

Speech receiving the Jim Kemmy Labour Youth Thirst for Justice Award at the Labour Youth Tom Johnson Summer School in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

12th July 2025

Kieran Rose

It's a great honour to receive this prestigious Award - thank you.

I would like to share this Award with Christopher Robson and Eoin Collins. We were great friends and comrades over the decades. Christopher and Eoin were crucial forces in GLEN from the beginnings. They were key to all our successes such as

- an equality based gay law reform and inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act in 1993
- Equality legislation in late 1990s
- full Civil Partnership in 2010 paving the way for the great success in the Marriage Referendum in 2015

Sadly, Christopher passed away in 2013 and Eoin in 2022 - all too young.

In their lifetimes neither got the public recognition that they deserved for their great achievements. Our roles were inextricably linked. In the later 1990s GLEN was effectively Eoin, Christopher, and me but we were incredibly productive. So that is why I would like to share this Award with Christopher and Eoin.

Eoin played a blinder on the Colley Working Group on Domestic Partnership convincing them to go way beyond their remit of Domestic Partnership as favoured by the Minister for Justice and recommend Civil Marriage as the full equality option, and if Civil Marriage was vulnerable to Constitutional action, Full Civil Partnership with all the rights and responsibilities of Marriage.

The Colley report laid the basis for the Labour Civil Unions Bill, the Civil Partnership Act 2010, and the success of the Marriage Referendum in 2015. So, Eoin played a key role in achieving Civil Marriage.

The broad Labour Movement, the Trade Unions and the Labour Party have played a major role in achieving progress for LGBT people, often working in concert.

In 1987, ICTU published its radical and groundbreaking policy document Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace. Christopher and I were on the ICTU working group.

This fed into the similarly groundbreaking Labour Party Equal Status Bill of 1990 which included sexual orientation and other grounds as advocated for by GLEN. This Bill laid the basis of the Equality legislation we have today and the implementation body the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Looking to the future, we need Disregard Legislation that would exonerate gay men convicted etc., before gay law reform. Ged Nash and Karl Hayden have been effectively campaigning on this for many years. It was great to see a Disregard Bill introduced into the Dail recently by all the Opposition parties.

Thanks again for this prestigious Award.

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