

# Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

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## Guide for Gay and Transgender Land

Posted: 18 April 2011, 8:59AM

There are some New Yorkers who have never been to Ellis Island, and only went to the top of the Empire State Building because a visiting friend wanted to see it. *Fodor's* Travel Guides enable tourists to know much more about a city or country than the natives.

If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, it is a bit embarrassing not to know more than your heterosexual allies about Gay and Transgender Land. For instance, there are many young, gay men and lesbians who don't know why June is Gay Pride month, and transgender people who don't know they have their own flag and symbol. Why do we celebrate October as History Month, and when do we stop and remember the murders of transgender people?

Here are some basics that will help both gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and our allies feel more culturally competent.

### *Dates to Know*

**June** is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. It commemorates the birth of modern-day civil rights movement. On June, 28, 1969, the New York Police Department conducted a raid, which resulted in a riot, at the Stonewall bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. It was one of the first times gay people responded with force to a routine police round-up. Transgender people are credited with being the first to resist the police that night. News of the event triggered the use of the words "Gay Power" and "Gay Pride" across the country. The Stonewall multi-day riot soon sparked similar public affirmations by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people throughout the world.

**October** is National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History Month. October is significant because it is when the first March on Washington occurred in 1979, and because October 11 is celebrated as National Coming Out Day. In the United Kingdom, the celebration of history month is in **February** to commemorate the repeal in 2003 of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1998, which prohibited government programs that portrayed gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in a positive light.

**November 20** is Transgender Day of Remembrance founded following the November 28, 1998 killing of Rita Hester, one in a series of transgender people murdered because of their gender identity of expression. The names of those people who have been murdered, such as Brandon Teena, are read on this day.

## *Symbols to Know*

**Rainbow Flag** – There are other rainbow flags used by other groups and cultures to celebrate peace, diversity, and even the Andean people. But the gay pride rainbow flag has become widely known and recognized as the international symbol of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. The gay pride rainbow flag contains six colored stripes, with red at the top, and is sometimes called the freedom flag.

**Transgender Pride Flag** – Known and used less often, the transgender pride flag was created in 1999 to symbolize pride and the struggle for transgender rights. The flag employs stripes of baby blue and pink to represent male and female, and white to symbolize intersex.

**Pink Triangle** – The Nazis used the pink triangle, sewn on clothing both inside and outside of concentration camps, to designate and shame the person as a male homosexual. The pink triangle, with the point facing down, was adopted after the war as a symbol of remembrance and solidarity. Next to the rainbow flag, it is the second most popular symbol of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities.

**Transgender Symbol** – There are multiple transgender symbols, all of which combine variations of the medical signs for male and female. The most popular symbol shows a circle with an arrow at the top right (male), a cross at the bottom (female), and an arrow with a cross bar at the upper left (male and female).

There are other lesser-known dates and symbols to be aware of, but this list is a good start. Next, perhaps, we should become more familiar with the words we use to describe ourselves. Do we know, for instance, that the word “lesbian” comes from the Greek island Lesbos, where in the 500 BC a well-known poet by the name of Sappho wrote beautifully about a woman’s love for other women? It should be noted that the inhabitants of Lesbos resent, and have attempted to prohibit, the use of the word “Lesbian” to describe homosexual women.