

June 2020



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An initiative of the Division of Criminal Justice Services,
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LGBTQIA+

TRAILBLAZERS:

PAST & PRESENT



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Though coming out for youth can still be hard, it would likely be much more difficult today if there were not those who first acted as activists and representation for SOGIE-minority youth. See below to learn about some of the LGBTQIA+ trailblazers who strove (or strive) for a more equitable society.

We also encourage you to share these profiles with your colleagues and friends!



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ALICIA GARZA

Civil Rights Activist, Co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement

Alicia Garza is an American civil rights activist & co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement. Her writing has been featured in The Guardian, Rolling Stone, & HuffPost.

To learn more about Alicia Garza, click [here!](#)



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Andrea Jenkins

Poet and First openly trans Black woman elected to public office in U.S.

Andrea Jenkins is a poet, writer, activist and politician. In 2017, she was elected to the Minneapolis City Council and has served as its vice president since 2018. Jenkins is the first openly trans Black woman to be elected to public office in the U.S.

To learn more about Andrea Jenkins, click [here!](#)



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AUDRE LORDE

Poet and Essayist

Audre Lorde was an American poet and essayist. Her work explored feminism, race, and sexuality, among other topics. Her poems and essays are noted as having substantially contributed to contemporary feminist thought.

To learn more about Audre Lorde, click [here!](#)



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BARBARA GITTINGS

Activist and Mother of the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement

Widely considered the mother of the LGBTQIA+ civil rights movement, Barbara Gittings was an activist who fought for LGBTQIA+ rights before, during, and after the Stonewall Rebellion. Known for her ability to organize and enlist activists, Gittings also organized a march from Greenwich Village to Central Park in 1970 to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Stonewall. This march is considered to be the first New York City Pride Parade.

To learn more about Barbara Gittings, click [here!](#)



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BAYARD RUSTIN

Civil Rights Activist

Bayard Rustin was an openly gay activist during the Civil Rights Movement. He was involved in pacifism and civil rights protests as early as the 1930s, where he combined non-violent resistance tactics with organizational skills. He was arrested multiple times throughout his life due to his activism and openness about his sexuality. Rustin worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

To learn more about Bayard Rustin, click [here!](#)



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BILLIE JEAN KING

Former #1 pro tennis player

Billie Jean King is the former #1 professional tennis player. She is known for being the one of the first prominent female athletes to be open about her sexuality.



To learn more about Billie Jean King, click [here!](#)

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EDITH "EDIE" WINDSOR

Technology pioneer whose landmark Supreme Court case led to overturning same-sex marriage prohibitions in 17 states

Edith "Edie" Windsor was a tech pioneer and LGBTQIA+ activist. She was a senior systems programmer at IBM and founded PC Classics, Inc.

Windsor's U.S. Supreme Court Case--*United States v. Windsor (2013)*--led to the overturning of certain same-sex marriage prohibitions across the nation as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was ruled unconstitutional.

To learn more about Edie Windsor, click [here!](#)



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HARVEY MILK

Activist, One of the first openly gay officials in the U.S.

Milk was an openly gay politician in California during the 1970s. He was elected into San Francisco's Board of Supervisors in 1977, after losing the election numerous times before. Since then, he'd become a large force in the gay community. After being inaugurated in 1978, Milk became one of San Francisco's "first openly gay officer, as well as one of the first openly gay individuals to be elected to office in the United States".

To learn more about Harvey Milk, click [here!](#)



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JAMES BALDWIN

Writer and Activist

James Baldwin was a celebrated essayist, novelist, & playwright. His work typically focused on issues of race, gender, & sexuality. He is also widely known for his social & political activism.

To learn more about James Baldwin, click [here!](#)



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JASON COLLINS

Former professional basketball player

Jason Collins is a former professional basketball player. In 2013, he publicly announced that he is gay, making him the first active male athlete in professional basketball to do so.



To learn more about Jason Collins, click [here!](#)

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JAZZ JENNINGS

YouTube personality, LGBTQ+ rights activist

Jazz Jennings is a teen YouTube personality, LGBTQIA+ rights activist, & honorary co-founder of TransKids Purple Rainbow Foundation. Her television program, "I am Jazz," details her navigation of teen life as a transgender girl.

To learn more about Jazz Jennings, click [here!](#)



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JIM OBERGEFELL

*Activist and Lead plaintiff in Supreme Court case that
legalized same-sex marriage in the U.S.*

Jim Obergefell is an American LGBTQIA+ activist. Following the death of his husband, John Arthur, Obergefell wished to have his name as the surviving spouse on the death certificate. The state of Ohio refused, as it was illegal there. The decision of the subsequent Supreme Court case-- *Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)*--made same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

To learn more about Jim Obergefell, click [here!](#)



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JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS

Activist and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist

Jose Antonio Vargas is an activist, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Emmy-nominated filmmaker, and Tony-nominated producer. His work focuses on immigration, race, and ethnicity. Vargas, himself a DACA recipient, founded Define American, a nonprofit devoted to enabling dialogue about immigration issues.

To learn more about Jose Antonio Vargas, click [here!](#)



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LAVERNE COX

Actress, Equal rights advocate

Laverne Cox is an American actress and LGBTQIA+ rights advocate. She is the first trans woman of color to have a leading role in a popular scripted television drama. Cox is best known for playing Sophia Burset in Netflix's "Orange is the New Black."

To learn more about Laverne Cox, click [here!](#)



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MARSHA P. JOHNSON

Gay liberation activist, Self-identified drag queen

Marsha P. Johnson was an LGBTQIA+ rights activist. Her work and activism created a new chapter in the LGBTQIA+ movement in 1969 during and after the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City. With another activist, Sylvia Rivera, Johnson helped establish a group in 1970 to support homeless transgender youth in New York City, also known as Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). She is remembered as an icon in LGBTQIA+ history, and her legacy is kept alive through a series of books, movies, and other media.

To learn more about Marsha P. Johnson, click [here!](#)



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PHILL WILSON

Founder and former president/CEO of the Black AIDS Institute

Phill Wilson is an LGBTQIA+ activist and advocate for persons living with HIV/AIDS. In 1999, he founded the Black AIDS Institute, the nation's only think tank devoted solely to addressing HIV/AIDS issues in Black communities. Wilson was also the Director of Public Policy for AIDS Project Los Angeles and co-founded the AIDS Prevention Team and the Gay Men of Color HIV Consortium. His work has resulted in wide dissemination of information, trainings, and policy reforms that impact people of color living with HIV.

To learn more about Phill Wilson, click [here!](#)



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RUTH ELLIS

Activist and World's oldest living, "out" lesbian (age 101)

Ruth Ellis was an LGBTQIA+ activist and entrepreneur, and many consider her to have been the world's oldest living, "out" lesbian. The success of her printing business allowed her and her partner to turn their home into the "Gay Spot"--a place where young gays and lesbians could enjoy a safe and welcoming club atmosphere (many were denied access to white gay clubs and Black straight clubs). Ellis passed away in 2000 at the age of 101. Founded in 1999, the Ruth Ellis Center continues her work of sheltering and aiding young LGBTQIA+ people in Detroit.

To learn more about Ruth Ellis, click [here!](#)



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SYLVIA RIVERA

Latin-American Transgender Rights Activist

Sylvia Rivera was an LGBTQIA+ rights activist who took part in the Stonewall Rebellion. She, along with friend Marsha P. Johnson, established Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), a group that supported homeless transgender youth in New York City. Her work after Stonewall focused on helping those who continued to be marginalized after "gay culture" had become mainstream. In 2002, which was the year that she died, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project was established to continue Rivera's work.

To learn more about Sylvia Rivera, click [here!](#)



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TAMMY BALDWIN

Senator from Wisconsin

First openly LGBT woman elected to U.S. Congress

Tammy Baldwin is a U.S. senator from Wisconsin, elected to that position in 2013. In 1999, Baldwin became the first female Congressional representative from Wisconsin, as well as the first openly LGBTQIA+ woman elected to the U.S. Congress, when she was elected to represent Wisconsin's second congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives. She served in this position from 1999 through 2013.

To learn more about Tammy Baldwin, click [here!](#)



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**The views presented here are those of the individuals featured and do not
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