

MICHIGAN'S LGBT NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993



Michigan Pride Returns  
to the Streets of Old  
Town this Weekend

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Historic Flag Raising  
Event Honors Symbol  
of LGBTQ Rights

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Our Guide to the Best  
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June 15, 2017

VOL. 2524 | FREE

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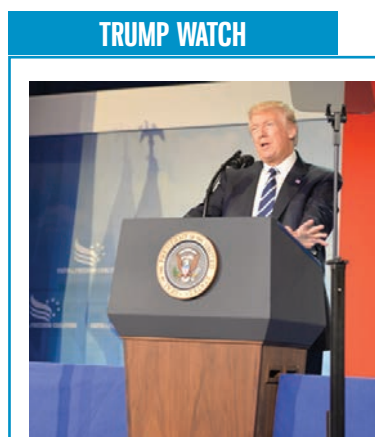
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### PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

20222 Farmington Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48152  
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### PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

### MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association  
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Q Syndicate



### EDITORIAL

#### Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200 x 12  
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

#### Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200 x 24  
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

#### Senior News Editor

Kate Opalewski, 734.293.7200 x 10  
kate@pridesource.com

#### News & Feature Writers

Emell Derra Adolphus, Todd A. Heywood,  
Jason Michael, Amy Lynn Smith

### CREATIVE

#### Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

#### Columnists

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown,  
Mikey Rox, Dan Woog  
Gwendolyn Ann Smith

#### Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau

#### Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter  
Alexander Godin

### ADVERTISING & SALES

#### Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200 x 22  
jan@pridesource.com

#### Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200 x 13  
anncox@pridesource.com

Donelle Kremke, 734.293.7200 x 16  
donelle@pridesource.com

#### National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

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## Old Rape Kits Lead to Justice for LGBTQ Victims

Two rape victims will get justice more than five years after crimes against them were committed.

A 46-year-old Port Huron man, Anthony Thornton, was found guilty by Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Vonda Evans on June 2 of two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, and one count of unlawful imprisonment.

Thornton was arrested in January and charged with two rapes, according to a Fair Michigan press release.

On April 20, 2010, Thornton met his first victim, a transgender man, at the Coalition on Temporary Shelter homeless shelter in Detroit. The victim, who was 19 at the time, accompanied Thornton and two other men to an abandoned house to drink and smoke. When the victim attempted to leave, Thornton and the other men held him down and took turns raping him.

The victim had a rape kit collected, but the kit was not processed until March 20, 2015.

The DNA was a match to Thornton, according to an official report.

On March 8, 2011, Thornton's second victim, a lesbian, was invited to a home in Detroit by a friend. When the victim arrived, the friend was not there but Thornton was. Thornton overpowered the victim and raped her. Thornton only stopped his attack when he heard someone at the door. The victim was able to escape through a back window and immediately reported the crime.

That rape kit was processed recently and the DNA matched to Thornton, according to an official report. The victim has positively identified Thornton as her alleged attacker.

"Only one case was tried, but the second victim testified as 'other act' evidence to rebut the defendant's defense of consent," said Fair Michigan Justice Project Special Prosecutor Jaimie Powell Horowitz. "The defendant's DNA was identified in the rape kit that was done for 2010. The victim did not know the offenders, so it was a DNA driven case against Thornton."

The victim's rape kits are one of thousands dating back to 2009 that were never tested. There has been an ongoing effort to raise money needed to process each kit, investigate the cases and bring the perpetrators to justice.

First-degree criminal sexual conduct is a felony punishable by up to life in prison. Unlawful imprisonment is also a felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Sentencing for Thornton is June 16. Powell Horowitz said the other case will be scheduled for trial after that.

For more information about the Fair Michigan, visit [www.fairmichigan.org](http://www.fairmichigan.org).

## Historic Flag Raising Event Honors Symbol of LGBTQ Rights

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

As a gay man who has been out since the age of 15, Curtis Lipscomb said he remembers the time when many LGBTQ people were too afraid to walk the streets of Detroit because "we were afraid to be who we are, but many of us fought because we wanted this space to be safe."

It was a "wonderful, glorious day" for Lipscomb, the executive director of LGBT Detroit, among others, on June 6 when Detroit Police Department Chief James Craig announced his commitment to making sure Detroit is that safe space where everyone is welcome.

"We are a community committed to inclusiveness where everyone matters and everyone can contribute," said Craig while the city of Detroit for the first time raised the rainbow flag at Hart Plaza in honor of LGBTQ Pride Month. The flag, a symbol of LGBTQ rights, will continue to fly throughout the month of June.

"This is Detroit. This is freedom. This is change and this is great," said Lipscomb to the 100 or so activists, community members and city representatives in attendance.

This change comes long after Jeff Montgomery, who died in July 2016, started the work being done now by various LGBTQ rights organizations.

"The relationship between the LGBTQ community and the police in 1991 was to say the least, not as good as it is today. It was bad. It was hostile. Our lives were not taken seriously, crimes against our community were not taken seriously, and Jeff Montgomery and others stood up and said, 'No more.' Our lives matter. We are part of the fabric of this city and we demand full justice and full representation," said Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan, the statewide anti-violence and advocacy organization founded as the Triangle Foundation by Montgomery in 1991.

White said, "It means a lot" 25 years later to stand in partnership with the DPD. Craig said during his speech that raising the rainbow flag is a small gesture, but "It says a lot for our community, that Detroit has got your back."

Many times, that small, symbolic gesture is all that LGBTQ people can get, according to White.

"That's the first thing we get. We say 'Can you please just at least put up a little flag?' or something that says you don't hate us, that we're welcome, that we're part of this community, and if we get that win, we take it as a first step," she said.

Since the '70s, Craig said Detroit has taken



The rainbow flag, raised in the city of Detroit for the first time, will fly in Hart Plaza during LGBTQ Pride Month in June. Photo Facebook.

steps to enact ordinances to protect lesbian, gay and bisexual people from discrimination in housing, employment and many other areas where equality has been threatened. Nearly 10 years ago, he said, the city took yet another progressive and necessary step by providing these same protections to transgender citizens also.

"But laws aren't enough. We must stand behind the commitment we have made to our citizens even when it sometimes is unpopular to do so," he said. Craig noted that during his time as police chief in Portland, Maine and Cincinnati, Ohio, he learned the value of building trust and respect between the LGBTQ community and law enforcement officers.

Upon starting his tenure in Detroit in 2013, Craig has made certain that cadets going through the Police Academy receive LGBTQ training and that every active officer receives additional training on an annual basis. Craig appointed the DPD's first LGBTQ Liaison Officer Dani Woods when he took office.

These are some of the intentional efforts that lead to Detroit scoring 100 percent on the Human Rights Campaign's 2016 Municipal Equality Index, which examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of the LGBTQ people who live and work there.

"I like to say that is not by accident," said Craig. "City council as well as previous administrations have long seen the value of having city laws that protect the LGBTQ community. It's also because Mayor Duggan has hired some of the nation's best and brightest LGBTQ men and women for top

positions in his administration."

White reiterated what a "big deal" it is to receive this recognition.

"I will back you up on that. That does not happen on accident. You have to do a lot of work so thank you, and thank you for this symbol today because it rises high above Hart Plaza. It shows everybody that comes by that all of us are welcome here, all of us are part of this city," she said. "It feels like a cherry on top of the cake. I don't want to say the work is done. The work is never done. We love Detroit. We're so proud and happy. Sometimes we might be critical lovers, but we only want what's best for everybody."

Sabin Blake was there to show support for the LGBTQ community and its allies. As the community outreach manager for General Motors, Blake said the company cares about issues like this. That is indicated by the rainbow lights on the Renaissance Center, GM's World Headquarters, not far from Hart Plaza.

"Being welcoming and inclusive is important for us and our employees. Standing up matters. Being visible matters," he said.

The flag raising event signified the start of Motor City Pride last weekend as well.

"One of our goals is to show that Detroit and Southeast Michigan is a place where we can all live, work and raise our families," said Dave Wait, chair of Motor City Pride. "By having the festival we hope to demonstrate that."

Visit [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com) to view the Motor City Pride photo gallery.



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# Corporations Have Big Presence at Motor City Pride

## Companies Make Statement in Support of Diversity, Acceptance of LGBTQ Community



Google. BTL Photo: Heather Aymer



Chase, JP Morgan. BTL Photo: Andrew Potter



Delta. BTL Photo: Andrew Potter



Fiat. BTL Photo: Andrew Potter

### BY HEATHER AYMER

The almost 90-degree weather didn't stop what turned out to be a record number of people from gathering last weekend for Motor City Pride at Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit. At least 35,000 people came out to show their support for the LGBTQ community, according to Dave Wait, chairperson for the festival.

"There were twice as many people this year than there were in the past," said Wait, noting that people celebrate Pride for many different reasons - to be with friends, to engage politically, or to enjoy various entertainers.

The festival featured five stages of entertainment from musical acts, spoken words and drag shows. In addition, more than 130 sponsors, vendors and non-profit organizations were in attendance.

"It always amazes me how many people come out to participate, not just from the LGBTQ community,

but allies and entire families," he said. "It was relaxing for some people who just hung out, sat on the grass and observed the river."

The theme, "Stronger Together," was apparent, specifically during the Saturday evening vigil where members of the community took a moment to remember not just the LGBTQ lives lost to tragic violence, but the activism of their trans sisters of color, among others, who began the rallies and riots, marches and parades that today LGBTQ people honor.

On Sunday, the parade at Griswold Street and Jefferson Avenue began the festival, followed by the equality rally at Hart Plaza. The parade staging area was full of costumed, vibrant, speckled persons quietly assembling. There were families preparing, photo opportunities taken, meet and greets with glitter, sparkles and the signing of petitions.

Swelling the crowd were Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood, and Unite Here Local 24. The

organizations represented the fight for safe spaces and continued work toward parity. Others marched raising awareness of the unnecessary practice of genital mutilation and lack of gender choice. LGBTQ Detroit, the organizers of Hotter Than July, marched representing diversity and inclusion. The collection of not-for-profit hero organizations showed their viability, commitment and partnership to a community in need.

Onlookers watched, they shouted and they cheered as marchers from social clubs, kink circles, motorcycle guilds and performance groups passed by. These groups and clubs have been safe harbor for the LGBTQ community for decades, often the only affirming safe space available. These groups are the only families that many have ever known. The Michigan Rocky Horror Preservation Society has been supportive of the LGBTQ community for more than 40 years.

And, too, did the Christians march.

For a complete photo album, go to...

<http://www.pridesource.com>



Parishes and congregants, such as Christ the King Catholic Church, came from Ann Arbor to affirm their commitment to inclusion and unconditional love. With heady skepticism abounding, they came, into a world of persons often hurt and humiliated by hatefully interpreted religious doctrine. They came to wash such humiliation away, and, with courage, show support instead.

A new rainbow-wrapped 2017 Fiat 124 Spider, the brand's all-new roadster, served as grand marshal vehicle for this year's parade.

"We are pleased to once again have a leading role supporting Motor City Pride, the largest LGBT event in the state of Michigan," said Bob Broderdorf, Director - Passenger Car Brand Sales and Network Operations, FCA US LLC. "Motor City Pride is among the many ways FCA US and FIAT Brand celebrate our inclusive work culture in which all members of our team are respected and fully engaged developing vehicles that resonate with diverse buyers and communities."

The corporate world led by inclusive example this year. Employees from Delta Air Lines, Google, Amazon, Mercedes-Benz, Starbucks, General Motors and Lyft marched, to name a few. TD Ameritrade passed out whistles, and as they did, the echo of twitters vibrated in a safe space cacophony of solidarity. Chipotle dotted the landscape with rainbow flag wristbands and many wore Pride flags as superhero capes. All businesses seemed to voice by their presence the theme of safe space for the LGBTQ community.

Diane Gomez, marcher and general manager of Chipotle summed it up. "We support LGBTQ people. We offer a great and safe work environment. Anybody can be who they want to be," she said.

When asked about the corporatization of Pride, Wait spoke to the importance of having community partners, which helps provide a large and varied festival that meets the interests and needs of a diverse community.

Involving corporate America gives many businesses the opportunity to reach potential LGBTQ customers and employees. Plus, Pride festivals are not cheap.

"Every Pride is different. We aren't charging the \$35-50 that some festivals charge. We wish we didn't have to charge \$5," said Wait. "It's hard to include the many things, like hiring security, that we do without sponsorship."

He and his team will debrief, crunch numbers and begin to address some of the challenges faced in addition to new ideas for the festival moving forward.

"We want it to be all-encompassing, bigger, better and hope to provide more for individuals who attend Pride each year," said Wait, who will start planning for Motor City Pride 2018 in July next year. First, he said, "we'll take some time to make sure bills are paid and breathe."

Stay connected to all things Motor City Pride at [www.motorcitypride.org](http://www.motorcitypride.org). Visit [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com) for an online gallery of images from Motor City Pride.

BTL Senior News Editor Kate Opalewski contributed to this report.



Rev. Dr. Roland Springfellow of MCC Detroit speaks at vigil commemorating one year anniversary of the massacre at Pulse nightclub in Orlando. BTL Photos: Alex Godin

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# Our History of Marching on Washington

BY LOU CHIBBARO JR.

As thousands descend on Washington, D.C. for the Equality March for Unity and Pride, it's important to remember that the LGBT community has quite a bit of experience executing national demonstrations. Here, we take a look back through the photographic archives of the Blade at five previous major LGBT demonstrations in D.C.

In what LGBT advocates and political observers considered an historic first, LGBT people from throughout the country came to the nation's capital on Oct. 14, 1979 for the nation's first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

The idea of a gay march on Washington similar to the famous 1963 March on Washington for African-American rights initiated by Martin Luther King, Jr. had been pushed by San Francisco gay Supervisor Harvey Milk shortly before his assassination in 1978. New York gay activist Steve Ault and New York lesbian activist Joyce Hunter have been credited with moving Milk's plans forward.

Similar to the four LGBT Washington marches that followed in subsequent years, there were conflicting reports on the size of the turnout. The U.S. Park Police, which at the time gave crowd estimates for public events, initially estimated the turnout for the march to be 75,000 but later said between 25,000 and 50,000 people turned out.

Organizers of the march insisted that more than 100,000 people turned out.

Whatever the turnout, the event drew national media attention to the LGBT rights movement and, according to LGBT advocates, motivated thousands of LGBT people to become active in the movement to secure their rights who were not involved before.

A five-point platform for the march called for passage by Congress of a "comprehensive" lesbian and gay civil rights bill; a presidential executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal workforce, the military, federally contracted private employers; repeal of all anti-gay/lesbian laws; an end to discrimination in child custody disputes for gay and lesbian parents; and protections for gay and lesbian youth against discrimination at home or in schools.

The march began near the Capitol and traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House before ending on the grounds of the Washington Monument, where a rally with speakers was held.

Activists familiar with the Oct. 11, 1987 march say that while it called for some



of the same LGBT rights advances as the 1979 march, it was prompted by two major developments - the widespread belief that the administration of President Ronald Reagan had failed to adequately respond to the AIDS epidemic and the 1986 U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding state sodomy laws, which made it a crime for consenting adults of the same gender to engage in sexual relations.

This time, U.S. Park Police estimated the turnout to be at least 200,000. Organizers declared the turnout to be well over 300,000, making the 1987 march and rally the largest LGBT demonstration ever held in the U.S.

Media coverage of the march and rally was heightened by the decision by creators of the AIDS Memorial Quilt to display the quilt for the first time on the National Mall on the same day as the march.

During the days following the march, some participants staged a civil disobedience demonstration on the steps of the Supreme Court to protest the sodomy law ruling that resulted in arrests.

Among the speakers at the march rally, which was held on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, where gay U.S. Reps. Barney Frank and Gerry Studds, both Democrats from Massachusetts; former National Organization for Women president Eleanor Smeal; United Farm Workers Union president Cesar Chavez; and civil rights leader and then-presidential candidate Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Items added to the platform beyond those included for the 1979 march included a call for legal recognition of lesbian and gay relationships; repeal of sodomy laws applying to consenting adults; an end to discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS; reproductive freedom for women; and an end to racism in the U.S. and an end to apartheid in South

Africa.

Plans for the third march on Washington for "Lesbian, Gay, and Bi-Equal Rights and Liberation," as it was officially named, began prior to the 1992 presidential election while George H. W. Bush was president.

By the time the march took place on April 25, President Bill Clinton, who expressed support for gay rights during his election campaign, had been in office for just over two months. While march organizers were generally optimistic over a Clinton White House, some expressed concern that the new president appeared to be backing down from his promise to lift the ban on gays in the military following opposition to the proposal by many in Congress.

Thus a major theme of the 1993 march and its large rally at the site of the U.S. Capitol was the call to "lift the ban." Among those playing a visible role in the march were gay and lesbian veterans, some of whom wore their military uniforms.

Another vocal message delivered at the march was strong opposition to Colorado's Amendment 2, a ballot measure passed by voters that banned cities and counties in the state from adopting anti-discrimination laws protecting gays and lesbians.

AIDS activists and members of the AIDS protest group ACT UP also emerged as highly visible participants in the march, which traveled from the White House to the Capitol.

By 5 p.m., hours after the march began, marchers could be seen at the far end of the National Mall near the Washington Monument still streaming onto the Mall, which appeared to be completely filled with people involved in the march. This prompted organizers to declare they had reached their goal of drawing a turnout of a million people. As with the

previous two gay marches, U.S. Park Police issued a significantly lower figure, putting the turnout at 300,000.

Some participants expressed disappointment that Clinton declined an invitation to speak at the rally and also didn't agree to record a video message to be shown at the rally. Instead, he sent a written message to be read at the rally expressing strong support for LGBT rights and increased funds for the fight against AIDS.

Then-D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly, then-New York City Mayor David Dinkins, and U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), were among the speakers at the rally.

Held on April 30, 2000, the fourth national LGBT march on Washington, named the Millennium March on Washington for Equality, drew hundreds of thousands of LGBT people and their supporters despite a rocky start that sparked strong divisions among LGBT activists.

In a break from the first three 'gay' Washington marches, which were initiated by individual activists, the Millennium March was initiated by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT civil rights group, and the Rev. Troy Perry, leader of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

Rather than seek input from grassroots activists and local LGBT groups, HRC and Perry formed a march committee on their own and hired lesbian comedian and events producer Robin Tyler, who had been calling for another gay march, as the march's executive producer. In a press release announcing the march, the committee boasted that corporate sponsors were being lined up to help finance the march and a long list of celebrities, most of whom were gay or lesbian, would be performing at a concert during the weekend of the planned march.

Infuriated over what they called a top down, undemocratic structure, many LGBT activists denounced the proposed march and vowed to organize a boycott. But as criticism mounted, HRC and Perry agreed to make changes to broaden the organizing committee and vowed to make the march the most diverse LGBT event ever held. Transgender activists and LGBT people of color were brought into leadership positions.

With the November 2000 presidential election approaching, many LGBT activists agreed a national LGBT march would be an important showing of LGBT political clout. Similar to the 1993 march, the National Mall appeared filled with march participants

See Equality March, page 18



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## Dreaming of Tophat's Pink Garters

# Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

I was five years old when I had my first vivid dream. Still vividly recalled today. Imagery was induced by counting to 10, drifting off to dreamland, as ether was applied drop by drop to a mask placed over my unsuspecting little nose for a routine tonsillectomy.

The operation was performed in 1941 at downtown Detroit's now-forgotten Burt Shurly Hospital, overlooking Grand Circus Park. (The several-storey metal facade of its vanished building curiously still stands today.)

I dreamed of a boy gracefully skating in circles – round, round, round, round – on an ice-covered pond. Curiously, I had never witnessed anyone ice skating. (That it was a boy skater augured well for my future formative temperament. That, plus the fact I got to eat lots of vanilla ice cream and tapioca pudding for weeks afterward.)

I kept a dream journal a few years ago. I recorded over 100 dreams, which is pretty good considering that dreams are like exotic butterflies. Unless netted, quickly they flutter back into the mental twilight zone and vanish forever.

Cats, dogs, parrots, Log Cabin Republicans dream. (The latter on occasion having full-blown, Donald Trump wake-up-screaming nightmares.) Dreams happen about every 90 minutes and are evidenced by REMs, rapid eye movements. We dream, as our eyes move up and down underneath our eyelids.

The secret of capturing a dream is telling yourself at bedtime that you'll remember it upon awakening, and having pencil and paper handy to jot down details while they're fresh. (You may not get back to sleep, but you've got clues to show for time spent diddling with the LGBT Rainbow Sandman. And sometimes, fortunately as we get older and older, we do get to diddle.)

I reread my dream journal recently, thinking I might make a bundle by selling it on eBay. It was fascinating. Embarrassing. X-rated shock theater. No wonder psychoanalysts find their couch-work such fun. My shrink appointment's next Tuesday, by the way.

Here's a sample, dated July 5, 2010: 6:35 a.m.: "I'm with Astaire Tophat. (I have no idea who he is, was, or wasn't.) He's svelte, athletic, box office show-biz type. We're looking at a Broadway musical poster to determine what's gay about its content.

"Look for the pink garters," suggests Tophat. We get closer. Close enough to gingerly tango, dip, soft shoe it. Only to find there are no chorus-line pink garters. I see a purple T-shirt on one of the dancers, emblazoned with UNDERSTUDY! "There's your clue!" whispers Tophat seductively. "It won't be easy! That's for darn sure," I answer, as Tophat shouts, "Everybody high kick your 10!"

Although dreams like this can be off-the-wall, off-Broadway, they keep us from going insane. (If you go without sleep for more than 48 hours – say during a rave party thrown with non-stop beats – you can expect later to experience daytime distortions of perception, maybe hints of party-poop psychosis.)

The Guinness world record for going without zzzz is 264 hours, 11 minutes, held by a straight but really bent DJ who reportedly never fully recovered from his stay-awake experiment.

Of all the sweet dreams I've had, none compares with what's called a Lucid Dream. It's a real mind trip, and for about 60 seconds or so that it lasts it's Life in the Fourth Dimension (and sometimes Love). No question about it: the mind has a Mind of its own.

You can fly. Touch "solid" surroundings. Explore. Ask questions of "people". (Like life, you may not get intelligent answers.) Or have a fleeting

See Parting Glances, next page



BY DESIREE GUERRERO

## Positive Thoughts

# From Darkness to Hope

## Growing Up in the AIDS Generation

I don't exactly remember when I first heard the word "AIDS." I know it was at some point during my childhood in the mid-1980s, when the epidemic first hit the world with full force. I remember hearing about it often on the news. I remember when Rock Hudson (one of my mother's favorite film stars) passed away from its complications. I remember Elizabeth Taylor becoming an activist for it. But what I remember most was the first time HIV touched my young life – and how it would continue to do so throughout my life.

It was 1988. I was 11 years old. I was visiting my best friend Cindy\* at her grandparents' house, as I often did after school. They lived across the street and she would go there after school until her parents got home from work. Cindy had a handsome young uncle, James, an artist who lived there as well. A young artist myself, I was very interested in him and his art (and I also thought he was very cute). Any chance I could, I would try to worm my way in to see him and talk to him when I was visiting Cindy.

It had been awhile since I had seen James. I was just getting over a cold, and after hearing me cough, I heard

James yell frantically from the other room, "Who's coughing? Get her out of here!" Cindy's grandmother quickly entered the living room and politely ushered me out, telling me that James was ill and couldn't be exposed to germs.

I remember being very hurt and confused to be sent home. Had I done something wrong? Was I dirty and germ? Most of all, I was devastated at being rejected and kicked out by my girlhood crush. The next day, when Cindy and I were walking home from school, I asked her what kind of illness James had. Without nervousness or hesitation, she said, "Oh, he has AIDS."

Needless to say, I was heartbroken. I was young, but I knew enough to know that this was (at the time) a deadly condition. I could not believe this beautiful and talented young man could be dying, which by that point, he was. Sadly, I never saw James again. He passed away soon after, and all that remained were his paintings that hung on the walls of his parents' home, now serving as silent memorials.

See next page



## ► Positive Thoughts

Continued from p. 10

Fast forward one decade, to the mid-1990s. My family receives the news that a very dear relative, Uncle Felipe, was in the hospital and was not expected to make it. What happened? Was it an accident? Cancer?

“No,” my mother explained, “he has AIDS.” Fear ran through me like a cold, nauseating shiver. There was that word again. That word that had taken Cindy’s Uncle James over 10 years before.

Uncle Felipe was just about the kindest, sweetest, funniest person you would ever want to know. He was always smiling, bearing gifts and telling entertaining stories. You couldn’t help but feel happier and lighter when he was around. Felipe passed away two weeks after we found out he was ill, and per his request, we were not allowed to see him in the end. He did not want us to remember him being sick, wasting away to nothing in a hospital bed, but rather to remember him as the happy, healthy, charming man he always was.

For the second time in my life, I saw this virus take away someone dear to me, quickly and without mercy. But as time marched on, so did advancements in treatment. As we rolled into the 2000s, I began to hear the term HIV-positive more and more, and the term AIDS less and less – something that gave me hope, since I only knew the latter to equate to death. Celebrities who opened up about being poz, like Magic Johnson and Greg Louganis, also served as inspiration, as we saw them to continue to *live* and be healthy – something we didn’t see much back in the ’80s.

It was around 2009 when I discovered a very close friend of mine was HIV-positive. I had met Sergio when we had worked together in an office building nearly two decades ago. He was funny, fashionable and strange – just like me – and we became instant friends. I figured that Sergio was gay, but he insisted he was not, and I never pressed the subject. We kept in touch over the years, and we finally decided to get together and have dinner and drinks and catch up. Before we met up, he had told me over the phone, “A lot has changed. I have so much to tell you.”

I assumed that what had changed was that he was out of the closet, so I wasn’t surprised when he told me he that was gay. I was surprised, however, when he then told me he was HIV-positive. But this time, hearing the news was very different than my previous

## ► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

fantasy fling. (I lucid dreamed one blond hottie who, when refusing to fling was told, “Hey, guy, it’s my dream. You exist because of me. Now get with the program! He did. It was, well, mind blowing. Safe sex. Though we haven’t fantasy flung since.)

We’ve come a long way since losing all those beautiful souls back in the ‘80s and ‘90s, and we have long-term survivors to thank for persevering through it. I have seen this virus go from a death sentence, to being a treatable, chronic condition, which gives me great hope we will see its elimination in my lifetime.

experiences. This time, it was my dear friend, my contemporary, my peer. This time, I was being told by the person themselves, not hearing about it only as they were dying. And this time, I saw the same healthy young man in front of me who I had always known.

Although I was obviously concerned about his health and emotional state, that shiver of fear did not run through me like with Uncle Felipe. This time, I immediately thought about antiretroviral treatment and asked him if he was on it (he was). This time, I thought, “We’ve got this; I’m not letting this take you away. You’re going to be OK.”

Today, Sergio is still doing fine – dating, traveling and living his life. In fact, the latest research shows that the life expectancy of those living with HIV today, if on proper treatment, is now almost on par with the general population. We’ve come a long way since losing all those beautiful souls back in the ‘80s and ‘90s, and we have long-term survivors to thank for persevering through it. I have seen this virus go from a death sentence, to being a treatable, chronic condition, which gives me great hope we will see its elimination in my lifetime.

*Desireé Guerrero is the associate editor of Plus magazine. This column is a project of Plus, Positively Aware, POZ, The Body and Q Syndicate, the LGBT wire service. Visit their websites – <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com>, <http://poz.com> and <http://thebody.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.*

A bit of dream trivia: San Francisco’s Nonatal and Obstetrical Research Lab studied pregnant women’s dream imagery. Researchers found these reoccurring images: (first trimester) frogs, worms, potted plants; (second) furry animals, cuddly kittens; (third) lions, monkeys, Barbie dolls.

Take lucid dreaming comfort. A wet dream in time saves nine!

# Creep of the Week

## Julio Severo

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Julio Severo, a Brazilian writer and blogger, is super mad that America taught Brazil to be gay.

In a June 12 piece on Barbwire, a website



named for its unique ability to make a thinking person’s brain bleed, Severo writes,

“The homosexual movement became active in Brazil by direct cultural effect from America, including her politics and Hollywood.”

In other words, Brazil would be totally straight if it wasn’t for those meddling American movies and politicians enticing them to the gay side.

So you can understand that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who apparently formally recognized June as Pride Month, has made Severo very unhappy. But he’s even madder at President Trump for not publicly speaking out against this heinous crime.

“Trump is a man who speaks,” Severo writes, “and does it strongly on strong issues.”

Ah, yes. A “man who speaks.” You’ll remember that Trump himself declared that he had “the best words.” I’m not sure what it means to speak “strongly on strong issues,” but we certainly know it doesn’t have anything to do with rational thought or honesty if this “strong” stuff is coming from Trump’s mouth.

“[Trump’s] silence while powerful members of his administration promote the homosexual agenda is a strong sign that he approves it and that in due time he will strongly defend the same issues they are defending,” Severo continues.

In other words, Trump’s silence is his special, secret way of telling LGBTQ people he loves them. Granted, in just about every way that matters, like by nominating anti-LGBTQ cabinet members and judges, he has given LGBTQ people the finger. But sure, he’s probably gonna marshal a Pride parade any day now.

“Trump’s silence, while his State Department actively praises the homosexual abnormality in the international community, is sheer connivance,” writes Severo.

Dude, “sheer connivance” pretty much sums up Trump’s entire presidency.

He continues, “Homosexuality is a

U.S. evangelicals enthusiastically voted for Trump and continue in large part to support him, which goes to show how morally bankrupt they are.

cause of shame and scandals, not pride. Why then is Trump’s State Department so proud of a LGBT month?”

I don’t know because I don’t take any positive overtures toward LGBT people seriously with this president or administration. But likely Trump doesn’t know, either. You don’t even have to follow the news that closely to see that Trump and Tillerson don’t exactly talk to each other. They pretty much constantly make opposing statements about important stuff. Like earlier this month when they both expressed completely opposite positions on Qatar. That’s, like, not how a functional administration works. But then, we don’t have a president with a functioning brain.

“As a Brazilian conservative evangelical,” Severo writes, “I ask U.S. evangelicals to press the Trump administration to abandon Obama’s homosexual imperialism in the State Department and honor his commitment to his evangelical constituents, who were instrumental for his victory.”

Indeed, U.S. evangelicals enthusiastically voted for Trump and continue in large part to support him, which goes to show how morally bankrupt they are. And believe me, U.S. evangelicals have their anti-LGBTQ fingerprints all over this administration and the entire Republican Party. One particularly stubborn fingerprint goes by the name of Mike Pence.

“The Trump administration should defend family against predatory homosexuality,” Severo continues, “which is a special threat to children.”

No, it isn’t. But you know what’s really a special threat to children? War. Which is why it should worry anyone who claims to care about kids that Trump seems hell bent on weakening the State Department by slashing its budget and leaving a ton of positions unfilled.

But where were we? Oh, that’s right, we were discussing how the real problem is that the State Department doesn’t hate gays enough. Got it. (Insert eyeroll, vomiting, middle finger emojis.)





# JUNE 17, 2017

## 1pm - 11pm

**PARADE:** Steps off from Adado Park at Noon. Ends at the Capitol.

**RALLY AT THE CAPITOL:** Immediately following parade. Variety of speakers about Trans\*, Equality, and Diversity issues that aim to unify our community

**FESTIVAL (the main event):** We're shutting down Turner Street in Old Town to show our Pride!

Featured Entertainment: StarFarm Band, a local Lansing 80s cover band.

Kid-friendly entertainment

Vendors booths and Non-profit exhibitors

Pride swag

Beer Tent





## Michigan Pride Returns to the Streets of Old Town in June

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

This year's 28th annual Pride celebration in Lansing will return to the streets of Old Town June 16-17. The festival was originally held in June from 1990 until 2011.

"There are so many Pride festivals in Michigan now, which is a wonderful problem to have. We didn't want to jump in on any of the other Pride's going on in Michigan (originally)," said Michigan Pride Public Relations Director Leigha Faith when reflecting on the organization's decision to move the festival in 2012.

"There's only so many weekends in June, so as a means of allowing people to attend more Pride events, we wanted to have ours in August," she said.

The change of date was expected to increase attendance and give people an opportunity to celebrate locally then join together at the end of the summer for a bigger wrap-up. The move had other benefits as well. Students started to move to the area in preparation for college classes, and legislators are back in session from their summer vacations.

"It was really no other decision except for public input," Faith said about their decision to move the festival back to June this year, but the dates were limited with festivals happening

By popular demand it has to be the traditional month of June, though, after four years of gathering at the Capitol steps in August. Faith said she realizes the jam-packed Pride Month schedule and urges Pride attendees to make time to head to Lansing.

in Ferndale, Grand Rapids, Detroit, Traverse City, Kalamazoo and several other cities.

By popular demand it has to be the traditional month of June, though, after four years of gathering at the Capitol steps in August. Faith said she realizes the jam-packed Pride Month schedule and urges Pride attendees to make time to head to Lansing.

"Because we are seated in the state capital, we have the most influence to gain large masses and speak to the capital and rally for change and equality," Faith said. "And when we won marriage equality, it was huge for our community, but the work is not done."

One of the activists who is continuing this work is 14-year-old Shane Shananaquet who will speak this year.

"I want to speak about amplifying youth

voices," Shananaquet said. "It's stressful and it's nerve wracking especially for people so young, but it's really necessary for children to get out and speak for themselves, and advocate for themselves and others."

Already, he has presented on behalf of The Human Rights Campaign, spoken in support of safe and supportive learning environments for LGBTQ students in front of the Michigan State Board of Education and been elected president of his high school's gay-straight alliance.

"I love the accepting environment and the community, and I'm excited to give my speech and let others know my story and some of my thoughts on the current topics," Shananaquet said. "I hope to empower others with my words."

Ultimately, fostering such an accepting environment is the goal of Pride said Faith.

"Most important, is to recognize that Pride is supposed to be a private, safe space for all. I say private because we don't want pictures taken and posted on social media, accidentally outing someone," Faith said. "We want it to be safe, we want to include the entire community. We want to include the lesbians, the gays, the bisexuals, the transgender people, the queer people and allies."

### Schedule

Michigan Pride kicks off on June 16 with the White Party at Sir Pizza in Old Town located at 201 E. Grand River Ave. This annual pre-party at 7 p.m. features performances by Alise King, Ty Teon and DJ Fudgie. Party-goers are encouraged to wear white as a way of expressing solidarity for the LGBTQ community. A \$10 wristband allows access to all the bars located in Old Town for the evening.

On June 17, the parade stages in front of Adado Riverfront Park at 11:30 a.m. and steps off at 12 p.m. Members of the community are invited onto the Capitol steps following the parade for an afternoon rally. Festival celebrations will continue in Old Town throughout the day featuring a variety of entertainers like the LanSINGout Gay Men's Chorus, Starfarm Band, Ty Teon, Chelsea Delray, and Miss Amateur PowerDiva 2017 Emma Sapphire.

"There is so much to look forward to at this year's pride celebration," Faith said. "And we are grateful to all of the volunteers and organizations who dedicate countless hours to organize the events."

For more information and a full schedule of events, visit [www.michiganpride.org](http://www.michiganpride.org).



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## PRIDE PROFILE

# Print Thrives in the Lesbian Community

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

It arrives in an inconspicuous, magazine-sized envelope on your front doorstep, and the word “lesbian” isn’t anywhere on the packaging. This is deliberate. Just a return address to a Lansing, Michigan P.O. Box for the Helen Diner Memorial Women’s Center. If you’ve been subscribed since the start, you’ll have been on the mailing list for 43 years.

“Currently our press run is 15,000 and a lot of the households of course have multiple women in them. It’s down some from peak years, it’s been as high as the low 20,000s but we’re hanging in there,” said Lisy Harmon, editor and Ambitious Amazon.

Hanging in there indeed. Tear open the packaging, and you’ll find the bimonthly magazine is called Lesbian Connection, with the words “free to lesbians worldwide” just underneath. Now with a glossy cover, gone are the days that 18 staples bound the publication shut. Fully funded by donations, the magazine is put out through the Elsie Publishing Institute and is perhaps the oldest existing lesbian-exclusive print forum in the world.

“We’re grassroots and reader-written and the fact that it’s all over the place and a really diverse voice, you’ll hear different sides of the issues,” Harmon said. “It’s a place for a call-in response kind of thing, where we do get various sides and that’s different than most publications. There’s no set slant to it, because it’s not based on a board that sits down and says what we’re going to print and that makes us unique.”

Unique as the setup may be, the reader-driven content is what keeps many engaged.

“I think I’ve been a reader since I was about 18 and I’m 53 now,” said contributor M.J. Stephenson. “It’s not like it’s professional writers, so you get all sorts of styles. It’s about things that people are really thinking about, it’s not like ‘oh what do I have to write for this edition? The issue is coming out and I have to come up with a topic.’”

Filled with both letters and responses to previously covered issues, the magazine also includes topic suggestions for readers to submit about, such as aging well and achieving closure in a breakup. In the spirit of network building it also has a “Contact Dyke” mailing list, filled with the names, addresses and contact information of friendly lesbians willing



to aid women in their travels across the US and as far away as New Zealand.

Founded in 1974 by several women, Margy Lesher was especially involved with Lesbian Connection. While planning the first ever Midwest Lesbian Conference that year, Lesher became frustrated with the difficulty of distributing information to lesbians on a wide scale, and so called a meeting of Ambitious Amazons – taking a term from the 1932 book by Helen Diner: Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminine History of Culture.

The title stuck.

“The Ambitious Amazons who have chosen to step up and actually manage and make sure everything gets done, so we have some higher expectations for them and higher responsibility, that’s what it is to me,” Harmon said. “It’s an achievement. You have to want to be one and then you have to be accepted by whoever the current ones are it’s kind of a badge of honor.”

Diner’s actual name was also used, both in renaming the women’s center as well as in the creation of a companion publication to all Michigan subscribers of Lesbian Connection.

What Helen Heard. It’s a newsletter that extensively details lesbian events in the area, features classified ads and announcements and is put out by more than two dozen bookstores and distributors. LC estimates it reaches over 7,000 women.

“All of the ads are aimed toward our community,” Stephenson said. “When you look at the magazines that are out there that you can buy in the store, there’s a lot of money there in those glossy magazines, and it’s not necessarily what we want to see.”

Yet even with the tailor-made content, it’s clear that times have changed in the internet age. Print is certainly a slower form of communication and lesbian news has become easily accessible.

“Actually, one of the things that is discussed a lot in the magazine is the disappearing lesbian and women-only scene,” Ambitious Amazon Jen Richmond said. “We’ve become more mainstreamed.”

But Harmon is confident that LC is far from obsolete.

“On the one hand, we’re not as vital life-line to a certain section of the lesbian population any longer because there is more available, but then on the other hand we still have a lot of readers who are firmly in the closet for any number of reasons,” Harmon said. “I think we would continue in the same way, but we have talked about getting the content online but making the content secure.”

Harmon also feels Lesbian Connection also has a hand in stopping lesbian erasure.

“Well I believe that’s one of the things we’re trying to do. We are Lesbian Connection and then we’ll always remain that,” Harmon said. “Many readers have said that this is one of the last places that they have found to be connected to lesbians with the disappearing of spaces.”

*Lesbian Connection is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December. For more information, call 517-371-5257, email LC@LConline.org or visit the website at www.LConline.org. Find out what’s happening for Michigan lesbians at www.facebook.com/LConline.*



# SUMMER PRIDE CALENDAR

COMPILED BY KATE OPALEWSKI

## JUNE 16

### Lake Effect Pride

7-11 p.m.  
Pebblewood Country Club, 9794  
Jericho Road, Bridgmann  
www.outcenter.org  
Tickets: \$35

### Michigan Pride White Party

7 p.m.  
Old Town, Lansing  
www.michiganpride.org  
\$10 wristbands provide access  
to all Old Town bars. Party-goers  
encouraged to wear white. Sir Pizza  
featured performer is Alise King with  
DJ Fudgie.

### Pride Prom: Mean Girls Edition

Necto Nightclub, 516 E. Liberty, Ann  
Arbor  
www.necto.com  
Hosted by Ivy Winters, Chanel Hunter  
and Jadein Black. Free before 10  
p.m., free with college ID before 11  
p.m., \$5 for 21+, \$10 for 18-20. Get in  
free with prom attire.

### 3rd Annual White Party

10 p.m.  
Rumors Night Club, 69 Division Ave.  
S, Grand Rapids  
www.grpride.org  
Come dressed in your favorite white  
attire. Tickets: \$10 for 21+, \$20 for  
18-20.

## JUNE 17

### 3rd Annual Pre-Pride Rally: Hand-in-Hand

11:30 a.m.  
Ah-Nab-Awen Park, 220 Front Ave.  
NW, Grand Rapids  
www.grpride.org  
Hosted by Dave Watt of Mr. Friendly  
and special guests.

### 29th Annual Grand Rapids Pride Festival

12 p.m.  
Calder Plaza, 300 Ottawa Ave. NW,  
Grand Rapids  
www.grpride.org  
Featuring Billy Gilman, Bonnie  
McKee, Lipstick Jodi, DJ Keller Shaw,  
Dymond Denae and the Rumors  
House Divas.

### Michigan Pride Parade and Rally

11:30 a.m.  
Adado Riverfront Park, 300 N. Grand  
Ave., Lansing  
www.michiganpride.org  
Parade will end on the Capitol steps  
for the rally featuring guest speaker  
Shane Shananaquet, a transgender  
14-year-old sophomore at Adrian  
High School.



LGBT Detroit marches in the Motor City Pride parade Sunday. BTL Photo: Andrew Potter

## Michigan Pride Festival

1-10 p.m.  
Old Town, Lansing  
www.michiganpride.org  
Featuring Starfarm Band, Ty Teon and  
Miss Amateur PowerDiva 2017 Emma  
Sapphire

## JUNE 21

### Up North Pride Ride with Norte

5:45 p.m.  
F and M Park, 716 E. State St.,  
Traverse City  
www.upnorthpride.com  
In partnership with Norte and TC  
Rides, riders will cruise down Front  
Street to the Bay then through several  
TC neighborhoods before ending at  
Rare Bird Brew Pub. Pride-themed  
bike decorations and costumes  
encouraged.

### Up North Pride Sign Making Party

7-9 p.m.  
Rare Bird Brew Pub, 229 Lake Ave.,  
Traverse City  
www.upnorthpride.com  
Supplies provided. Make a sign for  
Pride March on June 25. DJ Sheree  
will provide entertainment.

## JUNE 22

### Community Giving Days

Shop at Whole Foods Market in  
Rochester Hills, Troy and West  
Bloomfield  
Five percent of that day's net sales  
will be donated to Affirmations in  
Ferndale  
www.goaffirmations.org

## JUNE 24

### Motown Invitational Classic Boat Cruise

Board 12:45 p.m., Depart 1 p.m.,  
Return 4-5 p.m.  
Atwater St. and Jos Campau, Detroit  
Tickets: \$30  
www.mictournament.org  
Riverboat cruise to raise funds for  
Michigan's oldest and largest LGBT  
bowling tournament. 21+.

### LGBT Older Adult Summit

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
MSU Detroit Center, 3408 Woodward  
Ave., Detroit  
www.sagemetrodetroit.org  
RSVP online. Free.

### Flint Pride in the Park

2-8 p.m.  
Riverbank Park, Downtown Flint  
www.facebook.com/flintgaypride  
Suggested donation: \$5

## JUNE 25

### 4th Annual Up North Pride Rally and Visibility March

1-3 p.m.  
The Little Fleet,  
448 E. Front St., Traverse City  
www.upnorthpride.com  
Marching down to Clinch Park  
Beach for a community picnic. Bring  
posters, rainbow flags and Pride  
spirit.

## JULY 25

### Hotter Than July Candlelight Vigil

6-9 p.m.  
Palmer Park, 910 Merrill Plaisance  
St., Detroit

## Hotter Than July Channels Ancient African Philosophy

The 22nd annual Hotter Than July's theme is "I Am Because We Are." The theme for this year's black LGBTQ Pride event in Detroit comes from the ancient African word Ubuntu, according to Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit. Ubuntu's translation derives from the Bantu philosophy "humanity to others."

"Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you cannot exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity," said Lipscomb, adding that HTJ is inspired by this philosophy.

"The theme reminds us of the need to stick together, lock arms, and weather the storms that come our way," he said.

The week of gatherings begin July 25 with a candlelight vigil where the organization will pay respect to loved ones the community has lost and rejoice in life and freedom. LGBT Detroit will also host an opening party, an annual gathering and a picnic in the park before closing out the celebration with a worship service on July 30. A full schedule of events is available at [www.hotterthanjuly.org](http://www.hotterthanjuly.org).

## JUNE 27

### National HIV Testing Day

Visit [www.pridesource.com/directory.html](http://www.pridesource.com/directory.html), [www.pridesource.com/calendar.html](http://www.pridesource.com/calendar.html) to find testing events in your area.

## JULY 26

### Hotter Than July Opening Party

5-9 p.m.  
Woodward Bar & Grill,  
6426 Woodward Ave., Detroit  
www.hotterthanjuly.org  
This year's theme, "I Am Because  
We Are" will promote a conversation  
around identity politics.

## JULY 28

### Hotter Than July Annual Gathering

9 a.m.  
Center for Disparity Solutions and  
Equity, University of Michigan-  
Dearborn, College of Education,  
Health and Human Services, 19000  
Hubbard Drive, Fairlane Center  
South, Dearborn  
www.hotterthanjuly.org

## JULY 29-30

### Hotter Than July Palmer Park Picnic

11 a.m.  
Palmer Park, 910 Merrill Plaisance  
St., Detroit  
www.hotterthanjuly.org

## JULY 30

### Hotter Than July Sunday Worship Service

11 a.m.  
Whosoever Ministry United Church of  
Christ,  
2930 Woodward Ave., Detroit  
www.hotterthanjuly.org

## AUGUST 4-6

### OUTFest & Pride Picnic

[www.a2outfest.com/](http://www.a2outfest.com/)  
This annual pride celebration, hosted  
by Jim Toy Community Center,  
returns to Ann Arbor's Kerrytown  
District with an array of activities for  
the LGBTQ and allied communities  
of Washtenaw County area. Weekend  
events including movie night, a  
morning yoga session, game night  
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## AUGUST 12

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## SEPTEMBER 17

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[www.aidswalkdetroit.org](http://www.aidswalkdetroit.org)





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## March Against Sharia Event Draws Protests in Lansing

About 100 people gathered in south Lansing Saturday morning, some to march against Sharia and others to oppose the march, according to a Lansing State Journal report.

The two groups, separated by a makeshift divider police set up, stood in a grassy area in the 6200 block of South Pennsylvania Avenue, south of Miller Road, and held signs, waved flags and chanted "No hate. No fear. Muslims are welcome here."

The March Against Sharia was one of nearly two dozen planned across the country. About two dozen people gathered to oppose Islamic law, and many were many carrying assault weapons and wearing military-style uniforms.

The Lansing Police Department had about a half dozen officers present, and blocked off part of South Pennsylvania Avenue for a short period of time around 10:30 a.m. as the counter-protesters made their way from Miller Road. Both sides had left the area by 12:30 p.m., with the counter protesters leaving first.

An event called "Wash Away the Hate in Michigan" was held later Saturday at the state Capitol Building in downtown Lansing.



Photo courtesy of Lansing State Journal, Matt Mencarini

It was organized by the Islamic Society of Greater Lansing and several other groups that washed the Capitol steps and surrounding area with water and mops and sponges as a symbolic gesture, according to the report, to wash away hate from the morning rally on Lansing's south side.

ACT for America – designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group – organized the nearly two dozen rallies against Islamic law that took place across the country. It describes itself as a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots national security organization.

Read the full report online at <http://gaybe.am/lm>.

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The Michigan Shakespeare Festival is a nonprofit professional theatre. Originally named the Jackson Shakespeare Festival, it started in 1995 as an outdoor summer event in Jackson's beautiful Ella Sharp Park. A replica Globe was constructed in 1996, and audiences flocked to experience Shakespeare in Jackson.

New Artistic Director John Neville-Andrews changed the name to the Michigan Shakespeare Festival in 1998, reflecting the growing statewide popularity. Two years later the MSF added members of the Actor's Equity Association, making the event a fully professional Shakespeare company.



As the Official Shakespeare Festival of the State of Michigan, the Michigan Shakespeare Festival is dedicated to producing world-class classical plays. Shakespeare's plays survive and thrive because of his language, his expression of humanity's light, darkness, and the foibles in-between. Under the guidance of award-winning Artistic Director Janice L. Blixt, the MSF brings that language to life before your eyes.

Tickets are \$40 for various performance-scheduled every Thursday-Sunday, July 6-23, at the Baughman Theatre, 2111 Emmons Road in Jackson. Call 517-796-8600 to inquire about a 2017 Season Flex Pass for \$105.

For more information, visit [www.michiganshakespearefestival.com](http://www.michiganshakespearefestival.com).


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## ► Equality March

Continued from p. 8

on April 20, 2000, prompting organizers and many observers to estimate the turnout to be 800,000. A short time before the Millennial March was held, U.S. Park Police discontinued making crowd estimates for events on the Mall.

Meanwhile, this time President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, who was running for president, spoke to the crowd through a large video screen on the Mall near the Capitol, where the rally was held.

An array of entertainers and celebrities, including Melissa Etheridge, Martina Navratilova, and actress Anne Heche, appeared on the stage at the rally. On the evening before the march, an HRC-produced concert at D.C.'s RFK Stadium called Equality Rocks, drew a sold-out crowd, which saw performances by Etheridge, George Michael, Pet Shop Boys, and k.d. Lang.

All of this drew extensive media coverage that for the most part omitted any mention of the internal LGBT strife surrounding the march and portrayed the event as a successful demonstration for LGBT equality.

Held on Oct. 11, 2009 on National Coming Out Day, the National Equality March is believed to have attracted about 150,000 people to Washington on a relatively short notice.

Longtime gay rights advocate David Mixner is credited with initiating the march in an effort to build on the groundswell of LGBT activism on social media generated by the approval by California voters of Proposition 8, a ballot measure that overturned the state's same-sex marriage law.

San Francisco gay rights leader Cleve Jones, founder of the Names Project that created the AIDS Memorial Quilt, became involved as one of the lead organizers along with lesbian activist Robin McGehee and gay activist Kip Williams.

Similar to the previous LGBT Washington marches, the 2009 march traveled from the White House to the U.S. Capitol, where about two-dozen speakers, including mainline civil rights leaders, LGBT leaders, and supportive elected officials spoke in support of marriage equality, a federal LGBT non-discrimination bill, and repealing the military's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy.

The march took place during President Barack Obama's first year in office, and some of the march speakers expressed concern that he wasn't moving fast enough on his campaign promises to back LGBT rights legislation.

Among those who spoke and performed at the rally was bisexual singer and LGBT rights supporter Lady Gaga.

Unlike the previous LGBT Washington marches, that mainly closed their books in debt, the 2009 march generated a surplus in funds that organizers gave to existing grassroots LGBT rights organizations.

Among the key goals of march organizers was to put in place a network of grassroots LGBT organizers in each of the nation's 435 congressional districts to push for LGBT equality under the auspices of a new group called Equality Across America. But activists familiar with the group acknowledge that goal was never reached and the group is no longer active.

*This article originally appeared in the Los Angeles Blade www.washingtonblade.com and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*

## Here's How Trump Has Undermined LGBT Rights (So Far)

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

Critics of President Trump claim he's a disaster for LGBT equality. The White House asserts Trump is "respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights." So, who's right?

To the surprise of many, the start of the administration saw limited support for LGBT rights. The White House within days of the new administration issued a statement declaring Trump is "respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights" and would keep in place an executive order signed by President Obama in 2014 that barred federal contractors from engaging in anti-LGBT workplace discrimination.

The Trump administration also defied the wishes of anti-LGBT advocates seeking to purge the State Department of LGBT rights supporters by keeping in place Randy Berry in his role as special envoy for global international LGBT rights.

In terms of anti-LGBT actions, the most concrete actions have undermined transgender rights. Most prominently, that came in form of U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos revoking Obama-era guidance instructing schools that discrimination targeting trans kids, such as denying them access to the restroom consistent with their gender identity, is unlawful.

Under Sessions, the Justice Department also withdrew litigation against North Carolina's anti-LGBT law after it was replaced despite assertions from civil rights groups the new law is discriminatory. The department also missed a deadline to appeal a court injunction barring enforcement of an Obama-era regulation assuring trans people have access to health care, including gender reassignment surgery.

Another metric for presidential commitment to LGBT rights has been making openly LGBT appointments, an effort Obama undertook, which led to a record number of openly LGBT appointees.

By contrast, Trump has yet to make a single high-profile, openly LGBT appointment.

Meanwhile, Trump appointments include Roger Severino as assistant secretary of civil rights at the Department of Health & Human Services, which essentially places an anti-transgender activist in charge of defending trans



President Donald Trump. Washington Blade photo by Michael Key

health. LGBT advocates helped derail the confirmation of Trump's first choice for Army secretary, Mark Green, who has taken anti-LGBT positions during his career as a state legislator and said being trans is a "disease."

Many LGBT advocates breathed a sigh of relief after learning that a long-awaited "religious freedom" executive order issued by President Trump in May did not include specific anti-LGBT provisions that media reports said were included in an earlier draft of the order.

But officials with several national LGBT advocacy organizations expressed concern that the two-page executive order, called "Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty," gives U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions authority to interpret existing federal laws and regulations in a way that could result in discrimination against LGBT people.

"In essence, the executive order punts the question of how and where the administration will permit discrimination against LGBT people to Jeff Sessions, a man who has consistently denied LGBTQ people equality under the law," the Human Rights Campaign said in a statement.

"This sweeping approach could result in an unprecedented expansion of religious exemptions affecting employment, services and programs," the HRC statement says.

But Gregory Angelo, president of Log Cabin Republicans, disputed that

assessment, saying the text of the order makes "absolutely no mention of anything to do with the LGBT community."

"Not only is the text of the executive order completely agnostic on LGBT-related matters, the Trump administration has now explicitly asserted that 'there were no plans for a separate order that addressed LGBT issues,'" said Angelo.

The main provision of the order directs the IRS to use "maximum enforcement discretion" to ease restrictions on churches and religious organizations with a tax-exempt status that would allow them to engage partisan politics, including possible endorsement of candidates running for public office.

In addition, President Trump declined to issue a proclamation designating June as Pride month, breaking with a tradition started under the Obama administration. Trump on the last day of May issued five separate proclamations recognizing June as National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, African-American Music Appreciation Month, National Homeownership Month, Great Outdoors Month and National Ocean Month. Absent from the list was anything related to Pride.

Trump's budget proposal is another source of concern for LGBT advocates. Proponents of funding to combat HIV/AIDS continue to express alarm over cuts to federal programs, which in some cases are massive, in the budget proposal that

See next page



President Trump unveiled last month amid questions of whether Congress will agree to the reductions.

Carl Schmid, deputy director of the AIDS Institute, said the decrease in funding for HIV/AIDS proposed in the Trump administration's \$4.1 trillion budget request was "pretty shocking" after years of bipartisan agreement to confront the disease.

"We always think there are ways to improve, ways to change things, we're open to that," Schmid said. "We're not one of the people that say, 'No, no, no.' But I don't think cutting the budget this drastically is a way to change things."

The budget blueprint unveiled in March by the White House Office of Management & Budget indicated proposed cuts for HIV screening and research, but Schmid said the extent of cuts in the budget was a surprise.

Among the more drastic cuts is a \$186 million reduction in Centers for Disease Control funding for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STIs, and TB prevention. A full \$150 million of the reduction would come from HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

For research, on the chopping block is the National Institutes for Health, which handles HIV/AIDS research for the federal government and was working on a cure under

President Obama. The budget seeks a massive \$7.2 billion reduction to NIH generally and a \$550 million reduction to HIV/AIDS research specifically, according to the AIDS Institute.

On international LGBT rights, the Trump administration has already seen a human rights crisis after the emergence of reports of arrests and torture of gay and bisexual men in Russia's semi-autonomous Republic of Chechnya. More than 100 men have been tortured and at least four killed in what media reports are calling "concentration camps."

After some prodding, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley has said the U.S. government is "disturbed by reports of kidnapping, torture and murder of people in Chechnya," although Trump himself has remained silent.

When asked by the Blade at the 100-day mark of the administration to grade Trump's performance, all major LGBT rights organizations — with the exception of Log Cabin Republicans — gave Trump an 'F.'

*This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade [www.washingtonblade.com](http://www.washingtonblade.com) and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*

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Photo: Matt Martin

# The Future Is Nico

## 'Younger' Actor on Embracing Polyamory, His Queer Introduction & Being a 'Proud' Bisexual

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

When it comes to Hollywood interviews, they're "just so fucking straightforward and boring and everybody asks the same questions and it just gets redundant," explains Nico Tortorella.

But our interview is different, he says.

"This is a straight-up 'Love Bomb' episode," acknowledges the 28-year-old actor, likening the conversational tone of our exchange to his love- and sexuality-centric podcast, now in its second season.

Though he touches on "Menendez: Blood Brothers," his Lifetime movie about the infamous, parricidal siblings, and the upcoming season of TV Land's "Younger," Tortorella greatly expounds on his ever-evolving sexual identity, which has been an ongoing dialogue – internally and externally – since the actor revealed his label-less fluidity a year ago.

Now identifying as a "proud" bisexual, the Chicago-born dreamboat candidly discusses his desire for a polyamorous relationship, struggling with his sexuality as a kid before finding his queer "safe haven" within the theater and his current mission to normalize the abnormal.

**Your sexual identity has really evolved over the last year; in 2016, you revealed you were label-less and "emotionally fluid." Then, you said you identify as bisexual.**

I really like the term bisexual, and I fall somewhere under the umbrella that is bisexuality. I use the word bisexual because people have fought for so long for this word and the fact that it even exists in part of the LGBTI-etcetera is just a beautiful thing, and I'm not gonna be the person to take, like, fluidity or emotional fluidity or pansexual. I'm comfortable somewhere under the bisexual label, and I'm proud of it.

**After you revealed that you're open to dating men, did you hear from more gay male admirers?**

I think it was actually more when I came into touch with my own sexuality – not in terms of who I prefer, but just me as a sexual being. I just became more aware of different energies.

**When did you embrace your bisexuality?**

Honestly, I think with the work that I'm doing on my podcast – really exploring sexuality as a human condition has

educated me on many different people's lives and the importance of labels and the unimportance of labels, for that matter. I'm in a really interesting place where I can talk about these things, but I'm really doing the work outside of myself on it.

**When were you first aware that you had a gay following?**

That's an interesting question. I grew up in Chicago on stage, and I was constantly surrounded by a bunch of queer people. I really got along with them as a little kid and they really liked me too, so I don't think there was one moment in my career, like, "Oh, now I see I can get along with these people." I feel like it was always there. It was always in me; it was always part of me.

**Recently, on your Instagram, you posted a pic of you sporting a shirt that says, "The Future Is Non-Binary." What's the story behind that shirt?**

I bought it when I was shooting the "Menendez" movie up in Vancouver at this little thrift store. And yes, the future is non-binary, but I am a hardcore believer that so is the past. It has been forever, but for whatever reason, during these past 300 years, we have – and it probably has to do with religion – created the binary. And listen, nothing else exists. But finally, over the last 50 years there's been this amazing breakthrough and clearly now it is the zeitgeist. I'm just so fascinated by that whole story.

**Do you think people are too sexually rigid because society forces people to choose boxes to put themselves into? Is Hollywood influenced by this rigidity?**

Look, in Hollywood these are the stories that are being told that everybody's watching. And if you look at mainstream television, basically since it's been created, there's only been one story that's been told. For the most part, it's about the heteronormative, white family and that has been what's been pushed in our faces for so long.

Finally, in the last 20, 30 years, things have really been changing. So the answer is yes, absolutely. It's what we know; it's what we've seen. Religiously, it is what we've been taught. It is everything. So, I think, yes, for so long people have been so oppressed in who they are because it doesn't match what we're being shown.



Now, in the age of the internet and social media, there's just so much being thrown down our throats constantly – pun intended (laughs) – and it's like, it exists. Finally, it exists. Finally, people's stories can be told. And my purpose in life is to extend these stories. I'm in love with people and I'm in love with their stories.

**How do your views on sexuality influence the roles you choose as an actor? Are you looking for roles that challenge people's views on sexuality?**

Yeah, for sure. It's a natural thing that happens once I put myself into the role, and those types of projects seem to be floating in my direction, which I'm all for. But I think as an actor it is my job to transform, and as obsessed as I am with the community and our stories and everything, I'm obsessed with people in all facets of life. It's my job to become them. So, I really think that there's always gonna be a whole slew of different characters I play.

**Jacob Wells, your character on FOX's serial-killer thriller "The Following," enjoyed the company of both men and women. What was your read on his sexuality?**

It's funny – at that point in my life I had a boyfriend in L.A. and a girlfriend in N.Y. and it was pretty intensely life imitating art. Granted, we weren't killing people (laughs), but I was living that and wasn't comfortable with myself to the fullest extent probably because that was before I got sober. I was somewhat of a mess. But I was really navigating what that meant to have two lives, almost.

**How have your "Love Bomb" guests enlightened you and your approach to your sexuality?**

It really is an extension of who I am. My sexuality is a part of my story – it's not all of my story – and to just normalize things that are deemed abnormal is really important. That's my driving force at this point, so it affects everything that I do because it *is* me.

**What topics do you seek to normalize during this second season?**

In the second season, I have everyone from Courtney Love to Todrick Hall to Johnny Weir. Some really, really heavy episodes. And it's everything from ageism to intersectionality. The most amazing thing about this show is that every single person who comes on has a completely different story, and nine times out of 10 the story that is told is different than the one that I thought I was going to hear. That's where the real magic is. So, the spectrum is wide. It's a universe, really.

**What was it like sitting down with Courtney Love for "The Love Bomb"?**

I love her so much, and I'm just gonna open with that. The second we locked eyes and had, like, an exchange, it was magical. We're kindred souls, and we spent a lot of time in

Vancouver (shooting "Menendez" together). We went to a native-led sweat lodge and were just in interesting parts of our lives at the time and really opened up to each other. So, when it was time to sit down with a microphone – I mean, I felt like we were having the "Love Bomb" conversation for months before we even had the real conversation in the studio. It was amazing. We had gotten so close by that point that there wasn't a wall, and she has such an incredible story. I mean, she's an icon, she's royalty. People are really gonna see a softer, human side to her that I think is just so lovely.

**Did she go thrift shopping with you?**

We went shopping together a couple of times. She's kind of like a gay man just in general, and I think she stands by that. I love that about her.

**Let's talk "Younger." Based on last season, Liza and your character, Josh, seem to be broken up. During season four, will we see Josh rebound with a boyfriend, perhaps?**

Yeah, I was just gonna say: The big secret of season four is Josh and Charles are gonna get together. (Laughs)

**Who wouldn't love that?**

I mean, I would, let's be honest. But no, there's definitely not gonna be a boyfriend for Josh anytime soon – not that I know of, anyway! But I think after Liza he's definitely exploring other options, and we really get to see a part of Josh's life that's lived outside of everybody else's story in this fourth season, which is nice. And since it is a Darren Star show, Liza and Josh won't be that far apart from each other for that long.

**There's been talk about you developing the "The Love Bomb" into a sketch-based TV series. What's the status on that?**

The idea has evolved into something. I left a development meeting this morning, which I can't talk too much about. But it is definitely happening. It is moving at a really sensible pace, and it's the one thing that I'm most excited about right now. Honestly, there's great acting jobs in the future and different movies and TV shows even, but this is the soul.

**What about it excites you?**

It's just an extension of the podcast, I think. Everything I learned on the podcast I wanna take to the next level. The way I see it in my head is, it's some sort of segmented show where I'm talking to different people all over the world and learning and really diving into different cultures and people and sexuality. It's a sexploration of love.

**I hope that it's been picked up by a cable network so you can push buttons and boundaries.**

See next page

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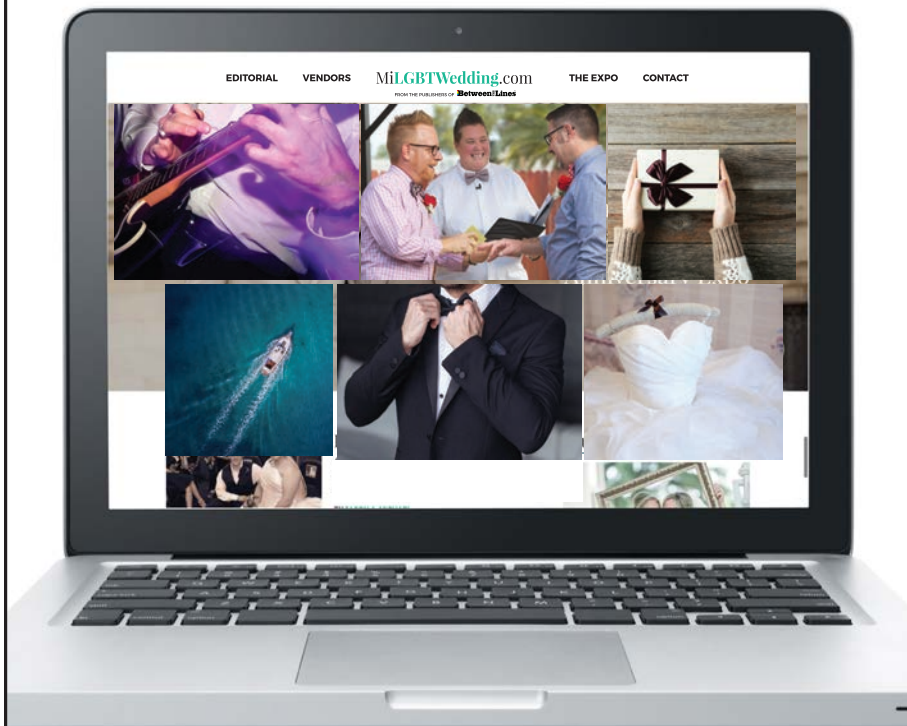
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#### ► Nico

Continued from p. 21

I'm gonna get naked at some point, I promise. (Laughs)

#### **You really *are* challenging people's feelings on sex and nakedness, aren't you?**

And love too! People are so fucking uptight about love. Love is supposed to be one specific way. You're supposed to get married and have kids and that's it – oh, and you're probably supposed to marry the opposite sex. That just isn't the case for so many fucking people.

#### **Like all my gay friends who are in open relationships.**

Even on that note: Why is it socially acceptable for two gay people to be in an open relationship, but if you hear about a straight couple in an open relationship people are like, "What? How does that work?" It doesn't make sense to people.

Also, being somebody that dates both, how do I maneuver that conversation? Like, "Look, I want a boyfriend and a girlfriend at the same time – are you cool with that?" That's even more confusing. But I've done it, and at the end of the day that's who I am. I think I'm coming more and more into my own acceptance with polyamory and how I think that I can just be the best partner, if that is an option.

#### **Have you always been as comfortable in your skin as you seem to be now?**

I just wanna make it clear that it was not always easy for me. For sure, as a kid. I had a really bad stutter from 8 to 11. I wasn't doing any theater, and sexuality in my household was one thing and one thing only. Anything heard or talked about or seen outside of it was gross in one way or another. I mean, big Italian family in Chicago. It didn't exist anywhere in my family. I didn't have any gay relatives. It just wasn't anywhere.

#### **Did you grow up Catholic?**

Yes, yes. And the theater is a safe haven for queer people everywhere; it just is. That's where they go to let the flags fly to transform, to create, to fall in love, and it was the best training that I had for acting, for sure, and just for human experience. And once I started seeing (gay people), I started getting more comfortable talking about it with my family. But the struggle was real. When I got sober, really, is when I decided that I wasn't going to *not* be unapologetically myself, and I really just stepped into it.

*As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at [www.chris-azzopardi.com](http://www.chris-azzopardi.com) and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).*





This story of boundless love, full of passion and drama, follows Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera." Photo courtesy of Encore

## 'Love Never Dies' at the Fisher Theatre

BY ENCORE STAFF

"Love Never Dies" will open its North American Tour at Detroit's Fisher Theatre on October 17 with performances through October 29. Tickets for "Love Never Dies" start at \$39 and are on sale now at all Ticketmaster locations, by phone at 800-982-2787 and online at [www.broadwayindetroit.com](http://www.broadwayindetroit.com) or [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com). Tickets are also available for purchase at The Fisher Theatre Box Office, 3011 W. Grand Blvd. in Detroit.

The year is 1907. It is 10 years after his disappearance from the Paris Opera House and the Phantom has escaped to a new life in New York where he lives amongst the screaming joy rides and freak shows of Coney Island. In this new, electrically charged world, he has finally found a place for his music to soar, but he has never stopped yearning for his one true love and musical protégée, Christine Daaé. Now one of the world's finest sopranos, Christine accepts an invitation to travel from Paris to New York to perform at a renowned opera house. Christine's marriage to Raoul is suffering at the hands of his drinking and gambling and they desperately need the financial rewards that America can give them. In a final bid to win back Christine's love, the Phantom lures her, Raoul, and their young son Gustave, from Manhattan to the glittering and glorious world of Coney Island – not knowing what is in store for them.

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## GM River Days

For the 12th year, GM River Days will take place along the Detroit Riverfront from 11 a.m.-10 p.m. June 23-25 – from the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority Terminal & Dock just west of the GM Renaissance Center, to Rivard Plaza and the William G. Milliken State Park. River Days is a weekend-long celebration of Detroit's RiverWalk with activities on land and water. Experience all the RiverWalk has to offer, from the jet-ski demos and riverboat tours to live music, sand sculptures, delicious eats and much more. Admission is \$3. Free for children ages 3 and under and seniors ages 65 and up. For more information, call 313-566-8235 or visit [www.riverdays.com](http://www.riverdays.com).

# Happenings

## OUTINGS

Be sure to check out *Summer Pride Calendar* on page 15 of this issue.

### Friday, June 16

**Lake Effect Pride 2017** 7 p.m. OutCenter, 9794 Jericho Road, **Bridgman**. 269-925-8330. [info@outcenter.org](mailto:info@outcenter.org) [www.outcenter.org/lake-effect-pride-event](http://www.outcenter.org/lake-effect-pride-event)

**White Party** 7 p.m. \$10 wristbands for all access to Old Town bars. Sir Pizza featured performer is Alise King with DJ Fudgie. Michigan Pride, **Lansing**. [www.michiganpride.org/](http://www.michiganpride.org/)

### Saturday, June 17

**Grand Rapids Pride** Grand Rapids Pride Center, **Grand Rapids**. [www.grpride.org/fest](http://www.grpride.org/fest)

**Michigan Pride Parade** 11:30 a.m. Michigan Pride, Adado Riverfront Park, 201 E. Shiawassee St. **Lansing**. [www.michiganpride.org](http://www.michiganpride.org)

**Michigan Pride Rally** 1 p.m. Youth Ambassador for the Women's March on Washington's Youth Initiative, Shane, a trans teen, speaks about the importance

of amplifying youth voices. Michigan Pride, Adado Riverfront Park, **Lansing**. [www.michiganpride.org/](http://www.michiganpride.org/)

**Teen GSA Meeting** 2 p.m. B Free B Yourself OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org)

### Tuesday, June 20

**Clinic Days Hormone Education, Consultations & Resource Navigation for the TGNB Community** 1 p.m. All services are free to enrolled clients. Email to enroll, receive & complete new client paperwork. Transcend the Binary, Address, **Ferndale**. 248-533-0797. [consults@transcendthebinary.org](mailto:consults@transcendthebinary.org) [transcendthebinary.org](http://transcendthebinary.org)

### Thursday, June 22

**Community Giving Days** Whole Foods Market will donate five percent of their net sales to Affirmations. Whole Foods Market, Various locations, **Rochester Hills, Troy and West Bloomfield**. [kkoch@goaffirmations.org](mailto:kkoch@goaffirmations.org) [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

**Red Umbrella Support Group** 7:30 p.m. For individuals involved in the erotic labor industry. Sex Workers Outreach Project

Michigan, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

### Saturday, June 24

**LGBT Older Adult Summit** 8:30 a.m. Theme "Moving Forward, Letting Go." Free event. SAGE Metro Detroit, 3408 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. [www.sagemetrodetroit.org](http://www.sagemetrodetroit.org)

**#PrideRide** 1 p.m. CycleBar, 311 E. Big Beaver Road, **Troy**. 3135208629. [TJ.Benrowski@CyclebarTroy.com](mailto:TJ.Benrowski@CyclebarTroy.com) [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

**Flint Pride** 2 p.m. Flint Pride, Riverbank Park, 1101 Beach St. **Flint**. <http://flinttown.com>

**TGMI Table** 2 p.m. Transgender Michigan, 1 Riverfront Plaza, **Flint**. [www.transgendermichigan.org](http://www.transgendermichigan.org)

**LezRead** 4 p.m. Email Kerene Moore to join Ann Arbor's premier book club for lesbians. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. [kerenem@jimtoycenter.org](mailto:kerenem@jimtoycenter.org) [www.jimtoycenter.org/](http://www.jimtoycenter.org/)

### Sunday, June 25

**Up North Pride** Loud and Proud, **Traverse City**. <https://upnorthpride.com/>

**Drag Queen Bingo** 11 a.m. Tickets: \$20-\$30. Reservations required. 18+ Five15, 515 S. Washington Ave., **Royal Oak**. 248-515-2551. [www.five15.net](http://www.five15.net)

**Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity, Inc. Interest Meeting** 3 p.m. Learn how to join the non-profit, non-collegiate, community service based organization for dominate lesbian women. Debonair Alpha Delta Colony, **Detroit**. [www.facebook.com/AlphaDeltaColony/](http://www.facebook.com/AlphaDeltaColony/)

## Editor's Pick

### LGBTQ Artists Represented at Orchard Lake Fine Art Show

Artist Robert Stadnycki is one of several LGBTQ artists featured at the 15th annual Orchard Lake Fine Art Show presented by Hotworks July 29-30 in West Bloomfield. He will be exhibit and sell his fiber creations. Voted one of the top 100 art shows in American ten years in a row, the art fair boasts 150 juried professional artists featuring original, handmade works. There is a call for youth artists, ages 5-13, this year for competition. Deadline is July 1. Applications available online at [www.hotworks.org/applications](http://www.hotworks.org/applications). The art fair is held at West Bloomfield High School, 4925 Orchard Lake Road. Details online at [www.hotworks.org/orchardlakefineartshow](http://www.hotworks.org/orchardlakefineartshow).



### Monday, June 26

**Transition 2.0** 7 p.m. Facilitated by Hannah Hartley, this group is focused on the art of transition. Integrate safely and positively into society. Open to all. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

**Whole Lives, Healthy Lives Adult Support Group** 7 p.m. This one-of-a-kind program in Berrien County helps attendees support each other in healthy ways through active listening and caring feedback. OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. 269-925-8330. [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org)

**Factory Monday** 9 p.m. Goth-industrial night. Main room: DJ Void6 hosted by MC Yoda. Red Room: DJ Madisi. Tickets: \$1-3. Necto, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

### Tuesday, June 27

**Sexual Assault Survivors Groups** 4 p.m. Youth group, ages 13-17, meets at 4 p.m. Adult group, ages 18 and over, meets at 5:15 p.m. OutFront Kalamazoo, 340 S. Rose St., **Kalamazoo**. [www.outfrontkzoo.org](http://www.outfrontkzoo.org)

**Pride Awards Banquet** 6 p.m. Tickets: \$20-30. Perceptions, 120 Ezra Rust Drive, **Saginaw**. 989-891-1429. [pride@perceptionsmi.org](http://pride@perceptionsmi.org)

[perceptionsmi.org/prideBanquet.php](http://www.perceptionsmi.org/prideBanquet.php)

### Wednesday, June 28

**The Pastor is In** 3:30 p.m. Pastor Dani Veenstra, local United Church of Christ faith leader and ally to the LGBTQ community hosts this free service every Wednesday. OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. 269-925-8330. [thepastorisin@outcenter.org](mailto:thepastorisin@outcenter.org) [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org)

**An Evening with John Corvino** 6:30 p.m. Admission: \$20-25 to benefit

Continued on next page

There are hundreds of businesses that advertise in BTL and welcome everyone. Invest in equality and work with businesses that support Michigan's LGBTQ community!

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# Editor's Pick

## The Ringwald Plans to 'Bust Your Nut'

The Gay Play Series returns to The Ringwald Theatre in Ferndale for the eighth fabulous year with new short plays based on Gay Fan Fiction and a big old show tune sing-along. Original one-act plays will run for one weekend, June 16-19, based on Harry Potter, Friends, Disney Princesses and Star Wars. The series will end with The Dynamic Duo, Eric and Gerianne, so come prepared to sing your favorite show tune. Audience members will vote for their favorite script. The winning script receives an additional performance at the closing ceremonies. Showtime June 16-18 is 8 p.m. and June 19 at 3 p.m. Tickets can be purchased for \$10 at [www.TheRingwald.com](http://www.TheRingwald.com) or at the theatre box office at 22742 Woodward Ave.

This Summer, The Ringwald is gonna Bust Your Nut

## GAY PLAY SERIES



**Affirmations.** Author John Corvino will present his new book, "Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination." Corvino will give a short talk followed by a Q&A and book signing. Coffee and dessert will be served. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. <http://gaybe.am/Ej>

**Estate Planning Presentation** 6:30 p.m. Learn more about the 10 biggest mistakes people make when planning their estate. Light refreshments, food provided. The Giles Law Firm, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-645-1210. [www.thegileslawfirm.com](http://www.thegileslawfirm.com)

**LGBTQ Support Group** 7 p.m. Connect on Facebook at @LGBTQSupportDownriver Beaumont Taylor Teen Health Center, 26650 Eureka Road, Suite B, Taylor. 734-942-2273 Ext. 23.

### Thursday, June 29

**Coding Workshop** 6 p.m. Please RSVP online Grand Circus, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. [haymer@gofaffirmations.org](mailto:haymer@gofaffirmations.org) <http://gaybe.am/Jul>

## MUSIC & MORE

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival" Works by this year's Stone Composer-in-Residence, Sean Shepherd. Free performances. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 23 - June 23. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

### Comedy

**Ann Arbor Summer Festival** "Scared Scriptless Tour" Tickets: \$45. Featuring comedian Colin Mochrie and Brad Sherwood. Power Center for the Performing Arts, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. June 24. <https://a2sf.org>

### Concerts

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival presents Shostakovich and The Black Monk: A Russian Fantasy" World Premiere. DIA's Detroit Film Theatre Stage, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. June 17. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival Shouse Showcase" A showcase of young professional ensembles from the festival's Shouse Institute and a world premiere by Stone Composer Fellow, Will Healy. Tickets: \$10-40. Kirk in the Hills, 1340 W Long Lake Rd., Bloomfield Hills. 7:30 p.m. June 22. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival presents Beyond the Notes: Music Meets Mindfulness" Enjoy a 60-minute yoga class for every body with yoga maestro Gail Mondry accompanied by live music performed by one of our Shouse ensembles, Friction Quartet. Tickets: \$10. Kirk in the Hills, 1340 W Long Lake Rd., Bloomfield Hills. 7 p.m. June 19. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival presents "Audio/Visual" Dmitri Shostakovich's "String Quartet No. 11" is filtered through the creative imaginations of several local poets in one of Detroit's most unique creative spaces. Tickets: \$10-15. Prop Art Studio, 112 E Grand Blvd., Bloomfield Hills. 8 p.m. June 16. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Closing Night of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival" Tickets: \$10-70. Seligman Performing Arts Center, Beverly Hills. 8 p.m. June 24. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival" "In her festival debut, Leila Josefowicz joins an all-star roster of musicians to present a celebration of all things cello. Tickets: \$10-40. Temple Beth El, 7400 Telegraph Rd., Bloomfield Hills. 7:30 p.m. June 21. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival** "Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival" Festival Composer-in-Residence Sean Shepherd will introduce his 2008 violin-piano duo, "Dust." Tickets: \$10-40. Temple Beth El, 7400 Telegraph Rd., Bloomfield Hills. 7:30 p.m. June 20. 2485592097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.org](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.org)

**PD9 and Cultivate Coffee & Tap House** "Sundays in the Garden" RJ Spangler and the Planet D Nonet will be making their debut appearance for this inaugural event. Cultivate Coffee & Tap House, 307 N. River St., Ypsilanti. 6 p.m. June 18. 734-645-8684. [www.cultivateypsi.com](http://www.cultivateypsi.com)

**The Blue Room** "Sam Hunt" Special guests Maren Morris, Chris Janson and Ryan Follese. DTE Energy Music Theatre, 7774 Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 7 p.m. June 16. 248-377-0100. [www.palacenet.com](http://www.palacenet.com)

### Festivals

**Michigan Pride** "Michigan Pride Festival Entertainment" 2 p.m. Emma Sapphire, 3 p.m. Motor City Drag Kings, 5 p.m. Lansing City Drag Queens, 7 p.m.

Starfarm - Lansing's '80s Cover Band. Old Town, Lansing. 1 p.m. June 17. [www.michiganpride.org/](http://www.michiganpride.org/)

## THEATER

### Professional

**8th Annual Gay Play Series** Don't miss The Ringwald's original one act plays based on Harry Potter, Friends, Disney Princesses and Star Wars. Tickets: \$10. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. June 16 - June 19. 2485455545. [www.theringwald.com](http://www.theringwald.com)

**Countdown to the Happy Day** Tickets: \$17-20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through June 25. 313-868-1347. [www.detroitreptheatre.com](http://www.detroitreptheatre.com)

**Lysistrata** Tickets: \$12 in advance only. Slipstream Theatre Initiative, Slipstream Theatre, 460 Hilton Road, Ferndale. June 17 - July 9. 3139869156. [www.slipstreamti.com](http://www.slipstreamti.com)

**Taking Shakespeare** Tickets: \$25-30. Students: \$10 with valid ID. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. Through June 18. 517-655-SHOW. [www.williamstontheatre.org](http://www.williamstontheatre.org)

## ART 'N' AROUND

**Detroit 1967** "Detroit 67: Perspectives" Exhibit examines 150-year span of the city's history. Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 24 - July 2. [www.detroit1967.org](http://www.detroit1967.org)

**Ferndale Pride** "Summer of Pride Art Show" Exhibit honors the struggles of the LGBTQ community through activism during Ferndale Pride, Motor City Pride, Hotter Than July and Transgender Pride. Pittman-Puckett Gallery, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. Now - July 28. [www.gofaffirmations.org](http://www.gofaffirmations.org)

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Panelists captivated an attentive audience in a lively conversation about black LGBT health issues June 2. From left to right, editor and author Dr. Jonathan Lassiter from Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, moderator Leseliey Welch, deputy director of the Detroit Health Department, author Dr. Ami Robinson, former REC staffer Emani Love, and editor and author Dr. Lourdes Follins from Kingsborough Community College/CUNY in Brooklyn, NY. BTL Photo: Jan Stevenson

## Black LGBT Health: Stories of Strength, Resilience, Creativity

BY JAN STEVENSON

Over 50 people gathered at The Ruth Ellis Center June 2 for a discussion about black LGBT health issues, an area of study that has been largely ignored in the academic literature until now. Authors and editors of a new book “Black LGBT Health in the United States” explored black LGBT health, the resilience of the black LGBT community and its powerful resources – emotional, medical, sociological and psychological.

The panel discussion was convened by Dr. Ami Robinson, a psychologist at Detroit’s Clinic for Child Study conducting therapy with incarcerated youth and their families, and is the author of the new book’s opening chapter. “Most of the youth I see in the juvenile justice system are black, and a disproportionate number of them are LGBTQ and gender non-conforming,” said Robinson. “They are finding their way alone a lot of the time, without family support. It is amazing to watch them and to witness their strength.”

The book’s co-editors joined the panel, Dr. Lourdes Follins, associate professor at Kingsborough Community College/CUNY, and Dr. Jonathan Lassiter, an assistant professor of psychology at Muhlenberg College.

Dr. Follins said that when she was approached by

the publishers to write this book she did an initial search of the literature to see what already existed and was astounded to find almost no writing about black LGBT health outside of the AIDS epidemic. “I reached out to other black LGBT scholars and asked if they would join me in this project. It was important that this book be written about Black LGBT health by black psychologists and academics. We know these stories and we need to be the ones to tell them,” said Follins.

Dr. Lassiter, who is also a dancer and choreographer, was passionate in his reasons why he wanted to see this book published. “We are not victims. Too often Black LGBT people are portrayed as victims, and, yes, we have struggles, but we also have incredible strength and resilience. That’s what I wanted to write about.”

Emani Love, former REC staffer, provided the panel with a youth and trans perspective. The panel discussion was moderated by Leseliey Welch, deputy director of the Detroit Health Department, and sponsored by Pride Source Media Group, the Metro-Detroit Association of Black Psychologists, SAGE Metro Detroit and the Ruth Ellis Center.

*The book is available for purchase on Amazon.com. Follow Dr. Kofi Adoma on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/kofi.adoma.7>.*

## ‘Communities That Care’ Awards Announced

The annual “Communities that Care” Awards are given each year by the OutCenter in Benton Harbor to recognize individuals, groups and/or organizations that have made exceptional efforts in the

past year to move the work of the OutCenter, and the overall LGBTQ movement, forward.

The 2017 winners will be formally presented during Lake Effect Pride on June 16 at the Pebblewood Country Club in Bridgman.



**Charli Herman**, Spanish teacher and co-founding advisor and **Cindy Swem**, guidance counselor and co-founding advisor – Buchanan High School Prism Gay-Straight Alliance

**Dr. Bradley Hinman**, Department of Graduate Psychology & Counseling, Andrews University



**Shane Peters**, Superintendent, Bridgman Public Schools



**Becky Foster**, president, Counseling Association of Southwest Michigan



**Marilyn Haslett**, middle school counselor and founding advisor, and **Austin Carter**, sophomore and founding member – Brandywine Middle and High School Gay-Straight Alliance

**Tracy Wagner**, president elect, Counseling Association of Southwest Michigan



**Dr. Dennis Waite**, Department of Graduate Psychology & Counseling, Andrews University

The OutCenter will also award the annual “Ally of the Year” during the event at 9794 Jericho Road.

Tickets are available online at <http://gaybe.am/sl> in advance for \$35 or \$40 at the door. There will be appetizers, a cash bar, music and dancing, as well as a \$10,000 drawing.

For more information, call 269-925-8330 or visit [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org).





The ACLU of Michigan honored Nancy Katz and Margo Dichtelmiller on June 8 for their financial support of the LGBT Project by renaming the project after them. From left to right: Jay Kaplan, staff attorney of the Nancy Katz and Margo Dichtelmiller LGBT Project of the ACLU, Nancy Katz, Kary Moss, executive director of the ACLU of Michigan, Margo Dichtelmiller and Angela Gabridge, development officer of the ACLU of Michigan.

## ACLU Honors Dichtelmiller and Katz, Renames LGBT Project

BY BTL STAFF

More than 75 LGBT supporters gathered June 8 for a reception and ceremony to rename the LGBT Project of the ACLU after Nancy Katz and Margo Dichtelmiller. Their financial, personal and visionary support of the project was lauded by ACLU staffers, community leaders and even the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Nancy and Margo bring their values to their philanthropy – values that include equality and justice,” said ACLU of Michigan Executive Director Kary Moss. Moss then presented the text of a Proclamation that had been read on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Debbie Dingell in which the couple was praised for their support for LGBT equality and the ACLU of Michigan.

“Organizations do not grow on their own and these two have made a big difference.”

– Allan Gilmour, former president of Wayne State University and former vice chair of the Ford Motor Company

Allan Gilmour, former president of Wayne State University and former vice chair of the Ford Motor Company, then spoke warmly and graciously about Margo and Nancy, lamenting their imminent move to New Mexico as a serious “brain drain” to the LGBT community here. “Organizations do not grow on their own and these two have made a big difference,” said Gilmour. He also spoke about their large gift to the Affirmations capital campaign that funded the building of the center on Nine Mile in Ferndale. “Without Nancy and Margo the building would be missing a floor or two,” he quipped.

Jon Hoadley, one of three openly gay members of the Michigan House of Representatives, then thanked Margo and Nancy. “I’m here on behalf of the LGBT Caucus of the Michigan House, which we wouldn’t have without you,” he said, noting that their financial support has extended beyond non-profit groups and included significant political contributions too.

Other speakers included Susan Erspermer, executive director of Affirmations, Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit, Jerry Peterson, executive director of the Ruth Ellis Center, Jan Stevenson, co-publisher of Between The Lines, and Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan. Each speaker thanked and detailed how Katz and Dichtelmiller had helped their organizations over the years.

Jay Kaplan, staff attorney of the newly named Nancy Katz and Margo Dichtelmiller LGBT Project of the ACLU of Michigan, spoke last. “Two weeks ago was my 16th anniversary working for the ACLU’s LGBT Project. Because of you, we are still here 16 years later. I am honored to be working for this project that is now in your names.”

For more information about the ACLU of Michigan, visit their website



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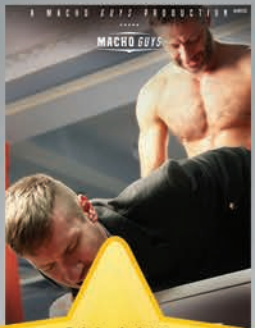


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# Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

## Mama Mia, get ready for more 'Mamma Mia'

The question is not why they're making a sequel to "Mamma Mia!" The 2008 smash grossed over \$600 million worldwide, after all. The question is why it took so long to get here. It's been nearly a decade since Meryl Streep and pals warbled ABBA tunes in the service of some kind of plot – truthfully, we forgot what the movie was even about and so did you – and we wondered if anyone would ever have the nerve to say, "You know what? We need even more of *that*." But in a world where "Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2" was an easy decision, perhaps we shouldn't have wondered so much; it was always going to happen, just as soon as La Streep's calendar cleared. The cast is back: Colin Firth, Amanda Seyfried, Pierce Brosnan and most likely some of the rest, singing other songs from the Swedish Beatles' back catalog (and probably a couple of reprises of tunes from last time). And in 2018 you will go buy a ticket. You know you will. This is your next Waterloo, and Pierce Brosnan's singing voice is the secret slaying force.



Meryl Streep. Photo: by Joe Seer

## Buckle up For 'The Secret History of Hollywood'

Did you get a chance to pick up 2012's trashiest memoir, "Full Service: My Adventures In Hollywood and The Secret Sex Lives of The Stars"? Not yet, you say? Well, summer's here and the time is right, as it were. But if you'd rather wait for the documentary film on the subject, well, the time is almost right for that, too. Scotty Bowers, now 93 years old and the author of "Full Service," was a World War II vet who came to Hollywood and quickly fell in with a circle of queer movie stars, all of whom were looking for sex on the down low. Bisexual, hungry and ready to make friends and money, Bowers arranged the liaisons (and often participated) and took notes. Now, documentary filmmaker Matt Tyrnauer ("Valentino: The Last Emperor") has the movie version ready, titled "Scotty and The Secret History of Hollywood," and there was a buyer's screening at the recent Cannes Film Festival. That means there's no distributor just yet. But salacious sells, and so it's only a matter of time before your local LGBT film festival gets its hot hands on this hotter property.

## 'Fly' girls ready for takeoff

Based on real events, the in-development series "Fly" promises something refreshingly different. Set in Atlanta, it's the story of the first commercial airline flight crew staffed entirely with African-American women. Their lives and careers, and the obstacles they face, will form the ongoing narrative, and the cast will include TV vets Tatyana Ali ("The Fresh Prince of Bel Air"), Bruce Boxleitner ("Babylon 5"), Cristian de la Fuente ("Devious Maids"), Valarie Pettiford ("The Blacklist"), as well as Ja Rule, Mindy Cohn, Cicely Tyson, Marla Gibbs, Todd Bridges, "Glee" star Amber Riley, and the show's creator, former child actor Rae'Ven Kelly, taking control of her own projects starting here. This women-driven enterprise will also feature behind the scenes talent like lesbian filmmaker Aurora Guerrero, whose 2012 feature "Mosquita y Mari" was a hit at Sundance and an LGBT festival staple. "Fly" is shooting now and waiting for a network pickup, but that wait will certainly not be very long. We're looking forward to this one for 2018.

## ABC jumps on the musical bandwagon with 'The Little Mermaid'

Would anyone have ever predicted that the hot thing on TV in 2017 would be dueling Broadway musicals, done live? That an innovative staging of "Grease" would win over television critics and audiences? That old-fashioned musical theater would captivate the nation? Well, it did, predictions be hanged, and now ABC is climbing aboard. The network will revive its "Wonderful World of Disney" brand and kick off what is certain to be an ongoing series of special broadcasts with "The Wonderful World of Disney: The Little Mermaid Live!" A celebrity-packed cast will be announced as soon as the ink is dry on their contracts. And the clock is already ticking: the airdate is scheduled for Oct. 3 and the network promises an interesting twist on the format, one that will mix live action with animation. We're intrigued, Disney. Now please entice us with some stars.

Romeo San Vicente politely requests that "Mamma Mia 3" be set in outer space.

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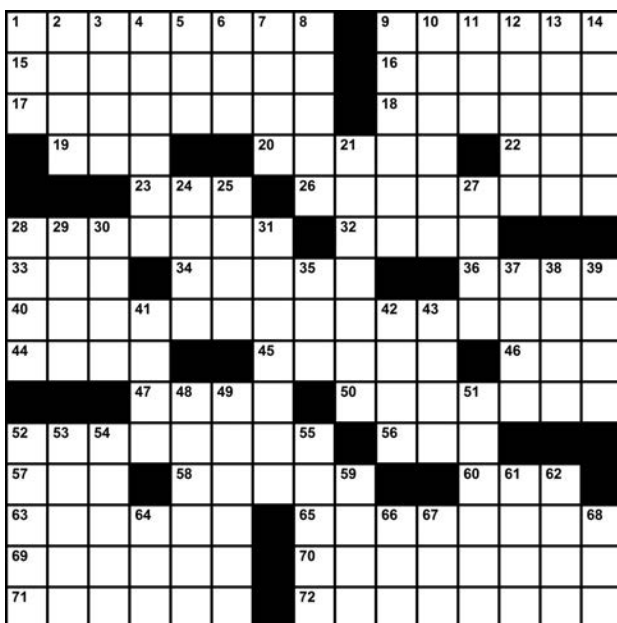


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## Q Puzzle



## Diora Bared Her Soul

### Across

- 1 Dressed for Mardi Gras
- 9 Dave Pallone call
- 15 Rule with whips and such
- 16 Aileen Wuornos portrayer Charliize
- 17 Start of the title of a 2006 Diora Baird movie (with "The Beginning")
- 18 Johnny Mathis disk
- 19 Get hard

- 20 Loafer's lack
- 22 Keanu's role in "The Matrix"
- 23 Chemist's workplace
- 26 More of the title
- 28 Matured, as fruit
- 32 Schoolyard retort
- 33 Rene Auberjonois role
- 34 Chef Des Jardins
- 36 Take advantage of International Male
- 40 2005 Diora Baird movie
- 44 Not hard to get in bed

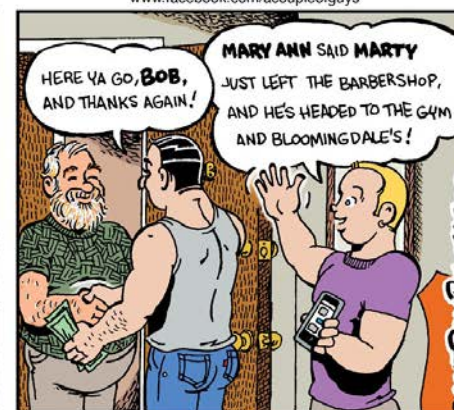
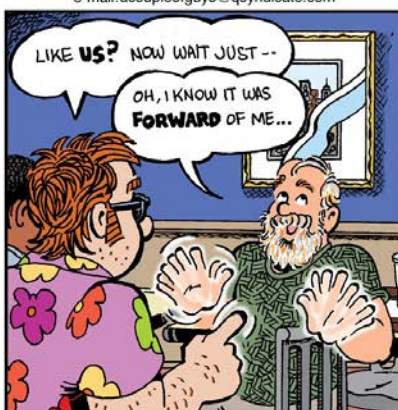
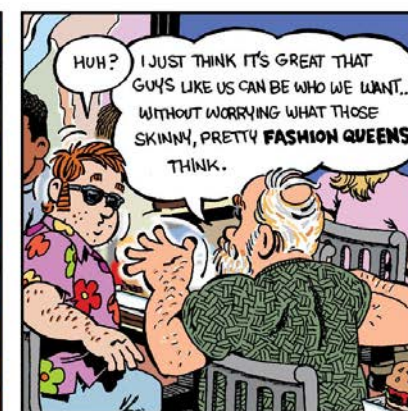
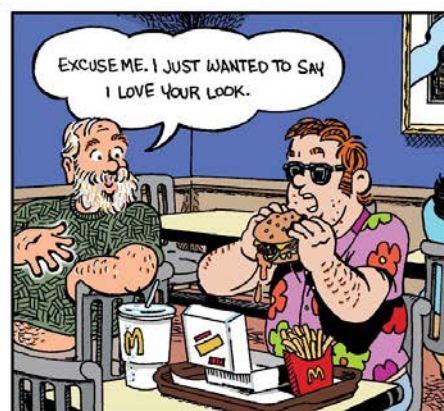
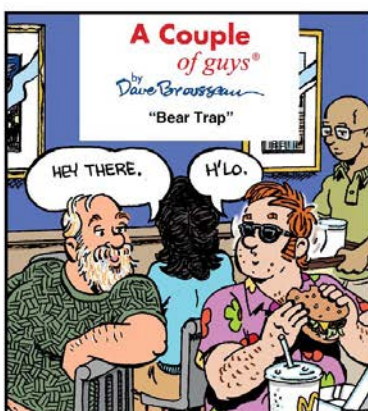
- 45 Hotel customer
- 46 Lawyers' things
- 47 Last word in a threat
- 50 Like the most extreme penetration
- 52 End of the title
- 56 Fearful reverence
- 57 Cole Porter, for one
- 58 Lorca's shore
- 60 Mauresmo's court divider
- 63 Friend of Dorothy
- 65 2006 Diora Baird movie
- 69 Patrick Stewart's order on "Star Trek"
- 70 Flattered, in a way
- 71 TV Superman George
- 72 Mouthpiece's tongue?

- 24 Start to climax
- 25 Swiss town with a bear mascot
- 27 Enjoy some ladyfingers, e.g.
- 28 Horror writer Michael
- 29 Head output
- 30 Body snatcher's hatchers
- 31 Macbeth's weapon and others
- 35 Heart ward, for short
- 37 Gay cable network
- 38 Crude material
- 39 "Hey, over here!"
- 41 Does a head job?
- 42 On "The Love Boat," perhaps
- 43 One way to cook fruit
- 48 "\_\_\_ aux Folles"
- 49 Teatime treats
- 51 Prison friend?
- 52 Shakespeare's iambic pentameter, e.g.
- 53 Dress with a flare
- 54 Barely burn
- 55 International Male's business, e.g.
- 59 Top
- 61 Cock ending
- 62 Spencer-Devlin supporters
- 64 \_\_\_ Viola (Diora Baird's partner when she came out)
- 66 Cylinder put in the mouth, for short
- 67 Announcement from the cockpit
- 68 JFK's predecessor

### Down

- 1 Summer hrs. in Harper Lee's home state
- 2 Package appreciation cries
- 3 Foe of Peter Pan
- 4 Diacritical dot
- 5 One of "Fifty Million Frenchmen"
- 6 Nathan's role in "The Producers"
- 7 And others, for Caesar
- 8 Cul-\_\_\_
- 9 One that stays in a bed
- 10 Main argument
- 11 YMCA activity
- 12 Jeremy of "M. Butterfly"
- 13 Land of Margaret Cho's ancestors
- 14 Give a large bosom, e.g.
- 21 Presided over

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