

# Galop and Stonewall Housing Oral History Project

**Interviewee:** Sam Goldberg

**Interviewer:** Keith Stewart

**Place of Interview:** Galop Offices, Essex Road

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## Key

**SG:** = Interviewee, Sam Goldberg

**KS:** = Interviewer, Keith Stewart

[time e.g. 5:22] = inaudible word at this time

[5:22 1A] = inaudible section at this time

Word 5:22 = best guess at word

**KS:** And where and when were you born?

**SG:** I was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March in 1981 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

**KS:** Tell me a little bit about your background, where you grew up, all those sorts of things.

**SG:** I grew up in Newcastle, so I'm a Geordie, possibly not at heart! <Laughs> But that's certainly where I was born and where I grew up until I was eighteen, and then I went off to Leeds to go to university for a few years, went back to Newcastle for a bit and then went travelling, was lucky enough to go round the world for nine months, before I moved to London to come and start work at Galop.

**KS:** So two questions – what did you study, and what was that like?

**SG:** I studied politics at Leeds and I absolutely loved being at Leeds, had a great time at university, it was just I suppose exciting moving away from home first time at eighteen, living in halls and just loads of mates, meeting a girl for the first time. The course, the politics part, I didn't really pay that much attention to, but the social side I had a great time.

**KS:** And then you went travelling for nine months. Where did you go – any things you remember from that?

**SG:** Yeah. Started off in America, spent a couple of weeks there, went to Rarotonga, Fiji, New Zealand, and then I lived in Sydney for four or five months and worked at Mardi Gras, the gay and lesbian parade there, that was brilliant experience. I hadn't ever done or seen anything like that before, so that was amazing. And then went through Asia for a couple of months on the way home, and it was a good nine months.

**KS:** What was Mardi Gras like then?

**SG:** That was a really, really good experience. I was working in a call centre in Sydney, and I loved Sydney and I thought it was an amazing city but I hadn't really got to grips with it, or wasn't getting inside it. I still felt like quite an outsider. And then I saw a job to be the production assistant on the parade,

and I thought I'll have a go at that – just cheeky chance. And somehow got the job, and so worked for three months on it. It was incredibly hard work, as any big event, and it was an office like Galop but just much bigger, mainly staffed by volunteers, everyone just comes together for two months of the year and it's just this big community event ending with obviously the world's biggest night-time parade or something, which randomly was on my birthday as well, so all in all very fun.

**KS:** And are there differences or similarities between lifestyles there and here for the LGBT community?

**SG:** Certainly there was then, that was in 2003, and it was more ... it wasn't as accepted, I don't think, 'cause Australia, less so now I think but even in Sydney, the major city, whilst there is an LGBT community and there are some cool, right-on people, there's loads of people who aren't still, and there's quite a lot of people who are quite ... backward I guess in their thinking and bigoted really, and so you could see that in Mardi Gras. And with Mardi Gras one of the things that was cool about it was that it wasn't just cool about LGBT stuff and forward-thinking about that – it was about everything. So I think there's areas of Australian society which were quite racist and haven't really got to grips with the Aboriginal people and don't treat people with the respect that they would deserve, but Mardi Gras really did, and really made a big effort to include all different sections of the community, so it stood out in a good way. But I think for LGBT people there, certainly then, I think it was a bit harder, and certainly outside of Sydney, everywhere else outside of Sydney and Melbourne in Australia that was really difficult.

<Part 2 starts>

**KS:** And then you came back, moved to London and started working?

**SG:** Yes

**KS:** Tell us a bit about when did you do that, what did you do ...

**SG:** I got home and I had to go back and live with my parents 'cause I had no money, 'cause I spent it all gallivanting round the world, so that was fair enough ... and I was working back at the council in Newcastle that I'd worked at before, and after I'd had this experience, particularly the Mardi Gras thing really affected what I wanted to do, so I just looked for all the LGBT organisations in the country, which was mainly London, and just wanted to get a job somewhere. And then a job came up at Galop doing an anti hate crime ...as Galop does, but doing some sort of community development work, so yeah, I came down and did that for a year.

**KS:** When was that?

**SG:** That was 2005 I think. I think about April 2005 I came down.

<Part 3 starts>

**KS:** What was it like then coming to London?

**SG:** Brilliant. When I finished university nearly all of my friends within the next couple of years moved to London. Everyone, didn't matter where they were

from – all my friends from Newcastle, from School, growing up, had moved to London, and so when I was stuck there for a few months after travelling I was just so desperate to get away, so when I came down to London all of my mates were here, had an exciting new job ... my job was around engaging people to work with the police from lots of different communities, and so I was all around London all the time, meeting loads of new people. It was good.

**KS:** And what did you enjoy about the job?

**SG:** It was really cool working in an LGBT organisation, first off, 'cause even though I'd been out for a few years and had worked at Mardi Gras for a couple of months, it was just ... I guess it was quite inspirational, the chief executive at the time, Tor, just working with different people who had been campaigning on LGBT rights for a while, and so learning from them. The thing I enjoyed most was getting to know London, because I had to go and work in lots of different boroughs from Westminster out to Bromley, and getting to meet all the different people, I got to see bits of London that I think some people I know who've lived here all their lives don't go out to Bromley. They stay in their own little areas. This job meant that I had to go out and see lots of different parts of it and just get to know how things worked here.

<Part 4 starts>

**KS:** How did you find the organisations you were meeting with?

**SG:** Good in the main. What we were doing was trying to get together these community forums to talk to the police and to talk to other statutory agencies about their experiences of being in the LGBT communities. And mainly I worked with people who were forward-thinking I guess in the police and those statutory agencies, 'cause they were the people who wanted to talk to us. And in the main I have to say I found them really good, and I found working with ... did quite a bit of work with the Met and I don't think ... it may not be true of the whole organisation but certainly all of the people I worked with were brilliant and really wanted to make a difference and were aware of things that had gone wrong in the past with the way they'd policed different communities in London, but were there to try and embrace diversity and move it forward. So yeah, I think they were positive.

**KS:** In terms of making those connections?

**SG:** Making those connections and then making an effort. Realising it hadn't always been perfect, and that in order to gain the respect and to gain the trust of those communities who, in the past, they'd lost the trust of because of actions ... not they, but colleagues, people before them, had taken, they needed to go out there, put on events, run these forums, work with people like Galop, and just get people on board. And so I think you could see there'd been a real change in the way that institutions like the Met Police were running their organisations and making such an effort now to proactively try and engage with these different diverse communities.

<Part 5 starts>

**KS:** And at the time – what were the years that you worked first of all?

**SG:** That was 2005/2006.

**KS:** What were the bigger issues for the community – were there any other things happening around that time?

**SG:** It was just before the de Mendez shooting; that was quite interesting. Even in a case like that, where there would be no direct link necessarily to the LGBT communities, someone might just think off the top of their head, still they would ask community advisors (the Met Police) from the LGBT communities how it might impact upon them. And I think that was quite telling of the fact that they were thinking about all the different impacts, the way they policed London and the way they come into contact with people on a day-to-day basis, or what news stories are and how they impact on the different communities.

LGBT Liaison Officers as well were getting going more and more then. They'd already started, but the idea that every single borough should have an LGBT Liaison Officer available so that if anyone in the community needed them, I don't know where that's got to today but that was something when we were working with the LGBT Advisory Group that we were lobbying really hard for, that every single borough should have one 'cause it was such an important role, and more and more that was being taken on by the police and people were coming in and coming on board doing that.

**KS:** And were you starting to work with some of those officers?

**SG:** Yeah. I worked with a few. There were a couple, particularly fulltime LGBT Liaison Officers involved in the projects and working with Galop, and yeah, they were actually ... even though those ones who were working part time were doing it on top of their day job were really helpful in setting up these community forums, they were the ones who would know who was out there in the community and support us and help push through some of the work we were doing.

**KS:** How did people hear about Galop and know about Galop?

**SG:** Well I think a lot of people already knew about Galop and I've always thought that Galop's got a really good, powerful reputation out there in London's communities, maybe nationally as well, but part of the project that I was looking at was about getting communities to know who Galop were and to know what the police did and to get involved. I think people know, just because of the way Galop promotes itself, and I think also word of mouth, because I think the service that people get at Galop is very good and it's there if you need it and it's always been there for so many years if you've needed it, that I think people tell other people about it, so I think word of mouth's quite important as well.

<Part 6 starts>

**KS:** And you said you worked in different boroughs – did you cover most boroughs in London?

**SG:** It's hard to remember but I think there was about eight (ish) that we worked with, so not all of them. Some of them already had really good things going on. Like Westminster for example had so much going on already that we didn't do a great deal of work there. Had loads of LGBT Liaison Officers, they

had forums, all the bars and the clubs in Soho, so much work's gone on there, and so there were other boroughs that we did more work with.

**KS:** Were there different issues between boroughs, and any examples you can think of?

**SG:** Yeah, there definitely are big ... not necessarily big but definitely different issues. If you look at somewhere like Bromley, when we were working on the project there was one ... a gay pub, and I think halfway through the project it got shut down and that meant that in the whole borough, and it's a big borough, there were no LGBT venues whatsoever. So in terms, just from trying to promote something, a working on it point of view, where do you promote? If you can't go to the local gay bar or gay club, you have to think outside the box and think about where else can we find LGBT people? One of the parts of the project was saying to the statutory agencies, 'You don't just find LGBT people in a bar. They go shopping and they go to a cinema, and they go to all these other places, so you find different places to promote them,' but the issues in Bromley would be around there's not very much for people to do, and if you're trying to convince a local council to support your work then you can kind of use the argument that you should fund us because all your people are going to spend their money ... they maybe live here, but they're off to spend their money in Westminster's council because that's where all the bars and clubs are, and unless you get something going here, people are going to leave.

**KS:** Any other boroughs that had different issues?

**SG:** <Pause> Can't think of any right now. Come back to me!

<Part 7 starts>

**KS:** And you were a worker 2005...

**SG:** 2005-2006 I worked here I think. And then 2006-2007 I worked at another LGBT organisation called The Consortium, but I also was on the management committee for Galop and I was an LGBT Advisor as part of the independent advisory group to the Met Police.

**KS:** Tell us a bit about the management committee role. How did you get involved in that?

**SG:** I really liked Galop and I really liked working here, so when I left to go to another job I just wanted to stay involved. And also try and I guess help out a bit because it's been a really good place for me to work, and so I think it was useful ... I hoped it was useful <laughs> that I had some knowledge of how the staff team worked and the inner workings of Galop, so I decided to stand to be on the management committee.

**KS:** How long were you on the committee?

**SG:** I think maybe nine months to a year. Up until I went travelling. I went travelling again after that. <Laughs> And so up until that point I was on it.

**KS:** What was happening for Galop around that time, and happening generally?

**SG:** For Galop I think the big change was a change in the chief executive. So at around that time, I think maybe just before I left, Tor Docherty left and then Debbie came in, so that was a really exciting new change. I think just the normal things that go on in a charity, getting funding in, making sure the projects are developing. Ben came in when I left, who I believe still works here, and he did a great job taking over the forums project and making sure that was carried on, and then, or so I understand, his work diversified and he's into quite a lot of stuff around trans issues. I think that was quite a major issue, certainly from my point of view. I'd always thought about LGB issues, and Galop and other organisations, not everyone but other organisations, really were taking forward the trans community's issues and looking at service provision, and making sure that it wasn't just LG or LGB that was being looked at, but that trans was also getting all the coverage, all the support that it needed or deserved as well.

**KS:** And you said you did some advisory work as well?

**SG:** Not advisory. Just there's the LGBT Advisory Group to the Met Police. They were one of the funders for the project I worked on at Galop, and so when I stopped working on it, I also joined that group and became one of the members of the LGBT Advisory Group.

**KS:** Tell us a little bit about the role of the group and what was that about?

**SG:** That is one of the ways after ... correct me if I'm wrong but I think after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry it was said that the Met needed to engage with different communities more strongly than it had done before, and one of the ways it did that was set up a number of Independent Advisory Groups which were members of communities, what they term hard to reach communities, who would meet on a relatively regular basis to discuss issues on behalf of or with the police and act as a critical friend and give the opinions, try and represent their communities as well as they could. So there's a disability group, there was one around race, one around religion, and then there was the LGBT group, so I was one of the people who sat on that for a while.

**KS:** And you said you also worked for The Consortium for a while?

**SG:** I did work for The Consortium for about nine months.

**KS:** Tell us about The Consortium and what they were about.

**SG:** Consortium was a third tier organisation, which basically means that organisations, charities or community organisations like Galop etc., they would support their work, they aimed to support their work, and aimed to support national LGBT community organisations. The project that I worked on was called Freestyle, which was around LGBT youth groups in London and trying to support them.

**KS:** What was it like in terms of LGBT youth groups in 2006 ...

**SG:** Yes, it wasn't long ago, only a couple of years ago. Ooh, patchy, definitely patchy. I wouldn't say there was particularly good provision for LGBT young people. There were groups in some boroughs, and the groups that there were, so there were some examples of really, really good groups for young people doing some great stuff, but I think there could be more done, more

groups, more funding from local authorities, just to make sure that ... it's a hard time, isn't it? Like out of all the ... I don't know, for most people out of all the times for coming out, in your teenage years, which I guess the majority of people probably do nowadays, if you don't have a support network around you, and if you're in a school it may or may not be homophobic, but many are. If you're just getting that the whole time then at home you can't come out either. If you have some kind of a youth group or somewhere you can ... you saw that with the young people we did work with. We ran Youth@Pride in 2006/2007 I think, and we had over 100 young people came with us on a float and we had just the best day. And you can see these young, young people having a great time – as they should do, and why not? Just being proud and out. That was a great day. And it's sad when you think about where I lived and other places where people don't have that.

<Part 8 starts>

**KS:** So let's hear a bit about living in London at that period of time. What was it like living in London?

**SG:** Living in London was and is great! It's such a vibrant, all-encompassing, all-inclusive city, I think. There's never a time when you don't have something to do, something new to see, somewhere new to go. I think it's just a really interesting place. I've lived here four or five years and I don't really tire of it.

**KS:** What's it like in terms of LGBT things to do?

**SG:** There's absolutely loads to do for me, like there's ... what's interesting, there's so many different things, so you can go to a trans night or you can go to like a butch lesbian night, you can go to a high fem night, or there's just so many different things. It's not just like ... I find say like at Newcastle where there's two gay clubs, or one gay club and one gay bar, and that means LGBT and that means everyone goes to this one place ... and that's nice, it's good that everyone's together, but there's no diversity, there's no choice. You can hear cheesy music and dance on a sticky floor, and that's it. Whereas in London there's all different types of culture and ... there's so many different things. If you look at religion, how many different LGBT religious groups there are, or for different races of whatever, I just think that's ... it would be hard to live in London and not find something which really suits you. That's the really nice thing about it.

<Part 9 starts>

**KS:** Let's think about Galop and your time with Galop; what was the impact on you?

**SG:** That coupled with the experiences I'd had at Mardi Gras in Sydney made me very ... strong about people's rights in terms of their sexuality and I guess their gender as well, gender identity. I think I'd always had the notion that obviously it's OK to be gay or lesbian or bisexual, trans, whatever, and that people should fight for those rights and there should be equality, but it really strengthened those thoughts and it really made me angry, I guess, in some ways, when you saw how people were mis- or maltreated about it, and that more needed to be done, and that it was important that this work was going on.

**KS:** And what for you was the impact on the LGBT community of Galop's work?

**SG:** I just feel like Galop's almost like a bit of a safety net for some people, in that if you do have an issue and you don't feel comfortable talking to the police and the provision that's already out there isn't suitable for you, then here's an organisation that you know you can trust and if you get in contact you know you'll get a good service, quite a personal service, and someone will sort your issue out and you don't need to worry about all the other things that you may need to worry about now, or certainly in the past people did need to worry about. And I think that's really important that that's there. And I think it's really good that Galop's really been there in a relatively transient community, particularly in the community sector, that Galop's been there for relatively a long time, so people know that they can rely on it.

**KS:** And how do you think that trust was built up? Sounds like it might be an important thing, that might be an important thing, that trust between Galop and the community.

**SG:** I think because of the length of time it's been going and I think the service that it offers, because it does provide a good service to people, and people talk, don't they, and people, organisations easily get a reputation, and I think if you do a good job and people put their trust in you and then you ... use that wisely, then I think people will let each other know that it's a good service.

<Part 10 starts>

**KS:** So thinking about the work that you did, your own project, what would you say was the impact on the community?

**SG:** I hope we did some good, and I hope that in the areas ... I suppose I talked earlier more about Bromley than other areas, areas where there was less provision, so I think that's where you can make the biggest impact. And I think we were able to set up community forums and we did get them talking to the police, and I hope it gave ... well some people in those communities, a chance themselves firstly to build up a community forum themselves and to get things going, so I hope that was empowering to people, and I hope really that the police got a better understanding of what people's needs were in the community, police and other statutory agencies, and so afterwards, when they were thinking about how they were going to do their policies and how they were going to implement and write those policies, LGBT people weren't a thought afterwards or a box that they ticked. They actually thought about the real people and how the issues would impact on them.

<Part 11 starts>

**KS:** Thinking about the years that you've been in London, just generally, have you witnessed any changes to the LGBT community, thinking generally?

**SG:** I don't think over the years I've been in London, because I haven't been here that many, and I think because when I came down here I was so like impressed and shocked by how many lesbians there were everywhere, and out people, and there were all these things to do, and I think it's probably ... it may have got bigger, but it was so big to me then that I probably haven't noticed. But certainly since I was a kid, and in terms of the country, there's been a huge change. It's just so much more accepted nowadays, it's so much

easier to be LGBT. Me and my girlfriend always say how lucky we are to live in a time where we're going to be able to get pretty much married or civil partnership, whatever you want to call it; we're going to be able to have children; families are completely happy with us, all of our friends, some are gay, some are bi, some aren't, no one cares. It's just a muddle of people who seem to be OK about what people's sexuality is. And certainly when I was growing up in Newcastle that just wasn't the case, and you didn't talk about it and if you did it was totally looked down upon. And I think that's only been a ten-year change but I think it's been massive.

**KS:** Do you think there's been any changes in the relationship between the police and the community?

**SG:** Yeah, I think so. I mean my knowledge of this isn't personal because I don't feel like I had much contact with the police before really starting to work with them, so that's only been a few years, but certainly when you read some of the reports from Galop's earlier days and then you look at other reports about the police, and you talk ... when I was working with members of the Advisory Group who had been working or experiencing the police many years ago, yeah, it sounds like there's been a massive, dramatic impact.

One of the things I used to do when I worked here was do training with some of the new recruits at Hendon, so the new police recruits, and the fact that the police bring LGBT community members in, in the first eight weeks of a police cadet's training, and ask them to sit there and spend hours talking to them about what your experiences are and whether you've had a good or a bad time with the police and what they should do ... that would never have happened before. That shows how much the police have changed, I think.

<Part 12 starts>

**KS:** Any things come to mind about your time with Galop that were interesting for you?

**SG:** I think it was just the whole experience really. As I say, the first time I'd really worked ... I guess doing a more serious job around LGBT issues and so getting to know those communities. When we did the forums we would launch them and doing those events and working with all the people in the communities ... that was interesting, to get to know them and to get to know the people in the police who were interested in these issues. So mainly the project as a whole.

<Part 13 starts>

**KS:** Last question – looking forward, where do you see things going over the next five or ten years for the community and the relationship between the community and the police etc.?

**SG:** I think things will only get better. I may be an eternal optimist, but I think things are on the right track. I don't think things are perfect and I think the police have got better and I think things have got better for the community but they're by no means perfect for certain sections of the communities, as in LGBT communities, it's still a lot easier for some people within that big umbrella bracket than it is for other people, and I think there's a lot of work to do for some of those communities. But I think because of organisations like

Galop and Stonewall and Consortium and all of those different people who are continuing to do this work and kind of growing in some ways, I think things will just continue to get better.

**KS:** Brilliant. Thank you very much Sam.

**SG:** Pleasure.

<End of recording>