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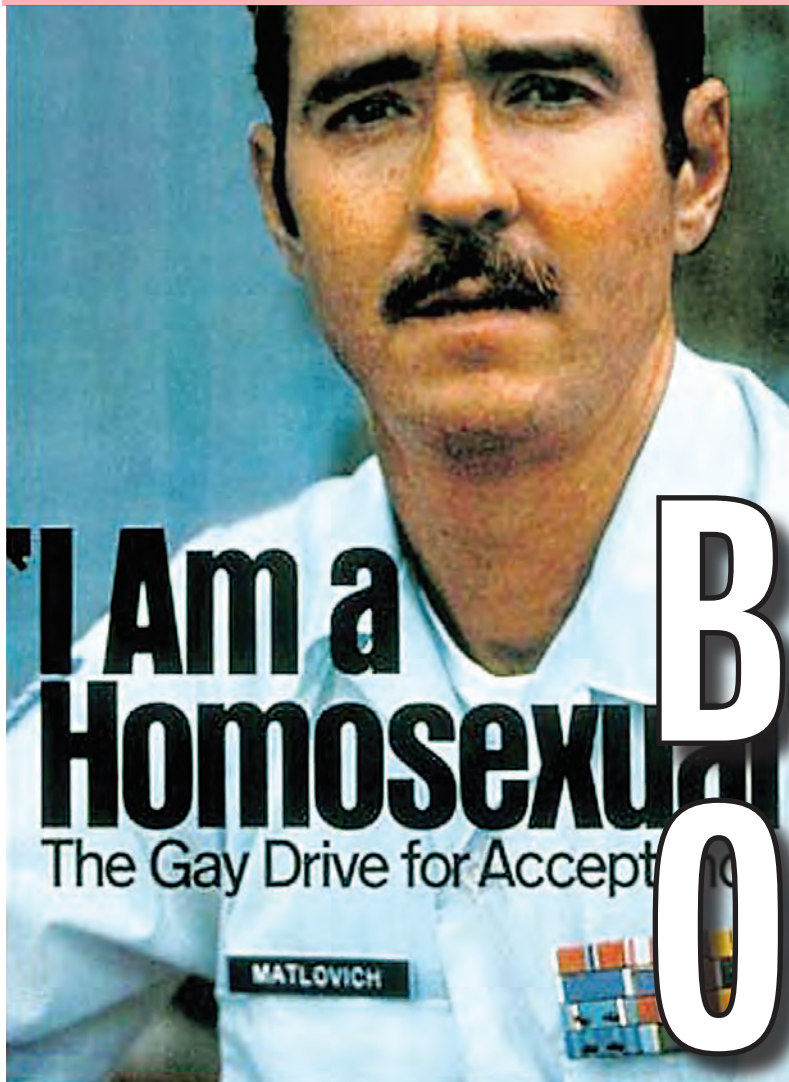
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Best of 2010
Year in Review

BEST OF 2010: MUSIC, BOOKS, SPORTS

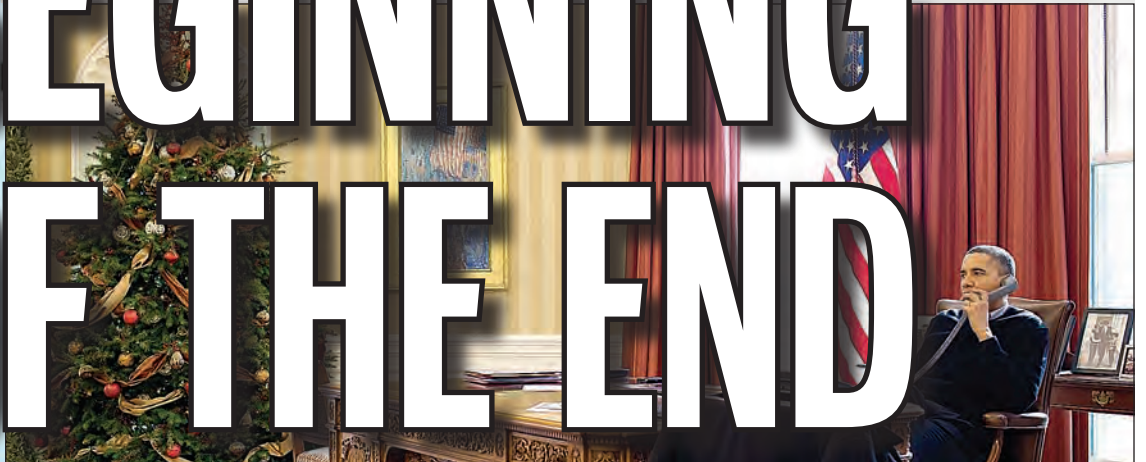
MODELS STRIP DOWN FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

'I LOVE YOU PHILLIP MORRIS': FINALLY *OUT!*



**I Am a
Homosexual**
The Gay Drive for Acceptance

BEGINNING OF THE END



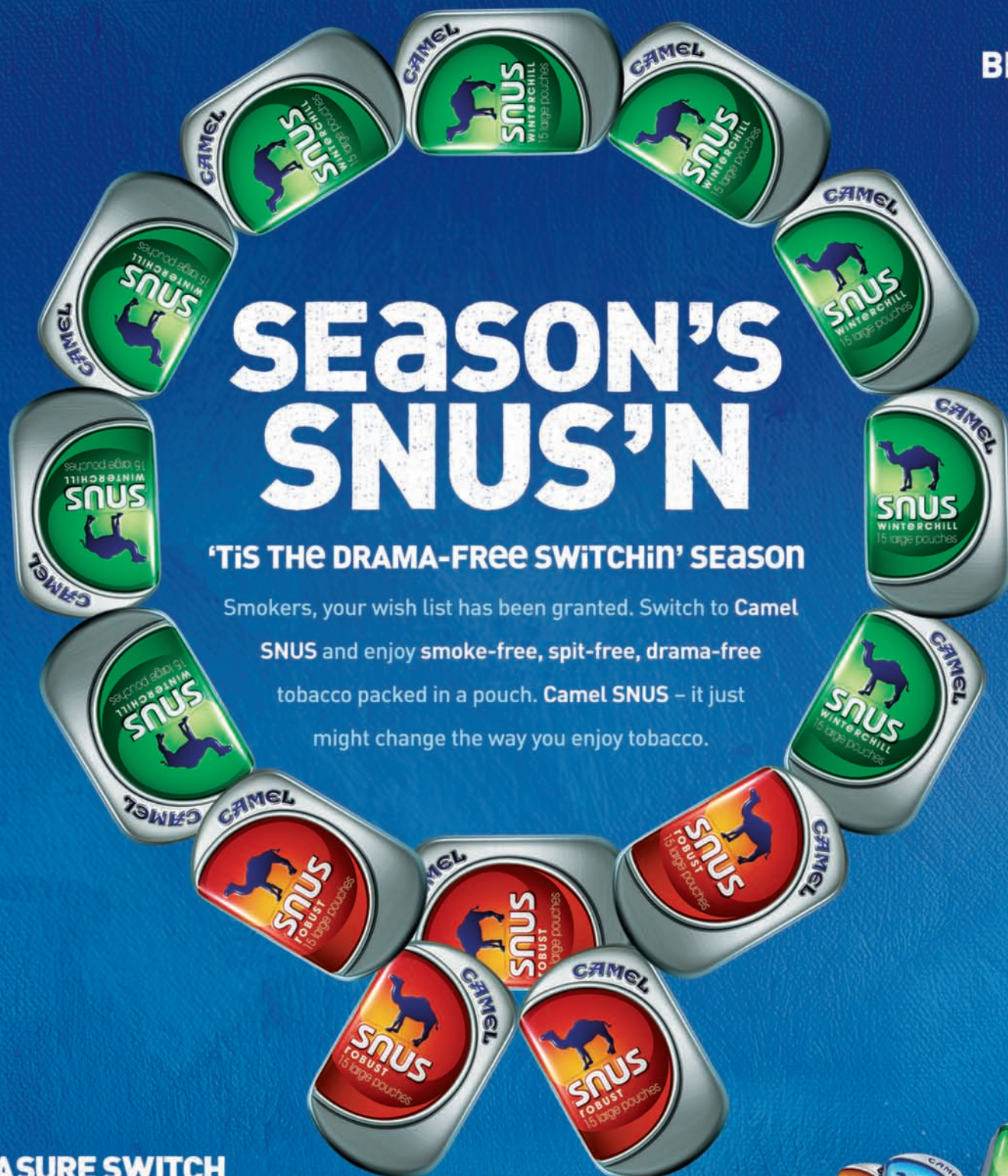
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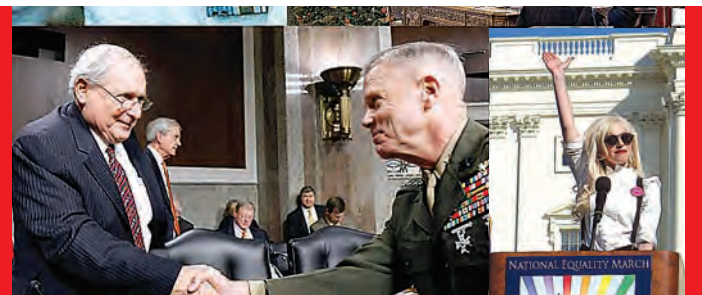


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Cover

DADT: Beginning of the end. Clockwise from top left: Sgt. Matlovich, Time Magazine, 1975; protesters outside White House in the fall; U.S. Sen. Carl Levin; Lady Gaga





Repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell' is a good start

In a historic vote on Dec. 18, the United States Senate finally did the right thing and consigned the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy to what commentators called the "dustbin of history." Good riddance. Now that Congress has finally repealed this atrocious law, the cause of equality for LGBTs moves forward.

Never before in American history have so many political and legal leaders, not to mention the American people, been so supportive of our community and our rights to equality under the law.

While there is much for our community to celebrate, there are still enormous challenges facing us. While most Americans may support equal rights for the LGBT community, there remains a powerful minority that seeks to discriminate against people because of sexual orientation and gender identity. In some quarters, it is still OK to disparage people because their real or perceived sexual orientation does not fit the "norm." While political opponents of equality may not publicly condone violence or threats against LGBTs, their harsh statements can incite bigots to action. In the middle of last week's House debate on ending DADT, one Congressman stated his belief that the very existence of our country would be doomed if gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military. One can only imagine the impact of such a statement on young people who are struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity. This year's episodes of LGBT suicides point to the dangerous consequences of bigotry.

As we move into 2011, the political reality in Washington and Lansing will change dramatically. Given the recent verbal and physical attacks on the LGBT community, many people are unsettled by what may happen legislatively over the next several months and years, even as we celebrate recent victories. We must continue to remind our elected leaders that they were not put into power to discriminate against anyone. To the extent that our newly elected leaders have any mandate, it is related to the troubled economy, not social issues. Indeed, the incoming Republican governor of Michigan, Rick Snyder, did not focus on social issues in his landslide election campaign. His own statements on LGBT equality, while not as positive as the actions of Gov. Granholm, are still rather moderate by Republican standards.

The new governor may have to make a decision soon after he takes office on whether the State of Michigan should offer benefits to people living with state employees, something Granholm has supported, but will likely not be settled before she leaves office. So far, the newly elected governor has not come out against this proposal. It will be important to keep the political pressure on Snyder as he considers this issue. Our community should not dismiss the new governor as someone who will not listen to us.

Much work remains to be done in guaranteeing equality to the LGBT community, and all of us should be engaged in this battle.

Let's engage the new governor in good faith, since his own social views do not seem to fit the right-wing agenda. The LGBT community should try to educate him on issues of equality and their importance to Michigan's overall success and work with him where possible to advance pro-equality measures.

It is highly unlikely that Congress will do much of anything that will advance equality for the LGBT community over the next few years. Since the Republican House will probably not take action on issues of LGBT equality, it is important for President Obama to use his executive powers as fully as he can to protect equality for all people.

The president can also help by using the bully pulpit of his office to speak out forcefully against bullying against youth because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, as he did in an Internet address this fall. It is welcome news that the president seems to be softening his opposition to same-sex marriage, and we should continue to educate the president on the significance of this issue to our community. The president will also have to determine the logistics and speed of the implementation of the DADT repeal.

Next year will be a challenging year for both our state and nation. While many of us were highly disappointed by the results of the November elections, we simply have to move forward. The past few years have seen horrible attacks on LGBTs and tragic deaths of youth, yet there have also been historic advances for our community. Our community's hard work and the support of leaders in Congress have resulted in the repeal of DADT. Much work remains to be done in guaranteeing equality to the LGBT community, and all of us should be engaged in this battle. If we continue to work for equality in our communities, regardless of who's leading our government, we will be successful.



Contact Gov.-elect Rick Snyder's office to ask him to support the effort to grant employee benefits to domestic partners of State employees at <http://www.governorelectricksnyder.com/contact-us> and (517) 241-3318

Thank President Obama for ending DADT, and ask him to implement the repeal as quickly as possible: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

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Michigan survey says discrimination getting worse

Discrimination based on race, gender or sexual orientation is getting worse in Michigan, respondents said in a recent poll commissioned for the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion.

The phone survey of more than 500 people showed that 46 percent of Michigan residents said people of color have worse educational and employment opportunities than white people, and 53 percent said that discrimination against gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered individuals is prevalent. The percentage of people that say this is up from 41 percent a year ago.

Perhaps most discouraging, the number of respondents who said that people of color have worse educational and employment opportunities than whites increased from 32 percent in 2008 to 46 percent in 2010.

"In an age where diversity must be seen as critical to the success of any company seeking to compete nationally or globally, Michigan is moving backwards in the eyes of its own people when it comes to discrimination," said Thomas Costello, president and CEO of the Michigan Roundtable. "These findings have deep consequences for our state as we seek to pull ourselves out of our current economic depression, and build a more inclusive community that ensures opportunity for all."

The survey is the third conducted annually by Mitchell Research & Communications, Inc. for the Michigan Roundtable. All three surveys ask about discrimination against women and people of color; the last two ask about discrimination based on sexual orientations. Support for this survey was provided by the Ford Foundation. Full results of the survey are available at www.miroundtable.org.

Woman murdered in Livonia

Amy "Rion" Chesbro, fiancée of activist and social worker PJ TwoRavens, was shot in her car the morning of Dec. 16. She died from the wounds the next day.

According to the Charlotte Observer, police suspect Julie Ann Hopwood, who was arraigned Dec. 19 in Romulus. She faces first-degree murder and felony firearm charges. Her next court date is Dec. 28.

Hopwood is from Charlotte, N.C., said annarbor.com, and allegedly waited for Chesbro for 45 minutes outside of a business on Victor Parkway in Livonia before she shot Chesbro in her car. Hopwood is TwoRavens' sister.

Chesbro, 35, taught at Cleary Business School and Washtenaw Community College. She was also a part of the "Out Loud" chorus at Trinity Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor.

Chesbro's memorial service will be held from 1-4 p.m. Thursday at the Ann Arbor Marriott Ypsilanti at Eagle Crest, 1275 S. Huron St. in Ypsilanti.

'Tis better to give

Detroit's Metropolitan Community Church feeds families in need

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE – Christmas will be a little bit brighter for six South Oakland County families this year thanks to the generosity of the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, located in Ferndale.

Led by a spunky lady with an elf-eared hat, the LGBT-friendly congregation's Worship Team delivered nearly \$4,000 worth of presents to the families on Dec. 15. Laurie Amalfitano of Roseville organized the church's giving tree program through Volunteers of America. While MCC has a history of helping those in need within their congregation, this is the first Christmas the church felt strong enough to spread their generosity further.

"This has been the most rewarding experience since I've joined the church," Amalfitano said. "The economy is tough and there are people outside the church who are in worse shape than we are."

Pastor Deb Dysert said she is proud of the way members came together and went above the call of duty put forth by the Worship Team. Volunteers of America set minimum requirements for the donations to the families adopted through the program. They required at least a \$50 grocery gift card for the families, one toy per child, and one warm clothing item per family member. MCC collected more than double the amount in food certificates. They received coats, boots and new pajamas for each child; pots, pans and towels for each home; and a turkey for each family.

More than two dozen members delivered the gifts and sang Christmas carols with the families.

"It is something to see how people respond to actually being the hands and feet of God as they share his blessings with others tonight," Dysert said. "It doesn't just help the families; it makes all of us feel good too."

Five of the families live in Ferndale, and one in Royal Oak. "Another member and I went and visited each family to introduce ourselves and learn more about what each of the children would like," said Amalfitano. "Their stories are all so touching. One is a mom and dad who have two little girls... and they both lost their jobs this year. There is also a 64 year old grandmother who is in a wheelchair struggling to raise a ten-year-old boy."

In addition to adopting six families, MCC is collecting blankets for Higher Ground's Blankets for AIDS program. They also collect personal hygiene items and teddy bears for homeless LGBT youth at the Ruth Ellis Center.



Laurie Amalfitano sits with some of the presents gathered by the MCC Worship Team to be delivered to six area families in time for Christmas. Below over two dozen members of The Metropolitan Church of Christ Detroit delivered presents and sang Christmas Carols with needy families on Dec. 15. BTL photos: Crystal Proxmire

The Jim Toy Community Center receives challenge grant

ANN ARBOR – The Jim Toy Community Center (formerly the Washtenaw Rainbow Action Project) is currently engaged in an end-of-year appeal and announced a \$10,000 donation from MillerCoors last week. The donation includes a \$5,000 corporate sponsorship in support of OutFEST, held annually in September, and a \$5,000 partnership grant that will allow the Jim Toy Community Center to match and double the value of donations during the month of December. In addition to helping to increase donations to the center for ongoing programs,

the grant will fund a Washtenaw Anti-Bullying Summit scheduled for Jan. 9.

"We have always had a special relationship with MillerCoors," said outgoing president Barry MacDougall. "They have been an important long-term supporter of our community center. We are pleased that MillerCoors has been able to support our mission with this much-needed grant."

"We have exciting plans for 2011," said incoming president Linda Lombardini. "There is tremendous momentum in the community, and

this funding will allow us to move forward with our ambitious programming goals."

The Jim Toy Community Center is at 319 Braun Ct. in Ann Arbor's Kerrytown area. For more information about the anti-bullying summit, contact Terry McGinn, tjmccginn@umich.edu.

For more information about the challenge grant or the Jim Toy Community Center, contact Linda Lombardini at 734-216-6415 or Linda@Trillium-Realtors.com.



How to help: LGBT agencies share

HIV/AIDS Research Center

Wish list: Dedicated and consistent volunteers, financial donations, new furniture, personal care items (toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, soap, toilet paper, etc.)

What is HARC? HARC is an established AIDS service organization that provides free HIV prevention and care services to individuals in Washtenaw, Jackson, Lenawee and Livingston Counties. Services include HIV education, HIV testing, Hepatitis C testing, harm reduction services, prevention for positives, provider training on HIV and related issues, medical case management, food pantry, and support groups. *Online at hivaidresource.org*

Contact: Calvin Dishmon at (734) 572-9355 xt. 237 or cdishmon@hivaidresource.org
Address: 3075 Clark Road, Suite 203, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Ruth Ellis Center

Wish List: Winter coats and boots, gloves and hats, sidewalk salt, laundry detergent, financial donations

What is the Ruth Ellis Center? The Ruth Ellis Center is one of three organizations in the nation solely dedicated to the needs of homeless and run-away LGBTQ youth. It operates a State of Michigan licensed Child Caring Institution and a Drop-In Center. *Online at ruthelliscenter.com*

Contact: Quentin Savvoir at (313) 252-1950
Address: 77 Victor Street, Highland Park, MI 48203

Michigan AIDS Coalition

Wish List: Copier paper 8-1/2" by 11" and 8-1/2" by 14," toilet paper, paper towels, bar hand soap, napkins, paper plates, plastic silverware

What is MAC? MAC is a provider of HIV/AIDS programs, including counseling and testing, outreach, education/prevention workshops, GLBTQ sensitivity trainings, and many others. Our primary target population is MSM: men who have sex with men, who are gay, bi, questioning. *Online at michiganaidcoalition.org*

Contact: Monica Mills at (248) 545-1435 xt. 117 or mmills@michiganaidcoalition.org
Address: 429 Livernois, Ferndale, MI 48220

Affirmations

Wish List: Office supplies, cleaning supplies, gift cards to Cosco, IKEA, Home Depot and Lowe's

What is Affirmations? Affirmations is metro Detroit's community center for lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender people and their allies. *Online at GoAffirmations.org*

Contact: Jon Fitzgerald at jfitzgerald@GoAffirmations.org
Address: 290 West 9 Mile Road, Ferndale, MI 48220

Elsie Publishing Institute

Wish list: financial donations

What is Elsie Publishing? Elsie Publishing is the publisher of Lesbian Connection Magazine, "The free worldwide forum of news & ideas for, by, and about lesbians" and What Helen Heard, "What's happening for Michigan lesbians." *Online at LConline.org*

Contact: (517) 371-5257 or elsiepub@aol.com
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'Don't ask, don't tell' repealed

Gay service members are encouraged not to come out yet —official repeal could take months

BY REX WOCKNER

"Don't ask, don't tell," the military's ban on open gays, is headed for the dustbin of history.

The Senate voted 65-31 on Dec. 18 to authorize the policy's repeal and sent the measure to President Barack Obama for his signature.

Eight Republicans joined all but one Democrat in voting to repeal the ban. They were Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine, Scott Brown of Massachusetts, Richard Burr of North Carolina, John Ensign of Nevada, Mark Kirk of Illinois, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and George Voinovich of Ohio. Democrat Joe Manchin of West Virginia did not vote.

Obama plans to sign the bill quickly, but that will not end the ban. Gay servicemembers will need to stay in the closet for a few more months.

After Obama signs the measure, he and the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must certify that the military is ready for the change and that it will not harm military readiness or effectiveness, unit cohesion, recruiting or member retention.

Then, after that, DADT repeal will take effect 60 days later. The process is expected to proceed relatively smoothly.

"No longer will patriots be forced to lie in order to serve the country they love and are willing to die for," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "This vote by the United States Senate will have extremely positive ripple effects well beyond 'don't ask, don't tell.' Our government has sent a powerful message that discrimination, on any level, should not be tolerated."

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network Executive Director Aubrey Sarvis called on the Pentagon to cease DADT discharges during the months between now and when repeal is finalized.

"I respectfully ask Defense Secretary Robert Gates to use his authority to suspend all 'don't ask, don't tell' investigations during this interim period," Sarvis said. "Until the president signs the bill, until there is certification and until the 60-day congressional period is over, no one should be investigated or discharged under this discriminatory law. ... Certification and the 60-day congressional requirement must be wrapped up no later than the first quarter of 2011."

Sarvis called the repeal of the ban "the defining civil rights initiative of this decade."

Lambda Legal Executive Director Kevin Cathcart called the 17-year fight to overturn the ban "a heroic political battle by LGBT advocates who refused to give up."

In a statement, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said: "Once this legislation is signed into law by the president, the Department of Defense will immediately proceed with the planning necessary to carry out this change carefully and methodically, but purposefully. This effort will be led by Dr. Clifford Stanley, under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. ... The legislation provides that repeal will take effect once the president, the secretary of defense and



President Barack Obama makes Congressional calls from the Oval Office before today's final Senate vote repealing the ban on gay men and women serving openly in the military, Saturday, Dec. 18. White House Photo by Pete Souza

the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify that implementation of the new policies and regulations written by the department is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the armed forces. ... I will approach this process deliberately and will make such certification only after careful consultation with the military service chiefs and our combatant commanders and when I am satisfied that those conditions have been met for all the Services, commands and units. It is therefore important that our men and women in uniform understand that while today's historic vote means that this policy will change, the implementation and certification process will take an additional period of time. In the meantime, the current law and policy will remain in effect."

Obama's statement

Obama issued a statement that said: "Today, the Senate has taken a historic step toward ending a policy that undermines our national security while violating the very ideals that our brave men and women in uniform risk their lives to defend. By ending 'don't ask, don't tell,' no longer will our nation be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans forced to leave the military, despite years of exemplary performance, because they happen to be gay. And no longer will many thousands more be asked to live a lie in order to serve the country they love. As commander-in-chief, I am also absolutely convinced that making this change will only underscore the professionalism of our troops as the best led and best trained fighting force the world has ever known. And I join the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as the overwhelming majority of service members asked by the Pentagon, in knowing that we can responsibly transition to a new policy ... It is time to close this chapter in our history."

60 days to certified

STILL AT RISK: Despite the U.S. House and U.S. Senate voting on repeal legislation, service members still cannot come out. "Don't Ask" will remain the law even after the President signs the bill. Warning to service members: www.SLDN.org/StillAtRisk

SLDN FREE HOTLINE: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender service members with questions are urged to contact the SLDN hotline to speak with a staff attorney: 202-328-3244 ext. 100.

Even after a successful U.S. Senate vote and after the President signs the bill, servicemembers will remain at risk for investigation and discharge. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" will still be the law until 60 days after the Commander-in-Chief, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs certify repeal can happen.

What is certification?

The President would transmit to the congressional Armed Services Committees a written certification, signed by the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stating each of the following:

A - That the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the recommendations contained in the report and the report's proposed plan of action.

B - That the Department of Defense has prepared the necessary policies and regulations to exercise the discretion provided by the amendments made by subsection.

C - That the implementation of necessary policies and regulations pursuant to the discretion provided

by the amendments made by subsection is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces.

After the President transmits written certification to the congressional Armed Services Committees, full repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" would be effective 60 days later.

Executive order

Merely repealing DADT won't ensure that lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members can serve free of discrimination based on their sexual orientation. Policies and regulations would need to be written and put in place. SLDN will encourage the President to issue an executive order protecting service members from discrimination based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

This gives the President the opportunity to show strong leadership by adding non-discrimination of sexual orientation to the uniform side of the military via Executive Order.

EO 9981 (1948) issued by President Harry Truman prohibited discrimination in the armed services on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin.

EO 11478 (1969) prohibited discrimination in employment within the federal government based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or age. It applied to all civilian employees, including those in the Defense Department.

EO 13087 (1998) issued by President Bill Clinton added sexual orientation in federal employment guidelines has been successful and set a durable precedent. OPM issued a guidance booklet in 1999, <http://www.opm.gov/er/orientation.htm>.

Read SLDN's warnings to servicemembers: www.sldn.org/StillAtRisk.



Parting Glances

Then & Now

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Bogart. Jesus. Annie Lennox. Sol Invictus!

If your birthday is December 25th your sun sign is Capricorn - in case you're wondering while kissing Santa underneath his merry mistletoe.

Advises the Sexual Astrology Team (Google them after opening your AAA battery-operated toys), "Try to lighten up a little - it'll do wonders for your soul . . . After all you're all about getting to the top of your game!"

(Even if - holiday irony of ironies - you are a bottom, with an occasional moon sign in your neat little House of Uranus, or something astrological like that.)

In addition to Lennox and Bogart, other famous 25th day upstarts to the savior's birthday include Sissy Spacek, Rod "Twilight Zone" Serling, Cab "hi de ho man" Calloway, Robert "Believe It or Not" Ripley, nurse founder Clara Barton, Sir Isaac Newton. Recently uncloseted Ricky Martin missed deity upstaging by one day, not livin' la vida loca!

(My artist friend John Wynn, who waits tables at Pete's Place in Ferndale, spreading good cheer 52/12, was born on Christmas Day. He says he's singularly honored in his family, "although as a kid celebrating two gift days would have been nice - and, I'm sure my birthdate has nothing to do with 'donning gay apparel'. Maybe just being festive when imbibing yuletide eggnog.")

Whether Jesus was born on the now traditionally observed day is historically debatable. Various churches for hundreds of years celebrated Jesus' nativity on different dates. Eastern churches generally used January 6th (Epiphany). Others chose April 24th or 25th; some even placed the event in May.

Some historians cite date parallels between early Christianity and pagan mystery religions. A popular recent - highly controversial treatment - is "Jesus Mysteries: Was the Original Jesus A Pagan God?" by British mystical writers Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy (Three Rivers Press, 1999; paperback \$10.88).

Their several related books are source material for Dan Brown's equally controversial, best seller, big movie money-maker, "The DaVinci Code."

Among ancient Romans, the advent day of celebration of Sol Invictus, the official sun god, was December 25th, also the day when the sun was believed to cross the winter solstice, heralding the beginning return of spring. (This year for Old Sol - the expression's a semantic throwback - it's December 21.)

One of the strongest rivals of early Christianity was Mithraism, a Persian-based, Zoroastrian cult of the god Mithra, who was virgin born in a cave on the 25th of December, brought a message of truth and justice, ultimately died a sacrificial death, was resurrected, and expected to return to gather his flock heavenward. Mithra's symbol was a bull, in contrast to the Christian lamb. Curiously, his followers were predominantly Roman soldiers.

Writes religious historian Alfred Reynolds in his 1993 book, "Jesus Versus Christianity:" "Mithraism was popular in the Roman Empire with many emperors following, not just the populace. It had seven sacraments, the same as the Catholic Church, baptism, and communion with bread and water.

"The Eucharist hosts were signed with a cross, an ancient phallic symbol which originated in Egypt, and the Egyptian cross (the ankh) still shows the original form which included the female symbol."

Other Christmas symbols with earlier pagan and phallic origins are the Christmas tree (the Druids), the use of mistletoe (Norse mythology), and the exchange of gifts (Roman religious custom celebrated in December and January).

Saint Nicholas, for whom Santa Claus is named, was born in Parara, Turkey in 270 CE. He became Bishop of Myra (wherever that is), and later died in 345 CE on December 6. He acquired sainthood in the 19th century (when he also took to chimney hopping as an avocation, thanks to Clement Clarke Moore's "Twas the Night Before Christmas.")

Mary Christmas. Keep the faith. Go pagan for Jesus!

E-mail: Charles@pridesource.com

Righting wrongs

As a transgender woman, Denise Brogan-Kator experienced injustices no lawyer could fix. Now she's a lawyer and an advocate.

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Dressing in drag for Halloween isn't usually a life-altering experience. But a particular drag performance as Ginger Rogers sent Denise Brogan-Kator on an unexpected path.

Back in 1993, Brogan-Kator was a 38-year-old vice president of finance for a medical products company in Florida. She had been hired by the company five years earlier to help create liquidity for the struggling firm. She improved the company's finances and received raving reviews from the owner, who became wealthy thanks to her work. There was a problem though. Brogan-Kator had been hired when she was still living as a male, the gender label given to her at birth.

"As a very young person I knew my gender was different. I thought I had grown through it, but in my late 30s it resurfaced in my life," said the woman who is now a 55-year-old LGBT-rights activist. "When I came out to myself I thought I could deal with it by expressing my true self episodically, which basically means I was occasionally cross dressing."

No one at work had a clue, until the night of the company Halloween party when Brogan-Kator and her wife (who dressed as Fred Astaire) won first prize in the costume contest. "I did a little too good of a job as Ginger Rogers," she said.

Because of her stellar performance as the blond bombshell, the owner of the company hired a private investigator, who followed her around until he had evidence that she was expressing her feminine side for more than just holiday fun. After five years of working as a team and building up a profitable company, Brogan-Kator was called into the office and fired without warning. Someone else cleaned out her desk and threw her personal items in a box. She was escorted out of the building and told not to come back.

A lawyer said there was nothing she could do about it.

She carried on in suits and ties, hiding her true self. She was fired from two more jobs when employers



At Triangle Denise Brogan-Kator became Board Chair, and helped the organization in its 2009 merger with Michigan Equality, and now as Equality Michigan is going through some leadership changes, she has resigned from the Board to become a consultant for the organization. Current Executive Director Alicia Skillman's resignation will be effective Dec. 31, 2010, and the Board is expected to announce Brogan-Kator as an interim replacement.

discovered that she was transgender. These situations, along with the struggles she faced in her personal life, helped shaped Brogan-Kator into the woman she is today.

In addition to the workplace discrimination, Brogan-Kator faced family law problems. She had been married and fathered three children with her first wife, and the divorce that followed was a painful one. "During the divorce process they filed to have my parental rights terminated,

and to the everlasting credit of my ex-spouse, she finally stood up to her lawyer and told them not to take my kids," she said.

"I was this close to losing my kids. I lost three jobs. I had gone into bankruptcy, lost my house, my cars ... All in the name of being authentic."

In a Tampa, FL support group, Brogan-Kator realized that she wasn't alone. "I found tremendous support. I began to fully appreciate who we were and the inherent bias in society."

support she needed to move forward with transitioning. She legally changed her name, but still sought work as a man.

She was hired by a small, independently-owned software company in Tampa. She had already been working with the company as a man when a background check revealed that she had legally changed her name to Denise. The boss wanted an explanation. He was surprised, yet accepting. He let Denise keep her job as the vice president of finance, and in a few years the company went from doing \$5 million in sales each year to about \$50 million. The owner sold the company for about \$200 million and was so impressed that he gave Brogan-Kator a bonus: enough money to pay off her debt and start her life fresh.

Finally, fearlessly, she faced the world as Denise.

The confident, happy woman who finally showed through wanted to repay the world - to right the wrongs in the legal system and to give back positively to the community that supported her through her transition.

She moved to Michigan to go to law school. In 2005, while going to the University of Michigan she met a former U-M law student, Mary Kator. On Dec. 29, 2005 they went to Windsor and got married. She gradu-

“We’ve given a lot of talk to being a state-wide organization, but the reality of it is we weren’t serving all the communities as well as we should be. I felt if we were going to be successful as an organization we had to listen to what the communities had to say.” – Denise Brogan-Kator

ated in 2006 and passed the Michigan State Bar Exam in May 2007.

Later that year the couple started Rainbow Law Center, PLLC, a firm that helps clients with family law, partnership agreements, adoptions, estate & trust planning, medical directives, transgender services, business planning, employment disputes and civil rights violations.

“We’ve done good work,” Brogan-Kator said. “After my divorce I thought I’d never want to do family law, but I was really lucky to have a family law professor in college who was a lesbian who was passionate about using the law to make a difference in people’s lives. I’d always foreseen going to work for one of the bigger national organizations, but Mary was rooted in Michigan. She came up with the idea to start our own law firm, and it is so rewarding being able to help people in the community who need legal help.”

Brogan-Kator’s other big contribution has been to Equality Michigan, which was called Triangle Foundation when she joined the Board of Directors in 2008. Prior to that she had been on the Board of WRAP in Ann Arbor (now named the Jim Toy Community Center), and had been involved in Transgender rights organizations in Florida. At Triangle she became Board Chair, and helped the organization in its 2009 merger with Michigan Equality, and now as Equality Michigan is going through some leadership changes, she has resigned from the Board to become a consultant for the organization. Current Executive Director Alicia Skillman’s resignation will be effective Dec. 31, 2010, and the Board is expected to announce Brogan-Kator as an interim replacement.

“When I joined the Board I knew that it was critical for us to have a strategic plan,” Brogan-Kator said. “The merger took about

six months. Once we got through that we embarked on a strategic planning process. We’ve given a lot of talk to being a state-wide organization, but the reality of it is we weren’t serving all the communities as well as we should be. I felt if we were going to be successful as an organization we had to listen to what the communities had to say. That can be from the LGBT alphabet soup, to geography, to economic communities, to looking at diversity. My experience is my experience. I wanted this plan to listen to all of the voices that deserve equality in Michigan.”

Equality Michigan is expected to announce Skillman’s replacement later this month. Whether she is chosen for the position or not, Brogan-Kator expects to continue to fight for the rights of all to be treated fairly. Eventually though, she hopes to retire and move back to Florida where she hopes to watch her three adult daughters continue to grow and start families of their own.

The actress Ginger Rogers said, “The only way to enjoy anything in this life is to earn it first.” The smile on Brogan-Kator’s face as she talks about her family, her wife, and her advocacy work shows how individual authenticity can be won, and rewarded.

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- EPZICOM, in combination with other antiretroviral agents, is indicated for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults.
- EPZICOM is one of 3 medicines containing abacavir. Before starting EPZICOM, your healthcare provider will review your medical history in order to avoid the use of abacavir if you have experienced an allergic reaction to abacavir in the past.
- In one study, more patients had a severe hypersensitivity reaction in the abacavir once-daily group than in the abacavir twice-daily group.
- EPZICOM should not be used as part of a triple-nucleoside regimen.
- EPZICOM does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others.

Important Safety Information

EPZICOM contains abacavir, which is also contained in ZIAGEN® (abacavir sulfate) and TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate, lamivudine, and zidovudine). Patients taking abacavir may have a **serious allergic reaction (hypersensitivity reaction) that can cause death**. Your risk of this allergic reaction is much higher if you have a gene variation called *HLA-B*5701* than if you do not. Your healthcare provider can determine with a blood test if you have this gene variation. **If you get a symptom from 2 or more of the following groups while taking EPZICOM, call your doctor right away to determine if you should stop taking this medicine.**

1. Fever
2. Rash
3. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal (stomach area) pain
4. Generally ill feeling, extreme tiredness, or achiness
5. Shortness of breath, cough, or sore throat

Carefully read the Warning Card that your pharmacist gives you and carry it with you at all times.

If you stop EPZICOM because of an allergic reaction, NEVER take EPZICOM or any other abacavir-containing medicine (ZIAGEN, TRIZIVIR) again. If you take EPZICOM or any other abacavir-containing medicine again after you have had an allergic reaction, **WITHIN HOURS** you may get **life-threatening symptoms** that may include **very low blood pressure** or **death**.



I've got the fight in me.

If you stop EPZICOM for any other reason, even for a few days, and you are not allergic to EPZICOM, talk with your healthcare provider before taking it again. Taking EPZICOM again can cause a serious allergic or life-threatening reaction, even if you never had an allergic reaction to it before. If your healthcare provider tells you that you can take EPZICOM again, **start taking it when you are around medical help or people who can call a healthcare provider if you need one.**

A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported.

Do not take EPZICOM if your liver does not function normally. Some patients infected with both hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HIV have worsening of hepatitis after stopping lamivudine (a component of EPZICOM). Discuss any change in treatment with your healthcare provider. If you have both HBV and HIV and stop treatment with EPZICOM, you should be closely monitored by your healthcare provider for at least several months.

Worsening of liver disease (sometimes resulting in death) has occurred in patients infected with both HIV and hepatitis C virus who are taking anti-HIV medicines and are also being treated for hepatitis C with interferon with or without ribavirin. If you are taking EPZICOM as well as interferon with or without ribavirin and you experience side effects, be sure to tell your healthcare provider.

When you start taking HIV medicines, your immune system may get stronger and could begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body, such as pneumonia, herpes virus, or tuberculosis. If you have new symptoms after starting your HIV medicines, be sure to tell your healthcare provider.

Changes in body fat may occur in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also occur. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

Some HIV medicines, including those containing abacavir (ZIAGEN, EPZICOM, and TRIZIVIR), may increase your risk of heart attack. If you have heart problems, smoke, or suffer from diseases that increase your risk of heart disease, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes, tell your healthcare provider.

The most common side effects seen with the drugs in EPZICOM dosed once daily were allergic reaction, trouble sleeping, depression, headache, tiredness, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, rash, fever, stomach pain, abnormal dreams, and anxiety. Most of the side effects do not cause people to stop taking EPZICOM.

By prescription only.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see additional important information about EPZICOM, including boxed warnings, on the adjacent pages.



If you don't have prescription coverage and can't afford your medicines, visit GSKforYou.com or call the ViiV Healthcare Response Center 1-877-844-8872



Save on your medication!

Ask your doctor about the Patient Savings Card or visit www.mysupportcard.com to learn how to save on your out-of-pocket expenses. Subject to eligibility. Restrictions apply.



“EVEN WITH HIV,
**I NEVER
STOP FIGHTING.”**

“When I was first diagnosed with HIV, I didn’t know what each day would bring or how the virus would affect my body over time. But at some point, I realized I had to take control. So I worked on my body. My mind. And my attitude. Since then, I’ve dedicated my life to fighting HIV with everything in me.

My meds help a lot. About a year ago, my doctor told me about **EPZICOM**. In combination with other medications, it’s been shown to help keep HIV from making more copies of itself and infecting healthy cells. 68% of patients taking a regimen with **EPZICOM** had their viral load become undetectable in less than one year. Plus, patients saw a 93% increase in their T-cell counts.* So I started taking it as part of my combination therapy.

Turns out that was a good thing. My viral load is undetectable. And me? I just keep fighting on.”†

† Not an actual patient testimonial. Based on collection of real patient experiences. Individual results may vary.

*HEAT study of 688 patients defines undetectable as a viral load less than 50 copies/mL. Baseline median T-cell count for patients receiving **EPZICOM** was 214 cells/mm³ and at 48 weeks, patients saw a median increase of 201 cells/mm³ in their T-cell count.

Ask your healthcare provider if **EPZICOM** is right for you.
Learn more at www.EpzicomForYou.com

EPZICOM® (abacavir sulfate and lamivudine) Tablets

MEDICATION GUIDE

EPZICOM® (ep' zih com) Tablets

Generic name: abacavir (uh-BACK-ah-veer) sulfate and lamivudine (la-MIV-yoo-deen)

Read the Medication Guide that comes with EPZICOM before you start taking it and each time you get a refill because there may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your doctor about your medical condition or your treatment. Be sure to carry your EPZICOM Warning Card with you at all times.

What is the most important information I should know about EPZICOM?

- **Serious Allergic Reaction to Abacavir.** EPZICOM contains abacavir (also contained in ZIAGEN® and TRIZIVIR®). Patients taking EPZICOM may have a serious allergic reaction (hypersensitivity reaction) that can cause death. **Your risk of this allergic reaction is much higher if you have a gene variation called HLA-B*5701 than if you do not. Your doctor can determine with a blood test if you have this gene variation. If you get a symptom from 2 or more of the following groups while taking EPZICOM, call your doctor right away to determine if you should stop taking this medicine.**

	Symptom(s)
Group 1	Fever
Group 2	Rash
Group 3	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal (stomach area) pain
Group 4	Generally ill feeling, extreme tiredness, or achiness
Group 5	Shortness of breath, cough, sore throat

A list of these symptoms is on the Warning Card your pharmacist gives you. Carry this Warning Card with you.

If you stop EPZICOM because of an allergic reaction, NEVER take EPZICOM (abacavir sulfate and lamivudine) or any other abacavir-containing medicine (ZIAGEN and TRIZIVIR) again. If you take EPZICOM or any other abacavir-containing medicine again after you have had an allergic reaction, **WITHIN HOURS** you may get **life-threatening symptoms** that may include **very low blood pressure or death.**

If you stop EPZICOM for any other reason, even for a few days, and you are not allergic to EPZICOM, talk with your doctor before taking it again. Taking EPZICOM again can cause a serious allergic or life-threatening reaction, even if you never had an allergic reaction to it before. If your doctor tells you that you can take EPZICOM again, **start taking it when you are around medical help or people who can call a doctor if you need one.**

- **Lactic Acidosis.** Some human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) medicines, including EPZICOM, can cause a rare but serious condition called **lactic acidosis with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly).** Nausea and tiredness that don't get better may be symptoms of lactic acidosis. In some cases this condition can cause death. Women, overweight people, and people who have taken HIV medicines like EPZICOM for a long time have a higher chance of getting lactic acidosis and liver enlargement. Lactic acidosis is a medical emergency and must be treated in the hospital.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection.** Patients with HBV infection, who take EPZICOM and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. "Flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before. If you have HBV infection, your doctor should closely monitor your liver function for several months after stopping EPZICOM. You may need to take anti-HBV medicines.
- **Use with interferon- and ribavirin-based regimens.** Worsening of liver disease (sometimes resulting in death) has occurred in patients infected with both HIV and hepatitis C virus who are taking anti-HIV medicines and are also being treated for hepatitis C with interferon with or without ribavirin. If you are taking EPZICOM as well as interferon with or without ribavirin and you experience side effects, be sure to tell your doctor.

EPZICOM can have other serious side effects. Be sure to read the section below entitled "What are the possible side effects of EPZICOM?"

What is EPZICOM?

EPZICOM is a prescription medicine used to treat HIV infection. EPZICOM includes 2 medicines: abacavir (ZIAGEN) and lamivudine or 3TC (EPIVIR®). See the end of this Medication Guide for a complete list of ingredients in EPZICOM. Both of these medicines are called nucleoside analogue reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). When used together, they help lower the amount of HIV in your blood. This helps to keep your immune system as healthy as possible so that it can help fight infection.

Different combinations of medicines are used to treat HIV infection. You and your doctor should discuss which combination of medicines is best for you.

- **EPZICOM does not cure HIV infection or AIDS.** We do not know if EPZICOM will help you live longer or have fewer of the medical problems that people get with HIV or AIDS. It is very important that you see your doctor regularly while you are taking EPZICOM.
- **EPZICOM does not lower the risk of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood.** For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safe sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier method to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take EPZICOM?

Do not take EPZICOM if you:

- have ever had a serious allergic reaction (a hypersensitivity reaction) to EPZICOM or any other medicine that has abacavir as one of its ingredients (TRIZIVIR and ZIAGEN). See the end of this Medication Guide for a complete list of ingredients in EPZICOM.
- have a liver that does not function properly.
- are less than 18 years of age.

Before starting EPZICOM tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have been tested and know whether or not you have a particular gene variation called HLA-B*5701.
- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. We do not know if EPZICOM will harm your unborn child. You and your doctor will need to decide if EPZICOM is right for you. If you use EPZICOM while you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about how you can be on the Antiviral Pregnancy Registry for EPZICOM.
- are breastfeeding. Some of the ingredients in EPZICOM can be passed to your baby in your breast milk. It is not known if they could harm your baby. Also, mothers with HIV should not breastfeed because HIV can be passed to the baby in the breast milk.
- have liver problems including hepatitis B virus infection.
- have kidney problems.
- have heart problems, smoke, or suffer from diseases that increase your risk of heart disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your doctor if you take any of the following medicines*:

- methadone
- HIVID® (zalcitabine, ddC)
- EPIVIR or EPIVIR-HBV® (lamivudine, 3TC), ZIAGEN (abacavir sulfate), COMBIVIR® (lamivudine and zidovudine), or TRIZIVIR (abacavir sulfate, lamivudine, and zidovudine).

How should I take EPZICOM?

- Take EPZICOM by mouth exactly as your doctor prescribes it. The usual dose is 1 tablet once a day. Do not skip doses.
- You can take EPZICOM with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of EPZICOM, take the missed dose right away. Then, take the next dose at the usual time.
- Do not let your EPZICOM run out.
- Starting EPZICOM again can cause a serious allergic or life-threatening reaction, even if you never had an allergic reaction to it before. If you run out of EPZICOM even for a few days, you must ask your doctor if you can start EPZICOM again. If your doctor tells you that you can take EPZICOM again, start taking it when you are around medical help or people who can call a doctor if you need one.
- If you stop your anti-HIV drugs, even for a short time, the amount of virus in your blood may increase and the virus may become harder to treat.
- If you take too much EPZICOM, call your doctor or poison control center right away.

What should I avoid while taking EPZICOM?

- Do not take EPIVIR (lamivudine, 3TC), COMBIVIR (lamivudine and zidovudine), ZIAGEN (abacavir sulfate), or TRIZIVIR (abacavir sulfate, lamivudine, and zidovudine) while taking EPZICOM. Some of these medicines are already in EPZICOM.
- Do not take zalcitabine (HIVID, ddC) while taking EPZICOM.

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection, as EPZICOM does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.

- Do not share needles or other injection equipment.
- Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades.
- Do not have any kind of sex without protection. Always practice safe sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier method to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- Do not breastfeed. EPZICOM can be passed to babies in breast milk and could harm the baby. Also, mothers with HIV should not breastfeed because HIV can be passed to the baby in the breast milk.

What are the possible side effects of EPZICOM?

EPZICOM can cause the following serious side effects:

- **Serious allergic reaction that can cause death.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about EPZICOM?" at the beginning of this Medication Guide.)
- **Lactic acidosis with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) that can cause death.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about EPZICOM?" at the beginning of this Medication Guide.)
- **Worsening of HBV infection.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about EPZICOM?" at the beginning of this Medication Guide.)
- **Changes in immune system.** When you start taking HIV medicines, your immune system may get stronger and could begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body, such as pneumonia, herpes virus, or tuberculosis. If you have new symptoms after starting your HIV medicines, be sure to tell your doctor.
- **Changes in body fat.** These changes have happened in patients taking antiretroviral medicines like EPZICOM. The changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the back, chest, and stomach area. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known.

Some HIV medicines including EPZICOM may increase your risk of heart attack. If you have heart problems, smoke, or suffer from diseases that increase your risk of heart disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes, tell your doctor.

The most common side effects with EPZICOM are trouble sleeping, depression, headache, tiredness, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, rash, fever, stomach pain, abnormal dreams, and anxiety. Most of these side effects did not cause people to stop taking EPZICOM.

This list of side effects is not complete. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store EPZICOM?

- Store EPZICOM at room temperature between 59° to 86°F (15° to 30°C).
- Keep EPZICOM and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information for safe and effective use of EPZICOM

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in Medication Guides. Do not use EPZICOM for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give EPZICOM to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them.

This Medication Guide summarizes the most important information about EPZICOM. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for the information that is written for healthcare professionals or call 1-888-825-5249.

What are the ingredients in EPZICOM?

Active ingredients: abacavir sulfate and lamivudine

Inactive ingredients: Each film-coated EPZICOM Tablet contains the inactive ingredients magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and sodium starch glycolate. The tablets are coated with a film (OPADRY® orange YS-1-13065-A) that is made of FD&C Yellow No. 6, hypromellose, polyethylene glycol 400, polysorbate 80, and titanium dioxide.

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March 2009

EPZ:2MG

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ECM526R0

June 2010

S/he said

'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and progress

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL



John Culhane

"Yesterday's win isn't just about DADT. Consider what repeal means: Even in a situation where people are, and should be, the most concerned about any changes (because of the dangers involved), in the end this (vote) was close to a consensus. Popular opinion, the views of the troops and of most of the top military brass, and even the strangled U.S. Senate add up to a resounding statement of this principle: Gay and lesbian troops can and will soon be as valued a part of the military as anyone else. And we're reminded that discrimination by government is indefensible, a message that resounds loudly in the marriage equality debate."

– John Culhane, in his column titled "Five Observations on the Repeal of DADT," www.365gay.com, Dec. 19

"Homosexual sin will always be a stench in the nostrils of Almighty God, an abomination which God condemns and shall punish with everlasting destruction. Even if the Senate had voted 100 to 0 to legalize sin, they could not remove God from His throne of Judgment. I hereby call upon the new Congress to never certify that the military is ready to implement repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell,' and instead pass strong laws protecting the rights of Christian troops - especially chaplains - to openly speak their opinions about what the Bible calls sin. If free speech and free religion rights of Christian chaplains and troops are not protected, then the military will quickly begin to persecute good people of Christian conscience."

– Gordon Klingenschmitt, former U.S. Navy Chaplain, in a press release about the Senate's repeal of DADT, www.christiannewswire.com, Dec. 19. Klingenschmitt, a far-right Christian fundamentalist, was discharged from the Navy in 2006 for disobeying a direct order, a violation of military regulations.



Sam Adams

"I hope that the repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell' will help persuade the collective conscience of the United States that gay people are just the same as anybody else. We shouldn't have to die in the closet. The irony is, as mayor, I marry people, but I can't marry Peter, my longtime partner."

– Sam Adams, mayor, Portland, Oregon, quoted in a column titled "A Gay Commander in Chief: Ready or Not?," <http://www.nytimes.com>, Dec. 18.

"In the end, Marines in combat will treat sexual orientation the same way they treat race, religion and one's stance on the likelihood of the Patriots winning another Super Bowl. I do not believe the intense desire we all feel as Marines to accomplish the mission and protect each other will be affected in the slightest by knowing the sexual orientation of the man or woman next to us. I believe the reluctance many Marines feel about repeal is based on the false stereotype, borne out of ignorance, that homosexuals don't do things like pull other Marines from burning vehicles. The truth is, they do it all the time. We simply don't know it because they can't tell us."

– Nathan Cox, Marine Corps infantry captain, in his column titled "Sexuality doesn't matter on the battlefield," www.washingtonpost.com, Dec. 16.



"I think the entire population of America has come tremendous strides forward in dealing with the issue of gays. And I would say that the answer is yes. I don't know about the next election, but I think in the near future. Because step-by-step we have realized that this issue of homosexuality has the same adverse and progressive elements as when we dealt with the race issue 50 or 40 years ago. So I would say that the country is getting acclimated to a president who might be female, who might obviously, now be black and who might be as well, a gay person."

– Former President Jimmy Carter, in a video interview, when asked if the country is ready for a gay president, <http://bigthink.com>, Dec. 14.

Heard on Facebook

How excited are you about DADT?!

I served for 17 1/2 years in the Air Force prior to recently being medically retired. This wonderful news brings gladness to my heart where all can serve their country equally – no more closets, no more fake dates, no more "roommates." No more fighting this system and trying to open the eyes of others without risking one's own career. We are not, however, done until we can freely marry and be acknowledged by the U.S. government. Keep up the good fight!

– Steph Maxson

As the daughter of a career military officer, WWII veteran, & "I Like Ike" Republican, it makes me proud. Damn well time.

– Cindy Clardy

Jodie Foster, Kevin Spacey and now John Travolta: Is it OK to out someone just because they're famous?

Another way to look at that question is: Is it OK to help someone continue to perpetuate the idea that being gay is negative just because they're famous?

– Craig Anderson

It's never OK to out someone, that is a personal choice, doing so only makes the person who is outing look vindictive.

– Robert Bayn

Should the state offer health benefits to unmarried partners?

Get rid of all tax benefits to any married couple – this will end the discrimination. Why should two people get a legal tax break just for living together? Shouldn't the single income household that pays out the same in rent and mortgage as a "married" couple with two incomes? I'd say the single people are the ones being discriminated against because we don't have a spouse. We get no tax breaks and yet we are paying the same amount on housing with only one income.

– Keith Mercier

Gosh, I wonder how your readers are going to answer this. Hmm. How about hell yes they should!

– David Paul Rudzinski

Some grammar mistakes in the responses have been fixed.

Add our fan page!

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

– *First Amendment, U.S. Constitution*



BTL EDITORIAL

Looking forward, looking back

Sgt. Leonard Matlovich was a Vietnam War veteran, race relations instructor, and recipient of the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. His photograph appeared on the cover of the Sept. 8, 1975, issue of TIME magazine with a cover headline that read: "I am a homosexual."

For a community still very young and without any national presence, Matlovich was an instant symbol of courage for gay people around the country. His legal battle to stay in the United States Air Force after coming out of the closet was closely followed and documented by the media.

He was eventually discharged, but he never stopped fighting for full equality. He remained an activist until his death due to complications from HIV/AIDS on June 22, 1988, a month before his 45th birthday.

Matlovich's tombstone selflessly reads: A Gay Vietnam Veteran (in place of his name) and under this is a quote, "When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."

And while Matlovich did not live to see the historic end of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, his legacy gave today's LGBT citizens reason to believe that this country will eventually deliver full equality to all of us in every sector of our lives – from serving in the military to full marriage equality.

In this season of giving and hope, the government finally delivered on one of the

And while Matlovich did not live to see the historic end of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, his legacy gave today's LGBT citizens reason to believe that this country will eventually deliver full equality

promises our U.S. Constitution envisions for all its citizens. However, it was a bittersweet day since the DREAM Act did not manage to pass. For millions of people, defeat of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) was a huge setback in dealing with immigration reform. It is hard to fully celebrate when fellow citizens are left out of the equality equation.

And so as we reflect during this holiday season, all of us here at BTL encourage our readers to think of some ways to act courageously and with compassion in the coming year, and to care about full social justice and fairness in our society. Find a way to give back – be an inspiration to those you have a chance to meet in your everyday life. Find an organization, a place where you can contribute to a cause. It all adds up in the end – even if we are not here to see it in person.

VIEWPOINT



Affirmations, Equality Michigan, Ruth Ellis: Will our 'big 3' be stronger?

Our LGBT agencies should stop talking money and start talking equality

BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

We've all felt the effects of this economic downturn in our personal lives. Companies downsizing, jobs lost, friends moving to other states. Even Detroit is downsizing, neighborhoods disappearing, education struggling, businesses closing, and services being slashed.

It is hitting each of us hard and in this time of uncertainty we turn to our organizations even more. In the abstract we understand that giving is down and this hurts our organizations, but have our expectations really come to grips with this?

It's been happening for a while. Like the automotive "Big Three," our big three have been in crisis for a long while with no bailout in sight.

Our decline did not come with headlines, bankruptcy or the congressional attention the auto industry received, but each time they took a hit we took a body slam – not just in donations, but in the heart and soul of what has kept our community so resilient, despite the unfriendly and sometime hostile politics of Michigan. We have lost the time and talent of our LGBT community.

We've been downsizing, but have we been doing it strategically so we can reemerge leaner, stronger and better in the future? Are we poised for a GM-like reemergence or just wishing and hoping that things will get better?

The recent merger of Michigan Equality and Triangle Foundation was as much as a consolidation of resources as it was a consolidation of our many voices in our fight for equality into one strong statewide voice. The Ruth Ellis Center had to take a step back, reevaluate its purpose, mission and vision and make painful downsizing decisions.

Now it's Affirmation's turn. Our center grew from its humble beginnings to be a bright shining star of achievement and LGBT presence in Ferndale. But even this new, much needed and utilized facility was not safe from Michigan's economic flu. Staff and hours have already been cut and a campaign is underway to provide a much needed financial infusion.

Recently there has been a call for yet another merger, this time between Affirmations and Equality Michigan, but where's the long-term strategy for our community?

We have one statewide voice in Equality Michigan, but our voice in the 2010 mid-term elections was far less impactful than in 2008. We won the unity battle so that we were no longer squabbling amongst ourselves, but didn't do so well in the overall war for LGBT equality in Michigan.

The Republican sweep in Lansing, the coming conservative Supreme Court, an untested (on

LGBT issues) Governor-elect, congressional redistricting by conservative leadership and serious threats to our allies in Washington including Debbie Stabenow – what's our strategy?

Is moving Equality Michigan into Affirmation's building a good move? Who knows? But again: where's the long-term strategy? It might be a better use of space, but would it resolve the overhead expenses inherent in owning a building?

I have often said that Affirmations would benefit from taking a page from the HRC playbook. A great deal of the HRC building in Washington D.C. is rented out, not just to other non-profits, but also to progressive businesses. This in effect helps the building pay for itself.

And what about Equality Michigan's building? That space on Detroit's west side is an asset to our community by its mere presence. That's an intangible that must be considered in planning a strategy for the future growth and stability of our community.

I'm lovin' the Ruth Ellis Center. It's like our own Ford Motor Company. They tightened their belt, made necessary cuts, and downsized staff, programming and hours. They took a hard look at themselves and came out swinging. Kudos to the board, executive director and kids who were part of the solution.

We cannot keep looking at our challenges in the same way and expect different outcomes. We need a holistic strategy that looks not just at

We – the LGBT community – care, but please don't ask us for a bailout without a plan for winning this fight for equality.

today, but towards the future. It's more than just raising more money, having another fundraiser, and sending out another letter of appeal.

Our community is smaller and earning less, but we are rich in talent, passion and possibilities. We are a community within a greater community and neither will survive without the other.

Our connectivity to the greater community provides opportunities for growth, understanding and equality but we've got to come out of our LGBT closet, think outside the box and put some motion in this movement.

This is a tough time, but it also a time of infinite opportunities – a time to get off the defense and take some strategic offensive action to be the change we want.

We – the LGBT community – care, but please don't ask us for a bailout without a plan for winning this fight for equality.

In the spirit of the season let's build together, not shout or pout - we don't need any more lumps of coal in our stockings. As for me, I'm making my list and checking it twice and sending season's greetings to all and hopes for a happy, prosperous new year in peace and equality.



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John McCain

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

"Today is a very sad day," sighed a doddering and out of touch John McCain on the day "don't ask, don't tell" was finally repealed by Congress.

Oh, shut up, McCain. Your completely indefensible and fear-mongering position lost. Suck it.

"I hope that when we pass this legislation that we will understand that we are doing great damage," McCain said before the vote.

The only thing that the DADT repeal is going to do great damage to is McCain's reputation. He's staked his claim to the wrong side of history. As DADT's staunchest defender in the face of possible repeal, he's made himself the George Wallace of this issue.

What's especially unseemly is McCain's complete about-face. While today he stands with the anti-gay right-wingers he's so capriciously aligned himself with, three years ago he was Mr. "DADT repeal is fine with me so long as the top brass are cool with it."

"I listen to people like Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and literally every military leader that I know. And they testified before Congress that they felt the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy was the most appropriate way to conduct ourselves in the military," McCain said in 2006. "But the day that the leadership of the military comes to me and says, 'Senator, we ought to change the policy,' then I think we ought to consider seriously changing it because those leaders in the military are the ones we give the responsibility to."

But of course, as soon as "the leadership of the military" was cool with it, McCain was not.

We've been kicking service members out simply because, say, he's a soldier who doesn't get turned on by big jugs, or she's a soldier who does. That's the policy McCain has been so rabidly defending?

McCain went out of his way to insist that DADT was "effective" policy and that only military folks who agreed with him were worth listening to.

"They're saying if it isn't broke, then don't fix it," McCain said. "I understand the other side's argument because of their social-political agenda, but to somehow allege that it has harmed our military isn't justified by the facts."

What exactly does McCain mean when he calls DADT "effective policy?" Effective at what? Ruining people's lives? Punishing members of the military who are doing a job the vast majority of Americans are too chickenshit to do? Coddling members of the military who think that gay people are too "icky" to work alongside?

And how does kicking trained personnel out not harm the military?

In 2007 McCain said, "We have the best-trained, most professional, best-equipped, most efficient, most wonderful military in the history of this country. There just aren't enough of them." Did he mean there just aren't enough straight ones?

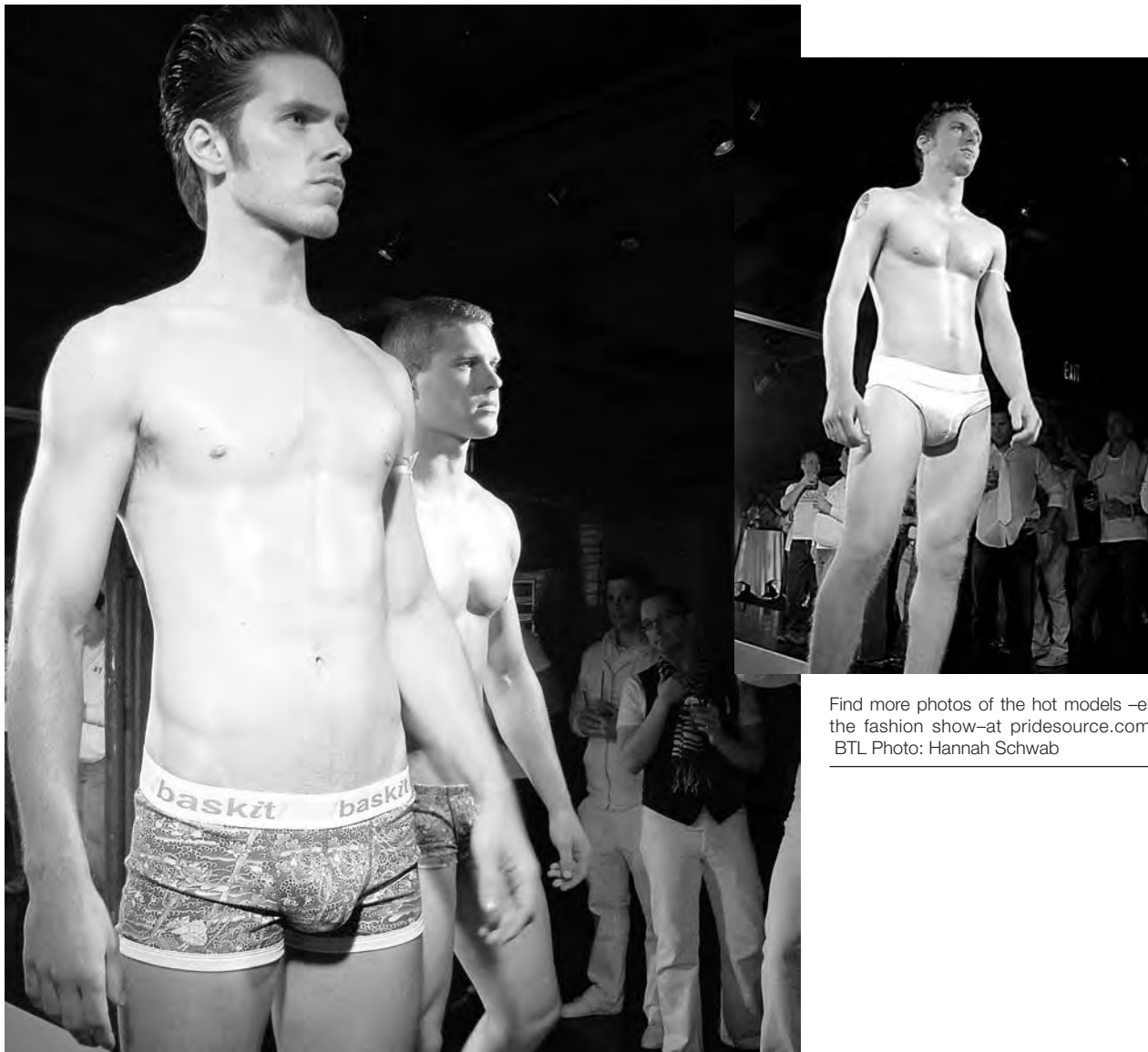
It takes a lot of time and money to turn a new recruit into a fully trained member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines. And yet we've been kicking service members out simply because, say, he's a soldier who doesn't get turned on by big jugs, or she's a soldier who does. That's the policy McCain has been so rabidly defending?

As Joe Sudbay of AmericaBlogGay wrote, "They're on the front lines, putting their lives on the front lines for the rest of us."

By saying that repealing DADT is simply another notch in the belt of some "social-political agenda" McCain is essentially saying to the thousands of gay and lesbian service members who have lost their careers under DADT, "You're worthless."

In the end it's McCain himself who is worthless. A man who once seemed to have a shred of integrity but who now barely clings to a shred of dignity after he's sold out his career trying to appease the anti-gay right. It looks like that isn't exactly "effective policy."

Because everyone deserves to wear white



Find more photos of the hot models —er, the fashion show—at pridesource.com. BTL Photo: Hannah Schwab

A Grand Rapids fashion show featuring underwear models raised money for White Knot for Equality

BY HANNAH SCHWAB

Everybody should have the right to tie the knot. This is the driving force behind White Knot for Equality, a nonprofit organization that supports marriage equality. And this was the motivation behind the White Party fundraising fashion show at the The B.O.B.'s Eve Lounge in downtown Grand Rapids Dec. 15.

White Knot, along with A.K. Rikk's Menswear, the mobile social network Grindr and Stolli vodka sponsored an underwear fashion show. Attendees sporting white outfits were engulfed in white lights and white ribbons, all to bring awareness to the message of marriage equality.

Male models were provided by The Matthew Agency, a Grand Rapids-based talent firm. The fit gentlemen showed off the latest in upscale men's swim, lounge and

underwear by Diesel, Rufskin, aussieBum and Baskit.

This was not the underwear your brother buys at The Gap. Formfitting briefs, boy shorts and bikinis showed off well-toned figures. Strategically placed colors and patterns highlighted the well-equipped gentlemen. A steady stream of catcalls echoed from the audience as the dapper men posed on the runway.

The underwear wasn't the only thing the men wore. Every model displayed a white ribbon tied on his bicep while every person in the audience was offered a white knot to pin to his or her outfit.

Tina Derusha, founder of Spotlight616, LLC, an event planning and promotions company, was brought on board to help plan the event.

"(White Knot) works tirelessly to advocate equal marriage rights for all. We

believe that this is a message that has finally received major support in our nation and is now gaining momentum in our state," Derusha said.

The fashion show was the first event of its kind to be held at The B.O.B. and in Grand Rapids, Derusha said. The B.O.B. doesn't host any other gay nights or clubs, she said.

While the main event of the night featured a giggling crowd, whistles and a constant stream of light bulb flashes, the true message of the evening was not lost.

White Knot's goal, listed front and center on its website, is to "make sure every kid gets the chance to grow up and fall in love." And there was nothing but love at Eve: People loving each other, people loving the Stolli and appetizers, and people loving sexy underwear models each taking a turn on the catwalk.

Thousands on HIV drugs desperate amid state budget deficits

Free drug programs also see increase in demand

BY MICHELLE R. SMITH

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) – Cash-strapped states are cutting back on a program that provides free medicine to people with HIV, leaving thousands of patients to wonder where their drugs will come from and stirring fears of a return to the days when an AIDS diagnosis meant certain death.

At least 19 states have taken such steps as capping enrollment, dropping patients, instituting waiting lists, lowering the income ceiling for eligibility, and no longer covering certain drugs or tests.

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program is funded by the federal and state governments and run by the states. It provides free drugs in all 50 states and U.S. territories. But because people are living longer with HIV and the recession has created more demand for the program, states have been unable to keep up.

“It’s very frustrating to be stuck in this position at this age and not feel well,” said Stephen Farrar, 55, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., who has HIV and is going on Florida’s waiting list. “Am I going to be one of those people?”

Health officials and advocates believe most people on ADAP’s waiting lists are getting AIDS drugs free from pharmaceutical companies. But advocates say an unknown number are falling through the cracks of those programs, which provide only a patchwork of coverage and have widely varying income requirements.

AIDS drugs can be extremely expensive – a single one can cost more than \$20,000 per year, and patients often need to take a cocktail of prescriptions to treat the disease or keep symptoms at bay.

In nine states, more than 4,500 people with HIV are on ADAP waiting lists or can’t get into the program because enrollment is capped, according to the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

More than 300 people who had coverage were dropped this year, after five states lowered their income eligibility limits to as little as \$21,000 per year. Hundreds more face the same fate by February if more states follow through on plans to cut their eligibility, the alliance said.

Several states have started covering fewer drugs – only AIDS medications, for example, but not drugs for conditions often developed by those treated for HIV.

The cutbacks have set off alarm among some HIV patients, with some people cutting pills in half to make them last longer, said Stephen Hourahan, executive director of AIDS Project Rhode Island, a state that was hit hard by the economic downturn and which instituted a waiting list this fall.

“There were stories of people calling us in a panic because they were afraid they

Making sure patients with HIV take their medications faithfully is a high priority of health care workers because it reduces the chance they will develop resistance to drugs and may also lower the risk of transmission.

were going to die if they didn’t have their meds,” he said.

Waiting lists have been instituted previously for the program, said Ann Lefert of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. But as demand has spiked, she said, the lists now are bigger than ever before.

The program had more than 168,000 people nationwide on its rolls in 2009, the most recent numbers available. The federal government spent \$860 million on ADAP programs in the fiscal year that ends March 31, while states spent \$336 million. In 2009, California, for example, spent \$71 million, Texas \$27 million and Illinois \$14.5 million.

Nearly 1,400 people entered the program every month nationwide this year, compared with half that number in 2008, the alliance said. While many states have increased money sent to the program, it often hasn’t been enough to keep up with demand, and they’ve had to cut services. Despite the greater need, 12 states have put less money into their drug programs.

Most people on ADAP don’t qualify for Medicaid because they are not sick enough to be considered disabled. Some who do qualify can get only limited drug coverage; ADAP covers the gap.

Making sure patients with HIV take their medications faithfully is a high priority of health care workers because it reduces the chance they will develop resistance to drugs and may also lower the risk of transmission.

Farrar lost his health insurance this month, more than a year after losing his job doing hair and makeup at a Florida TV station. Once his final insurance-covered prescriptions run out, he will have to worry about filling 17 prescriptions – two AIDS drugs and the rest for related ailments, such as arthritis and wasting, a severe weight loss. He will be one of more than 2,400 patients on Florida’s waiting list, which was started June 1.

The cuts hit even those with insurance because copays can reach \$500 to \$700 per month for a single drug, and ADAP often helps with those copays.

“This is a huge financial burden on folks, but there’s not a whole lot we can do,” said Kevin Sullivan, executive director of the

Ohio AIDS Coalition. The state has more than 370 people on the waiting list and dropped more than 250 others from the program because of now-lower income limits.

The process for getting free drugs from pharmaceutical companies can be difficult to navigate because each has different rules, with some limiting patients’ income to \$21,000 per year and others covering patients who make up to \$54,000.

Patients who take many drugs from different makers, like Farrar, have to qualify for multiple drug company programs. If they qualify for one but not another, they might have to change their drug regimen, which can affect their health.

Elaine Henderson, 39, of Cleveland, gets her single AIDS drug through a pharmaceutical company’s free program but worries about what will happen if the company changes its requirements.

“Right now, I’m hoping that I’ll be OK until ADAP is fixed. If not, then I’ll be in trouble,” she said.

During the summer, after several states instituted waiting lists, the federal government infused the program with \$25 million, which helped some states eliminate waits. But that fell about \$100 million short of what AIDS advocates estimated was needed, Lefert said. The House recently approved a \$60 million increase for the year starting April 1, but it hasn’t passed the Senate and would not solve the program’s woes for the current fiscal year, Lefert said.

Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., said states must do their part to provide money, but given the economic slump, the federal government needs to step in and do more.

“Just to let people hang out there without any notion of where they’re going to get their lifesaving treatments or drugs, it’s really morally offensive,” she said.

In the meantime, states are looking for ways to move money around in their budgets to cover ADAP.

Rhode Island was able to close its waiting list this month after finding money elsewhere in the budget. Florida’s program, which has a deficit of \$15 million to \$17 million for the current fiscal year, hopes to do the same, but that probably would not happen until July.

But Sullivan, of the Ohio AIDS Coalition, said: “This is going to take a federal solution. To expect the states with their budget crises to bail this out is not realistic.”

Farrar said he has written to his congressman and President Barack Obama about his plight.

“I’m in limbo. It’s very stressful,” he said. “I don’t have much hope that it’s getting any better.”

Spacey won’t discuss sexual orientation



Actor Kevin Spacey told *The Daily Beast* on Dec. 15 that he’s not interested in discussing his sexual orientation.

“I have not given up my right to privacy,” Spacey said. “People have different reasons for the way they live their lives. You cannot put everyone’s reasons in the same box. It’s just a line I’ve never crossed and never will.”

“You have to understand that people who choose not to discuss their personal lives are not living a lie,” he continued. “That is a presumption that people jump to. ... I just don’t buy into that the personal can be political. I just think that’s horseshit.”

Lesbian becomes Colorado Supreme Court justice

Monica Marquez became the first openly gay or lesbian member of the Colorado Supreme Court when she was sworn in Dec. 10.

Her partner, Sheila Barthel, helped her put on her black robe at the ceremony.

Marquez, 41, previously served as deputy attorney general.

Equality Matters launched in support of gay equality

On Dec. 20, Media Matters for America founder and CEO David Brock announced the launch of Equality Matters, a new media and communications initiative in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender equality. Joining Equality Matters as president is Richard Socarides. A leading gay rights advocate for more than two decades, Socarides previously served as White House special assistant and principal adviser to President Bill Clinton on gay civil rights issues. Award-winning journalist Kerry Eleveld will serve as editor of EqualityMatters.org, which will include news, opinion, and messaging about the ongoing fight for equality. Eleveld is currently the Washington correspondent for *The Advocate* and will begin her new duties on January 15, 2011.

“Despite huge progress in gay rights in recent years, exemplified by the historic vote finally striking down the ban on gay men and women from serving in the military, we are now living through a period of ferocious fundamentalism in the Republican Party and the conservative movement,” Brock said in a statement. “Traditional conservatives and the Tea Party movement are united only in their contempt for equal rights for all Americans and a desire to return America to a 19th century idyll. Equality Matters will not allow these latter-day ‘clerics’ to gain serious recognition by the media nor influence the policies that affect the lives of every American.”

Report looks at LGBT Cambodians

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights released a groundbreaking report Dec. 9 titled "Coming Out in the Kingdom: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in Cambodia."

It says that LGBT Cambodians face unique challenges, including ostracism from their families and communities that often leads to economic hardship as well as discrimination by employers and authorities.

The report argues that the concept of homosexuality as understood in "the West" may not directly transfer to Cambodia.

"The Cambodian understanding of sexuality is derived from concepts of gender, character and personality," it says. "The focus on these character traits and outwardly visible characteristics instead of sexual orientation means that many Cambodians who are homosexual do not identify themselves as such."

Buddhism, the report says, generally tolerates homosexuality.

"Homosexuality, whilst seen as an oddity, does not attract the kind of aggressive reaction as can be seen in Christian or Muslim cultures," it states. "Buddhism itself places no value on marriage or procreation. Marriage and procreation are considered positive if they bring about love and respect, but may be deemed negative if pain or strife is caused. However, in Cambodia, cultural, social and economic pressures override Buddhist teachings on marriage – family values are incredibly important and pressure is strong for sons and daughters to marry and have children."

"Sexual behavior amongst male youths may be seen as harmless experimentation,

since women are expected to remain 'pure' until marriage," the report continues. "Youthful indiscretions may be forgotten or may continue unnoticed. However, eventually men are expected to marry and father children. Given traditional gender roles, women have less ability to pursue same-sex relationships than homosexual males, either privately or publicly."

"The risk of ostracism from a close family network and economic difficulties posed by living outside the family network may mean that LGBT persons do not live the lives they wish to or have to conduct homosexual relationships in secret," the researchers conclude.

Nonetheless, an LGBT community is emerging in the nation. A pride celebration, which includes workshops, movies, art exhibits and social gatherings, launched in 2003. Four

hundred people attended the culmination of the events in 2009.

Pride organizers have formed an organization called RoCK to support LGBT people and raise awareness among non-gay Cambodians.

A gay "scene" has developed in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

And "the Internet has allowed gay Cambodian people to connect to other gay people, thus raising awareness of a wider, global LGBT community and the possibilities of participating in this," the report said.

The research, funded by the Swedish Association for Sexual Education, can be downloaded in English and Khmer at www.cchrcambodia.org.

UN secretary-general, US ambassador attend LGBT event, condemn violence

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United States' U.N. ambassador, Susan Rice, joined a high-level U.N. panel Dec. 10 that condemned anti-gay violence and the criminalization of same-sex relations.

The Human Rights Day event was hosted by several nations and organized by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch and other organizations.

"Violence will end only when we confront prejudice," Ban said. "Stigma and discrimination will end only when we agree to speak out. That requires all of us to do our part - to speak out at home, at work, in our schools and communities."

"Where there is tension between cultural attitudes and universal human rights, universal human rights must carry the day," he said. "Personal disapproval, even society's disapproval, is no excuse to arrest, detain, imprison, harass or torture anyone, ever. ... Human Rights Day commemorates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is not called the Partial Declaration of Human Rights. It is not the Sometimes Declaration of Human Rights. It is the Universal Declaration, guaranteeing all human beings their basic human rights, without exception."

Rice told the gathering: "The story of my country is, in part, a story of the expanding boundaries of rights and

dignity – of the way that discrimination and prejudice have been countered by acceptance and equality. I feel this deeply and I feel it very personally. Even at a time of profound challenges at home and abroad, we dare not give up on the great causes of equality and fundamental rights. And that includes the pursuit of full and equal rights for the millions of people in this country and around the world who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender."

The event was sponsored by U.N. missions from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, France, Gabon, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States and by the Delegation of the European Commission.

Brazil council to protect LGBTs

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Human Rights Secretary Paulo Vannuchi signed a decree Dec. 9 creating the National LGBT Council.

The document says the council's purpose is to "formulate and propose guidelines for government actions, at the national level, aimed at combating discrimination and promoting and defending the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals."

The body is composed of employees from 15 government ministries and representatives of 15 nongovernmental organizations.

"The creation of the council is something ABGLT has been pressuring for and is a victory for civil society and the Lula government," said Toni Reis, president of the Brazilian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Association.

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Best of 2010

INSIDE

HOLLYWOOD

BOOKS

SPORTS

Albums of the Year

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI



(10) Melissa Etheridge, 'Fearless Love'

Hearing the musician return to her zenith and kill songs with raging burn was a rush like no other. She blows the spiraling top off the title track, spilling desperation into a Kings of Leon-like arena rock tune, and sticks it to her home state on the rip-roaring fireball "Miss California." She doesn't always bite down hard, though: Her narrative about family and illusions on "Gently We Row" is as beautiful as her own fearless love.



(8) Vampire Weekend, 'Contra'

The shameless sophomore album from the indie hipsters came out earlier in the year, so by now, in this breakneck music industry, it should be long forgotten. Had it not been for how the N.Y. quartet expertly merges classical components with dainty pop melodies, making feathers of harmony that ease their way in, it would've been. But the airiness of Ezra Koenig's voice floated to the clouds and the songs were some of the most smiley sounds to fall on ears.



(9) Elton John and Leon Russell, 'The Union'

Two music greats got together and created, well, more greatness. Theirs is a "Union," but so much more: a rare act of appreciation – the album came to be because of John's fandom for Russell, a soul veteran – deeply felt in their exchanges about war, morality and expensive shoes. It crosses genres, from gospel ("Hey Ahab") to piano rock ("Monkey Suit"), with hat-tips to the '70s era that both were born out of. Oh, and did we mention that it's John's best album in, like, forever?

See Best Albums, page 24



Robyn: No. 1

► Best Albums

Continued from p. 23



(7) Sia, 'We Are Born'

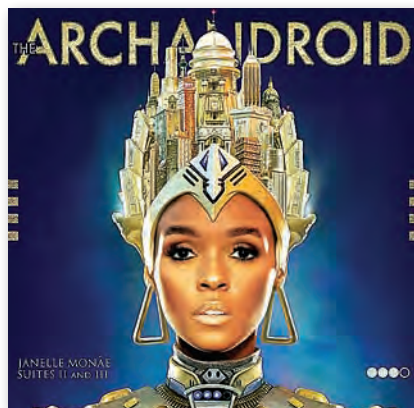
The singing Aussie, especially known for bummed-out numbers that hurt like hell, danced her way out of down with this jiggy shake-up splashed in rainbow colors. A nod to her adoration for the '80s era, even covering – and one-upping – Madonna's "Oh Father," Sia's messages of optimism and survival were also intrinsically hers despite dollops of toy pianos, chimes and child chirps (see standouts "The Fight" and "Never Gonna Leave Me"). A new Sia was born, indeed, and cooler. Than. Ever.



(6) Taylor Swift, 'Speak Now'

No one hates Taylor Swift as much as they might say they do. It's why the Southern sugarplum's as big as she is, something her third album – as she expands past her limited pop-by-numbers palette – strongly justifies. Love is, as expected from a boy-crazy 21-year-old, what brings out the best in her songwriting (which, here, she exercises in full) with "Back to December" and "The Story of Us," all about the tickles and tortures of relationships

that Swift's so good at exposing. Speak now, later, whenever – just keep doing it, Taylor.



(5) Janelle Monáe, 'The ArchAndroid'

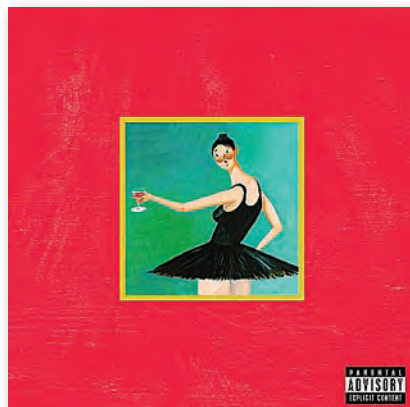
Retro and funk collide in this wonderfully conceived canon of Janelle Monáe's futuristic world, a mind-blowing saga stretched over 70 crazy minutes. Taking off from 2007's debut EP about a robot-led land, it turns the Kansas-born ingénue's easy "soul" tag on its head, spins it around, and makes musical gumbo out of it. What a mess you'd think, what with all the influences (from James Brown to Michael Jackson, and then pastoral folk and crazy theatrics), but it's uniquely spellbinding – like nothing, and everything, before it.



(4) Arcade Fire, 'The Suburbs'

Never one to disappoint, the Montreal supergroup tempered their tiptoe-to-takeoff bombast, stepping back from bloated epics to deliver this resonating rock opus. Impressive again is how transcendent their sound is, especially with the majestic "Sprawl II" and lines like, "Let's go for a drive and see the town tonight/There's nothing to do but I don't

mind when I'm with you." It plays out like the fleeting years of life – except in life, you can't go back. "The Suburbs" at least takes you there.



(3) Kanye West, 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy'

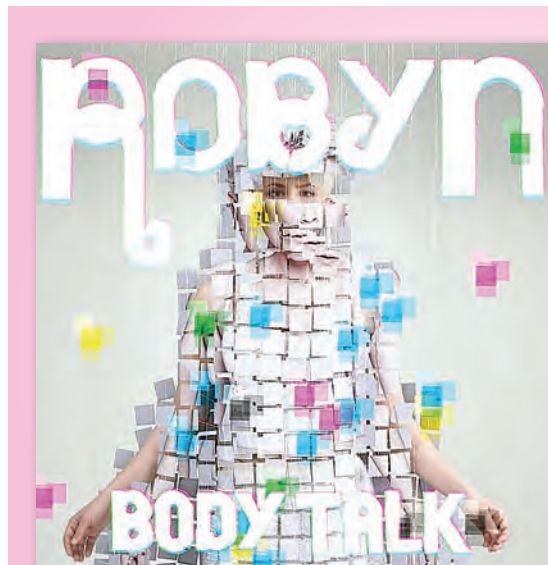
Hated like few others, the rapper's narcissism often gets in the way of his crafty, boundary-breaking work. This time, it was the reason for it, as he probed his own reckless psyche for a thrilling, demented, self-deprecating, even vulnerable genre buster that stretched hip-hop beyond its roots and into classic rock (uh-huh: That's an Elton piano solo on "All of the Lights," which

boasts an impressive guest list) and electro-dance of extreme grandeur. Songs are big as his ego, but just try turning away.



(2) Jónsi, 'Go'

Hope got a new name this year: Jónsi Birgisson, lead singer of Iceland's Sigur Rós who, for the first time, went solo. Going at it alone, with support from his boyfriend Alex Somers and conductor Nico Muhly, proved revolutionary as he gave the vox behind some of the most soulful classic-rock restored life – working his soaring instrument into kaleidoscopic bursts of orchestral whimsicality. From the ecstatic "Animal Arithmetic" to the consuming swell of "Grow Till Tall," Jónsi was the sun, singing.



(1) Robyn, 'Body Talk'

Her body talked, but did you listen? The irresistible (and overlooked) Robin Miriam Carlsson – flooding the club scene with her genius trilogy, which culminated in a 15-track masterpiece of shoulda-been-hits – wised-up a genre that's otherwise become insipidly dumb. "Dancing on My Own" was moving in every sense, and the hearty "Hang With Me" and "Call Your Girlfriend" only confirmed what a refreshing, distinct diva of dance-pop this delicious Swede is. Innovative, transparent, entrancing, geeky and adorable – Robyn's a firecracker that just kept popping.

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BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE



The cast of "Glee." Photo: Matthias Clamer/FOX

'Modern Family' goes there

"Modern Family" began its second season the object of fan protest. Why, asked viewers, on a sitcom featuring a gay couple, is that gay couple never seen being affectionate the way the straight couples are? It came down to a Facebook campaign, some idiotic "Who cares?" mouthing off from co-star Ed O'Neill (who should really know better by now) and then an episode the show's creators assured us had always been on the agenda, one in which Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Eric Stonestreet finally gave each other a husbandly smooch. Feathers unruffled, the Earth didn't fall into the Sun and now those guys are the first fictional gay couple on the cover of "TV Guide." Holding their TV baby. Everybody wins.

'Glee' becomes Gayest TV Show Ever

The all-singing, all-dancing show's lone gay character Kurt, played by Chris Colfer, was all over the place in season one. He was strong, he was weak, he was predatory, he was vulnerable. And then along season two came with a triple whammy: a tender father/son dynamic unlike anything seen on network TV up to this point, an intriguing bullying plotline that injected tension into a series that often feels weightless and a swoon-inducing introduction of a new gay

character played by Darren Criss, one that may or may not be Kurt's ticket to teen romance. All of this on a show families watch together. We've come a long way from "Will & Grace."

'Black Swan' magnetizes audiences, unlike 'Phillip Morris'

The ballerina-cracking-up psychodrama "Black Swan," starring Natalie Portman, Mila Kunis and "that" lesbian sex scene, broke opening weekend records for a movie in limited release, racking up per-screen box office tallies previously unheard of for a decidedly non-mainstream film. Now it's gone wide and looks like a lock for a slew of Oscar nominations. Meanwhile, the weird saga of one of the year's most daring, biting comedies, "I Love You Phillip Morris" gets its final chapter, as the American film actually earns, at long last, an American theatrical release. Featuring Jim Carrey in what may be the most out-on-a-limb performance of the year (not to mention his entire career), the movie also features some explicit gay sex between Carrey and co-star Ewan McGregor that's keeping away the same male audience lining up to see Natalie and Mila go at it. Expect Academy Award voters to give it an undeserved cold shoulder too.

See Best of Hollywood, page 33



Photo: Patrick Demarcelier

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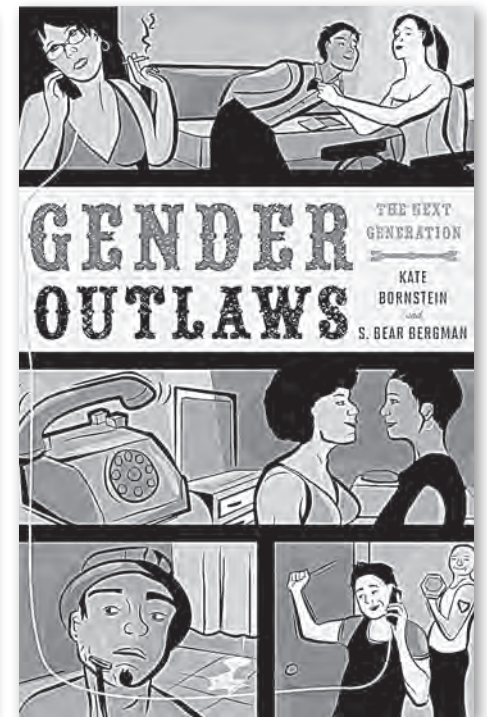
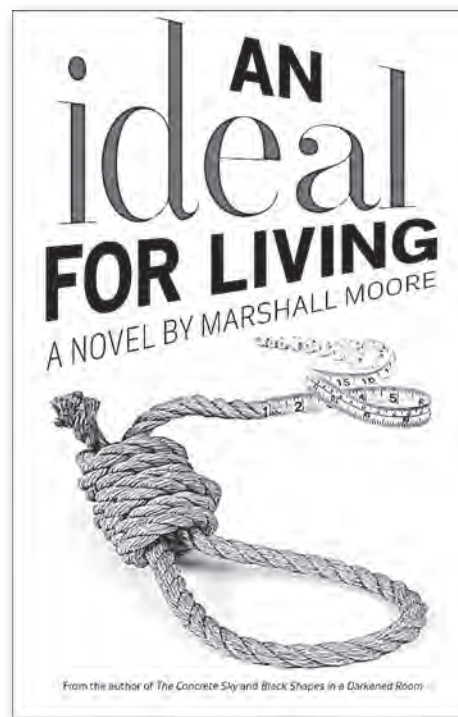
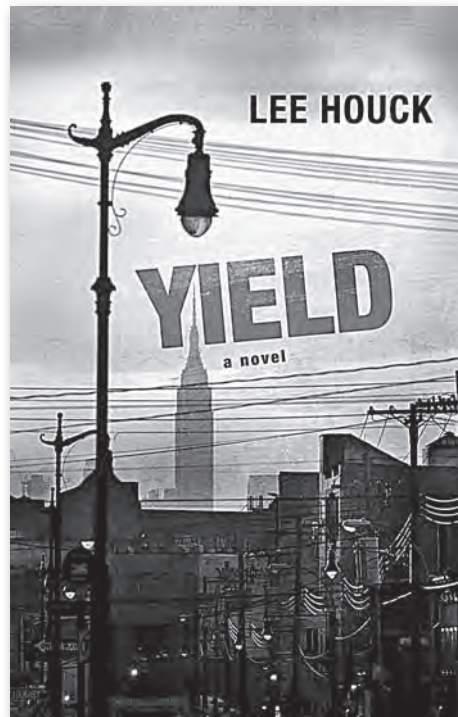


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Best of 2010



The bad news: Alyson Books, founded 30 years ago and for a time the preeminent gay and lesbian press, flamed out in October despite a bid by editor Don Weise to purchase it mostly for debts. More than a dozen contracted books are languishing in limbo and Alyson authors are organizing to demand unpaid back royalties, while owners Here Media plan to emerge in 2011 as an e-book only press. The good news: in November, Weise announced the launch of Magnus Books (after Magnus Hirschfeld, an outspoken German advocate for gay rights in the 19th and early 20th centuries), with plans to publish up to a dozen titles next year.

More good news: Victoria A. Brownworth has launched Tiny Satchel Press, a young adult publisher whose first list features books by J.D. Shaw, Greg Herren, Patty Friedman, Diane DeKelb-Rittenhouse and the anthology "From Where They Sit: Black Writers Write Black Youth." Jameson Currier started Chelsea Station Editions with three books released in 2010. J.M. Snyder expanded JMS Books, which publishes both print and e-books with a focus on male romances. And novelist Marshall Moore announced Signal 8 Press and BookCyclone, based in Hong Kong, the former a print publisher whose first 2011 book is Philip Huang's story collection, "A Pornography of Grief," the latter focusing on e-book reprints, with a list that includes Juliet Sarkessian's "Trio Sonata" and backlist/out of print books by Andy Quan and Neal Drinnan.

Best Fiction 2010

"Another Life Altogether," by Elaine Beale, Spiegel & Grau.

Beale's memoir-style novel – about a 13-year-old girl struggling with an unstable home life (her suicidal mother is bipolar, her ineffectual father is mean-tempered), an unrequited crush on another schoolgirl, and bullying by her peers in 1970s East Yorkshire – is heartbreaking, heroic and, somehow, also humorous.

"The Big Bang Symphony," by Lucy Jane Bledsoe, University of Wisconsin Press.

Antarctica, which Bledsoe has visited three times – feet-on-the-ground research that captures the southern continent's blend of mystery, menace and majesty with ravishing immediacy – is as much a character in this crystalline novel as are the three women confronting the emotional puzzles of their lives in a riveting narrative.

"Krakow Melt," by Daniel Allen Cox, Arsenal Pulp Press.

It's quite likely Cox's second novel qualifies as one of the two most original queer stories of the year. Radek Tomaszewski is a sometimes-bisexual parkour-loving queer pyromaniac and activist whose fiery romance with fellow fire-lover Dora is set against a backdrop of Polish homophobia, Pope John Paul II's death and the music of Pink Floyd.

"By Nightfall," by Michael Cunningham, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

The allure of astounding beauty and how the mind can betray the body are the core of Cunningham's elegant novel about mid-age angst, the hollow nature of elites, the elusiveness of once-dreamed goals, and the vanity of unexamined lives – all qualms confronted in a poetically pyrotechnic mix of humor and pathos.

"Hate: A Romance," by Tristan Garcia, translated by Marion Duvert and Lorin Stein, Faber & Faber.

It would be a mistake to pigeonhole this controversial book as solely about the politics of safe sex versus barebacking in the middle years of the AIDS epidemic. It's first a heady intellectual narrative, a rich novel of ideas and then, amidst the tumult of personalities at war with each other, the story of romance gone awry.

"I Came Out for This?," by Lisa Gitlin, Bywater Books.

Love comes late for Joanna Kane, who denied her sexual self well into her 40s. Debut novelist Gitlin's breezy novel about a late-bloomer is told through sometimes manic, sometimes maudlin, sometimes wise, and sometimes simply wonderful journal entries, a narrative tack that propels the tale with engaging quirkiness.

"Spanking New," by Clifford Henderson, Bold Strokes Books.

Spanky is an unborn baby who can flit from one character's thoughts and emotions to another's – a storytelling perspective that might have come off as a diaper-load of a gimmick. But Henderson handles the unorthodox point of view with inventive style and charm – and this is the other truly original queer read of the year.

"Yield," by Lee Houck, Kensington Books.

Houck writes about 20-something queers with perfect emotional pitch, as they scramble to make their way in contemporary Manhattan, navigating uncertain years of youthful drift. This luminous debut novel captures big-city New York hustle with the values of small-town heart.

"An Ideal for Living," by Marshall Moore. Lethe Press, 214 pages, \$15 paper.

What better themes for a skewed-view gay novel than the concepts of self-loathing, gym culture and body image, abetted by a supernatural solution to avoirdupois and a money-buys-everything sense of entitlement? Moore's razor-sharp dialogue and well-honed disdain for the concept of beauty at any cost makes this unsettling novel irresistible.

"The More I Owe You," by Michael Sledge, Counterpoint Press, 336 pages, \$15.95 paper.

Fascinating fact is transformed into sumptuous fiction in Sledge's debut novel, in which he reimagines poet Elizabeth Bishop's 15 years in South America – when she was tumultuously in love with aristocratic architect and activist Lota de Macedo Soare – with extraordinarily atmospheric prose and unflinchingly emotional intimacy.

Best Nonfiction 2010

"Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation," edited by Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman, Seal Press

Transpeople. Genderqueers. Trannies. Sex/gender radicals. Transsexuals. They're all represented in this prose-and-poetry anthology of intense, painful memoirs and breezy, joyous mini-biographies addressing the fluidity – sometimes hard-won, often wholly fabulous – of the sexual self, many voices mulling a singular theme and bringing younger gender outlaws into the queer literary mainstream.

"The Lost Library: Gay Fiction Rediscovered," edited by Tom Cardamone, Haiduk Press.

Allen Barnett and Christopher Coe, Melvin Dixon and Robert Ferro, Michael Grumley and Paul Reed: fiction by writers taken by AIDS – too young, their books now out of print – is celebrated in Cardamone's loving collection, part book review, part social history, part literary excavation and, in summation, a loving memorial for queer writing and writers.

"Portrait of an Addict as a Young Man," by Bill Clegg, Little, Brown.

The moral redemption at the core of Clegg's relentless, self-flagellating memoir about

Books

BY RICHARD LABONTE



hapless addiction and palpable paranoia is likely as psychically searing for the reader as it was for the writer. Clegg, young, handsome, in love and at the top of the literary management game in Manhattan, was everyone's ideal – until he encountered crack.

"Inseparable: Desire Between Women in Literature," by Emma Donoghue, Alfred A. Knopf.

There's more to lesbian lit than "The Well of Loneliness" – and novelist Donoghue ("Room," one of the best non-lesbian books of 2010) has done the research to prove it. With completely accessible (and often witty) prose married to rigorous academic research, this treasure trove focuses on writing about girl-girl relationships from the medieval to the modern.

"The Bucolic Plague: How Two Manhattanites Became Gentlemen Farmers," by Josh Kilmer-Purcell. HarperCollins, 320 pages, \$24.99 hardcover.

Kilmer-Purcell's account of a retired drag queen and his Martha Stewart-employed boyfriend settling into a rural setting has many hilarious high points. But the stress of holding down day jobs while handling farm chores on weekends while launching an online business takes a toll on the men's relationship too, a reality the author never shies away from.

"My Queer War," by James Lord, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

As Congress dawdled over the inevitability of repealing "Don't Act, Don't Tell," art historian Lord's posthumous wartime memoir arrived at an opportune time. His cheeky recounting of WWII service as a practicing homosexual – he was good at it, once he eased out of the closet – makes clear that queers, even back then, were everywhere, even in the military.



"Madre & I: A Memoir of Our Immigrant Lives," by Guillermo Reyes. University of Wisconsin Press.

Reyes, an accomplished playwright and theater professor, bares his soul with searing candor in this graceful memoir about growing up as a Chilean immigrant in America, a handsome lad drawn to other young men but nonetheless bedeviled for years by body shame, paralyzing fear expressed with a compelling combination of poignant honesty and rueful wit.

"Just Kids," by Patti Smith, Ecco Press

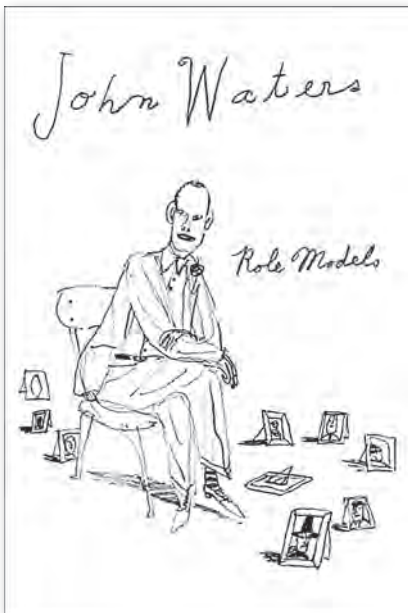
Though the likes of Burroughs and Ginsberg wander through Chelsea Hotel hallways of this memoir, they're merely colorful bit players. The real stars, memorialized in pre-fame days, are then-waiflike Smith and her late-1960s cohort in cool ambition, Robert Mapplethorpe. Their relationship endured physically until Mapplethorpe's death and, as this exquisitely tender book makes clear, emotionally well beyond his passing.

"An Obscene Diary: The Visual World of Sam Steward," edited by Justin Spring, Elysium Press, Antinous Press.

Spring's biography of tattoo artist, avid sexhound and erotic author Sam ("Phil Andros") Steward is a gay nonfiction standout in its own right – but this limited-edition collection of Steward's one-night-stand sketches, Polaroid pics of tricks, tattoo flash art and written remembrances from his "stud file" is a stunning visual companion to a story of a remarkable gay man's life.

"Role Models," by John Waters, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

It's hardly surprising that boundary-shattering filmmaker Waters claims an eclectic roster of role models – the women and men he says molded him



into a healthily neurotic man. For a man whose shtick is to shock, what's most shocking about these essays is how sentimental, un-ironic and humane they are.

Footnotes

It was the year of queer life stories. Country singer Chely Wright asked readers to "Like Me"; actor (and Ellen DeGeneres's wedded wife) Portia de Rossi wrote about her "Unbearable Lightness"; and, for former boy band performer and current balladeer Ricky Martin, it was all about "Me": three performers wrote about their queer selves (and Wright and Martin came out) in not-bad autobiographies. (And, in January, muscularly fey Johnny Weir proclaims "Welcome to My World" – it's the year of pop star tell-alls. But serious books told the stories of serious queer lives, too: R. Tripp Evans, in "Grant Wood: A Life," tracks the subsumed homosexuality in the gothic artist's life; Sjeng Scheijen, in "Diaghilev: A Life," gays up a ballet master; long-closeted British novelist E.M. Forster ("Maurice," published after his death in 1970), is caressed critically in Frank Kermode's "Concerning E. M. Forster," and his homosexuality is made central to his life in Wendy Moffat's celebratory "A Great Unrecorded History: A New Life of E.M. Forster." And another venerable British gay scribe's life is also queered up in Selena Hasting's "The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham." More prosaically – but no less importantly – Will Fellows writes about grandmother Helen P. Larson and her "Gay Bar: The Fabulous, True Story of a Daring Woman and Her Boys in the 1950s," and Archbishop and AIDS activist the Rev. Carl Bean tells how "I Was Born This Way: A Gay Preacher's Journey Through Gospel Music, Disco Stardom, and a Ministry in Christ" by Archbishop Carl Bean.

Richard Labonte has been reading, editing, selling, and writing about queer literature since the mid-'70s. He can be reached in care of this publication or at BookMarks@qsyndicate.com.

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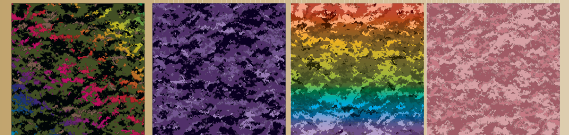
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As another year winds down, The OutField's inbox fills up. Here are a few stories from 2010 we had no space for – but that merit a big ol' LGBT shout-out.

“Gay” and “NASCAR” are rarely used in the same sentence. But if we truly are everywhere, that includes stock-car speedways. And Michael Myers makes sure we connect with each other, above the roar of race cars.

Queers4Gears.com is a website for gay NASCAR fans – though all are welcome. It features photos, race reports, even discount ticket deals. It's been named one of NASCAR's top 50 blogs.

“NASCAR fans have been more accepting of (Myers) being gay than gay people have been accepting of his being a NASCAR fan,” the site says of the 37-year-old founder.

According to a recent article in the “New York Times,” Myers “acknowledges that gay male race fans are attracted to stock car drivers the way straight female race fans are.” However, he adds, it's really just about the races.

“I'm not there to ask drivers what they think about gay marriage,” he says. “I'm there to ask them about racing.”

Another oxymoron could be “gay professional baseball umpire.” But when a manager attacked an out ump with anti-gay language, it was the manager who suffered most.

The Golden Baseball League incident began in July, when Billy Van Raaphorst ejected Edmonton Capitals manager Brent Bowers for repeatedly objecting to a call. Bowers raced over, called Van Raaphorst a “fucking faggot,” and asked, “Do you take it up the fucking ass?” (Just to make sure there was no mistake, Bowers bent over and grabbed his ankles.)

The tirade continued, with the manager saying, “I ought to kick your ass, you faggot.” The league suspended Bowers for two games. Van Raaphorst's fellow



Jessica Leigh Weather, a student in Duke University's Physician Assistant Program at the University's Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina.

umpires thought the punishment was insufficient and threatened to walk out.

The league then suspended Bowers for the rest of the season – and fined him \$5,000. The Capitals' owner – who also owns the National Hockey League Edmonton Oilers – supported Van Raaphorst and the league against its now-former manager.

Then – recognizing a “golden” opportunity when they saw it – the owners announced plans to provide diversity training for all its baseball and hockey staffs.

In more gays-and-baseball news, a group of gay men and lesbians got fed up watching the St. Louis Cardinals' hetero-only “Kiss Cam.” That's the traditional shot shown on an enormous scoreboard of a man and woman passionately smooching. A cute little heart is superimposed on the shot, and cute little music plays.

Big deal, huh?

To David Whitley – a columnist for MLB.Fanhouse.com, a national website – it was.

“I can't help sympathizing with that father who'll be sitting next to his son or daughter at Busch Stadium,” the not-very-empathic dad/fan/writer wrote.

“Daddy, why are those two men kissing?” he imagined a child saying.

“Umm, err, hey isn't that Albert Pujols coming to bat?” he figured would be the only possible reply.

“I'm not ready to discuss same-sex relationships with my 3-year-old,” he wrote. “I don't think she's ready, either.” Using that logic, he would have to discuss opposite-sex relationships every time the “Kiss Cam” showed two straight people

making out.

Scrambling to avoid charges of homophobia, he added: “If my daughter grows up and falls happily in love with another woman, I'll proudly walk her down the aisle.” Chances are, though, he'd first have to get over his daughter's fear that he wouldn't, in fact, be proud – based on his reaction, years earlier, when daughter and dad watched two women doing the exact same thing straight people do every day, at every ballpark in America.

Finally, from the Stand-Up-And-Cheer Department: For the fifth consecutive year, the Gene and John Athletic Fund of Stonewall has awarded a scholarship to an outstanding gay athlete. This year's recipient is Jessica Leigh Weather.

At the University of Florida, Jessica studied six languages. A runner, she has completed two marathons, three half-marathons and a half-Ironman triathlon. She's a swimmer too, with a 12.5-mile swim around Key West and 8-mile swim through Boston Harbor and a relay swim of the English Channel to her credit.

She hopes to compete in the 2014 Gay Games in Cleveland.

Jessica is currently enrolled in Duke University's Physician Assistant Program. Her goal is to specialize in pediatrics.

“My knowledge of the mental and physical benefits of athletics, along with my first hand understanding of the spectrum of sexuality, will make me a unique asset to the field for the next generation of youth, both straight and LGBT.”

Including those who aspire to be NASCAR drivers, baseball umpires, or kiss their same-sex partner in public.

Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach, gay activist, and author of the “Jocks” series of books on gay male athletes. Visit his website at www.danwoog.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.



Umpire Billy Van Raaphorst



Queers4Gears Founder Michael T. Myers

► Best of Hollywood Continued from p. 28

'It Gets Better' fights against tragedy

Sex columnist and humorist Dan Savage had an idea to use the Internet to combat anti-gay sentiment aimed at teenagers, vicious abuse that was causing a wave of teen suicides. It

was simple: any gay or lesbian grown-up with a camera and a happy life was invited to share their story and the truth that, in fact, life does get better once you've left that awful high school behind. Within weeks a phenomenon was born, one that got bigger and bigger, one that included celebrities and local politicians – even actors like Zachary Quinto, who isn't exactly openly gay – and did what no “very special episode” of a fictional movie or TV show could do: affect real lives. Sometimes regular people are the stars.

Oprah and Gayle: Still not lesbians

Barbara Walters, while talking to Oprah Winfrey for her annual roundup of “fascinating” people, broached the tired old rumors that have followed Oprah and Gayle King (and, by extension, poor Steadman, too) for years. Never mind that Oprah has talked about it on her own show many times. Never mind that Oprah and Gayle discussed it in a widely read interview

in “O” magazine; until Barbara Walters gets an answer, the question hasn't been asked. So this time Oprah responded in a new way, by crying about it. It was weird, it involved her personal feelings about friendship between women, and only served to make it all seem that much more unresolved. Thanks Barbara Walters, now we all have to keep talking about it.

Romeo San Vicente can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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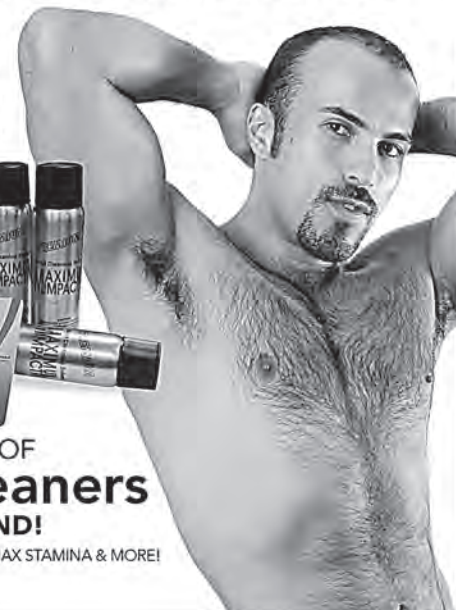
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A few minutes with Syesha Mercado of 'Dreamgirls'

BY DONALD V. CALAMIA

From second-runner up in the seventh season of "American Idol" to the lead role in the national tour of "Dreamgirls," 23-year-old Syesha Mercado is, herself, living a dream. Yet the down-to-earth actress and singer doesn't take her meteoric success for granted: Taking the stage every night is hard work, and the reality show's rigorous schedule helped prepare her for the challenges to come. Mercado spoke recently with Between The Lines about her passion for her work, and why "Dreamgirls" still generates such excitement nearly 30 years after its debut on Broadway.



Adrienne Warren (Lorrell), Syesha Mercado (Deena) and Moya Angela (Effie) in "Dreamgirls." Photo: Joan Marcus.

The last two-and-a-half years have been quite a ride for you. In 2008, you were the only woman in the final three of "American Idol" – which was ultimately won by David Cook – and for the last year you've been playing the lead role of Deena Jones in the national tour of "Dreamgirls." How often have you pinched yourself to make sure it's not all been a dream?

SYESHA: Yes, it has. I've been sooooo busy (laughs). "Idol" was definitely a roller coaster ride, and I haven't taken a vacation since. I've learned show business requires a lot of sacrifice.

I've had moments where I look back and realize that what I'm doing is exactly what I've desired since I was a little girl. I am definitely living my dream.

You have a background in R&B and soul. But Simon Cowell, I believe, once said on "Idol" that your voice was more suited to Broadway. Did you agree with him then? And given what's happened since, was he right?

(Laughs) My voice has many textures, and depending on what project I'm working on - my album, a ballad, a fierce uptempo track, or Broadway songs – my voice calls for a different texture. So, really, Mr. Cowell, my voice is suited for singing! (Laughs)

What did you learn from your experiences on "Idol" that helped make the transition to "Dreamgirls" easier than it otherwise might have been?

"Idol"’s rigorous schedule really helped "discipline me" – and I learned early on what it took outside of being on the stage to be ready and healthy to perform.

The rehearsal process for "Dreamgirls" was my biggest challenge. I'd been away from theater for years and forgot how tedious learning so much material in a short amount of time could be. But having gone through "Idol," I was reminded that being persistent and dedicated early on always pays off, and things just got easier from then on. The more you work at something, the easier it gets.

I spent all my free time, like I did on "Idol," rehearsing and going over my dance steps.

Although you studied theater in a Florida high school (from which you

PREVIEW

'Dreamgirls'

Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Through Dec. 26. \$20-\$72. 1-800-745-3000. www.olympiaentertainment.com

graduated in 2005), "Dreamgirls" is your first major professional job, isn't it? And better yet, you scored the lead role. Looking back, did you on your graduation day ever expect to have this type of success so quickly?

Anything you do in life takes hard work, discipline and perseverance. I've been working professionally since I graduated high school, but my first professional Broadway show was "Dreamgirls."

Since I was a little girl I always dreamed of doing a Broadway show, and the older I got the more I dreamed of starring in films and television. I always knew the success would come - and I always dreamed big.

How did the "Dreamgirls" gig come about? Did you audition specifically for the role of Deena?

I found out about the tour for "Dreamgirls" while I was on the "Idol's Live Tour." My agent told me about the part, and when the tour wrapped up I was so busy recording I decided not to audition in L.A. so I would have more time to prepare my sides. I ended up flying to New York to audition, and after six months of a long and rigorous process of callbacks, I was in front of Radio City Hall when I got the call from my agent that I got the part. I made a scene that day! (Laughs)

Were you already familiar with the show?

When I was in elementary school, I found my mom's libretto of "Dreamgirls" in the closet. I pulled it out and asked her, "What is this?" She then told me her stories about auditioning for the original Broadway production of "Dreamgirls." My mom had the pipes back in her day and still does, but like she tells me now, she was a size two back then... (Laughs)

She told me it was an amazing experience for her, and I remember that moment

being my introduction to "Dreamgirls."

Had you seen it on Broadway or on tour?

I've yet to see a staged production of "Dreamgirls." But I saw the film and I was very impressed with Jennifer Hudson's portrayal of Effie. Her performance of "And I Am Telling You" moved me to tears.

Can you relate to Deena and the Dreams – given how much society has changed over the decades?

I can definitely relate to Deena and the Dreams. It's the story of finding one's self, realizing the importance of family, and seeing the ups and downs of show business. It's not all about the glitz and glam. A lot has changed, but a lot is still the same.

The original production of "Dreamgirls" opened in December 1981 and won six Tony Awards, including Best Musical. It has since been revived several times. In your opinion, what is it about the musical that continues to appeal to audiences?

The score. When people come to see "Dreamgirls," it's like they are coming to see a live concert.

The story is rooted in the songs and even though this is a new production, our creative team really made sure they paid their homage to the original, while sprinkling contemporary appeal here and there.

It continues to appeal to audiences because it tells a thought-provoking story where you don't have to be in the music industry to understand a cultures' struggle and desire to fulfill their dreams.

This new production has differences from the original and the movie, but because the messages are so strong, they transcend time. Everyone has a dream!

I understand the tour is about to come to an end. What's next for you? What dream is still out there for you to achieve?

Film and television is next. Acting has always been a passion of mine, and I've always dreamed of starring in movies. And, of course, my debut album.

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I Love You, 'Phillip Morris'

Jim Carrey's wonderfully wacky queer prison comedy finally sees the light of gay

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It took nearly two absurdly long years for "I Love You Phillip Morris" to hit stateside cin-plexes, and for such an uproariously funny film, with quirkiness and unsuspecting heart to boot, one question looms: Why the hell?

Could be the gay sex. (Jim Carrey shagging another man ever wildly; what would people think?) Could be, besides the intensity of that said sex, how far from politically correct this sometimes silly, sometimes serious dramedy is. Or, you know, it could just be the oddball nature of the story: Two penis-loving prison inmates, Steven Russell (Carrey) and Phillip Morris (Ewan McGregor), meet in the jail library and fall madly in love with each other. But before Steven could surrender to a man, he was living a lie. Well, he was living lots of lies — it's how he lives, he's a master con artist — but this one was a biggie: He was "straight."

Yep, gay ol' Steven played house with a precious daughter and an oblivious, Jesus-worshipping wife — the always priceless Leslie Mann ("Knocked Up"), who has a wonderfully

gut-busting scene praying bedside for just about everything except Steven's redemption from homosexuality. It'd do absolutely no good (not that it ever does), however, because he's about as gay as you get: He struts, dresses and talks flamboyantly, and realizes — once he's officially closet-free and blowing all his scam money — that "being gay is really expensive." He says it in a voiceover like an excuse for his con games, which have him in and out of jail and put his relationship with Phillip on the line.

It all sounds too crazy to be true, but it is; there's a real Phillip Morris (not tobacco company Phillip Morris) and a real Steven Russell, and they were one heart. It's a strange story — when's the last time you heard of prisoners falling for each other (not *into* each other)? — that's written and directed by suckers for the weird and wild: Glenn Ficarra and John Requa, who directed Billy Bob Thornton as a low-life Saint Nick in 2003's filthy good comedy "Bad Santa," another hellacious hoot that unjustly fought for an audience.

"I Love You Phillip Morris," for whatever reasons (too gay, too weird, too horny), is es-



“I Love You Phillip Morris,” for whatever reasons (too gay, too weird, too horny), is essentially a funnier, more fucked-up “Brokeback Mountain” in lock-up.

essentially a funnier, more fucked-up “Brokeback Mountain” in lock-up, with two protagonists who are prisoners of love and, different circumstances abiding, unable to completely give into their relationship. Both films end tragically, and neither, unlike politically, era-shadowing biopic “Milk,” have any sort of “gay agenda” – “Phillip Morris” is just really gay, and completely shameless about it. “Brokeback Mountain” has nothing on it. Even the film knows that as it makes the drama’s spit-for-lube tent sex look like playtime on “Sesame Street.”

Ficarra and Requa’s breezy, amusing and amazingly touching film is a hardcore comedy without question – especially because Carrey slips into his idiosyncratic ticks (meaning he still does stupid shit) – that’s soft around the edges because of the believable love story that somehow anchors all the you-gotta-be-kidding craziness. Like a Taser, there’s something electrifying going on between McGregor and Carrey, who are sublimely layered.

As Phillip, McGregor is all sweets and swoons, a coquettish, doe-eyed gentleman who’s the kind of guy you bring home to mom, who

‘I Love You Phillip Morris’
 Opening Dec. 25
 Main Art Theatre
 118 N. Main, Royal Oak
www.landmarktheatres.com

makes breakfast in the morning and, as he is in the movie, a true romantic. (He’s so benign, in fact, that the only reason he’s in jail is because he failed to return a rental car on time. Big whoop.) Carrey, in one of his best roles – particularly nailing it when he transcends the “Oh, that’s Jim” bits – connects with McGregor as if they were more than just onscreen lovers: There’s the romantic (and hilariously ironic) slow dance amidst a loud brawl outside their cell; the ache in McGregor’s voice as he speaks to Carrey during the shocking climax; and then Carrey’s graceful expression of love, as he sweetly defends his reckless antics. It’s all the more endearing, and even heartbreaking, because for once it doesn’t feel like a lie.

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With performances by Natalie Cole, Jacqueline Frost, Michael Cole and Teddy – along with a full buffet, party favors, champagne and toasts to the New Year – you won't want to miss out.

The party begins at 10 p.m. at the new Menjo's Complex, 928 W. McNichols, Detroit. For more information search Facebook for "New Years Eve with Family & Friends @ Menjos" or visit MenjosComplex.com.

OUTINGS

Friday, Dec. 24

Charity Poker Tournament to Benefit Affirmations, 5 p.m. Cash tables for Poker, Blackjack, Craps, Roulette and Wheel. Affirmations will be offering daily cash games and poker tournaments. Affirmations, 290 W Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Thursday, Jan. 6

Euchre Tournament, 7 p.m. Fundraiser to benefit Out Loud Chorus, Washtenaw county's original GLBT chorus. Tickets: \$10. Out Loud Chorus, 1950 South Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor. 734-973-6084. outloudchorus@gmail.com www.olconline.org

Friday, Jan. 7

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: The Brave One - Oscar winner Jodie Foster stars in this dramatic thriller as Erica Bain, a New York City radio host who decides to take the law into her own hands after losing her fiancé in a brutal Central Park attack. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Jan. 8

Free Mammograms, 9 a.m. To those who reside in Oakland County, have no health insurance or are underinsured, and are older or have a palpable mass. St. Joseph Mercy Oakland, 44405 Woodward Avenue, Pontiac. 248-858-6662. PRESSH@trinity-health.org

Sunday, Jan. 9

All Creatures ULC Sunday Pets Welcome Services, 1 p.m. Sunday interfaith spiritual services held at an indoor dog park. All types of pets are welcome at all services. Every Sunday. All Creatures ULC, 27911 Five Mile Road, Livonia. 313-563-0162. cbarber_art@yahoo.com allcreaturesulc.com

Anti Bullying Summit, 1 p.m. A county-wide summit on intervention and prevention strategies to address bullying in Washtenaw County and area schools. Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Legal Project, will make opening comments. Rev. Joe Summers, Vicar of Ann Arbor's Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, will facilitate the meeting. Jim Toy Community Center, 1432 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor. 734-763-4186. spectrumcenter.umich.edu

Thursday, Jan. 13

Meet 'n Greet, 7 p.m. A meeting for LGBT and allied people ages 18-33 for dinner, drinks and conversation. 20 Somethings, 222 E. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. the20somethings.org

Friday, Jan. 14

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Guardians of the Frontier - College students Alja, Simona and Zana go on a canoe trip down the Kolpa River in this edgy thriller billed as a female version of Deliverance. The first Slovenian film to be directed by a woman. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Jan. 15

Pancake Breakfast, 10 a.m. Breakfast followed by AA meeting with open speaker. Admission: \$8. Together We Can, 2441 Pinecrest, Ferndale. twcdetroit.com www.twcdetroit.com

Hepatitis A and B Vaccinations, 11 a.m. In partnership with ACCESS. Free, with HIV testing also available. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Friday, Jan. 21

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Gaudi Afternoon- Cassandra, a solitary writer in Barcelona gets a call for help from a stranger, a stylish woman named Frankie, who wants Cassandra to find her husband, so he can sign some important papers. However nothing Frankie has told Cassandra is true. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Thursday, Jan. 27

Organize! Organize! Organize!, 12 p.m. "There is no movement without organizing. Currently, many people depend upon media instead of organizing and many mainstream justice movements think of organizing as only producing bodies for the immediate need such as Get Out the Vote. No base is built, no community power is increased." A conversation about examples of organizing we have witnessed and admired. Grand Valley State University LGBT Resource Center, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale. 616-331-2530. lgbtcenter@gvsu.edu www.gvsu.edu/igbtcr

Friday, Jan. 28

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Desi's Looking for a New Girl - When Desi's lover moves out of their apartment after falling for another woman, heartbroken Desi can't make a connection with any woman she meets. But teenager J.T. makes it her mission to find her friend the perfect mate. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Kafka Fragments" Professors Freda Hersheth, mezzo-soprano, and Andrew Jennings, violin, present one of the 20th century's most powerful and challenging modernist chamber works, György Kurtá's 1986 Kafka Fragments. 8 p.m. Jan. 22. Apsa, 525 South State Street, Ann Arbor. 734-763-UMMA. www.umma.umich.edu

The Whiting "Moscow Festival Ballet: Swan Lake" Moscow Festival Ballet: Swan Lake. Tickets: \$17-\$39. 8 p.m. Jan. 15. 1241 E. Kearsley, Flint. 810-237-7333. TheWhiting.com

CONCERTS

Olympia Entertainment "Fantasia's "Back To Me" Tour" Tickets: \$39.50-88. 9 p.m. Dec. 31. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com

Sky Production "Wednesday Night Concert & Jam featuring Sky Covington" Sep. 29-Dec. 29. Harbor House, 440 Clinton Street, Detroit. 313-424-3458. skycovington.com

The Whiting "Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood" Tickets: \$25-\$50 1241 8 p.m. Jan. 22. E. Kearsley, Flint. 810-237-7333. TheWhiting.com

Palmer Woods Association & Creative Arts Collective "Jazz with Naima Shamborguer Trio" Concert & reception with jazz vocalist Naima Shamborguer, guitarist Spencer Barefield & bassist Don Mayberry. Tickets: \$35 available online. North of Seven Mile & West of Woodward, Address provided with ticket purchase, Detroit. 7 p.m. Dec. 29. 313-891-2514. palmerwoods.org

FILM & VIDEO

Michigan Theater "Sesame Street Presents Follow That Bird" Part of the Family-Friendly Film Series. Tickets: \$9 adults, free for kids 12 and under. 1:30 p.m. Jan. 9. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. www.michtheater.org

SHOWS

The Whitney "Kimberly Fairchild live" Sexy, Sassy Detroit Diva entertains a diverse crowd with eclectic song selections in one of Detroit's most beloved historical landmarks. Oct. 15-Jan. 28. The Ghost Bar, 4421 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 313-832-5700. kimberlyfairchild.com

Olympia Entertainment "Rain" A tribute to the Beatles, part of the My Foxtown Theater Series. Tickets: \$30-75. 8 p.m. Jan. 21 & 22. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. www.ticketmaster.com

THEATER

PROFESSIONAL

A Christmas Carol \$25-\$40. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel, Rochester. Through Dec. 23. 248-377-3300. www.mbtheatre.com

A Sock Hop Christmas \$39.95 adult & \$30 ages 12 and under, plus tax and tip; price includes a four-course meal with your choice of four entrees. Reservations required. Williamsburg Showcase Dinner Theater at The Williamsburg Dinner Theater and Conference Center, 4230 M-72 East, Williamsburg. Through Dec. 23. 231-938-2181. www.conventiondinnertheater.com

A Strange Disappearance of Bees \$17, \$20 at the door; \$70 New Year's Eve. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson Street, Detroit. Through Dec. 26. 313-868-1347. www.detroitreptheatre.com

Best Damn Holiday Show \$10-\$15. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. 9 Mile, Ferndale. Through Dec. 23. 248-327-0575. www.gocomedy.net

Dreamgirls \$20-\$72. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Dec. 21 - 26. 1-800-745-3000. www.olympiaentertainment.com

Guys On Ice \$28-\$30; \$75 New Year's Eve. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 E. Cady Street, Northville. Through Jan. 15. 248-347-0003. www.tippingpointtheatre.com

Identity Crisis Tour \$47.50. Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Drive, Detroit. 5 p.m. Dec. 26. 1-800-745-3000. www.jeffdunham.com

In The Heights \$27.50 and above. Broadway Grand Rapids at DeVos Performance Hall, 303 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids. Jan. 4 - 9. 1-800-745-3000. www.ticketmaster.com

It's a Wonderful Life \$28. The Encore Musical Theatre Company, 3126 Broad Street, Dexter. Through Dec. 23. 734-268-6200. <http://theencoretheatre.org>

Mary Poppins \$25 and up. Broadway In Detroit at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway Street, Detroit. Through Jan. 2. 313-872-1000. www.broadwayindetroit.com

Of Mice and Men Plays in rotating repertory. \$25 - \$30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through Feb. 5. 313-577-2972. www.wsushows.com

Onstage & Unplugged \$70; tickets for the night performance on Dec. 31 are \$85. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park Street, Chelsea. Dec. 21 - 31. 734-433-7673. www.purplerosetheatre.org

Plaid Tidings \$27.50 - \$32.50. The Gem Theatre, 333 Madison Street, Detroit. Through Dec. 31. 313-963-9800. www.gemtheatre.com

Richard III Plays in rotating repertory. \$25-\$30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through Feb. 25. 313-577-2972. www.hilberry.com

Sister's Christmas Catechism \$27.50-\$32.50. The Century Theatre, 333 Madison Street, Detroit. Through Dec. 31. 313-963-9800. www.gemtheatre.com

Sonia Flew A co-production with Performance Network Theatre. \$32-\$41. Jewish Ensemble Theatre at Aaron DeRoy Theatre, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. Through Jan. 2. 248-788-2900. www.jettheatre.org

Super Happy Funtime Burlesque Show \$10. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks. 9 p.m. Dec. 31. 269-756-3879. www.acorntheater.com

T&A... and Friends \$7-\$10. Crawlspace Theatre Productions, Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Jan. 7 - 8. 269-599-7390. www.crawlspace theatre.com

The Drowsy Chaperone \$30-\$46. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron Street, Ann Arbor. Through Jan. 2. 734-663-0681. www.performancenetwork.org

The Life of Sam \$40.80. Music Hall, 350 Madison Street, Detroit. Dec. 30 - Jan. 2. 313-887-8501. www.ticketmaster.com

The Marvelous Wonderettes \$29 for weekdays and Sunday matinees, \$33 for Friday and Saturday evenings. Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Through Dec. 26. 269-343-2727. www.farmersalleytheatre.com

THEATER FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

The Sleeping Beauty \$10 adult, \$5 children. PuppetART, 25 E. Grand River Ave., Detroit. Through Dec. 26. 313-961-7777. www.puppetart.org

AUDITIONS

WARREN CIVIC THEATRE - auditions for youth and teen musical "Beauty and the Beast," week of Jan. 4, 2011, 586-268-8400.

ART 'N' AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "Moving Ground" features the works of fiber artist Lois Bryant and photographer/sculptor John Cynar. Free opening reception. Jan. 14-Feb. 6. 117 W Liberty Street, Ann Arbor. 734-994-8004. annarborartcenter.org

Congregation TChiyah (Reconstructionist) "End of 2010 Shabbat Service Birthday Celebration" Celebrate Shabbat, as well as Peter and David's birthday. Brief oneq to follow. All are welcome. 6:45 p.m. Dec. 31. 15000 W. 10 Mile Road, Oak Park. 248-542-0900. tchiyah.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "In Your Dreams" 500 years of imaginary prints from Europe and America. Admission: \$8 adults, \$6 seniors, \$4 youth. Sep. 8-Jan. 2. 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "An Intuitive Eye: Andre Kertesz Photographs, 1914-1969" Celebrates the photographic achievements of Andre Kertesz whose work achieved a delicate balance between technical perfection and lyrical beauty. Nov. 24-April 10. 5200 Woodward Ave, Detroit. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Grand Rapids Art Museum "Diana, A Celebration" An exhibit with personal objects of Princess Diana, including dresses, home movies and more. Tickets: \$20 adults, \$18 seniors and college students, \$15 youth. Nov. 9-Feb. 16. 101 Monroe Center, Grand Rapids. artmuseumgr.org

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts "In Focus: National Geographic Greatest Portraits" A traveling exhibition created by National Geographic and the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. Free. Oct. 30-Jan. 2. 314 S. Park, Kalamazoo. 269-349-7775. kiarts.org

Lawrence Street Gallery "The Best of 2010" Twelve prizewinning artists from the Gallery's four annual juried shows given space to exhibit a larger selection of their work. Jan. 12-Jan. 28. 22620 Woodward, Ferndale. 248-544-0394. lawrencestreetgallery.com

Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum "Artists Portray Artists" An exhibition of 35 portraits and self-portraits. Oct. 1-Jan. 29. 7400 Bay Road, Saginaw. 989-964-7096. marshallfredericks.org

MSU Museum "Dear Mr. Mandela, Dear Mrs. Parks" Children's Letters, Global Lessons. Showing in the Main Gallery. Dec. 20-Jan. 3. Michigan State University, East Lansing. museum.msu.edu

Sherry Washington Gallery "Free Radicals", paintings by Senghor Reid" Nov. 20-Jan. 22. 1274 Library St, Detroit. 313-961-4500. sherrywashingtongallery.com

The Henry Ford "George Washington Carver" An exhibit celebrating the work and life of the extraordinary American. Admission: \$15 adults, \$14 seniors, \$11 youth. Nov. 1-Feb. 27. The Henry Ford Museum, 20900 Oakwood, Dearborn. 313-982-6001. thehenryford.org

Toledo Museum of Art "Voices That Taught Me How to Sing" Two- and three-dimensional works by Ohio artist Aminah Robinson. Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe Street, Toledo. Nov. 19-Feb. 27. 419-255-8000. toledomuseum.org

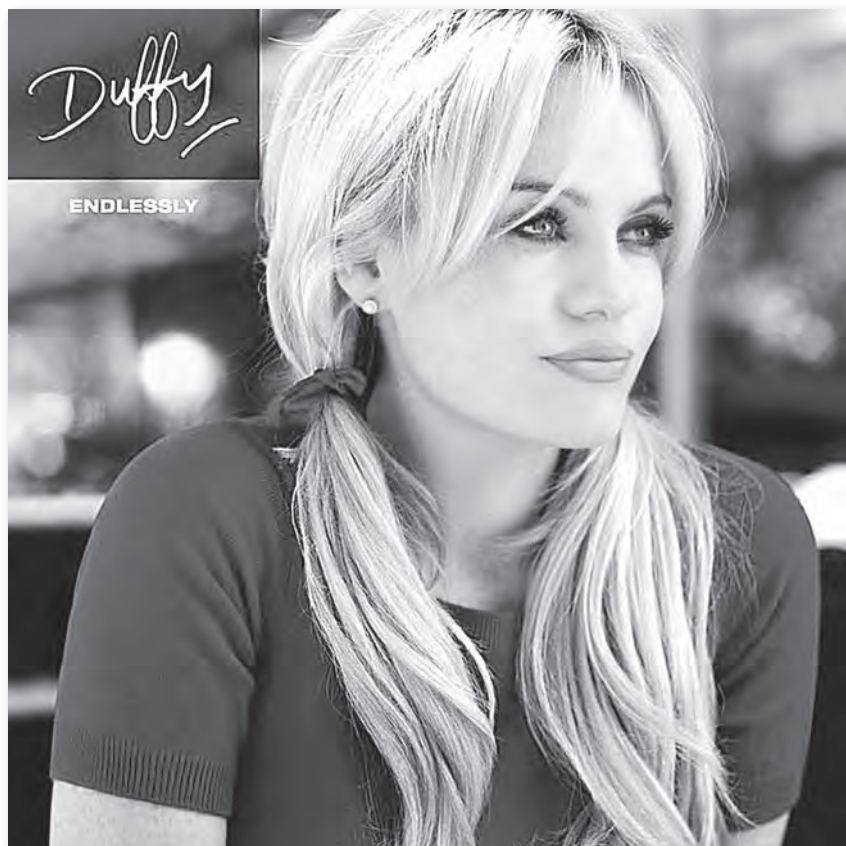
University of Michigan Museum of Art "Artist Talk: Mai-Thu Perret" Discusses her exhibit, An Ideal for Living, which presents works that span the artist's career and are part of an ongoing narrative. 7 p.m. Jan. 19. Helmut Stern Auditorium, 525 South State Street, Ann Arbor. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Mai-Thu Perret: An Ideal for Living" The first large scale North American survey exhibition of the contemporary Swiss artist (born 1976 in Geneva). Synthesizing a range of media and genres, Perret conjures an imaginary alternate history of twentieth-century art, design, and social activism. Dec. 18-March 13. 525 South State Street, Ann Arbor. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Simon Dybbroe Moller" Sculptures and other works by the Danish-born artist. Nov. 6-Jan. 30. 525 S. State, Ann Arbor. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu

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Duffy's 'Endlessly': No, no, no



Duffy, 'Endlessly'

Duffy wants nothing to do with Amy Winehouse after an impressive debut cast the Welsh singer as the soberer shadow of the drunken mess. But, to separate the conjoined twins of neo-soul, her follow-up to 2008's "Rockferry" goes too far – neutralizing her retro sound into a fumbled, overly calculated (almost methodically looping ballads and dance) collection that, even at only 33 minutes, will have you begging for "Mercy." That single from two years back at least had verve, something tracks on "Endlessly" lack as the album projects Duffy as something much more horrifying than Winehouse: a Disney tween. "Girl," a '60s-sounding roller skater, tries to seduce with its hypnotic groove but just comes off annoyingly immature. Which is precisely the problem with her sophomore outing: This is Duffy's "Alice in Wonderland," where's she still blooming, unsure of who she wants to be when she grows up. Soul revivalist ("Breath Away")? Dance diva (bright spot "Well Well Well")? Torch-song singer ("Don't Forsake Me")? The talent's there, especially on ballads like "Too Hurt to Dance" that give her pinched vocals an achy exhibit, but barely any of it's used as powerfully as it was on "Rockferry." Duffy's finally far from being Wino, but who she is now couldn't be any more vague. *Grade: C*



Kandi Burruss, 'Kandi Koated'

Trash TV gave the "Real Housewives of Atlanta" star, and former member of '90s girl group Xscape, the boost she needed after her 2000 debut, "Hey Kandi...," was a chart bust. The drama doesn't stop on Bravo, though: On Kandi Burruss' long-overdue sophomore CD, she threatens to walk out on a lazy lover, then she chews him out for cheating with a chick that "don't even dress that good" (keep in mind, this is the same songwriter behind TLC's "No Scrubs" and Destiny's Child's "Bills, Bills, Bills"). He comes back, she don't need him; it's all very soap opera-esque. That works for tawdry reality TV, but it doesn't always translate to dynamic music – and more often than not, this isn't. Burruss' dear-diary confessionals are monotonous to a fault and there's just not much thought given to the phoned-in lyrics. So even if she sounds remarkably delicious as her voice cascades along Ne-Yo's on "Me & U," the song's a drag. "Haven't Loved Right," championing the disc's best vocals, is one of few highlights after lead-in "I Want You," a sleek mid-tempo that, too, promises bigger things from Burruss. This, sadly, isn't it. *Grade: C+*

Also Out



Nicki Minaj, 'Pink Friday'

Girls aren't her thing anymore, but that doesn't mean the lady rapper du jour isn't up for some experimenting.

Pulling back from the fierceness that the femcee tore into with her early-career mixtapes, there's surprising heart behind the hard edge (especially on "Dear Old Nicki," a love song dedicated to her lost self) and a fondness for classic pop. She still gets nasty, especially on the fantastic "Roman's Revenge," but at least she's less plastic than her Barbie image.



Josh Groban, 'Illuminations'

Pairing a human Hallmark card with the Red Hot Chili Peppers' producer sounds like a bomb-making compound.

But gosh, Josh, does it work. And it's even quite explosive, as the choirboy crooner's shellacked approach is elegant without being overdone, something Rick Rubin steadily keeps in check with staggering guitars that give Groban an organic spin. He still raises you up, particularly on the stunning "Straight to You." Most of the goop, however, is gone.



Rihanna, 'Loud'

The dark side of Rihanna on the uninhibited "Rated R" was so fantastically leftfield that its follow-up feels disappointingly lightweight

by comparison. Of course, that's the point – to put Rihanna back under her "umbrella," going pop-party with "Only Girl (in the World)" and Janet Jackson on "S&M." "Love the Way You Lie" with Eminem gets a decent sequel, but at least she's still taking some risks: That's Enya on "Fading."



Pink, 'Greatest Hits... So Far!!!'

Cheers to Pink, whose first best-of package adequately shows what a cool chameleon the pop renegade is. She's

party girl (empowering new single "Raise Your Glass," an underdog anthem) kiss-off queen ("U + Ur Hand") and bitter ex ("There You Go"), but beneath the badass is potent honesty: "Family Portrait" and "Dear Mr. President," featuring the Indigo Girls, definitely rank among her greatest. You know, so far.



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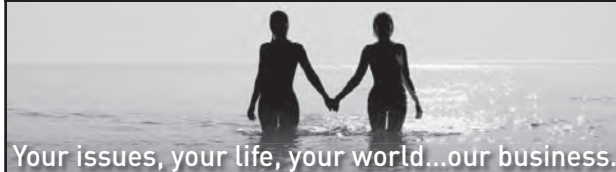
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Rear View

DEAR JODY



Got problems? Send letters to: "Dear Jody," C/O Between The Lines, 11920 Farmington Road, Livonia, MI 48150. E-mail her at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com

Readers check-in on year's columns

Holiday time is supposed to be happy, so let's celebrate some of the positive feedback I've received from readers:

I have so often enjoyed your column in Between The Lines, and always think you're dead-on! So I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for your piece on credit card debt in the Dec. 9 issue.

Please let "Over My Head" know that there is hope. As with all challenges, it takes time to overcome a large pool of credit card debt, but with some simple rules and goals, it can be done.

At one point, due to poor coping skills and depression, I had gotten myself into \$35,000 in credit debt (while earning a non-profit salary). Through the help of a consolidation program and counseling, that debt is now less than \$5,000, and that includes spending this year to furnish a new house.

Of course, I now have the mortgage to worry about every month, but the money on the mortgage becomes equity. Awesome! More importantly, I would never have been able to buy the house had I not joined the debt counseling program.

I believe it is mostly pride that keeps folks from signing up for debt consolidation programs, or programs to avoid foreclosure and keep their homes. Folks are embarrassed, which I understand on a personal level. But I have learned that it's much better to address a problem when it's still a leak than to wait until it has become a flood.

Thanks again for your sage advice!

Jody, I wrote to you in November about my problem with my boyfriend "James" whom I've been with for three years. I was "Big Spender." I complained that I couldn't get why James, who has less money to spend than I, was upset if I bought him expensive gifts, even if he couldn't afford to buy me something as expensive.

I did sit down with James – as you suggested – and asked him to tell me why it was a problem. By the time he got done telling me, I felt foolish

for even having to ask him. If I had only thought about it, and put myself in his shoes, I wouldn't have had to write to you.

I appreciated your suggestion that we pool our money and then decide how much money we'd spend on each other so we'd both be spending approximately the same amount. First, we just decided to do that for Christmas presents; he put in what he could, and I put in what I could, then we'd split the pot. But then, after thinking about it all, I suggested that we pool our money for all expenses. It just felt right.

I can't tell you how good that feels. It's freeing, actually, even if I'm the one who contributes more. It also seems to have brought us closer together. I've decided that in the future when I don't understand James' feelings, I'm going to ask. Revolutionary idea, for me anyway.

Thanks for your recent column that addressed adult temper tantrums. I have a sister who has them. Our family just didn't seem to know what they were or how to handle them. She has red hair so we just passed them off as a genetic problem that red-haired people were prone to. But after reading your column and going to your Facebook link, I learned a lot and now have such a different idea about them and how they are behavioral, not genetic. I even talked to my family, and we are all determined to deal with her tantrums in a different way now. I'm so grateful to you.

Jody's on Facebook! Check out helpful links and follow Jody, and her partner and their two dogs, as she travels to San Diego in a fifth-wheel.

Jody Valley spent 12 years as a clinical social worker. She worked with the LGBT community both as a counselor and a workshop leader in the areas of coming out, self-esteem and relationship issues. The "Dear Jody" column appears weekly. Reach Jody at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

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3. Scroll down to the entry form for the fake ad contest and enter your name, etc.
4. In the notes field, put the date of the BTL issue, page number where you found the fake ad and the name of the fake advertiser.

Think ahead, Capricorn!

BY JACK FERTIG

With Mars semi-square Neptune enthusiasm and ideals can ignite huge fires. Especially in this holiday season of dreams, trying to dodge disappointments and enthusiastic partying isn't easy. Focus on meditation, charity and humility.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Your friends mean well, encouraging you toward your goals, but they probably have a poor understanding of what you need to get ahead. Thank them for their support, but be clear on your goals and what it really takes to reach them.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): A tendency to mouth off – especially to people whose attitudes exceed their authority – can get you into trouble. You need a challenge and will find it more trying to develop a deeper appreciation for classical art or music.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Sexual experiments or other deep research will take you to places you never imagined and could prove scary or dangerous. Maybe that's good, but be careful! This is not the time to experiment with skydiving or recreational drugs.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): Mad, wild passion can be thrilling, but don't take a rush of hormones and sweat too seriously. Enjoy the moment and let that be enough for now. If you want to make promises, wait a while and be sure you can keep them.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Your eagerness and force of personality can be like a runaway train. To stay on track, check with colleagues often and be attentive (but not too much!) to their processes. Moderation is the key to cooperation and good health.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Safety first! A rush of playful enthusiasm can easily get you into all kinds of trouble whether it's a scandal at work or a sports injury. (Anything that can work up a sweat may be considered "sports.")

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Dream about your ideal home, family and community. Then think about the best you can reasonably hope for and what it would take to get it. This

season drips maudlin sentiment that easily provokes disappointments. Keep your balance!

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Efforts to rectify family problems can cause more trouble than they solve. Even if Aunt Madge is a lush, she won't go to AA until she wants to! Knowing the problem is good. Waving it in everyone's face, not so much.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Trying to figure out your finances now will only make you crazy. If you must worry about debts, also make a list of assets. Don't worry about getting it all penny perfect. That will come later.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Your efforts to get ahead can get needlessly costly. Think ahead. It's not about keeping up with the Joneses. Financial success is only a means to comfort and options. Focus on deeper values, and keep everything else in proportion.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Worries that normally lurk in the back of your head are now getting in your face. Get proactive, tear them apart and put them into perspective. Perhaps some things you should be less certain of. Be adaptable and open without dithering and doubting.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): The future looks scary for good reason: It ain't pretty. Still, your imagination is better put to finding the light in the darkness than worrying about doom and gloom. Consider that your mission in life!

Jack Fertig, a professional astrologer since 1977, is available for personal and business consultations in person in San Francisco, or online everywhere. He can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his website at www.starjack.com, and by e-mail at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.



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Solution to puzzle from page 42

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The show closed WHEN?

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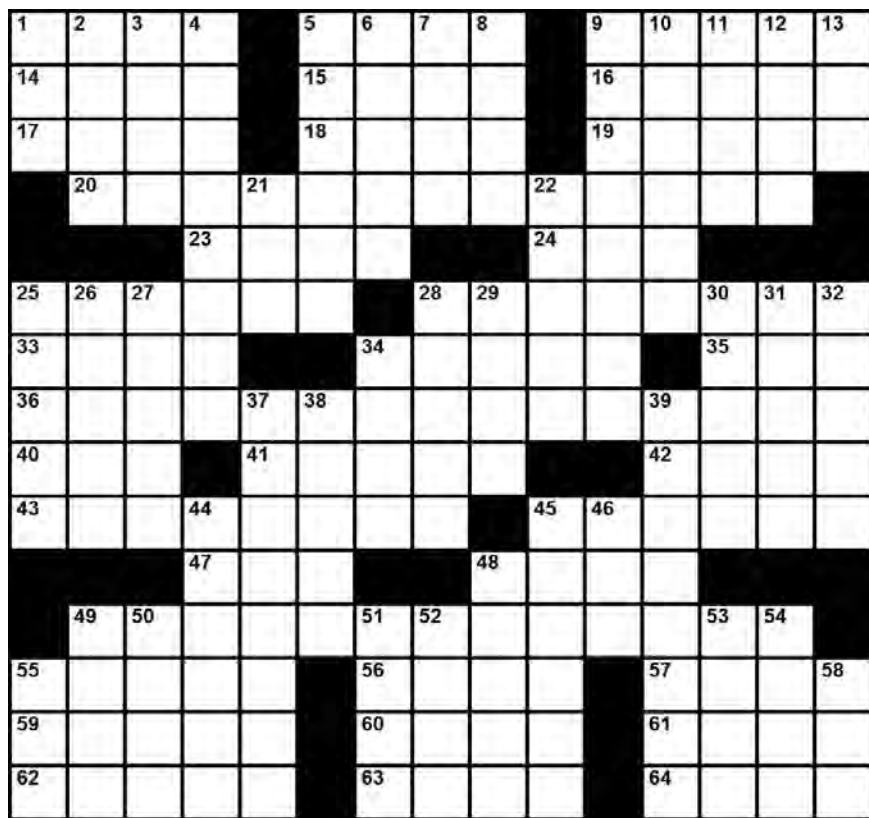
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Solution on 41

Q U I Z I S I D E Isle Say!

Across

- 1 They poke around in leather
- 5 Shakespeare sprite
- 9 P-town beach sights
- 14 One of the Huxtables
- 15 Auth. unknown
- 16 Bucky Beaver's toothpaste
- 17 Anthropologist Margaret
- 18 "Aida" backdrop
- 19 Barber belt
- 20 Start of a question
- 23 Military cross-dresser of Arc
- 24 Sharers' word
- 25 Narrows down
- 28 Study groups
- 33 CK One emanation
- 34 Bitches
- 35 Moo ___ pork
- 36 End of the question
- 40 U-turn from SSW
- 41 Network of "Wedding Wars"
- 42 Stallion's supper

- 43 Alpha Chi Upsilon, for example
- 45 Type of fair
- 47 Von Trapp's rank
- 48 Sow's mate
- 49 Answer to the question
- 55 Hot stuff
- 56 O.K. Corral gunfighter
- 57 Got a little behind
- 59 Composer Copland
- 60 Pay your share, with "up"
- 61 Don't go straight
- 62 Quarterback Favre
- 63 Cowardly lion actor
- 64 Disturbance at a spa

- 7 Revolver inventor
- 8 Felt in your bones
- 9 Drag outfit, in "Some Like It Hot"
- 10 Rise, after a fall
- 11 ___ a soul
- 12 Hazzard County deputy
- 13 Suck the energy from
- 21 Mountain top
- 22 Sex appeal
- 25 Cherry Grove and Ogunquit
- 26 Hersey's bell town
- 27 Gondola guy
- 28 Broadway musical pet
- 29 Art Deco design name
- 30 Lake Nasser dam
- 31 "Gone with the Wind" character
- 32 Like soap operas
- 34 Relief of Lincoln
- 37 Makeup for one of the Village People
- 38 Cole Porter's "Katie Went to ___"
- 39 Checkers comment

- 44 Forest feline
- 45 Chris of "American Beauty"
- 46 Bonehead
- 48 Where to have a moving experience in bed?
- 49 "___ she blows!"
- 50 Put on the staff
- 51 Big top barker
- 52 Chloe's role in "Boys Don't Cry"
- 53 Blown away
- 54 Pine for
- 55 Where a trucker parks his bottom
- 58 In need of a lube

Down

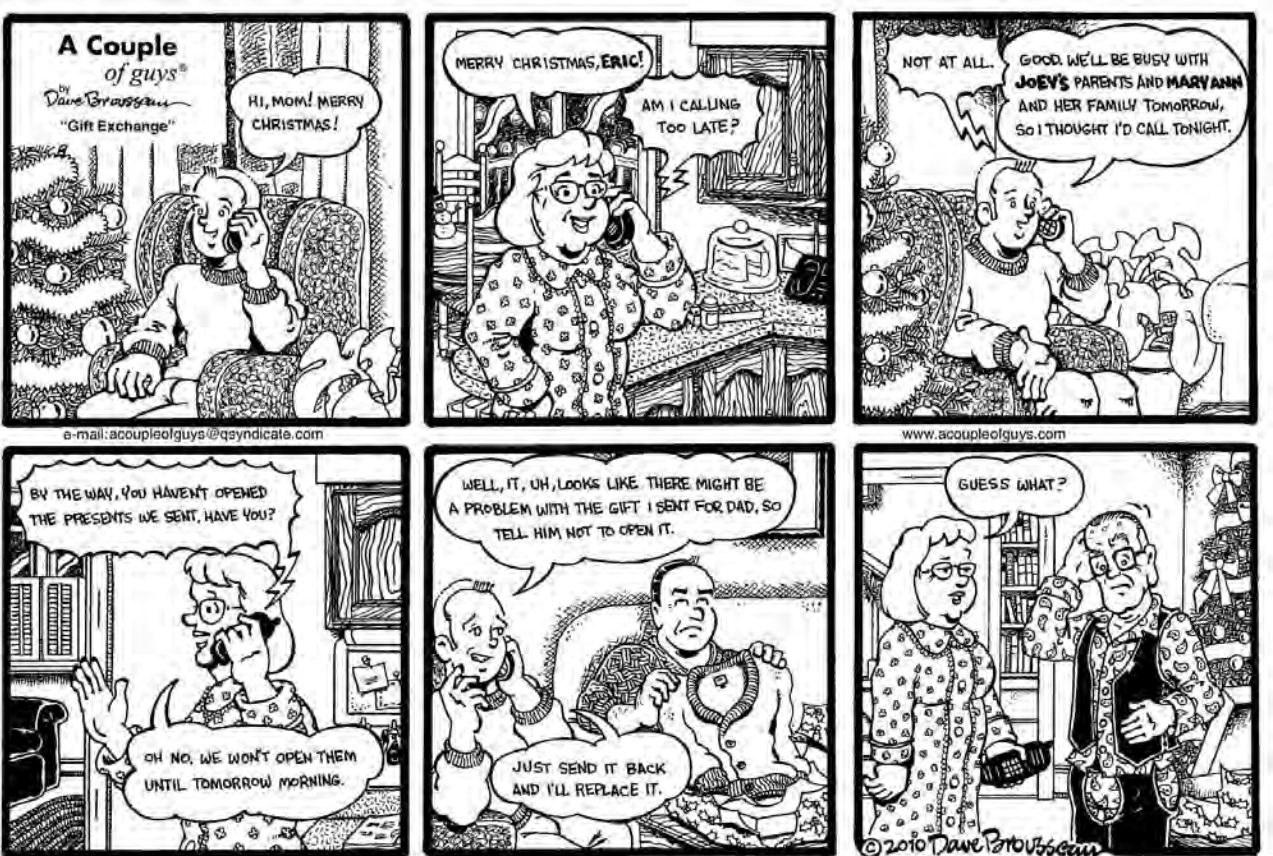
- 1 It swallows plastic
- 2 "That was close!"
- 3 "Starting Over" bisexual
- 4 One who serves drinks with foamy heads
- 5 Bear-like creatures
- 6 It could be civil

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only happens to women, but that's not the case. In fact, it was only recently that same-sex sexual harassment became widely accepted as real. The law now extends its protections to all of us, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

However your workplace mistreatment might eventually be categorized, there are things you can do about it. Start by talking informally and off-the-record

to a supervisor or ombudsman (someone whom you think is generally supportive) to decide whether or not to file an official complaint. At the same time, do your best to make sure you have communicated that the "jokes" offend you or make you uncomfortable. This communication can be in person, by letter or through email. In addition, keep a diary of what's going on, including dates, times, places and what exactly has been said and done and by whom. Also keep track what you have done in response.

If all else fails, make an official report to the department and/or contact an LGBT rights group or an attorney specializing in employment law to find out your options. But be careful: Lesbians and gay men can be fired at will simply because of their sexual orientation. And until Congress enacts the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, that will remain the case.

Gay cop faces harassment

Q. I started working as a police officer just last year. When I was first hired, pretty much everyone asked me why I'm not married. Then came the gay jokes. I've tried to let it go since I'm still a rookie, but it seems like they know I'm gay and want to push me out the door. How would you handle this?

A. As a law enforcement officer yourself, you may know that the workplace you're describing pretty much fits the description of "hostile" and your treatment verges on harassment. It may even be sexual harassment, depending on various factors such as whether your harassers know you're gay. Often, people think that sexual harassment

Breast cancer makes me nervous about sex

Q. I'm a lesbian who's had breast cancer. I've been dating a little but am uncomfortable about my body and not sure when to discuss the various health issues and the marks they've left. Before we have sex – or after?

A. Starting to date and then going to bed with someone new can raise all kinds of anxieties; add into the mix feeling self-conscious about scars and/or the loss of body parts and I can understand why you might feel uncomfortable. Your question is part and parcel of one of the most common of dating concerns: When do you talk about the "skeltons" in your closet? The answer is slowly. As the relationship deepens, offer up the basic facts of your medical history and be open to any questions. Not surprisingly, that's why many of us with body image concerns (full disclosure: I have a testicular prosthesis) choose to wait to have sex until we're comfortable enough with a new partner to discuss these issues. Still, steel yourself for the possibility of rejection. Once, after I told a new boyfriend that I had had testicular cancer, he thanked me for being honest and sent me on my way, saying: "I just buried my partner who died from cancer. I can't go down that path again."

The last word: Don't forget that each of us is the composite of our experiences (surgery included), and these make our beauty unique.

Gay couple (plus cat) contemplates a holiday photo card

Q. Many of my straight friends send holiday cards with their kids front and center. Since my partner and I don't have any offspring, can we send a card with just us as the cover models? We could add in our cat if you think that would help.

A. Most holiday photo cards feature kids ("aren't they adorable!") or vacation destinations ("look at how fabulous we are!") as key elements. The truth is that these images are just another example of the deep narcissistic streak in our culture ("look at me and my beautiful family"). But there are limits: It's actually pretty rare that couples alone – straight or gay – pose for their close-ups without a supporting player. Since equality is all about parity, I'd say do go ahead with your close-up – just don't forget your cat ("isn't she beautiful?")

One last note: If you're not already out, this is an effective way to do so. Imagine the photo: two husbands and their cat in front of the fireplace. ("The warmest of holidays from Justin, Benji, and Garfield!")

Steven Petrow writes for the *Huffington Post*, *Advocate.com* and *365Gay.com* and is the author of the forthcoming book, "Steven Petrow's Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners" (www.gaymanners.com). Have a question? Email him at ask@gaymanners.com.

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Keira Knightley. Photo: Focus Features

Liberace with Damon and Douglas: Still on

If you've felt frustrated after reading an announcement about a movie going into production "sometime in the near future," and then never hearing about it again, here's some great news for you: the Liberace movie is still happening. It just hit a bump in the road when star Michael Douglas became ill. But not only is Douglas on the mend from throat cancer, but he's also cleared his schedule to begin shooting the long-awaited biopic. His co-star, Matt Damon, is also ready to move and Steven Soderbergh will direct the Richard LaGravenese script, adapted from the book "Behind the Candelabra (My Life With Liberace)" by his former lover Scott Thorson. Expect a deep look at a beloved yet complicated and conservative man who — due to the restrictions of his era — denied his homosexuality as well as his own AIDS diagnosis right up until his death. Start date is looking like early 2011 now. Can't wait for this one to show up in multiplexes.

Lance Bass has a screenplay, too

Well, that didn't take long. Not two hot minutes after "A List: New York"'s Reichen Lemkuhl announces that a screenplay of his memoir "Here's What We'll Say" had been written and a movie was in the gestation period, his apparently super-competitive arch-ex-boyfriend Lance Bass announces his

own screenplay. Coincidence? Weird gay on-upsmanship? Passive media battle? Whatever it is, Bass's story sounds... odd. Seems he went to "Girls Gone Wild" pornpreneur Joe Francis's wedding in Mexico and drove there with Cheryl Tiegs and they had a wacky time of it. So now that's a script. Along for the ride were Aaron Sorkin's ex-wife and two non-famous people. But in the script they should just go ahead and turn the nobodies into the real Tom Brokaw and the real Nene from "Real Housewives of Atlanta." Just because famous people are more interesting. That's why they're famous, right? And how great is it going to be to see a double feature of both these films? Very great, that's how great.

Logo brings you two new 'reality' shows

"RuPaul's Drag Race" and "The A-List: New York" have finally given gay cable channel Logo what they wanted from the start: hit shows. Now they're hungry for more. Be on the lookout for not only more "A-List" locations and the second season of "Be Good Johnny Weir," but also for new reality programs like "Pretty Hurts" and "Setup Squad." Coming in February, "Hurts" follows the staff, gay doctor and not-camera-shy clients of a Beverly Hills medical office that specializes in face augmentation ("Liquid face lifts," says the press release, which probably just means a lot of Botox.) as they save social lives and erase brow lines. Meanwhile, "Squad" places people who are dating in all the wrong ways

with professional coaches who help them turn their game around. The coaches will include one lesbian and one gay man, so everybody will get a turn at finding true hookup...er, love. If Logo doesn't watch out, all this classy programming is going to turn them into The History Channel.

Keira Knightley, Elizabeth Moss are West End Girls

The revival of Lillian Hellman's "The Children's Hour" at London's Comedy Theatre has rounded out its cast. Previously announced lead Keira Knightley will be joined by "Mad Men"'s Elizabeth Moss; they'll play two women running a girls boarding school in New England in the 1930s (played by Shirley MacLaine and Audrey Hepburn in the film version) who find themselves at the center of a lesbian scandal. Of course, at that point in history the fact that lesbians existed at all was all the scandal anyone needed, so the drama runs high in this now-classic play. It's an impressive supporting cast joining Moss and Knightley, as well, with Oscar-winner Ellen Burstyn and Carol Kane taking on roles as the pivotal rumor-mongering student's grandmother and another teacher, respectively. The play begins previews in January of 2011 and runs through April. Book those London plane tickets now.

Romeo San Vicente prefers vintage lesbian scandals to all others because the outfits were smarter. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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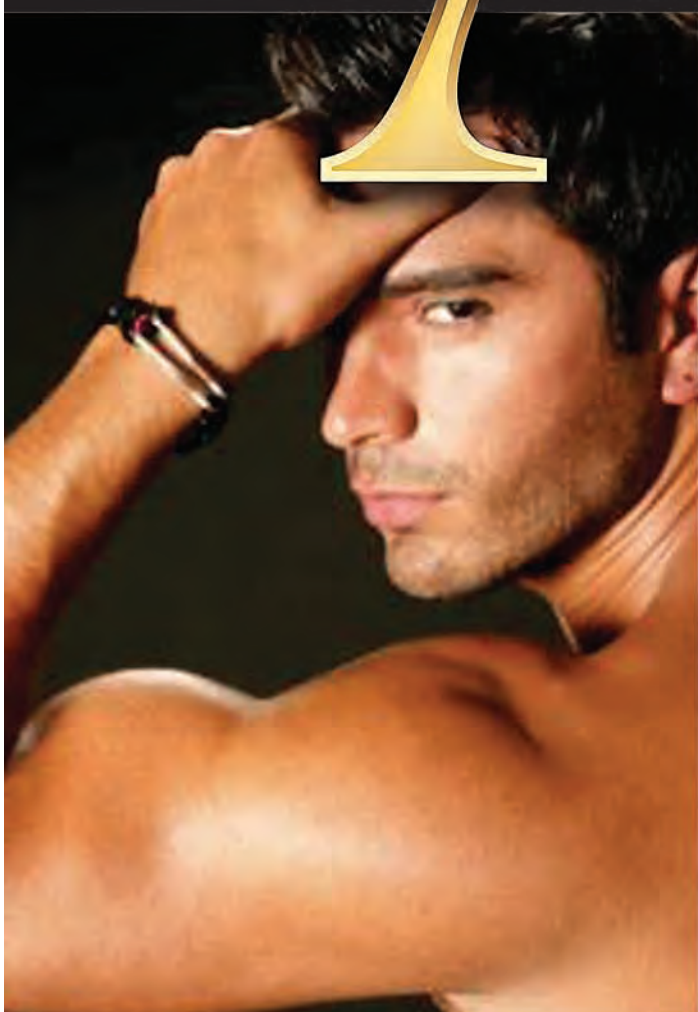
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