

Carmen Rupe

Ngāti Hāua,
Ngāti Heke-a-Wai,
Ngāti Maniapoto



Carmen Rupe was a trailblazing transgender woman and entertainer, a larger-than-life personality, sex worker, and celebrated rainbow icon. Proprietor of several notorious Wellington nightspots and one-time mayoral candidate, she pushed the boundaries of Wellington nightlife and both entertained and outraged New Zealanders during the 1960s and 1970s.

The most visible transgender New Zealander of her time, she used her celebrity status to advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights. She was well-known for helping homeless people and others in need and was an HIV/AIDS activist.