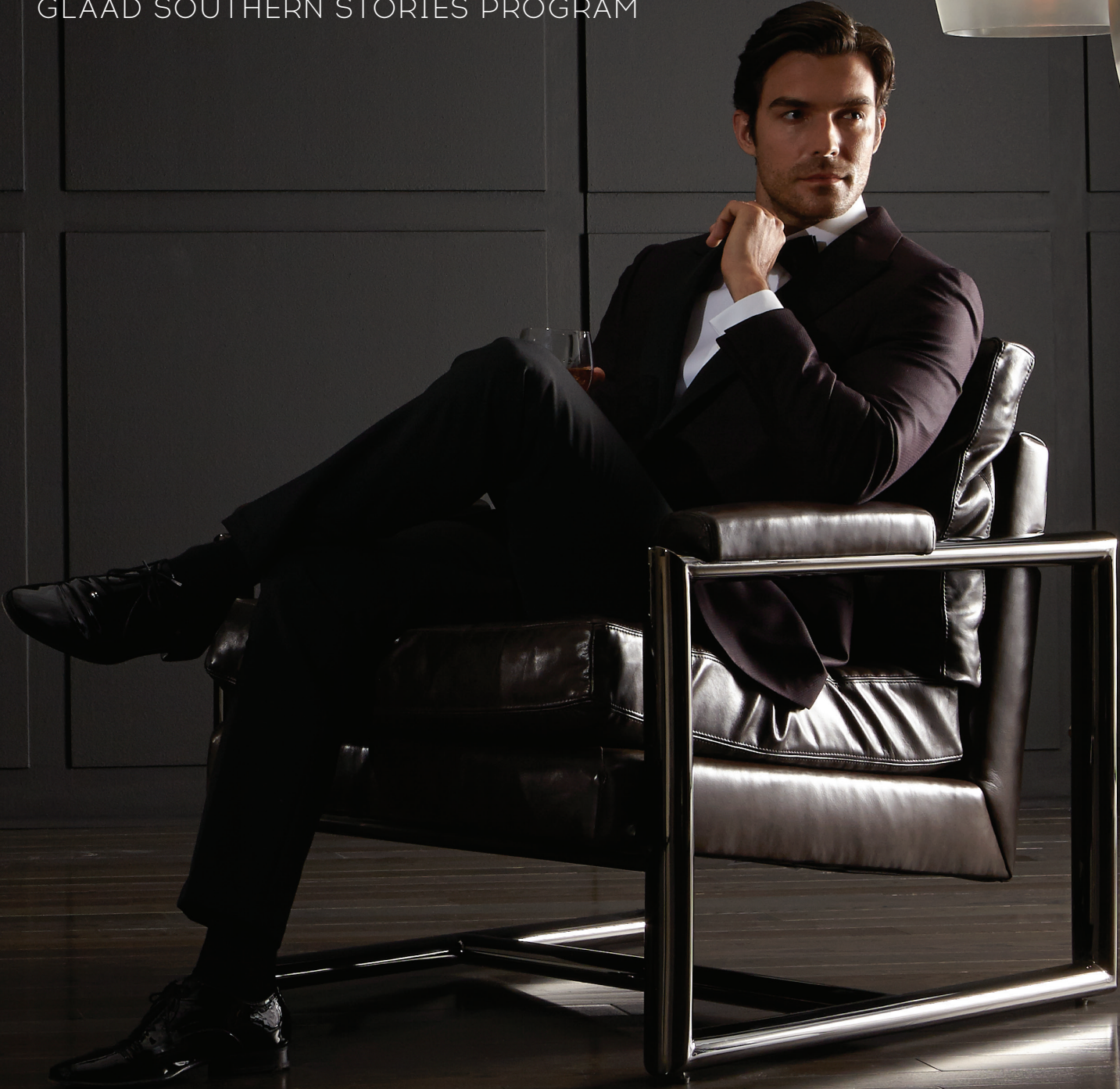




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SOUTHERN
STORIES

**A Guide for Reporting
on LGBT People in
Georgia**

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Mitchell Gold
+ Bob Williams

800.789.5401

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When GLAAD’s Accelerating Acceptance report revealed that levels of discomfort towards the LGBT community are as high as 43% in America—and spike to 61% in the U.S. South—we knew we had to act. To accelerate LGBT acceptance in the U.S. South, GLAAD is telling the stories of LGBT people from across the region through our Southern Stories initiative.

We are amplifying experiences of LGBT people who are resilient in the face of inequality and adversity, and building a culture in which they are able not only to survive, but to also thrive. These are impactful stories with the power to change hearts and minds, but they are too often missed or ignored altogether.

In Georgia, the LGBT community is making sure and steady progress, but the work to achieve full equality and acceptance is far from done. On the ground in Georgia, we have enjoyed meeting and working with organizations like Georgia Equality and Lost-N-Found Youth and connecting with inspiring LGBT Georgians like trans homecoming queen Eris Lovell and Reverend Maressa Pendermon. More and more, Georgia sees communities of faith opening their arms to LGBT people; public officials listening to families, workers, and tax payers as they voice their need for equal protections; students creating supportive and inclusive spaces; and allies standing up for their LGBT friends, family members, and neighbors.

This guide will serve as a useful tool for the media as it works to effectively share the stories of LGBT people so that all Georgians can live the lives they love.

Sarah Kate Ellis
GLAAD CEO & President

Getting Started

At first glance, Georgia lags behind the rest of the country when it comes to protections for LGBT people. However, beneath the surface is a vibrant and diverse LGBT community that has built itself into an incredible force for change over the last few decades, and is leading the way to bring policy protections and cultural acceptance to LGBT people in the state.

In April 2014, Lambda Legal filed a federal lawsuit seeking the right for same-sex couples to marry in Georgia.¹ The following January 29, U.S. District Judge William Duffey granted in part and denied in part a request to stay the proceedings in the case. Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality nationwide, Georgia has dismissed lawsuits that prohibited the freedom to marry.

Culturally, acceptance for the LGBT community has increased enormously over the past decade. An exit poll conducted for the Associated Press on March 2, 2004 found that half of those who voted in Georgia's primary election opposed any legal recognition of same-sex relationships. Only about 17% supported marriage equality, and just 25% supported same-sex couples forming civil unions.² In a Public Policy Polling report published on August 8, 2013, almost a decade later, 32% of Georgians supported marriage equality, while 57% supported civil unions.³ Slowly but surely, the cultural needle is moving toward acceptance.

Meanwhile, in that same 2013 poll, 72% of Georgians revealed that they do not believe employers should be able to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.⁴ Despite this encouraging statistic, however, non-discrimination legislation in the state does not include sexual orientation or gender identity at this time. Thankfully, Georgia does not have any statewide anti-LGBT curriculum laws that restrict school faculty from discussing LGBT lives in the classroom. Statewide anti-bullying legislation fails to include protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, there are 50 Georgia school districts that include sexual orientation in their own anti-bullying

policies and 19 districts that include gender identity. Together, these districts cover almost 60% of public school students in the state.⁵

When it comes to open LGBT representation in government, Georgia has elected out government officials since the late 1990s and continues to do so today. Cathy Woolard became the first out LGBT elected official in Georgia when she was elected to the Atlanta City Council in 1997. Woolard went on to become the first woman and first out LGBT person elected to serve as Atlanta City Council President. Karla Drenner, who campaigned for State Representative in 2000, was the first to be elected as an out LGBT person.⁶ Simone Bell, elected in 2009, is the first out African American lesbian to serve in a State House in the U.S. Rashad Taylor was outed as a gay man in 2011 during his term as State Representative, making him the first out LGBT African American man in Georgia legislature.⁷ Cynthia Wright, Joan Garner, and Jane Morrison, out lesbians, all serve as elected officials at the county level, and Alex Wan became the first out LGBT Asian American on Atlanta City Council in 2011.⁸ Most recently, Keisha Waites became Georgia's fourth out LGBT legislator in 2012 when she was elected State Representative.⁹

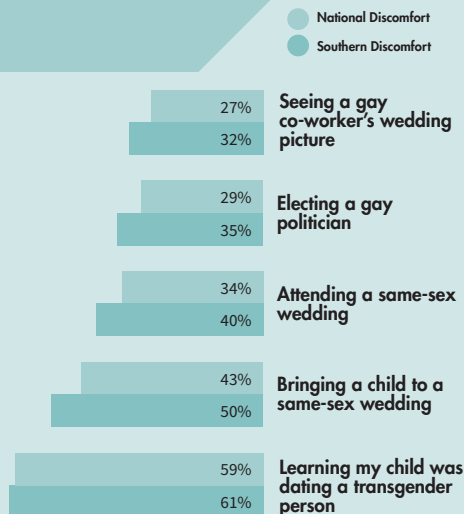
Georgia's grassroots movements for full equality represent people living at the intersections of multiple identities. African-American and Latino LGBT communities, for example, continue to move equality forward through advocacy organizations like LatinoLinQ and the National Association of White and Black Men Together. These organizations prioritize communities with multiple minority identities, helping to foster acceptance for the LGBT community in all its diversities.

This guide only captures a portion of LGBT Georgians' lives and history. Our hope, however, is that it empowers and motivates media professionals to find and discover new stories, new angles to existing but often overlooked stories, and a new framework for reporting on LGBT individuals in the state of Georgia.

Why the South? Why now?

GLAAD recently commissioned Harris Poll to measure attitudes towards LGBT Americans. What we found is that even though 2015 has been an historic year for the rights of LGBT Americans, beneath legal and policy progress lies a layer of uneasiness and discomfort. While the public is increasingly embracing LGBT civil rights and equal protections under the law, many are still uncomfortable with having LGBT people in their families and the communities where they live. Within these numbers, we find that Southerners feel significantly more discomfort about their LGBT families, friends, and neighbors than is found in other regions of the country.

For more information, visit glaad.org/acceptance





Terms and Definitions

Sexual orientation – The scientifically accurate term for an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual (straight) orientations. Avoid the offensive term “sexual preference,” which is used to suggest that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is voluntary and therefore “curable.” People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all.

LGBT / GLBT – Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.” LGBT and/or GLBT are often used because they are more inclusive of the diversity of the community. Care should be taken to ensure that audiences are not confused by their use. Ensure that the acronym is spelled out on first usage.

Queer – Traditionally a pejorative term, *queer* has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote. When Q is seen at the end of “LGBT,” it typically means queer and/or questioning.

Homophobia – Fear of lesbians and gay men. *Intolerance* or *prejudice* is usually a more accurate description of antipathy toward LGBT people.

Marriage – Many states, including Georgia, had voted against recognizing the marriages of same-sex couples. Because a key section of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), passed by the federal government in 1996, was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2013, however, legally married couples became recognized by the federal government. Furthermore, in June 2015, the Supreme Court’s historic ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* determined that the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right for someone to marry the person they love.

Bisexual (adj.) – Describes a person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetimes. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

Transgender (adj.) – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including *transgender*. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual.

Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well, but not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

Trans – Used as shorthand to mean *transgender* or *transsexual* – or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella. Because its meaning is not precise or widely understood, be careful when using it with audiences who may not understand what it means. Avoid unless used in a direct quote or in cases where you can clearly explain the term’s meaning in the context of your story.

Transgender man – People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a man may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten it to trans man. (Note: trans man, not “transman.”) Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called *men*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transgender woman – People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a woman may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten to trans woman. (Note: *trans woman*, not “transwoman.”) Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called *women*, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transition – Altering one’s birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. **Avoid the phrase “sex change.”**

Gender non-conforming – A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. **Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming.** Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional – that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

Georgia's LGBT History

The timeline on these pages accounts for some of the important milestones in Georgia's LGBT history. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to provide a context in which LGBT people in the state find themselves living at this critical juncture in the movement for equality and acceptance.

1971

Georgia's first Gay Pride March is held in Atlanta

Organized by the Georgia Gay Liberation Front, the first Atlanta Gay Pride march is held in Midtown Atlanta.¹⁰ Denied a permit to march through the streets, activists march down the sidewalk and stop at traffic lights.¹¹ Among the first pride marches in the U.S., this Gay Liberation March inspires the widening equality movement for LGBT people.

1974

Groundbreaking LGBT social groups and businesses form

The state's first out lesbian softball team (ALFA Omegas), two publications (*The Barb* and *Cruise*), a lesbian feminist bookstore called Charis Books (still in operation), and a lesbian meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous all commence in Atlanta.¹⁵

1978

March on the Atlanta World Congress Center is held

When notorious anti-gay campaigner Anita Bryant is scheduled to deliver the keynote address at the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, an estimated 2,000 protesters march on the World Congress Center to picket her speech in lieu of a Pride march that year.¹⁷



1972

Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) forms

This Southern feminist group breaks away from the Atlanta Women's Liberation Center, which ALFA believes is ignoring the concerns of lesbian women.¹² ALFA dedicates itself to preserving Southern lesbian history and maintains an archive from 1972-1994 that today is housed at Duke University.¹³

Atlanta delegation of Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) forms

The MCC, a national LGBT-affirming Christian denomination, founds a new congregation in Atlanta. It is now known as the City of Light congregation.¹⁴

1975

ALFA hosts first Great Southeast Lesbian Conference

500-600 women from 18 states attend a weekend of advocacy, organized around the theme, "Building a Lesbian Community." The renamed Southeastern Conference of Lesbians and Gay Men will later be held in Atlanta in 1978 and 1988. to inspire the widening equality movement for LGBT people.¹⁶



1979

Atlanta Gay Center opens

A center that has since closed, the Atlanta Gay Center is the first place of its kind to serve the city's LGBT community. The center publishes bi-weekly newspapers, operates the Gay Helpline for the Atlanta area, and serves as a meeting place for support groups.

1984

PFLAG Atlanta forms

PFLAG Atlanta forms in 1984 and gains prominence for its protest of Cracker Barrel's anti-LGBT policies in 1991. PFLAG's mission is to promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, their families, and friends through support, education, and advocacy.²¹

1986

Georgia sodomy laws upheld in U.S. Supreme Court case, *Bowers v. Hardwick*

In a 5-4 decision, *Bowers v. Hardwick* upholds Georgia's sodomy laws on the grounds that the Constitution does not cite "a fundamental right to engage in homosexual sodomy."²³ Though the case argues for the right to privacy, Justice Byron White states that "the act of consensual sodomy is not protected under the fundamental right to privacy or any right protected under the United States Constitution," and therefore, "there is no precedent to support the Respondent's claimed constitutional right to commit sodomy."²⁴



1991

Emory University opens the Office of LGBT Student Life

Following the harassment of two male students kissing in a residence hall, Emory University rallies for improved treatment of LGBT students on campus.²⁶ The mission of the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life aims to create an affirming and just campus environment, while supporting the development of students of all gender and sexual identities.²⁷

1980

LGBT minority organizations in Atlanta begin to form

The Gay Atlanta Minority Association organizes in 1980 to protest and provide social support for those experiencing racism in Atlanta's LGBT community.¹⁸ In 1981, Black and White Men Together forms in Atlanta, now the largest individual chapter of this national organization, to combat racism in the LGBT community, eventually succeeding in passing a ban on racist carding practices common at bars.¹⁹

LGBT establishments subjected to arson and bombing

After Dark, a bookstore for the LGBT community, is destroyed by arson in 1980 and later, Down Under, another bookstore for the gay community, is bombed. A third LGBT-focused destination, The Otherside Lounge, is bombed in 1997.²⁰

1985

Founded by LGBT people of faith, LGBT-affirming synagogue opens

Atlantans form Bet Haverim to provide a space for the LGBT and allied community to fully engage with Judaism. The synagogue embraces all Jews and their loved ones, with a focus on those who are seeking acceptance or feeling marginalized by other Jewish spaces.²²



1988

Southern Voice newspaper forms in Atlanta

SoVo, a bi-weekly 16-page newspaper, remains the prominent regional LGBT publication for just over two decades until it is succeeded by *Georgia Voice* in 2010.²⁵

1994

Greater Atlanta Business Coalition forms

With support from 4th Tuesday, an Atlanta-based LGBT advocacy group, the nation's first recognized LGBT Chamber of Commerce is founded in Atlanta. The group now serves Atlanta as a local chapter of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.²⁸

1995

Georgia Equality forms
Now recognized as Georgia Equality, this organization is comprised of Georgia Equality, Inc. and the Equality Foundation of Georgia. Both unite with a common vision of advancing fairness, safety, and opportunity for the LGBT community.²⁹

Stonewall Bar Association is founded

The Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia is founded to “develop a coalition of legal workers to utilize their professional expertise to support the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and oppose discrimination based on sexual or gender orientation.”³⁰

1997

Atlanta v. Morgan leads to victory for domestic partner registrations

The City of Atlanta secures a victory in *City of Atlanta v. Morgan*, in which Justice Carol W. Hunstein rules domestic partnership registration to be legal. It takes until 1999 for the provisions to commence because Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine blocks domestic partnership benefits to city workers.³⁴



2004

Atlanta Police Department appoints first LGBT liaison

The LGBT Liaison Unit in Atlanta is established to implement “safety projects and programs to establish a closer, more effective dialogue between the police and [LGBT] the community.” Connie Locke, appointed as the full-time officer for this department, believes that “being a member of the community she serves [will] help her develop trust and credibility.”³⁷

Georgia Amendment 1 constitutionally bans marriage equality

Georgia Amendment 1 is approved by 76% of voters. This amendment specifies marriage as only the union of a man and a woman. No other domestic union can be recognized as valid or legal. The state is prohibited from creating or recognizing any right or claim respecting any other domestic union by any name.³⁸

1996

Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative is founded

In response to out lesbian Dennie Doucher’s and her caregivers’ experiences with discrimination during cancer treatment, ALCI forms to empower Atlanta’s health care system to effectively serve gay patients. Now rebranded The Health Initiative, it advocates for all LGBT patients, providing financial support to the uninsured and underinsured.³¹

LGBT community responds to Atlanta Olympic Games

The Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Visitor’s Center opens to both educate and host events for the Games. Lobbying by LGBT advocates persuades the Olympic Games to boycott Cobb County in response to its anti-LGBT legislation declaring being gay as “incompatible” with Cobb’s community standards.³²

In the Life Atlanta is founded

After a small Labor Day picnic among lesbian and gay friends to celebrate their unique experiences in Atlanta, In the Life Atlanta (ITLA) is formed. ITLA works “to promote unity, pride, self-empowerment and positive visibility within Atlanta’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) community of African descent through education, advocacy, and coalition building programs.” Labor Day celebrations develop into Atlanta Black Gay Pride, one of the largest Black Pride festivals in the U.S., which is now attended by people of color and allies from across the nation.³³

2000

Savannah hosts first Pride festival

Savannah hosts its first Pride festival, the first in Georgia outside of Atlanta.

Karla Drenner becomes the first out LGBT member of the Georgia House of Representatives

Democratic candidate Karla Drenner is elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 2000, becoming the first out LGBT person to serve as a state legislator in Georgia. Her work for the LGBT community includes drafting legislation that “prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.”³⁵

2003

Lawrence v. Texas strikes down state laws banning “homosexual sodomy”

In a 7-2 decision written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, state laws banning same-sex sexual activity, such as sodomy laws in Georgia, are ruled unconstitutional. The Court rules that such laws violate the Fourteenth Amendment’s Due Process Clause, which is designed to protect a substantive right to personal liberty in intimate decisions. Same-sex partners in Georgia can no longer be legally apprehended for engaging in consensual sexual activity.³⁶

2006

Georgia Stonewall Democrats (GSD) is formed

GSD educates Georgia Democrats about LGBT issues and how to advance equality through the Democratic Party. GSD works to “continue making progress within the Democratic Party on issues important to the community, to inform the LGBT community about the differences between the Parties, and to elect fair-minded Democrats to public office.”³⁹



2015

Georgia Equality Clinic receives LGBT medical award

A student-run Georgia Regents University clinic in Augusta, Georgia Equality Clinic receives the American Medical Student Association/Gay and Lesbian Medical Association’s LGBT Health Achievement Award. As the first health care center in the state to specifically serve the LGBT community, the Equality Clinic works toward making LGBT people “feel safe in accessing basic primary care and screenings.”⁴¹

So-called “religious freedom” bill fails to pass State Legislature

For the second year in a row, the Georgia legislative session ends without passing what’s known as The Religious Freedom Restoration Act – a bill that would undercut local ordinances offering nondiscrimination protections for LGBT Georgians. The bill still remains active, as it passed the state Senate and will likely be re-visited when the Legislature reconvenes in 2016.⁴²



2009

Georgia Safe Schools Coalition (GSSC) is founded

GSSC is founded to raise awareness about issues affecting LGBTQ youth and families. The organization works with educators and community organizations to “help Georgia’s schools become safe and affirming environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity expression.”⁴⁰



Terms to Avoid

Offensive: “homosexual” (n. or adj.)

Preferred: “gay” (adj.); “gay man” or “lesbian” (n.); “gay person/people”

Please use *gay* or *lesbian* to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* restrict use of the term “homosexual.”

Offensive: “homosexual relations/relationship,” “homosexual couple,” “homosexual sex,” etc.

Preferred: “relationship,” “couple” (or, if necessary, “gay couple”), “sex,” etc.

Identifying a same-sex couple as “a homosexual couple,” characterizing their relationship as “a homosexual relationship,” or identifying their intimacy as “homosexual sex” is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate gay people, couples, and relationships.

As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion or relationship gay, lesbian, or bisexual unless you would call the same activity, emotion or relationship “straight” if engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your readers, viewers or listeners will be able to discern people’s sexes and/or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.

Offensive: “sexual preference”

Preferred: “sexual orientation” or “orientation”

The term “sexual preference” is typically used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.” Sexual orientation is the accurate description of an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, as well as straight men and women.

Offensive: “gay lifestyle” or “homosexual lifestyle”

Preferred: “gay lives,” “gay and lesbian lives”

There is no single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrase “gay lifestyle” is used to denigrate lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals suggesting that their orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.”

Offensive: “admitted homosexual” or “avowed homosexual”

Preferred: “openly lesbian,” “openly gay,” “openly bisexual,” or simply “out”

Dated term used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words “admitted” or “avowed” suggest that being gay is somehow shameful or inherently secretive. You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: “Ricky Martin is an out pop star from Puerto Rico.” Avoid the use of the word “homosexual” in any case.

Offensive: “gay agenda” or “homosexual agenda”

Preferred: accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., “inclusion in existing nondiscrimination and hate crimes laws,” “ending the ban on transgender service members”)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are motivated by the same hopes, concerns, and desires as other everyday Americans. They seek to be able to earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. Their commitment to equality is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBT. Notions of a so-called “homosexual agenda” are rhetorical inventions of anti-gay extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBT people as sinister.

Offensive: “special rights”

Preferred: “equal rights” or “equal protection”

Anti-gay extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as “special rights” to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive nondiscrimination laws.

Problematic: “transgenders,” “a transgender”

Preferred: transgender people, a transgender person

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, “Tony is a transgender,” or “The parade included many transgenders.” Instead say, “Tony is a transgender man,” or “The parade included many transgender people.”

Problematic: “transgendered”

Preferred: transgender

The adjective transgender should never have an extraneous “-ed” tacked onto the end. An “-ed” suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. It also brings transgender into alignment with lesbian, gay, and bisexual. You would not say that Elton John is “gayed” or Ellen DeGeneres is “lesbianed,” therefore you would not say Chaz Bono is “transgendered.”

Defamatory Language

Problematic: “transgenderism”

Preferred: none

This is not a term commonly used by transgender people. This is a term used by anti-transgender activists to dehumanize transgender people and reduce who they are to “a condition.” Refer to *being transgender* instead, or refer to the *transgender community*. You can also refer to *the movement for transgender equality*.

Problematic: “sex change,” “pre-operative,” “post-operative”

Preferred: assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth or designated male at birth, designated female at birth

Referring to a “sex-change operation,” or using terms such as “pre-operative” or “post-operative,” inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.

Problematic: “biologically male,” “biologically female,” “genetically male,” “genetically female,” “born a man,” “born a woman”

Preferred: assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth or designated male at birth, designated female at birth

Problematic phrases like those above are reductive and overly-simplify a very complex subject. As mentioned above, a person’s sex is determined by a number of factors - not simply genetics - and one’s biology does not “trump” one’s gender identity. Finally, people are born babies - they are not “born a man” or “born a woman.”



Defamatory: “fag,” “faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” “sodomite,” and similar epithets

The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, “The person used a derogatory word for a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person.”

Defamatory: “deviant,” “disordered,” “dysfunctional,” “diseased,” “perverted,” “destructive” and similar descriptions

The notion that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as “deviant,” “diseased,” and “disordered” often are used to portray LGBT people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the LGBT community. If they must be used, they should be quoted directly in a way that clearly reveals the bias of the person being quoted.

Defamatory: associating gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery, and/or incest

Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender is neither synonymous with, nor indicative of, any tendency toward pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery, and/or incest. Such claims, innuendoes, and associations often are used to insinuate that LGBT people pose a threat to society, to families, and to children in particular. Such assertions and insinuations are defamatory and should be avoided, except in direct quotes that clearly reveal the bias of the person quoted.

Defamatory: “deceptive,” “fooling,” “pretending,” “posing,” “trap,” or “masquerading”

Gender identity is an integral part of a person’s identity. Do not characterize transgender people as “deceptive,” as “fooling” or “trapping” others, or as “pretending” to be, “posing,” or “masquerading” as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are defamatory and insulting.

Defamatory: “tranny,” “she-male,” “he/she,” “it,” “shim”

These words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used in mainstream media. The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, “The person used a derogatory word for a transgender person.” Please note that while some transgender people may use “tranny” to describe themselves, others find it profoundly offensive.

Best Practices in Media Coverage

First and foremost, is this person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity relevant to the story?

If it's not immediately relevant to the story or profile, there is no need to include it. If it is relevant, then be sure to use accurate and respectful terminology to discuss the LGBT-identified person.

Use a personal lens in your reporting

If their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is indeed relevant to the piece, ask for personal stories; both the joys and challenges of being LGBT in Georgia. Ask about relationships and networks of support.

Include voices of people who identify as LGBT

Often, news coverage silences the community by covering anti-LGBT legislation and social groups without including the voices of those who are most affected. Hearing from everyday LGBT-identified people - not just allies or advocates - is critically important. Positive change is made when marginalized persons and groups are humanized in the press.

Personal details about someone's life may be more important than labels

If sexual orientation or gender identity is indeed relevant to the piece, be sure to use accurate and respectful terminology to discuss the subject. You do not have to necessarily apply an LGBT label to them, but rather provide details that give a fuller picture of the subject's life. For example, "When Tonya Johnson isn't running the new tech startup, she's at home helping her wife raise their two children."

Include LGBT angles in stories that may not immediately appear to have an LGBT focus

Stories like immigration, health care, housing, and even the economy can have LGBT angles. One of the questions to ask is, "What impact does this have on someone who is LGBT?" Finding subjects who can speak to this angle is important.

Explore the intersection of LGBT issues with other identities

LGBT people do not live in a vacuum, but rather approach the world with other identities, including race, gender, and class. To isolate out an LGBT identity from the rest of the person is to make them one-dimensional. Ask questions that can talk about the challenges and privileges that come with various aspects of one's identity.



Challenge anti-LGBT activists with accurate information about the LGBT community

Often, anti-LGBT activists will make claims about the LGBT community that are not based on fact as a way to score political points. Do not let fallacies stand. Do your research and come prepared with accurate information. Note the inaccuracies as soon as they are stated and present clear and factual information in their stead. If you want more information on state and national anti-LGBT activists, visit GLAAD's Commentator Accountability Project at www.glaad.org/cap. The Commentator Accountability Project aims to put critical information about frequent anti-LGBT interviewees into the hands of newsrooms, editors, hosts, and reporters. All of the quotes listed are sourced back to video, audio, or writings from the activists themselves.

Reach out to state and local organizations

The more localized your sources, the better able you are to tell an accurate, genuine story. State and local organizations can more readily tell you what is at hand in their communities. See the list of Georgia-based LGBT organizations on page 15 of this guide.



Pitfalls to Avoid

Avoid omitting coverage of Georgia’s anti-LGBT laws

Coverage of Georgia and its political progress should make note of its anti-LGBT laws whenever possible. Omitting this information may give the impression that your news outlet is overlooking the safety of LGBT Georgians or condones the state’s anti-LGBT laws.

Avoid minimizing the advancements of the LGBT community in Georgia

While Georgia is not the archetype for LGBT acceptance in the United States, do not ignore the progress and progressive ideas that emerge from Georgia. Highlighting advancements sends hope to LGBT individuals in the state and at large.

Avoid speaking only to anti-LGBT activists about LGBT people

It is hard to hate somebody when you know their story. When the media acts as an unbiased conduit of people’s authentic stories, cultural acceptance is accelerated.

Avoid pitting people of faith against LGBT people

Being a person of faith and an LGBT person are not mutually exclusive. Do not presume or imply people who identify as LGBT are not also people of faith.

Avoid pitting the LGBT community against other marginalized communities

The reality is that LGBT people exist within every community, and LGBT equality does not have to come at the expense of other marginalized groups. Do not ask questions that imply that growing LGBT acceptance or legal protections is a step back for another group. If an anti-LGBT activist makes that claim, challenge it.

Avoid the use of outdated or pejorative terminology

See “Terms to Avoid.”

Story Ideas



Marriage equality is ahead of employment protections

While marriage equality may be the law of the land throughout the United States, it is still legal to fire LGBT workers in Georgia, just for being who they are. In the Peach State, there are no statewide protections against employee discrimination based on either sexual orientation or gender identity.⁴³ In pockets of the state, though, the tide is starting to turn: Atlanta employees have discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as do government employees in Clarke County, Decatur, and Pine Lake.⁴⁴



Explore the experiences of LGBT individuals living with HIV in Georgia

The criminalization of HIV under Georgia Code section 16-5-60 complicates the experiences of members of the LGBT community living with HIV.⁴⁵ For example, the law states that only people who have tested HIV-positive can be convicted under the code, and that people living with HIV must disclose their status before engaging with any sexual partners. This law may consequentially discourage people from getting tested for fear of criminalization or stigma. Tell the stories of people living with HIV in a way that is humanizing and raises awareness about the discrimination that they face.



Explore how faith communities and the LGBT community intersect

Though the media occasionally portrays them in opposition, faith communities and the LGBT community often overlap in positive and interesting ways. Speak with LGBT people about their faith journeys, allies of faith about their journeys to LGBT acceptance, and faith leaders who minister to the LGBT community.



Explore the experiences of LGBT individuals living on military bases in Georgia

The military remains a difficult place for some LGBT people to live their authentic lives. Ask about both the joys and the challenges of serving in the military as an openly LGBT service member.



Focus on the advocacy of LGBT communities of color in Georgia

Much of the coverage and storytelling around the LGBT community in Georgia has centered on the experiences of gay white men. As a result, the experiences and advocacy of communities of color are often underreported. Be sure to celebrate the excellence in LGBT people of color. For example, the LGBT African-American community has played a very strong role in the history of Atlanta and the state at large.



Focus on the activism of the transgender community in Georgia

The transgender community in the U.S. South is prolific in its advocacy, and it is important to highlight both the accomplishments they have brought about and the struggles they still face.



Highlight the stories of groups addressing multifaceted historical challenges in Georgia

Georgia's history is marked by disparities in acceptance of LGBT people in different communities, such as low levels of LGBT acceptance in African American religious communities and racist carding practices targeting people of color in LGBT bars. It is important to highlight the work of people and organizations, such as Black and White Men Together and the National Black Justice Coalition, working to mend these historical inequalities within Georgia's LGBT community.⁴⁶



Explore the experiences of youth affected by anti-LGBT sentiment

Anti-LGBT sentiments in families and communities at large can result in youth living out-of-home, and an estimated 700 youth do so in Atlanta every night. Work with LGBT youth organizations such as Lost-N-Found Youth, JustUsATL, and CHRIS Kids to profile youth affected by these challenges and the lives they construct in response.⁴⁷ Include the influence of anti-LGBT religious practices and how they can lead to LGBT homelessness.



Explore the stories of LGBT people seeking political office in Georgia

Atlanta has a history of LGBT representation in office starting in 1997. However, no LGBT officials have been elected outside the Atlanta metropolitan area or as a state delegate to a national office, so media coverage may help accelerate acceptance in those areas.



Focus on LGBT people outside of metro Atlanta

While many LGBT organizations and events are focused on the Atlanta area, LGBT people and their allies live complex lives with joys and challenges throughout the entire state of Georgia.



Organizations

LGBT Community Centers

The Phillip Rush Center

Shared space for organizations advancing LGBT rights, including Atlanta Pride Committee, as well as Southern Jewish Network on Sexual and Gender Diversity (SOJOURN).

1530 DeKalb Avenue NE, Suite A
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(678) 362-4084
info@rushcenteratl.org
rushcenteratl.org

LGBT Organizations

Georgia Equality

Advocates for LGBT-friendly policy and policymakers.
The Rush Center, 1530 DeKalb Avenue NE, Suite A
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(404) 523-3070
geinfo@georgiaequality.org
georgiaequality.org

The Health Initiative

Improves healthcare access for local LGBT people.
The Rush Center, 1530 DeKalb Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(404) 688-2524
info@thehealthinitiative.org
thehealthinitiative.org

In the Life Atlanta

Education and advocacy group for Atlanta's LGBTQIA community of African descent.
1530 DeKalb Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(678) 964-4852
inthelifeatlanta@gmail.com
inthelifeatlanta.org

Just Us ATL

Support space for LGBTQIQA youth.
The Rush Center
1530 DeKalb Avenue NE, Suite A
(470) 399-2028
contactus@justusatl.org
justusatl.org

PFLAG Atlanta

Advocacy group including parents, friends, allies, and LGBT Georgians.
2484 Briarcliff Rd. NE Suite 22-252
Atlanta, Georgia 30329
(678) 561-7354
www.pflagatl.org

Georgia Safe Schools Coalition

Works to promote safe schools for LGBT youth.
2484 Briarcliff Rd. NE Suite 22-252
Atlanta, Georgia 30329
(678) 561-7354
info@georgiasafeschoolscoalition.org
www.georgiasafeschoolscoalition.org

SAGE Atlanta

Advocates for LGBT elders in Georgia.
1530 DeKalb Avenue NE, Suite A
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(404) 688-2524 ext. 116
info@sageatl.org
sageatl.org

Lost-N-Found Youth

Helps LGBT youth transition out of homelessness.
2585 Chantilly Dr. NE
Atlanta, GA 30324
(678) 856-7824
lnfy.org

Lambda Legal

Southern Regional Office

LGBT legal advocacy group.
730 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 1070
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
(404) 897-1880
www.lambdalegal.org

Southerners on New Ground (SONG)

LGBT advocacy community group made up of southerners from all backgrounds.
PO Box 11250
Atlanta, GA 30310
(404) 549-8628
southernersonnewground.org

Transgender Individuals Living Their Truth (TILTT)

Transgender support group.
1530 DeKalb Ave. NE
Atlanta, GA 30307
(678) 754-3506
activetiltt@yahoo.com
tiltt.org

Juxtaposed Center for Transformation

Transgender and non-gender confirming advocacy group.
2360 Green Forrest Drive
Decatur, GA 30032
(678) 591-3481
juxtaposedcenter@bellsouth.net

GLAAD's Assistance

For more information, help, and guidance, please contact GLAAD. We can put you in contact with organizations and spokespeople, and provide resources, facts, and ideas to tell the stories of LGBT people living in the US South.



Zeke Stokes
Vice President of Programs
646-871-8015
zstokes@glaad.org



Ross Murray
Director of Programs,
Global and U.S. South
646-871-8040
rmurray@glaad.org



Alexandra Bolles
Strategist, Global and U.S. South
646-871-8057
abolles@glaad.org

Acknowledgements



For this resource guide, GLAAD partnered with Georgia Equality, which advances fairness, safety, and opportunity for LGBT communities in the state.

Special thanks to GLAAD interns Effy Donovan, Carrie Seigler, Kate Sutton, and Adrianna Redhair for research and writing of this guide.

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Alejandro Lopez
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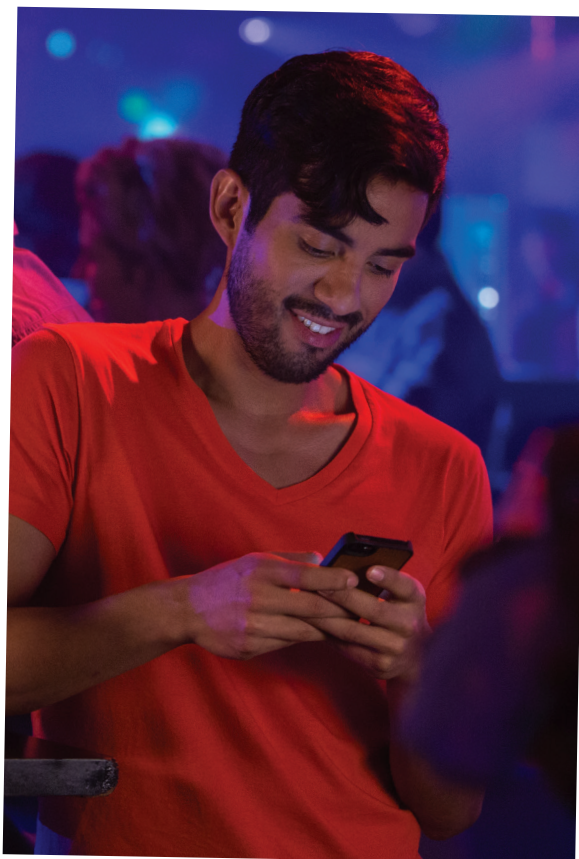
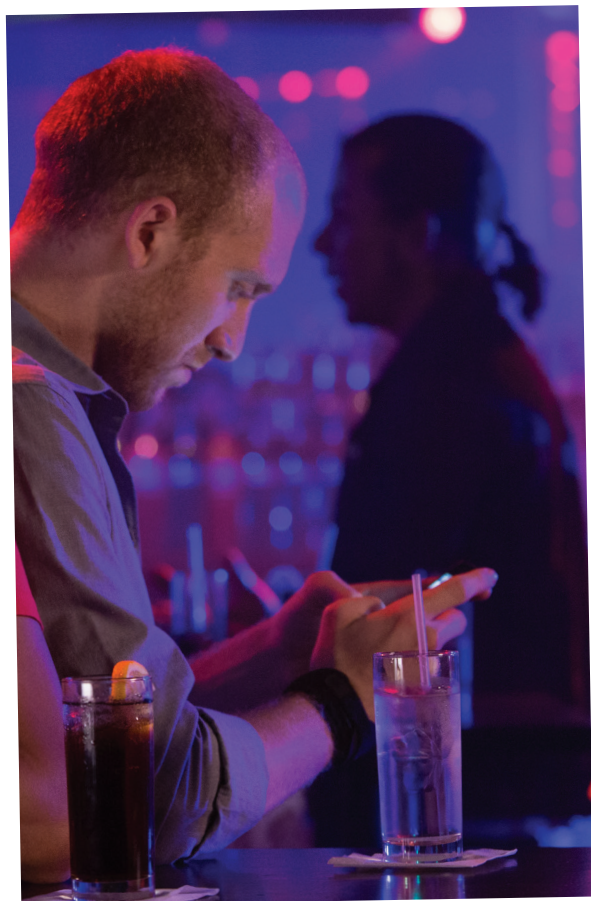
Georgia State University
Linda Ellis
Lost-n-Found Youth
Maressa Pendermon
Pamela Stewart
Terry Guest

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Talk

can be the perfect foreplay.



Protect yourself and your partner. Talk about **testing**, your **status**, **condoms**, and new options like **medicines** that prevent and treat HIV. Get the facts and tips on how to start the conversation at [cdc.gov/ActAgainstAIDS/StartTalking](https://www.cdc.gov/ActAgainstAIDS/StartTalking).

Start Talking. Stop HIV.



Follow us online at:  facebook.com/StartTalkingHIV

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GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBT acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love.

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Americans' attitudes and behavior on LGBT equality are not just influenced by what they see and hear, but who they know. GLAAD's Southern Stories initiative tells the stories of LGBT people and their allies in the South to create a cultural shift towards LGBT acceptance and understanding in the region.

glaad.org/southernstories
[#SouthernStories](https://twitter.com/SouthernStories)