

Speech

[Name, what I do, where I'm from etc]

"Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it."

George Santyana

The LGBT* community has a rich, and often tragic history in its long struggle for equality. The Soho bombings a decade ago; the build-up to and occurrence of the Stonewall riots in 1969; the deaths of some 10,000 people during the Nazi holocaust; the persecution and deaths of hundreds of trans people worldwide every year; the lifetime ban on giving blood imposed on gay and bisexual men; the list goes on.

That said; that which does not destroy us only makes us stronger. As evidenced by the Stonewall riots, there are moments in our history that we should be proud of; moments where we as a community stood against the oppression and demanded that it end and we be treated as equals. For "as long as society is anti-gay, then it will seem like being gay is anti-social".

This is our history; the history of the entire LGBT* community and that is why we celebrate History Month. It is fitting that we celebrate this as a coalition of West Midlands Universities and FE institutions to strengthen our community and our resolve to finish the fight for equality; that we come to remember the tragic milestones in our long and difficult struggle for equality; that we acknowledge and appreciate the freedoms that we consequently and never take them for granted; that we can encourage others to remember the courageous people who sacrificed so much for these freedoms and inspire others to finish the fight for LGBT equality.

[Talk about specific issues:]

Religious oppression (Evangelism and Catholicism) and the develops of progressive sects (Methodist/Anglican/Jewish) and the support we [specifically] have received from them.

The National Blood Service

- The blame of HIV and AIDs on the gay and bisexual community.
- The belief that our blood is 'dirty'.
- Donation not Discrimination and Give Blood Because We Can't.
- Where has this policy left the NBS?

Last week, our community joined the Jewish community on Holocaust Memorial Day to commemorate the millions who were killed under the name of "Euthanasia" and "the final solution" by the Nazi Party; widely accepted as a dark part of our history which is long past.

Two weeks ago, I attended a talk intended to raise awareness of the atrocities committed during the 2008 Israel/Gaza conflict. At this event, an attendee told some of my colleagues that he actively supported the Hamas persecution of gays and described us as "paedophiles and sexual deviants"; grossly out-of-order and inaccurate comments that members of the gay community has certainly heard before.

There is no simple definition of intimacy. As a community we have always understood this better than most, and we are fortunate to live in time where we are quite free to express ourselves in this country. As an inspiring passage in Beethius, 'The Consolation of Philosophy' quite well puts it "who would give a law to lovers? Love unto itself is a higher law".

What I've said over the past few minutes barely scratches the surface. As this month goes on and you, the students of Coventry, Warwick, Birmingham, BCU, Aston and Wolverhampton, attend events, talks, film trips; you read posters telling the story of a famous lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or otherwise person, remember why we celebrate our history.