



CONVICTED FOR LOVE

1 x 60 Testimony Films

To mark the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in private, CONVICTED FOR LOVE tells the dramatic and emotional story of four gay men who fell foul of Britain's homophobic laws. The government's 2017 Turing's Law promises a pardon and an apology for men like these, hounded for their homosexuality. But this film reveals that for many of them, the injustice continues.

Fifty years ago, the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was hailed as a great step forward for gay rights. It gave the impression that it made all homosexuality legal for men. It didn't. It only legalised sex in England and Wales between two men over the age of 21 - in private. It also didn't mark the end of discrimination against gay men. Many aspects of their everyday lives remained illegal.

In the following decades these men have had a long, hard struggle for their rights. Over 15,000 men were unfairly convicted of homosexual offences. Many others were damaged by cruel medical treatments.

In 2017, the government passed the new 'Turing's Law' claiming that it granted pardons and apologies for those convicted of same sex relationships. Yet this film reveals that out of the 15,000 men who were originally convicted under the old homophobic laws, only 113 have so far been granted a pardon. The vast majority of those prosecuted are not eligible and remain with criminal records that has wrecked countless careers and lives.

At the heart of this film are the emotional testimonies of four men who suffered criminal or medical discrimination. They have bravely agreed to share their stories in making this film.

They are part of an older generation of gay men who grew up in a nation where they were CONVICTED FOR LOVE.

CONVICTED FOR LOVE CONTRIBUTORS



TERRY STEWART – NORTHERN IRISH GAY RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER PERSECUTED FOR BEING GAY

Terry was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1953. Belfast was possibly one of the worst places to grow up gay in Britain. Homosexuality remained illegal here until 1982. Terry grew up in a poor Catholic working class family where any talk of homosexuality was taboo. He felt very confused about his sexuality until one day in his late teens, he watched a Whicker's World television programme on gay marriages in San Francisco. He suddenly realised there was hope for him as a young gay man. He moved to London, joined a gay squat in Brixton and became a prominent gay liberation campaigner in the capital.

But Terry's reputation as a militant gay rights campaigner- very distinctive with his long blonde hair and pig tails- got him into trouble with the police. One day in 1982 he was, he claims, falsely accused by the police of the offence of importuning- trying to get off with another gay man in a public toilet. He was found guilty and his criminal record blighted a budding promising career in the social services. Instead he was forced to work as a lowly paid road sweeper.

Terry continues to protest his innocence and is today getting legal help in trying to clear his name and get his criminal conviction wiped from the official records. Such a 'disregard' is essential if he is to benefit from the so called Turing's Law which promises a pardon and an apology for those falsely accused under the old homophobic laws which discriminated against gay men. However his case shows how it is almost impossible to get such a disregard.

JOHN SAM JONES – ENDURED ELECTRIC SHOCK TREATMENT TO 'CURE' HIS HOMOSEXUALITY

John Sam grew up in the North Wales seaside town of Barmouth. His family were very religious and he felt a crippling sense of guilt about the fact that he was gay. When he went to Aberystwyth University aged 18 to study theology he fell in love with another male student- who prayed to God for forgiveness after they had sex for the first time. John Sam contemplated suicide and went to his doctor for help. He was advised to have electric shock treatment in Denbigh Psychiatric Hospital.

Here John Sam received electric shock aversion therapy intended to destroy his gay feelings and make him attracted to women. He was allowed out when he claimed he was cured. The treatment had in fact failed, and even though John Sam found it very difficult to form sexual relationships throughout his twenties, he eventually freed himself from the stigma that had been drilled into him after he spent time in San Francisco.

On returning to Britain in the early eighties John Sam became a campaigning figure in the fight against AIDS in Liverpool and North Wales. He encouraged the police and health authorities to work with the gay communities, not stigmatise them. However he couldn't altogether escape the stress he had suffered as a gay man and later suffered a heart attack. Nevertheless he is now he is fully recovered and happily married to his German partner. They have recently moved to Germany to avoid what they see as renewed homophobia in North Wales in the aftermath of Brexit.



STEPHEN CLOSE –A SOLDIER WHO WAS IMPRISONED BECAUSE OF HIS HOMOSEXUALITY

Stephen was born in Salford in 1962. He grew up thinking his sexual feelings were wrong, in what was then a very masculine and homophobic culture. He joined the army hoping that the discipline and activity would keep his true sexuality at bay. By the age of 21 he was serving in the Royal Fusiliers stationed in Berlin.

But the 1967 de-criminalisation of homosexuality act didn't apply to the army, navy and air force. In the forces being gay was a court martial offence punishable by a prison sentence. Stephen would fall victim to this law after a drunken night out when he secretly made love to another soldier. They were detected, then forced to admit their crime. In 1983 Stephen was found guilty of disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind, court martialled and sentenced to six months in a military prison.

Even though homosexuality was completely legal in Britain from 2003 onwards, Stephen found that his record of gross indecency in the military remained on police records and continued to blight his chances of getting a good job. Recently he applied for a disregard of the criminal offence from his records – and was successful. Out of around 15,000 men with prosecutions under the old homophobic laws, Stephen is one of only 113 men who have had their offence disregarded. But he remains angry at the homophobic laws which damaged his life and thinks that the gay pardon and apology is a government smokescreen which covers up continuing homophobic prejudice.

GEORGE MONTAGUE – THE OLDEST GAY IN THE VILLAGE, CAMPAIGNING FOR AN APOLOGY

George was born in 1923 and has achieved celebrity late in life when in his nineties he came out and became the mascot for the annual Brighton gay pride parade, proud to be 'the oldest gay in the village.' Yet for many years George had led a double life, on the surface a respectable married man with children, yet also secretly having a long term relationship with Rodney, his gay lover- and other occasional relationships.

One night in June 1974 George was convicted of gross indecency after visiting his local public toilet or 'cottage', then a common yet secret meeting place for gay men in an age before the advent of gay bars. George remains adamant that he did nothing at all in the cottage but was arrested simply because he was on the 'queer list' of suspected local homosexuals, kept by police forces at the time.

George remains angry about this conviction which stained his reputation.

So when the Tory government offered a pardon for men convicted under the old gross indecency laws, it was not enough. He campaigned for an apology instead, collecting a petition that he handed into 10 Downing Street last year.

A few months ago he thought he'd finally received the apology he'd long dreamt of when he got an apology letter from the Home Office. He went on BBC television celebrating the fact. But we reveal that George's apology letter is not what it seems. It actually says he can only receive an apology if the crime for which he was convicted – sex in a public toilet- has been disregarded. It hasn't. So George is now back on the campaign trail again, demanding a government apology for him and the 15,000 other gay men unfairly convicted under the old homophobic laws.