

Visibility (or lack of)

Having decided to go to the event at the Parliament on 10th September to mark 50 years after the Stonewall riots, I was pleased to be asked to be one of the people to pass around the mics for the Q&A sessions. We had two main speakers, Nicola Sturgeon and Sir Stephen Wall. Both gave fascinating talks, and both fully included trans people in what they were saying. This is great but stirred up a few issues for me as a trans person. I was very visible when I transitioned. Now I am not. In many ways it is a privilege to have the relative safety that comes from this. And yet.....is what people see who I am?

This was highlighted after the event when it was discussed that the two mic handlers were not very diverse, being two white men. Yes, we are and yet that is not all I am, and it would be wrong for me to make any assumptions in that regard about my colleague. But that is what the world saw. There is a constant strangeness in that part of my life.

This means I tend to out myself at times. My gender identity is relatively male, but my experience of life is very much non binary. It is certainly not the same as cis men of my age. If I am getting to know people well, then I do mention being trans as my history is part of who I am. But I have also disclosed for safety. That sounds bizarre, doesn't it? Why would it be safer? Well, if it's not known I am trans then I do not have the protection of the Equality Act. I have found times of discrimination when I have realised someone who is a factor in that does know about my trans history and therefore it could be relevant to the problems.

Coincidentally, the day after the parliament event two trans male friends were chatting online about how they are both seen at work as cis allies – and the feelings this stirs up for them. We are at a point when society's attitudes to trans people are becoming increasingly polarised. Sometimes people

need to remember we are not 'freaks', just people getting on with out lives. We can even be the boring, middle-aged white bloke passing round the mic at an event.

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