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Singer-Songwriter  
Sharon Van Etten's  
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# A True Bruhhood of Dominant Lesbian WoMen

Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity Brings GentleWomen  
Together to Uplift Each Other, the Community



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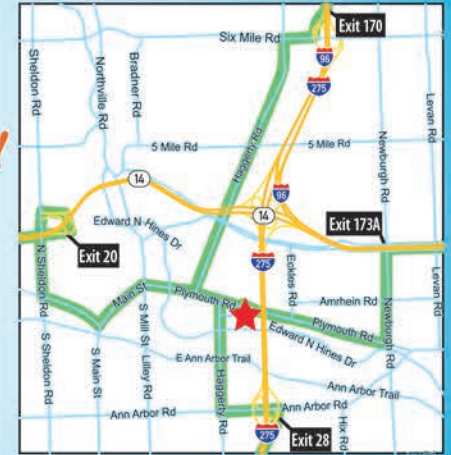


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## MARRIAGE

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The Debonair Alpha Delta Colony of the Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity.

Alpha Psi Kappa completes over 1800 hours of community service annually. The organization has three national service initiatives – Habitat for Humanity, March of Dimes and Stand Up for Kids – that are ongoing through the year with a host of local community initiatives taking place in 31 colonies and five chapters across the U.S.

# A True Bruhhood of Dominant Lesbian WoMen

## Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity Brings GentleWoMen Together to Uplift Each Other, the Community

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

**S**harron Fincher said, “something magical happens” when the Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity comes together.

“It’s such a positive experience,” she said about being a part of the third oldest Greek lettered fraternity for women who identify as masculine of center. Alpha Psi Kappa is a non-profit, non-collegiate, social service organization established on February 20, 2002 in Tallahassee, Florida on the campus of Florida State University.

Fincher, whose Greek line name is Bruh S. ArKhitekt, is the National Executive Director of Alpha Psi Kappa. She is also a member of the Detroit Police Department LGBTQ Action Team and is the facilitator for the Woman 2

Woman program at LGBT Detroit.

Fincher founded the Debonair Alpha Delta Colony in Detroit on November 17, 2011. Since then, she and Bruh A. AkolADe Hall, Colony President, and Bruh K. GraVity Gaffney, Colony Vice President, have been recruiting members who want to give back to their community, stand on the side of justice for all people and exhibit the characteristics of leadership, cooperation and patience.

“It’s crazy how we mesh,” said Fincher. “It feels good to talk with people who are similar to you. I mean, nobody’s exactly alike, but it doesn’t matter. We are each other’s support system.”

As an MOC woman, Fincher defies the societal stereotype associated with her outward appearance – aggressive, someone to be feared,

unfriendly – which she wrote about recently as a guest author for the Wayne County Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner’s Program. The article is titled, “The Skin I’m In.”

“It’s hard sometimes,” she said about tilting toward the masculine side of the gender spectrum. “People look at you and judge you. They don’t think you’re a nice person until they talk to you, get to know you and warm up to you.”

Taking an oath with a fraternity that dispels all that negativity has changed Fincher, who no longer feels limited and is much more in tune with herself at 40 years old.

“There were a lot of obstacles I had to overcome,” she said. “I wish I found this when I was younger. I think I’d be a lot further along in life.”

Fincher and her Bruhs are giving younger women someone to look up to and something to look forward to.

“I was real soft spoken and now I speak up more. This really helped build my confidence,” said Bruh C. KAlypso Dawson, who crossed over from being a pledge to a full member of the fraternity with Bruh T. RocK SteADy Simmons in May.

“People are really interested in what I’m doing. They are proud of me,” said Simmons. “This helps me emotionally, mentally and physically because I’m going through so much in my life. This is something I want to do and it will help me with my future. It’s such a positive environment. I can stop worrying about negativity and focus on what’s important.”

Fincher said she has seen “crazy transformations” from Dawson and Simmons in a short period of time. “It makes you feel like what you’re doing is worthwhile,” she said. “That’s what this is all about.”

When the Bruhs are out recruiting, they might seem intimidating in their khaki and baby blue getup, walking around with their Kappa Kanes and paddles, but they represent more than what people see on the outside.

Alpha Psi Kappa completes over 1800 hours of community service annually. The organization has three national service initiatives – Habitat for Humanity, March of Dimes and Stand Up for Kids – that are ongoing through the year with a host of local community initiatives taking place in 31 colonies and five chapters across the U.S.

There are more than 150 active members in cities like Detroit, North Carolina, Missouri, Illinois, New York, Florida and Virginia.

The organization attracts Bruhs from a variety of professional fields that learn from and support one another. In an effort to stay connected, Alpha Psi Kappa hosts an annual LGBT Greek Networking Conference.

“The family that you gain through this gives you an awesome support system from people that have been through things that you’ve been through or things that you’re going through that you can’t talk to your cousin about because they’re heterosexual and they have no clue what your daily life is like – going to work dressed masculine, just walkin’ on the street, even walkin’ in the bathroom. The support of this organization helps you to no longer be in that shell,” said Gaffney, who crossed in Alabama before relocating to Detroit.

Around that time when her grandmother died, it was her Bruhs who were there for her. “It was my best experience,” she said.

“You might have never met them before, but if you’re in need, your Bruhs will come pick you up wherever you’re at, no questions asked to spend time with you, like it’s nothing. We are each other’s family sometimes.”



The Alpha Delta Bruhs provide community service at Gleaners Food Bank.

## The Kappa Phamily

What started as the Kappa Psi Kappa Fraternity, Inc. on August 17, 2001 in Tallahassee, Florida, has grown into Tau Kappa Phi, Inc., the “Kappa Phamily,” comprised of five different organizations that are constitutionally bonded and are the only Greek lettered Phamily of its kind. For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/TauKappaPhiIncorporated](http://www.facebook.com/TauKappaPhiIncorporated).

Kappa Psi Kappa Fraternity, Inc.

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

An organization for men

Alpha Psi Kappa Fraternity, Inc.

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

An organization for dominant lesbians

Phi Nu Kappa Sorority, Inc.

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

An organization for feminine women

Alpha Omega Kappa Fraternity, Inc.

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

An organization for transmen

Kappa Iota Sigma Sorority, Inc.

[www.coralkiss2014.org](http://www.coralkiss2014.org)

An organization for transwomen

Gaffney said it’s not all business all the time, and the Alpha Delta Colony makes time for fun beyond the work they do.

“We still have our life. We go to the clubs and we do karaoke. We’ll meet up to eat or go to sporting events. We hang out at each other’s houses to grill, laugh and talk for hours,” she said.

But they must stay true to the Alpha Psi Kappa motto, “The WoMen in Service with Unity.” Gaffney said, “That’s the number one thing. You need to make sure that’s what you’re about – serving your community.”

For more information about Alpha Psi Kappa, visit the fraternity’s website [www.alphapsikappa.org](http://www.alphapsikappa.org). Follow the Alpha Delta Colony on Facebook [www.facebook.com/AlphaDeltaColony](http://www.facebook.com/AlphaDeltaColony).



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### DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS.

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### IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

#### What is the most important information I should know about DESCOVY?

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- **Buildup of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark "tea-colored" urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY for a long time. In some cases, lactic acidosis and serious liver problems have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV and stop taking DESCOVY, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Ask your healthcare provider if an HIV-1 treatment that contains DESCOVY® is right for you.

### What are the other possible side effects of DESCOVY?

#### Serious side effects of DESCOVY may also include:

- **Changes in body fat**, which can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking DESCOVY.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking DESCOVY if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems**, such as bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

#### What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking DESCOVY?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how DESCOVY works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take DESCOVY with all of your other medicines.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if DESCOVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking DESCOVY.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch), or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.



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WHAT'S  
INSIDE



(des-KOH-vee)

## IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY® and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

### MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DESCOVY

**DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:**

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; loss of appetite; light-colored bowel movements (stools); nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking DESCOVY. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY or a similar medicine for a long time.

### ABOUT DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older. DESCOVY is **not** for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

### HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine that is taken with other HIV-1 medicines.
- Take DESCOVY with or without food.

### POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY

**DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:**

- Those in the “Most Important Information About DESCOVY” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.

**The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.**

These are not all the possible side effects of DESCOVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking DESCOVY.

**Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with DESCOVY**

### BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

**Tell your healthcare provider if you:**

- Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

**Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:**

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with DESCOVY.

### GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to [DESCOVY.com](http://DESCOVY.com) or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit [DESCOVY.com](http://DESCOVY.com) for program information.



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# Mercedes-Benz Partners with Ruth Ellis Center to Help LGBTQ Youth

## Volunteers Build, Paint and Plant at Ruth's House During Week of Caring Campaign

View the Online Gallery  
www.pridesource.com

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

LGBTQ youth at the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park will have the opportunity to grow food in an urban community setting and learn more about sustainable gardening as a result of a new partnership between the agency and Mercedes-Benz Financial Services.

Over the course of two days, around 60 volunteers transformed the grounds around Ruth's House and REC during the automotive finance company's fifth-annual Week of Caring.

The team members spent six hour days June 22-23 to build and install a tool shed, picnic tables, benches and raised flower beds. They painted and sorted, cleaned and organized donation items for Ruth's Closet. They also built and planted a food garden to help raise awareness for REC young people and provide education about the benefits of growing their own fruits and vegetables.

Week of Caring is a week-long community service campaign that MBFS has organized as part of its corporate commitment to making a difference in the communities where its team members live and work.

This was one of 12 community enhancement projects selected by MBFS this year.

"We have had a particular focus in the last couple of years on enhancing the diversity and inclusion segment of our community relations efforts. It's always been one of our four focus areas, but we've really been working to expand that so it's reflected better in our partnerships," said Rachel Van Rossum, community relations and corporate events specialist with MBFS, noting they proudly participated in the Motor City Pride parade for the first time, among other LGBTQ-related activities this month.

Rossum said she met with Mark Erwin-McCormick, director of development and advancement at REC, to learn more about what the agency does and to discuss their needs.

"I had goosebumps the whole meeting," she said. "They have a really



Volunteers from Mercedes-Benz Financial Services transform the grounds at Ruth's House in Detroit during their Week of Caring. BTL Photo: Kate Opalewski

good grasp on how to do what they do. They really get what the need is and how to fulfill that need in the community. They clearly have it together and are very competent in the services and programs they're putting together, which are getting national recognition and are being adopted by other agencies."

Rossum said REC's project proposal fit within the parameters of the program and "we loved it and we were thrilled to include them."

MBFS employees are given two paid volunteer days during the year, according to Rossum. One to be used during the Week of Caring and one individual day to volunteer with any non-profit of the employee's choice.

"We are truly grateful to have the support of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services. This is one of the largest corporate volunteer projects the Center has ever taken on, and the level of enthusiasm, passion, and commitment the volunteers showed throughout was incredible," said Erwin-McCormick.

REC is a youth social service agency whose core purpose is building positive futures with LGBTQ young people

experiencing barriers to housing, health and wellness.

As LGBTQ youth continue to be disproportionately affected by homelessness, and overly represented in the child welfare system, REC remains dedicated to ensuring these youth/young adults receive the services and protections available to all citizens.

Ruth's House accommodates up to nine youth in the foster care system at any given time by providing services in a home-like setting that meets the individual needs of the youth while they are in care.

Other Week of Caring projects involved helping Macomb County Habitat for Humanity, the Detroit Animal Welfare Group and Forgotten Harvest.

Mercedes-Benz Financial Services USA LLC is located at 36455 Corporate Drive, Farmington Hills. To follow the progress of Week of Caring on social media, visit [www.facebook.com/mymbf](http://www.facebook.com/mymbf) or use the hashtags on Twitter #everycommunitymatters, #weekofcaring or #MBFS.

## Barbershops and Salons Join the Strands for Trans Campaign

BY BTL STAFF

A movement to create more trans-friendly barbershops and hair salons launched on June 20. Transgender discrimination is a daily occurrence – especially when it comes to gender-specific institutions. While issues like "allocated" bathrooms are among the more common topics of public discussion, a far less-acknowledged everyday issue for trans people, yet equally historically-gendered, is the simple act of getting a haircut. Salons for women. Barbershops for men. Both, too often, leaving trans people feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome.

Raising awareness for this issue to coincide with Pride during the month of June, independent advertising agency, Terri & Sandy, in partnership with Barba, a men's grooming salon based in NYC's Chelsea, have launched Strands for Trans, a public awareness campaign encouraging barbershops and salons across the country to provide a welcoming and safe environment for transgender individuals. Designer Marc Jacobs has also joined the campaign and will be featured in various videos throughout the week.

The Strands for Trans campaign features both an emotional call-to-action spot titled, "Barber Poles," and a central campaign video coined "Pink, White & Blue," in addition to a series of video testimonials on YouTube.

Through Strands for Trans, barbershop and salon owners can register their businesses online, download a signature pink, white and blue barber pole sticker to place permanently in their windows, and also add their shops to an interactive map of transgender-friendly hair service locations across the country. The site also features inspiration for people of all walks of life to get involved and show support, whether through social media via #StrandsForTrans or on the local level.

"I've been deeply moved by recent news stories of trans discrimination and decided it was time to do something about it," says Xavier Cruz, owner of Barba. "What's so amazing about Strands for Trans is it shows trans men and women that lots of people support them; whether they're a he, she or ze."

"The recent press on this topic is saddening. Everyone, regardless of their gender identity, should be able to get a simple haircut without being insulted or ridiculed," says Terri Meyer, co-founder of Terri & Sandy. "We created Strands for Trans to help stop the hate and institute real change in barbershops and salons across the country."

For more information, visit [Strands for Trans](http://StrandsforTrans.com) [www.strandsfortrans.com](http://www.strandsfortrans.com).

## America's Newest Museum Recognizes LGBTs in Our Revolution

MARK SEGAL, PHILADELPHIA GAY NEWS

America's newest museum, Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, does something quite revolutionary: It recognizes the LGBT community as having played a part of that revolution. And it does so with several exhibits.

This may seem strange to point out, as LGBT people have been a part of every facet of life and war throughout history – and at times the major historical players, from Alexander the Great to World War II codebreaker Alan Turing. But up until now, you might have thought that LGBT people were invisible at the founding of the United States, and had no role in our country winning its independence. Thanks to this museum, that notion ends here and now.

In addition to lauding the community's historical efforts, another of the museum's themes is that the revolution continues; we still have work to do. As Dr. Philip Mead, the museum's director of curatorial affairs and chief historian, states: "We're so pleased to have a story of the American Revolution here that we hope includes all Americans and messages for people around the world."

Here's how LGBT media played a part in getting that story to the museum.

It's a rare experience when you actually get to see something that you're passionate about take root. It's even more special when academics in the field run with that material, embrace it and make it a major point of their own project. What the museum has done is a great leap in LGBT history. Those involved are well aware of that and embrace it, maybe more than me. And I just love when those who join the march begin to lead it or add to it to create discussion.

So what has me so euphoric? It's a story that goes back about six years. I was watching a TV talk show on which LGBT rights were being debated when a conservative on the panel stated something to the effect of, "When our founding fathers created this nation, they didn't have those [LGBT] people in mind."

Well, this angered me and, as you'd expect, became a challenge.

In response to that TV show, I pitched a project entitled "We Are America," as part of the LGBT History Project I coordinate that appears in numerous newspapers around



Dr. Philip Mead, the museum's director of curatorial affairs and chief historian says the scene above is ambiguous. He said, "It's possible that this refers to a niece and an aunt who were both named Hannah Catherell in the Quaker community. It's also possible that it refers to Hannah Catherell and Rebecca Jones, two women who lived together who were described at the time as 'yolk mates.'" Mead explained that "yolk mates" were "co-workers, co-laborers in this place, in a school, for the good of the young people of Philadelphia. So some historians speculate that this may have been a same-sex couple. While we may not be able to prove that, we thought some of these displays were useful in getting people to think about the presence of the gay community here in Philadelphia in the 18th century." Photos by: Scott Drake

the country each October. We commissioned writers and began research on LGBT people who were instrumental to the cause of the Revolutionary War.

In our research, there was one character who stood out and fascinated me. His name was Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. He was a brilliant and somewhat flamboyant military genius. I read almost everything that I could find on the web and then the wonderful and revealing biography "The Drillmaster of Valley Forge." The book was written by Paul Lockhart, who at this point most would say is the foremost expert on von Steuben and a teacher of military history. Von Steuben was outrageous and he was going to be my contribution to the project – never did I expect how passionate I'd become about him earning his rightful place in history.

Why von Steuben? Simply, his being acknowledged as a gay man would bring about major change in the way we look at

the founding of this country. Without von Steuben, there would be no United States of America, and that means a gay man was a founding father. If we could prove that the founding fathers knew he was gay, then the founding fathers not only had us in mind when founding this country, but also expected us to have equality, or what could pass for equality at that time. Clearly, one of those equality points was the issue of gays in the military. For that is where von Steuben and founding father Benjamin Franklin come in.

Never did we expect that in our research we'd find such names touching on the subject as Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Adams and many others. The project of explaining von Steuben's impact became so big and touched on so many founding fathers that we had to break it into various segments: a piece on Franklin, another on Washington and so on.

Here in quick order is a short version of part of the von Steuben story:

In the late 1700s, von Steuben had a somewhat-celebrated military leadership career in the various German states, though at numerous times he was accused of having sex with his male recruits. He never denied the allegations, but did leave (escape) those countries before he could be charged or arrested. He arrived in Paris hoping to impress The Continental Congresses ambassador to the Court of Louie XVI, Benjamin Franklin, and get a commission in the Continental Army commanded by George Washington. At the first meeting, Franklin was unimpressed. Von Steuben left Paris, but another scandal brought him back. Von Steuben and his friends – connected either to the court of Louie XVI or to Franklin — asked Franklin to have another meeting with von Steuben, knowing of those scandals and the chances that he could be arrested in Paris if he did not escape Europe.

Franklin met with von Steuben and agreed on the plan to escape, but not before von Steuben went shopping and enlisted an entourage. How could one not find him fascinating?

There can be little doubt here that Franklin, the Bill Gates of his day and a major celebrity in Paris at that time, with spies at his disposal, would not have known of von Steuben's "problems." This makes Franklin the father of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

**Von Steuben, like many LGBT people and their histories and contributions, has remained invisible or unrecognized until recently. That is what is so revolutionary about what the Museum of the American Revolution has done.**

### INFO

For more information about The Museum of the American Revolution, visit [www.amrevmuseum.org](http://www.amrevmuseum.org).

Before von Steuben boarded his boat, he ordered fine, new special uniforms made with epaulets and medals, found a personal staff and, just to look like royalty, brought along a couple of dogs. He was then smuggled out of Paris on a ship that had munitions for the Continental Army, along with letters of introduction to Washington and Congress by Franklin.

The ship arrived in New England, and von Steuben met members of the Adams family and John Hancock before heading to meet Congress, and then onto Valley Forge to meet Washington.

It was at Valley Forge that von Steuben pulled together Washington's rag-tag Continental Army and began to make them into a cohesive, collective force. He taught them to drill, created a regulation book (which continued to be used by U.S. military until the war of 1812), instituted standards of sanitation and became Washington's chief of staff.

Today, there are few, if any, professional historians who would doubt that von Steuben was gay. In our research, we unearthed correspondence among members of the Adams family regarding the subject. The whispers about von Steuben led the Continental Congress to delay granting him a pension, and it was Washington's last act as commander of the Continental Army to write the Congress on behalf of von Steuben's "moral character." And finally, at the urging of Hamilton, the first secretary of the treasury of the new country, Congress finally granted von Steuben an annual \$2,500 pension.

## Von Steuben's Major Achievements

According to the New York Public Library ("The Papers of von Steuben"), the following is a list of von Steuben's major achievements:

February 1778: Arrives at Valley Forge to serve under Washington, having informed Congress of his desire for paid service after an initial volunteer trial period, a request with which Washington concurs.

March 1778: Begins tenure as inspector general, drilling troops according to established European military precepts.

1778-79: Writes "Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States," which becomes a fundamental guide for the Continental Army and remains in active use through the War of 1812, published in over 70 editions.

1780-81: Serves as senior military officer in charge of troop and supply mobilization in Virginia.

1781: Replaced by Marquis de Lafayette as commander in Virginia.

1781-83: Continues to serve as Washington's inspector general, and is active in improving discipline and streamlining administration in the army.

Spring 1783: Assists in formulating plans for the post-war American military.

Washington rewarded von Steuben with

a house at Valley Forge (still in existence and open for visits), which he shared with his aide-de-camps, Capt. William North and Gen. Benjamin Walker. Walker lived with him through the remainder of his life, and von Steuben, who neither married nor denied any of the allegations of homosexuality, left his estate to North and Walker. His last will and testament, which includes the line "extraordinarily intense emotional relationship," has been described as a love letter to Walker.

Von Steuben, like many LGBT people and their histories and contributions, has remained invisible or unrecognized until recently. That is what is so revolutionary about what the Museum of the American Revolution has done.

The largest original mural in the \$150-million museum features von Steuben drilling the troops along with key figures at Valley Forge. Each figure has a biography. Here's what the museum wrote about von Steuben: "Baron von Steuben came to the encampment as a volunteer but left it as a general. A German nobleman with experience in Frederick the Great's Army, von Steuben transformed the Continental Army's drill and training. In May, he was promoted to inspector general of the army. Here he sits on a horse directing the troops as they maneuver. Though the army didn't ask, and he didn't tell, von Steuben is thought by some historians to have been gay."

On my recent visit to the museum, when Mead showed this to me, my response was, "What you're going for is inclusion of the entire American family." He smiled and responded, "Correct, the revolution belongs to all of us."

He pointed out other LGBT exhibits.

One features a scene of two Quaker women visiting American prisoners of war at Independence Hall, then known as the Pennsylvania State House. The exhibit was based on the diary of a Quaker woman named Elizabeth Drinker, who wrote about the "two Hannah Catherells."

"Now there's ambiguity in this scene," Mead noted. "It's possible that this refers to a niece and an aunt who were both named Hannah Catherell in the Quaker community. It's also possible that it refers to Hannah Catherell and Rebecca Jones, two women who lived together who were described at the time as 'yolk mates.'"

When I inquired what "yolk mates" means, Mead explained, "They were co-workers, collaborators in this place, in a school, for the good of the young people of Philadelphia. So some historians speculate that this may have been a same-sex couple. While we may not be able to prove that, we thought some of these displays were useful in getting people to think about the presence of the gay community here in Philadelphia in the 18th century."

When I asked Dr. R. Scott Stephenson, the museum's vice president of collections,

See LGBT History, page 21

# 2017 Ad POP Awards



## Congratulations to the Detroit Area Winners Presented by the National LGBT Media Association

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**B. Ella Bridal, Plymouth**

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**Metals in Time, Royal Oak**

**Pewabic Pottery, Detroit**

Ad POP is a production of the National LGBT Media Association, a group of the nation's leading LGBT newspaper publishers, located in New York (Gay City News), Washington, D.C. (Washington Blade), Los Angeles (The LA Blade), Boston (Bay Windows), Philadelphia (Philadelphia Gay News), Detroit (Between The Lines), Chicago (Windy City Times), Dallas (Dallas Voice), San Francisco (Bay Area Reporter), Atlanta (Georgia Voice), Ft. Lauderdale (SFGN) and Orlando (Watermark).

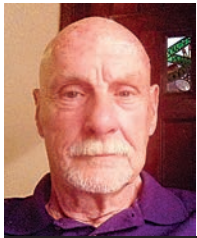
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# Woo! Woo! You, too, Wonder Woman?



## Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Sixty-three years ago, when I was a gay, impressionable teenage DC Comics Book fan, a shrink named Fredric Wertham claimed that the bitter seeds of crime were sown by comic books.

Wertham's best selling psychobabble book, "Seduction of the Innocent" also said comics helped to turn impressionable kids gay. (In or out of capes and leotards isn't specified.)

"I have never come across any adult or adolescent who had outgrown comic-book reading who would ever dream of keeping any of the 'books' for any sentimental or other reason," Wertham wrote. (Let's see, "Action Comic #1; 1938" marketed for \$3.2 million on eBay.)

I'll admit as a kid I admired Captain Marvel. I knew that his alter ego, dot-eyed Billy Batson, was an ordinary runt like me. That was encouraging. With exercise, Wheaties, eight hours of sleepovers, and Brilcream – "a little dab'll do ya" – life held possibilities for real rooftop soaring. (And maybe backroom scoring.)

But Wertham's darts weren't directed at Captain Marvel, Mary Marvel, Superman, Plastic Man, Submariner, The Flash, or Mr. Tweedle Dee Dee. (All heroes of mine.) They were aimed at closet queers Batman and Robin and crypto-dyke Wonder Woman.

Yes, the Caped Crusader had a "ward" (guardian, not prison) and Wonder Woman, well – as plump sidekick Etta Candy woo-woo'd it, "Aphrodite be praised!" – she hailed from an island of female Amazons, and they weren't selling books online in the forum, either, Mary!

"At home they lead an idyllic life," observed Wertham. "They are Bruce Wayne and 'Dick' Grayson. They live in sumptuous quarters with beautiful flowers in large vases. Batman is sometimes shown in a dressing gown. It is like a wish of two homos living together."

(Under 30s, please note: A dressing gown is not drag. Large vases are House & Gardens optional. But, as everybody knows, 'Dick' is dick.)

"For boys Wonder Woman is a frightening image," warns Wertham. "For girls she is a morbid ideal. Where Batman is anti-feminine, the attractive Wonder Woman and her counterparts are definitely anti-masculine."

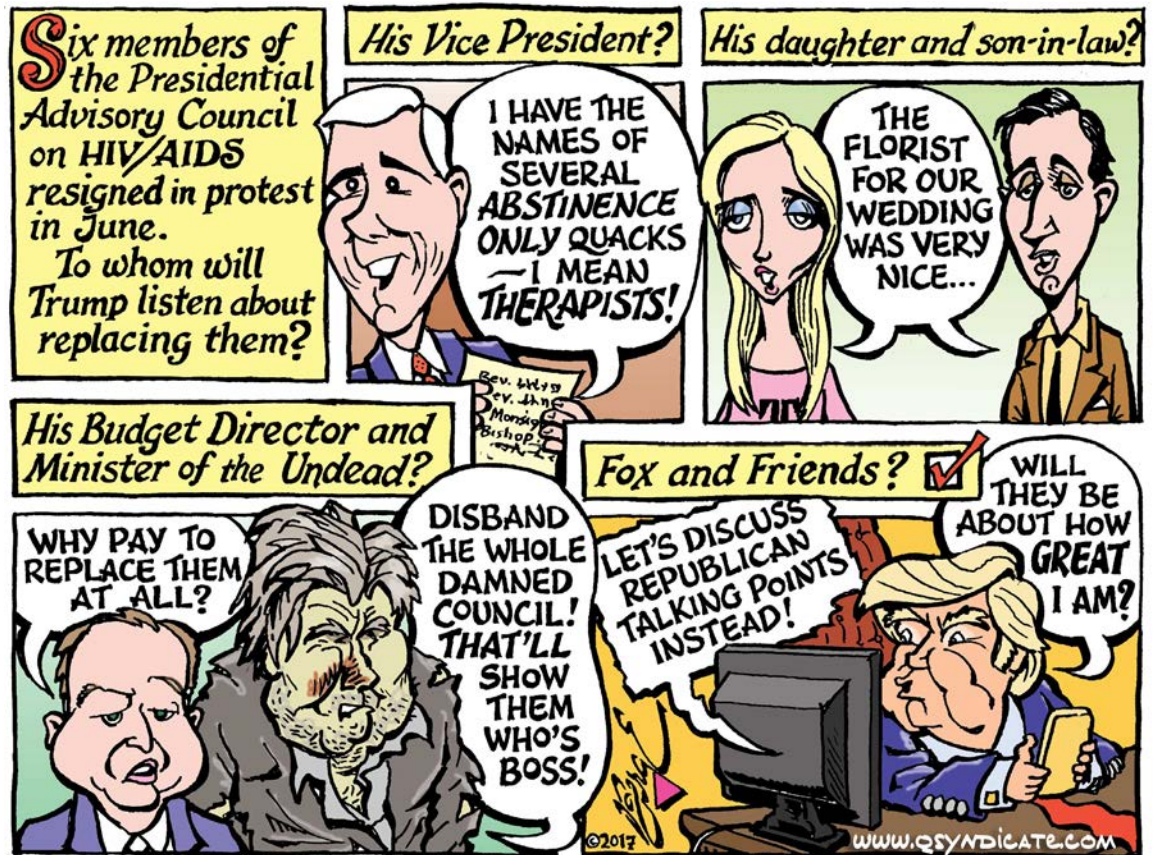
Wertham may have been on to something about the Wayne-Graysons. DC Comics, which drives the lucrative Batmobile to the bank, refuses to grant permission to use any illustrations of the crusading pair – gardening or fisticuffing – for psychological gossiping about the their sexual orientation.

As for the redoubtable Wonder Woman, circa 2017, she and plump sidekick Etta Candy have made it big, big time. The Warner Brothers box-office hit, according to nine ScreenRant could break into the Top 10 Highest Grossing Superhero Films of all time.

America's [Beloved Dyke Prototype?] Wonder Woman has earned over \$275 million at the domestic box office and \$573 million worldwide. "Says, ScreenRant – and with just a hint of caveat – "The film enjoyed the most successful opening weekend ever for a film with a female director."

Director Patty Jenkins, it's also reported online, at first had some private reservations about the selection of Gal Gadot as the film's superstar. Understandably, Jenkins changed her mind rather quickly. Gal's performance is – WOW! WOO! WOW! – stunning, if underpaid at \$300,000.

Truth is: \$800 million's incentive enough for a worldwide seduction of movie audiences that are – shall we say, Aphrodite be praised! – less than innocent?



BY JAY KAPLAN

## Viewpoint

# Be Vigilant, Be Informed, Speak Out to Oppose Religious Discrimination

In the midst of LGBT Pride month celebrations, on June 22 a three-judge panel for the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals lifted the injunction (stay) on Mississippi's law that permits both individuals and government workers to discriminate against LGBT people on religious grounds.

Mississippi's law, the very mistitled "Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act," is considered one of the most aggressive state responses in opposition to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 marriage equality decision.

Mississippi's law would permit government clerks to opt out of certifying same-sex marriages and permit businesses to deny wedding-related services to same-sex couples if their marriage contravenes "a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction." It would permit religious organizations (including those that receive government funding) to discriminate against LGBT people in employment and housing. It would allow public school counselors to refuse to work with LGBT students, and potentially result in child-welfare agencies placing LGBT kids with anti-LGBT foster or

adoptive parents.

The law could also permit religiously affiliated schools to fire a single mother working in its cafeteria, supporting children on her own, because that university has a religious opposition to sex outside of marriage.

Sounds pretty bad, huh? But Mississippi is not an anomaly. It represents an attempt by opponents of LGBT rights to secure the right to discriminate in non-religious settings, often under the auspices of the government and government funding, in the name of religion. And these legislative attempts have been introduced throughout the country. How many recall Indiana's so called "Religious Freedom Restoration Act"? How many are aware of the First Amendment Defense Act, federal legislation that has been introduced (and President Trump during the 2016 campaign promised to sign) that would permit discrimination based on the religiously held beliefs that marriage is between one man and one woman, that sex outside of marriage is wrong, and that to be

See next page

## ► Kaplan: Viewpoint

Continued from p. 13

transgender is against God's teachings? How many of us know that Michigan has a law that permits state tax payer subsidized faith based adoption and foster care agencies to refuse to work with LGBT families based on those agencies' religious beliefs?

Texas must know about it because they just passed a similar law last week. The biggest threats to achieving LGBT equality in our country today are these attempts to use religion as a basis to deny LGBT equal opportunity in all facets of life. This is the reality that we are dealing with.

All of this legislation is packaged to make it appear that somehow those who wish to discriminate against LGBT people are victims of government retribution for religious beliefs that they hold. This is simply untrue and proponents of LGBT rights are going to have to be both savvy and informed advocates to oppose these attempts to violate our constitution (which provides for separation of church and state), and to gut civil rights laws and protections.

Make no mistake about it. Our constitution strongly protects the right of individuals to hold their religious beliefs and the government cannot take away that religious belief. However, once an individual or organization voluntarily decides to enter into non-religious activity – like baking cakes, hosting wedding receptions, working for the local government clerk's office, contracting with the government to facilitate adoptions and foster care placements, operating funeral parlors, etc., those individuals and those organizations are subject to a myriad of laws, regulations and policies that govern those activities.

You don't get a special carve out or exemption for zoning ordinances, health codes, payroll taxes, or civil rights laws. Our federal courts while strongly protecting the rights of individuals' religious beliefs, have never permitted those beliefs to be used as a mechanism to harm other people – to be a sword, instead of a shield. Our country was

**Our federal courts while strongly protecting the rights of individuals' religious beliefs, have never permitted those beliefs to be used as a mechanism to harm other people – to be a sword, instead of a shield. Our country was founded on the principle that our government does not promote a particular religious belief to the detriment of others.**

founded on the principle that our government does not promote a particular religious belief to the detriment of others.

When we allow for laws like Mississippi's, the government is promoting the religious belief that to be LGBT is to be both wrong and inferior. Those plaintiffs in *Barber v. Bryant* (the Mississippi legal challenge) will now ask for this decision to be reconsidered by an en-banc (full) panel of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. Should that be unsuccessful, they could petition to the U.S. Supreme Court. However, no matter the outcome, this issue is not going away anytime soon and while we celebrate all that there is to celebrate about being LGBT and the civil rights gains that have been made, we must be cognizant that attempts to roll back any and all progress are in play at home in Michigan and throughout the U.S. We need to be vigilant, we need to be informed, and we need to continuously speak out.

## Michigan Non Profit Resource

### Have You Experienced Discrimination?

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

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

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

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

**Hundreds more resources can be found at**  
**[www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com)**

# Creep of the Week

## Karen Handel

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



Another day another truly terrible person elected to Congress. America is on a roll when it comes to voting for people who are the worst.

As I write this I'm in Chicago with my family during Pride. The Navy Pier Ferris wheel is lit up in rainbow colors. In fact, when my 7-year-old son saw it he cried, "Look! A gay Ferris wheel!" We also saw cars with rainbow flags waving out their windows as I drove down the freeway. It's a happy time.

Or at least it should be.

Sadly, I can't help but think about Georgia's newly elected Republican congresswoman Karen Handel. She beat the much better human being Jon Ossoff, a Democrat, but not by much. While some are pointing at Ossoff's defeat and saying it's proof the Democratic Party is dead and that Nancy Pelosi should be buried along with it, that's stupid and short sighted. America deserves better than that.

Okay, but why am I thinking of Handel as I gaze upon the gay Ferris wheel?

Back in 2003, according to Think Progress, Handel was a little more gay friendly. Or at least appeared so. The Log Cabin Republicans threw their support behind her because she appeared to think domestic partner benefits were not the work of Satan (LCR's standards are not high). But no more!

In 2010 she told a local Georgia news station that she not only didn't know any gay couples with children, but she said that a same-sex couple raising a kid "is not the best household for a child." When asked why she thought "gay parents aren't as legitimate as heterosexual parents" she answered, "Because I don't."

Well, then.

But that was seven years ago! Surely she's come around since then, right? Ha. No.

In June she was again asked about same-sex couples adopting and she said she still opposed it because of "her faith."

"My faith at the same time calls me to be compassionate and what I have always believed is that what has to be paramount is what is the best interest of the child," she told *The Reporter Newspapers*.

But what does that mean, "best interest of the child?" Surely Handel can be more specific?

"The best interest of the child. Period, end of paragraph," she said. "That's not for you to decide. That's not for me to decide. It's for the child advocates to decide, whether that be the court or the child's guardian. The child's best interest must be paramount."

Got it. The best interest of the child is some impossible to define thing that only "The Child Advocates" (which sounds like a group from the *Handmaid's Tale*) can dictate.

**I sure as hell am an advocate for my child, and I don't take kindly to anyone claiming that my wife and I are unfit parents. I especially loathe the fact that Handel is joining the anti-LGBT scum that is creeping across D.C.**

Well, I'll tell you what. I sure as hell am an advocate for my child, and I don't take kindly to anyone claiming that my wife and I are unfit parents. I especially loathe the fact that Handel is joining the anti-LGBT scum that is creeping across D.C.

It's hard not to feel hopeless. To look at the anti-LGBT backlash across the country and feel exhausted and want to give up. Or just ignore the news and watch nothing but RuPaul's Drag Race (everything in moderation, dears). But then I look up and see a gay Ferris wheel shining in the night sky and my son in the back seat declaring that "today was one of the funnest days of my life." And I know that love will win. It's going to be a bumpy ride, and oh, it's going to hurt sometimes. But love will win.

# SCOTUS Ruling: Score One for ‘Dykes on Bikes’

BY LISA KEEN

The long-standing organization of lesbian motorcycle enthusiasts filed a brief recently with the U.S. Supreme Court supporting the effort of an Asian-American group that sought to trademark the name “The Slants.” In a decision issued June 19, the Supreme Court said the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office violated the group’s First Amendment right to freedom of speech when it denied the group the right to register a trademark on the name.

The PTO had argued that federal trademark law prohibits registration of a trademark that may “disparage . . . or bring . . . into contemp[t] or disrepute” any “persons... institutions, beliefs, or national symbols....” But a unanimous court it amounts to government censorship. Attorneys for the San Francisco-based Dykes on Bikes group applauded the decision.

“Our argument on freedom of expression is very much like that of the Slants. The USPTO should not be deciding what is derogatory and what is not, and them doing so is the essence of viewpoint expression,” said Brooke Oliver, an attorney for Dykes on Bikes. She noted that the Dykes’ brief also argued that the PTO’s application of the so-called “disparagement clause” was arbitrary. The brief noted, for instance, that while the PTO denied Dykes on Bikes a trademark for its logo because of the wording, it granted a trademark for the name and granted trademarks for “Queer as Folk.”

Oliver and law professor Tobias Wolff prepared the brief to the Supreme Court for the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes Women’s Motorcycle Contingent, a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit which licenses chapters in other cities. Oliver said the group immediately submitted a request to the PTO seeking approval of its previously suspended application for a trademark of its logo.

The *Matal v. Tam* decision also enables the Asian-American rock group called “The Slants” to trademark its name. The PTO had rejected the group’s application, noting that “slants” is a disparaging term for people of Asian descent. But The Slants said they adopted the name to “reclaim” the term and diminish its power as a derogatory term.

In its brief to the Supreme Court, Dykes on Bikes noted that its efforts to trademark the name “Dykes on Bikes” had been rejected several times “on the ground that the term ‘dyke’ is a disparaging term for lesbians....”

Like the Asian-American rock group, Dykes on Bikes explained that its use of the term “dykes” was to “highlight and confront the



Dykes on Bikes Detroit cruises during Motor City Pride parade on June 11. BTL Photo: Andrew Potter

controversial history of that term and dispel the notion that it is disparaging.”

“The inconsistency of the PTO in registering other marks that use words with a history of disparaging meaning, like QUEER AS FOLK and BITCH, while refusing to register the Dykes on Bikes design mark, further demonstrates the arbitrariness of the standard,” said the brief. “Dykes on Bikes’ experience is a cautionary tale about delegating hundreds or thousands of discretionary free speech decisions to individual civil servants [at the PTO] working with no clear or objective standard. It is also a healthy reminder why the First Amendment strongly disfavors this kind of content-based prior licensing restraint on speech.”

The brief also explained why it was important for Dykes on Bikes to trademark its name. The group is a “non-profit organization focused on political speech and social action.” Without a federal trademark, other entities (such as businesses) can promote messages and sell products using the Dykes on Bikes name in ways that can affect the group’s political message. And without the trademark protection, Dykes on Bikes cannot insist that copycat groups take down postings on such social media as Facebook.

All eight participating justices agreed the patent law violated Free Speech rights, but they split 4 to 4 on why. (The court’s newest justice, Neil Gorsuch, did not participate in the case.)

The conservative justices (Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito) joined by moderate Justice Stephen Breyer said the government had not made a convincing argument that the awarding of a trademark constituted a government subsidy of speech. It also said that “public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are themselves offensive to some of their hearers.”

The court’s four moderate justices (Anthony Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan) said the patent law is unconstitutional because it “reflects the Government’s disapproval of a subset of messages it finds offensive, the essence of viewpoint discrimination.”

The specific law under challenge in *Matal v. Tam* was a law known as the Lanham Act. The act says an otherwise legitimate trademark can be refused registration by the PTO if it “consists of or comprises immoral, deceptive, or scandalous matter; or matter which may disparage or falsely suggest a connection with

persons, living or dead, institutions, beliefs, or national symbols, or bring them into contempt, or disrepute....”

Debate over the law spread beyond the particulars of the name of one rock band and Dykes on Bikes and included whether some professional sports teams could be challenged for having names like “Washington Redskins.” The Washington, D.C., professional football team issued a statement, celebrating the Supreme Court’s decision.

But Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said there’s a difference between having a legal right to use a name and a moral responsibility not to.

“Even if teams have a constitutional right to use racist names, they have no moral right to do so,” said Minter. “The use of a derogatory term for Native Americans is repugnant, and the Washington team should change it immediately. Their failure to do so is appalling.”

*Keen News Service is a professional news organization for LGBT national law and politics.*

# Supreme Court Reverses Ark. Justices in Lesbian Birth Certificate Case

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

The U.S. Supreme Court reversed June 26 an Arkansas high court ruling allowing the state to refuse to place a lesbian parent's name on the birth certificate of their child if the parent isn't the birth mother. In the case of Pavan v. Smith, the court in a per curiam decision issued a summary reversal of the Arkansas Supreme Court decision on the basis it contravened the 2015 decision in Obergefell v. Hodges extending marriage equality nationwide, which was handed down exactly two years to the day of the reversal. "When a married woman gives birth in Arkansas, state law generally requires the name of the mother's male spouse to appear on the child's birth certificate – regardless of his biological relationship to the child," the decision says.

"According to the court below, however, Arkansas need not extend that rule to similarly situated same-sex couples: The State need not, in other words, issue birth certificates including the female spouses of women who give birth in the State. Because that differential treatment infringes Obergefell's commitment to provide same-sex couples 'the constellation of benefits that the States have linked to marriage,' we reverse the state court's judgment."

Observing that plaintiffs in the consolidated Obergefell litigation – namely those in the case of Henry v. Hines – explicitly challenged Ohio's refusal to recognize same-sex marriages for the purposes of the birth certificates, the justices conclude the marriage equality decision "applies with equal force" to the Arkansas law in question. In December, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled the state has no obligation to place the names of both lesbian parents on a child's birth certificate as a result of litigation filed by three lesbian plaintiff couples to strike down a state law requiring the state to label on a birth certificate the "paternity of the person" when that person is born. Not all justices were in agreement with the reversal of the Supreme Court decision.

U.S. Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch – joined by U.S. Associate Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito – rejected the court's conclusion that a summary reversal is appropriate in this case. "Before the state supreme court, the State argued that rational reasons exist for a biology based birth registration regime, reasons that in no way offend Obergefell—like ensuring government

**“ Today's Supreme Court decision protects same-sex married couples and their children from discrimination and strengthens the rule of law. Marriage equality is the law of the land, and this decision sends a clear message that states must follow the law and treat all married couples equally. ”**

- Doug Hallward-Driemeier, partner at Ropes & Gray who served as co-counsel in the case

officials can identify public health trends and helping individuals determine their biological lineage, citizenship, or susceptibility to genetic disorders." Gorsuch writes. "In an opinion that did not in any way seek to defy but rather earnestly engage Obergefell, the state supreme court agreed. And it is very hard to see what is wrong with this conclusion for, just as the state court recognized, nothing in Obergefell indicates that a birth registration regime based on biology, one no doubt with many analogues across the country and throughout history, offends the Constitution." A trio of legal firms – the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Arkansas attorney Cheryl Maples, who represented the lesbian couples in the case before the Supreme Court, and the D.C.-based law firm Ropes & Gray – filed a petition for certiorari before the Supreme Court in February calling on justices to reverse the decision. Doug Hallward-Driemeier, partner at Ropes & Gray who served as co-counsel in the case, praised the Supreme Court in a statement for reversing the Arkansas high court decision. "Today's Supreme Court decision protects same-sex married couples and their children from discrimination and strengthens the rule of law," Hallward-Driemeier said. "Marriage equality is the law of the land, and this decision sends a clear message that states must follow the law and treat all married couples equally."

*This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*



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## NEWS

# 5th Circuit Rules for Mississippi Anti-LGBT 'Religious Freedom' Law

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has lifted a court order against a "religious freedom" law in Mississippi that would enable sweeping anti-LGBT discrimination, citing a lack of standing for plaintiffs in litigation against the statute.

Writing for a unanimous three-judge panel, U.S. Circuit Judge Jerry Smith issued a decision allowing HB 1523, which has been enjoined as a result of a lower court order, to go into effect and denied plaintiffs suffered injury as a result of the state violating the Establishment Clause.

"The Governor of Mississippi and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services appeal a preliminary injunction," Smith writes. "Because the plaintiffs do not have standing, we reverse the injunction and render a judgment of dismissal."

Smith denies assertions of injury from plaintiffs, who alleged the Mississippi law violates the Establishment Clause because it takes into account only certain religious views on LGBT people.

"The Establishment Clause is no exception to the requirement of standing," Smith said. "It is not enough simply to argue that there has been some violation of the Establishment Clause; The plaintiffs claim they have suffered a stigmatic injury from the statute's endorsement of the Section 2 beliefs. That stigma can be a cognizable Establishment Clause injury, but even such stigmatic injury must be concrete and particularized."

Smith maintains he and his fellow judges "do not foreclose the possibility that a future plaintiff may be able to show clear injury-in-fact" compelling the judiciary to overturn the law, but for the time being that condition isn't satisfied.

The three-judge panel who issued the decision consists of Smith, a Reagan appointee; U.S. Circuit Judge Jennifer Elrod, a George W. Bush appointee; and U.S. Circuit Judge Catharina Haynes, another George W. Bush appointee.

Signed by Gov. Phil Bryant last year, HB 1523 enables individuals and businesses to discriminate against LGBT people in the name of "religious freedom."

The law prohibits the state from taking action against religious organizations that decline employment, housing or services to same-sex couples; families who've adopted a foster child and wish to act in opposition to same-sex marriage; and individuals who offer wedding services and decline to facilitate a same-sex wedding.

Additionally, the bill allows individuals working in medical services to decline to afford a transgender person gender reassignment surgery. The bill also allows state government employees who facilitate marriages the option to opt out of issuing licenses to same-sex couples, but the person must issue prior written notice to the state government and a clerk's office must not delay in the issuing of licenses.

As a result of consolidated lawsuits — one filed by the Campaign for Southern Equality, the other by the Joshua Generation Metropolitan Community Church and 13 Mississippi ministers — U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves, an Obama appointee, issued a preliminary injunction in July against the law on the basis it violates the Establishment Clause, barring enforcement on the day the law would've taken effect.

Roberta Kaplan, lead counsel for the plaintiffs in Campaign for Southern Equality case and attorney who successfully argued against the Defense of Marriage Act before the Supreme Court, said in a statement she plans to seek "en banc" review of the three-judge panel decision before the full Fifth Circuit.

"This decision is not only deeply upsetting for the rights of LGBT individuals living in Mississippi, but also for the protection of religious liberty in our country," Kaplan said. "Our clients have already suffered enough. The state communicated a message loudly and clearly with the passage of HB 1523: only certain anti-LGBT beliefs will get

the protection and endorsement of the state. Under the logic of this opinion, it would be constitutional for the state of Mississippi to pass a law establishing Southern Baptist as the official state religion."

According to the Campaign for Southern Equality, HB 1523 won't go into effect until the Fifth Circuit issues its mandate for the three-judge panel's decision. If the 5th Circuit agrees to hear this case "en banc," the preliminary injunction will remain in effect until the full court rules.

No state law exists in Mississippi that would bar discrimination against LGBT people if not for the "religious freedom" statute. However, the "religious freedom" law could undermine municipalities and state universities that have or would seek to enact discrimination policies against anti-LGBT discrimination.

Federal laws against sex discrimination, which a growing number of courts have interpreted to apply to LGBT people, would also still have effect in Mississippi. Those laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars employment discrimination, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which bars discrimination in schools.

Rob Hill, the Human Rights Campaign's Mississippi state director, expressed disappointment in a statement over the decision, which he said will "clear the path for the anti-LGBTQ law HB 1523 to take effect in Mississippi."

"This law — now the most discriminatory, anti-LGBTQ state law in the country — was rooted in hate, it targets the LGBTQ community and it is a deliberate attempt to undermine marriage equality and the dignity of LGBTQ Mississippians who lawmakers have sworn to serve and protect," Hill said. "We will continue to fight tooth and nail against HB 1523 until it no longer threatens our community."

*This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*



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HHS has nixed plans to eliminate LGBT questions in a federal survey.

## HHS Nixes Plan to Eliminate LGBT Questions from Elder Survey

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

The Department of Health & Human Services has reversed itself on a plan to eliminate questions allowing LGBT elders to identify their sexual orientation from a federal health survey amid pressure from LGBT advocates and members of Congress. In a Federal Register notice set for publication on June 22, HHS declared it made minor adjustments to plans to change the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants, such as “retaining the primary question regarding sexual orientation.” According to the notice, the Administration for Community Living changed its mind on eliminating the question after receiving comments in response to the proposal from 89 organizations and more than 13,900 individuals. “The majority of the comments that ACL received expressed the need to retain demographic questions on sexual orientation/gender identity,” the notice says.

By saying HHS has decided to retain “the primary question regarding sexual orientation,” the notice suggests HHS will keep a question allowing respondents to identify their sexual orientation, but still eliminate a question allowing them to identify as transgender. The department reverses itself on plans to eliminate the questions after publishing in March a plan to eliminate them in the Federal Register, the daily journal of the U.S. government that includes rule changes. The notice provided a link to descriptions of previous surveys and a link to a proposed draft of the 2017 survey, incorrectly saying there will “no change” to the new survey. But a look at the survey reveals a change: The elimination of a question on whether respondents identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, which had been included in each annual survey since 2014. At the time, HHS said the LGBT questions were part of a pilot test and removed because the sample response “has not been sufficient enough to date to allow for reliability and reporting.” The planned elimination of the questions prompted outrage from LGBT advocates, who said the removal of questions effectively erases LGBT elders from federal health programming, as well as letters objecting to the change from 49 U.S. House members led by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.) and 19 U.S. senators led by Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Bob Casey (D-Pa.).

## D.C. to Allow Gender-neutral Driver's Licenses

BY LOU CHIBBARO JR., WASHINGTON BLADE

At the direction of D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, the city's Department of Motor Vehicles will begin allowing residents to choose a gender-neutral “X” identifier on driver's licenses and other city identification documents on June 26. The announcement on June 20 by the mayor's office of the soon to be available gender-neutral identification documents came on the same day that six members of the D.C. City Council introduced a bill that would enact the gender neutral I.D. policy proposed by the mayor administratively into city law. The Nonbinary Identification Cards Amendment Act of 2017, written by Council member Brianne Nadeau (D-Ward 1, would require the Department of Motor Vehicles to “permit applicants for a license, permit, or identification card issued pursuant to this act to designate their gender as ‘non-binary’ in lieu of ‘male’ or ‘female.’”

“The District has always sought to be a safe and welcoming place for our LGBT community, and today we are continuing to deliver on that legacy,” Nadeau said in a statement accompanying the proposed bill. “Gender is a spectrum and some of our residents do not identify as male or female,” she said. “Current licenses force residents to conform to gender that don't accurately reflect their identity,” she added. “This bill changes District identification documents so they can accurately reflect the needs of our residents.” The bill was co-introduced by Council members David Grosso, Robert C. White Jr., Charles Allen, Elissa Silverman and Mary Cheh. It was co-sponsored by



Mayor Muriel Bowser's directive will allow D.C. residents to choose a gender-neutral option for state-issued ID cards. Washington Blade photo by Michael Key

Council members Jack Evans, Anita Bonds, Trayon White and Vincent Gray. A statement released by the Department of Motor Vehicles says the mayor's proposal will give applicants for city driver's licenses, learner's permits, or identification cards the option of marking on an application form an “M” for male, “F” for female, and “X” for gender non-binary individuals. Amy Nelson, director of legal services at Whitman-Walker Health, said the mayor's proposal, which is expected to take effect June 26, will make D.C. the first jurisdiction in the nation to have a motor vehicles department that will add an “X” gender identity marking for a government-issued driver's license or identity card. “Whitman-Walker Health congratulates D.C.'s DMV for being the leader in recognizing non-binary gender identities and making a third gender marker available to D.C.

residents,” Nelson said. Although Oregon became the first state in the nation to allow a third gender option on identity documents following a court decision in support of a non-binary resident in the state, the Oregon action won't take effect until July 3, according to Nelson. “We welcome this move by the mayor and our bill is complementary to her efforts,” said Tom Fazzini, a spokesperson for Nadeau. “Councilmember Nadeau's bill would make this change permanent in the D.C. Code,” he said. “Since the mayor's change is administrative, it could be undone by a future administration, however unlikely that may be.”

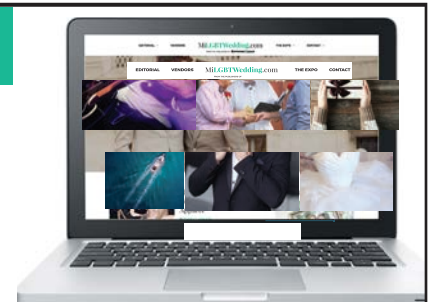
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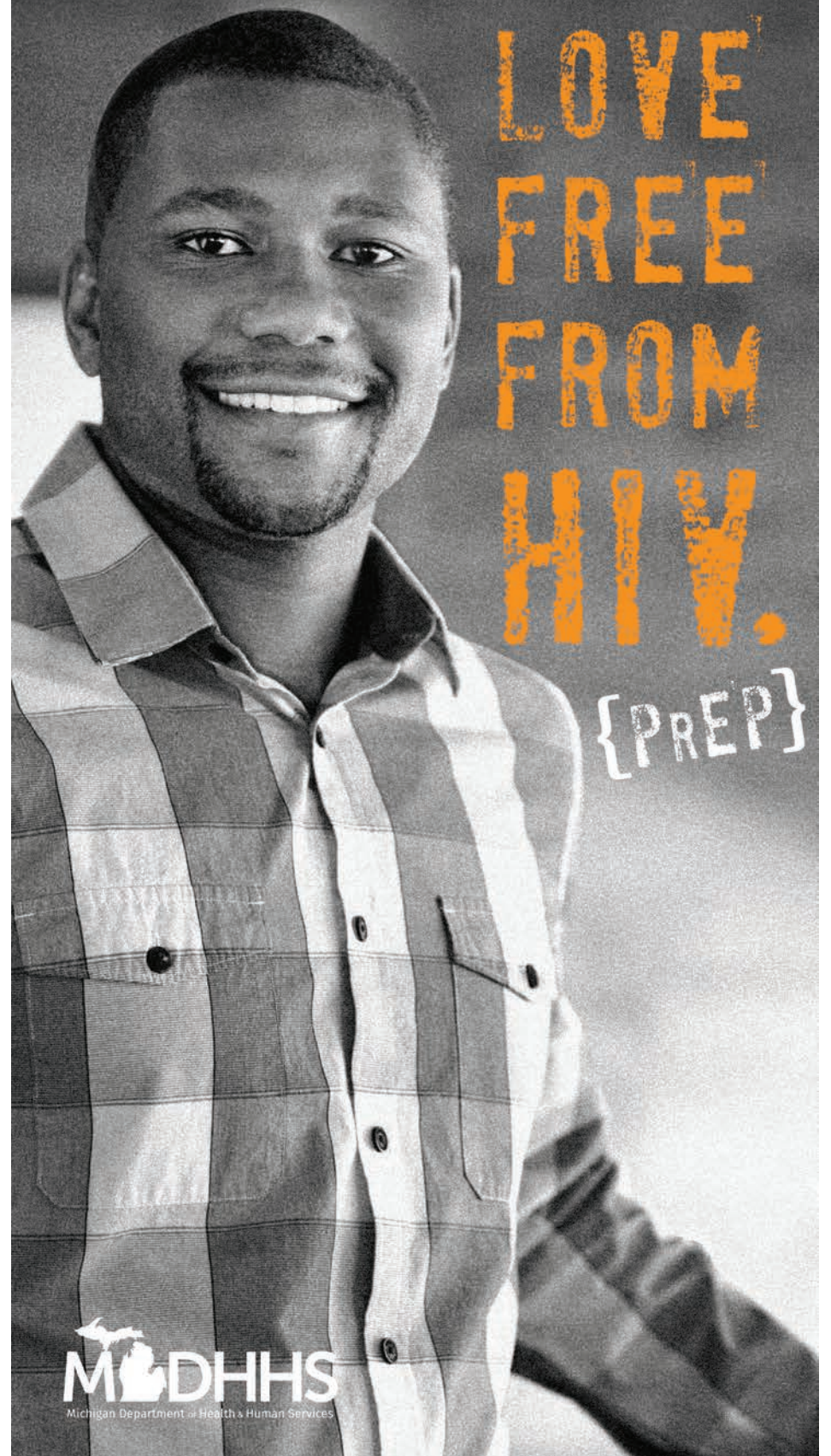
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The Supreme Court has agreed to take up a gay wedding cake case. Photo by Bigstock

## Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Gay Wedding Cake Refusal Case

CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

On the two-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's sweeping decision in favor of marriage equality, the court announced June 26 it had agreed to review a case in which a Colorado bakery refused to sell a wedding cake to a same-sex couples.

The Supreme Court announced in its orders list on June 26 it had agreed to take up the case of Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission in the aftermath of the court's periodic conference on June 22. It takes a vote of at least four justices to grant a writ of certiorari – or agree to take a case – but the names of which justices voted that way isn't made public. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of Masterpiece Cakeshop, which was penalized for refusing to sell a wedding cake to a same-sex couple under Colorado's human rights law, it could establish a religious carve-out for denial of services to LGBT people throughout the country. Because the Supreme Court's 2016-2017 term is about to close, a decision from justices won't come any time soon. The court will hear arguments and render a decision in the gay wedding case refusal case during the next term after the summer. The petition for certiorari asking the Supreme Court to take up the case had been sitting before the Supreme Court without action for nearly a whole year. The Supreme Court only agreed to take up the case after the confirmation of U.S. Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch, whom LGBT rights supporters opposed out of concern he'd diminish LGBT rights from the bench.

Stay tuned as the Washington Blade continues to report on this story.

*This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*

# Military Chiefs Seek 6-month Delay in Transgender Enlistments

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

The military service chiefs are seeking a delay in implementation of a policy allowing openly transgender people to enlist in the U.S. military, the Associated Press reported June 23.

Laura Ochoa, a defense spokesperson, responded to the report by denying Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work has made a recommendation on the issue, suggesting the situation remains in flux.

“The Deputy Secretary of Defense has not provided a formal recommendation to the Secretary of Defense, therefore no decision has been made and there is no update to the current review,” Ochoa said.

The brief AP report doesn't name which of the service chiefs are seeking the delay or ascribe any motivation, but is consistent with earlier media reports that top defense officials were seeking more time to implement the final stage of openly transgender military service. It could be a signal that the anti-trans policy could remain in place as a result of the Trump administration.

LGBT rights supporters backing transgender military service were initially reluctant to comment on reports service chiefs wanted to hold off on enlistments, but in the aftermath of the AP report issued fiery statements in opposition to dragging out implementation.

Aaron Belkin, director of the San Francisco-based Palm Center, highlighting the Army's expenditure of \$300 million to recruit 6,000 soldiers each year as he condemned the reported request for delay.

“A six-month delay of the last piece of inclusive policy, the repeal of the enlistment ban, will only produce redundant evidence about the contributions of transgender service members,” Belkin said. “Indeed, the chiefs who are demanding ongoing delay are not bringing any new arguments or new data to the table, but are recycling long-discredited concerns whose only basis is emotion and politics, not data. It is particularly remarkable, as the Army spends an additional \$300 million to recruit 6,000

“There are thousands of transgender service members openly and proudly serving our nation today, and as they've proven time and time again, what matters is the ability to get the job done – not their gender identity.”

– Stephen Peters, a Marine veteran discharged under “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” and the Human Rights Campaign's national press secretary

Soldiers this year, that it would seek to turn away Americans who are fit and eager to serve.”

Former Defense Secretary Ashton Carter lifted the ban on openly transgender military service under the Obama administration last year, but left certain pieces of the prohibition in place as the military adjusted to the change. While transgender people already in the military could at that time come out without fear of discharge, the enlistment of new openly transgender people was set to begin July 1.

With that date approaching, the reports the military service chiefs are seeking a six-month delay in allowing openly transgender people spells trouble – especially for cadets who graduated from military academies, but were denied access to service and continue to wait for a change in policy. A delay could be the first step in additional delays to come, kicking the can down the road indeterminably for fully open transgender service.

Stephen Peters, a Marine veteran discharged under “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” and the Human Rights Campaign's national press secretary, said the reported request for a delay “harms our military readiness” and called on Defense Secretary Gen. James Mattis to implement the change on schedule.

“There are thousands of transgender service members openly and proudly serving our nation today, and as they've proven time and time again, what matters is the ability to get the job done – not their gender identity,” Peters said. “We're disappointed that a further delay is under consideration and urge Secretary Mattis to move forward expeditiously in implementing this recruitment policy which will strengthen our forces by

allowing anyone who is qualified and willing to serve our nation.”

The joint chiefs of staff consist of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson, Air Force Chief of Staff David Goldfein and Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Joseph Lengyel. Overseeing them is Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford and Vice Chair Gen. Paul Selva.

Earlier this month, the Military Times reported that top brass wanted to delay openly transgender enlistments in the U.S. military, which was followed by a USA Today report that the U.S. Army and Marine Corps wanted a delay of up to two years to implement the policy.

During the Pride celebration at the Pentagon earlier this month, acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness Anthony Kurta declined to comment when the Blade asked him if the plan to allow transgender troops to enter the U.S. military was still on track.

“We're here today to recognize this event and I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment,” Kurta said.

Ashley Broadway-Mack, president of the American Military Partner Association, said the reported request for a delay “is disappointing because it's such an incredibly important recruitment change.”

“Secretary Mattis has made clear he believes there is a need to increase troop levels, and any qualified American who is willing and able to serve should have the opportunity to join the ranks, regardless of their gender identity,” Broadway-Mack said. “We urge Secretary Mattis to reject further delays and move quickly in implementing this important recruitment policy.”

► **LGBT History**

Continued from p. 21

exhibitions and programming, about the museum's LGBT inclusion, he put it up this way: "You can't tell the story of E pluribus unum without the pluribus."

Another possible LGBT connection exists in the Revolution Gallery.

One of the people highlighted along a wall of revolutionaries is Deborah Sampson. A post-war, 1790s portrait depicting Sampson in a dress with a necklace and typical women's haircut is featured alongside a summary of her contributions.

"You'll learn here that, during the Revolutionary War, she dressed as a man to join the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment," Mead explained. "She saw combat and was discovered after she was wounded. She was honorably discharged from the Continental Army on the basis of her gender and later published a memoir of her experiences, 'The Female Review.'"

"This is the place where we talk about the highest aspirations of the revolutionary generation in 1776," Mead added about the gallery in which Sampson's story is featured. "We talk about the limitations of the revolution in immediately expanding voting rights and other civil liberties of many groups. But our point here is that the revolution continues; it's an idea, it's ongoing. So while the 1760-90 period might not have seen major changes for all of these people, the ideas of the revolution made advancement possible. And along the way we meet people who have anticipation of those changes; they are pushing them forward with their own lives.

Mead next took me to the final screening room before you leave the museum for a film about the continuing revolution of our nation. The set-up features a clip of Abraham Lincoln and the words: "These revolutionaries

**We saw pictures of slaves winning their freedom, immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, laborers organizing, women fighting for the right to vote and then we saw a picture of the first Gay Pride March fill the entire screen. I cried.**

were inspired and forged as a generation by their sacrifices and their belief that people have a right to liberty, equality and a role in governance.

"In 1858 Abraham Lincoln answers," the narrator continued. "He sees a connection between the ideas of a revolution and the hopes of millions of immigrants arriving on U.S. shores. He describes these new arrivals as American revolutionaries, people without family ties to the revolution itself. He says that the revolution includes all people who are inspired by those words of 1776 and who look for the Declaration of Independence and feel they have a right to claim it. He called that the electric cord that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty loving men together."

As these words played, we saw pictures of slaves winning their freedom, immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, laborers organizing, women fighting for the right to vote and then we saw a picture of the first Gay Pride March fill the entire screen. I cried.



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# Two Years Later and Where Are We?

## A Look at Organizing for Equality

BY REV. ROLAND STRINGFELLOW

June 26, 2015 – a day history was made. Crowds gather around their television sets waiting for the announcement from the High Court. A collective breath was held. Couples were holding hands in anticipation. Celebrations or protests were in the works depending upon the outcome.



Then the decision was announced – marriage was now recognized in all 50 states for same-gender couples! Human dignity obtained through legal standing, removing the second-class citizen status for many lesbian and gay couples.

“Marriage in all 50 states? Really? In our lifetime?”

Decision Day Detroit! Decision Day Ann Arbor! Decision Day Lansing! Decision Day Grand Rapids! Throughout our state, the rallies and celebrations began that afternoon into the night. This Supreme Court decision was particularly important for those of us living in Michigan as there existed three tiers of marriage up to that day – marriage for heterosexual couples, the marriages of the 300+ same gender couples and the ban placed upon same gender couples that wanted to get married. All of that was now erased.

Many of us remember vividly that day in June when we first heard the news. Here we are two years later and where do we find ourselves? Within our current political climate, we could use some good feelings of celebration and victory.

It is easy to become overwhelmed with all of the negative news out of Washington D.C. with the assaults upon our climate, voting rights and gerrymandering, health care bills from Congress that make us sick and course “Russiagate.” On the national stage there continues to be discrimination and violence aimed at members of the transgender, Arab-American, Latino/a communities. And people still want to

debate “Black Lives Matter” vs “All Lives Matter.”

Yet, when a Minneapolis police officer is acquitted after a Facebook live recording of him shooting a black man in front of his family is broadcasted, many of us wonder “where is the justice?”

Marriage equality was a “no-brainer” for progressive people because it provided lesbian and gay couples and their families the dignity they deserve. Yet, for those who believe in equality, we cannot be lulled into thinking that “we have arrived” when the issues of immigration, the restriction of health care for women, poverty and hate crimes still impact the daily existence of a multitude of people. As long there are laws on the

“We would like to include Muslims in our community dialogue, but are there any who would be open to LGBTQI issues?”

The answer is “Yes”. Many are waiting to be included and to contribute to the movement for equality. If we sincerely value others (especially those who are different from us), then inviting diverse voices to the decision making table will not be so difficult. Also, those wanting to be invited to the table must take the responsibility of stepping up and speaking out in order to be known. If we, as LGBTQI people want acceptance from the communities we live in, then we must first begin to model that acceptance and look for ways of being inclusive

**Yet, for those who believe in equality, we cannot be lulled into thinking that “we have arrived” when the issues of immigration, the restriction of health care for women, poverty and hate crimes still impact the daily existence of a multitude of people. As long there are laws on the books that diminish the humanity of any person, then there is still a need for champions for equality who recognize the importance for intersectional work.**

books that diminish the humanity of any person, then there is still a need for champions for equality who recognize the importance for intersectional work.

There are many wonderful, hardworking individuals who expended their energy and placed their hearts on the line as they worked to make marriage equality a reality. If our goal is to improve the lives of LGBTQI people, then we must recognize that racism, sexism and classism are all LGBTQI issues.

To begin to repair the divisions that exist in our society as we work for equity, we must ask ourselves, “What divisions continue to exist within our movement for equality?”

“We would love to have a person of color on our board, but we don’t know any qualified persons?”

“We would love to have a trans person to help us with messaging, but would they help us free of charge?”

within our own movements.

I am an optimist and feel that the ways for us to experience even more celebrations and victories is to be more intersectional in our organizing. We know that working towards greater equality is never easy or popular. Some have paid with their very lives to see people with differences holding hands in unity. May we, who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning, be the very ones who model for our community and world what it looks like to work in solidarity with those of different issues.

*Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow is the Senior Pastor and Teacher of the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit*  
www.mccdetroit.org.



Michigan was one of four states who went before the U.S. Supreme Court seeking marriage equality. Jayne and April DeBoer-Rowse (top) celebrate June 26, 2015 when marriage equality became the law throughout the country. The couple are seen here at Braun Court in Ann Arbor after learning of the decision.



June 26, 2015: Communities throughout the country, including Detroit above, took to the streets in celebration.



Frank Colasanti, Jr. and his husband Jim Ryder camped outside the U.S. Supreme Court for several days in order to gain a seat inside the courtroom where the case for marriage equality was heard in March 2015. They were the first couple in Oakland County married by Oakland County Clerk Lisa Brown on March 22, 2014, when a short window allowed Michigan 323 same-sex couples to marry in the state.

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## MARRIAGE

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# Personalization Prevails and Traditions Get A Twist Among Same-Sex Weddings

## Study of U.S. Married and Soon-to-be Married LGBTQ Couples Reveals Top Proposal, Planning and Wedding Day Trends

BY BTL STAFF

June 26 marked the two years since the historic Supreme Court ruling that the U.S. Constitution guarantees rights to same-sex marriage. In celebration of Pride month and the second anniversary of marriage equality in the U.S., The Knot – the nation's largest source for wedding news and inspiration – released the results from The Knot & Q.Digital LGBTQ Weddings Study.



professionals completely, and instead having their guests walk down the aisle to greet them at the altar.

Some are choosing to walk in together to symbolize the start of their journey together (42 percent of male couples and 20 percent of female couples). Another twist on tradition is the ceremony music. Only three percent of men and two percent of women walked down the aisle to the tune of the traditional Wagner's Bridal Chorus.

### LGBTQ Wedding Trends

**A Pair of Proposals.** Aside from asking, "Will you marry me?" there are no steadfast rules to creating a great proposal. But when it comes to same-sex proposals, who asks whom? Some couples decide who's going to do the asking, others wait and see who pops the question first and many are both opting to propose to each other.

admitted that they were turned away from vendors or left feeling uncomfortable due to their LGBTQ identity.

An overwhelming majority of LGBTQ couples (88 percent of males and 91 percent of females) agree that vendors should clearly communicate that they are LGBTQ friendly, and 91 percent of males and 92 percent of females are more likely to book a vendor that caters to the LGBTQ community.

### Mixed-Gender Wedding Parties.

Eight in ten LGBTQ couples (82 percent) had wedding attendants. Among female couples, 74 percent had a maid of honor (58 percent) or best woman (16 percent), and 36 percent had a man of honor (14 percent) or best man (22 percent)

Forty-one percent of male couples had a maid of honor (14 percent) or best woman (27 percent), and 60 percent had a man of honor (12 percent) or best man (48 percent). Only 20 percent of LGBTQ couples had exclusively men only (9 percent) or women only (11 percent) wedding parties.

For Michigan same-sex wedding and anniversary news visit BTL's sister website [www.MiLGBTWeddings.com](http://www.MiLGBTWeddings.com)

### Creating A Unique Ceremony Set Up and Rethinking the Processional.

There's no rule book for same-sex wedding ceremonies, so couples are switching it up, opting for a ceremony in the round or staging multiple aisles, diffusing any pressure of who walks when. Other couples are skipping

According to The Knot & Q.Digital LGBTQ Weddings Study:

- 17 percent of female couples and 11 percent of male couples both proposed to one another.

- Women are more traditional when proposing, with 43 percent proposing on bended knee compared to 28 percent of men doing the same.

- Women (86 percent) are also more likely than men (60 percent) to exchange engagement rings during the proposal.

- Of the women and men who exchanged engagement rings, one in four created a custom designed ring (26 percent of women; 23 percent of men).

**Equality-Minded Pros Are a Must.** Same-sex couples are eager to partner with wedding professionals, be it a cake baker, florist or planner, who are equality-minded and openly show support of same-sex marriage.

According to the study, female (30 percent) and male (11 percent) couples

### Top Statistics from The Knot LGBTQ Weddings Study

**Average Wedding Cost (excludes honeymoon):** Women, \$17,341; Men, \$18,049

**Average Engagement Ring Spend:** Women, \$3,185; Men, \$2,226

**Average Marrying Age:** Women, 36; Men, 46

**Average Number of Guests:** Women, 87; Men, 84

**Average Length of Engagement:** Women, 13 months; Men, 12 months

**Most Popular Month to Get Married:** Women, October, 15 percent; Men, October, 15 percent

**Percentage of Destination Weddings:** Women, 29 percent; Men, 35 percent



# Michigan Couples Reflect During Two-Year Anniversary of Marriage Equality

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

While there is much to celebrate about being LGBTQ, recent Supreme Court actions show that the fight for LGBTQ legal equality is not over. Evan Wolfson, founder of the Freedom to Marry said the magnitude of the transformation and triumph reflected in our winning marriage nationwide here in the U.S. continues to reverberate and grow across the country and around the world. He points out that polling shows that public support continues to grow.

“We are at near-majority support now even among Republicans, more than a million gay people have married in the U.S., and the marriage conversation continues to increase empathy, visibility, and allies that we can harness to other battles still ahead for gay and transgender people – the gift that keeps on giving,” he said. “And the momentum we have built continues to contribute to other work and victories in other countries – as shown, for example, in the important freedom to marry ruling from Taiwan’s high court, our first beachhead in Asia.”

But with the Trump/Pence regime and its enablers in Congress, Wolfson said the country is on the wrong track and there is much to do, both defensive and affirmative.

“So many overlapping communities and values are under assault – immigrants, women, people of color, Muslims, the poor and ill, and, of course, gay and transgender people – not to mention America’s standing in the world, the environment, liberal democracy, and even our national security when under attack by hostile foreign powers aiming to subvert our democracy and election,” he said.

“I am proud that our movement is standing in solidarity with those defending our Republic and resisting the corrupt and abusive agenda a minority disproportionately empowered is now driving. While part of the pushback against these existential assaults and the necessary work to reclaim political power and get the country back on track, we must also defeat anti-gay and anti-trans attacks and make our affirmative case, building on the progress we’ve made, including the marriage lift.”

To continue making progress, LGBTQ couples understand the importance of remaining visible and sharing their stories about love and family. Two years after the historical Obergefell v. Hodges decision, Michigan couples reflect on what marriage equality means to them.



## Candice and Renee Coschino

Candice and Renee Coschino of Clinton Township have been together for six and a half years. Candice proposed to Renee on Valentine’s Day in the Renaissance Center in Detroit after four years of dating.

They were married on July 10, 2015, shortly after it became legal to do so.

“We didn’t want to wait because we were worried that it would be taken away from us again so we did a quickie wedding in our backyard,” said Renee. “We both cried and celebrated and were just incredibly happy that we could finally have the same rights as everyone else.”

However, the couple still wanted to do a big formal wedding so they took the next year to plan their perfect day and got married again on August 26, 2016 at Fox Hills Golf Course in Plymouth.

After their first wedding, the couple worried about crossing

T’s and dotting I’s to make sure that no one could take those decisions away from them about their children, their home and their financial affairs.

“So we did the responsible thing and filed POA’s and Medical Directives to secure those rights for each other. Unfortunately, that took all of the romance away because it seemed so much more transactional than anything else,” said Renee. “Marriage equality, to us, means that we don’t have to wonder ‘what if’ and we don’t have to worry about what happens next. We know, now, that we can take care of each other with no question or judgement because we can. Finally, it goes beyond the transactional and really means something.”

See Michigan Couples, page 26



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## ► Michigan Couples

Continued from p. 25

### Scott Sauter and Domenick Viviano

For Scott Sauter and Domenick Viviano of Ann Arbor, marriage equality means they are no longer second class citizens.

“It means putting that civil union nonsense to rest. It’s about having the same right to a beautiful marriage or a painful divorce,” said Domenick, who married Scott on April 23, 2017, the couple’s eight-year anniversary together.

Scott proposed to Domenick at a Garbage concert (his favorite band) at the Majestic Theatre in Detroit in 2013.

Finally, after marriage equality and months

of planning, the couple ended up getting hitched at the Neon Museum in Las Vegas.

“The right to marry did not affect our relationship, but it prolonged our engagement during the first year,” said Domenick. “We blame years two, three and four on disagreements over the setlist.”



The proposal!

### Crystal and Heather McBride

Crystal and Heather McBride of Wyandotte met almost 15 years ago in Toledo, Ohio through a mutual friend.

“We hit it off from the first meeting and have been inseparable ever since,” said Heather. The couple got engaged on December 23, 2013.

“I said yes without hesitation never really knowing if we would truly have the opportunity to wed,” she said, adding that it was important for them to show their two adopted children what true love, commitment and dedication is.

Crystal and Heather were married on the beach on August 10, 2015 in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. They had a reception back home with family and friends.

Heather acknowledged that for some people, marriage is no big deal. “It’s a piece of paper and to other’s a binding legal contract. I must admit, for a long time I described marriage in the same context – either to accept that marriage was not an option or to express how my family could “legally” be accepted and awarded the same privileges



of other families,” she said. “But having experienced the marriage ceremony, holding a marriage license and having my wife take my surname as hers has changed my views in so many ways.”



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Photo: Laura Crosta

# A SONG FOR ORLANDO

## Singer-Songwriter Sharon Van Etten Talks Powerful Pulse Benefit Single & How Michael Stipe Convinced Her to Do a Club Mix

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

In June of last year, Sharon Van Etten mourned alongside the rest of the community after 49 people were shot and killed at one of Orlando's premier LGBT nightclubs, Pulse. She did so at the piano, where the Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter has long spent her music career trying to grapple with the world, herself and unthinkable tragedies like the one that claimed innocent lives at Pulse.

Her rueful state led her back to the beautiful "Not Myself," wherein she laments the immense loss of life and opens her arms up to the LGBT community: "Please, darling,

believe in something / I want you to be yourself around me / I know it's too much to take / There's too much at stake / But I want you to be yourself around me," she sings. The haunting elegy, which she was compelled to finish years after she originally wrote the melody for it, is dedicated to the victims. Proceeds from the song's downloads (<https://sharonvanetten.bandcamp.com/track/not-myself>) benefit the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, a movement to end gun violence and build safer communities.

Here, Van Etten opens up about the song's healing message and how R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe influenced the new remix after convincing her to release a version for the

gay clubs.

**There are several emotions at play on "Not Myself."**

That song was originally a demo from when I was going through a breakup. I never finished it, but it was one of those times where I had to sit down and get it out just for myself, not thinking I would ever share it with anybody. It was this therapy session to myself about being with this person who wasn't accepting me for who I was. I never thought anything of it. But when I was staying with my parents and I heard about the shooting, I just kept thinking to myself, "Those were all people who were trying to be themselves in a safe

space," and that demo I hadn't returned to in years came to mind. It made me sit down at the piano and finish it and write it specifically for this.

**You said you'd written some of this previously, but the first verse, particularly – "Run away with me in July / To the same place and be ourselves / In the ashes of the aftermath, pray" – seems specific to Pulse.**

I was feeling sorrow (during the breakup), and then translating that for a larger population, that sorrow just grew in me. It was hard to even record it without crying. I mean, you might be able to hear that at points. I would literally have to stop because I couldn't get

through it. There are moments you can actually hear my voice waver a little bit.

#### Have you done it live?

I've done it once live, but I haven't really been playing out lately. I had a baby in March and so I've been home learning how to do that. I'm sure when I do play it out, it will be hard for me to get through. But I'm also not shy to cry on stage if I need to.

#### How long after the Pulse shooting did you write the song?

I started it in probably 2013, 2014 as, again, a diary entry for myself. Then, when I was visiting my parents, it was the day after (the shooting) and I came back to New York at night. My piano was home and I finished writing it that night.

#### What was the response to the song when you originally released it in August 2016?

I was moved by how people connected with it. I just wanted to share my sense of loss with the world and find a positive way to make a difference. The song is also about just letting people be themselves.

#### What goals did you have in mind for the song itself, musically speaking?

I wanted to share my sense of loss with the world and show my respects to the community, but then also make a bigger difference outside of that with Everytown. The issue is more about tolerance and gun control and helping the community directly, and showing my respects. I tried to do that in a way that wasn't too political but that could still make a difference.

#### By community, I assume you mean the Orlando community, but also, perhaps, the LGBT community?

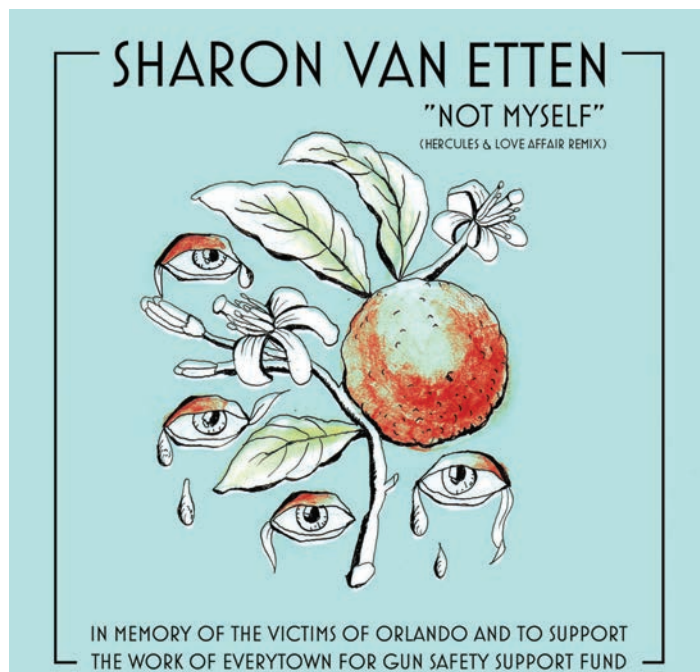
Absolutely.

#### How do you think this song might speak to the LGBT community?

It's a message from me personally extending my hands to – I hate saying allowing people to be themselves, but just the acknowledgement that it can be hard and it can be a struggle to show who you really are, to show your strength and weaknesses. I know that it's never easy to be entirely yourself, especially in the climate that we're in right now where (sighs) – there's just

too many ignorant people out there that need to show a hand of support and acknowledge that it is very hard to be out in the open in such a harsh climate. I don't know how to say that without saying names (laughs). But it's just me extending my arms to the LGBT community and showing love.

#### How does writing a song that offers catharsis to those affected by this tragedy affect you as its creator?



I've always used writing as a form of therapy, because even starting from when I was a kid I wasn't really good at communicating. I was pretty shy, and I kept a lot in. I remember just writing something down that made me feel better, and after I learned to play instruments, I put those words to songs. Thank goodness those songs don't exist in the digital world right now (laughs).

But when I started I just knew I felt better, but I didn't understand it at all. As I got older, I wanted to understand what it was I was doing, because I was starting to affect people who were listening to my songs. I hadn't ever been asked to look at my songs in such a way. I realized this was actually therapy. A therapist in my 20s helped me understand what that release meant, and that's my form of therapy – singing.

#### As a musician, how does violence in what is expected to be a safe place for people to come as they are – be it at Pulse or in Manchester outside of Ariana Grande's show – affect you on both a human level and a professional level?

As a showgoer, I think about that all the time. In our world, we have lots of

friends who either go to shows or are musicians, and I hate that it's in the back of my mind all the time. It's a regular thing. The fact that it's on our brain and it's a conversation we're having saddens me. But it's not gonna keep me from going to shows. It's a community, and we need to be together and show love and support music and the arts.

#### How did the remix come about and who suggested that you remix it for the club community?

It was interesting. When I was tracking the song, a friend of mine had reached out – he's worked with Michael Stipe before. Michael Stipe was really sweet, because I was looking to see if anybody would want to be a part of the original version. We sent it to him and he had a lot going on, but he appreciated that I was putting that song into the world. He's the one who actually suggested the remix for the club community.

It was so outside of my world for the kind of music that I perform and it made total sense to me, and within that week I had been written by Andy (Butler) from Hercules and Love Affair to sing on a song of theirs. So, I thought the timing was kismet, because I was providing a vocal for a genre of music that is so outside my wheelhouse. I was so excited for the challenge. And when I asked him if he would do a remix of this song, he was for it as well.

#### Do you like hearing yourself over a dance beat?

It makes me feel like I can do so much more, that a song doesn't have to just live in one world. And as heavy as the song is, it felt joyful. There's a sense of – happiness isn't the word. But I wish I could go to a club and see people dancing to this version.

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).



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# Lady Parts Justice League: Vagical Mystery Tour Comes to Ferndale

## Comedy, Music and Activism Draws Attention to Repro Rights, Sexism, Racism and Homophobia

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Comedian and The Daily Show co-creator Lizz Winstead and her Lady Parts Justice League is bringing the Vagical Mystery Tour – a 16-city national tour – to Ferndale on July 9. In addition to Winstead, the show will feature various special guests like Joyelle Johnson, Maysoon Zayid, Alex English, Buzz Off, Lucille (Upright Citizen's Brigade), and poet Jessica Care.

The LPJL is a reproductive rights organization that uses humor and outrage to expose anti-choice zealots and mobilizes people to take action in all 50 states, including some of the most conservative like Wichita, Indianapolis, Omaha, Birmingham and Louisville. Winstead spoke with Between The Lines about the tour and the attack on women taking place across the country, including LPJL's fight against sexism, racism and homophobia.

**How sick are you of men – particularly old white men – telling women what to do with their bodies? I'm a man myself and I'm sick to death of it.**

I just feel like I didn't realize how many white men don't have any hobbies. Like literally. If this is your past time to shame women and try to legislate uteruses and vaginas why don't you spend that time trying to get into one. It's much more fun if you're asked to be in a vagina rather than forcing your way in.

**You have been open about getting pregnant at 16 and having an abortion. How does your own personal experience with the issue impact or influence the work you're doing now?**

I knew as a young kid I didn't want to have kids. I was a very driven person. So when I was 16 and found myself pregnant I found myself at a fake clinic set up by religious people. Literally the person was wearing a lab coat that they probably got at the Lancome counter. They proceeded to shame me and tell me that my only choices were mommy or murder. So you think you're going to a place that's going to help you and you end up at a place that demonizes you. So to me access to your own destiny and being able to live your own life is essential. If I was allowed to be able to have that choice and make that choice I feel like it's my responsibility to advocate for everybody to have that choice.



Comedian and The Daily Show co-creator, Lizz Winstead. Photo courtesy of Lady Parts Justice League

**Tell me about the Lady Parts Justice League. It's sort of a revolutionary idea. What led you to create it?**

It was created in 2012 and actually Michigan played a huge part in how we named our organization. I came to Michigan and I met [State Rep.] Lisa Brown and we became friends. About a year after we became friends she was passionately arguing against the very thing we're talking about. Lisa was passionately speaking about it on the floor of the house and her leadership banned her from using the word vagina in the house chamber. And she's like, 'What should I say?' and they

told her to say something that sounds more comfortable to them, like "lady parts." I was like stunned. So it's like, oh my God, going back to the men you asked me about earlier, the fact that they are uncomfortable about the word vagina but feel absolutely empowered to legislate them. I felt I was going to call my group Lady Parts. We created our name in honor of Lisa.

**I know on this tour you focus on independent abortion clinics, but if the new health care bill proposed by Republicans passes, what does defunding Planned Parenthood mean for women across the country?**

I do tons of work for Planned Parenthood. This round is really just about elevating the work of independents. Defunding Planned Parenthood would be so incredibly tragic. It would legally take away not only Medicaid funding for pap smears and gynecological services a lot of people have simply because abortion is not covered. The other thing we don't talk about is that a lot of the independents and Planned Parenthood both provide a lot of trans services with respectful exams for both trans men and trans women. So if the funding gets cut those services go away.

**While on tour, you'll be advocating for local clinics you're trying to help. Tell me about that.**

After our comedy show we have a talk back and they talk about the landscape of their state and they talk about what they need. Then right there at the show we have tables where people can sign up and volunteer. I think the things that people forget a lot of times is that a lot of these clinics that are in hostile states need the simplest things – like getting their gutters cleaned or lawn maintenance. A lot of contractors who would do that work won't come because they are abortion providers. So if you're somebody who has a skill set that can be helpful on a logistical level, that's great. There's so much to do. It makes me feel like we're really providing a service by gathering folks in an environment that's fun. We're not going to just do a comedy show and leave. We're going to do a comedy show and bring people together and give you some stuff you can do.

**You're dealing with some very heavy issues in your show. Do you ever face criticism for bringing humor to such serious matters and, if so, how do you respond to that?**

I feel like I'm bringing levity and exposing politicians who are absolutely in the controlling human beings business and I would like to smack their hypocrisy down. For me it's also about reintroducing the arc of what abortion care means. It can be everything from someone who's had an unwanted pregnancy, had it, and then went on with their lives to someone who had a very wanted pregnancy that went horribly wrong and threatened their lives. Humor is levity through any kind of times, even dark times. It's a way to have a conversation. I just want to provide that levity for this subject, too, because it makes perfect sense.

*The Vagical Mystery Tour will play the Magic Bag in Ferndale on July 9. Doors open at 7 p.m. at 22920 Woodward Ave. For more information or to purchase tickets for \$15, call 248-544-1991 or visit [www.themagicbag.com](http://www.themagicbag.com).*





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# Affirmations Employee Makes USA TODAY 'Faces of Pride' List

USA TODAY captures what LGBT Pride across America looks like by featuring members of the LGBT community and their allies from all 50 states.

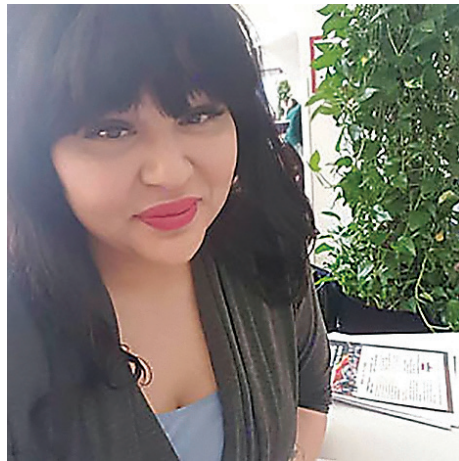
In their recent "Faces of Pride" project, the news organization featured Lilianna Angel Reyes.

Reyes talks about growing up in a traditional Mexican Catholic home. She was always effeminate, which was never a problem -- until she came out as a transgender woman to her parents, she told USA TODAY.

They didn't speak to her for two years. "It was scary, but I refused to live as a person I wasn't...I was going to be who I was," Reyes said.

She started speaking out on LGBT issues in college.

"I started to do more introspective thinking... what could I do as a trans woman of color? Who's going to hire me?" Her first job was at Planned Parenthood. She's now program services director for Affirmations, a Ferndale nonprofit that supports people of all sexual



orientations and gender identities.

"I think it just became a mission that I have to...come to a job that supports what I believe in every day."

See who else made the USA TODAY 'Faces of Pride' List .

## Public Invited to Royal Oak State of the City Address

Members of the community are invited to attend the annual Royal Oak State of the City Address on July 13 at Eagle Plaza on Center Street, north of Fourth Street.

This event is hosted by the Royal Oak Rotary Club and is open to the public. A light dinner and dessert will be offered beginning at 4 p.m.; Mayor Michael Fournier's address will begin promptly at 5 p.m.; a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Eagle Plaza will immediately follow.

The Royal Oak Commission for the Arts' summer concert follows the official festivities.

Guests are invited to stick around and enjoy the sounds of summer from 6-9 p.m.


The cost to attend the State of the City is \$12 per person for dinner and dessert; \$4 per person for dessert only. Please pay at the door. Make checks payable to 'Royal Oak Rotary.'

Two hours of free parking is available to guests who arrive before 5 p.m. and park in one of Royal Oak's three public parking decks. For maps or additional parking options, go to [www.romi.gov/parking](http://www.romi.gov/parking).

Please RSVP by June 30 at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017stateofcity](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017stateofcity).

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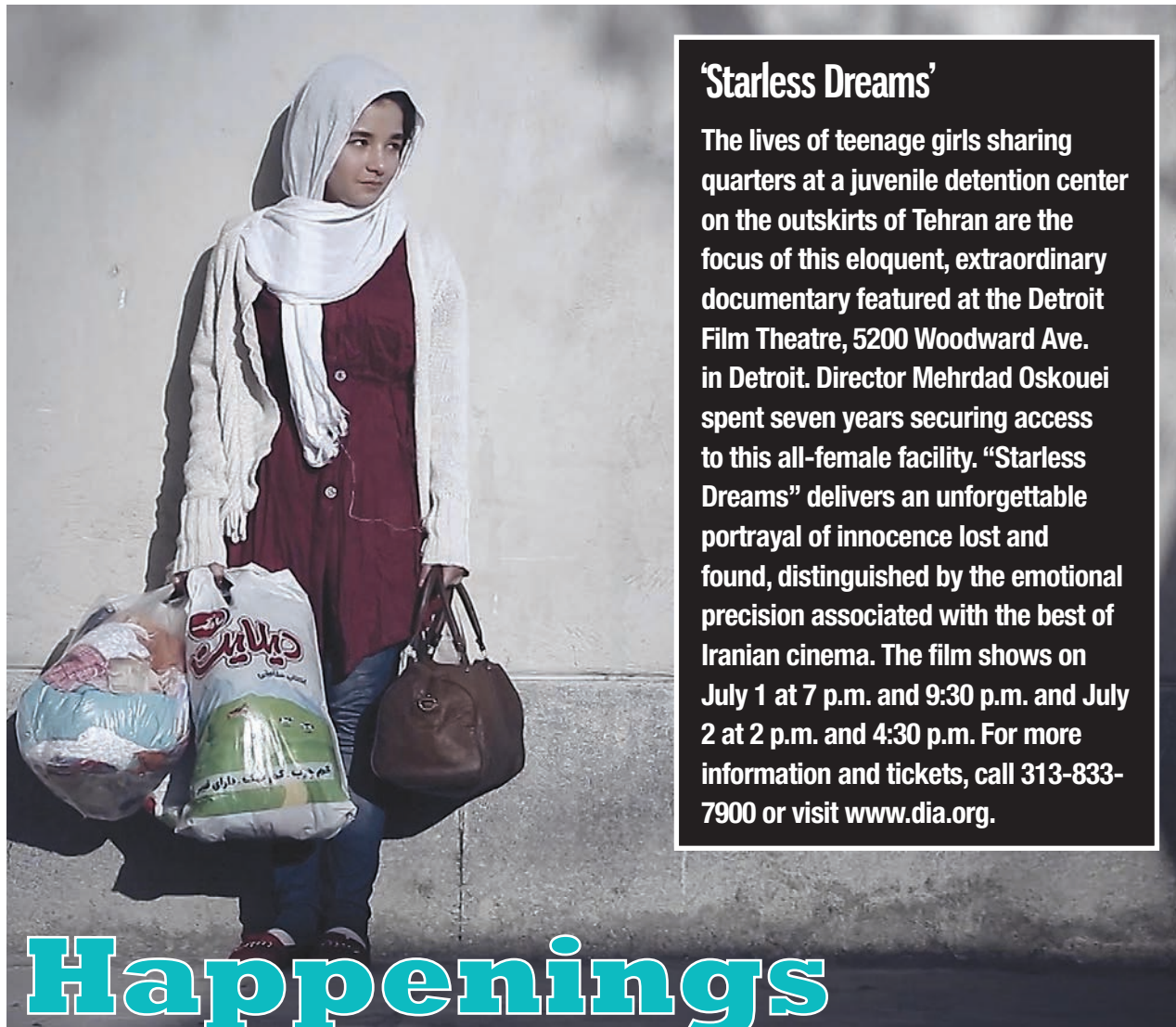
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## 'Starless Dreams'

The lives of teenage girls sharing quarters at a juvenile detention center on the outskirts of Tehran are the focus of this eloquent, extraordinary documentary featured at the Detroit Film Theatre, 5200 Woodward Ave. in Detroit. Director Mehrdad Oskouei spent seven years securing access to this all-female facility. "Starless Dreams" delivers an unforgettable portrayal of innocence lost and found, distinguished by the emotional precision associated with the best of Iranian cinema. The film shows on July 1 at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. and July 2 at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. For more information and tickets, call 313-833-7900 or visit [www.dia.org](http://www.dia.org).

# Happenings

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## OUTINGS

### Thursday, June 29

**Free HIV/STI Testing** 5:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Eligible couples can test together by appointment. Call 313-446-9820. UNIFIED - HIV Health & Beyond, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 800-872-2437. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

**LGBTQIA Community Meeting with Andy Schor** 5:30 p.m. The mayoral candidate will share his vision for the city's future. Suggested donation: \$15. Free pizza, cash bar offered. Penny Gardner and Dennis Hall, 201 E Shiawassee St., Lansing. [halld2572@sbcglobal.net](mailto:halld2572@sbcglobal.net)

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

**Throwback Thursday with DJ Ayinde Audio** 10 p.m. Free for 21+, \$10 for 18-20 NECTO, 516 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

### Friday, June 30

**Midtown Block Party** 1 p.m. National HIV Testing Day event featuring food, music, games and free HIV/STD testing opportunities. Free gift cards for first 115 people tested. MDHHS, WSU, UNIFIED, Detroit Public Health and City of Detroit Health Department, 50 East Canfield, Detroit.

**Drag Queen Bingo** 7 p.m. Tickets: \$20-\$30. Reservations required. 18+ Five15,

## Editor's Pick

### Forum on Community, Culture & Race

The 25th anniversary of Detroit's beloved Concert of Colors diversity-themed music festival is cause for major celebration July 12-16. As our region looks back at Detroit's 1967 rebellion 50 years ago, the Revue and other compelling offerings create an opportunity for reflection, dialogue and healing. On July 13, the festival briefly departs Midtown for a forum on community, culture and race featuring keynote speaker and moderator Dr. Thomas Sugrue and performances by Abby Dobson and Las Cafeteras. The forum, from 6:30-9:30 p.m. is at the Arab American National Museum, 13624 Michigan Ave. in Dearborn. For more information, visit <http://gaybe.am/vd>.



515 S. Washington Ave., Royal Oak. 248-515-2551. [www.five15.net](http://www.five15.net)

### Monday, July 3

**UNPLUGGED Social and Support Group** 7 p.m. First Monday of every month. For those shunned, disfellowshipped or excommunicated from their religion, family or friends for being LGBTQ. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. [haymer@goaffirmations.org](mailto:haymer@goaffirmations.org) [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

### Tuesday, July 4

**March with Jim Toy** 9 a.m. Jim Toy is the Grand Marshal of the Ann Arbor Jaycees annual 4th of July parade. Show your Pride and march. RSVP online. Jim Toy Community Center, Intersection of State Street and William Street, Ann Arbor. [www.jimtoycenter.org/](http://www.jimtoycenter.org/)

### Wednesday, July 5

**Free HIV/STI Testing** 6:30 p.m. Last client taken at 8 p.m. Matrix MAC Health, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-

545-1435 Ext 123. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

### Thursday, July 6

**The League of Extraordinary Genders** 7 p.m. Transgender support group OutCenter, 132 Water St., Benton Harbor. 269-925-8330. [info@outcenter.org](mailto:info@outcenter.org) [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org)

**Throwback Thursday Beach Party** 10 p.m. Free for 21+, \$10 for 18-20. DJ Nick Donovan NECTO, 516 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

## Editor's Pick

### Motown Records: A Made in Detroit Symposium

No study of 20th century American culture would be complete without an examination of the history, sounds, and significance of Motown Records. Within four years of its founding in 1959, Motown became the largest independent record company in the U.S. With nearly 70 hits and millions of records sold in the 1960s alone, the company grew to become the largest African American owned business by 1973. Learn more during "Motown Records: A Made in Detroit" symposium July 6-7, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. and July 8, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Michigan State University Detroit Center, 3408 Woodward Ave. in Detroit. For more information about the event, email [info@plowsharetheatre.org](mailto:info@plowsharetheatre.org), call 313-744-3181 or visit [www.plowsharetheatre.org](http://www.plowsharetheatre.org).



#### Friday, July 7

**First Friday** 7 p.m. A monthly social gathering and potluck. To host a gathering, contact Penny at [marydrpenny@yahoo.com](mailto:marydrpenny@yahoo.com) or 517-484-4512. Lesbian Connection, 12365 Madonna Dr., **Lansing**. 517-755-0772. [sarahglinz@gmail.com](mailto:sarahglinz@gmail.com) [www.LCOnline.org](http://www.LCOnline.org)

**Boys of Summer Contest** 9 p.m. Hosted by Chanel Hunter. Free cover with beach attire. Hot body contest with cash prizes at midnight. NECTO, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

**Turn Up Fridays** 9 p.m. \$5 for 18+ until 11 p.m., \$10 after. No cover for 21+ until 11 p.m., \$5 after. Music by Klees. Spiral, 1247 Center St., **Lansing**. [www.spiraldancebar.com](http://www.spiraldancebar.com)

#### Saturday, July 8

**Caregiving Resource Workshop** 1 p.m. Please register by phone. Free event. Discuss nutrition, finances, veterans resources, exercise and fitness, and community resources. AARP and DMC, 6071 Outer Drive, **Detroit**. 877-926-8300.

**TGMI Port Huron Social Club** 1 p.m. Transgender Michigan, 324 Superior Mall, **Port Huron**. [www.transgendumichigan.org](http://www.transgendumichigan.org)

**Summer Splash Pool Party** 2 p.m. \$5 suggested donation, but event is free. Picnic-style foods with vegetarian options. Beverages provided, but alcohol is BYOB. Private changing area available. FTM A2 Ypsi, 1711 Pond Shore Dr., **Ann Arbor**. [www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/](http://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/)

**Frequency Beach Party** 9 p.m. No cover with beach attire. DJ Hardy and MC Yoda. NECTO, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

**Kiki Saturdays** 9 p.m. 18+, guest entertainers, 10 p.m. drag show Spiral, 1247 Center St., **Lansing**. [www.spiraldancebar.com](http://www.spiraldancebar.com)

**DJ & Dancing** 10 p.m. Aut Bar, 315 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. [www.autbar.com](http://www.autbar.com)

#### Monday, July 10

**Zombie Beach Party** 9 p.m. No cover for zombies. Factory Monday, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

#### Wednesday, July 12

Telaina Eriksen presents "Unconditional" 6 p.m. Author discusses

her book, a guide to loving and supporting your LGBTQ child. OutFront Kalamazoo, 340 S. Rose St., **Kalamazoo**. [www.outfrontkalamazoo.org](http://www.outfrontkalamazoo.org)

#### Thursday, July 13

**Fundraiser to benefit Affirmations** 6 p.m. Grab a beer and some grub to support Affirmations. There will be a raffle and prizes. Guest bartenders will be serving. All tips donated to the community center. Affirmations, 7 N. Saginaw St., **Pontiac**. 248-977-3972. [www.fillmore13brewery.com/](http://www.fillmore13brewery.com/)

**Battle Creek Pride Weekend Keynote** 6:30 p.m. Free. Appetizers and childcare provided. Community discussion on combatting hate in America facilitated by Cynthia M. Deitle, Esq., retired FBI Civil Rights Special Agent and current Program Director for the Matthew Shepard Foundation. KCC Center for Diversity and Innovation, 200 W. Michigan Ave., **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

**RENDERED** 7 p.m. Featuring Daniel Myers, Philipp Strobel, Altstadt Echo and Marc Church. Factory & Modern Cathedrals, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

#### Friday, July 14

**Battle Creek Pride Parade** 7 p.m. Battle Creek Pride, **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

**RuPaul's Drag Race Contestant Peppermint** 9 p.m. \$5 for 21+, \$10 for 18-20 Pride Friday, 516 E. Liberty, **Ann Arbor**. [www.necto.com](http://www.necto.com)

**White Party** 10 p.m. Battle Creek Pride, 910 North Ave., **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

#### Saturday, July 15

**Battle Creek Pride Festival** 11 a.m. Battle Creek Pride, **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

**TGMI Table** 11 a.m. Meet with the organization during the Battle Creek Pride Festival. Transgender Michigan, 10 N. Washington Ave., **Battle Creek**. [www.transgendumichigan.org](http://www.transgendumichigan.org)

#### Sunday, July 16

**PFLAG Monthly Meeting** 2 p.m. Entry from parking lot behind church. Every third Sunday. PFLAG Ann Arbor, 306 N. Division at Catherine Street, **Ann Arbor**. 734-741-0659. [info@pflagaa.org](mailto:info@pflagaa.org) [www.pflagaa.org](http://www.pflagaa.org)

[pflagaa.org](http://pflagaa.org)

**Pride Benefit Drag Show** 5 p.m. \$5 Cover Battle Creek Pride, 910 North Ave., **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

**Candlelight Vigil** 9 p.m. Guest speakers will be invited to guide the community in honoring the lives lost to suicide or homicide. Battle Creek Pride, 2-14 E. Michigan Ave., **Battle Creek**. [www.battlecreekpride.org/](http://www.battlecreekpride.org/)

#### Saturday, July 22

**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, July 23

**Camping Weekend** Bring your tent or RV Amazon Sisters, **Grand Rapids**. 616-443-6563. [amazonrisingwbw@gmail.com](mailto:amazonrisingwbw@gmail.com)

#### Monday, July 24

**T-Time** 6 p.m. Social gathering every fourth Monday of the month where trans folks can meet in a safe space. FTM A2 Ypsi, 307 N. River St., **Ypsilanti**. [www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/](http://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/)

## MUSIC & MORE

### Concerts

**Detroit Symphony Orchestra** "Salute to America" Tickets: \$15-25. The Henry Ford, 20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn. June 30 - July 3. 313-982-6001. [www.thehenryford.org/current-events/calendar/salute-to-america](http://www.thehenryford.org/current-events/calendar/salute-to-america)

**The Blue Room** "Queen and Adam Lambert". The Palace of Auburn Hills, 5 Championship Dr., Auburn Hills. 8 p.m. July 20. 248-377-0100. [www.palacenet.com](http://www.palacenet.com)

## FESTIVALS

**Women In the Arts** "National Women's Music Festival" Tickets, \$75-125, available at [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com). Marriott Madison West Hotel and Conference Center, 1313 John Q. Hammons Dr., Middleton. July 6 - July 9. 317-395-3809. [www.wiaonline.org/](http://www.wiaonline.org/)

See page 39

SAVE THE DATE 9/14/2017

# 2017 VOICES

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## Lansing Bartender Represents the Midwest in Cocktail Apprentice Program

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

From a young age, Melissa “Inky” Kim has always been fascinated with processes and mixtures.

“I began playing behind the bar and pairing drinks for family gatherings once I was old enough to see over it,” said Kim, whose grandparents founded Main Beverage Co. in 1961, which her family has owned and operated in Owosso for the last 56 years.

Kim spent more time with adults than she did with kids while growing up as an only child in the small town of Chesaning.

Destined to become a successful bartender, Kim began her career at Club Triangle in Flint.

“I was just barely 21 when I first worked in the club as security,” Kim recalled. “After just six to nine months, a spot behind the bar opened up and I jumped in for the next three years.”

After that, Kim worked as a bartender and general manager at the Chrome Cat, Lansing’s lesbian bar, until it closed in 2011.

By then, Kim was known as “Inky” for being so heavily modified and tattooed.

“I was about 24 when I began work as a graphic designer for my family’s beer distributor so the two kind of went hand in hand - inked skin, working with inks,” she said. “I would later in life get the blue ghost, Inky (from Pac-Man), tattooed on my shoulder with crossbones.”

Kim has settled in as the head bartender at Spiral, an LGBTQ nightclub located in Old Town Lansing where she mixes up her signature cocktail, the Hellcat. In 2010, this particular drink won her the local Cocktail Wars competition. For six weeks, 32 contestants battled it out in numerous area bars.

“I played a bit with the ingredients and



ended up taking the Bacardi 151 out of it and using it on the stem of the martini glass to light it on fire to caramelize the blue raspberry sugar rim,” she said.

This kind of creativity won her a spot in the semifinals of the 2017 USBG Make it Exotico Competition sponsored by Exotico Tequila. She submitted a recipe that contained bitters, which she said isn’t normally found in tequila drinks.

Unfortunately, Kim would have to decline this opportunity to take advantage of another one. She was accepted into the Cocktail Apprentice Program, which gives up-and-coming bartenders a chance to learn from masters of the craft during the 15th Annual Tales of the Cocktail festival in New Orleans July 18-23.

Each year, 40 bartenders from around the globe are selected to accommodate the nearly 20,000 people that attend the festival to mingle with fellow drink-lovers, network and taste some of the best drinks mixed by the world’s most prestigious bartenders. Kim will be a

part of the group mixing tens of thousands of cocktails in exchange for the best training the industry has to offer. The non-profit New Orleans Culinary and Cultural Preservation Society produces the festival.

“I am beyond excited and eager to learn alongside industry leaders, mentors and peers to bring back a little of that southern hospitality and knowledge back to the Midwest,” said Kim on her Facebook page.

Kim said her favorite part about bartending is meeting new people.

“Everyone has a story and it seems bartenders have the best job to hear people tell them,” she said. “Most people just want their voice heard in life, and being a bartender, you sort of become an unpaid therapist sometimes.”

Kim has become well-known for mixing unique ingredients to create cocktails that most people think do not pair well together, until they try it.

“I have customers who like to challenge me and instead of ordering drinks by name

### Melissa “Inky” Kim’s Signature Cocktail

#### Hellcat

- 1oz Blue Curacao
- 1oz Midori
- 1oz Stoli Razz
- 1/2oz Red Bull
- Splash lime juice top with orange juice
- Shake & strain into pint glass with fresh ice.
- Blue raspberry sugar rim on pint glass with orange/lime slice garnish

or liquor, they trust me to make a specialty drink by only picking a color. It’s a pretty great feeling when you can see the joy on someone’s face when you hand them a beverage they fully enjoy but didn’t have any expectations of,” she said.

This adds to the fun and mystery of what Kim does.

“I like never knowing what the night might hold. Working in the service industry you see all sorts of crazy things the average person doesn’t get to see,” she said.

Kim’s good friend Renee LeBlanc said that Kim deserves the success that’s coming her way.

“She has genuine compassion for people and she has a big heart with a good soul,” said LeBlanc. “People naturally gravitate towards her. Well, those who aren’t put off by her tattoos.”

Check out what’s on Melissa “Inky” Kim’s drink menu at Spiral, 1247 Center St. in Lansing Thursday-Sunday from 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Call 517-371-3221 or visit <http://spiraldancebar.com> for more information.



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## Michigan Students Selected for Point Foundation Scholarships

BY BTL STAFF

Point Foundation, the nation's most prominent scholarship-granting organization for LGBTQ students, has announced its 2017 scholarship recipients, and it's by far the largest and most diverse group in the organization's history.

"Given the volatile political climate and its implications for trans rights, immigrant rights, gender issues, and civil liberties, it is essential that we continue to invest in the next generation of LGBTQ leaders," said Jorge Valencia, executive director and chief executive officer of Point Foundation.

"By helping them to access the higher education they need to succeed, we can assure promising LGBTQ students are poised to become the change makers we so desperately need."

From more than 2,000 applicants, 52 recipients were chosen — 27 LGBTQ students were chosen to be Point Scholars, while 25 LGBTQ students were chosen from community colleges to expand Point's Community College Scholarship Program. This year's scholarship recipients include veterans of the armed forces, award-winning artists, international LGBTQ rights activists, creators of nonprofit organizations, and young scientists.

Two-thirds of the Point Scholar class are people of color, nearly half of them identify as transgender, gender-nonconforming, or intersex, and eight were formerly homeless. In the group of community college recipients, 60 percent of the students are the first in their families to go to college, nearly half of them identify as transgender, gender-nonconforming, or intersex, and one-third identify as bisexual, polysexual, or queer.

A complete list of scholarship recipients and their bios are available on Point's website, [www.pointfoundation.org](http://www.pointfoundation.org).



**Michael Arellano**

Western Michigan University — Dance/  
Behavioral Science  
Read Michael's full bio online at <https://pointfoundation.org/scholars/michael-arellano/>.



**Shannon Moran**

University of Michigan — Chemical  
Engineering  
Read Shannon's full bio online at <https://pointfoundation.org/scholars/shannon-moran/>.



**Donna Scaffidi**

University of Michigan Law School  
Read Donna's full bio online at <https://pointfoundation.org/scholars/donna-scaffidi/>



The Prism Gay Men and Allies' Chorus of Metro Detroit

## HOPE Builds Community

**DETROIT** — Over 100 guests attended a soiree and fundraiser for the H.O.P.E. Fund in the magnificent gardens at the Palmer Woods home of Dr. Boyd Richards and Joshua Ronnebaum June 25. Donors and potential donors sipped champagne and fine wine, nibbled on delicious hors d'oeuvres and celebrated almost a quarter century of philanthropy to benefit the area's LGBT organizations.

Board co-chair Allan Gilmour spoke about the challenges still facing the LGBT community. "A year ago we thought we were in really good shape and it would be downhill going forward. But now, I'm not sure which way we are going in this current political environment." He highlighted several recent grants to Freedom House and Equality Michigan and said the H.O.P.E. Fund now has \$2.7 million in the endowment fund. He encouraged those present to remember the H.O.P.E. Fund in their wills. "Remember, the money doesn't go until you do," he quipped.

The Prism Gay Men and Allies' Chorus of Metro Detroit performed three numbers from their sold out performance at Royal Oak's Baldwin Theater the night before. Gilmour thanked Mariam Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan where the H.O.P.E. fund is held and managed, for her and her staff's years of support. Event chair Gerry Banister thanked the hosts of this event and year's past.

Learn more about The H.O.P.E. Fund by visiting [cfsem.org/fund/hope-fund](http://cfsem.org/fund/hope-fund)



H.O.P.E. Fund board co-chair Allan Gilmour

## Rachel Lutz to Open New Boutique Named Yama

BY BTL STAFF

Yama, a new retail store dedicated to the contemporary woman is set to open this fall. Named in honor of legendary Detroit architect Minoru Yamasaki, the 2,000-square-foot Yama will join Rachel Lutz's other stores, The Peacock Room and Frida, both of which are located in Midtown's Park Shelton next to the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Yamasaki was the king of mid-century modern design, and Yama's apparel will showcase architecturally-inspired, edgy fashion and accessories for the modern woman, according to a press release.

The plans for Yama were announced in May in partnership with a real estate group called The Platform - which Lutz says recently invited her to open on the first floor of the Fisher Building.

"There has been such an overwhelming response to The Peacock Room that we've outgrown our footprint after doubling the original space," Lutz said, a Detroit resident. "I'm now doubling that into New Center, a neighborhood that will be growing leaps and bounds over the next few years."

Lutz said that while Detroit builds up, she wants to be an entrepreneur who builds out.

"We need growth to spread along

the Woodward corridor into the neighborhoods," she said.

When asked how the three stores will differ, Lutz said, "The Peacock Room is for women inspired by vintage classics. Friday is for today's women. Yama will be our sister store of the future."

The new store will be similar, offering sizes 00-26 at all price points, since it is important to Lutz to serve every woman, not just a narrowly defined type.

Follow Rachel Lutz and the opening of Yama online at [www.facebook.com/prouddetroit](http://www.facebook.com/prouddetroit)

## Editor's Pick

### 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).



## ► Happenings

Continued from p. 35

### Film & Video

**Aut Bar** "Campy Movie Night". Aut Bar, 315 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor. June 28 - Aug. 30. 734-994-3677. [www.autbar.com](http://www.autbar.com)

**MOCAD** "Film: A Steady Grind" A portrait of Eloyse Kereszi, a fiery grandmother with a mouth like a sailor, who runs Joe's Junk Yard, in Chester, Pennsylvania. MOCAD, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. July 12. 313-832-6622. [www.mocadetroit.org](http://www.mocadetroit.org)

### OTHER

**Arab American National Museum** "Forum on Community, Culture & Race" 25th Annual Concert of Colors event featuring Dr. Thomas Sugrue and performances by Abby Dobson and Las Cafeteras. Arab American National Museum, 13624 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 6:30 p.m. July 13. <http://gaybe.am/vd>

**Aut Bar** "Women's Music on the Patio" Featuring Marsha Gayle and Debbie Vogel. Aut Bar, 315 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor. June 28 - Aug. 30. 734-994-3677. [www.autbar.com](http://www.autbar.com)

**Aut Bar** "Live Jazz with the Jesse Kramer Trio on the patio". Aut Bar, 315 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor. June 27 - Aug. 29. 734-994-3677. [www.autbar.com](http://www.autbar.com)

**Meadow Brook Theatre** "Concert & Cuisine" Tickets: \$85-125. Strolling gala featuring local restaurants including beer and wine samplings. Entertainment provided by The Grass Roots. Meadow Brook Theatre, 378 Meadow Brook Road, Rochester. 6 p.m. July 15. 248-377-3300. [www.mbttheatre.com](http://www.mbttheatre.com)

**Plowshares Theatre Company** "Motown Records: A Made in Detroit Symposium" An examination of the history, sounds, and significance of Motown Records. MSU Detroit Center, 3408 Woodward Ave., Detroit. July 6 - July 8. 313-744-3181. [www.plowsharestheatre.org](http://www.plowsharestheatre.org)

## THEATER

### Civic/Community Theater

**Murder Mystery Dinner: Till Death Do Us Part** Tickets: \$60-79. The Murder Mystery Company, Pietros Italian Restaurant, 2780 Birchcrest Dr SE, Grand Rapids. 6 p.m. July 22. 888-643-2583. [www.grimprov.com](http://www.grimprov.com)

### Professional

**Introduction to the Meisner Technique** Sanford Meisner's innovative, step-by-step series of improvisational exercises. Class is \$99 or \$150 for Day 1 and 2. Slipstream Theatre Initiative, Slipstream Theatre, 460 Hilton Road, Ferndale. 10 a.m. July 22 and June 23. 313-986-9156. [www.slipstreamti.com](http://www.slipstreamti.com)

**Lysistrata** Tickets: \$12 in advance only. Slipstream Theatre Initiative, Slipstream Theatre, 460 Hilton Road, Ferndale. Through July 9. 313-986-9156. [www.slipstreamti.com](http://www.slipstreamti.com)

### ART 'N' AROUND

**Berkley Chamber of Commerce** "Berkley Street Art Fest" The festival will include a chalk art contest, nine murals created on buildings throughout downtown Berkley, live music, and places for children and adults to create art. Downtown Berkley, Coolidge Hwy and Dorothea, Berkley. 11 a.m. July 15. 248-414-9157. [www.berkleystreetartfest.com/](http://www.berkleystreetartfest.com/)

**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)

**DIA** "Art of Rebellion: Black Art of the Civil Rights Movement" Explore powerful artworks by African American artists who formed collectives during the Civil Rights Movement of the '60s and '70s. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. July 23 - Oct. 22. 313-833-7900. [www.dia.org](http://www.dia.org)

**Downtown Development Authority** "Art & About" Every second Friday from June through October. Downtown Berkley, 3338

Coolidge Hwy, Berkley. June 9 - Oct. 13. <http://gaybe.am/DG>

**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. Thru July 28. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

**Flint Institute of Arts** "Rodin: The Human Experience" Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collections. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Thru July 30. 810-234-1695. [www.flintarts.org](http://www.flintarts.org)

**Hot Works, Inc.** "15th Annual Orchard Lake Fine Art Show" 175 juried fine arts and craft artists. Tickets: \$5, 12 and under free. Hot Works, Inc., 6900 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. July 29 - July 30. 248-684-2613. <http://hotworks.org/orchardlakefineartshow/>

**Lawrence Street Gallery** "Summer Invitational '17" This exhibition features new work by artists we like and admire. Opening reception July 7, 6-9 p.m. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. July 5 - July 28. 2485440394. [www.lawrencestreetgallery.com](http://www.lawrencestreetgallery.com)

**Lawrence Street Gallery** "Grapheeti World" Reception on June 2 from 6-9 p.m. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Thru June 30. 248-544-0394. [www.lawrencestreetgallery.com](http://www.lawrencestreetgallery.com)

**MOCAD** "99 Cents or Less" A major group exhibition of 99 artists based in the U.S. that addresses Detroit's ongoing economic crisis and its 2013 bankruptcy. Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Thru Aug. 6. 313-832-6622. [www.mocadetroit.org](http://www.mocadetroit.org)

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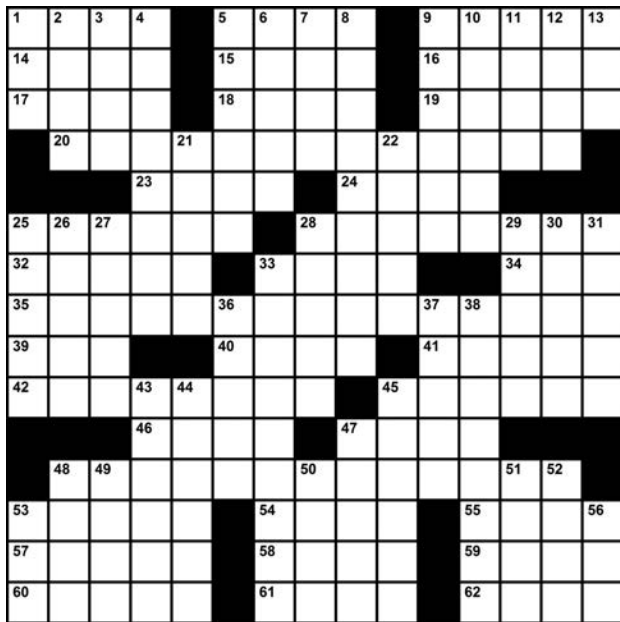
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# Q Puzzle



- description of 20-Across  
 39 Medium skill  
 40 Miss, to Mauresmo  
 41 Rear  
 42 Order more stock  
 45 Betrayer of Caesar, and namesakes  
 46 Wear too much Obsession, perhaps  
 47 "So \_\_\_"  
 48 End of description  
 53 Allstate rival  
 54 Buck heroine  
 55 Rep in the 'hood  
 57 \_The Brady Bunch\_ episode  
 58 "\_\_\_ off to see the wizard"  
 59 Jane Spahr's last word, perhaps  
 60 Wave top  
 61 Scholarship criterion  
 62 "Boys Don't Cry" character
- 11 Industrial area of Rilke's land  
 12 Falco of "The Sopranos"  
 13 30-day mo.  
 21 Cut of meat  
 22 Word before organ  
 25 Shoe part  
 26 Service a Dairy Queen?  
 27 Many go down on them  
 28 Simon of pop  
 29 Like a rare baseball game  
 30 Journalist Harris  
 31 Hoped for responses to come-ons  
 33 Like Ellen or Elton  
 36 Philip Johnson contemporary  
 37 Sweaty people use it  
 38 Like seamen  
 43 Planet out?  
 44 Stuffed shirt  
 45 Hit on the head  
 47 Proclaim loudly  
 48 Look lecherously  
 49 To be in Rimbaud's arms  
 50 Fox comedy with Jane Lynch  
 51 Humorist Bombeck  
 52 In the public eye  
 53 Part of cross-dresser Joan's name  
 56 Sex orientation determiner, some say

## Down

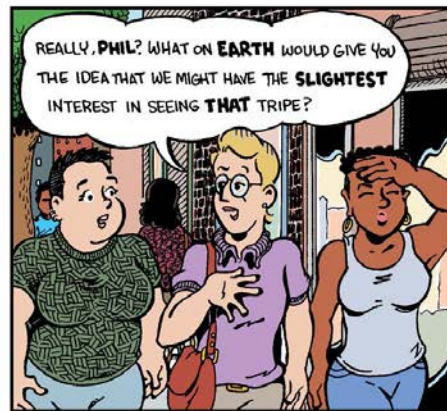
- 1 Troy Perry's title (abbr.)  
 2 Melissa and Tammy, e.g.  
 3 Roz portrayer on "Frasier"  
 4 Tara heroine  
 5 "Who's on First?" straight man  
 6 Drain troubles  
 7 Shakespeare's Hamlet, e.g.  
 8 Julianne's role in "A Single Man"  
 9 Eat with enthusiasm  
 10 "Little Men" author

Find solution to this puzzle at [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com)

# Uncommon Bond

## Across

- 1 Muscle Mary stat  
 5 Current band of the past?  
 9 Looks straight in the eye, say  
 14 Biz boss  
 15 Vanilla  
 16 Give the slip to  
 17 Wang in fashion  
 18 \_\_\_ fide  
 19 It may filter out gay porn
- 20 Late actor who played Bond, with title  
 23 Where they yell "Cut!"  
 24 Ill-mannered oaf  
 25 Succeed against a homophobic incumbent  
 28 Love or Cox  
 32 Strokes from Spencer-Devlin  
 33 Bulb unit  
 34 Cheer for Lorca  
 35 Start of Rex Reed's



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## Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

### Joel Edgerton takes on ex-gay conversion in 'Boy Erased'

Now that we've got a vice president who thinks so-called "gay conversion" therapy is a valuable form of torture for LGBT young people, the need to take it down in popular culture is more urgent than ever. "Boy Erased," the 2016 memoir by Garrard Conley about his time in a fundamentalist Christian camp as a young person, is getting a big push in the direction of that national conversation: Joel Edgerton is going to direct and write the film version. Based on Conley's time in "Love in Action," a faith-based program meant to "cure" young people of their homosexuality, the story will reach the screen starring Lucas Hedges ("Manchester by the Sea") as the tormented and, ultimately, tortured son of an Arkansas minister, with Edgerton playing the leader of the program that tries to turn the young man straight. Edgerton is also in talks with Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman to play the boy's parents. If production goes smoothly, it will probably mean a late 2018 theatrical bow, because it already has the meaningful subject matter movie studios love to bring out at awards time. More details on this one as they develop.



Cher. Photo: KathClick

### Cher if you agree

"Cher: The Musical." That's right. It's called "Cher: The Musical." It features her songs, and it's coming to Broadway in 2018. Give yourself a moment to stop squealing and let that sink in. The woman is getting her own "Mamma Mia!" and, unlike ABBA, who had to sit back and let their show be about people who are not in ABBA and, presumably, had never even heard of the existence of ABBA, this one will do its subject justice and is all about Cher's entire life from babyhood to "Believe." There's been a read-through, and the creative team includes Jeffrey Seller ("Hamilton") and Flody Suarez ("Rise") as producers, Jason Moore ("Avenue Q") directing, and Rick Elice ("Jersey Boys") writing the book. Meanwhile, most importantly, the casting calls for three stages of Cher — "Babe," "Lady" and "Star" — with supporting characters Sonny Bono, Gregg Allman, Bob Mackie, David Geffen, Robert Altman, Rob Camilletti and Sigmund Freud. And if you ask us — and someone should — we're not going to be satisfied unless we get baby Chastity and grown-up Chaz in there, too. This cannot happen soon enough.

### Alexander 'McQueen' documentary delves into designer's short life

Sometimes they come in twos. Filmmaker Andrew Haigh ("Weekend," "45 Years") is at work on a narrative biopic about the sharp rise to fame and abrupt end of the life of acclaimed fashion designer Alexander McQueen (he committed suicide at age 40). And now a competing documentary feature is in the works, as well. "McQueen," the working title of Ian Bonhote's film about McQueen's career, will take on the tough task of making sense of the creative genius's tragic demise. The London designer began his career as a teenager before becoming a designer for Givenchy, and was known for his sensation-making, media-courting work, eventually beginning his own fashion house, one that continues even after his death. Bonhote's film appears to be taking the usual documentary form, with the promise of plenty of access to archival footage, photographs and audio, as well as dramatic recreations and interviews with people involved in McQueen's work and life. Bleecker Street has already purchased the North American distribution rights, so now it's a matter of what makes it into theaters first, the doc or the drama.

### Are you ready for a gay male 'Golden Girls'?

Sometimes subtext, given enough time, turns to text. And that's why it's possible that the classic '80s sitcom, "Golden Girls," a show that has always been considered an analog for aging gay men and counts gay men as the bulk of its ongoing fan base, could find itself rebooted. Sort of. It turns out that writers Stan Zimmerman and James Berg, who wrote for "Golden Girls," "Roseanne" and "Gilmore Girls," as well as the 1996 film "A Very Brady Sequel," saw an acclaimed documentary about LGBT senior citizens called "Before You Know It." The experience prompted them to collaborate on a new sitcom pilot, called "Silver Foxes." There's already been a table read with George Takei, Leslie Jordan, Bruce Vilanch, and "SNL" alum Cheri Oteri. And... well, that's all for the moment. But they want to take it all the way. And they should. Queer baby boomers are already hitting retirement age. The Gen X-ers are little more than a decade away from it themselves. These people are going to need entertainment. And given the slow process of making a TV show reality, it might take that long. We'll be waiting.

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