

Stonewall

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at www.stonewall.org.uk

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Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.

Stonewall Young Futures

Our Stories into Education, Training, and Work

Pembe: Some of the difficulties that I believe came my way whilst I was at school, included not being diagnosed with my ADHD. So, I think that was a big part of not understanding why I was behaving the way I was behaving. I think also being a queer woman that wasn't aware that she was a queer woman at that time, also brought its challenges.

I came into secondary school feeling really positive, however, I just started to realise that I was struggling with concentrating, struggling with being able to learn in the way the school structure was at that time in that place. So, by the time I was in year nine, I actually was permanently excluded from school.

Celine: I came from a Filipino background where obviously most of the careers that we go to is law, medicine or something to do with STEM. I actually realised: why am I doing science? Is it for my parents or is it for me?

This was literally probably three weeks, four weeks before I started my second year my second year and I just switched like that. And I was like, I'm switching, I'm doing something else that I want to do.

Kerris: So, when I left school, I didn't really want to do what school had planned for me, it was always college, university, so I decided to go to a different route and I took up an apprenticeship.

Being a male dominated environment, it was quite hard to find an apprenticeship, so I ended up taking one with my stepdad. Once I qualified it, it was a bit like I'm 18, this is it for the rest of my life. And so, I sidestepped into electronics.

Tim: Growing up in Northern Ireland, as a young queer person, I have to say it wasn't particularly the easiest, there was quite a few barriers. There was religious barriers, political barriers. The vision definitely came from watching my mum getting her hair done in the salon from the age of ten.

So, from 13 I decided to take a Saturday job in the salon, and I just stuck with it, I loved it.

Pembe: I do a lot of stuff backstage in the creative sector and it's very white cis, male dominated and that's something that you see all the time. And being a queer woman coming into that space, I think at first it was really hard to navigate in it.

Five to 7% of the audio industry is made up of women, maybe one or 2% of women of colour. That's why I put together Petok Productions, that's for women, trans and non-binary people that work behind the scenes, screens and lens and I've been able to go out there and challenge organisations and challenge people, being that queer woman.

If you are that queer young person out there, that wants to come into the creative sector, or wants to go into a sector, you will find people that will support you and create safer spaces for you.

Kerris: I think in navigating the barriers that I have faced is probably coming mainly from realising that my difference is actually my strength.

I have faced the whole, not wanting to come out as queer or gay, I've faced that. I don't, you don't want to admit it to people because you don't know how they're going to react.

I have mental health issues and I've been told there's no place for crying in engineering. When you've got something that's different or you feel that you're different, you feel that you've got a bit more to prove. I can do it just because I've got this or I'm like this, it doesn't mean you can't be as good as other people, if not better.

Tim: Being openly gay within my career, definitely impact it in positives and some negatives. Working within TV and film, it's definitely helped.

I feel a lot of either my actors or my artists or clients that are sitting with me, with me being so open about myself, allows them to open up a lot more. So, it's very different to when I worked for somebody to then working for myself. The exciting part about it all is working with other creatives, putting your ideas forward, your ideas being accepted, and then building on that with other creatives. I started off studying hairdressing, I didn't know I was going to do makeup and special effects and wigs.

Even now I'm starting education, which I never would have thought I was going to go into.

So, paths can change and it's just good to actually go into something, Yes, 100%. But also know it doesn't have to be forever. Don't scare yourself because if I told myself as a teenager that this was going to be forever, I don't think I would have done it.

Celine: As a teenager, if I had role models growing up that was BAME or Filipino or similar background as me and LGBT, I think that would've helped me more on able to actually do what I wanted.

I ended up being in STEM because that's what I saw, but I didn't see other career paths that was possible for someone like me. So, I changed my career path then, and this is where I actually really flourish because I was out to my parents, I was confident with myself, I was my authentic self, and with that as well, I was able to more excel in the career path that I am in now.

Not just to say, Oh, I'm a Filipino, I'm a Southeast Asian girl, my parents are immigrants, but also to tell them I'm a lesbian. I'm proudly out.

Pembe: I think that one piece of advice that I'd give my younger self would be to be kind, actually. I think that when you're a suppressed young person that doesn't know how to come out or be who you want to be, sometimes you come across in ways that is very misunderstood.

I think it's just that you're not heard, you can't hate on something you don't know.

So, love yourself.