

LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH EDITION

# PLANORAMA

FEBRUARY 2023

WHAT DOES LGBTQ+  
HISTORY MONTH  
MEAN TO YOU?  
A SPECIAL FEATURE

---

2022  
A YEAR IN  
REVIEW

---

LGBTQ+ HIDDEN  
FIGURES



RODNEY  
WILSON

---

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FOUNDER  
OF LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH

# CONTENTS

---

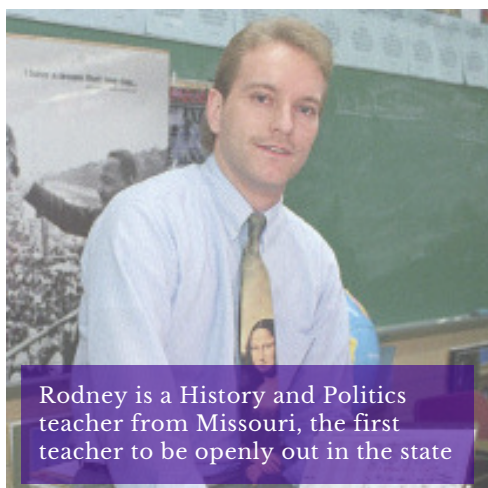
Editor's Note	03
Who are Warwick PLAN?	04
What is LGBTQ+ History Month?	06
What History Month means to you	07
Forgotten Figures	10
2022 Year in Review	12
Scottish Gender Reform Bill	13
The UK vs Conversion Therapy	14

---

## SPECIAL FEATURE

---

An Interview with LGBTQ+ History Month Founder: Rodney Wilson	16
---	----



Rodney is a History and Politics teacher from Missouri, the first teacher to be openly out in the state



Why is coming out still hard? <i>by Mathew Stephenson</i>	22
Supporting the Miners <i>by Kieran Barry</i>	23
Representation Matters: POSE <i>by Eoin Boyce</i>	24
LGBTQ+ Rights in Europe <i>by Angel Tetimov</i>	26
LGBTQ+ Careers Summit 2023	28
How to get involved	29



Find more at

[WWW.WARWICKPLAN.CO.UK/  
PLANORAMA](http://WWW.WARWICKPLAN.CO.UK/PLANORAMA)

# Editor's Note



## PLANORAMA LGBTQ+ History Month

Welcome to PLANORAMA's LGBTQ+ History Month special edition magazine.

First celebrated in the UK in 2005, LGBTQ+ History Month is an internationally observed celebration of queer history and progress. In this issue, we will be looking at some of the recent landmark moments in LGBTQ+ rights and successes, interviews with leading queer professionals and an array of articles from our brilliant members.

This magazine is dedicated to a month of remembrance and education about queer people and allies who paved the way to where we are today. We hope that you enjoy this issue and that it can shine a light on some of the stories and experiences that you may not have encountered before

Featuring protestors from the 1969 Stonewall Riots

# PLAN

## WARWICK

PROFESSIONAL  
LGBTQ+  
& ALLIES  
NETWORK

# WHO ARE WE? WARWICK PLAN

Established in 2020, PLAN is a student-led society at the University of Warwick that is designed to connect LGBTQ+ students with exclusive career opportunities and support.



If this is your first exposure to PLAN, welcome!

At PLAN, with sponsors from multiple industries, exclusive spring weeks and our annual conference, we offer plenty of opportunities for our LGBTQ+ community here at Warwick. We also run workshops, speaker events and more to help you build your employability skills and support you through university into your career.

We also host an array of socials, trips and club nights to provide a supportive, welcoming environment for Warwick's LGBTQ+ community and allies.

When finding internships and learning about companies, students with minority sexual orientations and gender identities have the added issue of discovering how open and accepting firms are of LGBT+ professionals. By highlighting upcoming events put on by companies that are committed to providing a safe working environment for their LGBT+ staff, we hope to help our society's members in their endeavour to find an accepting workplace.

2020-2023

## OUR SUCCESSIONS SO FAR:

- We hosted the first University LGBTQ+ Careers Conference outside of London
- We have been named Bright Network's D&I society two years in a row
- And this year we were lucky enough to win their overall **SOCIETY OF THE YEAR 2022** Award!
- The last year has also seen the beginning of our sister societies in Cambridge and Sheffield, with more soon to come!

# WHAT IS LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH?



LGBTQ+ History Month was first celebrated in the UK in February 2005. February was selected to recognise the abolition of Section 28 of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 two years prior.

Founded by the LGBTQ+ charity, Schools OUT UK, it's a month designed to celebrate and recognise the history and legacy of queer individuals and milestones for our community. Schools OUT UK also provide free resources for schools, businesses and other charities to help celebrate our community and 'usualise' the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

[WWW.LGBTPLUSHISTORYMONTH.CO.UK/](http://WWW.LGBTPLUSHISTORYMONTH.CO.UK/)

# WHAT DOES LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH MEAN TO YOU?

*We asked a variety of LGBTQ+ professionals about the significance of this month and their own personal experiences*

## **GEFFRYE PARSONS (HE/HIM): CEO OF THE INCLUSION IMPERATIVE**

LGBT+ History Month is important to me for a number of reasons. Quite apart from its role in helping to dispel the popular (mis)perception that LGBTQ+ activism happens only during Pride Month, which is crucial in order to maintain awareness and progress, it also resonates strongly with me as someone who has always loved history, even majoring in modern history for my undergraduate degree back in the 1980s. History teaches us valuable lessons. I am appalled to think that, when I was born, it was still illegal to be gay in the UK. Like every LGBTQ+ person alive in the UK today, I am indebted to the heroic efforts of those that went before us and fought for the freedoms that many of us are now fortunate enough to enjoy.

Yet so many people who should be celebrating with us today are no longer here to do so. This is because of all the onslaughts suffered by earlier LGBTQ+ generations – from those who succumbed to the scourge of HIV/AIDS, to the many who were murdered by their peers, and the many who committed suicide due to shame, ostracism, internalised homophobia or lack of social or familial support. Charitable organisations like Opening Doors London now do magnificent work to benefit aged LGBTQ+ people who are especially prone to isolation as a result of the paucity of support networks which these factors have caused. So it is incumbent on us all, and especially those of us with a degree of privilege, to fight vigilantly to ensure that their legacy lives on and that their sacrifices were not in vain – because, more than ever in recent history, LGBTQ+ rights are now under attack on many fronts.

Examples abound – just recently, the parliament in Russia voted (jaw-droppingly, unanimously!) to blanket-ban the promotion of homosexuality in books, films and social and other media; in Qatar, a government ambassador for the football World Cup described homosexuality as “damage in the mind”; and in Turkey, the Interior Minister labelled LGBTQ+ as “cultural terrorism”.

And even in countries like the US and the UK, where a greater degree of inclusion might be expected, there is a real risk of backsliding – witness the horrific mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs recently, as well as the dozens of anti-LGBTQ+ bills which are currently under consideration in many US states, and the appalling attacks on the human rights of trans persons which continue to be perpetrated by the so-called ‘gender critical’ lobby in the UK.

So we should know our history (perhaps consider marking it with a visit to Queer Britain, the UK’s first museum dedicated to LGBTQ+?), commemorate it, honour it, and learn from it. We will all be much richer for doing so!

### **LUKE SERAPHIN (THEY/THEM): HEAD OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT SKY STUDIOS**

LGBTQ+ History Month is a vital event in my opinion. It's only by knowing our past that we can really understand the context of the challenges for the present and future and build on the shoulders of giants in terms of the work that has been done to date.

### **MICHAEL AYRE (HE/HIM): CO-FOUNDER OF SHEHETHEY**

As a child, I never considered that other people like me existed, let alone that we had a rich and diverse history. As an adult, LGBTQ+ History month is a chance for me to stop and reflect on what I missed as a child. I always exit the month feeling enriched, and filled with pride. I understand myself and my community a little more and feel grateful for the trailblazers and changemakers that are making history today. TV, books, film and YouTube are filled with incredible content, dedicate one day to Queer history...you won't regret it.

### **MICHAEL GUNNING (HE/HIM): JAMAICAN SWIMMER**

LGBTQ+ History Month is important to me because it's not just a celebration of authenticity (like we have in Pride Month), but it's an incredible chance to educate one another and learn about things that aren't always spoken about in society. The World Cup last year showed us all that unfortunately we are not yet in a place where everyone can be themselves, even at sporting events, and personally, I'm doing everything in my power to help create change globally. With my heritage, I grew up under the shadow of colonial laws criminalising LGBTQ+ people, and as a former professional swimmer, I use the platform I've got to try and change this for young LGBTQ+ people, so they have a better experience from growing up being part of the community.

### **MATTHEW MITCHAM (HE/HIM): AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC CHAMPION DIVER**

Being the first openly gay Olympic champion is something that makes me extremely proud. It's validation to feel like I'm part of history. It would be remiss of me - especially during LGBT History Month - not to acknowledge the people before me who fought for the rights and freedoms that created an atmosphere in which I felt comfortable competing at the Olympics as an openly gay man. I specifically want to pay tribute to my all-time queer hero and friend, Greg Louganis, who has been a source of inspiration and advice for me in many ways.

### **SAM WINTON (HE/HIM): FOUNDER AND CEO OF HERE IN SPORT**

"The tendency is to think of the past when it comes to LGBTQ+ history months. In years previously I have taken the time to learn about pioneers of the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement and try to honour their work, standing on the shoulders of giants to help promote inclusion in sport.

Yet, I prefer to focus on the history still to be made and connect to that long lineage of work. In sports particularly we are still seeing far too many historic moments, with many sports in recent years seeing their first openly gay athlete. Some still refuse to include trans athletes; there are still too many firsts to come and too much history to be made.”

### **JOEL MORDI (HE/HIM): FOUNDER OF MIF NIGERIA**

We are reclaiming space and owning our achievements, no longer shrinking to accommodate our oppressors. There's still more work to be done and there's always ground to cover in England and in my home country Nigeria, as well as globally. My hopes for Nigeria are high especially seeing other young people advocating beyond the walls of social media, notably during the ENDSARS protest [against police brutality] and how the LGBTQ+ community stood up in solidarity to campaign for our rights. It's a long walk to freedom, however - but not beyond the LGBTQ+ community, as love will find a way. It can be delayed yes, but not completely halted, that is what we should remember more than anything.

### **JAE SLOAN (THEY/THEM): DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT AND EXECUTIVE COACH**

LGBTQ+ people have been present as part of our history since records have been kept of our humanity. However, queer history has often been erased to the point that many people think being queer has only emerged in recent years. LGBTQ+ History Month shines the light on the truth, allowing queer people to reclaim their narrative and place in history. Incidentally, this allows all human beings to broaden our understanding of the human experience, so we better understand the whole of who we are. For these reasons, LGBTQ+ History Month is not just important, but necessary.

### **JANE TRAIES (SHE/HER): HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR**

LGBTQ+ History Month is important because history generally is important.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” and our history has always been so hidden. Like everyone else, LGBTQ+ folk need to know that people like ourselves existed in the past. I love History Month because it brings people together to uncover those hidden histories and to give us back our queer ancestors.



# FORGOTTEN FIGURES

*It is vital that during times like LGBTQ+ History Month, we reflect on the progress that has been made for the rights of our community. But with that comes centuries of censored history, and individuals who have played vital parts in enhancing queer acceptance and freedoms that don't get the recognition they deserve.*

*So here we have 5 underappreciated figures, to shine a spotlight on just a fraction of our history and the incredible impact that they had.*

1912-1987

## BAYARD RUSTIN



Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Rustin's family were long involved in civil rights work. In 1936, he moved to Harlem, New York City and earned a living as a nightclub and stage singer, and continued activism for civil rights.

He recognized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership, and helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to strengthen King's leadership, where Rustin also promoted the philosophy of nonviolence and the practices of nonviolent resistance. He became a leading strategist of the civil rights movement from 1955 to 1968.

Rustin was a gay man who had been arrested for a homosexual act in 1953. Homosexuality was criminalized in parts of the United States until 2003. Rustin's sexuality, or at least his embarrassingly public criminal charge, was criticized by some fellow pacifists and civil-rights leaders. Rustin was attacked as a "pervert" or "immoral influence" by political opponents from segregationists to Black power militants, from the 1950s through the 1970s.

Another of Rustin's most notable achievements was as the main organizer of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in the Summer of 1963. The event roused a crowd of 250,000 and was where Martin Luther King Jr. made his legendary "I Have A Dream" speech.

Despite his pivotal role in this event, his presence was hidden, and he was shunned into the background of the event because of his open advocacy for gay rights.

Former President, Barack Obama, posthumously awarded Rustin the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013, but in most teachings of America's Civil Rights movement, one of its most influential individuals remains underappreciated.

1951-1991

## LOU SULLIVAN



Lou Sullivan was an American author and activist known for his work on behalf of trans men.

He was perhaps the first transgender man to publicly identify as gay and is subsequently responsible for the modern understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity as distinct, unrelated concepts.

Sullivan was a pioneer of the grassroots female-to-male (FTM) movement and was instrumental in helping individuals obtain peer support, counselling, endocrinological services and reconstructive surgery outside of gender dysphoria clinics. He founded FTM International, one of the first organizations specifically for FTM individuals, and his activism and community work was significant contributor to the rapid growth of the FTM community during the late 1980s.

He began his transition in 1973 and was consistently frustrated by the lack of medical and social support he received, preventing him from undergoing SRS until 6 years later in 1979. His experiences inspired him to advocate for greater education for trans people, as well as support individuals through his work, such as the FTM Newsletter, one of the first guidebooks for trans men.

In August 2019, Sullivan was one of the honorees inducted in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's Castro neighbourhood noting LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields".

1871-1942

# PRINCESS CATHERINE HILDA DULEEP SINGH



Princess Catherine Hilda Duleep Singh was the daughter of Maharaja Sir Duleep Singh and Maharani Bamba, and the god-daughter of Queen Victoria.

Educated in England, Catherine and her sisters were prominent figures in Victoria's court and along with her sisters, was instrumental in both the Indian, and British suffragist movements. Her sister, Sophia, was a member of Emiline Pankhurst's Suffragette movement.

She was the lifelong romantic partner of governess Lina Schäfer and lived with her in Germany from 1904.

During this time, the two of them were instrumental in aiding Jewish families to escape Germany during WWII, even housing several families to protect them from capture during the early years of the war.



1960-1987

# MARK ASHTON

Mark Ashton was a British gay rights activist and co-founder of the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) support group ( page 23).

Upon watching the news about the miners' strike, gay activist Mark Ashton realises that the police have stopped harassing the gay community because their attention is elsewhere. He spontaneously arranges a bucket collection

for the miners during the Gay Pride Parade in London. Encouraged by the success, he founds "Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners".

LGSM faced opposition from the mining community who do not wish to associate with them, as well as within the gay community who feel that the miners have mistreated them in the past. However, during the strikes, many grateful miners acknowledged LGSM's role and relations begin to thaw and the two communities quickly become close.

This relationship became hugely significant for the LGBTQ+ community. At the 1985 Labour Party conference in Bournemouth, a resolution committing the party to the support of LGBT rights passed, due to block voting support from the National Union of Mineworkers.

# STORME DELARVERIE

1920-2014



While influential figures in the 1969 Stonewall riots have finally started to receive the recognition they deserve, one individual who is perhaps yet to receive her limelight is Storme DeLarverie.

Born in 1920, her father was white and wealthy, whilst her mother was African American and worked as a servant for his family. She was never given a birth certificate and was not certain of her actual date of birth. Biracial and androgynous, she could pass for white or black, male or female. She was picked up twice on the streets by police who mistook her for a drag queen.

Her background inspired years of advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community during the early 1960s, and later in 1969, she is widely recognised as the woman whose scuffle with police was the spark that ignited the Stonewall uprising, spurring the crowd to action.

She worked for much of her life as an MC, singer, bouncer, bodyguard, and volunteer street patrol worker known as both the "guardian of lesbians in the Village." and "the Rosa Parks of the New York gay community."

# 2022 RECAP

## A LOOK BACK AT SOME OF THE KEY LGBTQ+ MOMENTS IN THE UK FROM THE LAST YEAR

**January:** The Government ruled that single-sex schools that ban or mistreat any transgender or intersex students would be stripped of Government funding.



**May:** Jake Daniels became the only openly gay professional footballer in England, and the first since Justin Fashanu in 1990.



**June:** The NHS introduced a comprehensive guide for LGBTQ+ people who wanted to have children, including changing legislation to make it easier for lesbian couples to receive NHS funded treatment.



**July:** England become European Football Champions with the Lionesses containing seven openly out players who continue to advocate for greater queer representation in sport.



**December:** For the first time, the UK census included representation of sexual orientation and gender identity.



**March:** The UK Government announced its intention to ban conversion therapy for sexual orientation but not for transgender people. More on this on page (14).



**May:** GLAAD reported that LGBTQ+ representation on TV was at its highest levels ever, with 11.9% of all characters identifying as LGBTQ+ over the last 12 months.



**July:** Members of the community showed up in record numbers as London Trans+ Pride boasted its largest ever turnout



**August:** There was also a record attendance for UK Black Pride with over 25,000 people showing up to protest and celebrate at the Olympic Park, London



**December:** The Scottish Parliament passed the Gender Recognition Reform Bill allowing trans people to self-identify. More on this on page 13.



More on both the Scottish Gender Recognition Bill and Conversion Therapy on pages 13 and 14.

# SCOTTISH GENDER RECOGNITION BILL

## AND AN UNPRECEDENTED CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

In December of last year, The Gender Recognition Bill was passed by 86 votes to 39 in the Scottish Parliament and is intended to streamline the process in Scotland for changing legal gender.

The bill would lower the age that people can apply for a gender recognition certificate (GRC) – a legal document confirming a gender change – from 18 to 16. It would also remove the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria, with applicants only needing to have lived as their acquired gender for three months rather than two years – or six months if they are aged 16 or 17.

Trans campaigners welcomed the reforms, but critics of the plans are worried that allowing anyone to "self-identify" as a woman could impact women's rights and access to single-sex spaces like refuges and changing rooms.

However, the UK government has blocked Scotland's gender reform bill in an unprecedented intervention which Nicola Sturgeon has described as a "full-frontal attack" on the Scottish parliament.

Downing Street has the power to stop legislation from Scotland receiving Royal Assent – the final stage of any new bill – if it believes it will have an adverse impact on UK-wide law.

Despite the fact that in the 25 years since devolution, no British government has taken this step, Scotland Secretary Alister Jack confirmed that he will lay a section 35 order at Westminster on Tuesday to prevent the legislation from being sent to the King for royal assent, a decision he claimed he 'did not take lightly.'

He too cited the alleged adverse effects on the operation of single-sex spaces, associations, and schools and protections such as equal pay, yet like many others who naively rely on this logic, he did not explain how this legislation would endanger these spaces. Furthermore when later quizzed on what a Gender Recognition Certificate was for, could not explain that either.

Scottish National Party cabinet secretary for social justice, housing and local government – Shona Robinson – told the BBC's Today programme that the move to block the bill was "more about the politics than it is about the legislation".

Robinson said: "Using the section 35 nuclear option, I think, reveals that they don't have a legal basis to challenge it, and this is more about the politics than it is about the legislation."

"And I don't think the UK government are going to come forward with a suggestion of a tweak here or a tweak there. They are fundamentally against this bill. They don't like this bill."

"They are using their power to stop the democratically elected Scottish parliament taking forward legislation that had the overwhelming support for that parliament."

Labour MP Kate Osborne criticised the government for "playing politics with trans people's lives".

# SCOTTISH GENDER RECOGNITION BILL



Additionally, in January of this year, a group of transgender people lost their legal case against NHS England over waiting times to get seen by a gender specialist. They had tried to get the wait times – more than four years in one of their cases – deemed illegal – but a High Court judge ruled on Monday the waiting times are lawful.

The Good Law Project – which helped to bring the legal action – said it would seek permission to appeal. The four people brought legal action against NHS England (NHSE) over the waiting time to get a first appointment with a gender dysphoria specialist. The claimants argued that NHS England was failing to meet a duty to ensure 92% of patients referred for non-urgent care start treatment within 18 weeks. They said the waiting times were discriminatory, arguing the delays faced by trans people were longer than for other types of NHS treatment.

It comes at an incredibly challenging time politically for the trans community. With vitriolic rhetoric continuing to dominate much of right-wing politics and media, decisions such as these make it very clear that legal protections for the trans community are currently incredibly inadequate. The Government promised that following the refusal of the Scottish bill, a new, amended version would instead be presented. However, given the Government's current progress on ensuring the abolition of practices such as conversion therapy, which was first promised almost 5 years ago – it is hard to summon optimism in this current government's protections of the LGBTQ+ community and specifically trans and non-binary people.

## 2018

In July 2018, the Conservative government promised the UK's LGBTQ+ community that they would ban the traumatising, dehumanising practice known as conversion therapy. That month, Theresa May's government released its LGBT Action Plan – a comprehensive document that laid out how the Tories would work to improve life for queer people in the UK.

The goals in the plan were pulled out of nowhere – they were based on extensive research. Specifically, the government pledged to ban conversion therapy after it carried out a survey which found that five per cent of LGBTQ+ people in the UK had been offered conversion therapy, while two per cent had directly experienced the debunked practice.

## 2020

In the summer of 2020, there was still no progress on a conversion therapy ban – and LGBTQ+ people were starting to question what had happened to the government's grand plans to outlaw the practice. In June of that year, women and equalities minister Liz Truss described conversion therapy as a “vile, abhorrent practice” during a speech in the House of Commons. She said the government had “commissioned research to look at the scope of the practice in the UK”.

It later emerged that the results of that research landed on ministers' desks in December 2020 – but the study wasn't made publicly available.

# CONVERSATION THERAPY BAN

5 YEARS IN THE MAKING...

# CONVERSATION THERAPY BAN

5 YEARS IN THE MAKING...

2021

In March 2021 a row broke out in relation to the government's LGBT Advisory Panel. Three members of the panel – which was set up under Theresa May's government – resigned, citing a "hostile environment" for LGBT+ people in the Tory administration.

One of those who resigned was Jayne Ozanne, who is herself a survivor of conversion therapy. She cited a concerning speech given by equalities minister Kemi Badenoch earlier that month following a conversion therapy debate. In her speech, Badenoch refused to use the word "ban" and refused to give MPs a timeline for when legislation prohibiting the practice would be introduced.

Just one day after Ozanne resigned, James Morton and Ellen Murray quit the panel. In a blistering letter to Priti Patel, Morton said he had "no confidence" that the UK government wanted to protect the rights of LGBT+ people in the UK.

Shortly after those resignations, Truss told ITV News that she would "bring forward plans to ban conversion therapy" in the near future – but all wasn't as it seemed. In April, the LGBT Advisory Panel disbanded altogether, and in May, the government signalled that it had abandoned the 2018 LGBT Action Plan entirely.

In October, the consultation and research document was finally published. It was widely condemned for being shot with loopholes and red flags, including religious exemptions.

This Government's track record for supporting the LGBTQ+ community is frankly abysmal. For 5 years, various promises and commitments have been made regarding the abolition of LGBTQ+ conversion therapy in the UK. First pledged by Theresa May, plans have since been amended, reconsidered, submitted for further review and ditched altogether.

In March of last year, Boris Johnson binned a planned conversion therapy ban, capping off almost four years of dither, delay and betrayal. A spokesperson at the time said:

"The government has decided to proceed by reviewing how existing law can be deployed more effectively to prevent this in the quickest way possible and explore the use of other non-legislative measures."

It came after ITV News reported on a leaked briefing which stated: "The PM has agreed we should not move forward with legislation to ban LGBT conversion therapy."

This was later revised, with the government going back on its word and re-vowing to abolish conversion therapy. However, this time it came with the massive drawback of refusing to include banning trans conversion therapy in the same bill.

So that brings us to now, and in January of this year, the plans finally seem to be back on track. Despite previous statements that any proposed ban would not include trans conversion therapy, finally, the government might appear to have listened, with Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan saying in a written statement that the bill would be published shortly and would:

"Protect everyone, including those targeted on the basis of their sexuality, or being transgender".

Ms Donelan says it is a "complex" area and legislation must not "harm the growing number of children and young adults experiencing gender-related distress, through inadvertently criminalising or chilling legitimate conversations parents or clinicians may have with their children".

"We recognise the strength of feeling on the issue of harmful conversion practices and remain committed to protecting people from these practices and making sure they can live their lives free from the threat of harm or abuse," she added.

What is concerning, is that this caveat has come with every new promise around banning conversion therapy. Shrouding any kind of legislation against this abhorrent practice in red tape and citing the need for 'extensive review and consultation' has consistently been used as an excuse for eventually brushing any plans under the carpet, a ploy that has gone on for 5 years. While Donelan's pledge to include both sexuality and gender-based conversion therapy may seem promising, 5 years of broken promises leave many with the doubt that once again this government won't keep its word when it comes to protecting our community.

# SPECIAL FEATURE

A black and white photograph of Rodney Wilson, a man with short dark hair, smiling and resting his chin on his fist. He is wearing a light-colored dress shirt and a patterned tie. The background is a classroom with a bulletin board featuring a 'CORE BLACK POWER' sign, a handwritten note about parents uniting in support for children, and a map of the Pacific region. A poster of Martin Luther King Jr. is visible on the left.

## RODNEY WILSON

FOUNDER OF LGBTQ+  
HISTORY MONTH

# BIOGRAPHY

## WHO IS RODNEY WILSON?

Rodney Wilson is a high school history teacher from Missouri credited with creating Gay History Month. This later evolved into the LGBTQ+ History Month we know that is observed across the world.

Inspired by Women's History Month and Black History Month, he continues to work with national organizations to develop an LGBTQ+-friendly school curriculum.

## HIS STORY

In 1994, as a teacher at Mehlville High School in suburban St. Louis, Wilson came out to his history class during a lesson about the Holocaust. If he had lived in Germany during World War II, he explained, he likely would have been imprisoned and murdered by the Nazis for being gay.

His coming out made national headlines, with many calling for his resignation as a teacher, but Wilson persevered and later that same year, founded Gay History Month and inspired the University of Missouri-St. Louis to become the first college in the country to hold a Gay History Month function.

He also founded GLSEN-St. Louis (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), the first GLSEN chapter outside of Massachusetts.



# A CONVERSATION WITH RODNEY WILSON

## How did you build yourself up to that moment where you first came out to your students?

It was a slow buildup. I really didn't start coming out until 1989, when I was 24 years old, so I was a little delayed in the coming out process. I knew that I was gay since I was 8 years old, so I always knew, I always had.

I was growing up in rural Missouri, a little town of 2,500 people, conservative and religious and in the 1970s, you know homosexuality was something you did not discuss so I kept it all in.

But once I did start coming out I quickly came out to all of my friends, and then I started coming out to my family. I told my mother in 1991 when I was 26. So the only group to which I was still carrying secrets, were my colleagues and students, and that's because you still did not have openly LGBTQ+ teachers in Missouri.

I believe that it is essential that the teacher, as the authority figure in the classroom is not forced into a position of weakness. If an LGBTQ+ teacher comes to be known as an LGBTQ+ teacher by students, through rumour, innuendo or gossip, but they've never revealed it themselves, that strips them of their agency and repositions the power dynamic in the classroom. All of that was going running through my head during that very long process that brought me to that day in class in March 1994.

## How did you cope with all of the media attention and backlash you received?

I think in one sense I was able to deal with it because I really believed that my position was the right one. It wasn't yet the majority position in 1994, certainly not in my environment. But I knew it would be the position of the future. I knew I was on the right side of this question.

I also had confidence that I'm largely, I hope, a person of integrity and honesty, and if I'm going to be honest, if I'm going, to have integrity, I have to speak my truth. Truth is always good and helpful, and I felt that I was doing something that would better my community, my school district and my students, and that's what we're supposed to do as teachers. We're supposed to help our students be better. Better readers, better writers, better thinkers, better mathematicians, better human beings, better citizens and better friends.

## Much of the backlash you received was due to irrational fears that LGBTQ+ teachers like you pose a threat to children, something we are now seeing with the modern discourse on gender. Why do you think this problem persists?

I think in part it's evolutionary that we fear the other. It's not good. It's not moral. It's not wise. But it is somewhat natural, and of course, evolution is about transcending the natural. If we're going to see progress, we have to outgrow these fears. We all have an obligation to overcome irrational anxiety and phobia.

If we're going to be upstanding human beings and good people who create what Martin Luther King called the



Wilson speaking at a Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, known as GLAAD, event about LGBTQ+ History Month soon after its establishment.

beloved community in which there's a seat at the table for every individual then we have to transcend that initial feeling of apprehension.

Right now, the war in the United States is largely against non-binary and transgender people. They are being exploited by right-wing politicians to conjure up fear and anxiety so that they get more votes. The right wing still is uncomfortable with the L, the G and the B but they know that largely culture has now evolved and moved beyond them.

So they moved over now to transgender and non-binary people. That's their boogie man, so to speak, and it's devastating. It's devastating, not just for non-binary transgender individuals but everyone else too because if there's anything we've learned, it's that we need to be one community. A united front in the sense that we all stand outside the norm in regard to sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity. So it's really important that all of us in our community, and as many allies as possible can stand up for everybody.

## If education is the key, then why are many still hesitant to adapt the curriculum?

I think the hesitancy comes from the potential for backlash.

# A CONVERSATION WITH RODNEY WILSON

So instead of taking on one more potential responsibility or dealing with one more unhappy administrator or an unhappy parent, sometimes in life you just say I'm just not going to go there now, and I think that's particularly true right now in the United States.

The 'Don't say Gay', Bill has had an enormous chilling effect in Florida, and in the rest of the country other state legislatures also have passed these kinds of bills so I think right now people are sort of on edge. There's anxiety about what is allowed, and what is not allowed, and when you have that anxiety, you're likely to opt for just not pushing the bus. So I think that's part of the reason.

Another reason is in the United States at least textbook companies must sell books, and they cater for larger States, including particularly Texas. If a publisher cannot get an American history book sold in Texas they're going to be in trouble so they censor things that might be uncomfortable for Texans, Conservative Texans. But that affects all of us. When I was teaching in 1994, my American history textbook had 800 pages. It did not have one single reference, not one, to any identified LGBTQ+ person or event.

That was one of the reasons I opted to create a history month in order to take the light on that aspect of history that had been neglected. And we made great progress, I think since 1994, but we've had a tremendous backlash, and we've taken steps backwards now since the election of 2016, particularly because that election sort of liberated those who are publicising their phobias. Now we need to try to figure out how to move forward again.

## What do you think are the next steps to take to overcome those obstacles?

We have to convince everyone in our community, that just as gay and lesbian people were excluded, vilified, left out and demonized before, that's what's happening now to other people in our community.

I mean, for example, with the American Civil War you have to tell the full story. You have to discuss those women who disguised themselves as men and fought in the Civil War. They didn't have words like non-binary and transgender, they didn't have access to medical science and understanding. But it would be naive not to recognise that some of these people were likely transgender and non-binary individuals.

We can't identify with specificity which ones but there are some examples, like Casimir Pulaski who was a Polish immigrant to the United States. Born in Warsaw, he became the father of the American cavalry and it is highly likely that Pulaski was an intersex individual in the American Revolution.

Another is Baron von Steuben, a Prussian, who came over, and George Washington loved him. He whipped the armed forces into shape and was very likely an openly gay man.

When you explore the full picture, including recognising the existence of LGBTQ+ people, that makes it really interesting because then you've gone 3 or 4 layers further into the onion of human history.

But I do understand how some people, especially older people, maybe don't quite understand yet, all the ins and outs of identifying as non-binary or transgender. That's fine, but then learn, grow, and evolve yourself until you fully figure it out. Have grace and gentleness with everyone, because we're all here for only a very short time, and I think surely we can at least, agree that love and grace, are good things and inclusion is always better than exclusion, and trying to understand is better than remaining in your ignorance.

## What are some of the inspirations behind your work?

Well, one person that inspires me is Dr Carter Woodson. He was the first African-American to earn a PhD at Harvard University and the only African American who was the child of two enslaved parents to finish at Harvard University.

He believed the same thing that I believed in 1994. He was believing it, though in 1924, 70 years earlier. There was a large part of history and many stories that had been shunned for so long. He's the father of all history and commemorative months and heritage months.

And as I was writing the proposal in 1994, I had a framed picture of Carter Woodson because he was a direct inspiration. I believe the same thing about the history of LGBTQ+ people that he believed about the African-American community. It usualises, it inspires, it uplifts, it energizes, it provides a way forward. I think also we have a sacred or moral obligation to remember the past, to remember those who came before us.

That's when I really started learning this history, and yes, it made me feel normal. It made me understand that people with similar views to my own and experiences and orientations are part of the narrative, we're not left out.

It reminded me of when I talked about Casimir Pulaski, for example, I always say to my students: You know some people think that this whole concept of transgender just developed 3 months ago, or 3 years ago, but no this stuff goes way back. It's always been there. But we've always had arguments. We've always had nasty political campaigns, I think that's part of the system, unfortunately.

When we're born, we think everything revolves around us. And then, as we begin to grow, we encounter a larger world, and hopefully, we don't get stuck in our own little world, we gain some perspective. But clearly, this didn't happen with Donald Trump frankly. You know, because he never grew beyond his own little bubble. So history is about being able to, not only grow beyond your bubble but then also extend that into the past. It's all essential for a good education and for a good upbringing, just as a regular human being.

# A CONVERSATION WITH RODNEY WILSON

---

**You are part of an organising committee for international history month events. There is surely a lot of value in everyone coming together and sharing your experiences. What are some of the things that you've learned from this kind of collaboration?**

I had a conversation with the Italian team a year ago when they were planning the first history month in Italy in April 2022. Out of that came the idea that we need an international committee because by that point you had history months already all across the world and then here comes this Italian group of activists and academics who want to do the same thing in Italy.

We are a global community. LGBTQ+ people are found in all cultures which actually can give us a very unique role, in the globalization process and in transcending borders.

I've learned a lot. I did not know why Italy picked April. I didn't know until I learned about a protest in San Remo in 1972, it's the fiftieth anniversary of those protests, the first public LGBTQ+ protest.

I've learned a lot from Sue Saunders. She loves, you know, sharing her story, which is an amazing one, dating back nearly 50 years of activism and co-founding history month UK in 2005. She's amazing. We are learning a lot from each other on this committee. We now have 30 members from about 19 locations around the world and meet quarterly in January, April, July, and October. In that meeting, we share what we're planning for the upcoming history months in our locality, or what just happened in the history month that just passed. We're also putting together a website that will include a resource page on how to start a history month. So we're there to support, not only existing history months, but we're there to help nurture new ones.

History is incredibly important, and it needs to be preserved, understood and publicized all over the world, and that will help unite our community around the world and empower LGBTQ+ people. I spent 25 years figuring myself out and accepting myself, and I really don't want young people to have to spend 25 years of their lives doing that too. Why should anyone have to spend a quarter of a century just trying to figure themselves out? So yes, I think our International Committee is a really important endeavour.

**Why is it important that even those who are not necessarily part of our community, learn and recognize these events and queer history in general?**

I think there's an obligation we have as human beings to try to understand as many other people, their circumstances, and their unique upbringing as possible. When I was in my undergrad studies I took a module called "American History from the Perspective of Black Americans" and I did the same with a women's history course.

It was a revelation of information for me. I'm neither a woman nor black, but what does that matter when these are vital components of our history that we are otherwise just not learning about? Not studying something because it does not directly relate to us is a flawed logic, especially when it comes to history. I don't live in the eighteenth century, so does that mean we shouldn't study the eighteenth century, just because we don't live there?

Everything in history is essential. Why exclude any perspective or group, or in the case of our conversation, any sexual orientation or gender identity, or expression? It may be evolutionary, that we concentrate on our own little group. First of all our family, and then our larger family, our neighbourhood, our community etc. But then there are the 'outsiders', the ones we have no immediate connection to. As a result, it is easy to perceive those 'outsiders' as a potential threat, because they're not known or understood. But for me, I don't want to be guided by fear but by curiosity. All my life I have found the unusual, the most interesting. I've always gravitated to those from a different culture, or who have different perspectives. I was at one point a Conservative Christian, and am now agnostic. Understanding and absorbing information is always good because it helps you come to your own conclusions.

**You mentioned the influence of Carter Woodson earlier. Did you take inspiration from his work because of the similarities with what you wanted to achieve? Or was it due to the fact that in LGBTQ+ spaces there wasn't really an abundance of role models to relate to?**

I think it was a bit of both. I knew about Black History Month a few years prior to starting teaching, and then I started to participate in local Black History Month events, and then Women's History ones too. I'd put up a bulletin board in my classroom or I'd put up a display out in the hall, something that the students could interact with and learn from too. I already knew who Dr Woodson was, and it seemed to me that the predicament he found himself in, in the 1920s was the predicament I found myself in in the 1990s so it seemed to be a match and a parallel. So I thought why not just adopt a model that's already known and understood and that already functions?

**As someone who perhaps lacked this from older generations, why is it important that queer people have role models to look up to today?**

Queer role models, I think are crucial. I think we spend our early lives looking for those we see ourselves in. We're advised as children to look at the adult figures in our lives to try to model our behaviour. So when we as queer people don't have enough people they can look up to who are queer too, it means they are not learning about a vital part of their identity.

# A CONVERSATION WITH RODNEY WILSON

I remember when Ellen came out in 1996 or 97 and that was such a big event. But then it's a good thing that we don't have as many big events like that now because the representation of our community is much more common. I was starving for role models and for representation of people like myself in the larger world and I think it's really helpful for young people today. It gives them a faster path toward psychosocial development and understanding their identity. You need representation, especially in schools. Boy, I can't imagine what that would be like to have had a queer teacher. Similarly, when I was going to school I never even had a black teacher, isn't that shocking? Through 12 years of school, my 2 graduate degrees and my 2 masters degrees, and this is still the experience of most white people in the United States.

But then how can we achieve diversity in places like schools? I think we need to continue to advocate for ourselves, we need to continue to be out and proud of ourselves when and where we can. We need to continue to publicise ourselves on Instagram or Twitter, Facebook, or whatever instead of hiding the picture. Familiarity doesn't just help bring about tolerance but also acceptance.

We just have to keep incrementally, step by step, moving the conversation forward until we come to a point at which all voices and all people are at the table. I think it's still good trying to find a reservoir of hope somewhere because if we just go hopeless and withdraw, then that side which doesn't believe in embracing, all humanity, will win so we have to stay out there and history month is part of that. Once a year in February in the UK and October in the US, or wherever once a year, we intentionally take these individuals and events, and this history, and we put it on the top shelf and we put a little spotlight on it. That's one of the best ways to tell our story.

I hope more and more in future years, young people like you, and your generation continue to be forward-thinking and take us into a much better place.

**If you had to give one piece of advice to people that read this, what would it be?**

Do everything you can to accept who you are, accept who others are, and find people that accept you for who you are: Areas of commonality, of mutual understanding and compatibility.

Make room under the umbrella for everyone who wants to be under that umbrella. Unity brings about strength and in this case, we're talking about striving for unity and purpose, the full and total liberation of all human beings, without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression and that kind of action requires unity.

To get to a place in societal progression where we can all find ourselves with absolute liberation and the right to live a whole, peaceful, safe and productive life being able to achieve our full potential and wanting that for everyone else. That'd be it!



## WHAT IS PLAN-ning AHEAD?

In 2022, PLAN launched its very own podcast series: PLAN-ning Ahead.

Since its creation, we have interviewed CEOs, LGBTQ+ Award Winners, Leaders of Diversity and Inclusion and more!

The episodes cover topics such as breaking the barrier, intersectionality and mental well-being in the workplace. They also offer advice and insight on the transition from university to the beginning of your career, and how to overcome the barriers we may face as part of the LGBTQ+ community.



Our episodes release monthly, with February's episode interviewing Dominic Arnall: the outgoing CEO of Just Like US.

The full interview with Rodney Wilson is also available to listen to now!



# WHY IS COMING OUT STILL HARD?

Mathew Stephenson explores why it is still difficult for queer people to come out to those around them in 2023.

Coming out is easy because no one cares about it anymore. That's the sentiment felt by many who fail to understand the reasons why it is still hard to go through the process of 'coming out'. But what is it that makes it still so difficult for so many, and how can we address this?

Our generation has seen a huge amount of progression for LGBTQ+ rights yet many queer people struggle in understanding and accepting their true identity. We are still taught that being heterosexual is the norm and that being queer means bringing inferiority simply by being different. These heteronormative norms associated with sexuality are damaging and cause people to feel powerless, as it's something that is unable to be changed. Many young queer people foster internalised homophobia simply because they don't identify with what is considered around them as 'normal'.

Another core reason is rejection. Rejection comes in many forms and may come in disownment or being treated differently from how you used to be treated. Whether it's your grandma or your barber it can be very hard to tell them you are gay because of fear of some sort of rejection. When somebody asks you "have you got a girlfriend" as a queer man it can feel like an impossible task to correct them because they have already put the heteronormative



More than 1.3 million people in England and Wales identify as LGBTQ+ census data has revealed for the first time in 2023.

expectation on you that you must be straight. Nobody wants to be rejected, especially when things like social media make many crave validation and thus fear rejection. If you say nothing then there is no fear of being rejected for your sexuality, but this only strengthens those feelings of internalised homophobia, as if our identities are something that deserves to be hidden. Whereas if you were to correct them and say "I have a boyfriend" there is always that risk.

Religious or cultural values can also hinder a straightforward coming out process, with many individuals still struggling with the concept of somebody in their family having a queer identity. This brings lots of pressure onto queer people to hide who they are from sometimes their closest friends and family because they don't want to cause upset. So by them hiding their true selves they can try and appease other people's values and expectations of them.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that change is hard. Many of those close to you would see coming out as a big change in

Who you are, or even make it about themselves.

To sit somebody down and say that you are not straight and don't fit into the normal heteronormative stereotype is still hard for so many people. In the span of a generation or two, we have gone from the criminalisation of homosexuality to the pressure, predominantly from heterosexual, cis people, to come out because 'it's easy'. In such a relatively short period, no time or attention has been paid to the ways in which we should address this stigma.

It may seem obvious, but it is so important to emphasise that you should not put pressure on people you know to disclose aspects of their identity they don't yet feel comfortable sharing. Give people the time and space to wait until that point where they feel ready, and don't put pressure on them by assuming or judging them with outdated heteronormative stereotypes. Allow them to do it on their terms when they feel safe and happy to do so.

Even simple steps like gender-neutral language when referring to them, partners or complete strangers can help prevent feelings of shame and anxiety when discussing their personal lives with you. Let them tell you instead of you assuming and rushing them to do so.

Crucially, educate yourself. Endeavouring to understand those different to you helps make them feel valued and recognised, and queer people are no different. Lots of the hateful sentiments, fear and judgement of queer people come from a lack of education, so it is key to make those around you as comfortable as possible.

# SUPPORTING THE MINERS

Kieran Barry explores the shared history of the LGBTQ+ and working-class communities

Intersectionality has become an increasingly important part of discussions about race, sexual orientation, gender, and other "minority" characteristics. But, the intersectionality of minority groups is far from a new revelation, with a long history of marginalisation. This article will discuss some of the histories behind the intersection of sexual orientation and class within the UK, through the lens of the history of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM).

LGSM was formed in 1984 and had extensively supported the National Union of Mineworkers during their strikes under the Thatcher government. Thatcher's politics of anti-unionism and support for traditionalism led to an undeniable marginalisation of minority groups within society. In turn, Thatcher's policies on pit closures resulted in a particularly lengthy mining strike between 1984-85 as a response.



Under the leadership of Arthur Scargill, then President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), miners had taken extensive industrial action against proposed closures. They had been supported, in part, by the LGSM group, which fundraised to support the NUM in their strike action. This fundraising helped to support the families of miners impacted by these strikes.

The formation and support from LGSM had created alliances between working-class workers in the UK, and the LGBTQ+ community. What followed was extensive support for LGBTQ+ rights campaigns by miners' groups in the years following. Such groups participated in London's Lesbian and Gay Pride parade in 1985, campaigned against Section 28 in 1988, and the NUM's support helped in passing a resolution for the Labour Party's commitment to LGBTQ+ rights in 1985 at their annual conference. The LGSM's support for The mining strikes had ultimately brought two marginalised groups within Thatcherite Britain together, sharing a very mutual respect for one another.

There is a strong shared identity between working-class and queer communities, demonstrated by this mutual support under a divided Britain. This had been a feature in other liberation movements, too. Many of the rioters within Stonewall themselves were from working-class backgrounds. In fact, much of the movement towards LGBTQ+ rights was populated by working-class queer activists fighting against a system which did not work for them, and this shared history is one which continues today.

I would thoroughly recommend a watch of the film "Pride", which shows one of the alliances the LGSM had formed with miners in the Dulais Valley in Wales. It shows the story of the LGSM's role in the mining strikes much better than I could write down.

As a final discussion point, there are many ways in which the intersection between class and sexual orientation manifests in today's society. For instance, the youth homeless population contains an overrepresentation of LGBTQ+-identifying youth: as much as 24%, according to the Albert Kennedy Trust. I would argue that more attention needs to be placed on how class, race, gender and sexual identity overlap today, to better identify the ways to support 'marginalised' communities within the UK.

Where governments and businesses place emphasis on working-class diversity, often a discussion on LGBTQ+ inclusion and disparate outcomes is left behind. Similarly, where the emphasis is placed on LGBTQ+ inclusion, often a recognition of disparities between the working- and the middle class is left behind. What the shared history behind LGBTQ+ and working-class liberation shows, one example is through the LGSM and NUM, is an intertwined struggle for recognition and equal opportunity. This article aims to show the importance, and the shared history, of this intersection.

## REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Eoin Boyce explores the ground-breaking and important historic impact of tv shows like 'Pose'

Premiering in June 2018- Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Steven Canals' 'Pose' became a monumental piece of media for LGBTQ+ representation both on and off the screen. Its historic impact on so many communities deserves more than just this piece- but this piece will delve into the outstanding legacy left by the series.

Firstly, the show broke records by featuring the largest number of trans actors in regular roles in TV history and centring the narrative around Black, Afro-Latino and Latino trans and queer people- groups who birthed and grew ballroom culture of the 80s and 90s. Moreover, the show explores very real, devastating issues such as the AIDS crisis- doubling the number of HIV-positive characters seen on TV in 2018-2019.

GLAAD president Sarah Kate Ellis praised the show for its portrayal and important representation of these communities in an interview with *Variety*, stating that it's "one of those pieces of content that takes the people that the stories are being told about and puts them in the storytelling position as well". This is key for the trans community, which historically has a "much higher rate of unemployment". Furthermore, the creative and storytelling team had many artists from within the ballroom community involved- helping give light on ballroom to a wider audience and show how ballroom (such an important part of queer history) isn't just for entertainment, but "it's actually the epicentre for healing folks and a place for folks discovering themselves.

It's this space to cultivate resilience within the community" says the show's ballroom coordinator Jonovia Chase. Evidently, the series shines a spotlight on the experiences of being a trans/queer person of colour- not being afraid to tackle difficult issues like bigotry, discrimination and violence whilst also providing a celebration of identity, culture and queer history.

The show's success grew further and broke records for trans and queer people of colour in awards nominations and wins. Michaela Jaé Rodriguez became the first transgender woman in history to win a golden globe award for her role of Blanca (a trans woman with HIV/AIDS who is the mother of the house of Evangelista).

Moreover, actor Billy Porter became the first openly gay black man to be nominated for and win a Primetime Emmy award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series. With Rodriguez also becoming the first trans lead to be nominated for outstanding lead actor at the Emmy awards- it is clear that *Pose* was so important in creating a celebration and showcase of LGBTQ+ talent.

Whilst maybe not directly related, it is important to acknowledge the recent increase in trans representation in media after *Pose* began. Just one notable example is "RuPaul's Drag Race" season 14- in which there were 5 trans contestants competing. In one episode, the show aired contestant Jasmine Kennedie coming out as a trans woman and in an interview with NBC, she says "I get messages daily from a parent, a mother, anybody that is dealing under the trans umbrella, whether it be someone who is trans or related to them.". It's clear now that, with shows like *Pose* having such a significant impact on the media world, there is more of an understanding and acceptance that different stories need to be told and celebrated.

Although the series reached its conclusion in June of 2021, its ground-breaking legacy will remain for years to come. After laying many foundations in terms of historic wins and nominations in awards season and amplifying representation of Trans and Queer people of colour on mainstream television- I hope will inspire future LGBTQ+ creatives to continue creating/telling important stories for generations.

With events in the USA like the Club Q shooting in November 2022 and the vile rhetoric of hate and aggression from the GOP and the far right (including the ever-increasing numbers of anti-trans bills being introduced in state houses each year), it is imperative that we need shows like *Pose* continue making history - celebrating, and most importantly educating audiences about the LGBTQ+ community.

# LGBTQ+ RIGHTS ACROSS EUROPE

Angel Tetimov explores the ongoing journey towards LGBTQ+ rights and equality across Europe

Europe is generally seen as a leader in LGBTQ+ rights. After all, more than half of the countries that have legalised same-sex marriage are located in Europe with the Netherlands being the first country in the world to do so in 2001. However, countries in Eastern Europe are lagging behind their Western counterparts.

We often read in the news about hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community in those countries and that is only part of the hostility that our community experiences there on a daily basis.

Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union includes an anti-discrimination provision that states that "any discrimination based on any ground such as [...] sexual orientation shall be prohibited"; This is easier said than done.

Although all EU countries have anti-discrimination laws in place, 4 EU countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, and Latvia) lack laws against LGBTQ+ hate crimes. Same-sex couples have zero legal recognition in 4 EU states (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania) with another 2 countries (Poland and Slovakia) offering very limited recognition.

The EU institutions have consistently reaffirmed that it is a Member State's prerogative to decide whether or not to extend same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ adoption rights to its own citizens as family law is the competence of EU countries.



Clai Hamilton and his spouse, Romanian citizen Adrian Coman brought a landmark case to the European Court of Justice in 2018

However, the EU can intervene when fundamental Union rights are affected or if there are cross-border implications. One such case that reached the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is *Coman v Romania*. The case concerns a Romanian national and his American husband who married in Belgium. However, when they tried to move to Romania, the American husband was not granted a residence permit even though EU laws guarantee free movement in all EU countries of family members of EU citizens. This practically meant that the couple could not live in EU countries that do not recognise same-sex relationships which is a restriction of fundamental Union rights. Fortunately, the case reached the ECJ which ruled that "...in the directive on the exercise of freedom of movement the term 'spouse', which refers to a person joined to another person by the bonds of marriage, is gender-neutral and may therefore cover the same-sex spouse of an EU citizen...".

This was hailed as a landmark ECJ decision on human rights but in practice, it still has not been implemented in Romania even though Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania did implement it.

Another ECJ decision concerns the right of children of same-sex couples. The specific case concerns Sara, who was born in Spain in 2019 and has two mothers: a Bulgarian and a British Gibraltar-born one. Spanish and British citizenship laws did not allow for Sara to be granted either Spanish or UK citizenship, therefore the couple requested a Bulgarian one. The case came before the highest EU court after Bulgarian authorities refused to give a birth certificate to the newborn girl - on the basis that a child cannot have two mothers.

The child was at risk of being stateless, with no access to citizenship or personal legal documents, unable to leave her family's country of residence, or receive education, healthcare and social security.

The ECJ ruled that Spain had already established the child-parent relationship through a birth certificate and Bulgaria should issue a passport based on that

"The member states must recognise that parent-child relationship in order to enable [Sara] to exercise, with each of her parents, her right of free movement. [...] both parents must have a document which enables them to travel with that child" the court said. Bulgaria is, however, set to appeal the decision.

Even though Eastern European countries are behind on LGBTQ+ rights there is definitely hope. Just a few decades ago even the idea of legal same-sex marriages was unthinkable and look where we are right now! The change might be slow but it is inevitable.



Greek national Eleni Maravelia (left) and her British wife, Kate McArdle, who found the Spanish birth certificate of one of their children was not recognised in the UK

“ THE  
CHANGE  
MIGHT  
BE SLOW  
BUT IT IS  
INEVITABLE ”

3:00pm // FAH



Warwick Alum, Justin Farrance, who is now Allen & Overy's global DE&I ambassador, returned to campus as our headline speaker.

# LGBTQ+ CAREERS SUMMIT 2023

We also hosted a variety of panels, including discussions on The Power of Pride, Breaking the Barrier and International Queer Stories.



On January 28th 2023, we were delighted to host the second PLAN Careers Conference after such a successful event last May.

With thanks to our headline sponsor, Allen & Overy, and our headline partner, National Student Pride, we were able to put on a brilliant event, with representatives from Reed Smith, BCG, Citi, Morgan Stanley, Lazard, Pink News, Terrence Higgins Trust, TransMission PR and Teach First too!

It was a day full of truly inspirational stories, insightful workshops, a fantastic careers fair and, of course, free food! A wonderful event and we can't wait for next year.



Our wonderful PLAN Exec 2022/2023

# WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

We're always looking for writers

LIFESTYLE

NEWS

REVIEWS

INTERVIEWS



## WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW VOICES

At Planorama, we always want to hear more points of view. If you would like to write for us, contact us through the socials at the back of the magazine.

No prior experience is necessary!

**APPLY NOW!**

<https://www.warwickplan.co.uk/planorama>

# PLAN

WARWICK

PROFESSIONAL  
LGBTQ+  
& ALLIES  
NETWORK



**@warwickplanorama**



**Warwick PLAN Society**



**linktree.ee/warwick  
lgbtuanetwork**