

# ELIZA BYARD

b. August 3, 1968

## LGBTQ YOUTH ADVOCATE

*“Finding that we do not walk alone—  
that’s where courage is found.”*

Eliza Byard is an American historian, filmmaker and activist who leads GLSEN, an organization recognized globally as a leader in the fight for LGBTQ issues in K-12 schools.

Byard was born in New York City. Her mother was a teacher, and her father was an architect and director of the Historic Preservation Program at the Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. Byard earned a B.A. from Yale University in 1990 and a Ph.D. in United States history from Columbia University in 2002.

**She is the  
executive director  
of GLSEN.**

Byard began working in public television at age 13, with an internship at WNET. Her career included work on numerous award-winning documentaries. “Out of the Past,” a PBS documentary on the lives and struggles of LGBTQ people throughout U.S. history, won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival, and “School Colors,” a film for FRONTLINE on segregation in public education 40 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, earned an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award. Byard worked for Bill Moyers at Public Affairs Television on projects spanning

more than a decade and at the Center for Investigative Reporting.

Byard joined GLSEN as deputy executive director in 2001. She became executive director in 2008, taking over from the organization’s founder, Kevin Jennings.

She led the growth of GLSEN’s public education and advocacy efforts; GSA support and in-school programming; professional development training for educators; and pioneering research and evaluation capacity. She has crafted advocacy and legislative strategies that have won bipartisan support and widespread acceptance of the urgency and importance of LGBTQ issues in education. Since 2005 her work has contributed to measurable improvements in the lives of LGBTQ students across the United States. In 2010 she launched GLSEN’s international initiative, which has partnered with United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and LGBTQ community-based organizations in 40 countries to spark an evidence-based revolution on LGBTQ youth issues in education.

In the 2016-17 school year, more than a million U.S. students took part in a GLSEN program or action at their schools.



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