

NYPD apologizes for Stonewall raid for the first time ever

NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill said officers were 'in the wrong, plain and simple'

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In a historic first, the **New York Police Department (NYPD)** has **apologized** for the **1969 raid of the Stonewall Inn** in New York City's Greenwich Village. Historians largely consider this event to be the dawn of the modern LGBTI rights movement.

NYPD Commissioner **James O'Neill** spoke at a press conference on Thursday (6 June).

Describing the actions of officers during the early hours of 28 June 1969, O'Neill said they were 'in the wrong, plain and simple'.

He continued: 'The actions and the laws were discriminatory and oppressive, and for that, I apologize.'

This has never happened: NYPD Commissioner @NYPDONEill apologizes on behalf of the NYPD for the Stonewall raid. Thank you, Commissioner. #pride2019 #NYCPride #WorldPride2019 pic.twitter.com/0pHHGdjzQK

— Erik Bottcher (@ebottcher) June 6, 2019

According to the New York Times, O'Neill made additional comments.

'I think it would be irresponsible to go through World Pride month and not to speak of the events at the Stonewall Inn in June of 1969,' he said.

New York City is hosting World Pride this year, marking the 50th anniversary of Stonewall.

'I do know what happened should not have happened. We have, and we do, embrace all New Yorkers,' he concluded to applause.

This is the first time the NYPD has formally apologized for the raid and subsequent violence.

What happened 50 years ago at the Stonewall Inn

Historian David Carter detailed the events of the raid in his book *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*.

Around 1:20 am on Saturday, 28 June 1969, eight officers — four in plainclothes, two in uniform, a detective and a deputy inspector — arrived at the establishment and shouted: 'Police! We're taking the place!'

Typically, LGBTI bars and other places were warned ahead of time of raids, but that didn't happen this time. When police attempted to round up the patrons, people began resisting and standing their ground.

Figures like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were those who stood up to NYPD officers that night.

'You've been treating us like shit all these years? Uh-uh. Now it's our turn!' Rivera recalled saying. 'It was one of the greatest moments in my life.'

Protests continued into the next day and night.

A long time coming

Prior to O'Neill's statement, NYC Pride released its own statement demanding an apology.

'Last night (5 June), we voted unanimously to demand that the NYPD formally apologize to the LGBTQIA+ community for the violent police raid that triggered the Stonewall Uprising,' the group said. 'We offer our stage at the Stonewall 50 Commemoration Rally on Friday, June 28, 2019 for Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill to do so on behalf of the Department.'

The statement continued: 'Under Commissioner O'Neill, the NYPD has made significant strides in improving relations with LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers.'

'Taking responsibility and apologizing for this single event is a small, albeit meaningful step towards improving the larger systemic issues that continue to cause significant harm to LGBTQIA+ people,

especially transgender people and people of color. It demonstrates what is possible for the future of our community and our movement.'

It is unclear if O'Neill will accept the invitation to appear at the rally later this month given the statement today.

GSN reached out to NYC Pride for a response to O'Neill's formal apology.

Update 6 June

NYC Pride responded to GSN with a statement regarding O'Neill's apology.

'We appreciate NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill's words and leadership today, apologizing on behalf of the Department for its actions that triggered the Stonewall Uprising,' the organization said. 'For many years, Heritage of Pride has worked to build a productive relationship with the NYPD, a relationship that was, and is, critical to ensuring the safety of all NYC Pride participants. We've engaged with innumerable NYPD personnel, deeply committed to Pride's safety and success, all the while recognizing the irony that these individuals represented the very institution whose violence and discrimination gave rise to Pride as a movement.

'We recognize that the work of those LGBTQIA+ NYPD employees, who are part of our community and work within law enforcement, have played a role in making this historic apology a reality and work daily to build bridges and improve relationships with all New Yorkers.

'And we also know that the work is far from done, as members of the LGBTQIA+ and other diverse communities continue to demand better treatment by and improving relationships with the NYPD and other branches of law enforcement.

'Today, as millions of people from across the world prepare to descend on New York City for WorldPride 2019 NYC | Stonewall 50, that relationship has reached a turning point, and we hope that this gesture will allow for even more dialogue moving forward.'