

“We the people”



DRAFT

The History UnErased Academic Inquiry Series

- *teaches students about the vital role LGBTQ people and social movements have played in the development of our nation and the world;*
- *aligns with national, state, and Common Core standards;*
- *provides research-based content, pedagogy, and outcomes;*
- *offers suggestions for technology integration.*



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Title: “We the People” CIVIC Inquiry Kit: Student Edition

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Sylvia Rivera (holding banner) and Marsha P. Johnson (carrying cooler) representing their organization, the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), at the Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay Pride Parade, New York City, June 24, 1973. Photo by Leonard Fink courtesy of the LGBT Community Center National History Archive.

About “We the People”

Introduction

This “We the People” CIVIC (Connecting Individual Voices to Intersecting Concepts) Inquiry Kit expands the American Civil Rights Movement to include Gay Rights and the LGBT movement. It brings this story to life through archival audio oral history testimony from the Give Voice to History Project, which is produced in partnership with the *Making Gay History* podcast. In their own voices, trailblazers of the LGBT civil rights movement, including Perry Watkins, Morty Manford, Sylvia Rivera, and Ellen DeGeneres, explain how discriminatory laws, policies, and cultural practices led them to intentional or incidental activism.

You will engage with primary and secondary sources that connect the Give Voice to History Project archival audio oral histories to

- the history of the evolving policy regarding homosexuals and military service;
- Gay Rights activism in New York City from the 1950s to 1980s;
- Gay Rights groups in New York City from the 1950s to 1980s;
- the cultural perception and representation of gay people in the media (film, television, and print).

The activities in this CIVIC Inquiry Kit will help you contextualize the American Civil Rights Movement, analyze methods of challenging discrimination, and explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientation. The “Building a Nation” visual analysis assessment asks you to cite evidence to demonstrate your understanding of connections to the present and substantiate your interpretations through historical reference.

Note: The language introduced in this CIVIC Inquiry Kit mirrors language in the primary and secondary source materials. Using historically accurate language is necessary to understand the social, political, and cultural perceptions of those we label and understand today as LGBTQ+ (including, but not limited to, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer). “Gay Rights and the LGBT movement” is language used in the New York State Education Department Grade 11 Social Studies Scope and Sequence.

Learning Outcomes

You will demonstrate an understanding of Gay Rights and the LGBT movement and be able to

- evaluate and interpret connections between primary and secondary sources relating to Gay Rights and the LGBT movement;
- create meaningful and persuasive arguments connecting Gay Rights and the LGBT movement to the American Civil Rights Movement;
- define and cite evidence of *de jure* (in law) and *de facto* (in fact) discrimination;
- analyze and evaluate how individuals challenged laws, policies, and positions of power to strive for extensions of freedom, social justice, and human rights;
- cite primary and secondary source evidence and analysis to demonstrate understanding of connections to the present.

Essential Questions

- Is there one America or many?
- Is the United States moving toward or away from its foundational ideals?

Getting Ready

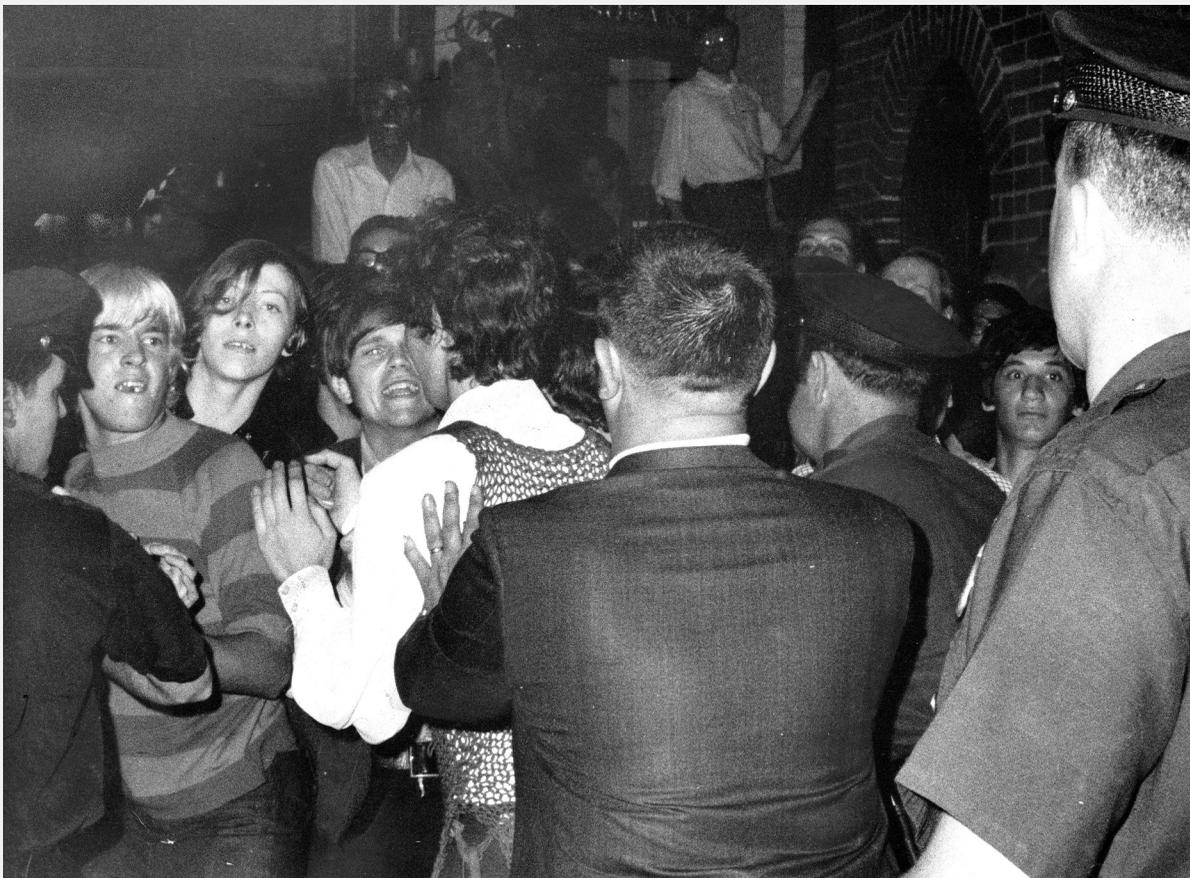
Make a Prediction

Read the Learning Outcomes and Essential Questions and make a prediction about what you will learn in this CIVIC Inquiry Kit.

Activate Prior Knowledge

What is your understanding of the American Civil Rights Movement? Who is included? Who is excluded?

Which discriminatory laws, policies, and cultural practices have been challenged in the past? By whom (individuals, organizations, or groups)? What were their methods for challenging the discriminatory practice?



Crowd attempts to impede police arrests outside the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village, June 28, 1968. Photo by Joseph Ambrosini, reproduced with permission from the New York Daily News Archive via Getty Images.

Stonewall Riots Background

The Stonewall riots, which were a key turning point for the LGBT movement, began in the early morning hours of Saturday, June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village. Back then, the police routinely raided gay bars, conducted uncalled-for ID checks, and made arrests—often roughing up patrons in the process. As the police checked IDs, harassed Stonewall patrons, and made arrests, people became increasingly angry. Patrons resisted and a crowd gathered outside. Protesters hurled bottles and debris at the police and through the bar's windows. The police reacted with violence, beating and arresting the patrons-turned-protesters. The riots continued from Saturday until Wednesday, with hundreds of people joining in on the fight.

But Stonewall wasn't the first confrontation between the police and LGBT people. In 1959, patrons of Cooper's Donuts in Los Angeles, an all-night restaurant that was in the Skid Row neighborhood and was popular with drag queens and people who today might identify as transgender, responded to police harassment one evening by chasing off the officers who fled in a patrol car. Eight years later, after the Los Angeles police beat and arrested gay patrons at the Black Cat Tavern who were ringing in the New Year, PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) organized a protest that drew hundreds of participants.

In 1966 at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco, drag queens and transgender patrons fought back against the police when they were attempting to arrest a patron for "female impersonation," smashing windows, vandalizing a police car, and burning down a nearby newspaper stand. The following evening, in response to a decision by the restaurant's owners to ban drag queens and transgender patrons, community members picketed the restaurant.

Nonviolent methods of resistance also occurred before the Stonewall riots, including the regional East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO) marches in Philadelphia. While these early confrontations and protests didn't get the attention of the Stonewall riots, they were important milestones of resistance.

Today, Stonewall symbolizes many things, but, most importantly, it served as a catalyst for the uprising that occurred after the riots, when the burgeoning national LGBT liberation movement experienced explosive growth and became more visible, political, and powerful.

Relevant Gay Rights groups:

- Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed in New York City in 1969 immediately after the Stonewall riots.
- Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) was founded by former members of GLF in December of 1969 in New York City.
- Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) was created in 1970 to advocate on behalf of homeless drag queens and runaways in New York City.



Photos, clockwise from the top:
Sylvia Rivera at Christopher Street Liberation Day in New York City, 1973. Photo by Leonard Fink courtesy of the LGBT Community Center National History Archive.

Sgt. Perry Watkins near his home in Tacoma, Washington, 1983. Photo © Steve Stewart for Positive Image: A Portrait of Gay America, published by William Morrow & Company, 1985.

Morty Manfred following his arrest at a GAA (Gay Activists Alliance) Board of Examiners "zap" protest, New York City, 1971. Photo by Rich Wandel courtesy of the Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Ellen DeGeneres, with her wife Portia de Rossi, at her Hollywood Walk of Fame star induction ceremony, September 4, 2012. Photo by s_bukley/Shutterstock.com.

Lenses of Analysis Tool

This Lenses of Analysis Tool with embedded Close Listening Activity allows you to organize your explorations into primary and secondary sources related to the Give Voice to History Project archival audio oral histories.

Primary sources are materials that provide first-hand accounts of the historical events you are researching, including oral histories, personal letters, photographs, music, art, demonstration posters, and other documents that were created by witnesses or first recorders of these events.

Secondary sources are materials that interpret historical events and/or reference primary sources (through the lens of the time period in which these secondary sources were created). They include, but are not limited to, obituaries, journals, news reports, and newspaper articles.

Directions

1. Go to <https://unerased.org/NYC11> to access the Give Voice to History Project archival audio oral histories assigned to you and related primary and secondary sources.
2. Write the name of the Give Voice to History Project voice in **1a**.
3. Listen to the oral history.
4. Answer the Close Listening Activity questions in **1b** while listening to the oral history a second time.
5. Investigate the online primary and secondary sources associated with the oral history. In **2b**, write down the names of two (2) sources that interest you the most, and note the important information you discover during your exploration of each of these sources. Consider the questions in **2a** as you engage in your research.
6. After you research and explore the primary and secondary sources, choose one (1) Lens of Analysis (PEOPLE, POWER, or CULTURE) to help you frame your evaluation and interpretation of the historical events that the sources reference. Write the name of the lens in **3a**.
 - a. The lens of PEOPLE focuses on how people interacted with each other as individuals or groups.
 - b. The lens of POWER focuses on politics, competition, and struggle.
 - c. The lens of CULTURE focuses on tradition, beliefs, religion, music, health, and media.
7. Write two (2) statements in **3b** that reflect your evaluation and interpretation of the primary and secondary sources through the lens you chose.
8. What more do you want to know? Write three (3) questions related to your research in **4b**.

Lenses of Analysis Tool

1a. Give Voice to History Project voice:

2a. List the names of your sources and website links, and note any important information while considering the following questions:

- What do you notice first?
- What is the perspective?
- What surprises you?
- Who or what is the focus?
- How/why is this relevant to American civil rights?
- Which civic leaders were involved? How?
- What laws were in place that can connect to this source material?
- What were the possible motivations to create this?

1b. Close Listening Activity:

- What do you notice first? _____

- Do you hear any background noises? _____

- Are any words unfamiliar to you? _____

- What other details do you notice? _____

- Describe the person's personality. _____

- What problem does this person discuss? _____

2b.

1. Source: _____

Notes: _____

2. Source: _____

Notes: _____

3a. Important information from the sources you researched in connection to the lens of

3b.

1. _____

2. _____

4a. What more do you want to know?

4b.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Example of *de jure* (in law) segregation:
“Separate but Equal”—

In 1896, the Supreme Court of the United States case *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that as long as separate facilities for separate “races” were equal, segregation did not violate the 14th Amendment.



Man drinking from a water fountain at an Oklahoma City street car station, 1939. Photo by Russell Lee courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Integrate NYC’s “separate is still not equal” symbol.



Example of *de facto* (in fact) segregation:

Segregation in New York City schools—
In 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. Today, across the nation, schools are more segregated than they were decades earlier. IntegrateNYC is a student-led organization working with students across the nation (IntegrateUS) to demand equitable access to resources and the opportunity to attend racially and culturally diverse schools “to better learn about ourselves and each other.”

Contextualizing the American Civil Rights Movement Chart

Directions: Use your Lenses of Analysis Tool to complete **column 1** of the chart below. Use your knowledge of the American Civil Rights Movement that is relevant to, but not limited to, women, gender, the differently abled, indigenous people, people of color, and new immigrants and refugees to complete **column 2**.

Suggested intersections and connections: Perry Watkins/*Loving v. Virginia*, Morty Manford/Bayard Rustin, Sylvia Rivera/Rosa Parks, Ellen DeGeneres/Jason Collins.

Give Voice to History Project voice:

Intersections and connections: Identify another individual or group within the American Civil Rights Movement who challenged a similar discriminatory law, policy, or cultural practice. Provide three (3) explanations of how this individual or group is similar to the Give Voice to History Project voice.

1. Which discriminatory law, policy, or cultural practice did this individual challenge?

Name of individual or group:

1.

2. Explain whether the discriminatory practice was *de jure* (in law) or *de facto* (in fact).

2.

3. Which method or strategy did this individual use to challenge the discriminatory law, policy, or cultural practice?

3.

Methods of Challenging Discrimination Analysis Chart

Directions: Individually or in small groups, use your knowledge of the American Civil Rights Movement that is relevant to, but not limited to, women, gender, the differently abled, indigenous people, people of color, and new immigrants and refugees to complete columns **1, 2, 3, and 4**. Use your Lenses of Analysis Tool and Contextualizing the American Civil Rights Movement Chart to complete **column 5**.

Suggested examples: the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Black Panther Party, American Indian Movement National Day of Mourning, and the Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act (Title IX).

1 Individual, organization, or group	2 Discriminatory law, policy, or cultural practice	3 Explain whether the discriminatory practice was <i>de jure</i> or <i>de facto</i>	4 Method or strategy used to challenge discriminatory law, policy, or cultural practice	5 Connection to another historical event related to Gay Rights and the LGBT movement
Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963	Discrimination and segregation in employment, housing, and public accommodations; police brutality	<i>De jure:</i> Jim Crow laws were still enforced <i>De facto:</i> police brutality	Peaceful march and public gathering	

Discussion

In a small group or whole class discussion, engage with the Essential Questions, additional suggested discussion questions, and questions that arose for you during your primary and secondary source analysis. Cite evidence from your research and reference your Contextualizing the American Civil Rights Movement Chart and Methods of Challenging Discrimination Analysis Chart to support your answers.

Essential Questions

- Is there one America or many?
- Is the United States moving toward or away from its foundational ideals?

Student-Generated Questions

What questions arose during your research connected to the Give Voice to History Project oral histories? (Choose one question from **4b** in your Lenses of Analysis Tool for each Give Voice to History Project voice you explored.)

Perry Watkins

Morty Manford

Sylvia Rivera

Ellen DeGeneres

Additional Suggested Discussion Questions

- Has America lived up to the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?
- What were the actions and values of the American Counterculture and New Left in the 1960s?
- How do federal, state, and local legislation affect *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination?
- What is a current issue that is important to you and connected to your research?

Visual Analysis Assessment: "Building a Nation"

This assessment asks you to compose a visual analysis of the Angela Alés painting *Building a Nation*. You will use historical references from this CIVIC Inquiry Kit to evaluate and interpret how visual attributes such as composition, color, texture, light, form, and technique convey ideas that the painting is expressing.

Assessment Process

1. Go to <https://unerased.org/building-a-nation/> to access a biography of Angela Alés (available in English and Spanish), the introductory "Building a Nation" by Angela Alés" video (English and Spanish), and an expanded image of the *Building a Nation* painting.
2. Read Alés's biography.
3. Watch the introductory video.
4. Read the "Building a Nation" Rubric on page 17.
5. Read the Visual Analysis Questions on the right, then carefully examine the expanded image of *Building a Nation* online.
6. Answer the Visual Analysis Questions to help you organize your evaluation and interpretation of *Building a Nation*.
7. Consider the guidelines in the rubric as you compose your visual analysis.

Visual Analysis Questions

1. What are the main colors?
2. What mood do the colors convey?
3. Why might Alés have chosen these colors? What do they represent?
4. What is the direction of the light?
5. What is the significance of how light is represented and reflected?
6. What forms, figures, and objects do you notice?
7. What do they represent?
8. What effect do the forms, figures, and objects create?
9. How does Alés make your eye move around the canvas?
10. Is there one place where your eye always ends up?
11. What does this movement and organization make you think about the figures or objects depicted?
12. Describe the texture.
13. Why might Alés have chosen the title *Building a Nation*?
14. What ideas are conveyed in *Building a Nation* that are connected to your contextualization of the American Civil Rights Movement?

“Building a Nation” Rubric

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Strength of Analysis and Interpretation	Visual analysis is weak and/or repetitive. Your interpretation needs to be developed and explained further.	Visual analysis evaluation is expressed clearly. Your interpretations are developed, but more analysis and conclusions are needed.	Visual analysis is supported with well-developed and thoughtful evaluations. Interpretations show strong analysis and conclusions based on your research.
Depth and Variety of Evidence <i>Use a minimum of three (3) historical references from your research.</i>	Little to no support from your research is present in your visual analysis and interpretation.	Your analysis needs to be supported with more valid and accurate information. Some of the information may not be relevant and/or does not support your interpretation.	Your visual analysis is supported in depth. Substantial valid and accurate information is used throughout your interpretation. The information is relevant and supports your interpretation well.



Building a Nation by Angela Alés. Reproduced courtesy of the artist.

Addenda

Give Voice to History Project Introduction Transcript

Eric Marcus: Hi. I'm Eric Marcus from Making Gay History and this is the Give Voice to History Project. In the late 1980s, I recorded a hundred interviews for a book I was writing about the LGBTQ civil rights movement, which we called the gay rights movement back then. After I finished the book, the cassette tapes sat in storage for almost 30 years... But then I dug them out, the New York Public Library digitized them, and I took a listen. Suddenly, I was back with all these people again—at their dining room tables, in their living rooms, sitting across from them and hearing about their lives... Now I get to share these amazing stories with you. Individual stories that connect to the bigger story of American civil rights.



Sylvia Rivera: Here, I'm out there being a revolutionist for everybody else. I said now it's time to do *my* thing for my *own* people.

Zandra Rolón: [He] kept giving us the, you know, the back of the bus type of thing, you know. "Well, you can sit over there. And you can sit over here and you'll have free drinks. But you will not, you cannot sit here. You will not be served here."

Deborah Johnson: And if there's anything that King had taught us, it was that we could sit anywhere in the restaurant we wanted to sit.

Ellen DeGeneres: For me on the show to be able to say, "I'm gay," was like... I mean, I cried every take we did. Every time we did that. Even in rehearsal I'd cry when I did it. Because it was such a release for me.

Morty Manford: What, maybe a thousand people sitting in the audience. And the mayor was up at the podium talking. It was just me. What was I going to do? I did what anyone else would do. I walked onto the stage and I took the podium away from John Lindsay.

Perry Watkins: Things are gonna have to change drastically in this country. People are gonna have to wake up and realize, wait a minute, I am an average American citizen. Whether I'm gay or lesbian or anything else, given that simple fact alone, there is no way in hell I should have gone through what I went through in the military.



Eric Marcus: Three decades ago, when I started researching and interviewing for my book, I was outraged that I'd never heard these stories before—stories of accidental activists, committed revolutionaries, and happy civil rights warriors, who gave me a greater understanding of who I am and where I'm from.

My hope is that by sharing these stories with you now, in a way that wasn't possible when I was a student, you'll have a deeper understanding of how individuals—people like you and me—can challenge laws, institutions, and assumptions and come together to make big changes. So let's get started!

Perry Watkins Transcript



Eric: I'm Eric Marcus from Making Gay History. Over the course of two decades beginning in 1988 I conducted a hundred interviews with trailblazers from the LGBTQ civil rights movement. Now, with the Give Voice to History Project, I'm bringing some of those trailblazers into your classrooms to help tell the story of this part of the American Civil Rights Movement.

Meet Perry Watkins. In the late 1960s, as social and political upheaval rocked the world, Perry was a 19-year-old African American man living in Germany and studying dance. On the other side of the world, the Vietnam War was at its peak with more than a half-million U.S. troops deployed there. At that time, all young men in the U.S. had to register for military service and were assigned a number. If their number came up, they were drafted, in other words, ordered to report for duty.

Young Perry was one of nearly 300,000 young men drafted in 1968. As an out gay man he had every reason to believe that after a quick trip to an Army induction center in the States, he'd be back in Europe and dancing again because gay people weren't allowed to serve. But that's not what happened.



Eric: Did you know you wanted to work in the military?

Perry: I didn't want to. I did not check the box "yes" because I wanted to go into the military. I laugh when the Army now defends their, you know, "Oh, well, it's just so terrible..." All they had to do was comply with their regulation, which said they cannot take me if I check that box.

Eric: You checked the box.

Perry: I checked the box "yes" and I was drafted anyway.

Eric: You checked the box that said "homosexuality"?

Perry: Would you like to see a copy of the form?

Eric: I believe you! I believe you! You checked the homosexual box.

Perry: Yes.

Eric: You were drafted.

Perry: Yes. I would be curious to do a statistical report, an investigative type report on the number of people who checked the box "yes," what their race was, and how many of them that were white were drafted anyway.

Eric: What year were you drafted?

Perry: 1968.

Eric: Vietnam War.

Perry: Yeah, good thinkin'.

Eric: Were you shocked?

Perry: Yes! That's why I find it absolutely ludicrous that the Army is in court saying, "We don't want this man." Why the hell did you take me? Fifteen years later, I'm still in court. I lost... This is a rental. I used to own a house not a mile from here. I lost it because when I got thrown out of the Army I didn't have an income. I don't have heat in my house now because I don't make enough money to turn on the heat. But yet I'm dealing with a system of justice who's looking at the facts in my case and going, "Well, we can't tell the Army not to comply with their

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80 regulation.” Well, who the [...] told them not to comply with it to begin with?

Eric: So you’re drafted.

Perry: I’m drafted, yeah.

85 **Eric:** And what do you wind up doing in the military then?

Perry: I was assigned to personnel, administration, of course, because I
90 knew how to type, I can read and write. I could also speak a little German and a little Spanish. A lot of German and a little Spanish. After that I was assigned to school to be a chaplain’s assistant. I
95 am called into the commandant’s office and I’m told, “You can’t complete this course. No, you can’t stay.” “Why?” “Well, because you’re gay, and I can’t have a chaplain’s assistant who’s gay.”
100 Fine, then put me out of the Army. He refused to put me out. I said, “Wait a minute. If I’m gay enough not to be in this school, I’m gay enough to be out of the military.” I requested discharge
105 three times.

Eric: No one would believe you.

Perry: No, they wouldn’t! I get to my unit. Basically, everybody in the unit just kind of accepted me. Until one
110 night five guys decided to sexually assault me.

Eric: They assaulted you.

Perry: Yeah. They tried real hard. They ran me around pretty good.

115 **Eric:** You must have been scared half to death.

Perry: Yeah, more than half. [Laughs.] But, I go in the next morning and I said, “Look, I’m not going to deal with
120 this. No, I want out.” Do you know

what the military did? What they investigated was not the assault. Our system of justice, our system, our military system of justice... “Oh, that’s alright for them to assault you. But we’ve gotta
125 prove is that you’re gay. The crime is not that they assaulted you, the crime is that you are an admitted homosexual.” I am not going to put up with this kind of shit. “I am gay, you people put me in
130 this damn Army, and it’s up to you to see to it that I am protected.” I never had another problem in the remaining 15 years.

Eric: So this is all in the first year. 135

Perry: This is within the first six months. So that’s kinda how that relates...

Eric: So you spent the next 15 years doing what? 140

Perry: Having a wonderful time. I worked in personnel, I went to college and got a four-year degree. I traveled, I lived in Europe for eight years, I lived in Korea for two. I was not sitting there stagnating and waiting to retire, it wasn’t like I wasn’t being productive, I obviously was. I didn’t get an exemplary record for nothing. Every unit I went to people looked at me and said,
145 “Oh, you’re gay.” Right, I’m openly gay! They opened my records, and—good grief!—everything they see says, “This man is a homosexual, but he functions in an exemplary manner.” Fine. Every time I was sent to a psychiatrist for an evaluation, they would do the same thing: “Yes, he is homosexual. But no, it is not detrimental to his job performance.” Exactly what they would write in a record, you know? 150 155 160

Eric: What changed?

Perry: In 1980, when I came back from Germany to Fort Lewis, Washing-

165 ton, the Army had told me they were
going to revoke my security clearance
because I was gay. This is the fourth
time the Army is telling me this. Well,
when we filed in court to have my
170 security clearance reinstated, the Army
immediately jumped up and said,
“Well, he can’t be in the Army anyway,
because he’s gay.” Suddenly, we’re
gonna change the rules of the game.
175 They never even mentioned discharge
until I took them to court to get my
clearance back. And then it was, “Now
we’ve got to discharge you.”

180 **Eric:** If you win, will you continue to
speak out on the issue...?

Perry: You’re damn right I will!
Certainly! Things are gonna have to
change drastically in this country.
People are gonna have to wake up and
185 realize, wait a minute, I am an average
American citizen. Whether I’m gay or
lesbian or anything else, given that
simple fact alone, there is no way in
hell I should have gone through what
190 I went through in the military.



195 **Eric:** Perry Watkins said the reason the
Army took him in the first place was
they expected him to come home from
Vietnam in a body bag. In the early
years of the Vietnam War, a dispropor-
tionate number of black men were
assigned to combat units and didn’t
make it home alive.

Perry wasn’t sent to Vietnam.
Instead, he wound up serving on the
front lines of an eight-year legal battle
with his employer, the U.S. military. In
1989 a federal appeals court ordered
Perry’s reinstatement to the Army. It
was the first ruling by a full appellate
200 panel that struck at the military’s ban
on gay and lesbian service members.
President George H.W. Bush’s adminis-
tration appealed that ruling, but in
November 1990, the Supreme Court,
205 without comment, let it stand.
He had the option to reenlist, but he
took a settlement instead and retired
with a promotion and full benefits. In
1993, he celebrated his victory as the
grand marshal of New York City’s
annual Pride march.
210 Perry Watkins died of complications
from AIDS just three years later. He
was 48.
215 So long. Until next time.
220

Morty Manford Transcript



Eric: I'm Eric Marcus from Making Gay History. Over the course of two decades beginning in 1988 I conducted a hundred interviews with trailblazers from the LGBTQ civil rights movement. Now, with the Give Voice to History Project, I'm bringing some of those trailblazers into your classrooms to help tell the story of this part of the American Civil Rights Movement.

Meet Morty Manford. In the early 1970s he was a young activist who very publicly challenged New York City's mayor over police brutality against the city's gay citizens. The mayor also happened to be running for president.

When I interviewed Morty in 1989, his activist days were long since behind him. By then, he was a 39-year-old lawyer working for the New York State attorney general's office. But I asked him to take me back in time, to his early days as a fearless young man.



Eric: I want to ask you about an NYU [New York University] protest, uh, where you broke into the hall where the mayor was speaking.

Morty: That was my 21st birthday. There had been some raids. The police were out going wild raiding the bars. They did this each year as the elections started to roll around. They'd want to build up their statistics to show the police were making arrests and they were arresting all these perverts. Those were the sorts of things they'd say in the *New York Times*. Anyway, we had

already reached the point where we weren't going to just stand by and let this stuff happen.

And there was a big uproar at One Sheridan Square, which was a bar. And the police had physically beat some gay people who were there. The police brutality against the gays was the inspiration for the demonstration at NYU against John Lindsay. It was a pretty quickly organized protest. Everybody was having trouble getting inside. Somehow or another I got inside.

Eric: All by yourself. You were the only one to get in.

Morty: Yeah. What, maybe a thousand people sitting in the audience. And the mayor was up at the podium talking. It was just me. What was I going to do? I did what anyone else would do. I walked onto the stage and I took the podium away from John Lindsay. [Both laugh.]

I walked up right next to him and I said, so the audience could hear, "The police are brutalizing gay people three blocks away from where we're sitting..." The police harassment and attacks were even going on that night. That was one of the points that I made. I wasn't there very long but what I said made an impression. The police dragged me off the back of the stage and they ejected me through, you know, some or another exit.

After I left, the audience called the mayor to account for what was going on with the police bothering the gay community. And apparently John

Lindsay had made the statement that he would permit me to speak. Of course, he knew darn well the police had already thrown me out, didn't realize that I would come back.

And I snuck back in. I mean, I broke through their security lines again. I can't tell you how I did it, but I got back in and I came right down that aisle. And I could see him looking up from the podium at me, you know, biting his lip and saying, "Oh shit, here he comes again." And I walked right back up on stage and I said to him, "I understand you said I could speak." And he said, "Yes," and he yielded the podium to me. And I addressed the audience about the police brutality and the harassment we were facing. And I said my piece. I thanked them and I left as surreptitiously as I'd entered.

See, I had this thing with John Lindsay. Somehow or another we had encounter after encounter face to face. There were several examples, I mean, I got arrested in his presidential headquarters.

There was a big demonstration at Radio City, and it was very well planned. The Political Action Committee with GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] did the planning. As soon as Lindsay, uh, came to the podium, I went right up to the railing at the front of the balcony and handcuffed myself to it. And I made my statement, "Homosexuals need your help to end police harassment." And some people had these little pocket alarms, I mean, and it created upset. Lindsay wasn't allowed to speak. We were all shouting that the police

were harassing gays in the city, they were brutalizing gays, you've got to stop this. You know, while we were honking and hooting and shouting our one-liners, you could see their sense of loss. They lost this battle.



Eric: The confrontational protests that Morty Manford and the other young post-Stonewall activists engaged in were called "zaps." And they worked. Before long the police began showing restraint and the bar raids came to an end.

Zap-like tactics were a hallmark of LGBTQ and AIDS activism into the 1990s and continue to be used today.

Morty Manford died of complications from AIDS on May 14, 1992. He was 41 years old.

So long. Until next time.

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Sylvia Rivera Transcript



Eric: I'm Eric Marcus from Making Gay History. Over the course of two decades beginning in 1988 I conducted a hundred interviews with trailblazers from the LGBTQ civil rights movement. Now, with the Give Voice to History Project, I'm bringing some of those trailblazers into your classrooms to help tell the story of this part of the American Civil Rights Movement.

Meet Sylvia Rivera. Trans icon, LGBTQ civil rights activist, and self-described troublemaker. When I met Sylvia, she was living in a rundown apartment in North Tarrytown, New York, about 30 miles north of Manhattan.

Sylvia was dressed in a black halter top, hot pink Spandex pants, and beige knee-high boots with chunky heels. I was wearing an orange down parka and green corduroys and I looked like I'd stepped off the "F" train from Queens, which is where I'm from.

Sylvia was striking: high cheekbones, wide-spaced eyes, bright red lipstick. With a gap-toothed smile she welcomed me into her steamy kitchen. While she stirred a pot of chili on the stove, she began reminiscing about joining the movement in the late 1960s.



Sylvia: I guess my revolutionary blood was going back then. Before the Stonewall I was involved in the black liberation movement, the peace movement. Because I had to. I had so much anger. About the world, the way it was. The way they were treating people. When the Stonewall happened, I said, here, I'm out there being a revolutionist for everybody else. I said now it's time to do *my* thing for my *own* people.

Eric: Do you think all this was in part because people were so angry for so long?

Sylvia: People were very angry for so long. I mean, how long can you live in the closet? **45**

Eric: So what happened after that night then? Did you start going to meetings of some kind? **50**

Sylvia: I did join the movement. I joined GAA [Gay Activists Alliance]. And that first year that we were petitioning for gay rights...

Eric: So it was 1970. **55**

Sylvia: It was 1970. I got arrested for petitioning for gay rights, the city Gay Rights Bill, on 42nd Street. The cops came up to me and said, "You can't do this." I'm like, "What do you mean? My Constitution says that I can do anything that I want." "No, no, no, you can't do this. Either you leave or we're going to arrest you." I said, "Fine, arrest me." They very nicely picked me up and threw me in a police car and took me to jail. I went in front of the judge. He's like, "Number one, I'm letting him go." He says, "But you don't realize what you just did." **60**
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Eric: To the policeman.

Sylvia: Uh-huh. "You don't realize what you just did." He says, "The whole country is going up in an uproar and you are messing with people..." **75**

Eric: Who are circulating petitions.

Sylvia: Right. And I'm like, "Ah, okay." They let me out. They let me go home.

Eric: Were you part of...? There was a protest at NYU [New York University]. There was a dance. **80**

- 85 Sylvia:** That was one of the sit-ins. It was a nice sit-in for three or four days. My brothers and sisters from the gay community themselves were not very, very supportive.
- Eric:** Was STAR formed already by then?
- 90 Sylvia:** Actually STAR was born out of the NYU sit-in.
- Eric:** What does STAR mean?
- 95 Sylvia:** Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. The people that held that sit-in for three days was my people, the people from STAR. The people... We were there and everybody says always, because you didn't have a place to live. That wasn't true, we could have picked up a trick and stayed at a hotel. We were there for them, Marsha, myself, and everybody else. When they came in and threw us out, there was nobody there except what they call the street people or the STAR people.
- 100 Eric:** How many queens were involved in STAR? Was it a small group? Three, four? Half dozen?
- 105 Sylvia:** It was very small. It was like, it was myself, Marsha Johnson, Bambi Lamour, Endora. Bebe, Bebe was part of my group at one time.
- 110 Eric:** What was the reason for starting it?
- 115 Sylvia:** Why was the reason? Because my brothers and sisters kept on using us and we wanted to be by ourselves.
- Eric:** You weren't getting fairly treated by them?
- Sylvia:** We weren't. The Gay Liberation Front did give us the vanguard of the revolution. We were the vanguard of the revolution, but Gay Liberation Front was too revolutionary. GAA came into their power at that time.
- 120 Eric:** What were you and Marsha trying to do? What were your hopes then for what you were working for?
- 125 Sylvia:** Marsha and I had a building on Second Street, which we called STAR House. When we asked the community to help us [tears coming down face] there was nobody to help us. We were nothing. We were nothing! They had... Now we were taking care of kids that were younger than us. I mean, Marsha and I were young and we were taking care of them. And we kept it going for about a year or two. We went out and made that money off the streets to keep these kids off the street.
- 130 Eric:** So, you sold yourselves to take care of the kids.
- 135 Sylvia:** Instead of showing them what we were doing, 'cause we already went through it.
- 140 Eric:** Because you wanted to protect them? What were you protecting them from?
- 145 Sylvia:** From the world. From life in general. You know, to show them that there was a better life.
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- Eric:** In the years since her death in 2002, Sylvia Rivera has become an icon—a symbol of LGBTQ people fighting *against* oppression and *for* respect and equal rights.
- 150**
155 So long! Until next time!

Ellen DeGeneres Transcript



Ellen DeGeneres, 1997.
Photo by Featureflash Photo
Agency/Shutterstock.com.

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Meet Ellen DeGeneres. Of course, you probably feel like you already know her. Watching her on TV, it's easy to believe that she's always been "Ellen"—out, proud, and maybe the most famous lesbian in the world. But it wasn't always that way.

Let's go back to 1997, when Ellen came out in the most public way possible. Back then, most LGBTQ people in show business stayed in the closet to protect their careers. She knew she was risking everything by going public.

But when I interviewed her in 2001, Ellen told me that coming out in real life—and as her character on her TV sitcom in front of 42 million viewers—was something she just had to do.



Ellen: So for me on the show to be able to say, "I'm gay," was like... I mean, I cried every take we did. Every time we did that. Even in rehearsal I'd cry when I did it. Because it was such a release for me. I mean that goes back to... God, you know, so much that's around *that* that just cracked open when I said it.

Eric: When the show was over, when you finished taping, was there a reaction from the audience at the end? Was there... What was the feeling on the set?

Ellen: I think I was too high to even know. I was like... Everybody said I looked like, you know, something had just lifted off of me.

Eric: Did it?

Ellen: Yeah. I'm sure. I'm sure. I let go of a heaviness, you know. We had to clear out pretty fast because there was a bomb threat. The studio had a bomb threat. So we had to get out real quick.

Eric: The bomb threat was because of you and your show, I assume.

Ellen: Yes. Yeah. It wasn't for the catering. Yeah.

Eric: What kinds of letters did you get? You said you got hate mail and you also got other mail. What kinds of letters did you get?

Ellen: People telling me, writing me or telling me, that they came out because of me. Realizing they were gay because of me. That they didn't realize it. And also, you know, the parties that went on around the country that night. Like, when else have we had an excuse to have parties like that? Like, I wish that would happen again. I wish somebody would do something so I could have like that kind of... Because it really did feel like this magical... Like everybody can remember that night. Like especially in the gay community. You know, it's just like what happened for everybody. We united and we felt like, you know...

And I can't really feel that because it was... I'm just... I'm in it so I don't know what that was like. But I can imagine what that must have been like for everybody else to have that kind of party. And someone called from New York and said, you know, you could just hear like cheering from other apartment buildings. And you could... And that the streets were empty. And restaurants were closing. And that seems like a lot of fun, you know?

Being a comedian it's a very different thing than being an actor. Because when you're a comedian you actually

make people happy. So they come up to you and they really have a different response to you. Because they just...
95 They like you. And also being on TV every single week they feel like they know you. But because of what I did, unless people are just completely narrow-minded and just evil, you
100 know, most people, the reaction that I get, I think that there's so much respect for what I did. Even if they don't fully understand it. But they really appreciate the fact and understand that I did
105 something that not too many people do.

Eric: Did that help sustain you through some of the difficult times that came in the year following? Did that
110 help at all during that following year?

Ellen: Yeah. It certainly helped. I mean, if I didn't have that, I wouldn't have had, you know... Because it was...
115 Because the press got pretty nasty. The press really turned against me. And really took advantage of, you know, pointing out the ratings. You know, sagging ratings and... It mattered to me. Always. It always mattered
120 to me what people thought of me. Even though I'd forgotten that for a while to say, "I'm gay and I'm going to say it and I don't care what anybody thinks, I don't care if I lose everything."

125 Ultimately, when it comes down to it, okay, yes, now I'm gay and I'm free. And then the reality hits like this big wave going, "We hate you. We think you're... You know... You're off the air
130 now. We don't want to watch you. You know... We're gonna show you." When you're that depressed and people are like, "But you don't know how many people, you know, you've changed,"
135 and, you know, it's like, you know, but, yeah, I'm sad... I'm, you know...

Eric: How was it coming back? How different was it coming back to stand-up now, from before? Because now

you're coming there as your whole person as opposed to...? 140

Ellen: Yeah, well, it's great. But that personal stuff had to come out of me to get that out of the way. Because that's actually... I keep pointing because
145 there's a TV there. But it's more political and more personal than anything I've ever done on stage. And I think I needed to do that. But... So it's helped me in being, you know, free to say
150 whatever I want on stage. And not worry that something is going to give something away. And, "Oh God, I can't talk about that because then they'll know I'm gay." Or, "I can't talk about
155 that because that's going to offend somebody." Or, "I can't talk about that because..." It's like... Now it's like, you know... I'll just... I'll say anything. And to me the only thing that's important is honesty. And as long as I'm
160 being honest with my feelings and coming from a good place, and coming from a true place, it's not gonna... It can't possibly hurt anybody. 165



Eric: In the short term, Ellen's honesty did cost her. The media storm that followed her coming out was a Category 5 and the backlash included hate mail, death threats, and ultimately the
170 cancellation of her show. When I interviewed Ellen in 2001, her place in our hearts and minds and on TV was not guaranteed. I don't think anyone, including Ellen, would have predicted
175 that she'd go on to host one of the most popular, long-running daytime television shows of all time. And that's on top of hosting awards shows, doing stand-up, and winning 30 Emmy
180 Awards and more People's Choice Awards than anyone. Ever. Add to that the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, given to her by then President Barack Obama.
185 So long! Until next time!

"We the People"

Nonfiction

Grades 8-12