Trans Focus

The world from a transgender perspective

June 2025



Trans Women are Biological Women

- The Science

Staying Strong Amid Rising Hostility

Happy Pride Month to all our Readers

The Emerald Isle
ORIHUELA COSTA
ORHUELA PRIDE 2025
IN MEMORY OF
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Welcome to June

We try to be as positive as we can as we enter Pride month, but it's a challenge at the moment. As the USA and UK vie for the title of most transphobic country, LGBTQ+ people around the world prepare for celebration, reflection and this year maybe a little more protest. The UK have stolen a march by achieving an 11 year drop from first place in the European ILGA rainbow ratings to 22nd place. An achievement that seems quite astounding today.

Imagine being the 16 year old transgender high school student ready to participate in the high jump, long jump and triple jump events when the President declares that unless you are banned from competing, he will withdraw sports funding for the schools in your state.

Imagine being one of the women, many of whom are cis, who have been confronted and, in some instances, savagely attacked when trying to use a toilet.

A climate of fear is growing with very little in the way of intervention from the government - Those who are there to protect us.

Imagine being one of dozens of transgender women who play football each weekend, then suddenly being told you are not allowed to play alongside your friends and team mates this weekend.

I could go on and list numerous examples of the current of hate directed towards a small section of society. You only have to run a quick internet search to find out.

We are resisting though. Protests are springing up all over and petitions showing we are not alone. Some of which are instigated and signed by cis women. We fight on, and as I've said before…

WE ARE GOING NOWHERE!

This month we bring you the usual array of articles that we hope to inform and entertain. I hadn't heard of Jay Hulme, transgender poet until relatively recently, so we have a profile of him. As someone who is nearing the finale of The Handmaids Tale, I've put together a comparison of the dystopian drama with the current wave of politics affecting us.

Penny and I have our LGBTQ quiz and party night at Seaview, Playa Flamenca on Thursday 12th June and of course we have our yearly Pride event in June also.

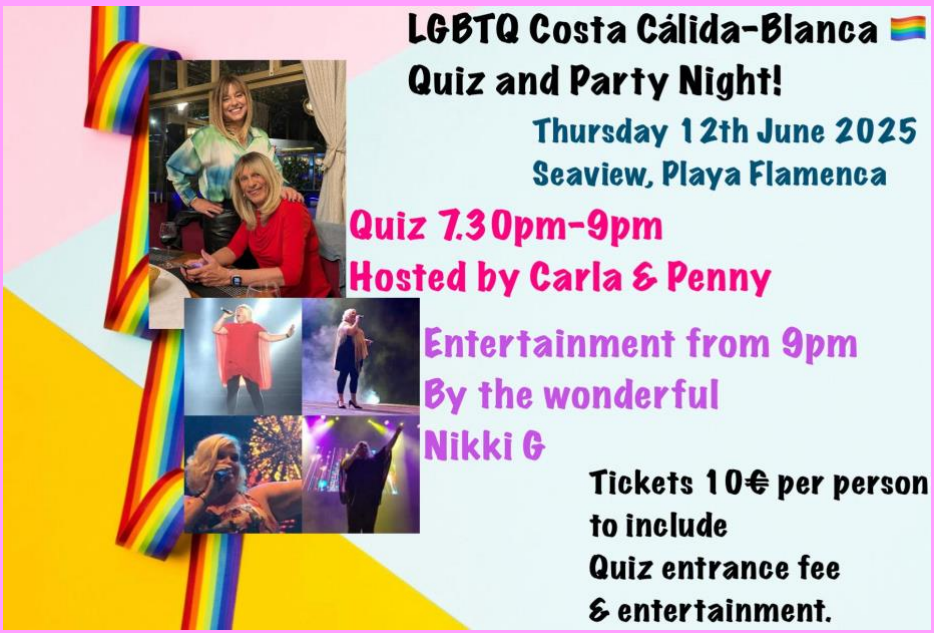
Have a happy June

Love Carla & Penny XX

ORHUELA COSTA PRIDE 2025

28th June 2025





The Female Brain in Trans Women: What Science Tells Us

For decades, scientists assumed that "male" and "female" brains were strictly binary, until research on transgender individuals revealed a far more complex picture. Studies now show that trans women's brains often resemble cisgender women's in structure and function, challenging old ideas about biology and gender.



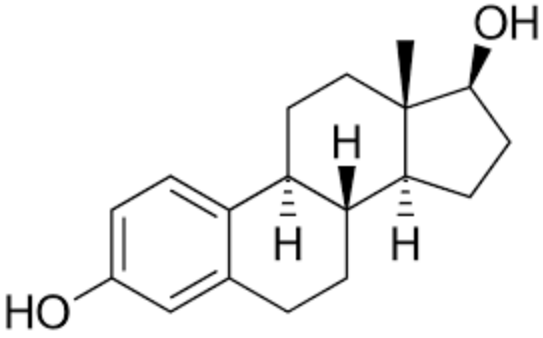
A Mismatch Between Body and Brain

One of the most striking findings comes from a 2000 study examining a tiny brain region called the Bed Nucleus of the Stria Terminalis (BSTc), which is typically larger in men. Researchers discovered that trans women had a BSTc closer in size to cis women's, even before hormone therapy. This suggested that their brains were wired differently from birth.

Later MRI scans reinforced this idea, showing that trans women's gray matter (the brain's information-processing areas) often falls between typical male and female patterns, leaning toward female. Meanwhile, their white matter (the brain's "wiring") frequently matches cis women's connectivity, particularly in regions linked to self-perception and body awareness.

Hormones Reshape the Brain, But Aren't the Whole Story

When trans women take estrogen, their brains change in ways that further align with cis women's. Studies tracking hormone therapy



found shifts in areas like the hippocampus (involved in memory and emotion) and prefrontal cortex

(responsible for decision-making). Yet crucially, some differences exist before hormones, implying that gender identity has deep biological roots.

Brains Don’t Fit in Boxes

While no single brain feature defines someone as male or female, the overall pattern in trans women suggests their neurology aligns more with their true gender than their assigned sex. As neuroscientist Dr. Daphna Joel puts it, "Most brains are mosaics of male, and female, typical features."

Why This Matters

This research undermines arguments that reduce womanhood to chromosomes or genitals. If a trans woman’s brain looks and functions like a cis woman’s, isn’t she, in a very real sense, biologically female? Science increasingly says yes,and that’s worth talking about.



Trans Women Deserve Better:

Staying Strong Amid Rising Hostility

In recent months, trans women across the UK have felt the weight of renewed hostility. From the Scottish Supreme Court's restrictive legal definitions of womanhood to heated debates over public toilets, the conversation has become toxic. Sadly, much of it ignores the lived realities of transgender women — people who simply want to live, love, work, and exist in peace.

This rising tide of intolerance isn't just political theatre; it's personal. It invades our public spaces, our healthcare, our headlines — and increasingly, our mental health. Yet in the face of this, trans women continue to stand strong. Here's how we can support ourselves and each other through these stormy times.

1. Know That You're Not Alone

One of the cruelest effects of transphobia is the sense of isolation it breeds. But let's be clear: you are not alone. Thousands of trans women across the UK — and millions globally — share your frustration, your exhaustion, and your courage. Community is our shield. Whether through local support groups, online forums, or friendship circles, connection is survival.

2. Protect Your Mental Space

It's okay — essential, even — to set boundaries with the news, with social media, with people who drain your energy. Staying informed doesn't mean drowning in negativity. Prioritise your feeds. Follow affirming creators. Take social media breaks when you need to. Self-preservation is not weakness. It's wisdom.

3. Claim Public Space With Pride

Toilets. Parks. Bars. Buses. The public realm is not off-limits to you. It is your space, just as much as anyone else's. While we acknowledge real risks, we also reclaim our right to be visible. Walk tall, dress how you want, use the facilities you need. If you feel safe enough, assert your presence — because every time we show up, we chip away at ignorance.

4. Access Support

Therapists trained in gender identity issues can be life-changing. If waiting lists are long or costs are high, peer support groups and charities like **Beaumont UK**, **Mermaids**, **Gendered Intelligence**, or **MindOut** offer practical and emotional help. You don't have to face this alone — and you shouldn't.

5. Use Your Voice — Or Not

Some trans women find empowerment through activism and speaking out. Others choose privacy and quiet resistance. Both are valid. Your gender doesn't need defending. You are enough just as you are. How you fight back is your choice — even surviving, today, is a form of protest.

We Are the Future

Trans women are not a problem to solve. We are part of the beautiful, diverse tapestry of human life. No court ruling, politician, or podcast can take that away. When the world grows colder, we grow stronger — together.

You are worthy. You are powerful. And you are never alone.

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What's in Summer's Handbag?

Essential member of Costa Blanca Tgirls, Summer from Hull doesn't pack light — she packs *essential*. Her **lipstick** is her mood ring: bold, defiant, and ready for a close-up.



Summer in mushroom Street, Alicante

Cigarettes and a lighter? Darling, some girls carry pepper spray — Summer prefers sparks. Her **bank card** is mostly used for cute sandals and emergency snacks (churros are a legitimate emergency).



Keys — house and **car**, naturally — because arriving in style is non-negotiable. And her **phone**? It's practically a limb, mostly used for selfies, memes, and politely ignoring people.



She doesn't drink much, but when she does? It's **pink gin**, sweetie — because basic is for brunch.

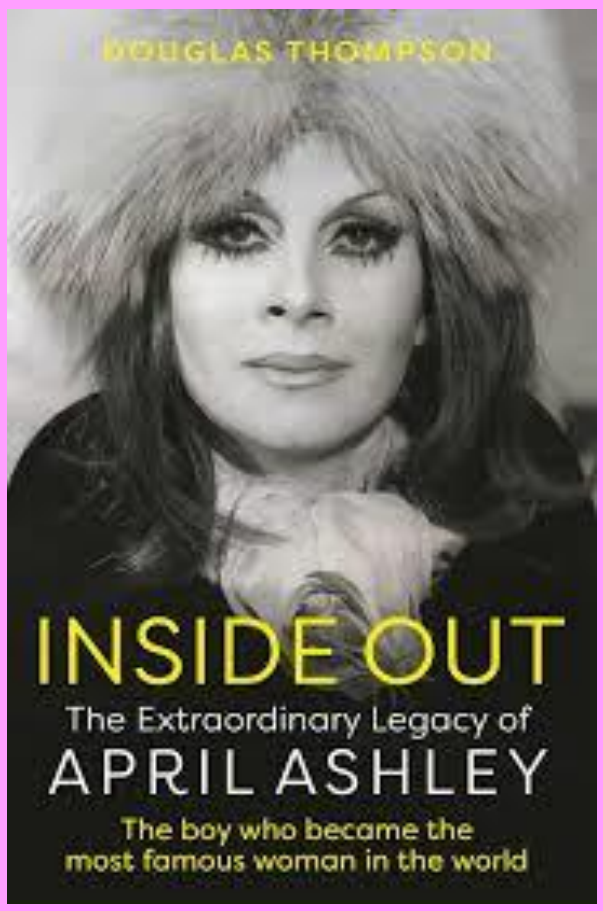
April Ashley:

A Liverpudlian Pioneer in a World That Wasn't Ready



When I think about April Ashley, I don't just see a trans pioneer—I see a sister, a trailblazer whose life resonates deeply with my own. She was one of us, and she was from where I'm from. Born in Liverpool in 1935, April entered a world that couldn't comprehend someone like her. Like many trans people of her generation, her early life was defined by secrecy, shame, and struggle. But from the banks of the Mersey, she would go on to shake the world awake.

April was born George Jamieson in Pitt Street, in Liverpool's Chinatown, the youngest of six children. Her childhood was difficult—fraught with bullying and a sense of otherness she couldn't yet name. At school and at home, she didn't fit the rigid expectations of boyhood. It's a feeling I know too well—trying to find yourself while being told you don't exist.



After serving in the Merchant Navy and suffering a breakdown, April eventually made her way to Paris in the 1950s. There, she performed at the famous Le Carrousel nightclub, working alongside other gender-nonconforming entertainers. It was in this vibrant underground world that she found the strength to begin her transition. In 1960, she travelled to Casablanca for gender

confirmation surgery with Dr Georges Burou—becoming one of the first British people to do so. She returned as April Ashley, herself at last.

And for a time, it seemed the world would embrace her. She modelled for *Vogue*, moved in celebrity circles, and even had a brief marriage to aristocrat Arthur Corbett. But when a Sunday newspaper outed her in 1961, everything came crashing down. Her career disintegrated overnight, and her marriage was annulled on the grounds that she was legally male—a ruling that set back trans rights in the UK for decades.

Yet April never stopped being April.

Despite the injustice, the scandal, and the humiliation heaped upon her, she survived—and not just survived, but lived openly and defiantly as a trans woman long before society was ready to offer even basic dignity. In later years, she was rightfully recognised with an MBE for services to the trans community, and her portrait now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.



To me, April Ashley is more than a name in history. She's a mirror reflecting my own experience—trans and proud, and shaped by the grit and grace of Liverpool. Her story reminds me that our city, often stereotyped and underestimated, has produced some of the bravest women to ever walk its streets.

She fought so I could live more freely. And now, it's our turn to carry her legacy forward—with courage, with pride, and with that same Liverpool spirit that refuses to be silenced.

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Dedication to my friend Rebecca…

I dedicate this feature to my sadly departed transgender friend Rebecca.

I met her around 25 years ago. We were setting up a gender/transgender course and needed somebody to assist with the delivery – Enter Rebecca.

A larger than life figure over six feet tall with bright red hair, she cut quite a figure. As I got to know her, I found a sensitive, caring but strong woman who lived life to the full. She shared her story of transition, through her Gender Recognition Certificate to her current experiences as a trans woman.

In the classroom she was incredibly open and honest, sharing details with course delegates so that people of gender variance were understood. At the time, I was firmly in the closet, only venturing out when in the house on my own.

She didn’t know it, but her advice and openness were instrumental in my emergence into the world as Carla. She passed away a few years ago and I was glad that I shared my true identity with her. As usual she was supportive and as I write this I realise just how much I miss her.

At the time I met her, rights and acceptance for transgender people were increasing, albeit slowly. I dread to think what she would make of the vile transphobia that’s poisoning the UK at the moment, especially through MP’s and so called journalists.

A search of the internet gave me the following extract from the BBC website. Rebecca was instrumental in this initiative. Sadly, in 2010 coinciding with the election of a new governement, her services were dispensed with and diversity training was decimated.

From 2004. How far have we fallen.

Force tackles transgender issues
Transgender men and women on Merseyside are being offered new levels of support by police.
Merseyside Police has developed a new policy for its approach to issues affecting the community People are being urged to contact the force, in confidence, with any problems or issues they have. Until now issues affecting the community are normally dealt with as part of the lesbian, gay and bisexual support work the police offers. However, the force has decided transgender issues are "entirely different" and deserving of recognition in their own right.

'Duty to protect'
Sergeant Chris Wathan, from the force's community relations unit, said: "Some people in Merseyside suffer assault, harassment, verbal abuse or other hostility because of their actual or perceived gender identity. "We have a duty to protect those in society who are vulnerable to such victimisation. "All these incidents will be dealt with thoroughly, sensitively and confidentially. "People who carry out such acts should be left in no doubt their behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated."

The new approach means officers will receive training in how to treat transgender men and women. Members of the transgender community have welcomed the new approach.

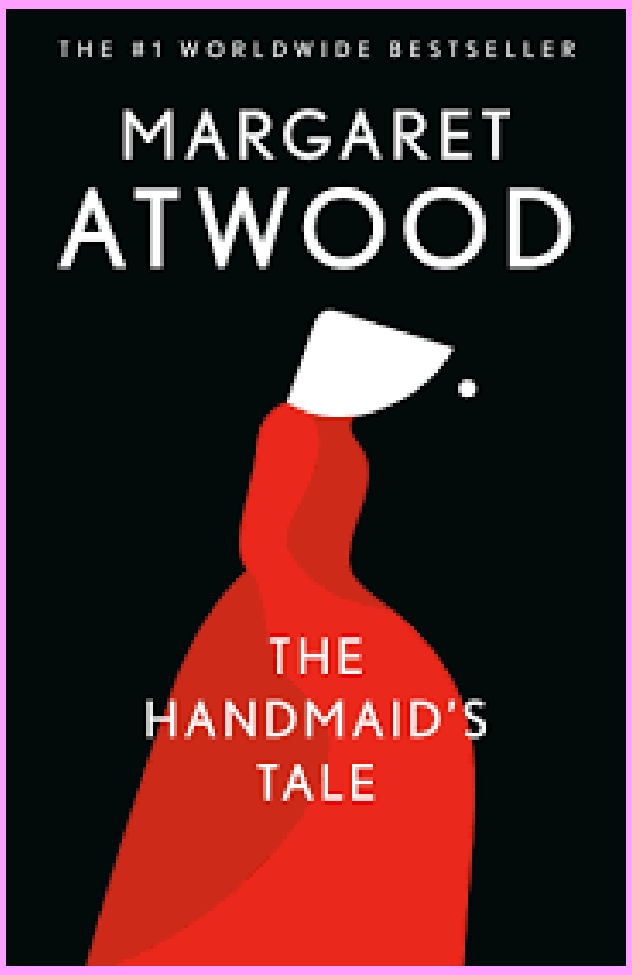
'Proactive, positive'

Rebecca Dittman, who advises the police on transgender issues, helped draw the policy up. She told BBC News Online: "As a transgender person I welcome any initiative to try to address the complex issues people like me face. "Officers often have anxiety in dealing with people like me." She said she felt the police were approaching the policy in a "proactive and positive way".But added not all members of the transgender community had had the same experience. "I would hope having a policy like this will make Merseyside Police more attractive," she said.

A Dystopian Tale That's Hitting Too Close to Home

By a Proud Trans Woman

Have you ever read *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood? I havent, instead I've seen the TV series which I found seriously disturbing.



If not, let me fill you in. It's a dystopian novel, written in 1984 (yes, that Orwellian year), about an America where democracy has collapsed and a theocratic regime has taken control. They call themselves the Sons of Jacob and their motto might as well have been "Make America Great Again." Sound familiar?

The scary thing is, the fall into this regime didn't happen overnight. It was slow and creeping. A law here, a restriction there. People were shocked, frozen, unsure what to do. And by the time they realised what was happening, it was too late.

Atwood didn't make it all up. That's where it gets disturbing. Everything in the book has happened before. Somewhere, sometime, to someone. She's said it over and over: *The Handmaid's Tale* isn't a prediction—it's a warning.



And here we are. In 2025. And her warning is more relevant than ever.

In the US 2017, when Trump first came into power, the book shot up the bestseller list again. Then they made a TV series. Then Roe v. Wade was overturned, and boom—the book hit the charts once more. Every time there's a crackdown on women's or LGBTQ+ rights, Atwood's novel gets dusted off and read again like a manual for surviving dystopia.



But let’s not kid ourselves that this is only about America.

In the UK, we’re seeing similar patterns. Trans rights are under attack from all sides—media, politics, even institutions meant to protect us. Proposed laws threaten our ability to live freely, honestly, and safely. There's talk about rolling back gender recognition reforms, tightening access to healthcare, banning inclusive education, and restricting what young trans people can learn about themselves.

I’ve felt the creeping dread that Atwood writes about. That sense of society shifting subtly, then suddenly, until you're no longer welcome in the world you thought was yours. There’s a growing push to “define” womanhood in biological terms only. Debates rage over our very existence. We’re no longer just “othered”—we’re being legislated against.

And like in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, it starts with small things.

Restrict healthcare.
Limit visibility.
Control language.
Then take away autonomy.

Sound familiar? The wall isn’t always made of bricks—it can be built out of policies, media narratives, and public indifference.



What stood out to me most in Atwood’s novel was the way identity was erased. June becomes Offred—not a person, but property. Just “Of Fred.” We’re seeing echoes of that now, when people insist trans identities are just a phase or a delusion. When they reduce our names, our pronouns, our truth, to something disposable. Something to debate. Something to erase.



The irony? *The Handmaid's Tale* was partly inspired by Atwood's ancestor, Mary Webster, who was accused of witchcraft and nearly lynched in the 1600s. She survived. That legacy of resistance runs through the book—and I think it runs through us, too.

Being trans in today's world often feels like being part of a resistance. We push back against a system that wants to confine us to a box that never fit. We dare to live, to thrive, to be visible. And that is powerful.

Atwood once said, "You write these books so they won't come true." But we must do more than write and read—we must vote, speak, organise, and support each other. I've said this before, but we need our friends and allies like never before. Because dystopias aren't created in a single moment. They are built slowly, while the world watches.

Let's not just be watchers. Let's be changemakers.

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ASK CARLA

I've just started driving en femme on my own for the first time. What should I do if I have a burst tyre, and I want to change it myself?

What? No breakdown cover? Here goes…

First, locate your vehicle's "wheel detachment enabler" (jack) and consult the car manual. Next, secure the handbrake like you're preparing for a spaceship launch, then ceremoniously unsheath your spare tyre, which you will later discover is flatter than your post-breakup soufflé. Using your "lug nut liberation device" (spanner), attempt to loosen bolts installed by Thor himself — this requires Herculean strength, a sacrificial offering, and at least three curse words per nut. Hoist the vehicle with a jack that appears alarmingly flimsy for such a heroic task. Remove the old tyre with the delicacy of a ballet dancer and install the new one like you're reattaching a lost limb. Tighten bolts in a star pattern (because witchcraft), lower the car, and triumphantly Google "how to change a tyre" to see if you did it right.

Now, get that breakdown cover, Fast!!!

Cis Woman Confronted Over Appearance in London Toilet Queue

Last month, Caz Coronel (she/her), a cisgender woman, was aggressively confronted while waiting to use the women's toilets at London's Royal Festival Hall – targeted solely because her short haircut and hoodie led a stranger to misjudge her gender.

According to Caz's social media account, a man began shouting from the adjacent men's toilet, "The men’s toilet is over here!" Assuming it wasn't directed at her, Caz ignored it. He persisted: "The men’s toilets are this side!" Moments later, Caz felt a tap on her shoulder. The man had approached, poked her, and stated, "Do you realize this is the women’s toilet?"

"Up to that point, he hadn’t seen my face," Caz recounted. "So, what was he judging me on? My haircut? My hoodie? Also, I was surrounded by women. It was pretty obvious I knew which toilet it was. His energy was aggressive. I was shocked. I looked him straight in the face and asked, ‘What sex do you think I am?’ Affronted, he said, ‘I don’t know!’"

Caz regrets not replying, "If you don’t know, then shut the f*** up!" Instead, she responded, "Would you like to see my tits?" and began unzipping her hoodie. The man panicked, saying, "No, no, nah, don’t do that!" His wife, emerging from the toilet and seeing the commotion, urgently told him, "Let’s go now!"

Caz emphasized that her primary offense wasn't being mistaken for a man, but the man's "assumption that this kind of behaviour is okay" and the intrusive policing of her appearance.

The women in the queue, visibly disturbed, immediately supported Caz. One woman affirmed, "You are welcome here," while another expressed sympathy, saying, "I am so, so sorry you had to experience that. I can’t believe what I just saw."

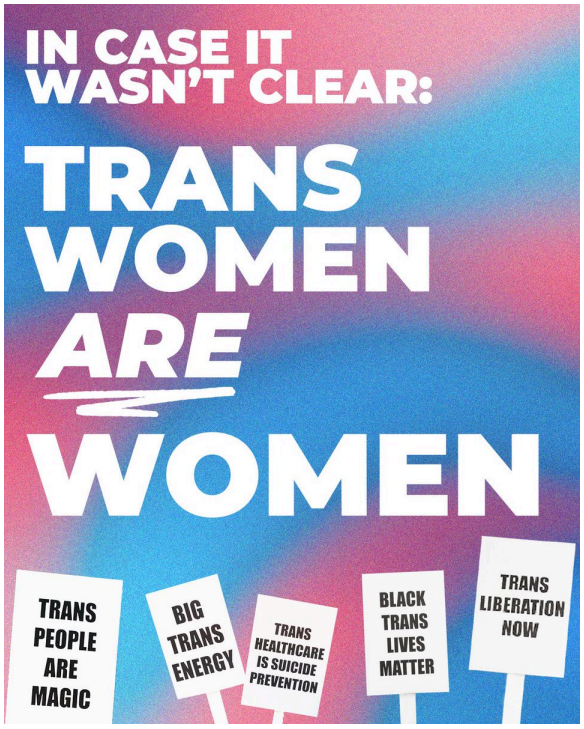
Incident Amidst Broader Gender Policing Debate

This confrontation occurred against the backdrop of heightened public debate and policy changes concerning gender identity and single-sex spaces in the UK, following the recent Supreme Court clarification (April 16, 2025) that the protected characteristic of "sex" under the Equality Act 2010

refers to biological sex as recorded at birth.

Caz believes such rulings and the surrounding discourse are "not making it safer for everyone," arguing they fuel "public entitlement and the policing of gender expression" – as evidenced by her own experience as a cis woman targeted based on stereotypes.

Her experience highlights how policies and rhetoric focused on excluding trans people from spaces based on birth sex or appearance can also lead to the harassment of gender-nonconforming cisgender individuals. As institutions like Barclays, the Scottish Parliament, and Robert Gordon University implement new guidelines restricting facility access, incidents like this underscore the real-world consequences of increased gender policing for *anyone* perceived not to conform to narrow expectations.



Jay Hulme

Transgender Icon

Jay Hulme is a distinguished British transgender poet, theologian, speaker, and educator whose work intricately weaves themes of faith, identity, and the natural world. Hailing from Leicester, Hulme's journey is a testament to the transformative power of art and belief.



Picture from YouTube

In 2015, Hulme's poetic talent was nationally recognised when he won SLAMbassadors UK, the country's premier youth poetry slam organised by The Poetry Society. This accolade propelled him into the literary spotlight, leading to performances at esteemed venues, including the BBC Edinburgh Fringe Slam in 2017.

Hulme's debut poetry collection, "Clouds Cannot Cover Us," published in October 2019, offers readers an intimate exploration of his experiences growing up in a working-class family in Leicestershire and navigating life as a transgender teenager. The collection does not shy away from addressing complex issues such as domestic violence, homelessness, and transphobia, reflecting Hulme's commitment to portraying the unvarnished realities faced by many young people. His candid approach resonates deeply, with critics praising the work as "vital, raw, powerful and uplifting."

Beyond his literary achievements, Hulme is dedicated to education and advocacy. He conducts poetry workshops in schools, emphasising the importance of diversity and inclusion in literature. As an ambassador for Inclusive Minds, he promotes authentic representation in children's publishing and offers sensitivity reads to ensure respectful and accurate portrayals of transgender individuals.

A profound spiritual transformation marked a new chapter in Hulme's life in late 2019. His fascination with ancient church architecture led to a personal encounter with faith, culminating in his baptism into the Anglican Church. This spiritual awakening deeply influences his subsequent work, blending the sacred with the everyday. In "The Backwater Sermons," Hulme chronicles his faith journey amidst the backdrop of a global pandemic, finding divinity in urban landscapes and drawing parallels between the resilience of cathedrals and the transgender experience.

Hulme's poetry is celebrated for its ability to capture the mystical within the mundane, inviting readers to perceive the world through a lens of wonder and introspection. His belief in the power of childlike curiosity permeates his work, encouraging audiences to embrace the beauty and possibility that surround them. As he eloquently expresses, poetry

serves as a conduit for revelation, offering glimpses into the ineffable aspects of human existence.

Through his evocative verse and unwavering advocacy, Jay Hulme continues to inspire and challenge, crafting a legacy that bridges the realms of art, identity, and spirituality.

Jay HulmeJay Hulme

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ASK CARLA

Whenever I'm on social media and the subject of transgender women comes up, especially relating to sport, often people become abusive and call us men. How can I respond?

First of all, you don't have to respond. We are dealing with ignorance and to change their mind on social media is pretty much impossible. But if you really must…

When faced with cruel social media comments aimed at transgender women—especially the tired lines like "You're just a man" or "You don't belong in sport" it can be exhausting. These remarks are rooted in ignorance, fear, and a refusal to understand. If you choose to respond (and you absolutely don't have to), stay calm, clear, and confident. You might say, *"Trans women are women. We've always existed, and we have the same right to participate in life—including sport—as anyone else. Inclusion doesn't harm fairness; it strengthens it."*

There's no need to debate your humanity. You're not here to educate people who are committed to misunderstanding you. Instead, protect your peace. Use block and report tools freely. You're allowed boundaries. You don't owe anyone a discussion that undermines your identity.

Sometimes the most powerful response is simply being visible and proud. Let them shout into the void—you go on living, thriving, and being your full, authentic self. The more they try to erase us, the more we shine. Remember, every time you take up space as yourself, you're creating room for others to do the same. That, in itself, is a quiet revolution.



Things to Think About Before You Go Commando

by Someone Who's Been There, Regretted It, and Bought More Underwear

"The hills are alive, with the sound of the wind rustling through your legs…"

There comes a time in every girl's life—cis, trans, or somewhere delightfully in between—when she thinks, "Maybe today I'll go commando." No underwear, no lines, no wedgies. Freedom! Liberation! Ventilation!

Hold that thought.

Going commando sounds glamorous. It whispers of effortless chic and rebellious confidence. But before you throw caution (and your knickers) to the wind, here are a few things to consider:

1. Fabric Matters
Silk dress? Gorgeous. Now picture a light breeze and your bare bum clinging to the lining like Velcro. Not so chic now, is it? Denim? Prepare for chafing. And linen trousers? Say hello to sweat patches you didn't even know you could get.

2. Tucking Logistics
For trans girls who tuck, going commando is less about liberation and more about strategic risk management. Gravity is not your friend. Neither is surprise laughter, uneven pavement, or bus brakes. If you value stealth and security, maybe leave this experiment for a quiet Sunday in yoga pants at home.

3. Social Risks
Let's say you're at brunch, feeling bold and breezy. Then someone says, "Oh, you've got a little something on your seat." That, my friend, is the ghost of breakfast past. Always remember: underwear catches more than just hearts.

4. Emergency Situations
Ever dropped something and had to bend down in a short skirt? Now imagine doing it with no barrier between you and the judgmental glare of a passing chihuahua.

5. Confidence vs. Consequence
If you can strut confidently, secure in your anatomy, outfit, and the complete unpredictability of life—go for it! But maybe pack a backup pair. Just in case.

Going commando? It's not just a fashion choice. It's a lifestyle. One best approached with planning, poise—and powder.



A floaty skirt can be a bit of a risk when going commando…

Penny Takes Gran Canaria: Small Triumphs on a Trans Journey

For countless trans women, few moments spike the heart rate quite like the simple act of presenting



identification. Those of us whose passports, driving licenses, or ID cards still bear names and genders assigned at birth, markers that feel like ill-fitting costumes from another life, face a unique vulnerability each time we hand them over. It's a silent plea for understanding, a hope that the person scrutinising the worn plastic won't linger on the dissonance between the faded photo and the woman standing before them. That flicker of confusion, or worse, judgment, is a familiar spectre.

We often call flying while presenting authentically "flying pretty." It's a badge of courage, a reclaiming of the inherent stress of air travel. This month, that badge was pinned firmly to my bikini top as my partner and I escaped for a week of Gran Canarian sun. I wasn't a complete novice at navigating airports *en femme*; I'd braved passport control before. Though one memorable encounter at JFK Airport in New York taught me a specific lesson: silicone breast forms nestled innocently in hand luggage light up security scanners like anomalies. The TSA agent's brow furrowed as the screen flagged something... undefined. With a mix of British bluntness and flustered defiance, I declared, "It's me tits, mate!" His expression remained professionally



inscrutable, a brief, surreal moment suspended in the sterile airport air.

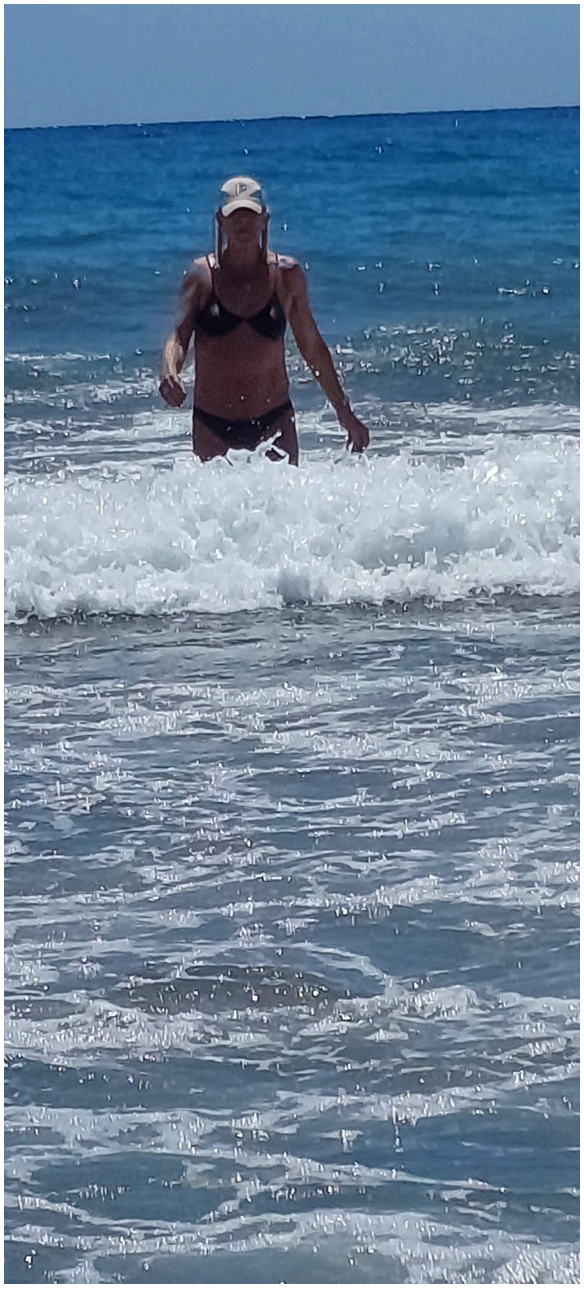
This time, the journey was smoother. Apart from a minor hiccup requiring a second pass through the scanner (a forgotten metallic object stubbornly lodged in a pocket), I was just another passenger. No double-takes, no whispered comments, blissful anonymity. That sense of unremarkable passage continued upon landing. Renting our car meant presenting my driving licence, the one bearing my old name and a photo lightyears away from the woman signing the paperwork. I braced internally, sliding it across the counter. The agent glanced, processed it, handed back the licence, not even a fractional pause. Just business as usual. The relief was a warm wave washing over me.

Gran Canaria, specifically Maspalomas, is a haven within a haven. Renowned for hosting both vibrant Summer and Winter Pride events, its very atmosphere thrums with LGBTQ+ acceptance. The Yumbo Centre pulses as the island's undisputed queer heart, a kaleidoscopic maze of bars, cafes, and shops where diversity isn't just tolerated; it's celebrated. Walking its bustling plazas felt like shedding an invisible weight, breathing air free from the constant, low-level vigilance I sometimes carry.



But the true milestone, the moment that crystallised the liberation of this trip, happened on the golden curve of Maspalomas beach. For the first time in my life, I stepped onto the sand *en femme*, clad in a bikini. The Mediterranean sun, warm and forgiving, kissed my skin as I laid out my towel. The initial flutter of self-consciousness, *Are they looking? What are they thinking?* gradually dissolved with the rhythmic sigh of the waves. Then came the water.

Walking into the gentle surf, feeling the cool embrace of the Atlantic, swimming freely... it was transcendent. Each wave that lifted me felt like it was washing away layers of inhibition and fear. Floating there, buoyed by saltwater and a profound sense of self, was more than just a swim; it was an act of defiance, a deep, personal claiming of space and body. Pure, unadulterated empowerment. It wasn't just a holiday moment; it was a radiant landmark in my journey, a confirmation written in sunlight and sea spray. Gran Canaria didn't just offer sun; it offered a space to simply *be*, beautifully and unapologetically, Penny.



Inspirational Quotes

I looked at some quotes from history and looked at how they could related to transgender women today.

USA President John F. Kennedy



Wikipedia

"Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth,"

can be summarised as follows:

Conforming to societal expectations limits personal freedom and prevents individuals from evolving and reaching their full potential.

Link to Transgender Women's Identity Today:

This quote powerfully resonates with the experiences of many transgender women. Society often pressures people to conform to rigid gender norms and binary roles. For transgender women, breaking away from these expectations is an act of courage and authenticity. By refusing to conform, they reclaim their freedom to live as their true selves and open the door to personal growth, confidence, and joy. In essence, embracing one's identity—despite societal pressure—is a powerful step toward both individual and social progress.

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Musician Kurt Cobain



DW.com

"I definitely feel closer to the feminine side of the human being than I do the male - or the American idea of what a man is supposed to be. Just watch a beer commercial and you'll see what I mean"

Summary of the Kurt Cobain Quote:

Kurt Cobain expresses a deep personal connection to femininity over traditional masculinity, especially as defined by stereotypical American ideals—like those exaggerated in beer commercials, which often portray men as tough, emotionless, and dominant.

Expanded Interpretation and Relevance to Transgender Women Today:

Cobain's words challenge the narrow, performative version of manhood promoted in mainstream culture. His discomfort with those expectations mirrors the experience of many transgender women, who often grow up being pressured to adopt a version of masculinity that feels unnatural or even painful.
For transgender women, this quote underscores how societal definitions of gender—especially the rigid, hyper-masculine ideal—can feel alienating. Many trans women have felt from a young age that those roles didn't fit, and like Cobain, found a more authentic connection with femininity. His rejection of stereotypical masculinity validates the idea that gender identity is deeply personal, not something that should be dictated by ads, tradition, or culture.

In today's context, where transgender visibility is growing but still often met with misunderstanding, this quote can serve as a powerful reminder: that not fitting into society's outdated gender boxes doesn't make someone wrong—it often means they're being truer to themselves.

And a poem. Inspired by a Kurt Cobain quote…

Not That Kind of Man
I watched the men on the screen—
all shoulders and smirks,
clutching bottles like trophies,
laughing at nothing,
loud and invincible.
They called it strength.
They called it being a man.

But I didn't see myself there.
Not in their fists,
not in their games,
not in the silence they wear
when their hearts are breaking.

I felt closer
to softness,
to quiet understanding,
to the kind of strength that listens
instead of shouting.

They said I was confused,
but I think they were.

Because I wasn't failing to be a man—
I was never meant to be that man.
Not their version.

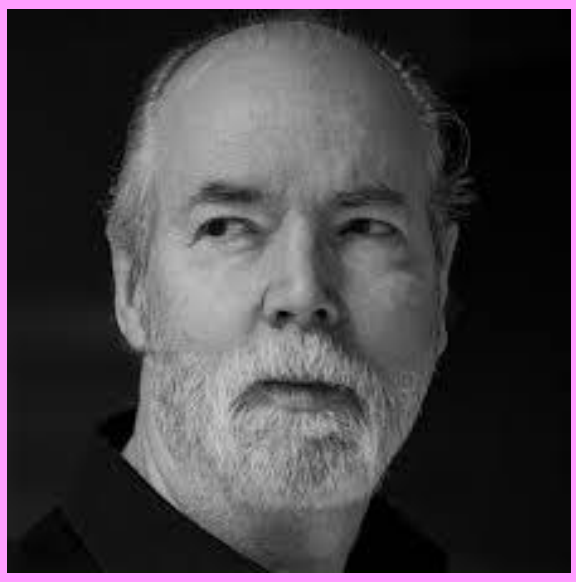
I didn't want the box,
the performance,
the mask made of steel.

I wanted truth.
And sometimes truth looks like eyeliner,
and a voice finally free
to speak without pretending.

Carla

****

Novelist, Designer and Visual Artist Douglas coupland:



From Facebook

“if human beings had the courage, they’d wear their costumes every day of the year, not just on Halloween”

Summary of the Douglas Coupland Quote:

Douglas Coupland suggests that people often hide their true selves, only expressing their real identity—through clothing, creativity, or character—on rare occasions like Halloween. If they had the courage, they'd dress and live as their authentic selves every day.

Expanded Interpretation and Relevance to Transgender Women Today:

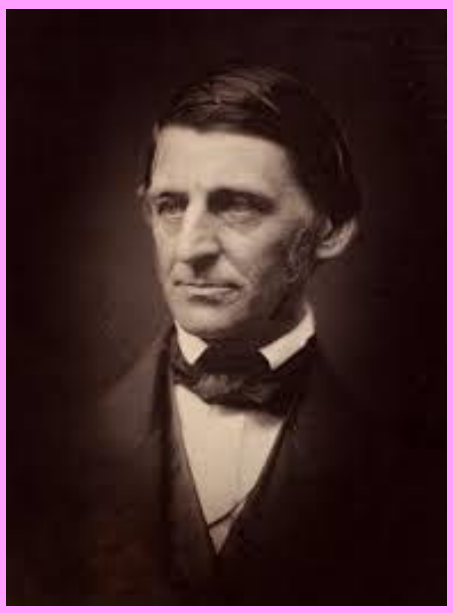
This quote speaks directly to the experience of many transgender women. For years—sometimes decades—they may hide who they are, afraid of rejection, ridicule, or harm. Like a costume worn only once a year, their true identity often stays hidden, worn in private, or imagined in silence.

Halloween, for many trans women, has historically been a rare moment of freedom—a time when dressing as their true selves was socially "allowed," without explanation or judgment. But Coupland's quote challenges that idea. Why should authenticity be limited to a single day? Why should self-expression require permission?

For transgender women today, this quote is a call to courage. It speaks to the power of shedding fear and embracing identity every day, not just when it feels "safe." In a world that still tries to police gender expression, Coupland’s words become a quiet anthem: to live boldly, dress honestly, and be unapologetically true to who you are—every day of the year.

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Philosopher and abolitionist Ralph Waldo Emerson



Wikipedia

“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment”

Expanded Explanation of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Quote:

This quote speaks to the deep human struggle between authenticity and conformity. Emerson reminds us that staying true to who we are—despite social pressures, expectations, and judgment—is not just brave, but one of life's most meaningful victories. The world often pushes people to fit into neat categories, follow norms, and silence parts of themselves that don't align with the mainstream. Resisting that pull and choosing to live as your true self is a profound act of courage and self-respect.

How This Resonates with Transgender Women Today:

For transgender women, this quote holds particular power. From an early age, many are taught—explicitly or subtly—to suppress their identity, to act a certain way, dress a certain way, speak a certain way. The pressure to conform to the gender assigned at birth can be overwhelming, especially in cultures or communities where deviation from the norm is punished or ridiculed. Living as a transgender woman in a world that often tries to erase, deny, or misunderstand that identity is not just difficult—it can be dangerous. So to *be yourself* in that environment, fully and openly, becomes a revolutionary act. It means refusing to live a lie, even when doing so might seem easier. It means walking through fear, pushing past shame, and embracing the beauty of your truth. Transgender women who claim their identity—through name, expression, voice, or presence—embody Emerson's idea of the "greatest accomplishment." They remind the world that authenticity is not only possible, it's powerful. In a society that still pushes so many to hide or conform, their visibility and truth-telling are acts of strength, resilience, and deep human dignity.

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Nava Mau:

A Trailblazing Transgender Actress Redefining Representation



When I travel to or from the UK I always buy myself a copy of Cosmopolitan to read on the plane. On my way to Antugua in February, my copy had an interview with Baby Reindeer star Nava Mau. I'll leave you to dig out the interview but I thought I would share a biography of the transgender star. I hope you enjoy…

Born on May 14, 1992, in Mexico City and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Nava Mau is an award-winning actress, filmmaker, and cultural worker whose work has reshaped the portrayal of transgender women in media. Her journey from community advocacy to international acclaim is a testament to her resilience and commitment to authentic storytelling.

Before entering the entertainment industry, Mau dedicated herself to supporting marginalized communities. She worked as a legal assistant for immigrant survivors of violence and served as a peer counselor, focusing on the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals. These experiences deeply informed her artistic vision, emphasizing the importance of nuanced and compassionate representation.

Mau's breakthrough came with her self-produced short film *Waking Hour* (2019), where she portrayed Sofia, a young transgender woman navigating the complexities of intimacy and personal safety. The film garnered critical acclaim and showcased Mau's talent both in front of and behind the camera.



Wikipedia

In 2021, she starred as Ana in HBO Max's *Generation*, bringing depth and authenticity to the role of a supportive aunt in a diverse family dynamic. However, it

was her portrayal of Teri in Netflix's *Baby Reindeer* (2024) that catapulted her to international recognition. Playing a transgender therapist in a complex relationship, Mau delivered a performance that was both powerful and tender. Her work earned her a historic Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie, making her the first openly transgender woman nominated in this category.

Mau's commitment to authentic representation extends beyond her acting roles. She was a production fellow for the Netflix documentary *Disclosure* (2020), which examines the depiction of transgender people in media. Additionally, she has produced several short films, including *Work*, *Sam's Town*, and *Lovebites*, further contributing to the visibility of transgender narratives.

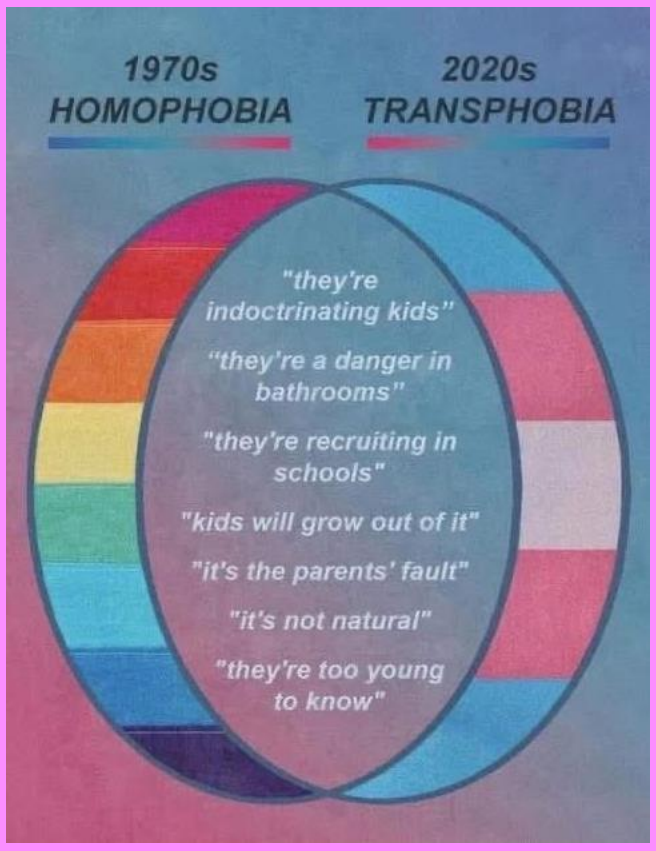
In 2025, Mau joined the final season of Netflix's thriller series *You*, portraying Detective Marquez, a role that continues to challenge stereotypes and expand the presence of transgender characters in mainstream media.



YouTube

Nava Mau's journey reflects a profound dedication to storytelling that honors the complexity of transgender experiences.Through her multifaceted career, she continues to inspire and pave the way for more inclusive and representative narratives in the entertainment industry.

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Travel Proud in the Costa Blanca: Inclusive Holidays with Costa Property Rentals



Travel should be joyful, free, and welcoming — for everyone. But the reality is that many LGBTQ+ travellers still face discrimination or discomfort when away from home. That's where **Costa Property Rentals** is making a difference. As a **certified Travel Proud partner**, this Costa Blanca-based holiday rental company is leading the way in ensuring LGBTQ+ visitors can explore the Spanish coast with confidence, comfort, and pride.

What Does "Travel Proud" Really Mean?

Travel Proud is a global initiative from Booking.com, aiming to create a truly inclusive travel experience for LGBTQ+ people. Backed by expert training from **HospitableMe**, the program equips hospitality providers with the tools and understanding to deliver exceptional, respectful service — without assumptions or awkwardness.

When you see the **Travel Proud badge** on a property listing, it's a clear signal: *you're welcome here*. It means that property has committed to inclusive hospitality, understands the unique needs of LGBTQ+ guests, and has a representative dedicated to ensuring those values are carried through every part of your stay.

Costa Property Rentals: Local, Welcoming, Proud

Whether you're looking for a peaceful villa retreat, a chic apartment near the beach, or a family-friendly town house, **Costa Property Rentals** has the perfect place — and you can rest assured that you'll be met with warmth and respect.

Their team has completed the full **Travel Proud training**, and they go the extra mile to make every guest feel seen, safe, and celebrated. For trans and non-binary guests, this means no awkward questions or assumptions. For same-sex couples, it means holding hands without second thoughts. For every LGBTQ+ traveller, it means being able to relax and be yourself.

Pride Isn't Just for One Month

True inclusion doesn't end after Pride season. Costa Property Rentals is proud to fly the rainbow flag all year round. They support diversity not just in word, but in daily action — from using inclusive language in booking and communication, to ensuring every guest interaction reflects the values of respect and acceptance.

Inclusive Bookings Made Easy

Booking through a Travel Proud certified provider also means you'll notice some important changes to the booking experience itself. Gone are unnecessary gendered titles — and when creating your profile, you'll have more options that reflect the beautiful spectrum of identities within our community.

🌈 Your Costa Blanca Adventure Starts Here

Whether you're planning a romantic getaway, a group trip, or just a solo escape in the sun, **Costa Property Rentals** offers a safe, inclusive, and beautiful home-from-home in one of Spain's most stunning regions.

Look for the Travel Proud badge. Book with confidence. And travel with pride — every day of the year.

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The Emerald Isle

ORIHUELA COSTA

ORIHUELA PRIDE 2025

IN MEMORY OF STEVIE SPIT

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY DS Real Estate







Join us on **28th June** for Orihuela Costa Pride at the Emerald Isle! Get ready for an unforgettable day of talent, music, and show-stopping performances!

We're bringing you an incredible lineup featuring:

- DJ Gina G & Mick Nottingham – Dynamic duo bringing the energy
- Chole Leigh as Cher – Believe us, you won't want to miss this tribute!
- Chole Jade Jones – Soulful vocals and star power
- Nikki G – Pure powerhouse performer
- DJ Luscious (Sorya) – Spinning the vibes all night long
- Bowie Tribute – A stellar homage to the legend himself
- Lucy Taffs – Electrifying vocals and unforgettable stage presence
- DJ Angeliya – Beats that keep the dancefloor alive
- Natasha – Dance of Evolution – A performance that moves the soul

Don't miss this incredible event!





