



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Interview Backgrounders

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Kendall Bailey and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 2:01)

Kendall Bailey joined the U-S Marine Corps in 2001. Five years later he was a sergeant assigned to a recruiting office in Virginia and was considering becoming career military.

At StoryCorps, Kendall told his friend, Don Davis, how because of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell those plans changed.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Kendall says that when the staff sergeant looked at his text messages, the atmosphere immediately changed. What would you have done in Kendall’s situation? What do you think motivated Kendall to come out to his commanding officer? What were the potential risks and benefits of that decision?
- When Kendall came out, the sergeant major said that it was “a phase” and that Kendall needed counseling. Do you think sexual orientation is something that’s changeable in a person? Why or why not?
- What do you think it felt like for Kendall to be isolated and then discharged with such swiftness and finality? Have you ever been excluded from something that was important to you? How did the experience affect you?
- After his discharge, Kendall says his life changed dramatically because he was able to be open about his relationship with his boyfriend. What toll do you think it takes on a person to hide an aspect of their identity from the world?
- Even though Kendall could finally be open after his discharge, he hid his sexual orientation from his family for a while and pretended to still be in the military. Why is it particularly difficult for some LGBT people to come out to their families? In what ways is the process of coming out a never-ending one?
- Looking back, Kendall says that his feelings toward the military haven’t changed and he would go back if he could. Does this surprise you? Why or why not? How is it possible to maintain respect for an institution that doesn’t accept you?
- How do you think Kendall must have felt when the law was changed in 2011 lifting the ban on LGBT service members? If you were Kendall, would you reenlist? Why or why not?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Ask students if they have ever been excluded from a group that was important to them. Have them create a piece of artwork, poetry, reflective writing, etc., that explores how that experience impacted them. Have volunteers share their reflections. Discuss how their personal experiences with exclusion relate to Kendall Bailey’s experience with the military.

- Assign students to investigate the story of an LGBT service member who came out and/or fought against the military's ban on LGBT people. Have students create a portrait or collage of their subject that includes newspaper headlines, images, and personal reflections about what they have learned. Some possible subjects include Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, Petty Officer Keith Meinhold, Navy Lieutenant Zoe Dunning and Army Reserve First Lieutenant Steve May (also a member of the AZ State House of Representatives).
- Ask for student volunteers to conduct an interview with a current or former service member who they personally know. Work with students to develop interview questions that explore the subject's experiences with LGBT service members and their views on the military's former ban, the current law and the impact of open service on unit cohesion. Have students share portions of their interview (in written form or audio/video excerpts) and discuss the varied perspectives from members of the local community. If possible, invite one or more of the interview subjects into your classroom to discuss their views directly with students.
- Until the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the military was the only federal job in which you could get fired due to your sexual orientation. Ask students to look into whether or not employment protections exist for LGBT people in their state or city. Have them create a graph illustrating which states or major cities currently have employment non-discrimination acts or ENDAs (a national ENDA has never been passed). Debate the pros and cons of your state law and have students write letters to their government representatives expressing the reasons they support or oppose the law.
- Have students research and write a report on past efforts to integrate African Americans and/or women into the armed forces. After students share their findings, create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the experiences of Black, female and LGBT Americans with regard to efforts to gain acceptance within the military.
- Women and people of color were discharged disproportionately under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Have students create a chart or graph illustrating the discharge rate for women versus men and people of color versus white people. Conduct a discussion about why these groups may have been targeted more frequently under the military's ban.
- In response to the military's ban on gay and lesbian service members, many schools across the country protested by prohibiting the military from recruiting on campus. Have students debate the No Child Left Behind Act's provisions regarding military recruiters' request for disclosure of students' private information.
- Currently more than 18 countries have opened military service to LGBT people. Create a class map illustrating which countries have done so. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the countries. Have them find two to three articles exploring the response and effects of LGBT inclusion in their assigned country, and discuss worldwide trends as a class.



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Student Handout



Kendall Bailey

Kendall Bailey joined the Marine Corps in 2001 and quickly moved up the ranks, becoming a sergeant within his first five years of service. “I thought that I could make a career out of it,” reflects Kendall. “I could do 20 years, I could do 30 years, I could retire.” But all of that changed when a staff sergeant scrolled through Kendall’s cell phone and found messages he had sent to his boyfriend. Within a couple of months, Kendall was discharged. “It’s a hard thing to take,” says Kendall, “when you want to do something that badly, you’ve put five years of blood, sweat and tears into it and then all of a sudden it’s not really an option for you anymore.”

In 2006 Kendall joined a long line of soldiers in the U.S. who were told that they were unfit to serve their country because of who they love. As far back as 1778 General George Washington approved the dishonorable discharge of a lieutenant caught in a romantic encounter with another man. For the next 200 years the military enforced a strict ban on homosexual behavior and gay and lesbian people in the armed forces. It wasn’t until the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s that LGBT people began to more forcefully demand equal rights and “gays in the military” emerged as a hot button political issue.

In 1991 then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton vowed to end the military’s ban on gay and lesbian service members if he were elected. The brutal murder in 1992 of Seaman Allen Schindler—beaten to death by fellow sailors because he was gay—forced the issue to the forefront. Ultimately, however, Clinton’s efforts to lift the prohibition were blocked by military and Congressional leaders, and a compromise was reached in 1993 that came to be known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT).

The policy recognized for the first time that gay and lesbian people can and do serve honorably, but prohibited service members from being open about their sexual orientation. In exchange for a “zone of privacy” in which military personnel would not be questioned about their sexuality or unfairly investigated, LGBT people were required to keep their identities a secret.

From the outset, confusion and resentment of the new policy led to frequent harassment and illegal investigations. A memo from the Navy, for example, instructed psychologists and healthcare providers to turn in gay service members who requested counseling; and an Air Force Judge Advocate General instructed investigators to question the parents, siblings, close friends and roommates of those suspected to be gay.

Throughout the years of DADT, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) recorded numerous disturbing incidents. In Hawaii, a Senior Petty Officer was outed to his command when a Navy investigator improperly obtained information from his AOL user profile. In South Korea an enlisted woman was

threatened with criminal charges for being a lesbian after reporting a sexual assault. And in Maryland, an Airman was questioned about his sexual orientation and forced to move off-base when he reported ongoing harassment, including notes that read, “Die fag” and “You can’t hide, fag.”

The rising tide of harassment under DADT culminated in the brutal murder of Private First Class Barry Winchell in 1999 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. After four months of anti-gay taunts and intimidation—which commanders knew about and ignored—Winchell was beaten to death with a baseball bat in his sleep. As a result of this tragedy, some military leaders began to publicly admit that anti-gay harassment was a problem that needed to be addressed.

A number of brave soldiers stood up for their rights and helped to change public opinion during this period. Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, a Vietnam veteran, successfully challenged her discharge from the Army National Guard after a security clearance investigation revealed that she was a lesbian. And Petty Officer Keith Meinhold—who came out on ABC World News—became the first openly gay man returned to active duty after he fought the military’s ban. Both soldiers received support from their colleagues and served openly until they retired.

Kendall Bailey may have found the courage to come out to his commanding officer due in part to the achievements of people like Cammermeyer and Meinhold. But after writing a letter stating that he was gay and unable to serve under DADT, he was told to seek counseling and an investigation was launched. “I was in limbo for about a month,” explains Kendall. “They sent me home. I couldn’t show up for work [or] do anything...They basically segregated [me] from the rest of the unit. It was demeaning...the way they handled it.”

In order to avoid negative media, Kendall was quietly given an honorable discharge in 2006 with the understanding that he would not speak to the press. “My life changed dramatically when I got out [of the military],” he recalls. “I was able to...hang out with my boyfriend...and hold hands walking down the street. It was a big change.”

Kendall was one of over 13,000 service members discharged under DADT between 1993 and 2010. As news of harassment and high levels of dismissal became more widely reported, public support for the law declined. Studies revealed that the U.S. government had spent over \$300 million to enforce the discriminatory policy while more than 25 countries opened military service to LGBT people with no unfavorable effects.

In 2008 Barack Obama promised to end DADT as part of his presidential campaign. A 2009 article in *Joint Force Quarterly* concluded that “there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that unit cohesion will be negatively affected if homosexuals serve openly.” By 2010, a CNN poll showed that 72 percent of Americans supported a repeal of the law.

On December 22, 2010, President Obama made good on his campaign promise and signed a new law that allows gay and lesbian people to serve openly for the first time (though transgender people are not included in this law). Encouraging those kicked out under the old law to reenlist, the president stated, “We are a nation that welcomes the service of every patriot...a nation that believes that all men and women are created equal.”

A year before the new law was signed, 26 year-old Kendall reflected on his experiences. “My relationship and my feelings toward the military really didn’t change. Obviously I’m very disappointed that I can’t serve...If I could go back I would.” Today Kendall has that option.



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David Barr and the Early Days of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time 1:55)

David Barr was a young man when the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed. While many people he knew were getting sick and dying, Barr began working in the community to fight the epidemic. The work of Barr and his colleagues changed the response to AIDS in the U.S. and galvanized the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- What is a crisis? Why does Barr consider the spread of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s a crisis? What made the LGBT community's response to AIDS an "historic response" to the crisis?
- Why do you think the initial response to HIV/AIDS by the U.S. government and medical community was so slow? Do you think anti-LGBT bias played a role? If so, how?
- While community organizations worked to stop the spread of the disease and treat those already infected, Barr says that the epidemic also "changed the way society looks at gay people." In what ways were people's ideas and beliefs about the LGBT community affected?
- Barr talks about how HIV/AIDS "politicized" and galvanized the LGBT community. What do you know about the LGBT movement before the HIV/AIDS crisis? In what ways do you think the response to HIV/AIDS advanced LGBT rights in the U.S.?
- Can you think of other communities that have faced health crises (for example, Sickle Cell Anemia in the African-American community, Tay-Sachs Disease in the Ashkenazi Jewish community, Breast Cancer in women)? How have they responded? Are there still disparities or discrimination in the current U.S. health system? Why or why not?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- In groups of 4–6, assign students to investigate the current state of HIV/AIDS in the U.S. today. Ask groups to research answers to the following questions: How many people are living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. currently? Which populations are most at risk and why? How are young people impacted by HIV/AIDS? What is the current government response to HIV/AIDS? Then, ask each group to create an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign for their school, including slogans, posters, presentations, etc.
- Assign students to research the current data on HIV/AIDS cases worldwide. Have groups of 5–6 students each focus on one of the most heavily impacted regions (Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Central and South America, North America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Caribbean). Ask students to answer the following questions: How many people are living with HIV/AIDS in that region? What groups have the highest rates of infections? What myths do people in this

region have about HIV/AIDS, who can get it, and how it's contracted? What are some solutions to address the myths and the spread of HIV?

- Assign students to explore the history of the AIDS Memorial Quilt (www.aidsquilt.org). Assign each student to select one quilt panel from the searchable online database on which to focus. Ask students to answer the following questions: What clues about the person's life can be found on the quilt panel? What questions would you want to ask that person if you could? In groups or as a class, select 1–3 individuals from your local community who have died from AIDS and create a quilt in their memory.
- Assign students to research the governmental response to HIV/AIDS during the early to mid-1980s. Who were the prominent leaders in the White House and Congress, and what messages were they sending about AIDS to the American people? What were the counter-responses to these messages?
- While there was initially much focus on gay men as contractors of HIV/AIDS, other communities were also heavily impacted, including hemophiliacs and members of the Haitian community. Assign students to compare and contrast the experience of these three groups in the 1980s.
- In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the medical community and government were slow to address the crisis, and it required the advocacy of the LGBT community and others to push them to respond faster and with greater seriousness. Ask students to consider if there are any health disparities today that affect certain groups of people more than others? Assign students to research current health disparities in the U.S. (people of color, residents of rural areas, women and children, the elderly, persons with disabilities) and what is being done to correct them, from medical, government and community perspectives.
- One method of raising awareness and fighting for LGBT rights was public protest. Assign students to create collages using slogans and signs from HIV/AIDS activists and groups during the 1980s and 1990s. Compare these signs and slogans to those from other social and civil rights movements in U.S. history. Have students create their own signs related to issues they care about.
- Get your students involved! Volunteer at your local AIDS Walk, meal service or other programs designed to raise money for treatment and research and meet the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS.

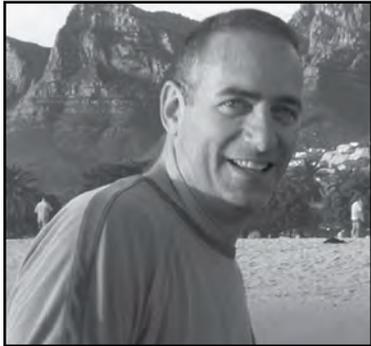


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Student Handout



David Barr

Living in New York in the early 1980s, David Barr witnessed his friends and loved ones getting sick and even dying from AIDS, a new disease that people knew little about. “I was there at the epicenter of the epidemic in the United States,” remembers Barr, “a member of the hardest hit community in the city. A lot of people were sick. People were dying constantly. We all felt like we were living in a war zone.”

The first officially diagnosed American AIDS deaths were in 1981. Many of those diagnosed with AIDS were gay men. Due to a lack of medical knowledge about the causes or transmission methods of the disease, it was initially assumed that gay men were the only carriers. Many people mistakenly feared they could contract AIDS through casual contact, shaking hands, sitting next to someone, a hug. For a while, airlines did not allow people with AIDS to fly, mortuaries refused to handle the bodies of people who died from AIDS and even health care professionals sometimes refused to care for patients with AIDS.

First termed “GRID” or gay-related immune deficiency, the disease was renamed AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) in 1982 after it was found that other groups of people contracted AIDS, too. Discrimination against people infected with AIDS intensified as more and more people died. A 1983 *New York* magazine cover story on “AIDS Anxiety” reported that people with AIDS “have been fired from their jobs, driven from their homes, and deserted by their loved ones.”

Even though other groups of people were getting AIDS, many people still associated the disease with gay men. Combined with widespread homophobia, this misconception delayed the public response to the rapidly spreading human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that leads to AIDS.

By the end of 1983, AIDS cases diagnosed in the U.S. had risen to 3,064, killing 1,292 people. More than two thirds of these deaths occurred in New York City, where Barr lived. The city’s mayor, Ed Koch, held his first meeting with the LGBT community that year, but not much changed. Very little money and few resources were put towards dealing with AIDS.

Without much support from the government or traditional healthcare organizations, the LGBT community was left on its own to take care of its sick and dying. Barr recalls, “The response by the gay community to AIDS is an historic response of any American community in response to a crisis. It involved hundreds of thousands of people coming together, creating organizations, helping one another, really overcoming incredible adversity as individuals and as communities to address a problem.”

For example, Gay Men’s Health Crisis, which became the world’s first provider of HIV/AIDS prevention, care and advocacy, was founded by a group of friends who set up an AIDS hotline in one of their homes. Fresh out of law school, Barr joined the fight against HIV/AIDS in 1985 as a staff attorney at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, where he worked on many of the first legal cases to battle discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

In 1987 Barr became a member of ACT UP/New York, a “diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis.” ACT UP started a new, more political phase of AIDS activism. They staged protests in public spaces and presented political demands to federal agencies and pharmaceutical companies. ACT UP called for making medical treatment for HIV/AIDS more affordable and for speeding up the drug approval process. Still, by the end of the 1980s HIV/AIDS had killed 19,241 New Yorkers.

In the 1990s researchers and doctors were finding out more about AIDS and were developing better treatment options. The public started to realize that the AIDS crisis affected all Americans. Barr and many of his peers were now considered HIV/AIDS experts and started participating in public policy debates and medical research discussions. Barr continued his activist work from 1990 to 1997 as director of treatment education and advocacy at Gay Men’s Health Crisis. From 1997 to 2001, Barr organized the very first forums to develop research agendas and discuss the impact of HIV medicines and medical treatment on patients.

Since the beginning of the epidemic more than a half million people have died of AIDS in the U.S.—the equivalent of the entire population of Las Vegas—and more than 18,000 people with AIDS still die each year. Over a million people in the U.S. today are living with HIV/AIDS and one in five people living with HIV is unaware of her/his infection, posing a high risk of transmission to others.

Worldwide an estimated 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS today and the epicenter of the crisis has long shifted from the U.S. to Africa. Barr is now a global HIV/AIDS educator and advocate who works with national and international organizations to help end the AIDS crisis around the world.

AIDS—and particularly the AIDS crisis in New York—is often described as one of the catalysts that spurred the modern day movement for LGBT rights in the U.S. “AIDS politicized the gay community. It created the organizations that became very powerful and politically savvy,” says Barr. And in the process, “it changed the way society looks at gay people.”



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Terry Boggis and LGBT Family Rights

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 2:20)

Terry Boggis was one of the founding members of Center Kids, Center Families, a New York City based LGBT families program, in 1988. That same year, her son, Ned was born.

Here, Boggis talks about parenthood.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Why did Terry feel like she had to “shelve motherhood” as an adult woman? What opportunities do you think existed for LGBT people who wanted to become parents in the 1970s and 1980s? What obstacles do you think they faced?
- Regarding Ned’s first experiences with school, Terry observes that “the larger culture starts weighing in.” What does she mean by this? Does this comment relate to any experiences that you have had?
- What kinds of experiences do you think led Ned to ask if there are “two kinds of gay people...good kinds and bad kinds”? In your experience, what language and/or ideas are communicated among your peers that might lead some people to believe “gay” is “bad”?
- Why did Terry assume that wearing the rainbow rings and expressing gay pride might invite a negative response from Ned’s peers? Would you assume the same thing about the people at your camp or school? Why or why not?
- Terry says that “LGBT people are really changing what families can look like.” What other groups of people or social trends are shaping the way families look today? A recent Pew poll asked if these trends are “good, bad or of no consequence to society.” What is your opinion?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Assign students to capture and celebrate their unique family make-up in some creative fashion (brief video, portrait, poem, story, etc.). Have students post and share their pieces. Discuss experiences students have had in which their family structure has been disrespected or marginalized in some way.
- A 2011 Pew Research Center survey asked adults whether seven trends related to family structure were “good, bad or of no consequence to society” (see <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/02/16/the-public-renders-a-split-verdict-on-changes-in-family-structure>). Discuss the results of this study with students and have them conduct their own poll on “attitudes about the changing American family.” Generate questions as a class and have students conduct the poll with friends and family. Publish the results in the school newspaper or on the school Web site.

- The television show, *Modern Family*, is one example of current media that explores the changing face of American families, including same-sex headed families, adoptive families and multiracial families. Have students analyze and write an essay on the ways in which media is reflecting and shaping attitudes toward various family structures and trends.
- Assign students to analyze LGBT demographic trends as reflected in the 2000 and/or 2010 Census results (see the Williams Institute’s “Census Snapshot 2010” at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/>). Assign small groups to create a chart or graph illustrating national or state-level trends on a specific topic (e.g., number of same-sex couples, number of same-sex couples raising children, number of adopted or foster children in LGBT-headed households, etc.).
- As a follow-up, discuss the limitations of the current Census (it does not count the actual number of LGBT Americans, single LGBT parents or same-sex partners living in different homes). Assign students to investigate other demographic information that may not be reflected in the Census. Have them write letters to the Census Bureau advocating for changes to the current survey that they would like to see reflected in 2020.
- Screen the film, *That’s A Family!*, for your students (see <https://www.newday.com/film/thats-family>). Share that this film for elementary students has been the subject of numerous battles due to its inclusion of same-sex headed families. Have students hold a mock school board meeting in which they debate the appropriateness of the film for school settings. Assign students different roles (e.g., parents, teachers, school officials, etc.) and different positions (for or against inclusion of the film). Have them prepare by researching past controversies and taking notes on arguments for or against that resonate with them (search, for example, *That’s A Family!* and “Evesham, NJ schools” or “Vallejo, CA schools”).



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Student Handout



Terry Boggis

“I’ve always been...a baby person,” says Terry Boggis about herself. “I always wanted babies, surrounded myself with babies...and also as a little kid I had an awareness of being a lesbian really quite young, maybe five or six years old...I was aware that I had these two important dreams that I would have to figure out how to put together.”

When Terry came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, gay and lesbian people who wanted to openly form families had few options. Same-sex couples could not legally marry or adopt, and those who pushed for equal rights faced fierce opposition.

In 1977, for example, a group called Save Our Children—led by singer and former beauty queen, Anita Bryant—launched a hard-hitting campaign to repeal a law in Miami, Florida that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Bryant also helped pass a statewide law the same year that prohibited adoption by gay and lesbian people. “As a mother,” she declared, “I know that homosexuals cannot biologically reproduce...therefore, they must recruit our children.”

Contrary to Bryant’s statement, many gay and lesbian people were “reproducing,” but within heterosexual marriages. In 1976 there were an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 gay and lesbian biological parents in the U.S. As society changed, many of these individuals gained the confidence to come out and leave their marriages. These parents faced much prejudice and were often barred from raising or even visiting their own children. At the first-ever National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979, 100,000 LGBT people demanded equality, including an end to discrimination in lesbian-mother and gay-father custody cases.

In 1978 Louise Joy Brown became the world’s first “test-tube” baby. New scientific breakthroughs made it possible for couples with medical challenges to conceive a baby outside of the human body. This technology also presented new options for people—whether straight or gay—interested in having children outside of traditional heterosexual marriages. For the first time, many gay and lesbian people saw opportunities to form families on their own terms.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the adoption and foster care systems gradually opened the door to gay and lesbian parents as well. During this era the number of children in foster care rose dramatically—in part due to the AIDS and crack cocaine epidemics—and there was much pressure on child welfare agencies to find homes for tens of thousands of babies. While most people were unwilling to take in a sick or drug-addicted child, many gay and lesbian people saw an opportunity to fulfill their desire to become loving parents. As a result, some states began to allow any qualified adult to adopt, regardless of sexual orientation.

When Terry Boggis gave birth to her son, Ned, in 1988 it was a new frontier for gay and lesbian parents. Terry connected with other new parents seeking social support and before long they formed a group that would come to be called Center Families. “As soon as we started meeting in a more visible way,” remembers Terry, “we started getting a lot of questions from people who wanted [kids], like, ‘Where’d you get that baby?’; ‘How do you do that?’; ‘I didn’t know we could do that’; ‘Is it okay that we do that?’”

Center Families educated the LGBT communities about new technologies for getting pregnant, adoption, foster care, and legal and financial issues related to non-traditional families. They also helped LGBT parents find doctors and schools that would be respectful of their families, which sometimes proved challenging. In 1992, for example, the New York City school system became entangled in a nasty debate over a new multicultural curriculum that included positive references to LGBT people. Same-sex headed families were attacked by local residents and school officials and, according to Terry, “Families in our program...were frantic to get out of those school districts...Our families were scared, we were just scared.”

In response to attacks on their children and families, many LGBT people organized and demanded greater visibility and acceptance. Some activists realized that in order to become visible, LGBT people would first have to be officially recognized, so they began working toward a more inclusive census. The U.S. Constitution requires a count of everyone living in the U.S. every ten years, and this data affects how people are represented in government and how hundreds of billions of dollars in funding is spent on community services.

In 1990 the U.S. Census Bureau included a category for “unmarried partners” for the first time. In 2010 the rules were expanded to allow same-sex couples to check “husband” or “wife” on their forms, regardless of whether same-sex marriage was legal in their home state. As a result we know today that more than 700,000 same-sex couples live in the U.S., in every state and over 99% of all U.S. counties. More than 30% of these couples are raising at least 300,000 children, including over 65,000 adopted and 14,000 foster children.

Though the census does not yet count the actual number of LGBT Americans, it has helped to challenge the myth that LGBT people are “strangers” who only live in New York and San Francisco. As noted in a report by the Human Rights Campaign, “From big cities to small farming towns, from the deep South to the Pacific Northwest, gay and lesbian families are part of the American landscape.”

This increased visibility has encouraged elected officials to better represent LGBT citizens and their families. As of 2011 only two states—Utah and Mississippi—prohibit same-sex couples from adopting, and at least 18 states provide them with some form of adoption rights. In 2010 a Florida court ruled that the 1977 adoption ban—championed by Anita Bryant and Save Our Children—was unconstitutional, ending a 30-year battle over family rights in that state.

“You know how they always talk about how the arc of history bends toward justice,” reflects Terry, “If you stay in it long enough you actually get to watch it happen, and I feel like that has happened for us...[Society has] really become much more welcoming and much more expansive in their understanding of who makes a good parent.”



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James Dale Takes on the Boy Scouts of America

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 1:30)

In 2000, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) could refuse membership to people who identify as gay. It was a ten-year court battle.

The plaintiff in the case was James Dale, who began scouting when he was eight years old. By the time he entered Rutgers University he had achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

Here, James remembers how he ended up as a lightning rod for gay rights in the United States.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- When James spoke out on gay issues, he felt he was doing what he was taught in the Boy Scouts—“taking a leadership role, being active and being visible.” Do you think James’ sexual orientation or activism on gay rights is incompatible with being a scout? Why or why not? Why do you think the Boy Scouts of America felt that James’ activities were inconsistent with scouting?
- The letter James received from the Boy Scouts said that “avowed homosexuals are not permitted in the Boy Scouts of America.” Are there any other groups that the Boy Scouts prohibit? (The BSA does not allow girls or atheists/non-religious people to be members.) Do you agree with the Boy Scouts’ policies on membership? Why or why not? Why do you think the Boy Scouts have held firm to their policies even as other organizations (such as Girl Scouts of the USA and The Scout Association in the UK) have updated their policies to reflect the changing attitudes of society?
- James said that “seeing those words in that letter, I wasn’t going to walk away from it.” What would you have done in James’ situation? What personal qualities do you think it takes for someone to stand up for what he believes is right?
- In 2000 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that opposition to homosexuality is part of the BSA’s “expressive message” and protected by the First Amendment. Regardless of your personal feelings, do you think that the BSA should have a legal right to exclude groups that they don’t feel reflect their purpose or mission? Why or why not?
- James felt “blindsided” when the Boy Scouts excluded him because scouting had always been something that made him feel “important and valuable and connected.” Have you ever experienced a similar dilemma, where there is a conflict or disconnect between positive and negative aspects of a group? How did you resolve that problem?
- Speaking about his parents’ struggle with his activism on gay rights, James says that his “parents did the right thing before they fully accepted the right thing.” Which do you think comes first—change in behavior or change in attitude? What strategies would you employ to try and change someone’s behavior or attitude on an issue that is important to you?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Ask students if they have ever been excluded from a group that was important to them. Have them create a piece of artwork, poetry, reflective writing, etc., that explores how that experience impacted them. Have volunteers share their reflections. Discuss how their personal experiences with exclusion relate to James Dale's experience with the Boy Scouts.
- Assign students to research the membership policies of various youth leadership groups in which they are involved (e.g., Girl Scouts of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Camp Fire USA, etc.). Have them compare and contrast the policies with one another and with the Boy Scouts of America policy. Discuss the pros and cons of policies that limit membership in some way.
- At age 12, Steven Cozza started Scouting for All (www.scoutingforall.org), a group dedicated to overturning the Boy Scouts of America's ban on gay members. He was motivated in part by his respect for a family friend who is gay. Have students read about Cozza or watch the documentary film, *Scout's Honor* (2001), which chronicles his story. Engage students in a discussion about what it takes to be an ally to others who have been targeted by prejudice or discrimination. Challenge students to identify a social issue about which they care and to develop an action plan for getting involved as an ally.
- James Dale was motivated to fight for his rights in part by the LGBT rights movement of the 1980s. Assign small groups of students to each research one prominent LGBT group (e.g., ACT UP, Queer Nation) and/or prominent activist (e.g., Cleve Jones, Larry Kramer, Urvashi Vaid) from this era. Have each group write a summary and create a graphic representation highlighting what they learned. Create a large collage out of the different graphic representations to put on display.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



James Dale

“When I was a gay kid growing up in suburban New Jersey,” reflects James Dale, “the Boy Scouts made me feel good about myself. They taught me to have self-respect and how to be a leader...It allowed for individuality...I wasn’t the best track star or football or soccer player. In Scouting I didn’t have to be. They let me be myself.”

As a young boy, James could never have imagined that one day he’d challenge the organization he loved in the nation’s highest court. During his 11 years as a dedicated Scout, James earned 33 merit badges and the Eagle Scout Award. He was elected into the Order of the Arrow and served as chairman of his lodge’s Vigil Honor Society.

When James entered college in 1988, he continued with the Scouts as an Assistant Scoutmaster. During his second year at Rutgers University, James decided to be open about his sexual orientation and became co-president of his campus’ Lesbian and Gay Alliance. At the time, it never occurred to James that these two interests conflicted. “I was pretty much doing what I was taught in the Boy Scouts,” he explains, “to get involved, take a leadership role, to be active, to be visible.”

After an article about James’ involvement in LGBT rights appeared in a local newspaper, he received a letter from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) saying that he didn’t meet their standards for leadership, and ultimately that “avowed homosexuals are not permitted” in the BSA. “I felt betrayal, a tremendous amount of sadness and disappointment,” remembers James. “[Boy Scouts] was *the* thing that I did when I was younger. To have them suddenly say, ‘You’re gay, you’re out,’ was painful...I also felt anger...seeing those words in that letter, I wasn’t going to walk away from it.”

James was not the first person to challenge the idea that being LGBT is at odds with the BSA mission “to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.” As far back as 1980, Eagle Scout Tim Curran entered into a long legal battle with BSA after he took his boyfriend to a school prom and was excluded from the organization. Since that time, numerous Scouts and Scout leaders have challenged the BSA’s membership policies in court. James decided he would wage the next battle.

Ironically, James’ decision to fight for his rights was motivated by his experience as a Scout. “I think it was the integrity and strength of character that came from the Boy Scouts,” he explains, “and justice and that bigger picture patriotic belief in American society and who we are.”

James was also inspired by the climate around LGBT rights that was heating up throughout the nation. Inaction in response to the growing AIDS epidemic and the deaths of thousands of gay people gave rise to aggressive new organizations—such as ACT UP and Queer Nation—and a more forceful approach to LGBT rights. “I was a student at Rutgers,” recalls James, “and I’d come...to ACT UP meetings where there’d be 600 people in a room focusing on changing laws and changing policy and empowerment. So much of the power of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement of the ‘80s was probably my catalyst for standing up for myself.”

James relied on the determination he learned from the Scouts and the courage inspired by LGBT activists to get him through nearly a decade of court battles. Between 1992 and 1999, James experienced victories and setbacks as his case made its way through the New Jersey court system. “The first judge in the case called me a sodomite and quoted brimstone and fire,” describes James. “Then the appellate level court ruled two to one in favor, which was great. That was appealed to the New Jersey Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously in my favor. Never before had a state supreme court handed down such a strong unanimous decision on a gay and lesbian civil rights issue...It was big, it was really exciting, I felt vindicated...I felt empowered. It was an amazing time.”

In 2000 James’ case was heard by the United States Supreme Court, which was the first time that the nation’s highest court had considered a challenge to the Boy Scouts policy excluding LGBT people. “When it went to the United States Supreme Court it was a totally different ballpark,” recalls James. “It was a totally different level of intensity. I felt a very different weight on my shoulders that was hard to deal with personally. I felt that it was so much bigger than me.”

On June 28, 2000, in a narrow 5–4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey could not use its anti-discrimination law to force the Boy Scouts to accept gay members. The court’s majority opinion stated that forcing a private group to accept certain members would violate that group’s First Amendment rights to express its views and associate with people who reflect those views.

In his dissenting opinion, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote that “Every state law prohibiting discrimination is designed to replace prejudice with principle” and warned that “ancient” prejudices against LGBT people could be worsened by the “creation of a constitutional shield” that protected discriminatory policies such as the Boy Scouts ban on LGBT people.

At a news conference following the decision, James said, “I’ve spent nearly half of my life in Scouting, so obviously this decision is disappointing. But if I learned anything during my years as a Scout, it was to believe that justice will prevail. America realizes that discrimination is wrong, even if the Boy Scouts don’t know that yet.”

Ten years after the historic case, James—a 40-year-old advertising professional in New York City—is still passionate about the cause he took up as a teenager. “They’re essentially telling kids that if someone is gay—if they are themselves gay—that they’re not equal...that they’re not worth as much as another kid, so it’s a very damning and damaging message that they send to young people, both gay and non-gay. No kid should be taught that discrimination or bigotry is acceptable or an American value.”



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Jamison Green: Transgender Activist

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time 2:03)

Jamison Green is an activist and writer who has worked on behalf of transgender men and women for more than 20 years.

Jamison transitioned from female to male in 1988. Here, he speaks with his daughter, Morgan Green, about what life was like for him as a child.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Green says, “I think I really consciously felt different my first day of kindergarten.” Have there been times that you have felt different? How did you feel? In your school, what differences are noticed the most amongst students? In what ways might students be treated based on their differences? What are some ways that you can help other students who may feel different?
- Green talks about growing up as a girl and always hating to wear dresses. What are the things that our society expects girls to wear and do? What are the things that our society expects boys to wear and do? Were there ever times that you did not conform to gender expectations? If so, how were you received by those around you?
- How does Green describe his first day of kindergarten? Why were the boys and girls in the class separated? Do you think there are activities that only girls or only boys should do? Where you ever discouraged from doing something you liked because of your gender?
- When someone suggested to Green that he might be transsexual, he says he “reacted in complete horror.” Why do you think he was so scared? What messages had he received growing up that made him afraid to even explore the idea of transitioning? What messages have you received (from family, friends, media, school, places of worship) about transgender people?
- When Green saw Steve Dain on television, what was his reaction? How did that moment impact him? Why is it important to know role models, historic figures and successful people with whom we can identify?
- Green says, “I didn’t feel that I could actually be an honest, whole person in my relationship[s]...if I didn’t transition.” What do you think he means by this? Why is it important to be able to be your true self? Why does Green’s daughter say that she is “probably a better person” as a result of her father’s decision to transition?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Assign students to research the history of the use of the colors pink and blue to designate newborn babies' gender in the U.S. Ask them to answer the following questions: When did labeling of newborn babies with pink and blue start and why? Have the color designations always been the same? Why do hospitals label babies in this way? As time allows, have students identify and research other gender-specific customs that are taken for granted. Discuss how these seemingly benign practices may actually reinforce gender role expectations and stereotypes.
- Assign students to analyze gender expectations (names, clothing, professions, roles, etc.) in U.S. culture and to create a visual representation of their findings. Students can be encouraged to make collages from magazine advertisements, toy catalogues and photos or create videos from media clips.
- Ask students, individually or in groups, to research transgender and gender non-conforming historical figures and to present their findings to the class. Subjects might include Sylvia Rivera, Joan of Arc, Billie Tipton, Christine Jorgensen, Miss Major, Chaz Bono, Kate Bornstein, Kim Coco Iwamoto, Jamison Green and We'Wha.
- In groups, ask students to research the barriers that transgender people face in the U.S or in your community. Some topics to cover may be name changes on official government documents (birth certificates, driver's licenses, etc.), safe and accessible restrooms and locker rooms, participation in gender-segregated athletics, and experiences with bullying and name-calling.
- Green was teased at school by his peers for not conforming to assigned gender expectations. Ask students to analyze what ways their school or school district works to support and protect students regardless of gender identity or expression. Have students find the answers to the questions below and then generate a few recommendations for improving school climate around gender issues that can be presented to school administrators:
 - Does your school or school district specifically mention gender identity and gender expression in the code of conduct, student handbook or anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies?
 - Is there a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar club on campus that focuses on the needs of transgender students?
 - Does the school's dress code specify different rules for boys and girls?
 - What gendered spaces exist on your campus (e.g., classes, P.E., sports, locker rooms, clubs, prom) and what are the options and/or consequences for students who wish to transgress those boundaries?
- Get your students involved! Work with the school GSA or local advocacy group to learn about the needs of transgender people in your community. If possible, encourage students to join groups or volunteer for local non-profits working to address transgender issues.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



Jamison Green

According to 1629 Virginia court records, Thomasina Hall—who was born female, but often dressed in male clothing—was brought to court by fellow villagers who were confused about his gender. After an examination, the court pronounced that Hall was both male and female, ordering him to wear female headgear and an apron over his male clothing to mark his dual identity.

Transgender people have always existed, though language to describe them was not coined until the 1900s. As far back as the sixth century, for example, King Henry III of France frequently cross-dressed, preferring to be addressed as “her majesty” by his subjects when in female attire. In the seventeenth century, Queen Christina of Sweden dressed in men’s clothing and renamed herself Count Dohna. And in 1886, We’Wha—a Native American weaver and potter, who was born male but lived as a woman—met with President Grover Cleveland, who may never have realized this six-foot Zuni maiden was born male.

When Jamison Green was born in 1948, he was labeled “female.” He was adopted by a family that was excited to have a baby girl, and was given a female name accordingly. However, Jamison never felt like a girl. “I think I really consciously felt different my first day of kindergarten,” remembers Jamison. “I always hated wearing dresses, but my parents dressed me up and we walked in... The kindergarten teacher welcomed me and she said, ‘The little girls are over here.’ But as soon as I saw the guys with the trucks I went right over there in my little dress and started playing with these two kids.”

At about the time that Jamison was starting school, Christine Jorgensen—born George Jorgensen—became a media sensation after traveling to Denmark for sex reassignment surgery. In a front-page story entitled “Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty,” it was reported that Jorgensen was the recipient of the first “sex change” operation. The claim was not true, as German doctors had pioneered this type of surgery more than twenty years earlier, but Christine was the most visible transsexual that the U.S. had seen to date.

This visibility provided little reassurance to young Jamison. As he grew older, people often had difficulty determining the sex of the masculine child wearing a dress, and they would treat him as an object of ridicule. “As I got to be about thirteen, fourteen,” recalls Jamison, “I made my mother uncomfortable in that I looked so much like a boy and seemed so much like a boy and played football with the boys...” At fifteen, he took a male name and started going by “Jamie.”

In the 1960s people like Jamison had few rights. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people were routinely subjected to police brutality and raids of gay bars, public parks and even gatherings in private homes. Laws were enacted against cross-dressing and even dancing with a member of the same gender. Few social establishments welcomed LGBT people.

Gene Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco was usually a safe haven for LGBT people. One evening in 1966, however, the manager called the police on a table of loud transgender customers. When an officer got rough with one of the women and tried to arrest her, she threw a hot cup of coffee in his face. The transgender community was sick and tired of mistreatment, and violence erupted and spilled onto the street. The building's windows were smashed, a police car was destroyed and a newspaper stand was set on fire. The first recorded transgender riot in U.S. history marked a turning point in the struggle for LGBT rights, resulting in new social and health services for the transgender community in the years to come.

Jamison—in his early 20s during this time—knew he was probably transsexual, but was afraid to seek treatment. When his partner at the time suggested surgery to help him transition from female to male, Jamison was horrified. “Only crazy people do that! Don't you ever talk about that again,” he responded. “I believed that I would lose all my friends and...that I would never get a job and...it would be a total disaster.”

As Jamison reached his 30s, living as a woman became unbearable for him, but transitioning still didn't seem like an option. “I...didn't know that it was possible until I saw someone else who had transitioned from female to male on television in 1976,” remembers Jamison. “I saw Steve Dain. He had been a teacher of the year in California and he went away over the summer break and came back as a man. And he wanted to keep his teaching job. He was handsome, articulate, self-confident, poised. And I thought, ‘That's me if I'm successful. I could be him.’”

Steve Dain helped Jamison to accept that he could live life as a man. His role as a parent also impacted his desire to transition. He had two children with his partner at the time. According to Jamison, “I didn't feel that I could actually be an honest, whole person in my relationship with [them]...if I didn't transition.” Jamison began the process of transitioning and was listed as the “father” on his children's birth certificates. By April 1991, Jamison was legally male and his own birth certificate was corrected to reflect his rightful gender.

In 1993 two pivotal events occurred. Brandon Teena, a transgender teen from Nebraska, was brutally raped and murdered by peers who had discovered that he was biologically female. This hate crime brought widespread attention to transgender discrimination and violence, and became the subject of the award-winning film, *Boys Don't Cry*. In the same year, Minnesota became the first state to pass a statewide law prohibiting discrimination against transgender people.

By that time Jamison had already become a leading voice for transgender rights through his involvement with FTM International—the world's largest group for female-to-male transgender people—and through his work on the passage of San Francisco's Transgender Protection Ordinance. Since then, Jamison has worked for numerous transgender organizations, appeared in many documentary films and wrote a book entitled *Becoming a Visible Man*.

Today, efforts to create safer and more accepting communities for transgender people are needed more than ever. The 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey indicates that transgender people experience higher rates of harassment, unemployment, housing discrimination and homelessness than the general population. According to the study, an alarming 78% of transgender youth reported harassment by peers, leading 15% of these students to leave school.

Due to the efforts of Jamison and many other activists, transgender people are gaining more visibility and support with each passing year. As of this writing, thirteen states and the District of Columbia now have non-discrimination protections for transgender people, and schools and workplaces across the country are adapting to meet the needs of their transgender members. In 2006, Kim Coco Iwamoto—a member of Hawaii's Board of Education—became the first openly transgender official to win statewide office, an achievement that Jamison could never have imagined when he toddled into his kindergarten class in a dress a few short decades ago.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Michael Levine and the Stonewall Rebellion

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 2:26)

Michael Levine was at a popular gay bar in New York City in June 1969 when it was surrounded by police. At the time, the vice squad routinely raided and emptied gay bars. Patrons usually complied with the police—frightened at being identified publicly.

But this particular Friday night was different because patrons at the Stonewall Inn stood their ground. They clashed—during what became known as the Stonewall Rebellion.

Here, Michael Levine reflects with his friend, Matt Merlin, on what happened that night.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Why did a “deafening silence” occur at the Stonewall Inn on the night Michael describes? What did this signal to the LGBT patrons at that time and place?
- Why do you think the police targeted the Stonewall Inn? Do you think it was illegal for LGBT people to congregate in a bar at that time?
- On the third night of the rebellion, Michael says, “We stood there on the street and held hands and kissed—something we would never have done three days earlier.” Why wouldn’t he have done this before the Stonewall Rebellion? What changed in that short space of time? Why did Michael feel so proud he had “chills”?
- How did the Stonewall Rebellion change Michael’s relationship with his family? Why do you think he never disclosed his sexual identity to them and why do you think they never asked about his identity?
- What does Michael mean when he says, “I didn’t feel that I was a different person...I felt the world is now more comfortable with me.” How did the Stonewall Rebellion change the lives of individuals? How did it change the world?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Help students to understand the interconnections among various civil rights movements from the 1950s to the 1970s. Assign small groups to each research a different movement (e.g., African American, women, farm/migrant workers, Native American, LGBT). Have groups collect key slogans/anthems from that movement (e.g., “Black is beautiful,” “A Woman Needs a Man Like a Fish Needs a Bicycle,” “Sí, se puede,” “Indians are people not mascots,” “Gay is good”). Create a collage or mural out of the slogans and use them as a vehicle for identifying the key goals and demands of each movement, and discussing how the movements collectively reinforced and influenced one another.

- Assign students to select a key figure in the LGBT rights movement during the era right before, during or after Stonewall. Have them create a portrait, poem or piece of reflective writing that demonstrates what they have learned about the figure, and share their work with the class. Some important activists from this era include Harry Hay, Frank Kameny, Phyllis Lyon, Dell Martin, Barbara Gittings, Evelyn Hooker, Sylvia Rivera, Rita Mae Brown, Marsha P. Johnson, Adrienne Rich and Harvey Milk.
- Have students read a poem, essay or novel by an influential LGBT writer during the Stonewall era (e.g., Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Edmund White, Audre Lorde, Rita Mae Brown). Assign a different reading to small groups and have each group discuss their reactions to the reading. Then form new groups with students who have each read something different, and have them share the main ideas or highlights to their group members.
- Have students compare gay rights groups before Stonewall (e.g., Mattachine Society, Daughters of Bilitis) with those that came after the uprising (e.g., Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activists Alliance). Create a Venn diagram or another visual that shows how the goals and tactics of the LGBT rights movement evolved to reflect changing times and attitudes.
- Create a class timeline from Stonewall to the present that shows some of the major rights LGBT people have achieved during that period. At the end of the timeline, have students identify rights that are yet to be achieved.
- The Stonewall Rebellion sparked annual Gay Pride marches around the country and throughout the world. Ask for student volunteers who are willing to attend a local pride march (or another LGBT rally or peaceful protest). Have them assume the role of a journalist and write an article that captures what they observed. Alternatively, challenge straight students to wear a visible LGBT symbol (e.g., rainbow rings necklace, pink triangle pin) and to write an essay reflecting on how it felt to participate in that role.
- On the 40th anniversary of Stonewall in 2009, President Obama challenged citizens to “commit to achieving equal justice under the law for LGBT Americans.” Have students create a piece of writing or artwork that depicts what “equal justice under the law” would look like for LGBT people. Discuss the rights that are being sought by LGBT Americans today and what it might take for those rights to be achieved.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



Michael Levine

“I came out in the 1960s, when it was difficult to be gay,” remembers Michael Levine. “As a matter of fact, we didn’t use the word ‘gay’ back then. There were only two words: ‘homosexual’ and ‘queer.’ I hated the word ‘homosexual.’ Everyone knew that only male hairdressers and female gym teachers were ‘homos.’ They weren’t normal people. I stayed away from them because I wanted so much to be normal. I hated the word homosexual, but I was terrified by the word ‘queer.’ If anyone knew you were ‘queer,’ you would get [beat up] on the way home from school, every day. I didn’t want to get beat up, so I avoided them too.”

“That’s how I lived my high school and college years, hiding from the world, and, most importantly, from myself. I had several brief secret affairs with other guys and after each one I felt ashamed and embarrassed and humiliated by the thought of anyone knowing what I was doing. I was, naturally, always moody and depressed and caught in a life I felt I did not understand or want. I felt as though I was not ‘normal.’ But, I knew no other way.”

In the 1950s and ’60s, most lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people lived a shadowy existence. They were commonly regarded as sexual deviants and subversives, and portrayed in the media as child molesters and communists. In 1952 the psychiatric community classified homosexuality as a mental disorder and the FBI kept lists of “known homosexuals,” who were considered security risks.

During this era it was dangerous for LGBT people to be open about their sexual identity. Police often performed sweeps of public parks and beaches where LGBT people congregated. The names of those arrested were commonly printed in newspapers, leading to humiliation, harassment and loss of employment.

Few social establishments welcomed LGBT people. Those that did were mostly bars and often run by organized crime. The Stonewall Inn in New York City—a ratty hole in the wall without running water or fire exits—was one of those bars. It was illegal for members of the same sex to dance together or display affection in the bar. Cross-dressing was also forbidden and women were required to wear at least three articles of “feminine clothing.” Though the owners regularly paid off cops to keep them away, raids and entrapment were common.

Popular among the most marginalized—drag queens, homeless youth, effeminate men and masculine women—the Stonewall was an unlikely site for a revolution. “Every night I went in with my collar up, hiding my face, ashamed to be seen,” recalls Michael Levine. “But, once in, it was there that I could dance with and kiss my boyfriend, and no one cared.” Many of the patrons, craving a social space where they could be

themselves, put up with the routine ID-checks and harassment. But when the police burst into the Stonewall during the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, a different mood was in the air.

“Suddenly,” explains Michael, “a deafening silence occurred. The lights went up, the music went off, and you could hear a pin drop, literally.” Several officers shouted, “We’re taking the place!” and began lining up the 200 patrons for an ID-check. Many resisted, refusing to show their identification or to go willingly with the police. As the officers forced the customers outside—where the “Public Morals Squad” was waiting with a wagon—a crowd gathered on the street and confronted the cops. Some threw bottles and pelted police officers with coins. Chants of “liberate Christopher Street!” and “we shall overcome!” echoed throughout the neighborhood as a chorus line formed and kicked its way down the block. “They were all Puerto Rican drag queens and Irish cops,” explains Michael. “It was a funny, funny confrontation.”

As the crowd swelled and grew angrier—throwing garbage cans and bricks, and trying to overturn police cars—the cops barricaded themselves into the Stonewall. Before reinforcements could arrive, the mob rammed the door with an uprooted parking meter, lit garbage on fire and threw it into the bar. By the time the violence died down, thirteen arrests were made, four cops were injured and many protesters were hospitalized.

“When we came back [the next] night,” describes Michael, “we stood there on the street and held hands and kissed – something we would never have done three days earlier. It made me feel wonderful. I stood there with chills.” Over the next three days, protesters defied law enforcement by openly displaying affection, declaring “gay power” and antagonizing the police. The owner of the Oscar Wilde Bookshop—the first bookstore devoted to gay and lesbian authors—printed 5,000 fliers, including one that read, “Get the Mafia and the Cops out of Gay Bars.” The leaflets called for a boycott of the Stonewall and other bars run by organized crime, for gays to own their own establishments and for the city to investigate the “intolerable situation.”

The three days of unrest that came to be known as the Stonewall Rebellion were small in scale, yet they triggered massive change. Within months several organizations and newspapers were formed to promote LGBT rights. Whereas the earlier gay rights movement tried to create change by fitting peacefully into mainstream society, new groups adopted more militant tactics inspired by 1960s civil rights activists. The Gay Liberation Front, for example, was the first organization to use the word “gay” in its name and introduced itself with a flier proclaiming: “Do You Think Homosexuals Are Revolting? You Bet Your Sweet A** We Are!” Within two years, there were LGBT rights groups in every major U.S. city as well as in Canada, Australia and Europe.

In 1970, to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, the first Gay Pride marches took place across the U.S. By 1972 a dozen cities held pride parades, and gay and lesbian people in London, Paris, West Berlin and Stockholm also marched for gay rights.

Thirty years after the rebellion, the U.S. government designated the site of the original Stonewall Inn as a National Historic Landmark and proclaimed: “Let it forever be remembered that here—on this spot—men and women stood proud, they stood fast, so that we may be who we are, we may work where we will, live where we choose and love whom our hearts desire.”

When Michael Levine looks back at his experience with the Stonewall Rebellion, he sums it up this way: “... The lights went up, the police entered and raided the bar, the gays fought back and refused to leave, and gay rights was born. I went in that night with my collar up hiding my face. After the rebellion, I stood in the street with my collar down, holding my face up and holding my boyfriend’s hand, and being proud to be gay. It felt ‘normal.’”



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Phyllis Lyon, the Daughters of Bilitis and the Homophile Movement

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time 1:57)

Phyllis Lyon has been a gay rights activist for over fifty years. She was one of the founding members of the Daughters of Bilitis—a group named for a lesbian character in French poetry. Formed in 1955, it was the first lesbian rights group in the United States.

Here, Phyllis tells her friend, Margie Adam, about coming of age in an era when sexuality was rarely discussed.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Lyon says, “I didn’t really find out that lesbians existed until I met the woman that I spent the rest of my life with.” What social conditions existed when Lyon was a teenager and young adult— in the 1940s and ’50s—that kept her from knowing that gay and lesbian people even existed? How do you think that invisibility affected both LGBT and straight people? Do you think invisibility is still a problem for LGBT people today? Why or why not?
- Lyon describes how Del Martin “came out” to her, or disclosed that she was gay. What risks did Martin face by admitting that she was a lesbian? In general, what did LGBT people risk by being open about their identity in the 1950s? What are the risks and benefits for LGBT people today who choose to “come out”? How would you feel if someone you knew told you that they were LGBT?
- Lyon says that she and Martin “wanted to meet more lesbians and we didn’t have any luck.” Why do you think it was important for them to meet other lesbians? What were some of the barriers they faced when they tried to meet people like them? How do you connect with people that share similar identities to you? What does “community” mean to you?
- When Lyon and her friends started their new social club, why did they choose the name, “Daughters of Bilitis”? Why was it necessary for them to choose a name that non-lesbians might not recognize? What might have been the consequences if they selected a more identifiable title? What changes had to take place in society for some of today’s groups to adopt their names (e.g., National Gay and Lesbian Task Force)?
- While Daughters of Bilitis began as a social club, Lyon says, “We discovered also that there were a lot of laws that were anti-gay and there were more things to do than just party.” What anti-gay laws existed in the 1950s? How did Daughters of Bilitis set about addressing this discrimination? What anti-LGBT laws still exist today? What groups are currently challenging these laws and how are they doing so?
- Why do you think Daughters of Bilitis decided to create a newsletter as one of their initial strategies for addressing anti-LGBT bias? What were the benefits and drawbacks of this form of communication and networking in the 1950s? How would you compare a newsletter back then to a Facebook group today?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Arguably, the two most influential organizations of the homophile movement were the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society. Assign students to research both and compare and contrast them based on mission, tactics and impact. Then ask students to report their findings to the class.
- Assign students to select one of the key leaders of the homophile movement to research (e.g., Phyllis Lyon, Del Martin, Barbara Gittings, Harry Hay, Frank Kameny). Have students answer the following questions: Who were they? Why were they involved in the movement? What were their major contributions? Have students create a collage or other visual representation of the person they selected that reflects the answers to the assigned questions.
- Assign students to research McCarthyism and the “Red Scare” of the 1950s. Have them answer the following questions: What was happening in the U.S. politically at that time? Which public figures fueled the “Red Scare”? Who was accused of being a communist or subversive, and why? Why were homosexuals targeted? Assign students to compare this era to others in which certain groups were considered dangerous or anti-American (e.g., the Salem Witch Trials, Japanese American Internment, anti-Muslim sentiment post-9/11).
- In 1873 the Comstock Act was created to suppress the circulation of “obscene literature” and “prevent the mails from being used to corrupt the public morals.” In the 1950s the law was used to bar the distribution of LGBT materials, such as Daughters of Bilitis’ *The Ladder* and *ONE, Inc.*, which won a Supreme Court case in 1958 protecting its right to be published. Assign students to find copies of *The Ladder*, *ONE, Inc.* or other LGBT publications from that era (or individual articles from them). Have them write a report summarizing the issues of the day for LGBT people and discussing why these publications were considered “obscene” by some people. Have them research and discuss how current groups are still framing the distribution of information about LGBT people as indecent.
- In the 1950s and ’60s, people like Phyllis Lyon created a distinct movement for LGBT people to fight for their rights, but LGBT people were also members of many other groups fighting for civil rights during that era, including African Americans, women and Native Americans. Assign students to investigate the ways in which these other movements embraced or rejected LGBT people and issues (e.g., exclusion of Bayard Rustin from the black civil rights movement, Betty Friedan’s notion of lesbianism as the “Lavender Menace”). Have students write a poem reflecting on the ways in which their multiple identities find expression within the different communities to which they belong.
- Get your students involved in advocating for LGBT rights. Assign them to research a local or national issue, such as bullying prevention measures, same-sex marriage, same-sex couples at prom, etc. Have students present their findings to the class and brainstorm ways they can make a difference (e.g., writing letters to legislators or a local newspaper, having conversations with friends, standing up for someone who is being bullied, raising money for an organization, starting an awareness campaign, participating in GLSEN’s Ally Week or Day of Silence). Then have small groups of students select one of their ideas to enact.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



Phyllis Lyon

“I didn’t really find out that lesbians existed until I met the woman that I spent the rest of my life with,” Phyllis Lyon recalls of the first time she met Del Martin when they worked together in Seattle, WA. Over the next three years, Lyon and Martin’s relationship developed into a romantic one. “We also wanted to meet more lesbians and we didn’t have any luck,” remembers Phyllis. “We went to the lesbian bars, but we were too shy to go talk to them and they didn’t come around and talk to us.”

In the 1950s, following World War II, the U.S. enjoyed an economic boom that brought prosperity to many middle class American families. It also was a time of intense anti-communist sentiment and fear of Soviet spies. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people were targeted during this time because some politicians falsely believed that homosexuals had infiltrated the U.S. government and posed a threat to national security. These leaders considered communists and homosexuals to be both morally weak and mentally disturbed, and argued that homosexuals could be easily blackmailed by communists into revealing state secrets.

As a result of this “Lavender Scare,” LGBT people were routinely fired from their jobs and subjected to police raids on gay bars, parties and even gatherings in private homes. Laws were enacted that prohibited men and women from wearing clothes traditionally associated with another gender, and even dancing with a member of the same gender became a criminal offense. This public harassment forced many LGBT people to lead invisible lives in isolation from one another.

In 1955, finding it hard to develop a social network, Phyllis, Del and six other women founded the first national lesbian rights group in the U.S.—Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). The name, taken from a collection of French poems with lesbian themes, was chosen out of a need for secrecy. “If anyone asked us,” commented Phyllis, “we could always say we belonged to a poetry club.” The group leaders designed a pin to wear so that they could identify with others and chose a motto, “Qui vive”—French for “on alert.” The group’s original charter was written so vaguely that, according to Phyllis, “It could have been a charter for a cat-raising club.”

Though initially a secret club for dancing and socializing, Phyllis quickly discovered “that there were a lot of laws that were anti-gay” and that “there were more things to do than just party.” DOB called themselves “A Woman’s Organization for the purpose of Promoting the Integration of the Homosexual into Society” and focused on educating the public about lesbians, participating in research about lesbians and repealing anti-LGBT laws. Within five years of its origin, DOB had chapters around the country, including Chicago, New York, New Orleans, San Diego, Los Angeles, Detroit, Denver, Cleveland and Philadelphia.

With Phyllis as editor, DOB began publishing *The Ladder* in 1956, the first nationally distributed lesbian publication in the U.S. Many of the people who wrote for *The Ladder* used fake names to protect themselves and the magazine was issued in a brown paper covering. Even Phyllis edited under the name “Ann Ferguson” for a while, but later dropped it to encourage her readers not to hide. *The Ladder* included news, book reviews, poetry, stories and letters from readers. DOB published 175 copies of the first issue, and by 1957 there were 400 subscribers, including Lorraine Hansberry—the African American playwright and activist—who wrote a letter of thanks to DOB in May 1957 stating she was “glad as heck that you exist.” Historian Marcia Gallo wrote of *The Ladder*, “For women who came across a copy in the early days, *The Ladder* was a lifeline. It was a means of expressing and sharing otherwise private thoughts and feelings, of connecting across miles and disparate daily lives, of breaking through isolation and fear.”

In addition to DOB, other groups were working to address the rights and needs of LGBT people in the 1950s. Often called “homophile” groups—a term preferred over “homosexual” because it emphasized love (“-phile” from Greek) over sex—organizations such as The Mattachine Society, Knights of the Clock and One, Inc. worked on job and housing discrimination, and other issues relevant to the LGBT communities.

Like DOB, these groups faced many challenges working at a time when the law and societal rules deemed LGBT people as subversive and dangerous. For instance *ONE, Inc.*, a publication with LGBT content, was barred in 1954 from being sent through the U.S. Postal Service because it was considered “obscene” and in violation of the Comstock Law of 1873. After four years of legal battles, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled to allow such materials to be sent through the mail.

The 1958 ruling made it easier for LGBT organizations to communicate with their members and increase the impact of their work, but also created backlash for organizations like DOB. During the 1959 mayoral race in San Francisco, one candidate claimed the city was being made safe for “sex deviants,” writing, “You parents of daughters—do not sit back complacently feeling that because you have no boys in your family everything is all right...To enlighten you as to the existence of a Lesbian organization composed of homosexual women, make yourself acquainted with the name Daughters of Bilitis.” The San Francisco police subsequently broke into and searched DOB headquarters, and the FBI even infiltrated DOB meetings, reporting in 1959 that “the purpose of the DOB is to educate the public to accept the Lesbian homosexual into society.”

Phyllis stayed involved with DOB until the late 1960s, and in 1970 the organization dissolved due to the changing nature of the LGBT rights movement and disagreements among the group’s leaders. However, the work of homophile organizations in the 1950s and ’60s, like DOB, formed a base for the LGBT rights movement that continues to this day.

Phyllis has remained engaged in the struggle to ensure social justice for LGBT people in the decades since DOB. In 2008, she and her partner, Del Martin, became the first gay couple to get married in California after the state’s Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. They had been together for more than 50 years. Phyllis recalls, “We got together in 1953 on Valentine’s day. It was Del’s idea. ‘We’ll never forget our anniversary,’ she said. And we never did.”



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Charles Silverstein and the Declassification of Homosexuality as a Mental Illness

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 2:11)

Between 1952 and 1973, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association. Gay men and women across the country were subjected to a variety of treatments aimed at curing their “condition.”

During that era, Dr. Charles Silverstein was in graduate school training to become a psychologist. Here, he talks about his role in changing the medical community’s ideas about homosexuality.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Dr. Silverstein shares that during the early 1970s—when he was in his 30s—none of his closest friends knew that he was gay. How do you think it would feel to keep a major part of your identity a secret well into your adulthood? Why do you think it was necessary for many LGBT people to do so during this time? Why do some LGBT people still feel the need to hide their identity from others today?
- Dr. Silverstein decided to come out, or disclose his sexual orientation, by joining the Gay Activist Alliance, an organization working for gay rights. Why do you think he might have chosen activism as a way to come out? In what other ways do people come out? How can you be an ally to people in your life who might decide to come out?
- In 1972 Dr. Silverstein helped to organize a demonstration against the use of aversion therapy on gay men. What is aversion therapy (*the use of unpleasant stimuli to eliminate undesirable behavior*)? Why did Dr. Silverstein and his peers believe it was wrong to use electric shock therapy and other methods aimed at “curing” LGBT people?
- Dr. Silverstein, the Gay Activist Alliance and others were working to have homosexuality removed from the list of recognized mental disorders. What do you think of when you hear the term “mental illness”? How are people categorized as “mentally ill” thought of in the U.S.?
- Why does Dr. Silverstein say that the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder was “the single most important success of the gay liberation movement”? Once it was accepted that gay people do not suffer from a mental defect, what types of opportunities opened up for LGBT people? What do you think is the next “most important success” needed by the LGBT rights movement? Why?
- Dr. Silverstein challenges the notion that “you can’t fight City Hall” and asserts that “when you see something wrong, you should say something.” Do you think it’s possible to change government/laws on important issues facing society? Why or why not? What changes do you think are most important to stand up for today? What strategies do you think would be most effective to achieve those changes?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Dr. Silverstein speaks of multiple forms of communication and activism that the Gay Activist Alliance used to get homosexuality removed from the *DSM*. Assign each student (or group of students) to create and present their own historical item representing the work of Silverstein and others. This could be a protest sign, one-page flier, speech to colleagues, formal speech to the APA Nomenclature Committee, etc.
- Homosexuality and same-sex attraction were categorized in various ways in the first few versions of the *DSM*. Assign students to research and display the changes of language and the history of removal of homosexuality from the *DSM* by creating a timeline, chart, collage, etc.
- Following the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, many new gay rights groups emerged to fight for LGBT equality. Divide students into small groups and either assign or have each group select an LGBT rights organization from the post-Stonewall era. Have each group research the organization and create a poster that visually depicts the organization's mission/goals, slogan, major accomplishments, notable members, etc. Examples of groups include Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activist Alliance, ActUp, Queer Nation, Human Rights Campaign, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Lambda Legal.
- Dr. Silverstein and his colleagues raised awareness about anti-gay discrimination through a “zap”—a public demonstration designed to confront a public figure and secure media coverage and other forms of attention on important issues. The Gay Activist Alliance and other activist groups commonly used zaps during the 1960s and '70s. Have students research and report back on some of the noteworthy or successful zaps of that time. Assign small groups to plan a zap that they think would effectively address a current issue. Have groups role play or share their idea with the class and encourage feedback that helps students to refine their ideas about how to successfully work toward social change.
- The research of psychologist Evelyn Hooker in the 1950s was instrumental in establishing that gay people are as socially well adjusted as others, and contributed to the ultimate declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. Likewise, modern-day research is helping to demonstrate that same-sex parenting poses no mental health risks to children, thereby paving the way for fairer marriage and family laws. Have students research and discuss Hooker's original findings (see, for example, <http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/hooker.html>). Then either assign or have them identify and report back on a current newspaper/magazine article that discusses the research on same-sex parenting. Make sure only reputable sources are consulted (see, for example, “The Gay Science: What Do We Know about the Effects of Same-Sex Parenting?” in *Slate* or “Study: Same-Sex Parents Raise Well-Adjusted Kids” on *WebMD*).
- While homosexuality has been removed from the *DSM*, Gender Identity Disorder is listed in the current edition. There is great controversy in the LGBT and medical communities as to the appropriateness of this addition. Assign students to research the current language and the different community responses. Ask students to present the potential benefits and challenges of inclusion in the *DSM* for transgender and gender non-conforming people.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



Charles Silverstein

“It became the single most important success of the gay liberation movement,” says Dr. Charles Silverstein, a psychologist and founding editor of The Journal of Homosexuality, who helped to convince the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that homosexuality was not a mental disorder.

Throughout history, in every culture, there have been lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. In some societies LGBT people have been accepted and in many they have been misunderstood and persecuted. When same-sex attraction was first discussed in western medical books, it was widely believed to be a mental illness. This view, based more on morality than science, was written into the first edition of the APA’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* in 1952. The *DSM* was created to define and organize the list of known mental disorders, and to give mental health professionals guidelines to treat such illnesses. The first *DSM* labeled homosexuality a “sociopathic personality disorder.”

During the 1950s and ’60s, some psychiatrists subjected LGBT people to cruel treatments designed to “cure” them, including castration, brain surgery and electric shock therapy. Colin Fox, for example, was 19 when he “volunteered” for a treatment called “aversion therapy” in 1964 because his family, religion and community persuaded him that homosexuality was a sickness. “I thought I was a bad person and lived in fear of going to jail,” remembers Colin.

During therapy sessions, electrodes were fixed to Colin’s arm and leg. He was shown photos of attractive men and jolted with shocks after each. By linking homosexual desire with pain, Colin’s doctors thought they could “cure” him of his attraction to men. At the end of each session, he was “rewarded” with a picture of an attractive woman without getting electrocuted. “The electric shocks were very, very painful,” recalls Colin. “The comparison would be if I was about to be electrocuted, because it was such a sharp bolt of pain shooting through my body.”

In addition to administering inhumane treatments, many psychiatrists also served as medical experts in legal cases, branding LGBT people as unfit to care for their own children, to teach or work with children or to hold jobs that dealt with security and intelligence.

However, there were also doctors and advocates who challenged the idea that LGBT people were “sick”. For example, research conducted by psychologist Evelyn Hooker beginning in the 1940s demonstrated that gay people were as psychologically sound as heterosexuals. In addition, activist groups such as Daughters

of Bilitis and Mattachine Society worked for years to educate the public about LGBT people and to fight discriminatory laws.

Although research was proving wrong the idea that LGBT people needed to be “cured,” the medical and mental health communities were slow to update their practices. In 1972, Charles Silverstein, a graduate student studying psychology, decided to do something about this form of discrimination, which he considered torture against gay people.

Silverstein knew that a big meeting of psychologists was taking place in New York that fall, and he asked the leaders of the Gay Activist Alliance (of which he was a member) for permission to “zap” the convention. “Zaps”—commonly used by activists of that era—were public demonstrations designed to confront a public figure, get media coverage and generate attention on an important issue.

Silverstein and his peers decided to “zap” a lecture about the use of aversion therapy on gay people. About a dozen people from Gay Activist Alliance walked into the room and sat down. Silverstein remembers approaching the lecturer and saying something like, “Dr. Quinn, the room is filled with radical gay liberationists and we are here to fight against aversion therapy used against our people. You can talk for 15 minutes, then we’re going to take over the room and tell the audience how gay people are being tortured.”

The audience erupted into fury, but a lot of important ideas were exchanged during the meeting. As a result of the action, Silverstein and others were invited to submit a report to the APA’s Nomenclature Committee, the group in charge of making changes to the *DSM*. When they presented their report, Silverstein criticized the committee for the large role that psychiatry had played in discrimination against gay people. “What we hope to convey to you,” he warned, “is that we have paid the price for your past mistake. Don’t make it again.”

In 1973 the board of the APA recommended the removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder. Fifty-eight percent of the ten thousand psychiatrists who voted on the issue supported the board’s action while thirty-seven percent voted against it. To calm opponents, the board didn’t actually remove “Homosexuality” at first, but rather changed the wording in the *DSM* to “Sexual Orientation Disturbance.” It took two more changes—one in 1980 and another in 1994—until homosexuality was completely removed from the *DSM*.

Today the American Psychological Association states that, “Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals agree that homosexuality is not an illness, a mental disorder, or an emotional problem. Homosexuality was once thought to be a mental illness because mental health professionals and society had biased information.”

We all rely on researchers and health professionals to help us understand the world. When the information they provide is based on outdated ideas or prejudice, many people may be subject to discrimination and violence. While institutions like the American Psychiatric Association may seem huge and immovable, ordinary people have the power to change them. Activists like Dr. Charles Silverstein helped to transform the belief system of the entire mental health community in the U.S., and paved the way for more equal treatment of LGBT people in their jobs, homes, relationships and families.



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



David Wilson and the Struggle for Marriage Equality

Introduction to the Interview (Running Time: 3:09)

David Wilson and his partner, Rob Compton, were two of the plaintiffs in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*—the landmark state appellate court case in Massachusetts that awarded marriage equality to same-sex couples in the state.

Ten years before the lawsuit, David Wilson was living with his first partner, Ronald Loso, outside of Boston, until November 29, 1994. Here, Wilson remembers that day.

Questions to Discuss with Students Following the Interview

- Why do you think the police initially assumed that David was a criminal rather than Ron's partner? What challenges did David face as a black gay man? How are racism and heterosexism interconnected throughout David's story?
- David comments that as far as the hospital was concerned, he was a stranger. Why didn't medical personnel recognize David and Ron's relationship? Do you think the law should treat domestic partners differently than legally married couples? Why or why not? Do you know what the law says about this in your state or locale?
- What is a commitment ceremony? Why did David make a point of telling people that their ceremony was not a wedding? How is a commitment ceremony the same and/or different from a civil marriage (on a social/emotional level, spiritual level, legal level, etc.)?
- David comments that his father saw their wedding as a victory for all people who had ever experienced discrimination. What connections do you see between efforts to legalize same-sex marriage and other civil rights struggles? How does marriage equality help to further the goals of other equal rights causes?

Suggested Activities and Assignments for Extended Learning

- Assign students to research some of the rights and benefits associated with civil marriage (over a thousand have been identified at the federal level, including hospital visitation, tax exemptions, custody rights and social security income). Hold a class debate about whether or not these benefits should be available to families only through civil marriage.
- A common argument against same-sex marriage is that it has been historically between a man and a woman, and that it is important to maintain this age-old tradition. Assign students to research the history of marriage and the ways that it has changed and evolved over the centuries (see, for example, *What is Marriage For?* by E.J. Graff). Then have them write an essay or engage in a debate about whether or not same-sex unions pose a threat to the traditional institution of marriage.

- Conduct a discussion with students about the difference between civil and religious marriage. Have students consider whether the rules about access to marriage should be different in civil versus religious settings. Ask students to find out what their faith community's position is on same-sex marriage, and to reflect on how they feel about that position.

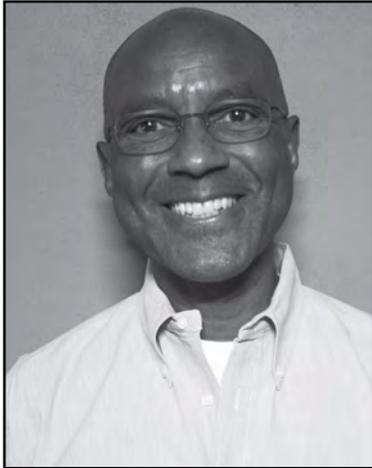


UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Student Handout



David Wilson

Arriving home from work one evening in 1994, David Wilson found his partner, Ron Loso, lying unconscious in their driveway. “EMTs arrived within minutes,” remembered David, “and they called the police, because they saw me standing in the driveway. You know, an African-American man in a white neighborhood... When the police arrived they wanted to arrest me for assault and battery, and breaking and entering.”

At the hospital, David was not allowed to visit Ron or receive information about his condition. “They wouldn’t give me any information because they did not recognize our relationship,” David explained. “They called my partner’s 75-year-old mother who lived in Vermont, and she gave them permission to tell me his condition. They told me that he had suffered a massive heart attack and was dead on arrival.”

David’s tragic experience drove home the reality that same-sex couples in the U.S. did not enjoy the same rights as legally married couples, such as the right to visit a partner in the hospital and make medical decisions for him. “I had never considered the problem with relationship rights until that moment,” David commented. “I had a lot to think about.”

In 1994 no U.S. state recognized gay relationships, but the issue had been thrust into the national spotlight a year earlier when three same-sex couples sued the state of Hawaii for the right to marry. That battle lasted six long years until the state amended its constitution to define marriage as the union between a man and woman only.

In response to the controversy in Hawaii, the U.S. Congress passed the “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA) in 1996, which allows states to refuse recognition of same sex marriages performed in other states and officially defines marriage as the “legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.” Since 1996, states passed similar laws at the local level.

Following the loss of his partner, David joined a group called Gay Fathers of Greater Boston. There he met Rob Compton, a dentist who had been fired after coming out as a gay man. David and Rob fell in love and decided to have a commitment ceremony. “Lots of people came and thought it was our wedding,” David explained. “We said, ‘No, this isn’t a wedding, because we don’t have the right to get married.’”

One morning Rob awoke in terrible pain. David rushed him to the hospital and—in what seemed like a recurring nightmare—was denied access to Rob or information about his health. “I tried to describe what had happened to me three years earlier, and the staff didn’t really care,” David shared. “To them, I had no relationship to this man and, unless I could prove that I was related in some way, they would not give me any information.” Rob ultimately recovered from his illness and the couple moved to the city, seeking a more supportive environment for their relationship.

In 1999 Vermont became the first U.S. state to rule that same-sex couples are entitled to the benefits and protections of marriage, though the state legislature decided to grant those rights through a separate system called “civil union.” (In 2009 Vermont abolished the civil union system and made civil marriage available to all couples, gay and straight alike.)

In nearby Massachusetts, David and Rob learned that a local legal rights organization was preparing to sue the state for marriage rights for same-sex couples, and they decided to get involved. More than a hundred couples were interviewed, and David and Rob were selected along with six other couples to be plaintiffs in the case. The suit—known as *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*—was filed in April 2001 and in November 2003 the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples, making Massachusetts the first state in the nation to do so. David and Rob were among the first same-sex couples in the U.S. to be married on May 17, 2004.

The issue of same-sex marriage continued to be a hotly debated topic in the United States. In California, for example, a long battle over marriage rights followed after San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom issued the first same-sex marriage certificates in the U.S. in 2004. These certificates were later nullified, but in 2008 the California Supreme Court officially legalized same-sex marriage. In response, opponents of same-sex marriage launched Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that passed in 2008 and changed California’s constitution to define marriage as the union between a man and woman. In 2011 judges at a federal appeals court deliberated on the constitutionality of Proposition 8.

“It was amazing to become a plaintiff in a major lawsuit against the state of Massachusetts,” David commented as he looked back on the historic case. “Part of the decision to be part of the case was to talk with my family. My dad wasn’t sure. All of a sudden his only son is going to become this prominent, out, gay black man. So, I talked with Dad about some of the issues. A couple of hours later Dad said, ‘You’re doing the right thing.’”

“[On the day of our wedding, Dad] was in the front row when we walked down the aisle. Both his arms were in the air. He was 89 at that point. And he didn’t see it just for gay people, he saw it for all people that had been discriminated against. And, his whole life he had been discriminated against. So, I think, for Dad, it was just a victory that he could be a part of. He could not have been more proud. It was a great day.”