

Loud!

"Your silence will not protect you." - Audre Lorde

CELEBRATING GAYPRIL 2023 {SAY GAY!}

AMERICA'S FIRST DRAG QUEEN

By Edwin Roman, Rainbow Alliance Advisor

Drag is an art form that acts as a conduit for social critique while simultaneously challenging oppression. Despite the recent focus for the sole purpose of political scapegoating through irrational fear, it is hardly new. Drag dates back to Ancient Egypt, where powerful queens such as Cleopatra used to dress up as men to emphasize strength and supremacy¹. In Ancient Greece, men portrayed female roles just as they did later in Shakespeare's plays and in Japanese Kabuki theater.² Drag has been a form of self-expression for the LGBTQI+ community in the United States since the 1800s.

America's first drag queen, William Dorsey Swann, was a former slave who became the very first LGBTI+ rights crusader. According to Channing Joseph, whose forthcoming book *The House of Swann: Where Slaves Become Queens*³ will ex-

plore how anti-Blackness and queerphobia have intersected in US history, noted in an interview that Swann was the earliest instance he could find of anyone referring to themselves as a drag

queen. Swann was born into slavery in Maryland around 1860, just three years before Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Joseph notes: "There were lots of things that seemed possible that had not seemed possible during the slavery era. And I think that there was a level of excitement and possibility that drove Swann and his group to consider how they could express themselves and flout the norms of their society."⁴

Swann and his confidants did not have the freedom of being able to socialize openly which lead to the creation of the House of Swann, a place where they could be visible

to each other while concurrently remaining concealed to the public. The gatherings at the House of Swann were quite similar to the modern ball-



There are no known pictures of William Dorsey Swann. The above illustration was created by Jimena Isabel Merchán & Gaby Torres for Freedom is Mine.

1 Kendall, Allen Alexander. "'Queen of Kings': Masculinity and Femininity in the Visual Rhetoric of Cleopatra VII and Augustan Distortions Thereof." 2019, n.d..

2 Blackmer, Corinne E., and Patricia Juliana Smith. *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*. Columbia University Press, 1995.

3 Joseph, Channing Gerard. "Channing Gerard Joseph." *Channing Gerard Joseph: Journalist & LGBTQ Culture Historian*, <http://channingjoseph.com/elements/bio.html>.

4 "America's First Drag Queen Was a Former Slave and LGBT Rights Crusader, Says Historian | CBC Radio." *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 28 Feb. 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/teck-frontier-mine-medical-assistance-in-dying-1990s-mls-wilson-cruz-the-first-drag-queen-and-more-1.5477892/america-s-first-drag-queen-was-a-former-slave-and-lgbt-rights-crusader-says-historian-1.5478181>.

room scene. Notably, there were no specific laws against drag at the time. However, Swann was falsely imprisoned for running a brothel for 10 months in 1888 and reportedly stayed to challenge the police while others ran away⁵. He later asked for a pardon from President Grover Cleveland. Swann is the earliest recorded American to take specific legal and political steps to defend the LGBTQ community's right to gather without the threat of criminalization, suppression, or police violence. Swann paved the way for activists like Marsha P. Johnson, who fought back when police raided New York City's Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969, in a pioneering moment that helped launch the modern LGBTQI+ rights movement.

Swann passed away on December 23, 1925, at the age of 65. After Swann retired from the drag scene he created in Washington, DC, his younger brother began making costumes for the drag community until his death in 1954.⁶

Today's drag performers are a part of a remarkable history of steady resistance that paved the way for their visibility on screen, stage, and television.

5 PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 1 Oct. 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/video/william-dorsey-swann-from-enslaved-to-queen-cgm82q/>.

6 Joseph, Channing. "William Dorsey Swann - Oxford African American Studies Center." African American National Biography (2021): n. pag. Web.

In the News...

How a Campaign Against Transgender Rights Mobilized Conservatives

The New York Times explored how the religious right, after being defeated on same-sex marriage, went searching for an issue that would re-energize supporters and donors. The campaign that followed has stunned political leaders across the spectrum.

Read more at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/16/us/politics/transgender-conservative-campaign.html?smid=url-share>

G.O.P. Lawmakers Override Kentucky Governor's Veto on Anti-Trans Law

The Kentucky measure bans access to gender-transition care for young people, and West Virginia's governor also signed a similar bill. Passage of bans also appears imminent in Idaho and Missouri.

Read more at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/29/us/kentucky-anti-transgender-bill.html?smid=url-share>

How Drag Bans Fit Into Larger Attacks on Transgender Rights

Drag queen and historian Dr. Lady J discusses how "trans people have always been attacked using these drag bans"

Read more at: <https://publicintegrity.org/inside-publici/newsletters/watch-dog-newsletter/how-drag-bans-fit-into-larger-attacks-on-transgender-rights/>

LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Groups Issue Travel Advisories for Florida

LGBTQ advocacy group Equality Florida issued an unprecedented travel advisory on April 12, warning LGBTQ people of the risks that traveling or relocating to Florida could pose to their health, safety and freedom.

"The advisory comes after passage of laws that are hostile to the LGBTQ+ community, restrict access to reproductive health care, repeal gun safety laws and allow untrained, unpermitted carry, and foment racial prejudice," the travel advisory states. "The Governor has also weaponized state agencies to impose sanctions against businesses large and small that disagree with his attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Read more at: <https://truthout.org/articles/lgbtq-and-immigrant-rights-groups-issue-travel-advisories-for-florida/>

RuPaul's Drag Race Finale Highlights ACLU's Defense of Trans Rights

The highly anticipated finale of RuPaul's Drag Race will feature incredible ensembles, sensational lip sync performances, and of course, the revelation of the season 15 winner. Alongside the competition, the finale will also highlight a joint effort with the ACLU to help defend constitutional rights and creative expression in the LGBTQ community.

Read more at: <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/rupauls-drag-race-finale-drag-defense-fund>

{Say} GAYPRIL 2023

WHAT IS GAYPRIL?

Every year college campuses across the country celebrate a month of LGBTQI+ Pride in April, which is celebrated in June around the world. GAYpril is an opportunity for LGBTQ+ students to enjoy visibility and support while promoting awareness about issues surrounding the diverse intersectionality of LGBTQI+ identity.

#SayGay #GAYpril

Wednesday, April 19, 12pm - 1:30pm, RBSC 312

Name Change Workshop

Facilitator - Jack Pellicano (they/he), The TGNC Rights Project, Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice, CUNY School of Law

Wednesday, April 19, 2pm - 4pm, RBSC 312

Focus on the Visual Arts: The Visual Arts and the LGBTQI+ Community

Facilitator - Héctor V. Cotza

Thursday, April 20, 12pm - 2pm, RBSC 312

Focus on Health: Understanding Sexual Health & Sexual Well Being in the LGBTQI+ Community

Facilitator: Lissette Marrero, MSW

Friday, April 21, 12:30pm-2pm via Zoom

Safe Space Training: LGBTQI+ 101

Facilitator: Emalinda McSpadden, Ph.D.

Monday, April 24, RBSC 312

Focus on Creativity and Visual Narrative: Telling Your LGBTQI+ Story Through Photography

Facilitator - Shay Gutierrez

Tuesday, April 25, RBSC 312

Safe Space Training: TGNB 101

Facilitator: Emalinda McSpadden, Ph.D.

Wednesday, April 26, 2pm-4pm, RBSC 312

TGNB Know-Your-Rights Workshop

Facilitator - Jack Pellicano (they/he), The TGNC Rights Project, Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice, CUNY School of Law

Wednesday, April 26, 2pm-4pm, RBSC 312

The Who-What-When-Where of Reporting Anti-Queer Bias at BCC - Public Safety & Title IX

Facilitator: Jesenia Paoli, Esq., Emalinda McSpadden, Ph.D.

Thursday, April 27, 12pm - 2pm, Sage Hall 100

Focus on the Spoken Word: The Poetry, Prose, and Activism of Simply Rob

Facilitator - Rob Vassilarakis

Friday, April 28, 12pm-2pm, RBSC 312

Pride as a Protest - Community Activism Art Wall & Project Review

Funding for these events was made possible by the CUNY LGBTQI+ Consortium.



LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM

2155 University Avenue
Roscoe Brown Student Center [BC] 312
718.289.5300

Dr. Thomas A. Isekenegbe
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Vice President & Provost, Academic Affairs

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Dr. Alexander Ott
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Edwin Roman
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MISSION

The LGBTQI + Resource Room at Bronx Community College works to foster an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. The LGBTQI + Resource Room aims to sustain visibility and a sense of community by providing education, programming, and support services on campus.

Weekly !

THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM, LOCATED IN THE ROSCOE BROWN STUDENT CENTER IN ROOM 312, IS OPEN MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY 12-5PM, AND FRIDAY 1-4PM.

TUESDAYS

LGBTQI+ Support Group | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Share. Express. Support. Let's come together to express thoughts, hopes, and feelings with other like-minded people. Meets virtually through Zoom. To gain access please email Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu

WEDNESDAYS

Beyond the Binary Group | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

BCC's 1st and only transgender and non-conforming support group for transgender women and men, gender queer, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, non-binary and questioning students. We are experts, allies, and advocates ready to give support-oriented speech and offer student to student led feedback. This group meets virtually via Zoom. Please email Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu

THURSDAYS

Rainbow Alliance Club | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

The Rainbow Alliance, the oldest LGBTQI+ club on campus, provides extracurricular activities that address the needs of LGBTQI+ students as well as the greater campus community. This group meets virtually via Zoom and in person in the Roscoe Brown Student Center Room 301. Please e-mail Edwin.Roman@bcc.cuny.edu for information.

Black and Queer | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Black & Queer is a weekly round table meeting for and by queer-identifying BCC students of the African Diaspora. Topics focus on the intersectionalities of Blackness, queerness, and a host of others experienced by students at BCC.

FRIDAYS

Queer Lit Book Club | 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Provides an opportunity for students to read and discuss queer literature of various genres and examine the ways in which this literature has inspired students' own creative works.. This group meets virtually via Zoom.

Please email Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu

In-person Lavender Graduation returns in 2023! Stay tuned!