In conversation: Jan Pimblett and Veronica McKenzie on archives and collecting stories of LGBT+ people’s lives

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Jan Pimblett, recently retired from the London Metropolitan Archives, and Veronica McKenzie, from the Haringey Vanguard BAME LGBT+ project, sat down for a kitchen table chat.

The pair discussed the importance of involving a diverse range of people in their work and how crucial it is to document ordinary people's lives. They also reflected on the progress made by the LGBT+ community over the past 50 years, as well as the challenges they still face.

It was an insightful and wide-ranging discussion which we present below in five video chapters. Or you can watch the full 30-minute conversation on YouTube.

On outreach, engagement and diversity

> "Over the last 20 years the cohort of people coming in (to the archives) has altered and changed. We've got more younger people, more people from diverse communities coming through" - Jan

On saving history and partnership working

> "I made an application, which failed, because I didn't have the right partnerships. So I approached Jan and said 'is there something we can do?'" - Veronica

On their highlights from the LGBT+ archives

> "For a lot of people, seeing these materials reaffirms their existence, and opens up a wonderful rabbit hole that they can go down" - Veronica

On the Stonewall uprising and what’s happened since

"Some people imagine that Stonewall happened; stuff changed. And that didn't happen. What you're looking at is 50 years of slow, slow, slow campaigning" - Jan

On the importance of conferences and networking events

"To have people there from Russia, Somalia (was so important)... these people are facing really tough times every day" - Jan

Got an idea for a project?

If you've been inspired by Jan and Veronica's insights and experiences, we'd love to hear your plans for an LGBT+ or other heritage archive project. Get in touch with your nearest office, or explore our funding section.

The London Metropolitan Archive's annual History and Archives Conference takes place on 7 December 2019. This year it is seeking new perspectives and dynamic responses in exploring BAME LGBT+ history.





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