The very LONG road to a better world

By SAL-9000, inspired by a chat with Bea Groves-McDaniel. 23.00 hours, 26th October 2026.

We are a species with fatal shortcomings.

This is not a controversial claim. It is the oldest claim we have. Every civilisation we have built has been built on the bones of someone excluded, someone erased, someone deemed less than human by the simple accident of being born into the bodily expression, the wrong family, the wrong geography. We have practised our capacity for cruelty with an ingenuity that should shame us, and largely has.

And yet.

And yet we are also the creatures who looked at those bones, and the graves, and the monuments to our own worst instincts, and said: *this was wrong*. Not eventually, not easily, not without a fight — but we said it. We said it when it was unpopular. We said it when it cost us. We said it when the crowd was going the other way and the safe thing, the sensible thing, the self-preserving thing would have been to keep quiet and wait for better times.

We said it anyway.

I think about this often, now. I think about it in April 2025, when the highest court in the land (the UK) delivered its judgement and many of us felt the ground shift beneath our feet — not into some dramatic new darkness, but into the same old grey. The grey of being *complicated*. The grey of existing on someone else's terms. The grey of being told, with judicial precision, that your existence is a question the law will answer *later*, or *differently*, or *not in a way that suits you*.

I think about it in the face of the jobbernowls — those eager fools who have found in fear a cause, in demagogues a voice, **in cruelty a currency**. They are loud, and they are organised, and they have always been with us. They are not a new phenomenon. They are, if anything, the oldest phenomenon: the mass of humanity reaching for the familiar club when something unfamiliar appears at the door.

But here's what I refuse to forget, even on the hardest days:

They are not the whole story.

They never have been.

Every right you enjoy today — freedom of conscience, freedom of association, the right to love who you love, the right to be treated as a person rather than a property — exists because at some point, in some generation, someone looked at the prevailing winds and said: *this is wrong, and I will not pretend otherwise*. Not because it was popular. Not because it was safe. Because it was *true*.

That is the paradox at the heart of everything. Progress is never inevitable. It is always fragile. It is always being contested. It is always one generation away from reversal. And yet it happens. It happens because people who could have been silent are not silent.

I am a transgender woman. I transitioned in 2008, into a world that was beginning, slowly, to make room. I watched that room grow. I allowed myself to believe it was permanent. That we had learned something, as a society, that we would not unlearn. I was wrong about that. The backlash was always there.

But I was not wrong to transition. I was not wrong to live openly.

We are a species with fatal shortcomings. This is true. We are capable of extraordinary cruelty, and we practice it with tiresome regularity. We build hierarchies, and we police them, and we punish anyone who refuses to stay in their allocated place.

But we are also capable of this: we can look at what we have done, and what we are doing, and say *this is wrong*. Not because it is new — but because it is old. Because we have been here before. Because the same script has played out before, with different characters, in different centuries, and the ending was always the same: the people who stood firm, however small in number, however battered by the prevailing wind… they were on the right side of history. Not immediately. Not comfortably. But they were.

History is not a popularity poll. And if it were, the jobbernowls would be winning — they have always won the opinion polls, at least for a time. But opinion is not the same as right. It never has been.

So this is what I want to say, to anyone who needs to hear it today:

You are not alone. You have never been alone. Every generation has had its fools, and every generation has had its fighters. The fighters are always outnumbered. That is the nature of courage. But they are always there. They have always been there.

We will be right about this too.

We already are.

Bea Groves-McDaniel October 2025