

ANARAA NYAMDORJ

b. 1977

MONGOLIAN LGBT ACTIVIST

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we will have a very, very beautiful society.”*

**He founded Mongolia's
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which advocates for
laws preventing LGBT
discrimination.**

A self-described queer transgender man, Anaraa Nyamdorj is a leading Mongolian LGBT civil rights activist. In 2007 he cofounded and served as executive director of the country's first LGBT Center.

Born female in Ulan Bator, Mongolia's capital city, Nyamdorj felt different early on. Growing up in a society without information about LGBT people left him unable to describe his identity as a boy in a girl's body. By age 10, Nyamdorj had grown severely depressed and eventually attempted suicide. At 19 he summoned the courage to talk to his eldest sister. She rejected him and they never spoke again.

After the Soviet Union fell and Mongolia gained its independence, Nyamdorj received a scholarship to study at the National Law School of India University. There, he became part of a progressive feminist and queer student group. Though he began to identify as lesbian, it did not really fit. Even so, in 2003 he established Mongolia's first lesbian organization.

In 2004, after moving to Japan, Nyamdorj met a transgender man and finally understood his feelings. He married a Mongolian woman in Canada, then one of the few countries where same-sex marriage was legal, and the two became pillars of Mongolia's emerging LGBT community. About six years later, despite his wife's repudiation, Nyamdorj acknowledged his male identity and his attraction to men. He underwent gender-confirmation surgery in Thailand.

Nyamdorj has dedicated his life to helping other Mongolians find self-knowledge and social acceptance. In 2007, along with a group of activists, he founded Mongolia's first LGBT Center, which focuses on social awareness, community programming and legislative advocacy. Although discrimination remains pervasive in the country, the organization has pushed the government to adopt LGBT protections, including passage of a law preventing medical and police discrimination. Through its many initiatives, the organization has worked extensively to educate and train medical professionals, law enforcement officials and the community and is fighting LGBT employment discrimination.

In 2018, after three years as the executive director of the LGBT Center, Nyamdorj stepped down from his leadership role. He continues to serve in an advisory capacity.

Nyamdorj remains optimistic about the future and the organization he helped found. “We have another 50 years of work ahead of us,” he said, “but I do believe that in another 10 years, we will have a very, very beautiful society.”



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