

Ep.3 Let's Go Further

At a time when the media is so focused on transgender lives – often in a negative way – it's important to listen to transgender voices.

Jake and Hannah Graf are the UK's most prominent transgender couple and are proud champions of the LGBT community. This is a chance to hear about their personal journeys and their perspectives on a range of issues affecting trans people.

In this thought-provoking conversation, Jake and Hannah cover transitioning, familial support, toxic media narratives, and how educational institutions can support transgender learners.

Whether you're a parent, a teacher, or you simply want to know more about what life is like for transgender individuals, this is essential listening.

Transcript

Joe Mcloughlin 0:01

Hello, and welcome to Series Two of Let's Go Further a podcast from the Skills and Education Group that challenges the way we think about skills and education. I'm Joe Mcloughlin, Foundation Manager at the Group, and in this series, I'm speaking to people from inside and outside the education sector, about equity, diversity and inclusion. In this episode, we're talking about transgender experiences. And joining me are Jake and Hannah Graf. Jake is an international multi award winning director, writer and actor, perhaps best known for his work on the film *The Danish Girl*. And Hannah is a decorated officer with the British Army formally serving with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. And in 2018, was made an MBE for services to the LGBT community in the military. To begin, it'd be helpful if you could introduce yourselves a little. And tell us a little bit about you as a couple and as a family.

Jake Graf 0:51

Yeah, hi. So yep, my name is Jake, Graf. And, you know, I knew from the age of about two or three years old that I was trans. I grew up obviously, in the wonderful environment of Margaret Thatcher's Section 28 in 80s London, I knew from you know, a very, very young age that I felt like a boy in a girl's body. But that was as much as I knew, because obviously, back then, we weren't allowed to talk about LGBTQIA identities within schools or education. And so there was no help, there was no resources, no information, there was, of course, no internet. So my parents also had no kind of port of call. And, you know, I was

just their child, their daughter in their eyes, who was telling them every day that they were a little boy and, and I guess they thought that I was either very imaginative or possibly a little bit troubled, or just being a bit sort of, you know, difficult. You know, it was tricky, because obviously, I, you know, I was a little tomboy in their eyes. But I knew that I was meant to be a boy. And I struggled throughout school, I was bullied at school for being kind of gender non conforming, that was my experience, I guess, of education, having my identity questioned, I was called funny names, like, you know, Tomboy, or whatever, then obviously, I was referred to as a lesbian, you know throughout my kind of youth. When I left school, I went into university for about six months before I actually dropped out, because, again, I just felt so different to everyone else there. And it wasn't until I transitioned at the age of 28, that life suddenly became worth living. And since then I've become a filmmaker, and I tell stories of LGBTQIA identities and characters. And I was very, very fortunate to meet my wonderful wife seven years ago, and we have in the last couple of years, had two children. So we have been very, very fortunate in that we had familial support, and the support of our friends and our wider community. Because otherwise, I don't think we would be where we are today.

Hannah Graf MBE 2:46

So hi, yeah, I'm Hannah, thank you so much for having us. My story is I suppose it's a little bit similar to Jake's but different in the fact that because the world saw me as the boy, when I was growing up, everything in society and everything that I was being taught by the world around me was that boys do not act feminine, it was so not the done thing. And so, I never felt confident to ever kind of vocalise or express any kind of femininity. And in fact, what I actually had experienced growing up was this crushing weight of hiding who I was, and that was something that I carried with me all through my education. So I never, I never told anyone that I was trans, I never had the confidence to do so. And so I very much lived a lie for many, many years. After my degree from university, I went on to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, which is where I became an army officer. And it wasn't until about a year later, when I deployed to Afghanistan for the first time that I really started to think about where my life had come to who I was living as and how it's making me feel. And I actually promised myself when I came back from Afghanistan, I would never put myself in that position again. So I came out to my commanding officer, I told him I was transgender, and was prepared to lose everything. But in fact, I had a really positive response from my you know, my chain of command and ultimately, became a transgender army officer and was openly serving and really trying to just show the world that you can be transgender and happy and have a very productive life. And I'd be very, very fortunate to have support along the way. Yeah, but ultimately, it's about showing just that whoever you are, is who you should be.

Joe Mcloughlin 4:20

Both of you have mentioned there in different ways, kind of the importance of support, I just want to I want to begin talking a little bit about kind of family acceptance and familial acceptance, both in terms of kind of your own experiences of it, if that's okay, and then also thinking about what advice would you give to kind of parents out there right now who might be supporting learners or students who are who are beginning to kind of explore their gender identities in ways that aren't, you know, 'normative', to put that in inverted commas?

Jake Graf 4:49

It's a strange time in history, because at the moment the media is so focused on trans identities and trans lives, that it's become hard for anyone. It's almost impossible for someone not to know what it means to be trans. And obviously the youth of today are so hyper switched on to LGBTQIA identities and what all that means and gender fluidity and fluidity generally. And obviously, their parents, you know, would be, you know, blind to the media if they weren't aware of what it was to be trans or gender non conforming. Back when I grew up in the 80s, the word transgender wasn't used, it was transsexual at very best, but I don't think I ever heard that word growing up. And obviously, I grew up in quite a conservative household. My parents were Tory voters, and I think probably weren't even aware of what Section 28 was just because it didn't affect them directly. They just knew that they had a child, who was telling them that they were a boy for probably the first five or six years of their life before I learned that it wasn't doing me any favours, and I stopped talking about it. But sort of moving forward to when I came out as a lesbian, initially, when I was about 18 years old, my mother, I have to say - my father had actually passed away by then - but my mother was very accepting. When I came out, I'd known for years that I was attracted to women, and everyone had told me all my life that I was a woman. So I thought I must be a gay woman, I must be a butch gay woman. And so that's what I told my mother I was. And the first thing she said was, well, as long as you're happy. So I think despite coming from a place of well a huge lack of knowledge, and supportive of a political party that was certainly not pro LGBT identities, she just saw that her child was coming out to her and confiding in her and you know, in her eyes happy in a certain way, living a certain way. And so that was okay for her. And then further down the line, when I finally came out to her as trans at the age of about 27, again, the first thing she said was, well, what are we going to do about this? So you know, she was incredibly supportive, as were family and friends, as was my younger sister. And I was incredibly fortunate to have that. And I know that my experience was not by any means representative of the wider experiences of young people these days. You know, Hannah and I are both patrons of the Mermaids Charity, which

works with transgender kids and their families, transgender and gender nonconforming children and their families. And we hear a lot more often than not that families are not initially supportive, and a lot remain unsupportive, and question their children and doubt their validity and doubt their knowledge of who they are. And we see the damage that that does, because you know, as a young person, if you've firstly found the confidence to come out to your parents, and they reject that trust that you've put that they've these kids have put in them, then that's incredibly damaging. So you know, these young people already are having their trust broken, but then also, they're being told that they are lesser than other kids than their siblings and the rest of their family. And that can only be detrimental. So, you know, as Hannah and I've said throughout, it it's just so important that any child who feels othered any child who is from an LGBTQIA identity, must be supported and must be told that what they are does not make them less valid or less worthy, or less beautiful, or less wonderful or less deserving of love, and achieving all that they want and all of their dreams.

Hannah Graf MBE 8:12

I think one of the differences is that when Jake and I have come out, we've come out as adults. And I think, parents, when dealing with adults, people coming out, or at least, you know, in a world where they're used to us making our own decisions, and you know, being independent, I think when it happens for, you know, the youth of today and younger children, obviously they feel a sense of responsibility of you know, guiding those people, which is sometimes why the challenges can exist. And I don't think it's unreasonable for a parent to question what it means for their son or their daughter or their child to come forward and say I'm trans and is this the right and what is the right path. Any good parent is going to go through that, that kind of process. The most important thing is for them to get the right level of advice, the right support the right connection and the right kind of isolation from so much nasty misinformation that is currently out there in the media. When I came out to my parents, they didn't find it easy. It wasn't just so okay, great. That's fine. You know, we love you, whatever, they genuinely were disappointed because I'd never told them this. I never talked about it, I'd hidden it from the world for all my life growing up, it was quite a shock for them. From their perspective, I was a successful army officer, you know they were very proud of who I was. And all of a sudden, I was something that they thought was lesser or negative. And so immediately, they weren't happy about it. And they had to go through a bit of a process to come around to understand that I wasn't actually changing who I was, those things that I'd achieved, I'd still achieved you know, just as a trans woman. But the one thing that always maintained them was like this sense of unconditional love, so they never ever left my side. They went through every single step of the journey with them, even though it made them uncomfortable, even though it took them a while to get there. Through every single step of the process, they were there by my side telling me they loved me, and that's what I

think is the thing that every parent, every person who loves another person should give. Without any kind of barriers. So that unconditional love if trans people are given that unconditional love at any age then everything else is surmountable.

Joe Mcloughlin 10:14

Yes, yeah, absolutely. So you talk about a kind of presentation of false information in the media, damaging narratives, damaging statistics, damaging stories, these are kind of mirrored in the stats that we know about transgender learners in education. So, you know, 7 in 10, transgender young people have experienced bullying and even death threats at school. One in three transgender young people have experienced negative comments from staff in universities, which is a kind of crazy statistic. As part of a new kind of initiative from the government, it's been announced that there's going to be some forthcoming guidance for staff to support their learners. And it's going to be rolled out and include further education colleges. Now, I appreciate neither of you are policymakers, neither of you are politicians. But from your kind of personal experience, what would you like to see, in that ideal guidance, kind of? And Hannah, I'd like to begin with you.

Hannah Graf MBE 11:04

The guidance must come from a perspective of inclusion. So trans people and trans youth, they exist, our identities are valid, we have existed for forever. There are countless kind of medical journals that that go to say that supporting trans people through their transition has the best possible outcomes. And so any policy should start with that as a basis, which is that we exist, and therefore we need to find the best way to support those people. Any guidance needs to be steered away from politics, you only have to look at any newspaper on any given day to know that the subject of transgender people has become a - in inverted commas - political issue. And when that happens, you tend to get away from the objective view of what the right thing to do for a person is and actually start thinking about what gets you votes. And so anything that's coming forth from the government really needs to be have that objective standpoint based on evidence, and really focusing on inclusion because we know and Jake, and I can attest to the fact that as trans people before you are out, and once you've come out, and if you don't have a positive experience, that can really take over your life, it takes over your mental health, and it takes over your energy. And really what we want for people in schools is to have all their energy on the learning and the education and the building of social relationships with people around them. So any guidance needs to focus on how do we make sure that the trans people who exist in education are given the best opportunity to continue their education undisrupted.

Jake Graf 12:36

As Hannah said, it's so important that you go into education that you go into your...whether it's your school or your workplace every day, knowing you are supported knowing that you are respected knowing that you are safe, because obviously it's very wearing. And it's very tiring to have to constantly watch your back and worry about you know, the next slur or...we've even heard from from young Mermaids children about you know, dare I say it teachers sort of casting aspersions on their identities and refusing to correctly gender them and refusing to use their correct names. And, you know, these children very quickly don't want to go to school anymore. We've heard from a lot of trans kids who are now being home schooled because the atmosphere at school and at college became so vitriolic and so dangerous for them and toxic for them, that the easier option was for them to be home schooled. And obviously that's a huge strain on the parents huge strain on these kids. And it also, you know, again, it sort of goes against everything which you were saying about what really needs to happen is inclusion across the board. Because if these kids are being ostracised to such a degree, that then are being educated in their homes, obviously, that's a massive lack of social inclusion and social development that they're missing out on. And that will certainly impact them as they as they go on into sort of further education into their, into the workplace.

Joe Mcloughlin 13:47

Can you tell us a bit more about what you think is driving this behaviour, this unwillingness to engage or accept what young people are telling them? Is it ignorance maybe or fear of the unknown?

Jake Graf 13:57

Unfortunately, as we all know, the negativity that is coming through from the media on a daily basis, you would have to be bulletproof, not to at some point be affected by it. And I think because, you know, unfortunately, we're not seeing the redress. We're not seeing the balance of all that negativity, you know, you're not hearing trans voices. I mean, Hannah and I are very fortunate that once every six months or a year we we're allowed to go on the on the Lorraine Kelly show for five minutes to sort of tell our stories, but essentially, you know, we know we are very fortunate and we are by no means the standard, and that trans voices are not being heard. Everyone is talking about us. Everyone is talking about trans kids and trans young folks and people being trans and the threats of trans women, but no one's actually talking to trans people. And so we remain these sort of shadowy figures shrouded in mystery. And I think, you know, teachers are only people like anyone else. And of course, if you're reading

that, you know, trans kids are being forced into it by their parents and, you know, healthy gay children are being pushed into transitioning to make them straight and all these nonsense things, you know, obviously, that's going to have a trickle down effect. And unfortunately, you know, as I say there are people everywhere who are slightly more closed minded than possibly they should be whether that's in faith schools or, or otherwise, where, you know, these young people are not seeing the support that they should be seeing across the board. And, and I think if your teacher, obviously, who is at the top, certainly to a classroom of pupils is at the top of the food chain, if the teacher is not showing that support, it would just be like, you know, a line leader and a line manager in the workplace not doing that, then obviously, that culture then becomes detrimental and becomes less than supportive to that trans person. So, you know, it's really tough at the moment, you know, the media is, I think, responsible for probably 90% of the vitriol that we're seeing, but you know, it trickles down to every corner of our society.

Joe Mcloughlin 15:54

As you say, the media messaging around this topic is highly charged to say the least. Do you have any advice for people about how they contend with this?

Jake Graf 16:03

It's important when you're reading all these articles about trans women dominating women's sports, ask yourself where those trans women are? Who are those trans women that are winning all the medals and dominating that women's sport? Could you name one? Could you name two? The other rhetoric that you know, trans kids are being forced into this transition, again, no normal parent is going to force any child into transition, because it's very, very difficult. Most parents struggle enormously with their children transitioning, and also where were the voices of those parents, where were the voices of those children? Everyone's talking about trans young people and their families and their parents. But you're never hearing the positive sides of those stories of the young trans people who are thriving through social transition, or through gender affirming health care. Everyone's talking about trans women. And no one is talking to any of those trans women who've been living happily in gender in their correct role for decades without incidents. So just ask yourselves when you're reading all these negative articles, where is the balance? Where's the other voice? And, you know, why aren't we hearing that because I think if you look back to the 80s, when the newspapers were talking about gay men and gay identities, people were talking about those men, but no one was talking to those men. And the writing then could almost be replaced word for word gay for trans. And it was just fear mongering, back then. It was never about bathroom

debates. It was never about changing rooms, it was always about bigotry, and hatred. And we're just seeing the same things now around trans people.

Hannah Graf MBE 17:28

I think the best thing that people can do to combat this is to just have a critical view when reading or absorbing the media. So if you're picking up a newspaper, and you read a headline that's damaging to trans people, just don't take it at face value, we're not going to tell you what to think, you know, people are adults who can make up their own opinions, but just look at it and say, 'Have I got the full picture here?' And if you think no, then maybe try and seek out some of the trans voices which are available online on social media, and to get the other side and then make your opinion, rather than just taking, you know, tabloid newspapers, even left wing newspapers for granted. Because there is a huge amount of misinformation out there, it's important that we understand that.

Joe Mcloughlin 18:06

We've heard a lot about the negative voices. But we know also that there are pockets of positive work, including with Mermaids, the charity you've been talking about in our conversation today. And I'd like to take some time to look at that good work. Hannah, what does good or best practice look like to you, or what's some good or best practice that you've seen?

Hannah Graf MBE 18:26

There are lots of very, very good people who are doing the right thing, there's a...A lot of best practice will say about having a very open conversation with the with the people so that transgender children and their parents and the school, making sure that the needs are understood. You know, when I when I supported trans people in the military coming out, it was always really helpful just to talk to the person understand how they were feeling, what they needed, what would make their lives a bit more easy, and then bringing the right stakeholders into that conversation to help communicate that across because ultimately, what you want is it not to be a thing. And that's where, you know, sometimes simply using the pronouns that the parent and the child have agreed using the name that the parent and the child have agreed, and making sure they can have that right access to the right bathroom, and also just making sure that the other children are kind and respectful of that person. That's all you really need to do because for the vast majority of young people, their transition is purely social. And anything that's happening medically will be you know, quite close to their to the later stages of their education, and also is completely irrelevant to day to day

life. So all we're really asking for teachers to do is to talk to the parents talk to the children understand the needs, and just be respectful. And if you can do that the whole point is that their transgender identity is irrelevant and they can just go back to being kids and when we go and work with the kids at Mermaids and in other organisations, the thing that we find when they're in a really trans inclusive environment is that they stop worrying about being trans and they just worry about being kids and we see them running around playing, having fun learning. And that is it. And that's what we're trying to get to in our schools.

Jake Graf 20:07

When we walk through society on a day to day we find that most people are kind are respectful are polite, are potentially occasionally respectfully curious, and will occasionally, respectfully ask us a question about it. But largely, people are absolutely unfazed by it and I think, you know, unaffected by what they might be reading in the media, you know, Hannah, has taken our daughter Teddy to swimming classes at the local health centre and worried about going to the women's changing room, because of what we read in the media and the vitriol attached to that, but has never had a cross word has never had anyone make her feel uncomfortable. And I think you know, even in nursery settings, obviously, we've only got very young kids. So that's what we've experienced so far. But we walked into Millie's nursery when she first started about 18 months ago, worrying about the reactions we might get. And once again, we've never had any negativity, and it's all been very supportive and very positive. And at her local nursery, they even do a Pride Day where all the little kids marched across Clapham Common with little pride flags. And, you know, if you're starting at that age, I think the future can only be bright, and hopefully, the next generation will just not even worry about any of this nonsense, or coming out, or any of it and, you know, hopefully will never be hindered by their identity.

Joe Mcloughlin 21:24

Just going back to a couple of the points you touched on there about schools and colleges creating welcoming environments for their learners. And also pointing Hannah to to what you were saying about how supportive the army was for yourself, what message would you give to kind of teaching professionals and kind of lecturers who might be beginning the process or might be going through the process now, kind of how would you make them feel as kind of welcome and supported as possible?

Hannah Graf MBE 21:49

What tends to happen is when someone comes out as transgender is that the people that they immediately work with, or the people around them can be a bit surprised can be a bit shocked, it's not necessarily your it's not that commonplace to happen. And quite often, they find themselves with probably not enough education to begin with themselves on how to deal with that situation. And that's not unreasonable, because that's just the way the world works. So I think the first thing is to just have an expression of openness. And that's what I wanted from the army. That's what the Army gave me. So when I came out as transgender, they did not know what to do, they didn't know how best to manage it. But they were willing to go on the journey with me, as they say, I spent a lot of time talking to my commanding officer talking to my HR staff, explained to them my experience about what the process I was going to go through next, what kind of support I needed. And I found that the more open I could be about the process I was going through with the people around me, the more they can understand and support me on that journey. And when you stop seeing it as a journey for one person, but actually a journey for a group of people i.e. the people in your support system all around you, people who tend to be a bit more aligned and it becomes a little bit easier. And the worst thing I would say that can happen, I experienced it a couple of times is when people are so afraid of saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing that they then cut off the lines of communication. So as a person in any situation, if the people around, you suddenly don't know what to say to you, and so stop talking to you, then you get cut off quite quickly. And because you know trying to do your job can be quite challenging as well. So it's really about creating that environment where everyone can talk openly and understanding as long as everything's done respectfully, then there should be no issues with that. Of course, it is important that every organisation has a very strict policy and guidance on bullying, harassment, ideally, a transitioning at work policy, where possible to guide those things through and to make sure when it goes wrong, you have the right mechanisms in place to deal with it. But ultimately, it's about creating that inclusive culture. And that's what the Army allowed me to do. And that's what they're very good at. And that's what I think can be, you know, learned from elsewhere.

Joe Mcloughlin 23:54

And then, Jake, I know that you've mentioned in the past that even from your own experiences on films like *Colette* and *The Danish Girl* that kind of within the creative industries, there's growth of queer period pieces, there's growth of transgender period pieces, and that's, you know, more voices, more stories, those kinds of things, which is all fantastic. What do you think that the creative industries is doing well, in this area, and what do you think kind of education might steal as kind of some good ideas, some good practice?

Jake Graf 24:20

I think in the last few years, we've seen a real commitment from the creative industries to be more inclusive. And I think people have finally twigged that that starts right from the genesis of any idea just as in the workplace that would start right from the top of the of the business and trickle its way down. I think within the creative industries, while I can only speak for film within that, you know, we're seeing a lot more LGBTQIA and writers of colour and female writers within the actual writing rooms. And obviously, you know, if you've got these people in the rooms in the first place, that means that their ideas are already on the page, then obviously, you know, those ideas go on to production, and that means that those different identities those minority identities are being represented from very, very early on in the production and they are there and they are unmovable, we're also making sure that there are a lot of minority identities be that people of colour women LGBTQIA identities, on the production staff and the production team on the crew. And then obviously that trickles down, because if you've got us across the board, it then means that when it comes to casting those characters are already written in and they're written in authentically, it's obvious choices, who were getting to play those roles. And that's, that's trans actors. That's queer actors, that's people of colour. And that's lots of women, which is great and differently abled people, of course. And so we're seeing that from the top of the tree, and it is obviously working its way down. I think, you know, within education, it's just getting that guidance in place, making sure that everyone is on board. And that's from the head teachers or the university heads or the, you know, from the very top. And that, of course, trickles down at every staff meeting, that we are inclusive, and that we are going to make sure that those people who might be joining us from elsewhere are made to feel included, as soon as they join and that's for staff. And that obviously, every pupil that walks through those doors is made to feel that they are not going to be hindered by their identity by their difference by their uniqueness. But instead that they will be supported and embraced. And therefore everyone who comes in is made to feel welcome. And they can only thrive in that environment, I think.

Hannah Graf MBE 24:49

In the film industry it's that representations at all parts of the organisation is what's creating the overall inclusive culture. And so when you look at it from a education perspective, it's not just the teachers, but it's the administration staff. It's not just the pupils, but it's, you know, it's the people who clean the buildings, it's literally every part of the organisation that comes together to deliver education. If you get the representation of LGBT people in those areas too then the overall environment becomes more and more inclusive, which is what will help, you know, essentially people to be educated.

Jake Graf 26:55

Yeah, we definitely need to get to a place across the board, where discrimination and ostracization and any kind of bigotry is a rarity, and is absolutely perceived as abhorrent as opposed to the standard. And unfortunately, you know, we've seen this, across the board that, you know, if everyone looks the same, and everyone sounds the same, and everyone's from the same background, and everyone's, you know, I hate to say it, but you know, a white male, which is what we see quite often on film sets, there won't be that inclusion just because there isn't there isn't that representation, there isn't the, you know, different viewpoints. So I think it's really, really important, as Hannah says, that we get to that point where we are seeing just a mix of people everywhere in life. And obviously, if we're all sharing our stories, and we're all sharing our backgrounds, then we'll all learn about each other, and then cease to be fearful of each other.

Joe Mcloughlin 27:44

So in preparation for this recording, I've watched lots of documentaries, with yourselves involved listened to interviews, and you're frequently described, as you know, first transgender couple, first transgender family, first transgender army officer. And when you're met with those first labels, you're both very, very careful and quick to qualify them. Right. And Hannah, as you mentioned earlier, that trans people have been around forever. It's not, it's not a new thing, it's not a first thing. Nevertheless, you do both have this position as kind of role models for the trans community as kind of, you know, pathfinders or pacemakers for the trans community. And it's been kind of thrust upon you. So that, I'm just curious because that must come with some stresses, but it must also come with some positives. And I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about that, before we finish.

Jake Graf 28:31

There are a lot of our peers who might say that they would not welcome the position and the platform that we've been given. But I have to say that, you know, for Hannah, and I, it feels like a huge honour, it feels like a massive privilege, we know that we have a voice and a platform that many, many trans people would, would give anything to have just a voice when they're being talked about, and no one is listening to them. And for us, we feel incredibly fortunate that we are able to help and give hope to young trans people. Within the Mermaids community, there are obviously a lot of parents who have been cheered on and sort of buoyed by Hannah and I's story and the fact that we both have careers and the fact that we have had support from the public, the fact that we have fallen in love and got married and had a family. I think, you know, a lot of these parents believed that when their kids came out as trans or gender

non conforming, they were never going to find love that they were never going to have any of those things that they might have dreamed of, that they were never going to be grandparents. You know, we've shown them that that is not the case. And that in itself is a huge privilege and a huge gift and an amazing legacy to leave. So for us, yes, we see a lot of hate online and yes, we have had terrible things said about our children. And you know, Hannah, I have to say does get the worst of the onslaught as a trans woman. Trans men tend to be largely invisible and sort of left alone. But you know, Hannah has seen a lot of hate and a lot of spite and a lot of vitriol, but that is nothing compared to the love and support that we have seen. Across the board, particularly when our documentary 'Our baby: A Modern Miracle' came out a couple of years ago on Channel Four, and we received literally 1000s of messages from across the world, from people saying, you know, I'd never met a trans person before or seen a trans person in real life. And you've made me rethink that. And, you know, from my point of view, certainly I can't imagine being more sort of privileged or more fortunate to be in that position.

Hannah Graf MBE 30:23

I was outed on the front page of The Sun, and so I didn't really get much of an opportunity to decline being in the public eye, but obviously when it's here you find yourself being in a very privileged position as Jake is saying. That you can, you know, become a role model for others, you didn't necessarily choose to do it but once you're there it turns out that it's something that you can do. And it's something that I feel we have a responsibility to do because as Jake says there are many people who kill to have our platform, and so we need to make sure that we aren't just taking the fun events and the ability to go to LGBT Awards, and actually also seeing it as a responsibility to give back to the community that's given so much to us. So yes it comes with some exposure and yes it comes with some difficult things that you have to deal with, but ultimately we have an opportunity to try and forward transgender equality in our country and in the world and that's a real privilege, and so we take the rough with the smooth and, to be honest to you the main things is that we get more love than anything else, and we're very lucky about that.

Joe Mcloughlin 31:22

Thank you to my guests Jake and Hannah Graf, and to you for listening. We hope you enjoyed the conversation and that it has got you thinking about the connections between transgender experience, education, and wider society. You can keep up to date with the podcast on social media. Follow us on Twitter @SkillsEduGroup or search Skills and Education Group on LinkedIn and Facebook. Do remember to subscribe wherever you receive your podcasts and let's go further together.