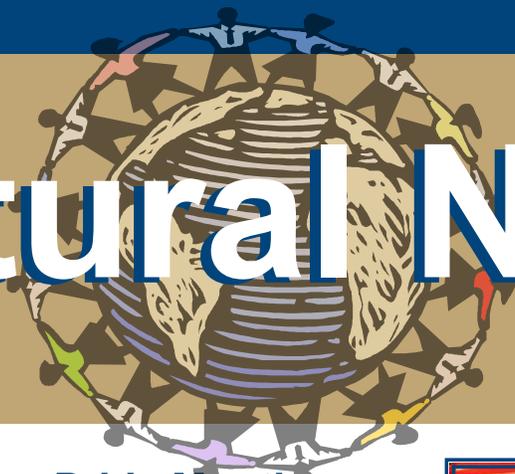


Cultural News

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June is Lesbian and Gay Pride Month

Gay pride or LGBT pride refers to a world wide movement and philosophy asserting that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Gay pride advocates work for equal "rights and benefits" for LGBT people.

The movement has three main premises: that people should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity, that sexual diversity is a gift, and that sexual orientation and gender identity are inherent and cannot be intentionally altered.

In June of 2000, Bill Clinton deemed the month of June, "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month." The month was chosen to remember a riot in 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan that is thought to be the beginning of the gay liberation movement in the United States.

June is now the month of acceptance and the month to welcome diversity in communities. Gay and lesbian groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost to HIV and AIDS, and other group gathering events that attract thousands upon thousands of individuals. This month is meant to recognize the impact Gay, Lesbian and Transgender individuals have had on the world.

The Invisibility of Lesbians in American History

To Believe in Women, by Lillian Faderman, is a landmark book about lesbian history in the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

To address the issue of the invisibility of lesbians in history books, we quote an excerpt from **Living with History/ Making Social Change**, by Gerda Lerner, historian, author, and pioneer in the field of women's history: "Researchers in women's history often have to depend on autobiographical writing – diaries, letters,

memoirs, and fiction – to piece together the life stories of women of the past. . . Self-descriptive narratives of women abound in omission and disguises. . . A subset of autobiographies and biographies concerns women who had special friendships with other women prior to the period when lesbian relationships were defined. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's essay, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America," had long defined the discourse and also limited it. Smith-Rosenberg had argued that single-sex friendships among women were accepted by society in the nineteenth century and were not considered marks of deviance. Were modern historians justified in defining such friendships as lesbian relationships? Were they reading modern interpretations into the past record? The subject was mostly discussed and written about by lesbian historians, while heterosexual historians, coming upon ample evidence of such special friendships, gingerly danced around them.

Among the many prominent nineteenth-women who had lifelong stable relationships with other women, which involved shared home-making, shared finances, and often shared organizational responsibilities, were Jane Addams, Frances Willard, and M. Carey Thomas. What kind of "evidence" did one need to define the relationship as lesbian? Were such relationships lesbian if one could not prove sexual aspects? Heterosexual authors often chose to ignore such relationships or to refer to them simply as "friendships," allowing the reader to draw her/his own conclusions.

I urged historians to report honestly on what their sources told them about these relationships, without necessarily being able to report on how the participants or their contemporaries defined such relationships."



JUNE 2015 CALENDAR

BLACK MUSIC MONTH

CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

NATIONAL GLBT (GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER) PRIDE MONTH

ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN AWARENESS MONTH

- 1 - Lailat al Bara'ah (Islam)
- 1-8 - National Sun Safety Week (US)
- 4 - Corpus Christi (Catholic Christian)
- 7 - All Saints (Orthodox Christian)
- 9 - World Pet Memorial Day
- 10 - Alcoholics Anonymous (Founders') Day (US)
- 11-18 - Nursing Assistants Week
- 14-20 - Universal Father's Week (World)
- 16 - Guru Arjan Dev Martyrdom (Sikh)
- 18 - Ramadan begins (Islam)
- 19 - New Church Day (Swedenborgian Christian)
- 20 - World Refugee Day (World)
- 21 - Father's Day (US)
- 21-27 - National Mosquito Control Awareness Week
- 23 - Kupalo (Ukraine/Pagan)
- 25 - Global Beatles Day (World)
- 28 - America's Kids Day (US)
- 29 - Saints Peter and Paul (Christian)
- 30 - National Organization for Woman Day (US)

The Kupalo Festival (Midsummer Night)



The Kupalo Festival originated in Ukraine. It is celebrated in both the United States and Ukraine today on June 24. The word Kupalo originates from the name of the god of summer and fertility. This god sleeps under a tree all winter and then awakens in the spring. Many of the customs of this festival link to encouraging fertility in both humans and the natural world.

Young women gather flowers to make a wreath that is tossed into a nearby river. Wherever the wreath touches the shore, this location determines what family the young female will marry into.

Another custom for the girls is for them to make an effigy of Marena, the goddess of cold, death and winter. After singing special songs, they burn or drown this effigy to reduce the goddess's power over the coming winter. The Ukrainian winters are usually very harsh.

What do the young men do? They go into the forest on Kupalo and look for a type of fern that blooms (according to the legend) only on the night of Midsummer Day. The men take along a special cloth, white powder and a knife. If they find this special fern and are strong enough to fight off the enticements of those wood nymphs, then they draw a circle with the white powder and sit down in the middle to wait for the fern to bloom. When it does, they cut off the blossom with the knife and wrap the flower in the special cloth. They must NEVER tell anyone that they have found the fern, or they will lose the luck and power it is believed to symbolize. Thus, this is how they explain why some people just seem to have more luck and talent than others.

The Kupalo Festival goes back to pagan times when people believed that supernatural forces governed the seasons. So, if certain annual rituals were not performed properly, the weather might not warm up in time to yield a good harvest. The festival is still observed in parts of the Ukraine as well as in Ukrainian communities in the United States.

The symbol of the Kupalo Festival is a young sapling tree decorated with flowers, seeds and fruit. This tree represents Kupalo himself, who awakens in the spring and shakes the tree he's been sleeping under. This shaking will make seeds fall and symbolizes fertilizing the earth again. During the festival the young men and women dance around the tree and sing special songs to please this image of the fertility god.

<http://www.brownielocks.com/kupalofestival.html>

June is Caribbean-American Heritage Month

With a current population of approximately 10 million, hailing from 30 territories including the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, Caribbean-Americans have played a role in shaping America since before its founding. From fighting slavery and segregation to serving in the highest levels of government to sports and entertainment, Caribbean-Americans have been active participants in the shaping of this country since the first Caribbean immigrants arrived in Jamestown, VA in 1619.

To help bring attention to this long and diverse history Dr. Claire Nelson founded The Institute of Caribbean Studies (ICS) in 1993 to bring attention to and advocate for the concerns of the Caribbean-American community in both the private and public sector. This effort included national recognition of the Caribbean-American Heritage and in 1999 ICS sent a letter to President Clinton requesting a month dedicated as Caribbean-American History Month.

It wasn't until 2004 that Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced legislation for such a proclamation. Reintroduced a year later the House unanimously passed Congresswoman Lee's bill in June 2005 and the Senate passed their own legislation a few months later in February 2006, leading to President George W. Bush issuing the first Presidential proclamation declaring June Caribbean-American Heritage Month on June 5, 2006.

This year, President Obama proclaimed June the eighth Caribbean-American Heritage Month. In doing so, he once again reminded America that for "...every chapter of our Nation's history, Caribbean Americans have made our country stronger..." and will continue to do so in the years ahead.



<https://www.nwhm.org/blog/june-is-caribbean-american-heritage-month/>