

# UNAPOLOGETICALLY QUEER

By. Cierra White

Hi Readers! My name is Cierra White and I am a senior at Longwood University. I am currently a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a Pre-Law Concentration and a minor in History. I decided to take this course because of my career aspirations of wanting to be a litigation lawyer. So, I thought that taking this class would better help me in the future if I have a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ community and their history. As I will mostly likely be representing individuals that identify with the LGBTQIA+ Community. Also, I wanted to take this course to help understand the barriers that have prevented LGBTQ history from being taught in schools and higher education.

At the start of this course I did not have much knowledge on LGBTQIA+ history. My understanding of LGBTQ history was very limited I knew about Emily Dikerson, The Don't Say Gay Bill, the controversy of the gender neutral bathrooms in schools, and the implications of for LGBTQ community due to the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Additionally, this past summer I studied abroad in London, England and while there I heard a little bit about their LGBTQ history and how it has shaped their society today. In England I learned about sodomy laws that targeted gay males and how they were persecuted by Parliament. I also learned about the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967 which made same-sex acts in the United Kingdom legal for men over the age of twenty-one if conducted in private. In England there was never any laws that prosecuted lesbians because it was just unthought of at the time that two women would choose to be together, so the monarchy and parliament did not believe that lesbians existed. Lastly, our speaker in the UK talked about how the Stonewall Riots transformed the LGBTQ community even in Europe because the UK Gay Liberation Front was founded and started to fight for the rights of the LGBTQ community. Other than educational knowledge I did have some personal experience about LGBTQ history and representation through friends, family members, and social media from hearing their personal experiences, coming out stories, and how they feel they are viewed in society.

Since I have started the class my knowledge has evolved to better understand that the battle for LGBTQ equality is always critical as this struggle relates to visibility, equality, acceptance, and justice. Queer Erasure has negative consequences including the identities and stories of LGBTQ people throughout history. In order to fight erasure and invisibility there must be LGBTQ representation in all walks of life and an understanding of individuals' experience. Anti-LGBTQ legislators in the government, and Census Organizers often make decisions about LGBTQ history, what can be taught in public schools, and the representation of LGBTQ



individuals to be counted for government funding. The consequences and implications of queer erasure is that it puts LGBTQ rights under attack.

### **Implications of Queer Erasure and Representation in academic and public history?**

- Queer Erasure is the legally proscribed, forbidden, punishable, and stigmatized to make LGBTQ people as invisible as possible.
- Constantly fighting for visibility in society
- Coming out is the most powerful statement an LGBTQ person can do
- LGBTQ have been murdered and attacked for who they are
- Individuals have tried to change LGBTQ individuals sexual orientation with chemicals, electrical shock, and threats.
- Throughout history LGBTQ individuals have been made invisible on film and TV
- LGBTQ individuals are not included on the census which is just another way to make LGBTQ people feel as if they don't count
- Bans instruction and classroom discussion about LGBTQ issues for K-3rd grade
- Limited LGBTQ issues and identities are discussed in K-12 classrooms
- "Don't Say Gay Bill" required educators to tell parents when their child received mental health services
- Warning educators not to wear any rainbow clothing, remove pictures of same-sex spouses from classrooms, and remove LGBTQ safe space stickers from classrooms.
- Course materials, textbooks, and other reading books are flagged for any references about sexual orientation, race, and gender identity.
- The removal of LGBTQ safe spaces in public schools could result in high rates of suicide attempts among LGBTQ youths.
- Teachers are more likely to be sued if any classroom instruction is viewed as not being age appropriate for current students.
- If school districts do not have enough funds or resources for legal fees this could result in teachers being let go even if they have not done anything wrong with a teacher shortage already happening in the United States.

### **Inclusion of queer history in Public Schools**

LGBTQ history should be included in k-12 schools and higher education curriculum. It is important for students to know they have safe places in schools where they can discuss their gender identity. Especially, if their home environment is toxic that it is essential for students to have these safe spaces in schools because this can be a life or death situation. By teaching LGBTQ history in school this creates equality opportunity for students to learn about all communities as students already learn about African American history, the Holocaust, and Women's suffragists movement. Teaching LGBTQ history would lead to more positive impacts in schools because it would increase awareness and decrease discrimination. Teachers are being training how to navigate complex topics of gender and sexual orientation so there will be no issue of if class material is age appropriate for certain students. It has been proven that kids start exploring their genders in elementary school so it is essential that conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation are had sooner rather than later to combat mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Furthermore, it is significant to make schools safe and inclusive

for all students, which is why educators in some parts of the country are already incorporating LGBT lessons into their classrooms.