

Antonis Rompos: In 2015, My Identity Was Revealed to All of Greece

My name is Antonis Rompos. I'm 72 years old and I'm a retired doctor. I spent my career at the University of Athens. Since I retired in 2012 I have been working as a volunteer consultant with NGOs, addressing the needs of immigrants and refugees, and impoverished Greek citizens. I've been touring with Doctors of the World, to the border islands, serving people who don't have access to a neurological psychiatrist, which is my specialty practice area.

My volunteer work and contribution to the field of social solidarity and activism began many years ago, at least 25 years ago, before I left my post at the university. However, since I retired I have decided not to work in private practice with patients and I just work in these volunteer organizations, as well as in other organizations such as with Rainbow Seniors, where I offer whatever medical help I'm asked to provide. I also volunteer with an organization run by Greek-Americans which is not exactly an NGO, but it's a charity organization, where I've organized a small clinic there as well.

Meanwhile, I still teach at the university. I can no longer do private practice because I no longer hold an active medical license after leaving my university post in 2012, but I can teach indefinitely, until I die, everywhere. And so I teach two semesters of "Introduction to Neurology" at the university every year. I'd say I keep myself very busy.

The personal side of my life is also very full. I have lived a beautiful life. It's been very exuberant, I don't mean in terms of partying, of course I have partied, but I mean that my life has been full of both beautiful moments and challenges. If we take it from the beginning, I knew consciously that I was gay from the age of 6, without a doubt. I knew very much what I was and what I wanted.

Back then it was 1956. OK, this is funny but, I remember my father used to go fishing in Pahi, it's a little village near Megara. My greatest joy was to peep over there at the fishermen wearing shorts and I realized that my little heart was beating a little bit funny, so to speak. So then as I got older and the time of identity consciousness came, I already knew very well what I wanted, I knew that I was now part of the gay population and of course in the decade that was starting then, the 60's, I was 10 years old, And the words I was hearing about gay neighbors, I specifically remember my mother was using the word *τοιούτος*, which was very common at that time.



The family climate makes a big difference in how you grow up. In our family we had a progressive mindset and my father and my mother were not people who were the extreme ones to criticize, hound or oppress either me or my brother, who was two years older than me, and was also gay.

We would hear little comments sometimes just off the cuff, but there wasn't a homophobic attitude from my family. It was more of a playful use of the word for homosexuals or for lesbians. Even though, I don't remember a name being called for them, just for men they would say "τσιούτος". Of course I was also influenced by the school, the neighborhood, and my friends. In elementary school things were easier because we were kids and it didn't go too far. In high school things were tough. In fact, my father, while he could afford private school because he was a doctor, told me and my brother that we had to go to public school because you need to see what real society is like, not some private school where you're going to be sheltered.

So, in public school where I went, things were tough. At that time I was overweight. By the time I was 16 I was about 85 kilos or so. I only had one or two friends, I didn't have any psychological problem of isolating myself. I didn't have any anxiety related to being gay and what society would say and so on. I didn't show it, I kept a low profile. When comments were made about gay people I didn't participate.

I remember in high school when my friends started going to brothels, I didn't participate. My friends didn't mind, I supposed because my behavior was subdued and no one bothered me about it. The challenge I faced as a teenager was my weight, so my dream was to lose weight so that eventually I could have the sex life that I wanted. And I did that on my own, with my own stubbornness, I dieted and by 18 I was an average sized boy who all of the sudden faced comments like, "You're such a lovely boy, why don't you have a girlfriend?"

At 18, I started university. Everyone had a girlfriend but I was a virgin. I hadn't done anything at the time. I had a very dear friend, a very cultured and talented girl, very smart and beautiful. Because romance and dating was considered so important at that time, I thought I should play the game, I should fit in with society and do what was expected of me. So this girl and I built a relationship. We are still friends, actually. In any case, we had a relationship for about a year and a



half. It was fake for her and fake for me, but as far as appearance go we were a completely normal boy-girl couple who had sex and everything. The sex for me was a mechanical process but it had to be done. At about 20 years old I realized it was wrong to make a sham of this girl and besides, I couldn't go on with my life like that. Of course, there are people who make a compromise like this and I have so many examples. All homosexuals know some people who live double lives like this. But I didn't want it so I broke up with my girlfriend. I gave her excuses like I wanted to focus on university, studying science and so on.

As soon as we broke up at about 20, 21 years old, I started living the life I really wanted. It was the 70's and it was not as easy to be gay as it is now. Society was not ready to accept that there was an LGBT community in the country, they were making derisive comments and harassing us. I don't know the legislation at that time, I don't remember what the legislation was exactly, but I do remember that it was a difficult time and all of us who wanted to find lovers, we were more into partying, let's be honest. . There were no bars, there were the streets. To meet guys you walked down the street, you looked at the other person, and then you'd go right to saying, "Hi, let's go for coffee".

Well, what was sweeping through Athens in the '70s was the so-called street cruising. I don't know if it exists now, I'm not at an age, nor am I in a mood to see, to try it out if it exists, but back then it was the standard way of meeting men. On the bus, without going out at night, let's say you were just on the bus some afternoon, and you noticed a certain man. There was, I'd call it, a certain energy that could turn on or off. It would turn on, and he'd get your message just by your glance. You'd only say a few words, like, "It's a busy trolley today," and the other guy would say, "Yeah, it's really busy. Going far? To a faraway stop? Why don't you get off and have a cup of coffee?" And just like that, it was a done deal.

It had a certain charm for me, this practice. And of course I don't know how but it had a certain shyness about it. It was a really different experience from what it is today. I don't know if it was a sexual liberation, but obviously it was a sexual need. How else were the needs going to be met? There was no social media, there were no bars, there was nothing. Even in the provinces this kind of casual cruising was happening, from what I was told by some friends, the baker I know with the fisherman and so on. How they manage to do it, face to face and by innuendo, finally ending up on some beach to hug, I don't know. They didn't have a gay bar. They just had a grocery store. There was a different charm to this thing.



Of course in the '70s There were one or two places that instead of being a bar, they were like a meeting place and a sex place. And these were the hammams, the bathhouses. There were 2 or 3 Hammams in Athens where people went. Which were once bathhouses because they were old. In fact, there was a rumor that a very famous one, it's been closed for years now, and they tore it down, the rumor was that it was owned by the monastery of Tinos, and all entrance money went there. I don't know if that's true but I used to laugh about it.. So we used to go out there, it was a meeting place too, an easy place for those who didn't have a place to have sex. It had these little rooms for privacy. And people would go to the two hammams, I don't remember exactly where they were. But they were full of people I remember. Some lunchtimes you couldn't get in, you had to wait for some people to leave so the next ones could get in, because all the rooms were full. By the end of the 70s, there were luxury saunas abroad, like in Paris, with swimming pools and such. Here in Athens we just had these two simple Hammams. So these provided a way of getting to know each other, and I would say a very erotic way of getting to know each other because it was different there than meeting someone on the street. And today, as far as I know, there are saunas and operate and I think they will continue to do so. But street cruising, I don't think it exists anymore as it did back in those days. And like I said before I don't know it wasn't back then, sexual liberation or need.

Now, looking back, I think a huge percentage of those guys were married. They admitted it. They were married men who went cruising and then went home, living their Christian life and cursing the faggots. That was the hypocrisy... But anyway, we didn't care much because we were having a good time and they were having a good time. It was fine. Of course, if I fast forward and look at it from the point of view of being a psychiatrist, I have experienced cases of such trapped people who cannot get out of this vortex of hypocrisy, having a family and children and desiring to have relationships with men. These guys came to me as patients because they fell in love with their lover and felt trapped, they did not know what to do. They were depressed.

But anyway, going back to the 70s, things were difficult then. On the street, some areas where homosexuals typically met each other were regularly raided by the police. The cops picked up our friends, not picking them up like they were prostitutes, but picking them up in a way that wasn't elegant at all. It's something that happened to me, too. I'm not talking about any really seedy areas, I mean an area like Dimarchio Square or Syntagma... Where we were sitting on the bench or walking around for a while. And I mean early, not at 3:00 in the morning or anything like that. At 3:00 in



the morning I don't know what they usually did because I didn't go to parks and such, I confess I was too afraid to do that. But I'm talking about a situation where you were sitting in the square at 10 o'clock and someone in civilian clothes came up to you and asked to check your ID without any justification . You weren't having sex on the street or anything, but the cops knew you were a homosexual because you were in an area with a certain reputation So the cops would take you to the station where there was a whole ordeal over identification and evidence, fingerprints. I'm speaking from personal experience now. This happened to me after I finished medical school and I was a doctor. It was a very serious situation and of course I had to lie. The conversation with the police was something like:

“What are you doing there”

“Waiting for a friend of mine.”

“Do you have a family?”

“Yes, I do.”

“What's your personal life?”

“I'm engaged.”

In fact, I said that I was in a relationship with a girl. Obviously I couldn't tell them that I'm gay, so I told them that I was almost engaged. The officers in that station laughed hard at that and taunted me, all three of them: "Nah! Almost engaged? What's that supposed to mean?"

Anyway, in general the mood was a bit weird at this inquisition. The only positive thing I can say about it is that there were a lot of offenders brought in for verification that night besides me and the man who was taken in alongside me. When you were permitted to leave, the officers would call out each person's last name. But when it was our turn , they didn't call out our last names, the officer on duty walked by and waved to us so we left.

I recognize that was intended as an act of kindness, a bit of respect, to not call out our last names. Maybe we were just lucky and that officer was just a bit progressive Mind you, the other person that they had taken with me was married and had two children. Meanwhile I was sitting there being his therapist because I wasn't as bothered by the whole event: what were they going to do to me? Tell my parents I was gay? And what would my parents do to me in that case? I was lucky to have good, understanding parents.



And so it was an experience in relation to society that exemplified how difficult things were, but we didn't give up, we had a good time. Without going to extremes this decade passed, you may say, with some resistance. We absolutely didn't do them any favors by disappearing. In fact, we even made the joke that even without women, we still managed to multiply...because the number of gays was growing all the time.

In the 70s also there was this movement with AKOE, the Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement, and the magazine. Amphi, that they published. The magazine contributed positively because it shared a lot of messages about homosexuality. Well I think that some people had taken advantage of the magazine for self-promotion, but overall every action done by organizations coming forward was always positive for the rights and for the LGBTQ movement.

Of course, from the 70s going into the 80s we had a tragic history in Greece and on the whole planet as well with HIV, because that was the time when the bomb exploded. In the beginning we didn't pay any attention, as too many people my age know, we didn't take any precautions. That is, throughout the 70s and early 80s we didn't use condoms. First of all, I was lucky enough not to catch it. I don't know why I didn't get it. Somehow I survived and my brother survived. But ten of my friends, loved ones, didn't survive and were lost to AIDS.

At that time I happened to be working in a hospital as a consultant in the department that they had opened for AIDS, where there were so many people dying. I met so many couples there, I say couples because there was always the patient and next to him, his partner. I could count on one hand the number of times a patient had his family there with him. Nope! They had their partner next to them, not the family. And it really is a very cruel disease, this doesn't happen nowadays with all the anti-retroviral drugs that are available, the extreme suffering has almost disappeared, which doesn't mean that you can do whatever you want to do. You have to take precautions, but in general it was a disaster back then. So, It was the patient who was literally wasting away and it was the companion next to him. Unfortunately, as a doctor, I had to say goodbye to so many people. And when the patient died, the family would come and literally throw his partner out of the window.

Only at the moment of death did the family remember that they had a child, a son, who was a homosexual, and that he was not a monster, he had neither killed anyone, nor had he raped anyone. Here's an extreme example I saw while working in the hospital. The patient was someone who had a



long term partner, they had been together for 5 years and were living in a house together. I was also friends with them, and when the patient died his partner called me in tears. The family had shown up, once the patient died, even though they had never stepped foot in the couple's house before. So my friend called me saying, "The family came and kicked me out, and I can't even retrieve my clothes, my guitar, my possessions." The deceased was about 34 at the time, and his partner was about 28. I'll jump ahead for a moment now to talk about civil partnership because now that we have some legal protections for gay couples in civil partnerships, there is no way that could happen today. You can't just bust into the house of two people, two partners who have entered into a civil partnership. It's an amazing protection under the law that we did not have in the 1970s or the 1980s.

In any case, the good thing about the 70s is that we were all partying. I did in my 20s and 30s, not to extremes or excess, but just to enjoy my life as a young man. The same way the young people are doing now, which I think is great. When I met my partner in the 1980's I stopped living so casually because I was now committed to him as a husband, essentially, like a marriage. We were together for 40 years until he died about three years ago and I was very happy with him.

During the time my partner and I first got together, in the 1980s, I had a friend who was very dear to me, a lesbian. We are still dear friends. I often had events at the university where I was expected to bring a date. There were some rumors about me, but I was largely indifferent to it because I knew that my professional status would protect me from the worst of it. Concretely, there was no reason for them to incriminate me, but there was still chatter. So to put them off my trail even more, I brought this friend, the lesbian, along to the events when it was needed. She needed me too, for family reasons of her own, and I called her my "fiancée." We still have laughs about it: she says you never put a ring on my finger and we joke about it.

In the '80s things were starting to loosen up slowly, the political situation changed. PASOK, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, which was a bit looser, had come into power. Well, I don't know now how loose it actually was but it had to appear a bit looser at least, as the socialist party, they had to seem more progressive. Also, messages were coming into Greece from abroad that the world was changing, people were starting to live their truths, some people were coming out of the closet. This was very, very important because the movement itself, whether organized or unorganized, was starting to come out of the closet. It's very important for this to happen, I don't think it will ever happen in the same way again because now I'm afraid that society is turning back again.



So in the 80's it was easier to live as a homosexual and in the 90's much easier of course. Yet even as society became more open, and even today, there are people who have not been able to find fulfilling relationships. I had the pleasure to have such a nice partnership for 40 years, but there are many people who live with loneliness. These people are very vulnerable and often turn to meeting people on the streets, who may turn out to be trouble.

To that end I can tell you the story of my brother, who was an extremely cultured man and a successful professional, but was largely alone in his life. He couldn't, he didn't have time, he didn't manage to find a fulfilling relationship until he was 42 years old. And so in his loneliness he would go out for walks, go to bars and so on. One of these evenings he met a man who turned out to be a criminal. Unfortunately my brother took him home and this man murdered him and robbed him. So I had to go through this experience in 1992. Our parents had both already died, so I was on my own to deal with the horrible demise of the only brother I had plus all the media attention. The television stations and the newspapers. Everything was supposed to be all rosy, but it wasn't at all. Because behind everything, homophobia was the huge bogeyman. It still is, even today.

In the trial, which was held for my brother's murder, first of all, fortunately I was not harrassed by the media because I hid myself, I didn't seak out to the media or anything, but the newspapers were rabid at the time. I remember one tabloid newspaper that was so homophobic. My brother was a dentist, and the tabloid printed a headline that said something like "Dental tools dripping with AIDS." And one newscaster who is very well known today, at the time he was just starting out, had said on a broadcast that "Robos took the immigrant home to fulfill his perverted appetites." I'll never forget it. He's now a famous anchorman, he must be I don't know 60 years old now. So I have to conclude that despite this whole illusion of tolerance, and narrative about social progress, there was still a lot of homophobia at play, even in the trial.

In court, things were very clear. It was a cruel murder, no doubt about it. The murderer used a knife to cut my brother's throat. Not only to slice his carotid artery, but he also removed half of his throat. He robbed my brother as well: he took a video camera, his money, some jewelry and so on. What could be more obvious than that? Yet the murderer was convicted by only a 3 to 2 decision, meaning that two of the people, after the facts and the evidence, still thought that my brother was an



evil sissy who had taken some unfortunate immigrant to abuse him. The assailant was not a child, he was 23 years old at the time I think.

When this guy was 11 years old, he had been taught in Saddam Hussein's army to slaughter, he didn't know anything else. He had come to Greece with no way to make money, so he turned to stealing. I don't think it was his intention to kill. Something happened, maybe they had a fight, I don't know what happened but somehow it was very simple for him to take the kitchen knife and kill. In no way has the murder of my brother at the hands of an immigrant prejudiced me against immigrants. That man was personally destroyed by being trained as an assassin by Saddam Hussein's army.

For me it was a very, very bad experience. And the trials were awful. There were two, because the perpetrator appealed the first decision and there was a second trial. And the prosecutor was awful as well. I remember the first question the prosecutor asked me. He asked me if my brother wore colorful underwear or underwear that could have been women's underwear. I lost it. THAT is the first question you ask to the murdered man's brother? Really? I, of course, had been instructed by my lawyer that I shouldn't say my brother was gay and certainly don't say anything about my own sexuality either. I didn't answer the question about the underwear. I said "I'm sorry I don't know, my brother and I didn't live together, I don't know what he did, it was his personal matter." And then, they even asked the same question to my lesbian friend, who was so outspoken with disapproval about the line of questioning that the judge threatened her with a fine. He wouldn't let it go! The prosecutor wanted so badly to demean and humiliate and trivialize the homosexual who was murdered that he asked questions that I don't think were at all appropriate for a prosecutor. I think he influenced the jury and I believe the jury was homophobic as well. Because to get a 3-to-2 verdict in a clear cut murder case? ... Of course, in the appeals court trial that happened a year later, the murdered received a unanimous guilty decision and received a life sentence.

I'm saying all of this about the trial because this was the level of homophobia at play in the 1990s. I think it's probably still relevant today. The homophobia that is sweeping our country from top to bottom has never ceased to exist. All of these theatrics that you see on television today about acceptance and tolerance and so on. I think they are all for show. What the media like to sell is lifestyle. In practice, I think that most of Greek society is homophobic, the majority simply or barely just tolerate homosexuals and lesbians. I think that the passage of the civil partnership agreement in



2015 and also the change of gender identity legislation was a very big step for our country, a very big step because homosexuals were finally legally recognized, even if it was the law that forced people's mind and not vice versa. . Some very important needs were addressed legally – we don't have to have holy water and marriages – to have these practical needs addressed. And we also need marriage to happen in our country someday, it needs to happen especially in the case of families with children, because too many gays or lesbians have children. What can these families do? With only civil partnership, they are not fully protected. There must also be marriage to address the needs of couples with children.

In terms of issues of LGBTI accessibility in the health care system, I can speak from my experience working both as a resident and then as a physician at the University of Athens for many years. I think there was a lot of hypocrisy there too. At the end of the 70s when I was finishing my medical residency I was working at Dafni, Dafni we called it then, now I think it's called the state mental health clinic, and I remember there were two trans women. Amanda and Roberta, they were called. They were two nice people who must have been in their 30s. We were almost the same age, and they used to come and hang out. They were transgender and they had been in the hospital, I don't know who had them admitted in because they weren't sick. They must have been admitted because they were trans and because they were a bit peculiar. Back then, around 1978, trans people were extremely limited in terms of rights and their place in society. I remember there was Darzentas Theatre, I think it was in Plaka, if I'm not mistaken and they put on drag shows there which were amazing, of course. But practically speaking, the visible trans people were basically only the sex workers on Syngrou Avenue. There were no gender identity legal protocols or protections, and therefore trans women had no choice but to work as prostitutes. Now these two girls who were in Dafni, I don't consider what they experienced as access to treatment because I'm not sure if it was forced treatment, I don't know.

However, I do know that at that time some people were taking their children to psychiatrists, endocrinologists, andrologists, and even to all kinds of quack, to fix their sexuality. That kind of thing happened. And it was tragic for these children and their psyches to be tortured with injections of hormones and testosterone and other crap. And then in the provinces, the families would also call on priests to bless them and to get rid of the evil spirit.



There are many stories of parents taking their children to certain doctors to get treatments to change their sexuality. Giving testosterone injections to a 21 year old gay boy to turn him into a normal man? Are we serious? I remember the tragic story of a very dear patient of mine, a patient who was then twenty-three years old, he was a teacher, who had a serious neurological condition and we had become very, very close. He had figured out that I was gay and had leaned on me, and I had supported him like a child. He had a Christian mother, stuck I don't know where, she took him to priests, she took him to monasteries. He told me all about it: "I can't take it anymore. They take me to doctors and they give me injections, they give me psychotherapy, I am what I am, I can't change." The sad thing was because of his illness he was also a virgin, he hadn't experienced the intimacy that he craved. Eventually that child died from the foolishness of what they were doing to him. His neurological condition contributed, of course. I'll never forget his anguish and pleading. He would say, "help me, I can't take anymore what my parents are doing to me, they drag me to monasteries and doctors."

I remember a patient, a young guy from the Mount Athos monasteries who had epilepsy and who was gay. So this kid was about 23 years old and I was 35 at the time. He opened up to me. He was epileptic but he was also depressed because he was the crux of a scandal between a monk and an abbot from Mount Athos. And I don't know how he finally ended up in our hospital, but I remember his father who was a priest in Athens came and found me and said "please don't send him back" because there is this scandal happening, this problem. My director, the head of the department, was also a so-called-Christian and there were two interns who were believers and in the cover of night they packed up the patient and sent him back to Mount Athos. This has stayed with me as a very bad example in relation to my professional life and colleagues, of course it wasn't the majority, but it was a very unpleasant event. I don't know what happened to this boy. His father, the priest, was furious that he was sent back, but of course he was an adult. The father couldn't prevent them from sending him back, and I couldn't do anything to intervene or prevent how the discharge happened.

So there was so-called treatment for LGBT people. There were exceptionally bad events, like the one I just described, and then there was the much more common thing, a more subtle discrimination that happened behind patients backs. The LGBTQ patients did get the treatment they needed but behind their backs many doctors were nasty about them. I remember we had a patient who was a nice guy, middle-aged, about my age, who was a bit more expressive as a



homosexual. We had to do some tests and so on and another director called him 'the queen' and they all laughed together. This kind of attitude was very common.

This story I've just told you was in the 80s. But I have even witnessed incidents recently. Last year, there was a married man from a country town who was secretly living a double life and fell in love with his male lover. With two children at home, he became depressed and went to the psychiatrist in his provincial town who had portraits of all the saints up on his walls. But he didn't talk about religion. Instead the psychiatrist told the patient: "what is all this? Go find a little 17 year old girl to fuck so you can get past this nonsense." The patient left ready to slit his wrists. The case was brought to my attention by some acquaintances so to speak, and I was able to talk to him and send him to another psychiatrist, let's say more modern, to help him manage his conundrum. To be able to manage, either a divorce or to be able to manage what they do all over the world! Or manage this double life. He can do it if he wants to. The point is that even today, there are doctors who do harm.

In my professional life when, I saw that a patient was gay or lesbian, I didn't come out, but I did make a great effort to connect and these people would open up to me. I did what I could to support them, but I wasn't able to reveal my own identity for many reasons. My identity was revealed to all of Greece in 2015. I had been with my partner for many, many years when SYRIZA got the law passed for recognizing civil partnerships between same-sex people. Kaminis, mayor of Athens at that time, had said that he would sign the first civil partnership into effect. My partner and I became the first couple legally recognized under the new civil partnership legislation. So the spotlight fell on me, I accepted it. And thus I came out in the newspapers, I went on some daytime talk shows and such. So everybody found out about it, but even then I was not overtly criticized by anyone. In fact, some colleagues may have been laughing behind closed doors but there were others who said to me "Well done you for having the courage to do it?" and I answered, "why? where do we live?" And even some foolish colleague of mine said to me, "ah I see you are just too advanced," and I said, "I'm not too advanced. You are too far behind."

In addition to my professional career at the university, as I said before, I have been an activist and a volunteer in a number of organizations that take care of vulnerable people. I knew Kamini, the mayor, and he was very surprised when the civil union happened because he didn't know that I was going to be the first couple. I knew him, well, he knew me and knew that I was someone who is



often involved in charitable projects. I was vice-president of the Athens Homeless Foundation for five years under Kamini, I was appointed by him and I was taking care of the homeless, not from the vice-president's chair, but face to face on the street I worked with the homeless population alongside social workers and psychologists. It was therefore a very cute surprise when Kamini saw me in front of him when I went to file the civil union papers, because you don't sign the pact at the town hall, you sign it at the notary as you file the papers. So, the revelation was made, I was photographed, and interviews were done and ... I don't think I felt any joy in revealing myself to the nation really. Some shows were made, they wanted to interview me, I was interviewed by a TV station where I talked again about my life and my partner.

At the end of the day I don't think that a homosexual person has any different feelings of love, their struggles, their shortcomings, their desires than a heterosexual person, it's the same thing. As I lived with my partner, with our joys and sorrows or as I feel the loneliness of a widower. I don't think I'm any different than anyone else, in terms of life and emotions. What does it matter how your desire is expressed sexually? What matters is what is your attitude in society, what is your attitude with yourself, what your compassion you have with your fellow human being, what is your attitude to the movements that are taking place internationally for the, for the planet, for the change of the planet that we are destroying, to support the wave of migration, to confront exploitation in the workplace! I'm not going to get political now but that's it, it's common sense! Our life is not about going to Mykonos to dance. Sure, let's go to Mykonos anyway. But life, no matter what identity you have, is about having a place on the planet as a human being respecting yourself and others. Without that, hypocrisy exists. I don't need to be a psychiatrist to say, we all know, that in the case of homophobia, what is the homophobic person is afraid of? Himself, because he has homosexual tendencies. Or we have the racist who is afraid of the immigrant, because he's traumatized so-called Christian, who has it in his mind that the immigrant will change his religion, will take away his God and replace it with Muhammad and Allah. These unfortunate disorders, I call them disorders, which of course have their roots in education, make our society very stuck. Not just in our country, but in many places, in America, where I have also lived, the mind is stuck. So from that viewpoint, I think what is very important is to know what one can offer to the other person, to understand what their life is like, and their struggles... That is what matters, not what he is doing in bed.

If I compare today's LGBT community to my experience in the '70s, the late '60s, early '80s...well, I've seen a lot. I would say there has been progress because so many people have opened up, so many have come out of the closet, the young kids are more expressive these days. In some places,



the LGBTI movement is stuck. It can't progress, people are trapped, they are not organized in a way that they can force the state to take action. There is not a structured way to make things happen. Maybe attitudes have changed a little bit, people are more tolerant. That's a positive thing. The dark period that I have lived through is no more, that's a fact. Yet, I still think the real recognition of rights hasn't happened yet. And not only in Greece but there are others countries which are, even in Europe, very far behind on LGBTI rights.

