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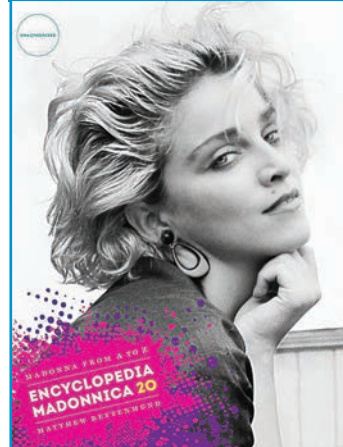
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“What are the long-term goals of Affirmations? Is there a strategic plan already? Who gets to decide? How is community defined? Who does it include? How is that being communicated, and to whom? How can community members contribute to developing those goals?”

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The annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival, a fundraiser for The Ark, returns. Topping the lineup - Joan Baez.

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Remembering Bill Beachler

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Liz Lamoste is a local attorney, social justice advocate and proud Ferndalian. She hopes the public will attend the Jan. 27 board meeting of Affirmations

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PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200 x 12
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200 x 24
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

Assistant Editor

Shelby Clark Petkus, shelby@pridesource.com

Calendar Editor

Shelby Clark Petkus, shelby@pridesource.com

Staff Writers

AJ Trager, ajtrager@pridesource.com

CREATIVE

Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Contributing Writers

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown,
Emell Derra Adolphus, Todd Heywood, Jason
Michael, Jerome Stuart Nichols, Gwendolyn
Ann Smith, Christopher J. Treacy

Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter
Alexander Godin

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200 x 22
jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200 x 13
anncox@pridesource.com

Donelle Kremke, 734.293.7200 x 16
donelle@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

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NEWS BRIEFS

Ashton O'Hara's Murderer Sentenced to 30-60 Years

Nearly six months after the body of 25-year-old Ashton O'Hara was found brutally murdered in a Detroit field, the killer has been found guilty of voluntary manslaughter.

O'Hara's killer, Larry B. Gaulding, 39, was sentenced Jan. 13 to 30-60 years for voluntary manslaughter and 10 years for tampering with evidence, to be served concurrently.

O'Hara, who was also known as Jessica Storm, was a black transgender and genderfluid individual who was using he/him pronouns.

At the time of his death on July 14, 2015, O'Hara was the 14th confirmed murder of a trans person in 2015 and the 12th of a trans person of color. Nearly 30 transgender individuals were murdered last year – a record-breaking year for transgender murders in the U.S. Despite reports that say the transgender population comprises less than 1 percent of the world's population, statistics show that a trans person is murdered every 29 hours.

Unlike so very many of the victims, especially working class trans people of color, O'Hara was able to receive justice for his untimely death. This surprising show of system support for a transgender life was thanks in part to a highly cooperative Detroit Metropolitan Police Department and a mother, Rebecca O'Hara, who strongly advocated for her child. Rebecca also worked closely with Equality Michigan which supported her in navigating these systems to achieve justice for Ashton.

"Just last month, we were heartbroken when the jury came back with a guilty verdict for voluntary manslaughter rather than murder one or two, especially since Gaulding

showed no signs of remorse throughout the proceedings," said Yvonne Siferd, Director of Victims Services for Equality Michigan. "But, yesterday everything changed. Far surpassing our expectations, Judge Cameron used his judicial discretion and exceeded the sentencing guidelines, which would have otherwise capped at 15 years. Instead, Gaulding was sentenced to 30-60 years in prison, and will likely never again have the opportunity to walk the streets of Detroit or harm another trans woman."

It's not often that the trans community sees realized justice for the harm against the community. Michigan law does not provide legal protections for sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. Were the state to have such laws in place, O'Hara's murder would have been considered and charged as a hate crime.

"Even though the state could not prosecute this as an anti-trans hate crime, Judge Cameron sent a message that trans lives do matter by providing Ashton's family with equal justice under the law," said Siferd.

Despite the satisfaction that may come in seeing the murder of a trans person treated, investigated and prosecuted with seriousness and uncharacteristic speed, the time spent in jail will not alleviate the loss to Ashton O'Hara's family, friends and community.

"This outcome is really bittersweet. Though Gaulding's sentence is a small victory for the trans community, it has come at a very high price. Ashton O'Hara, a.k.a. Jessica Storm, was a brilliant and beautiful spirit that we lost to soon," Siferd soberly reminded us.

SOGI Conference Talks Inclusion in Michigan Classrooms

TROY – The fifth annual SOGI Conference, hosted by the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Initiative of Oakland University's School of Education and Human Services, comes to the Detroit Marriott in Troy next week beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Jan. 29. The theme for this year's event is "Creating Climate Change in our Classrooms and Communities."

The day long event will feature expert presentations, roundtable discussions, best practices for integrating SOGI issues into school and work and ongoing networking opportunities – all focused on meeting the needs of LGBT individuals.

The 2016 SOGI Conference will feature multiple guests including Michigan Board of Education President John Austin and Sean Kosofsky, executive director of the Tyler Clementi Foundation, who will discuss LGBT bullying in his keynote address titled "Bullying, Harassment and Humiliation, Stories and Solutions."

Executive Director of Equality Michigan,

Stephanie White, will serve as emcee for the event.

"Mr. Austin has close personal ties to the LGBT community and is determined to see that all students receive equitable access to their education, free from harassment or other forms of discrimination," said Timothy Larrabee, associate professor and director of the SOGI Initiative Taskforce. "Both he and the State Board of Education are committed to enhancing policies will that will help us reach our goal of 'Creating Climate Change in our Classrooms and Communities,' which is the theme of this year's conference."

Registration for the SOGI Education Conference is open until Jan. 28 at oakland.edu/SOGI/register. A \$100 registration fee for the public and a \$25 fee for full-time students includes two meals and access to the day's activities.

The Detroit Marriott is located at 200 W. Big Beaver Road in Troy. Follow conference developments on Twitter at @OUSOGI, #SOGICON.

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Equality Michigan Starts New Year with New Plan

BY TODD HEYWOOD

It's a new year, and Equality Michigan has a new political team in place to drive what they are calling a new three to four year legislative plan to move LGBT equality forward in the state.

"We are launching our new political effort to expand gay rights in Michigan," said Nathan Triplett, the organization's new political director.

Triplett is by no means a new face to LGBT equality. He rose to prominence as a teen fighting to implement a gay/straight alliance at Portage Central High School, served as an ally voice while an undergraduate student at Michigan State University and helped organize the organization's Local Electeds Against Discrimination (LEAD) and the approval and implementation of more local human rights ordinances across the state. The last two were part of a comprehensive strategy to create a groundswell of support for amending the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA).

Triplett will report to Stephanie White, Equality Michigan's recently installed executive director. Sommer Foster, who is the agency's director of policy and outreach, will work in tandem with Triplett.

The trio, during an interview in their third floor offices of the AFL-CIO building in downtown Lansing, said the new proposal will focus on several prongs.

The project will work to elect more LGBT-friendly lawmakers to the Legislature in 2016. In 2017 it will work on local municipal elections to "build the bench" of potential lawmakers who are also friends from various regions, and in 2018 the group will focus on flipping the currently anti-gay Senate to an LGBT supportive one, as well as working to elect a supporter to the governor's office.

"This includes our friends who are Republican," White emphasized in the conversation, noting that many members of the GOP, particularly younger members, are supportive of LGBT equality.

"These are critical elections that will shape the political landscape over the next decade," said Triplett.

Reshaping the political landscape will be key in amending the state's civil rights act to include LGBT people. Attempts to amend ELCRA have been introduced regularly in the state Legislature since 1981, and in 2014 two different bills to amend the civil rights act received the first public hearings on the matter. However, Republicans wanted to drop



Nathan Triplett, the organization's new political director, with Executive Director Stephanie White and Sommer Foster, director of policy and outreach. BTL Photo: Todd Heywood.

gender identity from legislation, while LGBT community leaders and Democrats wanted the bill with gender identity – sponsored by East Lansing State Rep. Sam Singh. The non-inclusive legislation was sponsored by Republican Frank Foster who lost his seat in a primary in August 2014.

As a result of the debate over inclusion of the transgender community, the GOP controlled House did not bring either bill up for a vote in committee and both proposals died at the end of 2014. Current House leadership has said, despite calls by Gov. Rick Snyder to amend the law, that they have no interest in having the discussion.

With what appears to be an intractable opposition to full LGBT equality leading in the current GOP controlled Legislature, some

activists have launched a ballot initiative to amend the state constitution. The proposal's language was approved by the State Board of Canvassers on Dec. 29. 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 as well.

Supporters have until July 11 to collect 315,654 valid signatures of registered Michigan voters. Collecting that many signatures could cost the ballot initiative committee leading the effort – Fair Michigan – at least \$1 million.

How well such a ballot measure will fair with voters in November is up for significant debate. Basic polling indicates the measure could pass. However, when that polling is

subject to modeling efforts which take voter behavior into account, as well as challenge the support for LGBT equality with political messaging threatening men in women's bathrooms, the results show a significant defeat in the offing. Those differing political models have created what, to some, may appear to be a split in the community. But Equality Michigan leaders said that is not quite an accurate assessment.

"What you see is a conversation about strategy," said White. "We are unified as a community that civil rights have to happen. We're debating how that happens."

She noted that in addition to the plans to rev up political support through elected officials,

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► Equality Michigan

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the new strategy will also harness “affinity groups” to tell the LGBT equality story.

“That includes people of color and people of faith, as well as labor,” said Foster.

To accomplish this, the agency will tap into the existing network of community centers and LGBT equality organizations including groups like PFLAG and LAHR. With that grassroots movement, the organization will provide in-depth trainings on how to lobby and deliver effective messages on LGBT equality through story-telling

“We need labor telling the story of how they have always stood with the community,” said Foster. “We need LGBT people of color to tell their stories, and we definitely need people of faith telling their stories as well.”

The hope is that using this model – which all three leaders said was not a new model, as it is borrowed from numerous other social justice movements over time – will help shift the discussion on LGBT equality and civil rights making it more

“What you see is a conversation about strategy. We are unified as a community that civil rights have to happen. We’re debating how that happens.”

- Equality Michigan Executive Director Stephanie White

untenable for politicians to fail to support inclusive legislation.

It will also, Triplett noted, create powerful political ties.

And that political strength is essential in addressing LGBT equality issues and beating back so-called Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) like bills which would carve out exemptions to allow religious groups to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The political power, White noted, would also prevent politicians from trading away our rights – as apparently happened last year when Snyder signed legislation allowing adoption agencies that contract with the state of Michigan to discriminate against those to whom they would provide adoption services. Snyder allegedly traded his signature on that bill for a legislative deal to fix the state’s crumbling road infrastructure.

“The goal is to get to the point where we aren’t bargained like that,” White said.

SEE RELATED VIEWPOINT

The Winning Path to Equality

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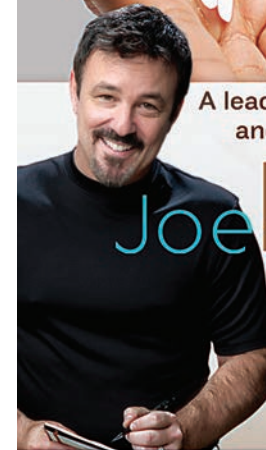


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Pence Backing Religious Freedom in LGBT Rights Debate

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) – Indiana Gov. Mike Pence said Jan. 12 he would prioritize religious freedom in the debate over civil rights protections for gay and transgender people, showing no retreat from his stance during last spring’s national uproar over the state’s religious objections law.

The Republican governor said in his half-hour televised State of the State speech before legislators that no one should be mistreated because of “who they love or what they believe.” But he also said that “no one should ever fear persecution because of their deeply held religious beliefs.”

“I will not support any bill that diminishes the religious freedom of Hoosiers or interferes with the constitutional rights of our citizens to live out their beliefs in worship, service or work,” Pence said.

The religious objections law Pence signed in March prohibits other state laws that “substantially burden” a person’s ability to follow his or her religious beliefs. It led to a social media-driven storm of protests, with critics calling for boycotts of the state because they believed the law would sanction discrimination against gays.

After Tuesday’s speech, the group Indiana Competes, which represents prominent state business interests – including Cummins Inc., Eli Lilly and Co. and the NCAA – expressed disappointment with Pence’s remarks.

“We were looking for a moment of leadership, and what we got is a shoulder shrug,” said group spokesman Peter Hanscom, who said Pence’s conciliatory words won’t stop discrimination against gay people in employment, housing and public accommodation.

Pence had avoided taking a position on the issue for months, though bills are pending in the Legislature that would extend varying degrees of LGBT protections, along with a long list of religious exemptions. Pence didn’t say specifically whether he believed those bills would infringe on religious freedoms.

Republican Senate leader David Long said he believes measures in the Senate could comply with Pence’s guidelines, but added Pence has “kept his cards pretty close to the vest.”

Pence’s speech – heading into what’s expected to be a hotly contested re-election campaign this fall – focused on where Indiana has been as a state and where Pence would like it to go, including plans for increased government spending. Pence faces a likely gubernatorial election rematch in November with Democrat John Gregg, the former Indiana House speaker he narrowly beat in 2012.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane said Pence made clear which side of the social divide he stands on.

“He’s proud of what happened last year and thinks it’s absolutely not necessary to restore our reputation as a state,” Lanane said.

The 2016 LGBT Political Climate

BY AJ TRAGER

According to a recent report by the Human Rights Campaign, 115 anti-LGBT bills were introduced by state lawmakers in 2015. Many of these state Legislatures have provisions that allow bills introduced in the previous year to carry over into the current term if they were neither enacted nor defeated. Many of the bills introduced nationwide were Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) bills that would authorize individuals, businesses and taxpayer-funded agencies to cite any reason to refuse services to LGBT people. But the most heinous of bills introduced seek to restrict access to bathrooms by transgender people and eliminate the ability of local governments to protect LGBT residents and visitors.

“2016 will prove a critical year for the fight for LGBT equality in states across the country,” said HRC President Chad Griffin. “The progress our movement has made is threatened by an organized effort to pass discriminatory legislation that seeks to rollback our hard-won rights. We will have much work to do to defend our rights this year, but we will not waiver in our fight to expand the map for LGBT equality to every corner of this country.”

So what is coming to the ring in 2016 in the fight for LGBT equality?

Unlike Texas, Montana, Nevada and North Dakota, whose Legislatures do not have a 2016 session, the Michigan Legislature will meet throughout all of 2016 and will have a chance to discuss and amend proposed legislation that would further disadvantage the LGBT community and provide Michigan residents with a license to discriminate against the LGBT community.

Michigan is one of two dozen states considering anti-LGBT legislation.

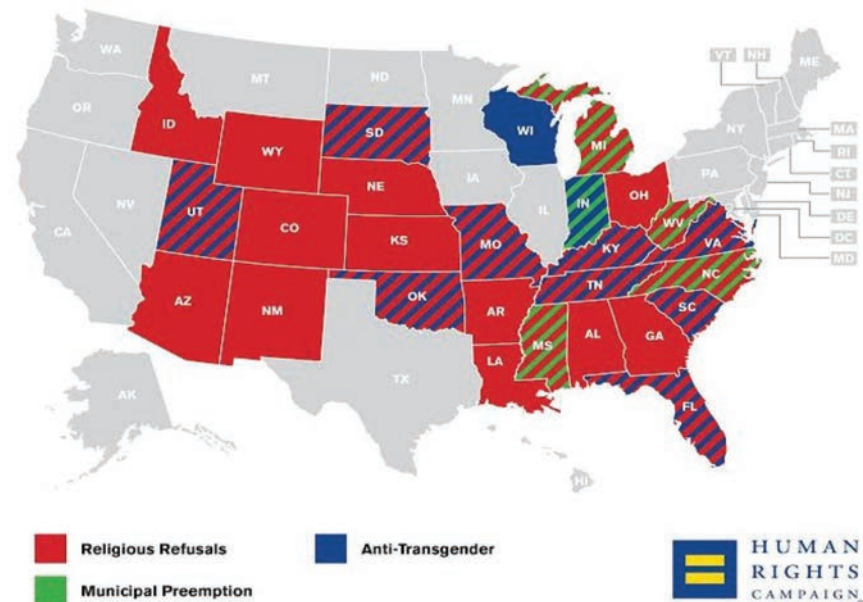
RFRA were originally intended to

protect genuine religious freedom, such as the persecution of Native American spiritual practices; however, many states are using RFRA legislation to override LGBT anti-discrimination laws and deny women reproductive healthcare. This type of legislation would authorize religious exemptions so that a business owner or working professional could deny LGBT people access to a product or service. Many organizations and activists fought against the Michigan Senate Bill 4 that was introduced Jan. 20 last year but never moved out of committee.

Michigan

In states where pro-LGBT equality is the majority opinion and there are existing state-level protections against anti-LGBT discrimination, efforts are on the rise to pass legislation addressing bullying in schools, protecting the youth from “conversion therapy,” simplifying name and gender marker changes on identity documents and requiring LGBT cultural competency training for medical and social service providers.

States with a High Likelihood of Anti-LGBT Legislation in 2016 Legislative Session



Following the outcome last spring where Indiana Gov. Mike Pence signed into law a RFRA bill that many felt would legalize discrimination against the LGBT community, Gov. Snyder finally took a position in April and said that he would not sign similar legislation.

“Given all the events that are happening in Indiana, I thought it would be good to clarify my position,” Snyder said. “I would veto RFRA legislation in Michigan if it is a standalone piece of legislation.”

SB4 is just one of 14 RFRA measures that were introduced across the country in the past year and have the opportunity to be passed into law in coming months.

While various organizations in Michigan are working on those efforts by educating and spreading awareness, perhaps the biggest fight on the minds of LGBT people in the state is the push to get statewide housing, employment and other legal protections for LGBT people that are currently not established in Michigan law. An effort that many in the state have been fighting to establish for decades.

A bipartisan effort was made in 2014 to get the state Legislature to pass an amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, however issues over whether it was necessary to include gender identity and

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Obama's Last State of the Union: Religion, Coming Out, and Sally Ride

BY LISA KEEN

In his final State of the Union address, President Obama on Jan. 12 seemed intent on both acknowledging the nation's rifts and binding together those disparate parts with a "common creed" devoted to democracy. Unlike in some previous addresses, President Obama did not call for specific actions to promote equality for LGBT people, but he did pay tribute to both large and small victories of the movement. He referred to marriage equality once, uttered the word "gay" once and urged Americans to appreciate and celebrate the nation's "diversity" and "commitment to the rule of law." And he included lesbian astronaut Sally Ride in his short list of American historical legends.

"(W)hen I no longer hold this office, I'll be right there with you as a citizen, inspired by those voices of fairness and vision ... voices that help us see ourselves not first and foremost as black or white or Asian or Latino, not as gay or straight, immigrant or native born; not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans first, bound by a common creed," said President Obama. "I see it in the soldier who gives almost everything to save his brothers, the nurse who tends to him 'til he can run a marathon, and the community that lines up to cheer him on. It's the son who finds the courage to come out as who he is, and the father whose love for that son overrides everything he's been taught."

Lorri Jean, chief executive officer of the nation's largest LGBT community and health center, the Los Angeles LGBT Center, called it "Obama at his best."

"I can remember hearing presidents give speeches that included a line or two that was more historic or that moved me more strongly," said Jean, "like when (President Bill) Clinton mentioned gay and lesbian people from the capitol steps in Arkansas the night he first won the presidential election. Or, in last year's State of the Union, when Obama mentioned transgender people. But I do not remember any previous State of the Union address that has seemed as aspirational and optimistic – that represented the kind of clear-eyed leadership that our nation so desperately needs."

"From an LGBT perspective, I was happy to hear him highlight the fact that ending HIV/AIDS is within our grasp. I liked that he mentioned Sally Ride. And, I was really touched by his use of a coming out metaphor as an example that epitomizes what makes America great," said Jean. "Plus, I loved his concept of unarmed truth and unconditional love having the final word. Anytime that happens, our community benefits."



Rea Carey, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, said President Obama's speech "denounced the politics of hatred and divisiveness" and "reminded all of us of our core American values of dignity and mutual respect in what is a fiercely divisive political climate." Both President Obama's address and the Republican Party's response, delivered by South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, spoke against conflicts that target religions. President Obama said he opposes "politics that targets people because of race or religion," but he said nothing of those who use religion to target people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Haley said that, if Republicans held the White House, "We would respect differences in modern families," an apparent reference to same-sex couples marrying. But she said Republicans would "insist on respect for religious liberty as a cornerstone of our democracy." She said nothing of the constitution's equal protection clause and attempts by some to claim that personal religious beliefs trump that clause.

"I was far more impressed by Gov. Nikki Haley and her call to 'respect differences in modern families' while at the same time balancing that respect with a concern for religious liberty – a position Log Cabin Republicans has long advocated," said national Log Cabin Republicans President Gregory Angelo. "It was refreshing to see a Republican explicitly acknowledge that on a

major national stage."

Unlike in previous addresses, President Obama did not point to special White House guests in the gallery to illustrate issues he talked about in his speech. Two gay men were among the 23 guests seated with First Lady Michelle Obama in the Congressional gallery during the State of the Union. One was Jim Obergefell, a lead plaintiff in one of four cases that successfully challenged state bans on marriage for same-sex couples. The other was Ryan Reyes, whose partner Daniel Kaufman was killed during the Dec. 2 terrorist attack in San Bernardino.

A White House press release characterized Obergefell, who hails from Cincinnati, as an "accidental activist" who challenged Ohio's refusal to recognize his marriage to John Arthur on Arthur's death certificate. The couple, who had been together for 20 years, became the focus of national attention in 2013



Jim Obergefell, a lead plaintiff in one of four cases that successfully challenged state bans on marriage for same-sex couples, meeting Pres. Obama last June. Obergefell was a guest of the Obamas at the State of the Union address.

when they had to rent a private jet to enable Arthur, who was bed-ridden and near death from ALS, to travel to Maryland so they could obtain a marriage license. The press release identified Reyes as an "activist" who spoke out to discourage hostility toward Muslims after Kaufman's death at the hands of two Muslim

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Ingrid Nilsen, one of three popular YouTube “creators” chosen to ask the president questions in conjunction with his State of the Union address Jan. 12.

Obama on LGBT Equality: ‘Stay Vigilant and Keep Working On It’

BY LISA KEEN

President Obama said Friday he thinks the LGBT movement will “keep moving in the right direction, as long as we stay vigilant and keep working on it.”

He made his comment in response to a question from Ingrid Nilsen, one of three popular YouTube “creators” chosen to ask the president questions in conjunction with his State of the Union address Jan. 12.

Nilsen, who came out as a lesbian on her YouTube channel last June, asked President Obama whether it might be possible that some recent progress toward LGBT equality is “not here to stay in certain states.”

Her question was prompted, she noted, by the recent announcement by the Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice that that state’s ban remains in “full force and effect” until the state Supreme Court can weigh in on what effect the U.S. Supreme Court decision to strike down state bans on marriage for same-sex couples has on the Alabama

ban.

“No, no, no, it’s here to stay,” said President Obama, who was being interviewed in the East Room of the White House Friday afternoon. “Understand that the Supreme Court has ruled that, under the constitution, everybody in all 50 states has the right to marry the person they love. So that’s now the law of the land.

“The fact that an Alabama judge is resisting is just a temporary gesture by a judge which will be rapidly overturned because it violates what’s called the Supremacy Clause,” he said. “When the federal constitution speaks, then everybody has to abide by it and state laws and state judges can’t overturn it. So, you shouldn’t be worried about that. I think that the process of changing people’s attitudes, the process of people treating the LGBT community with full equality and respect, making sure they’re not discriminated on the job or in housing or things like that – those are areas where we’ve still got some significant work to do.

“And, for young people, making sure they’re not bullied – that requires the participation of all of us.” President Obama continued. “So, we’re not there yet. On the other hand, I got to tell you that, to watch the amazing strides we’ve made over the last five years, 10 years, 20 years, and all of this is a result of the incredible courage of people who had the courage to come and say, ‘Here’s who I am,’ but who did it 20, 30 years ago when it was incredibly tough. It was because of their courage and their activism that we’ve seen the changes we’ve made, and I’m confident we’ll keep on making them.

“The thing that makes me most hopeful about this,” he added, “is when I talk to Malia and Sasha and young people of your generation, their attitudes are so different. The notion that you discriminate against someone because of sexual orientation is so out of sync with how most young people think – including young Republicans, young

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terrorists. Another LGBT activist in the Congressional gallery Tuesday night was 32-year-old Alicia Garza, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter, an organization created to respond to anti-black racism in American society. Garza attended as a guest of her member of the House, U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.

Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin attended as a guest of U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., sponsor of the Equality Act. Anti-gay activist Kim Davis was also in the House chamber for the State of the Union, seated in the back row. Davis is the county clerk in Kentucky who refused to enforce the U.S. Supreme Court decision that said state bans on marriage for same-sex couples are unconstitutional. She claimed it would violate her religion to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Her attorney, Mathew Staver, would not identify which member of Congress invited Davis to the event. (Each member of the House and Senate can bring one guest. Some can invite two, if they secure an unused ticket from a colleague.)

The Guests

Guests of LGBT caucus members U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc., invited a University of Wisconsin communications major, Britney Woods, to be her guest at the State of the Union address Tuesday night. According to a Wisconsin newspaper, Woods met Baldwin at a roundtable discussion on college affordability. Guests of other members of the LGBT Congressional Caucus included:

- 12-year-old Boulder student Kyla Bursiek who is lobbying Nintendo to include characters with disabilities in its videogames. Bursiek was the guest of Rep. Jared Polis, D-Colo.

- The parents of U.S. Army Special Forces Sgt. Andrew McKenna Jr., a Rhode Island veteran who was killed in Afghanistan last August, attended as guests of Rep. David Cicilline, D-RI.

- The wife of San Bernardino shooting victim Damian Meins was guest of Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif.

- Alderman Samba Baldeh of Madison, Wisconsin, a Muslim immigrant from Gambia, was guest of Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wisc.

- Two high school students, Rida and Salwa Hajaig, were guests of Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz. Rida is Desert Vista High School’s senior class president, and Salwa, a sophomore, is an honors student.

- The office of Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-NY, did not respond to a query to identify his guest.

Last Friday, 26-year-old lesbian Ingrid Nilsen, who has a YouTube channel with 3.8 million subscribers, was one of three YouTube “creators” to “host a live YouTube interview” with President Obama. Nilsen had questions concerning LGBT issues and other matters. She solicited questions from her viewers.

The White House streamed the YouTube interview last Friday. It can be watched at YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/whitehouse> and at whitehouse.gov’s special State of the Union page.

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Democrats. I mean, I think it's across some of the usual political lines. This is an issue that's going to keep moving in the right direction, as long as we stay vigilant and keep working on it."

Ironically, this year's State of the Union address was one of the few in which President Obama did not lay out a specific goal to accomplish for the LGBT community.

In his first official State of the Union address, in 2010, President Obama said he would work with Congress and the military to repeal the ban on openly gay Americans serving. Reaction in the LGBT community was mixed: Some applauded the statement; others said the time for promises was over and that the president should create a plan to make it happen.

By December that year, Congress agreed to a plan that the policy would end as soon as the president, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff certified that repeal would not jeopardize military readiness. They so certified and the policy was repealed in September 2011.

In January 2011, President Obama disappointed many LGBT activists when he did not call for repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act. Instead, he called on college

campuses to "open their doors to our military recruiters." President Obama's 2012 address made passing mention of "gay or straight" members of the military.

In 2013, the president again talked about members of the military "gay and straight" and made a pitch for ensuring that all people can "get ahead no matter where you come from, what you look like or who you love."

In June of that year, with the support of the Obama administration, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act. President Obama got a little more specific in January 2014, when

"The notion that you discriminate against someone because of sexual orientation is so out of sync with how most young people think – including young Republicans, young Democrats.

he spoke about "marriage equality" and the "inherent dignity and equality of every human being, regardless of race or religion, creed or sexual orientation." In a separate "supplemental" statement to the State of the Union, President Obama stated that, "It's time to add sexual orientation and gender identity to (the) list" of types of discrimination prohibited by federal law. And he explicitly endorsed the Employment

Non-Discrimination Act, which sought to provide job security for LGBT people.

Of course, in June 2015, with the full support of the Obama administration, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down bans to marriage for same-sex couples in every state. During last year's State of the Union address, President Obama talked about LGBT people in the context of preserving American values and respecting human dignity.

"That's why we defend free speech and advocate for political prisoners and condemn the persecution of women or religious minorities or people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender," said the president. "We do these things not only because they are the right thing to do but because, ultimately, they will make us safer."

Human Rights Campaign spokesman Stephen Peters said the president's explicit mention of transgender people last year was historic. Peters said HRC hoped the president this year would address the community's remaining challenges, including the "need to pass the Equality Act for full federal LGBT equality, HIV/AIDS funding, the current Department of Defense review of the outdated regulations preventing transgender service members from serving authentically, and a host of other areas."

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expression protections in the bill's language left it sitting in committee.

Fair Michigan, the nonprofit organization now seeking 315,000 pro-LGBT signatures from registered voters, is working to get a ballot question placed on the voter's ticket in November. The ballot question, if passed, would add LGBT protections into the state constitution. However, shortly after it was announced, the ballot proposal fell under heavy scrutiny. Seventeen LGBT organizations and affiliates signed a letter requesting Fair Michigan collaborate with the trans community and since then, the community and its leaders have been split on whether or not a ballot initiative is the right course in Michigan for the upcoming year.

Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Florida, Arizona, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Idaho are the only states with campaigns working in 2016 to amend existing state anti-discrimination laws to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. A similar measure is afoot in Massachusetts where state lawmakers are continuing to pass a bill that would add gender identity to an existing state law that already includes protections for sexual orientation.

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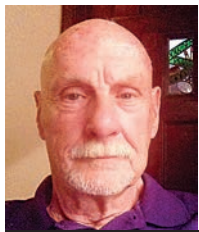
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A John by Any Other Name Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

SOURCE: Lone Star Police Gazette & Badge Polisher (Waco, Texas).
HEADLINE: Undercover cops make Sunday surprise restroom arrests.

Mark your activist, Sunday-go-to-meeting desk calendar ...

“While thousands were inside the Hallelujah Handclap of Hope Tabernacle Miracle Megachurch singing ‘Love Lifted Me,’ six weeks of amazing undercover police work came to a head, so to speak, last Advent Sunday.

“Several persons were ‘ nabbed.’ They were sitting in the wrong church stall at the wrong time. Arrests were made without drawing undue attention to the offenders. Each was escorted from church property in a covering choir or baptismal robe.

“Those arrested were fortunately proven to be of baptismal age at the Waco District Six Police Headquarters, once their respective collected wallets, IDs, pants, shirts, long johns, occasional high heels, were sorted through and matched to the individual arrestee configuration.

“The match-up process took a little under three hours, in part due to the asking of what is essentially a touchy theocratic question involving whether or not a violation of the HHH Tabernacle’s posted men’s restroom requirement occurred.

“Those arrested were advised that they have a right to refuse to divulge status, vis-à-vis the unequivocal sanctioned use of the facility in question, clearly marked in large English Gothic letters **SAVED** in contradistinction to another similar restroom 200 feet away marked plainly **UNSAVED**.

“Even so, one or two of the arrestees are brazenly thinking of asking so-called LGBT lawyers to bring legal action against the megachurch for what is – at least to arrestee preconceived perception – a clear case of discrimination involving use of a public-blessed, sin-free, toll-free facility.

“Rev. Delburt B. Windwiper, HHH pastor, when contacted on the QT by Lone Star reporter Lois Lane-Kent, is alleged to have said, ‘I don’t see how they have a p–ing leg to stand on. The simple fact is you’re either saved or you’re unsaved. This certainly isn’t discrimination in God’s sight. If you’re going to Hell, well, you’re going to Hell. No matter what restroom you happen to frequent, and for whatever the burning urgency.

“‘What’s really offensive to any fair-minded Christian is that the offenders did their nefarious business a) on Sundays and b) in a restroom clearly marked for the whole world to see. **SAVED!** That’s something that’s just not done.

“‘I want to make it abundantly clear! We – that is our HHH board of directors, our financial banking investment team, our health store employees, our senior citizens retirement association, our American chain of Bible trinket shops, all 5,000 saved, baptized not sprinkled, primarily Republican HHH members – we don’t discriminate.

“‘Our members include blacks (at last count four), Mexicanos (two, with appropriate Green Card), Jewish converts (.5), assorted others (probably in the neighborhood – maybe a less affluent one at that – of 12).

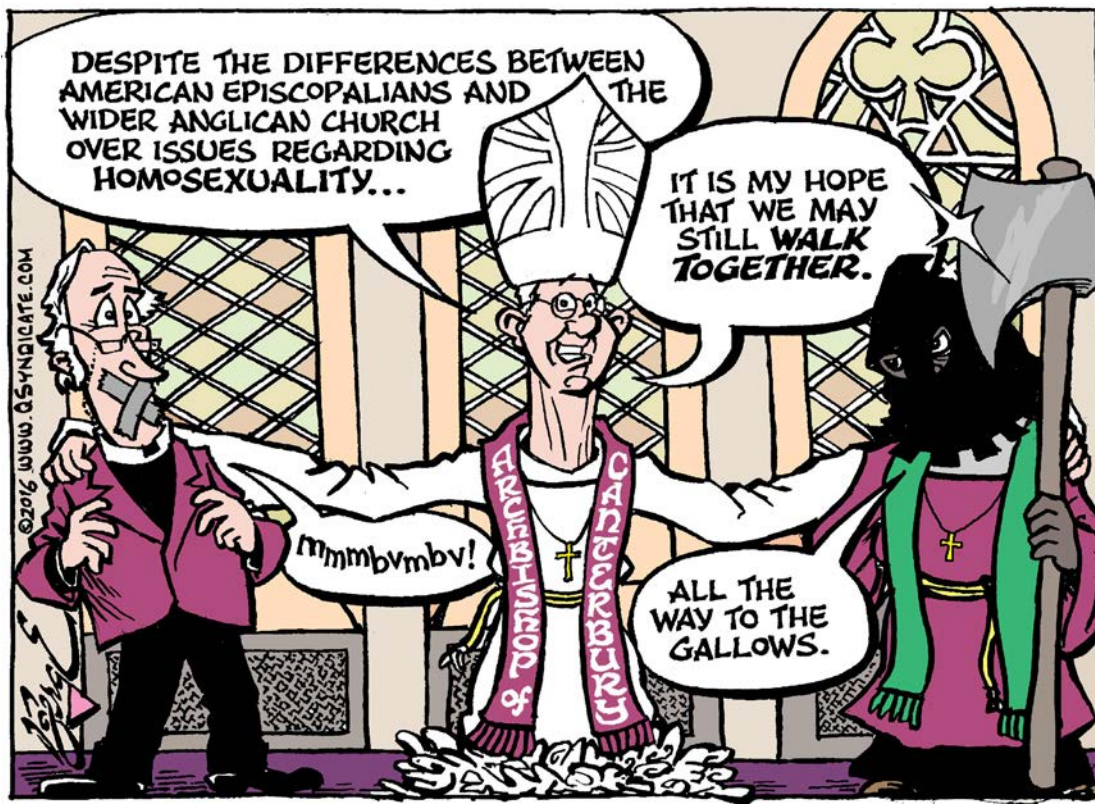
“‘We tried to include gays (the balcony last two rows) but look what’s happened. Six months ago, it was brought to board attention that these gays were being bold as brass in using the restroom they had no business using. Not one of 10 in 10,000 is saved.

“‘If you’re not **SAVED**, it would stand to reason that you’d use the **UNSAVED** facility, which by the way is just as clean, although the Bible-verse toilet tissue and paper towels therein aren’t blessed.’”

Charge: “Disorderly conduct for staging so-called weekly ‘nude-in’ protests with occasional Gospel Tract toilet bowl closings to affect status change of perceived discrimination in the use of a necessary adjunct to optimal daily good health, mental well being of unsaved, unrelenting gay persons.”

Amen. Ah-men. Whatever!

Charles@pridesource.com



Viewpoint



OPINION BY LIZ LAMOSTE

Affirmations: It’s Time to Bring the Community Back to the Center

I respectfully request that the Board dedicate a portion of its upcoming meeting to community concerns and host the meeting in the Affirmations community room at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 27.

Affirmations announced the termination of the program that essentially started the organization, its Helpline, near the end of 2015, offering reasons such as: “Affirmations is not a crisis agency,” “running a helpline can be fairly costly,” because the monthly calls dropped from over 100 to 80-100 calls, and because they suffered from prank calls. I’m confounded and disappointed by this decision for several reasons.

First, if we’re talking about an LGBTQIA* organization, a part of that organization’s mission is necessarily crisis-oriented. Because whether we like it or not, our community is still in crisis and no LGBTQIA* organization should ignore it. As far as cost is concerned, Affirmations had a grant to improve and promote the Helpline, and such a core program could easily be funded with a bit of effort. Even if the numbers were slightly declining, isn’t helping at least a few people in immediate crisis worth it? Or, couldn’t having the Helpline services be adapted instead, perhaps by providing chat services or exploring other alternatives?

Shortly before that announcement, the abrupt exit of former Executive Director Darrious Hilmon came to light, which was accompanied by high staff

turnover both upon his arrival and departure. And instead of the announcement and onboarding of an engaging new executive director who is poised to provide Affirmations with new energy and forward momentum, Susan Erspamer is already embroiled in scandal as she has used a historically anti-gay tactic in her custody litigation just weeks on the job. While I understand that custody litigation is personal, the role of executive director for one of the region’s oldest LGBT community organizations carries a special social significance. What message does it send to have someone lead Affirmations who is willing to try to undermine the interests of the LGBT community as a whole for personal gain?

Each of these issues is concerning, and taken together, it’s fair to worry about the quality of leadership and decision-making in Affirmations and the organization’s sustainability. I’m a person who has longstanding, but highly intermittent, involvement

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with Affirmations. And as I've read the news articles in the past year I've often thought, "You know, that's distressing I guess, but it'll get sorted out and I have other things to do." After more reflection, I realize now that this response is a mistake.

I first became involved in Affirmations in 2003 when I was doing Gay-Straight Alliance organizing work in high school, and Cass Varner had enough faith in me to allow me to build and run a Regional Gay-Straight Alliance. That experience gave me confidence and one of my first opportunities to hone my advocacy skills, and those are skills that I use every day as an attorney at work and an organizer in my spare time. I know that many others have had positive, formative and affirming experiences at Affirmations, and there are many more of these experiences yet to be had.

Affirmations "provides a welcoming space where people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and cultures can find support and unconditional acceptance; and can learn, grow, and have fun." My past experiences are consistent with this mission. But, the recent developments I cite above suggest a lack of commitment to this mission.

So, again, why does this matter? It matters first because we have a collective responsibility to think about all of the members of our community, especially those most vulnerable. What about the local person who knew of Affirmations and the Helpline, but only felt comfortable enough to try to place a call into the Helpline after its needless discontinuation? What about a young person who would really benefit from additional youth empowerment programming that we don't have right now, but could? Have we really committed enough resources to the most vulnerable members of our community? Will Affirmations be around to serve them, and even if it is, will it do so?

And, our community is broader than those who reside in Southeast Michigan. I've always viewed Affirmations as a symbol of LGBTQIA* pride and resilience, especially as we still face a political climate where members of our community are discriminated against and are oftentimes unsafe. We need to invest our best in Affirmations even as we get incremental civil rights victories, especially as our community still faces contentious policy challenges, including the ballot initiative spearheaded by Fair Michigan, to name but one example.

Now is an opportune time for reflection. What are the long-term goals of Affirmations? Is there a strategic plan already? Who gets to decide?

How is community defined? Who does it include? How is that being communicated, and to whom? How can community members contribute to developing those goals?

The laws and policies governing LGBTQIA* lives continue to evolve and change, and Affirmations needs to provide the literal and metaphorical space for those discussions on how to handle those discussions, even if it doesn't end up taking official policy positions.

The Board has the responsibility to take leadership to correct these problems, move towards well-defined goals, and to actively participate in the response to attacks against our community when they occur. But this isn't just up to the Board, and the Board shouldn't be expected to do it alone. Community members, myself included, have also disinvested our time and attention away from the Aff. And that has to change. We all have an opportunity to critically examine where our community is going and the challenges that Affirmations currently faces. But the dialogue needs to start now.

I respectfully request that the Board dedicate a portion of its upcoming meeting to community concerns and host the meeting in the Affirmations community room at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 27, and we strongly encourage that the Board invite any member of the community with a connection to Affirmations to come and participate.

I also request that the Board commit to increasing transparency into the organization and its operations, that they create and fully participate in community forums, and that they establish a community advisory board so that community feedback is systematically sought and synthesized. As the Board opens the door to this dialogue, we need to show up and engage and help how we can.

Affirmations, it's time for the community to return to the center.

Liz Lamoste is a local attorney, social justice advocate and proud Ferndalian.

Creep of the Week

Liberty Ridge Farm

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

While I've never been there in person, Liberty Ridge Farm looks like a beautiful place according to the photos on their website. Lush green grass, handsome horses and goats, a rainbow of various flowers, hearty corn stalks taller than your head.

It's the kind of place a couple looking to get married might want to hold their event. And Liberty Ridge Farm offers that experience. "Panoramic views, beautiful barns, and acres of picturesque countryside makes Liberty Ridge Farm an ideal location for those bridal couples looking for country rustic charm," their website reads.

To be clear, though, you can't get married there. Your vows have to happen somewhere else. But you can reception there all you want. That's because in 2012 a lesbian couple, Jennifer and Melisa McCarthy (not to be confused with Jenny "anti-vaccine lunatic" and Melissa "hilarious actress" McCarthy, who are cousins, not spouses. At least not to each other) wanted to have their wedding at Liberty Ridge. And Liberty Ridge said, "Uh, no thanks. That's gross. Because God."

So the McCarthys sued. And the law was on their side. It took a couple of years, but they won.

According to the ACLU, "(A)s the New York State Division of Human Rights ruled in 2014, under New York's Human Rights Law, public businesses cannot discriminate on the basis of race, sexual orientation, national origin or other protected classes."

Not satisfied with that ruling, the owners of Liberty Ridge Farms, Robert and Cynthia Gifford, appealed, saying they weren't discriminating based on sexual orientation, they were just making a decision "based solely upon the Giffords' religious beliefs regarding same-

sex marriage," according to ThinkProgress.

See the difference? "Hey judge, it isn't about their sexual orientation, it's about our religious belief about marriage. Granted, our belief just happens to hinge on the sexual orientation of the people getting married, but that's a minor technicality, right?"

Wrong. They lost again. On Jan. 15 the appeals court ruled that the Giffords were in the wrong and that their argument was bullshit.

That doesn't mean it's over, of course. According to their lawyer, Caleb Dalton of the virulently anti-gay Alliance Defending Freedom, "The government went after both this couple's freedom and their ability to make a living simply for adhering to their faith on their own property. The court should have rejected this unwarranted and unconstitutional government intrusion, so we will consult with our client regarding appeal."

The headline on the ADF's press release is very revealing: "NY court: Farmers can't obey their faith in their own backyard."

According to ADF, when the McCarthy's first called about using Liberty Ridge Farm for their wedding, "Cynthia politely told McCarthy that she and her husband don't host and coordinate same-sex ceremonies but left open an invitation to visit the farm to consider it as a potential reception site. Instead, McCarthy and her partner filed a complaint with the Division of Human Rights."

What? They filed a complaint about discrimination? But Cynthia Gifford was polite! How dare they!

Make no mistake that this case will ramp up efforts across the country to pass so-called "religious freedom" laws. The anti-gay right has gotten quite used to discriminating for any reason with impunity. Now that LGBT people are winning more civil rights, the anti-gay wing is doubling down on legislation that declared discrimination against LGBT people a "religious freedom." About half of the states have some kind of legislation in place. Stay tuned.

Letter to the Editor: Regarding Michigan LGBT Ballot History

This letter is in response to Tim Retzloff's commentary: "Remembering the History of Michigan's LGBT Ballot Fights," published in BTL Jan. 14, issue 2402.

As Tim Retzloff points out, there have been many successes in establishing local legal protections from discrimination for LGBT people in cities across Michigan. With extraordinary efforts in some ballot cases, utilizing armies of volunteers and meaningful resources, some cities have been successful in adding LGBT protections to their nondiscrimination policies. In some cities, city councils, not the voters, have established LGBT legal protections. Sadly, transgender

individuals are still not protected, even in cities with LGB protections.

Despite local successes, there are still no instances of any successful statewide LGBT-related referenda in Michigan. None. Not one. And certainly none yet has included the hot button issue of gender identity. Michigan voters have never approved of LGBT civil rights protections in a statewide ballot initiative.

I am grateful for Dr. Retzloff's scholarship, but optimism about LGBT progress must be tempered by the fact that winning statewide recognition requires time, cash and organization. The critical lesson learned in building a national movement towards marriage equality – over a

40-year span – is that the LGBT community, partnering with our friends and advocates, moved the hearts and minds of the majority of the general public. We must be mindful that our every push forward should be thoughtful and strategic because poorly-timed, hastily and inadequately executed initiative efforts waste our resources, damage our political clout, drain our energies and demoralize our spirits.

Look online here www.equalitymi.org/resources/cities-with-legal-protection for a list of Michigan cities that offer LGBT legal protections.

*Howard Israel
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan*



My David Bowie

OPINION BY GWEN SMITH

Something magical happened in my life late in the evening of the 14th of December, 1979. For years, I had been used to watching the television in my parents' front room quietly every Saturday evening, watching "Saturday Night Live" into the wee hours. It was a ritual of mine from the first season well into the show's much leaner 1980s years.

The guest that night was Martin Sheen, and while I can recall a couple of the comedy skits that night, they did not even remotely have the lasting impact that the musical guest would.

Performing that night was David Bowie, who played three tracks that night. Most point to his performance of "The Man Who Sold The World" as the highlight of the night, or perhaps his puppet-like performance of the then-current single, "Boys Keep Swinging." It was his first track, however, that would forever change the mind of this one young kid living in the suburbs.

I had heard of, and heard the music of, Bowie before that night. You could not avoid tracks like "Space Oddity" on the rock radio stations of the time. I enjoyed the song well enough, but it was just another tune blaring out of my yellow Panasonic Panapet.

Bowie's first performance that night was the song "TVC 15," a sci-fi story about a man whose wife ended up trapped inside a holographic television set. At the time, though, I had no idea of the story behind the song: all I had was the spectacle unfolding on my television screen.

Front and center was David Bowie, who hit the microphone wearing a bluish-gray men's style top and matching A-line skirt, while one backup singer pantomimed walking a bright pink poodle – with a television screen embedded in it – as the other pretended to read a newspaper. They too wore skirted outfits: one in black and the other in red.

I would later learn that these two were Klaus Nomi, a countertenor known for avant-garde musical performances, and Joey Arias, a cabaret singer and drag artist.

I had by this point in my life already gained a rudimentary idea of what being transgender was, though my knowledge was – to say the least – very limited, and focused largely on transsexuality. The notion that someone could wear an outfit like that while still appearing male, and be celebrated, was mind-blowing. It was simply nothing I'd ever heard of back in '79.

Over the ensuing years, of course, my knowledge of things trans grew by leaps and bounds, as did my knowledge of David Bowie. I went through a very heavy Ziggy Stardust period, two and a half decades after Bowie had hung up the platform boots and pancake makeup, spending my idle hours poring over his lyrics and style both.

At the time, I was hip-deep in my own gender transition, and took a lot of strength from listening to, amongst other things, David Bowie's many albums. "Life on Mars" gave me life, while "Rebel Rebel" gave me the power to make it out the other side.

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OPINION BY STEPHANIE WHITE

The Winning Path to Equality

There's power in numbers and we know we have the numbers on our side. More and more people every day believe that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity should be against the law.

We are all tired of waiting for the Michigan Legislature to get their act together and expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to include all of us, aren't we? When they aren't ignoring us (which is most days), they either roll back our rights, (such as codifying into law the right of adoption agencies to discriminate against us), or they fumble an attempt at doing something right (such as the recent failure to expand ELCRA). I understand it when I hear, "It can't be done. They are broken."

But I have another suggestion. What if we get serious about taking matters into our own hands? What if, instead of giving up on their brokenness, or waiting for them to come around, we build the power and the political conditions that lead the Legislature to do the right thing? The winning path to protecting our basic rights is longer than any of us would like. But the leadership in our community is smarter, more sophisticated and bigger than ever. We have a serious shot at updating the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act by 2019. If you are with us, here's what I suggest we do together over the next 3-4 years.

Build Relationships with Both Parties

There's an old adage in politics: "There are no permanent allies and no permanent enemies. Just permanent interests." Today in Michigan's movement for LGBT rights, that couldn't be more accurate. Historically we have been much more successful expanding our legal rights with the help of our Democratic friends. And too often, we've had to fight Republican enemies who demonize us. But of course, neither party is homogenous and we see people evolving every day.

Winning equality requires us to become more nuanced in working with lawmakers of both political parties. This isn't easy to do, especially in a highly polarizing presidential election year, but it can be done. Equality Michigan has started by creating a

bi-partisan board of directors whose members are building relationships for us all over the Capitol.

Increase Our Political Impact

Since we don't have the votes we need today to expand Elliott-Larsen, we have to create a majority of lawmakers who do share our values. Not a Democratic or Republican majority, but a pro-equality majority from both sides of the aisle. By pooling our resources and investing wisely, we can bring a few more allies with us to Lansing in both 2016 and 2018 and thereby shift the balance of power. Equality Michigan is helping to reboot Pride PAC and finding new investments for the first time in many years to make this possible.

Lawmakers are like the rest of us – there is a lot that they care about and a lot they are asked to do. It's easier to forget, to delay and to ignore the people who they don't interact with. We have to be relevant to lawmakers' lives. We have to build relationships of mutual respect and power. You can be part of that by showing up to candidate and lawmaker events, by helping with campaigns, by donating your time, talent and your voice to the political process. Let's all agree to vote this year. It doesn't even matter who you vote for, but only that lawmakers understand that the LGBT community is a voting population.

Create Momentum

There's power in numbers and we know we have the numbers on our side. More and more people every day believe that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity should be against the law. We need our lawmakers to know that everyone from faith leaders, business people, union members, straight allies, and more, support expanding Elliott-Larsen to include all of us.

In the next two years you will see

more coalitions like the Michigan Competitive Workforce Coalition emerging. Equality Michigan is working with LGBT Detroit to create a Queer People of Color Caucus across the state, and the ACLU has already launched the Transgender Advocacy Project. The state network of PFLAG is organizing straight allies, the National LGBTQ Task Force is working with faith leaders, and Pride At Work (the pro-LGBT union group) is rebooting their work in Michigan. You can build the power and impact of these groups by joining ongoing efforts or by creating your own.

Tell Our Stories

Lastly, we know we still have a great deal of teaching we have to do. We have to educate lawmakers, the general public, the media, and our friends, family and neighbors. When we tell our stories at our community gatherings, at our club meetings, to the press, and to lawmakers, they understand us and they support us. We have to win over both hearts and minds, and all the fact sheets in the world don't carry as much weight as our personal stories and human connections. In 2017 when the ELCRA expansion bill is introduced again for the new legislative session, we'll all come to Lansing to show our collective support and tell our stories en masse.

As you might recognize, this is not a new path that I'm suggesting. It's the same winning path to providing environmental protections, to expanding health care and to winning civil rights. I know we've tried and stumbled and been thwarted in the past, but that doesn't mean that we won't win our rights.

As a friend of mine likes to say, "No" is just the first thing they say before we win."

Stephanie White is the executive director of Equality Michigan. Find out more at <http://equalitymi.org>.



OPINION BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

2016: Time Has Changed Us, but We Can Change the Future

divisive than ever.

It's a new year and like it or not, there will be change! Instead of optimism, if you listen to the tone of the GOP debates, the change the 2016 elections suggest are changes we are more likely to want to run from than changes we can believe in. Fear, hatred, divisiveness spewed from the podium, the pulpit and the media. We all want to believe that they are just a vocal minority; that our friends/families and allies will stand with us on the side of justice and the progress of the last seven years under the Obama administration will continue. But will they? Will it?

Will Black Lives Matter in federal and state Legislatures designed to reflect the interests of the few by gerrymandering – the practice that establishes a political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating district boundaries?

Will rights for all Americans be expanded further and protected if judicial appointments, including those for the next member of the Supreme Court, come from elected officials who spew the vitriolic dialogue of the likes of Trump, Carson, etc. supported by voters who share the same mind set of voters like Kentucky County Clerk Kim Davis?

It's a new year, but listening to President Obama's final State of the Union address, although inspiring, reminded me of the scary future that lies ahead.

As crazy as the rhetoric from the GOP contenders seems; as divisive and destructive as it would be to continue upon our current political path; as much as we want to believe that the American electorate is smarter than this, many of us are still sitting on the fence waiting – waiting for someone to be the change only we ourselves can be.

Fear and ignorance tends to bring out the worst in people and unfortunately those who can be motivated by fear and ignorance come to the polls voting even when it is against their own best interests and those of their community.

Some folks believe their vote doesn't matter and opt to stay home on Election Day. We've seen what happens when we don't vote – congressional lines redrawn, voting rights under attack, discriminatory legislation passed and, even when something's the law of the land, "elected" officials opt to ignore it. President Obama said it best, "It is not easy. Our brand of democracy is hard."

There are no quick fixes. 2016 is the short game but to continue the momentum of the past seven years and to go even further to insure those unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness promised to all Americans, we have to prepare a long game.

How do we overcome the fear, and not necessarily change hearts and minds, but move them to put those unalienable rights of

equality first, even when it's uncomfortable? President Obama summed it up best, "If we want a better politics, it's not enough just to change a congressman or change a senator or even change a president. We have to change the system to reflect our better selves."

I know you're saying, "I'm only one person, my voice won't matter, won't be heard." Then join it with others. Find your tribe. Pull up your big progressive, LGBTQ, black, white, brown, intersectional pants and don't just hope that people will do the right thing: **Create Change!** And if you're looking for someplace to start, there will be over 4,000 of us doing just that in Chicago Jan. 20-24 at the 28th Annual Creating Change Conference.

Let's thank President Obama for his leadership, but now it's up to us. Let's roll up our sleeves, dig in our heels and lift every voice to build that nation Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed of where everyone will not be judged by the color of their skin, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity but by the content of their character. To paraphrase the late David Bowie, "Time has changed us, but we can change time!"

Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. You can follow her writing and activities at <http://www.mychangeiam.com> and on www.twitter.com/mychangeiam.



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► My David Bowie

Continued from p. 14

That coincided with when I first started to write for the Bay Area Reporter in 2000, and needing a name for my column, I reached back to that moment in 1979, as Bowie sang the two-word chorus for “TVC 15”: “Transition/Transmission.”

So Transmissions it is to this day, thanks again to that one moment where David Bowie opened my eyes and showed me a world I never imagined existed.

That he was in a blouse and skirt for his SNL performance was a bit of a lark, concocted after Arias and Nomi found their matching dresses on a pre-show shopping spree. It wasn’t anywhere near the first time that Bowie would challenge gender, having started with cross-gender presentation on the covers for “Hunky Dory” and “The Man Who Sold The World.”

He did these one better for the arrival of one of his best-known personas, that of Ziggy Stardust. With a shock of bright red hair and a face full of makeup, his platform boot-and-jumpsuit wearing androgynous space alien trod into the heart of a generation of fans who felt out of place. He embodied the outsider – and doubly so for anyone who felt alienated due to their gender or sexuality.

This continued into his Aladdin Sane character, with the now-iconic lightning-bolt-across-the-eye makeup. Even to the end, Bowie seemed to exist in a place beyond traditional gender roles, or, more succinctly, in an identity that existed by his own rules.

He would appear in female personas in the video for “Boys Keep Swinging” as well as the 2013 clip for “The Stars (Are Out Tonight),” crossing personas and characters with the equally androgynous actress Tilda Swinton. That video also featured Andreja Pejic, a transgender model.

Bowie is gone now, taken from this planet on the 10th of January. He’s yet another victim of cancer, gone too soon from this place.

In the wake of his passing, many have commented on how everyone has their “own” Bowie, much like how fans of the television series “Doctor Who” have a preferred actor for the eponymous lead character.

I wish I could claim it was the androgynous Ziggy Stardust that started me off as a fan, with his golden moon disk and flaming red hair, as well as his fluid sexual and gender identities.

For me, though, it will always be the Bowie who invaded my television set that December long ago.

Godspeed, Starman.

Gwen Smith wishes she could have given him a hug. You can find her on the web at gwensmith.com.

Lansing Community Mourns Passing of LGBT Leader

Bill Beachler founded LGBT scholarship, worked to run local organization for decades

BY TODD A. HEYWOOD

Bill Beachler, with his “perfect hair” and “remarkable presentation,” was an ever-present figure at nearly every LGBT and HIV related organizational event and activity in the Capitol City for decades. But on Tuesday, Jan. 12, the former state department of transportation employee, Spartan alumni and longtime publisher of the Lansing Association for Human Rights newsletter, passed away. He was 70.

Gary Hicks, a retired attorney in Lansing, has known Beachler since their days as undergrads at Michigan State University. He said in the summer of 1976, when he came out, Beachler was one of the people he struck up a friendship with.

“It was probably due to our being alumni of MSU, his love of sports and his participation in the community,” that caused the friendship to “bloom,” Hicks said.

Beachler was involved in the very early days of the Lansing Association for Human Rights. Hicks said he was in attendance at every meeting of the group from the late-’70s on. For decades Beachler also served as the publisher of the organization’s monthly newsletter.

“He relished his role as publisher of the newsletter because it allowed him to keep in contact with the different organizations and promote what they were doing,” said Hicks.

That early and lifelong commitment to the community made him a storehouse of history for the local community, said Hicks. Penny Gardner, president of LAHR, said he was “an institution.”

Activists and community leaders noted that Beachler was particularly proud of the formation, in 2000, of a scholarship for LGBT students. State Rep. Jon Hoadley, D-Kalamazoo, was the second student to receive that scholarship.

“He wanted to get to know each winner of the scholarship,” Hoadley said in a phone interview Jan. 13 from the floor of the state House. “As a freshman he took me to lunch at Clara’s – someplace I had never been to before – and he shared all this history and culture of the LGBT community that I, as a person from South Dakota, simply had no idea about. That mentorship was pivotal in the next choices I made to get involved.”

Hoadley said the scholarship introduced him to educational advocacy and empowered his love for politics. Hoadley became one of the state’s first openly gay lawmakers two years ago.



Bill Beachler was an avid MSU sports fan. He is pictured here at 2014 Rose Bowl. Courtesy of Gary Hicks

Beachler was a long time employee of the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the department named a rest area in Allegan County near Saugatuck after him upon his retirement.

But Hicks said there was more to Beachler than the politics. He said the former farm boy from Independence, Iowa loved euchre – spending two or three nights a week playing the card game and participating monthly in tournaments.

Hoadley said Beachler left “some big shoes to fill.”

“There is no question that the state of Michigan and the LGBT community lost an institution in Bill Beachler,” said Hoadley.

Local politicians and leaders have also been weighing on Beachler’s passing.

“We served on the MSU LGBT Alumni Association together for many years, and I worked closely with him on AIDS and LGBT related events when I was with the city,” wrote Jean Golden, a retired deputy city manager for the city of East Lansing. “Even before that, we worked together advocating for people with disabilities when he worked for the state Dept. of Transportation. For many years now, we have shared our thoughts, difficulties and successes in our lives together, every Monday night. He was the glue that held us all together – in every organization he worked with. He put in the daily effort to accomplish the tasks that needed to be done, even when many of us faltered. He was a tireless advocate, a generous donor who established the first LGBT scholarship at MSU. He was maddeningly exacting at times, but always

with the noblest of intentions. He cared. He was good to his soul, which is now free to soar unencumbered by illness or age. I am grateful to have known and worked with him. I will miss him very much.”

His impact on the city was reflected in a statement from Carol Wood, a city council member at-large.

“Bill Beachler has made an enormous impact on the lives of many,” Wood said in her statement. “His dreams of inclusive community and his willingness to work for that has help to change the fabric of our region. From the establishment in January 2000 of the Pride Scholarship Fund at MSU, to publisher of LAHR LGBT News, Bill has given countless hours, resources and talent to enlighten us as individuals. Words cannot express how much he will be missed.”

And Barb Byrum, the Ingham County Clerk and former state representative, has also weighed in.

“Today we lost a true trailblazer for equality,” said Byrum in a written statement. “Bill Beachler will be missed dearly, but his presence will remain with us at every equality event going forward, because we all know he would be there if he could. Because of Bill’s work and the work of so many other trailblazers, we have made major strides for equality, but we still have a long way to go. Let’s make Bill proud as we continue the fight in his honor.”

Beachler’s brother, Jim, said funeral arrangements were still being planned and would include services in both Michigan and his native Iowa.

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Confessions of a Superfan

Why a Michigan Author Wrote 581 Pages on Madonna

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Matthew Rettenmund is only kidding, but his enduring commitment to Madonna isn't lost on him when he jokes, "She has me on speed *hang-up*." It's a statement that couldn't ring truer if it were, well, true.

Except Rettenmund, the author known for quenching your man-thirst via his site BoyCulture.com, doesn't *know* Madonna like you know your mom or a Facebook friend or even the hot Starbucks barista you shamelessly stalk. He and Madonna have met, briefly, a few times, but they're not musing introspectively on their way to Kabbalah classes, drafting, en route, a detailed plan for the icon's next love-it-or-hate-it career conquest.

Rettenmund – who grew up in Michigan, and who calls himself Madonna's "front-row bitch" – would, however, make an expert consultant. After all, he did document the life and times and first menstruation of Madge (actual entry: "Madonna first bled at age 10."), when, two decades ago, he released "Encyclopedia Madonnica 20: Madonna from A to Z." Now updated, this impressively crazy feat of fandom that goes deep (and deeper and deeper) into the pop empresses' history is not just a book – when it comes to Madonna, it's the Holy Bible.

You must know more about Madonna than Madonna herself.

I think that's true. That's not to brag, but just like a lot of people she seems to forget a lot of things about herself, and like a lot of stars enhances some things. I think I



Photo: Kevin Mazur

have more factoids than she's ever kept at any one given time.

When did you decide that you would dedicate the rest of your life to this woman?

I'm not dead yet! I can still give her up! (Laughs) I first became really interested when I first heard her on the radio. I have a very clear memory of it, and it was when I first heard "Holiday." I was obsessed with the Billboard charts at the time, and I remember driving back from a Dungeons & Dragons session and I heard this song and thought it was amazing.

Of course it's a cliché, but I thought she was a black girl. I really associate that song with "Let the Music Play" by Shannon because I was hearing them at the same time, and for some reason I was just so captivated by ("Holiday") that I wanted to know more about her.

I liked being surprised by her even in small ways back then, and I liked a lot of different stars. I really liked Cyndi Lauper first, and so it took a while for all my forces to coalesce around Madonna. I would say when "Like a Virgin" came out

it really kind of started to hit its stride, and certainly by 1985 I had moved on from Cyndi Lauper and Madonna was my woman – she was my main woman.

I found her really useful when I was talking to people too, because even back then I'd feel like when you were having a conversation about Madonna, it's never just about Madonna – it's about different suppositions and presets people have when they're talking about her, and that's not true of a lot of artists. She was kind of an icon from the beginning for that reason – she means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. She causes people to express things within themselves whether they intend to do it or not.

For me that was sexuality. I recall seeing the "Vogue" video and being awestruck that I could see boobage through that black lacey top. I associated Madonna with sex at a very young age. What facets of Madonna did you first cling to?

Oh, I mean that was definitely part of it. But before that, it was just the coolness. That's true of almost

any person you put on a pedestal. There's a cool factor. But Madonna always had a certain effortless coolness. She never questions herself. She reminded me of Andy Warhol in that way. She had tunnel vision about what she wanted to do, that she was gonna do it really well and that she was *the* person to do it. I really admired that. I liked that she was so decisive and really so cool.

The sex part came along quickly too. At the time, I was a teenager and had hormone flare-ups. And I was gay, and I just kind of felt that she was a kindred spirit. She'd come from Michigan where I came from – and where I'll probably go when I die (laughs). I just loved knowing that she had come where I had come from and was doing all this stuff and was so unafraid to be so expressively sexual in a way that I couldn't be, so I definitely used her as a mode of expression as we do with any star. It was easier to say, "I love Madonna," than it was to go into the hundreds of things that were wrapped up in that. I definitely used her as a kind of shorthand, and I liked that she used her music and her work as a

shorthand to communicate back to her fans.

How old were you when you first fell for Madonna?

I was born in 1968, Christmas '68, so I would've been 13.

And is it true you have "literally over a ton" of memorabilia?

I do have a big archive. Up till about 24 years old my rooms looked like they should be second-hand shops, but I did get over that pretty quickly. Now it's all stashed away. So, if you walked into my apartment you'd know I like Madonna because there are three or four things on the wall, but they're kind of tasteful, kind of cool high-end things, and then there's a lot of other art. So it's under control.

Over the years I have let go of things. And that's a hard thing to come to grips with if you've kind of devoted a lot of time to collecting anything. It does make you think, "Do I really wanna get rid of all this?" and then you think, "Geez, do I really wanna die with all of this?"

What's the first piece you ever owned?

Oh, that's a good question. I know what it is: If you don't count music, I remember very clearly buying my first Madonna poster at probably a Sam Goody's or maybe even Coconuts near Genesee Valley mall. It was a caricature picture of her from "Desperately Seeking Susan," and it's really not a very good shot. Herb Ritts did the shoot and they're all amazing but I always thought this shot was a little weird. She looks a little greasy, a little matted down (laughs). But her face was amazing! The hair was just not quite right in this one shot. But I bought that poster, and that's the one that replaced my Cyndi Lauper poster. In my opinion, "Desperately Seeking Susan" is one of the best things Madonna has ever been associated with. I love that movie.

Even back then in Michigan

See Superfan, page 24



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► Superfan

Continued from p. 18

when I had to drive around I had my routine where I would go to buy stuff and my approach to collecting was like that of a bug strip – anything that got close to me that had to do with Madonna was stuck to me and I kept it, or I found a way to get it. I wasn't discriminatory at all. I bought music, I bought posters, I bought cheesy merchandise at stores. Old magazines, new magazines. For a long time I continued down that path.

As you know, I'm a big Mariah fan and, in fact, I remember getting a life-size Mariah cardboard cutout from Sam Goody's. It was a hard day for me when I put it into storage in my late 20s.

But you didn't get rid of it?

No, no. Of course not.

(Laughs) That's actually worse when it gets to that level. That's when you go to a whole new level of crazy. So congrats.

Ha! Are you not at that level of crazy? You did write a 581-page book about Madonna that weighs four pounds.

Oh, I'm way beyond that. But I could probably be persuaded by the right entity to give my archives away, to donate them somewhere if I thought it'd be kind of kept well and made available. I mean, I have tens of thousands of clippings from magazines and newspapers. When you collect anything you have to decide if you're collecting it to make a profit or collecting it because you love it.

For you, it's because you love it, right?

No, it's just the money. (Laughs) No, I do love it. But I'm definitely not as crazy as I once was when it comes to collecting. If anything, I've gotten more successful in life and started making a little bit more money and deciding "I'm going to go to an auction! I'm going to buy something that she owns! I'm gonna buy a one-of-a-kind thing!" You bump up from getting the latest foreign magazine to crazy shit you never thought you'd be looking into. It gets worse before it gets better.

How would you describe your level of fandom when it comes to Madonna?

Front-row bitch. People always like to say,

"I'm a crazy fan but I'm not crazy like that person," but I don't have a lot of wiggle room for that because I've written this huge book on her and people know me as someone who's pretty far gone. But I would describe myself as someone who has complete respect and affection for Madonna, and the respect is very objective, and the affection is very subjective. I have a high level of both of those things, but I still think I'm able to be realistic, and I think that's reflected in the book. As positive as it is, and as fawning as parts of it are, you do have to kind of step back and say, "This wasn't so great, this let me down, this

reveals a character flaw," so I'm sort of a student of Madonna's.

You definitely did not fawn over her film career.

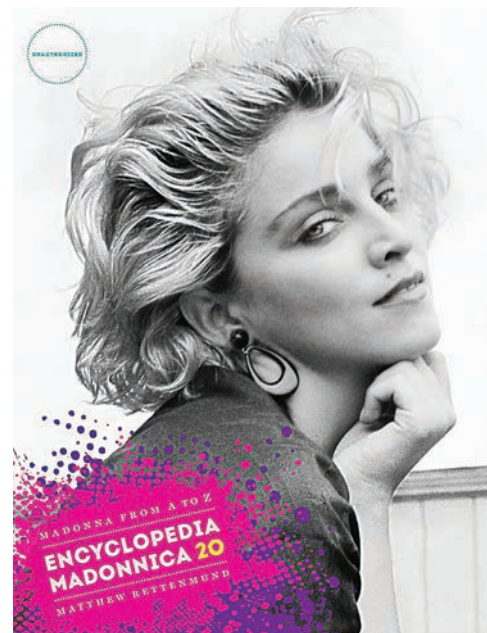
Well, yeah. I think that's a good way to tell if someone is too far gone as a fan: If they really like all of her movies. I think even she would admit that a lot of her movies were not good. She may not agree why. (Laughs) She might say it was the script, it was the director. But also, you weren't so great in them. So much of the criticism she

gets is just ridiculously over the top and it's unfounded and so mired in people's hang ups and expectations: the way women and the way older women and the way public figures should act and behave. I'm someone who's extremely sensitive, and as confident as I can be, I take stuff to heart in a way, and I like the fact that she's able to present an extremely determined public face. And as much as it probably does affect her in some ways, it doesn't stop her. That's inspiring.

What compelled you to write this book 20 years ago?

When I wrote the first book and when I decided to update it, the way I approached it is: It had to be two different things. On one hand it is a serious reference book, but on the other hand there's a ridiculousness about the endeavor – that's the point of it. It is a pop artifact. I want it to be kind of ridiculous that we have a 600-page encyclopedia about this person, about any person.

I was inspired 20 years ago by a dictionary on Marilyn Monroe and that one was very straight-laced. Basically entries with all the different people and places and things about her. I really kicked it up a notch from that. But that was my inspiration. So: I'm the Lady



See Superfan, page 26

Scott Shuptrine Interiors Expands Again With New Furniture Gallery

BY BTL STAFF

Royal Oak-based luxury furniture retailer Scott Shuptrine Interiors recently opened a new gallery inside Art Van Furniture in Shelby Township (14055 Hall Road, Shelby Charter Township), growing its store count to six stores in Michigan and one in Chicagoland to meet the increased demand for custom furnishings and interior design services.

The Scott Shuptrine name has a rich history of standing for a premium level of home furnishings and custom interior design. Scott Shuptrine Interiors makes its luxury designs accessible for today's décor enthusiasts and prides itself on providing trend-setting themes to partner with contemporary, traditional, eclectic and transitional interiors for a modern living approach. Scott Shuptrine was founded in 1927 and purchased by Art Van Furniture in 1987.

Scott Shuptrine Interiors debuted its second design lab inside Art Van, featuring exclusive collections by Bernadette, Century Furniture, Theodore Alexander, Vanguard, Highland House, Curations Limited and Hooker Furniture.

"There's a great demand for high end home furnishings and interior design



services," says Jeanette McNamara, director of Scott Shuptrine Interiors. "We're continually encouraged by our customers to bring our exclusive luxury brands and personalized shopping experience to more communities like Shelby Township."

"Scott Shuptrine Interiors has brought a premium level of home furnishings and service to both Michigan and Illinois, making world-renowned interior design

accessible for today's discerning home decor buyer," says Art Van Elslander, founder and chairman of Art Furniture. "We're thrilled with the success of Scott Shuptrine's relaunch and eager to open more new locations in Michigan and beyond."

This year, Scott Shuptrine Interiors also opened its first standalone gallery in Grosse Pointe, and a more than 10,000-square-foot gallery within Art Van Furniture in Downers Grove, Illinois. Each gallery employs a team of professional interior designers who provide a complimentary interior design consultation.

Keeping the community apprised of the latest design and entertaining tips and trends, Scott Shuptrine Interiors also hosts free monthly design classes called Trending with Scott's at all galleries. The classes are open to the public and scheduled at convenient times that cater to each community. Attendees are treated to refreshments and a free gift. The classes are free and open to the public. Please register to attend at www.scottshuptrine.com.

Scott Shuptrine Interiors is a division of Art Van Furniture. For more information, visit www.scottshuptrine.com.

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► Superfan

Continued from p. 22

Gaga and those writers are the Madonna. (Laughs)

What does Madonna think of your book?

She loves it – no, I’m just kidding. I’ll tell you the truth: When I did the first book 20 years ago I approached her publicist to try to get them to potentially give me some information or help me out, and of course they ignored me. When the book came out, her publicist, Liz Rosenberg – and I’ll never forget it – called me at my new job and said, “I love this.” So I was thrilled that they liked it. What happened was they had me send a signed copy to Madonna and Madonna signed a copy for me. So she did see it and she was aware of it. But Madonna’s the kind of person who is not gonna be excited to hear that somebody wrote a book about her. She’s not gonna flip open a book and go, “Look at all this wonderful stuff he got right about me.” You just can’t picture that.

Who would wanna read a book about themselves anyway?

Nobody would, but especially someone who’s cool. She’d roll her eyes. This time around I did send it to her people again, got no negative feedback or anything. I haven’t gotten a signed copy this time, but I haven’t gotten a lawsuit either. If she gets it and flips through it – or maybe her kids would; I can imagine that happening more likely – I would hope she’d appreciate the affection that’s there.

Anything in the book that you’re uncomfortable with her seeing?

I wouldn’t want her to read about plastic surgery or my guesses about plastic surgery or any kind of personal health things. I don’t think I would care about her reading any of my impressions of her work. She understands that people have criticisms, and unlike most people who review her I know that none of my reviews, even the ones that are negative, are outrageously off-base. They don’t come from a place of hating her.

Also, the last time, I was just some random kid doing a book and so nobody wanted to deal with me – except Allen Ginsberg... maybe because I was a young boy. But this time I was able to get some people to actually talk to me, and some of them said things that weren’t 100 percent positive, like the publicist from “Desperately Seeking Susan” who had a very long interview and I put in every word. I found it really fascinating because he really respected her and thought she was talented musically early on. He was very frank in saying that there were times when it wasn’t cool to be seen with him so she didn’t want to be seen with him and so

she’d blow him off.

This reminds me of the time we both interviewed Madonna in New York at the end of 2011, when, after I mentioned that people refer to her as the “queen of reinvention,” she snapped, telling me, “Don’t throw those tired, old clichés at me.” Which you note in your book! It’s forever immortalized. And you don’t even know how long that haunted me. I was happy to read that you thought Madonna was being “playful” with me, though.

I get it. I think when someone has that much power, any little swipe, any little movement can be taken so much more powerfully. I sort of took it as she assumed that you were on the team and so it was fine to kind of give you a little kitty cat swipe.

Well, I’m glad. Aside from Madonna herself, you’d know best.

She told me it’s fine... just kidding. (Laughs) But I know what you mean. Before I met her I always wondered: What if I meet her and she’s horrible to me? Would I claim that I thought that was cool and amazing too? Or would I be deeply sad? Obviously you wouldn’t want her to be a total asshole, but luckily I got to meet her under positive circumstances, where she knew I was a member of the press. It wasn’t like I was coming up to her on the street and saying, “Oh my gosh can I get your autograph?” which would be like suicide and you might as well just step in front of a car.

Ha! Well, this has been great, Matthew. Thanks for the chat.

I appreciate you taking the time and I hope you didn’t read the Mariah Carey entry.

I did. It was the first entry I went to.

Fuck.

I didn’t want to sour this experience, but now that you have...

I do think it’s important to have a healthy sense of bitchery, but I will say that the whole “stan wars” are tiresome when you get to be in your fucking 40s. It’s like, “I can’t read all this. There’s too many divas for me to hate.” Gaga fanatics would write me and say, “I hope you choke on your AIDS medications.” I loved that one. (Laughs)

I definitely have commented on posts about things I disagree with, but I’ve never gone to somebody’s Lady Gaga or Mariah Carey page to just start shit and say, “My favorite is better than your favorite.” So pointless. Come on guys. Promote the things you like and don’t worry about the things you hate.

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).

The OutField Pride Tape Covers Canada

BY DAN WOOG

According to Kris Wells, Canada is known for two things: “hockey and human rights.”

If that’s true, he has reason to be proud. He’s a creator of Pride Tape, a new product that wraps those two things together. And it’s taking his country by storm.

Kris Wells – more formally Dr. Kristopher Wells – is an assistant professor of education at the University of Alberta. The Edmonton native also serves as faculty director of the school’s Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (ISMSS).

One of the institute’s research projects tracked the use of “casual homophobia” on Twitter. The enormous prevalence of words and phrases like “faggot” and “no homo” led Wells, his colleagues and students to wonder how they could raise awareness of harmful language, and reduce it.

“Schools and sports are the last two areas of institutionalized homophobia and transphobia,” Wells says. “That’s why we’ve partnered with the You Can Play Project” – the organization dedicated to ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation, co-founded by National Hockey League executive Patrick Burke.

But, Wells continues, “there is still not one out NHL player. They’re role models for so many people. We wanted to find a way to get them involved in the dialogue.”

During the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, the Russian government’s anti-gay propaganda law sparked a backlash by human rights activists. Rainbow flags flew all over the city, in a show of solidarity with LGBT athletes and spectators.

Those six colors – universally recognized as symbols of gay pride, and support of LGBT issues – also appeared on T-shirts and souvenirs.

Now – thanks to Wells and the ISMSS –

they’ll be wrapped around hockey sticks all over the country.

Tape is ubiquitous in the sport. Players use it to better grip a stick; to protect the stick from wear and damage; and to impart more spin on shots and passes. For decades, it’s come in only two colors: white and black.

Now there’s also red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.

“This is a way for teams to signal support to kids at rinks everywhere,” Wells says. “Research shows that LGBT youth are less likely to participate in team sports, because of the homophobic culture of the locker room. The higher the level of play, the more hypermasculine the environment. Rainbow-colored tape is a badge of support to LGBT youth, which everyone can see. These six colors can change the hockey world.”

Edmonton is a natural birthplace for Pride Tape. Two years ago Andrew Ference – captain of the Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins – was traded to the Oilers. He’d been involved with You Can Play, and asked Wells how to stay involved in his new city. That June, when he marched with the Camp fYrefly youth group, he became the first captain of any professional sport to participate in a Gay Pride parade.

Last year, Ference was joined by Oilers’ goaltender Ben Scrivens (traded last month to the Montreal Canadiens), and Scrivens’ wife Jenny, also a professional goaltender.

The tape was created by Calder Bateman, an Edmonton marketing, design and brand management agency. Creative director Jeff McLean says, “Unfortunately, too often sports remains a holdout in creating a welcoming environment for LGBTQ youth. That’s why I feel strongly about the ongoing relationship we have” with the ISMSS.

Getting Pride Tape to market was not as easy as slapping a rainbow on cloth, however. Professionals demand high-grade tape, and blending six colors proved difficult.

The manufacturer also had a minimum run:



Kris Wells.

“Schools and sports are the last two areas of institutionalized homophobia and transphobia.”

- Kris Wells

10,000 rolls. The cost is nearly \$40,000. A Kickstarter campaign runs through Feb. 4. (To contribute, visit www.PrideTape.com.)

Wells is confident the goal will be reached. Five thousand rolls of tape will be given to minor league professional hockey teams (hopefully NHL squads too). Other rolls will go to backers who contributed \$30 or more. The tape will also be sold to the public.

Proceeds will be split between ISMSS and You Can Play.

Pride Tape has received strong press coverage. A nationwide multimedia campaign was launched in mid-December. Every major television network provided

free spots for a commercial featuring Ference – and produced gratis – by Global.

In addition, NEWAD contributed space for printed materials in restaurants and bars across the country.

Feedback has been powerful. Email and letter writers say that seeing rainbow tape when they were younger would have made a major difference in their lives. One man wrote, “This could have kept me playing.”

As Wells prepares for a national rollout of Pride Tape, he’s already looking ahead. Tape is used on tennis racquets, baseball bats, lacrosse sticks – even on socks – for nearly every sport. Soon, rainbow tape might be as ubiquitous as the rainbow flag.

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.

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Gus Van Sant to deliver 'When We Rise'

So Roland Emmerich's "Stonewall" might not have gotten its history lesson across as effectively as planned. OK, fine, it was a disaster. But now another LGBT narrative history project is in the works, the eight-hour ABC miniseries "When We Rise," from director-producer Gus Van Sant. He'll reunite with "Milk" screenwriter Dustin Lance Black for the series, which will cover the personal stories and political struggles of a large group of LGBT activists. No word on the time-span the series will cover, or if it's going macro or micro, but because Stonewall's failure hovers over it like a too-white storm cloud, they're already making sure that the press releases talk about its diversity. And that's good. No one project will be all things to all people, but setting the record un-straight involves listening to every kind of queer story. Cautiously optimistic on this one.



Gus Van Sant. Photo: Denis Makarenko

Bisexual actress Saffron Burrows (married to "Ellen" writer Alison Balian) is one of the stars — her character will be having a secret affair with Gretchen Mol this season, so enjoy that — and she's got another project upcoming with fellow queer actor Russell Tovey. The indie feature is called "Night of the Lotus"; it's from filmmaker Henry Mason and writer Thomas Martin, and it revolves around a young woman (Adelaide Clemens, "The Great Gatsby") suffering guilt over the death of her new husband. She then lives out the honeymoon she never had with a stranger she meets on a train. Look, you have to use the tickets or you lose them.

Anne Heche, Sandra Oh, Alicia Silverstone have a 'Catfight'

Writer-director Onur Tukul just wrapped a lesbian brawl. It was for the filmmaker's latest feature, "Catfight," which stars Anne Heche, Sandra Oh and Alicia Silverstone. Oh plays wealthy housewife Veronica Salt (hat-tip to Willy Wonka, obviously), whose life-long rival, played by Heche, meets her again at a birthday party. The sparring begins. They're making a big deal out of the "intense" fight scenes, which is great, of course. And there's also a plotline about war in the Middle East, even though we're not quite sure how that fits into the "Dynasty"-style beatdowns. Bottom line: Silverstone plays Heche's girlfriend and we've loved her since "Clueless" and that's pretty much enough for us to want to see this one. In post-production now, look for it at better LGBT film festivals before its proper release later in the year.

'Sick' will make you angry all over again

You don't have to have devoured all of "Making a Murderer" to know that injustice served to the powerless is a rage-making proposition. And for all the progress enjoyed by the LGBT community in recent years, it's still a scary world out there for too many queer people, especially young people and those outside Northern Europe and the United States. So here comes the infuriating documentary "Sick (Bolesno)." The Croatian film from director Hrvoje Mabic tells the story of 16-year-old Ana, whose parents put her in an institution for five years to cure her of lesbianism. As a young adult, she is paranoid and depressed, involved in a relationship that might not be good for her, and suing her parents. Harrowing stuff, to say the least, but still vital viewing for anyone who thinks that marriage equality was the last battle. Look for "Sick" to make film festival rounds this year, and don't be afraid to encounter its sadness.

Saffron Burrows, from the 'Jungle' into the 'Night'

Its Golden Globe wins might be the first you've heard of "Mozart in The Jungle" (it's OK, there's just too much TV to watch out there, new Golden Age, etc.), but like us you're probably binge-watching it right now.

Romeo San Vicente's wig-pulling days are behind him, but he was one of the best. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.


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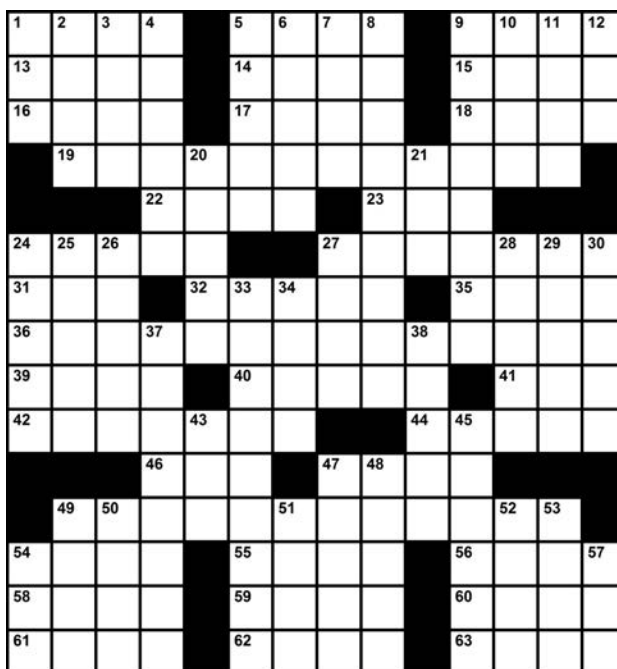
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Q Puzzle



Brides Made

Across

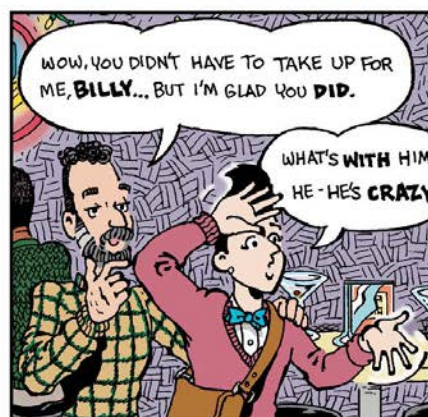
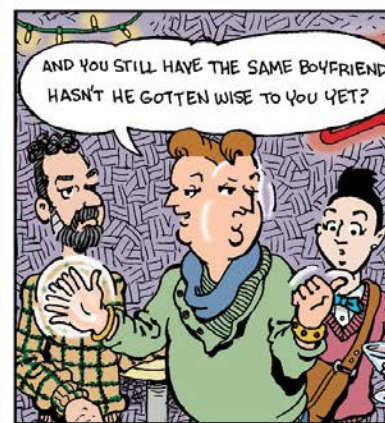
- 1 Piece of leg
- 5 They poke around in leather
- 9 Logical beginning
- 13 His brother laid him in his grave
- 14 Take back a blow job?
- 15 Tombstone lawman Wyatt
- 16 One of a Columbus threesome
- 17 Rainbow shape
- 18 Hit the ground
- 19 He played Jenny's dad in "Jenny's Wedding"
- 22 Take an active part in S and M
- 23 Doze off
- 24 Navratilova's winter home
- 27 "Queer as Folk" writer Jason
- 31 Sea shell seller
- 32 Get the job done

- 35 Gay cable network
- 36 She played Jenny in "Jenny's Wedding"
- 39 Buffalo's lake
- 40 Make noise in bed
- 41 Mine of movies
- 42 Brown on a book cover
- 44 Our, to Vivien
- 46 Cap for James M. Barrie
- 47 Word after fish?
- 49 She played Jenny's partner in "Jenny's Wedding"
- 54 Like fervant fans
- 55 Polished part for a fem
- 56 Hawaiian wedding party, perhaps
- 58 Hamburger Mary's list
- 59 Lascivious look
- 60 The Phantom of the Opera's name
- 61 Type of school
- 62 Trust, with "on"
- 63 In need of BenGay
- 9 "Love Songs" poet Sara
- 10 Mary topper
- 11 Sinead O'Connor's country
- 12 Get off the fence
- 20 Recoil from pain
- 21 Type of drama in the land of Samurai
- 24 Curious one
- 25 She had her hand up Lamb Chop
- 26 Teensy, in Toulouse
- 27 Chinese prefix
- 28 Base in Brooklyn?
- 29 Samantha not of "Bewitched"
- 30 Bea Arthur's TV maid Esther
- 33 Bear of the night
- 34 Fork feature
- 37 Became aroused
- 38 Word before coming to a conclusion
- 43 Nathan's role in "The Producers"
- 45 Loads
- 47 Govt. promissory note
- 48 Where bowlers roll their balls
- 49 State emphatically
- 50 Dotterman's "Antonia's ____"
- 51 Wise guy
- 52 Prefix with peein'?
- 53 Bear's hangout
- 54 Blaster for Etheridge
- 57 Islands instrument

Down

- 1 When repeated, a 1953 Cole Porter musical
- 2 Small amount in a stallion's mouth?
- 3 "Jaywalking" comedian
- 4 Like a Traci Des Jardins dish on fire
- 5 Enthusiastic lover's cry
- 6 Florida's Disney ____
- 7 Someone else's skill, to a sore loser
- 8 Rectal Allen Ginsberg poem

Find solution to this puzzle at www.pridesource.com



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A portrait of Adam Lambert with a voluminous, styled hairstyle, set against a background of intricate golden geometric patterns, including circles, triangles, and lines. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and artistic.

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