



## Gertrude ("Ma") Rainey (1886-1939)

Short, fat and country to the core, Ma Rainey may not have appeared very impressive to someone passing her on the street. However, when she took the stage, dressed in one of her trademark sequined gowns and her necklace of gold coins, and began to belt out a song such as "See See Rider," Rainey captivated every audience that heard her.

In spite of her marriage to "Pa," Rainey made no secret of her relationships with women. Indeed, her famous "Prove it on Me Blues," recorded in 1928, sounds more like the testimony of a lesbian than a bisexual:

Went out last night with a crowd of my friends,  
They must have been women, 'cause I don't  
like no men.

Wear my clothes just like a fan, Talk to gals  
just like any old man



# Alice Walker

1944

Her most famous novel, *The Color Purple*, was awarded Pulitzer prize and American Book Award 1983. Even after the book won the National Book Award and Walker was the first black woman to win the Pulitzer Prize, she was vilified by some in her community.

Feminist, poet, critic and essay writer, she was active in the civil-rights movement in the USA in the 1960s and as a black woman has written about the double burden for women of racist and sexist oppression. In the February 1996 issue of *Essence Magazine* Walker states, "I am bisexual. I just live my life. I don't think I have to phone in and tell everybody." She actually lives in Mendocino, California.



# Alvin Ailey (1931 - 1989)

Ailey began his formal dance training inspired by the performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and the classes with Lester Horton that his friend, Carmen de Lavallade, urged him to take. Horton, the founder of the first racially integrated dance company in the US, was a catalyst for Ailey as the young dancer embarked on his professional career.

In 1958, Ailey founded his own company, the Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater, which made its debut at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York.

Ailey's vision was to create a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of black cultural expression.

In 1988, he was honored by the Kennedy Centre for his extraordinary contribution to American culture and achievement in the performing arts.



# Bayard Rustin (1912 - 1987)

For more than 50 years, Bayard Rustin was a strategist and activist in the struggle for human rights and economic justice. Raised as a Quaker, Rustin began his lifelong career as a social and political activist in 1937, when he moved to New York after completing an activist training program of the American Friends Service Committee.

As a gay man, relatively open for his time, Bayard Rustin experienced anti-gay prejudice in addition to racial discrimination. Because of his sexual orientation as well as his controversial political positions, he was often relegated to a behind-the-scenes role in various campaigns.

He assisted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the early days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. His extensive background in the theory, strategies, and tactics of non-violent direction action proved invaluable to Dr. King.

Mr. Rustin organized the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in 1957, The National Youth Marches for Integrated Schools in 1958 and 1959, and was the Deputy Director and chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom which, at that time, was the largest demonstration in the nation's history. Thought by many to be the high point of the Civil Rights movement, the March on Washington served as the platform for Dr. King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech and helped secure pending civil rights legislation.



## Bessie Smith (1894-1937)

"Empress of the Blues" is the regal title rightly bestowed upon Bessie Smith, whose history has been filled with persistent, colourful legends. Gifted with a powerful voice and sophisticated musical artistry, she conducted her life by her own set of rules and had affairs with both men and women.

Born in severe poverty, probably on April 15, 1894, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Smith became the undisputed favourite blues singer of ticket and record buyers alike throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Specializing in songs of heartbreak, violence, and longing, her vocalization is characterized by haunting expressivity, perfect phrasing, and a superb sense of timing.



## William Thomas Strayhorn (1915-1967)

Despite his indisputable musical genius, prolific composer, arranger, and performing musician Billy Strayhorn spent much of his life in near-anonymity. Best known for his collaborations with Duke Ellington over a span of nearly thirty years, Strayhorn was the writer and arranger behind the famous Ellington Orchestra theme "Take the A Train," as well as the creator of such classics as "Lush Life," "Satin Doll," and "Johnny Come Lately."

Yet the small, bespectacled, openly gay Strayhorn--by all accounts a quiet and extraordinarily refined man--lived behind the scenes of jazz glory for most of his life. Only one solo album of his own was released during his lifetime, and until the mid-1990s, not a single biography had been written about him.



# Manvendra Singh Gohil

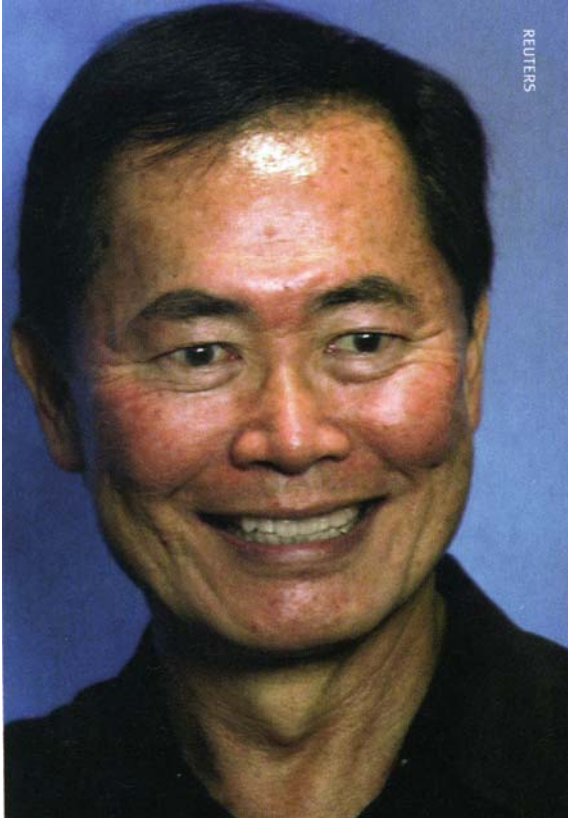
(1965)

Gay prince Manvendra Singh Gohil was one of three opening speakers at Stockholm EuroPride 2008. Prince Manvendra came out to the public in 2006 and is one of India's few open LGBT people.

"I am honoured to be invited as one of the opening speakers for Stockholm EuroPride. Especially since I live in a country where LGBT issues are still taboo says Manvendra Singh Gohil. I look forward to visit Scandinavia for the first time and for the possibility to initiate future collaborations. I am convinced it will be a memorable journey, says Manvendra Singh Gohil.

Prince Manvendra is president of an Indian HIV organization and he drew attention in 2007 when he participated in the Oprah Winfrey show in a episode called "Gay around the world".

Manvendra Singh Gohil is the son of Maharana Shri Raghubir Singhji Rajendrasinghji Sahib and his family comes from Rajpipla, Gujarat in West India.



# George Takei (b.1937)

A resident of Los Angeles, George is a dedicated long-distance runner since his high school cross-country team days. He has completed five 26.2-mile marathons and carried the Olympic Flame in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Torch Relay.

In Hollywood during the 1960s he pursued his ambition to succeed as an actor at a time when asian faces were rarely seen on television and movie screens and appeared alongside such actors as Richard Burton in *Ice Palace* (1960), Alec Guinness in *A Majority of One* (1962) and Cary Grant in *Walk Don't Run* (1966).

In 1966 he met with an idealistic young producer named Gene Roddenberry who cast him as Mr. Hikaru Sulu on the USS Enterprise, on the Television Series *Star Trek*. George received a star on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame in 1986 and he placed his signature and hand print in the forecourt of the landmark Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood in 1991.





## Isaac Julien (1960)

A film-maker and cultural critic, Julien studied at St. Martin's School of Art and his videos have been shown at the Tate Britain, London, Museum of Modern Art Oxford and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston among other places.

He has long had a strong reputation abroad but his work has not been that well known in the UK. He was born in 1960, in Bow, London, and has been described as being among the first wave of Black independent film makers.

His work often deals with the breaking down of racial and sexual stereotypes.

His films, videos and installations have been shown at the ICA, London, the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, and at art cinemas around the world. In 1989 he directed a Channel 4 documentary Looking for Langston.

His work blurs the boundaries between cinema, painting, video and photography.



# Ismael Merchant

(1937-2005)

Indian producer, director and writer of cook books, born in Bombay, Maharashtra, India, as Ismail Noormohamed Abdul Rehman, was educated in Bombay and New York, where he studied business administration.

While shooting a film in India, American actor, director and screenwriter Ivory met Merchant and in 1961, they formed Merchant-Ivory Productions with the goal of making English-language films in India for international release; Ivory directed while Merchant sought funding from numerous sources.

Merchant works and lives together with his lover, James Ivory, and collaborated with him on films including *Shakespeare Wallah*, *The Europeans*, *Heat and Dust*, *Room With a View* (eight Oscar nominations in 1985), *Maurice*, and *Howard's End*.



# James Arthur Baldwin (1924-1987)

James Baldwin, a pioneering figure in twentieth-century literature, wrote sustained and articulate challenges to American racism and mandatory heterosexuality.

The circumstances of Baldwin's birth were unremarkable: He was born on August 2, 1924, at Harlem Hospital in New York City to a poor, unmarried, twenty-year-old woman named Emma Berdis Jones. But his death sixty-three years later on December 1, 1987, at his home in southern France was an event reported on the front pages of newspapers around the world. Indeed, his journey from a difficult childhood in Harlem to his eventual status as a legendary artist with a large and loyal international audience constitutes one of the most compelling American life-stories of the twentieth century.

In an early essay - one of very few non-fiction narratives in which Baldwin explicitly engages the subject of homosexuality - he defends the naturalness and legitimacy of homosexual desire and suggests that homophobia is a consequence of heterosexual panic.



## The Rev. Rowland Jide Macaulay

Rowland Jide Macaulay is African, gay, a Christian theologian, a poet, author, an educator in business and Christian education, a confirmed and ordained Pastor with the Metropolitan Community Church.

MCC has a primary ministry in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities (LGBT), and stands as an integral part of these communities, providing the safe environment of an accepting congregation where all people including heterosexuals and families can find God's salvation, personal support, spiritual growth and guidance toward health and wholeness

“I spent my teenage years in Nigeria, where I first experienced my sexuality.”

“Prohibition of homosexuality in Nigeria is not only confined to legislation; culturally there is a continuous attempt to deny or refuse to acknowledge that gays and lesbians make up a significant part of the population. Homosexuality, as far as Nigeria is concerned, is an abuse of traditional values.”



## Joan Armatrading (1950)

Born in St Kitts in 1950, Armatrading followed her parents to Birmingham in 1958 after they had emigrated when she was three. Her father was a bus driver and her mother a cook. Part of what is now called the Windrush generation, it was, by all accounts, an uneventful childhood. Yet, at the age of 17, she landed a part in the musical *Hair*. Armatrading's talent had singled her out as different to her peers.

Recluse, lesbian, loner: over the years, Joan Armatrading has been labelled many things. To be crowned Britain's first black female pop star when she burst on to the scene in the Seventies would have put a lesser star in a career-stifling straitjacket. With her electrifying performing style, the raw visual power of this young black woman and her uncompromising, emotionally charged songs seared itself on to the retina of a lily-white popular culture.



# Johnny Mathis (b. 1935)

With more than sixty gold and platinum albums to his credit, Johnny Mathis is one of the most successful recording artists in the world, trailing only Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley in the number of albums sold.

His interpretations of romantic ballads have brought him fame and wealth, but he is notoriously reticent about his own romantic life.

Although he has acknowledged his homosexuality, he has refused to discuss it in any depth, and its effect on his art and life must remain speculative.



# Josephine Baker

(1906-1975)

Josephine Baker was born in St.Louis, Missouri. Chorus girl who rose to fame in the Folies Bergères in Paris, was a bisexual singer and actress who lived most of her life in France. She was known to have had many same-sex affairs.

Baker left home at age 13 to pursue a career in show business. Finding the United States difficult for black performers, she eventually settled in France.

Famous for her Parisian show *La Revue Nègre* and for walking her pet cheetah through the Paris streets; during World War II she served as an intelligence liaison and an ambulance driver for the French Resistance and was awarded the Medal of the Resistance and the Legion of Honour.



# Justin Fashanu

1961-1998

He played in the England Youth and Under 21 team and made his professional debut at Norwich City in 1979. He became Britain's first £1,000,000 black soccer player when he transferred to Nottingham Forest in 1981. At the time Justin Fashanu was in a heterosexual relationship but he was soon drawn to Nottingham's gay scene. When it was learned of Justin's gay leanings he was suspended. However, Justin still turned up for training, whereupon the police escorted him from the premises.

In 1990, he was the first professional Britain soccer player - and still the only one - to come out as gay in *The News of the World*, a British tabloid paper, and in the London tabloid "*The Sun*"; he supposedly claimed to have had political boyfriends in the House of Commons. His career was affected by homophobia both in the black community and in English football.

He left the sport in 1994 because of a serious knee injury. After the collapse of his football career, Fashanu went into a self-destructive spiral, and eventually committed suicide; his body found hanging in an abandoned garage in Shoreditch, East London.





# Yukio Mishima

1925 –1970

His work as a novelist often deals with sexual desire and perversion, as in *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), and *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956). His fine novel *Forbidden Colours* has an explicit homosexual theme ("colour" in Japanese has also the meaning of "sex", hence "Forbidden colours" is understood by Japanese as "Forbidden sexuality")

In November 1970, together with four young men whom he had chosen for the purpose amongst his followers, he attempted a *coup d'état* at the Ichigawa, Tokyo, the headquarters of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces. His attempt proved unsuccessful and Mishima committed *seppuku* (or "harakiri" = ritual suicide, performed cutting his own belly) as a demonstration against the corruption of the nation and the loss of the samurai warrior tradition, the *coup de grâce* being delivered by his reputed lover, Morita.



## Lord Waheed Alli (b. 1964)

At the age of 34, Lord Alli became the youngest peer in parliament.

He first became well known through his TV production company Planet 24, which made the Channel 4 Big Breakfast. Later he became head of production for Carlton TV.

He has influenced government policy on such things as the Communications Bill in 2003 and has spoken out several times during debates which touched on equality issues for gays and lesbians.

He is now chairman of the media rights company Chorion.

