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**January 28, 2016  
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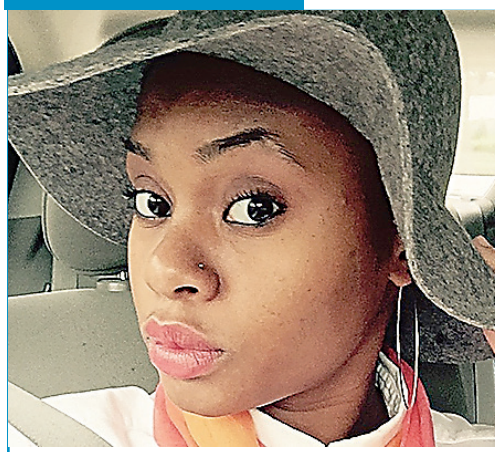
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## BREAKING

# Affirmations Executive Director Susan Erspamer Releases Statement on Custody Controversy

BY SUSAN ERSPAMER

As many of you are aware, I have been involved in a very personal matter being played out in a public forum. Custody proceedings relative to my children, my beloved and adored children, are pending in the Oakland County Circuit Court. My first reaction to the case was as a parent, a mom doing everything and anything in the best interest of her children. The stance I took, along with my wife of three years, was informed by deep personal feelings, without a full picture of policy ramifications and what our legal actions meant to the LGBT community, my community, the community I belong to and represent as the executive director of Affirmations. Based on this new understanding, I am using this very public forum to release a statement and share how we are proceeding from here forward.

Between the Lines recently ran a story which primarily focused on one angle and viewpoint; I would like to offer this statement in order to further understanding from my perspective and offer transparency.

I am a private person and have always held my personal life close to me and rarely brought my personal life into the work setting. My wife and I, along with our two children, live a quiet life in Wixom, Michigan where the kids go to school; we socialize with friends and neighbors and live a very inclusive life as members of a wonderful community. Prior to this job, my interaction and utilization of LGBT services and attention to LGBT advocacy efforts was admittedly minimal. I accepted the position as executive director, excited to bring my education and years of professional experience to Affirmations while at the same time learning what services and public policy issues are paramount within the LGBT community.

As a member of the LGBT community, I bring to Affirmations a deep personal knowledge of living many years "in the closet," searching for acceptance and a place to belong and feel safe to be who I am. I know the pain of growing up as a lesbian youth in the 1970s and 1980s when no resources or services were available to me. I have a personal

journey that gives me more insight than any education could have ever afforded me, and when I accepted the executive director position at Affirmations, it was with a passion for a job I have never felt before in my professional career. I was taking the next step in my career and excited about what the future held for me and for Affirmations.

My current legal situation began this past summer. At this time, my wife and I retained an attorney and quickly made a personal decision strictly based on the best interest of our children and upon legal advice from counsel. The children are our number one priority in life, and their health, safety and well-being comes before all else, including our personal feelings. Our goal has been and still is to do the right thing so they grow up to be happy and well-adjusted young adults.

With that being said, the past two weeks have been consumed with personal reflection and outreach to key community members which led to new clarity, understanding and

awareness of what our position meant to our community, the LGBT community. My wife and I sought advice from many, including Jay Kaplan from the ACLU, and various other well respected community members. They indicated their support for a change in legal strategy, a strategy that is in the best interest of the children while maintaining my support for a change in legislation that will no longer discriminate against the LGBT community and others.

To put it clearly with continued transparency: I regret the initial litigation strategy undertaken by me through counsel, and after consideration of the policy ramifications, I now understand I must change course and abandon this discriminatory tactic. I have retained new counsel and completely altered my position in this litigation. I have asked my new lawyer, Carol Breitmeyer, to advise my ex-partner's attorney of my intentions and she has done so. Breitmeyer is an ally to the community who understands our desire to change course and she provided us with thoughtful recommendations on how to proceed.

*“To put it clearly with continued transparency: I regret the initial litigation strategy undertaken by me through counsel, and after consideration of the policy ramifications, I now understand I must change course and abandon this discriminatory tactic.”*

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# Return of the Mac

## Taylor Mac Brings Epic Drag Performance to Ann Arbor

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Taylor Mac says “it’s good to leave a lot of assumption at the door” when theatergoers attend “A 24-Decade History of Popular Music” at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre in Ann Arbor Feb. 5-6. Mac, who uses “judy” not as a name, but as a gender pronoun, is a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, performance artist, director and producer. Judy is returning to Michigan to surprise and engage audiences during a three-hour event focused on the period 1956-1986. Mac’s creation, which explores the history of popular music in the U.S. from the 1770s to the present, will culminate in New York City in late-2016 during what’s being called an “ambitious” and “epic” one-time only 24-hour event.

“The older stuff is fun, but it will be nice to hang out with more contemporary people while doing Act Seven for the first time. We haven’t shared any of this decade yet,” Mac says.

Judy will fearlessly tackle subject matter like the 1969 Stonewall disturbances that created the modern-gay rights movement, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the decade known for sexual liberation. When the Universal Musical Society of Ann Arbor began its collaboration with Mac, they agreed to bring the community together in a more authentic way by choosing decades people may have experienced or lived through in their lifetime.

“I remember vividly two of these decades. It’s really fun to hear someone interpret a song you knew, loved or have forgotten,” says UMS Director of Programming Michael Kondziolka. “For an artist of Taylor’s skill to reimagine and make sense of these decades ... really tumultuous times. This is real stuff he’s singing about. It’s all stuff that’s touched our lives in immediate and direct ways.”

Mac, who has lived and worked in New York City for two decades, was born in 1973 and raised in Stockton, California, where Judy says there was an “absence of culture.” Mac relates to the time when “anti-gay people thought they would contract AIDS by simply talking to a gay person.”

Now, Mac’s work is about heterogeneity. “When people are expected to adhere to being one thing, how can you express the full range of who you are? I may be the oddest looking person in the room, but the point is to get everyone to connect with what’s going on. Everybody will feel a little bit of everything. They will see me chaotic and well-crafted, beautiful and ugly, disturbing and calming. It’s varied. That doesn’t happen a lot in performance. I’m creating a tangible thing,” Mac says.

The audience can expect Mac to perform around 30 songs

“When people are expected to adhere to being one thing, how can you express the full range of who you are?”

- Taylor Mac

“I can’t spill the beans completely, but you’re going to see some recognizable costume elements. I’m still working on and creating brand new images. Taylor is open and there are many iconic moments I will play with.”

- Mac’s longtime costume designer Machine Dazzle

from different artists, but Judy says, “I rely on surprise,” and teases only one: Nina Simone, a popular jazz, blues and folk musician in the 1950s and 1960s. Kondziolka added there will probably be some surprise guests, Detroit-based artists, who may join Mac on stage.

Each decade will feature a unique costume designed by Mac’s longtime costume designer Machine Dazzle. They met while working on Mac’s Obie-award-winning play, “The Lily’s Revenge.”

“I can’t spill the beans completely, but you’re going to see some recognizable costume elements. I’m still working on and creating brand new images. Taylor is open and there are many iconic moments I will play with,” Dazzle says, adding that he will transform the theater lobby into a playful gallery inspired by the show. “I am finding it harder to be abstract because a lot of us have been alive during the ‘50s through the ‘80s. It’s familiar, and I know what it should look like. What I come up with will be unexpected though. The last thing I want is for Taylor to walk on stage and it be exactly what you expect.”

So it might be stilettos, a glitter-bedecked dress and elaborate headgear, or makeup generously applied and sprinkled with sequins. Whatever Dazzle dreams up, it will be another form of communication and a tool they use to help get the story across. “We are of like minds and have a similar aesthetic. I don’t force him to adhere to my vision. We work together. That’s how I treat him and vice versa,” Mac says, adding that performing in drag allows Judy to reveal something personal that would normally be hidden in public.

“Off stage, I’m in man drag. I’m presenting masculinity or relative masculinity. On stage, I’m exposing something, taking a risk, showing what I look like on the inside. There is societal pressure to be a certain way and this lets me release things. It helps me perform and

express myself,” Mac reveals.

“With this particular show, a day doesn’t go by when I’m not working. It’s a monster, but I love it,” Mac says. “I’m pretty happy with how things are going. I like my down time. I hang out with my lover, we read the paper, cuddle and go to dinner parties. I have dear friends. I’m making really good art. What else do you need?”

UMS supports innovative artists like Mac through their Renegade Series, which is focused on artists who are changing the way we look at and think about performance. “Taylor is an artist whose work I’ve been following for a long time. (Judy) is audacious and thrilling ... an interesting choice for our season,” Kondziolka says. “(Judy) is a unique and original voice. Anyone interested in adventure and discovery should not miss (Judy’s) performance.”

Time Out New York has called Mac, “One of the most exciting theater artists of our time.” The Village Voice named Judy Best Male Vocalist 2015. Mac was also honored with the 2015 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts.

“A 24-Decade History of Popular Music” is created, written, co-directed and performed by Mac, with co-direction by Niegel Smith and music direction by Matt Ray. The work is co-produced by Pomegranate Arts and Nature’s Darlings. Performances will be held at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. Prices for tickets start at \$40 each. For more information or to make reservations, call 734-763-3333 or go online at [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org).

## PERFORMING

Taylor Mac presented by University Musical Society  
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# Online App Launched to Help LGBT Youth

BY AJ TRAGER



## LGBT-U Now Accepting Applications For 2016 Training Program

**PHILADELPHIA** – Freedom for All Americans is currently accepting applications through Feb. 7 for the second round of LGBT-U apprentices.

The innovative training program will equip participants with all of the skills necessary to run effective campaigns, with in-depth looks at overall strategy, communications and messaging, field work, lobbying, fundraising, staff management, public education and business outreach.

Participants will gather for an intense, hands-on series of trainings and informational sessions taught by national LGBT leaders. The first one-week training will be held in Philadelphia April 10-15, session two will be held in September and the third will include a 2-4 day session and graduation ceremony to be held in March of 2017. The program is free of charge for apprentices. Freedom for All Americans will provide scholarships to cover the cost of travel, lodging and meals for accepted participants.

Applicants should be interested in full-time employment on a nondiscrimination campaign. Preference will be given to individuals with leadership experience either on a nondiscrimination or LGBT campaign or on electoral campaigns. However, a history working on campaigns is not required.

Freedom for All Americans is working to build a national movement to win nondiscrimination protections for LGBT Americans across the country.

Acceptance and wait list notifications will be distributed around Feb. 15.

To apply, go to <http://action.forallusa.org/page/slgbtuapp>.

## National Survey Calls for 1000 LGBT Older Adults

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders has launched a survey that will help the organization develop strategic planning for future projects for LGBT older adults.

The five-minute, anonymous survey discusses the participant's knowledge of LGBT aging issues, gauges interest in volunteering and asks household demographic information and includes a comment section.

SAGE's goal is to reach 1,000 LGBT and allied individuals of all ages with 30 percent of participants under 50 and 70 percent over 50.

To take the survey go to [www.surveymonkey.com/r/L538LYX](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/L538LYX).

**DETROIT** – The new online application iCON, from the elongated iCONNECT, launched late last year as an innovative service aimed at linking LGBT youth to a variety of services in southeastern Michigan.

iCON is a product of SexLab, a program of the Center for Sexuality and Health Disparities based out of the University of Michigan, which received a grant in early 2015 from the Herb Ritts Foundation to provide youth in the region with a database of information on health and social services.

Many LGBT youth don't know what services are available to them and often worry about experiencing stigma and discrimination if they attempt to use services. iCON aims to fix this dilemma by providing a database of LGBT welcoming services that can be searched and tailored to a user's individual needs and offers life skill-building educational modules.

"Young gay and bisexual men and transgender women face a number of barriers to getting the services they need. Some don't know where to look for help, and others assume that they will be turned away or discriminated against. iCON aims to solve this problem by providing an easy to use and searchable database of local resources," said Professor of Health Behavior and Biological Sciences at U-M School of Nursing, Rob Stephenson, M.S., Ph.D., who is one of the principal investigators for iCON. "But iCON isn't just about sex and HIV: iCON includes services for all areas of young people's lives, including education and employment."

The group spent a year compiling information and resources into a searchable online database of roughly 375 services in the southeast Michigan area and then organized the pilot-testing of the product.

Handling of the application is relatively simple. Users can choose from 16 life-skills modules – ranging from education, legal advice, social activities, transportation and many more. Each topic allows the user to read information, find local services and set goals to make changes in their life.

All content on the iCON website was written by someone on the SexLab youth advisory board. Each topic has multiple subtopics so the user can follow the trail of services and programs in the area that fit a particular area of interest.

Program Director Michele Demers, Masters in Public Health, is very interested in how changes in technology can help break down the barriers LGBT youth face when accessing healthcare or other services. She told BTL that even though not all of the services

were checked for having completed cultural competency or LGBT awareness training, many of them were suggested to the iCON team from community partners or were referred from working professionals in the field, such as case managers.

iCON officially launched in December 2015 but is currently seeking 500 young LGBT men and women in the southeast Michigan region to test the product. If the testing is effective, iCON will expand to other regions of the country with the aim of developing a centralized system that lists all national services in a single, easy-to-navigate system.

"Our aim is to empower sexual and gender minority youth to find the services they need and enable them to make positive changes in their lives" said Jose Bauermeister, Masters in Public Health, Ph.D., a principal investigator for iCON and associate professor of health education and behavior at U-M School of Public Health. "By empowering change we hope to allow young men to be able to reduce their vulnerability to HIV or to seek the care

## NEEDED

iCON officially launched in December 2015 but is currently seeking 500 young LGBT men and women in the southeast Michigan region to test the product. If the testing is effective, iCON will expand to other regions of the country with the aim of developing a centralized system that lists all national services in a single, easy-to-navigate system.

Go to [iconlife.org](http://iconlife.org) to learn more.

they need."

iCON is not yet designed as a mobile application; however, the service is compatible with multiple platforms. A shortcut can be created to place iCON on a phone desktop.

To hear more about iCON or to start a profile, go to [iconlife.org](http://iconlife.org).

## Michigan Non Profit Resource

### Have You Experienced Discrimination?

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, intimidation, harassment or violence because of sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity, contact Equality Michigan's Department of Victim Services at :

**report@equalitymi.org or call 1-866-962-1147**

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

To get involved in the movement for better hate crimes law, contact [policy@equalitymi.org](mailto:policy@equalitymi.org).

**Hundreds more resources can be found at**  
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# Creating Change Conference Copes with Changes

BY AJ TRAGER

**CHICAGO** – Creating Change – the largest LGBT conference in the U.S., which is put on by the National LGBT Task Force – is known to often include controversy, disagreements, protests, offer a transformative experience that for many is life-changing and provide a chance for some to meet their first LGBT person. However, the 28th Creating Change conference ended up leaving 4,000 attendees from across the nation and the globe with a truly intersectional, very heavy experience.

The welcome letter published in the 2016 Creating Change program book, authored by National LGBTQ Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey, included the following line: “That’s why we are here this week: to tear down ALL the barriers we face between us and true liberation – and to support and lift-up one another in spirit, camaraderie and love.” But many who attended this year’s conference found neither a sense of camaraderie nor community.

The controversy started before the conference even began when the Task Force cancelled a panel that was to include representatives of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and then cancelled a reception for the organization A Wider Bridge after receiving criticism from online activists claiming that the group is engaged in “pinkwashing,” promoting a positive image of LGBT life in Israel in the hopes to distract from the treatment of Palestinians in Israel and Gaza. The reception was reinstated, a protest was held (with no arrests made) and the conference continued as normal into the scheduled workshops.

Every year the conference is different and brings to light new struggles and conflicts within and outside of the LGBT community. This year, as BTL engaged with people attending the conference, it was abundantly clear that many believed this year’s majority of participants were the youngest Creating Change has ever seen. Queer, trans people of color reported that they felt unsafe and not welcomed by many of their LGBT cohorts. There were reports that the sexual liberation track was ripe with stigma and shame. And the HIV brunch plenary was poorly attended.

But, after a weekend that hosted over 350 workshops and caucuses, two day-long institutes, an HIV track, LGBT youth performances and hours of dancing, Creating Change felt less like an event that brought the community together and more like an event that pinned the community against one another. Carey addressed the tension to a full room at the closing banquet brunch, her voice and hands quivering.

“What you are witnessing and what we are all experiencing is messy. It’s hard. And for many, we and I, have failed to live up to the



National LGBTQ Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey at closing plenary, in tears as she tells conference attendees she is not sure how to lead them right now. BTL photo: AJ Trager

ideals of our mission or our values for you.

“The progressive LGBT movement is mirroring the tensions of the larger society. Changes are happening in the world and Creating Change is reflecting some of those shifts as well. I don’t have all the answers. Probably none of us do. I will be honest with you and tell you that I have struggled how to lead in this moment,” Carey said. “But what I can say is that our work at the Task Force and together with others in the coming months will focus on how we continue to build a better conference, how we learn from this year while continuing to provide a place that so many have called their activist home. We will learn and build from this moment.”

In a press release issued Jan. 25, the Task Force admitted that next year will have to include major changes related to inclusiveness and program content; upgraded safety and security; and a more open and accepting approach to conversation and peaceful protest.

## The Michigan Experience

Equality Michigan held a Michigan mixer on the third day of the conference. The event was attended by well over 50 people from across the state, with representatives from LGBT community organizations like LGBT Detroit to academic institutions like the Equality Research Center at Eastern Michigan University.

Michael Tew is the director of the ERC at EMU. Tew and ERC Assistant Director Nicole Richards attended the conference and took turns running a booth at the Creating Change exhibit space alongside other organizations such as the Metropolitan Community Churches, SAGE, Secular Student Alliance, CenterLink, GLSEN, NGLCC, AARP, AIDS United, Intersex is Beautiful, Inc and many

more.

At the Michigan Mixer, Tew told BTL that he was having a very positive experience at Creating Change and was completely blown away by the opening plenary “Black Feminism and the Movement for Black Lives,” and a statement presented by one of the panelists who said, “post-revolutionary strategies do not work in a pre-revolutionary world.”

“The discussion from a black feminist perspective, personally, was mind altering and transformative and it will change the way I teach and work. Many other aspects of the conference are just as empowering as that but what I really like about Creating Change is the positive approach to creating change; not dwelling on oppression but how to confront and overcome,” Tew said.

Tew had one critique. As a first time exhibitor, but a return Creating Change attendee, Tew would have preferred the layout of former conferences for exhibitors, where attendees had to walk through the various exhibits to get from one conference room to another. This year the exhibits had their own ballroom and were separated from the rest of the conference, leaving less of a chance for people to filter through the exhibits and learn about new organizations or opportunities.

Cailynn Smith is the new LGBT Coordinator at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and attended Creating Change for the first time. They come to Michigan from Indiana and find Michigan’s LGBT community to be extremely active and empowering.

“Even though Creating Change can be overwhelming, because it is a lot, it is awesome because there are many queer people all in one place at one time and we are networking, trying to exchange our ideas and learn from each other. And I think I’ve learned a lot of different insights from all

kinds of people.”

Smith attended workshops that will enhance their programming at UM-D, but also found a good sense of community in the genderqueer caucus.

“I think that was the first time I had been in a room with that many genderqueer, gender nonconforming and non-binary people at once. Being from the Midwest, sometimes if you’re from the really rural areas, it’s hard to find that community,” Smith said.

Executive Director of Equality Michigan, Stephanie White, was one of the hosts of the Michigan Mixer. White, who was the center of many photos that night, was having a pleasant experience at Creating Change and was appreciative that the conference allows for the opportunity to work with allies and network with organizations from all across the world.

“There are so many people around the country who are doing great work. Equality California is going to share their transgender education project with us. Equality New Mexico is going to share board development with us. I can’t think of all the great stuff,” White explained.

This was her third Creating Change conference. She decided to bring the entire staff of Equality Michigan so that members like Steele Lindbloom, the new accounting coordinator, had a chance to experience the conference.

“The beautiful thing about Creating Change is that it is a radicalizing experience for people. Whenever you are first awakened, it is like a burst of energy. It can be chaotic and for some of us who have been around social justice for a long time, (we) might see it as disruptive, but I think the energy and passion and awokenness and injustice and courage to take it on are beautiful.”

## National LGBTQ Task Force condemns anti-Semitism, launches review of Creating Change

*The following statement is being released by Rea Carey, National LGBTQ Task Force executive director, at the close of this year’s Creating Change Conference in Chicago:*

“I want to make this crystal clear: the National LGBTQ Task Force wholeheartedly condemns anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic statements made at any Task Force event including our Creating Change Conference. It is unacceptable. Hate speech of any kind is unacceptable

See Rea Carey Statement, page 16

# Protesters Shut Down Israel-focused Event at Creating Change

BY MATT SIMONETTE

More than 200 protesters shut down a presentation organized by A Wider Bridge (AWB), an organization that fosters relationships between Israel and the LGBT community, on Jan. 22 during the National LGBTQ Task Force's Creating Change conference in Chicago.

The protest came two days into the Creating Change conference which was being held through Jan. 24 at the Hilton Chicago.

The reception, which was to feature speakers from the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance (JOH) in Israel, had already been the focus of controversy when Creating Change organizers initially cancelled the reception in response to online and local protests. But the presentation was reinstated after more protests from members of the Jewish community and other supporters.

AWB is often accused of being emblematic of "pinkwashing" marketing strategies that highlight LGBT rights in order to distract from Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

The crowd gathered outside the reception as guests tried to make their way in. A few protesters entered the room just as introductions were being made. The guests from Jerusalem Open House

did not make their presentation, but AWB organizers said the protesters who entered did not make them fear for their safety. Creating Change rules dictate that anyone with a conference lanyard can be admitted to any session. The protesters stayed in the gathering space for the entire time, according to AWB Executive Director Arthur Slepian.

"We got our guests from Jerusalem out of there very quickly, to ensure their safety," he said, adding, "We came here with a message we wanted to bring, and I think there are lessons to be learned here. What happened tonight was contrary to all the important liberal values our society holds dear. I also felt there was a strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism."

Protesters held up signs and used chants that called Israel an apartheid state and decried Zionism. They chanted, "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free," a chant that has been subject to a wide range of interpretations, some of them anti-Jewish.

There were some reports of altercations between the protestors and guests trying to enter the reception. Protesters chided one man for grabbing and balling up a Palestinian flag, but a video by Lynnell Stephanie Long, shooting for Windy City Times and posted at [bit.ly/1nllm52](http://bit.ly/1nllm52), showed that a protester had tried to drape the flag over the man's face. A female protester also alleged that she was assaulted by a reception guest, and

yelling slogans, so the music was turned up to drown them out. Many guests left (most by a side exit) while others stayed behind.

"They were yelling what seemed to be random things," Bennett said. "Everyone just went back to talking again."

Susan Boone, whose husband, Laurence Edwards, is Emeritus Rabbi at Congregation Or Chadash, attempted to speak with the protesters to hear why they were there. One woman spoke with her briefly. "It was difficult to make out with the music," Boone recalled. "She was trying to conjoin Black Lives Matter and Palestine. At a certain point she just stopped, and said politely, 'I don't want to talk to you anymore.'"

The protest came about in part after online writings by an artist known as DarkMatter, who attended and criticized the presence of AWB at Creating Change. Writings by Seattle activist and law professor Dean Spade also called attention to the event.

"We first saw that there

was going to be this Israeli Zionist organization here, and as part of a coalition of multiple groups, we reached out to the Task Force and asked them to please cancel the session, and they did, and we thought, victory," DarkMatter said. "Then they brought it back with almost no explanation, and then we saw the statements from (Task Force Executive Director) Rea Carey, which we all felt were abhorrent. We think that there is no dialogue when there is an apartheid wall. We felt it was important to continue to up the pressure."

A Jan. 22 statement from Chicago-based Gay Liberation Network



Photo by: Brenda Shumacher

Slepian said one of the protesters in the reception got into an argument with one of the guests there when they entered. At one point a few Jewish men prayed loudly amongst the protesters before heading into the reception.

Gary Liss, a member of Congregation Or Chadash, which was among the co-sponsors, was at the reception. "You had all the noise coming from the hallway," he said. "With everything that is going on in the world right now, you couldn't help but wonder what was going to happen next."

But activist James Bennett said that he did not feel especially threatened or unsafe being in the reception. The protesters went on stage and began

See *Creating Change* Protestors, page 17

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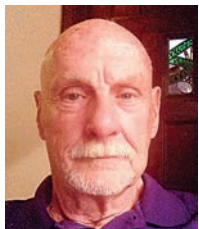
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## Who's Behind Our Gay Waiters?

# Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

It almost goes without saying, but the world's second oldest profession is that of the gay waiter. According to U.S. LGBT Census 2015, there are 4 million gay waiters.

While this seems somewhat high as far as this time-honored table serving profession goes, the U.S. ranks fourth, behind India, Australia and the Monarchy of Monaco.

As for big gay-populace cities – New York, Chicago, San Francisco – each clocks in with 350,000 gay waiters. Locally, Ferndale and Royal Oak, of more modest gay mecca status, number only 500 each, many of whom received gay-specific table training at nearby community colleges.

(Course offerings, as listed in one community college catalog, include: Handling Heterosexually Finicky Eaters; Metro-Sexual Outfits to Make A Lasting Gourmet Impression; Wine and European Cuisine Pronunciation; Are Coney Islands A Gay Friendly Career Choice?)

Not everyone is happy politically about America's seeming over abundance of gay waiters. The American Fundygelical Ass'n, for one, initiated an Easter Week campaign urging restaurant chains not to hire gay waiters.

### Not everyone is happy politically about America's seeming over abundance of gay waiters.

Called "Turning the Tables On Temptation," the AFA staged a week-long, round-the-clock sit-in at New York's popular Off-Broadway All Night 24/7 Beef & Chicken Hawk Bistro.

According to AFA televangelist Dr. Renfrew B. Denser, "Gay waiters are bringing America to its knees. They're infiltrating traditional meeting places where food and drinks are blatantly seasoned with 'campy' Gay Agenda encouragement. Menus are laced with insinuating verbal anti-America saltpeper. Cutesy rainbow umbrellas."

An article appearing in this month's AFA's issue of The Sky Is Falling warns, "Washington, D.C. is being infiltrated. For every congressman or senator in our nation's capital, there are 22 gay waiters, none of whom, by the way, votes Republican.

"Such open access – especially at the Supreme Court level – is accorded to none of our Christian citizenry; yet gay waiters can go about their nefarious business seemingly unmolested. Rumor has it that it was a gay waiter who first served Congressman Barney Frank a flaming dessert. Look what happened."

(Note in passing: The Sky Is Falling also carries a full-page advertisement for Dr. Denser's biblical commentary on a recently discovered Aramaic Gnostic Gospel of Jesus' time that says Judas Iscariot was a Galilean gay waiter who passionately kissed Jesus in the garden and got a little-too generous tip for doing so.)

How do gay waiters in Ferndale and Royal Oak view these AFA accusations? According to one well-known Nine Mile local restaurant waiter – who knows a thing or two first hand about gay waiters and their superior articulation skills – "It's been my extensive, albeit modest, experience with gay waiters that they can usually hold their own.

"As a rule of thumb, gay waiters measure up as good breeding types. I've found older customers like to be serviced by them. It's been nothing but positive word of mouth about their legendary efficiency above and beyond the call of duty. They've made many a person's day succinctly stimulating.

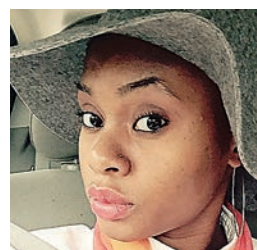
"As Ferndale's beloved table-hopper, former mayor Craig Covey puts it, 'I never met a gay waiter I wouldn't tip generously. Twenty percent of the time.'"

Charles@pridesource.com



THE GROUND HOG COMES OUT AND SEES HIS SHADOW.

## Viewpoint



OPINION BY STOYAN FRANCIS

# Oppression Olympics: The Dark Side of the Rainbow

In 1978, artist Gilbert Baker designed what would go on to be the biggest symbol of the LGBT movement: The Rainbow Flag. The legacy of the flag is that different thoughts and ideas united and made something beautiful. This legacy of solidarity felt somewhat lost this past week at the Creating Change conference.

## The Invitation to the Winter Games

Creating Change is an annual conference that is filled with opportunities to collaborate and educate members of the LGBTQIA movement. There were many arenas one could navigate to meet, greet and celebrate the unity of each other and the organization represented. Unfortunately, unexpected divisions hindered my expectation of togetherness and celebration. I prepared for the possibility of racial inequality and misunderstandings. Those things are as familiar as hopscotch on a hot summer day in Detroit. I know what to do with that. I have built armor for those dilemmas and have an arsenal of comebacks for that type of oppression, and/or miseducation.

However, what I received this past conference was new and as surprising as loan forgiveness. I saw people who looked like me, spoke like me, who I shared

oppression with, excluding me from shared space. I felt my sisters separating me as a "cis"-ter and naming me and the rest of our black and brown family as oppressors and conspirators. The Oppression Olympics had started.

As I stated previously, I am used to running against racial inequality or injustice. The thing I wasn't used to was running against my family, my black and brown trans sisters who have the knowledge and experience of bigotry and injustice for the same reasons as my sisters and I.

## Opening Games

While we understand that there are several categories in these games, the focus of this will be the category of womanhood: transgender vs. cisgender. During Creating Change, there were many spaces filled with chants to acknowledge the lives and experiences of transgender women of color. From my vantage point, there were many sessions geared toward the trans experience and a few for funding resources. Now, all these spaces may not have been geared towards transwomen of color, but several sessions each day of the conference were

See Oppression Olympics, next page

## ► Oppression Olympics

Continued from p. 12

available. For my lesbian counterparts, very few spaces (maybe even a handful) were available. The “L” in LGBTQIA felt small and invisible.

Nonetheless, there were spaces for everyone to learn something new. Unfortunately, the dialogues that some of the other cisgender women of color and I experienced were “the lives of black transwomen were harder because of rape, violence, medical disparities and access.” Being a woman and gender studies graduate, my mind was blown. In my head, I replayed statistics and passages of books in my head: 1 in 3 women will experience violence by an intimate partner; 1 in 5 girls will experience child sexual abuse; the forced sterilization of women of color; rapes during

women to their attention and sometimes will invalidate cisgender women of color and their experiences as “not being as bad as...” This equation tends to negatively result in a war of gender politics between women. You find cisgender women hurling slurs of what defines womanhood at transgender women. This is a space where cisgender women, especially of color, need to be mindful of our privilege, and not only privilege as it pertains to transgender versus cisgender, but also our privilege in that some of our insults can be applied to cisgender women. One gun, nine bullets, endless victims.

## Lighting of the Torch

In my opinion, love is unconditionally accepting a person for whom and what they are without reservation or constraints. This means not trying to mold them into what I want them to be, or to reflect a certain ideal, but supporting them through the journey of becoming better

“ I am used to running against racial inequality or injustice. The thing I wasn't used to was running against my family, my black and brown trans sisters who have the knowledge and experience of bigotry and injustice for the same reasons as my sisters and I. ”

slavery. However, my experience and input was discounted and discredited before I could get out a complete sentence.

I think it is in mind, during these games, that socialization plays a very dynamic role in the delivery and designation of these spaces. No matter what a transgender individual's chosen gender, there was a time when they were socialized as the opposite gender. Let's be clear that this is not an insult or a perceived shortcoming, but it is a fact. From some of the negative experiences cisgender women of color have come across with transgender women of color, there has been a subtle hint of privilege in this space.

Transgender women of color have been exposed to something cisgender women have never had privy to: male privilege. And sometimes it is that internalized privilege that transitions with them, unknowingly. It is sometimes with this privilege that transgender women disrespectfully command cisgender

and being able to live their truth. Everyone was created to bring something new and original to the table of life by virtue of the gifts afforded them through their unique creation. For this reason, I don't limit womanhood to the act of giving birth, menstruating, being feminine or holding them to any specific construction or ideology. Womanhood is a masterpiece in its own right, which is fluid and nonconforming to biology or gender expression.

For one who is not trans to say they know or understand the barriers and plights of transitions is someone who doesn't understand the complexities and uniqueness of learning and self-discovery and expression in truth. I know everyone doesn't move in the same direction of my steps and that the world is cruel even to those who have adapted and mastered the execution of heteronormativity. So with that, I can understand how my transisters tiptoed into situations and spaces with a sense of uncertainty. In a world where murder,

silence, invisibility and no access are common threads of their fabric, they would be foolish not to.

## Warm Up

The Olympics is widely regarded as the biggest sports spectacle where competitors compete to determine who is the best in respective fields. People go on to great heights and can use their fame to attract the attention and support they may want/need.

The Oppression Olympics is verbal banter between different, possibly marginalized, groups who are trying to determine the weight of their many intersectionalities of oppression (race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability) to determine who has it the worst. These games are damaging to any group or movement because of the alienating and dehumanizing effects of invalidation that can cause all parties to try and be gold medalists.

This is not something that is simply limited to the LGBTQIA movement. This is visible in feminism, and with racial disparities and immigration issues. The gold medal of the Oppression Olympics is seen as the commanding spot for demanding change, for visibility and allocation of resources. Conversely, it is also an instrumental tool in the social segregation of various populations. And with this, barriers to solidarity are created and resentment between groups is formed, and humanness becomes asinine.

## Passing the Baton

“On your mark! Get Set!” Their words rose and shot up in the air. “Go!” I buckled, I froze. The shots rang for the first race, and I was left in a dust of bewilderment and disbelief. I'm glad this conversation wasn't a sprint but the first round of the relay.

I took two steps back and shot forward. Each step forward, I ran trying to reach my trans sister to let her know she was running against me, not towards me.

We, cisgender and transgender women of color, are anchored at the hip of oppression. Pain and abuse are our matching birthmarks. During birth, the doctor of patriarchy pulled us out and slapped us with the same force; and yet we are not the same in any capacity. Though we are black and brown alike, we wear different uniforms and colors to these races, and our cheering sections rarely acknowledge

the dedication and sacrifices we make to get to the Olympics. Their primary focus is for us to win so they have bragging rights in support of the win. If we lose, then we become as invisible as the microscopic cells that determine our identity. To say we entrants in the game are the same would not acknowledge the ways we were designed, socialized and traumatized. And for that, we should never trip each other over when we have commonalities in the same hurdles we are trying to jump, despite the length of our race and destination of our journey. We should all celebrate and pay attention to everyone as the struggle and sacrifices in getting to the Olympics puts us on an even keel.

## The Victor

The end of the race is marked by a sense and space of solidarity. However, there are no true winners of the games because the genius of the game was lost in translation and it became a solo experience instead of recognition and celebration of the entire orchestra. This has become a place where we stand on the backs of our ancestors in hopes of unification. We are deeply rooted in selfishness and ignore that it was not one of our ancestors that paved the way for us, but several – all with different skills. In essence, this should be a world where we advocate, not isolate; a place where we harmonize our songs of oppression with alternate solos with the same orchestra as an integral part of the performance. No one is more of a woman or more of a victim or more important, and if we are able to get this out of the way in this hierarchy of oppression, we will find that things are a lot better on the other side of the rainbow, and the rainbow will be an indelible reminder of who and what we are and represent.

*Stoyan Francis is a sexual assault, domestic assault and LGBT of color advocate. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Women and Gender Studies and a Master's Degree in Social Justice. She is an alum of the LGBT Detroit Leadership Academy and board member of SASHA Center. She does community tabling and first response for Wayne County Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner's program and other domestic violence organizations. She splits her time between activism and LGBT diversity trainings and presentations. This was Francis' first Creating Change conference.*

## ► Affirmations Statement

Continued from p. 4

It is mine and my wife's intent to enter into private mediation in order to bring this to resolution. I ask for privacy and understanding now as our change in course no longer involves a public policy issue. It is a very private matter involving two wonderful and sensitive children who deserve space as this new unexpected family matter is introduced

to them. With this correction in my personal course, I look forward to the focus shifting back to Affirmations.

I am very passionate about Affirmations' mission and programs and the potential that lies ahead. The needs of LGBTQ individuals and the community as a whole are still great. I am highly committed to making others' journeys less painful and easier to navigate while generating community support through education and outreach. I will take this

personal lesson with me forever as I lead Affirmations into its next chapter. I hope I can count on your support in shaping Affirmations' future and making a difference.

This next year will be a transition year where we will work to stabilize the organization and position it for growth. The year will include strategic planning and the development of a new three-year strategic plan, establishment of strong internal operations and heightened revenue generation

with a focus on diversification of revenue streams in support of Affirmations' mission. A priority in the strategic planning includes forums for stakeholder and community input and your voice is welcome and encouraged. I ask that you to join me in authoring the next chapter for Affirmations. Together we can make a difference.

Thank you, and I look forward to meeting and working with you this next year.

# Creep of the Week

## Louie Gohmert



Gohmert

I think Trent Reznor/Nine Inch Nails said it best: “Bow down before the one you serve. You’re going to get what you deserve.”

And if you’re Rep. Louie

Gohmert, R-Texas, you’re up in arms

about the fact that the Supreme Court ruled that God doesn’t exist any more and since they’re the highest court in this land, well, they’re God now.

But what’s a Texas rep supposed to do with all that anger? Well, take to the airwaves before the Supreme Court takes those away, too!

On Jan. 22, as Right Wing Watch reported, Gohmert was interviewed on “The Joyce Kaufman Show,” a Florida radio program hosted by, duh, Kaufman, who calls herself “South Florida’s leading independent voice,” for whatever that’s worth.

She also seems to think of herself as quite the comedian. Her online bio states that she is “Divorced and remarried (sic), just like you...” Apparently the gays have so ruined marriage that heterosexuals can’t even spell it any more. Then it says, “Heterosexual, probably unlike you.”

Um, okay. I mean, she’s right that I’m not, but I also don’t think I’m her intended audience. Which leads me to believe that “Heterosexual, probably unlike you” is supposed to be a joke. Because ha.

While the bulk of the interview is about Benghazi, at one point Kaufman suggests term limits for Supreme Court Justices saying that lifetime appointments prevent “any kind of honesty.”

Let me point out that term limits for Supreme Court Justices is a popular idea in some Republican circles right now, especially since the Court voted to let the gays get married.

Gohmert is on board with this idea. “Last June was the biggie,” he said, referring to Obergefell v. Hodges, the case that won marriage equality for all. He then rambles a bit about how for 40 years the Supreme Court said that people can’t talk about God (not true) and then he goes on about Moses and Jesus and God and their view on marriage according to the Bible and/

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Gohmert concludes that Obergefell is “an illegal decision, and it’s time to start impeaching judges and remove them from the Supreme Court.”

or a Chick Tract Gohmert got with his Halloween candy.

According to Gohmert, “The Supreme Court said, ‘You know, we told you you couldn’t use God, now here’s the new line: We’re God. We are your God. Forget what God, Moses, Jesus ever said, we are your God now, the five of us in the majority, you do as we tell you.’”

I think it’s only fair in this new reality that Ruth Bader Ginsburg get to be Chief Goddess, am I right?

“And I’m telling you,” Gohmert continued, “that is a Supreme Court that is out of control.”

Supreme Court Gone Wild: Spring Break edition! Woo hoo! Everybody must worship our supreme beach bods! We rule!

But wait, what’s Gohmert talking about?

“Two of the justices were illegally participating in that decision because the law’s very clear: if there is even a question that could be raised about your impartiality,” he said, “you must disqualify yourself. We have two of them who had done same-sex marriages before they participated.”

Gohmert is referring to Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan, who did in fact preside over the weddings of same-sex couples. This doesn’t make them “disqualified,” but it does make them awesome.

I should point out that Justice Antonin Scalia has been very outspoken against LGBT rights, yet I don’t see Gohmert crying that Scalia didn’t recuse himself.

Gohmert concludes that Obergefell is “an illegal decision, and it’s time to start impeaching judges and remove them from the Supreme Court.”

Supreme Court justices can, in fact, be impeached, but they have to have actually done something illegal, not just something Gohmert doesn’t like. So he’s welcome to sharpen his pitchfork and get the U.S. House to start impeachment proceedings. Which I’m sure they’ll get to right after they’ve repealed Obamacare.

# Indiana Days Away from Possible ‘Super RFRA’

BY BTL STAFF

The ACLU, Freedom Indiana and the HRC released statements about Indiana’s “super RFRA” being considered this week, expressing outrage at the state’s additional attempt to strip rights from LGBT residents of the state and more. Senate Bills 66, 100 and 344 will be heard Jan. 27; SB 66 will be heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee and SB 100 and SB 344 will be heard in the Senate Rules Committee. An additional bill, Senate Bill 35, introduced by anti-LGBT Republican Sen. Jim Tomes, seeks to criminalize transgender people for using restrooms or locker rooms consistent with their gender identity.

“It’s unbelievable that some Indiana lawmakers are ignoring the incredible damage they inflicted on the state last year with their disastrous anti-LGBT religious refusal law,” said HRC Legal Director Sarah Warbelow. “The new proposal is the old RFRA all over again. Lawmakers appear ready to put Indiana’s economy and reputation in reverse and floor it. I can’t imagine Hoosiers want to see their state make national headlines again for all the wrong reasons. This ‘super-RFRA’ is a dangerous attempt to allow people to

use religion as an excuse to discriminate against LGBT Hoosiers, visitors and other minorities. By stripping away the limited buffer put in place last year, the legislators have made crystal clear their true intentions. Rather than trying to inflict even more damage and embarrassment on the state with this shameful legislation, lawmakers should fix the damage they caused by passing fully inclusive LGBT nondiscrimination protections to move Indiana forward.”

“Senate Bill 66 is RFRA on steroids,” said Freedom Indiana campaign manager Chris Paulsen. “Not only would it reopen the national and international wounds caused by last year’s discriminatory RFRA legislation, it would make it easier to discriminate against any group currently or potentially protected under our civil rights law. Just when you thought lawmakers had learned a lesson from RFRA, a handful of them have decided to breathe life into a ‘Super RFRA.’”

“Senate Bill 100 treats gay and transgender people as second-class citizens under existing civil rights law, and Senate Bill 344 doesn’t include transgender people at all,” Paulsen added. “Both bills also erode important protections

that already exist in state law, making it easier to discriminate based on race, sex and other characteristics. Lawmakers are trying to thread a political needle when they should be enacting real legal protections for the people who are most at-risk for being fired, denied housing or turned away from public places for being who they are.”

## Senate Bill 66

Senate Bill 66 would enact a new RFRA and create sweeping exemptions that encourage people to pick and choose which laws they’re going to follow. Under the bill, government would have to meet a strict scrutiny standard for

“The new proposal is the old RFRA all over again. Lawmakers appear ready to put Indiana’s economy and reputation in reverse and floor it. I can’t imagine Hoosiers want to see their state make national headlines again for all the wrong reasons. This ‘super-RFRA’ is a dangerous attempt to allow people to use religion as an excuse to discriminate against LGBT Hoosiers, visitors and other minorities.”

- HRC Legal Director Sarah Warbelow

claimed impingements on the right to worship, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assemblage or the right to bear arms, making it easy for an individual or any business, no matter how large, to use RFRA to challenge any number of laws.

This would potentially affect not just existing and potential nondiscrimination protections, but it could be used to challenge tax and zoning statutes, public safety regulations and many other laws.

Even worse, Senate Bill 66 would repeal the RFRA “fix” that lawmakers passed last year following a firestorm of national negative publicity over the so-called “license to discriminate” against gay and transgender people. The fix, while imperfect, ensured that RFRA could not be used as a defense to a nondiscrimination claim. By repealing the fix, SB 66 would allow people and businesses to challenge longstanding state and local nondiscrimination laws.

When it was introduced in November 2015, Indiana Senate Bill 100 was presented as a bill to add sexual orientation and gender identity

See Indiana Super RFRA, page 16

# The New Normal of HIV in the Queer Community

## The stigma related to HIV on full display at Creating Change plenary session

BY TODD HEYWOOD

**CHICAGO** – The grand ballroom in the Chicago Hilton has played host to many moments in American history – as the elevator trivia screens reminded everyone. But changing the commitment to the fight against HIV by the LGBTQ community cannot be chalked up to one of those historical moments.

On Saturday, Jan. 23, The LGBTQ Task Force and Gilead Sciences sponsored a plenary lunch, called “AIDS: Mind the Gap,” as part of the Task Force’s Creating Change conference. While men who have sex with men and transwomen are significantly overburdened with this infection – particularly people of color – the attendance in the ballroom, which had enough space for 2,500, was abysmal.

About half the space was full, and as the program was just getting revved up, and lunch was done, the attendance dwindled even further – to about one quarter full. It’s the new normal for HIV and the queer community, the elephant in the community most don’t want to be reminded of.

“We are virtually breaking the back of HIV,” declared Phil Wilson, president and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute.

But that’s not accurate. The tools to break the back of HIV are certainly available – what with PrEP and Treatment as Prevention – but the community, according to government data, simply is not availing itself of the options.

Despite being at least 92 percent effective – and math models say it could be as effective as 99 percent – PrEP, the once a day pill to prevent HIV infection, has been very slow on the uptake. In June 2014 the CDC issued broad new clinical guidance on the prescription of PrEP which ought to have extended the use of the drug to a half million or more men who have sex with men and transgender women. Instead, in November 2015, Gilead (the same company that sponsored the plenary lunch) reported that there were only about 25,000 prescriptions for the drug in the U.S.

And the government data on treatment of HIV is certainly no better. Nationwide, only about 25 percent of people living with HIV are in care, on medications and have their virus controlled. In Michigan, about 58 percent of people living with the virus have it controlled, according to MDHHS stats. That treatment is key not only to the improved health outcomes of people living with HIV, experts argue, but it also dramatically reduces the infectiousness of the person living with HIV.

With such terrible uptake of the two key biomedical prevention options in the U.S., it’s hard to find Wilson’s claims more than wishful thinking at this point.

But those in attendance on Saturday would not have known how dramatic this failure to use the tools is based on the presentation by Wilson, Cecilia Chung of the Transgender Law Center and Sharon Lettman-Hicks of the National Black Justice Coalition. Nor would a casual observer be aware of just how much of a crisis the HIV epidemic has become – again – among MSM and transwomen, particularly young MSM and transwomen of color.

Nowhere in the presentation were attendees told of the terrifying statistical analysis released several years ago by the CDC which showed the 20-year-old cohort of MSM had an overall HIV positivity rate of 10 percent; black MSM in that cohort had a 20 percent positivity rate. At current transmission

“*For those living with HIV, they may not want to be reminded,” he said. “For those who are not, they may not think HIV is an issue for them. But at the end of the day, to get young people in the room, you have to make the presentation sexy.*”

– Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb, LGBT Detroit

rates, half of all MSM in that cohort will be infected in 30 years, and 70 percent of black MSM will be infected.

Dr. Leo Moore, a doctor from Los Angeles, also presented at the plenary – and he explained both PrEP and PEP (that’s post-exposure prophylaxis, which is the use of anti-HIV drugs to prevent infection after an exposure) – but there was no call to action. There was no mention of the dismal prescription rates for PrEP or the lack of knowledge of clinicians on the

interventions.

In fact, despite decades of experience in the fight against HIV being represented on the stage, there was barely a whisper of actual call to action. The closest came from Chung, a transwoman of color from San Francisco and a powerful advocate on HIV issues. She highlighted the failure by health officials to truly calculate the trans HIV crisis with accurate data, and presented estimates that show transwomen are 49 times more likely to be infected with the virus.

“Ask any government agency if they are collecting data on the transgender community,” she said. “If they aren’t, ask them why not.”

Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit, was in attendance at the entire plenary. He said the information provided was good and presented in a way to reach a younger audience, but noted attendance was low for a variety of reasons.

“For those living with HIV, they may not want to be reminded,” he said. “For those who are not, they may not think HIV is an issue for them. But at the end of the day, to get young people in the room, you have to make the presentation sexy.”

This plenary was anything but, and sadly, resulted in a failure to come away with a real commitment to pick up the tools now available in the arsenal of prevention and care and find a way to end the epidemic.

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## ► Indiana Super RFRA

Continued from p. 14

protections to Indiana law, which gay and transgender Hoosiers urgently need. Unfortunately, the bill that was introduced provides little meaningful protection from discrimination for transgender people and includes damaging carve-outs and exemptions targeting all LGBT people in Indiana.

## Senate Bill 100

Senate Bill 100 would prohibit cities and towns from enforcing, existing or adding meaningful local civil rights protections to achieve fair treatment of their residents and as an economic development tool.

Senate Bill 100 provides limited protections for discrimination based on gender identity, and creates very broad religious and services exemptions that would authorize discrimination against gay and transgender people and either erode or

eliminate many longstanding protections under Indiana civil rights law for discrimination based on other currently protected characteristics, including race and sex.

For example, this bill could allow a homeless shelter that receives government funding to turn away a single mother or permit a religiously affiliated hospital to deny someone the ability to make medical decisions for a same-sex spouse.

The bill also includes steep financial penalties that make it harder for anyone to file a discrimination claim.

## Senate Bill 344

Senate Bill 344 was introduced in January 2016 as an alternative to Senate Bill 100. They share the same authors in the Indiana Senate.

Senate Bill 344 includes many of the same problems outlined above, and it furthermore provides zero protections for the tens of thousands of transgender people in Indiana. It would instead refer the issue of transgender discrimination to a summer study committee, sending a message that discrimination against this population should remain legal.

## ► Rea Carey Statement

Continued from p. 10

whether it's directed at Jewish or Muslim people. Let me also be clear regarding a reception planned and hosted by the group A Wider Bridge with guests from Jerusalem Open House that happened after the annual Shabbat service and a protest of that reception. We are deeply concerned about how the events of the evening unfolded – and have already initiated a review of our conference practices.

“The last couple of weeks leading-up to Creating Change have been rough. The events leading up to and during it have been extremely hurtful to many – and for really different reasons. What we all are experiencing is complicated and messy. We know that many people at Creating Change share our belief in the self-determination of all people. And for many we have failed to live up to the ideals of our mission or values. We are leaning into the struggle. As Creating Change has grown to over 4,000 people, we are experiencing some of what happens when we ask people to be their full selves, to bring their whole selves to Creating Change ... and those whole selves come into conflict.

“There have been many protests over the 28 years of the conference – and peaceful protest has been a hallmark of the


pursuit of civil rights in our country. Receptions have never been protested at Creating Change in all its history. We acted to defuse the situation to the best of our ability. Without consulting us, hotel security called the police.

“This year's conference revealed a variety of needed improvements to the systems and infrastructure we have built over the years for a smaller conference – that now need to be evolved to meet the challenges of a growing attendance. In light of all that has happened, I have already started a review of the Conference so we can make needed changes in the future. Among them are: inclusiveness and program content review; safety and security; and promoting conversation and peaceful protest.

“We know we have much to learn and many to learn from. As we work hard to improve the Creating Change Conference experience over the next year, we will include in that review process consulting widely with leaders in different communities, supporters and stakeholders.

“The Creating Change Conference, for the past 28 years, has been both a family reunion, a home for activists, a movement town hall and a place for movement building, for wrestling with the hard issues, and to energize activists to press on. It has always been a special place and will continue to be as it evolves and grows. If not the Task Force, who? If not Creating Change, where?”

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## ► Creating Change Protest

Continued from p. 11

summarized the protesters' objections to the event. "For several years the Israeli government has attempted to use propaganda about the freedoms some LGBTQs in that country have as a cover for their increasingly brutal rule over Palestinians, a process known as 'pinkwashing,'" the statement said.

"Because of the brutal racism of the country, mimicking South Africa under apartheid – one set of laws for Jews, another for Palestinians – most Palestinian LGBTQs don't enjoy those freedoms. Instead, they endure the anti-Palestinian racism meted out on a daily basis to gay and non-gay alike.

"Israel's racist rule features widespread imprisonment of Palestinians without charges or trials, systemic torture documented by numerous human rights organizations, and the intentional, extreme impoverishment of Palestinians thru the purposeful destruction of their economic activity in Gaza and the West Bank."

No arrests were made. A Hilton staff member told protesters they would be arrested if they did not leave, and threatened to close the entire conference. Creating Change Director Sue Hyde was on hand during the entire protest, negotiating with Hilton staff, police and protesters, but the Hilton staff seemed most in charge. Hyde was even shoved out of one room by a police officer as she tried to make sure the reception was in fact over. The protesting group gradually moved to a lower level of the hotel and cleared the hallway. Some went across the hall to a Latino reception.

"You had Jewish people congregating in a small space, and then you had police brought in when there were many young people of color and undocumented people at that conference," said Cindy Rizzo, who had attended the Shabbat services prior to the protest. "There was the potential for just about every bad '-ism' to happen there." Rizzo was at the reception before the protest in the hall began, then left and was unable to re-enter the room.

Two Shabbat services were held before the reception. One was part of the AWB gathering and had about 120 attendees. About 35 people attended an alternative service that would lead into the protest.

Bashar Makhay of the group Tarab-NYC said he was "disappointed with Hilton and disappointed with the Task Force. Disappointed that they choose to stand up for racism, colonialism and imperialism, and not for human rights. By inviting A Wider Bridge, they did just that, and they threatened to arrest us. They abused people at the rally and punched them out. Enough is enough. We won't stand for injustice."

Activist Dara Silverman of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) said of the protest, "For all of us at (SURJ), it's really about supporting Palestinian, Arab and Muslim leadership

and the need for indigenous struggles to be recognized in the queer and trans communities in the way we recognize them in all other social justice struggles. What A Wider Bridge aims to do is paint Israel as a good place for LGBT people. The reality is, that doesn't include LGBT Palestinians. It doesn't include anyone of Arab or Muslim or indigenous descent. So the need for all of us in social justice is for all of us to support that indigenous leadership."

Earlier in the week, Black Lives Matter Chicago voiced its disapproval of AWB's participation at Creating Change, drawing correlations between the experiences of African-Americans and the Palestinians. In a statement, they said, "They/We navigate heavily surveilled and detained realities on tightropes. They/We are expected to be grateful to those that itemize their/our pain to strengthen existing norms. As is routine for too many souls across the globe, They/We must negotiate oppressions as a provision of harm reduction and triage."

Faith Cheltenham, president of BiNet USA, took part in the protest and said shortly after it ended that she saw it as part of a larger effort to get "our movement back."

She added, "It's wonderful because we're seeing people be represented. There are many LGBT people who think treatment of Palestinians is incorrect. Many people. There are very few people who'd say, 'You know, they're getting everything they want. ... It is cultural apartheid, so much so that the Obama administration recognized that. They actually said recently that this is unjust. So when you come here to the LGBTQIA gender nonconforming queer community and you deal with us, that's our movement. That's our intersection."

But Slepian maintained that it is possible to separate Israel's LGBT community from its governmental policy.

"I think it's fine to try to see the world as having inter-related causes to different kinds of oppressions, but I think it's a different issue when people then develop an agenda of purity, saying, in effect, 'This is what it means to be a good queer person, and if you're not on board, you deserve to be silenced,'" he said. "There needs to be much more room for diversity and exploration of different points of view."

Slepian also defended AWB's reasons for being at Creating Change, adding, "We came with the message that the LGBT community and Israel are valuable allies, just as every other LGBT community around the world wants to be valued and supported. The idea that (Israel's LGBT community) would be disenfranchised because of something that their government does, that they would be devalued because of what their government does, is disgraceful. They're saying that their lives as LGBT people are not valuable stories because of the actions of their government."

*Originally published on Jan. 22 and updated on Jan. 25 at Windy City Times. Find out more at [www.windycitymediagroup.com](http://www.windycitymediagroup.com). Video footage available for multiple CC events.*

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# JILLIAN MICHAELS

Sets The Record

# STRAIGHT

## Reality Star on Reclaiming Gay Slurs & How Madonna Helped Her Come Out

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

The “shred” will put you through the sweat fires of hell, but despite her extreme workouts, Jillian Michaels wants you to know she is no monster. To set the record, ahem, straight, the out fitness guru is opening the doors to her very “normal,” sometimes-emotional, not-at-all-what-you-thought life during E!’s “Just Jillian,” where she laughs (you read that right) and... cries?!

Yes, that Jillian Michaels—the Butt Kicker from “The Biggest Loser”—cries actual human tears.

As if that revelation wasn’t enough, there were many more made during this recent chat with Michaels, who talked about her reputation being “destroyed” by “The Biggest Loser,” why she uses the word “fag” and how, after a long road to self-acceptance, Madonna empowered her to confront her sexuality.

**After watching “Just Jillian,” a lot of people will be surprised to find out that you’re not who they thought you were.**

Very much so, yeah. Here’s what I love about it: Everyone is like, why would you do this? And they have these preconceived notions about reality shows and all this drama and, “It’s all fake and it’s all mean spirited,” and that’s not at all why I wanted to open up my life. I feel like the comedy of errors as we go about our daily routine, honestly, is quite enjoyable. And everybody has the same struggles, right? Whether it’s in their work, marriage, family, parenting, as a friend, you go on this journey where you laugh and you cry, and hopefully you learn something with the characters on the show. For me, in my career, it’s always been “Jillian’s the fitness guru,” but the bigger conversation is using fitness as a tool to help somebody build a better life.

**Was being out on TV – with a family, even: your partner, Heidi Rhoades, and your two children – something you ever imagined for yourself?**

You know, it’s interesting that you ask that. I know I’m sort of in that very pivotal generation, right? I’m on the younger end of Gen X, and for me, growing up gay was not cool. Gay was gross. Gay was despicable. People said the word “faggot.” People said “dyke” – I heard that a lot in high school. And it was very scary. I have watched as a people and as a country and a culture over the course of my teenage-into-adulthood life and I do still think there is a tremendous amount of homophobia that exists. And I’ve never been out there with my gay flag; I wanted to take an approach of, “Hey, I don’t need to win you over and I don’t need to fight with you and I don’t want to combat you.” But what I do hope is that people observe me, observe my family, and go, “Oh my god, this isn’t at all what I thought it was. This is actually pretty similar to my family; they’re going through things that my family goes through.” And that’s always been my approach. I don’t need to make these big statements. I’m just going to

live my life and my truth and hopefully as you observe that it will become a little more – and I have so much trouble with this word – normalized for people who don't perceive it as the norm.

**I was struck by the use of "queer" in the show. Some people who are older than us hear queer and still find it offensive, whereas our generations have embraced the term as being all-encompassing of any sexual orientation that isn't straight. Where do you stand on labels? Do you have a preference?**

What's interesting is, I take a very African-American-using-the-"n-word" approach with those terms. I've claimed them all. I use "homo" and joke about it. I use "dyke" and joke about it. My gay male friends and I use "fag" and joke about it. We've taken them all back and made them our own.

What we've tried to do is take some of the venom out of the terms by reclaiming them – and I hate to draw this reference – but in the same way the black community has taken back the "n-word." We don't allow them to harm us or hurt us and there could be a whole psychology about why we do, but we all do. It's like, I own these words, they're my words, and I've suffered enough to be able to take them on and wear them with pride, so to speak. None of those words actually have any venom in them for me anymore and I don't really care who's swinging them at me – it doesn't mean anything to me. People can judge it but that's just something that I've done and it is what it is.

**What is the biggest misconception about you?**

God, I mean, it's the obvious. And I hate the obvious and I think it's cliché, but I think people never really understood "The Biggest Loser." "The Biggest Loser" was a life or death intervention that existed on a ticking clock on top of which you would see 45 minutes of a television show which is shot over 10 days and so you never saw what I was doing, why I was doing it, what else I was doing, the end result of what I was doing. The intentions were never displayed and it was far more entertaining to have a good guy and a bad guy, and I think some people really saw through that and that's great; some people did not and that's that.

But what is kind of cool about this show – and it is so appropriately named "Just Jillian" – is you see just me, and it's the good, the bad, the ugly. I'm a very real person. So, for those who have idealized me, they'll be disappointed (laughs); for those who've hated me all these years, I think they'll be surprised.

**Do you regret doing "The Biggest Loser"?**

Good question. There's this Latin quote that I heard and it summarizes "The Biggest Loser" perfectly: "That which nourishes me also destroys me." I'm super grateful for the platform I was given. Obviously I owe everything I have to that diving board, that

jumping-off point. But there does come a point where you definitely overstay your welcome, where something starts to become more limiting, it starts to do more harm than it does good, and that was definitely a source of frustration for me. I don't think it's a secret – I have been vocal about it – but to say that I'm not grateful for the opportunity and for all it's done for me would be obtuse, absurd and obnoxious, but I'm not gonna lie and say it didn't also cost me a host of problems on the backend.

Now, I'm hoping this show is really just my best foot forward and the thing is, I am sarcastic and I am obnoxious but I'm also loving and I'm also passionate and I'm also caring and I'm all those things. At least now if people hate me, they'll hate me for a legitimate reason – that I'm really excited about! (Laughs) At least they'll hate me for a reason that's real.

**And unless those tears are CGI, you cry. Quite a bit, in fact. Actual human tears, I think.**

(Laughs) No, no, no. It's just tear-gas shit they sprayed at me during the interviews.

**You've been called a bully to overweight people and I know that must be hard to hear for somebody who was bullied.**

I know, I know.

**What does that feel like?**

It's a shame. For somebody who comes to an environment where they're literally committing suicide with food, let's cut the shit. Some of them are 400 or 500 pounds, they're killing themselves with food and the amount of time they have left is five or 10 years; if they're lucky, 15. It's suicide with food. In some cases I would have a week with one of these people, so I will try everything under the sun, but if I can't do it with hugs, love and kisses, then I'm gonna do what it takes. What people should really pay attention to is, I was less concerned with being likable than getting done what I needed to get done.

**So this goes back to the whole "I didn't know Jillian Michaels was sensitive" thing, but you're a fan of Tori Amos, which we discover in the first episode. That is some deep sensitivity. What kind of influence did she and her music have on you? And what Tori song got you through your teen years?**

God, so many of them. I was very much that kind of bullied emo kid. And a lot of teenagers go through that emo phase and it manifests in different incarnations for every generation, but in some of those darker moments during that very kind of impressionable and pivotal part of my life, her music was something I could really relate to, especially "Cornflake Girl." She's sort of the outcast, and that whole song was, to me, about being an outcast, being on the outside. Or "Silent All These

See Jillian, page 21

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## Editor's Pick

Cranbrook Art Museum will host a showing of "Empire" by famed LGBT icon Andy Warhol. This 1964 film consists of eight hours and 24 minutes of continuous slow motion footage of the Empire State Building in New York City. The presentation at Cranbrook Art Museum is shown in relation to "Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe," which runs through March 26.

Like Reed, Warhol's Empire shares Reed's rejection of conventional time. Reed's Metal Machine Music relied heavily on sustained or repeated motifs (in

this case sound, not images) to produce a work that relied on duration and the concept of time to experience the complete work. Warhol projected the film at a slower rate than it had been filmed, producing a repeated and sustained – almost hypnotic – "visual pitch" or "drone," much like Reed's Metal Machine Music.

The exhibit will run through March 13. Cranbrook Art Museum is located at 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. For more information, call 248-645-3300 or visit [www.cranbrookart.edu](http://www.cranbrookart.edu).

representations and racially charged clichés. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 N. University, Ann Arbor. 7:30 p.m. Feb. 2. 734-764-2538. [www.Ums.org/performance/tanya-tagaq/](http://www.Ums.org/performance/tanya-tagaq/)

### Film & Video

**Michigan Theater** "CineManga Film Series" Different anime or Japanese film each Wednesday night. State Theater, 233 State St., Ann Arbor. Jan. 13 - April 27. 734-668-8397. [www.Michtheater.org](http://www.Michtheater.org)

### Shows

**HBA** "Novi Home Improvement Show" Ticket prices \$10 adult, \$9 seniors (55+). Children 12 and under free. Parking not included. Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi. 2 p.m. Jan. 29. 586-752-6381. [Novihomeshow.com](http://Novihomeshow.com)

**Macomb Center for the Performing Arts** "Blue Man Group" Tickets: \$68+. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Township. Jan. 26 - Jan. 28. 586-286-2222. [www.Macombcenter.com](http://www.Macombcenter.com)

## THEATER

**Butler** . Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through March 13. 313-868-1347.

**The Odd Couple** Tickets: \$19-43. The Purple Rose Theatre, Purple Rose Theatre, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Through March 30. 734-433-7673. [www.Purplerosetheatre.org](http://www.Purplerosetheatre.org)

### College/University Theater

**Love's Labour's Lost** By William Shakespeare. Hilberry, Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Jan. 29 - March 13. 313-577-2972. [www.Hilberry.com](http://www.Hilberry.com)

### Professional

**Avenue Q** Tickets: \$22-24. Stagecrafters, Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette Ave., Royal Oak. Through Feb. 7. 248-541-6430. [www.Stagecrafters.org](http://www.Stagecrafters.org)

**The Monster Who Ate My Peas** Tickets: \$12. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan State University, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing. Jan. 31 - Jan. 31. 800-WHARTON. [www.Whartoncenter.com](http://www.Whartoncenter.com)

## ART 'N' AROUND

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

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

**Flint Institute of Arts** "From Heart to Hand: African American Quilts from the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts" Throughout history, quilts have held an important and cherished place in our culture, particularly in the American South. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Jan. 24 - April 10. 810-234-1695. [www.Flintarts.org](http://www.Flintarts.org)

# Happenings

## OUTINGS

### Thursday, Jan. 28

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

### Friday, Jan. 29

**Michigan SOGI Education Conference** Oakland University School of Education & Human Services, 200 W. Big Beaver Road, Troy. 248-370-4614. [Sogi@oakland.edu](mailto:Sogi@oakland.edu) [www.Oakland.edu/SOGI](http://www.Oakland.edu/SOGI)

### Saturday, Jan. 30

**Chess, The Musical** 8 p.m. Tickets: \$24. Grosse Pointe Theatre, 32 Lake Shore Drive, Grosse Pointe Farms. 313-881-4004. [www.Gpt.org](http://www.Gpt.org)

### Sunday, Jan. 31

**Wine, Women & Song XIV** 3 p.m. Tickets: \$20-50. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-763-4186. [www.Kerrytownconcerthouse.com](http://www.Kerrytownconcerthouse.com)

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

### Monday, Feb. 1

**I'll Eat You Last and Buyer & Cellar** The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 248-545-5545. [www.Theringwald.com](http://www.Theringwald.com)

**Happy Hour** 4 p.m. Come join us for happy hour and Man Crush Monday. Grenadier Club, 3101 McDougall, Detroit. 313-910-6867.

**New Member Night** 7 p.m. Washtenaw County's original mixed LGBT chorus. Opportunity to join LGBT chorus group. No commitments, just see if we're the right group for you. All are welcome--LGBT & allies. No sight reading skills or audition are required. Out Loud Chorus, 1400 W. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor. 734-265-0740. [outloudchorus@gmail.com](mailto:outloudchorus@gmail.com) [www.Olconline.org](http://www.Olconline.org)

### Thursday, Feb. 4

**Throwback Thursday** 7:30 p.m. Different movie each time. Tickets: \$12. The Berman, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. 248-661-1900. [www.Theberman.org](http://www.Theberman.org)

### Friday, Feb. 5

**Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of American Popular Music: 1960s-1980s** 8 p.m. Tickets: \$40-\$50 UMS, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. [umstix@umich.edu](mailto:umstix@umich.edu) [www.Ums.org/multiperformance/taylor-mac-a-24-decade-history-of-american-popular-music-1960s-1980s/](http://www.Ums.org/multiperformance/taylor-mac-a-24-decade-history-of-american-popular-music-1960s-1980s/)

### Saturday, Feb. 6

**KGLRC Winter Gala and Fundraiser** Wonderful entertainment, fantastic food and cocktails as well as sought after silent auction items from your favorite local businesses. Tickets: \$25-55. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 314 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. [www.Kglrc.org](http://www.Kglrc.org)

### Monday, Feb. 8

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

### Tuesday, Feb. 9

**National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Testing** 5 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. [www.Goaffirmations.org](http://www.Goaffirmations.org)

### Wednesday, Feb. 10

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

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

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

## MUSIC & MORE

**Ford Motor Company Fund** "39th Ann Arbor Folk Festival" Fundraiser for The Ark. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. Jan. 30 - Jan. 30. 734-761-1800. [www.Theark.org](http://www.Theark.org)

### Classical

**UMS** "Igor Levit, piano" . Hill Auditorium, 825 North University Avenue, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Feb. 6. 734.764.2538. [www.Ums.org/performance/igor-levit/](http://www.Ums.org/performance/igor-levit/)

### Comedy

**Ann Arbor Civic Theatre** "Four Performance Showcase" Tickets: \$10. A2CT Studio Theater, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. Feb. 5 - Feb. 6. 734-971-2228. [www.A2ct.org](http://www.A2ct.org)

### Concerts

**Cliff Bells** "John Raymond Trio" On his latest record, Real Feels, trumpeter John Raymond abandons the R&B influence & the improvisation-heavy nature of his first two records, in favor of getting back to his roots. Cliff Bells, Detroit. Jan. 30.

**The Magic Bag** "The Mega 80s" 21+. Cover: \$10. The Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Jan. 15 - Feb. 6. 248-544-3030. [www.Themagicbag.com](http://www.Themagicbag.com)

**UMS** "Tanya Tagaq in concert with Nanook of the North" With Tanya Tagaq, ancient meets modern in provocative, powerful ways. This spellbinding performance features the Inuit throat singer accompanying a screening of Nanook of the North (1922) with a live score. Tagaq's mixed-media performance reclaims the controversial classic - considered the first feature-length documentary - capturing the sense of the sound of the Arctic spaces shown in the film and adding tremendous feeling and depth to what is a complex mix of beautiful



► **Jillian**

Continued from p. 19

Years” where she finally finds her voice. And it took me a long time. As much as I’m very outspoken now, I wasn’t always so. I didn’t always have that inner sense of strength and authenticity and passion. I was extremely shut down and shamed – and geez, there are so many. “Past the Mission.” I could go on and on. “China.” Literally on and on.

**When did you find your voice?**

It was a series of things... it was a process. Basically it was a combination of getting involved in martial arts and having these small successes within martial arts, which empowered me to start taking steps in my personal life, in my relationships, in my professional life, and then, honestly, when it comes to accepting my sexuality – I didn’t even know I was (gay) until later in life. I mean, I realized I was bisexual at about 18 but I didn’t even realize I was gay until into my 20s.

I think what helped that, and I know this sounds ridiculous, but Madonna and her “Justify My Love” video made a really big difference for my generation because (being gay) wasn’t something that was disgusting and gross – just something that became cool overnight, thanks to Madonna. That allowed me to feel less ashamed – it became almost cool to explore it – and, unfortunately or fortunately, that exploration was not just an exploration, it wasn’t just me experimenting. It turns out that was what was going on with me throughout all my teenage years. I really didn’t know. I really thought something was wrong with me. I didn’t know that I liked women, but I knew I didn’t like men. I knew when I was a kid I didn’t want to be physical with my boyfriends. Didn’t wanna make out with them. I couldn’t figure out what was wrong with me.

Then when I became 18 and I was kissed by a girl, like a Katy Perry song, I shit you not, I was like, “Oh my god, this is what’s been going on all these years.” The light bulb went off in me and I’m like, “I’ve been fucking gay this whole time,” and I, honest to god, was in such deep denial that I had no idea until that moment.

**Thanks Madonna!**

Honestly, you’re absolutely right.

**Are you gonna end up getting married on this show? Are we gonna see that?**

You gotta watch! Have to watch. That’s all I’m gonna say. And here’s the thing, because another journalist who’s gay was like, “Don’t you think that you’re disrespecting the right we all fought for?” And here’s my answer: We fought for the right to choose and so therefore it’s my choice to say, you know, I’ve had some bad experiences with marriage. (Laughs)

**How do you feel about comments like that?**

Again, I hate to reference the African-American community again, but the reality is that gay rights is the civil rights movement of today, right? Women have fought for rights. The African-American community has fought for rights. Every minority has fought for rights. This really is our moment for the gay community – the LGBT-whatever, put all the letters in there. With that said, Malcolm X didn’t like Martin Luther King; there’s always a lot of kind of inciting as progress is being made as to how we need to go about making that progress, so I think being a public gay figure, there’s always a lot of criticism about what I say, what I didn’t say, how I did it, how I didn’t do it. If I live my life to make all these people happy, that’s obviously an impossibility – can’t please everybody all the time – so I live my life in my truth. I hope it’s enough. I hope that it’s enough for me and for my family, and that’s really all I can do.


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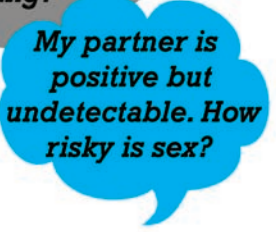
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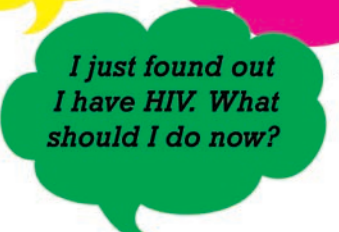
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# The Frivolist



## Treat Yo'self: 8 Ways to Avoid Valentine's Day – and Enjoy It

BY MIKEY ROX

If you're consciously uncoupled (or just got dropped like a bad habit) this Valentine's Day, make the most of your single status with these eight ways to tell Cupid to shove it.

### Drown Your Sorrows in Retail Therapy

Not everybody's a shopper, but when I'm feeling down retail therapy never fails me. If you have outlet stores in your area, hit those first – you're sure to score deep discounts given that Presidents' Day falls on Feb. 15 this year. Otherwise, pop into your local mall or shopping center. Even though spring is just around the corner, this is the time to scoop up winter essentials – like heavy coats, hats, gloves and scarves at near-clearance pricing. Retailers have to make room for new, warmer-weather arrivals, and the winter stuff will be priced to move.



See Frivolist, page 24

# Comedian Paula Poundstone to Perform in East Lansing Feb. 18

BY BTL STAFF

**EAST LANSING** – Michigan Radio welcomes comedian Paula Poundstone to Wharton Center’s Cobb Great Hall on Feb. 18. Tickets to see Poundstone start at \$38 and will be available at the official source to purchase Wharton Center tickets online, [www.whartoncenter.com](http://www.whartoncenter.com), at the Auto-Owners Insurance Ticket Office or by calling 1-800-WHARTON.



Twenty-five years ago Paula Poundstone climbed on a Greyhound bus and traveled across the country – stopping in at open mic nights at comedy clubs as she went. A high school drop out, she went on to become one of the great humorists of our time. You can hear her through your laughter as a regular panelist on NPR’s popular rascal of a weekly news quiz show, “Wait Wait... Don’t Tell Me.”

She tours regularly, performing standup comedy across the country, causing Bob Zany with the Boston Globe to write: “Poundstone can regale an audience for several hours with her distinctive brand of wry, intelligent and witty comedy.” Audience members may put it a little less elegantly: “I peed my pants.”

Over the span of her career, Poundstone has amassed a list of awards and accolades that stretch the length of a great big tall guy’s arm. She not only shot through the glass ceiling, she never even acknowledged that it was there. Never one to stereotype herself as a “female comedian” or limit herself to comedy from a “female” point of view, in the early ’90s she was the first woman to win the cable ACE for Best Standup Comedy Special and the first woman to perform standup at the prestigious White House Correspondents dinner where she joined the current president as part of the evening’s entertainment.

Poundstone is also a published author and lecturer. Her hard cover book, “There is Nothing In This Book That I Meant To Say” (Crown, 2006, with a forward by Mary Tyler Moore) is still in release on audio (Highbridge) and in paperback. Other writing credits include the back page columnist of Mother Jones, The Los Angeles Times Entertainment Weekly and Glamour magazine.

Not only a writer, but an avid reader, Paula continues her role for the American Library Association (ALA) as the National spokesperson for United for Libraries, their “Friends of Libraries” national network – a citizens support group who work to raise awareness and much needed funds to support their local libraries.

Poundstone will perform at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 18 in the Wharton Center’s Cobb Great Hall, East Lansing.

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## ► Frivolist

Continued from p. 24

### Sweat Out Your Frustration at the Gym

It's scientifically proven that exercise releases endorphins and other feel-good chemicals into your body, so if Hallmark's faux holiday has you down, fit at least an hour of gym time into your day to lift your spirits. Use your existing membership, or, if you want to switch up your experience, try out a new facility in your area – maybe even for free if you can cop a one-day pass online – that features a pool, sauna and steam room where you can let go of your stress in more ways than one.

### Attend an Anti-Valentine's Day Event

Anti-Valentine's Day events have become increasingly popular over the past decade or so (as have dating events if you're a glutton for punishment), and there are probably quite a few in your area. A quick Google search should produce the results you're looking for, but you also can tap into neighborhood-specific apps like Nextdoor or go old school and browse the newspaper.

Massacr"e; and "Valentine," starring David Boreanaz.

### Troll Social Media With Love-Fail Statistics

A friend of mine recently told me that on Valentine's Day he likes to post sobering marriage and relationship statistics to Facebook to provide all those hand-holding, heart-pounding, PDA-lovers a proverbial kick in the junk – like how infidelity, in one form or another, now affects close to 80 percent of all marriages or committed relationships, according to Examiner.com.

### Quell Your Loneliness With Around-the-Corner Company

If you're feeling particularly lonely on Valentine's Day, do what you do any other time: Manipulate other people's loneliness to your advantage. Hop on Grindr, Scruff or the new Bro app and invite over naked company to bury your insecurities about how nobody wants to date you and only strangers want to bang you.

### Pour the Wine, Pop a Xanny, and Relax

No legitimate doctor will recommend that you pop a Xanax after you get a good wine buzz going. Ya know – malpractice and all. Lucky for you, I'm not a doctor, so I say go for it! Just don't go overboard. One and done so there's no OD on my hands.



### Say to Hell With the Whole Day and Do Whatever You Want

There are no rules that say you have to spend Valentine's Day this way or that way. You do you, boo. Relationship equality – where all those single-day kissy-faces can't stand the sight of each other the other 364 days of the year – is on the horizon. Ride it out and you'll be handsomely rewarded.

### Host a Scary-Movie Marathon With Friends

Oh, the horror! Who needs all those lovey-dovey smooch/snooze-fests to get you down on a day where you're already on edge? As an alternative, invite over a few of your friends, gather the snacks and screen your favorite scary movies to subconsciously exact your ex-boyfriend/girlfriend revenge. There are several V-Day-themed flicks from which to choose, including "My Bloody Valentine" (both the 1981 original and 2009 remake); "Lovers Lane," starring Anna Faris; "Hospital

*Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He splits his time between homes in New York City and the Jersey Shore with his dog Jaxon. Connect with Mikey on Twitter @mikeyrox.*



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### BTL Pet of the Week - Scotty

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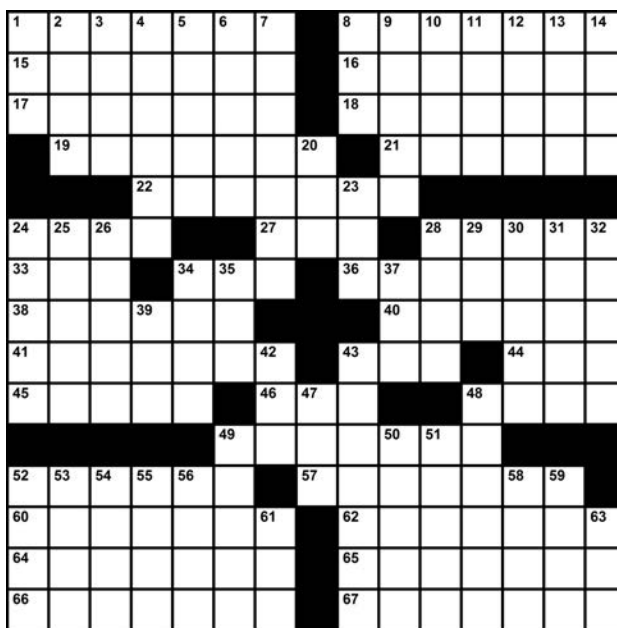
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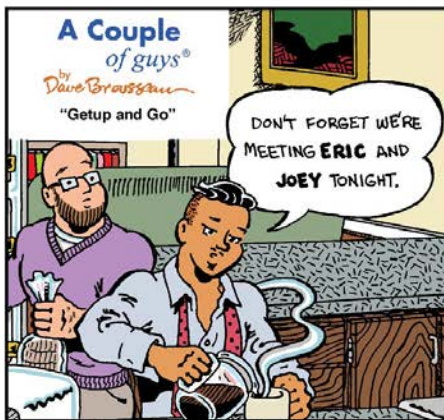
- 1 Anaïs Nin was one  
8 Golfer Muffin \_\_\_-Devlin  
15 Physically fit  
16 Unit with some real stallions  
17 "You wish!"  
18 Rio beach of song  
19 Start of Degeneres' comment on receiving the People's Choice Humanitarian award  
21 More of the comment  
22 Rubbers of noses  
24 Seaman's pair  
27 Doze off  
28 More of the comment  
33 Debussy sea  
34 Trucker's ride  
36 Lea of "OITNB"  
38 Imaginary  
40 Seaport of Pasolini's land  
41 Some Willa Cather works  
43 Came out on top

- 44 Neighbor of Cal.  
45 Degeneres  
46 Put a scuff on  
48 Sign over  
49 Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd," e.g.  
52 Children's hospital to which Degeneres donated her award  
57 End of the comment  
60 Like Kerr Smith in "Dawson's Creek"  
62 Kind of homo  
64 First, for one  
65 Whip material  
66 "Jailhouse Rock" settings  
67 Become harder to climb  
25 Self-directed Streisand film  
26 Flamboyant Flynn  
28 Cumming on the stage  
29 Break for Heather's mommies  
30 One that mates with a queen bee  
31 Was laid up in bed  
32 Easily screwed  
34 Prince's purple precipitation  
35 Island in gay Paree  
37 Rocker Brian  
39 Byron's before  
42 Mustangs of the NCAA  
43 Violet Quill members, for example  
47 "Try \_\_\_ might..."  
48 Queer as a three-dollar bill, e.g.  
49 Mullally of *Will & Grace*  
50 Weight unit for your stones  
51 "Is that true of us?"  
52 Margaret Cho's "Can't \_\_\_ Dancing"  
53 Alas., once  
54 Knight in the saga of Moff Mors  
55 Aussie colleges  
56 Paul of "Little Miss Sunshine"  
58 "Take \_\_\_ from me ..."  
59 Staircase descender for Duchamp  
61 Dottermans of "Antonia's Line"  
63 DC figure

### Down

- 1 Had sex with, in slang  
2 Letters over Mary's son  
3 On the ocean  
4 "Pulp Fiction" actor Ving  
5 Shakespeare's feet  
6 Shake up  
7 Erection of temporary shelters  
8 Poli \_\_\_  
9 Parenting couple, sometimes  
10 Cole Porter's "Well, Did You \_\_\_"  
11 Half of Mork's good-bye  
12 Warhol critic Greenberg  
13 "At Wit's End" author Bombeck  
14 Idol of porn  
20 Ins. letters  
23 Ann Bannon's "\_\_\_ Girl Out"  
24 Get a smile out of

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