



Although Marsha P. Johnson described herself as a “nobody from Nowheresville,” she went on to become a very important activist. Her involvement with the Stonewall Riots of 1969 is well-known, but she also fought for the homeless, transgender, and the HIV/AIDS community. Marsha changed how we as a society view and define gender. She believed in autonomy and equal rights for all.

While Marsha’s life did end tragically, she left quite a legacy behind. Marsha and her friend Sylvia Rivera co-founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) – a group that provided housing for transgender youth. STAR was the first LGBT youth shelter in North America. Monuments are being erected in both Marsha’s and Sylvia’s honor in New York. They are expected to be completed in 2021. Marsha was also associated with the ACT UP organization, and she now has an institute in her name to continue her life’s work. And finally, thanks to Marsha’s, Sylvia’s, and others’ tireless efforts, we are continually gaining more rights for the LGBTQ community.



Frida Kahlo was born to a German-Hungarian Jew father and a part Spanish, part Native American mother. Although she was born in 1907, she changed her official birth date to 1910 in honor of the Mexican Revolution. This nationalism could be found throughout her life - in her fashion, political leanings, and art. Frida was attracted to both men and women, and many partners influenced her personal politics.

Because Frida’s father had no sons, he raised Frida in nontraditional roles and sent her to the National Preparatory School just a few years after girls were first admitted. After a bout of polio, Frida was encouraged to play sports such as boxing and soccer to strengthen her leg. Frida would continue to suffer health challenges throughout the rest of her life. Her illnesses caused immense loneliness, but she found solace through art – specifically self-portraits. The success of her art provided independence and financial security. As Frida aged, her art became more political. She taught classes and her students were known as “Fridos.” Some of those same students would go on to found the Young Revolutionary Artists group.



Though François S. Clemmons is best known for his role on Mister Roger's Neighborhood, he was also a well-known singer and author. François' unstable childhood led him to cope through singing songs of his African ancestors. He faced constant discrimination in the segregated South during a time of racial tension in America. Despite this, he believed in himself and went on to graduate from Oberlin College and Conservatory to start a music career.

While pursuing graduate studies in music at Carnegie Mellon and singing at Third Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, François met Fred Rogers. Their friendship lasted many years, and Fred served as a mentor, fan, and surrogate father to François. François was nervous about playing an officer on Mr. Roger's television show, because it wasn't just putting on a uniform. Police officers were not viewed positively in the Black community, but François wanted to change that perception. He wanted to show that children should feel comfortable asking for help from police in a crisis. François' role on that television show relieved some stress that America was currently experiencing. The famous foot-washing scene taught viewers that Mr. Rogers and François did not condone racism of any kind – the two men were equal.

One caveat of François being on Mr. Roger's show was that he had to keep his private life hidden. Mr. Rogers knew how talented François was, and he did not want François' sexuality to hold him back from opportunities. François found out at the very young age of 9 or 10 that he preferred the company of his same sex, but he never had a romantic relationship with a man. In fact, due to several suggestions from friends, he briefly married Carol Clemmons to keep up appearances. After his time on Mr. Roger's show and after his divorce, François experimented with self-expression through his clothing. At performances, François wears African chieftain outfits and tiaras, which make him feel like royalty. At long last, he is true to himself and being heard at the same time, which wasn't possible in his younger years due to the social inequity in America.



Sharice Davids was born in 1980 and raised by a single parent. Her mother served 20+ years in the Army and then took a job at a local post office. Sharice is a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, which is a Native American tribe in Wisconsin. Sharice worked through school and was a first-generation college student. She is also a professional mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter. Though Sharice attended several universities and a community college, she later graduated from Cornell Law School and became a White House fellow under the Obama administration.

When Sharice Davids traveled to South Dakota to work on improving community and economic development at a Native American reservation, she was denied housing because she was in a same-sex relationship with her partner. All of the other employees of the reservation were granted housing. At that time, South Dakota had not passed the Fair Housing Act that protected people on the basis of their sexual orientation. Davids did not let this stop her important work, and stayed in multiple lodging accommodations during her time there, thanks to the kindness of others. This led her to question the purpose of legislation and how it affects different communities. When Sharice later started her campaign for Congress, she built it on the value of inclusivity.

Sharice ran for Congress in 2018. That year held a record number of LGBTQ Americans that sought office. Along with Deb Haaland, who is a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe in New Mexico, Sharice became one of the first Native American women in congress. In addition, Sharice is the only LGBTQ Native American Congresswoman. These victories mark a milestone in the U.S. political system, and pave the way for others to have a voice that is heard.



Margaret Cho is a Korean-American who was born December 5th, 1968 and raised in San Francisco. Her mother resisted an arranged marriage and instead married a joke book writer, which influenced Margaret's affinity for comedy. Although she lived in a diverse city, Cho still experienced bullying growing up. However, she reclaimed the insults others called her, and used humor as a way to cope. Margaret began writing jokes at 14 and professionally performing at age 16.

By her early 20's, Margaret became the most booked act in the market. Within two years, she performed over 300 comedy acts, as well as appeared on the Arsenio Hall and Bob Hope late night television shows. During this time, she suffered from an eating disorder but nevertheless was successful in her professional life. She continued to perform at sold-out shows, including Carnegie Hall and off-Broadway. Her topics range from LGBTQ issues and bullying to body acceptance, feminism, and racism. Margaret has been nominated twice for a Grammy for "Comedy Album of the Year," and once for an Emmy for "Best Guest Performance." Prior to this time, no other woman had released an album of comedy music. Margaret has been on multiple television series, but one that held significance for her was Cho's appearance on Dancing With the Stars. She wore a rainbow dress in order to bring awareness to the issue of bullying gay teens.

Margaret herself identifies as bisexual, but finds that many are not accepting of that label. None of her partners have been bisexual – only straight or lesbian. Despite Cho's parents owning a gay bookstore, they didn't completely understand her identity. Since then, Margaret has embraced being LGBTQ and frequently attends the annual Pride parade in her city. She's been the Grand Marshal many times, and has experienced celebrations around the world – whether it be as a performer or an audience member. Margaret Cho has received numerous awards and accolades from groups such as the ACLU, the National Organization for Women, and the Asian Excellence Awards. She continues to use her platform to uplift others and talk about serious issues in a comical way that appeals to the masses.