

MARIN ALSOP

b. October 16, 1956

TRAILBLAZING CONDUCTOR

“Success means pursuing a career that inspires you — brings passion to your life and totally absorbs your energy.”

Marin Alsop is the first woman to conduct a major orchestra in the United States, Britain, Austria, and South America. She serves as the chief conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Alsop was born in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Her parents were professional string players. Alsop began playing the violin at age 5 and was accepted into the Julliard Pre-College Program at age 7. When she was 9, her father took her to see the renowned conductor Leonard Bernstein. The experience so inspired her, she told her violin teacher she wanted to conduct. The teacher cautioned her that “girls can’t do that.”

She is the first female conductor to lead a major orchestra in the United States, Britain, Austria, and South America.

At age 16, Alsop entered Yale University as a math major. She transferred to Julliard to pursue a bachelor’s and master’s degree in violin, graduating in 1978. During college, she performed with the New York Philharmonic and the New York Ballet.

Alsop auditioned three times for Julliard’s conducting program but was rejected. Over the next four years, she founded an all-female jazz string ensemble, conducted the opera “The Photographer” by Philip Glass, and established Concordia, a 50-piece orchestra specializing in contemporary American music. In 1989 she became the first woman to win the Koussevitzky Prize for student conducting at Tanglewood Music Center

in Massachusetts, where, during her continued studies, she met her idol and eventual mentor, Leonard Bernstein.

Throughout the next decade, Alsop held conducting positions for the St. Louis Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, among others. In 2002 she shattered the glass ceiling, becoming the principal conductor of Britain’s Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. During her tenure, she cofounded what is today the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship to support women.

In 2005 Alsop became the first conductor to win a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship. When she was named musical director of the Baltimore Symphony in another barrier-shattering appointment two years later, she donated \$100,000 of her MacArthur grant to start OrchKids, a groundbreaking outreach program serving under-resourced Baltimore schoolchildren. During her 14 years in Baltimore, Alsop also served as the first female principal conductor of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and the first woman to lead a Viennese Orchestra.

Alsop’s artistic success has included innumerable appointments, tours, and recordings. Her many professional accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Conductor Award and the Ditson Conductor’s Award for the Advancement of American Music. “The Conductor,” a documentary about her, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2021.

Alsop and Kristin Jurkscheit, a horn player, married in 1990. They are the parents of a son.



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CHASTEN BUTTIGIEG

b. June 23, 1989

LGBT ACTIVIST

“Your time in the closet and your journey to coming out belong to you.”

He is an openly gay teacher, author, and activist, and the spouse of Pete Buttigieg.

Chasten Glezman Buttigieg is an educator, an author, and an LGBTQ rights advocate. He is the spouse of Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, who became the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in February 2021.

Chasten was born in Traverse City, Michigan. His parents owned a landscaping business. As a teenager, he attended public high school and worked on his grandfather's cherry farm. “Growing up in conservative rural Michigan, I thought I was the only gay person in the world,” he says. He thought there was something “twisted and wrong” with him. Although he kept his sexual orientation secret, he was bullied and taunted with homophobic epithets.

Buttigieg escaped to Germany on an exchange program for his senior year in high school. When he returned, he came out to his family. Their rejection compelled him to leave home, and he spent a difficult period in which he was technically homeless. Around this same time, he was sexually assaulted by the friend of a friend.

Buttigieg and his family eventually reconciled. He went on to attend the University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in theater and global studies. He received his Master of Education from DePaul University.

Buttigieg worked as a teaching artist at First Stage Children's Theater in Milwaukee. During the 2010s, he taught in public schools in Chicago and Indiana. He met his husband on a dating app in 2015. The couple married in 2018, during Pete's tenure as South Bend's mayor, making Chasten the first gay “first gentleman” of a city mayor in America. The following year, Chasten joined the South Bend Civic Theater as director of curriculum for civic education.

Chasten took a leave of absence from his teaching job to support Pete's 2020 presidential bid. The couple made history again, as Pete was the first openly gay married presidential candidate in U.S. history. Chasten served as his husband's campaign spokesperson, advisor, and social media manager. In the fall of 2020, Chasten became a Harvard Institute of Politics fellow for a semester and released his first book, a memoir titled “I Have Something to Tell You.”

In 2021 the Buttigieges received the International Role Model Award from Equality Forum. Around the same time, they became the parents of twins, Joseph and Penelope. The family lives in Washington, D.C. Chasten appears on television and holds public speaking engagements to discuss his life experiences and advocate for LGBTQ equality.



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MADELINE DAVIS

b. July 7, 1940

d. April 28, 2021

LGBT ACTIVIST & HISTORIAN

She was the first out lesbian major-party delegate to a U.S. national convention.

“I don’t want to have to be afraid of going to jail for being in love and doing something about it.”

Madeline Davis was a prominent gay rights activist, a writer, an archivist, and a librarian. She was the first out lesbian major-party delegate to a national convention in the United States.

Davis was born in Buffalo, New York. She attended the University of Buffalo, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s degree in library studies.

Davis realized she was a lesbian in her 20s. She was married to a man for three years in the 1960s before they separated. In the late ’60s, Davis cofounded and later served as president of the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier, an early gay rights organization. She also cofounded Fifth Freedom, the first LGBT magazine in New York.

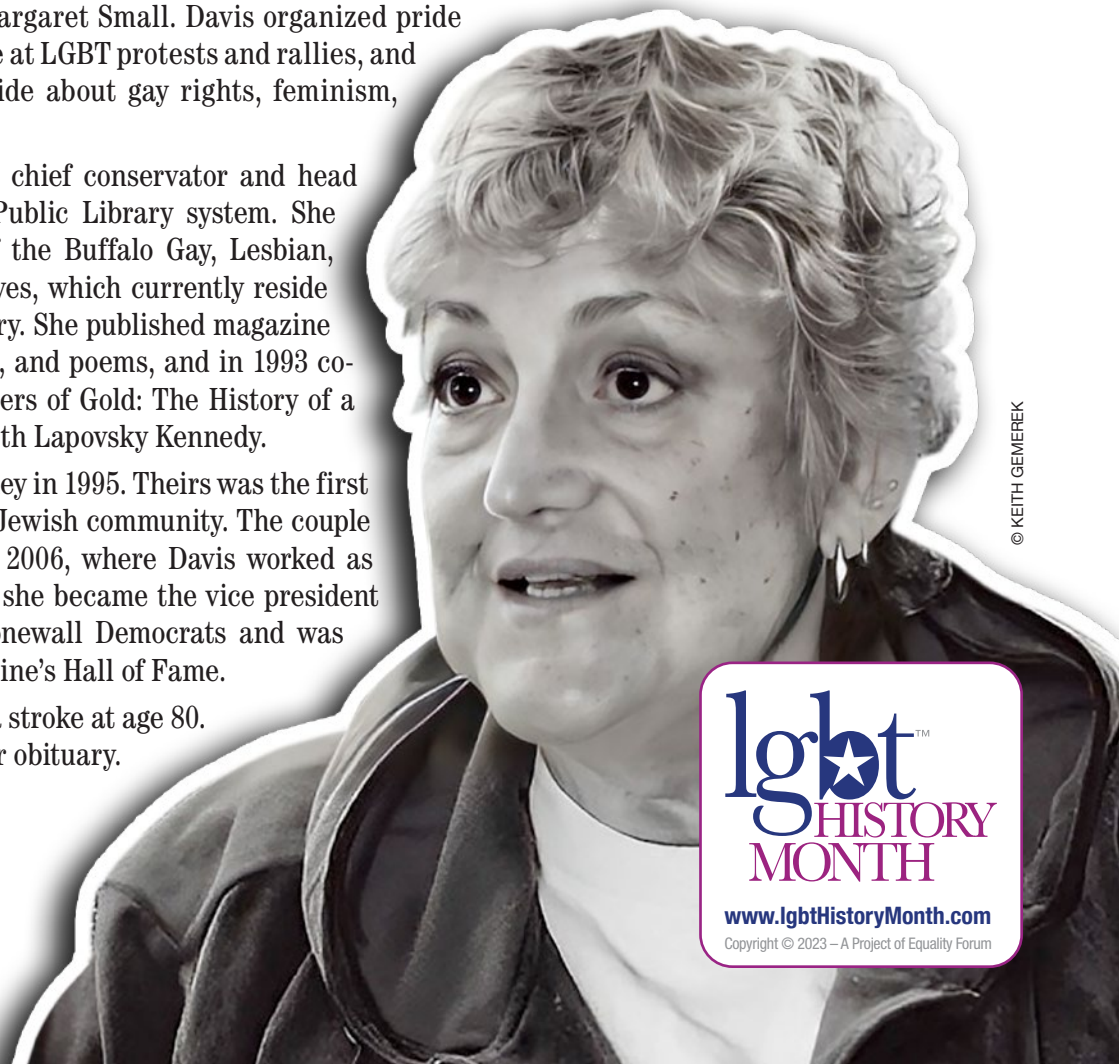
In 1971 Davis spoke at the first gay rights march at the New York state capitol. Soon thereafter, she wrote a song titled “Stonewall Nation,” now recognized as the first gay liberation record and an anthem for the gay rights movement.

In 1972, as a delegate representing New York’s 37th Congressional District, Davis became the first out lesbian to address the Democratic National Convention. “I am a woman and a lesbian, a minority of minorities,” she proclaimed. “Now we are coming out of our closets and onto the convention floor.” That same year, Davis taught what she described as the first college-level course on gay women, “Lesbianism 101,” at the University of Buffalo, with fellow activist Margaret Small. Davis organized pride workshops in New York City, spoke at LGBT protests and rallies, and lectured at universities nationwide about gay rights, feminism, and gender.

During the ’90s, Davis served as chief conservator and head of preservation for the Buffalo Public Library system. She founded and was the director of the Buffalo Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Archives, which currently reside in the Buffalo State College Library. She published magazine and journal articles, short stories, and poems, and in 1993 co-authored “Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community” with Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy.

Davis married activist Wendy Smiley in 1995. Theirs was the first same-sex wedding in the Buffalo Jewish community. The couple moved to Amherst, New York, in 2006, where Davis worked as a librarian and archivist. In 2012 she became the vice president for community liaison of the Stonewall Democrats and was inducted into the Advocate magazine’s Hall of Fame.

Davis died of complications from a stroke at age 80. The New York Times published her obituary.



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ELANA DYKEWOMON

b. October 11, 1949

d. August 7, 2022

**AUTHOR
& ACTIVIST**

Her debut novel was the first to be identified as a “lesbian book” by The New York Times.

“You can try a hundred things in your life, and ... you can still go on trying.”

Elana Dykewomon, née Elana Michelle Nachman, was a feminist activist and author, best known for her three popular lesbian-themed novels. She published five poetry collections, wrote short stories and essays, and contributed to numerous lesbian periodicals.

Dykewomon was born in Manhattan to Jewish parents and cleaved to her religious identity, particularly as she matured. When she was 8, the family moved to Puerto Rico, where her father opened a law practice. She knew she was “different” as a preteen and felt “sharply alienated” by the toxic masculinity and oppressive heteronormativity of the culture. She attempted suicide after a doctor told her she couldn’t possibly be homosexual.

Back in the United States, Dykewomon studied fine arts at Reed College before receiving her BFA in creative writing from the California Institute of Art. She earned her MFA from San Francisco State University.

In 1974 Dykewomon published her debut novel, a bawdy coming-of-age story titled “Riverfinger Women,” under her original name. It was the first work to be identified as a lesbian book by The New York Times. By the time she published her second book in 1976, “They Will Know Me By My Teeth,” a collection of poetry and short stories, she had adopted the pseudonym Dykewoman, later spelling it with the second “o” to delete the word “man” from the name. She published a collection of her poetry, “Fragments from Lesbos,” under the new spelling in 1981.

In 1987 Dykewomon became the editor of a lesbian journal called Sinister Wisdom. She held the job for more than seven years. During this period, her writing appeared in “Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women’s Anthology” as well as a variety of lesbian publications.

Dykewomon’s second novel, “Beyond the Pale” (1997), about lesbian Russian-Jewish immigrant factory workers, won the Ferro-Grumley Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction. In 1999 the Associated Press named “Riverfinger Women” to its list of 100 Greatest Gay Novels.

Dykewomon continued to write and publish, and she taught at San Francisco State University later in life. She lived in California with Susan Levinkind, her wife and partner of many years. After Levinkind died of Lewy body dementia in 2016, Dykewomon wrote the play “How to Let Your Lover Die.”

Surrounded by friends, Dykewomon died of esophageal cancer minutes before they were set to watch a live-streamed performance of the play. Though she never achieved commercial success, her work occupies an essential place in the annals of American LGBTQ history.



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TESSA GANSERER

b. May 16, 1977

TRANSGENDER GERMAN POLITICIAN

She is one of the first two transgender German politicians elected to the Bundestag.

“Visible gender diversity will ultimately also be an enrichment for all people.”

Tessa Ganserer made history in 2021 as one of two transgender women elected to the Bundestag, the German federal Parliament. As a representative of The Greens party, she supports a strong environmental agenda and is a fierce LGBTQ rights advocate.

Ganserer was assigned male at birth in Zwiesel, Bavaria. She attended Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Science in Freising, Germany, where she studied engineering and forestry. She graduated in 2005. Ganserer presented herself publicly as male until she was 41.

At age 21, Ganserer joined Germany's Alliance 90/The Greens political party. From 2002 through 2005, she served as the spokesperson for the specialist forum on ecology at the Federal Association of Green Youth.

Ganserer served as a district executive in the administrative region of Middle Franconia from 2008 to 2018. In 2013 she was elected to a seat in the Lantag of Bavaria (Bavarian state Parliament). There, Ganserer sat on multiple committees, including transportation, energy, and technology, and served as vice chair for public service from 2013 to 2018.

In 2018 Ganserer came out as a trans woman, making her the first openly transgender member of a German Landtag. She was “shocked” by the hatred she faced on social media, although she said, “It was definitely outweighed by the many positive messages.” In the Lantag, she fought to make legal name and gender changes easier.

When Ganserer ran for the Bundestag, she set her sights on federal reform of the country's restrictive 1981 Transgender Act. She said she ran “so that transgender people can finally raise a voice in the place where the legislative decisions on this degrading transsexual law are made.” Elected in 2012, Ganserer and another female Greens candidate, Nyke Slawik, became the first two transgender members of the German federal Parliament.

In the Bundestag, Ganserer advocates for soil protection, reduced carbon emissions, and forest conservation. She champions health and gender-affirming care for LGBTQ people, the right of lesbian mothers to adopt children, and ending the ban on blood donations from gay men.

Ganserer has two sons and is married to Ines Eichmüller, a fellow Greens party politician.

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ROXANE GAY

b. October 15, 1974

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

“If people cannot be flawed in fiction, there’s no place left for us to be human.”

She is a best-selling author and the first Black woman to write for Marvel Comics.

Roxane Gay is a cultural critic and a best-selling author and editor. She has served as a contributing opinion writer for The New York Times, The Guardian, Salon, and Rumpus, and her work has appeared in countless other periodicals. She was the first Black woman to write for Marvel Comics.

Gay was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and spent her childhood summers visiting family in Haiti. At age 12, she was raped by a gang of boys.

Gay attended Phillips Exeter Academy, one of the most prestigious boarding schools in the country. She went to Yale University but dropped out at age 19, when she could no longer suppress the trauma of her early sexual assault. Her emotions began to fray, and she abruptly moved to Arizona with a man 25 years her senior.

Her parents located her, and Gay returned to Nebraska, where she earned her master’s degree. She received her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Technical Communication from Michigan Technological University in 2010 and began teaching English at Eastern Illinois University, while working as a magazine editor. She has since held professorships at Purdue and Yale Universities.

In 2011 Gay published “Ayiti,” her first short story collection. In 2014 she published her debut novel, “An Untamed State,” and an essay collection, “Bad Feminist,” which became a New York Times best seller. From 2015 to 2018, she was a columnist for The Guardian magazine.

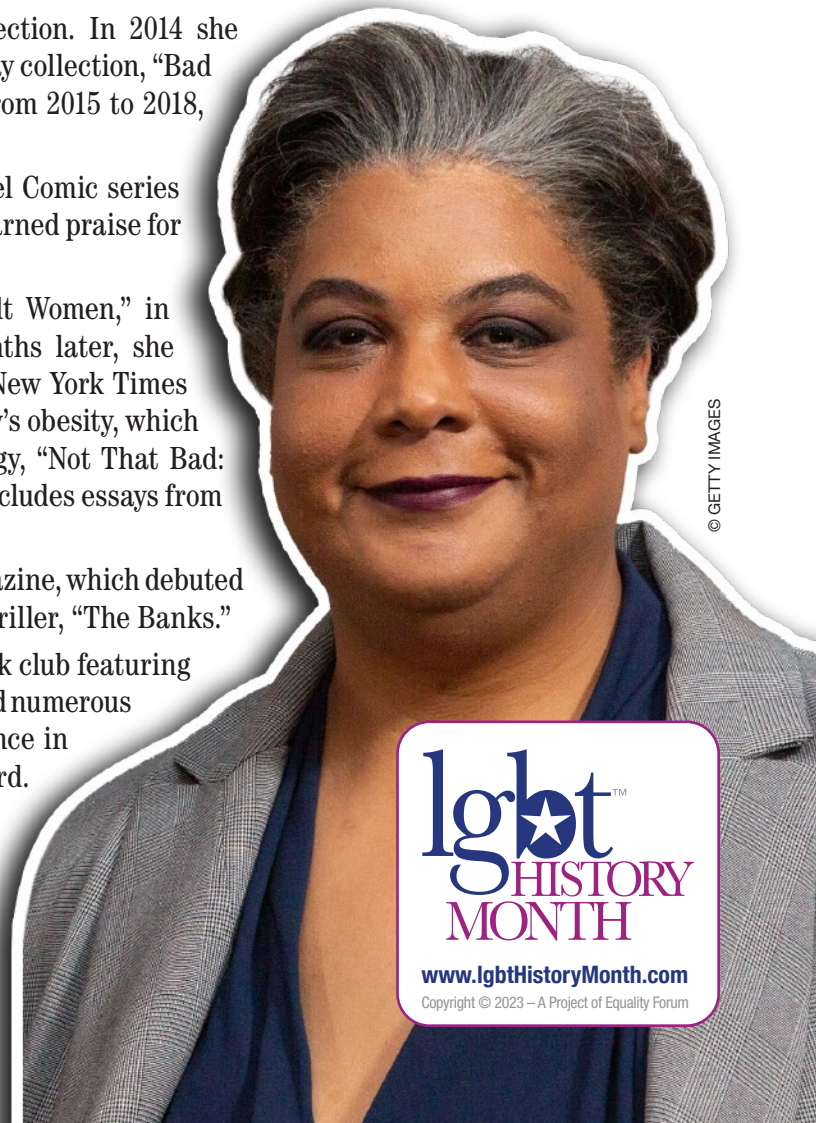
In 2016, with help from Yona Harvey, Gay wrote the Marvel Comic series “World of Wakanda.” A spinoff of Black Panther, the series earned praise for its LGBTQ representation.

Gay released her second short story collection, “Difficult Women,” in January 2017. It became a national best seller. Six months later, she published “Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body.” Her second New York Times best seller, the book sparked debate over fatphobia and Gay’s obesity, which she says serves as her “fortress.” She edited the anthology, “Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture,” published in 2018, which includes essays from Gay and 29 other writers.

Gay collaborated with Medium magazine to create Gay Magazine, which debuted in 2019. The same year, TKO Studios published her heist thriller, “The Banks.”

In 2021 Gay launched “The Audacity,” a newsletter and book club featuring work by underrepresented American authors. She has earned numerous awards, including the Lambda Literary Award for Excellence in Literature and the PEN Center USA Freedom to Write Award.

Gay identifies as bisexual. She is married to Debbie Millman, an artist.



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LESLEY GORE

SINGER & COMPOSER

b. May 2, 1946

d. February 16, 2015

She was a national singing and songwriting sensation, best known for her 1960s pop hits.

"I just kind of lived my life naturally and did what I wanted to do."

Lesley Gore was a singer and songwriter, best known for her 1960s pop hits, including "It's My Party" and "Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows."

Gore, née Lesley Sue Goldstein, was born in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in Tenafly, New Jersey, and attended Dwight School for Girls. At age 16, she was discovered by the prominent music producer Quincy Jones.

In 1963 Gore recorded her first and biggest hit, "It's My Party." The single quickly went gold, selling more than 500,000 copies. The same year, Gore released her first album, "I'll Cry If I Want To," which included other favorites like "Judy's Turn to Cry." Her second album followed shortly thereafter. It comprised more big hits, such as "Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows" and the feminist anthem "You Don't Own Me."

Gore graduated from high school in 1964 and appeared in the concert film "T.A.M.I. Show," alongside top artists such as Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, and The Beach Boys. In 1965 she performed three songs in the movie "The Girls on the Beach."

Gore studied literature at Sarah Lawrence College. She graduated in 1968. Although she had signed a five-year contract with Mercury Records that was extended for a sixth year (through 1969), rock music had begun to dominate the airways. By then, her songs had stopped selling as well.

After her contract with Mercury Records ended, she signed with MoWest records. She released her first album in a half decade, but it did poorly. In 1980 she composed songs for the film "Fame," including the Academy Award-nominated "Out Here on My Own."

Gore co-wrote the song "My Secret Love" for the 1996 film "Grace of My Heart," about a closeted lesbian singer. It was loosely based on her life. Throughout 2003, Gore served as a recurring host of the LGBTQ public television newsmagazine "In the Life."

In 2005 Gore came out publicly on "AfterEllen" and disclosed that she had been in a relationship with Lois Sasson, a jewelry designer, since 1982. Although Gore never tried to hide her sexuality, she said she had not advertised it, due to the music industry's homophobia.

During her career, Gore released 12 albums, composed music for numerous productions, and appeared in films, documentaries, and television episodes. She has been praised as a feminist and LGBTQ rights activist.

Gore died of lung cancer at age 68, just a few months before her wedding to Sasson. The couple set the date immediately after same-sex marriage was legalized. They had been together for 33 years.

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MISS MAJOR GRIFFIN-GRACY

b. October 25, 1940

EARLY TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

She is a lifelong LGBTQ activist who participated in the seminal Stonewall Uprising.

“I’d like for young transgender people to go to school, learn like everyone else does, and then get out there and live their lives.”

Miss Major Griffin-Gracy is a lifelong LGBTQ activist. She participated in the seminal Stonewall Uprising in 1969. She assisted infected people during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, and she has been advocating for trans women of color, particularly those who have survived incarceration in men’s prisons, for more than four decades.

Assigned male at birth, Griffin-Gracy was raised in the South Side of Chicago. As a teen, she met an older drag queen who taught her how to dress and apply cosmetics.

Griffin-Gracy attended drag balls and immersed herself in drag culture. She gradually came out to her family but continued to present herself publicly as a male.

At age 16, Griffin-Gracy enrolled in college and lived in the men’s dorm. She was outed by her roommate, after he discovered her women’s clothing, and expelled. Her attempt at college elsewhere ended similarly. She moved to New York at age 22, where she earned money as a drag performer and sex worker.

In the 1960s, police raids of drag shows and other gay hangouts were commonplace.

A regular at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, Griffin-Gracy was arrested on June 28, 1969—the first night of the historic Stonewall Riots—when she joined other patrons fighting police who stormed the bar. A year later, while working as a prostitute, she was arrested and incarcerated for robbing a customer. She spent five years in and out of prisons, where she was humiliated and abused. The experience motivated her to help other trans women in trouble.

After her release, Griffin-Gracy entered a relationship with a cisgender woman. They had a son together and moved to San Diego in 1978. After they broke up, Griffin-Gracy continued to co-parent their child.

In California, Griffin-Gracy worked with a food bank, helping trans women who were incarcerated, homeless, or suffering from addiction. At the height of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and ’90s, she assisted community members at the Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center.

Around 2004 Griffin-Gracy joined the Transgender Gender-Variant & Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) to assist incarcerated trans women. She later became its executive director. In 2019 she founded House of GG, a sanctuary offering a range of services for trans and gender-nonconforming people.

Griffin-Gracy has received numerous honors and is the subject of the award-winning documentary “Major!” (2015). She co-authored “Miss Major Speaks: Conversations with a Black Trans Revolutionary,” published in 2023. She and her partner, Beck Witt, a trans man and fellow activist, have a 2-year-old biological son. They live in Arkansas.



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BRITTNEY GRINER

WNBA SUPERSTAR

b. October 18, 1990

“Don’t worry about what other people are going to say ... if you’re just true to yourself, let that shine through.”

She is one of the greatest female professional basketball players of all time.

Brittney Griner is a seven-time WNBA All-Star, a two-time Olympic gold medalist, and an LGBTQ advocate. She ranks among the greatest women’s basketball players of all time. After her highly publicized imprisonment in Russia, she vowed to help other Americans detained abroad.

Griner was born in Houston, Texas. She showed tremendous aptitude for basketball early on. During her junior year of high school, a YouTube compilation of her extraordinary dunks amassed almost seven million views.

Griner shattered records and steered her high school team to the Texas 5A girls’ basketball state championship. She was selected for the 2009 WBCA High School All-America team, and the mayor of Houston named May 7, 2009, “Brittney Griner Day.”

Griner accepted a basketball scholarship to Baylor University. She set multiple records, becoming one of the best shot blockers in the history of the women’s game. In 2012 she led Baylor to a perfect 40-0 season (a first for any college basketball team) and an NCAA title. She received both the Naismith and Wooden Awards and was named the AP Player of the Year, among other honors.

In 2013 the Phoenix Mercury drafted Griner. That same year, she came out publicly as a lesbian and was named a WNBA All-Star. In 2014 she helped the Mercury win the WNBA finals—their third time ever—and became the first out gay athlete to receive a Nike endorsement deal. She also released her memoir, “In My Skin: My Life On and Off the Basketball Court,” written with Sue Hovey, describing her struggles as an African-American lesbian.

In 2015 Griner married fellow player Glory Johnson. A month before, they were both arrested for a domestic dispute and suspended for seven games. They divorced after a year.

In 2019 Griner married Cherelle Watson and played for a sixth time on the WNBA All-Star team. In 2016 and again in 2021, she played on the U.S. women’s Olympic basketball team and won the gold both times.

Like many other WNBA players, Griner sought supplemental income in the off-season playing overseas. In February 2022, authorities in a Russian airport discovered a vape cartridge for prescription cannabis in her luggage. She was arrested on alleged drug smuggling charges and sentenced her to nine years in a penal colony. After unrelenting pressure, President Biden secured Griner’s release in December 2022 in a one-for-one prisoner swap.

In 2023 TIME magazine named Griner to its list of 100 most influential people. She lives with her wife in Arizona and continues to play for the Phoenix Mercury.



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MAURA HEALEY

b. February 8, 1971

GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

“I hope as governor I can make sure that I’m leading the fight against bigotry and discrimination.”

She is the first female and first openly lesbian governor of Massachusetts.

Maura Healey is a trailblazing American politician. Previously the first out LGBTQ state attorney general in the United States, she became the first female and first openly lesbian governor of Massachusetts in 2023.

Healey grew up in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, the eldest of five siblings. She attended Harvard University, where she majored in government and captained the women’s basketball team. After graduating cum laude, she played professional basketball in Australia for two years.

Healey returned to the U.S. and earned her Juris Doctor in 1998 from Northeastern University School of Law. She clerked for a U.S. district court judge in Massachusetts and worked for various law firms before serving as a special assistant district attorney. In 2007 she was named chief of the Civil Rights Division under Massachusetts Atty. Gen. Martha Coakley. During her tenure, Healey led and won the state’s lawsuit challenging the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which banned same-sex marriage.

Healey announced her candidacy for Massachusetts attorney general in 2013. She won the Democratic primary handily, securing key endorsements, and defeated her Republican rival by a landslide in 2014.

The victory made Healey the nation’s first openly lesbian state attorney general.

Healey was re-elected in 2018. Her agenda included suing Purdue Pharma over OxyContin and Exxon Mobil over climate-change issues.

In 2022 Healey entered the Massachusetts gubernatorial race. She swept the primaries, winning the endorsement of prominent politicians, most notably Vice President Kamala Harris. She went on to trounce the Trump-endorsed Republican nominee, returning the office to the Democrats. The historic election made Healey Massachusetts’ first female and first out lesbian governor. Her victory also broke the state’s “curse of the attorney general.” During the previous 65 years, six AGs before her had run for governor and lost. Healey and Oregon’s Tina Kotek, who assumed office at the same time, became the first two openly gay elected female governors in America.

Healey feels a particular responsibility to support LGBTQ youth, with whom she periodically played basketball along the campaign trail for governor. She has fought for the rights of women and the LGBTQ community throughout her career. Among other initiatives, she is committed to protecting the right to safe and legal abortion and to gender-affirming care for trans kids.

Healey is in a relationship with Joanna Lydgate, her former deputy AG. The couple lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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JAZMINE HUGHES

b. October 25, 1991

WRITER & EDITOR

“When I came out ... I delightedly rediscovered the new me over and over again.”

She is a highly successful associate editor and writer at The New York Times.

Jazmine Hughes is a highly successful young associate editor and writer at The New York Times and has contributed to numerous other publications, including Elle, Cosmopolitan, and the New Yorker. She draws on her experience as a queer woman of color to pen perceptive, quick-witted observations that are equal parts unique and relatable.

Hughes grew up in New Haven, Connecticut. She was homeschooled with her four sisters until fifth grade. Her journalism career began at Connecticut College, where she studied government and creative writing. She joined the student newspaper during her freshman year and worked her way up, becoming the editor in chief in her senior year. From 2011 to 2012, she landed editorial internships at New York magazine and the New Haven Register and earned a certificate in publishing from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Hughes found her first job as a fact-checker for New York magazine. She was one of only two Black employees. She began writing, and in 2014 became a contributing editor for The Hairpin, a women's blog. The Huffington Post named one of her blog commentaries among the 28 pieces from 2014 that every woman should read.

Hughes's work garnered praise for its accessibility, poignancy, and humor. She earned particular attention for writing about her experience with impostor syndrome. To increase visibility and opportunities for professionals like herself, she cofounded the website Writers of Color, a database of minority writers and their work, searchable by location and keywords.

In March 2015, The New York Times hired Hughes as an associate editor. A few years later, she came out at the age of 26. In October 2019, Vogue featured her personal essay as part of its collection, “On Coming Out, Slow and Not Always Steady: 6 Stories.” In it, Hughes wrote: “I delightedly rediscovered the new me over and over again. I wanted to change the way I dressed and the way I smelled and the way I carried myself; I needed everyone to treat me exactly the same and yet entirely differently.”

Praising her as an “innovative editor” and a “gifted writer,” The New York Times made Hughes a full-time metro reporter for the paper and a staff writer for the magazine in 2020.

Among other recognition, Hughes was named to the Forbes list of 30 Under 30 (in the media) in 2018. She received the ASME NEXT Award for Journalists Under 30 in 2020 and the National Magazine Award for profile writing in 2023.



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EDDIE IZZARD

b. February 7, 1962

BRITISH COMEDIAN
& ACTOR

Her breakout U.S. comedy show won two Emmy Awards.

“Comedy is a great weapon of attack.”

Eddie (a.k.a. Suzy) Izzard is an award-winning British comedian, actor, and philanthropist. Hailed as the foremost comic of a generation, she is known for her surreal, meandering monologues.

Izzard was born male in Aden, Yemen, to English parents. The family moved to Northern Ireland before settling in Wales. When Izzard was 6, her mother died of cancer.

Izzard studied drama at the University of Sheffield. She knew she was gender-fluid as a youngster and identifies “broadly” as transgender. She came out at age 23 and began cross-dressing in public. Always switching personas, Izzard adopted female pronouns permanently in 2020.

After university, Izzard worked in comedy clubs and as a street performer. Her breakthrough came in 1991, performing as part of “Hysteria 3,” a televised AIDS fundraiser at the London Palladium. In 1993 she booked the Ambassadors Theatre in London for a one-person show. It earned her a British Comedy Award for Best Live Stand-up Comedian.

Izzard launched a second successful show in 1994 and staged an award-winning third show in 1995 that toured major cities outside the UK. Her U.S. break came with “Eddie Izzard: Dress to Kill” (1999), which aired on HBO and earned her two Emmys. She has performed overseas in French and German, which she speaks fluently.

Izzard’s extensive body of work includes more than 30 films and numerous television and theater shows. She made her movie debut in 1995 and performed alongside Bob Hoskins and Robin Williams in the dramatic thriller “The Secret Agent” in 1996. Her subsequent films include “The Avengers,” “Oceans Twelve,” and “Victoria & Abdul,” for which she gained 26 pounds and was virtually unrecognizable as Prince Bertie of Wales.

As a voice actor, Izzard has performed in animated films such as “Cars 2” and “The Lego Batman Movie.” Her stage credits include the title roles in “Edward II” and “Lenny.” She was nominated for a Tony for her leading role in the Broadway revival of “A Day in the Death of Joe Egg.”

Izzard has raised millions of dollars for Sports Relief, a UK charity that aids vulnerable people worldwide. An endurance athlete, she ran 43 marathons in 51 days throughout the UK and 27 marathons in 27 days across South Africa. She is also a major donor to the British Labor Party.

Among other awards, Izzard received the Annual Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award in Cultural Humanism, presented at Harvard University. She is the subject of a documentary and the author of a New York Times best-selling memoir.



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MICHAEL R. JACKSON

b. January 26, 1981

PULITZER-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT

“That’s the experience of what being a young Black gay man is ... I wanted to try to invite everybody to step into that.”

He is the first Black writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for a musical.

Michael R. Jackson is a playwright, lyricist, and composer, celebrated for his groundbreaking Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, “A Strange Loop.”

Jackson grew up in Detroit, Michigan. He started playing the piano at age 8 and participated in church choir and plays. His early experiences on stage fueled a passion for the theater, which his mother indulged. She took him to plays throughout his childhood.

Though he knew for much longer, Jackson came out as gay at age 16. He attended NYU Tisch School of the Arts, receiving both his undergraduate and graduate degrees. As a queer Black man, Jackson felt like an outsider in the typical New York City gay scene. He channeled this sense of alienation into his art.

Before his commercial success, Jackson served as a Sundance Theatre Institute Composer Fellow and a Dramatist Guild Fellow and worked on a variety of projects. Among them, he wrote the lyrics and co-wrote the book for the musical adaptation of the indie film “Teeth” and composed “The Kids on the Lawn,” a song cycle that The New York Times Magazine published in its culture section.

Earlier, Jackson worked as an usher for various Broadway musicals, including “The Lion King.” He wrote “A Strange Loop”—with the book, music, and lyrics—drawing upon this period. The story follows a queer Black man named Usher, who works as an usher and is writing a play about a queer Black writer who is writing a play about a queer Black writer. The show opened off Broadway in 2019 and premiered on Broadway in 2022. In 2020 it made Jackson the first Black writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for a musical, and it was the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize before opening on Broadway. In 2022 the play earned two Tony Awards: Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical.

Among his many other honors, Jackson has earned two Obies, two Drama Desk Awards, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, and a Lambda Literary Award for Drama. The New York Times named him one of the “Best Black Male Writers of Our Time” and Queerty listed him among 50 heroes furthering equality and acceptance in America.

Jackson’s second musical, “White Girl in Danger,” channels his childhood soap opera obsession into a campy, humorous exploration of race, class, and identity. It opened in April 2023.



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LESLIE JORDAN

ACTOR & COMEDIAN

b. April 29, 1955

d. October 24, 2022

He was an Emmy-winning actor and comedian and an LGBTQ advocate.

“Happiness is a habit. It’s a choice. It’s something that you have to work for.”

Leslie Jordan was an Emmy-winning actor and comedian and an LGBTQ advocate. Beloved for his puckish humor, small stature, and distinctive Southern drawl, he appeared in commercials, television shows, films, and theater productions.

Jordan was born and raised in Tennessee. His father died in a plane crash when Jordan was 11. His childhood travails were compounded by being a diminutive gay youth in the conservative South. Sent to a camp designed to toughen up young boys, Jordan returned with the award for best all-around camper—not because they succeeded, but because

he made everyone laugh. Humor became his best defense.

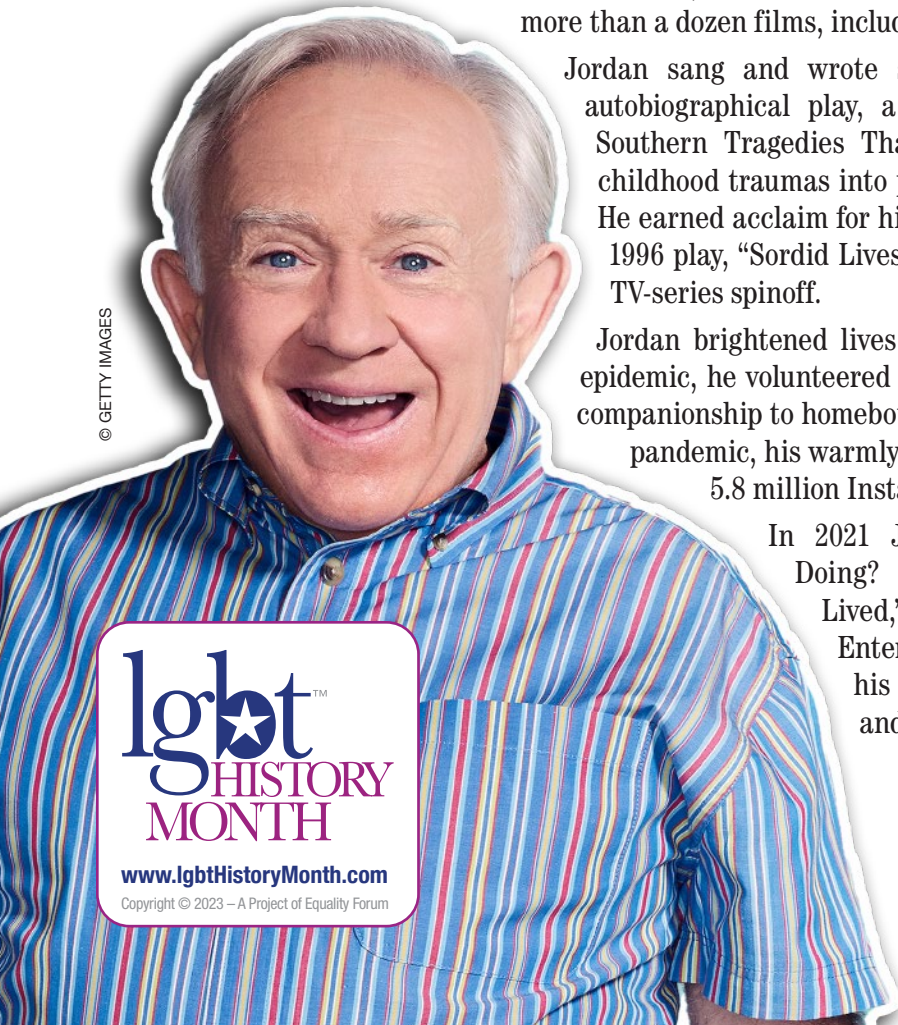
In 1982 Jordan moved to Los Angeles, arriving with money his mother had sewn into his jacket. He was soon appearing in television commercials. Standing just 4 feet, 11 inches, he found an asset in the physicality for which he had once been bullied. Feeling free and flush with cash for the first time, he fell into substance abuse and was arrested multiple times on DUI charges. Despite this, Jordan landed his first television role on the 1986 series “The Fall Guy,” and his career took off. He achieved sobriety in the late ’90s.

Jordan earned an Emmy in 2005 for his performance as the snarky Beverley Leslie on the hit series “Will & Grace.” He appeared in three seasons of the award-winning anthology “American Horror Story” and became a regular guest on the sitcom “Hearts Afire,” among countless other TV performances. Jordan also appeared in more than a dozen films, including “The Help” in 2011.

Jordan sang and wrote several of his own stage productions. His first autobiographical play, a musical titled “Hysterical Blindness and Other Southern Tragedies That Have Plagued My Life Thus Far,” turned his childhood traumas into poignant comedy. It appeared off Broadway in 1993. He earned acclaim for his role as “Brother Boy” in Del Shores’s darkly funny 1996 play, “Sordid Lives,” and reprised the part in the film adaptation and TV-series spinoff.

Jordan brightened lives in multiple ways. During the height of the AIDS epidemic, he volunteered with AIDS Project Los Angeles, providing food and companionship to homebound patients. In the grim early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, his warmly hilarious videos went viral, earning him more than 5.8 million Instagram followers.

In 2021 Jordan published his autobiography, “How Y’All Doing? Misadventures and Mischief from a Life Well Lived,” and received the GALECA: The Society of LGBTQ Entertainment Critics’ Timeless Star Award. He died in his car the following year, after suffering a heart attack and crashing into a building.



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TINA KOTEK

b. September 30, 1966

GOVERNOR OF OREGON

“When you’re coming out, you have to build a resilience of dealing with people who treat you differently for who you are, and that has made me a stronger person.”

She is the first openly lesbian governor of Oregon.

Christine “Tina” Kotek is the first openly lesbian governor of Oregon and one of the first two lesbian governors elected in the United States. She was the first openly lesbian speaker of a State House and the longest-serving House speaker in Oregon’s history.

Kotek was born in York, Pennsylvania, to first-generation American parents of Czech and Slovene ancestry. After graduating from Dallastown Area High School, Kotek attended Georgetown University but did not complete her studies. She moved to Oregon in 1987 and earned a bachelor’s degree in 1990 in religious studies from the University of Oregon. She earned her master’s degree in international studies and comparative religion from the University of Washington.

Kotek’s community service began long before she ran for public office. She served as an advocate for Oregon Food Bank and a policymaker for Children First for Oregon and continues to volunteer at her church’s food pantry.

Religion has always played an important role in Kotek’s life. She came out as a lesbian during her religious studies, which forced her to reconcile two key facets of herself. Though much anti-LGBTQ rhetoric originates from religious institutions, Kotek uses her faith to find strength in the face of opposition.

Kotek is vocal about her lesbian identity. She met her wife, Aimee Wilson, in 2005. They married in 2017, two years after same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide. Though they keep the details of their personal lives private, they are very open about their relationship and often attend political events together.

Kotek’s first foray into politics was marked by a loss in the 2004 Democratic primary, when she ran for a seat in the Oregon House. Victory came two years later, when she won a House seat with more than 80% of the vote. She was reelected every two years, and in 2013 she was nominated for Speaker of the House—a position never held by an out lesbian. She maintained the post until 2022, when she stepped down to run for governor.

In 2023 Kotek was elected the 39th governor of Oregon, making her the state’s first openly lesbian governor and one of two lesbian governors in U.S. history. She has devoted her life to bettering the lives of her adoptive home state’s citizens. Among other policies, her progressive Democratic agenda includes raising the minimum wage, increasing health care access, and keeping abortion legal.

Kotek lives in North Portland with her wife and their two dogs.



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MARIJANE MEAKER

b. May 27, 1927

d. November 21, 2022

PULP FICTION PIONEER

“We are what we are. We don’t have to define or label it.”

She helped launch the lesbian pulp fiction genre.

Marijane Meaker was a prolific author who helped launch the lesbian pulp fiction genre with her 1952 novel, “Spring Fire.”

Meaker grew up in Auburn, New York, surrounded by books. Enamored of pen names from an early age, she carried the affinity into adulthood, publishing under a variety of pseudonyms.

In 1943 Meaker attended Stuart Hall School, a Virginia boarding school, but was expelled for unruly behavior. She enrolled in Vermont Junior College in 1945, then in the University of Missouri the following year, where she joined the Alpha Delta Pi sorority. Throughout college, Meaker sought the company of other aspiring writers and began submitting her own work for publication. She sold her first story to Ladies’ Home Journal while she was a student.

After graduation, Meaker worked as a clerk for Dutton Publishing before becoming a proofreader for Gold Medal Books. She began publishing mysteries under the name Vin Packer. As Packer, she penned the novel “Spring Fire” about a love affair between two sorority sisters. The novel sold an astounding 1.5 million copies at a time when gays and lesbians were largely closeted and considered mentally ill. The unexpected financial success of the book uncovered a huge untapped market for lesbian-themed fiction, and Meaker continued writing in this newfound genre.

Throughout the 1950s, Meaker pursued relationships with other women, most notably the American writer Patricia Highsmith. Highsmith is best known for thrillers such as “Strangers on a Train” and “The Talented Mr. Ripley.” The couple met at a lesbian bar in New York and lived together for a time.

In the late ’50s, Meaker began writing nonfiction paperbacks about lesbians under the pen name Ann Aldrich. In the ensuing years, she wrote children’s books under the name Mary James. As M.E. Kerr (a play on Meaker), she earned acclaim for her young-adult novels, which told captivating stories while authentically depicting a range of issues affecting teens, from mental illness to sexism and homophobia.

Later in life, Meaker published several books under her own name, most notably “Highsmith: A Romance of the Fifties” (2003), about her two-year relationship with the author.

Among other recognition, Meaker received the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the American Library Association in 1993 for her achievements in young-adult literature. She received the Trailblazing Award from the Golden Crown Literary Society in 2013 for her contributions to the lesbian literary cannon.

Meaker died in Springs, New York, at age 95. The New York Times, The Washington Post, and other major media published her obituary.



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SCOTT MINERD

b. March 23, 1959

d. December 21, 2022

WALL STREET INNOVATOR

“I think real success is being motivated by trying to create something ... that really will make a difference and impact society.”

He was a Wall Street superstar and prominent philanthropist.

Scott Minerd was the highly successful global chief investment officer of Guggenheim Partners, a Wall Street investment firm, and a financial commentator for CNBC and Bloomberg Television. A prominent philanthropist, he contributed millions of dollars to LGBTQ and other human rights causes.

Minerd grew up in Pennsylvania's coal region in the tiny rural town of Chalkhill, just north of the Mason Dixon Line. His mother was a homemaker, and his father worked as an insurance agent.

Minerd received his bachelor's degree in economics from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania in 1980. He became a CPA and took his first job at PriceWaterhouse as an accountant. After he completed graduate work at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, he headed to Wall Street, where he quickly proved himself to be exceptionally gifted. Between 1983 and 1996, he rose to prominence at firms such as Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley.

Having amassed a significant fortune by the age of 37, Minerd bought a house in Venice Beach, California, and left his career to pursue bodybuilding. He quickly grew bored of retirement and in 1998 joined Mark Walter, a successful financier, in launching what would become Guggenheim Partners. Minerd's skills proved instrumental in driving the firm's extraordinary growth. He became the company's chief investment officer in 2005, a position he held until his death.

A talented prognosticator, Minerd was among the first to predict the global financial crisis in 2007 and the financial fallout of the Covid 19 pandemic, rebalancing his clients' portfolios to favor safer investments. He regularly attended the Global Financial Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and became a financial markets advisor to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York as well as a trusted TV analyst.

For Minerd, a rare openly gay man working on Wall Street, success was about more than moneymaking and machismo. He supported multiple charities with his time and fortune. Minerd worked with SMUG International, an NGO supporting sexual minorities in Uganda, to create housing for LGBTQ people there. He donated \$27 million to the Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles to help feed homeless families. Minerd served on the board of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization, helping asylum seekers, and he created and funded his own organization to help immigrants and refugees. With his husband, Eloy Mendez, he produced a documentary short, “We Are Here,” about the lives of four undocumented immigrants. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

Minerd died of a heart attack in Vista, California. He was 63.



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RYAN MURPHY

b. November 9, 1965

WRITER, DIRECTOR & PRODUCER

He is an award-winning writer, director, and producer whose work frequently features LGBTQ characters.

“I feel every day that everything I create—everything I do—I want it to be a risk.”

Ryan Murphy is an award-winning writer, director, and producer whose work frequently features LGBTQ characters and storylines. Among many other credits, he is the co-creator of the Emmy-winning TV series “Glee” and “American Horror Story” and the director of the films “Eat, Pray, Love” and “The Normal Heart.”

Murphy was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. When he came out as gay at age 15, his traditional Catholic parents were unsupportive. Only his grandmother fostered his confidence.

Murphy attended Indiana University Bloomington and graduated with a degree in journalism. He performed in choral ensembles throughout his education. Those experiences helped shape his high school musical comedy-drama, “Glee.”

After working as a journalist for several leading papers, such as the Los Angeles Times and the Miami Herald, Murphy began screenwriting. His first television show, “Popular” (1999), ran for two seasons. Professional recognition came in 2003 with “Nip/Tuck,” his Emmy-nominated series exploring America’s relationship with plastic surgery. “Glee” followed in 2009. It ran for six seasons and earned Murphy his first Emmy Award. The show earned 40 nominations and won six Emmys. It inspired a concert tour, albums, games, merchandise, apps, and a film that Murphy directed.

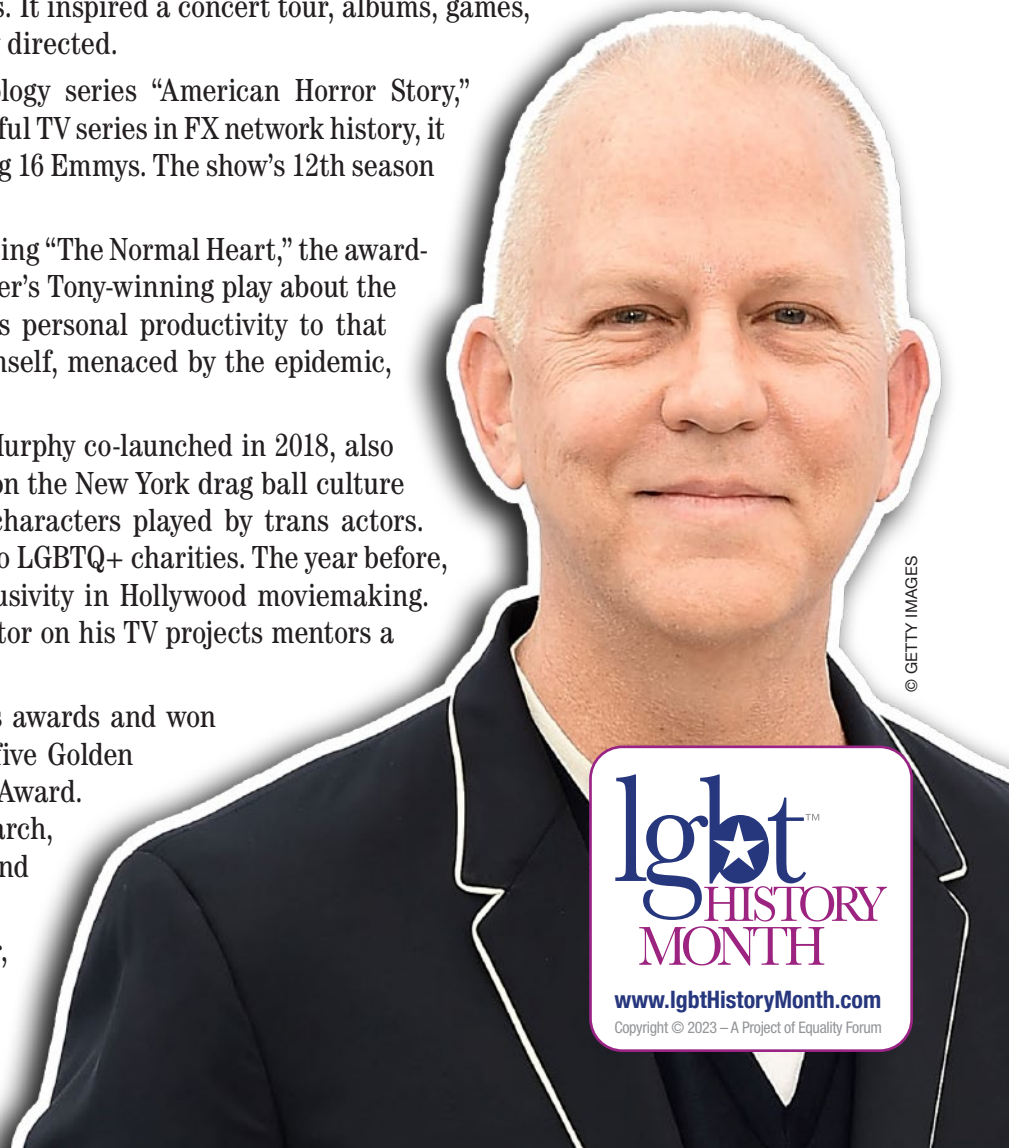
Murphy’s next big TV project, the anthology series “American Horror Story,” premiered in 2011. Among the most successful TV series in FX network history, it has earned more than 125 awards, including 16 Emmys. The show’s 12th season began in 2023.

Murphy’s various film credits include directing “The Normal Heart,” the award-winning TV film adaptation of Larry Kramer’s Tony-winning play about the rise of the AIDS crisis. Murphy traces his personal productivity to that era—a time when young gay men like himself, menaced by the epidemic, never knew how much time they had left.

“Pose,” the critically acclaimed FX series Murphy co-launched in 2018, also takes place during that period. It centers on the New York drag ball culture and includes more than 50 transgender characters played by trans actors. Murphy donated his profits from the show to LGBTQ+ charities. The year before, he launched an initiative to promote inclusivity in Hollywood moviemaking. It spawned a program in which each director on his TV projects mentors a rising female or minority director.

Murphy has been nominated for countless awards and won dozens, including six Primetime Emmys, five Golden Globes, a Tony, and a GLAAD Media Award. AmfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, honored him for his contributions to TV and film and the fight against AIDS.

Murphy lives with his husband, David Miller, and their three sons.



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CARL NASSIB

b. April 12, 1993

FIRST OUT ACTIVE NFL PLAYER

“I do not know all of the history behind our courageous LGBT community, but I am eager to learn and to help continue the fight for equality and acceptance.”

**He is the first
openly gay active
player in the NFL.**

Carl Nassib is the first openly gay active NFL player. In 2021, as a defensive end for the Las Vegas Raiders, he made headlines by coming out after five seasons in the pros.

Nassib was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, to a family of football enthusiasts. His father played at the University of Delaware. His older brother played in the NFL. Nassib excelled in high school sports, lettering in football, basketball, and track and field. His love of athletics and exceptional success fueled his dream of one day playing professional sports.

In 2011 Nassib enrolled in Penn State University. He immediately tried out for the football team as a walk-on, but the coach didn't play him until he earned an athletic scholarship in 2013. He quickly proved himself on the field, and after two successful seasons, he joined the starting lineup in his senior year. His performance earned him the Lombardi Award for best college football linebacker and the Hendricks Award for top defensive end in the nation. He was also named the Big Ten's Nagurski-Woodson Defensive Player of the Year.

In 2016 the Cleveland Browns signed Nassir as a third-round draft pick for a four-year deal worth \$3.2 million. After a successful first game, he was nominated for Pepsi's NFL Rookie of the Week. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers claimed Nassib off waivers for his last two years of the contract, then the Las Vegas Raiders picked him up in 2020 as an unrestricted free agent.

During Pride Month in June 2021, Nassib came out in an Instagram post. Despite fearing it might ruin his career, Nassib felt an obligation to set an example for LGBTQ youth. In his post, he pledged \$100,000 to the Trevor Project, an organization that provides counseling and suicide prevention services for at-risk LGBTQ kids. In a remarkable show of support, the NFL matched Nassib's donation.

After a standout 2021 season, Nassib became the first out NFL player to compete in the playoffs. In 2022 he signed a one-year deal to play again with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Nassib is in a relationship with Soren Dahl, an Olympic swimmer. He continues to support the Trevor Project and advocate for LGBTQ rights.

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STU RASMUSSEN

b. September 9, 1948

d. November 17, 2021

FIRST OUT TRANSGENDER MAYOR

"I transitioned in place. And the community came along with me."

**Rasmussen was
the first openly
transgender mayor
in America.**

Stewart "Stu" Rasmussen became the first openly transgender mayor in America when he was elected in Silverton, Oregon, for a third time in 2008. It was his first term as Silverton's mayor after coming out as transgender.

Assigned male at birth, Rasmussen, who identified as female but used predominantly male pronouns, was a lifelong resident of Silverton, a farming community of roughly 9,200 people. His father was a mail carrier and managed the Palace Theatre, a local cinema. A self-described nerd, Rasmussen studied electrical engineering at what is now Chemeketa Community College. He worked for a tech company and as an entrepreneur

before entering politics, where he served for most of three decades.

Rasmussen brought cable TV to Silverton in the 1970s. In 1974 he became the co-owner of the Palace Theatre. He ran the projector, worked the concessions, and frequently stood out front, costumed like a character from the currently running film. The year he took over the theater, he began dating Victoria Sage, the woman he would eventually marry.

A socially liberal, fiscally conservative Democrat, Rasmussen entered politics in the 1980s, first as a City Council member. He was elected mayor in 1988, while still publicly identifying as male, and served two terms. In the mid 1990s, he ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Oregon House of Representatives and then the Oregon State Senate. By the time he ran for mayor again in 2008, he had transitioned to female. Despite backlash and his own doubts, Rasmussen won Silverton's support. He told the Salem Statesman Journal: "A lot of people who are transgender think, I can't be myself here, I have to go somewhere else ... I transitioned in place. And the community came along with me."

After the election, members of the Kansas-based, notoriously anti-LGBTQ Westboro Baptist Church descended on the town in protest. The Silverton community countered, rallying around Rasmussen, with several male supporters donning dresses and holding signs declaring "Jesus Loves Stu." In 2013 a musical about him, "Stu for Silverton," opened at the Intiman Theatre in Seattle. It played in other cities, including New York.

Rasmussen remained in office until he was unseated in 2014. He married his longtime partner, Victoria, the same year. In 2018, he ran again, but was defeated.

Rasmussen died of prostate cancer at age 73. The New York Times published his obituary.



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ALLEN SCHINDLER JR.

b. December 13, 1969

d. October 27, 1992

SLAIN NAVAL OFFICER

**His murder brought
national attention
to gay people in
the military.**

“If you can’t be yourself, then who are you?”

Allen Schindler Jr. was a United States Navy officer. His brutal murder in 1992 brought national attention to gay bashing and the right of gay people to serve in the military.

Schindler was born in Chicago Heights, Illinois. His mother worked multiple jobs to support him and his sisters, while his aunt acted as their primary caregiver.

At age 18, Schindler joined the Navy and became a radioman on the aircraft carrier USS Midway. He described this period as among the happiest of his life. When the Navy decommissioned the ship less than a year later, Schindler was reassigned to the USS Belleau Wood. Though he had previously spoken safely, if discreetly, about his sexuality, he now faced unrelenting harassment from his new shipmates. They shouted homophobic slurs, physically assaulted him, and glued his locker shut. The military consistently ignored Schindler’s complaints about the abuse.

Frustrated by his treatment, Schindler eventually rebelled. In September 1992, he transmitted the message “2-Q-T-2-B-S-T-R-8” (too cute to be straight), which reached most of the Pacific fleet. He was immediately charged with broadcasting an unauthorized statement. In the ensuing meeting with his captain, Schindler came out and was told he would be discharged. In the aftermath, he wrote in his journal, “If you can’t be yourself, then who are you?”

As he awaited discharge, Schindler grew afraid for his safety. During his last visit home, he gave his prized childhood toys to a nephew and spent extra time in the airport saying goodbye to his mother. In Japan during his final shore leave, two fellow shipmen followed Schindler into a restroom at night. They beat him to death, crushing his face and neck and rendering him virtually unrecognizable.

Schindler’s killing spotlighted the issue of gay bashing and sparked renewed debate around the official ban on gay people serving in the military. The Navy’s attempt to conceal the details of her son’s murder forced Schindler’s mother to confront her own misunderstandings and biases. With gay rights organizations by her side, she fought for justice and became an activist.

Schindler’s killers were convicted, and in 1993 one received a life sentence. The same year, President Bill Clinton signed the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy into law. The bill allowed gays and lesbians to serve in the military if they kept their sexual orientation secret. Though discriminatory, DADT provided a step forward. In 2010, President Barack Obama repealed the bill, thus allowing gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans to serve openly in the armed forces.



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CHARLES SILVERSTEIN

b. April 23, 1935

d. January 30, 2023

PSYCHOLOGIST & LGBT ACTIVIST

**His testimony
helped prompt the
declassification of
homosexuality as a
mental illness.**

*“We wanted to eliminate homosexuality
as a mental disorder, period.”*

Charles Silverstein was an American psychologist, writer, and gay rights activist. His testimony played a consequential role in persuading the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to declassify homosexuality as a mental illness.

Silverstein was born to a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. As a teenager, he recognized he was gay. Wishing he could be “cured,” he struggled with low self-esteem and feelings of shame.

Silverstein attended State University of New York at New Paltz. He taught elementary school for six years before deciding to become a psychologist. He earned his doctorate in social psychology from Rutgers University.

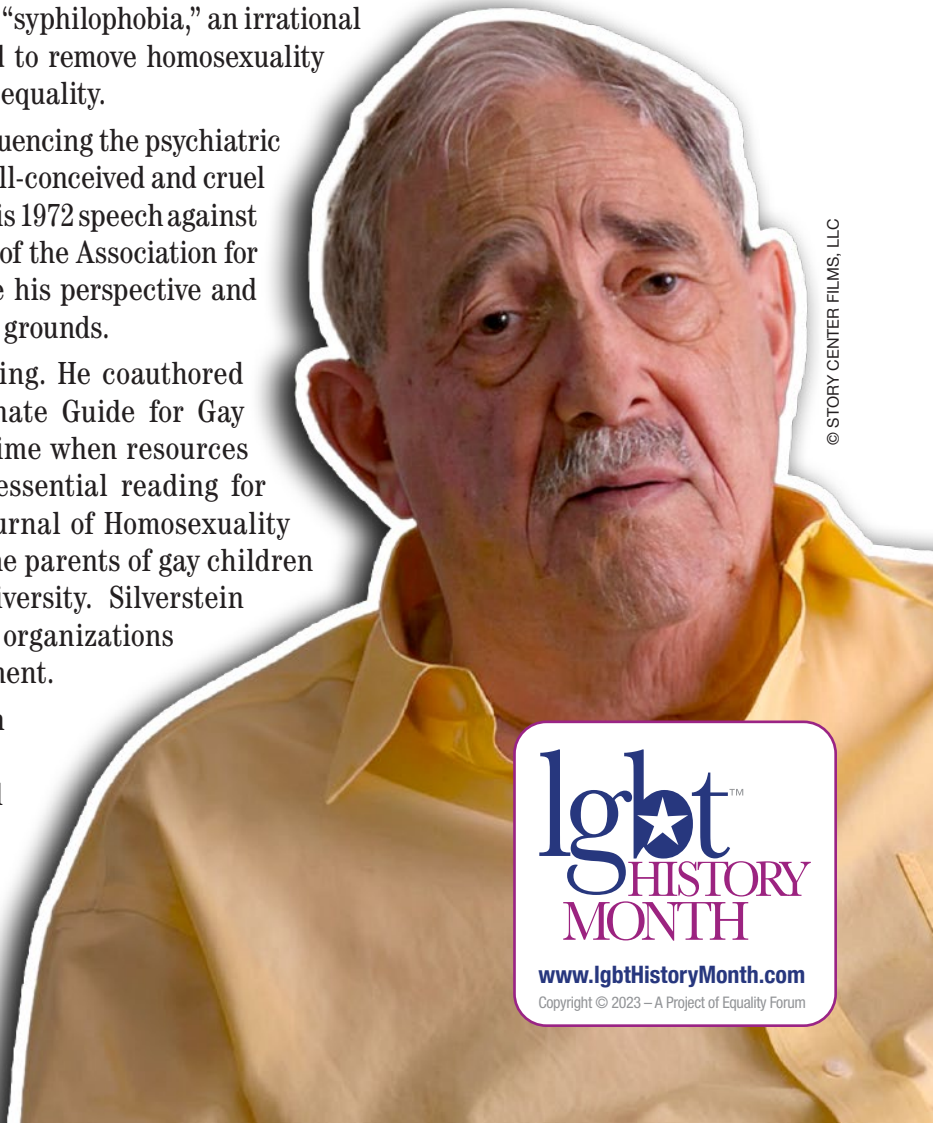
In his early 30s, after his first gay sexual experience, Silverstein emerged from the closet to become a passionate gay rights activist. He joined the pioneering Gay Activists Alliance in 1972 and began challenging the psychiatric profession over the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). In February 1973, while still a doctoral student, Silverstein spoke as one of several presenters to an APA panel who was reviewing the matter. Using humor to sway his audience, Silverstein satirized the organization’s previous absurd diagnoses, such as “syphilophobia,” an irrational fear of syphilis. Ten months later, the APA voted to remove homosexuality from the DSM. It marked a watershed for LGBTQ equality.

Silverstein’s activism also played a key role in influencing the psychiatric establishment’s views on conversion therapy, the ill-conceived and cruel attempt to change someone’s sexual orientation. His 1972 speech against the practice persuaded Gerry Davison, president of the Association for Advancement of Behavioral Therapies, to change his perspective and begin speaking out against the practice on moral grounds.

Silverstein’s activism also extended to publishing. He coauthored the 1977 book “The Joy of Gay Sex: An Intimate Guide for Gay Men to the Pleasures of a Gay Lifestyle.” At a time when resources on the topic were limited, the book became essential reading for countless men. Silverstein also founded the Journal of Homosexuality and authored guides for psychotherapists and the parents of gay children to help facilitate understanding of sexual diversity. Silverstein also founded two LGBTQ-affirming health care organizations dedicated to providing unbiased medical treatment.

Silverstein received an achievement award from GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality. He became an American Psychological Association Fellow in 1987 and received The Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement from the Association in 2011.

Silverstein died at age 87. He is survived by his adopted son.



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ANDREW SOLOMON

b. October 30, 1963

AWARD-WINNING
WRITER

His books have won more than 30 national and international awards.

"I believe that words are strong, that they can overwhelm what we fear."

Andrew Solomon is an award-winning author and a commentator on politics, culture, and psychology. He is a professor of clinical psychology at Columbia University and an activist for LGBTQ rights and mental health.

Solomon was born and raised in Manhattan. He studied English at Yale University and received his master's degree in the subject from Cambridge University, where he later earned a doctorate in psychology.

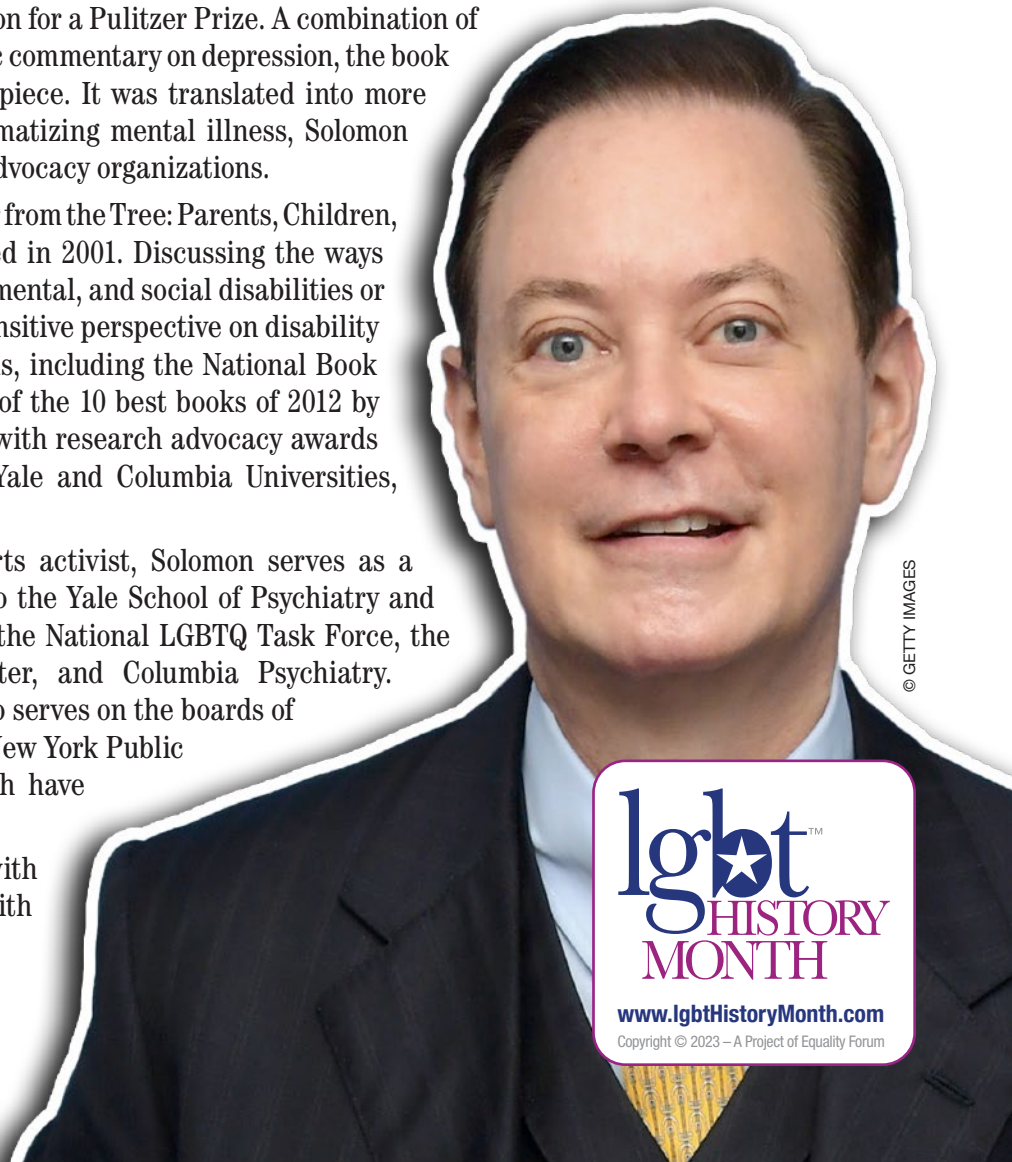
In 1991 Solomon published his first book, "The Irony Tower: Soviet Artists in a Time of Glasnost," a work of nonfiction based on his study of Russian vanguards. He published his first novel, "A Stone Boat," about a gay man's relationship with his terminally ill mother, in 1994.

A contributing writer for a variety of publications, including New York Times Magazine, Solomon published a personal account of his experiences with depression in 1998. The piece garnered widespread attention. In 2001 he shot to literary fame with "The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression," which won him the National Book Award and a finalist's position for a Pulitzer Prize. A combination of personal memoir and cultural and scientific commentary on depression, the book earned praise as a transformative masterpiece. It was translated into more than 20 languages. For his role in destigmatizing mental illness, Solomon was honored by numerous mental health advocacy organizations.

Solomon's best-selling nonfiction work, "Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity," was published in 2001. Discussing the ways that families raise children with physical, mental, and social disabilities or differences, the book was praised for its sensitive perspective on disability issues. It garnered over 30 national awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award, and was named one of the 10 best books of 2012 by The New York Times. It was also honored with research advocacy awards from the Departments of Psychiatry at Yale and Columbia Universities, among others.

An LGBTQ rights, mental health, and arts activist, Solomon serves as a Special Advisor on LGBT Mental Health to the Yale School of Psychiatry and as a member of the board of directors of the National LGBTQ Task Force, the University of Michigan Depression Center, and Columbia Psychiatry. A former president of PEN America, he also serves on the boards of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Public Library. His TEDx talks on mental health have been viewed more than 20 million times.

Solomon lives in New York and London with his husband and son. He has a daughter with a college friend.



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MICHAEL STIPE

b. January 4, 1960

ROCK STAR

*“My feeling is that labels are for canned food ...
I am what I am—and I know what I am.”*

**He is best known as
the front man for the
alt rock band R.E.M.**

Michael Stipe is a singer and lyricist, a producer, and a photographer. Praised for his distinctive baritone vocals that range from keening to crooning, he is best known as the front man for the American alternative rock band R.E.M.

Born John Michael Stipe, in Decatur, Georgia, he was a military brat who spent his childhood moving from place to place with his parents and two brothers. They settled in Illinois, where Stipe graduated high school. He attended the University of Georgia.

As a teenager, Stipe loved punk rock and idolized Patti Smith. He frequented a record store in Georgia, where he met Peter Buck. They decided to form a band, taking on members Bill Berry and Mike Mills to create R.E.M. Stipe is said to have picked the name randomly from a dictionary. R.E.M. quickly found success with their first single,

“Radio Free Europe,” and were signed by I.R.S. Records. They released their first EP, “Chronic Town,” in 1982.

Between 1982 and 2011, when the group disbanded, R.E.M. released 15 studio albums, five live albums, and numerous compilations and singles. The band earned countless national and international nominations and awards, including 12 MTV Video Music Awards, four BMI Pop Awards, and three Grammys. R.E.M. was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2007. They have sold more than 85 million albums.

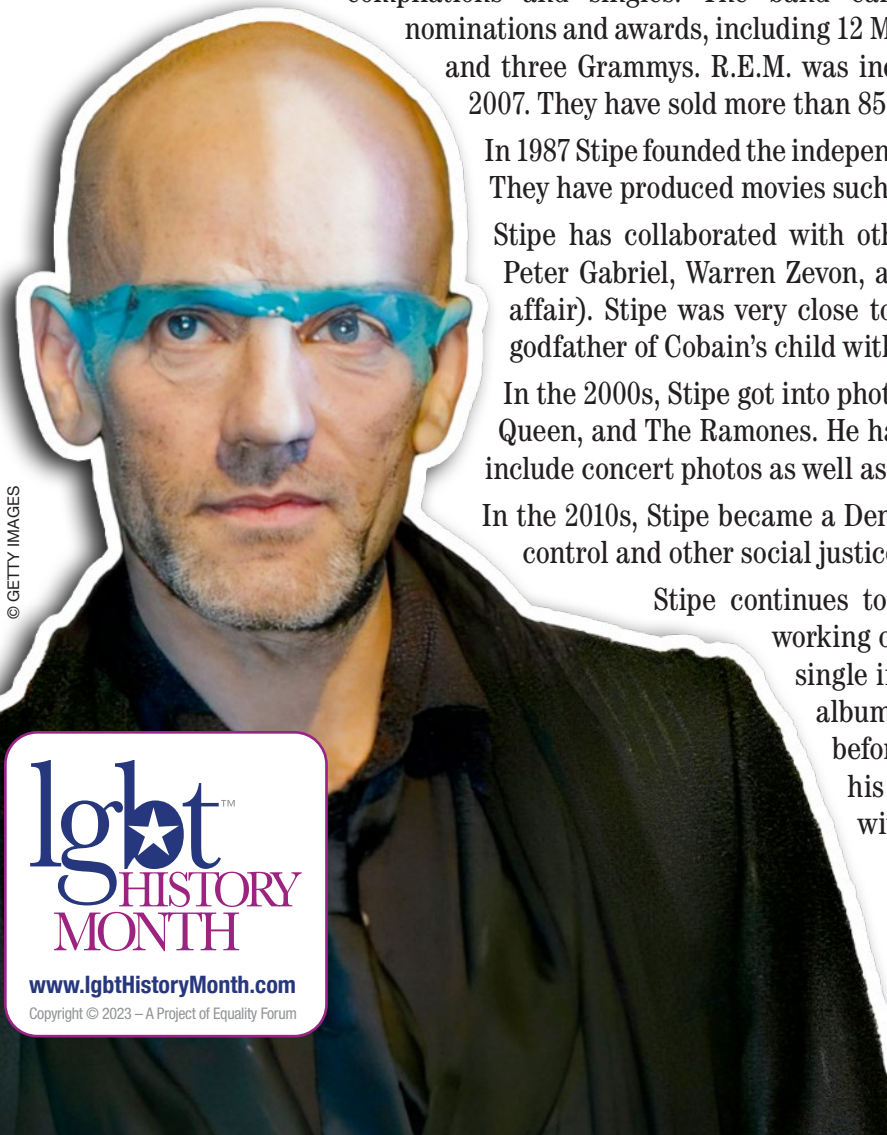
In 1987 Stipe founded the independent film company C-00 Films with Jim McKay. They have produced movies such as “Being John Malkovich” and “Saved.”

Stipe has collaborated with other popular musicians, including Tori Amos, Peter Gabriel, Warren Zevon, and Natalie Merchant (with whom he had an affair). Stipe was very close to fellow indie rocker Kurt Cobain and is the godfather of Cobain’s child with Courtney Love.

In the 2000s, Stipe got into photography, shooting concerts for The Runaways, Queen, and The Ramones. He has released several photography books, which include concert photos as well as individual portraits of other music artists.

In the 2010s, Stipe became a Democratic party activist. He has rallied for gun control and other social justice issues.

Stipe continues to write music, publish, and produce, and is working on his first art show. He released his first solo single in 2019 and is on track to release his first solo album late in 2023. He says he knew he was “queer” before he was 10, although he prefers not to label his sexuality. He lives in New York and Berlin with his partner, Thomas Dozol, a photographer.



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KARA SWISHER

b. December 11, 1962

TECH JOURNALIST & PODCASTER

**She is arguably
the most authoritative
tech journalist.**

*“Sure, I am funny ...
Mostly, though, I just tell the truth.”*

Kara Swisher is an American tech journalist and podcaster. Arguably the most powerful insider and authoritative voice in the industry, she has broken some of the biggest stories in Silicon Valley.

Swisher grew up on Long Island knowing she was gay from an early age. She attended Georgetown University and interned at The Washington Post. She earned her master's degree in journalism from Columbia University before returning to the Post for a full-time position.

In 1997 Swisher joined The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), where she became one of the first major reporters on the internet beat. She wrote a column called “Boom Town,” covering Silicon Valley’s hottest corporate players and personalities. Appearing on the front page of WSJ’s Marketplace section, it quickly secured her reputation as top tech writer. Many of the most powerful figures in the industry, such as Jeff Bezos and Marc Andreessen, sought her counsel early in their careers.

Swisher published a book about the internet-access giant AOL in 1998. She published a sequel in 2003. The same year, she and fellow journalist Walt Mossberg launched the award-winning conference “D: All Things Digital.” They later expanded the concept into the popular blog AllThingsD.com, a subsidiary of Dow Jones & Co. and part of the WSJ digital network. In 2014 Swisher and Mossberg left to start a new tech news site, Recode (later sold to Vox), and the Code Conference series.

Praised for her no-nonsense style and courage to hold power accountable, Swisher has interviewed dozens of prominent figures, going head-to-head with the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Rupert Murdoch, Larry Ellison, and Elon Musk. Her conferences have hosted groundbreaking conversations, like her joint interview with Steve Jobs and Bill Gates—the only one they ever did together—and the introduction of iconic products like Apple’s virtual assistant, Siri.

Swisher earned her stripes breaking big tech-industry news and ethics stories, such as the falsified résumé and subsequent resignation of Yahoo CEO Scott Thompson and the ouster of Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich. Eich donated to California’s Prop 8, which banned same-sex marriage. She regularly reported on controversial topics, including consumer privacy, regulatory issues, and the underrepresentation of women at major tech companies.

In 2018 Swisher became a New York Times Opinion writer and host of “Sway,” a podcast about power. In 2022 she hosted her last Code conference and launched a new podcast, “On With Kara Swisher,” with Vox Media and New York Magazine. She also co-hosts Vox’s “Pivot” podcast.

Swisher is married and has four children.



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ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY

b. October 16, 1948

d. January 18, 2022

FASHION JOURNALIST

*“I scorched the earth with my talent,
and I let my light shine.”*

**He was the first
Black person to serve
as creative director
of U.S. Vogue.**

André Leon Talley was an extravagant, trailblazing fashion journalist and pop-culture icon. He rose through the ranks of an elitist, historically white industry to become the creative director and editor at large at Vogue magazine. He was the first Black person ever to do so.

Talley's path to fashion-industry legend was far from typical. Growing up in the segregated South, he was raised by his grandmother, who worked as a cleaning lady.

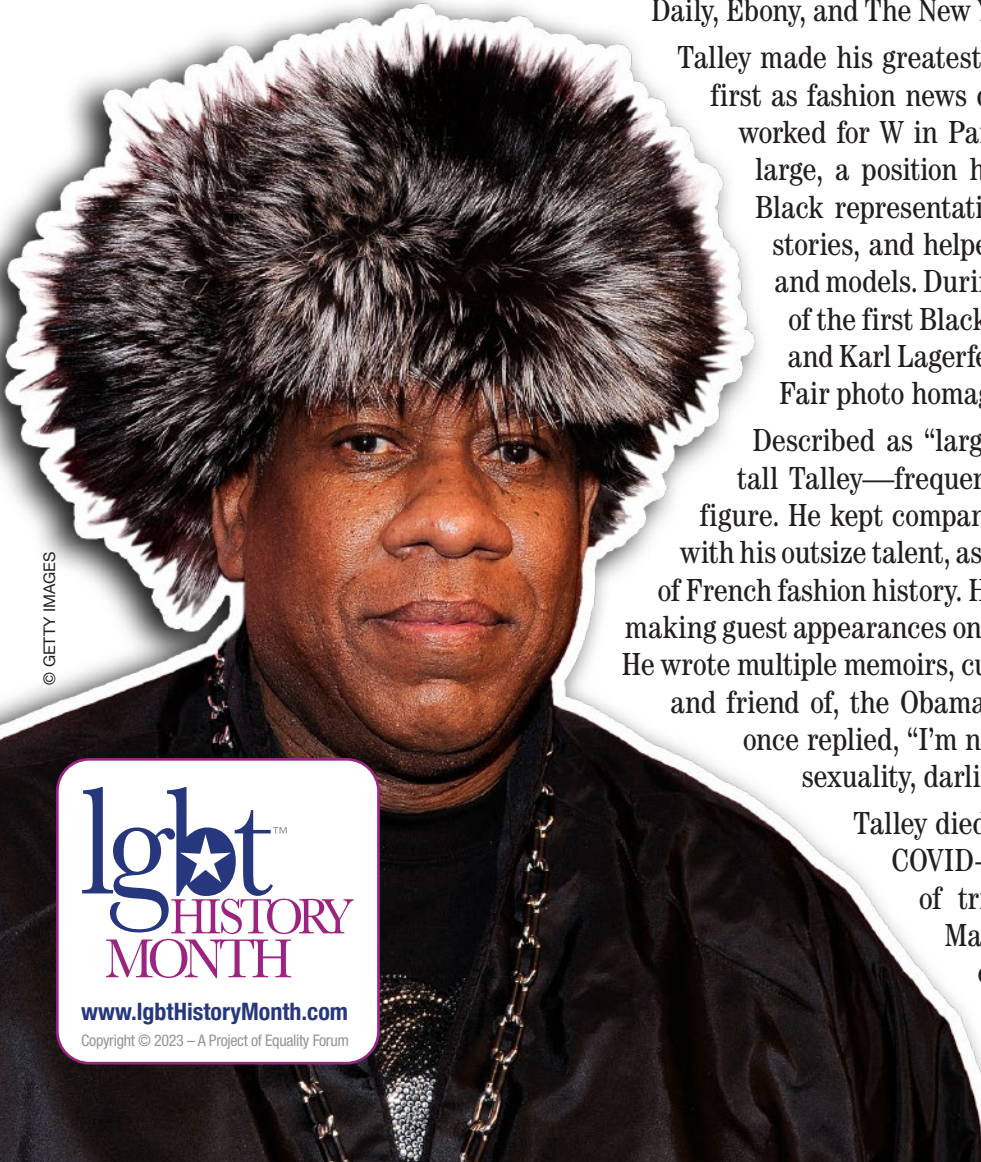
He credited her with his earliest understanding of style—watching her, with her gloves and blue-rinsed hair, meticulously ready herself for church. When Talley was 9, he discovered Vogue at the library. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, he found his passion and escape on its glossy pages.

After earning a master's degree in French literature on a scholarship from Brown University, Talley began his career as an unpaid intern for fashion journalist Diana Vreeland. She found him a position at Andy Warhol's Factory and at Interview magazine. He subsequently wrote for publications like Women's Wear Daily, Ebony, and The New York Times.

Talley made his greatest mark at Vogue, where he started in 1983, first as fashion news director and later as creative director. He worked for W in Paris before returning to Vogue as editor at large, a position he held until 2013. He pushed for greater Black representation on the runway, on title pages, and in stories, and helped advance the careers of Black designers and models. During his tenure, Naomi Campbell became one of the first Black models to appear on a Vogue cover, and he and Karl Lagerfeld famously featured her in a quirky Vanity Fair photo homage to the classic film “Gone with the Wind.”

Described as “larger than life,” the exuberant 6-foot-6-inch-tall Talley—frequently seen sporting a cape—cut a striking figure. He kept company with top designers, whom he impressed with his outsize talent, astute observations, and scholarly knowledge of French fashion history. He came to embody the idea of fashion itself, making guest appearances on shows such as “Sex and City” and “Empire.” He wrote multiple memoirs, curated exhibitions, and became a stylist for, and friend of, the Obamas. Asked about his sexual orientation, he once replied, “I’m not heterosexual. I’m saying I’m fluid in my sexuality, darling.”

Talley died from complications of a heart attack and COVID-19. His death was met with an outpouring of tributes from Anna Wintour, Tyra Banks, Marc Jacobs, Michelle Obama, and countless other famous friends and admirers.



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DORIS TAYLOR

b. February 21, 1956

CUTTING-EDGE MEDICAL SCIENTIST

“Trust your crazy ideas. If we always listened to the world that told us we couldn’t do it, we wouldn’t.”

She is a renowned regenerative medicine researcher, credited with engineering the first bioartificial beating heart.

Doris Taylor, Ph.D., is a cutting-edge researcher in the field of cardiovascular regenerative medicine. She is renowned for engineering the first bioartificial beating mammalian heart—a heart replacement made from specialized stem cells and natural structures.

Taylor was born in San Francisco and moved to Europe with her family when she was 2. After her father died of cancer, they moved to Columbus, Mississippi, her mother’s childhood home. Taylor’s twin brother suffered from cerebral palsy and

schizophrenia. Her father and brother’s illnesses inspired her to pursue a career helping others.

Taylor attended Mississippi University for Women, where she studied biology and physical sciences in a pre-med program. In her senior year, she fell in love with her roommate. The dean accused them of being lesbians and called their parents. Prevented from returning to campus for an extended period, Taylor ultimately failed her senior classes, excluding her from medical school.

Despite her devastating experience with discrimination and feelings of failure, Taylor eventually earned a doctorate in pharmacology from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Thereafter, she worked at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where she began her tissue-engineering research.

In 2008, leading a team of researchers at the University of Minnesota, Taylor used stem cells to engineer a beating rat heart and published a paper detailing the work. It was hailed as a landmark scientific breakthrough. By the time she was the director of regenerative medicine research at the Texas Heart institute, she had developed more than 100 of these biological “ghost hearts,” including nearly human-sized, derived from pigs.

Taylor is credited with many significant scientific breakthroughs. More than 200 prestigious journals have published her papers. She holds numerous patents and patent applications and has received myriad leadership and faculty appointments and awards. The American Heart Association named her work among the Top 10 Research Advances. She serves as a frequent keynote speaker and has been featured on the PBS “NOVA” series, the Discovery Channel, “60 Minutes,” CNN, and in countless other media.

Taylor is also a lifelong activist. During the AIDS crisis, she helped start the first buddy program, wrote the first brochure on gays and lesbians donating blood, and lectured on safe sex practices. She has advocated for the rights of individuals with HIV, among other social justice issues.

Taylor has founded several bioengineering firms dedicated to heart repair, including Organamet Bio, where she serves as CEO. Her goal is the eventual development of individually customized human heart replacements using patients’ own stem cells.



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EVELYN THOMAS

b. June 30, 1968

U.S. MILITARY ACTIVIST

Her protest focused national attention on the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

"Character is not bought or earned; it is lived."

Corporal Evelyn Thomas is a former marine and the founder of the Sanctuary Project for Veterans. As one of the "White House Six," she was arrested for chaining herself to the White House fence in peaceful protest over the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Raised by a struggling single mother, Thomas often did her homework by candlelight when her mother couldn't pay the electric bill. She learned about the Civil Rights Movement and the philosophy of nonviolent resistance from her mother. Thomas came out to her when she was 17. Months later, in 1986, Thomas joined the National Guard with her mother's authorization. She was not yet old enough to enlist on her own. The National Guard transferred her to the Marine Corps to serve her five-year commitment.

Thomas was stationed at Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California. She was outed by a fellow Marine who discovered a letter from her mother mentioning a woman Thomas was dating. The letter made its way to Thomas's commanding officer. Despite being a model cadet, she was laughed at, arrested by military police, and isolated. The Marines discharged her in 1991, under the national ban on gays and lesbians in the military.

Thomas subsequently enrolled in college. She earned her master's degree and found a job as a high school teacher.

In 1994 the Clinton administration instituted "Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT)," a policy permitting gays and lesbians to serve in the military if they kept their sexuality secret. A stop-gap compromise intended to end the official ban on LGBT servicemembers, it created problems of its own.

In 2009, after the murder of August Provost, an African-American Navy seaman who was suspected of being gay, Thomas became an activist. She established the Sanctuary Project for Veterans (SPV) to offer a refuge and confidential services for LGBTQ people serving "silently" under DADT.

In 2010 Thomas and five other military activists chained themselves to the White House fence to protest DADT and were arrested. Although civil disobedience was a difficult decision, Thomas felt strongly motivated, especially to protect women of color, who were disproportionately silenced and sexually coerced because of the policy.

Thomas's efforts, along with those of other activists, led to the abolishment of DADT in 2011. She was invited to witness President Obama signing the repeal. At the ceremony, she asked the president, "May I hug you on behalf of all the women of color impacted by DADT?" The two embraced.

Thomas is married. She is an openly gay educator who works to eliminate homophobia in schools.



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MPHO TUTU VAN FURTH

b. 1963

SOUTH AFRICAN ANGLICAN PRIEST

“God challenges us to love those with whom we don’t agree.”

She is an internationally respected priest, author, and human rights activist.

The Reverend Mpho Tutu van Furth is a South African cleric, author, and activist. A leading human rights advocate and proponent of forgiveness, she was barred from preaching by the Anglican Church of South Africa after she married a woman.

Tutu van Furth is the daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Prize-winning humanitarian and anti-apartheid activist. She was in her 30s when apartheid ended.

Growing up, Tutu van Furth had no interest in joining the clergy. Years of exposure to religious diversity finally inspired her to explore her own faith. At age 40, she

received a Master of Divinity from Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In 2004 Tutu van Furth began her ordained priesthood at Historic Christ Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia. In 2005 she founded and became executive director of the Tutu Institute for Prayer and Pilgrimage, which provides spiritual renewal for people of faith and faith seekers. She collaborated on several books, including “Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference” (2010), which she co-authored with her father, and “Tutu: The Authorised Portrait” (2011), with Allister Sparks, which chronicles her father’s life and accomplishments.

In 2011 Tutu van Furth moved back to South Africa, where she became executive director of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. In South Africa she met Marceline van Furth, a Dutch visiting professor of pediatric infectious diseases. When they developed a romance, Tutu prayed about it and concluded, “If this is love, then it’s love.”

After her housekeeper was murdered in 2012, Tutu van Furth spoke publicly about her difficult journey to forgive the killer. In 2014 she published “The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World.”

When Tutu married van Furth in 2015, the Anglican Church of South Africa revoked her clerical license. As the daughter of a venerated archbishop who campaigned for LGBTQ equality and women’s ordination, Tutu van Furth was deeply hurt. She and her wife moved to the Netherlands, where Tutu was free to preach.

As a religious leader, human rights advocate, and champion of mercy, Tutu van Furth is a celebrated speaker. She has shared the stage with influential figures, such as the 14th Dalai Lama and the spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle. Among many other initiatives, she advocated for forgiveness in the wake of racial tensions and police shootings in the United States. She produced the 2021 documentary “Mission: Joy – Finding Happiness in Troubled Times.”

Tutu van Furth preaches at Vriburj Church in Amsterdam. She and her wife have four children.



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SAMIRA WILEY

EMMY-WINNING ACTOR

b. April 15, 1987

“There’s some little girl out there watching [me] who can think differently about herself.”

Samira Wiley is an Emmy Award-winning actor and activist best known for her roles as Poussey Washington in “Orange Is the New Black” and Moira in “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

Wiley was born and raised in Washington, D.C. She credits her parents for her social conscience and moral compass. As preachers in a Baptist church, they were among the first to perform same-sex marriages, despite losing half their congregation because of it. Her parents were clear about taking a social stand, especially in the seat of federal government. Wiley came out to them when she was about 20.

She is best recognized for her roles in the TV series “Orange Is the New Black” and “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

Wiley was interested in acting as a child. As she neared graduation from her performing arts high school, she auditioned for multiple acting conservatories and was rejected by all of them. After Wiley attended one semester at Temple University, her mother convinced her to give Juilliard another try. She auditioned again and was accepted.

At Juilliard, a friend and writer for a new Netflix series, “Orange Is the New Black,” told Wiley about the

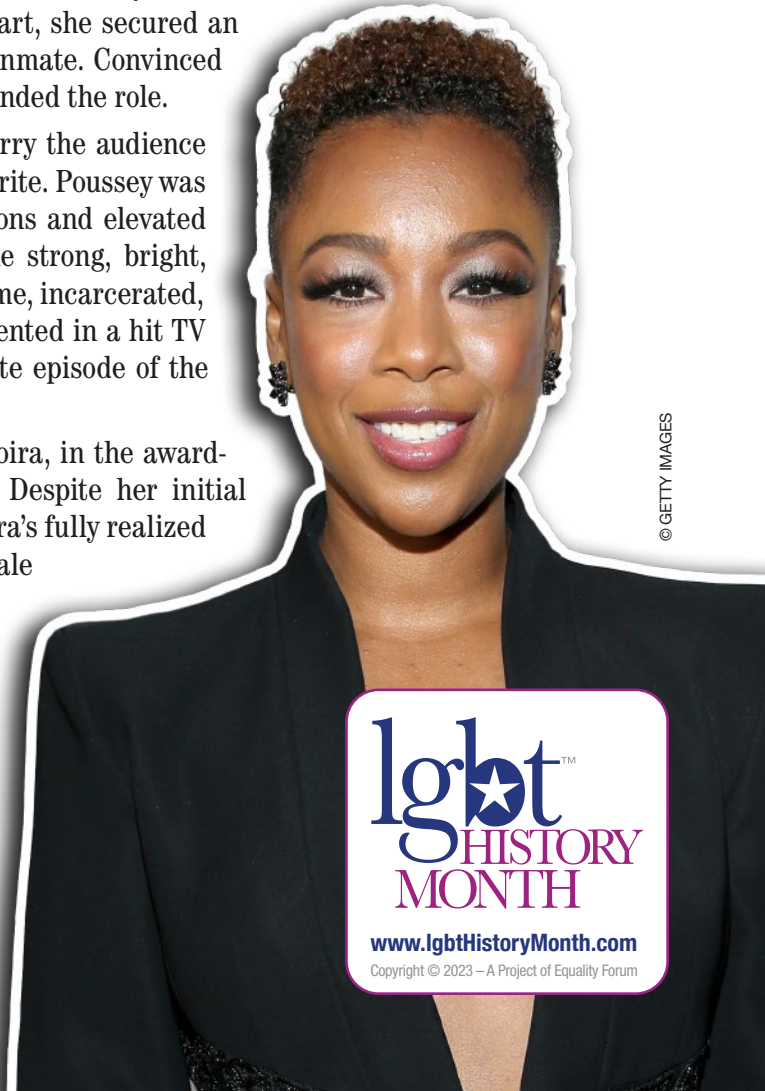
project. When Wiley discovered that a classmate had won a part, she secured an audition for the role of Poussey Washington, a lesbian prison inmate. Convinced the character resided in her somewhere, Wiley determinedly landed the role.

Praised for her powerful on-screen presence and ability to carry the audience through the full spectrum of emotions, Wiley became a fan favorite. Poussey was written as a recurring character in the show’s first two seasons and elevated to a main character in season three. Wiley’s portrayal of the strong, bright, sensitive Poussey has inspired countless Black, queer, low-income, incarcerated, or otherwise marginalized women who saw themselves represented in a hit TV series for the first time. The character died in the penultimate episode of the show’s fourth season.

Wiley went on to star as another courageous gay character, Moira, in the award-winning dystopian television series “The Handmaid’s Tale.” Despite her initial concerns about typecasting, Wiley took the role because of Moira’s fully realized character and the importance of strong queer Black female representation. Her widely praised performance earned her an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

Wiley has followed in her parents’ activist footsteps. The Human Rights Campaign presented her with a Visibility Award in 2015, and she has worked as a spokesperson for GLAAD. Her active social media presence affirms Black, LGBTQ, and gender-nonconforming youth.

In 2017 Wiley married Lauren Morelli, a writer for “Orange Is the New Black.” They have one child.



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PENNY WONG

b. November 5, 1968

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

*“You can choose not to be interested in politics,
but you can’t choose to be unaffected by it.”*

**She is the first LGBTQ
person to serve as
an Australian foreign
minister.**

Penny Wong is the Australian minister for foreign affairs and leader of the government in the Senate. A respected force in Australian politics, she is the first Asian Australian and first LGBTQ person to hold the office.

Wong was born in Malaysia to an Australian mother and a Malaysian father. When she was 8, her family moved to Australia. She quickly realized that race factored into other people’s perceptions of her. She attended the University of Adelaide, where she studied arts and law. She joined the Australian Labor Party (ALP) as a student and led protests over planned changes to university funding.

After she graduated in 1992, Wong worked for a furniture industry union. She campaigned for better working conditions and wages for its members, especially underpaid immigrant women.

Wong served as an adviser on forest policy to the New South Wales Labor Government and practiced law before she was elected to the Senate in 2001. She was reelected four times: in 2007, 2013, 2016, and 2022.

After the election of ALP Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2007, Wong was appointed minister of climate change and water. In this role, she significantly expanded the country’s Renewable Energy Target, driving increased investment in wind and solar power. She represented Australia in international climate negotiations and developed the government’s carbon emissions trading scheme to reduce greenhouse gases.

In 2010 Senator Wong was appointed minister for finance and deregulation. She has delivered three budgets in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis and implemented a policy to promote gender equality at the senior level in public- and private-sector workplaces.

Wong became leader of the government in the Senate in 2013. After the next election, she was appointed leader of the opposition in the Senate, making her the first woman to perform both these roles. Wong made history again in 2022, when she was appointed minister for foreign affairs. She is the first Asian Australian and first LGBTQ person to hold this position.

Soon after she was sworn in, Wong visited New Zealand and other Pacific Island nations to emphasize cooperation on climate, regional Indo-Pacific, and indigenous issues. An Australian household name, Wong is praised as an effective politician. A 2019 poll by The Australia Institute found Wong to be the most trusted federal legislator in the country.

Wong lives in Adelaide, Australia, with her partner and their two daughters.



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