

On 22nd May, the anniversary of the same-sex marriage referendum vote in Ireland, [Ciné-ONU](#) screened 'The Queen of Ireland' in order to highlight the [70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [UN Free and Equal Campaign](#)

The film shows the ongoing evolution of Ireland into a truly equal society, as seen through the eyes of one of its most vivid, morally courageous and downright entertaining citizens.

"The Queen of Ireland" was shown in partnership with the [Irish Embassy to Belgium](#) and [OHCHR](#) (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) at Cinéma Galeries in Brussels.



The screening was preceded by a Facebook Live event broadcast on our [Ciné-ONU Facebook](#) page. Rory O'Neill, the film's protagonist, discussed his experience of the marriage referendum in Ireland and his ongoing work as a prolific LGBT+ rights activist.

The documentary was followed by a conversation on the issues highlighted in the film. The guest speakers included: [Rory O'Neill](#) (campaigner, performer and creator of 'Panti Bliss'); [Caroline Mellows](#) (Irish Department of Justice and Equality), [Claude Cahn](#) (OHCHR); moderated by [Carlos Jimenez](#) (UNRIC).



Despite the film centering on Rory O'Neill, and the rise of 'Panti Bliss', he was quick to state, "It's not about me, it's about Ireland." In the panel discussion, Caroline Mellows noted that her feelings on the film were mixed, as she felt it was overwhelmingly positive, noting marriage equality and gender recognition in Ireland, but also that there is always more work to do in order "to advance and sustain LGBTQI+ rights". Claude Cahn remarked how the LGBTQI+ rights movement has been seen to "mature in our lifetime" and that each rights movement shows the things that need to change in society, which can be uplifting.

The panel also discussed the pace of change within the LGBT movement, as Caroline Meadows spoke about how some legislation in Ireland only came in the late 1990's – such as the Equal Status Act. O'Neill quipped how things have changed: "I remember when they would go through hairdressers arresting colourists (!); to today where marriage equality is legal!" This was contrasted by Claude Cahn with the unsuccessful Slovenian marriage equality referendum, reminding us: "We still have a lot of work to do."

Claude Cahn went on to question what to do when in some countries there isn't a "free public space" to discuss these matters. Progress on the issue has been slow, but our panelists were optimistic, as he asserted: "there's still much ahead, but we live in a wonderful time where we can be part of this social change." Here he cited the OHCHR's decade long work with the Moldovan government on the issue, and that last Sunday, Chişinău held their first peaceful pride parade.



Rory O'Neill offered simple prescriptions for the future of LGBTQI+ activism: "The only way to change minds is to befriend gay people." Movements such as these "often start over a small issue and a small person who has no fear. I believe the answer is personal interaction."

During the panel discussion, UNRIC moderator Carlos Jimenez, invited questions from the audience. Many asked how we can support the LGBTQI+ community as allies in changing society's attitudes to those that are, to which O'Neill responded that the best support is to just be visible. Join your local groups, speak up, and make your voices heard. In the end, our panelists and the film enlightened an already captivated audience with hope, optimism and plenty of laughter. Most importantly, it educated participants on the difficult but exciting past of LGBTQI+ activism but also on a hopefully equally exciting future!



- To watch the trailer, [click here](#) .
- To see pictures from the evening, [click here](#) .
- For more information about the film, [click here](#) .
- To download the handout, [click here](#) .
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