



Closets | Pride | Courage

1920 - 1969

1924 Henry Gerber creates the first American homosexual rights organization after being committed to a mental institution for being gay. **1961** Illinois decriminalizes homosexuality. **1966** Gene Compton's cafeteria where trans people gathered held the first LGBT related riot. **1969** Police entered Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, taking several patrons into custody for not wearing gender appropriate clothing.

1970 - 1999

1970 1st Gay Pride Week. **1978** Gilbert Baker designs the rainbow flag, with colors meaning: hot pink - sexuality; red - life, orange - healing; yellow - sun; green - nature; blue - art; indigo - harmony; violet - spirit. **1987** DSM removes homosexuality as a disorder. **1990** WHO no longer considers homosexuality a disease. **1999** 1st Transgender Day of Remembrance commemorating all trans people killed by violent bigotry.

2000 - Present

2004 1st trans march and same sex wedding in San Francisco. **2011** Don't Ask Don't Tell is repealed. **2013** DSM reclassifies gender identity disorder to gender dysphoria for trans people. **2015** Same sex marriage is legalized. **2016** Trans healthcare gold standard guidelines created. **2017** Trans protections reversed. **2019** 1st trans congressperson elected. **2020** civil rights extend to LGBTQ employees. **2023** 120 bills have been introduced restricting trans people's rights and care.



When I was young, my bedroom had a closet with a little corner space tucked in the back. It was the perfect place to hide. I spent a lot of time there. I wrote and drew on the walls in that tiny space. The images and words were expressions of my truest elementary school self. And I kept them all secret.

Twenty years later, in grad school, I am sitting in my closet in the apartment I share with my best friend. It's Friday night and I am supposed to be on a plane. Instead, I am hiding in my closet. I have just made a life altering decision and I will never be the same. My closet is the only place I can find solace.

Thirty years later I found myself in my closet again. It was Thanksgiving. Dinner had been served, the kitchen was being cleaned and I realized I was not well. I wanted to run away. But I couldn't. So I went to my closet and spent the rest of Thanksgiving laying on the cold floor, finding comfort in that quiet, hidden space.

What is it about closets? Catholic priest, Father Richard Rohr says we are all in a closet. Maybe this is why I have always had friends who are gay. I resonate with the urge to hide. I feel the angst of pushing down my truest self. I have also known the relief and liberation of being seen and known and loved. I want this for all of us.

In honor of Pride Month, I want to acknowledge closets. As Rohr puts it, "We're all in our closets. The gay rights movement has just given us a good metaphor for what we all have to do. We're all afraid to come out of our various closets". (Yes, And ..., by Richard Rohr)

We have all learned to be afraid of living our true selves. Our queer brothers and sisters have bravely come out of their closets. They are showing what it means to be liberated and beautiful, authentic and true.

Any of you who have been in my office know that it is about the size of a closet. I hope to be in a bigger space someday but for now, I hope it provides safety and comfort where true self can be seen, known and loved. The world needs us all to be our true selves. My hope is that we can all come out of the closet as an act of courage and confidence. Then, like the LGBTQIA+ Community is doing, we can change the world.