Stonewall Riots

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Civil rights are meant to be granted to everyone in the United States and everyone in the world. But when a certain group is attacked and targeted the group must unite and take a stand to those who are going against them. Gay rights have been a topic of interest for many groups and organizations for years. This group has been targeted for years for being “different”. Being gay or lesbian is looked upon by a lot of people as going against tradition and that definitely should not be condoned. But it was time that people saw them as a part of the population and not segregating them because of their sexuality. The Stonewall Riots would be that turning point in history where gay activism truly began and ignited a new movement. In the end of it all it had a big impact on New York City today and the people that live in it.

At a time in history it was difficult for men or women to be openly gay. Men and women would be scared to open up. This was unfair and this population was not getting the freedom others had. They were looked as if they were doing something wrong and that made them hide their sexuality. Finding a place where they could be openly gay was important to them. Being near the other people that understood what they were going through was important.

The place where some found it was at the Stonewall Inn on 53 Christopher Street. It was the most popular and known gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York. It was a small bar that drew racially mixed crowd and was popular for its location as well. Greenwich Village is a place full of cafes and hangout spots. The bar is still operating today and is still a major historical mark. Christopher Park is also a well known park there because of having statues of two same sex couples all cast in bronze and painted white. These statues are still there today and the park is still visited by many gay couples and admired by many for having such a statement with those statues. It was an easy target because it had no liquor license and was said to be connected with organized crime (Wright, 2008, Page 130). This put them under the watch of police and gave them more reason to raid them.

On June 28, 1969 the bar was raided by the police and the patrons where attacked and forced out (Hall, 2010, Page 545). There had been many raids before this so it wasn’t unusual but this one was definitely different than the others. It was a moment of fear and despair for the people in the bar and the only thing they could do is fight back. They would not go without a fight and caused a scene that would make others react as well. They did not endure the humiliation that they once did when people acted against them (Armstrong & Crage, 2006, Page 724). The patrons fought back and began throwing objects and chanting at the police (Hall, 2010, Page 545). It was time to make a change.

When word got out about this riot, crowds gathered and also join the crowds at the bar. Gay, transgender and gender-variant people had been engaging in violent protests and direct actions against social aggression for many years at that time. But it was not seen in this magnitude like at the Stonewall Riot. This riot was said to be the spark that inspired the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (Stryker, 2008). This group would further increase this movement’s popularity.

The impact this time in history had on NYC has been a big one. On February 16, 2000, the Stonewall Inn became a National Historic Landmark (PBS website). It has definitely had its share of its challenges but this bar stand for something really great which is equality. More organizations were initiated and it may be estimated that more than 1,000 organizations formed within a year after the riot (Singleton, 2009). It was also a moment where it was time for people to come out and take pride of their sexuality. Gay pride parades are now held toward the end of June in many cities to commemorate the riots history (Wright, 2008). We now see more homosexual couples out and about and that may have much to do with the Stonewall Riots. Gay bars, social groups, and even gay rights activists are seen everywhere now. Without these people who fought for their rights New York City, as well as other cities, would be a city of different sex couples just because of fear. We now see the famous rainbow flags in front of shops and cafes showing support for the gay community. The riots had changed the path people opening up about their sexuality and being able to go anywhere without fear. Although we still see hate crimes and actions against homosexuals, it is definitely more acceptable now to be openly gay then back then.

Overall, the impact that the Stonewall Riot has had on the gay community as well as New York City itself has been a big one. The Stonewall Inn is admired in the Greenwich Village community as seeing that anything is possible if you fight for it. Not only the homosexual community boomed but also the bisexual and transgendered are now seen different and more accepted. The day of June 28, 1969 marked a day of change and today would definitely be different if it hadn’t happened.

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