

# GEORGE CHAUNCEY DISTINGUISHED HISTORIAN

b. July 28, 1954

**His groundbreaking scholarship helped establish the field of U.S. LGBT history.**

*“Marriage equality was neither inevitable nor, until recently, even conceivable.”*

George Chauncey is a celebrated American historian and author whose groundbreaking scholarship helped establish the field of U.S. LGBT history and the basis of his work as an expert witness in numerous court cases. He serves as the DeWitt Clinton Professor of American History at Columbia University and the director of the Columbia Research Initiative on the Global History of Sexualities.

The son of a Presbyterian minister who was active in the civil rights movement, Chauncey was born in Brownsville, Tennessee, and raised in the South. He attended Yale College, graduating with his doctorate in 1989. He attained a full professorship at the University of Chicago, where he taught history 15 years.

In 1994 he published “Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940.” The groundbreaking work won five major awards, including the Organization of American Historians Merle Curti Award in social history and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for history. It remains the most widely taught book about LGBT history.

In 2000 Chauncey secured major grants from the Rockefeller and Ford foundations to support a conference at the University of Chicago billed as “the largest-ever” on lesbian, gay and queer history. The following year, Equality Illinois presented him with its Freedom Award.

In 2004 Chauncey published “Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today’s Debate Over Gay Equality.” He joined the faculty of Yale in 2006, where he chaired the history department and the committee for LGBT studies. In 2012 Yale presented him with its prize for Teaching Excellence in the Humanities. He joined the Columbia University faculty in 2017.

Chauncey has served as a historical consultant on major public projects, including exhibitions at the New York Public Library and the Chicago History Museum. He has provided expert witness testimony on the history of antigay discrimination in more than 30 court cases. Five reached the U.S. Supreme Court, including *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), which overturned the nation’s remaining sodomy laws; *United States v. Windsor* (2013), which struck down the core of the Defense of Marriage Act and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

Chauncey earned fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the National Humanities Center. He was elected a member of the Society of American Historians in 2005 and has served on its executive board.

In 2014 Chauncey married Ronald Gregg, a professor of film and media studies at Columbia. They live in New York.



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