

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

b. February 15, 1820

d. March 13, 1906

AMERICAN SUFFRAGIST

*“Men their rights and nothing more;
women their rights and nothing less.”*

**Her activism was
foundational to
securing women’s
voting rights
in America.**

Susan Brownell Anthony was an American activist central to the women’s suffrage movement. She rallied for women’s voting and labor rights and for the abolition of slavery. Her efforts were foundational to securing women’s voting rights in America.

Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts. She grew up in a Quaker household, raised with the belief that all people are equal in God’s eyes. Quaker values underpinned Anthony’s lifelong battle for equality. Her seven siblings also became women’s rights activists and abolitionists.

In 1846 Anthony began teaching at Canajoharie Academy in New York. Five years later, she traveled to Seneca Falls for the seminal abolitionist convention. There, she forged friendships with Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who inspired her to include the abolition of slavery in her activism. Anthony eventually became the chief New York agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which Garrison founded.

In 1851 Anthony and Stanton began working and traveling the country together in the fight for women’s rights. Anthony gathered signatures for petitions and spoke publicly about women’s suffrage, despite the taboo against women making speeches. She faced angry hecklers who claimed her campaign was an attempt to destroy the institution of marriage. She was nearly arrested many times for speaking out.

Anthony and Stanton became lovers and lifelong companions. In 1866 they created the American Equal Rights Association, which distributed a newspaper called *The Revolution*. They used the publication to address all aspects of women’s equality, but especially suffrage, eliciting both love and hate from the citizenry. Detractors labeled Anthony “manly” — one of the worst insults a woman of the era could receive. Anthony countered with a published essay titled “The New Century’s Manly Woman.”

After the 15th Amendment was proposed, ensuring the right of Black men to vote, Anthony and Stanton were outraged that women were excluded. They formed the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869 to pressure Congress to include women’s voting rights. In 1870 the U.S. ratified the 15th Amendment, leaving women out. Anthony managed to vote in the next election anyway. The police arrested her, and she received a \$100 fine, which she refused to pay.

Though rarely acknowledged, Anthony is one of the most famous lesbians in American history. In addition to Elizabeth Stanton, she is known to have had relationships with a least two other women.

Anthony died at the age of 86. Fourteen years later, the United States ratified the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. In 1979 she became the first woman depicted on a circulating U.S. coin.

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W.H. AUDEN

b. February 21, 1907

d. September 29, 1973

POET

*“If equal affection cannot be,
Let the more loving one be me.”*

Wystan Hugh (W.H.) Auden was a Pulitzer Prize-winning British-born poet who became an American citizen at age 39. Inspired by Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost and T. S. Eliot, he is considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. Auden spent his childhood in Birmingham, England. His mother was a devout Anglican. His father was a renowned physician and academic. Auden’s poetry reflects both his mother’s Christian ideals and his father’s interest in folklore and mythology.

After receiving a scholarship to Oxford University, Auden studied science and engineering before switching to English. He developed a close friendship with Christopher Isherwood, a childhood acquaintance and fellow Oxford student. Auden later moved to Berlin with Isherwood, where they frequented a local gay bar and experienced the city’s “decadent homosexual subculture.”

In 1930 Faber & Faber published “Poems,” Auden’s first collection. He spent the next five years teaching English in private schools.

**He was a Pulitzer
Prize-winning
Anglo-American
modernist poet.**

In 1935 Auden married Erika Mann, a lesbian writer and actress and the daughter of the novelist Thomas Mann. A marriage of convenience, the union helped Mann, who was a German Jew, obtain a British passport to escape the Nazis. The couple fled to Britain, where Auden worked as a freelance writer. He began traveling the world and writing about his experiences in Germany, Iceland and China.

Auden quickly earned recognition for his exceptional wit, fluency in virtually all forms of verse, and unique commentary on morals, love and politics. In 1937, motivated by leftist ideology, he traveled to Spain and participated the Spanish Civil War. He published his activist poem, “Spain 1937,” to raise money for Spanish medical aid.

In 1939 Auden and Isherwood moved to New York, where Auden met his lifelong love, Chester Kallman, and they began a relationship. Auden wanted monogamy with the aspiring young poet, but Kallman would not commit. Heartbroken, Auden eventually accepted it, telling Kallman, “We’re a funny pair, you and I.”

From 1942 to 1945, Auden taught at Swarthmore College. In 1946 he acquired U.S. citizenship. He and Kallman spent their summers together in Europe.

Auden won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for “The Age of Anxiety” in 1948. He received the National Book Award for Poetry for “The Shield of Achilles” in 1956 and began lecturing at Oxford University as a professor of poetry.

Auden died unexpectedly in Vienna, Austria, in 1973. The attacks of 9/11 revived his poem, “September 1, 1939,” about the outbreak of World War II. It became one of Auden’s best-known works, even though he had grown to despise it during his lifetime.

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FRANK BRUNI

b. October 31, 1964

NEW YORK TIMES COLUMNIST

“It’s a hell of a thing to have your identity, your dignity — your very hold on happiness — pressed into partisan battle and fashioned into a political weapon.”

Frank Bruni is a longtime writer for The New York Times and the newspaper’s first gay columnist. He is the best-selling author of three books. Frank Bruni and Andrew Sullivan are the two most impactful commentators on gay equality.

The middle child of three, Bruni was born and raised in White Plains, New York. His parents dubbed him the “big klutz,” and labeled his brothers respectively as “charismatic and confident” and “crafty and focused.”

He is the first openly gay columnist for the New York Times.

In Bruni’s humorous and poignant memoir, “Born Round: A Story of Family, Food and a Ferocious Appetite” (2009), he recounts his life through the lens of disordered eating. His parents teased him about his weight, joking that his initials (F.B.) stood for “fat boy.” He eventually joined his mother on a series of fad diets.

The incessant focus on food led Bruni to develop multiple eating disorders. Through prep school, he jumped from one weight-loss scheme to another, including extensive fasting, amphetamine abuse and excessive exercise. Realizing he was gay was not terribly unsettling for Bruni, but his struggle with anorexia and bulimia filled him with such shame, he abstained from sexual contact.

In 1986 Bruni graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in English from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He earned an M.S. in journalism with highest honors in 1988 from Columbia University.

Bruni started his career at the New York Post. He moved to the Detroit Free Press in 1990 where, in 1992, he became a Pulitzer Prize finalist for his profile of a child molester.

In 1995 Bruni joined The New York Times. As a White House correspondent, he reported on George W. Bush. His book “Ambling into History” (2002) chronicles Bush’s presidential campaign. Bruni went on to become a restaurant critic for The Times and was named an op-ed writer in 2011.

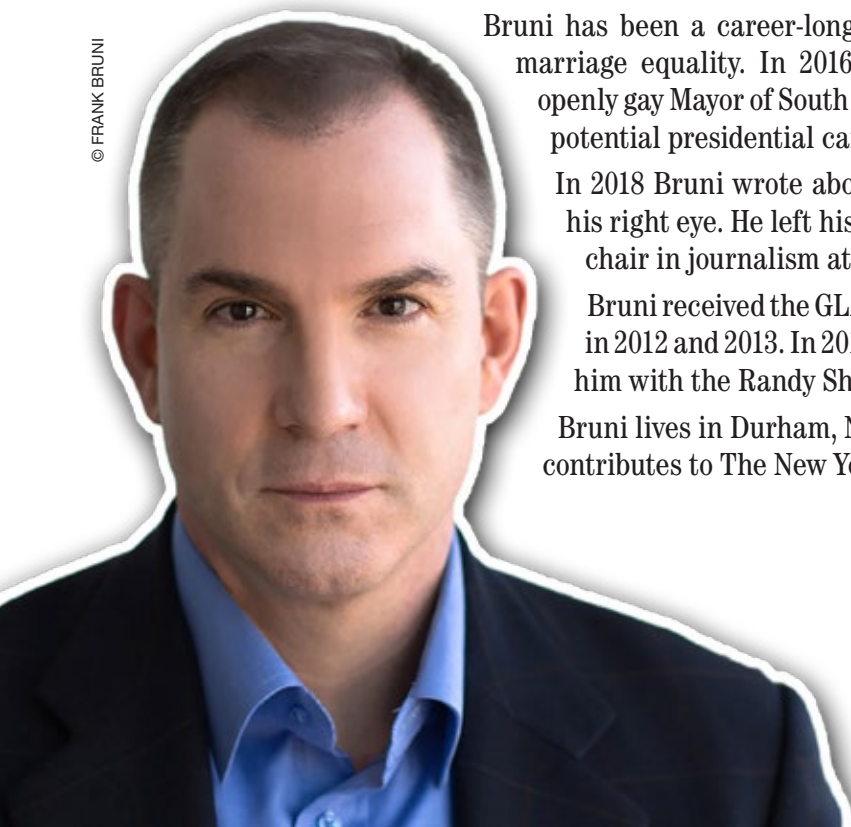
Bruni has been a career-long LGBT and AIDS activist and has often opined about marriage equality. In 2016 he wrote extensively about Pete Buttigieg, then the openly gay Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, positioning him as a talented and serious potential presidential candidate.

In 2018 Bruni wrote about a rare condition that led to significant vision loss in his right eye. He left his official post at The Times in 2021 to accept an endowed chair in journalism at Duke University.

Bruni received the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Newspaper Columnist in 2012 and 2013. In 2016 the Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association presented him with the Randy Shilts Award for his dedication to LGBT Americans.

Bruni lives in Durham, North Carolina. He contributes to The New York Times and CNN.

© FRANK BRUNI



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

COMPOSER

b. March 1, 1810

d. October 17, 1849

“Sometimes I can only groan, suffer, and pour out my despair at the piano!”

He was one of the world's greatest classical composers, famous for his piano solos and concerti.

Frédéric Chopin was a famous Polish French pianist and composer of the Romantic period. Among the greatest composers in history, he was renowned for his solo piano compositions and piano concerti.

Chopin was born in a small town near Warsaw, Poland. His father made a living tutoring the children of upper-class families, before becoming a French teacher. Chopin's mother and sister played piano, which enthralled him from the time he was a toddler.

As a young child, Chopin took piano lessons from Wojciech Zywny, a talented local musician. Before long, the boy excelled beyond his teacher's capabilities and the constraints of formal music education.

Chopin composed and published his first work at the age of 7. He was performing at private events and charity concerts before he was 10, and he played for the Russian tsar at age 11. At 16, Chopin entered Warsaw Conservatory of Music, where he studied musical theory from Joseph Elsner, a Polish composer.

Elsner was a Romanticist who encouraged Chopin's prodigious talent and creativity. At age 20, Chopin moved to Paris, the hub of Romanticism in music.

While gaining recognition for his compositions, Chopin earned a living in Paris as an acclaimed piano teacher. After his spectacular debut, which was attended by the composers Franz Liszt and Felix Mendelssohn, he became an overnight celebrity. His major contributions during this time include the Nocturnes, (Op. 9 and 15), the 2 Études, and Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35).

Chopin was engaged to Maria Wodziński for a brief time before her parents called off the marriage in 1837. He had what many believe to have been a romantic relationship with the female novelist Aurore Dudevant, who was known by the pen name George Sand. Chopin spent nine years corresponding with Dudevant and composed some of his greatest works during their involvement. Their liaison ended after they spent a winter on the Spanish island of Majorca.

Over the years, biographers and archivists have largely concealed Chopin's attraction to men and exaggerated his involvements with women. A Swiss radio documentary titled “Chopin's Men” contended that his sexuality had been strategically misrepresented by Polish historians to comport with the country's conservative values. Researchers uncovered romantic and suggestive letters that Chopin wrote to men. The music journalist Moritz Weber found historical evidence that many of Chopin's letters had been intentionally mistranslated, exchanging his male lovers' pronouns to female.

Chopin contracted tuberculosis and died in Paris at the age of 39. He composed more than 200 works for the piano during his life.

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DAVID CICILLINE

b. July 15, 1961

U.S. CONGRESSMAN

“The American people deserve to know who will stand up and speak out for those on the margins of society.”

He is the chair of the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus.

David N. Cicilline is a Democrat representing Rhode Island's 1st District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Previously, he served two terms as the mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, and four terms in the Rhode Island House of Representatives. He was the first openly gay mayor of an American state capital and the fourth openly gay member of Congress.

A native of Providence, Cicilline is the son of a Jewish mother and an Italian Catholic father. Cicilline regards himself as a practicing Jew. His father was a well-known attorney who had been an aide to Mayor Joseph Doorley Jr. and defended members of the mafia.

As an undergraduate at Brown University, Cicilline started a political club, the College Democrats, with fellow student John F. Kennedy Jr. Cicilline received his B.A. in political science in 1983. He earned his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, then worked as an attorney for the Public Defender Service in Washington, D.C.

In 1996, after a failed senatorial bid, Cicilline won a seat in the Rhode Island House of Representatives. He came out publicly in 1999, insisting his sexuality was irrelevant to the campaign. He described himself as a “candidate who happens to be gay rather than a gay candidate.”

In 2002 Cicilline ran for mayor of Providence and won by landslide, carrying 84% of the vote. He became the city's first openly gay mayor and the country's first openly gay mayor of a state capital. He won reelection in 2006 by nearly an identical margin. As mayor, he cofounded a bipartisan gun-control coalition, Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

Cicilline was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010. He became the fourth openly gay member of Congress.

Throughout his political career, Cicilline has championed the rights of the middle class, vulnerable populations and the LGBTQ+ community. He has worked to ensure affordable health-care access and to protect social security and Medicare. Among countless other initiatives, he has authored the Assault Weapons Ban, introduced the Automatic Voter Registration Act and co-sponsored multiple pieces of environmental legislation.

After the Supreme Court's 2015 decision legalizing same-sex marriage, Cicilline proposed the Equality Act to prohibit LGBT discrimination nationwide. In 2018 he co-authored the Gay and Trans Panic Defense Prohibition Act to prevent lawyers from using victims' LGBTQ+ identity to justify crimes against them.

Cicilline serves as chair of the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus, chairman of the House Antitrust Subcommittee and vice chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. In January 2021 House Speaker Nancy Pelosi named Cicilline a co-manager of the second impeachment trial of Donald J. Trump.

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MART CROWLEY

b. August 21, 1935

d. March 7, 2020

PLAYWRIGHT

“I had no agenda in writing this play except expressing myself.”

He advanced gay representation onstage with his groundbreaking play, “The Boys in the Band.”

Mart Crowley was a gay American playwright famous for “The Boys in the Band” (1968), a groundbreaking play that shocked mainstream audiences with its open, unapologetic portrayal of gay life.

The son of an alcoholic father and a drug-abusing mother, Edward Martino “Mart” Crowley was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He attended an all-boys Roman Catholic high school and studied theater at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He earned his bachelor’s degree in 1957 and moved to New York City.

In New York, Crowley worked as a personal assistant for the film director Elia Kazan. He later worked for the actress Natalie Wood, who encouraged Crowley to write.

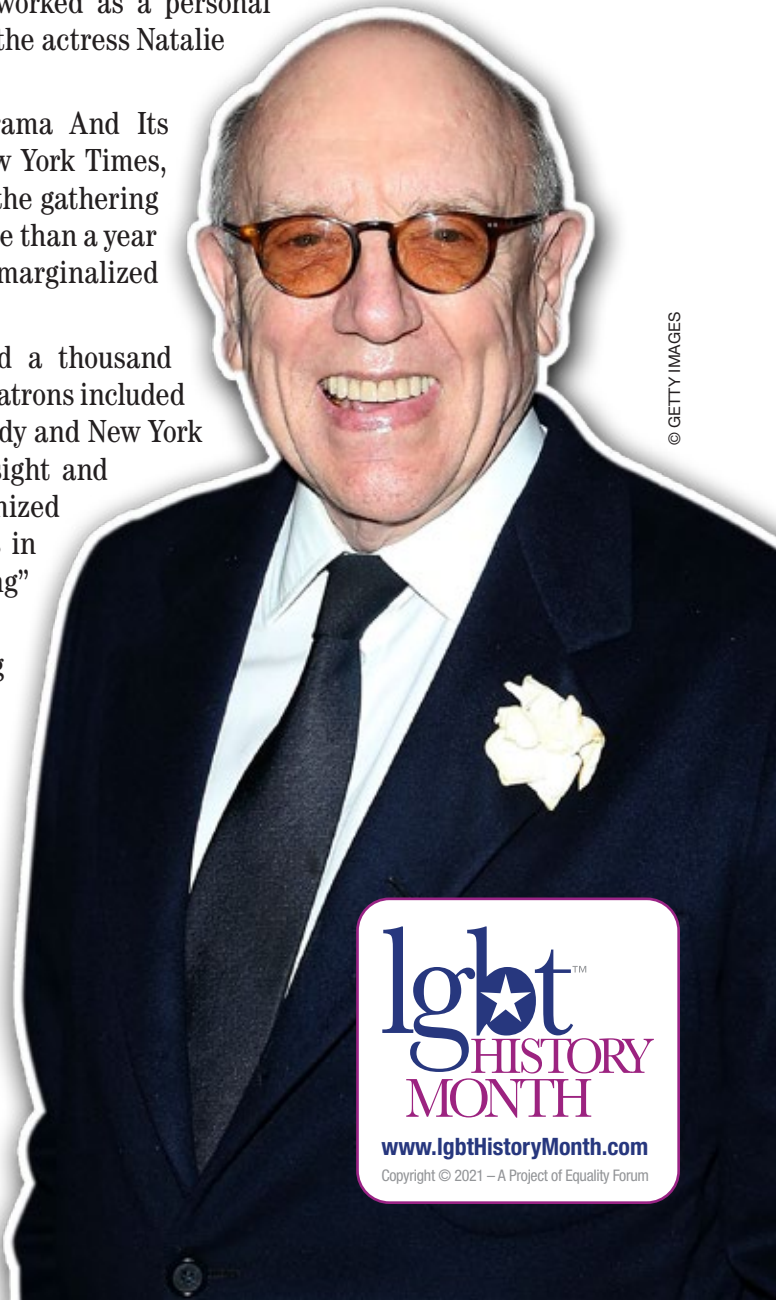
Inspired by a controversial article titled “Homosexual Drama And Its Disguises” by Stanley Kauffman, a theater critic for The New York Times, Crowley penned his first play, “The Boys in the Band.” About the gathering of gay men for a birthday party, it premiered Off Broadway more than a year before the Stonewall riots, at a time when homosexuality was marginalized and vilified.

“The Boys in the Band” ran for more than two years and a thousand performances, attracting both gay and straight theatergoers. Patrons included prominent figures such as former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and New York City Mayor John Lindsay. The play earned praise for its insight and honesty. A film adaptation was released in 1970. As the organized gay rights movement gained momentum, however, “The Boys in the Band” drew criticism for its reinforcement of “unflattering” gay stereotypes.

Crowley wrote and produced five additional plays, including “The Men From the Boys” (2002), a sequel to “The Boys in the Band.” He wrote for television, including the popular ABC mystery series “Hart to Hart,” which he produced. Crowley also appeared in several documentaries.

In 2009 Crowley won a Lambda Literary Award for his collected plays. The same year, in celebration of its 50th anniversary, “The Boys in the Band” was restaged on Broadway. It earned Crowley a 2019 Tony Award for Best Revival. In 2020 Netflix released a cinematic adaptation of the work with many of the same Broadway actors.

Crowley died in New York from complications of heart surgery.



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ASHLEY DIAMOND

b. 1978

TRANSGENDER PRISON ACTIVIST

“While it seems like the world is so obsessed with ‘Orange Is the New Black,’ I’m living it.”

Her lawsuit forced Georgia to reclassify hormone therapy as a medical necessity for transgender inmates.

Ashley Diamond is a transgender prisoners’ rights activist. In 2016 she won a landmark case against the Georgia Department of Corrections that forced the state to reclassify hormone therapy as a medical necessity for transgender inmates.

Diamond was born and raised in Rome, Georgia. As a youngster, she told her parents she identified with a TV cartoon, “Jem and the Holograms,” about a girl rock star with alter egos. After she attempted suicide at age 15, Diamond was diagnosed with gender dysphoria. The recognition gave her hope for the first time in her life.

Diamond’s Southern Baptist family rejected her gender identity. Her father kicked her out, and Diamond moved in with a “privileged, white family.” She began hormone therapy at age 17.

Passionate about singing, Diamond frequently performed in Atlanta clubs and traveled to New York where she appeared on talk shows to discuss her transgender experience. Even so, she struggled to maintain a reliable income. She frequently faced discrimination when employers discovered she was a transgender woman.

In 2011 an emotionally abusive boyfriend convinced Diamond to pawn his stolen goods. He led her to commit nonviolent “crimes of survival” for which she was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Despite federal standards classifying transgender inmates as vulnerable and in need of continuously reviewed placement, Diamond served her time in an all-male prison. Officials forced her to strip naked in front of other inmates, an initiation that began years of “degrading and abusive treatment.” Fellow prisoners raped her repeatedly. Prison staff ignored her reports of assault, merely advising her to “be prepared to fight.”

Diamond was also denied the medically necessary hormones she had been taking for 17 years. The disruption triggered a painful physical and emotional transformation that led her to multiple suicide and self-castration attempts. Guards placed her in solitary confinement for “pretending to be a woman.”

In 2015 Diamond and the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a class-action lawsuit against the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) for failing to provide transgender prisoners medically necessary hormone therapy and safe prison assignment. A few days after the case was filed, Diamond was released on parole. The following year, she reached a settlement with the GDC that prompted multiple statewide policy changes.

Diamond was reincarcerated for a parole violation in 2019. Despite Georgia’s new policies supporting transgender inmates, the state again placed her in a men’s facility, and she again endured abuse. In November 2020 she filed a second lawsuit.

Diamond continues to fight for a transfer to a women’s facility.

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ALICE DUNBAR-NELSON

b. July 19, 1875

d. September 18, 1935

AUTHOR & ACTIVIST

*“Unwittingly, you’ve made me dream /
Of violets, and my soul’s forgotten gleam”*

Alice Dunbar-Nelson was a racially-mixed bisexual poet and author whose career spanned multiple literary genres and culminated during the Harlem Renaissance. She was also a lifelong educator and activist who fought for women’s suffrage and equality for Black Americans.

**Hers is one of
only two African-
American women’s
journals published in
the 20th century.**

Dunbar-Nelson (née Alice Ruth Moore) was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, 10 years after her enslaved mother gained freedom. Her father, who was rumored to have been a white merchant, left when she was young.

An exceptional student, Dunbar-Nelson graduated from high school at age 14. She attended Straight College (now Dillard University) and received her teaching certificate in 1892. She later attended Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Initially, Dunbar-Nelson taught in the Louisiana public school system and worked on her writing. In 1895 she published her first book, a collection of stories and poems titled

“Violets and Other Tales.” Soon after, she moved to Boston to pursue a literary career. Her work for the Boston Monthly Review captured the heart of a fellow writer, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and they began a two-year correspondence.

During this period, Dunbar-Nelson relocated to Harlem where she cofounded and taught at the White Rose Mission, a “home for Black girls and women.” In 1898 she married Paul Dunbar in New York, and they settled in Washington, D.C.

In 1899 her second book, “The Goodness of St. Rocque and Others,” about Creole life, launched Dunbar-Nelson’s career-long exploration and critique of American culture and racial oppression. She wrote novels, stories, essays, poems, and reviews and kept a diary.

Dunbar-Nelson’s husband physically and emotionally abused her. She divorced him in 1902 and moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where she taught at various high schools and colleges. She created the Wilmington Advocate, a newspaper promoting racial uplift. She quietly married and divorced a second time and explored relationships with women, including Edwina Kruse, a high school principal, and Fay Jackson Robinson, a journalist and activist.

In 1916 Dunbar-Nelson married the journalist Robert J. Nelson. His activism further ignited her own. Among other pursuits, she served on the Delaware Republican Committee and championed civil rights and women’s suffrage.

During the Harlem Renaissance—the golden age of African-American art and expression in 1920s and ’30s—Dunbar-Nelson lectured and wrote prolifically. Her work inspired influential writers of the era.

Dunbar-Nelson died from a heart condition. Fifty years later, W.W. Norton & Co. published her journal, “Give Us Each Day.” It is one of only two African-American women’s journals published in the 20th century.

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CARLOS ELIZONDO

WHITE HOUSE SOCIAL SECRETARY

“In both my professional and personal life, it has always been important to me to represent our community in a positive manner.”

He is the first Hispanic and second openly gay man to serve as White House social secretary.

Carlos Elizondo is the Biden administration’s White House social secretary. He is the first Hispanic American, the second man and the second openly LGBT person to hold the position.

Elizondo was born in Harlingen, Texas. He graduated in 1985 from Pontifical College Josephinum, a private Roman Catholic college and school of theology in Columbus, Ohio. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and Latin American studies.

In 1988 Elizondo entered the political scene as a fellow in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), which provides development opportunities for emerging Latinx civic leaders. Through the fellowship, he worked in the Mexican Government Tourism Office at the Embassy of Mexico in Washington, D.C. He credits CHCI with providing him “a solid foundation for [his] future career path.”

Subsequently, Elizondo joined the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest Latinx nonprofit advocacy organization in the United States. He also worked in a variety of events-related positions at trade associations in the D.C. area, before he was appointed to a position in the Clinton administration in 1992.

During President Clinton’s two terms, Elizondo served in the White House and in the Office of the U.S. Chief of Protocol. As a protocol officer, he coordinated and managed the NATO 50th Anniversary Summit, the Centennial Olympic Games, Papal visits, and other high-profile events involving national and international White House guests.

From 2000 to 2001, he managed special activities and protocol at Walt Disney World. When he returned to Washington, he worked for six years as the senior director of presidential events at Georgetown University. During the Obama administration, Elizondo served as special assistant to the president and social secretary to then-Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill.

In 2020 the Biden White House named Elizondo social secretary. He was the first LGBTQ person appointed to President Biden’s staff and is only the second man to hold the position. He came to the role with more experience than anyone before him. His responsibilities include impeccably hosting and entertaining the world’s most powerful people.

Outside of his professional duties, Elizondo maintains a very private life. He lives with his husband in Washington, D.C. He has volunteered with several Washington community organizations and has mentored Latinx youth, many of whom were from his native area of Texas.



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ALTHEA GARRISON

b. October 7, 1940

TRANSGENDER STATE REPRESENTATIVE

She was the first transgender U.S. state legislator.

“It pays not to quit when you want something. You have to keep working until you get it.”

Althea Garrison was the first elected transgender state legislator in the United States. She served one term in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1993 to 1995.

The youngest of seven children, Garrison was born male in the tiny town of Hahira, Georgia. At 19 she moved to Boston, planning to attend beauty school. Garrison instead attended Newbury Junior College, then received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Suffolk University. She went on to earn a master’s degree in management from Lesley College and a certificate in special studies in administration and management from Harvard University. Garrison transitioned in Boston. She became Althea Garrison in 1976, legally changing both her first and last names.

In 1982 Garrison ran for the Massachusetts state legislature as a Democrat. It was her first bid for public office. Throughout the next decade, she ran and lost elections for a variety of seats, gradually moving from a Democrat to an Independent to a Republican.

In 1992 Garrison ran as a Republican for the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Although her transgender identity was an open secret among local politicians, it was unknown to her constituents. Days after winning the election, she was outed by a reporter who found her birth certificate and made her original name and sex public.

While in office, Garrison served as a member of the Housing Committee and the Election Law Committee. She sponsored and passed legislation to introduce mail-in voter registration and strongly supported workers’ rights. Despite endorsements from eight local unions and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, she lost reelection.

Garrison spent the next 34 years working as a human resources clerk in the Massachusetts State Comptroller’s Office and continually running for office. She often devoted her vacation to campaigning. Although her political affiliation has been fluid, she has identified as an independent conservative since 2012.

In 2017 Garrison finished as the first runner-up in the Boston City Council election. The following year, Boston Councilmember Ayanna Pressley won a congressional bid and had to vacate her seat. Garrison was appointed to fill Pressley’s remaining term. In 2019 Garrison became the most conservative member of the otherwise Democratic Boston City Council.

“I never quit,” 78-year-old Garrison explained. “I’m constantly running, and I knew it would pay off.” Despite advocating for affordable housing measures, including rent control and eviction protections, Garrison lost reelection to a Democratic challenger in 2020.

Garrison lives in Boston. She has appeared on the city’s ballot more than 25 times.

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R.C. GORMAN

b. July 26, 1932

d. November 3, 2005

NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIST

**The New York Times
called him “The
Picasso of American
Indian Art.”**

“I’m an Indian painting Indians, and if it worked out for me, then it’s all well and good.”

Rudolph Carl (R.C.) Gorman was a gay Native American artist best known for his paintings and lithographs of full-bodied indigenous women. The New York Times called him “The Picasso of American Indian Art.”

A member of the Navajo (Diné) Nation, Gorman was born in Chinle, Arizona, to a family “rich in artistic talent and creative spirit, but not in material possessions.” His mother was a devout Catholic. His father was a Navajo Code Talker and an accomplished artist and illustrator. They separated when Gorman was 12.

Gorman grew up with his extended family in a hogan, a traditional earth-covered dwelling. His grandmother, who served as his guiding light, nurtured his budding talent. To his mother’s dismay, Gorman’s earliest drawing portrayed a naked woman. He credits a high school teacher with the encouragement to become an artist.

Gorman briefly attended Arizona State College (now Northern Arizona University) before enlisting in the U.S. Navy in 1951. While stationed in Guam, he drew the wives and girlfriends of his officers and fellow sailors for a small fee, using photos for reference.

After the Navy, Gorman resumed his education. In 1958 the Navajo Tribal Council awarded him a scholarship to study art in Mexico City. There, celebrated painters such as Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros significantly influenced his style and direction.

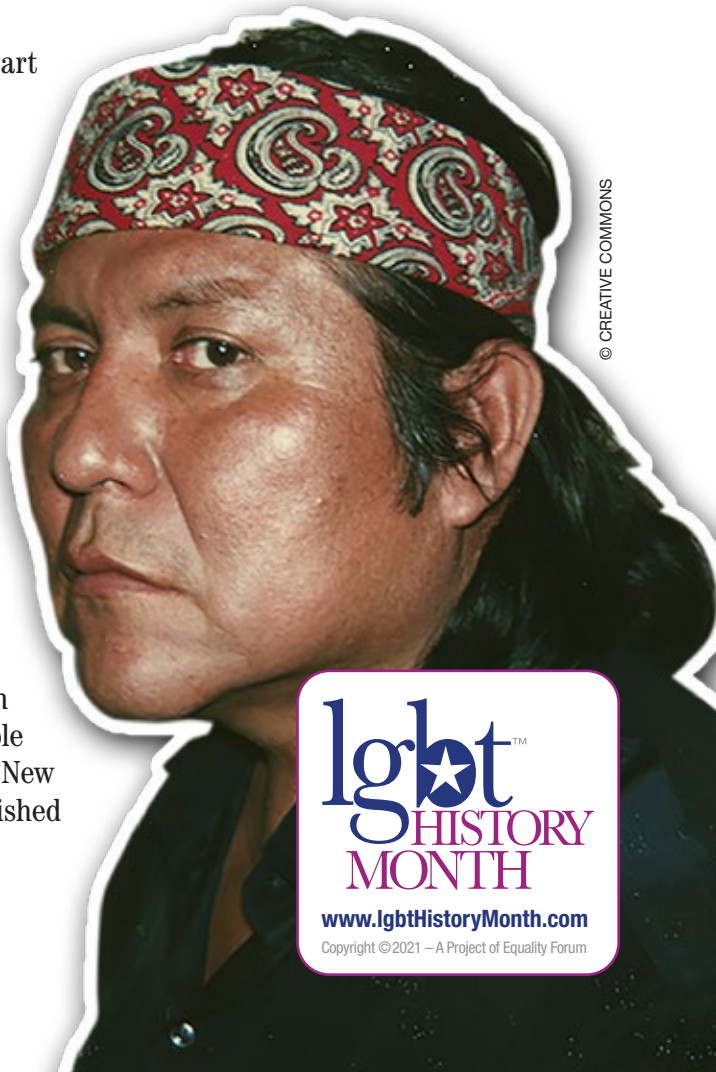
Upon his return, Gorman moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to start his career. Initially, he earned more money as an artist’s model.

Gorman embraced San Francisco’s gay culture and moved to the Castro District with his male partner. After an acquaintance outed him to his family, Gorman wrote home: “I am a homosexual. It’s unfortunate only in that I myself did not tell you.”

In the 1960s Gorman opened the country’s first Native-American-owned art gallery in Taos, New Mexico. Celebrity collectors, including Elizabeth Taylor and Gregory Peck, purchased his work.

Gorman’s success rested on his iconic representations of large, hardy, mostly Navajo women. “My women work and walk on the land ...” he said. “They are soft and strong like my grandmother.” Once, when asked about his subject matter, Gorman replied, “It’s me. I am every fat, nude woman I draw.” Traditional Navajo culture recognizes four genders and embraces the interplay of masculine and feminine.

Gorman received the Harvard University Humanitarian Award in Fine Art, the New Mexico Governor’s Award of Excellence and multiple honorary doctorate degrees. When he died in Taos, the governor of New Mexico had flags flown at half-staff. The New York Times published Gorman’s obituary.



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LZ GRANDERSON

b. March 11, 1972

JOURNALIST & COMMENTATOR

“This is the gay agenda: equality. Not special rights, but the rights that are already written by [our Founding Fathers].”

He is a groundbreaking, openly gay American sportswriter and commentator who explores the intersection of athletics, race and LGBTQ identity.

Elzie Lee “LZ” Granderson is a groundbreaking, openly gay American sportswriter and commentator. His work for major news outlets such as CNN, ESPN and ABC News has increased the visibility of racial justice and LGBTQ equality in athletics.

Granderson’s passion for sports began early. Born in Detroit to a poor family, he suffered abuse from his stepfather and turned to drugs and gangs as an adolescent. Sports helped save him. “I’d be bleeding from being whipped and go to sleep reading the NBA Almanac,” he said in a 2012 interview. “It was my blanket that helped me heal. I read every line about every player.”

Granderson began his career as an actor. He attended Western Michigan University on a theater scholarship and landed his first film role in “Zebrahead” at the age of 20. A few years later, he appeared in “To Sir, With Love II” (1996), with Sidney Poitier reprising his original role.

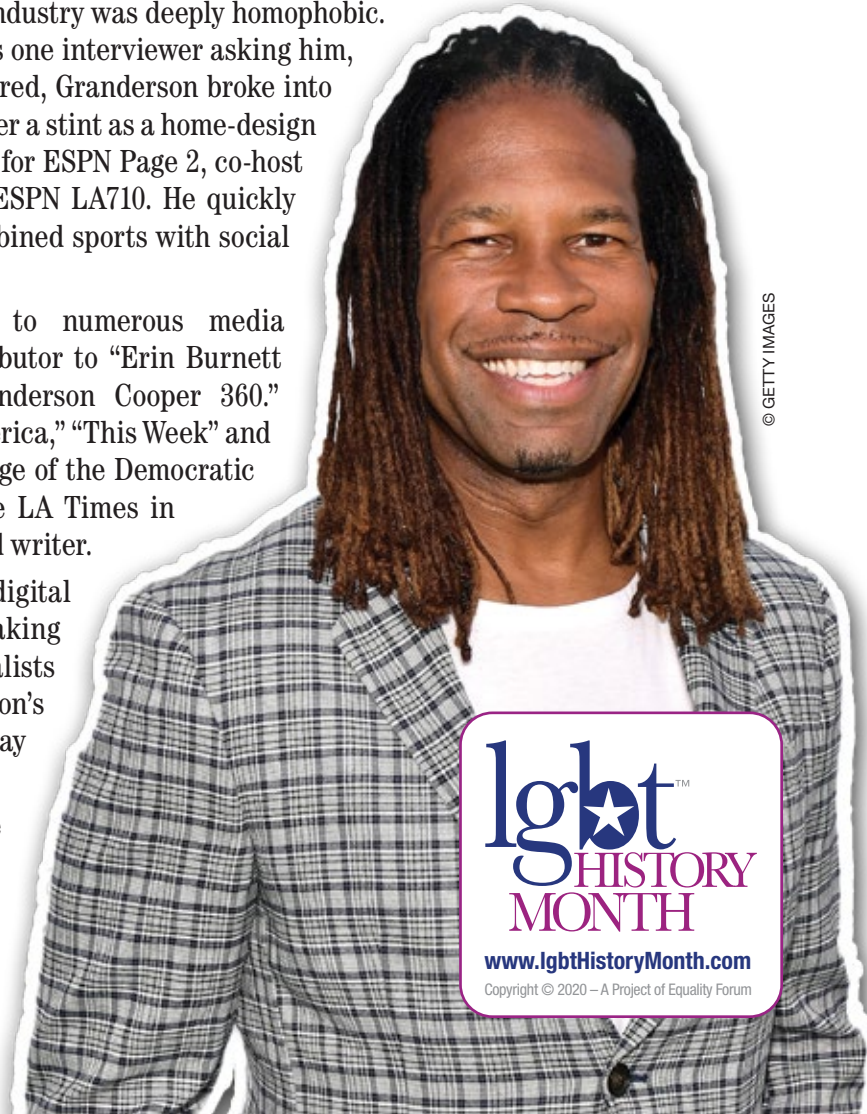
Granderson got his start in journalism at the The Grand Rapids Press. During the 1990s, when he was trying to break into sportswriting, the industry was deeply homophobic.

Granderson, who was open about his sexuality, recalls one interviewer asking him, “What does a gay guy know about the NBA?” Undeterred, Granderson broke into sportswriting at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, after a stint as a home-design writer. He went on to serve as a writer and columnist for ESPN Page 2, co-host of ESPN’s “SportsNation” and afternoon co-host on ESPN LA710. He quickly developed a reputation for incisive columns that combined sports with social commentary on race, gender and sexual orientation.

Granderson has taken his unique perspective to numerous media outlets. He served as a CNN columnist and a contributor to “Erin Burnett OutFront,” “Newsroom with Don Lemon” and “Anderson Cooper 360.” He regularly contributed to ABC’s “Good Morning America,” “This Week” and “Nightline,” in addition to co-anchoring ABC’s coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. He joined the LA Times in 2019 as the sports and culture columnist and an op-ed writer.

In 2009 Granderson won the GLAAD Media Award for digital journalism for his ESPN article, “Gay Athletes Are Making Their Mark.” The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association honored him in 2008 and 2010. Granderson’s Ted Talk on LGBTQ equality, “The Myth of the Gay Agenda,” has received more than 1.6 million views.

Granderson lives with his partner, Steve Huesing. He has one child from a previous marriage.



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BOB HATTOY

GAY RIGHTS PIONEER

b. November 1, 1950

d. March 4, 2007

He was the first openly gay person to address the Democratic National Convention on prime-time TV.

“Mr. President, your family has AIDS ... and you are doing nothing about it.”

Bob Hattoy was a pioneering HIV/AIDS, LGBT rights and environmental activist. The New York Times called him “the first gay man with AIDS many Americans had knowingly laid eyes on.” His arresting speech at the 1992 Democratic convention brought national attention to the AIDS epidemic, when the government was sweeping it under the rug.

Robert Keith Hattoy was born in Providence, Rhode Island. His family moved to Long Beach, California, when he was a teenager. Despite an abusive father and an otherwise difficult home life, Hattoy grew into a witty, outgoing and influential young man.

Though he never completed a degree, Hattoy attended several colleges and universities. Motivated by his passion for the environment, he turned his talents toward public policy. He worked under Zev Yaroslavsky, a Los Angeles city councilman, where he focused on environmental initiatives and rent control.

In 1981, after a stint on Yaroslavsky’s staff, Hattoy took a job with the Sierra Club, where he remained for the next decade. Founded by the naturalist John Muir, the Sierra Club was reputedly run by “an austere bunch of mountaineers.” Hattoy breathed new life into the organization with his charisma and the power of his convictions.

In 1992 Hattoy joined Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign. Shortly thereafter, he discovered a lump under his arm and was diagnosed with AIDS-related lymphoma. Hattoy told Clinton, and Clinton urged him to speak publicly about the epidemic.

Ten days later, still shell-shocked by his diagnosis, Hattoy addressed the Democratic National Convention in a nationally televised speech. Calling out the presidential incumbent, George H. W. Bush, Hattoy declared the gay community “part of the American family.” “Mr. President,” he said, “your family has AIDS, and we are dying, and you are doing nothing about it.”

After Bill Clinton’s election, Hattoy served in the White House Office of Personnel. He was an outspoken critic of the environmental policies of previous administrations and found Clinton’s policies similarly lacking. In 1994 the Clinton administration moved Hattoy to the Interior Department as White House liaison on environmental matters. He remained there for five years. He also served as the research committee chairman of the Presidential Commission on HIV/AIDS.

In 2002 Hattoy took a position with the California Fish and Game Commission. He became its president in 2007, shortly before his death.

Hattoy died at age 56 in Sacramento, California, from complications of AIDS.



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JERRY HERMAN

b. July 10, 1931

d. December 26, 2019

AWARD-WINNING COMPOSER

He was the Tony award-winning composer and lyricist for the hit musicals “Mame,” “Hello Dolly!” and “La Cage aux Folles.”

“Writing for me is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle.”

Gerald “Jerry” Herman was an openly gay Broadway composer and lyricist best known for the smash musicals “Hello, Dolly!,” “Mame” and “La Cage aux Folles.” Herman was born in New York City and grew up in New Jersey. His family made frequent trips to the New York theater, which ignited his passion for Broadway musicals.

Herman spent his childhood learning the piano and writing songs. Every year he attended a summer camp owned by his parents. Before long, he was directing the camp’s theater shows.

Herman attended Parsons School of Design in New York. A talented interior designer, he renovated more than 30 homes. After a year at Parsons, Herman left to pursue theater at the University of Miami. At the time, the college offered one of the most innovative theater programs in America.

In Miami, Herman wrote, produced and directed his first musical, “Sketchbook.” The successful show ran for 17 additional performances beyond its original schedule.

Herman received his bachelor’s degree in drama in 1953 and relocated to New York, where he worked with an Off Broadway revue. In 1961 the theater producer Gerard Oestreicher asked Herman to write the music and lyrics for “Milk and Honey.” It was Herman’s first full Broadway score.

In 1964, with David Merrick and Michael Stewart, Herman produced “Hello, Dolly!” The longest-running musical of its time, “Hello, Dolly!” won 10 Tony Awards, and the show’s original cast recording was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Multiple Broadway revivals have been produced since.

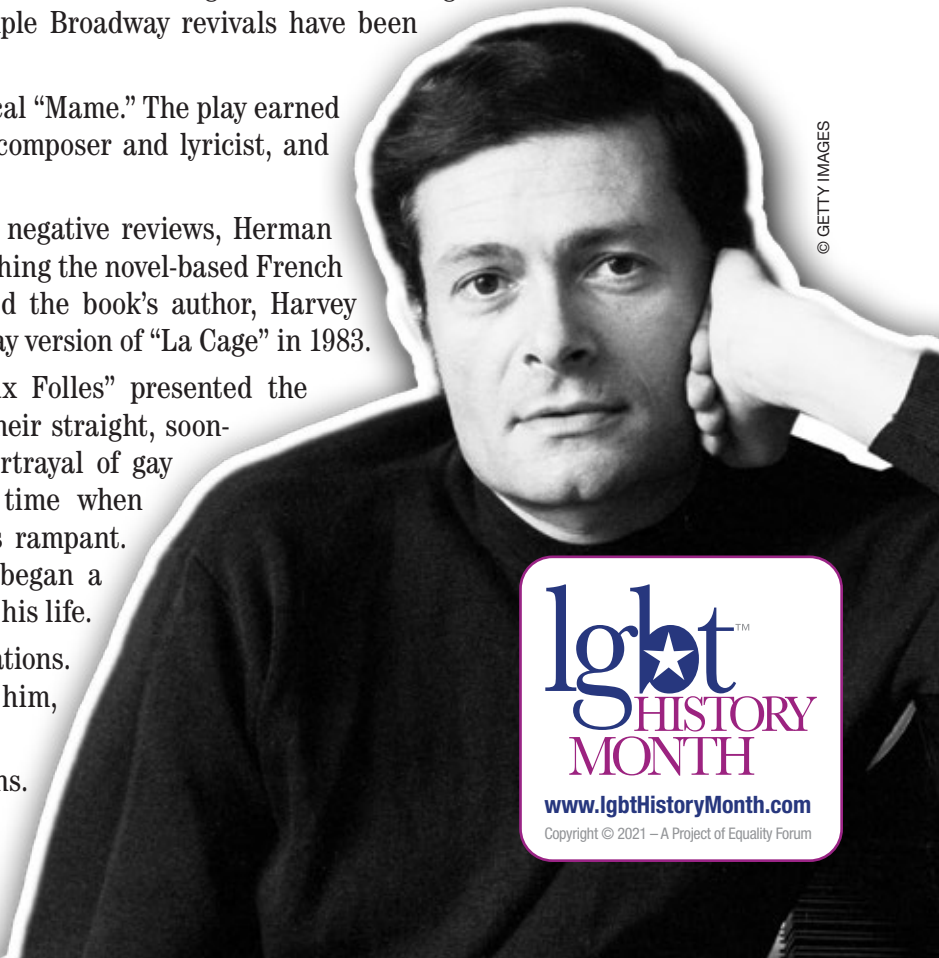
In 1966 Herman wrote the score for the hit musical “Mame.” The play earned eight Tony Award nominations, including best composer and lyricist, and won three.

After several of his subsequent shows received negative reviews, Herman took a break. His inspiration returned after watching the novel-based French movie, “La Cage aux Folles.” Herman contacted the book’s author, Harvey Fierstein, and the two collaborated on a Broadway version of “La Cage” in 1983.

The winner of six Tony Awards, “La Cage aux Folles” presented the funny and touching story of a gay couple and their straight, soon-to-be married son. It provided a watershed portrayal of gay relationships and same-sex parenthood at a time when the AIDS epidemic raged and homophobia was rampant. Herman himself contracted HIV in 1985 and began a series of experimental drug therapies that saved his life.

Herman received numerous awards and nominations. The University of Miami named a theater after him, and the Kennedy Center honored him in 2010.

In 2019 Herman died of pulmonary complications. The New York Times published his obituary.



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JANIS IAN

b. April 7, 1951

SINGER-SONGWRITER

She is a three-time Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter and a lifelong activist.

“Truth is not the enemy, and whatever does not kill us sets us free.”

Janis Ian is a folk singer-songwriter and lifelong activist. She has won three Grammy Awards and been nominated for 10.

Born in Farmingdale, New Jersey, to a liberal Jewish family, Ian grew up on a farm. She began playing piano at age 2 and guitar at age 10.

In 1965, at age 14, Ian wrote “Society’s Child” (“Baby I’ve Been Thinking”). The song was released the following year and reached No. 14 on the Billboard 100. Even so, Ian

was harassed both on- and offstage for its lyrics, which depict an interracial relationship. In 1967 she was nominated for her first Grammy for Best Folk Performance.

In 1975 Ian performed on the premiere episode of “Saturday Night Live.” The following year she won two Grammy Awards, including Best Pop Female Vocalist, and was nominated for three more.

Ian married an abusive man in 1978 and divorced him five years later. She moved to Nashville “penniless, in debt, and hungry to write.”

In 1992 Ian came out as a lesbian and started her own label, Rude Girl Records. After a nine-year music-industry hiatus, she released the album, “Breaking Silence” (1993). It was nominated for a Grammy for Best Folk Album.

Ian became a columnist in 1994. She wrote for The Advocate until 1997 and for Performing Songwriter until 2001. In 1998 she and her future wife founded The Pearl Foundation in honor of Ian’s mother. Since its inception, the organization has donated more than \$1.2 million in college scholarships to support returning students.

Ian’s mother, Pearl, put her lifelong dream of attending college on hold when she married at age 18. When Ian was 15, Pearl was diagnosed with MS. Ian then convinced her mother to return to school and paid for her tuition. Ian insists “the proudest thing” she ever did “was sending her to college.”

In 2001 Ian began publishing her science fiction short stories online. She was one of the first recording artists with a personal website and controversially maintained that “free Internet downloads are good for the music industry and its artists.”

In 2002 Ian’s debut song, “Society’s Child,” was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. In 2008 her hit single “At Seventeen” was also inducted. Ian’s autobiography, “Society’s Child” (2008), earned her a 2009 Grammy (Best Spoken Word) for the audiobook. She was nominated again in 2016 for her reading of the lesbian classic, “Patience and Sarah.”

Ian has been honored by the New York State Senate and the Human Rights Campaign. She lives in Nashville with her wife.



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KARINE JEAN-PIERRE

b. August 13, 1977

DEPUTY WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

“America is progressing towards a stronger, more inclusive future — and I know women of color are a driving force in that evolution.”

An immigrant, an activist and an author, Karine Jean-Pierre was named principal White House deputy press secretary in January 2021. She made history as the first Black person in 30 years — and the first out lesbian — to address the White House press corps.

Jean-Pierre was born in Martinique, the eldest child of Haitian parents who fled the dictatorship of François Duvalier. When Jean-Pierre was 5, her family moved to Queens, New York, in pursuit of the American dream. Instead, like so many immigrants, her parents faced financial hardship. Her father, a trained engineer, drove a taxi to support the family. Her mother worked as a home health aide.

Feeling like the ultimate “outsider” and under immense pressure to succeed, Jean-Pierre suffered from depression and attempted suicide in early adulthood. She discusses her struggles and achievements and offers advice to aspiring young changemakers in her political memoir, “Moving Forward: A Story of Hope, Hard Work, and the Promise of America” (2019).

As the Biden administration’s deputy press secretary, she is the first out lesbian and the second black person to lead a formal White House press briefing.

Jean-Pierre earned a bachelor’s degree from the New York Institute of Technology and a master’s degree in public affairs in 2003 from Columbia University. After graduate school, she served as a regional political director of John Edwards’s 2004 presidential campaign and Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign. When Obama was elected president, Jean-Pierre was named regional political director for the White House Office of Political Affairs. In 2012 she became the deputy battleground states director of President Obama’s reelection campaign.

In 2014 Jean-Pierre began teaching at Columbia University and served as campaign manager for the ACLU’s Reproductive Freedom Initiative. She joined MoveOn.org, the progressive policy advocacy group, in 2016. She became its chief public affairs officer and provided regular commentary on MSNBC and NBC News.

In 2019, during a political forum she was moderating, Jean-Pierre jumped between presidential candidate Kamala Harris and an angry protester who rushed the stage. “Here comes this guy with all of his male privilege,” Jean-Pierre said, recounting the experience as both scary and insulting. He insisted he had something “better to talk about.”

In 2020 the Biden campaign tapped Jean-Pierre to serve as a senior advisor. She became campaign chief of staff for Harris, then the vice presidential nominee, making Jean-Pierre the first Black person and the first out lesbian to hold the position. In 2021 the Biden administration named Jean-Pierre principal deputy press secretary in a historic move that also placed her on the first all-female White House communications team.

Jean-Pierre lives in Washington, D.C., with her wife, Suzanne Malveaux, a national CNN correspondent, and their daughter, Soleil.



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JANIS JOPLIN

b. January 19, 1943

d. October 4, 1970

ROCK STAR

A trailblazing icon of the 1960s counterculture, she became known as “the first queen of rock and roll.”

“Don’t compromise yourself. It’s all you’ve got.”

Janis Joplin was a trailblazing 1960s blues-rock singer and songwriter. Celebrated for her raw, powerful vocals and electric stage presence, she became known as “the first queen of rock and roll.”

Janis Lyn Joplin was born in Port Arthur, Texas, to conservative, college-educated parents. She gained weight and developed acne as an adolescent, and in high school, boys bullied her mercilessly. Rebellious, and convinced she would never be one of the “pretty girls,” she rejected mainstream fashion in favor of men’s shirts and tight skirts.

She befriended a group of male outcasts who shared her interest in music and the Beat movement. By her senior year, she had earned a reputation for tough-talking and hard-partying.

After graduating from high school in 1960, Joplin studied art at the University of Texas at Austin. She began performing there and joined a folk band. When a fraternity voted her the “ugliest man on campus,” she was devastated.

Joplin dropped out of college in 1963 and hitchhiked to San Francisco. She developed a following for her music, and she and a boyfriend started shooting methedrine. Troubled by her addiction, a group of friends sent her back to Texas to clean up. Though still a heavy drinker, she largely succeeded and returned to San Francisco’s music scene.

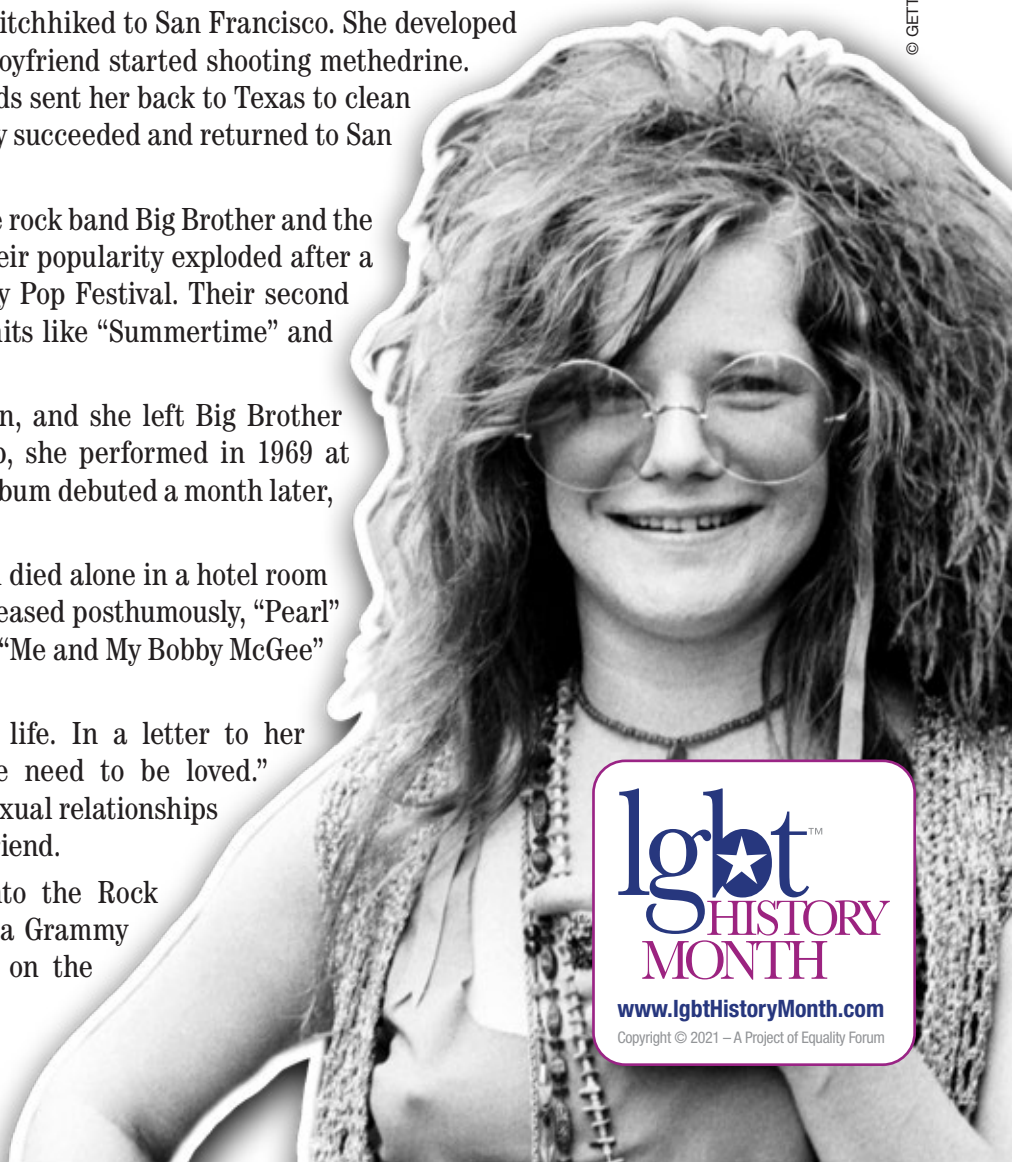
Joplin’s big break came when she joined the rock band Big Brother and the Holding Company. With Joplin fronting, their popularity exploded after a historic performance at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival. Their second album, “Cheap Thrills” (1968), featuring hits like “Summertime” and “Piece of My Heart,” reached No. 1.

Joplin’s preeminence soon created friction, and she left Big Brother for a solo career. Backed by a new group, she performed in 1969 at Woodstock, high on heroin. Her first solo album debuted a month later, peaking at No. 5.

In 1970, after forming another band, Joplin died alone in a hotel room of an accidental overdose. She was 27. Released posthumously, “Pearl” (1971) became her best-selling album, and “Me and My Bobby McGee” became her only No. 1 single.

Drive and insecurity dominated Joplin’s life. In a letter to her parents, she described ambition as “the need to be loved.” Absent any labels, she freely maintained sexual relationships with men and women, including her best friend.

After her death, Joplin was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She also received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



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LIBERACE

b. May 16, 1919

d. February 4, 1987

PIANIST & ENTERTAINER

A world-class pianist and showman, he was once the highest paid entertainer in the world.

“Nakedness makes us democratic; adornment makes us individuals.”

Liberace was a world-class pianist and showman, as famous for his flamboyant wardrobe and stage persona as he was for his immense talent.

Wladziu Valentine Liberace was born into a musical family in West Allis, Wisconsin. His parents emigrated from Poland and Italy. A prodigy, Liberace could play the piano by the age of 4.

As a child, Liberace was bullied for his effeminacy, avoidance of sports and speech impediment. He took refuge at the piano. As a teenager, he began studying at the Wisconsin College of Music and performed as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

When his family suffered financial hardship during the Great Depression, Liberace earned money playing popular music at weddings, movie theaters, speakeasies and other venues. Those experiences helped shape his trademark style, which he called “classical music with the boring parts left out.”

Liberace created a unique mix of classical and contemporary arrangements, often performed in extravagant medleys. Critics uniformly bashed him, but their opinions left his popularity unaffected.

In response to one caustic review, he famously quipped, “My manager and I laughed all the way to the bank.”

In 1944 Liberace premiered in Las Vegas and eventually made the city one of his many homes. Routinely wardrobeed in sequins, lace, feathers and fur, he dazzled audiences at an enormous, jeweled piano topped with a Louis XIV candelabra.

Liberace debuted on television in 1952 with his own variety show. A smash hit, it was broadcast on more than 200 U.S. stations. His autobiography, published in 1972, became a best seller, and he wrote several cookbooks, the first of which was reprinted seven times.

Liberace became one of the most famous and highly paid performers of the 20th century. He maintained an overwhelmingly female fanbase and consistently denied — and sued over — allegations that he was gay. After his death, his close friend, the actress Betty White, confirmed his sexual orientation.

The HBO biopic, “Behind the Candelabra” (2013) depicts the now well-known affair between Liberace and Scott Thorson, his much younger lover. When Liberace kicked Thorson out of his mansion, Thorson attempted to sue Liberace in the first same-sex palimony case in U.S. history. The judge threw out the claim, but Liberace settled anyway.

Liberace produced six gold albums, earned two Emmy Awards and received two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He turned one of his mansions into a museum and started a foundation offering scholarships to young artists.

Though undisclosed at the time, Liberace died less than two years after he was diagnosed with HIV.



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CLAUDE MCKAY

AUTHOR & POET

b. September 15, 1889

d. May 22, 1948

He was a Jamaican poet and author central to the Harlem Renaissance.

“If a man is not faithful to his own individuality, he cannot be loyal to anything.”

Claude McKay was a prominent bisexual Jamaican poet and author who earned international renown during the Harlem Renaissance — an awakening of African-American arts and culture in the 1920s and '30s. McKay's writing, which illuminated the Black experience, made a historic impact on the literary world.

Festus Claudius “Claude” McKay was born in Jamaica in 1889 to a family of “peasant” farmers. Educated by his brother, a schoolteacher, and an English family friend who was well-versed in British literature and European philosophy, McKay used his formative experiences as inspiration for his writing and use of Jamaican dialect.

At age 17, McKay moved to Kingston, Jamaica, to earn money as a constable while he worked on his poetry. He left the job soon after, having experienced constant racism in the predominantly white capital city.

McKay returned to his hometown, then moved to London in 1912, where he published his first poetry collections, “Songs of Jamaica” and “Constab Ballads.” The works stood in stark contrast, as “Songs” romanticized Jamaican peasant life, while “Constab” painted a dark portrait of the racism and inequities faced by Black Jamaicans.

McKay attended Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, then transferred to Kansas State University. He moved to Harlem, New York, in 1914.

In 1925 “The New Negro,” an anthology edited by Alain Locke, showcased McKay's writing alongside other gifted Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance. McKay published his first book, “Home to Harlem” three years later. Largely a romantic novel, it also portrayed working-class struggles and McKay's perspective on life as a Black man in America.

During the 1920s, communist ideology captivated McKay, and he traveled to Russia and France. In France he met two other notable writers, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Sinclair Lewis. In 1933 he wrote “Romance in Marseille,” the fictional account of an enslaved man who, after receiving reparations, moves to Marseille, France, to live in a society that views homosexuality the same as heterosexuality. Considered his most controversial prose, the novel was nearly lost to history. McKay's editors deemed it too shocking to release. Penguin Classics finally published it, seven decades after McKay's death.

McKay returned to Harlem in 1934. He had grown critical of communism and wrote of his disillusionment. He completed “Amiable With Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair Between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem” in 1941, but the book remained unpublished until 2017.

Although McKay never came out publicly, he had relationships with both men and women and found community in New York's LGBT circles. He died of a heart attack at age 58.



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STACEY MILBERN

b. May 19, 1987

d. May 19, 2020

DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVIST

“I would want people with disabilities 20 years from now to not think that they’re broken.”

Stacey Park Milbern was a civil rights advocate best known for her role in establishing the disability justice movement. She proudly identified as a queer, *crip* (*slang for disabled person*) woman of color.

The child of a white U.S. army serviceman and a Korean mother, Milbern was born with muscular dystrophy—a serious, progressive, degenerative disease. Though she began life in Seoul, South Korea, she spent most of her childhood in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Milbern was in grade school the first time she realized she had “a totally different reality.” She could walk on her own, but she was unsteady on her feet. When she fell in the school restroom, the other little girls just continued to chat, oblivious to her predicament.

The New York Times called her a “warrior for disability justice.”

As she matured, Milbern had trouble establishing independence as a physically impaired person confined to a wheelchair. “The world literally isn’t made to house us, it feels sometimes,” she said. By the age of 16, she had become a full-fledged disability activist. She secured a role as the community outreach director of the National Youth Leadership Network and later founded the North Carolina Leadership Forum and Disabled Young People’s Collective.

In 2004 the governor of North Carolina appointed Milbern to the Statewide Independent Living Council, where she served for six years with a two-year overlap on the North Carolina Commission for the Blind. Thanks largely to her diligence, North Carolina mandated disability awareness instruction in its public schools. In 2005 Milbern established the disability justice movement as an “intersectional approach to achieving access” for people of color, the LGBTQ community and other traditionally excluded groups.

Milbern graduated from Methodist University in 2009. She moved from her parents’ home to San Francisco at age 24, because of the city’s reputation for disability access. She earned her MBA from Mills College in Oakland, California, in 2015 and took a leadership position at the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley.

A gifted writer and blogger, Milbern rebuked the mainstream disability movement for marginalizing LGBTQ people and racial minorities and criticized telethons for their pity ploys. She faulted doctors for recommending unnecessary surgeries in pursuit of a “good body” versus a good quality of life.

Despite her declining health, in 2019 Milbern organized the distribution of generators to people on ventilators during the California wildfire power shutoffs. Just months before she died in 2020, she mobilized a group to help protect homeless people from the novel coronavirus.

Milbern died on her 33rd birthday from surgical complications. The New York Times published her obituary.



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SHANNON MINTER

b. February 14, 1961

TRANSGENDER SUPREME COURT ATTORNEY

“This is how we win; not by being confrontational but by showing people we want to contribute to the community”

He is a groundbreaking transgender civil rights attorney who argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Shannon Minter is a groundbreaking transgender civil rights attorney who argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court. He serves as the legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

Minter was born on Valentine's Day in East Texas and assigned female at birth. In high school, Minter believed he was a lesbian. He came out to his family, who vehemently disapproved of his presumed sexuality. Minter experienced “a lot of rejection” in his conservative hometown and often feared for his safety growing up.

Minter attended the University of Texas at Austin and graduated with honors before attending Cornell Law School. He earned a J.D. in 1993, graduating Magna

Cum Laude, Order of the Coif, and joined the NCLR the same year. Headquartered in San Francisco, the NCLR is a leading organization dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights. Minter founded the NCLR Youth Project, the first legal advocacy program of its kind.

In 1996, at age 35, Minter began his transition, keeping his given name. Minter believed it might be easier, particularly for his family, if he came out as a transgender man. Instead, the revelation shattered Minter's connections to his family and church. Those relationships took “decades to heal.”

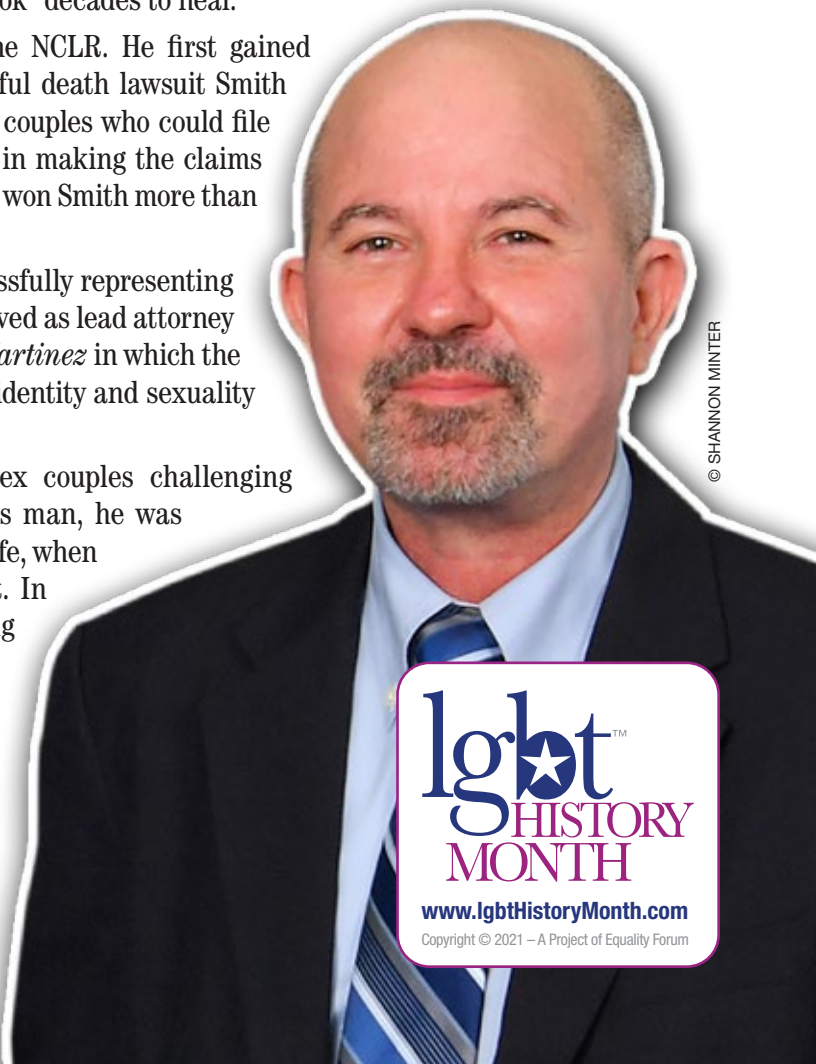
Minter went on to secure myriad historic victories for the NCLR. He first gained attention in 2001 representing Sharon Smith in the wrongful death lawsuit Smith filed on behalf of her lesbian partner. At the time, the only couples who could file tort claims were married heterosexuals. Minter succeeded in making the claims applicable to same-sex couples in domestic partnerships and won Smith more than \$1.5 million in damages.

Minter captured the national spotlight again in 2003, successfully representing a transgender father seeking custody of his child. Minter served as lead attorney in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* in which the court upheld an antidiscrimination policy based on gender identity and sexuality at the University of California, Hastings Law School.

In 2009 Minter served as lead counsel for the same-sex couples challenging Proposition 8 in the California Supreme Court. As a trans man, he was “pained by the injustice” of being able to legally marry his wife, when gay and lesbian couples were not afforded the same right. In a landmark decision, the court struck down Prop 8, making marriage equality state law.

Among numerous other accolades and bar association honors, Minter has received the Cornell Law School Exemplary Public Service Award and the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World Award.

Minter lives with his wife and daughter in Washington, D.C.



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JANELLE MONÁE

b. December 1, 1985

SINGER, SONGWRITER & ACTOR

She is an eight-time Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter and an award-winning actor and activist.

“I’ve never lived my life in a binary way.”

Janelle Monáe is an eight-time Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter and an award-winning actor and activist. Known for her bold fashion choices and music videos, which she calls her “emotion pictures,” Monáe describes herself as a nerdy polymath, Afrofuturist storyteller and pansexual android.

Janelle Monáe Robinson was born to working-class parents in Kansas City, Kansas. Her father struggled with addiction. Her mother devoted herself to God and family and, along with her grandmother, supported Monáe’s participation in musicals, talent shows and playwriting groups. Monáe credits her family with her intense work ethic.

By age 16, Monáe had established her own record label. When the American Musical and Dramatic Academy awarded her a college scholarship, she moved to New York City. As the only Black woman in her drama classes, she felt typecast and grew frustrated. She dropped out and moved to Atlanta.

In Atlanta, Monáe established an artist’s collective, the Wondaland Arts Society. In 2005 she made her professional debut as a featured artist on several OutKast tracks. Two years later, she released a solo concept EP, “Metropolis: Suite 1,” on which she introduced herself as an android. She received her first Grammy nomination for the album.

Monáe carried the android persona into her next two albums, “The ArchAndroid” (2010) and “The Electric Lady” (2013). In 2013 she made her first appearance as a musical guest on “Saturday Night Live.” When asked about her signature black-and-white tuxedo, she explained, “My mother was a janitor and my father collected trash, so I wear a uniform too.”

In 2016 Monáe made her film debut in “Moonlight” and played Mary Jackson, one of the starring roles, in “Hidden Figures.” Monáe received Critics Choice Award nominations for both. She won for “Moonlight,” as part of the ensemble cast.

In 2018 Monáe came out publicly as a “queer Black woman.” She founded Fem The Future, a mentoring organization and movement for women, and released the radical, critically acclaimed album, “Dirty Computer.” She said she wanted “young girls, young boys, nonbinary, gay, straight, [and] queer people who are having a hard time dealing with their sexuality . . .” to know she saw them. “This album is for you,” she said. “Be proud.”

In 2019 Monáe appeared as Marie in “Harriet,” a biopic about the abolitionist Harriet Tubman. In 2020 she starred in the horror film “Antebellum.”

Among countless awards and nominations for her music, videos and acting, Monáe has also received a GLAAD Media Award, an NAACP Image Award and two Council of Fashion Designers of America Awards.

Monáe resides in Atlanta and Los Angeles.



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JAVIER MORGADO

b. November 11, 1977

CNN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

“As Americans we should all share one dream ... that we should all enjoy the same rights as everybody else.”

He is an openly gay executive producer at CNN.

Javier Morgado is a journalist and a four-time Emmy Award-winning executive producer at CNN. He received his latest award as part of the CNN team whose breaking coverage of George Floyd’s murder won a News Emmy on September 28, 2021. Morgado earned an Edward R. Murrow Award in 2018 for CNN’s coverage of the devastation in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria.

Morgado was born to Cuban parents in Miami, Florida. Cable news captivated him early on. Eventually, he grew “completely obsessed” with the format and writing of news programs. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Miami and holds two master’s degrees: one from Fordham University and one from New York University. He completed executive education programs at Harvard Business School and Northwestern University and began his journalism career in 1995 at WPLG, Miami’s ABC affiliate. In 1999 Morgado joined NBC’s WTVJ as an assignment editor. In 2001 his work with NBC News hunting down leads on the September 11 terrorist attacks captured the network’s attention. He soon was promoted to the NBC News assignment desk in New York.

During his 11 years there, Morgado held several leadership positions. He played a pivotal role in the network’s coverage of breaking stories, including the Space Shuttle Columbia explosion, and served on the team that led the network’s award-winning coverage of the Iraq war in 2003. Morgado worked as senior political editor during the 2004 presidential election and the 2006 midterms. He became the supervising producer of “TODAY” from 2006 to 2010, during which time, the show won two Daytime Emmys.

In December 2011, Morgado joined CNN as senior broadcast producer of “Starting Point with Soledad O’Brien.” He became the executive producer of “New Day,” a position he held for seven years, before moving on to produce “At This Hour With Kate Bolduan.”

Morgado is a lifetime member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA). He is vice chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Martha Graham Dance Company and sits on the boards of the Stonewall Community Foundation and the Provincetown Film Festival. He is a member of the Dean’s Committee at the University of Miami School of Communication and teaches as an adjunct professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

For Morgado, being openly gay in the workplace is an incredible asset. He insists, “Being true to who I am allows me to focus on the stories we tell, on reporting the truth and on showcasing diverse perspectives in our coverage.”

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HENRY MUÑOZ III

b. December 1959

DESIGNER, ENTREPRENEUR & LEADER

“If we are to be the future, then we have to take the future in our own hands.”

Henry Reuben Muñoz III is an architectural designer, an activist and a philanthropist. In 2013 he became the first Latinx and first openly gay national finance chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Muñoz was born in San Antonio, Texas, where his father was an established Latinx labor organizer and civil rights activist. As a child, Muñoz attended many protests. Those experiences helped shape his conviction that the American dream should be available to all.

He was the first Latinx and first openly gay DNC finance chair.

Muñoz attended Loyola University, where he now sits on the Board of Trustees. In 1983 he joined Jones & Kell, one of the country’s oldest minority-owned architectural firms. Despite his lack of formal architectural training or licensing, Muñoz developed a diverse portfolio and pioneered the Mestizo Regionalism and Latino Urbanism styles. His design expertise and cultural understanding eventually led him to assume ownership of the firm, now known as Muñoz & Company.

In 1992 Muñoz was appointed transportation commissioner of Texas, making him the first Latinx person to hold the position. He also became an outspoken philanthropist, pledging to fight “dangerous racism ... almost of historic proportions.”

In 2007 Muñoz joined the DNC’s fundraising efforts in support of Barack Obama’s first presidential bid. He worked within the Democratic party to mobilize “not only Latinos, but the LGBT community and women.” Through the Futuro Fund, a committee established to engage first-time Latinx donors, Muñoz and the actress Eva Longoria raised \$30 million for President Obama’s reelection in 2012. That same year, Muñoz was elected finance chairman of the DNC—the party’s chief fundraising post. Beyond raising money, he believed it was necessary to “rethink, redesign and rebuild the party from scratch.”

In 2014 Muñoz and Longoria created the Latino Victory Fund, which works to elect Latinx candidates to all levels of government. Muñoz also established TheDream.US, an organization that helps young immigrants fund higher education. It has awarded in excess of \$141 million in scholarships to more than 6,000 students.

Muñoz served three terms as DNC finance chair before stepping down in 2019. He held the post longer than anyone else. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi described him as a “visionary who leads by example” and a critical contributor to the 2020 election victory.

Muñoz continues to serve as chairman and CEO of his architectural firm and to promote the role of cultural diversity in the American narrative. He serves on numerous boards and leads the commission to develop the Smithsonian American Latino Museum.

Muñoz married his husband in 2017 in a ceremony officiated by now-President Joe Biden. The couple lives in New York and Connecticut.



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JOHNNIE PHELPS

b. April 4, 1922

d. December 30, 1997

DECORATED WWII VETERAN

*“It would be unfair of me not to tell you,
my name is going to head the list.”*

**She was a member
of the U.S. Women’s
Army Corps and a
lesbian rights activist.**

Nell Louise “Johnnie” Phelps was a decorated World War II veteran and a lesbian rights activist. She dissuaded General Dwight D. Eisenhower from “ferreting out” the lesbians in her army detachment. “There were almost 900 women in the battalion,” Phelps later reported, “I could honestly say that 95% of them were lesbians.”

Phelps was born in North Carolina and raised by adoptive parents who abused her. She spent much of her youth in trouble with the law and eventually married a sailor. In

1943 she joined the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) to escape her marriage. The WAC, created during World War II, allowed women to serve in the military in non-combat positions. Phelps became a medic and earned the rank of sergeant.

While stationed in the South Pacific, Phelps met a lover in the corps, but lost her in 1944 when she was killed in a bombing. In 1945, after being wounded herself, Phelps received a Purple Heart and was honorably discharged. She reenlisted in the WAC a year later.

The second time, Phelps served in the post-war occupation of Germany under General Eisenhower, whom she greatly admired. He reportedly told Phelps he heard there were lesbians in the WAC and ordered her to “ferret” them out. Her response became military legend.

Phelps famously told Eisenhower she would be happy to oblige, but her name would be first on the list. Eisenhower’s secretary chimed in that her own name would come first.

Phelps explained that lesbians were serving in every role and rank in the corps. What’s more, they were not only the most decorated members but also were without any misconduct charges or pregnancies.

Eisenhower withdrew the order.

After a second honorable discharge, Phelps started her own printing business. In the early ’70s, she moved to Southern California, where she met her life partner, Grace Bukowski. Phelps joined the National Organization for Women (NOW), and in 1979 started NOW’s Whittier, California, chapter.

Phelps served as chair of the Lesbian Rights Task Force and was appointed to the Los Angeles Commission on Veterans’ Affairs. She helped lead the March for Gay Rights in Sacramento and advocated for women charged with homosexual misconduct. As a recovering alcoholic, she also became president of the Alcoholism Center for Women.

Phelps appeared in several documentaries, including “Trailblazers: Unsung Military Heroines of WWII.” In 1993 the Veterans for Human Rights hosted the Sgt. Johnnie Phelps Annual Awards Banquet in her honor.

Phelps died in 1997 in Barstow, California. Her partner donated her papers and effects to the ONE Gay and Lesbian Archives.



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LITTLE RICHARD

b. December 5, 1932

d. May 9, 2020

ROCK & ROLL PIONEER

Little Richard was a musical pioneer, called the “architect of rock and roll.”

“Elvis may be the King of Rock and Roll, but I am the Queen.”

Richard Penniman, “Little Richard,” was a musical pioneer of the 1950s and one of the first Black crossover artists. Known for his legendary hits — such as “Tutti Frutti,” “Long Tall Sally” and “Good Golly Miss Molly” — and flamboyant, gender-bending style, Little Richard has been called the “architect of rock and roll.”

Born in Macon, Georgia, during the Great Depression, Richard was one of 12 children of evangelical Christian parents. His father was a church deacon, a moonshine bootlegger and a nightclub owner. Richard’s love of music began as a child, singing in the church choir.

Richard’s early years were rife with abuse. Peers bullied him and mocked his walk. Richard’s father would strip him, tie him up and dispense “bloody beatings” for his effeminate behavior and deliberately androgynous appearance. His father “wanted seven boys,” Richard once said, and he “was messing it up.”

When Richard was 19, his father was murdered. Richard took a job as a dishwasher to provide for the family. He wrote some of his first and most celebrated tracks at that time, including “Tutti Frutti,” the song that launched his career.

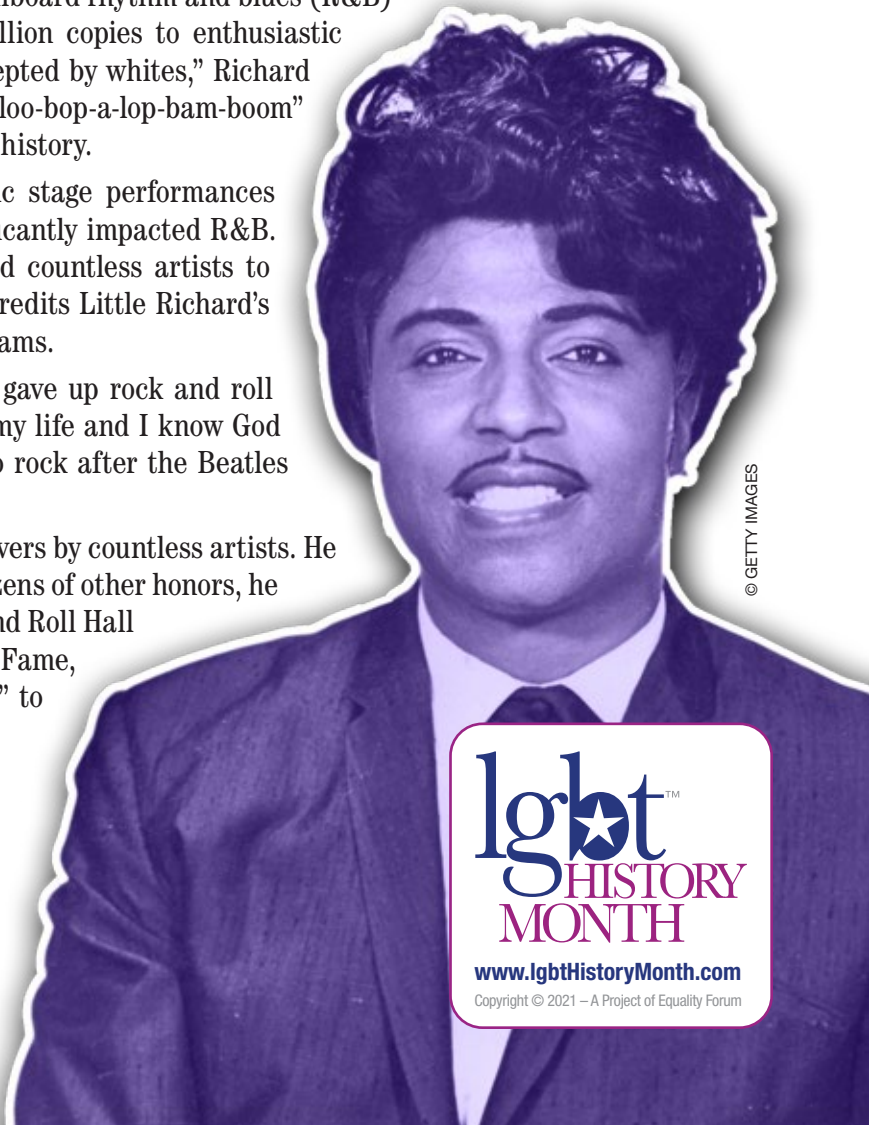
Released in 1955, “Tutti Frutti” rose to No. 2 on the Billboard rhythm and blues (R&B) chart and climbed the pop chart. It sold over a million copies to enthusiastic interracial fans. “From the get-go, my music was accepted by whites,” Richard said. The song’s introductory phrase, “A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-lop-bam-boom” became one of the most iconic in contemporary music history.

Richard’s backbeat rhythms, vocal style and frenetic stage performances helped give rise to the rock and roll genre and significantly impacted R&B. His long pompadour hairdo and eye makeup inspired countless artists to come, from David Bowie to Prince. Paul McCartney credits Little Richard’s signature shrieks with informing his own singing screams.

Richard became a born-again Christian in 1957 and gave up rock and roll for gospel music and the ministry. “I’ve been gay all my life and I know God is a God of love, not of hate,” he said. He returned to rock after the Beatles recorded a rendition of “Long Tall Sally” in 1964.

Over the years, Little Richard’s songs have inspired covers by countless artists. He later appeared in movies and TV shows. Along with dozens of other honors, he was one of the first 10 artists inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and the U.S. Library of Congress added “Tutti Frutti” to the National Recording Registry.

Little Richard died in Tennessee from bone cancer. He was 87.



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SWE ZIN HTET

b. November 16, 1999

MISS UNIVERSE CONTESTANT

“If I say that I’m a lesbian, it will have a big impact on the LGBTQ community back in Burma.”

Swe Zin Htet is a Burmese model and beauty pageant winner. In 2019, as the reigning Miss Myanmar, she became the first out lesbian to compete in the 67-year-old Miss Universe contest. In Myanmar (also known as Burma), homosexual conduct is criminalized.

Swe Zin Htet was born to a Buddhist family in rural Burma. She spent much of her time meditating and maintaining the family’s shrine to the Buddha.

Around the age of 15 or 16, Swe Zin Htet discovered her attraction to women. She came out to her parents, who were initially shocked and unsupportive. She told People magazine, “The difficult thing is that in Burma, LGBTQ people are not accepted.”

She was the first out lesbian to compete for the Miss Universe title.

At age 16, Swe Zin Htet began competing in beauty pageants. In 2016 she was crowned Miss Golden Land Myanmar and won Miss Supranational Myanmar the same year, earning her a spot at Miss Supranational 2016. She took home the Miss Personality title from that pageant and set her sights on the Miss Universe competition. She won Miss Universe Myanmar in 2019, qualifying her for the international contest in Atlanta, Georgia, later that year.

A week before the global Miss Universe competition, Swe Zin Htet came out publicly on the beauty blog “Missology” to capitalize on the publicity surrounding the pageant. She also took to Instagram, posting a photo collage of herself and her girlfriend of three years, Gae Gae — a popular Burmese singer— with the word “proud” and a rainbow flag emoji.

“I have that platform that, if I say that I’m a lesbian, it will have a big impact on the LGBTQ community back in Burma.” Swe Zin Htet said. Although she did not take home the crown, she made an undeniable impact on the Miss Universe contest, which aired in more than 190 countries. “We are honored to give a platform to strong, inspirational women like Miss Universe Myanmar,” pageant organizers said. “[We] will always champion women to be proud of who they are.”

Beyond its global impact, Swe Zin Htet’s coming out was particularly brave, as consensual homosexual conduct remains illegal in Burma, carrying a potential prison sentence of 10 years or more. She hopes her confident self-acceptance will inspire legislative and social change.

Though Swe Zin Htet largely avoids publicity, she stays active on social media. She spends most of her time modeling.



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MARK TAKANO U.S. CONGRESSMAN

b. December 10, 1960

“I will continue to fight for equality in Congress, as all Americans deserve to be treated equally under the law.”

He is the first openly gay congressman in California and the first congressman of color in America.

A Japanese-American, U.S. Representative Mark Takano is the first openly gay congressman in California and the first openly gay congressman of color in the nation.

Born and raised in Riverside, California, Takano is the eldest of four brothers. In 1942, after the United States entered World War II, the government forced Takano's parents and grandparents out of their homes and sent them to an internment camp. After the war, the entire extended family moved to Riverside, where Takano's father managed a grocery store and his mother worked part-time as a hairdresser.

In 1979 Takano graduated as valedictorian of his high school. He received a B.A. in government from Harvard University and taught briefly in Boston before returning home to attend graduate school at University of California (UC), Riverside. In 1988 he began teaching high school English in Rialto, California. In 1990 he was elected to the Riverside Community College (RCC) Board of Trustees.

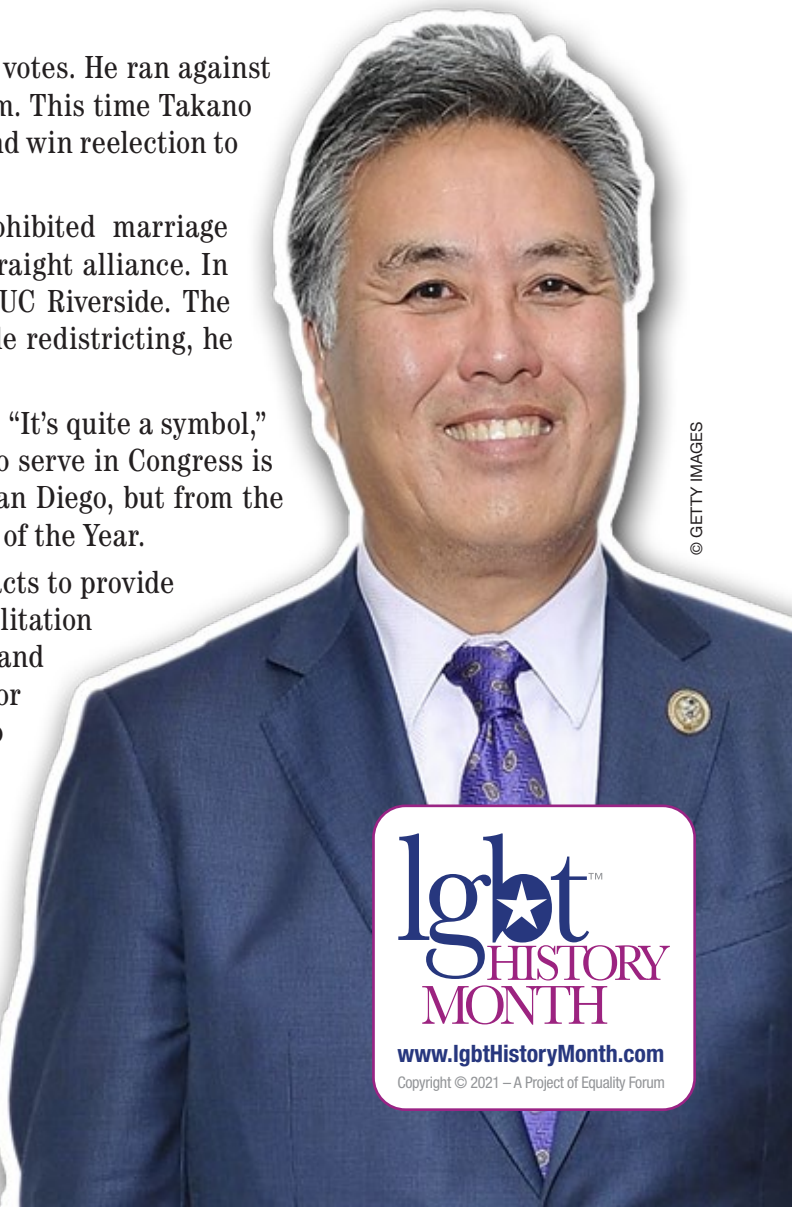
When Takano first ran for Congress in 1992, he lost by 450 votes. He ran against the same Republican in 1994 and was publicly outed by him. This time Takano lost by a more substantial margin. He continued to teach and win reelection to the RCC Board of Trustees.

In 2008 after the passage of Proposition 8, which prohibited marriage equality, Takano helped students start Rialto's first gay-straight alliance. In 2010 Takano completed his M.F.A. in creative writing at UC Riverside. The next year, inspired by his GSA students and more equitable redistricting, he announced another congressional run.

In 2012 Takano won a seat in the House of Representatives. “It's quite a symbol,” he said, “that the first openly gay person from California to serve in Congress is not from Los Angeles, not from San Francisco, not from San Diego, but from the Inland Empire.” In 2013 he was awarded LA Pride's Person of the Year.

Takano helped pass three important veterans' assistance acts to provide on-campus jobs, extend the enrollment period for rehabilitation services, and ensure that LGBT families receive veteran and survivor benefits. “Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country,” he said. “All our returning heroes deserve to enjoy the same benefits and freedoms, no matter who they love or where they live.”

Takano won reelection in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. He serves as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and as a member of the Education and Labor Committee. He remains on the RCC Board of Trustees.



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RITCHIE TORRES

b. March 12, 1988

U.S. CONGRESSMAN

He was the youngest elected official in New York City, the first openly gay elected official in the Bronx and the first Afro-Latinx elected to Congress.

“In politics, it’s important to be decisive, to take a stand, which is what I do.”

Ritchie Torres is the first Afro-Latinx U.S. congressman. He represents New York’s 15th District, one of the poorest and most diverse in the nation. At age 25, he became the youngest elected official in New York City and the first openly gay elected official in the Bronx.

Raised by a single mother, Torres and his two siblings grew up in a run-down public housing project in the South Bronx. Though Torres realized he was gay in middle school, he did not come out to anyone until 10th grade.

Throughout high school, Torres held part-time jobs and developed a taste for political nonfiction. He was the captain of the law team and loved participating in moot court. At 16, he interned with the deputy mayor of New York City.

Torres attended New York University for a little more than a year before he fell into depression and dropped out in 2007. He speaks candidly about his journey from standing “on the verge of suicide” to overcoming “the odds” to realize his political aspirations.

After a time, Torres became a community organizer, advocating for adequate, affordable public housing. He also worked for a city councilman, who encouraged Torres to run in 2013 for a seat on New York City Council.

Torres opened up about his sexuality, concluding, “If you are deceitful about your personal life, then you’re likely to be deceitful about your professional life.”

At age 25, Torres became the youngest elected official in the city and the first openly gay elected official in the Bronx. On City Council, he served as chairman of the Committee on Public Housing and led hearings exposing New York’s failure to correct unsafe building conditions. He helped open the first LGBT homeless shelter for young adults in the Bronx and ensured that every borough had funding for LGBT senior centers. He won reelection in 2017.

Torres ran for Congress in 2020. He out-fundraised the incumbent to become the first Afro-Latinx U.S. congressman. “It’s one thing to have a representative in the gayborhoods of New York City and the United States,” he explained. “It’s another thing to have an LGBTQ representative in the places you might least expect it.”

Torres has spoken out against the “antiquated rule that prohibits members of Congress from joining both the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.”

Though he supports much of the Democratic Socialists’ agenda, he identifies as an independent progressive who puts legislative efficacy above ideology.

Torres received the Courage in Government Award from the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce. He lives in the South Bronx.



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MARY TRUMP

b. May 3, 1965

AUTHOR & FORMER PRESIDENT'S NIECE

A clinical psychologist and best-selling author, she has been a harsh, outspoken critic of her uncle, former president Donald J. Trump.

“Donald ... destroyed my father. I can't let him destroy my country.”

Mary L. Trump is a psychologist, an author and a political figure famous for her best-selling memoir, “Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World’s Most Dangerous Man.” The niece of former president Donald J. Trump, she has been a scathing critic of her uncle’s presidency and political influence.

Mary Trump was born in New York City to Linda Clapp and the former president’s older brother, Fred Trump Jr. Growing up, she lived mostly with her paternal grandparents in Queens, New York. She suffered a traumatic childhood marked by callous and chaotic family dynamics, abuse and neglect. Her father, who was devalued by her grandfather and uncle Donald, died from complications of alcoholism when Mary was 16. His death became a source of family strife.

Trump attended Tufts University as an undergraduate, then earned her master’s degree in English literature from Columbia University. She received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University.

In a 2020 interview by The Advocate, Trump described her family as “anti everything” that was unlike them. Her grandmother denigrated Elton John for being gay, referring to him as “that little faggot.” Trump feared disownment if she came out as a lesbian. She kept her sexual orientation hidden for many years. When she eventually married a woman, she did not disclose her spouse’s identity.

Simon & Schuster published Trump’s first book, “Too Much and Never Enough,” in July 2020. In it, Trump reveals herself as the main source for the New York Times’s investigation of Donald Trump’s financial history. She also provides a professional assessment of the former president’s mental stability, saying he exhibits sociopathic tendencies. She considers him a “terrified little boy” who was never held to any standard of accountability.

During the 2020 election, Trump worked with LPAC, an organization that encourages and supports female LGBTQ+ candidates for public office. “If it’s only men making decisions about women’s issues or straight people making decisions about LGBTQ issues,” she said, “then that’s where we run into problems.” LPAC is credited with helping Senators Tammy Baldwin and Kyrsten Sinema, two of 11 openly LGBTQ members of Congress, get elected.

Trump lives with her daughter on Long Island, New York. She has owned multiple businesses and is the founder and CEO of The Trump Coaching Group, a life coaching organization. Her second book, “The Reckoning: America’s Trauma and Finding a Way to Heal” was published in August 2021.

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DARREN WALKER

b. August 28, 1959

FORD FOUNDATION PRESIDENT

“We have to significantly change our practices so that we can create an inclusive capitalism that works for everyone.”

As president of the Ford Foundation, he uses philanthropic investment to fight systemic injustice.

Darren Walker is the president of the Ford Foundation, the second largest American philanthropic organization, with assets of \$13 billion. Walker has dedicated most of his life to promoting social justice through eradication of economic and racial inequities.

Walker was born in a charity hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana. Raised in rural Texas by his single mother, he “felt both gratitude and rage” growing up poor, Black and gay in the South. He credits his grandmother with illuminating his world and pushing him to greater aspirations.

Walker was part of the first generation who benefited from the Head Start Program for public schools. He went on to attend the University of Texas (UT) at Austin on a Pell Grant and graduated in 1982 with a B.A. in government and a B.S. in communication. Four years later, he earned his J.D. from the UT School of Law. Throughout his education, Walker felt “his country was cheering [him] on.”

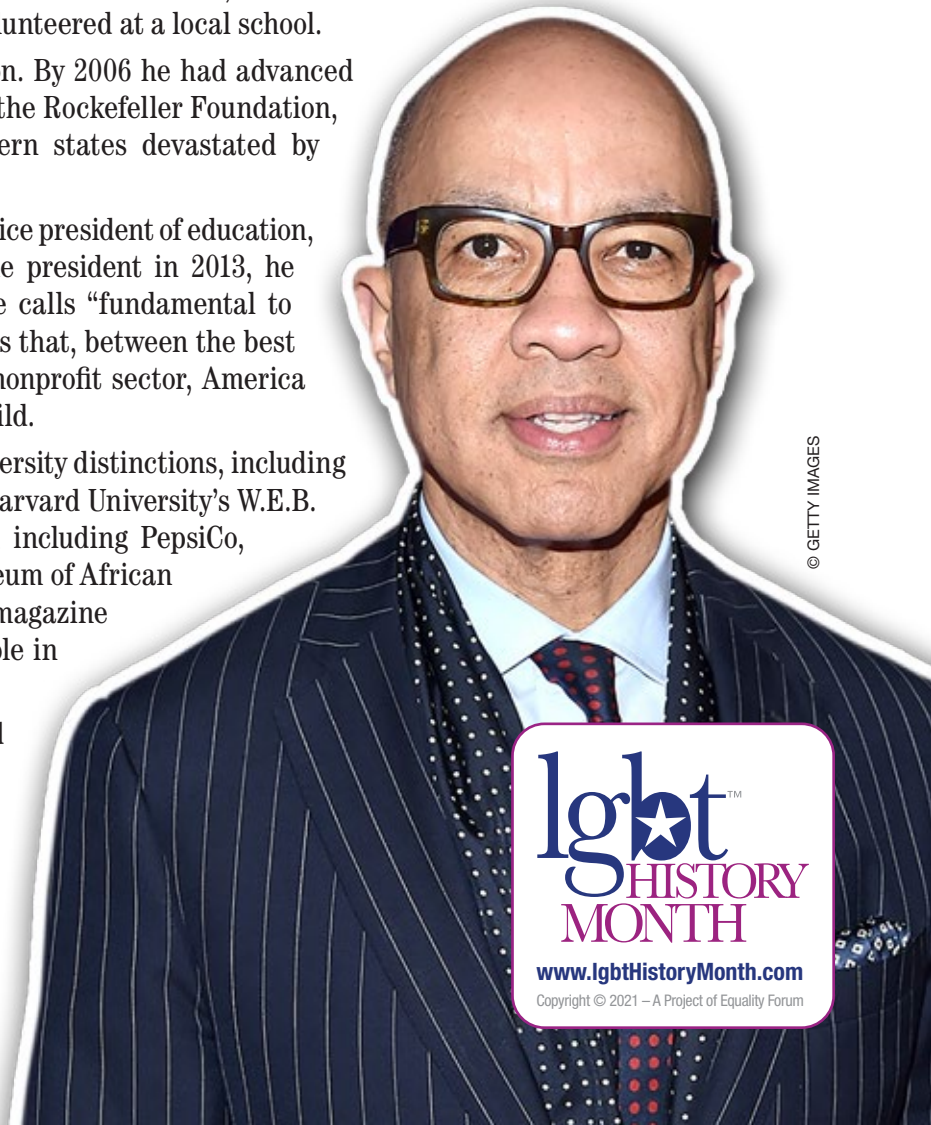
Walker spent the next seven years in Switzerland, working first as a lawyer and then in the capital markets. He left investment banking to battle systemic injustice. He moved to Harlem, where he worked at a community development organization and volunteered at a local school.

In 2002 Walker joined the Rockefeller Foundation. By 2006 he had advanced to vice president for international initiatives. At the Rockefeller Foundation, he launched recovery programs for the Southern states devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

In 2010 Walker joined the Ford Foundation as the vice president of education, creativity and free expression. When he became president in 2013, he doubled down on social justice, the principle he calls “fundamental to the DNA of a successful America.” Walker believes that, between the best private philanthropy in the world and a robust nonprofit sector, America can reduce the inequality he experienced as a child.

Walker has received 16 honorary degrees and university distinctions, including UT Austin’s Distinguished Alumnus Award and Harvard University’s W.E.B. Du Bois Medal. He serves on numerous boards, including PepsiCo, Ralph Lauren and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. In 2016 TIME magazine named him one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World.”

Walker is openly gay. His partner of 26 years died in 2019.



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