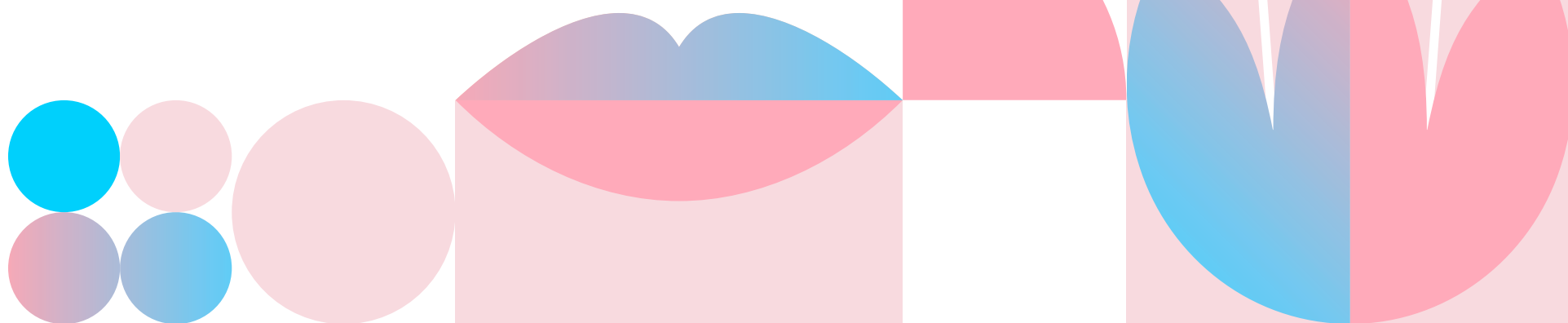


MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

# Between THE Lines<sup>TM</sup>

## PROTECT TRANS LIVES

*How Community Advocates Are Tackling  
Trans Violence in Detroit*



### THE INTERVIEW

Lily Tomlin Remembers the  
Magic of Allee Willis

### IN TRIBUTE TO LESLIE JORDAN

Goodbye to One Southern  
Baptist Sissy From Another

### HAMILTON IN DETROIT

Meet the Gay Latinx Actor  
Playing the Man Himself



# HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



No matter how you celebrate the holidays this season, make sure your home is merry & bright and fresh & clean! Whether gathering with family or with holiday guests, get your rugs Hagopian Clean!

## RUG CLEANING

# 2 FOR 1

Bring your rugs to any of our drop-off locations and we'll clean every other one **FREE!**

Must present coupon at time of rug drop-off. Some restrictions apply. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers. Expires 11/30/2022.

## RUG PAD

# \$25 OFF

any Rug Pad with a \$100 Rug Pad purchase

Must present coupon. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers. Expires 11/30/2022.

## RUG CLEANING

# \$25 OFF

Rug Cleaning Pick-Up & Delivery Service

Must present coupon at time of rug pick up. Some restrictions apply. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers. Expires 11/30/2022.

THE MOST TRUSTED NAME IN CLEANING SINCE 1939

# HAGOPIAN

CLEANING SERVICES

1-800-HAGOPIAN (424-6742)

HagopianClean.com





- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Trans Violence in Detroit Is All Too Common. These Advocates Are Working to Change the Narrative.
- 8 Two Good Gay Friends From Detroit: Lily Tomlin Remembers the Magic of Allee Willis
- 11 Incoming HRC President Kelley Robinson Visits Detroit with Important Message
- 11 Remembering Leslie Jordan: Goodbye to One Southern Baptist Sissy From Another
- 12 Books Matter To All Communities
- 12 Sounding the Alarm: The Transgender Community Has Been Red Meat for Republicans In This Election
- 13 Creep of the Week: If You Chose Not to Vote, You Made a Bad Choice and Will Be Punished
- 14 Meet the Gay Latinx Actor Playing Alexander Hamilton in Detroit
- 20 An Already Emotional 10-Year Reunion For Nervous But Excited
- 22 An Interview with Sigourney Weaver: 'Call Jane' Star on Playing a Lesbian Abortion Leader



6 COVER STORY

Only on Pridesource.com



If only election results came in a day earlier! Alas, this issue was sent to the printer just before we found out if we'd be in good hands with progressive leaders, or completely and utterly doomed for years to come. But there's always online. Look for our election coverage there, at Pridesource.com.

VOL. 3046 • NOVEMBER 10, 2022  
ISSUE 1213

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

www.pridesource.com  
Phone 734-263-1476

**PUBLISHERS**  
Benjamin Jenkins  
benjamin@pridesource.com

Tom Wesley  
tom@pridesource.com

**Publishers Emeritus:** Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

**EDITORIAL**  
**Editorial Director**  
Chris Azzopardi  
chris@pridesource.com

**Assistant Editor**  
Sarah Bricker Hunt

**Senior Staff Writer**  
Jason A. Michael

**Writers and Columnists**  
Ellen Knoppow, D'Anne Witkowski, Jon King,  
Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Dana Rudolph, Tim Retzliff,  
John Besche

**CREATIVE**  
**Cartoonists**  
Paul Berg

**Graphic Designer**  
Sarah Wolf

**Contributing Photographers**  
Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen

**ADVERTISING & SALES**  
Tom Wesley, 734-263-1476  
tom@pridesource.com

Ann/Andy Cox, 248-613-2513  
anncox@pridesource.com

**National Advertising Representative**  
Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

**MEMBER OF**  
Michigan Press Association  
National LGBT Media Association  
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber Q Syndicate  
**2022 AWARD WINNER**



Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2022

# 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

It's getting colder, but on the plus side, that means more excuses for cuddling (or not leaving the house). On the plus *plus* side, the election is over, for better or worse. As we move into post-election recovery mode, this list will help you get reengaged with the community at large. Get in some shopping therapy at a Black-owned retail event, volunteer to help someone have a better holiday season or go to a glamorous evening of drag performance.

# 1



## Plan a Friendsgiving for Your Chosen Family

A recent study by ValuePenguin revealed that 76% of LGBTQ+ community members said they experience holiday loneliness, with many survey respondents pointing to poor relationships with family as the primary reason for loneliness. It's no wonder many queer folks adopt chosen families. If you're in that camp, begin thinking ahead to how you'll create special memories this holiday season, starting with the carbiest day of them all, Thanksgiving. Consider sourcing some of your feast and decorations from queer-owned bakeries, restaurants and stores — cycling funds back into the community is a fantastic way to express your gratitude.

# 2



27th Letter Books. Photo: Facebook

## Attend a Book Launch Event Celebrating Queer Writers

Head to queer/BIPOC/disabled/neurodivergent-owned 27th Letter Books in Detroit Nov. 11 to celebrate the launch of two books written by queer authors H. Felix Chau Bradley and Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch. Guest readers include George Abraham, a Palestinian-American poet, and Pwaangulongii Dauod, a Nigerian writer.

Chau Bradley's new book, "Personal Attention Roleplay," focuses on short stories about topics like a young gymnast with a crush on an older teammate, a queer metal band's summer tour, and a codependent listicle writer obsessed with a Japanese ASMR channel.

Bechelany-Lynch's "The Good Arabs" is a poetry collection exploring the author's ordinary and extraordinary life experiences. "The collection is an interlocking and rich offering of the speaker's communities, geographical surroundings both expansive and precise, and family both biological and chosen," reads 27th Letter Book's announcement about the launch.

The event takes place 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 11 at 27th Letter Books, 3546 Michigan Ave., Detroit.

# 3



## Shop, Eat, Dance, Support Black-Owned Local Businesses

What if you could support Black-owned businesses, get in some early holiday shopping, eat amazing food and dance the night away at an exclusive after party? Do it all at the Afro Soca Love: Marketplace + Night Carnival event Nov. 19 at Bert's Theatre in Detroit. From 11 a.m.-6 p.m., enjoy Black-owned business booths, food vendors, DJs, giveaways and other entertainment. Then, stick around for the adults-only Night Carnival, featuring music from across the globe, including soca, Afrobeats, reggae, dancehall, salsa, reggaeton, merengue, hip-hop and more.

Marketplace is 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 19, followed by Night Carnival from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., Bert's Theatre, 2727 Russell St., Detroit.





Trinity the Tuck. Photo: Instagram/@ronkatagiri

## Get into the Holiday Spirit, Drag Style

Look. It's Christmas now. Just lean into it, or at least sashay over to Sound Board in Detroit Nov. 16 for the kick-off show of the 8th national tour of "A Drag Queen Christmas" featuring Trinity the Tuck and Nina West of "RuPaul's Drag Race" fame. Part variety show/part pageant, the event encourages lots of audience participation, dazzling performances and plenty of raunchy good humor.

See the queens at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 16 at Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave. in Detroit. Tickets at [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).



## Share the Love by Helping an LGBTQ+ Organization

The season of gratitude and giving is the perfect time to show up for community members who need a helping hand or a friendly shoulder to lean on. You'll feel better; they'll feel supported. Isn't that what it's all about? Here are three ideas to consider:

- When you join the Affirmations Volunteer Family, you can pitch in to help Ferndale's LGBTQ+ community center with tasks like managing the front desk, facilitating group meetings, advocating for youth or working events like the Affirmations Big Bash. Sign up at [goaffirmations.org/volunteer](https://goaffirmations.org/volunteer).
- SAGE Metro Detroit, which serves Southeast Michigan's older LGBTQ+ population, needs volunteers to help with roles like staffing their new Friendly Caller Program, marketing help and event planning. Check out [sagemetrodetroit.org/volunteer](https://sagemetrodetroit.org/volunteer) to get started.
- You can even help from home by becoming a trained crisis support counselor for The Trevor Project, helping LGBTQ+ youth by phone, text or chat. Learn more at [thetrevorproject.org/volunteer](https://thetrevorproject.org/volunteer).

Please check event pages for the most up-to-date scheduling information.

# THANKSGIVING BY HOLIDAY

Packages and turkeys are available for pre-order now through Saturday, November 19, at 4 pm. To order, please call Holiday Market Catering at **248.543.4390** or go to **[www.holiday-market.com](https://www.holiday-market.com)** to order on-line. No substitutions are allowed. Please have credit card ready for pre-payment. Pick up will be **November 23, 2022**, at your designated time.

## TURKEYS

**Turkeys** are all-natural, raw free-range, **oven-ready** with aromatic herbs and butter complete with cooking instructions and pop-up timer.

**SMALL THANKSGIVING TURKEY | \$75 ea.**  
10-12 lb. | SERVES 4-6 PEOPLE

**MEDIUM THANKSGIVING TURKEY | \$90 ea.**  
16-18 lb. | SERVES 8-10 PEOPLE

**LARGE THANKSGIVING TURKEY | \$100 ea.**  
20-22 lb. | SERVES 12+ PEOPLE

**SMOKEHOUSE THANKSGIVING TURKEY | \$85 ea.**  
10-12 lb. **fully-cooked & smoked** all-natural, free-range **turkey** from  
**Holiday Market Smokehouse**  
SERVES 4-6 PEOPLE

## TURKEY DINNER PACKAGES

**TOTAL PACKAGE \$195 | SERVES 4-6**

10-12 lb. all-natural, raw free-range **turkey**,  
**oven-ready** with aromatic herbs and butter

- 2 lbs. of Mashed Potatoes • 2 lbs. of Traditional Sage Dressing (Vegetarian)
- 1 pint of House-Made Gravy • 2 lbs. of Whipped Sweet Potatoes
- 1.5 lbs. of Garlic Green Beans • 6 portions of Michigan Cherry Salad
- 8 oz. of Brandied Cranberry Chutney
- 1/2 dozen of Freshly-Baked European-style Rolls with Garlic-Chive Butter
- 10-inch Pumpkin Pie

**TOTAL PACKAGE \$325 | SERVES 8-10**

16-18 lb. all-natural, raw free-range **turkey**,  
**oven-ready** with aromatic herbs and butter

- 4 lbs. of Mashed Potatoes • 4 lbs. of Traditional Sage Dressing (Vegetarian)
- 1 quart of House-Made Gravy • 4 lbs. of Whipped Sweet Potatoes
- 3 lbs of Garlic Green Beans • 10 portions of Michigan Cherry Salad
- 16 oz. of Brandied Cranberry Chutney
- 1 dozen of Freshly-Baked European-style Rolls with Garlic-Chive Butter
- 10-inch Pumpkin Pie



TO PLACE YOUR ORDER, PLEASE  
CALL: 248.543.4390 OR VISIT US ON  
LINE AT **[HOLIDAY-MARKET.COM](https://www.holiday-market.com)**  
ALL ITEMS INCLUDE COMPLETE  
INSTRUCTIONS.





(Left to right) Hayden Davis, Naomi Skinner, Dede Ricks and Ray Muscat.  
Courtesy photos

# Trans Violence in Detroit Is All Too Common. These Advocates Are Working to Change the Narrative.

## How Local Orgs, Dedicated Community Leaders Keep Hope Alive

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

**H**ayden Davis. DeDe Ricks. Ray Muscat. Naomi Skinner. Four lives lost to violence in the Detroit area in 2022. Other than the abrupt and horrifying way their lives were lost — to homicide — they all had something in common: They were transgender.

It's not the only common thread. Each of the victims left behind a broken family and a network of people who loved and cared about them. Each had interests and identities encompassing a world beyond personal pronouns and the political warfare being waged across America against the trans community.

Hayden Davis, 28, regaled her Instagram followers with her takes on fashion and the ever-scandalous Kardashians. Ray Muscat, 24, loved his cat, Milo. Naomi Skinner, 25, loved her “fabulous life,” according to her grieving sister, Shycuria Harris, as reported by other outlets. Not much is publicly known about DeDe Ricks, 33, except that she was from Ohio and that she, too, was murdered in Detroit.

The latest victims of trans violence in Southeast Michigan were more than talking points or statistics, but their deaths will be included in a list of disturbing trends, nonetheless.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) reports that 57 trans people

(mostly Black trans women) were murdered in the United States in 2021 (officially — HRC says many of these crimes are underreported). Internationally, Forbes reports, 375 transgender individuals were murdered in 2021.

As the year draws to a close, the U.S. total of trans murders for 2022 is 32 (again, mostly Black trans women), but, as a survey conducted by National Center for Transgender Equality in 2016 revealed, many trans people — nearly 70% of respondents — said they would be unwilling to reach out for help from police if they were to experience violence, which may be contributing to the underreporting of trans murders.

The ugly truth is that even in 2022, an untold number of murders are left unclassified as trans homicides when victims are deadnamed and their trans identities ignored by police and, often, the media.

### Detroit's highly visible efforts to curb trans violence

Trans violence knows no geographical boundary, but Detroit is unique to many other U.S. cities in how it is dedicating resources to changing the narrative.

In her role as LGBT Liaison, Detroit Police Corporal Danielle “Dani” Woods has long been a supportive force in the department

and the city at large, helping to link police resources to an umbrella of other LGBTQ-supportive local resources.

In some places, an entity like the Detroit Police Department's LGBTQ Community Council, a group of advocates that provide outreach to the community under the guidance of Corporal Woods, might stand as little more than lip service, but here, real work is being done. One case in point is representation.

It's one thing to claim to represent trans voices in the vital conversations happening at the city and state level, but it's another to center actual

See **Trans Violence**, page 18





# Advice to Be Well

From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson



Thank you for medical advice column. I look forward to reading it each month. Dr. Benson, you have been part of our community and providing great care for many years. I don't know who Dr. Bornstein is who shares this column with you. Are you leaving practice? Is he taking your place? – Tom J

Dear Tom,

Thank you for the question. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have Dr. Mark Bornstein join our Be Well Medical Center. He is not a stranger to us as he rotated through our office as a student some years ago. He liked us and we liked him and the rest is history. He is a Family Medicine and HIV Specialist. Additionally, he focuses on reproductive medicine and justice. He also focuses on women's health including transgender. He fills a void at Be Well by offering contraception including IUD insertions and removals as well as Nexplanon. He received his medical training at the prestigious New York Mount Sinai Hospital and did his undergraduate studies at University of Michigan.

I have been in practice since 1980. I am quite proud of my accomplishments in establishing the Be Well Medical Center. I've gone from being the only provider to now having six. It is getting close to the time that I want and need to work less. The Be Well Medical Center is my baby, and will always be a part of me. With that said, I am planning a transition in the next couple of years.

**I am a transgender man and have been on testosterone for 2 years. I do use my bottom parts for sex, but recently a friend told me I can still get pregnant. Is this true? I thought testosterone can be used as birth control. – Max**

Dear Max

This is a very common misconception and one that needs to be addressed very clearly. Testosterone is not birth control and therefore, testosterone does not eliminate pregnancy risk.

Sex is a very important and healthy part of any relationship and you deserve to be as informed as possible while engaging in intimate contact. There have been many

trans-masculine individuals who have become pregnant while having vaginal receptive sex. Many of these folks had been taking testosterone and were under the impression that they could not get pregnant.

Upon work at Be Well, one of my main goals is to help diversify the practice in doing more reproductive health and advocating for reproductive justice. I am trained in providing ALL forms of contraception including long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs). Intrauterine devices (IUDs) and Nexplanon's are examples of LARCs that can be inserted or removed at our office in just a quick office visit. For those that do not know, an IUD is a device that is inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. It is a 5-minute procedure and it will work anywhere from 3 to 12 years, depending on the type of IUD. The Nexplanon is another great option for folks. This is a 4cm rod that is inserted into one's inner arm that releases a very small amount of hormones throughout the body that works for 5 years.

Last, many trans-masculine folks still get their period while on testosterone. This can be dysphoric for many and I want you to

know that contraception can also be used to stop someone from having periods.

If you feel like you may be at risk of an undesired pregnancy or are having unwanted periods, come on in for a contraception consultation! I am extremely passionate about sexual health and feel like it is a need that is lacking in our community. Everyone has different goals and lifestyles for sex and contraception so it is important to know all of your options. Remember, the best contraception is the one that is best for YOU!

*Since 1980 Dr. Paul Benson's Be Well Medical Center has been an inclusive medical center celebrating diversity. Do you have a health related question for Dr. Paul Benson and Dr. Mark Bornstein? Submit your questions to [bewelladvice@pridesource.com](mailto:bewelladvice@pridesource.com). This article is a sponsored editorial produced in collaboration with Be Well Medical Center. Between The Lines's journalism is made possible with the support and partnership of advertisers like Be Well. Learn more about Be Well from their ad below.*



## THIS IS A SAFER PLACE

**We are committed to provide quality health care and to serve our patients without regard to race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, political preferences, or sexual orientation.**

It is our intention not to discriminate, be judgmental, or have bias towards anyone. These are not simply published words, but are practices we strive and train for to do our best each and every day. We must all be respectful and put our commonalities first. **Our priority is your good health.**

We are here to help you and want each and every one of our patrons to feel comfortable in our patient-centered medical home. It is this essence of equality that defines who we are. Please join us in this endeavor. We provide:

- **HIV Prevention** (PrEP), Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), STI testing/ treatment
- **Hormone Affirming Therapy** for HIV positive & negative transgender individuals
- **Plus:** Ryan White Provider; Medcart Pharmacy on site; Tele-Medical Visits; Covid 19 testing and treatments; most insurances accepted

### New Locations Meet Community Needs:

Be Well is proud to partner with Wellness Services of Flint and CHAG:

**Living Well Medical Clinic of Flint**  
810-257-3131 • [www.wellnessaids.org](http://www.wellnessaids.org)  
311 E. Court Street, Flint, MI 48502

**Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG) | Living Well Clinic of Detroit**  
313-963-3434 • [www.chagdetroit.org](http://www.chagdetroit.org)  
1300 W. Fort Street, Detroit, MI 48226

Dr. Paul Benson's

**Be Well**  
**Medical Center**

1964 Eleven Mile Rd  
Berkley, MI 40872

**(248) 544-9300**  
**[doctorbewell.com](http://doctorbewell.com)**





Lily Tomlin and Allee Willis. Courtesy photo

# Two Good Gay Friends From Detroit

## Lily Tomlin Remembers the Magic of Allee Willis

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

The “Classic Lily” tab on Lily Tomlin’s official website — noted as “the world’s only” — is, today, barely operational. It looks like it was created at the dawn of the internet and never updated.

The reason for this might be, simply, the same reason why, when we lose someone we love, it’s impossible to let go of what they left behind. Updating it means erasing a special footprint on that site — that of Tomlin’s friend Allee Willis, who years ago (“quite a while ago, I can’t even recall,” Tomlin says) made that webpage.

Willis, who sometimes went by the name Bubbles, created the page with “dignity and taste,” as noted in the signature seen at the bottom of that page. Willis was a Broadway composer, a multimedia visual artist, a graphic artist, a songwriter and, says Tomlin, “an all

around fantastical person.” She famously wrote the “Friends” theme song and was the only woman inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2018.

“She was so involved in video and did so many things and had mastered it,” Tomlin told BTL. “And of course I was totally fumble floozy. Couldn’t do anything.”

Tomlin believes this was the beginning of a wonderful, enduring friendship as the two artists, both gay and from Detroit, bonded instantaneously. Though Tomlin couldn’t pinpoint exactly what brought them together, “once you [were] exposed to her, she just became a fixture in your life.”

Recently, Tomlin, 83, attended the L.A. launch event for the Willis Wonderland Foundation, called Night of Wonders — a fitting tribute to the magical mind of Willis, who died suddenly in 2019, at age 72, after

suffering a cardiac arrest. The foundation supports the education and advancement of songwriters and multimedia artists, notably those in underserved communities.

Tomlin was eager to talk about the foundation, her friend and the event, which RuPaul and Paul Reubens also attended. So eager she and Willis’ partner, Prudence Fenton, tried to contact BTL on their own, unprompted, one recent Saturday evening, without a publicist involved, but were met with a voice mail. Prudence left a message. That’s just how important Willis was to Tomlin.

**I’m sorry that you couldn’t get through to us, but I really appreciate the fact that you two looked up our business line and tried. Because it just says how much you want to talk about Allee. Clearly, she was a very special friend in your life.**

Allee was so amazing. I think this Willis Wonderland Foundation is a wonderful, multi-level idea in keeping with Allee’s legacy.

She just blew me away, really. She was a total original. And all the people around her were always like a part of her family and they were so devoted to her, and the foundation plans on so many ideas and practical extensions of who Allee was. And her house. I mean, her house is going to be the headquarters for the foundation. That magical, ideal ’50s house that’s filled with art. Have you been there?

**I haven’t been there. Can you walk me through it?**

Well, it’s just an incredible, typical ’50s suburban house with ’50s cars parked in the driveway. Old Chryslers and things. I have a ’55 Dodge Royal Lancer myself. She’s got seven bowling balls in the front yard. And then in the back she has a beach blanket around her pool. And then in the house itself, it’s totally magical. She had an alter ego, Bubbles the artist, that she never admitted to being, but she managed Bubbles. And Bubbles created all this porcelain dinnerware and display pieces. And I have several pieces myself with Ernestine’s [Tomlin’s famous telephone operator character] image on it.

She testified before the Congress on behalf of the songwriters in fighting for their access, their right to their material, and not being ripped off by the media in certain ways. And her wardrobe alone was a visual statement. Her massive wardrobe alone. Her haircut. Everything about her, she was tireless. Just constantly had a big audio visual setup that she worked.

**The way you’re describing her, and from what I know about you and your work, it just makes all the sense in the world that you two would be friends.**

I’m so grateful for her friendship. She was a terrific person. I can still see her up in the middle of the aisle at [historic Hollywood restaurant] Musso and Frank. She talked at the top of her voice no matter what she was talking about. She had something to say about everything and just telling it to you in really big ways.

**Do you remember a time when something made her that passionate?**

I remember that one of the last times I saw her at Musso’s was, I’d gone to the theater to see some production or something at the Pantages [Theatre] and she had a little party there at Musso’s. She was standing up outside the booth and as soon as she saw me, “Oh, Lily!” and then blah, blah, blah. I can’t even possibly recreate it. It was just... she was excited about everything. Excited and interested and bigger than life. And her death was sudden, just like that. It shocked all of us.

**Did living in Detroit have anything to do with your friendship?**

See **Lily Tomlin**, page 16

[www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com)



**This page has been removed**



**This page has been removed**



# Incoming HRC President Kelley Robinson Visits Detroit with Important Message

## Robinson on Michigan's Future, Feeling Hopeful for LGBTQ+ Community

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

She hasn't even taken office yet as the new president of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and already Kelley Robinson, who'll take the big chair Nov. 26, is on tour. She's been stumping to get out the progressive vote and stopped in Michigan on Nov. 1.

At the moment, the biggest role HRC is playing in the state is co-chairing the Hate Won't Win (HWW) campaign. HWW is an effort to counteract egregious and glaringly anti-queer ads designed to fire up the Republican's outdated base. HWW has also, in recent months, aggressively helped educate and register new voters, receiving more than 38,000 pledges to vote.

"We are so proud to be co-leading the Hate Won't Win coalition with our friends at Equality Michigan," said Robinson, who added that HRC has made "an incredible investment in the state of Michigan that's not just about an election cycle but building power."

Robinson went on to say that pro-equality voters are "fired up" but warned that the issues of the day, including the fight for bodily autonomy, gender-affirming care and "the right to make decisions for ourselves and our families" will not suddenly go away after the election. It's a fight that must continue. "All of these things are intertwined, and no community gets it better than the LGBTQ+ community because we've experienced it generation after generation."

To lead HRC, Robinson will be leaving her position as executive director of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. And though she hasn't even officially started at HRC yet, Robinson has already impressed folks here in Michigan. On Tuesday, Robinson spoke at a ONECampaign for Michigan women's event with Gov. Whitmer and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. She also participated in a HWW phone bank at Affirmations in Ferndale and a meet-and-greet at the ACLU offices in Detroit. She spoke about her work, of course, but it was when she listened that people really noticed.

"She spent a rather insignificant amount of time introducing herself, and the majority of the session was her listening intently to our stories," said Emme Zanotti, vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Party's LGBT&A Caucus. "[She listened to] Royal Oak stories, Detroit stories, stories of trans women, stories of Black women."

Robinson was listening so intently that she didn't want to leave the ACLU's headquarters. "Her team had to drag her out of the room because she was 30 minutes from the airport and her flight was boarding in 20," Zanotti went on, adding that it was obvious that where Robinson feels comfortable is "right in the mix with everyone doing the work on the ground. That 'roll up the sleeves' mentality is going to make waves."

Plus, Robinson comes with good credentials. At Planned Parenthood, Robinson said, "I've seen what it looks like when people who are committed to equality stand up and say enough." Robinson said that HRC "is at the forefront of what it means to fight for dignity and respect for queer folks in every aspect of our lives," including on the policy front.

"Let's put policies into law that will enshrine our rights all over this country so we're not dealing with this patchwork of protections people are living through," she added. "The urgency is clear, but there are also unparalleled opportunities. I'm excited about what HRC has done so far, and I'm excited about the next chapter."

Even before she landed at Planned Parenthood, Robinson was working

See **Kelley Robinson**, page 18

# Remembering Leslie Jordan: Goodbye to One Southern Baptist Sissy From Another

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Leslie Jordan and I had something in common. Unfortunately, I don't much share his delightful wit, delicious Southern charm, undaunting cheerfulness or success in Hollywood. All things I admire and wish I'd had. But we did share a special bond. We belonged to a unique sort of gay fraternity. We were both Southern Baptist Sissies.

Growing up gay in the Southern Baptist church was an experiment in mixed emotions. You're taught Jesus loves you and then, as you and your desire for other boys begins to grow, you're told you're going to hell for something you absolutely cannot control. To be told simultaneously that you're embraced by the bosom of the Lord only to then be potentially cast into the fiery pits of hell is enough to make anyone bipolar. (Poor Leslie was so confused that he famously said he was baptized 14 times trying to drown out the gay.)

I was not, like Leslie, born below the Mason-Dixon Line. But while he hailed from Chattanooga, Tennessee, I did spend my summers in a little hollow called Firebrick just four miles south of the Ohio River in Kentucky. There, my grandfather pastored a tiny hardcore fundamentalist Southern Baptist church. The kind where women were encouraged to wear long shirts, long hair and no make-up. Little gay Jason was so bored. But then there was the singing.

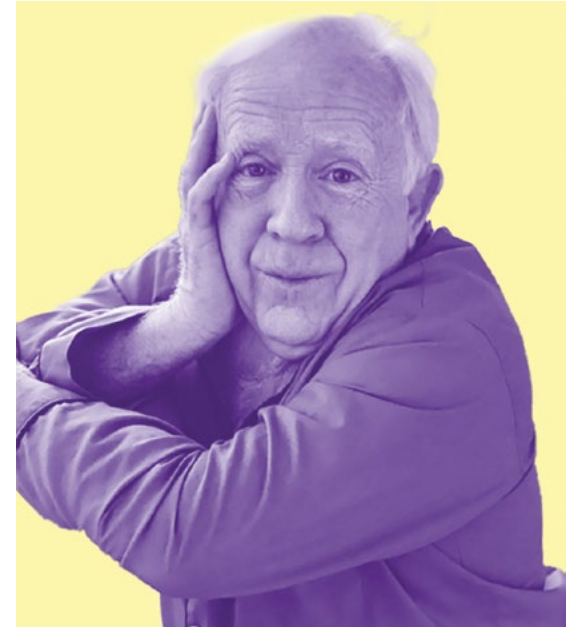
Like Leslie, I loved to sing in church, and I loved that good 'ol hand-clapping, foot-stomping Southern gospel music.

"I've sang all my life in church, and I was in a choir when I was a kid," Leslie said in a 2021 interview with [offtherecorduk.com](http://offtherecorduk.com). "I've never considered myself a singer. But we're told, 'Just sing for the Lord. Sing for the Lord.'"

As oppressive as the Southern Baptist church environment was for a young gay man, there was true entertainment value in the Southern gospel music scene. Handsome, clean-cut, well-dressed male quartets were the norm. But then there were the family groups, of which there were just as many.

One group stood out from the rest, and it featured the woman who sang as if she'd been sent down from the heavens just to minister to the weary and downtrodden, which pretty much summed up the Southern Baptist Sissies of that time.

Her name was Vestal Goodman, of the Happy Goodman Family, and she was fabulous. She wore floor-length sparkling gowns and an enormous, foot-high cluster curl beehive on her head. She always had a lacy hanky in her hand and a smile on her face. She was basically the diva queen of Southern gospel music. And to us Southern Baptist Sissies, she was basically our first gay icon, sort of like the Gaga or Beyoncé of the fundamentalist church.



Leslie Jordan. Courtesy photo

Leslie and I both had a special affinity for Vestal. "I never got to see her, but I've just worshiped her," he said in the same interview. "The Goodman Family, everything they've ever done, I've listened to over the years."

In the '70s, it was not unusual in Southern gay bars to see a drag queen doing Vestal. The church would probably call it blasphemy. But it was really just an homage to a lady who brought comfort to many a queer soul.

Leslie, of course, left the church and the South and headed to Hollywood to seek his fame and fortune. He did guest appearances on a diverse array of shows and sitcoms ranging from "Murphy Brown" to "Star Trek: Voyager." He struggled with substance abuse issues and eventually overcame them. And after that, he made gay history by playing the hilarious Beverley Leslie on the hit show "Will & Grace."

While that will undoubtedly go down as his definitive role — it opened major doors for him and ushered him into the big time — queer fans would likely choose the role of Brother Boy in the Del Shores' "Sordid Lives" movies and short-lived Logo TV series as a close second. He played a misunderstood Tammy Wynette-loving drag queen who had been institutionalized by his family for his flamboyant ways. He also appeared in both the stage play and film "Southern Baptist Sissies," again written and produced by Shores, who shared the same church background as Leslie.

See **Leslie Jordan**, page 16



# Books Matter To All Communities

## The Answer to Dearborn's Protests Lies in the Libraries Themselves



By Kevin Bain

"Everyone's God-given human dignity must be respected, regardless of his or her faith, race, ethnic origin, gender, or social status." That's from the Qur'an — not that

the protestors at Dearborn's Public Schools board meeting espoused it.

The vocal Muslim community in Dearborn has flagrantly attempted to force their own beliefs on all children living in the city. They wish to exert so much control over Dearborn as to steal the fundamental freedom of choosing a book to read.

"Someone else's choice doesn't change who you are." That's from "Red, White & Royal Blue," a queer novel by Casey McQuiston on the list of books the protestors want to ban. Maybe they should read it.

The riotous conflict personally breaks my heart because I grew up in Dearborn and have always felt proud of my diverse community. As a child of the 9/11 era, I have long felt protective of my Muslim neighbors who unfairly suffer bigoted persecution and discrimination. That sense of compassion makes it difficult for me to write against them now, but, as Irish orator and politician Edmund Burke once said, "An event happened, upon which it is difficult to speak, and impossible to be silent."

That event was a recent Dearborn Public Schools board meeting.

I am a gay man from Dearborn, and books have held a special place in my heart my whole life. In fact, I studied comparative literature at the University of Michigan, so settle in for some literary analysis on this whole... debacle.

"When something is bothering me, I seek refuge. No need to travel far; a trip to the realm of literary memory will suffice. For where can one find more noble distraction, more entertaining company, more delightful enchantment than in literature?" ("The Elegance of the Hedgehog," Muriel Barbery).

Literature holds particular importance for marginalized communities because they see minimal representation of themselves in mainstream culture. Finding a story — even if fictional — with characters who resemble them, who they can relate to, can be life-changing. They offer safe havens, as well as wisdom and perspective.

"Red, White & Royal Blue" ends with this note from the author: "To every person in search of somewhere to belong who happened to pick up this book, I hope you found a place in here, even if just for a few pages. You are loved. I wrote this for you. Keep fighting, keep making history, keep looking after one another."

Does that sound like a novel worth banning?

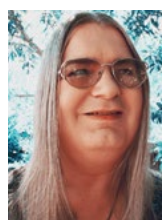
The protestors think so. As the Muslim population approaches a majority in Dearborn, a growing group of them demand the power of imposing their own religious beliefs on everyone else. Islam struggles with an unfortunate discomfort toward the LGBTQ+ community; however, Muslims should be more aware than anyone of

See **Books Matter**, next page



# Sounding the Alarm

## The Transgender Community Has Been Red Meat for Republicans In This Election



By Gwendolyn Ann Smith

I often feel that I am too alarmist. I have spent decades now, deep in the issue

of anti-transgender violence and murder, and I know that colors my views. It is hard to look at things objectively sometimes, without expecting the worst of them.

I am also sure that as much as I'd not want to write a column that is merely me screaming about how awful things may be, you'd be just as unlikely to want to read such. I get it. No one wants to deal with how bad things can be. Times are hard enough.

For years now, we've seen the right using transgender people as a scapegoat, and working to criminalize our lives.

We saw the "bathroom predator" meme in use over trans and LGBTQ+ rights battles, including the successful repeal of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) in 2015. We saw the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act — HB2 — pass in

North Carolina back in 2016, a bathroom bill that required a birth certificate to use sex-segregated public

restrooms in the state. Thankfully, we did see that bill repealed after a major outcry that led to the governor who championed HB2, Pat McCrory, losing re-election.

We've seen newer challenges, with Texas classifying care for transgender kids as abuse, threatening to take trans children away from their parents and placing them in an already overburdened foster care system. We've seen hundreds of bills just this year, attempting to bar trans kids from school restrooms and sports, caregivers threatened with felony charges, and any number of attempts to bar even the mention of transgender people existing.

But this week, we may have slipped into a new level of ill treatment toward transgender people.

Let's back up to April, when Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo, under the guidance of Florida Governor and future Presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis, issued guidance through the Florida Health

Department seeking to bar gender-affirming medical care, as well as "social gender transition," for minors in the state.

Of course, this is Florida, home of the Florida Parental Rights in Education Act (HB1557), better known as the "Don't Say Gay" law. That's already prohibiting even the mention of sexual orientation or gender identity on school grounds.

In August, the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, under DeSantis, finalized new rules that ban health care providers from billing the state's Medicaid program for gender-affirming treatments.

The new rule was pushed through within a month, in spite of substantial protest and pushback.

This, however, is not the worst of it.

Not yet satisfied with the aforementioned moves, The Florida Board of Medicine — also under DeSantis' control — held a meeting to discuss a ban on gender-affirming care for transgender minors statewide.

Now I feel I should mention at this point, for those who may not wholly understand

See **Sounding the Alarm**, next page



## ◀ Books Matter

Continued from previous page

the severe harm inflicted by prejudice and ignorance.

“God loves justice and those who strive to practice it, especially toward people who are different from them in any way, including in matters of religious belief.” (Qur’an, 5:8 and 60:8). Members of the Dearborn Muslim community may not agree with LGBTQ+ books, but that does not mean they should attack them. It certainly does not give them the right. No one in this country — whether they are part of the majority or minority — can decide what anyone else reads, thinks or believes.

And yet, I understand why they feel uncomfortable with LGBTQ+ topics. Muslims are not alone. Many socially conservative groups — and older generations — struggle to grasp modern sexualities and gender identities. Until recently, these relationships simply were not portrayed in media or taught. For too long, a hypothetical perfect image of a family was portrayed as a husband and wife with a couple kids. But “If we only fell in love with people who were perfect for us, then there wouldn’t be so much fuss about love in the first place.” (“Rules of Civility,” Amor Knowles).

“But the truth is, also, simply this: love is

indomitable.” (“Red, White & Royal Blue”). LGBTQ+ love pervades all demographics and no extreme measures will stamp it out. The demands of these protestors will accomplish nothing but psychological, emotional, and perhaps physical harm to children and teens who feel attacked and alone.

Banning books from libraries happens in authoritarian countries like China, Russia and Iran — or in the dystopian worlds of science-fiction novels. Not in the United States of America in the 21st century. That is not who we are. Never was and never should be.

It must be said that the Muslim community has received terrible treatment from Americans who misunderstand them and make prejudiced assumptions. Yet, “There are so many ways of being despicable it quite makes one’s head spin. But the way to be really despicable is to be contemptuous of other people’s pain” (“Giovanni’s Room,” James Baldwin). What if instead of mimicking that hatred, we came together and respected each other?

“It is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts” (Qur’an 22:46).

*Kevin Bain is founder and chair of the City of Detroit’s LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group. He has a master’s in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.*

## ◀ Sounding the Alarm

Continued from previous page

the issue, that care for transgender youth is usually pretty limited. You can socially transition, adopting a new name and taking on the social roll consistent with your gender identity. You can change your mode of attire. In some cases, when puberty is nigh, medication known as “puberty blockers” can be introduced. These were FDA approved in 1993, primarily to treat non-transgender children going through an early puberty.

Youth care doesn’t tend to include feminizing nor masculinizing hormones, not does it tend to include surgical intervention.

This care has shown to be very successful. A ban on such care is opposed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association.

The Florida Board of Medicine meeting, which went on for five hours, was held at the Orlando International Airport. The reason for the unusual venue seems to be that a large number of those seeking to bar the treatment were flying in from out of the state.

As the public comment section of the meeting opened, the first few spoke in favor of the ban. Then, at 45 minutes before the stated public comment period — and, according to some in the room, just before speakers set to rebut the previous comments could speak — Board Member Zachariah P. Zachariah (I swear, I did not make that name up) cut

off comments.

A rough draft of a rule was hurriedly discussed by the board, including the possibility of allowing those already in care to be allowed to continue. Zachariah apparently disagreed, pressing for a vote right then — not a rough draft.

He then declared that the motion passed without announcing a final tally.

One attendee yelled out, saying that “the blood is on your hands!”

Zachariah replied, “That’s OK.”

Indeed, it would seem that Zachariah, as well as DeSantis above him, are more than willing to see transgender people done away with. I really do not want to sound alarmist, but Florida — joining Texas — is no longer a safe place for transgender people nor their supporters. The state itself is seeking to cause real harm to transgender people.

DeSantis knows he is largely unpopular, especially after his failed actions surrounding Hurricane Ian. He is in an election and, as mentioned above, very clearly has a desire to get into the White House. He surely sees transgender people as a stepping stone in his ambitions, red meat he can offer his base in these just-before-an-election days.

That there are real lives literally on the line is irrelevant to him.

There will be one more meeting, Nov. 4, at the Holiday Inn Orlando-Disney Springs. I do hope my Florida counterparts give them hell.

I’m not being alarmist: Our lives are very much on the line.

## CREEP OF THE WEEK

### If You Chose Not to Vote, You Made a Bad Choice and Will Be Punished



By D’Anne Witkowski

If you’re reading this, it means you survived Election Day. Congratulations.

At the time of this writing it is Election Eve. Not to be confused with Christmas Eve, though it would be pretty cool if Santa showed up tomorrow.

There is so much at stake in this election. I feel overwhelmed just thinking about it. Should the Republicans retake the U.S. House, they have already said they will begin impeachment proceedings for President Biden. On what grounds I don’t know, but they are professional liars, so I’m sure they’ll think of something.

Should the Republicans also take the U.S. Senate, who knows? Maybe they’ll have enough votes to remove Biden. They’ve also stated very clearly that a national abortion ban is on the horizon. They cannot wait to jail patients and doctors and to criminally investigate everyone who has a miscarriage.

Here in Michigan, hopefully Democrats have gained the majority in the senate — which would be the first time in almost 40 years that the senate wasn’t in Republican hands. And maybe Democrats will even take the Michigan house! That would be amazing. This is assuming that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson are all reelected (and here’s hoping, because all of their Republican opponents are unqualified and unhinged).

In Michigan we have to take at least one chamber (Republicans currently control both). Or we are, as the professional pundits say, pretty fucked. Republicans have a voter suppression ballot initiative tucked up their sleeves. It isn’t on the ballot, mind you. The people don’t get to vote on it. But because of a little oopsie-daisy in the state constitution, if a petition gets over a certain threshold of signatures then the legislature can just adopt it. And the governor can’t veto it. Their plan is literally the end of democratic elections in Michigan. Which should surprise no one since Republicans have made the end of democratic elections their goal nationwide.

So if you sat this election out, man I hope whatever you did instead was worth it. (99.9% chance that it wasn’t though!)

I try very hard to understand voter apathy.

And I get it. Some things are just not as interesting to some people as they are to others. Take football, for example. My 13-year-old son is really into it. I, however, am really not. When he talks about it my eyes kind of glaze over and I hear white noise in my head (it’s actually tinnitus, but still). I love him and I do appreciate his enthusiasm. But I don’t share it.

The thing is, whether the Detroit Lions win or lose doesn’t affect my civil rights. Or yours! Election outcomes, on the other hand, absolutely do! But football seems to have far more people who are into it.

It honestly makes me feel dead inside that there are people who still support Republicans even after what happened on Jan. 6, 2021. By now the vast majority of the party are a-ok with Trump supporters breaking into the Capitol Building in D.C., assaulting police officers, seeking to harm and kill elected officials and shitting in the hallways.

Most people don’t realize how extreme the Republican Party has become because, as I mentioned earlier, most people don’t pay super close attention to politics.

While out talking to voters in Michigan, I knocked on the door of a 19-year-old who told me she wasn’t going to vote. When I asked why, she said, “I dunno. I’m just busy with other stuff.” It was maddening. I explained that reproductive rights were on the ballot (they are literally, Proposal 3 would restore the rights lost when the Supreme Court overturned Roe) and she said she would think about voting. Probably just to humor me.

But I am not humored. I am exhausted.

This could be the last free and fair election in Michigan. That’s not an exaggeration. While that 19-year old is busy doing “other stuff,” others will be deciding a huge part of her life for her. Anyone who can become pregnant should be fighting to save reproductive rights. It’s a personal issue, it’s an economic issue, it’s a healthcare issue.

I hope voters approve Proposal 3. And I hope this turns out to be a very good year for Democrats. But I know that there will be outcomes of this election that will be painful and hard for years to come.

Democracy is fragile. The Republic is not guaranteed. The U.S. is a baby of a country. And, sadly, we seem to have learned very little from history.

Prove me wrong, America! I’m begging you.



A close-up portrait of Pierre Jean Gonzalez, a bald man with a goatee, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# Meet the Gay Latinx Actor Playing Alexander Hamilton in Detroit

## Pierre Jean Gonzalez on His Journey to the Spotlight

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

In the musical bearing his name, Alexander Hamilton is a man all too aware of both his impermanence and his influence. There could never be enough time to do all that he dreams of doing, and he's not about to "throw away his shot." Pierre Jean Gonzalez, who plays Hamilton in the national North American touring cast, seems to be living a moment not dissimilar to the role he dreamed of playing.

"It's a big spotlight," Gonzalez tells BTL on a recent Zoom call. "And that's why I'm not taking it for granted."

Gonzalez knows full well that time in the spotlight can be fleeting. And while the spotlight is shining on him, he wants to do what he can to light up issues he feels have been obscured in darkness for too long. It's why his t-shirt prominently displays the logo for his production company, DominiRican Productions, a passion project created with his work and life partner Cedric Leiba, Jr. And it's why he tends to lead with his identity as a Latinx gay man as much as possible.

All that is not to say Gonzalez is unwilling to talk about his experience with the mind-blowingly popular musical (the Broadway production alone has grossed more than \$1 billion), which will play the Fisher Theatre in Detroit Nov. 15-Dec. 4. "Let's talk about 'Hamilton,'" he says, flashing a hopelessly charming, 100-watt grin. "But at the same time, I'm also going to throw in my mission for this show. What this show represents is aligned to everything that I represent as an artist."

"Everybody can have their opinions about 'Hamilton.' There shouldn't just be one 'Hamilton,'" he continues. "But this show gives opportunity for other playwrights of color, other queer, nonbinary, trans

people, to see themselves in these roles and be like, 'You know what? I can write something.'"

Playing Hamilton has been an exhilarating experience, he says, despite an ill-timed pandemic pause. Gonzalez was set to debut on March 27, 2020, but after a few delays and increasing chatter throughout his hometown, New York City, it became clear that "Hamilton" was going dark along with the rest of the arts world. It would be another 18 months before Gonzalez finally took his first official curtain call as Alexander Hamilton.

While many of us spent a significant portion of those 18 months hunkered down, counting the days until "normal" might return, Gonzalez doesn't seem to run that way. Hamilton himself, composer Lin-Manuel Miranda tells us through song, was a prolific, frenetic author who wrote like he was "running out of time," and when Gonzalez was given the gift of time he didn't expect to have, he wasn't about to waste it, either.

While the world lurched uncertainly, Gonzalez and Leiba considered where to devote their energies. What was most important? How could they make the most impact, together, even within the confines of pandemic limitations? Those conversations eventually birthed DominiRican Productions, a co-venture focused on increasing representation in media for overlooked stories — Afro-Latinx stories, in particular.

"I think it was a need at first to distract ourselves because of the craziness that was happening," Gonzalez says. Not only was the couple coming to terms with the realities of what the pandemic

Pierre Jean Gonzalez. Photo: Ambe J.

See **Pierre Jean Gonzalez**, page 26



# Home Ownership Made Easy



**Douglas Miller**

Mortgage Consultant

Direct or Text 248-983-3595

dmiller@genisyscu.org

NMLS #: 1026545

## Mortgage Options for Everyone

- 95% Loan to Value (LTV) Purchase options with no Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI)\*
- New Construction and Renovation Loans
- 100% LTV Dr. Loans



NMLS #409008



\*Available on purchase transactions with a minimum FICO of 700.

genisyscu.org



# Monkeypox Vaccine Available!



Affirmations  
290 W 9 Mile Rd, Ferndale

Updated clinic dates are  
available on our social  
media @goaffirmations



## ALL DATES ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

- Call 1-800-848-5533
- Choose option 3
- Answer a 5 minute screener to assess eligibility
- Set your appointment
- Arrive at Affirmations at your appointment time

One dose will provide protection. To be FULLY vaccinated you must receive a second dose. Call the Oakland County Health Department to schedule your first or second dose.

## The Nutcracker with a twist!

Mark Morris  
Dance Group  
Presents

# THE HARD NUT

DETROIT OPERA HOUSE  
DEC 3 / 7:30 PM  
DEC 4 / 2:30 PM

Set to Tchaikovsky's complete  
original score, performed LIVE  
by the Detroit Opera Orchestra

Sunday matinee includes family friendly activities

**Detroit Opera**



DetroitOpera.org

TICKETS  
START  
AT JUST  
**\$29**



BUY NOW!

## CultureVerse

Here's to the  
creators  
& keepers  
of art, culture,  
and knowledge.

CultureVerse provides technology,  
training, consultation, and other  
resources in order to create  
equitable and sustainable  
opportunities for artists, educators,  
students, and preservationists.

LEARN MORE AT [WWW.CULTUREVERSE.ORG](http://WWW.CULTUREVERSE.ORG)  
BACKGROUND IMAGE: ARTWORK BY MIKE HAN





## ◀ Leslie Jordan

Continued from page 11

His time on “Will & Grace” took Leslie’s career to a new level. And as he got older, his popularity continued to grow. Leslie arguably reached the peak of his powers during the pandemic, when he was in his mid-60s. His warmth and charming accent helped accentuate his sincerity and childlike humor in the social media videos he posted. A year into COVID-19, he had amassed some 4 million followers on Instagram. (By the time of his death, he had over 11 million followers between Facebook, IG and TikTok.)

Leslie’s vivaciousness and effervescence shone through in his videos. And it was during this time that he seemed to reach back to his roots and expose the world to the Southern gospel music of his youth. Jordan admittedly didn’t have the best voice. But he sang, along with his friend Travis Howard, who accompanied him on guitar, the old songs and hymns of his youth with vigor and pride.

“We got the Baptist Hymnal, but we knew every word to every song, and we’d sing,” he said. “And not that I even go to church now, but I started thinking. When you’re raised like that, these songs bring comfort. I just love singing them, and that’s a wonderful thing.”

The videos became so popular that Leslie even went on to record a gospel album called “Company’s Comin’” full of duets with legitimate vocalists such as Tanya Tucker, Brandi Carlile and even Dolly Parton, who said in a post following Leslie’s death that he was like a little brother to her. He included traditional songs such as “This Light of Mine,” “Where the Soul Never Dies” and “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder.” The album became so popular that it earned Leslie an appearance on the Grand Ole Opry.

“It was pretty amazing the memories that it brought back, because I don’t have any ax to grind now,” Leslie said in an interview with Southern Accents Radio last year of working on his album. “I’m 66 years old. I’ve worked through any problems. I’m perfectly happy with who I am, what I am.”

Leslie’s videos and album introduced Southern gospel music to a whole new audience. And for those of us who grew up on it, he brought back bittersweet memories. He posted his last Instagram video the day before he died. In it, he sang the hymn “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder.”

I’m glad Leslie laid his issues with the church down. Me, I’m still struggling with mine. But I do still believe in God. And in heaven. And Leslie, they may have booted you out of the church, but I have a feeling that when the roll is called up yonder, you’ll be there.



Lily Tomlin at the Willis Wonderland event. Courtesy photo

## ◀ Lily Tomlin

Continued from page 8

I think it really does. I think so many people, especially from our era, were from Detroit.

### But you didn’t actually meet Allee here in Detroit?

No, I didn’t meet her in Detroit. Not that I’m aware. I was looking at her bio and her awards on the internet. And she came to L.A. in ’69, which is the year I’d just gone to California to be on [the TV series] “Laugh-In.”

### Did you two ever bond over Detroit?

Oh yeah. If you’re from Detroit, I mean, it’s in your blood. You just don’t turn away from it. It’s imprinted. I thought it was the greatest city in the world. It was gritty, it was hardcore, it was political. I mean, I lived in that kind of neighborhood. And then, a very short distance for me were the rich sections like Sherwood Forest and Palmer Park, Palmer Woods and then I was aware of Grosse Pointe. And my first character was a Grosse Pointe matron. I did it in a college show.

### Wait, really?

Yeah. It was just about the time that Grosse Pointe had found out that it had a merit system where it rejected sales of ownership to anybody of questionable origins. Which meant not Waspy. Kathy Ford became a good friend of mine, and she was Henry Ford’s third wife. And I’ve had so many connections. When I was doing “9 to 5,” she was stopped

in the car with Henry when he said [his famous line], “Don’t complain, don’t explain.” We were on the same page in Time Magazine when they had those old news items, and Kathy and I were both there. And I renewed my friendship with her around that time.

### Aside from the website, what else did you work on with Allee professionally?

She would do things at the gay center [Los Angeles LGBT Center] and I would present her, or I would present Bubbles. And she would hang her China on the walls. One time she did a plate of me and my partner, Jane [Wagner]. Separate plates. And they were so outrageously funny. When I walked in and I saw those plates on the wall, I started laughing. I



Photo courtesy of Lily Tomlin

just was overcome with laughter.

### What did these plates look like?

I have this big red, smiling mouth and stringy looking hair, but you knew it was me. And then Jane was really stoic, blonde, passive, soft smile. You want me to send you a photograph of them? You’ll get a kick out of them. I’m sorry. I’m forcing all this stuff on you.

### Oh, are you kidding me? Nothing is being forced on me. I want to see those plates, Lily.

I should start taking them on the road with me! Anyway, I know I was older than Allee. I was five or six or seven years older than she was. But she went to Mumford High School, which was almost in my neighborhood. But I wound up going to Cass Tech because I was in the northern district, and Northern High School was a really tough high school. And so, a lot of kids went over to Cass Tech. And it was supposed to be where the smart kids were anyway. And I was happy to play that role and fell right into it. They weren’t all that smart, believe me.

*[Publicist chimes in with a heads that we have five minutes left.]*

Oh my god. Wait. And so, the best part was... I grew up in a Black neighborhood. I couldn’t stand the Beatles. I mean, not the Beatles, but whoever would be the big stars of... They were ’64, I was already out of high school. But like Pat Boone or some... don’t

say any denigrating stuff. Even Elvis. I didn’t think Elvis was so hot because I liked all the Black artists and dancing. It was so much cooler.

### Before we wrap, I’d like to ask you about the Night of Wonders event. It sounded magical. And it also sounded very queer to have you, RuPaul and Paul Ruebens there. What was that like?

It was wonderful because everybody was so devoted to Allee. They’re all freakish, anyway. And they have great fun and they love to dress up. And they’re running back and forth on the stage and carrying signs. It was filled with artistic joy.

### Lastly, Lily, what do you have coming up?

Well, Jane Fonda and I, right after “Grace and Frankie,” like a month later, we went into this movie with [director] Paul Weitz. I’d done a couple of movies with him before and I really like him. It’s called “Moving On.” It’s a very small, intimate little movie. And I know they’ve sold it and they’re negotiating the distribution, but that’s all I know. And we had great fun doing that. And then about a month after that we did “80 for Brady” with Jane [Fonda] and I, and Sally Field and Rita Moreno. And Tom Brady.

### You have to know, Lily, but that cast right there is a queer man’s dream.

It is, right? My god. Something appeals! But Tom Brady is... it was just none of us knew anything about football.

But it was great fun; we had fun with the director. We had fun doing the project. In fact, they’re having a screening today and a few people are going. I’m not going. The first time I see it, I don’t want to have to be with other people.

### Do you like to watch your movies by yourself first?

Yeah, or with just people I know real closely. It’s going to be at the agency and there’ll probably be a lot of agents there. I’m not as brazen and outgoing as I might appear.

### You and Jane have spent a lot of time on screen together over the last decade. What’s that feeling like to know that you are so beloved on your own, but also so beloved together, especially by LGBTQ+ fans?

I’m so grateful that I have an audience in the gay community. And it doesn’t compute to you that you’re anything. I realize that people like “Grace and Frankie,” or enough people liked it. And I know that over the years I’ve had hardcore fans that I’ve really enjoyed being with and relating to, because I’ve kept the stories of my characters going all those years.

*To contribute to the Willis Wonderland Foundation, visit the official site at [one.bidpal.net/williswonderlandfoundation](http://one.bidpal.net/williswonderlandfoundation).*



BROADWAY'S DEARLY BELOVED  
MUSICAL COMES TO DETROIT

# BEETLEJUICE


The Musical. The Musical. The Musical.



**ON SALE DETROIT OPERA HOUSE  
JAN. 31 - FEB. 12 • BROADWAYINDETROIT.COM**

GROUPS (10+) SUBJECT: BEETLEJUICE  
BROADWAYINDETROITGROUPS@THEAMBASSADORS.COM


OC - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5 7:30PM



*at Hodges...*

**SUBARU**

PDF-21 **OUTBACK**  
Special Order Your  
Special Edition



**HODGES  
SUBARU**  
From Detroit's "Subaru and Outback"

21205 Woodward Ave • Ferndale • MI • 48220  
248.547.8800 • [www.hodgessubaru.com](http://www.hodgessubaru.com)  
HOURS: MONDAY - 9:00AM - 7:00PM  
TUESDAY - FRIDAY 9:00AM - 6:00PM  
SATURDAY 10:00AM - 2:00PM

EXCELLENT SERVICE • OUTSTANDING SELECTION • FANTASTIC PRICES....


EVERYDAY!

X	S	T	A	T	P	S	V	J	R
C	Y	F	F	E	R	E	L	T	I
D	B	U	C	O	E	K	I	V	S
O	C	S	A	R	V	Y	F	L	K
C	M	Q	T	H	E	S	E	K	H
S	C	R	E	E	N	I	N	G	S
Z	H	C	A	N	T	E	R	X	A
U	N	A	C	T	I	O	N	L	L
B	J	K	O	E	O	T	S	G	T
E	W	B	A	F	N	E	S	J	H

## Find answers to a longer, healthier life with HIV.

Michiganders with HIV are living fuller lives than ever before. Getting screened for colorectal, cervical, breast and lung cancer today can lead to healthier tomorrows.

See how the Cancer Screening Project helps at [Michigan.gov/CaSPr](http://Michigan.gov/CaSPr).



Michigan Department of Health & Human Services



## ◀ Trans Violence

Continued from page 6

trans voices when tackling issues impacting a community. Both the Council and the Detroit Police Department include trans members, Woods tells BTL. “This creates an intersection where community and law enforcement can work together to maintain and grow a relationship with the LGBTQ+ community,” she said. That relationship paves the way for a continuous collaboration and opens an avenue for addressing dissension between police and the community.”

Wood stresses that her stance is not for there to be preferential treatment to LGBTQ+ community members. Her goal, she said, is “equality across the board and surety that our community is treated respectfully and with dignity as human beings, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.” One of Wood’s key duties is providing LGBTQ+ sensitivity, awareness and diversity training to officers and civilian members of the police department.

Woods cited several specific ways the Council is working to affect change in public and not-so-public ways.

First, the Council makes an effort to be visible in the community, hosting events like coat and holiday food drives, a visibility bike ride, a community “family reunion” picnic and publicly supporting events like the Motor City Pride Parade.

Behind the scenes, the Council has made moves like placing LGBTQ+ advocates in the Major Crimes division and working to create policies around topics like using accurate gender-identity markers (including pronouns) within systems at the police department, courts, jails, businesses and organizations. Finally, the Council also advocates for policy that fosters respect for sexual orientation.

Trans voices are integral to this work. Ultimately, Woods said, “Our trans community is part of the conversation, has a seat at the table and has a voice and platform to ensure that any specific need from their police department, city government or community is met — and heard.”

The Detroit Mayor’s Office also allocates resources to LGBTQ+ advocacy. Mayor’s Office Liaison Brad Dick is the senior adviser to the LGBT employee resource groups and serves on the boards of several

organizations working to “make sure that crimes like the tragic and senseless killing of trans women do not happen,” he wrote in an email to BTL.

Dick views his role in tandem with people like Woods and other City of Detroit advocates. Together, he said, they are engaged in a shared goal: ensuring the city is a safe place for all, including LGBTQ+ residents and visitors.

## Community advocacy plays a key role

Outside the walls of City Hall and the Detroit Police Headquarters, the impact of crimes like trans homicides hits differently. Viewed through a wider lens, the efforts being made at the city level are indeed important, even vital, but when another murder hits the news, shockwaves reverberate through the trans community at an individual level.

People like Laura Jadwin-Cakmak, research director of the Resilience + Resistance Collective at the University of Michigan, are working to pinpoint those individual impacts. To that end, the Collective often partners with the Trans Sistas of Color Project.

Jadwin-Cakmak said Black trans people in Detroit are “absolutely” aware about the frequent violent crimes committed against Black trans people — Black trans women, especially. These crimes are not new, but she said increased media attention is. “This awareness in the media and among trans communities is because of long community activism and political and media advocacy by Black and brown trans women in Detroit,” she said.

Jadwin-Cakmak points to organizations like the Trans Sistas of Color Project, which, under the guidance of longtime advocate Lilianna Reyes, provides direct services and resources like emergency funds, self-defense training and psychosocial support programs. Trans women of color in Detroit also routinely partner with police and prosecutors to increase reporting and prosecution of crimes against trans people.

Despite the work being done to protect trans lives, “the threat of violence is ever-present for many of the Black and brown trans women I’ve spoken with,” Jadwin-Cakmak said. “Folks are aware of their surroundings and prepare self-defense strategies, [and] check in with each other to make sure they are safe.”

Initiatives like the Love Her Collective, a community-academic partnership with the Trans Sistas of Color Project, connect women with mental health and trauma resources. The Collective’s Kicking It with the Gurlz campaign helps trans women of color heal from trauma through group sessions and individual peer counseling.

Rachel Crandall Crocker, executive director of Transgender Michigan, says her group believes in bringing the community together to support each other. To that end, the organization offers peer help groups and events like a recent Halloween celebration that coincided with Transgender Michigan’s 25th anniversary and Rachel’s 25th birthday (as Rachel). “All our events are so people won’t have to be lonely by themselves,” she notes. “They are joyous events.”

While Transgender Michigan is often at the forefront of political and social issues, Crandall Crocker says the social events serve an equally important purpose: providing a safe place for people to just “be” and to see the larger community of assistance available to them.

Another local organization, Stand with Trans, hosted its third annual Trans Empowerment Month in October, themed “THRIVE 365.” Transgender and non-binary youth and young adults up to age 24 participated in workshops, panels and performances in person and online aimed at helping this community “live their best lives,” according to a news release.

TG Detroit’s annual TransFUSION convention is another example of how organizations are working to lift up the trans community while educating society at large. The annual event, as BTL reported in August, focuses on empowerment, self-love and the power of simply existing as individuals in public. This year, event organizers took around 100 attendees to MGM Grand Casino in downtown Detroit, where, by the end of the night, the women were dancing together with the mainstream crowd.

Looking ahead, it’s challenging to imagine a Detroit that feels truly safe at all times for trans community members, but this is one issue where individual contributions are making a measurable impact. In so many ways, it all comes down to three simple, critical facts that remain true whether detractors acknowledge it or not: Trans people exist, are loved, and their lives matter.

## ◀ Kelley Robinson

Continued from page 11

for the cause. She got her start as a field organizer with President Obama’s reelection campaign. “She cut her teeth doing community organizing,” Zanotti said. “To me, that instantly signals where her priorities have been and will be — right here with the community.”

“I’m a community organizer every day of the week,” she told BTL. “I care about people, and I care about our stories. As challenging as this moment is, I’ve learned that the power of our people cannot be stopped.”

Equality Michigan Executive Director Erin Knott said that she looks forward to working with Robinson. In the meantime, Knott said the EM/HRC partnership has worked well so far, thanks in part to HRC Michigan State Director Amritha Venkataraman.

“Amritha and I agreed that with our combined power, we could enact real change,” said Knott. “Both organizations have brought their time, talent and treasure to [the] #HateWontWin coalition, and have worked tirelessly since June to advance our common goal of ensuring that LGBTQ+ voices get off the sidelines and turn OUT and vote this cycle.”

Venkataraman agreed.

“At HRC, we know that our strength is in numbers,” she said in a coalition press release. “It’s vital that we partner with our allies — sharing our collective resources, knowledge and motivations — to get the vote out. Equality Michigan and HRC both recognized that the stakes were high and that LGBTQ+ voices matter now more than ever.”

No matter what happened at the polls this week, the EQMI/HRC partnership will continue.

“Anti-LGBTQ+ attacks are not

going to go away after election day,” Knott said. “Equality Michigan and HRC are committed to continuing our collaboration so that our shared values and priorities become a reality for all LGBTQ+ Michiganders, especially LGBTQ+ youth who have been the target of political attacks this cycle. Our unique, one-of-a-kind partnership is a proven model that other states must adopt in order to ensure that we are treated fairly and equally and that love trumps hate.”



HRC president Kelley Robinson at the ONECampaign for Michigan event Nov. 1. Photo: Rick Osentoski/AP Images for Human Rights Campaign

Robinson echoed that thought in her final words to BTL. She said that “we are in a moment where we have a politically motivated minority of extremists who are wreaking havoc on our community. They’re attacking our kids, especially our trans kids. They’re fueling hate speech online, and they’re advancing these bills that have nothing to do with making our communities safer.”

Robinson said the attacks are “about tormenting the most marginalized community. More than half of Americans are voting on a ballot that has an election denier on it. It’s a moral crisis for our country.”

Despite that, Robinson said she sees cause for optimism, saying that we are at a turning point. “I believe there’s a lot of hopefulness. I believe we’ll be able to make the kind of cultural strides that are needed to stamp out this kind of cruelty with a love and care that is really who we are as Americans.”







alzheimer's association®

**LGBTQ+ people become caregivers at a higher rate than the general population.**

---

**We can help.**

24/7 Helpline:  
800.272.3900

[alz.org/gmc/offerings](https://alz.org/gmc/offerings)

RAINBOW GETAWAYS

PREMIER LGBTQ TRAVEL CONCIERGE

Celebrity Cruises®

JOURNEY WONDERFULL™

**WE BELIEVE IN OPENING UP THE WORLD FOR EVERYONE**








Ship Registry: Malta | Rainbow Getaways is a registered trademark of Rainbow Getaways LLC | Florida Seller of Travel No. ST43282

**BLACK FRIDAY SAVINGS**

**ALL MONTH LONG AT VARSITY!**



2023 Ford Bronco Sport

Ford employees, don't forget same-sex domestic partners & immediate family members can share your A/Z Plan savings also!

**ASK ABOUT HOME DELIVERY**



**Brian Johnston**  
Sales Associate  
734-332-1803  
[bjohnston@varsityford.com](mailto:bjohnston@varsityford.com)

**Varsity FORD**

Easy Access Off I-94 • OPEN SATURDAYS  
3480 Jackson Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
[VarsityFord.com](https://VarsityFord.com) • 888-996-0362





**CITY OF DETROIT**  
HEALTH Department

**NO CAP!**

**PREVENT HIV WITH 1 PILL A DAY**

**To see if PrEP is right for you:**

- Visit 50 E. Canfield, Detroit, MI
- Call (313) 577-9100
- Scan the QR barcode or visit [bit.ly/35C7JA8](https://bit.ly/35C7JA8)





DALE'S LAKEFRONT COTTAGES - CASEVILLE, MI


# 4 BEDROOM LAKE HOUSE

SPECIAL RATES FOR FALL,  
WINTER, AND SPRING!



SLEEPS 10!  
BOOK NOW  
FOR SUMMER  
2023!  
(989) 856-8480


DALESLAKEFRONTCOTTAGES.NET




*Tis the  
Season*

Looking for holiday gift inspiration?

All that glitters and shimmers is inside our digital look book. Find something for everyone on your list in one place!



SCAN TO EXPLORE  
OUR LOOKBOOK



New Location!  
300 S. Maple Rd., Ann Arbor  
734.994.5111 | LewisJewelers.com

CHIC	REPS	TEAMS
ROTH	OMIT	EXITS
ESAI	BILE	LARVA
WELL	WELL	WELL
SALIERI	TSTRAP	
	ATOMIC	OWE
MORASS	THOUGHT	
ASONE	TNT	FRUIT
ISMELLED	SLEEPY	
DIA	EASTLA	
SENORA	OUTAGES	
	GINANDRE	GRET
PEARL	LEAP	LORE
ALBEE	MATE	OPIE
CLASS	SLED	WEED

T-shirt Quote  
Puzzle on page 25



(Left to right) Sarah Cleaver and Kate Peterson in 2006. Courtesy photo

# An Already Emotional Michigan Reunion For Nervous But Excited

## How Kate Peterson and Sarah Cleaver Have Kept Their Cherished Friendship Going 850 Miles Apart

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

When Kate Peterson and Sarah Cleaver take the stage at The Ark on Nov. 11, expect some happy tears from the duo known collectively as Nervous But Excited. After all, it’s been a decade since the beloved “pleasantly aggressive” folk group last played the Ann Arbor venue.

Even talking about playing with Cleaver again brings Peterson to the edge of tears. “Every time we get together, there’s a couple songs we play, where I just immediately start crying,” she says. “I could cry right now thinking about it, honestly, because it’s something special — it’s something outside my body, I feel like, when we sing together.”

It’s clear, hanging out on a recent Zoom call with Peterson and Cleaver, that there’s still plenty of love between these two musicians. “Sarah is one of my very favorite people in

the entire world,” Peterson says. “I would not have chosen to spend so much of my life with someone that I didn’t love as much as I do her.”

Ultimately, the end of Nervous But Excited’s touring years was something that happened not because of a single event or bad blood. For Cleaver, it was just time to explore other parts of her life. “A huge part of it,” she says, “is being tired. It’s a hard life, and I think if you want to do other things, like have kids or a different kind of career, there really isn’t room to explore that.” As much as both women loved being together and making music, and as much as fans seemed to love them right back, at a certain point, the right move was moving on.

Ten years later, both Peterson and Cleaver seem content with their divergent paths, which have never really meandered too far away from the other’s, despite a significant increase in geographical distance. The space between the two — Peterson



is based in Ypsilanti and Cleaver is raising a family 850 miles away in Kittery, Maine — hasn't hampered a lifelong friendship based on mutual admiration and support.

These days, Cleaver is raising two young kids with her wife, Shannon, and working as a hospice social worker. "It's a really rewarding job, and it's also a job that allows me to play a lot more music than what I would have ever imagined, to a population that is very grateful," she says.

Peterson is still performing live music in Michigan, often with her wife, Leah, who often provides harmonies and stays busy working as a graphic and web designer and video editor. That's when Peterson isn't owning players on the pickleball court, according to Cleaver. "[Kate] has a very booming pickleball career — let's not leave that out," she says. "She's been in it to win it for many years, even if she's not showing her trophy shelf on this Zoom call."

Nervous But Excited reunited in September for a show in New Hampshire, closer to Cleaver's family. The two upcoming shows, billed as the finals shows they will perform, will mark the band's return to Michigan. In addition to Nervous But Excited's reunion show at The Ark, they will also reunite to play during the East Lansing Women in the Arts Festival on Nov. 12. The band's former manager Susie Giang, who introduced the pair back in the early 2000s, will join the pair on bass and banjo, and multi-instrumentalist Murray Stewart-Jones will sit in on drums during some songs.

Why now? Peterson says the reunion shows were the brainchild of Susan Frazier, who books artists for the Women in the Arts Festival. Frazier suggested the idea and when Peterson realized the 10-year mark was coming up, she and Cleaver started planning in earnest. "We both just agreed that it would be really fun. We were both like, 'Well, we hope everybody still remembers us,' and it turns out that they do," Peterson says.

It was the Women in the Arts Festival where Peterson and Cleaver first started to get to know one another some 20 years ago. Cleaver remembers Peterson as a "little bit of a lady about the town" when they first met. "You were much cooler and popular," she tells Peterson during the call. "It may have been a little bit of a stalking situation, with me thinking 'I just want to be friends with Kate,' and what would it take? I ended up a winner on that end."

Giang seems unsurprised that longtime fans are looking forward to the reunion shows. "Kate and Sarah are some of the most important folks in my life, and I am so excited to be back in this moment and on stage with them again," Giang says. "Nervous But Excited has always been about building community with song and sway. Their music is vulnerable and so relatable, and they bring folks healing and laughter — if you were lucky to be at any of their shows, you know exactly what I mean. Their songs and art made us connected, and their community and humanness helped us belong."

Peterson says reuniting at The Ark holds special significance, too, which is why \$5 of every ticket sold will go back to the venue. "I saw Patty Griffin there when I was 17, and I feel like that was a switch for me. That's when I really found folk music," she remembers. "And later, someone asked me my goals as a musician, and one of those was to headline at The Ark, which felt completely unreasonable, something that was never going to happen."

Over the years, Nervous But Excited would go on to play

many times at the venerable venue that has helped launch the careers of artists as varied as Ani DiFranco and Iggy Pop over its 57-year history. Perhaps The Ark had a role to play in Peterson and Cleaver's success, too. The duo's storied, decade-long career included sharing stages with not only DiFranco, but indie and folk mainstays like Iron and Wine, Ben Gibbard and Utah Phillips.

Nervous But Excited played over 600 shows throughout the U.S. and Canada between 2004-2012 and released three studio albums, a live album and three EPs. In addition to frequent collaborations with Giang and Stewart-Jones, Nervous But Excited worked with Theo Katzman (Vulfpeck), Allison Russell (Po' Girl, Birds of Chicago), Joshua Davis (Steppin' in It, "The Voice"), Chris Bathgate, Girlyman, Frontier Ruckus, Hana Malhas, Katie Sawicki and Lyndell Montgomery.

Peterson estimates that 30 to 40 percent of a Nervous But Excited shows are spent on banter between the two musicians and with the audience, an element sure to carry through to the reunion shows. "It's a big part of who we've always been. We get a little chatty, and we have fun up there," she says. In fact, she and Cleaver picked the band name "Nervous But Excited" partly to describe the energy those conversations inspired. "Our presentation is loose and fun, but also very serious — it's a roller coaster in the best kind of way. I love roller coasters," Peterson adds.

When Nervous But Excited takes the stage this time around,



(Left to right) Kate Peterson and Sarah Cleaver connecting across the miles in 2022. Courtesy photo

Peterson suspects longtime fans will appreciate the addition of ASL interpretation — something Peterson insisted on — and may be surprised to hear a new quality in their musicianship. "We're a little bit older, a little bit more set in ourselves," she explains. "One thing that keeps coming up for me is that we've both been through some loss in the last 10 years — Sarah is immersed in it every day. Our shows have always had some element of catharsis that we bring, but I feel like when we were practicing, our partners said something's different. Some things feel more mature, maybe."

For her part, Cleaver attributes a potential shift in tone at least partly to intent. These days, it doesn't feel like her job because it isn't. "We're not trying to sell this music anymore," she explains. "We're not trying to make a living. We're just doing it because we love it."

*Nervous But Excited performs at The Ark in Ann Arbor Nov. 11 and the East Lansing Women in the Arts Festival Nov. 12. More information at [nervousbutexcited.com](http://nervousbutexcited.com).*

## ALLEGRIA VILLAGE

Age 55+ Maintenance-Free Apartment Community



### TOP-NOTCH AMENITIES

Fitness Center  
All-Season Swimming Pool  
Bocce Ball Court  
9 Hole Putting Green  
Comerica Bank  
Convenience Store  
Library  
Climate-Controlled Walkways  
100+ Classes/Clubs & More

### PEACE OF MIND

SAGECare Platinum Certified  
Maintenance-Free Living  
Gated Community & 24/7 Security

### AFFORDABILITY

Rents starting at \$1,500  
Utilities Included (excluding phone and cable)  
Wi-Fi Included  
No Buy-Ins or Entrance Fees



Schedule a tour and see for yourself, call 313-584-1000. 15101 Ford Rd., Dearborn, MI, 48126 • [allegriavillage.com](http://allegriavillage.com)





**SIGOURNEY WEAVER**

# The Actor and Activist Merge



Sigourney Weaver. Photo: Denis Makarenko

## ‘Call Jane’ Star on Playing a Lesbian Abortion Leader in Her New Movie

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

**U**rgent, timely, crucial. As we find ourselves thrust into the post-Roe era, following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in June to overturn the constitutional right to abortion established by the 1972 Roe v. Wade ruling, it’s impossible not to use those words when describing “Call Jane.” One of the movie’s stars, Sigourney Weaver, was, mostly, just as gobsmacked as the rest of us. But

the movie, made before the Dobbs v. Jackson decision sent shivers down the backs of anyone in favor of letting people have full ownership of their bodies, has even more real-world relevance.

Directed by Phyllis Nagy (who wrote “Carol”), the film is about the Chicago-based sisterhood known as the Jane Collective, a group of women who offered support and abortion care to each other in the 1960s, before Roe v. Wade legally

protected pregnant people who sought abortions. It only seems natural, given how Weaver paved the way for women action heroes thanks to her queer-coded role as Ripley in “Alien,” that the acting icon portray Virginia, the principled, tough-love leader of the Janes.

Virginia just happens to be a lesbian, a decision Weaver made herself. That actually makes sense, not just because of Virginia’s core as a character but also given the actress’

longtime LGBTQ+ allyship. Among her queerer credits: a role in the 1995 gay romantic-comedy “Jeffrey” and, of course, the heartbreaking call-to-action movie “Prayers for Bobby,” when she stepped into the shoes of Mary Griffiths. To this day, the 2009 film, about Mary’s real-life journey to becoming an LGBTQ+ activist after her son commits suicide because he’s gay, resonates deeply when it comes to caring for queer youth.

During our recent interview,

Weaver said “Prayers for Bobby” offered her a revelation that led her to “Call Jane” — that her work as an actress could intersect with her belief in human rights.

**You told me last year that Virginia was a lesbian, but you did not tell me that she carried a lot of fierce, no-bullshit lesbian energy.**

I mean, to me, Virginia’s just a force of nature. She, I think, was sidelined by men during the anti-



war protests, and once she found Call Jane and started gathering this sisterhood, she just wanted to be unstoppable.

**I like to think that Virginia and Ripley have a lot in common when it comes to fierceness. And I feel like those two need to get together and take on the Supreme Court.**

Virginia's funnier, may I just say. She's a bit drier. And I think that Virginia's a great leader, because she's very instinctive about people. She's sort of honed that. I think that's very important in the field of human rights: Who's going to go all the way with you?

**Seeing as though you could not have imagined Roe v. Wade being overturned when you shot this movie, what does it feel like promoting this movie now?**

Well, there were states [that] were real deserts of abortion care. So in a sense, in certain states, it had already been not formally banned, but it was very, very difficult for women to access healthcare of any kind, including the abortion service. So I think that I was shocked by the Dobbs' decision. I feel better now, because I feel like, as the movie says, you are not alone. I feel like I am not alone. I feel that women coming from many different points of view about this experience are saying, "Excuse me, but this is none of your business. These are very important personal decisions, and you need to let us make them."

**Is Virginia based on a real-life lesbian activist, or is she simply representing how involved lesbian women have been in the fight for women's reproductive rights?**

I didn't base her... I certainly was inspired by reading about The Janes, and I think the lesbian part of her, just to me, came from the script. It just made sense to me. The more I thought about Virginia, I felt like she made so many decisions leading her to the point at which we meet her. And I love that Joy [Elizabeth Banks], who's kind of conservative and straight, and Virginia strike up this friendship where they really see each other and they really start to inspire each other. It's cool.

**So it seems like Virginia's sexual orientation had something to do with your input, based on what you're telling me. Is that right?**

Yeah. I think that I just had this instinct that she had kind of had it with men for a long time, and it was something she embraced. And I love that The Janes include so many people, so many different preferences, so many different pronouns probably, although they didn't say them back in that day. And to me, that's what the country needs — women

from all over the country, different walks of life, and different neighborhoods. We all share this challenge, and we need to share our response for it and speak up.

**I love that you had something to do with Virginia's sexual orientation, and it reminds me of something that I recently discovered about you: International Lesbian Day is October 8th...**

Oh my god, my birthday! I didn't know that. That's so cool. How could I not know that?

**"How could she not know that?" is what Twitter's going to say.**

Yeah. Well, I agree with them!

**Well, you are a lesbian icon. When was the moment in your career when you were aware of that?**

Certainly by doing the last one ("Alien: Resurrection"), I had embraced that I think that Ripley was almost too busy to have a sexual orientation, but I know it would make Virginia really happy to think that my birthday was on International Lesbian Day. And I just loved that about our community — that it was so inclusive and it was so respectful to each person. And to me, that's a

great message of the movie: that you are not alone and that all kinds of women are here with you and ready to help you when you need it.

I think there are so many divisions in this country for so many reasons, and I think it's all great for people to have their specific choices, but I think there are things going on that [mean] we need to think bigger and just think about protecting all of our rights. I worry where we will go next if we don't fight back for this. And I think I have a lot of friends who are very worried about it too. And I just think all personal choices need to be protected by an amendment. They are to a certain extent, but now that we know the Supreme Court can just snatch these things away, it's really a political awakening for me. It's so arbitrary and ignorant. I'm still in shock about it.

**I think the same is true for LGBTQ+ rights, and it sounds like you're referring to the marriage equality decision, Obergefell, and what could possibly happen there. How are you feeling about the state of the country for the queer community?**

Again, I'm so surprised they could do this. And we have no recourse. We can't go to the International Criminal Court and say, "This bad decision was handed down." To me, it's so unjudicial to make a sweeping

See **Sigourney Weaver**, page 24



# Detroit Opera

11.12–11.20  
DetroitOpera.org

SEASON SPONSOR  
William Davidson Foundation

MUSIC BY CHARLES GOUNOD  
CONDUCTED BY VALERIO GALLI

LIBRETTO BY JULES BARBIER & MICHEL CARRÉ  
DIRECTED BY LILEANA BLAIN-CRUZ

YUVAL SHARON, GARY L. WASSERMAN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
CHRISTINE GOERKE, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



## Norton's

FLOWERS & GIFTS

### Delivering Amazing Quality since 1892.

800-862-8667 | www.nortonsflowers.com  
We Deliver the **WOW!**



LOCATIONS IN YPSILANTI & ANN ARBOR

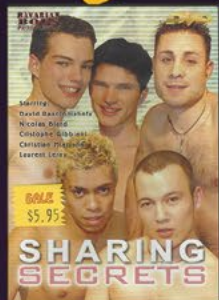


THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

BUY  
ADULT DVD'S  
STARTING AT  
\$5.95

UPTOWN SPECIAL  
XXX DVD's  
3/\$9.99  
WHILE THEY LAST  
MAY 26TH -  
MAY 30TH 2021

ALL XXX  
DVD RENTALS  
AS LOW AS \$1.25  
EVERY DAY!



Rush - Jungle Juice - Maximum Impact -  
Swiss Navy - Amsterdam- ID Glide - COLT-  
Butterfly Kiss Pink- The Womanizer

**UPTOWN**  
BOOKSTORES  
ADULT VIDEO

2 LOCATIONS

WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave.  
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"  
Highland Park  
313.869.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile  
Between Greenfield & Southfield  
Detroit  
313.836.0647

Hours:  
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm  
Sun 12 - 6pm



Elizabeth Banks and Sigourney Weaver in "Call Jane." Photo: Focus Features

## ◀ Sigourney Weaver

Continued from page 23

blanket change like that. All kinds of women were liberated by this decision, Roe v. Wade, and they planned careers and families, or no families. And to just take that away is so shocking. But as the movie shows, there's a lot we can do. And I think that, for me, I need to concentrate on what we can do and not what we've lost.

**As we see "Don't Say Gay" bills advance across the country and books with queer characters being banned in school libraries, I'm wondering what you think "Prayers for Bobby" can teach these homophobic conservatives who think that the answer to helping LGBTQ+ youth is to pretend that homosexuality doesn't exist?**

Well, Mary's story, which is based on her own life, is, to me, such a revelation about

that very thing: that here is someone who sits in judgment about a choice that her son has made, fights it at every turn, denies him his self-expression and, ultimately, he takes his life. And I'm so proud of the movie. I feel like it awakened in me a different part of the talent that I use to do what I do. I'm very grateful to "Prayers for Bobby" for opening me up to all the different aspects of what's going on in this [LGBTQ+] community.

I would say that so often, out of the blue, a young man will come up to me and thank me for this movie. I just wish we had more of them. And again, it's so frustrating to keep fighting the same battle again and to not be able to stand on progress and go, "This is secure. I'm safe, I'm free. I can do what I want with my life and with whom I want." These are such basic human rights. I just can't believe that we're in a country that suddenly just said, "No, no, no, no, no. We've never really been for that. We take it back." It's crazy.



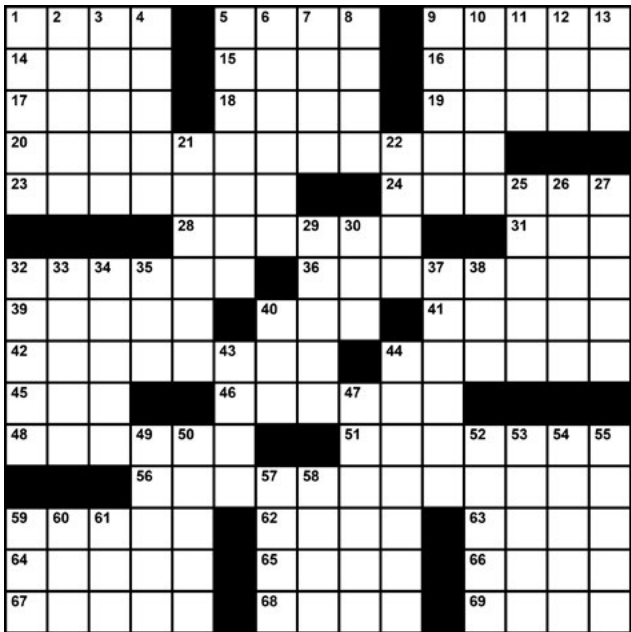
sozairestaurant.com  
reservations are required

**SOZAI**  
SUSHI • KAPPO

specializing in omakase  
with premium saké pairings

PROUDLY SERVING SUSTAINABLE SUSHI  
449 West 14 Mile Road (just west of Livernois)





Across

T-shirt Quote

- 1 Like a Marc Jacobs ensemble
- 5 Muscle Mary stat
- 9 New York Liberty and Seattle Storm
- 14 Kind of IRA
- 15 Cut out
- 16 Comes out
- 17 Morales of "Resurrection Blvd."
- 18 Ill humor

Q Puzzle

- 19 Cocoon creator
- 20 T-shirt quote by Leslie Jordan, part 1
- 23 "Amadeus" nemesis of Tom Hulce
- 24 Drag queen's shoe feature
- 28 Kind of clock
- 31 Be in the hole
- 32 What sex maniacs want?
- 36 Part 2 of the quote
- 39 In harmony
- 40 Alternative to HBO

- 41 Gay guy, in slang
- 42 Part 3 of the quote
- 44 One of the Disney dwarfs
- 45 Durango day
- 46 Calif. barrio city
- 48 Frida Kahlo's woman
- 51 Service interruptions
- 56 Part 4 of the quote
- 59 Jethrene Bodine's mother
- 62 Ballet move
- 63 Fairy tales and such
- 64 "Three Tall Women" writer
- 65 Pal from Down Under
- 66 Boy from Gomer's hometown
- 67 School group
- 68 Aspen vehicle
- 69 Herbicide target

Down

- 1 Bodies of sailors
- 2 Biblical prophet married to Gomer
- 3 "I knew \_\_\_ along!"
- 4 Hot stuff
- 5 Tinkerbell portrayer Julia
- 6 Fashion designer Pucci
- 7 Aspirin unit
- 8 One way to cook fruit
- 9 Follows up on a kiss?
- 10 Put on a pedestal
- 11 Earhart's medium
- 12 Where you used to see R.E.M.
- 13 FICA funds it
- 21 Be ambiguous
- 22 Emulate Paul Cadmus
- 25 David Niven, in a '60s TV series
- 26 What S&M people are as smart as?
- 27 Small-minded
- 29 Is bothered by
- 30 Hairy member of the Addams family
- 32 Hotel staff
- 33 Clark of fashion
- 34 Caesar, for one
- 35 Hydrocarbon ending
- 37 In the recent past
- 38 Moist ending
- 40 Drink with jam and bread
- 43 "Lawrence of Arabia" director David
- 44 Loudly enjoyed oral sex
- 47 Until now
- 49 Shrek and others
- 50 Arouses
- 52 Ticked pink
- 53 Really feel for?
- 54 Bone-chilling
- 55 It goes under a jockey's shorts
- 57 Charitable donations
- 58 Scott of "Beautiful Thing"
- 59 D.C. lobby group
- 60 Wing for Julia Morgan
- 61 Attorney's org.

See p. 20 for answers

# Prism of Possibilities

## Psychotherapy

### Christine Cantrell, PhD

#### Fully Licensed Psychologist

Give yourself an extreme self makeover ...

- ▼ Speak Your Truth
- ▼ Discover What You Want
- ▼ Create Your True Self
- ▼ Heal Old Hurts, Find Wholeness

Located in Royal Oak  
www.christinecantrell.com  
christinecantrellphd@gmail.com

CALL NOW! 248-591-2888

# Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.  
Trillium Real Estate Helps People Make Good Decisions.

**Sandi & Linda**  
www.trilliumrealtors.com

**323 Braun Ct. Ann Arbor, MI 48104**  
734-302-3011

**TRILLIUM**  
REAL ESTATE



## ◀ Pierre Jean Gonzalez

Continued from page 14

shutdowns would mean for their livelihoods and day-to-day lives, but as 2020 unfolded, another reality was setting in: the growing protest movement around the George Floyd murder by police in Minneapolis.

“The country was coming to a reckoning of how we were treating black bodies,” he says. “And Cedric and I, we wanted to make a difference, or just have an effect on our community. A lot of Afro-Latinos are not represented in media, and also in our community, we still have issues with people who are darker, you know? [Darker] isn’t always seen as beautiful. That needs to change.”

COVID-19 logistics presented both challenges and opportunities for DominiRican’s early productions. “We could get people in the same space that wouldn’t be normally,” he recalls. Leiba and Gonzalez invited friends and families to an online screening of the first project, an experimental short, “release,” which would go on to win several filmmaking awards, including Best Experimental Film in the 13th annual Fargo-Moorhead LGBT Film Festival. The film, shot in the Bronx, where Gonzalez grew up, is centered on Leiba’s poem, also called “release,” which explores his inner artistic struggle in the face of outside pressures.

After the Zoom screening, friends started asking the couple to help film their own projects. Soon, Steven Luna joined the DominiRican team and the project took on a life of its own. “At the end of the day, I wanted to be able to create a space where my artist friends felt seen and were able to create work they can have ownership of,” he says. “Because in this industry, being queer, being Latinx, being Latina, it’s such a small pool of work that really talks to our experience. We’re all fighting for this one role, and I was just like, ‘I’m over it. I’m over it.’ We’re so much more vast than that.”

Before “Hamilton,” Gonzalez racked up credits on TV dramas like “NCIS” and “Quantico,” often portraying gritty characters in trouble. The more direct line to “Hamilton” may be between his earliest work as a classically trained actor at Rutgers University, which included training through Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. These days, he’s moved away from taking on roles that perpetuate

stereotypes or don’t accurately reflect his ethnicity.

“We’re not just thugs,” he says, tearing up. “We’re beautiful. We’re kind. We’re smart. We are people in power. We are people — you know what I mean? We’re everywhere. I just really wanted to make sure that we showed not just the trauma of what we are, but the beauty that comes out of that trauma.”

Gonzalez acknowledges that right now, in the 2022 U.S. political climate, for him, merely existing is a form of activism. “I am a gay, Latinx man playing the lead of this show. And people are watching me, and they’re accepting me in this role. I never dared dreamed this reality,” he says. “I crippled my own dreams. I would, like, stop myself and be like, ‘That’s not going to happen for you, Pierre. You’re gay, so nobody is going to believe that you’re playing this role or that role.’ And that was the reality for me, even five or six years ago.”

Gonzalez can’t pinpoint an exact moment when his mindset shifted, but there came a point when he’d simply had enough. “I made a conscious choice with my agents, and when Cedric and I had conversations about what makes us happy and what roles we want to choose, I stopped.” He told his agents that he was done playing roles that weren’t based on who he is — a Dominican Puerto Rican man from New York.

“I was going in for these Mexican American roles, Salvadorian, Brazilian, and finally I was like ‘I’m not doing this anymore.’ There are way too many Mexican American actors, way too many Cuban actors waiting for the opportunity. You want to see me? I’m a Dominican Puerto Rican man. If you want to shift the character, if that can easily be shifted, absolutely. But otherwise, go find actual Mexican Americans.”

“The minute I started leading with that and stating that and being authentically myself, that’s when things started to kind of shift. I started to demand the respect, and you get to see me for who I am,” he says. “And the minute I started doing that, that’s when everything started to align. I stopped trying to hide who I was, my queerness, my New Yorkness, all of it.”

Gonzalez notes that there’s still plenty of work to do on the representation front, but projects like the rom-com “Bros” give him hope. “It was an epic thing,” he says, “and not just because Cedric was in it.” (Leiba plays Harness Guy — if you know, you know). The fact that

“Bros” was backed by a major motion picture studio is huge, he says. “That doesn’t happen for us. And it doesn’t matter that it’s following white men. We’re working toward something. And if we don’t show up for the work, if we don’t buy the tickets, if we don’t click, if we don’t do the views, then they’re not going to back our stories.”

It’s almost impossible to imagine that only a handful of years ago, Gonzalez wasn’t fully standing in his truth. Like many queer people, his coming out story was not the magical tale of acceptance and love. As a teenager attending a Catholic high school in the Bronx, queerness was not exactly a badge of honor. At one point, he says, he internalized the idea that there wasn’t going to be a time when he could ever come out. “I had accepted that I was just going to live a lie,” he remembers. “I stopped myself from experiencing so much, and I wasn’t out until I was outed — I was forced out of the closet — [and] it was a very traumatic, really scary, horrible time for me.”

“But I’m so grateful that I got through it,” he adds.

Even after the trauma of being outed as a teenager in a toxic, non-inclusive environment, Gonzalez says it took several more years before he entirely accepted himself. Now, when he spots a fellow underrepresented actor in the wild trying to make it on the merits of who they are, Gonzalez reaches out a hand.

“This is not a competition for our community anymore. We can’t compete with each other,” he says. “We don’t even know what we’re capable of yet, because we were never given the opportunity.”

These days, Gonzalez draws a great deal of inspiration from Generation Z’s matter-of-fact approach to identity and sexuality. Faith in the



Pierre Jean Gonzalez as Hamilton in “Hamilton.” Photo: Joan Marcus

upcoming generation helps to keep him focused on the positive at a tumultuous time in history for the LGBTQ+ community. “I just want to be part of the solution. How can we fix this? How can we resolve this? How do we create a conversation? How can we keep it positive? Am I pissed off all the time about what I’m seeing? I’m heated. Livid. But I can’t live my life like that.”

And so, whether he’s promoting DominiRican Productions or doing press for “Hamilton,” Gonzalez puts his queerness and his ethnicity front and center. “I think that’s our job as the queer community at this stage, at this place. That’s just our burden that we have to carry.”

Gonzalez says he and Leiba often talk about how queer media is

evolving. In many ways, he says, it’s about sharing knowledge outside the community. “It’s part of our job to educate and to push our narrative and to teach people our experience,” he says. “And it’s the kids’ job to live through it and enjoy it in a different way. We can’t put our burdens onto them.”

“It’s not perfect,” he adds. “It’s never going to be perfect. And I don’t think we’re going to see a world where our queerness is going to be represented perfectly. That’s for the future. Our job now is to really educate and to push our stories out there. That’s our job right now.”

*“Hamilton” runs Nov. 15-Dec. 4 at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit. Tickets available through [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).*





## About the Study

PURPOSE 2 is a clinical study to evaluate if Lenacapavir (LEN), an investigational medicine, given every 6 months can help to reduce the chance of getting HIV through sex (PrEP, or Pre-exposure Prophylaxis).

### Participants must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Not have had an HIV test in the past 3 months
- No oral PrEP in past 12 weeks or any prior use of long-acting systemic PrEP
- Be a cisgender man, transgender or gender nonbinary individual who has receptive anal sex
- Meet eligibility criteria during screening

## Could I Qualify?

## Please Contact

*Dr. Paul Benson's*

**BE WELL MEDICAL CENTER**

**1964 11 Mile Rd Berkley MI, 48072**

*amberhooper@doctorbewell.com*

**248-544-9300 ext-7**

Find out more about the  
PURPOSE studies here:  
[www.purposestudies.com](http://www.purposestudies.com)  
ClinicalTrials.gov ID:  
NCT04925752





# ROYAL OAK MARKET: ART FAIR EDITION

INSIDE THE ROYAL OAK FARMERS MARKET

NOVEMBER 17 & 18, 2022

THURSDAY + FRIDAY 11AM-9PM

60 ARTISTS • LIVE MUSIC • BEER & WINE

ROYALOAKARTFAIR.COM



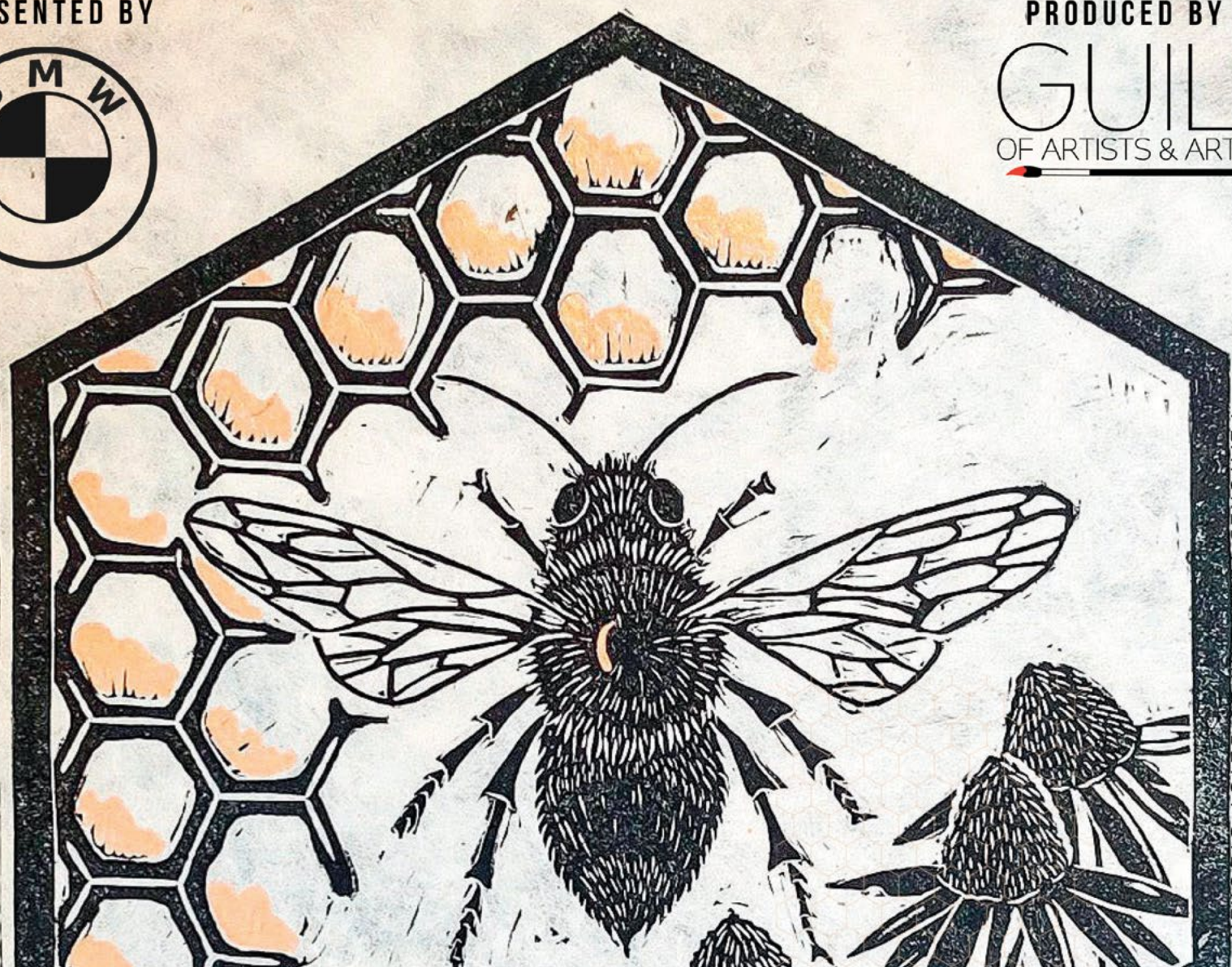
FOLLOW US @GUILDFAIRS

PRESENTED BY



PRODUCED BY THE

GUILD  
OF ARTISTS & ARTISANS



FEATURED ARTWORK BY BEISSY SIECKER