

# LGBT PEOPLE AND HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY



The Nazis persecuted anyone who did not fit in to their ideal, including gay men. This resource sheet will highlight the suffering they experienced under the Nazis, and that lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people still experience today.

It will also include examples of ways you can use Holocaust Memorial Day to remember and honour the LGBT victims of both Nazi Persecution and hate crime today.

Holocaust Memorial Day, on 27 January is a day for everyone to remember the millions murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. On HMD we honour the survivors of these genocides and learn the lessons of their experiences to challenge hatred and discrimination in the UK today.

Nazi conceptions of race, gender and eugenics shaped the Nazi regime's hostility to homosexuality. Within days of Hitler becoming Chancellor repression against gay men and lesbians commenced. Unknown numbers of German gay men and lesbians fled abroad, entered into marriages in order to appear to conform to Nazi ideological norms, and experienced severe psychological trauma. The thriving gay culture in Berlin was lost. Lesbians were not targeted in the same way as gay men but did suffer the same destruction of community networks as gay men.

## Find out more about:

- Nazi persecution of gay people [hmd.org.uk/gay-people](http://hmd.org.uk/gay-people)
- Albrecht Becker, a gay man imprisoned by the Nazis [hmd.org.uk/albrechtbecker](http://hmd.org.uk/albrechtbecker)
- Pierre Seel, who spoke out about Nazi persecution he experienced [hmd.org.uk/pierreseel](http://hmd.org.uk/pierreseel)
- Gad Beck, who despite being Jewish and gay survived in Nazi Berlin [hmd.org.uk/gadbeck](http://hmd.org.uk/gadbeck)
- How HMDT marked LGBT History Month on Pintrest [pinterest.com/hmdtuk](https://pinterest.com/hmdtuk)
- The work of Diversity Role Models [diversityrolemodels.org](http://diversityrolemodels.org)

## If any of the issues discussed in this resource have affected you, here are some helpful links:

- Switchboard – the LGBT+ Helpline [switchboard.lgbt](http://switchboard.lgbt)
- LGBT Helpline Scotland [lgbt-helpline-scotland.org.uk](http://lgbt-helpline-scotland.org.uk)
- LGBT Cymru Helpline & Counselling Service [lgbtcymruhelpline.org.uk](http://lgbtcymruhelpline.org.uk)
- PACE LGBT+ mental health charity [pacehealth.org.uk](http://pacehealth.org.uk)
- Stonewall [stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)

## Rudolf Brazda

Born on 26 June 1913, he grew up in Germany. Brazda was open about his sexuality and was supported by his family.

He was arrested by the Nazis and had to serve a six month prison sentence, before being deported back to Czechoslovakia, where his parents were from.

Brazda was arrested again, in 1941, and forced to serve another 14 month prison term. In August 1942 he was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp and he was forced to wear a pink triangle, identifying him as homosexual. He was subject to forced labour and remained at Buchenwald for 32 months. **It is estimated that the Nazis arrested around 50,000 people and sent between 5,000 – 10,000 people to camps because of their sexuality.**

Buchenwald was liberated by American forces on 11 April 1945. Brazda moved to France, and in the 1950s met his life partner, Edouard Mayer. They were together for nearly 50 years. Brazda did not talk about his experiences until 2008, when he then said:

**'If I finally speak, it's for people to know what we, homosexuals, had to endure in Hitler's days... it shouldn't happen again.'**

Rudolf Brazda died in 2011, at the age of 98.



Today in the UK, legislation protects the rights of gay men and women. However, prejudice still exists.

## Arif Adam

I'd always been a bit different from the other boys in my secondary school in East London. I was more into pop music and hanging out with the girls than playing football and smoking behind the bike sheds. This seemed to cause a lot of frustration among some of the boys who couldn't understand the person I was.

The bullying started in Year 7. Shouts of 'poof', 'batty man', 'gay boy' would follow me down the corridors. It then evolved into physical abuse, punches, slaps and kicks. I stood up for myself, but to no avail. The school arranged for me to leave lessons five minutes early, so I could get to my next lesson in peace.

This didn't deal with the issue, which is why, years later, as a confident and happy adult, **I'm proud to work at Diversity Role Models, so that we can counter this homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and give young people positive LGBT role models.**



## Diversity Role Models explain more about the work they do

“LGBT rights have advanced significantly in the last few decades with several pieces of legislation introduced in recent years to enshrine equality in law. Our experience in schools highlights that these changes are being reflected in the attitudes and views of young people. Much of their feedback from our sessions focuses on how they will help to challenge LGBT prejudice and not use some of the derogatory language that is so common in UK schools. One Year 9 pupil wrote after the session, **‘treat LGBT people with kindness and respect and make sure our opinions don't harm others’**. With positive media coverage of LGBT people becoming more common alongside a greater willingness from schools to discuss issues, there is much to be hopeful about.

When we ask young people if they think someone who is LGBT would feel comfortable coming out at school, approximately 90% say no. They tell us that someone who is LGBT would fear being bullied, insulted and isolated. So they stay hidden, and for many of them this has a devastating impact on their self-esteem, confidence and mental health. It affects their academic achievement too with many reporting that they avoid school where possible. In the most tragic cases, it can lead to self-harm and suicide. It is for these reasons that further campaigning for LGBT equality is vital. Schools, and society more widely, have a responsibility to keep young people safe and ensure they can reach their full potential.



We work with many amazing schools who are doing incredible work in ensuring all their young people are celebrated. Their commitment has a remarkable impact on the attitudes of their pupils and the wider school environment. Our vision is for all young people in the UK to **feel free to express themselves, valued for their uniqueness and take responsibility for their environment**. We need to support the next generation to create a society where this is possible.”

As the example of Arif Adam shows, the end of the Holocaust did not bring about the end of persecution, suffering and prejudice towards LGBT people. The timeline on the next page shows key dates in the struggle for equality.

## Germany

1871 - Paragraph 175 was introduced to the German Empire, making homosexuality illegal.

1933 - The Nazis came to power and revised Paragraph 175 making more acts illegal.

1933-1945 - An estimated 50,000 people were imprisoned by the Nazis for their sexuality, with around 5-10,000 of these being sent to concentration camps where they were treated very harshly; only 40% survived the camps.

1945 - Even after the Nazis had been defeated, Paragraph 175 was not repealed, meaning it was still illegal to be homosexual in Germany.

Some homosexual concentration camp survivors were taken to prison to complete their two-year sentences.

1968/69 - Homosexuals in East and West Germany would no longer be prosecuted. Some of those who had been persecuted by the Nazis began to share their stories.

2001 - Same-sex couples can register life partnerships. Gay marriage has not yet been introduced.

2008 - A memorial to the homosexual victims of the Nazis is opened in Berlin.



## The United Kingdom

1885: The offence of 'gross indecency' is introduced in the UK, with a punishment of up to two years in prison, enabling the police to prosecute men for homosexual sex much more easily.

1967 - The Sexual Offences Act decriminalised homosexual acts between two men over 21 years of age in England and Wales. In Scotland they were not decriminalised until 1980.

1988 - Section 28 is enacted, stating that a local authority should not 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. This was later repealed in 2003.

2000 - Gay and lesbian people are allowed to serve in the British armed forces openly. The age of consent for gay and lesbian people in England, Wales and Scotland is reduced from 18 to 16.

2002 - The Adoption and Children Act 2002 allows same sex couples to adopt in England and Wales.

2004 - The Civil Partnerships Act is introduced, granting civil partnerships for same-sex couples across the whole of the UK.

2010 - Equality Act 2010 is passed consolidating all previous discrimination law and making gender reassignment a protected characteristic.

2014 - Separate legislation legalising same sex marriage in England, Scotland and Wales came in to effect in March 2014.

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020



## LGBT ACTIVITIES ON HMD 2015

Many groups across the UK showed their support for LGBT communities on HMD by remembering the Nazi persecution of gay men. Here are a few examples of the many inspiring LGBT focused activities from HMD 2015.

### CADAS, Barrow-in-Furness

CADAS created a display about the persecution of homosexual, bisexual & transgender men, and other victims of Nazi Persecution.

### Metropolitan Church, Manchester

During the service of worship, the congregation brought to mind the large number of LGBT lives that were considered 'lives unworthy of life'.

### The Rainbow Project, Belfast

In conjunction with the Red Barn Gallery in Belfast, The Rainbow Project held a screening of the film *Bent*.

### Rotherham Council and Rotherham Integrated Youth Support Services

Young people from across Rotherham marked HMD by using their circus and performance skills. Songs and readings were performed to highlight that, today, the lives of LGBT people (and those with learning difficulties) may continue to be marginalised.

### The Armistead Centre, Liverpool

A LGBT youth group held an art competition to highlight Nazi persecution of gay men.

### LGBT and Friends Society, University of Essex

The LGBT and Friends Society at the University of Essex hosted a special film screening of the harrowing US documentary about Nazi persecution of gay men and lesbians, *Paragraph 175*.

### Museum of Liverpool, Liverpool

Working in collaboration with Homotopia, a local arts and social justice organisation, the Museum of Liverpool screened the film *Pink Triangle*. The film showcases the experiences of a LGBT youth group visiting Auschwitz.

### Camden LGBT Forum, London

On behalf of the Camden LGBT Forum, poet Trudy Howston created a living-interactive poem called *Schwule*. The poem depicted the experiences of the LGBT community under the Nazis. Trudy wanted the words of the poem to transmit a sense of remembrance and respect of the past, but also contemporary resolution in societies today.

### Blaenau Gwent Police, Wales

Police services across Gwent learned about the persecution of LGBT people through an article circulated on their website and Facebook page.



@hmd\_uk

[hmd.org.uk](http://hmd.org.uk)



[/hmd.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/hmd.org.uk)