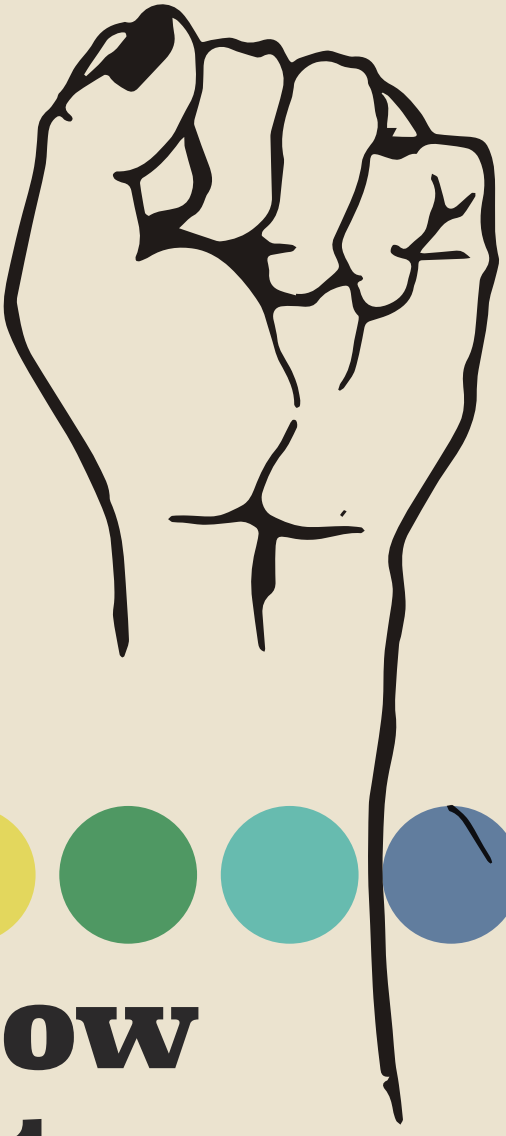

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This is a Souvenir written by the Gay Liberation Front for the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising

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A hand-written Letter from the Gay Liberation Front

'Hello all today's Pride-goers, Protestors and Revellers.
This is for you.
It's fifty years since the Stonewall Uprising and next year
it will be fifty years since the Gay Liberation Front reached London.
How time flies! – forty-seven years since the under-21s
of the Gay Liberation Front organised London's first Pride march.
They're now the under-70s and have children and grandchildren
and great-nieces and great-nephews and great-non-binaries.
The weather on Saturday 1 July 1972 was dim and
a cop winked at us out of sight of his colleagues.
We who were there have written these pages.
We did what we did to rescue ourselves, but we always
thought of you – you who would come out after us,
and will come out until the world ends.
We wish you happy Prides and happy lives.

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The Arrival of Pride

London's was the first Pride March in Europe. We organised it, if that's the word for chaos, on 1 July 1972. We hope to be with you next year behaving disgracefully as always on the 50th anniversary of the Gay Liberation Front arriving in Britain.

Our first appearance in Trafalgar Square in 1971, a year before we staged Europe's first Pride March© Peter Boll

The Demands We Made – A Call for Liberation by John Chesterman

Written in 1970 by the late John Chesterman
In September 1971 he organised the Gay Liberation Front's disruptions of the anti-queer Festival of Light held in Trafalgar Square, Methodist Central Hall, & Hyde Park

GAY LIBERATION FRONT
The Demands We Made in 1970

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the STONEWALL uprising in New York in June 1969 and next year will be the 50th Anniversary of London Gay Liberation Front. Ahead of this summer's PRIDE EVENTS around Britain and the planet we reprint the famous freedom call for all humanity written by one of our number, the late John Chesterman, in 1970.

We believe
That apathy and fear are the
Barriers that imprison people
From an incalculable landscape
Of self-awareness
That they are the elements of prejudice
And the enemies of Truth
That every person has the right
To develop and extend their
Character and explore their
Sexuality through relationships
With any other human being,
Without moral, social or political
Pressure.
That no relationship formed
By such pressure, or not freely
Entered into, can be valid,
Creative or rewarding.
To you, the others, we say
We are not against you, but
The prejudice that warps your
Life, and ours
We demand:
The same right to public
Expressions of love and
Affection as society grants
To expressions of hate and scorn.
The right to behave, without
Harm to others, in public and
Private, in any way we choose,
In any manner or style, with
Any words and gestures, to wear
Whatever clothes we like or to
Go naked, to draw or write or
Read or publish any material or
Information we wish, at any
Time and in any place.
An end to the sexual propaganda
That distorts the innocence of
Children, conditions their image
Of human relationships and implants
Guilt and nurtures shame for any
Sexual feelings outside an
Artificial polarity.
And end to the centuries of
Oppression and prejudice that have
Driven homosexuals from their
Homes, family, and employment, have
Forced them to cynicism,
Subterfuge and self-hatred and
Have led them, so often, to
Imprisonment or to death.
In the name of the tens of
Thousands who wore the badge of
Homosexuality in the gas chambers
And concentration camps, who
Have no children to remember, and
Whom your histories forget.
We DEMAND honour, identity and
Liberation.

How far do you think we've got? We judge that worldwide John would be both proud and despairing.

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It Was a Rebellion, it Was an Uprising, it Was No Damn Riot!

In April 2019 the Queer Collective at the Arcola Theatre in London staged a wisecracking tear-jerking tribute to fifty years since the Stonewall uprising. Directed by Dani Singer, it was written by the collective itself and had music by Canadian-born Londoner Robbie Des Roches. The cast called it *They, Them, We, Us*. It played to full audiences. The set was a stage-full of cushions and teddy-bears representing a queer commune surviving immortally from the late 1960s to 2019. The fifty years in just an hour began with a lesbian racing in among the pot-smokers, acid-heads and nail-varnish crying aloud for joy: "A dyke and a black drag queen are trashing the police at the Stonewall Inn! It's Stormé DeLarverie and Marsha P Johnson! Get up everyone, come on! They're defying the cops at the Stonewall Inn!"

Marsha P Johnson, trans black heroine of the Stonewall Uprising

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The Stonewall Inn was and is an unpretentious bar in the Greenwich Village area of New York in west Manhattan across from Hoboken where, as in the Castro district of San Francisco, the washed-up unwanted of America found low-rent living and survived on nothing much, made things and had fun till they dropped. The Stonewall had been a stables in the 1840s. Then a lesbian bar in the 1930s. Then a gay men's dance-hall in the mid-1960s with three straight (or supposed straight) owners from the Mafia. In exchange for weekly cash in an envelope for "New York's Finest" (ironic local term for the blue-uniformed cops) "intimate dancing" was allowed. You could touch – a little – rest a hand on a waist or on a shoulder and revolve to the sounds of Frank Sinatra from Hoboken, looking in one-another's eyes. But trouble was coming: a sign on the Stonewall on 1 July 1969 would unsuccessfully read:

"We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the village."

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It had been a neat little deal as these things go, profitable to all, and there were equivalents everywhere in the world – gay men, cops, Mafia outwitting the vice vigilantes, the self-appointed amateur neighbourhood watches who in the name of the crustier end of religion tried to clear queers out of Manhattan.

The Stonewall had a no-drag-queens door-policy. Marsha P Johnson began to ease her way in among the 'straight arrows' at the dance-hall ('straight arrow': buttoned-up straight-dressing gay guy). More queens were allowed onto the floor and in crowds watching. Lesbians came back to their old scene. Everybody liked Marsha, so un-threatening in flowers. She slept like many another African American and white internal refugee in the port city of New York under the trestle tables of the Manhattan flower district, where the blooms were sorted, and workers would give her gifts of unsold blossoms for her hair. Born Malcolm Michaels Jr in 1945 in New Jersey as the war in Europe ended, she was the son of an assembly line worker at General Motors and her mother was a black housekeeper for a white family. 'Malcolm', 'he', headed at nineteen for New York with $15 and a bagful of clothes and changed into Martha (keeping an 'M' from Malcolm Michaels) P (for '*pay it no mind*' i.e. ignore unkindnesses) and Johnson for family-friendly Howard Johnson's eateries, of which there was one on 42nd Street.

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It was a custom in those days, more than fifty years ago, that every so often New York's finest would raid the Stonewall dance-hall so that every election year the Police Commissioner could assure the unhappy Religious Right that everything was being done to contain vice. The managements of the Stonewall and other liquor-bars were always notified by police before a raid, and business resumed afterwards. One day in 1969, it was 28 June, the management of the Stonewall was *not* notified and cops began arresting drag queens, the visually defiant queers. Richard Nixon was President. The National Liberation Front of North Vietnam had just announced a Provisional Revolutionary Government-in-Exile for South Vietnam. Gravitational waves had just been discovered. Judy Garland, singer of *"Over the Rainbow"*, had been buried in New York the day before, Friday 27 June, after being found dead of an unintentional drug overdose in her London home the week before.

An elegant white blonde "dyke-stone butch" (doesn't need to be touched to get satisfaction), forty-eight years old 'mixed race' (black mother, white father) Stormé DeLarverie from New Orleans changed the world at 1.20 a.m. eastern standard time when she fought back against at least four of the police trying to handcuff her. The place erupted. It was not a riot, she said impatiently every year until she died five years ago at ninety-three:

"It was a rebellion, it was an uprising. It wasn't no damn riot."

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Martha P Johnson was there forty minutes later, racing across town to collect another drag queen on the way and flinging herself against the police. Alas, she's no longer with us. People found her floating dead in the Hudson river in the summer of 1992 just after the twenty-second New York Pride March.

HISTORICAL NOTE

This year the Stonewall charity in Britain, named in honour of the Stonewall uprising, celebrates its 30th birthday. Between 15-27 July 2019 check out a free, fully-accessible, exhibition at Platform, Southwark London, of the work of Bloolips, the radical drag troupe of artists, pianists and writers who ranged Europe, America and Britain for fifteen years under the direction of Bette Bourne of Hackney, Notting Hill Gate, and the Gay Liberation Front. The Stonewall uprising is being commemorated this year at the New York Public Library with an accompanying book "Love and Resistance, Stonewall at 50" with contemporary photographs described as "the great queer treasure of the New York Public Library." See also "The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution" by David Carter (2004). Wikipedia has full entries for the Stonewall Inn, for Marsha P Johnson, and for Stormé DeLarverie.

The Stonewall Inn

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The Fags Have Lost That Wounded Look!

The first New York Pride March was on 28 June 1970 and was the idea of Craig Rodwell, founder in 1967 of the one-time Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, New York. The Gay Liberation Front, New York, considered the catalyst of the modern LGBT movement, was founded in early July 1969 to keep up the rebellion begun by the Stonewall Uprising. As best anyone can remember it was named in honour of the Vietnamese and the Algerian National Liberation Fronts, the one seeking freedom from American warplanes, the other seeking independence from French occupation. 'Gay' then covered the whole lesbian, intersex, transgender, and bi range, and only later came to mean blokes - mainly because newspapers *would* use it as if it referred only to cis-males. "LGBT" arrived as a solution during the 1980s. The Gay Liberation Front said:

"Every person has the right to develop and extend their character and explore their sexuality through relationships with any other human being,without moral, social or political pressure... We DEMAND honour, identity and liberation..."

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Allen Ginsberg was there, and said of the "guys" (American for anyone of any gender determination) "they were so beautiful! They'd lost that wounded look that fags all had ten years ago!" Aubrey Walter and Bob Mellors, the one a recent sociology graduate of West Ham College in London, the other a post-graduate student at London School of Economics, both in their twenties, got themselves to New York in the autumn of 1970 to find out what was going on and new friends got them to the People's Revolutionary Convention announced by Black Panthers for September 1970 in Philadelphia. There, Huey P Newton, African American revolutionary and co-founder of the Black Panther movement, welcomed a Women's Liberation delegation, though refusing it access to the plenary sessions, and welcomed the Gay Liberation Front. Jim Fouratt, a co-founder of the Gay Liberation Front in America, remembers Aubrey that day in Philadelphia:

"He was golden, this gorgeous young man with a halo of curls who sat and drank everything in..."

Aubrey and Bob came back to London and on Wednesday 14 October 1970 with "Bev the Les for Pres" Jackson of London School of Economics launched the Gay Liberation Front London in a basement room of the LSE. There were under twenty there. They included Elizabeth Wilson the feminist fashion historian and her partner Mary McIntosh the sociologist activist. The LSE allowed the meetings to become weekly. Word went down the telephone (no social media) and word went out in the bars: hot women, hot men, and hot ideas! We reached out to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and lesbians and gay men from Rome and Paris came with delight to meet with us. A first demo in the name of Pride, and announcing the end of shame, was held on 25 November 1970 in Highbury Fields, London, to protest the arrest of a young man by police on a mere suspicion that he was cruising. The suggestion for the demo was made at a Gay Liberation Front meeting by the most prominent British LGBT advocate of Parliamentary change of the previous generation, Antony Grey (1927-2010), who at college in 1948, aged twenty, had vowed to:

"Do whatever I could to fight the iniquitous laws which had destroyed the genius of Oscar Wilde and brought untold misery to many thousands..."

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On Saturday 1 July 1972 the under-21s in Gay Liberation Front organised the first London Pride March. We remember with sorrow Bob Mellors, pioneer of non-binary protest and GLF founder, who was murdered by young men in Warsaw on Sunday 24 March 1996, aged forty-six.

By 2003 LGBT police were marching with us instead of arresting us

HISTORICAL NOTE

For an oral history of the Gay Liberation Front in Britain and its American origins by the prominent activist and co-founder of the Stonewall lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights charity now celebrating its 30th anniversary - slogan "Acceptance Without Exception" - see "No Bath But Plenty of Bubbles" by Lisa Power (1995), due to become available this year online in an e-version at low or no cost. For the story of Gay Liberation Front London by a radical drag queen who was a participant throughout, see "Blowing the Lid – Gay Liberation, Sexual Revolution, & Radical Queens" (2015 by Stuart Feather).

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I Marvel At How Much She Was Able to Say in 600 Words

Among the early Pride marchers in England was Hampstead-born Mary McIntosh, 'Mary Mac' to many of us. Demonstrating against capitalism and for Women's Liberation and Queer Liberation in 1970-1972 as if she had no career to lose. She's gone now, dying young of a stroke in January 2013 at only seventy-six, but in 1970 she was forty-four-years-old and a sociologist at Borough Polytechnic, now London South Bank University. She had written a famous paper two years before when she was a lecturer at Leicester Uni. It was called *"The Homosexual Role"*. She wrote that "The current conceptualization of homosexuality as a condition is a false one. It is a condition characterising certain persons in the way that birthplace or deformity might characterise them." And as a result, she wrote, over and over, "The wrong questions are asked" about who and what we are.

Mary McIntosh "They ask the wrong questions!"

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'Homosexuality' and 'Heterosexuality', the words, had been invented by Viennese-born Karl-Maria Kertbeny in Berlin in 1868. When he used them, they were an act of defiance on behalf of what we would call 'queers'. He himself was forty-four and in the closet. A friend of his had committed suicide because of Paragraph 143 of the Prussian Penal Code which ordered prison for queers, and Kertbeny always claimed only to be campaigning *on behalf* of queers. He was right to be terrified. In 1871 Prussia would begin extending its anti-LGBT laws into a whole new German Empire and the expanding German colonies. Kertbeny camply grew a spiked moustache exactly like a Prussian cavalry officer's in hilarious mockery of the moustaches of the men running Prussian government.

He put a couple of Greek words ('homo' – 'the same') and ('hetero' – 'the other') together with the Latin word for sex and suggested that queer people ought to be called 'homosexual', meaning born the way we are, so that it's ludicrous to attack us. What he was confronting in 1868 was the epithet 'sodomite', used of both men and women in the German law-courts and the Reichstag, and in English-language courts and Parliaments and the US Congress. The old 'sodomite' word was packed with dynamite, for its suggestion drawn from the Bible was that gay sex is a "perversion" by straight people. The English-language media on both sides of the Atlantic hated Kertbeny's invention and wouldn't use it during the 19th century.

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But as the 20th century stamped along with war after war English-language newspapers *did* start using it. So did doctors, psychiatrists, sociologists, criminologists and LGBT people ourselves. So when we got to 1968 it had been hopelessly "pink-washed", in the phrase invented in 1992 in San Francisco by Elenore Pred, Susan Claymon, and Linda Reyes, activists in the San Fancisco Bay area Breast Cancer Action movement for people living with breast cancer and in fear of it. The women used their invention, "pink-washing", to describe corporations that while *claiming* to support women with breast cancer were profiting from the illness.

Karl-Maria Kertbeny (1824-1882)

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Mary didn't have "pink-washing" as a word to hand, but she announced in 1968 that Kertbeny's word 'homosexual' had become a box into which we'd all been put so that 'experts' could 'discover' what 'caused us'. The way the western world talked of homosexuals, she said, was pretend-science - just a description of a momentary social role that "Western values" had put us into in, and which plenty of other communities of humans didn't and don't remotely share.

Here's Stuart Feather on Mary McIntosh: "I wish to pay tribute to her memory as the outstanding second-wave feminist and founder of the modern lesbian and gay movement in Britain who died in 2013. Her work in sociology and criminology paved the way to a new understanding of lesbian and gay history before the advent of Gay Liberation Front."

HISTORICAL NOTE

Mary McIntosh's famous Essay,"The Homosexual Role", was published in Social Problems, vol.16. No.2 in California in the autumn of 1968 and is now available online. "I marvel at how much she was able to say in 500 words", says Jeffrey Weeks, author of "Coming Out" (1977 & 2016). For a general history from the 19th century till now see also Jeffrey Weeks' "Coming Out" - or check the shelves at Gay's the Word!

** In l977 the giant Coors Company of the USA fired LGBT employees at its Colorado plant to comply with the anti-immigrant, homophobic and anti-Women's Liberation views of its owners, the Coors family. In no time, a lesbian and gay film festival called Outfest, still with us and very much the wiser, accepted funding from Coors. "Pink-washing" by clever old Coors, whose beers are drunk across America. One of the creators of the Mattachine Society for gay men, which with the Daughters of Bilitis for lesbians became the leading pre-Gay Liberation Font LGBT pressure groups in the USA, went in fury to Outfest in Los Angeles to explain just why they shouldn't take that money. The nationwide LGBT boycott of Coors beers by LGBT drinkers is still maintained by many bars after forty-two years.*

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No Sex Please – We Can't Afford it

On Sunday 28 June 1970 thirty or so transgender and intersex people walked arm-in-arm down the middle of Polk Street, San Francisco, and it's counted as the city's first Pride Day. They'd said the hell with organising this officially and the hell with any cars that get in the way. During the afternoon hundreds of gay people joined them in a 'Gay-in' beside San Francisco Bay in the Golden Gate Park. New York's first Pride Day was going on simultaneously.

Straight and gay people in San Francisco didn't quite manage a Pride Day the following year, in 1971, but had an "Age of Aquarius Parade" instead, congratulating themselves on getting it together by August with the participation of gay groups. The next year, San Franciscans amazed themselves, and have continued to do so ever since, by arranging a real second Pride Parade on Sunday 25 June 1972. This time they processed down the main street of the city, Market, as far as Little Saigon, settled by Vietnamese refugees. Dykes on Bikes and gender-variant people led the Parade, as in San Francisco they always do.

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This year's brave Equality Parade in Warsaw, The Guardian 10th June 2019. Photograph by Maciek Luczniewski/SIPA/PA

The second San Francisco Pride was six days before London's first Pride, called the "Carnival Parade" by the youngsters who arranged it as the Gay Liberation Front under-21s. We cavorted from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park. Lesbians marched under the GLF Women's banner. Thirty members of the *Front Homosexuel pour Action Revolutionnaire* and *Gouines Rouges lesbians* (Red Dykes) came from Paris.

Let's move on a bit to 1978 and the seventh San Francisco Pride. Three years still to go before the first tremors of Aids/HIV. Gilbert Baker, a twenty-seven year-old from Kansas in the American mid-West, is there with a banner. He grew up in his grandma's women's clothing store in a region of wheat, corn, sorghum, and soybeans. And he grew up knowing all about Judy Garland who had died a week before Stonewall.

Nothing more famous among LGBT Americans and Canadians than that it was from Kansas, Baker's very own home state, that in MGM's 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* a tornado threw Judy Garland and her dog Toto into a new land "over the rainbow". A two-year stint in the US Army, an honourable discharge, and Gilbert Baker of Kansas had found himself, like Judy Garland's character in 1939, far, far from Kansas and in a wonderland, the gay San Francisco of those days before Aids.

An artist, he does drag as "Busty Ross". He's been taught to sew properly by a fellow activist in the local "legalise marijuana" movement, Mary Dunn. He becomes well-known for his banners. He goes to a place a lot of us remember, the old Gay Community Centre on Grove Street, San Francisco. There's a solar-powered 35,000 square foot modern Gay Community Centre at 1800 Market Street today. In Grove Street, Gilbert Baker, "Busty Ross", joins other alternative artists.

He becomes friends with Harvey Milk, owner of a photographic shop on Castro off Market. Milk is the first openly gay person to run successfully for political office in the United States.

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Harvey says to Gilbert one day, “Busty, design us something for Pride 1978. What about a flag?”

And Baker takes his sewing friends a design for a “Rainbow Flag”. He’s not claiming for one minute that he’s the first person ever to think of a stripy flag for a global purpose. It’s all about allies: he’s seen the “Flag of the Human Race” which American anti-war students created during the 1960s. It’s red, white, brown, yellow and black, signifying both the variety and the actual equality of human skin colours.

What about – says Gilbert -

HOT PINK for Sex

RED for Life

ORANGE for Healing

YELLOW for Sunshine

GREEN for Nature

TURQUOISE for Magic and Art

INDIGO for Serenity, and

VIOLET for Spirit.

Lynn Segerblom says "Yes!!!" Today she lives in Los Angeles. She identifies as heterosexual. In 1987 she's in love with a woman and calls herself "Faerie Argyle Rainbow". She's a tie-dye artist. She knows textiles, and she knows dyeing, and she knows both a lot better than Baker does. So does a seamster - a male 'seamstress' - called James McNamara, who also works in the crowded studio space on Grove. James McNamara will die of HIV/Aids in 1999, but not before he knows that what he, Baker, and Segerblom now create in summer 1978 has become the symbol which LGBT people rally around across the world, even where forced by culture or a government to be mute.

Segerblom and McNamara proposed to "Busty Ross" that his flag idea be carried out on an ENORMOUS scale. They bought a thousand yards of white cotton muslin. Volunteers appeared from all over. The task of dyeing the muslin in a sequence of colours without the cotton fabric mottling was so laborious that it took a month, and the teams of volunteers could be recognised at a glance in the bars, at dances, by a pick-up, because of their perma-dyed hands. But alas, without pink dye on the palms.

The collective found that the hot pink dye Baker so wanted for first place among the parallel lines of colour, yelling sex from the rooftops, was too expensive, which is why we aren't getting any hot sex on the LGBT flag to this day – except on the transgender flag invented by trans woman Monica Helms for a Phoenix, Arizona, Parade in 2000. Back in 1978 the Grove Street collective created two 60ft x 30ft flags, so heavy they would need teams to carry them.

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They were displayed on a day when the theme of San Francisco Pride, 25 June 1978, was "Come Out For Joy, Speak Out For Justice".

Two hundred and fifty thousand people attended that Parade, against the thirty rebels only eight years before in 1970. Harvey Milk, elected out gay member of the Board of Supervisors at City Hall, San Francisco, was assassinated by a disgruntled young straight-male politician on Monday 27 November 1978, five months after the creation of the Rainbow Flag. His nephew Stuart Milk, born in 1960, campaigns for human rights around the world and was here in Britain during School's Out's LGBT History Month this year.

The creators didn't take out trademark rights to the Rainbow Flag. Gilbert Baker died in his sleep in New York in 2017 aged sixty-five. That was just before the 47th Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Parade in San Francisco. By that time his/their flag was flying around the planet, people straight and gay wearing and carrying the Rainbow as part of the symbolism of mourning and anger.

For many people of faith it recalls the day in the Bible when God accepted that he'd gone too far, and sent a rainbow as a sign of peace with humanity.

HISTORY NOTE

Campaigning openly as a gay man Milk won an elected role on the Board of Supervisors of the City of San Francisco in 1977 and that was news right across the United States. He was sworn in as an elected official alongside three other firsts: the first single mother elected to the Board of Supervisors (Carol Ruth Silver), the first Chinese American elected (Gordon Lau), and the first African American woman (Ella Hill Hutch).

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Pride Before Pride

We're often asked, those of us who've been around long enough, what came before Pride. We'd like to try to give a few answers to that.

It's an infinite subject. Apes do it, same-sex love that is. Here we are, products of the 'primate family' which branched off from the other mammals who do same-sex love, horses and sheep and the like, about 65 million years ago.

So we descend from as many as a billion intelligent primate creatures who have sought their own gender since the world began - lemurs, galagos, lorisids, tarsiers, monkeys and us.

There are perhaps about 150 million queer people on the planet today who are aware of it, plus many whose cultures or the accidents of their own lives prevent full self-awareness.

Nearly two million more of us are growing up gay each year, if we assume that our numbers increase at around 1.1% globally per year in line with overall human population growth.

That means there are seven times more LGBT people on earth today than there were in 1800. And thousands of times more LGBT people than in 2,500 BC where we thought we'd begin a story of Pride before Pride began…

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Don't Do That To My Sister!

It's 514 BCE, two thousand six hundred and thirty-three years ago today. There were perhaps eight thousand self-aware queer people in Athens, temporarily the most important city on earth. Britain had hill-forts and Rome was seven forts on seven hills surrounded by enemies. In comparatively vast Athens a highly-educated young woman called Leaena, who supported herself as an entertainer at all-male social gatherings, was in love with a cavalryman called Aristogeiton, who loved her back but was also in love with and loved by a young man called Harmodios, who was friends with Leaena. So it was a very modern arrangement. Their names have meanings: 'Leaena' is "lioness", 'Aristogeiton' is "best of neighbours", and 'Harmodias' seems to be "harmony of Zeus". The final bit of the set-up, before the disaster, was that Harmodias had a dearly-loved sister, whose name hasn't come down to us.

Democracy (n.)

Government by the people, system of government in which the sovereign power is vested in the people as a whole exercising power directly or by elected officials; a state so governed; from Middle French *démocratie* (14c.), from Medieval Latin *democratia* (13c.), from Greek *dēmokratia* 'popular government' from *dēmos* 'common people' & *kratos* 'rule or strength.

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A chap called Solon had been advocating democracy in Athens for years by 514 but a series of men called the Peisistratids ("persuaders of the army") had become hereditary tyrants and carried on tyrant-ing regardless. The latest of the Peisistratid dictators was Hippias ("horsey") and in 528 BCE or thereabouts he made his younger brother Hipparchos "horsemaster" minister of culture for Athens. "Horsemaster" did well, encouraging the finest male poet of the age, Simonides ("flat-nose"), to move to Athens while brother Hippias invented the four-yearly Panathenaic Games, athletic contests and cultural events modelled on the older Olympic Games. The brothers weren't too bad by dictatorial standards. But then "horsemaster" and minister of culture Hipparchos tried to pull Harmodios, despite the very much younger Harmodios's declared commitment to Aristogeiton.

When the young man turned him down Hipparchos publicly humiliated Harmodios's sister. He removed from her place at the head of the procession of virgin maidens at the Panathenaic Games, hiring men to shout that she wasn't a virgin, though dressed as one from head to foot in pleated white linen with a basket of flowers and fruits balanced on her head, as shown on the Parthenon marbles at the British Museum.

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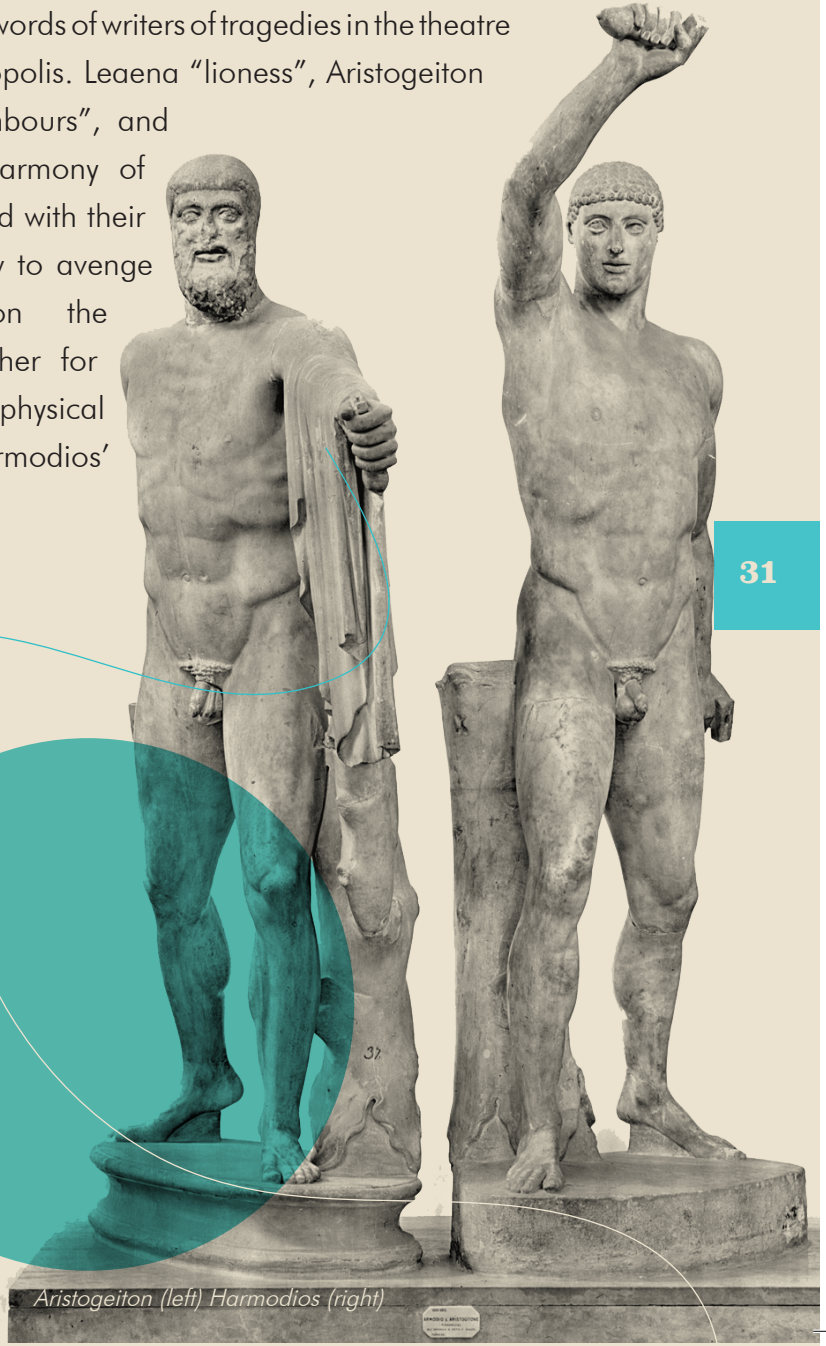
Athens in 514 BCE was a place where non-violent protest was entirely unheard-of, save in the jokes of comedians and the coded words of writers of tragedies in the theatre below the Acropolis. Leaena "lioness", Aristogeiton "best of neighbours", and Harmodias "harmony of Zeus" conferred with their friends on how to avenge themselves on the dictator's brother for his verbal and physical assault on Harmodios' sister.



Aristogeiton (left) Harmodios (right)

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They don't seem to mention very often in Parliament or in our schools that the ancient Greeks credited a straight woman (Leaena, "the lioness"), a bi man (Aristogeiton, "best of neighbours") and a young gay man (Harmodios, "harmony of Zeus") with being the gender-fluid real-life founders of western democracy. They did it, in Greek belief, in Athens in 514 BCE. The ancient world used to be covered in statues paying tribute to them. We don't have to be shy about our great achievement. A statue to Leaena, Aristogeiton, and Harmodios in Parliament Square? Who knows, maybe Leaena was bi too....

Harmodias and Aristogeiton were trained from boyhood to the use of arms, like all male Greek citizens and female Amazons, but weapons weren't allowed at the Games. Backed by other old families of Athens, Harmodios and Aristogeiton put wreaths of myrtle on their heads, the symbols of declared lovers, sacred to Aphrodite goddess of love, and hiding daggers in the myrtle leaves sought Hipparchus among the holidaying crowds. The fight-back against tyranny that would be honoured by all the Greeks had begun. Guards overwhelmed Harmodios and killed him at the foot of the Acropolis. Aristogeiton and Leaena were taken alive and imprisoned. Hippias rortured Aristeogeiton hoping for the names of accomplices:

"Aristotle in The Constitution of Athens preserves a tradition that Aristogeiton feigned willingness to betray his co-conspirators, claiming only Hippias' handshake as guarantee of safety. Upon receiving the tyrant's hand he is reputed to have berated him for shaking the hand of his own brother's murderer, upon which the tyrant wheeled and struck him down on the spot."

Leaena bit her tongue off during torture for fear she might give the names of their friends. The Greek sculptor Calamis, or it may have been Amphicrates, made a large brass lioness statue without a tongue to stand forever before the Acropolis in memory of her endurance. No doubt the Romans later took the object. The three lovers had started a movement: Extinction Rebellion against Tyranny you might call it. Four years later, in the year of another Panathenaic Games, Greeks of Sparta and Athenian families drove Hippias and his family into Asian exile. 'Democracy' as Solon conceived it was tried. It consisted of public voting by all adult male citizens gathered together and the short-term appointment of male leaders. Public silence was forced on all but a very few women in Athens so the women had no vote, and nor did British ones until added to democracy in 1918 CE. New Zealand did it sooner.

Sappho of Lesbos, the great poet, painted by Raphael out of his imagination on a commission from the Pope at the Vatican in 1511. She's seated lower left in pale blue skirt holding an early form of guitar.

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HISTORICAL NOTE

The facts about Harmodias and Aristogeiton given here and the Greek praise of the same-sex lovers as saviours of Athenian democracy are certainly true in outline. The role of Leaena is less definite than that of the two men in line with the general faster fading of facts about women than about men in early historical writing. Details of the story vary in surviving accounts, none of which are completely contemporary. That the 'love triangle' were all in their twenties or younger is a guess and contradicted here and there. A wonderful imaginative reconstruction of the last days of Aristogeiton and Harmodias and the poet Simonides can be found any time at Gay's the Word bookshop in 'The Praise Singer', written in 1978 by Mary Renault, lesbian novelist born in Forest Gate who died in Cape Town in 1983. This description of the LGBT contribution to the foundations of democracy has been prepared with gratitude to the help of etymonline & behindthename.com. & quora.com. & of Wikipedia, Harmodios and Aristogeiton. The shorthand BCE - if it isn't familiar - means 'Before Common Era' and for reasons of diversity is increasingly used instead of 'BC' ('Before Christ'). 'CE' similarly means 'Common Era' and replaces 'AD' ('Anno Domini', meaning Year of Our Lord'. The estimates of our numbers, whether across the whole spectrum of ape species or in the human population today, are very conservative, small 'c'. They follow the present UK National Office of Statistics estimate that 2% of the population is prepared to identify as queer-LGBT. Global total historical population estimates & annual global population growth estimates are from Wikipedia, population growth, & scottmanning.com/year by year world population estimates. The cautious 2% queer/LGBT estimate has been applied and it's assumed, which may not be true, that the proportion of people 'born queer' remains constant.

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Someone Will Remember Who We Are

In the drawings and sculptures Greek artisans loved to make of these three instigators of democracy they always represented Aristogeiton as a naked armed soldier with a beard, signifying that he was older than Harmodias, and Harmodios as a clean-shaven armed soldier, meaning he was adolescent. Leaena was shown in the culturally enforced female modesty of dresses, but they could be clinging and diaphanous. Other cities in the Greek-speaking put up statues to the young same-sex lovers Aristogeiton and Harmodios to remind all citizens when they gathered to vote that a price had been paid for democracy. In Athens itself the families of Harmodios and Aristogeiton were offered free meals forever at the public expense and front-row seats at the theatre below the Acropolis forever. Let's hope they're still there. While Leaena and Aristogeiton and Harmodias were rising against the tyrants of Athens in 614 BCE, like trans woman Marsha P Johnson rising against police tyranny at the Stonewall Inn of New York in 1969 CE, we can say for certain that the three knew and loved the songs of a Lesbian called Sappho.

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She died two generations before them: not in Athens, which she may never have visited, but perhaps in Sicily, driven there by civil war. Or in her homeland, the island of Lesvos - as it is today - Lesbos as it used to be spelled, hence 'lesbian'. She had three much-loved brothers and she was so wonderful that, according to Aelian the Athenian lawmaker, Solon of Athens dreaming of democracy asked to be taught a song by Sappho "so that I may learn it and then die." There are 264 surviving fragments of her work. There may be 265 next week: papyrus-hunters who pick through the wrappings of mummies in Egyptian cemeteries to find in the shrouds shreds of no-longer wanted Greek manuscripts may find further Sappho. She sang in an Asian Greek dialect and wrote her name 'Psappho', a spelling that was subsequently tidied up by mainland European and Egyptian copyists to suit their own preferences.

At her death she left a songbook of some 10,000 lines. The admiring staff at the libraries of the Greeks at Alexandria on the African coast preserved her work in the 500s BCE on eight huge scrolls of papyrus pages, joined together and rolled up for pigeon-holing. Musicians could come in, sit down, ask for one of them, and copy words. Poetry was performance, as when Joan Baez stood at 1960s anti-war pop concerts, her guitar in her hands. Sappho used an early version of the guitar called the *kithara*, whose complicated possibilities in performance have recently been rediscovered. Drawings on funerary and other pots show her with agile fingers crooked every which way to play the strings.

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Potters make her 'girlish', but on her own account she played until she was an old woman with grey hair, resembling (she said) Tithonos, the man who asked a goddess to grant him eternal life but forgot to ask that it be eternal youth. He became so miserable as he endlessly shrank with age that the goddess turned him into a cricket that chafes its wings in the dark. A sister of ours in gay politics was Monique Wittig of Paris (1935-2003) who in April 1971 founded *Les Gouines Rouges*, the Red Dykes, "out of a wish to assert [ourselves] within both the feminist movement and the homosexual movement and [out of] the fear that lesbians were in danger of disappearing." In 1976 she published *Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary* with her partner Sande Zeig of New York. They wanted to honour Sappho. But they found it hard to say anything adequate to their feelings. In the end they left a blank page for Sappho in their dictionary, for readers to write anything they liked.

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We know so little. She probably didn't perform for pay. She was probably an aristocrat. She probably wasn't precisely a European woman, to our way of thinking: Greek certainly, but of Asia, her island home less than four miles off the coast of Asia Minor, now Turkey. One of us in Gay Liberation, Bev Jackson, a founder of the London movement in 1970 and now a teacher and translator in Amsterdam, went to Lesvos in 2015 with her wife, a judge, to offer their help for a month to the islanders. *Do no harm* was their motto, knowing that shit-work should be their lot as better-informed locals and experienced global well-wishers struggled to help Syrian asylum-seekers arriving on the island in their thousands. Bev wrote about the experience in *A Month With Starfish* in 2016. Bev writes:

"The word 'lesbian', of course, does derive from the name of the island of Lesbos/Lesvos, because the great Greek poet Sappho, who wrote love poems about women, was born in Eressos, in the southwest of the island. Still, once in a blue moon someone will get hot under the collar about the word. Like the man who instituted a curious legal battle in 2008 to get the "Gay and Lesbian Community of Greece" to change its name. Only people from Lesbos are Lesbian appears to have been his argument. Anyway, he lost the case."

Most of Sappho's songs were gone within 1,700 years of composition, possibly within 1,400 years.479 lines are left, compared with 15,693 lines of Homer's Iliad, and 12,110 lines of the Odyssey. Some think the Odyssey may have been the work of a woman singer or women singers hundred years or so before Sappho was born, which would make the Odyssey the work of a community of loving women. But why so little of Sappho, ranked by her contemporaries not far below Homer? It's often said that she was suppressed for speaking not only of love for men but of aching love for women.

We are sometimes left with mere breaths on the mirror: 'A handkerchief dripping with…" "I shall never, ever, join you again…" "Please, golden-crowned Aphrodite, let me win this round…" "In love beware, a scorpion lies under every stone…" stray phrases from whole songs and we don't know how long they may have been, hours long for all that we can tell, like portions of Homer. Sappho preferred love to war, surprise, surprise: "I would rather see Anactoria before me than all the chariots of Sardis or the armour of men who fight wars on foot…" Sixteen not-quite complete lines of that survive.
Whatever happened to her work, she knew she would never be forgotten: "I declare that later on, even in an age unlike our own, someone will remember who we are." That's like predicting that all of us will be remembered in 3,149. Shakespeare had the same pride: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, so long lives this, and this gives life to thee..."

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Sappho and Erinna in the Garden Mytelene by Simeon Solomon.

Orchestras are learning to re-make and re-play the *kithara* and the *aulos*, the two-pipe flute that would have been part of her public performances. Above all it seems she was admired wherever Greeks carried their language for she wrote about failure to win the love of another human being.:

"At the mere sight of you my throat constricts, I can't speak, I get hot all over, I can't see properly, my hearing's affected, I sweat, I go pale, I tremble..."

Yes, that's the real thing, to us at any rate.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Bev Jackson was a student at the London School of Economics in 1970 when she helped start Gay Liberation Front in its London form, running for president of the LSE student union at the time with the slogan "Bev the Les for Pres". She wrote "A Month With Starfish" in 2016. We'd like to thank Josephine Balmer for her permission to quote from her translations of Sappho in "Classical Women Poets" (1996) and also Aaron Poochigian, for "Stung With Love: Poems and Fragments of Sappho" (2009, with a preface by Carol Ann Duffy, reprinted with two newly found Sappho poems in 2015). In some instances, though lacking Greek, we've dared to do a free rendering of our own from multiple sources. See also Daniel Mendelsohn, Girl Interrupted: Who Was Sappho, published by the New Yorker, 9 March 2015, & with thanks to With thanks to Wikipedia, Sappho. Only four partial copies of Sappho's songs are long enough to make the story-line clear. One aspect of the Western tradition about Sappho is how translations of her work, and imaginative paintings of her, have varied since antiquity, so that e.g. for a long period all the stress was laid on a reputed sad heterosexual affair of Sappho's, resulting it was supposed, most improbably, in her throwing herself off a cliff for love of the chap. Showing how different eras invent their Sappho see Alison Hennegan's "The Lesbian Pillow Book" (2000) containing successive translations from the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s & 1900s. Again, do ask Gay's the Word bookshop…

The Trans Man Who Said They'd Rather Die

In 1580, as Shakespeare reached sixteen, Marie de Vitry died in France asserting their right to dress as a man. "I would rather endure hanging than return to the state of a girl" they said, speaking for seven or eight other trans men in their neck of the woods, though only Marie's own fate is certain. "She" and the other "girls", as the translations have it, lived in the Marne district near the border with the German Rhineland, later the site of ferocious battles during the First World War. We know about them from Michel de Montaigne and his male secretary. Montaigne, from the south of France, was the father of six daughters with his wife Françoise de la Cassaigne. Only one of their children outlived infancy. Montaigne and his secretary were 'humanists', men who unlike most men in the 16th century thought it more important to look after the needs of people than the needs of religion. Montaigne and his secretary kept a travel diary, alternating the writing.

"There is a small town on the banks of the Marne", wrote the secretary one day. He meant Vitry le François, then a new town by French standards, built in 1545. Houses were made of small blocks of chalk-stone and of turf. He and his master stayed there overnight while journeying north towards Germany. A man had recently, they heard from their hosts, been executed in the next-along town, Montirandet, "for a certain offence". In other words, a gay or bisexual man had been executed. Then they were told about Marie de Vitry. She/they

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"Got her living by weaving., passing as a well-favoured young man, and was on friendly terms with everyone. She engaged herself to marry a woman of Vitry, who is still alive, but on account of some strife which arose between them, the match went no further. Afterwards, having gone to Montirandet, and still following the weaver's calling, she fell in love again with a certain woman, whom she married and lived with contentedly for four or five months."

Marie, who must have assumed a new masculine name unknown to Montaigne's secretary, or not noted by him, was then recognised by someone from Chaumont-en-Bussigni, home-town of the other "girls" who'd agree to "live the life of men". The Montirandet authorities arrested Marie and took them to court, accusing Marie of "using unlawful appliances to remedy the defects of her sex." And that's when they said they'd "rather endure hanging than return to the state of a girl."

They hanged her/them.

London Pride 2013

While at Vitry, Montaigne and his secretary were told also of an intersex individual "a man still living named Germain, of humble condition and engaged in no employment." Up to the age of twenty-two "he'd been regarded by all the townsfolk as a girl, albeit the chin was more hairy than that of other girls, for which reason she was called 'Marie la Barbue', or bearded Mary."

"It came to pass one day when she put forth all her strength in taking a leap that the distinctive signs of manhood showed themselves, whereupon the Cardinal of Lenoncourt, at that time Bishop of Châlons, gave him the name of Germain. This personage is still unmarried and has a large thick beard."

Neither Montaigne nor his secretary published their joint travel diary and nobody knew anything about it until 1774 when it was found in a chest in their former home, the Tour de Montaigne in the Dordogne and published in French. An English version was published in 1842 and another version in English was published in 1903.

HISTORICAL NOTE

For Marie and her friends, and much besides, see Louis Crompton, The Myth of Lesbian Impunity, Journal of homosexuality, vol. 6, 1981, page 17. Crompton expresses gratitude to Dr Stanley Vanderstall for 'valuable help in translating several of the Latin sources'. Also see the diary of Montaigne and his secretary digitised in English translation by archive.org., 36-38.

Women's Speaking Justified

We're all very indebted to the Quakers. Some of us of who were in Gay Liberation Front in 1970 remember the lovers Len Smith and Reiss Howard. Reiss was Canadian. Len was British, and had been jailed during the Second World War for refusing to fight or to perform alternatives helpful to the war effort. That was a Quaker position. In 1958 they loaned their house at 219 Liverpool Rd, Islington, then a poor district, for meetings of the newly formed Homosexual Law Reform Society, which was to achieve success in 1967 with the 1967 Act partially decriminalising homosexuality.

"Their action in offering their private address to enable the Society to begin operating was one of signal bravery; police surveillance of anyone known or suspected as a practising homosexual was very much a reality in those days, and Len and Reiss knew very well that if they were to be arrested and convicted they would get heavy prison sentences. Yet the atmosphere at 219 Liverpool Road was invariably one of tranquil serenity and efficient cheerfulness."

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That's Antony Grey, who as Secretary of the Homosexual Law Reform Society knew the courage required of LGBT people in the 1950s. How delighted Len and Reiss would have been to know that in 2019 an Islington's Pride project backed by Heritage Lottery Funding is working on recording the borough's LGBTQI+ history. Let's go back, though, to Margaret Fell (1614-1702), born Margaret Askew in Cumbria, who was prepared to lose her home and go to jail to forward a reform of Christianity. She wed a barrister. And then when he died she married George Fox. Eh? Yes, she wasn't queer, at least not as far as anyone knows.

The Quakers were devout believers in the possibility of immortality in Heaven through the intervention of Jesus Christ without need of priests, and are so still, and they were and are believers also in close study of the Bible. But they decided during the 17th century that Biblical advice must not be followed if the result is obvious cruelty to other people. That led some of the men into a refusal to go to war on the orders of governments (pacifism) and an agreement by some Quaker men that grown women should share fully in public life (feminism). The most important thing any Christian could do, these men and women felt, was to preach their highly unorthodox take on religion. So Fell preached. The authorities put her in Lancaster jail. She faced lifetime imprisonment and confiscation of all her possessions at the request of the Church of England for allowing dissident Quakers to meet in her house and for conducting herself in contradiction to traditional clergymen's commands to persons of her gender.

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Womens Speaking

Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the SCRIPTURES,

All such as speak by the Spirit and Power of the Lord JESUS.

And how WOMEN were the first that preached the Tidings of the Resurrection of JESUS, and were sent by CHRIST'S Own Command, before He ascended to the Father, *John* 20.17.

And it shall come to pass, in the last dayes, saith the Lord, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh; your Sons and Daughters shall Prophesie. Acts 2. 27. Joel 2. 28.

It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God, saith Christ, John 6. 45.

And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the Peace of thy Children. Isa. 54. 13.

And they shall teach no more every man his Neighbour, and every man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them, saith the Lord. Jer. 31. 34.

London, Printed in the Year, 1666.

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From the nick in 1668 she wrote *Women's Speaking Justified* (1668), gently recommending equality of the sexes. Philadelphia Quakers of Germantown in America joined African Americans in denouncing black slavery from 1688. The Bill of Rights of 1791 and protective Amendments to the Constitution after freedom from Britain in part came about under their pressure. Quakers today number about 380,000 worldwide, half of them in Africa. The Quakers won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1947. And in 1963, a few months after a Church of England bishop had denounced from the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral the British Parliament and police's "utterly medieval treatment of homosexuals", eleven British Quakers published, after six years thought, *Towards A Quaker View of Sex*.

In the pamphlet they became the first proud followers of the Christian religion in two thousand years to call openly for approval of the physical side of homosexuality. It surprised none of us who had been in Gay Liberation Front in 1970 that Quakers in Chelmsford, Essex, became some of the first to step forward in October 2018 on behalf of the "Stansted 15", including Lesbians & Gays Support the Migrants members among the fifteen, when the young people were charged with terrorist offences after stopping a Boeing 767 deportation flight by non-violent protest.

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HISTORICAL NOTE

Amazon offers 'A Quaker View of Sex' for about £24. See also worldpolicy.org selections from the revised edition of 1964. For the Stansted 15 see e.g. the Guardian 16 December 2018. On 31 July 1763 Dr Samuel Johnson of the first major Dictionary in the English language expressed the disquiet of religiously old-fashioned men at the very thought of females teaching religion to the men: his biographer James Boswell told him that he had "been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where I had heard a woman preach. Johnson: "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all." Margaret Fell travelled to London to urge the government to agree to freedom of conscience in religious matters before the men among the Quakers did.

They'd Ceased to Resemble Human Beings

The British, alas, have historically taken pleasure in hurting LGBT people. What the Sultan of Brunei is today to Moslem sisters and brothers with his stonings and whippings, was being done here in 1810. Hurting homosexuals or supposed ones in public was a popular entertainment. There was a device called the 'pillory'. It was a wooden vertical with a cross-piece into which was cut a large central hole through which a standing person's face could be forced forward and locked, with two smaller holes to do the same with the hands. In that he faced the public for a set time, an hour, two hours, or longer. Brought from store when wanted, or specially carpentered, the 'engine', as it was called, would be fixed onto a raised platform about the height of a watching crowd's heads, like a stage. John Waller, for example, was 'pilloried' in London in 1732 for a very serious offence of perjury. He gave false evidence in a courtroom that nearly resulted in an innocent man being hanged for highway robbery, when he himself was the highwayman.

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The crowd didn't care for that and threw at his face anything to hand, including mud, offal, dead animals, live animals, animal and human dirt, and stones, killing him. On the other hand, the spectacle of persons in the pillory might on occasion be used by crowds to signal dislike of governments which had put them there. Daniel Defoe, the famous novelist, writer of *Robinson Crusoe*, was 'pelted with flowers' in 1703 when he was put in the pillory in London for satirising the unkindness of the British government to people who didn't like the teachings of the Church of England. On 8 July 1810 'Bow Street Runners', an early form of police, arrested twenty-three men at the White Swan pub in Vere Street in Clare Market off Covent Garden where the London School of Economics now has its campus. The first meetings of Gay Liberation Front in London in October 1970 were held at Clare Market just where the White Swan, long-demolished, used to be, an extraordinary historical coincidence. We were unaware of it, for the necessary LGBT research hadn't yet found it out.

The twenty-three men seized at the White Swan men of 1810 were accused in Bow Street (now to become a 'boutique hotel', Westminster Council having turned down a police request that it become a police museum) of "conversation and actions that passed while they were in the parlour [of the pub] of too horrible a nature to meet the public eye" – i.e. not fit to be named in *The Times* newspaper, not then owned by Rupert Murdoch. It seems police particularly objected to men wearing yellow trousers.

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Evidently the cops had infiltrated the Clare Market pub in plain-clothes, or perhaps in pretty clothes in the manner of 'pretty policemen' wearing torn jeans and white singlets to entrap gay men in Britain in the 1970s. Fifteen chaps from the White Swan were eventually released in July 1810 because of a (slightly mysterious) lack of persuasive-enough evidence. The remaining accused stayed in prison awaiting trial throughout the summer of 1810 and into the autumn. Beethoven was composing *Für Elise*. The bisexual twenty-two years old poet Lord Byron, born at John Lewis's in Oxford St, born that is where John Lewis now stands, was launching modern long-distance swimming events by tackling the Hellespont. The British were at war with Napoleon, African Americans were opening a first insurance company for black people in Philadelphia, and Jane Austen was about to rewrite *Pride and Prejudice* before seeking a publisher. The eight men from the White Swan parlour were at last taken to trial in October 1810 and a bench of local dignitaries at Clerkenwell Magistrates Court found them guilty of "divers vile and unnatural crimes." Two were hanged.

The other six got two-year prison terms preceded by the pillory. One of the many places pillories used to be put up then was the junction of Panton St and the Haymarket in London's West End. On Wednesday 3 October 1810 a quadruple pillory, facing each compass point, was erected. It revolved, apparently, on its high platform, and the six – four first of all, then the other two – were to be made to turn it with a foot for an hour, like a bopster Sport Pro scooter, or if they became too injured to do it the official state torturer did it for them. The idea was that every part of the crowd should have a chance to hurt each man as he revolved through 360-degrees.

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The six were brought out of the Old Bailey prison in the City of London and put in an open cart. Their torment began even before they reached the pillory two miles off. They were shackled seated upright so that they couldn't duck or lie down, and spectators were encouraged to throw or drop filth on them as they wheeled along surrounded by soldiers with pikes. People came down side-streets to get a look at them and shop-keepers covered their windows with shutters lest they be hit.

In the cart was James Cooke, landlord of the White Swan. Possibly he wasn't gay himself, just undertaking a high-risk, high-profit, business serving drink to homosexuals like any number of landlords in New York and Notting Hill Gate and elsewhere in London at the time of the Stonewall Uprising in June 1969. The straight man, the landlord - if straight he was - defied his tormentors. He was offered his freedom if he'd name customers of his pub whom the police hadn't caught and was too proud to betray them. So he may have been the first we know about of the many thousands, the tens of thousands, of straights who over the years have come to our help, appalled by the miseries inflicted in their own orientation's name. Others in the cart with the landlord were one of his waiters, Philip Ilett, two unemployed waiters called William Thompson and James Dean, a bystander called James Amos, and a Guardsman in the royal service called Richard Francis. So filthy were they by the time they were returned to prison that they had ceased to resemble human beings.

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Vere St gays being pelted by the crowd in 1810

HISTORICAL NOTE

Everyone's gratitude needs to go out to Rictor Norton above all, born in Friendship, New York, and aptly so, for he has been a great friend to our knowledge of ourselves in Britain through his researches in newspapers and court-reports. For the judicial murder of John Waller in1732, Wikipedia, and for the pillorying of five gay men and a landlord in 1810, Rictor Norton, Homosexuality in Nineteenth-Century England, a Sourcebook of Primary Documents, rictornortion.co.uk & Wikipedia, Vere Street Coterie. 'Pretty policemen' were young constables humiliatingly required to loiter under cover near public lavatories and pubs with gay clientele until a man cruised them ("importuned" them in the police talk) and they put on the bracelets.

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A Scottish Manual For the Guidance of the Police

An offshoot of the Gay Liberation Front of London in 1982 was *Gay News*, a fortnightly publication for the LGBT community. From it in 1974 derived Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline of today, when such was the pressure on *Gay News* of calls for help and advice that the news editor, the late Michael Mason of Gay Liberation Front, called a conference of lesbian and gay voluntary organisations to create a helpline. Not that the community then called itself by the acronym LGBT, or its longer modern versions. That waited for the 1980s. The newspaper cost 10p and could scarcely afford a typewriter at the start. It lasted until 14 April 1983 and issue 263, and was launched at the first London Pride March on Saturday 1 July 1972. Under the direction of a collective and later of an editor, Denis Lemon, whom we lost to HIV in 1994, it received one day during the 1970s from a source in Scotland a copy of a written piece of advice. It was for police-stations in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other large towns in Scotland. Undated, possibly Victorian, it must be presumed that it was handed to young policemen by their desk-sergeants to advise them on how and why, by order of Parliament, they should seek out and arrest gay men at a rate, in the 1950s and 1960s, of about 1,000 a year.

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Whoever wrote it, the leaflet was an accurate representation of Parliamentary opinion and as any gay or bisexual or trans person of the period can testify it was representative of police attitudes all over the United Kingdom until 2003. That was the year full legislative equality in the criminal courts between LGBT people and straight people was achieved. Here is a selection of the thoughts of the governing classes of Britain in the bad old days - and they can stand for New York and Dublin and everywhere that England's language touched:

"It is a sad reflection on modern society that there are still to be found in our midst persons who are so lewdly disposed that they will stoop to the most revolting and almost unbelievable acts of indecency. The terms 'sodomy', 'indecent exposure', 'lewd and libidinous practices', and 'gross indecency' which are used in law give but little indication of the nature of these offences, the manner in which they are usually committed, and the evils they are liable to bring in their train."

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Hmm. Further:

"It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that many innocent children fall victims of the foul activities of moral degenerates to the detriment of integrity of mind and health of body. Women too are not immune from the attentions of the pervert who finds apparent gratification in deliberately exposing the private parts of his body before a female."

Mmm. Some protection of women offered there.

"Consequently, no effort is ever spared by the Police to suppress this insidious form of evil whenever and wherever it may occur. Apart from actually detecting an act of indecency, the constable will play his part best by giving special attention to those parts of his beat, such as public parks and secluded public lavatories, which lend themselves to the activities of these degenerates..."

HISTORICAL NOTE

Gay News is currently being digitised at the Gay News Archive Project, gaynewsarchive.org, and Steven Dryden of the British Library intends to include information about it in due course in the Library's LGBTQ histories series.

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With Words We Will Hurt You

The gross language of the advice to cops in Britain in the young days of people who are now the grandparents, great-aunts, and great-aunties of today's LGBT young is matched in the 1880s, when with an amendment to a piece of legislation supposed to improve police protection of young women a certain Henry Labouchere MP added a prohibition on any kind of sexual contact between males of any age. A kiss, a caress, a loving look - if it was in public and a policeman happened to intercept it - was enough to have you broken apart in public, your diaries and private letters carried off, your employers encouraged to fire you, your family encouraged to disown you, and jail if a jury thought fit. Juries in those days read his sort of thing in their newspapers:

"The increase of these monsters in the shape of men, commonly designated margeries, poofs, etc. of late years in the Great Metropolis [London] renders it necessary for the safety of the public that they should be made known...
These monsters actually walk the street the same as the whores..."

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Oscar Wilde was treated as a "monster". A week after the first patent for an automobile was granted in the USA and a few days after the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Röntgen he was exposed in convict gear and handcuffs by his British prison guards to public ridicule at a railway station, an event as near to pillorying as could be devised. It was 13 November 1895. He regarded it as the lowest point in the humiliations to which the British Parliament had brought him:

"From two o'clock till half-past-two on that day I had to stand on the centre platform at Clapham Junction in convict dress, and handcuffed, for all the world to look at."

He was a big man. Almost certainly bigger than his guards.

"When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came in swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour" (that's half the time the six men from the White Swan parlour were fastened in the pillory eighty years before) "I stood there in the grey November rain surrounded by a jeering mob. For a year after that was done to me I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time."

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Wandsworth LGBT Forum, Studio Voltaire and Network Rail are arranging as we write to have a commemorative plaque made in York to mark where Wilde stood at Clapham Junction. It would have pleased the Irishman. Meanwhile his last prison, Reading Gaol, is set to become luxury apartments.

"A most disgusting subject" said James Edward Harris, 5th Earl of Malmesbury on 15 August 1921, "It requires some moral courage to discuss [it]... these unfortunate specimens of humanity exterminate themselves..." William John Manners Tollemache, 9th Earl of Dysart heartily agreed: "I am strongly of the opinion that the mere discussion of subjects of this sort tends, in the minds of unbalanced people, of whom there are many, to create the idea of an offence of which the enormous majority have never even heard... It would be made public to thousands of people [that] there is such a horror."

They were talking about lesbians.

HISTORICAL NOTE

"The increase of these monsters...". The Yokel's Preceptor, Neil McKenna, The Secret Life Of Oscar Wilde (2006), 107. Wilde's memory of Clapham Junction in 1985, De Profundis. For Lords Malmesbury and Dysart on lesbians, parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1921/aug/15/commons-amendment-2. The men were speaking in the context of an effort by the House of Commons to extend Labouchere's 1885 prohibition on any kind of sexual contact between men to any kind of sexual contact between women, with the same penalty of up to two years in jail.

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In Every Community We Need a Group of Angelic Troublemakers

At 5.17 on the afternoon of 30 January 1948 in New Delhi a gunman emptied three bullets at point-blank range into the chest of seventy-eight years old 'Bapu' ('papa') Mohandas Gandhi, leader of the Indian National Congress. He died thirty minutes later. For nearly thirty years since the Amritsar massacre of unarmed Indian civilians by British troops in the Punjab on 13 April 1919 Gandhi had campaigned against the "Angresso ki Ghulami", the "enslavement of India by the British". He employed a tactic of non-violent demonstrations, advocated friendship between religions, and offered a vision of an independent Indian democracy of 360 million people - now 1.3 billion. He won his aim of independence. India had been free for five months when he died.

Among the millions of mourners worldwide was a thirty-five years old gay black man from Philadelphia called Bayard Rustin. In 1942, aged thirty, he boarded a bus in Louisville, Kentucky, bound for Nashville, Tennessee. According to the white-majority Jim Crow racial segregation laws enforced in the Southern United States until 1965 white folks had priority on the seating in public buses and black folks had to go to the back. You boarded such buses at the front so as to pay the driver first. Rustin remembered long afterwards how he wasn't looking to kick off. He was passing the second row up in the front on his way to the back when a white child reached out from her mother's arms for the ring necktie he was wearing and the mother told the child "Don't touch a n*****".

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Rustin was already an activist against racial discrimination, had been from boyhood. He'd even managed to get himself expelled from a black college in 1936 - Wilberforce University in Ohio, the first college in the USA to be owned and managed by African Americans - for organising a strike there. In 1942 he halted in mid-stride in the aisle of the Nashville bus:

"If I go and sit quietly at the back of that bus now, that child, who was so innocent of race relations that it was going to play with me, will have seen so many blacks go in the back and sit down quietly that it's going to end up saying "They like it back there, I've never seen anyone protest against it." I owe it to that child, not only to my own dignity, I owe it to that child, that it should be educated to know that blacks do not want to sit in the back, and therefore I should get arrested, letting all these white people in the bus know that I do not accept that."

So he sat down where he was, up the front. A number of drivers during the 176-mile journey from Louisville asked him to move to the back. Thirteen miles short of Nashville white police boarded the bus, removed him, beat him up, and told him to walk:

"It occurred to me shortly after that it was an absolute necessity for me to declare my homosexuality, because if I didn't I was a part of the prejudice. I was aiding and abetting the prejudice that was a part of the effort to destroy me."

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There we have it, what we call ally-ship today, or intersectional alliance, Rustin fitting together in 1942 the state-backed contempt for him as a black man that he'd known nearly all his life and the state-backed contempt for him as a gay man. His bus demo was spectacularly re-staged in 1955 by Rosa Parks of Tuskegee, Alabama, on a forcibly segregated bus in Montgomery. In 1986, aged seventy-four and forty-four years after the journey to Nashville, Rustin gave a speech at the height of the worldwide Aids/HIV crisis:

"Today, blacks are no longer the litmus paper or the barometer of social change. Blacks are in every segment of society and there are laws that help to protect them from racial discrimination. The new "niggers" are gays."

We might be less confident in 2019 about the protections achieved for black people or of any people of non-Caucasian colour. Rustin helped Japanese Americans interned in the USA during the Second World War. He helped refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. He was jailed many times for resistance to racism, and once in 1953 for sixty days for sex with another man in a parked car. In 1956, teaching that in the Hindu 'Bapu' Gandhi lay the greatest example of non-violent resistance to tyranny, he persuaded Martin Luther King to get rid of his armed bodyguards. In 1963 it was Rustin the gay man who organised the famous million-strong non-violent black people's March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom at which Martin Luther King said "I have a dream…"

Rustin died of appendicitis in 1987. Always a pest himself, he said with a grin in 1948 that "in every community we need a group of angelic troublemakers."

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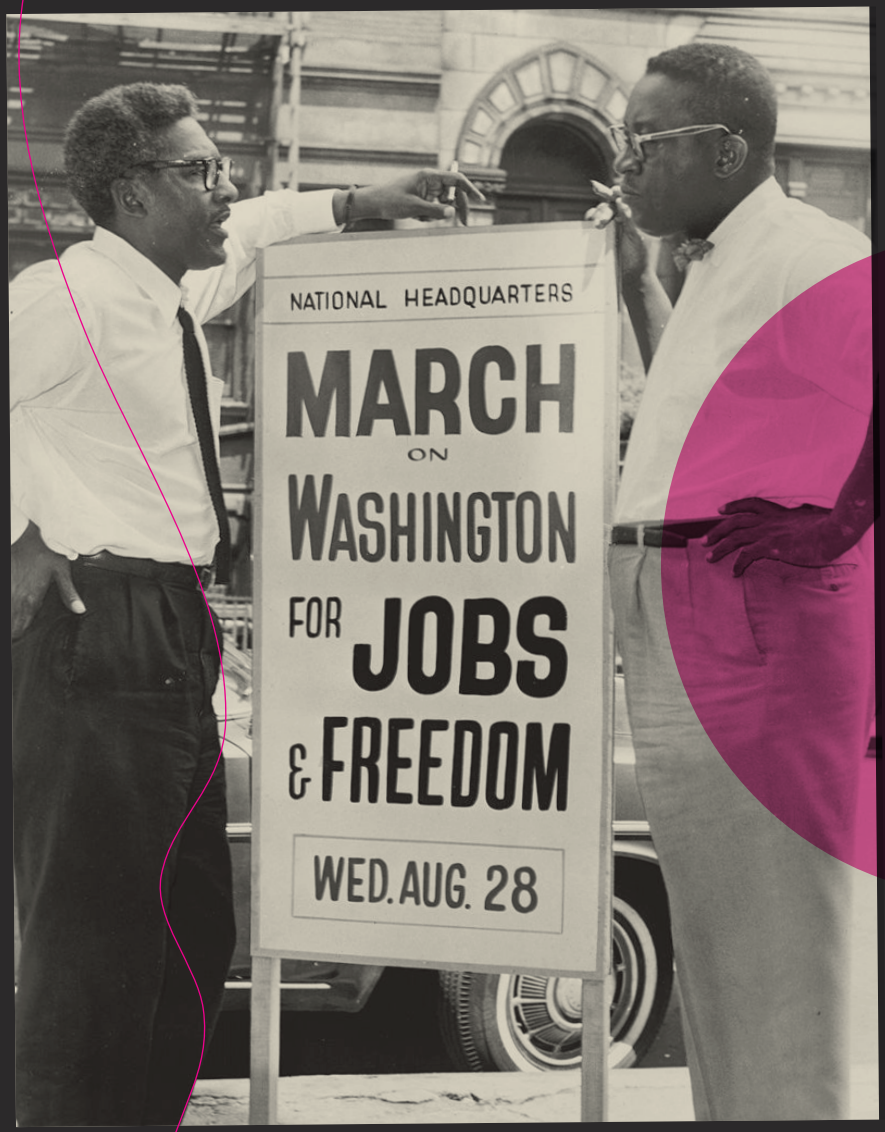

Baynard Rustin (left) & Martin Luther King (right) by New York World-Telegram and the Sun staff photographer: Fernandez, Orlando, photographer. - Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Britain occupied India in 1858. Mihir Bose wrote in the Guardian on 13 April 2019 that "it is comforting for the British political class to talk of the Commonwealth as a unique family with many shared memories. The fact is that there was never such a family. The British empire was a best a real-life Downton Abbey, the black and brown people occupying the downstairs." How strongly all LGBTQI+ people have to agree. We are discriminated against, jailed or killed in a majority of Commonwealth countries in 2019. However, on 6 September 2018 the Supreme Court of india decriminalised homosexuality by declaring Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, inherited from the British, unconstitutional and transgender people, hijiras, have had a constitutional right to declare a gender change without sex reassignment surgery. For Bayard Rustin, see the spectacular entry for him in Wikipedia. Rustin's bus-ride: Michel Martin & Emma Bowman, "Newly-Found Audio, A Forgotten Civil Rights Leader Says Coming Out Was An Absolute Necessity" (6 January, 2019). There's a prize-winning documentary about him, Brother Outsider (2003.) The term "intersectionality" was coined by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989.

The Blue Angels

Joseph Hansen (1923-2004), a white gay man from Minnesota who loved a white lesbian artist, Jane Bancroft, and lived with her for fifty-one years as a married couple until she died in 1994, came back from American military service in the Second World War and settled in California in 1945 like tens of thousands of other GIs. We'll come back to Joseph. Those GIs (general infantrymen, grunts, squaddies) who survived the fighting in Europe or the Pacific got benefits like free admission to college. But not if they returned on a 'blue ticket'. That was an early discharge from a war-zone and a peremptory return home by military transport for anyone thought a challenge to discipline. Disproportionately high numbers of African Americans in the US forces got 'blue tickets' for being "uppity", slang for proud. Homosexual 'general infantrymen' who were reported by queer-hating comrades, or got caught in European or Asian sex-joints by military police, or who were simply commanded by a bigot commander, also got 'blue tickets' ordering them back at once to the USA.

Dumped by military convoys in the ports of New York or San Diego or San Francisco the discharged black boys with a 'blue ticket' home couldn't find any clean work though they'd just been fighting for their country.

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Employers demanded to see their army-discharge papers, recognised the literally blue colour of the 'blue tickets', and drew down the blind. Same for gay boys sent home from the war. Black families might welcome back a discharged black boy unless it was for being queer. It was otherwise for discharged gay white boys. No point whatever in their going home to farming families in Wyoming or Kansas or wherever. So they stayed where they'd been dumped in the harbours of New York and San Francisco, immigrants on the borders of their own country. Civilian gays called them 'Blue Angels'. Oho! Rustin had his angels. Released from extreme discipline, how they partied!

They converted lofts and basements. They served in bars. They carted out people's garbage. They bought their clothes in flea-markets and sewed them into new clothes. They called one-another 'faggot' and they called one-another 'gay'. Joseph Hansen was of a generation who never liked the word 'gay'. They liked 'homosexual', the word invented in 1868 to emphasise that being queer is natural, how you are, not a willed sexual variation by straights who've gone of their heads. 'Faggot' was from an old word for a bundle of sticks which became misogynistic as "old faggot!" for an old woman. 'Gay" meant 'tart' as in a female sex-worker and came to Britain in 1970 as a borrowing from New York Gay Liberation, though it was here that in a small way the usage had first begun. Before it was an insult in the playground as it is today "Gay" was a radical affirmative word comparable to "Queer" announcing that you welcomed your orientation.

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Joseph Hansen hosted a pioneering 1960s Californian radio show called *Homosexuality Today*. He became a novelist deeply loved for his character Dave Brandstetter, an openly gay insurance investigator investigating crimes against or amongst the gay community. The series (first published in 1970) begins in 1968 just before the Stonewall uprising and ends in 1990. And now we get to Pride, in the sense of Pride Marches, Pride Parades, and Pride Festivals. Hansen helped found the world's first Gay Pride Parade, staged in Hollywood on 28 June 1970. Four months later the Gay Liberation Front reached London and two years later in 1972 the first London Pride March.

Our delighted and transfiguring word "Pride", like a pride of lionesses and lions, or pride of place, has been traced to the James Brown song "Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud" released in August 1968 by the Vox Studios in Los Angeles and recorded by thirty-five years old Brown in front of about thirty young people. It became an unofficial anthem of Black Power ten months before the Stonewall uprising.

HISTORICAL NOTE

For more information on Hansen, see Wikipedia, Joseph Hansen, and for 'blue tickets', Wikipedia, Blue discharge. That the nickname 'Blue Angels' was used of gay men discharged from the US Army in the Second World War – word of mouth information to us in Gay Liberation Front days. After a period of oblivion the Dave Brandstetter books have been reprinted. Try Gay's the Word!

Homer Eakers, Loy Neighbors & Julius Eakers, Heber Springs, Arkansas, 1945. Photograph by Michael Disfarmer

"Girls at the Bar," New York 1946. Photograph by Weegee

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This little book has been about the courage of LGBT people from Stonewall to 514 BC.

Nobody has to be an activist. No shame if it isn't for you. If you can manage just to come out – or to come in, as we like to say in Gay Liberation Front – that's brave enough.

Trans, intersex, lesbian, bi, gay, non-binary, *queer*, a straight seeking love - just come out and that's everything that can be asked of you. It's enough. You don't have to be a campaigner too.

But campaigning if you can do it is a great way to find friends. It's a great way to learn from others without being in a school. It's a great way to cope on a troubled day. It can even be a place to find a lover. Your head will be so on the task, and somebody watching you will love you for it. We know!

Don't – of course! - get so taken up by our planet's cause that if you have a lover in your life you neglect them. We know!

But - if you're experiencing a longing to play a part, here are some of the great present-day LGBT campaigns and help organisations you might join this year or next. Google them. Give them all you can spare of head and heart and your life will change forever.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants

No Pride in War

UK Black Pride

African Rainbow Family

The Outside Project

Stonewall Charity

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex Association

AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (London)

Opening Doors London

Switchboard LGBT+ helpline

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans History Month

Or volunteer for Pride in London! Or for Pride events wherever you happen to live.

This "Letter from the Gay Liberation Front" has been published by Pride in London for 2019's 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. It has been designed by Chris Pearce & Alexia Vasilarou.

Pride-goers, revellers and protesters!
Join the global effort to

PUT A RAINBOW OVER THE PLANET