

[Stonewall 50 years on: Gay Liberation and Lesbian Feminism in its European Context](#)

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2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York, which began in the early hours of Saturday, 28 June 1969, when patrons of the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street defended themselves against police oppression. The Stonewall riots are often credited as the spark that set the gay liberation movement alight, not just in the United States, but around the Western world. In the years since, the words 'Stonewall' and 'Christopher Street' have become a recognisable shorthand for gay activism across Europe, inspiring the names of organisations, events, bars and publications.

With this one-day conference at Manchester Metropolitan University, we want to rethink the movements that the riots supposedly spawned in a European context. Gay liberation was never a one-way flow from across the Atlantic. While the Gay Liberation Front, set up in late 1969 in New York, was an important catalyst for similar groups in Europe, activist innovations crossed the Atlantic in the other direction too. Rather than walking fully formed off New York's Christopher Street, the European gay liberation movements that sprang up in the early 1970s were influenced by national events, or groups elsewhere on the continent. In particular, gay liberation was enabled by the upheavals associated with "1968", even as activists struggled with the sexual politics of the New Left. Although Anglophone activists such as Carl Wittman or Dennis Altman were influential in Britain, the likes of Guy Hocquenghem and Mario Mieli, writing in French and Italian respectively, were the most important theorists of gay liberation in its European context. For lesbian feminists across Europe, it was the literature, activism and networks of post-1968 feminism which fostered the emergence of a lesbian movement. All the while, activists moved around the continent to meet, set up groups or translate each other's work. We hope that placing individuals and movements in a European context will help to situate properly a phenomenon that has always crossed national borders, whilst offering an antidote to the overwhelming dominance of the American movement in gay, lesbian and queer historiography. The conference will incorporate panel sessions and a poster session, as well as a career development workshop for junior researchers. We therefore invite proposals for either 20 minute papers or posters which explore the conference themes, possibly engaging with one or more of the following questions:

- What was the significance of the Stonewall riots and American activism on European gay liberation movements and what other local and transnational sources did they draw upon?
- How was gay 'liberation' conceptualised in different national contexts, both in Western and

Eastern Europe?

- What were the links between European gay liberation, the New Left and other social movements?
- What was the relationship between differing subjectivities, stances and affiliations in the movement, including questions of race, religiosity and commitment to other political struggles?
- How have histories of gay liberation to date reinforced the marginality of trans* narratives?
- Fifty years on, what long-term impact has gay liberation activism had on sexual politics and LGBT/queer lives across Europe and how has it been remembered?

Please send abstracts of 150-200 words, together with a short biographical statement, to Craig Griffiths (c.griffiths@mmu.ac.uk), Rebecca Jennings (r.jennings@ucl.ac.uk) and Dan Callwood (dancallwood@gmail.com) by Friday 6 September 2019.

We would particularly welcome proposals from postgraduate students and Early Career Researchers, and are currently exploring funding sources in the hope that we may be in a position to provide some financial support for travel and/or accommodation costs. There will be no conference fee.

The conference is supported by Manchester Met's History Research Centre and is organised in cooperation between the Manchester Centre for Public History and Heritage and the Raphael Samuel History Centre.

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<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/history-research-centre/news-and-events/detail/index.php?id=11611>