

Transgender activist Marsha P. Johnson will get a monument in her New Jersey hometown

Christina Maxouris, CNN • Published 28th August 2020

(CNN) — Marsha P. Johnson, the beloved transgender activist who was a central figure in New York City's gay liberation movement, will get a monument in her hometown of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Local officials met with Johnson's family Thursday to announce the dedication of land that will soon turn into Johnson's public monument, according to a [news release](#) from Union County. The announcement is only the first step in what will be a community effort, the county said. Throughout October, city and county leaders will put together events which will allow the public to participate in the planning and creating of the project, the release said.

"The monument is anticipated to be the first public monument in the State of New Jersey to honor a LGBTQ+ person and transgender woman of color," the county said.

It will be located near Elizabeth's City Hall, in an area the city says is used to "recognize trailblazers, pioneers and international patriots."

"The dedication today, recognizes Elizabeth native, Marsha P. Johnson, as a leader for the rights of transgender people throughout the country," a spokesperson for the mayor's office told CNN. For Johnson's nephew, Al Michaels, the announcement comes during a time when the country is still battling the same issues the late activist fought against -- among them, police brutality. Johnson was on the front lines of protests against oppressive policing and also played a key role in the uprising that began on June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village after police raided the gay bar and patrons fought back, sparking days-long protests. "Marsha is needed now," Michaels said. "Here we have the Black Lives Matter movement and the Trans Lives Matter movement. We have the same thing happening to people today, as far as police brutality."

"And as far as equality and justice, and Marsha was at the forefront of all that in 1969. And here it is 2020, and we're in exactly the same place. And Marsha's spirit has come to guide us through this fight, (like) she did back at Stonewall."

Other tributes to Johnson

Union County's announcement is the latest effort in the country to honor Johnson. Earlier this week, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office announced the dedication of East River State Park in Brooklyn for Johnson, saying the state will "improve park facilities and install public art celebrating Johnson's life and her role in the advancement of LGBTQ rights." The Marsha P. Johnson State Park will become the first state park in New York honoring an LGBTQ person and a transgender woman of color, the governor's office said.

"Too often, the marginalized voices that have pushed progress forward in New York and across the country go unrecognized, making up just a fraction of our public memorials and monuments," Cuomo

said in [a statement](#).

"Marsha P. Johnson was one of the early leaders of the LGBTQ movement, and is only now getting the acknowledgement she deserves. Dedicating this state park for her, and installing public art telling her story, will ensure her memory and her work fighting for equality lives on."

And last year, [New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced](#) the city would commemorate the work of Johnson and her friend and activist Sylvia Rivera with statues in Greenwich Village.

The monument, the city said in a [news release](#), will be the first permanent, public artwork recognizing transgender women in the world.

"Transgender and non-binary communities are reeling from violent and discriminatory attacks across the country. Here in New York City, we are sending a clear message: we see you for who you are, we celebrate you, and we will protect you," de Blasio had said in a [statement](#).