

STONEWALL *Out Loud*

REMEMBERING THE **STONEWALL INN, 1969**

In the early hours of June 28, 1969, eight officers from New York City's public morals squad loaded into four unmarked police cars and headed to the Stonewall Inn at 7th Avenue and Christopher Street. The local precinct had just received a new commanding officer, who kicked off his tenure by initiating a series of raids on gay bars. The Stonewall Inn was an inviting target — operated by the Gambino crime family without a liquor license, the dance bar drew a crowd of drag queens, hustlers, and minors. It was almost precisely at midnight that the morals squad pulled up to the Stonewall Inn, led by Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine.

At the time, the vice squad routinely raided gay bars. Patrons always complied with the police, frightened by the prospect of being identified in the newspaper. But this particular Friday night was different. This time, tired of being harassed by law enforcement, patrons resisted arrest. The subsequent rioting sparked a revolution, and a hidden subculture was transformed into a vibrant political movement. What began with a drag queen clobbering her arresting officer soon escalated into a full-fledged riot, and modern gay activism was born.



Michael Levine recalls his experience at the Stonewall on June 28, 1969, in a StoryCorps story, [“The lights went up, the music went off, and you could hear a pin drop.”](#)

The police started to say, “OK everyone, leave,” and the drag queens, they’re the ones who said to the police, “We’re not leaving.” And they formed a chorus line outside of the bar. And they stood there dancing in the street. They were all Puerto Rican drag queens and Irish cops. It was a funny, funny confrontation. The police would disperse the group and then they would reform half a block away and dance back toward the Stonewall.¹

This night sparked the modern movement for LGBTQ rights that has led to 50 years of activism, visibility, and increased civil rights for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.