



GALHA NEWS

NEWS FROM THE LGBT SECTION OF THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

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SECULARLY SPEAKING

On September 14th Galha members and supporters were among those who took to the streets of London to campaign for a secular Europe.

The march ended at Downing Street where speeches were made, including a contribution from Galha Chair **Adam Knowles**, reproduced here:

I want to ask you a question: why am I still having to protest this shit?

This is the sixth annual march. The sixth time we're coming together to demand. Dave across the road: I hope you're listening.

A man walked past just now and said 'we already did this in Norway'. It's 2013 people, it's time for our government to listen. Why? Because we need a separation of church and state for progress. And particularly for LGBT people.

Gays in the military? The Church opposed it. Gay adoption? The churches opposed it. Equal age of consent? Religion said no way. Equal marriage...?

So that's why we're here. LGBT people urgently need a secular Europe, everyone urgently needs a secular Europe.

Now: we need to talk about Russia. Last year on this march we said Free Pussy Riot. They were arrested because they protested against the support of the Russian Orthodox Church for Putin. That's why we need a secular Europe now.

And Putin, sponsor now of one of the most backward, harsh laws against LGBT people in recent times. It's why we must stay vigilant, and keep demanding a Secular Europe now.

It's a Russian section 28 and it's appeared this year.

And all the while the International Olympic Committee is sitting on its hands. Doing nothing for our gay and lesbian brothers and



Above: Galha members and supporters march toward Downing Street

sisters. Putin out. Secular Europe now.

Why am I still having to protest this shit?

Let's get religion out of our system, our collective system. We must separate church and state. Secular Europe now.

A secular Europe means separating out regressive, patronising ideas. It makes progress possible. It makes happiness more likely, for more people. That's the future I want, it's the future we all deserve, let's make it happen. Secular Europe now.

Faith schools!

A compulsory daily act of worship in every school in the land?

A head of state that's the head of the country's established church?

A religious thought for the day on the BBC?

Bishops in the House of Lords?

State visits for the Pope?

Secular Europe now.



Above: Galha Chair Adam Knowles with fellow speaker A. C. Grayling

EDITOR'S NOTES

I have been seeing my masseur weekly for about a year now, and he always seems such a happy cheeky young man. We've often chatted and joked and know each other reasonably well, but last week was the first time that we had a proper in-depth conversation, and he broke my heart with his tale of how he went from being a promising music student in his native Turkey to working as a masseur in an East End London sauna.

During the final year of his studies he was contacted by the military – national service is still compulsory in Turkey. As was his duty, he informed them that he was gay – they don't allow passive gay men to serve. (Weirdly, active gay men ARE accepted as fit to fight...) But they demanded 'proof' of his homosexuality. They made him send them photographs of his sex life. They stipulated that he had

to be in the passive role and that his face must be visible. He didn't have a regular partner at the time, so had to enlist a friend's cousin to pose for the 'evidence'.

They also insisted that he sent them photographs of him wearing one of his mother's dresses. Apparently this is the sort of visual evidence that 'proves' a man's homosexuality.

Whilst he complied with all the demands, violent threats were made. There was talk of him being forced to undergo psychological treatment to 'cure' his 'disorder'. And then they sent a letter to his family, to whom he wasn't 'out', complete with copies of the photographs. At this point he fled the country.

He thinks that he'd be relatively safe to return now, but what terrifies him is a potential change of law in the future. In the event of homosexuality being recriminalized in Turkey, which with a

recently rising tide of homophobia isn't as unlikely as it might sound, the authorities will have his name and all the 'evidence' on file. He has a genuine fear of a future in which he could be rounded up and 'dealt with', along with the thousands of others in similar situations.

Sadly this isn't an unusual story - this is a common practice for the Turkish military - a barbaric, intrusive, and humiliating one.

Working in the world of LGBT activism, there's always the possibility of becoming somewhat numb to the endless, overwhelming torrent of abuse and humiliation directed at gay people all around the world. This intimate encounter in a Shoreditch sauna was, for me, a reminder of how it's real individuals who are hurt by the grand homophobic machinations of governments and dictators, of how much work there is still to do, and how important it is that we keep fighting.

COMPETITION!

We've got a CD copy of audio drama 'My Gay Best Friend', starring **Louise Jameson** (Dr. Who, Tenko, Eastenders, Bergerac, Doc Martin, etc...) to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply tell us the name of Louise's character in **Tenko**. Answers to the address below.



LOUISE JAMESON SUPPORTS LGBT RUSSIA

Richard Unwin
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STAND UP FOR RUSSIA!

AN EVENING OF COMEDY TO SUPPORT THE RUSSIAN LGBT NETWORK

DECEMBER 13th
7.30PM

CONWAY HALL
£10



galha
LGBT
Humanists

WWW.GALHAMEETUP.COM

THE CURRENT STATE OF GAY

Peter Tatchell gave his annual lecture to Galha members on the state of LGBT rights in the UK and worldwide on November 8th at Conway Hall.

First the good news: in just 13 years, Britain has transformed itself from a country with the world's largest number of anti-gay laws to being at the forefront of equality legislation. And while the latest stage of that journey, the passing of the Same Sex Couples Act in July, is welcome, we have some distance to go before LGBT people are treated equally, legally and socially.

The marriage act is riddled with inequalities. On inheritance, the surviving partner loses all contributions before 2005 - when same-sex partnerships were first legally recognised - even if the deceased had been paying since the 60s.

While the Quakers and Unitarians are allowed to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, LGBT people are practically excluded by the major faith groups. Exemptions are stacked in favour of homophobic churches. If they share premises with gay-affirming churches, they can stop that property from being used at all for same sex ceremonies. (We all have to wait until the last homophobes are ready for change, and judging by Anglican Mainstream's newsfeed, this will be when hell freezes over).

The outrageous ban on opposite-sex civil partnerships remains, even though two-thirds of those who replied to the government's marriage consultation supported its repeal. Peter expects this to be addressed in 2014 but expressed disappointment at Stonewall for consistently opposing equality for straight couples:

"We wouldn't have equality but for straight

men and women. But when straight couples want support, Stonewall says no. It makes the LGBT community look selfish and uncaring about anyone else. We have to stand for all minorities. Our fight is equality for everyone: we stand with them as we want them to stand for us."

After describing the horrors faced by asylum seekers, Peter condemned an increasingly Balkanised, fragmented British education system, where nobody is following a clear standard. There is no mandatory requirement for sex and relationship education in the curriculum. As a result, Peter says, the young generation is being failed, where independent schools can deny children not just sex and relationship education, but the opportunity to learn about different people.

Some do well. Some even include education on LGBT issues, but most don't, and some don't provide any SRE at all. It is a fundamental human right to have sexual emotional fulfilment. Faith schools are the ones least likely to provide adequate SRE. They have been allowed to lag behind other schools by Michael Gove. Faith schools have the green light to teach that homosexuality is immoral and abnormal because they can teach SRE 'in accordance with ethos'. This must end.

Peter also called for an end to parental opt-outs, and mandatory lessons in equality and diversity from the first year at school:

"Education is the way to challenge prejudice and understand people who are different and to develop young people into well-informed, rounded, tolerant, accepting human beings, that is how you create a tolerant society."

Report by ADRIAN TIPPETTS

WEIGHING IN AT THE GRAM

On Saturday the 16th November committee members attended the BHA Groups Annual Meeting. They presented Galha's strategy to develop a network of local representatives based around the country.

Galha has always had members spread across the country, but has tended to focus on London and the SE, because that's where the bulk of our active members are based.

What we have in mind is an initial trial involving maybe 6 or so local groups, aimed particularly at LGBT people. These groups could campaign on local LGBT issues from a Humanist perspective or vice versa (e.g. faith schools or homophobic bullying). They could form links with other local LGBT groups, including for the purpose of joint campaigning.

We have a large amount of promotional materials and aids we can supply along with our experience to help facilitate local meetings and Pride events.

An interesting Q&A session followed the presentation and a number of groups expressed an interest in

helping us make this a reality. Over the next few months we will be working with these groups but would also be interested in hearing from anyone who would be interested in helping move this project forward. If this appeals to you, please get in touch and let us hear your thoughts on what you would like to do and where you are based.

Report by JAMES HEATHER



Adam Knowles and James Heather with BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson (centre)

COMMONWEALTH PEOPLE

Below: Galha members were among those demonstrating outside the Commonwealth HQ in London on November 13th. The protest, arranged by Peter Tatchell, in association with the 'Out And Proud Diamond Group', was to demand equal rights for all Commonwealth citizens.

