

GIORGIO ARMANI FASHION DESIGNER

b. July 11, 1934

d. September 4, 2026

He was one of the most influential fashion designers of the 20th century.

“To create something exceptional, your mindset must be relentlessly focused on the smallest detail.”

Giorgio Armani was a world-renowned Italian fashion designer and the founder of Armani, a luxury fashion house. Known for sophisticated minimalist silhouettes, Armani's influential designs shaped contemporary views of gendered clothing and modern red-carpet fashion.

Born in Piacenza, Italy, Armani was raised in poverty during World War II. In 1951, he entered the University of Milan to study medicine. After completing compulsory military service in 1954, his interest pivoted to fashion, and he took a job at a department store. Seven years later, he joined Nino Cerutti's menswear company, Hitman.

In 1975, Armani and Sergio Galeotti, his business and life partner, founded Giorgio Armani S.p.A. in Milan. The brand's collections were marked by a natural fit and subtle color palette, both revolutionary at the time. In 1977, Armani met Leo Dell'Orco, who began working for Armani's company. The two formed a close friendship.

Armani captured public attention when Richard Gere wore his clothing in the film “American Gigolo” (1980). Three years later, Armani was honored as best international designer by the Council of Fashion Designers of America. His suits were worn by the lead actors in the stylish hit television series “Miami Vice” (1984-1989), and Hollywood stars began walking the red carpet in his evening wear.

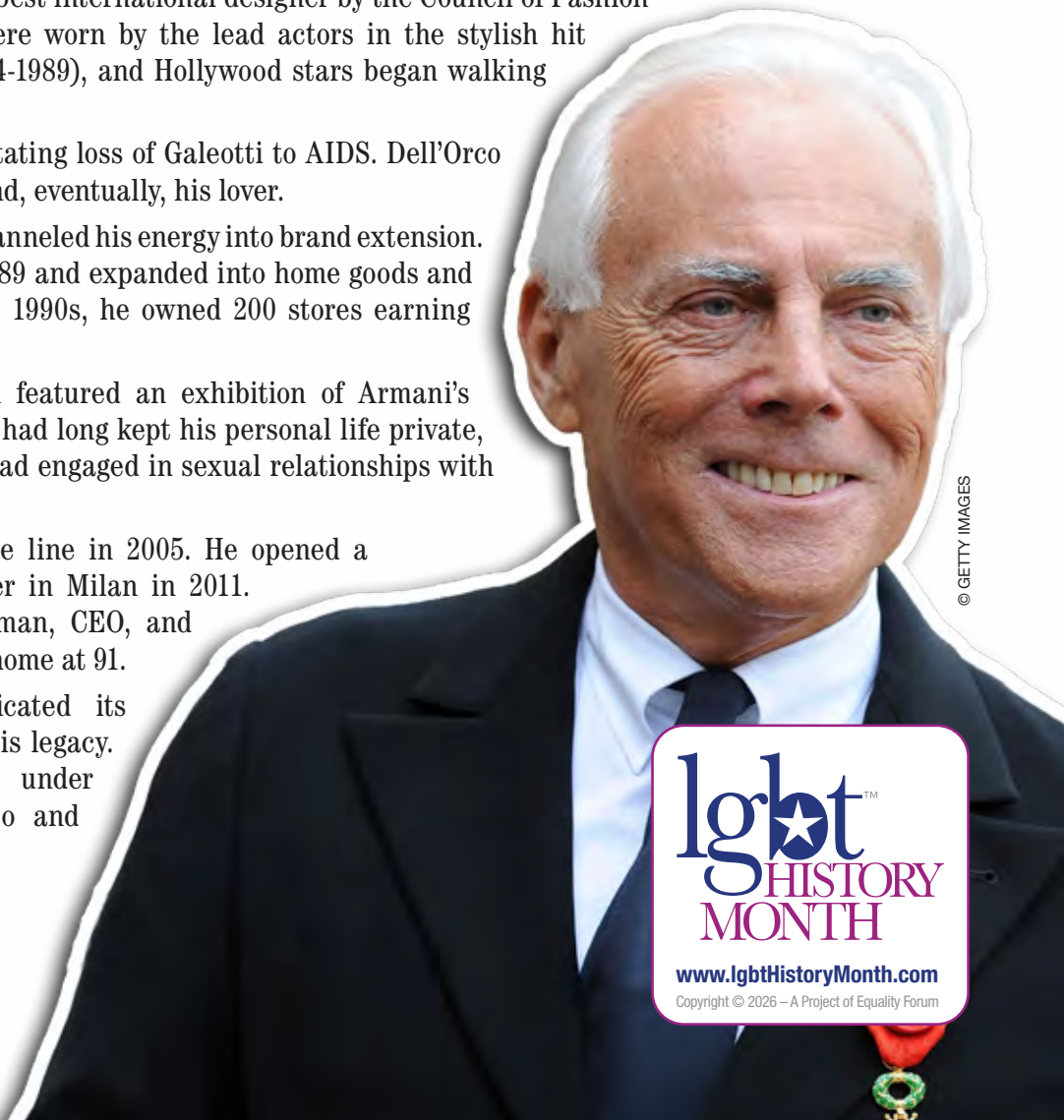
In 1985, Armani suffered the devastating loss of Galeotti to AIDS. Dell'Orco became his new business partner and, eventually, his lover.

As he processed his grief, Armani channeled his energy into brand extension. He opened his first restaurant in 1989 and expanded into home goods and book publishing. By the end of the 1990s, he owned 200 stores earning roughly \$2 billion in annual sales.

In 2000, the Guggenheim Museum featured an exhibition of Armani's work. That same year, Armani, who had long kept his personal life private, revealed for the first time that he had engaged in sexual relationships with both men and women.

Armani launched his haute couture line in 2005. He opened a hotel in Dubai in 2010 and another in Milan in 2011. He remained his company's chairman, CEO, and creative director until his death at home at 91.

The 2026 Winter Olympics dedicated its opening ceremony to Armani and his legacy. His company continues to thrive under the creative guidance of Dell'Orco and Armani's niece.



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GABRIEL ATTAL

b. March 16, 1989

FIRST GAY FRENCH PRIME MINISTER

“To be French in 2024 means being able to be prime minister while being openly gay.”

He was both the youngest and the first openly gay prime minister of France.

Gabriel Attal is the former prime minister of France. Appointed in 2024 by President Emmanuel Macron, he is both the youngest and the first openly gay person to hold the position. He is recognized for his advocacy for workers' rights and for his efforts to streamline government operations.

Born in Clamart, Île-de-France, Attal is the son of a Tunisian Jewish father and a Russian mother. He attended École Alsacienne, a French private school, where he experienced homophobic bullying.

Attal began his political engagement in 2006 by participating in youth protests against labor deregulation. Two years later, he entered Panthéon-Assas University, where he studied law. He earned a Master of Public Affairs from the Paris Institute of Political Studies in 2012.

During the 2012 presidential campaign, Attal interned at the French National Assembly. After which, he worked for five years as an assistant to the French minister of health.

In 2017, Attal was elected to the French National Assembly, where he served on the Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs and as the whip for the Together for the Republic group. He was named the group's chairman in 2018. That same year, one of Attal's former classmates outed him on Twitter. At the time, Attal was in a civil union with Stéphane Séjourné. Their union ended in 2024.

In October 2018, Attal was appointed junior minister of national education and youth. From 2020 to 2022, he served as government spokesperson under Prime Minister Jean Castex. The high-profile position showcased his skills as a communicator and bolstered his popularity. In 2023, after a government reshuffle, Attal was appointed minister of national education and youth.

When Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne resigned in 2024, Attal was named her successor, buoyed by public support. At 34, he became the youngest and the first openly gay prime minister of France. The French prime minister is accountable to Parliament and Parliament to the president.

After Attal's appointment, President Macron called a snap parliamentary election. Attal led the campaign for Macron's centrist Ensemble alliance, then resigned after the party's defeat.

In his speech during the handover ceremony for the new prime minister, Attal expressed his dissatisfaction with the brevity of his own tenure. Since then, Attal has distanced himself from President Macron, who, by law, cannot run for a third term. Attal is expected to run for the French presidency in 2027.

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ALVIN BALTROP

b. December 11, 1948

d. February 1, 2004

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER

*“I want people to see these photographs and say,
‘this is something from my time.’”*

**He documented 1970s and
'80s underground LGBTQ+
life along New York's lower
West Side piers.**

Alvin Baltrop was a photographer who captured raw and often sexual images of LGBTQ+ subculture during the 1970s and '80s — a perilous time to be poor and gay in America. Largely unseen until after his death, Baltrop's work provides pivotal documentation of LGBTQ+ life as lived around the Hudson River's dilapidated piers, near New York's Meatpacking District.

Born in the Bronx, Baltrop was the second son of a single mother. He discovered his love of photography in his teens, using a camera his uncle gifted him.

Baltrop honed his eye by observing the lighting in 1930s films and studying prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He started out taking photos at the Stonewall Inn and at Black Power rallies, and he asked friends to pose for him nude. Much of this early work was destroyed when his mother, a devout Jehovah's Witness, discovered it.

Although Baltrop was sexually fluid, he identified as gay after the Stonewall Riots. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1969 and served as a medic during the Vietnam War. In the service, he remained closeted at first for fear of the consequences, then began photographing other sailors who posed for him clothed and unclothed.

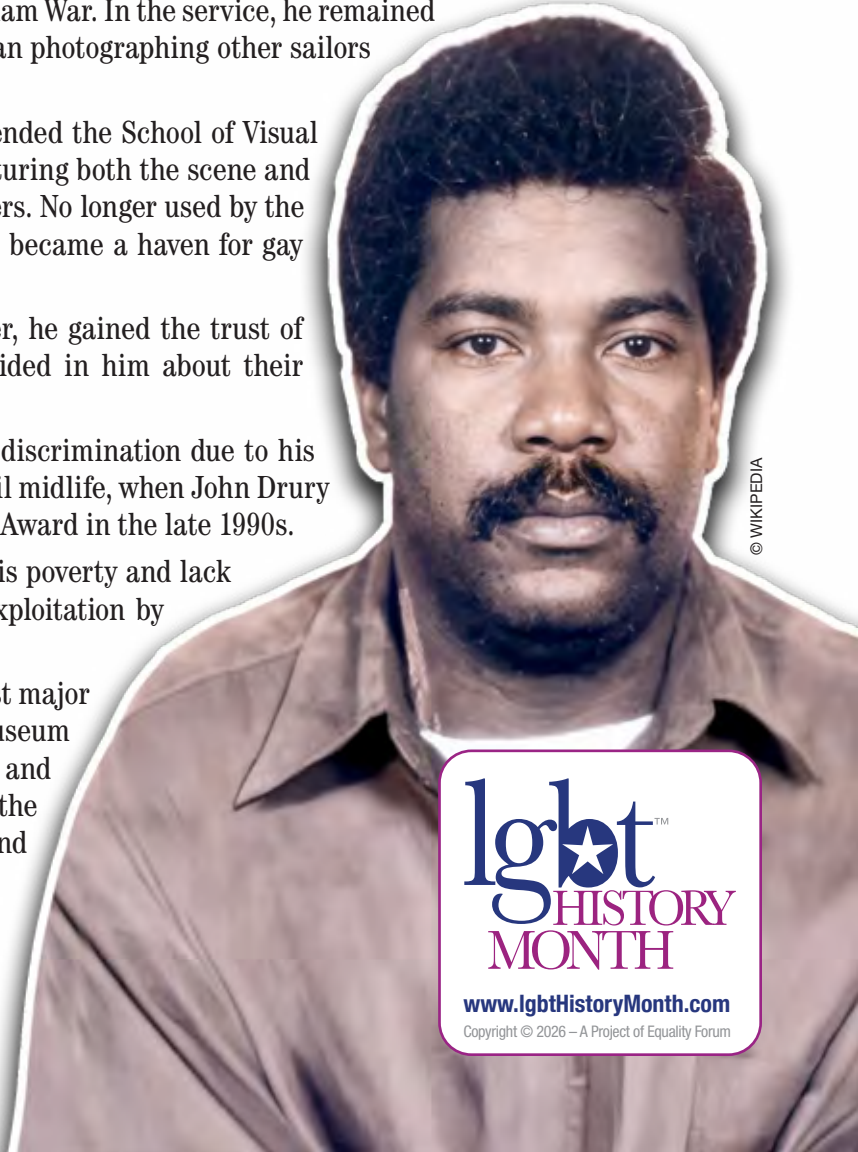
Baltrop was discharged from the Navy in 1972. He attended the School of Visual Arts from 1973 to 1975. During this time, he began capturing both the scene and the architecture along Manhattan's lower West Side piers. No longer used by the shipping industry and abandoned by the city, the area became a haven for gay cruising, sunbathing, and temporary living.

As Baltrop earned a local reputation as a photographer, he gained the trust of the waterfront LGBTQ+ community. Young men confided in him about their struggles with sexual identity and money.

In the art world, it was different. Baltrop faced harsh discrimination due to his race and sexuality and received no real recognition until midlife, when John Drury nominated him for a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in the late 1990s.

This period also brought Baltrop a cancer diagnosis. His poverty and lack of appropriate health care made him vulnerable to exploitation by curators and filmmakers. He died at age 55.

Baltrop's success arrived posthumously. In 2012, his first major solo exhibition debuted at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. The Bronx Museum presented “The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrop” in 2019. Today, his work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.



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FRIEDA BELINFANTE

b. May 10, 1904

d. March 5, 1995

CELLIST &
CONDUCTOR

"I've always helped people, whether they're worth it or not comes out later."

She was among the world's first female conductors and a member of the Dutch resistance.

Frieda Belinfante was a Dutch lesbian cellist and one of the world's first female conductors. She was active in the Dutch resistance during World War II and later became the founding artistic director and conductor of the Orange County Philharmonic Society in California.

Belinfante was born in Amsterdam to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. Her father was a well-known pianist and music school director. Her parents divorced when she was 11, and her father died eight years later.

Belinfante began playing the cello at age 10. She graduated from the Amsterdam Conservatory and made her professional debut at 17, performing with her father. That year, she moved in with her girlfriend, the composer Henriëtte Bosmans.

Near the end of her relationship with Bosmans, Belinfante met Johan Feltkamp. At his insistence, they married in 1930. They divorced in 1936.

In 1938, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw invited Belinfante to form a chamber ensemble, Het Klein Orkest (the Little Orchestra). She remained the ensemble's artistic director and conductor until 1941, making her the first woman to conduct an ongoing professional orchestra in Europe.

When the Nazis invaded the Netherlands, Belinfante put her career aside to join the resistance, helping musicians oppressed by German cultural restrictions and aiding persecuted Jews, children of mixed Jewish-gentile marriages, and homosexuals. She forged documents and prepared fake IDs. To keep vital information from the Nazis, she was involved in the daring destruction of Amsterdam's population registry. When the Gestapo retaliated, she went into hiding, disguising herself as a man, forging an ID, and calling herself "Hans." In 1943, she sold her cello and escaped on foot to Switzerland. After a brief incarceration for illegal immigration, she secured U.S. sponsorship.

In 1947, Belinfante emigrated to the United States, settling in California. She joined the UCLA music faculty in 1949 and, in 1953, formed The Vine Street Players to continue conducting. In 1954, she became the founding conductor and artistic director of the Orange County Philharmonic Society. When her contract ended in 1962 for various reasons, including her gender and sexual orientation, she established a small private studio to train other musicians.

In 1994, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum recognized Belinfante's courageous work for the Dutch resistance. She died of cancer a year later, but not before the Dutch government featured her story in an exhibition about the persecution of LGBTQ+ people during World War II.



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MICHEAL BENNETT

CHOREOGRAPHER & DIRECTOR

b. April 8, 1943

d. July 2, 1987

He was a seven-time Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway choreographer, best known as the creator of "A Chorus Line."

"I think I am now the king of backstage musicals, and you know what? I like it."

Michael Bennett was a seven-time Tony Award-winning Broadway choreographer, director, dancer, and writer, considered one of the most influential artists of his generation. Known for his work on musicals such as "Promises, Promises," "Follies," and "Dreamgirls," he is most famous for creating, choreographing, and directing the Pulitzer Prize-winning hit "A Chorus Line."

Michael Bennett DiFiglia was born in Buffalo, New York, to a Jewish mother and an Italian father. He started dance lessons at age 3 and staged productions in high school before joining the touring cast of "West Side Story" at 16. Early in his career, he met Larry Fuller, who became a significant romantic partner.

Bennett first danced on Broadway in "Subways Are for Sleeping" (1961). He made his Broadway debut as a choreographer with "A Joyful Noise" in 1966. Though commercially unsuccessful, the work earned him his first Tony nomination. Around this time, he appeared on the TV musical variety series "Hullabaloo," where he met Donna McKechnie, who would become his muse.

In 1968, with Neil Simon's "Promises, Promises," Bennett experienced his first commercial success for choreography and earned another Tony nomination. Three years later, he won his first two Tony Awards for Stephen Sondheim's "Follies."

In 1973, before the play "Seesaw" was set to open, Bennett was called to rescue the production. In the process, he pioneered and popularized the modern workshop method — a way to test a Broadway musical before it premiered.

During the 1970s, work for Broadway chorus dancers was difficult to find. To better understand the problem, Bennett recorded 20 hours of interviews with Broadway dancers. Those rich and poignant conversations eventually formed the basis of "A Chorus Line," which debuted off Broadway in 1975. It starred Donna McKechnie, whom he married in 1976. The marriage ended two years later, but they remained close.

"A Chorus Line" won nine Tony Awards and the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Its spectacular success created tremendous personal and professional pressure. Bennett turned to drugs and alcohol for relief, ultimately developing an ongoing substance-abuse problem.

Bennett's next musical, "Ballroom," failed financially but earned him another Tony Award. In 1981, "Dreamgirls," his final Broadway triumph, opened to immense critical acclaim.

Because of the stigma associated with queer sexuality at the time, Bennett was discreet about his romantic liaisons with men. He died of AIDS-related lymphoma at age 44 and left a portion of his estate to organizations battling AIDS.



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RACHEL CRANDALL-CROCKER

b. November 7, 1959

TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

“I wanted a day that we could focus on the living.”

She is the founder and organizer of International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Rachel Crandall-Crocker is a transgender psychotherapist and activist. She is the cofounder and executive director of Transgender Michigan and the founder and organizer of International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Crandall-Crocker was born to a middle-class Michigan family, the child of a CPA and a stay-at-home mom. From an early age, she felt misidentified as male. At the age of 8, she told her parents she was a girl. They forbade her from speaking about it again, and she remained closeted for decades.

In 1985, Crandall-Crocker received a master's degree in social work from Michigan State University and became a licensed psychotherapist. During her time at MSU, she began a 25-year tenure working with a local crisis intervention center.

After graduation, Crandall-Crocker married a woman and settled in Okemos, Michigan. When alone, she often dressed in women's clothing, applied makeup, and secretly left the house presenting as female.

Crandall-Crocker came out as transgender in 1997. It cost her her marriage, her job, and her home. The same year, to help people like herself feel less alone, she cofounded Transgender Michigan — one of the first groups of its kind in the United States — with Susan Crocker, whom she would later marry. A nonprofit organization, Transgender Michigan, offers connection, advocacy, education, and other services to support the trans and gender-nonconforming community, including coalition building and LGBTQ+ inclusion training. The organization established the nation's first transgender helpline.

In the late 1990s, Crandall-Crocker began shifting her practice to transgender-specific psychotherapy. Today, it is her specialty. She also disclosed that she has Tourette syndrome.

In 2009, after realizing that Transgender Day of Remembrance, which honors those who have died from anti-trans violence, was the only event acknowledging the community, she founded Transgender Day of Visibility to celebrate and empower the living. Held annually on March 31, it has since been embraced by numerous countries, helping to promote awareness and civil rights. In 2021, President Joe Biden issued a formal proclamation of the day and recognized it each subsequent year of his administration.

The recipient of multiple honors, Crandall-Crocker is the first transgender person to receive the Michigan State Bar's Liberty Bell Award for “outstanding citizens within the local community.” In 2024, MSU honored her with its Alumni Service Award.

Crandall-Crocker lives in Michigan with her wife, Susan. They continue to run Transgender Michigan.



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BARRY DILLER

b. February 2, 1942

MEDIA MOGUL

He is a billionaire media and digital-commerce pioneer.

“In today’s world, you don’t need scale to compete, you just need a good idea.”

Barry Diller is a television pioneer, former film studio head, and billionaire businessman. Perhaps best known as the cofounder of Fox Broadcasting Company and founder of USA Broadcasting, he currently serves as chairman and senior executive of the media conglomerate IAC/InterActiveCorp and the travel technology giant Expedia.

The second son of Jewish parents, Diller was born in San Francisco, California, and raised in Beverly Hills. His parents were emotionally distant, and he suffered abuse from his heroin-addicted brother.

Diller attended UCLA briefly before dropping out to work in the mailroom of the William Morris Agency. He later joined ABC and helped pioneer the made-for-TV movie, becoming vice president of ABC’s prime-time programming by 1973.

In 1974, at age 32, Diller took over leadership of Paramount Pictures. As its chairman and CEO, he made Paramount the most successful Hollywood studio of the late 1970s and early ’80s.

In 1984, Diller assumed chairmanship of 20th Century Fox. With Rupert Murdoch, he launched the Fox Broadcasting Company in 1986 as a fourth commercial broadcast network, rivaling ABC, NBC, and CBS. Conceived as an edgier alternative, Fox targeted a younger demographic with early programming that included “Married With Children” and “America’s Most Wanted.” The network launched “The Simpsons” in 1989.

Diller resigned from Fox in 1992 and acquired a stake in the home shopping channel QVC. A year later, he became its chairman and CEO. In 1994, he was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

In 1996, Diller acquired Silver King Broadcasting and repurchased one of its former assets, the Home Shopping Network. By year’s end, he had merged the two with Savoy Pictures Entertainment, Inc., to form HSN Inc. In 1998, he renamed the entity USA Networks Inc. (later USA Interactive). In 2001, USA Interactive purchased a majority stake in Expedia. In 2003, USA Interactive became InterActiveCorp.

From 2002 to 2003, Diller also served as co-chairman and CEO of Vivendi Universal. He has been the chairman of Expedia Group since 2005.

Over the years, Diller has had many romantic relationships with men. In the 1970s, he began an on-again, off-again relationship with the prominent fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg. They married in 2001.

Although his sexuality was an open secret in elite circles, Diller never disclosed it publicly. In 2025, he published the memoir “Who Knew,” detailing his life and struggles with his sexual fluidity.

Married for more than 25 years, Diller and von Furstenberg live in New York City.

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ERNESTINE ECKSTEIN

GAY PIONEER

b. April 23, 1941

d. July 15, 1992

**She was a pioneering
Black lesbian and
leader of the early
LGBTQ+ civil rights
movement.**

*“I’ve always believed that love
transcends any kind of label —
Black, white, woman, man.”*

Ernestine Eckstein was a pioneering Black lesbian activist and leader of the early LGBTQ+ civil rights movement. She served as the New York chapter vice president of the nation’s first lesbian organization and participated in the Annual Reminders — the first demonstrations for gay and lesbian equality, held from 1965 to 1969, in front of Independence Hall.

Born Ernestine Delois Eppenger, Eckstein was one of eight children. Growing up, she was attracted to various female teachers and friends but did not know those feelings had a name. She attended Indiana University, where she majored in magazine journalism and minored in Russian and government. After graduating in 1963, she moved to New York City.

In New York, Eckstein met members of the nascent LGBTQ+ community. When she identified herself as a lesbian, she quickly turned to activism, adopting the pseudonym Eckstein for protection. At the time, her race and sexuality put her safety at risk.

Eckstein attended meetings of the New York chapter of the Mattachine Society, the first gay civil liberties organization in the United States, which led to her membership in the Daughters of Bilitis, the first U.S. lesbian organization. She also joined the Congress of Racial Equality, an influential organization in the Black Civil Rights Movement.

In 1965, Eckstein broke new ground as an African American and a lesbian. She was appointed vice president of the New York City chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis and traveled to Philadelphia to participate in the first Annual Reminder Demonstration for Gay and Lesbian Rights, held on July Fourth in front of Independence Hall. Eckstein is the only known Black person to have participated among the roughly 40 protesters that day. In October, she demonstrated in front of the White House, where again, she was the only person of color picketing. Her sign read “Denial of Equality of Opportunity is Immoral.”

In 1966, Eckstein gave an interview to “The Ladder,” the magazine produced by the Daughters of Bilitis, and was the first out Black lesbian featured on the cover. In the article, she stated that even before she knew she was gay, she believed that love transcended labels.

In 1968, Eckstein moved to Northern California. In the early 1970s, she joined the feminist organization Black Women Organized for Political Action. She worked in advocacy and activism throughout her life, although little more is known about her work.

Eckstein died in San Pablo, California, at the age of 51. Her cause of death is unknown.



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LAÏLA EL-MÉTOUI

b. December 10, 1967

LGBTQ+ EDUCATOR

“I hope to encourage people to be the change they want to see.”

Laïla El-Métoui is an acclaimed UK-based LGBTQ+ equity and well-being educator, motivational speaker, and activist, working to increase equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in schools and workplaces worldwide. She has founded several organizations, including Pride in Education and SWANA Queers (previously UK Queer Arabs).

She is an acclaimed global LGBTQ+ equity and well-being educator, based in the UK.

El-Métoui was the firstborn child of Muslim parents in Paris, France. She grew up practicing Islam and learning to speak English, French, and Arabic. She frequently cared for her younger siblings and translated for her parents, which fostered her love of teaching.

Although same-sex relationships are condemned by traditional Islamic law, El-Métoui's family was supportive when she came out as a lesbian. Otherwise, her experiences as a queer Arab Muslim were largely negative. Because of this, and the racism she faced in France, she immigrated to the United Kingdom in 1989 and converted to Buddhism around the same time.

El-Métoui began a career in education in 1992 and earned a certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) from the University of London in 1994. She gave her first presentation as an ESOL lecturer at City & Islington College in 2000. That same year, in response to cuts to anti-LGBTQ+ bullying programs in UK schools, she founded Pride in Education. The organization focuses on inclusion in academic and professional learning. She later founded LelmEducation to expand her work into public and corporate environments.

The National Association for Teaching English and Other Community Languages to Adults named El-Métoui chair in 2008. She subsequently served for two years as curriculum manager for tutorial and enrichment at Hackney Community College (now New City College). In 2015, she became project coordinator for the City of London Corporation.

In 2018, El-Métoui became the co-chair of the LGBT+ Staff Forum and the founder and chair of Proud London Councils. In 2021, she founded UK Queer Arabs, now known more inclusively as SWANA (South West Asian and North African) Queers.

Among many other achievements and honors, El-Métoui has been named to the Love Queer Top 100 Trailblazer list, the Diva Power List, the National Diversity Power List Top 50, and the Top 20 Lesbian Trailblazers list. UK Stonewall named her Stonewall Lesbian Role Model of the Year.

In mid-life, El-Métoui developed a hidden disability. She lives in London and continues to teach, present, and consult globally.



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EDWARD ENNINFUL

FASHION EDITOR

b. February 22, 1972

He was the first Black male editor in chief of British Vogue.

“I like to play with contrast. It’s about changing people’s perceptions of people.”

Edward Enninful is the editorial and creative advisor to Vogue magazine and the founder and CEO of the media firm EE72. A fashion-industry pioneer, he was the youngest person to serve as fashion director of an international publication and the first Black man to serve as editor in chief of British Vogue.

Born in Ghana, Enninful is the fifth child of an army officer and a seamstress. He first learned about fashion through his mother’s work. When he was 13, the family moved to West London, England.

In 1988, Simon Foxton, a creative consultant and fashion director for i-D magazine, spotted Enninful on a train and soon hired him to model. Because Ghanaian society is notoriously hostile to LGBTQ+ people, their sexuality is kept secret. Foxton was the first openly gay person Enninful ever encountered.

While shooting with Foxton, Enninful met the cofounders of i-D. Two years later, he was assisting Beth Summers, the publication’s fashion director. When Summers left in 1991, 18-year-old Enninful took over, making history as the youngest fashion director of an international publication. He soon earned a reputation for his elegant take on edgy street-style fashion.

In the 1990s, Enninful met Alec Maxwell, an intern at the studio of the renowned fashion designer Amanda Wakeley, and the two became lifelong romantic partners. Enninful came out as gay in 1993.

In 1998, Italian Vogue hired Enninful as a contributing editor. He became a contributing fashion editor for American Vogue in 2006 and then, in 2011, the style director for W Magazine, a struggling Condé Nast publication. He reinvigorated W with sexually charged layouts featuring celebrities like Nicki Minaj and photography by industry superstars like Steven Meisel and Steven Klein. Enninful became one of the world’s most sought-after stylists.

British Vogue named Enninful its editor in chief in 2017. He is the first male, the first Black person, and the first out gay person ever to hold the position. In this new role, he championed greater diversity and inclusion in fashion — both in the magazine and in its creation. He commissioned Misan Harriman to shoot a cover in 2020, making Harriman the first Black male photographer to shoot a British Vogue cover.

Enninful’s latest incarnation came about in 2025, when he and his sister, Akua, established EE72, a global entertainment and media firm. The venture launched with a print magazine and digital platform focused on the intersection of culture, beauty, fashion, and luxury.



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ANDREA GIBSON

b. August 13, 1975

d. July 14, 2025

POET & ACTIVIST

She was an award-winning writer, named the 2023 poet laureate of Colorado.

“In the end I want my heart to be covered in stretch marks.”

Andrea Gibson was an award-winning poet and activist whose work explored themes such as politics, gender identity, love, and trauma. Gibson is the subject of the 2025 documentary “Come See Me in the Good Light.”

Born in Calais, Maine, to conservative Baptist parents, Gibson identified as genderqueer and used they/them pronouns. They began writing poetry as a child.

Gibson attended Saint Joseph’s College of Maine on a basketball scholarship and graduated with an English degree in 1997. They moved to Boulder, Colorado, in 1999, where they worked as a Montessori school teacher.

After attending an open mic in Denver, Gibson was inspired to become a spoken-word poet. They left teaching in 2005 to pursue the art form full-time. In 2008, Gibson won the inaugural Women of the World Poetry Slam in Detroit, Michigan, and went on to compete in numerous performance poetry competitions, winning the Denver Grand Slam Championship four times.

Gibson published multiple poetry collections and released seven spoken-word albums. Their first published book, “Pole Dancing to Gospel Hymns” (2008), helped establish them as a leading voice in the spoken-word genre. Their 2018 collection, “Lord of the Butterflies,” earned several poetry category prizes, including an Independent Publisher’s Book Award and an Eric Hoffer Book Award.

As an activist, Gibson focused on LGBTQ+ issues, gun reform, and patients’ rights. Among other efforts, they performed their poem “America, Reloading” (with music by Ani DiFranco) on video to prompt action against gun violence, and partnered with Power to the Patients, a nationwide movement to push for hospital pricing transparency.

In 2021, Gibson was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Their collection, “You Better Be Lightning” (2021), which covers issues from queerness to healing and mortality, earned another Independent Publisher’s Award for poetry in 2022 and the Feathered Quill Book Award for Poetry in 2023, among others.

In 2023, Governor Jared Polis named Gibson the poet laureate of Colorado. Gibson received an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship the following year.

After nearly a decade together, Gibson married fellow poet Megan Falley in 2022. The documentary “Come See Me in the Good Light” chronicles Gibson’s life and the couple’s struggle with Gibson’s terminal diagnosis. Premiering at Sundance in January 2025, the film earned numerous awards, along with an Oscar nomination. Gibson’s love song for Megan, “Salt Then Sour Then Sweet,” is featured in the film and performed by Sara Bareilles and Brandi Carlile. Six months after the film’s release, Gibson died at home in Longmont, Colorado.

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MARSDEN HARTLEY

b. January 4, 1877

d. September 2, 1943

MODERNIST PAINTER

**He was a pioneer
of American
Modernist art.**

*“It is never difficult to see images
— when the principle of the
image is embedded in the soul.”*

Marsden Hartley was a 20th-century American painter, poet, and essayist. An early interpreter of European Modernism, he helped introduce elements of Expressionism and abstraction into American art. Best known for his landscapes, he was also among the first American Modernists to explore homoerotic themes.

Baptized Edmund Hartley, he was born in Lewiston Maine, the youngest of nine surviving children of English-immigrant parents. His mother died when he was 8. Four years later, his father remarried Martha Marsden.

Hartley studied with the landscape painter John Semon before earning a scholarship to the Cleveland School of Art. In 1899, he received a stipend to attend the William Merritt Chase School of Art in New York City. He transferred to the National Academy of Design, where, in 1902, he won its Suydam Silver Medal for still-life drawing. He later returned to Lewiston and traveled through western Maine, painting landscapes. To reinvent himself as a professional artist, he adopted the first name Marsden in honor of his stepmother.

After several exhibitions, Hartley captured the attention of the New York photographer and art promoter Alfred Stieglitz. In 1909, Stieglitz mounted the first of Hartley's three solo exhibitions at his influential 291 gallery.

In 1912, Hartley traveled to Paris, where he met Gertrude Stein and her circle of avant-garde writers and artists. There, he met Karl von Freyburg, a Prussian lieutenant widely believed to have been his lover. Because same-sex relationships were criminalized, Hartley kept his sexuality private.

Hartley moved to Germany in 1913, where he was influenced by the Expressionist movement. A year later, von Freyburg was killed in World War I. Hartley memorialized him in a series of abstract paintings, including “Portrait of a German Officer” (1914). He encoded themes of homosexual desire in these and his figurative paintings later in life.

Hartley spent most of the 1920s in Europe painting still lifes and landscapes. In 1931, he relocated to New Hampshire and received a Guggenheim Fellowship, which supported his yearlong residence in Mexico.

After hopping around several locations, Hartley eventually settled in his home state, where he embraced his identity as “the painter from Maine.” In the late 1930s, he began painting muscular hypermasculine figures, inspired by sunbathers, fishermen, and laborers.

At 66, Hartley died of heart failure in Ellsworth, Maine. In addition to his painting, he was an accomplished writer whose work appeared in leading publications, including *Vanity Fair* and *The New Republic*.



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MUHSIN HENDRICKS

b. June 1967

d. February 15, 2025

ISLAMIC LGBTQ+ ACTIVIST

**He was an openly
gay imam and a
pioneering champion
of LGBTQ+ Muslims.**

*“The need to be authentic is
greater than the fear of death.”*

Muhsin Hendricks is widely regarded as the world's first openly gay imam. A scholar, an activist, and a pioneering champion of LGBTQ+ Muslims, he compassionately challenged traditional views of homosexuality in Islam.

Hendricks was born in Cape Town, South Africa, to traditional Indonesian Muslim parents. His grandfather was the community imam. From 1990 to 1994, Hendricks attended the University of Islamic Studies in Karachi, Pakistan, and later received a diploma in counseling and communications from South African College for Applied Psychology.

After completing his religious training, Hendricks returned to Cape Town, where he initially served as a co-imam at a local mosque. He went on to teach in other mosques and madrasas.

In 1991, Hendricks was wed to a woman in an arranged marriage. They had three children together before divorcing in 1996. After the divorce, he spent 80 days intensely praying and fasting before publicly coming out as gay. Hendricks was immediately dismissed from his teaching roles as an imam and shunned by other clerics. In response to his ostracism, he created Inner Circle (later renamed the Al-Fitrah Foundation), an organization to help LGBTQ+ Muslims reconcile their sexuality with their faith and to provide a safe space to practice Islam without judgment.

Hendricks officiated at same-sex marriage ceremonies and entered his own marriage with a Hindu man in 2006. He wrote numerous articles and facilitated workshops on Islam and sexual diversity in South Africa, America, and Europe. In 2007, he appeared in the groundbreaking documentary “A Jihad for Love,” about LGBTQ+ Muslims, and faced harsh condemnation from Islamic leaders who expelled him from the faith by formal decree.

In 2011, despite continuing opposition, Hendricks opened Masjidul Ghurbaah, an inclusive mosque in Cape Town. He directed the documentary film, “Fitrah: Negotiating Islam, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” in 2013, and established the Al-Ghurbaah Foundation in 2018 to continue his advocacy work. He traveled widely, working with international organizations to promote justice, equality, and interfaith support for LGBTQ+ Muslims.

Following the release of a documentary about Hendricks, “The Radical” (2022), the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) issued a fatwa against him — a nonbinding decree based on Sharia law, reinforcing Islam's stance against gay Muslims.

Over the years, Hendricks received numerous death threats for his activism. In 2025, on his way to officiate at a heterosexual interfaith wedding, he was assassinated by a masked gunman. Although the murder was condemned by the MJC and the South African Department of Justice, it was not labeled a hate crime.

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PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

b. January 19, 1921

d. February 4, 1995

AMERICAN NOVELIST

She was a famous author of psychological thrillers such as “The Talented Mr. Ripley.”

“My imagination functions much better when I don’t have to speak to people.”

Patricia Highsmith was an American novelist and short-story writer best known for her internationally famous psychological thrillers “Strangers on a Train” and “The Talented Mr. Ripley.” Popular screen adaptations of these and many of Highsmith’s works have been released over the last 75 years.

Born Mary Patricia Plangman in Fort Worth, Texas, Highsmith was the only child of two artists. Her parents’ marriage ended nine days before her birth, purportedly after her mother, at her father’s urging, attempted to terminate the pregnancy. In 1924, her mother married Stanley Highsmith, and they moved to New York City, where Highsmith was raised. She developed an early interest in psychology, reading Karl Menninger’s “The Human Mind” at age 9.

Highsmith attended Barnard College and graduated in 1942. She spent the next seven years working on her own writing while supporting herself as a comic book writer. Her breakthrough came in 1945 when Harper’s Bazaar published her short story, “The Heroine,” a piece that established her hallmark style and dark psychological themes.

In 1950, Highsmith published her first novel, “Strangers on a Train.” She sold the rights indirectly to an unknown buyer, later identified as the director Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock released a screen adaptation in 1951. Initially pleased, Highsmith later criticized the film’s ending, which was altered from the book’s, due to Hollywood censorship.

Highsmith published a novel about a lesbian relationship, “The Price of Salt,” under the pseudonym Claire Morgan in 1952. It is recognized today as a groundbreaking work. She wrote her most famous book, “The Talented Mr. Ripley” (1955), in just six months. Its main character, Tom Ripley, appeared in four of her subsequent novels. The book received the 1957 Grand Prix de Littérature Policière and inspired film adaptations, including “Purple Noon” (1960), “The Talented Mr. Ripley” (1999), starring Matt Damon, and the Netflix limited series “Ripley” (2024).

A lesbian whose sexuality informed her work, Highsmith struggled with internalized homophobia. In her 20s, she was engaged to a man but never married. She had many affairs with women, most of whom were married, and avoided permanent romantic relationships. The screenwriter Phyllis Nagy described her as “a lesbian who did not very much enjoy being around other women.”

All together, Highsmith published seven short story collections and 20 novels. Among other honors, she was named an Officer of the French Order of Arts and Letters in 1990 and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991. She spent much of her life in Europe and died in Locarno, Switzerland, in 1995.



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ROBERT JOFFREY

b. December 24, 1930

d. March 25, 1988

DANCER & CHOREOGRAPHER

**He was a world-
renowned
choreographer
and founder of the
Joffrey Ballet.**

“To me, dance is everything that’s good. Everything that’s beautiful, everything that’s difficult.”

Robert Joffrey was a world-renowned ballet dancer, instructor, and choreographer. His acclaimed Joffrey Ballet company introduced the art form to scores of Americans.

Born Abdullah Jaffa Anver Bey Khan to an Afghan Muslim father and an Italian mother, Joffrey grew up in Seattle, determined to culturally assimilate despite his father’s wishes. Dance became his refuge.

A small, bowlegged, asthmatic child, Joffrey was an unconventional candidate for classical dance. He began his training early with the ballet master Ivan Novikoff. At 11, he earned a nondancing role in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo’s “Petrushka,” sparking his ambition to one day lead a dance company.

In 1945, Joffrey met Gerald Arpino, a Coast Guard veteran from Staten Island, and they began a lifelong romantic and professional partnership. Joffrey convinced Arpino to study dance with him under Mary Ann Wells in Seattle. Wells encouraged her students to study choreography and helped Joffrey make the best of his atypical physique.

At 18, Joffrey moved to New York with Arpino and studied under George Balanchine. After performing in Europe, he began teaching in 1950 at the High School of Performing Arts (NYC), where he trained several dancers who joined the original Joffrey Ballet.

Joffrey started his ballet school in 1953, after a calf injury derailed his performing career. With Arpino, he founded the Joffrey Ballet in 1954 at New York’s 92nd Street YMCA. They launched a modest national tour in 1956 with six dancers in a borrowed station wagon.

In 1962, Joffrey met Rebekah Harkness, who financed performances that earned the company international acclaim. Their partnership ended bitterly in 1964 over creative differences, and recurring financial struggles followed.

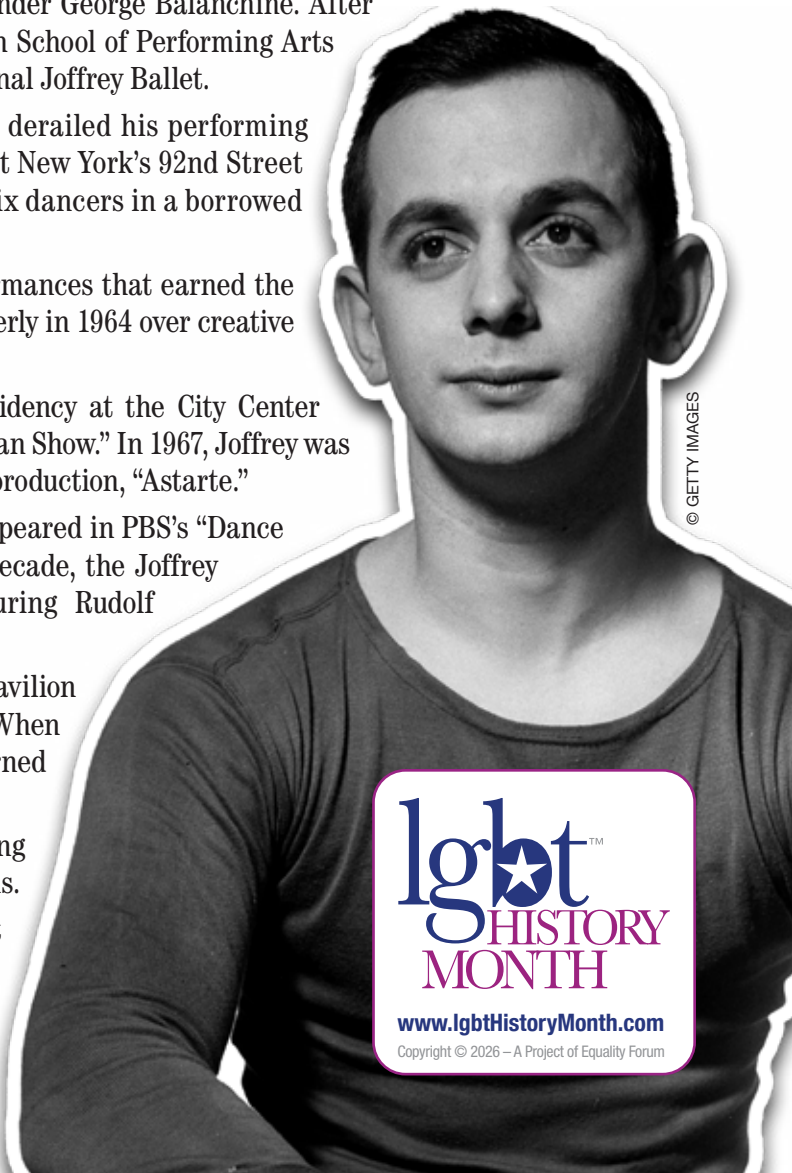
Joffrey’s company gained wide recognition with a 1965 residency at the City Center Theater in New York and a 1966 appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show.” In 1967, Joffrey was the first to feature a rock score in a ballet in his multimedia production, “Astarte.”

By 1970, the troupe had grown to 37 dancers. In 1976, they appeared in PBS’s “Dance in America,” reaching millions of viewers. Throughout the decade, the Joffrey Ballet performed exuberant, groundbreaking works, featuring Rudolf Nureyev and other internationally celebrated dancers.

In 1981, the Joffrey Ballet moved to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles with support from First Lady Nancy Reagan. When the arrangement ended a few years later, the company returned to New York.

Robert Joffrey premiered his final ballets in 1987, attending both in a wheelchair. He died a year later of AIDS complications.

The Joffrey Ballet moved to Chicago in 1995, where it thrives today.



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JULIE JOHNSON U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN

b. May 2, 1966

“That’s what public service means to me: being responsive, cutting through bureaucracy, and making sure federal agencies work for the people they’re supposed to serve.”

**She is the first
out LGBTQ+ member
of Congress from
the South.**

Julie Johnson is an attorney and the U.S. Representative from Texas’s 32nd Congressional District. A Democrat, she is the first openly LGBTQ+ person elected to Congress from a Southern state.

Johnson was born in Kansas City, Kansas. She graduated from high school in Alabama and earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin in 1987. She received her Juris Doctor from the University of Houston Law Center in 1991 and came out as a lesbian the same year.

Johnson began her legal career in private practice, specializing in personal injury, family law, and mediation. She advocated for workers and people with disabilities and

represented more than 350 students in a lawsuit against a for-profit college.

In 2014, Johnson married Susan Moster, M.D., a gastroenterologist. After the 2016 presidential election, Johnson entered politics. In 2018, she was elected to the Texas House for District 115, making her the first member with a same-sex spouse and Moster the first same-sex spouse invited to the Legislative Ladies Club, an organization for Texas House members’ wives.

In the legislature, Johnson passed over 100 bills, including Texas’s first bipartisan Medicaid expansion. She supported efforts to strengthen the state’s energy grid after Winter Storm Uri and helped successfully block many bills targeting LGBTQ+ Texans. In 2021, she led opposition to the state’s proposed voting restrictions and traveled to Washington, D.C., to push for the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to reinforce voter protections on the federal level.

Named Texas Monthly’s 2019 Freshman of the Year, Johnson was honored as a Champion of Medicine by the Texas Medical Association and received the Big Voices for Little Texans Award from Texas CASA.

After three terms in the state House, Johnson ran for Congress. In November 2024, she was elected to represent Texas’s 32nd District. She made history again, this time as the first woman to represent her district and the first openly LGBTQ+ member of Congress from the South. Her policy priorities include affordable health care, consumer protections, reproductive rights, and increasing oversight and accountability of ICE agents. She serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the House Administration Committee, and as vice ranking member on the House Homeland Security Committee.

In 2025, at the behest of President Trump, Texas Republicans redrew the Congressional map in hopes of increasing their seats in the 2026 midterms. With her district redrawn, Johnson was unseated in the Democratic primary runoff in what is now the 33rd Congressional District.



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LANI KA'AHUMANU

b. October 5, 1943

WRITER & BISEXUAL ACTIVIST

**She is a prominent
figure in the U.S.
bisexual rights
movement.**

*"We have every right to be
in the world exactly as we are."*

Lani Ka'ahumanu is a writer and a leader of the American bisexual rights movement. She was the first openly bisexual board member on the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Born in Edmonton, Canada, and raised in Northern California, Ka'ahumanu is of Native Hawaiian, Japanese, and European heritage. Early personal experience with racial bias helped inspire her lifelong quest for social justice.

At 19, Ka'ahumanu married her high school sweetheart and became a suburban housewife and mother. Emboldened by feminism in the 1960s, she participated in the anti-war and Black Power movements, started taking college courses, and adopted the title "Ms."

After 11 years of marriage, Ka'ahumanu and her husband divorced. She moved to San Francisco and came out as a "lesbian mother." She continued her studies at San Francisco State University, helping to establish the Women's Studies Department there and graduating with a degree in the field in 1979.

During the summer of 1980, Ka'ahumanu entered a relationship with a bisexual man. Returning to San Francisco as an out bisexual, she faced ostracism from many in the lesbian community. Consequently, she cultivated a bisexual community and, in 1983, cofounded BiPOL, the first feminist bisexual political action group in the United States. She also helped establish the San Francisco Bay Area Bisexual Network, which published the first national quarterly bisexual magazine, "Anything That Moves."

In 1990, Ka'ahumanu helped establish BiNet USA, the country's first national bisexual rights organization. San Francisco declared June 23, 1990, Bisexual Pride Day in recognition of the group's founding. Ka'ahumanu proceeded to lead a national campaign to include bisexuals in the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. In 1993, bi rights were officially added to the march's name and platform, and she was the only out bisexual among the event's 18 speakers.

During the 1990s, Ka'ahumanu focused primarily on the AIDS epidemic. She coordinated the first U.S. HIV/AIDS prevention grant for young high-risk lesbian and bisexual women and co-created the "Peer Safer Sex Slut Team," which was recognized by Ms. Magazine. Among other notable initiatives, she also helped organize BiNet USA's National Institute on Bisexuality HIV/AIDS Summit and a Bisexual People of Color HIV Prevention Summit, hosted by the CDC and the UCLA School of Nursing.

An accomplished poet, author, and editor, Ka'ahumanu is best known for editing the influential feminist anthology "Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out" (1991), which was named among the Top 100 GLBT Books of the 20th Century.



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KING JAMES I

b. June 19, 1566

d. March 27, 1625

SCOTTISH & ENGLISH MONARCH

*“You may be sure that I love the
Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else ...
Christ had his John, and I have my George.”*

**He commissioned
the King James
Version of the Bible,
used by Protestant
denominations
worldwide.**

King James ruled Scotland as James VI (1567-1625) and England and Ireland as James I (1603-1625). Styling himself as the “King of Great Britain,” he is perhaps best known for his unprecedented union of the Scottish and English crowns and the publication of the King James Bible. Based on his well-documented, intensely romantic relationships with men, many historians believe James to have been bisexual or gay.

The only son of Mary, Queen of Scots, James was born in Edinburgh Castle in 1566. After his mother was deposed and imprisoned in 1567, he ascended the Scottish throne as King James VI at the age of 1. Unable to rule as a child, he assumed a

more active role as monarch in his teens. Recognizing the possibility of succeeding the childless Queen Elizabeth I of England, James brokered an alliance between Scotland and England in 1586. Firmly committed to the partnership, he took no action when Elizabeth had his mother executed in 1587.

In 1589, James married Anne, the daughter of Frederick II of Denmark. They had eight children together. Three survived infancy. Despite his wife and family, rumors about James’s sexuality abounded. He surrounded himself with noblemen, many of whom were his exceptionally close companions. Their public displays of affection and the influence these friends exerted over his policies fueled speculation by contemporaries and, later, historians that the relationships with his favorites were sexual.

Upon the death of the unmarried, heirless Queen Elizabeth I, James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne in 1603 as James I. The two countries uniting under a single sovereign laid the groundwork for the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707.

During his reign, King James encouraged and actively presided over brutal witch trials. He ended England’s war with Spain in 1604 and survived a failed assassination attempt by Catholic revolutionaries in 1605, known as the Gunpowder Plot. He oversaw the establishment of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607 — the first permanent English colony in North America — and in 1611, commissioned a revised translation of the Bible known as the King James Version, which is still used today by Protestant denominations worldwide. Believing that the monarch’s power was absolute and ordained by God, James frequently clashed with the English Parliament. He dissolved the body in 1611 and then again in 1621.

James faced mounting criticism toward the end of his 58 years of rule over Scotland and 22 years over England and Ireland. His son, Charles, succeeded him.

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CALVIN KLEIN

b. November 19, 1942

FASHION DESIGNER

He is a pioneering American fashion designer whose minimalist style and controversial advertising reshaped the industry.

“I’m crazy, and I don’t pretend to be anything else.”

Calvin Klein is a pioneering American fashion designer whose minimalist style redefined luxury and casual wear, and controversial advertising reshaped fashion marketing.

Born in the Bronx, New York, Klein took his early inspiration from his grandmother, an accomplished dressmaker. He graduated from the Fashion

Institute of Technology in 1963, then apprenticed at a Seventh Avenue coat manufacturer. In 1964, he married his college girlfriend, Jayne Centre. They had one child, Marci Klein, before divorcing in 1974.

In 1968, at 26, Klein founded his eponymous company with a childhood friend, Barry Schwartz. Starting with \$10,000, Klein designed understated coats and suits in counterpoint to the era’s flower-power trends. His breakthrough came when Bonwit Teller placed a \$50,000 order. He soon expanded into women’s sportswear.

In the 1970s, Klein became the first designer to win three consecutive Coty American Fashion Critics’ Awards for womenswear and the youngest inductee into the Coty Hall of Fame. He popularized designer jeans, most notably with his racy 1980 ad spot featuring a teenage Brooke Shields. Despite some networks banning it, the ad dramatically increased sales.

In the 1980s, Klein launched highly successful women’s fragrances, including Obsession and Eternity, and revolutionized the undergarment industry, making men’s underwear a branded fashion statement. The 1985 blockbuster film “Back to the Future” used his designer briefs as the basis of a running gag.

Klein married his assistant, Kelly Rector, in 1986. They separated in 1996. He entered a substance abuse treatment program in 1988 and subsequently experienced relapses and a near-bankruptcy.

Despite setbacks, Klein expanded into affordable apparel, home décor, and cosmetics, and continued his controversial advertising. By the 1990s, Calvin Klein was an industry-dominant brand. His 1992 homoerotic underwear ads with Mark Wahlberg (then Marky Mark) and a waifish Kate Moss drew criticism for their sensuality and “heroin chic” aesthetic. In 1995, his CK Jeans campaign triggered allegations of pornography and a Justice Department investigation, though no charges were filed.

In 2003, Phillips-Van Heusen (PVH) acquired Calvin Klein Inc. (CKI). Klein stayed on as a consulting creative director. Months later, after disrupting a New York Knicks game while intoxicated, Klein returned to rehab. In 2006, CKI declined to renew his contract, formally ending his ties to the brand.

Later in life, Klein publicly addressed his sexual fluidity. In 2016, he began a relationship with Kevin Baker, a model roughly 45 years his junior.

In 2017, Klein published a self-titled autobiographical coffee-table book featuring his work and commentary.



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

b. February 12, 1809

d. April 15, 1865

AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Widely regarded as the greatest U.S. president, he is credited with the abolition of slavery.

“Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States. Credited with emancipating enslaved people, he is widely regarded as the nation's greatest president. Over time, his sexuality has been a subject of interest.

Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. Largely self-educated, he attended a few frontier schools and read extensively. As a 20-year-old, he penned a 16-line poem about a marriage between two boys.

In 1830, Lincoln moved to Illinois. In New Salem, he became a shopkeeper and postmaster and entered politics as a Whig, opposing President Andrew Jackson's monarchical style. He won a seat in the Illinois State Legislature in 1834 and served for four terms.

Lincoln maintained intense male friendships. His first close companion was his grammar tutor, Billy Greene. The two shared a cot for 18 months. For an extended period thereafter, Lincoln shared his bed with A.Y. Ellis.

In 1837, Lincoln moved to Springfield, Illinois, to start his law career. For four years, he shared a bed with Joshua Speed, who came from an affluent Louisville, Kentucky, family. They exchanged intimate letters throughout Lincoln's life.

In 1839, Lincoln met Mary Todd, the daughter of a wealthy, politically connected lawyer. They were engaged a year later. When Speed left Springfield in 1840 to return to Louisville, Lincoln suffered from severe depression and canceled his engagement to Mary Todd. In 1841, Lincoln spent a month in Kentucky with Speed, who had married. Speed remained married for 40 years and never had children.

Lincoln returned to Springfield in 1842. At age 33, he married Mary Todd. Mary became increasingly emotionally volatile, especially after the loss of two of their four children, tragedies that left them both heartbroken.

Lincoln was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1847. He served for one term. In 1856, he joined the newly formed Republican Party. In 1860, the Republicans nominated Lincoln for president on a platform to prohibit the expansion of slavery into the Western territories. After Lincoln's election and before his inauguration, seven Southern states seceded from the Union, fearing abolition. After the Civil War began in April 1861, four Upper South states joined the Confederacy.

During the War, when Mary Todd traveled, Lincoln frequently shared his bed with Army Major David Derickson in what is now known as the Lincoln Bedroom.

Lincoln's sexuality is most notably explored in “The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln” (2005) by C.A. Tripp, who holds a Ph.D. in human sexuality. The Log Cabin Republicans, an organization of LGBTQ+ conservatives and allies, was named in Lincoln's memory.

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CHRIS PAPPAS

b. June 4, 1980

U.S. CONGRESSMAN

“There are ways that you can help people and ways that you can actually get things across the finish line.”

He is the first out gay man to run in the general election for the U.S. Senate.

Democratic Representative Chris Pappas is the first openly LGBTQ+ person to represent New Hampshire in the U.S. Congress.

A descendant of Greek immigrants, Pappas was born and raised in Manchester, New Hampshire. He began his political journey as a public high school student, volunteering for Jeanne Shaheen’s gubernatorial campaign. In 2002, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in government from Harvard College.

After graduation, Pappas returned to New Hampshire to help run the family’s 108-year-old business, the Puritan Backroom Restaurant, a Manchester ice cream shop turned tavern-style eatery. The same year, he also ran for the New Hampshire House of Representatives. Elected in 2002, at age 22, he served two terms.

In 2011, Pappas appeared on the television show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” and won \$17,500. The following year, he won a seat on the New Hampshire Executive Council, where he served three terms (2013-2019). On the Council, he worked to expand Medicaid, invest in renewable energy, and protect funding for Planned Parenthood.

In 2018, Pappas announced his bid to represent New Hampshire’s First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. He won the Democratic nomination, beating 10 other contenders, and defeated his Republican opponent in the general election, securing 53.6% of the vote. The victory made him the first openly gay man and first out LGBTQ+ person to represent New Hampshire in Congress. He has been reelected three times (2020, 2022, and 2024).

As a U.S. congressman, Pappas has supported tax cuts for working families and small businesses, taken on companies that target veterans and pollute water, and pushed big pharma to lower drug costs. He serves on the Transportation and Infrastructure and Veterans’ Affairs committees.

A moderate known for working across the aisle, Pappas was ranked the most bipartisan Democrat in the House, and the third overall, by the Lugar Center in 2023. He supported the Supreme Court’s 2020 ruling protecting LGBTQ+ workers and co-sponsored the Equality Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. After the Dobbs decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, he advocated for the restoration of abortion rights nationwide.

Pappas married Vann Bentley in 2023. The couple lives in New Hampshire, where Pappas co-owns the family restaurant. In April 2025, Pappas entered the 2026 race for a U.S. Senate seat representing New Hampshire. He is the first out gay man to run in the general election for the U.S. Senate.



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PAULINE PARK

b. October 1960

TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

“It’s important that trans people of color come to the forefront.”

**She is a prominent
NYC-based transgender
rights activist and
cofounder of NYAGRA.**

Pauline Park is a transgender rights activist based in New York. Among other significant contributions, she cofounded NYAGRA, New York’s first statewide transgender rights advocacy organization, and successfully campaigned for the passage of the 2002 New York City Transgender Rights Law.

Born in South Korea, Park was adopted by European American parents in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Growing up in an all-white neighborhood, she faced bullying for her race and gender expression. By age 4, Park identified as a girl but told no one due to her evangelical upbringing. In high school, she realized she was attracted to men.

In college, Park came out as gay to her brother, who came out to her. She left the house for the first time in gender-affirming clothes on Halloween in 1979.

In 1982, Park graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and entered the London School of Economics and Political Science to pursue her master’s degree in European studies. There, she began publicly presenting as a woman.

Park later attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she received a Fulbright fellowship in France before earning her doctorate in political science in 1994. That summer, she attended the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in New York City. She cofounded Gay Asians & Pacific Islanders of Chicago (GAPIC) a year later.

Park subsequently moved to Queens, New York. In 1997, she cofounded Queens Pride House and Iban/Queer Koreans of New York and began using the name Pauline with her Korean surname, Park.

In 1998, Park cofounded the statewide New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA). She helped promote “LGBT” as a more inclusive term and spearheaded a campaign to protect New Yorkers from discrimination based on gender identity and expression, leading to a groundbreaking 2002 amendment to the city’s Human Rights Law. In 2005, she became the first openly transgender grand marshal of the New York City Pride March. She successfully advocated for the inclusion of gender identity and expression in the Dignity for All Students Act of New York State in 2010.

Among other honors, Park was recognized as one of 50 Transgender Icons for Transgender Day of Remembrance and as The Most Influential LGBT Asian Icon by the Huffington Post. She is the subject of two documentary short films, “Envisioning Justice: The Journey of a Transgendered Woman” (2008) and “Coming Full Circle: The Journey of a Transgendered Korean Adoptee” (2015).

Park is the board chair of NYAGRA and leads workshops, trainings, and discussions on transgender-related topics.

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PAUL RUDOLPH

b. October 23, 1918

d. August 8, 1997

ARCHITECT

“Every building, no matter how large or small, is part of the urban design.”

Paul Rudolph was an acclaimed American architect and educator who served for six years as the chair of the Yale University Department of Architecture. Best recognized for his mid-century Brutalist buildings, he was also known for his unconventional Florida home designs.

Born in Kentucky, Rudolph spent his childhood traveling across the region with his father, an itinerant Methodist preacher. Exposure to the structural aesthetics of the American South sparked Rudolph's interest in architecture.

Rudolph earned a Bachelor of Architecture from Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University) in 1940. He started his career in Sarasota, Florida, apprenticing for six months with Ralph Twitchell. At the beginning of World War II, Rudolph entered Harvard Graduate School of Design. After a semester or two, he joined the U.S. Navy, where he supervised shipbuilding at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

He was a prominent American architect best known for his Brutalist buildings.

After his discharge, Rudolph completed his master's degree at Harvard under the pioneering Modernist architect and Bauhaus founder, Walter Gropius.

Rudolph returned to Florida in 1946 and became Twitchell's business associate. They helped found the “Sarasota School,” a group of Modernist architects who gained international attention for their functionally focused, climate-conscious modular homes.

In 1952, Rudolph started his own architecture practice. His style evolved, and in 1954, he won the Outstanding Young Architects Award in an international competition. The honor secured him larger, more prestigious projects, including the Jewett Arts Center at Wellesley College (1955) and Boston's Blue Cross-Blue Shield Building (1957).

In 1958, Yale University's School of Architecture appointed Rudolph chair. During his tenure, he completed several iconic projects, notably Yale's controversial Art & Architecture Building (1963) and the Endo Pharmaceuticals Building (1964) on Long Island. Featuring reinforced concrete and sculptural forms, the buildings are prime examples of Brutalism.

After leaving Yale in 1965, demand for Rudolph's large-scale architecture declined. In the 1970s, he primarily designed interiors for wealthy gay men in Manhattan, including the well-known fashion designer Halston.

Throughout his career, homophobic stigma kept Rudolph closeted. In 1975, he developed a relationship with Ernst Wagner. They cofounded Modulightor, a lighting and design company, in 1976, and lived together for the rest of Rudolph's life.

In the 1980s and '90s, Rudolph enjoyed renewed success with major commissions in Asia. He died in 1997 of mesothelioma, a cancer linked to asbestos exposure.

To honor his partner, Wagner founded the Paul Rudolph Foundation and The Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture. In 2010, Rudolph's residence was designated a New York City Landmark. The Library of Congress houses his archive.

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AMBER RUFFIN

b. January 9, 1979

COMEDIAN,
WRITER & ACTOR

She is the first Black American woman to write for a late-night talk show.

*“I’m using the last day of PRIDE to come out!
Be proud of who you are ... I know I am!”*

Amber Ruffin is a queer Black comedian, writer, actor, and playwright. In 2014, she became the first Black woman to write for a U.S. late-night network television show, joining the team at “Late Night with Seth Meyers.” She has gained broad recognition as the host of “The Amber Ruffin Show,” which premiered in 2020, and as a panelist on CNN’s “Have I Got News for You.”

Born in 1979 in Omaha, Nebraska, Ruffin spent her early 20s performing in local theater and improv before meeting the owner of the improv company iO, who urged her to pursue comedy full-time. She trained at iO Theater in Chicago until 2008, then moved to Amsterdam to join Boom Chicago.

After Ruffin returned from the Netherlands, she performed with The Second City in Denver and Chicago. There, she met Jenny Hagel, with whom she later founded the production company Straight to Cards.

In 2011, Ruffin moved to Los Angeles, where she performed in an episode of “Key & Peele” and with groups such as RobotDown, Story Pirates, and Sacred Fools Theater Company.

Three years later, after an unsuccessful audition for “Saturday Night Live,” Ruffin was hired as a writer for “Late Night with Seth Meyers.” She soon began appearing in on-air segments.

Ruffin was nominated for a Writers Guild of America Award in 2017, then hosted the ceremony in 2018. During this time, she also appeared in the educational comedy series “Drunk History” and in the sitcom “Detroiters.”

In 2020, Ruffin launched her eponymous late-night show on Peacock. It ran for three seasons and received Writers Guild and Emmy Award nominations. She was named to the TIME100 Next list in 2021, and in 2023, she won a Tony Award alongside Matthew López for Best Book of a Musical for “Some Like It Hot.”

On June 30, 2024, at the end of Pride Month, and after recently divorcing her husband, Ruffin came out as queer on Instagram — a revelation she quipped would shock “exactly zero people.”

Three months later, CNN premiered its own take on the British quiz show “Have I Got News for You,” featuring Ruffin and Michael Ian Black as permanent panelists.

With her sister, Lacey Lamar, Ruffin is also the New York Times best-selling co-author of “You’ll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey: Crazy Stories of Racism.” She wrote the lyrics for “Bigfoot! The Musical,” which premiered off Broadway in 2026, and continues to write for Seth Meyers’s show while working on other projects.

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ST. VINCENT

b. September 28, 1982

SINGER, SONGWRITER & GUITARIST

*“I’m not one for gender or sexual absolutism.
I fully support and engage in the spectrum.”*

She is a six-time Grammy-winning musician, named by Rolling Stone as one of the greatest guitarists of all time.

St. Vincent is a six-time Grammy-winning musician, singer, and songwriter, named by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the greatest guitarists of all time. She has earned three Grammys for Best Alternative Music Album, more than any other solo female artist.

Known professionally as St. Vincent, Anne Clark was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her parents divorced when she was small, and she moved with her mother and siblings to Dallas, Texas. Inspired by the music of Jimi Hendrix, she began studying guitar at age 12. Clark participated in her school’s theater and jazz band, and as a teen, helped her uncle and aunt, the famous jazz duo Tuck and

Patti, on tour. Clark cites them as a major influence on her work ethic and musicianship.

After graduating high school in 2001, Clark attended Berklee College of Music in Boston but left after three years. In 2003, following the release of her first EP, recorded with fellow students, Clark returned to Texas to tour with The Polyphonic Spree. She joined Glenn Branca’s guitar orchestra in 2004 and Sufjan Stevens’s band in 2006. In October of 2006, Clark released her debut solo EP, “Paris Is Burning,” as St. Vincent — a stage name inspired by her great-grandmother’s middle name and a lyric by Nick Cave.

St. Vincent was nominated for three PLUG Independent Music Awards in 2008, after the release of her first studio album, “Marry Me” (2007). Her next two albums received increasing acclaim.

In 2012, St. Vincent collaborated with the former Talking Heads front man, David Byrne, on “Love This Giant.” She released a self-titled album in 2014 that earned her the 2015 Grammy for Best Alternative Music Album. She won her second Grammy for the title song on her 2017 album, “Masseduction.” She went on to win four additional Grammys, including two more for Best Alternative Music Album: “Daddy’s Home” (2021) and “All Born Screaming” (2024). In 2023, Rolling Stone named her the 26th greatest guitarist of all time.

St. Vincent co-wrote “Cruel Summer” with Taylor Swift and Jack Antonoff and has written, directed, scored, and acted in several indie films, including “The Nowhere Inn” (2020).

In a 2014 interview with Rolling Stone, St. Vincent identified as queer and discussed her belief that sexuality and gender are fluid. She has dated multiple celebrities, including Kristen Stewart and Carrie Brownstein. In 2025, she revealed that she had a wife and daughter by thanking them both during a Grammy acceptance speech.

St. Vincent splits her time between Los Angeles, New York City, and Dallas.



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JESSICA STERN

b. 1977

LGBTQ+ DIPLOMAT

“All human beings should be treated with respect and dignity and should be able to live without fear, regardless of who they love.”

Jessica Stern is a distinguished American diplomat and lifelong LGBTQ+ rights advocate. A senior fellow at Harvard since 2025, she previously served for four years in the Biden administration as the U.S. special envoy to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

Raised Jewish in Setauket, New York, Stern credits her religious heritage with inspiring her pursuit of activism. After earning a master's degree in human rights from the London School of Economics, she began her career as a community organizer in Philadelphia and at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. She went on to work for Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as a researcher and an advocate.

**She is a distinguished
official U.S. advocate
for international
LGBTQ+ rights.**

In 2009, Stern joined Outright International (then the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) as director of programs. She was promoted to executive director in 2012. Among her many accomplishments, Stern quintupled the budget and built the world's largest COVID LGBTQ+ grant-making program. She helped secure UN observer

status and served as an early member of the United Nations LGBTI Core Group and a founding member of the UN Women LGBTI Reference Group.

Appointed U.S. special envoy for the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons in 2021, Stern is the second person to hold the position since its creation in 2015. The role was not filled during President Trump's first term and is vacant in his second. In that State Department post, Stern worked with international partners to protect LGBTQI+ individuals from discrimination and violence worldwide and to promote the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in multilateral human rights frameworks.

In 2025, Stern was appointed the first senior fellow focused on LGBTQI+ rights at Harvard's Kennedy School Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights. She also serves as an adjunct professor of international public affairs at Columbia University, teaching the first and only LGBTQ+ rights course, and is the cofounder and co-president of the Alliance for Diplomacy and Justice, a group of senior officials and diplomats focused on human rights in U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy.

Stern has received honors from governments and institutions worldwide, including the U.S. Department of State. Her writing is regularly published in leading academic and political journals and has been cited in landmark human rights decisions.

Stern and her partner, Lisa Davis, live in Brooklyn, New York.



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CHARLES SUMNER

b. January 6, 1811

d. March 11, 1874

19TH CENTURY
U.S. SENATOR

“No true and permanent fame can be founded, except in labors which promote the happiness of mankind.”

He was a prominent 19th-century abolitionist.

Charles Sumner was a 19th-century Republican senator and prominent abolitionist who promoted Black civil rights, despite fierce opposition.

Sumner was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1833. He worked as an attorney before studying in Europe from 1837 to 1840.

As a young man, Sumner and a friend, Samuel Gridley Howe, were extremely close. When Howe married, his wife told him, “Sumner ought to have been a woman and you to have married her.” Howe and his wife burned many letters exchanged between the two men. Scholars speculate that the content could have harmed Sumner’s political career.

Sumner remained a bachelor until his mid-50s, enduring years of derision because of it. He married Alice Mason Hooper in 1866, but the union lasted only two years. He had intimate friendships with men throughout his life.

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1851, Sumner spoke out against slavery and publicly opposed legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Act and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. After his “Crimes Against Kansas” speech in 1856, in which he denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act and attacked its co-author, Senator Andrew Butler, Sumner was brutally caned in the Senate chamber by Butler’s relative, South Carolina Congressman Preston S. Brooks. It took years for Sumner to fully recover. The caning became a national cause célèbre for the abolitionist movement.

From 1861 to 1871, Sumner served as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He played an instrumental role during the Civil War, handling diplomatic relations with Britain. After the war, Sumner and Rep. Thaddeus Stevens led the Radical Republicans, a coalition that advocated for civil rights and political restructuring of seceded states. Sumner unsuccessfully proposed that Southern states should be forced to guarantee Black suffrage and equal rights before they rejoin the Union.

Sumner and President Ulysses S. Grant were frequently at odds. In 1869, Grant proposed a plan to annex the Dominican Republic in part as a potential refuge for freed slaves from the South. Sumner delivered another fiery opposition speech, insisting that African Americans deserved to live in the U.S. with their rights protected. After the plan was eventually dropped, President Grant retaliated, engineering Sumner’s removal from the Foreign Relations Committee.

In 1871, the Massachusetts legislature censured Sumner for a small gesture of reconciliation toward the South. The state legislature rescinded the reprimand in 1874. Days after his name was cleared, Sumner suffered a fatal heart attack and died.



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JEWEL THAIS-WILLIAMS

NIGHTCLUB OWNER & LGBTQ+ ACTIVIST

b. May 9, 1939

d. July 7, 2025

*“Dare to dream, no matter how impossible
... With patience and perseverance, you can
accomplish anything ...”*

Jewel Thais-Williams was a community activist and, reportedly, the first Black woman to own an LGBTQ+ nightclub in the United States.

Thais-Williams was born in Gary, Indiana, and raised in San Diego, California. She worked her way through UCLA, holding various jobs and opening a clothing store with her sister. Despite multiple intimate experiences with women, it took years for her to accept her sexuality.

Turned away from most nightclubs due to her race and gender, Thais-Williams purchased the Diana Club in Los Angeles in 1973 as a sanctuary for people unwelcome elsewhere. She renamed the club Jewel's Catch One.

As the new owner, Thais-Williams faced continued discrimination, with both regulars and employees abandoning the business. She persevered and gradually built a new customer base, mostly of Black patrons. Eventually, news circulated that Catch One was run by a lesbian, and the LGBTQ+ community began patronizing her establishment. By the early 1980s, “The Catch”—as locals called it—was the most successful Black gay discotheque in L.A.

**She was a pioneering
Black female LGBTQ+
nightclub owner.**

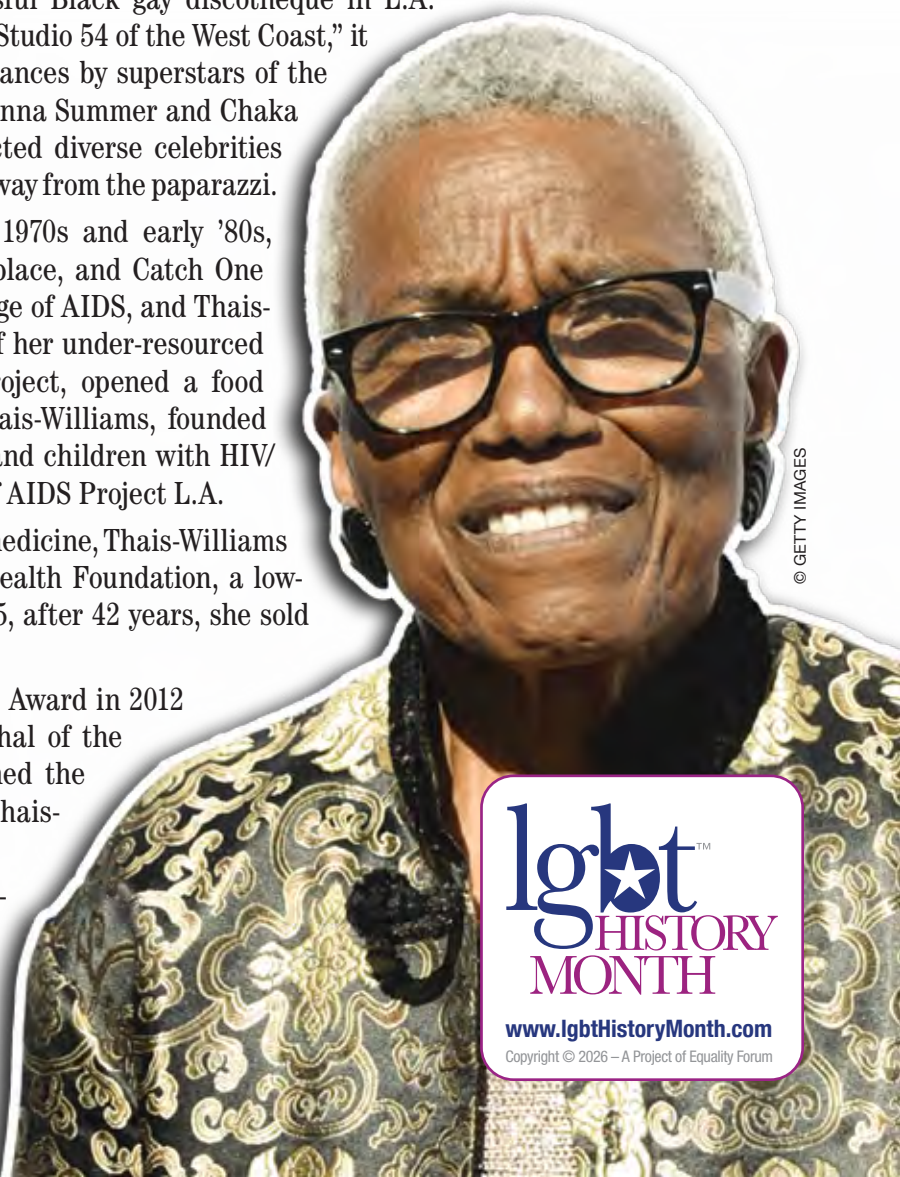
Dubbed the “the Studio 54 of the West Coast,” it featured performances by superstars of the day, including Donna Summer and Chaka Khan, and attracted diverse celebrities seeking a night away from the paparazzi.

During the late 1970s and early '80s, police raids of LGBTQ+ businesses were commonplace, and Catch One was no different. The period also brought the scourge of AIDS, and Thais-Williams became a committed activist in support of her under-resourced community. She cofounded the Minority AIDS Project, opened a food pantry, and in 1989, with her life partner Rue Thais-Williams, founded Rue's House to provide crucial services to women and children with HIV/AIDS. From 1990 to 1995, she served on the board of AIDS Project L.A.

In 2001, after earning a master's degree in Oriental medicine, Thais-Williams used profits from Catch One to open the Village Health Foundation, a low-cost holistic community health-care facility. In 2015, after 42 years, she sold Catch One to focus exclusively on the clinic.

Thais-Williams received the Dreams of Los Angeles Award in 2012 for community service and served as Grand Marshal of the L.A. Pride Festival in 2016. In 2019, the city named the intersection in front of her former club Jewel Thais-Williams Square.

After more than three decades together, Thais-Williams married Rue and finally came out to her family. She died at 86, survived by her wife.



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KARL HEINRICH ULRICHS

b. August 28, 1825

d. July 14, 1895

SEXOLOGIST & GAY PIONEER

“Indeed, I am proud that I found the courage to deal the initial blow to the hydra of public contempt.”

He was a pioneering sexologist who helped pave the way for the early LGBTQ+ civil rights movement.

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was a pioneering 19th-century sexologist who helped lay the groundwork for the early LGBTQ+ civil rights movement. He wrote extensively about homosexuality and publicly defended his attraction to men.

Born in what is now Lower Saxony, Germany, Ulrichs was attracted to other boys as a youngster. He experienced his first sexual encounter at age 14, when he was abused by his male riding instructor.

Ulrichs graduated from Göttingen University in 1846 with degrees in law and theology and studied history at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin until 1848. After graduating, he practiced law and became an assistant judge in 1853 but was dismissed the following year because of his sexuality.

In 1862, Ulrichs came out to his family and friends. Two years later, under the pseudonym Numa Numantius, he began publishing a series of pamphlets, “Studies on the Riddle of Male-Male Love” (*Forschungen über das Rätsel der mann männlichen Liebe*), in which he described same-sex attraction as natural and coined the terms Urning and Dioning — early words for homo and heterosexuals. His writings were banned in Berlin, Saxony, and throughout Prussia. In 1866, Ulrichs was exiled to Bavaria, and his papers were confiscated.

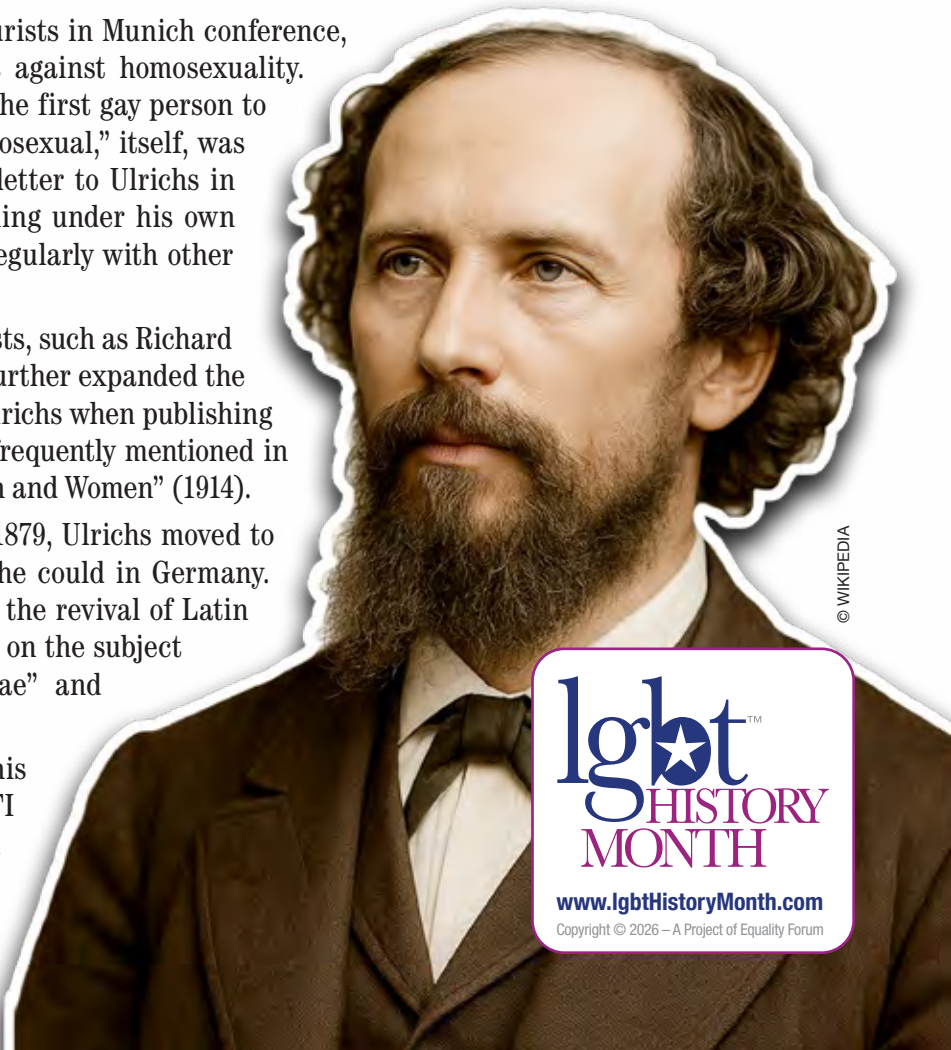
Ulrichs attended the Association of German Jurists in Munich conference, where he argued for the reformation of laws against homosexuality.

On August 29, 1867, he became what is likely the first gay person to publicly defend homosexuality. The term “homosexual,” itself, was officially coined by Karl-Maria Kertbeny in a letter to Ulrichs in 1868. Around this time, Ulrichs began publishing under his own name and moved to Stuttgart, where he met regularly with other early gay rights activists.

Ulrichs’s pamphlets inspired emerging sexologists, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Magnus Hirschfeld, who further expanded the field of sexual science. Krafft-Ebing credited Ulrichs when publishing “Psychopathia Sexualis” (1886), and Ulrichs is frequently mentioned in Magnus Hirschfeld’s “The Homosexuality of Men and Women” (1914).

After completing his final pamphlet series in 1879, Ulrichs moved to Italy, believing he had accomplished all that he could in Germany. After settling in L’Aquila, he began writing on the revival of Latin as a universal language. He wrote passionately on the subject for 15 years, publishing the journal “Alaudae” and cultivating a community of readers.

When Ulrichs died at 69, his fans paid for his gravestone. Today, the International LGBTI Law Association presents an annual award in his honor, and streets in Germany and other locations bear his name.



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ALOK VAID-MENON

b. July 1, 1991

COMEDIAN & PERFORMANCE ARTIST

“Beauty is about looking like yourself.”

ALOK is an internationally acclaimed trans feminine comedian, performance artist, author, and fashion designer.

Alok Vaid-Menon (they/them) is an internationally acclaimed nonbinary, trans feminine comedian, performance artist, author, and fashion designer who explores themes of trauma, gender identity, self-expression, and acceptance in their art.

Vaid-Menon was raised in a tight-knit Indian American community in College Station, Texas. From a young age, they experienced racism and bullying for their gender expression. As a gender-nonconforming ethnic minority in the South, they began creating art as an outlet to process their experiences.

Vaid-Menon attended Stanford University, receiving a bachelor's degree in feminist, gender, and sexuality studies and comparative studies in race and ethnicity, before earning a master's degree in sociology in 2013.

From 2013 to 2017, Vaid-Menon (also known simply as ALOK) performed with a former classmate, Janani Balasubramanian, in DarkMatter, a slam poetry collective that drew on both of their queer, South Asian identities. In 2017, ALOK released their first book of poetry, “Femme in Public,” which focuses on discrimination against the trans feminine community, and subsequently began performing eclectic, genre-busting shows internationally.

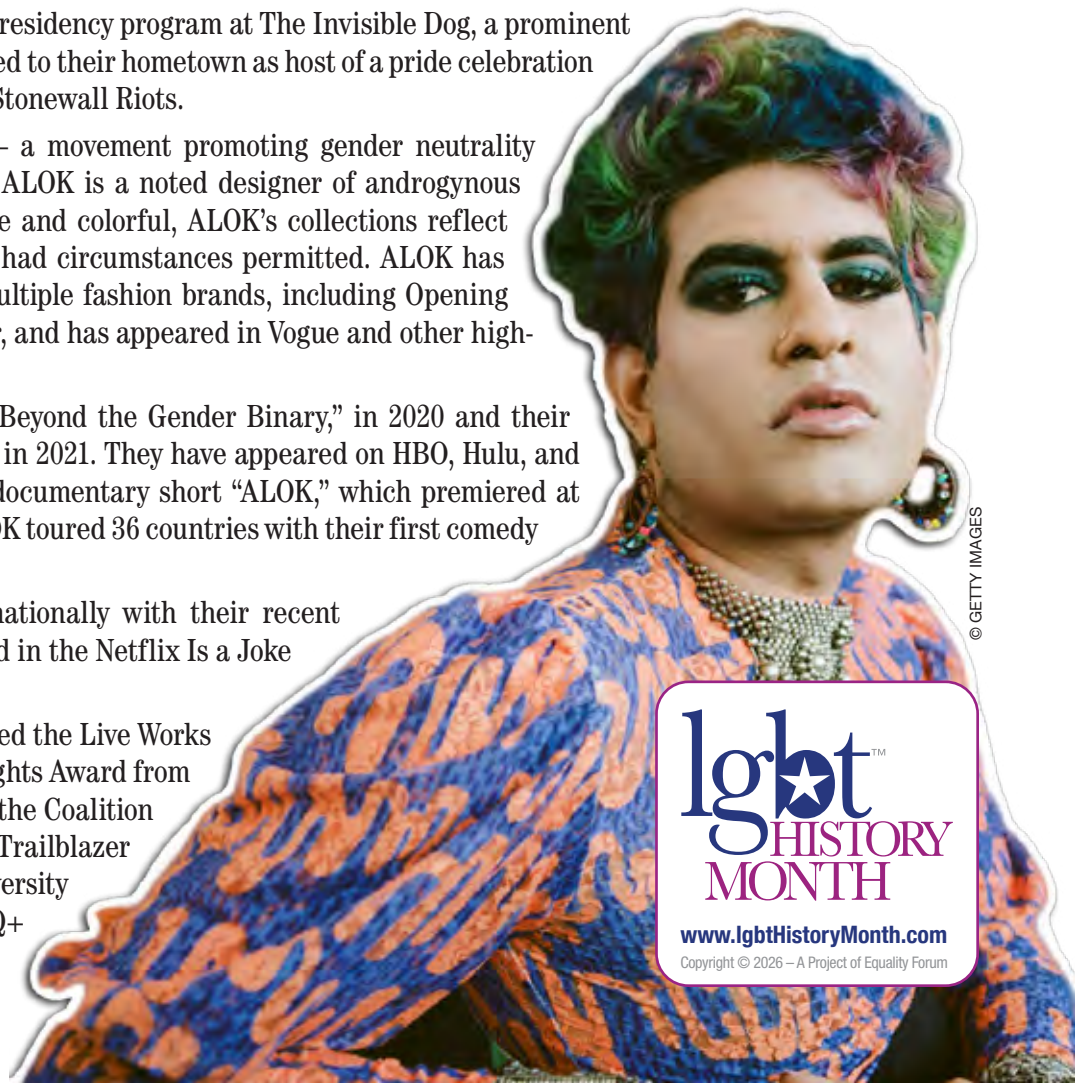
In 2019, ALOK completed an artist-in-residency program at The Invisible Dog, a prominent Brooklyn-based art center, and returned to their hometown as host of a pride celebration honoring the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.

The creator of #DeGenderFashion — a movement promoting gender neutrality in clothing and cosmetics/beauty — ALOK is a noted designer of androgynous Indian-Western fusion fashion. Unique and colorful, ALOK's collections reflect what they may have worn as a youth had circumstances permitted. ALOK has modeled for and collaborated with multiple fashion brands, including Opening Ceremony, UGG, and Polaroid eyewear, and has appeared in Vogue and other high-fashion magazines.

ALOK published their second book, “Beyond the Gender Binary,” in 2020 and their third book, “Your Wound/My Garden,” in 2021. They have appeared on HBO, Hulu, and Netflix, and were the subject of the documentary short “ALOK,” which premiered at Sundance in 2024. The same year, ALOK toured 36 countries with their first comedy special, “BIOLOGY!”

In 2025, ALOK began touring internationally with their recent show, “Hairy Situation.” They appeared in the Netflix Is a Joke Festival in Los Angeles in May 2026.

Among other honors, ALOK has received the Live Works Performance Act Award, the Bill of Rights Award from the ACLU of Southern California, and the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment Trailblazer Award. They were named the University of Pennsylvania's inaugural LGBTQ+ Scholar in Residence in 2023.



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EDMUND WHITE

LGBTQ+ NOVELIST

b. January 13, 1940

d. June 3, 2025

“For me, writing is about the truth. I have always to be faithful to my own experience.”

Edmund White was a trailblazing author of gay literature and an AIDS activist. Writing with honesty from personal experience, he profoundly influenced modern LGBTQ+ storytelling.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, White began writing novels in high school. After coming out to his mother as a teen in the 1950s, he was dispatched to a psychologist to be “cured.” Later, when Harvard College admitted him, the psychologist recommended he stay closer to home to continue his conversion therapy. White acquiesced and studied Chinese at the University of Michigan instead. After graduation, he followed a lover to New York City.

In New York, White freelanced for various publications and worked for Time-Life Books from 1962 to 1970. A regular at the Stonewall Inn, he witnessed the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, an event that proved pivotal to his development and self-image.

He was a trailblazing author of gay literature.

White published his first book, “Forgetting Elena,” in 1973. A stylish mystery coded with gay references, it was described by The New York Times Book Review as “an astonishing first novel.”

In 1977, White found a broad LGBTQ+ audience with “The Joy of Gay Sex,” a book he co-authored with Charles Silverstein, a gay psychologist. He published his

first overtly gay novel, “Nocturnes for the King of Naples,” the following year. In 1980, he founded the Violet Quill Club with a group of gay writers to share and critique each other’s work.

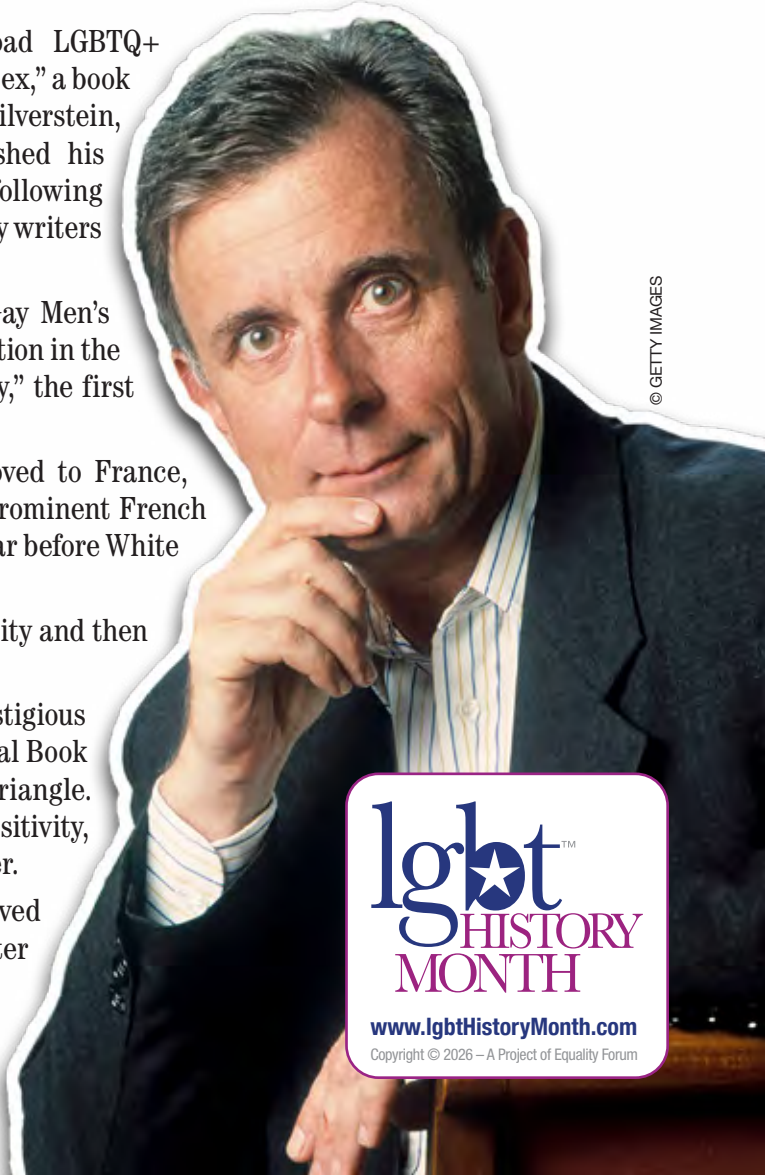
In 1982, early in the AIDS epidemic, White cofounded the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, the first community-based AIDS service organization in the United States. That year, he also published “A Boy’s Own Story,” the first novel in what became an autobiographical fiction series.

After receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1983, White moved to France, where he lived until 1990. He befriended Michel Foucault, a prominent French philosopher, who died of AIDS-related complications about a year before White learned that he himself was HIV positive.

Back in the States in the 1990s, White taught at Brown University and then at Princeton. He continued to publish until his death.

The author of more than 25 books, White received numerous prestigious honors, including lifetime achievement awards from the National Book Critics Circle, Lambda Literary Foundation, and Publishing Triangle. His candid portrayals of life as a gay man in America, his sex positivity, and the disclosure of his HIV status made him a literary pioneer.

White died at home in Manhattan at the age of 85. He is survived by his husband, Michael Carroll. The couple married in 2013 after living together for 18 years.



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