Martin Green

Speaking notes for *The House of Kings and Queens* opening

27/07/17

**Digested version:**

LGBT 50 origins and intro

Pride in Hull present 1st UK Pride tomorrow

Pride have theatre, comedy, film and so much more happening the rest of the week. Im looking forward to the premiere of Yorkshire *Brokeback Mountain* – *God’s Own Country* next Friday.

27th July 1967 – a significant moment in the movement but not the end of the struggle.

 Over 70 countries continue to criminalise homosexuality, some with the death penalty.

Chechnya is in a process of a sinister ‘cleansing’ of its population; Russia continues to ban mention of homosexuality in its media; and, it’s all not so far away, Northern Ireland’s Assembly keeps voting for same sex marriage only for it be vetoed by its First Minister!

We are marking the 27th July 2017 with the opening of *The House of Kings and Queen* at Humber Street Gallery. A beautiful photography exhibition captured in our sister city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, where homosexuality remains illegal.

*The House of Kings and Queens* offers a glimpse into the life of a young transgender woman who provides a sanctuary for LGBT people in need. It is a place where LGBT people exiled from their homes and society can live without oppression whilst surrounded by those who understand them and accept them.

We are closing our LGBT 50 programme with a campfest. It is important to celebrate, both locally and internationally – it is an act of defiance, of binning shame.

A Tea Party with Duckie in Queen Victoria Square from 1 until 6pm, full of surprise performances. BBC Radio 2 broadcasting a concert live from City Hall with Will Young and Alison Moyet and more. And probably bad behaviour at Fuel for our after party with Duckie that night.

Enjoy yourselves!

**Narrative version:**

LGBT50 is a project for the Hull 2017 programme that has been something I’ve wanted to do from the very beginning.

Not only is it significant because of the date we wanted to mark, I feel it is important to recognise that, beyond Pride, moments of civic ownership of and confidence in public space for the LGBT community are rare. Projects and events like these allow the community to socialise across age ranges and genders.

I hope what we have done with LGBT 50 has helped the community to mix together but also offered them a moment to own this city.

Across the next week there is an immense amount of things happening:

Pride in Hull present the first ever UK Pride tomorrow from noon. Parade starting from Hull College. Then a whole afternoon and evening concert in Queens Gardens from 2pm – showcasing everything from Cleopatra to Marc Almond!

Pride have film, comedy, theatre, spoken word events happening every day all through the week, check their programme out. I am particularly looking forward to the premiere of *God’s Own Country* – Yorkshire’s *Brokeback Mountain*! After it has received accolades from Sundance to Berlin.

One of the most significant moments, of course, is the 27th July – the anniversary date itself.

On this day in 1967, An Act of Parliament was passed decriminalising homosexual acts in private between two men over the age of 21 in England and Wales, excluding the armed forces and merchant navy.

It wasn’t until 1980 that a similar act was passed in Scotland, and 1982 in Northern Ireland.

While we recognise this moment as a significant milestone in the LGBT equality movement it also needs to be recognised that it wasn’t singularly the greatest act of equality and freedom, prosecution of homosexuals for various offences continued for quite a few more years, nay decades.

The Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, at the time stated ‘those who suffer from this disability carry a great weight of shame all their lives.’ There was and is still a lot more to do to combat homophobia and fight for LGBT rights.

Over 70 countries around the world continue to criminalise homosexuality, some with the death penalty.

LGBT rights vary greatly across many more countries worldwide. I think everyone is aware of Chechnya’s attempts to ‘cleanse’ its population of homosexuals; of Russia’s attempts to ban, as they put it, the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality in media; and the public beatings and hangings of young gay men in countries around the world where homosexuals are terrorised by the state.

Let’s not forget either that restriction of rights is not always in far off climes, Northern Ireland has a first minister who has actively vetoed majority votes in its Assembly to allow same sex marriage.

On the 27th July 2017, we are marking our solidarity with on-going LGBT struggles for equality around the world with what has become an incredibly beautiful photography exhibition created by the artist Lee Price in our sister city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, where homosexuality remains illegal.

Opening at our Humber Street Gallery, *The House of Kings and Queens* offers a glimpse into the life of a young transgender woman who provides a sanctuary for LGBT people in need. It is a place where LGBT people exiled from their homes and society can live without oppression whilst surrounded by those who understand them and accept them.

We are closing our LGBT 50 programme with a campfest. It is important to celebrate, both locally and internationally – it is an act of defiance, of binning shame.

Queen Victoria Square is being taken over by Duckie and turned into the gayest tea party ever. There is no alcohol. It is for all ages and everyone without a hateful bone in their body to gather, feel a sense of community and have a cuppa and a laugh while a dozen or so mad performances happen around them.

Including a rather spectacular 50 strong dance cast in a new work by Gary Clarke and Yorkshire Dance. Of that 50, 42 of them are local LGBT people who have never danced with professionals before, and some argue have never danced at all. It is incredible, and will be beautiful, and everyone can join in a mass dance in the end.

This is followed by a live concert from City Hall on BBC Radio 2 and Red Button and then we’re all letting our hair down in Fuel with Duckie and probably being very badly behaved from 10pm.

I want to thank you all for coming and making our City of Culture as fabulous as it is. I want to thank you for your support of our community. And I know you will have a wonderful weekend.