



What would be your own
“coming out story”?



What does it mean to “come out”?

- A German activist – **Karl Heinrich Ulrichs** was one of the first people to fight internationally for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) rights.
- In 1869 he said that coming out was the most important thing you can do if you are LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans).
- He said it was an act of **liberation** - It made you personally feel free BUT also had massive political implications for other people.

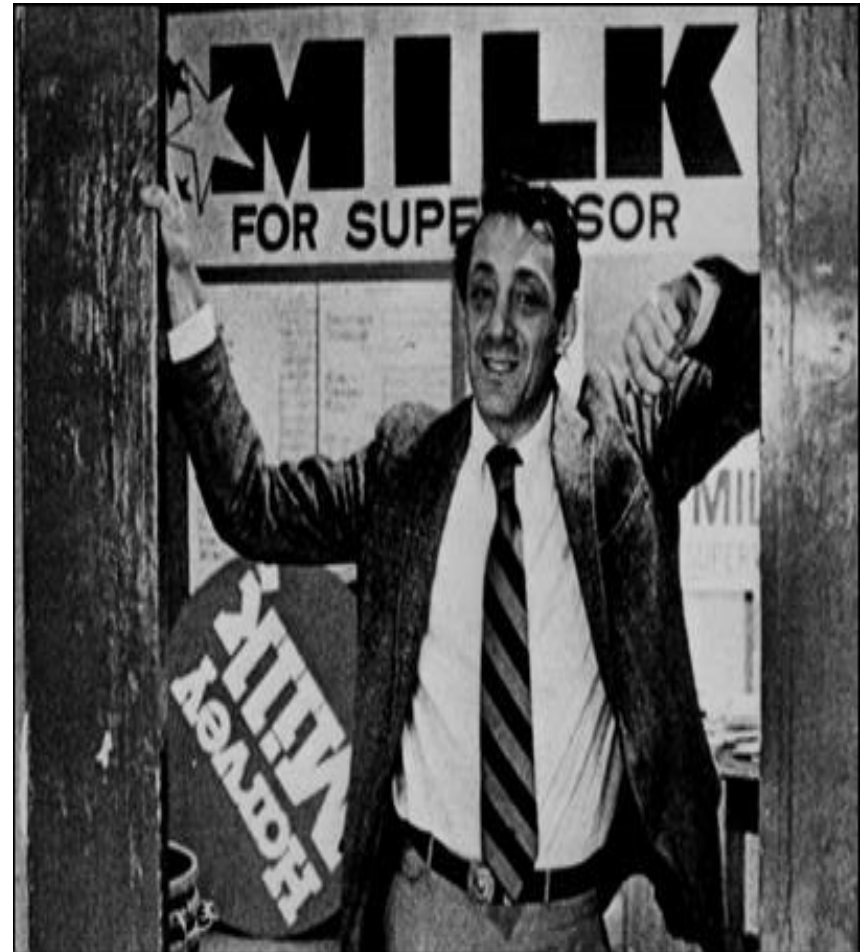
CONSIDER:

- *Today, nearly 150 years on – would he have believed that some people are still not able to “come out”?*
- *In what ways can straight people show **empathy** with the idea of coming out?*



What does it mean to “come out”?

- **Harvey Milk** was an American politician who became the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in San Francisco in 1977. His story was made into the film MILK starring Sean Penn in 2008.
- He was a strong advocate of coming out: "Brothers and sisters you must come out! Come out to your parents; come out to your friends, if indeed they are your friends. Come out to your neighbours, come out to your fellow workers! Once and for all let's break down the myths and destroy the lies and distortions."
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P SjgF3B4-Xw>



How can people “come out”?

- Tell someone face to face.
- Wear a T-Shirt.
- Write them an email or a letter.
- Get someone else to tell them.
- Go on a march.



**Damn
straight
I'm
gay!**

What about tweeting?

- OUT140 is a multimedia project for Norwich Pride (www.norwichpride.org.uk) by community filmmaker Shelly Telly and poet Vince Laws.
- It began life on the giant Fusion screen in the Forum in February 2010 and since then has been in exhibitions across Norfolk and the UK.
- Hundreds of people have told their story in 140 characters so far. *Could your story be next?*





I was 18 & couldn't wait to come out; I'd known I was gay all my life. Yes, I was scared; but nothing scarier than living a lie!

Grandma asked mum if I had a boyfriend. Mum sed I was gay. Gramdma sed has she got a girlfriend then.

Came out to mum first. She was relieved – she thought I'd got someone pregnant.

We were 11. We met ay school. We saw, we knew, we kissed. Love conquered.

Read the coming out stories:

- Which tweets do you like the best?
- Why do you think that they stand out the most? Is it the emotional impact? Because they are funny? Because of the structure?
- How do people manage to fit such a lot into 140 characters? Give examples of shortened words/ phrases.



Do only LGBT people have coming out stories?

- You may have your own coming out story – whether you are LGBT or not.
- How as a straight ally (someone who is supportive of LGBT people) can you show **empathy** and write your own coming out story?
- Have you had to reveal something “big” to a friend/ relative? Were you nervous beforehand? How did you do it? Did it go well?

Have you had to tell someone you are moving away?

Did you ever do something wrong at school?

Have you ever had to break up with someone?

Did you fail a big test?

Want to find out more?

- Norwich Pride is always on the last weekend of July. It's from the LGBT community for everyone. For more info – www.norwichpride.org.uk
- Coming out is not always easy but there are people to help. Blah is a support service for young LGBT people or those questioning their sexuality – www.norfolklgbtproject.co.uk

