

# UNHEARD VOICES

## Stories of LGBT History



### Interview Transcripts

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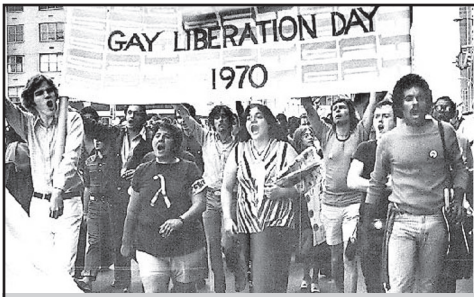
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### Interview Transcript



**Kendall Bailey** joined the U-S Marine Corps in 2001.

*Five years later he was a sergeant assigned to a recruiting office in Virginia and was considering becoming career military.*

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

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**Kendall Bailey:** I was at a recruiting event and I had my cell phone. I put it in the little Marine Corps hummer that we had. And one of the other recruiters, a staff sergeant, went through my cell phone and saw some of the text messages that I had to my boyfriend.

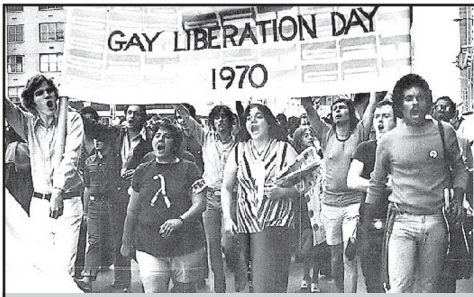
The atmosphere at the office just changed from that point on. So I wrote a letter to my commanding officer saying, you know, "I'm gay," and the Sergeant Major basically said, "You're not gay, it's a phase. You need to go through counseling." They sent me home. I couldn't show up for work—"for my safety," which I wasn't really concerned with because I could handle my own.

But when you wanna do something that badly and you've put five years of blood, sweat and tears into it and then all of a sudden it's not really an option for you anymore, it's a hard thing to take. On my discharge paperwork, it says RE4 and that means I am never ever allowed to be in the military again, which sucks. I mean if I could go back, I would.

**Interviewer:** *And how has your family responded?*

**Kendall Bailey:** Well, my family didn't find out I was gay until after I was discharged. I kept playing this role as if I was still in the Marine Corps. My dad and my stepmother decided that something was wrong, so they decided to take a trip out here. At the time, I had a boyfriend and I was like, well, if I'm gonna come out, I guess now is good as time as any to do it. I said I got out of the Marine Corps because I was gay and my dad said, "Uhhh, yeah." That's his answer to everything. I'm like, dad, it's raining out—"Uhhh yeah." So it was assuring, I was happy about that.

And my life changed dramatically when I got out. I'm able to hang out with my boyfriend and hold hands walking down the street. Obviously I'm very disappointed that I can't serve, but my feelings toward the military really didn't change. It's just being equal is something that I think everyone deserves and obviously we have a long way to go.

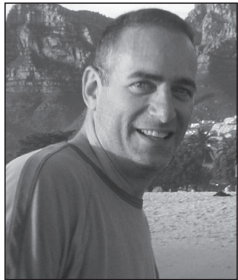


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### Interview Transcript



*David Barr has been working as an AIDS activist for over 25 years. Recently, he came to StoryCorps to talk about how the disease changed the gay community in New York City during the early 1980s, and what it was like to fight a disease that nobody fully understood.*

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**David Barr:** I was there at the epicenter of the epidemic in the United States, a member of the hardest hit community in the city. A lot of people were sick, people were dying constantly. We all felt like we were living in a war zone.

We were working day and night, and people would die, you know, close friends would die. And there was no time to really stop and take it in and process it. Somebody else was sick, you know. There was another action to do. There was another piece of work to get done. It wasn't like, oh, I have a job in AIDS and then I go home and I go do something. It was our life.

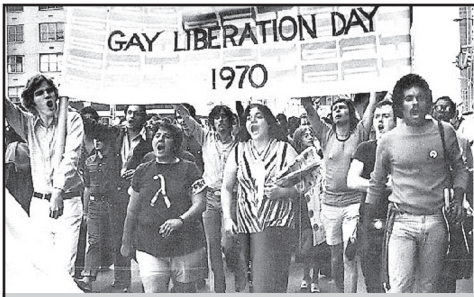
Prior to AIDS there was a gay movement. It was not a large movement. It wasn't a very politicized community. Here in New York, the largest gay community in the world, we had no gay rights bill passed. We didn't have the political clout and we didn't have enough people in the community interested.

AIDS politicized the gay community. It created the organizations that became very powerful and politically savvy. The response by the gay community to AIDS is a historic response of any American community in response to a crisis. It involved hundreds of thousands of people coming together, creating organizations, helping one another, really overcoming incredible adversity as individuals and as communities to address a problem.

And in doing so, we changed the way that society looks at gay people because people started realizing, oh, that's my brother whose dying, I can't really hate him anymore because I'm...I'm sad that he's dying. Or it's my friend or it's my co-worker.

People dying of AIDS was the first important step to changing people's attitudes about gayness and about gay people.





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### Interview Transcript



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

Here, Boggis talks about parenthood.

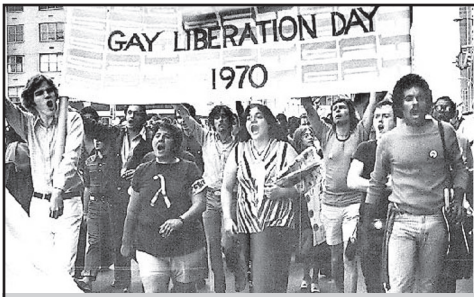
**Terry Boggis:** I've always been the kind of woman who was a baby person, and I always wanted babies, surrounded myself with babies as a little kid. And also as a little kid, I had an awareness of being a lesbian really quite young. So I sort of shelved motherhood. I think as my biological clock ticked is when I started to say, "Oh, if I wanted to have a family, how am I going to do that?" And as it is I didn't have a kid until I was thirty-seven, so it was somewhat later in life.

Telling him I was gay or that his other mother was gay was not a hard conversation. He knew it from the cradle, and it was very normalized and very celebratory in spirit in the household. But then later when kids leave home and they're going to school for the first time, suddenly the larger culture starts weighing in. And he came home and he said, "Are there two kinds of gay people? Are there good kinds and bad kinds?" Because he had heard it used positively and negatively.

I remember when he was going off to day camp and he was wearing, you know, these little rainbow like freedom rings, the little gay symbol, and I thought, "Oh man - this could really not go well." You know? I was trying to rehearse with him and not, and not say, "You can't wear those to camp, someone might beat you up." So I said, "What if someone asks you what your rainbow rings mean? What will you say?" And he said, "I'll say they mean gay pride." And I said, "Well that's good, but... and then what if they ask you if you're gay?" And he stopped walking and he said, "Well, I'll say yes because you are, so I am, too." And I said, "Well, you know, you're not necessarily. Like Grammy, she's not gay, but I am, and she was my mom. And so you might be different from me, but you don't know that yet."

Once when he was still little enough that he was sitting in the backseat of the car in a car seat and we were driving somewhere and he goes, "Mom, we're lesbians right?" And I go, "Wait no. Not actually, no." And then later on he sort of came out of the closet, he said, "I'm not gay or straight. I'm a bachelor." He was like eight. And I said, "Well, okay. That'll do for now."

I feel like LGBT people are really changing what families can look like. It's been really exciting to watch kids come of age and instead of us saying how it is for them, they're telling us what's good for them. That's been a blast.



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### Interview Transcript



*In 2000 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America could refuse membership to people who identify as gay.*

*It was a ten-year court battle.*

*The plaintiff in the case was **James Dale**, who began scouting when he was eight years old. By the time he entered Rutgers University, he had achieved the rank Assistant Scout Master as an adult.*

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

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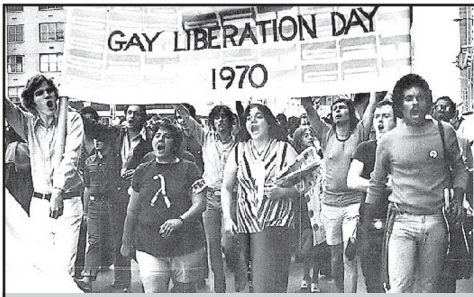
**James Dale:** My second year at Rutgers I came out of the closet and got involved in the gay organization at school. I was pretty much doing what I was taught in the Boy Scouts—take a leadership role, be active, be visible. And I was speaking at a conference on the needs of gay teenagers. There was a newspaper there and there was a photograph taken for the Star Ledger of New Jersey.

I didn't really think much of it. But then as a result of that, I received a letter in the mail from the Boy Scouts. They said "avowed homosexuals" are not permitted in the Boy Scouts of America, which kind of blindsided me because I think as a gay kid, I didn't fit in a lot of places, but the Boy Scouts was some place where I felt important and valuable and connected.

But seeing those words in that letter, I knew that it was wrong. I wasn't gonna walk away from it. I didn't think at that time that it would've gone on to the legal system for ten years and went to the Supreme Court. I was nineteen and I thought, you know, I'm right and they're wrong and justice and the courts will see this. To lose to the Supreme Court was really devastating.

When the Boy Scout lawsuit started, I was out to my parents and there were times when we didn't talk and there was fighting. It's not usually the case that your son comes out and then a couple of months later he's in the New York Times, and I think my parents did the right thing before they fully accepted the right thing.

Ultimately that's kinda what I was thinking that the Boy Scouts would do with me, not that they were thrilled that I would be gay and visibly gay, but I did think they would rise to the occasion.



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### Interview Transcript



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

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

**Jamison Green:** I think I really consciously felt different my first day of kindergarten. I always hated wearing dresses, but my parents dressed me up and we walked in and the kindergarten teacher welcomed me and she said, “The little girls are over here.” But as soon as I saw the guys with the trucks, I went right over there in my little dress and started playing with these two kids.

And then as I got older, as I got to be about thirteen, fourteen, I think I made my mother uncomfortable in that I looked so much like a boy and seemed so much like a boy and played football with the boys and all of those things.

**Interviewer:** *When did you find out it was possible to be a transsexual?*

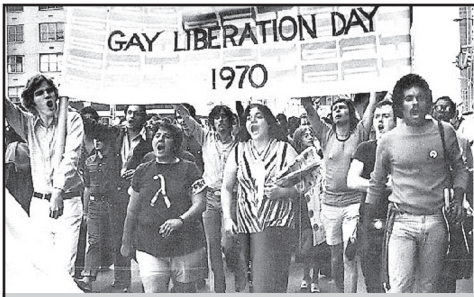
**Jamison Green:** Well, my first lover suggested to me that I might enjoy having a sex change. And I reacted in complete horror. I said, “Only crazy people do that. Don’t you ever talk about that again.” And I believed that I would lose all my friends, and I believed I would never get a job, and I believed it would be a total disaster.

So I still didn’t know that it was possible until I saw someone else who had transitioned from female to male on television in 1976. I saw Steve Dane. He had been a teacher of the year in California, and he went away over the summer break and came back as a man and he wanted to keep his teaching job. He was handsome, articulate, self-confident, poised. And I thought, that’s me. If I’m successful, I could be him.

And after you were born, as I was experiencing my relationship with you, I didn’t feel that I could actually be an honest, whole person in my relationship with you or with anyone if I didn’t transition.

**Interviewer:** *And I think that I am probably a better person for it.*





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### Interview Transcript



**Michael Levine** was at a popular gay bar in New York City in June 1969...when it was surrounded by police. At the time, the vice squad routinely raided and emptied gay bars. Patrons usually complied with the police—frightened at being identified publicly. But this particular Friday night was different because patrons at the Stonewall Inn stood their ground. They clashed—during what became known as the Stonewall Riots.

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

**Michael Levine:** It was a Friday night and I had a date. I was at the bar getting drinks for both of us. We had just finished dancing. The music was blaring. It was a combination of beer and cigarettes and cologne. Suddenly, as I'm handing money to the bartender, a deafening silence occurred. The lights went up, the music went off and you could hear a pin drop, literally.

My boyfriend rushed in from the dance floor. He walked over and said, "Put the drinks down. Let's leave." We go out onto Christopher Street and there are what look like a hundred police cars all facing the entrance, and crowds of people looking at us. The kids coming out of the Stonewall, the onlookers, the police – everyone was just kind of standing there.

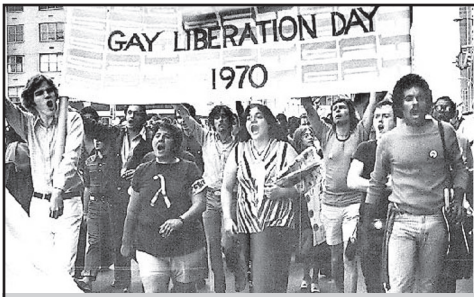
It was not a riot in the sense of people breaking furniture and police hitting people over the head. It was just an enormous crowd of people. And then the police started to say, okay, everyone leave. And the drag queens, they're the ones who said to the police, we're not leaving. And they formed a chorus line outside in front of the bar. And they stood there dancing in the street. They were all Puerto Rican drag queens and Irish cops. It was a funny, funny confrontation.

When we came back on Saturday night, we stood there on the street and held hands and kissed—something we would never have done three days earlier. It made me feel wonderful. I stood there with chills. It was like when you're watching a parade and the flag goes by and you see something you're so proud of and you see your troops and you get that chill inside of you. I got a chill. I got a chill seeing guys on the street holding hands and kissing.

In the week that followed I got phone calls from relatives—cousins, my brother, my aunt. We're just calling to find out if you're okay. We know you go to places like this. We want to make sure you're all right. That means they knew all along. It was like I was wearing a sign on my back. They knew. We never discussed it. I never had to once say to anyone in my family, I'm gay.

**Interviewer:** How did you feel about yourself between the beginning of Stonewall and after Stonewall? Did you feel that you were a different person?

**Michael Levine:** No, I didn't feel that I was a different person. I was the same me. I was a homosexual person coming from an old fashioned Jewish neighborhood living in Greenwich Village on my own. I felt the same, I felt comfortable. But I felt the world now is more comfortable with me. And Stonewall did that for me.



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### Interview Transcript



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

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

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**Phyllis Lyon:** I didn't really find out that lesbians existed until I met the woman that I spent the rest of my life with, and that was Del Martin. And she came to work in the place in Seattle that I was working.

One evening, Del and I and another woman we worked with went off to have an after-work drink. And Del somewhere along the line got on the subject of homosexuality. One of us said, "How come you know so much about this homosexuality?" And she said, "Because I am one!" I was startled.

**Interviewer:** But you fell in love with each other.

**Name:** Well, that took about three or four years. We got together in 1953 on Valentine's Day. It was Del's idea. "We'll never forget our anniversary," she said. And we never did.

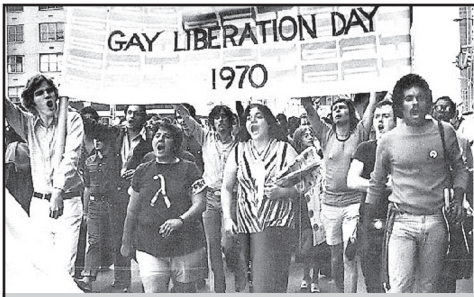
And we also wanted to meet more lesbians. And we didn't have any luck. We went to the lesbian bars, but we were too shy to go talk to them and they didn't come around and talk to us, so...

One time we went to a party where we met another lesbian. So we gave her our phone number. And then very shortly after that we got a phone call asking us if we would be interested in coming to a meeting with six other women to start an organization, and they were going to call it the Daughters of Bilitis because nobody else would know what that name meant.

**Interviewer:** So DOB started as a secret social club?

**Phyllis Lyon:** Right. But we discovered also that there were a lot of laws that were anti-gay and there were more things to do than just party. We decided we'd put out a newsletter, *The Ladder*. I was the first editor and I think we got about a hundred copies of it and we mailed it to every lesbian that anybody in the group knew. We'd said in the first issue that if you'd like to continue to get it, send us a dollar. And it began to grow after that.





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### Interview Transcript



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

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

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**Charles Silverstein:** None of my closest friends knew that I was gay and I decided to finally come out by participating with an organization called the Gay Activist Alliance. We organized a demonstration against the guys who used to use aversion therapy on gay men. The technique they were using was electrical aversion, where a guy would get aroused seeing a picture of a naked man and they’d shock him.

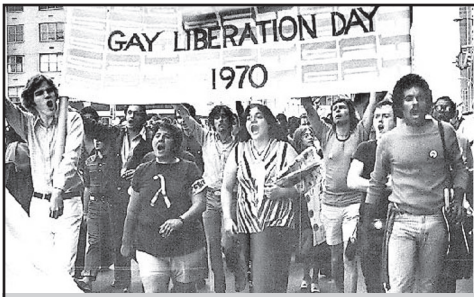
And so we organized this demonstration consisting of two parts. Some would be people in the street with placards and flyers and the usual stuff. But the other part of it was getting a group of people into the room at the behaviorist convention, where this psychiatrist was talking about his work in aversion therapy.

And so we sat down quietly and after fifteen minutes, we took over and attacked the use of aversion therapy and the people in the audience who were trying to cure homosexuals, the whole, the whole bit.

In the audience was a psychiatrist by the name of Bob Spitzer from the Nomenclature Committee of the American Psychiatric Association. They’re the group that makes the list of mental disorders. And it is to his credit, I must say, that he invited us to make a presentation about the deletion of homosexuality. And the Board of Directors removed homosexuality from the Nomenclature.

It became the single most important success of the gay liberation movement. Gay groups could attack the laws against sodomy in states all over the country.

People in New York say, “You can’t fight City Hall,” and we used to say, “You can’t fight City Hall, but you can piss on the steps.” And I would say that when you see something wrong, you should say something. It’s not just about homosexuality, but about anything.

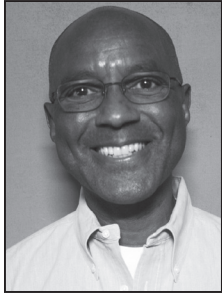


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### Interview Transcript



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

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

**David Wilson:** EMTs arrived within minutes and they called the police because they saw me standing in the driveway, you know, an African American man in a white neighborhood. And when the police arrived, they wanted to arrest me for assault and battery and breaking and entering.

And when I got to the hospital, I found out that they were not going to give me any information because I had no relationship to Ron. As far as they were concerned, I was a stranger. They called Ron's family in Vermont and said, "Can you give permission for us to talk to David?" And his seventy-five year old mom said, "Of course! They're partners." So they came out and they said that he was dead on arrival. My whole world just kind of fell apart and I felt pretty broken. You know, where do I go from here?

So I joined a support group. One meeting I walked a man. That man's name was Rob Compton. Three years later we had a commitment ceremony. Lots of people came and they thought it was our wedding. And we said, "No, this isn't a wedding because we don't have the right to get married." So it was amazing to become a plaintiff in a major lawsuit against the state of Massachusetts.

Part of the decision to be part of the case was to talk with my family. My dad wasn't sure. All of a sudden his only son was going to become this prominent out, gay, black man. So I talked with dad about some of the issues. A couple hours later dad said, "You're doing the right thing."

May 17th, 2004 was the first weddings. Dad said, "Well, you're going to City Hall and you're going to be part of all this excitement. What about me?" I said, "Dad, I'm sending a limo to pick you up." My dad had never been in a limo. He got a new suit, he came down and the limo took him down.

And he was in the front row when we walked down the aisle. Both his arms were in the air. He was eighty-nine at that point. And he didn't see it just for gay people, he saw it for, you know, all people that had been discriminated against, and his whole life he had been discriminated against. And so I think for dad it was just a victory that he could be a part of. He could not have been more proud.

It was a great day.