

## The Evloution of LGBTQ Right in the U. S.: The Vaugries of Presidential Leadership and Followership

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**Abstract :** The struggle for LGBTQ rights in the United States began in Greenwich Village, New York, in 1967, when police tried to break up a gathering of mostly gay men who were partying at the Stonewall Bar in NYC. As unlikely as it may sound, this "riot" proved to be consequential in raising the political consciousness of gay men in America. From that point on, gays engaged in a political battle to achieve the rights to which they were entitled. This essay examines changes in popular opinion regarding LGBTQ rights from the late 1960s through the Trump administration, and examines the role public pressure played on presidential politics. For most of this period, presidents "followed" public opinion. This was true even during the administration of Barack Obama when gay Americans finally achieved some clearly spelled out rights (e.g. same-sex marriage). The findings of this paper call into question certain assumptions about presidential leadership, and underline the power of public opinion in shaping policy.

**Keywords :** presidential leadership, gay rights, LGBTQ, popular opinion

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