



# PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

**TO: Parents, Educators and policy makers**  
**FROM: PJI Legal Department**  
**DATE: October, 2018**  
**RE: What Every Parent Needs to Know about LGBT History That May Be Coming to Your Child's Classroom**

## OVERVIEW

With growing attention on LGBT history via legislation like California's Senate Bill (SB) 48, corresponding revisions of textbooks and instructional materials, and presidential designations of LGBT historical sites, it is important to understand how this focus differs from the traditional teaching of history.<sup>1</sup> Most Americans have only the faintest concept of what LGBT history entails, and most parents and policy-makers assume it will be taught much like the Civil Rights Era. Most would not expect that this type of history would instead re-brand current Hollywood celebrities as historical, introduce students to disturbing individuals whose works would never be allowed in most homes, claim historical figures to be LGBT with disputed evidence, and present current political figures and activists as heroes.

**Objective presentation of history in our public schools has long been understood by historians from many diverse backgrounds as imperative to quality education.** With that in mind, this memo will examine LGBT history as it is being presented to students through the annual celebration of LGBT History Month in October. This event has been endorsed by GLAAD, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the National Education Association.

Since 2012, the first school districts to officially recognize LGBT History Month were Los Angeles Unified (CA) as the second largest district in the country, Broward County (FL), Palm Beach County (FL), Fresno Unified (CA), Baltimore County (MD), Charlotte-Mecklenberg County (NC), and Philadelphia (PA). Among those seven school districts alone, over 1,450,000 students are being taught LGBT "history."<sup>2</sup> Many other teachers, principals and student groups throughout the country promote LGBT history at the local level without formal endorsement from school boards, making its reach significant yet difficult to quantify. Parents should take note of posters at school, ask their children's teachers and principals, and talk to school board members to find out whether LGBT History Month is being promoted in any way at the local level.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/24/president-obama-designates-stonewall-national-monument>.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Coppola, "4 additional county school districts to recognize LGBT history month," GLADD (October 8, 2013), <https://www.glaad.org/blog/4-additional-county-school-districts-recognize-lgbt-history-month>.

## Who is behind LGBT History Month?

Equality Forum, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing LGBT civil rights with an educational focus, assumed responsibility in 2006 for providing content, promotion, and resources for LGBT History Month. Equality Forum accepts nominations from regional, state, national, and international organizations, activists, and the public.<sup>3</sup> LGBT History Month Co-chairs Lillian Faderman and Paul Farber review all nominations and select the annual icons. Lillian Faderman is a historian who has written books on lesbian history and LGBT history, including her most recent work *Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*. Paul Farber is a historian and curator from Philadelphia who received a PhD in American Culture from the University of Michigan.<sup>4</sup>

Every October, the icon selection Co-chairs identify 31 individuals or couples—one for each day of the month—to present to students as icons of LGBT history. For more than a decade, this information has been publicly available through the website [www.lgbthistorymonth.com](http://www.lgbthistorymonth.com), but it has been largely overlooked by media and the general public. This data provides an eye-opening look at what advocates for LGBT history believe students need to know about their movement.

## Overview of Controversial Figures

The vast majority of LGBT “icons” presented to students are either unknown to most Americans, or have never previously been considered historic. For the better-known icons, most have become famous for their accomplishments and not their sexuality.

In the following pages, you will meet—or become reacquainted with—a number of people ranging from the drug-addicted to the deeply disturbing. As you read some of these bios, consider: Why are students being introduced to some people whose works are too explicit to be allowed in school? Why are current politicians and political activists being promoted? And even for the figures who are well-known entertainers, authors, composers, etc., why should students focus on their sexuality, and why should they displace other American heroes who cannot all be covered in history lessons? Among the more disconcerting finds explained below are the following:

- Icon status for a person who served prison time for homicide.
- Introduction of students to pioneers of gay erotic porn and literature.
- Icon status for a Stonewall riots figure with a split personality described by friends as exhibiting demonic behavior.
- Introduction of students to the “Radical Faerie” movement.
- The suggestion that the White House was once the scene of a gay love affair between a President and his Vice-President.
- The claim that “America the Beautiful” is a source of lesbian pride.



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<sup>3</sup> <https://equalityforum.com/organization>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/icon-selection-co-chairs>.

## Dark, Disturbing and Dangerous Individuals as Role Models

There is a dark trend running through LGBT History Month—the inclusion of figures that few parents would want their children to regard as heroes, if they had any idea they were being promoted as such. Please note that some of the following material may be offensive to some readers. It has been deemed essential by the authors of this report not to sanitize what is being promoted to children in school. Consider the following “icons”:

- **Gilbert Baker.** Best known for designing the rainbow flag in 1978, Baker was also known for his irreverent and sacrilegious drag queen outfits that he wore to events around the world. His most well-known costume was for his “Busty Ross” personality, a perversion of the iconic seamstress who created the stars and stripes. Baker also donned a “Pink Jesus” costume: his body painted entirely pink, while carrying a pink cross and wearing an American flag loincloth, a pair of pink heels, and pink crown of thorns.<sup>5</sup>  

- **Touko Valio Laaksonen**, under the pseudonym Tom of Finland, was known primarily for his homoerotic fetish art and his contributions to gay porn, being labeled the "most influential creator of gay pornographic images."<sup>6</sup>
- **Patrick Califia** is a bisexual trans man noted for erotic fiction.<sup>7</sup>
- **Robert Mapplethorpe**, a gay man famous for his nude, homoerotic, and “X Portfolio” photography. He died from AIDS at the age of 42.<sup>8</sup>
- **Cece McDonald.** McDonald, an African American from Minneapolis, is presented in the LGBT History Month list as a “prison reformer.”<sup>9</sup> The transgender McDonald was charged with second-degree murder and accepted a plea of second-degree manslaughter after fatally stabbing a man with scissors. McDonald had been insulted by the victim and claimed self-defense. McDonald was released from prison in January 2014 after serving 19 months in a men’s facility. The experience established McDonald’s resolve to become a transgender activist.  

- **John Cameron Mitchell** is a screenwriter and director. The music video he directed for lesbian-inspired *Scissor Sisters* American pop group was banned from MTV Europe for its explicit sexual content. His writing explores sexuality and gender. He is part of the Radical Faerie counter-cultural movement, a form of contemporary Paganism, that redefines Queer consciousness through spirituality. The Radical Faeries claim to be the first spiritual movement to be gay

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sfchronicle.com/style/article/The-untold-story-of-rainbow-flag-creator-Gilbert-13008223.php#photo-15729287>.

<sup>6</sup> Slade, Joseph W. *Pornography and Sexual Representation: A Reference Guide*, Volume 2. Pp. 545–546. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Radical-Transformation-Writer-Patrick-3303152.php>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/robert-mapplethorpe?tab=biography>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/cece-mcdonald?tab=biography>.

centered, because of their exploration of the “gay spirit” as being the source of all spirituality, wisdom, and initiation.<sup>10</sup> Mitchell’s involvement in the Radical Faerie movement inspired works such as his “art-porn” 2006 film “Shortbus.”<sup>11</sup> In 2008, Mitchell established a nightclub in New York’s oldest gay bar.<sup>12</sup>

- **Natalie Barney.** Born in Ohio in 1876, Barney spent most of her time in Paris and is famous for her scandalous relationships with multiple French writers.<sup>13</sup> She denounced fidelity and advocated adultery.
- **Malcolm Michaels/Marsha P. Johnson.** This dual personality was an African American gay liberation activist and drag queen. Known as an outspoken advocate for gay rights, Johnson was one of the prominent figures in the vanguard of the Stonewall riots uprising in 1969. Johnson co-founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.). Although his Marsha personality was described as generous and warmhearted, Johnson’s dark side sometimes emerged as his male personality of Malcolm, which led to Johnson being hospitalized and sedated on multiple occasions. His acquaintance Robert Heide explained, “He sometimes saw a demon emerge especially when she was in her male persona of Malcolm. I think we all have that to some degree, but apparently in Malcolm/Marsha’s case there was this real duality and it would take hold. There was a schizophrenic personality at work, for Malcolm Michaels could become a very nasty, vicious man, looking for fights.”<sup>14</sup>
- **Tallulah Bankhead.** By most accounts, Tallulah Bankhead was an unforgettable stage actress in the first half of the 20th Century. But students wishing to learn more about this icon would find another side to her story—a serious drug addiction and what she described as her uninhibited sex life that, at times, led to venereal disease and near death. They might also discover that she inspired villains more than heroes, having been credited as the model for Disney’s Cruella De Ville in 101 Dalmatians and, to a lesser degree, the sea witch Ursula in A Little Mermaid.<sup>15</sup> Bankhead’s penchant for chain smoking, public nudity, and heavy drinking marked her reputation until her death at the age of 66.<sup>16</sup>

### Activists, Litigants and Lawyers

Quite a number of icons presented to students through LGBT History Month can best be described as activists. Many of the groups they have formed, led or promoted are quite controversial. So, too, are the lawyers, litigants and judges involved with some of the most controversial court cases pushing LGBT rights. But while many parents continue to disagree with these causes and decisions, the next

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<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Cameron\\_Mitchell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Cameron_Mitchell).

<sup>11</sup> Tim Murphy, “Tinseltown Can Wait; the Village Cannot,” THE NEW YORK TIMES (December 29, 2010), <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/30/fashion/30mitchell.html>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/john-cameron-mitchell?tab=biography>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Natalie-Barney>.

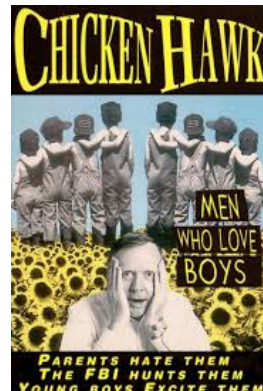
<sup>14</sup> Carter, David. *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*. New York: St. Martin's, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallulah\\_Bankhead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallulah_Bankhead).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000845/bio>.

generation of students is being taught that the individuals behind them are heroes. Consider the following figures who have been promoted through LGBT History Month:

- **Allen Ginsberg.** Joined the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) and appeared in the documentary *Chicken Hawk: Men Who Love Boys* to defend the organization's promotion of pedophilia.<sup>17</sup>
- **Harry Hay.** Founded the Radical Faeries movement<sup>18</sup> and advocated for NAMBLA's inclusion in gay pride parades. In a 1983 New York University forum, he remarked, "If the parents and friends of gays are truly friends of gays, they would know from their gay kids that the relationship with an older man is precisely what thirteen-, fourteen-, and fifteen-year-old kids need more than anything else in the world."<sup>19</sup>
- **Evan Wolfson.** Lawyer who argued unsuccessfully before the Supreme Court in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* that non-profit organizations like the BSA should not have the freedom of association to set moral expectations of their leaders.
- **Vito Russo.** The co-founder of Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLADD).<sup>20</sup>
- **Jane Addams.** Leading feminist of the early 20th Century and co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Her family revealed she had a female lover.<sup>21</sup>
- **James Obergefell.** Plaintiff in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the United States Supreme Court imposed gay marriage nationwide, overturning many legislative and voter-enacted natural marriage definitions.
- **Edith Windsor.** Lead plaintiff in *Windsor v. United States*, in which the Supreme Court invalidated the federal Defense of Marriage Act.
- **Gavin Grimm.** This teenager is sometimes claimed to be the new face of the transgender movement. Grimm received national attention for her court battle in Virginia for the right to share bathrooms with boys, since she felt like a boy even though she is biologically female.<sup>22</sup>
- **Perry Watkins.** Pursued court challenges to the military's ban on homosexuality throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>23</sup>
- **Miriam Ben-Shalom.** This activist was discharged from the U.S. Army for homosexuality in 1976, prompting her to challenge the discharge in court until she was reinstated in 1987. Ben-Shalom founded the American Veterans for Equal Rights and is best known for protesting the "Don't



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ipce.info/library/miscellaneous/thoughts-nambla>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.harryhay.com/>.

<sup>19</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Hay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Hay).

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrence-d-mass-md/vito-russo-the-visual-art\\_b\\_7977330.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrence-d-mass-md/vito-russo-the-visual-art_b_7977330.html).

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/June-2008/Friends-With-Benefits/>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/us/gavin-grimm-transgender-bathrooms.html>.

<sup>23</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perry\\_Watkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perry_Watkins).

Ask, Don't Tell" military policy in 1993 and 2010 by chaining herself to the White House fence.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, she has more recently stirred controversy by opposing transgender rights, causing her to be ostracized by some LGBT leaders.<sup>25</sup>

Among the many other activists honored by LGBT History Month, a few worth considering for further reading would include: Elizabeth A. Birch (former corporate executive who chaired the board of directors for the National LGBTQ Task Force), Michael Callen (AIDS activist from the 1980s who admitted in his writings that gay men suffer from their own promiscuity), Vaughn Walker (homosexual San Francisco federal judge who ruled Prop 8 to be unconstitutional), Marlon Riggs (filmmaker who examined race and sexuality), Melvin Boozer (former director of the National LGBTQ Task Force), Mandy Carter (won a Spirit of Justice Award from GLADD for advancing LGBT rights and was described by the National Organization for Women as "one of the nation's leading African-American lesbian activists"), and Michelangelo Signorile (*Huffington Post's* Queer Voices Editor-at-Large who wrote *Queer in America* on the dangers of the "closet" and *Outing Yourself*, a 14-step program to come out as gay or lesbian).

### Religious Figures

On the other end of the spectrum from the ex-cons, split personalities, porn producers, and activists, religious figures are making a comeback in schools—so long as they are gay or gay-affirming. The following are a few of the religious leaders who have been promoted to students over the last few years as LGBT icons:

- **Irshad Manji.** Manji is a Muslim Canadian advocate of a reformist interpretation of Islam. A well-known critic of traditional mainstream Islam, she wrote *The Trouble with Islam Today* in 2004 and



*Allah, Liberty and Love* in June 2011.<sup>26</sup> Manji wrote on her website, "Studying Islam on my own, I made a truly surprising discovery: It is possible to reconcile faith with freedom. My journey has brought me to where I am today – speaking, writing and teaching not just about Islam, but also about moral courage." Manji travels all over the world to speak about her views on how homosexuality complements her Islamic beliefs, providing

guidance to help people who feel limited by religion.<sup>27</sup> She is the director of New York University's Moral Courage Project, which develops young leaders to challenge conformity. Manji married her female partner in Hawaii in 2016.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/miriam-ben-shalom?tab=biography>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://fox6now.com/2016/06/08/transgender-issues-are-driving-a-rift-in-lgbt-community-says-activist-ousted-from-milwaukee-pride-parade/>.

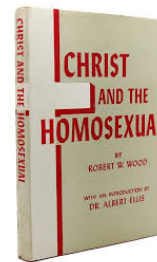
<sup>26</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irshad\\_Manji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irshad_Manji).

<sup>27</sup> <http://irshadmanji.com/irshad>.

<sup>28</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irshad\\_Manji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irshad_Manji).



- **Mary Douglas Glasspool.** Glasspool is a suffragan bishop in the Episcopal Diocese of New York and had previously served in the Diocese of Los Angeles. She is the first open lesbian to be consecrated a bishop in the Anglican Communion.<sup>29</sup>
- **Rev. Robert W. Wood.** Wood is recognized as the first member of the clergy to picket for gay rights. As the first religious leader to call for church-sanctioned gay marriage, he wrote the first book in the United States on Christianity and homosexuality. His book *Christ and the Homosexual* (1960) calls for the Christian Church not only to welcome homosexuals, but also to recognize same-sex marriage, which he had performed long before it was legal.<sup>30</sup>
- **Denise Eger.** Eger is one of the first openly gay rabbis and served as rabbi for the world's first gay and lesbian synagogue. Eger stated, "I believe God made me just as I am. That is all I need to know, that I am exactly who God created me to be!" She is also the first female and first openly homosexual president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California.<sup>31</sup>
- **Mel White.** White, an ordained minister who left his career as an adviser to prominent Christian evangelists, came out during the 1990s. He tried therapy and exorcism before attempting suicide. He divorced his wife and founded Soulforce, an organization whose mission is to "seek freedom from religious and political oppression" for LGBT people with his male partner Gary Nixon.<sup>32</sup>
- **Gene Robinson.** Robinson became the first openly gay Episcopal bishop when he was elected bishop of the diocese of New Hampshire in 2003. He is the coauthor of three AIDS education curricula and assisted with setting up a national peer counseling program for AIDS educators in Uganda, referring to it as "a calling from God."<sup>33</sup>



Other religious leaders featured as LGBT icons include Darlene Garner, Troy Perry, Pauli Murray, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Father Mychal Judge, Peter Gomes, and John McNeill.

### Historical Revision

LGBT activists claim that figures like President Buchanan, William Rufus King, Sandro Botticelli, and Frederick II were gay, without a serious discussion of the historical evidence or their shortcomings.

- **Alexander the Great.** Although there is great debate regarding the military commander's sexuality, claims of Alexander being gay are based on speculations drawn from ancient texts. Indeed, assumptions predominate over hard evidence when it comes to

<sup>29</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary\\_Glasspool](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Glasspool).

<sup>30</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/rev-robert-wood?tab=biography>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/denise-eger?tab=biography>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/mel-white?tab=biography>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/gene-robinson?tab=biography>.

Alexander's personal life.<sup>34</sup> Even assuming Alexander could be considered homosexual or bisexual, another serious question is whether this should be treated as a positive trait, since it is unlikely his slaves and subordinates had a choice in submitting to his sexual interests.

- **James Buchanan and William Rufus King.** Our 15th President and his Vice President are certainly historical—but for all the wrong reasons. Buchanan is often regarded as one of our least effective leaders, presiding over the lead-up to the Civil War. King has the unfortunate distinction of being the shortest-serving Vice President, dying after just six weeks in office from tuberculosis.<sup>35</sup> LGBT History Month seeks to re-cast this duo of bachelors as iconic—a close relationship that is presumed by the list-makers to have been homosexual. The historical evidence is dubious at best; what seems clear is that they were not American heroes.<sup>36</sup>
- **Florence Nightingale.** “The Lady with the Lamp,” born in 1820, revolutionized the health care system and set high standards for nurse training.<sup>37</sup> Historian and biographer Mark Bostridge’s extensive research in the archives of the British Library revealed many corrected facts about Nightingale’s life—especially the demystifying evidence that Nightingale was never a lesbian. The decision to claim Nightingale as a member of the LGBT community is questionable at best.<sup>38</sup>
- **Katharine Lee Bates.** Bates, most famously known for writing the lyrics of “America the Beautiful,” is listed as a lesbian LGBT History Month icon. LGBT activists base this claim on the fact that Bates lived with her roommate Katharine Coman for 25 years. And after Coman’s death, Bates wrote “Yellow Clover: A Remembrance of Love.” The two were undoubtedly close—but no evidence establishes that the two considered their relationship romantic.<sup>39</sup>
- **George Washington Carver.** The LGBT History Month historians put Carver on the list, despite the nonexistence of evidence to back up the claim that Carver was bisexual. Even their biography of Carver on their own website presents no facts to explain why he is on the list.<sup>40</sup> The claim seems to stem from Carver’s failed courtship with Sarah Hunt and his close research partnership with Austin W. Curtis.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/booked/2011/02/10/alexander-the-great-gay-or-straight/#7cdf7ee03447>.

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP\\_William\\_R\\_King.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_William_R_King.htm).

<sup>36</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/william-rufus-king?tab=biography>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.biography.com/people/florence-nightingale-9423539>.

<sup>38</sup> Suzi Feay, “Florence Nightingale: A new biography sheds light on the Lady with the Lamp: Not a lesbian, not a malingerer &ndash; not, it turns out, even a nurse. Florence Nightingale’s tireless biographer, Mark Bostridge, reveals how he dug into the archives to find the real Lady with the Lamp,” THE INDEPENDENT (September 27, 2008), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/florence-nightingale-a-new-biography-sheds-light-on-the-lady-with-the-lamp-942339.html>.

<sup>39</sup> <http://gayhistoryproject.epgn.com/historical-profiles/katharine-lee-bates-author-of-america-the-beautiful/>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/george-washington-carver?tab=biography>.

<sup>41</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Washington\\_Carver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Carver).



## Hollywood Re-Imagined as Historic

It is sometimes noted that Americans like their pop stars weird. It's hard to argue when you think of stars like Lady Gaga and Rue Paul. But does that mean these types of celebrities should be lauded in class as historic figures? The promoters of LGBT History Month certainly seem to think so.

Whether you love or hate their music, acting, or art, consider a few of these figures in light of the claim that they are role models:

- **Lady Gaga.** Whether you find her style artistic or just annoying, Lady Gaga is hard to ignore, from a Super Bowl performance to her edgy costumes and stunts. But is she historic, a hero or an icon? Her music centers on sexuality, especially her own bisexuality. She is known as a fierce advocate for LGBT rights. She spoke at the 2009 National Equality March in Washington, D.C., calling it "the single most important event" of her career. She was a leading activist for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."<sup>42</sup> Lady Gaga was ordained as a minister by the Universal Life Church so she could officiate the wedding of two female friends.<sup>43</sup>
- **Barry Manilow.** Manilow is an American singer-songwriter, arranger, musician, and producer with a career that has spanned more than 50 years. In 1978, Manilow began a relationship with TV executive Garry Kief, who soon became his manager. The two married in 2014, after same-sex marriage became legal in California. They kept the relationship and his sexual orientation secret until the marriage made headlines in 2015. Manilow officially came out in April 2017 after years of keeping his sexual orientation quiet out of concern that it would disappoint his largely female fan base.<sup>44</sup>
- **Mick Jagger.** Jagger is the lead singer of the Rolling Stones and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1989. He also launched an acting career, most notably acting in a 1970 British crime drama in which he plays a bisexual.<sup>45</sup> One author analyzing Jagger's gender, image, and sexuality stated that Jagger "opened up definitions of gendered masculinity and so laid the foundations for self-invention and sexual plasticity which are now an integral part of contemporary youth culture."<sup>46</sup>
- **Brian Epstein.** A gay man living in 1960s England who became captivated with the Beatles, particularly John Lennon. Epstein became their band manager and shaped the group's image. Epstein, from a wealthy Jewish family, was considered a tortured gay man. He died at age 32 of an accidental drug overdose.



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<sup>42</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/lady-gaga?tab=biography>.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.universallifechurchministers.org/lady-gaga/>.

<sup>44</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barry\\_Manilow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barry_Manilow).

<sup>45</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/mick-jagger?tab=biography>.

<sup>46</sup> Sheila Whiteley, *Sexing The Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (Routledge, 1997), 67.

- **Ian McKellen.** McKellen has made more than 40 films over five decades. He performed in London and New York theaters as a Shakespearean actor. At the age of 49, McKellen announced on BBC radio that he was gay, confronting the government's legislation that criminalized the promotion of homosexuality in the UK. McKellen has performed many one-man shows about his parallel journeys as an actor and a gay man.<sup>47</sup>
- **Margaret Cho.** Comedienne “icon” Margaret Cho’s routines are replete with vulgar explanations of her bisexuality and obsession with gay men. Her traumatic experiences of being repeatedly raped throughout her childhood led her to a career on the stage and a fascination with alternative sexuality. Cho promoted the legalization of gay marriage and became deputized by the City of San Francisco to perform marriages when same-sex marriage was made legal in California.<sup>48</sup>

Additional past celebrity honorees include Ellen Page, Jodie Foster, Cary Grant, Laverne Cox, Ellen DeGeneres, Angelina Jolie, Wanda Sykes, Neil Patrick Harris, Frank Ocean, Chaz Bono and Ricky Martin. Additions for 2018 include Lance Bass, Sean Hayes, and Chely Wright.

### Athletes as Icons

Unlike Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in baseball by his undeniable talent and achievement, many of the LGBT athletes presented as historical are marginal. Some have achieved more than their NFL, NBA and MLB counterparts, like Olympic medalists and tennis stars Billie Jean King and Amelie Mauresmo. But why, exactly, should schoolchildren be taking time away from other American heroes to learn about athletes, many of whom are known only for their sexuality?

Consider these individual icons:

- **Kye Allums.** Allums is included under the “youth” division of the LGBT History Month list, as an icon to inspire younger students to embrace their sexuality preferences. Allums is considered the first openly transgender person to play college basketball.<sup>49</sup>
- **Glenn Burke.** Burke is an obscure baseball player from the late 1970s for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Oakland A’s, with a recorded batting average of .237 and two home runs in his career. After retirement, he got attention by coming out in the *Inside Sports* article “The Double Life of a Dodger.” After leaving baseball, Burke became homeless and began using drugs. In 1988, he served a 16-month jail sentence for grand theft and drug possession. In 1995, Burke died from AIDS-related complications.<sup>50</sup>
- **William Daro (Billy) Bean** is a former baseball player. He played in Major League Baseball as an outfielder for the Detroit Tigers, Los Angeles Dodgers, San Diego Padres, and the Kintetsu

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<sup>47</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/ian-mckellen?tab=biography>.

<sup>48</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Cho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Cho).

<sup>49</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/kye-allums?tab=biography>.

<sup>50</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/glenn-burke?tab=biography>.

Buffaloes, with a forgettable batting average of .226. Bean publicly came out as gay in 1999. He is MLB's first Ambassador for Inclusion, encouraging other baseball players to come out.<sup>51</sup>

- **Wade Davis II.** Davis is a former football player. In 2012, Davis came out publicly and explained what it was like to be closeted and gay in the NFL. Davis is the director of Professional Sports Outreach for the You Can Play Project, an advocacy organization working to prevent homophobia in professional sports.<sup>52</sup>
- **Tom Waddell.** Waddell was the founder of the Gay Games, an international sporting event that first took place in San Francisco in 1982. Waddell had come out to his family and friends as gay in the 1970s. He married lesbian athlete Sara Lewinstein in 1981 and died six years later from AIDS-related complications.<sup>53</sup>

Additional athletes in this category include Bruce Jenner, John Amaechi, Jason Collins, Sherri Murrell, Dave Kopay, Diana Nyad, Esera Tuaolo, William "Big Bill" Tilden II, Greg Louganis, Megan Rapinoe, Sheryl Swoopes, Rudy Galindo, Adam Ripon, and Michael Sam.

### Politicians, Operatives and Reporters Presented as Historical Icons

Should kids be taught that current politicians, political operatives, and left-leaning media personalities are heroes? Or does using taxpayer money to laud recent and current government officials and their promoters sound more like propaganda? Consider these LGBT "role models":

- **Barney Frank.** Frank is the first member of Congress to voluntarily come out as gay and to marry someone of the same sex while in office. Frank's 1989 sex scandal almost marked the end of his political career. He admitted to having a sexual relationship with a male prostitute, Stephen Goble, who he hired to live with him as his housekeeper. Frank abused the power of his office to fix 33 tickets for Goble and to write a misleading letter to Goble's probation officer in Virginia. Goble attended a bill-signing at the White House and played left field for Frank's team in the Congressional Softball League.<sup>54</sup> However, Frank denied any knowledge of the fact that Goble continued running a bisexual prostitution service out of the Congressman's apartment. Goble maintained that Frank was fully aware of his actions the entire time. Frank's standing in Congress was greatly damaged and the House



<sup>51</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy\\_Bean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Bean).

<sup>52</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wade\\_Davis\\_\(American\\_football\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wade_Davis_(American_football)).

<sup>53</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/tom-waddell?tab=biography>.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Dedman, "'Mayflower Madam' Gave Goble Idea," WASHINGTON POST (August 27, 1989), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/longterm/tours/scandal/gobie2.htm>.

reprimand passed overwhelmingly in July 1990. Nearly 30 years later, Frank is being re-branded as an icon.

- **Tom Ammiano.** He served as a member of the California State Assembly from 2008 to 2014. He had previously been a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. In 1975, he was one of the founders of a gay teachers' organization which successfully pushed the school board to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>55</sup>
- **Midge Costanza.** Costanza was the first female assistant to a president, serving as an adviser on social issues to Jimmy Carter for two years until she resigned due to her tense relationships in the White House and her persistent criticism of Carter. Costanza invited members of the National Gay Task Force to the White House during Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign, the first organized opposition to the gay rights movement. Costanza also hosted a group of 30 women in protest of the president's opposition to federal abortion funding.<sup>56</sup>
- **Andrew Tobias.** Tobias is a financial writer and for many years, was the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee.<sup>57</sup> His 1973 memoir, *The Best Little Boy in the World*, chronicles his life as a gay man, saying that he "wanted to tell young gay and lesbian kids and their parents that you can have a good, happy, productive life if you're gay. You can be out and be respected."<sup>58</sup>
- **Glenn Greenwald.** Greenwald defended Chelsea/Bradley Manning, whose prison sentence was commuted by President Obama after Manning was given a 35-year prison sentence for stealing secret government documents and disseminating them on Wikileaks. Greenwald saw Manning as "politically insightful, astute, and thoughtful."<sup>59</sup> Many other Americans see Manning as a traitor.
- **Charles M. Blow.** An op-ed columnist for *The New York Times* who publicly came out as bisexual in 2014. Blow gained notoriety from attacks on Mitt Romney and Donald Trump during their respective presidential campaigns.<sup>60</sup> Blow was later forced to apologize for his anti-Mormon comments about Romney.

More heroes in this category for further reading include Tammy Baldwin, Kathy Kozachenko, Roberta Achtenberg, Danica Roem, Virginia Apuzzo, Annise Parker, John A. Perez, Jim Kolbe, David Huebner, Brian Bond, John Berry, Michael Guest, Jean O'Leary, Christine Quinn, Malcolm Forbes, and Barbara Jordan.

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<sup>55</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_Ammiano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Ammiano).

<sup>56</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/midge-costanza?tab=biography>.

<sup>57</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew\\_Tobias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Tobias).

<sup>58</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/andrew-tobias?tab=biography>.

<sup>59</sup> <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/glenn-greenwald?tab=biography>.

<sup>60</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_M.\\_Blow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_M._Blow).

### Foreign Leaders and Activists Presented as Heroes

So who do American students need to know when it comes to world leaders? The prime minister of Luxembourg isn't exactly the first figure who comes to mind. But that's typical of the focus in this area of LGBT History Month. Inclusions in this category are Xavier Bettel (legalized same-sex marriage in 2014 in Luxembourg), Uzi Even, Leo Varadkar (gay Irish politician who was instrumental in the repeal of Ireland's abortion restrictions), Volker Beck, Georgina Beyer of the New Zealand Parliament, and Irshad Manji. Further consider these icons:

- **Taiga Ishikawa.** Ishikawa is a lower-level Japanese politician and LGBT activist. He became one of the first two openly gay male politicians to win an election in Japanese history when he was elected in April 2011 to a seat in Tokyo's Toshima ward assembly. He helped to successfully lobby the Japanese government to amend the certificate allowing Japanese citizens to marry foreign nationals of the same sex in countries where same-sex marriage is legal.
- **Sunil Babu Pant.** Pant attracted media attention in 2012 when he wrote an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg, urging Facebook to allow its users to list their gender as "Other." The Supreme Court of Nepal, in *Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Government of Nepal and Others*, decriminalized homosexuality and allowed same-sex marriage in Nepal in 2008. Pant recently founded Pink Mountain, Nepal's first gay travel company, to offer LGBT-geared travel packages to Nepal.<sup>61</sup>



Other listed foreign leaders include Chi Chia-Wei, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, Klaus Wowereit, Michael Kirby, Bertrand Delanoë, and Elio Di Rupo.

### Authors, Artists and Composers

To be sure, among the more than 400 persons and couples featured to date in LGBT History Month, many are more notable than those discussed above. Among these are a large number of authors, artists and composers such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Tchaikovsky, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Maurice Sendak, Willa Cather, Truman Capote, Michelangelo, and Botticelli. Such figures are not irrelevant or unknown, but apart from their sexuality, they would typically be discussed in connection with music appreciation, literature, art appreciation, or similar courses of study. And for figures who lived in the 19th Century or earlier, historical evidence of their sexuality is often ambiguous or disputed.

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<sup>61</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunil\\_Babu\\_Pant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunil_Babu_Pant).

## CONCLUSION

Running across several of the foregoing categories, and particularly the entertainment world, is the tragic reality that many of the “icons” died early, preventable deaths due to drug addiction and other poor choices. Insufficient efforts are made to caution students against following their examples.

**Sensitivity to all aspects of history is a noble endeavor for public education.** Yet, as it is currently being taught, LGBT history advances a political agenda at the expense of hard facts and important historical lessons. Policy-makers, parents and media need to ask more questions and delve deeper into what is actually being taught and promoted in the classroom in the name of inclusivity. Any educational leader seeking to endorse or promote LGBT history should be presented with the foregoing examples and asked to take specific positions on their suitability as role models.

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