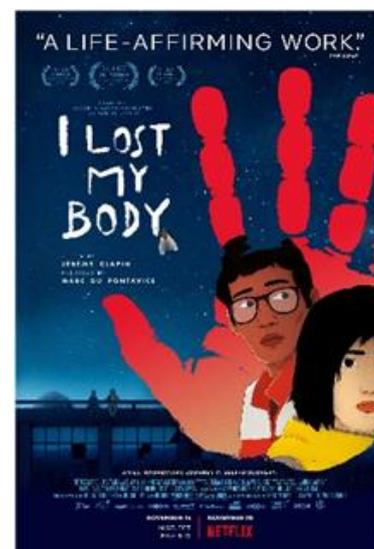


INSIDE CEDARS: JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2020



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Why we need LGBT History Month

Jamie Freebairn

Happy. Vibrant. Colourful. Weak.
Effeminate. Overdramatic.



The dictionary definition for the word gay is as follows: “relating to, or exhibiting sexual desire or behaviour directed toward a person or persons of one's own sex” (Source: dictionary.com). However, the term gay has been used as a synonym for all the aforementioned adjectives over time.

Going back as early as around 1300BC, a frequently misinterpreted line in the Bible condemns homosexuality as a sin, and being gay was considered not only immoral but illegal as late as 1967 in Britain when homosexuality was finally legalised (Source: theguardian.com). In recent times things have started to look up, with same-sex marriage being decriminalised in Britain in 2014 and attendance at London Pride increasing from around 100,000 attendees in 1992 to nearly 1.5m in 2019.

But G is only one letter in the LGBT+ acronym and as the world and our own small community here at Cedars moves towards acceptance, it's important to represent the less widely-represented identities that account for all the letters in the acronym (LGBTQQIAP). Personally, I would like to shed more light on the T, A and P.

Starting with 'transgender': denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. The record of trans people throughout history is fairly sporadic up until around the 1950s, when Christine Jorgensen underwent a public transition and brought awareness to gender dysphoria and gender non-conformity in America. After that, the concept of being transgender was associated with crossdressing and drag races, with the slur “Tranny” being thrown around like confetti.

Even now there are news reports nearly every day of trans adolescents facing higher levels of bullying, depression and suicide than their peers (Source: inquirer.com).

In more uplifting news, however, Angela Ponce competed as an openly trans participant for Miss Universe in 2018; and Laverne Cox, an African-American trans woman, was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for her performance in *Orange Is The New Black*.

Up until recently the term asexual – “without sexual feelings or associations” - was not widely used, this lack of awareness and support has led many to the ‘what’s wrong with me?’ ‘why don’t I feel a certain way?’ type of questions. In particular, young men struggle with asexual feelings as it goes against social norms and stereotypes that teenage boys are hypersexual. Before the age of the internet, asexuality wasn’t a widely accepted notion - partially due to stigma, but also because of a general lack of knowledge and representation. Since the rise of the internet people are now more aware, but asexuals still face discrimination. Worryingly, a large amount comes from inside the LGBT community who in some cases refuse to accept asexuals due to disparity in terms of level of prejudice and past oppression faced from homophobia and transphobia, claiming that asexuals generally have an easier time being accepted in society.

In modern society, pansexuality is often confused with bisexuality, but there is heavy debate as to whether this is actually the case. In the dictionary, pansexual is defined as “not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity. Pansexuality includes being attracted to those who identify with being gender fluid or non-binary amongst others. It doesn’t translate to promiscuity, even though it is often interpreted as such, leading to a whole community being invalidated. The first mainstream mention of pansexuality was in 1917 by Sigmund Freud, but this was not a statement of support. Freud stated “that the sex instinct plays the primary part in all human activity, mental and physical”, meaning that pansexual people were essentially defined as hypersexual. For this reason, many people dismiss the name, although its modern definition is incredibly far removed from the original. Another point of contention lies in the inclusivity of pansexuality versus bisexuality. Many bisexual activists argue that bisexuality has always included trans people whilst some pansexual activists argue that bisexuality only encompasses cisgender men and women. As a result, this has caused a lot of people to feel uncertain about which label suits them best.

The asexuality inclusion debate and the pan vs. bi debate will most likely never be completely resolved, but this LGBT History Month, let us put aside our differences and remember the struggles fought by all members of the LGBT+ community.

The Roe V. Wade debate and its significance in modern America

Millie Harvey



The Roe V. Wade case has become an important historical court case for generations, allowing women to have the right to an abortion. However, it has remained controversial since its beginnings and is still being challenged today. Before Roe V. Wade, women were forced to undergo dangerous and illegal abortion methods; in 1965 (according to official reports) one in six of all pregnancy deaths were abortion related. Roe v. Wade changed abortions from a dangerous and painful procedure to “one of the safest medical procedures in the United States, with a safety record of over 99%”, according to Planned Parenthood.

The case was filed by Norma McCorvey, in court known as Jane Roe. With her defence attorney, Gloria Allred, Roe fought the decision of Henry Wade (a Dallas district attorney) who enforced a Texas law prohibiting abortion - the only exception being to save the woman's life. It was under Chief Justice Warren Berger that the Supreme Court, in 1973, that women had the right to have an abortion without excessive government regulation restricting them. The majority decision (7-2) of the US Supreme Court was ruled under the 14th Amendment of the constitution, which gives everybody “born or naturalized” in the United States “equal protection of the laws”. This amendment to the constitution was key in the Civil Rights Movement, allowing many landmark decisions to be ruled in the Supreme Court such as Brown v. Board of Education (ruling segregated schools as a violation), Loving v. Virginia (interracial marriage) and Roe V. Wade (abortion rights).

Roe v. Wade is still under threat today though, with a Conservative majority in the Supreme Court and recent state legislature challenging the case's result. From Alabama's banning abortion in all cases except those where the mother's life was at risk to four states passing “heartbeat” bills in 2019, prohibiting abortion after a fetal heartbeat is picked up. The Conservative majority caused by President Trump's nomination of Brett Kavanaugh brings Roe V. Wade's future into question. Alabama is even threatening doctors with prosecution for an abortion procedure. However, many argue that this isn't the case as the court would “be credited with upending settled law and causing massive societal upheaval.” According to Kathleen Parker from the Washington Post, Roe v. Wade has survived many anti-abortion presidents. In 1992, with a Conservative majority, the case Planned Parenthood v. Casey took place. Planned Parenthood v. Casey prohibited states from banning most abortions but allowed state regulation of abortions to protect the mother's and fetus' health. The woman would not have “undue burden” placed on her when seeking an abortion and would not have to gain her husband's permission in gaining an abortion, but would have a 24 hour waiting period and one parent's consent.

Today, the “fetal heartbeat” bills challenge Roe V. Wade's ruling and in Ohio abortion clinics have been reduced from 45 in 1992 to just 10 in 2019. A movement is also gaining traction for the Roe V. Wade ruling to be overturned. Chief Justice Roberts voted to uphold a Texas anti-abortion law in 2016 to stop abortion clinics from operating. Even President Trump made a key part of his campaign on overturning Roe V. Wade; after his Presidency was announced he consistently appointed Conservative judges with anti-abortion views such as Justices Neil Gorsuch and Justice Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court and more than 100 judges to the court of appeals and district courts. A Louisiana law applying licensing requirements to doctors who perform abortions is one of the ways abortion rights are being limited - this law would have left a single abortion clinic with one doctor for more than four and a half million residents. This case and the Alabama case is undeniably unconstitutional

giving “undue burden” to a woman trying to gain an abortion. An Indiana law prohibiting doctors performing an abortion if the abortion is because of the fetus’ gender, race or “any...disability” is also being discussed. This law also requires the “remains” to be buried or cremated.

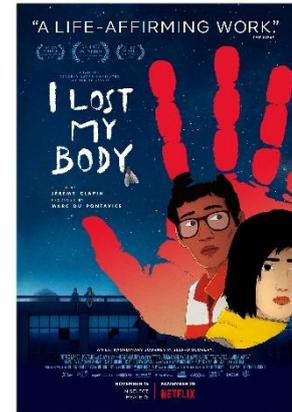
However, pro-choice groups have also been pushing for states to expand access to abortion, with states like New York passing the New York’s Reproductive Health Act - which ensures that abortion will remain legal in New York even if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe V. Wade*. Other states have been introducing similar Reproductive Health Acts including Illinois, New Mexico and Rhode Island, ensuring abortion rights are codified in state legislature. Furthermore, support for abortion rights and the *Roe V. Wade* case has actually grown - 73% Americans don’t want to see *Roe V. Wade* overturned (Planned Parenthood). Louise Melling, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union and director of its reproductive rights centre even stated, “we should be having this conversation about *Roe*, but we should also be having the conversation about how, instead of reversing *Roe*, the court is dramatically chipping away at it.” Moreover, other cases such as *June Medical Services V. Gee* can restrict but not overrule *Roe V. Wade*, giving deniability to the Supreme Court. Therefore, *Roe v. Wade* is unlikely to be overruled but is likely to have even more restrictions applied to it.

Melancholy wonder: *I Lost My Body*

Ben Smith



A recent film festival favourite and recently distributed for viewing on Netflix, *I Lost My Body* puts a modern and surreal glaze of melancholy wonder over a coming-of-age story of danger, desire and destiny. Written for the screen by Guillaume Laurant, the Oscar-nominated and BAFTA-winning screenwriter of the French phenomenon *Amélie* (2001), *I Lost My Body* is an animated spectacle about life, loss, and the struggle of finding who you are and who you want to be.



Being a massive film nerd, one of the sad types who stay up until ungodly hours to watch live film award ceremonies held in America, I knew I wanted to review something more obscure from the independent filmmaking scene, a hidden gem in the oversaturated world of media entertainment. One night, browsing through prediction lists for this year's Academy Awards, I saw that *I Lost My Body* was gaining a lot of traction in the animated features categories and, having never heard of it, decided to watch it and find out what it was about. What I found was a film that cannot be thoroughly explained by words. You need to watch it yourself to fully understand and appreciate this graphic animated epic of alienation and humanity, one that takes place on a small scale but speaks volumes. It unfurls into a deep and evocative story that combines a deeply heart-wrenching love story and tense horror. While animated, this is definitely not a kids' film.

Je suis là. I am here. A phrase seen once scrawled as graffiti on a wall in the film that captures the essence of the film entirely. Following the orphaned Naoufel through his impulsive and romantic pursuit of Gabrielle, and the journey of a severed hand to be reunited with its owner, we are reminded of how memories and expectations shape and limit who we are. Beautiful shots of the urban jungle of Paris and lustrous starry night skies juxtapose dank scenes of the Métro and grotesque body parts, presenting an existential feast for the eyes of melancholy hope and mortality, revealing the magic in the mundane. Save your 'live, laugh, love' and other trashy tattoo quotes, *I Lost My Body* shows how you do not need to be reminded to be better; it's just natural when you are free.

Destiny and free will are constantly at odds in the film, making the characters and their relationships even more endearing, becoming more unpredictable and heart-warming as the film progresses. When the severed hand is first introduced, it learns to stand, then stumble, then walk, then run, showing free will at its finest. Using the surreal images of a severed hand scampering around Paris in a disused tomato soup can, like a hermit crab, to represent the desire to change the past, the hand's goal to be re-attached to its owner is like replaying scenarios in your head. The hand's journey represents the duality of memory: how it can soothe and corrupt our lives, ambitions and attitudes and cause us to do things we never thought we could.

The animation style adds to the personal nature of the film. *I Lost My Body* looks hand-drawn, using 3D CGI designs and drawing over them to create a 2D effect, subtly adding depth and tone. This complements the unconventional perspectives (what other film lets you have the POV of a severed hand?) and allows us to further emotionally invest in the characters whilst simultaneously creating a sense of claustrophobia; the inability to change pen on paper allows regret to thrive. The animation of the film illustrates the relationship between past and present, using grey-scale in memories and colour in the present, a

dynamic contrast that creates images of threat and tenderness seem even more tragic and hopeful. The application of a typically child-focused medium of film to portray a more adult and profound narrative evokes a feeling of nostalgia that relates to everyone, as everyone has felt alienated in their lives, the universal art form of images allowing the film's messages to be even more universal and appreciated by all.

The score of the film suits every scene that it accompanies. With the mixture of modern rap, lo-fi and hypnotic ethereal droning complementing the scenes and colour schemes of the film, the score emphasises how situational and metamorphic life can be; how we can never take any moment for granted. Finite experiences, moods and feelings like first love and grief in the film are beautifully encapsulated by the enchanting score, perfectly embedding itself in the animation and narrative, showing us how easily such experiences can be squandered when our pasts become a ball-and-chain to our futures, having to be impulsive and care-free in order to live the life we want and deserve.

I Lost My Body is a wonderful film that pulls at the heartstrings and takes your breath away with its exquisite beauty and tension, exploring the importance of freedom and kindness, creating a promising future of the characters, the world of animation and humanity as a whole.

Citizens Advice and student finance

Millie Harvey



Is Student Finance a debt?

Technically yes, but it is treated more like a tax than a loan.

Can a student loan affect my credit score?

Student loans are not included in your credit score. The only way loan, credit card or mortgage providers know if you've got a student loan is if they choose to ask on application forms. They can do this and it happens, but in general it's only for bigger value transactions such as mortgages.

Will I find it more difficult to get a loan/mortgage in the future because of my student loan?

Student loans don't appear on your credit file but they do impact the affordability checks lenders use to work out if you can afford the mortgage repayments.

How do you pay a student loan back?

Once you leave university, you only repay when you're earning (employed or self-employed) more than £25,725 a year - it's fixed at 9% of everything you earn above that.

How much do I have to pay back?

How much you pay depends on which plan you are on. There are three plans. Assuming you are starting an undergraduate course anywhere in the UK, you will be on Plan 2. You will repay 9% of the amount you earn over the threshold. The current thresholds are £494 a week or £2,143 a month (before tax and other deductions). They change on 6 April every year.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/which-repayment-plan-you-are-on>

When does all the debt need to be paid back?

You stop owing either when you've cleared the debt, or when 30 years (from the April after graduation) have passed, whichever comes first.

Can they change the interest rate on my loan?

Yes, the interest rate changes throughout your working life - while studying, the loan accrues Retail Price Index (i.e. inflation) currently set at 2.4% plus 3% (5.4% total) on the outstanding balance. This decreases after you graduate then rises as you earn more.

Do my parents have to contribute? What if they will not contribute?

The maintenance loan is means-tested for almost every student under 25 - this means test is based on household income, which in practice means parents' income. Students cannot force their parents to contribute. The only option for students whose parents won't contribute is they can apply for the full loan amount if they can prove they've been financially independent for the past three years. There are other ways to get financial help through bursaries, scholarships and fee reduction schemes.

What are the student loan deadlines for me to apply? How do I apply?

You can still apply for funding up to 9 months after the first day of the academic year for your course. You do not need a confirmed place to apply, and can apply through the gov.uk website.

Does the student loan come in one lump sum or spread throughout the year?

You usually get paid in three instalments, normally at the start of each term.

How should I manage my money?

1. Choose a good student bank account – they all have different benefits, and a few things to be wary of too, so do some research to find out which bank account is right for you.
2. Figure out a budget – making your money last through each term can be hard, so you can find a budgeting checklist so you'll know how much money you can spend.
3. Manage debts – many of us have debts one way or another, but rather than panicking about them, the important thing is to find a way to make them manageable.

When can I get more information about debt?

You can go to our website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk or come to one of our drop in sessions at Citizens Advice Leighton Linlode. You can find details of drop in times and contact details for an appointment at www.leightonlinlodecab.org.uk

Is all debt bad debt?

Bad debts are those that drain your income, are not affordable to repay and give you no chance to pay back what you owe. Bad debts are less likely to have realistic payment plans and often arise as a result of "impulse buys" such as a holiday or a brand new car. If you're not sure you can make the monthly repayments, then you can't afford to borrow the money.

NEW
YEAR

