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COVER STORY

14 Elaine Stritch: The lady who lives for tomorrow

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“They’ve used ‘God’s Word’ to justify their discriminatory denouncement, choosing to single out the gay community. ... It isn’t just hurtful – it’s hateful and hypocritical. It’s everything *but* Christian.”

– Chris Azzopardi on
NorthRidge Church in Plymouth, pg. 8



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Rev. Michael C.R. Nabors talked with Rev. Darlene Franklin at the First Calvary Baptist Church in Detroit where Nabors has served as senior pastor for 16 years. Nabors reached out to Franklin, his former seminary student, to express his outrage and anger at the media storm that erupted after a group of conservative black pastors demonstrated against marriage equality. BTL Photo by Jan Stevenson.

Prominent Detroit Minister ‘Comes Out’ As LGBT Ally

Rev. Nabors Rejects Black Pastors’ Bigotry

BY JAN STEVENSON

DETROIT – Dr. Michael C. R. Nabors has come out. The highly respected African American pastor and scholar was so appalled by a group of black pastors’ recent demonstration against same-sex marriage in Detroit that he could not stay silent any more.

“I am coming out of the closet as a heterosexual, male pastor, with all the privileges this has afforded me in more than 30 years of ministry, to say that I do believe in gay rights. I also believe that if gays love each other in the way I love my wife, in the way that any man-husband loves his woman-wife, it is perfectly fine for them to be married,” Nabors wrote in an open letter Mar. 4. (see Dr. Nabor’s complete letter on www.pridesource.com).

On Mar. 28, Nabors met with Rev. Darlene Franklin, former pastor of Full

“You know, you don’t have to follow the words that are being spoken or the places where they are being spoken. You have to follow the money trail.”

– Rev. Nabors

Truth Fellowship Church in Detroit, and Rev. Roland Stringfellow, the newly-appointed senior pastor at Metropolitan Community Church in Ferndale, to discuss the theology and politics behind his decision to come out as an ally to the LGBT community.

“It was seeing about 50 African American preachers in Detroit that got national attention for stating that they were unalterably opposed

to same-sex marriage,” said Nabors, referring to a Feb. 24 press conference at the First Baptist World Changers Church in Detroit. “It was the aftermath. It garnered tremendous local press, and then I’m seeing it on television and reading about it in USA Today, The New York Times, and I said, ‘Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I’m a pastor in Detroit and I don’t feel that way about it.’ And that compelled me to sit down and try to write something.”

Nabors, 54, who has been at New Calvary for 16 years, said he submitted his letter to The Detroit Free Press and The Detroit News, but had not heard if either paper intends to print it. He reached out to Franklin, his former seminary student, to explore what he could do to get his message out. Franklin had been out as a lesbian

throughout her studies at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary. “I am so honored to bring you two together,” said Franklin to the two pastors. “I am interested in being that person to help bridge the (black and the gay) communities of faith together.”

Dr. Nabors is senior pastor at New Calvary Baptist Church in Detroit, a 64-year-old, large black church with hundreds of members. He is also an assistant professor, director of graduate programs and director of student life at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary on Woodward Ave. in Detroit. Born in Kalamazoo to a large family - he is the youngest of nine children - and raised in a fundamentalist Baptist church, Nabors said his world view expanded while in college at Western Michigan University and later at Princeton’s Theological Seminary where he earned a masters degree in theology and Christian ethics.

“I went to Princeton - it was a big leap. A sort of new world opened up for me. As a Princeton seminary student you could take as many classes as you wanted at the university. After I got all my requirements out of the way I was doing everything I could under Cornell West and (civil war) historian James McPherson,” said Nabors.

Nabors said he was angry, offended and embarrassed that the anti-marriage demonstrators claimed to represent all of Detroit’s faith community. He also accused some pastors of being influenced by right-wing donors.

“You know, you don’t have to follow the words that are being spoken or the places where they are being spoken. You have to follow the money trail,” said Nabors. “Find out about that church, find out about the organizations that are supporting them, and more often than not it will be a very conservative, very evangelical, very fundamental organizations - church related - that are throwing money out, saying, ‘we need you to be a part of our cause.’ Now I’m not saying that every single African American minister has been bought off and that’s why they are speaking out on this issue. But I am saying when you get that kind of publicly and that kind of focus, it’s not just by accident. Someone absolutely knows what they are doing.”

Nabors, who served as the director of the civil rights commission in Trenton, NJ, said the issue of homosexuality is divisive for the Black Church.

“I have been in ministry for over 30 years, and I have not been in any institutional organization that is more homophobic than the Black Church,” said Nabors. “I absolutely believe that with all of my heart. It exists on two levels. Preachers have been

using the pulpit to preach ‘God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.’ And then there’s that underlying, sneering, negative sense - pointing to ‘those people.’ Every time that happens in my presence, whether it is my congregation or somewhere else, I say, ‘Oh my God - you sound just like someone from the Ku Klux Klan.’”

“I didn’t know I could be both gay and a minister - who ever heard of such a thing,” said Stringfellow, who grew up and became a minister in a small conservative community in Indiana. After he came out as gay, Stringfellow moved to California to attend the progressive Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA in 2003. “But the Black Church is not a monolith. There are welcoming congregations. The one who yells the loudest from the pulpit does not represent us all. It’s good to show the diversity of thought.”

Nabors, a member of the Black Baptist Council, is aware his open support of the LGBT community and marriage equality could cost him support among his peers.

“I know the difficulty. I know that pretty much I am accepted in all groups of clergy in Detroit,” said Nabors. “When something like this comes out and your name is attached to it, your invitations will be limited and your presence will not be nearly as welcome. I understand that, especially in the Black Church - no doubt about it.”

But Nabors feels he has to follow his conscience and his faith. He is also relying on the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, “The problem is not so much the evil people who are killing and destroying this world, it’s the appalling silence of the good people.”

“The basis of my faith and our religion is that God so loved the work that he gave his only begotten son,” said Nabors. “And there is no quantifying indicators on what that world is. It’s the whole world. It’s everybody that is in it; red, white, black, yellow, brown, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Christian, gay, straight, man, woman - every single part of this world God loves. I believe that is the basis that runs from the beginning to the end of the sacred word.”

History Shows ‘Traditional Marriage’ Not The Black Family Reality

BY JAN STEVENSON

DETROIT – Throughout American history the black family has endured and evolved under pressures of slavery, discrimination, poverty and social unrest. Two black pastors discussed black family structures and why the argument against marriage equality “to preserve traditional marriage” conflicts with the history and current reality of the black family in America.

Rev. Darlene Franklin, former pastor of the Full Truth Fellowship Church in Detroit, moderated the Mar. 29 discussion at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary between Rev. Michael C.R. Nabors, senior pastor at First Calvary Baptist Church in Detroit, and Rev. Roland Stringfellow, senior pastor at Metropolitan Community Church in Ferndale.

“If you do a historical analysis you will gain an understanding that the best way to control a group



Rev. Roland Stringfellow shared his journey from a conservative Baptist ministry in Indiana to becoming an out-of-the-closet sacred activist for LGBT inclusion in faith communities. Photo courtesy of Stringfellow.

of people is to tear the families apart in the first place,” said Nabors who recently “came out” as a supporter of LGBT rights including marriage equality. “Upon our arrival there was no recognition of family unit. And during the institution of slavery there was no family unity that was respected and appreciated among slaves – there just wasn’t. Because where there was the possibility of unity, there was the possibility of rebellion. And so if they saw there was some unity that was created, then the first thing that happened was someone was sold down the river – this person is sold, that person is sold. So to now come back and use the argument against the LGBT community that we need to have this ideal nuclear family as the only way to exist, is to not grapple with our own history,” said Nabors.

“For African Americans to demand that the ideal model is the only way, and we’re going to take this to court to defend it – that simply has not been our reality,” said Stringfellow. “Single mothers, two women, two men - the point is how have these children fared? It would be insulting to try to

criticize the many single mothers who have done a spectacular job raising boys. Is it easy? No. It is not always easy. But in terms of family configuration it has always been varied for African Americans.”

“I think that kind of argument is a basic affront to 70 percent of the folks who are single parent families in the black community who are doing the very best they can, often a great job, above and beyond the call of duty,” said Nabors. “To say, ‘No you have to have a husband, you have to have a wife,’ we don’t have that. It doesn’t exist in our community. So I’m offended by the very fact that they would approach it in that manner.”

“In 2008, I was hired by the Pacific School of Religion to do sacred activism” said Stringfellow. “I went into many churches and congregations to do training and discussions to understand the issues of marriage, sexuality, etc., doing the work within the African American faith community around LGBT issues.” He said that there building trust between the LGBT community and the black community requires patience and a willingness to question conventional wisdom. “When Prop 8 passed in 2008 in California, a lot of gays and lesbians blamed the African American community, and believed that black voters had voted for Obama but against Prop 8. That turned out to not be true,” he said.

“In the DeBoer v. Snyder trial that ended a few weeks ago, the state says they are concerned about stabilizing the family. Do you think the Michigan Marriage Amendment is stabilizing or destabilizing?” asked Franklin.

“I do not believe that same sex marriage is a destabilizing factor for the institutions of marriage or the family,” said Nabors. “If there is a destabilizing factor in the family and our political system is so concerned about the family, then they need to attack all the issues that contribute to poverty and discrimination. But to come along and say that this hot-button issue is the core problem for families today is just reeking of politics. It’s trying to divide people, to get folks on your side, parlaying for votes. They are hoping that if they are lucky enough and the spotlight is on them, they can get more votes.”

“For African Americans to demand that the ideal model is the only way, and we’re going to take this to court to defend it – that simply has not been our reality. Single mothers, two women, two men - the point is how have these children fared? It would be insulting to try to criticize the many single mothers who have done a spectacular job raising boys. Is it easy? No. It is not always easy. But in terms of family configuration it has always been varied for African Americans.”

- Rev. Roland Stringfellow, MCCC

REV. NABORS LETTER

Find Rev. Nabors Letter Online
 >> www.pridesource.com

Elected Officials, Advocates Petition Schuette To Drop Marriage Appeal

BY RJ WOLCOTT

A group of marriage-equality advocates and elected officials today delivered 14,000 signatures and an album of wedding photos from Saturday urging Attorney General Bill Schuette to drop his appeal of a federal court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in Michigan.

"We need to remember this isn't about any one of us, it's about all of us and that we need to see the faces of the happy couples that were so excited to get married on Saturday," Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer said today at a press conference at the Capitol.

Whitmer was joined by representatives from Equality Michigan, a statewide LGBT rights advocacy group, and several elected officials, including State Rep. Sam Singh, D-East Lansing.

While clerks in Ingham, Washtenaw, Muskegon and Oakland counties granted marriage licenses Saturday, Attorney General Bill Schuette was granted a stay on the decision, effectively putting a hold on any further unions and casting a legal cloud over the roughly 300 licenses issued Saturday.

"There's so much love and that love continues and it has always been there and in those court rooms, at those county clerk's offices, there were so many couples. I would say the majority of the couples I saw there had been for decades just quietly waiting. And we will be dropping off these petitions at the Attorney General's Office and saying we are done waiting," said Emily Dievendorf, executive director of Equality Michigan.

Along with the petitions, Equality Michigan delivered a photo album of same-sex marriage ceremonies Saturday.

Glenna DeJong and Marsha Caspar, Michigan's first same-sex couple to wed Saturday morning, spoke at today's event, saying that after 27 years, they were finally done waiting.

"Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette, please make the right choice: Drop the appeal and let all Michiganders enjoy and celebrate marriage," Caspar said.

After hearing testimony in the case, U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman issued a 31-page decision, refuting the arguments made by Schuette's experts and declaring Michigan's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. Following the decision, the state filed a stay on the decision, giving the courts until Wednesday to decide where the case proceeds from here.

During questions, Dievendorf said that while she expects Michigan to eventually become a state where marriage rights are granted to same-sex couples, she expects the courts to extend the stay. Dievendorf also said Equality Michigan will continue to build support for a possible 2016 ballot initiative to amend the state's constitution.

This article originally appeared in Lansing City Pulse www.lansingcitypulse.com

Sixth Circuit Continues Stay

Citing the U.S. Supreme Court's issuance of a stay in the federal district court ruling striking Utah's ban on same-sex couples marrying, a Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals panel issued an order March 25 it would grant a similar ruling by a district court in Michigan. The stay will continue until the federal appeals court reviews the district court decision in *DeBoer v. Snyder*.

MI Leaders React To Fed's Recognition Of Marriages

BY TODD A. HEYWOOD

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced Friday morning that the federal government will recognize same-sex marriages legally conducted over the weekend.

"I have determined that the same-sex marriages performed last Saturday in Michigan will be recognized by the federal government," Holder said in a written statement released by the White House and the Department of Justice. "These families will be eligible for all relevant federal benefits on the same terms as other same-sex marriages."

After acknowledging Gov. Rick Snyder had noted the marriages were legally conducted, but would not be recognized by the state, Holder's statement continued, "For purposes of federal law, as I announced in January with respect to similarly situated same-sex couples in Utah, these Michigan couples will not be asked to wait for further resolution in the courts before they may seek federal benefits to which they are entitled."

Democratic candidate for Governor Mark Schauer responded immediately.

"Attorney General Holder made the right call by announcing that the federal government will recognize the same-sex marriages that were performed in Michigan last weekend. Now it's time for Rick Snyder to get on the right side of history and stop wasting tax dollars to defend the state's discriminatory ban on marriage equality."

The marriages and licenses were issued in the 20 hour window that followed federal Judge Bernard Friedman striking down the state's ban on same-sex marriage, but before the 6th U.S. Court of Appeals issued a stay on the ruling. Because Friedman did not issue a stay, a legal action which freezes the impact of the ruling, county clerks were free to offer marriage licenses legally to same-sex couples. This was the first time in Michigan history same-sex couples could be legally married in Michigan.

"I applaud Attorney General Eric Holder's decision to extend federal recognition and benefits to the same-sex couples married in Michigan last Saturday. These couples were legally married and are entitled to the rights and protections afforded to all married people. It is extremely disappointing that we have a Governor who admits these marriages were



Lisa Brown issued a record 147 marriage licenses on March 22. BTL photo: Andrew Potter

legal, but would rather deny families their benefits while he wastes taxpayer dollars on a senseless appeal. I urge Governor Snyder to join the right side of history by immediately extending state benefits to all same-sex couples legally married in Michigan," said Oakland County Clerk Lisa Brown who was able to issue and record 147 marriage licenses March 22. The announcement comes less than a week after East Lansing Mayor Nathan Triplett and Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum sent a letter to Holder asking the federal government to recognize the marriages. Byrum and Triplett both conducted same-sex marriage ceremonies on Saturday. Ingham County was one of four counties to issue marriage licenses Saturday. The other three were Muskegon, Washtenaw and Oakland counties.

Byrum applauded Attorney General Eric Holder for declaring Michigan same-sex marriages eligible for federal benefits and ending unconstitutional discrimination against same-sex couples.

"While Governor Snyder and Attorney General Schuette continue to play politics and pander to the far-right, same-sex couples married last weekend will no longer face discrimination in the eyes of the federal government," said Byrum. "For

too long, these loving couples have been wrongfully denied the right to marry and the legal benefits that marriage provides. I commend Attorney General Eric Holder for doing the right thing and being on the right side of history."

Triplett hailed the Attorney General's announcement as well.

"Attorney General Holder made the right decision for these couples and for Michigan, in stark contrast to Governor Snyder and Bill Schuette. These couples were lawfully wed and they deserve all the rights and responsibilities that come with marriage," Triplett said in an interview Friday morning.

Michigan's Congressional Democrats sent a letter to Holder on Thursday asking that the federal government recognize the marriages. That move was orchestrated by Flint Democratic Congressman Dan Kildee.

"I applaud U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder for recognizing the recent same-sex marriages performed in Michigan. Just yesterday, I, along with other Democratic members of Michigan's congressional delegation, asked the federal government to recognize these recently performed marriages. Today's recognition of these marriages by the federal government is

welcome news. These legally married and loving couples shouldn't have to wait any longer for the recognition and benefits they are entitled to under the U.S. Constitution," Kildee said in a statement released on his website. "It's my hope that Governor Rick Snyder and Attorney General Bill Schuette will also drop their appeals in this matter and recognize the inherent rights of these Michiganders to love and marry one another."

Supporters of marriage equality were quick to hail the decision by Holder.

"I was proud to join my colleagues from the Michigan delegation in a letter to Attorney General Holder asking him to recognize the 300 same sex marriages that took place in Michigan last weekend. Today's decision by the Justice Department to recognize these historic marriages marks an important step forward toward greater equality for families across our state. No American should face discrimination based on whom they love, and we must continue working to ensure that marriage equality is fully recognized and celebrated in Michigan," said Democratic U.S. Senate candidate and U.S. Rep. Gary Peters.

"Great news!" wrote State Rep. Andy Schor (D-Lansing) on his Facebook page following the announcement. "The Federal Government will recognize the same-sex marriages that were performed on Saturday. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder said that because the marriages are legal in Michigan, these couples will be eligible for all relevant federal benefits. These Michigan couples will not be asked to wait for further resolution in the courts before they may seek federal benefits to which they are entitled. So now they are recognized as legal by the federal government but not the Michigan government. It would be nice to see Michigan recognize them as well. How can they be legal yet not legally recognized?"

"Same-sex couples shouldn't have to rely on federal intervention to have their right to legal marriage recognized, but thanks to Republican Gov. Snyder that's exactly what's happening," said Lon Johnson, Michigan Democratic Party Chair. "Gov. Snyder's decision to deny equal treatment to these couples is offensive and ridiculous.

Loving, committed same-sex couples have been denied equal protection for too long in Michigan. Our state needs leaders like Gary Peters and Mark Schauer, who will stand up for full equality for every Michigander."

Liberal advocacy group Progress Michigan also praised Holder's decision.

"We applaud U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's announcement that the United States government will recognize the marriages that were performed on Saturday," said Lonnie Scott, executive director of Progress Michigan. "Rather than trying to play both sides of the fence, Gov. Snyder should have stood on the side of equality and we hope this announcement will push him to follow the federal government's lead on the issue. Gov. Snyder should not be wasting taxpayer money by continuing to deny equal rights to loving families."

Michigan State AFL-CIO President Karla Swift reminded everyone it is still legal to fire and discriminate Michigan workers, "Governor Snyder has shown a shameful lack of leadership and basic human decency on this issue. Loving, committed couples should not have to wait through a costly and politically motivated appeals process in order to receive equal treatment in our state. Appallingly, it is still legal to fire or discriminate against Michigan workers based sexual orientation or gender identity. Even after same-sex marriage is fully recognized, the labor movement will continue to fight for fairness and equality all."

State Senator Gretchen Whitmer said, "I applaud the U.S. Attorney General for stepping up where our own Governor won't by recognizing the legal rights that Michigan's same-sex married partners are owed. Apparently the Governor's legal advice is as poor as the political advice he's getting. As an attorney, the Governor should know that the vested rights of all of our people cannot be denied.

The only sad conclusion I can draw is that Governor Snyder is making a crass political calculation to appease the extreme wing of his party by continuing to deny rights. Despite what he claims, he's just playing politics."

“We applaud U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's announcement that the United States government will recognize the marriages that were performed on March 22. Rather than trying to play both sides of the fence, Gov. Snyder should have stood on the side of equality and we hope this announcement will push him to follow the federal government's lead on the issue. Gov. Snyder should not be wasting taxpayer money by continuing to deny equal rights to loving families.”

- Lonnie Scott, executive director of Progress Michigan

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When ‘Non-Denominational’ Really Means ‘Homophobic’



Viewpoint

OPINION BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Because I didn't know how to tell her, my mother was one of the last people I came out to, but it's funny – she's always been the first to have my back. She'd never let anyone shame her son – even her own church. Not now, not ever.

That unwavering support was demonstrated yet again last week when she approached me, looking more angry and letdown than I'd seen her in a while. Her longtime church isn't as accepting, welcoming or progressive as she, and a lot of other parishioners, thought.

NorthRidge, a massive, hip and inviting establishment located in Plymouth on North Territorial, seems to welcome, with open arms: parishioners who are divorced, those who have had sex out of wedlock, even convicts and other “sinners.” Their marketing is perfectly in sync with today's youth culture – it's pithy, it's non-judgmental, it's downright comical sometimes. “Come one; come all,” they seem to proclaim. Except if you're homosexual. Because being gay? That's just unforgivable in the eyes of God, at least according to NorthRidge.

On March 25 and 27, the pastor emailed the entire congregation, including my mom, using Him to rationalize an offensive, embarrassing and deplorable truth: NorthRidge is anti-gay. So anti-gay, in fact, they turned their backs on World Vision – a Christian-based humanitarian aid for poverty-stricken children – when it was announced the charity had recently decided to employ gay people ... gay people with big hearts, gay people with strong characters, gay people wanting to reach out to needy children.

NorthRidge responded in a particularly polarizing and foolish way. Citing the Word of God as justification for their inexcusable self-righteousness and un-godly condemnation, they wielded pervasive church hypocrisy to shun the gay community.

As for my mom, she was feeling outraged, but also deceived. Understandably, she thought NorthRidge was a forward-thinking, “non-denominational” church free of judgment. It's the image they promote. Sighing as she handed me a printout of the email she sent me earlier in the day – with the subject “I'm fired up! I'm done with NorthRidge!” – she noted this blurb:

“Unfortunately, without notice, WV has just announced a significant change. They have decided to hire (and endorse as fulfilling the biblical standards of sexual purity) individuals involved in same-sex marriages. In so doing, we believe that they have compromised the clearly expressed truth of God's Word about marriage

and sexual purity.”

“Marriage” and “sexual purity”? So how about the divorced? How about those who've engaged in pre-marital sex? Maybe World Vision, the nation's 10th largest charity, should prohibit everyone – even “sinners” with tattoos – from working for them.

After NorthRidge released two letters detailing why denouncing homosexuality is more important than committing to the hungry mouths they promised to feed, World Vision reversed their decision to hire gay employees. The charity ultimately caved to pressure from NorthRidge and other congregations around the country, casting married gay Christians aside days later, reversing an honorable, common-sense decision.

Now, I've been to NorthRidge. Several times,

Being gay? That's just unforgivable in the eyes of God, at least according to NorthRidge.

in fact. Nearly 10 years ago, I introduced my mom to the church after finding it to be a welcoming place that wasn't preachy, political, and seemed far more progressive than its recent turn of events revealed. Maybe it was the latte you could grab at the coffeehouse before mass, how they turned a Kings of Leon song into a spiritual experience, the hashtags used in their promo materials – but no, it was more than that.

It was Pastor Brad Powell.

Powell spoke about faith, but not in a forceful or restrictive way. Kind, fair, compassionate, loving – that's the God I came to know through him. That's the God my mother came to know through him. NorthRidge was an inviting place of worship, and it gave me, my mother and other faith-seekers false hope.

But even worse, they've used “God's Word” to justify their discriminatory denouncement, choosing to single out one specific group of people – the gay community – as if others at NorthRidge, at World Vision and around the world are also, in some way and according to the church, not “compromising the clearly expressed truth of God's Word.” It isn't just hurtful – it's hateful and hypocritical. It's everything *but* Christian.

But NorthRidge, it turns out, isn't as “non-denominational” as it might appear. Behind the smoke and mirrors is a creed rooted in strict Southern Baptist beliefs. That mega church serving mochas before mass used to be in Detroit, and it used to be called Temple Baptist Church. In service from 1934 and 1951, Temple was known to be so fervently conservative it barred African Americans from attending. If banishing minorities is part of NorthRidge's mission statement, they should be really proud. I mean, Fred Phelps certainly would be.

In light of the church's shamefully biased declaration, they cornered World Vision into

making the unfortunate and dishonorable decision to un-hire gay people in same-sex marriages, reinstating NorthRidge as a partner – but only for now. In a second letter, Pastor Brad writes that he “will remain skeptical,” and that if the church does not believe “their confession and repentance is genuine,” they will not pursue any further opportunities with WV.

“Since it's impossible to fulfill our mission without both showing His love and telling His Truth, we believe that the partnership we began with WV to advance our mission now threatens it. Rather than helping to expand our capacity to show God's love, their decision will significantly hinder and hurt it.”

Hey Brad, you know who else this hurts? It hurts that gay parishioner who, year after year,

find at every corner, but I do hold out a sliver of hope thanks to a woman I met while attending a retreat at Christian music icon Amy Grant's Nashville farm last fall. The retreat was magic, bringing together fans from every walk of life. My mom was there with me, and so were many other people. We connected with strangers, some similar, but most very different. We shared stories about our lives, and fans asked about my experience of speaking with Amy Grant for her first gay press interview. Unbeknownst to me, within earshot, was a pastor's wife. I heard her talking about the congregation she serves, and I just froze. My heart skipped a few beats. I felt the way I usually do when I know I'm within a pastor's presence: judged. I figured we'd have nothing in common. I figure she'd condemn me. I figured she'd be another Brad Powell.

I figured wrong.

This woman expressed not just the enlightening takeaway she had from that Grant interview (it ended with Grant asserting that the only relationship with God that matters is the one he has with you and only you, emphasizing the inclusion of “everybody”), but I'll never forget this: She and her husband – the pastor – shared it with their congregation. Her God was the kind, compassionate, loving God that my mother and I – and many other faith-seekers – thought we'd found at NorthRidge.

So, it is a hopeful thought to know that while rare, these pastors do exist; you just won't find them at NorthRidge. And it's sad, and it's surprising. But most of all, it's heartbreaking.

It's heartbreaking to the gay community, certainly, but also to those who, like my mother, love them and believe they deserve fairness, compassion and the judgment-free right to generously contribute to those people that NorthRidge is willing to give up on.

To read Pastor Brad Powell's letters, visit northridgechurch.com/outreach/global/zambia.

I'm discouraged by homophobic dogma I



39, and not counting



Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

At my advanced age I've come to realize I really don't exist. With the exception of the IRS, my creditors, my column's faithful baker's dozen fans, my friends, I'm a nobody, and an old nobody at that. Sigh. It happens.

Of the seven billion persons on this over-crowded, truculent planet, how many care that I'm but one more bug in the trained flea circus of life?

Everyone knows of course that in Gay US of A oldsters (anyone over 39) are space ghosts, keening but seldom seen. If you don't believe me, ask yourself how many folks do you know of who are willing to admit to being 39? or willing to associate with persons alleged to be of antsy age?

We seniors are last season's limp linguine. And, horror of horrors, us GOPs (gay old potboilers) have weak knees, fixed opinions, sleep apnea, bladder leakage, and not infrequently read newspapers. Youngsters don't.

I suppose that's kinda good. Being eternally pretty is a great burden on society. And God knows the hardest years to be eternally pretty are between 39 and 50. (I got to 45 and came unglued.) After that it's why the heck bother.

Why diet? Do yoga! Stop drinking? Give up smoking! Sleep eight hours. Nobody cares one way or t'other. Do the honorable thing. Just go to pot. (But legally.)

Yes, Captain Invisible. Shazam! You're over the hill. Stop dyeing your hair. Don't bother with transplants (top or bottom). Forget personal trainers. Leave the Viagra, yohimbe, and horny goat weed alone. Your salad days are over. It's chunky canned noodle soup from here on in.

You think I'm kidding. I'm not. For Lent recently I thought I'd peek into one of Chicago's popular gay spots - Faucet's. (Or, some such leaky place.) Just to see how the young plumbers plumb; and bingo! I got stopped before I could put one pleated trowser inside the door.

DOOR GUY: "Got ID?" TROWSER: "You're kidding. Man, I'm into Social Security. Why in the world do I need to prove it? I'm harmless - reasonably." DOOR GUY: "Sorry, don't croak. I don't make rules. I enforce them. It's too crowded inside anyway! Nothing to see." TROWSER: "Or be seen by."

I coulda made a scene - I'm a sequin karate belter, but not wanting to besmirch the honor of our line-backing Go Blues - or Go Blowers - I held my piece, er, peace.

The evening wasn't a zero. Not far from Faucet's there's a nice, scenic go-go bistro, The Lucky Shoe Horn. It thoughtfully caters to us mature types - plus or minus a few decades - with a nonstop bevy of proverbial "barefoot boys with cheeks of tan".

I know it's a tad déclassé, but for a token of financial support - a dollar or two to help ensure, er, insure, the collective family jewels - said interpreters of the liberal dance arts are quite willing to prove seven billion inhabitants of this wacky planet wrong. I actually do exist. (However, briefly.)

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Tammy Baldwin Intros New Bill

Openly gay U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) introduced a bill March 27 to require that universities receiving federal aid establish anti-harassment policies aimed at curbing bullying of students based on their actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion. The bill is named after Rutgers student Tyler Clementi who jumped to his death in his first year of college in 2010 after his roommate surreptitiously recorded Clementi's intimate activities with another man and made fun of him over the internet. U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) joined Baldwin in introducing the measure. The bill was introduced last year by then Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), who passed away last June.

Defending Virginia's Ban

Attorneys for the Virginia county clerks who are defending the state's ban on same-sex couples marrying submitted their brief to the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals March 21. The case, *Schaefer v. Bostic*, will be argued in May and is on track to be the first post-Proposition 8 case to reach the U.S. Supreme Court. In the brief, the attorneys assert that, by not ruling on the merits of last year's Proposition 8 case, the Supreme Court "continued to leave such an option to the state." And by striking down the Defense of Marriage Act in *U.S. v. Windsor*, argues the brief, the high court signaled "that state laws respecting same-sex marriage are protected from federal intrusion."

Rewriting Windsor Decision?

Two Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee submitted questions in writing for federal court nominee Staci Yandle. Senator Charles Grassley grilled her over how she would interpret the Supreme Court's ruling in *U.S. v. Windsor*, which overturned DOMA. Several LGBT legal activists said Grassley's goal seemed to be to promote a narrow interpretation of *Windsor*. "They are trying to get her to say that the federalism discussion in *Windsor* means that the federal courts should not strike down state marriage bans - that they don't have the authority to do so," said GLAD Civil Rights Director Mary Bonauto. Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry, noted that Grassley "chose not to ask about the explicit passages in the [*Windsor*] decision making clear that the ruling turned on equal protection, not federalism." Lambda Legal's Eric Lesh said Grassley has made the *Windsor* questions a routine line of inquiry for all federal court nominees now.

Seeking Relief In Indiana

Lambda Legal on Monday filed an emergency motion in federal district court seeking an order that would allow a lesbian couple's marriage to be recognized by Indiana. In the motion, Lambda adds couple Niki Quasney and Amy Sandler to the plaintiffs in its *Baskin v. Bogan* lawsuit challenging the state's ban on same-sex couples marrying. Quasney and Sandler were married in Massachusetts last August. Quasney has late-stage ovarian cancer and is concerned that, without a court order to recognize their marriage, their children will be "denied important benefits" upon Quasney's death and Sandler will be considered a legal stranger.

Ugandan Children In Song

Thousands of people turned out yesterday in the capital city of Uganda to stage a "thanksgiving" celebration for President Yoweri Museveni's signing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in February. According to an Associated Press report, many in the crowd were schoolchildren "who sang and danced to anti-gay tunes that also railed" railed against U.S. and European con tries.

Transgender Day of Visibility Now Happening World Wide

Michigan Born Event Moves To International Stage

BY PAULETTE NIEMIEC

Five short years ago, Rachel Crandall-Crocker, a social worker and executive director of Transgender Michigan, was sitting in her office pondering the thought of having a day people could celebrate being transgender. On that day Transgender Day of Visibility was born. Today the idea has grown into an international holiday, celebrated literally around the world.

Taking the stage in the Five Fifteen coffee shop in downtown Royal Oak March 26, Crandall-Crocker enthusiastically screamed into the microphone, "Surely we are world wide now! People in France, Romania, Brazil and several other countries are celebrating this day all around the world."

The same passion was shared by much of the crowd of approximately 25 - 30 people who had gathered to engage in a three-hour presentation of poets, musical performers and speakers; all focused on the theme of living life in a body the opposite of their identity.

Gender identity is something most take for granted, yet for those who suffer with gender dysphoria, and those who's gender is not defined by their genitals but rather by their psyche, life can be strange, hard, confusing and sometimes a little terrifying. However on this night, all that was not to be denied, repressed, ashamed or feared, but rather celebrated with joy and embraced.

One by one, artists took the stage at the open-mike event. Beginning with singer/song-writer, Carmel Liburdi who's original compositions, "Ice-Cream in Heaven," "Pretty Lady," and "One too Many;" set the mood for the evening, as each tune uniquely described the plight and sometimes the triumph of individuals who are unique, different and special as transgender people can be. Comedian and storyteller Gary O'Conner (a.k.a. "GAZ") had the crowd in stitches as he told a



Rachel Crandall-Crocker came up with the idea of Transgender Day of Visibility.

series of jokes and comedic stories revolving around a religious theme. With his strong, vibrant personality, GAZ described scenes that reflect America's sometimes conservative and judgmental views regarding gays, lesbians and transgender people.

Other speakers and performers on stage were actually trans. Including Steph Turner who works with and helped to create Jen Durr Services, a company dedicated to the economic empowerment for trans people; Debbie David, guitarist, who rocked the crowd with her rendition of Prince's "When Dove's Cry," and Jay Elbrecht a transman who is legally married to Carla Manion, a cisgender woman.

"I'm here to show my full support for Jay and for all transgender people," David proclaimed to the audience. Both had separate spots on stage, and described their life as a happily married couple that has had obvious obstacles to overcome since meeting and marrying over three years ago.

Although these speakers, musicians and performers embraced the passionate mood that engulfed the atmosphere all evening, this night belonged to the poets. Several artists

read their prose including Michelle Elizabeth Brown, who read two poems composed by Janet Mock including "Redefining Realness." Afterwards, Brown described her love for Rachel Crandall and Mock, another transgender woman, author and advocate of transgender women. "I have a special trans friend and have read Janet's book. Her work is special to me," Brown said.

The mood grew more solemn and serious as poet, author and activist writer L. Bush and Rick Harris, poets, made their way to the podium. Bush read, "Transgender State of the Union" a salute to transgender people and all they've had to endure throughout the years; then he stilled the crowd with "Still Raging," an emotionally charged piece describing the plight of the city of Detroit.

Harris reminded everyone of the prejudice and hate that remains a part of our society as he told a story of a family who's house was burned to the ground in New York simply because the inhabitants were transgender. "It's sad I have to remind you of the reality of being trans and how it can go terribly wrong," said Harris.

The night's final reader, Master of Ceremonies Rachel "Ray" Weisserman announced, "and now the one you've all been waiting for Victor Billione Walker!" Walker is a well-known poet, author and voice of the gay community and an advocate of transgender women and men.

The crowd erupted into cheers and a standing ovation for Walker, following his rendition of "Please Don't Go" by Boyz to Men; which electrified the atmosphere.

As the evening grew to a close, Rachel Crandall-Crocker thanked everyone for coming and said, "We're going to do this until everyday is Transgender Visibility Day," and leading a chant of "we can do it! We can do it!"

ENDA Lobbying Begins



Human Rights Campaign Michigan Field Organizer Allison VanKuiken who was one of the organizers of the One Royal Oak Campaign. BTL photo: Crystal Proxmire

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

“We need to live in a country where you can get married on a Friday and not have to worry about being fired on Monday.”

The sentiment was shared by Human Rights Campaign Michigan Field Organizer Allison VanKuiken at the ENDA campaign kick-off event March 17 at Affirmations.

ENDA is the Employment Non Discrimination Act that would provide protection for LGBT people against employment discrimination across the country, and HRC is lobbying to make it happen.

The bill has already passed in the U.S. Senate and has more than enough bi-partisan votes to pass in the House. But a procedural rule means that Speaker of the House John Boehner can prevent the matter from coming to the floor for a vote. In this case, VanKuiken said, Republican leadership is scared.

“We’re told that they won’t take the vote until after the primaries, so it could happen in August or they may even hold it until November,” she said. VanKuiken explained that when Republicans come out in favor of any pro-LGBT measures, far-right conservatives come after them with opponents in primary races.

HRC has identified key Republican leaders to lobby, including Michigan’s U.S. Rep. Candice Miller, R-Harrison Township. Miller voted for ENDA in 2007 and has also supported other pro-women legislation in the past. HRC is hoping to convince her to help clear the way for a vote. Miller can be reached through her website <http://candicemiller.house.gov>.

Over 30 people attended the meeting to learn how to get involved in the lobbying effort.

Shannon Salk of Ferndale was among the volunteers. “I think from my perspective everyone deserves the dignity of a job,” she

said. “It’s irresponsible not to pass this in the kind of economy we have. I have a friend who has been impacted by discrimination, so I know how important it is.” She said her friend had been harassed at work by a co-worker for being gay, and when they reported it to a manager, the manager fired them both.

The fight for employment protection is happening at federal, state and local levels. ENDA would mean everyone in the United States would have protection.

At the state level there is a push to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity by the Unity Michigan coalition. The current law protects people on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight and marital status. Elliott-Larsen includes not only employment discrimination protections, but also housing and public accommodations protections.

Historically Republican leadership in Michigan has not been inclined to amend Elliott-Larsen to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Individual communities have enacted local human rights ordinances to try and provide some protections. Thirty-two cities and townships across Michigan have local nondiscrimination ordinances, including Detroit, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Ferndale, Royal Oak, and Muskegon as of Feb. 25.

VanKuiken was one of the organizers of the One Royal Oak Campaign which got a local human rights ordinance passed in the city just last year. After her work on that successful campaign, HRC offered her a job leading the lobbying effort in Michigan to help pass ENDA.

The work involves coordinating volunteers to work phone banks out of Affirmations. They will call HRC members in Miller’s District to ask them if they would contact Miller urging her to support ENDA. “We want to show Candice Miller that people who live in her district want this,” VanKuiken said. “It’s the easiest phone banking we’ve done because we’re calling HRC members who we already know support our work. But we still need to make thousands of calls.”

Lobbying efforts also include identifying pro-equality corporations asking them to express their support, showing support within Miller’s constituency, and building up grassroots awareness of the issue.

“There is a tremendous amount of support for this in the GOP. They have family and friends that are gay. Most support it but they have 30 percent of them that are a vocal minority that they don’t know how to deal with,” VanKuiken said.

Visit www.hrc.org to stay up to date on ENDA. To learn more about Unity Michigan visit www.unitymichigan.org

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Creep of the Week

Hobby Lobby

OPINION BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

It's really amazing that in 2014 Americans are still fighting over birth control. As in whether or not contraception makes Jesus cry, and whether or not health insurance policies should be beholden to His tears.

It's also amazing that in 2014 gay and lesbian couples still don't have the legal right to marry across the country.

But hey, at least same-sex couples don't have to worry about birth control, right?

Wrong.

Granted, same-sex couples can't exactly make each other pregnant by accident. But there is a very clear link between the anti-contraception and the anti-gay movements. In fact, there always has been. It's an argument I've been making for years (and I'm not the only one).

For far too long LGBT civil rights have been fought for primarily by

Granting corporations freedom of religion would give corporations even more power based on whatever the fuck they claim to believe so long as they claim they believe it for God.

LGBT people. That has changed over the years in that more and more heteros are actively supporting equality. But let's face it, privilege, in this case heterosexual privilege, makes it pretty easy to say, "Hey, that's not my fight," even for folks who believe in the cause.

But the anti-gay movement has always been an anti-sex movement. And to those of us who have followed it closely it wasn't hard to see that the anti-gay right wouldn't be satisfied until they were able to legislate all sex, gay or straight, and that heterosexual women were especially high value targets.

And now here we are in 2014 and major players in the Republican Party have enthusiastically taken up the anti-birth control rallying cry and the United States Supreme Court just heard a case brought by Hobby Lobby, a store that sells glue guns and puffy paint, claiming that they shouldn't have to provide health insurance that includes contraceptive coverage to their employees. Because Jesus.

The best part? Just like so many anti-LGBT arguments are based on completely inaccurate and distorted ideas of LGBT people, Hobby Lobby's legal temper tantrum is based on completely inaccurate and distorted ideas about how IUDs and the morning after pill work. In Hobby Lobby land, these types of birth control kill babies. In the real world you can say they do, and you can believe they do, but they do not.

But Hobby Lobby has argued that being forced to offer IUDs and emergency contraception is against their religious beliefs. And that they, a corporation, should have their religious beliefs trump the health care of their employees. Even though what they believe about these particular methods of contraception is completely wrong.

Granted the Supreme Court granted corporations free speech rights in the Citizens United case, a decision that has already had disastrous consequences for Democracy in America. After all, if money is speech, as the court ruled, then whoever has the most money (corporations) has the most speech. And whoever has the least money (the vast majority of Americans) has little to no voice at all. Granting corporations freedom of religion would give corporations even more power based on whatever the fuck they claim to believe so long as they claim they believe it for God.

According to Salon, Hobby Lobby founder and CEO David Green's money has been tied to anti-gay marriage initiatives as well as the odious "religious freedom" bill in Arizona that would have made it totally okay to discriminate against LGBT people so long as you claimed that you did it for God.

This should surprise no one.

There are plenty of other places to buy foam board, tempura paints, rainbow patterned duct tape, and yard sticks (which could be used to make some fabulous protest signs). And, so, as they say in the crafting business, fuck Hobby Lobby. Seriously, fuck that place.

Supreme Court Seems To Lean Toward Religious Exemptions

BY LISA KEEN

Nobody spoke about recent efforts to circumvent laws protecting LGBT from discrimination by claiming religious motivations; nobody pointed out that people with religious objections to contraception often have religious objections to alternative insemination for lesbians and condom distribution for safe sex education.

But the implications of two U.S. Supreme Court cases argued March 25 for LGBT people and for laws that seek to prevent discrimination against LGBT people were a big part of the political discourse.

Observers of the March 25 oral arguments over giving religious exemptions from the Affordable Care Act to for-profit corporations all agreed the decisions will likely come down to how Justice Anthony Kennedy votes.

Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores and *Conestoga Wood v. HHS* are lawsuits brought by the owners of for-profit commercial enterprises (not religious institutions). One owns a furniture making enterprise; the other owns both an arts and craft store and a bookstore (the latter selling Christian-oriented books).

The company owners object to the ACA's requirement that employer health plans cover contraception.

Jenny Pizer, director of Lambda Legal's Law and Public Policy program, said it was "no accident" that the three female justices prodded Paul Clement, the attorney representing the companies, about how allowing for-profit corporations to take a religious exemption from ACA could lead to

The implications of two U.S. Supreme Court cases argued March 25 for LGBT people and for laws that seek to prevent discrimination against LGBT people were a big part of the political discourse.

them seeking religious exemptions to non-discrimination laws.

Pizer said the votes of Justice Kennedy and Justice Stephen Breyer, both frequently supportive of equal protection for LGBT people, were not really predictable from the arguments.

But she said her sense of how the arguments went is "deeply worrisome." She said her sense is that the court may give certain for-profit companies - those closely held by families or small groups of people (also known as S-corporations)-- the ability to claim the same sort of religious exemption to ACA that is currently afforded to religious institutions.

"If they say any for-profit can claim religious [exemptions], obviously, that's very bad," said Pizer. "If they say only S-corporations can have a religious exemption, that's less bad, but it's still bad."

"There are an awful lot of family-owned businesses," said Pizer.

Most of the discussion in the media yesterday focused on the possibility of a ruling in favor of

the for-profit corporations that could lay the groundwork for at least two slippery slopes: one where corporations would seek exemptions from more and more medical services, and one where they would seek exemptions from more and more laws.

In a discussion on MSNBC's Now with Alex Wagner Tuesday afternoon, California state senate candidate Sandra Fluke said companies could try to avoid paying for such things as HIV treatments "and, beyond that, to the level of what other laws could a corporation say, 'We don't need to comply with that because our owners have a personal objection.' We've seen owners of corporations object to a whole list of non-discrimination laws...[protecting the] LGBTQ community [and] the civil rights movement in the past...."

Pizer noted that one of the female justices suggested that a ruling in favor of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga could "open up religious objections to the entire U.S. Code."

Edith Windsor's attorney Roberta Kaplan, on MSNBC's Ronan Farrow Daily, said there have been efforts in the past for corporations to argue that they "didn't want to pay Social Security or honor minimum wage or child labor laws on the grounds of religious beliefs."

"But the court has said they have to follow laws of general application," said Kaplan. "The implications" of the court ruling otherwise in this case, she said, "would be profound."

Audio and written transcripts of the arguments are expected to be available by Friday at the Supreme Court website.

SUPREME BYPASS: The U.S. Supreme Court, for two weeks in a row, has given no indication of whether it will hear a New Mexico dispute pitting New Mexico's non-discrimination law against a commercial photographer's claim that she has a First Amendment right to deny public accommodations to a same-sex couple based on her religious beliefs. The photographer filed *Elane Photography v. Willock* in November. The case was on the relatively short lists for the justices to discuss in private conference March 21 and 28. But on the subsequent Mondays, when the court announced which cases it

would and would not take, *Elane* was not mentioned. The next conference is April 4.

LESBIAN NOMINEE GRILLED: President Obama's nomination of openly lesbian African American Staci Yandle for the U.S. District Court in southern Illinois was up for a Committee vote last Thursday. But the committee held over her nomination and that of four others in a group of 10. Her nomination is now slated for a committee vote this Thursday.

- filed by Keen News Service
www.keennewsservice.com

Fenway Report Urges 50-State Survey Of LGB Health Issues

BY LISA KEEN

A report released March 27 by the Boston-based Fenway Institute has found important health-related risks within the LGB community that are not well documented or well known and not addressed by prevention and treatment programs.

Many studies have shown that gay men have a higher risk of HIV infection and that LGBT youth are at higher risk of being bullied and considering suicide. But the new policy brief from Fenway found that the LGB community has a higher rate of tobacco use than the general public, that lesbians have an increased risk of being overweight, and that LGB elders have an increased risk of disability.

The Fenway report is based on data collected by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through an annual Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Surveys (BRFSS) in all 50 states, reaching 506,000 people. CDC provides the core questionnaire for each state to administer, asking questions about such health-related matters as diet, physical activity, smoking, immunization, and sleep.

CDC does not include a question about a survey participant's sexual orientation on the core questionnaire or on a list of additional optional questions states can add if they choose.

Only 27 states have, on their own initiative, begun asking questions about sexual orientation and/or same-sex

sexual behavior, according to the Fenway report.

Because sexual orientation data is not collected in all 50 states, says the Fenway report, "it is impossible to compare their health behaviors to those of other groups."

"Without this information, states may miss the opportunity to develop programs, policies, and services to

one year; some every year. The 27 states include: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The new policy brief from Fenway found that the LGB community has a higher rate of tobacco use than the general public, that lesbians have an increased risk of being overweight, and that LGB elders have an increased risk of disability

address local health disparities."

The Fenway report urges all states "to include, at a minimum, a sexual identity measure, and, whenever possible, to also include a sexual behavior measure." Due to the "nuances and complexity of measuring gender identity, and the unique and understudied health disparities transgender people face," said the Fenway report, "a comprehensive assessment of these issues" requires another report.

Of the 27 states which have asked people about their sexual orientation, some have asked the question in only

The report urges all 50 states to begin asking about sexual orientation.

"Collecting sexual orientation data at the state level," says the report, "can propel the federal initiative forward and enhance states' ability to document and work toward eliminating health disparities experienced by their own populations."

Find the report here <http://fenwayfocus.org/2014/03/asking-sexual-orientation-questions-on-state-risk-factor-surveys-allows-27-states-to-document-health-disparities-affecting-sexual-minorities>



Key Findings

Some of the specific findings of Fenway's analysis of the data collected by the 27 states that do ask questions about sexual identity and/or same-sex sexual behavior include:

- Lesbians and bisexual women are less likely than heterosexual women to obtain mammograms and Pap tests
- Gay men have higher rates of alcohol and drug use
- LGB people have higher rates of tobacco use and are more likely to lack health insurance
- LGB older adults have increased risk of disability, excessive drinking, and smoking
- 18 percent of doctors in California are "sometimes" or "often" uncomfortable treating gay patients
- 9.4 percent of men who identified themselves as "straight" in New York City had sex with another man during the past year.
- 76 percent of self-identified lesbian sexually active adolescents reported having had sex with a male

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Elaine Stritch

The Lady Who Lives For Tomorrow

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

A vase of lilies sits amidst medical paraphernalia used to keep Elaine Stritch's diabetes in check. Her caretaker has just arranged the flowers and set them in the middle of the kitchen table—flowers I brought her as a token of gratitude for inviting me into her Birmingham home, and because it's almost Valentine's Day— and Stritch can see them just fine even without her oversized specs.

"Oh, they're beautiful, Chris. I happen to love them," she gushes. "They're just the kind of flowers I dig. Small bouquet. White. Everything." She stares longer, pondering and admiring, and then turns her eyes playfully toward me.

"I'll bet you got a little help."

She's sharper than expected for an 89-year-old lady barely able to stand on her own two feet. As she sits next to me in a wheelchair, even something as mundane as removing a Chapstick cap is arduous. And today was especially hard. She fell again.

"Sore, sore," she bemoans, her voice like sandpaper as she eases from a walker into the chair. "One of the worst days I've had that you're here."

When I thank her for still having me over despite the tumble, she zings me: "Well, you should."

It's just minutes into our chat, and after she's called me out for asking her assistant the color flower she fancies most, what's not lagging is evident: Stritch's mouth. She's still foul, she's still demanding, she's still brutally honest—she's still brilliant. Focusing on a drink that her caretaker places in front of her, she gives it the stare-down before scoffing, "I don't know why you put it in this cocktail glass. I don't want it in this. What's a matter with her?"

There's no alcohol in the cup, by the way. Even though Stritch, a recovering alcoholic, is allowing herself one boozy drink a day, this is not it. So what is it?

"This is..."

Confused, she looks at her assistant from

across the kitchen table, raising her finger to caution him. She knows he's about to finish her thought, and—despite a spotty memory—she wants no help. "Don't tell me! I'll kill you if you tell me!"

He smiles and complies.

“It's true that your life can be, ugh, not good at all—sad—and yet hysterically funny. I don't think sad is contradictory to funny.”

Stritch is a truth-teller, never sugarcoating, never concealing. While struggling to record her renowned part as Joanne, a role she originated in Stephen Sondheim's 1970 musical "Company," she got red-hot. Unable to nail a note during "The Ladies Who Lunch," she erupted into a screaming, ranting diva tantrum, all the while puffing away at a cigarette. Her Emmy-winning "Elaine Stritch at Liberty," a live one-woman show performed on Broadway in 2002, was essentially a memoir: Here was someone cracking her steel shell and handing you her essence. But Stritch's greatest role may be as herself in director Chiemi Karasawa's hilarious and bittersweet documentary "Elaine Stritch: Shoot Me," a tribute to Stritch's life and career as she faces the inevitable and imminent end of both.

Today she's opening herself up again, maybe even more so than unusual. "Anything you wanna ask me," she says, "feel free to do it."

Revealing a life full of triumphs, failures, fears and sadness, the celebrity veneer comes

off. Everything is exposed. At this point, what does she have to lose? Besides her pants, which are nowhere in sight.

But in a nearby room—let's call it the dining room, though there's no table—pieces of her are everywhere. The walls are lined with

wonderful memories, I really do." She throws a smirk my way. "And I'll tell you about them, if I can remember and think and get you out of here before 6."

Looking for love

It's not hard to understand Elaine Stritch's sorrow, especially now. Her health is suffering, her memory is going, and having a team of people take care of her isn't her idea of a blissful existence. "These gals are running around trying to stop me from falling and killing myself. They're not here because I'm rich and looking after myself. Do you understand what I mean? That isn't very happy."

Stritch sometimes references an aphorism from her late husband, John Bay: "Everybody's got a sack of rocks." Having lugged rocks around since she was a kid, it seems full circle—now that she's, in many ways, a kid again—to reveal, after all this time, how the theater took the place of a family she never had.

"I'll give you a break. I'm gonna tell you something I've never told anybody, so that's good," Stritch says. "I don't think anybody in my family had the capability of... what am I trying to say?"

From across the table, she looks to the same assistant, the one who suggested white for the flowers I wanted to bring her. "You know what I'm trying to say. I've told you this a million times."

Silence suggests a heartbroken soul-baring. "There's a background to my life story that is not happy."

Her eyes wander, momentarily disappearing in the past. "I adored my mother and father. Adored them. And I look back on them, at them, with them, and I thought they were just darling. I loved them!"

The catch: "I don't think anybody in my family—none of them were capable of standing up and declaring their love for anybody. I'm not saying they didn't love me, but they sure as hell didn't know how to show me. I think it's one of the hardest things in the world to get over,

photographs of Stritch with Bernadette Peters, with James Gandolfini, with Bela Lugosi (Stritch starred as the ingénue in the late-'40s play of the black-and-white "Dracula"). One particularly striking photo showcases a young Judy Garland, a friend of Elaine's.

The photos, the famous faces, the gleaming accolades atop her piano—they're a surface glimpse into a legend's history. In this room, Stritch's life looks big and grand, remarkable and fruitful. Anyone would want this life—except maybe Elaine.

"I think my life has been very sad," Stritch says candidly. That can't be. Look at that room. "Rounding out, yeah, I do."

A few downer moments, maybe? "The whole thing."

When I look at her dumbfounded, she clarifies: "Oh, I had moments. I had moments that were knockouts, great, successful and 'yay.' Lots of those moments, absolutely. And accomplishments. God, I thought I accomplished a great deal. I've got a lot of



Photo: IFC Films

or to never get over.”

As a kid, Stritch looked for a way to express herself, but found that to be near impossible – she just couldn’t do it. The problem was, she didn’t know how.

“Something was missing in my life,” she confesses. “But once I got on the stage, I felt totally at home.”

And she felt adored and appreciated and, most of all, loved by the sea of people she looked out on every night, including and perhaps especially, her gay audience.

A Broadway legend has to be aware the community thinks she’s an icon, but no, not Stritch. “I’m just becoming aware of it,” she admits, but why now? “By articles such as this one. I really have become very much aware, first of all, what great audiences they are. And it isn’t that I finally discovered that gay people understand me and straight people don’t – oh, no no no. Not a word of truth in that. I can’t tell you how many straight people I know that think I am the cat’s pajamas.”

But not knowing you have a gay following

until now, 70 years into your career ... a career in one of the gayest professions pursuable: the theater? Stritch is as surprised as you are.

“It sounds like I’ve lost my mind, but I feel like I’m becoming aware of it. The longer that people think of me as a big-time actress, and as long as, uh, what’s his name?”

After tossing out a few names, she confirms it’s Edward Albee, the Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. Stritch worked with Albee on the 1996 revival of “A Delicate Balance” and – in 1962, as Martha – on “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” The respect she has for Albee is just immense, she says, but that fondness also extends to the other gay men in her life, near and far. It’s their sense of humor she savors.

“I gotta get in that line, because I think gay people have extraordinary humor. Extraordinary! I’m talking deep, deep, deep humor. Deep humor that goes way below the ...”

Trailing off, she looks up almost to see if she can find the word. It’s not there, and she doesn’t warn her assistant this time. There’s no death threat. “The belt,” he adds. “The what?”

she says.

Even if she didn’t know it, and many times she says she didn’t, Stritch nurtured many close relationships with gay men throughout her career. And when she wasn’t collaborating with Albee or singing Sondheim, she was out with Rock Hudson, wining and dining and doing the exact opposite of what some people assumed. Before Hudson died of complications from AIDS in 1985, the two were rumored to be romantically involved while working on the 1957 adaptation of Ernest Hemingway’s love story “A Farewell to Arms.”

“Did we have an affair? No,” she clarifies. “He was nuts about me, and I felt it, knew it. And I was madly in love with this gorgeous guy. But I couldn’t have reacted in any real way because I don’t think he was truly in love with me. I think he just loved me and loved that we had fun and loved to be with me.”

Hudson, she says, dedicated all his off-set time to her, never to anyone else working on the film.

“Anybody that dates you all the time, wants to

be with you all the time, takes you out everywhere – he had a good time with me. You know what I’m talking about. And there’s nobody who says that gay guys don’t have fun with women, because they do!”

Sex fun?

“Oh, absolutely. Some of them, yes.”

True, though now we’d call that bisexual or queer, or nothing at all – a label-less defiance of the times. But Stritch is only now realizing that gay people go nuts for her. This is a work in progress.

“I don’t even know if (Rock) was aware of anybody being gay,” she says, noting she found out when it was announced that he had AIDS. “That all had to surround it because I wouldn’t have known, and then it was so crowded and overloaded with sadness. I mean, that’s *really* sad. I got off easy, I think.” She stops and backpedals: “Not by not being gay, but I just got off easy.”

Though Stritch didn’t know what “gay” meant then, it wouldn’t have mattered anyway. “I don’t care who’s gay and who isn’t! I

See Elaine Stritch, page 16

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“ I’m just becoming aware of (my gay following), by articles such as this one. I really have become very much aware, first of all, what great audiences they are. And it isn’t that I finally discovered that gay people understand me and straight people don’t – oh, no no no. Not a word of truth in that. I can’t tell you how many straight people I know that think I am the cat’s pajamas. ”

► Elaine Stritch

Continued from p. 15

liked everybody! I had a ball in my life!” she says. “This all sounds contradictory. This is a contradictory interview. It will be.

“It’s true that your life can be, ugh, not good at all – sad – and yet hysterically funny. I don’t think sad is contradictory to funny.”

Speaking firmly and reiterating that point, this paradox is the part of her life – her whole life – she wants people to understand most. Layers of bullshit and heartbreak and hilarity and happiness – we all feel that, we all have that.

“Absolutely,” she agrees. “I think it took me forever – forever! – to admit that to myself, because I couldn’t believe I had everything I wanted, so what the fuck was I looking for? You know? I couldn’t explain it to myself, Chris.”

All she wanted was one word. Just four letters.

“Love,” she says.

Love – of course. We all want that. We all need that.

“I’m not saying it’s unusual. I’m saying that I’m part of the team.”

Showbiz: ‘A pain in the ass’

Stritch beams when she remembers 2004, the year she won her second Emmy, this time for “Elaine Stritch at Liberty” – the best moment of her career, she says. “It takes an awful lot to win an Emmy. People don’t realize, and you wait all your life practically. It’s a pain in the ass, show business!”

It was a momentous triumph, her face wonderstruck when they announced her name. And that boastful verbal middle finger she waved loud and proud during that acceptance speech – who could forget?

“It was the greatest relief I’ve ever felt in my life,” Stritch recalls. “I won! You didn’t win; I won! I went nuts.”

But isn’t it enough to be nominated? She pooh-poohs. “Nice to be nominated – it’s about the un-nicest thing that could ever happen to you.”

That’s saying a lot considering her experience with “un-nice,” though she might choose even harsher words for Anges de Mille, who collaborated with Stritch on the 1958 musical “Goldilocks.” The famed choreographer was not a fan of the then-aspiring Broadway star. Stritch says the two clashed when de Mille criticized the

unbefitting way Stritch pointed her toes during a dance sequence, souring Stritch’s first experience in a starring role on Broadway.

“I’m no fool,” Stritch assures. “I know when someone likes me and when they don’t.”

Agnes blasted Elaine; Elaine, of course, held her own. “I remember once when I was cursing her. I didn’t know what the hell she was talking about.”

Stritch recalls de Mille’s verbal lashing for the toe-pointing that did not meet de Mille’s standards: “What are you trying to prove, Elaine?” Stritch gave it right back to her. “You know, I’m not trying to prove anything, Ms. de Mille. I’m trying to find out how to make this damn dance just like you’re trying to make it *amuuuuusing* for the audience, because I think it’s kind of funny. I think it’s got a lot of humor to it. So thank you for that, Agnes.”

Stritch rolls her eyes. “I think I made Agnes de Mille uncomfortable because she didn’t think I liked her. She was missing the joke someplace. And she knew it. And she was.”

Who she got on with so well during that show might surprise you, only because you never really saw him. He was inside the bear suit. And he was gay.

“I think he was more or less the funniest guy I worked with – well, certainly in that show. I didn’t like any of the directors. I didn’t like – what else didn’t I like? The whole production.”

Stritch, however, knows she also has a reputation for being a pain, and before starring in Woody Allen’s 1987 “play on film” “September” the director sent her a letter (she reads it in the “Shoot Me” doc) requesting, in so many words, she come in, do her job and not be a bother. Is she really that difficult to work with? Not if you ask Stritch.

“No,” she says. “Not for a really talented person.”

And great talent doesn’t walk away after a letdown like “Goldilocks.” Stritch stayed on stage, where she’d go on to perform in the original production of William Inge’s 1955 play “Bus Stop,” Noël Coward’s 1961 musical “Sail Away” and Sondheim’s “Company,” the production that’s at least partly responsible for her gay following (Jinx Monsoon of “RuPaul’s Drag Race” parodied her seminal showstopper with “Here’s the Ladies in Drag”).

“I don’t think Sondheim was aware of his

See Elaine Stritch, page 21

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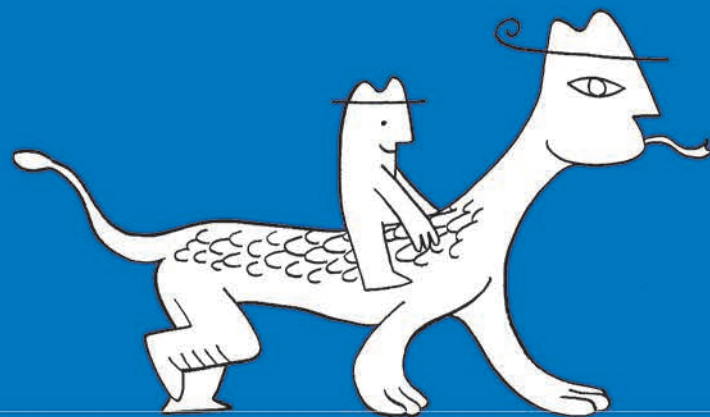
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Angie's list



Affirmations Recognizes Outstanding LGBTs, Allies At Silver Jubilee

BY SHELBY CLARK PETKUS



Kathleen LaTosch will be awarded the Jan Stevenson award at the Silver Jubilee.

When Affirmations Community Center celebrates its 25th anniversary with the "Silver Jubilee" on April 5 at Cobo Hall, three awards will be presented at the black-tie event honoring outstanding members of the LGBT and allied community.

The Jan Stevenson Award is presented annually to those who've made exemplary contributions to Affirmations. The award pays tribute to Stevenson, the center's founding executive director and one of the publishers of *Between The Lines* newspaper.

This year's recipient is Kathleen LaTosch, a former staff member of Affirmations. LaTosch is granted the Jan Stevenson Award for her dedication, commitment and service to Affirmations and southeast Michigan over the last 12 years. LaTosch is also noted for her four-year tenure coordinating the Multicultural Advisory Committee, expanding racial diversity of the board, staff and programming for the organization. She has also been a leader in helping coordinate older adult services for the LGBT community through her work with the Older Adult Summit and the Older Adult Coalition.

Darnell Jones is being recognized as the Lorna Utley Outstanding Ally this year for his leadership and dedication as an advocate for the health needs of the transgender community; Jones offers free hormone consulting sessions every week at Affirmation. Jones has also served on the Transgender Day of Remembrance Committee and has secured funding from CET Group and CVS Caremark for the health and wellness services

at Affirmations.

The Lorna Utley Outstanding Ally Award recognizes allies who have made a difference to Affirmations and the LGBT community. Utley is currently the CEO of Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit. The First Annual Lorna Utley Outstanding Ally Award was given to Utley, the former president of the General Motors Foundation and director of Diversity Initiatives and Philanthropy. It was Utley who made the decision for GM to become the first corporate sponsor of the first Big Bash in 2000.

The final award to be presented at the Affirmations' event is the Chuck Moyer and Tim Cavanaugh Philanthropy Award, presented to those who have gone above and beyond their typical support of Affirmations. Ron Northrup, lead fundraiser for Affirmations' AIDS Walk Detroit walk team for over five years, is recognized with the award for the example he sets to others about the importance of philanthropy in the LGBT community.

Partially as a direct result of Northrup's work, Affirmations has been able to provide HIV counseling and testing services. Northrup began his avid work for AIDS awareness and fundraising following the death of his partner in 2005 to complications with AIDS.

Interim Executive Director of Affirmations, Jon Fitzgerald, expresses pride that Affirmations is able to recognize such members of the community in a "meaningful way."

"It's important to always be mindful of those who give so much," notes Fitzgerald. "Affirmations and the entire LGBT community owes a debt of gratitude to these individuals."

Silver Jubilee will begin at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 5 at Cobo Center, 1 Washington Blvd., Detroit. Tickets are \$175-500. For more information on the awards or Silver Jubilee, visit www.goaffirmations.org/bash.

For more information on Affirmations or other LGBT resources, check out the *Pride Source Yellow Pages* at www.pridesource.com/directory.html.



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Clockwise from left: Elaine Stritch at her Bloomfield Hills house; with husband John Bay; with Noel Coward and Vivien Leigh; with *Between The Lines* editor Chris Azzopardi, Feb. 12, 2014. Photos courtesy of Elaine Stritch / Faye Hammoud

► Elaine Stritch

Continued from p. 16

own homosexuality at the time,” Stritch says. “That’s what I found so interesting about ‘Company.’ Nobody knew what (the lead) Bobby was, how Bobby was – I don’t think any of us knew. Maybe they knew, but I sure didn’t.” (Of the rumored revision in which Bobby would be an out gay man, she says, “I think Sondheim did that already!”)

Though off stage Stritch appeared on “The Goodyear Television Playhouse,” an NBC anthology series airing in the mid-’50s during the “Golden Age of Television” – and later on a couple episodes of “Law & Order” (her first Emmy win) – she wouldn’t be known as a bona fide TV star until more recently, when she played opposite Alec Baldwin on “30 Rock.” The stage was her home.

Not some TV set. In fact, Stritch has long since moved past the initial pain of losing out on the role of Dorothy Zbornak to Bea Arthur when she auditioned for “Golden Girls.”

“My feelings were very hurt by that, but I’m awful glad I didn’t do it. I could’ve made a lot of money, but nothing’s worse than ending up like – there’s a lot of money out in Hollywood. It’s a killer. I could’ve made a lot of money if I played ball, but I didn’t wanna play ball. And I didn’t wanna play sitcoms for the rest of my life, and that’s what I would’ve done.”

Appearing together in the 1956 TV series “Washington Square,” Stritch and Arthur talked at length about the sitcom business, she recalls. Stritch praises Arthur for her acting and comedic talents. She even calls her a “great dame.” “But I wouldn’t wanna be her,” she says. And there’s almost no delay in the

rest of that revelation: “Well, she’s dead, so I’d rather be me now.”

Don’t let the sun go down on me

Dishes clank from the kitchen as Stritch’s caretaker fields phone calls, one from the doctor, another from The Los Angeles Times calling to confirm a fast-approaching chat. And despite her assistant’s warning that she has a tendency to cut interviews short because her attention span can’t endure them, Stritch actually hates to end this one.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t give you more time, Chris,” she says, “but for some reason I’m just hotter than a pistol!”

I insist I’ll be on my way. “Don’t cut yourself short. You can read me out. It’s all right, I’ll just be late for everybody else.”

And just like her attitude toward

life, Stritch doesn’t stop. She wants to keep going.

“I’ve never been unhealthy,” she laments. “I wanted to go to my hometown and get fixed up with whatever’s wrong with me and live for a few more years. Because I could use ’em. I just don’t want to lose the time. I’d be happy with two, three years. Just happy, happy.”

Even though she left New York last year and returned to her Michigan birthplace – both to escape the franticness of the city and to reconnect with family – she’s not ready to hang up her bowler hat just yet. Stritch still has to do a new play (“I don’t care who writes it as long as it’s good”), and she’s planning a reading of “Three Tall Women” close to home. She wants to get a feel for Albee’s drama locally, in Ann Arbor, before taking it to the Big Apple. “Can I, will I, could I, should I do the whole nine yards? I

don’t know. That’s a play and a half. I mean, it’s a really tough go.”

Never stopped her before, I contend.

Once more, she grins like she’s onto me. “I knew you would say something similar to that.”

Also on the to-do list is a collaboration with Elton John, yet another gay man she’s pining for. Delighted over the prospect, which she mentions in “Shoot Me” – the closing credits fittingly play “The Bitch Is Back” as she heads home – Elaine’s not letting this one go.

“I know it really is on his mind, and I’m convinced he really cares about me. Nobody buys that many orchids who isn’t interested in you.” The grin – there it is again. “And that’s not including Rock Hudson, but I think I have to say that because it makes a good tagline on this interview.”

“Elaine Stritch: Shoot Me” premieres Friday, April 4 at the Birmingham 8.

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Heart, Humor & F-Bombs At The Ringwald

BY JENN MCKEE

In the opening scene of The Ringwald Theater's production of Stephen Adly Guirgis' "The Motherfucker with the Hat," we see Veronica (Amy Probst) on the phone with her mother, saying, "You shouldn't drink so much" just before she crouches down to snort a line of cocaine.

Yes, the contradictions that inhabit "Hat"'s five working-class characters are as blunt as the play's title. But what is far more subtle is the way Guirgis' self-deluding, vulnerable, desperate, striving people still manage to get under your skin, despite their constant posturing and bluster.

The story begins with Veronica and her recovering addict boyfriend Jackie (Travis Reiff) – on parole after serving two years in jail – celebrating Jackie's new job. When Jackie stumbles upon a man's hat under the bed, he confronts Veronica, who denies that she's cheated on him. Jackie goes to his AA sponsor, Ralph (Sean Rodriguez Sharpe), for support and a place to stay, but Ralph's embittered wife, Victoria (Vanessa Sawson), has her own story to tell, as does Jackie's fey cousin Julio (Brian Marable), whom Jackie only seeks out when he needs a favor.

This is the third Guirgis play I've seen, and for me, "Hat" is the most fully realized and satisfying. For all the expletives and tough talk and self-justifications being tossed around – I don't really need to mention that there are a lot of four letter words, do I? – Guirgis makes each flawed character sympathetic, so that no matter how much we may want a villain to blame, we don't really get one. Instead, we see men and women in tough circumstances, making poor decisions and trying to justify, to themselves and others, what they've said and done.

Indeed, in spite of the play's word-feasting density, the characters often appear to be spinning their wheels in an attempt to articulate their motives and feelings. Language thus seems both useless and our only hope at working toward meaning.

Director Jamie Warrow deftly handles the script's moments of humor, and more generally, The Ringwald's engrossing, nearly two-hour production of "Hat" keeps you rooting for Veronica and Jackie to work things out, despite the not-so-flattering things we learn about both of them in the course of the play.

This is largely due to Reiff's and Probst's impressive performances. Both roles could easily slip into caricature, but in these actors' hands, they never do. Reiff and Probst get laughs, but never at the expense of Jackie and Veronica; and the last scene between them is heart-wrenching.

In contrast to Veronica and Jackie, a loving couple whose pride and bad choices keep them



Brian Marable, Vanessa Sawson, Travis Reiff, Amy Probst, and Sean Rodriguez Sharpe in the Michigan premiere of Stephen Adly Guirgis' high-octane play, "The Motherfucker with the Hat" at The Ringwald Theatre. Photo: Brandy Joe Plambeck.

REVIEW

The Motherfucker with the Hat

The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday & Monday, and 3 p.m. Sunday through April 14. \$10-20. 248-545-5545.

www.theringwald.com

apart, there's Ralph and Victoria, who've worked out a chilly marital routine, despite the love having soured long before. Sharpe and Sawson make each character, and their relationship, feel lived-in and (painfully) true.

Finally, Marable, in the play's smallest role, makes an outsized impact, powerfully confronting Jackie about his own culpability in the life he's lived while also subtly suggesting contradictions within Julio's own character.

Costume designer Bailey Boudreau plays a key role in creating "Hat"'s world, including Probst's cheap lingerie and Marable's neat, pressed, neutral-toned, buttoned up wardrobe. Scenic designer/artist Alexander Carr presents a low-rent interior that, after a couple of cosmetic changes (provided by props master Alexander Trice), alternates between being Jackie and Veronica's place and Ralph and Victoria's place; plus, off to one side, Julio's meticulously furnished porch provides a sharp contrast to the main space, mirroring the way Julio himself stands apart. Phill Harmer affectingly choreographs the fights that break out late in the show, while Dan Morrison's lighting design, and Reiff's sound (which fittingly blares hard-edged tunes) round out "Hat"'s atmospheric vision.

Despite a compelling twist – namely, whom the hat belongs to – you might wonder, at some points, where the play is going, and how it will wrap up. I won't reveal that here, of course. And because of its fierce, in-your-face style, this "Hat" won't fit all. But to those not put off by the play's title, the play's humor, heart and human truth will likely feel like a revelation.

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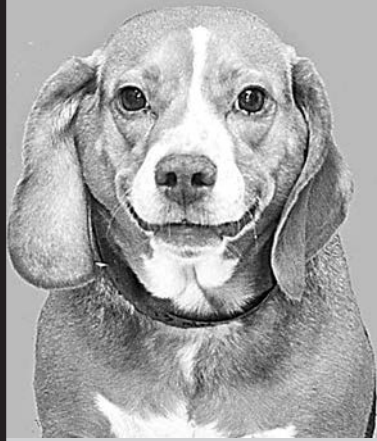
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01-ANNOUNCEMENTS LGBT AA MEETINGS

Ann Arbor-Friday
 7:30 pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church Gay AA, 306 N. Division St. Closed/Discussion.

Bloomfield Hills-Sunday / Tuesday / Thursday

8:00 pm, North Woodward Equality, Birmingham Unitarian Church, 38651 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills, lower level classroom - enter first walkway off Woodward entrance. Big Book/12 & 12 Meeting.

Detroit-Tuesday / Friday

8:00 pm, Downtown Gay AA, Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 West Fort St. Closed/Discussion (Open 1st Friday of every month).

Farmington Hills-Monday

8:00 pm, Suburban West Gay AA, Universalist Unitarian Church, 25301 Halstead (Between 10 & 11 Mile Roads) Closed / Discussion.

Ferndale-Monday / Wednesday / Friday

11:30 a.m., Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

Ferndale-Saturday

1 p.m. Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

8 p.m. Go After Your Sobriety Gay AA, Drayton Ave Presbyterian Church, 2441 Pinecrest. Closed/Discussion.

Livonia-Friday

8 p.m., West Side Story's Gay AA, Providence Medical Center, 7 Mile & Newburgh. Closed/Discussion.

Warren-Monday

7:30 p.m., Eastside Serenity Gay AA, Odd Fellow's Hall, 830 S Monroe St Closed/Discussion.

101-ANNOUNCEMENTS LGBT AL ANON

Diversity Wednesday Al-Anon Family Group

Wednesday 8pm
 St. Luke's Parrish Hall (in basement)
 Lewiston & Livernois, Ferndale MI
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Go After Your Serenity (G.A.Y.S.) Al-Anon Family Group

Saturday's 8pm
 Drayton Ave. Presbyterian Church (in basement)
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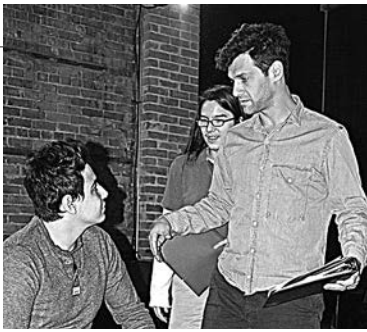
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Solution to puzzle from page 26

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D	Y	E	S	O	D	E	S	E	Y	E	D



Editor's Pick

The Teen Company of Matrix Theatre is putting the final touches on its original play, "Are You Passing?" which opens Friday, April 4 and continues through Sunday, April 13. The play was written by the teens with the help of Hollywood actors Justin Bartha and Jesse Eisenberg, along with award-winning playwright Noah Haidle. It explores the frustration felt by a diverse group of teens who feel their voices are not being heard by the school's bureaucracy.

"The teens' inspiration for the play was the walkout at Western High School where students protested the closing of Southwestern High School in 2012. They were frustrated because they felt their concerns were not being heard," said Laura Perez-Bernal, Teen Theatre assistant director. Bartha and Eisenberg helped the group narrow down their topic and tighten up the script. They guided the kids in bringing the entire production together.

Friday and Saturday performances begin at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. Prices are \$8-12. For further information, call 313-967-0599.

▶ Happenings

Continued from p. 20

661-1900. theberman.org

Breaking Legs \$15-18. Broadway Onstage Live Theatre, 21517 Kelly Road, Eastpointe. April 6 - May 10. 586-771-6333. broadwayonstage.com

Bring It On: The Musical \$30-70. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 5 - 6. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com

Brother of All \$17-20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodward Wilson, Detroit. Through May 18. 313-868-1347. detroitreptheatre.com

Falling \$25-40. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Through April 13. 248-377-3300. mbtheatre.com

Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune \$15-25. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. Through April 19. 517-655-SHOW. williamstontheatre.org

Improv Mondays \$5 at the door. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff, Hamtramck. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

Life is Happening to Us Again \$15. A Host of People at Play House, 12657 Moran St., Detroit. April 3 - 26. ahostofpeople.org

Love is Strange \$15-18. Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company at The Abreact Performance Space, 1301 W. Lafayette #113, Detroit. April 4 - 26. 313-454-1542. magentagiraffe.org

Rock of Ages \$22 and up. Wharton

Center for Performing Arts, 750 E Shaw Lane, East Lansing. 6:30 p.m. April 6. 517-432-2000. whartoncenter.com/events/detail/rock-of-ages

Small Hours Serenade \$20. Puzzle Piece Theatre at The Box Theater, 90 Macomb Place, Mt. Clemens. Through April 13. 586-954-2677. puzzlestage.org

Stuart Little \$10-20. Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit. 2 p.m. April 5. 313-887-8500. musichall.org

Sundays at Go Comedy! Pay-what-you-can at the door. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomey.net

The Motherfucker with the Hat \$15-20. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Through April 14. 248-545-5545. thewingwald.com

Venus in Fur \$22-41. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. Through April 13. 734-663-0681. performancenetwork.org

We Will Rock You \$35+. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. April 1 - 13. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com

ART 'N' AROUND

Detroit Artists Market (DAM) "Annual Scholarship Awards & Exhibition" 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Feb. 28-April 5. 877-462-7262. detroitartistsmarket.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "Foto Europa, 1850 to the Present" 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Oct. 25-April 27. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Flint Institute of Arts "Point of View: Contemporary African American Art from the Elliot & Kimberly Perry Collection" 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Jan. 26-April 13. 810-234-1695. flintarts.org

Janice Charach Gallery "Breaking the Mold Glass and Clay Exhibit Sale Janice Charach Gallery" 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. March 16-April 17. 248-432-5579. charachgallery.org

MOCAD "James Lee Byars: I Cancel All My Works at Death" 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Feb. 7-May 4. 313-832-6622. mocadetroit.org

Riverside Arts Center "10th Annual Docent Exhibit" 76 North Huron Street, Ypsilanti. April 3-April 27. 734-483-7345. riversidearts.org

robert kidd gallery "Deep Thaw" 107 Townsend St., Birmingham. March 22-April 26. 248-642-3909. Robertkiddgallery.com

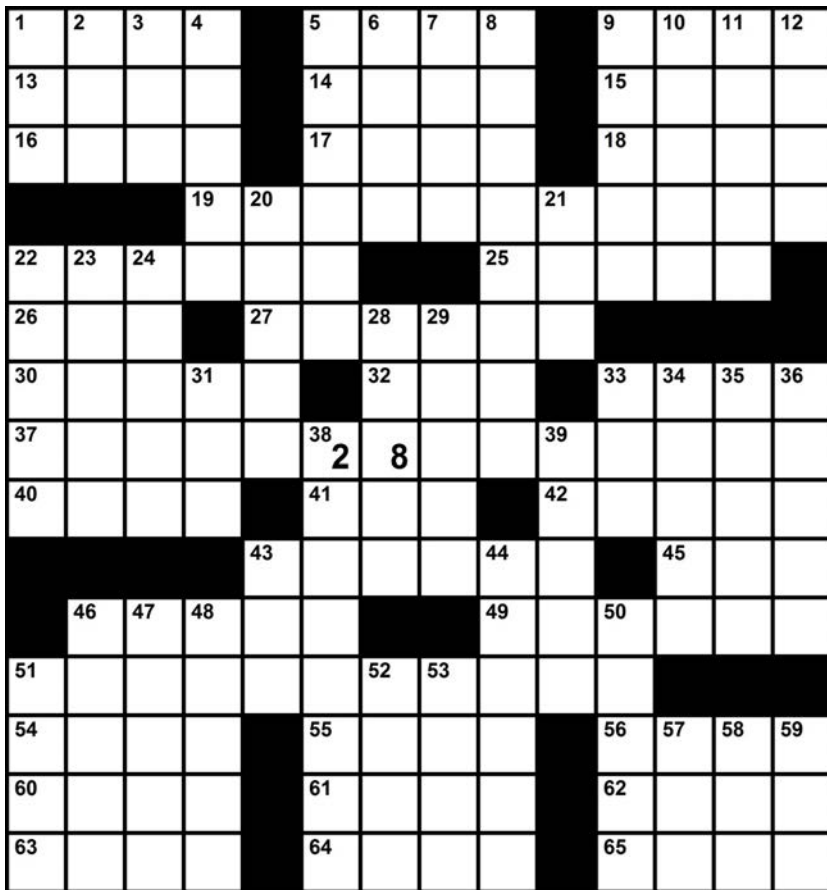
Saugatuck Center for the Arts "Balancing Point" 400 Culver St., Saugatuck. Feb. 7-April 6. 269-857-2399. Sc4a.org

South Oakland Art Association (SOAA) "Monthly Meetings" 814 N. Campbell Road, Royal Oak. Feb. 3-June 2. Soaklandart.com

The Suzanne Haskew Arts Center "The Art of MI Craft Beer" 125 S. Main St., Suite 700, Milford. 5 p.m. April 6. MilfordVTAA.org

UMMA "Fragments from the Past: Islamic Art from the Collection of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology" 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Nov. 30-April 13. 734-763-4186. umma.umich.edu

For Gay Guys It's 9



Across

- 1 Home, to Dave Pallone
 5 They gave Pinocchio an 8-incher
 9 Word before "my shorts"
 13 Nose activator
 14 Scat queen Fitzgerald
 15 To some extent
 16 School of Marcel Duchamp
 17 Pale gray
 18 Lesbos, for one
 19 Heterosexual males
 22 To the rear, when cruising
 25 Pink shades
 26 Diffident
 27 The Stars and Stripes
 30 Like Jeremy Irons in "The Borgias"
 32 Legendary big bird
 33 Victim of Jacob's tricks
 37 How often 19-Across think about sex, in contrast with the puzzle title
 40 In order
 41 Supporter of Patty Sheehan
 42 Broadway whisper
 43 Take a bad turn
 45 Part of RPM
 46 Patron of Wilde's homeland, briefly
 49 Compact disk readers

- 51 TV program in which Michael Novotny makes this puzzle's comparison
 54 Greek vases
 55 Biweekly tide
 56 Showing a tiny opening
 60 Errol Flynn's "The Sun ____ Rises"
 61 "Shall We Dance" star
 62 Word after fish?
 63 Changes colors
 64 Tributes in verse
 65 Ogled a hottie in a bar, e.g.

Down

- 1 Muscle Mary's pride
 2 Toothpaste box letters
 3 "Get out!" to Orton, with "off"
 4 Remove a slip?
 5 Masters
 6 Ingrid's role in "Casablanca"
 7 K through 12
 8 Pray like Will before dinner?
 9 Tries to get a rise out of
 10 "C'est Moi," to Lancelot
 11 Maupin stories
 12 James Dean's "East of ____"
 20 In all honesty
 21 Porker

- 22 Navratilova's winter home
 23 Close one, for a drag queen
 24 Aggressive sort
 28 Cargoáship (the 8 stands for a five-letter sequence)
 29 Goes down in defeat
 31 Gallery objects
 33 Shooter in Bruce Weber's field
 34 Criticize petulantly
 35 One that's calculating to get sum
 36 Sadists, to masochists, in a way
 38 What it takes for a dance, or some relationships
 39 Place for a gondola
 43 Kids' card game
 44 Flees to a same-sex marriage state
 46 Like a sourpuss
 47 In need of a backrub
 48 Kahlo's cash
 50 Imitate Brian Orser
 51 Leg muscle, for short
 52 It gets spilled at wild parties
 53 Money left on the nightstand
 57 Leno, once of late night humor
 58 It may top a queen
 59 Poet McKuen

Solution on pg. 24

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