

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH



LGBT Heroes of the Asian American & Pacific Islander Community

GLSEN is proud to honor Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month by celebrating the communities contributions to the LGBT and safe schools movements. Below are some notable individuals whose achievements have bettered the lives of the LGBT community.

Jenny Shimizu



Jenny Shimizu is a Japanese American supermodel and actress. Born and raised in California, she attended California State University on a basketball scholarship. After graduation, she opened a car garage in LA, where she worked as a mechanic and was eventually discovered. She started modeling with Calvin Klein and was later featured by various designers and in numerous magazines, including Versace and Italian Vogue. Her image appears in books and art exhibits around the world. In 1993, Jenny shifted to film and video, first appearing in Madonna's music video, Rain. Following this she starred in a few independent movies, such as Foxfire in 1996 and Itty Bitty Titty Committee in 2007. Jenny has also been on television in the series Dante's Cove and an episode of Ellen, as well as appearing on reality shows, like RuPaul's Drag Race, America's Next Top Model, and Make Me a Supermodel. Jenny has been ranked on various lists of powerful and influential women and Asian Americans in Hollywood and in 2006 received a Lesbian Icon Award.

Jim Toy



Jim Toy is a Chinese American activist, social worker, and a pioneer of the LGBT movement in Michigan. He received his Masters in Social Work from the University of Michigan (UMI) and is hailed as the first person to come out publicly as queer in Michigan, which he did at an anti-Vietnam rally in 1970. Throughout his long history of activism, he has been a founding member of several organizations, including the Ann Arbor and the Detroit Gay Liberation Movements, PFLAG/Ann Arbor, Transgender Advocacy Project, Washtenaw Rainbow Action Project, Out Loud Chorus, Washtenaw Faith Action Network, LGBT Retirement Center Task Force, and GLSEN Ann Arbor. He also helped set up the Ann Arbor Gay Hotline, the HIV/AIDS Resource Center, and the HIV/AIDS Task Force. Jim co-authored a non-discrimination policy around sexual orientation for the city and the university and the first LG Pride Week Proclamation from a governing body in the US. Jim is most well known for his work in establishing UMI's Lesbian-Gay Male Programs Office, the first LGBT center in an institution of higher learning in the US, where he served as coordinator from 1971-1994. Jim has worked as a therapist, counselor, trainer, facilitator, educator and advocate on the behalf of all LGBT people.

Esera Tuaolo



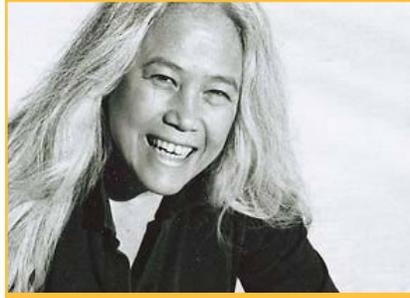
Esera Tuaolo is openly gay and a former professional football player. Born in Honolulu, Hawai'i, his family members were Samoan banana farmers. In 1986, he received a scholarship to attend Oregon State University, where he continued to play football. In 1990, he was drafted as a nose tackle for the Green Bay Packers. Nine years later he played in the Super Bowl with the Minnesota Vikings. After retiring, Esera came out as gay in 2002 on an episode of HBO's Real Sports. Since coming out, Esera has worked to fight homophobia in sports, especially football. He serves as an advisory board member of the Gay and Lesbian Athletics Foundation. He wrote a memoir, which was released in 2006, entitled Alone in the Trenches: My Life as a Gay man in the NFL. Esera has been a vocal advocate supporting marriage equality and other LGBT causes.

Pauline Park



Pauline Park is a community activist in NYC. She received her M.Sc. from the London School of Economics and Political Science and her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Throughout her career, she helped found the Queens Pride House, Iban/Queer Koreans of NY, the Out People of Color Political Action Club, the Guillermo Vasquez Independent Democratic Club of Queens, the Transgender Health Initiative of NY, and the NY Association for Gender Rights Advocacy, which she still chairs. Pauline advocated for passage of a transgender rights law in NYC and inclusion of gender identity/expression in a safe schools law for NY. She has been published in various journals and written and edited training sessions and publications about transgender sensitivity and health care for a wide range of organizations. She won a Fulbright Fellowship, the Orgullo Translatina award, and has been named on many lists of the top influential LGBT icons. She was the first openly transgender grand marshal of the NYC Pride March in 2005 and the subject of the documentary, *Envisioning Justice: The Journey of a Transgendered Woman*.

June Millington



June Millington is a musician, most famous for her participation in the band, *Fanny*. Born in Manila, Philippines, June moved with her family to California in 1961. Starting with a ukulele, she played music with her younger sister Jean when they were kids and throughout high school. Eight years after moving to the states and after many band attempts, June and Jean formed the band, *Fanny*, which was one of the first all-female rock bands to be signed to a major label. They started recording and touring worldwide, including an appearance on the *Tonight Show*. The band released five albums, had two singles reach the top 40 on the Billboard Hot 100, and performed as the session musicians for Barbra Streisand's first rock album. After *Fanny*, June formed other bands and experimented with studio work, becoming an important figure in the women's music movement. Although she continues to record and perform with her sister, June has also founded the Institute for the Musical Arts, an institution for women and girls offering support, education on the music business, and opportunities to record. June is a pioneer who has been an inspiration for many other all-female rock bands.

Jose Antonio Vargas



Jose Antonio Vargas is an award winning journalist, filmmaker, and activist. Born in the Philippines, Jose moved to the US to live with his grandparents in 1993. While in high school, he became interested in journalism and pursued internships at various newspapers, which he continued to do as he attended San Francisco State University. After graduation, Jose went on to work at the *Washington Post*, where he wrote about the AIDS crisis in DC, which inspired the documentary, *The Other City*. In 2009, he joined the *Huffington Post*, as a senior contributing editor. Throughout his career, he has won a Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting and the Sidney Award for social conscious journalism, as well as being named as one of 50 Politicos to Watch by *Politico*. *The New York Times Magazine* published an article in which he came out as undocumented in 2011, spurring a cover story in *Time* magazine the following year on undocumented immigrants. He later founded Define American, an organization to redefine the national dialogue on immigration, and has been an outspoken advocate for immigration reform.

"I THINK WE NEED TO SEE THAT TRANSGENDER IS SIMPLY A NATURAL VARIANCE IN GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION...HELPING ALL OF US BREAK OUT OF THESE BOXES SO WE CAN ALL LIVE LIVES FREE OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE RELATED TO GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION."

— Pauline Parks

Urooj Arshad



Urooj Arshad is an advocate and award winning activist. She grew up in Karachi, Pakistan, until age 16, when her family was eligible to immigrate to the US through her uncle's sponsorship. She came out as queer a few years later, while attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Noticing the lack of intersectional work between the LGBT and people of color communities, she began to organize for LGBT people of color. In 1999, she attended the National Youth Advocacy Coalition youth summit in Washington, DC and realized what her work had been missing-inclusion of her Muslim culture. Urooj helped start LGBT Muslim retreats and developed training sessions on Islamophobia and homo/transphobia. She has received numerous awards, including a We Speak Award for her work with young women, a Community Catalyst Award, and was nominated as one of the 15 APA Women Leaders by the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance. She is currently a director at Advocates for Youth, where she manages international projects to develop the capacity of youth and a fellow of the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute.

"[...] AS WE CONTINUE TO CHANGE THE DISCOURSE, I AM HEARTENED BY HOW MUCH OUR COMMUNITY HAS GROWN IN SOPHISTICATED WAYS THAT PUSHES AND PROPELS US FORWARD AND TRULY REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITY."

– Urooj Arshad

Ghalib Shiraz Dhalla



Ghalib Shiraz Dhalla is a novelist, filmmaker, and activist. He was born in Mombassa, Kenya, but currently calls LA his home. His first article appeared in *VIVA* at the age of 13 and he has continued to publish in various magazines, including *Genre* and *Details*. In 2002, Ghalib released his first novel, *Ode to Lata*, which received rave reviews. The book was hailed as one of the first accounts of gay life in South Asia as written by an author from the African continent and has been presented at book festivals and added to university course syllabi across the country. The book was later adapted to a feature film, *The Ode*, which premiered at Outfest Film Festival in LA in 2008 to a sold out audience. In 2011, Ghalib released a second novel and film. He has also been involved with the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team and SATRANG to improve support and programs for LGBT South Asians. Ghalib has been ranked on various lists as an important figure and tastemaker for his literary and film work, as well as joining the Humanitas Prize organization in 2009 and headlining a show at the Lincoln Center in NYC.

George Takei



George Takei is an actor, comedian, personality, and activist. Born in LA to Japanese American parents, George and his family were forced to move into an internment camp in Arkansas in 1942. When the war ended, he returned to California, where he completed high school and attended UCLA. He received both a BA and MA in theater and upon graduation went to the Shakespeare Institute at Stratford-upon-Avon in England and Sophia University in Tokyo. His first professional debut as an actor on television was an episode of *Playhouse 90* and *Ice Palace* was his film debut, both in 1959. It was six years later, when he was cast in his most well known role, that of Mr. Sulu in the *Star Trek* franchise, including six films. In the last 50 years, George has appeared in over 40 feature films and had hundreds of guest-starring roles on television and stage, as well as being a highly valued voice actor. He was presented with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette for his work on US-Japanese relations; has an asteroid named after him; carried the Olympic flame in 1984; has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame; and received an LGBT Humanist Award. Recently, George has become well known for his community and political activism in support of the API and LGBT communities and his humor as a blogger and Facebook personality.

