



# GALHA NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GAY & LESBIAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

I'd like to draw your attention to the Special General Meeting scheduled for April 14th. This event is to discuss and vote on the plans to move GALHA forward and become a sub-section of the BHA. This is something that has been in the planning for a long time, and the committee has been working hard behind the scenes to make it a reality.

My personal view is that this would be the best move that we could make as an organisation. Recent months have seen the nastier corners of religious bigotry becoming more and more vocal in their calls for inequality and oppression. Now, as much as ever, GALHA needs to be proactive and visible in the fight for equality, and joining forces with the BHA will give us more opportunity to do just that. The relentless admin and mountains of paperwork currently bogging us down will be vastly reduced, allowing those who volunteer time to GALHA to shift the focus onto more practical activism.

I understand that there are some reservations - concerns about financial independence and emotive instincts to cling to the past - but the committee believes that we have brokered an excellent deal of significant benefit to GALHA. There will be discussion time on the day to air and address any concerns. Do come along and vote if you can.

**Richard Unwin**  
[Editor@galha.org](mailto:Editor@galha.org)

## GALHA WELCOMES CHRISTIAN SUPPORT OF GAY EQUALITY

The Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA) welcomes the finding of an Ipsos Mori poll that 61% of self-identifying Christians in Britain believe that "Homosexuals should have the same legal rights in all aspects of their lives as heterosexuals", compared to only 21% who disagree. The poll also showed that while 28% of Christians disapproved of same sex relationships, 46% did not.

GALHA Chair Adam Knowles commented: "This poll confirms what we have long suspected: that many of the Christians that we know as friends, family, neighbours and colleagues are not anti-gay, and have moved on from many of the positions of the church leadership.

"Those who try to hide behind "religious freedom" to justify anti-gay positions, whether it comes to employment opportunities, to the supposed "right" to turn away gay customers, or to defending anti-gay indoctrination in schools, are not only setting themselves against the equal rights of gay people, but are contradicting the convictions of many Christians, in some cases a majority of Christians.

"As humanists we have always welcomed the chance to make common cause with those of all religions and any who share our goals of full equality, and the chance of happiness and fulfillment for all citizens.



"We also fully accept the right of religious believers to defend and advocate their beliefs, even where we find some of those beliefs to be morally wrong - as in the objections that some religious leaders have raised to Civil Partnerships and Marriage Equality. What we do not accept is that these views should have any special privilege, or be treated with any particular deference just because they claim a religious justification.

"Our aim, which we believe society is moving towards, is one where all citizens, whatever their beliefs, enjoy the same freedom to express their beliefs in actions and in words, provided that this does not harm others."

## POETRY CORNER

Congratulations to Paul Hession, who's entry was chosen as the winner of the GALHA News poetry competition. The signed copy of 'May I say Nothing' by leading gay poet Gregory Woods is winging it's way to you.

**A GAY ATHEIST** by PAUL HESSION

Atheist AND Gay, I hear you say?  
Yes, that's me, for the world to see.  
Life without God is simply the best,  
And loving men gives me no rest!  
For too long we have endured prejudice and hate,  
Instigated by those who deigned our fate.  
How dare they stand in judgment of me,  
It appears to give them a sense of glee.  
Recognise the beauty in nature and you,  
And let us stand united because we are all too few.  
Shame is not part of my vocabulary no more,  
It belongs in the past in the days of yore.  
Love yourself, love life, love nature, love men,  
And get angry with those who chant Amen.  
Remember that being a gay atheist is a joy to behold,  
So stand up, be counted, be brave, be bold.

## OUT OF THE VINYL CLOSET

This review of February's 'Vinyl Closet' event by JON CLARKE originally appeared on his blog - 'Give 'em the old Razzle Dazzle'.

We went to the first of our planned LGBT History Month events on Friday evening - the newest outing of The Vinyl Closet, an examination of gay themes, singers and trends in popular music throughout the 20th century.

As this was a fundraiser for the Lesbian and Gay Humanists (GALHA) - an organisation very dear to my heart, staunch as they are in challenging the abuse of power, and the personal abuse inflicted on us (and others), by organised religions - I didn't really mind that this was going to be a repeat (a compilation) of the two installments I have been to before.

Suffice to say, this was another exceptional evening's entertainment, as the lovely Brett and Ted once more took us on a journey from the earliest innuendo-charged Blues music in 20s America, right through to the fey "is he, isn't he?" teasing of Morrissey in the 1980s. It was all the better because two of our gang had not been to the previous shows, so this was a fabulous eye-opener for them!

Ted has a lovely voice, and again paid fittingly soulful tributes to the likes of Elvis, The Kinks, Tom Robinson and Queen (and, er, Cliff), the musicals The Wizard of Oz, Easter Parade, Hair and The Nervous Set, from which The Ballad Of The Sad Young Men is taken.

I sincerely hope that next time The Vinyl Closet makes its outing, we get the long-awaited part 3 - from the 80s to date.

Lots more from Jon on his blog at: <http://jon-doloresdelargo.blogspot.com>



GALHA Chair Adam Knowles (left) with performers Ted, Brett, and Chris.

## SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

**APRIL 14th - 2.30pm**  
**CONWAY HALL**

SEE 'UPCOMING EVENTS' FOR MORE DETAILS



GALHA found an unexpected ally at the 'Vinyl Closet' event in the form of the Rev Sharon Ferguson, who placed the winning bid in the fundraising auction. Sharon is pictured here with her bounty, including an exclusively signed t-shirt, all generously donated by pop sensation Darren Hayes - of 'Savage Garden' fame. Sharon is chief executive of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement.

# NORDIC CONNECTIONS



Rolf Solheim

Following our request for reports of regional activity, we heard from ROLF SOLHEIM, who writes on behalf of the Nordic Rainbow Humanists - a small group of GALHA members based in Norway and Sweden:

"The Nordic Rainbow Humanists is an absolutely informal and tiny group. The name was coined around 2001 by Bill Schiller (Sweden), who is involved with various LGBT networks using culture to inspire freedom and the advancement of LGBT rights. We have made a point of traveling to East Europe (where liberation work is more urgently needed) to bring people together at Pride and other events.

"Bill has on a number of occasions prompted me to deliver a presentation on Humanism and homosexuality, and since 2002 events have taken place in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Bucharest, Poznan, Warsaw, Istanbul, and Ankara. This

has been with the support of various local organizations - from the Iranian LGBT group HOMAN, to Warsaw Europride and LGBT student groups in Turkey, but mostly as joint Humanist and ILGCN (International Lesbian and Gay Cultural workers Network) events. Bill wanted to show that Humanists are also active in the freedom fight, so we made a point of announcing my presentations under the heading 'Rainbow Humanists'.

"The last of these presentations was given in May 2011 to students in Ankara. However, the rector at Ankara University refused them access to the auditorium they had booked in advance, so the meeting had to take place at the office of the LGBT organisation - the appropriately named KAOS.

"Bill is also the mastermind behind the Nordic Rainbow Humanist Award, which is presented to Humanist LGBT activists and cultural workers for outstanding achievement in the fight for equality. The most recent of these was awarded to George Thindwa at the main dinner of the Humanist World Congress at the Opera House in Oslo on the 13th of August 2011, for his work with the Malawi Humanists and their courageous public stand for LGBT rights in Africa. Previous recipients of the award include GALHA founder member, and former secretary, George Broadhead."

Our thanks to Rolf for this update. Any information or pictures of regional activity are always very welcome at the usual address - [editor@galha.org](mailto:editor@galha.org)

## Feedback

The second of February's public meetings, 'Against Nature?' - a lecture by Professor Volker Sommer - drew record crowds. Well over a hundred attendees packed into Conway Hall to hear the fascinating talk on homosexuality in other species and how such behaviour ties into Darwinian theory. These are some of the comments that we received from you about this popular event:

Really interesting and amusing presentation. Lots of food for thought.  
**Jonathan Silver**

I'm a new member and it was my first event, I had a great evening! Well done, excellent event! Thx for organising  
**Peter Galazka**

Excellent meetup. Thanks are due for Derek Lennard, for organising the event, and Professor Volker Sommer, for his stimulating talk. It was no surprise to see how well attended it was.  
**Alan Treveltham**

Great topic, well-presented, stimulating questions; very kindly audience.  
**Behzad**

Professor Sommer gave a very engaging and amusing talk, I'd love to hear more from him on this interesting topic. The overall message I took from his presentation was that we are looking the wrong way if we are expecting to defend homosexuality in humans by comparing it to animal behaviour. However its occurrence in nature does reaffirm that it

can be explained by evolutionary theory.  
**Thalia**

Funny, engaging, and informative. Excellent event.  
**Dr Joseph Brooks**

Very good indeed. Prof Volker gave an engaging and clear talk. I would be interested in reading or hearing more on this.  
**Brendan Armstrong**

This is the second time I saw Professor Volker Sommer's presentation and thoroughly enjoyed it. Very informative evening with great question and answer session at the end of the lecture. The room was packed, great topic.  
**Jadzia**

This was an excellent talk - very informative and great fun, too! Thank you so much!  
**Julia Robertson**

Excellent - informative and entertaining at the same time. Wish all talks could be this good!  
**Graham Bell**

An excellent evening. Packed with information and told with great humour and lovely use of slides. I'll always remember the HE HE, HE HO, HE HO and HO HO genetics.  
**Jeremy Kingston**

Excellent talk. Particularly thought provoking on the use of 'natural' as an argument for and against equality and human rights. Record crowd - full to bursting.  
**Tristram W**

# PRIDE 2012

GALHA News chats to PAUL ALLEN about GALHA's presence at Pride events and the need for volunteers to help with the upcoming season:

You've been running the GALHA Pride stalls pretty much single-handedly for some years now...

Yes. We're trying to get more people involved. It really needs more support. Ideally we want to get a co-ordinator at the three main sites - Manchester, London, and Birmingham. This could be one person to cover each event, or even someone who could co-ordinate the whole lot. It would be a case of booking the stall and liaising with

volunteers. I'll be able to advise and provide all the contacts and materials. And we're also desperately short of local volunteers to help run the stalls.

**What happens at a GALHA Pride stall?**

A typical day begins around nine or ten, getting the stall ready to open at twelve, and then going on until five or six. And during that time you'll be making quality relationships with people, giving out information, working alongside local humanists, and making local contacts. Pride events are by far our best opportunity to engage face to face in one place with significant numbers of the public who may be open to an LGBT Humanist message.

**Who are we looking for to volunteer?**

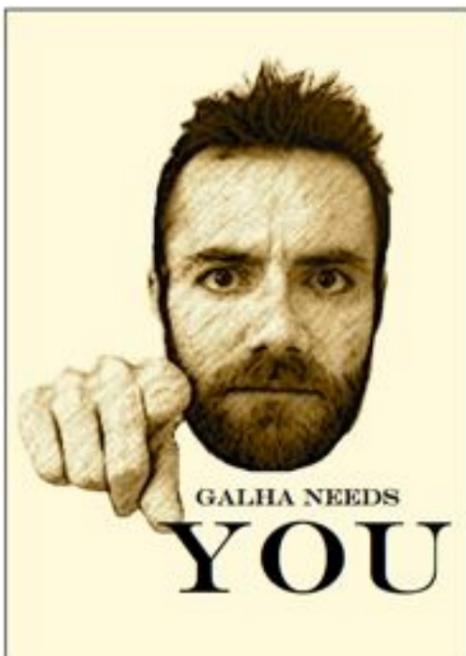
Anyone! There are days when I'm literally there on my own. That's a difficult job, and in a way, it doesn't present us very well. We should have a female member, we should have an older and a younger member, so there's an element of representation - a white 50 something man isn't going to pull in everybody! Especially when it seems to be the case that the majority of people who are interested in our stall and information are young women.

**What should people do if they're interested in helping out?**

If anyone can offer some much-needed support, either in a co-ordinator role or as a volunteer on one of the stalls, they should get in touch with me at [mail@peacenik.me.uk](mailto:mail@peacenik.me.uk) - I'll be able to advise and provide all the information and materials. We really need your help.



Paul Allen working the crowd at the 2011 London Pride event.



Above: Some militant Humanism.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Queer London in the late 19th Century**

**Wednesday, March 21, 7.30pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall**

Queer London in the late 19th Century.

A talk by Matt Cook, Senior Lecturer in History and Gender Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London.

Discussion of London's homosexual subculture and various major and minor scandals + examination of representations in the press, in science and in literature.

**Please note that this meeting is on a Wednesday.**

**Special General Meeting**

**Saturday, April 14th, 2.30pm Conway Hall**

A special general meeting to discuss and

vote on the proposition that GALHA becomes a subsection of the BHA. All are welcome, but only GALHA members will be eligible to vote.

**IDAHO Event**

**Friday, May 18th, 7.30pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall**

A major event in the form of a panel discussion to focus on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia 2012 theme of "Fighting homo/transphobia in and through education". Key campaigners and politicians have been invited to take part in this forum. Watch out for further details in GALHA News and online media.