



LGBTQ+ History Blog

Q & A with Charlie Craggs – 23/02/2021

GYRO celebrated the end of their LGBTQ+ History Month project when we welcomed back our friend and ally Charlie Craggs.

Charlie first came in to GYRO in 2017 and we have stanned her ever since (and we know the feeling is mutual)!!

Charlie is an internationally recognized trans activist, author and multi award winner (too many for us to mention here) and we had the pleasure and privilege to interview her and get to know about her journey to activism.

We have probably overused the word 'inspirational' throughout these blogs but if the cap fits then you had better wear it!

So without further ado we present an abridged transcript of GYRO young people's interview with Charlie Craggs.

Enjoy, we know you will :)

P.S. Thanks again to all the young people who asked questions and welcomed Charlie in to our family.

Billie: How do you balance activism and downtime? How do you de-stress?

Charlie: I make sure that I schedule time off, like you would do with any job. My trans identity doesn't just switch off at the end of a work day. I always try and take a day dedicated to self-care, cooking for myself, nurturing myself, baths etc. You need to give yourself time off as an activist!

Billie: What is your favourite silly joke??

Charlie: My silly joke is me- my life is a joke- especially my memory. The biggest joke is, that I have found lockdown so easy. I am such a hermit! I'm a joke!

Salem: What/who inspired you to become an activist?

Charlie: It wasn't so much a person who inspired me... what inspired me was that I didn't see anyone talking about transphobia. It was a different landscape for trans people back then, all the trans people and conversations we have in the media now (good and bad!), it was not like that around 2013/2014. At that time, my life got really hard when I transitioned. I was angry and upset and was wondering 'why are people not talking about this?!'. I started Nail transphobia as a uni project. I wanted to make activism fun... doing peoples nails whilst opening the door to talking about being trans and transphobia but in a very intimate way. There is a saying 'be the change you want to see' and I knew that had to be me.

Salem: What was your experience like as a trans activist when you first started?

Charlie: It was hard. Harder than it is now! I feel like now there is probably too much focus on trans people, which is bringing negative attention. I found that I could get 100 nice comments on Instagram, but one bad comment would ruin my week. I have found that just existing is a form of activism. Existing boldly and proudly. You are not doing it to be liked, you are doing it for yourself and your community. I don't care what Linda, 42 from Liverpool thinks about me... I don't know why I said Liverpool, people in Liverpool are always so nice to me!!

Salem: What inspired you to write your book?

Charlie: I wrote the book as something I wish I had when I was transitioning. I wish someone had handed me this book! This book is trans feminine focused, but there is a book from the 90s that is trans masculine focused- Letters to my Brothers. In my book there are so many sisters to choose from, to relate to and take advice from. It is your sisters in a book until you find your sisters in real life!

Paul: You have such a confident and radiant personality and it's so captivating to be around! How do you manage to nurture your confidence rather than quieting yourself down for a society that seems to always be against you?

Charlie: It definitely comes down to nurturing. I wasn't born this confident! It came with my transition... I was in a very dark place just before I transitioned.. Sometimes you have to hit rock bottom... I then decided to transition and refused to continue being a victim. I made a decision - not to be a victim anymore. I said that I am going to start feeling confident. Not being confident doesn't get you anywhere! You get one life, and you can either spend it not putting yourself out there, or, you can get all the gold stars and be confident. You don't get gold stars through being shy. Fake it till you make it. Me being a victim doesn't align with what I deserve. I'm not scared anymore, and if I can do it, you can do it! Choose what you deserve for yourself. What does the child in you deserve? Find someone you admire and emulate them! Adapt it to suit you as well!

It doesn't matter how confident you are, people will still come for you. Confidence is an armour. Don't fight anyone- like throwing a chair at someone- but stand up for yourself! Find a resolution through humour, activism etc.

Sophie: Who are some of your biggest LGBTQ+ inspirations?

Charlie: Nadia from Big Brother, as she was the only representation I had when I was younger, she always stood up for herself- and I respected that. She was so fabulous- she would wear high heels in the shower! But generally, just strong women! Women who stand up for themselves!

Sophie: When did you first have contact with GYRO and what was it like for you?

Charlie: 2017 at the 'Coming Out Exhibition' at The Walker Art Gallery. I did a talk and then had my pop up nail salon offering free manicures. GYRO has my heart, and I love you all so much!

When did 2017 become 4 years ago?!!!

Alix: Did you ever go to an LGBT youth group when you were younger?

Charlie: I didn't. If I had had Gyro, I would've been 'me' a lot sooner. It was a different time, and when I was a teenager LGBT youth groups weren't a thing. You are all so lucky!

Alix: If you were to put an item in to a time capsule to inspire future LGBT+ young people, what would it be and why?

I would put myself in!!!! Only joking (a bit)....

I would put my upcoming BBC documentary in there about trans teens.... It highlights what is going on for trans young people right now and it's shameful! I want people to know what we fought for and what we are fighting for!

Note: The theme of LGBT+ History Month is Body, Mind and Spirit and we are putting together a digital time capsule for LGBT+ young people of the future that would be a positive message of hope for their physical and mental health.