Trans Focus

The World from a Transgender Perspective

March 2026



Is it time to turn Green?

Why the "T" belongs!

Do you still have it?

Welcome to March

The shortest month of the year has passed, and it was probably one of the busiest. Apart from the fact that we have less time to put the magazine together, Both Penny's and Carla's birthdays and our social events make February a lot busier than January.

This month there's a little more LGBTQ content from a wider perspective. If the trans community have learnt anything, it's that we have stood together with the LGB community for decades. The 'LGBTQ all together' feature in this edition outlines our togetherness. As ever, if anyone wants to contribute to future editions, then please do so. Different people's perspectives are always most welcome.

Interestingly, there was a feature on a UK TV programme recently about the Conway effect, and what impact it has on minorities, women and trans people specifically. It was already written for this edition before the programme went out, which shows its relevance today. Originating from the genius of transgender woman Lynn Conway, if you haven't come across Lynn or the Conway effect before, read and see how historical events have been manipulated.

Amongst all the political turmoil aimed at the trans communities in the UK and USA, we stay strong and defiant. It's always interesting how many people in social media complain about LGBT people being in your face. That's a response to equality. When fairness arises, the dominant group get twitchy. They happily enjoy their privilege and equality affects that.

Social media can become quite an issue for minorities, but I find it interesting that people hiding behind their computers are happy to dish out the usual nonsense. A simple pro trans post will attract the abuse. What I have found though, is that despite the abuse, as soon as you call someone a 'cis man' they really don't like it. In fact ,they get quite irate. It seems that the poor lambs are not quite as robust as they make out.

We also met a new Tgirl in the area last week. Clair is from the UK and has a holiday home here in Spain and will be visiting regularly. We met her last week, and she became the latest member of Costa Blanca Tgirls. Our ever-growing group.

To celebrate Carla's birthday, she had a party at a local bar. Amongst the revellers were some Tgirls. It went on until late, and a good time was had by all.



Costa Blanca TGirls out at Carla’s birthday party.

As ever, thank you for downloading, reading and continued support. We leave you with what I think is quite a poignant quote.

Until next month,

Love Carla & Penny XX



We Didn’t Get This Far By Splitting Apart (And Honestly, Why Would We?)





Every so often someone tries to tell us we’re too different.

That the letters should separate.
That the LGB should go one way and the T another.
That our stories aren’t really connected.

And every time I hear that, I have the same thought:

Have you *met* us?

We are practically stitched together by shared history, borrowed eyeliner, late-night heart-to-hearts and decades of “you’ll be fine, love — just be yourself.”

Before I Knew I Was Me

Long before I fully understood myself, before I had the language, before I had the courage, there were LGB people quietly shaping me.

Friends who showed me that living outside expectation was possible.
Gay men who wore confidence like armour and taught me that visibility could be power.
Lesbians who embodied unapologetic authenticity long before it was trendy.
Bi friends who gently dismantled binaries without even trying.



They may not have realised it at the time, but they were building the foundations beneath my feet.

When I was still working out who I was, they were already modelling something vital: you don’t have to shrink to survive.

Without those allies — those friends, those trailblazers, those ordinary brave people — I honestly don’t know if I would have found my way as confidently as I eventually did.

We don’t evolve in isolation. We grow in community.



The Alphabet Isn’t a Battlefield — It’s a Dinner Party

If the LGBTQ+ community were a dinner party, it wouldn’t be neatly organised. It would be noisy, affectionate and occasionally chaotic.

Someone would be passionately explaining queer history.
Someone else would be correcting the playlist.
There would be at least one dramatic story about a disastrous date.
And somebody would absolutely be reorganising the seating plan for maximum gossip potential.

But no one would be left outside.

That’s the point.

We are different. Of course we are. That’s what makes it interesting.

But difference has never meant division. It has meant expansion.

And Then There’s Now

Fast forward to today, and I see that same warmth in our local LGBTQ Facebook group.

What a joy that space is.

Positive. Encouraging. Generous.
A mix of identities, ages, stories and experiences — all showing up for one another.

When someone posts a worry, people rally.
When someone shares good news, the comments fill with celebration.
When someone new arrives, they are welcomed — not interrogated.

It’s not dramatic activism. It’s something quieter and just as powerful: everyday solidarity.

And that kind of space doesn't happen by accident. It happens because people choose kindness over division.



We Made Each Other

Here's something I believe deeply:

None of us became who we are alone.

We were shaped by mentors, friends, role models and allies across the letters. We borrowed courage from each other. We learned language from each other. We inherited resilience from those who came before.

The gay friend who first made you feel normal.
The lesbian colleague who quietly had your back.
The bi activist who challenged your thinking.
The trans woman who showed you what was possible.

We made each other.

So when someone suggests we should tidy ourselves into separate boxes, I can't help but smile.

Because the truth is far messier — and far more beautiful.

We didn't get this far by splitting apart.

We got here by pulling up chairs, pouring drinks, fixing each other's crowns and saying:

"You belong. Sit with us."

And honestly?
Why would we ever want it any other way?



The Ripple Effect: How Transmisogyny Endangers Cis Women Too

In an era where gender debates dominate headlines, one term often surfaces amid heated discussions: transmisogyny. Coined by author Julia Serano in her 2007 book *Whipping Girl*, transmisogyny describes the unique intersection of transphobia and misogyny directed primarily at trans women and transfeminine people. It manifests in ways that devalue their femininity, question their womanhood, and expose them to heightened risks of violence and discrimination. But here's the twist that's often overlooked: transmisogyny doesn't stop at trans women. It seeps into the lives of cisgender (cis) women, enforcing rigid gender norms that police all femininity and undermine women's rights as a whole. Far from being an isolated issue, transmisogyny acts as a Trojan horse for broader misogyny, threatening the safety, autonomy, and unity of women across the spectrum.

Consider the story of a cis woman in a public restroom. She's tall, with broad shoulders and a deeper voice, traits that fall outside narrow stereotypes of "femininity." Suddenly, she's confronted, accused of being trans, and harassed or even assaulted.



This isn't hypothetical; it's a growing reality fueled by anti-trans rhetoric. In 2016, following bathroom bills like North Carolina's HB2, reports surged of cis women, particularly women of colour and those with non-conforming features, being targeted in restrooms under the guise of "protecting women." Such incidents reveal how transmisogyny creates a culture of suspicion that harms anyone

perceived as not "woman enough," turning everyday spaces into battlegrounds for all women.

The Roots of Transmisogyny and Its Broader Reach

Transmisogyny operates on a foundation of intertwined prejudices: it combines hatred of trans identities with the devaluation of women. Trans women face disproportionate violence, over half of anti-LGBTQ+ homicides target them. Yet, this bigotry doesn't exist in a vacuum. It reinforces patriarchal standards that dictate how women "should" look, act, and exist. When society deems trans women "less than" for their femininity, it implicitly sets a bar that cis women must also clear, or face consequences.

Online forums like Reddit highlight this spillover effect. Users discuss how transphobia has escalated to the point where cis women are dragged out of stores or assaulted because they're mistaken for trans. One commenter noted, "A lot of transphobia is just an extension of misogyny and homophobia which absolutely harm cis people too." This isn't rare; it disproportionately affects women of colour, who often don't fit Eurocentric ideals of femininity, blending racism with gender policing. Intersex women and those with conditions like PCOS face similar scrutiny, as do athletic cis women in sports where "masculine" builds lead to invasive testing and bans.



In essence, transmisogyny upholds a binary where deviation from "traditional" womanhood is punishable. This harms cis women by perpetuating the idea that femininity must be performative and fragile—echoing age-old misogynistic tropes that limit all women's freedoms.

Dividing Women: The Feminist Fallout

Feminism has long fought against the objectification and control of women's bodies, yet some arguments against trans inclusion ironically reinforce these very issues. So-called "cis-woman-protective" (CWP) arguments claim that recognising trans women's rights endangers cis women in spaces like prisons, shelters, or sports. However, legal analyses show these claims often backfire, harming the cis women they purport to protect by relying on essentialist views of biology that ignore human diversity.

For instance, excluding trans women from women's spaces doesn't eliminate risks; it amplifies them by fostering division. As one feminist writer argues, "Trans exclusion makes feminism weaker for trans and cis women alike," because it ignores shared experiences of misogyny and allows patriarchal forces to exploit the rift. On platforms like X (formerly Twitter), users echo this: "Transmisogyny affects cis women too," with examples of cis women harassed in bathrooms for appearing "masculine." This rhetoric echoes historical tactics used against other marginalized groups, like how homophobia in the 1980s portrayed queer people as threats, ultimately harming broader civil rights.



Moreover, anti-trans laws have unintended victims. In the UK, a 2025 Supreme Court ruling defining womanhood by biological sex risked denying trans women access to single-sex spaces, but it also sparked fears among cis women about increased policing of their own bodies. Globally, authoritarian regimes use transphobia to roll back women's

rights, blending it with patriarchy to control all gender expression.

Intersections: Race, Class, and Beyond

Transmisogyny doesn't operate alone; it's amplified by other oppressions. Trans women of colour experience "combined discrimination," facing racism, sexism, and transphobia simultaneously, which correlates with higher depression rates. This mirrors how cis women of colour are targeted: their features, darker skin, broader builds, are weaponised under the same lens that "clocks" trans women. As one X user put it, "Transphobia upholds yt [white] supremacy," noting how it endangers non-white cis women more.

Class plays a role too. Trans women are often forced into precarious work like sex work due to discrimination, a fate that echoes the economic vulnerabilities of many cis women under patriarchy. When society devalues trans femininity, it devalues all femininity, pushing cis women toward hyper-feminine ideals that can lead to body dysmorphia, eating disorders, or unnecessary surgeries.

Real-World Consequences: From Bathrooms to Boardrooms

The threats aren't abstract. Anti-trans bathroom policies have led to vigilante harassment of cis women, making public spaces less safe for everyone. In sports, bans on trans athletes have resulted in cis women like Algerian boxer Imane Khelif facing scrutiny over their "masculine" traits, proving how these rules boomerang.



Even healthcare suffers: trans women's struggles for affirmation highlight broader issues in women's medicine, like dismissal of pain or reproductive rights.

Critics from across the spectrum, including some gender-critical voices, argue that trans rights erode women's boundaries. Yet evidence shows no increased risk from trans inclusion, claims of trans women as predators lack substantiation and mirror outdated smears against other minorities. Instead, these fears distract from real threats like domestic violence, which affects cis and trans women alike.

Toward Solidarity: A Unified Front

Transmisogyny isn't just a "trans issue", it's a women's issue. By challenging it, cis women strengthen their own fight against patriarchy. As one advocate urges, "Trans women ought to be included in the feminist coalition because we share some experiences of misogyny with cis women." Solidarity means recognizing that freeing trans women from transmisogyny liberates all women from confining norms.

In a world quick to divide, let's remember: an attack on one woman's right to exist as she is, threatens us all. The path forward? Education, empathy, and collective action to dismantle the systems that pit us against each other. Only then can we build a feminism that's truly inclusive and unbreakable.



Lynn Conway and the Conway Effect: Why Our Brilliance Gets Erased — and Why It Still Matters

There are transgender people who survive.
There are transgender people who inspire.
And then there are transgender people who quietly change the world.

Lynn Conway did all three.

If you are reading this on a smartphone, laptop, or tablet, you are benefiting from her work. Yet for decades, most people had no idea who she was.

That isn’t an accident. And that’s where the *Conway Effect* comes in.



Photo from Latimes.com

A Genius Before the World Was Ready

Lynn Conway was born in 1938 and showed early brilliance in engineering. In the 1960s she worked at IBM, where she made groundbreaking contributions to computer processor design. Her work was ahead of its time and helped lay foundations for modern computing.

But in 1968, when she told IBM she intended to transition, she was fired.

Just like that.

No celebration of her talent. No loyalty. No understanding. Just dismissal.

This is a story many in our community recognise. The moment you live authentically can become the moment institutions decide you are “too much.”

But Lynn did something extraordinary. She rebuilt her life from scratch.

After transitioning, she restarted her career under her true name. She went on to co-develop revolutionary methods for designing microchips at Xerox PARC. Her work in Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) transformed how chips are built — shaping the modern tech industry as we know it.

Silicon Valley runs, in part, on her ideas.

And yet, for many years, she was missing from the story.

What Is the Conway Effect?

Lynn Conway later spoke about a pattern she had lived through. She described how innovators who are “different” — women, transgender people, queer people, people of colour are often:

- Written out of history
- Credited less than colleagues
- Forgotten when awards are handed out
- Or only recognised after someone else is centred

She called this the **Conway Effect**.

It’s not always loud discrimination. Sometimes it’s quieter. More polite. More institutional.

It’s the conference panel with no trans voices.
It’s the article that names everyone but you.
It’s the “team effort” narrative that somehow erases the person who did the breakthrough work.

It’s the way history gets rewritten to feel comfortable.



Photo from wikipedia

Why This Hits Our Community So Hard

For transgender people especially, the Conway Effect has an extra edge.

When you transition, your past achievements can become “complicated.”
Colleagues may feel awkward.
Institutions may distance themselves.
Archives may misgender you.

Sometimes people pretend your contributions belonged to a version of you that no longer exists.

But we exist. Fully. Across our whole lives.

Lynn Conway refused to let her legacy be split in two. Later in life, she became publicly visible as a transgender woman, sharing her story online when there were very few trans role models in tech. She reclaimed her narrative — and forced institutions to confront what they had done.

In 2020, IBM formally apologised for firing her.

It took 52 years.

The Conway Effect Today

We might like to think this kind of erasure belongs to the past. It doesn't.

The Conway Effect is still playing out — sometimes subtly, sometimes aggressively.

Here are just a few modern echoes:

1. Trans Creators Without Credit

Trans artists, writers, and activists often originate language, frameworks, or cultural shifts — only to see them mainstreamed by cis voices who receive the recognition and monetisation.

2. Tech and AI Bias

AI systems reflect the data they're trained on. When trans people are excluded from datasets, histories, or design teams, our realities are misrepresented or erased. Innovation built without us replicates the Conway Effect at scale.

3. Research and Policy

Trans researchers and community experts frequently find their lived expertise sidelined in favour of "neutral" or "objective" voices — often those with less direct knowledge but more institutional power.

4. Anti-Trans Erasure Campaigns

In some countries, political movements are actively attempting to erase transgender contributions from public life — removing books, blocking inclusive curricula, and redefining gender in law. That is the Conway Effect weaponised.

5. Workplace "Inclusion" Without Visibility

Corporations celebrate Pride while trans employees remain underrepresented at senior levels. Innovation is welcomed — as long as the innovator fits comfortably within existing norms.



YouTube

Why Lynn Conway Still Matters

Lynn Conway didn’t just help invent the future of computing.

She showed us something vital:

You can be erased and still endure.
You can be pushed out and still transform the world.
You can transition — and your brilliance transitions with you.

Her life reminds us that recognition is political. That credit is power. And that telling our own stories matters.

For a community that is constantly told we are new, trendy, or disruptive, Lynn Conway stands as proof that we have *always* been here — building, teaching, inventing, leading.

The Conway Effect teaches us to look twice.
To ask who is missing.
To name who was overlooked.

And most importantly — to make sure the next generation of trans innovators does not have to wait 50 years for an apology.

Watch on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9U4wio-gOVE

Is time to turn Green?

After the surprise victory of the Green PArty in the Gorton and Denton by-election we take a look at their policies towards Trans Men and Women.



The Green Party UK's Stance on Transgender Women: Policies, Support, and Internal Debates

The Green Party of England and Wales, often referred to as the Green Party UK, has positioned itself as a progressive political force emphasising environmental sustainability, social justice, and equality. In recent years, the party's policies on gender identity and transgender rights have garnered significant attention, particularly regarding transgender women. As of 2026, the Green Party maintains a strong commitment to transgender inclusion, viewing trans rights as integral to broader human rights frameworks. This article explores the party's official policies, key statements, and the surrounding controversies.

Official Policies on Transgender Rights



At the core of the Green Party's approach is the recognition that "trans women are women, trans men are men, and non-binary identities exist and are valid." This affirmation underpins their support for self-identification (self-ID) in gender recognition processes. The party advocates for reforming the Gender

Recognition Act (GRA) to allow individuals to change their legal gender through self-declaration, eliminating the current requirements for medical diagnosis and a lengthy bureaucratic process. Proponents within the party argue that self-ID simplifies access for transgender people, noting that elements of it are already in practice, such as changing gender markers on passports with a doctor's letter.



In their policy pledges, the Greens emphasise protecting transgender individuals from discrimination, particularly in areas like healthcare, employment, and public services. For instance, the party has called for the withdrawal of government guidance on single-sex spaces, describing it as "ill-considered and impractical." This guidance, which allows for the exclusion of transgender women from certain women-only facilities, is seen by the Greens as discriminatory. Instead, they push for inclusive policies that ensure transgender women can access appropriate facilities without being left without options.



The party's 2024 manifesto highlighted human rights but focused primarily on the needs of transgender and non-binary people, supporting self-ID to enable legal recognition without barriers. This includes opposition to restrictions that might limit transgender women's participation in women's spaces, sports, or services. In response to legal developments, such as the 2025 UK Supreme Court ruling that defined "woman" based on biological sex for certain

protections, Green Party lawmakers expressed concern, calling it a "huge blow" to marginalised groups and reaffirming their pro-trans stance.



Healthcare and Broader Support

The Green Party advocates for improved transgender healthcare within the NHS, criticising delays and barriers in gender-affirming care. They have been vocal against policies perceived as restricting access to treatments like puberty blockers, though internal discussions have highlighted tensions following reports like the Cass Review in 2024, which questioned the evidence base for such interventions in youth. Despite this, the party's leadership has maintained a supportive position, with figures like Zack Polanski campaigning on "trans rights are human rights."

In party structures, membership in groups like Green Party Women is open to anyone who identifies as a woman or gender-variant, reflecting their inclusive definition of gender. This policy has been praised by trans advocacy groups but criticised for potentially diluting sex-based representation.



Internal Conflicts and Criticisms

While the Green Party's pro-trans policies have solidified its appeal among progressive voters, they have also sparked significant internal divisions. A leaked 53-page dossier in 2025 revealed deep rifts over trans guidance,

with accusations that the party is "tearing itself apart." Gender-critical members, those who prioritize biological sex in discussions of rights, claim the party has been "captured" by trans rights activists, leading to a clampdown on free speech.

High-profile cases include the expulsion of former health spokesperson Dr. Pallavi Devulapalli in 2025,



who alleged it was due to her gender-critical views opposing self-ID and the party's affirmation that trans women are women. Similarly, former London Assembly member Darren Johnson was suspended after criticising the party's response to the Cass Review. At least 40 women reportedly left the party following the appointment of a trans woman as head of the Women's section.

External criticisms come from groups like Sex Matters, which argue that the Greens' policies overlook women's human rights by prioritising transgender inclusion without addressing potential conflicts, such as in prisons, sports, or shelters. The party has also faced backlash for blocking a women's rights group from its conference over gender ideology disputes. In Scotland, Green leaders have stated that those denying biological reality are not welcome.

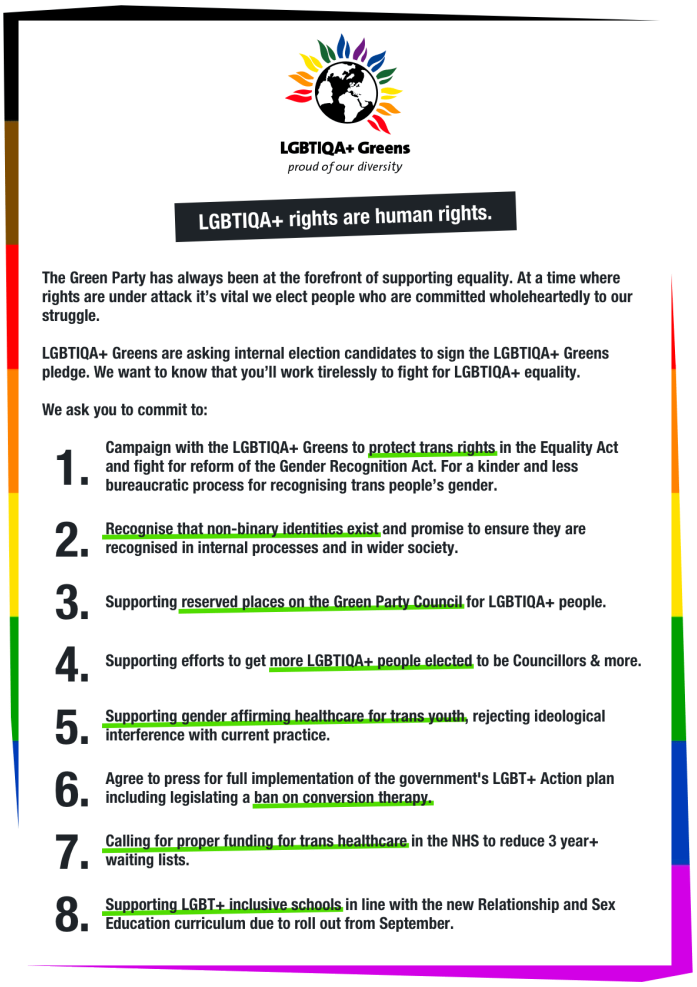
The Green Feminists Women and Girls Declaration group has submitted evidence to parliamentary inquiries, warning that self-ID within parties leads to a loss of political space for women. Despite these tensions, the party has acknowledged internal conflicts and committed

to resolving them while upholding trans rights.

Looking Ahead

As the Green Party navigates these debates, its policies continue to evolve amid broader UK discussions on gender and equality. With co-leaders like Adrian Ramsay and Ellie Chowns emphasising inclusivity, the party remains firm in its pro-trans position, but the ongoing expulsions and resignations suggest challenges in balancing diverse viewpoints. For voters concerned with transgender rights, the Greens offer a clear progressive alternative, though critics argue this comes at the expense of sex-based protections.





LGBTIQA+ Greens
proud of our diversity

LGBTIQA+ rights are human rights.

The Green Party has always been at the forefront of supporting equality. At a time where rights are under attack it's vital we elect people who are committed wholeheartedly to our struggle.

LGBTIQA+ Greens are asking internal election candidates to sign the LGBTIQA+ Greens pledge. We want to know that you'll work tirelessly to fight for LGBTIQA+ equality.

We ask you to commit to:

1. Campaign with the LGBTIQA+ Greens to protect trans rights in the Equality Act and fight for reform of the Gender Recognition Act. For a kinder and less bureaucratic process for recognising trans people's gender.
2. Recognise that non-binary identities exist and promise to ensure they are recognised in internal processes and in wider society.
3. Supporting reserved places on the Green Party Council for LGBTIQA+ people.
4. Supporting efforts to get more LGBTIQA+ people elected to be Councillors & more.
5. Supporting gender affirming healthcare for trans youth, rejecting ideological interference with current practice.
6. Agree to press for full implementation of the government's LGBT+ Action plan including legislating a ban on conversion therapy.
7. Calling for proper funding for trans healthcare in the NHS to reduce 3 year+ waiting lists.
8. Supporting LGBT+ inclusive schools in line with the new Relationship and Sex Education curriculum due to roll out from September.

Famous Albums by LGBT Acts.

I've removed the act and title of these 10 albums. How many can you get out of 20?

Answers at the end of the magazine.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 

Cinderella

and the Other Glass Slipper



Once upon a time — because all the best revolutions begin that way, there was a young person named Cinderella who was very good at sweeping ashes and very bad at fitting into expectations.

In this kingdom, everyone believed in two things: happily-ever-afters and proper categories. Princes married princesses. Dresses were for girls. Boots were for boys. And glass slippers? Well. They only came in one size.

Cinderella had tried very hard to be the “right” sort of girl. She had balanced trays, lowered her eyes, and practised smiling politely when her stepmother spoke about “knowing one’s place.” But late at night, when the house was quiet, Cinderella would try on different versions of herself in the mirror — sometimes soft and sparkling, sometimes sharp and suited, sometimes something beautifully in between.

The invitation to the royal ball arrived edged in gold. *All eligible maidens are required to attend.* Required. There’s always that word, isn’t there?

Cinderella almost stayed home.

But then, in a shimmer of improbable timing, the Fairy Godparent arrived — not with a wand exactly, but with a tote bag full of possibility.

“My dear,” they said, adjusting their sensible shoes, “magic is not about turning pumpkins into coaches. It’s about turning fear into courage.”

With a flick of something between a wink and a spell, Cinderella’s rags dissolved into an outfit that did not disguise, but revealed. A jacket with sharp tailoring and a skirt that swirled like defiance. Boots with a little heel. A hint of glitter. The look whispered: lesbian grace, gay joy, bisexual boldness, transgender truth, queer magic. It held the quiet strength of those still

questioning and the fierce light of allies who stand beside them. It shimmered with every letter — L, G, B, T, Q — like constellations stitched into fabric.



At the ball, the chandeliers blazed and the orchestra swelled. Princes searched for delicate maidens. Courtiers scanned for compliance. But when Cinderella entered, something unexpected happened.

People stared.

Not because they were shocked — though some were — but because she looked… radiant. Not perfect. Not conventional. Radiant in the way someone is when they are finally not pretending.

The Prince (who had secretly always disliked the word “eligible”) approached with curiosity rather than conquest.

“You’re not dressed like the others,” he said.

“Neither are you,” Cinderella replied, noting the way his crown sat slightly askew, as though he, too, was weary of inherited roles.

They danced — not in the rigid steps prescribed by the court, but in laughter. Around them were others: two ladies spinning freely together; a knight blushing as he clasped hands with a visiting duke; a quiet courtier watching it all, uncertain but hopeful. The ball, once a marketplace of marriage, began to feel like a festival of possibility.

And yes, at midnight there was running. There is always running when the world has not yet caught up.

The glass slipper was found, of course. But when the Prince arrived at Cinderella’s door and held it out, something extraordinary happened.

“It doesn’t quite fit,” Cinderella said gently. “Because I am not only one thing.”



From her pocket, she drew the other slipper — sturdier, scuffed, more practical — the one she had made herself.

The Prince smiled. “Then perhaps the kingdom must widen its measure.”

And so it did. Not perfectly. Not overnight. But enough.

They say the kingdom learned that love is not a narrow shoe to be forced upon a single foot. It is a dance floor. It is chosen family. It is the courage to arrive as yourself — lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, allied, or still discovering.

And the moral, as all good childish threads insist?

If the slipper doesn’t fit, it may not be your foot that needs changing.



It was school a long time ago. I remember it vividly as if it was yesterday. I'm convinced the same people who used that intended insult in school are the same ones now sitting at their keyboard calling us men.

This may sound odd to some, but it never bothered me then. I was never bullied at school, but I was often called a girl, yet it didn't feel wrong. I never sought to understand why I felt that way until a few years ago…

Behind The Screen

At school you called me a girl.
It was a joke to you,
a nudge, a laugh, a word thrown like chalk dust.

Now you call me a man
as if you have discovered something profound,
as if repetition makes it true.

Your social media pages glow with certainty.
"Mentally ill."
"Biological."
"Only two sexes."
"Ideology."
"Once a man, always a man."

The same tired slogans,
copied and pasted like armour.

But you don't say it to my face.
You type it.
You press "send."
You sit behind a screen that protects you
from the weight of your own words.

You question my body.
You mock what you think I have,
reduce me to parts,
as if identity could be measured
in inches of flesh.

You ask if I have standards.
You ask if I have the courage
you insist I possess.

Courage is not anatomy.
It is standing in the open
and living anyway.

If you need to dig at others
to feel steady in yourself,
if my existence unsettles you
so deeply that you must try to shrink me,

then I have news for you.

I am not the one hiding.

Carla Moss

Thomas(ine) Hall

Sometimes while inadvertently searching for ideas for writing I come across some quite remarkable stories. This is one of them…

Thomas(ine) Hall was an intersex person living in early seventeenth-century colonial America, whose life offers a rare and powerful glimpse into how gender variance was understood, and controlled — in the 1600s.



Wikipedia

Born in England around 1603, Hall was raised as female and named Thomasine. As a young adult, they reportedly alternated between living as a woman and as a man, adopting the name Thomas when presenting as male. This fluidity was not simply personal expression; it was closely tied to survival and economic opportunity. In England, Hall worked in gendered roles associated with both sexes, including needlework while living as a woman and military service while presenting as a man.

By the 1620s, Hall had travelled to the English colony of Virginia. There, in the small settlement of Warrosquyoake (in present-day Isle of Wight County), neighbours became suspicious and confused about Hall's gender. Colonial society depended heavily on rigid binary distinctions: legal status, labour expectations, clothing, inheritance, and sexual morality were all structured around whether someone was classified male or female.

In 1629, the matter came before the Virginia General Court in Jamestown. Hall was subjected to invasive physical examinations by local women and later by men, in order to determine their "true" sex. The court ultimately concluded that Hall possessed both male and female physical characteristics. Rather than choosing one

sex over the other, the judges issued an extraordinary ruling: Hall was ordered to wear a combination of male and female clothing, men's breeches and a woman's apron and head covering — effectively marking them publicly as both.



Wikipedia

This decision did not affirm gender diversity in any modern sense. Instead, it functioned as regulation and surveillance. By forcing Hall to dress in mixed attire, authorities ensured that their body and identity remained visible and controlled within a society deeply anxious about gender boundaries.

After the court ruling, historical records fall silent. We do not know how long Hall lived, whether they remained in Virginia, or how they understood their own identity in personal terms. What survives is the court transcript — one of the earliest documented cases of an intersex person in colonial American history.



Hall's story resonates powerfully today. The impulse to inspect, define, legislate and publicly mark bodies that do not conform to binary expectations has not disappeared; it has merely changed form. Contemporary hostility toward transgender and intersex people — from invasive debates about anatomy to laws regulating clothing, bathrooms, healthcare and identity documents — echoes the same fear of ambiguity that shaped the 1629 ruling. Thomas(ine) Hall reminds us that gender diversity is not new, but the anxiety it provokes in rigid systems is centuries old. The lesson from their life is not only historical: it is a warning about what happens when institutions claim the authority to decide who a person is, rather than allowing individuals the dignity of self-definition.

“Wouldn’t It Be Good: Finding Trans Meaning in Old Songs”

Music has a way of holding on to us. Melodies that once played in the background of youth later return as companions in self-discovery. For me, these four songs from the 1980s and 1990s — *Wouldn’t It Be Good* (Nik Kershaw), *Million Suns* (Ooberman), *Space Age Love Song* (A Flock of Seagulls), and *There She Goes* (The La’s), have found new meaning through my transgender journey.

Nik Kershaw’s *Wouldn’t It Be Good* was once an anthem of envy and alienation. A young man trapped by circumstance sings of wanting to swap lives, even for a day. Back then, it was about class and emotional isolation. For me now, it speaks of gender longing — that quiet ache of wanting to live in someone else’s skin, to see how it feels to walk through the world as your true self. It’s not about jealousy, but yearning for authenticity.



Wouldn’t it Be Good, Nik Kershaw

Wouldn't it be good to be in your shoes
Even if it was for just one day?
Wouldn't it be good if we could wish ourselves away?
Wouldn't it be good to be on your side?
The grass is always greener over there
Wouldn't it be good if we could live without a care?

https://youtu.be/deGTvK1FkZo?si=aDCnNHcqN4s0LDGl

Ooberman’s *Million Suns* captures transformation in a softer, more healing light. The song’s original theme is love as salvation — someone who “takes the pain away.” But

when I hear it, I think of self-acceptance. The moment you begin to embrace who you are, the darkness lifts. “You shine with the light of a million suns” becomes a celebration of trans joy — that radiance that comes when you stop hiding.



Million Suns, Ooberman

I like walking in the dark
Finding ways to make a mark
And now the clouds begin to part
Pouring moonlight on my heart, heart, heart
She takes the pain away

You shine with the light of a million suns
Don't you know that everyone can see you?
Shine with the light of a million suns
Don't you know that everyone can see you shine?

She takes the pain away...

https://youtu.be/NqeUcDfX8cA?si=McwbxvlQYQ3Sh2lc

Then there’s *Space Age Love Song* by A Flock of Seagulls — a song drenched in new wave romanticism. On the surface, it’s a simple love story: the spark when eyes meet. For me, it’s the moment I first looked in the mirror and saw myself looking back. That instant of recognition — not of someone else, but of me. Love, at last, turned inward.



Space Age Love Song, A Flock of Seagulls

I saw your eyes
And you made me smile
For a little while
I was falling in love

I saw your eyes
And you touched my mind
Although it took a while
I was falling in love

I was falling in love

https://youtu.be/gOK3rqVgN2I?si=iXOD_FbigZsHsOPL

Finally, *There She Goes* by The La's. Once seen as a love song (or sometimes misread as a drug reference), it has become, for me, an anthem of emergence. *There she goes again* — not disappearing, but arriving. A celebration of visibility, of finally being seen by the world and by myself. It's not melancholy anymore; it's freedom.



There She Goes, The La’s

There she goes
There she goes again
She calls my name, pulls my train
No one else could heal my pain
But I just can't contain
This feelin' that remains
There she goes
There she goes again
Chasing down my lane
And I just can't contain
This feelin' that remains

https://youtu.be/CZXLLMbJdZ4?si=rWJgWvm1Aea85O7b

Music doesn’t change, but we do. These songs are still the same, yet they now tell my story, too. Each lyric, once about distance or desire, has become a step toward understanding, toward living as the person I always was. In the end, it’s not about rewriting the past — it’s about reclaiming it, note by note.

Transgender Women in Ancient Rome: Challenging Gender Norms in the Eternal City

Ancient Rome, often romanticised for its military prowess, engineering feats, and rigid social hierarchies, was a society deeply invested in binary gender roles. Men were expected to embody virtus, strength, courage, and dominance, while women were confined to domestic spheres and subservience. Yet, historical records reveal individuals who defied these norms, adopting identities and practices that modern scholars interpret as transgender or gender-nonconforming. These figures, such as the priestesses known as the Gallae and the emperor Elagabalus, provide glimpses into a more fluid understanding of gender than Rome's patriarchal framework might suggest. Drawing from classical texts, archaeological evidence, and contemporary analysis, this article explores their stories, highlighting how they navigated, or subverted, Roman expectations.

The Gallae: Devoted Priestesses of Cybele

One of the most prominent examples of gender transgression in ancient Rome comes from the cult of Cybele, the Phrygian goddess known to Romans as Magna Mater, or "Great Mother." Imported to Rome in 205 BCE during the Second Punic War, Cybele's worship brought with it a cadre of devoted followers called the Galli (singular: Gallus), often referred to in feminine terms as Gallae. These individuals, assigned male at birth, underwent ritual castration as part of their initiation, a process tied to the myth of Cybele's consort Attis, who castrated himself in a divine frenzy. Afterward, they dressed in women's clothing, wore makeup, jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles, and referred to themselves using feminine language.

The Gallae's practices placed them outside Rome's strict gender binary. Roman authors like Firmicus Maternus noted that they "say they are not men... and want to pass as women," leading modern historians to view them as early transgender figures. They participated in ecstatic rituals, including frenzied dances and processions through the streets, begging for alms while playing flutes and cymbals. This visibility made them both revered and reviled: celebrated for their role in Cybele's cult, which was officially sanctioned by the state, but marginalised for rejecting Roman manhood. Citizenship laws even barred Roman men from joining, fearing the cult's "effeminacy" would erode traditional values.

Archaeological finds, such as a burial in northern England of a Gallus adorned with feminine jewelry, underscore their lived reality. For some, the cult offered refuge, a community where gender dysphoria could be expressed through devotion. As one scholar notes, it allowed individuals to escape "the strict binary gender system of the Romans."



This depiction of a Gallus highlights the elaborate attire and ritualistic elements central to their identity.

The Gallae's existence challenges the notion that transgender experiences are modern inventions, showing how ancient religious spaces could foster non-binary expressions. Their influence persisted for centuries, with records spanning from 200 BCE to 300 CE.

Elagabalus: An Emperor's Quest for Authenticity

Perhaps the most famous figure associated with transgender identity in Rome is Elagabalus (also known as Heliogabalus), who ruled from 218 to 222 CE. Born around 204 CE as Varius Avitus Bassianus, Elagabalus ascended the throne at age 14 amid political intrigue. Historical accounts, though often hostile and sensationalised by later writers like Cassius Dio and Herodian, paint a portrait of a ruler who rejected male norms in favour of a feminine identity.

Elagabalus reportedly wore women's clothing, makeup, and wigs, preferred to be addressed as "lady" or "queen," and even married a charioteer named Hierocles, referring to herself as his wife. Dio recounts that she offered vast sums to any surgeon who could provide her with female genitalia, a desire interpreted today as a pursuit of gender-affirming surgery. These behaviors went beyond mere eccentricity; they represented a profound rejection of assigned gender, leading some modern institutions, like the North Hertfordshire Museum, to reclassify Elagabalus as a transgender woman and use she/her pronouns.



This ancient bust captures Elagabalus's youthful features, often stylized in art to emphasize her feminine qualities.

As high priestess of the Syrian sun god Elagabal (from whom she took her name), Elagabalus introduced Eastern religious practices to Rome, including a controversial marriage to a Vestal Virgin and the elevation of a black meteorite as a divine symbol. Her reign was marked by scandal, including prostitution in

taverns while dressed as a woman, which fueled opposition from the Praetorian Guard. Assassinated at 18, her legacy was smeared by successors, but recent scholarship separates propaganda from evidence of genuine gender expression. Historians caution against anachronistic labels, yet accounts of her desperation for bodily alignment resonate with transgender narratives today.

Broader Contexts and Legacy

Beyond the Gallae and Elagabalus, Roman literature hints at other gender-fluid experiences. Ovid's myth of Iphis, a girl raised as a boy who transforms into a man via divine intervention, explores themes of gender incompatibility. Pliny the Elder documented cases of spontaneous sex changes, reflecting a cultural fascination with fluid bodies. However, these were often sensationalized or pathologized, as Rome prioritised reproductive masculinity.



Reliefs like this one of Cybele and her attendants illustrate the goddess's role in providing a space for gender exploration.

The stories of transgender women in ancient Rome remind us that gender diversity has deep roots, even in societies that suppressed it. While Roman sources were biased, often written by elite men hostile to "effeminacy", they preserve evidence of resilience and community. Today, these figures inspire discussions on identity, proving that history's margins hold profound truths about human experience.

Would You Ask That to Anyone Else?

When you meet someone for the first time, do you ever ask anything about their medical history?

One of the first questions many trans women hear — sometimes even before "hello" is: "So… have you had *the operation*?"



It's asked with a curious smile, as if we might suddenly hand over our medical records over coffee. It's always framed as "just wanting to understand," but really, it's a question about our genitals. And no, that's never appropriate small talk.

Interestingly and tellingly, it's the first thing many people think about. When the transphobes are on social media, the first thing they seem to think about is what's between our legs.

What people don't realise is how *one-sided* this curiosity is. No one meets a cis woman and asks, "So, how's your vagina doing these days?" Yet somehow, when it comes to trans people, all social filters vanish.

Here's what some of those questions sound like when you flip them around.

"Have you had the operation?" → "Lovely to meet you! What do your genitals look like?"

“What was your name before?” → “Can you tell me your most embarrassing childhood secret?”

“When did you decide to be trans?” → “When did you decide to be cis?”

“Do you still have, you know… down there?” → “Do you mind if I ask what’s in your pants?”

See the problem? Suddenly those “innocent” questions sound absurd, invasive — even rude. Because they *are.*

We’re not exotic creatures from another planet; we’re just people. We go shopping, we work, we fall in love, and we want to be treated with the same respect everyone else gets.

If you genuinely want to understand trans lives, there are far better questions to ask — ones that open hearts, not wounds. Try “What helped you most on your journey?” or “What can I do to be a better ally?”



Those questions don’t pry — they connect.

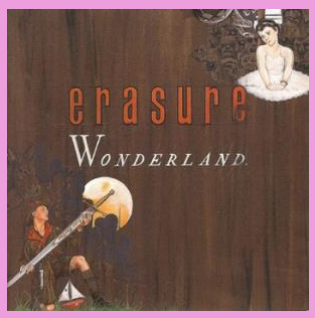
Curiosity isn’t the problem. Entitlement is. If a question would embarrass you to answer, it’s probably not one to ask.

Because when you treat a trans person with the same dignity you’d expect yourself, you’re not just being polite, you’re helping to build a world where nobody’s identity is treated as public property.

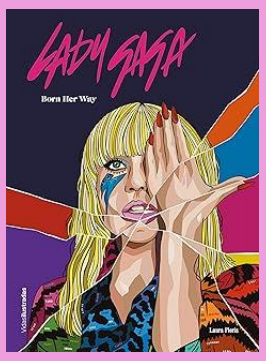
And trust me, that’s the kind of conversation worth having.

Famous Albums by LGBT Acts.

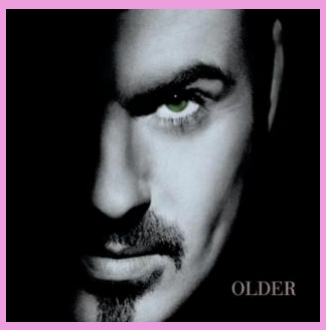
Answers. How many did you get out of 20?

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10 

1. Erasure – Wonderland
2. Joan Armatrading – Mee Myself I
3. Lady GaGa – Born Her Way
4. Grace Jones – Nightclubbing
5. George Michael – Older
6. Sam Smith – In the Lonely Hour
7. Bette Midler – The Divine Miss M
8. R.E.M. – Automatic for the People
9. McAlmont & Butler – The Sound of McAlmont & Butler
10. K.D. Lang – Invincible Summer