



# GALHA NEWS

NEWS FROM THE LGBT SECTION OF THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

Issue 30

September 2013

## LET THEM EAT CAKE

After a long and hard-fought battle, equal marriage is now a reality in England and Wales.

Campaigners once again assembled outside the House of Lords on July 15th (pictured) and champagne corks were flying as the bill was passed. It then went through the final stage in the Commons on the 16th and was given Royal Assent on the 17th.

BHA Head of Public Affairs Pavan Dhaliwal commented, 'We are extremely proud to have played our part in what is a historic step for gay couples and for society as a whole. Furthermore we are delighted that another inequality through the same vehicle will soon also be addressed as we will work towards legal recognition of Humanist marriages. We congratulate the government and all those who worked towards achieving this.'



James Heather and Tyrone Curtis with long-time Galha supporter Peter Tatchell



Galha members sending love and solidarity to our LGBT brothers and sisters in Russia

## TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Galha members and supporters were among the thousands who gathered outside Downing Street on the 10th of August to protest against Russian President Putin's homophobic 'gay propaganda' law and the subsequent outbreak of attacks on Russian LGBT people.

At the time of writing there is some division in the LGBT community over how best to challenge Russia's draconian stance, but all agree that something needs to be done as a matter of urgency.

There are further protests planned, in London as well as around the country and across the globe.

Galha intends to be present at as many of these demonstrations as possible. Keep an eye on Facebook and Meetup for details. We are also planning several fundraising initiatives, including 'Stand-Up for Russia' - a night of comedy in December in support of the Russian LGBT Network.



Josh Cullimore showing support



Galha members with John D Carrion - Chairman of the London Gay Men's Chorus

## INTERVIEW: Tyrone Curtis

Hello Tyrone. You're an active member of Galha. How did you become involved in the organisation?

I'd been living in Japan for 18 months when I first properly embraced my atheism, and not speaking fluent Japanese, found it difficult to find any campaigning/interest groups. So when I moved to the UK in 2008 (I'm Australian), I was itching to meet similarly-minded people and get involved. Galha combined two things I'm passionate about - gay rights and ending religious privilege (I didn't really know what humanism was at the time) - and was small enough that members could really get involved in its work. Plus, the people were extremely welcoming and friendly!

As evidenced by the pictures in this newsletter, you often make the effort to attend events like Pride and the various protests that Galha supports. Why is this important to you? Do you think that

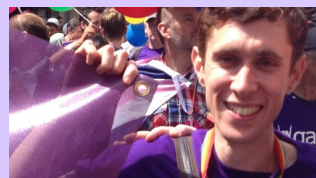
protesting can make a difference?

When you're part of a minority or are fighting for change, it's so important that (where possible) you represent yourself, and that you make your voice heard. You can't just rely on others to do it for you. The more people there are protesting, the harder it is for those in power to ignore. While change may not be immediate, it's important to believe that protesting can make a difference, otherwise it's far too easy to grow cynical and apathetic (which really WON'T make a difference!).

What, in your opinion, are the most important issues facing LGBT people at the moment? What should Galha be focussing its energies on?

I'd like to see Galha focus on the rise in homophobic and transphobic violence in some parts of the world, the horrific new law in Russia being just one example. I'd also like to see Galha do more campaigning on behalf of the T part of LGBT. In my view, the next great fight needs to be for making the world an easier place to be transgender, both in terms of society having a better understanding of

what that means, and an end to transphobic violence.



Do you have any favorite memories of being involved in Galha over the years?

The screening of Suddenly, Last Winter as part of IDAHO in 2010 was a definite highlight. It turned out they were about to release the DVD in the UK, and Derek (our wonderful events coordinator) then turned our event into their DVD launch. I got to meet the very sweet Italian couple who made the film, and we even had an appearance from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. A wonderful night! Also, every Pride marching with Galha is a buzz. It's so empowering, making a declaration that my sexuality and my

humanism are essential parts of me of which I'm proud.

What's your standard reply if someone asks you what Humanism is?

For me it has meant applying the skepticism and reasoning that lead to my atheism to all parts of my life. It is also the recognition that without a God to pray to, it is up to us to make the world a better place, and one of the most important ways we can do this is through working to reduce human suffering wherever we see it.

If we could have any LGBT/Humanist personality, dead or alive, as a speaker at a Galha event, who would you pick, and why?

Am I allowed to say Darwin? A hero of mine, I'd like to believe he would be a humanist if he were alive today. He was an incredibly humble, sensitive and caring family man and scientist, for whom it was impossible to separate one from the other. Incredibly empathetic and constantly questioning, in my opinion he embodied everything that humanism stands for.

Tyrone, thank you.

# GALHA ON PARADE - LONDON PRIDE 2013



2013 saw record numbers of members and supporters marching with the Galha banner at the London Pride festival.

Thanks to an all-new Pride committee, any thoughts of last year's financial and planning problems were banished as the parade proudly veered it's way from Baker Street to Trafalgar Square.

The theme of this year's festival was 'love and marriage', each section of the parade being given a sub-category. Galha was in the 'Ceremony' zone, and we were thrilled to be accompanied by BHA celebrants as we distributed literature on Humanist marriage, as well as Galha leaflets, stickers and postcards to the cheering crowds.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Film: Vito - The life of gay activist Vito Russo

Friday 13th September, 7.30pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall.  
On June 27, 1969, a police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar called the Stonewall took a surprising turn when patrons decided it was time to fight back. As a riot erupted on Christopher Street, a new era in the Gay Rights Movement was born. Vito Russo, a 23-year-old film student, was among the crowd. Over the next twenty years until his death from AIDS in 1990, Vito would go on to become one of the most outspoken and inspiring activists in the LGBT community's fight for equal rights.



### Secular Europe March and Rally

Saturday 14th September, 12.30pm assembly at Temple Place, Victoria Embankment, London.  
Galha will once again be taking part in the annual march for a secular Europe. We will meet in Temple Place at 12.30pm for the march at 1.00pm. The rally will then be held in Richmond Terrace, opposite Downing Street. Speakers will include Galha Chair Adam Knowles.

### Peter Tatchell - LGBT rights at home and abroad

Friday 8th November, 7.30pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall.  
Galha's friend since the organisation was formed in 1979 argues that the LGBT movement has a long way to go before it achieves equality at home and abroad.

### Annual Lunch with guest speaker CJ de Mooi

Saturday 30th November, 12 noon, Browns Restaurant, Covent Garden.  
Tickets: <http://bit.ly/galhalunch2013>  
We are pleased to announce our speaker this year will be CJ De Mooi. He is an actor, producer, model, author, and previous star of BBC quiz show Eggheads. He has been President of the English Chess Federation and is a Distinguished Supporter of the BHA. He is a supporter of Stonewall and homelessness charities, having been homeless himself for 3 years as a teenager. He has been an Ambassador for the National Bullying Helpline and worked for Barnardo's and The Albert Kennedy Trust. He has recently been lobbying to help Russian LGBT activists around the Sochi Olympics. From 23 - 30 November CJ will be spending every night living and sleeping back on the streets of London to raise awareness of the issues.

### Stand-Up for Russia

Friday 13th December, 7.30pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall.  
A fundraising evening of stand-up comedy to benefit the Russian LGBT Network.



ANNUAL LUNCH SPEAKER ANNOUNCED:

## CJ DE MOOI

FROM BBC TV'S 'EGGHEADS', CJ IS A DISTINGUISHED SUPPORTER OF THE BHA. SEE 'UPCOMING EVENTS' FOR MORE DETAILS.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

It's been just over one year since Galha became the LGBT section of the British Humanist Association, and now that the teething troubles are mostly over, we can confidently say that the move has been a great success. We've seen a significant rise in membership, and, as hoped, the reduction in admin has allowed us to focus on more practical activity.

In June alone, possibly our busiest month ever, we had an outing to The Book of Mormon musical in the West End, hosted the Shenanigans literary event at Conway Hall, marched in the Pride parade, had a stall at the Pride charity reception at the Marlborough Gallery, protested outside the House of Lords for equal marriage, and attended the BHA conference in Leeds, as well as producing a brand new Galha leaflet and rebranded t-shirts, postcards, and stickers. And there's no sign of slowing down.

It's been impossible not to notice the focus on Russia in recent months. It's true that there are many other places around the world where the situation for LGBT people

is equally appalling or worse, but it seems to me that a concentrated campaigning effort against this one injustice has focussed and reinvigorated the voice of queer dissent, and that can only be a good thing. I recall being at a protest against Russia's treatment of LGBT people a couple of years ago, attended by only about two dozen people. Seeing a similar demonstration last month supported by thousands was fantastic. If we keep making noise like this, we will be impossible to ignore.



STEPHEN FRY SUPPORTS LGBT RUSSIA!

Richard Unwin  
Editor@Galha.org