



American LGBTQ+ liberation from the beginning to Stonewall.

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Season 3, Episode 12:

Stonewall Inn • Night 2:

“Gay Power”

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The original Mattachine Society jester logo is courtesy of ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

This transcript includes text from real homophile-era publications, letters, organizational documents, et cetera. These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

AUDIO: ‘Lindsay for Mayor’ ‘Remember the Mets’ advertisement, followed by siren blips

HOST: The Greenwich streets are swept... while the *New York Post* reports,

AUDIO: typewriter

NY POST REPORTER: Village Raid Stirs Melee. A police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a tavern frequented by homosexuals at 53 Christopher St., just east of Sheridan Square in Greenwich Village, triggered a near-riot early today.

HOST: The Stonewall Inn’s smashed windows are boarded up again and painted black.

NY POST REPORTER: As persons seized in the raid were driven away by police, hundreds of passersby shouting “Gay Power” and “We Want Freedom” laid siege to the tavern with an improvised battering ram, garbage cans, bottles and beer cans in a protest demonstration. Police said the raid was staged because of unlicensed sale of liquor on the premises.

HOST: But of course, as gay reporters like **Craig Rodwell** and **Dick Leitsch** know, police were pursuing so much more illegal activity going on in the dumpy Mafia bar.

As the smoke clears, word spreads. But it’s not whispered in the parks while cruising or over a warm beer in a boarded up bar. It’s shouted in the streets and printed in every gay publication immediately. Everyone is answering [the call](#). Gay and trans people from all over the city come to Christopher Park to see the Stonewall for themselves. The bar’s employees have written on the boarded up windows:

THE SKULL: Support Gay Power—C’mon in, girls

HETERO MAN: Insp. Smyth looted our: money, jukebox, cigarette mach, telephones, safe, cash register, and the boys tips

THE SKULL: There is all college boys and girls in here

AUDIO: growing crowd

HOST: Now with no liquor license, they’re only serving soft drinks inside the bar, which they’re giving away free, as long as you come pay the cover charge at the door. Queers from the neighborhood add their own messages to the boards on the bar’s windows:

GAY 4: THEY WANT US TO FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY THEY INVADED OUR RIGHTS

GAY 5: GAY PROHIBITION CORUPTS\$ COP\$ FEEDS\$ MAFIA

HOST: All the S's are dollar signs.

GAY 6: How can Inspector Smythe Drive a \$15,000 Car on HIS Salary?

GAY 7: Legalize Gay bars and lick the problem

HOST: On the sidewalk is written,

GAY 8: BUTCHES, WHERE ARE YOU NOW THAT WE NEED YOU?

HOST: Small groups of people are gathered on the sidewalks **all Saturday evening**, looking at the two copies of the *Daily News* coverage taped up on the boarded windows.

AUDIO: typewriter

DAILY NEWS REPORTER: Police have been keeping an eye on the inn to explore the possibility of "local syndicate involvements."

HOST: Cops walk a beat through Greenwich, telling people to keep moving. But their intimidation doesn't work. By midnight, thousands of queers are in the neighborhood coming to be a part of whatever happens next. Hippies come out to see the commotion and straight places turn gay for the night, as the Village is overwhelmed with queers. And it's still so hot out, of course. The angry mood still lingers in the air.

AUDIO: clip of queer folks talking in [Lilli Vincenz documentary "Gay & Proud" \(1970\)](#)

HOST: Mattachine members hand out copies of their pamphlet *What to Do If You Are Arrested*. People fill Christopher Street, pack Christopher Park and Sheridan Square, and wrap around 7th Avenue and 10th Street. Some people are gathered to protest, others to watch. Some Villagers and tourists stop just to see what's going on, and they stay to support the cause. One woman and her husband stop a police officer and she shouts,

WOMAN: Don't you know that these people have no place to go, and need places like that bar?

HOST: People stand up on stoops and benches to shout quick speeches and one-liners.

GAY 6: I just want you all to know...that sometimes being homosexual is a big pain in the ass!

GAYS: [cheering, clapping]

GAY 7: Christopher Street belongs to the queens!

HOST: Lots of gay people quickly return from Fire Island to see what happened, and find the crowd is a lot rowdier than they expected, like they're looking for a carnival rather than a protest. **Jack Nichols and Lige Clark** are among those returning, excited to join the crowd. They meet up with friends, hold hands, and chant. The chanting gets louder and louder as the crowds gets angrier.

VILLAGERS: [chanting] Gay power! [Audio from Vincenz documentary]

HOST: The Stone Wall owners step outside to coax the crowd into the bar.

THE SKULL: C'mon in and see what da pigs done to us. We're honest businessmen here. We're American-born boys. We run a legitimate joint here. There ain't nuttin bein' done wrong in dis place.

HOST: Stonewall management has hung a new sign saying "Members only" even though they let just about everyone inside. But as **Ronnie Di Brienza** writes in the *East Village Other*,

AUDIO: typewriter

RONNIE DI BRIENZA: Fuck them too! Why? To save their asses? To keep the public eye off them and the corrupt pigs? Horseshit, baby! We want the world and we want it now!

HOST: The crowd has little interest in patronizing businesses tonight. Village stores and restaurants close up early.

GAY 5: Let's go down the street and see what's happening, girls!

AUDIO: bus horn blows

GAY 8: Stop the bus!

HOST: At Greenwich and Christopher, the cruising place often called The Corner, protestors stop the flow of traffic onto Christopher. Craig Rodwell tells everyone around him,

CRAIG RODWELL: Don't let taxis or buses onto the street unless they're carrying gay people!

HOST: As cars and buses gently force their way through, gays start to push back on them. The cars rock back and forth as they inch through the crowd. The advertisement card on the front of a bus is torn off. Someone blocks the windshield with it and protestors beat the sides of the bus. chanting,

GAYS: Liberate Christopher Street!

HOST: Cops persuade protestors to let the bus pass. As it drives away, the protestors create a human chain across the street. Okay, officers, we'll allow cars—one at a time. The chain breaks just long enough for one car to pass through, one by one occasionally. People jump on tops of cabs and stomp around. They rip the red light off a cop car, and then they rock the car and tip it over.

AUDIO: car turning over, crowd cheering, bottles breaking

HOST: Closer to the Stone Wall, cops dodge bottles being thrown across the park from Grove Street. One kid throws trash can lids like Frisbees, neatly bouncing off the cops' helmets.

Trashcan fires light the streets. Doric Wilson stands on The Corner, looking up as red sparks gently rain down on him.

WOMEN: [distant cheering]

HOST: Up in the **Women's House of Detention**, where many Black and Latina lesbians are held, they're setting scraps of toilet paper on fire and dropping them from the cell windows — to show their support. Many of these women inside have been arrested in the bars. (There are so many lesbians in the House of Detention, some gay women call it “the country club.”)

As Craig Rodwell is stopping traffic, he spots **Marsha P. Johnson** climbing on top of a lamppost, dropping a bag full of something heavy, maybe bricks, onto a squad car's windshield.

AUDIO: glass shattering

GAYS: Liberate Christopher Street!

HOST: Cops run, grab the closest gay person they can, and jump into the car. They drive off with him, beating him in the back seat. Another patrol car speeds by Dick Leitsch.

AUDIO: typewriter

DICK LEITSCH: The fat cop looked for all the world like a slave-owner surveying the plantation.

HOST: As the patrol car passes Dick, a sack of wet garbage is thrown into the car and busts on the cop's face, soggy coffee grounds running down his frown. Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth precincts bring hundreds of cops to the Village, but they can't control the girls. **At 2:15AM**, the Tactical Patrol Force joins in again—a hundred TPF officers swarm The Corner at Greenwich and Christopher—and fifty more at Christopher and Seventh Avenue South, the other side of the Stonewall, bringing the party down to a tense standoff.

The TPF officers are in blue helmets, carrying billy clubs, and 4-foot tall plastic shields. The occasional beer can flies from the crowd to hit TPF cars. Out of the sudden eerie calm, two cops turn, rush into the crowd and grab someone at random and drag them to the paddy wagon. As the two cops hold the guy, four more officers beat him, punching him in the face and the stomach, and they hit his genitals with nightsticks.

GAY 6: [high, shrill voice] Save our sister!

HOST: Dozens of people rush the cops and take their sister back to the crowd. Everyone takes the beating, refusing to give him back to the officers. More TPF officers march slowly in wedges again, down Greenwich, pushing crowds out onto cross streets.

AUDIO: slow march, crowd persists

HOST: People run off Greenwich onto 6th, across Waverly and back to Christopher, sneaking up behind the TPF on Greenwich again. The officers turn around to the crowd, and march toward them. At each cross street, TPF officers break off the ends of their chain and chase queers down side streets. As Greenwich Avenue clears, the TPF moves down Christopher toward the Stonewall. Several young queer folks coming up the street meet the TPF head-on. The officers stand shoulder to shoulder, marching slowly, hiding behind their giant plastic shields. They clear Christopher down to Waverly, stopping right before Christopher Park, outside the bar.

A small kick line of queers sing their little “We are the Village girls” song, slighted updated: “We are the Stonewall girls, we wear hair in curls! We don't wear dungarees to show our nelly knees!” The officers, marching toward these little faeries, must be terrified: they're hiding behind shields and helmets, carrying guns and clubs.

Everyone watching wonders how long this kick line will go, how close will the officers get? Just a few feet from the shields, the girls break up and run. Like last night, the

queens scatter and simply run across Waverly, up Gay Street, and back out onto Christopher right behind the TPF. They dance and taunt the officers again.

AUDIO: typewriter

DICK LEITSCH: The most striking feature of the rioting was that it was led, and featured as participants, “queens,” not “homosexuals.” “Homosexuals” have been sitting back and taking whatever the Establishment handed out; the “queens” were having none of that. The “butch” numbers who were around the area and who participated peripherally in the action remained for the most part in the background. It was the “queens” who scored the points and proved that they were not going to tolerate any more harassment or abuse... Those usually put down as “sissies” or “swishes” showed the most courage and sense during the action. Their bravery and daring saved many people from being hurt, and their sense of humor and “camp” helped keep the crowds from getting nasty or too violent.

HOST: For centuries, homosexuals were quietly walking down side streets, discreetly whispering in the parks, nervously drinking in illegal bars. Finally, tonight, queers own the streets. They stop traffic on the main streets and take the offensive. If the police want to force gays into a ghetto, the gays demand to run it.

As two cops chase a group of a hundred or so down Waverly, one protestor realizes they outnumber the cops and they turn to shout,

GAY 4: Let’s catch *them*, rip their clothes off, and *screw them on the spot!*

HOST: The crowd turns, sees the two cops, and the officers turn around, too, and run from the girls for blocks.

GAY 8: Catch them!

GAY 6: Fuck them!

HOST: Police successfully block off Christopher Park, and surround the Stonewall. All of Christopher from Waverly to 7th and all of Grove on the opposite side of the park are blocked off. TPF swarms the streets, beating people at random. Protestors, and even some pedestrians just passing through, are slugged in the head by cops for no reason. Attempting to clear the crowds, the pigs set off tear gas in front of the Stonewall. But just as before, the angry queers are not discouraged. They’ve discovered a power they didn’t know they had, and they refuse to give it up. This battle, on the second night, is far uglier than last night’s.

Dick Leitsch sees the woman who yelled at the police with her husband earlier now sticking together with a large group of queers taunting the TPF. Over two hours, the queens run the streets with chaos and glee.

Slowly, the crowds dissipate into the night... Then as the bars close at 3, more people come outside, walking the Village streets, seeing the helmeted officers roaming their territory again. A brief resurgence of anger fills the Village again as protestors attempt to take control of a Village subway station, but cops chase everyone out. Around 3:30 in the morning, the Village cools, and empties out. The TPF still watches the streets til sunrise. Dick Leitsch discovers the docks packed with guys hanging out and hooking up. The cops are all busy watching the Village.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: **A few hours later, Sunday, June 29.** Henry Gerber's 77th birthday. The Village is quiet while the sun rises. The *New York Daily News* reports,

AUDIO: typewriter

NY DAILY NEWS REPORTER: "3 Cops Hurt As Bar Raid Riles Crowd"

HOST: *Those poor cops.* The *Daily News* hits the stands with a photo from the first night of the rebellion, showing **Jackie Hormona** and other street kids face-to-face with cops outside the bar, above the caption, "Crowd attempts to impede police arrests outside the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Street."

Meanwhile, as the Village wakes up, members of a group called the **Homophile Youth Movement** gather in Christopher Park outside the Stonewall to hand out flyers to passersby, titled: *Get the Mafia and the Cops Out of Gay Bars.*

Craig Rodwell writes in his bookshop's newsletter, *Hymnal*,

AUDIO: typewriter

CRAIG RODWELL: The nights of Friday, June 27, 1969, and Saturday, June 28, 1969, will go down in history as the first time that thousands of Homosexual men and women went out into the streets to protest the intolerable situation which has existed in New York City for many years—namely, the Mafia (or syndicate) control of this city's Gay bars in collusion with certain elements in the Police Dept. of the City of New York. The purported reason for the raid was the Stonewall's lack of a liquor license. *Who's kidding whom?*

HOST: Rodwell's flyer suggests legitimate businesspeople open gay bars with decent prices and healthy social settings, and that gays should write to Mayor Lindsay to demand a thorough investigation, and that gays should also—

CRAIG RODWELL: —boycott places like the Stonewall.

HOST: Activists in every gay organization can sense that nothing will be the same after this. Everyone is asking, what do we do now? What does the movement do now? First, we make sure everyone knows about what happened here. Volunteers for the Mattachine print and pass out copies of Dick Leitsch's coverage of the uprising, titled,

AUDIO: typewriter

DICK LEITSCH: *The Hairpin Drop Heard Around the World*

HOST: Some volunteers show up every night following the rebellion, mimeographing the story and passing it around Greenwich, all down Christopher. The neighborhood is buzzing, day and night. Mayor Lindsay's staff and NYPD officers come to the New York Mattachine offices and beg them to please make everyone calm down. The Mattachinos hang a new sign in the east window of the Stonewall:

DICK LEITSCH: We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the Village—Mattachine.

HOST: Some Villagers are, again, disappointed in the stuffy old Mattachine. Back in the offices, the Mattachinos argue.

MADOLIN CERVANTES: Oh, we should be nice. Gay people are known as being nice, sweet people.

MARTY ROBINSON: No! This has all got to change. It's time to get radical. The civil rights movement didn't get where they are by being nice and quiet. The antiwar movement didn't get where it is. We have to be militant, and we have to confront the authorities.

DICK LEITSCH: Okay, okay. Let's form an Action Committee.

HOST: Flyers are printed up titled in all caps: "GAY POWER" A midtown meeting at Freedom House is announced for July 9, under this call to action:

MARTY ROBINSON: Gay people are reaching the end of their patience. At the bottom of the calls for GAY POWER and HOMOSEXUAL EQUALITY is a realization that **we can influence our existence—if we can only come together.**

Martha Shelley wakes up feverish from a lack of sleep. She picks up the *New York Times*.

AUDIO: typewriter

NYT REPORTER: 4 POLICEMEN HURT IN 'VILLAGE' RAID; Melee Near Sheridan Square Follows Action at Bar. Hundreds of young men went on a rampage in Greenwich Village shortly after 3 A.M. yesterday after a force of plainclothes men raided a bar that the police said was wellknown for its homosexual clientele. Thirteen persons were arrested and four policemen injured... [fading out]

AUDIO: riot clip from episode 11, echoing Martha: “*Oh, that’s just a riot. We have them here all the time.*” Presently, Martha dials the phone.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Joan, it’s Martha. We have to do something. DOB has to do something. We have to have a protest march! I can make a speech or something. Yes, stand up in public and get shot at. But I’d rather die than be called a coward, I have to do it.

JOAN KENT: Maybe you should take this idea to the Mattachine Society. If they agree to it, we’ll jointly sponsor it.

AUDIO: phone hanging up

HOST: Even though the press barely covers what would be a huge story if any other minority had revolted like this, the activists are still thrilled to see small stories continue to pop up in the *New York Times*.

NYT REPORTER: [Published on June 30, Monday, writing about Sunday night] “Police Again Rout ‘Village’ Youths: Outbreak by 400 Follows a Near-Riot over Raid” Heavy police reinforcements cleared the Sheridan Square area of Greenwich Village again yesterday morning when large crowds of young men, angered by a police raid on an inn frequented by homosexuals, swept through the area. Stones and bottles were thrown at the police lines, and the police twice broke ranks and charged into the crowd.

HOST: Queers in leather pack the Village on Sunday night. ([Kink at Pride!](#)) **Lucian Truscott** writes for the *Village Voice*,

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT: Gone were the ‘gay power’ chants of Saturday, but not the new and open brand of exhibitionism. Steps, burbs, and the park provided props for what amounted to the Sunday fag follies as returning stars from the previous night’s performances stopped by to close the show for the weekend.

HOST: **Over the next few nights**, the police are finally able to get the neighborhood quiet—only because the weekend is over, and people who might make noise on a weeknight have already done plenty over the past two nights. What else is there to be said

or done? The NYPD is also prepared now, to handle any potential crowds early on. Many officers outnumber the few protestors on Sunday, although a small band of young queers do raid the Sixth Precinct's headquarters on Sunday evening. They put Day-Glo blue and fuschia bumper stickers on police cars, paddy wagons, and some cop's personal cars. The stickers say "Equality for Homosexuals." Tonight, the police are begging gays to go inside their bars. The TPF clears the streets more politely this time, without helmets and clubs.

Allen Ginsberg crosses Christopher, holding up a peace sign to the indifferent TPF officers as he goes inside the Stonewall for the first time. Lucian Truscott, the *Village Voice* reporter, goes in with him. The bar is booming with rock music. Apparently, after the cops destroyed their jukebox, they had a sound system put in. Everyone is dancing through the revolution in this now-legendary bar, which will soon be closed for decades. As he leaves the Stonewall with the reporter, Allen Ginsberg says,

ALLEN GINSBERG: You know, the guys there were so beautiful—they've lost that wounded look that fags all had ten years ago.

AUDIO: typewriter

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT: Watch out. The liberation is under way.

MUSIC SETTLES.

AUDIO: siren blips

HOST: **The following nights** are even calmer, aside from some minor skirmishes with cops.

OFFICER 1: Start something faggot; just start something. I'd like to break your ass wide open.

GAY 5: What a Freudian comment, Officer!

HOST: Some cops drive around shouting insults at people. Another cop stands on Waverly and Christopher doing the same, but a femme queen sneaks up behind him and lights a firecracker between his legs. The cop jumps and screams, and a fight breaks out. His badge is stolen by a crowd of queens. The badge will be found tomorrow by the police — on a string of pickled pig's feet hanging from a tree in Washington Square Park. God, I wish there was a photo.

Aside from that dazzling creation, overall, the streets on **Monday and Tuesday** are fairly calm. **Late on Wednesday night**, the *Village Voice* publishes their issue covering

Howard Smith and Lucian Truscott's Stonewall accounts. Howard was the reporter inside the bar on the first night, Lucien was outside. The issue distributed through the neighborhood, and Fred McDarrah's photographs on the front page of the *Village Voice* grab the Villagers' attention once again. But the text does even more so, the articles are filled with disrespectful phrases like "limp wrists," "gay cheerleaders," and "dancing faggots," most of which were used by Lucian Truscott. They mention only one lesbian, both reporters referring to her as a "dyke." After years of inconsiderate coverage by reporters—covered in great detail on this podcast—many gays are pissed to see their gay uprising reported on this like this. They talk about going down to Christopher Park tonight and setting the *Village Voice* offices on fire.

Radical Left groups have spent the past two days curiously following the stories from the Village. This isn't like the DNC—the gays put the police on the defensive. That never happens. On Wednesday, many more heteros come to the Village. Feet from the *Village Voice* offices, just outside the Stonewall, hundreds of Black Panthers, Yippies, and street youths from all over the city gather, as a pack of patrol cars forces its way into the crowd. The police are better prepared tonight. Trashcan fires are lit down Christopher again. The mood is far less camp, and far more hostile, the *New York Times* reports. Dick Leitsch writes for *Mattachine*,

AUDIO: typewriter

DICK LEITSCH: The street people were no longer half-serious, half-camping. The cops...had taken the offensive and massive retaliation was their goal. Some seemed quite ready to depopulate Christopher Street the moment anyone would give them permission to unholster their guns. Failing that, some of them, particularly some of the TPF men, tried to achieve the same objective with their nightsticks.

HOST: It's barely 10:30PM. The pigs are ready to get started. Cops grab and beat people at random. The crowd grows to about a thousand. People are thrown down, kicked, dragged down Christopher to waiting patrol cars on 7th Avenue. Several injuries are reported throughout the night. Shops are vandalized and broken into.

AUDIO: typewriter

DICK LEITSCH: Young people, many of them queens, were lying on the sidewalk, bleeding from the head, face, mouth, and even the eyes. Others were nursing bruised and often bleeding arms, legs, backs and necks.

HOST: Ronnie Di Brienza covers the riot in the *East Village Other*:

RONNIE DI BRIENZA: I have never seen anything worse than an infuriated queen with a bottle, or long nails. Believe me, get their ire up, and you face the wrath of all the Gods

that ever lived. Revolution is being heard on Christopher Street, only instead of guttural MC-5 voices, we hear it coming from sopranos, and altos.

DICK LEITSCH: The exploiters had moved in...blacks and students who want a revolution, any kind of revolution...swelled the crowd...but 'graciously' let the queens take all the bruises and suffer all the arrests.

HOST: After about an hour of brutality, the Village calms down again. Di Brienza writes,

RONNIE DI BRIENZA: Christopher Street shall be liberated. The fags have had it with oppression.

HOST: *New York Times* covers the story, too:

NYT REPORTER: Last night a chanting crowd of about 500 persons was scattered by members of the Tactical Patrol Force and police of the Charles Street station who were the targets occasionally of bottles and beer cans. A few fires were set in trash baskets along Christopher Street.

HOST: And the *Village Voice*:

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT: Sheridan Square this weekend looked like something from a William Burroughs novel as the sudden specter of "gay power" erected its brazen head and spat out a fairy tale the likes of which the area has never seen. The forces of faggotry, spurred by a Friday night raid on one of the city's largest, most popular, and longest lived gay bars, the Stonewall Inn, rallied Saturday night in an unprecedented protest against the raid and continued Sunday night to assert presence, possibility, and pride until the early hours of Monday morning...

HOST: Howard Smith, the Voice reporter who was trapped inside the Stonewall with the cops, reflects on that night:

AUDIO: typewriter

HOWARD SMITH: By now the mind's eye has forgotten the character of the mob; the sound filtering in doesn't suggest dancing faggots any more. It sounds like a powerful rage bent on vendetta.

AUDIO: phone ringing

MUSIC: The GLF

HOST: SDS activist Bill Katzenberg calls up Charles Pitts, the coproducer of *The New Symposium*, the 1968 radio show on WBAI. Pitts is openly gay and talks about it on the air. The SDS activist, Katzenberg, had already announced a new gay Left organization forming before the Stonewall uprising, and a meeting for them on July 24th. It was *originally* advertised as—

BILL KATZENBERG: A group of young radical homosexuals will meet this week to develop a critique of heterosexual supremacy, both in society and within this movement.

HOST: Now that Charles Pitts and WBAI are launching *The New Symposium II* in the wake of the uprising, Katzenberg and Pitts team up to advertise the group with *new* flyers:

CHARLES PITTS: Do You Think Homosexuals Are Revolting? You Bet Your Sweet Ass We Are. We're going to make a place for ourselves in the revolutionary movement. We challenge the myths that are screwing up this society.

HOST: The flyer tells all people interested to meet on **July 24 at Alternative U**, a **counterculture** meeting space where the movement will take a new turn.

Act 2

HOST: **A few days after the Stonewall rebellion, July 1, 1969.** Frank Kameny is skimming through the *New York Times* when he spots an old friend's name: **Clifford Norton**. Six years ago, Norton, a NASA employee, was arrested for cruising in Lafayette Square. He was fired, he called Kameny, and Frank referred him to the NCACLU. His firing was upheld, his appeal happened to go some very liberal judges, and now, 6 years later, the *New York Times* announces the judge's statement... "we conclude that he was unlawfully discharged." Frank and Clifford are shocked. One of the judges writes, "We do not doubt that NASA blushes whenever one of it's own is caught in flagrant delictu [sic]," but that's not enough to fire someone. The judge says this is all a "smokescreen hiding personal antipathies or moral judgements." Clifford writes to Frank, "So— For whom are you working now? Can they use me?"

MUSIC: Annual Reminder

AUDIO: marching in sync, the same picketing we've heard before

HOST: On **July 4th**, eight homophile organizations travel to Philadelphia for the 5th Annual Reminder picket at Independence Hall. The dress code is just slightly relaxed. Guys can have long hair and beards, but no blue jeans, and no pantsuits for women. Beads are considered by Gittings and Rodwell on a person-by-person basis. Some of the

activists still don't wanna push it too hard. After Craig Rodwell ran an ad for the picket in the *Village Voice*, men called the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop saying they were gonna run the bus off the road. But they arrive safely at Independence Hall — as Apollo 7 astronaut Walter Cunningham finishes a speech for a huge audience, explaining that he's worried about the students who are protesting their country and their military.

AUDIO: light applause

HOST: Craig Rodwell steps off the bus he arranged from New York City and immediately notices a change in the usual attitude here. Everyone is talking about Stonewall. Jack and Lige see **Lilli Vincenz**, their former Mattachine friend from D.C. They all talk about how different this picket feels.

LILLI VINCENZ: It's clear things are changing. Everyone seems so empowered.

HOST: **Gene Damon** reports for *The Ladder*,

AUDIO: typewriter

BARBARA GRIER/GENE DAMON: The largest picket line ever turned out, with as many as 45 persons at one time. Another sign of change was that some of the rigidity in dress appeared to be relaxed, and some of the women had on slacks and some of the men, blue jeans.

HOST: Philadelphia's deputy mayor, his wife, and his son watch the picket next to the press. Frank Kameny is designated spokesman, the only activist allowed to speak to the press.

AUDIO: the same quiet footsteps

HOST: He greets the reporters as the quiet picketers walk in a circle behind him. **Barbara Gittings and Kay Lahusen** have sweat through all five of these July 4th pickets. Craig Rodwell, having just spent the past weekend screaming through the rebellion, is eager to make any kind of noise again. They all are. They're itching to. Just ahead of Craig, two young women have broken the single-file rule—walking beside each other. They're *holding hands*. Frank runs over to them, striking his arm down to separate their hands.

FRANK KAMENY: None of that! None of that!

HOST: Craig breaks from the line. He runs up to friends from New York in the picket line and asks them to hold hands, too. About ten pairs couple up while Bill Weaver scribbles a new slogan over his sign:

AUDIO: cameras, permanent marker

BILL WEAVER: SMASH SEXUAL FASCISM!

HOST: The press gets very excited. Frank is being interviewed by a journalist and Craig bursts into the conversation. He says,

CRAIG RODWELL: Did you hear about what's going on in New York and the riots last week? We're tired of not being able to hold hands in public, and the leadership of our demonstration has to change.

FRANK KAMENY: [aside] Craig, this demonstration isn't about any one individual person, this is about picketing against job discrimination. You are not making us appear presentable for employment.

CRAIG RODWELL: We don't want to be employed by this government anyway. We aren't going to change who we are! Homosexuality is a viable way of life. We are just as valuable as heterosexuals, just as we are!

FRANK KAMENY: This isn't the place to make a scene, you can take that yelling back to Greenwich Village.

CRAIG RODWELL: Put this in your story: The old-guard leaders like this Auntie Tom here – he no longer represents the new wave of the gay movement.

HOST: There's not much Frank can do in front of this reporter, but watch the Movement progress right in front of him. Back on the bus, Craig and the others realize they've attended the final Annual Reminder, at least in this rigid form. Something new will need to replace the Annual Reminder, and also celebrate the uprising at Stonewall.

Frank writes to Craig, apologizing for their disagreement—but adding:

AUDIO: typewriter

FRANK KAMENY: 'Love-ins'—homosexual and/or heterosexual, both—have their place, so do picketing demonstrations. Neither is likely to be effective, and both are more likely to be ineffective, if they are mixed.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: Meanwhile, on the West Coast, **Dick Michaels at *The Los Angeles Advocate***, like most of the homophile publications, covers the disagreement, saying, "What the hell ever happened to the concept of freedom and equality that we espouse? What difference

does it make whether the straights push us around directly or do it through other, uptight homosexuals. This is what the concept of 'image' eventually leads to. The image becomes more important than the goal." Anyone remember the very first Mattachine schism in season 1? Same fight.

Kameny won't hear the criticism. The only person that can get him to listen, Barbara Gittings, takes some notes to prepare to change his mind. She gets right to the point: She writes, "Frank, Stop being martinet, acting like a general commanding the troops... Younger people are tired of being ordered around, told what to do & how to dress." She ends by asking why there was no sign at the picket saying "Gay Is Good."

At the next MSW meeting, Frank updates the members on open gay cases against the federal government, he mentions Stonewall, and then they watch [Lilli Vincenz's film of the 1968 Annual Reminder picket](#). Eva Freund, writing the MSW's newsletter *The Insider*, reports, "TO HELL WITH DYING ON YOUR KNEES... It appears that the structured homophile groups have failed to motivate the homosexual community. Perhaps they have not wanted to deal with the homosexual masses... When it becomes clear that the doors are never going to open and that door knocking is only a pacifier for the masses, then it is time to knock the doors down."

July 5. The New York Mattachine's Action Committee is taken up by Michael Brown, Bill Weaver, Earl Galvin, Marty Robinson, and Martha Shelley. Their new flier announces, "Homosexual Liberation Meeting."

GAY 8: Many of us in the community have been heartened by the appearance of a new spirit this past two weeks. Now is the time to take a stand on our own behalf. No one is free until everyone is free!

HOST: The next day, **July 6**, a huge club in Manhattan called the [Electric Circus](#) opens its doors for a gay night. Management heard about the gay power thing, and decides to use the moment to help their slow business. (They might've been onto something there.) They get in touch with Mattachine to promote the gay dance, and Mattachine releases another flyer:

DICK LEITSCH: Oh Boy! We don't think it's necessary for gay people to be quizzed at the door, packed into over-crowded, over-heated, over-priced, Mafia-controlled sewers. If you all come, and if the experiment works—it could be beautiful... beautiful enough to do every week. We really hope that everyone will dance together and dig one another.

HOST: All proceeds will go to the Mattachine to fund the replacement of the trees cut down by homophobic vigilantes in Kew Gardens. The Electric Circus dance floor is opened, and [Randy Wicker](#) grabs the mic just after midnight. He's wearing his American

flag shirt similar to the one he lent to Abbie Hoffman for his HUAC hearing. Looking out at the crowd, Randy shouts,

RANDY WICKER: Gay power!

AUDIO: cheers

HOST: But Randy is critical of the image the riots are giving homosexuals. He begins his speech,

RANDY WICKER: Rocks through windows don't open doors.

HOST: Before anyone can agree with or criticize Randy, for this comment he'll later admit was wrong, an employee of the Electric Circus realizes this room is full of queers, and leans over to ask a guest if he's with this crowd. The guy says yes, and the bar's employee immediately starts beating him up. Jack Nichols is shocked as they all watch *the straight guy* get dragged away screaming. Randy gives the gay guy a ride home, who tells Randy he was part of the rebellion at Stonewall.

GAY 5: All I know is that I've been in this movement three days, and I've been beaten up three times.

AUDIO: 'Lindsay for Mayor' 'Newark' advertisement

MUSIC: Nancy May snaps.

HOST: **Three days later, July 9.** Mattachine's Action Committee meets at Freedom House. Nearly 20 years ago, the Mattachine met discreetly in living rooms, by invitation only, with arrival times scattered in order to keep neighbors from being suspicious. Their organization was discreetly named after medieval performers who confronted their powerful government from behind masks. The women named theirs after a fictional bisexual woman in an 1890s French poetry book. The activists used fake names and covered the telephones to be sure no one was listening in to their furtive conversations. Now...

BOB KOHLER: We're on the brink of something here! Organizations are forming, and we're hearing 'gay liberation.'

GAY 1: We should have a march!

AUDIO: applause

GAY 2: Protest the police!

AUDIO: louder applause

DICK LEITSCH: Okay, all those in favor of a march?

HOST: Every hand goes up.

DICK LEITSCH: I see, okay, those who intend to organize a march, meet in the back for a planning session.

HOST: The march committee pops open a few beers.

AUDIO: beer bottles opening

HOST: Martha Shelley leads the meeting.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Our committee should have a name, right? Any ideas?

GAY 4: We're marching, it's a strong front, like the Viet Cong, citizens fighting against the government.

HOST: Someone says,

GAY 8: We're like a gay version of the National Liberation Front of North Vietnam!

HOST: Martha slams her fists on the table.

AUDIO: Martha's hands suddenly slamming on the table multiple times

MARTHA SHELLEY: *That's it! That's it! We're the **Gay Liberation Front!*** Oh, my hand's bleeding.

MUSIC: The GLF

DICK LEITSCH: What's going on here? What is this Gay Liberation Front?

MARTHA SHELLEY: Oh, no, don't worry, Dick. We're not starting a competing organization. We're just a march committee.

HOST: An ad is placed in the *Village Voice* announcing a July 27 demonstration on the one-month anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion. There will be a rally with speeches in Washington Square Park and a march to the Stonewall, all co-sponsored by Bilitis and Mattachine. Everyone should wear a lavender armband.

AUDIO: typewriter

MARTHA SHELLEY: SUPPORT GAY POWER

HOST: In the meantime, the committee joins a picket outside the Women's House of Detention in support of Black Panthers imprisoned inside. The young Mattachine members want to show that gay people are ready to join more causes. We support you, and hopefully you support us. After chanting and singing as they marched around the building, they led a parade from the Women's House to the Stonewall.

Shortly after that, a meeting before the Stonewall rebellion's one-month anniversary demonstration. They have a big event to plan. 200 people meet in a big room with a low ceiling. Dick Leitsch walks in late, wearing a brown suit.

DICK LEITSCH: Police brutality and heterosexual indifference must be protested, but at the same time, the gay world must retain the favor of the Establishment, especially those who make and changes the laws. Homosexual acceptance will come slowly, by education the straight community, with grace and good humor and—

GAY 7: We don't want acceptance, goddamn it! We want respect! Demand it! We're though hiding in dark bars behind Mafia doormen. We're going to go where straight go and do anything with each other they do and if they don't like it, well, *fuck them!*

AUDIO: applause

MADOLIN CERVANTES: Well, now, *I* think that what we ought to have is a gay vigil, in a park. Carry candles, perhaps. A peaceful vigil. I think we should be firm, but just as amicable and sweet as—

LOUD FAGGOT: Sweet! Bullshit! That's the role society has been forcing these queens to play, and they just sit and accept it. We have got to radicalize, man! Be proud of what you are, man! And if it takes riots or even guns to show them what we are, well, that's the only language that the pigs understand!

AUDIO: wild applause

DICK LEITSCH: Now, don't—

GAY 1: If Mattachine wants to act straight, they're going to act straight...into irrelevancy!

AUDIO: wild applause

LOUD FAGGOT: All the oppressed have got to unite! The system keeps us all weak by keeping us separate.

AUDIO: cheering

DICK LEITSCH: Order! Order! [fading out behind the cheers]

By the time the **July 24** meeting rolls around, Martha Shelley and Marty Robinson are clearly in charge of this Gay Liberation Front, though the organization has no official leaders or membership. Anyone can show up and chip in. They host their GLF meetings at [Alternate U](#), a free school of counterculture educators and leftist political organizing. It hosts many groups, like The Rat newspaper, the National Committee to Combat Fascism, and Burning City Women's Theater. It's the perfect space for a new progressive gay organization to work for their own cause, and also for racial civil rights, feminism, economic justice, and an end to war. The people of Alternate U believe that your body is your own, not the government's opportunity to value it for battle, it's yours to smoke pot if you want to, have sex if you want to, get pregnant if you want to, do sex work if you want to, do whatever you want as long as you're not hurting anybody. As the growing Gay Liberation Front moves into the counterculture space to begin their work, Martha

sees all the new possibilities ahead of them. In the Mattachine, they can't get involved in the anti-war movement or take up other causes. But the Gay Liberation Front sees **the draft and racism and sexism and homophobia all as pieces of one larger problem.**

At the one-month anniversary Gay Power vigil, on **July 27, 1969**, Martha and Marty are the speakers for the Gay Liberation Front. Barbara Gittings looks around to see, not 50 picketers in suits and dresses, but 500 people gathering joyfully in their everyday clothes.

MUSIC: Gay Power

HOST: It's 2 PM in Washington Square Park. A lavender banner displays two female symbols linked and two male symbols linked. Martha stands on the edge of a fountain and shouts,

MARTHA SHELLEY: The time has come for us to walk in the sunshine! We don't have to ask permission to do it. Here we are! Brothers and sisters, welcome to this city's first gay-power vigil. We're tired of being harassed and persecuted. If a straight couple can hold hands in Washington Square, why can't we?

AUDIO: applause and cheers

GAY 7: Long live the queen!

HOST: People cheer and wave from apartment windows above.

MARTHA SHELLEY: We will no longer be victimized by straight people who are guilt-ridden about sex. We don't need to be told we're sick—man, if I'm sick, I know where it hurts and I go to a doctor. If I'm happily making love, I don't want a doctor to come to me and say, 'you're sick!' We're tired of flashlights and peeping-tom vigilantes. Tired of marriage laws that punish you for lifting your head off the pillow. Why do you think they ran around at one in the morning with flashlights to chase people out of the park? To protect their children—or to get a free peep show?

AUDIO: laughter

HOST: Marty Robinson says,

MARTY ROBINSON: Gay power is here! Gay power is no laugh. There are a million homosexuals in New York City. If we wanted to, we could boycott Bloomingdale's, and that store would be closed in two weeks. Join with the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society to fight for equality! We will not permit another reign of terror!

MARTHA SHELLEY: Keep your ears open. There are going to be more meetings. This ain't the end of us. This is just the beginning—go home peacefully today but keep in mind that this is just the beginning.

AUDIO: 'Gay Power!' chants from [Lilli Vincenz documentary "Gay & Proud" \(1970\)](#)

HOST: The crowd marches to the Stonewall, stopping traffic on Sixth Avenue, clapping and chanting "Gay power." The *Village Voice* reports,

AUDIO: typewriter

VILLAGE VOICE REPORTER: Gay power had surfaced... A mild protest to be sure, but apparently only the beginning.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: A few days later, the Mattachine Action Committee gathers again to make official the lie that Martha Shelley told Dick Leitsch: Many Mattachine members are leaving to run their own, the Gay Liberation Front. Like many queer organizations, choosing their name will be one of the only unanimous decisions made. They meet back at Alternate U to discuss whether the organization will aim to deal with gay issues exclusively, or work with other militant minority groups. Half the room walks out in disagreement. The Gay Liberation Front settles on a decision, and announces their organization's goal in New York's underground newspaper *Rat*,

AUDIO: typewriter

GLF MEMBER: We are a revolutionary homosexual group of men and women formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished. Babylon has forced us to commit ourselves to one thing... revolution. We've come to realize that all our frustrations and feelings of oppression are real. The society has fucked with us...within our families, on our jobs, in our education, in the streets, in our bedrooms; in short, it has shit all over us. We, like everyone else, are treated as commodities. We're told what to feel, what to think. We identify ourselves with all the oppressed: the Vietnamese struggle, the third world, the blacks, the workers...all those oppressed by this rotten, dirty, vile, fucked-up capitalist conspiracy. The closet is a system of taboos and institutionalized repressions against sexual expression. Marriage is one of the most insidious and basic sustainers of the system, because by taking part in it, a male worker is given the illusion of participating in the power of the ruling class through economic control of his children and through the relation he has with his wife as sexual object and household slave.

HOST: Meanwhile, Frank Kameny writes again to the Department of Defense.

AUDIO: typewriter

FRANK KAMENY: While I do not necessarily approve of violence, public disorder, and rioting, if—all other reasonable measures having failed—that turns out to be what it does take, then, by your own effective invitation, that is what you will get.

HOST: The Gay Liberation Front announces discussion groups, demonstrations, dances, a newspaper, a coffeehouse, and a commune. They begin absorbing gay activists from other groups all over the city. Catching herself in the whirlwind of work, Martha realizes that just a few months ago, when she was president of the New York Daughters of Bilitis chapter, people would send money to her and hope that she would go out and fight while they hid in the closet. But now, after Stonewall and all the public demonstrations following, it seems like everyone is suddenly called to action and no longer afraid.

Forget the pseudonyms. Fuck the court jester and the woman from the poetry book — and the political in-fighting of the homophile organizations — and the discrete hotel room meetings — and the run-down bars and the dark alleys and secret house parties and all the various masks held up by the many gay organizations who think they alone hold the keys to queer liberation.

In the series finale, the end of the homophile era.

Learn more in the episode credits & at queerserial.com/s3e12