

History is Gay Podcast  
Episode 29: Building Queer Symbologies Before & After Gilbert Baker

## Introduction

**Leigh:** Hello guys, gals and non binary pals. It's Leigh here in the intro today with a little bit of information about this episode that you'll be listening to, and a few announcements.

First off, I hope that everyone's quarantine/social distancing is going okay, and that you're taking time to check in with yourselves and treat yourselves and others gently as we're in the middle of this crisis. Take care of one another and check in on our most vulnerable. And, you know, I love to see people helping out where they can. If you have been doing really interesting and kind things for folks in this crisis, please send us a message and let us know about it, we'd love to share your stories.

Before we get into the episode today, I wanted to make a relatively big announcement. If you follow us on social media, you may have seen this a few days ago, but I just wanted to say it here on the pod as well.

Unfortunately, it is with a heavy heart that we have to announce that Gretchen is taking a step back and departing from *History is Gay* as co-host. She's asked me to tell you all,

*"Sadly, I no longer have the time or energy that History is Gay deserves. It's been fun, fam. But don't worry, I'm not gone forever. I'll still be helping out occasionally behind the scenes and will still make guest appearances."*

So send your love along to Gretchen, she has to depart this project. She's poured a lot of love into it.

And because of this, please be patient as we move through this weird transition period and work towards finding another person to add to our team. We'll still be doing our best to get episodes out and bring you content,

but please know that for a while we'll be a one-queer operation. It'll just be me working on things. And this is a big show, and I can't do it by myself.

So, saying all that, we are actively seeking a new co-host/producer to work with me. We need someone with an enthusiasm for queer history, a knowledge of fandom culture and a knack for research and production. Above all, we're looking for someone who would have good on-mic chemistry with me, the right sound and personality for the tone of the show, someone who knows the the flow of *History is Gay* and is just a generally a good fit to work together.

If you or someone you know would be a good match, please feel free to email us at [historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com](mailto:historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com). And I'll be reaching out to folks with more information and details.

And now with the announcements done, I wanted to tell you a little bit about the episode that you're about to hear. This is a little bit of a weird one, but what follows is a presentation on the history of queer symbols that I originally did for my work at the GLBT Historical Society back in January. It was something to coincide with the special exhibition on the work of Gilbert Baker, who you may remember as the creator of the rainbow flag. I had a really, really great time talking about this and doing some education in my community, and then we turned it over into a workshop for folks to create flags and symbols of their very own. Unfortunately, the night of the event, we had a bit of a snafu with recording, so I wasn't able to get the audio from my presentation that night, but I decided to redo the presentation on Zoom for *History is Gay* listeners a few weeks ago.

What you'll hear is the presentation that I gave online, and then you'll hear some fantastic audio from some of the workshop participants back in January, discussing the art and flags that they created. I've put the PowerPoint and images from the original presentation and workshop up on our website, so you can follow along with the episode if you'd like to know what visuals are being referred to.

And with that, I hope you enjoy this weird solo episode experiment. And I'll see you on the other side.

♪[theme music plays] ♪

## Main presentation: Beyond the Rainbow

**Leigh:** Hi everyone. We're gonna talk today about different queer symbols, and framing it kind of before and after the creation of the rainbow flag—that was created by Gilbert Baker in 1978.

So this was to go along with the temporary exhibition on Gilbert Baker at the GLBT Historical Society. And I wanted to have an opportunity to talk about what Gilbert Baker and the rainbow flag did for the queer community in galvanizing around a symbol, and talk a little bit about where we were before, and where we were directly after, and where we're going now.

So we're gonna go through a bunch of history and a whole bunch of different queer symbols, some that you may have seen, some that you may not have, some that we've talked about on this show before, and we're gonna go as far back as 600 BC.

So let's start off with pre-1978, right before we get the rainbow flags unveiling. We'll start off—this is not necessarily going to go in any sort of chronological order, it's just the fun order that I put them in—but we're looking at, like, before we had the rainbow flag.

So the first one I want to talk about is green carnation. So some of you may be familiar with this if you listened to our episode on Oscar Wilde, but green carnations were known as a queer symbol starting in the 1890s. It's generally associated with Oscar Wilde, who was the dandy, astute playwright, and arguably one of the most well known 19th century queer figures in Western history—but he's not necessarily the originator of the symbol as a queer signifier.

So, Wilde spent a bunch of time in the Parisian art and literary world in the 1880s, and in 1889, he noted in an essay that the color green was, quote,

*"In individuals, always a sign of a subtle artistic temperament."*

We all know artists are gay as hell. Early sexologists also noted that green was the favorite color of inverters, which was the term at the time commonly used to describe gay men. Oscar Wilde was known for adorning himself with lilies and sunflowers, and so at his 1892 premiere of the play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde adorned himself with a white carnation that was that was dip dyed in a distinctive green, which is not a color normally found in the flower's varieties.

And this created this lurid, artificial green flower that blossomed not only in his buttonhole, but in the lapel of the play's leading man and also a dozen of Oscar Wilde's associates that he had invited to join in on the publicity stunt. "What does it mean?" Someone who Oscar Wilde knew asked of him.

He, being Oscar Wilde and the pithy bastard that he is, just said,

*"Nothing whatsoever, but that is just what nobody will guess."*

He wanted the public to gaze upon the spectacle and wonder at its mystery, coyly avoiding any answer. In the same conversation with that person, he actually hinted to one of his followers that he should get a green carnation at a famous flower shop in London because, quote,

*"they grow there."*

There's an organization called Oscar Wilde Tours; it's a travel organization and they use the green carnation as their logo. And they note on their website about the story, quote,

*"As anyone who knew the decadent movement could see, Wilde was playing with one of his favorite ideas, that nature should imitate art and not the reverse. In that sense, then, the green carnation was symbolic: a flower of an unnatural color embodied the decadent and the unnatural."*

So two years later, after the *Lady Windermere's Fan* spectacle in 1894, a scandalous, satirical novel called *The Green Carnation* was published. This was at first anonymously published but it was written by Robert Hitchens, which was one of the men in Wilde's circle of admirers.

The lead characters in the novel are closely based on Wilde and his lover, Lord Alfred Bosie Douglas, and it was an instant success.

The novel's scandalous nature was instrumental in contributing to Wilde's arrest and trial for gross indecency. So much so, that Wilde even had to publicly refute the widely held belief that he was the anonymous author. He wrote into the Pall Mall Gazette in October 1894, writing,

*"Sir, kindly allow me to contradict, in the most emphatic manner, the suggestion made in your issue of Thursday last and since then copied into many other newspapers that I am the author of The Green Carnation. I invented that magnificent flower, but with the middle class and mediocre book that usurps its strangely beautiful name I have, I need hardly to say nothing whatsoever to do."*

And this one is my favorite part.

*"The flower is a work of art. The book is not."*

Always a sassy bitch. A tongue-in-cheek reference to the green carnation's past symbolism would emerge even decades later in the lyrics of a song from Noel Coward's 1929 operetta, *Bittersweet*.

The song titled, *We All Wore the Green Carnation* features four dandy ascete characters singing the lyrics in a parody of the dandy lifestyle. The lyrics read,

*"Pretty boys, witty boys, you may sneer at our disintegration; haughty boys, naughty boys, dear, dear, dear, swooning with affectation; And as we are the reason for the 90s being gay, we all wear a green carnation."*

And then I've got this little image here of the cover of the operetta, *Bittersweet*. Also, that just makes me really happy because it just makes me think of Xena and the *Bittersweet* musical.

So while the green carnation was kind of created as an empty mystery, it would become indelibly associated with both Oscar Wilde and just in general like a subtle symbol of Victorian homosexuality.

So we'll move on to our next one, which is violets. If you listen to our episode on Sappho, you might have heard a little bit about this. Dating all the way back to 600 BCE, violets had been used as a symbol for love between women, originating with the ancient Greek lyric poet, Sappho. Several fragments of her poems—and as you may know if you listen to the episode, she is said to have written over 10,000 lines of poetry, only about 600 of which remain—have lines describing a lover wearing garlands or crowns of violets. So we have this one translation from Mary Barnard,

*"I have not had one word from her. Frankly, I wish I were dead. When she left she wept a great deal. She said to me, 'This parting must be endured, Sappho. I go unwillingly.' I said, 'Go and be happy. But remember, you know well whom you leave shackled by love. If you forget me think of our gifts to Aphrodite, and all the loveliness that we shared, all the violet tiaras, braided rosebuds, dill and crocus twined around your young neck, myrrh poured on your head and on soft mats, girls with all that they most wished for beside them. While no voices chanted choruses without ours, no woodlot groomed in spring without song."*

And then another translation of this same one from Anne Carson, who you may know is one of our favorite translators,

*"For many crowns of violets and roses at my side you put on, and many woven garlands made of flowers around your soft throat."*

Sappho may have mentioned violets repeatedly due to their connotation at the time as a symbol linking brides to Aphrodite. We had talked previously about Sappho doing some bridal ritual poetry. And here's where I find it's really, really interesting. So, in our Sappho episode we had kind of left off in Ancient Greece with the violet. But while it originated in Ancient Greece, its use as a symbol for love between women expanded in modern times.

By the 1920s, violet was a common slang for homosexuality, much like lavender, specifically associated with women loving women. So lavender was generally used to refer to a streak of femininity in men and violet was kind of the women's side of it. This reference and use of violet flowers as a symbol of love between women was catapulted into popularity, however, in the late 1920s by an adaptation of the play by Édouard Bourdet called *The Captive* or *La Prisonnière* in French, and this play put lesbianism in the spotlight on the American stage.

It was performed in 1926 on Broadway and the play features a romance between two women. The lead character, Irene, is a lesbian tortured by her love for Madame D'Aiguines, but pretending an engagement to Jacques. Though Irene attempts to leave Madame D'Aiguines and marry Jacques, she returns to the relationship, saying that it is quote, "a prison to which I must return captive despite myself," hence the name of the play.

After returning from her honeymoon with Jacques, Irene receives a package from Madame and opens it to find a corsage of violets, known at that time to be a symbol of her love for Irene.

So this reference, this opening a package to find a corsage of violets was well known enough as a symbol of queer love between two women that it caused a huge scandal. New York Police raided the theatre and shut down the production for scandalous behavior. The lead actors were arrested and charged with offending public morals, and after 160 performances, the play was closed on February 27th, 1927, yielding to pressure from censorship advocates.

And New York even adopted new obscenity laws for the theatre banning plays quote "depicting or dealing with the subject of sex degeneracy, or sex perversion."

So, *The Captive* set a precedent causing this association of violets with lesbianism that lasted decades. The queer connotations linked to the violet were so ingrained and provocative at this point, that New York actually saw a sharp decline in violet sales. What had been previously seen as an innocent flower, which was often worn by like debutantes and virtuous female

celebrities to show like 'look how innocent and feminine and wonderful I am,' it lost favor in a big way. Wildly enough, the November 1934 edition of Harper's Bazaar wrote, quote,

*"Way back in violet country last year, they were still cursing this play as the knell of the violent industry."*

So the gays tanked the sales of violets in New York in the 1920s and 1930s.

In Paris, the reaction to the play and its subsequent banning was vastly different than the anxiety expressed by middle class American audiences. Lesbian groups in the audience at the performances of *La Prisonnière* including our favorites like Renée Vivien and Natalie Clifford Barney, they would go in groups—much like Oscar Wilde and his friends—they would go as groups to performances of *La Prisonnière* and pinned violets to the lapels and belts to show solidarity with the characters and subject matter of the play, which is my favorite thing, and I really think that we should bring stuff like this back.

Next up is a little one. So we talked a little bit about this in our episode on male-male love in feudal Japan, the chrysanthemum. The chrysanthemum flower was not only the emblem of the imperial family in feudal Japan, but it was also the most recognized and used symbol to discuss nanshoku, which was male-male intercourse and relationships, due to its resemblance to the anus.

*Kiku no chigiri* translated as chrysanthemum trysts and *kiku asobi*, chrysanthemum play, both meant homosexual intercourse. Trysts on top of chrysanthemum pattern fabrics were commonly depicted in erotic illustrations during the Tokugawa period, some of which you can see on our website if you go to our episode notes on that episode.

And then this is one that folks might be familiar with. If you are familiar with any queer symbol other than the rainbow flag, it is probably the pink triangle. So, it originates in 1930s, but didn't start gaining ground as a gay liberation symbol until the 1980s. It has origins in Nazi Germany during World War II and the Holocaust and was used to identify homosexual male prisoners. Homosexuality, as you may remember, was originally made illegal

in Germany in 1871, with the implementation of paragraph 175, a section of the German criminal code, which stipulated that homosexual acts between men were punishable with imprisonment and loss of civil rights. However, this was rarely enforced until the rise of the Nazi Party in the 1930s.

When Adolf Hitler rose to power, the persecution of LGBTQ people was intensified. And during the course of the Nazi regime, approximately 10,000 men were arrested for homosexuality. The symbol of the upside down pink triangle was sewn into their clothing in the concentration camps to mark them as homosexual. So you can see here this is a picture from a concentration camp uniform.

This was also very similar to the yellow stars branded upon Jewish prisoners. These two symbols were not the only symbols that the Nazis used. They used brown triangles to mark Romani, green for criminals, blue for immigrants, purple for Jehovah's Witnesses, and the black triangle was used to mark "asocial" prisoners, quote-unquote, among which sex workers and lesbians were included. So if you see the black triangle being associated with lesbianism, that also comes from the history in the concentration camps.

Years and years later, some attempts to reclaim the pink triangle remained in the early gay liberation movements. Starting— appropriately enough— with a West German gay liberation group called Homosexual Action West Berlin or Gay Action Group of West Berlin. They're abbreviated as HAW, which was founded in 1971 by college students.

HAW became the first group in the world to officially adopt the pink triangle as a gay liberation logo in 1973, following the 1972 publication of the first autobiography of a gay concentration camp survivor, which was called *The Men with the Pink Triangle*.

According to Peter Hedenström, one of the founding members of HAW, the symbol worked for the emerging movement because, quote,

*"At its core, the pink triangle represented a piece of our German history that still needed to be dealt with."*

So by the end of the 1970s, the symbol had spread from West Germany to being an international symbol, and synonymous with the gay liberation movement. However, many, including Harvey Milk, were uncomfortable with its traumatic history—understandably. In 1986, however, the symbol was solidified as a universal sign of queer resistance, with the creation of the Silence Equals Death Collective, which was a group of six New York activists who created a poster featuring the pink triangle facing upward and the words “Silence Equals Death” in large, block letters. Some of you may be familiar with this image. This was meant to call attention to the AIDS pandemic that had already claimed more than 5,000 lives of gay men at the time.

Their idea in changing the orientation of the triangle to stand on its base appropriated the triangle that had been used as a traumatic and violent symbol, instead, quote,

*“Conveying the strength of an otherwise stigmatized social position.”*

According to Andy Campbell, the author of a really great book—*Queer X Design*.

Shortly after, the poster was adopted by Act Up and became an everlasting symbol of AIDS advocacy. The pink triangle continues to feature prominently in LGBTQ imagery, for example, as the logo of the March on Washington for lesbian and gay rights in 1987. And then, you can see here a couple of different images, LGBTQ historical markers in New York City for the project *Queer Spaces: Places of Struggle, Places of Strength*, which is by the artists’ collective known as Repo History, you could check them out online.

This is a placard commemorating Marsha P. Johnson. And also the prison abolitionist organization Black and Pink, which aims to end the prison industrial complex and connect the public to incarcerated LGBTQ prisoners. So you can actually get involved with Black and Pink and do letter writing campaigns and cards—holiday cards—to incarcerated LGBTQ people around the holidays, to reduce isolation. They're a really great organization, and this is a very, very powerful image. If you're listening, you didn't get the visual of this, it is an upside down bright pink triangle inside which are bars to evoke a prison cell and hands grasping the bars.

Next up, we have the lambda. I don't know how many of you are familiar with the lambda. The origin as a queer symbol for the lambda begins with a man named Tom Doerr, who is a graphic artist and one of the founding members of the Gay Activist Alliance, which is a group that's split off from the GLF—the Gay Liberation Front—in 1969, aiming to focus explicitly on gay and lesbian issues. The Gay Liberation Front had a more broad approach, and they were doing a whole bunch of different activist work including working with the Black Panthers and the Gay Activists Alliance group specifically wanted to focus on gay and lesbian issues.

So they designated this Greek letter as the group symbol in 1970. Doerr originally designed the lambda as a gold or yellow image on a blue background, but it was frequently depicted in lavender on a white background, harking back to lavender as a queer color. The significance of Doerr choosing the lowercase Greek letter lambda as its symbol is kind of steeped in speculation and rumor. There aren't really specific accredited sources that tell one particular story, but the text accompanying Doerr's original drawing on a flier by GAA, kind of says it all. It says:

*"For the sciences of chemistry and physics, the lambda symbolizes a complete exchange of energy: that moment or span of time witness to absolute activity. An ancient symbol brought to application centuries from its origin, Lambda is the 11th lowercase letter of the Hellenistic alphabet. The Lacedaemonians, or Spartans, bore it on their shields—a people's will aimed at common oppressors. Likewise, members of the Gay Activists Alliance uphold it as their symbol before the nation. It signifies a commitment among men and women to achieve and defend their human rights as homosexual citizens. Activism is the operative term. Political involvement that is both assertive and effective is GAA's prime thrust. In the struggle against oppression, a cultural bond develops, suffused with human energies. The lambda now affirms the liberation of all gay people."*

The GAA adopted this symbol en masse, and they printed it on all apparel and press materials and, due to the GAA's is sponsoring of several public events for the queer community, the lambda quickly spread outside of GAA specific activities and became a growing symbol for gay liberation and a way

to discreetly identify community members. If you were wearing it, you know, it could easily be mistaken for a fraternity letter. So it was a nice, kind of under the radar symbol.

The symbol was officially declared an international symbol for gay liberation and rights when it was adopted as the logo for the International Gay Rights Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland in December 1974.

And today, the lambda is still in use, albeit less frequently than you would have seen it in the 1970s and 1980s. Many LGBTQ university student associations use the lambda in their names and logo designs and fraternity and sorority groups—queer fraternity and sorority groups—use it in their chapter names, and legal organizations and other businesses have adopted the symbol for their own use.

There's a couple of different examples here we have. So we have the Lambda Archives of San Diego, there's the Lambda Legal organization, which is a legal organization for queer equality, Delta Lambda Phi, which is a social fraternity which was founded by gay men, Gamma Rho Lambda, which is another--it's a co-ed "frorority," UCLA's Lambda Alumni Association, I like this little bear here, and then we also have the Lambda Literary Foundation, which is an organization for LGBTQ writers, and they host the annual Lammy or Lambda Literary Awards.

Next up, we have interlocking gender symbols. So this is probably one that you've also been really familiar with. So we've got—these actually originate from astronomy. So these— astronomical symbols have been used to represent men and women since the ancient times, referring to the Roman gods of war and love Mars, who is Aries in Greek mythology, and Venus, Aphrodite in Greek, and associating stereotypical, binary aspects and roles of men and women with the associated gods.

So the Mars symbol depicts the shield and spear of the Roman god of war. So it's two interlocking circles with arrows and then the Venus symbol depicts the hand mirror or distaff of Aphrodite or Venus. So it's two symbols and then a little cross on the bottom.

In the 1970s, these symbols became popular among gay men to use this interlocking Mars or male symbols to represent homosexuality, and then lesbians began to adopt the interlocking Venus symbols. The concept has since seen countless expansions on the basic theme and formula to represent various identities and relationships and genders throughout the years.

So we've got, you have—there's these bisexual interlocking symbols. There's been adaptation of them as use for a trans symbol; so you have it combining Mars and Venus. It's a mix of female Venus, male Mars and androgene mixed, and this was specifically designed in the 1990s by Holly Boswell, Wendy Parker and Nancy R. Nangeroni.

And then we also have another interesting symbol. This is Mercury. So in Greek mythology, Aphrodite had a child with Hermes, also known as Mercury in Roman mythology, and the child's name was Hermaphroditus and had ambiguous genitalia. That's the origin of the now antiquated term "hermaphrodite." As we probably all hopefully know, intersex is the preferred term. Since there's no specific symbol to represent Hermaphroditus, the symbol for Mercury was adopted as one way to represent the trans and intersex community. And it's also used kind of as a unisex signifier more generally, it's also the botanical symbol for hermaphroditic plants, which—so you'll see it in a whole bunch of botany and biological texts.

And then we have a couple of different things. We have a couple of non-binary versions here. The original one, this was designed by a Tumblr user named Jonathan R in 2012, to specifically represent non-binary individuals. The use of the X—so it's the circle and a little stalk and then it has an X—was a decision made as a way to represent non-binary identities that don't fall into strict binary categories. And then you also have a variation on it where you've got—instead of an X, it's a little bit more like an asterisk. So you'll see these kind of all over. There's a whole bunch of variations, but they originated in the 1970s.

Next we have one that I was actually really surprised to find out about, and it's a delight for me, is nautical stars. Nautical stars were traditionally associated with sailors and pirates, and it is one of the most widely known tattoo designs. Sailors use the North Star as a navigation aid, so many

sailors tattooed the nautical star design on themselves as a good luck symbol in hopes of returning home safely. It was then adopted by military personnel, again with the returning home safely motif, as well as those in the punk scene, and that traces back as a reference to Sailor Jerry.

However, it also has a history as a lesbian symbol. Popular in the late 1940s and early 1950s, some lesbians utilized tattoos as a method to recognize one another. They would get nautical stars tattooed on their wrists.

Historians and activists, Madeline D. Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy note in their 1993 book, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*—which is an ethnography on working class lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York, pre 1969 liberation—they write in this book, quote,

*"The cultural push to be identified as lesbians, or at least different all the time, was so powerful at the time that it generated a new form of identification among the tough, bar lesbians, a star tattoo on top of the wrist, which was usually covered by a watch. We can trace this phenomenon back to an evening of revelry in the late 1950s when a few butches dropped over to Dirty Dick's tattoo parlor on Chippewa Street and had the tiny blue five pointed star put on their wrists. Later, some of the femmes of this group also got the idea one night—and did it. The community views the tattoo as a definite mark of identification. The Buffalo police knew that the people that had the stars on their wrist were lesbians and they had their names and so forth: that it was an identity thing with the gay community, with the lesbian community. They know that the star was one of the first symbols of lesbian community that veered from the butch-femme dynamic and imagery that was really common in the 1940s and 1950s."*

Next up, we have the labrys. Some folks may be familiar with the lesbian flag that features a double headed axe on a purple background in front of a black, upside down triangle, but even before the concept of flags as an identity marker for queer people was popularized by Baker and the rainbow flag, the labrys was popular as a lesbian symbol in the 1970s, on its own.

So the labrys was a double headed axe wielded by the Amazons, a mythical, matriarchal warrior society of ancient Greece--here we go back to ancient

Greece--as well as associated with the Greek goddesses Demeter and Artemis. The labrys was adopted in the 1970s by feminists as a symbol of radical lesbian feminist efforts meant to represent women's strength and self-sufficiency. It was printed on T shirts, buttons, jewelry and more and appeared on the cover of books like *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta Ethics of Radical Feminism* by Mary Daly, in which she, according to, again, author Andy Campbell in his book *Queer X Design*,

*"Imagines one being smelted by the gathered tools of patriarchal oppression."*

Daly read the access double edge is a metaphor for the amazing female mind, which must be attuned to the many impediments to women's liberation.

Nowadays, I don't think you see the labrys super frequently—right now, and there's some debate online about whether or not it's been co-opted as a terf symbol. I'm always of the opinion that whatever terfs or shitty people take, we should fight to take back, so there are a lot of people who utilize it in various different ways.

Next up is my favorite, and I really wish this was more well known, is the lavender rhinoceros! This one might be pretty obscure for folks if you're not familiar with some queer history in the Boston area. So, some symbols last for decades and are widespread all throughout the world, and some experience a brief moment of popularity and then fade. The lavender rhinoceros is one of those.

It was designed by two artists in Boston, Massachusetts, Daniel Thaxton and Bernard or Bernie Toale, and they debuted this image in 1974 as a part of a public ad campaign for Gay Media Action Advertising. It was intended as a symbol of strength and resilience of the queer community. As Toale explained, the rhino was specifically chosen because, quote,

*"It is a much maligned and misunderstood animal and in actuality, is a gentle creature."*

The purple came from a mixture of pink and blue, symbolic of unity and a merger between masculine and feminine. And also, you know, harkens back to lavender as a queer color, and then a small, red heart was added to evoke the gentle characteristics.

As Andy Campbell writes in *Queer X Design*,

*"The rainbow's [rhino] personality characteristics, gentle but tough when provoked or angered, seems to speak to the position of LGBTQ people."*

Thaxton and Toale disseminated the images through ads plastered on Boston's buses and subway systems. They hoped to encourage the visibility of the queer community in Boston with the ads, sending out press packets to try to drum up public support to run the ads on the MBTA in time for Pride.

However, due to rising costs of the ads and the advertising company actually tripling the cost of the campaign by refusing to categorize the ads as a public service project, Gay Media Action didn't actually have the funds to cover the cost and the ads were put on hold, which prompted the Gay Action Media to challenge the decision through organizing a protest campaign, sending hundreds of letters to MBTA and MTA, as well as actually hiring a lawyer to represent their case in court.

Ultimately, the MBTA and MTA stood by their price increase and the ads weren't run. However, in response, the lavender rhino debuted at Boston's Pride march in force. It was emblazoned on T-shirts and pins and signs, it was everywhere. It even showed up as a life-size paper mache, a rhino on a float, and it instantly became immortalized as a symbol of queer resistance and perseverance. GMA eventually received donations to pay for the increase in ad costs and was able to circulate a small run of the ads between 1974 and 1975—December 1974 and February 1975—and it continued to live on as a symbol of the LGBTQ community locally—until other symbols like the lambda rose in popularity.

Its legacy still stands today, though, inspiring things like Denver, Colorado's first LGBTQ magazine, *The Rhinoceros*, and Theatre Rhinoceros in San Francisco, which is the longest running queer theatre company in the world.

Next up, we have the hanky code or handkerchief code. So, this is one that you might be familiar with. It's one of the more well known symbols of the queer community, especially in terms of being incognito. So the wearing of various colored bandanas around the neck was common in the mid and late 19th century among cowboys, steam railroad engineers and miners in the western United States.

It's thought that the wearing of bandanas by gay men originated in San Francisco after the Gold Rush when, because of a shortage of women—right— mostly it was men going out west to pan for gold, men were dancing with each other in square dances and they developed a code where the man wearing the blue bandana would take the male part in the square dance and the man wearing the red bandana would take the female part. These bandanas were usually worn around the arm or hanging from the belt or in the back pocket of one's jeans, which is how we kind of evolve into the modern day hankie code.

The modern hankie code may have started in New York City in 1970, or '71, when a journalist for *The Village Voice* joked that instead of wearing keys to signify top and bottom, which was the common practice at the time, men should use different colored hankies.

Alan Selby, who was the founder of Mr. S Leather in San Francisco—which is a leather shop that kind of changed the face of queer men's kink in San Francisco—he claimed that he created the first hankie code when the distributor sent a double order of bandanas and he and his business partners decided to come up with the code to sell the extra colors that they received.

There's also something called Bob Damron's Address Book, which is notable when we're referencing the handkerchief code. It started in 1964, created by a businessman by the name of Bob Damron, and he published a book of all the gay bars he knew from his constant travels across the entire United States. Quote,

*"This book fit comfortably in the palm of your hand," a description reads, "Despite its petite size, this book was an impressive accomplishment. Each one of the listings he had visited himself. Every*

*last copy of the book he sold himself. Bob Damron's Address Book also published a yearly chart for the meaning of each colored hankie under the title 'color codes.' Depending on what color was worn and which pocket the handkerchief was placed in, it signaled the wearer's sexual preferences for positions and acts."*

It's less seen in modern use now, but it is frequently seen at specific venues like kink fairs and festivals, things like Dore Alley or Folsom Street Fair in San Francisco.

The need for a discreet sexual advertising method—which is what the hankie code started fulfilling in the 1970s—has kind of been filled these days with the digitized process on gay cruising apps like Grindr and SCRUFF and other gay cruising apps. So, as we move forward into a—society that is a little bit more tolerant, the need for discreet sexual advertising has kind of moved online.

So that takes us to 1978 and the creation of the rainbow flag. I'm not gonna go super into detail about it—because we have an entire episode on it, but I did want to cover a little bit. So in 1978, upon urging from his friend, Harvey Milk, to create a new symbol to represent LGBTQ people as an alternative to the popular but traumatic pink triangle, Gilbert Baker started work on what would become the most iconic and prolific representation of the queer community around the world.

As Baker mentioned in an interview in *Metro Weekly*, he said, quote,

*"We needed a logo, a symbol. We needed a positive image that could unite us. I sewed my own dresses, so why not a flag? At Harvey's behest, I went about creating a rainbow flag. I had never felt so empowered, so free."*

He knew that symbol had to be a flag, and he was inspired by the American flag and its power. In 1976 it was the Bicentennial, and he had seen the American flag being put on literally everything. He said, quote,

*"It really put the seed in my head. I was like, 'wait a minute, we're a global tribe, and a flag really fits our mission.'"*

In another interview, he said,

*"Flags say something. You put a rainbow flag on your windshield, and you're saying something."*

The original flag debuted to the public in 1978 on June 25th. It was hand stitched and dyed by a team of 30 people and it was raised in the United Nations Plaza as a gesture of the flag as an international symbol. You may remember, the original flag had eight colors, each representing something empowering to the queer community. Hot pink for sex; red for life; orange for healing; yellow sunlight; green nature; turquoise for magic and art; indigo for serenity and purple for spirit.

You may be more familiar with the six colored flag, which removed the hot pink and the turquoise. And that's because, at the time, hot pink was removed due to dye expenses. So it was really, really hard to get this color of dye when they were hand dyeing these flags and Gilbert Baker wanted it to be widely available to everyone, so they dropped that. And then turquoise was removed in order to have a flag that could be evenly split in half, resulting in a six color rainbow flag that's more commonly seen today. So where did that leave us? Post-1978, right.

You might be familiar with flags for everybody. Since Gilbert Baker and his collaborators debuted the rainbow flag in 1978, all corners of the LGBTQ community have embraced the process of creating unique and beautiful flags to represent various identities. Gilbert was right, a flag is a powerful item to claim and adopt. Since 1978, dozens of flags have been created and more are popping up each day with the current generation of queer youths on the internet. The relationship between Baker's flag and these other flags has been referred to by some, including the creator of the trans flag, Monica Helms, akin to national versus state flags. They're not meant to invalidate one another, but to be individual representatives of specific LGBTQ communities and identities—within a whole. The rainbow flag is all encompassing. But each of these flags representing specific communities each have their own history, significance and design logic integral to the community they're connected to.

So here's a few—I've got a little array of them on there, and we're gonna go, we're gonna go through a couple of specific ones. So first up is the bisexual flag. This was designed by Michael Page in 1998, at a time when people were uniting under the iconic rainbow flag, but it seemed to really only belong to gay and lesbian people. Bisexuals needed a flag of their own as an effective tool to unite the movement. As Wendy Curry, the then president of BiNet USA said, quote,

*"We wanted to let the larger world know that we were here, we're proud and we demanded respect."*

Michael Page took his inspiration for the flag from the bisexual triangles or "biangles" motif that was already in use. So you have two intersecting pink and blue triangles converging in the middle to make lavender, and this was the first symbol to use the pink, purple and blue color scheme to represent bisexuality.

The history of this symbol is relatively mysterious, and there doesn't really seem to be a clear cut origin or definitive source of the biangles. The pink triangle we know the origin of as discussed earlier, but what about the blue? The blue wasn't specifically used for anything queer among the Holocaust. It may have been added as a foil to the pink, and the overlapping area was representing the middle ground that bisexual people exist in—with attraction to multiple genders. So going on that theme, using magenta royal blue and lavender, Page clarified the idea of the intersecting colors from the biangles into a powerful flag. Magenta represents those attracted to the same gender, the royal blue for people attracted to other genders, and the central lavender for bisexuality, and as a link to the larger queer community referencing the history of lavender as an LGBTQ color.

Page also, really interestingly, specifically addressed the issue of bi invisibility with the design of the flag, saying,

*"The key to understanding the symbolism in the bi Pride flag is to know that the purple pixels of color blend unnoticeably into the pink and blue, just as in the real world, where most bi people blend unnoticeably into both the gay, lesbian and straight communities."*

The flag's first public, official outing was on March 22nd 1999, at the Equality Begins at Home rally in Tallahassee, Florida, and it was caught on camera and included in a front page photo of the rally.

Next up we have the trans flag! So this was created in 1999 by co-founder of the Transgender American Veterans Association, Monica Helms, and she debuted the flag at a Pride celebration in Phoenix, Arizona in 2000. And its colorway, light blue, pink, and white—has been embraced widely by trans people around the world. Monica Helms describes the meanings of the flags colors, saying:

*"the stripes at the top and bottom are light blue, the traditional color for baby boys. The stripes next to them are pink, the traditional color for baby girls. The stripe in the middle is white, for those who are transitioning or consider themselves having a neutral or undefined gender."*

So, specifically including non-binary people in the original trans flag. Helms also designed the flag to be symmetrical, in order to make it so that no matter which way it's flown, it's always correct, quote,

*"Signifying us finding correctness in our lives."*

Which I love.

In 2014, Helms actually donated her original flag to the Smithsonian, so if you are near the Smithsonian, you should—when we can all leave our houses again— go there and check out the flag in person.

So next up— a lesbian flag. This is a hot topic full of lots of contention. There isn't currently a unified consensus around a lesbian flag that has been widely adopted. So various designs have been popping up throughout the years. So we talked a little bit before about the labrys flag. This was designed in 1999 by graphic designer Sean Campbell, and it featured a labrys superimposed on the inverted black triangle set against a violet hue background.

Then we have the lipstick lesbian or pink lesbian flag, which consists of six shades of red and pink colors and a white bar in the center. The original design known as the 'lipstick lesbian flag' includes the red kiss symbol in the

corner and was introduced in the web-blog, *This Lesbian Life* in 2010. Both the pink and lipstick lesbian flags represent, quote,

*"homosexual women who have a more feminine gender expression."*

So this comes with some controversy. There have been some things that have been uncovered about the creator of this flag and having some racist connotations, so there's been a lot of adaptations kind of away from it, which led to—in 2018, the creation of what is commonly known as the lesbian community pride flag, which takes the pink flag and kind of adapts it. It has a dark orange bar indicating gender non-conforming folks and was created and introduced on social media in 2018. So it's meant to be more inclusive, not specifically just for a femme identity.

There are also more that come up. We talked a little bit in our Sappho episode with Alexandra Tydings about the sapphic flag that has debuted online. There's a whole bunch of different variations of people coming up with ones all the time, but because of a lot of, you know, questions within the community, there doesn't seem to have been a consensus on one.

Next up we have the genderqueer flag, which is one of my favorites. It was designed in 2011 by genderqueer writer and advocate, Marilyn Roxie, and according to Roxie, the lavender stripe up at the top is a mix of blue and pink, colors traditionally associated with men and women, and represents androgyny as well as queer identities. The white stripe, like in the trans pride flag, represents agender or gender neutral identities, then the chartreuse— or green—stripe at the bottom is actually--this is so cool--is the inverse of lavender. So it's the color theory inverse of lavender, and it represents third gender identities and identities outside of the gender binary. So you have on top like a mixing of the binary and on the bottom you have a rejection of the binary, which is really cool.

This flag was then followed in 2014 by the non-binary flag by activist Kai Rowan, who intended to represent non-binary people who didn't feel that the gender queer flag represents them. It's intended to be used alongside Roxie's design. Each stripe color represents different types of non-binary identities. You have yellow at the top for people who identify outside of the gender binary, white for non-binary people with multiple genders, purple for

those with a mixture of both male and female genders, and black for people who do not have a gender.

And there's so, so many more. There are a whole bunch of different variations on genderqueer and non-binary flags just based off of those two. There's bigender and gender fluid, demi-boy, demi-girl, androgene, agender, there's a whole bunch of them. Just check them out online. They're all really cool.

Next up, we have the pansexual pride flag, which was created in 2010 by a Tumblr user named Just-Jasper and it features a similar design to Michael Page's bisexual flag, Just-Jasper substitutes the lavender central band with yellow, representing an attraction to people who identify as androgynous, gender fluid or non-binary. And then you also have a variation on the astronomical symbols that represents pansexuality. It looks like a little  $p$  with the Mars and Venus symbol at the bottom there, the cross between the cross and an arrow.

And then next up, we have the asexual flag. So the asexual pride flag was created in 2010 and it consists of four horizontal stripes: black, gray, white and purple from top to bottom. The flag was created by AVEN, which is the Asexual Visibility and Education Network, and it was created by a user named standup in August 2010 as part of a community effort to create and choose a flag. Basically the black stripe represents asexuality, the gray stripe represents the gray area between sexual and asexual, so gray-sexuality, the white stripe represents sexuality, and the purple stripe represents the community.

In addition to flags, the ace community also signals connection to one another with the symbol of wearing a black ring. It's also known as an ace ring. It's worn on the middle finger of one's right hand as a way that asexual people signify their aceness. The ring is deliberately worn in a similar manner as one would a wedding ring to symbolize marriage. And use of the black ring as a symbolism for asexuality can be seen kind of starting around—around 2005.

You can also see we also have different versions on the asexual flag and symbols. So you've got the aromantic flag. There's a demisexual flag, which

harkens to the colors, and then there's also the actual symbol and logo for AVEN, which is a upside down triangle with the purple outline and then a gradient of white to black, symbolizing the whole spectrum of sexuality to asexuality—on it, which is really neat.

Next up, we have the intersex flag, which was created by Morgan Carpenter of the Intersex Human Rights Australia Organization in July 2013. And Morgan wanted to create a flag that is, quote,

*"Not derivative, but is yet firmly grounded in meaning."*

The organization describes the circle as,

*"Unbroken and unornamented, symbolizing wholeness and completeness and our potentialities. We're still fighting for bodily autonomy and genital integrity. And this symbolizes the right to be who and how we want to be."*

And it's such an interesting flag design, it's so different than anything else I've seen, it's very, very striking. It's a bright yellow background with an unbroken purple ring—in the middle.

And then we even have variations on the rainbow flag from Gilbert Baker—onward. So one thing that Gilbert Baker really, really loved was anytime anybody made variations on the flag. He even did a whole bunch of variations on the flag himself. He did one with a black stripe to represent, hopefully, a future victory over AIDS. Shortly before Trump was elected, he created a rainbow flag with a lavender stripe to specifically represent community. He was constantly excited about variations on this. And so following from that theme, we have a couple of different variations.

The first of which is the Philadelphia Pride flag. You may have seen this in 2017, Philadelphia's Office of LGBT Affairs proposed adding a black stripe and a brown stripe to the rainbow flag, tasked with addressing a bout of racial violence that was happening in the community. As one of the supporters noted, quote,

*"With all of the black and brown activism that's worked to address racism and the gayborhood over the past year, I think the new flag is a great step for the city to show the world that they're working toward fully supporting all members of our community."*

And then we have something that is known as the Daniel Quasar flag for the founder, or also known as the intersectional or Progress Pride flag. So Daniel Quasar is a graphic designer that uses xe/xyr pronouns. Xe went a step further in Xir design in 2018, adding the black and brown stripes along with the colors in Monica Helm's trans flag as a chevron on the hoist of the flag. So it's a series of triangles. And this is meant to signify the work that still needs to be done in the community in ensuring inclusivity, safety, and advocacy for queer people of color and for trans people.

Moving away from flags a little bit, I wanted to highlight a very important symbol post-the rainbow flag that is not a flag base symbol. You are probably familiar with this one. This is the AIDS awareness ribbon. So it was created by Visual AIDS Artists' Caucus inspired by the custom of tying a yellow ribbon around a tree to welcome home military or convicts. And the group developed the red ribbon to be a symbol of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, which I feel is very relevant as we're in the middle of COVID-19. They chose red specifically to stand for blood, passion, anger and love. And after the ribbon debuted publicly at the 1991 Tony Awards, it exploded in popularity, so much so that Visual AIDS actually couldn't keep up with production, and they would hold ribbon bees where attendees would assemble the ribbons by the thousands to distribute.

The ribbon project made clear the political and community spirit of the symbol. They stated that they did not ever want it to be copyrighted. And their reasons were—their requirements were as follows:

*"Remain anonymous as individuals and to credit the Visual AIDS Artists' Caucus as a whole in the creation of the red ribbon project and not to list any individual as the creator of the Red Ribbon project. Keep the image copyright free so that no individual or organization would profit from the use of the red ribbon, and use the red ribbon as a consciousness raising symbol, not as a commercial or trademark tool."*

The red ribbon remains one of the most recognizable symbols of the AIDS pandemic and is expanded beyond LGBTQ communities and the United States. It's used worldwide to represent the fight against HIV and AIDS.

And lastly, flags have kind of exploded even beyond specifically the queer community. You have the adoption of identity flags for specific subcultural groups or kink and fetish groups. So the popularity of the flag as a signifier in the LGBTQ community has gone beyond representing sexual and gender identities and has gone onward to represent specific kinks and fetishes and non-traditional relationship models.

Some examples are the leather pride flag, which was created by Tony DeBlase, who was a founding member of the Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago, and it was unveiled in 1989, at the International Mr. Leather Competition. DeBlase left the design up for interpretation, invoking the dress of the leather and BDSM community of black leather and blue denim. So it is black and blue alternating stripes with a white stripe in the middle, and then a heart up in the corner, which represents mutual consent and love and respect among all leather and kink participants.

There's also the bear brotherhood flag, which was created by Craig Burns in 1995. So bears are a subcultural group of gay men. You also have the other kink ones like rubber pride, which was created in 1994, and pony play flag in 2007. And then you also have the polyamory flag designed by Jim Evans in 1995, which has blue, red and black and then a Pi ( $\pi$ ) symbol in the middle.

And then here's kind of where we end. Where do we go from here? More flags are being proposed and designed every day by the current generation of queer people. There are even Reddit groups like Our Queer Vexillology, encouraging people to come up with their own unique flag designs. So I'm really interested to see what we will see in the future.

And then a little bit of information about Vexillography, which is flag design. And this is where we moved into our workshop. Good things to keep in mind when you're creating a flag or a symbol is keep it simple, use meaningful symbolism, limit your color palette, and be distinctive, or be related to one another.

So this is where we ended and we moved into a workshop on flag design. And I really, really encourage you all to go out there and discover what you really like about flags and symbols that currently exist or find things that don't work out for you. Maybe you don't like one of the flags, maybe you, you hate the flag created for your identity, and you want to make a new one or you want to adapt it. I highly encourage everybody to go out there and really claim it and take charge of creating something that can be used by yourself and your community.

And that's...that's it!

That's where we're gonna leave you with our talk.

### **Interviews with flag workshop participants**

[static transition]

**Leigh:** So that was the talk. I really hope you enjoyed it. It was really fun to hang out with everyone online and talk about this. And now I'd really like to share some wonderful audio from people who participated in the workshop. And listen to them tell us a little bit about the symbols and flags that they created. I've put pictures of the artwork that these folks created on our website, and I've just been completely blown away by them. So I really hope that you enjoy them too.

[static transition]

**Leigh:** Alright, so we are here at the flag making workshop at the GLBT Historical Society Museum. And I would love for you to talk a little bit about the flag that you designed. Introduce yourself with your name and your pronouns, please.

**Mia:** Hello, my name is Mia Burn, my pronouns are she and they. I'm a trans dyke and butch, here in San Francisco and I've designed a trans butch pride flag and the color... and inspired by what I've learned today about Monica Helms' original idea for the trans flag, which is that it's symmetrical so it can be—always be in alignment wherever it's viewed, which I think is a

wonderful substance subtext to that flag. The colors I've chosen are black at the edges, followed by violet and navy blue at the center.

One of the criticisms I often hear of the trans flag for many reasons is, okay, pink, blue and white. So, some people have perceived that to have an anti-blackness element to it. Whether or not that is one's opinion, I feel that black being both the symbol of, historically, of lesbians during the Holocaust, violet being a known symbol and color for lesbians throughout history and the original butch pride flag which, we may know, is a background of violet with a black triangle and then a white labrys on top of that.

I wanted the black to symbolize both the historical—aspect of lesbians being persecuted in Nazi Germany and also to be more inclusive of people of color. I wanted the violet to have its very well known meaning in the dyke community as being a color of dykeness. And then the navy blue. I was very much thinking about—because I wanted to eliminate the white stripe in the middle—I was very much thinking about in 1979 when Patrick Califia, then with the Society of Janus repurposed or made a new leather women's hankie code, and how I personally have always associated navy blue, not with anal sex as many people tend to just say, 'Oh, it's just for anal,' it's not, it symbolizes sex. It symbolizes topping and bottoming and all sorts of aspects of sex, but in my mind's eye, one of my visions of who is a butch dyke is—some awesome badass standing on the top of Dolores Park during the Dyke March, wearing a purple shirt and a black vest and a navy blue hankie around their neck.

I've seen that. So this is, to me, I wanted to just be inclusive of those identities and also not to have it be simply a trans dyke pride, or anything like that, because I think something that gets erased a lot is there a lot of people who are for afab trans folk who still have a dyke identity, and wind up being—and/or a butch identity—and wind up getting erased, not because of trans women, but because of the nature of symbols.

And so I wanted to make a flag that could be used by butches of any of any stripe—to pun it out.

**Leigh:** [faintly] I always appreciate a good pun.

**Mia:** But I think it's kind of cool. Yes, I think it's pretty cool, actually. And I'm hoping that it's—I'm hoping that it's pretty neat. I'm gonna put it on my Instagram and say, 'Here's trans butch pride, do with it what you will. Rip me apart if you want to. [Leigh laughs] Doing my best. Heart you.'

**Leigh:** I think it's fantastic.

**Mia:** Thank you.

**Leigh:** Thank you so much for sharing.

[static transition]

**Iris:** My name is Iris, my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I made a flag that is a ribbon that usually represents different types of disabilities, but with the traditional queer rainbow colors, and I think that that's often an intersection that people don't think about is people with disabilities who are also part of other communities, like the queer community. And, yeah, that's it.

**Leigh:** Wonderful. Thank you for sharing.

[static transition]

**Sadia:** I'm Sadia Thomas, I use she/her pronouns. So the flag that I designed is based around my own black, feminine, queer identity. So growing up black and queer, and a woman, I always felt super, super alone. I didn't feel represented in any way, shape or form, especially within the LGBT movement. I saw a lot of it being sort of white, and male focused. So for this, I wanted to sort of combine my own identity with...I wanted to basically display my—where I exist at an intersection of being black and female and queer.

So I decided to put the afroed woman in the center because to me, the afroed woman is not only myself, it's also all of the activists who fought and died to get me where I am today. And it's my own symbolism of black femme power. And then I also wanted to use, I wanted to go off of the lesbian flag because I typically identify as a queer woman and for my entire upbringing I identified as a lesbian.

So that was basically the concept that I was going for, and I feel like I've really accomplished it. And I feel like it's something that I can look at, and feel as if I'm represented through that painting, but also feel empowered and know that I can continue fighting for what's right. And also I could show it to other black, you know, black lesbians and they can feel some sense of representation or empowerment.

[static transition]

**Steve:** I'm Steve, I go by he/him/his and this is— my flag. I have the upside down triangle referencing the pink triangle. I'm using that kind of to call back to reappropriation and the idea that you can always take something and make it your own. And you can always override its—its power to support you.

I have that suspended in a white flag. The white flag is the peace flag, like, I guess technically surrender [laughter] but it's, you know, peaceful and it kind of, I use that because I'm a pacifist. I think more things can be solved by talking than by fighting. The triangle has in it the rainbow flag. And I use that because it's gay [laughter]. But also, it's another symbol of, you know, togetherness. It's the gay flag, but it's for all the LGBTQIA+ community, it's not necessarily just for one group. And I like that kind of all encompassing aspect to it. And that brings me to the circle that's embedded inside the triangle. It's—I tried to make it silver. And the circle itself represents kind of a unity, a togetherness. Think of it like a ring. And it's like a silver ring, like, the idea of metal kind of seems almost tribal in a sense. Like, you know, if you come into a partnership and you give your spouse a ring, or you wear jewelry as a sign of status to a group, or coming of age, or solidarity or something. So having that metal ring in there just kind of emphasizes the unity aspect and the human communal feeling I'm trying to go for.

[static transition]

**Rhea:** I'm Rhea Ewing. I use they/them pronouns. I am a artist and author.

**Ezra:** And I'm Rhea's partner Ezra and I use the ze/zir pronouns.

**Rhea:** We have made a flag for non-binary people who love other non-binary people. And the reason we made this flag is because it's relevant to our lives. We've been together for almost eight years now. And when we first got together, I was out and proud as trans and non-binary, but Ezra was not and a few years...

**Ezra:** I hadn't really thought about gender that much—until I met Rhea.

**Rhea:** Yeah, then I was like 'gender, gender, gender, gender, gender,—gender, gender, gender, gender.'

**Ezra:** And I was like, [thoughtful] 'Hmmm. Gender.' [laughter]

So a few years into dating, I started thinking about gender more, and feeling a little bit like I was questioning my gender and then like, 'Oh, I think I really am non-binary. I think I'm genderqueer. Oh, but I can't be that because Rhea is that and that would be stealing their identity.'

**Leigh:** [laughter]

**Rhea:** Yeah, so we wound up having after, finally, I think maybe after a lot of internal, internal anguish...

**Ezra:** Oh yes, much internal anguish

.

**Rhea:** And we, you know, from my perspective, you were just so like scared and worried that you were like going to be taking something from me, or like copying something from me. And, you know, finally, I interrupted you in the middle of the spiel and I was just like, 'Well, of course, we can have the same gender and be dating together, like, that's what being gay is.' [laughter]

**Ezra:** It's very embarrassing, because I have known that I was queer since about sixth grade, so...

**Rhea:** Oh it took me so much longer to figure that one out.

**Ezra:** So our flag. So we went through about 17 different ideas, and then realized that we were overthinking it completely. So we took the non-binary flag, which is the four stripes going from yellow at the top, through white, purple, and then black. And we just put a heart on top of it, for love.

**Rhea:** A nice red heart.

**Leigh:** So beautifully simple and it encapsulates so much. I love it.

**Rhea:** Well, I really appreciated your presentation and learning about the history and all these different iterations makes me feel a lot better and more secure and creative about continuing to make more variations.

**Ezra:** I agree. I actually was really kind of not okay with all of the different proliferation of flags that was happening and actually with this new perspective, I am more into it now.

**Leigh:** Awhh, yay!

**Rhea and Ezra:** More flags!

**Rhea:** More happiness. History is awesome.

[static transition]

**Leigh:** And that's the end. I'm gonna splice in here a few other announcements I made at the end of the presentation online about some cool things coming up. I would re-record it, but I'm too lazy. So y'all get to hear me talk about it from when I did the presentation.

**Presentation Leigh:** Thank you everybody so much for joining me. I would really love to do some more things like this. And we've got a couple of announcements and other things coming up.

We have the *History is Gay* coloring book starting and coming along. So I've had some really wonderful submissions from artists and all, once we have some of those finalized, we'll start releasing them as items that you can do like \$1 donation for and the donations will go for queer COVID-19 relief, and

you'll be able to color the pages and then share them with us on social media. So yeah, look out for things on our social media. I would really love to do some more of those live watches that I did with our disastrous watching of the *Girl King*. So I'm hoping to schedule some more of those things.

If you are not a Patreon supporter, I urge you to become one. Things like the live watches and some other things will be exclusive to Patreon supporters. And also right now during the COVID-19 crisis, all of our Patreon funds are going to be donated to artists that have worked with us on merch design or logo design, as well as queer mutual aid funds for COVID-19 relief. So if you've been thinking about becoming a patron, even just at the dollar level, every extra dollar will go to helping people figure out what to do in this crisis. I'm lucky enough to still be having a job right now and being able to work from home. So those extra funds, I really wanted to go to folks who need it right now. So you can go to [patreon.com/historyisgay](https://patreon.com/historyisgay) and become a patron. You'll also get access to things like the Sappho Salon Minisodes, which are really fun. I've got a couple of those in the queue. And I'm really hoping--I would love to be able to do a, like, a Letters and Queries episode soon where folks get to submit their own stories and chat with us.

Let's see, other things that we've got happening or going on... oh! Transcribing Project. If you are stuck at home, bored and you want stuff to do and you want to be a helpful human, we have a transcribing project. So because the podcast is pretty much just me while I'm trying to balance a full time job, we don't have all the time that we would love to dedicate to transcribing all of the episodes to make them accessible for our d/Deaf and hard of hearing community. So we have a team of volunteers who are going through and transcribing our episodes and more people are always welcome, always wanted. The more people we get involved in the project, the quicker we're going to have more episodes up and we can have it accessible to folks who wouldn't normally be able to engage with the content because it's audio only.

So if you're interested in transcribing, you don't need any special skills. We have descriptions and instructions where everyone—you can go to [HistoryisGayPodcast.com/transcribe](https://HistoryisGayPodcast.com/transcribe) and it will take you to the project and how to participate. Thank you again.

[static transition]

And with that, finally, that concludes this weird little episode. I hope you enjoyed—I hope you learned something. Go out and make more flags, find flags that you love and make you feel like you're a part of something bigger and that you enjoy. I hope you stick with us as we try to figure out what the future of this show is. And *History is Gay Podcast* can be found on Tumblr at [@historyisgaypodcast](https://www.tumblr.com/historyisgaypodcast), Twitter at @historyisgaypod. You can always drop us a line with questions, suggestions, or just to say hi at [historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com](mailto:historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com).

We already mentioned Patreon above, but I'd like to thank our most recent supporters, including Chelsea Smith, Philip Casey, Vivian Lang, Lauren Ode Giles and Julian MacLaughlin. Thank you so much for all of your support. As we say every episode, we literally couldn't do this without you. And like I mentioned in the comments up above, all of those proceeds from Patreon will be going to folks who need support during COVID-19 right now.

Lastly, remember to rate, review and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. It helps more people find the show. And as always, we can expand our awesome community. That's it for *History is Gay*. Until next time, stay queer and stay curious...and stay healthy.

♪[Outro Music Plays] ♪