

Marsha P Johnson:

Leader in a New Frontier of Inclusivity in the LGBTQ+ Rights Movement

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Individual Website

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## Process Paper

I chose Marsha P. Johnson as my topic because, as a transgender and nonbinary person, I have a personal interest in learning about and understanding the history of LGBTQ+ rights. Marsha P. Johnson was an influential figure in the gay rights movement, however because she was a black transgender woman her contributions have been largely overlooked. I felt that it was important to give her the awareness and appreciation that she deserves. It is also important to me to have this historical understanding so that I can meaningfully discuss the current state of LGBTQ+ rights.

Before beginning this project, I was already aware of Marsha P. Johnson's importance in the gay rights movement and her significance as a co-founder of STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), a transgender, queer, and racially diverse street activist organization. I began my research by conducting internet searches on Marsha P. Johnson, STAR, and the gay rights movement in the 1960's and 1970's. Through my internet research I found a wealth of information, including multiple interviews with Marsha P. Johnson, as well as with her close friend and co-founder of STAR, Sylvia Rivera. I also found many photos of Marsha P. Johnson as well as photos of events and protests. For this reason I thought that a website would be the best way to create my project. I added pictures and quotes throughout the website to give readers primary sources and historical evidence. Through the website, I was able to use visual elements that emphasized my argument, such as format and colors. I chose the color scheme of pink and white based partially off the transgender flag, as well as because of the significance of the color pink within the gay community.

Through her advocacy for transgender rights, her fight against discrimination within the gay community, and her participation in STAR, Marsha P. Johnson set the foundation for a more inclusive LGBTQ+ rights movement that valued gender, racial, and income diversity. Johnson's advocacy for transgender rights brought a new wave of inclusivity into the gay rights movement, when at the time the faces of the movement were mostly white, cisgender, and upper class gay men. Through connecting and advocating with her community, Johnson helped to mold the gay rights movement into a community oriented goal. As the co-founder of STAR, Johnson engaged a diverse group of homeless queer people in the gay rights community as well as fostering a sense of family among lower class queer people in New York.

LGBTQ+ rights have recently moved to the forefront of our collective conscience. As a country, we have recently made significant strides toward inclusivity, such as legalizing gay marriage in 2014. However, in some ways we are moving backwards, evident due to the recent anti-trans bills that have been passed in the country in recent years. As our society works towards increasing the rights of marginalized people, it is the perfect time to acknowledge, honor and learn from pioneers like Marsha P. Johnson.