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Cork LGBT+ Pride festival

Cork L.G.B.T+ Pride festival

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#CORKPRIDE2021

HUGE THANKS TO:

An Taoiseach Micheal Martin; Lord Mayor Cllr Colm Kelleher; Cork Pride Parade Grand Marshal Aoife Cooke; Cork Pride Master of Ceremonies Paul Ryder; all the team at the Gay Project; all the team at LINC; all the team at the Sexual Health Centre; An Garda Siochana Anglesea Street; Cork City Council; Cork County Council; Sara MacKeown, Nicholas Bourke, and all the team at Port of Cork; Karen O Donoghue, Joe Dermody, Lisa Coughlan and all the team at the Irish Examiner; Dave McCardle, Colm O Sullivan, Stevie Grainger, and all the team at Red FM; Justin Cronin, Kieran Rigby and the team at Coolgrey; all the team at the Marina Market; Peter O Toole; Sophie Ridley; Maurice Supple; Anton Cullen; Rose-Anne Kidney; Daragh Kelly; Rory Collins; Helena O Brien; Mark Kenny; Cathal Deavy, Robbie McKeown, Aoife Dilworth and the team at Tesco; Evan Murphy, Anna Nolan and the team at PepsiCo; Sarah-Jane Willoughby and the team at Ibec; Niall Donnelly and the team at Gilead; Danielle Bouchier, Katie Martin, and the team at An Post; Gerald O Riordan, Lisa O Callaghan, Louise Dorgan, and the team at Pfizer; Micheal Barry and the team at Apple; Gillian Barry and the team at Laya Healthcare; Mary White, Audrey Walsh, and the team at Johnson Controls; Claire O Regan, Ciara McAdam-O'Connell and the team at VMware; Vicki Crean, Caoimhe Scolard, and the team at AIB; Peter Lynch, Niamh Ryan and the team at Accenture; JP McCarthy and the team at Amazon; Amy O'Shaughnessy, Stephanie Curry, and the team at Energia; Don Crowley and the team at MTU; John Byrne, Louise Hynes and the team at Salesforce; Fergal Fitzgerald, Oonagh Dalton, and the ESB EFG Fund; Jenny Kenrick and the team at Qualcomm; Maria Barry, Kieran Birrane, Stephen Barry and the team at EY; Fionnuala Walsh at Solarwinds; Padraig Hughes, Ailish Murphy, Erin Lavigne, and the team at Facebook; Eleanor Moore and the team at HSE, Naoimh Frawley, Bo Browne, and the team at Cork Chamber; Shane Prendergast and the team at Cloudera; Anita Casey and the team at Teamwork; Francis Coll and the team at Bank of Ireland; Daniel Morris, Daniel Varian, and the team at Abtran; Dean Constable and the team at Blizzard Entertainment; Fiona Connolly and the team at Bus Eireann; Orla Lee and the team at Boston Scientific; Ruth Furney and the team at Telus International, Daragh and the team at Hairy Baby; Nathan Adams and the team at Sweet King; Sinead McDonald and the team at the River Lee; Colette Walsh and the team at The Dean; Paul O Connell and the team at the Clayton Cork City; Evan Murphy Keogh and all at Frontrunners Cork; Peter Roberts and all at Sporting Pride Ireland; Paula McCarthy and the team at St. Johns College; Fiona Kearney, Tadhg Crowley, and the team at the Glucksman, Stephen Doyle; Alan Amsby; Anna Nolan.

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Community Events Sub-Committee: Konrad Im, Ailsa Spindler, Ciara Mulcahy, Aaron Nation & Robyn Penkert.

Thank you to all of our loyal sponsors, advertisers, community partners and supporters, both this year and in previous years - you have helped build Cork Pride into what it is today - huge thanks also to our dedicated Board of Directors, Committee, and our army of volunteers who generously give of their time and skills to bring you the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival annually.

This publication has been part-funded by ESB Energy for generations

A MESSAGE FROM AN TAOISEACH

I want to wish you all a happy 2021 Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival and to congratulate the organisers and volunteers for such an innovative approach to this year's celebrations.

This year's theme is 'Together Apart' and the festival's mix of both online and physical events promise to be unique, collaborative, inclusive, yet mindful of the ongoing need to stay safe as we emerge from the pandemic.

Together Apart is an excellent theme, reflecting the unprecedented challenges, of the past year.

Pride has always sought to bring people together, embracing diversity and inclusivity.

Many of us couldn't be together with our friends and loved ones for long periods, yet as a community, and as a nation, we showed unity of purpose to overcome those challenges.

Over the past 16 years, Cork Pride has grown in popularity to become one of Ireland's biggest public events, yet has never lost that community focus or sense of hope.

This year's Grand Marshal Aoife Cooke, will carry that sense of hope when she represents Ireland in the marathon at the Tokyo Olympics – and I wish her every success.

Like all of you, I sincerely hope that we will be in a position to celebrate Pride 2022 more together than apart.

In the meantime I wish everyone a Happy Pride 2021.

Micheál Martin

Micheál Martin
An Taoiseach

Cork City Council
Wishes continued success
to Cork LGBT+ Pride
Festival.

www.corkcity.ie

A MESSAGE FROM THE LORD MAYOR

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the organising committee, volunteers and attendees, the very best for this year's Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival.

Cork City Council has been to the forefront of many initiatives over the years to lead and deliver an inclusive city and society in Cork. We pride ourselves on being a Healthy city, a Learning city and also a Rainbow City. Tremendous work is done by community groups, and while much of this work is often completed behind the scenes it has real and significant impact on the lives of so many through the development and implementation of inclusive policies and practices.

Recent challenges in Poland and Hungary, to the hard-won freedoms and rights for LGBT communities, highlight the reason why Pride is still relevant and essential. Pride is not just about celebrating but it is also about asserting rights and demanding inclusion and equality. Cork City is proud to support the LGBT community. In Ireland, we were the first city council to adopt a motion in favour of marriage equality and the first city to fly the Rainbow Flag over the council chambers and we continue to do more. Cork Pride and others have asked for the installation of Rainbow Crossings to give a permanent visual expression and presence and City Council will consider this in the coming months.

The theme for this year's Festival is Together Apart and was inspired by the response to Covid-19, restrictions and lockdown. I hope that together as a city of communities and families we can come back together in a new and reimagined way when lockdowns are fully lifted. Our societal response to Covid clearly demonstrated that even though we had to be apart we were all in this together.

The Pride Festival in Cork continues to grow from strength to strength with an increasing audience and programme of events and is the key event in the City during the August Bank Holiday weekend and the week preceding it annually. I would like to conclude by thanking the Cork Pride Festival Board and Organising Committee for their commitment and dedication over the past number of years.

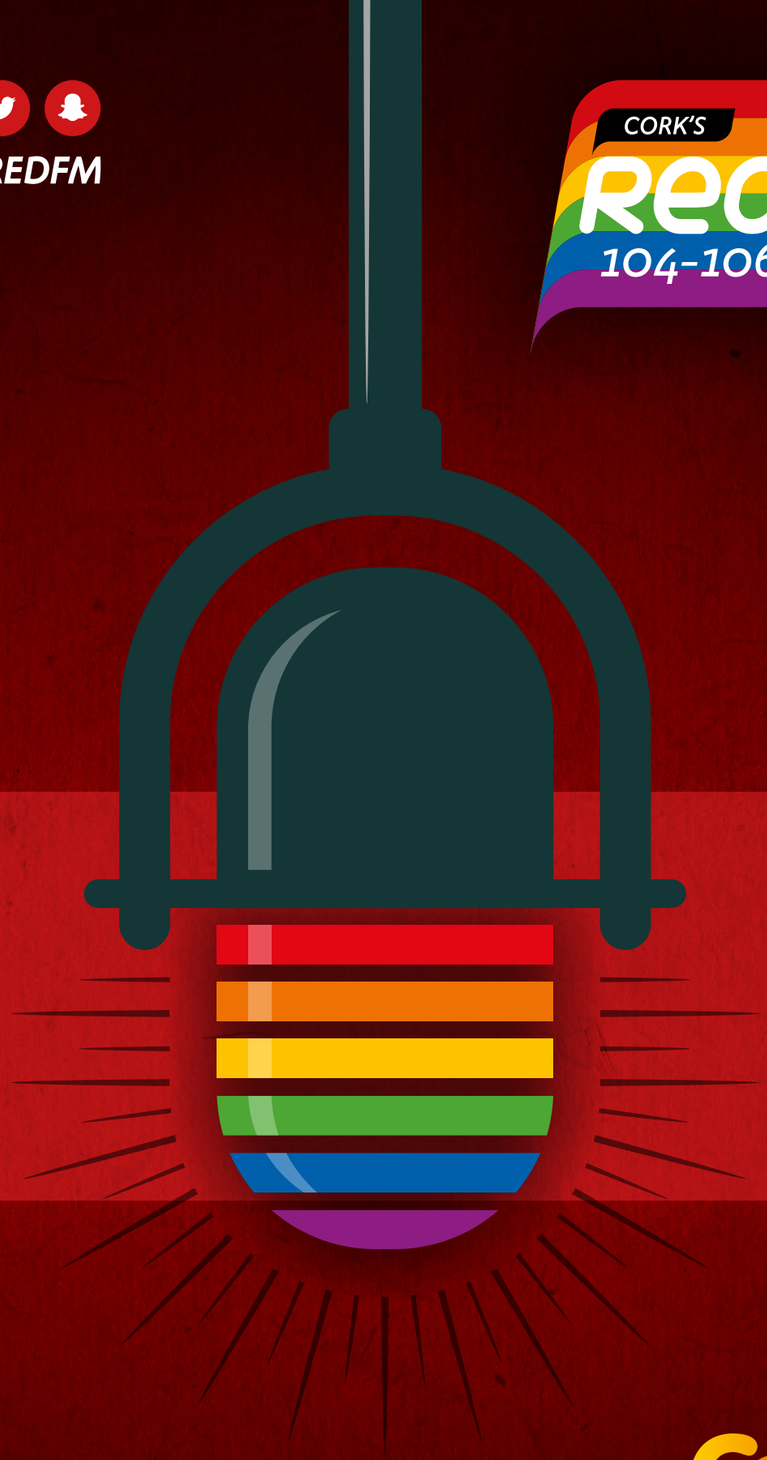
Wishing you a happy and safe Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival,

Mise le Meas,

Councillor Colm Kelleher
Lord Mayor

@CORKSREDFM

CORK'S red FM 104-106



PROUD MEDIA PARTNERS TO CORK PRIDE 2021

Cork L.G.B.T+ Pride festival

A MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MARSHAL

As we head into our second year of restrictions and the impact of Covid-19 on our community, we can all take stock of the achievements and victories – both collective and individual from the past year. We have been adaptive and innovative in our efforts to include and connect with one another during an exhausting and difficult time and as we emerge from lockdowns and severe restrictions I am honoured to take up the role of Grand Marshall for the Cork LGBTI+ Pride Festival 2021. Cause for celebration has never felt so necessary and though we will still exercise caution in our festivities, I truly hope we can immerse ourselves in the joy and fun of what looks to be the only in-person Pride festival in the country this year.

'Together, apart' not only holds weight in relation to protecting and caring for one another but also speaks to the ways in which we have connected, communicated, celebrated and grieved the past year and the message from the Cork LGBTI+ community is clear – we are together. Our community groups (and our community) have worked tirelessly to hold space in safe and accessible ways constantly adapting and responding. Thank you!

2021 marks the launch of Cork LGBTI+ Pride's first (Health conference) and as an athlete the expansion of the festival to include health, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion in its delivery of a Pride that caters for all and seeks to impact so positively on the experience of LGBTI+ people in Cork and beyond makes me feel very proud.

Pride, as well as a celebration is even more so a protest and we as a community have many battles to fight and inequalities to protest; family rights and recognition for all LGBTI+ families is a must, adequate health care for trans people in their own country must be championed by all LGBTI+ voices and social and legislative advances for intersex people should be part of the conversation we're all having. Everyone should have the right to live a full and healthy life and all struggles require strong allies. Let's be there for one another – together!

Finally, as I prepare to represent Ireland in what will be a strange Olympic games I will take the support, energy and camaraderie of the Cork LGBTI+ community with me, have a happy and safe pride to all– Together, Apart.

Aoife Cooke
Grand Marshal

MEET THE TEAM

Clive Davis / Chairperson

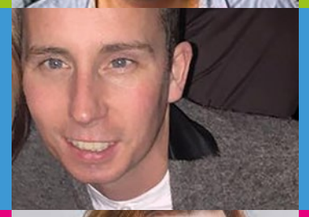
Clive has been the Chairperson of the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival for the past 10 years. Clive is a Regional Director with Youth Work Ireland, manages Youth Work Ireland Laois, and is a Director and Board Secretary of People First Credit Union; he is also Director on the ILCU's Youth Committee and is a Director of LGBT Ireland where he is also Treasurer.

Konrad Im / Vice-Chair & Events Co-ordinator

A dedicated LGBTI+ activist, Konrad volunteers with the Gay Project, UP Cork LGBT+ Youth Group and works part-time as the LGBTI+ Sexual Health Support Worker in The Sexual Health Centre Cork. Konrad has a BA in Community Development and is currently finishing a Masters in Voluntary and Community Sector Management in UCC.

Denise Boyle / Parade & Afterparty Manager

Denise has been the Parade and Afterparty Manager for the past 7 years. A well known Cork building contractor, Denise is a registered gas technician, CAD technician, and electrician. She is a huge Munster Rugby fan, is the Coach for Mallow Women's Rugby team and is a Board member of the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival.



JP McCarthy / Treasurer

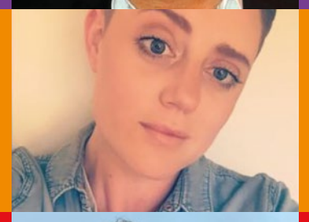
JP is the longest serving member of the Cork Pride team. JP is a Customer Service Support Manager with a global online retailer. He is also an out and proud Eurovision fan, and a closet sports fan. JP is originally from Dungarvan, but lives in Cork. JP is also a Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival Board member.

Ailsa Spindler / Committee Member

Ailsa is project Co-ordinator at Gay Project. Ailsa moved to Cork in 2020, having worked in equality and human rights organisations across Europe. The first Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, Ailsa's campaigning for LGBT rights was recognised in 2005 with the Ian Dunn Memorial Award for Activism, awarded by Pride Scotia.

Kery Mullaly / Business Development Manager

Kery handles the Cork Pride sponsorships remit and produces the annual Cork Pride magazine. Kery has brokered partnerships and sponsorships across many festivals and events including the Guinness Cork Jazz Festival, Electric Picnic, Cork Midsummer Festival, and the Cork International Choral Festival. He divides his time between Kilkenny and Cork.



Ciara Mulcahy / Cork Pride Magazine Features Editor

Ciara is the Community Health Worker with LINC and is the Features Editor for Cork Pride magazine. Her background combines community development, communications and women's studies. Also from Dungarvan, Ciara has been adopted by Cork where she lives with her family.

John Buttimer / Board Member

A former Cork City Councillor, John as Lord Mayor in 2013 accepted the official rainbow flag which flies over City Hall from sister city San Francisco following the work and advocacy of Cork LGBTI + groups. In 2019 John and his partner Don, re-established the Gay Men's Rambling and Hill-walking Group. John is also a board member of the Gay Project.

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME

I hope this finds you, your family, and your friends safe and well, and that you're looking forward to the rest of the summer with hope and good health. It's so encouraging to see our beloved Cork City emerge from its slumber - the energy on the streets is electric! The Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival team have been working very hard for the past six months to bring you all a fabulous, but very different Cork Pride Festival this year, as we all begin to emerge from some incredibly difficult and challenging times.

Pride means many different things to many different people. At its core, Pride is a protest, and a platform – but Pride is also a party. It celebrates the achievements we have collectively made as a community, but also highlights the work left to do. As recent high-profile instances of homophobic behaviour in Ireland has sadly shown, Pride is as important and as relevant as ever. The actions of a few won't silence us – their vitriol will only make us stronger, and help harness the community spirit that is always apparent at Pride.

Our community continues to need support, and continues to need visibility. That's why we're delighted to be able to tell you that this year's Cork LGBT+ Pride will take place as a hybrid event, with over 20 Covid-safe community events taking place across the City. A huge amount of work has gone into making sure that every single individual participating in the re-imagined Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival will be safe – the health and wellbeing of our community is our primary concern this year, and as always.

This year's theme is Together Apart, and due to the nature of the times we are living in, a Covid-safe Pride Festival looks very different. We have tried our best to ensure that the blended approach of delivery still gives as much visibility to the community as it always has, and that we can engage again physically, together apart. This year, we will move the location of the legendary Cork Pride Afterparty to the Port of Cork, and this will uniquely take place as a drive-in event, which will also be available to watch online.

We are also proud to bring you our second Work with Pride Diversity and Inclusion Conference, some new events such as the Brighter OUTcomes Health and Wellbeing Expo, and our unique Pride on Tour Parade, which will bring Pride back to the city - and now to the county too, by bringing our Parade to towns and villages, increasing LGBT+ visibility in parts of rural County Cork. We hope you will join us for some of these events, in person, or online. Check out our social media and corkpride.com for updates.

We're also delighted to also bring you the news that the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival were recently awarded Charitable Status, and are the first Pride organisation in Ireland to achieve this, which we're very proud of. Cork Pride are a very outward looking organisation, and I'm delighted to have also recently been appointed co-chair of the InterPride Governance Committee, and the co-chair of the Ireland Pride Network; I look forward to using these opportunities to promote the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival on a national and international stage.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Cork LGBT+ Pride Board and Committee for their hard work, commitment and tenacity; it's not been an easy year but we're very proud of the programme of events we have planned. I'd also like to sincerely thank all of our sponsors, funders, community partners, and you - our community; without you Cork Pride simply couldn't happen. I hope you all enjoy this year's very different edition of the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival, and hope to be able to welcome everybody back to our usual Cork LGBT+ Pride festival in 2022!

Wishing you, your family, and friends a very happy and safe 2021 Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival!

Clive Davis

Clive Davis
Chairperson
Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival

EVENTS

Covid-19 Safety – Please note that in compliance with Government and HSE advice and guidelines, all events are subject to format and venue change. All physical events taking place will be ticketed to control numbers; these will be available through an Eventbrite link on www.corkpride.com. All speakers, participants, tech staff and volunteers at physical and virtual events will be fully Covid compliant, socially distanced, and will rigorously adhere to the necessary protocols.

Details correct at time of print but subject to change – please scan QR code or check out our social media for up to date information

All Week

- LGBT Interactive Walking Tour
- LINC Drama - 'Queer Code'
- Queeroes Exhibition

Saturday 24th July

- Cork Pride: Land to Lee
- Hellhound RFC Cork Pride Touch Tournament
- Coming Out for Pride 5k
- Cork Pride at the Marina Market

Sunday 25th July

- Cork Pride on Tour

Monday 26th July

- Cork Pride: Heels on Wheels

Tuesday 27th July

- Cork Pride: Welcome to the Community: Coming Out Evening
- Glucksman: Cork Pride Art Project Exhibition
  Tuesday 27th July - Sunday 1st August

Wednesday 28th July

- UCC Gay Rocks!
- Dragging Up the Past Live

Thursday 29th July

- Cork Pride Remembrance Service

Friday 30th July

- The Work with Pride Diversity and Inclusion Conference, in association with Ibec
- Launch - Cork Pride: Brighter OUTcomes: Health & Wellbeing Expo in association with Laya Healthcare

Saturday 31st July

- Cork Pride: Brighter OUTcomes: Health & Wellbeing Expo in association with Laya Healthcare
- Cork Pride & UP Cork: Future OUTcomes: Youth Health & Wellbeing Expo

Sunday 1st August

- Cork Pride at the Marina Market
- Cork Pride Party at the Port

For full details and info on how to book your place for all events go to **www.corkpride.com**

THE PRIDES OF IRELAND

2021 presented many challenges again to Pride celebrations around the country. We take a look back and also a look forward at the various Prides around Ireland which have reinvented themselves to take place in a new and exciting way this year! Unfortunately, due to restrictions some Prides have been forced to make the hard decision to postpone this year's events - but promise to be back bigger and better next year!

PRIDE OF THE DEISE

4th – June 6th 2021

Waterford Pride kicked of the Pride season in Ireland on June 4th with a virtual Pride Festival. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

www.prideofthedeise.ie

@Deisepride @Deisepride

PROUD IN LOUTH

22nd June -21st July

Outcomers have been celebrating Pride for 12 years – this year they have decided to bring a splash of Pride across the entire county of Louth with their Proud in Louth initiative.

@Outcomers | info@outcomers.org

DUNGARVAN PRIDE

June 24th 2021

The Pride flag was raised high outside the Civic Offices on Friday June 4th followed by the launch of the Dungarvan Virtual Pride video which took place on June 24th. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@Dungarvan Pride

DUBLIN PRIDE FESTIVAL

Tuesday 1st June - Monday 28th June 2021

Dublin Pride Festival was largely virtual again this year, and ran throughout June with the virtual Parade and Afterparty taking place on June 28th. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@DublinPride @DublinPride

MAYO PRIDE

July 9th – 11th 2021

This year's events include the Ride with Pride cycle, a Pride Cruise on Clew Bay, and a Parade which takes place on July 10th. Check out their website and social media for all events listings and further updates.

@MayoPride www.mayopride.com

LIMERICK PRIDE

July 4th -11th 2021

Limerick Pride Festival takes place this year from July 4th -11th, with a virtual Parade on Saturday July 10 at 2pm, live from the Limerick Pride Facebook page. The theme for this year's Pride is 'Different Families, Same Love'. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@limerickpride @limerickpride

KINGDOM PRIDE IN KERRY

July 16th -18th 2021

Kingdom Pride in Kerry are planning events for the LGBT+ community in Kerry, and take place from 16th-18th July. Check out their social media where you can have your say on the events by completing their survey. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@thekingdompride

BELFAST PRIDE

July 23rd –August 1st 2021

Belfast Pride will take place this year from Friday 23rd July - Sunday 1st August with Pride Day on Saturday 31st July. There will be a mix of online events and in person events. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@Belfast Pride @Belfastpride

CORK LGBT+ PRIDE FESTIVAL

July 24th –August 1st 2021

The Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival will run from July 24th – August 1st 2021. This year's festival will be a mix of in-person and virtual events - the full programme is now available in this fabulous Cork Pride magazine, on social media, and on our newly launched Cork Pride website!

www.corkpride.com

@CorkPride @Cork Pride Corkpride

SLIGO PRIDE FESTIVAL

August 2nd - 8th 2021

Sligo Pride Festival will take place from August 2nd-8th 2021. Online and in person (restrictions permitting) in Sligo town. Check out their social media to keep up to date

@sligopride | www.sligopride.com

GALWAY COMMUNITY PRIDE FESTIVAL

9th - 15th August 2021

Galway Community Pride Festival will take place from the 9th-15th August. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

infogalwaypride@gmail.com

@GalwayPrideFestival @GalwayPrideFestival

LEITRIM PRIDE WEEKEND

August 20th-22nd 2021

Leitrim will hold its first ever pride event from August 20th-22nd. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@leitrimPride

Facebook Event: Leitrim Pride weekend

FOYLE PRIDE

August 23rd – August 29th 2021

Foyle Pride will take place from August 23rd -August 29th. This year's theme is "Light at the end of the Rainbow" Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@foylepride @FoylePrideFest

TIPPERARY CLONMEL COMMUNITY PRIDE

August 28th – August 29th 2021

Clonmel Pride will take place on the last weekend of August. They are currently looking for people to get involved. You can get in touch at tippclonmel@gmail.com and also checkout their social media for updates.

@TippClonmelCommunityPride

CARLOW PRIDE

Carlow Pride isn't taking place in 2021, but to celebrate Pride this year, Carlow Pride will be publishing a special issue of The Out Mag in the the Carlow Nationalist at the end of June. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@carlowpride

KILDARE PRIDE

The Kildare Pride committee are working hard behind the scenes on big things for next year. Follow them on their social media to keep up to date.

@Kildarepride @Kildarepride

PRIDE IN NEWRY

Check out their social media to stay up to date with plans for future pride events

@PrideInNewry

Prideinnewry

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WORK WITH PRIDE

Diversity and Inclusion Virtual Conference

July 30th 9am to 2pm

Session Sponsors

accenture · energia Switched on · Cork Chamber Advancing business together · MTU Oilscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan Munster Technological University · vmware

Work With Pride - Proudly Sponsored by Ibec, Ireland's largest lobby and business representative group.

The Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival is delighted to present its annual Diversity and Inclusion Conference, Work With Pride which will run as a key event during the week-long series of Pride events.

We are delighted to welcome attendees from over 35 companies and organisations who are all invested in creating and maintaining a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) inclusive workplace. These include Tesco, PepsiCo, Ibec, Gilead, An Post, Apple, Accenture, Laya Healthcare, Johnson Controls, Pfizer, Amazon, EY, AIB, VMware, Energia, MTU, Boston Scientific, Blizzard Entertainment, Salesforce, Teamwork, Facebook, Qualcomm, Solarwinds, Bank of Ireland, Bus Eireann, Cork Chamber, Abtran, Telus International, Cloudera, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, HSE, Irish Examiner, and Red FM amoungst others.

We are so grateful and indebted to all of this year's sponsors, without whom we could not have made this event possible. Thank you!

In the last 15 years, organisations right across all sectors have made huge strides in supporting LGBT+ employees and creating an inclusive workplace. Cork Pride began facilitating site specific D&I training events at our key partners' locations some years ago as part of our corporate partners bespoke suite of benefits, and these events have been hugely successful in creating social and business networking interactions, and has also suggested that there is an appetite to augment and amplify these talks into a conference, and to establish a network of Cork Pride Partners; the Work With Pride D&I Conference is our response to this demonstrable need.

The research also shows this, according to Erin Uritus, CEO of LGBT+ workplace advocacy non-profit Out and Equal, "Companies are urgently interested in making sure that they understand and support our community".

Similar to last year and aligning with public health measures for Covid, this year's event will be delivered via a live streamed interactive webinar.

The Work With Pride Conference will feature a stellar and diverse line-up of speakers and panellists who will provoke and stimulate discussion to heighten the profile of professional role models, in addition to identifying how we can augment and amplify the voices of people from diverse backgrounds, whose unique experiences and challenges may not usually have a prominent role in shaping the dialogue around sexual orientation and gender identityexpression in the workplace.

During the Work with Pride D&I Conference, we will be exploring the multitude of identities that make up the LGBT+ community and our speakers will delve into identities that aren't as widely recognised when referring to the LGBT+ community, and will cover a broad range of topics; there is capacity to shape the discussion around issues that may have been encountered previously, or which may be encountered in the future. We will also be exploring the role of families, and how we can better champion inclusion in and out of the workplace, how parental leave, adoption leave and other supports for families are inclusive of LGBT+ families.

Our Work With Pride D&I Conference also aims to further drive positive change by exploring what behaviours, attitudes and actions make both allies to LGBT+ colleagues and allies within the diverse LGBT+ community successful.

Our speakers will explore and highlight innovative approaches and policy that can be replicated and amplified throughout the workplace and beyond, and hope to equip and inspire attendees to become agents of change in their own organisations.

This year we are also thrilled to announce the launch of our dedicated Work With Pride Website, **www.workwithpride.ie**

Based on the success of last year's conference and the feedback received, there was an appetite from conference delegates for further speaker engagement and an opportunity for further event interaction and business networking. The investment made in bringing the dedicated website to light will cater for and further enhance the capabilities, accessibility and offerings of the conference this year.

With the conference being fully virtual this year, the website will allow for:

- **Dedicated viewing conference portal**
- **Live conference delegate interaction and audience polling**
- **Live Q&A capabilities**
- **Virtual Sponsor exhibition hall**
- **Always up to date Scheduling and Agenda**
- **Advanced registration with integrated calendar options**

According to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation

46% **of LGBT+ individuals are closeted at work**

28% **are totally closeted and not open to anyone in their lives**

In a 2017 study by the HBR, they found that employees with inclusive managers are

1.3 **times more likely to feel that their innovative potential is unlocked**

Those with sponsors are

62% **more likely to have asked for and have received a promotion**

Employees who are able to bring their whole selves to work are

42% **less likely to say they intend to leave their job within a year**

Supporting LGBT+ employees is not just the right thing to do, it is good for business too.

Team member diversity helps to attract and retain talent, foster innovation, increase employee NPS scores, collaborate more effectively, increase shareholder value and guess what, and people perform significantly better when they can be themselves at work. Diverse teams bring diversity of thought. According to a McKinsey Study, it revealed some interesting statistics about diversity.

The study concluded that gender diverse teams are

15% **more productive**

and ethnically diverse teams are

35% **more productive**

The study went on to claim that for every 10% increase in ethnic diversity on the senior team there is a 0.8%

0.8% **increase in earnings.**

While many employers or organisations are well underway with diversity and inclusion programs, others are just getting started and that's ok! The important thing is that while significant progress has been made, so much more can be done to support diversity and inclusion.

So, what can businesses do to better support and create a safe and welcoming workplace for those who may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning or allies (LGBT+) in the workplace?

1. **Creation of LGBT+ Inclusive Policies and Practices, ensuring alignment with the Employment Equality Acts, the Equal Status Act, Safety, Health and Welfare Acts.**
2. **Demonstrable support and sponsorship from executive leadership, the board and other senior leaders in the organisation.**
3. **Creating an inclusive environment for all employees, including LGBT+ employees, where they can bring their true authentic self to the workplace without fear of harassment or intimidation.**
4. **Ensure employee benefits are to include and support LGBT+ employees and families.**
5. **D&I Training and Education, not just to tick the box or to avoid legal situations, but to truly invest in bringing diversity and inclusion to the forefront through active discussion, awareness and continuous education.**
6. **Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) , promoting not just 'enroling' but engagement and being an active member of the ERGs.**
7. **Support of local LGBT+ charities and causes that support the community and events.**
8. **Don't make assumptions, don't be afraid to make mistakes, don't be afraid to ask, but most importantly, if you see or hear something that's just not right, don't be afraid to call it out.**
9. **Be an ally. We're all allies to one another in some shape or form. Let's all support each other, that's how we make change real.**
10. **Set realistic D&I goals and measure your successes and failures, if you don't know where you're going, how can you ever expect to get there.**

Cork Pride at Work Diversity & Inclusion Conference Organisers

Sarah O'Donnell is Diversity & Inclusion Officer for a global e-commerce company and currently undertaking a Masters in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. She is a passionate advocate and ally, building out strategies to create globally diverse and inclusive work environments.

Damien O'Halloran is a Senior Technical Support professional with 24 years industry experience, having most recently held the role of Senior Director of Customer Support and Customer Experience for Virtustream, by Dell Technologies, leading this globally diverse team with team members based in Cork, Utah, Durham, Atlanta and Bangalore. Damien is also actively involved in multiple Diversity & Inclusion functions.

Kery Mullaly handles the sponsorships and strategic partnerships remit of the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival and is also the MD of fundraising, marketing and events Company Fundfest. Kery has brokered partnerships and sponsorships across many high profile events including the Guinness Jazz Festival, Electric Picnic, the Cork Midsummer Festival, and the Cork International Choral Festival. Kery has been involved in the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival for the past ten years.

Don Crowley is Head of Department of Organisation & Professional Development at Munster Technological University (MTU). MTU is a diverse and inclusive higher education institution. Following consultation with a range of stakeholders, *MTU's new Certificate in Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace,* commencing September 2021, is aimed at industry professionals leading D&I in their place of work.

Ronan Kenny is a customer focused professional, with a background in technical support, customer service and customer success from both large multinational companies to start up cultures. Passionate about enabling cross collaboration of teams and business units, with an additional focus on Great Places To Work, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and knowledge sharing within an organization.

Register now online at **www.workwithpride.ie** or by following the link on **www.corkpride.com**

Agenda & Schedule of events can also be found on the website, or by scanning the QR code.

For further details or ticketing enquiries, please email **info@corkpride.com** or contact **086 727 3888**

We're Stronger Together

Turning up for work as you are — being true to yourself — means you're more likely to thrive and fulfil your potential. This in turn makes for a better workplace and even a better society.

At Ibec, we actively promote and campaign for all aspects of the intersectional workplace including LGBTQ+ equality, racial equality, mental health and wellbeing, gender balance at decision-making levels and valuing people with disabilities.

We're proud of Ireland's diverse labour force.

HAPPY PRIDE 2021 FROM EVERYONE AT IBEC

Ibec
For Irish Business

HAVE WE REALLY SURVIVED AGAIN?

By Bruce Coleman

My husband and I got our second jabs and can now resume "normal" life? Easier said than done. We've spent nearly four decades living with AIDS. One of us has it but both of us live with it.

In the 1980s in NYC our friends were dying all around us and we lived with daily stress and uncertainty. We never thought about getting old, just surviving with no help from the government, weak insurance cover and constant new physical challenges and lots of stigma.

For the longest time there were no treatments, cures or vaccines and only confusing information about prevention and transmission. We did what we thought or heard would help us to survive. We were lucky enough to have access to cutting edge doctors and survived numerous drug trials, set backs, and near death events.

We raised awareness and money and sometimes hell to help our brethren when no one else would. We were involved with ACTUP, the YIPPIES, Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), Cures Not Wars and Equity Fights AIDS. We fought against politicians, Big Pharma, bureaucracies and bigots. We've dodged coughs, washed hands, avoided filth and worn masks for years. Sound familiar?

The big difference this time is that the Covid 19 disease is not stigmatised and all efforts and expense have been immediately dedicated to a focused response. In fact, the rapid mRNA developments finally offer promise of an HIV vaccination eventually.

We've enjoyed a more peaceful life here as Irish citizens benefiting from the advances that made HIV manageable and no longer deadly for most. HIV is no longer primarily in the gay community, but it is unnecessarily increasing again simply because of a lack of knowledge. Now for the sexually active community there is PrEP available to help prevent transmission. There is also the knowledge of U=U (undetectable equals untransmittable) that those testing positive and being successfully treated for HIV cannot pass it on to others . The huge irony now is that those that have been tested and treated if necessary are not a threat to others, but those who do not know their HIV status are a threat to the whole community.

We worked for Civil Partnership then Marriage Equality here in Ireland and share in the pride of that achievement. After more than 30 years together we were glad to enjoy the benefits of marriage. But we have not achieved full equality and we still need a strong LBGTQ+ community effort, particularly in the South and rural Ireland, to combat lingering prejudice, isolation and injustices.

Along with the HIV that has demanded our attention, are the real challenges of senior living: fixed income, isolation, bad health and dependence on institutions not friendly to our community. We have fought hard for equal legal, employment, domestic and marriage rights but we have not so far been able to address the remaining inequities and prejudices in education, health and social support.

We have an opportunity at the moment to stand against the continued control of vital information for the development of sexual attitudes and very survival of young LGBTQ+ people by religious interests, who cling to shame and bigotry and misinformation causing further deaths.

We now must make progress against many subtle barriers that frustrate the LBGTQ+ community in service organisations that provide specialised care and support for those with diabetes, dementia, cancer, and nursing homes. For many years we have been battling to have more humane treatment and support for the HIV community, especially in the South and rural areas. The depth of services available in Dublin has never been equalled in Cork, and much stigma and secrecy remains even in the well-meaning volunteer organisations and the HSE. We must make sure that our community is welcome and represented in all areas and ages of life. People must be free to be themselves and this will take continued hard work as we seek to be visibly represented in the populations and on the boards and staff of these organisations so we can openly advocate for our needs.

Bruce Coleman and his husband of 39 years, John Sheridan have been working for 35 years on issues of HIV treatment and stigma often saying "one of us "has" HIV, but we've both been "living" with it". They lived in NYC where they were in the performing arts. They testified on HIV issues in the media, courts and the US Congress. They worked with the YIPPIES, GMHC, Equity Fights AIDS, Cures Not Wars, and ACTUP.

They moved to Cork after the 9/11/01 bombings had further disrupted their lives. They have been participating citizens of Ireland for 14 years, John working for Amazon and volunteering, and Bruce doing some shows and short films. They have attended, and help advocate for, improvements at the HIV Clinic at CUH. They have helped to promote HIV patient support groups and services for the Sexual Health Centre, the Other Place, the Gay Project and help to start ACTUP Cork.

Bruce Coleman and his husband of 39 years, John Sheridan

Pride on the frontline.

Covid-19 has brought about so many changes in our daily lives, including the way we shop.

Meet Darren, who has been working with Tesco throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and for the last 18 months.

Darren Loughnane
Compliance Team Leader at Tesco Thurles

Retail is more on the frontline than ever before, has this changed the way you work?

I started working with Tesco in January 2020, just before the pandemic emerged. There have been lots of new protocols and measures put in place to help keep everyone safe, be it on the colleague side or the customer side. At this point, I'm more used to working with all the restrictions and guidelines in place than not. It feels normal being behind a screen, wearing a mask and keeping a distance from colleagues and customers. But we can always do it with a smile on our face, even if it's behind the mask!

In saying that, obviously, the last year hasn't been easy, but we've worked together and I've learned so much from the team in Thurles.

I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to evolve and grow in the last 16 months – I've just moved positions from Customer Assistant to Compliance Team Leader in the Thurles store. I'm looking forward to a new challenge! I won't be a regular on the tills anymore, but I still plan to chat to all my regular customers, they are our top priority at the end of the day and I don't want to lose the relationships I've built with people since I started.

Everyone is welcome at Tesco, and even though we are behind a mask we can still have a connection with our customers on a regular basis. I've heard it time and time again how we as a team are helping brighten our customers day but truth is customers actually brighten our day by their chats at the tills, the masked smiles and hellos in the aisles and the waves passing the shop.

> "Everyone is welcome at Tesco, and even though we are behind a mask we can still have a connection with our customers ."

1. A year on, how have you been coping with COVID-19?

It has been a strange time. Everyone has had a different experience with Covid-19 but I try to focus on the positives. I've been working throughout it. As with everything, there are good days and bad days. We have a great team in the Thurles store, we always look out for each other and our customers.

On the bad days, I can always count on my co-workers for a little boost. Inside any store or shop you always have that one person that just automatically brightens up your day, and someone to help make the day better, we have two particular, Front End Manager Caroline and my Deputy Manager Catriona, there's just something about them that can have you laughing, singing and dancing in seconds and in times of COVID and restrictions it was much needed to get through. I'm excited to see society beginning to safely reopen – I'm living for the first social gathering with a couple of friends, outdoors!

2. What is your day-to-day routine both in and out of work?

Personally, I started my healthy food journey in 2018 and started documenting it on Instagram over at @darrynsfood and post healthy alternatives to foods that I love, I'm not a sit down and eat a salad type of person. Over the last year, on my days off, I've shared a lot of meals there, and some pictures of my partner and dogs and outings with my family. My partner Allan will tell you that he's taken a few of the pictures I've posted on my account, but to be fair would burn water, which in turn isn't that healthy!

I've loved the extra time with my partner and our dogs. We're together 10 years and have two furbabies Nicki who's 10, and Ruby who's 6, so we're always busying bringing them for walks and playing when we're not working or cooking!

Workwise, I'm looking forward to the future and getting settled in my new role as Compliance Team Leader. My days are very different in this position compared to what I've known the last 16 months but my experience from being a Customer Assistant, will come in handy as I've picked up a few things.

3. How do you plan to celebrate Cork Pride 2021?

I can't wait to have a reason to celebrate! We won't let the week go by without celebrating. We might even dress Nicki and Ruby up in some rainbow colours! I'm planning to do a healthy brunch at home with Allan and following guidelines, if permitted with the restrictions, I'll book a dinner with a couple of friends and of course if there is a virtual Pride well be sitting back with a few drinks and enjoying the festivities and then like always catch a few episodes of RuPaul's Drag Race.

I love attending the Cork Pride parade Allan and myself have been to a few over the years, some local and some afar and I can't wait to get back to it next year, hopefully! I haven't had the chance to experience it with my Tesco colleagues due to the Pandemic so I'm already living for Cork Pride 2022, in person. I love being part of a team and company that champions inclusivity, everyone is accepted for who we are. There's a great community of colleagues in Thurles and nationally too, I'm proud to be part of it.

Happy Pride from everyone at Tesco

TESCO
Every little helps

LGBT ACTIVISM HUNGARY

By Maria Kristófy & Dorottya Rédai

Short LGBT+ history of Hungary

In the late 1990's LGBT organizations were founded in Hungary. It soon became clear that lesbian women had special interests and needs; therefore Labrisz Lesbian Association was founded in 1999. Labrisz is run by 10-15 volunteers and welcomes lesbian, bisexual and trans women.

The main aims of Labrisz are community building, strengthening the self-acceptance and visibility of lesbian, bisexual and trans women, and creating a dialogue with society through our activities. We also seek to facilitate the discovery, cultivation and promotion of lesbian culture. Our activities include organizing community and cultural events: we have a monthly film club, a game evening, and a club evening. We take part in organizing the annual LGBT History Month, offer programs for the Budapest Pride Festival and organise our annual LIFT Festival (Lesbian Identity Festival) - a 3-day community and cultural event that we hope to be able to stage again this autumn, if the pandemic situation allows.

Labrisz has published books, including Secret Years (herstory interview collection), Is it Still a Taboo (handbook to assist teachers working with LGBT+ topics in schools) and the latest, the fairy tale collection Fairyland is for Everyone. We have produced films, including short films, the herstory documentary Secret Years and currently we are working on The Second Golden Age, a romantic-educational series for elder lesbians about how to handle internet and social media safely and with confidence. We are building a herstory digital archive with Orla Egan's help, and running an education program for secondary schools, called "Getting to Know LGBT People" in cooperation with Szimpozion Association.

Since 1997 we have had Budapest Pride every year, which offers a cultural festival, many community events and a Pride March. There are more and more events, both in Budapest and in the countryside, and a few years ago the Pride Festival was extended to last a whole month.

Our umbrella organization, the Hungarian LGBT Alliance is a member of ILGA, and Labrisz is a Board Member of the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (EL*C). We are connected with several lesbian organizations from post-Soviet Central-Eastern Europe. We don't have regular collaborations but we occasionally participate in joint projects. The Slovene group Lesbian Feminist University and the Serbian Labris Association often come to visit and offer programs at LIFT Festival.

The current political situation in Hungary

Since 2010, when the current political regime made of the two right-wing parties Fidesz and the Christian Democrats came into power, a major element of their increasingly autocratic politics is to divide society and increase hatred against certain people and social groups (refugees, George Soros, Roma citizens, and most recently against LGBT people). They banned gender studies master programs at universities, and forced Central European University to leave Budapest. Democratic checks and balances are dysfunctional. Freedom of the press is more and more limited, mainstream media (newspapers – also locals, TV-channels) is owned by government members and their close allies. Courts and public institutions (including educational institutions) have lost their autonomy. In the Constitutional Court there are only judges appointed by Fidesz. The economy is dominated by corruption, clientelism and the outsourcing of public (including EU) money into private companies' pockets.

In the last ten years over 500,000 highly educated and professionally trained citizens left Hungary seeking a better life, including more and more queer people.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in spring 2020, the government has taken advantage of the emergency situation, authorized themselves in the Parliament to rule by decrees, and some restrictive laws have been introduced without proper parliamentary and public debate. This includes revoking of the right for trans and intersex people to officially change their name and gender; removing the right for single people to adopt (which was the only way how LGBTQ people could adopt); declaring in the Constitution that "the mother is a woman and the father is a man" and that children are entitled to have their biological sex-based identity protected and to receive education based on national identity and Christian culture. Besides legislation, there has been an increasingly hostile political discourse targeting LGBTQ people for the past 2-3 years. Government politicians have incited hatred by comparing LGBTQ people to pedophiles and suggesting that LGBTQ people are a threat to children. The autonomy of the Equal Treatment Authority has been terminated, where queer people and people belonging to other disadvantaged groups could report cases of discrimination

How we handle this situation

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it very hard to sustain our community, therefore we have had to learn new ways of socializing and keeping in touch with our community.

We think that the biggest successes of the past few years are that LGBTQ people and issues have become part of the public discourse, and despite the government's anti-gender and homophobic propaganda, more and more people understand and accept us. It is more common for the young generation to accept queerness and there are more possibilities and programs for LGBTQ people.

> "THE STRENGTHENING OF HATRED AGAINST OUR COMMUNITY HAS ALSO STRENGTHENED THE ALLIANCE AND COLLABORATION OF LGBTQ AND LEGAL ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS"

The story of a book for children

A great success for Labrisz was the publishing of the fairy tale collection for children called Fairyland is for Everyone in 2020. The book includes 17 rewritten stories, mostly based on classic folk and fairy tales, featuring characters that are gender-diverse and from ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds rarely represented in children's stories. The stories touch on themes ranging from disability to poverty and domestic violence to child adoption. With several contributions by LGBTQ authors, this is the very first children's book about LGBTQ people in the Hungarian language. The book aims to sensitise children to discrimination, social exclusion, diversity and acceptance with an intersectional approach and address children of minority and disadvantaged backgrounds.

After its release in September, the book immediately became the target of homophobic attacks by politicians, including the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, other leading Fidesz politicians and a far-right party leader who shredded the book publicly, reminiscent of the Nazi book burning in the 1930s. As a consequence, the originally planned 1,500 copies sold out within two weeks and an additional run of 15,000 copies was published shortly after. This second batch sold out in two weeks and to date over 27,000 copies have been sold.

Based on an anonymous complaint, the Consumer Protection Authority, a governmental body, ruled that Labrisz was committing an unfair commercial practice by not warning consumers that "patterns of behaviour deviating from traditional gender roles" appear in the stories. A petition and campaign organised by ultra-conservative campaign group CitizenGO - demanding the book's removal from bookstores - has gained tens of thousands of signatures. Bookstore assistants were attacked by extremists for selling the book. A public reading of the tales by actors was disrupted by far-right activists and the police didn't intervene. Governmental media have fuelled hatred against the book, Labrisz and LGBT+ people in general for months. However, the book has galvanized significant public support from parents, teachers and booksellers across Hungary. Celebrities spoke out in support of it and LGBT+ issues, and the tales are available on YouTube, read by popular actors. It has also generated international interest from media and publishers. In the next year or two the book will be published in English, Dutch, Swedish and Polish, and possibly in other European languages.

Fairyland is for Everyone has become a bestseller and a symbol of protest against oppressive, exclusionary politics and hate speech against minorities, and it has made Labrisz more visible than ever.

And how to continue

For the coming years our main goal is to get laws implemented that guarantee that we are equal citizens and to fight against the overwhelming homo- and transphobic propaganda in politics and public discourse. Both are great challenges for our community, and much will depend on the outcome of the national elections next year. As the Covid-19 situation allows, we will continue our usual activities. Hopefully we can stage the LIFT Festival this autumn and our other activities where people can meet each other - the community is really missing these events. We are continuing the work with Fairyland, which was originally planned as an education project. It is very important to keep Labrisz members connected, therefore we are holding frequent online meetings and we hope that soon we can have in-person meetings again and spend some fun time together in the summer.

Maria Kristófy (Kymi) lives in Budapest, Hungary. She is 71, a retired singer of classical music. She has three children and two grandchildren, with a third expected in August in Cork. She is a frequent visitor to Ireland to visit her daughter who lives in Cork with her Irish-Hungarian family and to participate in LGBT events in Cork.

Kymi has been a member of Labrisz for 16 years and Board Member of the Hungarian LGBT Alliance since 2018.

Dorottya Rédai (Dóri) lives in Budapest, Hungary. She is 48 and works as a freelance scholar, researching, teaching and publishing in the area of gender, sexualities and education. She joined Labrisz in 2004 and is currently a Board Member. She is the project coordinator of Fairyland is for Everyone and a trainer in the "Getting to Know LGBT People" school program.

LGBT+ Legislation in Hungary

1961
Decriminalization of Homosexuality

2002
Equal Age of Consent for all citizens at 14

2009
Registered Partnership for Same-Sex Couples

2020
Ban of gender and name recognition
Ban on single people adopting

2021
Banning the "promotion" of homosexuality among minors

LGBT+ Organisations in Hungary

1997
Háttér Association for LGBT People established **www.hatter.hu**

1999
Labrisz Lesbian Association established **www.labrisz.hu**

2003
Szimpozion Association for LGBT People established **www.facebook.com/szimpozion/**

2004
Atlasz Sport Association for LGBT People established **https://atlaszsport.hu/**

2008
Mozaik Community – ecumenical Christian community for LGBT people established **www.mozaikkozosseg.org**

2011
Hungarian LGBT Alliance established **http://lmbtszovetseg.hu/**

2011
Transvanilla Transgender Association established **https://transvanilla.hu/**

2015
Foundation for Rainbow Families established **www.facebook.com/szivarvanycsaladokert/**

2018
Magyar Aszexuális Közösség (Asexual Hungary) established **asexhun@gmail.com**

2019
qLit (Lesbian Magazine and Program Organizer Association) established **qlit.hu**

These organisations are registered and Budapest-based but there are more and more informal, grassroots groups in the countryside.

At PepsiCo, *'Our Family'* is important to us, and as an **EQUAL** opportunity employer we are always on the lookout for more talent to join our ever-growing team.

Randall Lovorn; GM PGCS raising the Pride flag at Little Island, Cork 2021

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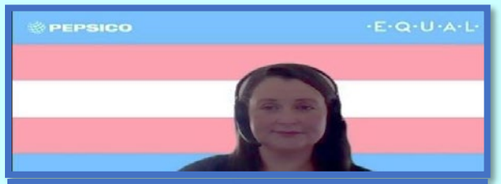


WE SEE YOU!

IT'S NO SIN

HIV & HOPE

For those of us who remember the 1980s, the doom laden narration of John Hurt in the 'Don't Die Of Ignorance' advert will forever be burned in our memories. The voiceover informed us of a deadly disease that could be passed on through sexual intercourse and the advert finished with a headstone emblazoned with 'AIDS' hitting the ground.

The fears we have all experienced around COVID-19 rival the fears that were experienced in the early days of HIV. COVID, as we all now know, affects people in different ways. Some people experience a very mild illness while others experience severe illness and death. In the early days of HIV, in the absence of effective treatments, the future looked bleak for those receiving a positive test result. Outside of the health implications and the fears around mortality, gbMSM (Gay, Bisexual and men who have sex with men) living with HIV faced social isolation fuelled by homophobia, ignorance and incorrect information.

This year many of us watched It's A Sin, the latest series by Russell T Davies. The series painted a vivid picture of young lives, some of which were ended much too soon by the HIV epidemic in 1980s London.

The tales of friendship, love and selfless devotion were joyous and heart wrenching in equal measure. The fear, shame and stigma around this novel virus were portrayed excellently by the fantastic cast. Across the 5 episode series, we watched people go from diagnosis to death in a very short period of time.

Thankfully, we are now a world away from the stories presented in It's A Sin. The anti-retroviral medications (ARVs) available to people living with HIV ensure that they can live a healthy life for as long as anybody else. These medications also prevent onward transmission of the virus to sexual partners. The U=U (Undetectable equals Untransmittable) campaign was launched in 2016 to highlight this fact. This message is a powerful tool in battling the stigma which stubbornly persists around HIV.

Condoms are no longer the only form of protection. PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) and PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis) have been hugely beneficial in protecting against HIV. PEP can be accessed up to 72 hours after a potential HIV exposure and is taken for 28 days. PrEP can be taken either as a daily regimen or at times where there may be potential for exposure to HIV (Event Based Dosing).

At the Sexual Health Centre we offer a free rapid HIV testing service, with results available in one minute. In non-COVID times our staff and dedicated volunteers offer this service in a number of outreach venues including Chambers, the Gay Project and the Loft. Testing in non-clinical settings has helped to normalise testing and allows more opportunities for people to know their HIV status. We look forward to getting back to these venues as soon as we can.

In the time that I have been providing rapid HIV testing I have told many people that they have a reactive result and there is a high possibility that they have HIV. Immediately after receiving the reactive test result, people are unable to take in much information. In those moments the messages I want them to hear are in relation to hope. There is no cure for HIV but it is now a manageable illness. I convey the information about the effectiveness of ARVs and the message around U=U. I reinforce this messaging in recurrent appointments when a person's emotions are less raw around their diagnosis. HIV positive people and/or their significant others can also avail of free counselling at the Sexual Health Centre if this is something they feel they need.

PrEP

Unfortunately, the stigma associated with HIV has not moved as quickly as the advances in HIV treatments. People living with HIV still have to contend with behaviour and attitudes from other people that are based in ignorance. HIV is a virus. There is no shame in having a virus. People living with HIV on effective treatment pose no threat to other people.

It's A Sin accurately portrayed the role that fear and shame play in helping HIV to thrive. To combat this we must all make an effort to normalise our conversations in relation to our sexual health and actively correct misinformation and stigmatising comments. If you are interested in accessing PEP and PrEP or wish to access a rapid HIV test, do not be put off by fear of judgement about your life choices whether these be related to your sexual life, your number of sexual partners, the type of sex you are having, drug use or any other matter that you think may carry a stigma.

You will be meeting with professionals who will help to guide you. Do not be your own worst enemy. There is no denying that people can be judgemental, but don't let your fear of other people's judgements limit your opportunities for taking care of your sexual health or prevent you from accessing the preventative medications that are available to you. Take control of your own sexual health. There are many people who will help you along the way including the staff here at the Sexual Health Centre.

If you wish to avail of HIV support, counselling or rapid HIV testing then please call or WhatsApp me on **086 028 6227** or email me at **info@sexualhealthcentre.com**

A free condom postal service is available from us at **www.sexualhealthcentre.com/condomservice**

You can contact our LGBTQIA+ support worker, Konrad Im at **konradim@sexualhealthcentre.com**

PEP and PrEP can currently be accessed from the GUM clinic at the Victoria Hospital. You can contact them on **021 427 6676** for an appointment. PEP is also available from Accident and Emergency Departments.

Phil Corcoran
Senior Health Promotion Officer
Sexual Health Centre

sexual health CENTRE .com

CONNECTING WITH FRIENDS HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Celebrating Cork Pride 2021

yourmentalhealth.ie
Information | Support | Services

8 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Talk about it
Problems feel smaller when they are shared with others. Talking about feelings is a good way to deal with a problem.

Keep active
Regular exercise can really give your mental health a boost.

Drink less alcohol
Avoiding too much alcohol is important, especially if you're feeling down or worried.

Stay in touch
Trusted friends and family are important, especially at difficult times. You do not have to face things on your own.

Eat and sleep well
Having a balanced diet and a good sleep pattern will not only help the way you feel, but it will also help the way you think.

Accept yourself
Everyone is different and is entitled to respect. Many different things, including your background, race, religion and sexual identity, make you who you are.

Ask for help
Asking for help is not a weakness but a sign of personal strength. Everyone needs help from time to time and there's nothing wrong with asking for it.

Do something you enjoy
Setting aside some time to do something you enjoy, especially if you are not feeling great, will help you feel better.

116 123 SAMARITANS IRELAND

Connecting for Life

HSE Seirbhís Sláinte Níos Fearr á Forbairt | Building a Better Health Service

For more information on ways you can protect your own mental health, and support those you care about, visit yourmentalhealth.ie.

If you're feeling down call the Samaritans on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.ie (available 24/7).

INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

Looking back, what advice would you give your younger self? What have you learnt that you wish you had known? What knowledge or wisdom can you pass on to others at that age from your life experience?

RITA WILD - 57

On Coming Out

No one ever regrets coming out, no matter how hard it feels. I came out in 1987, via Lesbian Line, I got plugged in toa political, activist community and we partied and 'activised' hard. That saved me. Plug in to community, it might save you too.

On Mental Health

This culture traumatises Queer people, it traumatises everyone who doesn't conform to its norms. We all have trauma, learn about it and how it is playing out in your own life, understanding trauma makes understanding everything else so much easier. Look in the mirror and smile at yourself at least once a day.

On Physical Health

Bodies are amazing and the allegedly not 'perfect' ones are the most amazing of all; this auld scarred, patched up, bag of bones of mine is a blessing, even when it doesn't work as I want or expect. Avoid 'diets' they are the devils work. All bodies are good bodies.

On Relationships

We inherited a heteropatriarchal model of relationship that really doesn't serve us Queers. I think we need new models and I think we are making those, meanwhile treating people with love and respect goes a long way. Friendships are what gets us through the hard times, good friends are like winning the lotto.

Any Other Advice On Life in General

I think perspective helps, when I feel the weight of life I try to remember that I am but a speck on a tiny planet in a massive universe and really am of no consequence at all in the great scheme of things. And I try to remember to wear life like a loose garment.

WILL KENNEDY – 63

On Coming Out

Coming out is not a one off event. As you grow in life you will always be meeting new people in new situations. So you may have to decide not once but many times if you should come out. The most important coming out in your life, will be coming out to yourself. Self-acceptance is the key to a happy life.

On Mental Health

Choose wisely the people you want in your life. People with positive attitudes will have a positive influence on you. Also find something you are passionate about, something that makes you feel alive. Follow that passion with the help of friends you and community, your community.

On Physical Health

Being fit has so many benefits, it's something you should try to maintain throughout your whole life. First off, if you are fit your physical health will be so much better. I can't guarantee you will not get any major physical illness, but being fit lessens your chances. Also being fit is great for your mental health.

On Relationships

Try not to worry too much about relationships. They are many different forms of relationships. Family, friends, work relationships and of course romantic relationships. But the most important one of all is a good, healthy relationship with yourself. Find inner happiness and peace and you won't need to find them from any outside source.

On General Life

Life is short, it may not seem so now, and also we only get one go at it. This is not a rehearsal. So find out who you are, this may not be easy. But if you find out who you truly are, come to accept self, then you will not spend your life seeking outside approval or acceptance. Remember you are unique, and there never has been and never will be another you.

MARCUS McCANN – 54

On Coming Out

I should have come out sooner than when I was a 30 something... but it's never too late. Do it to suit yourself and nobody else. And have loads of fun too.

On Mental Health

Do talk problems and situations with someone you are comfortable with. Worry less about what others think. You are loved every day by so many people. You are good enough. In fact you are the Best! Take a ''mental break'' at work every day, just 3 or 4 minutes for you, Just you, and nobody else.

On Physical Health

Get out more. Walking, cycling, jogging, fresh air is free, take full advantage of it. Get a pet, eat at least one healthy meal per day, you'll soon see the difference.

On Relationships

Don't lose hope of finding ''The Right One'', but have loads of fun along the way. Life is too short so make every minute count.

On General Life

My younger self probably wouldn't listen to 'the likes of me' but I'll keep it simple and say: "Stop trying to change yourself to please others, and start focusing on the things that matter to you".

DAITHI CEE – 66

On Coming Out

I came out in 1974, in Dallas, Texas. I had met my first boyfriend at university and I wanted to share my excitement with my mother. After all, a boy's best friend is his mother. (Norman Bates in Psycho).

On Mental Health

After nearly 50 years out of the closet, I have totally thrown off any pathology about my queerness. If someone has a problem with me being gay, it's THEIR problem.

On Physical Health

I used to think my body was a temple, but now I realise it's a theme park.

On Relationships

I left the U.S. five years ago when my family of origin revealed themselves as Trump supporters. It was painful and hurtful. When I came to Ireland, I discovered a rainbow family who supports me and celebrates me in all of my queerness.

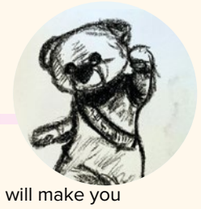
On General Life

When walking down stairs in heels, always point your toes outward.

What I'd tell myself 40 years from now.
What I've learnt & hope to learn.

What message would you give your older self? What do you think you, in 40 years from now, would look back on and tell you today? What is it you hope to have accomplished or learnt in the next 40 years?

SEBASTIAN – 19



On Coming Out

Some people will disappoint you. Some will make you disappointed in yourself. But those people have their own struggles, their own beliefs. You can't change them. But you can accept them for who they are and love yourself more than ever could

On Mental Health

You don't have to be 100% every day.
Some days, 1% is enough

On Physical Health

Your disability doesn't define you. The pain doesn't make you weak. The scares don't make you ugly and the exhaustion doesn't make you lazy. It only makes you more determined

On Relationships

Don't limit yourself to what you believe you deserve because trust me - You deserve so much more! There are people who will use you for your identity, but there are people who will love you despite it.

On Your Future Goals and where you hope to be in life

I want to make films that matter to people. That tell stories that everyone can relate to and feel their experiences have been shared. From a young queer kid to an older person of colour.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

GADEA ARREGUI – 20

On Coming Out

If I could talk to my 40 year old self, I would ask myself how many times did I have to come out, if it was still scary at times or hard, if I changed my preference or labels, or if it's all still the same. And how has the world evolved in the next 20 years around LGBTQ+ rights - do we even still need to come out?

On Mental Health

I mean the first question I'd have is, have I managed to move on? I hope I was well and not carrying the weight I do now. I would ask myself about how I did it or question why I hadn't.

On Physical Health

I've always had a kind of dysphoria and detachment with my body, is that still a thing? Did working out and eating healthy do the trick? Honestly speaking of physical health I would mostly ask if I got buff, 40 year old me better be able to use my current pr as a warm up.

On Relationships

Oh god I would have so many questions, what have I learned about love and relationships? I would ask for tips to not get hurt or to not be toxic. And tips to pick up girls not gonna lie, I would be really interested to know who I ended up dating, am I still single? I better not be single at 4...uff!

On Your Future Goals and Where you hope to be in life

I'm currently struggling with my own goals and ambitions, but I've always wanted to become a famous artist. I hope to be the reason people go to galleries, I want to be someone's inspiration towards becoming an artist, did I get there? Am I happy with my art and achievements even if not for others but for myself? I want to help as much as possible in this world, and have travelled at least half of it by the time I hit 40.

ALEC BOARD – 18

On Coming Out

I would hope within 40 years the world would be a different place and that you would no longer have to come out. I hope that children are more openly brought up being taught that if they like someone of the same sex that they are not just going through a phase. Over the next 40 years I hope to become a youth worker so I can provide support to young people who have had similar experiences to me.

On Mental Health

Mental health should be openly talked about and less stigmatised because the stigma around mental health stops people from seeking help. I hope that we see a drastic decrease in the amount of stereotyping in society. Hopefully in the next 40 years we will see a big change in this.

On Physical Health

I hope for myself that I will no longer suffer from back pain in 40 years. As a trans man I would hope that in the next 40 years that the healthcare for transgender people in Ireland would drastically improve, and that trans people would no longer be forced to go abroad for treatment. That in itself would massively improve mental health for trans people in Ireland.

On Relationships

I hope to be in a relationship that brings me joy every day. I hope that I will never need to hide who I am in order to achieve love. I would hope that in the future my partner and I could have a night out without fear of being under threat or having to hide who I am.

On Your Future Goals and Where you hope to be in life

I hope to move out of Ireland in the future. I would love to live somewhere extraordinary. I would hope that wherever I live that I am surrounded by people who are open and understanding of who I am. I hope to become a youth worker so that I can help young people through their struggles so they won't ever have to feel alone.

ONE ADDICT'S STORY

By Kaz

"Leave when it stops raining" I told myself. Then I remember stopping and almost seeing myself from a birds eye view. I stopped and I asked myself the question: "Is this the gear talking or is it the real Me?" Part of me knew I would be going back to the Lion's Den. So I stayed that day.

That was me in Coolmine Rehab, Dublin - the 'no nonsense' behavioural Rehab centre, the Rehab that even the courts acknowledge as a 'sentence'. I ended up doing nine months there. On days when it hurt like crazy I would stop and try to remind myself that perhaps this seems impossibly hard because there is something of huge value at stake here. I knew my life was on the line and I didn't feel old enough to die.

My name is Kaz, I am a queer recovering addict. As I am addressing a queer audience in "Cork Pride Magazine", some inevitable questions are lurking: Am I an addict because I am queer? Personally I would say that the alienation of being a gay young person in the closet certainly contributed to my sense of isolation. Drugs soothed that feeling. There were other factors also: as an adopted person, I had a very fragmented sense of self.

My addiction developed in parallel with other more positive aspects of my life. I graduated with an Honours degree from UCC at 19 years of age. I went to Glasgow and I discovered rave culture. Ecstasy taught me how to hug and "freed" me up enough to becoming a fairly cool dancer. I was sold from the get go. I began to live for those raves, for the feeling of connection that ecstasy provided me with. It was a short-lived freedom. I found myself celebrating my 24th Birthday in a psychiatric ward in Cork City. Doctors stated clearly to my parents that their daughter had a "serious drug problem." I stated clearly to the doctors that they were deluded and inquired if any of them had ever even used any drugs.

I pleaded to see a psychologist, not a psychiatrist; I was told I was too unstable to see a psychologist. My father joked around as much as he could with me - any effort to keep me sane. He also complained when one of the psychiatrists called me a junkie. That was an introduction to many labels foisted upon me and others in my predicament: "Junkie" "Druggie" "smackhead" "alco." Most of us are familiar with these labels; as an addict, at some level, you feel the shame of them too. Lets face it, it wasn't a life goal of mine to sell myself to any substance and all the behaviours that inevitably follow. Shame isn't like a t-shirt you can throw off when you don't like it anymore: shame sticks to you like an insidious layer of skin, invisible to the naked eye, but it does its job very well - it alienates you from yourself. Shame and addiction are the closest of friends.

I was sent to a treatment centre to manage my addiction. Compassion was in short supply. It was typical to suggest to a young addict that they were confused if they needed to explore their sexuality. That centre was the first of a litany of treatment centres. I slipped and slid and found myself using again for any reason or no reason, a random Tuesday or a sunny Saturday, it didn't matter. All I knew was the periods of abstinence were getting shorter and the drugs were getting harder. My father had lost his faith and eventually even my mother told me she didn't know if she could keep praying for me. My sister, who did try to understand was understandably confounded. I was watching myself dismantle my family and I was the reluctant dark destroyer.

> "IS THIS THE GEAR TALKING OR IS IT THE REAL ME?"

Eventually I found myself using against my own will. I needed to use to function - I had to use to get to work, to tie my laces, to say hello. Tears falling on the tin foil that I was using the drug from became a strange pattern. Since then I have met other addicts who have told me they cried when using or drinking or gambling or doing the whatever habit that had become their daily grind. In the end, I felt owned a lot more than I got stoned. I could taste the drug in my tears too. I remember hating that SO MUCH.

So I got some clarity from somewhere. It felt like it was coming from somewhere that wasn't my fractured mind. I paid enough attention to it to at least try and leave my lover drug that had become my destroyer drug behind. There was another reason I wanted out: I had met a woman who actually made sense to me and I had fallen for her. She and I would talk sometimes about the possibility of me living something more than just a half life. She helped me to identify Coolmine Rehab as a possible escape route. I was in awe of her coming to see me every week without fail. I wanted to do it for her too, she seemed so dynamic and yet had never even played around with chemicals. She showed me life can can be a very multicoloured experience. I admired how she lived.

In Coolmine, I began to learn that there was perhaps NOT SUCH A Mystery to stopping and staying stopped. I was given methods there that I could check out, practice and repeat. These tools were showing me that I could choose to use or choose to not use, but one thing was for sure, all my choices were on me. It was like maybe I could empower myself and rebuild my skewed views of myself, and my world.

When I left Coolmine. I still felt a huge sense of grief for the drug. It was as if I could not imagine a world where I could function and enjoy life without it. Narcotics Anonymous was suggested to me as a means of finding a new community -people who were living and enjoying life without the use of drugs. A key concept of NA really spoke to me: Regardless of age, race, creed, sexual identity, religion or lack of religion everyone is welcome.

Members openly shared their stories at meetings describing the circumstances of their lives in the active addiction phase and the moments of clarity that brought them to putting the drugs down. I was drawn to the momentum of their stories.

It seemed that against all the odds, people were actually living drug free. LGBT recovery meetings were also on offer - it was a huge relief when I didn't need to refer to my partner in code!

The possibility of a social life looked like a desolate barren landscape ahead of me. Could I dance? Could I even make conversation without the familiar chemical prop? Before the COVID lockdowns this matter was resolving itself. I found running clubs, writing groups, volunteering options and cool DJ events that over time developed my interests. I also realised that the community centres we have in our Queer community are an ongoing social resource.

In conclusion, every day there are millions of addicts the world over that are managing to battle addiction. A day clean from not using, not drinking, not cutting, not gambling, not shopping, not starving, from whatever one's poison is, is a day won. This is particularly remarkable, as addiction is still often a misrepresented and misunderstood condition. In Ireland we are faced with archaic criminalisation laws, numbing methadone 'maintenance' programmes and a glaring lack of detox and recovery resources. Even in COVID the Twelve Step meetings have diversified and went online to offer another option. However, not every addict has a cool laptop or a smart phone, so of course we need to always be mindful of making assumptions that exclude any member of any minority group.

Presently we are losing many addicts in the queer and the straight community. I was lost for a number of years to a 'half-life' existence on Methadone. That medicine crushed my spirit. Many more are lost entirely. An Irish Examiner article outlining the fatal consequences of addiction in Munster and the epidemic scale of overdoses comes to mind: over three times more people died from drug related activity in Munster in 2013 than those who died as a result of road accidents. I found the statistic of 679 deaths to represent a chilling wake up call.

Alienating an addict is the worst step that any society could take. In my recovery I am influenced strongly by the message of connection, not alienation offered by Johann Hari. He states clearly that on a political, social and personal level, "the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection." If there is a solution to the perplexing and lonely condition of Addiction, it most likely lies in the words and concepts of Dr. Gabor Mate who suggests that we need a radically new perspective: "The real question in addiction is not why the addiction? But why the pain?" His words are pertinent every day and as a Queer addict anticipating Cork Pride 2021, I would invite our community to bear this spirit of inclusion and compassion in mind when we march under that iconic rainbow flag as we celebrate our uniquely diverse and beautiful community.

Pride means more

Pride means more...

Than ever. So, we're looking at what it means to our community during Pride season, and maybe more importantly, what it means every day of the year.

...to Bob Sy.

Bob Sy | Associate Director, Cross Cultural Network Co-Lead and LGBTQ+ Operations Lead, Accenture in Ireland

There's something very special about taking part in a Pride parade with friends, family and colleagues, so celebrating it virtually is certainly different. But it's shown me just how committed and resilient the LGBTQ+ community and allies are. I'm constantly amazed at how inventive online parties and events have become and it's great that we still have an inclusive and inviting place to talk about what and who we love.

As an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights there are so many reasons why Pride means more to me, but here are my top three.

Pride means more...authenticity

I truly believe that when we're confident enough to live our truths, it unlocks a power and allows us to reach our full potential. You can break free from the things that limit us and take the time and space you need to explore new opportunities and territories.

I'm fortunate to have a great career and personal life and I put that down to one thing. Not having to play out different lives in different circles. I live one full life. No lies. No half-truths. No hiding.

That's not always possible in our community. Fear, anxiety and even the law mean that some of us have chosen to stay in the closet. That's where Pride can make a real difference, particularly online events and forums, because they reach people who might not otherwise be able to find the support network they need and deserve.

Wherever possible, we need to be a source of hope and inspiration to others. Beacons that show them there isn't just light at the end of the tunnel. There are rainbows.

Pride means more...family

It brings me so much joy to see parents bringing their children to the Pride events and parades. Being part of something so inclusive where families, friends and lovers can share important moments is really moving.

I feel very lucky that my loved ones accept me for who I am and the life choices I've made.

My Mum even joined me for the Dublin Pride celebrations in 2018. It was her first time and she got right into the spirit of it all.

How fantastic does she look?! I was so proud of her.

"I don't have to play out different lives in different circles. I live one full life. No lies. No half-truths. No hiding."

It's upsetting to think that not everyone is embraced and accepted like I am. The isolation, rejection and discrimination some of

our community experience can make a person feel forgotten or that they don't matter. So, being a friend, listening more or simply making a person feel seen, can make a huge difference to their day. Smiles, hugs and chats are free, so why not give them out when you're with someone who needs them.

Pride means more ... solidarity

Living in a country where it's safe to be open and out is a freedom I don't take for granted. It's one of the things I love most about living in Ireland, knowing I can be myself and that's okay.

I was born in the Philippines and we're making strides there, but we have some way to go yet.

Being part of the LGBTQ+ community is still considered a crime in 71 jurisdictions where violence, hate and phobia keep our community from living full, happy and inclusive lives.

As individuals living in countries where freedom of choice is not just tolerated but encouraged, it's important to stand up for the rights of people who are denied the same liberties.

I remind myself all the time that small acts, when compounded can make a big difference.

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HOW HISTORICAL EVENTS SHAPED MY LIFE

By Sean Vail

Every holiday presented the opportunity for my enormous family to come together, to show off the new babies, rekindle family ties and, of course, eat. Whether it was Christmas Eve, which was also my parents' wedding anniversary, or the 4th of July, we managed to make a colossal event out of it. It could be a BBQ in someone's back garden or the annual takeover of a public park. Whatever the case, it was guaranteed to be memorable. Our mouths salivated at the thought of Aunt Bonnie's potato salad, mom's baked beans and the many delicious culinary delights from my multi-cultural clan.

During those halcyon years as a youngster, I could not ask for anything more to fulfil my childhood dreams. But as the years progressed and I started to understand more of what the adults were talking about, I found myself a sheep amongst the wolves.

Life, for many of my folk, had certainly been shaped by the atrocious and dreadful events that had taken place prior to my birth. My parents endured the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, the polio epidemic, the Vietnam war and a myriad of other ghastly crises that moulded them into the people they were and how they perceived the world.

Little did I know that on a completely different level, my own life was being forged by the current and soon to be historical events, and the attitudes that those around me had formulated regarding them.

As early as 1965, only being six years old, I remember the outrage of my father and my uncles concerning the picketing of civil rights activists at Independence Hall in Philadelphia; they had gathered there to call attention to the lack of civil rights for LGBT people. The conversation in our living room quickly escalated into a fury of hate and disgust; they were referred to as a deviant section of society that had no place among God-fearing, respectable people. Even as a very young child, I felt the shudder run over my shoulders due to the immense hate that was being exuded.

One year later, a riot broke out in San Francisco, and several transgender people stood up against the police and their abusive manhandling. This resulted in the formation of the National Transsexual Counselling Unit, which was the first peer-run support and advocacy organisation in the world.

As news of this travelled through the media, I was again forced to endure the barrage of abuse towards those brave and daring individuals who were only standing up for their rights as human beings.

Three years later, the monumental Stonewall event, credited with reigniting America's modern LGBT rights movement, became newspaper headlines across the country. Family, neighbours and elected officials took to the tabloids and expressed their aggressive views towards the situation and voiced opinions on what should be done to the perpetrators of this unrest.

At this point in my life, I felt I was different from other boys my age, but I can tell you for certain, I was not going to be one of those bludgeoned and persecuted people. I prayed for some form of release from these daunting feelings I was harbouring, I could not imagine what my own father would do to me if he ever found out what thoughts were milling around in my mind.

Although progress was slow, there were changes taking place. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as a mental illness and in 1974, an openly gay public official was voted to office. America's civil rights were being challenged, not only by LGBT people but also by the black community, upsetting conservatives like Anita Bryant, whose campaign to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Florida was successful and was not reinstated until 1998.

Up until this point, I had lived on the Canadian American border between Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario in a very conservative neighbourhood. In 1976 my father had a nervous breakdown, and I was shipped off to my sister to finish my last year of High School in Arlington, Texas. I was not prepared for what I faced in this new and alien environment. I could write a book based on my experiences, many good memories but a myriad of demoralising, disappointing, and dangerous affairs.

If there was one thing I learned that year, it was that I liked boys, a lot. I developed a penchant for the local cowboys who wore tight jeans, cowboy shirts and cowboy boots. As handsome as they appeared, they were adamant about their dislike of LGBT people. I was away from my parents, but it seemed I could not get away from the bias and prejudice I was surrounded with in my youth.

San Francisco again takes the limelight with Harvey Milk winning a seat on the Board of Supervisors in 1977. He was responsible for a gay rights ordinance that protected LGBT people from being fired from their jobs. He was also instrumental in overturning Proposition 6 which would forbid homosexual teachers. A year later he was assassinated by a former city supervisor, motivated by jealousy rather than homophobia or so the media portrayed. Surmising so far, I am believing that it is truly treacherous, or precarious at the least, to be open about one's sexuality.

After a tumultuous year, my brother and sister marched me down to the recruitment office of the US Navy, to be made into a man. There I would be taught how to do manly things, be among manly men and learn the necessary manly skills to take me into the world, to go forth and multiply. Instead, I was put into the submarine fleet, discovered other men whose sexuality was the same as mine and met a terrific lover, culminating in a new and healthy outlook on my sexuality and a thriving passion to learn more about my new community.

But all was not to remain ecstatic and joyous. In 1981, my navy boyfriend drowned, which left me devastated and broken. It was apparent to my superiors that I was miserable, and my head was certainly not in a place to function as an integral part of a nuclear submarine. I made the decision to come out as gay and to express how toppled I was by the loss of my lover. I was given an Honourable Discharge despite it being an offense to be gay in the military at the time. I was shown a tremendous amount of compassion by the officers and crew, I learned how important it is to have a circle of support.

I had not only lost someone I loved and forfeited a potential career, but I was also torn away from my main support group.

As if losing a lover was not enough, later that year, I lost my best friend William. He died from a peculiar disease that no one knew much about at the time. The New York Times printed a story on July 3, 1981, about a rare pneumonia and skin cancer that seemed to be manifesting in gay men, initially the disease was called GRID, Gay Related Immune Deficiency Disorder later to be called AIDS. This began a time of sadness and great despair for the entire LGBT community.

As was drummed into me from a young age, I could not stop thinking that bad things happen to people who deviate from the sexual norm. This indeed had to be some form of punishment for the choices I made. I had yet to deal with my family back in Texas, as all this had happened in Seattle. Upon my arrival home, as predicted, I was met with comments that stressed that this is what God does to people like you, change or forever be in turmoil. I rebelled against this treatment and was promptly thrown out of my parents' home.

I could ramble on for hours about how I endured the abuse and endeavoured to create a happy, satisfying life for myself. But the point of this article is to highlight that everyone is shaped by their personal experiences and by historical events that not only change their perceptions but have an apparent effect on those around us.

We are just emerging from another catastrophic historical event that threatened us all to the very core. We faced months of quarantines, unhealthy periods of isolations and loneliness that will affect people for months to come. Now is an especially important time to lay aside preconceived prejudices, personal judgements and possibly your own homophobia and, to not only create your own support group, but to be part of someone else's.

The conclusion that I have come to, from my own set of experiences, is that it is so important for everyone to create a circle of support, to listen to the older members of your community and take the lessons from their stories, to grow from the mistakes of others, and to embrace our community and all that it has become over the years.

Reach out for yourself, reach out to others, let's connect in the spirit of togetherness again.

Together Apart

Johnson Controls LGBTQ+ network and allies delivering for all

Mary White (Cork, Ireland)
Operations Program Manager | JC4e Vice-President (EMEA)

It has been an honour for me to lead and grow Johnson Controls business resource group for our LGBTQ+ employees (JC4e), their families and allies across EMEA. Despite being apart during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have never been more together. We have been open, vulnerable, and honest with ourselves and each other, and as a result we've grown as individuals. The most powerful aspect of being involved with JC4e however, is the realisation that each member's story is impactful and powerful. That bravery to be who you are, or to be accepting of others, creates that open, inclusive and supportive workplace that I am incredibly proud to help shape alongside my colleagues, members and allies who have shown up in so many different ways across the company.

Javier Reina Sanchez (Spanish, living in Slovakia)
Corporate Global Business Services

I would be happy if we did not have to celebrate Pride. It would mean there was no inequality, discrimination, or homophobia. As that is not the case just yet, I am standing and being proud of who I am. I am ready to support anyone who needs to be loved for who they are. I am also very proud to be part of JC4e, because Johnson Controls provided us with this important platform and network where we can be heard. Where we work is our second home, and we need to support and respect each other. We need to embrace what we have in common and what makes each of us unique. I hope in a few years' time, we can celebrate Pride as an amazing party and not only as a matter in question of equality and diversity.

Stan Sandland-Owens (Manchester, England)
Customer Support Leader

What does Pride mean to me? For me it is being free to be myself and not to be afraid of any stigmas or phobia that may come my way. I just wish that working through the 1980s my employers then had felt that setting up a LGBTQI network like we have with Johnson Controls For Equality (JC4e), was a worthwhile project that would allow employees globally to network, share ideas and offer support. I really do feel that as an employer, Johnson Controls has brought us together again and we stand proud of who and what we all are!

Audrey Walsh (Cork, Ireland)
Information Developer | JC4e Communications Chair (EMEA)

The global pandemic has challenged us like never before. Here at Johnson Controls having the JC4e network has given us a vital space to share common experiences, allyship and camaraderie in the past twelve months. As a community of colleagues and friends, despite being apart, we have embraced virtual connection and found ourselves closer than ever. Through live online events and regular Teams chats Johnson Controls for Equality has engaged members not only in Cork, or Ireland, but further afield in 29 countries around the globe. I'm proud to be part of an ever growing network of people committed to affecting positive change in our individual workplaces, and by extension, across the world.

Amy Zoyomi (Bratislava, Slovakia)
Purchasing Administrator

Being a member of the Johnson Controls LGBTQ+ business resource group – Johnson Controls For Equality (JC4e) – is a great opportunity for me to find people who I can relate to at work. I like that Johnson Controls provides its employees with such a wonderful way of connecting with each other. I personally enjoy being able to talk to my colleagues about LGBTQ+-related topics the most, as it gives me the opportunity to be creative in something I am truly passionate about. Most importantly, it reassures me that my workplace is a safe environment.

Rebecca Walsh (Cork, Ireland)
HR Manager, Ireland

I am a member of the Johnson Controls LGBTQ+ business resource group JC4e and also a proud ally to the LGBTQ+ community. Fundamentally, I have a strong belief in inclusion and human rights. In the past twelve months at our Cork headquarters I have had the benefit of learning more about the community from both internal and external events and hearing the stories of our own employees who have been so brave in coming forward to share their story in the hope that it will help others to feel included and empowered. In my role as HR Manager, I have the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience on a regular basis through our Manager Forums and Town Halls, and I want to be able to use that privilege to demonstrate my solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community wherever I can.

Nikhil Vengatesan (Bratislava, Slovakia)
Application Engineer

I believe that every individual has the right to choose their partner, and that it is key to helping us live this precious life that we have. One must be happy to achieve it no matter who they are with. As someone who believes in 'Mind over body', we need to support everyone, no matter where they are from, or what their desires are. I would like to have the same mentality in the workplace and really appreciate the members of JC4e in Johnson Controls who make this possible.

THE ANTI CONVERSION THERAPY COALITION

By Christine O'Mahony PRO - Anti Conversion Therapy Coalition

What is conversion therapy?

Conversion therapy refers to any form of treatment proposed to change a person's sexual orientation or to suppress a person's gender identity. It targets LGBTQI+ individuals and seeks to change their sexuality or gender identity. This unethical practice is usually carried out via psychological, physical or spiritual/religious methods.

Other methods include drugs, hormones, exorcism, x-ray treatments, anaphrodisiacs, hydrotherapy, hypnosis, 'fantasy satiation', or electric shock treatment.

Why conversion therapy should be banned?

Firstly, homosexuality was removed from the International Classification of Diseases in 1990. It has also been long removed from the list of mental illnesses in the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.' Psychologists such as Glenn Wilson and Qazi Rahmen affirmed that "modern scientific research indicated that sexual orientation is largely determined by the time of birth, partly by genetics, but more specifically by hormonal activity in the womb arising from various sources." This disputes the theory that you can "choose" to be LGBTQI+. LGBTQI+ people do not need to be "fixed" or "cured", it is perfectly natural to be LGBTQI+. It is also wrong to call it "conversion therapy" as therapy is designed to treat physical or mental illnesses, and it has been scientifically established that homosexuality is not a disease.

So-called "conversion therapy" constitutes a form of torture. A top UN expert, Mr Victor Madrigal-Borloz stated, "the process of conversion therapy is cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and in some cases, they constitute torture." He also urged global governments to ban the "degrading practice known as conversion therapy." His research revealed that in a survey of more than 8000 people from 100 countries, it was found that 98% of those who had undergone conversion therapy reported suffering some damage.

There are many negative side effects attached to conversion therapy such as anger, anxiety, confusion, depression, grief, guilt, hopelessness, deteriorated relationships with family, loss of social support, loss of faith, poor self-image, social isolation, intimacy difficulties, suicidal ideation, self-hatred and sexual dysfunction. Conversion therapy does not work, you cannot change somebody. It does more harm than good.

It must be noted that LGBTQI+ minors are more at risk of being forced into conversion therapy by their parents or guardians. This actually goes against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under Article 12, it states that children have 'a right to be heard', forcing children into these "therapies" against their will, is not in line with Article 12.

This is why the practice of conversion therapy should be banned globally.

What other countries have brought in a ban?

Currently, only Brazil, Ecuador, Malta and Germany have banned conversion therapy. Regional laws have also been introduced in the US, Spain, Canada, and Australia. In Northern Ireland, a motion put forward by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) to ban the practice of conversion therapy in Northern Ireland passed 59-24. However, the motion was legally non-binding. Legislation to completely ban the practice in all its forms will hopefully be introduced before the next assembly elections.

What are the Government promises on Conversion Therapy?

Banning Conversion Therapy is included in the Programme for Government (PFG). Minister for Children, Roderic O'Gorman, who himself is part of the LGBTQI+ community, claimed "a person's sexual orientation is not up for debate" and has tasked officials with exploring ways to outlaw the practice in the Republic. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael elected reps have also strongly supported the initiative put forward by the Anti Conversion Therapy Coalition (ACTC), which aims to ban conversion therapy on the island of Ireland using Sinn Féin's Senator Fintan Warfield's 2018 bill, called 'Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill', which would prohibit conversion therapy as "a deceptive and harmful act or practice against a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and, or gender expression."

In Northern Ireland, Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey, said at the assembly debate on conversion therapy that "conversion therapy should be ended now". She promised that she would be exploring all legislative practices to ban the practice and warned that she "needs to make sure we get the policy right, with no loopholes". Lastly, she stated that "homophobia is in our society, and we need to challenge it."

What's the situation in Northern Ireland /United Kingdom?

In Northern Ireland, the only real opposition came from the DUP, TUV and some faith leaders. TUV's Jim Allister was shocked that the bill proposed by the UUP said that they want to ban conversion therapy in "all its forms." He claimed that groups like Anti Conversion Therapy Coalition and Ban Conversion Therapy NI want to "criminalise preaching and praying", which is not the case. Ex-DUP MLA Jim Wells claimed that if he became gay one day, he would want to seek spiritual guidance, and LGBTQI+ groups want to ban that. He later clarified that he was not gay!

It is clear that these groups don't have an understanding of what conversion therapy is about. Many LGBTQI+ people are themselves religious. It is not religion we want to ban. It is when religion seeks to harm people; you cannot "pray the gay away." Despite this, the DUP amendment failed to pass, and the UUP motion passed.

The issue of conversion therapy has resulted in DUP leader, Arlene Foster, having no choice but to resign as she decided to abstain on the motion rather than reject it like the rest of her colleagues. This was very unexpected. She was replaced by Edwin Poots, who opposes gay men donating blood and once said, "and so someone who has sex with somebody in Africa or sex with prostitutes, I am very reluctant about those people being able to give blood."

In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been under pressure to ban the abhorrent practice of conversion therapy. Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has given Johnson an ultimatum, "ban the practice, or I will!" It is clear that Scotland and Northern Ireland could be the first two regions that are part of the UK that could ban the practice.

How Anti Conversion Therapy Coalition came about?

Anti Conversion Therapy Coalition formed after a controversial tweet was posted which claimed that "supporting conversion therapy for minors, is not homophobic". It reminded everyone that conversion therapy was still legal in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Conversion therapy on the island is mainly done in private and in religious settings, such as 'Core Issue Trust', which reject the idea that sexual orientation is innate and immutable.

Aaron Grant, who is the chairperson of ACTC, launched the campaign on the 13th of April, which comprises of youths from various political parties and none, who decided to organise together by forming a group chat with over 211 members. The plan is to organise a movement to pressure the Irish government to pass Fintan Warfield's bill on banning conversion therapy. The group have also pressured MLAs in the NI Assembly to support the UUP motion on banning conversion therapy and are happy with the results.

How can people get involved in the campaign or support the campaign?

Anyone aged 18 or over can get involved in our campaign. If they contact the Facebook, Twitter or Instagram page, we can invite them to the group chat, where ideas are discussed, and tasks are handed out. We have already done one email campaign to MLAs in the NI Assembly and plan to tackle Leinster House next. Those who want to support the campaign can retweet/share our posts, contact their local TDs/MLAs, sign and share our petition and raise awareness on how bad the practice is.

BRÓD MEANS PRIDE.

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For your world

THE CORK PRIDE ART PROJECT

By Tadhg Crowley

This summer, the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival have partnered with the Glucksman art museum in University College Cork to invite members of Cork's LGBT+ community to participate in a creative project. The community led project will include the commissioning of the inaugural Cork Pride Artist in Residence, Stephen Doyle, to create a new artwork for the UCC Art Collection.

Through a series of creative consultations at the Glucksman, the LGBT+ community will inspire the Artist in Residence by sharing memories and experiences around their sexual and gender identities, mental health, rural isolation, desexualisation of the older community, the challenges and supports of their life in Cork, and ideas on the impact of legislative changes in altering attitudes and improving opportunities.

Artist Stephen Doyle shared his excitement for the project, "I'm so delighted to get this opportunity to make something of significance for the LGBTQ+ community with the Glucksman and Cork Pride. This is such a unique residency, we'll get to share our experiences and concerns and it will be treasured rather than dismissed. That feels like progress."

The creative consultations at the Glucksman which will take place throughout July will include a variety of activities for participants, including art making, writing, and photography workshops, together with talks from invited speakers and facilitated discussions. The creative material generated by the community members in these sessions will be exhibited at the museum during this year's Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival, which takes place from 24th July-1st August.

Cork Pride Artist in Residence
Stephen Doyle

'Meditating Tongqui', Stephen Doyle

'Dylan is ainm dom', Stephen Doyle

Director of the Glucksman, Professor Fiona Kearney said, "The Glucksman has been fortunate to collaborate on a number of events in partnership with our LGBTQ+ UCC colleagues and students, so I am delighted to have the opportunity now to work with the Cork Pride Festival, and in particular to engage artist Stephen Doyle to co-create a new commission for the UCC Art Collection that will reflect and celebrate the views of the wider LGBTQ+ community in Cork."

The commissioned artwork, which forms part of Cork Pride's Artist in Residence programme, will capture the thoughts, experiences and ideas of the LGBT+ community and will be unveiled at the museum at the 2022 Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival, before being toured regionally as part of the Glucksman's Art Library initiative, a new loan collection which places artworks in public and community venues. The artwork will be accompanied by educational resources that will be designed to encourage creative engagement with people of all ages.

In the words of Elliot Eisner, a renowned Professor of Arts and Education, who dedicated his life to researching the impact of the arts on people. "Art can truly move us, it can lead us to experiences that challenge our ways of thinking, question our capacities and sensibilities, and allow us the opportunity to recognize with the creator or idea being conveyed." The Cork Pride Art Project will connect audiences of all ages and from all backgrounds to the stories, memories and experiences of the Cork LGBT+ community and to new and exciting visual arts experiences.

The Cork Pride Art Project is joint initiative between the Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival and the Glucksman, and is supported by the Arts Council of Ireland and private philanthropy through Cork University Foundation.

If you'd like to learn more about the Cork Pride Art Project, please contact:

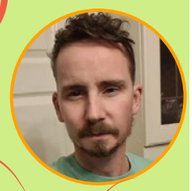
Tadhg Crowley, Senior Curator – Education + Community at the Glucksman t.crowley@ucc.ie

WHAT DOES PRIDE MEAN TO ME?

AMAZON'S LGBTQIA+ NETWORK AND ALLIES

Barry Lynch
Site Lead, Amazon Customer Services

I am the Site Lead of Amazon's Customer Service office in Cork and also a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community. For me, Pride is a celebration of the progress we have seen in LGBTQ+ rights over the past 30 years in Ireland. It's not a celebration of a job that is complete but very much, still a work-in-progress. Pride month is the perfect opportunity to shine a light on those parts of the world still fighting for true equality. At Amazon, given that we are a large multi-cultural organisation, our default setting is to celebrate what makes each of us unique. Pride is another opportunity for us to showcase that fact and reinforce the message that Amazon is an Ally.

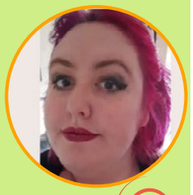


JP McCarthy
Customer Service Team Manager, Amazon Customer Services, Glamazon Chapter Lead

I'm the chapter lead for Glamazon Cork Campus and DEI Champion. Pride for me is a celebration of how far we have come as a society and what we have achieved as a community. It's also a time to highlight that there is still much more to do. It demonstrates acceptance and tolerance. I'm proud to lead the Glamazon group for the Cork campus. Amazon Cork has a diverse workforce and it offers a vital resource for the LGBT+ community within Amazon. It also showcases Amazon's LGBT+ acceptance. It enables employees to engage with LGBT+ peers and allies across the globe.

Keith Linehan
WW Continuous Improvement Program Manager – Amazon Customer Services

I'm a proud member of Glamazon Cork as well as the Amazon Cork Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee. Pride is a time for all LGBTQ+ to celebrate our true selves, to be visible in our communities and to have one hell of a party. Homosexuality was only decriminalized in Ireland three years before I came out. So when I celebrate Pride I always remember that I get to march in the parade because of the incredible work of those who fought and continue to fight for equality for LGBTQ+ people in Ireland. Of course, not all LGBTQ+ around the world are as fortunate as us. Pride also serves as a beacon of hope and a catalyst of change to those experiencing discrimination and homophobia globally. Pride makes me I realize how privileged I am and to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ communities around the world whenever I can.



Sara Gamboni
Recruitment Coordinator, Amazon Cork

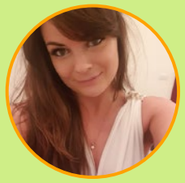
Being part of the recruitment team, as well as part of the LGBTQ+ community, it's really important to me to work in a company that understands, respects and promotes inclusivity and diversity. I've always felt I'm working in a safe place, where I can express myself, be who I am and talk freely about myself and my partner, without any judgement. Amazon is an inclusive workplace that allows space for different communities, as well as allowing people to set up their preferred pronouns in their profile page.

Nicky Harris
Customer Service Agent – Amazon Customer Services, Virtual Contact Centre Ireland

Cork LGBT+ Festival is one of the highlights of the Irish Pride Calendar and here at Amazon we can't wait to celebrate, take part in and support this festival. I come to this as an ally to all LGBT+ friends but in particular the Trans community which means that I come from a place of privilege to learn and support the trans members of our society. Working in Amazon gives me an opportunity to help us all acknowledge the difference and make us better at understanding how we can do that in our day to day working and personal lives. For example, our everyday use of pronouns. My wish for this Pride celebration is that we learn how we can make inclusivity a lived experience for all. The last year has been particularly challenging and isolating, let's make this Pride Festival a truly happy one, where we can all celebrate acceptance, our love for one another and our continued striving to do better for all our LGBT+ friends.

Daphne Tambling
Supervisor - Amazon Seller Partner Support

To me pride means loving and sharing your unique self. I am proud to be part of Amazon Selling Partner Support, a company which respects and promotes diversity and encourages everyone to represent their true colors. A team which understands the importance of helping people who struggle to be honest with who they are. Our community of colleagues who are friends that encourage everyone to feel secure and aware that they are not alone. I am proud to be part of an ever growing virtual community committed to impacting positive change across our global network. Spread the love and joy of who we all are.

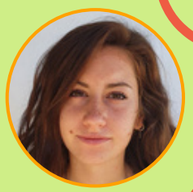


Tricia Brady
Senior Content Developer - Device, Digital & Alexa Support

When I first joined Amazon I wasn't sure about what to expect from a LGBTQ+ support perspective. While I was out at the time, I was still finding myself and so entering a new work environment was a little daunting. I needn't have feared as I quickly realized Amazon not only supports members of the LGBTQ+ community, but celebrates them. It is truly a place where you can feel comfortable expressing your true self. This is true not only in our Cork offices, but for Amazon globally. Over the years the support for the LGBTQ community has grown, from the Glamazon affiliate group to the inclusion on a pronoun field in our internal employee directory and everything in between, and it shows no sign of stopping any time soon. Pride in Amazon is a time to celebrate our diversity, share our stories, and being our true selves, and while we have to celebrate apart this year we will still celebrate.

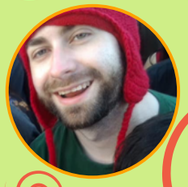
Begona Pascual
Registration & Compliance Operations Investigation Specialist

I'm a member of the Glamazon affinity group for Cork. As part of the LGTBQ+ community and RCO team, Pride is a reminder that me, you and every single human is valid, seen, and respected. For me, Pride means human rights. The situation for LGTBQ+ people around the world is not equal. Some countries embrace equality and in others, LGTBQ+ people continue to suffer from discrimination, persecution and violence. Pride is also a reminder that we are still fighting for those who can't live with the privileges that we enjoy, loving who we want to love, and identifying ourselves how we feel to. Remember: You are valid, loved and seen.



Chris Poyntz
SPS Employee, Seller and Brand Support, Seller Support Services

Being a member of the Glamazon affinity group, Pride for me is a celebration and acknowledgement of people who fought hard for LGBT+ rights, past and present. We've come a long way in Ireland over the last 30 odd years but many parts of the world are not as fortunate. Pride helps us remember how far we've come and also acts as an example that love in all forms is to be celebrated and not hated.



Damien Keane
Customer Service Team Manager, Amazon Customer Services

Pride allows me to be open and proud about who I am and it is because of attending previous Pride events throughout the years that I have even arrived at this conclusion. Pride allows us all to just be ourselves, regardless of whether or not you are LGBT+, it is colorful, loud, everything that LGBT+ people have not previously been allowed to be. Working for Amazon also reflects this for me as you are never judged for your differences, if anything they make you more valuable. You don't need to be brave to be yourself here because you are expected to just be you but by having this safe space, we have been able to achieve a place of openness, kindness and inclusion for all involved. I am very proud to be part of a company where every colour of the flag is welcome and provided an equal opportunity.

WHY NEW HATE CRIME LAWS MATTER

By Adam Long

The pressing need to legislate against Hate Crime in Ireland has been a key priority for LGBT+ equality campaigners since the publication in 2016 of the comprehensive 'Burning Issues' research revealed it to be the leading legislative demand for our LGBT+ communities post marriage equality.

Despite the significant equality strides of recent years, Ireland is something of a European and Western outlier in failing to have any laws in place to address hate motivated criminal acts, where someone is targeted due to their very identity.

It can also be no coincidence that Hate Crime has taken on an increased prominence for LGBT+ people in more recent times.

The historic 2015 referendum was a powerful demonstration of the fact that the majority of the Irish people solidly affirm our status as full and equal citizens. Conversely, however, that very public support and the wonderful, increased queer visibility it brought in its wake, has caused a bigoted minority to double-down on their hate. This element has also been emboldened by the rise of illiberal, far-right ideologies on the global stage and the use of social media to amplify extremist voices.

As we witnessed in the United States earlier this year, when supporters of a defeated Donald Trump sought to violently overturn the outcome of a democratic election, the lines distinguishing the online world from the real world are becoming increasingly blurred.

LGBT+ communities certainly have no intention of compromising our hard won, increased visibility in the face of such hate. But we are looking to our legislators, among others, to clearly demonstrate that they stand with us and on the side of progress and modernity more generally.

The recent publication by the government of a Heads of Bill, which proposes to legislate both for Hate Crime in addition to updating laws around Incitement to Hatred, was given a broad welcome by campaigners.

In the first instance, there was relief that after many years of advocacy and campaigning, there is now, at last, a tangible legislative proposal from the government of the day to address the issue.

The draft Bill also appears to be fully LGBT+ inclusive with both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression explicitly enshrined as protected characteristics.

The Bill will now embark on its journey through Parliament where it will be subjected to scrutiny and debate, including possible amendments which may try to either strengthen provisions or indeed to water down or remove key elements.

For organisations like the National LGBT Federation (NXF), on whose Board I serve, we will be closely monitoring developments to ensure that the final version of the Bill passed by the Oireachtas not only fully protects the LGBT+ community in its entirety, but is as robust and effective as possible in tackling the scourge of Hate Crime.

Justice Minister Helen McEntee TD, in unveiling her government's Bill, was right when she talked of Hate Crimes being 'signal crimes' in that they are designed to 'signal' to victims that their very existence is grounds for violence or abuse. In legislating against this, society would be sending a very different 'signal' - that such crimes which strike at a person's very identity deserve to be recognised as such in law and subject to appropriate sanction.

However, there is little to be gained if any new law proves to be mainly symbolic in nature. We certainly know from the research that Hate Crime is far from an abstract concept for LGBT+ people.

For example, according to the ICCL commissioned 'Lifecycle of a Hate Crime', Ireland has the second highest level of transphobic hate crime in the European Union - a finding made all the more disturbing when you consider that incidents of Hate Crime are chronically under-reported. Likewise, research from the European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, revealed that many Irish same-sex couples remain fearful of expressing themselves in public or engaging in activities heterosexual couples take for granted, for fear of being verbally abused or worse.

It is also crucially important that any new legislation is accompanied by comprehensive training for all those tasked with enforcing its provisions, in addition to other confidence building measures.

Ultimately, the success of any legislation will be reflected in the increased willingness of victims to come forward and a corresponding reduction in incidents of Hate Crime. The latter will be best achieved through both enforcement and educational measures.

The separate but related issue of Incitement to Hatred is also addressed in the Hate Crime Bill. Current law in this area dates back to 1989 when Ireland was very much a monochrome society and where most LGBT+ people either emigrated or stayed in the closet.

It is widely agreed that the aforementioned 1989 Act has proved to be toothless and simply not fit-for-purpose at a time when we see such a proliferation of online hate in particular.

The proposed updates to our 'Hate Speech' laws are therefore timely. And while it is quite correct that the threshold for criminal speech should be a high one, it must also be capable of capturing those truly egregious examples that compromise the safety and well-being of LGBT+ people and other vulnerable groups.

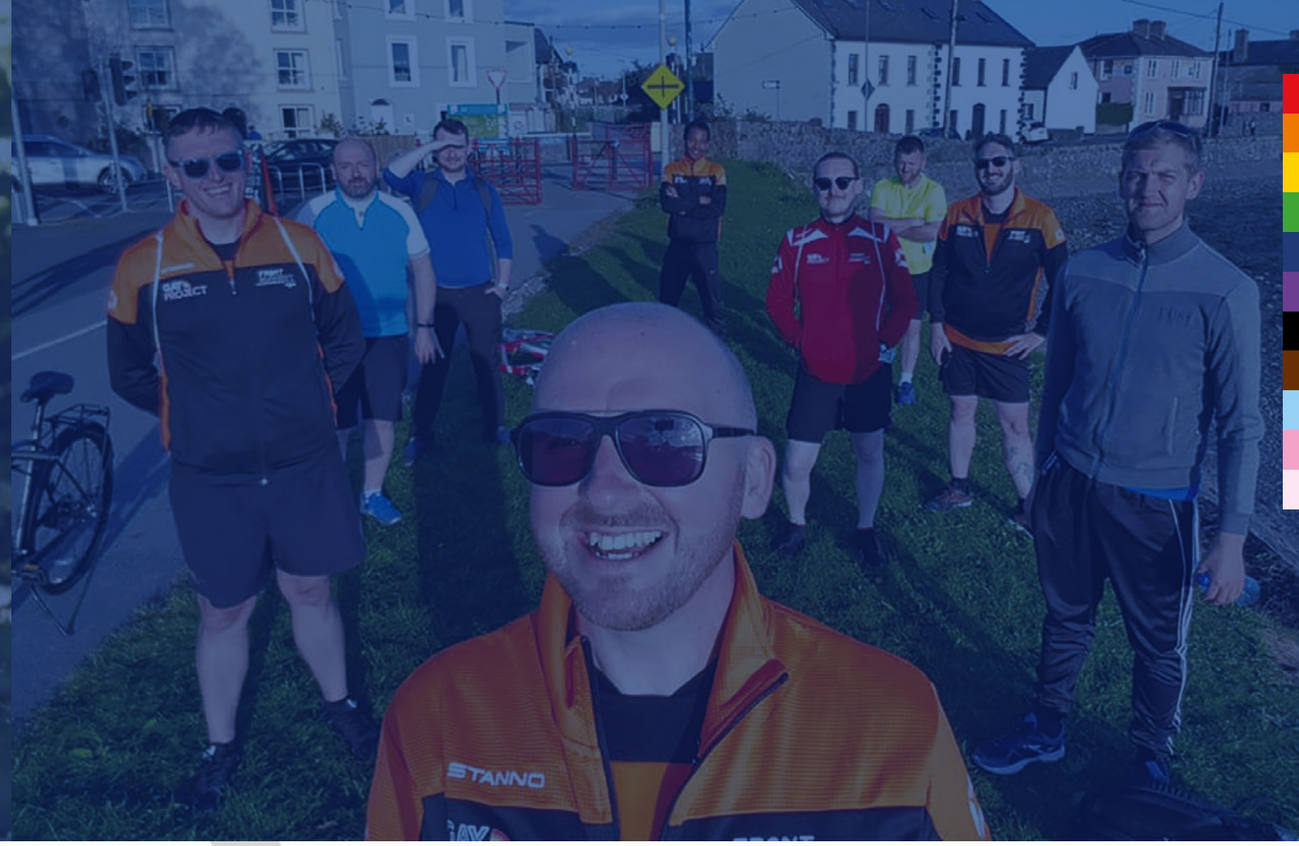
We also cannot of course ignore the role of social media platforms in facilitating the sharing of dangerous and extremist content. It has certainly been clear for quite some time now that self-regulation has been an abject failure and an alternative approach is required.

Finally, as we prepare to celebrate Pride, let us remember that it is both a celebration and a call-to-action. In addition to Hate Crime legislation, a fully LGBT+ inclusive curriculum in all our publicly funded schools and complete ban on so-called 'conversion therapy' (torture) are just some of the other areas where we need to see progress.

Our equality journey continues.

Adam Long was born in Cork and has been an LGBT+ equality advocate for many years. He currently serves as a Board Director with the National LGBT Federation (NXF)

‘COMING OUT’ OF A PANDEMIC



By Michael O Donnell

June 2021

Community Development Worker with Gay Project

When I wrote ‘Adapting To The New Normal’ in the 2020 Cork Pride Magazine, I couldn’t have predicted the changes that we’ve seen and continued to see on the ground for GBTQI+ men in Cork. While discussion and focus now move towards ‘coming out’ of this pandemic; the question for ours, and many other communities, is what next? And the answer is complex. We’ve been through so much together in the past year-and-a-half and we’ve felt every feeling imaginable from grief to relief. We must now allow time for healing, for assessing the full impact that this pandemic has had on each one of us and, crucially, we must allow time for hope.

The pandemic will have far-reaching side-effects for everyone in our LGBT+ family. Some of the lasting effects are sure to make us an even more inclusive family. For example, over the past 1.5 years, people from across Ireland and the world have participated in Gay Project’s online community events. For many, geography became less of a barrier to participation. Those in rural areas who have sometimes been beyond the reach of LGBT+ support services have been enabled to participate remotely for the first time. This is a game-changer for our community. Moreover, in another unprecedented turn, the pandemic gave rise to a mass exodus from urban centres. For the LGBT+ community who traditionally migrate from rural-urban areas this had a major impact. Many who had migrated for work were freed to work remotely and chose to do so from a tranquil countryside instead of an empty city. Others who lost their jobs decided to start again elsewhere. It’s clear that the reverse of this traditional trend will have a big impact on our community, time will tell just what that will look like for us here in Cork!

Despite this, it’s essential that we don’t overlook those most evidently impacted by the crisis such as those older and younger people in our community. Many younger people felt trapped living at home in a sometimes hostile environment. The usual coming-of-age transition into adult life delayed by lockdowns leaving some of those vulnerable young people at home with unsupportive families.

Moreover, older members of our community struggled with isolation, many without families to support them and without access to the normal community services that they would attend. Others hit hard were those LGBT+ travellers and those in Direct Provision throughout this crisis – each facing a unique set of issues. Despite amazing work and efforts across the county to address the impact on older and younger people, it’s essential now that we give space to exploring just what the full extent of that impact is and what needs to happen next to mitigate it. Crucially we must also give space to inquire about those who were less visible and whose experience of the pandemic may not yet even be known.

> “I COULDN’T HAVE PREDICTED THE CHANGES THAT WE’VE SEEN AND CONTINUED TO SEE ON THE GROUND FOR GBTQI+ MEN IN CORK’

What’s more, the enormous strength of our community has come to the fore during this unprecedented challenge! It was wonderful to see the show of solidarity and support amongst those in our community for those who most needed support. From the beginning, there were many who volunteered in our community and many who contributed well beyond our community in the broader life of Cork city and county. Examples include those who worked hard to develop new community groups such as Adam from the Cork Hellhounds whom we supported through Gay Project Community Affiliation Programme. Others included the volunteers who supported older members of our community during the pandemic in the form of digital literacy to support them in accessing services remotely. These examples and many serve as a wonderful reminder just what strength our community holds and the impact we can make when we work together. This altruistic tendency which has long been recognised in our community was clear to see in the pandemic and I suspect will continue on well into the future!

Building a better working world

An Inclusive Working World

EY proudly supports Cork Pride!

Some perspectives on Diversity & Inclusion from around our business.

Manny Adeleke
Data & Analytics Director

Diversity & Inclusion, and what it means for our families, has been at the forefront of the global conversation for the last number of months.

The issue of race embedded within that, is something that people often find uncomfortable for various reasons. As with any uncomfortable situation, education is key. I have had a number of uncomfortable personal experiences growing up in a society that wasn't fully ready to acknowledge, but more importantly accept and embrace our fundamental differences.

My wife is white, we have two daughters. The thought of my daughters being picked on, insulted, or excluded for nothing other than their slightly darker skin colour is something that frequently crosses my mind, and for good reasons too.

We want to raise our daughters to be strong, independent women. But it is important to us that the source of some of that strength doesn't stem from the need to 'fit in' and not feel marginalised. I think we're at a very important inflection point as a society to realise that not being racist simply isn't enough anymore. It's time to stop accepting the things we cannot change and start changing the things we cannot accept.

Maria Barry
Marketing Associate

To me, the idea embedded in Pride itself is to fight back against various forces that aim to eliminate who you are.

I come from a rural area of Kerry where (in the '90s and early '00s) being just that – 'who you are' - was fine, as long as that included playing GAA (if you're a man) supporting GAA (if you're a woman or a man past his playing days), going to mass on a Sunday, eating meat seven days a week and drinking copious amounts of tea.

This wasn't my truth - I had minimal interest in GAA, didn't conform to the Catholic Church, liked to eat more vegetables than meat and preferred coffee to tea.

In college, seeing coverage of Pride for the first time – while circumstantially very different – I found a community I could relate to, and find acceptance in. Being an ally to the vibrant LGBT+ community has helped me develop confidence in myself and my family so that I don't hide who I am to fit in.

That's how I see Pride – as both a fight for what we believe in, and as a beacon of hope for all those that have felt like an outsider to rally behind.

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OUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING DADDY & DAD!

By Kevin Egan Higgins

Our first family photo on day 1 of meeting our second son!

So, this story started many years ago in the early noughties, we both left Cork separately, not knowing of each other at that time, both in our early 20's and yet to embrace our sexuality. Our story is so similar, and no doubt will resonate with others out there. The Ireland and Cork back then was very different to today, being gay was something that we personally found hard to explore here. Back then the idea of ever being openly gay, getting married, let alone have children was something we could only dream of, and it honestly felt that if we did come out of the closet, then all those things would be lost forever. How wrong we were and lucky for our generation things were changing for the LGBT+ community in the UK, Ireland and across Europe!

We decided to move to the UK, I guess on reflection we were running away from a place where we felt we couldn't be ourselves, and to a place that was disconnected from our family and friends in Cork so that we could explore our sexuality with some anonymity. Yes, we were excited and scared, who are we? Are our thoughts wrong? What will our family and friends think? Will we be accepted? All those questions taunted us for years. Well, as a gay couple and as closeted gay men for many years, we are so glad that we did leave Cork, as if we hadn't, I don't think we would have found each other and achieved all those goals that seemed impossible all those years ago. Today we are husbands, Dads and most importantly a very proud LGBT+ family.

We both moved to the same area of the UK within a year of each other, our paths had never knowingly crossed when we both lived in Cork. We were introduced to each other through a group of mutual friends and the rest is history as they would say.

During the 2000's, life was starting to change for the better in the UK for the LGBT+ community. In December 2005 the first Civil Partnership took place in England and in the same month, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, allowing for same sex couples to adopt came into effect. These were huge events that enabled us to take a step closer to equality.

During 2006 we took the brave decision to "come out" to our family and friends having been together for over 3 years. We had a civil partnership in 2007 and started our journey to become Daddy & Dad. Our dreams and hopes that once felt out of reach were now within touching distance.

One of our very first experiences beginning our adoption journey, wasn't a positive one. Considering we were all excited, how will this work? how long will we be waiting? Like any new parent to be, whether you are gay, straight, single, having a baby naturally, through adoption or surrogacy, you are excited, nervous, anxious and need positive reassurance. What we got and didn't expect was "We suggest you contact the adoption team of your local authority as we don't have experience of matching children with people like you…", it was a private adoption agency that had a religious affiliation, we were the only same sex couple at the event, and we left someone deflated and disheartened questioning were we doing the right thing or not, and although we could now legally adopt, was this going to be a harder process than we had first envisaged and would discrimination within the system sabotage our dreams. After several months procrastinating about what to do, we finally got the courage up to contact the adoption team at our local authority that was run by the council, part of us expecting a negative experience again but we got completely the opposite. They couldn't have been more different, positive and welcoming. We met other individuals from the LGBT+ community also going through the process that we are still friends with today.

It took us 2 years to adopt our first child from our initial contact with the adoption team. What an emotional rollercoaster ride of highs and lows that time was. We had to attend various parenting and training events, we were fortunate to have a social worker assigned to us that was very experienced and accepting. However, we didn't enjoy the whole experience as the social worker's role in assessing our suitability to adopt was to delve into every part of our life, so at times it felt intrusive but was necessary considering a child, that in most cases will have had a very negative start in life would be placed with us for the rest of their lives.

We still remember the day our social worker phoned to tell us that we had been approved to adopt. We cried, screamed, laughed…. WOW, we are going to be Dad's and then the waiting game started. From approval to adopt, it took us about 6 months to be matched with a child. And…… finally in late 2009, the call we had been waiting for came, it was to discuss a little boy who was 18 months old that was a potential match. That evening our social worker called to the house with his file, shared lots of information with us about his story, how he ended up for adoption and also shared some photos with us. We had a couple of hours with her to look through everything and then she left, taking with her all the photos and information, we weren't allowed keep anything until the match had been approved. We can still see that photo in our minds toady! We cried that night with joy that we were so close to being parents but also with sadness that in the world today, a child through no fault of their own can end up in the system. The next few months were tough, lots of meetings with every professional involved in our son's life, from his social worker, medical advisors to foster parents, this was all part of the matching process to ensure that it would be a successful match.

> "THEN THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS, THE PHONE RANG AND THE MATCH HAD BEEN APPROVED, WE COULD FINALLY MEET OUR SON

Then the week before Christmas, the phone rang and the match had been approved, we could finally meet our son for the first time in 3 weeks, January 2010. To say that we celebrated that evening would be an understatement, it was the best Christmas present we could have ever asked for and to top it off we both arrived home from work to find our social worker had put a copy of all his photos through our letter box. We now had 3 weeks to child proof our house, start adoption leave from work and get ready to be Dad's. We flew back to Cork for a few days so that we could share the good news, we handed Christmas cards to our parents with copies of our son's photos inside, saying Happy Christmas, this is your grandson.

And then fast forward 5 years and we did it all again, the second time round was much quicker, it took us about 12 months from contacting the agency to being match and approved, and during the summer of 2015 we finally got to meet our second son who was 4 years old. So that day in 2010 and again in 2015 meeting our sons for the first time, we can honestly say were and are to this day the best days of our lives.

Returning home to live in Cork, well in May 2015 watching events unfold at Dublin castle and around the country as Ireland overwhelming voted in favour of same sex marriage, we for the first time started to think the country we ran away from nearly 15 years earlier had sent a clear signal that we were now welcome.

In December 2016 we moved back home to Cork. ,Our experience as a LGBT+ family so far has been very positive, our children's school, Carrigaline Educate Together are so inclusive and welcoming which made the transition for our children easier, hence making our lives easier due to their core values and equality-based ethos. Family, friends and work colleagues are all very accepting. However, there have been some challenges, which reminds us that we can never forget that the flight for LGBT+ rights continue. We had a very interesting experience with registering our children for PPS numbers, let's just say that the computer needed a "Mother" and "Fathers" name with the staff member needing to seek a lot of additional advice on how our children's applications should be processed. Additionally, our children were also unable to obtain Irish citizenship until 2017 when the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 came into effect on the grounds that we were a same sex couple. To think that our eldest son was living with us for 7 years and held a non-Irish passport that on occasion when travelling abroad would prompt additional questions at passport control.

Five years on, we have no regrets having left the UK to return to Cork as an LGBT+ family. Writing this piece for Cork Pride reminds us of how important Pride is, how those before us fought so hard over the years for rights that have made it easier for us today, it's important more than ever that we celebrate Pride to be proud of who we are, what we have achieved and to highlight the inequalities that members of the LGBT+ community continue to face today.

Our journey is not over yet, as at some stage in the future we may be writing a piece about being same sex Grandparents, but let's hope that's a long way off for now!

Our first Cork Pride

THE QUEER REBELS

Cork LGBTQ Media Activism & Visibility

By Dr. Páraic Kerrigan

The story of queer Irish visibility is one that is only beginning to emerge. While scholarly efforts to account for our community's shared and varied histories continue to become uncovered, both within academic research and in broader cultural and social movements, media activism and visibility have been central factors to the story of LGBTQ rights in Ireland.

While my recent book, LGBTQ Visibility, Media and Sexuality in Ireland, has demonstrated the significance of representation, along with the political and transformative potential of media visibility in Ireland, Cork has been one of the key players in this broader history and has been a hotbed of media activism since the founding of a gay civil rights movement in the region. Cork, or the Queer Republic of Cork, as it has been dubbed by archival activist Orla Egan, has always been a central and important player in the story of Irish LGBTQ visibility and history.

As a gay civil rights movement began to spread across the island, with the likes of the Irish Gay Rights Movement and the National Gay Federation, Cork too saw a demonstrably active movement emerge in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Media activism and visibility was central to many of these early activist formations, particularly that of the Irish Gay Rights Movement Cork and the Cork Gay Collective (CGC). The CGC in particular developed a manifesto which stated that 'society's view of sexuality and the structures reflecting that view must be altered ... underlying this fight is the need for access to a dissemination of positive information about sexuality in the media'. Cathal Kerrigan, a member of the CGC noted the significance of media activism to gay civil rights in Cork, when he states: 'getting images on television that said we are Irish and we are gay and we are here was a huge step and very important for us to try and achieve'.

This sentiment runs to the core of many of the prominent Corkonian media activists to have emerged and fought for LGBTQ rights across a range of media platforms and representational planes. Among these include Cathal Kerrigan, Orla Egan, Kieran Rose, Ger Philpott and of course the indomitable Arthur Leahy, to name but a few who have pushed the envelope for LGBTQ rights in Ireland.

One of the first significant watershed moments for early queer Irish visibility occurred in Cork when self-identifying gay couple Arthur Leahy and Laurie Steele appeared on Irish television, on the current affairs show Week In (1980). This appearance signalled a significant shift for queer visibility in Ireland. The interview was shot in the domestic space of Arthur and Laurie's home, which was significant as it was one of the first broadcasts to provide an alternative to the implicit heterosexuality of the home dominant within Irish culture. What was significant about their appearance was the heteronormative frame that RTÉ attempted to confer onto the couple, which was noted quite overtly when the presenter Áine O'Connor asked them: 'do you have a sense of husband and wife?' Implied in this question is the expectation that gay men would submit to the heteronormative family structure which permeated Irish society. In response, Laurie explained that he and Arthur had developed a relationship that operated outside of this strict binary and that put importance on themselves as 'individuals living together', a major signal of acceptance for many of the LGBTQ people watching.

This first major media appearance of a Cork couple on Irish television was significant, particularly in the context of the fact that the climate of criminality hung heavily over the LGBTQ community, as gay male sex acts were criminalised. To appear as openly and brave as they did on the biggest platform possible at the time was massively important, not only for Cork but for shifting perceptions of gay people in Ireland.

While the reception of Laurie and Arthur was widely positive, homophobic undertones were evident in some of the Cork press, where the Cork Evening Echo noted: "here's a pair of gay boys that must tell their story". While demonstrating to audiences that being in a content, gay relationship was possible, this broadcast was also important in breaking the Dublin-centricity of queer media visibility in the late 1970s and early 1980s, confirming proudly that a gay civil rights movement was emerging nationally, especially in the rebel county.

While appearances in national media have been a significant means by which Cork LGBTQ activists made their mark, the formation of alternative media systems and networks proved as important and crucial. A gay press proved central to early media activism in the region. In 1977, four issues of a Cork gay newsletter Corks Crew were produced. The Cork IGRM newsletter Sapphire was published on 30 January 1978 and was in circulation for a number of years. For a period of time, Munster GCN was produced as a four page spread, which was placed over copies of GCN in Munster and appeared as an insert elsewhere around the country. All these publications served as crucial forms of community building, consciousness raising and generating locally proximate queer knowledge for a community in Cork that was ever expanding and developing.

The rich history and vibrancy of those from the rebel county continued throughout Ireland's media history. In 2006, Orla Egan and Catherine Morley appeared on The Late Late Show following the birth of their son, becoming one of the first publicly visible lesbian couples in the mainstream media in Ireland to discuss issues affecting lesbian families, particularly in light of the birth of their child through assisted reproduction. In 2009, Cork county hurler Dónal Óg Cusack became the first elite Irish sportsperson to publicly come out as gay, marking his coming-out on The Late Late Show. Cusack was followed by GAA footballer Valerie Mulcahy, who came out in 2014. In 2016, transgender siblings Jamie and Chloe O'Herlihy appeared on the RTÉ documentary My Trans Life, where they openly spoke about the challenges facing trans people in Ireland.

Many of these appearances by activists and individuals from Cork were harnessed and utilized to disentangle LGBTQ identities from anachronistic, generic stereotypes and to make available to isolated LGBTQ people an awareness of shared existences and desires. While media visibility and media activism are an important facet to the story of Irish LGBTQ civil rights and LGBTQ representation, the Queer Republic of Cork has been a central presence in this story and in many cases, has been at the forefront of inciting change and ensuring more representation.

Dr. Páraic Kerrigan is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Information and Communication Studies at University College Dublin. He has published widely on gender and sexuality in digital and traditional media, creative labour and data cultures. Further, he has a particular research interest in queer Irish culture. He has just published his first book, LGBTQ Visibility, Media and Sexuality in Ireland (2021), which was followed by his second book, Media Graduates at Work (2021).

Laurie Steele (left) and Arthur Leahy (right) as they appear on RTÉ's Week In, 1980
Source: Cork LGBT Archive https://corklgbtarchive.com/items/show/148

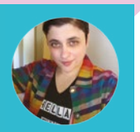
vmware®

PROUD TOGETHER - Leading with Empathy

At VMware, our people shape our company and values and drive our success as a community. The past year has put us all to the test, both professionally and personally, and has shown the strength of VMware's inclusive leadership and that of our Power of Diversity groups, including our PRIDE@VMware ERG. At VMware, we came together to face the current pandemic, help our Black and Asian communities, back LGBTQ+ public policies, while also supporting our employees through these trying times.
Our executives focused on leading with empathy and compassion which was seen in the internal policies, from additional benefits such as pandemic leave to increased Mental Health support and resources.

In celebration of PRIDE Month, we want to share some thoughts from our PRIDE@VMware champions. Get to know VMware!

Deepa Joshi, you can all me DJ (she/her/hers)



Sr. Program Manager, OCTO (Office of the CTO)

Tell us a little bit about yourself
I am a late bloomer in a sense, because I came out at the age of 40. I grew up in India and have a degree in Hospitality Management. Then, I studied in Switzerland for a year before coming to the US in 1998. My first few years in the US I spent in Florida and New York, before moving to Northern California in 2001. I went back to school to study project management, joined a hotel-based-tech startup and have been working in tech since. On a personal front, I was married to a man for 17 years and have two beautiful children ages 11 and 17.

In 2016, I decided to embrace my authentic self and came out of the closet as a lesbian. As a South Asian raised in a culture where divorce is a no-no and homosexuality is not a topic that is discussed, this was a hard transition to navigate on many levels. I had to work on myself to get over the shame and guilt, but it was more painful to think of going back to living the life that was not my own. I am grateful for the support I got from my family and friends over those years. A year and half ago my child who was 15 at the time, came out to me as trans. I feel my own journey has helped me support her as she navigates her journey. I am also grateful to have the support of the PRIDE POD over the last few challenging years.

Who Inspires you?
My mother and my daughter. My mother taught me the importance of loving others and taking care of others. My daughter is teaching me daily how to love myself and take care of me

What can you tell us about your career journey as part of the LGBTQ+ community?
Though I came out in my personal life, I did not feel comfortable being out at work in my previous job. I was offered a job at VMware in February 2019, which excited me because I knew firsthand from friends already at VMware who were engaged in the Pride POD that the culture was open, accepting and focused on DEI. I appreciate the inclusive culture at VMware and choose to be visible as a South Asian, later-in-life lesbian because representation matters. I also do the work I do with the PRIDE POD for my trans child and hope that she gets to live in a world that is more accepting of all of our beautiful differences.

What advice do you have for people in the LGBTQ+ community and their allies?
Be You. The world needs your light and wisdom. For all the naysayers and haters out there, you will find twice as many friends and allies. There is some magic that happens when one shows up in their authentic self; it's like their inner light shines more brightly. Let your light shine, know you are beautiful, and you are loved.

Shane McCarthy (He/Him)

Senior Director
Global Strategic Sourcing & Operations

I've worked at VMware for 14 years. During that time the growth and impact of our Power of Difference (PODs) has been absolutely phenomenal. Joining the VMinclusion Ireland Pride Pillar last year has given me firsthand experience of the exceptional efforts our POD colleagues go to in order to empower our Pride community members and enable our allies.
#PROUD TOGETHER

Em Turner (They/Them)

Technical Writer

One of the reasons I joined VMware is because I knew how active and amazing the Pride Power of Difference group is! I haven't been disappointed since I joined – I have seen the Pride POD accomplish so much and have been given the space to grow and educate other folks at VMware. If you want to make an impact at VMware, the Pride POD – or any of the other amazing PODs here – can definitely help you do that.

vminclusion
The power of human difference

vminclusion IRELAND

vminclusion PRIDE @VMWARE

Andy McAdams (He/Him)

Manager, Product Management for VMware Carbon Black

Tell us a little bit about yourself
I'm a nerd and an athlete. I'm an avid MMO gamer, love to read (mostly sci-fi/fantasy books but I've read everything), and still love Pokemon at age 37. I also love to move - I run, spin, hike, do calisthenics (sometimes all at once) and I'm a Shodan (black belt) in Shotokan Karate (Fun fact: My sensei is one of the Olympic coaches!). I live in a more rural suburb of Pittsburgh with my husband, our two cats and three dogs.

Who Inspires you?
I have two people who really inspire me, a contemporary figure and a historical figure. The first Henry David Thoreau - I wrote a critique of Civil Disobedience in high school, and that essay drastically changed the way that I viewed the world around me, and I can see the influence of Thoreau's work (and the Transcendentalist movement overall) on how I view the world. The second is Stewart Butterfield, the creator of Flickr and Slack – and more importantly a tiny game in between Flickr and Slack called "Glitch". Butterfield has a PhD in Philosophy and brings the humanities to tech, such as integrity, morality, ethics. His ethical approach to business and doing the right thing for the humans working for him is apparent in everything he does. I strive to be a leader like him.

What can you tell us about your career journey as part of the LGBTQ+ community?
For most of my career, I wasn't out at work. My friends and people I worked closely with always knew and I never made it a point to avoid it, I just didn't necessarily volunteer the information. That is, until I was at a company where I was legitimately intimidated by my manager. He was an incredibly nice guy, but he had said some things that made me really concerned that if he knew I was gay, it would change how he viewed me to the negative–and Pennsylvania had no protections for LGBTQ+ folks, so I could be fired just for being gay and have no recourse.
When he asked me about my "wife" I would use inclusive words like "us" "we" or gender indistinct, "My spouse." It was such an uncomfortable situation. I vowed once I left there that I would never put myself in that position again and finding an environment where I felt comfortable being out became a make-or-break criteria for me.

What advice do you have for people in the LGBTQ+ community and their allies?
Always know your limits - know what you are willing to accept, and what you aren't. That line is different for all of us, and it's important for you to be deliberate and intentional in determining that line for yourself. Embrace mindfulness - I know being mindful is all the rage, but at the risk of being a hipster - I was into mindfulness before it was cool :-) I can't even begin to recount the number of benefits it's brought me - in my career, my mental health, my physical health. I would be hardpressed to find a part of my life that hasn't been positively impacted by mindfulness.

While I feel like I could fill my own book with advice, I'll end with embracing a learning mindset. I see failures or challenges as opportunities to learn and grown and just become better. I let go of the value judgement of "I failed therefore this is bad" and instead turned it into "alright, that didn't go as I planned, what did I learn?"

Jason Conyard (he/him)

Chief Information Officer &
Executive Sponsor Pride@VMware

Words and Symbols are imortant, but so are policies and actions. VMware is committed to making sure our benefits and programs are supportive and equitable for all our employees regardless of who they love or how they identify.

careers.vmware.com

PROUD TOGETHER

> “THIS YEAR HAS TESTED, TAUGHT AND REVEALED SO MUCH. LINC HAS SEEN AN INFLUX OF WOMEN OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS COMING OUT AND CONNECTING WITH OUR SERVICE FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

LINC-ING OUT

It’s 12.30pm and the coffee is brewed, click on the link and you’re met with friendly faces and smiling, brady-bunch style arrangement of other members of the LINC community.

‘You’re on mute!’ someone says, as you’re mouthing away silent ‘hellos’.

LINC-IN; LINC but from your kitchen or bedroom or spare room-come-home-office …. No one can see the stack of storage boxes in the corner, just the little windows filled with butch, femme, bi, non-binary faces ready to check in and catch up.

This year has tested, taught and revealed so much. LINC has seen an influx of women of all ages and backgrounds coming out and connecting with our service from all over the country.

One of the opportunities (though few) that Covid restrictions have afforded us; virtual drop-ins and remote conversations.

Since March of 2020 LINC has moved many of our services to online platforms; we have 4 weekly drop-in sessions over zoom, an online health group on Facebook, peer support sessions over zoom and on the phone and our LGBTI+ diversity and awareness training has been running on Zoom and over Teams. Though Covid restrictions necessitated the use of alternative and virtual spaces, we have an increase in numbers and locations in terms of who can now access our daily services.

It’s rare that there’s an optimistic comment about Covid unless we’re heralding the easing of restrictions or a robust order of vaccines but there is one thing the pandemic has gifted us that we can cheer about – accessibility! Our online chats allow women with children, women who are carers and those with other commitments that may have previously acted as a barrier to connecting in with the community, to join us from their homes and various other locations. Our monthly ISL drop-in also means that our service is more accessible to those from the deaf community.

Though we have finally been able to host in person meet-ups for the past number of weeks, we will continue our online presence into the future; with accessibility and inclusion at the heart of our service.

LINC will gather up all the learnings the pandemic has provided and continue to build an ever-growing and adapting community space for lesbian and bisexual women in Cork and beyond and we’re excited about this.

With a broader reach we have a greater impact, so what will community work look like in the near future? A realistic approach is blended and weather-proof! LINC will continue to provide online spaces as well as endeavour to host out-door and other safe ways of meeting and connecting with the community. It’s clear that the past 15 months have exacerbated mental health challenges and feelings of isolation within our community, some hard to reach groups have become harder to reach and to combat this we have set up a pen-pal service called Silver Scribblers; older lesbian and bisexual women can make contact with LINC and we’ll connect them with a LINC volunteer to exchange letters each month in an effort to combat those feelings of disconnect and loneliness.

Our outdoor meet-up – ‘OUTside Again’ currently has a capacity of 15 and each Saturday has been full with smiling faces, bursting to make those in person introductions with one another after a long period of time spent making friends on screens and Facebook groups. We have continued to run our drama group and this summer, during Cork Pride we aim to host a theatre experience that will be the first of it’s kind in Cork; ‘Queer Code’ is a park-theatre hybrid experience where the audience walks around Cork’s stunning Fitzgerald’s park and scans QR codes to reveal pre-recorded monologues from their favourite lesbian and bi thespians, it’s like Poke mon Go – but with queer people!

We’re back to playing soccer outdoors and hope to re-launch our other out-door groups over the coming months.

The expansion of LINC this year is testament to the ongoing work of the staff team and members of our steering group; we haven’t stopped working to improve and grow the organisation and we won’t! LINC now has a broader reach in the form of our two new out-reach workers in Kerry and Waterford, Hannah and Alison who are doing a fantastic job of bringing the counties together.

Our new 3 year education and employment programme WorkLINC, funded by The Equality Fund, will employ another staff member to oversee the project, improving outcomes from lesbian and bi women in relation to education and employment.

All of these adaptations show that regardless of the challenges and circumstances we find ourselves in, we will adapt, move forward and overcome.

If you’d like to get involved in anything mentioned above, please don’t hesitate to contact us on info@linc.ie or on 021 4808600

Boston Scientific PRIDE ERG Mission

A welcoming LGBTQ+ and Ally community that fosters inclusiveness and professional fulfilment through corporate and community LGBTQ+ programs and initiatives

ORLA LEE
EHS

PRIDE in Boston Scientific (BSC) is about ensuring we can bring our whole selves to work. Many of us have experienced working in a company where we hide who we are, and it can be very difficult.

I started working in BSC in 2017 and it didn't take long to realise I didn't have to hide who I truly am. I have regular conversations about my partner and our children with my colleagues.

In 2021 I took on the Cork Chapter lead role of the PRIDE Employee Resource Group and we are focusing on empowering our employees to bring their whole self to work. We are rolling out training on how language and behaviour can impact an employee/ family member or friend who is struggling with their own sexuality.

Another area of focus for us is on empowering our employees to bring their whole self to work. We recently launched our new PRIDE bench at the employee entrance as a reminder to all To Be Yourself. The new Progressive PRIDE flag is proudly flying at the Cork site for the month of June.

MARY McCARTHY
QUALITY

As sponsor of the PRIDE ERG Cork chapter for 2021, I am humbled to be part of a team that is energised to engage and educate our colleagues on PRIDE and the LGBTQ+ community.

One of the priorities for leadership here in the Model Farm Road is to ensure everybody feels and experiences Boston as an inclusive place to work, a place where everybody feels comfortable being themselves. Our PRIDE ERG is key to achieving this goal.

I am motivated to support PRIDE as respect and inclusion form part of my core values. As a leader it is my privilege and responsibility to champion and influence positively where I can. With many of my dearest family and friends in the LBGT+ community, PRIDE is a natural fit for me as an active ally.

SANDRA DONEGAN
BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

I returned to Boston Scientific Cork after 8.5 years, having left in 2012 and I have to say it felt like coming home.

When I was considering returning, I had no doubt that I would feel comfortable in the workplace. I didn't have to think twice about how I would fit in or if I would be accepted as my true self. In fact knowing I would be accepted for who I am was a big factor in making the decision to come back. Returning in 2021 it is obvious that BSC is taking its responsibility to be an inclusive, diverse and equitable employer very seriously. As I have settled in over the last three months, how I see people treating each other and supporting each other has confirmed that I made the right decision to return. Here's to many more happy years as part of the BSC family and to making more friends for life along the way!

COLIN KENNEALLY
PRODUCTION

The reason I joined PRIDE ERG was to show our employees that Boston Scientific is an inclusive company and that it's a safe space to 'Be Yourself'. Being part of the PRIDE ERG has meant a lot to me, as it pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me achieved PRIDE in myself.

My highlight so far was to walk on site in 2015 and see the rainbow flag flying for the first time, I felt like I belonged at Boston Scientific.

ANNE COLLINS
LOGISTICS

I joined PRIDE as I wanted to educate myself on how to better support family and friends. Working towards a better future for my younger relatives, ensuring there will be companies that will welcome them for who they are and what they can contribute by bringing their whole, true self to work.

There is a real energy within the Boston Scientific Cork PRIDE ERG to highlight how open and diverse the work environment is in BSC Cork. We are continuously building on our foundations to be the best we can be. I love the fact that being a member of the PRIDE ERG in Cork allows me to learn, laugh and become a better ally to all.

NOELLE CAMBRIDGE
PRODUCTION

Pride to me stands for family & feeling at home. For so long I used to be nervous about being looked at differently or judged for simply being me and loving the "wrong" person.

I walk down the corridor in Boston Scientific with my head held high, why? Because the people there make me feel at home & it is like a little family. Yes, we save lives everyday through the medical device products we manufacture, but the people of Boston Scientific with their open minds and non-judgemental attitudes positively impact more lives that they realise!

Boston Scientific Mission

Boston Scientific is dedicated to transforming lives through innovative medical solutions that improve the health of patients around the world.

RIDE WITH PRIDE!

By Alannah Murray

Dear Reader,

Happy Pride first of all! I know it hasn't been the easiest year on everyone, in particular the queer community. You've missed out on everything the queer experience is; meeting up with your friends, laughter, dancing, queer joy. Dating, hookups, relationships, all the fun things that come with being young. What if I told you, that being queer and disabled meant missing out on it anyway; Covid or not?

Disabled people are frequently left out of conversations around the queer experience, but a big gap that hasn't gotten any smaller is the distance between disabled queer people when it comes to dating and sex. There seems to be a disconnect from the communities around the intersections of both identities; you can be both disabled AND queer, despite the barrier of which there are numerous. I would know, that's me! I've been around the block a few times trying to navigate the queer scene as a disabled person, so I think it's time I gave back and shared my wisdom around disability, dating and sex and tackle some of the issues that exclude disabled people from the topic of sex. On a human level from non-disabled people, I think it is seen as somewhat taboo, and not something we talk about enough in queer circles. That changes today!

Online dating during the pandemic has allowed people to keep in touch with people and for many has been a godsend. People have gotten creative with it, from online movie nights to virtual dinner dates. If anything, lockdown and being forced to migrate online has made everything more accessible for disabled people looking for connections. Even more casual apps like Grindr have thrived, though many people have felt like they've completed apps at this point. One thing that hasn't changed though, are people's attitudes towards dating and hookups with disabled people. There have been many debates I've had with myself around disability and dating in the online world; the main one being disclosure. When I first started online dating, I didn't have any pictures of myself in my wheelchair and didn't include anything about it in my bio.

Once people found out, the reaction was mixed but most of it was negative. It ranged from people saying, "Aw that's a shame", to curious people who wanted to know invasive questions about my medical history and my ability to still have sex, and then on the extreme end of the spectrum there were people who said that I should tell people before they matched with me to avoid "tricking people". It was a really confusing time for me, and my identity. I was already nervous about dating because I hadn't dated through my teens at all. I believed that people would feel tricked or something by finding out I was in a wheelchair, like it was this big plot specifically to defraud people.

So, I began to disclose my disability and I started loving myself more and it took a lot of work to remind myself that I deserved the same affection as a non-disabled person. Then the messages stopped coming, apart from people who were "devotees". These are people who have a sexualized interest in disabled people and tend to prey on young disabled women.

So, for quite some time, I didn't date online at all. Luckily, I've had some positive experiences as well with online dating and met some incredible people, but it got me thinking about wider representation and people's attitudes towards disability, sex and relationships.

There seems to be two extremes with how people engage with disability and sex. They either hypersexualize it, or they don't talk about it at all. It's like catholic guilt. It's a frowned upon topic that disabled people can engage with sexuality at all because people think we're these innocent people with no control over our lives and need to be cared for. That isn't the case. We need people to view us as human beings rather than objects or charity cases. All the things you'd afford somebody with no disability on dating apps and all the depth you'd find in them based on their interests and their qualities that you fall for or makes you want to get to know them more? Disabled people have them and more. There's this idea that disabled people aren't just as eager to get the ride as non-disabled people. I think with the queer community, we need to reject the idea that disabled people don't want to know someone biblically just because they're disabled. To do that, we need to do what Irish people fear most; talk about riding, both in a general sense and one on one.

> **"DISABLED QUEERS WANT THE EXACT SAME THINGS OUR NON-DISABLED SIBLINGS WANT; TO DANCE, TO BE INCLUDED, TO BE LOVED, TO BE RODE INTO OBLIVION.**

Non-disabled people have this fear of saying the wrong thing when it comes to disability. My general rule of thumb? Talk to them like you would anyone else. If we make jokes about ourselves and have opening lines on dating apps related to their disability? Laugh at them, we know we're funny and it's about time people gave us credit for it.

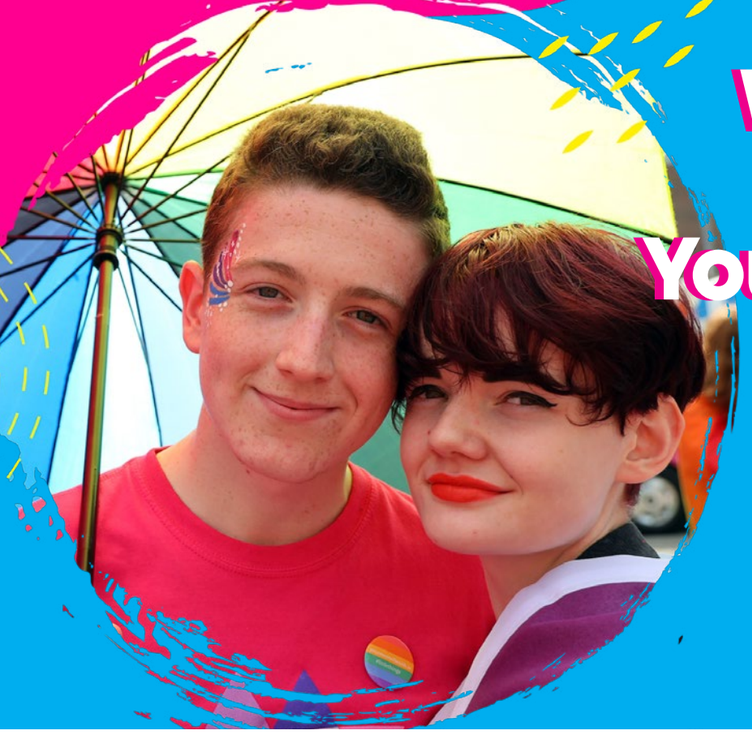
There's also a lack of awareness around disability, particularly within the queer community. Why? Because we're erased from queer culture. A majority of disabled venues aren't accessible, at least in my experience as a wheelchair user. There's been little engagement from the community around issues of accessibility and ableism, and I don't want to believe it's a lack of caring from either non-disabled LGBTQ+ advocates. I believe that people want to be inclusive, but they don't know how. Much like getting over the stigma around disability and sex, this is solved by talking. If you're putting together an event on queer issues, include disabled people to ensure you're behind accessible and inclusive.

I personally have a lot to say about how I've been treated by the community that's meant to welcome us from a lack of engagement from promoters and venues about accessibility and then flat-out ignorance from people on nights out in gay bars. We've been erased from queer history even though we've been right there at every pivotal event from Stonewall to Marriage Equality here in Ireland. The disabled queer experience is one of exclusion, and that has to end if we're to move forward.

Sex positivity in the queer community needs to do more to extend to disabled people. For example, if you run a nightclub that offers a dark room. Put it on the ground floor. You may not think disabled people will make use of it, but I have news for you; they will. If you consider hoists as an example, they are pretty much the same as sex swings. Disabled people deserve access to sex as much as anyone else, and people should be having sex with us whether it's a one-night stand or as part of a relationship dynamic, whether it's one partner or multiple. Open the lines of communication around sex. If you're having sex with a disabled person, talk to them about what they like, where is the best place to touch, what positions work for them; all the conversations you would hopefully have with non-disabled partners. Content creators like Andrew Gurza and Eva Sweeney are revolutionizing the way we talk about disabled people and sex, and while I would encourage you to check them out on Twitter and Instagram, they're international examples. We need space for Irish disabled people to build those platforms and discuss sex in the same carefree way without the stigma.

In summary, my advice is simple.

Talk to disabled people. Include disabled people. Date disabled people. Ride disabled people! The community needs us, you need us, whether you realize it or not. Disabled queers want the exact same things our non-disabled siblings want; to dance, to be included, to be loved, to be rode into oblivion. It's up to the community whether they're going to be inclusive.



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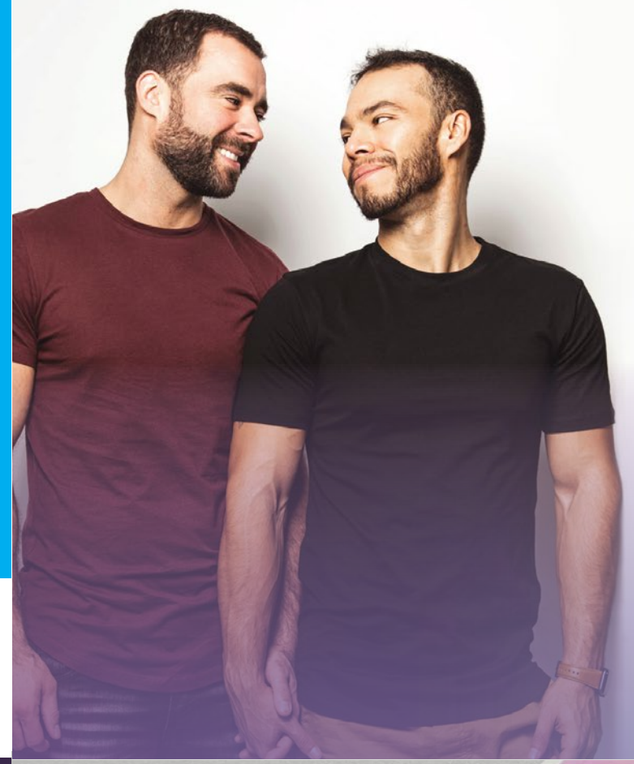

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THE MTU INCLUSION IN PRACTICE GROUP:

WHAT ARE WE DOING, AND WHY?

By Dr Deirdre O'Donovan

Warm greetings on behalf of the Inclusion in Practice group!

We are currently undertaking a first-of-its-kind project in MTU, and are delighted to be able to share with you all, what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why.

Our MTU-wide Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) project concerns all staff and students. The primary objective is to support continuing efforts aimed at developing and maintaining an Inclusive MTU for all staff and students. When individuals feel included, they are more engaged, committed, and open to participation. This is true of our educational context, but also workplace and social contexts. What we learn through this work in MTU won't just be relevant to us, but to any other context that involves people. Everyone is different, meaning diversity is everywhere, whether it seems like it or not.

This project is new but is in addition to the many strong initiatives already being undertaken by different groups across MTU. Indeed, we are privileged to be able to say that there are many groups and individuals already making great strides in the inclusion space in MTU, many of whom have been doing so for many years. This project will ultimately support the activities of our colleagues by being stakeholder and data driven, meaning we will be hearing directly from stakeholders what inclusion means to them, and how we can support individuals in perceiving inclusion in MTU. Importantly, the project also supports MTU's first Core Value: Inclusion.

The Project to Date

In October 2019, a need for D&I training was identified by our HR Manager. This is when my colleagues Antoinette Hogan and Dr Sheila Butler, and I, all lecturers and researchers in the area of D&I, came on board. We began by designing and developing D&I workshops for staff and students. These were piloted in one department, following which, the roll-out across campus began (currently paused due to Covid-19, but they will be back!).

The workshops provide an overview of diversity in society and education, then explore Unconscious Bias, Privilege, and Micro-Aggression, but are ultimately heavily focussed on Inclusion. Both skills- and awareness-based, the goal is to support participants in being inclusive on a practical level. By that, we mean that we reinforce that inclusion isn't 'just' about dimensions of diversity. Instead, it's about dimensions of diversity, but also practical workplace needs, for example having access to the tools needed to do your job, being facilitated in developing workplace relationships, or feeling like you are part of a team. While content is delivered, our role takes the form of facilitation to allow for open, frank discussion and questioning. Each session is framed as being a time for discussion and questioning from the outset. We start each session by explicitly stating that we are not there to lecture anyone, or tell them they are "bad" people, or that everything they do and say regarding D&I is wrong. This is crucial for engagement in D&I training in any setting. D&I training can be an uncomfortable experience and is often rolled-out by organisations when something has "gone wrong". Sometimes, participants can go to D&I training with preconceived ideas of who the training is for. Focusing on inclusion, which is the extent to which every individual feels they belong and can bring their authentic selves to a situation, in whatever form that takes for them in that particular situation, can ease that idea. We are aware that regardless of its intentions, diversity training can be interpreted by some as "pushing an agenda" for particular groups. That's not to say that diversity initiatives for particular groups are bad; quite the opposite. Initiatives focussed on particular elements of diversity are fantastic avenues for learning for those who do not have shared experiences regarding that element of diversity, and for opening dialogue. The advantage of also running training focusing on inclusion of all, however, is that it reinforces that inclusion is for everybody, regardless of how they are diverse.

We have also developed what we like to call a "Take Away" pack. This is provided to all workshop attendees, and includes worksheets from the session, and a body of information to assist attendees in applying and developing a deeper understanding of the workshop content. This currently includes information on biases, practical implications associated with diversity in a college setting (although it applies to any learning and training environment), the advantages ("Business Case") associated with D&I, a model titled Factors Contributing to Inclusion, and an explanation of different Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation terminology.

To capture the current perception of Inclusion, and ensure future activities are reflective of as many individuals as possible, surveys were sent to students and staff across MTU. In order to know where to go next, we need to know where we are now. Do staff and students perceive inclusion in MTU at present? What are we doing well, and what needs a little bit of work? Inclusion is momentary and contextual, so we need to keep working at it. Data from these surveys is currently being analysed and compiled into a report, due to be completed over the coming year. While based in MTU, it will be of relevance to other contexts, as although we are an education provider, we are also an organisation.

We have also drafted an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. It's impossible to get everything to do with D&I into one policy, so this is an umbrella policy that sets the scene for inclusion in MTU, and acts as a reference point for other policies. Again, we are fortunate that across both MTU Cork and Kerry campuses there were some very strong policies in place. Rather than reinventing the wheel, an umbrella policy allows for retention of these existing policies, and simple amendment where needed.

We have many future plans in the works, so watch the **#InclusiveMTU** space!

MTU's new part-time Certificate in Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace commences in September 2021.

For further information, check out www.mtu.ie

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CORK LGBT ARCHIVE

By Orla Egan

This has been a year of acknowledgements and awards for the Cork LGBT Archive.

The Cork LGBT Archive was one of six finalists in the Heritage Category for the Irish National Lottery Good Causes Awards 2021.

This is an amazing acknowledgement and honour, especially when you consider the thousands of wonderful heritage projects operating throughout Ireland. It is also symbolic in terms of inclusion and the acknowledgment of LGBT history and heritage as being an important part of Irish Heritage. It raises the profile of the Cork LGBT Archive and enables more people to learn about the rich history of the Cork LGBT community.

Orla Egan was interviewed by Dave Fanning about the Good Causes Award – you can listen to the interview on the Cork LGBT Archive **www.corklgbtarchive.com/items/show/353**

In March 2021 Orla Egan was awarded the UCC Athena Swan Equality Award.

Professor John O'Halloran, Interim President of University College Cork presented the award to Orla Egan "in recognition of and in celebration of your contribution, through your research, advocacy and activism on LGBTI+ issues, to advancing progress towards greater equality in UCC and in Cork."

The awards ceremony took place virtually and the speeches have been added to the Cork LGBT Archive **www.corklgbtarchive.com/items/show/372**

Over the years the Cork LGBT Archive has received a number of small grants from the Irish Heritage Council. These grants have been important in practical terms, enabling the purchase of essential equipment like acid free storage boxes and a new scanner. Cork City Council's Heritage Office has also provided support, funding the publication of the Queer Republic of Cork book and the production of the archive exhibition banners. In 2016 the Cork LGBT Archive received a Hidden Heritage Award from the Heritage Council. The Cork LGBT Archive was shortlisted for the GALAS Digital Change Maker Award in 2020.

In 2021 the Cork LGBT Archive has received another grant from the Heritage Council – this will support the further development of the Digital Archive, the creation of an online photography exhibition, Cork Queeros, and the filming of a number of oral history interviews. This work will take place over the summer.

Thanks to the funding from the Heritage Council, Patrick Egan and Mira Dean have joined the Cork LGBT Archive team on a temporary basis. Their contributions will see an increase in the materials digitised and added to the Digital Archive. Mira has also activated the Cork LGBT Archive Instagram account hoping to engage a wider audience with the archive. Follow us: **www.instagram.com/corklgbtarchive**

These heritage grants are really important for the Cork LGBT Archive, in practical terms, and also symbolically, as a clear demonstration of the inclusion of a queer archival project within Irish heritage. However the Cork LGBT Archive still has no core funding and the work is done primarily on a voluntary basis. We need substantial funding to enable the employment of staff to continue and expand the amazing work done to date. So if anyone knows any rich queers who would like to invest in a cool heritage project, let us know!!!!

The Cork LGBT Archive gathers, preserves and shares information about the rich history of LGBT activism and community in Cork.

The Cork LGBT Archive collection is housed in the Cork Public Museum in Fitzgerald's Park, with plans to create a permanent LGBT exhibition in the museum.

The Digital Archive can be found at **www.corklgbtarchive.com**

It has also been added to the Digital Repository of Ireland **www.dri.ie** and Europeana **www.www.europeana.eu/en**

The Cork LGBT Archive won the inaugural DRI Community Archives Scheme in 2019.

Queer Republic of Cork book was published in 2016, tracing the history of the Cork LGBT community from 1970s to 1990s. **www.onstream.ie/books/queer_republic.htm**

The Cork LGBT Archive Exhibition has been on display in various venues in Cork, Belfast and Berlin.

The Cork LGBT Interactive Walking Tour was launched during Cork Pride 2020. Plaques have been placed throughout the city on buildings of significance to the Cork LGBT community – there are QR codes on the plaques which link to exhibitions on the Cork LGBT Digital Archive. Download the map and take the tour at your leisure. **www.corklgbtarchive.com/items/show/348**

CORK GOES GAY

40 years after the first National Gay Conference in Cork

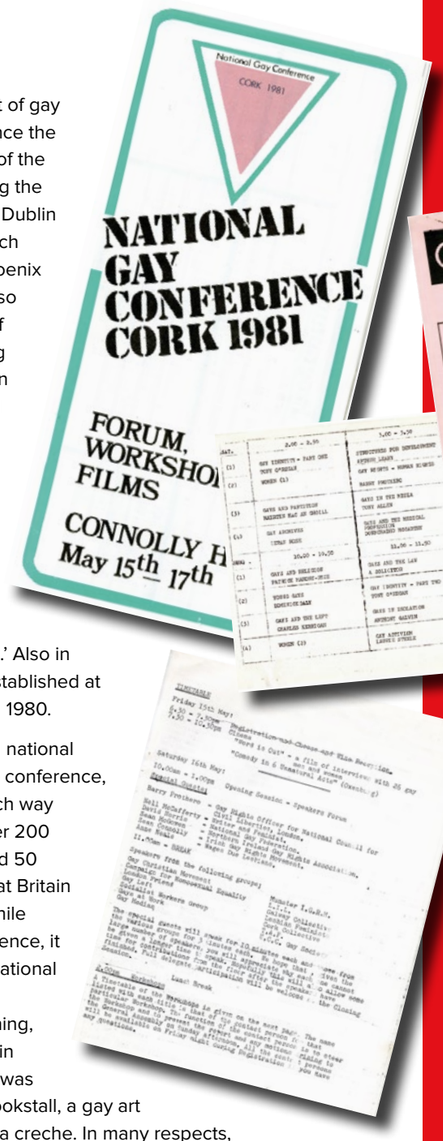
By Dr Patrick McDonagh

In 1981, Tom McClean writing in In Touch, the journal of the National Gay Federation, noted that 'the Cork Conference will, I feel, become to the gay rights movement in Ireland what Stonewall is to the gay liberation movement worldwide...' In comparing the Cork conference to the Stonewall Riots of 1969, a moment that is synonymous with the history of gay liberation worldwide, McClean reveals just how significant an event he believed the Cork conference to have been. The conference McClean was referring to was the first National Gay Conference held between the 15th and 17th May 1981 at Connolly Hall, the headquarters of the trade union movement in Cork.

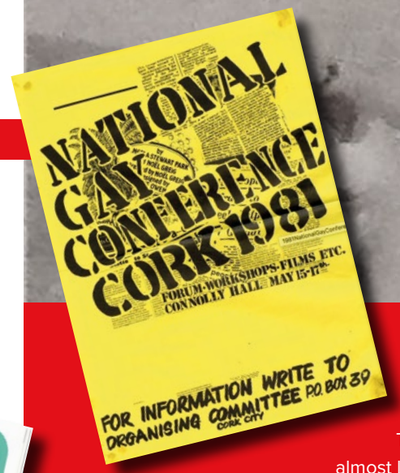
On the 40th anniversary of this conference, it's worth looking back at this important moment not only in the history of gay rights activism in Cork, but also on the island of Ireland, for this conference truly was an attempt to advance gay rights in Ireland on an all-island basis and to recognise that organisations existed outside Dublin and that they should have a greater input into the gay rights movement in Ireland. It was an attempt to take stock of where the Irish gay rights movement had come from since the 1970s, to look to the future, but to also to explore why, in the view of the organisers, the movement was not stronger and unified.

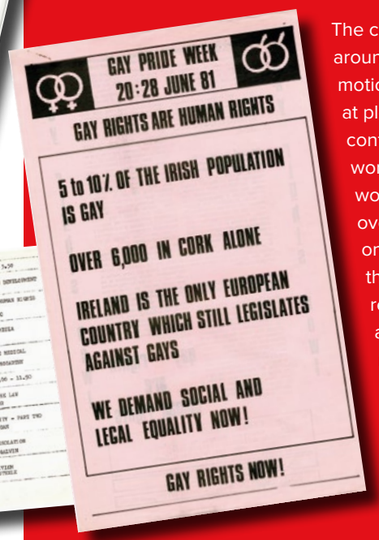
In the Republic of Ireland the National Gay Conference was the first major gay rights event to take place outside Dublin and it provides an insight into the aims, aspirations, challenges, but also the tensions that existed within the different Irish gay rights organisations at that time. It was, in fact, the bitter split of 1977 within the Irish Gay Rights Movement and the lingering impact it had on the wider gay rights movement in Ireland that was a driving force behind activists in Cork organising the National Gay Conference in 1981. Bringing about greater unity amongst Irish gay organisations was a key desire for conference organisers.

May 1981 was not the start of gay rights activism in Cork. Since the mid-1970s a Cork branch of the IGRM had existed, opening the first gay centre outside of Dublin at 4 McCurtain Street, which became known as the Phoenix Centre. The Cork IGRM also operated a local branch of Tel-A-Friend, a befriending service for gay and lesbian individuals, and published a series of publications: Corks Crew in 1977 and Sapphire in 1978. In 1980 the Cork Gay Collective was established, which Cathal Kerrigan described as wanting a 'revolution, a revolution for everyone,not just gays.' Also in 1980 a gay society was established at University College Cork in 1980.



It was within this local and national context that the three-day conference, 'Gays in the Eighties: Which way Forward?' took place. Over 200 individuals (c. 150 men and 50 women) from Ireland, Great Britain and the USA attended. While billed as a national conference, it resembled more an international one. Two gay films were screened on the first evening, Word is Out and Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts. There was also a feminist and gay bookstall, a gay art exhibition, a canteen and a creche. In many respects, the conference was as much an opportunity to socialise and party as it was a chance to discuss gay politics in Ireland. For many the highlight was the gala dance which took place on the Saturday night in Connolly Hall. The conference report noted that 'it was a unique experience to see hundreds of mixed couples dancing together in a public building.





The words gay and straight almost lost their meaning in the light of such genuine community feeling.'

The conference primarily revolved around workshops that proposed motions which were then debated at plenary sessions. In total, the conference hosted 18 separate workshops, some of which were women-only, out of which over 40 motions were proposed on issues relating to law reform, the media, medical profession, religion, education, and isolation amongst others. While the majority of motions were carried unanimously, a minority were not.

The Conference provided a rare opportunity for those who were often marginalised within the male dominated and Dublin-centric gay rights movement in Ireland to have their voices heard. For example, John Porter, a founding member of the Galway Gay Collective, used it as an opportunity to explain the challenges of organising in a county like Galway due to the lack of facilities and low numbers getting involved. While Joni Sheerin, Liberation for Irish Lesbians, expressed her hope that the conference would foster 'a new solidarity between gay women and men.' One lesbian woman, Sharon, who travelled from Belfast later wrote that while lesbian women were in a minority and the challenges they faced both inside and outside the gay rights movement were considerable, the conference 'provided an opportunity to get away from oppressive straight society for a while, and to be completely natural. It was great to meet so many other lesbians, and to feel their support and solidarity; any last doubts I had about being perverted vanished.' There can be no doubt that the Cork conference infused confidence into many who attended.

In Cork though there was evidence that activists with differing political viewpoints could work together. In June 1981 the Cork IGRM and the Cork Gay Collective organised the first gay pride events in Cork.

The 1981 Munster gay pride included leafleting on the streets of Cork and Waterford and sponsored advertising campaigns on local radio in both counties for the Munster Gay Switchboard. Kieran Rose explained that leafletting campaign sought to increase public awareness of gay rights. The high-point of the gay pride celebrations that year was most likely the erection of a giant pink triangle by members of the Cork and Waterford IGRM at the top of the Comeragh Mountains to 'symbolise the unity of gay people in Munster in our fight for civil rights.'

The organisation of gay pride in Munster in 1981 was further evidence of the growing confidence of activists outside Dublin and it's important we remember these milestone moments in our wider Irish queer history. The first National Gay Conference was no mean feat to have pulled off. Both logistically and financially it was a considerable challenge to organise a large-scale conference out of which many important lessons were learned. As Kieran Rose has noted it was 'hugely influential in the sense of setting an agenda for the future in a whole range of areas.' The conference also sent an important statement that the gay rights movement was not confined to Dublin, but rather was expanding throughout Ireland and gay and lesbian activists were not going to settle for just minimum change, i.e. decriminalisation, but rather were fighting for a broader range of issues, many of which were reported in the significant press coverage the conference generated.

As we celebrate Cork LGBT+ Pride in 2021 let us remember its origins 40 years ago and that of the first National Gay Conference, both of which were significant moments in our rich queer history. In doing so, we can try to advance one motion passed at the 1981 conference, that of recording, researching and telling the history of gay (LGBT+) people in Ireland.

With thanks to the Cork LGBT Archive and Clement Clancy for the kind permission to use their images.

You can read more about the National Gay Conference and wider gay and lesbian activism in the Republic of Ireland in Patrick's forthcoming book, Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973-1993 which will be published in November 2021. Visit **www.bloomsbury.com** for further details and use the code **ACTIVISM21** at the checkout to save 35%.

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GAYLGEOIRÍ

Visibility and Representation

By Cian Griffin

People often ask me "what's your favourite part of being a Gaeilge influencer?", and despite not really liking that word (I mean, c'mon. CRINGE!), my answer is always the same. The most powerful thing about Gaylgeoirí for me is visibility, representation, and pride (and the free food I get sent, let's be real).

Although I'm part of the generation that gets to live out and proud, for a large portion of my life I wasn't accepted by society, and arguably, I'm still not. Although I have learned to be GAFA liom féin ('obsessed with myself' in English), I was not always like this. I was conditioned by society to grow up with internalised shame surrounding my sexuality. Gaylgeoirí is my way to combat that shame; my own as well as that of other members of the LGBTQIAP+ community. It's also a tool to educate - both how to say some of Gemma Collins' most iconic quotes as Gaeilge, and more importantly, on how Ireland is still not there yet in terms of equality.

Growing Up and Becoming the Representation

Growing up, I didn't have representation in the media. I didn't have visibility of people like me to assure me things would be alright. And as much as I may appear confident on the outside, those years have certainly taken their toll on me. In recent years, I've definitely grown into myself, but for myself and most queer people, we aren't really able to explore our identities freely until our 20s - whereas for most straight people, they begin this process in their teenage years.

Thankfully, I grew up in a very supportive household. From a young age, I was more in touch with my feminine side and my parents didn't try stop me from doing what made me happy. However as I grew older, especially in my teenage years, I learned to suppress my true self because of how much abuse I was receiving from my peers. I wasn't able to truly embrace myself, in fact I had to pretend to be someone I wasn't. This privilege is something I've always been jealous of straight people for, because had I been allowed to flourish at an earlier age, I would have found that confidence and self-love in my identity much earlier - and it would have saved me a fortune in therapist fees!

That said, even though it took me longer to get here, I am still happy and grateful for the journey because it has shaped me and helped me realise how important using your voice and platform is. Thanks to Gaylgeoirí, I can now be the thing that I needed the most growing up for other people. I can offer representation to young queer kids across the country, who are looking to see themselves online, on TV, in newspapers, online, and on the radio.

When I first started Gaylgeoirí on Instagram as a meme page back in 2018, I had no idea it would grow into what it has become today. Three years later and I am truly proud of what it has become and I am shocked by how many messages I receive from young people thanking me for showing them it's OK to embrace who they are, and live life as their authentic selves. It's surprisingly emotional to receive DMs from young people thanking me for giving them the courage to come out, because I know just how big a deal it is at any age, but especially at an age where they may not have necessarily found their tribe yet, and living as their authentic self can be a very isolating experience. I am in constant awe of the younger generation, who really embrace who they are unapologetically, and I think part of that is due to the shift in the media's representation of queer peole. So for Gaylgeoirí to have helped create that community for these people, I am extremely proud.

Haters Are My Motivators

Despite receiving gorgeous messages of support and gratitude, I receive just as much hate on a weekly basis. I have lost count of the amount of times I've been told to kill myself, that I'm an abomination, and that I should be ashamed of myself for being a man that wears makeup and heels - but I mean, with legs like these it'd be a crime not to!

And while this negativity no longer gets to me, it still scares me. I am in my mid twenties. I have developed a thick skin from growing up in a country that told me at every turn (in politics, religion, and education) that I wasn't good enough and that being gay wasn't normal. I was part of the fight for marriage equality and I have grown confident in myself. With that said however, if sixteen year old me was to read the messages I receive, I know for sure that he wouldn't be able to deal with them. That's why it's so important that Gaylgeoirí exists; to further the fight for equality. Just by being visible, that in itself is very powerful and the same can be said for the wonderful trans activists out their, or the queer artists and musicians, or drag queens. They give visibility to further issues we need to solve as a society. The marriage referendum was obviously a giant leap in the right direction, but there is still so much we need to fight for and I am so grateful to be part of the fight.

Another question I'm often asked is "what can I do to help as an ally?". Again, it's simple; show your support and help amplify the voices of minorities. Whether it's equality in terms of sexuality, gender, race, religion; it doesn't matter. You can help by doing something as simple as sharing someone's post on social media with the click of a button. There is so much activism online and it's so easily accessible, so do your bit to help amplify these important messages to your audience, and help change the world for the better so that the next generation of kids won't be afraid to be themselves. Do your bit to make sure that your friends, your family members, and your children feel empowered to embrace their authentic selves, because believe me, that is a truly powerful thing.

ALWAYS A REBEL

Cork Trans History

Cork has a rich trans history and not just in recent times but throughout the past 200 years. From Dr James Barry, born on Merchants Quay, to Dr Margaret O'Regan providing services to the community in the 1990's, Lorraine O'Regan, fighting for medical care and to the birthplace of Transgender Equality Network of Ireland (TENI), the National organisation for the trans community. There have been countless trans activists that have worked to bring the acceptance, visibility and advancement of our rights today. Here are just a few examples from Cork trans history.

During the 19th century, we find many individuals, throughout the world, breaking the well-established societal binary of male and female. Many of those documented happen to be of Irish origin. Names such as Albert Cashier or Edward De Lacy Evans may be the ones we can find, but my research with the Irish Trans Archive throws up many Irish people across the globe breaking the binary.

Dr James Barry

This is true of Cork's most famous trans son, Dr James Barry. Born on Merchants quay circa 1779, James Barry was to make his mark on history and especially the development of medical science and procedures in childbirth.

There is no doubt that as he grew up above his father's shop in Cork, he was unaware of the groundbreaking life journey he was about to make. In the early 1800's, women were not allowed to be educated in medicine. But neither James nor his family were going to accept that. In 1809, with the help of General Francisco de Miranda, Dr Edward Fryer, his tutor and Daniel Reardon, the family's solicitor, James changed his name and presentation to male and enrolled in Edinburgh University school of medicine. After qualifying James joined the British army and was posted to Cape town. He held many ranks, sometimes being demoted, in the army.

After many years serving in the British army, James rose to the rank of Inspector General (equivalent to Brigadier General) in charge of military hospitals, the second highest medical office in the British Army. He was well regarded for his work in both sanitation and nutrition. Barry also performed one of the first known successful Caesarean sections in which both mother and child survived. There were many controversies through his life, whether it was his highly held strong opinions or arguments with Florence Nightingale, James Barry was a Cork man to be reckoned with. After a quiet retirement in London, Barry finally died on 25 July 1865. There is no doubt his life was one of highest achievement. For whatever reason, in death, Dr James Barry requested arrangements that would ensure his secret would be carried to the grave and his legacy preserved.

It is difficult to place Dr Barry in a trans framework of today. The language didn't exist in the 19th century, never mind the understanding of trans identities. Something we can be sure of is that Dr Barry did everything in his power to secure his legacy, and that he be remembered as a man. No matter how you want to see him, please give him the respect of his dying wish. He was not given that in death, we should at least give him that now.

Interestingly, James Barry was not the only, nor the first, person assigned female at birth that undertook this journey. Around 1804, 5 years before James went to Edinburgh, a Cork woman known as Margaret King, previously Lady Mount Cashell, went to medical college in Jena, Germany, presenting as a man. King eventually studied under the professor of surgery, Andrea Vaccá Berlinghieri of the University of Pisa. Interestingly, and unlike James Barry, King only presented as male to complete her studies and reverted to living her life as a woman. There is evidence that the families may have known each other through mutual acquaintances. Was this something Dr Barry considered? And if not why not?

Dianne Hughes

During the late 1990's Dianne Hughes started to advocate for her rights and especially state funding for her surgery. By 1998, Dianne, in an interview with the Sunday Tribune, was reported to have received funding through the Southern Health board. But by mid-1999, she was still asking the state to fund gender reassignment surgeries. The fraught nature of looking for medical support was evident throughout all her interviews. Originally from Wales, Dianne was now living with her wife and son, on a farm outside Macroom. Over the next few years, she was featured in many media pieces both in newspapers and in television documentaries. Throughout 1999, Dianne turned her focus to activism, at first calling out the government for not enacting EU Directive 1177 giving equal rights to trans people with guidelines on standards of medical care. In 2002, Dianne and Angel O'Doherty appeared in an RTE Documentary 'Dianne and Angel', sharing their stories. Through her activism, Dianne provided submissions to the Nexus report and in 2004 was a founding member of TENI.

TENI

In late 2003 and 2004, a number of activists came together in the hope of forming an advocacy group to work on issues, specifically healthcare, that concerned trans people's wellbeing and rights. At the first meeting, held in Cork, were Dianne Hughes, Nick Krievenko, Sara Jane Cromwell, Lynda Sheridan, Catherine and Kyra. Sara Jane Cromwell in her Book 'becoming myself' tells us that the name was devised by Dianne Hughes and Nick Krievenko during their submissions to the Nexus Report. Over the next two years they worked with the Healthcare system, and the Equality Authority to advance the rights of the trans community in Ireland. By 2005, a number of the founding members had moved on and were no longer involved. In late 2005, Sara Jane Cromwell, the then Chair, reached out to the Trans Peer Support group in Dublin to bring in new members and create a committee that could enhance the work with the few individuals that were left. Throughout 2006 many meetings, debates and discussions, a committee was formed and the current version of TENI came into being. Never always as simple as it seems, let's not forget TENI was formed, to paraphrase Lynda Sheridan, in 'a cold kitchen in Cork'. In late 2006, Sara Jane moved on to set up GIDI (Gender Identity Disorder Ireland).

Over the years, we have seen the formation of two trans support groups in Cork. Dr Lydia Foy was honoured as Grand Marshall in 2015 and the community itself was represented as Grand Marshall in 2019. I was delighted to have joined my friend (and adopted son) Noah Halpin in representing our community at the head of the parade.

From people involved in setting up TENI, running support groups, being visible in the media and fighting for gender recognition and trans rights, it is clear that Cork has always played a central role in the advancement of trans rights and trans visibility. The documentary by Carol O'Keefe 'Written on the Soul' documents the stories of 3 trans people living in Cork and provides critical examination on what life was like for our community. Over the years, the work of individuals like Moira and Corrine, Ben Power, Darrin Matthews, and more recently, Chloe and Jaime O'Herlihy, Jack Fitzgerald, along with countless others, whether individual, through TENI or the support groups continue to place Cork central and visible in Irish Trans History.

If you have a story to share or paperwork or books that you could donate to the Archive, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Sara R Phillips
Irish Trans Archive
irishtransarchive@gmail.com

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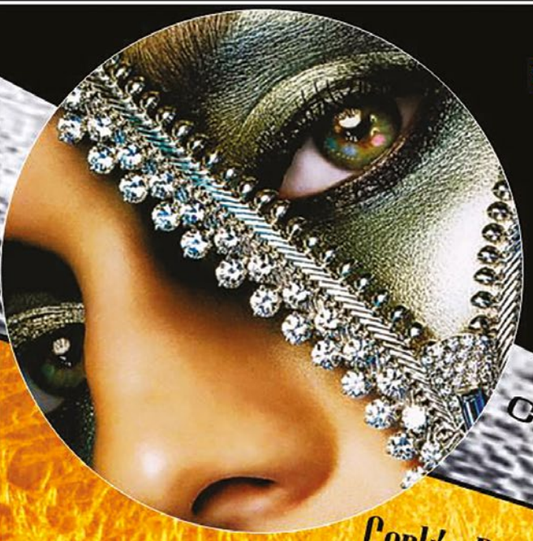

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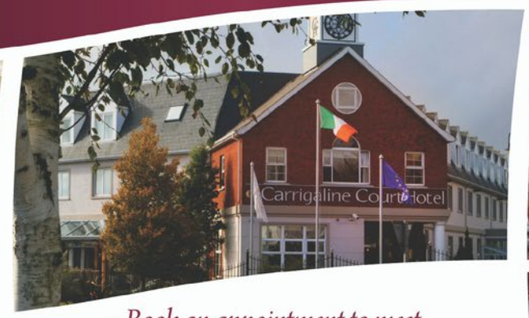

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RACISM & OTHERING IN QUEER COMMUNITIES

By Thomas Kumvana Heising

People with intellectual disabilities are full and equal members of Irish society and have the same hopes and desires like everyone else. There have been significant and important changes and developments in the care and support of people with intellectual disabilities over the past 30 years, with the majority living within their local communities, often with additional support to enable them to lead full and inclusive lives. Their hopes and desires include having a job, having friends, relationships and for some intimacy. Some people with intellectual disabilities have, or want, a romantic relationship.

Writing an article about racism in the queer community alone is difficult. I can't isolate a destructive behaviour in one community without looking at it in the wider society. But I will try...

Firstly, I will describe why you should care about racism in the queer community, both as a member or an ally of it. Lastly, I will end with a Q&A to answer some of the questions or comments I often face as a POC (Person/People of Colour).

And the word itself: **Racism.**

The definition of 'racism' varies according to context and intent. There are structural definitions that describe "racism" as leftovers from imperialistic power hierarchies. While in everyday life, it describes interactions where people position themselves as superior relative to others based on perceived or actual heritage. This happens through 'othering' people - making them feel as if they don't belong to a community or society. I prefer the terms 'othering' or 'discrimination' to avoid debating people's associations with the ever-so problematic word 'race' (I have no idea what race I belong to and don't want to know...). But I get why we use the word 'racism' widely: it carries a certain 'punch' and it is useful when describing certain systemic forms of discrimination.

In Ireland, racism is structurally expressed via its treatment of people in Direct Provision, employment biases towards members of the Traveller community and lack of opportunities for certain groups in specific institutions. Some European countries have racially and culturally segregating laws, and in the US, racism seeps deep into the fabric of society. But systemic racism also shows itself on many levels across the world and in our daily lives. It is one of the reasons why I am not on Grindr.

Even more complicated, the individual experience of being subjected to racism is diverse. For instance, being European with African heritage (Zambian mother and Danish father), I have certain privileges. These privileges can make me blind to my own intolerance. Also, I have never had racist violence acted upon me, but I know people who have. I cannot imagine what that must have felt like. All I can do is to listen instead of trying to declare what I would have done in their situation.

Overall, we like to think of ourselves as good people who mean well and want to stand up for our beliefs. So if we sometimes do cause harm, we may get defensive about our motivations for causing this. It is easier to say: "I'm only messing", "everyone is so PC these days" or "can't you take a joke?" than to face the fact of having said something hurtful.

Racism in Ireland

Discriminatory attitudes exist with our biases and they can flourish because of discourse and socioeconomic circumstances in society, and the effects of these in society and our minds are damaging. Reports, news stories and conversations with POCs in Ireland should make it apparent that racism exists here. Perhaps more verbally directed towards members of the Traveller community than to POCs, but this shouldn't be soothing for anyone.

We often assume that the popularity of right-wing politics in mainland Europe is incompatible with Irish people. And I agree with this to a great extend coming from Denmark where prominent politicians regularly encourage segregation and racism. This is not to say that we potentially couldn't see the same thing in Ireland one day, and thus we have to be vigilant.

Fortunately, the response towards racism has also changed positively. Previously, minorities have been told to 'grow' resilience when faced with it. Now we are more openly and collectively rejecting it and asking for a change in our surroundings rather than in ourselves. And yet, there are many commentaries against minorities speaking up, and they often stem from a strong discomfort (that we all have) of realising the injustices of our progressive Western societies. It is more comfortable to assume that our society is fair and balanced.

Racism in the queer community

Queer POCs entering the queer community may become discouraged when finding themselves in an othered community that further others POCs. Surely, as a community that faces a lot of stigmatisations from the general society and have struggled with identity, us queers should be able to relate and not be mean to each other?

Well, ideally, yes. But we all carry anxieties from minority stress, and these unfortunately don't always give us the capacity for tolerance and empathy. It makes it comfortable to elevate ourselves above other marginalised people. You'd hear gays enjoy distancing themselves from more effeminate gays: "Those gurly men are just over the top!" etc.

Some Irish queers will remember a time when the state saw us all as abject outliers. For many, the best option was to accept this traumatising injustice. At times, we can become convinced that society is right in treating us as outliers, and perhaps this is a partial origin of internalised queerphobia.

That is not to say that queerphobia and racism are the same, but they are linked in so many ways. Similarities include the perpetrators and the resulting trauma for the victim. But we must also note the most important and obvious difference:

POCs can't hide

A POC is never "in the closet". From the moment your parents decide to try and 'make' you, there is little question as to whether you will be a POC or not. As you grow up, you will stand out and others will comment on this. Which is not always bad, but I have never been able to suddenly say: "oh, there is that intolerant idiot, let me hide my dark skin and be white for a moment to conform". Whereas, I, as many gays, have learned to hide my gayness or lie about it at the onset of social discomfort.

My tolerance levels are quite high, though. I can process and deal with skin colour bias on dating apps, nauseating requests for my "black anaconda" and weird questions on assumed properties of my skin. But it hurt when fellow queers I trusted humiliated me, did not validate my experiences or made racist comments I never asked for.

Many things changed when I moved from Denmark to Ireland. Encountering Irish nosiness was as refreshing as a glass of lemonade in a desert. I got silly questions sometimes, yes, but I often ask silly questions myself. I noticed that the questions that centred around my origins and appearance were rarely to distance or elevate themselves over me. Quite on the contrary, I have Irish friends who declare me to be Irish or to be "pure Cork, like" despite me getting the cultural codes and etiquettes of being Irish wrong. But those comments mean a lot. As a brown Dane in Denmark, I constantly had to validate my 'Danskhed' (loosely translated to 'Danishness') to my fellow Danes. This is part of why I feel more accepted as a POC in Ireland than in Denmark. So, thank you for that.

I reckon that our bi-siblings struggle with being validated as queers when they are constantly being told that they are "in between", confused or "just experiencing a phase". In reality, we don't need validation or confirmation of who we are, and ideally, we shouldn't seek it from a majority group. But we rightfully should find a sense of belonging in our communities.

What can we do?

Not knowing what to say or being afraid of saying something wrong scares most of us from socialising or speaking to 'others'. The idea of 'triggering' people can be scary. But we can make efforts to share experiences and to acknowledge the injustices and biases we cling to.

We need to be aware of racism and other forms of 'othering' and to have the difficult talks. Discrimination doesn't disappear even after radical and important legislative measures - these help, but there are difficult mechanisms behind that we need to discuss and deal with.

I love to share my experiences, and I encourage people to ask about them. And so, I want to keep the ball rolling by answering some of the comments I have encountered over the years while living in Copenhagen, Bristol and Cork. My replies are my own and you are welcome to challenge me on them.

Q&A

What is wrong with saying “I don’t see colour”?

The shared experience is that as POCs we see colour all the time, and admittedly to our own disadvantages at times.

When I joined networking groups in Cork for my self-employment, I found myself at many events and contexts where I was the only black/brown person around. There was no way on Earth that I wouldn’t contextualise my skin colour in almost whatever I did: “Shiiit, is she looking at me more than the others?”, “Nope, walk away, he gives off Healy-Rae vibes”, “Her scarf has a leopard pattern, she might be cool…”. My anxieties were luckily often curbed as I found Cork people to be helpful and welcoming. I wouldn’t be working with motion graphics full-time now, had I not ventured out to mingle in these contexts.

But the colour of my skin comes to mind in almost every context. And for the most part positively so. Thus, when someone says that they don’t see my skin colour, it is like ignoring something very obvious. Your intentions might be good, but unfortunately it is not very convincing.

What do you prefer to be called?

Different experiences for different words. For instance, the English version of the offensive ‘n’ word has few to no negative connotations for me (this is not me condoning its use, though!), while the Danish equivalent ‘neger’ sends me spiralling down a drain of hurtful trauma, no matter who utters it. I also find the term ‘POC’ to be useful here in Europe, but very weird to use when I am visiting Zambia.

There is little point in clinging or searching for a word that can describe “all of us”, because in reality, referring to us by name or as the nationality we have, is less othering and much easier. Again, I don’t identify with a race nor ethnicity, and for the same reason, I leave census form fields on ethnic heritage empty.

Maybe POCs should become more resilient?

Admittedly, I often get this from white men I date. The assumption is that we POCs need to not “take things so seriously”.

As detailed above, we have exercised resilience throughout our lives. POCs don’t get angry because we “can’t take a joke” - we get angry because we are exhausted. The exhaustion comes from being forcibly defined by how we are so different from everyone else.

I am not racist, there are some REAL racists out there!

The idea is that the ‘light’ discriminatory micro-aggressions (as some call them: “jokes”) we encounter are nothing compared to some “really racist people out there”. Or the idea of there being larger racist movements in works, and that we need to spend efforts focusing on those. Firstly, the big racist ‘movements’ are already in place, they are called post-colonialism, white/Western supremacy, legislative segregation, ethnic and racial violence, and right-wing political discourse. Indeed, far-right movements are on the rise, but self-declared well-meaning people joining in on the micro-aggressive racist comments are just being part of all that.

Can POCs be racist?

Yes, just as gay people can be queerphobic. Personally, I feel that when we POCs discuss racism, we need to consider our own privileges. I, for instance, feel very confident communicating in English and Danish, and as an EU citizen I can navigate Denmark and Ireland somewhat easily. My socioeconomic background means that I will never fully be left in starvation or homelessness. I am also very comfortable with digital technology, and I got my first relevant job through my father’s network. Further, I am an openly gay guy who came out early in life and has had plenty of resources to develop my emotional availability.

I must remember that most people in the world may have few or none of these benefits, especially when I point towards other POCs. For a long time, I was embarrassed with black people in Copenhagen who did not try to aspire for the societal validation and levels of achievement I was aiming for. I was embarrassed if they didn’t speak as good Danish as I, or that they hadn’t “abandoned” their religious-conservative attitudes.

What matters is perspective. Don’t get me wrong: if you are a POC with enormous wealth and influence, you still have the right to condemn racism when you experience it. But how we position ourselves in society relative to others is important when discussing social injustice.

I think PC and diversity can go a bit too far…

The idea of “people being so PC” these days aligns so conveniently with socially conservative views promoting exclusion and intolerance. I know it is overwhelming to witness and experience change in society. Indeed, there are now greater expectations on how we express ourselves and which words we should use.

The heavy focus on language and on what we should say is obviously about balance. We need to teach our children that we in the previous generations have been callous and apathetic with our words, and that they have a chance to get used to more inclusive vocabularies. This also involves teaching them that they can choose friends and partners from any social, ethnic, socioeconomic and gender-based backgrounds, and that they can have fun without making it at the expense of others.

I am white and I think I said something racist, what happens now?

We will gather a mob and scalp you. No, of course not. Though this one is complicated and individual, here is my advice:

First and foremost, be ready to have the conversation and to offer a sincere apology. And by ready, I mean that you think about what you said, and why you said it. Get over the point of wanting to make excuses or wanting to try to explain the “joke” you were getting at. Instead, ask the person if they got hurt by what you said, and that you are willing to accept that you will not understand why it hurt for the other person. The chats can grow from there, but silence and listening are gold as well.

There is no need to glorify yourself afterwards, we all fuck up at times and make people sad. Admit that this is hard. We are all guilty of it.

What can I do overall?

Becoming aware is the first step. Listening to or reading about experiences of minorities to hear about the difficulties they face and how racism happens to them is really important.

Getting comfortable with thinking critically about our privileges is another step. ‘Privilege’ is a word that pisses a lot of people off. But I believe if we were more aware of the structural benefits gained from our heritage and socioeconomic origins relative to those of others, we allow for understanding the battles others face.

Be nice. I have known many people who refused to acknowledge my experiences with racism. They are not people I can trust or confide in. However, you can be a person someone can trust and confide in with good reason, regardless of their social, ethnic or gender-based backgrounds. Everyone can be an asshole (even us POCs!) but also everyone also has their own stories and traumas.

End note

Also, apologies: I would have loved to talked about racism towards members of the Traveller community, but it isn’t something I could do comfortably. I will acknowledge the existence and injustices travellers face, and will learn more in the coming time. Anyways, I am off to practise to what I have preached here!

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THE ONLY GAY ON THE SHIP

By Derrick Gerety

Irish Shipping Ltd and other Irish shipping companies operate mainly under British maritime rules.

In 1967 homosexuality was decriminalised in the UK, but specifically excluded the Armed Forces and the Merchant Navy. The reason was to protect junior ranks from being taken advantage of by senior ranks. So homosexuality aboard ship was illegal.

I was 18 years old in 1968 when I joined my first ship in the Alexander Basin in Dublin. It was the Irish Spruce, a steam turbine ship and one of the most beautiful ships I'd ever seen. It was a bit like love at first sight. I was a marine engineer cadet and had already spent 3 years in the Crawford Tech in Cork as part of my training and joining my first ship was a great adventure.

I'd known I was gay since I was a small child so I had no issues around sexual identity. I liked boys, knew it, but had no idea how to go about doing anything about it. It was the 60's and learning about myself consisted mainly of going to the 'h' for homosexuality in the index of a book in a bookshop and on finding a reference probably going bright red because I felt everyone was looking over my shoulder. And if you did find the occasional nugget, it was frequently negative and depressing. Most information around homosexuality was formal, academic and not at all engaging. And fear played a huge part, the fear of being found out. It took over 10 years after the publication of The Wolfenden Report in 1957 for the UK to decriminalise homosexuality. If you heard or read anything about homosexuality, it was invariably about a scandal. It wasn't cool to be gay.

And so to arrive into the environs of a ship and find lots of magazines with articles about sex and sexuality in general was an eye opener and it became part of my education as a young gay man.

Playboy magazine was certainly part of my liberation and I'm definitely one of those who can say that they read it just for the articles! And there was the occasional short story by Sean O'Faolain.

My first trip was from Dublin to New York, which was pretty cool for a first tripper and walking the streets of New York in late summer was intoxicating. Eating pizza slices from street vendors and just smelling the atmosphere, and even though the Stonewall Riots and Woodstock were only a few months away in 1969, it was like there was electricity in the air.

Also in those days there was somewhat of a debate around what percentage of the population was actually gay. I had heard of a book "One In Twenty" by Bryan Magee, published in 1966 and he suggested that 5% of the population was gay, one in twenty. I was always good at maths so I reckoned, if there are 40 men on this ship and I'm one gay, there just might be another. I was thrilled until I realised it might just be the gnarly old bosun and I wasn't particularly into gnarly old bosuns!

So getting used to living on a ship was quite interesting, a bit like monasticism, except wearing a uniform instead of a habit, drinking beer instead of praying. Working 4 hours on and 8 off. Just getting to know other guys and getting to know myself.

And so for a week or two we steamed along the east coast of the US discharging and loading cargo. Down from New York, to Philadelphia, Baltimore and on down to Charleston and discovering fire flies in Savannah. And then 7 days steaming back across the North Atlantic to Liverpool, Manchester and Dublin, the exhilaration of seeing the light from the Mizen, experiencing what old timers call 'the channels' that stomach churning thrill of coming home. I spent the next 8 months on the Spruce. It was a wonderful time and a great first trip to sea. I can definitely say I fell in love with the Irish Spruce, but I can never be entirely sure if I was the only gay on the ship.

I never did find that other one.

UNVEILING OUR PAST

NEW LGBT+ HISTORY RESOURCE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

By Cecelia Gavigan

‘Unveiling Our Past: The Struggle for LGBT+ Rights in Ireland’ is a new resource aimed at supporting primary school teachers in being more LGBT+ inclusive in their teaching practice, specifically with regard to history education. History is a subject in which minority stories have often been erased. This can be seen through the erasure of indigenous cultures and histories across the world, the inaccurate narrative of Christopher Columbus ‘discovering’ America or the women written out of the history of scientific developments. This trend is replicated here in Ireland also. The recent centenary celebrations of the 1916 rising brought to light the literal way in which Nurse Elizabeth O’Farrell was airbrushed from history. Similarly, our history books pay little attention to the rich culture and history of our indigenous Traveller population. The LGBT+ identities of significant Irish historical figures have also been systematically erased over the years.

‘Unveiling Our Past: The Struggle for LGBT+ Rights in Ireland’ is designed to go some way towards addressing this erasure by introducing 5th and 6th class pupils to the recent history of the movement for LGBT+ equality in Ireland. Written by primary school teacher and former Chairperson of the INTO LGBT+ Teachers’ Group, Cecelia Gavigan, it integrates historical content with the development of historical skills and concepts relating to chronology, evidence, causation, historical empathy and perspective. It fulfils curriculum requirements under the strand ‘Politics, conflict and society’ while also developing the historical skills required in the curriculum for 5th and 6th class pupils. It also contains a focus on the development of core English skills related to reading comprehension. The resource includes lesson plans, printable pupil resources (including primary sources) and supporting ancillary material.

The resource begins with a problem solving activity for the pupils where they need to create a timeline of various LGBT+ related events including the founding of Urania by Eva Gore-Booth, the arrest and prosecution of Oscar Wilde, the campaign for decriminalisation headed by David Norris, the passing of the Gender Recognition Act, the referendum on same sex marriage and the appointment of the first openly gay Taoiseach. The next lesson teaches pupils the history of Pride from a global perspective and how that struggle manifested in Ireland relating the stories of Stonewall and also the events surrounding the murder of Declan Flynn. Lesson Three looks at ten pieces of evidence from the Cork LGBT Archive including a series of correspondence between LGBT+ groups in Cork and the local newspapers regarding a dispute about printing advertisements relating to LGBT+ matters; a newspaper article about the first LGBT+ float in the Cork St. Patrick’s Day Parade, and photographs of LGBT+ activism featuring Cork Gay Collective, Laurie Steele, Arthur Leahy and Tony O Regan. The resource also features three case studies on ‘LGBT+ Rights Trailblazers’ which relate the stories of David Norris, Dr Lydia Foy, Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan. The sequence of work concludes with lessons asking the pupils to create a project that will communicate what they have learned and present this project to their class,

As noted, the primary sources included in the document relate to the specific struggle for LGBT+ rights in Cork. The primary reason for this was accessibility. Due to the immense work of Orla Egan and the Cork LGBT+ Archive, these documents, photographs and artefacts are all freely available to members of the public to use and so could be included in the resource. However, having the primary sources centred on Cork fulfils a wider objective also.

Too often are the concepts of Pride and LGBT+ activism thought of as something pertaining to Dublin and to Dublin alone. Incorporating real evidence of the work of activists in Cork in the resource serves in some way to counter this narrative. The struggle for equal rights in Ireland for LGBT+ people is, and always has been, a national project. As Eleanor Roosevent might describe it, ‘it happens in small places, close to home - so small and so close that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world’.

The resource is the latest addition to those provided by the INTO LGBT+ Teachers’ Group to teachers to support them in developing LGBT+ inclusive practices in their schools. The group is a sub group of the wider INTO union whose aim is to support and advance the cause of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender primary school teachers in Ireland and advocate for LGBT+ inclusion in primary school. The group run the annual ‘Different Families, Same Love’ competition which calls on teachers to take action in their classrooms to celebrate the diversity of people and families in Ireland and to address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in school. This competition usually runs between International Family Equality Day and International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia on May 17th with the winners announced during June to coincide with Pride month. Other resources the group have developed for use in schools include the ‘Different Families, Same Love’ teaching resource, the ‘LGBT+ Inclusive Staffroom’ poster and a series of inclusive book recommendations linking in with World Book Day. Their webpage also showcases good practice videos for teachers related to dealing with LGBT+ based bullying, supporting a child socially transitioning and how to answer questions pupils may have in relation to LGBT+ matters.

‘Unveiling Our Past: The Struggle for LGBT+ Rights in Ireland’ was launched on the 16th June and is available under the ‘Educational Resources’ tab on www.into.ie/lgbt. The INTO LGBT+ Teachers’ Group can be found on Facebook (@intolgbteachersgroup), Twitter (@intolgbt) and Instagram (@intolgbt). They meet six times a year and new members are always welcome.

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UNZIPPING THE FAT SUIT

By Aaron Nation

Unfortunately, in life and society being FAT or overweight can most definitely put someone at a disadvantage in the world. Now I know what you might think, why can't you get up and do something about it? But it's simply not that easy. Being FAT is in fact a very serious eating disorder for many of us, that we often do not take into account. So, I'm going to shed a little light on my life and journey.

My name is Aaron Nation, or as most of the Cork LGBTQ+ scene would know me, Letycha Le'Synn. I'm going to delve into my journey so far in regard to weight loss. This is a battle that so many of us face in our lives and I feel it is not broadcast enough for the masses.

I have been heavy since the day I let out my first cry. And like every baby and toddler I had the adorable rolls... Cute on an 18-month-old but evidently it's not so cute on a grown man. Growing up I breezed through getting older year by year, and similarly I breezed through clothes sizes like no other. From as far back as I can recall, I can remember my mother saying to people "it's only puppy fat, he'll grow out of it". I DID NOT. If that was puppy fat, by the time I was 15 I was a full-grown Great Dane. As you can imagine I then started the continuous battle of yo-yo dieting. You name it, I have tried it; Atkins, Weightwatchers, Slimming World, Lipotrim, Motivation Weight Loss Clinic amongst so many others. These always had their peaks of brilliance followed by the impending crash back to reality. And as a result, this took its toll on my confidence with how I looked, and how people saw me. When I was in my early 20s, I guess you could say I was shy and socially awkward, and I believe it all stemmed from my own issues of not being body "perfect". It wasn't until I found drag in the fabulous form of Letycha Le'Synn that it all changed.

> "I CAN REMEMBER MY MOTHER SAYING TO PEOPLE "IT'S ONLY PUPPY FAT, HE'LL GROW OUT OF IT". I DID NOT. IF THAT WAS PUPPY FAT, BY THE TIME I WAS 15 I WAS A FULL-GROWN GREAT DANE"

Letycha has always been body positive and proud of her size. And that's how I made her!! The art of drag has been the best thing to happen to me in such a long time as I learnt how to accept myself for who I was then and am now. When I first started creating the persona of Letycha I was on a mission to make her the direct opposite of who I was at the time. Imagine shy awkward fat dude VS super confident Glamazon. How on earth are they the same person? But it was oh so easy to be her, and then I had the ultimate mask to hide the real me from anyone I wanted. By creating this persona, I could go out and do as I wanted in ways Aaron never would. It was through that persona I became more body comfortable with my size as a man. Mind you still not jumping for joy about being big but at least more accepting. Letycha empowers people to be who they are and want to be, and ironically it happened to myself.

The decision to go for surgery came about through loads of different places. Being brought up in a family where excess weight is common, I guess it made me very aware of bariatric surgeries. 5 years ago, I lost my mom and like many of us gay boys she was my best friend. She herself had planned to have the surgery and spent years on waiting lists trying to make it happen. Unfortunately she passed before her dream of having it done could happen. I guess then any thoughts of having the surgery myself vanished. It wasn't until 2 years later that I met a friend that was planning on having it done, and the idea came rushing back. I carefully watched on as this close friend became the best version of herself and I thought fuck it I can do the same thing for myself. When lockdowns hit I said it's now or never and decided to pull up my big boy pants and booked it without telling a soul.

On the 1st of March this year I boarded a plane to Istanbul alone and went to change my life. Turkey was no longer just the Christmas dinner for me but the place I would finally become the person I wanted to be. Many asked why I didn't get the surgery here in Ireland. Let's get real for a moment.... I'd have to rob a bank to afford it here with Turkey being a fraction of the price it was a no brainer. The team in Turkey were exceptional and I felt like yes this is right for me.

Running through my mind in the weeks after surgery was how Letycha's followers would view my decision to go under the knife. I spent years empowering people to be the person they wanted to be, and here I was getting cut open to become someone that I never was before. But then I thought I am choosing to become my best self both in and out of drag, both for my health (physically and mentally) and for aesthetic reasons. I finally found a way to improve my health and become the thin person that was trapped inside a fat suit with a broken zip. Don't get me wrong, big is 100% beautiful and I will always think that, but I had to lay everything out on the table and see where I wanted my life to go. Being in my 30s and so morbidly obese, it was not going to end well for me. Having tried every fad going, surgery was the last resort in my eyes, and I had reached that point. So, now I will be the skinny bitch with the larger-than-life personality, rather than the larger-than-life waist measurement.

I feel the future is full of endless possibilities now. Upon writing this article, I have lost 7 stone since surgery and I'm only half way there. I hope to reach my goal of losing a further 7 stone and then become a model.... Jokes!!! In all seriousness, I'm just going to continue to lose and eventually reach a healthy weight I am happy with. I plan on still repping for the big guys and girls because once a fatty, always a fatty, no matter what your weight is. As anyone reading this can guess, my confidence is already boosted no end, so I hope to keep it, because there is always someone in the world rushing to try and tear that down. One of the downsides to being a member of the gay community is that those nasty people are plentiful. I love being an entertainer for the scene but with it I have had my fair share of nasty comments thrown at me. All over my fat ass!!! Let's get real we cannot all be, nor want to be a Calvin Klein model so begin to accept everyone for who they are. Hunny let's face it, it's more fun when you're built for comfort rather than speed!!

> "FIRSTLY, LOVE YOURSELF FOR WHO YOU ARE AND LET NOBODY DETER YOU FROM THAT"

To anyone reading this article there's a couple of things I'd like you to take from it. Firstly, love yourself for who you are and let nobody deter you from that. Self-love is the only way to radiate happiness. Secondly, do whatever you can to healthily reach that state of self-love. For me it was surgery, yes it was a last resort, but I assure you it is by no means an easy option or the fast way out. After surgery is intense being left with constant restrictions in diet. It's a learning curve with many ups and downs along the way. Days when you feel on top of the world ready to face all challenges, and days when you can barely move. Then again that's life. And lastly, be kind. It costs nothing to show a little kindness because everyone no matter what size has some level of insecurity about their bodies. Being on the receiving end of hurtful comments about your size is the hardest place to be.

For now, I'm off to throw away endless costumes that no longer fit, they will be for sale on the pink pages under the heading "1-man tents!" ... but at least a good heel will always fit.

Aaron / Letycha xx

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LONDON CALLING

The London Irish LGBT Network

The London Irish LGBT Network was set up in 2014 by a group of Irish LGBT people living in London who felt that it was time that we had an organisation where Irish LGBTQ people could meet and share issues around Irish identity and culture as well as sexuality.

Our first Chair was Bernard Lynch (the famous AIDS priest) who served for two years and I followed him as Chair with Vanessa Monaghan as our current Chair. I am a proud Dub living in London since 1984 and although there have been other Irish organisations in the past, the last one being in the 90s, there had not been anything for a long time. We were warmly welcomed by the Irish embassy and were the first Irish LGBT organisation outside Ireland to receive a grant from the Emigrant Support Programme via the Dept of Foreign Affairs and the Dept of the Diaspora. We have become regular visitors to events for the Irish community at the embassy and I recently spoke at an event run by the embassy called "Rainbow Crossings" about the history of Irish gay men in London in the 80s, one of whom was Mark Ashton from Antrim, made famous as a result of the film Pride.

During the course of that talk with Dr Leeworthy, we mentioned the many Irish people who came to be nursed and many to die, in London during the AIDS crisis. This is a story that needs proper telling and has been brought to life again by the recent Channel 4 series, It's a Sin. I was one of those who was diagnosed in 1990 and got great support from organisations such as Positively Irish, which was visited by Mary Robinson at the time and funded by the Irish government.

Our two big events are the London St Patrick's Festival and London Pride. At St Patrick's we march with our banners to Trafalgar Square and have a stall there with many other organisations – we frequently meet Irish people over for a trip but also many, especially younger Irish LGBTQ emigrants living in London and introduce them to us. We always get a great reception from the Irish crowds. One of our best St Patrick's was in 2016, after the marriage referendum, when Colm O'Gorman (from Amnesty Ireland) who we had invited, stood on the main stage and brought us all up to a rousing cheer. We also take part in London Pride and enjoy showing off our Irish LGBT Network t-shirts.

We have held some really good events. One highlight was having the veteran lesbian novelist Maureen Duffy read poems, joined by the Irish ambassador at the time who read some of his favourite poems.

We have also had talks on Roger Casement and the Black Diaries (which I delivered) and Sonja Tiernan spoke about the radical Irish lesbian Eva Gore Booth, who is buried in London and was mentioned also by President Higgins during his trip to London. We rediscovered the plays of the Irish gay dramatist, Colm Clifford nee O'Clubhan, who was on the verge of fame when he died of AIDS in London in the 80s and organised a performance and a staged reading of his play about Irish gay emigration "Rio Rita" in the Lewisham Irish Centre in 2019. We have also organised the first ever conference about Irish LGBTQ emigration to Britain in 2018, together with Irish in Britain (the umbrella organisation for Irish groups in Britain) where one of the themes was marriage equality in Northern Ireland with MPs from the Labour Party and Sinn Fein as well as the Irish TUC.

More recently with Covid we have organised online events and have had a number of Irish LGBTQ filmmakers and musicians come to speak, including Riyadh Khalaf, who won Celebrity Masterchef. We held a really interesting presentation about special LGBTQ housing projects in London and Manchester as well as a talk with trans activists in both Ireland and the UK. On the social side we hold a regular Christmas party and often attend the London Irish Film Festival where there is usually something of interest for an LGBTQ audience. We have just been involved in the launch of the exhibition at the Epic Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin on the history of the Irish LGBTQ Diaspora and many of us hope to return to Ireland to see the exhibition which runs until December this year. Many of us have, of course, been unable to visit our families in Ireland this year and are hoping to be able to make it over soon. Recent developments in Ireland around marriage equality and the repeal of the 8th have made us feel very proud and even more a part of the modern Ireland just across the Irish Sea.

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Equality for Children

Equality for Children is a not for profit organisation which was founded in 2019 by a group of LGBTQ+ parents who came together to fight for equality for their children.

The majority of LGBTQ+ couples require Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) treatment in order to be able to conceive a child. However, most children born through AHR treatment are left in an uncertain legal position without any functioning legal framework to establish a legal parent-child relationship with both of their parents. This has many practical impacts for the children of these families in areas such as; birth registration, citizenship provisions, childcare and/or educational provisions, access to social welfare, succession/inheritance rights etc.

There is a misconception that with the marriage referendum, equality has been achieved. The introduction of the Children and Families Relationships Act (CFRA) last May meant that, for the first time, same sex female couples who met the criteria could go to court and both be recognised as thier childs' legal parents.

Going forward from May 2020, any female couple who conceive and birth their child in the way set out in the CFRA, will have automatic recognition of both parents from birth. The progress was welcome, but legislation is needed to recognise all remaining LGBTQ+ family units for what they are - families - and give equal rights to both parents. In recent months, the Irish Government published a report on children's rights and best interests in the context of assisted human reproduction. If adopted, the recommendations contained in this report would address numerous legislative gaps that exist for LGBTQ+ families in Ireland.

Ranae von Meding, CEO of Equality for Children says, "Professor Conor O'Mahony's report represents another crucial step forward in our be able to have a legal parent-child relationship with both of their parents, something that has been denied to them to date." campaign. By adopting all of the recommendations in Professor O' Mahony's report, thousands of children in Ireland will finally Equality for Children have a petition calling on the government to act swiftly and adopt all of these recommendations into legislation governing assisted human reproduction. Sign the petition now on their website or across all their social channels.

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BEING AN LGBTQI+ ALLY IN EUROPE

By Grace O'Sullivan MEP

Until not so long ago, Ireland largely lived up to its long-held reputation as a conservative little country, where the Catholic church had its citizens in a stranglehold grip of repression.

It was a country that, to put it mildly, didn't encourage or value personal expression or freedom of choice around living an authentic life relating to the bodies we inhabit, our sexualities, and who, what or how we want to be, in the privacy of our autonomous selves.

While in more recent years we have come a long way interms of openness, equality and inclusion around the LGBTIQ+ community, I don't want to examine this topic through rose-tinted glasses. The lived experiences of many still indicate that we have not yet come nearly far enough.

Sadly, I must mention, of course, the disturbing backdrop of a rise in the deplorable efforts and alarming actions of the far-right, and say that however far we have come, the fight continues today and looks set to continue into the future.

Against another, more positive backdrop, though, of that wonderful day just a few short years ago, I want to guardedly acknowledge the evolving maturity of a nation that has become more generally accepting and open.

When Ireland embraced the more positive aspects of our reputation - for warmth and welcome - and overwhelmingly voted in favour of equality and fairness in the Marriage Equality Referendum, it was a day worthy of the mighty celebration the country erupted into. And while demands for equality and fundamental human rights continue, my own support and activism in this area will always, I hope, be tinged with an underlying tone of pride and celebration!

I'm a proud and supportive ally of the LGBTIQ+ community, and I do my best as a member of the LGBTI Intergroup in the European Parliament to fight for LGBTIQ+ equality within the EU and beyond.

I've supported and signed letters, written questions and resolutions. I've taken part in photo actions and social media storms, and I've spoken out in support of the community many, many times.

I fundamentally believe that if I want to stand by my own principles, values and claims around being an open-hearted person who values equality and inclusion, it's important to be visible and outspoken.

To that end, I've shared content on International Coming Out Day, Bisexual Awareness Week, Lesbian Visibility Day, Trans Day of Visibility, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO), and LGBT History Month. I have also been vocal in very actively calling for a ban on the utterly abhorrent practice of conversion therapy.

On 14th September last, I took the floor in the European Parliament to reject LGBTI-free zones in Poland, standing in solidarity with LGBTIQ+ persons throughout Europe.

The day after that, I stood outside the European Parliament dressed in the colours of the rainbow flag, together with like-minded MEP colleagues, in support of the Polish LGBTIQ+ community and inspired by Polish legislators who had taken a similar photo action. I'm proud to say there were many members of the Greens/EFA showing solidarity in that action. Our group in the European Parliament is particularly strong and vocal in this area.

Just a few months ago, in November 2020, the European Commission presented its first-ever strategy on LGBTIQ+ equality in the EU. The actions I've outlined form part of a global call for recognition for rights and regulation supporting rights and legislation in this area. The Commission Strategy is a further acknowledgement that actions and giving voice to issues of concern do produce action.

Fast forward to March 2021, when the European Parliament voted to declare the EU an LGBTI Freedom Zone. I was proud to sponsor this resolution.

We contacted several LGBTIQ+ NGOs to inform them in advance of the vote and urged them to get involved: LGBT Ireland, Belong to Youth Services, Gay Project, and other LGBTIQ+ personalities came on board.

> **"HERE'S HOPING THAT IRELAND WILL BE BETTER RANKED IN THIS YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX ASSOCIATION (ILGA) RAINBOW MAP.**

Looking ahead at more news and actions coming up in the future, and here's hoping that Ireland will be better ranked in this year's International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) rainbow map. I was disappointed with our ranking last year, but as I mentioned above, the fight continues.

Amid growing transphobia in Ireland and the UK, in a community that already faces huge challenges in Ireland and worldwide, I see this as a particularly important area of concern at the moment. It's important to me to keep showing support to the trans community and to keep informing myself and educating myself around what support is wanted and needed.

It's all down to respect and inclusivity. Those intentions and actions have to spread throughout all aspects of our lives, however we identify. Words, for example, are powerful and I'm conscious of doing everything I can to use respectful, inclusive terminology like for example "persons who menstruate" and making sure to use the right pronouns for trans folk. I'm led by members of the LGBTIQ+ community and will continue to do my best to reflect your wishes around where and when activism is needed, and how best I can support my friends and citizens throughout the community.

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RELATIONSHIPS & ID

Relationships, sexuality and love and the needs of people with intellectual disabilities who are LGBTQI+

By Michael Brown

People with intellectual disabilities are full and equal members of Irish society and have the same hopes and desires like everyone else. There have been significant and important changes and developments in the care and support of people with intellectual disabilities over the past 30 years, with the majority living within their local communities, often with additional support to enable them to lead full and inclusive lives. Their hopes and desires include having a job, having friends, relationships and for some intimacy. Some people with intellectual disabilities have, or want, a romantic relationship.

For some this may involve a sexual relationship. However, despite the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens, many people with intellectual disabilities experience significant prejudices and challenges, including the right to express their sexuality, in whatever form that may take. Barriers include assumptions that people with intellectual disabilities are asexual and not interested in relationships and sex. Families may be concerned about exploitation and harm due to their cognitive impairment and possible vulnerabilities. Some experience challenges and barriers to accessing individualised education and support appropriate to their needs regarding relationships. What is evident is that some people with intellectual disabilities are sexually active and others want to be.

While there has been an increasing recognition of the fundamental right of people with intellectual disabilities to express their sexuality, it is frequently assumed that this relates solely to a heterosexual expression. In Ireland there have been significant and welcome recognition of the rights of LGBTQI+ people, reinforced by changes in legislation to ensure equality. There is however a slow and gradual recognition that some people with intellectual disabilities are LGBTQI+, just like others in the general population. There is growing research evidence that some people with intellectual disabilities are LGBTQI+ and wish to express their gender and sexual identity. Despite this, as with the expression of their sexuality in general, people with intellectual disabilities who are LGBTQI+ report significant barriers.

These include heteronormative assumptions and a general attitude that they are not sexually active, through to negative attitudes regarding being intellectually impaired and LGBTQI+, a situation often negatively perceived by some as them being doubly disabled and disadvantaged. What is very clear is that people with intellectual disabilities want friendships and relationships, and some are or want to be sexually active and this may involve a same sex relationship. Some people with intellectual disabilities are gay and yet may lack opportunities to meet other gay people and are relatively invisible within the gay community.

What is evident is that gay people with intellectual disabilities want access to accurate and non-judgemental information, education and supports that enable them to lead lives and develop friendships and for some this may involve a same sex, loving relationship. There is therefore an opportunity to further support their wider inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities within Irish society, including those who are gay, and ensure they can express their sexuality like any other citizen in whatever form that may take.

> “PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES WANT FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS, AND SOME ARE OR WANT TO BE SEXUALLY ACTIVE AND THIS MAY INVOLVE A SAME SEX RELATIONSHIP”

Michael Brown is Professor of Nursing, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen’s University Belfast and undertakes research into the care and support needs of people with intellectual disabilities, including the expression of their sexuality.

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LGBTQ+ POLITICAL ALLIES

By Pádraig Rice

Pride is a protest. Pride is political. Pride is about progress. To sustain that political progress we need LGBTQ+ allies at all levels. Pádraig Rice spoke to politicians from across the political spectrum to ask them why they became active LGBTQ+ allies, what issues are important to them and what they admire about the LGBTQ+ community. Here's a selection of what they had to say:

Cllr Colette Finn Green Party, Cork City Council

What inspired you to become an ally to the LGBTQ+ community?

I was inspired to support the LGBTQ+ community when my friend's son came out as being gay. As a feminist, I wanted to build a world that respects everyone's sexual identity.

What LGBTQ+ action, initiative, project or campaign are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the part that I played in the marriage equality referendum. As Chair of the Board of the Gay Project, I saw first-hand the way the LGBTQ+ community and their family and friends came together to win the debate. The campaign was difficult because it was hard to gauge the extent of the opposition to the proposal. There was scaremongering about children, which unfortunately still exists today. Thankfully, the Irish electorate proved to be a very enlightened group of people. I was happy for LGBTQ+ friends that were now able to plan their weddings and all that goes with that. It also signalled that we need to embrace all families, not just those of heterosexual couples.

What do you admire the most about the LGBTQ+ community and the pride movement?

I admire the LGBTQ+ community for their resilience. I guess any group that experiences the level of discrimination that has been targeted at LGBTQ people needs to be able to bounce back. I think Pride shows how the LGBTQ+ community has been able to celebrate their difference and revel in it.

What advice do you have for LGBTQ+ people interested in getting involved in politics or a political party?

The political space is where the decisions are made. It is important that all groups are represented in a flourishing democracy. It does take a certain mental resilience to be an elected politician. However, with proper party support these can help candidates to be able to take the criticism that goes with being in politics. We need more women to put themselves forward as candidates. If you do not see yourself as a candidate, perhaps support someone else? It takes a lot of voluntary effort to get someone elected. The Green Party has always tried to embrace everyone who shares equality values coupled with ecological wisdom and a just transition. If you feel that you have what it takes, get in touch. The local elections are in 2024. Cork City and Cork County councils could certainly do with more Greens. The future of our ecosystem is at stake and we need all hands on deck to make the changes that need to happen. Be that change.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins Independent, NUI Panel

What inspired you to become an ally to the LGBTQ+ community?

Growing up I learnt that love and family can take many different forms. As a teenager I was very involved in theatre and had a number of gay friends, some of whom were older than me and shared their experiences of unequal treatment from Irish society, including criminalisation and conversion therapy. I think this gave me an awareness of the issue and for me it has always been a core aspect of my wider commitment to equality.

What LGBTQ action, initiative, project or campaign are you most proud of?

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of Senator Fintan Warfield's Bill to ban conversion therapy and as a member of the Council of Europe Committee on Equality I was glad to support an important report on Intersex recognition and rights, which is an aspect of our gender recognition laws which could be strengthened. I have also worked to secure more inclusive social protection policies and more open and transparent adoption policies.

What advice do you have for LGBTQ+ people interested in getting involved in politics or a political party?

Both individual parliamentarians who bravely challenged laws and collective movements have shown us that change really is possible. Getting involved in politics is one important way to contribute to that and to the really important decisions we make about how we live together. As well as bringing forward positive ideas for the future, I think it's also important to learn from the inequalities of the past in terms of listening to and amplifying diverse experiences and being willing to challenge or dismantle embedded inequalities in terms of power and systems. Politics is about participation and also transformation.

Any other message for readers?

I would emphasize the importance of solidarity and intersectionality. Solidarity, because there will always be attempts to divide and conquer and it is by respecting and standing alongside each other that we create stronger momentum for a more equal society. Intersectionality because it is important to embrace the diversity within the LGBTQI+ community while also recognising the additional obstacles that might be faced by individuals within that community who are women, who have a disability, who are from an ethnic minority.

Holly Cairns T.D. Social Democrats, Cork South West

What inspired you to become an ally to the LGBTQ+ community?

Growing up in Ireland I was aware of discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ people in my life and in the news, it was appalling to see and anyone who believes in equality needs to do their bit as an ally.

What do you admire the most about the LGBTQ+ community and the pride movement?

There is incredible solidarity in the LGBTQ+ community which is an example and inspiration for others. The focus on intersectionality highlights issues of class, ethnicity, and disability alongside gender and sexuality. Also, there is real connections with LGBTQ+ groups in other parts of the world who are still suffering extreme discrimination.

What LGBTQ+ action, initiative, project or campaign are you most proud of?

Marriage equality stands out for me as not only a major victory in itself but also as something which was emblematic of the massive change in how LGBTQ+ issues were understood and treated by the Irish people. It was incredible to see the celebration of diversity and love when the referendum passed, it was one of the best moments in recent Irish history. I was delighted to be able to campaign to help achieve equality for my friends and family.

What is your LGBTQ+ policy priority at the moment?

The first immediate issue I am working on is the treatment of LGBTQ+ people in direct provision, there is need for specialised support and special accommodations. While there is a plan to close the direct provision system, we are all aware of its inhumane impact and the reality is asylum seekers will still be spending years in the system. We need significant reform to happen concurrently with the wind down. Secondly, barriers still remain for same-sex parents to be fully recognised as the parents of their children. This issue cuts across several departments and needs the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to lead this change.

Senator Fiona O'Loughlin Fianna Fáil, Admin Panel

What inspired you to become an ally to the LGBTQ+ community?

I was fortunate to have been brought up in a home that valued inclusion, social justice and equality. I remember as a young person being inspired by Minister Maire Geoghegan Quinn's mission to decriminalise homosexuality, and probably only fully realising then how difficult life was for those within the LGBTQ+ community who had endured discrimination and bigotry all their lives. That made me very angry.

What do you admire the most about the LGBTQ+ community and the pride movement?

That much needed sense of solidarity; the celebration of diversity and individuality engendering respect and awareness.

What is your LGBTQ+ policy priority at the moment?

I think a new Relationship and Sexuality Programme in schools is essential and that is my own political priority, along with supporting the passage of hate crime legislation through the Oireachtas. While this legislation is important and necessary, it is the hearts and minds of people that we need to change.

What advice do you have for LGBTQ+ people who are interested in getting involved in politics or a political party?

My own party Fianna Fail is a very inclusive one that embraces diversity. My advice to anyone interested in running for political office is to find your message and use your voice. Being authentic, and true to your values is hugely important, and not always easy (but possible) within any political party. As Oscar Wilde said "Be yourself, everyone else is taken." We need people active in public life that will actively promote the values of tolerance and respect for diversity.

"

BE YOURSELF, EVERYONE ELSE IS TAKEN"

Paul Murphy T.D. People Before Profit, Dublin South-West

What inspired you to become an ally to the LGBTQ+ community?

There's no one event in particular to be honest, it is just a very elementary principle of equality and opposition to oppression which is part and parcel of what drove me to become a socialist.

What is your LGBTQ+ policy priority at the moment?

I think that in Ireland there is a big job ahead when it comes to achieving trans rights. I truly believe that trans rights is one of the next big campaigns for the movement. We need to make sure that there is provision made in legislation for gender recognition for 16 -18 year olds.

What advice do you have for LGBTQ+ people interested in getting involved in politics or a political party?

I would say to people that 'people power' and mass movements work. If we look at any time in history when equality or rights have been won, it is usually through a mass movement. Our own marriage equality referendum is a good example of the culmination of pressure from below over a sustained period of time. If people want to be part of genuine change and make Ireland a more equal place for LGBTQ+ people, then they should get involved in movements and campaigns to achieve these things.

Any other message for our readers?

Over the last Dáil term myself and my colleagues in Solidarity - People Before Profit brought forward a Bill to legislate for objective sex education in schools, free from religious influence. I think that it is possible that we could win this in the next number of years as the movement to separate church and state is building momentum. I would encourage people to get involved in the campaign to separate church and state so that we can provide things like healthcare and sex education without religious influence.

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KINGDOM PRIDE IN KERRY

It's been a funny auld year for Prides across Ireland, given how difficult it is to gather. However, despite the odds and the difficulties, many Prides have pushed forward to attempt the impossible, and deliver something that represents the LGBT+ community in all its colourful fun and glory. It's led to a lot of ingenuity, and in Kerry, it's led to a new Pride organization launching. We've been supported along the way by the fabulous Cork Pride, to whom we are forever grateful!

Kingdom Pride in Kerry is a new organization, set up to deliver Pride to the Kingdom of Kerry. The dates of the festival in 2021 are the 16th to the 18th of July. (Good things come in small packages, after all!) Kingdom Pride is being supported by an Advisory Group made up of community & statutory organisations working in Kerry. These organisations are the Listowel Family Resource Center, Black Lives Matter Kerry, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), Jigsaw Kerry, the KDYS, Kerry Adolescent Counselling Service, TransparenCI, HSE Social Inclusion Unit, Kerry Travellers Health & Community Development Project, LINC Out Kerry, and Gay Project. With all these groups on board, we attempt to bring the people of Kerry the very best Pride possible.

It's run by the same people who brought you Pride Inside last year, which included the county of Kerry, Killarney Pride, Limerick Pride, Black Pride Ireland, Galway Pride, Sligo Pride, and Mayo Pride. And, yes, the people who worked with Todrick Hall to promote the event, leading to the most iconic pronunciation of Irish counties and cities one has ever clapped ears on. (Sleego and Khhhhillorney being among them, representing Sligo and Killarney respectively. We've told the tourism offices that if Todrick Hall says otherwise, they might as well change the names now. Haven't heard back yet.)

This year, we hope to see people in Kerry recognizing our efforts across the county, which is difficult to do - it's a big county! We've already seen more places in Kerry than ever raising the rainbow flag. As a place to grow up in, it's a common experience - for many across rural Ireland I expect - to feel like if you want to be your full, LGBT+ self, you'll have to move. To a university, to a city, to another country - just move! Hopefully, more and more, that feeling is lessened. The more we embrace our beloved community in public, the more our children will understand they, too, are beloved. The more we say: you can grow here, become a brilliant person here, and stay here for as long as you want - because you're safe, and accepted.

Perhaps we are a few years off that future for now. But with each passing year, each passing parade, each brave individual that comes forward to claim they too are LGBTQ+, that future is a little less distant.

There are so many LGBT+ groups in Kerry nowadays too! For children, there is Jigsaw (12-25), Transformers and the KDYS group. For those not eligible for youth groups, there is Trans Kerry support group, ScEEN in Kerry, LINC Out Kerry, Gay Project, and now us as well.

Kingdom Pride in Kerry would never have happened without the support, the generosity, and the kindness of Cork Pride. It's been such an honour and very heartwarming to see what support Prides have given one another in the past years, especially with COVID looming in the distance, threatening the end to many rural and smaller Prides. We couldn't have asked for better neighbours, despite the fact ye sometimes give us a run for our money on the auld football side of things. Thank you Cork Pride for the amazing work ye do, and to yourself reading this - have a wonderful Pride.

Until we next see you,

Kingdom Pride in Kerry Committee

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WHAT MAKES LIFE LIVEABLE FOR LGBTQI PEOPLE?

By Prof. Kath Brown

For two decades now we can see a trajectory of progress in the creation of equalities for LGBTQI people, but as academics and activists have long noted, this is not enough.

There have been massive shifts in the 21st century around sexual and gender rights. There can be little doubt that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans lives and activisms in places like Ireland, England and Canada have altered considerably throughout the first decade of the 21st Century. These include same sex marriage, gender recognition legislations, and banning sexualities discrimination in workplaces. This has been accompanied by cultural changes towards the acceptance and inclusion of some LGBTQI people. When properly operationalised anti-discrimination legislation and practices has been shown to improve society for example reducing strain on mental health and other health and wellbeing services. However, the reconfiguration of political, social and cultural landscapes that offers new possibilities, as many activists and academics have noted, are not experienced evenly between people or places. It matters who you are and where you are. Inclusions are imperfect, hierarchical and created through codes and norms that result in and from discrimination. There is always work to be done, and this is no less true in the areas of sexualities and genders.

What work is to be done, goes beyond asking for the means to survive (legislation, absence of physical abuse), and instead should look towards what makes life liveable, what makes a good life and what makes life a life for LGBTQI people. This changes how we see politics here (and what we understand of countries that are often seen as 'worse than' here).

Drawing on the 'count me in too' research (www.countmeintoo.co.uk) and the 'liveable lives' research (www.liveablelives.org), it is possible to see the ongoing issues of difference and marginalisation in the pursuit of what makes lives liveable in places that have good equality laws.

Even where acceptances are ostensibly in place, there continue to be issues with how people experience everyday spaces, and how we can be treated, including at work:

Heidi: There's homophobia in totally different ways. Like at work. I always feel the need now to go into work and like, 'Hi. I'm a lesbian.' It's just out there then and then the banter can commence where I will happily join in, in taking the piss out of myself because it's easier than being like, 'Please don't offend me because that's really hurtful'. I had a manager refer to me always - never by my name, but always - as lezzer, and I laughed at that but then I look back at that and I'm like, 'That's not fine. That's really not fine', that type of homophobia absolutely exists. As one person you're vulnerable. You go along with it because you're like, 'I don't know how to challenge this in a way we don't come across as an angry lesbian'.

(Project Workshop 3 – Southampton, UK)

Ishika: At my work space, my sexuality...because I have never been very shh shh about it... it has turned into kind of a private joke sometimes. Like, sometimes everybody is okay...you are like this, very good, we are like this supportive people, but suddenly...some below the belt jokes and you know they are about you. At that point you feel very hurt. it's very insensitive, it's uneducated and I absolutely get very furious about it.

(In-Depth Interview – Kolkata, India)

Ishika and Heidi show how the everyday realities of being 'other' and 'not normal', the effects of always being the butt of the joke. Things like this structure your daily life, such that you may not even notice. Indeed, you can presume them to indicate true 'acceptance'. But being the butt of the joke can have damaging effects - the idea of a sexual or gender identity as part of a joke shows how these differences continue to be seen. In spaces where people are ostensibly 'supportive', there continue to be issues with who is ridiculed, and how.

Yasmin demonstrated the problems with discussing oppression and the everyday nature of some forms of discrimination:

Yasmin: It is a very subtle thing you see because discrimination is a word that sounds like something very active that somebody does to you and actually oppression, which I prefer to speak about is ... like a soup that you are sitting in. It is in your eyes and you nose and it is everywhere so it isn't something that you can say well that person did that thing to me. You can identify those events but they are like the carrots in the soup, they are like the big bits that you can grab hold of and say 'well I was walking along the Level and somebody hit me over the head without provocation and then proceeded to racial abuse me'. So that to me is at the hunk of you know carrot or leek or whatever it is that's in the soup but the rest of the soup is there all the time. And you know that's life, that is actually what life is like when you are you know you are a woman, you are a Lesbian, you are Asian, you are Muslim, you are all of those things that I am ... I think in Brighton there is a kind of naivety, 'oh we are all very nice in Brighton and therefore we don't discriminate against anybody' and I think that's a problem. There is a kind of naïve collusion with institutional and other forms of what is soupy oppression, which people don't really recognise.

(BME focus group 1)

Yasmin points to the intersectional identities that create who she is- they cannot be disentangled. This soup of oppression is how our everyday lives are created, how they interact with us affects us on a daily basis. The ways in which these interactions can be difficult vary, from presuming the gender of a partner, to assuming the gender of someone that you are speaking to. These all create the soup in which you exist and some interactions can be the carrots that are grabbed hold of, others can be ignored, passed over, dismissed in part because being continually upset and offended is detrimental to your wellbeing, regardless of if these interactions are acceptable or legal. They challenge your liveability.

So, even with equalities laws and cultural changes, life may not be liveable for LGBTIQ people. The presumption that lives are 'sorted' can lead people to being silenced and failing to acknowledge ongoing issues. The stigmatisation of LGBTQ people is a necessary counterpoint to the idea that there has been successful and irrevocable social, legal and political change to the benefit of all LGBTQI people. This insecurity in knowing that your rights will be protected makes lives less liveable. There is always a fear that things that are afforded to you now, may not always be so. Ongoing support also continues to be needed because of all the issues discussed above and many more!

Liveable Politics Here and There

The other side of this is the dismissal of these fears and experiences, because 'you have gay marriage', or that Pride is 'isn't needed anymore'. Dismissing LGBTIQ people's experiences and worries because things are supposedly 'fine', and we are not being murdered or beaten up (enough?) can also take another form. This is usually done by pointing to 'other places' that are worse, so you shouldn't complain, name discrimination or ask for more, because you have it 'better'. This downplaying and dismissal of ongoing issues 'here' is also how LGBTQI people can speak about and make sense of their lives, in ways that don't ask for more. Seeing somewhere as worse than where you are, and where you could be, can be empowering. Your life is apparently not as 'bad' as it might be:

Q: As an LGBT person, what makes your life not liveable?

Not much when I consider the hurt and pain that lgbts undergo on a daily basis in other countries (Online)

The hurt and pain of others seemingly dwarfs the hurt and pain that might otherwise be recognized and agitated around. This was the case even when people went on to speak to abuse, harassment and prejudice that they experienced. This was almost made acceptable because the base level of survival (i.e. not being murdered) was a possibility 'in other places'. The discourse becomes comparative, 'I am fine, because they are not'. This construction of 'here' as 'fine' and 'there' as 'not fine' is a key way in which Pride and other politics can be played out.

Understanding here as better than other places, which should 'learn from us', rather than recognising the importance of solidarity, mutual learning and complicities is replicated where 'other places' become where the politics is located, and the local is neglected and ongoing problems negated or downplayed.

Prof. Kath Browne and Dr. Niharika Banerjea are currently working on the book Liveable Lives, due to be completed in 2022.

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- Misty Hill

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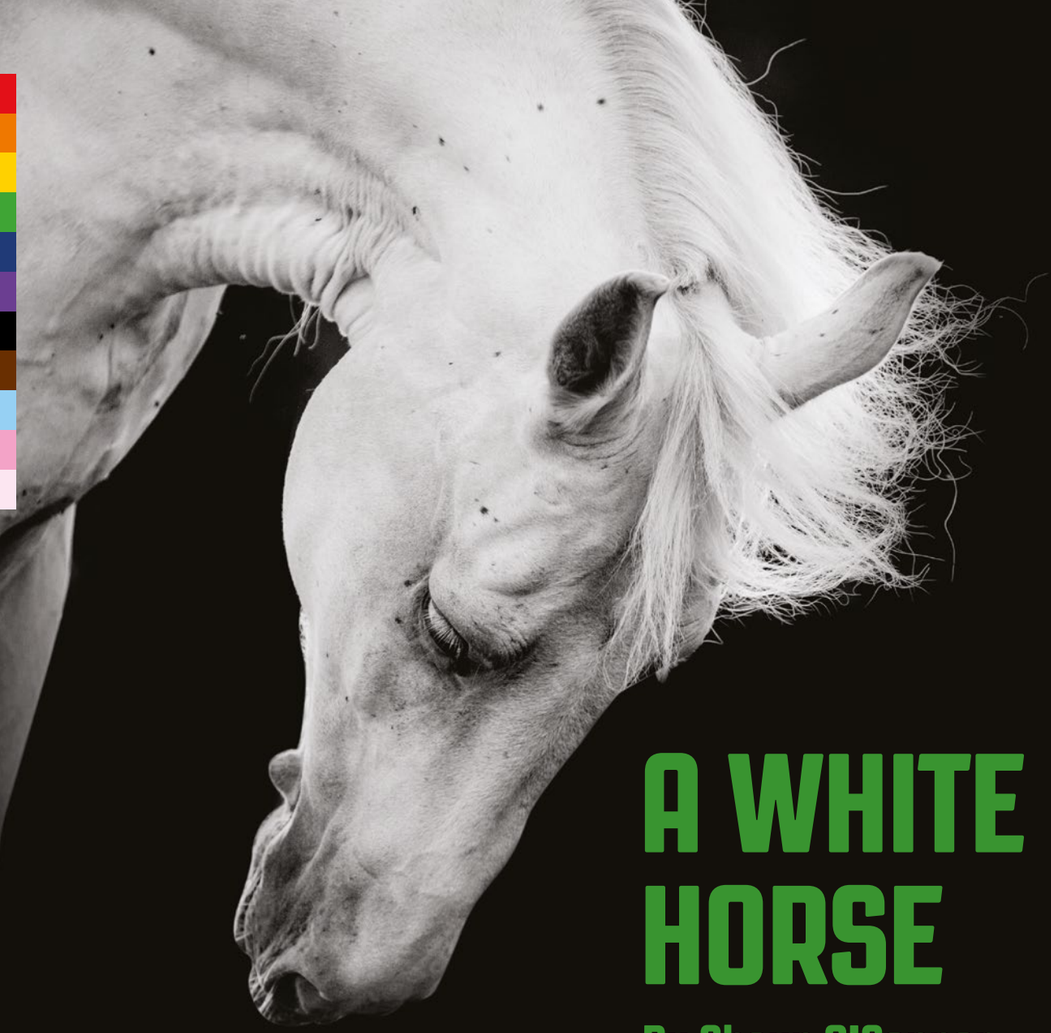

A WHITE HORSE

By Shaun O'Connor

In 2019 I directed a short film called 'A White Horse'.

Set in Ireland in the late 1970s, it's about Bridget, a young girl who escapes a mental hospital, walks into a phone booth and calls home. Through the conversation with her mother, we learn that the reason she's been placed in the hospital is that parents have found out she's in a romantic relationship with another girl in her school. Bridget has been sent away to be 'fixed', through use of various therapies including ECT (electroconvulsive therapy).

This practice of sectioning and 'treating' people for homosexuality was well documented and happening wholesale in the UK and the US. It was not quite as catalogued in Ireland, but we know from anecdotal evidence that it was happening. Not just that, but anyone deemed generally 'abnormal' or 'burdensome to society' (i.e., mentally ill) was commonly incarcerated too. Sadly, it was not usual for these people to be left 'unclaimed' by their families and abandoned in these institutions for years or decades.

To tell Bridget's story, we drew on various sources, both anecdotal and recorded. We spoke to people who had been in mental institutions around that time. We took inspiration from Lou Reed, who underwent intensive ECT as a young man and whose memory was subsequently affected for years. And we drew from the story of Hanna Greally, an Irishwoman who spent the best part of two decades in a psychiatric institution and recounted her story in the harrowing memoir 'Bird's Nest Soup'.

For our character Bridget and many like her, what makes her story so heartbreaking is that her parents' motivation is not cruelty, but love. As awful as the situation is, they're doing what they think is best for their daughter. To them, Bridget's emerging sexuality is a phase. Like a bad habit or falling in with the wrong crowd, it's something that can be fixed with tough love and professional intervention.

Screenwriter Paul Cahill and I were also fascinated by the idea of Bridget's story taking place at the epicenter of historical flux. Ireland was on the cusp of major change in the late 1970s: countercultural influences were seeping through the old protective walls of religious dogma. Punk, poetry, disco; the cultural fuel of civil rights movements across the water were filtering into Irish consciousness and taking root.

What nobody could have predicted was how strong those roots would become. Ireland has since become an international beacon for LGBTQ rights and the degree to which gay culture has been embraced and made accessible here is amazing. As a straight man growing up in rural Ireland in the 80s and 90s, my awareness of gay culture was limited to the John Waters episode of The Simpsons. For young digitally literate people growing up today, LGBTQ lifestyles and culture are ubiquitous and celebrated.

This revolution of thought is astonishing not just because of our historical deference to anti-gay teachings, but in how dramatically our culture has uncoupled from it. Same-sex marriage, a gay Taoiseach; it's as if we're making up for lost time. It blows my mind to think of both how far we've come in the meantime, but also that institutional conversion therapy was happening in my lifetime.

In fact, that chronological proximity of dangerous bigotries was one of the reasons we felt 'A White Horse' was an important film to make. And though there's recently been a strong interest in telling these stories on screen (Boy Erased, The Miseducation of Cameron Post), we felt that it hadn't been told from an Irish perspective.

'A White Horse' toured the Irish film festival circuit in late 2019 and early 2020, so we were very lucky to have had cinema screenings before the planet came to a halt with COVID. We picked up a number of awards, one of which qualified us for the Academy Award longlist. Unfortunately we didn't make the shortlist, but it was an amazing experience and a great achievement for an independent short film.

The most gratifying part of the whole experience was when people approached us after the screenings to say how they had related to the film. Either they had gone through something similar in the past, or had known a family member who went away 'for a spell' and reappeared back months or years later, often with a marked difference in their personality.

What we didn't expect was that the film would become even more pertinent in the time since it was made. The Republican Party's 2020 platform all but re-endorsed conversion therapy. An ultra-conservative judge was appointed to the US Supreme Court, which could mean knock-on effects for LGBTQ rights. And Arlene Foster's abstention to vote in a debate on a motion to ban Conversion Therapy is likely to have contributed to her stepping down as lead of the DUP.

It's astonishing that in such a progressive era the idea of somebody's sexuality being 'incorrect' and in need of 'fixing' is taken seriously at all. And though conversion therapy has been thankfully relagated from legitimate medical treatment to fringe practice, for the vulnerable young people who go through it the effects are still as damaging as ever. The sooner it's consigned to history, the better.

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SING IF YOU'RE GLAD TO BE GAY

By Ailsa Spindler

Those of us over a certain age will remember the first time they heard Tom Robinson and his band singing about being glad to be gay. Released in 1978, "Glad To Be Gay" soon became a gay anthem, with club audiences joining in the chorus, which sounded like a simple call to rejoice in being gay. However, the lyrics of the song were about the hypocrisy of British society, the British media, and on-going intolerance, police brutality and homophobic violence – hardly a cause for celebration. The song actually had a spoken word introduction in its original form, which dedicated it to the World Health Organisation. It labelled itself 'a medical song' which concerned 'a disease whose classification according to the International Classification of Diseases is 302.0'. This, of course, was the classification of homosexuality (including lesbianism) as a mental illness. The song reached #18 on the UK Singles chart, in spite of being banned from the weekly chart show by BBC, and was #1 for six weeks on Capital Radio's Hitline.

However, for the purposes of this article, I am going to take the song's chorus at face value, and suggest that we should all sing, celebrate, shout and party if we are glad to be gay. Then, a step further, I contend that we should be glad to be gay. Other articles within this Cork Pride magazine recount some terrible experiences that members of the LGBTQI+ community have experienced, both here in Ireland and in other parts of the world. I do not seek to play down the discrimination, inequality, persecution, and physical and mental abuse that many have suffered. I would like to offer a counterbalance to that, and remind everyone that queerness can be – indeed, should be – a cause for celebration.

There are many academic studies into the perceived benefits of identifying as LGBTQ, and one of the most repeated themes is 'connectedness'. In modern societies, many individuals feel disconnected and isolated, a situation marked by high levels of mental ill-health and suicide. Many queer individuals have a much stronger sense of community than their straight friends. Gay men often report that their female acquaintances trust them more than they do heterosexual men. Lesbians can celebrate 'sisterhood' in a richer, deeper way than straight women. Bisexual and pansexual people may enjoy not being constrained to one 'category' of sexual attraction.

> "DO YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE CHOSEN TO BE GAY, WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS IT BRINGS?""

Another cause for celebration arises from the cliché, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger". Many LGBTQI+ people have had to show great resilience in overcoming negative forces, and that resilience stands us in good stead in the workplace, in family relationships, and in life in general. The LGBTQI+ world is full of high achievers, and not just in the 'artistic' sector – commerce and industry, science and technology, sport, and many other spheres of activity are full of successful queer people.

True happiness is based on self-respect. If you don't love and respect yourself, why should anyone else? One of the saddest things I have heard regularly while working for gay rights is the response, "do you think I would have chosen to be gay, with all the problems it brings?". This is often said as a rebuttal to the view that being gay is a choice; but the point is, no-one chooses their sexual orientation, they just chose how to respond to it.

Being straight has its own set of hazards and negatives – all those unwanted pregnancies and abortions – but I have never heard a straight person say, "do you think I would have chosen to be straight?". This is not just heteronormativity; many gay people have been persuaded that their sexual orientation is the more problematic one, but it is society that makes it problematic.

One of the great benefits of being 'out and proud' is that friends and acquaintances will think of you as being 'out of the ordinary', 'eccentric', or even 'special'. This gives a freedom which extends well beyond sexual activities, into how you dress, what hobbies you enjoy, even your choice of music. If you are already outside one of society's more rigid constraints, then none of them hold much power over you. I suspect that this is why same-sex attraction is often associated with hedonism; queer people are not intrinsically more hedonistic than others, they are just better practised at stepping over boundaries. This is probably why so many institutions of governance and rule have sought to outlaw homosexuality – queers are harder to control!

So, there are positives about being gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex or just 'different'. Over a long(ish) life of being different, here are my tips to help you become Glad To Be Gay: be an active member of your communities - yes, plural! Not just the LGBTQI+ community, but other communities of interest; your sports club, the flower arranging society, a political group, the church choir.... In all of these communities, be as 'out' as you can be. Show the straights that we have lots to offer, and not all of it arises from our sexual orientation or gender identity. If there isn't a group that you can join, start one! Some of Cork's gay rugby players started their own club - Cork Hellhounds - in November last year, and it already has over thirty members.

Engage with your local queer support group. You will find contact details elsewhere in this magazine for several organisations and groups that welcome members of the LGBTQI+ community. Join in, to 'feel the love' but also to share your positivity and enthusiasm for your queerness. When you are showing that you are Glad To Be Gay, the person sitting next to you might well feel inspired and encouraged.

Finally, SING! I am as musical as a bar of soap, and I would never inflict my singing on an audience, but belting out (or miming to) the odd gay anthem in front of the mirror is great for your self image. I may not be Tom Robinson, Gloria Gaynor, Elton John or Katy Perry, but in my dreams.

CORK QUEER ARTISTS

The past year has been incredibly difficult for our musicians, writers, visual artists, poets, and designers etc. The absence of this culture has signalled a greater than ever need for our community to unite; Cork Pride would like to do its part to help in solidarity and support. Check out some of those talented individuals below and we encourage you to engage and enjoy their work. Also, a simple 'follow, like or share' is always appreciated.

ALANA DALY MULLIGAN

Alana Daly Mulligan is a multi-award-winning spoken-word "artivist", journalist & filmmaker of Déise extraction. Her work revolves around growing up queer in Ireland, and the people in her life that help to shape it.

Alana has performed across Ireland and the United States, competed as a finalist in several slams and had films win awards on both sides of the Atlantic. Alana features in Autonomy, Solstice Sounds Vol: VI, Quarryman V, Ó'Bheal's 5-Words Vol XII and Motley Magazine.

Alana has just completed a degree in English and History in University College Cork where she was a Quercus Active Citizenship Scholar & Eoin Murray Creative Writing Scholar.

www.alanadalymulligan.com

PAULINE WALSH

Pauline Walsh, Landscape Artist from Skerries Co.Dublin now living in West Cork. During her time in Dublin, Pauline worked for Don Bluth Studios and worked on the classic movies "Land Before Time", "All Dogs go to Heaven" and it's sequel "All Dogs II".

Pauline's work while nature based tend to include bodies of water, from large seascapes. However, living close to the beautiful woodlands of West Cork, has inspired Pauline to create paintings that give a sense of being immersed in those forests. She paints using oil on canvas, building up textures to create this feeling of depth. Pauline has exhibited throughout Ireland, her work is widely collected and commissioned both privately and commercially and is included in the following collections – Hennessey, Roxy New York, Jeremy Irons and the Department of the Marine.

www.paulinewalshart.com

JIM CRICKARD

Jim Crickard's poetry is camp, entertaining work that explores culture, sexuality and identity with a hint of colour. In 2020 he was invited to represent Cork in the Cork-Coventry Twin City Exchange, which was moved online due to pandemic. In 2019 he was selected by Poetry Ireland for the inaugural Versify series, and performed to a sold out show at Dublin Fringe Festival. He came second in the 2019 All Ireland Poetry Slam Final (and is working through his feelings about it with a therapist). In 2018, he won the Cuirt Spoken Word Platform and was awarded a slot to perform at Electric Picnic. In 2020 his poetry was broadcasted on RTE Arena. A poem he wrote was shortlisted in the 2018 O'Bheal International Five Words Competition, and his work has been published in Automatic Pilot, A New Ulster, and Contemporary Poetry.

Instagram: @knownonlyasjim

KODY THEO

I am a filmmaker, screenwriter, and photographer. My goal as a creator is to build a platform and safe space for LGBT+ people, where they can see themselves living full, happy lives, and not being torn down by tragedy and pain. I aim to capture moments of beauty, peace, and harmony, showing the world that this is our community. We deserve joy. This is also why I helped create Queer Plus Productions, a production company ran completely by LGBT+ people. We understand the frustration of never feeling seen or heard, but we aim to bring that to an end.

Instagram: @kxdytheo

MATT HIGGS

My name is Matthew Higgs, I'm a 26 year old drag artist (Dakota Mode), videographer, pianist and recent graduate from Crawford College of Art and Design where I majored in digital photography that included elements of sculptural installation! My digital photography work centralises on toxic masculinity and the stigma around male victims of domestic abuse in Ireland, this is influenced heavily by my own personal experiences with sexuality and domestic abuse in adulthood.

Instagram: @MattHiggsArtist

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#YOUAREINCLUDED AT COPENHAGEN 2021!

By Steve Taylor

Director of Communications for Copenhagen 2021

There's relief all over the world as travel restrictions are lifting, just in time for two Scandinavian cities – within a two-hour flight for most Europeans and direct flights from every region of the world – hosting WorldPride and EuroGames in August.

For ten days, Copenhagen in Denmark and Malmö in Sweden will host WorldPride and EuroGames in a huge combined event called Copenhagen 2021. It's the first time that the world's most significant Pride has combined with Europe's largest LGBTI+ multi-sport event.

Hosted by Copenhagen Pride and Pan Idræt – the Danish capital's LGBTI+ sports association – and in cooperation with Malmö Pride, Copenhagen 2021 will combine extensive and exciting programming in arts and culture, human rights, sports, activism and – of course – the opportunity to party, dance, and set yourself free.

This is also the first time that WorldPride has taken place in two countries. The program opens with a 'Pride Riots' and concerts in one of Malmö's parks, with four nights of concerts in Copenhagen's Fælledparken and WorldPride Marches to take activism to the streets.

In Copenhagen, our culture team are curating four separate arts spaces including specific activities for children and families, young people, and a chilled meeting space called 'Arcadia'. We'll also have a space, Fluids, where all programming will be by and for women, trans and non-binary visitors. More than 100 events will be hosted by cultural partners including the National Museum, Royal Theatre, and Opera.

EuroGames will attract up to 6,000 athletes to competitive tournaments in 29 sports including badminton, ballroom dancing, diving, triathlon, volleyball and water polo. E-sport will be included in EuroGames for the first time, with Counter Strike and FIFA tournaments.

Athletes, their friends and spectators alike can kick back and relax in our Sports Village on the vibrant waterside at Islands Brygge. The one-mile Pride Run from Islands Brygge to City Hall Square will deliver athletes to the EuroGames Opening Ceremony, with spectators and supporters lining the route.

But we're not just creating an event for ten days next August; we want Copenhagen 2021 to have a lasting legacy for LGBTI+ people worldwide and creating a better future for all LGBTI+ people is a core aim for our human rights program. The Human Rights Forum will be the world's biggest LGBTI+ rights event of 2021, and possibly ever, with a three-day Human Rights Conference for 2,000 activists and campaigners from around the world, with keynote speeches from political and world leaders and the Patron of Copenhagen 2021, HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark.

Danish MPs will invite parliamentarians from around the world to a plenary at the Danish Parliament to talk about enhancing LGBTI+ equality worldwide, with a special focus on the Global South. In Malmö, a summit on refugees, borders and immigration will recognise the city's strategic importance in the resettling of refugees from conflict zones in recent years. A six-day open-air democracy festival will allow visitors, activists and politicians to talk openly and freely about the challenges still faced by LGBTI+ people around the world.

And after all that serious business, we'll need to let our hair down and celebrate how far we have come. Party and protest have gone hand-in-hand at Pride for 50 years, and at Copenhagen 2021 we're making sure there are amazing parties for everyone to enjoy. Inclusive Signature Parties at venues around both cities are open to everyone and with affordable ticket prices.

Concerts – featuring live music from the LGBTI+ community and acclaimed artists – will be taking place in Copenhagen and Malmö, and they will be streamed online as part of their huge digital program. Copenhagen Pride's world-famous Drag Night will certainly be one night you don't want to miss.

And let's not forget the diverse LGBTI+ bars that we have to offer. Street parties take over a large part of Copenhagen during Pride, and 2021 will be no different. The famous bars of Studiestræde and one of the world's oldest LGBTI+ bars, Centralhjørnet, will keep the entertainment flowing every evening.

It's by being immersed in our lively bar scene that visitors will see why Copenhagen has yet again been named the best city in the world to be LGBTI+. These are friendly and welcoming cities where equality is simply a way of life. Danes and Swedes are proud of their cities, their countries, and their cultures of openness and acceptance. And this is a long-standing culture; Copenhagen 2021 also marks the seventieth anniversary of the first gender confirmation surgery in the world, which took place in Denmark. It'll be 88 years since homosexuality was decriminalised, and 32 years since the world's first civil partnership took place at Copenhagen City Hall, the setting for the main square during Copenhagen 2021.

Away from the Copenhagen 2021 activities and the LGBTI+ scene, you'll find amazing places to eat, shop and explore. Whether you want independent designers and clothes stores, or the latest in Scandinavian design to bring a bit of 'hygge' home with you, there are great finds to be had.

Whilst it's true that the cost of living is higher in Scandinavia, visiting doesn't need to break the bank. There's lots of advice online on how to visit Copenhagen and Malmö on a budget, and you can get a decent meal in a restaurant for under €20 and you can find a good bottle of wine in a supermarket for under €8. And the size of the cities mean you don't need to spend money on public transport.

Even more so than Dublin, for a capital city Copenhagen is compact and remarkably easy to get around; you can walk the city centre from end to end in 30 minutes. It's famous for its cycling culture and you can get anywhere in the city by bike in fifteen minutes. There's a 24 hour Metro, and an extensive bus and train network, including across the iconic Øresund Bridge which connects Copenhagen and Malmö's city centres in under 30 minutes. A ticket from the airport to Copenhagen Central Station costs around €5.

There are hotels for every budget and thousands of apartment rentals. You can find some great hotels at reasonable prices around Vesterbro and close to the harbour and the airport, and you could even stay in some of the beautiful countryside surrounding Copenhagen and Malmö or in one of the neighbouring towns or cities – none of which are more than 30 minutes away by train.

Of course, the shadow of the pandemic looms large over our plans. Coronavirus testing will be available 24/7 in Copenhagen and is free for everyone, including tourists. We'll be doing all we can to make the event as safe as possible, including limiting numbers at some events and requiring the EU or Danish coronapass for entry to some events.

So as travel and the world opens up, consider a visit to Copenhagen and Malmö for WorldPride and EuroGames. There are direct flights from Dublin and Belfast and we'll be working hard to deliver an incredible event where #YouAreIncluded – and we don't want you to miss it.

Copenhagen 2021 takes place from 12-22 August 2021.

Visit **copenhagen2021.com** and connect on social media.

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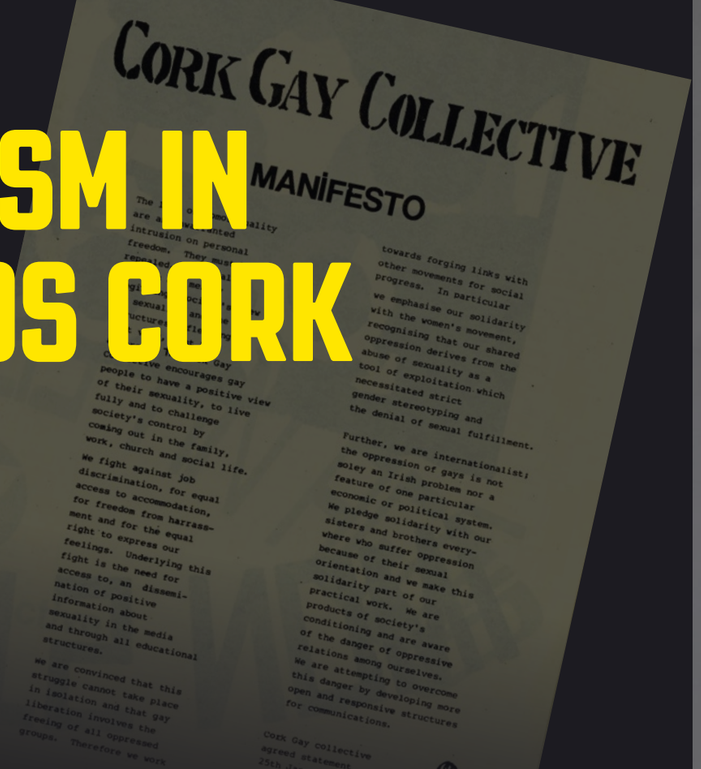
GAY ACTIVISM IN EARLY 1980S CORK

40 YEARS ON

By Kieran Rose



Early 1980s Cork was an exciting place to be for a young gay activist, there were so many ground-breaking projects and actions to be involved with, making a place for ourselves in the life of the city for the first time, coming out publicly, making friends, discovering ourselves and forging our identities in the process.

It was also a time of almost suffocating oppression, great discrimination and prejudice, enforced by powerful right wing groups, especially the Catholic Church. Various Governments had little respect for our human rights and upheld the laws that criminalized us. The High Court in 1980 and the Supreme Court in 1983 shockingly decided that gay men being threatened with jail for consenting sexual relationships was not contrary to the Constitution.

Given these pressures and lack of support, many gay people remained deep in the closet leading diminished and isolated lives. Not surprisingly many decided to emigrate, to escape.

In these circumstances we set up the Cork Gay Collective in 1980 and, after much debate, adopted our radical and ambitious Manifesto for gay liberation.

We went on to be the driving force for the First National Gay Conference held in Connolly Hall Cork 1981 and the motions adopted were to set the political agenda for the next decade and more.

We were involved in the first public lesbian and gay Pride event in the city when we leafleted in Prince's Street in 1981.

We began our engagement with the trade union movement by lobbying the Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in the City Hall. We were busy in 1981 and it's amazing to realise it was 40 years ago.

The following year I proposed a Motion at the AGM of the Cork Branch of the LGPSU (now Forsa) on equal rights for lesbians and gay men; this was later adopted overwhelmingly by the National Conference of the Union and got very good media coverage.

I am always amused by one delegate who opposed the Motion saying: "If Cork have problems with homosexuality then let them go away and solve them quietly without publicity".

In 1982 we travelled to Belfast to lobby the ICTU conference and a Motion supporting equal rights for lesbian and gay workers was passed, a historic victory.

The trade union movement was a huge support for the community at a time when we had few allies and many powerful opponents. The Unions played a key role in all subsequent milestones such as gay law reform, equality legislation, Civil Partnership and success in the Marriage Equality Referendum.

The Cork Gay Collective took the lead in the trade union work including setting up the trade union advocacy group 'Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work'. One of it's achievements was the radical ICTU policy 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace' published in 1987.

The Cork Gay Collective was also heavily involved in setting up the Quay Coop in 1982 which became a huge and nurturing resource for lesbians and gay men.

The Collective more or less disbanded to put all it's energy into the Anti Amendment Campaign to stop the anti-abortion clause being put into the Constitution. Cork had a vigorous campaign and one of the highest No votes in the country, but the Amendment was passed in 1983 and caused huge damage until it was removed in the Constitutional Referendum of 2018.

We were involved in a range of other solidarity campaigns including supporting the Miners Strike in Britain, against the Criminal Justice Bill, and against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

We seemed to travel to Dublin a lot for marches and meetings, most notably the 1983 Fairview March, a protest against the freeing of the killers of a gay man by the Courts, a pivotal moment in the development of the Irish lesbian and gay community, our 'Stonewall'.

We took part in the first Dublin Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade later in 1983 which was a wonderful, confident, joyous celebration as we took over the streets of the capital claiming our rights.

The Collective played a key role in setting up Gay Health Action in 1985 which did trojan work on HIV/AIDS issues. Many of us were later to be key activists in GLEN founded in 1988.

But it wasn't all marches and meetings, there were great parties, dinners, and pints in places like Loafers, or going off to West Cork for a few days. We had a lot of fun too.

It was a great time to be young and to be surrounded by so many dynamic and supportive lesbian and gay activists and friends.

QUEER AS YOU ARE

Summer Group Exhibition at Luan Gallery

LUAN GALLERY

As part of its Summer 2021 programme Luan Gallery is delighted to present Queer As You Are; a group exhibition of Irish artists which explores the gaps and fissures of queer presence within Irish history and considers how queer historical discourses, or lack thereof, populate our past, present and future.

The exhibition will run from mid-July to mid-September, pending public health restrictions and will feature artists; Kian Benson Bailes, Stephen Doyle, Austin Hearne, Breda Lynch and Conor O' Grady.

The artists within this exhibition examine the tension in translating different historical, social, and cultural contexts into something that can be understood by others today. Addressing the absence of objects to assist in their storytelling, each supplement alternative materials, drawing on psychoanalysis, activism, archaeology, hook up culture, the occult and autobiographical accounts.

From queering the rural to dragging religious hegemony and 'lesbian spotting' the exhibition sceptically, pulls apart linear time into constitutive pieces and analyses it from a variety of perspectives, taking nothing for granted.

Queer As You Are is subject to Government Health restrictions in place at that time. Exhibition dates will be announced via Luan Gallery media; Instagram **@luangalleryathlone** and Facebook: **@LuanGallery**

BREDA LYNCH

Breda Lynch is an artist, curator and a full-time lecturer in Fine Art at the Limerick School of Art and Design. She holds a BA Hons degree from the Crawford College of Art, Cork, an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art, London and an MPhil Fine Art and Digital Media from the University of Wolverhampton, England.

Lynch has created art from her ongoing engagement with discourses on identity, appropriation and re-appropriation, hidden histories and queer culture. Additionally, she engages with methodologies and approaches that respond to the history of mechanical reproduction, digital reproduction online, the persistent circulation of images in the public domain, all the while querying our relationship with the image, its consumption, distribution, reproduction, value and forcing (re)considerations of authenticity within art. After all, the online civilisation is historically speaking, a relatively new space wherein pictures circulate devoid of origins.

QUEER AS YOU ARE at Luan Gallery will present her most recent instalment of the on-going project Fragments of a Lost Civilisation. A continuous issue, lesbian queerness and sexuality is still largely invisible, in part because it wasn't seen as so significant in legal and religious terms. In a somewhat labour of love, Lynch endeavours to archive the hidden history of women's same-sex desire and make it comprehensible.

KIAN BENSON BAILES

Kian Benson Bailes is an Irish artist residing in the West of Ireland. He graduated from the Institute of Art and Design Technology IADT, Dublin, in 2016, his multifaceted practice explores rural Ireland, visual language and identity politics.

For Bailes, queer artworks are functional objects, not only as educational tools but as artefacts that further contextualize and embody queer academia and relational queer art practices. Drawing parallels between the aesthetics of rural and marginalised communities, he builds alternative narratives using figuration and motifs associated with rurality, superstitions and folklore.

Often considered twee, pastoral or craft, Irish folklore frames the visual landscape of rural communities and art spaces in Ireland. Craft nor queer are essentialist terms, each resist definition and have complex identities. Bailes highlights the intersection between rural and queer heritage noting that there is a necessity of these aesthetics in its function, building communities that lack the same kinds of urban infrastructures and economics.

CONOR O'GRADY

Conor O'Grady is an Irish multi-disciplinary artist based in Donegal, who actively employs a socially engaged art practice. His work explores the research methods of relational aesthetics and dialogue as a medium to examine the lived experiences of marginalised communities in society. He works collaboratively translating his conversations with these groups into moving image, site-specific intervention, and archival processes. Emotive and complex his output is often an examination of the moments where minorities are told that they are unwanted by the rest of society.

At times the viewer may feel like passive, voyeuristic bystander but who is, in fact, an active witnesses to the experiences of the underprivileged and unheard.

Current works by the artist focus on the symbiotic relationship between different marginalized groups. Mapping isolated spaces within urban and rural settings as sites of 'promise' or 'victimisation'. He offers unique perspectives on class, generation and the negotiations of safety by closeted gay men outside the commodified 'gay bar'. Abstract and ambiguous O'Grady documents groups whose lives have not been affected by the changing political landscape and who actively aim to leave little to no trace of their existence.

STEPHEN DOYLE

Stephen Doyle is a Cork-based artist currently working from Backwater Studios. They explore issues of queer identity through the relationship between figuration and the politics of representation.

Doyle makes figurative work of LGBTQIA+ people, and often includes objects in the paintings, a gesture of 'othering' the art that mirrors the subject matter it investigates. Painting, and portraiture in particular, is associated with the iconography of power (for example politicians and religious figures), and consequently with mainstream worldviews, of which queer identity and culture have always been excluded. By invoking them, Doyle makes an ironic comment on the subalternisation of the existence of the LGBTQIA+ community, and simultaneously does their part to illuminate it.

AUSTIN HEARNE

Austin Hearne is an Irish artist living in Dublin. He holds an MFA from NCAD, and has since exhibited extensively; with a new film work Whispers premiered at The Darkroom, Dublin in May.

In his practice Austin Hearne attempts to (re)appropriate and queer religious imagery, seeking a way to celebrate queer memory whilst simultaneously acting as a point of resistance. Despite holding a staunch position himself, Hearne's practice is a nuanced reflection on religion and suffering, rather than sacrilege. The infiltration of religious institutions into the queer Irish life is represent through a serious of domestic and interior items. Unapologetically camp they remind us that intermingling the sexuality and materiality of bodies with the transcendental concepts of spirituality and religion can still shock.

QUEER AS YOU ARE presents his latest works Devine Dividers and Self Portrait; an installation which addresses the 'hypocritical' drag of the church juxtaposed by Hearne's raw self-portrait in which he reflects on his own bodily integrity and physicality.

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COMING OUT

TIPS FROM ME & MAMMY

By Konrad Im & Carmel Im

Coming out refers to when someone who is LGBTI+ begins to tell others about their LGBTI+ identity. In most cases, coming out can be a very positive experience and can provide a person with some relief knowing they don't have to hide their identity. Everyone's experience is different, and people can come out at any age, and in a lot of cases people come out multiple times in life as they change schools, jobs, move homes, or meet new people.

However, it's your decision alone who and when you want to come out. In the Sexual Health Centre, through our LGBTI+ sexual health support service I offer free one-to-one support to those struggling with the coming out process. We also offer support to the family and peers that might be finding it difficult to adjust to their loved ones sharing their sexual identity with them.

TIPS FROM ME

If you're thinking of coming out here are some tips to consider:

Think Ahead

Think, process, and chat about your expectations so that you can be prepared for positive and negative reactions. Think about how you might answer any questions you could be asked like "how do you know you are?". Often coming out involves being asked lots of questions, but remember, you only need to answer questions you feel comfortable with and you don't need to have all the answers either!! We can all sometimes overthink situations and it is important to chat to someone about this

Test Reactions

Some people like to see how their loved ones might react to different LGBTI+ related issues. This might be asking what they think of an LGBTI+ celebrity, listening to how they speak about other LGBTI+ people in public or if they see an LGBTI+ person on TV or movies, asking what they think of marriage equality, and sometimes examining how they react to other emotional events in their lives. This could let you know if it's safe or good timing to come out to them. However, often we react differently when we see something affect a loved one and we are not "on the outside looking in".

Timing

If you're going to come out to others, think about timing and location. It might not be the best idea to come out to someone in a public place, or at a large family event. Often, it's best to sit someone down in a safe place and you can have their full attention. If you're nervous or anxious about how they might react, you can ask a supportive friend, relative or professional, to be there with you when you tell others. Always consider what is the safest option for you.

Talk to Others

No matter what stage of the coming out process you are in, it's always good to talk to others. If you are not comfortable telling any friends or loved ones yet, there are LGBTI+ organisations, helplines and services all over Ireland that you can seek support from. People dedicated to supporting you and others like you are there to be a listening ear, to give you a space to get things off your chest, and to help ease your stress. Check out lgbt.ie for a list of great LGBTI+ community organisations that can help and support you in your area. It might feel difficult or daunting but taking that first step, reaching out for support will be worth it.

Some parents, regardless of age, need a little more time to rethink and adjust to what you've told them. This can be because they have a preconceived idea of what they thought your future might be, and this new information alters what they planned or expected for you. It's important to have patience with your loved ones and allow them some time to adjust to the new information.

I was lucky enough to not have to come out in the typical ways portrayed on TV or in movies where it's a massive deal, or a major life changing scene. However, in preparing for this article I asked my own mother about what my coming out meant to her.

TIPS FROM MAMMY

When did you first realise Konrad was gay?

It's hard to explain but I just knew. I was very lucky to have been raised by very open-minded parents and brought up to accept people as they are. It was just something I knew. As a mum of 8 sons and one of 10 children, you just know your own child and their ways.

Konrad never had to come out to us. Yes, I suppose the first time I knew he was comfortable about being open to others, especially his 7 brothers and maybe his father, was when he introduced us to his first boyfriend. His older brothers especially did worry about others reaction, always said they would be there if he ever needed help. As I always say, my other 7 sons didn't have to sit me down and come out to me as heterosexual.

How did you feel at first when you found out?

Parents naturally have their own plans for what they expect their child's life to be, but I have always had a very relaxed attitude to my children and their future lives, once they were happy, healthy, and respectful to others as I raised them. Being busy with 8 sons, I never thought that far ahead in any of our lives. I take each week as it comes and we as a family strive to live a good decent life, never harm and always respect others. When a son chose what he wanted to do in life, I supported them to my best ability. I was probably more worried about others' attitude as my boys are Eurasian and we had to put up with racism and bigotry from the day their father and I met in 1977.

How have those feelings changed?

I love him from the day he was put in my arms and before that. I have become more confident about standing up to others and having my say when they're being bigoted. I do get very annoyed when people say, "Oh you must have been heartbroken and so worried". I can never understand remarks like that. It's sounds as if my LGBTI+ child has to prove himself more than his brothers to others which is not the case. Being different in Ireland has always been hard but definitely it's gotten easier.

What ways has Konrad coming out changed your life?

Konrad being so actively involved in the LGBTI+ Community has opened all our lives. He is like a duplicate of my beloved father, Bernie Kennedy with his love of supporting what and where he can in a community and the world. For me, it's given me a chance to meet and interact with some of the most talented, creative, and loving people in the world. It's also helped me to be more respectful and empathetic towards others, as some people, especially my age group, born 1959, are still only getting comfortable seeing the much needed LGBTI+ visibility in the movies, on tv, and on the streets, and learning/adjusting new terminology that we might not have known about growing up in a less inclusive society.

Is there any advice or message you'd like to share with other parents whose child might be struggling with coming out?

The most important thing is to provide love, acceptance, and support within the home. I have met so many young people through Konrad, and some had to stay in our home as their parents rejected them. Every child deserves love and acceptance. Do some research by reaching out to local LGBTI+ organisations to find out what resources are available for you to support your child. As parents, and as a heteronormative society in general, we don't know enough about LGBTI+ issues, such as physical, mental, and sexual health outcomes. The reason I say, ask in your local organisation is because things are different everywhere. In Cork there are so many groups/organisations now offering support from a very young age, to the older person still struggling with being LGBTI+ (sometimes it's not a child but an older sibling, family member, friend who has kept their feelings hidden for years, and it can be actually harder for them).

Become an ally by getting involved in the LGBTI+ community. Attend things like Pride, LGBTI+ awareness workshops, or the very many events going on in the community. Just go along and join in even if only sitting there and having cup tea, coffee or even a cheeky glass of wine on occasion. Show your child that you're supportive of the LGBTI+ community.

Sometimes your family or friends might not react immediately how you expect. Your newly announced LGBTI+ identity might be a shock to them that they need to process. It's important to be patient. If you think your family won't react well, we'd advise you to hold off telling them until you're living independently. If you absolutely need to get it off your chest, consider having a back-up plan. A supportive relative or friend that you can stay with should you need. Your happiness is what's important.

For some, when our biological families can't accept us for who we are, we need to create our own chosen families. Many LGBTI+ people have created amazing chosen families made up of friends and allies that they feel loved, empowered, and supported by. Others are lucky to have both a supportive biological family and need further support from a chosen family.

You deserve to be happy and free to be you. Remember, you don't have to rush to come out to anyone. Take your time and only come out when you feel like you're ready.

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ENTERTAINMENT

“Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is an integral part of our company's DNA”

I’m extremely proud of what our LGBT+ Cork employee network has achieved while we continue to WFH.

Their response to the pandemic by effectively coming Together Apart and supporting each other as members of a common community has been outstanding. Our Employee Networks provide a sense of belonging and the space for us all to be our very best while bringing an authentic version of ourselves to work. We will soon meet, work, hug, connect, laugh and party Together Again.

Thank you for being passionate about what matters and for fostering a culture that respects diversity, equity and inclusion in our Cork office making it a great place to work for.”

Ana Alfageme
Director, Customer Service Europe
Site Director for Blizzzard Cork and supporter of the LGBT+ Network

2020 and 2021 have been tough for everyone, and that includes the few hundred of us who find our home at the Blizzard Entertainment office up in Blackpool.

Having been with the company nearly 13 years now, I thought I'd seen most things; I've been through the launch of twelve of our games and expansions, not to mention tools upgrades and changes, launches of our sister company, Activision's games, changes to the office, friends and colleagues coming and moving on to new things. With an average tenure of around seven years, we are a seasoned group, and nothing prepared us for the upheaval the pandemic and moving to fully working from home in March last year would bring. It entirely changed how all of us worked and many of us lived.

In Customer Support at Blizzard, we work in teams, usually ten to twelve people and our manager and often for around two years or so. We have the same shift for that time and become a small family within the greater office community. It's usually a diverse family too, my own desk neighbours hail from Russia, Poland, Germany and Sweden, and our manager is French! We're further diverse in terms of gaming interests, sexuality, family status and so on, but what brings us together is that common interest in computer games, and our solidarity as a team. Working without that, honestly, sucked.

But we all soldiered on and hit some massive milestones last year. We managed to get our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion networks up; Multicultural, Generations, Differing Abilities, Women and, closest to my heart, the LGBTQ+ Network, all via Slack and emails and zoom calls. All of these have been highly successful, with multiple activations during the year. Even though we're perhaps further apart than we ever have been, we're all getting that little bit closer, including with our colleagues in other office locations in California, Texas, France and across Asia.

For me personally last year, coming out as trans on International Coming Out Day was a major step in my own path. My friends, colleagues and the HR team all made that very easy, and I thank them all for it. Getting the chance to open up about myself gave me a chance to know more about others as well.

Having come from our first ever Pride Week Celebration in the Blizzard office in 2019, including a pizza day communal meal, mocktails and cupcakes, an LGBTQ+ lean-in circle and decorations all over the office, last year, for the first time, the Cork Blizzard office sponsored the Cork Pride celebration and shared the streamed convention with our colleagues.

This year, the theme of Together Apart couldn't be more perfect. We're proud to be sponsoring Cork Pride for the second year running, and we hope, all being well, to participate as much as we're able.

I can’t wait for us to all be back in the office, to bump into friends in our cafe, and see the big blue Blizzard sign in reception again. Connecting more through our Networks, celebrating Pride both locally and internationally will go a long way to feeling closer together.

To everyone in the LGBT+ Network at Blizzard Cork, and around the globe, to everyone participating in Cork Pride this year:

Happy Pride

Dean Constable

LGBT+ Network Lead, Blizzard Entertainment Cork Office.

PROUD MARY'S

By Paul Ryder

The word Pride and its meaning holds different for every person on the planet. Some use it as a term of protest, some use it to party, but one thing is for certain, everyone feels Pride. No more so than those who feel that pride week in, week out doing what they love to do... PERFORM. In this interview Paul Ryder speaks to just three performers from Mockie-Ah about what their Pride stands for.

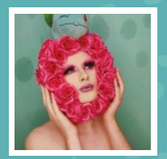
LIAM BEE
@LIAMXBEE

...on what Pride means to them

'Pride at its core is a protest and we are far from done fighting for LGBTQIA+ rights so it's important not to get complacent. The way I see it is that Pride is about remembering and honouring our queer history, celebrating how far we have come and continuing to protest and fight for our rights going forward.'

...on Cork's drag scene

'Cork's drag scene has done a complete 180 in the past few years in terms of the amount of people actually doing drag and feeling comfortable trying it, and I think that is as a result, in part of Mockie Ah's influence on the scene. I know speaking for myself that when I started drag back in 2017 Mockie Ah welcomed me with open arms and felt like such a safe space to be more experimental with drag.'



KRYSTAL QUEER
@KRYSTALQUEER

...on why Pride is still vital to our culture

'Pride is vital to our culture and our people. I believe a younger, more naive version of myself would have disagreed. It wasn't until I began to glue wigs to my head that I realised how rampant homophobia is. Homophobia in Ireland is casual. Pride will always be accessible to feminine gay boys like myself - but not for the closeted boy on the football pitch. Pride just simply existing inspires hope for the people who can't yet celebrate it yet, but one day will. If there is anyone out there struggling - come to a Mockie Ah gig. You might as well take the full plunge - and I promise you won't regret it.'

...on what drag means to them

'That is a difficult question because I feel there is never a set definition to drag, I also don't own a dictionary. Performing has always brought me such joy, and Mockie Ah assists me in spreading that feeling to an audience of eccentrics. For the foreseeable future drag will always be about spreading happiness - I will do anything on a stage to make people smile. I hope it stays that way forever.'

...on being a stand out performer

'Drag has trickled itself through the cracks of so many eras - prominent in Ancient Greece, Shakespeare's works and even 70's punk rock. Drag is not new and almost everything has been done and replicated to death. I think originality inarguably makes a stand out performer. A unique point of view is essential - and this applies to all art. For example, Britney's entire discography will be preformed by drag queens until queers become extinct, but if you can take one of her songs and still make it original then you've struck gold. Speaking of Britney, she will be appearing at the next Mockie Ah, so keep your eyes peeled for tickets!'

MIA GOLD
@QUEENMIAGOLD

...talking about Pride

'Pride for me is literally what the word says, Pride in what you are and being unapologetic about it and YES, it is and it will always be important, because the fight for equality and respect for all the LGBTQIA community, is ongoing. We need to march, speak up and to educate why we need equality for all.'

...on being a killer queen

'In my experience, having learnt from so many drag performers around me, to make a stand-out performer is to have presence on and off stage. Don't be arrogant but welcoming and loving and always stay true to yourself because the best you will shine through. Show up on time, work hard and remember to have fun!'

...on what drag means to them

'Drag for me is being whatever you want to be. It's a creative outlet that allows me so much - performing, creating costumes and financial support - which is important because drag ain't cheap henny.'

MAUD GONNE WRONG
@MAUDGONNEWRONG

...on being apart of Mockie Ah, a dedicated drag family

'It's like being in a motley crew of make up addicts and camp pop culture savants- useless in an emergency, fantastic on a night out! I realise how special our performance group is when we travel together. Firstly, I'm always astonished we survive in the journey and secondly, when we do our thing for new audiences I realise how many like minded mentalers there are around the country and that we facilitate their skit filled, well deserved night out! The classic Mockie Ah show, as the fans will know is filled with cheeky tunes, saucy performances and bad talk. It's a chance for us to be creative and have a safe space. I feel very lucky to be part of it.'

...on the perks of being a drag performer

'I love the chance to say "yes this is weird, I think we should soak it up and stop trying to be cool. Drag reminds me that fashion is meant to be enjoyed, going abstract and larger than life with make up, colours and my character is freeing. I actually feel more settled in my day-to-day self since finding drag. Nice to have an outlet for Maud! I also enjoy.. what's it called again? ..HAVING A LAUGH.

My favourite part is interacting with the crowd and feeding off each other's energy. At a good drag show, I think the performer taps into the persona and the crowd willingly and enthusiastically take on the role of the adoring, hyped up fans- like playing Beatlemania! It's a performance on both sides in a way and we all come out the better for it.'

FOLLOW CANDY & THE MOCKIE AH TEAM ON INSTAGRAM: @MockieAh

CANDY WARHOL

By Paul Ryder

The drag ballroom culture is not just the topic of a hit TV show called Pose, it is a way of life. In the 1980's the drag, ballroom scene was explosive and rich in diversity, inclusivity and down right gorgeousness for the community. You didn't need to have blood family, you had your chosen family, which, in the middle of the devastating HIV/Aids crisis, sometimes meant more to be a part of.

Flash foward to 2021 and the ballroom culture is still alive and well and situated right here in Ireland, namely in the Rebel County. Head of one of Irelands only functioning houses is TV personality and drag 'mother' Candy Warhol. This scene stalwart talks to Paul Ryder today about all things family.

What drew you to the art of drag and performance and at what age did you begin?

I was always drawn to performing and the world of make believe and I just I had to be a witch every Halloween. When I was seven my aunt taped 'To Wong Foo' for me for me and I watched it religiously for years and when I was eleven my father brought me to see our grand uncle Danny La Rue at Cork's Everyman Theatre. I was in awe. I think those early introductions to drag really stayed with me and in secondary school I began sketching illustrations of Andy Warhol superstars Candy Darling and Holly Woodlawn. Later in college I began recreating Warhol movies and then translated that to stage for a performance art workshop in 2010. The same year I became fed up with the lack of queer spaces in Limerick and I ran and hosted a club-night.

How have you found the process of moulding your aesthetic of your character and is it something that constantly changes?

When I first started drag I was coming from a performance art background and I would aim to shock, scare and make people uncomfortable as that's what I had learned. I also didn't have the same performance skills or aesthetics as my peers so I really leaned into the alternative. But overtime that got old for me and once I found my voice and character I realised I love to uplift people through comedy, more inspiring numbers and events. By starting 'Mockie Ah' I've created a space for all of us to think outside the box when it comes to our own aesthetics and performances and its really pushed me too. I've gone from The Wicked Witch Of The West to Glinda The Good and ended up somewhere strange and wonderful in between.

What keeps your passion alive for drag?

For me, drag is an unhealthy obsession that manages to keep me going. I think knowing to switch it up and try new things is the key. I find it hard to settle and I'm always asking myself 'what's next?' I'm always travelling and working with other drag artists, creating projects for myself and my peers and I've learned to say yes to as many possibilities as I can, you never know where it will lead to. When I was just about to move to Berlin, 'Mockie Ah' was born out of a Pride show and I stayed in Cork, when I began getting complacent I ended up taking a chance auditioning for 'Dragony Aunts' which brought me to London and when the lockdown began I started 'Friends Of Dorothy' podcast. The unpredictability is exciting to me.

How has Cork changed over the years in regards to drag culture?

Cork has always had such a strong history and love of drag, from Danny La Rue to Alternative Miss Cork and multiple spaces like Instinct, The Other Place and FreakScene, there was always something happening here when I was growing up. But when I moved home in 2016 there was a much smaller scene and Dublin was definitely the drag capital. Through starting 'Mockie Ah' we've gone from having two queens to having dozens of queens, kings and club kids working in Cork which I just love to see. Our ethos of providing an open queer friendly space instead of a specific gay bar has opened up things a lot and our audiences are so beautifully diverse. So much so that we now have an annual family friendly show which speaks volumes in terms of how far Ireland itself has come.

Tell me a bit about Mockie Ah? Where did the idea come from and how its grown since its birth?

In 2017, I was both frustrated with drag and the lack of diversity in our scene so during Pride I ran a Vogue Ball. It sold out and there was such an inspiring infectious energy that I had never seen before.

Everyone got involved and out of it a number of performers were born. Mia Gold, our winner Liam Bee quickly formed a Haus and ran our first cabaret the next month. It's grown ever since with an ever growing cast, regular cabarets and club nights, national and international appearances and various television segments. It's mind blowing to me and once the pandemic is out of our way we will be back to it. For me the best part of it is seeing new performers take to the stage at each show, regular performers really push themselves and audiences getting to feel part of an inclusive space where there is nothing but love for everyone.

Have you any advice for any members of the young LGBTQ+ generation who want to follow in your footsteps?

The funny part about doing drag for so long is that you get to make a lot of mistakes and pass your lessons down to your drag children! It's a right of passage to be obnoxiously confident and think you are the second coming of RuPaul when you start drag. I've learned that while you have to take it seriously in a sense of professionalism, you have to have fun and enjoy it. Lighten up, enjoy the moment and remember to lift up and support your fellow performers. Drag performers should light up the room not dim it. Please remember to be kind to everyone - from the first person you see when you enter the venue to the very last when you are falling into your taxi home. You might not remember the next day, but they will remember you - make sure it's for the right reasons!

FOLLOW CANDY & THE MOCKIE AH TEAM ON INSTAGRAM: @MockieAh

SUPPORTS & RESOURCES

LGBT+ ORGANISATIONS

Gay Project

Gay Project provides information, support and resources for the gay, bi, queer and trans community. From their community centre in Cork they provide a range of resources including free condoms and lube, LGBT books, magazines and DVDs, LGBT and general health leaflets – and also provide support by phone and email. Gay Project also have a range of different social, peer support and interest groups such as those listed below. For more information please visit their website.

- GOLD (A Weekly Social and Peer Support Group for mature men)
- Queervibes (A Weekly Social Group for LGBT+ people of all ages)
- Rainbow Ramblers Hillwalkers
- Cork Frontrunners
- Gay Project Drama
- OutLit Book Club
- Cork Rebels FC
- Gay Project Yoga Group
- Gay Project Meditation Group

4 South Terrace, Cork.

Call: 021 430 0430 / 087 164 6072
Email: info@gayproject.ie
Website: www.gayproject.ie

LINC

LINC is a community organisation with lesbian and bisexual women's health and well-being at the core of what they do. As well as being a community hub, LINC's dedicated team host a number of weekly drop in sessions, provide peer support and a low cost counselling service. They deliver LGBT+ awareness training to businesses, organisations and schools around Cork. They host a number of health-based initiatives and supports as well as community-led interest based activity groups including but not limited to those listed below.

- LINC Boxing
- LINC Drama
- LINC Rebels FC
- LINC Bookclub
- LINC Ramblers Hillwalking & Hiking

11a White Street, Cork

Monday to Wednesday 11am to 3pm and Thurs 11am to 8pm

Call: 021 480 8600
Email: info@linc.ie
Website: www.linc.ie

BeLonG To Youth Services

BeLonG To is an organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people, aged between 14 and 23.

Parliament House, 13 Parliament Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

Call: 01 670 6223
Email: info@belongto.org
Website: www.belongto.org

TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY & INTERSEX SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)

TENI is a non-profit organisation supporting the transgender community in Ireland in all its variety.

Unit 2, 4 Ellis Quay, Dublin 7

Call: 01 873 3575
Email: info@teni.ie
Website: www.teni.ie

Intersex Ireland

Intersex Ireland is a group set up to support intersex people and their families, educate wider society, and advance the rights and equality of all intersex individuals across the Ireland.

Email: intersex.ie@gmail.com

Gender Rebels Cork

Gender Rebels is a group based in Cork City which advocates for and supports all transgender, non-binary, intersex and gender non-conforming individuals.

Call: 087 366 9055
Email: genderrebelscork@gmail.com
Website: facebook.com/genderrebelscork

Cork Transgender Peer Support Group

Cork Transgender Peer Support Group, is a confidential support group for people with a diagnosis, or awaiting a diagnosis of Gender Identity Dysphoria. This group is for people who are planning, or in the process of going through their medical and social transition, and for those who have completed their transition. The group is a safe place to meet other Transgender People to: Share Experiences, Make new friends, Avail of peer advice and support.

The group is strictly for over 18s only.

Call: 085 193 5461

TransParenCi Cork & Transformer Cork

This support group is for parents and family members of transgender children and adults. Meets on the third Friday of every month 7.30 - 9.30pm.

Transformers is a peer support group for trans young people whose parents attend TransParenCI. Both groups run simultaneously but are facilitated in separate spaces.

Call: 01 873 3575
Email: transparencigroup@gmail.com

HELPLINES

LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland is a national support and advocacy organisation working to improve the visibility, inclusion and rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender people and their families. They also offer support to LGBT+ people through a Support Line which operates 7 days a week over the phone or through the chat feature on their website.

Call: 1890 929 539
Website: lgbt.ie
Email: info@lgbt.ie

Gay Switchboard

Gay Switchboard Ireland provides a confidential telephone support service to the LGBT+ community and allies. Open 7 days a week.

Call: 01 872 1055
Email: ask@gayswitchboard.ie
Website: facebook.com/GaySwitchboardIreland

Samaritans

Samaritans operates day or night, for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure. Their service is not only for the moment of crisis, they're taking action to prevent the crisis.

They offer people ways to cope and the skills to be there for others. And encourage, promote and celebrate those moments of connection between people that can save lives.

Call: 116 123
Email: jo@samaritans.ie
Website: www.samaritans.org

Cork Lesbian Helpline

Cork Lesbian Line is a voluntary helpline for women, providing confidential, informal information and support regarding sexual orientation. Cork Lesbian Line is a member of LGBT Ireland.

Call: 1890 929 539
(Wednesday 6.30 pm – 9.30 pm)

Gay Information Cork Helpline

Gay Information Cork is a gay helpline service for men. It is a non-directive, non-judgmental, information and listening service. Operated by trained volunteers on LGBT issues. It is totally confidential. Gay Information Cork is a member of LGBT Ireland.

Call: 021 427 1087
(Tuesdays 6.30 pm – 9.00 pm)

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

Sexual Health Centre Cork

The Sexual Health Centre is an NGO that provides non-biased information and offers non-judgemental support regarding sexual health, wellbeing, and sexuality. The centre offers a broad range of sexual health related services and supports including free Rapid HIV testing, an LGBTI+ Sexual Health Support service, counselling, and free condom packs and pregnancy testing.

For more information or to book a Rapid HIV Testing

Email: info@sexualhealthcentre.com
Call: 021 427 6676.

For the LGBTI+ Sexual Health Support Service

Email: konradim@sexualhealthcentre.com.

HIV Ireland

Ireland's national HIV organisation which advocates for people living with HIV and the prevention of new HIV infections.

Call: 01 873 3799
Email: info@hivireland.ie
Website: www.hivireland.ie

Act Up Cork

ACT UP is a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis.

Email: actupcork@gmail.com

LGBT+ GROUPS

UP Cork LGBT+ Youth Group

'UP Cork' is a Cork based youth project for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & questioning (LGBTQ) young people aged 15-23 years.

Call: 086 044 3745
Email: nadia.moussed@ywicork.com

Cork LGB Parents Group

This groups for parents with Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual children of all ages, they meet the second Friday of every month at 7pm in LINC (11a, White St, Cork).

Call: 021 480 8600

Email: info@linc.ie

MTU LGBT* Society

MTU LGBT* is a student society for LGBT* students of Munster Technological University campuses. Their aim is to enhance the student experience in MTU through social, educational, fundraising and awareness raising events, campaigns and projects.

Email: lgbtcit@gmail.com

Website: www.societies.cit.ie

UCC LGBTQ Society

UCC LGBTQ Society are a student led society who's aims are to create a safe space on campus for LGBTQ students, provide information in the hopes of creating a more tolerant student and staff community in UCC and to fight for equality on all fronts, with allies and as allies. This is done by holding a variety of social, political and cultural events throughout the year.

Email: lgbtq@uccsocieties.ie

UCC LGBT+ Staff Network

The UCC LGBT Staff Network supports LGBT staff in the university, promotes visibility of LGBT issues and seeks to make UCC an inclusive workplace.

Email: lgbtnetwork@ucc.ie
Website: www.ucc.ie/en/lgbtstaff

Choral Con fusion

Choral Con Fusion is an LGBTS Inclusive Choir which aims not only to make musical progress but also to be a bridge between communities and to be an organisation that would welcome everyone equally, regardless of musical experience, sexual orientation, gender or background.

Email: info@choralconfusion.com
Website: www.choralconfusion.com

Greenbow Deaf LGBT Ireland

Greenbow is an organisation run for the benefit of all Deaf LGBT adults all over Ireland.

Call: 01 874 9148
Email: greenbowlgbt@yahoo.ie
Website: facebook.com/GBWDeafLGBT

Is Rainbow Muid

Is Rainbow Muid is a monthly peer support group which also aims to raise awareness of the issues facing LGBT+ people seeking international protection in Ireland.

Email: info@lgbt.ie

LGBT Pavee

This site was voluntarily constructed and independently maintained by and for members of the Travelling and Roma community, for its Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Questioning members.

If you are struggling to come to terms with your sexuality, are looking for information on the location of support groups, or just general help and advice on sexual health, or how to deal and report homophobic bullying or behaviour, then look no further.

Website: lgbtpavee.yolasite.com

Look (Loving Our Out Kids)

Provides support to families and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people.

Call: 087 253 7699
Email: info@lovingouroutkids.org
Website: lovingouroutkids.org

INTO

The INTO LGBT Teachers' Group is a trade union group that supports and advances the cause of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender primary school teachers in Ireland.

Email: lgbt@into.ie
Website: www.into.ie

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