



1969 Stonewall Uprising and Gay Liberation in June

A Storytime Program for Stonewall Inn National Monument, New York



Summary: Stonewall Inn National Monument at Christopher Park played a vital role in the LGBT movement of the 1960's and 70's. The Stonewall Inn is a gay bar located in Greenwich Village in New York City. This is the location of the historic "Stonewall Uprising" during the evening of June 28, 1969. What started as a bar raid became an example of a fight for equal rights for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people. Stonewall National Monument is the first U.S. National Monument dedicated to LGBT civil rights and history. It received its National Monument designation on June 24, 2016 and is part of the National Park Service.

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Directions

To set your scene, print or display the map and images for your audience to visualize the historic place. Read the historical narrative of Stonewall Inn, show video clips about the creation of Stonewall Inn National Monument, and use the prompts to engage patrons of all ages in a discussion about civil rights, identity, and LGBTQIA+ issues. You may end your program with the activity included at the end.

The story of the Stonewall Uprising carries many universal themes and nuggets for your audience to embrace. Encourage patrons to ask questions throughout the program. Include a display of books about topics that can range from biographies about LGBTQ individuals, novels by LGBTQ individuals, and illustrated children's books about identity and LGBTQ history, to books about the 1st Amendment and policing. If someone asks a question that you can't answer directly, just be honest! Encourage them to turn to the library stacks or use the library computers to search for more information.

Images to illustrate and ground imaginations in the *place*

- Map of New York, NY with Stonewall Inn marked and discussion questions
- Photo of the Gay Liberation Monument in Christopher Park and discussion questions

Suggested Books to Be Read or Displayed

This Misadventures of the Family Fletcher by Dana Alison Levy

Heather Has Two Mommies by Leslea Newman

The Boy in the Dress by David Williams

Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition by Katie Rain Hill

Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kristin Cronn-Mills

Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution by David Carter

This Day in June by Gayle Pittman



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The Story of the Stonewall Inn Uprising, by James Fitzgerald and Katie Orr

It was a hot night in late June. Humid and warm even after dark. But that didn't keep New Yorkers at home when they wanted to go out dancing at a club. It was 1969 and freedom, liberation, and rebellion were on everyone's minds. The summer at the end of a long decade of civil rights, protest, and violence was a time to go out and have fun.

In Greenwich Village, there was one small bar where gays, lesbians, and gender non-conforming and all kinds of queer-identifying people hung out. You had to be on the list to get in and few people gave their real name. The cops would come by every now and then to raid the place or to collect a cash payoff to leave it be. Lots of gay bars used to be owned by the Mob and would bribe the cops. Stonewall paid New York cops \$1,200 a month.

Why did they pay? They paid because even if it wasn't illegal to be gay, cross-dressing and other "gay" behavior was against the law and even queer behavior that wasn't illegal would still draw police harassment. A woman couldn't embrace or hold hands with her girlfriend. Men couldn't dance together. Bars and clubs were public places, so anti-gay laws followed American citizens into places like Stonewall. Regardless of laws, law enforcement and the general public pose a threat to folks who break social and cultural norms. For example, if a police officer saw someone who they believed was a man wearing a dress, they may stop and harass that person. If they couldn't arrest someone for being a lesbian, they might arrest her for public intoxication or loitering.

So, the LGBTQ community could go and stay on the down-low as long as the corrupt Stonewall bar owners and city cops did, too. The Mob's payoffs worked until that night in June. That night in June, New Yorkers were tired of the down-low. When cops came to raid the bar, the patrons pushed back.

They didn't go quietly and violence erupted. These cops were trained to subdue anti-War protestors and dressed up in full riot gear, ready for a fight. They were trying to push back the crowd of protestors. But there were hundreds of people, maybe even a thousand. Some ended up in cop cars and were arrested. One person died in custody. Several were injured. But the police couldn't subdue them all.

Over the next week, hundreds of young LGBTQ men and women, angry at police harassment and oppression, gathered to sing, dance, yell, and, if necessary, fight. They converged on Christopher Street and the Stonewall Inn. It was a shock: many never imagined this community would ever rise up against the law. But it was the time of social protest across the nation, and these kids were fed up. They had had enough.

In New York, the raid sparked anger. The protestors didn't scatter-- they gathered.

In later years, the spontaneous riots would be compared to the Boston Tea Party, a singular event someone could point to as the place that the modern gay rights movement began. During the days of protesting, one woman, declaring her rights and dignity as a lesbian American in the streets in front the Stonewall, felt "like the world, really, had been turned upside down."



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Today we celebrate Pride Month and LGBTQIA experiences and heritage during June because June was when the Stonewall Inn uprising happened. Cities across the world have parades and festivals to celebrate something that used to be illegal and viewed as shameful. It all can be traced back to Stonewall. It's an important place and a place where we can learn about American history. Even if you don't identify as LGBTQ, you can be proud of this place where Americans stood up for freedom of expression and freedom from police oppression.

Now, imagine what would spark the courage in you to risk everything to stand up for yourself. Where's your line in the sand? What do you value?

What American values are found in the history of Stonewall Inn?

What stories related to the Stonewall Uprising and its legacy should be told?

What do you want from Stonewall as a National Park? What kind of information and events should it provide visitors to the Village?

Who should the National Park Service reach out to through Stonewall? Who might the park serve?

Is there anything else you would like us to know as we continue to plan this new park?

What can straight people find to value about the story of Stonewall Inn?

Why did the modern LGBTQ activist movement start in New York City? What's unique about this city?

Why is Stonewall National Monument special or important to you? What is your connection to its stories?

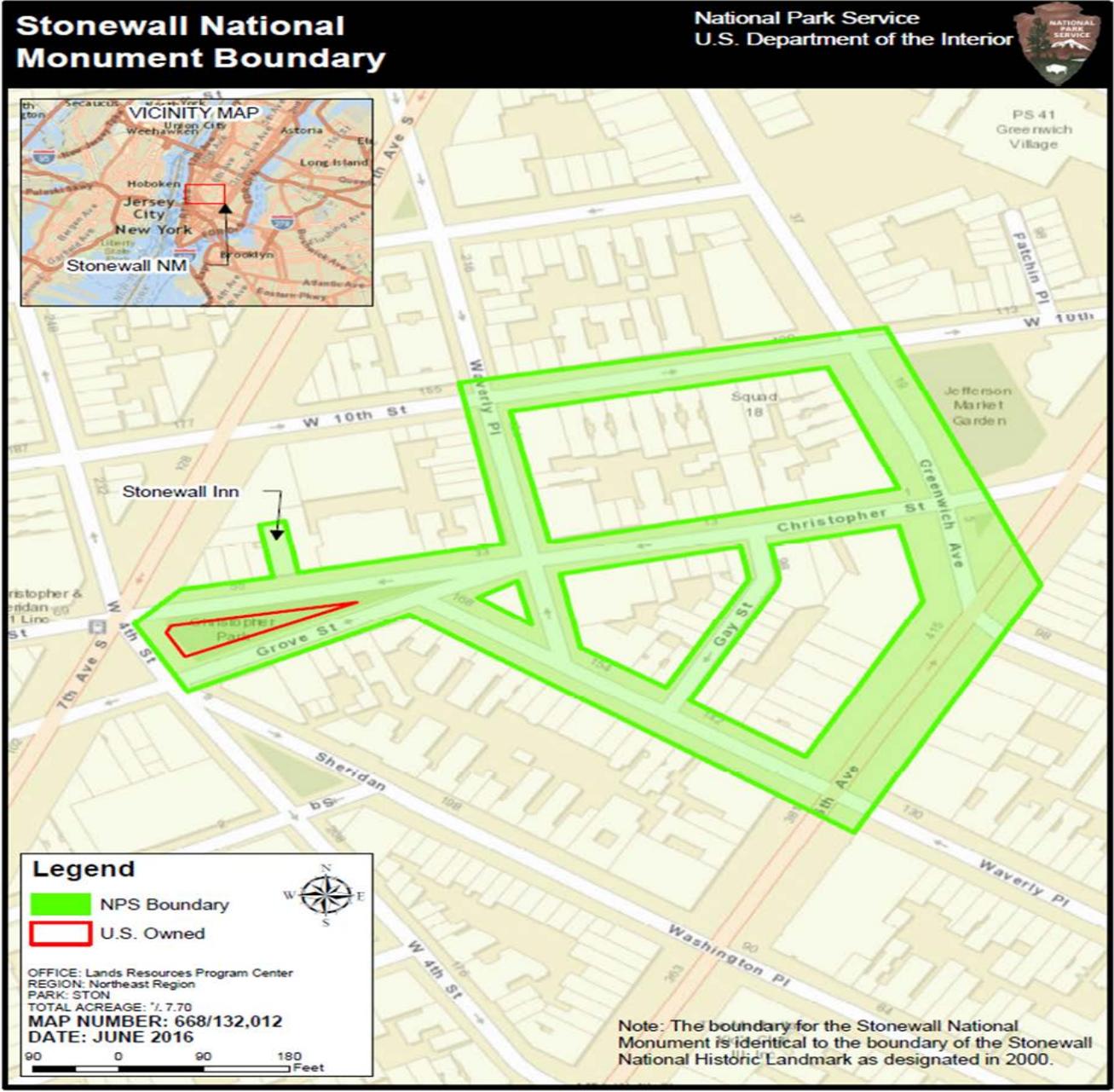
What other places should be National Parks? Why?



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Map

Map of Greenwich Village in New York City with Stonewall Inn Uprising historic protest spaces marked in green. Red triangle is Christopher Park, across from the historic Stonewall Inn.





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Map discussion questions

Why do you think Stonewall became a central meeting place for the LGBT community? Where would a meeting place be for your community? Why?

The Greenwich Village neighborhood is historically known as a “safe haven” for the LGBT community in New York City. Why do you think that is? What are other types of locations that can be considered “safe havens” for others? Why?

Are there locations or areas you consider to be safe spaces for your community? Why? Are there locations you do not feel safe at in your community? Why?

What are some of the neighborhood features that represent your community? (e.g., buildings, place names, types of restaurants, religious organizations)? Have you seen your community expressed outside your neighborhood? How?



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Image

Gay Liberation Monument in Christopher Park, 2016. Photo Credit: Megan Springate, NPS



Background: The *Gay Liberation Monument* is a monument featuring the sculpture *Gay Liberation* by American artist George Segal, located in Christopher Park along Christopher Street in the West Village section of Manhattan, New York. Segal's composition consists of two standing males and two seated females positioned on the northern boundary of the park, in naturalistic poses.

Commissioned in 1979, Segal was asked to create the piece to commemorate the Stonewall Riots. After almost 10 years of struggle, *Gay Liberation* was finally installed on June 23, 1992 during New York City's Pride month celebrations.

Gay Liberation lives in Christopher Park, also known as Sheridan Square. When crowds took to the streets during the Stonewall "Uprising" on June 28, 1969, thousands filled the park for days as the demonstrations continued. This land became the stage of the modern gay liberation movement.



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Image Discussion Questions

Why do you think George Segal chose this design for the monument? What do you believe the monument represents?

If you could design a monument to represent your community, what would it look like? Where would it be located?

Does your community have any LGBT landmarks or historical sites? If yes, where?

Discuss as a group, what you would like to see more of represented in your community and neighborhood. Why?



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Recommended Activity

Draw Your Community Life

The Stonewall Inn is regarded as one of the locations that represents the progress of the LGBT movement and the Greenwich neighborhood. *Close your eyes and imagine a location that you feel best represents your community.* Describe each location and discuss the similarities and differences amongst the group.

How would you describe to someone from a different galaxy what your community is all about? What do you feel would be important for others to know about the history and heritage of your community?

How do you feel your community has changed in the last 5 years? 15 years? Was the change positive or negative?

A community exists whenever people feel a connection between one another. This connection is not limited to a friend or family relationship, but can also exist within community organizations or other individuals that share common traits. There are many components that make up your community and can vary from person to person.

Ask the group to think about their communities, both those they live in and those made up of people they feel connected to.

On a sheet of paper, list the various components of your community (e.g., historical landmarks, gender or racial/ethnic groups, co-workers, school and/or college association, etc.).

Choose 2-3 components from your list. On a separate sheet, create a picture representing those aspects of your community using as few words as possible in your drawings. Ask for volunteers to share their drawings and have them explain what each picture depicts.

- Which of your communities means the most to you? Why?
- What responsibilities do you feel you have to other members of your community?



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Recommended Book list

Book	Author	Recommended Age Range	Accelerated Reader™ Book Level	Lexile® Level
<i>The Misadventures Of the Family Fletcher</i>	Dana Alison Levy	8-12+	Not Listed	750L
<i>Heather Has Two Mommies</i>	Leslea Newman	5-8+	Not Listed	AD460L
<i>The Boy In The Dress</i>	David Williams	8-11+	Not Listed	650L
<i>Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition</i>	Katie Rain Hill	14-17+	Not Listed	880L
<i>Beautiful Music for Ugly Children</i>	Kristen Cronn-Mills	14-17+	Not Listed	HL600L
<i>Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution</i>	David Carter	12-18+	Not Listed	Not Listed
<i>This Day in June</i>	Patricia A. Cain	7-12+	Not Listed	Not Listed



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Additional Resources

National Park Service: www.NPS.gov

- Search for Parks by location: www.nps.gov/findapark/
- Search for Parks by theme: www.nps.gov/findapark/advanced-search.htm
- Stonewall National Monument: www.nps.gov/ston/index.htm
- Teaching with Historic Places: www.nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/
- *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*: www.nps.gov/subjects/tellingallamericansstories/lgbtqthemestudy.htm
- National Register of Historic Places (NPS): www.nps.gov/history/nr/

State Historic Preservation Offices' websites: www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm

Stonewall Inn State Historical Site: parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/41/details.aspx

Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/

Accelerated Reader Bookfinder™: www.arbookfind.com/

Lexile: www.lexile.com/

List of famous LGBTQ individuals and allies: [www.algbtical.org/2A PEOPLE.htm](http://www.algbtical.org/2A%20PEOPLE.htm)

Youtube

- Announcing Stonewall National Monument: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywtvJyXDWkk
- The Stonewall Inn (NY State Parks): www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaAwtO3UUpM