



## PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

# Welcome to Queer America

### LEILA RUPP

This very morning, I woke up to an email about a Michigan legislator who is trying to erase U.S. history. He wants to strip references to women’s history, the civil rights movement, climate change, and the movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality from social studies textbooks. But understanding the past in all its complexity and nuance is critical for seeing how it has shaped the issues facing our society today.

As a historian, it’s frustrating to me to see people trying to change the facts of history to support political or cultural agendas. But this is not the first attempt to censor what our children learn.

### JOHN D’EMILIO

You can be sure it won’t be the last. But, fortunately, people who want to stop students from learning about the rich and diverse history of the United States often make the best arguments for why we need to make sure that our students do learn that history.

I’m John D’Emilio.

### LEILA RUPP

I’m Leila Rupp. And this is Queer America, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Press.

LGBTQ history has been largely neglected in the classroom. This podcast is a resource to help teachers integrate that history into their curriculum. I’m a professor of feminist studies at the University of California Santa Barbara.

### JOHN D’EMILIO

And I am a professor emeritus of history and of women’s and gender studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. And we’re your hosts for this series.

In each episode, we’re going to explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises.

### LEILA RUPP

The word “queer” has become an umbrella term to describe people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or cisgender.

LGBT—or even longer strings of letters, including Q for “queer” or “questioning,” I for “intersex,” and A for “ally” or “asexual”—make clear the diversity that exists under the “queer” umbrella. “Queer America” is an exploration of the history of sexual identity and gender identity in the United States.

### **JOHN D’EMILIO**

And we’ve asked some amazing scholars and educators to take a detailed look at important cultural touchstones, notable figures and political debates, and to suggest how you can incorporate them into an inclusive U.S. history curriculum.

Incorporating queer history doesn’t just improve the climate for queer students. It means teaching better U.S. history to *all* of your students. Changing conceptions of gender and sexuality—throughout U.S. history—contribute important elements to the story of the American past and present. The development of queer identities, communities and social movements is woven into the evolution of regional differences and the growth of cities.

### **LEILA RUPP**

The collective resistance of sexual and gender minorities is as much a part of U.S. history as the struggles of other marginalized groups whose stories intersect with queer history. Learning queer history helps all of our students develop a more complex understanding of the whole of U.S. history.

### **JOHN D’EMILIO**

And knowing how things change is crucial to living in the present and working toward a better future.

### **LEILA RUPP**

Learning about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history has the potential to transform the lives of students—both those who are part of the queer community and those who are not.

We know that bullying of students on the basis of sexual and gender identity is way too widespread, sometimes even driving young people to suicide.

A school climate study in California showed that any mention of queer people or issues in the classroom increases student safety and improves the climate for queer students.

Courageous queer students and their allies have worked tirelessly to make things better in the last decades, forming gay-straight alliances in many schools. But less progress has been made in what students learn, and that can make a difference.

### **JOHN D’EMILIO**

Talking with students about sexual identity and gender identity can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource to help you navigate those challenges so your students can develop a fuller understanding of the legacy and importance of queer history.

### **LEILA RUPP**

Returning to that Michigan legislator and his attempt to erase U.S. history, this is no time to erase the

past. This is a time for us to embrace the richness and complexity of our history.

**JOHN D’EMILIO**

It is our fervent belief that knowledge can make a difference—that teachers who incorporate queer history into their courses can make a difference.

**LEILA RUPP**

That students of all kinds who understand something about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender history can make a difference. It is our hope that teaching a more complete past will move us toward a better future.

**JOHN D’EMILIO**

And we want to help you do just that.

**LEILA RUPP**

I’m Leila Rupp.

**JOHN D’EMILIO**

And I’m John D’Emilio.

**LEILA RUPP AND JOHN D’EMILIO**

Welcome to “Queer America.”