

### **History of the Homophile Movement in Kansas City**

The homophile movement, a movement for gay and lesbian rights during the 1950's and 1960's, has important history in Kansas City. In 1966, the first North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO; pronounced Nay-Koe) took place at the State Hotel in Kansas City. NACHO was an umbrella organization of local gay and lesbian rights organizations that existed across the country. The 1966 meeting established a legal defense fund and coordinated demonstrations for equal rights. NACHO met in Kansas City again in 1969 at Hotel Bellerive, weeks after Stonewall took place. NACHO disbanded a short time later in response to calls for a more inclusive and radical movement.



Hotel Bellerive, the site of NACHO's 1969 meeting in Kansas City

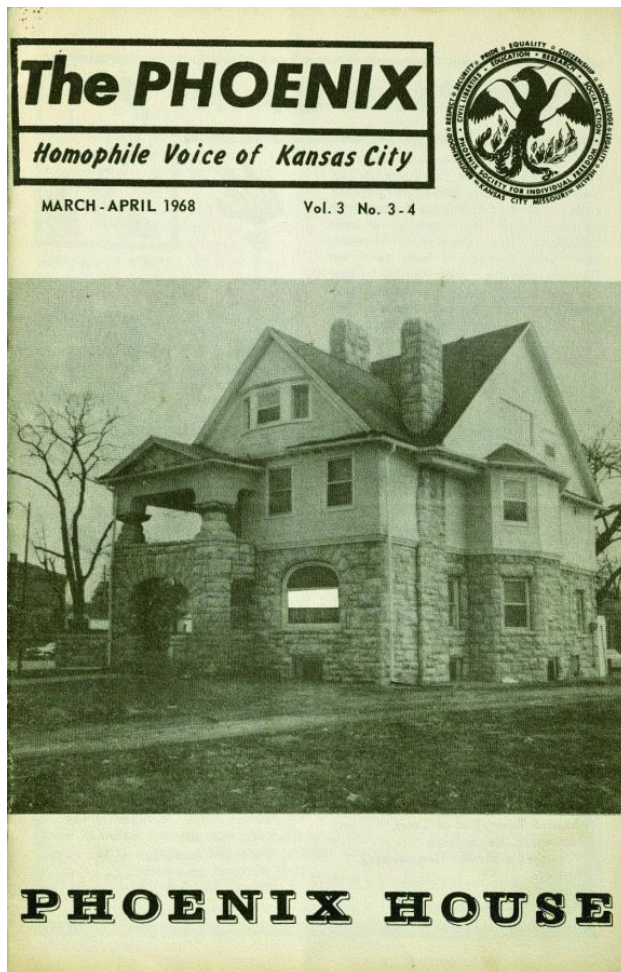
Read more here:

<https://info.umkc.edu/makinghistory/the-north-american-conference-of-homophile-organizations/>

June 17, 2024

### Kansas City's First Lesbian and Gay Organization

In the 1960's, the Phoenix Society for Individual Freedom established themselves as the first homophile organization in Kansas City. They held events, published their own magazine, and established the first LGBTQ community center in Kansas City in 1968. The Phoenix Society also published for the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO), a national organization for smaller local homophile organizations across the country. The Phoenix House served as a place for community, organizing, and publishing.



The Phoenix House stood at 1333 Linwood Blvd.

Read more here: <https://info.umkc.edu/makinghistory/the-phoenix-society-in-kansas-city/>  
<https://www.visitkc.com/2020/06/01/kansas-citys-lgbtq-history>

**Marsha P. Johnson**

thought to be she/her or they/them, but no historical consensus  
(using she/her here to be consistent with most historical descriptions)



Marsha P. Johnson was born in New Jersey in 1945. She was a leading transgender activist whose participation in the Stonewall Uprising kickstarted the modern movement for LGBTQ+ rights.

Marsha was the 5th of 7 children in a working-class, religious family and experienced bullying and violence in childhood for expression of her gender identity. She moved to NYC following her high school graduation at the age of 17. She originally referred to herself as Black Marsha, and later took the name Marsha P. Johnson, stating that the "P" stood for "pay it no mind" when asked.

Johnson used sex work to survive as an unsheltered teenager in NYC. She experienced abuse from clients and was arrested multiple times, sometimes simply for wearing makeup in public. She enjoyed drag and performed as a member of the drag group Hot Peaches. While at times falsely credited with throwing the first brick at Stonewall, Johnson (age 23 at the time) was present at the Stonewall Uprising and became a key player in the broader LGBTQ+ movement that followed, even as many gay and lesbian groups marginalized transgender people.

Johnson founded STAR, Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (the term transgender was not widely used at the time), with longtime friend, Sylvia Rivera, to support and house homeless LGBTQ+ youth and sex workers. Johnson also helped spread awareness and raise money during the AIDS crisis while struggling with her own illness. In 1992, Johnson's body was pulled from the Hudson River at the age of 46. First ruled a suicide and later reopened, the case remains unsolved today. Johnson's legacy lives on with the Marsha P. Johnson Institute, which advocates for the rights of black transgender people.

## Pride and Juneteenth



As celebrations of Pride are ongoing during the month of June, Black LGBTQ+ people have found ways to merge these celebrations with the acknowledgment and celebration of Juneteenth. Recently made a federal holiday, Juneteenth marks the day in 1865 that the enslaved people in Galveston, TX finally learned of their freedom, over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. It is also known as Black Independence Day, Emancipation Day, and Freedom Day. Given the continued marginalization of both Black and LGBTQ+ communities from society broadly, as well as the unfortunate prevalence of racism in some LGBTQ+ spaces and homophobia in some Black communities, recognizing the intersection of these experiences is crucial.

Trevon Mayers, senior director of advocacy and community engagement at New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, said adding a Juneteenth celebration to the center's Pride month festivities allows one to consider what freedom looks like "for the intersections of our community." "We often talk about the LGBTQ community not being a monolith, and that is also extended to the Black community," Mayers said. "There are so many nuances and intricacies of what those community members look like and the diversity that exists within that space."

From the Op-Ed "[My Pride is Black, My Juneteenth is Queer](#)," author Preston Mitchum writes: "LGBTQ people are not political wedge issues, but real people with real experiences. Our stories intersect not only across struggles, but across the landscape of American history and our united future. Despite that, Black LGBTQ people are often told we must separate parts of ourselves to be accepted, or at the very least decide which identity holds more weight. This is a dangerous and false dichotomy. But until I learned about, and fully grappled with, intersectionality, I once fell victim to that narrative. I now enter all spaces as both Black and queer, and it's the only way I'm interested in showing up. It's also now what I mean when I say I need my Pride to be Black and my Juneteenth to be queer."

**Sylvia Rivera**  
(she/her)



Sylvia Rivera (1951-2002) was a Latina-American drag queen who became one of the most radical LGBT activists of the 1960s and 1970s. Born on July 2, 1951 in Bronx, NY, Rivera had a difficult childhood. She was abandoned by her father shortly after birth and orphaned as a toddler after her mother died by suicide. After experiencing abuse from her grandmother due to her gender expression, she ran away from home at the age of 11 and worked as a child prostitute. With the support of drag queens who welcomed her into their fold, she became "Sylvia."

At the age of 17, Rivera participated in the Stonewall Riots and co-founded the group, the Gay Liberation Front. She also teamed up with friend, Marsha P. Johnson, to co-found the STAR group that helped support and empower gay, trans, and gender-fluid youth in 1970. Rivera's diverse personal background--as a poor, trans, drag queen, person of color, former sex worker, and someone who experienced addiction, incarceration, and homelessness--contributed to her activism for racial, economic, and criminal justice issues. She continued this advocacy despite being increasingly left out of the mainstream gay rights movement, including when the Gay Rights Bill, which took 17 years to become law in New York, ultimately excluded transgender rights.

Sylvia passed away in 2002 from liver cancer at the age of 50. Today the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) is named in her honor. SRLP is a non-profit organization that engages in policy work and provides trainings and free legal services for transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming low-income people of color.



June 21 ,2024

**Miss Major Griffin-Gracy**  
(she/her)



Miss Major Griffin-Gracy is a Black, transgender activist who has fought for transgender rights for over 50 years. Born on the South Side of Chicago, she came to know herself in the 1950s and 60's when police raids of queer bars were rampant.

Miss Major is a veteran of the Stonewall Riots (along with activists Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera), a former sex worker, and a survivor of incarceration. She credits her time in prison for her radical political stance on issues like abolition and Black liberation. At the center of her activism is her fierce advocacy for trans women of color who have survived police brutality and incarceration in men's jails and prisons.

Miss Major brought her intersectional approach to justice to care directly for people with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, and later to drive San Francisco's first mobile needle exchange. In 2005, Miss Major joined San Francisco-based Trans Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) as a staff organizer, and later as executive director, leading their efforts advocating for incarcerated transgender women. She now runs House of GG-TILIFI, a retreat center for trans and gender nonconforming leaders from the Southern U.S. She recently released a book, *Miss Major Speaks*, about her life's activism.

June 22, 2024

### **Kansas City's Support for the Transgender Community and Gender-Affirming Care**



Source: kcmo.gov

In May of 2023, Kansas City approved a “safe haven” resolution to protect individuals seeking gender-affirming care. The resolution was a sign of support for the local transgender community. The resolution came in response to several bills were introduced in the Missouri state legislature aimed at restricting and criminalizing access to gender-affirming care. The resolution states that the city will not criminally prosecute or penalize individuals seeking gender-affirming care or healthcare providers providing gender-affirming care. The resolution also states that if state laws are passed that restrict or criminalize gender-affirming care, the city will not prioritize enforcement of these laws. Kansas City transgender activists encourage the city to continue to support the trans community through programming support and funding.

Read the resolution here: <https://clerk.kcmo.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6195676&GUID=A44A421C-CC91-4816-B2CB-86F7BDA4BD67>

Learn more here:

<https://www.kctv5.com/2024/05/17/members-transgender-community-advocate-rights-city-hall/>

Highlighting some of Kansas City's LGBTQIA2S+ Organizations



***Transformations***

Transformations is a local grassroots community organization for trans women of color. The organization was formed by and for trans women of color in 2016 in response to violence that targeted Black and Latina trans women. The organization aims to create safer, thriving communities for trans people of color. They hold events and provide social support, education, and financial support to members of their community. One way that you can currently support Transformations is by providing a donation. Donations go toward programming and outreach activities.

**Website:** <https://transformationskc.org/>

**Instagram:** @kctransformations

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/kctransformations](https://www.facebook.com/kctransformations)

***Stonewall Sports KC***

Stonewall Sports is a local adult LGBTQIA+ sports organization that honors the 1969 Stonewall riots. They offer kickball, softball, sand volleyball, pickleball, tennis, billiards, trivia, virtual reality, and cheer. Scholarships are available to cover the costs of sports. One way to support Stonewall Sports is by becoming a sponsor or volunteering at their sporting events.

**Website:** <https://stonewallsportskc.com/>

**Instagram:** @stonewallsportskc

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/stonewallsportskc](https://www.facebook.com/stonewallsportskc)

***Kansas City Center for Inclusion***

Kansas City Center for Inclusion is a local LGBTQIA+ organization that provides resources, support groups, events and programming, and a space for people in the community. They are currently offering a religious trauma support group, an American Sign Language club, a queer voices book group, and a trans support group.

**Website:** <https://www.inclusivekc.org/old-home>

**Instagram:** @inclusivekc

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/inclusivekc](https://www.facebook.com/inclusivekc)