

The Fight For Equality

Civil Rights

1619

After 1619, when a [Dutch ship brought 20 Africans ashore](#) at the British colony of Jamestown, [Virginia](#), slavery spread quickly through the American colonies. Though it is impossible to give accurate figures, some historians have estimated that 6 to 7 million enslaved people were imported to the New World during the 18th century alone, depriving the African continent of its most valuable resource—its healthiest and ablest men and women.

American Revolution 1765 - 1783

Many northern states had abolished slavery by the end of the 18th century, but the institution was absolutely vital to the South, where blacks constituted a large minority of the population and the economy relied on the production of crops like tobacco and cotton. Congress [outlawed](#) the import of new enslaved people in 1808, but the enslaved population in the U.S. nearly tripled over the next 50 years, and by 1860 it had reached nearly 4 million, with more than half living in the cotton-producing states of the South.

The early abolition movement in North America was fueled both by slaves' efforts to liberate themselves and by groups of white settlers, such as the [Quakers](#), who opposed slavery on religious or moral grounds. Though the lofty ideals of the Revolutionary era invigorated the movement, by the late 1780s it was in decline, as the growing southern cotton industry made slavery an ever more vital part of the national economy. In the early 19th century, however, a new brand of radical abolitionism emerged in the North, partly in reaction to Congress' passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 and the tightening of codes in most southern states.

1793 Fugitive Slave act

The **Fugitive Slave Act of 1793** was an Act of the United States Congress to give effect to the [Fugitive Slave Clause](#) of the [US Constitution](#) (Article 4, Section 2, Clause 3), which was later superseded by the [Thirteenth Amendment](#).^[1] The former guaranteed a right for a slaveholder to recover an escaped slave. The Act, "An Act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their masters," created the legal mechanism by which that could be accomplished.

It was passed by the House of Representatives on February 4, 1793 by a vote of 48–7, with 14 abstaining.^[2] The "Annals of Congress" state that the law was approved on February 12, 1793.^[3]

The Act was strengthened at the insistence of the [slave states](#) of the [South](#) by the [Compromise of 1850](#), which required even the governments and the residents of free states to enforce the capture and return of fugitive slaves.^[4] The enforcement of the [Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#) outraged Northern public opinion.

Note:

Antislavery northerners—many of them free blacks—had begun helping enslaved people escape from southern plantations to the North via a loose network of safe houses as early as the 1780s called the Underground Railroad.

1820

The **Missouri Compromise** was [United States](#) federal legislation that admitted [Maine](#) to the [United States](#) as a [free state](#), simultaneously with [Missouri](#) as a [slave state](#)—thus maintaining the balance of power between North and South in the [United States Senate](#). As part of the compromise, the legislation prohibited slavery north of the [36°30' parallel](#), excluding Missouri. The [16th United States Congress](#) passed the legislation on March 3, 1820, and President [James Monroe](#) signed it on March 6, 1820.^[1]

1850 Fugitive Slave Act

The **Fugitive Slave Act** or **Fugitive Slave Law** passed by the [United States Congress](#) on September 18, 1850,^[1] as part of the [Compromise of 1850](#) between [Southern slave-holding](#) interests and [Northern Free-Soilers](#).

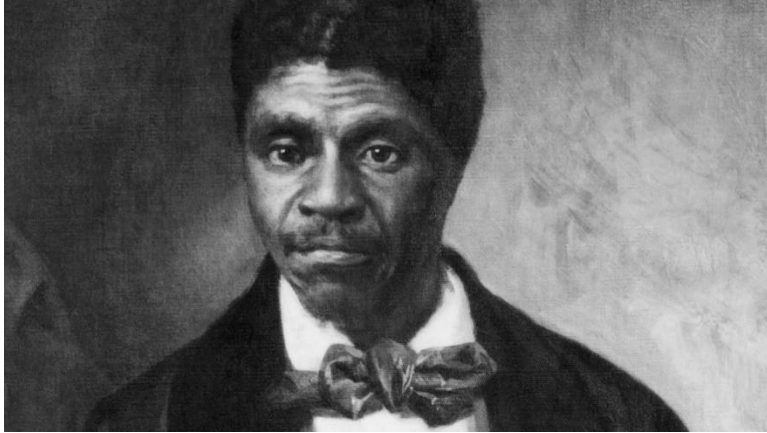
The Act was one of the most controversial elements of the 1850 compromise and heightened Northern fears of a "[slave power](#) conspiracy". It required that all escaped slaves, upon capture, **be returned to their masters**

and that officials and citizens of free states had to cooperate. [Abolitionists](#) nicknamed it the "Bloodhound Law", for the [dogs](#) that were used to track down runaway slaves.^[2]

1852

Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly^{[1][2]} is an [anti-slavery](#) novel by [American author Harriet Beecher Stowe](#). Published in 1852, the novel had a profound effect on attitudes toward African Americans and [slavery](#) in the U.S. and is said to have "helped lay the groundwork for the [Civil War](#)".^[3] Stowe, a [Connecticut](#)-born teacher at the [Hartford Female Seminary](#) and an active [abolitionist](#), featured the character of Uncle Tom, a long-suffering black [slave](#) around whom the stories of other characters revolve. The [sentimental novel](#) depicts the reality of slavery while also asserting that [Christian love](#) can overcome something as destructive as enslavement of fellow human beings.^{[4][5][6]} *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best-selling novel of the 19th century and the second best-selling book of that century, following the Bible.^{[7][8]} It is credited with helping fuel the abolitionist cause in the 1850s.^[9] In the first year after it was published, 300,000 copies of the book were sold in the United States; one million copies in Great Britain.^[10] In 1855, three years after it was published, it was called "the most popular novel of our day."^[11] The impact attributed to the book is great, reinforced by a story that when [Abraham Lincoln](#) met Stowe at the start of the [Civil War](#), Lincoln declared, "So this is the little lady who started this great war."^[12] The quote is [apocryphal](#); it did not appear in print until 1896, and it has been argued that "The long-term durability of Lincoln's greeting as an anecdote in literary studies and Stowe scholarship can perhaps be explained in part by the desire among many contemporary intellectuals ... to affirm the role of literature as an agent of social change."^[13]

Dred Scott Case, March 6, 1857



Dred Scott

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On March 6, 1857, the U.S. [Supreme Court](#) handed down its decision in *Scott v. Sanford*, delivering a resounding victory to southern supporters of slavery and arousing the ire of northern abolitionists. During the 1830s, the owner of an enslaved man named Dred Scott had taken him from the slave state of [Missouri](#) to the [Wisconsin](#) territory and [Illinois](#), where slavery was outlawed, according to the terms of the [Missouri Compromise](#) of 1820.

Upon his return to Missouri, Scott sued for his freedom on the basis that his temporary removal to free soil had made him legally free. The case went to the Supreme Court, where Chief Justice Roger B. Taney and the majority eventually ruled that Scott was a slave and not a citizen, and thus had no legal rights to sue.

According to the Court, Congress had no constitutional power to deprive persons of their property rights when dealing with slaves in the territories. The verdict effectively declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional, ruling that all territories were open to slavery and could exclude it only when they became states.

While much of the South rejoiced, seeing the verdict as a clear victory, antislavery northerners were furious. One of the most prominent abolitionists, [Frederick Douglass](#), was cautiously optimistic, however, wisely predicting that — "This very attempt to blot out forever the hopes of an enslaved people may be one [necessary link in the chain of events](#) preparatory to the complete overthrow of the whole slave system."

1861

Civil War and Emancipation, 1861

In the spring of 1861, the bitter sectional conflicts that had been intensifying between North and South over the course of four decades erupted into civil war, with 11 southern states seceding from the Union and forming the [Confederate States of America](#). Though President Abraham Lincoln's antislavery views were well established, and his election as the nation's first Republican president had been the catalyst that pushed the first southern states to secede in late 1860, the Civil War at its outset was not a war to abolish slavery. Lincoln sought first and foremost to preserve the [Union](#), and he knew that few people even in the North—let alone the border slave states still loyal to Washington—would have supported a war against slavery in 1861.

By the summer of 1862, however, Lincoln had come to believe he could not avoid the slavery question much longer. Five days after the bloody Union victory at Antietam in September, he issued a preliminary emancipation proclamation; on January 1, 1863, he made it official that enslaved people within any State, or designated part of a State in rebellion, "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." Lincoln justified his decision as a wartime measure, and as such he did not go so far as to free enslaved people in the border states loyal to the Union, an omission that angered many abolitionists.

By freeing some 3 million enslaved people in the rebel states, the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) deprived the Confederacy of the bulk of its labor forces and put international public opinion strongly on the Union side. Some 186,000 [black soldiers](#) would join the Union Army by the time the war ended in 1865, and 38,000 lost their lives. The total number of dead at war's end was 620,000 (out of a population of some 35 million), making it the costliest conflict in American history.

The Post-Slavery South, 1865

Though the Union victory in the Civil War gave some 4 million enslaved people their freedom, significant challenges awaited during the [Reconstruction](#) period. The [13th Amendment](#), adopted late in 1865, officially abolished slavery, but the question of freed blacks' status in the post-war South remained. As white southerners gradually reestablished civil authority in the former Confederate states in 1865 and 1866, they enacted a series of laws known as the [black codes](#), which were designed to restrict freed blacks' activity and ensure their availability as a labor force.

Lincoln's Assassination April

1867

Impatient with the leniency shown toward the former Confederate states by [Andrew Johnson](#), who became president after Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, so-called Radical Republicans in Congress overrode Johnson's veto and passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which basically placed the South under martial law. The following year, the [14th Amendment](#) broadened the definition of citizenship, granting "equal protection" of the Constitution to people who had been enslaved. Congress required southern states to ratify the 14th Amendment and enact universal male suffrage before they could rejoin the Union, and the state constitutions during those years were the most progressive in the region's history.

The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 began the period of time known as Radical Reconstruction. These laws included the following measures:

- The South was divided into five military districts and governed by military governors until acceptable state constitutions could be written and approved by Congress.
- All males, regardless of race, but excluding former Confederate leaders, were permitted to participate in the constitutional conventions that formed the new governments in each state.
- New state constitutions were required to provide for *universal manhood suffrage* (voting rights for all men) without regard to race.
- States were required to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment in order to be readmitted to the Union.

1868

The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868, granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States—including former slaves—and guaranteed all citizens "equal protection of the laws." One of three amendments passed during the Reconstruction era to abolish slavery and establish civil and legal rights for black Americans, it would become the basis for many landmark Supreme Court decisions over the years.

1870

The [15th Amendment](#), adopted in 1870, guaranteed that a citizen's right to vote would not be denied —on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." During Reconstruction, blacks won election to southern state governments and even to the U.S. Congress. Their growing influence greatly dismayed many white southerners, who felt control slipping ever further away from them. The white protective societies that arose during this period—the largest of which was the [Ku Klux Klan](#) (KKK)—sought to disenfranchise blacks by using voter fraud and intimidation as well as more extreme violence. By 1877, when the last federal soldiers left the South and Reconstruction drew to a close, blacks had seen dishearteningly little improvement in their economic and social status, and what political gains they had made had been wiped away by the vigorous efforts of white supremacist forces throughout the region.

“Separate But Equal,” 1896

As Reconstruction drew to a close and the forces of white supremacy regained control from carpetbaggers (northerners who moved South) and freed blacks, Southern state legislatures began enacting the first segregation laws, known as the “Jim Crow” laws. Taken from a much-copied minstrel routine written by a white actor who performed often in blackface, the name “Jim Crow” came to serve as a general derogatory term for African Americans in the post-Reconstruction South. By 1885, most southern states had laws requiring separate schools for blacks and whites, and by 1900, “persons of color” were required to be separated from whites in railroad cars and depots, hotels, theaters, restaurants, barber shops and other establishments. On May 18, 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its verdict in [Plessy v. Ferguson](#), a case that represented the first major test of the meaning of the 14th Amendment's provision of full and equal citizenship to African Americans.

By an 8–1 majority, the Court upheld a [Louisiana](#) law that required the segregation of passengers on railroad cars. By asserting that the equal protection clause was not violated as long as reasonably equal conditions were provided to both groups, the Court established the “separate but equal” doctrine that would thereafter be used for assessing the constitutionality of racial segregation laws. *Plessy vs. Ferguson* stood as the overriding judicial precedent in civil rights cases until 1954, when it was reversed by the Court's verdict in [Brown v. Board of Education](#).

NAACP Founded, 1909

In June 1905, a group led by the prominent black educator W.E.B. Du Bois met at [Niagara Falls](#), Canada, sparking a new political protest movement to demand civil rights for blacks in the old spirit of abolitionism. As America's exploding urban population faced shortages of employment and housing, violent hostility towards blacks had increased around the country; lynching, though illegal, was a widespread practice. A wave of race riots—particularly one in Springfield, Illinois in 1908—lent a sense of urgency to the [Niagara Movement](#) and its supporters, who in 1909 joined their agenda with that of a new permanent civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ([NAACP](#)). Among the NAACP's stated goals were the abolition of all forced segregation, the enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments, equal education for blacks and whites and complete enfranchisement of all black men (though proponents of female suffrage were part of the original NAACP, the issue was not mentioned).

First established in [Chicago](#), the NAACP had expanded to more than 400 locations by 1921. One of its earliest programs was a crusade against lynching and other lawless acts; those efforts—including a nationwide protest of D.W. Griffiths' silent film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which glorified white supremacy and the Ku Klux Klan—would continue into the 1920s, playing a crucial role in drastically reducing the number of lynchings carried out in the United States. Du Bois edited the NAACP's official magazine, *The Crisis*, from 1910 to 1934, publishing many of the leading voices in African American literature and politics and helping fuel the spread of the [Harlem Renaissance](#) in the 1920s.

African Americans in WWII, 1941

During [World War II](#), many African Americans were ready to fight for what President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) called the “Four Freedoms”— freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear—even while they themselves lacked those freedoms at home. More than 3 million blacks would register for service during the war, with some 500,000 seeing action overseas. According to War Department policy, enlisted blacks and whites were organized into separate units. Frustrated black servicemen were forced to combat racism even as they sought to further U.S. war aims; this became known as the “Double V” strategy, for the two victories they sought to win.

Brown v. Board Of Education, May 17, 1954



The children involved in the landmark Civil Rights lawsuit *Brown v. Board of Education*, which challenged the legality of American public school segregation: Vicki Henderson, Donald Henderson, Linda Brown, James Emanuel, Nancy Todd, and Katherine Carper.

Carl Iwasaki/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court delivered its verdict in *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruling unanimously that racial segregation in public schools violated the 14th Amendment's mandate of equal protection of the laws of the U.S. Constitution to any person within its jurisdiction. Oliver Brown, the lead plaintiff in the case, was one of almost 200 people from five different states who had joined related NAACP cases brought before the Supreme Court since 1938.

The landmark verdict reversed the "separate but equal" doctrine the Court had established with *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), in which it determined that equal protection was not violated as long as reasonably equal conditions were provided to both groups. In the *Brown* decision, Chief Justice [Earl Warren](#) famously declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Though the Court's ruling applied specifically to public schools, it implied that other segregated facilities were also unconstitutional, thus striking a heavy blow to the Jim Crow South. As such, the ruling provoked serious resistance, including a "Southern manifesto" issued by southern congressmen denouncing it. The decision was also difficult to enforce, a fact that became increasingly clear in May 1955 when the Court remanded the case to the courts of origin due to "their proximity to local conditions" and urged "a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance." Though some southern schools moved

towards integration relatively without incident, in other cases—notably in [Arkansas](#) and Alabama—enforcing Brown would require federal intervention.

Emmett Till, August 1955

In August 1955, a 14-year-old black boy from Chicago named [Emmett Till](#) had recently arrived in Money, [Mississippi](#) to visit relatives. While in a grocery store, he allegedly whistled and made a flirtatious remark to the white woman behind the counter, violating the strict racial codes of the Jim Crow South. Three days later, two white men—the woman’s husband, Roy Bryant, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam—dragged Till from his great uncle’s house in the middle of the night. After beating the boy, they shot him to death and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River. The two men confessed to kidnapping Till but were acquitted of murder charges by an all-white, all-male jury after barely an hour of deliberations. Never brought to justice, Bryant and Milam later shared vivid details of how they killed Till with a journalist for *Look* magazine, which published their confessions under the headline “The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi.”

Till’s mother held an open-casket funeral for her son in Chicago, hoping to bring public attention to the brutal murder. Thousands of mourners attended, and *Jet* magazine published a photo of the corpse. International outrage over the crime and the verdict helped fuel the civil rights movement: just three months after Emmett Till’s body was found, and a month after a Mississippi grand jury refused to indict Milam and Bryant on kidnapping charges, a city-wide bus boycott in Montgomery, [Alabama](#) would begin the movement in earnest.

The Murder Of Emmett Till (The Full Documetary) HD

From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uTtNnCW69w>>

Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, December 1955

On December 1, 1955, an African American woman named [Rosa Parks](#) was riding a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama when the driver told her to give up her seat to a white man. Parks refused and was arrested for violating the city’s racial segregation ordinances, which mandated that blacks sit in the back of public

buses and give up their seats for white riders if the front seats were full. Parks, a 42-year-old seamstress, was also the secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. As she later explained: “I had been pushed as far as I could stand to be pushed. I had decided that I would have to know once and for all what rights I had as a human being and a citizen.”

Four days after Parks’ arrest, an activist organization called the Montgomery Improvement Association—led by a young pastor named Martin Luther King, Jr.—spearheaded a boycott of the city’s municipal bus company. Because African Americans made up some 70 percent of the bus company’s riders at the time, and the great majority of Montgomery’s black citizens supported the bus boycott, its impact was immediate.

About 90 participants in the [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#), including King, were indicted under a law forbidding conspiracy to obstruct the operation of a business. Found guilty, King immediately appealed the decision. Meanwhile, the boycott stretched on for more than a year, and the bus company struggled to avoid bankruptcy. On November 13, 1956, in *Browder v. Gayle*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower court’s decision declaring the bus company’s segregation seating policy unconstitutional under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. King, called off the boycott on December 20, and Rosa Parks—known as the “mother of the civil rights movement”—would be one of the first to ride the newly desegregated buses.

Central High School integrated, September 1957



The Little Rock Nine forming a study group after being prevented from entering Little Rock's Central High School.

Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

Although the Supreme Court declared segregation of public schools illegal in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the decision was extremely difficult to enforce, as 11 southern states enacted resolutions interfering with, nullifying or protesting school desegregation. In Arkansas, Governor Orval Faubus made resistance to desegregation a central part of his successful 1956 reelection campaign. The following September, after a federal court ordered the desegregation of Central High School, located in the state capital of Little Rock, Faubus called out the Arkansas National Guard to prevent nine African American students from entering the school. He was later forced to call off the guard, and in the tense standoff that followed, TV cameras captured footage of white mobs converging on the "[Little Rock Nine](#)" outside the high school. For millions of viewers throughout the country, the unforgettable images provided a vivid contrast between the angry forces of white supremacy and the quiet, dignified resistance of the African American students.

After an appeal by the local congressman and mayor of Little Rock to stop the violence, President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) federalized the state's National Guard and sent 1,000 members of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne division to enforce the integration of Central High School. The nine black students entered the school under heavily armed guard, marking the first time since Reconstruction that federal troops had provided protection for black Americans against racial violence. Not done fighting, Faubus closed all of Little Rock's high schools in the fall of 1958 rather than permit

integration. A federal court struck down this act, and four of the nine students returned, under police protection, after the schools were reopened in 1959.

Sit-in Movement and Founding of SNCC, 1960

CORE and Freedom Rides, May 1961

Integration of Ole Miss, September 1962

Birmingham Church Bombed, 1963

“I Have a Dream,” 1963

On August 28, 1963, some 250,000 people—both black and white—participated in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the largest demonstration in the history of the nation’s capital and the most significant display of the civil rights movement’s growing strength. After marching from the Washington Monument, the demonstrators gathered near the Lincoln Memorial, where a number of civil rights leaders addressed the crowd, calling for voting rights, equal employment opportunities for blacks and an end to racial segregation.

The last leader to appear was the Baptist preacher [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), who spoke eloquently of the struggle facing black Americans and the need for continued action and nonviolent resistance. “I have a dream,” King intoned, expressing his faith that one day whites and blacks would stand together as equals, and there would be harmony between the races: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

King’s improvised sermon continued for nine minutes after the end of his prepared remarks, and his stirring words would be remembered as undoubtedly

one of the greatest speeches in American history. At its conclusion, King quoted an “old Negro spiritual: ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’” King’s speech served as a defining moment for the civil rights movement, and he soon emerged as its most prominent figure.

Civil Rights Act of 1964, July 1964

Thanks to the campaign of nonviolent resistance championed by Martin Luther King Jr. beginning in the late 1950s, the civil rights movement had begun to gain serious momentum in the United States by 1960. That year, [John F. Kennedy](#) made passage of new civil rights legislation part of his presidential campaign platform; he won more than 70 percent of the African American vote. Congress was debating Kennedy’s civil rights reform bill when he was killed by an assassin’s bullet in Dallas, [Texas](#) in November 1963. It was left to [Lyndon Johnson](#) (not previously known for his support of civil rights) to push the Civil Rights Act—the most far-reaching act of legislation supporting racial equality in American history—through Congress in June 1964.

At its most basic level, the act gave the federal government more power to protect citizens against discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex or national origin. It mandated the desegregation of most public accommodations, including lunch counters, bus depots, parks and swimming pools, and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to ensure equal treatment of minorities in the workplace. The act also guaranteed equal voting rights by removing biased registration requirements and procedures, and authorized the U.S. Office of Education to provide aid to assist with school desegregation. In a televised ceremony on July 2, 1964, Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law using 75 pens; he presented one of them to King, who counted it among his most prized possessions.

Freedom Summer and the “Mississippi Burning” Murders, June 1964

In the summer of 1964, civil rights organizations including the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) urged white students from the North to travel to Mississippi, where they helped register black voters and build schools for black children. The organizations believed the participation of white students in the so-called “Freedom Summer” would bring increased visibility to their efforts. The summer had barely begun, however, when three volunteers—Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, both white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black Mississippian—disappeared on their way back from investigating the burning of an African American church by the Ku Klux Klan. After a massive [FBI](#) investigation (code-named “Mississippi Burning”) their bodies were

discovered on August 4 buried in an earthen dam near Philadelphia, in Neshoba County, Mississippi.

Although the culprits in the case—white supremacists who included the county’s deputy sheriff—were soon identified, the state made no arrests. The Justice Department eventually indicted 19 men for violating the three volunteers’ civil rights (the only charge that would give the federal government jurisdiction over the case) and after a three-year-long legal battle, the men finally went on trial in Jackson, Mississippi. In October 1967, an all-white jury found seven of the defendants guilty and acquitted the other nine. Though the verdict was hailed as a major civil rights victory—it was the first time anyone in Mississippi had been convicted for a crime against a civil rights worker—the judge in the case gave out relatively light sentences, and none of the convicted men served more than six years behind bars.

Selma to Montgomery March, March 1965

In early 1965, Martin Luther King Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) made Selma, Alabama, the focus of its efforts to register black voters in the South. Alabama’s governor, George Wallace, was a notorious opponent of desegregation, and the local county sheriff had led a steadfast opposition to black voter registration drives: Only 2 percent of Selma’s eligible black voters had managed to register. In February, an Alabama state trooper shot a young African American demonstrator in nearby Marion, and the SCLC announced a massive protest march from [Selma to the state capital in Montgomery](#).

On March 7, 600 marchers got as far as the Edmund Pettis Bridge outside Selma when they were attacked by state troopers wielding whips, nightsticks and tear gas. The brutal scene was captured on television, enraging many Americans and drawing civil rights and religious leaders of all faiths to Selma in protest. King himself led another attempt on March 9, but turned the marchers around when state troopers again blocked the road; that night, a group of segregationists fatally beat a protester, the young white minister James Reeb.

Malcolm X Shot to Death, February 1965

Voting Rights Act of 1965, August 1965

Less than a week after the Selma-to-Montgomery marchers were beaten and bloodied by Alabama state troopers in March 1965, President Lyndon Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress, calling for federal legislation to ensure protection of the voting rights of African Americans. The result was the Voting Rights Act, which Congress passed in August 1965.

The Voting Rights Act sought to overcome the legal barriers that still existed at the state and local level preventing blacks from exercising the right to vote given them by the 15th Amendment. Specifically, it banned literacy tests as a requirement for voting, mandated federal oversight of voter registration in areas where tests had previously been used and gave the U.S. attorney general the duty of challenging the use of poll taxes for state and local elections.

Along with the Civil Rights Act of the previous year, the Voting Rights Act was one of the most expansive pieces of civil rights legislation in American history, and it greatly reduced the disparity between black and white voters in the U.S. In Mississippi alone, the percentage of eligible black voters registered to vote increased from 5 percent in 1960 to nearly 60 percent in 1968. In the mid-1960s, 70 African Americans were serving as elected officials in the South, while by the turn of the century there were some 5,000. In the same time period, the number of blacks serving in Congress increased from 6 to about 40.

Rise of Black Power

Fair Housing Act, April 1968

The [Fair Housing Act](#) of 1968, meant as a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, marked the last great legislative achievement of the civil rights era. Originally intended to extend federal protection to civil rights workers, it was later expanded to address racial discrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing units. After the bill passed the Senate by an exceedingly narrow margin in early April, it was thought that the increasingly conservative [House of Representatives](#), wary of the growing strength and militancy of the Black Power movement, would weaken it considerably.

On the day of the Senate vote, however, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. Pressure to pass the bill increased amid the wave of national remorse that followed, and after a strictly limited debate the House passed the Fair Housing Act on April 10. President Johnson signed it into law the following day. Over the next years, however, there was little decrease in housing segregation, and violence arose from black efforts to seek housing in white neighborhoods.

From 1950 to 1980, the total black population in America's urban centers increased from 6.1 million to 15.3 million; during this same time period, white Americans steadily moved out of the cities into the suburbs, taking with them many of the employment opportunities blacks needed. In this way, the ghetto—an inner city community plagued by high unemployment, crime and other social ills—became an ever more prevalent fact of urban black life.

MLK Assassinated, April 4, 1968

On April 4, 1968, the world was stunned and saddened by the news that the civil rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot and killed on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, [Tennessee](#), where he had gone to support a sanitation workers' strike. King's death opened a huge rift between white and black Americans, as many blacks saw the killing as a rejection of their vigorous pursuit of equality through the nonviolent resistance he had championed. In more than 100 cities, several days of riots, burning and looting followed his death.

The accused killer, a white man named James Earl Ray, was captured and tried immediately; he entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to 99 years in prison; no testimony was heard. Ray later recanted his confession, and despite several inquiries into the matter by the U.S. government, many continued to believe that the speedy trial had been a cover-up for a larger conspiracy. King's assassination, along with the killing of Malcolm X three years earlier, radicalized many moderate African American activists, fueling the growth of the Black Power movement and the Black Panther Party.

The success of conservative politicians that year—including Richard Nixon's election as president and the third-party candidacy of the ardent segregationist George Wallace, who won 13 percent of the vote—further discouraged African

Americans, many of whom felt that the tide was turning against the civil rights movement.

Shirley Chisholm Runs for President, 1972

By the early 1970s, the advances of the civil rights movement had combined with the rise of the feminist movement to create an African American women's movement. "There can't be liberation for half a race," declared Margaret Sloan, one of the women behind the National Black Feminist Organization, founded in 1973. A year earlier, Representative [Shirley Chisholm](#) of New York became a national symbol of both movements as the first major party African American candidate and the first female candidate for president of the United States.

A former educational consultant and a founder of the National Women's Caucus, Chisholm became the first black woman in Congress in 1968, when she was elected to the House from her Brooklyn district. Though she failed to win a primary, Chisholm received more than 150 votes at the Democratic National Convention. She claimed she never expected to win the nomination. It went to George McGovern, who lost to Richard Nixon in the general election.

The outspoken Chisholm, who attracted little support among African-American men during her presidential campaign, later told the press: "I've always met more discrimination being a woman than being black. When I ran for the Congress, when I ran for president, I met more discrimination as a woman than for being black. Men are men."

The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, 1978

Jesse Jackson Galvanizes Black Voters, 1984

As a young man, [Jesse Jackson](#) left his studies at the Chicago Theological Seminary to join Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in its crusade for black civil rights in the South; when King

was assassinated in Memphis in April 1968, Jackson was at his side. In 1971, Jackson founded PUSH, or People United to Save Humanity (later changed to People United to Serve Humanity), an organization that advocated self-reliance for African Americans and sought to establish racial parity in the business and financial community.

He was a leading voice for blacks in America during the early 1980s, urging them to be more politically active and heading up a voter registration drive that led to the election of Harold Washington as the first black mayor of Chicago in 1983. The following year, Jackson ran for the Democratic nomination for president. On the strength of his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, he placed third in the primaries, propelled by a surge of black voter participation.

He ran again in 1988 and received 6.6 million votes, or 24 percent of the total primary vote, winning seven states and finishing second behind the eventual Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis. Jackson's continued influence in the Democratic Party in the decades that followed ensured that African-American issues had an important role in the party's platform. Throughout his long career, Jackson has inspired both admiration and criticism for his tireless efforts on behalf of the black community and his outspoken public persona. His son, Jesse L. Jackson Jr., won election to the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois in 1995

Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson debate on Nightline

From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLBG8TVPh8&t=6s>>

Womens Rights

10.) Rassismus in den USA / Racism in the USA - Tess Lambert

From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCP0rJu8tts&list=PLGRNyAWPE9R8gg5zmIJ3j23Ek4Jug7t42&index=10>>

4 Waves of Feminism

1st Wave 1919 - Right to vote and own property

This was the around the height of the KKK and white men were more than happy to have white women vote so that they would drown out the black vote. Black women were left behind in this history.

2nd Wave 1960's - Workplace discrimination, reproduction (1960's beginning of birth control pill), violence inside marriage without legal remedy.

Centered around their treatment in the work force and at home and the fact that they didn't have the same legal rights.

3rd Wave 1989 - Sexual harrassment. Also seeing the effect on women of different races and cultures more specifically.

One example being the Anita Hill trial

Allegations of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas



Hill testifying in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991

In 1991, President [George H. W. Bush](#) nominated [Clarence Thomas](#), a federal [Circuit Judge](#), to succeed retiring Associate Supreme Court Justice [Thurgood Marshall](#). Senate hearings on his [confirmation](#) were initially completed^[12] with Thomas's good character being presented as a primary qualification for the high court because he had only been a judge for slightly more than one year.^[13] There had been little organized opposition to Thomas' nomination, and his confirmation seemed assured^[13] until a report of a private interview of Hill by the [FBI](#) was leaked to the press.^{[12][14]} The hearings were then reopened, and Hill was called to publicly testify.^{[12][14]} Hill said on 11 October 1991 in televised hearings that Thomas had [sexually harassed](#) her while he was her supervisor at the Department of Education and the [EEOC](#).^[15] When questioned on why she followed Thomas to the second job after he had already allegedly harassed her, she said working in a reputable position within the civil rights field had been her ambition. The position was appealing enough to inhibit her from going back into private practice with her previous firm. She said that she only realized later in her life that the choice had represented poor judgment on her part, but that "at that time, it appeared that the sexual overtures ... had ended."^{[15][16]}

According to Hill, Thomas asked her out socially many times during her two years of employment as his assistant,^[7] and, after she declined his requests, he used work situations to discuss sexual subjects.^{[5][7]}^[5] During the hearing, Republican Senator [Orrin Hatch](#) implied that "Hill was working in tandem with 'slick lawyers' and interest groups bent on destroying Thomas' chances to join the court." Thomas said he had considered Hill a friend whom he had helped at every turn, so when accusations of harassment came from her they were particularly hurtful and he said, "I lost the belief that if I did my best, all would work out."

Four female witnesses reportedly waited in the wings to support Hill's credibility, but they were not called,^{[14][17]} due to what the [Los Angeles Times](#) described as a private, compromise deal between Republicans and the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) Chair, Democrat [Joe Biden](#).^[18]

Hill agreed to take a [polygraph](#) test. While senators and other authorities noted that polygraph results cannot be relied upon and are inadmissible in courts, Hill's results did support her statements.^[19] Thomas did not take a polygraph test. He made a vehement and complete denial, saying that he was being subjected to a "high-tech lynching for uppity blacks" by white liberals who were seeking to block a black conservative from taking a seat on the Supreme Court.^{[20][21]} After extensive debate, the [United States Senate](#) confirmed Thomas to the Supreme Court by a vote of 52–48, the narrowest margin since the 19th century.^{[17][22]}

October 11, 1991: Anita Hill Full Opening Statement (C-SPAN)

From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QbVKSvm274>>

4th Wave 2012 - #Metto

Fourth-wave feminism is a phase of [feminism](#) that began around 2012 and is characterized by a focus on the [empowerment of women](#)^[1] through the use of internet tools.^[2]

The first and second waves of feminism fought for and earned women greater [liberation](#), [individualism](#), and [social mobility](#), and the fourth wave takes the agenda of third wave feminism that centres on the problematic gendered norms that cause the oppression and marginalisation of women in society, their [intersectionality](#),^[3] with interlocking systems of power and how these contribute to the [stratification](#) of [traditionally marginalized groups](#) to call for [equal pay for equal work](#). Fourth-wave feminists continue to advocate, as earlier feminists, for greater representation of these groups in politics and business, and argue that society would be more equitable if policies and practices incorporated the perspectives of all people.^[3]

Fourth wave feminism additionally argues the [equal opportunities](#) sought for girls and women should extend also to boys and men to overcome gender norms (for example by expressing emotions and feelings freely, expressing themselves physically as they wish, and to be engaged parents to their children ^[4]). Fourth-wave feminists use contemporary [print](#), of and [social media](#) to collaborate and mobilize, speak against [abusers of power](#) in seeking for the empowerment of women and seeking justice against [assault](#) and [harassment](#), and for [bodily autonomy](#).^[5]

LGBTQ + Rights

Timeline:

1924 - The [Society for Human Rights](#) is founded by Henry Gerber in Chicago. It is the first documented gay rights organization.

1950 - The Mattachine Society is formed by activist Harry Hay and is one of the first sustained gay rights groups in the United States. The Society focuses on social acceptance and other support for homosexuals.

April 1952 - The American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual lists homosexuality as a [sociopathic personality disturbance](#).

April 27, 1953 - President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs an [executive order](#) that bans homosexuals from working for the federal government, saying they are a security risk.

September 1955 - The first known lesbian rights organization in the United States forms in San Francisco. Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). They host private social functions, fearing police raids, threats of violence and discrimination in bars and clubs.

July 1961 - Illinois becomes the first state to [decriminalize homosexuality](#) by repealing their sodomy laws.

September 11, 1961 - The first [US-televised documentary about homosexuality](#) airs on a local station in California.

The Only Places people could meet were bars. Otherwise they lived very lonely lives constantly in hiding.

June 28, 1969 - Police raid the [Stonewall Inn in New York City](#). Protests and demonstrations begin, and it later becomes known as the impetus for the gay civil rights movement in the United States.

1969 - [The "Los Angeles Advocate," founded in 1967](#), is renamed "The Advocate." It is considered the oldest continuing LGBTQ publication that began as a newsletter published by the activist group Personal Rights in Defense and Education (PRIDE).

June 28, 1970 - Community members in New York City march through the local streets to recognize the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots. This event is named [Christopher Street Liberation Day](#), and is now considered the first gay pride parade.

1973 - [Lambda Legal](#) becomes the first legal organization established to fight for the equal rights of gays and lesbians. Lambda also becomes their own first client after being denied non-profit status; the New York Supreme Court eventually rules that Lambda Legal can exist as a non-profit.

January 1, 1973 - [Maryland](#) becomes the first state to statutorily ban [same-sex marriage](#).

March 26, 1973 - First meeting of "[Parents and Friends of Gays](#)," which goes national as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in 1982.

December 15, 1973 - By a vote of 5,854 to 3,810, [the American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality](#) from its list of mental disorders in the DSM-II Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

1974 - [Kathy Kozachenko becomes the first openly LGBTQ American elected to any public office](#) when she wins a seat on the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council.

1974 - [Elaine Noble is the first openly gay candidate elected](#) to a state office when she is elected to the Massachusetts State legislature.

January 14, 1975 - The [first federal gay rights bill](#) is introduced to address discrimination based on sexual orientation. The bill later goes to the Judiciary Committee but is never brought for consideration.

March 1975 - Technical Sergeant Leonard P. Matlovich reveals his sexual orientation to his commanding officer and is forcibly discharged from the Air Force six months later. Matlovich is a [Vietnam War](#) veteran and was awarded both the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. In 1980, the Court of Appeals rules that the dismissal was improper. Matlovich is awarded his back pay and a retroactive promotion.



Photos: Transgender identity in the news

1976 - After undergoing gender reassignment surgery in 1975, ophthalmologist and professional tennis player Renee Richards is banned from competing in the women's [US Open](#) because of a "women-born-women" rule. Richards challenges the decision and in 1977, the New York Supreme Court rules in her favor. Richards competes in the 1977 US Open but is defeated in the first round by Virginia Wade.

1977-1981 - [Billy Crystal](#) plays one of the first openly gay characters in a recurring role on a prime time television show in "Soap."

1977-1978 "Save Our Children"

Save Our Children, Inc. was a political coalition formed in 1977 in [Miami, Florida](#), US to overturn a recently legislated county ordinance that banned discrimination in areas of housing, employment, and public accommodation based on [sexual orientation](#). The coalition was publicly headed by celebrity singer [Anita Bryant](#), who claimed the ordinance discriminated against her right to teach her children [biblical morality](#). It was a well-organized campaign that initiated a bitter political fight between unprepared gay activists and highly motivated [Christian fundamentalists](#). When the repeal of the ordinance went to a vote, it attracted the largest response of any special election in [Dade County](#)'s history, passing by 70%.^[note 1] In response to this vote, a group of gay and lesbian community members formed Pride South Florida, now known as Pride Fort Lauderdale, an organization whose mission was to fight for the rights of the gay and lesbian community in South Florida.

Save Our Children was the first organized [opposition to the gay rights movement](#), whose beginnings were traced to the [Stonewall riots](#) in 1969. The defeat of the ordinance encouraged groups in other cities to attempt to overturn similar laws. In the next year voters in [St. Paul, Minnesota](#); [Wichita, Kansas](#); and [Eugene, Oregon](#) overturned ordinances in those cities, sharing many of the same campaign strategies that were used in Miami. Save Our Children was also involved in [Seattle, Washington](#), where they were unsuccessful, and heavily influenced [Proposition 6](#)—a proposed state law in [California](#) that would have made the firing of [openly gay](#) public school employees mandatory—that was rejected by California voters in 1978.

Historians have since connected the success of Save Our Children with the organization of conservative Christian participation in political processes. Although "occasional antigay appeals from the right" existed prior to the campaign, "the [new right](#) struck pure gold in Anita Bryant. A mother, celebrity singer, former Miss America ... the chirpy Bryant was the ideal model for its antigay crusade."^[1] Within two years the Reverend [Jerry Falwell](#) developed a coalition of conservative religious groups named the [Moral Majority](#) that influenced the [Republican Party](#) to incorporate a social agenda in national politics. Homosexuality, the [Equal Rights Amendment](#) (ERA), [abortion](#), and [pornography](#) were among the issues most central to the Moral Majority's priorities until it folded in 1989. For many gay people, the surprise at the outcome of all the campaigns in 1977 and 1978 instilled a new determination and consolidated activism and communities in many cities where the gay community had not been politically active.

Anita Bryant - Save Our Children Campaign

From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB5H--b3Xho>>

"The [normal majority](#) have said Enough! Enough! Enough!"

1978 The Briggs Initiative a.k.a. Proposition 6

January 9, 1978 - [Harvey Milk is inaugurated as San Francisco city supervisor](#), and is the first openly gay man to be elected to a political office in California. In November, [Milk and Mayor George Moscone are murdered](#) by Dan White, who had recently resigned from his San Francisco board position and wanted Moscone to reappoint him. White later serves just over five years in prison for voluntary manslaughter.

1978 - Inspired by Milk to develop a symbol of pride and hope for the LGBTQ community, [Gilbert Baker designs and stitches together the first rainbow flag](#).

October 14, 1979 - The first National [March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights](#) takes place. It draws an estimated 75,000 to 125,000 individuals marching for LGBTQ rights.

March 2, 1982 - Wisconsin becomes the first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

1983 - [Lambda Legal](#) wins *People v. West 12 Tenants Corp.*, the first [HIV/AIDS](#) discrimination lawsuit. Neighbors attempted to evict Dr. Joseph Sonnabend from the building because he was treating HIV-positive patients.

November 30, 1993 - [President Bill Clinton](#) signs a [military policy](#) directive that prohibits openly gay and lesbian Americans from serving in the military, but also prohibits the harassment of "closeted" homosexuals. The policy is known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

November 1995 - The [Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act](#) goes into effect as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The law allows a judge to impose harsher sentences if there is evidence showing that a victim was selected because of the "actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person."

September 21, 1996 - President Clinton signs the [Defense of Marriage Act](#), banning federal recognition of same-sex marriage and defining marriage as "a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife."

December 3, 1996 - [Hawaii's Judge Chang rules that the state does not have a legal right to deprive same-sex couples of the right to marry](#), making Hawaii the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are entitled to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples.

April 1997 - Comedian [Ellen DeGeneres](#) comes out as a lesbian on the cover of Time magazine, stating, ["Yep, I'm Gay."](#)

April 30, 1997 - DeGeneres' character, Ellen Morgan, on her self-titled TV series "Ellen," becomes the first leading character to come out on a prime time network television show.

April 1, 1998 - [Martin Luther King Jr.'s](#) widow, [Coretta Scott King](#), asks the civil rights community to help in the effort to extinguish homophobia.

October 6-7, 1998 - [Matthew Shepard](#) is tied to a fence and beaten near Laramie, Wyoming. He is eventually found by a cyclist, who initially mistakes him for a scarecrow. He later dies due to his injuries sustained in the beating.

October 9, 1998 - Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney from Laramie, Wyoming, make their first court appearance after being arrested for the attempted murder of Shepard. Eventually, they each receive two life sentences for killing Shepard.

April 26, 2000 - Vermont becomes the first state to legalize civil-unions between same-sex couples.

June 2003 - The [US Supreme Court](#) strikes down the "homosexual conduct" law, which decriminalizes same-sex sexual conduct, with their opinion in *Lawrence v. Texas*. The decision also reverses *Bowers v. Hardwick*, a 1986 US Supreme Court ruling that upheld Georgia's sodomy law.

May 17, 2004 - The first legal same-sex marriage in the United States takes place in Massachusetts.

September 6, 2005 - The California legislature becomes the first to pass a bill allowing marriage between same-sex couples. [Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) vetoes the bill.

October 25, 2006 - The [New Jersey Supreme Court](#) rules that state lawmakers must provide the rights and benefits of marriage to gay and lesbian couples.

May 15, 2008 - The California Supreme Court rules in *re: Marriage Cases* that limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples is unconstitutional.

November 4, 2008 - Voters approve Proposition 8 in California, which makes same-sex marriage illegal.

August 12, 2009 - Milk is posthumously awarded the Medal of Freedom by [President Barack Obama](#).

October 28, 2009 - Obama signs the [Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act](#) into law.

August 4, 2010 - Proposition 8 is found unconstitutional by a federal judge.

September 20, 2011 - "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is repealed, ending a ban on gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

May 9, 2012 - In an ABC interview, Obama becomes the first sitting US president to publicly support the [freedom for LGBTQ couples to marry](#).

September 4, 2012 - The Democratic Party becomes the first major US political party in history to publicly support same-sex marriage on a national platform at the Democratic National Convention.

November 6, 2012 - [Tammy Baldwin becomes the first](#) openly gay politician and the first Wisconsin woman to be elected to the US Senate.

June 26, 2013 - In [United States v. Windsor](#), the US Supreme Court strikes down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, ruling that legally married same-sex couples are entitled to federal benefits. The high court also dismisses a case involving California's proposition 8.

October 6, 2014 - The [United States Supreme Court denies review in five different marriage cases](#), allowing lower court rulings to stand, and therefore allowing same-sex couples to marry in Utah, Oklahoma, Virginia, Indiana and Wisconsin. The decision opens the door for the right to marry in Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming.

June 9, 2015 - [Secretary of Defense Ash Carter](#) announces that the [Military Equal Opportunity policy has been adjusted to include gay and lesbian military members](#).

April 28, 2015 - [The US Supreme Court hears oral arguments on the question of the freedom to marry](#) in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Michigan. On June 26 the Supreme Court rules that states cannot ban same-sex marriage. The 5-4 ruling had [Justice Anthony Kennedy](#) writing for the majority. Each of the four conservative justices writes their own dissent.

July 27, 2015 - [Boy Scouts of America](#) President [Robert Gates](#) announces, "the national executive board ratified a resolution removing the national restriction on openly gay leaders and employees."

May 17, 2016 - [The Senate confirms Eric Fanning to be secretary of the Army](#), making him the first openly gay secretary of a US military branch. Fanning previously served as Defense Secretary Carter's chief of staff, and also served as undersecretary of the Air Force and deputy undersecretary of the Navy.

June 24, 2016 - [Obama announces the designation of the first national monument to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender \(LGBTQ\) rights](#). The [Stonewall National Monument](#) will encompass Christopher Park, the Stonewall Inn and the surrounding streets and sidewalks that were the sites of the 1969 Stonewall uprising.

June 30, 2016 - Secretary of Defense Carter announces that the Pentagon is [lifting the ban on transgender people serving openly in the US military](#).

August 5-21, 2016 - [A record number of "out" athletes compete](#) in the summer [Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro](#). The Human Rights Campaign estimates that there are at least 41 openly lesbian, gay and bisexual Olympians -- up from 23 that participated in London 2012.

November 9, 2016 - Kate Brown is sworn in as governor of Oregon, a day after she was officially elected to the office. Brown becomes the highest-ranking LGBTQ person elected to office in the United States. Brown took over the governorship in February 2016 (without an election), after Democrat John Kitzhaber resigned amidst a criminal investigation.

April 4, 2017 - [The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals rules that the Civil Rights Act prohibits workplace discrimination against LGBTQ employees](#), after Kimberly Hively sues Ivy Tech Community College for violating Title VII of the act by denying her employment.

June 27, 2017 - [District of Columbia residents can now choose a gender-neutral option of their driver's license](#). DC residents become the first people in the United States to be able to choose X as their gender marker instead of male or female on driver's licenses and identification cards. Similar policies exist in Canada, India, Bangladesh, Australia, New Zealand and Nepal.

June 30, 2017 - [The US Department of Defense announces](#) a six-month delay in allowing transgendered individuals to enlist in the United States military. [Defense Secretary Jim Mattis](#) writes that they "will use this additional time to evaluate more carefully the impact of such accessions on readiness and lethality." Approximately a month later, [President Donald Trump](#) announces via [Twitter that the "United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US Military..."](#)

November 7, 2017 - [Virginia voters elect the state's first openly transgender candidate to the Virginia House of Delegates. Danica Roem unseats incumbent delegate Bob Marshall, who had been elected thirteen times over 26 years.](#) Roem becomes the first openly transgender candidate elected to a state legislature in American history.

February 26, 2018 - The Pentagon confirms that the [first transgender person has signed a contract to join the US military.](#)

March 4, 2018 - [Daniela Vega, the star of Oscar-winning foreign film "A Fantastic Woman," becomes the first openly transgender presenter in Academy Awards history](#) when she introduces a performance by Sufjan Stevens, whose song "Mystery of Love" from the "Call Me By Your Name" soundtrack, is nominated for best original song.

March 23, 2018 - [The Trump administration announces a new policy that bans most transgender people from serving in military.](#) After several court battles, the Supreme Court allows the ban to go into effect in January 2019.

November 6, 2018 - Democratic US Representative [Jared Polis wins the Colorado governor's race,](#) becoming the nation's first openly gay man to be elected governor.

June 30, 2019 - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signs a law banning the use of the so-called [gay and trans panic legal defense strategy.](#) The tactic asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for a defendant's violent reaction. New York follows California, Rhode Island, Illinois, Nevada and Connecticut as the sixth state to pass such a law.

September 22, 2019 - [Billy Porter becomes the first openly gay black man](#) to win the [Emmy](#) for best lead actor in a drama series.