

Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from cradle to elderly care - An Oral History'

Respondent: Siobhan Molloy Fahey

Year of Birth: 1965

Age:

Connection to project: Local Knowledge

Date of Interview: 09.05.2024

Interviewer: Rachel Kelly

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

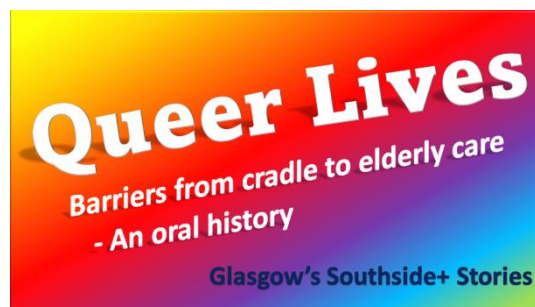
Photographic Images: No (Number of:)

Length of Interview: 1.03.35

Location of Interview: Respondent's home Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.35	<i>Where were you born and where do you live now?</i>	
	I was born and grew up in Liverpool and I now live in Govanhill, Glasgow.	00.36-00.46
	Respondent had no objections to the term referred to in the interview as queer and defines as lesbian or dyke and the preferred pronoun is 'she'	1.06-1.16
1.30	<i>Would you mind telling me if you have 'come out' as queer and when was this?</i>	
2.05	Respondent formally came out to her family at the age of 19.	
	"I come from an Irish Catholic family and my parents and my mum freaked out about it. First of all it came out in an argument but more properly in a chat with my sister and my sister had already reacted quite badly. Although she came round pretty quickly my mum and then she started befriending lesbians in the village. And sometimes I'd stay with them which was kind of awkward because my Mum was very proud. There is a funny story about my dad. It was always 'just never tell your dad'. My dad who wasn't the most easy-going bloke turned round one day and said 'your sisters and brothers bring their partners home why don't you bring your girlfriend home Siobhan?' and he'd known all along and it wasn't a big deal."	2.06-3.02
3.11	<i>Have you faced any barriers to access to education in your life due to being queer?</i>	
3.20-5.48	Respondent had no problem accessing education and while training to be a nurse attended a lecture on LGBT people. Someone said they had never met a gay person and she said 'oh yes you have, I've been here all along'. She was bullied at a few Irish Convent Schools and had been expelled from a few of them because of being a bit of a wild child, climbing out windows, skipping into town, dressing as a punk, running away from home. Growing up she did read about gay people but thought that only happened in London. At 18 she ran away from home and went to London.	
	To answer the question, I don't see being queer as a barrier to education	5.50-5.25
5.26	<i>Have you faced any barriers to your working career due to being queer?</i>	
	"The first time I really went back into the closet was when I was doing my nurse training in the early '90s in Livingston in St John's. I really went back into the closet and felt as if somebody was sitting on my chest all the time because at the weekend people. Would be chatter chatter chatter about their kids and their families. And I realised in that being in the closet it was actually dead easy because all you do is be interested in other people and nobody even notices that you say nothing about yourself, they're so self-interested, they honestly didn't notice. I remember one time on a bus in a one on one situation with a	5.35-8.43





	<p>young colleague, a young nursing student maybe or young nurse, and when I told her I was a lesbian, and this was in Scotland in the early '90s and was not '90s in England, her eyes fell out of her face, for me it wasn't an issue.</p> <p>In my first job working as a staff nurse and it was a stroke ward in London in Hackney and it was a very mixed group of nurses from all over the world, lots of different cultures and all of that and when I came out there, I got sent to Coventry, never spoke to me again which is a bit difficult when you're a nurse and there were HIV remarks made and when I did my interview on to the next ward I told the senior nurse that was why I was leaving and she was shocked because she was a bloody lesbian herself and hadn't noticed what was going on in her own ward.</p> <p>From there, beyond that, I pursued a career that was comfortable where I worked, particularly in drug services and public health and Hepatitis C was my speciality and liver disease, and the transplant ward not long after that where most of the staff were queer.</p> <p>So I didn't let it hold me back and I had a big huge community of friends, living in a big house with lots of friends, so I'd come home and talk about it, so it didn't feel like it was a big scar on me by any means, it was just the state of the world at the time."</p>	
8.50	<i>In your view have these barriers for people changed over time?</i>	
	<p>"Yes, it's not at all shocking now to have an LGBT work colleague. The last time I worked on a major ward, quite a while ago now, there were quite a lot of LGBT staff on that ward. I was a return to nursing student I was just ear-wigging and observing while being part of the staff nurse crew and I did hear one of the lesbian nurses making homophobic remarks about one of the gay charge nurses and I thought perhaps people join in homophobia to fit in. So even though she was an out lesbian I don't think she felt comfortable to fight the homophobia around her. I remember a transgender patient in a ward and people taking the piss out of."</p>	9.03-10.41
11.04	<i>How would you like to see things going forward in terms of workplaces?</i>	
	<p>"I do think it's amazing now. A lot of corporate places have LGBT workers groups. And I think I experienced that most when I went to the Pride Awards Ceremony Awards in Glasgow a couple of years ago, it was banks and things like that, and it was great, these proud, loud corporate people."</p>	11.05-11.46
12.13	<i>Can you tell me about your experience of growing up as a queer person?</i>	
12.22-13.27	Respondent never thought about growing up as a queer person, she grew up as an Irish Catholic, had trouble at home and being a wild kid nothing to do with being LGBT.	
13.29	<i>Do you think the experience of being queer has changed over time in terms of acceptance and why?</i>	
	<p>"Vastly. Having lived through it, I think the most important thing was people individually coming out to their friends and family and work places and not the laws. It was people realising that it was their daughters and their family members and humanising it in the most brave way possible because it is a very brave thing to come out to family. It still is but particularly then it was, yeah. Pretty much everyone I knew, well most of us, were rejected. It didn't last because things change but we all had experiences of pretty harsh rejection. It was definitely at the time. Coming out was something you could lose your family over."</p>	13.35-14.48
14.49-16.52	Respondent said that finding other people who had come out in London was very exciting, it was a sub culture and they had made connections with people from all over the world because London was a migrant city for queer people.	
17.07	<i>Where did you socialise in London?</i>	
	<p>"We lived in squats, squatted cafes, squatted bars, social centres I guess you'd call them these days, shops where we'd run a bar. So we had lots of DIY centres and spaces we'd run ourselves. Another thing was we socialised on demos. We were always on demos. It's incredible we didn't have mobile phones where we</p>	17.09-18.37

	socialised all over the world. It was all in phone boxes and letters, and looking back, there were actually a lot of venues in London compared to today. Venues were always underground. I remember the first time I went to a venue that had windows on the pavement level was Manto's in Manchester which was followed by Delmonicas in Glasgow. And it was quite revolutionary to not be underground or upstairs. Quite brave in the day for the people inside as much as staff. So there were lots of places to socialise. Yeah, I had a good social life."	
18.38	<i>Has socialising changed over time?</i>	
18.40-20.33	Respondent said she has moved to different cities in the UK finding cheap space to rent, bars, warehouses or whatever to run events and the creative queer community flourishes in venues with space. Respondent feels that with all the empty shops they could be utilised by all LGBT, all artists and all creative people can meet.	
20.43	<i>Do you feel that your experiences are similar to those of other queer people?</i>	
	"No because I came out a long time ago and because I was a punk and all that sort of stuff, quite creative, quite mobile and we had to be tough. We had so many deaths, of course there was Aids, but also lesbians were dying too because of drugs and HIV from drugs, fires, cancer, we had a lot of deaths and we were tough. We were very anti-censorship because it was us that was getting censored. We were the ones who were saying free speech with some very anti cancelling things because we wanted to fight them. We didn't want to stop homophobes talking, we wanted them to speak so we could shut them up in person. That is one of the things I feel this is different in the generations. I would say there's a phrase queer as in fuck you, not queer as in gay. It's not me that invented that, it's sort of punk queer ethos like you're not going to hold us back. That I feel seems to be different with generations. I think growing up through that period and having that fight has given us a difference but one of the nice things I've noticed through the work I've done is that there's a real conversation or possibility of conversation between the generations on those topics and learning both ways and I think this is essential."	20.44-23.33
24.10	<i>Could you tell me a bit about your work?</i>	
	"I've done a film and an archive called Rebel Dykes which is about punk lesbians in the 1980s, about that period, so the archive is at Bishopsgate and I've also produced a good-sized exhibition of the archive paired up with contemporary artists responding to the archive that was in London in 2021. We got Heritage Lottery and Arts Council funding and I did this project about that period, so that's where I learned about doing oral history myself. One of the aims was to use the archive to promote conversation and I think we did that, yeah, because I think people are really interested in each other's histories and stories, particularly the young folk."	24.13-25.06
25.07	<i>Do you believe there is such a thing as an "LGBT community", which implies a coherent community based on solely on sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	
	"Well yes and no. Within lesbians at the moment one of the things is that women are coming out later in life and I don't think that I've got that much in common with women who've been married, had a career and then comes out. But it's a great shorthand when you're moving into a room or moving into a space. One of the things all LGBTQ people have in common is that at some point in their life they thought very seriously about gender and sex and have made strong decisions in themselves. I think we should have community. Obviously there's been battles going on about different LGBT identity since I came out and before and that's just the way it is, they're forever arguing. Nothing a queer likes more than a good row. But it is a shorthand. There's other communities that maybe are stronger like perhaps your social class or your cultural identity. But it's a shorthand. It's something."	25.23-26.52
26.53	<i>What are your thoughts about the current public debates regarding gender identity?</i>	

	<p>"I've always had trans folk in my life. I was married to a trans woman for ten years. It's not really my thing. At the same time I very much believe that Cis women should be able to meet... I don't particularly want to be touched by someone who does look like a guy but calls himself she in certain situations. But we all need to be grown up and have proper conversations. There obviously needs to be boundaries in all ways. Just because you're a lesbian you doesn't mean you want to sleep with all women including any trans woman with perhaps a penis. Me, myself, I was perfectly happy with the partner I had both pre and post op. At the end of the day what it mostly is, is a big big conspiracy that a lot of people have been suckered into. You know, there's a hell of a lot of rape in the world and most of it is by members of the family and very rarely if ever by drag queens in libraries. Like most of these things, been massively stirred up since Covid and a conspiracy theory on social media sort of stuff. "</p>	27.06-28.48
29.02	<i>Have you faced any healthcare issues due to being queer?</i>	
29.03-30.23	Respondent had many health problems due to being a woman, having no treatment during menopause and lost her nursing career because of this. She feels that her healthcare issues are now hormonal, nothing to do with being queer.	
30.24	<i>How would you like to see things change going forward?</i>	
	<p>"One of the things I think is with the trans argument, is that the trans activists have been led along long paths in what they've been fighting for, for instance fighting for GRA. The GRA certificate which loads and loads of trans people never had or really wanted, so I never understood why they got dragged into that. The other one is teenage gender care and I think since 2016, 80 people in Scotland have been on puberty blockers, which is a minority topic, but what I think is an actual topic that is a real problem is people are waiting decades for gender operations. So now I just wish some of that activist anger would go into what I think is a huge real problem and that is adult care in gender stuff and beside that the NHS is massively underfunded."</p>	30.24-32.24
32.25	<i>Do you think queer people need different or additional forms of healthcare such as queer-only services</i>	
	<p>"Queer-only services... because the word queer is such a general word and doesn't make any sense. If we're talking about sexual health stuff, I mean they have had them in the past, women for women ones, but to be honest it is actually quite a safe re sexually transmitted disease woman on woman sexuality, men yes of course they have that and gender stuff I'm certain they have them. Basically they just need to sort out the sexuality, they're not even trying, they're saying it's gender services for adults."</p>	32.31-33.53
34.05	<i>You mentioned a lot of lesbians died in the 1980s can you tell me about that?</i>	
34.09-34.40	Respondent said this was not due to being lesbian, it was because they lived such a precarious life, poor housing, living on boats, drugs, and cancer that caused their deaths and because they were the outsiders of society.	
	<p>"There is still a lot of deaths now amongst the young queer people such as suicides. I think a lot of excess deaths. I can't prove it, but it just feels like that. It just seems like there are a lot more deaths in young LGBTQ people than other young folk."</p>	34.42-35.25
35.26	<i>Elder care - Do you ever think about your future as you age?</i>	
	<p>"I did think about it as an obvious business plan and I've decided that the perfect nursing home would be halfway between a backpackers and a nightclub and it shouldn't be in the suburbs it should be right in the city centre where there's plenty of buses and people can get to the pub and that would be the perfect elder care place. I've certainly kept up with various charities and campaigns about it because I do think it's a big issue and I've seen behind the curtain with nurses and nurses can be normative in general and as a group it's a very bullying profession anyway and they can be very judgemental. It's a big problem, a big tidal wave of an issue. A lot of elderly gay people have some</p>	35.53-38.16

	money and as a business they could put in some money to run centres and even having a few more would probably up the care in more places as well. It would be like a gold standard if you had a queer-only nursing home. Somebody needs to deal with it."	
38.24	<i>Do you know of any places worldwide for queer elder care?</i>	
	"I think there are quite a few. There's one in Manchester. London's got one I think. Brighton I think is looking at one. And there's also one in Holland and Germany. I don't think all gay elderly people will end up in them but I think by having more this will raise the standards. As far as I know the ones I'm talking about are more like sheltered housing sort of over '50s places whether or not there's ever been LGBT nursing homes which is so vulnerable when you're only being nursed purely where your family visit once a week if you've got family and a lot of queer people don't."	38.30-39.15
39.40	<i>Can you think of any legislation that's brought more rights for queer people?</i>	
	"Being a lesbian has never been illegal although a lot of lesbians used to lose their kids, so it was pretty damn bad, including friends of mine, so that doesn't happen anymore, which is good. The age of consent of course. The Equality Act was meant to be brought in by Tony Blair's Labour, but then the governments swapped so it was brought in by Cameron. Now it's 9 characteristics or 8 or something, so it was one more and the one the Tories dropped was social class. So we might have been in a different decade if that had been as important as race and gender. I think it was that one that until that point you could be sacked for being trans, so for instance my ex could come out at work and they couldn't sack them. So that's a big thing to not be sacked. I think people forget how late it was that the age of consent for men went down from 21 to first of all 18 and then 16. Of course there was the other one which was Clause 28 which was an interesting one for me because in my generation we fought against it. It was actually an incredibly community builder to stop anti-gay law. But then again the people who suffered were the generation below us. I guess I'm the last of the boomers, the generation X. LGBT people they've been really scarred by having Clause 28, yeah because they couldn't come out at school, they weren't given any support because schools were frightened. Nobody was arrested for it, but it was one of those laws that was very chilling to the public sector without anybody even needing to be prosecuted. Again that was on the statute books for too long. Gay weddings; that affected me and my ex in that we could've got married before gay weddings came in. We hadn't got a GRA certificate so we could've got married as a man and a woman but we obviously didn't want that so we had to wait until gay weddings were legal before we could marry, which was a nice day, even though we couldn't stay together, it was still a lovely day."	39.42-43.05
43.07	<i>Can you think of any legislation that's been diminished or has rolled back the rights of queer people?</i>	
	I suppose Clause 28 is the only one I can think of.	43.19
43.26	<i>In your opinion what are the barriers to equality for queer people at present in Scotland and the U.K?</i>	
43.33-44.03	Respondent said that queer people have even more community and opportunities than the majority of straight folk.	
44.04	<i>Do you feel that the general public are supportive of equal rights for queer people?</i>	
	"Yes. It's fascinating because I lived in Glasgow in the 1990s and didn't really come back at all until Covid. So 30 years later and it's unimaginable the changes that's happened. I think more so in Glasgow than the U.K. because when I lived in Glasgow in the '90s it was still a very union city, it was very old fashioned and dark so I found my community with the women's library at Garnethill at Hill Street. There was a little shop there and that's where I found my sort of friendships but in the general gay scene. Lesbians are still quite a 1950s butch and femme life. So it was moving on massively in London and Manchester but	44.12-48.50

	no Glasgow was really quite traditional in its LGBT ways. At that point in Glasgow the general public were angrily anti-gay. You'd expect pub windows closed, you'd expect to be shouted at in the street. It was quite violently anti-gay. I would say and this is a fact I'm sure but I remember I, and that when the first Pride march happened in Glasgow at the time. There was talk from the lesbian line when they were going on the walk whether or not we should wear bags over their heads so they weren't recognised by employers and family and it felt real at the time because it would be possible you would lose your job, you would get bullied. It was a real slur to be gay then. And coming back many years later there were gay queer bookshops, cafes and bars and people move here from the rest of the U.K. because it's so broadminded for LGBT rights. I'd say Glasgow is one of the most welcoming cities for LGBTQ people in the U.K. Ireland went from being very strict Catholic and very anti-gay to being rainbows everywhere and I think that's happened quite a bit in this city. I guess the big thing that has happened in this city is the tough working class folk, they have people in their family coming out to them and they're really supportive and that. You have to congratulate the population of Glasgow because in the '90s we would never have thought the population of Glasgow would ever change. The change in this city is kind of unbelievable."	
50.19	<i>Are you aware if it's the same or different in any other cities in the U.K.?</i>	
	All the cities have gone through a change and it's brilliant actually, pretty amazing.	51.14-
51.22	<i>What are your hopes for the future of the queer rights legislation in Scotland?</i>	
	"I think we're okay, we've pretty much got lots of rights, although this interview has made me think of two that require attention, one is elder care and one is gender care for adults. I think that's a much bigger issue than for teenagers."	52.23-52.04
52.05	<i>What changes would you like to see for adult trans healthcare?</i>	
52.06-51.41	Respondent said she hoped it would be a decently funded system to ensure people can get through the system and be given the treatment they need within a reasonable timescale and not having to wait decades for treatment.	
52.50	<i>Can you give examples of positive portrayals of queer people in the Arts?</i>	
	"It's still really unusual to have major cultural figures as lesbians and partly that's because we're women and it's always a double fight for anything but also people still think lesbians are a bit of a laugh and a joke and don't really exist because they don't stand out or anything. A lot of lesbian issues are feminist issues to do with women's rights. So there isn't that many really. One example would be Hannah Gadsby who's a non-binary queer comedian who is brilliant, who's on Netflix. I'm really excited at the moment., I don't watch reality TV shows. I hate game shows, but I've found out I really love them if the contestants are all lesbians. There was one on Netflix a few years ago I just loved and that was I Kissed a Girl and I tell you what they do a lot more kissing than the gay or straight ones. It's lovely to watch lesbian drama happen on telly and it being equivalent to gay men, they had I Kissed a Boy last year. That's a good thing."	53.09-54.38
54.39	<i>What about the films you've been involved in and produced yourself?</i>	
	"The one that's been most successful has been Rebel Dykes, the history one, which was on Channel 4 and it still is I think on the I-Player. It's been at festivals all over the world, was nominated for best feature for the West of Scotland, so that's done really well and we've got a lot of shorts. We've bringing one to Glasgow in July which is called Beautiful Trouble. It's a 17 minute portrait of Dan Glass, a queer activist and it's about how to do art activism. And he's been involved with things like The Trump Baby and all of these sort of big creative things. Also there is a feature film about Scottish activists."	54.40-55.40
55.46	<i>Could you give examples of any negative portrayals of queer people in the Arts?</i>	
55.59-56.59	Respondent said she did not feel there was any harm of negative portrayals of	

	queer people in dramas, you can have people that are good and bad.	
	"I suppose the most negative portrayal of queer people is in real life, right wing Tories and right wing gay people so that will always be uncomfortable when you've got not very nice people who are also gay."	57.00-57.46
57.56	<i>Would you say portrayals of queers in media and the arts have changed over your lifetime?</i>	
	"Yes there's definitely a lot more, more new ones."	57.58-58.15
58.16	<i>That's all of my questions, is there anything that you'd like to add?</i>	
59.00-59.09	Respondent said it would be interesting to chat with any other queer people who had been living here during the '90s, maybe a group thing discussing how much it has changed.	
59.39	<i>Interviewer asked about bars for women in the early '90s</i>	
	<p>"When I first came to Glasgow in the early '90s the place to be for lesbians was The Clyde Halls, it was just by the Clyde, the Euro Hostel, which is closed down. It was upstairs. It was a proper hotel with a lounge, a big sprung dance floor on the first or second floor. It was quite big, there were loads of women and it was really quite refreshing. So yeah, The Clyde Halls was the place to be.</p> <p>The first lesbian bar was Harry's Bar and it was a little bar by the side of where Launders is now. Karen Dunbar ran karaoke there. There was a bar near Queen Street Station which I'm sure was women only at the time one day a week or something. Harry's Bar was the place that I remember. The Women's Library used to run women only nights and of course I was involved and that was my role in the little space behind the shop which they used to raise money and so we used to put on club nights there and events and pantomimes and all sorts of things. There were all sorts of women only things that came out of The Women's Library. There was Bennetts and Club X which my friend used to D.J. at and I used to dance in the cages, which was like a slightly fetishy club."</p>	59.40-1.03.33
	<i>Thank you so much for doing the interview and for making me feel so welcome.</i>	
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