

Hear From Nadya in Pride month

This is a strange way to start off this blog post, but please bear with me. In April 2016 I got my first telescope. I didn't spend a great deal, and it took me awhile to learn how to focus it, but eventually one night I caught Jupiter, its red spot and the bright twinkles of the four Galilean moons. It was at that moment I started to believe in Allah again. **At around the same time I properly and very bluntly came out to my father – the end of a rather long journey in me accepting that I was a gay woman.** Soon after, I popped down to the LGBT inclusive Christian church at the bottom of my road, in a bid to be able to reconcile faith in god with my sexuality. It was welcoming, but it did not feel like my spiritual home.

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See, I am of Arab Muslim descent and in my late teens I was a devout Muslim. I wore the hijab, prayed five times a day, did voluntary fasts, only ate halal, didn't drink, stopped listening to music, stopped watching films, and would only read Islamic texts or books written by Islamic scholars. I found peace in Islam and prayer, but that peace started to shatter as my attraction to a Muslim sister I attended Jummuah prayer with started to increase. This wasn't the first time I had been attracted to a woman, but it was the first time I understood what my feelings meant. I buried that part of me, and met with a Muslim brother from my mosque to discuss marriage. Alhamdulillah that marriage did not take place as it would have been wretched for me and any children that eventuated.

I walked away from Islam. I moved out of home. I met a woman who I was absolutely in love with. I had my first intimate experience with another woman (the former was unrequited). The day after I felt horrid, dirty, wrong and ashamed. I stopped calling myself Muslim.

For the next decade and a bit, I would have relationships with women, self-sabotage them and then go back to dating men. Whilst I accepted and embraced seeing others in same-sex partnerships and unions, I couldn't embrace me being in one. A current close friend of mine commented that it was uncomfortable to watch.

I have a lot of regrets, the women I walked away from that could have made me so happy, the relationships I had with men that made me feel broken and disconnected inside (not their fault), the impact the above had on my mental health and all those lost years not being who I truly was.

I feel whole and am the person I was meant to be.

With all those regrets riding heavy on my shoulder, I attended Stonewalls'

Diaspora Showcase last year. That led me to attending the Stonewall BAME/LGBT+ role models programme in November 2018, where I met a representative from Hidayah, a Muslim LGBT charity. I am utterly ashamed to say when I walked into the room, I automatically assumed that the person wearing Hijab and Abayah was an ally, not LGBT themselves. It was unconscious bias stemming from my own experience growing up with no LGBT+ Muslim role models.

Where am I now? After 20 years of struggling with my sexuality I have embraced being a gay woman. Hidayah has helped me reconcile my sexuality with my renewed belief and has shown me there is more than one way to be Muslim. I feel whole and am the person I was meant to be. I am not sacrificing aspects of myself.

I am also stepping up. It is hard. Whilst I have stopped caring if my extended family knows about me being gay, I am still petrified of bringing shame to my very supportive father. I have started to deliver talks about BAME and LGBT intersectionality. I was part of a panel on behalf of Hidayah in late March. It is nerve racking in the moments before I talk, but letting it all out and using my voice has given me a peace I thought was well and truly outside of my reach.

I want to change the outcomes of other Muslim LGBT people

And, most importantly I want to change the outcomes of other Muslim LGBT people. If I had been able to see someone like me growing up, I wouldn't have felt so alone, isolated, scared and have lost so many years being an unauthentic me. I am doing that by working with groups like the Liberal Democrat Campaign for Race Equality and Hidayah, but also by being visible.

Nadya Fadih-Phoenix – Brit, Aussie, Arab, Muslim, Gay (pronoun them/they)

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Author:

[A fresh start for British democracy](#)

In a time of political crisis, we have some good news, and an invitation to demand democracy.

[I want Proportional Representation](#)

We have signed the [Good Systems Agreement](#), alongside other parties, organisations and public figures.

Together we have achieved something that has never been done in the UK. We're securing broad consensus about the principles that define good voting systems. Most importantly, **seats won in Parliament must closely reflect the votes cast**. We have also agreed that the best voting system for the UK would ideally be determined by citizens. This could be done through an evidence-based, deliberative process, like a citizens' assembly.

We believe this is a major milestone on the path to winning real democracy.

[Read more](#)

And now you have a chance to play your part! **On Saturday 6th July, we are supporting a major action by Make Votes Matter activists all across the country.** A host of street stalls and other activities are being organised for Demand Democracy Day. Check out the map and see what's happening in your area. You can volunteer to help out and meet some new friends, or **simply pop along to show your support for getting Proportional Representation in the House of Commons.**

Show your support for fair votes this Saturday

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[Vince's speech at the Cheltenham People's Vote rally](#)

The Conservative Party has spent the whole time since the European elections absorbed in its own internal psychodrama.

The Conservative Party has spent the whole time since the European elections absorbed in its own internal psychodrama.

And once again the future of the country has played second fiddle to the future of the Conservative Party.

The Conservative Party membership has been given the power to decide our next Prime Minister and the future of our country. This means they are

simultaneously the most powerful people in our politics today, despite being the least representative of the country.

On the whole, they are old, white and male – and economically so comfortable that they will never face the economic pain that they inflict on the majority of young and working people in our country.

But once the internal battle in the Conservative party is over, the same hard realities which shackled Theresa May will hit the new Prime Minister too.

And we will have fourteen weeks from July 25th, when he takes office, to October 31st, to save this country from No Deal, to secure a People's Vote and to Stop Brexit.

The next Prime Minister will be hit by the same hard realities which shackled Theresa May

Time and again in the past two years, when those prospects have seemed bleak, it is the People's Vote campaign which has lifted the chances and lifted our spirits.

When one million people turned out on the streets before the last Exit Day, we turned the tide.

And this May we elected hundreds of Liberal Democrat councillors and sixteen Liberal Democrat MEPs and gained our highest share in a national election.

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At the European elections here in Cheltenham, the Liberal Democrat team led by Max Wilkinson decisively beat the Brexit Party.

All around the country, Remain beat Leave.

And all at elections people said would never happen.

These campaigns can change the course of our country's future. And it is the duty of all of us to keep up the fight.

We making a difference. These campaigns can change the course of our country's future. And it is the duty of all of us to keep up the fight.

In Parliament, I am confident we will stop No Deal.

At that point, there will be no choice but to seek a fresh mandate from the people and then will come our chance to battle again for Remain and for our

place in the EU.

And I and the Liberal Democrats will be in the heart of that battle.

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Author:

Jo Swinson: we are so close to stopping Brexit

We are so close to stopping Brexit.

In the three years since we started our calls for a People's Vote on the final deal, your hard work has taken it from a fringe view in British politics to a position that is now advocated by millions of people, and so many more MPs across both sides of the House of Commons.

But to deliver and win that People's Vote **we need to do two things.**

First, we need to learn how to count.

There is not yet a majority in Parliament for a People's Vote, but it is currently the most popular option of any that were put forward in the indicative votes process. We now need to secure those extra few votes to get it over the line, because without a parliamentary majority for it we will never make it happen.

As the Liberal Democrat face of the People's Vote campaign, I've been working with people right across Parliament to bring them on board and build a cross-party group of MPs to get the numbers we need.

If I'm elected leader, that is the spirit in which I will lead. I genuinely believe that people want to see politicians adopt a less tribal approach, and work together to tackle the biggest issue our country faces, and that's the way I've been working for the last two years since I won my seat back. We wouldn't have got so close to a People's Vote any other way, and I'm determined we get over the finish line.

The next step is then winning that People's Vote.

The economic case for staying in the EU is clear, even the Government's own figures back up that case. But while that argument might win minds, it won't win hearts.

And to do that, we need to make the emotional argument.

The EU has been a beacon of peace and hope in the world for decades. It has ended the cycle of European wars that blighted previous centuries, allowed Europe to stand together against growing nationalism around the globe and helped to deliver peace in Northern Ireland, which would be put at risk if we leave.

The EU has allowed UK citizens to make their homes abroad, brought European citizens to the UK, enriching our culture as well as supporting our public services, and allowed students to travel and study all across Europe.

The EU has given us a platform through which we can stand tall on the global stage, speaking as one voice on the big issues, like the climate emergency and combatting international terrorism.

Our place in the EU has made us greener, safer, more open and more prosperous and that is the case we need to make to win a People's Vote.

We must do whatever it takes to stop Brexit because failing would be too high a price to pay for generations to come.

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[Our next Leader](#)

Here's the most important question in this leadership election; If Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn go head to head as the leaders of the Tories and Labour, both supporting Brexit, who should we choose who will stand out as the real alternative?

For me, that leader is Jo Swinson.

Let me tell you why.

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