An Original EduGuide for

FEARLESS

LGBTQ+ Pioneers That Made It Better
ABOUT THE SERIES

FEARLESS

*Fearless* is an original video series from MSNBC created in collaboration with the It Gets Better Project and ONE Archives ([www.onearchives.org](http://www.onearchives.org)). Each episode highlights an individual who was a trailblazer in the 20th Century LGBTQ+ movement throughout Los Angeles. They discuss the context in which they struggled and thrived, and how they fought (and won) against overwhelming challenges like transphobia in the legal system, police raids on queer nightlife establishments, religious discrimination, and so much more. The series features:

**Reverend Troy Perry** (p. 4)
*Founder of the Metropolitan Community Church*

**Malcolm Boyd** (p. 6)
*Gay rights pioneer, best-selling author, and priest*

**Jewel Thais-Williams** (p. 8)
*Owner of the former Catch One nightclub, the longest running bar for Black LGBTQ+ patrons in Los Angeles*

**Alan Bell** (p. 10)
*Editor of BLK, a monthly publication for the African-American LGBTQ+ community that ran from 1988 to 1994*
Virginia Uribe (p. 12)
Retired Los Angeles teacher and founder of the city’s first dropout prevention program for LGBTQ+ high school students

Mia Yamamoto (p. 14)
Criminal defense attorney and transgender rights champion

Ivy Bottini (p. 16)
Comedian and early National Organization for Women (NOW) activist

Joey Terrill (p. 18)
Los Angeles-based artist and HIV activist

Carolyn Weathers (p. 20)
Author, activist, and co-founder of the lesbian-oriented Clothespin Fever Press

To explore the complete series, visit:
www.itgetsbetter.org/Fearless
ABOUT THIS

EDUGUIDE

This official viewer’s guide for Fearless will walk you through each video in the series and provide you with discussion questions that ask you to think critically about the stories you watch. It’s intended for young adults (YA) ages 14+, or those already in late middle or high school. You can follow this guide on your own, with your fellow GSA members, during family night, or even in a classroom. You can watch and discuss one video at a time, or even watch the series in one sitting. The options are limitless.

To check out more of our original educational materials, visit:
www.itgetsbetter.org/EDU
At the beginning of the video, Reverend Perry said: “I knew I was a Christian again, and I knew that I was gay... and that I could be both.” How did he embrace these two identities? How do you bring together your own differing identities?
2. Reverend Perry realized his mission to create a church with special outreach to the LGBTQ+ community that is open to everybody. How can you make a community you belong to more open to the LGBTQ+ community or other groups?

3. Reverend Perry thinks it’s important for young people to learn about LGBTQ+ history. At one point in the video, he advised that we should all use books and the Internet to search for “the other side of the story.” What do you think he means by that? Have you enjoyed any educational media about the LGBTQ+ community that you can recommend?

4. Reverend Perry is one of the co-founders of the “Oldest Gay Pride Parade in the World,” which started on June 28, 1970 at Christopher Street West in Los Angeles. Either from personal experience or from what you’ve seen in the media, how have Pride protests, marches, and celebrations changed through the years?
EPISODE #2
“GAY RIGHTS PIONEER MALCOLM BOYD’S FINAL INTERVIEW”

Malcolm Boyd
Gay rights pioneer, best-selling author, and priest

https://youtu.be/AWWSiC8tNWA
(4 minutes, 20 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When talking about Los Angeles, Boyd says, “We were all treading this dangerous territory all the time. You couldn’t forget it and you couldn’t forget to play a role. You were on stage.” What do you think he meant by
that? Do you feel like there are roles that society, your family, your friends, etc. expect you to play?

2. What do you think: is “taking a stand” for something, similar to how Boyd did, a necessary part of a “fulfilled” life? Why or why not?

3. Boyd says, “I wanted more meaning in my life. I wanted more depth. I didn’t want to be just another success story.” What did that lead Boyd to do? What does success mean to you?

4. What do you think of Boyd’s advice in the second half of the video on getting a sense of humor? How do you use humor to deal with struggles in your own life? If not humor, what do you turn to to help you with your struggles?
EPISODE #3

“HER CLUB GAVE BLACK LGBT REVELERS THEIR OWN SPACE”

Jewel Thais-Williams
Owner of the former Catch One nightclub, the longest running bar for Black LGBTQ+ patrons in Los Angeles

https://youtu.be/dCqseJrQ3RI

(5 minutes, 52 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Thais-Williams said that The Catch One disco club was a haven for her as she faced the “same thing” as many of the club’s queer patrons. What
“same thing” is she talking about?

2. Thais-Williams said there was one “blessing” that came out of the AIDS crisis. What was this blessing? What makes this blessing bittersweet?

3. The Catch One disco club was a safe space for a lot of queer people, particularly queer people of color. What specifically makes somewhere a safe space for you? Where are the safe spaces in your school or your community?

4. What did Thais-Williams mean when she said, “practice, practice, practice”? 
EPISODE #4

“How Alan Bell’s Stories, Sex Parties and Community Helped”

Alan Bell
Editor of BLK, a monthly publication for the African-American LGBTQ+ community that ran from 1988 to 1994

https://youtu.be/GLkXy7NRLYQ

(6 minutes, 30 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Since the onset of the AIDS crisis, the LGBTQ+ community has sought out innovative ways to stall its progress. How was combining a sex club with safe sex workshops a “practical version of addressing the AIDS crisis,” as
2. *BLK* was the first magazine to run a cover story that featured the best companies for Black gays and lesbians to work for. Why was Bell so proud of this decision? What do you think this action meant for *BLK*’s readers?

3. Bell said, “I suspect that young Black gay and lesbians who feel oppressed [today] probably feel oppressed in similar ways to how they did when I was growing up.” What examples of oppression do many young Black people face today? What examples of oppression do many young LGBTQ+ people face today? How might those examples be compounded when someone is both Black and LGBTQ+?

4. Why is it important to collect and share intersectional stories like Alan Bell’s (i.e. stories that demonstrate the experiences of people with multiple marginalized identities)? What power do those stories hold?
EPISODE #5
“THE TEACHER BEHIND AMERICA’S 1ST LGBT PROGRAM”

Virginia Uribe
*Retired Los Angeles teacher and founder of the city’s first dropout prevention program for LGBTQ+ high school students*

[https://youtu.be/-QFEL5rh4UQ](https://youtu.be/-QFEL5rh4UQ)
(6 minute, 33 seconds)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. In your own words, describe Project 10. Why do you think many LGBTQ+ teachers didn’t want to get involved with the program? What was the
importance of non-LGBTQ+ allies for the project?

2. Uribe says that her LGBTQ+ students’ experiences of “finding themselves” were similar to her own. What are some challenges that young people experience in that process? What challenges do you think exist for self-discovery as an older adult?

3. Uribe equates being able to openly self-identify as LGBTQ+ as being “free.” What do you think she means by that? Why do you think coming out can feel so freeing for so many LGBTQ+ people?

4. Implementing programs that support LGBTQ+ students is one way schools can show create safer and more inclusive spaces for all. Do any such programs or resources exist in your local schools? If so, how could you best support them? If not, how could you help advocate for their implementation?
EPISODE #6

“TRANS LAWYER BUILDS CAREER FIGHTING FOR THE POOR”

Mia Yamamoto
Criminal defense attorney and transgender rights champion

https://youtu.be/Vpr9za63z2w
(7 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way does Yamamoto feel that her experiences earlier in life prepared her for her being a lawyer and out as transgender? Have you had any experiences that have helped you be your most authentic self?
2. Why do you think the judge had such a deeply emotional reaction to Yamamoto’s story? How important do you think it was for Yamamoto’s career to have an ally of such stature?

3. What makes coming out a “constant, ongoing process” for queer people, as Yamamoto says? How might gender, race, socioeconomic status, or other factors influence this process?

4. Yamamoto feels that the experience of being transgender is different today than it was in the past. In what ways might it be different, easier/harder, etc.?
EPISODE #7
“SHE FUSED GAY POLITICS AND COMEDY IN THE 70S”

Ivy Bottini
Comedian and early National Organization for Women (NOW) activist

https://youtu.be/mfihNrBsvTM
(5 minutes, 52 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bottini started a panel called Is Lesbianism a Feminist Issue?. What kinds of conversations do you think arose on this panel? How do you think LGBTQ+ issues and feminism are connected? How do you think they are different?
2. Why do you think Bottini used comedy to address women’s issues and LGBTQ+ topics? What are some ways you’ve seen comedy used for good? Provide at least one specific example.

3. Bottini says her comedy was “consciousness-raising.” What do you think that means? What does raised consciousness have to do with LGBTQ+ inclusion?

4. Keeping the video in mind, what does “equality” mean to you? What would a more equitable world look like from your perspective?
EPISODE #8

“GAY, LATINO, AND HIV+: ACTIVISM THROUGH HIS ART”

Joey Terrill
Los Angeles-based artist and HIV activist

https://youtu.be/SCEtUua0EgY
(7 minutes, 9 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Terrill and his friends chose to make and wear t-shirts displaying the very slurs that were commonly used against queer people at the time. Those t-shirts ended up being a hit among their community. Why do you think that is? What value might people glean from reclaiming words originally
intended to hurt them?

2. Terrill mentions that he and the other queer teens around him in the 80s often discussed whether or not they thought of themselves as mentally ill. Why do you think that was such a prevalent topic of conversation for them at the time?

3. Why do you think Terrill chose to create still-life paintings that included HIV medication? What sort of statement do you think he is trying to make?

4. How important is it for you to see yourself (i.e. the identities and communities you represent) reflected in popular art and media? Do you feel well represented, underrepresented, or over represented in popular art and media today? What might be some of the downfalls of seeing yourself represented in those mediums?
EPISODE #9

“THAT TIME GAY ACTIVISTS TOOK OVER AN ANTI-GAY FILM SCREENING”

Carolyn Weathers
Author, activist, and co-founder of the lesbian-oriented Clothespin Fever Press

https://youtu.be/ebjLijXi9eA
(5 minutes, 47 seconds)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the video, Weathers says that she always felt compelled by a “deep sense of fairness.” What sort of beliefs compel you to act, to try and make a difference for your community?
2. What kind of impact did Weathers’ sister make on her growing up? What about her sister’s actions made them seem “heroic” in Weathers’ eyes? Who do you see as a hero in your own life?

3. Why was it so important to Weathers and the other protesters that they stop the film screening taking place at the Biltmore Hotel? What was the outcome of that protest? If you were to join a protest (or you have already), which cause would you champion and why?

4. How does Weathers answer the question, “What do you think of the state of affairs for young people today?” In what ways do you agree/disagree with her? How would you describe the state of affairs for LGBTQ+ young people today?
Watching is only half the fun! You can also choose one of the following activities to take your learning one step farther. Don’t be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone.

**CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE**

- **CREATE** – Design a self-portrait or create a collage that represents the multitude of identities you embody. Highlight things like your personality traits, your hobbies, your family, and your society. Choose words or symbols that demonstrate how these identities connect you to different communities and highlight what roles you play in them. When complete, share your creation with a friend or family member and have a discussion about what identity and community mean to you.

- **RESEARCH** – In *Fearless*, we heard the stories of some of Los Angeles’ most inspiring LGBTQ+ trailblazers. Your city or town is home to its own inspiring activists, too. Take a trip to your local library or get online to find out more about them. With the help of your teacher or another trusted adult, consider reaching out to one of your local heroes to learn more about their story.

- **PARTICIPATE** – A sense of connection, solidarity, and strength can come from organizing or participating in things that matter to you, like the communities and political issues you care about. Go online and discover
which organizations out there are working with those communities and issues, and find out if there are ways you can get involved. Take to social media to share with your online community what these organizations are doing to make the world better. Make sure to use #ItGetsBetter, and don’t forget to tag any organizations you post about.

★ **SHARE** – Make an It Gets Better video or write your own personal story. Tell the world who you are, why stories like those in Fearless matter to you, and what message of support you’d like to share with an LGBTQ+ young person having a tough time. Submit your video or written story to the It Gets Better Project’s website at [www.itgetsbetter.org/share-your-story](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/share-your-story).
ABOUT THE
IT GETS BETTER PROJECT

This guide was written by education staff at the It Gets Better Project, a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California (USA). The organization uses the power of story - told through online videos (like those in Fearless), films, books, and more - to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

Website:
www.itgetsbetter.org

YouTube:
www.youtube.com/itgetsbetter

Instagram:
www.instagram.com/itgetsbetter

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/itgetsbetterproject

Twitter:
http://twitter.com/ItGetsBetter

Tumblr:
http://itgetsbetterproject.tumblr.com

The It Gets Better Project has also identified over 1,100 organizations in 40+ countries around the world offering support to LGBTQ+ youth. To find a resource near you, go to www.itgetsbetter.org/GetHelp.
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