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Kitana Kiki Rodriguez in "Tangerine." Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

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NEWS

Minister Seeks Right To Marry Without Marriage Licenses

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – Detroit minister Rev. Neil Patrick Carrick, who sued the state last January for the right to marry same-sex couples, wants a federal judge to determine whether it is legal under Michigan law for ministers and religious clergy to perform private religious marriage ceremonies for couples who don't have a license.

Carrick is former pastor with the United Church of Christ and believes that a person has the right to be married “in the eyes of God” without the state issuing a license.

Mark Kollar, Carrick's attorney, has said that older adults or widowed couples are particularly affected by current laws, afraid that they will lose their Social Security benefits if they were to remarry.

A 1957 Michigan law deemed civil contracts between two consenting people ill-fit in matters of the law and would not be recognized. Clergy who perform marriages without a license could be charged with a misdemeanor and face 90 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

U.S. Federal Judge Judy Levy will preside over the case and has asked for legal briefs to be filed by Jan. 8.

ACLU Seeking Trans Stories Of Shelter Discrimination

The ACLU of Michigan is looking for trans, genderqueer or gender non-conforming Michigan residents to come forward and discuss their discriminatory experiences in seeking access to a shelter.

A new rule, proposed in November by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, would clear up problems with the Equal Access Rule and require all shelter operators house transgender clients in accordance with their gender identity. In an effort to get the rule passed, HUD is requesting stories of discrimination based on transgender status.

Interested parties who have experienced discrimination when seeking shelter are encouraged to share their experiences with HUD by contacting LGBT special project staff attorney Jay Kaplan at jkaplan@aclumich.org or Amy Hunter, coordinator of the Trans Advocacy Project, at ahunter@aclumich.org. The deadline for receiving stories is set for Jan. 19.

Call For Presenters For Upcoming Health Summit

BAY CITY – The Michigan Primary Care Association and partners are looking for professionals to present at an upcoming LGBT Health Summit scheduled for June 13.

The summit is intended to reach all disciplines within health centers, community based organizations and the general and public health care industries. Conference attendance is open to members of any organization.

The comprehensive summit agenda will provide educational and networking opportunities for all health care professionals, executives, public health specialists and community based organizations.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about and update their skills on: cultural competency, sensitivity training, caring for LGBT youth or elderly, utilizing health information technology to improve outcomes for LGBT patients, addressing social determinants and disparities that impact LGBT individuals, and coordination of services across disciplines internally or with external partners.

Individuals interested in presenting at the conference can contact Llekken Neal at lnear@mpca.net.

Indiana LGBT Legislative Update

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) – Republicans control the governor's office and hold supermajorities in both chambers of the Indiana General Assembly. But their lack of consensus on several issues looms large as lawmakers ready for the 2016 legislative session.

Likely to dominate part of the 10-week session, lawmakers say, is determining whether LGBT civil rights protections should be added into law.

The much-anticipated debate over the possibility of extending civil rights protections to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people is an issue many, including Pence, would rather avoid.

It's driven a wedge in the GOP base between the pro-gay rights Indiana Chamber of Commerce and social conservatives, who oppose the idea on religious grounds.

Senate Republicans have proposed a bill that would extend LGBT discrimination protections in public accommodation, housing and employment while also including a long list of religious exemptions. Pence has refused to say where he stands on the matter, while House Speaker Brian Bosma has said doing nothing would be the easiest choice for House Republicans in an election year.

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PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Aging Study: Current LGBT Practices in Long-Term Care Facilities Lacking

BY AJ TRAGER

YPSILANTI – An Eastern Michigan University professor conducted a study of Michigan's long term care (LTC) facilities and found that despite the existence of models, the state's LTCs have no plan on how to approach the care of LGBT older adults.

In a presentation for the EMU Equality Research Center's Equality Knowledge Project held late last year, Dr. Beverly Mihalko, assistant professor of Health Sciences at EMU, discussed her recent study on long term care of LGBT older adults in the state.

Mihalko sent a survey to 440 of the 450 heads of Michigan LTC administrators regarding their LGBT inclusion policies and practices. Of the 440, she received 109 surveys back. Her results represent 46 of Michigan's 83 counties.

"There is a considerable lack of awareness and sensitivity – at least as it was reported by the directors of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, to the health and psychological needs of LGBT older adults," Mihalko said.

Today's LGBT older adults were born between 1915 and 1950 and have seen the community grow and expand from the days of total harassment and bigotry to a time when LGBT couples can get married. Today's LGBT older adults remember when they feared institutionalization for voicing their love for someone of the same-sex and they remember when homosexuality was removed from the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) in 1972.

However, these individuals are among the community's most invisible, often feeling rejected by the younger LGBT community. Simultaneously, they also report feeling rejected by the aging facilities that are supposed to treat them. So, after facing a lifetime of stigma paired with noninclusive practices by facilities and administrative staff, many LGBT older adults fall back into the closet and become further isolated in many long term care facility environments.

Lost in Translation

LGBT older adults are disproportionately affected by physical and mental health issues and are more likely to live alone than their heterosexual counterparts. A 1987 bill called the "Nursing Home Reform Act" established a quality of patient care for the aging, but the qualifications do not translate over to the care of LGBT older adults.

The survey Mihalko sent out included questions regarding admission processes, inclusive policies and environments, existence

Today's LGBT older adults were born between 1915 and 1950 and have seen the community grow and expand from the days of total harassment and bigotry to a time when LGBT couples can get married. Today's LGBT older adults remember when they feared institutionalization for voicing their love for someone of the same-sex and they remember when homosexuality was removed from the DSM in 1972.

of competency and awareness training programs for staff and whether the facility addresses needs of LGBT residents in their current administrative policies and practices. Participants were given the opportunity to explain their answer in a short open ended response format.

According to the study, 55 percent of Michigan LTCs have had an openly LGB resident at the facility and only 17 percent have had an openly trans resident. Less than 20 percent reported that they currently house an LGB resident and only 5 percent reported currently housing a trans resident.

Even though 87 percent of respondents self-reported that they offer a welcoming, safe environment for LGB residents and 79 percent reported offering a safe environment for trans residents, almost 15 percent stated that they were uncertain if they provide a safe environment for LGBT residents. The reasons, they wrote in short answer, are a result of not currently housing openly LGBT residents, confidence that they treat all residents with dignity and respect and that "equal treatment" is enough to ensure comprehensive care.

"A significant number of people, very surprising to me, answered anywhere from 10-30 open-ended responses for those questions. People were interested in sharing. A lot of it seemed very defensive. Others, although a smaller number of them, did indicate that these are things that they have discussed and that they need to begin that dialogue. The clear theme to me was, quite honestly, they don't get it. And a more professional way of saying that is, 'We treat everyone the same,'" Mihalko explained.

According to Mihalko's results, less than 15 percent of Michigan LTCs host LGBT events and programs and just over 10 percent provide trans specific programming.

However, 84 percent of LTCs in the state are actively working to manage discriminatory language or behaviors directed towards LGBT residents and 81 percent reported using the resident's preferred name and pronoun.

"There is a general lack of inquiry on sexual orientation and gender identity and staff awareness training which perpetuates the invisibility of LGBT older adults in long-term care and in health care in general," Mihalko said.

Suggestions

To fix these problems, Mihalko suggests that LTCs advance the conversation and include awareness training for all levels of long-term care, especially on the corporate level for all health professionals. Mihalko suggests that LGBT cultural competency and awareness training is crucial not just for those providing direct patient care but for all health care workers providing care to older adults.

Mihalko believes additional research is needed on LGBT aging and health services to identify more best practices so that the community can see how implementing those services can impact resident care and equity.

"What if I have PTSD from a brutal rape and that's one of the reasons I am in long-term care. Or several bones are broken or something? We don't treat everyone the same in healthcare. We don't treat men and women the same nor do we treat adults and children the same. They have special care needs and issues. That's what patient-centered individualized care is all about and obviously that has not entered into the nursing home philosophy yet. So we have a long way to go," Mihalko said.

Mihalko received five unsolicited emails from administrative officials who had completed the survey, found it enlightening and wanted to share that they will be working to update administrative policies to be more inclusive to current and prospective LGBT residents.

Mihalko tried to get an endorsement from Leading AGE, the professional organization for long-term care directors, but eventually let go of the possible endorsement after being given the runaround by the organization.

The study supports findings from SAGE, advocacy groups and articles published in academic journals.



Dr. Beverly Mihalko, assistant professor of Health Sciences at EMU, discussed her recent study on long term care of LGBT older adults in the state in a Equality Knowledge Project presentation held Dec. 8, 2015.

Mihalko's results indicate that even though a majority of Michigan LTCs ask about a patient's relationship status when they enter into a facility, LTCs rarely use inclusive terms such as partner or domestic partner.

Michigan

LGBT Couple Makes Major Gift to Newly Formed SAGE Metro Detroit

BY AJ TRAGER

OAK PARK – Gil Evans and Don Nadel met in Toledo, Ohio and have been together for 57 years. Inspired by the screening of “Gen Silent,” a documentary that follows the lives of LGBT seniors struggling with harassment and living in the closet in senior facilities or with homophobic caregivers, the couple announced that they will be donating a \$20,000 gift to SAGE Metro Detroit.

Late last year, the LGBT Older Adult Coalition of Metro Detroit announced that it would be transitioning into a new brand, “SAGE Metro Detroit,” and would be upgrading its range of services for LGBT older adults. The initiative to become a SAGE chapter began in January 2015 and was officially realized on Oct. 28, 2015.

As one of just 29 chapters serving 21 states across the country, SAGE Metro Detroit will provide LGBT cultural competency training, help create safe spaces and provide a framework for many programs and services that are lacking for LGBT older adults in the area.

Providing services costs money and at the start of the new launch, SAGE Metro Detroit had very little in the bank to ramp up the services needed right now.

Nadel, a retired art teacher from Oak Park, and Evans, a retired hairdresser and store owner, were asked by SAGE Metro Detroit volunteer Judy Lewis to be on a “talk-back” panel following the screening of the documentary last fall. After managing a relationship that has endured 57 years of love and growth, the couple finally married this year on June 26 when the U.S. Supreme Court announced their decision to make marriage equality legal throughout the country.

Nadel and Evans are very active in the LGBT community. They attend the Senior Koffee Klatch meet up at Affirmations and regularly play cards at two senior centers among other activities.

The “Gen Silent” film really hit home for Nadel and Evans, who recently lost a very close friend and say that without their companionship, their friend would not have had anyone to look out for him during the last days of his life.

After discussing some of the specific issues



Gil Evans and Don Nadel met in Toledo, Ohio and have been together for 57 years. They were finally joined in marriage on June 26, following the historic SCOTUS decision. At a panel screening of “Gen Silent,” a documentary featuring the lives and struggles of LGBT older adults, Evans and Nadel each donated \$10,000 to help SAGE Metro Detroit get off the ground.

that affect the aging LGBT community, including isolation and the fear of being alone after losing one’s partner, Evans and Nadel both spoke up and said that they would each individually give \$10,000 to help SAGE Metro Detroit get off the ground.

“I would really like it if SAGE could get a paid staff person. I’d like to see Judy (Lewis) get paid,” Evans told BTL. “She is so active and does good work. I’d like to see some social networking. I don’t know what programs the money could fund, but assisting the elderly is important. Many need that assistance right now.”

The couple is financially secure, Evans says, but he worries what would happen if one of them were to suddenly pass. He worries about isolation. “That could be Don or I,” Evans says.

“We’re hoping that it (SAGE) will work out. I’d like to be involved in SAGE, maybe do some volunteer work. I feel like I can still do so much for the organization,” Evans said.

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Faith Robinson-Renner Still Organizing After All These Years

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Faith Robinson-Renner was a precocious child.

“I gave my mother fits,” she recalled. “I had a bottle until I was 4 years old. Then my sister said, ‘OK, Faith Ann, we’re gonna throw it in the trash can.’ That’s what I was called, Faith Ann. I was named after my mother, but she had no middle name and I did. It was very kind of southern even though I was not southern.”

Robinson-Renner, in fact, was not even born in the United States. Her father was a missionary, and she was actually born in San Fernando La Union in the Republic of the Philippines. There she spent the first nearly three years of her life.

“Then we came back home to Ohio, where my mother and father had met at college,” she said. Robinson-Renner’s father made the rounds across the state talking to various churches about his experience as a missionary. “I went to small country schools wherever my father was preaching,” said Robinson-Renner. “Most of the time they were very white. But I was raised with a global view. We had lots of visitors from all over the world to my house. That’s what my parents believed in, more of a global view.”

Eventually, the family settled down in the southeastern corner of the state. “They called me a tom boy,” Robinson-Renner said. “I did play with dolls. But I also played with trucks and dirt and things like that and ran around behind our house. I never found a reason why girls were connecting with boys and talking about them in the bathroom. So I never joined in that kind of thing. I did participate in other things in school, like sports, band and choir.”

When she was 17 – six weeks before she was to graduate from high school – Robinson-Renner was involved in a serious car accident. “I had a closed head injury,” she said. “I was five days unconscious, and six weeks paralyzed on my left side. I walked on crutches for a year and a half.”

When the time came for Robinson-Renner to go to college, she knew she wanted to leave home and set out on her own. She chose the University of Evansville in Indiana. “I fell in love with the city,” Robinson-Renner said. “I saw so many African-American people. I was involved in the welfare movement, the civil rights movement. I was involved in the peace movement during that time and I got so excited about city living that I tried to convince my mother that I wanted to go to Toledo and go to the University of Toledo. But they wouldn’t let me. They were too afraid of me going to that school because I wanted to live on my own



Faith Robinson-Renner
BTL Photo: Jason Michael

in an apartment and work and go to school.”

Instead, her mother gave her a choice of small schools in the state. Robinson-Renner chose Wilmington College, which was still far enough away that she would have to live on campus and not at home. “Originally, I wanted to be a physical education teacher,” she said. “But I believed I had to be active for that and because of my foot I couldn’t. So then I went over to try to be a social worker and was unhappy because they said social workers

(at that time) were just glorified secretaries and I never wanted to be a secretary. I went from there to deciding that I was going to be a teacher ... but I probably shouldn’t have because I wasn’t happy.”

While in Wilmington, Robinson-Renner began seeing a young Jewish man who also attended the college. “David was just very, very sweet, very unimposing,” she said. “It was helpful for me because I’m kind of aggressive. I like my own way. I like to control

the situation. And he was that kind of person. I could kind of control the situation.”

Eventually, they married and had a baby girl. But they did not live happily ever after. Instead, they took a trip to a Quaker commune that would begin to open Robinson-Renner’s eyes to new possibilities. “In the middle of the winter we biked to this commune,” she recalled. “We spent the night and that’s where they talked about being bisexual. It wasn’t something I had heard before. I had heard about gays ... So I learned about bisexuality in this commune and I thought about it in my head and I said, ‘Yes, that is something that, philosophically, I could be.’ I could love a man or a woman. So I just kept it in my head. As our relationship wore on I thought that would just go away. You fall in love, you get married and then that’s it. You don’t think about being bisexual anymore.”

But she did think about it, especially after the couple relocated to Battle Creek, Michigan and Robinson-Renner got involved with the local chapter of NOW, the National Organization for Women. She went to a conference in Philadelphia and suddenly she saw real-life lesbians for the first time. And she was particularly taken with one of the speakers, Mordeca Jane Pollock.

“I said, ‘Oh my God, this is what they were talking about when they were talking about their feelings for boys in the bathroom.’ I had never felt that way before and it was just different and kind of scary. I came back home and I told my ex-husband about it and he was titillated,” Robinson-Renner continued. “He already knew that I was bi. But I didn’t know what that meant. But these were my first feelings and I told him about it and he got excited thinking maybe I would pick up a cute woman and bring her to bed with us. But that wasn’t what I wanted.”

Soon, Robinson-Renner found out that she was pregnant again, a realization about which she had mixed feelings. Seeing no alternative, she continued in her marriage and in her post as president of the Battle Creek Chapter of NOW. Two years later, in 1977, Robinson-Renner went to a NOW conference in Ann Arbor.

“They invited me to a bar, the Rubaiyat, and there were women there dancing with each other and it was amazing,” said Robinson-Renner. “I got so excited about dancing with women. It was eye opening. So I came home in the middle of the night, drunk, and my ex-husband wakes me up a couple hours after I got in. He woke me up and said, ‘Faith, what’s up?’ And I said, ‘I’m drunk and I’m gay,’ and that was my whole coming out. We went out

Michigan

Robinson-Renner became involved in the Wayne State Gay Liberation Front and was the only woman for a time working their switchboard.

to breakfast and discussed it more and then I moved out of the bedroom.”

The couple began therapy. But while her husband thought it was to repair the marriage, Robinson-Renner was going there to learn how to end it peacefully without damaging their two daughters. A divorce soon followed and Robinson-Renner and her girls moved to Detroit out of respect for her ex-husband.

“He was nervous about me living too close because he was embarrassed,” she explained. “I think he thought it was his fault that I became a lesbian. He wasn’t man enough. That’s what a lot of them think, that it takes a real man (to keep a woman happy).”

In Detroit, Robinson-Renner decided that a change of career was in order. Having an aptitude for trades, she looked around for work until finally landing a position as a line technician for Michigan Bell. But the men on her line were not happy to have a woman on their crew, and they set out to make Robinson-Renner quit.

“If I had known what I know about unions now, I might have been able to get better help,” she said. “But they almost killed me. They swung a sledgehammer at my hedge. They called me names. They were pretty rough with me. So I walked off the job and talked with the Free Press.”


The Free Press agreed to do an article, but Michigan Bell pressured them into waiting until they had taken action to help Robinson-Renner before they published it. Eventually, the article appeared on March 12, 1979, by which time Robinson-Renner had been reassigned to a different line. There, a manager named Don Hall took her under his wing.


“The next year I was given a top rating and then made a splicer,” she said. “I was promoted. That’s all it took.” Robinson-Renner went on to work for the phone company for the next 27 years, and as a result of her ordeal Michigan Bell made changes to avoid hazing and make it easier for women to work on the line. During her time as a line technician, Robinson-Renner was working on a different kind of line as well – a hotline.


She became involved in the Wayne State Gay Liberation Front and was the only woman for a time working their switchboard. She would also become vice president of the Detroit Area Gay/Lesbian Council, an early gay rights group in the city. She also got involved with the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights and continued her work with the Lesbian Task Force of NOW. She stepped back from her involvement for several years as her girls became teenagers. She retired from the phone company in 2006 and this year celebrated 36 years with her partner, Deb Renner. The two married legally in 2014.

These days, she has resumed her volunteer efforts and serves as chair of the Jewish Gay Network. “We’re trying to open up a PFLAG West Bloomfield and have it at Temple Israel,” she said. “That’s a project that we’re trying to work on right now.”

And so, even after nearly 40 years of working in the movement, the work never ends.







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The OutField: GO! Athletes Gets a Mentorship

BY DAN WOOG

Growing up in suburban Chicago, Chris Mosier had no FTM athletic role models. There were none at Northern Michigan University either, where – among many other activities – Mosier edited the school paper, performed as the Wildcat Willie mascot, led a service organization and played intramural sports.

But very quietly, Mosier has become the first openly trans man on a U.S. men's national team (triathlon). His event – the run-cycle-run sprint duathlon – takes an enormous amount of time and energy.

His full-time job is assistant director of housing at a New York City-area university. But Mosier still manages to serve as executive director of GO! Athletes, a national LGBT student-athlete network. It's an unpaid post, but he devotes many hours a week to it.

Now he's taken on another task. GO! Athletes is rolling out a new and novel mentorship program. And Mosier is in charge.

The initiative was two years in the making. The rising number of openly gay athletes has had a snowball effect. More and more competitors (and coaches) are also considering coming out.

When an athlete comes out – particularly a big name – he or she is inundated with emails, texts and letters. There are plenty of congratulations – and lots of requests for advice.

"There's a lot of informal mentorship going on," Mosier notes. "We want to provide more structure and guidance to the process. And we want to make sure people can provide mentorship in manageable ways."

The aim is to connect LGBT athletes (and coaches) with others – ideally, in their own sport or geographic area, and similar sexual, gender, racial and ethnic identity – who can help them deal with issues of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The need is profound. According to a January 2014 report by MENTOR, 89 percent of at-risk LGBT youth have never had a formal mentor – and 37 percent have never had any mentor at all. The figures are undoubtedly higher for LGBT athletes, because traditionally boys and girls in sports have had fewer role models than those



Chris Mosier

in other activities. Thus, they are less likely to reach out for help – and less likely to have others reach out to them.

A 2012 report by Campus Pride found that one in four LGBT student-athletes in college are "pressured to be silent about their sexual identity among teammates, coaches and other athletes." They are three times as likely to experience harassment, compared to non-athlete peers. The report also found that they are unlikely to believe their administration or athletic department would support them.

Last year, GO! Athletes secured a grant to develop a pilot mentorship program in the Delaware Valley. This year, the LGBT Sports Coalition gave its own funds, to build on those first steps.

GO! Athletes examined a variety of mentorship program, in and outside the gay community. They hired a consultant who had done mentorship work at the University of Pennsylvania.

They had to answer plenty of questions: Who would be mentored? How would mentors be trained? How would mentors and mentees be matched, and communicate? How would confidentiality be assured? Legal issues? How would the program be assessed?

It was a time-consuming process, particularly for an all-volunteer group. Finally, though, the mentorship program is a reality. GO! Athletes is publicizing it through social media, and with outreach to athletic directors and athletic conferences, and through LGBT centers on college campuses.

Mentors are in the process of being

trained. They're learning how to ask open-ended questions. How to assess the situation at a school or campus that may be very different from their own. And how not to force any one particular outcome.

"The intention is not to get everyone to be out," Mosier notes. "It's just to talk through any situation a mentee may be facing, with someone who understands what they're going through. And to provide options."

There is no age limit, though most mentees are in high school or college. Mentors and mentees attending the annual LGBT Sports Coalition summit in Portland, Oregon each June will have the opportunity to meet face to face – if they haven't already – at a GO! Athletes-sponsored reception.

Mentor applications have poured in from around the country. If there's one common thread among the men and women hoping to become mentors, Mosier says, it's this: "I wish I'd had a mentor. That would have been a game-changer for me."

Chris Mosier knows that feeling well from his own life. Which is why, today, he's mentoring GO! Athletes' very remarkable arena of mentors.

To learn more about the mentorship program, and apply to be a mentor or mentee, click on www.goathletes.org/mentorship.

Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach and gay activist. His latest book is "We Kick Balls: True Stories from the Youth Soccer Wars." He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.

Michigan Board of Canvassers Approves LGBT Constitutional Amendment Language

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING – In a 4-0 vote Dec. 29, 2015, the state Board of Canvassers approved the form and language of a ballot initiative to amend the Michigan constitution to protect the LGBT community from discrimination.

The proposal would amend the constitution to include gender identity, sexual orientation, gender and sex as protected classes. The move would eliminate the 2004 marriage amendment. The move is being taken as an end run around the state Legislature, which has failed to act on amending the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act since legislation to amend the law was introduced in 1981.

Sara Wurfel, a spokesperson for Fair Michigan, a ballot committee pushing the measure, said the group believes that the ballot measure is the right way to go. She said the constitutional amendment was "at the right time and the right moment."

Fair Michigan expects to begin circulating petitions in January of 2016, Wurfel said. She was unable to give a launch date.

While the initiative is being supported by some high profile political leaders in the state – including Kelly Rossman-McKinney, a partner at Truscott Rossman public relations agency, and Richard McLellan, a high profile GOP activist and attorney – LGBT organizations have raised concerns about the initiative and the potential for success. In a December meeting with the LGBT community and Fair Michigan representatives, former Congressman Mark Schauer proposed the two sides of the debate sit down without the media present to look at the issues, particularly polling and modeling numbers.

Polls show strong support for such a measure, but modeling, which takes into account a variety of issues related to a voter, shows the measure would likely go down in defeat.

A first meeting as proposed by Schauer has occurred with all polling and modeling data being turned over to one of the participants to determine if there is a viable path to victory for a constitutional amendment and how to use the polling data in such a campaign. The group – which includes Fair Michigan representatives, as well as representatives from ACLU Michigan, Equality Michigan and other organizations – is supposed to meet again in January to discuss the findings.

But on Dec. 29, Wurfel sounded a different tune. When asked if Fair Michigan was prepared to move forward, regardless of what the review of polling and modeling data showed, she said the organization was.

"We are prepared to move forward," she said.

She said the group believes the constitutional amendment process was the "path to win."

Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan, a statewide LGBT advocacy group, said she was surprised by the announcement.

"It's surprising they are going forward given they don't have the resources or support to be successful," she said in a phone interview.

Wurfel was unable to say how much money Fair Michigan had on hand. Ballot experts have said a successful petition drive to collect 315,654 valid signatures of registered Michigan voters could cost as much as \$1 million. The group would need to collect those signatures and turn them in by July 11 to qualify for the November 2016 general election.

Local LGBT Activists Will Match Final Donation to the ACLU of Michigan

BY AJ TRAGER

DETROIT – Two local LGBT activists will match the final donation collected for the ACLU Equality Challenge: Centennial Campaign at the end of January.

Michigan activists Howard Israel and Henry Grix have challenged the Michigan LGBT community to donate \$50,000 to the ACLU Centennial Campaign's Equality Challenge in support of the LGBT work done across the state and will match the final donations up to \$50,000.

Israel and Grix are longtime supporters of LGBT organizations and nonprofits and believe the work of the ACLU to be pivotal in changing hearts, minds and policies when it comes to LGBT equality. The couple wanted to incentivize other donors who had not yet provided monetary support to the organization.

So far the ACLU has raised 30 percent of the \$50,000 goal from just seven donors and is looking for more people to pledge their support for the organization's work.

"The approach (for the match program) was largely inspired by Howard and Henry and a lot of the activism and the work that they have been doing for so long," said Angela Gabridge, centennial campaign officer for the ACLU of Michigan.

Israel regularly sends emails filled with articles and commentary to LGBT activists in the state to help spread information faster and more directly than it may be when shared through Facebook or Twitter. In 2004 when the anti-LGBT organizations were fighting to ensure that the Michigan Marriage Amendment, which defined marriage as between a man and woman, was passed into law at the ballot box, it was Israel and Grix who helped get the word out by sending letters and emails to the community along with providing major financial support.

"We know that this (a match program) is an effective model. And we know that this is how you effectively set that foundation in place to change hearts and minds. It worked for marriage (equality). When Evan Wolfson (president of Freedom To Marry) changed the approach on marriage to begin talking about love and commitment and what it meant for people's lives versus talking about the abstract concepts like equality or bigger picture type things, it was the personal touch that really resonated with people," Gabridge told BTL.

The ACLU brings more LGBT cases

and advocacy initiatives than any other organization and has done so since its founding. In 2001 the ACLU of Michigan hired Jay Kaplan as the LGBT Legal Project staff attorney. Since his appointment, Kaplan has defended the validity of second parent adoption, fought Michigan's same-sex marriage ban and has worked on cases involving LGBT minors and police activity targeting gay men.

Last year the ACLU of Michigan launched the Transgender Advocacy Project, a program that brings together transgender individuals and allies from across the state to engage in outreach that will further the public's understanding of what it means to be transgender.

Headed up by west Michigan advocate Amy Hunter, TAP's Advocacy University project is nearing the end of its initial training. Participants will be provided the training and resources necessary to allow them to lobby in Lansing for trans rights and equality and educate the public about the discrimination.

In an effort to extend its reach, the ACLU of Michigan expanded five years ago and opened up an office on the west side of the state.

"We don't yet have the same kind of presence that we have in southeast Michigan. So this (Centennial Campaign) is an effort to provide a vehicle for reaching out to some of our supporters and prospective supporters on the west side of the state as well to incentivize their participation," Gabridge explained.

This year the ACLU of Michigan will continue fighting for statewide LGBT protections by challenging the statewide adoption ban, a law signed in early June 2015 allowing adoption agencies who receive state funding to discriminate against potential LGBT adoptive families; challenging efforts to pass a Religious Freedom Restoration Act; challenging the Michigan Secretary of State policy that makes changing someone's gender marker on state identification difficult; and working to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

The Centennial Campaign is part of a national ACLU campaign that started earlier this year. The ACLU of Michigan has set its goal substantially higher than the national goal.

To donate to the Equality Challenge, call Angela Gabridge at 313-578-6815 or email her at agabridge@aclumich.org.



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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

I was in the Sunday habit a few years back of taking a SMART bus to Ferndale. Riding with me were regulars, most of whom were off to church, or gave that halo'd impression by their dress or demeanor.

Motivated by whimsy from a half-hour drive of boredom and uneventful scenery, I dubbed these fellow travelers with romantic titles: The Dowager Empress, The Princess Royal, The Countess, The Waterloos. I made mental notes, although as the saying goes, "distance lends enchantment to the view."

Dowager Empress and Princess Royal were aunt Jean and niece Lola. They were Catholic. Aunt Jean would dutifully – and quickly – cross herself when passing Woodward's Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. She had raised niece Lola "properly from early on."

Charitably, the two were wallflowers who blushed, rarely bloomed, lived mostly sight unseen. They had limited social life, using public transportation to get to shops and Big Boy restaurants for small and low-caloric non-adventures.

Countess was middle-aged, a school teacher. Prim. Proper. Pleasant. She got off at People's Community Church. She was white. The congregation there: persons of heavenly color. I admired her spirit of integrated spirituality.

The Waterloos, Angie and Tony, were seniors. Tony told Stella, our regular Sunday bus driver, he was "an energetic 85," his girl friend, a "keep-pace 67." They were health food faddists, living on combined SS incomes.

Angie, once a ballerina, chatted on and on about her glory days. Tony was an "expert" on New Testament numerology. 666. Last Day's judgment. That sort of nonsense.

Abruptly, the Waterloos went AWOL. I learned sometime later from SMART driver Stella that Angie had died in Tony's arms following a brief illness. (I never saw ballerina-bereft, "energetic" Tony again.)

What's in a nickname? There was a time when gays and lesbians lived and survived with only a nickname to negotiate by. Sometimes campy. Sometimes exotic. A colorful bit of ID rainbow.

When I came out in 1956, gays nicknamed. Anonymity was a must. You told no one where you worked. Where you lived. Who you dated. It was a big no-no to out someone, especially to anyone who happened to be straight.

Among my closeted friends were Little Bobby, Marshmallow, Butch Jimmy, TD (Tall Dick – vertically speaking!), Estralita, Miss Bruce, Streetah Gayworth. Among dykes: Drano, Speedy, Rusty, Sky, Big Red, Big Mammoo, Mack, Bombshell Bobbaloo.

As my imagination then was a long way behind in coming out – I was shy, skinny, 19 – I tagged myself, rather hopefully I must confess, Big Al. (Alexander the Great might have opened many doors, both private, public and revolving.)

A friend, Tom Ingersoll – a police precinct captain's son later caught in an after-hours police raid – took perverse delight in bestowing secret put-down nickies on rivals. Victory Garden. No No Nannette. H. Livonia Beckons. Lovely Hula Hands. Tiny Tears (who cried non-stop during President Kennedy's televised funeral).

Tom's nickname – bestowed by his lover Paul – was Beads O'Bleach, given for hitting the peroxide bottle, with not infrequent patchwork results. (God bless you, Tom. Missed now some 50 years.)

Entertainer names were always used as forms of polite show-biz address. Miss Rae Bourbon. Miss Chunga. Miss Lola Lola. Miss Vicki Marlene. Others: Fat Jack. Tabu. Chi Chi Latrine. My favorite drag name: Gay Cocken! It has a faygeleh ring to it. Yiddish: Little bird. Queer. Gai Kokken. Go take a dump!

And not in the Bette Davis "what a dump" sense, either. Oy, vey!

Charles "Big Al" Alexander can be reached at charles@pridesource.com.



Transmissions



Button, Button

OPINION BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

It's a great irony about being trans: we are expected to both look and act in certain ways to fit into gender roles defined by non-transgender people, yet are also criticized by non-transgender people for adhering to gendered-standards developed by non-transgender people. It's a classic no-win situation.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) recently released their new policy change to better serve transgender people. Rather than referring to the particulars of our anatomies as "anomalies" when we pass through their body scanners, we shall now be known as "alarms." They're not making any other change, however, just putting an even worse term up to describe our bodies.

As an aside, I think it is worth mentioning that these scanners have cost the TSA \$160 million. That's more than \$150,000 per unit. In a recent security audit, these scanners failed to stop weapons and explosives passing through security checkpoints a staggering 96 percent of the time. Oh, and in recent news, they're now moving towards mandatory full

body scanning for some passengers, but have opted to not clarify what would cause a person to lose the right to a pat down.

Let me back up a moment, however. When you go through a full body scan at your local airport, the TSA agent operating the machine chooses one of two color-coded buttons for you: these buttons are pink and blue. So a TSA agent visually determines what gender you are, presses a button, and if the machine does not agree with his findings, you now have triggered that "alarm."

I can't think of a more appropriate analogy for the lived experience of many transgender people.

We're expected to be stereotypically handsome or beautiful, and if we are not we are the subject of insults and death threats. Sometimes we are murdered. Yet if we are to fit well into our preferred genders, and someone discovers we are transgender, we still face insults and death threats – and yes, still sometimes are murdered.

When someone is identified as transgender, those

Today we're in the midst of a push back against transgender rights, with people trying to literally police gender identity. While we dodged a bullet in California in the battle over bathrooms and public facilities, the fight is heating up elsewhere. While it does, I will never be able to live up to the conflicting standards the non-transgender will put up to fight against my identity.

who are not transgender immediately descend to pick them apart. Either they look too much like their birth sex, or act too much like it, or they're trying to "trap" straight men and women, or they're acting too stereotypically masculine or feminine and reinforcing gender norms.

More years ago than I care to count, when I had just begun living in my preferred gender, I had an experience that many other transgender people have discovered. As the time, I was working for a large reprographics and desktop publishing company, serving up freshly laser printed layouts for resumes and party flyers.

I was pretty good at my job, able to crank out a professional layout quick and fast, and had developed a good and loyal customer base. I also had the respect of my coworkers and management.

Once I transitioned, this changed. I still had my customers and they were still plenty happy with my work, but things were clearly deteriorating amongst the staff. I had coworkers who would refuse to do anything I asked of them, and I ended up written up a couple times by the assistant manager.

It wasn't my appearance that caused the trouble, I was told, and me being transgender had nothing to do with how I was treated at work. Rather, it was my attitude. When I was still presenting as male, my assertive attitude was perceived as an asset, but post-transition, it was identified as "bitchiness."

To me, I'd rather that all women could be perceived as assertive and not be labeled for speaking up.

This is but one example of many similar tales you'll hear from transfolks, of how they have had to change their ways or end up being seen as somehow "imperfect." In some cases,

they've even been disallowed care because they have opted to not fall into expected gendered stereotypes.

Every situation I walk into, someone is pushing their mental blue or pink button and assigning a number of stereotypes to me. They're determining how I should look, act and feel based on their assumptions of my gender identity and how I choose to express it. In the course of that interaction, if their mental "alarm" is tripped, I am judged unfit and treated accordingly.

I have to live in this world, and one has to interact with others on a daily basis. We end up having to traverse the pink and blue buttons of people all day long, from the bagger at your local supermarket to television pundits and political leaders.

Today we're in the midst of a push back against transgender rights, with people trying to literally police gender identity. While we dodged a bullet in California in the battle over bathrooms and public facilities, the fight is heating up elsewhere. While it does, I will never be able to live up to the conflicting standards the non-transgender will put up to fight against my identity.

The majority of the time I really don't care about your judgment of me. As a friend of mine taught me many years ago, my body is not a democracy: you do not get a vote. This is my flesh and blood, and I get to choose what I do with it.

Thing is, I really am not the person with the problem here. I got to spend a lot of time trying to figure out which button to press for myself. I also know there's a whole hell of a lot more options than just pink and blue.

Gwen Smith believes in a much broader spectrum. You'll find her on Twitter at @gwenners.



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OUTBACK



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Creep of the Week

Kevin Swanson

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

You guys. I have good news. Kevin Swanson doesn't want to murder all of us in the name of Jesus. And by us, I mean anyone who is LGBT or LGBT-adjacent (i.e. you have a friend, relative or someone else in your life who is LGBT and you're cool with that). He says the whole thing where he said that LGBT people should be killed was just a big misunderstanding. You see, he was just talking about what it says in the Bible, not about how he wants to spend his free time.

"On the one hand, I have reiterated God's moral injunctions concerning homosexuality contained in the Christian Bible," he said in a Nov. 25 statement. "But when confronted with the question, 'Shall we exhort our civil magistrate to implement the death penalty as mentioned in Romans 1 and Leviticus 20?' ... The answer is 'No.'"

Swanson isn't saying that he wants the government to kill gays. He just wants God to. So I think we all owe Swanson a big fat gay apology.

And then he says he totally wants civil servants to obey Christ but, "I have made the point very strongly that politics and government won't save this nation."

Duh, Christ will! Swanson isn't saying that he wants the government to kill gays. He just wants God to.

So I think we all owe Swanson a big fat gay apology. After all, according to some sources (i.e. Kevin Swanson himself), 2015 was THE YEAR for Christian persecution in America "and this may yield more suffering for Christians in 2016."

Why can't the Christians get a break in this country? I mean, Jesus Christ! It's 2016! You'd think Christians would finally be able to freely exercise their religion instead of having to hide in shame, praying only in airport restrooms and seedy bars. The children of Christians shouldn't have to pretend they have godless parents lest they

be tormented in school. Christian teens shouldn't be told that "it's just a phase" or get thrown out of their homes when they come out as believers in Christ.

I mean, it's not like the majority of Americans identify as Christian – oh, except they do. Which makes this whole "persecution" thing kind of difficult to swallow. But, you know, secular forces at work and all.

"As we continue to face the devastating effects of the sexual revolution (including sins such as adultery, homosexuality and illegitimate divorce), America is risking God's judgment," Swanson's statement continued. "Individual Americans have a more serious problem to confront than retribution from civil government, and that is the eternal judgment of God."

And let me tell you, God is hangry and is going to show us who is boss. How? By letting Hillary Clinton get elected. Because if she's our next president, it won't be a reflection of the will of the people, but rather a brutal way for God to say, "I am disappointed."

"Why wouldn't Hillary Clinton get full rein upon this nation to continue the destructive pattern, destroy the social fabric of the nation – the family, of course," Swanson railed on the Dec. 28 episode of his "Generations Radio" show.

Yes, why wouldn't she? Clinton's campaign stump speech, "I will destroy all of the families in the U.S.," polls very favorably with voters seeing as most Americans are heathens who only love butt sex and abortion.

Swanson predicts that after Clinton becomes Queen, "Tremendous majorities of American kids (will be) taken down the track towards homosexuality."

It's a curious claim because, first, how did he find this out? It's one of Clinton's most closely guarded campaign secrets. And also, what constitutes "tremendous majorities"? It sounds so big, and yet means so little. Like so much of what Swanson says.



Swanson

New Index Measures LGBTI Inclusion Worldwide

BY BTL STAFF

NEW YORK – How can people measure the degree to which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are included – and, as likely, excluded – from the lifeblood of societies around the world?

This is the overriding question that brought 75 data experts, LGBTI activists, scholars, NGO leaders, researchers and others together last month in New York for the first time to grapple with the information and data that will be needed to create the first Global LGBTI Inclusion Index. The group will make recommendations to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which will create the index.

The group that met at the CUNY School of Law was invited by OutRight and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA), the two NGOs that UNDP is consulting with directly to create the new index.

OutRight's regional experts on Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa participated in the meeting, along with senior staff, including Executive Director Jessica Stern, and OutRight board co-chair Amie Bishop, an independent global health consultant. Those involved in the discussion have worked on some aspect of LGBTI advocacy, community activism or research on LGBTI people and many are important figures in this world.

The group's three days of discussion on Dec. 14-16, 2015 will provide input to the UNDP on how an index can measure the experiences of stigma, discrimination, violence and economic exclusion that mark the lives of millions of LGBTI people every day.

The conversations focused on the range of needs, experiences and services that affect the well-being of LGBTI people: education, economic well-being,



legal rights, gender recognition and health care.

The fact that there is no existing index of this kind underscores the UN's challenge in ensuring that LGBTI people across the world can contribute to and benefit from sustainable development.

The premise of the index is simple: when people are counted, no one is left behind.

The UN's recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a powerful commitment to reduce poverty, achieve equality and promote peaceful and inclusive societies. But as noted by Clifton Cortez, UNDP's global lead on LGBTI issues: "As long as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are ostracized

by their families, bullied in schools, unable to obtain jobs they qualify for or access quality health care, or feel unsafe in their own communities, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will not be possible."

While discrimination and inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity or intersex status exist across the world, there has never been an attempt until now to measure their broad existence through data collected by governments, civil society and development partners. The SDGs focus intently on marginalized and vulnerable groups. If this global effort is to succeed for all people, it must include LGBTIQ people's experiences.

The Data

To collect the data that the index will require, participants at the meeting probed questions that ranged deep and wide across a range of concerns:

- Do schools have anti-bullying policies?
- Are teachers trained in human development of sexual orientation and gender identity?
- If same-sex activity is a criminal offense, what efforts are being made to decriminalize?
- Do laws exist to prevent discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity?
- What is the frequency of hate speech in the media, on the Internet, by religious and community leaders?
- Can LGBTI people access higher education?
- What are the rates of violence – partner violence, family and domestic violence, gang violence and other forms of violence that target LGBTI people?

For civil society, especially organizations that advocate to protect human rights as they are impacted by sexual orientation and gender identity, the new index offers the promise of making the rights of LGBTI people visible in places where they are ignored – and deliberately so.

"This can work to pressure countries who are excluding LGBTIQ people," said OutRight's Maria Sjödin. "In some places, it can be a first step, a way to make our community visible and to get countries to pay attention to people who are being left out of development aid and support."



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National & International

Missouri House Majority Leader Mike Cierpiot said many of his Republican colleagues were alarmed by the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage.

“I think there’s a lot of states that are looking at this and seeing what can be done to make sure that religious freedoms are respected,” said Cierpiot, a Republican from suburban Kansas City.

An intense debate over gay rights already is shaping up in Indiana, where a religious-rights law passed last spring thrust the state into the national spotlight over concerns it could sanction discrimination against gays and lesbians. A coalition of 150 businesses is backing legislation to ban discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

An LGBT rights proposal outlined by Indiana Senate Republicans would grant broad exceptions intended to protect small business owners and religious schools, nonprofits and adoption agencies. For example, a wedding-related business with fewer than four employees could refuse to do work for a same-sex marriage.

Other 2016 Issues

Other issues that made headlines in 2015 also are expected to lead legislative agendas in the new year:

– Lawmakers in several states are seeking to expand gun rights, citing a need for self-defense following a spate of mass shootings in San Bernardino, California, a community college in Oregon, a historically black church in South Carolina and a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado.

States such as Florida, South Dakota and West Virginia are among those considering bills allowing concealed guns on college campuses or dropping requirements for a government permit to carry concealed weapons.

Stricter gun controls are being discussed in California, Illinois and New York, including measures that would prohibit firearm sales to people on government no-fly lists or terrorist watch lists.

– A battle over funding for Planned Parenthood – and a renewed push for additional abortion restrictions – is expected in response to undercover videos released last summer showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing aborted fetal body parts.

Ohio Right to Life has an aggressive agenda, including a 20-week abortion ban, a prohibition on ending pregnancies involving a Down Syndrome diagnosis and the defunding of Planned Parenthood. Republican-led legislatures in Arizona, Idaho, Missouri, South Dakota and Utah also are among the places pushing greater restrictions on abortion and Planned Parenthood.

In Colorado, where a gunman killed three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic in November, the Democratic-led House could consider increasing the state’s protest buffer around abortion clinics. But Republican senators may try to defund Planned Parenthood, citing the fetal body part videos.

– Some states, responding to police shootings of citizens that prompted widespread protests, plan to try again in 2016 to set policies for the use of police body cameras and new procedures for investigating police shootings.

Several states are considering comprehensive sentencing changes, such as prison alternatives for non-violent offenders. More states also are expected to debate bills relaxing laws against marijuana, either by revoking criminal penalties or allowing for its medicinal use.



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Q&A

‘ORANGE’ STAR DASCHA POLANCO

Photo: Netflix

Actress on Being a Hollywood Minority & Why ‘Joy’ Will Resonate With the LGBT Community

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

“I want you to smell me.” It’s not your typical conversation starter, sure, but “Orange Is the New Black” star Dascha Polanco does smell nice,

like fresh flowers. Seated in a New York City hotel suite to talk about her new film, “Joy,” the 32-year-old actress invites me to cozy up next to her, because then, she jokes, I can experience the fact that “not only is she beautiful but she also smells delicious.”

It’s weird seeing you out of an orange jumpsuit.

Is it?! I love the fact that I got to play with decades: the ’70s, ’80s, ’90s. But it’s two totally different worlds, TV and film.

What’s that transition been like for you?

Professionally, it’s always welcome (laughs). It’s a new challenge. It’s a new area of acting and being able to be play with characters and stories more creatively. I think with (director) David O. Russell and this project, it was intimidating.

Because it's David O. Russell?

David O. Russell. Jennifer Lawrence. Bradley Cooper. Robert De Niro. Diane Ladd. Virginia Madsen. Isabella Rossellini. You just want to make sure you have your A-game on, and for a Latina being in this industry for the last three years, it takes you by surprise.

How does being Latina change things?

Well, there are not many Latin actors in Hollywood. There's still a lower percentage of them breaking into Hollywood, but we're seeing more diversity, especially with David O. Russell's film. You're seeing diversity there, to that caliber, and for me, that's a big responsibility.

There's been a lot of talk about diversity in Hollywood lately, and not just when it comes to race, but when it comes to women. And this movie is very –

Female driven.

It is. It's all about female empowerment. It has a feminist message. How does that personally strike a chord with you?

I can relate so much to the story and to the elements of the movie: having obstacles in your life, being a woman and having to be a parent, having to be a daughter, taking care of not only your personal self but also your family. It shows how much women throughout the years have been the backbone and have, at times, struggled to even take a risk or try to live their dream or move forward because of other commitments or because of the stigma that we are supposed to be at home.

From the perspective of someone who is Latina in Hollywood: What is the current state of finding roles in Hollywood for a minority?

I thought to myself for the last two years: I've gone on auditions – so many auditions – in comparison to when I first started. Maybe it's because of "Orange," maybe it's because of my representation, but there's a need, a desire now. You see more offers, you see more shows that want to include diversity because of the success of shows like "Orange Is the New Black." Anybody could've been cast as Jackie in "Joy," and that's the beauty of it. The role that I play, anyone could have, but he (Russell) didn't make it exclusive (and say), "I'm gonna make Jackie a white actress." No. She's ambiguous. She can be black. She can be Spanish. The fact that this is a Golden Globe-nominated movie – ah, it takes me by surprise that I'm part of this project, not because I don't have the potential, not because I don't believe in

myself – but because of what, historically, I've seen growing up. And now that I'm part of it, there's hope and there's an opportunity that was rendered that I'm not taking for granted.

You credit "Orange Is the New Black" for diversifying TV. What does it mean to you to be a part of that movement?

We have to look at a movie like "Joy" for a minute, and I'm going to talk about how it includes LGBT. It's funny: I'm very supportive of the LGBT because I have family, I have friends, and they're a big part of my life – and even so, I respect a human regardless of what their sexual orientation is, or who they feel they are. It has nothing to do with LGBT, or that I have a friend who is. It's human to accept another human. Not everybody thinks that way. But you see a character like Joy who's trying to just be... She's trying to belong, she's trying to accomplish her dreams; she can be a mother, she can be a wife or a divorcee and not have the backlash, because there's so much backlash in the movie. There are so many obstacles. "You're a woman and you can't do that." And I'm pretty sure the LGBT community can relate to that. So whether she was a lesbian or not, it has nothing to do with that – it's about her feeling like she's part of something and building her empire.

Because anybody can see themselves in Joy.

Exactly.

When it comes to "Orange Is the New Black," how do you feel about being a part of a show that embraces inclusivity?

I'm proud! So proud. It's done a lot for the gay community around the world. It shows how much the industry might be oblivious to what's needed, but the fans and the viewership have just been so boisterous and open to all these different sexual orientations – to transgender. There's so much more acceptance, and that's the beauty of it. We, (show creator) Jenji (Kohan), the actors, the story – we took all we had and the essence and being underdogs and being self-made and coming from nowhere and that passion and brought a project that everyone can relate to. That's what's succeeding now – when you have a project that everybody can relate to. We have "Joy" now. Anybody can watch the movie and I guarantee they'll walk out of the theater and want to take over the world.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).



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Equality Michigan is working with state legislators to update the Ethnic Intimidation Act to include proper protections for the gay and transgender community.
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The Evolution Of Martone

Lansing Native and Former Detroiter Makes a Buzz With New Album

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

His name is Martone. No last name. Just Martone. It's been that way since he was barely a teenager living in Lansing.

At 13, Martone was the youngest person to enroll in Continental Cablevision's public access producers' course. Soon after he was producing and hosting his own show. "Video Control" was a music video program that went into syndication to select cities by its

third year. During the show's run Martone interviewed rising stars such as Will Smith, Queen Latifah, En Vogue, Vanilla Ice and Public Enemy. After an incredible 13 years on the air, Martone decided to call it quits and move to Motown.

In Detroit, he enrolled in the Specs Howard School of Media Arts for additional training in television and radio production

Continued on next page



www.PrideSource.com

► Martone

Continued from p. 20

and promotions. He worked a variety of jobs, including one as administrative assistant for the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park. But he still felt a passion for entertainment and struggled to get back in the business.

In 2009, love intervened and Martone relocated to Dallas with his partner. Martone created Enotram Entertainment and his first project until the company name was Industry Review (now known as IRMIX Radio), an entertainment news and online radio station focused on providing one-on-one interviews. For IR, Martone interviewed such folks as CeCe Peniston and Kurtis Blow. But somewhere along the way, Martone decided that he wanted to do more than just ask the questions. He decided that he wanted to be the one actually giving interviews instead of conducting them.

"It was always something that I wanted to do," Martone recalled. "I guess the courage didn't really come to me until after my father had passed away. It kind of made me realize that life is short, so why not do what you love to do?"

Having written poetry since childhood, Martone started transforming his rhymes

into song lyrics and began work on his first album. He turned to his cousin, Michael E. Williams of Platinum Keyz Recordings, to produce the project. "A lot of times my poetry would be about love and relationships," said Martone. "Like the song 'Chocolate,' that was a poem that I had written like seven or eight years ago. And what I would do is have a song in mind and give it to my cousin, and let him know exactly what I wanted it to sound like. Or sometimes he sent me tracks and I would

music to the distributor when I found out she had died," Martone said. "It blew me away. I couldn't even function for like two or three days. It was really bad. She was one of my biggest supporters. So I dedicated the first edition to her."

This fall, Martone released "The Evolution of Martone – Second Edition" and even filmed a music video while in Detroit for Thanksgiving. The video starred popular Detroit area deejay DJ Tone as his love interest.

His name is Martone. No last name. Just Martone. It's been that way since he was barely a teenager living in Lansing.

write to them."

The finished project, "The Evolution of Martone," was released in June 2015, just days after the death of Martone's old boss and dear friend, Grace McClelland, the former executive director of the Ruth Ellis Center. "I was getting ready to send the

"I've had a crush on him for a long time," confessed Martone. "So it was dream number one to shoot my first music video and then to have somebody who's not too hard to look at help you do it ... it was great. I've had people ask me, 'Are y'all together?' And it's like, 'No.' They said

it was believable and that we had good chemistry on film. And after watching the footage back I can definitely see that."

Not everyone was thrilled with what they saw however. "My mom said I was selling sex," Martone said with a laugh. "I said, 'Is that what she thinks I'm doing?' When I look at it I don't see that. To me, what I'm doing is promoting love. If anyone read the lyrics of the song they would definitely see that. Those are supposed to be my memories of the one I love."

Whatever he's selling, folks are definitely buying. The album spent 18 weeks at number one on ReverbNation/EDM Dance Charts and each of the album's three singles – "Love You I Do," "Groove Tonight" and "Chocolate" – all made it to No. 1 as well. Martone plans to go into rehearsals for a spring tour just after Christmas and he's very excited about coming home to perform.

"That'll be the most awesome experience," he said. "I definitely want to do that. I'll probably be overwhelmed with joy. I just hope I'll be able to live up to the expectations and show my hometown what I've been doing with my life."

"The Evolution of Martone – Second Edition" is available on iTunes, Spotify and Google Play.

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Get Ready to Find Your Folk at Annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival

BY BTL STAFF

The annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival, a fundraiser for The Ark and presented by Ford Motor Company, returns to Hill Auditorium for two dynamic and different nights of folk and roots music beginning at 6:30 p.m. each night on Friday, Jan. 29, and Saturday, Jan. 30. The Folk Festival will celebrate its 39th year with a selection of the world's finest traditional and contemporary performers. Each night includes a blend of well-known and up-and-coming artists, providing you with an opportunity to hear artists you know and love while discovering great new talent.

Topping the lineup for the festival this year are City and Colour, Richard Thompson and Yo La Tengo on Friday night and Joan Baez and Cooder-White-Skaggs on Saturday night.

City and Colour

Friday headliner City and Colour features Dallas Green. "There's a line that I'm trying to find, between the water and the open sky," sings Dallas Green on "Friends," the penultimate track off of his recently released fifth album as City and Colour, "If I Should Go Before You" (No. 16 on the Billboard 100). For someone like Green, it's hard to imagine that there's much left to search for — he's traversed the globe on tour, released numerous albums (one most recently as You+Me with Alecia Moore, aka P!nk) and collected scores of accolades. Though Green is a musician, he doesn't make a show of things: that's the job of his songs. Green had always been an introspective, solitary writer, demoing songs in his basement, working up every instrumental part by himself. But he considers "If I Should Go Before You" to be a band



record, where the input of these trusted comrades was of the utmost importance. Even more pivotal was trying to capture the essence of their live show symbiosis in the studio; which comes through with an undeniable force. After performing countless sold-out shows worldwide, City and Colour embarks on an extensive full band tour this fall and winter which includes headlining Friday night of the 39th Ann Arbor Folk Festival.

Joan Baez

Main headliner for Saturday night, Joan Baez hasn't slowed down a bit in her

eighth decade. In the words of Anthony DeCurtis, the clarion songs of Baez "are nothing less than invitations to a life of social meaning, to view ourselves as part of a larger community whose fate is inextricable from our own, to make that fate better for all." Today, as she did in the 1960s and 1970s, Baez draws on the best music of the most vital songwriters of the times. Her characteristic vibrato is undimmed, and on her superb recent albums she has recorded songs by the likes of Steve Earle, Patty Griffin, Tom Waits and Eliza Gilkyson. "All of us are survivors," she once wrote. "But how many of us transcend survival?" Baez has done just that. Active in political areas ranging from LGBT rights to the environment to the global struggle for human rights, Baez not only rivets us with the beauty of her music but also challenges us to become more than we were.

Also featured on the bill on Saturday will be Michigan favorite Joshua Davis.

All funds raised through the Festival benefit The Ark, Ann Arbor's nonprofit home for folk, roots and ethnic music. Gold, Platinum and Benefactor Circles tickets are available to anyone by mail or phone until they're sold out. Gold circle starts at \$100 for one night, \$180 for both nights; platinum circle starts at \$200 for one night, \$360 for both nights; and benefactor circle includes additional premium benefits. Call The Ark business office for more information.

Hill Auditorium is located at 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. Find more info at www.theark.org, www.findyourfolk.org and 734-761-1800.

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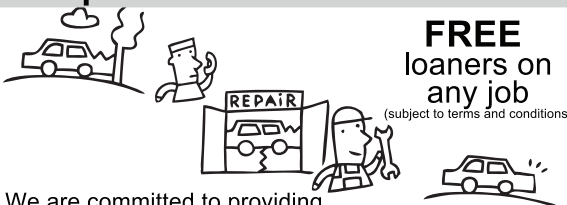
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Start The New Year Laughing With Production Of 'The Odd Couple'

CHELSEA – The Purple Rose Theatre Company will ring in the new year with the second play of its 25th anniversary season, Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple."

Two suddenly single pals – a sloppy sportswriter and a neat freak news writer – strain their friendship by turning roommates, but patterns of their own disastrous marriages begin to reappear with hilarious results.

"The Odd Couple" will run from Thursday, Jan. 21 through Saturday, March 26, 2016. Previews, with reduced-price tickets, begin Thursday Jan. 21; opening night is Friday, Jan. 29.

Founded in 1991 by actor, playwright, musician and Chelsea native Jeff Daniels, the Purple Rose Theatre Company is a creative home for original American plays. In the 168-seat theater, patrons experience an intimate encounter with live theater. The PRTC also provides an apprenticeship program, performance classes, readings, lectures and tours. It commissions new work from established and early-career playwrights. As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit professional theatre, the PRTC operates under a Small Professional Theatre agreement with the Actors' Equity Association.

Making her professional directorial debut is



Purple Rose Resident Artist Lauren Mounsey. Mounsey, a former PRTC apprentice from Macomb, has performed in several PRTC productions including "33 Variations," "Steel Magnolias" and "2AZ." She was a directing intern for "Annapurna" and "Talley's Folly" under Artistic Director Guy Sanville.

"Here was everything I wanted," Mounsey said in a recent interview, "the chance to act,

direct and have a family. Guy taught us that the key to happiness is passion, and he stressed that we can have what we want if we work towards it."

"The Odd Couple" cast features PRTC Artistic Director Guy Sanville (Chelsea) in the leading role of Oscar Madison and David Montee (Traverse City), former director of theatre studies at the Interlochen Center for the

Arts, as Felix Ungar. The cast also includes David Bendena (Chelsea), Chris Lutkin (Wyandotte), Michelle Mountain (Grass Lake), Jim Porterfield (Northville), Rhiannon Ragland (Gregory), and Tom Whalen (Royal Oak).

Set design is by Bartley H. Bauer, properties by Danna Segrest, costumes by Corey Collins, lighting by Reid G. Johnson and sound by Tom Whalen. Angie Kane Ferrante is the stage manager.

Underwriting support for the season comes from the Ford Motor Company Fund, The Hamp Family Fund, the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, the Sage Foundation, The Shubert Foundation and the Matilda R. Wilson Fund. "The Odd Couple" production sponsor is the Neil & Annmarie Hawkins Family. Media sponsors include Michigan Radio, ChelseaMich.com, Detroit Performs and Applied Storytelling.

All performances will be held at The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Prices for tickets range from \$19 to \$43 each with special discounts for students, seniors and groups. For more information or to make reservations, call The Purple Rose Theatre Company box office at 734-433-7673 or go online at www.purplerosetheatre.org.

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Detroit Public Theatre Will Present Eric Gutman's 'From Broadway to Obscurity'

BY ANNE KILEY

Continuing its inaugural season, Detroit Public Theatre will offer audiences Michigan native Eric Gutman in his autobiographical one-man musical journey "From Broadway To Obscurity" Jan. 22-Feb. 20.

Dreams collide in this hilariously revealing confessional from Michigan's own Broadway "Jersey Boy." With well-known songs, dead-on celebrity impressions and a heart-warming narrative, Eric Gutman's autobiographical one-man musical journey "From Broadway To Obscurity" intimately details the rocky road to "making it," from sweating bullets auditioning face to face with Frankie Valli himself, to rollicking backstage secrets, to his eventual life-altering change of heart. And when getting what he wants isn't all it's cracked up to be, Eric's internal compass points him back to the values of his community.

Tickets (\$35-100) for performances at the Robert A. and Maggie Allesee Rehearsal Hall inside the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center are on sale now online at www.detroitpublictheatre.org, by phone at 313-576-5111 or in person at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra box office.

Detroit Public Theatre's mission is to produce world-class plays and programs with world-class writers, directors, actors and designers in the heart of Midtown's thriving cultural district. The company produces bold plays that are relevant to Detroit audiences and illuminates the joys, thrills and challenges of our shared human experience.

Founded by Courtney Burkett, Sarah Winkler and Sara Clare Corporandy, Detroit Public Theatre is bolstered with board and advisory members including theater luminaries from across the nation and Detroit. These include Nina Essman, general manager of the 2015 Tony Award-winning musical Fun Home and GM and Executive Producer

of Wicked; Christopher Burney, associate director of New York City's Second Stage Theatre; and Tony Award nominated actors Kathleen Chalfant, Detroit-born Celia Keenan-Bolger and many more. Burkett is formerly the director of theater programs for Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit and co-founder of Breathe Art Theatre Project; Winkler is a recent transplant from New York where she was a producer and ensemble member of the award-winning Off-Broadway theater company, Epic Theatre Ensemble; and in addition to founding Detroit Public Theatre, Corporandy has served as Managing Director for Pig Iron Theater Company in Philadelphia and also currently serves as the Managing Director of Chautauqua Theatre Institute in Southwest New York.

"It has been truly affirming to see the support DPT has already received from audiences, donors and the artists themselves; we cannot wait to bring them even more of the kind of entertainment they have come to expect, as well as to exceed their expectations," says Corporandy. With support from many of Michigan's theater leaders, Detroit Public Theatre will strive to bring more local and national attention to the work of the area's brilliant theater community.

"We have an incredible opportunity to bring Detroit in league with cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis, Cleveland and Washington, DC, with a great regional theater that contributes to our culture and artistic vibrancy," states Burkett. "Our area has an extraordinary pool of Michigan-trained theater talent and a very sophisticated audience." Winkler adds, "We want to keep more artists and audiences here at home rather than losing them to New York, Chicago and elsewhere."

Originally published on www.encoremichigan.com. Visit *Encore Michigan* for more theater coverage, reviews and more.

Editor's Pick



The Detroit Institute of Arts' current special exhibition gallery is "30 Americans," running through Jan. 18. A dynamic showcase of recent art by African-American artists, this exhibition explores issues of racial, political, historical and gender identity in today's culture.

The 55 paintings, sculptures, installations, photographs and video on view were created by many of the most important African-American artists working over the past 30 years, including Kerry James Marshall, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kara Walker, Nick Cave, Kehinde Wiley, Carrie

Mae Weems, Robert Colescott, Glenn Ligon and Lorna Simpson. All the works are drawn from the Rubell Family Collection in Miami. In describing the origins and development of the exhibition, Don and Mera Rubell state: "As the show evolved, we decided to call it 30 Americans. 'Americans' rather than 'African-Americans' or 'Black Americans' because nationality is a statement of fact, while racial identity is a question each artist answers in his or her own way, or not at all."

The DIA is located at 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more information, call 313-833-7900 or visit www.dia.org.

Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Jan. 7

Connections 6 p.m. Open to all LGBTQ and Ally youth from 13-18. Join us to meet other LGBTQ and Ally teens and socialize in a safe space. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Friday, Jan. 8

Shabbat Service 6:30 p.m. Temple Echad, 1420 Hill St., **Ann Arbor**. www.Temple-echad.org

Saturday, Jan. 9

I'll Eat You Last and Buyer & Cellar The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 248-545-5545. www.Theringwald.com

Sunday, Jan. 10

Pride NA 6:30 p.m. Confidential and anonymous. Open to all individuals impacted by addiction. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Tuesday, Jan. 12

Free STI & Rapid HIV Testing 5 p.m. Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Trichomoniasis, Syphilis. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.Goaffirmations.org

NEST 6:30 p.m. Monthly Bible study focusing on LGBTQ issues. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 508 Denner St., **Kalamazoo**. www.Kglrc.org

Wednesday, Jan. 13

Senior Koffee Klatch 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings, bake-offs, and potlucks are incorporated throughout the year. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. khug@goaffirmations.org <http://goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups>

Affirmations Run Club 6 p.m. An informal group of runners and walkers

of all abilities. Seasoned marathoners, beginner walkers, and everything in between! Everyone is welcome, just show up! Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. jproctor@goaffirmations.org www.Goaffirmations.org/programs-services/community-events-activities

TransCend TransCend provides support and resources to the Southwest Michigan transgender community, their significant others, family, friends, and allies. Meetings occur twice per month on the 2nd Wednesday and 4th Sunday. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Thursday, Jan. 14

Patti Labelle 8 p.m. Tickets: \$50-85. Sound Board - Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., **Detroit**. 800-745-3000. www.Soundboarddetroit.com

Saturday, Jan. 16

It's Our 70's Show! 8 p.m. Out Loud Chorus is celebrating the decade of the 70's! You'll hear the music of Cat Stevens, the Bee Gees, Donna Summer, Carole King, Barry Manilow, Kiki Dee, Barbra, Elton John and Stevie Wonder. Tickets are \$15 in advance/\$18 at door, \$12 for seniors & students (65+). Free for children under 4 and unemployed people. Out Loud is sponsored in part by the Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs and the NEA. Our Saturday night performance is sponsored by the WCC Out-Space Club. Paul Haebig directs the chorus. Annie Jeng accompanies us on piano, Tamara Perkuhn plays drums and Edie Herrold rounds out the trio on bass. Colette Jacobsen joins our regular band on guitar. Out Loud Chorus, 4800 E. Huron River Dr., **Ann Arbor**. 734-265-0740. outloudchorus@gmail.com www.OLonline.org

It's our 70s Show 8 p.m. Out Loud Chorus, **Ann Arbor**. www.OLonline.org

Sunday, Jan. 17

Livingston County PFLAG Monthly Meeting 2 p.m. Please join us for our monthly support group for the third Sunday of every month at 2 p.m.

Livingston County PFLAG, 200 W St Paul St., **Brighton**. 517-548-0839. LivingstonPFLAG@aol.com www.facebook.com/pflaglivingston

Monday, Jan. 18

LGBT Sexual Assault Survivors **Groups** 5:30 p.m. Any member of the LGBT community, age 13-24, who is a survivor of sexual assault is welcome. This group is open to all LGBTQIAP individuals who have experienced any form of sexual assault in their lifetime. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-345-5595. nschneider@ywcakalamazoo.org www.Kglrc.org

Jazz in the Gallery 7:30 p.m. A local jazz ensemble, led by pianist and vocalist Brandon Perkins, rehearses and holds casual jam sessions in the Pittmann-Puckett Gallery every Monday evening. Jazz in the Gallery is open to the public. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Rd., **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. khug@goaffirmations.org <http://goaffirmations.org/programs-services/community-events-activities>

Thursday, Jan. 21

Faith Alliance Meeting 12 p.m. Welcoming new members who would like to be involved with the intersection of faith, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 2208 Winchell Ave., **Kalamazoo**. www.Kglrc.org

The Parent Network 6 p.m. This group aims to assist parents in understanding their child's identity, while also giving parents the opportunity to socialize with other adults who have LGBT children. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Young Jean Lee's Theater Company: Untitled Feminist Show 7:30 p.m. Six utterly charismatic stars of the downtown theater, dance, cabaret, and burlesque worlds perform a fully nude, wordless celebration of identity. This exhilarating work uses a dizzying array of modes to shake up gender norms through movement and music. A theater piece full of paradoxes and

juxtapositions of the best kind. Untitled Feminist Show constantly surprises, twisting and turning in hilarious ways that both reveal and challenge the viewers' assumptions about gender politics. UMS, 121 Fletcher St., **Ann Arbor**. 734-764-2538. umstix@umich.edu www.Ums.org/multiperformance/young-jean-lee-untitled-feminist-show/

Young Jean Lee's Theater Company: Untitled Feminist Show 7:30 p.m. UMS showcases Young Jean Lee's two most recent theatrical essays on gender and identity, in repertory for the first time ever. Tickets: \$20-48. UMS, 121 Fletcher St., **Ann Arbor**. 734-764-2538. umstix@umich.edu <http://ums.org/multiperformance/young-jean-lee-untitled-feminist-show/>

MUSIC & MORE

UMS "What's in a Song? A song recital evening with Martin Katz & Friends" Tickets: \$40-50. Lydia Mendelssohn Theater, 911 N. University, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Jan. 8. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/whats-in-a-song/

UMS "Royal Philharmonic Orchestra" This concert features Pinchas Zukerman both at the helm and as the featured soloist. Hill Auditorium, 825 North University Avenue, Ann Arbor. 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/royal-philharmonic-orchestra/

UMS "Jamie Barton, mezzo-soprano" Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 4 p.m. Jan. 10. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/jamie-barton-mezzo-soprano

THEATER

Butler Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Jan. 7 - March 13. 313-868-1347.

National Theatre of Scotland: A Christmas Carol UMS, Power Center, 121 Fletcher St, Ann Arbor. Through Jan. 3. 734-764-2538. <http://ums.org/multiperformance/christmas-carol/>

A2CT Presents Company The Tony Award-winning 1970 musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by George Furth tells the story of bachelor Bobby, his married friends, and several girlfriends, as Bobby faces his 35th birthday. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. Jan. 7 - Jan. 10. 734-971-2228. www.A2ct.org/shows/company

Company Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. Jan. 7 - Jan. 10. 734-763-3333. www.A2ct.org

ART 'N' AROUND

Cranbrook Art Museum "Empire by Andy Warhol" The presentation at Cranbrook Art Museum is shown in relation to "Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe." Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Dec. 1 - March 13. 877-462-7262. www.Cranbrookart.edu

Cranbrook Art Museum "Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe" Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Dec. 1 - March 26. 877-462-7262. www.Cranbrookart.edu

DIA "30 Americans" Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Oct. 1 - Jan. 18. 313-833-7900. www.Dia.org

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Deep Inside Hollywood 2015 In Queer Entertainment: It's a Trans, Trans, Trans, Trans World



Kitana Kiki Rodriguez in "Tangerine." Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

and her fiercely loyal family. If you hate reality TV because of its trumped-up exploitation and fake drama, the daily life of Jazz, her thoughtful parents, protective twin brothers and adorable grandparents is the antidote. This kid is going to be all right.

3. Transparent

There's no such thing as a cultural product that satisfies everyone, and when the subject matter is as rare as that of a person transitioning late in life,

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

There was a time in LGBT media stories when the G dominated the conversation. We love gay men, of course, and their stories are in no danger of extinction. But we also longed for more movies and TV shows about the L, the B, and the T, for narratives we weren't getting, for people of color to have a stronger voice, for older lesbians, for everybody else to sing their song. In 2014, Time magazine put Laverne Cox on the cover and called that moment "The Transgender Tipping Point." And in 2015, here's what we got...

1. I Am Cait

Is there anyone you know who doesn't have an opinion about Ms. Jenner, no matter how ignorant, ill-informed or warped by loathing of Kardashian, Inc.? Probably not. And Cait's learn-in-public approach has been fraught with problems and missteps. But we'd rather live in a world where she gets to speak and be heard than not, so we're going to trust that she's moving in the right direction. Meanwhile, here's hoping season 2 of her reality show keeps glorious Jenny Boylan on board for wisdom's sake.

2. I Am Jazz

There is no more cuddly show on the air right now than the sweetly sincere "I Am Jazz," featuring trans teen Jazz Jennings

the burden of representation weighs heavily. But this series, entering its second season, succeeds by being specific and well-made rather than trying to be all things to all people.

4. The Prancing Elites

The reality series about a black, queer, gender-nonconforming dance troupe in the Deep South wisely refused to overplay the overt, awful discrimination they face. It was on display, to be sure, but what comes through most is the joy of life these young prancers feel when they move the crowd. And they *really* move the crowd.

5. The Fosters

In the mainstream media, "trans" almost always means male-to-female transitions. "Deggrassi" helped move the game, with a cis female actor playing a trans male teenager. But now "The Fosters" has taken the leap forward, featuring Cole, young trans male character played by trans male actor Tom Phelan. Small steps in a big revolution.

6. Tangerine

Gritty, funny, dark, moving, with a story that was molded into shape by its stars Mya Taylor and Kitana Kiki Rodriguez, "Tangerine" is the best queer film of the year. The dynamic duo played a pair of Los Angeles sex workers on a fractured Christmas Eve, pushing their way through the city and testing the bonds of

friendship. It's a portrait of street life that's as tender as it is tough.

7. Sense8

The Wachowskis made the leap to the small screen with one of the most innovative shows ever created. It features characters from around the globe, all of whom are connected by shared visions, a cluster of psychic communication webs. The cast is multiracial, multigender, and the criss-crossing storylines are a masterclass in queer visibility. Also? Pansexual orgies.



8. The Danish Girl

Eddie Redmayne in "The Danish Girl." Photo courtesy of Focus Features.

Nearly a century ago, a Dutch landscape artist underwent gender reassignment surgery. Now it's an awards-season film starring Eddie Redmayne. It's come under a cloud of criticism for its casting, its treatment of trans identity, and its trans-education-for-your-parents approach to storytelling. But it's here, and it's still queer, so if your conservative Dad walks away from it learning a little more than he knew before, that's still a mark in the plus column, right?

9. Stephen Universe

You guys, it's a cartoon series for kids and it features queer and gender-nonconforming

characters, including one that is actually two lesbian space rocks who are fused together for eternity. Repeat that sentence out loud to yourself and marvel at the beauty of the world in which we live. If it still doesn't make sense, then you're not 7 years old. Work on that.

10. American Horror Story: Hotel

Look, they can't all be winners. Keep avoiding it in 2016.

Romeo San Vicente is Father Christmas. Or Daddy Christmas, if that's your thing. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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BTL Pet of the Week - Owen

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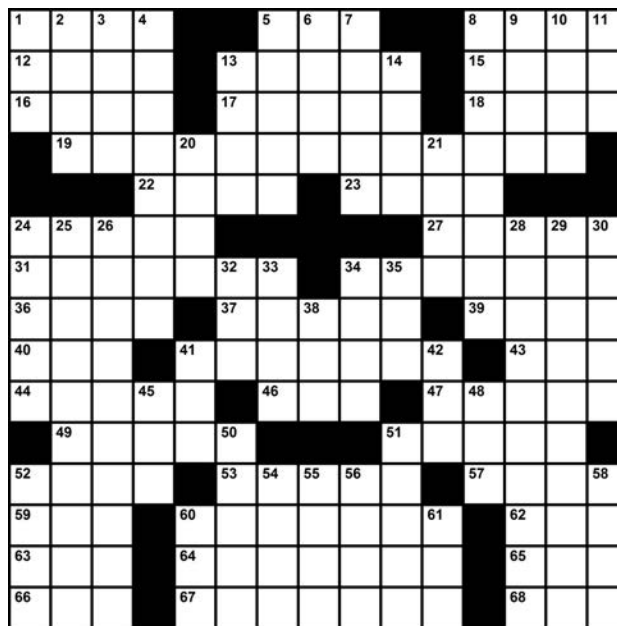
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Q Puzzle



Gender Fluidity

Across

- 1 Manger for Mary's boy
5 One of two ways
8 "Ed Wood" role
12 Cole Porter's Indiana hometown
13 Slice of wry
15 Go off, on Broadway
16 Judy Garland, to many
17 Words before "music," to Britten
18 In the pink
- 19 Beginning of why Stella considers herself to be a woman, on "OITNB"
22 Peter and more
23 "Pretty in Pink" setting
24 Shoe part
27 Straight men fear to drop them in the shower
31 Put down
34 Event requiring metal balls
36 Thumbs-down votes
37 Come slowly closer
39 "The thing with feathers" in a

- Dickinson poem
40 Giant outfielder Mel
41 More of Stella's reason
43 Cruising area
44 Ready to hit the sack
46 More of Stella's reason
47 Emulated Miriam Margolyes
49 Grout may separate them
51 Ejaculate, e.g.
52 With 57-Across, actress who plays Stella
53 Military doctor
57 See 52-Across
59 Univ. e-mail ending
60 End of Stella's reason
62 Third degree, often
63 Reno action
64 Some money from Melissa to Tammy Lynn
65 Warts prefix for Harry Potter?
66 Wall St. group
67 Thaw with Nureyev's land
68 Frat hazing prop

Down

- 1 Inflation meas.
2 Perform a decorator's task
3 Do some pressing work
4 Places where you never get to second base
5 Releases from bondage
6 Campus mil. org.
7 Coming soon
8 Huge thing
9 Digital-rectal, for example
10 Tomlin of "Grandma"
11 Didn't fast
13 ID for Sandra Scoppettone

- 14 Cole Porter's "Brush Up ____ Shakespeare"
20 Prison part
21 Matching notes for Bernstein?
24 "Lead ____ into temptation"
25 Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true" and such
26 Render unto Caesar, e.g.
28 Smee's version of "epiphany" in "Hook"
29 Hand job at times?
30 Home extension
32 Gaydar, for example
33 ____ Mae Brown
34 Kind of gin
35 Rooster in drag, seemingly
38 Hollywood VIP
41 Inspired writing
42 Type of sucker
45 "In the Steps of Mr. Proust" author Stanley
48 Scar, in "The Lion King," for example
50 Word from Tom Bianchi, perhaps
51 Hound's trail
52 "Queen of Country" McEntire
54 Put out
55 Bas relief of Eleanor's husband
56 Lay ____ the line
58 Beat, but barely
60 "When I was a ____..."
61 Easter egg application

Find solution to this puzzle at www.pridesource.com



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