

What is LGBTQ+ History Month?

LGBTQ+ History Month is an annual month-long observance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history, and the history of the gay rights and related civil rights movements. It was founded in 1994 by a Missouri high-school professor, Rodney Wilson – the first out public-school teacher in the state – who wanted to give students better access to LGBTQ+ history, as well as more role models with whom they could identify.

He established a planning committee with LGBTQ+ leaders from around the country, and from there, Gay and Lesbian History Month was born.

The group selected October for what would ultimately become LGBTQ+ History Month because school would be in session. October is also when we celebrate National Coming Out Day (on the 11th). The two LGBTQ+ marches on Washington in 1979 and 1987 also took place in October.

After its founding, organizations like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, GLAAD, and the Human Rights Campaign endorsed Gay and Lesbian History Month, and in 1995, the National Education Association passed a resolution officially recognizing it as a commemorative month.

In 2006, the civil rights organization Equality Forum became the official organizer and promoter of the month. Each year, Equality Forum selects 31 icons to honor, one for each day.

Today, as conservatives continue their widespread attacks on the rights of LGBTQ+ students, LGBTQ+ History Month feels more important than ever, serving to remind LGBTQ+ young people that they are part of a long, storied history of strength, resilience, and bravery.