

# **2024 Trans+ History Week Workbook**

**For the history lesson we never had**

Launched with **QueerAF**

**“We’ve always been here and it's time to tell our stories”**

# Trans+ History Week 2024: 6–12 May 2024

## Uncovering history

Thank you for picking up the 2024 Trans+ History Week Workbook. It's a lesson book for the history lesson we never had.

Trans+ History Week is the week we make space for, platform and share our rich history. A history which is as long as all of human life. Quite simply, we've always been here and it's time to tell our stories.

I believe that education is a route to liberation. Simply learning that trans+ people have always been here shuts down the lie that we're a "trend", "modern fashion" or "social contagion".

And for myself, I find the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves really matter — they empower us. Knowing that we've always been here tells us that we belong here. Right where we are in this present moment.

Humans have forever told stories to impart knowledge, share wisdom and teach lessons. Our stories are no different. During Trans+ History Week, you'll learn four lessons through four stories and four profiles.

So join me as together we begin to uncover our history and the learnings from it.

**Marty Davies (they/she)**

Founder of Trans+ History Week

## Behind the research

At my core, I have always been a researcher, regardless of any other hats I've worn. My research has moved me across oceans and into spaces I could have only dreamt of. I've never met a topic I didn't want to know more about – and trans+ history is no different. As I unravelled who I am, I discovered it was important for me to be rooted, to be part of something much bigger than me. Unfortunately, all of the fervent curiosity and good intentions in the world can't change that I am seeing things through the bias of being a White global northerner. Our all-volunteer team who have brought you Trans+ History Week are mostly based in London, UK. This is something we've been conscious of as this project has developed and something we wish to diversify in future years. I am well aware there are perspectives, experiences, and cultures that other trans+ people can share with us. As we'll learn in this lesson book, we are always stronger when we work together to celebrate each other.

In that vein, I want to draw attention to the incredible team I had to work with on this document. I have had folks volunteering their time to reading, researching, writing, editing, and otherwise letting me spout information in their direction. Without their contributions, you would likely be holding a shapeless 80-page tear-stained document. They have kept me grounded and focused, and I am endlessly grateful for them.

We've used the term 'trans+' to be inclusive of the many ways people describe and define their relationship with their own gender or absence of gender. This term is inclusive of transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, bigender, gender non-conforming and agender people – or indeed inclusive of any of the other ways people define their gender. This term is also inclusive of intersex people who have natural diversity in sex characteristics.

We've approached this academically. Despite concerted efforts to erase and suppress trans+ history, some records have survived. It was important to me that I followed the trails, as much as possible, to their origins. If primary sources exist, I want to find them, read them, and cite them. Through my research, I have uncovered some truly inspirational things. I have also been faced with the evidence that colonialism and imperialism are quite often the tools used to stamp us out along with other aspects of the indigenous cultures they oppressed and continue to oppress.

Some of the language you may find offensive and dated now, but it has been used for historical accuracy. It would be dismissive to ignore the terms an individual has chosen, especially on the basis that we know the language for them better than they know themselves. It may be that today's terms hadn't been coined or widely used yet, or it may be that a person felt purpose and intent in how they have named themselves.

My hope in producing this guidance is that anyone can pick it up and learn something they didn't know. Maybe you've just come out as trans+. Maybe you're wanting to be a better ally. Maybe you're just curious about what transness looks like. Whatever your purpose in picking up this document, welcome to my class.

**Gray Burke-Stowe (he/him)**

Lead Researcher and Writer

# Lesson plan

## **Lesson 1: We've always been here**

Through the Hijra community, we can explore how transness has been part of the human experience for thousands of years.

## **Lesson 2: We can't be erased**

The Nazis raided and burned records in the world's first trans+ clinic in a failed attempt to erase transness from existence.

## **Lesson 3: We're stronger together**

The story of Stonewall is one of a community coming together to seek communal liberation.

## **Lesson 4: We're more than trans+**

Trans+ musicians explore and express their identities through their art.

Trans+ History Week is a launchpad project from QueerAF, the UK's only non-profit and regulated LGBTQIA+ publisher. We're known for our award-winning content and mentoring schemes that are helping queer creatives to change the media.

## **Lesson 1:**

# **We've always been here**

The term "Hijra" refers to a distinct social and cultural group in South Asia, particularly in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Hijras are often recognised as a third gender, distinct from the binary categorisation of male and female. The Hijra community has a long history, dating back to at least the 13th century, and plays a unique role in the cultural and social fabric of the region. They are mentioned in various religious and historical texts. Traditionally, Hijras have held specific roles in royal courts, blessing newborns and newlyweds, and performing at ceremonies.

Hijras are individuals who do not conform to conventional notions of male or female gender identities. They may be assigned male at birth but may identify outside the male-female binary. Hijra is often considered an umbrella term encompassing various gender non-conforming and trans+ identities. Despite their long history, Hijras have faced marginalisation and discrimination. This is often exacerbated by the predominant religion of the region where they live and work; for instance, Muslim Hijras living in Hindu areas are prohibited from practising their religion.

In recent years, there have been efforts in some South Asian countries to recognise the rights of Hijras and provide legal recognition of their gender identity. In India, for example, legal recognition as the third gender was granted in 2014. Section 377, a colonial British law outlawing specific sexual acts, was finally overturned in India in 2018. Before then, it was often used to punish the Hijra community, as many make their living through sex work. Section 377 is still present in the penal codes in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

### **Names to know**

A. Revathi, Anne Ogborn, Asha Devi, Famila, Kalki Subramaniam, Kamla Jaan, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Shabnam 'Mausi' Bano

# Shikhandi

Princess, warrior, trans

## Does the soul have a gender?

In the Mahābhārata, one of the two Sanskrit epics from the Indian subcontinent and a major text for Hinduism, the figure of Shikhandi is often associated with a unique tale of transformation and reincarnation. Princess Amba, the eldest daughter of the King of Kashi, was kidnapped by the warrior Bhishma for his brother, the king of Hastinapura, to keep. Upon her return, she tried and failed to marry three men: her love Shavla, her captor King Vichitravarya, and her abductor Bhishma. Amba vowed revenge on Bhishma and invoked Shiva to help her destroy him. She was soon reborn – again, seemingly – as a girl. However, she knew herself to be male, and her new father raised her as his son, Shikhandi. Shikhandi was ‘lent’ manhood by a forest spirit for one night, but the forest spirits were so moved by his intention to return the manhood that they allowed him to keep it. In all senses, Shikhandi was a man, and he went on to destroy Bhishma in battle. This story in the Mahābhārata illustrates a Hindu belief that the soul has no gender; through reincarnation or divine intervention, a soul can fluidly move throughout gendered bodies or even inhabit a non-gendered or multi-gendered body.

## What can we learn from Shikhandi?

The Mahābhārata is a major text in Hindu mythology, and it is traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyasa, who referred to it as *itihasa* (history). In this sense, it is interpreted similarly to the Book of Genesis in Abrahamic religions. The oldest preserved parts date back to 400 BCE. It is also regarded as the longest epic poem ever written, containing over 200,000 verses. We’ve always been here.

## Extra credit

Princess Amba’s spirit was reborn as Shikhandi. Even though he was still given a female-appearing body, as in the previous life, he and his family knew him to be male. Shikhandi is misgendered by many throughout the tale, and one instance leads to the ultimate consequence: Bhishma says he will not raise weapons to a woman, which gives Shikhandi the opportunity to destroy him.

Shikhandi’s story isn’t the only trans-masculine narrative in Hindu mythology, but these tales are largely outnumbered by those of trans-feminine characters. Hijras are a recognised group of trans+ folks through to today. Why do you think ‘male-to-female’ transformation is more acceptable than ‘female-to-male’ stories, and why does it uphold patriarchal norms?

## **Did you know?**

Trans+ communities have always thrived, all around the world – including in India. Trans+ identities are not a modern invention.

## **What did you learn?**

**We've always been here.**

Being outside the binary is nothing new. Trans+ people can be found throughout centuries of recorded history, including as far back as the 13th century in India.

**A quote from Rico Jacob Chace (he/him), Trans+ History Week Project Advisor:**

“When seeking direction, I draw strength from knowing my ancestors would have embraced the value I bring as a Black trans man. We need to make efforts that aim to restore society to its inclusive roots before colonialism erased our ancestral wisdom, a wisdom we must reclaim through present discussions.”

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## Lesson 2:

# We can't be erased

The Weimar Republic, officially known as the German Reich, was a historical period of Germany from 9 November 1918 to 23 March 1933. For members of the LGBTQIA+ community during this time, there were both advancements and setbacks, reflecting the broader social changes taking place.

In 1871, under the German Empire, Paragraph 175 of the penal code criminalised male homosexuality. However, during the early years of the Weimar Republic, there was a significant push for social and legal reforms. In 1929, a revised version of Paragraph 175 was enacted, which technically decriminalised homosexual acts between consenting adults. Urban centres such as Berlin became known for their vibrant and open-minded subcultures, including gay and lesbian communities. Bars, clubs, and publications catered specifically to LGBTQIA+ individuals, providing spaces for socialising and self-expression. The Weimar Republic was a period of artistic and cultural flourishing. LGBTQIA+ individuals were able to express themselves more openly in the arts, contributing to the development of a more permissive cultural environment. Beyond the arts, the Weimar Republic saw advancements in science. Sexology and the study of human sexuality became more respected public topics. Influential figures like Magnus Hirschfeld, a prominent sexologist, advocated for the rights and understanding of homosexual individuals. Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin became a pioneering institution in the field.

Despite some positive changes, societal attitudes toward homosexuality remained conservative in many areas. Discrimination and social stigma persisted, and individuals could still face persecution, especially in more rural and conservative areas, which likely permitted the coming political unrest and rising extremism. The later years of the Weimar Republic were marked by economic hardships and political instability. As extremist ideologies gained strength, including the Nazis who rose to power in 1933, there was an increase in hostility towards marginalised groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community. The relatively tolerant environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals rapidly deteriorated. The Nazis viewed homosexuality as a threat to their vision of Aryan purity, leading to the persecution of LGBTQIA+ individuals. In 1935, they strengthened Paragraph 175, making it more repressive and widening its scope. The Nazi regime implemented aggressive measures against the LGBTQIA+ community, leading to widespread persecution, arrests, and imprisonment. Many individuals faced violence, forced sterilisation, and, later in the regime, were subjected to concentration camps.

The Weimar Republic offered a relatively more permissive atmosphere for the LGBTQIA+ community compared to earlier periods, with the emergence of subcultures and legal reforms. However, these advancements were short-lived, as the rise of the Nazi regime reversed these gains and led to severe persecution and suppression of the LGBTQIA+ population. On 6 May 1933, Nazis raided the Institute for Sexual Science and, on 12 May 1933, held one of the party's largest and most destructive book burnings. These acts

destroyed Hirschfeld and his colleagues' research — another attempt to erase trans+ people from history.

## Names to know

Magnus Hirschfeld, Kurt Hiller, Dora Richter, Anita Berber, Lile Elbe, Karl Kohnheim, Josefine Meißauer, Elsa B, Charlotte Charlaque, Toni Ebel

## Karl Kohnheim

Businessman, advocate, trans

### What did it mean to transition in Weimar Germany?

Karl Kohnheim (sometimes referred to in documentation as 'Katharina T') was the first person to receive a German *Transvestitenschein*, the official government documentation that allowed dressing in affirming clothes (literally *transvestites pass*). Karl fought to be legally recognised as a man for over 15 years before he was given his pass; it took 8 years to receive a notice to allow his style of dress, and he was never allowed to legally change his name.

### What can we learn from Karl Kohnheim?

We can't be erased. Trans+ people have always been resilient and have always had to fight for their identities. Even when the Nazis targeted the first trans+ clinic in the world, even when they burnt our medical records and outlawed our very existence, we didn't disappear.

### Extra credit

Magnus Hirschfeld was one of the strongest trans+ allies in the Weimar period. He founded the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) and the World League for Sexual Reform. His *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Research) was the site of the first sex reassignment surgery. Hirschfeld was not transgender himself, but he felt that trans+ people deserved more dignity than they were offered in society. The incoming fascist regime targeted him for those views as well as the fact that he was Jewish and gay.

Hirschfeld also gives us the opportunity to reflect on those we choose to put on a pedestal. He pushed trans+ rights forward significantly in his time, but he was deeply racist, held strong views on how eugenics could be used positively in society, and had complicated power dynamics in relationships with quite young men. It's important that we are careful about the people we invest in and recognise that no person is a monolith. We can't excuse Hirschfeld's horrific and dangerous ideas just because he was supportive of trans+ folks.

## **Did you know?**

Invoking Godwin's Law: even the Nazis failed to erase trans+ people from history.

## **What did you learn?**

**We can't be erased.**

Despite concerted efforts to remove trans+ people's existence, we find echoes of our history in many communities globally. LGBTQIA+ folks have always carved out safe spaces for ourselves and our queer siblings when others won't support us. The historic rise of fascism can harm us but cannot erase us.

# A journey through time and space...

## We go waaaaay back. That's just a fact.

In this timeline, we've plotted some points in our history but they're by no means exhaustive – that's quite simply impossible because much of our history has been improperly contextualised, undocumented or destroyed. All in an attempt to erase us.

Nor are these moments here because we deem them the most important. They are simply a collection of interwoven moments from across our deep trancistory. To know these moments, and to learn more about them is to know we've always been here and that we belong right here in our present moment. Use them as jumping off points for further learning.

### **3,000–5,000 BCE**

Gala, priests of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar, were seen to have adopted feminine dress and names and sung in the temples in Emesal, the Sumerian dialect for female characters in literary works

### **Circa 1479–1458 BCE**

Hatshepsut, Pharaoh and female king of the 18th Dynasty of Egypt, ruling first ruled as regent for Thutmose III, then as co-ruler and king alongside Thutmose III as queen regnant from c. 1479 BC until c. 1458 BC

### **Circa 300 BCE–400 CE**

The Galli, priests in the cult of Cybele, occupied a third-gender space in Roman society and spread as far as the British Isles

### **218–222 CE**

Roman emperor Elagabalus requested female 'pronouns' and to be addressed as Lady, flouting accepted gender roles

### **Colonial Era**

Many countries criminalised the gender identity and/or expression of trans+ people through laws targeting 'cross-dressing', 'impersonation' or 'disguise laws'. Many still do.

### **1431**

Joan of Arc was willing to die at the stake rather than stop wearing men's clothing

### **1777**

Casimir Pulaski, the Polish nobleman and Revolutionary War hero who saved George Washington's life, was intersex

**1933**

Nazis seized the queer hub Eldorado club and repurpose it as a *Sturmabteilung* (SA) headquarters

**1933**

Nazis raided the world's first trans+ clinic, *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Research)

**1946**

Michael Dillon became the first transgender man to undergo phalloplasty across 13 surgeries

**1952**

Christine Jorgensen became the first person widely publicised as undergoing sex reassignment surgery

**1960**

Model April Ashley travelled to Morocco to undergo sex reassignment surgery

**1965**

The term 'transgender' was coined by John Oliven

**1969**

Riots outside the Stonewall Inn kickstarted the modern liberation movement

**1970**

Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera founded the mutual aid organisation STAR in the wake of Stonewall

**1970**

In a court case involving the trans+ model April Ashley, legal precedent was set preventing trans+ people from changing legal gender in the UK

**1972**

Transvestite, Transsexual and Drag Queen group of the GLF was formed

**1975**

Model Tracey Norman featured on the box for Clairol Nice 'n Easy, No 512, a shade of dark auburn

**1977**

Renée Richards won legal case against the USTA to join the women's tour and play the US Open

**1978**

Gilbert Baker created the Rainbow Pride Flag

**1979**

Wendy Carlos, a musician who won three Grammys and scored Stanley Kubrick and Disney films, disclosed that she had transitioned more than 10 years earlier

**1980**

'Transsexualism' was entered into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) – the American Psychiatric Association's 'bible'

**1981**

Caroline Cossey (Tula) became the first trans+ Bond girl in *For Your Eyes Only*

**1988**

Section 28 was introduced in the UK, prohibiting the 'promotion of homosexuality' in schools

**1991**

Caroline Cossey became the first trans+ woman to pose in *Playboy*

**1998**

Dana International was the first trans+ winner of Eurovision Song Contest

**1999**

The Transgender Pride Flag was created by American trans+ woman Monica Helms

**1999**

The Matrix, subsequently revealed to be a trans+ allegory, was written and directed by trans+ sisters Lana and Lily Wachowski and made \$467.2 million USD at the box office

**2003**

Section 28 was repealed in the UK

**2004**

The first Trans March, consisting of only a few people, began in Dolores Park, San Francisco on 25 June 2004

**2004**

Nadia Almada made history as the first trans+ woman to win Big Brother UK

**2004**

First Gender Recognition Act gave trans+ people a way to change their legal gender

**2007**

11-year-old trans+ girl Jazz Jennings was interviewed by Barbara Walters

**2012**

Janet Mock established the #GirlsLikeUs Twitter hashtag campaign

**2013**

The first Trans Pride outside of North America, Trans Pride Brighton and Hove, was founded

**2013**

The Intersex Flag was created by Morgan Carpenter of Intersex Human Rights Australia

**2013**

Following activist campaigns, 'gender dysphoria' replaced transsexualism and other renditions in the DSM in 2013

**2014**

The Non-Binary Flag was created by Kyle Rowan

**2015**

Caitlyn Jenner publicly came out as a trans+ woman in April 2015

**2015**

SOPHIE's debut album 'Product' was made available for preorder

**2015**

The Rajya Sabha unanimously passed the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill in India

**2019**

Laverne Cox appeared as British Vogue's first trans+ cover star

**2020**

The Transgender Flag was added to Emoji 13.0

**2021**

Valentino Vecchietti created the Intersex-Inclusive Pride Flag

**2022**

Mj Rodriguez became the first trans woman to win a Golden Globe

**2022**

Dylan Mulvaney began a daily series of videos published on TikTok titled 'Days of Girlhood'

**2023**

Kim Petras was the first openly trans+ woman to win a Grammy

**2023**

Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni signed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill into law, opening the option of life imprisonment for convictions and the death penalty for 'aggravated' offences

**2023**

Yasmin Finney appeared in BBC's *Doctor Who* as transgender character Rose Noble

**2024**

First all-trans+ expert panel in UK Parliament was held

**2024**

Strengthening colonial precedence, a new bill in Ghana requires a jail term of up to three years for identifying as LGBTQIA+ and up to 10 years for campaigning for LGBTQIA+ rights

**2024**

First Trans+ History Week is marked on 6–12 May

**2024**

Trans+ History Flag is unveiled

## Lesson 3:

# We're stronger together

The Stonewall Riots or Uprising occurred 28 June 1969. The location was a gay club in Greenwich Village in New York City – one of a number that suffered from police raids in the 60s. The six days of protest that followed the raid were a catalyst for gay rights in the US and around the world.

The enduring legend of the Stonewall Inn is that of a community of people who suffered discrimination and exploitation from the state, organised crime, and the public while working together to achieve the dignity of living a full and authentic life. It was only in 1966 that activists overturned laws against serving alcohol to LGBTQIA+ patrons (although engaging in queer behaviour in public was still illegal) and the police continued to harass gay bars without licences, including those owned by the Mafia. The Genovese crime family had purchased the bar in 1966 and reopened it as a private 'bottle bar', not requiring an alcohol licence, and bribed the police so the illegal serving of alcohol could occur. They cut costs with poor safety, lack of clean water and toilet facilities, and even blackmailed wealthier patrons to their sexuality secret.

Despite this exploitation, Stonewall Inn became a hub for the queer community, particularly drag queens and young runaways, who often experienced hostility at other gay venues. It was a space for self-expression and one of the few gay bars that allowed dancing. In the context of queer expression being illegal in public, discriminated against in areas such as employment, and met with hostility (toward trans+ and gender-queer expression) even within the LGBTQIA+ community itself, the bar was an imperfect space for nurturing queer joy.

Greenwich Village was already a rich LGBTQIA+ community. It likely had the largest population of LGBTQIA+ people in the world at the time, with people travelling to be a part of the vibrant community. Although there remained a degree of intolerance in public and many queer people led dual lives, toning down or hiding their identity, being LGBTQIA+ was more accepted. This need to assimilate and not upset heterosexual society was a key theme of pro-LGBTQIA+ campaigning in the 1950s and 60s.

However, this approach did not sufficiently challenge the overt discrimination against the community from either the state or the public. And just as Greenwich Village developed its subculture of self-expression and self-love, New York's mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr began campaigns to rid New York City of gay bars. This included revoking alcohol licences and using entrapment, whereby undercover officers would engage men in conversation and if there was the suggestion they go home together, the man would be arrested for solicitation. The Mattachine Society, established in 1950 and focused on assimilation and respectability for gay men, successfully persuaded the new mayor, John Lindsay, to stop this campaign of entrapment. The experience of the LGBTQIA+ community at the time was both shared and varied, with social class, race, and gender identity shaping this. The nature of your accommodation, security in one's neighbourhood, and safety at work were likely to be worse

if you were poor, from the Global Majority, and trans+, with sex work an area of high exploitation for LGBTQIA+ people at the time.

Before official campaigns emerged, community solidarity existed in the mutual aid provided to support precarious living or non-profit organisations. One example of the latter is the lesbian-identifying activist Kady Van Deurs, who set up the 'Workshop of the Children', a toy-making shop run from the street where she lived insecurely and in poverty. This and other queer-led non-profits were established, such as Committee to Save the West Village housing co-operative and the Mattachine Society, to secure both the necessities for LGBTQIA+ community members and to bring the diverse racial and queer community together through joy. Such illustrations of community activism are significant because they point to the wider perspective we should apply to the Stonewall Riots and the community's organised response.

When the police raided the Stonewall Inn on 28 June 1969, many people stood up to defend their newfound home. While there is still confusion of who was present and did which thing on the first night, eventually the entire community came together. By the end of the year, more than 350 chapters of the Gay Liberation Front opened around the country. Unfortunately, police raids were still to continue, but Pride was on its way.

## **Names to know**

Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Stormé DeLarverie, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

## **Groups and movements that were formed**

The Gay Liberation Front, Christopher Street Liberation Day (the first Pride march in 1970), Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR)

# **Marsha P. Johnson**

**Activist, community organiser, transvestite**

## **Who threw the first brick?**

One of the names most associated with the Stonewall Riot, Marsha P Johnson has a lot of mythology surrounding her efforts. While she may not have thrown the first brick that night in 1969 (really!), she was one of a handful of organisers and activists who brought the community on Christopher Street together and led to Pride as we know it. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) organisation and worked tirelessly to find safe spaces for homeless gay and trans+ youths.

## **We're stronger together**

It wasn't only trans+ people in this moment; it was all of us.

After being raided, degraded, and detained, folks at the Stonewall Inn in June 1969 had had enough. Gay men, trans+ folks, lesbians, drag queens, and sex workers all banded together to fight the oppression they were facing. A year later, they all came back to the streets to hold the Christopher Street Liberation Day March – what became known as the first Pride March.

## **What can we learn from Marsha P. Johnson?**

We refer to Marsha P. Johnson as a 'transvestite' because that is one of the words she used to describe herself. The word 'transgender' wasn't commonly used in the 60s and 70s, and we don't know if she'd choose it today. Historian Susan Stryker supposes Marsha might prefer 'gender-nonconforming' if given modern vocabulary.

Recognising that we're stronger when we stand together helps us overcome divisive tactics. Today, there are efforts to alienate trans+ folks from other queer communities, but campaigns like #LwiththeT recentre that trans+ people are deserving of equality and living our best lives – and that we can do great things when we work together.

## **Did you know?**

Trans+ folks have helped fight for and achieve liberation for all LGBTQIA+ people.

## **What did you learn?**

### **We're stronger together.**

Trans+ people led the movement at Stonewall in 1969, working on the frontlines to liberate all LGBTQIA+ folks. Modern liberation and the Pride movement exists because we stood together in the face of oppression.

### **A quote from Marsha P. Johnson:**

“History isn’t something you look back at and say it was inevitable. It happens because people make decisions that are sometimes very impulsive and of the moment, but those moments are cumulative realities.”

### **A quote from Sabah Choudrey (they/he), Trans+ Youth Worker at Gendered Intelligence – an extract from Sabah’s QueerAF article (read the full thing [here](#)):**

“History reminds us that trans people have always been here, fighting for their rights, in healthcare and in name. History empowers us to celebrate moments of trans joy and our victories.”

## **Lesson 4:**

# **We're more than trans+**

Modern pop music has witnessed increased visibility and representation of trans+ artists, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse musical landscape. Several trans+ musicians have made significant strides in the industry, breaking barriers and challenging traditional norms. Musicians such as Redcar, Anohni, and SOPHIE have gained recognition for their talent and contributions to pop music. Kim Petras, in particular, has achieved success with her pop-infused tracks and has been embraced by a wide audience.

Some trans+ artists use their music as a platform for self-expression and to explore themes related to their trans+ identity. This includes discussing personal experiences, struggles, and triumphs, contributing to a more nuanced representation of trans+ narratives in mainstream music. This visibility has come full force through music videos and the power of internet meme. These videos often challenge gender norms and celebrate diverse expressions of gender and sexuality, as well as themes of empowerment and advocacy. Songs with messages of self-acceptance, resilience, and empowerment contribute to the broader cultural conversation around trans+ rights and visibility.

Collaborations between trans+ artists and mainstream artists are becoming more common, signalling a growing acceptance and integration of trans+ voices within the industry. Additionally, there is increasing support from major record labels for trans+ artists, while trans+ artists have been gaining visibility at major awards shows. This recognition helps bring attention to the diversity of skills within the community and communicates the positive consequences of investing in trans+ talent.

### **Names to know**

Redcar, Sophie, Kim Petras, Anohni, Shawna Virago, Ah-Mer-Ah-Su, Ezra Furman, Sam Smith, Wendy Carlos, Dana International, BIMINI, Dorian Electra

## **SOPHIE**

**Songwriter, DJ, trans**

### **What if you could be anything you want?**

SOPHIE was a highly influential and innovative Scottish musician, producer, and DJ, recognised for groundbreaking work in electronic and pop music. Known for pushing the boundaries of sound and challenging traditional norms, SOPHIE gained prominence with the debut single "Bipp" in 2013 and continued to release critically acclaimed music, including the 2018 album "Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides," which earned a Grammy nomination. Collaborating with artists like Madonna and Charli XCX, SOPHIE's avant-garde, electronic,

and pop fusion left a lasting impact on the music industry. As SOPHIE wrote in “Immaterial”, we have the chance to build our own existence, which means “I could be anything I want”.

## **What can we learn from SOPHIE?**

We are more than our transness. We are vibrant, creative, expressive individuals. Our ability to create our own lives and mould our own identities often comes out of exploring the deepest feelings within us. It’s no surprise, then, that so many trans+ folks are artists.

## **Extra credit**

SOPHIE burst onto the scene without providing any personal details, and everyone wanted to know who this unique new voice was. It was five years before SOPHIE’s own vocals and transitioning body were seen in the video for “It’s Okay to Cry”. It was reported in the media surrounding SOPHIE’s tragic death that SOPHIE did not use gendered or non-binary pronouns.

SOPHIE is far from the only trans+ voice in popular music. Artists such as Sam Smith (they/them), Demi Lovato (she/they), Redcar/Christine and the Queens (he/him), Kim Petras (she/her), and many more find expression and acceptance through music. It’s not just today’s music either; Dana International (she/her) won Eurovision in 1998 and Billy Tipton (he/him) was a household name in the American jazz scene from the 1930s–70s.

## **What did you learn?**

### **We’re more than trans+.**

While being part of the trans+ community is a major part of our lives, it’s far from our only community. We should remember that we belong to families, trade unions, workplaces, sports clubs, and religious communities – and we also happen to be trans+.

## **Did you know?**

Trans+ lives are just as unique and diverse as any others.

# Let's review

## **Lesson 1: We've always been here**

Trans+ identities are far from a modern phenomenon. People who have blurred, subverted, or completely rejected traditional gender roles can be found going back millenia.

## **Lesson 2: We can't be erased**

Even when outlawed, trans+ people have never disappeared. We will always find a way to come together and share our experiences.

## **Lesson 3: We're stronger together**

When we put our hearts and minds on a common goal, we can achieve amazing things.

## **Lesson 4: We're more than trans+**

Our transness is just one facet of the strong, creative, intelligent humans we are.

## **And how to take them forward and teach others**

1. Send this document to a colleague or friend
2. Produce some social media content about one of the figures profiled here – or share a post from our social media pages!
3. Write a reflection piece about something you've learned in this guidance
4. Make some art about one of the historical periods or events discussed here
5. Listen to trans+ people when they talk about their lives
6. Put on a learning event and invite panellists and contemporary history makers
7. Ask for books about trans+ lives or by trans+ authors at your local bookstore
8. Sign a petition to legally protect trans+ identities

## **Other places to visit to further your learning**

- The Bishopsgate Institute
- Queer Britain
- Wellcome Collection
- Outmuseum
- Museum of Transology
- Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity
- GALA Queer Archive
- Schwules Museum
- Liberty Osaka archives at Osaka Metropolitan University
- Museum of Transgender Hirstory & Art (MOTHA)
- California Aggregation for Gender Diversity
- The Museum of Sexual Diversity, São Paulo
- Aravani Art Project

## **Books to read**

**Before We Were Trans: A New History of Gender** by Kit Heyam

**Transgender History** by Susan Stryker

**Gender Pioneers** by Phillipa PUNCHARD

**Trans Britain: Our Journey from the Shadows** by Christine Burns

**Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c.1850–1900** by Jessica Hinchy

**Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity** by C Riley Snorton

**Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the Fin de Siècle** by Kate More and Stephen Whittle

**Gender Heretics: Evangelicals, Feminists, and the Alliance against Trans Liberation** by Rebecca Jane Morgan

**The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture** by Heike Bauer

**The Sage Encyclopedia of Trans Studies** by Abbie E. Goldberg and Genny Beemyn

## **Films to watch**

- The Stroll
- Eldorado: Everything the Nazis Hate
- The Death & Life of Marsha P. Johnson
- Disclosure
- Shinjuju boys
- KOKOMO CITY
- Paris is Burning
- Every Body
- Kapaemahu
- The Dream Life of Georgie Stone
- Framing Agnes

**Follow us and tag us in the content you share**

**@transhistoryweek #THW24 #TransHistoryWeek**

## We've done our homework

If you want to do some deeper digging, go visit our citations:

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**A quote from Christine Burns (she/her), author, trans+ history maker, Trans+ History Week Advisor:**

"We cannot progress without knowing how our ancestors lived and struggled to survive — often on their own."

# A launchpad initiative from QueerAF

## What is a QueerAF launchpad project?

Our launchpad projects facilitate, mentor and support LGBTQIA+ creatives to create their own original projects.

Everything we do at QueerAF is about ensuring there is a better way for our LGBTQIA+ community to be seen, heard and celebrated in the media – this launchpad project is just the latest of our many initiatives.

When we launched QueerAF, we set out to be an incubator of queer talent. To find as many ways to do that, share our secrets and help queer creatives succeed.

Trans+ History Week is our first formal launchpad project and it borrows lessons from previous projects, including our podcasts, **QueerAF** and **What The Pox?**, and our founding aims – to deliver on that vision.

When we support creatives, we don't just want them to leave with skills, mentoring and support – but solid foundations to succeed as they go forward.

We've been supporting the trans+ and non-binary creatives in the team through everything from content production to setting up the organisation as a social enterprise. While Trans+ History Week will always have its roots launched with us and delivered in a close partnership for years to come, the organisation will become its own entity.

Just like our podcast, which takes folks from pitch to invoice, we'll be here every step of the way. Equally much like our in-house content creation approach, what content and which stories we support the project to tell will be in the hands of the trans+ community, QueerAF members, in your hands and we've already had a huge community response to our call for what kinds of stories we should tell this year.

As a QueerAF launchpad project, our contribution to it will come with the promise of all the QueerAF values you expect from us every week in our newsletter that helps folks understand LGBTQIA+ news.

**Jamie Wareham (he/him)**

Founder of QueerAF

## Our mission

We help you understand the LGBTQIA+ world and support queer creatives to change the media.

## What is QueerAF?

We're an award-winning independent platform launching the careers of emerging and underrepresented LGBTQIA+ creatives driven by people, not advertisers.

QueerAF is a platform where creators, journalists and producers can get paid and commissioned directly by the QueerAF community. This, while we mentor them to build a career, work in the industry – and then, change it.

We've been giving creatives their first commissions with our award-winning podcast scheme for over eight years. Now, our top-rated weekly newsletter is publishing, mentoring, and building the resilience of queer creatives.

## Our (not so secret) queer militant agenda

So much of what we think and feel comes, often unconsciously, from the media. So if **you change the newsroom, you can change the country.**

We believe the UK media industry only thrives when it's bursting with queer talent. Only a media industry that represents hires, and understands us – can help shift the narrative on being queer in the UK.

There's a better way for our LGBTQIA+ community to be seen, heard and celebrated in the media. That's why we're skilling up a new generation of queer creatives to work in the media to rewrite the narrative and change the industry for good.

## It's different we know

- We live in a saturated world of doom scrolling and constant media. Online, digital, mobile, it bombards us wherever we are. But it doesn't reflect us.
- For too long, the media has been driven by short-term, revenue-led incentives. The diversity of those who write our stories has barely changed. That's why:
- 6 in 10 of our writers last year were gender diverse.
- We're the only non-profit LGBTQIA+ publisher in the UK, we're also the only regulated one.
- The majority of our content and our entire website and newsletter is ad-free
- We hand the commissioning power over to our audience, not editors
- We mentored, commissioned, and supported 39 marginalised LGBTQIA+ creatives to develop their media careers in the last year alone

## **Our values**

1. Queer creators should be paid for their work.
2. LGBTQIA+ information should not be a luxury.
3. Putting the well-being of LGBTQIA+ people above all else is the best way to make an impact with queer media.
4. Our community and members are our most valuable editors, not gatekeepers.
5. Every queer story (must) count. The media has an incredible power to shift the narratives – but is currently failing us. Our values model the change we want to see and ground our work.

## **Skip the doomscrolling**

Sign up for our free weekly newsletter to understand the LGBTQIA+ news and support queer creatives.

Sign up at [wearequeer.af.com/subscribe](https://wearequeer.af.com/subscribe)

### **A quote from Char Binns, Former Homotopia Festival Director:**

“As someone who works with queer creatives and the wider LGBTQIA+ community, I find the QueerAF newsletter indispensable. It is an easy and accessible way to stay fully engaged with the stories that matter.”

# Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I would like to thank all the volunteers involved in Trans+ History Week and all the people who donated to who helped make this lesson book and the wider activity possible. Thanks for believing in the project and committing your time and energy and talent to making it what it has become.

## **Marty Davies (they/she)**

Founder of Trans+ History Week

## **Trans+ History Week team**

Gray Burke-Stowe (he/him) – Lead Researcher and Writer

Laura Jordan Bambach (she/her) – Creative Director

Neil Hudson-Basing (he/him) – Events Director

James Addison (he/him) – Brand Director

Jamie June Hill (they/she) – Comms Director

Oli Storey – Researcher

Georgey Lee (they/them) – Designer

Dee Lou Whitnell (they/them) – Creative

Oeil Jumratsilpa (she/they) – Language Consultant

Shay Fredericks (she/they) – Project Manager

## **Project advisors**

Morgan M Page (she/her)

Rico Jacob Chace (he/him)

Christine Burns (she/her)

**Jamie Wareham (he/him)**, the founder of QueerAF, the independent publisher platforming underrepresented queer voices. QueerAF chose Trans+ History Week to be their first launchpad project. Quite simply, this project wouldn't have become what it has without their endless encouragement and support to keep going and keep dreaming big.

**Nancy Kelley (she/her)**, who was invaluable in the early stages of this project, connecting me to organisations who advised and guided us and who would eventually become our official supporters

**Bex Wade (they/them)**, who generously opened up their archive of photography to enrich the project visually.

**Jude Guaitamacchi (they/them)**, who was the first person I spoke to about the idea of having a Trans+ History Week and who has provided endless advice, encouragement and emotional support from the very beginning.

And finally, thank you to all those who donated to the crowd-funding campaign, you dug deep and raised over £3,000 to help invest in trans+ creatives to tell trans+ stories. And this workbook will help guide some of those stories.

## **Thank you to our official supporters**

Stonewall  
Gendered Intelligence  
UK Black Pride  
LGBT+ History Month  
Not a Phase  
Trans Pride Manchester  
London Trans+ Pride  
Trans Pride Brighton and Hove  
Hidayah  
Just Like Us  
LGBT Foundation  
TransActual  
Diva  
Pink News  
Queer Britain  
Switchboard LGBTQ+ Helpline  
My Generation  
myGwork  
Consortium  
A launchpad project from QueerAF