

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

Respondent: Stewart Gow

Year of Birth: 1961

Age: 63

Connection to project: Respondent

Date of Interview: 3/8/2024

Interviewer: Dr Sylvia Morgan

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

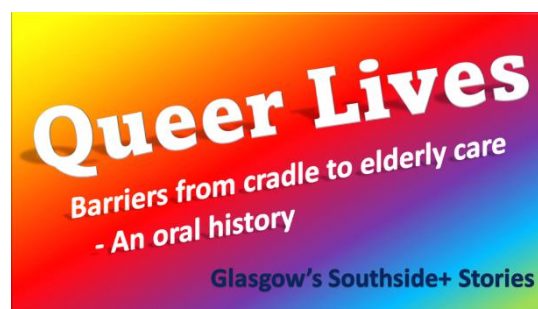
Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 2)

Length of Interview: 55mins 55 seconds

Location of Interview: Hyndland Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories



Time from	Description	Transcribed Extract
01.00	Stewart was born in the UK, grew up in South Africa, and returned to the UK in 1991 when he was 30. He now lives in Glasgow. He is comfortable with the term queer although would prefer the term gay to describe himself.	
02.25	Stewart has been out as gay to his friends from the age of 24 and then came out to family at 31.	
03.55	He cannot recall any particular barriers in education – just that “queerness or homosexuality wasn’t talked about at the time.”	03.55
04.23	Barriers in the workplace – earlier in his career early 80s and 90s a valid reason for firing someone is because they were gay. So many gay colleagues were frightened to come out at work.	
	“Earlier on in my career there was...when I worked for a government water board. You certainly wouldn’t come out. Although there was a few...Somebody was fired for saying that he was gay. That would be the early ’80s and that was in South Africa. But in the UK up until...When did the last Labour Government get in? ...A valid reason for firing people was that they were gay....But I think I’ve been fairly lucky in that when I came back to the UK. The company that I worked for. They had a lot of gay venues. So, it was a gay friendly company that I worked with. So, there was no issue there...I was lucky because a lot of friends and things would never have come out at work or yes, were still frightened, yes.”	4.13-5.22
05.46	Barriers have ‘most definitely’ changed in society and the workplace, especially in Scotland. But he has never personally had an issue with homophobia in the workplace.	
	“Yes, if somebody at work has an issue. You can tell them politely where to go. You know, there is recourse now for...Especially the likes of Scotland and the UK. We’re well ahead....Not to say...I’m sure people still face barriers but I think myself as well...I never let bullies get me down. I’ve always stood up to bullies. So, I’ve never had any real issue with homophobia in the workplace, I would say, yes.”	5.45-6.34
07.20	Stewart prefers the expression ‘Equal Rights’ to ‘Gay Rights’, and there shouldn’t be discrimination against anyone.	
08.15	Stewart’s experience of growing up as a gay person “I did try and have girlfriends although it never went very far ...you think at the time it may be a passing phase although I always fancied men....I did realise what I was in my 20s when I came into contact with other gay men.”	8.15-08.58
11.52	When Stewart came out to his four sisters and parents their reaction was “just lovely”.	

13.45	"I think I have not had the same experiences as the previous generation: police harassment and being terrified that family and work colleagues would find out...almost unimaginable now but there are still gay people who are nervous ...' particularly still now in small towns in Scotland."	13.45 -14.35
15.20	Is there such a thing as an LGBT+ community? – implying a coherent group identity based solely on sexual or gender orientation: "yes i do think so. I am a member of an elder group that is focussed on the LGBT+ community...i don't like gay groups usually, but it is nice to be with like- minded people to have a good night out for, there are some lovely South African expressions that sum up how you have fun...a jol, a big party."	15.20-16.32
17.04	The LGBT+ Elders group that Stewart attends began in 2018 as the 'Coming Back Out Ball and Social Dance Clubs' – a project started by the National Theatre of Scotland to combat homophobia, ageism and social isolation in relation to older gay people. Unfortunately, the projected ball in Summer 2020 was cancelled due to Covid lockdown, but the ball and the dance club continued online via Zoom. The group continues now known as 'Culture Club Collective' and includes dance alongs and cook alongs in person and online.	
31.19	Regarding protection of LGBT+ rights: 'We are very lucky to be living in Scotland'	
32.08	Gay clubbing in his youth was 'wonderful'. "It is nice to have the gay experience, but don't want to limit myself just to gay experiences ... "always nice to have a variety of different people and views and ideas."	32.08-33.35
34.00	Any particular gay venues in Glasgow? "The Underground ...but it has changed a little bit since Covid ...and I came out of early retirement and got myself a wee job'We have probably got enough gay venues in Glasgow ... but could probably be more venues for lesbians."	34.00-35.51
36.41	Stewart has not experienced any health care issues due to being gay in the last 8 years he has been in Glasgow and feels comfortable with his GP.	
38.54	Elder care – do you think about your future as you age? Stewart mentions that this has been a topic of discussion in the LGBT + Elders Culture Club. He feels he would not want to be in an exclusively LGBT+ care home himself. "There are other things going on in the world apart from just being gay...Younger people don't seem to have the issues that some of the older generation have...The training of carers seems to be virtually non-existent. So there is room for awareness of gay people and things that may cause older gay people concern... This may be more of an anxiety for trans people."	38.54 -43.30
44.00	Regarding legislation to protect LGBT+ people. "I was at the protest outside the House of Commons re Gay Rights late 1990s ... But I feel it is to do more with Equal Rights...it is about general discrimination and human rights"	44.00 -45.42
45.55	The general public in the UK are supportive of Gay Rights and there has been a shift in attitudes in the UK in the last 20 years. Stewart describes a Gay Pride march in London in 1994/95 where there was opposition and the police were standing by doing nothing, so he questioned them and they took action. "And now they have the Gay Police and the Gay Army marching with Pride - that would have been unheard of in the 1990s."	45.55-49.04
50.00	The influence of media and social media: Stewart cites the influence of the first gay characters in UK TV such as Eastenders. "In the 90s people would think it was fine to call you derogatory names ... and now it's not...and gay characters would be ridiculed. ...But this has changed in the last 20 years.... We've got to be careful that we don't lose the ability to laugh at ourselves...we also don't have the right to be not offended."	50.00-53.58
	Interviewer thanks the respondent for their contribution to the project.	

