

History Notes.

I'm gonna talk about times from the 1990s all the way to the 2010s here. Of course there were progressive thoughts in society in 1970s and even 1930s when people were massively implementing polyamory relationships, going from traditional family and marriage to open relationships etc., but times from 1990s is the times when first queer-community started forming, first trans people were beginning to realize themselves, speaking openly about it and society were moving to more acceptance of the idea that no one would tell you who you are.

1990s.

Country is in the ruins, people have lost the spark of the 30s with the idea of building an ideal state, people are tired of life behind the Iron Curtain and they are eager and terrified of a future with a new hastily assembled government, the rise of banditry, enormous inflation and access to the global economy. In those environments where there's no law prohibiting your non-standard appearance and society that is sick of conservative culture, people started to talk about taboo topics like sexual orientations, multiple marriages, ideas about themselves being more important than others etc. in public in a neutral and not passively hostile way. I have several stories from people who were trans youths in 1990s and they all described their experience as "people around have more important things like survival to care about than you being trans, only thing that matters is that you being ally to them", this attitude has led to greater acceptance of transgender people to the point that many have been able to come out to family or friends. Also necessary to note that there were catastrophic problems with banditry and not passing appearance or bright clothes might lead you to be robbed, beaten or even killed, but it was the same even for cis people cause everyone was suffering from it.

2000s.

Transgenders lives in Russia are very politicized, so I can't describe society in the 2000s and further without talking about politics of that time. After 90s disastrous crisis politicians in russia started to propagandize ideas of bright new european state who could be economically stable and prosperous, people believed it and that's how party of "united russia" came to control of the country, most of people who still voting for them is those who remember banditry crisis and lack of rights protection in 90s, they remember that it was after they thrown up previous government and they are too scared to repeat it even now, so typical normie of ages older than 30 y.o. would do everything that implies his safety and stable life. Long story short, 2000s were a time of prosperity, calm and rise of trans-community in russia cause of law protections for trans people,

right to have gender-affirming operations and hormone replacement therapy and ability to change gender marker in all the documents people could have, cause of “europeization” trend trans people were most likely to be met with positive attitude at mass media.

2010s.

The decline in the rights of the LGBT+ community began around 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev, who was famous for his homophobic statements, was elected. Due to the stagnation in terms of achieving the “Europeanization” of the country, the state needed a universal enemy for the people, to whom their discontent could be directed. Since the beginning of 2008, gays became such people, official media began to focus on if the perpetrator of any crime was gay. In 2013, a law was passed “prohibiting LGBT propaganda among children”; it was the first law directed against the LGBT community and with its help it was possible to bring any activist to prison. Later, by 2014, state-owned and paid media began to form a hateful image of the Western LGBT community, which strives to change the strong traditional family into “parent one” and “parent two”, make everyone gay and lesbian, and so on and the public began to perceive the LGBT community more as a joke than a real phenomenon. Those who were really influenced by the change of opinion in the media were the radical right, as well as the older generation of people.

Recent Events and Current State of LGBTQI+ People in Russia.

My full self-awareness happened in 2016, when a transmasculine friend of mine came out to me and that’s how tough parts of our lives began, I remember very well how homophobic jokes were part of our class’s vocabulary at the time, and how over the course of a couple of years they became more aggressive and already expressed disgust. In general, I was already faced with ridicule at school because of the length of my hair and my feminine style of wearing a male school uniform with an untucked shirt, so neither I nor my friend could even think about coming out or wearing more gender-affirmative clothing, ridicule and aggression from our classmates as well as charges for our parents from school administration could be received for much less noticeable things.

Left without acceptance from society, we began to wait and learn about ourselves, about how other people went through the same path as us and began to prepare plans to leave the country in the future, when we grow up. Then several significant events happened, which also affected the trans community in Russia as a whole, the first was public unrest due to Alexei Navalny, an opposition politician who spoke out against the current government and indirectly supported LGBT+ people, the unrest gathered hundreds of thousands of people across the country on the

streets of cities, but were unsuccessful and only led to even greater repression of dissent in the country. The next event was the mass blocking of trans-friendly activist organizations' websites and personal blogs of trans activists, which occurred from about the end of 2020 to the beginning of 2022 under the law on preventing LGBT propaganda among children, this made obtaining information about transgenderism almost impossible for many people who needed it and completely stopped the coverage of the transgender issue in society, from that moment on there was only one source of information about transgender people - state or purchased media.

Before the war, the safety of trans people was not protected in any way, they could not be who they were, only in some passing way that would not arouse suspicions about the transgender person, without this they could easily face ridicule, bullying, threats or even violent actions against them, it was impossible not to be afraid to be yourself.

After the war, we were considered traitors, people who were influenced by hostile propaganda from outside the pub and now we have become its last carriers, since the only way to block us, unlike websites on the Internet, is to kill us, which no one can afford to do. This attitude led to mass suicides among trans people here. Many could not cope with the lack of support from society and pressure from the state.

Then came new laws, first at the end of 2022 the law banning LGBT propaganda among children was expanded to a complete ban on LGBT propaganda. Second followed the recognition of a non-existent LGBT organization as extremist, the display and storage of any LGBT+ symbols was equated with support for terrorism or with the fact that a person is a terrorist if they consider themselves involved in the movement. The third was a complete ban on transgender transition and the provision of any medical care aimed at changing a person's body to a different gender; doctors faced prison and fines for such things for terms much longer than those given for murder; this ban hit the hardest.

In such conditions, my transmasculine brother, as I used to call him, and I had to maintain a balance between pandering to the regime and surviving gender dysphoria. School was a cakewalk before the war, after the war, they introduced so-called "conversations about important things," weekly lessons where the state not covertly but openly and directly broadcast patriotic propaganda of traditional values, refusal of abortions, instilled the idea that one must give one's life for the motherland at the front because of the Western threat of evil people who want to take our families away from us. Another "innovations" were the patriotic raising of the flag at the beginning of the week, marching, and the inclusion of patriotic sections in the OBZH (basics of life safety) lesson program, such as preparation for survival in conditions of radioactive contamination, memorizing military regulations, and disassembling and assembling a Kalashnikov assault rifle (I'm not kidding, everyone who went to school here, at least once disassembled one).

Besides studying, my brother and I always had to work because of our families' financial situation and to have enough money when it would be possible to leave the country. As expected in hard jobs, like a food delivery courier in a place like Siberia, no one will care about

your appearance, because it is hidden most of the time behind a warm jacket or when not (mostly in summer), people do not have enough time to contact you to tell you something, they rather prefer a dismissive look to an open claim. On the other hand, my brother, who worked almost exclusively behind the counter or behind the bar in cafes, restaurants, bars, was always discriminated against because of his non-passionate appearance, and visitors mostly sexualized him and tried to pester him against his will.

To this day, in 2025, I and many other trans girls cannot leave this country, for the state we are men, and men in this country must serve in the army, which in itself is incredible stress and I know examples before the war when girls could not survive it, but now it means being sent to frontline territories or even directly to the front, and without this, none of us will be allowed to go abroad, we will be stopped there and forcibly taken to the recruiting office, which means we are stuck here and the only thing left for us is to wait for change and hope for the best, trying to survive and not go crazy in the process due to pressure from the state and disgust from the people around us.