

The Rainbow Flag Story

The first Rainbow Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker, a San Francisco artist, as a symbol of gay and lesbian community pride. When Harvey Milk, San Francisco's first openly gay supervisor was assassinated that year, the planning committee decided to use the flag in the 1979 Pride Parade to demonstrate the gay community's strength and solidarity.

Slowly the flag took hold, offering a colourful alternative to the more common symbol of the pink triangle (which the Nazis forced homosexual men to wear during the Holocaust).

Today, the Rainbow Flag is recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers. Its colours represent the diversity of the bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender community. As a symbol of liberation and pride, it is prominent in Pride Day parades and so-called "gay villages" in larger North American cities, and is seen on clothing, jewelry, and even car bumper stickers.

Despite many advances in recent years, bisexual, gay, lesbian and/or transgender people continue to face oppression and persecution in Canada and the United States, especially in smaller communities.

Attached are two Rainbow Flag stickers. We invite you to express your solidarity with bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender people by wearing a sticker on your name tag. Please give the other half of this flyer, along with the second sticker, to a friend.

For information on how to purchase these stickers from the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns, go to www.uua.org/bglc and click on "Resource Order Form"

The Pink Triangle Story

The Holocaust, during World War II, took more than six million Jewish lives. Many people do not realize that other groups **also** were targeted for extinction, including the mentally retarded, Gypsies, **and homosexual men and women**. Nearly a quarter-million gay men and lesbians perished in Hitler's death camps.

Prisoners were forced to wear identifying symbols on their sleeves. People of Jewish descent were identified by a yellow Star of David. Homosexual men were branded by a pink triangle, while lesbians were branded by a black one. Today, the pink triangle is a symbol of liberation and pride worn on buttons, lapel pins, tee-shirts, and even car bumper stickers to remind gay, lesbian, and bisexual people of the oppression they have suffered historically and to signal their refusal to be silent victims again.

There is a story that relates directly to the witness we invite you to make today. When Denmark fell to the Nazi armies in 1940, the German occupation authorities immediately decreed that all Jews wear the yellow Star of David on their sleeves at all times, to facilitate their identification for transit to the concentration camps. Legend has it that the very next morning King Christian X, the aging Danish monarch, came out of the palace for his morning walk wearing a yellow Star of David on his coat, thus expressing his solidarity with the persecuted minority. Word quickly spread about this silent and non-violent act of defiance and soon many other Danes were wearing the symbol on their sleeves. Though historians disagree about the actual prevalence of this simple act of Danish resistance, there is no doubt that the population's compassion and resistance contributed to the fact that almost all of Denmark's Jews survived the barbarism of the holocaust that took the lives of most European Jews.

Bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people continue to face legal persecution in many parts of Canada and the United States.

Attached are pink triangle stickers to wear (on name tags), so that, like the people of Denmark, you can express your resistance. We invite all who are so moved to put a sticker on and wear it in symbolic protest.

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