

Heroes & villains of



#VILLAINS

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives

Our Bond villain of a prime minister continues to be up to no good, as he quietly tweaks laws, rejects landmark international rights documents and silences environmental research. But this year was a particularly active one for the Harper government, with the Conservatives continuing to debate and delay the transgender rights bill, the introduction of anti-privacy and anti-terrorism bills that would give the government unprecedented access to personal information, and a new anti-prostitution law that puts sex workers at risk. Remember when Pierre Elliot Trudeau said, "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation"? Well, Stephen Harper wants to be in your bedroom.



#HEROES

Law societies vs Trinity Western University

It's perfectly acceptable for an accredited law school to require that all its students abide by a covenant that forbids intimacy outside of heterosexual marriage, right? Yeah, I didn't think so. Thankfully, the law societies of British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia agree, with their members voting overwhelmingly against accrediting Trinity Western University's law school.



#HERO

WorldPride in Toronto

If you're still hung over from this year's Pride festivities, we understand. Toronto hosted the world for two glorious weeks, and queers from all corners of the globe flooded the city. They all participated in various festivities, including Canada's largest LGBT arts festival, a human rights conference featuring delegates from more than 50 countries, and a six-hour parade. And then Mother Nature proved her love for all things queer by wrapping the city in a gigantic double rainbow, because we're that awesome, you guys.



#HEROES

Ontario English Catholic educators

This year, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association voted in favour of marching in the WorldPride parade as a show of support for their LGBT colleagues and students. It was an act of faith so loving and non-judgmental that you'd be forgiven for thinking individuals other than those within the Catholic school board did it.



#HERO

Laverne Cox

2014 was the year of Laverne Cox. From her Emmy-nominated performance on the Netflix hit *Orange Is the New Black* to her history-making Time magazine cover, Cox has made a name for herself as an outspoken advocate for trans issues, correcting hosts like Katie Couric and Gayle King on language etiquette in interviews, speaking up for trans woman CeCe McDonald's need to use deadly force against her vicious attackers and being heralded as Glamour's 2014 Woman of the Year.



#VILLAINS

The Duggars

For two people whose sole talent is successfully reproducing, Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar sure have lots of opinions on things that have nothing to do with them. The TLC stars got in hot water in 2014 for successfully helping to overturn an anti-discrimination law that protected the rights of queer and trans people in their community and for having affiliations with the anti-gay Family Research Council. Between this and the Mama June debacle, maybe it's time we stop providing jerks with platforms to spread their hatred.



#HERO

Conchita Wurst

A rundown of 2014 wouldn't be complete without a nod to the fabulous Conchita Wurst. The Austrian winner of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2014, Thomas Neuwirth's bearded drag persona was a controversial hit, celebrated by LGBT groups worldwide while being condemned by conservative and religious groups.

PROUD TEACHERS: ADAM COISH; WORLDPRIDE: SPENCER XIONG

2014

WorldPride, the fall of the Ford Empire, marriage equality and PrEP — 2014 was a big year for the LGBT community, both in Toronto and abroad. And yet for every hero, there is always a villain. Join us as we look back at the individuals and groups worthy of our praise — and our scorn. **JP LAROCQUE**



#VILLAIN

Jian Ghomeshi

With accusations mounting, sexual assault charges looming and your former employer lawyering up, what's the best possible PR strategy to save face? How about blaming your allegedly non-consensual, violent sexual behaviour on an erotic subculture of which you have little to no understanding? Ghomeshi stands accused of some pretty heinous acts, but his decision to use the BDSM community as a scapegoat on social media was a very public mistake that effectively hoisted the fallen host by his own petard.



#VILLAINS

The Fords and Ford Nation

It's the end of an error, as it were. With the Ford brothers finally out of the mayor's office and the city regaining a comparative sense of normalcy under the Tory administration, it would be easy to write off the last four years of drug videos and drunken stupors as a collective bad dream. But the Fords did tremendous damage to Toronto's civic character, cracking open the veneer of acceptance that had been fostered for decades to reveal a hotbed of intolerance, resentment and division. Even politically neutered, the Ford family remains a potent symbol of a portion of Toronto that isn't interested in accepting the LGBT community. Sadly, we still have lots of work to do to repair our fractured city.



#HEROES

Gay-for-pay corporations

Starbucks has drag queens, Burger King celebrates gay families, and Kellogg's makes Tony the Tiger wear rainbow-coloured stripes. This was the year of corporations going to bat for the LGBT community, ignoring various calls for boycotts and religious backlash, and bravely marketing to our demographic. Congrats, everyone! Our copious amounts of disposable income are finally being acknowledged by capitalism. Freedom comes with a gift card and a delicious mushroom-Swiss-bacon Whopper.



#HEROES

Ontario voters

On June 12, Ontario voted in Kathleen O'Day Wynne as premier of the province and the first openly gay elected head of government in Canada. And perhaps what was most significant about both the campaign and victory was how little the media and her political opponents called attention to Wynne's sexual identity. At a time when mudslinging in the political arena is common, Wynne's win came across as a tentative step forward for both the province and LGBT rights.



#VILLAINS

Capital Pride

It hasn't been an easy year for Capital Pride, with the Ottawa organization declaring bankruptcy without community consultation, owing various suppliers thousands of dollars and casting serious doubt on the future of the event.



#HERO

Jill Soloway's Transparent

Amazon entered the streaming television game with this touching and subversive series about a father (played with grace by Jeffrey Tambor) who comes out to his grown children as a transgender woman. Exploring sexuality, identity and familial dysfunction with intelligence and humour, the show is easily the year's best and represents a clear turning point in queer televised storytelling.



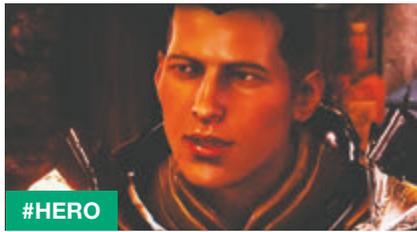
#VILLAIN

Pastor Manning

The passing of Reverend Fred Phelps left a career opening for crazy religious bigots everywhere, and so we now have Pastor James David Manning of Harlem advocating stoning homosexuals to hell, accusing President Obama of destroying the black community and suggesting that Starbucks flavours its coffee with the "semen of sodomites." Well, I guess that explains the drag queens.

KATHLEEN WYNNE: ANDREA HOUSTON; THE FORDS: SISSYDUDE; CAPITAL PRIDE: BEN WELLAND

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE ▶



#HERO

BioWare's *Dragon Age: Inquisition*

Video-game developer BioWare is used to courting controversy and has given countless interviews describing its commitment to creating rich, entertaining games populated by diverse casts of straight, gay and bisexual characters. And with *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, the company went even further, creating its first trans character, a second-in-command named Krem who has been heralded as a huge step forward in gaming representation.



#VILLAINS

Catholic bishops

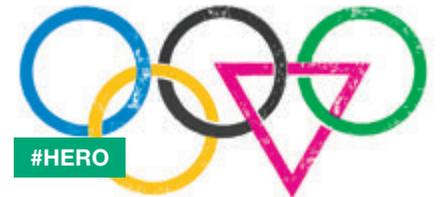
So, that Pope Francis is kinda cool, right? He's fairly progressive, as far as popes go. He made strides to welcome gay people and divorcees into the fold and is helping to bring the church into the 21st century, but then he has to deal with a bunch of buzzkill bishops going against him out of the fear that it would "undermine the traditional family." Well, stay strong, Francis — something tells me that you're on the right side of history.



#HERO

PrEP

Approved as an HIV-prevention method by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2012, PrEP (under the brand name Truvada) is still not officially licensed for use in HIV prevention in Canada. Still, countless sexual health organizations have come out in support of the drug, and many in the community see it as a valuable tool for lowering the risk of infection.



#HERO

Reluctant Hero: IOC

The International Olympic Committee didn't exactly make lots of gay friends with its decision to stay quiet on Russia's numerous human rights violations in the lead-up to the Sochi Games. But by the end of 2014, the committee had shifted its position, announcing that it will add sexual orientation to its anti-discrimination language in host-city contracts — a move that some hope will see significant changes to LGBT rights in the countries where the games are held.



#HEROES

Stories of Our Lives and filmmaker Jim Chuchu

Banned by the Kenya Film Classification Board, the film *Stories of Our Lives* offers up five vignettes about the extreme difficulties of queer life in the African country, where homosexuality is illegal. The cast and crew remained anonymous during the production of the project out of fear of repercussions and revealed their identities only at the world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival.



#HEROES

International Pride celebrants

2014 was a big year for Pride celebrations in traditionally homophobic countries, with brave protesters hosting demonstrations in India, Serbia, Russia (above) and Uganda, to name just a few.



#HERO

Michael Sam

The St Louis Rams' decision to draft Michael Sam — an openly gay football player — took many by surprise. For a sport that has a bunch of burly men in spandex shorts aggressively rubbing against each other, the idea of a gay football player seemed to make subtext a bit too textual for some in the industry. Still, the draft went ahead, and Sam has since revealed himself to be a charming role model and capable athlete — even if he's since been cut by the Rams and the Dallas Cowboys.



#VILLAIN

Russian President Vladimir Putin

Need we say more?



#VILLAINS

NBC and the show runners of *Constantine*

Adapting a comic to television involves a certain amount of creative licence, but the decision to alter a lead character's sexuality is a bit more suspect — which is why the creators of NBC's *Constantine* have had to go on the defensive over their version, which makes Constantine straight. There's been lots of waffling, lots of talk of series chronology and lots of insulting back-and-forth with the fandom, but the bottom line is this: the network didn't have the balls to build a show around a bisexual hero. Period.



#VILLAINS

Uganda's Parliament

In February 2014, the Parliament of Uganda signed its infamous "Kill the Gays" bill into law, which was subsequently struck down by the Constitutional Court in August. Victory, right? Not quite. In refusing to comment on the content of the bill, the Constitutional Court left open the option for another anti-gay bill to surface, which it did — a harsher bill that seeks to punish not only homosexuals, but landlords of gay tenants and LGBT civil rights groups. One step forward, two giant leaps back.



#HEROES

American equal-marriage plaintiffs

When historians look back on the fight for marriage equality in America, they will see a battle that was won slowly, on a case-by-case and state-by-state basis. Still, a critical turning point occurred in October of this year, when the Supreme Court chose not to hear appeals against lower court rulings that had overturned gay-marriage bans in five states. As a result, same-sex marriage is now legal in 35 states, representing more than half the country's population.

JIM CHUCHU: N MAXWELL LANDER; UGANDAN PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI: RUSSELL WATKINS/DEPT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT; OLYMPIC PRIDE: PAUL DOTEY; VLADIMIR PUTIN: ENRICO VARRASSO