

Suspicious death of transvestite

by Leslie Feinberg

NEW YORK — Marsha P. Johnson (born Malcolm Michaels Jr.) was found floating in the Hudson River at Christopher Street on July 6. Johnson apparently drowned three or four days earlier. Foul play has not been ruled out.

Marsha Johnson fought at the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion that ignited the modern Lesbian and Gay liberation movement. She and Sylvia Rivera founded Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries. The banners of STAR and Queens Liberation Front were prominent in early Gay rights protests.

Leaflets posted around the East and West Village following her death describe Johnson as an "internationally acclaimed entertainer with the Hot Peaches Review, Andy Warhol model, Anvil icon and a legendary prostitute on Christopher Street and the West Side Highway" and "a much beloved fixture in the Village for many years."

That she was. Those who know how hard Johnson struggled to survive will remember her for the dignity with which she carried herself.

The leaflets, issued by the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, call for information about Johnson's death.

Juan Mendez of the Anti-Violence project told Workers World: "Our history and our experience tells us that the New York Police Department is not necessarily the



Marsha Johnson

most efficient at investigating deaths in the Gay community. We've learned to go to our community, to go to the streets. We've learned to take care of our own. That's why so many people are so involved in this investigation to find out what happened to Marsha."

Anyone with information about Johnson's death is urged to call the Anti-Violence Project at 212-807-0197, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls will be completely confidential. ▼