An author and screenwriter, Rita Mae Brown is best known for her semi-autobiographical lesbian-themed novel, “Rubyfruit Jungle.” She is a groundbreaking activist for lesbian and civil rights.

An only child, Brown was adopted and raised in York, Pennsylvania. At age 11, her family moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Brown's interest in political activism began with the black civil rights movement. In 1964, after losing her scholarship at the University of Florida due to her involvement in a rally, Brown was forced to drop out of school. She hitchhiked to New York where she lived in an abandoned car before enrolling at New York University (NYU).

At NYU, Brown cofounded the Student Homophile League. In 1968, she joined the National Organization of Women (NOW). She worked there until a schism over whether or not to support lesbian issues caused her to resign. She says she was “kicked out” for raising the gay issue.

Betty Friedan is largely blamed for Brown’s expulsion from NOW. Years later, Friedan publicly apologized and admitted her actions were wrong.

After severing ties with NOW, Brown joined the Redstockings, a liberal feminist group. She helped form the lesbian feminist newspaper Furies Collective. Thereafter, she earned a Ph.D. in political science from the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank in Washington, D.C.

Brown’s coming-of-age lesbian novel, “Rubyfruit Jungle,” sold over 70,000 copies and made her a champion of lesbian rights. The book’s success encouraged her to author other lesbian novels.

In addition to more than 50 books, Brown has written numerous television screenplays. She received Emmy nominations for the variety show “I Love Liberty” and the miniseries “The Long Hot Summer.”

Brown lives on a farm outside of Charlottesville, Virginia. She is a Master of Fox Hounds and advocates for animal rescue.

“In addition to more than 50 books, Brown has written numerous television screenplays. She received Emmy nominations for the variety show “I Love Liberty” and the miniseries “The Long Hot Summer.”
Barbara Gittings is regarded as the mother of the LGBT civil rights movement.

Barbara Gittings is regarded as the mother of the LGBT civil rights movement.

In the 1950s gay activism was in its infancy. “There were scarcely 200 of us in the whole United States,” Gittings said of her fellow crusaders. “It was like a club—we all knew each other.”

Although she lived in Philadelphia, Gittings started the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in 1958. Founded in San Francisco, the DOB was the first lesbian civil rights organization in the United States. From 1963 to 1966, Gittings was the editor of the DOB’s publication, The Ladder, the first national lesbian magazine.

With fellow activist Frank Kameny, Gittings helped organize the Annual Reminders—the first public demonstrations for gay equality. Held in front of Independence Hall each Fourth of July from 1965 to 1969, the protests paved the way for the Stonewall riot in 1969. At the 1965 Annual Reminder, 40 openly gay and lesbian picketers from New York, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia participated. By 1969 their numbers had more than tripled.

After 1969, Kameny, Gittings and others suspended the Annual Reminders to marshal support for a 1970 march on the first anniversary of Stonewall. Proceeding from Greenwich Village to Central Park, it is remembered as the first New York City Pride Parade.

Gittings and Kameny waged a multi-year campaign to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. At the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1972, Gittings and Kameny formed a panel on homosexuality. When no gay psychiatrist would serve on it with them for fear repercussions, Gittings recruited Dr. H. Anonymous (John E. Fryer, M.D.), who appeared masked and using a voice modulator. Together they asserted that the disease was not homosexuality, but toxic homophobia.

In 1973, with Gittings and Kameny present by invitation, the APA announced its removal of homosexuality as a mental illness. Hence, the label and its consequences no longer encumbered the gay rights movement.

Gittings also successfully crusaded to promote gay literature and eliminate discrimination in libraries. She volunteered with the Gay Task Force of the American Library Association and soon became the group’s coordinator—a position she held for 16 years. She edited the Task Force’s bibliography and wrote a history of the group, titled “Gays in Library Land.” The American Library Association awarded her a lifetime membership.

Kye Allums is the first openly transgender athlete to play NCAA Division I college basketball. Allums was a star shooting guard on the George Washington University (GWU) women’s basketball team.

Born Kyler Kelcian Allums in Daytona Beach, Florida, he was the oldest of four children. Nicknamed Kay-Kay, Allums was a self-described tomboy, who identified as male from childhood. “I’ve always felt most comfortable dressing like a boy, but my mom would take all of my clothes and force me to wear girl clothes,” he says. Allums would put boys’ clothes in his backpack and change before going to school, then change back before he got home. He says it was the only way he could go to school.

Allums received a basketball scholarship to GWU. In his freshman year, he played in 11 games for the Colonials and missed the final 20 due to injury. As a sophomore, he started 20 of 26 games.

That same year, Allums began to distance himself from Kay-Kay and opened up to some of his teammates. “I do not like being called a girl. I’m a guy in a girl’s body,” he said. Thereafter, he told his head coach Mike Bozeman. Allums says his teammates, coach and family have all been supportive.

Allums was advised not to begin taking male hormones or undergo gender reassignment surgery while remaining on the women's team. If he did, he would risk losing his scholarship and ending his college basketball career. Allums says he’s undecided about when he will continue his transition.

After suffering a total of eight concussions and not starting any games his junior year, Allums announced he would not be returning to the Colonials for his senior season. “I alone came to this decision and I thank the athletic department for respecting my wishes,” he said.

In 2011, Allums began telling his story at speaking engagements and other forums. “It meant a lot to me to help and affect others in a positive way,” he says about sharing his experience with young people struggling with similar issues.

As for his future, Allums says, “I’ll just be trying to make some kind of difference in the world and look forward to my life.”
“It pays not to quit when you want something. You have to keep working until you get it.”

Althea Garrison was the first elected transgender state legislator in the United States. She served one term in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1993 to 1995. The youngest of seven children, Garrison was born male in the tiny town of Hahira, Georgia. At 19 she moved to Boston, planning to attend beauty school. Garrison instead attended Newbury Junior College, then received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Suffolk University. She went on to earn a master’s degree in management from Lesley College and a certificate in special studies in administration and management from Harvard University. Garrison transitioned in Boston. She became Althea Garrison in 1976, legally changing both her first and last names.

In 1982 Garrison ran for the Massachusetts state legislature as a Democrat. It was her first bid for public office. Throughout the next decade, she ran and lost elections for a variety of seats, gradually moving from a Democrat to an Independent to a Republican.

In 1992 Garrison ran as a Republican for the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Although her transgender identity was an open secret among local politicians, it was unknown to her constituents. Days after winning the election, she was outed by a reporter who found her birth certificate and made her original name and sex public.

While in office, Garrison served as a member of the Housing Committee and the Election Law Committee. She sponsored and passed legislation to introduce mail-in voter registration and strongly supported workers' rights. Despite endorsements from eight local unions and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, she lost reelection.

Garrison spent the next 34 years working as a human resources clerk in the Massachusetts State Comptroller's Office and continually running for office. She often devoted her vacation to campaigning. Although her political affiliation has been fluid, she has identified as an independent conservative since 2012.

In 2017 Garrison finished as the first runner-up in the Boston City Council election. The following year, Boston Councilmember Ayanna Pressley won a congressional bid and had to vacate her seat. Garrison was appointed to fill Pressley's remaining term. In 2019 Garrison became the most conservative member of the otherwise Democratic Boston City Council.

“I never quit,” 78-year-old Garrison explained. “I’m constantly running, and I knew it would pay off.” Despite advocating for affordable housing measures, including rent control and eviction protections, Garrison lost reelection to a Democratic challenger in 2020.

Garrison lives in Boston. She has appeared on the city’s ballot more than 25 times.
Christine Jorgensen was the first nationally known transgender American. She used her fame to speak out on behalf of transgender people.

Born George Jorgensen Jr. and raised in the Bronx, she described herself as a “frail, tow-headed, introverted little boy who ran from fistfights and rough-and-tumble games.” In 1945, after graduating high school, Jorgensen was drafted into the Army.

Jorgensen researched gender reassignment surgery. While visiting Copenhagen, she met Dr. Christian Hamburger, an endocrinologist and specialist in rehabilitative hormonal therapy. With Hamburger’s help, Jorgensen became one of the first to combine hormone therapy with gender reassignment surgery. She chose the name Christine to honor Dr. Hamburger.

In 1952, based on an intercepted letter to her parents describing her transformation, the New York Daily News ran the headline “Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty.” The media incorrectly called Jorgensen the first person to undergo the surgery, which had been performed since the late 1920’s in Europe. She returned to New York City and used her fame to advocate for transsexual and transgender people.

Jorgensen continued her transition by having a vaginoplasty. In 1959, she became engaged to Howard Knox. They tried to wed, but the marriage license was rejected because Jorgensen was legally a male. The media reported the story, Knox lost his job, and the relationship ended.

CeCe McDonald is a transgender prison-reform activist. While on her way to the grocery store with friends, she encountered a drunken group outside of a bar. Seeing McDonald and her friends, the group began taunting them with racial, homophobic and transphobic slurs. After taking a stance that their hate speech would not be tolerated, McDonald was assaulted with a shattered drinking glass across the face. The attack perforated her cheek and lacerated her salivary gland.

McDonald defended herself against a second assailant with fabric shears, the only weapon she had. The assailant died. McDonald was arrested and imprisoned. After two months in prison, she finally received care for her wounds.

Experiencing the inhumane treatment of prisoners firsthand, McDonald began speaking out against the criminal justice system. “Prisons aren’t safe for anyone, and that’s the key issue,” she said. For McDonald, the issue of safety included her status as a transgender female in a men’s prison. Transgender prisoners were assigned to prisons based on their sex at birth rather than their gender identity. The penal system frequently placed them in solitary confinement—a psychologically debilitating isolation—purportedly for the safety of the individual. The experience served to strengthen McDonald’s character and establish her resolve to become a transgender leader. “Free CeCe,” a documentary about her experiences, focused on the issue of violence against trans women of color.
Shannon Minter is a groundbreaking transgender civil rights attorney who argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court. He serves as the legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

Minter was born on Valentine’s Day in East Texas and assigned female at birth. In high school, Minter believed he was a lesbian. He came out to his family, who vehemently disapproved of his presumed sexuality. Minter experienced “a lot of rejection” in his conservative hometown and often feared for his safety growing up.

Minter attended the University of Texas at Austin and graduated with honors before attending Cornell Law School. He earned a J.D. in 1993, graduating Magna Cum Laude, Order of the Coif, and joined the NCLR the same year. Headquartered in San Francisco, the NCLR is a leading organization dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights. Minter founded the NCLR Youth Project, the first legal advocacy program of its kind.

In 1996, at age 35, Minter began his transition, keeping his given name. Minter believed it might be easier, particularly for his family, if he came out as a transgender man. Instead, the revelation shattered Minter’s connections to his family and church. Those relationships took “decades to heal.”

Minter went on to secure myriad historic victories for the NCLR. He first gained attention in 2001 representing Sharon Smith in the wrongful death lawsuit Smith filed on behalf of her lesbian partner. At the time, the only couples who could file tort claims were married heterosexuals. Minter succeeded in making the claims applicable to same-sex couples in domestic partnerships and won Smith more than $1.5 million in damages.

Minter captured the national spotlight again in 2003, successfully representing a transgender father seeking custody of his child. Minter served as lead attorney in the U.S. Supreme Court case Christian Legal Society v. Martinez in which the court upheld an antidiscrimination policy based on gender identity and sexuality at the University of California, Hastings Law School.

In 2009 Minter served as lead counsel for the same-sex couples challenging Proposition 8 in the California Supreme Court. As a trans man, he was “pained by the injustice” of being able to legally marry his wife, when gay and lesbian couples were not afforded the same right. In a landmark decision, the court struck down Prop 8, making marriage equality state law.

Among numerous other accolades and bar association honors, Minter has received the Cornell Law School Exemplary Public Service Award and the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World Award.

Minter lives with his wife and daughter in Washington, D.C.
William “Billy” Bean is the second Major League Baseball player to come out. Born in Santa Ana, California, the eldest of six kids, Bean showed talent for baseball in high school. His team won the state championship. He received an athletic scholarship from Loyola Marymount University where, in his junior year, he was recruited by the New York Yankees. Though he was offered a lucrative signing bonus, he chose to finish college and was twice named an All-American outfielder. When Bean was 24, he married a woman he met in college. They divorced three years later.

In 1986 Bean made his Major League debut with the Detroit Tigers. During his career, he also played for the Los Angeles Dodgers, the San Diego Padres and the Kintetsu Buffaloes of the Nippon Professional Baseball League in Japan.

While playing with the Padres, Bean came out to his family. He came out publicly in 1999, after retiring from the sport. In 2014 Bean was appointed Major League Baseball’s first-ever Ambassador for Inclusion. In this role, he provides guidance and support for LGBT players. He has also developed educational training on homophobia and has presented at annual industry events. In an interview, Bean said he likely would not have quit baseball as early in his career if a support system for gay players had existed at the time.

Bean lives in Los Angeles. He discusses his personal and professional life in his best-selling memoir, “Going the Other Way: Lessons from a Life In and Out of Major League Baseball.”
Richard Blanco is the youngest, the first Latino and the first openly gay person to be named a U.S. inaugural poet. He read his poem “One Today,” written soon after the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, at President Barack Obama’s second inauguration. He describes the poem as “a unique snapshot of where we are as a country.”

Blanco was born in Madrid to Cuban exiles. Shortly thereafter, the family immigrated to New York and later settled in Miami, where Blanco was raised. He graduated from Florida International University with a degree in civil engineering and worked initially as a consulting civil engineer. His creative yearnings eventually sent him back to his alma mater, where he earned an MFA in creative writing.

His first book of poetry, “City of a Hundred Fires,” published in 1998, won the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize from the University of Pittsburgh. After the book’s success, Blanco accepted a creative writing professorship at Central Connecticut State University. Subsequently, he taught at Georgetown University, American University and at the Writer’s Center.

Blanco’s poetry explores his cultural heritage and sexuality, most notably in “Looking for the Gulf Motel,” published in 2012. “It’s trying to understand how I fit between negotiating the world, between being mainstream gay and being Cuban gay,” he says. His work has been published in The Nation, Ploughshares, New England Review, Americas Review and many other poetry journals and publications. He received the PEN Open Book Award for “Directions to the Beach of the Dead” in 2006 and the Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry for “Looking for the Gulf Motel” in 2013. He wrote and read the poem, “Matters of the Sea,” for the reopening ceremony of the U.S. embassy in Havana, Cuba, in 2015.

Blanco has participated in many charitable causes, including Freedom to Marry and One Fund, an organization that benefits victims of the Boston Marathon bombing. He lives in Bethel, Maine, with his partner, Dr. Mark Neveu, a research scientist.
John E. Fryer, M.D., challenged the designation of homosexuality as a mental illness at the 1972 convention of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Seated on a panel and disguised as Dr. H. Anonymous, he announced his homosexuality at a time when a medical license could be revoked on that basis. Fryer declared himself a proud member of the APA and explained that homosexuality was not the illness, but rather the toxic effects of homophobia. Since 1952 the APA had listed homosexuality as a mental disorder in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). Fryer’s actions were pivotal in the declassification of homosexuality as a disease.

The DSM classification was first attacked in the 1960s by Gay Pioneer Frank Kameny, a Harvard-educated Ph.D. astronomer. Kameny and fellow activist Barbara Gittings waged a multi-year campaign against the APA. In 1971, after storming the APA’s annual meeting, they were permitted to organize a panel discussion on homosexuality for the 1972 convention.

When no other gay psychiatrist would participate, Gittings recruited Dr. John Fryer. Concealing his identity with a mask and a voice modulator, he declared, “I am a homosexual. I am a psychiatrist.” He described the hardships homophobia imposed on homosexual psychiatrists and patients. “This is the greatest loss, our honest humanity,” he said, “and that loss leads all those around us to lose that little bit of their humanity as well.” The conventioneers were transfixed. Subsequently, the APA formed a panel to evaluate the basis for the DSM classification. In 1973 homosexuality was delisted as a mental illness.

Fryer earned his medical degree from Vanderbilt University and began his psychiatric residency at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, but grew depressed from hiding his sexual orientation. He relocated to pursue his residency at the University of Pennsylvania, but was forced to leave for being gay. He completed his residency at nearby Norristown State Hospital.

In 1967 Fryer joined the medical faculty at Temple University where he became a professor of psychiatry and family and community medicine. He was employed at Temple at the time of his panel appearance. Having been forced from residency and at least one job for being gay, he took a considerable risk, even disguised. “It had to be said,” he wrote in 1985, “But I couldn’t do it as me. I was not yet full time on the faculty.”

Fryer lived in Philadelphia until his death. In 2006 the APA named an annual civil rights award after him. Barbara Gittings and Frank Kameny were its first recipients.
Hughes showed impressive literary aptitude. In eighth grade, he began writing poetry, short stories and plays and was elected “class poet.” His breakthrough poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” was published shortly after he graduated from high school.

In 1921, at the urging of his father, Hughes enrolled at Colombia University to study engineering. He left after two semesters due to racial discrimination.

Over the next few years, Hughes worked odd jobs while pursuing a writing career. He traveled to Africa and Europe on the crew of a shipping vessel before moving to Washington, D.C. While employed as a busboy, Hughes met poet Vachel Lindsay, who helped promote his work.

In 1926, Hughes’s first book of poetry, “The Weary Blues,” was published. Well received by literary critics, it earned him a reputation as the country’s leading black poet. A year later, his second book of poetry, “Fine Clothes to the Jews,” was published. Heavily influenced by blues and jazz, his work portrayed life in black America and addressed racism and oppression.

In 1929, Hughes graduated from Lincoln University. He traveled to Haiti and to the Soviet Union, where he studied communist theory. In 1934, Hughes became head of the League for Negro Rights, the main African-American branch of the Communist Party. A victim of McCarthyism, he was subpoenaed to appear before the Senate Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations in 1953.

Like most artists of his time, Hughes was not open about his sexuality. Literary scholars point to “Montage of a Dream Deferred,” “Desire,” “Young Sailor” and “Tell Me” as gay-themed works.

Hughes died at age 65 from prostate cancer. His ashes are memorialized in Harlem at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
Montero Hill, known as Lil Nas X, is a Grammy Award-winning rapper and social media sensation. A trailblazer in the hip-hop community as a gay rapper who speaks freely about his sexuality, Nas X entered the international spotlight with his single “Old Town Road.” Nas X was born outside of Atlanta, Georgia. His father is a gospel singer. His parents divorced when he was 6, and he spent much of his childhood living in housing projects.

As a youth struggling with his sexual orientation, Nas X spent most of his time alone. At age 13, he turned to social media and experimenting with memes. He eventually carved a niche for himself as an internet personality, working to create catchy content he hoped would go viral. He began with short Facebook videos and finally found success on Twitter, where he accumulated more than four million followers. He amassed nine million followers on YouTube. As his songwriting progressed, he adopted his stage name as an homage to the rapper Nas.

In December 2018, Nas X bought beats online and recorded the country rap song “Old Town Road.” He promoted the song on social media with hundreds of memes and with a musical “challenge” on the video-sharing app TikTok. Popular with all kinds of listeners, the song rapidly jumped to the radio, then to the Billboard charts.

With its unique blend of country and hip-hop, “Old Town Road” provoked controversy about its place on the country music charts. Nas X and the country star Billy Ray Cyrus subsequently recorded a remix. Released in April 2019, the single shot to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, where it remained for 19 weeks—longer than any song in history. It went 10 times platinum. Only 34 songs have ever achieved this status.

In June 2019, Nas X released “7,” his debut EP on Columbia Records. The seven-track recording features “Old Town Road” and the single “Panini,” which peaked at No. 5 on the Hot 100. Nine days after the EP’s release, Nas X came out as gay on Twitter. He is the first artist to do so with a No. 1 hit currently on the charts.

Nas X was nominated for six Grammy Awards in 2020. He won two for “Old Town Road” and also became the first LGBT artist to win a Country Music Association (CMA) Award. He was named to the TIME 100 Next list and the Forbes 30 Under 30 list.
Harvey Milk was a New Yorker who migrated to San Francisco in the 1970s when an influx of gay immigrants from across the country was changing the Castro neighborhood into the city’s gay village. Milk opened a camera store and founded the Castro Valley Association of local merchants. His willingness to represent the interests of local merchants with city government earned him the unofficial title “Mayor of Castro Street.” Milk discovered that he had a natural flair for politics.

Harvey Milk was a political outsider and a populist who made his own rules. From his shop in the Castro, he ran grassroots campaigns based on relentless meetings, door-to-door canvassing and media interviews. His supporters formed “human billboards” by standing along major thoroughfares holding placards. Milk’s first three tries for office were unsuccessful, but they earned him increasing credibility with the electorate.

When Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, a lesbian wrote, “I thank God I have lived long enough to see my kind emerge from the shadows and join the human race.”

Milk was shot to death in his City Hall office on November 27, 1978, by Dan White, a conservative anti-gay former supervisor who also murdered Mayor George Moscone. White was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years imprisonment. City-wide violence erupted in San Francisco when White’s sentence was announced.

Harvey Milk had forebodings of his assassination. He left a tape-recorded “political will” naming his preferred successor on the Board of Supervisors. On that tape he said, “If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door.”
Bayard Rustin was raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania, by Quaker grandparents who espoused pacifism. Rustin moved to Harlem in the 1930s, the time of the Harlem Renaissance. He paid his New York City College tuition by singing with folk artist Josh White and became an organizer for the Young Communist League in their work against racial segregation.

Rustin’s refusal to register for the draft in World War II resulted in his serving three years in a federal penitentiary. Although he was arrested 23 times for nonviolent protest, he never lost his conviction that equality should be pursued through nonviolent means.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Rustin organized nonviolent groups that became the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement for American blacks, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1947, he coordinated the Journey of Reconciliation, an event that became the model for the Freedom Rides of the 1960s.

In 1955, Rustin was instrumental in organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott. When he arrived in Montgomery, there were guns inside Martin Luther King Jr.’s house and armed guards posted at his doors. As an expert in Gandhian nonviolent tactics, Rustin persuaded King and the other boycott leaders to commit the movement to complete nonviolence.

A superb strategist, Rustin experienced prejudice because of his sexual orientation and his controversial political positions. He was often relegated to behind-the-scenes roles.

Shortly before he died 1987, Rustin said at a gay rights rally: “Twenty-five, 30 years ago, the barometer of human rights in the United States were black people. That is no longer true. The barometer for judging the character of people in regard to human rights is now those who consider themselves gay, homosexual, [or] lesbian.”
Alan Turing was by nature skeptical and indifferent to conventional values. While often at odds with authority, he made remarkable connections between apparently unrelated areas of inquiry, including treating symbolic logic as a new area of applied mathematics.

As a fellow at King's College, Cambridge, Turing wrote On Computable Numbers, his landmark paper published in 1936, which is considered the founding work of modern computer science. After completing doctoral work at Princeton University, Turing returned to Britain in 1938 shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Turing’s potential ability as a code breaker had been identified and he was introduced to secret operations at the Government Codes and Ciphers School in London. On September 4, 1939, the day after Britain declared war on Germany, Turing reported to work at Bletchley Park, Britain’s codebreaking center. He led the team that broke the German codes thereby assuring success for the Allies and shortening World War II.

At the conclusion of the war, Turing’s ambition was to create a computer. His contention that the computer could rival the computing power of the human brain correctly anticipated the field of Artificial Intelligence. In the postwar years, Turing competed as a distance runner, achieving near-Olympic race times in the marathon. When asked why he engaged in such demanding training, Turing replied, “I have such a stressful job that the only way I can get it out of my mind is by running hard.”

Alan Turing lived at a time when homosexuality was regarded as a mental illness and homosexual acts were illegal. Despite his critical wartime role, when his relationship with a Manchester man became public, he was charged with “gross indecency” and forced to accept hormone treatment with estrogen. He lost his security clearance and suffered physical, emotional, and cognitive effects from the treatment.

Turing died in 1954 shortly before his 42nd birthday. His death was ruled a suicide.

In 2009, the British Prime Minister apologized for the government’s inhumane treatment of Turing. The Parliament is expected to issue a posthumous pardon.
Danica Roem is a journalist and the first openly transgender person in the United States to win a seat in a state legislature. On November 7, 2017, she was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates.

Roem was born male and raised in Manassas, Virginia. Her father committed suicide when she was 3, and her maternal grandfather, Anthony Oliveto, helped raise her. Oliveto instilled in Roem a passion for reading newspapers, which influenced her interest in journalism.

In 2006 Roem graduated with a degree in journalism from St. Bonaventure University in New York. Her college professors described her as a student who worked for those whose voices were ignored. Her interest in politics was sparked initially in 2004 when President George W. Bush proposed a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Roem secured her first job after college at the Gainesville Times in Virginia. She worked for the paper for nine years as a lead reporter and also wrote for the Prince William Times in Manassas, Virginia. The Virginia Press Association honored her with seven awards.

In 2012, 28-year-old Roem began the transition to female—from Dan to Danica. Three years later, she became a news editor at the Montgomery County Sentinel in Rockville, Maryland. She left the paper in 2016 to pursue a career in politics.

Rip Sullivan, state delegate and recruiting chair of the Virginia House Democratic Caucus, reached out to Roem to run for state delegate. She accepted the challenge and successfully defeated Republican incumbent Bob Marshall, who had represented the district for 13 years. As the state's self-described “chief homophobe,” Marshall sponsored Virginia's “bathroom bill,” designed to restrict the use of public restrooms by transgender people, along with a bill to end same-sex marriage.

Progressives endorsed Roem, including former Vice President Joe Biden and groups such as the Victory Fund, EMILY’s List, the Human Rights Campaign and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee.

Roem’s campaign raised over $500,000—three times more than her opponent. She received more than a thousand donations under $100, the second highest number of any Virginia delegate candidate.

Roem defeated Marshall by approximately eight percentage points. Her victory was hailed nationally as a milestone for transgender rights. In January 2018 she and other newly elected female politicians appeared on the cover of TIME magazine.
Angelica Ross is a television actress and the founder and CEO of TransTech Social Enterprises, an organization that helps transgender people find work in the technology industry.

Born male, Ross grew up in Racine, Wisconsin. Perceived as feminine by the eighth grade, she came out as gay at age 17. Her evangelical Christian mother responded so negatively, Ross attempted suicide.

Ross entered the University of Wisconsin-Parkside but dropped out after one semester and joined the U.S. Navy to qualify for the G.I. Bill. After six months of service and harassment, Ross requested and received a discharge under the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy.

At age 19, Ross transitioned to female. Her mother and stepfather rejected her gender identity. Ross eventually went to live with her biological father in Roanoke, Virginia, where she waitressed so she could attend cosmetology school. After facing discrimination in Roanoke, she moved to Hollywood, Florida, where she overhauled a website for her employer and taught herself computer code. She used the experience to start her own web design and consulting firm, while she studied acting.

Ross later found a position as the employment coordinator at the Trans Life Center in Chicago, helping transgender people secure jobs and health care. In 2014 she launched her own nonprofit, TransTech Social Enterprises, to train transgender workers in technical computer skills and help them find employment. In 2015 she participated in the White House LGBTQ Tech and Innovation Summit as a featured speaker.

In 2016 Ross landed a role in “Her Story,” a web series about transgender women in Los Angeles. The same year, the program was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Short Form Comedy or Drama. Ross also served as executive producer and star of the short film “Missed Connections,” a black transgender love story. “Missed Connections” was an official selection at the 2017 Outflix and Outfest film festivals.

In 2018 Ross joined the cast of the critically acclaimed television series “Pose,” about New York City’s underground black and Latinx LGBT ballroom culture of the 1980s. The following year she starred as a psychologist in the FX television network series “American Horror Story.”

In 2018 the Financial Times named Ross a top 10 LGBT executive. In 2019 she served as a celebrity ambassador of the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. Late in 2019, she became the first transgender person to host a national presidential candidate forum, when she hosted the official discussion of LGBTQ+ issues with the 2020 Democratic candidates. In January 2020, the luxury brand Louis Vuitton featured Ross in its ad campaign.
Sahaykwisa was a female Mohave Indian shaman (a healer with supernatural powers), who specialized in the treatment of venereal diseases. Scholars have limited information about her life. She was a gender-nonconforming lesbian, or hwame (a female who chooses to live as a male), and often told people she had been turned into a man by white man's magic. Sahaykwisa was also a hunter and an industrious farmer—jobs typically performed by men.

She is known to have been relatively prosperous, a good provider who romanced many wives. She also courted a married woman, which was commonplace among the Mohave. While it seems most people accepted her sexuality, she was routinely questioned about her gender.

As rumors of her affairs circulated, Sahaykwisa faced frequent ridicule and humiliation for her masculine appearance. The women she married were often subject to mockery and rejection from men.

Sahaykwisa may have posed a threat to males in her tribe. She was the victim of a brutal rape by the former husband of one of her wives. After the episode, she is said to have carried on affairs with men and fallen into alcoholism and depression. She was eventually accused of being a witch and murdered. Accounts tell of her drowning in the Colorado River.

Her story has been used to examine the lives gays and lesbians in early America, most notably in Native American tribes where transgender and homosexual individuals were in some cases accepted. Although there are many accounts of gender-nonconforming indigenous people who lived openly and even happily, it seems Sahaykwisa suffered tragic consequences for simply being herself.
At age 18, Emma González became a prominent gun control advocate after surviving the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting on February 14, 2018, in Parkland, Florida. As a leader of the #NeverAgain Movement, her activism gave rise to nationwide demonstrations and helped trigger a monumental shift in U.S. anti-gun initiatives.

The daughter of a Cuban immigrant, González was raised in Parkland. She identifies as bisexual and served as president of her high school gay-straight alliance. As a senior, González survived the deadliest high school shooting in U.S. history. The massacre left 17 students and staff members dead and 17 others injured.

Just three days after the carnage, González courageously transformed her anguish into activism. She delivered an impassioned speech at a gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, calling “B.S.” on politicians and the NRA. “If all our government and president can do is send thoughts and prayers,” she declared, “then it’s time for victims to be the change that we need to see.” The speech was broadcast nationally and went viral on social media.

In the following weeks, González became one of the most visible and outspoken student activists to emerge from the Parkland tragedy. As a leader and founding member of the student gun control advocacy group Never Again MSD—alongside Cameron Kasky, David Hogg and several others—González spoke out for gun reform during multiple high-profile media appearances. She helped organize March for Our Lives, a series of demonstrations that mobilized hundreds of thousands of protestors across the nation and around the world.

As a direct response to the Never Again Movement, the Florida Legislature passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Florida High School Public Safety Act, which established a new set of gun restrictions. It marked the first time in 30 years that the state had passed gun control measures. On March 9, 2018, when the governor signed the bill into law, he said, “To the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, you made your voices heard. You didn’t let up and you fought until there was change.”

During the summer of 2018, González traveled the country holding rallies for stronger gun control and to encourage young people to vote in the midterm elections. In the 18 months following the Parkland shooting, more than 65 new gun violence prevention measures passed in the United States.

González entered the New College of Florida in the fall of 2018.
Sherenté Mishitashin Harris is an indigenous Two-Spirit youth leader, activist and champion powwow dancer. An advocate for Indian visibility and positive cultural change through the arts, s/he overcame discrimination to break down gender barriers in traditional dance.

Harris is a member of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and comes from a large family of champion powwow dancers. As a teenager, s/he came to understand his identity as an indigenous Two Spirit, a term used to describe nonbinary gender and sexuality in indigenous communities. “People told me that if I was transgender, I would have known ever since I was young,” Harris noted. “But what does it mean to be a man or a woman? I identify both as a man and as a woman—but really, at the end of the day, I’m just being myself.”

Although Two Spirits were once considered sacred by the Narragansett Tribe, many Two Spirits today face numerous challenges, including exclusion from powwow circles. After coming out as Two Spirit, Harris, who had previously danced at powwows in the tradition of his father, began to embrace his identity by dancing in the tradition of his mother—a style performed by women.

To prepare for competition, Harris practiced daily for a year, despite what s/he describes as loneliness and a lack of assurance that s/he would be able to compete as his true self. When the time came to compete, s/he faced resistance from powwow officials who told the judges not to score his performance. Many judges were supportive and scored Harris anyway. Harris continued to persevere, placing fourth, then third, then second and, finally, first. S/he went on to perform as head-person dancer at the Dartmouth Powwow in 2017 and 2018.

As an artist and activist, Harris aims to “intertwine the stories of his cultural path with his Two-Spirit identity to evoke an emotion that sparks dialogue regarding ideologies that are too often silenced.” Harris’s work on indigenous language preservation was submitted as a part of a contest for the White House Tribal Youth Gathering, where s/he was invited and honored for his work in 2015. Harris also attended the United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) conference, where s/he represented his tribe and sat at the first ever Two-Spirit workshop run by UNITY.

Harris studies at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design.
Lady Gaga is a world-famous performance artist and singer. She is best known for her chart-topping singles and outrageous costumes. She has had three consecutive best-selling albums and one of the highest-grossing tours.

Born Stefani Germanotta, she is the first of two daughters born to working class parents in Yonkers, New York. She describes her younger self as an “artsy, musical-theatre, nerdy girl who got good grades, who learned the tricks of self-reinvention, and [had] a look that veered between a bit too sexy and a bit strange.” Raised Roman Catholic, she graduated from Convent of the Sacred Heart School before attending New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She left the school after two years to work on her musical career. In 2005, she was signed by Def Jam Recording and worked as a songwriter for Britney Spears and The Pussycat Dolls.

Lady Gaga's persona is derived from her unique, androgynous, vintage-themed fashion sense and constructing her own costumes. In 2008, Gaga produced her first album, “The Fame.” The album has two international hits, “Just Dance” and “Poker Face.” The Fame Ball Tour premiered Lady Gaga’s innovative use of performance art and glam rock to form a multimedia party.

Her second album, “The Fame Monster,” received critical acclaim. The hit song “Bad Romance” earned Lady Gaga two Grammy Awards for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance and Best Short Form Music Video. Her third album, “Born This Way,” topped the charts within days of its release. She has sold 15 million albums and 51 million singles.

Lady Gaga has won five Grammy Awards and holds two Guinness World Records. She was named 2010 Artist of the Year and the top-selling artist of 2010 by Billboard. In 2010, Time magazine named her Most Influential Artist, and in 2011, Forbes listed her among its World’s Most Powerful.

Openly bisexual, Lady Gaga is an outspoken LGBT equality advocate. She spoke at the 2009 National Equality March in Washington, D.C., calling it “the single most important event” of her career. She was a leading activist for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Through her music, concerts and demonstrations, she continues to fight for LGBT rights.
Kyrsten Sinema is the first openly bisexual person elected to the U.S. Congress. Sinema was born to a Mormon family in Tucson, Arizona. Her parents divorced and her mother remarried. When her stepfather lost his job, the family moved into an abandoned gas station without running water or electricity.

Despite many hardships, Sinema graduated at 16 as valedictorian of her high school. By 18 she had earned a bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University on a full scholarship. She subsequently earned a master’s degree, a law degree and a doctorate—all from Arizona State University.

From 1995 to 2002, Sinema was employed as a school social worker, helping struggling families. In 2000 she lobbied at the state capitol against budget cuts in her school district. The visit inspired her interest in politics. Running as an Independent, her first bid for the State Legislature was unsuccessful.

Sinema subsequently registered as a Democrat. In 2005 she was elected to the Arizona State House of Representatives, where she served for a year as the assistant minority leader for the Democratic Caucus. She was elected to the Arizona State Senate in 2010 and to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012.

In office, Sinema worked for the adoption of the Dream Act, a proposal that gives illegal immigrants conditional residency, and actively campaigned against two voter referenda that sought to ban same-sex marriage and civil unions in Arizona. In 2013 she co-sponsored the bipartisan LIBERT-E Act, which sought to prevent the NSA’s mass collection of electronic information from innocent Americans.

Sinema was named Legislator of the Year by the Stonewall Democrats, the Arizona Public Health Association and the National Association of Social Workers. She received Planned Parenthood’s CHOICE Award, and in 2010 was named to TIME magazine’s list of 40 Under 40.

In addition to politics, Sinema has served as an adjunct instructor at the Arizona State University School of Social Work. In 2013 she completed an Ironman Triathlon and summited Mount Kilimanjaro.
Dusty Springfield was an English singer and record producer best known for her sultry, soulful sound. Born Mary Isobel Bernadette O’Brien in London (she got the nickname Dusty for playing football with the boys), Springfield was one of the most successful British female performers in history, with six top 20 singles in the United States and 16 in Europe. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the U.K. Music Hall of Fame.

In 1958 Springfield joined her first singing group, The Lana Sisters, later forming The Springfields with her brother. She first received attention for her hit “I Only Want To Be With You,” and later with a string of solo songs like “Wishin’ and Hopin’” and “Son of a Preacher Man.”

Springfield received acclaim in 1969 when she released “Dusty in Memphis,” an album that was awarded a prestigious spot in the Grammy Hall of Fame. She also became known for her blonde bouffant, heavy makeup and colorful evening gowns—a style emblematic of the Swinging Sixties.

Springfield spent many years out of the public eye, reappearing in 1987 to collaborate with the Pet Shop Boys on “What Have I Done to Deserve This,” which topped both the U.S. and U.K. music charts. By the 1990s, Springfield's music was experiencing a renaissance, appearing on several film soundtracks, including “Pulp Fiction.”

During the late 1960s and early '70s, Springfield was romantically linked to Norma Tanega, a California-born singer-songwriter who wrote a few of Springfield's songs such as “Go My Love.” During an interview in 1970, Springfield said, “People say that I'm gay, gay, gay, gay, gay, gay. I'm not anything.”

She was linked to many women during her life, including photojournalist Faye Harris and singer Carole Pope. In 1982 she married actress Teda Bracci, whom she met at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Though the wedding wasn’t legally recognized, they lived together for two years.

Later in life, Springfield became a camp icon, attracting gay fans and drag impersonators. In 1994 a breast cancer diagnosis took a toll on her career.

Springfield’s inclusion in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame came just two weeks after her death. At the induction, her friend Elton John said, “I just think she was the greatest white singer there has ever been … Every song she sang, she claimed as her own.”
Mary Douglas Glasspool
b. February 23, 1954

“My top priority is serving God’s people in God’s church.”

The Rt. Rev. Mary Douglas Glasspool is the first out lesbian bishop in the Anglican Communion—an association of Anglican and Episcopal churches around the world. Glasspool follows in the footsteps of Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Anglican bishop, who was consecrated in 2003.

Born on Staten Island, New York, Glasspool is the daughter of a conservative Episcopal priest. She attended Dickinson College and graduated magna cum laude. She received the college’s Hofstader Prize as the outstanding woman in her class. Glasspool entered the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1976. At the time, the ordination of women was controversial and the church was generally unreceptive to LGBT participation.

Glasspool’s father was opposed to women’s ordination. Nevertheless, he supported his daughter’s calling. “In his own gracious way, he sort of separated out public and private,” Glasspool told Newsweek. While still a seminarian, she attended the church’s General Convention, where she made a presentation regarding the ordination of homosexuals.

Glasspool was ordained an Episcopal deacon in 1981. She became a priest and, later, assistant to the rector at St. Paul’s Church in Philadelphia, before accepting the rectorship at a church in Boston. While in Boston, she met her life partner, Becki Sander.

In 2001 Glasspool was chosen as canon to the bishops of the Diocese of Maryland. She was elected bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles in 2009. That same year, the Episcopal General Convention resolved, “God’s call is open to all.”

Glasspool is the 17th woman to become an Episcopal bishop and the first out lesbian to become a bishop in the Anglican Communion. Her controversial election gained worldwide attention, helping shape the international debate about LGBT clergy in Anglicanism. Since 2015 Glasspool has served as a bishop in the Episcopal Diocese of New York.

Glasspool and Sander, a Ph.D. social worker, have been together since 1988.
Karne Jean-Pierre  b. August 13, 1977

“America is progressing towards a stronger, more inclusive future — and I know women of color are a driving force in that evolution.”

An immigrant, an activist and an author, Karine Jean-Pierre was named principal White House deputy press secretary in January 2021. She made history as the first Black person in 30 years — and the first out lesbian — to address the White House press corps.

Jean-Pierre was born in Martinique, the eldest child of Haitian parents who fled the dictatorship of François Duvalier. When Jean-Pierre was 5, her family moved to Queens, New York, in pursuit of the American dream. Instead, like so many immigrants, her parents faced financial hardship. Her father, a trained engineer, drove a taxi to support the family. Her mother worked as a home health aide.

Feeling like the ultimate “outsider” and under immense pressure to succeed, Jean-Pierre suffered from depression and attempted suicide in early adulthood. She discusses her struggles and achievements and offers advice to aspiring young changemakers in her political memoir, “Moving Forward: A Story of Hope, Hard Work, and the Promise of America” (2019).

Jean-Pierre earned a bachelor’s degree from the New York Institute of Technology and a master’s degree in public affairs in 2003 from Columbia University. After graduate school, she served as a regional political director of John Edwards’s 2004 presidential campaign and Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign. When Obama was elected president, Jean-Pierre was named regional political director for the White House Office of Political Affairs. In 2012 she became the deputy battleground states director of President Obama’s reelection campaign.

In 2014 Jean-Pierre began teaching at Columbia University and served as campaign manager for the ACLU’s Reproductive Freedom Initiative. She joined MoveOn.org, the progressive policy advocacy group, in 2016. She became its chief public affairs officer and provided regular commentary on MSNBC and NBC News.

In 2019, during a political forum she was moderating, Jean-Pierre jumped between presidential candidate Kamala Harris and an angry protester who rushed the stage. “Here comes this guy with all of his male privilege,” Jean-Pierre said, recounting the experience as both scary and insulting. He insisted he had something “better to talk about.”

In 2020 the Biden campaign tapped Jean-Pierre to serve as a senior advisor. She became campaign chief of staff for Harris, then the vice presidential nominee, making Jean-Pierre the first Black person and the first out lesbian to hold the position. In 2021 the Biden administration named Jean-Pierre principal deputy press secretary in a historic move that also placed her on the first all-female White House communications team.

Jean-Pierre lives in Washington, D.C., with her wife, Suzanne Malveaux, a national CNN correspondent, and their daughter, Soleil.
At age 18, she was in a trolley accident that left her with permanent pain and health problems. This accident crippled her, led to over 30 surgeries, and rendered her unable to bear children. Kahlo's pain is reflected in her works.

In 1929, she married the famous painter and communist Diego Rivera. Twenty years her senior and a noted muralist, Rivera's relationship with Kahlo was a mixture of passion and strife. While they had much in common, Rivera was frequently unfaithful. Kahlo had a series of affairs with men and women. They divorced in early 1940, but remarried later that year.

Her genius as an artist went unrecognized until she was offered a show in New York. It was wildly successful and led to shows in Paris and other international cities.

Her work is celebrated for its Mexican folk art traditions, use of vivid colors, and its subject matter, including self-portraits. Her work has been associated with surrealism, though Kahlo herself renounced the genre saying, “I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.”

In 1944, her health began to rapidly deteriorate. In 1950, she was hospitalized for a year. When Kahlo finally received her first solo show in Mexico, she had to be carried to the opening in bed.

After her death, her work continued to grow in popularity. Kahlo's paintings have been displayed in prestigious international shows, including a solo exhibit that celebrated the 100th anniversary of her birth. In 2001, her face graced a U.S. postage stamp. In 2002, her life was made into the Academy Award-winning movie “Frida.”
Katherine Miller was the last West Point cadet discharged under “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” (DADT). She is a 2012 Yale graduate. With the repeal of DADT, Miller enlisted in the Army as an officer.

Raised in Ohio in a conservative military family, Miller’s dream was to become an officer in the Army. In 2008, she enrolled at West Point and excelled as a cadet, ranking in the top one percent of her class. She faced hostility from those who believed her to be a lesbian. After two years at the academy, Miller said, “I could not square my integrity with the daily half-truths that came with hiding my sexuality.”

In 2010, Miller came out to her commanders and leaked her letter of resignation to the media, effectively initiating her own discharge. The following day she discussed her decision on MSNBC’s “The Rachel Maddow Show” and became a spokesperson for the repeal of DADT. After her discharge, Miller transferred to Yale University.

Miller served on the founding board of OutServe, then an underground organization of gay active-duty service members. She represented the organization at major media engagements, most notably escorting Lady Gaga to the MTV Video Music Awards to mobilize viewers for the DADT repeal.

Miller was the most important lesbian voice in the repeal of DADT. As a tribute to her activism, she was invited to the White House for the signing of the repeal bill in 2011.

Miller was named a Truman Scholar, a Point Foundation Scholar and one of Out magazine’s “Top 100 Influential Men and Women of 2010.”

Miller is a board member at OutServe, which is now the largest LGBT employee resource group in the world, with over 5,500 members.
Nell Louise “Johnnie” Phelps was a decorated World War II veteran and a lesbian rights activist. She dissuaded General Dwight D. Eisenhower from “ferreting out” the lesbians in her army detachment. “There were almost 900 women in the battalion,” Phelps later reported, “I could honestly say that 95% of them were lesbians.”

Phelps was born in North Carolina and raised by adoptive parents who abused her. She spent much of her youth in trouble with the law and eventually married a sailor. In 1943 she joined the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) to escape her marriage. The WAC, created during World War II, allowed women to serve in the military in non-combat positions. Phelps became a medic and earned the rank of sergeant.

While stationed in the South Pacific, Phelps met a lover in the corps, but lost her in 1944 when she was killed in a bombing. In 1945, after being wounded herself, Phelps received a Purple Heart and was honorably discharged. She reenlisted in the WAC a year later.

The second time, Phelps served in the post-war occupation of Germany under General Eisenhower, whom she greatly admired. He reportedly told Phelps he heard there were lesbians in the WAC and ordered her to “ferret” them out. Her response became military legend.

Phelps famously told Eisenhower she would be happy to oblige, but her name would be first on the list. Eisenhower’s secretary chimed in that her own name would come first.

Phelps explained that lesbians were serving in every role and rank in the corps. What’s more, they were not only the most decorated members but also were without any misconduct charges or pregnancies.

Eisenhower withdrew the order.

After a second honorable discharge, Phelps started her own printing business. In the early ’70s, she moved to Southern California, where she met her life partner, Grace Bukowski. Phelps joined the National Organization for Women (NOW), and in 1979 started NOW’s Whittier, California, chapter.

Phelps served as chair of the Lesbian Rights Task Force and was appointed to the Los Angeles Commission on Veterans’ Affairs. She helped lead the March for Gay Rights in Sacramento and advocated for women charged with homosexual misconduct. As a recovering alcoholic, she also became president of the Alcoholism Center for Women.

Phelps appeared in several documentaries, including “Trailblazers: Unsung Military Heroines of WWII.” In 1993 the Veterans for Human Rights hosted the Sgt. Johnnie Phelps Annual Awards Banquet in her honor.

Phelps died in 1997 in Barstow, California. Her partner donated her papers and effects to the ONE Gay and Lesbian Archives.
Lilli Vincenz is a pioneering gay rights activist. In 1965, she was the only lesbian to participate in the first White House picket. From 1965 to 1969, Vincenz demonstrated each Fourth of July in front of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. These protests, called Annual Reminders, launched the gay and lesbian civil rights movement.

Vincenz was born in Hamburg, Germany, and grew up during World War II. Her father died when she was 2 years old. In 1949, after her mother married an American, the family moved to the United States.

In 1959, Vincenz earned bachelor’s degrees in French and German from Douglas College. The following year, she received a master’s degree in English from Columbia University.

After college, Vincenz enlisted in the Women’s Army Corps and worked at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. After serving nine months, she was outed by her roommate and was discharged for being gay.

In 1963, Vincenz joined the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW). She was in the MSW delegation that held the first meeting with the Civil Service Commission to discuss discriminatory policies toward gays and lesbians.

In 1971, Vincenz helped launch the Frank Kameny for Congress campaign. This marked the first time an openly gay person ran for public office in the United States.

Vincenz filmed two important gay rights demonstrations: the 1968 Annual Reminder in Philadelphia and the first anniversary of Stonewall, known as the first New York Pride Parade.

From 1971 to 1979, Vincenz hosted a monthly Gay Women’s Open House in Washington to provide a safe setting for socializing and discussing common concerns.

In 1990, Vincenz earned a Ph.D. in human development from the University of Maryland. Vincenz has written for numerous publications and has appeared on television and in film.

She resides in Arlington, Virginia, with her partner, Nancy Ruth Davis.
Rabbi Deborah Waxman is the first woman and the first lesbian to lead a Jewish seminary and national congregational union. She serves as president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) and of Reconstructing Judaism, the leading organization of the Reconstructionist movement.

Waxman was born to conservative Jewish parents in West Hartford, Connecticut. Her father was a traveling salesman and her mother was the president of their synagogue’s sisterhood.

Waxman earned her bachelor’s degree in religion from Columbia University, her Master of Hebrew Letters from the RRC, and her doctorate in American Jewish history from Temple University. She also completed a certificate in Jewish women's studies from the RRC in conjunction with Temple University.

In 1999 the RRC ordained Waxman. She began teaching at the seminary and served as the rabbi of Congregation Bet Haverim in New York, before becoming vice president for governance of the RRC. In that role, she merged the RRC and the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities. Together, they form the Jewish Reconstructionist movement. In 2014 she became its president.

Waxman won grants from prominent donors, such as the Kresge, the Wexner, and the Cummings Foundations. She led initiatives to create interactive digital content, to bolster Reconstructionist Judaism’s ties to Israel and to help young people through camping programs.

Waxman is regarded as the Reconstructionist movement’s thought leader. She has provided an important voice for feminism in Judaism, encouraging gender equality in Jewish leadership. A member of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society, she researches, writes and speaks at conferences about Jewish identity, women in American Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism. Publications such as The Times of Israel, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, HuffPost, Forward, and other media and academic outlets have published her articles. She also created and hosts the podcast “Hashivenu: Jewish Teachings on Resilience.”

In 2015 Waxman was named to the “Forward 50,” a list of Jewish Americans “who have made a significant impact on the Jewish story.” She was interviewed by MSNBC following the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in October 2018, and she wrote an opinion piece on Jewish values amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Waxman lives in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, with her partner, Christina Ager, a professor at Arcadia University.