“Y’ALL BETTER QUIET DOWN”
BLACK AND LATINX LGBTQ+
PIONEERS

Est. Time: 45-60 minutes
Subjects: History/Social Studies
Age Range: High School
See the full lesson here!
Disclaimer: The primary sources used in this lesson contain strong, derogatory, and outdated language that is no longer used. Please remember to use correct language, including pronouns when referring to the people highlighted in this lesson. For guidance for appropriately discussing the terms featured in this lesson can be found at:

- The Trevor Project Glossary
- GLSEN Gender Terminology
- GLAAD "Ally's Guide to Terminology"
How did Black and Latinx people in the LGBTQ+ community take initiative in the Stonewall Inn rebellions, Gay Liberation Movement, and in the preservation of LGBTQ+ history?
In this lesson, you will:

• Investigate the life and work of Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ activists that were involved in the Stonewall Rebellion, including Stormé DeLarverie, Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

• Discover the importance of Disco and Sylvester to the LGBTQ+ community

• Define the concept of “whitewashing,” and how it excludes marginalized voices from history

• Investigate initiatives and actions commemorating the legacies and work of early LGBTQ+ pioneers, especially Black and Latinx trans women
In June 2019, the government of New York City held a press conference to announce plans to build a monument dedicated to trans activists Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.

The monument will be erected near the famous Stonewall Inn, which many consider to be the birthplace of the Gay Liberation Movement.
The featured quote was spoken by First Lady of New York City, Chirlane McCray, during a press conference announcing the new monument project.

“...The LGBTQ+ movement was portrayed very much as a white, gay male movement...This monument counters that trend of whitewashing the history.”

- Chirlane McCray
Based on the quote from the previous slide, consider or discuss with a friend:

- Why are monuments important? What do they represent?
- McCray mentions that the monument counters “whitewashing” of history. What does she mean by this? What is at risk when history is whitewashed?
THE STONEWALL RIOTS

Watch this clip on the Stonewall Rebellion, which took place at the location of where the monument will be built.
Consider or ask a friend:

• What happened at Stonewall?

• What is the significance of the Stonewall Rebellion? How is it presented in the clip?

• How do you think this clip relates to McCray’s argument that the remembering of the Stonewall Rebellion has been “whitewashed”?
In this lesson, you will be learning about LGBTQ+ pioneers who are often left out of the history of the Stonewall Rebellion and Gay Liberation Movement.

Each pioneer has an associated handout with questions. Use a scratch piece of paper or a word processing program to answer each question on the handouts.
Stormé DeLarverie

Activist Stormé DeLarverie performed with the Jewel Box Revue - one of the earliest drag shows and one of the first shows to play before an integrated audience. DeLarverie is credited as being one of the first people at the Stonewall Inn to fight back against the police during the Rebellion.

Learn more about Stormé DeLarverie and the Jewel Box Revue here.
Marsha P. Johnson

Marsha “Pay it No Mind” Johnson was a trans rights and LGBTQ+ activist. After participating in the Stonewall Rebellions, Johnson founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) with Sylvia Rivera. STAR provided food, water, and shelter to homeless sex workers and queer and trans youth.

Learn more about Marsha P. Johnson and STAR [here](#).
Sylvia Rivera

Sylvia Rivera was an activist involved with the Civil Rights Movement and Women’s Rights Movements. After participating in the Stonewall Rebellions, she founded STAR with Marsha P. Johnson.

Learn more about Sylvia Rivera [here](#).
Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

Miss Major Griffin Gracy is an activist involved in the Anti-War, Civil Rights, and Women’s Rights movements. She was one of the first to participate in the Stonewall Rebellions, and was knocked unconscious by the police.

Learn more about Miss Major Griffin-Gracy here.
Sylvester

Musician Sylvester became one of the iconic voices of the Gay Liberation movement, and the Disco Genre. Later, he became a community and HIV/AIDS activist.

Learn more about Sylvester [here](#), writing key facts about him on a scratch piece of paper or a word processing program.
Watch a clip on Sylverster’s importance to the LGBTQ+ community here.
Consider or ask a friend:

- What are the origins of discos? What kind of spaces did disco dancing occur in according to the clip?

- For the LGBTQ+ community, what might have been the message of Sylvester’s chorus, “You make me feel mighty real?”

- In the clip, David Mixner describes Sylvester as a symbol of “defiance.” What about Sylvester and his music might support this statement? What might Sylvester be defiant against?
In 2018, activist, writer, and filmmaker Tourmaline along with artist and fellow filmmaker Sasha Wortzel, released their short film Happy Birthday, Marsha! The film depicts the life of trans activist Marsha P. Johnson in the hours prior to the Stonewall Rebellion. Tourmaline and Wortzel released the following statement about the film.
Read **this statement** made by Tourmaline and Sasha Wortzel
Based on the statement on the previous slide, consider or ask a friend:

- What was Tourmaline and Wortzel’s motivation to make Happy Birthday, Marsha!?

- According to their statement, why is it important to revisit stories from the past?

- How does work like Happy Birthday, Marsha! combat erasure?

- How did the work of activists like Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Stormé DeLarverie, and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy pave the way for others?
• The Stonewall Rebellion and Gay Liberation Movement has been whitewashed, erasing the contributions of Black and Brown LGBTQ+ pioneers

• Highlighting their contributions and sharing their work combats their erasure and honors their legacies
BE CREATIVE

Create a monument dedicated to one of the pioneers featured in this lesson (or another LGBTQ+ POC that you believe deserves more recognition). You may use any medium available to you (drawing, painting, mixed media, digital, etc).
• Watch the 10 minute short about Miss Major Griffin-Gracy from *Vice*. Write a one-page summary or response.

• Watch “Happy Birthday Marsha!” by Tourmaline and Sasha Wortzel. Write a summary of the short film, incorporating additional research into the life and work of Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.
CONNECT

Share it with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your work with TeachRock on Instagram or Facebook, email to info@teachrock.org, or Tweet it to @TeachRock.
Visit us at teachrock.org for hundreds of other free arts-rich resources for every age range and classroom.

Please check back to teachrock.org/distancelearning frequently as we will update the material weekly!