



American LGBTQ+ liberation from the beginning to Stonewall.
Written & produced by Devlyn Camp
queerserial@gmail.com

Season 3, Episode 13:

Finale:
“Liberation Day”
Episode released October 11, 2021

Visit queerserial.com/s3e13 for resources, images, & additional information.

Follow the show [@queerserial](https://www.instagram.com/queerserial) on [Instagram](#) & [Twitter](#).

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 These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.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: typewriter

MARTHA SHELLEY: Do you think homosexuals are revolting? You bet your sweet ass we are.

GLF MEMBER: [from closing of episode 12] 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.

AUDIO: also typing

DIRECTOR HOOVER: Thank you, agent. Tell the New York Field Office to identify officers, aims, and objectives. I want informants inside this group. I want to know all activities aimed at overthrowing, destroying, or undermining the Government of the United States or any of its political subdivisions.

AUDIO: typewriter returns

DIRECTOR HOOVER: “All Power to the People; Gay Power to the Gay People.” Huh. File this under their group name, whatever it is—Fag Liberation Movement.

Act 1: ZAP!

HOST: “The very fact that it takes so many laws to enforce *heterosexuality* shows that *homosexuality* is natural,” [Henry Gerber](#) wrote to his pen pal in 1940... 26 years after his organization—the first gay rights organization in the U.S.—collapsed and ruined his life. He spent the following years running his discreet gay contacts service, hoping, but rarely believing, an American gay rights organization would succeed. In 1940, when Gerber wrote that letter, complaining about the many laws keeping queer people and organizations like his stifled, there was still little hope. It took another decade before the Mattachine Foundation formed. Then the Daughters of Bilitis. Then transgender people began rebelling in public. It took two more decades for our community to safely organize in public, reveal their faces, resist the cops—all while the FBI stalked them, the State Department fired them, the police beat them, and the history books left them out completely. They were spoken about in code in the newspapers, often as a joke, often misgendered, often as deservedly murdered perpetrators of “indecent advances.” It took painstaking time to unify isolated queer people everywhere and urge them into action, to educate queer folks about what they were, which was still so mysterious then, and then *they* had to educate the stubborn public about what they were, by forcing a movement that could not be denied its power. Those were the first goals of the movement—written in Harry Hay’s 1948 essay, [“The Call”](#): his goals were to unify, to educate, to lead. The Mattachine founders read those words as they quietly gathered on the hillside by Harry’s house, hidden in the tall grass. *Grassroots organizing, right?* They would all soon be outcast by their own organization, but the

intentions of their activism would succeed. By the time of the uprising at the Stonewall, about 20 years later, there were finally about 50 gay rights groups across the country—unifying, educating, leading—various chapters of once-national homophile organizations that splintered, spin-off groups, and brief blips of small towns attempting to organize their own community—like my hometown of [Evansville, Indiana](#).

After Stonewall, it will only take 5 years for about a thousand gay rights groups to be established. Groups that will look drastically different from the early days of secret living room meetings and stick figures on discreet magazine covers—though the internal conflicts will remain remarkably similar in the new organizations. The new groups' actions will grow necessarily bolder. And the fight will be long.

After Stonewall, the **homophile movement** becomes the **gay liberation movement** as the torch is passed to new leaders.

MUSIC INTERLUDE.

HOST: In the days following the Stonewall rebellion, lovers **Barbara Gittings and Kay “Tobin” Lahusen** leave their rented house on Fire Island and return to the city, finding Greenwich Village buzzing with energy. These two early Daughters of Bilitis, and former editor and photojournalist of *The Ladder: A Lesbian Review*, they immediately look for a **Gay Liberation Front** meeting. They've outgrown Bilitis and Mattachine, and, as usual, they're skipping ahead to what seems to be the most progressive, powerful action for queer people. The GLF crowd is huge, lots of young people milling around, excited about the uprising. Barbara and Kay's friend, Mattachine Society of Washington President **Frank Kameny**, joins them in the crowd, taking a break from the constant flood of calls from across the country to his house on the Mattachine phone line, all asking for advice on how to start an organization. Barbara, Kay, and Frank listen as teens and twenty-somethings shout big, radical ideas—unite the races, end sexism, overthrow capitalism. The former homophiles, determined in this moment to push their movement further than ever before, are spotted by a young, new activist. She points at Barbara's conservative clothes—the kind Barbara's always worn: a button-up, slacks, a handsome sweater—and the young activist looks Frank's suit up and down.

LESBIAN: What are your credentials?

FRANK KAMENY: [scoff]

LESBIAN 2: One of them has a Lindsay for Mayor button. Are you a fascist?

KAY LAHUSEN: Excuse me?

HOST: Kay is shocked.

LESBIAN: What are you all doing here?

HOST: Barbara is pissed.

BARBARA GITTINGS: I'm gay. That's why I'm here.

HOST: Barbara Gittings will not be brushed off. This movement has become her life. Before activism, she dropped out of Northwestern because she was spending all her time in the college library, researching everything she could find about homosexuality—in medical books full of wildly incorrect statements. She had to know what she was, and once she figured it out, she had to correct those books. She and Frank have already co-defended gay civil service clients, and successfully spoken before the Department of Defense and discredited the so-called “doctor” Charles Socarides, who peddled those medical myths. It was a fantastic success, but Barbara wants to remove the myths from the books for good.

Frank has also experienced this, being pushed out of the way by the younger, brash activist while his major goals are still incomplete. Picketers at the fifth Annual Reminder in '69 ignored Kameny's rules, holding hands and breaking from the lines. Gay bookshop owner **Craig Rodwell** was thrilled by it all, and now he envisions a new annual celebration in the place of Frank's picket—a celebration that carries on the tradition of the original protest at Independence Hall, and also commemorates the birth of the gay liberation movement that night at the Stonewall.

MUSIC: Late '60s party, happy crowd gathering

HOST: The line stretches down a New York City block to get in to the Gay Liberation Front's dance. The meeting room they're renting at **Alternate U**, the counterculture center, is packed with gay people, dancing under low lights. Not so low that they feel like they're hiding, but low enough to be romantic. Beer costs a quarter, and if you can't afford the cover charge at the door, they'll let you in free. Most of the groups that host dances at Alternate U have small crowds, but GLF draws people from all over—people come from Jersey and Baltimore. There are even lesbian-only dances where the women can dance half-dressed or even naked on a hot summer night. The most important part: no Mafia. Still like the earliest days of the homophile groups, these people are just looking for a safe space to dance and be around people like them. But now they're not quietly stuffed into a living room or a dumpy Mafia bar.

GLF members convince bar owners to put up bulletin boards so they can advertise the massive gay events, which is no easy feat considering the Mafia wants their clients as controlled and out of touch with the gay movement as possible, so that their customers will continue to desperately seek out Mafia-run gay bars as the only option. But people are getting wiser, seeing that the Mob will push around and rip off their own customers.

After Stonewall, a lesbian couple dancing in one gay bar is interrupted by a businessman trying to cut in on them. The women refuse, and he punches one of them in the face while the Mafia guy at the door watches and doesn't do anything. Quickly after, young people fill that bar. They turn on the jukebox and dance—but nobody buys a single drink. The Mafia bar owners are confused, so **Martha Shelley** goes over to explain. Her knees shaking, she looks them right in the eye:

MARTHA SHELLEY: We're here as a sort-of sit-in. A dance-in. Because this is our space. You've opened a gay bar and you're refusing to take care of gay people.

MAFIA GUY: Do you know who I am?

MARTHA SHELLEY: I don't know, and I don't care, but we're the Gay Liberation Front!

AUDIO: Queers cheer

MARTHA SHELLEY: *Come out!* Get your copy of *Come Out!*, newspaper of the Gay Liberation Front!

HOST: Martha Shelley stands on a snowy Village street corner as a middle-class couple walks by pushing a stroller.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Get your copy of *Come Out!* Read what your kid's going to be like when he grows up!

HOST: They jump, walking a little faster. The GLF is turning a profit from their huge dances, so they start their newspaper, and a bail fund for members who get arrested, and programs to provide free lunches for people who need them. They place in ad in the *Village Voice* seeking submissions from gay photographers and writers for their paper. At the top of the ad, they state their mission:

AUDIO: typewriter

MARTHA SHELLEY: Gay Power to Gay People

HOST: But the *Village Voice*, as we heard in the previous episode, has a long history of looking down on gays. For instance, in 1959, David McReynolds wrote,

DAVID MCREYNOLDS: Krim is off base in suggesting that queer brigades are about to storm the citadels of prudery, with Reichian slogans inscribed on their sequined banners. First, homosexuals *as a group* aren't going to lead any revolt because the last thing they want is to get involved in any real struggle. They just want to be let alone to lead their precious lives in their presently established dainty fashion. Second, in implying some kind of moral integrity and fervor

to the “gay underground” is to fail to see gay society for what it is—a tragic sub-culture which is every bit as sick as the larger society in which it exists...

HOST: But the *Village Voice* accepts the new magazine ad from the Gay Liberation Front, and their money—then runs the ad without the “Gay Power to Gay People” header. GLF is furious. They submit another ad to the *Voice* for their upcoming dance, making sure to use the word “gay” again.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Gay Community Dance

HOST: GLF gets a call from the *Voice*.

ED FANCHER: It’s our policy to refrain from printing obscene words in classified ads.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Why would anyone consider the word “gay”—

ED FANCHER: The staff decided that ‘Gay’ is equitable with four-letter words. You can change the ad, but we won’t run this—

AUDIO: phone hanging up, knocking on the door

HOST: GLF asked the *Voice* to give them a written explanation about their new policy.

AUDIO: knocking on the door, a bit louder, crowd gathering in hall

HOST: They’re planning to use that explanation in a lawsuit against the *Voice*, but the paper won’t provide it.

AUDIO: knocking on the door, louder

HOST: The paper’s publisher, Ed Fancher, avoided the GLF as they tried to serve him a lawsuit. Until they show up at his door.

AUDIO: banging on the door—

ED FANCHER: What?

MARTHA SHELLEY: We would like to speak with you about your policy against—

ED FANCHER: You should not have done such an outrageous thing as to come to my place of residence.

AUDIO: door closing

GLF MEMBER: Gay power to gay people!

AUDIO: cheers

HOST: **September 12, 1969.** At 9AM, GLF pickets the *Village Voice* offices, a few feet from the Stonewall. They give away coffee and collect signatures at a table, while passing out 5,000 copies of a flyer about this fight with the newspaper. Ed Fancher shows up at 10 and hides inside his office through the day of picketing. Lots of signatures are collected, and at 4:30 they submit a new ad:

MARTHA SHELLEY: “The Gay Liberation Front sends love to all Gay men and women in the homosexual community.”

HOST: **Howard Smith**, the *Village Voice* journalist who was trapped inside the Stonewall with the police, steps outside and invites GLF leaders in. The activists are reprimanded for targeting this so-called liberal paper, but they hold their ground until the *Voice* gives up. Fancher says,

ED FANCHER: Fine, we’ll print ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual.’

HOST: One of the GLF leaders flashes a V for victory sign out the window.

AUDIO: cheers, cars honk

HOST: The *Washington Post* still refuses to print ads for the Mattachine of Washington, no matter how much the Mattachinos write to the publisher or ask for help from the ACLU. But a protest with no rules, no planning in advance, just a mob looking for justice, yields immediate results outside the *Village Voice*. *Come Out!* announces on their cover, “*Village Voice* Goes Down.”

AUDIO: typewriter

FRANK KAMENY: I think that they will accomplish quite a bit of good. At the moment, they’re busy heckling Procaccino and Marchi in the NY mayoral race—they go to campaign rallies and get up and ask pointed questions about the candidates’ attitudes towards the problem of NY city’s homosexuals—questions for which the candidates are totally unprepared. They recently picketed the *Village Voice* (which used to be *avant-garde*, but which has steadily moved over in the middle) to force them to accept ads using the words ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ and to modify their attitudes toward homosexuals and the activities of homophile groups. They were totally successful. Unfortunately, there’s a conflict situation arising with MSNY (entirely by MSNY’s choice). MSNY is resolutely non-cooperative. I urged Dick Leitsch to work *with* GLF instead of against them, with the feeling that each can contribute a great deal to the other—but he’s not buying that. Cordially, Frank

HOST: While the *Post* won't print Frank Kameny's Mattachine ads, they do reference his organization while covering the uprising at the Stonewall and the GLF protest outside the *Village Voice*. The *Post* notes that Washington has not become as rebellious as New York. All the homosexuals here in D.C. is their Mattachine newsletter about court cases.

Frank writes to the editors, "The immediate present often tends to loom up too large and out of proper perspective, at expense of the achievements of the past. [The Annual Reminder pickets were] at least as novel, as pioneering, as militant, as 'extreme' and as indicative of a 'new openness' as the more recent demonstrations in New York and elsewhere, and, in fact, prepared the groundwork without which those more recent demonstrations would have been quite impossible and simply would not have occurred. Gay IS good! Sincerely yours, Franklin E. Kameny"

The picket clearly won't be coming back for a sixth time in 1970. Frank finally writes to Dick Leitsch, MSNY president, who resisted the '69 picket. You might recall, Dick also recently wrote to Frank's partner in activism, Barbara Gittings, to say the Annual Reminder picket is becoming too Establishment and urged her to come to New York and stop "playing solicitor to his barrister in Frank's legal charades." Barbara showed Frank the letter. Frank has had enough.

MUSIC: Mattachine 'in-fighting' theme

FRANK KAMENY: Dear Dick: Some time ago, Barbara Gittings showed me a copy of your letter of June 24 to her in regard to the July 4th demonstration. I have several comments... The purpose of the demonstration is NOT to put homosexuals on display in their chosen finery; it is NOT a chance for homosexuals to 'do their thing'; it is NOT an opportunity for homosexuals to have a day's outing in Philadelphia. It IS an effort to change the negative attitudes of the populace at large *by the most effective means*. If we thought that we could best change attitudes on homosexuality by a picket line consisting of sexual eunuchs dressed in loincloths and riding unicycles, our picket line would consist *solely* of asexual, loin-clothed, unicycle-riding eunuchs. EVERYone else would be excluded. What happened was that—with the duplicity which renders you so impossible to work this, because everyone has long ago learned that any relationship between what you say and actual fact is purely coincidental—you told me what you believed I wanted to hear, while not telling you picketers what you didn't want to tell them. As I have pointed out before, if a 'hippie' dressed as such, and a man in a suit, shirt, and tie get up before an average audience and presented the same identical message, the suited man will be listened to and his message accepted by far more people than in the case of the hippie. That is NOT as it should be, but it is as it IS...

Finally, considering the little, self-perpetuating cabal who have taken over MSNY and run it, I hardly think that you have any valid comments to make about 'establishments.' You didn't even bother to send out ballots to all of your members this year. Now, having said all of the preceding, let's call a spade a spade. I suspect that, being a basically sensible and intelligent person, you

probably agree with most of the above, although you would never admit it. What *really* bothers you is that MSNY generally, and Dick Leitsch in particular, are not the ones running these demonstrations and heaven forbid that anything in the Movement should go on of which MSNY is not in control. That has been the unfortunate pattern of MSNY's relationships with other groups throughout the years; the leopard seems never to change its power-mad spots. It's really a pity because you could contribute so much more and accomplish so much more, and put your evident abilities to so much more effective use if you worked in cooperation with others rather than in endless competition, conflict, and rivalry, all quite unnecessary. Sincerely, Frank

HOST: The remaining court jesters keep up the Mattachine Society's tradition of quibbling and quibbling via correspondence. Their organization ages into becoming the old queen of the gay movement. Amid the bickering and bankruptcy of the late '70s, MSNY will finally abdicate, as new organizations rise.

On the west coast, Mattachine of San Francisco's **Hal Call** refocuses their office on his book service, especially after *Mattachine Review* stopped publishing back in '67. Hal turns his gay book service into the Adonis Bookstore—which is quite different from the [Oscar Wilde Bookshop](#)—Adonis sells *explicit* gay books and films. Hal later opens a “sex education” screening room on the same Tenderloin block, which he calls CineMattachine. As if the word “Mattachine” isn't confusing enough, that is “cinema” and “Mattachine” merged together: CineMattachine. And after about a decade of pissing off other activists by using the Mattachine name to make buck—(again)—Hal will rename that theater... to something a little more accurate: the Circle J Cinema. Out of the ruins of the San Francisco Mattachine Society, Hal will finally make a successful gay business, despite lots of legal trouble—and that's an absolutely filthy story I'll tell you on the bonus podcast.

As Mattachine chapters fade, Frank Kameny wisely—finally—focuses his attention on the new militant demonstrations. In a [1970 audio documentary called Gay and Proud](#), reporter **Breck Ardery** interviews Kameny.

AUDIO: Ardery audio documentary

REPORTER: The Stonewall rebellion will be remembered as one of the major turning points in the struggle for equality. Dr. Franklin Kameny, President of the Washington D.C. Mattachine Society, explains why.

FRANK KAMENY: What's important is the message that's being conveyed... We've been shoved around for 3 thousand years, and we're tired of it, and we're starting to shove back, and if we don't get what's coming for us and get it promptly, there's going to be a lot more shoving back.

REPORTER: So there positives outweigh the negatives?

FRANK KAMENY: Oh very much so.

MUSIC: coming together

HOST: Queens. Democrat Mario Procaccino campaigns for New York mayor. He's smiling, working through the crowd, shaking hands. He shakes the hand of a young man with messy hair — who won't let the candidate's hand go.

JIM OWLES: Mr. Procaccino, what are you going to do about the oppression of the homosexual?

HOST: Procaccino's face falls. He leans in to the activist, **Jim Owles**.

MARIO PROCACCINO: Young man, I can see that you're very interested in this problem. That is one of the many problems that we must face in New York. It is sick rather than criminal, and we must show understanding and compassion for them.

HOST: At the Gotham Young Republican Club, New York State Senator John Marchi finishes his speech, and someone stands.

GLF MEMBER: Senator Marchi, are you aware of the emerging militancy within the homosexual community, and how does this relate to your views on law and order? Will homosexuals become targets or will you be responsive to their needs?

SENATOR MARCHI: I—it was being considered—by some committee, and was a topic for the state legislature—

GLF MEMBER: Senator, it's not just for the legislature. As mayor you have control of the police force. How will this affect the lives of New York's eight hundred thousand homosexuals?

SENATOR MARCHI: I—I will enforce the laws and prevailing mores of society...

AUDIO: typewriter

REPORTER: For the first time that evening the Senator lost his cool, elegant articulate style.

HOST: Soon after, **October 1**, at a candidates forum, there's an audience of two thousand. Thirteen people are scattered throughout that crowd, waiting for their submitted questions to be chosen and asked to the mayoral candidates. The moderator isn't reading any of them, so after 90 minutes—

MARTY ROBINSON: It's 1776, Mr. Procaccino! The homosexual revolution has begun!

MARTHA SHELLEY: Mr. Marchi, what will you do to ensure raids on gay bars end?

JIM OWLES: How will you protect the jobs of homosexual employees in New York?

HOST: Police officers move in on the audience, but the League of Women Voters surround the Gay Liberation Front members to protect them. When they're asked to leave, several straight audience members follow GLF outside. Other people stay and keep pushing the candidates on the same questions about gay issues. NBC and the *New York Post* cover the episode, this new style of political confrontation, becoming known as a [zap](#).

The new gay liberation movement spreads across the nation immediately. At Woodstock, **Vernita Gray**, a young woman of color, sees a muddy little table with a sign saying "Stonewall." She grabs a pamphlet, takes it back to Chicago, and quickly begins organizing. She starts a phone support line for gays from her own apartment, the phone number spelling out FBI-LIST. Vernita puts in ad in the paper, around the same time a University of Chicago student, **Henry Wiemhoff**. His ad says, "Roommates Wanted. 2 Gay Students Wanted to Share 5 Rm Unfrn. Apt (53rd & Harper)." Both Henry and Vernita's phones start ringing constantly. Vernita's phone rings so often eventually she just has to move. They get a better idea, and team up.

October 24, 1969, another ad, in the Chicago student paper the *Maroon*, announces the formation of **Chicago Gay Liberation**: "GAY POWER IN 69-70 Anyone interested in joining the Hyde Park Homophile League formed last qt at UC write Box 69, c/o Maroon. Replies kept confidential."

Their group hosts massive gay dances on the University of Chicago campus. They get so big and full of gay people who aren't even students that the dance is shut down. They have to move to a public space. Fortunately, there's one massive space that's been hosting queer parties since the late 1800s: the Coliseum on the South Side. Two aldermen raked in a ton of graft there hosting their legendary [First Ward balls](#). And that's where Chicago Gay Liberation hosts their dance, too. Two days before the event, 250 people rally in Grant Park for gay freedom and spread word of the dance down Washington Street. Gay Liberation leaders haven't even found an insurance policy for the dance yet—most of the brokers in town are certain the police will raid a gay dance. But finally someone insures them the day before. The Coliseum fills with 2,000 queers—and the police are quickly behind. A team of attorneys greet the officers at the Coliseum doors, ready to cite any civil liberty violations. The cops leave, and the Chicago Gay Liberation dance lasts late into the night.

Still buzzing from the event, the next weekend, Chicago Gay Lib activists meet at a gay bar, The Normandy Inn, to protest strict dress codes and the rules against same-sex dancing—just a few blocks from the police station where Henry Gerber was booked almost 50 years ago. The bar owners immediately agree to drop the rules.

VALERIE TAYLOR: Thanks are due to Gay Liberation for getting dancing in gay bars,

HOST: Valerie Taylor writes in the *Mattachine* Midwest newsletter. Meanwhile, across town, *Mattachine* begins a Chicago bar patrol on the weekends, looking to—

VALERIE TAYLOR: —put a significant crimp in police raid plans by hiring responsible observers who would be prepared to testify to the falsity of police allegations of public indecency.

HOST: Gay Liberation works its way to the West Coast, too. In San Francisco, on **October 31, 1969**, their GLF gathers at the *San Francisco Examiner* offices. It's the final straw with the newspaper's anti-gay language, which you've heard over the past 3 seasons. The activists also demand for the paper to stop printing names and addresses of people arrested at gay bars and cruising grounds. GLF and SIR picketers surround the front of the office building outside, making noise. A window opens, and newspaper employees open a plastic bag full of **purple printer ink**, and pour it out onto the activists. They all drop their picket signs, and put their hands in the ink pooling on the sidewalk. They smear purple handprints all over the front of the newspaper's office building. One person uses the ink to write on the wall, "**Fuck the Examiner.**" Another protestor begins writing "**Gay is**" and suddenly he's grabbed by the hair and dragged to a police van. Squad cars pull up, and cops beat and arrest the activists, not the ink-dumping employees. Mayhem erupts as the cops swing clubs and knock people down. The *San Francisco Free Press* editor is shoved against the wall and dragged away. Former *Vector* editor Leo Laurence snaps a photo of a young boy being clubbed by police, before he's also dragged to the van. Leo pulls the film from his camera and tosses it to SIR President Larry Littlejohn, who stands watching in disbelief.

Everyone who gets away pickets down through the Tenderloin to Glide Methodist Church, and on to San Francisco City Hall. They hold a sit-in in the mayor's office until the remaining three activists are arrested and the protest is done. It'll become known as **The Friday of the Purple Hand**.

Down in Los Angeles, another GLF forms. They start a bail fund and an underground VD clinic for gay people. Sometimes their GLF meets in the *Tangents* magazine office, sometimes they meet in **Harry Hay & John Burnside's** teleidoscope factory. The mostly young group elects the original Mattachine founder, **Harry Hay**, as their first chair and they begin to plan their pickets of places like Barney's Beanery in West Hollywood—a coffee shop with a misspelled sign reading "Fagots Stay Out!" F-A-G-O-T-S. (In fact, you can see the owner of the coffee shop proudly standing in front of that sign in the 1964 *Life* magazine article I covered in the season 3 premiere.) The LA GLF hosts dances to defy the anti-gay dance laws, they hold a Gay-In in Griffith Park to defy the police warning gays not to gather in the parks, they pass joints and poppers down their picket lines. The movement has changed. The GLF groups are bold and unapologetic. Harry Hay writes LA's statement of purpose, which ends, "Our goal is--total liberation--life is for the living! We are alive! We want all to be alive! Sex is a sure cure of boredom and an antidote to the violence that is so American -- Power to the People."

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: Once hiding in the bushes and dark living rooms, now the movement is so loud that America can not ignore them. On **October 31, 1969**, as San Franciscan queers cover the streets in purple handprints, *Time* magazine's new issue hits the stands—a response to the Stonewall uprising. The cover repeats *Time*'s famous 1966 headline “The Homosexual in America,” this time adding,

TIME REPORTER: The Homosexual: Newly Visible, Newly Understood

HOST: Though it becomes clear in this issue that homosexuals are not entirely understood. The piece starts by explaining Dr. Evelyn Hooker's study of homosexuals—that so-called “Fairy Project”—and the Kinsey Reports. They cover “transvestites,” Sappho, Ginsberg, Wilde, Baldwin, Tennessee Williams. A sidebar gets into Charles Socarides, and Mattachine's Dick Leitsch and Frank Kameny. And the report goes on...

TIME REPORTER: An exclusive formal ball will mark Halloween in San Francisco this week. In couturier gowns and elaborately confected masquerades, the couples will whisk around the floor until 2 a.m., while judges award prizes for the best costumes and the participants elect an "Empress." By then the swirling belles will sound more and more deep-voiced, and in the early morning hours dark stubble will sprout irrepressibly through their Pan-Cake Make-Up. The celebrators are all homosexuals, and each year since 1962 the crowd at the annual "Beaux Arts Ball" has grown larger. Halloween is traditionally boys' night out, and similar events will take place in Los Angeles, New York, Houston and St. Louis.

HOST: And then the reporter covers movies and theater, taking a turn—

TIME REPORTER: Is there a homosexual conspiracy afoot to dominate the arts and other fields? Sometimes it seems that way.

HOST: I guess sometimes it *does* seem that way, but the *Time* article perpetuates this myth, among many others:

TIME REPORTER: At their fullest flowering, the Persian, Greek, Roman and Moslem civilizations permitted a measure of homosexuality; as they decayed, it became more prevalent. Sexual deviance of every variety was common during the Nazis' virulent and corrupt rule of Germany... Most experts agree that a child will not become a homosexual unless he undergoes many emotionally disturbing experiences during the course of several years. They still seem fairly bizarre to most Americans, the homosexuals have never been so visible, vocal, or closely scrutinized by research. Inverts have been organizing to claim civil rights for themselves as an aggrieved minority. Their new militancy makes other citizens edgy, and it can be shrill. Most straight Americans still regard them with a mixture of revulsion and apprehension. A poll released last week reported that 63% of the nation consider homosexuals ‘harmful to American life.’ There is a large variation among homosexual types. ‘THE BLATANT’; ‘THE SECRET LIFER’; ‘THE DESPERATE’; ‘THE ADJUSTED’; and ‘THE BISEXUAL.’ We may eventually

conclude that there are as many causes for homosexuality as there are for mental retardation—and as many kinds of it. The case for greater tolerance of homosexuals is simple... Undue discrimination wastes talents that might be working for society. Police harassment, which still lingers in many cities and more small towns, despite the growing live-and-let-live attitude, wastes manpower and creates unnecessary suffering. The laws against homosexual acts also suggest that the nation cares more about enforcing private morality than it does about preventing violent crimes.

HOST: I mean, I do agree with the last half of that paragraph. ([Defund the police.](#)) But then *Time* magazine concludes,

TIME REPORTER: While homosexuality is a serious and sometimes crippling maladjustment, research has made clear that it is no longer necessary or morally justifiable to treat all as outcasts. The challenge to American society is simultaneously to devise civilized ways of *discouraging the condition* and to *alleviate the anguish* of those who cannot be helped, or do not wish to be.

HOST: The Gay Liberation Front prepares to picket *Time* magazine.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: **The day after the issue is released, November 1, the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations** meets in Philly at a gay bar called My Sister's Place. Frank Kameny announces that this will be his final conference as chairman because he's becoming so busy, which is likely fine with the many young activists from the **Student Homophile Leagues** and the Gay Liberation Front who have arrived with some changes in mind. The young militants propose and pass several motions—on sexual freedom, birth control, abortion, drug use, stopping discrimination against minorities, support of the **Black Panthers** and **Women's Liberation**, and an end to the war in Vietnam. Next, they put an official end to the pickets and their dress codes.

MUSIC: 'picketing' theme

HOST: **Ellen Broidy** from the NYU Student Homophile League presents a new demonstration to replace the annual picket. She has a resolution, which she's been working on with Craig Rodwell from the Oscar Wilde Bookshop, his lover, and another lesbian. Their idea will not only replace the picket, it'll also be a celebration of the Stonewall uprising's anniversary.

ELLEN BROIDY: That the Annual Reminder, in order to be more relevant, reach a greater number of people, and encompass the ideas and ideals of the larger struggle in which we are engaged—that of our fundamental human rights—be moved both in time and location. We propose that a demonstration be held annually on the last Saturday in June in New York City to commemorate the 1969 spontaneous demonstrations on Christopher Street and this demonstration be called **CHRISTOPHER STREET LIBERATION DAY**. No dress or age regulations shall be made for this demonstration. We also propose that we contact Homophile

organizations throughout the country and suggest that they hold parallel demonstrations on that day. We propose a nationwide show of support.

AUDIO: applause

HOST: Once again, Dick Leitsch and his New York Mattachine, are not on board.

Act 2: BATTLES

HOST: Almost everyone at the homophile conference vote in favor of the **Christopher Street Liberation Day march**, including, of course, Barbara Gittings. She's thrilled by this development. Mattachine of New York abstains from the vote, saying "we do not feel that the Stonewall riots were particularly beneficial to the homophile movement. Although we seriously doubt that a small group of militants can destroy in a few months what it has taken us fifteen years to build up, we do not wish to support their attempt." Chairman Kameny counts the votes. The resolution for a new annual reminder passes, a march, which will later become a parade usually called **Pride**—(oftentimes it is still celebrated as a march, as some people prefer a queer celebration unhindered by corporate nonsense).

The North American Conference for Homophile Organizations holds a couple more conferences, but in-fighting between radicals and assimilationists break the group down—a tale I've been telling since episode 1. By next year, at their final meeting, the SF GLF will crash the homophile discussion for a debate. The magazine *Gay Sunshine* will describe the meeting as "the battle that ended the homophile movement." Put a pin in that.

Kay Lahusen writes to Frank Kameny:

AUDIO: typewriter

KAY LAHUSEN: I believe the opposition will try to get ERCHO and NACHO to repudiate your and Barbara's work against the federal gov't on grounds that it is irrelevant, and who wants a security clearance anyway and who wants to work for the government anyway. And 'burn the universities,' too.... I think the movement will just have to split, and you had best not waste your precious time trying to save it.

HOST: Conflict builds between the trailblazers of the movement and the new generation of young radicals. Meanwhile, inside those new organizations, of course, there's conflict building there, too. A gay tale as old as time—schisms quickly form. The Gay Liberation Front newspaper called *Come Out!* accuses another new gay paper called *Gay Power* of profiting off of the movement. The GLF members vote against this, but their own magazine *Come Out!* prints a scathing article about the other paper. GLF votes to shut their own paper down, so the folks working on the paper separate the magazine from its organization. Shedding more members in

another fight, GLF activists argue about whether or not they should be donating money to the Black Panthers—since the Panthers often use homophobic language. But, some people argue, GLF’s purpose is to stand with all minorities, all intersections, for total revolution over the Establishment. It can’t be done alone.

AUDIO: typewriter

MARTHA SHELLEY: Chief pig Mitch and super-pig Trickie-Dickie have launched a national crackdown on gay “ghettos.” They want to isolate and divide the people: gay and straight, black and white, workers and youth. It is up to gay people to not antagonize potential friends; i.e., we don’t harass those who don’t harass us.

HOST: A series of GLF resignations follow.

HOST: **Back in Chicago, in early December 1969, Mattachine Midwest** hosts a benefit at the opening night performance of *The Boys in the Band* at the Studebaker Theatre. The cast recording album has already come out, and everyone in the audience already knows all the lines and yells out the punchlines with the cast!

As [Albert Williams](#), voice of Frank Kameny on this podcast, will tell you, it was joyous mayhem. It’s covered in all the papers the next day. The *Sun-Times* critic writes, “...there were times...when I wished it were 1953 and that the play I was watching was *Tea and Sympathy*... [The audience] hooted, hollered and applauded its way through the evening and almost managed to turn what is a compassionate, devastating and brilliant piece of writing into a circus.”

Three months later, **March 1970, Albert Williams** and other activists pass out flyers outside the Carnegie Theatre on Rush Street. Inside, the new movie version of *Boys in the Band* is playing. Albert and his friends use the movie as a teaching opportunity. They don’t want audience members to get the wrong idea. Not all gays are as self-loathing as the characters in this movie. It’s a drama for you, it’s a fucked up comedy for some of us.

AUDIO: behind-the-scenes clip of Albert Williams & Devlyn Camp recording Frank Kameny voice parts, quoting *Boys in the Band* from memory: “You’re a sad, pathetic man. You’re a homosexual, and you don’t want to be. Who is she? Who was she? Who does she hope to be?”

HOST: Their flyers say, “The pain and cruelty typified by *The Boys in the Band* should be understood as the expression of human lives damaged by an environment of condemnation, suspicion, job discrimination, and legal harrassment [sic].”

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: **Across town, on Chicago’s West Side, two days later.** Just before dawn, Black Panthers [Fred Hampton and Mark Clark are killed](#). Fred Hampton was deputy chairman of the national

Black Panther Party, a 21-year-old rising leader, dedicated to his community, who organized rallies, blood drives, a free medical center, and five breakfast programs. He taught political education classes, and he organized a nonaggression pact between Chicago's gangs. On **December 4, 1969**, a tactical unit from the Cook County State Attorney's office and the Chicago police raided Fred Hampton's apartment. They fired nearly a hundred bullets into the apartment, and went in to find the activist right where they planned for him to be—earlier that night, Fred had been drugged by one of his own members, sent by the FBI. An officer fired two bullets point-blank into Fred Hampton, asleep in his bed.

In 1971, activists will raid a Pennsylvania FBI office, stealing documents that will expose FBI's Director Hoover's [COINTELPRO](#) program—targeting Black Power leaders, the Communist Party, anti-war activists, environmentalists, animal rights groups, Native American activists, Puerto Rican independence groups, New Left activists, feminists, of course—and homophiles. Included in those stolen documents: a floor plan of Fred Hampton's apartment and a deal between the U.S. deputy attorney general and the FBI to cover up the Bureau's order to kill the activist. Finally, the public will come to learn of J. Edgar Hoover's decades of manipulation, spreading disinformation among activists, and planting informants inside these groups who turned leaders against each other. Hoover will be forced to finally shut down COINTELPRO. The next year, 1972, Director Hoover will testify before a congressional committee, stating that no activists are allowed to join his FBI. He'll die in his sleep 4 days later—and his secretary will begin shredding files.

Back in December 1969, Black Panther leaders bring Mattachine Midwest leaders to walk through Fred Hampton's apartment. They see the wall above Fred's bed covered in bullet holes. His pregnant fiancé was sleeping next to him. The Panthers and Chicago Gay Liberation release a joint statement, reported by the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

IRV KUPCINET: The Black Panthers are getting support from a surprising source—the Mattachine Midwest, a society... for homosexuals.

HOST: Mattachine Midwest calls for prosecution of the officers who killed Hampton and Clark. Some Chicagoans can't bear to read about all these gay groups in the news. The prosecutor of the Chicago Seven—the activists charged with conspiracy to incite a riot at the [1968 DNC](#)—the *prosecutor* from that case is running for Illinois governor, and giving a speech at Loyola Academy—

THOMAS FORAN: We are losing our kids to the *freaking fag revolution!*

HOST: —and Chicago Gay Liberation immediately prints the buttons: Freaking Fag Revolutionaries. Chicago's gay community has become more tenacious than ever.

Mattachine Midwest Newsletter editor **David Stienecker** starts reporting on a Chicago police officer who has been cruising a Lincoln Park restroom, waiting to flirt with men and then arrest

them. The blond and muscular officer, whose *real* name is just too perfect—[John Manley](#)—he’s already successfully entrapped several gay men in Lincoln Park.

AUDIO: typewriter

DAVID STIENECKER: Well over a dozen. A young man goes into a restroom to relieve himself—you know, urinate. Officer Manley lurks behind a door; zap, young man is arrested.

HOST: John Manley is also the officer who killed Jerome Johnson, a 15-year-old Native American boy, the night before the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Using the same “stop-and-quiz” initiative with which he stopped Jerome Johnson, Manley can stop any man *he wants* in the park bathroom.

DAVID STIENECKER: Innocent Looking?

HOST: Stienecker writes beside *a photo* of the cop in the Mattachine Midwest newsletter.

DAVID STIENECKER: Received too late for specifics, two cases where Officer John Manley bloodied the heads of two straight guys he arrested, and (allegedly) Maced them while handcuffed. Manley is cute, blond, and blue-eyed, about 5’7” and evidently has a ‘gay’ way about him that is irresistible—or at least one would think so, since everyone knows that Chicago’s finest don’t entrap. If they did, maybe Manley would be getting off on being employed to cruise in the public interest.

HOST: On **February 7, 1970**, Officer John Manley walks into Stienecker’s apartment and pulls the Mattachine editor out of bed. He arrests David on charges of “criminal defamation.” Manley tells Stienecker that if he pleads guilty he’ll get a slap on the wrist, but of course the Mattachine knows better, and fights the charges. The charges don’t stick, but with all the press around it, and no laws protecting the jobs of gay people, David Stienecker is fired as editor at World Book Encyclopedia. And Officer Manley’s reputation will very slowly fall apart over the decades as more stories come to light about his behavior toward women in the workplace. To hear the whole sordid tale from someone who was there, listen to my [bonus interview](#) with my dear judy Albert Williams on my Patreon.

Despite Mattachine Midwest’s direct confrontation with the police, young militants still don’t think the old homophile group is acting radically enough.

April 19, 1970, Chicago’s Mattachine Midwest holds their regular Sunday evening meeting at the Second Unitarian Church on West Barry Avenue in Lakeview, just blocks from a strip that will soon become a gay neighborhood [full of its own complicated history](#). In the church, in 1970, a circle of Mattachinos is seated, discussing some upcoming events as—

AUDIO: doors slam open

HOST: —young radicals in hippie clothes rush into the meeting—

YOUNG GAY: The revolution belongs to the Gay Liberation Front!

AUDIO: papers shuffling

HOST: Fliers are handed out to the Mattachinos, inviting them to join a less reserved form of activism.

YOUNG GAY 2: I'm ready to die for the cause!

HOST: One Mattachino is so “very much disturbed” by the disruption that *they* call the FBI later that night to report the incident. Chicago Gay Liberation does take the lead in activism, as Mattachine fades. Mattachine Midwest will launch a referral hotline for gay men and women to call to find counseling, and legal, medical, religious, and employment help. They become more of a social service for gays. Their hotline is super successful, it runs for 18 years. They go back to the original Mattachine purpose: discussion groups—this time particularly for gay alcoholics and for parents and friends of gay people. They also help gay Cuban immigrants settle in Chicago. In 1986, just before they disband, Mattachine Midwest will celebrate their 20th anniversary at a gala in the Midland Hotel—where they held their first meeting. Chicago Mayor Harold Washington will attend, as he encourages gay activists pushing for a human rights ordinance to protect jobs and prevent many other discrimination issues. (That fight, by those gay activists, is also another wild story for the bonus pod—[told to me by two of those activists](#).) By the time Mattachine Midwest closes their doors, gay Chicago will look drastically different.

Act 3: THE SNAKE PIT

MUSIC: gathering march

LIGE CLARK: We were thrilled by the violent uprising in Sheridan Square in which homosexuals put police on notice that they'd no longer accept abuse.

HOST: Jack Nichols and Lige Clark, formerly of Washington's Mattachine, write in “The Homosexual Citizen,” their column in the magazine *SCREW*.

AUDIO: typewriter

JACK NICHOLS: We hope that the young activists will read, study, and make themselves acquainted with all of the facts which will help them to carry the sexual revolt triumphantly into the councils of the U.S. Government, into anti-homosexual churches, into offices of anti-homosexual psychiatrists, into city government, into the state legislatures which make our

manner of love-making a crime.

HOST: An employee reading the column at the Oscar Wilde Bookshop, former photojournalist of *The Ladder* **Kay Lahusen**, gets an idea. She pitches a gay paper to Jack and Lige for *SCREW* to publish—their own paper titled, simply, **GAY**—in all caps. A word that has been our own secret code for so long, now blatant, for the public to see—25,000 copies of each issue are printed. They’ve come a long way since Kay Lahusen’s early silhouette covers on *The Ladder*, and Jack Nichols using a pseudonym on CBS.

Kay writes articles and she’s the news editor for *GAY*. When it launches in **December of ‘69**, *GAY* is the first gay weekly publication in the country. Other writers include **Randy Wicker**, Lilli Vincenz, and Dick Leitsch. There are nude photos of women and men, and, of course, ads placed looking for contacts. Very fun to read through. On the debut issue Lige Clarke, poses in a white knit tank top for the cover. The opening letter by Lige and Jack explains the paper’s purpose: *“Why, it may be asked, is it necessary to publish a newspaper which deals with issues concerning the homosexual? Doesn’t such a publication suggest gay ‘segregation’ rather than ‘integration’ with the world at large? The answer to this question lies in the repressive social fabric and in the currents of the times. Today’s homosexual community is awakening as never before to the concept of sexual equality. GAY will act, in part, as a chronicle of this awakening, and will help to hasten the day when people relate to each other as people rather than as homosexuals and heterosexuals.”*

JACK NICHOLS: Liberation for gay people is defining for ourselves how and with whom we live, instead of measuring our relationships by straight values.

HOST: The editors at *GAY* use artwork and jokes to lure in the reader, and suddenly they’re learning about political issues—still court jesters. For instance, one issue publishes the following poem:

*He’s off to seek an offender
Without wearing his Alice Blue Gown
He won’t even display tin jewelry
As he haunts every john in town.
His name is Polly Policeman,
He’s a dear sweet handsome young man,
Who wags his privates at people
As he waits in the stink of the can.*

HOST: That’s more of a joke than a news story, but you get the idea. Jack sends issues of their hit publication to his mother. She writes back,

MRS. NICHOLS: Tonight I read the issues you sent. I’m ever so pleased with much that you published, and the Editors Speak, but, as a friend said about topless dancers, ‘You see two

you've seen 'em all.' I don't approve of some of the pictures and can't see the reason for some of the four letter words. I approve of your aims, but question the means of achieving your end (pardon the pun.) I'm happy that things are going so well, and that you're so enthusiastic. So, good luck, dear ones. You do your things well, and I'm proud of you. The picture of you was good. Keep your clothes on, it's cold. Much love.

HOST: Jack prints her letter in *GAY*. Just when you think it doesn't get better than that, the paper picks up steam. *GAY* will feature Bette Midler's first print interview, after Jack and Lige see her perform at the Continental Baths.

Bette Midler will be on their cover three times! By 1971, Jack and Lige will reach a new level of fame. Their friend, Dr. George Weinberg—who will coin the term *homophobia*—he introduces them to a publisher to write a memoir about their activism and their relationship. One evening together, Jack says to Lige,

JACK NICHOLS: I have more fun with you than anybody!

HOST: So that's what they call their book. It'll be published in '72, the same year Kay Lahusen and **Randy Wicker** publish theirs: *Gay Crusaders*, a series of interviews with activists of the gay movement. Though Randy will insist Kay wrote the book herself, he just lent his name to support her. Kay keeps plenty busy before writing her book. In 1970, as the New York Gay Liberation Front disintegrates into schisms, a new group forms with Kay in a leading role.

The **Gay Activists Alliance** forms to focus specifically on gay issues, not to 'take on all the problems of the world.' They create a legal committee and return to Robert's Rules of Order to choose their leaders. Members include **Marsha P. Johnson, Arthur Bell, Arthur Evans, and Sylvia Rivera**, who attends every meeting, she's always wanting to protest, and she gets arrested often. GAA's logo is the lambda—symbolizing an exchange of energy. Check out the photos, you'll see the lambda everywhere.

MUSIC: GAA

HOST: **March 5, 1970**, the Gay Activists Alliance heads to City Hall. **John Lindsay** remains mayor, having defeated Procaccino and Marchi. The GAA now demands Mayor Lindsay's public support in fighting job discrimination and stopping the police harassment of gay people.

As the GAA heads toward City Hall, the mayor and the press are tipped off. The Gay Activists Alliance exit the subway, and reporters and photographers surround them. The activists carry their signs to City Hall, where police are waiting. The GAA tries to push in, but barricades are going up around City Hall. They picket for hours. They talk to the press, getting coverage on major stations and papers. Gay couples kiss for the TV cameras. A guitar player improvises songs about gays and the "little piggies that protect city hall." Finally, Mayor Lindsay's advisor Michael Dontzin comes out and talks with them.

MICHAEL DONTZIN: I assure you, the mayor is supportive of these issues and your progress.

JIM OWLES: The days of backroom promises are done. We want public support.

MICHAEL DONTZIN: I will speak with the mayor and we'll be in touch shortly.

HOST: Reporter Breck Ardery is on the scene:

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

REPORTER: Another young group in New York is the Gay Activists Alliance. We asked one of its leaders, **Marty Robinson**, what the purpose of the organization is.

MARTY ROBINSON: GAA is utilizing nonviolent militancy to secure what it wants. Somewhat by hitting the system below the belt, rather than just cut the rug out from under the system entirely.

MUSIC: Pine returns

HOST: **Three days later. March 8, 1970.** Nine months after the Stonewall riots, the New York City police still haven't learned their lesson, including one officer in particular. **Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine**, who led the raid on the Stonewall, leads a new raid on **the Snake Pit**, a non-Mafia basement gay bar in the Village, near the Stonewall. Inspector Pine is experiencing a familiar problem: people are gathering outside the raided bar. At the Stonewall, he released the customers, and they formed a crowd. So tonight, he decides, in order to keep a riot from breaking out, he'll arrest everyone. 167 people are loaded into vans and taken to jail for dancing in a gay bar. Pine's pretty good at this now, he raided 17 Barrow Street and the Zodiac two nights before. Breck Ardery is on the scene, again:

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

REPORTER: Of course, conditions for homosexuals have not changed very much for the better in the last year, as police raids, such as the one that triggered the Stonewall uprising, have continued, most notably at the Snake Pit, another Village bar. Bob Kohler of New York's Gay Liberation Front, thinks a repetition of the Stonewall riots is possible.

HOST: At the police station, after the Snake Pit raid, 23-year-old **Diego Viñales** is particularly frightened. He's an Argentinian immigrant and he's worry he might be deported, either because his visa is expired and/or because he's gay. A Snake Pit employee sees Diego is nervous and asks a cop, "What rights do we have?"

COP: Shut your fucking mouth.

HOST: The Snake Pit customers are held in the police station for a long time. Cops are repeatedly calling them faggots and threatening them. Finally, Inspector Pine comes out into the

chaos.

SEYMOUR PINE: ID will not be checked and no one will have to pay bail.

HOST: Over the nearly 200 people he arrested chattering in the police station, Diego either doesn't hear Pine or doesn't understand him, primarily being a Spanish speaker. Absolutely terrified of being deported, Diego sees a staircase and runs. He finds a window on the second story to escape through, and jumps toward the neighboring rooftop.

He misses, and lands on the iron spiked fence below. Six spikes pierce his abdomen. Diego can't be removed from the fence, so firemen have to cut a section of the bars out and he's sent to a hospital. One of the cops tells the firemen not to hurry, because if he's not dead he will be soon anyway.

The police are so busy with Diego Viñales that some of the other arrested Snake Pit guests somehow get into the captain's office and get on the phones. They call all the major papers, only one shows up. The *Daily News* sends out a photographer immediately, who snaps a shot from the window, of Diego on the fence. The Snake Pit patrons also call the Gay Activists Alliance. Can they help? And just for fun, they grab a few record books from the captain's office and drop them down the trash chute.

Diego is barely surviving, but word spreads that he's died. Inside the jail, the arrested begin to sing "We Shall Overcome."

The Gay Activists Alliance and the Gay Liberation Front gather outside the police station, with fliers they're passing through the Village:

AUDIO: typewriter

MARTY ROBINSON: Any way you look at it – that boy was PUSHED!! WE ARE ALL being pushed. Fighting Gays and any of you who call yourselves HUMAN BEINGS with guts to stand up to this horror – Gather at Sheridan Square tonight March 8 at 9:00 to march on the Sixth Precinct. Stop the Raids! Defend Your Rights! There will be a DEATH WATCH VIGIL at St. Vincent's immediately after protest! We must all come – There is only the truth to guide us!

HOST: Hundreds gather at the park, chanting, "Say it loud: gay is proud." They march from the park to the hospital, where Diego Viñales lies in a coma. Villagers join the march as they chant down the streets, stopping at the Sixth Precinct. TPF officers in helmets surround the building with hundreds uniformed police officers and plainclothes cops. The crowd chants for the captain to come out, "We want Salmieri!" He doesn't come out, so they chant,

MARTHA SHELLEY: Who gets the pay-off? The police get the pay-off!

JIM OWLES: There's the Mafia in blue!

HOST: The police refuse to meet with leaders from the gay community. GAA does their best to keep the crowd calm and move on to Diego's vigil. They light candles and march silently.

Fortunately, Diego Viñales will live. The New York *Daily News* prints their front-page photo of him impaled on the fence. **Congressman Ed Koch** says the Police Commissioner Howard Leary approved these raids on the Village gay community, and Leary is just reassigned to Brooklyn.

Only 10 days later, another protest. This time outside the *Ladies' Home Journal* offices in response to their stereotypical portrayals of women. 200 activists from several groups hold a sit-in for 11 hours! A big protest with big results: not only are the activists later paid to write a feminist supplement for the *Journal*, but the following week, 46 women at *Newsweek* file sexual discrimination suits against their own magazine. The dominoes are falling.

All these stories spread quickly throughout the city, especially the ones with grisly photos. People are becoming more aware that their personal lives are directly affected by their political lives. Go to a gay bar, get arrested, get spiked. People are demanding a revolutionary change in power. The Gay Activists Alliance decides that anyone in power who allows oppression over gay people will no longer be protected in *their* personal lives. The mayor and his advisor have yet to respond to the activists as he promised. So the Alliance decides that every time Mayor Lindsay steps into public, they'll be there.

MUSIC: GAA strategizes

HOST: **April 13, 1970**, New York Mayor John Lindsay speaks on the front steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its 100th anniversary. The crowd listens...

MAYOR LINDSAY: ...deeply enough about the city and art to recognize their mutual dependency...extending the museum's beauty out into the street...

HOST: ...as someone walks up the steps toward Mayor Lindsay. GAA's Marty Robinson grabs the microphone.

MARTY ROBINSON: When are you going to speak out on homosexual rights, Mr. Mayor?

HOST: Officers pull Marty from the podium. Lindsay goes on. At the end of the speech, guests line up to shake the mayor's hand. Martha Shelley extends her hand.

MARTHA SHELLEY: Why aren't you supporting gay rights, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR LINDSAY: Please—

MARTHA SHELLEY: Please, take my flyer.

HOST: She holds his handshake so long the police remove her. Mayor Lindsay goes inside to tour the museum. The mayor quietly looks over the artwork.

JIM OWLES: Beautiful isn't it?

MAYOR LINDSAY: Yes, it is.

JIM OWLES: You have our leaflet. Now when the hell are you going to speak to homosexuals?

HOST: GAA's Jim Owles. That night, the mayor and his wife attend *Romeo Et Juliette* at the Metropolitan Opera. It's opening night. Everyone is taking their seats. Except a few men and women in tuxedos and gowns who are standing up in the audience, turned toward the mayor for their long-awaited response.

ARTHUR BELL: End Police Harassment!

ARTHUR EVANS: Gay Power!

HOST: Zaps become the signature move of the Gay Activists Alliance. More political theatre. The GAA keeps people talking—and they're able to catch government officials off guard, on the spot in public, so they get honest responses. Two days after that opera, GAA's Sylvia Rivera is arrested while she's petitioning for gay rights on 42nd Street. She's in what she calls "scare drag," a little hair and mascara, so she's booked for wearing fewer than three items of clothing belonging to her legally assigned gender. Nothing new for her.

COP: Leave or be arrested.

SYLVIA RIVERA: Well fine, arrest me.

HOST: **A few days later**, WNYC fills their studio with a small audience. They have tickets to see a half-hour show that tapes 3 hours before airtime, a news show with guests talking local issues called *This Week with Mayor Lindsay*. Advisor to the mayor Michael Dontzin stops one of the audience members walking in—Arthur Bell from the Gay Activists Alliance.

MICHAEL DONTZIN: I see you have some of your people here.

ARTHUR BELL: Why haven't we heard from you?

MICHAEL DONTZIN: I didn't know I was to get back to you. Let's get together next week and talk.

ARTHUR BELL: We've left several messages with you and the mayor.

MICHAEL DONTZIN: I've been over my head with work, but I'm eager to meet with your people. I'll tell my secretary to set something up. What are your people planning here?

ARTHUR BELL: What do you mean?

MICHAEL DONTZIN: How many members of your group are here?

ARTHUR BELL: Here?

MICHAEL DONTZIN: How much of this audience is your group?

ARTHUR BELL: I really should take my seat, Mr. Dontzin.

AUDIO: studio bell

HOST: The opening music plays, which, as historian David Carter points out, is providentially "Something's Coming" from *West Side Story*—(a song written by two gay men). Mayor Lindsay walks out. His hands are stuffed into his pockets and it's clear he's nervous. His staff must have told him that gay activists are here. He crosses and uncrosses his legs over and over. His guest is an ecologist, who talks while the mayor fidgets through the whole interview. As the guest is answering a question from the mayor, Arthur Evans and another activist rush the stage.

GAY 3: Let that man speak!

ARTHUR EVANS: Homosexuals want an end to job discrimination!

AUDIO: thunderous stomping

HOST: Security takes them away. The audience stomps together.

AUDIENCE: Answer the question! Answer the question! Answer the question!

GAY 4: Are you in favor of repeal of the sodomy laws?!

GAY 9: Gay Power!

HOST: The show comes to a stop.

MAYOR LINDSAY: My counsel, Michael Dontzin, will meet with those who want to see him outside.

STAFFER: Listen up, audience. You cannot disrupt a public meeting under threat of arrest. You either leave in peace or are under arrest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [quietly to neighbor] Lindsay is phony as hell. He has to read off tapes. He can't answer questions unless he has prepared answers. Now he's threatening arrest?

AUDIO: studio bell

CAMERA MAN: Let's pick it up from...

ARTHUR GODFREY: Of course, Mr. Mayor. When the city considers what to do with abandoned cars—

PHIL RAIK: And what about abandoned homosexuals?!

AUDIO: laughter

HOST: The show stops again and the activist is removed from the studio.

MUSIC: GAA

MAYOR LINDSAY: Mr. Godfrey, in the case of one-way bottles—

JIM OWLES: What about a one-way mayor—nonreturnable?

AUDIO: stomping together

HOST: Jim Owles is removed. He gives a V for victory to the audience.

AUDIO: studio bell

MAYOR LINDSAY: If you're stuck in a traffic jam, it's illegal to blow your horn—

GAY 5: It's illegal in New York to blow anything!

AUDIO: laughter, stomping

HOST: By the end of the show, 38 gay activists are revealed to have been scattered in the audience, wearing their own clothes rather than the Lambda logo, including Kay Lahusen. GAA members were writing in for tickets to this show for weeks.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

REPORTER: In New York, the Gay Activists Alliance has begun to confront politicians openly on the street. They attempted to question Arthur Goldberg, the democratic candidate for governor during a campaign stop. When Goldberg refused to respond to the gay peoples' questions, they proceeded to shout him down and drive him away. They surrounded his car and protested his silence.

GAA: Crime of silence! Gay Power!

ACTIVIST: Pig! You're a pig, too. You're a fucking nazi, baby.

HOST: The Gay Activists Alliance finally gets their meeting with the mayor's office, including the deputy mayor, his chief counsel, and the NYPD's patrol chief. Arthur Bell and Kay Lahusen are there to cover the meeting for their publications, *Gay* and *Gay Power*. The deputy mayor says he doesn't like these public confrontations.

ARTHUR BELL: There'd be no need if the mayor would speak publicly about gay issues. Here are our demands.

MARTY ROBINSON: A moratorium on police raids and harassment to give time to the authorities to work on solutions to the underlying problems of the State Liquor Authority and Police Department corruption.

HOST: The police chief winces.

ARTHUR BELL: Since the raids on the Stonewall and the Snake Pit and the resulting riots, homosexuals will no longer sit back and take shit from the police. One of the reasons we're here is to forewarn you that spontaneous riots might break out again this summer if police harassment continues.

CHIEF TAYLOR: Seymour Pine has been transferred back to Brooklyn.

DEPUTY MAYOR: It's not the policy of the police department to harass homosexuals per se.

ARTHUR EVANS: There is harassment with legal basis and there is harassment for intimidation. This last type of harassment must stop immediately. We will not tolerate it. Often police direct verbal abuses at homosexuals that are disgusting. We demand that a directive go out that this police practice stop.

MUSIC: drums march on, music darkens

HOST: The Stonewall anniversary committee has been denied a permit from the city to hold their Christopher Street march this June. Finally, they're also invited to the mayor's office to speak with a representative. Craig Rodwell, Ellen Broidy, and the committee, mostly women, enter the meeting to see the head of every precinct they intend to march through in June. And

also, the head of the Parks Department, and Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine. He sits quietly, glaring at them throughout the meeting. One cop asks Craig,

OFFICER: Will there be female impersonators at your march?

CRAIG RODWELL: They're a part of our community.

OFFICER: There are laws—

CRAIG RODWELL: There are thousands of laws on the book that you don't enforce, so in the name of human decency just give them one day.

OFFICER: We can't guarantee that the laws won't be enforced.

HOST: The permit for the June march is granted, but there is no certainly there won't be another riot.

Act 4: STAR PEOPLE

AUDIO: busy convention hall

HOST: **May 1, 1970.** The **National Organization for Women**—NOW—holds their Second Congress to Unite Women in Manhattan. This feminist organization was created by *Feminine Mystique* author **Betty Friedan**. At the *first* Congress to Unite Women, Betty Friedan did quite the opposite—by leaving out the Daughters of Bilitis as a sponsor. You might recall DOB's own founders, **Del and Phyllis**, quit the homophile movement to join Friedan's group. Friedan said the “man-hating, mannish” lesbians would set the feminist movement back. She said lesbians in the feminist movement are a “**lavender menace.**” But the next gathering goes on as planned, also intending to overlook the lesbian feminists. A speaker takes the stage, as 300 women listen in the audience.

AUDIO: lights shut down

HOST: The lights go dark. The microphone's plug is pulled by GLF member Michela Griffo. Karla Jay stands up in the audience.

AUDIO: footsteps

HOST: Running footsteps echo down the two aisles.

AUDIO: laughing, hollering

HOST: The lights come back up, revealing the aisles filled with 17 lesbians in t-shirts reading LAVENDER MENACE. One of them is Martha Shelley. They hold up signs:

MARTHA SHELLEY: Women's Liberation *IS* A Lesbian Plot

LESBIAN: You're Going To Love The Lavender Menace

HOST: Karla, in the middle of the audience, unbuttons her long-sleeved red top and pulls it off, revealing her lavender shirt, too.

KARLA JAY: Yes, yes, sisters! I'm tired of being in the closet because of the women's movement.

HOST: She joins the others in the aisles. **Rita Mae Brown** shouts,

RITA MAE BROWN: Who wants to join us?!

WOMAN 1: I do!

WOMAN 2: I do!

HOST: Rita Mae then pulls off her Lavender Menace t-shirt...

AUDIO: gasps

HOST: ...to reveal another one underneath.

AUDIO: crowd laughing

MUSIC.

HOST: They pass around mimeographed copies of their 10-paragraph manifesto, "The Woman-Identified Woman," and take the stage. As the original organizers of the event try to take the mic back, the audience boos them off and lets the lesbians run the show. This event originally had no open lesbians on their program. Now, they hold the floor for 2 hours of discussion. When it's over, gay and straight women head to an all-women's dance together.

The group of activists who zapped the women's congress names their group the **Radicalesbians**—all one word—and their manifesto explains what a lesbian is: "A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion."

At the following NOW conference, the members will adopt a resolution for the rights of lesbians to be considered a "legitimate concern for feminism."

The lesbian activists were between two difficult choices: keep trying to deal with the male-dominated gay groups, or force themselves into the homophobic women's group. They'd already tried the homophile groups for two decades. DOB's **Rita LaPorte** writes in *The Ladder*, "We lesbians want first class citizenship and you homosexuals are the last to care about that. I predict that, only as women come to be accepted as fully human, will you gay guys be accepted." She goes on,

AUDIO: typewriters

RITA LAPORTE: It tends to be said over and over again that the real gap within humanity is that between men and women, not that between homosexual and heterosexual. When all the homosexuals, male and female, have their rights as homosexuals, we Lesbians will have all the rights that *women* have.

HOST: And then, uh... Frank Kameny weighs in.

FRANK KAMENY: You seem to forget that the Lesbian IS, first and foremost—subject to *all*—yes all—of the problems of the male homosexual and with *no* special problems as a Lesbian. If one is a Negro homosexual or a Jewish homosexual one may well fight racism and anti-Semitism, as well as fighting anti-homosexuality. One's two battles are far better and far more effectively fought totally separately.

HOST: This is Kameny's final letter published by *The Ladder*. Meanwhile, editor **Gene Damon** calls for DOB members across the nation to start their own chapters, break off from the mainstream movement, as that appears to be the best way to organize. She's already announced 1969 as "The Year of the Chapter," and she encourages readers to open their local chapters by using her Bilitis publication to spread a feminist message in their towns. Focus on feminism now in order to lift up lesbians. Kameny then writes to her:

FRANK KAMENY: To say that male homosexual and lesbians have less in common than almost any two groups is one of these statements which is just so far 'out of this world,' so utterly detached from reality, and so far 'off the deep end' that I am quite unable either to take it seriously or to reply to it. I feel that by your views you are backing yourself off into an unfortunate corner of total unreality and total irrelevancy to the real world of here and now. I know that I have written exceedingly strongly here and hope that it will not destroy or damage the good personal and working relationship which we have. But I was really quite incredulous at reading your remarks.

GENE DAMON: I can no more separate being a Lesbian from being a woman than you can separate being a male homosexual from the fact you are a man. You are just as convinced that our battles are the same as I am they are not. The thing here though is that from your viewpoint as a member of the current 'master race' it is logical, sensible and wholly right. From my viewpoint as a second class citizen...the handicaps are dual and not separable. Since yours is

single and mine double you really do not know how you would feel or act in some circumstances.

AUDIO: typewriter carriage returns

HOST: *The Ladder* writers cover issues like these in the new generational gap. Rita LaPorte notes that when once many homophiles fought for acceptance based on their *similarities* to heteros,

RITA LAPORTE: Now! Enter the young, the new morality; the belief that the individual has the RIGHT to be different. Basic to this attitude is the assertion that the larger society cannot legitimately dictate the life patterns or social habits of its individual members... A vested interest in *non-conformity*.

HOST: Some folks write in, discouraging the young radicals, particularly those that broke into the DOB's New York office to use the mimeo machine to print flyers for the Snake Hole protest.

LESBIAN: Their excuse was: dire circumstances justify dire means. An especially annoying fact is that they had every opportunity to ask for permission to use the machine and they didn't... In spite of real anger it was all the New York chapter could do to vote to censure the offenders, and there were many who proposed forgiveness on the grounds that we're all in the same 'thing.' What this 'thing' is that we're all in, I wish someone would tell me... Lesbians should tend their own garden and stop squandering their resources.

HOST: But, even still, Rita Mae Brown has concerns bigger than their own in-fighting. She wants them to focus on the real problems. In this same *Ladder* issue, she writes,

RITA MAE BROWN: Our struggle is against the male power system which is a system of war and death. If in the process of that struggle we are forced to mutilate, murder, and massacre those men, then so it must be. But simultaneous with that struggle we must also struggle to build a culture of life and love... To love without role, without power plays, is revolution. I believe these are our goals.

MUSIC: Wolden scandal

HOST: In the middle of the day, a woman walks into the Daughters of Bilitis San Francisco office, finding no one there. She goes for the filing cabinets. She collects the magazine's correspondence with women all over the country, grabs copies of every single issue of *The Ladder*, and she collects the magazine's production tools. And, most importantly, she takes the magazine's mailing list. She cleans out the *Ladder* office, packs it all up, and vanishes.

Who would do this? everyone wonders. The FBI? The cops? Would a lesbian do this? they wonder—until one day in **August 1970**, when the subscribers check their mail: a new issue of

The Ladder. Inside the magazine, the writers reveal the truth of the latest homophile heist. Replacing the original Daughters of Bilitis Statement of Purpose is a new, bold manifesto:

AUDIO: typewriter

GENE DAMON: THE LADDER, published by Lesbians and directed to ALL women seeking full human dignity, had [its beginning in 1956](#). It was then the only Lesbian publication in the U.S. It is now the only women's magazine openly supporting Lesbians, a forceful minority within the women's liberation movement. Initially THE LADDER's goal was limited to achieving the rights accorded heterosexual women, that is, full second-class citizenship. In the 1950's women as a whole were as yet unaware of the oppression. The Lesbian knew. And she wondered silently when her sisters would realize that they too share many of the Lesbian's handicaps, those that pertained to being a woman.

HOST: *Ladder* editor Barbara Grier, AKA Gene Damon, and Rita Laporte have hijacked the publication. Rita writes from the magazine's new office, her home in Reno, Nevada,

AUDIO: typewriter

RITA LAPORTE: With this issue, *The Ladder*, now in its 14th year, is no longer a minority publication. It stands squarely with all women, that majority of human beings that has known oppression longer than anyone....To raise all women to full human status, with all of the rights and responsibilities this entails; to include ALL women, whether Lesbian or heterosexual....OCCUPATIONS have no sex and must be opened to all qualified persons for the benefit of all. LIFE STYLES must be as numerous as human beings require for their personal happiness and fulfillment. ABILITY, AMBITION, TALENT—THESE ARE HUMAN QUALITIES.

HOST: Original and early Daughters Barbara Gittings, **Stella Rush**, **Helen Sandoz**, Del Martin, and Phyllis Lyon call it a theft—an inside job in the works for a while. The evidence: the address on the magazine's masthead was changed too early—a month before the heist, they notice—to a PO box in Reno. Rita will believe she's saving *The Ladder*, but the magazine will fold in 1972.

At the 1970 DOB convention in New York, the Daughters will mourn the loss of their magazine, and Phyllis Lyon will take the stage for a speech about the in-fighting they're still caught up in:

PHYLLIS LYON: The lesbian's lot today is tied up with two movements: the feminist movement and the homophile movement. The lesbian's dilemma is that while she may offer her services and her loyalties to both, she is rarely truly accepted in either.

HOST: Barbara Gittings will add that gay men and women will need to cooperate in order to move this cause. No one is going to do it for us. The Los Angeles DOB reports after the convention:

LESBIAN: DOB chapters are now run on an independent, each city ‘do your thing’ basis with all monies staying in the local chapter for the good of our own girls, rather than being poured down a national level rathole. Things are indeed looking up for DOB of today and tomorrow. Yesterday has been thoroughly buried.

HOST: Thoroughly. So, Shirley and Marion’s plan to take Bilitis to a local level, back in episode 9, is effectively established.

MUSIC: twilight women

HOST: Bilitis founder Del Martin is ready to bury her past and move on too. At that 1970 NACHO meeting, “the battle that ended the homophile movement” with all the rifts between new and old activists, Del had her eye on other rifts going unacknowledged—rifts between the genders. She watched as the SIR president called for unity, inviting activists to come forward to join hands at the head table, but he only called out names of men to join him. No women at all. It was the final straw for Del Martin. She’ll stop writing her “Police Beat” column for SIR’s *Vector* magazine and she’ll drop her membership. Instead, she writes an essay denouncing the male domination of the movement, and titles it “**If That’s All There Is.**” It’ll, basically, go viral in the homophile community:

DEL MARTIN: There is no hate in this goodbye -- only the bitter sting of disappointment. Momentarily I am pregnant with rage at your blindness and your deafness - the psychosomatic symptoms of narcissism and egocentricity. But my rage will pass. Most of it has been spent already. For I realize you were programmed by society for your role of supremacy. But somehow I expected more of you. I had hoped that you were my brothers and would grow up, to recognize that freedom is not self contained. You cannot be free until you free me - *and all women* — until you become aware that, in all the roles and games you play, you are always “IT.” Believe it or not, there is love, too, in this farewell — just as there has always been. How could anyone hold a grudge against helpless beings who are compelled to grope for their very existence? But I must leave you — for your good as well as mine. I refuse to be your scapegoat. By removing the target, you may no longer mock me. Besides, I must go where the action is — where there is still hope, where there is possibility for personal and collective growth. It is a revelation to find acceptance, equality, love and friendship — everything we sought in the homophile community — not there, but in the women’s movement.

HOST: Even Gene Damon and Rita Laporte, in their new version of *The Ladder*, will reprint the essay aimed at gay men:

DEL MARTIN: Those were stultifying roles you laid on me, and I shall no longer concern myself with your toilet training. You’re in the big leagues now, and we’re both playing for big stakes. They didn’t turn out to be the same. As I bid you adieu, I leave each of you to your own

device. Take care of it, stroke it gently, mouth it and fondle it. As the center of your consciousness, it's really all you have.

HOST: Del and Phyllis will stay in the National Organization for Women, and Del will be the first open lesbian elected to the board. In 1972, they'll jointly write a book about their experiences as activists and about the myths of lesbianism called *Lesbian/Woman*—published by Glide Publications, of Glide Memorial Church in the Tenderloin. Del will also publish the book *Battered Wives* about spousal abuse, and open the first battered women's shelter in San Francisco, as Phyllis continues to work for Glide Memorial.

The Daughters of Bilitis will officially end in 1978 as interest declines. The treasury will be sent back to where it began: Del and Phyl's house. They'll give the money to the San Francisco Women's Centers for their new building, the Women's Building, still operating 40+ years later. Del and Phyl will get a truck and head to the DOB office, pack up the remaining 23 years of letters from all over the world, address lists of the many chapters, *Ladder* sales records, convention minutes and programs, newspaper and magazine clippings, and store them in Phyllis's office at Glide, until donating them to the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, where I and many other historians will get to pick them up and read their words and experience the movement all over again.

They'll go on to serve on the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women, appointed by Mayor Moscone, focusing on racial discrimination and civil rights of gay women. They'll also co-found the Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club with SIR co-founder Jim Foster and DOB member Beth Elliot—who was voted out of DOB for being a trans woman, by the way. The Toklas Club will be the first gay Democratic club in the U.S., but controversial for being rather moderate—but put a pin in *that* until the upcoming new *Queer Serial sister series*! Del and Phyllis will later serve on the White House Council on Aging, and in February 2004, they'll become the first gay couple to legally marry in San Francisco. After the state voids gay marriages later that year and California deals with Proposition 8, Del Martin & Phyllis Lyon will *again* be the first gay couple to marry in 2008. *USA Today* will report,

AUDIO: keyboard typing

USA TODAY REPORTER: The pair never felt the need to get married, but they did it for the same reason they become domestic partners: to speak out.

MUSIC SETTLES.

GAY 3: Carol Greitzer, do you refuse to represent us in City Council?!

HOST: **Back in 1970**, the Gay Activists Alliance zaps their city counselor at the Village Independent Democratic Club. She has refused to see their petitions.

CAROL GREITZER: [quietly to staff] Tell them I have a terrible cold. I didn't refuse those petitions. I had too many things to carry... [to crowd] Is there a specific piece of legislation you're talking about?

ARTHUR EVANS: The job discrimination bill!

CAROL GREITZER: My stand is there is no way to getting this through, not even with bombs.

JIM OWLES: The very least we expect is a commitment, Mrs. Greitzer. You've never issued a position statement about homosexuals. You are guilty of a crime of silence.

ACTIVISTS: Guilty of a crime of silence. Guilty of a crime of silence.

GAY 4: Will you back us up?

CAROL GREITZER: Yes.

GAY 4: Will you co-sponsor a bill?

CAROL GREITZER: Yes.

GAY 4: Do you accept the petitions?

CAROL GREITZER: Yes.

EMISSARY: If you have legitimate grievances, I will see to it that they are forwarded to the right party.

ARTHUR EVANS: We want Governor Rockefeller to come out and fight for homosexual rights. Rockefeller is guilty of a crime of silence, and we are not leaving until we get a satisfactory answer to our demands.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

PROTESTORS: Say it loud, gay is proud.

REPORTER: While the pickets chanted on the sidewalks, several members of the GAA were staging a sit-in demonstration in the offices upstairs.

HOST: The GAA sits in at the Republican State Committee headquarters, **June 24, 1970**—4 days before the Christopher Street march.

EMISSARY: You did not call for an appointment! You have not made a legitimate request!

HOST: The activists sit down on the floor of the waiting room. Downstairs on the ground in Midtown, GAA's picket line holds hands, and kiss and hug for the cameras. Every 30 minutes a sit-in representative comes downstairs to update the picketers and TV and newspaper reporters.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

REPORTER: One of the members of the sit-in, Arthur Evans, came downstairs at one point to explain that the demonstrators had met with a representative who refused to give them an appointment with Governor Rockefeller or any other high official.

ARTHUR EVANS: The only thing he said he would do is pass on, pass the buck. The governor has made himself inaccessible to the people of the State of New York. Pass the buck! Pass the buck! That's all homosexuals have been getting in this state since this state has been founded. Nobody represents the homosexual. All they do is pass the buck. We are going to sit in until somebody of importance comes to talk to us about our demands. If they don't come to talk to us, they're going to have to send the cops in to drag us out. Because Gay Power is here to stay! Nobody is going to ignore us any longer!

HOST: Republicans in the State Committee headquarters can hear the picketers all the way upstairs, and when they look down, they can see the huge crowd forming around their building. It's impossible to ignore the sit-in, either, especially because it's 5 o'clock and they want to close the offices. At 6:30, finally, the chair of the New York Republican Party agrees to meet with a GAA representative. Jim Owles requests the press come along for the meeting, but the republicans refuse. So Jim refuses, too. That's when the police arrive.

Arthur Evans, Jim Owles, Phil Raia, Marty Robinson, and Tom Doerr are arrested for criminal trespass. As they're taken away, the picketers cheer. At their arraignment, 40 GAA members stand up and hold hands as the arrested activists enter the courtroom. The room bustles with press. The charges will later be dismissed.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

REPORTER: Marty Robinson was asked what purpose all this political confrontation serves.

MARTY ROBINSON: So far we've zapped enough political people that we're getting a fair employment law introduced in city council next week. We met a little resistance from Councilwoman Greitzer, we confronted her, took over the meeting, and changed her tune, which she did publicly. They took up the banner immediately and introduced two laws, one is a fair housing law and the other is the fair employment law, an anti-closet law. I think we're going to get back at everybody who testifies against us.

HOST: **The Rockefeller Five**, as they're called, are the first people to ever be arrested for a gay sit-in. Many more will be arrested in the following years, especially as **ACT UP** goes on to stage their famous zaps all over New York City. The Gay Activists Alliance will also zap St. Patrick's Cathedral, the New York City Taxi Commission, the American Psychiatric Association, the New York *Daily News* offices, the Board of Education offices, a few District Attorney's offices, ABC

and CBS News, even *The Dick Cavett Show*—to the point where Dick Cavett has to give GAA time to speak on the air. The GAA also demonstrates in Times Square to protest police harassing trans women and sex workers. When an agency called Fidelifacts is revealed to be collecting information for employers on gay applicants, saying that “if they look like a duck and quack like a duck” they need to be noted as homosexual, the GAA will arrive to picket, complete with Marty Robinson in, of course, a duck costume. When *Harper’s* magazine publishes an offensive article on homosexuality, guess who holds a sit-in at their offices? When a city clerk in the marriage bureau makes insulting comments about gays wanting to marry, the Gay Activists Alliance shows up and takes over the phones.

AUDIO: phone ringing

GAA MEMBER: This office has been liberated! We have free wedding cake. Yes, this is definitely the Marriage Bureau—but it’s been taken over by the Gay Activists Alliance. Your mother and dad wanna get married? Are they gay? Oh I’m sorry, we can’t help you. No.

HOST: [Randy Wicker filmed it](#). Soon after that, GAA will also open the city’s first Gay Community Center in an old firehouse. In 1972, the GAA will get word that John Lindsay intends to announce his campaign to run for U.S. President at a fundraising event at Radio City. Naturally, the activists purchase 10 tickets. The government likes to harass the gay bars during election seasons to score points, so the gays wanna score a few back this time. Radio City is packed with public officials and press, and since they’ve become well known, the GAA activists show up in actual disguises.

John Lindsay takes the stage, Morty Manford runs to the mezzanine, near all the reporters.

MORTY MANFORD: Homosexuals need your help to end police harassment!

HOST: Morty handcuffs himself to the railing. The gay activists stand up throughout the audience and they take out pocket alarms—the kind that are typically used in case of muggers. They pull out the pins, setting off the little alarms, and throw them into the audience while shouting their demands at Lindsay. The crowd erupts into pandemonium. Cops run to remove Morty from the mezzanine balcony, but he says he’s tossed the handcuff key. (It’s actually in his vest pocket.) Someone else enters the mezzanine wearing a raincoat. Security asks them what they want and they improvise.

GAY 5: Officer, I’m here to arrest that man.

HOST: They’re allowed onto the mezzanine, where they open their raincoat and pull out 2,000 flyers listing their demands. They toss them over the balcony railing, covering the Radio City audience. In the chaos, John Lindsay leaves the stage and the curtain drops.

About a month later, the GAA will confront the mayor again outside a Broadway show. The mayor’s wife finally loses it, kicking and hitting people around her as the mayor tries to hold her

back. Mayor Lindsay will finally give in, and issue a statement in favor of the City Council bill prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: The Gay Activists Alliance inspires tons of subsequent gay activist groups who will follow them, like ACT UP—and *another group* created by some of GAA's own members. It'll happen at Weinstein Hall at NYU, **in the fall of 1970**. The organizers of the Stonewall anniversary march, called the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee, will plan 4 dances at the hall to raise money for gay medical, housing, and legal funds. The university will cancel the gay events. GLF, GAA, and the Radicalesbians hold a sit-in—for 5 days. That's where Sylvia Rivera gets an idea, as she watches activists abandon their people at the sit-in. On the fifth day, with only a few people left sitting in, riot police drag the remaining activists out of the hall—mostly transgender people with nowhere else to go. Sylvia Rivera writes up a flyer under a new group name: Street Transvestites for Gay Power. She asks, "GAY POWER-WHEN DO WE WANT IT? OR DO WE?... The Question is, do we want Gay Power or Pig Power... all we fought for at Weinstein Hall was lost when we left upon request of the pigs... You people run if you want to, but we're tired of running. We intend to fight for our rights until we get them."

MUSIC: ancient Sumerian queer

HOST: Sylvia and Marsha P. Johnson used to book cheap hotel rooms and sneak the street girls in, so they decide they'll get their own place to take the street queers in—a 4-bedroom apartment in the East Village, where Marsha and Sylvia hustle to pay the bills. They'll call it **STAR House—Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries**. They'll also join the GAA in demonstrating for City Council to pass the bill against gay discrimination. Here's Marsha:

AUDIO: [[Marsha P. Johnson protesting April 27, 1973](#)] Darling, I want my gay rights now! I think it's 'bout time the gay brothers and sisters got their rights! And especially the women. There's only homosexuals, bisexuals, and trisexuals, darling, and there's no straight people.

HOST: The assimilationist gay activists will compromise, compromise, compromise—allowing trans people to be taken out of the bill. STAR's activity will dwindle, **ending in 1973, at the fourth Stonewall anniversary**, where Sylvia Rivera and Queens Liberation Front founder Lee Brewster will be asked not to speak—because drag apparently makes gays look bad. But Sylvia will *force* her way onto the stage and grab the mic.

AUDIO: [[Sylvia Rivera at CSLD 1973](#)] [over crowd booing] Y'all better quiet down! Your gay brothers and your gay sisters are in jail...they ask for your help, and you all don't do a god damn thing for them. Have you ever been beaten up and raped in jail? ...The women have tried to fight for their sex changes... They write 'STAR,' not the women's group, they do not write 'women,' they do not write 'men,' they write 'STAR' because we're trying to do something for them. I have been to jail, I have been raped and beaten many times by men—heterosexual men—that do

not belong in the homosexual shelter. But do you do anything toward them? No. You all tell me to go and hide my tail between my legs. I will no longer put up with this shit. I have been beaten, I have had my nose broken, I have been thrown in jail, I have lost my job, I have lost my apartment for Gay Liberation, and you all treat me this way? What the fuck's wrong with you all? Think about that. [crowd cheers] I do not believe in revolution, but you all do. I believe in the Gay Power, I believe in us getting our rights, or else I would not be out there fighting for our rights. That's all I wanted to say to you people. If you all want to know about the people that are in jail—and do not forget Bambi L'Amour, Andorra Marks, Kenny Messner, and other gay people in jail, come and see the people at Star House on Twelfth Street on 640 East Twelfth Street between B and C apartment 14. The people are trying to do something for all of us, and not men and women that belong to a white middle class white club. And that's what you all belong to! REVOLUTION NOW! Gimme a 'G'! Gimme an 'A'! Gimme a 'Y'! Gimme a 'P'! Gimme an 'O'! Gimme a 'W'! Gimme an 'E'! Gimme an 'R'! [crying] Gay power! Louder! GAY POWER!

MUSIC: Wicker Research Studies

HOST: Sylvia Rivera will later say, in a famous speech near the end of her life, "I'll be the first one to step on any organization, any politician's toes if I have to, to get the rights for my community." The movement still has a long way to go. After STAR ends, Sylvia will leave the gay movement for years. She'll start STAR again decades later, but let's put a pin in that for another day.

In 1982, when Marsha P. Johnson is looking for somewhere to crash, a friend will invite her over to Hoboken to stay with an *Advocate* reporter, who is on the fence about this street-hustling queen. He's a former Mattachine activist who used to run a political button shop—Randy Wicker. Randy and Marsha immediately become very close. In his 1982 [annual Christmas letter](#), Randy writes, "I've taken in two roommates. One is a 37-year-old black transvestite hooker with an arrest record going back to 1963. That's Malcolm, but everyone calls her 'Marsha.' ...that notorious black bitch, that common whore of the streets...She's been here for eleven months. When and where will it end? I hope never... And, yes, this is a strange household. But I've never been happier." Marsha is happy, too. She'll work in Randy's lamp shop, and she stays for the last decade of her life, until her death—but again, [a story for another day](#).

MUSIC SETTLES—and picks up into KAMENY'S THEME.

HOST: A decade after the former astronomer Frank Kameny requested his meeting with the Civil Service Commission, he'll finally get it—in 1973. The same day he finally meets with the CSC, they'll announce that homosexuality will no longer be grounds for firing in the U.S. government. The court cases he's led against the CSC are wearing down on them. Kameny will become a District of Columbia human rights commissioner, pushed into power by the GAA. A mere two months later, D.C. will eliminate the Police Department's Morals Division—the queer catchers. Frank will write to Barbara Gittings and Kay Lahusen,

FRANK KAMENY: The war, which they have fought against the Gay Community since 1950, and against me personally since 1957, is over. We have won.

HOST: Frank Kameny will go on to draft the bill that overturns sodomy laws, passed in 1993. He'll be the first openly gay candidate for Congress, and he'll found the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Washington, D.C. In 2010, he will be invited to witness President Obama sign the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Frank Kameny will die a year later, October 11, 2011, on National Coming Out Day.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: **Back in 1970**, Barbara Gittings still doesn't quite feel as though she has won. Sure, steps have been made, but with doctors still diagnosing us as sick, there will always be these medical grounds for discrimination. GAA and STAR will hold demos outside Bellevue Hospital to protest shock therapy treatment on queers—once they even break in and sneak Marsha out—but these protests don't erase the diagnosis in the books. Barbara Gittings starts making new plans.

MUSIC: sickness theory theme

HOST: First, she returns to the libraries, where all the books said she was sick. In 1970, she makes change from the inside. Barbara joins the American Library Association, networking her way into a small gay group, and becoming their coordinator—a group called the **Gay Task Force**.

She prepares a booth for the **1971** American Library Association convention in Dallas, with a big sign saying "**Hug a Homosexual.**" One side is women only, the other is men only. She waits behind her booth with author Alma Routsong, who used to sell her lesbian book at DOB meetings. No one gets in line to hug them, so Barbara and Alma wave over some TV cameras and kiss for the crowd. The aisles pack with people, but still no one gets in line. Barbara and Alma pass out suggested gay bibliographies for the libraries. Most of the famous authors at the convention aren't even shown on TV, because the footage of Barbara and Alma takes the spotlight. It's shown on the news twice that night, and again in the morning.

Over at the American *Psychiatry* Association convention that year, Kameny and other gay people are presenting a panel called "**Lifestyles of Non-Patient Homosexuals,**" which they jokingly called "Lifestyles of Im-patient Homosexuals." The previous year at the APA, gays in the audience got pissed about being called sick. They shouted things like, "Stop talking *about* us and start talking *with* us!" and "We're the people whose behavior you're trying to change." One panel on conversion therapy was heckled by gays like Barbara and Frank so loudly that it ended early. "Dr." Irving Bieber said at that convention, "I never said homosexuals were sick, what I said was that they have displaced sexual adjustment." A protester shouted back at him, "That's the same thing, motherfucker." GAA stormed the convention with Frank's help. He grabbed the

mic, and announced, “Psychiatry is the enemy incarnate. Psychiatry has waged a relentless war of extermination against us. You may take this as a declaration of war against you.”

So the next year, in '71, Kameny says on his panel, “We’re rejecting you all as our owners. We possess ourselves and we speak for ourselves and we will take care of our destinies.” All this speaking out at the APA leads to Kameny and Gittings to hear word that there is a secret “**Gay-PA**” group that meets during these conventions. **The next year, '72**, Barbara, Kay, and Frank make big, new plans that will change the queer movement again.

Because of their demos and open conflicts at previous APA conventions, Barbara and Frank have been invited to speak on another panel, “**Psychiatry: Friend or Foe to Homosexuals: A Dialogue.**” Kay looked at the panel list and said, “This isn't right—here you have two psychiatrists pitted against two gays, and what you really need is someone who is both.” So, the APA agrees that if the Kay & Barbara can find a gay psychiatrist, the doctor can join the panel. The activists dive into the underground world of the GAY-PA, writing letters making calls across the country. And finally, one doctor agrees to talk—on one condition.

Behind the scenes at the '72 convention, the activists put the doctor in an oversized tuxedo, a mask, a wig, and a voice distorting microphone. (You can see Kay Lahusen’s photos of him on my Instagram @queerserial or at queerserial.com/s3e13) They sneak him through the back corridors and out on the lecture hall stage. The place is packed. Barbara sits down and begins reading letters from other gay psychiatrists, anonymously, explaining why they had to decline her offer to speak today. The disguised man, who they call **Dr. H. Anonymous**, explains to his colleagues why he is speaking behind a mask today. He says over 200 gay psychiatrists attend this event in the closet every year, and in their real lives they can’t be seen with other gays or their career would be ruined. The audience is astounded. Dr. Anonymous has already been fired from a hospital for being gay and flamboyant—the person who fired him is sitting in the front row, not knowing it's him. In 1994, Dr. Anonymous will reveal his name, Dr. John Fryer.

His speech is all anyone can talk about when they visit the exhibits afterward. While Dr. Anonymous goes on the radio for two hours, Frank, Barbara, and Kay set up their exhibit at the convention, a display called “**Gay, Proud, and Healthy: The Homosexual Community Speaks.**” There are photos of gay couples under the word “**LOVE**” in big red letters. The activists hand out pamphlets. Doctors are shocked, asking Barbara, “Does this really work for you people?”

Another panelist from that event, Dr. Judd Marmor, has spent the past several years working with **Dr. Evelyn Hooker**, who ran that so-called “[Fairy Project](#),” the first study of homosexuals. He agrees with her and the gay activists, that gays are not sick. Marmor runs for APA president in '73, determined to remove homosexuality from their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The other two people running for president are determined to do the same. Just a year after Barbara, Kay, Frank, and Dr. Anonymous speak, the American Psychiatry Association votes 13-0 to remove homosexuality from the DSM. The so-called doctors Socarides and Bieber

demand a referendum! Over 10,000 psychiatrists vote—and the decision stands: gays are not sick.

The **January 1974** issue of Chicago's *Gay Crusader* hits the stands, announcing in an all-caps headline, "20,000,000 GAY PEOPLE CURED!"

Barbara Gittings will hold exhibits at the APA again in '76 and '78. Her last one will be called "**Gay Love: Good Medicine.**"

While Barbara makes several TV appearances, like on Phil Donahue and David Susskind, Kay keeps taking photos. If you look through photos of the homophile movement, or the early gay liberation movement, you're mostly looking at [photos taken by Kay Lahusen](#) (and [Diana Davies](#)). Barbara will spend the next 16 years campaigning libraries to circulate positive gay and lesbian books, and stop censoring our history. One day, the books will fill with Kay's photos. Barbara's Gay Task Force will become the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. She'll be awarded a lifetime membership with the American Library Association, and the ALA's annual award for the best gay or lesbian book will be renamed after Barbara Gittings. The first recipient of that award was Alma Routsong, the woman Barbara kissed at her first ALA booth. One of the largest collections of gay books, at the Free Library of Philadelphia, is also named after Barbara Gittings. In the early 90s, when author and historian Eric Marcus interviews Barbara and Kay for his book *Making History*, Barbara says, "You know, it's been a ball. I love being part of a special people. I think gays are a special people. However much we may now blend into the woodwork, and however desirable it may be for us to have as few barriers and obstacles as possible so that we are more like other people, we will always be a special people. There is something innately different about us. I prize it. I value it. I think in our hearts most of us do. And I think it gives us that special bond that's very enriching to me. I just don't feel that same sense of community with straight people. Oh, sure, there are straight people I like, but I can't imagine not being gay. What would life have been like? Dull? Dismal? Decrepit?" Kay talks about the idea of organizing a gay retirement home one day, saying, "We're not actively working on that, but it is a twinkle in our eye." Barbara and Kay do end up pushing the American Association of Retired persons to grant them a couple's membership, and they come out in their retirement home's newsletter. They organize a [monthly gay dinner for residents](#), which you can listen to on Eric Marcus's podcast *Making Gay History*. The couple who met at a Daughters of Bilitis gathering in the earliest days of the movement will stay together until Barbara Gittings's death in 2007. Kay "Tobin" Lahusen died earlier this year in May 2021.

MUSIC SETTLES.

HOST: Everything changed after the gay liberation movement began. When once there were boarded up bars with backroom dance floors, now there are gay discos. Lesbians met discreetly in living rooms, not allowed to draw suspicion by wearing pants, but now gather in convention halls demanding doctors stop diagnosing them. Trans women met in hotel rooms and put on hose and heels simultaneously so as not to incriminate each other. The organizing was meticulously

planned for their safety. Slowly, they educated themselves and the public—until the movement gained enough momentum to be self-perpetuating—not run by a few individuals, but instead becoming an unstoppable force. No longer a series of meetings with rules and moderated behavior, but series of events that were organic, spontaneous, combusting and angry, not just educating their audience but also demanding our freedom. After gay liberation sweeps the country, San Francisco’s **Twin Peaks Tavern** on Castro is bought by lesbians, who take the boards off the windows and, for the first time in the U.S., allow the public to see into a gay bar. An avant-guard psychedelic theatre troupe called **The Cockettes** begin performing genderfuck drag for huge audiences in the Bay. **Dugan’s Bistro**, a massive disco, opens in Chicago in the former Towertown, the neighborhood where Henry Gerber once organized the first gay rights group. The Bistro proudly advertises itself as “home of the Bearded Lady,” a legendary drag queen. John Waters, Bette Midler, and Diana Ross visit the *outrageously* gay club. The world begins to open up for queer people in ways it hasn’t for centuries.

But not until *after* those first brave steps in June 1970, on Liberation Day.

Act 5: JUNE 28, 1970

HOST: Craig Rodwell is nervous about the police. The morning of the Stonewall uprising’s first anniversary, **June 28, 1970**, he arrives early at **Christopher Park**, waiting outside the bar. Not very many people are here. Craig was the most critical of the Stonewall, knowing that the manager, “The Skull” Ed Murphy, had been blackmailing wealthy gays and trafficking young queers, likely by targeting them in his dumpy, hepatitis-ridden gay bar. Now the Stonewall is shut down. Over the next couple decades it’ll become a bagel shop, a shoe store, a Chinese restaurant. The big Stonewall sign will come down. It won’t be until the ‘90s when the space reopens as a bar called Stonewall. Craig is happy to be rid of the bar. He’s been pushing for his community to have better resources since he was too young to even join the Mattachine. He would stuff Mattachine flyers into the mailboxes of gay people, and his boyfriend, young **Harvey Milk** would say, “You shouldn’t do that to people! You’ll make people paranoid that everyone knows they’re gay.” Craig replied, “You’re just thinking about how you would react if it showed up in your mailbox.”

MUSIC: “The Rejected”

HOST: After Craig opened his gay bookshop, using it to actively educate his community, Harvey went to San Francisco and will open a camera store in the gay neighborhood on Castro Street. (But let’s put a pin in that, again, for the upcoming new *Queer Serial* [sister series](#).)

Craig waits with his banner outside Christopher Park, hoping enough marchers arrive to keep the police and the hecklers at bay...

There is hope, though. **Yesterday in Chicago**, [the very first march](#) went well, and was met with dropped jaws through the former Towertown. On Saturday, June 27, about 200 Chicagoans met in Bughouse Square, the old cruising ground known for public speaking.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

Chicago Gay Liberation's Mike Barta: I want to welcome everybody here on behalf of Chicago Gay Liberation, on this celebration day, part of Gay Pride week. We're here because we're gay and we're proud that we are. [crowd cheers] If you don't think that every guy...that gets busted, murdered, robbed in this park isn't you, you're outta your mind. All I gotta say about this park is let's get the hell out of here and let's stop being the fuckin' kind of homosexuals who hide and let's get onto Michigan Avenue!

HOST: Henry Wiemhoff, the student who placed the ad for gay roommates, also spoke to the crowd.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

HENRY WIEMHOFF: We're told we're supposed to live lives that are honest, but the more we do the more we get fucked over. We've taken the shit all our lives, we can deal with it.

[crowd chanting] Gay gay power to the gay gay people! All power to the people!

HOST: They held up their flags, with two linked female symbols and two linked male symbols, and they marched to Daley Plaza, [where they danced around the Picasso statue](#). Onlookers were amazed, but not violent. Like the first pickets, these Chicago activists became immunized against fear.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

MARCHER: I've never gone on a march before and I'll be damned if I've ever been in a movement before, but all of a sudden something that cuts the corner of my life and its inner core of being gay and to have some kind of meaning... And I have to say that I've gotta be out here no matter what.

MARCHER: I consider myself very lucky to be gay. [crowd cheers] Because we're gay, we can be the leaders in the revolution that's going to make this society a better place to live. Gay Power! [crowd cheers]

HOST: For the next march in 1971, Chicagoans will fill out their permit and ask for everything they can get: floats, bands, animals—even a flea circus—just because they know they *can* ask for it. In 5 years, the city will have to shut down traffic for the Chicago march.

The same day as Chicago's march, Saturday, a small group of about 30 people march down Polk Street to **San Francisco's** City Hall. They'll also hold a "gay-in" on Sunday in Golden Gate Park. In couple years, thousands will march in San Francisco alongside Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon,

Empress Josè Sarria, Hal Call, street queens, Castro Clones, and the vast, growing queer community.

During that Sunday gay-in in Golden Gate Park, a couple thousand people in **Los Angeles** meet to march up Hollywood to Vine, while a small crowd is beginning to form in **New York's Greenwich Village** with Craig Rodwell.

A few eggs are thrown from buildings above Christopher Park, but as a community that has lived on the streets for centuries, it's nothing the gathering crowd can't handle. The marchers have been advised not to wear loose jewelry, in case of attackers. One couple brings their dogs—just in case a riot breaks out, they can slip away and say they were just out walking their dogs. Some people hang out on the sidewalks—not in the street yet—waiting to decide if it's safe to join. Suddenly, the crowd jolts forward, eager to get moving and avoid possible attacks, and the march begins—so quickly that some people will refer to the first march as the first run.

AUDIO: gays chanting “Gay and Proud” in [Lilli Vincenz documentary “Gay & Proud” \(1970\)](#)

HOST: The pace steadies, and thousands of people fill the street behind the banner: **“Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day 1970”**

Behind the banner, there are members of the various surviving chapters of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, “Lavender Menace” Radicalesbians, Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance members, the old West Side Discussion Group, the Student Homophile League of Columbia University, street queens, teens, and Stonewall veterans all marching together. New York passersby on the sidewalks stop and gawk in astonishment. There is no violence, only bewilderment.

AUDIO: gays chanting “2 4 6 8! Gay is just as good as straight!” in [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

HOST: The *Village Voice* reports:

AUDIO: typewriter

VOICE REPORTER: No one could quite believe it, eyes rolled back in heads, Sunday tourists traded incredulous looks, wondrous faces poked out of air-conditioned cars.

HOST: As they pass the Women's House of Detention at Greenwich and 6th, they chant,

AUDIO: Ardery documentary

MARCHERS: Free our sisters, free ourselves!

HOST: Kay Lahusen and Diana Davies move through the crowd taking photos. Lilli Vincenz does the same, shooting footage for her short documentary:

AUDIO: [[Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)]

VINCENZ: Can you tell me what you feel about the homophile movement?

MARCHER: I think it's great! I think it's really dynamite!

HOST: Marchers proudly lift their signs:

LESBIAN: I am a lesbian and I am beautiful.

GAY 3: We are the people our parents warned us against.

GAY 2: Homosexual is not a four-letter word

GAY 1: Hi, Mom!

HOST: Frank Kameny holds up his sign,

FRANK KAMENY: "Gay is Good."

HOST: Soon, he'll write to his mother, "Some 32 years ago, I told you that if society and I differ on anything, I will give society a second chance to convince me. If it fails, then I am right and society is wrong, and if society gets in my way, it will be society which will change, not I...It has been a guiding principle in my life. Society was wrong. I am making society change."

MUSIC: Annual Reminder

HOST: The Annual Reminder pickets in Philadelphia are replaced with this massive march, and in 35 years, [in 2005](#), a sign will go up outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where those brave few once picketed. It will say, "Annual public demonstrations for gay and lesbian equality were held at Independence Hall. These peaceful protests and New York's Stonewall riots in 1969 & Pride Parade in 1970 transformed a small national campaign into a civil rights movement." That same year, 2005, the federal government will ask Kameny for permission to display the picket signs from their protest outside of the White House and other federal buildings. Frank will say yes, of course, and will *email* Barbara Gittings and Kay Lahusen, saying, "I am not often at a loss for words, but as today sinks in, I find myself approaching that. This afternoon, Charles Francis and I went to the Smithsonian Institution's American History Museum, on the Mall, to effect formal delivery to them of 13 of our 1960's picketing signs...now part of a large collection of American historical relics... That collection includes...the small portable desk which Thomas Jefferson used for writing the first drafts of the Declaration of Independence, and the inkwells used by President Lincoln in the writing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and memorabilia from Martin Luther King's [1963 march on Washington](#) (I was there). What do you think the

reaction would have been, in 1965, as a bunch of us scrambled around on our hands and knees on the poster-board littered floor of someone's apartment, lettering those signs, had we been told that our work products would be honored and eventually displayed along with relics of Jefferson and Lincoln and King? It still hasn't fully sunk in... We have arrived irreversibly."

AUDIO: [fading in] "Out of the closets and into the streets!" in [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

HOST: The first march, born out of those pickets, is 15 blocks long in 1970. As they pass Alternate U, they raise clenched fists, which the straight activists inside return from the windows in solidarity. As they move through midtown, a woman opens her office window to throw streamers of film in celebration. The crowd cheers. Some marchers take off their shirts and dance in the sun.

AUDIO: Marchers interviewed in [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

HOST: Marching down a street is public resistance. Going to a gay bar is public resistance. Wearing what you want to wear on the train to work in the morning is public resistance. Choosing queer visibility anywhere you go—that's resistance against queer oppression. When you show your queerness, talk about it, write about it, share it with anyone, you keep the queer liberation movement moving. The conservative old maid of Mattachine that history books will generalize about, they would not have approved of this celebration, flaunting and forcing people to look at who we are. But before those conservative white men in suits took it over, Harry Hay's Mattachine Foundation first set out to start a movement that would **embrace our differences from heterosexuals**. Harry will say that the original document, "The Call," his call to action, "was a great transcendent dream of what being gay was all about." Of breaking sexual normals and existing between genders. He'll say, "*The neitherness is who we are, and the neitherness is our power.*"

The conservatives who played it safe, putting on heterosexual society's uniform—suits for men and dresses for women—were also essential for the movement. Although their rules excluded trans people and the various gender variant folks who pushed the movement forward through civil disobedience, the conservatives spoke to the stubborn hetero world directly, through a mask the heteros recognized, and told them to expect louder and louder queer resistance. The conservative queers were dead wrong, though, early in the movement, when they insisted that our queer community did not have its own culture. It was already there for centuries underground. The conservatives insisted that we were just like everyone else, aside from who we take to bed. But the movement that grew out of the bars, out of street demonstrations, pushed by our publications, depicted in our books, sung about in our music—the movement itself is proof that a queer culture and community very much exists. And 50 years later, queer culture will still exist—larger in scale than even the most radical early activists might have imagined. Queer influence on mainstream culture will become immeasurable.

But liberation does not necessarily mean assimilation to the mainstream. The homophiles won us the right to work for or fight for the American government, but you are not obligated to. Later activists will win us the right to marry, but queer love has never required legal validation to exist. We exist beyond marriage, and military, and monogamy. “We are people who have been thrown up generation after generation throughout the millennia by the forces of natural selection,” Harry Hay once said, “and through that...we are able to act as a mirror to see certain things that the straights can’t possibly see.”

AUDIO: [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

MARCHER: Because if two homosexuals can live together and thrive and to be constructive rather than destructive to each other themselves, without legal bonds, without children, without sanction of the great society, then they can demonstrate to the heterosexuals they need not be so concerned with their property and their marriage and divorce law.

VINCENZ: And you think you’re happier now that you’ve realized exactly where your feelings lie?

MARCHER: Indeed, I’m sorry that it took so long. I’m sorry that I spent so many years in the closet.

HOST: We no longer have to moderate our behavior for oppressors. Our movement was born out of resistance against 1950s domesticity, war, religion, capitalism, and heteronormative rules. Our queer ancestors won us the freedom to do as we wish—you can go out into the desert and live among the Radical Faeries or you may be a celebrated drag king in your local bar or you may run the country. None of these is better than the others, and all of them are your right.

AUDIO: [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

QUEER: Honey, if straight people can do it, why can’t we? If straight people can do all this carrying on, holding hands and kissing in the park, why can’t we do it? They ain’t no better than I am.

HOST: Liberation did not begin at Stonewall, as we’ve learned over many episodes. The movement was only taking a new form at the uprising. At the first-ever [Queer History Conference](#), in 2019, historian Susan Stryker will say that the Stonewall uprising was “one highly significant episode” in the middle of a very long story—a story that intersects with the Civil Rights movement for racial justice, the women’s movement, the anti-war movement, the struggle of the people. With homophiles joining the struggle for liberation, uprisings like Stonewall became inevitable.

AUDIO: Activists spelling GAY POWER! [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

HOST: As the Christopher Street Liberation Day march arrives at Central Park, people sing a song so commonly heard at the various protests over the past two decades, “We Shall Overcome,” ...as thousands pour into Sheep Meadow.

AUDIO: Ardery documentary [crowds cheering]

REPORTER: The feeling was pervasive. It seemed as if everyone there knew that something of importance just happened to them. That there could be no turning back, from the old days of hiding, degradation, and denial of their basic humanity.

FRANK KAMENY: There's been nothing like this before and I hope it sets a tone and trend for the whole future.

SEVERAL VINCENZ & ARDERY CLIPS. Music plays in Central Park...

HOST: Kay Lahusen writes for *GAY*, “Thousands of gay men and women marched joyously through the streets of Manhattan Sunday, June 28th, to celebrate the first birthday of homosexual liberation. The unprecedented march was the culmination of Gay Pride Week. The ranks of festive participants stretched out over twenty city blocks as they moved from Sheridan Square in Greenwich Village up Sixth Avenue to Sheep Meadow in Central Park... Throughout the meadow, gay couples cuddled, kissed, laughed, and listened to themselves being described by announcers across the band of their transistor radios. Television cameras ogled at the open show of gay love and affection and solidarity. The Gay-In went on until well after sundown, after which *GAY*'s reporter was told love knew no bounds. Said one Lesbian, “We've just experienced the world's greatest consciousness raising event for homosexuals!” Said the flyer from the umbrella committee of sponsoring groups: “We are showing our strength and our love for each other by coming here today. We are all participants in the most important Gay event in history.”

MUSIC: Gay Liberation

AUDIO: gays chanting “2 4 6 8! Gays unite to smash the State!” in [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

HOST: Other early activists Jack Nichols and Lige Clark walk up the hill, turn around, and look back at the crowd, Jack tears up. The march is so long, they can't see the end of it. In the crowd, Diana Davies snaps photos of Marsha P. Johnson, her hair up in ribbons, walking with her community toward the park.

No longer sitting alone, typing letters to an indifferent government, Frank Kameny is overwhelmed by the turnout, too. Next week he'll write to a British gay activist about the march, saying “It was the culmination of Gay Pride Week, and that—**gay pride**—was the theme of the march—be proud of your homosexuality; come out into the open; hold up your head in pride.”

FRANK KAMENY: Life takes its turnings and you don't foresee them. But ultimately I think, in retrospect, life has been more exciting and stimulating and interesting and satisfying and rewarding and fulfilling than I ever could possibly have *dreamed* it would have been.

AUDIO: Queers camping in the [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

QUEER: Oh, go through it, Myra! Breckinridge! Myra, say something to the press!

HOST: Fights are still ahead. But now our community is better prepared than ever to take them on. As a result of our liberation, there will be backlash. But queer activism will lift queer people into power.

The march itself will be taken over by the corrupt Mafia man who owned the Stonewall, Ed Murphy, who will call himself “the first Stonewaller” and reverse the parade route so that it ends in the Village, where more profits can be made. Randy Wicker and Marsha P. Johnson will launch a campaign called “[Take Back the Day](#).” There will always be activism surrounding our culture—especially at our biggest annual event. As gay men take over the march, lesbians will launch the **Dyke March** in 1993. As corporations begin to put their logos in rainbow and pander to queers for a buck, and as *police officers* are chosen to lead Pride parades in many cities, the **New York City Drag March** will launch in 1994—on the 25th Stonewall anniversary—to give people an alternative march. The Drag March will celebrate genderfuckery in the streets from Tompkins Square Park all the way to the Stonewall. And on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, in 2019, the Reclaim Pride Coalition will launch the **Queer Liberation March**, encouraging queers of color, drag artists, and sex workers to walk the original path of the 1970’s Christopher Street Liberation Day march. In the following two years, 2020 & 21, the Queer Liberation March will transform again, specifically supporting the **Black Lives Matter movement**. Police will meet those marchers in Washington Square Park with pepper spray and batons, reminding us why all of this marching started in the first place.

The movement began in shared glances. Two women, finally alone, chatting in a living room. Genderqueer friends in a dumpy backroom bar, hiding from the cops. Men cruising quietly under lampposts in the park. In 1970, on Liberation Day, thousands of queers of all kinds hold hands in Central Park, dance in the sunlight, lie in the grass, kiss their lovers, camp with their family, and celebrate our powerful community.

AUDIO: [Lilli Vincenz doc \(1970\)](#)

VINCENZ: Tell me how you feel about being here today.

QUEER: I feel it’s beautiful, it’s fantastic.

VINCENZ: How many years have you been a homosexual?

QUEER: I was born homosexual, it’s beautiful.

THE END

Learn more in the episode credits & at queerserial.com/s3e13

My first Pride, in Chicago 2013, with my college boyfriend Mark.

