



LGBTQ+ History Blog

Q & A with Ben Saunders– 09/02/2021

GYRO's LGBTQ+ History Month project continued with a lovely Q & A session with Ben Saunders, Stonewall Young Campaigner of the year (still reigning!!) and Liverpool Pride Young Person of the Year.

Ben has the Midas touch when it comes to campaigning and he is a talented artist, pottery aficionado and t-shirt maker to boot!!

GYRO young people and staff were delighted to welcome Ben back home to his old youth group. We were so touched and inspired by his quiet confidence (which really meant a lot to the quiet and shy young people who currently attend the group, as they could see that this is a strength not a weakness)!

Ben himself said, 'if you told me four years ago when I first went to GYRO that I would be able to speak in front of an entire session, I wouldn't have believed you! So thank you for the confidence you helped me build!'

Again, for your pleasure, below is an abridged transcript of the interview for you to enjoy and be inspired by.

What got you into activism?

Ben: Some of the experiences I went through as a transgender young person motivated me to want to make a change for other Trans young people. I had a hard time in school and wanted to turn a negative into a positive.

What factors/experiences in your life inspired you to make films?

Ben: School was a big issue. I went to an all girl's school and found this hard, as the school did not know how to support me, as a Tran's boy. I felt that making a film about Trans young people's

school experiences gave me a positive thing to focus on. From the negative experiences, I had in school I wanted something good to come from that.

What was your experience at GYRO/TAY like?

Ben: My experience of GYRO was really good. A lot of games of UNO!! I was one of the quiet ones that came to the group and I wouldn't be the one to stand up and talk to the whole group. I was very shy to start with but as time went on, I started to grow in the confidence. Everyone that was in the group both staff and other YP made me feel very welcome. I became the official GYRO pride photographer and had some of my photos form an exhibition at the walker art gallery.

Did you have any funny/heartwarming experiences during your filmmaking?

Ben: Everyone was quite shy and withdrawn to start with, but after a little while, they would open up to me and share their experiences. Sometimes filmmaking is like a therapy session for me and the person I am working with. I love to see someone who is shy to start with, grow in confidence by the end of the work and I love to see how people change and express themselves during film.

What is an act of self-care care that has helped you look after your mental health?

Ben: I am not always the best at doing self-care for myself but I have come to realize that I can't fight everything and that it's not good for you to try and fight everything. I now know that sometimes you just have to try and just let go. I try and come off social media when I feel there is too much negativity on there and I make sure to block or unfollow people that are having a negative impact on my life.

What would you put in the time capsule to represent you/your films?

Ben: I am putting in a postcard from the Gays the Word Bookshop in London.



At the end of that the Stonewall Young Campaigners programme we all decided to go on a trip to find the Gays the Word bookshop, as we had watched the film Pride on the residential. All 25 of us descended on the bookshop singing the song 'every woman is a lesbian at heart' from the movie.

This experience was when I first felt properly a part of a queer community and it was the start of my journey to be an activist. I felt such an overwhelming feeling of queer joy and optimism after feeling so alone as an LGBTQ+ person for so long!