

From Mark of Oppression to Symbol of Gay Pride

-- The Pink Triangle --

Purpose - This display exhibit (treated thematically) explores the creation, use, evolution, and cultural legacy of the Pink Triangle symbol in the overall context of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer / questioning) history. It has served as a touchstone for the development and adoption of other community symbols, and has recently reemerged in ongoing sociological discussions, political activism, and the current culture wars.



During WWII, the Nazis developed a system of fabric patch symbols worn on the blue and grey striped uniforms marking prisoners in the various concentration camps. The Yellow Star-of-David, which marked Jews, is perhaps the most well known. The **Pink Triangle** (**pointed DOWN**) was used to mark gay men. It is believed **PINK** was chosen to be the color most demeaning to masculinity. It is estimated more than 150,000 gay men were arrested, and as many as 70,000 gay men may have died during the Holocaust.

Over time, the mark has been reclaimed as a symbol for political activism and Gay Pride, and has led to the development of other important LGBTQ community symbols.

Poland - cacheted cover, 1968 (far left) with a prisoners' Triangle and a 'P' for Poland over uniform stripes, honoring Holocaust victims. Stamps of the *Struggle and Martyrdom of the Polish People 1939-1945* series.

Germany - photograph (near left) of gay men held at Sachsenhausen (Oranienburg) Concentration Camp near Frankfurt, 19 December, 1938.

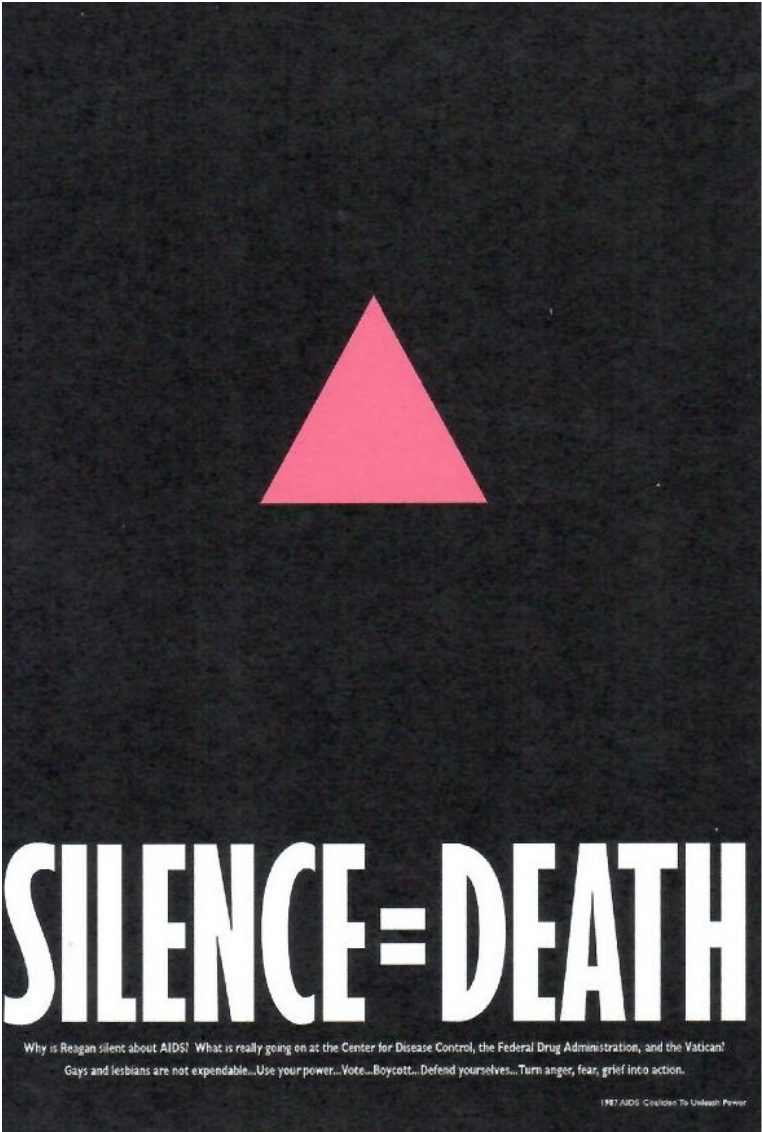
The Exhibit is Organized into the Following Major Sections

- 1] Gay Culture in Pre-War Germany
- 2] Social Nationalism and the Rise of the Nazis
- 3] The Pink Triangle, WWII and the Concentration Camps
- 4] Other Symbols and Persecuted Groups
- 5] Liberation (for Some....), Reflection and Remembrance
- 6] Early Gay Rights Movement and The Stonewall Riots
- 7] Politics and the HIV / AIDS Epidemic
- 8] Reclaiming the Pink Triangle for Social Activism
- 9] LGBTQ+ Identity and The Current Culture Wars
- 10] Beyond the Pink Triangle - Gay Pride and Modern Society



Modern Gay Pride lapel pins (above and bottom left).

ACT UP adopted the motto '**SILENCE = DEATH**' and image of the Pink Triangle, as a bold, militant graphic. The **Pink Triangle** was inverted (with the point facing UP) for future hope.



USA - art postcard (above) of the ACT UP symbol and motto with social criticisms. By ACT UP, 1987.

