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THE  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
OF ARKANSAS



# 11 LGBTQ+ Facts From AR History

# WELCOME TO THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS

Everything from



Slime Molds

to



Garage Bands



## THIS DAY IN ARKANSAS HISTORY

### October 7, 2004

Hot Springs (Garland County) native Billy Bob Thornton's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame was unveiled. Thornton is an actor, director, screenwriter, and musician who began his film career in the late 1980s and has since starred in a number of popular and critically acclaimed films. He received an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Sling Blade* (1996). Thornton has been married five times (most notably to actress Angelina Jolie) and has four children. He remains appreciated worldwide for his talent and known for his eccentricities (including his many tattoos and fears of antique furniture and reptiles), as well as his openness about dealing with obsessive compulsive disorder.

[Learn more about Billy Bob Thornton >](#)

## BROWSE THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

[Entries](#)

[BY CATEGORY >](#)

[A - Z >](#)

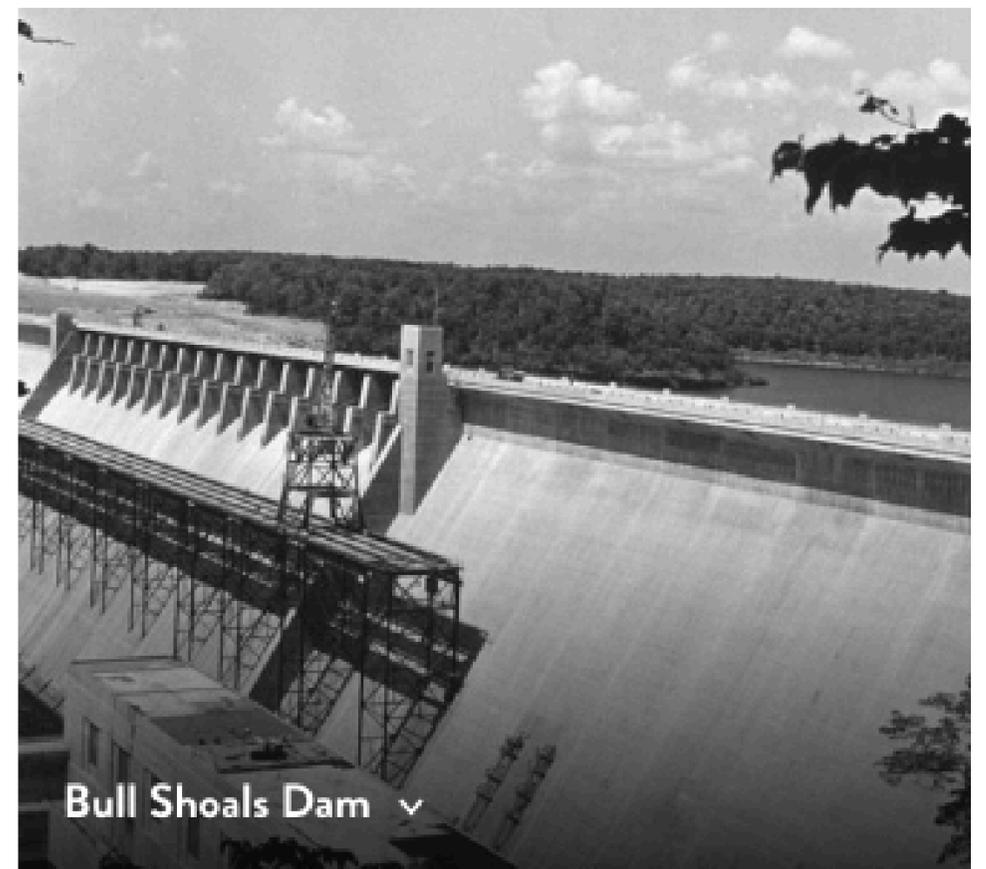
[Media](#)

[BY CATEGORY >](#)

[A - Z >](#)



## PHOTO OF THE DAY



[Bull Shoals Dam](#) ▾

≈7,600  
entries

ALL ENTRIES

FLOOD OF 1927

# Flood of 1927

AKA: Great Flood of 1927

AKA: Mississippi River Flood of 1927

AKA: 1927 Flood

The Flood of 1927 was the most destructive and costly flood in Arkansas history and one of the worst in the history of the nation. It afflicted Arkansas with a greater amount of devastation, both human and monetary, than the other affected states in the **Mississippi River** Valley. It had social and political ramifications which changed the way Arkansas, as well as the nation, viewed relief from natural disasters and the responsibility of government in aiding the victims, echoing the **Hurricane Katrina** disaster in the present day.

In largely agrarian Arkansas, the Flood of 1927 covered about 6,600 square miles, with thirty-six out of seventy-five Arkansas counties under water up to thirty feet deep in places. In Arkansas, more people were affected by the floodwaters (over 350,000), more farmland inundated (over two million acres), more Red Cross camps were needed (eighty of the 154 total), and more families received relief than any other state (41,243). In Arkansas, almost 100 people died, more than any state except Mississippi. In monetary terms, the losses in Arkansas (totaling over \$1 million in 1927 dollars for relief and recovery) surpassed any other affected state.

The Flood of 1927 had its origins both in nature and in man. In the late 1920s, technological advances kept pace with the growing economy. Heavy machinery enabled the construction of a vast system of **levees** to hold back rivers that tended to overrun their banks. Drainage projects opened up new, low-lying lands that had once been forests but had been left bare by the **timber industry**.

ENTRY

Flood of 1927

## TIME PERIOD

Early Twentieth Century (1901 - 1940)

## CATEGORY

Environment / Land and Resources / Natural Disasters

## TYPE

Event

## LESSON PLANS

[1927 Flood \(Grades 5-8\)](#)

[Arkansas's Top Ten Events \(Grades 6-12\)](#)

[Hard Times \(Grades 7-12\)](#)

[Mucket Mania \(Grades 6-12\)](#)

[Rollin' on the River \(Grades 5-12\)](#)

[Southern Flood Blues \(Grades 9-12\)](#)

- **EVERY** incorporated community
- **Government officials**
- **Civil rights organizations from NAACP to CLOB**
- **EVERY** military action including the smallest skirmishes
- **Wildlife, flowers, plants**



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Search results for  
**flood of 1927**

Search for...

≈ **17,000**  
**media**

ENTRIES 264

MEDIA 9



**Tupelo Flood**



**Pine Bluff Flood**



**Lake Village: 1927 Flood**



**MEDIA TYPE**

- Photo 5
- Document 1

**CATEGORY**

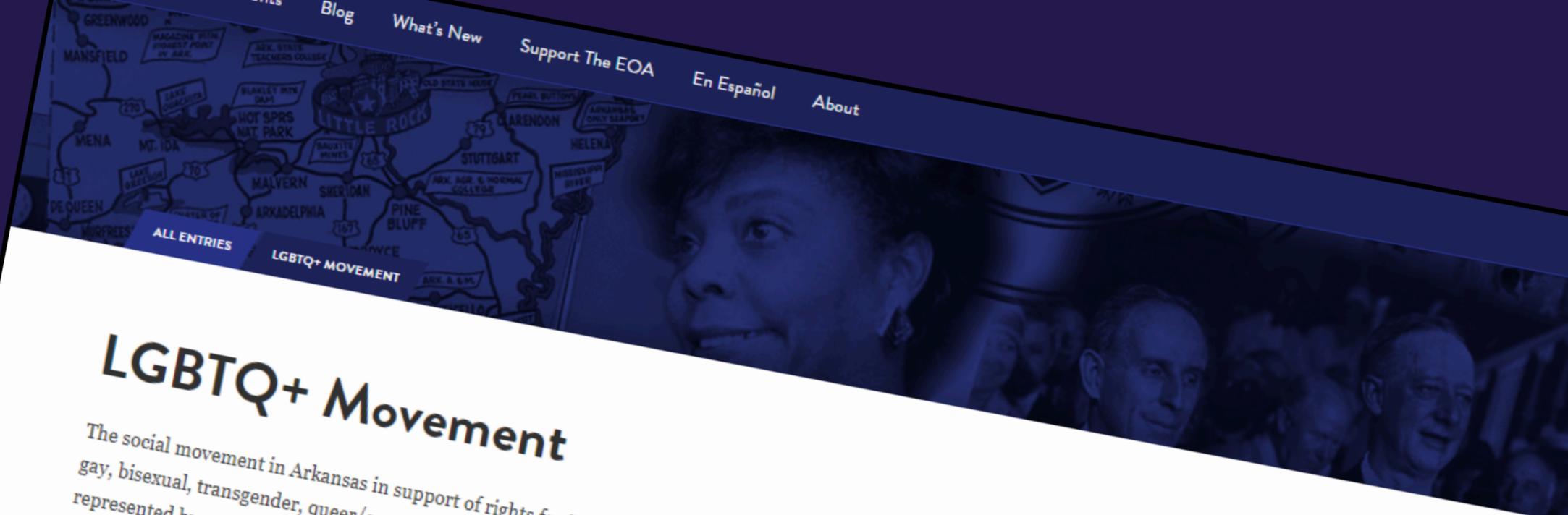
- Natural Disasters 7
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- Monroe 1

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OF ARKANSAS



# 11 LGBTQ+ Facts From AR History



## LGBTQ+ Movement

The social movement in Arkansas in support of rights for LGBTQ+ people (an umbrella term that covers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and more; LGBT was also used in the past) has historically been represented by such legal organizations as Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Lambda Legal, and the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**. This was followed by an increasing organization of LGBTQ+ people in Arkansas, primarily in the emergence of student groups at the **University of Arkansas (UA)** in **Fayetteville (Washington County)** and other institutions of higher education. Despite statewide and nationwide strides toward equality under the law, LGBTQ+ Arkansans still face ongoing discrimination—and the fight for rights, safety, and acceptance is far from over.

### Legal Issues and Context

The first reference to homosexuality in the bound index to the now-defunct *Arkansas Gazette* is from October 1973, four years after the Stonewall Riots (the first “shot” fired in the Gay Revolution, when a group of Greenwich Village gays stood up to police during a raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York) and reads, “see Sodomy.” The article states simply that the state Supreme Court had upheld the then-135-year-old Arkansas law, which read: “Every person convicted of sodomy or buggery will be imprisoned in the state penitentiary for not less than one year nor more than 21 years.” The following month, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Arkansas’s sodomy law, denying an appeal by two **Miller County** men convicted of having sex at a public rest area along Interstate 30. The state law was an equal-opportunity statute, applying to “unnatural” sex acts between both homosexuals and heterosexuals.

To put this in perspective, an *Arkansas Gazette* article from 1973 on a survey released by *Playboy* magazine reports, “There have been dramatic increases [since the Kinsey Reports] in the frequency with which Americans engage in various sexual activities and in the number of persons who include formerly rare or forbidden techniques in sexual repertoires,” including premarital, oral, and anal intercourse. Whether or not this translates into an actual rise in same-sex behavior is impossible to measure; however, there is little doubt that more people were beginning to talk-

ENTRY LGBTQ+ Movement

TIME PERIOD

Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1960-1980)

CATEGORY

Civil Rights and Social Change / Gender and Sexual Orientation  
Government and Politics / Political Issues and Controversies / Political Movements / Sexual Orientation

TYPE

Event

RELATED ENTRIES

Arts, Culture, and Entertainment

Civil Rights and Social Change

Drag Shows

Intrastate Commerce



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ALL ENTRIES JEGLEY V. PICADO

# Jegley v. Picado

*Larry Jegley v. Elena Picado, et al.* was a 2002 decision by the **Arkansas Supreme Court** that struck down Arkansas's sodomy law, which criminalized **homosexual** behavior. It was the first time that the Supreme Court removed a legal prohibition against homosexual relationships, and the decision was cited many times the next dozen years by state and federal courts in several states that invalidated such **laws**.

Sodomy laws preceded American independence. The colonies criminalized homosexual acts, which were often death-penalty offenses. Sodomy was a felony in every state until 1962, when states began to liberalize the laws. In 1975, Arkansas **attorney general Jim Guy Tucker** submitted a lengthy bill to the **Arkansas General Assembly** that overhauled and recodified the state's criminal laws. The bill omitted so-called "status offenses," which made the "undesirable" status of a person (rather than a specific act) a criminal offense. The legislature approved the bill, and Governor **David Pryor** signed it, but groups began to criticize legislators for, in effect, legalizing homosexuality. When the legislature convened in 1977, legislators wanted to undo their 1975 votes and criminalize homosexuality. A bill to do that passed on the last day of the session, and Pryor signed it. Under the statute, conviction carried a \$1,000 fine and up to a year in prison.

In 1991, a new state senator from **Little Rock (Pulaski County)**, **Vic Snyder**, introduced a bill to repeal the statute, but he could not get enough support to get it out of committee. He introduced it in every session of the Arkansas General Assembly during the time he was a member, with the same result. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996.

The next year, Elena Picado and six other women and men filed a lawsuit in Pulaski County Circuit Court challenging the statute. They said that they had engaged in homosexual acts and that, although they had not been arrested, the criminal statute harmed them by posing a perpetual threat of arrest for conduct harming no one else. They named the prosecuting attorney for Pulaski County, Larry Jegley, and the state attorney general, **Mark Pryor**, as defendants, because by law they were supposed to prosecute people under the statute and defend the convictions.

## ENTRY Jegley v. Picado

TIME PERIOD  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968-2022)

CATEGORY  
Civil Rights and Social Change / Gender and Sexuality / Law / Laws and Court Cases

TYPE  
Thing

### RELATED ENTRIES

-  Civil Rights and Social Change
-  Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968-2022
-  Tuck, Annabelle Davis Clinton Imber

### RELATED MEDIA







Teachers/Students Blog What's New Support The EOA En Español About

ALL ENTRIES AIDS

## AIDS

By 2007, a cumulative 4,119 Arkansans had been diagnosed with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the disease caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), with 196 of those cases being newly diagnosed in that year. Of all cases diagnosed in Arkansas, more than eighty percent were among men, fifty-seven percent were among whites, and forty percent were among **African Americans**. However, among cases newly diagnosed in 2007, the majority (fifty-five percent) were among African Americans, with only thirty-seven percent of new cases being among whites. This trend follows national rates of proportionally more cases being diagnosed among African Americans and other minorities. Of those 4,119 diagnosed with AIDS, more than 2,000 were people living with AIDS as of the end of 2007. A total of 1,834 people with AIDS in Arkansas had died by the end of 2007. The majority (fifty-three percent) of AIDS cases in Arkansas were most likely transmitted through male-to-male sexual conduct. Other methods of transmission that presented themselves among a large number of those cases were heterosexual contact and injection drug use.

The first cases of AIDS in the United States were identified by clinical investigators in New York and California in 1981. By 1984, researchers were able to identify HIV as the cause of full-blown AIDS. In 1983, a **Little Rock (Pulaski County)** man in his early twenties became the first Arkansan to die of AIDS-related pneumonia. Because little was known about HIV and AIDS in the early days of the disease, public reaction to the epidemic included discrimination and stigma against the populations who were at risk for the disease—namely bisexual and homosexual men. In Arkansas, **the gay rights movement** suffered a major setback in the mid-1980s largely due to the emergence of HIV and AIDS. Another controversy in Arkansas concerning HIV infection was the **Arkansas prison blood scandal**, in which plasma from prisoners in Arkansas jails was sold to several countries around the world. By 1994, reports of plasma recipients being infected with HIV by blood from Arkansas prisons emerged from Canada and England, leading to Arkansas becoming the last state to cease selling plasma from prisoners.

The struggle to provide services for people with AIDS in Arkansas has often been met with considerable opposition

ENTRY AIDS

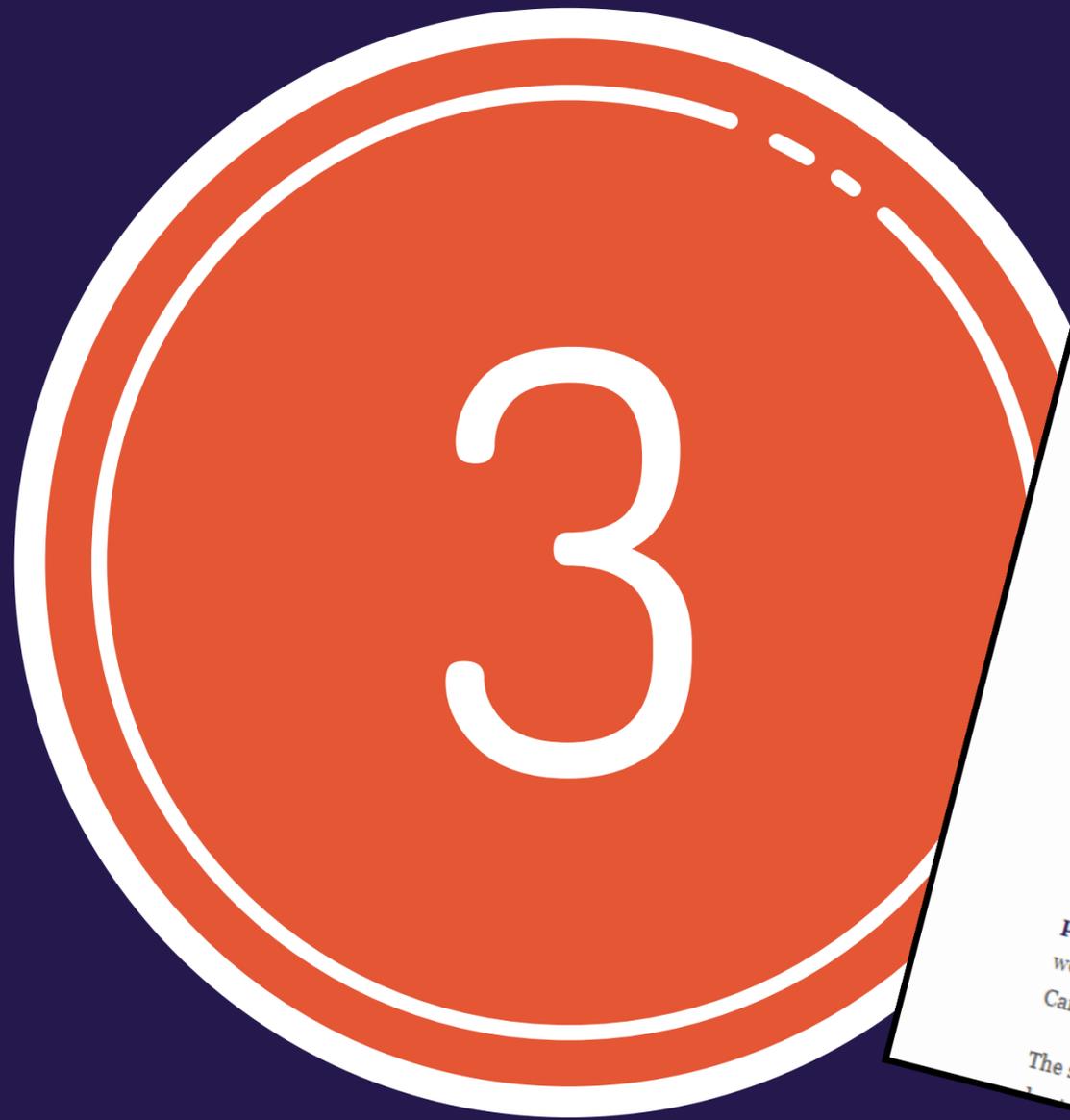
TIME PERIOD  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

CATEGORY  
Medicine / Pathology / Science and Medicine

TYPE  
Thing

RELATED ENTRIES

-  Burks, Ruth Coker
-  Health and Medicine
-  Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968–2022
-  Hildreth, James Earl King



# NARAN

## Northeast Arkansas Regional AIDS Network

People helping people with  
AIDS

For more information call:  
(501) 793-8221 Office  
(501) 698-2802 Message

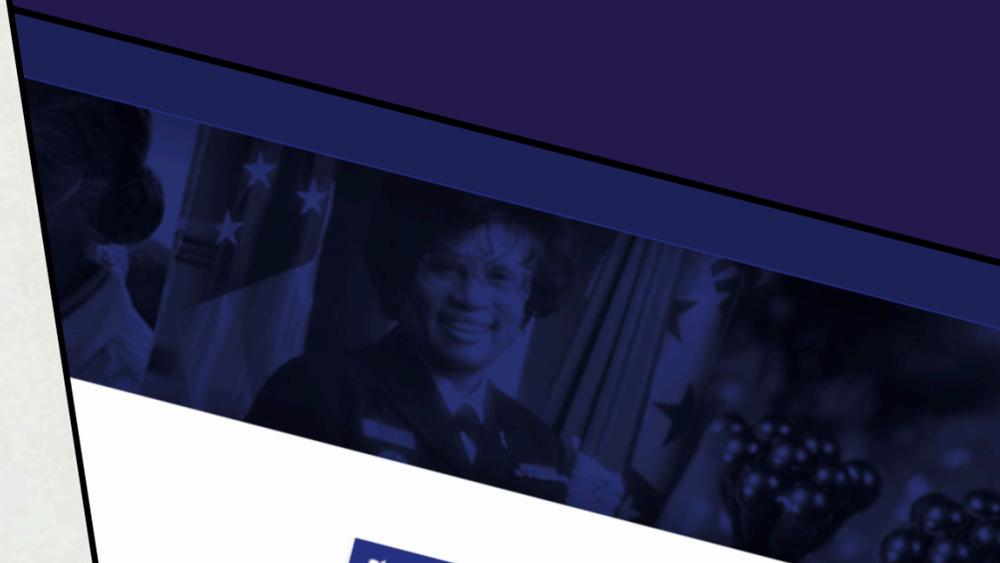
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ENTRY	AIDS
TIME PERIOD	Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968-2022)
CATEGORY	Medicine / Pathology / Science and Medicine
TYPE	Thing
RELATED ENTRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Burks, Ruth Coker</li><li>Health and Medicine</li><li>Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968-2022</li><li>Hildreth, James Earl King</li></ul>





# Ruth Coker Burks (1959–)

Ruth Burks is an Arkansas woman who, in the midst of the 1980s AIDS epidemic, provided support for dozens of men who were dying of AIDS—men who were often abandoned by their families, with even some health professionals being reluctant to treat them. According to Burks, she also ensured that they would have a proper final resting place, providing for the burial of dozens of men in **Files Cemetery**. However, later investigation into her story has raised significant doubts about the narrative she has promoted about herself.

Frances Ruth Coker was born in **Hot Springs (Garland County)** on March 19, 1959, to James Isham Coker and Aline Lawlor Coker. Her father, who was almost twenty years older than her mother, served in both **World War I** and **World War II**. During Coker's earliest years, her mother was hospitalized with **tuberculosis** for an extended period of time, leaving her father to attend to his infant daughter. They developed a close relationship, but he died in 1964 when Ruth was five. Still struggling with her own health, her emotionally distant mother sometimes put Coker in a local children's home. Following graduation, Coker attended the **University of Arkansas at Little Rock**, earning a degree in speech and communication. She married a man she later called "a bully," and the couple divorced after five years; they had a daughter, Allison. Ruth Burks was living with her daughter in Hot Springs when she first got involved with victims of AIDS.

In 1984, she was visiting the University Hospital in **Little Rock (Pulaski County)**, where she was helping care for a friend suffering from cancer. Through the course of her friend's five surgeries, Burks spent a lot of time in hospitals and witnessed nurses literally drawing straws to determine who would go into the room to check on AIDS-ravaged patients. The rising fear within society led the hospital to limit information about who was being treated there and for what disease. However, as Burks had a **gay** cousin in Hawaii, she had sought to learn as much as she could about the disease, even though her cousin downplayed its seriousness.

As Burks has recalled, one day, on a hospital visit to her friend, she entered the room of a dying AIDS patient. She met the patient, and after he asked for his mother, Burks went to the nurses and conveyed his request. They

**ENTRY** Ruth Coker Burks (1959–)

**TIME PERIOD**  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

**CATEGORY**  
Civil Rights and Social Change / Gender and Sexuality / Sexual Orientation

**TYPE**  
Person

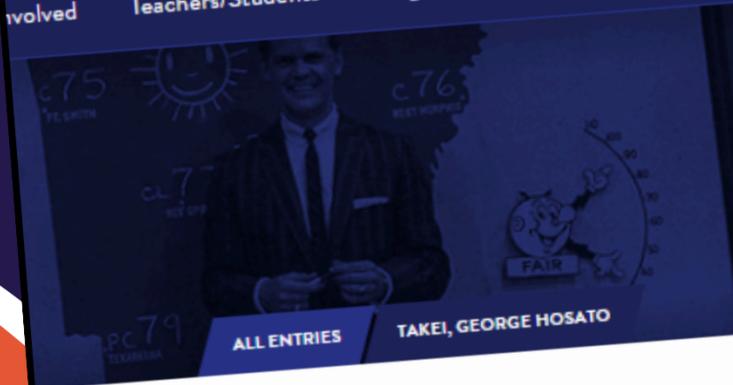
**RACE & ETHNICITY**  
White

**GENDER**  
Female

**RELATED ENTRIES**

- Civil Rights and Social Change
- Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968–2022





## George Hosato Takei (1937–)

George Hosato Takei gained international fame as Lieutenant Sulu in the original *Star Trek* television series and six movies. When he was a boy, he and his family were held in the War Relocation Authority Camp in **Rohwer (Desha County)**.

George Takei was born on April 20, 1937, in Los Angeles, California. His father, Takekuma Norman Takei, immigrated to the United States from Japan at age thirteen, graduated from Hills Business College in San Francisco, and owned a cleaning shop in the Wilshire corridor of Los Angeles. His mother, Fumiko Emily Nakamura Takei, was a native U.S. citizen who was educated in Japan.

In 1942, after the outbreak of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which led to the forced relocation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. As part of the relocation, four-year-old George, his parents, and his younger brother and sister were moved from California to the **Rohwer Relocation Center** in 1942. The family members lived in Arkansas about eight months. Following the refusal of Takei's parents to swear loyalty to the United States, the family was moved to the maximum-security camp at Tule Lake, California, where they stayed until being released in 1946. Takei has written of several memories of his time at Rohwer, including moving to and from Rohwer, playing games with his friends, and seeing a hog for the first time.

After graduating from Los Angeles High School in 1956, Takei enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley but transferred to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to study acting, and he graduated with a BA in theater in 1960. He soon began making guest appearances on television.

...degree in theater arts at UCLA, which he received in 1964, Takei was cast in the role of ... these seasons, from 1966 to 1969,

### ENTRY George Hosato Takei (1937–)

TIME PERIOD  
World War II through the Faubus Era (1941 - 1967)

CATEGORY  
Actors and Filmmakers / Broadcasting / Cinema / Media / Television

TYPE  
Person

RACE & ETHNICITY  
Asian American

GENDER  
Male

RELATED ENTRIES  
 Arts, Culture, and Entertainment



## Japanese American Relocation Camps

After Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and America's subsequent declaration of war and entry into **World War II**, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the War Relocation Authority (WRA), which selected ten sites to incarcerate more than 110,000 Japanese Americans (sixty-four percent of whom were American citizens). Two internment camps were selected and built in the **Arkansas Delta**, one at **Rohwer** in **Desha County** and the other at **Jerome** in sections of **Chicot** and **Drew** counties. Operating from October 1942 to November 1945, both camps eventually incarcerated nearly 16,000 Japanese Americans. This was the largest influx and incarceration of any racial or ethnic group in the state's history. One of the sites, Rohwer, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

After Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, many Americans, especially those living on the West Coast, feared an eventual invasion by the empire of Japan. Over eighty percent of the Japanese American population living in the United States at the time lived along the coast in the states of Washington, Oregon, and California. Many West Coast citizens viewed the concentrated Japanese American communities as potential enclaves for espionage and "fifth-column" activities. Fueled by war hysteria, reinforced by decades of racial hatred, and citing the "doctrine of military necessity," President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, signed Executive Order 9066, giving the secretary of war the power to designate military areas from which "any or all persons may be excluded" and authorized military commanders to initiate orders they deemed advisable to enforce such action.

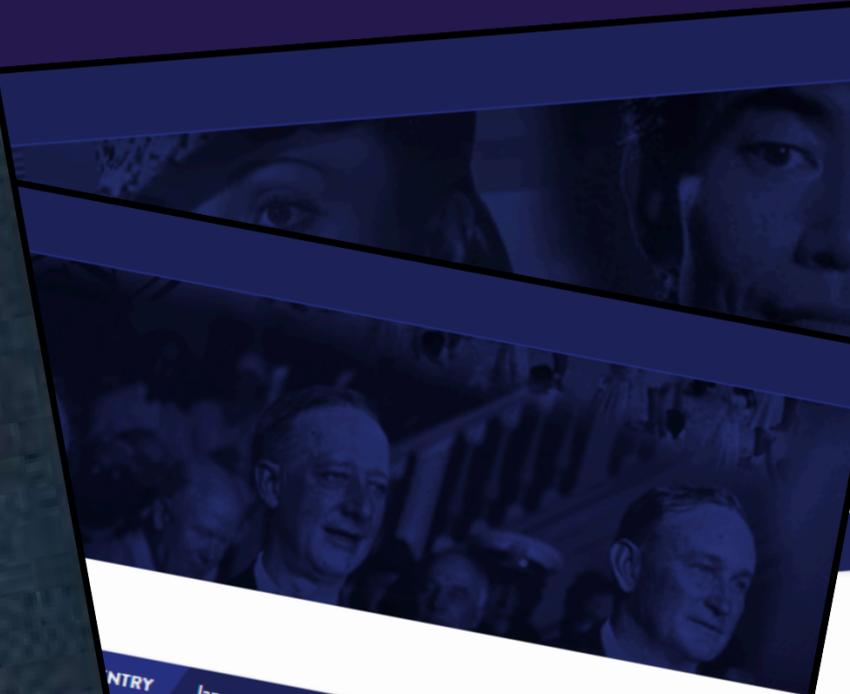
On March 18, Roosevelt created the WRA for the "relocation, maintenance, and supervision" of the Japanese American population. The search for sites for America's first Japanese American "relocation center," as they were euphemistically labeled by the WRA, was limited to federally owned lands suitable enough to house from five to eight thousand people and located, as the War Department required, "a safe distance from strategic works." By June

ENTRY	Japanese American Relocation Camps
TIME PERIOD	World War II through the Faubus Era (1941 - 1967)
CATEGORY	Civil Rights and Social Change / Government and Politics / National / Projects / Race / World War II to Faubus Era
TYPE	Place
RACE & ETHNICITY	Asian American
LESSON PLANS	Japanese Americans and the Rowher Relocation Camp (Grades 5-8) Under one Flag (Grades 4-12)

After graduating from Los Angeles State College, he transferred to the University of California at Los Angeles and appeared on the theater in 1960. He soon began making guest appearances on television and theater in 1960. He soon began making guest appearances on television and theater in 1960.



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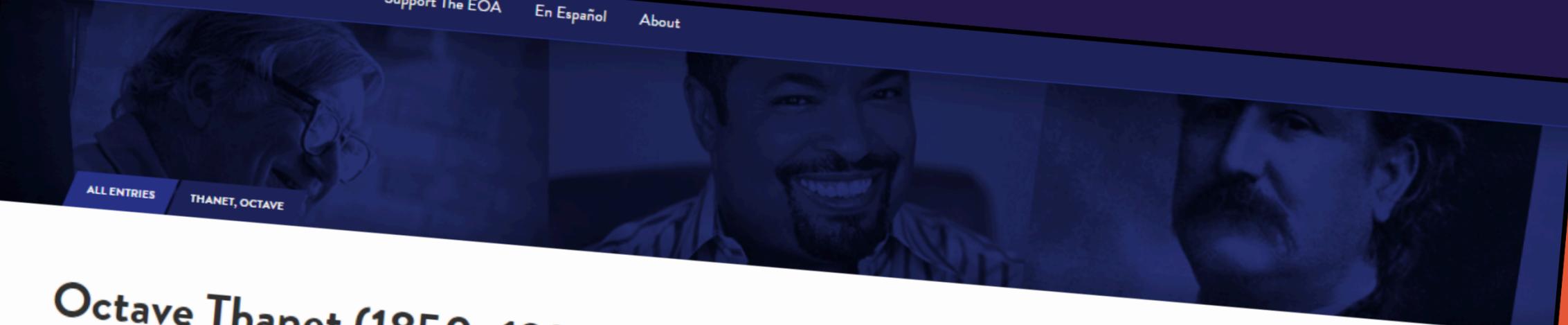
## World War II Japanese American Internment Museum

During World War II, Arkansas was the site of two Japanese American internment camps. Jerome Relocation Center, located in Drew and Chicot counties, and Rohwer Relocation Center in Desha County

ENTRY World War II Japanese American Internment Museum

TIME PERIOD  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968-2022)

CATEGORY



ALL ENTRIES THANET, OCTAVE

# Octave Thanet (1850–1934)

AKA: Alice French

Alice French was a leading writer of local color stories and journalistic essays under the pseudonym Octave Thanet. Some of her best work is based on the years she spent at her winter home in **Clover Bend (Lawrence County)** in the **Black River** swamp country. French also published stories and essays in such national periodicals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's Magazine*, and *Century Magazine*. She prided herself on the accurate depiction not only of the physical setting of her stories but also of the customs and **dialect** of the characters in them.

Alice French was born on March 19, 1850, in Andover, Massachusetts, to George Henry French and Frances Morton. The French family also included sons George, Morton, Nathaniel, and Robert. The Mortons and the Frenches were well connected to New England's earliest and most prosperous forefathers. George French had a successful leather business in Boston. In 1856, he moved his family to Davenport, Iowa, where he manufactured agricultural implements. Concern for his health may have prompted this move to a somewhat easier climate; furthermore, Frances French's brother-in-law, the Reverend Henry Washington Lee, had recently been named **Episcopal** bishop of Iowa and was enthusiastic in his assessment of the possibilities of this developing region. In 1866, French studied at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, and Abbot Academy in Andover; she completed her course in 1868 and returned to Davenport. She made good use of her uncle's library in continuing her studies in sociology, philosophy, and literature.

Her first published work was a sentimental story, "Hugo's Waiting," printed in the *Davenport Gazette* in 1871. A few years later, she finished "Communists and Capitalists, A Sketch from Life," inspired by a strike against the **railroads**. It was published in October 1878 in *Lippincott's Magazine*, which paid her forty-two dollars, the first money she earned from writing. At that point, French took the pseudonym "Octave Thanet." She later claimed that she chose "Octave" because it was gender-neutral, and that she had seen the word "Thanet" written on a freight car in the Davenport yards. She published stories and essays in such national periodicals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's Magazine*, and *Century Magazine*. These were often republished in book-length collections.

## ENTRY Octave Thanet (1850–1934)

TIME PERIOD	Early Twentieth Century (1901 - 1940)
CATEGORY	Fiction / Literature and Authors
TYPE	Person
RACE & ETHNICITY	White
GENDER	Female
RELATED ENTRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts, Culture, and Entertainment</li> <li>Early Twentieth Century, 1901 through 1940</li> </ul>





## Octave Thanet

AKA: Alice French

Alice French was a leading writer of local color. Some of her best work is based on the yearning for the **Black River** swamp country. French appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's Magazine*, and *Century Magazine*. Her depiction not only of the physical setting of the Black River region but also of the life of the people who lived there.

Alice French was born on March 19, 1850, in Davenport, Iowa. The French family also included sons George and Francis, both well connected to New England's earliest and most successful business in Boston. In 1856, he moved his family to Iowa implements. Concern for his health may have led to his death. Frances French's brother-in-law, the Reverend Francis French, was of Iowa and was enthusiastic in his assessment of the state. She made good use of her education at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, and returned to Davenport. She made good use of her education in philosophy, and literature.

Her first published work was a sentimental story. Two years later, she finished "Communists and Capitalists." **Communists and Capitalists**. It was published in October 1878 in *Harper's Magazine*. The money she earned from writing. At that point, French chose "Octave" because it was gender-neutral. She published stories and articles in *Harper's Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, and *Century Magazine*.



ALL ENTRIES HARRIS, E. LYNN

# E. Lynn Harris (1955–2009)

AKA: Everette Lynn Harris

Everette Lynn Harris was a bestselling author of novels about **African-American** men in **gay and bisexual** relationships. In his nine novels, which have sold more than three million copies, the gay characters are “on the down low,” or have not publicized their sexuality. Harris, a Black man, endured years of abuse at the hands of his stepfather and for years denied his own homosexuality.

E. Lynn Harris was born on June 20, 1955, in Flint, Michigan, to Etta Mae Williams and James Jeter, who were unmarried. When Harris was three, he moved with his mother to **Little Rock (Pulaski County)**, where she worked as a housekeeper. She soon married Ben Odis Harris, who helped raise Harris until he was thirteen, at which time the couple divorced. Harris had three younger sisters. The summer before his junior year of high school, when Harris was fifteen, he learned about his biological father and visited him several times while staying with relatives in Michigan. Jeter died in an automobile accident the next spring.

In his youth, Harris frequented the **public library** in Little Rock and fell in love with the writings of James Baldwin and **Maya Angelou**. He also worked at the **Little Rock Zoo**, Baskin-Robbins, Arkansas Paper Co., and **M. M. Cohn**, using the money to buy clothes and school supplies.

Harris graduated from Hall High School in Little Rock in 1973 and attended the **University of Arkansas (UA)** in **Fayetteville (Washington County)** in the mid-1970s. He was the school's first Black male cheerleader and first Black yearbook editor, and he served as president of his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha. He graduated with honors in 1977, earning a BA in journalism.

He sold computers for IBM and other companies for thirteen years, living in Dallas, Texas; New York City, New York; Washington DC; and Atlanta, Georgia. For years, he kept his sexual orientation hidden, and this led to depression and heavy drinking. When living in Washington DC in August 1990, he attempted suicide by ingesting a

ENTRY E. Lynn Harris (1955–2009)

TIME PERIOD  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

CATEGORY  
Civil Rights and Social Change / Fiction / Gender and Sexuality / Literature and Authors / Sexual Orientation

TYPE  
Person

RACE & ETHNICITY  
African American

GENDER  
Male

RELATED MEDIA





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ALL ENTRIES HARRIS, E. LYNN

## E. Lynn Harris

AKA: Everette Lynn Harris

Everette Lynn Harris was a bestselling author of novels about relationships. In his nine novels, which have been described as "down low," or have not publicized their sexual orientation, Harris's stepfather and for years denied his own homosexuality.

E. Lynn Harris was born on June 20, 1955, in Little Rock, Arkansas, unmarried. When Harris was three, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked as a housekeeper. She soon married a woman, and the couple divorced. Harris had three young brothers. When Harris was fifteen, he learned about his biological father, Jeter Harris, who was from Michigan. Jeter died in an automobile accident in 1977.

In his youth, Harris frequented the public library and the home of Maya Angelou. He also worked at the Little Rock Public Library, using the money to buy clothes and school supplies.

Harris graduated from Hall High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Fayetteville (Washington County) in the mid-1970s. He was a Black yearbook editor, and he served as president of the school in 1977, earning a BA in journalism.

He sold computers for IBM and other companies for several years in New York; Washington DC; and Atlanta, Georgia. For years he struggled with depression and heavy drinking. When living in Washington, D.C., he met a woman who became his partner and stepmother.



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on / Gender and  
sexual Orientation



## Peter Gregory McGehee (1955–1991)

Gay Arkansas-born novelist Peter Gregory McGehee was praised by reviewers for his outrageous comedies of Southern manners, in particular the sly humor with which he explores what he saw as a hypocritical society that easily rationalizes its own moral lapses even as it enforces a narrow, judgmental morality upon others.

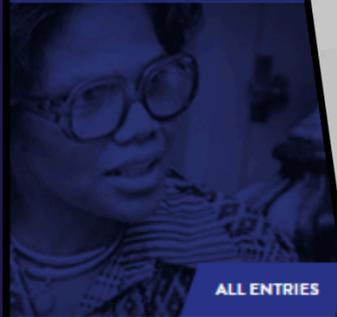
Peter McGehee was born in **Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)** on October 6, 1955, to Frank T. and Julia Ann May McGehee. The middle of three children, he was six years old when the family moved to **Little Rock (Pulaski County)**, where he attended Forest Park Elementary School and, in 1973, graduated from Parkview High School. Shortly before he would have completed a BFA degree at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, he moved to San Francisco, California, where he worked at various odd jobs while writing plays. There, he performed in a satirical musical review titled, *The Quinlan Sisters*, for which he wrote the lyrics. The musical toured in cities in Oregon and western Canada. While in San Francisco, he met Doug Wilson (1950–1992), a visiting Canadian gay rights activist, with whom McGehee would be closely allied for the remainder of his life.

In 1980, McGehee immigrated to Canada to be with Wilson, living initially in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and—apart from a period spent in New York City for immigration purposes—in Toronto from 1983 onward. He wrote and performed in a one-man play (expanded and later published as the novella *Beyond Happiness*, 1985) that toured central Canada, New York, and San Francisco. He continued to perform in and write new material for *The Quinlan Sisters* as well as for a two-person revue, *The Fabulous Sirs*.

In the fall of 1988, McGehee was diagnosed to be HIV-positive. The progression of his HIV infection into full-blown **AIDS** in the spring of 1991 left him little time to enjoy the success that followed the publication of his first novel, *Boys Like Us* (1991), which was praised in the *New York Times* and elsewhere for its comic vitality and witty yet natural-sounding dialogue. McGehee was able to complete a second novel, *Sweetheart* (1992), and a collection of short stories *The I. O. Zoo* (1991) before his death; both works appeared posthumously, the latter only a week after

ENTRY	Peter Gregory McGehee (1955–1991)
TIME PERIOD	Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)
CATEGORY	Civil Rights and Social Change / Fiction / Gender and Sexuality / Literature and Authors / Sexual Orientation
TYPE	Person
RACE & ETHNICITY	White
GENDER	Male

RELATED MEDIA



ALL ENTRIES

## Peter

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Gender and  
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RELATED MEDIA





## Danielle Bunten Berry (1949–1998)

AKA: Daniel Bunten

Danielle (Dani) Berry was a revolutionary computer game designer who specialized in multi-player games at a time when few in the industry were interested in the idea. She is also remembered for breaking gender boundaries in the industry, having been assigned male at birth but undergoing gender transition late in her career. Berry's 1983 game *M.U.L.E.* was listed third on *Computer Gaming World's* 1996 list of the best games of all time, and Will Wright, the designer of *Sim City*, once said, "Ask most game designers what their favorite computer game of all time is, and you'll get *M.U.L.E.* as an answer more often than any other title." She was a major influence upon the likes of Wright and *Civilization* designer Sid Meier. She once said of her career, "When I was a kid, the only times my family spent together that weren't totally dysfunctional were when we were playing games. Consequently, I believe games are a wonderful way to socialize."

Danielle Berry was born Daniel Paul Bunten on February 19, 1949, in St. Louis, Missouri, the oldest of six children. The family moved to **Little Rock (Pulaski County)** in 1965, and Bunten lived in and around Little Rock until the last years of her life, when she moved to Palo Alto, California. The family occasionally experienced hard times, and Bunten worked at a drugstore and as an assistant scoutmaster for a Boy Scout troop to provide extra money. Bunten graduated from **Catholic High School for Boys**.

In 1971, Bunten opened a bicycle shop, the Highroller Cyclerie, near the **University of Arkansas (UA)** in **Fayetteville (Washington County)** and received a degree in industrial engineering from UA in 1974. Bunten's first job involved doing mathematical modeling of urban systems for the National Science Foundation, which Bunten said "was the closest thing to building games I could find." In 1978, Bunten's first computer game, *Wheeler Dealers* for the Apple II, was published by Speakeasy Software; one of the first multiplayer games in an era before networking, it was sold with a custom controller to allow multiple players. *Wheeler Dealers* only sold about fifty copies, but it was followed by three titles for SSI, an early computer game publisher: *Computer Quarterback* (1978), *Cartels & Cutthroats* (1979), and *Cutron Masters* (1982).

### ENTRY Danielle Bunten Berry (1949–1998)

#### TIME PERIOD

Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

#### CATEGORY

Math and Computer Science / Science and Medicine / Science and Technology

#### TYPE

Person

#### RACE & ETHNICITY

White

#### GENDER

Female

#### RELATED ENTRIES



LGBTQ+ Movement



Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968–2022







# Boy Erased

Garrard Conley's 2016 memoir *Boy Erased* recounts his experiences at the Memphis, Tennessee, "ex-gay" therapy program Love in Action, to which his parents sent him in 2004 upon learning that he was gay. A movie adaptation of the book was released in November 2018.

Conley, who was born in Memphis and grew up in northern Arkansas—first in **Cherokee Village (Sharp and Fulton counties)**, then in **Mountain Home (Baxter County)**—is the son of Hershel Conley and Martha Caudill Conley. His father served as a Missionary **Baptist** pastor in Mountain Home. Conley was a **Lyon College** freshman when another student outed him as gay. In response, his parents sent him to Love in Action. His memoir is a painful reflection on his struggle to deal with his sexual orientation in a culture dominated by a conservative Christianity that disapproves of homosexuality.

In *Boy Erased* and interviews about it, Conley stressed that he wrote his book to give hope to others facing similar circumstances. As he told Bryan Borland of the *Arkansas Times*, the message he seeks to convey to others like himself is, "Hold on. Keep reading. Keep learning. Some day you will make it out. But don't forget where you came from. There are people like you who haven't made it out, and these people need your help."

In *Boy Erased*, he states, "On some days, it's hard to believe that I ever lived in a world that operated on such extreme notions of self-annihilation. But then I turn on the news, read a few articles, and realize that what I have experienced may have been unique, but in no way was it disconnected from history. Minorities continue to be abused and manipulated by nefarious and well-intentioned groups of people, and harmful ideas continue to develop new political strains all over the world. What I can't quite understand —and what I may never be capable of understanding—is how we all came to be mixed up in the ex-gay movement, what drew each of us to Love in Action's double doors."

Reviewer Steven Tagle noted that, while Conley repudiated the "ex-gay" therapy on which his parents insisted and

**ENTRY** Boy Erased

**TIME PERIOD**  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

**CATEGORY**  
Cinema / Films / Literature and Authors / Media / Nonfiction

**TYPE**  
Thing

**RELATED ENTRIES**

- LGBTQ+ Movement
- Literature and Authors
- Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968–2022

**RELATED MEDIA**





## Boy Erased

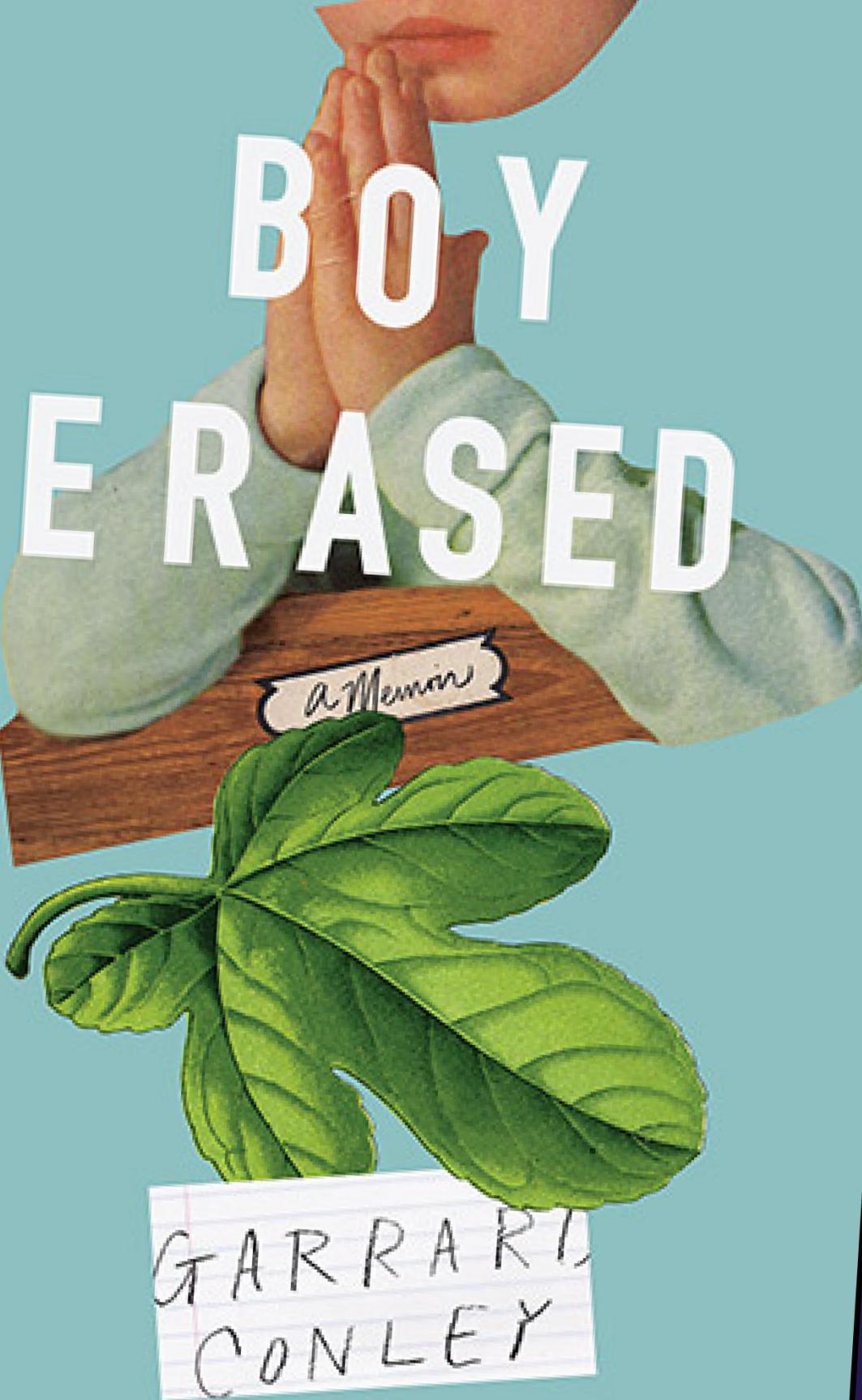
Garrard Conley's 2016 memoir *Boy Erased* is a memoir about his experience in the program Love in Action, to which his parents sent him when the book was released in November 2018.

Conley, who was born in Memphis and grew up in **Fulton counties**), then in **Mountain** Conley. His father served as a Missionary when another student outed him as gay. The book is a reflection on his struggle to deal with his father's disapproval that disapproves of homosexuality.

In *Boy Erased* and interviews about it, Conley describes the circumstances. As he told Bryan Borlaug, "Hold on. Keep reading. Keep reading. There are people like you who have been there."

In *Boy Erased*, he states, "On some days, the extreme notions of self-annihilation that I experienced may have been unique, but the abuse and manipulation by nefarious people and new political strains all over the world is a common understanding—is how we all came to this double doors."

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Involved Teachers/Students Blog What's New Support The EOA En Español About

ALL ENTRIES COX, V. L.

## V. L. Cox (1962–)

V. L. Cox is a painter and mixed media artist whose work has achieved national acclaim for confronting institutional racism and homophobia.

Vicki Lynette Cox was born on August 14, 1962, in Shreveport, Louisiana, to Lynn Cox and Mary Hardman Cox; she has one sister. Her father, an illustrator and engineer, was stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City, and following the end of his service, the family moved to **Arkadelphia (Clark County)**, where both he and his wife had been born and raised. When Cox was ten years old, her grandmother, Virginia Louise Pilkington Hardman, enrolled her in a children's summer art program at **Henderson State University**. Cox's great-grandmother, Virginia Louise Betts Pilkington of **Washington (Hempstead County)**, was also an artist, and her work is in the permanent collection of **Historic Arkansas Museum**.

Her mother developed a substance abuse problem while Cox was young. After her parents divorced, Cox was regularly abused by her mother until one day Cox fought back, and an uncle took her away from the house. Her grandmother Virginia Hardman then became her legal guardian.

Cox was a founding member of the girls' athletic program at Arkadelphia High School, graduating in 1980, and began studying at Henderson State University in 1981. She played volleyball for Coach Bettye Wallace and became a member of the prestigious "Bettye's Reddies." Cox transferred to **Arkansas Tech University in Russellville (Pope County)** in 1984 to study engineering but left the following year to work and focus her interests. In 1988, she reenrolled at Henderson and earned a BFA in computer graphics in 1991.

After college, she started doing marketing and advertising work in Dallas, Texas, as well as set design and construction for the Dallas Opera, the Dallas Ballet, and the Studios of Los Colinas before relocating to Memphis, Tennessee, after being hired by another firm. During this time, Cox had also been pursuing her own art, including designing and painting the theme and background for the National Civil Rights Humanities Awards in Memphis,

ENTRY V. L. Cox (1962–)

TIME PERIOD  
Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform (1968–2022)

CATEGORY  
Arts / Painting / Sculpture / Visual Arts

TYPE  
Person

RACE & ETHNICITY  
White

GENDER  
Female

RELATED ENTRIES

-  Arts, Culture, and Entertainment
-  Divergent Prosperity and the Arc of Reform, 1968–2022

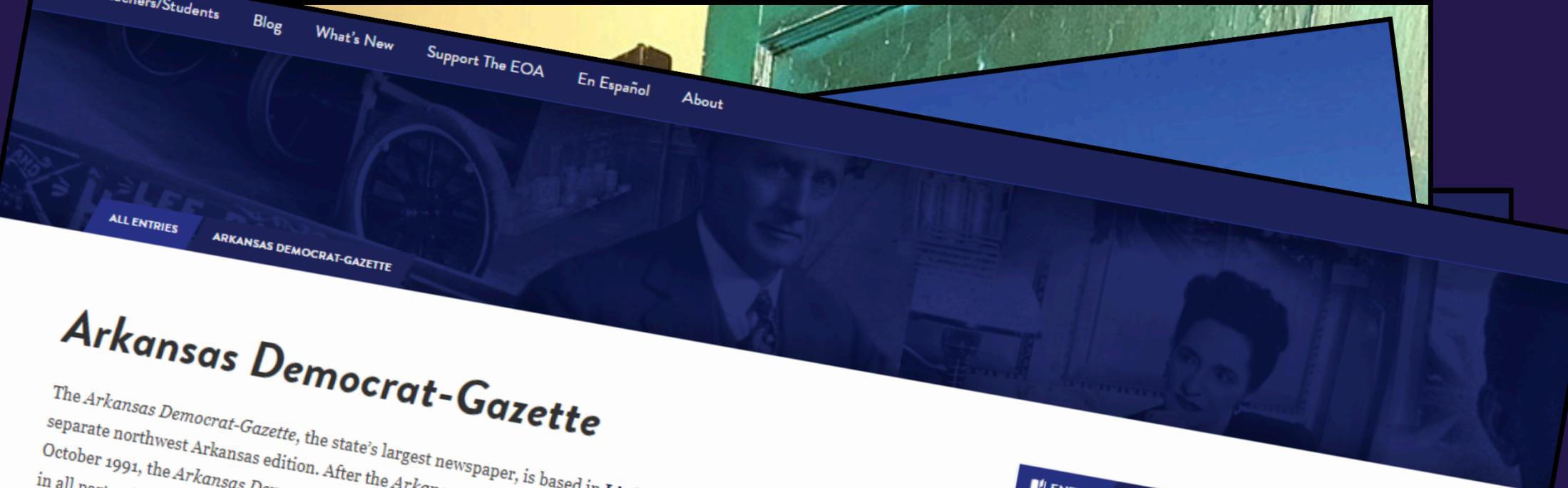


Involved Tea



11





ALL ENTRIES ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

## Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, the state's largest newspaper, is based in **Little Rock (Pulaski County)**, with a separate northwest Arkansas edition. After the *Arkansas Democrat* bought the assets of the *Arkansas Gazette* in October 1991, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* was born. It is the only statewide newspaper, offering home delivery in all parts of Arkansas.

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* has its roots in the Reconstruction era. A newspaper first called *The Liberal* became *The Journal* and then *The Chronicle*. Finally, it became *The Evening Star*, having passed through several owners and editors by 1875. On April 11, 1878, **Colonel J. N. Smithee** acquired the newspaper and renamed it the *Arkansas Democrat*. Smithee, who had served in the Confederate army, immediately launched an attack on the *Arkansas Gazette*, which was founded by **William Woodruff** at **Arkansas Post (Arkansas County)** in 1819 before being moved to Little Rock in 1821 after relocation of the territorial capital. Throughout 1878, Smithee criticized the *Gazette* editorially concerning the newspaper's position on the repudiation of state debt. The *Gazette* replied in editorials that the name *Democrat* was simply a cover for the **Republican Party**. Smithee, a colorful character, even had a gun battle in downtown Little Rock with Major John Adams, one of the *Gazette's* owners. Neither was seriously wounded, but it marked the start of a competition between the two newspapers that lasted more than a century.

Smithee, who also was state **land commissioner**, was charged with a conflict of interests by a state board of printing commissioners and forced to sell the *Democrat*. The buyers in September 1878 were **James Mitchell**, a former *Gazette* editor, and General W. D. Blocher, a former *Gazette* owner. Ironically, Smithee was later named

ENTRY Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

CATEGORY  
Business and Economics / Businesses / Media /  
Newspapers and Magazines / Print Journalism

TYPE  
Thing

RELATED ENTRIES  
WEHCO Media, Inc.

RELATED MEDIA



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OF ARKANSAS



# QUESTIONS

