

# **BLACK LGBTQ+ FIGURES, ICONS & INSPIRATIONS**

**BY AKIRA HOLLAND**

The gay rights and Black civil rights movements have long been intertwined. In fact, many refer to the LGBTQ+ movement's beginning, the rebellion against the police at the Stonewall Inn, as being predominantly instigated by queer and trans youth of colour. However, people of colour have often been omitted from these stories.

It's important that we recognise and celebrate their contributions, past and present, within the LGBTQ+ community. It's also imperative that we also look how we increase ally-ship.



## **BLACK & POC HEROES FROM THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY**

This piece acknowledges and celebrates the historic contributions that Black LGBTQ+ individuals have made throughout history, paving the way not only for LGBTQ+ PoC but the LGBTQ+ community overall.

Here are just a few of those heroes and their personal stories:



### **FANNYANN EDDY (1974 - 2004)**

FannyAnn Eddy started the Sierra Leone Lesbian & Gay Association in post-civil war Sierra Leone in 2002. FannyAnn was a proud and resilient woman who couldn't fathom the rebuild of Sierra Leone without the rights and freedoms of all of their citizens. She was brutally murdered in 2004 as a result of her activism.

### **ALICIA GARZA (1981 - PRESENT)**

Alicia Garza is an American civil rights activist, writer and freedom dreamer. She continues to lead the fight against police brutality, anti-racism and violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people of colour.



### **BISI ALIMI (1975 - PRESENT)**

In 2004 Alimi became the first Nigerian to openly declare his sexuality on national television. Shortly after this, he moved to live in the UK, where he has been campaigning for gay rights, challenging minds through his poetry and is now one of the founding directors of the Kaleidoscope trust & the Bisi Alimi Foundation.

### **JUSTIN FASHANU (1961 - 1998)**

The first professional footballer to be openly gay, Fashanu played for various English clubs between 1978 – 1997. He was the first Black footballer to command a £1 million transfer fee with his move from Norwich City to Nottingham Forest.



### **JACQUELINE MARGARET KAY (1961 - PRESENT)**

A Scottish poet, novelist and playwright known for her works *Other Lovers* (1993), *Trumpet* (1998) and *Red Dust Road* (2011). Throughout her career Jacqueline has won numerous awards and has held the position of the national poet laureate of Scotland.

### **LINDA BELLOS OBE (1950 - PRESENT)**

The first Black woman to join the Spare Rib feminist collective, Linda has been at the heart of grass roots community activism for 30 years and became leader of Lambeth Council in 1985. “I have a strong sense of being Jewish and a strong sense of being African, they are not in competition, all part of me, I also define myself as English, I know English culture. I remember people telling me to go back home, it was lawful until 1968, still people discriminate.”



### **MARC THOMPSON (1969 - PRESENT)**

Marc has been advocating for social justice for over 25 years, working to mentor, educate and remove the stigma around HIV in the LGBTQ+ community. With a big focus on the Black communities, Thompson has worked with numerous organisations and is currently involved with BlackOutUK.

### **FEMI OTITOJU (1958 - PRESENT)**

An LGBTQ+ activist and one of the leading providers of diversity and equalities training in the UK. Femi founded the diversity training consultancy Challenge in 1988, providing training films for organisations like Unilever and Scottish Parliament.





### **MUNROE BERGDORF (1987 - PRESENT)**

Rising to fame after she was dropped from a L'Oreal campaign for speaking out about racism. Munroe is a model and activist who uses her platform to campaign about race, diversity, gender and LGBTQ+ rights.

### **LADY PHYLL (1974 - PRESENT)**

Lady Phyll is the co-founder to Black Pride UK and her incredible activist work has increased visibility and advocacy for Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour (QTIPOC) in the UK and across the world.

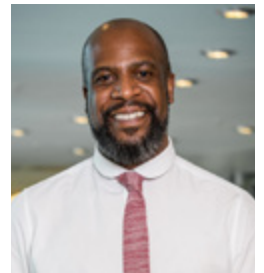


### **MARSHA P. JOHNSON (1945 - 1992)**

A founding member of the Gay Liberation Front, Johnson co-founded the radical activist group Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R). A popular figure in New York's gay and art scene, Johnson modeled for Andy Warhol and she was prominent in the Stonewall uprising in 1969.

### **DR ROB BERKELEY MBE**

Award-winning busybody, recovering academic and reforming social reformer, Dr Rob Berkeley is currently leading the development of BlackOut UK; a non-for profit social enterprise run and owned by a volunteer of collective of Black gay men. Until recently he was a strategic advisor to the BBC on accountability and audience engagement

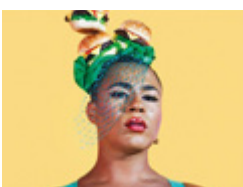


### **GINA YASHERE (1974 - PRESENT)**

A British comedian winning awards and appearing on both British and America TV for a number of years now, most recently appearing in the Mo' Gilligan Documentary 'Black British And Funny' on Channel 4.

### **LAVERNE COX (1972 - PRESENT)**

An American actress and LGBTQ+ advocate; Laverne rose to prominence with her role as Sophia Burset on the Netflix series, Orange is the New Black, becoming the first openly transgender person to nominated for an Emmy Award.



### **TRAVIS ALABANZA (1995 - PRESENT)**

Travis is a writer, theatre maker and performer who for the last four years has been creating performance, writing to archive the existence and experiences of gender non-conforming people of colour.

# BECOMING AN ALLY

Ally-ship is not a single step, it is an ongoing journey. It takes work, self-reflection and making that conscious decision over and over to step up until it becomes embedded in how we behave. Here are some resources to help start your ally-ship journey.

## WHAT TO WATCH



### POSE

A series about Black & Latino LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming ballroom culture of the 80's and 90's. Featuring themes of money, gender, politics, race and sexuality.



### MOONLIGHT

First LGBTQ+ film to win an Oscar for Best Picture, Moonlight follows a young Black man coming of age and grappling with his sexuality.



### ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

This groundbreaking series covering women in a US prison ushered a queer revolution on TV with LGBT and trans characters.



### KIKI

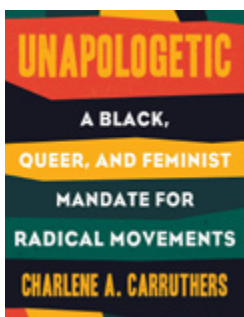
A documentary highlighting the beauty of ballroom, but also examines the injustices experienced within the community, such as homelessness and prejudice in policing.



### THE DEATH & LIFE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON

Victoria Cruz investigates the mysterious 1992 death of Black gay rights activist and Stonewall veteran, Marsha P. Johnson.

## WHAT TO READ



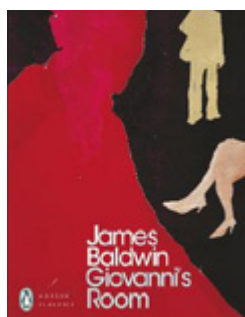
Unapologetic is a framework for how activists can “make the movement for Black liberation more radical, queer and feminist.”



A Year Without You is a poetry book that journeys you through the life of a Black gay man that experiences love, joy, loss and pain.



Black of Both Sides details the intersection of Black and trans identities from the mid-19th century to today.



Giovanni's Room is an acclaimed novel bringing complex representation of homosexuality and bisexuality.



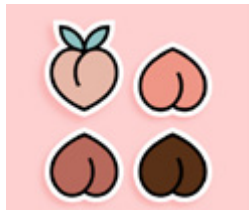
An anthology of essays analyzing the triumphs and limitations of representation of transgender people in pop culture/

# WHAT TO LISTEN TO



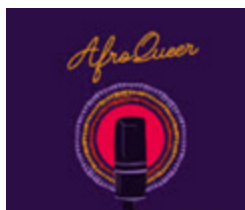
## **BLACK RADICAL QUEER**

A podcast which explores the intersection of blackness and queerness. Hosted by Jhavia Nicole.



## **FOOD 4 THOT**

A roundtable discussion podcast wherein a multiracial mix of queer writers talk sex, relationships, race and identity.



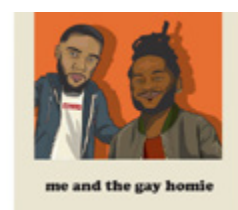
## **AFROQUEER**

A podcast about queer Africans living, loving, surviving and thriving on the African continent and in the diaspora.



## **THIS QPOC LIFE**

A podcast that looks at the world through the lens of a Queer Person of Colour (POC).



## **ME & THE GAY HOMIE**

Me & the Gay Homie is about two homies challenging social norms and homophobia within the (Black)

# BLACK LGBTQ+ ORGANISATIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

## **AFRICAN RAINBOW FAMILY**

This charity supports LGBTIQ people of African heritage and the wider BAME community. It was established in 2014 in the wake of some Commonwealth countries in Africa's draconian anti-gay laws, persecutions and environment that seek to criminalise LGBTQ+ people. They support refugees and people seeking asylum, stand against hate crime and campaign for global LGBTQ+ equality.

## **BLACKOUT UK**

This group was created to recognise the need for Black queer men to have a space to think, shout, show off, curse, celebrate, launch, reflect, share and be heard. They encourage and stimulate debate and discussion online and face to face through their website, writer workshops, networking events, and supporting interventions to meet the needs of Black queer men.

## **BLACK TRANS FOUNDATION**

Axelle Nasah, a Stonewall Young Campaigner, has set up a new community organisation for Black trans people in the UK. The organisation will support Black trans people in areas such as mental health.

## **EXIST LOUDLY**

This is an organisation committed to creating spaces of joy and community for queer Black young people. Their work has included the first-of-its-kind research looking into the lives and experiences of Black LGBT youth in the UK within education, healthcare and the home.