

Beyond Stonewall: Why We March, by Sharon Bandy and Joan Lipkin, is ideal for theatre companies, LGBT groups and associations, college campuses, and is available royalty-free. It is designed to work as a full-scale production as well as a staged-reading. Appropriate recognition is to be given to the authors of the play; however, we encourage people to take the text and adapt it to work with your available resources. Of course, we encourage conversation following any presentation of the script, whether it be in a classroom or on a stage. You need no permission before presenting *Beyond Stonewall: Why We March*. We would be delighted if you would join our efforts in publicizing this event and the important issues that it addresses. We do encourage you to send production information and photos to us at uppityco@aol.com.

SYNOPSIS

This short piece — running length of approximately twenty-five minutes — is about a newscaster trying to do a story on the "New Face of Gay Activism" when his interview is hijacked by bloggers, the ghosts of Stonewall, a young gay college student, and his best straight female friend. The essential conflict in the play centers on a confrontation of values between a white, newly-out gay male bank president and a long time African American lesbian activist. The piece is funny and informative and explores reasons people should be interested in the October 11, 2009 Equality March on Washington to address such issues as the legalization of gay marriage, the Employee Non-Discrimination Act, hate crimes initiatives, and repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Beyond Stonewall: Why We March

By Sharon Bandy and Joan Lipkin

CAST: News Reporter (white male)
Rob Franklin (gay, white, banker, mid-40s)
Blogger 1 (any age - can be played by 1-5 actors onstage or as voice-over)
Blogger 2 (any age - can be played by 1-5 actors onstage or as voice-over)
Helen (lesbian, African-American, mid 40s)
Queen 1 (drag queen, ghost, c1969 - can be played by 2-5 actors)
Queen 2 (drag queen, ghost, c1969 - can be played by 2-5 actors)
Josh (gay, college student)
Sarah (straight, college student, Josh's best friend)

SETTING: Sidewalk in a run-down neighborhood

TIME: Now

SCENE: The sidewalk in the commercial area of a run-down neighborhood, in front of a gay bar.

AT RISE: NEWS REPORTER is preparing to interview ROB, a prominent gay businessman. NEWS REPORTER is checking his hair and teeth in a small mirror, trying to juggle mirror and microphone while picking something out of his teeth. ROB watches, amused. NEWS REPORTER realizes the audience is watching him, puts the mirror away and addresses the audience.

NEWS REPORTER

So, this is it. My big shot. A story with some meat finally, not some dog show down at the rec center. And what do they tell me? In and out. Yep, in and out. Get it in one take because we're short-staffed. And we still need you to cover the traffic jam on Main because of the Baptist car wash. Welcome to the big time, huh? What they don't know is there's no such thing as a quick take on the street. All kinds of crap comes up.

(NEWS REPORTER gestures to "crowd" that is gathering: HELEN, an African-American lesbian activist, JOSH, a gay twenty-something, Sarah, his straight best friend, 2 bloggers and two drag QUEENS—ghosts of Stonewall—wearing feather boas and high heels)

NEWS REPORTER *(cont.)*

I arrange to speak with one guy, and people come out of the woodwork. Everybody wants to be a star.

QUEEN 1

Who's the guy in the suit?

QUEEN 2

Which one?

QUEEN 1

The good-looking one, sweetheart.

QUEEN 2

He's too young for you.

QUEEN 1

I'm only thirty.

QUEEN 2

Forty years ago you were thirty.

QUEEN 1

History does nothing if not preserve the complexion.

(NEWS REPORTER notices the QUEENS and approaches them)

NEWS REPORTER

Sorry, I've got an interview to do.

QUEEN 2

He wants to interview us!

NEWS REPORTER

(he indicates Rob)

Actually, I was planning on interviewing Mr. . . .

QUEEN 1

The cute one?

NEWS REPORTER

Who, exactly *are* you?

QUEEN 2

We're the ghosts of Stonewall, sweetheart. Aren't you going to wish us a "Happy Anniversary?"

QUEEN 1

Forty years . . . Hmmm . . . I believe rubies are traditional.

NEWS REPORTER

Say what? Ghosts? You've got to be kidding me.

QUEEN 2

This is the theater, darling, anything is possible.

QUEEN 1

If you'd done your homework, you'd know all about us.

NEWS REPORTER

Listen, I'm just supposed to interview the banker. I don't know anything about a costume party.

QUEEN 2

Here we go again, relegated to the footnotes of history.

NEWS REPORTER

Who exactly are you?

QUEEN 1

Shall we?

QUEEN 2

It's been so long.

QUEEN 1 and QUEEN 2

(Together in a sing-songy chant)

We are the Stonewall girls,

We wear our hair in curls,

We wear no underwear,

*We show our pubic hair,
We wear our dungarees,
Above our nelly knees.*

BLOGGER 1

Time to blog . . .

NEWS REPORTER

Oh, god, here we go. Is this more of that theater magic thing?

BLOGGER 2

No. The Blogosphere.

BLOGGER 1

We're everywhere.

BLOGGER 2

24/7.

BLOGGER 1

(mimes typing)

I would like to remind you what Jesus said about homosexuality . . . Signed, Washugrad.

BLOGGER 2

(mimes typing)

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Signed, Leviticus 18:22. Leviticus, Leviticus, Leviticus.

NEWS REPORTER

(directly addressing audience)

My GM's pushing this story. Says the gays are organizing, that they are a significant demographic that can affect the ratings, so here we are. *I* wanted to do a thought-piece on something important, right, like green nursery schools where *my* story might go national. But no, I end up in this God-forsaken place interviewing these . . . people. Christ on a stick.

(then, to ROB)

You ready for this?

ROB

Sure. This is the third one of these I've done.

NEWS REPORTER

(concerned)

We're not the first?

(ROB shakes his head)

NEWS REPORTER *(cont.)*

Phillip Marks got to you first, didn't he? Channel 4?

ROB

I think that's who it was.

NEWS REPORTER

Bastard.

(then, as if interrupted by a camera operator . . .)

Okay, let's try to get this in one take, whaddya' say Bob?

ROB

Rob.

NEWS REPORTER

(oblivious)

In five, four, three, two . . .In tonight's special report, we look at the new face of gay activism. Professional, polished. Older . . .

SARAH

(referring to ROB)

He looks like my dad.

JOSH

Ancient.

SARAH

Dude.

HELEN

White.

ROB

Excuse me?

NEWS REPORTER

(to unseen camera operator)

This is good stuff, just keep rolling.

HELEN

I said you're white.

ROB

Well, yes.

HELEN

So, where you been all my life? Where you been hiding, white boy?

ROB

Hiding?

HELEN

This town isn't that big. I haven't seen you around. Oh, on billboards, in the paper, sure. But in the flesh? Like . . . at a meeting? I don't think so.

SARAH

Oh, yeah, he's that guy from the bank. The one from the commercials.

HELEN

Right, the one in the paper. The "New Face of Gay Activism." Huh!

BLOGGER 1

It is ridiculous that there is a story about a successful gay man in the paper. Now I know why the Post is going under. Signed, W. Champion.

ROB

I haven't been hiding. I've been working fifty, sixty hours a week, building a company.

QUEEN 1

Apparently.

QUEEN 2

Nice shoes.

JOSH

I've never seen this guy.

SARAH

Well, why would you see him? He's like . . . old. You don't hang out with old people. And you haven't seen a TV since they shut off your cable.

JOSH

Hey, I couldn't pay the bill.

ROB

I'm not that old.

HELEN

Well, you're old enough to know better. Seriously, where you been, Mr. New Face of the Gay Movement!? What lit a fire under your ass, finally?

NEWS REPORTER

Oh, Christ. How are they going to deal with this in editing?

ROB

(to HELEN)

I don't believe we've met.

(extending hand)

Rob Franklin.

BLOGGER 1

Do you ever hear a straight person say, “Well, I’m straight,” when they introduce themselves?
Signed, Patman.

HELEN

Oh, I know you. I know your kind. You’re the man. You’re the guy who shows up, takes all the credit, when the rest of us have been in the trenches all along. *(To reporter)* Ain’t nothing new about this story. It’s just business as usual.

ROB

That’s not fair. You don’t even know me, lady. You don’t know what I’ve done. You don’t know how many checks I’ve written or what I’ve done behind closed doors.

QUEEN 1

I’d like to know what he’s done behind closed doors. He’s cu-ute.

QUEEN 2

Behave!

JOSH

Geez, I wonder if they’re gonna’ take a swing at each other.

HELEN

So you write a check, that’s nice and neat. You go to one of your black-tie dinners once a year, so you can sleep at night?

QUEEN 1

I’d like to help him sleep—

QUEEN 2

Girl, please.

ROB

That’s pretty harsh.

HELEN

Yeah? Yeah, well, I’ve been volunteering for the cause for twenty-five years. What have you been doing?

ROB

That’s great. And I hear what you’re saying, I do. But because of my position, I’m able to gain the attention of people with power. I can walk into any senator’s office or corporate head . . .

HELEN

Well, isn’t that special?

ROB

Look, I’m not boasting. I’m just saying how it is. I can be effective. I can have influence.

BLOGGER 1

(typing)

The real reason for all the attention is not really for equality. All they *want* is the spotlight, and to push their personal agendas. Signed, Justtruth.

ROB

It's just that there are ways to get things done, and it's important to have a seat at the table.

HELEN

I wouldn't know. I'm usually the one serving.

ROB

Look, Miss . . . Miss . . .

HELEN

Helen. My name is Helen.

SARAH

Wow. Like Helen of Troy.

JOSH

Or Helen Keller.

QUEEN 2

Or Helen Gurley Brown.

BLOGGER 1

I have the urge to eat vast amounts of ice cream, but I don't because it would be unhealthy. I use self-control. I do not know why some people have urges to have perverted sex with people of the same sex. Use self-control, people! Signed, Gobbler.

ROB

I'm sorry. I seem to have offended you. We've gotten off on the wrong foot. I'm Rob—

HELEN

I know very well who you are. You're that bank president. I've seen your advertisements all over town. I work with Social Services, not exactly a bank. And you're the guy who finally decided to come out of the closet, and now they're calling you the "New Face of Gay Activism."

QUEEN 2

That's because *some* of us are old.

QUEEN 1

Or dead.

QUEEN 2

Or just look like they're dead.

QUEEN 1

Girl, please.

HELEN

I've been out my whole life. But I don't see any newspaper or TV station asking *me* for the inside scoop.

SARAH

Yeah, they never cover women like they cover men. Look what happened with Hillary. And black women? I mean women of color. They never interview them.

NEWS REPORTER

(to audience)

Oh, Christ, here we go again. Like any of this is easy. Look, I just go where they tell me. What do I know? I'm just another white guy trying to hang onto his job. Meanwhile, down at the station, they just laid off half the people in my department last quarter.

HELEN

Listen, I've been out there defending your rights. I was there for all those gay men during the AIDS crisis and where were they when I had breast cancer. They didn't need me anymore. But it's always men calling the shots. Men, men, men.

SARAH

Wow, she's fierce.

JOSH

She's scary.

QUEEN 2

Well, she *is* a lesbo.

SARAH

I like her.

QUEEN 1

The only thing more fierce than a nelly queen is a butch dyke.

QUEEN 2

Yeah, they know how to get shit done.

NEWS REPORTER

(making a last-ditch effort to regain control . . . unsuccessfully)

Look . . . ladies? We're never going to be able to use this if you don't clean up your—

QUEEN 2

Who is he again?

(QUEEN 1 shrugs. NEWS REPORTER sits on the sidewalk with his head in his hands)

QUEEN 1

(indicating HELEN)

You know, we could've used someone like her when we got jumped by that group of—

QUEEN 2

I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to hear about it.

QUEEN 1

I'm sorry, sweetie. I know it was traumatic.

QUEEN 2

Which time? I could hardly keep count.

SARAH

Wow. You got gay bashed?

JOSH

Yeah. Well, remember when someone wrote "fag" on my locker at school?

QUEEN 1

What happened to that scar on your forehead?

QUEEN 2

(sing-song-y)

Con-ceal-errrrr.

BLOGGER 1

Why won't gay people leave heterosexuals alone? Why won't gay people leave children, schools, colleges, churches, government alone? Signed, Straight Arrow.

ROB

Look, I see what you're saying. There are a lot of things that I wish I had done. There are a lot of things that I wish my friends had done, but I can't change history. And the point is, I am here now, right.

QUEEN 2

If you could, would you make me blonde?

QUEEN 1

Yeah, a real blonde this time.

ROB

That's why I'm getting involved now, because the time is right.

SARAH

Well, yeah, I guess it is a process.

JOSH

It was for me.

SARAH

Like I don't know. You got so loaded, Josh, I had to help you write that letter to your mom.

JOSH

Yeah.

ROB

I bet it was the hardest thing you've ever done, right?

JOSH

That, and trying to figure out how to pay back my student loans.

QUEEN 1

Maybe he should go see him at the bank.

BLOGGER 1

I'm a business owner and I don't care what they look like or what their sexual orientation is as long as their money is green. Signed, TaterSalad.

HELEN

I bet you think we have the same agenda. What's at the top of your list?

ROB

Marriage.

QUEEN 1

"I do," handsome. Just say the word.

HELEN

Figures.

JOSH

Marriage?

ROB

(to HELEN)

Why? Isn't it important to you? Isn't there someone special in your life?

BLOGGER 2

(typing)

Gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose; they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us. Signed, J.R.

HELEN

That's really none of your business. . . . Okay. Okay, I've been with the same woman for twenty-four years. But I don't need the government to tell me my relationship matters. I'm too busy trying to keep a roof over our heads.

BLOGGER 1

Marriage has nothing to do with government. Marriage is a God-ordained institution, not government ordained. Signed, All for Jesus.

JOSH

I kinda' don't get it. What's with this gay marriage thing, anyway? That's what my parents did. What does it have to do with me? I'm too young. I can't go there.

SARAH

Are you serious? What happens when you fall in love and want to be with someone, Josh? I mean, you were in love with Nick. Even if it didn't work out.

JOSH

Do not mention Nick. He is dead to me. Dead.

SARAH

Well, okay then. But there *are* other fish in the sea. What happens when you fall in love again?

JOSH

I am never falling in love again. I am done with love. Done.

QUEEN 2

Oh, honey child.

QUEEN 1

Pu-leeze.

SARAH

The point is, Josh, don't you want to be able to get married if that's what you want?

JOSH

I thought you considered marriage . . . what was it? . . . oh yeah, "a patriarchal institution." Wasn't that it, Ms. Women's Studies Major?

SARAH

Well, it is. I mean, patriarchal. But that doesn't mean I don't want to belong to somebody. No, I mean not like property . . . but with my heart, you know. And have them belong to me.

QUEEN 2

I always wanted a white wedding. And a white picket fence.

QUEEN 1

And a French Poodle, and a husband . . . but make mine a red cocktail dress, girl.

BLOGGER 1

You all might think I'm kidding about this, but I am very serious! I think all people should be able to experience misery and that hopelessly trapped feeling of being married. Come on in...the water is fine! Signed, Ophelia J. Barnswallow.

ROB

Look, I know it's not perfect. It's a complicated institution. But when I finally met the right man after years of looking, I wanted to make a statement that this man was different from the others.

QUEEN 2

Ooh, I wonder how many others.

HELEN

So, he's your partner. Okay. What's the matter with partner?

ROB

That sounds like a law firm. This is something else . . . this is . . . this is . . .

QUEENS, SARAH

Love.

BLOGGER 1

Ever hear the phrase "taking things a bit too far?" Signed, A Patriot.

HELEN

I don't think this is about you demonstrating your love at all. If this is about love, who are you proving it to? No, no, this is about you wanting acceptance at the country club.

ROB

Okay, yes, at the country club, in the board room, and what's wrong with that? After all, we're just like everyone else.

HELEN

No, we're not.

QUEEN 1

She's got that right.

QUEEN 2

(shudders)

I had a nightmare once that I was like everyone else.

HELEN

I thought the point was to create a different kind of world.

SARAH

Yeah, a different world, we need a different world in so many ways. Because, like, we're destroying the planet, you know.

JOSH

Yeah.

ROB

I know what you think when you see me. But I'm a person too, and I don't appreciate being pigeonholed as some kind of corporate stereotype. You don't know what it was like growing up in my family with their expectations. I was terrified to show them who I was. It was hard. It was really hard.

JOSH

Yeah.

ROB

When I think back on what it was like for me in school, when I was attracted to other boys. I was always trying to hide, because of who my family was. Okay, so I don't feel good about that. Maybe that's why I'm trying to do something now. Look, I'll admit it, I've had advantages. But when it was me and my family, when I knew what I was about to tell them would devastate them and risk my becoming the CEO of the company. I'm sorry, I don't think we're all that different.

(Beat)

HELEN

Yeah, well, I left home.

QUEEN 1

Join the club.

QUEEN 2

Kicked to the curb.

JOSH

I'm so glad I waited until college to tell my mom.

SARAH

But she came around. God, Josh, she even joined PFLAG.

HELEN

(to ROB)

Look, we just come from very different worlds.

QUEEN 1

How's that joke go?

QUEEN 2

I'd rather be black than gay.

QUEEN 1

Because you don't have to tell your mother . . .

QUEENS *(together)*

You're black!

SARAH

That is so not funny.

(To JOSH)

Do you think that's funny, Josh?

BLOGGER 1

If gayness were genetic, there would be no gays at all because they would die out. Signed, MilMan.

HELEN

Look, I've just had a very different career path than you. It's not like anyone was opening any doors for me.

ROB

And I'm sorry about that, because one of the things I've learned at the bank is that we need an environment that reflects the world as it is. That's more inclusive, where we can all put our best foot forward. And It's too bad, because we *are* the world.

QUEENS *(together)*

We are the world . . .

JOSH and SARAH

We are the children . . .

QUEEN 1

I still can't believe he's gone.

QUEEN 2

R.I.P. Michael J.

BLOGGER 2

Your genetic argument is seriously flawed. What about an x-linked allele? Signed, Mat.

BLOGGER 1

X-linked allele typically causes hemophilia, not homosexuality. Signed, MilMan

(HELEN, ROB, JOSH, SARAH and QUEENS turn to stare at BLOGGER 1, dumbfounded by the randomness of the comment)

ROB

I'm sorry . . . where were we?

NEWS REPORTER

(to ROB)

You were talking about how *you* were born with a silver spoon in your mouth and how *she* wishes she had a trust fund . . .

HELEN

Don't you put words in my mouth. Look, I finally found a job where it doesn't matter who I sleep with, but I went through a lot of heartbreak getting there. Nine times out of ten, you show them who you are, they show you a cardboard box for your things.

BLOGGER 2

Tolerance is only a one-way street for gays. Ask Miss America. Signed, MilMan.

SARAH

And I thought just being a woman was hard enough.

HELEN

Listen, girl, you're looking at a triple threat: woman, black, lesbian. Do you know that thirty states in this "free" country of ours can fire me just because I'm a lesbian?

JOSH

No shit?

SARAH

It can't be that many.

HELEN

Oh yes, it can. So why the hell are we focusing on marriage instead of ENDA?

JOSH

ENDA?

ROB

The Employee Non-Discrimination Act.

HELEN

At least you know what it is.

ROB

Of course I know what it is. It would protect employees from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and disability.

QUEEN 1

I could've used that.

QUEEN 2

Yeah, back in the day.

BLOGGER 2

Just because people want to be recognized as equal does not mean it should be done. Signed, Shelley Powers.

BLOGGER 1

This country has undeniable fundamental values and the gay lifestyle is not one of them. Signed, USF1965.

HELEN

So why aren't you talking about ENDA instead of how you wanna' marry your boyfriend? With all your influence and position. Why aren't you talking about repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell?"

JOSH

Yeah?

SARAH

I don't know why someone would want to serve in the military, anyway. God, war.

JOSH

Yeah, but if somebody is going to be in the war, shouldn't they be able to be who they are? And besides, my cousin Tony got a free ride to college. That's why he signed up for the reserves. No way could he afford it otherwise.

HELEN

I'm just saying that we've got a shitload of issues, and if you want to be the new face of gay activism, you ought to get them straight.

(beat)

QUEEN 2

. . . so to speak.

ROB

Yeah? Well, while we're setting the record straight, I did not ask to be "the new face of gay activism". You should know how the media jumps on a story and it takes on a life of its own. How they try to manipulate us all. But now I have a certain amount of influence and what's wrong with that? I want to be useful. And why are you pitting one issue against another anyway?

HELEN

Because ENDA is way more important than gay marriage. And frankly, health insurance trumps all of it.

ROB

They're both important. It's all important. So . . .

(beat)

(Everyone steps forward)

ROB

Repeal the Defense of Marriage Act.

HELEN

Pass the Employee Non-Discrimination Act.

JOSH

Get rid of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

QUEEN 1

Protect us from gay bashing.

QUEEN 2

And punish perpetrators of hate crimes.

SARAH

Provide people with reasonable and affordable health care.

NEWS REPORTER

What the hell . . . ?

JOSH

We are more than actors.

HELEN

And this is more than a play.

ROB

Some tell us that now is not the right time.

HELEN

They say, "We don't have the resources."

ROB

They say, "We'll risk too much."

HELEN

But what do we risk by doing nothing?

QUEEN 1

We risk everything.

HELEN

We don't need to agree about everything.

ROB

We're not *going* to agree about everything. And that's okay.

HELEN

But we *do* need to show up. Because power never *gives* it away.

QUEEN 2

Sometimes, you have to demand it.

ROB

Too often we have been told, "it's not the right time." Or "don't move too fast."

HELEN

"Wait your turn." "Be patient." Boy have I heard that one before.

QUEEN 2

But it's always the right time to stand up and demand our civil rights.

QUEEN 1

We did it when it was our time.

QUEEN 2

And now it's your turn.

JOSH

The march in Washington D.C. on October eleventh is a not a march for any single thing. It is a march for equality in all things.

ROB

And we all need to be there. Gay.

SARAH

Straight.

JOSH

Young.

SARAH

(Indicating Rob)
Old.

ROB

Even though some of us have it easier than others, the fact is, none of us has equal rights.

HELEN

That's for damn sure.

ROB

And it's going to take all of us to turn the tide.

QUEEN 1

Whether we have been at it forever.

JOSH

Or are new to the game.

ROB

So join us. Please. Because the time is . . .

HELEN

Now.

EVERYONE

Now.

(NEWS REPORTER who has been watching from the side of the stage addresses the audience)

NEWS REPORTER

CUT!

QUEEN 1

(yanking off her feather boa)

Thank God.

QUEEN 2

These heels are killing me.

END OF PLAY