

From 9 Activists to a Worldwide LGBTI Movement

[Blog](#), [Civil Rights and Freedom](#), [Community Organising](#), [ILGA-Europe](#)

A newly released archive of over 2,000 photographs charts a journey that grew from a small meeting of activists in the UK almost 50 years ago to an international LGBTI movement still striding forward for human rights and equality today.

In 1978, a pivotal moment in LGBTI history unfolded in the United Kingdom, when activists from nine countries gathered in the city of Coventry to establish the International Gay Association (IGA), launching a coordinated global effort for LGBTI rights. Acting on the need for a dedicated space for lesbian activism, the International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS) was founded in 1980. Over time, IGA evolved to become the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), integrating broader identities into its advocacy. In 1996, ILGA-Europe was established as its regional branch, responding to the distinct political and legal landscapes of the European movement.



The IGA Founding Meeting, Coventry, England, August 1978

[The ILGA & ILIS History Collection](#), meticulously curated by long-time activist **Nigel Warner**, offers a profound insight into these formative years of the LGBTI movement. Nigel's dedication to documenting and preserving this history stems from his deep ties to ILGA, where he served in various roles, including overseeing its finances from 1987 to 1994. He also served in ILGA-Europe, as board member and treasurer from 2000 to 2005, and as our representative at the Council of Europe from 1998 to 2018.



Lesbian organising – the 1980 ILIS Amsterdam conference

Comprising over 2,000 photographs contributed by 80 activists, the collection documents significant events and themes from 1978 through the 1990s. It not only shows the public demonstrations and conferences but also provides contextual information, including contemporary documentation and personal accounts, painting a comprehensive picture of the early international LGBTI movement.

Today, as we witness a resurgence of right-wing ideologies and policies threatening LGBTI rights on an international scale, this collection serves as a poignant reminder of our community's resilience. The challenges we face are formidable, with countries electing openly LGBTI-phobic leaders, and enacting laws that roll back hard-won rights. Yet, the history captured in these photographs reminds us that the movement has weathered significant adversities before.

The ILGA & ILIS History Collection stands as a testament to the power of solidarity, courage, and unwavering commitment. And if we remember our past, we can inform our present and inspire our future. As we navigate the current challenges, let this collection be a source of strength and a reminder that, together, we can overcome adversity and continue the march toward equality.



Plenary session, ILGA European Regional Conference, Brussels, Belgium, December 1986

Explore the [ILGA & ILIS History Collection](#) and join us in honouring the legacy of those who paved the way for the rights we uphold today.



Opening Gala, 11th ILGA Annual Conference, Vienna, Austria, July 1989



Visit to the Acropolis – 6 – Section 28 mini protest – Isabel Aktypi, David Poolman, Marinka Körzendörfer, 1989



Demonstration against repressive proposals in the UK 1990



Plenary session, ILGA European Regional Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, December 1990



Group photo of the OCCUR demonstrators – Hiroshi Niimi, 1991



ILGA Secretariats Committee Meeting, NY, 1992