



## TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING WOMEN OF COLOR, THE STONEWALL INN AND THE MODERN LGBTQ+ MOVEMENT

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVELS:** 5 – 8

**LENGTH OF TIME:** 40 minute session

### GOALS

- To learn about transgender and LGBTQ+ history.
- To learn about the key role of transgender and gender non-conforming women of color in the modern LGBTQ+ movement.
- To learn about the Stonewall Inn Riots in June, 1969



### OBJECTIVES

- Students will watch and discuss a video about transgender rights and LGBTQ+ history.
- Students will learn about the activists Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Miss Major and Stormé DeLarverie.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### EDUCATORS' NOTES

The rebellion at the Stonewall Inn in June 1969 is considered the lightning rod that started the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement. While the police frequently raided gay bars in the 1960's, this time the patrons fought back. Outside the bar, hundreds of other LGBTQ+ people and allies joined in.

This lesson highlights four transgender and gender non-conforming women of color who were at Stonewall. These women went on to become an integral part of the LGBTQ+ movement – Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Miss Major and Stormé DeLarverie. The first

three are featured in the following video. Stormé DeLarverie is included as she instigated the Stonewall riots as the first person to stand up to the police in their raid on Stonewall.

### **A Trans History: Time Marches Forward And So Do We: A Short Video**

The lesson features, [A Trans History: Time Marches Forward And So Do We](#), a 4-minute animated video produced by the ACLU and narrated by Laverne Cox. It tells the story of transgender history and resistance from Stonewall and other locations to the present day highlighting the important role of transgender and gender non-conforming women.

The ACLU notes in the introduction to the video:

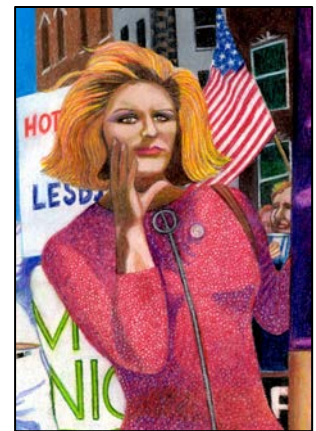
“While there is an increase in visibility of and attention to trans people, the discrimination remains staggering. And without accurate information about trans people, their lives and their rich histories, the impulse to push them out of public life will continue.”



### **Marsha P. Johnson**

Marsha P. Johnson was a Black transgender woman who was an outspoken advocate for transgender people of color and an activist LGBTQ+ rights. Johnson was a leader at Stonewall. After that she was a founding member of the Gay Activists Alliance that started soon after Stonewall. Later she established an organization called STAR, the Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries. STAR provided housing and social services to homeless transgender youth and transgender people of color.

Johnson died in 1992 at the age of only 46. Many people believe she was murdered. Her life and her work have been celebrated in numerous books and documentaries.



### **Sylvia Rivera**

Civil rights pioneer Sylvia Rivera was born in New York City of Puerto Rican and Venezuelan descent. Although many people have called her transgender or a drag queen, she identified simply as Sylvia and her gender identity remained fluid throughout her life.

In 2002, she [stated](#) “I’m tired of being labeled. I don’t even like the label transgender. I’m tired of living with labels. I just want to be who I am. I am Sylvia Rivera. I left home at the age of 10 to become Sylvia. And that’s who I am.” Rivera pushed the LGBTQ+ rights movement to include transgender people and people of color.

She was 17-years-old on the night of Stonewall. When the riots began, she [thought](#). "My god, the revolution is finally here!"

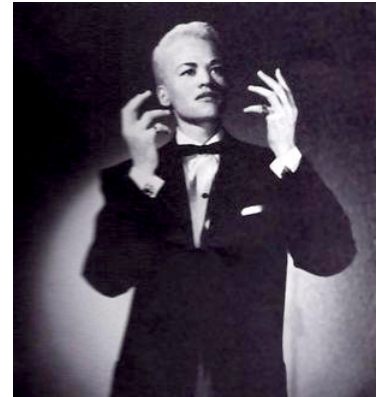
After Stonewall, she was a founding member of the Gay Activists Alliance. Then, along with Marsha P. Johnson, she started the Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries (STAR) to help homeless transgender youth and transgender people of color.

### Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

Miss Major was at Stonewall on the night the riots began. In the 60's going to a bar or a club was one of the primary ways to meet other LGBTQ+ people. Stonewall was one of her favorites because, "We could go to Stonewall and everything would be fine, we didn't have to explain ourselves."

She has worked and volunteered for many LGBTQ+ organizations since the Stonewall Uprising with a particular focus on women of color. She has helped trans women who were homeless, who have been in prison or who were dealing with addiction. During the 90's she became very active with organizations that were responding to the AIDS crisis.

Now, living in California, she says that her goal for transgender people is very simple, "We just want to be left alone to live our lives....I'd like for the girls to get a chance to be who they are. For young transgender people to go to school, learn like everyone else does, and then get out there and live their lives, not afraid or thinking that the only solution for them is death."



### Stormé DeLarverie

Stormé DeLarverie (pronounced "Storm De-Lah-vee-yay") was born in New Orleans in 1920 to a black mother and a white father. Stormé was a performer for many years. When she became an emcee for the Jewel Box Revue, she became known for her masculine appearance with men's suits and short hair. (For a striking image of her, see this Diane Arbus photograph.)

DeLarverie was at Stonewall on the night of the police raid. Primarily the bartenders and those people who were not wearing clothes considered "appropriate" for their gender were handcuffed and led outside by police.

Among them was a butch lesbian (Stormé) who resisted arrest. She repeatedly tried to escape before she was struck on the head with a baton. When that happened she then punched the police officer, shouting to bystanders, "Why don't you guys do something?" This moment motivated the crowd that had gathered to action, and the Stonewall Riots began.

After Stonewall, she continued to perform and she worked as a professional bodyguard. She was also known for roaming the streets of the West Village in New York at night to keep people safe from harassment and attacks.

### **PREPARATION FOR USING THIS LESSON:**

- Preview the short video about Stonewall, [Announcing the Stonewall Monument](#). If you are allowed to show films rated PG to students, you could use [How the Stonewall Riots Sparked a Movement](#) by History.com.



- Preview the short video, [A Trans History: Time Marches Forward And So Do We](#), featuring the role of transgender women of color at Stonewall and in the LGBTQ+ movement
- You may want to review Welcoming Schools [Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students](#) before presenting this lesson to your students.
- Welcoming Schools also has a handout [LGBTQ+ Definitions for Adults](#) that may help familiarize you with some of the vocabulary used in the video.

## MATERIALS

- [Announcing the Stonewall Monument](#) by the National Park Service (3:41 minutes)
- [How the Stonewall Riots Sparked a Movement](#) by History.com Rated PG (3:47 minutes)
- [A Trans History: Time Marches Forward And So Do We](#) by Molly Crabapple and the ACLU (3:57 minutes)

## THE STONEWALL MONUMENT: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

- [Optional] If your students are not familiar with LGBTQ+ history and the history of Stonewall, you may want to show [Announcing the Stonewall Monument](#) produced by the National Park Service when the Stonewall Inn was made an historic landmark. Or if you are allowed to show short films rated PG, you could show *How the Stonewall Riots Sparked a Movement*.

## INTRODUCING THE VIDEO: A TRANS HISTORY: TIME MARCHES FORWARD AND SO DO WE

- We are going to watch a short [video](#) today about some important people in transgender and LGBTQ+ history-- Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major.
  - Do you know what the word transgender (trans) means?
  - Do you know what the acronym LGBTQ+ means?
  - Have you ever heard of the Stonewall Riots or Pride Month?
  - Have any of you ever heard about any of these people?

## DISCUSSION AFTER VIDEO

- What can you tell me about Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Miss Major after watching this video? (Read or talk about the information about each of them provided in this lesson. Also talk about Stormé DeLarverie even though she was not in the video.)
- What rights were they fighting for?
  - Housing, healthcare, legal protection, safety, the right to assemble socially
- All of them spent time in jail after protesting for their rights. Can you think of any other people in history who spent time in jail after protesting for their rights?
  - Examples: Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, Dolores Huerta

- Are people still fighting for civil rights today?
- Can you give some examples of civil rights people are fighting for? Can you name some protests?
  - Examples might include: Black Lives Matter, Women’s March, March for Our Lives (gun regulation), Standing Rock #NoDAPL, right to vote, right to good education, workers rights such as health insurance, safe working conditions, equal pay, immigration rights, water rights...
- How did the people in the video fight for their rights?
  - In the courts, state legislatures, in the streets, voting
- Why is it important to know this history?
  - There is a long history of people working together for their basic human rights. If you learn about people who have worked for change, it can help you organize better to solve existing problems with many different people.

## EXTENSIONS

- Read other books to your students about people who have fought for civil rights.
- Have your students research and write about a civil rights issue that they care about.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- As students view the video and take part in the discussion afterwards, are they asking questions or pointing out things that show their comprehension?
- Can students make connections between civil rights activists and movements?
- Can students distinguish between consequences and outcomes of civil rights movements? (being jailed or murdered are consequences; having rights protected or ending harassment are outcomes)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Lessons to Understand Gender](#)
- [Books that Look at Gender and Support Transgender and Non-Binary Students](#)
- [Resources for Gender Inclusive Schools](#)
- [Be Prepared For Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#)
- [Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students](#)
- [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Training](#)

Lesson credit: Developed by Michele Hatchell, Madison, WI.

Image credits:

Screenshot [A Trans History: Time Marches Forward And So Do We](#)

Marsha P. Johnson from Marsha P. Johnson, Joseph Ratanski and Sylvia Rivera in 1973 by Gary LeGault

Sylvia Rivera from Marsha P. Johnson, Joseph Ratanski and Sylvia Rivera in 1973 by Gary LeGault

Miss Major at San Francisco Pride 2014 by Quinn Dombrowski

Stormé DeLarverie:Wikipedia