

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 Transcript

Khakan's Story

I grew up in a working-class area in Birmingham, and my experience in school was I was very much shy, introvert, very much a teacher's pet. I didn't fit with my peers and I didn't quite know who I was at that point. I kind of had, I suppose, little inklings that maybe I was possibly gay, but again, I couldn't say anything about it.

It was the 1980s. There was HIV and AIDS. There was a story that we heard in the household and in the community to say homosexuality is haram and it's forbidden. There was the whole kind of media propagating stereotypes and myths about the LGBT community, so there was immense pressure on me to conform and I tried to fulfil my parents expectations and aspirations of me.

No matter how much I tried, I just knew I couldn't fit in with what they wanted of me. Coming out within the workplace has been another journey in itself.

People of colour, someone like me, we weren't really pushed to go into the creative arts and the expectation was that we do something like medicine or law, a degree which was much more substantial and maybe give you some status.

So for me, going to drama college here in London and then returning back to Birmingham, two completely different cities, offering different things. So I had to get what people called a real job. And that real job for me was I ended up working in the care sector.

My colleagues at the time, you know, they kept asking me questions about myself. It was only when I went to an AIDS Awareness Workshop where a woman had said she couldn't quite understand gay people. I didn't have the confidence to respond and I was kicking myself like weeks afterwards and I thought: I'm gay and I need to be saying something because otherwise those sort of negative attitudes and prejudices would just continue.

And then that sort of took me through a number of jobs, you know, and each workplace I noticed over the years got a little bit better. Some would have, you know, the signs to say that they're LGBT friendly.

Some would have LGBT networks, and some people will just accept me as I am. Someone like me, growing up, we constantly see the one particular narrative which tends to be the cisgendered white male.

I think that people who work within the creative sector, what they can do in terms of helping marginalised people of colour is to have more workshops, have role models, really visible role models, people who are comfortable in their own skin, so people can say, you know, I'm not the only person on my own. I'm not the only brown gay in the village.

I think we just have to keep championing who we are, what we're doing to make it just a point where it doesn't make any difference whatsoever in how you identify.