

## **Devised Theatre from Oral Histories**

Adapted from [“Constructing Multimedia Theatre: Ideas for Devising a Creative and Effective Theatre Project”](#)

### **Overview**

In this lesson, students will learn about the New Jersey Four case using a variety of primary sources. Then, they will use devised plays as a framework for further exploring the themes and events that they’ve learned about, creating a script that reflects elements of the NJ4 case that interest them.

### **Grade Level**

9-12

### **Time**

Total: at least 95 minutes (5 minutes warm-up, 20 minutes cluster writing, 5 minutes ethics discussion, 10 minutes through-line discussion, 15 minutes chunking activity, 20 minutes framework activity, at least 20 minutes putting it all together)

Creating new work relies on allowing creativity to flow organically, so plan for flexibility.

### **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Define a devised play.
- Analyze primary sources.
- Craft a script using an established dramatic structure and historical information.

### **New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards**

1.4.12adv.Cr2a: Collaborate as a creative team to make informative and analytical choices for devised or scripted theatre work.

1.4.12adv.Cr2b: Collaborate as a creative team to make original artistic choices in devised or scripted theatre work.

1.4.12adv.Re8a: Research and synthesize cultural and historical information related to a devised or scripted theatre work to support or evaluate artistic choices.

1.4.12adv.Cn10a: Collaborate on devised or scripted theatre work that examines a critical global issue using multiple personal, community and cultural perspectives.

1.4.12adv.Cn11c: Justify the creative choices made in a devised or scripted theatre work based on a critical interpretation of specific data from theatre research.

### **Resources Needed**

- Chalkboard, white board, or other shared writing surface and writing utensils
- Paper and pencils or electronic devices
- Printed primary sources

### **Warm Up**

Write “devised play” on the board. Invite students to brainstorm a large list of words, phrases, and ideas that come to mind when they hear the term. Once complete, share with them the “official” definition of a devised play—a method of theater-making in which the script originates

from collaborative work by a group—and let them know that they’ll be creating a devised play as a class over the next few days.

### **Cluster Writing**

Explain to students that they’ll be working with a historical event that occurred in New York City in 2006. Share the following excerpt from a modern news article about the event.

[From “How 4 Gay Black Women Fought Back Against Sexual Harassment—And Landed in Jail” by Nicole Pasulka, NPR](#)

*Everyone agrees on one thing: On the night of Aug. 18, 2006, Dwayne Buckle catcalled Patreese Johnson.*

*Johnson and six of her friends, all young lesbians of color, were walking down Sixth Avenue in New York City's West Village to hang out at the clubs in one of the gayest neighborhoods in America. That's when Buckle, a then-28-year-old black filmmaker, called out to Johnson, who was 19 at the time, with an obscene comment.*

*"Mister, I'm gay," Johnson says she told Buckle, trying to wave him off.*

*That's when Buckle allegedly got furious, threatened to rape the young women "straight," and threw a punch, according to Johnson and the women with her that night.*

*Buckle, who'd been sitting on a fire hydrant selling his DVDs, says one of the women swung first. During the fight, he ripped hair out from one of the girls' heads and reportedly choked another. The whole encounter, captured by a surveillance camera at a nearby movie theater, lasted four minutes. At some point, Buckle was stabbed with a kitchen knife and taken to the hospital.*

*Buckle told The New York Times he was "the victim of a hate crime against a straight man." All seven women were charged with felonies, ranging from gang assault to attempted murder. Local and national media seized on the story and cast the women as a "wolf pack" of "killer lesbians."*

*Three pleaded guilty, and the other four went to trial, where they lost their cases and were sentenced to between 3 1/2 and 11 years at Riker's Island. These women would come to be known as the "New Jersey 4," and their supporters argue that, far from being a gang of "marauding lesbians," they fought Buckle out of self-defense.*

Next, share the eight primary sources about the event with students (Appendices 1-8). There are eight, so depending on class size, students may work independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Have them read the sources and cluster write independently for five minutes using a timer.

Guidelines for cluster writing:

- Write the source title in the center of a piece of paper and circle it.
- Free associate words, phrases, sentences, and images that you think of while reading the source.
- Don’t stop to edit, revise, or analyze what you’re creating.

- Don't pay attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

If in pairs or groups, provide students a few minutes to compare their cluster writes and identify any words, phrases, sentences, and images that they share. Then bring the whole class together; if in pairs or groups, ask a representative from each pair or group to summarize their source and share the words, phrases, sentences, and images that they had both identified from their source. If working individually, ask students to share with the class what they identified from their source. Keep a running list of students' responses.

### **Ethics Discussion**

Remind students that they've read primary sources from a historical event that involved real people. Ask them to think about and share what that means for the devised play that they're going to be working on, and tell them to keep this in mind throughout the rest of their work on the play.

### **Through-Line Discussion**

This discussion creates the devised play's treatment, outlining the major details of the story. Assign at least one student to take notes, either written or digitally. As ideas generate, some good suggestions may be lost if not noted. Ask students "What story do you want to tell?" and invite them to collectively create the major arc of the story, discussing and writing down:

- The inspiration
- The overall main conflict
- The characters and their connections to one another
  - Is there a protagonist/antagonist? What are their main objectives?
- The setting
- The way the students want to tell the story
  - If students are unfamiliar, share some examples of dramatic structure: [Western Dramatic Structure](#), [Non-Western Story Structure](#). You may also share the trailer for [Out in the Night](#), the documentary based on this case, and prompt students to reflect on how this documentary is telling the story and how they want to do it differently or similarly).

### **Chunking the Story Activity**

If creating a linear story:

- Discuss and review the main plot points of the story: introduction, inciting incident, rising action (multiple plot points), climax, and resolution.
- Divide the class and assign each group a section of the story. Each group writes down three options for their section of the play.
- Convene the whole class to share their ideas.

If creating a non-linear story:

- Discuss and review the chosen dramatic structure.
- Divide the class and assign small groups to brainstorm individual vignettes. Each group writes down three options for their vignette.
- Convene the whole class to share their ideas.

### **Building the Framework Activity**

Divide the class into their smaller groups. Have groups brainstorm ideas about their section of the story:

- Quickly review the framework for each section of the story or each vignette.
- Discuss how the story might be told using narrative text: traditional playwriting, choral speak, poetry, musical theatre, etc.
- Discuss how the story might be told with non-verbal formats: dance, pantomime, musical instruments, etc.
- Discuss how the story might be told with technology: video, audio, special effects, etc.
- Discuss how the story might be told with a combination of any of the above. Remind students that a story may be told using formats that change throughout. For example, Shakespeare used prose, poetry, soliloquy, music, and special effects to tell his stories.
- Determine how each group will tell their section of the story or their vignette using their preferred use of storytelling.
- Gather the class, and allow each group to briefly outline the structure of their play and how they will tell their portion of the story.

### **Putting It All Together**

Explain that now it is time for students to work together to insert details into the story. They will now be writing any dialogue, poetry, or text, or creating the alternate modes of storytelling such as pantomime, choreography, etc. necessary to complete writing the story. Divide the class into their smaller groups and begin building the script.

Important reminders:

- Remain flexible and open to change
- Focus on the main conflict or theme
- Work together to determine what is and isn't working and make needed changes
- Determine if additional sound, music, or special effects are needed
- Celebrate success throughout the process

Students may work entirely in their small groups, but for a linear structure, alternating between small group work and whole group work will result in a more cohesive narrative. Explain this to students, but allow them to decide whether cohesion is important to their play and whether they want to work as a large group throughout the project.

### **Extension**

Depending on the feasibility of the students' script and instructor plans for the academic year, students may choose to develop the script further and/or put on a reading or performance.

■ PERSPECTIVE/SNIDE LINES

Killer Lesbians Mauled by Killer Court, Media

BY SUSIE DAY

Four more black girls just went bad. Young, 19 to 25; from Newark or surrounding neighborhoods; "troubled" families; having babies while in their teens — you've heard it all before. The reason you're reading about this bunch is that they're lesbians — "killer lesbians," "a wolf pack of lesbians," say the media. They're not martyrs or heroes; they did something stupid that got them sentenced to prison. They stood up for themselves.

"Man Is Stabbed in Attack After Admiring a Stranger," wrote the comparatively well-mannered New York Times last August 19.

The Manhattan district attorney says Patreese Johnson, one of the four, was the stabber. He charged her with attempted murder, and Johnson, Renata Hill, Venice Brown, and Terrain Dandridge with felony assault and gang assault. The man assaulted was Dwayne Buckle, 29, who, seeing the "gang" on the corner of Sixth Avenue and West Fourth Street in Manhattan's West Village, singled out Johnson because she was "slightly pretty." He claimed he said, "Hi, how are you doing?"

Johnson, Hill, Brown, Dandridge, and three other women — a "seething sapphic septet," according to the New York Post — had just gotten off the train from Newark, looking for a little fun. Being young, they knew the odds of fun were better in the Village; being lesbians, they knew fun was not to be had in the streets of Newark, where, four years earlier,

15-year-old Sakia Gunn was knifed to death by men who thought she was cute — until she told them she was gay.

Although what happened between these women and Dwayne Buckle was caught on surveillance cameras, there isn't one newspaper account that doesn't, somehow, conflict with the others. Dwayne Buckle, a "filmmaker" or "sound mixer" or "DVD bootlegger" — depending on your news source — evidently said more than "Hi." The women contend he pointed to Patreese Johnson's crotch and said, "Let me get some of that." When Johnson answered, "No thank you, I'm not interested," he told Johnson that he could fuck her and her friends straight.

Buckle says the women called his sneakers "cheap," then slapped and spit at him, while he put his hands over his face to ward off the blows. The women say he spit at them and threw a cigarette. Buckle later admitted he called Venice Brown, because of her size, an elephant, and told one of the lesbians in a "low haircut" she looked like a man. Depending on your life experience, you'll probably believe one side over the other. In any case, a melee ensued in which two or three male bystanders jumped in, either, says one side, as "good Samaritans" to defend the women, or, says the other side, because the women "recruited" them into the beating.

Naturally, there are details the press didn't cover. Susan Tipograph, an attorney representing Renata Hill, supplies the fact that, at some point,

Buckle pulled off one woman's headpiece and tore out a patch of another's hair — which may be what he is seen swinging on the videotape, as he advances on the women.

According to Tipograph, Johnson, seeing that Buckle had Renata Hill in a chokehold, took a 99-cent steak knife from her purse and swung it at Buckle's arm, to get him to release Hill. After things quieted down, the women, with no apparent intent of fleeing

leverage to inflict much damage. Johnson still doesn't know if she actually stabbed Buckle. One of the men who jumped into the fight may have done it, but, since the NYPD never tested Johnson's knife for DNA evidence, we'll never know. Long story short: the jury didn't believe it was self-defense, and convicted the women.

Now it's June 14, 2007. Johnson, Hill, Brown, and Dandridge are in State Supreme Court, being sen-

People who believe in this kind of justice talk like they know what prison is.

the scene, went to the McDonalds across the street, visited the bathroom, got something to eat. Twenty-five minutes later, they were arrested a few blocks away, unaware the man they'd fought was injured. Buckle had, in fact, sustained stomach and liver lacerations, and was to spend the next five days in St. Vincent's Hospital, recuperating. Interestingly, news media barely noticed that Dwayne Buckle is, himself, black — given his demonstrable heterosexuality, he has become, for purposes of the press, Everyman.

The trial did little to elucidate what happened. The videotape, played repeatedly, was, says Tipograph, highly inconclusive. At 95 pounds, 4 feet 11 inches, Patreese Johnson may not have had the strength or

tenced. The Times reporter notes how Judge Edward J. McLaughlin shows "little sympathy" as he lectures the defendants, saying "they should have heeded the nursery rhyme about 'sticks and stones' and walked away." The judge "scoffs" at Johnson's explanation that she carried a knife because she worked nights at Wal-Mart and needed protection getting home; he's saying that Johnson's "meek, weak demeanor" on the stand has been "an act."

He sentences Johnson to 11 years in state prison; Renata Hill to eight years; Terrain Dandridge to three-and-a-half; Venice Brown to vie — and the courtroom erupts. The defendants scream, "I'm a good girl!" and "Mommy, Mommy, I didn't do this!" Brown and Hill,

■ PERSPECTIVE/A DYKE ABROAD

Habeas Columnus on Co-Dependence D

BY KELLY JEAN COGSWELL

It's almost the Fourth of July again, and time to get out the barbecues and sparklers and watch the fireworks

a tiny hair on a charging bull. Alone, you don't have much say about where the creature's going. Even large groups only

Liberties Union held a Day of Action in Washington, and the civil liberties group couldn't muster more than an eye-

als for when a single soul is up against the imprisoning power of the state. But most Americans don't even know

# Perspective/13

## Men Mauled by Killer Court, Media Wolfpack

BY SUSIE DAY

5-year-old Sakia Gunn was killed by death by men who thought she was cute — until she told them she was gay.

Although what happened between these women and Dwayne Buckle was caught on surveillance cameras, there isn't one newspaper account that doesn't, somehow, conflict with the others. Dwayne Buckle, a "filmmaker" or "sound mixer" or "DVD bootlegger" — depending on your news source — evidently said more than "Hi." The women contend he pointed to Patreese Johnson's crotch and said, "Let me get some of that." When Johnson answered, "No thank you, I'm not interested," he told Johnson that he could fuck her and her friends straight.

Buckle says the women pulled his sneakers "cheap," then slapped and spit at him, while he put his hands over his face to ward off the blows. The women say he spit at them and threw a cigarette. Buckle later admitted he called Venice Brown, because of her size, an elephant, and told one of the lesbians in a "low haircut" she looked like a man. Depending on your life experience, you'll probably believe one side over the other. In any case, a melee ensued in which two or three male bystanders jumped in, either, says one side, as "good Samaritans" to defend the women, or, says the other side, because the women "recruited" them into the beating.

Naturally, there are details the press didn't cover. Susan Tipograph, an attorney representing Renata Hill, supplies the fact that, at some point,

Buckle pulled off one woman's headpiece and tore out a patch of another's hair — which may be what he is seen swinging on the videotape, as he advances on the women.

According to Tipograph, Johnson, seeing that Buckle had Renata Hill in a chokehold, took a 99-cent steak knife from her purse and swung it at Buckle's arm, to get him to release Hill. After things quieted down, the women, with no apparent intent of fleeing

leverage to inflict much damage. Johnson still doesn't know if she actually stabbed Buckle. One of the men who jumped into the fight may have done it, but, since the NYPD never tested Johnson's knife for DNA evidence, we'll never know. Long story short: the jury didn't believe it was self-defense, and convicted the women.

Now it's June 14, 2007. Johnson, Hill, Brown, and Dandridge are in State Supreme Court, being sen-

mothers themselves, will leave behind an infant and a five-year-old.

"He lectured them as if he knew what their lives were about — he didn't have a clue," says Susan Tipograph. "Patreese Johnson is a 19-year-old kid. I'm sorry she's not as forceful and together as a white, middle-aged man who's been a judge for 20 years. He accused them of lying, of not being remorseful, of being predators. What happened that night was stupid, frankly. They should have walked away. But the sentences McLaughlin gave were off the charts."

"PACK HOWLS — JUDGE WONT BEND," blares the New York Daily News. Some people say justice was served. After all, you want to watch out for black dykes with knives. But people who believe in this kind of justice talk like they know what prison is. Prison is about anything but justice, especially for the young, the queer, the African-American.

Dwayne Buckle — or anyone that night — should not have been physically hurt. But, embedded within the charges and sentences these women received is an imploded violence that will damage lives deeply, years after the body's wounds are healed.

*None of these women can afford a lawyer; they urgently need pro bono counsel for an appeal. If you can help, contact Susan Tipograph at 212.431.5360. If you want to provide non-legal support or write letters to the women, go to <http://www.fierceny.org>.*

People who believe in this kind of justice talk like they know what prison is.

the scene, went to the McDonalds across the street, visited the bathroom, got something to eat. Twenty-five minutes later, they were arrested a few blocks away, unaware the man they'd fought was injured. Buckle had, in fact, sustained stomach and liver lacerations, and was to spend the next five days in St. Vincent's Hospital, recuperating. Interestingly, news media barely noticed that Dwayne Buckle is, himself, black — given his demonstrable heterosexuality, he has become, for purposes of the press, Everyman.

The trial did little to elucidate what happened. The videotape, played repeatedly, was, says Tipograph, highly inconclusive. At 95 pounds, 4 feet 11 inches, Patreese Johnson may not have had the strength or

tenced. The Times reporter notes how Judge Edward J. McLaughlin shows "little sympathy" as he lectures the defendants, saying "they should have heeded the nursery rhyme about 'sticks and stones' and walked away." The judge "scoffs" at Johnson's explanation that she carried a knife because she worked nights at Wal-Mart and needed protection getting home; he's saying that Johnson's "meek, weak" demeanor" on the stand has been "an act."

He sentences Johnson to 11 years in state prison; Renata Hill to eight years; Terrain Dandridge to three-and-a-half; Venice Brown to vie — and the courtroom erupts. The defendants scream, "I'm a good girl!" and "Mommy, Mommy, I didn't do this!" Brown and Hill,

DAD

## Bas Columnus on Co-Dependence Day

BY KELLY JEAN COGSWELL

...ing bull.

Liberties Union held a Day of ... in Washington, and the ... couldn't

als for when a single soul is up against the imprisoning power of the state. But most ... Americans don't even know

phrase "for all?" That's taking it too far, surely. We prefer to keep our literal-mindedness for the Bible, thank you very

## Appendix 2: “Man Is Stabbed in Attack After Admiring a Stranger” Article, New York Times

### Man Is Stabbed in Attack After Admiring a Stranger

The fight broke up, but not before Mr. Buckle felt a nick in his abdomen.

“I didn’t even know I got stabbed until the very end,” Mr. Buckle said. “I looked down. I saw my shirt was full of blood.”

The group of young women fled, but the police, responding to a 911 call, caught up with them moments later two blocks away at the corner of West Fourth Street and Jones Street. One of the women, Patreese Johnson, 19, was found with a bloodied serrated knife. The women, from Newark and East Orange, N.J., were arrested and were charged last night with gang assault and criminal possession of a weapon, the police said. The other women were identified as Venice Brown, 18, Renata Hill, 24, Chenese Loyal, 19, Lania Daniels, 21, Khamysha Coates, 31, and Terrain Dandridge, 19.

Family members in New Jersey were shocked to learn of the trouble the women had gotten in. Dell Barron, Ms. Johnson’s mother, said her daughter attended church twice a week until recently and was generally mild mannered.

“Patreese tries to keep the peace with everybody,” said Ms. Barron. “You yell at her too hard and she starts crying.”

Mr. Buckle, meanwhile, underwent surgery yesterday at St. Vincent’s Hospital Manhattan. He was well enough, though, to receive visitors at his hospital bed. His right eye was nearly swollen shut, a long thin scratch marked his face and tubes ran into his nose and under the sheets.

“It’s not a crime to say hello to a human being,” Mr. Buckle said. “Now, I think I’ll know which girls not to talk to.”

Mr. Buckle retorted in kind, and an argument started. Sarcastic remarks were tossed back and forth. Suddenly, he said, one of the women lightly slapped Mr. Buckle’s cheek, Mr. Buckle said, while another spat in his face. And, to their horror, Mr. Buckle said, he spat right back.

That is when, Mr. Buckle said, the entire group attacked him, raking their nails across his face and hitting him in the back. Other people joined in, he said, including some men. Mr. Buckle is 5-foot-10 and weighs 175 pounds, but said he struggled mightily to breathe and protect his face from more than a dozen flying fists.



Appendix 3: "Attack of the Killer Lesbians" Article, New York Post

# NEW YORK POST

24 HOURS A DAY

## ATTACK OF THE KILLER LESBIANS

MAN 'FELT LIKE I WAS GOING TO DIE'

By LAURA ITALIANO

April 12, 2007

One of them was "slightly pretty," so the freelance film director decided to say hi

Next thing he knew, he was encircled, beaten and knifed in the gut right there on a Greenwich Village sidewalk - by seven bloodthirsty young lesbians.

"The girls started coming out of nowhere," Dwayne Buckle told a Manhattan jury yesterday, describing the bizarre beat-down he suffered last summer, allegedly at the hands of a seething sapphic septet from Newark, N.J.

"I felt like I was going to die."

Buckle, 29, of Queens, took the stand in Manhattan Supreme Court yesterday to admit he was defenseless and terrified after his simple "hello" spurred a pre-dawn melee on Sixth Avenue at West 4th Street.

Three of the original seven women are currently serving six-month jail sentences for attempted assault. But four others are on trial on first-degree gang-assault charges that could get them anywhere from three to 25 years in prison.

The accused ringleader - Patrese Johnson, 20, whom Buckle called the "slightly pretty one" - is additionally charged with attempted murder for allegedly pulling a knife from her purse and slashing Buckle repeatedly, lacerating his liver and stomach.



DWAYNE BUCKLE, 29, of Queens, took the stand in Manhattan Supreme Court yesterday to admit he was defenseless and terrified after his simple "hello" spurred a pre-dawn melee on Sixth Avenue at West 4th Street.



The women, in turn, claim they were defending themselves against a violent, anti-gay bigot, and counter that Buckle provoked them as he sat outside the IFC Center movie theater trying to talk pedestrians into buying his latest movie

When they rebuffed his advances - telling him he wasn't their type - he began calling them "f---ing dykes," they say. He then spat on them, threw a cigarette at them, and even grabbed one of them by the throat - which, like much of the melee, was caught on an IFC video security camera.

"I'll f--- you straight, sweetheart," he told defendant Venice Brown, 19, before choking her, her lawyer, Michael Mays, told jurors.

Buckle told a different story on the stand, assigning many of his alleged attackers monikers.

There was Brown, the one he admittedly called an "elephant." Then there was the one with the "low haircut," do-rag and wife-beater T-shirt, whom he admittedly called "a man," and the "slightly pretty" one to whom he first said hello.

It all started, he said, when the first two walked by. "They looked effeminate [sic] and one of them was slightly pretty, so I said 'hi' to them," he said.

But the "heavier girl, she started to dog me out," Buckle said.

"What does that, perchance, mean," asked the judge, Justice Edward McLaughlin. "Just disrespect me," Buckle explained. Then "more girls started coming out of nowhere."

Buckle admitted he retaliated, telling the one with the "low haircut" that "she looks like a man." He felt spit on the back of his neck, and spat back.

That's when the women's fists began flying. "I had my hands in the air in defense of their blows," he said. Then "I felt like a nick in my abdomen. I didn't know what happened.

"Everybody just jumped me," he added, including three male passers-by recruited on the spot by the women. "It felt like it was 10, 20 people." By the end, "I was messed up," he said.

# 'I'm a man!' lesbian growled during fight

BY JOSE MARTINEZ  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Friday, April 13th 2007, 4:00 AM

A furious lesbian raged, "I'm a man!" during a wild seven-on-one beatdown of a male filmmaker in Manhattan, a witness testified yesterday.

Tattoo artist Louis Barak said he saw victim Dwayne Buckle try to diffuse the tension last August by ordering, "Calm down, woman!"

"And she's like, 'I'm not a woman, I'm a n----, I'm a man!'" Barak said.

Barak said he never saw who threw the first punch in the melee outside the IFC Center on Sixth Ave., but he told jurors he saw one woman swipe at Buckle with a knife. Buckle took no offensive action, he said.

"He would do what any person would do," Barak said. "He was in a defensive mode."

But defense attorneys tried to paint Buckle as the aggressor by playing a video in which he appeared to be choking a woman. They also aired a video clip of Buckle, a video engineer who makes his own low-budget films, triumphantly waving a handful of hair pulled out during the fight.

Three women involved in the rumble are already behind bars for attempted assault, while the four others are currently on trial on felony gang assault charges.

The lesbians say Buckle, 29, was belted after he said, "I'll f--- you straight, sweetheart," to a woman who had rejected his come-on.

Prosecutors contend that the Queens man - who denied making the crude crack - was preyed upon by the gang of angry lesbians.

Jurors yesterday viewed videos and photos of the fight and heard from the cop who arrested the brawling ladies.

Police Officer Christopher O'Haire said the women were "almost festive" as he tailed them shortly after the street fight.

"They were walking, almost carrying on," he said.

# Pack howls - judge won't bend

## Lesbians rip sentences in '06 attack

BY BARBARA ROSS AND DAVE GOLDINER  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Friday, June 15th 2007, 4:00 AM

A packed courtroom erupted in sobs and screams yesterday when a judge threw the book at the wolf pack of lesbians who stabbed an amateur filmmaker in Greenwich Village last summer.

Anguished friends and relatives wept as Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Edward McLaughlin slapped knife-wielding teen Patreese Johnson with a 12-year sentence.

"You've got to take responsibility," McLaughlin sternly told Johnson, 19, of Newark, who is just 4-foot-11. "You brought a knife into the city, and you used it. You swung that thing two, three, four times."

Three other women received sentences ranging from 3-1/2 to 8 years for their roles in the attack on Dwayne Buckle, who insulted the women after they rebuffed his pickup line. Another three had previously pleaded guilty to lesser charges.

Renata Hill, 25, collapsed on the courtroom floor when she got eight years.

Venice Brown, 19, was hauled out of the courtroom wailing "I'm a good girl," after McLaughlin gave her five years for punching and kicking Buckle.

Terrain Dandridge, 20, who tore at her hair when Johnson was sentenced, got just 3-1/2 years, and McLaughlin praised her for admitting the attack was wrong.

"Of all people, she took some responsibility, which is what nobody else did," McLaughlin said.

A group of seven young women from Newark were walking by Buckle, who hawks DVDs on Sixth Ave., when he tried to accost them last Aug. 18.

The women told him they weren't interested in men, but he continued to berate them, using anti-lesbian slurs, the women said.

Exploding in rage, the lesbians beat and stomped Buckle to the ground. Johnson pulled out a knife and stabbed him - and the crime was captured on a video surveillance tape.

Prosecutors didn't try to excuse Buckle's crude conduct, but said he should never have been attacked.

---

## When "Petite But Ornery Lesbians" Attack!



This is why it isn't a good idea to hit on strangers on the street. Early Friday morning 28-year-old Queens native Wayne Buckle hit on a 19-year-old lesbian from Newark named Patreese Johnson in front of the old Waverly theater on Sixth Avenue. After she turned him down he allegedly spat on her which incited Johnson and a gaggle of her Jersey friends to surround, beat and stab him.

Cops quickly arrested Johnson and six of her friends a block away from the scene. The women, all apparently lesbians ranging in age from 18-31, were charged with attempted second-degree murder, gang assault and possession of a weapon. None have posted the \$50,000 bail. Buckle, who the Post says is an independent filmmaker, was taken to St. Vincents hospital where he is currently in the intensive care unit.

Aside, the folks at the Daily News deserve some kind of recognition for using this story to write what is hands-down our favorite lead of the day:

A gang of petite but ornery lesbians pummeled and stabbed a DVD bootlegger in the West Village early yesterday after he tried to pick up one of the women - and then spat on her when she rebuffed his advances, police and witnesses said.

Now that's tabloid journalism!

## **Appendix 7: Venice Brown Oral History**

We partied every day, because it was the summer time. Renata had a car, so we went everywhere. She was the only one with a car. She was the oldest. Only one with a license, so we went everywhere with her. We stayed out. We used to sit on the porch every day and just break dance until the sun came up. Talking and drinking. We kids! We all decided to go to the village. Mind you, it was like, the village. Like everybody, we go every weekend. And we're going now and we got on a bus. First of all, the bus took forever so we were like about to go back in the house. It was so many signs telling us not to go, but we kids. We like, we ain't living our life according to no signs. Like we chillin. We ain't going out here to start nothing. And some guys on the bus were talking crack. Then we almost got into an altercation. We like, "Yeah, whatever!" We moved to the front of the bus. Then we got to the train station—Penn Station. The train took forever to get here, to get us. We like, we about to go home and they're like, "Ya'll corny, stay with us!" Half the girls like, "Ya'll corny stay with us!" Because there was originally seven of us. So we're like, "Alright, we're gonna stay." We stay, we get there. We walked from Christopher Street to West 4th Street. Soon as we got to West 4th Street, "Eh, let me get some of that!" Some of what? What do you mean? He talking to Patreese. Patreese like, "Some of my soda." We thought he was a bum. Patreese handed him the soda. He was like, "No, I don't want none of that. I want that!"—pointing to her vagina. She like, "No, I'm good. I'm gay." That was it. We were waiting for the light to change right in front of the IFC crossing the street to McDonalds. So it was just out of habit that every time you got to West 4th Street, we'd be crossing the street going to McDonalds. It was just out of habit. You know, and as we're at the light, it's a couple girls in the front and then it's the rest of us are in the back. You know, we like holding each other arms like this, you know, through the other person's arm...crossing the street, we were all together. All you know is, "Fuck all ya'll gay bitches. I'll throw all you bitches back straight." [Make a noise to mimic the sound of him spitting] He spit in Renata's face and that's all I remember. That's all I remember. I know that he was choking me like my face was this color. He was trying to...he was choking me. He had Renata and Terrain, I mean Renata and Shanice head by their dreads, banging them like with the dreads. When he let them go, Shanice dreads, the whole middle of her head look like a swimming pool. He pulled everything out. She was bald. Renata has epilepsy. He had Renata on the ground with his knee on her throat and like, you know what I'm saying? Like trying to....So after that, we kept trying to walk away, he snatched my hair out. We kept trying to walk away. And he kept following us, kept following us. Some gay boys came, three of them. "They women. Why are you fighting with women? Fight us." Next thing I know, the guy picked him up, boom! Slammed him. It was just...after that, we tried to walk away and the cops just came and that was it...Next thing I know, I'm in a court like Law and Order. Like a scene out of Law and Order. Like what is this? Like it was so surreal. Like being in a courtroom, being in that situation. Like I would just sit there like this... Like I was like a drug lord and a vicious killer. Like we were all of that. Cameras in our face. News. Every week it was different article slandering us. Making us look like animals. But we kept fighting though. That's the thing. Like we kept fighting, you know what I'm saying? I felt like if we give up, we won't be like we regret what we did. We regret what happened. The only thing we was doing was defending ourselves, because I don't know nobody out here right now in this world that's going to let somebody do something to them, if they have complete control. If they are able to have control or to protect themselves. It's either you or me and I'm not ready for that, so I had to protect myself and I feel like we should have a right to protect ourselves.

## **Appendix 8: Patreese Johnson Oral History**

I was really having an out-of-body experience because I was in shock. Like, I'm really locked up. This is some place I said I'll never be cause I never lived the life that would put me in a place like this or in a position like this. Like, what's going on. That's the question I had in my head the whole time like wondering when am I gonna feel safe now because up until the time he attacked us, until right now, I did not feel safe at all. Not in police custody. No nothing. And that's a problem also obviously with our society. It's not being able to feel safe by the people that are supposed to protect you. And I'm just sitting here like, what if this was your daughter? Just think about, just play the whole scenario out. I am telling exactly you what happened. I'm not lying, I'm not anything like that. And you could tell that I was a nervous wreck. You could tell I was telling the truth. There was no indication that I was lying or anything like that. Whether my story matched the others or whatever they would say or not, you could tell for a fact that I was not lying. And then all our stories matched up. We weren't even in the same room. We had no time to talk. No nothing. All our stories matched up and y'all still came up with the whole total different story. How did that end up – and then to months later I find out that I'm found guilty of something that, to this day, I still don't know if I did or not. I don't know if I stabbed him or not. Yeah, I had a weapon. It isn't no need to lie about that. No, my weapon had no blood on it. It should have. I felt like it should have. I had on light colors. I had a white shirt. I had on blue pants. I should have blood on me. I had no blood on me. There was no blood on my hands. The way I see it, he was stabbed, I should have some blood on me. So now it's just like common sense. Whether I washed the knife off or not I want forensics because if he got stabbed, his blood should still be on that knife. Whether I washed it off or I didn't, whether I wiped it on my pants or I didn't, y'all have to prove that. They neglected to do that for fear of it might mess up the only evidence that they had which was the knife. It showed me young like that nobody cares about what they do anymore even down to my lawyer. Like he didn't care if I was guilty or not. He just cared about the paycheck. Like to this day, I still don't believe he believed me, even meeting him at a screening [of the film], in the way he talked to me, in his nerves. Like I'm like you didn't really care about my life being thrown away. And I knew he was shocked with the evidence that Blair brought up in the film cause we all were, my lawyers, my attorney Karen was even like, where'd you find this at? Like we could've used this. Like down to the radios and the police and they was laughing about it. This is a serious situation. This is somebody attacking, something that we know right now live, that the LGBT community is being under attack by heterosexuals, straight men, in the Village. How can you not believe our story? How can you not put together regardless of him being hurt, one it should not have been taken to the extent with the media the way it went. So that started out with the police. They the ones who called the journalists and the camera people, they called them, they had a story and they felt like, this was gonna make a good story and at that time I couldn't process like why me? Why my life had to be, knowing that it could have been anybody in that situation like why it just so happened we walked up at that time. And we looked that vulnerable and we looked like we was just gonna probably walk away and not say nothing to him and he was gonna feel good that he got to antagonize some lesbians. And he was going to feel good about that. Because we walked away in defeat. But I will tell-- and we didn't do that that night. And I didn't look at it like that then, but as time went on, it was like oh we really did stand up for ourselves like in the midst of the fear and not knowing like what was going to happen from the time he attacked us up until the time we went upstate we lived in 100 percent fear. And I don't feel like... that's not human at all. I will never want to ever be in a position to feel like that again.