



# LGBT Humanist

News from the LGBT Section of the British Humanist Association

Issue 40

December 2016

## Peter Tatchell

### LGBT/Muslim Solidarity - Fight All Hate!

**At Conway Hall on November 11th we were delighted to welcome back veteran campaigner and human rights champion Peter Tatchell for his 'annual address' to LGBT Humanists. This year's talk was titled 'LGBT/ Muslim Solidarity - Fight All Hate!'.**

Peter stressed the idea of solidarity and cooperation between the LGBT and Muslim communities as we face our common foes. Both the LGBT and Muslim communities face prejudice and bigotry from right-wing media, far-right nationalist hate groups, and conservative religious organisations. While he didn't shy away from addressing the clear and virulent homophobia that comes from some quarters of extremist Islam, he was keen to point out the difference between 'Islam' and 'Muslim' - one being the faith, the other a person. Peter told us of some very positive receptions that he had received from muslim communities - particularly while demonstrating against the EDL and other far-right groups as part of his 'Gays & Muslims Unite!' campaign. He accepts that there is still a long way to go, but was generally positive about moving forward to a place of acceptance and tolerance.

The ensuing question and answer session was a particularly lively affair, and included a surprise appearance from notorious Christian conservative, and long time sparring-partner of Peter, Steven Green of Christian Voice. Green was keen to point out that his research revealed absolutely no oppression of either LGBT people or muslims in the UK...! We were amused to note our Conway Hall meeting described by Green in his extensive online write-up as being: "deep in the bowels of the bastion of anti-Christian thinking."...!

Long-time LGBT Humanists member Tony Thorne commented: "If we'd thought our meetings were just for us, that they went



unheeded by the world at large, I took it as a complement - albeit a back-handed one - that one of our worst detractors felt sufficiently motivated to attend and explain why we'd got it so wrong! Does it mean anything? Perhaps only that the ripples we make do not only reach his shores..."

LGBT Humanists Chair Richard Unwin said: "It's always a pleasure to welcome Peter back year after year - I'd like to thank him again for taking the time out of his incredibly busy schedule to speak to us. We knew that his topic this year was a potentially divisive one with our membership, but he so eloquently made the case for for unity and solidarity with moderate people of faith, using reason and compassion, that I think that the vast majority, if not all, of those in attendance ended up seeing the wisdom of his words."

Due to a slight technical issue, an audio-only recording of Peter's talk will shortly be available on our YouTube channel. And we'll be having another stab at recording when Peter speaks on the same topic to the South London Humanists in the new year, and hope to be able to bring you the full video shortly after!

---

# Trans\*Figurations 3

---

In October, we welcomed back Martha M Dunkley from London Trans Diversity London for our annual Trans\*Figurations event.

This year Nikita Parks and Sahra Rae Taylor were our guest speakers - both giving fascinating insights into their experiences as trans people.

We raised over £120 for the Trans Day of Remembrance.



Nikita Parks, Sahra Rae Taylor, Richard Unwin - LGBT Humanists, Martha M Dunkley - London Trans Diversity.

---

---

## Opinion

---

### ***In this post-Trump/Brexit world, Humanists must not be paralysed by normality***

From the senseless killing of Labour MP Jo Cox to the election of Trump and all the Brexit madness in-between, for many it's very clear that the political landscape is not what it once was. Progressives are torn about how to respond to this. The Labour Party is in the midst of a nasty civil war that, since the second leadership election, has become a loveless marriage between a leadership incapable of appealing to the country and a parliamentary party that knows it needs to make the best of things to mitigate seat losses in 2020. The Liberal Democrats are enjoying somewhat of a small resurgence, but we must not take a byelection in London as a sign of greater recovery in the shires, however much the result may have cheered progressives disgusted at Zac Goldsmith's earlier dog-whistle mayoral campaign. It is no secret that of the mainstream parties, the Tories are the most hostile towards humanism, in spite of the notable number of humanist Conservatives who nobly fight the corner within the party.

Whether it's Brexit or Trump, progressives preceded each with the same sentiment: "Oh surely not. Don't be silly, that won't happen". Then when those things did happen, coupled with the shock of the political rug being yanked from under their feet, they scrambled to understand and explain why. The

problem is, these things happened because those on the regressive right dared to dream and worked to make that dream a reality. Progressives, however, are paralysed by normality. The same "it'll never happen" we attributed to Brexit and Trump we also attribute to radical things we could achieve. Independence for London? A pipe dream, because people who could make it happen say "it'll never happen".

More than ever it is so important to speak out and do something. Join a political party that is closest to your beliefs. Go out campaigning for them. Stand for them. Win. Make sure progressive humanists are at the heart of political influence. Don't simply sit and do nothing, or just attend meetings where we all have a lovely chat about how much better the world can be. And most importantly, in these radical times, never confront a radical progressive idea with "it won't happen". The rules of the game have changed and we must adapt to that. So, put this newsletter down and do something practical that will make a difference. Don't be a humanist that comments on the world, be a humanist that changes it.

Chris Ward - Secretary



# Committee Interview: Matt Hall

**There have been a few new additions to the committee recently, so we thought we'd take the time to introduce them to you — this time, it's Matt Hall.**

**You have recently joined the LGBT Humanists Committee - how did you come to be involved?**

My involvement with the LGBT Humanists is, in no small part, thanks to close friends who encouraged me to attend my first meeting. Like a lot of people, I wasn't really aware that such a group existed; or that its members would share my values and beliefs so precisely. I really enjoyed that evening and have been a regular attendee ever since. When the opportunity to join the Committee arose, I stepped up because I wanted to contribute to the ongoing success of the association, and to reach out to others in similar positions to my own.



**Have you always identified as a Humanist, or is it something that you shifted towards over time?**

It was certainly a discovery. I grew up attending an evangelical church and as a teenager I was quite a devout Christian, even so far as planning to enrol at a bible college. As I got older, my religious beliefs became increasingly conflicted, not least in the arena of sexual identity. Identifying as a humanist didn't happen until relatively recently and was the result of many lengthy conversations with friends that usually involved wine.

**What, in your view, are the most important issues that LGBT Humanists should be tackling at the moment?**

I think that Faith Schools are a particularly important topic at the moment, especially given the government's current stance. I am also particularly interested in current debates surrounding censorship and free speech on University campuses.

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

That's possibly the hardest question you've given me. I'm always tempted to give a prescriptive answer, but then that's precisely what it isn't and is exactly how it differs from the doctrines I was raised on. To me, Humanism is about living an ethical life based on reason and human dignity. Unlike religious moral codes Humanism doesn't require years of creative liberal theologians to update its interpretations in line with our growing knowledge of ourselves and the world we inhabit, but rather its very core is closely in tandem with it.

**If we could have any LGBT/Humanist personality, dead or alive, as a guest at one of our events, who would you pick, and why?**

I'm massive fan of Stewart Lee, not only for his stand-up but also his more critical musings on topics such as religious fundamentalism. I think that his lived experiences and insights would make him an excellent candidate for one of our events.

---

# Letter from the Chair

---

We live in interesting times... There is an air of great uncertainty in the US at present - no one quite knows if, or to what degree, President Elect Donald Trump is planning to roll back hard-won LGBT rights that have been put in place by his predecessor. What we do know is that he seems to have no problem with appointing people with track records of homophobia into positions of power - indeed his Vice President, Mike Pence, appears to be one of the worst of the bunch: Mr Pence believes in defunding HIV research and using the money to pay for 'gay conversion therapy', has suggested that same-sex couples applying for marriage licences should be arrested, and claimed that a Trump victory would see the erasure of all of Obama's LGBT rights protections.

Whatever the future holds, this whole affair is a sobering reminder that previously won rights need to be guarded and protected - complacency is not an option. Here in the UK, while our legal rights do not appear to be in immediate threat, our social equality is something that the right-wing press have increasingly decided to toy with once again. The Daily Mail, in particular, is guilty of this: as well as angrily asking 'What Would Nelson Think?!' of the same-sex themed traffic lights in Trafalgar Square, they also recently attempted to

demonise senior Judge Sir Terence Etherton by branding him an 'OPENLY GAY EX-OLYMPIC FENCER'... (He sounds damned heroic to me...) This post-Brexit vote world in which we now find ourselves is a colder place, where certain quarters of the media are happy to sell-out and scapegoat whichever minority they like in order to further their agendas.

It is more vital than ever that minority communities, and their allies, stand together against this rising tide of hatred. Be angry - shout and march and protest, but also spread love and solidarity. Unity is the way forward - united we can weather this storm and find our way back to a kinder world.

Richard Unwin - Chair  
[chair@galha.org](mailto:chair@galha.org)



## Events

### **BHA Convention 2017** 9-11<sup>th</sup> June 2017—Cambridge

Join us and other Humanists in Cambridge for the BHA's annual convention.

There's a host of other great speakers and talks lined up and it's a great opportunity to meet humanists from across the UK.

LGBT Humanists will be there in force and will also be hosting an event on LGBT refugees during the weekend. We hope to see you there!

<http://humanism.org.uk/bha2017/>

### **We're still in the process of finalising our events schedule for the upcoming year.**

Do you have any ideas for events you'd like us to hold?

Are there any speakers that you'd like to see at one of our events?

Then get in touch and we'll see what we can do!

[chair@galha.org](mailto:chair@galha.org)

Click here or  
search for LGBT  
Humanists online



Contact: [editor@galha.org](mailto:editor@galha.org)