

Homophobia - what it is and how to fight it

Challenging negative views of LGBT people

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text

to fit: *to be suitable for something*

to manifest: *to be clear or obvious to the eye or mind*

targeted: *to focus on someone or something as an objective*

vulnerability: *state of being exposed to attack or harmed*

framework: *supporting structure for a building or concept*

UDHR: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

stigmatised: *described or regarded as worthy of criticism and disapproval*

Homophobia is the name given to a range of negative attitudes and feelings including ignorance, prejudice, fear and hatred towards people who have identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual and sometimes transgender people (although this is technically transphobia); people who are perceived to be gay, lesbian or bisexual; people who are associated with anybody gay, lesbian or bisexual; and even just anybody who doesn't **fit** into strict stereotypical ideas of what a boy should be like and what a girl should be like. Homophobia can **manifest** itself in many ways, including name calling, bullying, ridicule, exclusion, violence and in severe cases, murder.

In countries all over the world individuals are being **targeted** for imprisonment, torture and even murder, simply on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Gay men, lesbian women, transvestites, transsexuals, any person who doesn't adhere to the dictates of what passes for 'normal' sexuality or gender identity may be subject to such persecution at the hands of private individuals or government agents.

Abuses may take such subtle forms as everyday hostility, harassment or neglect. In such cases, antipathetic authorities may refuse to protect the basic rights of gay and lesbian people, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, sexual attack, public or domestic violence and even murder; all without

recourse to the law. In other instances, governments are themselves the perpetrators of abuses: unfair trials, imprisonment, ill-treatment (including false 'medical cures'), torture (including rape), and execution are among the violations against sexual minorities recorded by Amnesty International.

Lesbian women and gay men were targeted by the Nazis for extermination but despite clear indication of their particular **vulnerability** to human rights abuses, they were not specifically included in the **framework** for international human rights protection in the **UDHR**, or included in subsequent human rights conventions.

Some governments in the world deny the very existence of gay men and lesbian women among their people. In some countries, same-sex relations are still regarded as a grave crime, even as a sin against God, that is punishable by imprisonment or even by death. Other governments claim that the very concept of equal rights for sexual minorities is a Western idea that should not be recognised. The **stigmatised** position of gay men and lesbian women around the world and the lack of recognition of sexuality as a basic human right contributes to their experience of ill-treatment at the hands of the authorities.

There are 76 countries that prosecute people for carrying out 'homosexual acts'. There are 5 countries where it is actually punishable by death.

Adapted by John Hird from <http://www.theredcard.org/resources-and-activities>

"Let's chat about that!"

Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach! Give reasons for your answers.

- *What do you understand by the term 'gay rights'?*
- *Do people freely talk about gay rights in your country without feeling afraid?*
- *Are there laws in your country that discriminate against LGBT people?*
- *Which nationalities do you think are most homophobic?*
- *Why do you think some people are afraid of gay people?*
- *What do you think of same-sex relations and the raising of children?*



Actor Neil Patrick Harris (below) has two children with husband David Burtka



"iLook, iThink, iSpeak"

Express Yourself Better

Look at the photos & comments.

Discuss them with your coach and classmates.

How do you feel about the issue?

Have you changed your opinion?

Over half of lesbian and gay pupils don't feel able to be themselves at school.
35% of gay pupils do not feel safe or accepted at school.

The School Report, Stonewall 2006



WE ASKED YOUNG PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES OF HOMOPHOBIA...

"I've been called all sorts of names, I've been given detentions for kissing my girlfriend when there are so many straight couples who kiss all the time and NEVER get told off. Teachers have coughed and stared when they walk past my girlfriend and me, it's awful. I hate it."

Key comments:

"People need to become more educated and realise that we are not all 'dressing in pink, speaking in a high pitched voice and prancing around' we are just men"

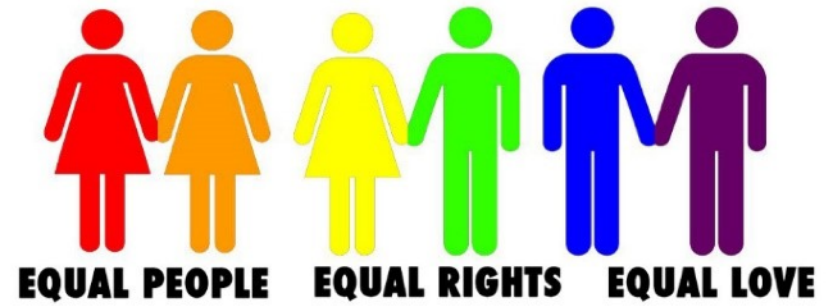
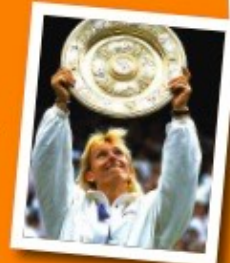
Newcastle Panthers
footballer

"There are a lot of girls who don't get involved in sports because they don't want to get called dykes or queers or lesbians."

Martina Navratilova,
Tennis champion

"Gareth Thomas, the famous rugby player who has recently come out as gay, he would be the prime example of someone who doesn't dress up in pink all the time, hasn't got a flamboyant 'gay' accent; he's quite macho and tough."

Kieron Richardson



Idioms And Expressions

Some of these idioms could be considered offensive. Ask your coach!

To come out (of the closet) - to tell your friends and/or family that you are gay or lesbian or bisexual; to make it known to others that you are gay or lesbian. You have your **coming out**:

Likewise, someone can be still **in the closet** or a **closet gay**.

One phrase you'll hear quite a lot is using the word **gay** to mean 'weak' or 'girly' or 'lame': "That bag is so **gay**."

"I can't believe he kicks like that. That's so **gay**." Some people consider this to be offensive.

To **out** someone - when a gay political group or the media decide to tell the public that someone, often a celebrity or politician, is gay.

Gaydar - a gay person who is good at spotting another gay person is said to have a **good gaydar** (from 'radar').

What a waste! - used pejoratively when someone finds out that a man or woman they like is not attracted to the opposite sex:

"Are you sure she's a lesbian?! **What a waste**..."

If someone **swings both ways**, it means they are attracted to men and women.

AC/DC can also refer to a bisexual.