Chris Neff – 'Celebrating the Top 10 LGBTQI Wins'

Moderator: Welcome to the podcast series of *Raising the Bar Sydney*. Raising the Bar in 2016 saw 20 University of Sydney academics take their research out of the lecture theatre and into 20 bars across city, all on one night. In this podcast, you will hear Chris Neff's talk celebrating the top ten LGBTQI wins. Enjoy the talk.

Chris Neff: Hi. Thank you very much Akosh. I'm American so I'm going to keep asking for rounds of applause. Can we have a round of applause for Akosh, because he's done fantastic. Imagine putting up with me for how many weeks were you …? Oh, you want me to put that on. Is it okay? Sorry.

Akosh: Four long months.

Chris Neff: All done. I'm going to look really good in a minute. Okay. Is that on? Good? Yes? Okay. Is that all right? It feels weird. Okay. Anyway, the point is … did you get a thank you?

Akosh: Yes, I got it.

Chris Neff: I can't imagine putting up with me for four months, but he's done it, and I think to a great aplomb. No one knows that word. Okay, similarly, speaking of words you don't know, let's look at the trivia really quickly. Okay. Thank you. What we're going to do, I'm going to do one quick round of it and we're going to collect them. I have a prize. Chris, are you around? Chris Pycrofts? There's nothing that the co convener of the New South Wales Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby needs to be doing right now other than looking at your answers and seeing whether or not you've won the prize, which is, let's look. Oh, okay. If you were going to be at a queer talk, this is the prize for the thing. Okay? You've got to think about this seriously, okay? Are we seriously?

Serious, okay. Number one. This Oscar winner who sent someone else up to accept his Oscar on his behalf, which was an indigenous Native American in 1978, 1979, to accept his Oscar and talk about the plight of indigenous Americans, had a reported affair with Laurence Olivier and there's a picture of Laurence Olivier, with his first wife, which I put there.

Number two; Joan Crawford had a reported lesbian encounter with what many times married actress? She was also married to my former boss, who just recently endorsed Hillary Clinton for President. Sorry, just noting that for the record. It's a simple fact; it's just a fact. So who's the actress, the legendary actress of Hollywood who you think of … do you need one? Did you give me yours? Who you think of was married the most times? Okay I'm not giving you any more hints. This former US President, it's not Ronald Regan, lead the largest inquiry into homosexual conduct in the history of the Navy.

Number four; this ancient Roman general was made fun of for reportedly being a bottom. Does everyone know what 'reportedly being a bottom' is? On this side of Oxford Street they do.

There's a picture of the Roman person there on the thing.

Number five; this queer person was Headmaster at a large boarding school near Hogsmead Village. If you don't know the answer to this question, you should be on Netflix more often. This openly gay English author and playwright, okay this is the most famous openly gay English author and playwright in history, the most openly gay, the most famous openly gay English author and playwright in history, had tea with openly gay American writer Walt Whitman. Which is quite an interesting fact, if you think about it. If you think about who that person was, and think about them having tea with Walt Whitman, that's quite an interesting fact. Sorry. Isn't that interesting? They sat down and had tea. It's not a euphemism, they had tea.

Audience: Was he British or English?

Chris Neff: English. Yeah. Umm Seven; Chris, the speaker tonight, that's me, was pen pals with what late queer American author who wrote the first, that should say, openly gay book, the first openly gay novel, which was called *The City in The Pillar* in 1948, does anyone know? Don't tell, don't say it.

Audience: … about your previous question, it is British, not English.

Chris Neff: Is it British? Okay, I was ...I plead American. Okay *City in The Pillar*, 1948. This person, so I called this person … sorry, I emailed this person … sorry, this was before email. I faxed this person a message to see, it was about people who were in World War II who were queer. I faxed this person and the person faxed back. We started corresponding and became fax buddies and then I'm at the office one day, and he calls. I was like, "I'm really busy right now," and then … does everyone know who this person is?

Audience: He read Burr.

Chris Neff: Aaron Burr?

Audience: Yeah that's him.

Chris Neff: Okay. He did, that's correct. So then they put it onto the loudspeaker, they're like, "Chris, blank is on line two for you." I was like, "Okay." Then I answered the phone, I was like, "Hello?"

Number eight; the person was the first openly homosexual member of the parliament of Australia, which is?

Audience: Bob Brown.

Chris Neff: Yes. Bob Brown. Yes, Bob Brown.

There's been lots of stuff in the news lately about so and so was the first openly gay Member of Parliament. (6:47) This Australian is partnered with Ellen DeGeneres, I have no idea.

The lesbian activist and support organisation was called The Daughters, and it should be plural, Daughters of blank. The tiebreaker, if you think you've done really well, write at the bottom of this, write at the bottom the first name of the answer of number seven. If you think you're really, really good, then write the first name of number seven, because whatever you wrote down is not the first name. Okay? Yes, got it? Okay. If we could collect the trivia, then we'll get on.

Audience: I did write down his first name.

Chris Neff: Oh, you did? Let me see. Hold on, please, this is important. That's not his first name. No, he has another first name. That's his middle name. Okay. Do you need that? You don't need it? Okay so here's how tonight works. I'm going to put the little guy; do we have a name for him?

Audience: Chris.

Chris Neff: Chris? No, that's a terrible name. No.

Audience: Rob.

Chris Neff: Bob? That's worse.

Audience: Neville.

Chris Neff: Neville? Is that the British person? We'll have the Rainbow Bear; we can call him Rainbow Bear, right there. There's Rainbow Bear. Now, down here, this is the most interactive Raise the Bar that we've had tonight. It's also at the largest venue of any of the 20 bars in Sydney tonight, this event sold out, which is a 160 RSVP's. If I could give you guys a round of applause, and our marketing team a round of applause, did we do a round of applause for marketing? They hung the banner, Karen was up there. I brought the flag and then Karen jumped up and did that.

Okay so here's now tonight works; I'm going to talk about, so, did I mention this previously? I spent the last 20 years doing LGBT rights in the US; I was the first lobbyist in the country for Don't Ask, Don't Tell, regarding gays and lesbians in the military. I started the first gay lobbying association in the United States. My mentor was Frank Kameny, who was the father of the gay rights movement in the US, who did the first march in 1960. First march on Washington, which was originally run in Philadelphia. I worked on lifting the ban on trans in the military for the last four years. That's what I've done; I've done eleven years on Don't Ask, Don't Tell, four years on trans in the military. I ran the largest non-profit in Vermont while we worked on the marriage debate and we won, the first state in the history of the United States to win legislatively on marriage equality. That was an amazing group.

There were 1200 youth at the queer youth centre; at the queer youth centre and 40% of them were gender non-conforming, or trans. It was an amazing group. They won marriage, I didn't do anything. So I've got ten things here, none of those things are on any of the ten. So what I'd like to do is ask someone to pick number ten. How's this for drama? It's written down inside the card what the thing is, and then I'm going to talk about it.

But before I do, so they're all … we've got ten envelopes, with ten things and you're each going to pick a thing. I am that American, I'm terminally American so you just need to prepare yourself for how American I am. I violate the fourth wall, I walk around. It's terribly like; I'm actually friendly, like legitimately helpful. I'm not picking your pocket, I'm just saying hi but here's the question.

So this is about victories, and the first question has to be what counts as a victory? What is a victory? How would you begin … if you're going to look at the top ten victories of the LGBTQI rights movement, what is a victory? I thought about it. Is it a law? No, there's lots of countries that have passed laws that are really crap. Do you know what I mean? There's lots of laws that are passed that don't, I mean, women's rights can tell us this. I mean the women's rights movement is a great example of a case where laws are not the answer to the problem, solely. They do help, but the radical feminist in me says they're not the only answer. Is it culture? Yeah, culture certainly, having a cultural victory does play it's part, but 'Will and Grace', you can't worship at the alter of 'Will and Grace' forever, you know what I mean? People age, half of these people are like, "What's 'Will and Grace'?"

I'm down on my knees, I can't even … it's very early already. People are like, "What is 'Will and Grace'?" I'm like, "Oh, dear god." There is a fundamental question of what does a victory mean. For me, I had to define what is the victory if I'm going to pick ten things that match up to that. This is what I said. Laws are not enough, culture is not enough; victories can come cheap these days if you don't acknowledge the work that got them to that point. The first thing I would say with acknowledging any of the victories … so I'm writing a book right now on queer lobbying and the first thing you know when you look at queer rights lobbying, is that it's a story of the people who aren't here. It's not a story of the people who are here. So for anything that we talk about, for any of the things that we've done, if you think about people who were lost primarily during the HIV/AIDS crisis, the first AIDS case, '79, '80. Anti-retrovirals came out in '95, '96.

That's a long period of time to go from 1979 to 1996. That's a generation of people who were lost. Those were all of the leaders; all of the people come during that time. There's an enormous amount of things that happen, so I just want to acknowledge that these victories are a story of the people who aren't here. Indeed, I couldn't have looked … I could have looked at the movement from the homophile movement, which is what it was called from the 1950s, 1960s. It was called the homophile movement. From 1950 to 1969, the Gay Liberation Movement. I talked to Dennis Altman about tonight's talk and he gave me a few suggestions, which I appreciated. He gave me a lot of suggestions, being because he's Dennis and I love him. He used to be in my department, the Department of Government in the University of Sydney. I could have looked at it from the Gay Liberation Movement, or from 1969 to the contemporary Civil Rights movement.

Rather I look … but I don't do that. We could have done all of these things, but I didn't do any of these things. Rather, I look at the focal events or focal people's actions that shook what's called the emotional habitus of the LGBTI movement around the world. Not necessarily at the same time, but ultimately changed the trajectory of the movement as a whole in an interconnected way. So what events or what people's actions at the time that they did them, for the cost that it took to them, what thing did they do or what action took place that fundamentally changed the trajectory of the queer civil rights movement?

That's the question. That's what victory is in my opinion. It may not be the end thing, it may not be culture plus legislation, but if it fundamentally changes the trajectory of the movement from anti gay to pro gay, or to more pro queer, right, then that I think, for any civil rights organisation, whether you're doing racial justice, environmental justice, whether you're doing women's rights, whatever you're doing all you can hope to do is get better.

I think that those trajectories are the real question, and I think there are ten moments in time that have altered the trajectory of our movement. Who would like to start with number ten? Is that sufficiently dramatic enough? Emily? Could you take the … Emily's in my class, Emotions and Public Policy. Don't let her trip on anything. Okay.

Emily: I'm not that broke yet.

Chris Neff: Okay. That's number ten.

Emily: Okay.

Chris Neff: Open it, it's fine. There's a thing inside. What's it say?

Emily: (16:31) controversial.

Chris Neff: It is, I said I was going to be controversial.

Emily: The plebiscite.

Chris Neff: The plebiscite.

Audience: Boo, boo.

Chris Neff: Yeah, exactly. I'm arguing that the victory to defeat the plebiscite is the change. I sat through America, I worked in the United States, like I mentioned. Do you know how many referendums; state constitutional referendums were passed to ban same sex marriage?

Audience: Twenty.

Chris Neff: There were 20. I sat through twenty. I was the co founder of the Equality Federation, which is the federation of LGBT statewide organisations. I was president of the DC LGBT group, which was founded by Frank Kameny in 1972, making it the oldest gay and lesbian, queer organisation in the United States. I'm working with them and side note; you know how that was founded? Frank was the first openly gay person to run for Congress in 1971, 1971, so 45 years ago. Forty-five years ago, and after he ran, he lost. He came in fourth. You know who sent him a letter? This is a note to the allies in the room. Do you know who sent him a letter with $2,000 in it and said, "You should take your volunteer list from your campaign for Congress and turn it into an organisation," which is today the oldest queer organisation in the United States.

Do you know how sent him the letter? Paul Newman. Paul Newman sent Frank $2,000. Like what a great … a) his dressing is amazing; b) all of his causes, whether it was for cancer, whether it was for adoption, whatever it was for, for queer rights, were amazing. And in 1971 he sends $2,000 to Frank who since turned it in to the thing and it's around today. My point is these things really do go for a long time.

Number ten is the plebiscite. This is my point. This victory against negotiating the acceptability of our identity, that is something that is not debatable, not debaseable, and using our own identity against us to discriminate against LGBTI Australians for the purpose of subjugation, shame, and political opportunity but Australia stopped the plebiscite. I know this town hasn't voted yet, and I can I note, Chris Pycroft is here and Chris was, like I mentioned, he's the co convener of the lobby and he did a great job on stopping the plebiscite, so have a number of you.

Sally Rug, where's Sally? Is that you right there? Did I step on you? Congratulations. These were two young achievers of the honour awards right there. No one else did it. No one else has said that we will … “Stop; we will not negotiate the quality of our lives for political purposes”. There are very, very, very few. We had 20 losses in the US; we had two wins but no one who took it off the ballot at the federal level. It's really important to note that. I think what Australia has done in rejecting the plebiscite, and Chris Kenney can listen to my podcast and learn something … Mark Kenney? Oh, sorry. See, he's not even a Chris. There we go. I think that what you've done on the plebiscite is the tenth most important thing in the history of the LGBTI movement, so you should all pat yourselves on the back. Tonight's a celebration, so I hope you give yourself a round of applause.

Some of these are quicker than others, but they're all important. Who wants to pick number nine? Sally Rug, would you like to pick number nine? Thank you Sally. Right there, it's got a nine on it. I was kidding, sorry. I'm a total American jerk. No, I know what it is.

Sally Rug: South Africa.

Chris Neff: South Africa. When South Africa did its constitution in 1996, does everyone know this? They wrote non-discrimination. I went to the Australian … sorry the South African Constitution and read it to see how it was talked about. They have a non-discrimination clause on the basis of sexual orientation in the South African Constitution, from 1996. It was sort of this moment of the rainbow nation, this moment where they’re not going to be … LGBT rights and LGBT equality was not going to be the global north versus the global south. It was something that was sort of extraordinary. Sorry, I was spitting a little bit on you guys. That was the first constitution in the world to include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy. There's a second one now, does anyone know? Where? New Zealand? Was that it? I thought it was Sweden. Was it New Zealand? You don't know? You just said it.

Okay well the point is that the first was South Africa in 1996. I think that was from a trajectory point of view, the ninth most important moment in the history of the LGBT rights movement.

Number eight, who wants to do number eight? Can we go from this side? Mark? Does everyone know Mark Smith, who heads up the ally network at the University of Sydney?

Mark Smith: Thank you Chris very much.

Chris Neff: Only for a moment.

Mark Smith: Very cool. Uganda.

Chris Neff: Uganda, absolutely. Now, Uganda is a complicated case because they've done some things recently that they've reintroduced legislation that's hostile to queer Ugandans, but the victory for the north south east west divide was … thank you. Maybe we can get away from that light, it's killing me. I don't have enough hair to be under that light. The victory for the north south east west, it was the Ugandan's kill the gays bill. Remember when this bill passed, and then the supreme court of Uganda declared it unconstitutional? Think about that moment. The kill the gays bill was declared unconstitutional. That is, in Uganda, and I'm not saying that, I'm saying that is a moment of triumph. I think that it sent ripples, and it was at a time, if people remember, there were sort of awful things happening in Russia, and awful things happening in Uganda. Then the Uganda Supreme Court stood up and said, "Stop." The legislature continues to cause problems, but I think what the Supreme Court did, in stopping that, in declaring that kill the gays bill unconstitutional, I think it stopped in terms of where the trajectory could have gone in terms of animosity toward queer rights. I think you've got to give credit both to South Africa, for the constitution, and Uganda's Supreme Court, which I think get left behind in all of the conversations that we have about LGBTI rights and victories in our movement. I would signal those.

Which brings us to number seven. Number seven; do you want to do number seven? You guys have been putting up with me like … Akosh? Can you turn that off please? Turn off the spotlight, please. Or whatever that is. Jesus, are you really that tall? Stop it I thought Mark was ... number seven, this is number seven. You read.

Akosh: Sex.

Chris Neff: Sex. If we can't get a round of applause for sex then we're all screwed. This is the victory, and you saw it in a number of places, but it's the victory for being intimately more legal. Legalising sexual identity, what are the odds of that light turning off? That light there, the one that's melting me? I'm just going to move away from it, we can leave it on. Everyone here understands, thank you very much. See? This is more intimate. Now we can talk about sex. So the repeal of the sodomy laws. What's the first one in Australia? Sen corrected me on this the other day. Sen, do you want to tell us all? You told me, so I'm just giving it back to you.

Audience: South Australia.

Chris Neff: South Australia. Was the year?

Sen: 1975.

Chris Neff: 1975. Then New South Wales, 1984 and then Tasmania, and the famous (26:38) case, '97. Between the time when it was petitioned and then when it was finalised. Do you guys remember this? So it was still … then when it happened in the United States? When did we make sex legal? So sex is … queer sex is illegal in the United States until when?

Luke: Lawrence versus Texas 2003.

Chris Neff: That's correct. Queer sex was illegal in the United States until 2003.

Luke: It remains the statute (27:13).

Chris Neff: All right, I got you. Okay, Luke. That's Luke Menslow. He's very intelligent. Enough of that. This affirmed queer identities in personal and intimate terms that have been used against us. Gay is good, queer sex, so it's not simply that gay is good. That had been the homophile movement analysis, right? Gay is good. This was the decision that queer sex is great sex, that there is something affirmatively great about queer sex and queer identity, and the sex that you have. When you look at the history of queer rights, there's no way to get around the fact that from the identity, the actually performative nature of the sex, was something that was, when they were talking about gays in the military, they'd go down in a submarine and they'd say, "How do you boys, it's quite close quarters down there, isn't it? Do you share barracks together?" They would do a thing and it would be in the papers, and that was the famous picture of the two guys and the thing.

It was a question about sex; the question about peer paedophilia is a thing about sex. It's this fear of queer sex. The legalisation of queer identity and specifically sex is the seventh most important thing that's happened to the queer movement.

Number six, ooh, ooh, who do we got? How are we doing in terms of gender diversity and selection of our things?

Audience: You need a woman.

Chris Neff: I do. Can I ask for a volunteer who is not a male? Yes, please, Kiara come on down. Kiara is wearing a beautiful leopard print shirt and has two children at home. She is a very avid Instagrammer and she takes very beautiful pictures. What we are looking for, Kiara, is number six, which is right there. Oh my god, hold on. You have to pick a prize as well. Each of the people who picked a thing, I was supposed to give you a prize for picking.

So Kiara, you pick one now before any of the rest of them see it. Okay, good. You got a turtle. I'll give them out in a minute. Now, this is number six.

Kiara: Norrie.

Chris Neff: Round of applause for Norrie. I mean, again, on the trajectory … for those who don't know, it's a victory for gender non-binary. There's no such thing as the binary, do we all know this. All the queers know this, or I hope all the queers know this. The binary doesn't actually exist.

So people will say male, female, and that's totally not the beginning or end of what gender is. It's certainly not a binary. I think that the sixth victory is the victory for gender non-binary. In 2014 the High Court of Australia recognised Norrie as gender non-specific. You also have instances of Dutee Chand, from India, Caster Semenya who are intersex, Caster's from South Africa. These cases, and Norrie specifically, have shifted the international consensus about false gender binary and essentialism regarding gender.

I think we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Norrie, to the case that she brought into the work that everyone who's non binary brings to those efforts, because it's these sort of small steps that lead to something enormous. I'd say non-binary is number six.

Number five, how am I doing on time, Akosh?

Akosh: Good.

Chris Neff: Good. Number five. Oh, I got to give out prizes. Mark, you can have the eye. It's weird; it's sort of weird. Who was the … Sally, what do you want? Do you want that one? Okay. Is that good? Who else did we …? Oh, you did. The tall guy. You can have the tallest toy on the thing, the little blue guy. He's really tall though. Did anybody else? My student Emily.

Emily: That's true.

Chris Neff: You can have the weird looking one. You're very normal, there's lots of very normal things about you. Now, that brings us to number five. Let's go ... Emmanuel. Would you mind grabbing number five? I'm taking a liberty to see if you would pick number five for us. Okay, and you get a toy.

Emmanuel: LGBT bars.

Chris Neff: LGBT bars and let me pause for a minute, and I'll say this as I think Pulse Nightclub, in particular, gave us all pause for the role that bars have historically played, that they currently play in terms of safe spaces. There aren't a lot of safe spaces. If they're only legalising sex in 2003, or 1997 in Tasmania or any of these things that are going on in any of these different places, like where do you go that it's safe? Like for you? Where, where else do we go? The bookstore? That's sort of a different kind of identity, in the bookstore right. Your bookstore identity, like my lesbian bookstore identity, like Portlandia or something. What's my queer lesbian bookstore identity? What's another one? The gym, no, that's a different kind of identity and that's probably on mine. You can have a digital identity. Maybe you're on Grindr, maybe that's a thing, or lesbian matchmaker, some other thing. Again, a different thing.

Queer bars have been their own thing for the history of the queer rights movement and Pulse, as a safe space, with the mums bringing their kids to dance, who died. Also, can I just note here for the record, that we often have this conversation about, "It's all digital." Pulse was a Latina nightclub. If you go on half of these apps, it's white only, no Asians. No mask for mask. Where do these people go? You know where they go, they go to clubs. People of colour go to clubs.

People who are otherwise shunned from what is a majoritarian white male cisgendered. It's certainly masculine hegemony, but an aesthetic that doesn't appeal. Those people go to bars. I don't want to for a moment either be like, "Bars are so ..." They're only so 2005 if you're white. That's the white answer, is that the bars are so 2005.

No. Because digital racism and sexual racism still exists. Then if you go 20 years before that, when everyone sort of went to bars together, they were used as organising points. They fundamentally changed the movement. They created the first safe spaces, they fundamentally changed the movement, they made everything else possible and I'm proud to be in a queer bar tonight, I made it a condition of my participation that it had to be a queer bar and if I can give my hats off to Josh and the marketing team, they made sure. This is the first queer bar that Sydney Uni's ever done an event in, ever. I hope we've gotten some photos of what is a fricking packed house, because this is amazing. So that was my number five, was LGBTQI bars.

Number four, oh we're getting close. Are you excited? It's okay, I won't bite. He's terrified of me. Number four, good job, Emmanuel, by the way. Number four, one of our market … who wants to do it? Someone who doesn't know me? Is there a heterosexual in the house? We could have a heterosexual person, would you like to come? Come, heterosexual. That's how radical we are; we are so out there that we are clapping. Please, if you would, the number four. What toy? This is possibly the most important decision. Don't forget your ...

Audience: Number four. Act Up.

Chris Neff: Act Up. Five Eighths. Fight back. Thank you very much, that's perfect. That's perfect. Number four is the victory for healthcare for the LGBTQI community. Healthcare didn't exist for queer people, it didn't exist. It didn't exist; it wasn't something … like women can tell you this, because women's health care didn't exist for the previous 50 years either. LGBTI health care came from women's health care, because there was a movement where women taught queer people that the experience was based on your lived experience, not based on what the doctor said. If you had AIDS, and you went to the doctor and said, "There's something wrong with me," and they said, "No there isn't, I can't find it." When did we start talking about AIDS as AIDS? 1986? It's GRID for the first four years, right?

Kaposi sarcoma, it's the gay cancer. Then it's GRID, then it's AIDS. If you're queer, and HIV positive, or anything, and you go to the doctor, that's why we've still got a long way to go in terms of prep and other things but the beginning was discovering that we as queer people had an identity that was valid in the doctor's office, and it was something that we learned from the women's rights movement which had been taught forever, that women just should listen to the doctor and they'll tell them what's wrong with them. So a generation of women got cancer, and died, or had other illnesses and died, because they didn't speak up or because the doctor's office was a hostile environment. The women's rights movement and a lesbian movement educates a lot of queer men who have HIV/AIDS. It establishes LGBT health care. Act Up's push for HIV/AIDS to gain antiviral availability in 1996, which is still tragically … I've watched six documentaries on HIV/AIDS this semester, and all of them say that the scariest part of it was 1991 and '95, that people thought AZT worked. There was a myth, AZT never worked. AZT didn't work.

People had started on AZT, and everybody died. Everybody died, most of the people who died who had HIV/AIDS, then everybody died on AZT. Then they realised in 1991 that none of the drugs worked and they had to start over. They had just done a decade and lost everyone, and now it's 1991 and they're at zero. This health care thing became a really big deal when everyone's dead. I just want to end by saying it also lead to the re-conception of the LGBTI movement, and what responsibility we had with governments around the world, and pharmaceutical companies around the world to treat us as citizens with an illness. Part of that trajectory change was also that the failure of governments to provide pharmaceuticals that would work. To treat us as human beings, to provide adequate medical care to us fundamentally changed. It didn't exist, it wasn't thing.

It wasn't like in 1989, “You're gay, and I'm going to treat you like a normal human. The sex you have is illegal, you've got GRID, you're going to die, as if there's any sort of government responsibility here, was you did this to yourself”. I mean that’s a fight we're still having with PREP, it's what you do to yourself. It's not what we do to ourselves. People have sex. This was a big one. I saw it right there, it was number seven. Having sex was number seven, and now we're on health care and that's number four. So I think that discovering and championing and changing the fundamental trajectory of LGBT health care is the fourth major victory of our movement. In many ways, I credit Act Up for changing the way our relationship happened with the government.

Okay number three. Who's got number three? Number three? Elena. Elena has a fantastic serve, a wonderful backhand, and Elena's got number three. Don't forget your toy, because I keep not giving them out. They're all weird looking. What do people think number three's going to be? We're at three, there's only three left. Three things, you've got a vibe now for how I think.

Five minutes? Okay. We'll keep moving. What do we think? What do we think? Yes?

Audience: Taking it out of the DSM.

Chris Neff: Taking it out of the DSM. Anything else? Let's see.

Elena: APA decision.

Chris Neff: The APA decision. Taking it out of the DSM is correct. That's exactly what it was. Excuse me. Thank you, Elena. A victory for mental health and public stigmatisation with reform of the APA, American Psychological Association decision, in 1974. This is the famous meeting where Frank Kameny and Barbara Giddings, so Frank was my mentor and Barbara Giddings, who, if on the bottom of your sheets, the last answer to the question, she was the head of the Daughters of Bolides. Bolides? Bolides. Oregano? Oregano.

So number three is the victory for mental health and public stigmatisation, reform of the APA decision. In the 1990 WHO decision, queer people went from mentally ill, sick on Monday, to just queer on Tuesday. This changed everything for LGBT people around the world. The DSM depathologised sexuality, and it's not all the way there for trans folk, but it does depathologise sexuality. It doesn't consider it a paraphilia anymore, don't worry about it, and there continues to be progress with transgender folk.

It needs to keep on keeping on, but the DSM is correct.

Next, number two. Number two, who's got number two? Can another PhD student at Sydney Uni …?

Rosie: Graduate.

Chris Neff: Graduate. Doctor. Doctor Hancock, thank you. Rosie, for those who ...

Rosie: The Stonewall riots.

Chris Neff: The Stonewall riots as our number two victory against police harassment. This is from assimilation to liberation. Who threw the second bottle at Stonewall? That's the question. That's the question. I don't want to know who threw the first bottle; I want to know who threw the second bottle at the Stonewall riot in 1969. Who? Anybody know? Who knows who Dean Spade is? Dean Spade? Sen, you're not allowed to answer. Am I still sweaty? Can you change that in posts? So Dean Spade runs a group called the Sylvia Rivera Law Project in New York. Sylvia Rivera is a trans woman who threw the second bottle at Stonewall and pushed the movement forward in the fight. Think about it, think about being at Stonewall. Stonewall goes for three days, for three days they fight the police. They've been beaten up by the police, and again, I'm sorry, I'm going to pick on you, straight, white, gay men like me, you weren't out there. It was not you.

It was Sylvia Rivera, a queer trans prostitute who is throwing the second bottle at the police at Stonewall. Has everything to lose, and does it anyway, stands her ground and goes and helps lead the riot. In 1973, at the Washington Square Park Pride Festival, the first of the pride parades that was calm in New York, Sylvia Rivera goes to get on stage. Do you know what happens? She gets thrown off stage. She gets thrown off stage. Vito Russo, does anyone know who Vito Russo? Vito Russo wrote 'The Celluloid Closet'. Vito Russo was the most famous film archivist in the history of queer cinema. He's hosting the thing, and Sylvia Rivera gets thrown off the stage because it's supposed to be light and fun. It's sort of like that scene from 'Pride' the movie, this needs to be like, "It's a celebration, it's a Mardi Gras."

Sylvia Rivera's like, "I've been homeless and fired from my job, and just got thrown off the stage. You wouldn't have Stonewall if I hadn't thrown the fricking bottle, so what are you doing?" There was this crystallised moment where the movement, and I think Sylvia Rivera specifically, really helped note what disruption means. You've got two choices in life, right? You're either reproducing a system of oppression that oppress you, right? (48:10), right? What am I going to say, Emily? You're either reproducing a system of oppression, or you're disrupting a system of oppression. Those are your two choices, that's what you got. Sylvia is the epitome of disrupting a system of oppression. I think the Stonewall riots, for the riot, who was rioting, I think it should be noted in the history books and I think for the history of our movement, the trajectory, I think it is the second most important moment in the history of the LGBTI movement.

Number one, who's got number one? Who have we got? Who's here?

Audience: You should do it.

Chris Neff: I should do it? All right. Do I get a toy? Oh, it's a little monkey thing.

Okay. Number one. Who's that? Bayard Rustin? Bayard Rustin? Anybody know who Bayard Rustin is? The number one, Chris are you kidding me? The number one moment in the history of the queer rights movement, Bayard Rustin, I don't know who that is. A radically intersectional victory for the movement which took two distinct movements and built a bridge of communication between the civil rights movement, the black African American civil rights movement. He was the organiser, convener, of the 1963 march on Washington, the largest civil rights demonstration in American history. The, "I have a dream" speech wasn't organised by Martin Luther King. It was organised by an openly gay Quaker socialist communist pacifist Baird Rustin.

The African American openly gay organiser of the largest civil rights event in the history of the United States, which lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. It linked the African American community with the queer community forever. Coretta Scott King, Martin Luther King Jr.'s widow, said this. Let me find it. Let Coretta Scott King to be a champion of LGBT rights knowing that her husband said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." She spoke in favour of LGBT rights for years, for decades after Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. Coretta Scott King leads this movement, unites these two. When we talk about … it is impossible to talk about the trajectory of the LGBT rights movement and not to note what people of colour have done for us throughout the movement. What people who are intersex have done, what the trans community has done. What poor people have done, what prostitutes have done. What everyone has done, so that when we look at this, what Australia has done. What define a plebiscite means, what it really means in the history of these ten trajectories.

And so as we wrap up tonight, I just want to say again that it is a colourful tapestry of people of colour, of communities that have been marginalised, that have lead us to this point, and Bayard Rustin is the number one moment and the number one person of action, I think, in the history of the LGBT rights movement. Thank you all very much.

Moderator: Thank you for listening to the podcast series of *Raising the Bar Sydney*. If you want to hear more Raising the Bar talks, head to raisingthebarsydney.com.au.

End of Recording.