

Document A: *New York Daily News* (Excerpt)

According to reports, the Stonewall Inn . . . was a **mecca** for the homosexual **element** in the **village** who wanted nothing but a private little place where they could **congregate**, drink, dance and do whatever little girls do when they get together.

Last Friday the privacy of the Stonewall was invaded by police from the First Division. It was a raid. They had a warrant. After two years, police said they had been informed that liquor was being served on the premises. Since the Stonewall was without a license, the place was being closed. It was the law. . . .

Two participants recently recalled the battle and issued a warning to the cops: "If they close up all the gay joints in this area, there is going to be all out war."

Bruce and Nan: Both said they were refugees from Indiana and had come to New York where they could live together happily ever after. . . . "I'll bet you didn't see what they did to the Stonewall. Did the pigs tell you that they smashed everything in sight? Did you ask them why they stole money out of the cash register and then smashed it with a sledge hammer? Did you ask them why it took them two years to discover that the Stonewall didn't have a liquor license?" . . . "They let us operate just as long as the payoff is regular," Nan said bitterly. "I believe they closed up the Stonewall because there was some trouble with the payoff to the cops. I think that's the real reason. It's a shame. It was such a lovely place. We never bothered anybody. Why couldn't they leave us alone?" . . .

The men of the First Division were unable to find any humor in the situation, despite the comical overtones of the raid. "They were throwing more than lace hankies," one inspector said. "I was almost decapitated by a slab of thick glass. It was thrown like a discus and just missed my throat by inches. The beer can didn't miss, though. It hit me right above the temple." Police also believe the club was operated by Mafia connected owners. The police did confiscate the Stonewall's cash register as proceeds from an illegal operation. . . .

Source: *Jerry Lisker, The New York Daily News, July 6, 1969.*

Vocabulary

mecca: a center; a place that attracts people of a particular group

element: a distinct group within a larger community

village: Greenwich Village, a neighborhood in New York City known as a center of counter-culture in the 1960s and 1970s

congregate: gather into a crowd; come together

Document B: Sylvia Rivera (Excerpt)

Born and raised in New York City, Sylvia Rivera participated in the Stonewall Riots as a teenager. Throughout her life, she fought for equal rights for LGBT people. This is an excerpt of a speech she gave at a meeting of the Latino Gay Men of New York, a community organization.

We were all involved in different struggles, including myself and many other transgender people. But in these struggles, in the civil rights movement, in the war movement, in the women's movement, we were still outcasts. The only reason they tolerated the transgender community in some of these movements was because we were gung-ho. . . . We had nothing to lose. . . .

We were all in the bar, having a good time. Lights flashed on, we knew what was coming; it's a raid. . . . The routine was that the cops get their payoff, they confiscate the liquor . . . a padlock would go on the door. What we did, back then, was disappear to a coffee shop or any place in the neighborhood for fifteen minutes. You come back, the Mafia was there cutting the padlock off, bringing in more liquor, and back to business as usual. . . .

The confrontation started outside by throwing change at the police. We started with the pennies, the nickels, the quarters, and the dimes. "Here's your payoff, you pigs!" . . .

Once word of mouth got around that the Stonewall had gotten raided, and that there's a confrontation going on, people came from the clubs. But we have to remember one thing: that it was not just the gay community *and* the street queens that really escalated this riot; it was also the help of the many radical straight men and women that lived in the Village at that time, that knew the struggle of the gay community and the trans community. . . .

So then the tactical police force came and heads were being bashed left and right. But what I found very impressive that evening, was that the more that they beat us, the more we went back for. We were determined that evening that we were going to be a liberated, free community.

Source: *Sylvia Rivera, speech to the Latino Gay Men of New York, June 2001. Reprinted in Centro Journal, Spring 2007.*

Document C: *Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter* (Excerpt)

This is an excerpt from an article written by Dick Leitsch, a founder of the Mattachine Society of New York, an early gay rights organization. Leitsch wasn't present at the Stonewall Inn when the riot began, but he came to the scene when he heard a report of the conflict on the radio.

Coming on the heels of the raids of the Snake Pit and the Sewer, and the closing of . . . other clubs, the Stonewall raid looked to many like part of an effort to close all gay bars and clubs in the Village. . . . Since 1965 the homosexual community of New York has been treated quite well by the City Administration. . . . Now we've walked in the open and know how pleasant it is to have self-respect and to be treated as citizens and human beings. . . . Efforts to force us back in the closet could be disastrous for all concerned.

The above, while a true evaluation of the situation, does not explain why the raid on the Stonewall caused such a strong reaction. . . . The answer lies, we believe, in the unique nature of the Stonewall. This club was more than a dance bar, more than just a gay gathering place. It catered largely to a group of people who are not welcome in, or cannot afford, other places of homosexual social gathering. The “**drags**” and the “**queens**,” two groups which would find a chilly reception or a barred door at most of the other gay bars and clubs, formed the “regulars” at the Stonewall. To a large extent, the club was for them. . . .

Another group was even more dependent on the Stonewall: the very young homosexuals and those with no other homes. . . . There are hundreds of young homosexuals in New York who literally have no home. . . . They live in the streets, panhandling or shoplifting for the price of admission to the Stonewall. That was the one advantage to the place—for \$3.00 admission, one could stay inside, out of the winter's cold or the summer heat, all night long. . . . The Stonewall became “home” to these kids. When it was raided, they fought for it. That, and the fact that they had nothing to lose other than the most tolerant and **broadminded** gay place in town, explains why the Stonewall riots were begun, led and spearheaded by “queens.”

Source: Dick Leitsch, “*The Stonewall Riots: The Gay View*,” from the *Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter*, August 1969.

Vocabulary

drags: a term used at the time to describe men who dressed in women's clothing, often as part of a performance

queens: a term used at the time to describe transgender women

broadminded: open-minded

Document D: *The Ladder* (Excerpt)

This is an excerpt of an article that appeared in The Ladder, which was the first nationally distributed lesbian magazine in the United States.

Gay power—social and political power for homosexuals—has become a reality in New York, with the **inadvertent** help of the Police Department. At about 2 A.M. late Saturday night of June 29, the police raided the Stonewall Inn. . . . They had previously closed . . . gay bars within the territory of the Sixth Precinct; but this was the first raid during peak hours, when the bar was jammed.

The raid touched off a riot by approximately 400 homosexual men and women, who yelled “gay power” and threw pennies, garbage and even uprooted parking meters at the police. . . . Both the Mattachine Society of New York and the **Homophile Youth Movement** began leafleting the Village in order to organize protests against the conditions which sparked the riots. . . .

CORRUPTION IN THE BARS. It is generally believed that the gay bars in New York City are controlled by the Mafia, in cooperation with the police. Reputable leaders of the gay community stated as much in private during the days following the riots . . . However, no solid evidence has yet been presented in court.

It is also generally believed that in order to obtain a liquor license from the State Liquor Authority, a bribe ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 must be paid. . . . Since the SLA refuses to issue licenses to gay bars, these bars are generally run without licensing . . . and are therefore a perfectly legitimate target of police raids. During ordinary times, the police have allowed these bars to operate, overlooking violations in return for a percentage of the take. During election years, these bars become the target for raids and round-ups of homosexuals.

The raids in the Sixth Precinct are believed to have been triggered off by the presence of a new captain, who wishes to make his reputation as a “law-and-order” man during a conservative year by “cleaning up the Village.”

Source: “Gay Power in New York City,” *The Ladder*, October-November 1969.

Vocabulary

inadvertent: unintentional

Homophile Youth Movement: an early gay rights organization

Stonewall Guiding Questions

Document A: *New York Daily News*

1. (Sourcing) Who was Jerry Lisker? Was he present at the Stonewall Riots?
2. (Close reading) According to the individuals interviewed in this article, what was the real reason the police raided the Stonewall Inn?
3. (Close reading) What is the tone of the author toward the patrons of the Stonewall Inn? Cite at least one example to support your answer.

(Contextualization) How might this help to explain what caused the riots?

4. Is this a reliable source on the riots? Why? Why not?

Document B: Sylvia Rivera

1. (Sourcing) Who was Sylvia Rivera? Was she present at the Stonewall Riots?

2. (Close reading) According to this document, which groups of people helped to escalate the riots? Why did these groups become involved?

(Contextualization) How does this information help to explain what caused the riots?

3. (Contextualization) What other social and political movements were going on at the time of the riots?

How does this information help to explain what caused the riots?

4. (Corroboration) How is this account similar to Document A?

How is it different?

5. Is this a reliable source for learning about the riots? Why? Why not?

Document C: *Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter*

1. (Sourcing) Who was Dick Leitsch? Was he present at the Stonewall Riots?

2. (Close reading) According to this document, which groups of people had strong attachments to the Stonewall Inn?

(Contextualization) How does this information help to explain what caused the riots?

3. (Corroboration) How is this account similar to Documents A and B?

How is it different?

4. Is this a reliable source for learning about the riots? Why? Why not?

Document D: *The Ladder*

1. (Sourcing) What was *The Ladder*? Was the author present at the Stonewall Riots?

2. (Close reading) According to this document, what had been happening in the weeks leading up to the Stonewall Riots?

(Contextualization) How might this information help to explain what caused the riots?

3. (Contextualization) The article states, "During election years, these bars become the target for raids and round-ups of homosexuals." At the time this article was written, an election for mayor of New York City was underway. How does this information help to explain what caused the riots?

4. (Corroboration) How is this account similar to Documents A, B, and C?

How is it different?

5. Is this a reliable source for learning about the riots? Why? Why not?

What caused the Stonewall riots?

Round 1

What caused the Stonewall Riots?

What evidence from the document supports this claim?

Round 2

What caused the Stonewall Riots?

What evidence from the documents supports this claim?

Round 3

What caused the Stonewall Riots?

What evidence from the documents supports this claim?

