



Songs & Stories by LGBTQI and Allies

Harvey Fierstein, *NY Times*, Nov 26, 2003

Consider the Americans who have rained nothing but glory on our nation. Think about the magnificent works of Walt Whitman, James Baldwin and Hart Crane. They're just a handful of writers who shaped the American vision and yet could not achieve full citizenship because they were homosexual. How many wedding parties have walked down the aisle to the music of Virgil Thompson, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman or Aaron Copland? The next time you stand, hand on your heart, and sing "America the Beautiful," remind yourself that we owe those towering words to Katharine Lee Bates, a lesbian.

**Aaron Copland,
"Fanfare for the Common Man"**

Austrian Brass Connection

<https://youtu.be/k7GrfxqVMBg>

James Baldwin, *Nothing Personal*

For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have.

The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.

Full text: www.j.mp/IB-NP-txt

Introduction by Hilton Als: www.j.mp/IB-NP-Als

Janis Ian, "Over the Rainbow"

<https://youtu.be/lypR-Sw-UhQ?t=527>

James Baldwin, *Collected Essays*

It took many years of vomiting up all the filth I'd been taught about myself, and half-believed, before I was able to walk on the earth as though I had a right to be here.

Al Carmines, "Faith Is Such a Simple Thing"

Faith is such a simple thing / It can't talk but only sing / It can't reason but can dance / Take a chance, take a chance / Life is full of ways to go / Sun, rain, wind, snow / All unknowingly we trace / A geography of grace / From breath to breath and blink to blink / It's never quite the way we think.

https://youtu.be/3U_CjyLoRjY (Emmy Bean)

Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life*

Love, whether consummate or chaste, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is spiritual when it is understood by its practitioners as the ennobling service of beauty itself; when its sensual pleasures point the way upward, rather than toward the earthbound extremes of licentiousness on one hand, domesticity and procreation on the other.

Cris Williamson, "Song of the Soul"

Open mine eyes / That I may see
Glimpses of truth / Thou hast for me
Open mine eyes / Illumine me / Spirit divine
Love of my life / I am crying
I am not dying / I am dancing
Dancing along in the madness
There is no sadness
Only a song of the soul

<https://youtu.be/gTYlkkquie8>

Sally Gearhart, *Word Is Out*

It seems to me that when we're talking about sexual identification, we're talking about people being able to participate in the whole continuum of feminine and masculine. The more gay people speak out, the more the whole world begins to understand the way all of us are told to fit into a certain role and how that's got to be changed. Gay liberation may really be the ultimate revolution, because when gay people are free to love whomever we wish, where we can love in the same way that I think humans are capable of loving, then that's when we'll be on the road to being a species that is worthy of this planet. I think that this is part of the gift that gay people have to offer the world.

Jerry Herman, "I Am What I Am," *La Cage Aux Folles*, Boston Gay Men's Chorus

<https://youtu.be/T4eNjvOZLps>

Rita Mae Brown

The only queer people are those who don't love anybody.

Indigo Girls, "Closer to Fine"

We go to the doctor, we go to the mountains
We look to the children, we drink from the fountain
Yeah, we go to the Bible, we go through the work out
We read up on revival, we stand up for the lookout
There's more than one answer to these questions
Pointing me in a crooked line
And the less I seek my source for some definitive
The closer I am to fine

<https://youtu.be/HUgwM1Ky228>



Quentin Crisp & Penny Arcade (interview)

Quentin Crisp was an English writer and raconteur. He became a gay icon in the 1970s after publication of his memoir, *The Naked Civil Servant*. In 1981 and at the age of 73, Crisp transplanted himself to New York City's Lower East Side. In 1991 in Britain's Sunday Telegraph Magazine, Quentin named New York City performance artist Penny Arcade, as his "soul mate and anima figure"—the woman with whom he most identified. From 1989 to till shortly before Mr. Crisp's death in 1999, their friendship blossomed and they took to the stage to perform a gospel of individuality and self-individuation.

<https://youtu.be/NTttQs-UhgA>

Jane Siberry and KD Lang, "Calling All Angels" (Jane Siberry)

calling all angels calling all angels
walk me through this one
don't leave me alone
calling all angels calling all angels
we're tryin' we're hopin'
we're hurtin' we're lovin'
we're cryin' we're callin'
cause we're not sure how this goes

<https://youtu.be/KRUErh47sao>

Armistead Maupin

My only regret about being gay is that I repressed it for so long. I surrendered my youth to the people I feared when I could have been out there loving someone. Don't make that mistake yourself. Life's too damn short.

Ann Hampton Callaway, "In A Restaurant By The Sea" (John Bucchino)

But for now, I drink you in
Inches separate our hands
When I move to close the gap
You won't clutch or draw away
As too many have before
For a moment, eyes collide
And reality's the dream

https://youtu.be/CVDRqJkD3_A

Harvey Milk

More people have been slaughtered in the name of religion than for any other single reason. That, my friends, that is true perversion.

Virgil Thomson: Suite from "The River": I. The Old South

Symphony of the Air & Leopold Stokowski

<https://youtu.be/r744iFwkGvs>

Kaiser Family Foundation

As of 2018, about 700,000 people have died of HIV/AIDS in the US since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, and nearly 13,000 people with AIDS in the United States die each year.

Billy Strayhorn, "Take The A Train"

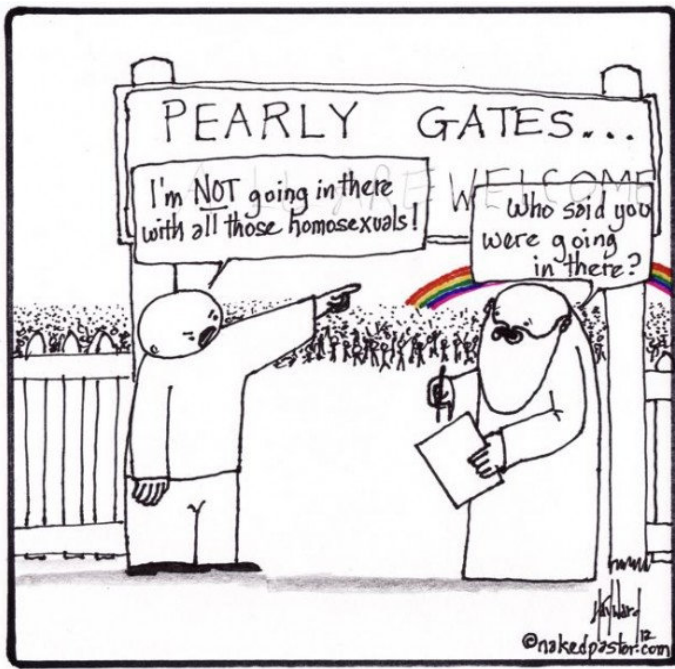
<https://youtu.be/bc2YGfAX8MY>

"Lush Life" <https://youtu.be/lyGGQWjcDPE>

Joe Coscarelli, NY Times, July 5, 2018

Teddy Geiger, perhaps the most prominent producer and songwriter in pop who also happens to be a transgender woman, worked on 11 songs on Shawn Mendes's No. 1 self-titled album. Mr. Mendes recalled what happened when he called Ms. Geiger, who is transgender, "she" for the first time in the normal flow of conversation:

Ms. Geiger stopped what she was doing, turned around and "looked at me with an overwhelming amount of happiness and joy beaming out of her eyes. It was right then that everything really made sense to me. For everybody that ever questions why people may choose to transition, if they had a best friend or somebody they loved dearly look at them the way Teddy looked at me in that moment, they would no longer question it."



Holly Near, "I am open and I am willing"

I am open and I am willing
To be hopeless would seem so strange
It dishonors those who go before us
So lift me up to the light of change
There is hurting in my family
There is sorrow in my town
There is panic in the nation
There is wailing the whole world round
<https://youtu.be/IAkGk5maD8Q>

Garth Greenwell, *The Guardian*, May 8, 2020

To write something, to make art of it, is to make a claim about its value. Even in our age of marriage equality, when as a culture we tell ourselves a very flattering story about gay liberation, it remains the case that our culture despises the queer body, especially the queer sexual body. To write about the queer body not just explicitly, but with all of the resources of the literary tradition, to write it in a way that foregrounds beauty and lyricism is, I hope, a way to cherish that body. It's a way not to argue for its value but to recognise and proclaim its value, and to lavish it with the peculiar, ennobling dignity art can bestow.

Fred Hersch, "Valentine"

<https://youtu.be/IBARaUnqeBs?t=37>

Gertrude Stein

Love is the skillful audacity required to share an inner life.

Paul Robeson, "Ode To Joy"

Build the road of peace before us
Build it wide and deep and long;

Speed the slow and check the eager
Help the weak and curb the strong.
None shall push aside another
None shall let another fall.
March beside me, Oh my Brother
All for one and one for all.

https://youtu.be/_3DYdSOzwoU

Tim Cook, CEO of Apple

So let me be clear: I'm proud to be gay, and I consider being gay among the greatest gifts God has given me.

Lou Reed, "I'm Sticking With You" (Velvet Underground)

I'm sticking with you
'Cause I'm made out of glue
Anything that you might do
I'm gonna do too
You held up a stage coach in the rain
And I'm doin' the same
Saw you hangin' from a tree
And I made believe it was me
<https://youtu.be/Fii57T-nlNk>

Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again"

O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—America will be!
Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

Full text: <https://poets.org/poem/let-america-be-america-again>

Mary Gauthier, (pronounced go-shay) "Drag Queens In Limousines"

As I worked on it, "Drag Queens in Limousines" became an autobiographical story song about coming of age as a gay kid in the South. It's more or less my story, but over the years it's become an outsider's anthem. The song speaks to the outsider in all of us, though when I wrote it I had no idea that people of all persuasions from all over the world would relate to feeling like an outsider. Often times when I am singing it I look out into the audience and I see folks who look a whole lot like insiders wholeheartedly relating to the outsider in this song, singing every word. I've learned that insiders feel like outsiders sometimes, and high school was hard for an awful lot of people, not just the gay kids.

<https://youtu.be/CPZ-rIpPqw>

Alice Walker

Please remember, especially in these times of group-think and the right-on chorus, that no person is your friend (or kin) who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow and be perceived as fully blossomed as you were intended.

Stephen Sondheim, "Send in the Clowns"

Don't you love farce?
My fault, I fear
I thought that you want what I want
Sorry, my dear
But where are the clowns?
Quick, send in the clowns
Don't bother
They're here

<https://youtu.be/aTEFGXFyVis>



Fran Lebowitz

If you removed all of the homosexuals and homosexual influence from what is generally regarded as American culture, you would pretty much be left with *Let's Make a Deal*.

Freddie Mercury, "Somebody To Love" (Queen)

Can anybody find me somebody to love?
Each morning I get up I die a little
Can barely stand on my feet
Take a look in the mirror and cry
Lord what you're doing to me
I have spent all my years in believing you
But I just can't get no relief, Lord!
Somebody, somebody
Can anybody find me somebody to love?

<https://youtu.be/aA2IRoPFIno>

Tony Kushner, "Angels in America"

You'll find, my friend, that what you love will take you places you never dreamed you'd go.

Katharine Lee Bates, "America. A Poem for July 4." (Original poem, 3rd stanza, 1893)

O beautiful for glory-tale
Of liberating strife,
When once or twice, for man's avail,
Men lavished precious life!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
Till selfish gain no longer stain,
The banner of the free!

<https://youtu.be/TRUjr8EVgBg>

David Sedaris, "When You Are Engulfed in Flame"

It's astonishing the amount of time that certain straight people devote to gay sex—trying to determine what goes where and how often. They can't imagine any system outside their own, and seem obsessed with the idea of roles, both in bed and out of it. Who calls whom a bitch? Who cries harder when the cat dies? Which one spends the most time in the bathroom? I guess they think that it's that cut-and-dried, though of course it's not. Hugh might do the cooking, and actually wear an apron while he's at it, but he also chops the firewood, repairs the hot-water heater, and could tear off my arm with no more effort than it takes to uproot a dandelion.

Garrick Ohlsson, "Nocturne, Op. 27 No. 1,"

Frédéric Chopin

He is the only American to win first prize in the International Frédéric Chopin Piano Competition (1970).

<https://youtu.be/b3NUBDxlijc?t=22>

Amanda Lovelace, "The Princess Saves Herself in This One"

the love
some girls
have for
other girls is
so gentle
& so soft
& so fucking
beautiful,
& these girls
deserve
to have
better stories
than the ones
where they
are murdered
because they love
with too much
of their
hearts.
—love is never a weakness.

Cheryl Wheeler, "Gandhi/Buddha"

<https://youtu.be/5-Ah-CxHywQ>

Janet Mock

I believe that telling our stories, first to ourselves and then to one another and the world, is a revolutionary act.

Patricia Barber, "You Don't Know Me"

<https://youtu.be/95E3tKTnfQI>

Bayard Rustin

To be afraid is to behave as if the truth were not true.

Modest Mussorgsky, "Pictures at an Exhibition: Promenade"

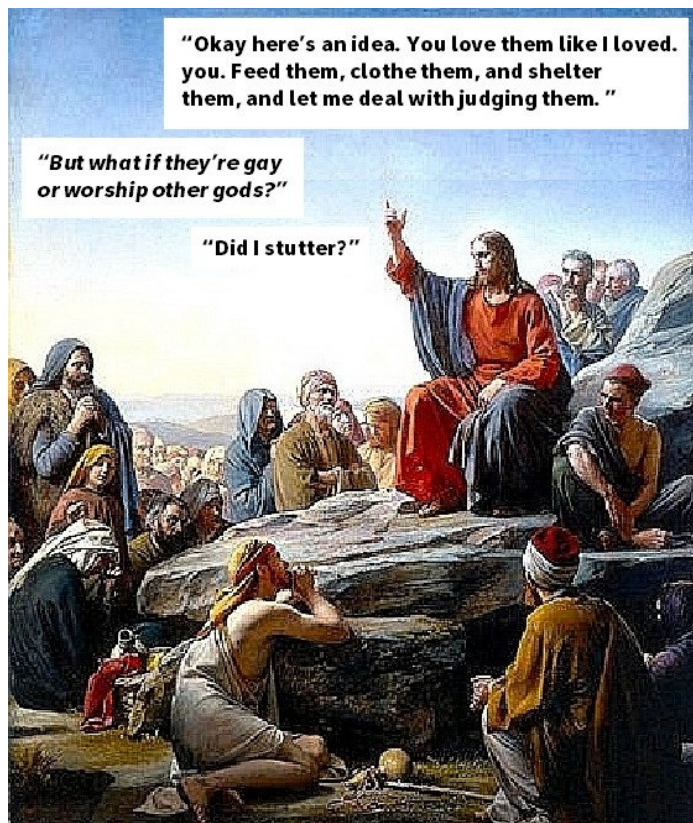
https://youtu.be/_5r8sa863Ts

Dorothy Allison, *Skin: Talking About Sex, Class, and Literature*

Suffering does not ennoble. It destroys. To resist destruction, self-hatred, or lifelong hopelessness, we have to throw off the conditioning of being despised, the fear of becoming the they that is talked about so dismissively, to refuse lying myths and easy moralities, to see ourselves as human, flawed, and extraordinary. All of us—extraordinary.

Percy Grainger, "Irish Tune from County Derry" US Marine Band

<https://youtu.be/kWsXMLnsfE4>



Andrea Gibson, "Fight for Love"

I've never had more fun writing a love poem than when I wrote "Fight for Love." This is for all the bickering beauties diving heart first into the holy work of learning to love each other better and better.

<https://youtu.be/kl2K82HCNfg> text: www.j.mp/ag-ffl

Michael Tilson Thomas, "You Come Here Often?" written for and played by Yuja Wang

(Watch it all—or at least after 3:33)

<https://youtu.be/gCC9f2w23jq>

Sally Ride

The view of earth is absolutely spectacular, and the feeling of looking back and seeing your planet as a planet is just an amazing feeling. It's a totally different perspective, and it makes you appreciate, actually, how fragile our existence is.

Cole Porter, "Let's Do It"

<https://youtu.be/T9ViJS9Zrrg>

Barbara Jordan

If the society today allows wrongs to go unchallenged, the impression is created that those wrongs have the approval of the majority.

Billy Preston, "That's The Way God Planned It"

Let not your heart be troubled
Let mourning, sobbing cease
Learn to help one another
And live in perfect peace

<https://youtu.be/XQ3XNtdzSFA>

Frida Kahlo

I used to think I was the strangest person in the world but then I thought there are so many people in the world, there must be someone just like me who feels bizarre and flawed in the same ways I do. I would imagine her, and imagine that she must be out there thinking of me, too.

Leonard Bernstein, "Candide Overture"

<https://youtu.be/422-yb8TXj8>

