

# CHI CHIA-WEI

b. October 12, 1958

## TAIWANESE GAY PIONEER

*“This should certainly offer some encouragement to different societies to consider following in Taiwan’s footsteps and giving gays and lesbians the right to marry.”*

Chi Chia-wei is a pioneering Taiwanese gay rights activist and marriage equality champion. He helped make Taiwan the first nation in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage.

Chi was raised by open-minded parents who were supportive of his homosexuality. He came out in high school and his classmates were overwhelmingly accepting.

**He helped make  
Taiwan the first nation  
in Asia to legalize  
same-sex marriage.**

Chi began his LGBT activism in his 20s, when there were virtually no other visible gay rights activists. Today, hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese support or have joined the LGBT rights movement.

For some time, Chi was Taiwan’s only AIDS activist. He operated a halfway house for HIV/AIDS patients and created awareness campaigns to promote safe sex among the country’s LGBT citizens.

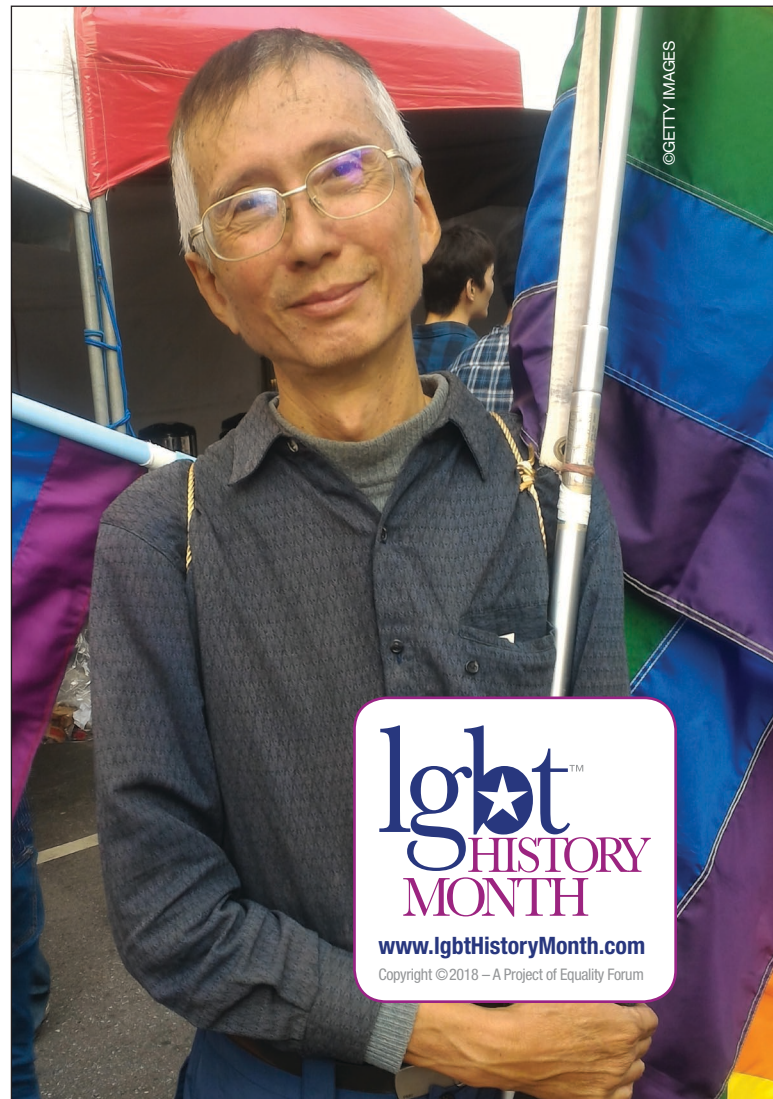
In 1986 the 28-year-old Chi organized an international press conference to announce his sexual orientation and bring attention to the HIV/AIDS crisis. In doing so, he became the first person in Taiwan to come out on national television. Media outlets such as the Associated Press and Reuters covered the event.

Chi’s quest to bring same-sex unions to Taiwan also began in 1986, when he applied for a marriage license. His request was denied by the Taipei District Court Notary Office as well as the Legislative Appeals Court. Later that year, he was detained by police and served a 162-day sentence. Such imprisonment was common during Taiwan’s White Terror, a period of oppression during which the government imprisoned political dissidents.

Chi unsuccessfully applied for a same-sex marriage license again in 1994, 1998 and 2000. In 2013, when he applied and was denied once more, Chi appealed the decision to the Taipei city government’s Department of Civil Affairs, who referred the issue to the Constitutional Court.

Chi and the Taipei city government petitioned the court to examine the constitutionality of the same-sex marriage prohibition. On May 24, 2017, Taiwan’s Constitutional Court struck down the previous classification of marriage and ruled that same-sex couples could marry, beginning in May 2019. A celebration erupted outside the court and Chi announced, “Today’s victory is for everybody!” The decision marked the culmination of Chi’s 30 years of activism.

In October 2016, Queermosa, a leading Taiwanese LGBT organization, presented Chi with its first Queer Pioneer Award. Chi has a longtime romantic partner whose identity he keeps private.



**lgbt**<sup>TM</sup>  
**HISTORY**  
**MONTH**

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright ©2018 – A Project of Equality Forum