

GILBERT BAKER

b. June 2, 1951

d. March 31, 2017

RAINBOW FLAG DESIGNER

"I love going to cities around the world and seeing the rainbow flag."

As the self-described "gay Betsy Ross," he originated the most widely recognized LGBT symbol today.

Gilbert Baker was an American artist and LGBT activist best known for creating the rainbow flag. The flag provided a defining symbol for the LGBT civil rights movement and is considered the first and most widely recognized gay symbol today.

Growing up gay in the small rural town of Chanute, Kansas, Baker felt like an outcast. After spending a year in college, he was drafted into the army and served as a medic. He was stationed in San Francisco, where he remained for most of his life.

Baker became friends with Harvey Milk, a gay rights leader and among the first openly gay politicians elected to public office. A member of the San Francisco Board

of Supervisors, Milk asked Baker to create a symbol for the gay rights movement. Baker flew his first rainbow flag at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade on June 25, 1978, where roughly a quarter of a million marchers participated. Milk was assassinated in November of that year. Following Milk's death, demand for Baker's flag increased dramatically.

With the help of volunteers using trash cans of dye, Baker made his first flag in the attic of the Gay Community Center of San Francisco. The original design included eight stripes: pink for sexuality, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for the sun, green for nature, turquoise for magic, blue for peace and purple for the human spirit.

Many years and flags later, the self-described "gay Betsy Ross" spent months creating a 30-foot wide, mile-long flag featuring just six colors of the rainbow. Commissioned in 1994 for the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, it was hoisted by thousands of New York City marchers. The Guinness Book of World Records officially declared it the largest flag in the world.

In 2003 Baker was the subject of a feature-length documentary, "Rainbow Pride." He was interviewed for the DVD of the 2008 Academy Award-winning film "Milk," and he was featured in Dustin Lance Black's 2017 documentary series about LGBT rights, "When We Rise."

In 2015 the Museum of Modern Art listed the rainbow flag as one of the most important symbols globally. It continues to fly at gay marches and events around the world.

Baker died at age 65. The New York Times published his obituary.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

LANCE BASS

b. May 4, 1979

POP SINGER

"The constant fear of people discovering who you really were and the inevitable shame that would fall upon you and your family dictated how you lived your life every day."

Lance Bass is an American singer who rose to fame as a member of the pop group NSYNC, one of the best-selling boy bands of all time. NSYNC produced two Billboard No. 1 albums, "No Strings Attached" (2000) and "Celebrity" (2001), before splitting up. Bass came out as gay in a People magazine cover story in July 2006.

Born in Laurel, Mississippi, Bass was raised Southern Baptist. He sang in the church choir and in local and state performance groups. He joined NSYNC at age 16 and toured Europe with the group from 1995 to 1997. RCA Records signed the band in 1998, launching their career in the United States.

NSYNC performed five national and international concert tours and sold over 70 million records. "No Strings Attached," the group's second album, was the fastest-selling record in history with sales of 1.1 million copies on the day of its release. Two of the band's best-performing singles, the No. 1 hits "It's Gonna Be Me" and "Bye Bye Bye" appear on the album. NSYNC received eight Grammy Award nominations between 2000 and 2003, including the 2001 nomination of "Bye Bye Bye" for Record of the Year.

Bass also enjoyed a career in film, television and radio. In 2001 he guest starred on the television drama "7th Heaven." The same year, he played the lead in the romantic comedy film "On the Line." In 2005 Bass finished in third place on the seventh season of the television series "Dancing With the Stars." From 2012 to 2016, he hosted "Dirty Pop with Lance Bass," a daily radio show on Sirius XM featuring LGBT-related topics.

In addition to his entertainment endeavors, Bass is a space exploration advocate. From 2003 to 2005, he served as World Space Week's Youth Spokesman, traveling to high schools to encourage students to explore science and space-related careers. Since 2004 he has served on the National Space Society's board of governors.

In 2014 Bass married Ben Thigpen, a New York City hairstylist, in a ceremony on the E! channel. The broadcast made them the first same-sex couple to wed on an American television network.

The Human Rights Campaign honored Bass with its Visibility Award in October 2006. His autobiography, "Out of Sync," debuted on the New York Times best-seller list upon its release in October 2007. NSYNC received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in April 2018.

He rose to fame as a member of NSYNC, one of the best-selling boy bands of all time.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

JAMES BEARD

b. May 5, 1903

d. January 21, 1985

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CHEF

*“Food is our common ground,
a universal experience.”*

Dubbed the “Dean of American Cookery” by The New York Times in 1954, James Beard was a prominent American chef, culinary instructor and television personality. He is regarded as the first TV chef. Beard wrote 20 cookbooks and trained countless other acclaimed chefs.

Born in Portland, Oregon, Beard was exposed to Pacific Northwest cooking, which included seafood, moose meat and venison. His family made meals using wild berries and freshly caught fish. Chinese culture and the meals prepared by his family's Chinese helper also influenced him, along with the culture and cuisine of France, where he spent his 20s.

**Dubbed the “Dean of
American Cookery,”
he is regarded as the
first TV chef.**

During the 1950s, Beard was known for bringing French cuisine to the American middle and upper classes.

After briefly attending Reed College in Portland, Beard was expelled. He believed it was due to his homosexuality. In 1937 he moved to New York City, and in 1939 he founded a successful catering company, Hors D'oeuvre, Inc., which served the Manhattan elite.

In 1940, at age 37, Beard published his first cookbook, “Hors D’oeuvre & Canapés,” which contained a collection of his

catering recipes. In 1942 he garnered acclaim for elevating outdoor cooking with “Cook It Outdoors.” His best-selling cookbook, “Beard on Beard,” was released in 1973. He also wrote articles and columns for numerous magazines such as Woman’s Day and House & Garden.

In 1946 Beard began hosting television’s first live cooking show, “I Love to Eat,” on NBC. His popularity led to endorsement deals for products such as Omaha Steaks and Adolph’s Meat Tenderizer. In 1955 he created the James Beard Cooking School in New York City and Seaside, Oregon. He dedicated more than 30 years of his life to teaching and mentoring chefs at his two schools and to lecturing at women’s clubs and other civic groups around the nation.

Beard died of heart failure at the age of 81. The James Beard Foundation was established in 1986 to honor his life’s work. Since 1991 the prestigious James Beard Awards have annually honored chefs and restaurants. Early recipients included Wolfgang Puck and Rick Bayless. The Foundation’s scholarship program has provided more than \$4.6 million in financial assistance to students and chefs to help develop and advance their culinary careers.

© GETTY IMAGES



www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com
Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

ELIZABETH BIRCH

b. September 2, 1956

HRC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During her tenure at the HRC, she helped increase membership from 100,000 to more than 1.1 million.

“It’s all about coming out.”

Elizabeth Birch is a prominent LGBT activist. From 1995 to 2004, she served as executive director of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest LGBT organization in the United States. Under her leadership, the HRC's budget quadrupled and its membership increased more than tenfold.

Born at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, Birch was the daughter of a Canadian Air Force officer. She graduated from the University of Hawaii and earned her J.D. from the Santa Clara University School of Law.

Birch began her law career as an associate attorney at McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen. She joined Apple Inc. in 1989 as the worldwide director of litigation.

Birch's activism began when she joined the Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee, an LGBT political action group in California. She went on to serve as chair of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force from 1992 to 1994, before accepting the position as the HRC's executive director in 1995.

With Birch at the helm, the HRC dramatically expanded in size and visibility. During her nine-year tenure, she helped increase membership from 100,000 to more than 1.1 million and helped grow the budget from \$6.5 million to almost \$30 million. She built a 100-person staff and launched key initiatives such as the HRC website, a magazine and youth outreach programs. Birch spearheaded the effort to establish the first major LGBT headquarters in Washington, D.C. The HRC opened the doors to its own building in 2003.

Birch has represented the HRC on television programs such as “Good Morning America,” “Nightline,” “Crossfire” and “The Today Show.” In 2000 she became the first leader of an LGBT organization to address a U.S. political convention, when she delivered a speech at the Democratic National Convention.

After Birch left the HRC in 2004, she launched her own consulting firm. The same year, she became the first recipient of the Elizabeth Birch Equality Award. Presented annually by the HRC, the award honors an individual or organization that has made a significant national contribution to the LGBT community.

Birch and her former partner, Hilary Rosen, are the parents of adopted twins (a son and a daughter).

© GETTY IMAGES



MELVIN BOOZER

GAY PIONEER

b. June 21, 1945

d. March 6, 1987

*"I know what it means to be called a nigger.
I know what it means to be called a faggot.
And I can sum up the difference in one word: none."*

**He was the first openly
gay candidate for
vice president of the
United States.**

Melvin "Mel" Boozer was a university professor, an activist for gay and African-American rights and the first openly gay candidate for vice president of the United States.

Boozer grew up in Washington, D.C. His mother was a domestic worker and his stepfather was a janitor. Boozer's childhood homes lacked electricity.

Boozer graduated salutatorian of his high school class and earned a scholarship to Dartmouth College where he studied sociology. He spent three years in the Peace Corps in Brazil before completing his graduate studies. He earned a Ph.D. from Yale University and became a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland.

In 1979 Boozer became the first African-American elected president of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) of Washington, D.C. Under his leadership and in collaboration with

Frank Kameny, the GAA secured passage of the D.C. Sexual Assault Reform Act, which decriminalized sodomy and struck down other anti-gay laws. The GAA also sued the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and won the right to display Metrobus posters announcing, "Someone in Your Life is Gay."

In 1980 the Socialist Party nominated Mel Boozer for vice president of the United States. The Democratic Party followed suit and nominated Boozer by petition. Though he was not elected, Boozer became the first-ever openly gay U.S. vice presidential candidate. In his primetime televised speech at the Democratic National Convention, Boozer called attention to discrimination against LGBT and black Americans.

In 1981 the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force hired Boozer as a district director. The following year, he cofounded and led the Langston Hughes-Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club, which advocated for black gays and lesbians in Washington, D.C. In 1984 he ran the D.C. gay-voter outreach effort for Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign. He also served on the national board of Americans for Democratic Action, a political advocacy organization for progressive causes and social justice.

Later in life, Boozer became an AIDS activist. He died of an AIDS-related illness at the age of 41. The New York Times published his obituary.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

b. 1445

d. May 17, 1510

His best-known paintings include
“The Birth of Venus” and
“The Primavera.”

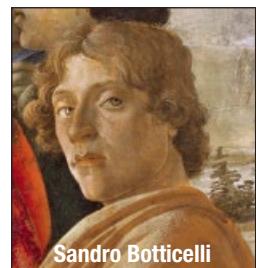
RENAISSANCE PAINTER

“Figures are designed and painted with plastic subtlety and confident mastery; they are incarnate with vitality . . .” – Ronald Lightbown, “Botticelli: Life and Work”

Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, better known as Sandro Botticelli, was an esteemed painter during the early Italian Renaissance. His most famous works include “The Birth of Venus,” “The Primavera” and “The Adoration of the Magi.”

The son of a tanner, Botticelli was born in Florence, Italy—the epicenter of the Renaissance—where he lived for most of his life. He trained under Fra Filippo Lippi, one of the city’s most prominent artists. As Lippi’s apprentice, Botticelli studied composition and painting techniques. He began painting frescoes in Florentine churches and spent most of his career employed by the politically powerful Medici family.

Botticelli painted prolifically during the 1480s. During this period, he completed “The Birth of Venus” (c. 1484-86). Groundbreaking for its nudity and the artist’s use of a canvas, as opposed to a traditional wood-panel substrate, it is one of the most celebrated and iconic paintings in history. Based on the writings of Homer, it depicts the naked goddess Venus arriving at the shore on a seashell. “The Birth of Venus” hangs in the famed Uffizi Gallery in Florence.



Sandro Botticelli

Botticelli’s late 1470s painting, “The Primavera” (meaning “spring”) features a gathering of mythological figures in a grove. Considered one of the gallery’s most significant works, it also resides in the Uffizi.

By 1472 Botticelli had his own workshop. He mentored Filippino Lippi, the son of his teacher. As his success grew, Botticelli was summoned by the pope to help paint the walls of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

Botticelli never married. He was friends with Leonardo da Vinci, and the two collaborated. Many understood Botticelli to be homosexual. Although most of his subject matter concerned mythological characters, the Madonna and religious scenes, Botticelli also painted portraits in which art historians have noted homoeroticism.

Botticelli is regarded as one of the greatest artists of all time. His paintings adorn the walls of the world’s most prestigious galleries and museums. In 2016 he was portrayed in the international television series “Medici: Masters of Florence.”



RICHARD BURNS

b. May 12, 1955

MOVEMENT LEADER

**He helped plan
the October 1979
National March on
Washington for Lesbian
and Gay Rights.**

"The call is to each of us to now take responsibility for the conferring of all rights to all people."

Richard D. Burns is a longtime LGBT community leader and organizer. He served for 22 years as executive director of New York's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center) and has held leadership roles at numerous human rights organizations, including the Arcus Foundation, GLAD and Lambda Legal.

Burns graduated from Hamilton College in 1977 and earned his law degree from Northeastern University. In 1978 he cofounded Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) and served as its president until 1986. He became managing editor of Gay Community News in 1978, the only national lesbian and gay newsweekly at the time, and later became president of its board.

In February 1979, Burns and three other Boston representatives participated in the Philadelphia Conference, a meeting of LGBT leaders from across the nation to organize the historic October 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

From 1980 to 1983, Burns served on the first national board of the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund. In 1985 he cofounded and led the board of the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association.

Burns became the first executive director of The Center in 1986, at the height of the AIDS crisis, and served until 2009. The second largest multiservice center of its kind in the world, The Center offers health and social services as well as cultural and recreational activities to the NYC LGBT community.

In 1994, while serving at The Center, Burns cofounded CenterLink, an organization serving over 200 LGBT community centers across the United States. That same year, he cofounded the New York State LGBT Health and Human Services Network.

Since 2009 Burns has led prominent nonprofit organizations. He was the Chief Operating Officer of the Arcus Foundation, one of the largest international funders of LGBT initiatives. He has acted as interim executive director of organizations such as the Stonewall Community Foundation, Funders for LGBTQ Issues, PENCIL, the North Star Fund, the Funding Exchange and the Johnson Family Foundation. Currently, he serves as the interim CEO of Lambda Legal.

Burns is a member of the board of directors for the Proteus Fund, a social justice grantmaker; the New York City AIDS Memorial Park; the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee; and the Center for HIV Law and Policy. He is a past member of the selection committee of the New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards.

Burns has received several awards for his vision and service. In 2008 the Center for Effective Government (formerly OMB Watch) named him to the Public Interest Hall of Fame for Outstanding Leadership and Commitment to Social Justice.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

JONATHAN CAPEHART

b. July 2, 1967

PULITZER- WINNING JOURNALIST

“One of the burdens of being a black male is carrying the heavy weight of other people’s suspicions.”

In 2007 he became the youngest member ever to join The Washington Post editorial board.

Jonathan T. Capehart is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and a member of The Washington Post editorial board.

Capehart was born in Newark, New Jersey. He attended Saint Benedict's Preparatory School and graduated with a degree in political science from Carleton College in 1989. Before joining The Washington Post, Capehart was a researcher for NBC's "The Today Show." He went on to the New York Daily News (NYDN), where he served on the editorial board from 1993 until 2000. There, Capehart was a key contributor to a 16-month series that helped save the Apollo Theater in Harlem. The project earned the NYDN editorial board the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Best Editorial Writing.

Capehart left the NYDN for Bloomberg News and served as policy adviser to Michael Bloomberg's successful campaign for New York City mayor. Capehart returned to the NYDN in 2002 as editorial page deputy editor. He left in 2004 to join the global public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton as senior vice president and counselor of public affairs.

In 2007 Capehart became the youngest member ever to join the editorial board of The Washington Post. His opinions focus on the intersection of social and cultural issues and politics. He hosts his own podcast, "Cape Up," and is a contributor to MSNBC, regularly serving as a substitute anchor on programs such as "The Cycle" and "Way Too Early." He has appeared on ABC News' "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" Reporters Roundtable, and in 2018 he became a guest host of New York Public Radio's "Midday on WNYC."

Capehart often speaks publicly about issues of equality and social justice. He has moderated panel discussions on these topics for the Center for American Progress, the Aspen Institute, the Aspen Ideas Festival and The Atlantic's Washington Ideas forum. Among other recognition, Capehart was named a 2011 Esteem Honoree—a distinction bestowed on individuals who have made a positive impact on both the African-American and LGBT communities.

In 2017 Capehart married his longtime partner, Nick Schmit, the assistant chief of protocol at the U.S. State Department. The New York Times covered the ceremony at which former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder officiated. The couple lives in Washington, D.C.



© MICHAEL YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHY

FRANCISCO CARTAGENA

b. January 18, 1986

PUERTO RICAN ACTIVIST

“Being different should not be a reason to hate or discriminate against a person. There are more reasons to respect sexual diversity than stars in the universe.”

He is a poet, a newspaper columnist and a leading Puerto Rican human rights activist.

Francisco J. “El Jimagua” Cartagena Méndez is a Puerto Rican writer and well-known human rights activist.

Cartagena was born an identical twin in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. His mother died from complications of diabetes when he was 11. He adopted the pseudonym El Jimagua at age 14, when he began to share his poetry on social media. The name derives from the word “twins” (jimagua) in Arahac, the language of the island’s indigenous Taíno people.

At age 18, Cartagena came out to his father, who accepted the news unconditionally. Cartagena began his human rights activism soon thereafter.

Cartagena was one of the principal promoters of “Boicot La Comay,” the boycott of a Puerto Rican television program that promoted homophobia and violence against gays. It resulted in the show’s cancellation. On the news outlet Univisión Puerto Rico, he denounced a religious group who had taken photos at a Gay Pride celebration in San Juan and posted them to a homophobic website with derogatory comments.

Cartagena became a published author at the age of 22, when his book of gay-oriented poetry, “Vuelo en Liberta” (Flight in Freedom), was released. At the time, gay literature was rarely seen in Puerto Rico. The same year, the island’s lead newspaper, El Nuevo Día, hired him as its LGBTT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transsexual) columnist.

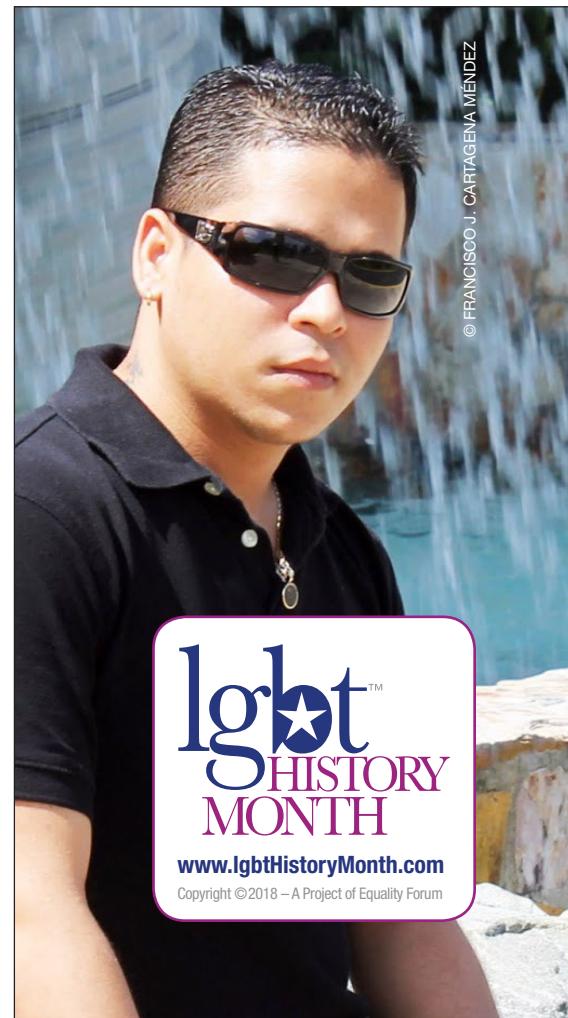
Cartagena writes for newspapers and blogs in Puerto Rico, the United States, Latin America and Europe. His numerous columns address topics such as sexual diversity, LGBTT suicide prevention and the effect of religious fundamentalism on LGBTT health.

In 2013 Cartagena and his partner, José Santiago, cofounded the nonprofit organization Fundación ASI (Inclusive Social Action Foundation) to advocate for socially disadvantaged communities, including LGBTT people, the elderly, children, and single mothers and fathers. The same year, he produced and directed a “El Fénix Erótico” (The Erotic Phoenix) in which he debuted as an actor. The sold-out show featured comedy, parodies and recitation of his poetry.

Cartagena won an international poetry contest in Argentina for his poem “A Free Land to Love” in 2014. In 2016 he organized Talk About Prevention, an awareness campaign aimed at averting pedophilia. He was also named the ambassador of an international project of ONG LGBT Spain, #PorUnFuturoSinViolencia, designed to address bullying, homophobia and gender violence.

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico causing massive power failures and economic disaster. Although Cartagena faced his own hardship, he traveled to three heavily hit towns to provide humanitarian aid. At the end of October, Cartagena’s apartment remained without power. An intruder broke in, robbed him and stabbed him brutally three times.

Having survived the near-fatal attack, Cartagena continues his activism. His latest book, “Fundamentos de la Equidad y el Discrimen” (Fundamentals of Equity and Discrimination), was published in the fall of 2018.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

DEBRA CHASNOFF

b. October 12, 1957
d. November 7, 2017

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

"We all know plenty of gay people who have won Academy Awards, but we're all just quiet about it. I couldn't imagine having that profound of an honor and not acknowledging my partner."

She is the first Academy Award winner to acknowledge a same-sex partner in her acceptance speech.

Debra Hill Chasnoff was an American documentary filmmaker and activist. She won the 1992 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject for "Deadly Deception." In her acceptance speech, Chasnoff became the first Academy Award recipient to acknowledge a same-sex partner during the ceremony's live national telecast. She came out in doing so.

Chasnoff was born in Philadelphia and grew up in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. Her father, Joel Chasnoff, was a Maryland state legislator and her mother, Selina Sue Prosen, was a psychologist. In 1978 Chasnoff graduated with a degree in economics from Wellesley College.

Chasnoff made 12 documentary films. With her production company, GroundSpark, she produced and distributed documentaries covering social issues such as income inequality, environmental rights and LGBT rights. The company's mission was to "create films and dynamic education campaigns that move individuals and communities to take action for a more just world." Films like "That's a Family" (2000) exposed students nationwide to diverse households of multiracial families and same-sex parents.

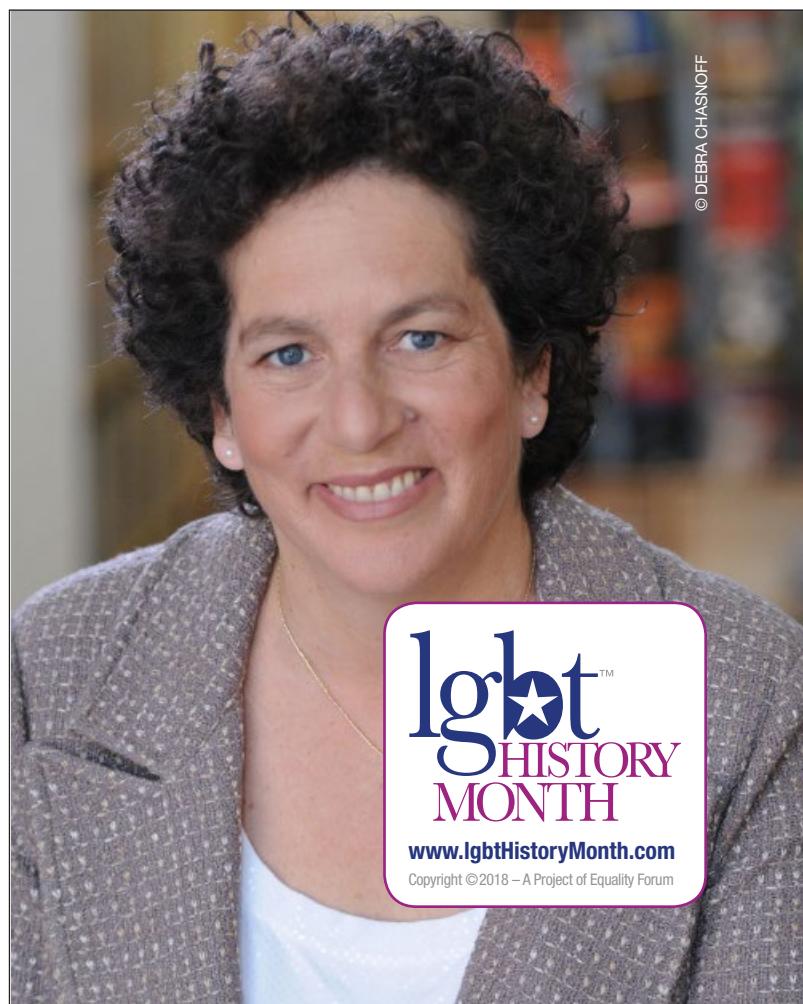
Chasnoff's influential first film, "Choosing Children" (1984), showcased six same-sex American couples raising children through adoption, biological donors or fostering. It won Best Short Documentary at the New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and First Prize from the National Educational Film Festival. The New York Times reported that the film "inspired many gay and lesbian couples to start raising families of their own."

In 1991 Chasnoff directed and produced "Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons and Our Environment." The exposé earned her the 1992 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject. In accepting the award, Chasnoff thanked her then partner, Kim Klausner.

In addition to filmmaking, Chasnoff was a visiting scholar in public policy at Mills College in California. Mayor Art Agnos of San Francisco appointed her vice chair of the city's Film and Video Arts Commission. She also served on the advisory boards of the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and the Jewish Voices for Peace organization.

At age 60, Chasnoff died of breast cancer. She was survived by her spouse Nancy Otto, an artist and nonprofit fundraiser, and two sons from her relationship with Klausner. The New York Times published Chasnoff's obituary.

© DEBRA CHASNOFF



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH
www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com
Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

CHI CHIA-WEI

b. October 12, 1958

TAIWANESE GAY PIONEER

"This should certainly offer some encouragement to different societies to consider following in Taiwan's footsteps and giving gays and lesbians the right to marry."

Chi Chia-wei is a pioneering Taiwanese gay rights activist and marriage equality champion. He helped make Taiwan the first nation in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage.

Chi was raised by open-minded parents who were supportive of his homosexuality. He came out in high school and his classmates were overwhelmingly accepting.

**He helped make
Taiwan the first nation
in Asia to legalize
same-sex marriage.**

Chi began his LGBT activism in his 20s, when there were virtually no other visible gay rights activists. Today, hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese support or have joined the LGBT rights movement.

For some time, Chi was Taiwan's only AIDS activist. He operated a halfway house for HIV/AIDS patients and created awareness campaigns to promote safe sex among the country's LGBT citizens.

In 1986 the 28-year-old Chi organized an international press conference to announce his sexual orientation and bring attention to the HIV/AIDS crisis. In doing so, he

became the first person in Taiwan to come out on national television. Media outlets such as the Associated Press and Reuters covered the event.

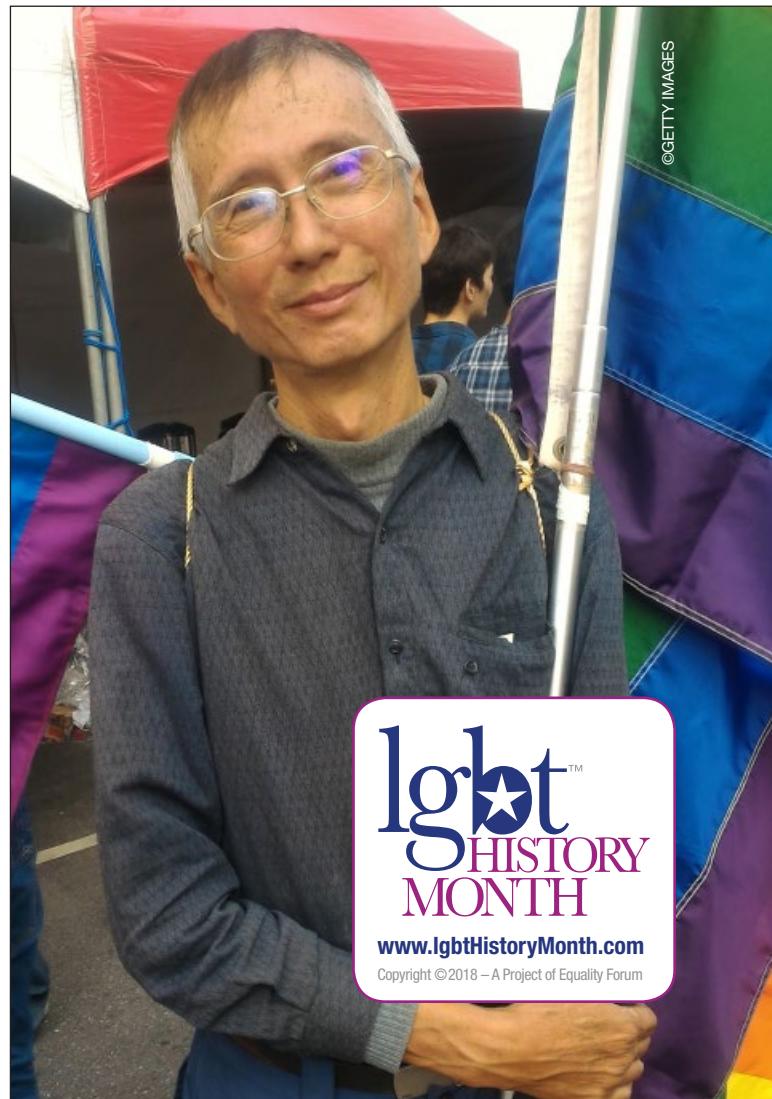
Chi's quest to bring same-sex unions to Taiwan also began in 1986, when he applied for a marriage license. His request was denied by the Taipei District Court Notary Office as well as the Legislative Appeals Court. Later that year, he was detained by police and served a 162-day sentence. Such imprisonment was common during Taiwan's White Terror, a period of oppression during which the government imprisoned political dissidents.

Chi unsuccessfully applied for a same-sex marriage license again in 1994, 1998 and 2000. In 2013, when he applied and was denied once more, Chi appealed the decision to the Taipei city government's Department of Civil Affairs, who referred the issue to the Constitutional Court.

Chi and the Taipei city government petitioned the court to examine the constitutionality of the same-sex marriage prohibition. On May 24, 2017, Taiwan's Constitutional Court struck down the previous classification of marriage and ruled that same-sex couples could marry, beginning in May 2019. A celebration erupted outside the court and Chi announced, "Today's victory is for everybody!" The decision marked the culmination of Chi's 30 years of activism.

In October 2016, Queermosa, a leading Taiwanese LGBT organization, presented Chi with its first Queer Pioneer Award. Chi has a longtime romantic partner whose identity he keeps private.

©GETTY IMAGES



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

MEG CHRISTIAN

b. 1946

FEMINIST SINGER-SONGWRITER

“She was a big tough woman, the first to come along that showed me being female meant you still could be strong.”

– Lyrics from “Ode to Gym Teacher”

She became a leader of the women's music movement, focusing on feminist causes and lesbian rights.

Meg Christian is an American feminist folk singer-songwriter and a founding member of Olivia Records. She became a leader of the women's music movement, focusing on feminist causes and lesbian rights.

Christian was raised in Lynchburg, Virginia. She graduated from the University of North Carolina with a double degree in English and music. She moved to Washington, D.C., where she performed in nightclubs and began to shift her musical focus to social justice and feminist themes. Christian became one of the first singers to incorporate lyrics about lesbianism and feminism into her music.

Christian came out as a lesbian in the 1970s. At that time, such an acknowledgement confined her to the fringes of the music industry. It relegated her music to independent labels and limited her media exposure. She turned this into an asset, becoming a leader in the women's music movement. She embraced women's separatism and, during periods of the '70s, performed exclusively at women-only venues.

In 1973 Christian and other feminist and lesbian activists founded Olivia Records. Christian recorded the label's first album and toured extensively throughout the country, particularly at music festivals.

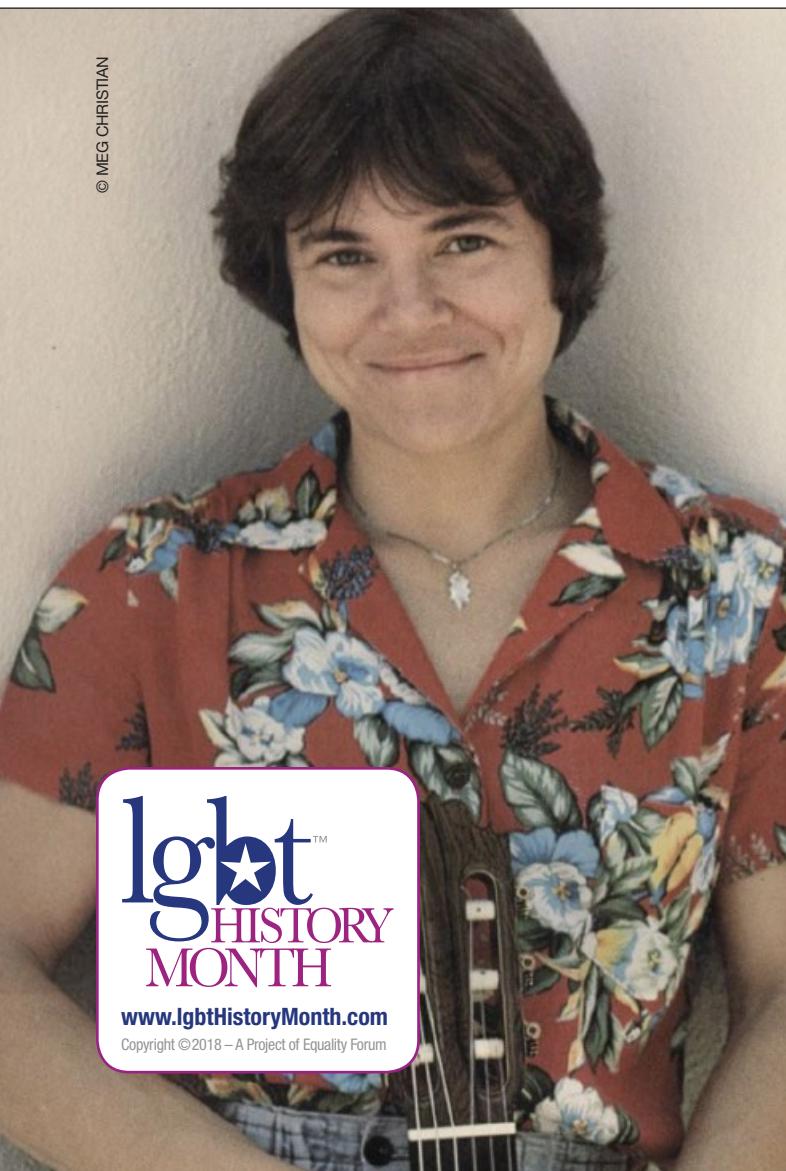
Olivia Records successfully recorded and marketed women-produced music, which often contained feminist lyrics or themes. To celebrate the company's 10th anniversary, Christian performed at Carnegie Hall with pioneering lesbian singer-songwriter Cris Williamson.

Christian began a two-decades-long break from performing in the mid 1980s. She studied and embraced Eastern mysticism and focused on her spirituality.

In 1988 Olivia Records founded Olivia, a lesbian cruise ship company. Christian has performed frequently on the cruise line.

Christian has recorded nine major albums, most of which were produced and distributed by Olivia Records. In 2009 Equality Virginia honored Christian as one of its “Outstanding Virginians.” She continues her music and LGBT activism.

© MEG CHRISTIAN



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

ANI DIFRANCO

b. September 23, 1970

GRAMMY-WINNING SINGER

"We so often fall in that trap of trying to convince somebody they're wrong, when really it's just go find the good people doing the good work and help them out."

Angela Maria "Ani" DiFranco is a Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter, musician and progressive social activist. Her unique musical style and lyrics combine elements of folk, alternative rock, funk and other influences.

Born in Buffalo, New York, DiFranco was playing guitar and singing Beatles covers at local venues by the age of 9. At 14 she was writing and performing her own songs at bars and coffee houses. She graduated from the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts at 16 and became an emancipated minor.

At the age of 19, DiFranco started her own record label, Righteous Babe Records. She released her self-titled first album—and more than 20 subsequent studio albums—on the label. DiFranco openly identified as bisexual in the early '90s.

During that decade, she toured nationally and internationally. She addressed her love for men and women in several of her songs and became a pioneering voice for the LGBTQ community.

As DiFranco's fame and visibility increased, she appeared on music television programs such as MTV and VH1 and in cover stories for Spin, Ms. magazine and other popular publications. In 1995 she performed as part of a concert at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Her cover of "Wishin' and Hopin'" appeared in the opening credits of the 1997 film "My Best Friend's Wedding."

In 1999 Righteous Babe Records began

releasing albums by other artists. The label also created the Righteous Babe Foundation through which DiFranco has supported grassroots initiatives to advance abortion rights, LGBT rights and other issues.

DiFranco has performed at benefit concerts and spoken at feminist rallies. She headlined the LEAF and Clearwater festivals in support of environmental protection. In 2004, along with celebrities like Whoopi Goldberg and Margaret Cho, she led the March for Women's Lives on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. For her 2017 "Rise Up" concert tour, she partnered with Emily's List, a leading Democratic organization aimed at electing pro-choice female politicians.

DiFranco has been nominated for nine Grammy Awards. Her 12th album, "Evolve," earned the 2004 Grammy for Best Recording Package. In 2006 the National Organization for Women honored DiFranco with the "Woman of Courage Award." In 2009 she received the prestigious Woody Guthrie Award as a consistent advocate for social change.

DiFranco married her sound engineer, Andrew Gilchrist, in 1998 and divorced five years later. She married Mike Napolitano in 2009. They have two children.

She received the prestigious Woody Guthrie Award as a consistent advocate for social change.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH
www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

GAVIN GRIMM

b. May 4, 1999

TEEN TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

"I'm just Gavin. I have frustrations, stress, hopes, and dreams like millions of other young people in America. And like everyone else, sometimes I have to use the restroom. It's not political. It's just life."

He sued for the right to use the boys' restroom in his Virginia public high school.

Gavin Grimm was thrust into the national spotlight in 2014 as a transgender high school student, when he sued for the right to use the boys' restroom in his Virginia public high school.

Born female, Grimm struggled with his sexual identity from an early age. At 15 he was diagnosed with severe gender dysphoria and began medical treatment. With his high school's permission, he began using the boys' restroom in his sophomore year. He told *The Washington Post*, "It just seemed like the natural progression of things."

Grimm used the boys' restroom without issue for nearly two months. Then, following transphobic complaints from parents and residents, the high school and the Gloucester County School Board voted to ban Grimm from using the bathroom matching his gender identity.

At a subsequent school board meeting, Grimm endured insults, threats and inflammatory rhetoric. The board voted to segregate him by relegating his bathroom use to the nurse's restroom or to a makeshift restroom meant only for him.

After learning of Grimm's plight, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a federal lawsuit on his behalf, contending that the school board's restriction of his bathroom use was unconstitutional. They argued that the school's policy violated Title IX laws prohibiting sex discrimination under the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972.

The lower courts dismissed the case. In 2016 the U.S. Court of Appeals overturned the lower courts' decision in Grimm's favor. The Gloucester County School Board then petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case. The request was rejected.

Throughout the appeals and during his graduation from Gloucester High School in June 2017, Grimm remained barred from the boys' restroom. In 2018 the U.S. District Court declared that the school violated the rights of transgender students by excluding them from the bathroom matching their gender identity.

Grimm has received numerous awards. In 2017 TIME magazine honored him on its list of "100 Most Influential People." Major news outlets, including as The New York Times and The Washington Post, have reported his story.

Grimm is working toward his college degree and advocates for transgender equality.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH
www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com
Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

SEAN HAYES

b. June 26, 1970

AWARD-WINNING ACTOR

"I know I should've come out sooner and I'm sorry for that. Especially when I think about the possibility that I might have made a difference in someone's life."

Sean Patrick Hayes is an actor, singer, comedian and producer best known for his role as Jack McFarland on NBC's award-winning sitcom "Will and Grace." The role has earned him an Emmy, an American Comedy Award, four Screen Actors Guild Awards and numerous nominations.

Hayes was raised Roman Catholic by his single mother in the Chicago suburb of Glen Ellyn. He studied piano performance at Illinois State University but left before graduating. He became the music director of a theater in St. Charles, Illinois, and worked as a classical pianist.

He is best known for his role as Jack McFarland on NBC's award-winning sitcom "Will and Grace."

Hayes practiced improvisation at The Second City in Chicago, the renowned comedy enterprise that launched many of the industry's top talents. In 1995 he moved to Los Angeles to work as a stand-up comedian.

Hayes made his film debut in "Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss" in July 1998. Later that year, he was cast as the flamboyant, humorously self-obsessed gay character, Jack, in the new television comedy series, "Will and Grace."

The groundbreaking sitcom was one of the first widely broadcast programs to feature LGBT characters

consistently and portray them positively.

"Will and Grace" ran for eight seasons (188 episodes) and garnered numerous awards and accolades. The series was revived in 2017 with its original core cast.

In 2001 Hayes's performance on "Will and Grace" earned him an Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series. Between 2001 and 2006 he earned seven consecutive Primetime Emmy Award nominations for the role. He also received six Golden Globe Award nominations for Best Supporting Actor, an American Comedy Award for Funniest Supporting Male in a Television Series, four SAG Awards and multiple Satellite Award nominations for his work on the show.

In 2004 Hayes founded his own television production company, Hazy Mills Productions, which has produced popular NBC shows such as "Grimm" and "Hollywood Game Night."

Hayes's Broadway credits include "An Act of God" and "Promises, Promises," for which he received the 2010 Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical. He hosted the live Tony Awards show that same year.

Although Hayes portrays a gay character on "Will and Grace," he did not come out until he was interviewed by The Advocate in 2010.

In 2018 he told the Hollywood Reporter, "I didn't have the DNA or the ability to be one spokesperson for an entire group of people."

In 2013 Hayes received an honorary Ph.D. from Illinois State University. In 2014 he married his longtime partner, Scott Icenogle.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

JOYCE HUNTER

b. April 26, 1939

GAY PIONEER

“Growing up in the Bronx and on the streets of the Bronx ... you hear everything. And then you can get your first word of faggot and queer. It scared the hell out of me.”

She helped organize the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Joyce Hunter is a gay pioneer who helped organize the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and cofounded the first public high school for LGBTQ students.

Hunter survived a difficult early life, growing up in the Bronx, New York. The child of an unwed Orthodox Jewish mother and an African-American father, she spent much of her childhood in an orphanage. She married and became a mother in her 20s. By her 30s she had established herself as a trailblazing LGBT activist.

In the 1970s, based on the black civil rights movement, activists sought to create a national march on Washington for lesbian and gay rights. In the summer of 1978, San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk assumed leadership of that vision. After his assassination in November 1978, approximately 300 activists, Hunter included, convened the Philadelphia Conference to fulfill Milk's dream of a march on the National Mall. Plans proceeded under the joint leadership of Hunter and Steve Ault.

On October 12, 1979, more than 100,000 activists attended the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The demonstration helped define a national civil rights movement.

Also In 1979, Hunter became a founding member of the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York, created chiefly to serve at-risk LGBT youth. As the Institute's director and clinical supervisor of social work, she helped create a counseling program, a drop-in center and an outreach project.

In 1985 with the Hetrick-Martin Institute and Steve Ashkinazy of the Stonewall Democratic Club, Hunter cofounded the nation's first LGBTQ high school, the Harvey Milk High School, in New York City's East Village. The same year, as a co-leader of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Hunter helped successfully lobby New York City Council for a gay and lesbian nondiscrimination ordinance—one of the first municipal ordinances of its kind in the nation.

Hunter has served as Human Rights Commissioner of New York City and on the New York State Governor's Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns. She founded the Women's Caucus of the International AIDS Society.

Hunter earned her undergraduate and master's degrees in her 40s and her doctorate in social work in her late 50s. She is an assistant clinical professor of sociomedical sciences in psychiatry and psychiatric social work and a research scientist at the HIV Center at Columbia University. She conducts HIV behavioral research and is the principal investigator of a community-based HIV prevention project for LGBT students.

Hunter donated her collection of LGBT civil rights papers to the archives of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center of New York City. The “Making Gay History” podcast series featured her story.

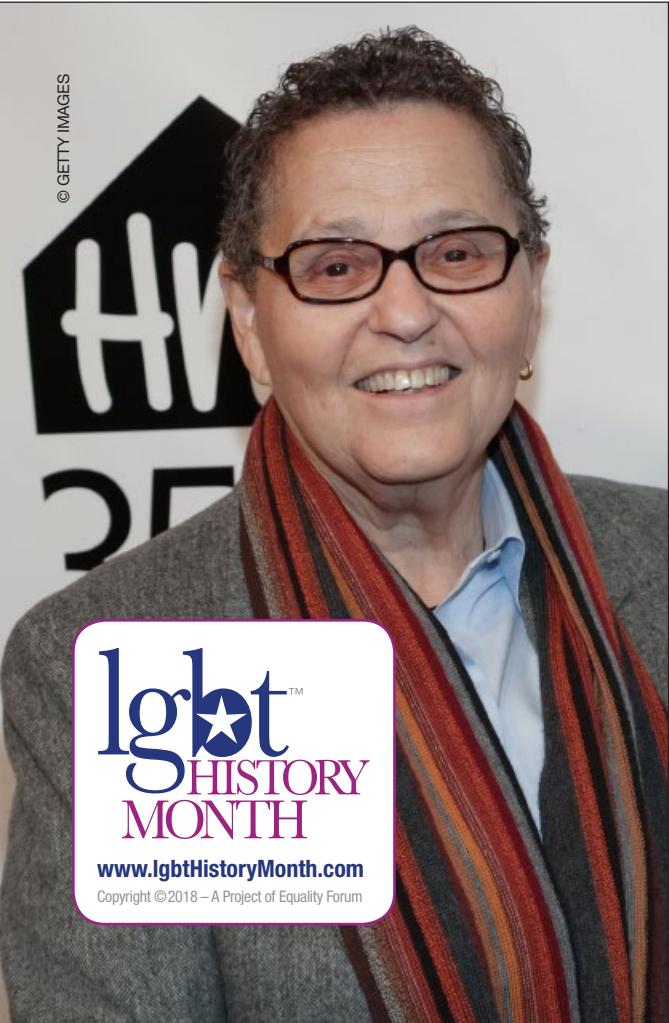
Now a great-grandmother, Hunter resides in Queens, New York.

© GETTY IMAGES



www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum



TAB HUNTER

ACTOR & SINGER

b. July 11, 1931

d. July 8, 2018

"In life we have to be contributors. It's very, very important. And I look up there and I think I've contributed."

Tab Hunter was an American actor and singer. A star during Hollywood's Golden Age, he was officially Warner Bros.¹ most popular actor from 1955 to 1959. He appeared in more than 40 films.

**Dubbed the "Sigh Guy,"
he became a 1950s teen
heartthrob and Warner
Bros.¹ most popular actor.**

Hunter was born Arthur Gelien in New York City and grew up in California. He figured skated competitively from childhood into his early teens. At 15 he enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard but was discharged when the military discovered his true age.

While still a teenager, the handsome blue-eyed blonde turned to acting. He signed with an agent and was given the stage name Tab Hunter.

Dubbed the "Sigh Guy," Hunter became a 1950s teen heartthrob. He made his Hollywood debut with a minor role in the 1950 film "The Lawless." Thereafter, Warner Bros. Pictures offered him a contract. One of his first movies was the 1955 box office hit "The Sea Chase," starring John Wayne and Lana Turner. The same year, Hunter

secured his breakthrough role as Danny, the young Marine in the hit World War II drama "Battle Cry."

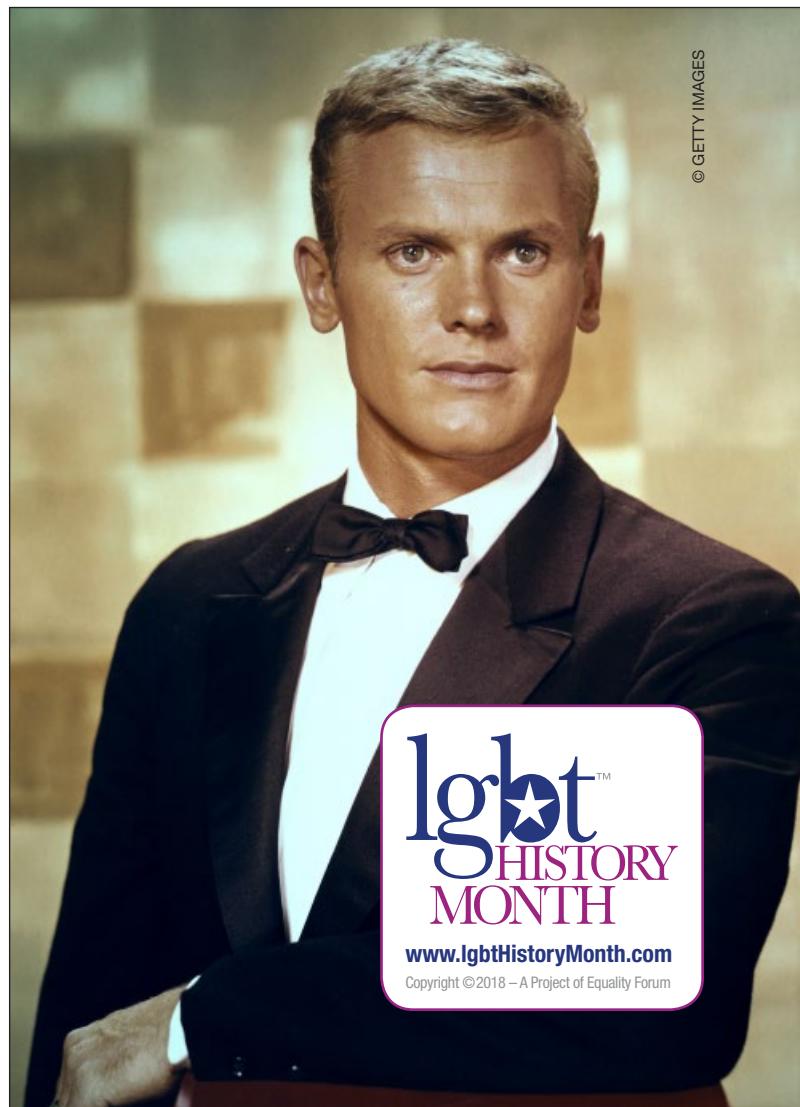
Hunter's most popular motion pictures included the Academy Award-nominated musical "Damn Yankees!" (1958), "Gunman's Walk" (1958), "The Pleasure of His Company" (1961), and "The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean" (1972).

With the emergence of rock and roll, Hunter became a well-known singer. His 1957 record, "Young Love," rose to the top of the Billboard Hot 100 charts and remained at No. 1 for six weeks. The movie studio established Warner Bros. Records specifically to support him.

In 1960 Hunter had his own television series. Although it lasted only one season, he went on to act in more than 200 TV shows and was nominated for an Emmy for his performance in an episode of "Playhouse 90." In the 1980s, he appeared in "Grease 2" and the John Waters cult classic "Polyester."

Hunter came out in his 2005 autobiography, "Tab Hunter Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star," after years of public speculation about his sexuality. The memoir became a New York Times best seller in 2007 and again in 2015 when a documentary film based on the book was released.

Hunter received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the Palm Springs Walk of Stars. From 1982 until his death, Hunter lived with his partner, Allan Glaser, a Hollywood producer. Glaser produced the documentary based on Hunter's memoir.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

DALE JENNINGS

b. October 17, 1917

d. May 11, 2000

GAY PIONEER

"I was one of the founders of the first homosexual organizations in U.S. history. ... Our basic argument was that changes in sex laws would not benefit us alone but everyone."

He cofounded the Mattachine Society, one of the first gay civil liberties organizations in the U.S.

William Dale Jennings was a gay pioneer who cofounded two early gay organizations and one of the first gay magazines in America. He was dubbed the Rosa Parks of the gay rights movement when he successfully challenged his arrest on homosexuality charges.

Jennings grew up in Denver, Colorado, where he studied piano and dance. He was performing by the age of 12 and traveled with the Lester Horton Dance Group. He moved to Los Angeles in his early 20s, after training in theater direction. Jennings established his own theater company and wrote and produced more than 50 short plays.

Jennings served in World War II and received several military honors, including a Victory Medal. After an honorable discharge in 1946, he studied cinema for two years at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

In 1950 the U.S. Senate declared homosexuals a national threat. That year, Harry Hay, Jennings and four other gay activists cofounded the Mattachine Society—an underground gay community network and one of the first gay civil liberties organizations in the United States.

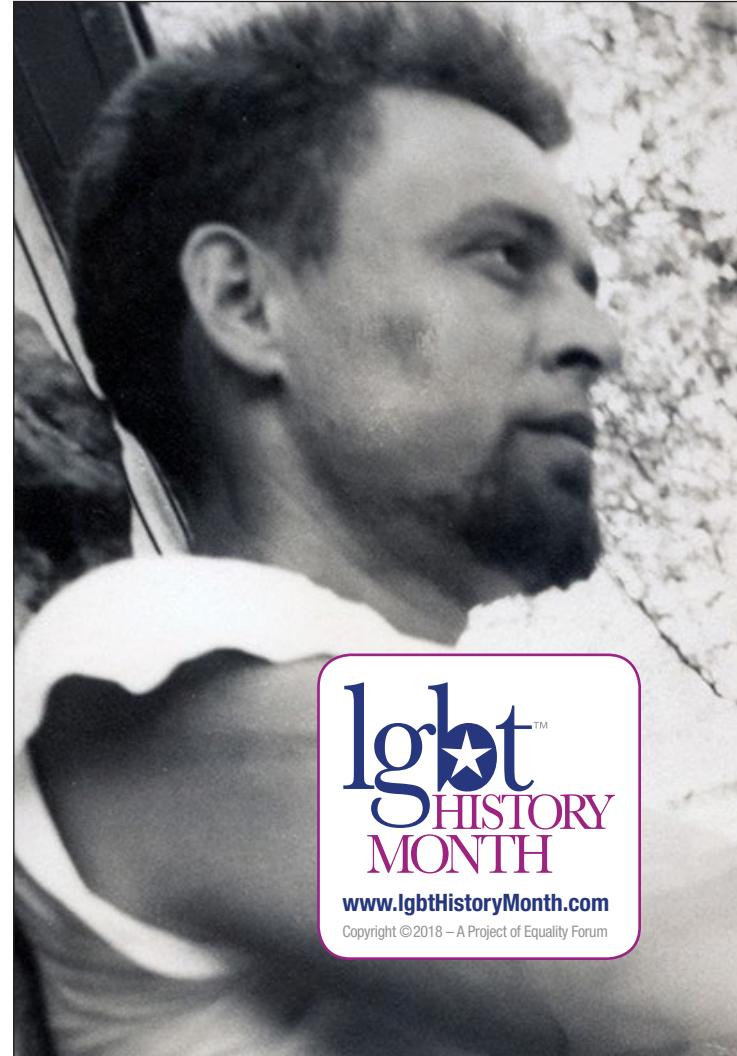
During this time, vice detectives posing as homosexuals commonly entrapped gay men and charged them with solicitation. Most men pled guilty for fear of public exposure. When Jennings was arrested for soliciting in 1950, he fought back. He was the first openly gay man known to have done so. During his 10-day trial in 1952, Jennings disclosed his homosexuality but denied the charge. The jury deadlocked one vote shy of acquittal, and the judge dismissed the case. Publicity surrounding the trial exposed the issue of entrapment and made Jennings an gay hero.

Later the same year, with a group Mattachine members, Jennings cofounded ONE, Inc., to develop a publication specifically for homosexuals. With Jennings as its editor, the first issue of ONE Magazine was published in 1953. It became the first widely distributed gay magazine in the United States.

In 1954 the Los Angeles postmaster cited the publication for obscenity and refused to deliver it. A legal battle ensued, and after several lower court rulings in favor of the post office, the United States Supreme Court ruled for the magazine. A first-of-its-kind victory, the decision in ONE vs. Olesen is celebrated as a legal landmark, making the mail circulation of gay periodicals possible.

In addition to ONE Magazine, Jennings wrote for other publications and published three novels. His California gold-rush-era coming-of-age story, "The Cowboys," was made into a movie, starring the Academy Award-winning actor John Wayne. Jennings co-wrote the screenplay.

Jennings died in Los Angeles at the age of 82. The New York Times published his obituary.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

ROBERTA KAPLAN

b. September 29, 1966

MARRIAGE EQUALITY LAWYER

“No other group in recent history has been subjected to popular referenda to take away rights that have already been given, or exclude those rights, the way gay people have.”

She represented Edie Windsor in the Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*, a landmark victory for marriage equality.

Roberta A. “Robbie” Kaplan is an attorney who represented Edie Windsor in the Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*, a landmark victory for marriage equality.

Kaplan grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard College and earned her J.D. from Columbia Law School in 1991. She clerked for judges in Massachusetts and New York.

From 1996 until 2017, Kaplan was an attorney at the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison. She became a litigation partner in 1999 and successfully represented clients ranging from Citibank to Airbnb. The American Bar Association (ABA) Journal lauded her as “a specialist in emerging law.”

In 2009 Kaplan agreed to represent Edie Windsor free of charge after hearing her story. Windsor and her lifelong partner, Thea Spyer, both U.S. citizens, married legally in Canada. When Spyer died a few years later, Windsor’s inheritance was subject to estate tax, as their marriage was not recognized under U.S. federal law. The estate tax would not have applied to the surviving spouse in a heterosexual marriage.

In the 2013 Windsor decision, the Supreme Court overturned a key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which held that marriage is solely between a man and a woman. The case laid the groundwork for the 2015 Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. During an exchange with Chief Justice John Roberts, Kaplan stated, “No other group in recent history has been subjected to popular referenda to take away rights that have already been given, or exclude those rights, the way gay people have.”

Former President Clinton said, “... Windsor was a landmark ruling and the case’s architect, Roberta Kaplan, emerged as a true American hero.” Kaplan wrote about the experience in her book “Then Comes Marriage: United States v. Windsor and the Defeat of DOMA.”

In 2013 The American Lawyer magazine named Kaplan Litigator of the Year, and Stanford University honored her with a National Public Service Award. In 2015 the New York Law Journal presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 2017 Kaplan founded her own law firm. She is an adjunct law professor at Columbia Law School.

Kaplan is married to Rachel Lavine. They live in New York City with their son.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

STEVE LETSIKE

b. March 30, 1985

SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIVIST

“There is no justification in a democracy for discrimination based on health status, race, nationality or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, social status or age amongst others.”

Mmapaseka “Steve” Letsike is a leading South African HIV/AIDS and LGBTI activist. She serves as deputy chair of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), overseeing campaigns to tackle the epidemic in her country. South Africa is home to the world’s largest HIV-infected population.

Letsike grew up in Atteridgeville, South Africa, an impoverished township comprising 99% black African residents. Her parents died when she was young. She was raised by her grandparents.

She is the deputy chair of the South African National AIDS Council.

Letsike’s childhood struggles helped her build resilience. She describes “hustling” from a young age to support herself. She persevered by experimenting in different fields, including entrepreneurship and activism.

As a child, Letsike did not identify as a “normal girl” or conform with societal expectations. She successfully challenged her school’s dress code, which did not allow girls to wear slacks. She played soccer, where she was nicknamed “Steve,” and she established the first female soccer team at her high school.

After high school, the self-described feminist joined a program for social development that exposed her to advocacy and training workshops. She founded her own organization,

Access Chapter 2 (AC2), which brings attention to the intersectional issues facing the most marginalized South Africans: black people, women, children and the LGBTI community. The organization’s name refers to the Bill of Rights, which is Chapter 2 of South Africa’s Constitution.

Letsike is the deputy chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), an association established by the government to respond to HIV, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. For several years, Letsike co-chaired the organization with H. E. Cyril Ramaphosa, then deputy president and now president of South Africa. Letsike also serves as the chair of the SANAC National Civil Society Forum, which plays a pivotal role in program implementation at the grassroots level.

In 2015 Letsike represented her country in the launch of DREAMS, an international initiative in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Girl Effect, created to secure an AIDS-free future for girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa. Each week more than 2,000 young South African women are infected with the virus—the highest rate on the continent.

In addition to her HIV activism, Letsike co-chairs the National Task Team, established by the South African Department of Justice to address hate crimes and violence against LGBT individuals.

Letsike has a daughter who she says provides her main motivation in life. In 2018 Letsike married her longtime partner, Lucy Thukwane.



© SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL (SANAC)

SAUL LEVIN

b. September 5, 1957

CEO OF THE APA

"It is our firm stance that homosexuality is not a mental disorder, a position we have maintained since 1973, when homosexuality was rightly removed from the DSM."

He is the first openly gay CEO and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association.

Saul Levin is the first openly gay CEO and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). He also serves as board chair the APA Foundation and as a clinical professor at The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. A native of South Africa, Levin received his medical degree in 1982 from the University Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He completed his residency in psychiatry at the UC Davis Medical Center and worked as a coordinator for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Levin joined the APA in 1987 and served on several committees.

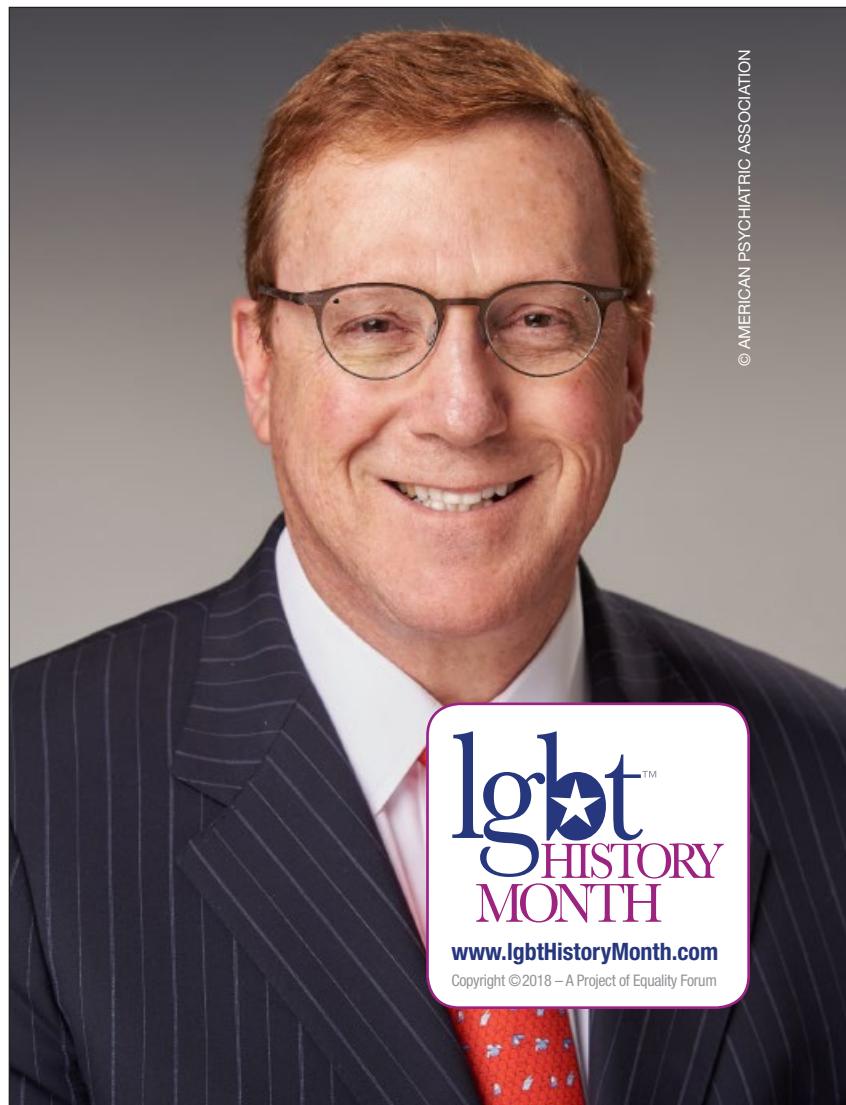
In 1994 Levin earned a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He founded a health care consulting firm, Access Consulting International, which he led for 10 years.

Levin has served as the president and CEO of medical education for South African Blacks, a U.S.-based charity that grants scholarships to black South African students pursuing health care degrees. He has served as vice president for science, medicine, and public health for the American Medical Association and has held numerous other leadership positions in the medical and social equity fields.

In 2012 Mayor Vincent Gray of Washington, D.C., named Levin interim director of the District of Columbia Department of Health. By this time, Levin was widely known to be openly gay.

In 2013 Levin was hired as the CEO and medical director of the APA, the world's leading psychiatric association. His position as the organization's top medical executive marks an LGBT milestone. Until 1973 homosexuality was listed in the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders. Treatments for the "disease" included lobotomy, electric shock treatment, chemical castration and other catastrophic therapies.

In 2018 Levin addressed the audience after a performance of "217 Boxes of Dr. Henry Anonymous," an Off-Broadway play about APA member John E. Fryer, M.D., and his role in the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. Levin praised Dr. Fryer and spoke about the APA's commitment to LGBT inclusion and equality.



RACHEL LEVINE

b. October 28, 1957

TRANSGENDER SECRETARY OF HEALTH

“We need to do a better job educating medical students about LGBT issues and transgender medicine.”

**She is the first
transgender
cabinet officer
in Pennsylvania
history.**

Rachel Levine, M.D., is the Secretary of Health for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. She is the first transgender cabinet officer in Pennsylvania history and one of the highest-ranking transgender public officials in the United States.

Born male and named Richard, Levine attended an all-boys private school outside of Boston. “All I knew is I wanted to be a girl, or I was a girl,” she says. Levine describes carrying this “secret” from an early age and struggling to fit in, even playing linebacker on the high school football team.

Levine graduated from Harvard College in 1979 and earned an M.D. from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1983. She completed her medical training in pediatrics at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, followed by a fellowship in adolescent medicine.

She practiced at Mount Sinai until 1993.

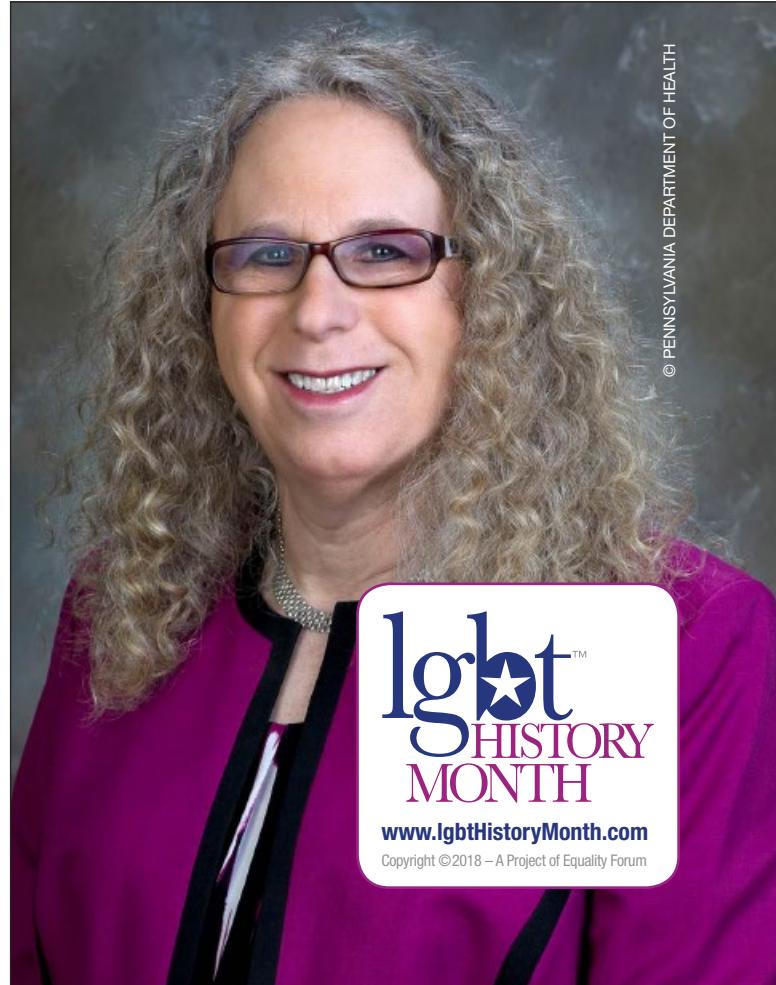
In 1996 Levine moved on to Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, where she founded the Eating Disorders Program for adolescents and adults. She has served as chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders and as vice chair for Clinical Affairs for the Department of Pediatrics. She is a professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine and has worked as the faculty adviser for the university’s LGBT student group. She is also the LGBT affairs liaison at the Penn State Hershey Office of Diversity. In 2010 she completed her transition from male to female.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced Levine’s appointment to Physician General in 2015. She was unanimously confirmed by the Senate. In March 2018 she became Secretary of Health.

As the state’s top doctor, Levine shapes policy on issues ranging from HIV to childhood lead testing, and she has made significant strides in tackling Pennsylvania’s opioid crisis. She also uses her platform to address LGBT issues, including transgender care. She spearheaded an LGBT workgroup for the governor’s office that creates programs to ensure fairness and inclusivity in health care, insurance and other areas. She serves on the board of Equality Pennsylvania, an LGBT organization that lobbies for equal rights.

In 2015 Levine served as Grand Marshal of the Philadelphia Pride Parade. In 2017 she was named to NBC Out’s national #Pride30 list, which recognizes individuals making an impact on the LGBTQ community. In 2018 Equality Forum presented her with the Frank Kameny Award.

As Richard, Levine married and had a family before divorcing many years later. She remains close with her ex-wife and two children. Levine is in a committed long-term relationship.



TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY

b. October 17, 1980

OSCAR-WINNING SCREENWRITER

"It's really important for us, in terms of the storytellers, to be able to talk about these intimate details that built our lives."

He won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for "Moonlight," a film based on his autobiographical play.

Tarell Alvin McCraney is an award-winning playwright and an actor. In 2017 he won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for "Moonlight," a film based on his autobiographical play, "In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue."

McCraney was born in the tough Liberty City section of Miami, Florida, to a teenage mother who struggled with crack addiction. He survived with the help of a kind-hearted drug dealer and his grandparents, who encouraged learning and offered a vision of life outside his crime-infested neighborhood.

McCraney attended Miami's New World School of the Arts and was accepted into the Theatre School at DePaul University, where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting. At age 24, he enrolled in the playwriting program at Yale School of Drama. Upon graduation he received the prestigious Cole Porter playwriting award.

At Yale, McCraney wrote his first famous play, "The Brothers Size." It opened off Broadway in 2007, when he was a third-year student. The New York Times reviewed it enthusiastically.

"The Brothers Size," and two other plays he wrote in drama school, "In The Red and Brown Water" and "Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet," make up McCraney's acclaimed trilogy, "The Brother/Sister Plays." Set in the Louisiana bayou and drawing upon West African Lore, "The Brother/Sister Plays" distinguished McCraney as a gifted new artist. The trilogy was performed in repertory in the United States and worldwide.

From 2009 to 2011, McCraney served as the Warwick International Playwright in Residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company in London. In 2010 he became a member of the celebrated Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. He also performed with the Northlight Theatre and co-starred in the Chicago premiere of "Blue/Orange."

In 2013 McCraney received a \$625,000 MacArthur Fellowship, known as the "genius grant." The MacArthur Foundation presents the coveted prize annually to 24 "extraordinarily talented and creative individuals."

With the director Barry Jenkins, McCraney co-wrote the screenplay for the 2016 film "Moonlight," which draws on his experience growing up black and gay in a Miami housing project. The film won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay, the Golden Globe and BAFTA Award for best picture, and dozens of other awards and nominations.

Among other honors, McCraney has received London's Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright, The New York Times' inaugural Outstanding Playwright Award and the renowned Whiting Award. The Advocate named him to its list of "40 under 40" and Out magazine featured him on its "Out100" list.

McCraney is the Chair and Eugene O'Neill Professor in the Practice of Playwriting at Yale University School of Drama and the Playwright-in-Residence of the Yale Repertory Theatre.

© GETTY IMAGES



ANN NORTHROP

b. April 29, 1948

PIONEERING AIDS ACTIVIST & JOURNALIST

As a teenager I didn't see any positive gay images. ... But I remember getting excited by characters in books who were marginally alluded to as gay."

Ann Northrop is a pioneering journalist and news producer who spearheaded media strategy for ACT UP and AIDS awareness during the height of the epidemic. She has been arrested roughly two dozen times for her activism.

Born in Hartford, Connecticut, Northrop was raised with conservative Republican values. She entered Vassar College in 1966, where she embraced politically progressive views.

Northrop began her journalism career immediately after graduation, reporting for a year and a half on the federal government at The National Journal in Washington, D.C. She moved to New York City to work for "Woman," a morning talk show on the WCBS-TV network. During that time, she became a feminist activist and Vietnam War protester.

Over the next several years, Northrop held a variety of jobs in television and wrote for publications such as Ms. magazine and Ladies' Home Journal. While writing for Ms., she fell in love with a woman and came out as a lesbian. The two remained a couple for 17 years.

In the early '80s, Northrop worked as a writer and producer for ABC's "Good Morning America," a talk show covering topics from politics to entertainment. For five years thereafter, she produced the "CBS Morning News."

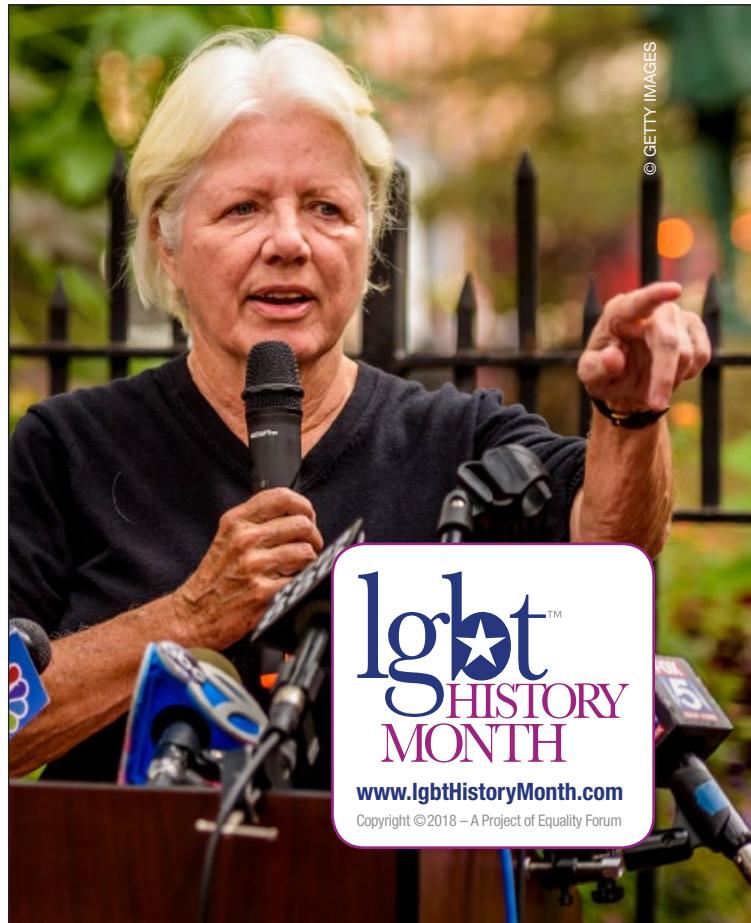
In 1987, during the early part of the AIDS crisis, Northrop placed her media career on hold to teach students about HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues at the Hetrick-Martin Institute for lesbian and gay youth in New York. The following year she joined the AIDS advocacy organization ACT UP. In 1989 she helped ACT UP organize a national media event, "Stop the Church," in which 4,500 activists protested at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The protest challenged the Catholic Church's opposition to condom use and sex education. The story captured major news coverage.

Northrop served as the only LGBT delegate from New York at the 1992 Democratic National Convention. She was an active board member of the 1994 Gay Games in New York City.

In 1996 Northrop returned to television to co-host and co-executive produce "Gay USA." The one-hour weekly news show airs on national cable channels and covers national and international LGBT topics.

Northrop was a founding member of the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, a think tank now known as the Williams Institute, and she helped found the Lesbian and Gay Alumnae Association of Vassar College. She has trained countless activists in dealing with the media and has spoken at many high-profile LGBT events. Northrop has appeared in several documentaries, including two in 2012: "How to Survive a Plague" and "United in Anger: A History of ACT UP."

She spearheaded media strategy for ACT UP and AIDS awareness during the height of the epidemic.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

ADAM RIPPON

b. November 11, 1989

OLYMPIC FIGURE SKATER

"I thought of everything I had been through as a young kid to get to that moment, and to feel confident, and to feel that I really liked who I was."

Adam Rippon is an Olympic figure skater and an advocate for LGBT rights. In 2018 he became the first openly gay American athlete to win a medal at the Winter Olympics. At 28 he also became the oldest first-time Olympic skater to compete for the U.S. in more than 80 years.

He is the first openly gay American athlete to win a medal at the Winter Olympics.

Rippon was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the eldest of six children. He started skating at age 10. The renowned coach Yelena Sergeeva trained him for seven years, beginning when he was 11.

At the 2005 U.S. Championships, 16-year-old Rippon won the silver medal at the Novice level. He went on to win the 2007-08 ISU Junior Grand Prix Final, the 2008 and 2009 World Junior Championships and the 2016 U.S. Championships.

Rippon came out publicly in the October 2015 issue of Skating Magazine. He was one of three male figure skaters selected to represent the United States at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

A month before the games, Rippon received a flurry of media attention for denouncing Vice President Mike Pence for his anti-LGBT positions. Rippon publicly opposed the selection of the vice president to lead the U.S. delegation to South Korea. He declined to join his American teammates in meeting Mr. Pence before the opening ceremonies.

In Pyeongchang, Rippon became a crowd favorite. He used Instagram and Twitter to connect with fans and demonstrate his playful, biting wit. His impeccable performance helped the United States capture the bronze in the men's figure skating team event.

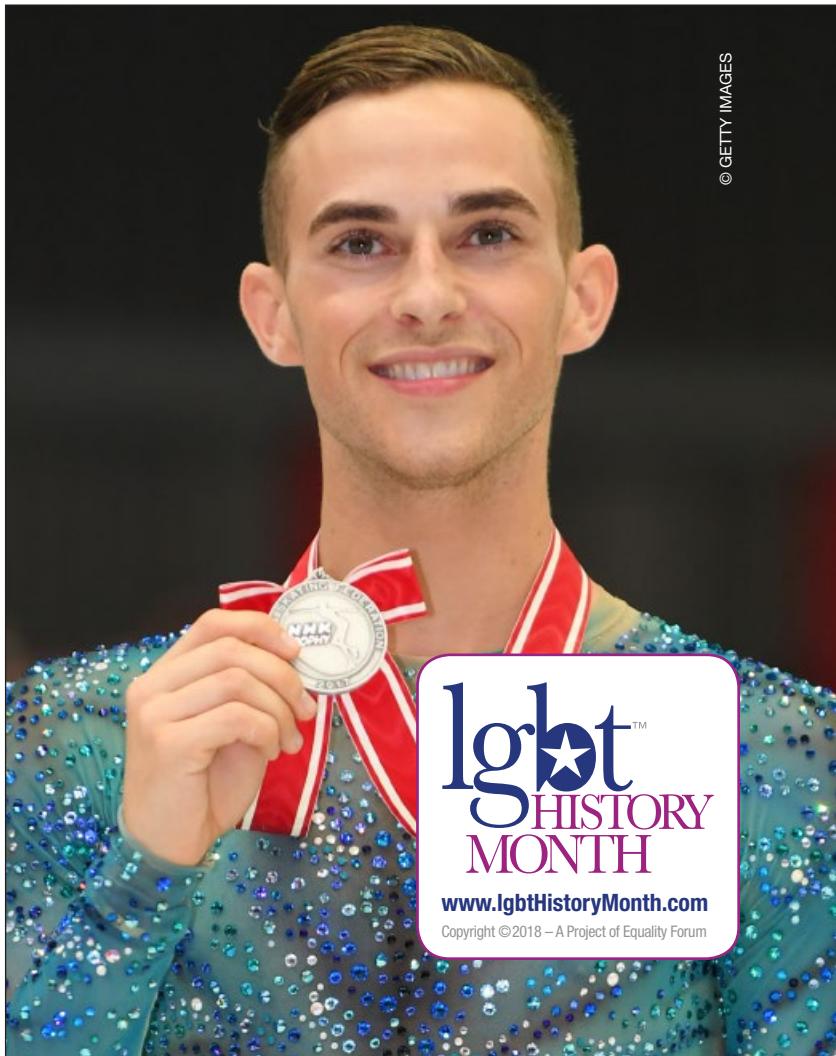
Rippon emerged from the Winter Olympics a celebrity. TIME magazine named him to its list of 100 Most Influential People in 2018. Cher contributed to the TIME feature on Rippon. She wrote, "Adam is a skater who happens to be gay, and that represents something wonderful to young people."

Rippon's Olympic achievements and LGBT advocacy have earned him interviews with numerous media outlets, including Out Magazine, The New York Times, "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and "NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt."

In May 2018 Rippon competed in the 26th season of ABC's "Dancing with the Stars." He became the first openly gay man to win.

Rippon performs in the "Stars on Ice" tour. He lives with his boyfriend, Jussi-Pekka Kajaala.

© GETTY IMAGES



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

DANICA ROEM

b. September 30, 1984

TRANSGENDER STATE LEGISLATOR

“What I hope people across the country are able to see in [our victories] is that transgender people can be really good at doing their jobs in elected office; we can make really good legislators.”

She is the first openly transgender person in the U.S. to win a seat in a state legislature.

Danica Roem is a journalist and the first openly transgender person in the United States to win a seat in a state legislature. On November 7, 2017, she was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates.

Roem was born male and raised in Manassas, Virginia. Her father committed suicide when she was 3, and her maternal grandfather, Anthony Oliveto, helped raise her. Oliveto instilled in Roem a passion for reading newspapers, which influenced her interest in journalism.

In 2006 Roem graduated with a degree in journalism from St. Bonaventure University in New York. Her college professors described her as a student who worked for those whose voices were ignored. Her interest in politics was sparked initially in 2004 when President George W. Bush proposed a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Roem secured her first job after college at the Gainesville Times in Virginia. She worked for the paper for nine years as a lead reporter and also wrote for the Prince William Times in Manassas, Virginia. The Virginia Press Association honored her with seven awards.

In 2012, 28-year-old Roem began the transition to female—from Dan to Danica. Three years later, she became a news editor at the Montgomery County Sentinel in Rockville, Maryland. She left the paper in 2016 to pursue a career in politics.

Rip Sullivan, state delegate and recruiting chair of the Virginia House Democratic Caucus, reached out to Roem to run for state delegate. She accepted the challenge and successfully defeated Republican incumbent Bob Marshall, who had represented the district for 13 years. As the state's self-described "chief homophobe," Marshall sponsored Virginia's "bathroom bill," designed to restrict the use of public restrooms by transgender people, along with a bill to end same-sex marriage.

Progressives endorsed Roem, including former Vice President Joe Biden and groups such as the Victory Fund, EMILY's List, the Human Rights Campaign and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee.

Roem's campaign raised over \$500,000—three times more than her opponent. She received more than a thousand donations under \$100, the second highest number of any Virginia delegate candidate.

Roem defeated Marshall by approximately eight percentage points. Her victory was hailed nationally as a milestone for transgender rights. In January 2018 she and other newly elected female politicians appeared on the cover of TIME magazine.

© GETTY IMAGES



MICHELANGELO SIGNORILE

b. December 19, 1960

He first gained notoriety in the 1990s for “outing” closeted public figures and anti-gay politicians.

JOURNALIST & RADIO HOST

“When it comes to LGBT civil rights, as with other marginalized groups, our fundamental personhood is not an issue that has two sides.”

Michelangelo Signorile is an outspoken American journalist, author and radio personality. He gained notoriety in the 1990s for using his media platform to “out” well-known public figures and closeted anti-gay public officials.

Signorile was born in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in journalism. After college he moved to Manhattan and gradually came out to his friends and family.

In the early 1980s, Signorile worked for an entertainment public relations firm where he witnessed the carefully orchestrated closeting of gay celebrities. In the late '80s, he became an HIV/AIDS activist and joined the media committee of ACT UP to highlight the epidemic. By this time, he had concluded that public figures who kept their homosexuality hidden were hurting the gay rights movement and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Signorile cofounded a New York LGBT weekly and first ignited controversy in 1990 with a cover story “outing” the late publishing magnate Malcolm Forbes. He subsequently outed Defense Department official Pete Williams, at a time when gays were banned from the military, and the actress Jodie Foster, among others. Though Signorile’s views on the subject were contentious, he made a strong case for outing powerful public personalities and sparked debate about the line between the right to privacy and the exposure of hypocrisy.

Throughout his career, Signorile has covered gay issues, culture and politics for media outlets such as the The New York Times, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times. He has served as editor at large for The Advocate and Out Magazine and has provided commentary on “Larry King Live,” “The Today Show,” “Good Morning America” and other television programs. He currently hosts his own three-hour weekday radio program, “The Michelangelo Signorile Show,” on Sirius XM and serves as editor at large for the HuffPost.

Signorile has authored several highly acclaimed, best-selling books including the groundbreaking “Queer in America: Sex, the Media and Closets of Power” (1993), which exposes the double standard for heterosexuals and homosexuals; “Outing Yourself” (1995), a step-by-step guide on the subject; and “Life Outside” (1997), which explores the history of gay culture from the '50s through the '80s.

Signorile was featured in the book “The Gay 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Gay Men and Lesbians, Past and Present,” published in 2002. In 2011 The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association inducted him into the LGBT Journalists Hall of Fame. In 2012 Out Magazine honored him on its annual Out100 list.

In 2013 Signorile married David Gerstner, a film historian.



ETHEL SMYTH

b. April 22, 1858

d. May 8, 1944

COMPOSER & SUFFRAGETTE

"I feel I must fight for [my music], because I want women to turn their minds to big and difficult jobs; not just to go on hugging the shore, afraid to put out to sea."

Ethel Mary Smyth was a pioneering British composer who helped popularize opera in the United Kingdom. She became a fervent champion of women's rights and the first woman composer to be awarded damehood.

Smyth was born the fourth of eight children in Sidcup, Kent, outside of London. Her father, a major general in the Royal Artillery, opposed her musical aspirations. Smyth defiantly persevered, learning from esteemed tutors. She studied composition at Leipzig Conservatory in Germany and received encouragement from Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Antonín Dvořák and Johannes Brahms.

Until 2016, her 1902 opera, "Der Wald," was the only opera composed by a woman ever produced by The Metropolitan Opera.

Along with operas, Smyth wrote choral arrangements, symphonies and chamber music. She first captured attention for her "Mass in D" (1892). Her 1902 opera, "Der Wald," broke attendance records in London. It became the only opera composed by a woman ever produced by the New York Metropolitan Opera. This held true for well over a century, until 2016.

Smyth composed her most famous work, "The Wreckers," in 1906. Critics extoled it as one of the most important English operas.

By 1910 Smyth had established herself as a leading member of the women's suffrage movement in the United Kingdom. She took time off from composing to join the Women's Social and Political Union. She participated in marches and protests for women's rights and full equality. During this period, she was

incarcerated for two months after the authorities arrested her and more than 100 other suffragettes for breaking the windows of their political opponents. In 1911 Smyth composed "The March of Women," which became the anthem for England's women's movement.

Smyth was public about her nonconformist sexual identity. Many of her romantic partners were famous women, including the French Empress Eugénie and the English modernist writer Virginia Woolf.

Smyth wrote 10 books and many have been written about her. She openly discussed her experiences in several autobiographies. She once wrote, "I wonder why it is so much easier for me to love my own sex more passionately than yours."

In 1922 Smyth was named a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her accomplishments as a composer. In 1926 Oxford University presented her with an honorary doctorate. Despite the fanfare, as a woman she struggled to get her music performed.

For her 75th birthday, Smyth was honored with a festival in Royal Albert Hall celebrating her lifetime achievements. She began to lose her hearing at age 54 and went completely deaf before the end of her life. She died at age 86.



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

LEO VARADKAR

b. January 18, 1979

PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND

“Our democracy is vibrant and robust and can survive divisive debates and make difficult decisions.”

He is the youngest, the first of Indian extraction and the first openly gay prime minister of Ireland.

Leo Eric Varadkar is the first openly gay Taoiseach (prime minister) of the Republic of Ireland. He is also Ireland's youngest prime minister and the first of Indian extraction.

Varadkar was born in Dublin, the nation's capital, and raised Catholic. His father, a Hindu, was born in Mumbai, India, and immigrated to the United Kingdom to work as a doctor. His mother, a Catholic, worked as a nurse in Slough, England. The couple moved to Dublin six years before Varadkar was born.

Varadkar attended secondary school at The King's Hospital, a boarding school administered by the Church of England. He joined Young Fine Gael, the youth wing of Fine Gael, the Irish liberal-conservative and Christian democratic

political party. Varadkar maintained his party affiliation.

Varadkar studied medicine at Trinity College in Dublin and worked as a non-consultant hospital doctor before qualifying as a general practitioner. He earned his first significant political post in 2004 as a member of the Fingal County Council, located north of Dublin City, before serving as deputy mayor.

As a longtime statesman, Varadkar has held important and diverse roles within the Irish government. In 2007 he was elected to the Teachta Dála, the lower house of Ireland's parliament. He has since served consecutively as minister for transport, tourism, and sport; minister for health; and minister for social protection.

Varadkar came out in 2015 during the referendum that legalized same-sex marriage in Ireland. In June 2017, when the country formed its 31st government, he became Ireland's prime minister and minister for defence at the age of 38.

In becoming Ireland's first gay prime minister, Varadkar also became the world's fourth openly gay head of government. As Taoiseach, he also leads his political party, which promotes their support of LGBT rights and families by displaying ads in the Gay Community News (GCN).

By January 2018 Varadkar's approval rating had reached 60%—the highest of any Irish prime minister in 10 years. A few months later, TIME magazine named Varadkar to its list of the 100 Most Influential People of the year. In May the predominantly Catholic country voted to legalize abortion. Varadkar described it as “the culmination of a quiet revolution.”

Varadkar lives with his boyfriend, Dr. Matt Barrett, a cardiologist. In 2018 the couple marched hand-in-hand in the New York City St. Patrick's Day parade.

© GETTY IMAGES



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

PERRY WATKINS

b. August 20, 1948

d. March 17, 1996

PIONEERING MILITARY ACTIVIST

"For 16 years the Army said being homosexual wasn't detrimental to my job. Then, after the fact, they said it was. Logic is a lost art in the Army."

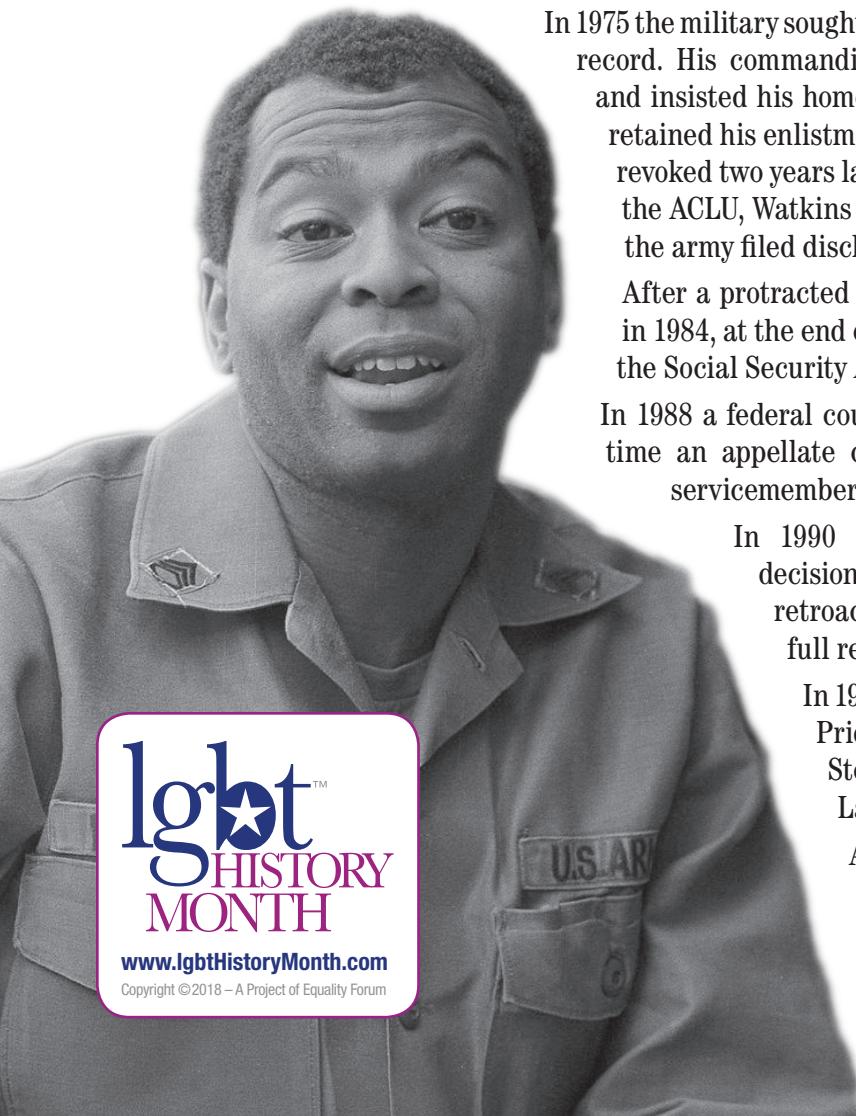
He won a landmark lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of his military discharge due to his homosexuality.

Perry J. Watkins was an African-American soldier who won a landmark lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of his military discharge due to his homosexuality. Born in Joplin, Missouri, Watkins was raised by a single mother who always encouraged his honesty. He was open about his homosexuality in high school, at a time when both gay and black Americans were stigmatized.

At age 19, Watkins was drafted during the Vietnam War. He did not hide his sexuality on his pre-induction paperwork and served openly, even though U.S. policy barred homosexuals from the military.

In the 1970s, while serving in Korea, Watkins volunteered to entertain the troops. He performed in drag, using the stage name Simone. Off duty, he took his show to Army clubs in Europe.

The Army accepted Watkins's reenlistment three times following honorable discharges. Each time he responded candidly to inquiries about his "homosexual tendencies." Several times the military conducted investigations into Watkins's sexual conduct. All of them ended due to insufficient evidence.



In 1975 the military sought to discharge Watkins for being gay, despite his excellent record. His commanding officer testified that Watkins did "a fantastic job" and insisted his homosexuality had no impact on his performance. Watkins retained his enlistment and in 1977 was granted a security clearance. It was revoked two years later, due again to his sexual orientation. Represented by the ACLU, Watkins filed a lawsuit to challenge the revocation. In response, the army filed discharge proceedings.

After a protracted legal battle, the Army dismissed Watkins permanently in 1984, at the end of his enlistment period. Thereafter, Watkins worked for the Social Security Administration while he fought the discharge.

In 1988 a federal court of appeals ruled in Watkins's favor. It was the first time an appellate court ruled against the military ban on homosexual servicemembers. The Bush Administration appealed the decision.

In 1990 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision and ordered Watkins's reinstatement. He settled for a retroactive promotion, an honorable discharge, back pay and full retirement benefits.

In 1993 Watkins served as grand marshal of the New York City Pride Parade. The documentary "SIS: The Perry Watkins Story" was released in 1994. The University of Michigan Law School awards an annual fellowship in his memory.

At age 47 Watkins died of AIDS-related complications. The New York Times published his obituary.

lgbt HISTORY MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2018 – A Project of Equality Forum

CHELY WRIGHT

b. October 25, 1970

AWARD-WINNING COUNTRY MUSIC STAR

"I hear the word "tolerance"... I am gay, and I am not seeking to be tolerated.' One tolerates a toothache, rush-hour traffic, an annoying neighbor with a cluttered yard. I am not a negative to be tolerated."

She is widely regarded as the first major American country music artist to come out publicly.

Chely Wright is an award-winning country singer-songwriter and LGBT activist. She is widely regarded as the first major American country music artist to come out publicly.

Raised in a musical family in Wellsville, Kansas, Wright started piano lessons at age 4. She knew she was a lesbian by age 9. Growing up Christian in a small farming town, she believed her feelings were "sinful" and kept her sexuality secret long into adulthood.

Wright always dreamed of becoming a country star. She started to sing professionally when she was 11. In her senior year of high school, she began performing in the

Ozark Jubilee, a music show in Branson, Missouri. After graduation, Wright sang as part of a production in Opryland USA, a theme park outside of Nashville.

Wright's career took off in her mid 20s. In 1995 she earned the Academy of Country Music Award for Top New Female Vocalist on the merits of her debut album, "Woman in the Moon." Some of her most famous hits include "Shut Up and Drive" (1997), "I Already Do" (1998) and "Single White Female" (1999), which reached No. 1 on the country music charts. The song earned her several award nominations, most notably for top female artist and best music video.

Wright's 2001 album, "Never Love You Enough," reached the Top 5. Her 2005 ballad "The Bumper of My SUV" was nominated for Best Patriotic Song by the Country Weekly Awards. She performed it while entertaining U.S. troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Germany.

By 2006 Wright had grown severely depressed and suicidal. No longer able to hide her sexuality, she poured her soul into a memoir, "Like Me: Confessions of a Heartland Country Singer." When the book was published in May 2010, Wright came out on NBC's "The Today Show" and in People.com. Her widely publicized coming out was chronicled in the award-winning documentary, "Wish Me Away."

Wright founded the LIKEME® Organization to promote LGBT equality and prevent bullying in classrooms. The organization expanded to offer college scholarships to young LGBT advocates, and in 2012 opened the LIKEME Lighthouse, a community center for LGBT youth in Kansas City, Missouri.

Wright has released eight studio albums and more than 19 singles. She continues to perform and advocate for LGBT rights. Among other honors, she has received a Lambda Literary Award for her autobiography; the Family Equality Council's award for Outstanding Work as an LGBT Activist; and the Black Tie Media Award.

Wright married Lauren Blitzer in 2011. They are the parents of identical twins.

© GETTY IMAGES



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum