



# Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context

*Phd, John Dececco, Vern L Bullough*

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Explore the early history of the gay rights movement! In the words of editor Vern L. Bullough: “Although there was no single leader in the gay and lesbian community who achieved the fame and reputation of Martin Luther King, there were a large number of activists who put their careers and reputations on the line. It was a motley crew of radicals and reformers, drawn together by the cause in spite of personality and philosophical differences. Their stories are told in the following pages.” *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* illuminates the lives of the courageous individuals involved in the early struggle for gay and lesbian civil rights in the United States. Authored by those who knew them (often activists themselves), the concise biographies in this volume examine the lives of pre-1969 barrier breakers like Harry Hay, Henry Gerber, Alfred Kinsey, Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, Jim Kepner, Jack Nichols, Christine Jorgensen, Jose Sarria, Barbara Grier, Frank Kameny, and 40 more. To anyone with an interest in the history of the gay/lesbian rights movements in the United States, these names will be familiar, but did you know that in addition to their groundbreaking activism:

- Prescott Townsend was a Boston Brahman
- Dorr Legg was a Log Cabin Republican
- Harry Hay was at one time a member of the Communist party
- Jim Kepner was a boy preacher
- Troy Perry was removed from the ministry of his church for homosexuality--and then founded the gay-friendly Metropolitan Community Church
- Reed Erickson--a transsexual millionaire who gave millions to the cause--kept a pet leopard called Henry
- Barbara Gittings set up a kissing booth at the American Library Association convention and urged attendees to kiss a gay or lesbian!

*Before Stonewall* is a perfect ancillary text for any gay/lesbian studies course, but more to the point, no one interested in these heroic figures and the movements they ignited should be without this book, which received an honorable mention in the 2004 Stonewall Book Awards.

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