

History is Gay
Episode 0: Introducing *History is Gay!*

Leigh: Hello and welcome to *History is Gay*, a podcast that examines the underappreciated and overlooked queer ladies, gents and gentle-enbies that have always been there in the unexplored corners of history. Because history has never been as straight as you think.

[Theme Music Plays]

Leigh: Hey, I'm Leigh!

Gretchen: And I'm Gretchen! And in this episode we're going to be talking about what this podcast is and why you should listen to us.

Leigh: I mean other than the fact that we're super cool, big gay nerds and who wouldn't want to listen to us?

Gretchen: I mean there's that, but like also we have really cool shit to say. [Laughs] Specifically we like to think of this podcast as "queering" history. So what is "queering" history? Well, for us, it's a recognition that persons who existed outside of straight sexuality and the gender binary have always existed, but that history— or, you know, the people who write and tell history— may or may not always have acknowledged that we exist.

Leigh: We're going to introduce you to some people from history who aren't as straight as people might think. We'll also cover cultures who have may have been more affirming or at least understood differently of what we now consider LGBT identity, but it's not just about sexual orientation. We're also going to be diving into gender representation beyond the binary that we've been taught in western American culture. Whether it be same gender attraction, trans experience or gender expression outside of the modern Western binary, we're going to look at it at all or as much as we can get our hands on. Basically, if it's not heteronormative or ciscentric, you can bet it's something we want to talk about. Like...

Gretchen: Anne Bonny and Mary Read who totally boned on the open seas...

Leigh: The original emo lesbian Sappho...

Gretchen: Gay Egyptians who are married for all eternity.

Leigh: Speaking of egyptians, do you know they had three genders?

Gretchen: That's so cool. We're also going to talk about people like Claude Cahun, the genderqueer Nazi fighter...

Leigh: And more! I guess you'll just have to listen to see.

Gretchen: Yes. Well, before we move on, we want to address our choice of language. The podcast is called *History is Gay*, but you've also heard us use the term queer. For us, gay is – it's a good umbrella term, but we may also use queer as an umbrella term as well. We understand that not everyone is comfortable with either or both of these terms. We, however, find them useful. We actually had a really long conversation. We debated which terms we wanted to use, what language and these are just the ones we settled on.

We really want our listeners to understand that we're not blind to them as potentially harmful terms, but we also want to be as inclusive as possible with our terminology. When we use either one of these terms, what we mean is basically not straight and/or non gender binary conforming, but that's too long to say every time. [Laughs] Our podcasts would probably be at least twice as long if we had to say that every time. So we had to compromise and we chose queer and gay and we use them interchangeably. Similarly, if it wasn't clear from our sign-on, we're using straight as a shorthand for the dominant narrative of cis-heteronormativity rather than specifically to mean non-same-gender attracted.

Leigh: For female-identifying persons, you'll probably hear us use sapphic or women-loving-women interchangeably as well, unless we can actually pinpoint a specific sexuality. Uh, we may also use the term men-loving-men to identify male-identifying persons. We also acknowledge these are modern terms and are not always historically accurate and that there are some questions about which communities they specifically belong to, but we find that they're useful, approachable, and good places to start and we're also really excited to hear people's feedback about it.

Gretchen: Totally. Alright, so we have clarified what we're doing and what terms we're using. The next logical question is why are we doing this to begin with?

Leigh: Well, because we're queer folks ourselves and we're tired of our stories and community throughout history being ignored and erased. E.M. Forster said a really wonderful quote that we were going into this podcast really thinking about, which is, "There have always been people like me and there always will be".

Gretchen: We're done living in the shadows and being just kind of anecdotes in the corners of history. It's time to show the world and ourselves in these communities that we're here, we're queer, and we've literally always existed.

Leigh: Before we let you listen to a sneak peek, we've got a few housekeeping issues we want to get out of the way. First is our use of sources. We're aiming to be historical here, so we do try to differentiate between confirmed sources and speculation and we'll make note of that in every episode. However, it has to be said that a lot of sources may downplay or try to erase the truth of these people's lives, so we do need to take those with a grain of salt sometimes too. That's why we will distinguish between what the sources actually say and what we think about them.

Gretchen: We also need to bring up here that there are differences between current understandings of identities like gay, lesbian, trans, nonbinary, and societal or historical context and attitudes. Where possible, we'll try to distinguish between these two in our discussion, but as we noted in our terminology section earlier, we only have the language and culture we have now, so we might sometimes use modern terms like "big, gay, lesbian Sappho" um, to refer to historical people. The difference between the way modern societies think about LGBT identity and the way history did is, I mean it's a huge topic on its own and we'll probably eventually devote a whole podcast or two or three or however many we need to talk about it in the future.

But for now we just want you all to know that we are aware and that we're trying our best to be as nuanced as possible while also being a bit silly and fun to listen to. We're huge fucking nerds about this stuff and we want it to be as enjoyable for you to listen to as it is for us to do the research. Also, just so you're aware, we will include sources and further reading in our description notes for each episode on social media, including tumblr posts and our website. We want you all to be able to access further reading if you feel so compelled.

Leigh: As far as release schedule goes, we're aiming to make these every other week releases, so roughly twice a month. Uh, what will these episodes look like? In general, we'll be talking about people from a particular culture or religion or period in time- uh, our goal is to start with a brief bio and then transition to a discussion about evidence that they may not quite be as straight as some people would assume and we'll end the podcast with "How gay were they?", our personal ranking about how likely it is that they weren't straight.

And we're going to have a few rotating and semi-permanent fun segments. You might look out for things like "word of the week" or media shout-outs or because we're both big nerds, maybe even some fic recommendations if it fits with our theme. We also hope one day to have special guests who specialize in various languages, cultures in history. We love talking about everything, but we're also limited and would love to bring in as many voices as possible and we want to bring our friends into the conversation.

Gretchen: Totally. Now, without further ado, here's a snippet from our first podcast where we talk about queer pirates Anne Bonny, Calico Jack Rackham, Mary Read, and Pierre Bouspet.

[Static]

Leigh: See, this is my -this is my favorite story, right? Like you have your, your Spanish warship and I have this crazy batshit plan-.

Gretchen: It's such a great story.

Leigh: -where they had a very dramatic and theatrical privateering raid. So they stole a boat and they went and covered the entire thing and themselves in turtle blood. Where did they get that much turtle blood? I don't know. I don't. Look. Pierre was a man of many talents. Maybe he had a weird turtle farm somewhere, I don't know. Um, but so they like cover themselves in turtle blood. They put up one of Pierre's dressmaker dummies dressed in women's clothing and they made it appear like Anne was standing over it, having massacred it like with a blood-soaked axe- like this crazy lady standing over this dummy hacking it away.

Gretchen: Yep.

Leigh: And another ship passes by, sees this and get so freaked out that they just end up giving all of their cargo to the pirates without a fight. Right? They're like coming upon this ship being like, "oh, okay, let's see what this situation is". And then when all the pirates come up and say, "hey, we'd like to take over all of your cargo", they just went, "yeah, no, it seems- okay. Yeah, seems good."

Gretchen: "Yeah. Here, take this and- take this and go."

Leigh: Y'all are a little crazy. But I just like that they went to the effect of, "Hey, I know what we can do. We can just make it look like a creepy bloody murder scene."

Gretchen: Right. And I feel like it's very telling that- that Anne was the one with the bloody axe.

Leigh: Oh yeah.

Gretchen: I see her being totally into that. Like, "oh yeah, of course. Yeah, cover me in turtle blood and give me a bloody axe."

Leigh: Can I ship Anne Bonny and Lizzie Borden? Is that a thing? I mean, I know they're like totally different time periods, but-

Gretchen: I did think of Lizzie Borden while you were talking. In my head, I was hearing that like "Lizzie Borden took an axe..."

Leigh: Right? Exactly. Well, I mean, come on. Its- we gotta. We gotta have our axe wielding crazy queer murder ladies together.

Gretchen: Oh my gosh. They would destroy the world.

[Static]

Leigh: And that's it for our teaser episode. We hope that you choose to come and listen to us. We're going to be launching on January 1st and until then you can find us online individually. I'm Leigh- when I'm not nerding out about old timey queer folks, I'm usually talking about comics and queer TV over at [@aparadoxinflux](https://twitter.com/aparadoxinflux) on twitter and crying about Xena episodes on my couch.

Gretchen: And I'm Gretchen, and when I'm not talking about gay history, I'm writing nerdy media analysis and fangirling over Star Wars, Steven Universe and Wynonna Earp for TheFundamentals.com and my personal website gnellis.com Or you can check me out on Tumblr and twitter at [@gnelliswriter](https://twitter.com/gnelliswriter). All one word, no underscores.

Leigh: And if you want to get a head start on following us on social media, you can find us at historyisgaypodcast on Tumblr and on Twitter [@historyisgaypod](https://twitter.com/historyisgaypod). We've also set up our website historyisgaypodcast.com and you can always drop us a line with questions, suggestions, or just to say hi at historyisgaypodcast@gmail.com.

Gretchen: That's it for *History is Gay*. Until next time...

Leigh: Stay queer...

Gretchen: And stay curious.

[Ending theme music plays]