

Table of Contents

- [***Taboo-busting Singapore podcast gives gay men a voice***](#)
- [***Singapore gay sex ban: Court rejects appeals to overturn law***](#)

Taboo-busting Singapore podcast gives gay men a voice

The podcast aims to change 'outdated' views about LGBT+ people in Singapore, where gay sex is illegal.

By Beh Lih Yi

Thomson Reuters Foundation (02.12.2020) - <https://tmsnrt.rs/3lCVHs6> - When Singapore radio DJ Joshua Simon was asked to tone down a "sensitive" speech on coming out as gay, he pulled out of the talk but ended up revealing all – by launching a podcast.

The SG Boys, a new podcast focusing on LGBT+ issues hosted by three Singaporean gay men including Simon, is unusual for the modern city-state, where sex between men is illegal and the subject is still largely seen as a taboo.

"When you're denied a space, you're going to create your own space," said Simon, referring to the TEDx talk he withdrew from last year after the local school hosting the event asked him to drop "sensitive" comments about his sexuality.

"I was ready to give my true self, but Singapore wasn't ready for me to tell my story," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview. "So I thought let's do the podcast I wish we had."

Simon, 30, teamed up with a journalist and a student to launch the weekly podcast last month, sharing their personal struggles to topics ranging from LGBT+ portrayal in pop culture and serving in Singapore's compulsory military service as gay.

"In the wider Singapore culture, there is a lot of representation about the LGBT+ community that is based on outdated notions," said co-host Kennede Sng, 23.

He said this include the use of slurs to refer to gay people in TV shows and everyday conversations, or misleading portrayals that suggest they were sexual predators or responsible for spreading HIV/AIDS.

"The representation now is not positive, it's largely negative and really inaccurate about what our gender identity is," Sng said, adding that he wants to change public perceptions with a more "holistic" views of who they are.

Tongue-in-cheek

Since its launch, the podcast has drawn big names including Melanie Chisholm - also known as Mel C of the British pop band The Spice Girls - and American singer-songwriter Lauv who appeared on the programme as guests.

They named the podcast "The SG Boys" as a tongue-in-cheek using a coded language adopted by gay men in Singapore to connect with each other online.

But some of the racy photos posted on social media using the hashtag has led to misperception of gay people, they said.

"There's certain impression when you hear the words SG Boys. We want to grow this definition," said Simon, whose father is a pastor.

Both came out in their youth and have suffered bullying and prejudice for being gay, which they said stemmed partly from a law that bans gay sex.

Singapore still has a British colonial-era law known as Section 377A that says a man found to have committed an act of "gross indecency" with another man could be jailed for up to two years, although prosecutions are rare.

Singapore activists have sought to overturn the law, but a court upheld it in March despite opinion polls showing growing acceptance for gay rights in recent years.

The podcasters understand the risks they face for speaking up, but said they they hoped the conversations could lead to change.

"As much as the shadow (of Section 377A) is always looming above us, we look at it as a challenge and an opportunity for us to be brave," said Simon.

Singapore gay sex ban: Court rejects appeals to overturn law

A bid to overturn a law that criminalises gay sex in Singapore has been dismissed by a court, dealing a blow to the city state's LGBT movement.

BBC News (30.03.2020) - <https://bbc.in/3bzqf9y> - The high court rejected appeals by three gay men who had argued the colonial-era law was unconstitutional.

The presiding judge said the law was "important in reflecting public sentiment and beliefs" in Singapore.

Under Section 377A, men found guilty of homosexual acts in public or private can be jailed for up to two years.

Speaking outside court, a lawyer for one of the complainants, M Ravi, said he was "very disappointed" by the ruling.

"It's shocking to the conscience and it is so arbitrary," he said.

The legal challenges were the latest attempts to repeal Section 377A, after an effort by a gay couple in 2014 was rejected by the Court of Appeal.

But the LGBT rights movement in Singapore regained momentum after India's decision to scrap similar legislation in 2018 renewed hopes for reform.

Singapore's authorities rarely enforce Section 377A, first introduced in 1938 by British colonial rulers.

But Singapore's leaders, including its current prime minister, have refused to remove it, saying it reflects the conservative mores of the city state's society.

In Monday's judgement, the court echoed that sentiment, saying non-enforcement of the law against consensual gay sex in private did not render it redundant.

The court concluded the law was constitutional because it did not violate articles regarding equality and freedom of speech.

The latest attempt to overturn the law was spearheaded by three people: a retired doctor, a DJ and an LGBT rights advocate.

One of the men told Reuters news agency he was disappointed by the ruling, adding "my eyes are firmly on the road ahead".

Currently 70 countries criminalise same-sex relations.
