

# AGGIE ALLY

*Providing support for the gay,  
lesbian, bisexual and transgender  
community*

*Resource Manual*

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# Ground Rules

- Safe Space
- Parking Lot
- Use “I” terminology
- Right to pass
- Step outside of your comfort zone
- Respect each other’s contributions
- Vegas rule

# About Aggie ALLIES

## History

In 1993, a group of students and staff members in the Texas A&M Division of Student Affairs launched the Aggie ALLIES organization. They realized the need to support the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the university community. The ALLIES committee now includes representatives from the Division of Student Affairs, as well as administrators, faculty, staff and students from A&M's various colleges and units.

## Purpose

The purpose of ALLIES is to provide a safe haven, a listening ear and visible support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people at Texas A&M University.

## Membership

Membership is open to anyone who is willing to provide a supportive environment for GLBT people. To become an Aggie ALLY, potential members should attend ALLIES' diversity workshop, called an Advance. This is a 3-hour, interactive workshop that provides participants a chance to learn about issues affecting the GLBT community. Advance workshops are held at various times throughout the year.

After completing the Advance workshop, participants have the option of signing an ALLIES contract. If participants do choose to sign a contract, they are given an Aggie ALLIES placard to display in their office, on their residence hall door, or wherever they choose. For more information, visit our Web site: [allies.tamu.edu](http://allies.tamu.edu).

Members are encouraged to attend our monthly Continuing Education Workshops and events sponsored by ALLIES and other GLBT community groups. Aggie ALLIES plays an active role in Texas A&M's Coming Out Week in the fall and GLBT Awareness Week in the spring. Activities are announced through the ALLIES Announcement listserv, a low traffic, moderated listserv.

## Governance

ALLIES is an independent committee within the Department of Student Life. Because it is not funded by the university, money for ALLIES' activities is collected through a voluntary dues structure, as well as other fundraising activities. A volunteer committee, comprised of faculty, staff and students, oversees the organization. Spearheaded by a chair, the ALLIES committee includes functional groups, such as publicity, continuing education, advance coordination and membership coordination.

## About this Manual

This manual has evolved throughout ALLIES' history. Individuals contributing time researching information and revising the manual include: Sheri Schmidt (1994), Nancy Tubbs (1999), Jennifer Snyder (2000), Lara Zuehlke (2003), Tracey Forman (2004), Michelle Gardner (2010), Lowell Kane (2010).

# Terminology

**AIDS / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome** – The stage of HIV infection. An HIV positive person is diagnosed with AIDS when their immune system is so weakened that it is no longer able to fight off illness. People with immune deficiency are much more vulnerable to infections such as pneumonia and various forms of cancer. These diseases are called opportunistic infections because they take advantage of the weakened immune system. Ultimately, people do not die from AIDS itself, they die from one or more of these opportunistic infections. It is believed that all people who become HIV+ will eventually have AIDS.

**Ally** – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and genderstraight privilege in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people; an a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social.

**Asexual** – Someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who we are. Asexual people still have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and experience attraction. However, they feel no need to act out that attraction sexually.

**Bicurious** – A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

**Biphobia** – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQQIAAP community, as well as in general society.

**Bisexual** – A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

**Butch** – A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**Coming Out** – May refer to the process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersexed person (to “come out” to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersexed status with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed individuals.

**Cross-dresser** – Someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

**Discrimination** – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individuals acts of hatred of injustice

and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

**Down Low** – See ‘In the Closet.’ Also referred to as ‘D/L.’

**Drag** – The performance of one or multiple gender theatrically.

**Drag King** – A person who performs masculinity theatrically.

**Drag Queen** – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

**Dyke** – Derogatory term referring to a masculine lesbian. Sometimes adopted affirmatively by lesbian (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves.

**Fag** – Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heterosexual.

**Femme** – Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

**FTM / F2M** – Abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

**Gay** – **1.** Term used in some cultural settings to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. **2.** Term used to refer to the LGBTQQAAP community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Binary** – The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender Cues** – what human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

**Gender Identity** – A person’s sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

**Gender Normative / Gender Straight** – A person who either by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society.

**Gender Variant** – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, cross-dresser, etc.).

**Hermaphrodite** – An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (See ‘Intersexed Person’).

**Heteronormativity** – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

**Heterosexism** – Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual

behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinated people because of their sexual orientation.

**Heterosexual Privilege** – Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals and bisexuals. Also, the benefits homosexuals and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.

**HIV / Human Immunodeficiency Virus** – A virus that attacks the immune system (the body's defense against infection). HIV uses healthy white blood cells to replicate itself, breaking down the immune system and leaving the body more susceptible to illness. Without treatment, most people infected with HIV become less able to fight off germs that we are exposed to every day. Someone who has HIV is called "HIV positive" or "HIV+".

**HIV-phobia** – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

**Homophobia** – The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism as well as heterosexism.

**Heterosexual** – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to member of the same sex.

**In the Closet** – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, trans-person or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. (also known as ‘Down Low’ or D/L).

**Institutional Oppression** – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

**Internalized Oppression** – the process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppression group.

**Intersexed Person** – a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has

formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

**Lesbian** – Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and as such is sometimes considered a Eurocentric category that does not necessarily represent the identities of African-Americans and other non-European ethnic groups. This being said, individual female-identified people from diverse ethnic groups, including African-Americans, embrace the term 'lesbian' as an identity label.

**LGBTQQAAP** – A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexed, asexual, ally, and pansexual community.

**Lipstick Lesbian** – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

**Male Lesbian** – A male-bodied person who identifies as a lesbian. This differs from a heterosexual male in that a male lesbian is primarily attracted to other lesbian, bisexual, or queer identified people. May sometimes identify as gender variant, or as a female/woman.

**Metrosexual** – First used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term to refer to an urban, heterosexual male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. This term can be perceived as derogatory because it reinforces stereotypes that all gay men are fashion-conscious and materialistic.

**MTF/ M2F** – Abbreviation from male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

**Oppression** – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

**Outing** – Involuntary disclosure of one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

**Pansexual** – A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

**Passing** – Describes a person's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or race/ethnicity identity or to be seen as heterosexual.

**Polyamory** – Refers to having honest, usual non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a 'primary' relationship or relationships and various "secondary" relationships).



**Prejudice** – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

**Queer** – **1.** An umbrella term which embraces a matrix of sexual orientations, and habits or the not-exclusively- heterosexual-and-monogamous majority. **2.** This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label instead of 'bisexual' as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to, or as a way of stating a non-heterosexual orientation without having to state who they are attracted to. **3.** A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been semantically overturned by members of the maligned group, who use it as a term of defiant pride. 'Queer' is an example of a word undergoing this process. For decades 'queer' was used solely as a derogatory adjective for gays and lesbians, but in the 1980s the term began to be used by gay and lesbian activists as a term of self-identification. Eventually, it came to be used as an umbrella term that included gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold 'queer' to be a hateful insult, and its use by heterosexuals is often considered offensive. Similarly, other reclaimed words are usually offensive to the in-group when used by outsiders, so extreme caution must be taken concerning their use when one is not a member of the group.

**Questioning** – Someone who is questioning their sexual orientation, identity, etc. These individuals may be exploring their feelings or unsure of their own sexuality.

**Same Gender Loving / SGL** – A term sometimes used by members of the African-American / Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990s with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life.

**Sex** – A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into 'male' and 'female', this category does not recognize the existence of intersexed bodies.

**Sex Identity** – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

**Sexual Orientation** – The desire for intimate emotional and/ or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery / SRS** – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's 'sex'. In most stated, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance.

**Sexuality** – A person's exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.

**Stealth** – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as ‘going stealth’ or ‘living in stealth mode’.)

**Stereotype** – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Even positive stereotypes can have a negative impact, however, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

**Stone Butch / Femme** – A person who may or may not desire sexual penetration and/or contact with the genitals or breasts. (See also ‘Butch’ and ‘Femme’).

**Straight** – Another term for heterosexual.

**Straight-Acting** – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men. Straight-acting gay men are often looked down upon in the LGBTQIAAP community for seemingly accessing heterosexual privilege.

**Stud** – An African-American and/of Latina masculine lesbian. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

**Top Surgery** – This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

**Trans** – An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole.

**Transactivism** – The political and social movement to create equality for gender variant persons.

**Transgender** – A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

**Transgendered (Trans) Community** – A loose category of people who transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.

**Trans-Hate** – The irrational hatred of those who are gender variant, usually expressed through violent and often deadly means.

**Transition** – this term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

**Transman** – An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. Also referred to as ‘transguy(s)’.

**Transphobia** – the irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

**Transsexual** – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**Transvestite** – Someone who dresses in clothing generally identified with the opposite gender/sex. While the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘transvestite’ have been used synonymously, they in fact signify two different groups. The majority of transvestites are heterosexual males who derive pleasure from dressing in “women’s clothing”. (*The preferred term is ‘cross-dresser,’ but the term ‘transvestite’ is still used in a positive sense in England.*)

**Transwoman** – An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals to signify that they are women while still affirming their history a males.

**Two-Spirited** – Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term ‘two-spirit’ is usually considered to specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include ‘one-spirit’ and ‘wintke’.

**Ze / Hir** – Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/ and /here,/ they replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively.

Document based on Eli R. Green and Eric N. Peterson’s LGBTQI Terminology. Retrieved from [www.trans-academics.org/lgbttsqiterminology.pdf](http://www.trans-academics.org/lgbttsqiterminology.pdf).

[http://www.lifebeat.org/just\\_the\\_facts.htm](http://www.lifebeat.org/just_the_facts.htm)

[http://www.isna.org/faq/what\\_is\\_intersex](http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex)

Edited by Karla Gonzalez and Lowell Kane, Texas A&M University, 2010.

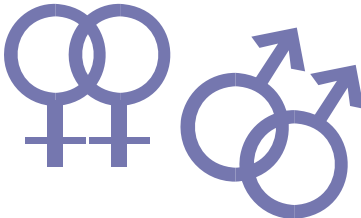
# GLBT Symbols

## Rainbow Flags



Use of the rainbow flag by the gay community began in 1978 when it first appeared in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. Borrowing symbolism from the hippie movement and black civil rights groups, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. Rainbows have since become a symbol representing pride for the GLBT community even though a few stripes have been removed.

## Gender Symbols



Double interlocking male and female symbols have been used by gay men and lesbians since the 1970s. Some feminists have also used the double female symbol to represent the sisterhood of women. Today the symbols might be superimposed to show the common goals of gays and lesbians. Superimposed symbols might also denote a heterosexual aware of the differences and diversity between men and women.

## Bisexual Flag



The bisexual flag was designed in 1998 to create visibility outside of and within the GLBT community. The deep pink represents the possibility of same gender attraction; the royal blue represents the possibility of different gender attraction; the purple represents the possibility of attraction anywhere along the entire gender spectrum.

### Red Ribbon



The AIDS ribbon acknowledges the significant impact AIDS has had on the GLBT community. While AIDS can impact anyone, there is no denying the impression it has left on the community.

### Pink Triangle



In Nazi Germany, Hitler declared all homosexual acts prohibited and any homosexuals caught doing actions outlined, such as kissing, embracing or fantasizing, were sent to death camps and marked with pink triangles. Today, the pink triangle serves as a reminder and a symbol today of persecution and oppression of gays and lesbians.

### Black Triangle



Although lesbians were not included in Hitler's prohibition of homosexuality, this is evidence to indicate that the black triangle was used to designate prisoners with antisocial behavior. Considering that the Nazi idea of womanhood focused on children, kitchen and church, black triangle prisoners may have included lesbians, prostitutes, women who refused to bear children and women with other "antisocial" traits. As the pink triangle is historically a male symbol, the black triangle has similarly been reclaimed by lesbians and feminists as a symbol of pride and solidarity.

### Transgender Triangle



The International Foundation for Gender Education is an educational and charitable organization addressing cross dressing and transgender issues. One of the organizations logos, this symbol combines the lavender color and the pink triangle shape with a ring denoting various genders all fused into one.

# Cycle of Oppression

**Oppression** is perpetuated in our society and is the exercise of authority of power in a cruel and unjust manner. Defining the following terms and showing the link between them explains the momentum that keeps the cycle going.

**Stereotype** is a preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. While often negative, stereotypes may also be complimentary. Even positive stereotypes have a negative impact because they are broad generalizations.

The stereotypes we hold form the basis of our prejudices.



**Prejudice** is a conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

When a person holding the prejudice also has and uses the power to deny opportunities, resources or access to a person because of their group membership, there is discrimination.



**Discrimination** can take many forms including racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, etc.

Many acts of discrimination build up over time, perpetuated against one relatively less powerful social group by a more powerful social group, leading to a group of people being in a state of oppression.



**Oppression** is the systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group of people with access to social power. The result benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

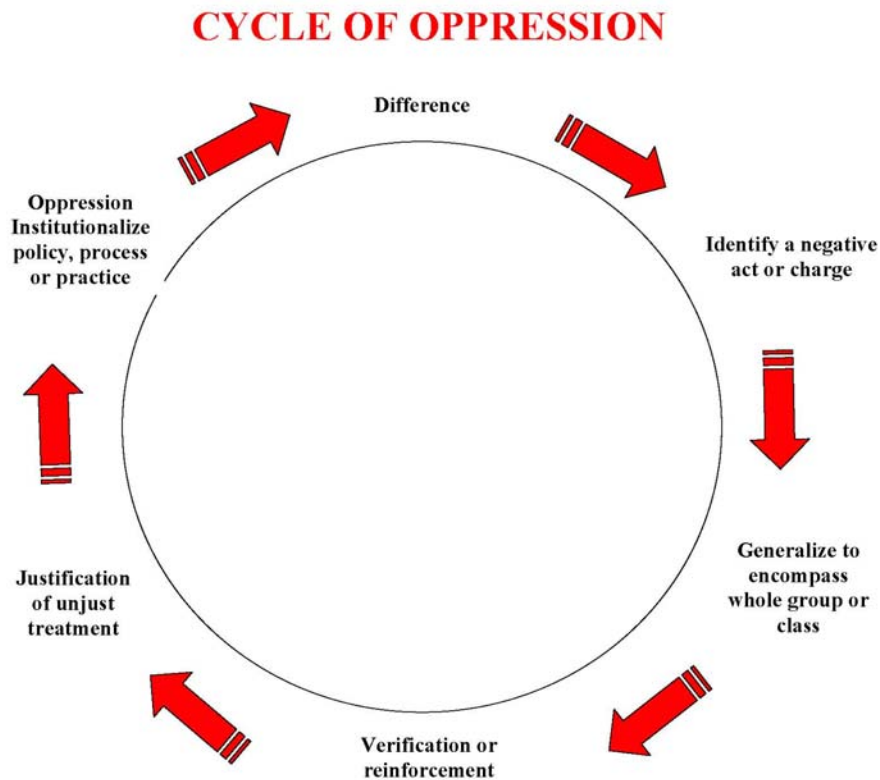
Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often believe the messages and internalize the oppression.



**Internalized Oppression** is the “buying into” the elements of oppression by the target group.

When target group members believe the stereotypes they are taught about themselves they tend to act them out and thus perpetuate the stereotypes. This reinforces the prejudice and keeps the cycle going.

Source: Developed by Sheri Lyn Schmidt, 1994.



How it works...

1. A difference is identified or noticed (race, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, accent, etc.)
2. A negative experience or negative charge occurs
3. This experience is then generalized to encompass the whole group or class
4. The generalization is reinforced by media, friends, family and/or institutions
5. The reinforcement justifies unjust treatment
6. This treatment is then often institutionalized and oppresses the group

# Coming Out

## What is “coming out?”

Coming out (of the closet) refers to the lifelong process of someone developing a positive gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT) identity. Working hard to conceal one’s thoughts and feelings is called “being in the closet.” It’s often a long and difficult struggle, particularly in the initial step – admitting/recognizing to oneself that he/she is GLBT. This is often the most important and difficult aspect of coming out because it involves much soul searching and introspection as well as a healthy sense of self-appreciation and acceptance.

When the person is comfortable, he/she will often disclose his/her orientation to others (family, friends, coworkers, etc.). Yet, coming out to others isn’t easy, as it often involves risks, especially if the other person has, or is perceived to have, homophobic attitudes.

## What might GLBT people be afraid of when coming out?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection (loss of friendships)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Being forced to undergo psychotherapy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing their job                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment/abuse                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical violence                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being disowned by their families | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing their children                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of financial support        | <input type="checkbox"/> Being thrown out of their home        |

## Why come out?

Coming out allows the person to develop as a whole individual, allows for greater empowerment, and is a necessary part of developing a healthy and positive identity. Once “out,” the person is better able to share with others who they are and what is important to them, as well as to develop close and mutually satisfying relationships. Their life becomes more honest and real, and the stress of hiding or keeping a secret and living a double life ends. Isolation and alienation are reduced, allowing for increased interaction with and support from other GLBT individuals.

## A lifelong process

Coming out is not just a one-time event and does not follow a linear course. For example, each time a person meets new people or starts a new job he/she must decide whether it is safe to come out. In addition, a person might be out to some people (i.e., friends) but closeted around others. Each coming out experience is unique as reactions can be positive or negative.



# Coming Out to Families/Friends

Before coming out to their families (particularly parents), GLBT individuals should be fully comfortable with their orientation. While each family is unique, many parents go through a range of emotions upon learning their child is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Below are several questions GLBT individuals should consider prior to coming out to their parents. More coming out resources can be found on the Parents Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) Web site at: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

## **Are you sure about your sexual orientation?**

Don't raise the issue unless you're able to respond with confidence to the question: "Are you sure?" Confusion on your part will increase your parents' and friends' confusion and decrease their confidence in your conclusions.

## **Are you comfortable with your sexuality?**

If you're wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, it would be better to wait to tell your parents and friends. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy and strength on your part; it will require a reserve of positive self-image.

## **Do you have support?**

In the event that your parents and friends' reactions devastate you, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

## **Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?**

Your parents and friends may respond based on information they have received from a homophobic society throughout their lifetime. If you've done some serious reading on the subject, you'll be able to assist them by sharing reliable information and research.

## **What's the emotional climate at home?**

If you have the choice of when to tell family, consider the timing. Choose a time when they're not dealing with such matters as the death of a close friend, pending surgery, or the loss of a job.

## **Can you be patient?**

Your parents and friends will require time to deal with this information if they haven't considered it prior to your sharing. The process may last from six months to two years.

## **What's your motive for coming out now?**

Hopefully, it is because you love them and are uncomfortable with the distance you feel. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

**Do you have available resources?**

Homosexuality is a subject most non-gay people know little about. Have available at least one of the following: a book written for parents or friends, a contact for the local or national P-FLAG chapter, or the name of a non-gay counselor who can fairly deal with the issue.

Source: P-FLAG brochure, "Read This Before Coming Out to Your Parents."  
([www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org))

## *When Someone Comes Out to You*

We live in a society that often discriminates against people who are different. We have all been taught to believe that to be "straight" is to be normal. This can cause a great deal of pain for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people. "Coming out," or disclosing their orientation to others, is an important step in GLBT people's self-acceptance.

Like everyone, GLBT people accept themselves better if others accept them. Someone who is "coming out" feels close enough to you and trusts you sufficiently to be honest and risk losing you as a friend. It is difficult to know what to say and do to be a supportive friend to someone who has "come out" to you. Below are some suggestions you may wish to follow.

- Thank your friend for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that they have a great deal of respect and trust for you.
- Don't judge your friend. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about homosexuality, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think and talk about your beliefs in light of your friend's orientation.
- Respect your friend's confidentiality. They may not be ready to tell others right away and want to tell people in their own way.
- Tell your friend that you still care about them, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that their friends and family will reject them.
- Don't be too serious. Sensitively worded humor may ease the tension you are both probably feeling.
- Ask any questions you may have, but understand that your friend may not have all the answers. You can save some questions for later or, better yet, you can find some of the answers together.
- If your friend has a partner, include them in plans as much as you would with any other friend.
- Be prepared to include your friend in more of your plans. They may have lost the support of other friends and family; your time and friendship will be even more precious to them. This may include "family" times like holidays or special celebrations.

- Offer and be available to support your friend as they “come out” to others.
- Call frequently during the time right after your friend has come out to you. This will let them know you are still friends.
- Be prepared for your friend to have mood swings. Coming out can be very traumatic. Anger and depression are common, especially if friends or family have trouble accepting your friend’s orientation. Don’t take mood swings personally. Be flattered you are close enough to risk sharing any feelings of anger or frustration.
- Do what you have always done together. Your friend probably feels that coming out will change everything in their life, and this is frightening. If you always go to the movies on Friday, then continue that.
- Talk about other GLBT people you know. If your friend knows you have accepted some one else, they will feel more comfortable that you will accept them.
- Learn about the GLBT community. This will allow you to better support your friend and knowing about their world will help prevent you from drifting apart.
- Don’t allow your friend to become isolated. Let them know about organizations and places where they can meet other GLBT people or supportive allies.
- If your friend seems afraid about people knowing, there may be a good reason. People are sometimes attacked violently because they are perceived as GLBT. Sometimes people are discriminated against in such things as housing and employment. If your friend is discriminated against illegally, you can help them in pursuing their rights.
- Don’t worry that your friend may have attractions or feelings for you that you may not share. If they have more or different feelings than you have, these can be worked through. It’s the same as if some- one of the opposite sex had feelings for you that you don’t share. Either way, it’s probably not worth losing a friend over.
- It’s never too late. If someone has come out to you before and you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back and try again.

# Coming Out Issues

## **African Americans and Coming Out**

Coming out can be one of the most challenging events in one's life, but also one of the most rewarding. Being attracted to someone of the same sex or understanding that one's gender identity is different from his/her biological sex can be frightening. Some African Americans feel pressure to prioritize their different identities.

For many African Americans, coming out involves additional cultural factors that make the process more challenging but no less rewarding. Some of those challenges include associations with often homophobic churches, strong family foundations that emphasize heterosexuality, homophobia in the black community and racism in the broader gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Thanks, however, to brave GLBT African American activists and their allies effecting change in the church and the community, there is more support and acceptance than ever before.

## **Latinas/Latinos and Coming Out**

Although Latina/o Americans come from various cultural backgrounds, many who come out as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender share similar experiences and challenges. Some, who were raised Roman Catholic, must reconcile themselves with the church's teachings that to act on one's homosexuality is sinful. Language differences often make finding resources and support difficult, and a lack of GLBT Latinas/os in media and entertainment perpetuates invisibility. Fortunately, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that a growing number of Latinas/os are coming out.

Many GLBT people of color report that after they come out, they are able to communicate better with their family and friends. Coming out at home, at work, in churches and schools will also further the visibility of GLBT people and help ensure that those who are still in the closet know they are not alone.

Source: Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project Web site ([www.hrc.org/ncop](http://www.hrc.org/ncop)).

## **Resources for GLBT People of Color**

The Blackstripe for GLBT people of African Descent ([www.blackstripe.com](http://www.blackstripe.com))

Gay Asian Pacific Alliance ([www.gapa.org](http://www.gapa.org))

LGBT Youth of Color for all people of color ([www.youthresource.com](http://www.youthresource.com))

The National Latino/a GLBT Organization ([www.llego.org](http://www.llego.org))

GLBT South Asians ([www.trikone.org](http://www.trikone.org))

The White Ribbon Campaign Japanese Resources ([www.wrcjp.org/yourself.html](http://www.wrcjp.org/yourself.html))

# Coming Out Research

## Cass Homosexuality Identity Development Model

### *Confusion*

Sees self as member of mainstream group. Denial of inner feelings. (Who am I? Why am I different?)

### *Comparison*

Begin to come out of the “fog.” (Maybe I’m gay. I’m alone. What are gay people like?)

### *Tolerance*

Encounter someone or something that breaks through the denial system. (I accept the possibility that I may be gay. Where are other gay people?)

### *Acceptance*

Exploring subculture activities, readings, etc. (I am gay. Am I okay? I can come out to some people.)

### *Pride*

Feel arrogance/pride in new identity and deep rage toward majority culture. May adopt/heighten stereotypical behaviors or characteristics (i.e. I’m different and proud of it.) May isolate from mainstream values and activities. (I am so proud to be gay. I don’t [and wont] pass for straight.)

### *Synthesis*

Acceptance and integration of new identity. May go through five stages of grief (grief, denial, anger or resentment, bargaining, depression, acceptance) to let go of old identity and all advantages of heterosexual privilege. Internalize pride/positive feelings about identity. Typically is “out” (with friends, family, at work). More at peace with self. (I’m an okay person who happens to be gay.)

## Fassinger Sexual Identity Model

Individual Sexual Identity	Group Membership Identity
<b>Phase 1: Awareness</b>	
<p><b>...of feeling or being different</b></p>	<p><b>...of existence of different sexual orientations in people</b></p>
Self-statement Examples	
<p>Women: "I feel pulled toward women in ways I don't understand."</p>	<p>Women: "I had no idea there were gay people out there."</p>
<p>Men: "I wonder if there is something strange about me."</p>	<p>Men: "I had no idea how many gay people are out there."</p>
<b>Phase 2: Exploration</b>	
<p><b>...of strong/erotic feelings for same-sex people or a particular same-sex person</b></p>	<p><b>...of one's position, re: gay people as a group (both attitudes and membership)</b></p>
Self-statement Examples	
<p>Women: "The way I feel makes me think I'd like to be sexual with a woman."</p>	<p>Women: "Getting to know lesbian/gay people is scary but exciting."</p>
<p>Men: "I want to be closer to men or to a certain man."</p>	<p>Men: "I think a lot about fitting in as a gay man and developing my own gay style."</p>
<b>Phase 3: Deepening/Commitment</b>	
<p><b>...to self-knowledge, self-fulfillment, and crystallization of choices about sexuality</b></p>	<p><b>...to personal involvement with a reference group, with awareness of oppression and consequences of choices</b></p>
Self-statement Examples	
<p>Women: "I clearly feel more intimate sexually and emotionally with women than men."</p>	<p>Women: "Sometimes I have been mistreated because of my lesbianism."</p>
<p>Men: "I might be willing to live with a male lover."</p>	<p>Men: "I get angry at the way heterosexuals talk about and treat lesbians and gays."</p>
<b>Phase 4: Internalization/Synthesis</b>	
<p><b>...of love for same-sex people, sexual choices, into overall identity</b></p>	<p><b>...of identity as a member of a minority group across contexts</b></p>
Self-statement Examples	
<p>Women: "I am deeply fulfilled in my relationships with women."</p>	<p>Women: "I feel comfortable with my lesbianism no matter where I am or who I am with."</p>
<p>Men: "I feel a deep commitment about my love of other men."</p>	<p>Men: "I rely on my gay/lesbian friends for support, but I have some good heterosexual friends as well."</p>

Source: Duke University's "SAFE on Campus Manual"

### Kinsey's Sexual Identity Continuum

There have been a number of reputed studies on homosexuality in recent decades. The most widely discussed material, however, came from the work of Dr. Alfred Kinsey and his associates in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His results have more recently been supported by further research by Masters and Johnson and several other researchers.

The most revealing point from these studies is that there is a broad spectrum of sexual orientation, not just two identities: heterosexual and homosexual. Instead of picturing sexual orientation as an either/or issue, Dr. Kinsey developed a seven-point continuum based on the degree of sexual responsiveness people have for members of the same and opposite sex. The continuum is as follows:

- 0     *Exclusively heterosexual*
- 1     *Predominantly heterosexual, incidentally homosexual*
- 2     *Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual*
- 3     *Equally heterosexual and homosexual*
- 4     *Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual*
- 5     *Predominantly homosexual, incidentally heterosexual*
- 6     *Exclusively homosexual*

#### **Where does your sexual identity lie?**

Kinsey's thought: About 10% of any given population is homosexual.

Dr. Kinsey suggested that it is necessary to consider a variety of activities in assessing an individual's ranking on the continuum:

- Fantasies*
- Thoughts*
- Emotional Feelings*
- Dreams*
- Frequency of sexual activity*

Therefore, many heterosexuals, in fact, would fall somewhere between numbers 0-3 because they occasionally think/dream/fantasize about sexual activities with members of the same-sex and/or occasionally act on these feelings.

Source: Adopted from handout by Jamie Washington, 1990.

# Transgender 101

## Sex, Gender & Bipolarity

In order to understand the difference between someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and someone who is transgender, you need to know the difference between sex and gender. Simply put, sex is polarity of anatomy, gender is polarity of appearance and behavior. As one gains familiarity with transgenderism, these definitions quickly break down, but they serve as a good starting point.

Most people think there are just two sexes, male and female. This is not the case. People who are intersexed and people who are transsexual constitute sexes which are neither exactly male nor exactly female.

Likewise, gender is not a simple case of “either/or.” Gender is exhibited by countless signals, from articles of clothing to cosmetics, hairstyles, conversational styles, body language and much more.

Notice, however, that our gender “norms” are not symmetric. Women have won for themselves the right to a wide range of gender expression. Men have not made a corresponding effort. Most men live within a much narrower range of “acceptable” gender.

Though our culture tends to group characteristics into “masculine” and “feminine,” many people find some amount of gender transgression exciting, so there is some crossover between the two categories. Ultimately, gender is a “mix and match” mode of self-expression, and people within our culture are ever finding new ways to express their gender, with exciting subtleties and intriguing implications.

In general, it works best to think of all effects - sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual identity, and any others - as varying along a continuous spectrum of self-expression, rather than in just one of two or three ways.

## Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity vs. Sexual Identity

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual identity are independent of each other. A person may express any variation of each of these in any combination. To discourage the free expression of identity and orientation by an individual is to impose a damaging burden of conformity.

*Sexual Orientation* is which sex you find romantically/erotically attractive: opposite (hetero), same (homo), or both (bi).

*Gender Identity* is how you see yourself socially: man, woman, neither, or a combination of both. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman, or one may have a vagina but prefer to relate as a man. One might prefer to be fluid,



relating sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. Or one might not identify as either one, relating androgynously.

*Sexual Identity* is how you see yourself physically: male, female, or in between. If someone is born female, but wishes to see their body as male in all respects, their sexual identity is male. It is generally rude to speak of such a person as female, since it denies their right to inhabit the social and physical role of their choosing. We call such a person transsexual, whether or not they have had any surgery.

Many female to male transsexuals do not undergo genital surgery, often because of disappointing results or extreme cost. As surgical technique improves, this may change. Since it is healthier for these people to live in accord with their wishes and heartfelt need, we call them men, though they may have a vagina where one would expect to find a penis.

# Bisexuality

## Myths & Realities of Bisexuality

Sexuality runs along a continuum. It is not a static “thing” but rather has the potential to change throughout one’s lifetime, and varies infinitely among people. We cannot fit our sexuality into nice, neat categories, which determine who and what we are. Bisexuality exists at many points along the sexual continuum.

Bisexuality is the potential to feel attracted (sexually, romantically, emotionally) to and to engage in sensual or sexual relationships with people of either sex. A bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction may vary over time. Self-perception is the key to a bisexual identity. Many people engage in sexual activity with people of both sexes, yet do not identify as bisexual. Likewise, other people engage in sexual relations only with people of one sex, or do not engage in sexual activity at all, yet consider themselves bisexual. There is no behavioral “test” to determine whether or not one is bisexual.

**Myth:** *Bisexuality doesn’t really exist. People who consider themselves bisexual are ongoing through a phase, are confused, undecided or fence sitting. Ultimately, they’ll settle down and realize they’re actually homosexual or heterosexual.*

**Reality:** Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others, a bisexual orientation remains a long-term orientation. For some bisexual people, same-sex attractions were a transitional phase in their coming out as bisexual. Many people may well be confused, living in a society where their sexuality is denied by gays and straight people, alike, but that confusion is a function of oppression. Fence sitting is a misnomer; there is no “fence” between same-sex or heterosexual orientations except in the minds of people who rigidly divide the two.

**Myth:** *Bisexual people are promiscuous hypersexual swingers who are attracted to every woman and man they meet. They cannot be monogamous, nor can they marry or live in traditional committed relationships.*

**Reality:** Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Like lesbian, gay or heterosexual people, some have multiple partners, some have one partner, and some go through periods without any partners. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups.

# Heterosexism

## Heterosexuality in Perspective

**Heterosexism** is the belief/assumption that everyone is heterosexual. And if they aren't, then they should be. Heterosexism is very prevalent in our culture, from TV shows and music videos to everyday conversations at work or school. And if we turn around questions commonly asked of GLBT people, we can see a whole different perspective on sexual orientation.

- What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
- When and where did you first decide that you were a heterosexual?
- Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you might grow out of?
- Is it possible that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
- If you have never slept with someone of the same sex and enjoyed it, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
- To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
- Why do heterosexuals seem so compelled to seduce others into their lifestyles?
- Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
- With so many child molesters being heterosexual, do you feel safe exposing your child to heterosexual teachers?
- Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
- With the menace of overpopulation, could the world survive if everyone were a heterosexual?

Source: Mary Ann Tucker, Ed.D. and Sharon Young, Ph.D., 1982.

### **Heterosexuals have the privilege of:**

- Being free of fear to hold their partner's hand in public.
- Going on a date without fear of physical or verbal harm based solely on their sexual identity.
- Joining a club or organization without fear of being rejected based on their sexual identity.
- Playing varsity sports without fear of being removed from the team because of their sexual identity.
- Being free to take their partner to office functions without fear of discrimination.
- Walking into a bar/club with their partner without fear of being verbally or physically abused.
- Interviewing for jobs without fear of discrimination.
- Obtaining insurance and other benefits for their partner.
- Being a member of the dominant culture but still being able to CHOOSE to be an ally for GLBT people.

# Privileges

**Privileges** are rights or resources that one group has access to and from which other groups are denied. Some examples of privileges include: insurance benefits, adopting or serving as a foster parent, Social Security and other retirement benefits, tax credits, etc. Essentially, there are numerous privileges that are currently denied to GLBT people who are in same-sex relationships.

**Marriage** is one of the most common privileges that heterosexual people enjoy and GLBT are denied. Marriage is a powerful legal and social institution that protects and supports intimate family relationships by providing a unique set of rights, privileges and benefits. In fact, heterosexuals receive more than 1,000 benefits and rights through marriage. Same-sex couples are currently denied the right to legally marry in the United States.

**Civil Unions** confer many of the benefits of marriage to couples who are residents of a state that allows for them. However, these unions are not recognized outside of that state. Years of testimony and a fair and open trial have shown that states have no good reason to continue harsh discrimination in civil marriage. Yet in 1996, the

**Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)** was passed, limiting the federal definition of marriage to a man and a woman; thus, excluding same-sex couples. Many states (including Texas) have passed their own versions of DOMA, further denying same-sex couples the protections and recognition that heterosexual couples receive.

**Domestic Partnerships** are defined as individuals who are in a long-term committed relationship and are responsible for each other's financial and emotional well-being. Employers usually set their own definitions for domestic partner status, when they decide who is eligible for domestic partner benefits. Such definitions frequently require that the partners have lived together for a certain amount of time, are responsible for each other's financial welfare, are at least 18 years old and are mentally competent to enter into a legal contract.

Today, many companies and not-for-profit institutions offer same-sex domestic partner benefits to their employees, which extends insurance and other benefits to the employee's domestic partner. In fact, according to the Human Rights Campaign, there are more than 5,800 employers that offer domestic partner benefits (in 2003).

The state of California offers same-sex couples a **Domestic Partners Registry**. This enables same-sex couples the chance to legally declare their relationship. Although this is not the same as marriage, it does offer couples rights and responsibilities they otherwise wouldn't have. By registering, couples can protect themselves in a time of crisis, protect their children and gives them access to family benefits at work.

*The legal landscape for the issue of marriage and recognized same-sex relationships is an actively changing concept. Interested individuals are encouraged to seek out updated information on this topic.*

Sources: P-FLAG's Web site, "What is marriage anyway?" ([www.pflag.org/education](http://www.pflag.org/education))  
Human Rights Campaign Web site ([www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org))

### **Marriage Privileges**

Because same-sex couples cannot marry, they do not have access to the 1,000+ rights and privileges that heterosexual couples enjoy. Some of those privileges of marriage include:

- Accidental death benefit for the surviving spouse of a government employee
- Appointment as guardian of a minor
- Award of child custody in divorce proceedings
- Beneficial owner status of corporate securities
- Bill of Rights benefits for victims and witnesses
- Burial of service member's dependents
- Certificates of occupation
- Consent to post-mortem examination
- Continuation of rights under existing homestead leases
- Control, division, acquisition, and disposition of community property
- Criminal injuries compensation
- Death benefit for surviving spouse for government employee
- Disclosure of vital statistics records
- Division of property after dissolution of marriage
- Exemption from regulation of condominium sales to owner-occupants
- Funeral leave for government employees
- Homes of totally disable veterans exempt from property taxes
- Income tax deductions, credits, rates exemption, and estimates
- Inheritance of land patents
- Insurance licenses, coverage, eligibility, and benefits organization of mutual benefits
- Legal status with partner's children
- Making, revoking, and objecting to anatomical gifts
- Making partner medical decisions
- Nonresident tuition deferential waiver
- Notice of guardian ad litem proceedings
- Notice of probate proceedings
- Right to file action for nonsupport
- Right to inherit property
- Right to sue for tort and death by wrongful act
- Right to support after divorce
- Right to support from spouse
- Veterans' preference to spouse in public employment
- In vitro fertilization coverage

# Daily Heterosexual Privileges

- I can be pretty sure that my roommate, hallmates and classmates will be comfortable with my sexual orientation and not take issue with being in close proximity to me.
- If I pick up a magazine, watch TV, or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.
- When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.
- I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.
- I did not grow up with games that attack my sexual orientation (i.e. Fag Tag or Smear the Queer)
- I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation.
- I can go home from most meetings, classes and social outings without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
- I am never to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.
- I can be sure that my classes will require curricular materials that testify to the existence of people with my sexual orientation.
- People don't ask why I made my choice of sexual orientation.
- People don't ask why I made my choice to be public about my sexual orientation.
- I do not have to fear revealing my sexual orientation to friends/family. It's assumed.
- My sexual orientation was never associated with a closet.
- People of my gender do not try to convince me to change my sexual orientation.
- I don't have to defend my heterosexuality.
- I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.

- I do not worry that people will harass me because of my sexual orientation.
- I have no need to qualify my straight identity.
- My masculinity/femininity is not challenged because of my sexual orientation.
- I am not identified by my sexual orientation.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.
- Whether I rent or go to the movie theater, I can be sure I will not have trouble finding my sexual orientation represented.
- I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.
- I can choose to not think politically about my sexual orientation.
- I do not have to worry about telling my roommate about my sexuality. It is assumed I am a heterosexual.
- I can remain oblivious of the language and culture of the LGBTQ community without feeling in my own culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can go for months without being call "Straight".
- I'm not grouped because of my sexual orientation.
- My individual behavior does not reflect on people who identify as heterosexual.
- In everyday conversation, the language my friends and I use generally assumes my sexual orientation.
- People do not assume I am experienced in sex (or that I even gave it!) merely because of my sexual orientation.
- I can kiss a person of the opposite sex without being watched and stared at.
- Nobody calls me "straight" with maliciousness.
- People can use terms that describe my sexual orientation and mean positive things (i.e. "straight as an arrow". "standing up straight", or "straightened out") instead of demeaning terms (i.e. "eww that's gay" or "queer").
- I am not asked to think about why I am straight.

- I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job.
- I can, all other things being equal, expect to be able to marry my significant other in the church of my choice and in the state of my choice.
- I can be reasonably sure, if I need prayerful counsel and spiritual guidance in my relationship with my spouse or significant other, that I can find a religious-oriented counselor or literature that will cater to me.
- If I decide to pursue a relationship which turns out badly, I can expect that my friends will only admonish me for a lack of discernment at most - they will not use the failed relationship as evidence of my "brokenness", or use the incident as an opportunity to steer me toward a celibate life, or to change my sexual orientation.
- I can be confident that the loving, nurturing relationship I share with my spouse or significant other will not be likened to incest, pedophilia or bestiality by others.
- If I ask someone for sincere and frank advice about my relationship, I can be certain that they will not advise me to change my sexual orientation.
- If I have been cohabiting or having premarital sex with my significant other, and a Christian friend decides to rebuke us, I can expect that they will, at most, advise us to refrain from sexual contact until we are married - not that we cease our relationship entirely (provided there are no other issues which would make our relationship inadvisable). In any case, their rebuke will not involve a call for us to change our sexual orientation.
- I can hold hands with (or even kiss) my spouse or significant other in a public place without worrying that people will shy their children away from the "display".
- I don't have to worry about being separated or uninvited to an event because of the sex of my spouse or significant other.
- I do not have to worry that the legality of my marriage will be put to a vote - a vote in which the majority of those voting to dissolve that marriage are from the religious community.
- I do not have to fear being fired or being pressured to resign from any business due to the discovery of my sexual orientation.
- I will never feel the need to exclude, isolate, hide, suppress or oppress, a part of who I am within my friendships, family or other social circles—and be encouraged to do so, simply because of my sexuality.
- I can be pro-gay - even vocally so; and while a good number of Christians will not support my pro-gay stance, I can be certain that they will, at most, admonish me to change my opinion; they will not demand that I cease any and all intimate



relationships I may have with any other persons of my sexual orientation.

- I can be reasonably sure that people of my sexual orientation will not call me "a traitor to my kind" for my decision to accept Christ. Furthermore, while I am aware that truly accepting Christ involves sacrifice, some of which could involve estrangement from friends and family (Matthew 10:34-39), I can also be reasonably sure, all other things being equal, that I can find new friends (and possibly a significant other) within the Christian church.

- I can go to any church, knowing nothing of their politics or theology, and not dread that the topic of this week's sermon will be the "evil" or the "problem" of my sexual orientation.

- I will never have to worry about a church admonishing or advising my family to disown or repudiate me simply because of my sexuality.

- I do not fear being pressured into treatment or conversion therapy if I am open about my attraction to members of the opposite sex.

- I do not have to fear that doors will be closed on me by businesses, investments, connections, employment or references based on my sexual orientation.

- I know that, all other things being equal, any acts of violence will not be motivated, even in part, by my sexual orientation.

- I can volunteer for children or youth work without being deemed "unsafe" due to my sexual orientation.

- I can be sure that, while growing up, I can expect to be exposed to positive role models who share my sexual orientation.

- I don't have to worry about my children being taught that their parent's relationship is an abomination. If I am still growing up, I will not learn that my sexual orientation is an abomination.

- All other things being equal, I can be reasonably certain that the quality of my upbringing or the competency of my parents will not be brought into question because of my sexual orientation.

- Growing up, I can expect to receive guidance about healthy sexual expression and relationships.

- All education and advice concerning family planning, upbringing and child-rearing will be specifically (and often deliberately) tailored to my sexual orientation.

- My sexual orientation is not a barrier to my adopting children through an adoption agency, or fostering children.

- Should I divorce or be separated from my spouse or significant other, and that person should later decide that they wish to change their sexual orientation, or discover that they should have been living as a person of the wrong sexual orientation all along, society will likely be more sympathetic to my case, should the custody of our children become an issue, regardless of my abilities as a parent.

- I can be sure that no Christian church of any denomination will immediately reject me for my sexual orientation.

- Any time I sin (sexually or otherwise), my sin will not be automatically attributed to my sexual orientation.

- I can probably find favorable reviews in many Christian book, film or theatre reviews of books, films or shows featuring intimate, loving relationships between two people of my sexual orientation.

- I do not, if I choose not to, have to be familiar with various biblical interpretations of my sexual orientation, nor will I be expected to justify and reconcile my beliefs with my sexual orientation through biblical exegesis.

- I have the luxury of choosing which denomination I will belong to or which church I will attend based on their doctrinal stance, missionary or charity work, fellowship programs and statement of faith; I am not restricted in my choices based on whether or not the church affirms my sexual orientation.

- If part of my faith involves the belief that same-sex relationships are sinful, then I can openly call all gay Christians to live celibate lives in order to avoid sexual sin - indeed, a vow of celibacy is understood as potentially beneficial in almost all Christian traditions, in certain contexts (Matthew 19:10-12, 1 Corinthians 7:25-35); however, I am under no such compulsion to live a celibate life myself. For me, living a chaste life does not necessarily mean living a celibate life.

- I don't have to worry about being segregated from others of my gender at Christian events or conferences because my sexuality is known.

# Homophobia

**Homophobia** is the irrational fear and/or hatred of GLBT people because these individuals do not conform to traditional sex-role stereotypes. Homophobia can take many forms. Some homophobic people may be subtle in their language and actions, whereas others are overtly hateful and mean. Extreme homophobia can lead to hate crimes and other malicious, hurtful acts against GLBT people. Of GLBT students, 83.2% report being verbally harassed and 42% report being physically harassed. GLBT youth are four times more likely to commit suicide than their straight peers.

## ***Riddle Scale of Homophobia***

### *Homophobic Levels of Attitude*

*Repulsion*- Homosexuality is seen as a crime against nature. Gays/Lesbians are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them; prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy.

*Pity*- Heterosexual chauvinism; Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming “straight” should be reinforced, and those who seem to be born that way should be pitied.

*Tolerance*- Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people grow out of. Thus, gays/lesbians are less mature than heterosexuals and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Gays and lesbians should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.

*Acceptance*- Still implies there is something to accept. Characterized by such statements as “you’re not a lesbian, you’re a person” or “what you do is your own business” or “it’s fine with me, just don’t flaunt it.”

### *Positive Levels of Attitude*

*Support*- Work to safeguard the rights of lesbians and gays. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves but they are aware of the homophobic climate and irrational fears.

*Admiration*- Acknowledges that being gay/lesbian in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values and behaviors.

*Appreciation*- Value the diversity of people and see gays/lesbians as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.

*Nurturance*- Assumes that gay/lesbian people are indispensable in our society. They view gays/lesbians with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be allies and advocates.

Source: Wall, V. (1995). “Beyond Tolerance: Gays, lesbians and bisexuals on campus.” American College Personnel Association.

# Homophobia and You

- Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
- Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
- Homophobia is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals: those perceived or labeled by others to be gay, lesbian or bisexual; children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents; parents of gay, lesbian or bisexual children; and friends of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals.
- Homophobia compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- Homophobia, combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of gay, lesbian, or bisexual lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussion, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
- Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chance of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are “normal.”
- Homophobia prevents some gay, lesbian and bisexual people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and often times trauma on themselves, as well as on their heterosexual spouses and their children.
- Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

## **How to Report Incidents of Bias at Texas A&M University**

Members of the TAMU community who have experienced any form of harassment/bias/assault because of their sexual orientation or because they support GLBT people (i.e. through Aggie ALLIES) can report incidents at:

1. Contact the GLBT Resource Center through their website ([gibt.tamu.edu](http://gibt.tamu.edu)), in person (Cain Hall C-118) or by calling (979-862-8920).
2. You may report the incident anonymously or if you wish to have the incident investigated, you must give your name. Report form at: <http://stophate.tamu.edu>
3. You will not be contacted unless you request follow-up. Please note, however, that sharing identifying information related to incidents of sexual harassment may require intervention.

Note: If you would like to talk to someone before reporting an incident, please contact the Coordinator of the GLBT Resource Center at 979-862-8920. Other confidential support services can be found through Student Counseling Service at 979-845-4427 or through the 24-hour helpline at 979-845-2700

# What the Bible says

Taken from "What Does the Christian Bible Say?" by Frank Jernigan, GLBSB Newsletter, 3-4 (1992).

## On the Defense

**Leviticus 18:22** - "Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination." There is a similar reference repeated in Lev. 20:13.) Both references probably pertain to temple prostitution and idolatry. They are no longer under the law. If this law is still in effect, all the other laws described in Leviticus would also be in effect (the requirement for circumcision, prohibitions against eating pork and shellfish, etc.) Ask [yourself] how many people follow those rules. Leviticus is the only apparently explicit reference to homosexuality in the Old Testament.

**Genesis 19:4-9** - The story of Sodom leading up to the city's destruction became the basis of the belief that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality (hence the term "sodomite"). The offense described in this passage is not homosexual behavior, but rather the mistreatment of strangers and rape.

**Ezekial 16:49-50 (NIV)** says "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me."

**What Jesus had to say about homosexuality** - Nothing

**What Paul had to say about homosexuals** - The word translated as "homosexual" in modern verses of the Bible ("effeminate" in the King James version) is much disputed and probably means male temple prostitute. It would be difficult to deny that Paul was your basic homophobe, as most explicitly revealed in Romans 1:26-27 ("Because of this [practice of idolatry], God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.")

He goes on to describe these same people as being "filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful..." In fact, every person is included here in one category or another, including all born-again Christians. This is merely the beginning of Paul's premise that "There is no one righteous, not even one," which he follows with the explanation that salvation cannot come by our own efforts, but only through the grace of God.

## On the Offense

**Old Testament** - A prominently recurring theme is that God is on the side of the oppressed (Psalm 103:6 - "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed." Psalm 82:3 - "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.") There are many others.

"Do not mistreat an alien [stranger, misfit, or queer] or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt." This is one of the most repeated commandments in the Old Testament. Exodus 22:21,23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 24:17, and over thirty similar verses in the rest of the Old Testament. Compare the number of verses proscribing homosexual acts (two, if any) and the number of verses proscribing mistreatment of queers (over thirty). Which do you think God is more concerned about?

**New Testament** - Which of the following is closer to a statement of the "gospel," the "good news" that Christ commissioned his followers to tell the world:

A. God, the unrelenting avenger of sin, is coming to seek out all people unworthy of eternal life to throw them in the fires of Hell for eternal torment. Therefore, you better try to understand every requirement of God (both do's and don'ts) and try as hard as you can to live according to them, in the almost impossible hope that you won't be among the condemned.

B. God, who is love, unbounded and unconditional, has completed in Christ whatever was necessary (for whatever reason it was necessary) to reunite all people with God. By experiencing, i.e., receiving, trusting in, contemplating the reality of this divine acceptance, we can grow in our ability to feel and express this kind of love for other people.

A prominently recurring theme, God's unconditional love, is found in the following passages:

**Romans 8:38** - "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**I John 3:1** - "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

**I John 4:7-12** - "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. [My, how inclusive!] Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." [Is it even remotely conceivable that such love would exclude people on the basis of their sexual orientation???].

**Romans 8:31** - "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

# Becoming an Ally

To be an effective ally, it is important for people to reflect upon and understand their own beliefs and attitudes about the GLBT community. There are four basic levels of becoming an ally:

**Awareness:** Explore how you are different from and similar to GLBT people. Gain this awareness through talking with GLBT people, attending workshops (such as the Aggie ALLIES' Advance) and self-examination.

**Knowledge/Education:** Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect GLBT people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of GLBT people.

**Skills:** This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and learn to communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.

**Action:** This is the most important and frightening step. Despite any potential fears you may have, action is the only way to effect change in the society as a whole.

*Things to keep in mind about becoming an ally:*

- Have a good understanding of sexual orientation and be comfortable with your own.
- Be aware of the coming out process and realize that it is not a one-time event. The coming out process is unique to GLBT people and brings challenges that are often not understood by those who are non-GLBT.
- Understand that GLBT people receive the same messages about homosexuality and bisexuality as everyone else. Thus, they often suffer from internalized homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to recognize the risks of coming out and also to challenge some of the internal oppression.
- Remember that GLBT people are also a diverse group. Each community within the larger gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community has unique needs, goals and beliefs.
- A discussion about heterosexism and homophobia quite often includes the topic of HIV and AIDS. Although we recognize that all people are at risk, the reality is that many victims of this dreaded disease have been members of the GLBT community. Knowledge and understanding in this area is a key to help eliminate myths and be supportive of those who have lost friends and loved ones.

# Benefits of Becoming an Ally

## What an Ally does:

- Uses appropriate language. Learns new terms as language and terminology evolve.
- Confronts inappropriate language and behaviors.
- Supports activities, policies, etc. that address LGBTQ concerns.
- Supports other Allies.
- Builds relationships with other oppressed groups.
- Regards people who are LGBTQ as whole human beings.
- Takes responsibility for equalizing power.
- Asks questions.
- Appreciates the risk people who are LGBTQ take in coming out.
- Appreciates the efforts of people who are LGBTQ to point out the mistakes an Ally might make.
- Takes risks.
- Educates self on LGBTQ cultures, homophobia, and heterosexism.
- Begins to educate others about LGBTQ cultures, homophobia, and heterosexism.
- Actively participate and identify homophobic & heterosexist institutional practices or individual actions and works to change them.
- Addresses people who are LGBTQA and not their behavior.
- Continues to work on their level of acceptance.
- Acknowledge the risks in our society faced by people who are LGBTQA.
- Supports changes in others.
- Values friendships.
- Becomes knowledgeable on issues which often concern people who are LGBTQA.
- Seeks to act 100% as an Ally – no strings attached.
- Openly and honestly expresses their feelings.

## Displaying an Aggie ALLY Placard Means

- I am an ALLY who supports GLBT people, and I am courageous.
- I can make a difference in the lives of GLBT members of the campus community.
- I am a “safe person” to whom someone who is GLBT can freely talk without fear of harassment or discrimination. This means I am committed to providing support and to maintaining confidentiality.
- I will work to confront homophobia and heterosexism by demonstrating my support of people in various ways, such as speaking up when a homophobic joke is told, planning awareness activities, or just being there.
- I will work to create a positive environment for ALL people. Even though I may be an ALLY for the GLBT community, my actions mean little if I simultaneously put down



other groups on the basis of their race, culture, religion, gender, social status, or physical and mental abilities.

■ I do not have all the answers, but I can provide resources to others and will continue learning about the issues faced by GLBT people.

### **Qualities of an Ally:**

- Has worked to develop an understanding of homosexuality/bisexuality and the needs of people who are LGBTQ.
- Chooses to align with people who are LGBTQ and respond to their needs.
- Believes that it is in his/her self-interest to be an ally.
- Is committed to the personal growth required.
- Is quick to take pride and appreciate success.
- Expects support from other allies.
- Able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have operated in their own lives.
- Expects to make some mistakes, but does not use this as an excuse for non-action.
- Knows that each person in an ally relationship has a clear responsibility for personal change, whether or not persons on the each side choose to respond.
- Knows that in the most empowered Ally relationships, the persons in the non-LGBTQ role help initiate change towards personal, institutional, and societal justice and equality.
- Knows that he/she is responsible for humanizing or empowering their role in society, particularly as their roles relates to responding to people who are LGBTQ.
- Promotes a sense of community with LGBTQ communities and teaches others about the importance of outreach.
- Has a good sense of humor.
- Does not force his/her help on people who are LGBTQ.
- Assesses her/his own values about equality and how people should be treated.
- Is patient.
- Is willing to dismantle heterosexism and homophobia, even if it means giving up certain comforts, privileges, unearned advantages, etc.
- Supports people who are LGBTQ with time and space and not just words.
- Shows people who are LGBTQ support that is available, whether they choose to use it or not.

# Coming Out as an Ally

## Coming Out as Straight Allies

When GLBT people acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity to themselves or another, it is known as “coming out.” Coming out also applies to our straight allies as they acknowledge that they know and support a GLBT person and then take the next step by coming out about it to others. Some make a conscious decision to come out to others, and some experience a defining moment that spurs them to speak out. Other straight allies may not even know gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people but are motivated by the injustice and discrimination they face.

## “Guilt by Association”

Some people find that coming out to others as the friend or family member of someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is intimidating – not unlike how some GLBT people feel when coming out. Other heterosexuals hesitate to come out due to the idea that if you are outspoken about GLBT issues or people, you must be one yourself.

## Parents as Allies

It has been said that when gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender children come out, their parents go in the closet. Part of this angst is borne from the misconception that having a GLBT child means that the parents must have done something wrong in how they raised the child. One way parents can overcome some of their negative feelings is by educating themselves about the issues and talking with other parents of GLBT children. Through groups such as Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) parents are able to realize that they aren’t the only ones and can move from reacting to the news to acting on behalf of their child.

Most parents, once they are more comfortable with their gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender child, take their next step and come out to others. It may be when a family friend innocently asks when a son or daughter is “finally going to get married,” or when a relative tells an anti-gay joke at the family reunion. Some parents stop their journey once they have come out to family, while others come out to everyone possible.

## Why Come Out as an Ally?

Coming out as a straight ally may be an extremely challenging experience, but many find that it is unexpectedly rewarding. Some may think that advocating on behalf of GLBT equality is solely the responsibility of those who are affected by the inequality.

Like GLBT people, straight allies will find that coming out is not a one-time event, but rather a lifelong journey. For more resources on being a straight ally, visit: [www.hrc.org/ncop/straightallies](http://www.hrc.org/ncop/straightallies).

# How Allies Can Help

Allies play a crucial role in the lives of GLBT people. Here are a few things you can do to help support the GLBT community:

- Remember that not everyone is heterosexual/straight.
- Use inclusive language. Use “partner,” or other gender-neutral terms, instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” when talking to others.
- Stress that everything brought to you is confidential.
- Confront homophobic and anti-gay jokes and comments.
- If you are unable to remain impartial, refer a GLBT person to another resource or person who can help them.
- If someone comes out to you, respond with warmth and friendship. Remember that coming out to someone can be very difficult for GLBT people, so be honored that he/she chose you to tell.
- Refresh yourself on your institution’s nondiscrimination policy.
- Participate in Texas A&M’s Coming Out Week (each fall) and GLBT Awareness Week (each spring).
- Participate in an Aggie ALLIES Advance workshop and display your ALLY placard in your residence hall or office.
- Familiarize yourself with campus and community resources. Refer people to those resources as necessary.
- Continue educating yourself about GLBT issues by attending Aggie ALLIES’ Continuing Education presentations and reading magazines, newspapers and books.

Source: Adapted from “Thirteen Things You Can Do” by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance at Iowa State University.

# How to be an Ally

- *Know Thyself* – Be aware of what your own thoughts and ideas are on GLBT issues. Decide where you stand, and if you can be supportive regarding all facets of GLBT issues. If you have not thought seriously about the issues, you can not...
- *Role Model* – Your students need to know what to say, what to do, and how to do it when it comes to creating an inclusive environment for GLBT students. Be vocal about your support of the community, and let your students know why you feel that way. This way, you can...
- *Confront Homophobia* – Many heterosexual students harbor a great deal of fear and mythology about their GLBT peers. When you become aware of homophobic acts/discussions, confront them. When the opportunity arises to discuss GLBT issues, do not shy away from it. In this way, you will help to...
- *Combat Heterosexism* – So often, students assume that everyone they know is heterosexual. That is rarely true. However, in only safe environments do members of the GLBT community feel comfortable “coming out.” Whenever you see that students are assuming heterosexuality, work to address it, because using inclusive language is a first step to creating a safe environment. Know that heterosexism is connected to all other forms of...
- *Oppression* – Appreciating diversity within your organization usually starts with a conversation about how the members are all the same, and then how the members are all different. How does your group reach out to those who are different from them racially, economically, culturally, etc? Is there any attempt? If not...
- *Do Something* – Do not be immobilized by the fear of doing something “wrong” in regards to discussing GLBT issues. The more mistakes you make, the more you and your students will learn. Start by seeing what resources are available. From there, do what you can to make everyone feel more connected. Most importantly...

Do not wait for a GLBT student to come out to your group to begin discussing these issues. Take the responsibility to start the discussion now.

# GLBT Timeline

This is a collection of some of the major happenings in the GLBT community during the 20th century through today. Please note this is not a comprehensive list.

**1913** Alfred Redl, head of Austrian Intelligence, committed suicide after being identified as a Russian double agent and a homosexual. His widely-published arrest gave birth to the notion that homosexuals are security risks.

**1919** Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexology in Berlin. One of the primary focuses of this institute was civil rights for women and gay people.

**1933** On January 30, Adolf Hitler banned the gay press in Germany. In that same year, Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexology was raided and over 12,000 books, periodicals, works of art and other materials were burned. Many of these items were completely irreplaceable.

**1934** Gay people were beginning to be rounded up from German-occupied countries and sent to concentration camps. Just as Jews were made to wear the Star of David on the prison uniforms, gay people were required to wear a pink triangle.

**1947** The first U.S. lesbian magazine, *Vice-Versa*, was published.

**1948** The Kinsey Report surprised almost everyone with its findings that 4% of men identified themselves as exclusively homosexual while 37% had sexual relations with other men in their adult lives.

**1951** The Mattachine Society was founded to help homosexuals realize their collective histories and experiences. The Mattachine Society is often considered the beginning of the contemporary organized gay rights movement in the U.S. The name Mattachine was derived from medieval French history and referred to jesters who always wore masks in public.

**1955** The Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization, was founded to promote a sense of community, belonging, and political unity for women. The name Daughters of Bilitis was taken from the poem, "Songs of Bilitis," by Pierre Louys.

**1957** The Kinsey Report revealed that 10% of the male population is predominantly homosexual.

**1961** Illinois became the first state to decriminalize homosexual acts.

**1969** In June, the Stonewall Riots in New York City's Greenwich Village marked the beginning of major resistance by gay men and lesbians to discrimination. Police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay pub, and were caught off guard by the amount of resistance levied by patrons. The police barricaded themselves inside the Inn to protect themselves from the patrons, who were throwing bricks and bottles. This was the first substantial resistance to harassment that gay men and lesbians had put forward.

**1970** In the summer about 200 Chicagoans took to the streets of their city with signs carrying simple messages such as "I am Gay," "Gay is as Good as Straight," and "I Exist!"

**1978** On November 27, Harvey Milk, an openly gay city council member and San Francisco's Mayor George Moscone were murdered. In 1979, the convicted murderer Dan White, received a verdict of voluntary manslaughter and a sentence of 7-8 years.

This caused massive protests throughout the country as gay men and lesbians saw this as yet another blatant example of discrimination.

**1979** On May 31, the California Supreme Court made a landmark decision that public utility companies may not arbitrarily refuse to hire homosexuals, nor can they interfere with employee involvement in gay organizations.

**1979** On October 14, the first National March on Washington D.C. attracted over 100,000 people.

**1981** Wisconsin became the first state to pass state-wide gay rights legislation.

**1982** The first International Gay Games were held in San Francisco. Over 1,300 gay men and lesbian athletes from 28 states and 10 nations participated.

**1984** The *Wall Street Journal* changed its editorial policy and now permitted the use of the word “gay” as an alternative to homosexual in the news. Previously the newspaper only used gay in quotes. *The New York Times* and Associated Press still banned the word gay except when meaning “happy” or when in quotes.

**1984** Charles Howard, a 23-year-old gay man was walking home from church on July 7, when he was attacked by three teenagers. They kicked and beat him and threw him in a stream where he drowned. The boys bragged to their friends and were arrested. They were convicted on the charge of manslaughter, a crime that legally implies that they did not act in malice.

**1986** The Reagan Administration Budget Director James Miller stated that the treatment and care of persons with AIDS was a state and local concern – not a federal one.

**1987** On October 11, the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights drew over 500,000 people making it the largest civil rights demonstration in U.S. history. This date became National Coming Out Day.

**1987** The NAMES Project unveiled the AIDS Memorial Quilt on the Capitol Mall in Washington, D.C. At that time, the Quilt covered the area of two football fields.

**1988** The 10th Annual National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays conference took place.

**1988** The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, New Jersey became the first church in the country to support ministers and congregations who condoned and blessed relationships between gay and lesbian couples.

**1990** The Hate Crime Statistics Bill passed through Congress in February. Previous legislation required the collection of data on crimes motivated by racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice. This new law also required that data be collected on crimes motivated by prejudice against people of differing sexual orientations.

**1990** At the 101st Annual Conference of American Rabbis, it was decided that gay men and lesbians would be accepted as rabbis. The resolution states that “...All Rabbis, regardless of their sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen.”

**1992** On October 11, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was unfolded in its entirety, representing 22,000 people, on the Capitol Mall. Today, it's too large to be displayed in its entirety in any one place.

**1992** The University of Iowa extended its health benefits to the domestic partners of lesbian and gay employees. The University of Chicago soon followed suit.

**1992** Canada joined the vast majority of other NATO countries permitting military service by lesbians and gay men.

**1992** Bill Clinton, the 41st President of the United States, was the first President to recognize gay and lesbian civil rights as a serious and important national issue. He also appointed open gays and lesbians to government positions.

**1993** The first large study of female sexual orientation found that there was a strong genetic component to homosexuality and heterosexuality, as reported by researchers at Boston University and Northwestern University.

**1993** By a narrow margin, voters in San Francisco rejected a city-wide partnership ordinance that would grant legal recognition to the relationships of gay men and lesbians.

**1993** The Grammy Awards featured several openly gay and lesbian musicians including k.d. Lang, Elton John, the B-52's, Fred Schneider, Keith Strickland, and the late lyricist Howard Ashman ("Beauty and the Beast").

**1994** The first-ever school district-sanctioned gay youth prom is held in Los Angeles.

**1995** Coors Brewing Company and Walt Disney Company announce they will offer health benefits to domestic partners of their gay employees. Allstate Insurance changes its policies to offer joint coverage to same-gender homeowner couples.

**1996** The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, narrowly fails in the U.S. Senate in a vote of 50-49. It is the first time a vote on lesbian and gay civil rights has ever been before the full Senate.

**1996** President Bill Clinton signs the Federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), denying same-sex couples to the right to have their unions/partnerships recognized by the federal government.

**1997** Ellen DeGeneres comes out in her U.S. television comedy show.

**1997** Virginia court permits lesbian adoption.

**1998** Maine rescinds gay non-discrimination statute.

**1998** Mathew Shepard brings hate crimes against gays to the forefront of news. The 21-year-old gay college student in Wyoming was beaten, tied to a fence, and left to die.

**1999** Bills in Maryland (for the second year and it failed again) and Rhode Island were introduced to legalize same-sex marriage.

**1999** Billy Jack Gaither was murdered because of his sexuality on February 19, sparking more controversy about hate crimes against gays.

**1999** Actress Hillary Swank receives an Academy Award for her portrayal of Brandon Teena in "Boys Don't Cry." Brandon was a female to male transsexual who was murdered in 1993.

**2000** The Vermont bill to give legal recognition to same-sex unions took another step forward March 6 when a legislative committee narrowly approved the proposal.

**2000** Suspects in the Billy Jack Gaither and Matthew Shepard cases were found guilty and given life sentences in prison for the murders.

**2000** Fifteen-year-old Anthony Colin wins a court battle in California after being denied the formation of a Gay Student Alliance group in his high school.

**2000** For the first time, the U.S. census attempts to estimate the number of same-sex ("unmarried partners") households.

**2001** A federal judge upholds Florida's ban on adoptions by gays and lesbians.

**2001** Rev. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson blame gays and lesbians among other groups for contributing to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

**2001** In San Francisco, Diane Whippel dies after being mauled by two dogs outside the apartment that she shared with her partner, Sharon Smith. The dogs belonged to Whippel's next door neighbors, who did not try to prevent or stop the attack. Smith filed a wrongful-death suit against the neighbors, in part to hold them accountable for their actions but also to challenge California law, which said same-sex partners have no legal standing to file such suits. Both Knoller and Noel were convicted for murder.

**2002** Comedian and actress Rosie O'Donnell publicly comes out in a television interview.

**2002** Finland grants same-sex couples the same legal rights as heterosexual couples.

**2002** A Philadelphia court struck down a 1998 ordinance that recognized city employees' "life partnerships," claiming the ordinance "unsurped" the power of the state to regulate marriage.

**2002** The Ohio Supreme Court ruled a same-sex couple can adopt a last name they created for themselves, reversing the lower court's decision.

**2003** Texas Gov. Rick Perry signs the state's version of the Defense of Marriage Act, denying same-sex couples the right to marry or receive any benefits of marriage.

**2003** Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn) compares homosexuality to polygamy, incest and adultery when commenting on the sodomy case being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

**2003** The U.S. Supreme Court overturns the Texas sodomy law in a highly publicized case (*Lawrence, et al vs. Texas*). The Court determined the law was unconstitutional based on infringement of citizens' privacy in their home.

**2003** CNBC host Michael Savage is fired after making homophobic remarks to a man who called into his television show.

**2003** Canada allows same-sex couples the right to marry.

**2003** Rev. Gene Robinson becomes the first openly gay man to be confirmed a bishop in the Episcopal Church USA.

**2004** Same-sex marriages are conducted in various cities across the United States and as a result the topic is under high debate throughout the country



# GLBT History at Texas A&M

**1952** An article in the *Bryan Daily Eagle*, May 12, 1952, indicates that seven (unnamed) students were suspended by President M. T. Harrington after a thorough investigation of rumors of homosexuality on campus.

**1976** Three A&M students file an application to form Gay Student Services (GSS). The application is denied on the grounds that GSS would not be “consistent with the philosophy and goals...of Texas A&M University.”

**1977** GSS files a lawsuit against Texas A&M for recognition as an official university student organization.

**1981** After several legal delays (which almost took the case to the Supreme Court in 1980), Gay Student Services’ suit was heard in Judge Ross Sterling’s District Court.

**1982** Judge Sterling ruled in favor of Texas A&M in the Gay Student Services (GSS) recognition case, citing that GSS was a “social group” similar to fraternities and sororities, which A&M does not recognize. This reasoning was surprising, since A&M had not maintained that GSS was a social organization and GSS filed for recognition as a service organization.

**1984** The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals rules unanimously that A&M’s reasons for rejecting GSS’ application were not sufficient to deny students their first amendment rights. The Board of Regents won’t accept a decision against A&M. The university appeals the circuit court’s decision. Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox withdraws state support for the appeal, requiring Texas A&M to raise funding from alumni and other outside sources.

**1984** Texas A&M’s Board of Regents, using alumni donations and private lawyers, files an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court against the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling in the GSS case.

**1985** The Supreme Court denied *certiorari* (refused to hear) Texas A&M’s appeal of the Gay Student Services recognition case, thus allowing the 5th circuit decision to stand.

**1985** Gay Student Services (GSS) is quietly, but officially, recognized by Texas A&M.

**1986** GSS organizes “Pink Panther Patrols” to keep anti-gay students from tearing down GSS flyers from campus message boards and kiosks, catching a few people in the act.

**1988** Texas A&M establishes a Women’s Studies Program.

**1990** After much heated debate in 1989, Gay Student Services changes its name to Gay and Lesbian Student Services (GLSS).

**1991** Paul Broussard, 27, a gay banker and former A&M student, is beaten and stabbed to death in the Montrose district of Houston by 10 students from what was then McCullough High School in The Woodlands, Texas. The kids were looking for gays to harass.

**1993** The English Department offers the first Gay and Lesbian Literature course.

**1993** Aggie ALLIES is formed by faculty and staff in the Division of Student Affairs.

**1993** GLSS members change the group’s name to Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Aggies (GLBA).

**1997** The office of Gender Issues Education Services (GIES) is formed in the

Department of Student Life with a portion of the office mission focused on supporting GLBT students.

**1998** GLBA members vote to change the group's name to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Aggies (GLBTA).

**1999** A&M President Ray Bowen chose not to approve a recommended change to the University Student Rules, which had been supported by the Faculty Senate, Graduate Student Council, and Student Senate. The change would have added sexual orientation to the Students' Rights section of the university's student rules. The decision was protested by A&M students.

**2000** A&M adopts a more inclusive statement on harassment and discrimination.

**2000** The GLBT Professional Network is formed to support faculty, staff and graduate students.

**2001** Judy Shephard, mother of Matthew Shephard (the gay college student who was murdered in 1998) speaks to the A&M community during GLBT Awareness Week.

**2003** Aggie ALLIES membership exceeds 500 members.

**2004** GIES moves from under Student Life to the Vice President for Institutional Assessment and Diversity and begins working with faculty & staff needs in addition to students.

**2004** Gender Issues Education Services becomes Women's and Gender Equity Resource Center

**2007** Women's and Gender Equity Resource Center divided into Women's Resource Center and Gender Issues Education Center in the Division of Student Affairs

**2007** Cleve Jones, founder of the AIDS Memorial Quilt speaks at Texas A&M

**2008** Gender Issues Education Center renamed Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Resource Center

**2009** Phyllis Frye Advocacy award is created to honor those who have shown leadership in the advancement of GLBT civil rights

**2009** GLBT Resource Center brings Judy Shepard to Texas A&M

**2010** Recognized Student Organization GLBTA along with the GLBT Resource Center, Aggie Allies, and the GLBT Professional Network host the **"It's Time" Conference** at Texas A&M celebrating 25 years of GLBT Recognition!

**2010** Lt. Dan Choi speaks at Texas A&M University for GLBT Awareness Week

**2010** No H8 Campaign is brought to Texas A&M where students, faculty and staff can have their photo taken to show that Hate is NOT an Aggie Value

# GLBT Resources

## **Aggie ALLIES**

<http://allies.tamu.edu> | [allies@tamu.edu](mailto:allies@tamu.edu)

Approximately 800 faculty, staff and student members that help create a safe zone for GLBT people \* Provides education and resources about GLBT issues

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center**

<http://glt.tamu.edu> | 979.862.8920 | [glt@tamu.edu](mailto:glt@tamu.edu)

Education and support for GLBT issues, including coming out, gender identity, and sexual orientation \* GLBT resource library

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender - Professional Network (GLBT-PN)**

<http://glt-pn.tamu.edu> | [glt-pn@tamu.edu](mailto:glt-pn@tamu.edu)

Organization for faculty, staff and graduate students \* Addresses a variety of issues (benefits, work environment, marriage, etc.)

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Aggies (GLBTA)**

<http://gltba.tamu.edu> | [gltbaggies@gmail.com](mailto:gltbaggies@gmail.com)

Social organization for undergraduate students

## **Helpline**

24-hour Helpline: 979.845.2700

## **Student Counseling Service**

[scs.tamu.edu](http://scs.tamu.edu) 979.845.4427

## **Student Health Services**

979.458.8316

## **Stop Hate-Report an Incident on campus or in the B/CS community**

<http://stophate.tamu.edu>

## **Department of Multicultural Services**

<http://dms.tamu.edu/> | 979.862.2000 | [DMS-Info@dms.tamu.edu](mailto:DMS-Info@dms.tamu.edu)

Programs/services for African American, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American students \* Diversity education for campus community

**Bryan/College Station Community****Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays/Brazos Valley (P-FLAG)**

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) | [pflagbcs@yahoo.com](mailto:pflagbcs@yahoo.com)

Coming out issues & resources for families, friends, allies

**Open and Affirming Churches**

Friends Congregational Church (UCC)	979.693.7021	<a href="http://www.friends-ucc.org">www.friends-ucc.org</a>
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	979.696.5285	<a href="http://www.ipt.com/uuf">www.ipt.com/uuf</a>
St. Francis Episcopal	979.696.1491	<a href="http://www.stfrancisonline.org">www.stfrancisonline.org</a>
St. Thomas Episcopal	979.696.1726	<a href="http://www.stthomasbcs.org">www.stthomasbcs.org</a>

**Resources****GLBT National Help Hotline**

[www.GLBTNationalHelpCenter.org](http://www.GLBTNationalHelpCenter.org)

**Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)**

[www.lambda10.org](http://www.lambda10.org)

Resources for kids, parents \* Links to nationwide chapters

**Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Aims to end anti-gay bias in K-12 schools \* Resources for teachers, students and allies \* Research, curriculum and lesson plan ideas \* Links to local GLSEN chapters

**Human Rights Campaign**

[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

Link to National Coming Out Project \* News, events, politics \* Resources for GLBT families and workplace issues

**The Lambda 10 Project**

[www.lambda10.org](http://www.lambda10.org)

Targeted for LGBT fraternity/sorority students \* Great resources for Gay & Greek issues

**Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas**

[www.lgrl.sitestreet.com](http://www.lgrl.sitestreet.com)

Works to end discrimination against GLBT community in Texas \* Political information about GLBT-related bills in the Texas Legislature

### **National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Centers**

[www.lgbtcenters.org](http://www.lgbtcenters.org)

Up-to-date GLBT headline news \* Nationwide listing of GLBT community centers

### **National Campus Pride**

[www.campuspride.net](http://www.campuspride.net)

Online community for student leaders of GLBT organizations\* Information on fundraising, leadership, health, coming out, and more

### **The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

[www.nglhf.org](http://www.nglhf.org)

Up-to-date GLBT news & great online library

### **Texas Triangle Newsletter**

[www.txtriangle.com](http://www.txtriangle.com)

Information on Texas events, news and issues



## ALLIES DONATION AND BUTTON ORDER FORM

Please complete and return to: Aggie Allies  
 c/o Lowell Kane  
 GLBT Resource Center  
 Cain Hall C118, 1257 TAMU  
 College Station, TX 77843-1257

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check your request(s) below:**

___ Annual Donation/Dues enclosed	= \$ _____
___ Button Order: Qty: ___ @ \$1.00 each (1 free w/donation)	= \$ _____
___ Please send me a new door placard	= \$ 0 (no cost)
<b>Total Amount Enclosed</b>	= \$ _____

*Checks should be made out to "Allies"*

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