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National Story of 2017:
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Combat Isolation,
Loneliness for Elders

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**Mayomi Fowowe-Makinde
LGBTQ and HIV Activist Escaped
Nigerian Homophobia to Build
a New Life in America**



BTL Photo Andrew Potter

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JANUARY 4, 2018 | VOL. 2601 | FREE

What is TRUVADA for PrEP?

TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a prescription medicine that is used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1. To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- ◆ **You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- ◆ **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- ◆ **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- ◆ **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP:**
 - ◆ Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months.
 - ◆ If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- ◆ **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
 - ◆ Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
 - ◆ Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
 - ◆ Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
 - ◆ Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- ◆ **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- ◆ **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV and stop taking TRUVADA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- ◆ **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.** If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- ◆ **Also take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.**

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- ◆ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA.
- ◆ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- ◆ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- ◆ **Bone problems,** including bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA.
- ◆ **If you are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed.** Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- ◆ **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- ◆ **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include certain medicines to treat hepatitis C (HCV) infection.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.

A photograph of two men with beards and short hair, both wearing black leather vests. They are smiling and looking towards each other. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with buildings and greenery.

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TRUVADA for PrEP™ is a once-daily prescription medicine that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when taken every day and used together with safer sex practices.

- ◆ TRUVADA for PrEP is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex.
- ◆ You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

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(tru-VAH-dah)

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you think you were exposed to HIV-1 or have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- See the "How To Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA for PrEP is a prescription medicine used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1.

- To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day,** not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- Use TRUVADA for PrEP together with condoms and safer sex practices.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months. You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP™ (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- Bone problems.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

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

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can pass to the baby in breast milk.

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 TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.



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Version date: April 2017

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VOL. 2601 • JANUARY 4, 2018

ISSUE 1048

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A Face for Nigerian Gays: Mayomi Fowowe-Makinde

LGBTQ and HIV Activist Fled his African Home to Build a New Life in America

BY MORDECAI HAZELWOOD

DETROIT – After spending nearly his entire life in his home country of Nigeria, LGBTQ and HIV activist Mayomi Fowowe-Makinde now finds himself having to adjust to a brand-new home nearly 7,000 miles away from where he grew up. This wasn't immigration for fun, though — he had little say in the matter.

Escape

Fowowe-Makinde, a gay man, had been outed after his stepmother broke into his apartment in Lagos, the country's largest city, and found gay literature there.

He went into hiding after being actively pursued by the police, and then kept for days in a local church.

"I was held in the church for seven days straight," Fowowe-Makinde said. "I didn't drink water or eat. I was told I should fast and pray for the demons to get out."

That's when he reached out to Rainbow Railroad for help—a Canada-based organization that works to remove LGBTQ people from dangerous homophobia in their native countries.

"If you're gay and caught, it's 14 years in prison. Public displays of affection can mean 10 years," Fowowe-Makinde said. "Also, if you have a friend, family member or neighbor who is gay, you must report them to the police. If you don't, it can mean 10 years in prison as well."

Since 2013, Fowowe-Makinde worked at the Access to Health and Rights Development Initiative, the nonprofit he cofounded with his close friend Peter Kass. Together, they helped provide sexual education, psychological and social support for LGBT and HIV positive individuals, temporary housing for LGBTQ people fleeing the police and resources for access to medication. His activism was dangerous, however. It painted a target on his back.

That he's alive to tell his tale today is due in a large part to Fowowe-Makinde's cousin, who is also gay and fled to America via the Rainbow Railroad in 2014. His cousin relayed his story to case and project managers for the Rainbow Railroad, who, in turn, managed to get Fowowe-Makinde's case going and let him start the application for a visa to the U.S.

It might be difficult for Americans to imagine, but during the one-month application process, Mayomi lived in constant fear for his



Nigerian LGBTQ activist Mayomi Fowowe-Makinde was forced to flee his homeland because of his homosexuality. His search for asylum brought him to Detroit, and he is now working to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ people both in Michigan and Nigeria. BTL Photo Andrew Potter

life. Going out during the day wasn't safe, as the police had circulated his picture around Lagos and across the country, offering a reward for information about his whereabouts. He briefly fled to neighboring Ghana as his application was processed. He couldn't stay in his apartment, either, and instead lived with Kass.

"I wouldn't open the door for anyone. The risk was too high," Fowowe-Makinde said.

Freedom

Finally, in early May, visa was processed and he boarded an 11 p.m. flight to the U.S. Following the instructions of the Rainbow Railroad case managers exactly, he didn't tell anyone he was traveling, and didn't say goodbye to anyone. It wasn't until he was safe in the U.S. that he could contact his family.

Fowowe-Makinde had travelled around Africa for his activism work, but he'd never been to the U.S. Although he landed in Chicago initially, the local LGBTQ organizations there already had a substantial backlog of asylum seekers. So, he was directed east to Detroit. It is there that Mayomi has started building a new life for himself.

"When I came here, there's so much more freedom. It is easy for people to show affection for one another," he said. "I see guys hold

hands and kiss. You can visit gay clubs; there were no gay clubs of any kind in Nigeria, none that I knew of, anyway. It's amazing."

Fowowe-Makinde is able to continue his activism work with the AHRDI remotely. In fact, he said, that's a common way that LGBTQ organizations are run in his native country.

"If you were an organization that worked with LGBT people, you couldn't put that on your application or let the government know," he said. "You have to say it was for HIV and reproductive health. It's all a front to get registered. Most activists in Nigeria ... they left for the U.K. or U.S. The threat of prison is enough to make them leave."

While his work to benefit LGBTQ people in his native country continues, he has developed goals for his new home. Fowowe-Makinde received a college degree in food science and technology in Lagos, and wants to work in the medical field here in the U.S.

"I'd also love to be on the radio at some point to present African food, music, politics and culture," Fowowe-Makinde said. "I want to reach out to Africans here and grow the community."

Finally, he said he wants to continue his LGBTQ and HIV outreach abroad, but expand it in his new home, too. Despite not being able to apply for work authorization until January,

“If you're gay and caught, it's 14 years in prison. Public displays of affection can mean 10 years,” Fowowe-Makinde said. “Also, if you have a friend, family member or neighbor who is gay, you must report them to the police. If you don't, it can mean 10 years in prison as well.”

he volunteers his time at LBGT Detroit and Affirmations in Ferndale.

Fowowe-Makinde won't be allowed to visit his native country for up to 10 years, according to U.S. asylum regulations. However, he is adamant that Detroit is his new home now.

"Even if I wanted to go, I would need to inform the U.S. government," he said. "Coming back may not be so easy."

Aftermath

His family is still very much in denial about his homosexuality. The phone calls he had with his mother's family all ended in discussions of when Fowowe-Makinde plans on settling down with a woman. His father's side of the family has shunned him.

"I would rather stay where I am now," Fowowe-Makinde said. "I may visit Nigeria when I'm able to. When I get a job, I will be able to financially support any activism in Nigeria to the best of my ability. I'm looking forward to doing that."

For now, he is growing accustomed to American culture and becoming a part of the local LGBTQ community through volunteering. While the plight of LGBTQ individuals in Nigeria is still grim, Mayomi remains hopeful that he will continue to make a difference from his new home.

RESOURCES

More information about Rainbow Railroad can be found online at rainbowrailroad.ca. Locally, Freedom House Detroit works with similar cases, and can be reached online at freedomhousedetroit.org.



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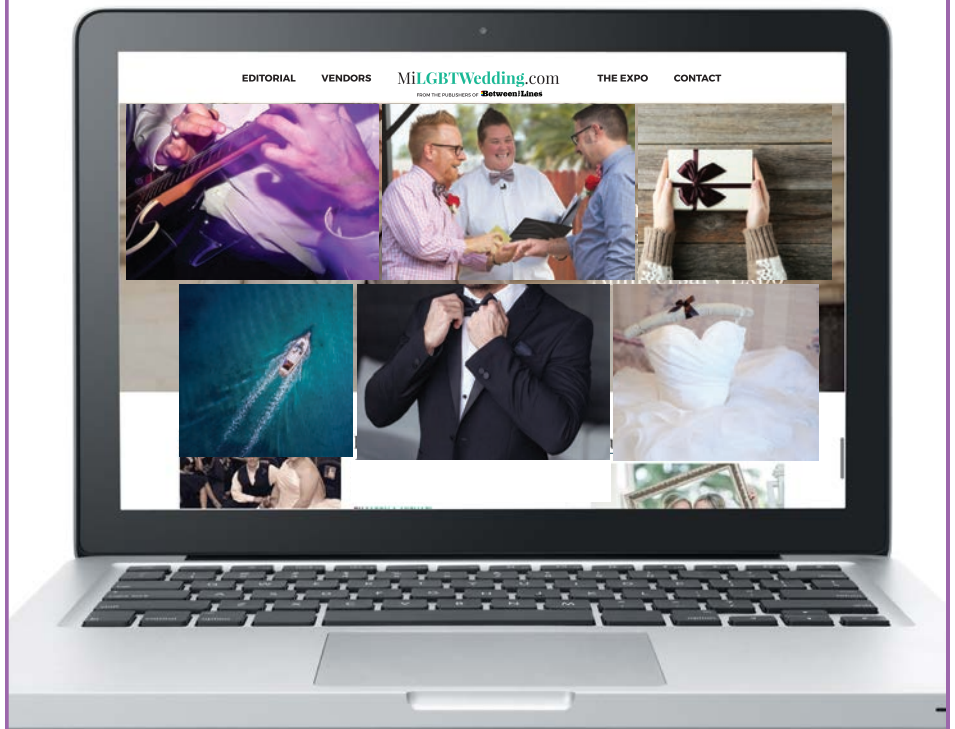
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SAGE Offers New Program to Combat Loneliness and Isolation of LGBTQ Elders

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

*"We have all known the long loneliness, and we found that the answer is community."
— Dorothy Day*

During a recent shift at the Affirmations Welcome Desk, a visitor who was new to the area inquired about our programs for older adults. They spoke of loneliness and feeling isolated. I knew of SAGE - in name and excellent reputation only - so I pulled up the website and we looked at it together. There we discovered news of an innovative new opportunity: The Friendly Caller Program.

SAGE Metro Detroit is a local affiliate of the national Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders, a nonprofit organization which is dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults. They offer supportive services and consumer resources for LGBTQ older adults and their caregivers, advocate for public policy changes that address the needs of LGBTQ older people, and provide training for aging providers and LGBTQ organizations.

Because of my interest in providing referrals for the program, as well as participating as a Friendly Caller myself, I contacted Keisha Watkins-Dukhie, coordinator of the new program. She was very interested in spreading the word and recruiting volunteers. What follows is her answers to my questions:

What is SAGE's Friendly Caller Program?

SAGE's FCP is a program focused on increasing social connectedness and support for LGBT older adults. Our program matches older LGBT adults with volunteer callers who engage in conversation and check in on them by phone at least three times a week.

Why is the program needed? Why LGBTQ-specific?

The program is needed because many older adults experience social isolation and reduced social networks as they age, which can lead to higher rates of physical and mental health problems. LGBT older adults experience particularly high rates of social isolation and loss of connection, due to a history of discrimination and fear of negative repercussions among service providers, care providers and co-workers. LGBT older adults are also less likely to have family support



Attendees during a SAGE national event attended by SAGE Metro Detroit Board Chair Pat Baldwin. Photos courtesy of SAGE Metro Detroit



Keisha Watkins-Dukhie, SAGE Friendly Caller Program Coordinator.

after years of discrimination in forming families or experiences of family rejection. LGBT older adults who are more active may still seek calls from FCP volunteers, given uncertainty in safe spaces and the need for overall support.

What does it mean to be a volunteer? What kind of people are you looking for to volunteer (both in terms of personal characteristics and

expectations of training and time commitment)?

A volunteer is someone who is committed to ensuring the respect and dignity of older adults within the LGBT community. Volunteers should be friendly, empathetic, caring and most of all great listeners. The program requires a minimum of three calls per week with some flexibility of when you can make calls based on your availability. A person who travels frequently for work or leisure can still honor their call commitment remotely. The commitment requires more of an intention and dependability than an amount of time. Volunteers must be able to attend a half-day training and orientation. [Anyone over the age of 18 is invited to participate as a volunteer.]

If interested, how does someone get involved or for more information?

Interested individuals can call or email the Friendly Caller Program Coordinator Keisha Watkins-Dukhie at the following: 248-567-2363 or kwdukhie@sagemetrodetroit.org. You can also visit our SAGE Metro Detroit website for more information about the Friendly Caller Program and how to contact the FCP coordinator.

What should an older adult who wants to receive calls know or do to be part of the program?

An older adult should contact the FCP Coordinator via phone or email to express their interest so that we can begin the process of getting them started with the program.

Does SAGE have other volunteer opportunities?

SAGE has many volunteer opportunities. In addition to our Friendly Caller Program, volunteers can join one of several SAGE committees (Programming, Training, Marketing, Fund Development, Finance, Advocacy), serve on our Board, attend our Board meetings or public events. We also have opportunities to volunteer or participate in our annual LGBT Older Adult Summit in June every year.

Board meetings are open to the public. They meet on the third Wednesday of the month from 9:30 to 11 a.m. From January to June, meetings are held at Affirmations in Ferndale. From July to December, meetings are held at the Hannan Center in Detroit. They are currently considering holding general membership meetings as well.

Anything else you would like to add?

We encourage everyone to share information about the Friendly Caller Program with friends and loved ones who could benefit from the social connection of regular phone calls. We have several excited volunteers waiting to foster new friendships and provide support for LGBT older adults.

The Friendly Caller Program is supported by a grant from the HOPE Foundation.

Other ways to get involved: In addition, older adults are invited to enjoy the LGBT Elders monthly discussion group and potlucks on the third Thursdays of the month from 5 to 7 p.m. at Hannan. SAGE also sponsors their senior Koffee Klatch, a discussion and networking group for people 45 and older that meets every Wednesday from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at Affirmations. (See the Affirmations website for more information on offerings throughout the week that welcome all ages.)

SAGE: Info@sagemetrodetroit.org 734-681-0854; Hannan Center Detroit: 4750 Woodward Ave. hannan.org/ 313-833-1300; Affirmations: 290 W. 9 Mile Rd. goaffirmations.org/ 248-398-1943

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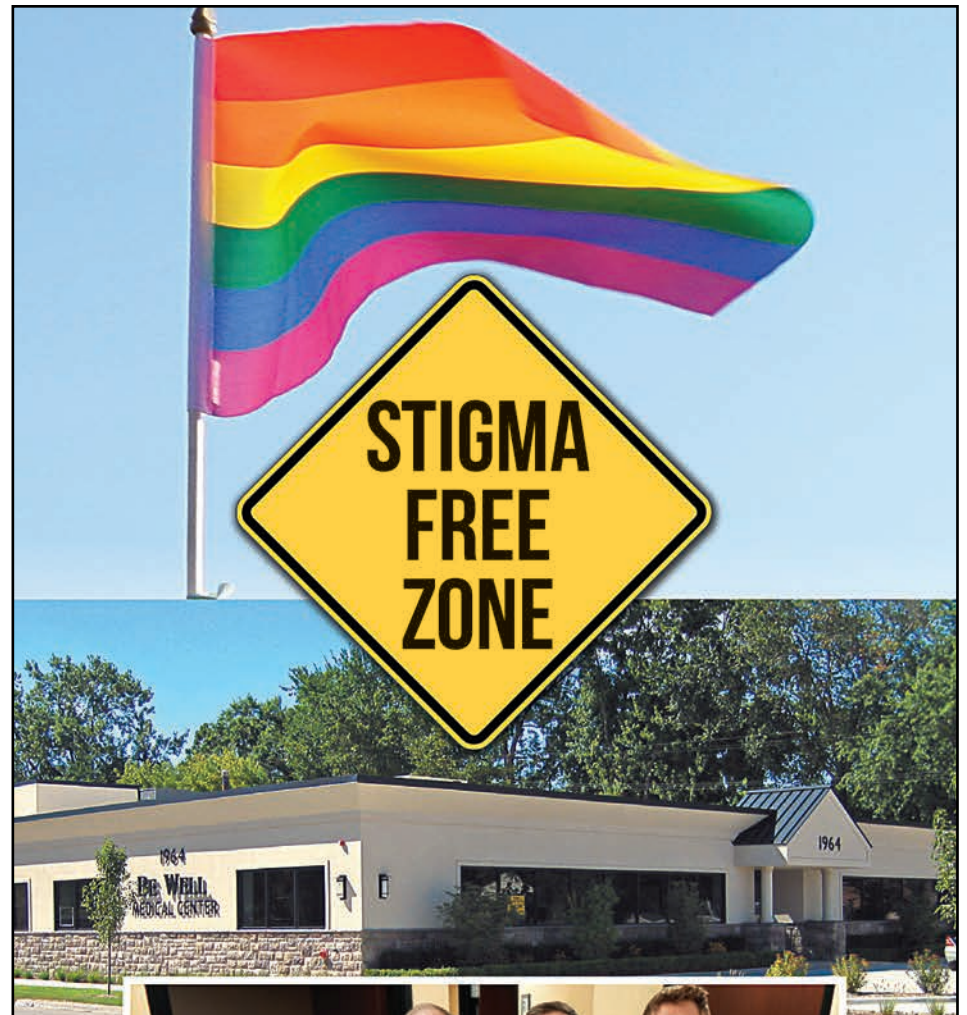
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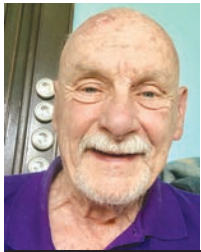
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Boys I Remember

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Mart Crowley's "Boys In the Band" opened off-Broadway 50 years ago. I bought a copy of the play in Chicago in 1968 and read dialog aloud while driving back to Detroit with my then partner, Larry.

We saw a local production a few years later at the long-vanished Rivera – a movie house turned legit stage – starring Wayne State University theater major Paul Pentecost.

Seeing gay life as we sometimes found ourselves living it proved fascinating: a big city birthday party turned "truth game," with much drinking and lotsa line dancing to the sweet turn-on sounds of Burt Bacharach's "The Look of Love." A play about us!

"Boys" opened – timely – one year before New York City's liberating Stonewall Riots. (The same year Rev. Troy Perry started the first gay lib church in Los Angeles.) Change was in the air.

"Boys" was exciting on two counts. It was gay from start to finish, with camp humor putdowns. And, score one up for me, I had spent a romantic summer week with one of its off-Broadway production actors: Frederick Combs.

I met "Honey Combs" in a gay bar. He was appearing about 1966 in 18-year-old British playwright Shelagh Delaney's international hit, later movie, "A Taste of Honey" at the Fisher Theater. He played Geoffrey, a gay artist. It was his big break. The cast included legendary Uta Hagen. The start of a promising career.

Freddy was staying at the Wardell Sheraton transients hotel, later Park Shelton Apartments. (I later lived there for 24 years. The property was once owned by comic Gilda Radner, of "Saturday Night Live" fame.)

Freddy said his two high school drama teachers believed he had talent and much promise. They paid for his ticket to New York to study acting. (He also said he had been brought out by an Army sergeant when he was 16.)

I followed him to Chicago during New Year's week, but was gently told our final curtain had rung down in Detroit. I never saw him again in person, but in 1970 had the pleasure of seeing him playing Donald when "The Boys in the Band" was made into a movie. (His thespian buns are glimpsingly preserved for posterity.)

Looking back at Crowley's pre-Stonewall play, given all that's happened – gay Liberation, the AIDS crisis, Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, Ellen Degeneres, "Brokeback Mountain," "Angels in America" – "The Boys in the Band" remains entertaining, well-crafted and compelling – if gay self-loathing.

Its characters are guys of another time and place who have yet to shake off the constricting onus placed upon them by religion, psychiatry, police, politics and even the Mafia! You name it. Just about everyone and everything straightjacketing.

Given as much, today we either like the play for its moments of history replayed, or loath it for its internalized homophobia; nonetheless, it's courageous, especially compared to cautious to the plays dealing with homosexuality preceding it, like "The Children's Hour" (1961) and "Tea and Sympathy" (1956).

The boys in "Boys" are who they are in spite of a culture that demonizes them.

Frederick Combs' later career included writing, producing and directing an off-Broadway mystery play that got soundly panned, prompting him to leave New York for Los Angeles. He then appeared in TV soaps and miniseries, and, for a time, ran his own drama school. He died from AIDS-related causes in 1992. He was 57.

His acting talent, face – and rather memorable backside understudying – are available for repeated viewing on DVD. I watched the movie this week and remembered when...

And, as one of the old boys in an old band, I'm still grateful to be tootin' my horn. On or off-key. On and off stage. Front row or last row, balcony.



Viewpoint



BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

2017 Dark Days With a Glimmer of Hope and Resistance

In these worst of times, I keep looking for the best of times, the best in people, the best in possible outcomes, but it's hard.

Most days, it feels that common decency is under siege by a GOP wave of "shock and awe," where Republicans use their almost overwhelming power to control every branch of the federal government. This displays a force that almost paralyzes our perception and dreams of America.

It no longer, even remotely, feels like a government of, for and by the people. Instead, it's a government of, for and by a partisan ideology being rammed down our throats in the name of far-right conservatism and so-called Christian values; with little, or no regard for the vast majority of Americans — even those who voted them in to office.

From day one, it's been about turning back the hands of time for women, gays, workers, immigrants, education, the environment, you name it. And if

change/advancement has come during the Obama Administration – like recognition of rights for the LGBTQ community, immigrants/dreamers, etc. – then a special level of racist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, penis-envy tirades was unleashed by the pussy-grabber-in-chief; usually in an overnight Twitter storm and reiterated by his band of clueless henchmen/women.

2017 has been a hard year! But the fighter, dare I say the optimist in me, continues to look for the best of times, the best in people, the best in possible outcomes and I've seen it – flashes and glimmers of hope and resistance.

Starting with the Women's March in January 2017. It was held in Washington, D.C. and across the country, attended by not just women, but all who believe the destiny of this country lies in its diversity and inclusion.

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► Viewpoint: Michelle Brown

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The event included people who are young, old, black, brown, LGBTQ, immigrants, women and even men, marching together. Those marching often held the hands of their children, not in protest of the election results, but for the protection of all we hold dear. And the marches/protests didn't stop with the Women's March. Americans took to the streets and airports in protest of 45's refugee and visa ban/Executive Orders. Communities across the nation declared themselves sanctuary cities, limiting their cooperation with U.S. Immigrations & Customs Enforcement (ICE) efforts to implement immigration policies.

After undermining the Environmental Protection Agency's effectiveness by appointing a climate-change doubter and antagonist of mainstream science as leader, as well as pulling the U.S. out of The Paris Agreement, many American governors and mayors rejected Trump's isolationism on climate issues. Most notably, California Governor Jerry Brown and the former mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg led an initiative that aims to bring together states, cities, businesses, universities and citizens to ensure the U.S. delivers on its Paris Agreement goals.

The ban on the military service of transgender Americans was met with outrage from many, including the Interfaith Alliance, Anti-Defamation League and American Humanist Association. Even Caitlyn Jenner had a moment of clarity, clapping back on this.

The American Civil Liberties Union joined several other advocacy groups in filing a lawsuit to challenge the directive. The Pentagon continued with plans to accept transgender applicants to the military on Jan. 1, 2018, after a federal judge declined to put the deadline on hold.

Dismayed with the direction of the country since the 2016 elections, more women are running for office. Angered by Trump's election, they were energized by the Women's March. Thousands came to Detroit in October for the Women's Convention planning strategies and actions to "reclaim" their time. More are expected to get involved in the flood of sexual harassment allegations against powerful men.

Those who are in office, like Rep. Maxine Waters, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Sen. Kamala Harris are speaking out and holding their male political counterparts to task. The November 2017 elections saw a high number of women, people of color and members of the LGBTQ community elected to office in their states and municipalities, most notably transgender candidates Danica Roem for a House of Delegates seat in Virginia, and Andrea Jenkins, was the first openly

Dismayed with the direction of the country since the 2016 elections, more women are running for office. Angered by Trump's election, they were energized by the Women's March.

transgender candidate to win a city council seat in a major city.

The #MeToo movement finally put the spotlight on sexual assault/harassment, and inappropriate behavior in the wake of allegations in the film industry, media and politics, although the occupant of White House has yet to be called out for his actions.

Despite the President's endorsement, Roy Moore, also accused of inappropriate sexual behavior, was defeated by Doug Jones in a special election. An election which saw a large turnout from African American voters, especially black women. They were responsible for Jones victory, but, sadly, saw a majority of white men and women voting for Moore despite the sexual allegations and removal from the Alabama bench for defying the law.

Little victories, but the GOP hits keep coming. They closed out the year jubilantly, celebrating the passage of a sweeping tax overhaul.

According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the biggest benefits from this tax reform will primarily go to the richest people in the country, i.e. the top 5 percent of earners. The Brookings Institution said the bill would eliminate personal exemptions and raise the lowest marginal income tax rate to 12 percent, producing a "mixture of effects" for low- and middle-income households.

An NPR commentator said that for many middle-class Americans the Tax reform will amount to approximately two tanks of gas for the family car a month. Republicans are hoping the American public will be so tickled for these tax crumbs that they will overlook the continued income inequalities, attacks on the LGBTQ community, education, environment, global isolationism and overall bad decisions. McConnell, Ryan and the Grand Old Party of prevaricators, predators, patricians and phonies.

I'll keep looking as we go into this New Year for the best of times, the best in people, the best in possible outcomes and maybe, just maybe, in 2018 – the time they will be a-changin'!

Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. Her blog radio podcast "Collections By Michelle Brown" airs every Thursday at 7 p.m. Current and archived episodes can be heard on Blog Talk Radio, iTunes, Stitcher or SoundCloud. Follow her on Facebook at facebook.com/CollectionsByMichelleBrown.

Creep of the Week

Donald Trump's GOP

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I'd say, "Well, we survived the first year of the Trump Administration," but the truth is not everyone did or will.

Take this tax scam bill that the Republicans passed and Trump signed. By removing the individual mandate in the Affordable Care Act, they've essentially removed a fundamental structure of the program. The goal is for the whole program to collapse. The same goes for the Children's Health Insurance Program. But here's the thing, CHIP and the ACA aren't just government programs. They are access to health insurance, which is access to health care, which is access to life. Republicans want us to go back to the "good old days" when Americans who got sick or injured went bankrupt, or died or both.

Then there's the full on assault on LGBTQ rights, with a heavy emphasis on anti-trans hate. Every year since 1999 people have observed Nov. 20 as Transgender Day of Remembrance, and every year the list of transgender people murdered because of hate grows. Trans women of color are at an especially great risk of being murdered, not to mention physically and sexually assaulted. The Trump Administration's targeted campaign against transgender people certainly isn't helping. Creating a culture of fear around transgender people and painting them as less than human costs lives.

Then there's climate change denial, trying to bait North Korea into nuclear war, rolling back environmental regulations that keep nasty shit out of our air and water, anti-Muslim rhetoric, immigration panic, closing our doors to refugees, support for even looser gun laws, turning a blind eye to sexual assault, denying Black Lives Matter, anti-science bias, restricting reproductive freedom (which includes the assault on Planned Parenthood and access to birth control), further destabilizing the Middle East, implicitly and explicitly supporting white supremacist Nazis, slashing the social safety net (food stamps, housing assistance, medicare – they want it all gone), attacking journalists and complete abandonment of the truth or reality.

Any of these alone could have deadly consequences. Taken together, the danger is so great that it's hard to wrap your brain around it all. I've read plenty this year of "alarm fatigue" and "chaos fatigue" when it comes to trying to follow the shit show that is this presidency. It's damn hard to do. It's exhausting to be presented with a

I've been asked by friends and family why I consume so much news if it just makes me upset ... There's just too much at risk to stop paying attention right now, even when paying attention is literally maddening.

new slew of horrors every day. In fact, I'm tired of being exhausted. I literally have fatigue fatigue.

I've been asked by friends and family why I consume so much news if it just makes me upset. I totally get people who are like, "I just can't." But I just can't stop. I don't mean I'm obsessed or have a compulsion to watch the "The Rachel Maddow Show." There's just too much at risk to stop paying attention right now, even when paying attention is literally maddening.

I've said this before and I'll say it again: elections have consequences. Local, state and national elections can literally change your life, especially if you are part of a vulnerable population. The Republicans were literally willing to put up with anything to get their tax cuts for the rich rammed through. Children, the poor, racial minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women – all happily sacrificed in the process.

I saw a bumper sticker that read, "Vote for Democrats. We're not perfect, but they're nuts!" I have plenty of issues with the Democratic party. On a small level: emails from the Democratic National Committee make me insane and whoever writes them should be fired. On a larger level: black people, especially black women, have been doing the heavy lifting in elections, yet their concerns and needs are often ignored. Instead of dealing with issues like income and education inequality, mass incarceration and police violence, many white Democrats are focused on how to get racist and ignorant Trump supporters to vote for Dems. And while I am pleased to see mostly across the board support from Democrats for LGBTQ people, it could have, and should have, come much sooner.

So while Democrats will often disappoint you, Republicans will often try to kill you. And I think that's a damn important distinction.

'Year of Trump' is Pick for Top National Story of 2017

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Although President Trump campaigned in 2016 on being a friend to LGBT people, his first year in office was marked by an erosion of LGBT rights after significant gains in recent years.

The infuriation within the LGBT community over Trump's hostility to LGBT rights spanned the entirety of 2017 and stood in stark contrast to progress during the Obama years. The attacks helped fuel the "resist" movement against him, making the "Year of Trump" the Washington Blade's No. 1 story for 2017.

Growing Troubles

A ban on transgender people in the military, withdrawal of Title IX guidance assuring transgender students access to the bathroom consistent with their gender identity, arguments in litigation LGBT people aren't protected under existing civil rights law and intervention on behalf of an anti-gay baker before the U.S. Supreme Court are a few high-profile ways the administration undermined LGBT rights in Trump's first year at the White House.

Rea Carey, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force said the first year of the Trump administration has been "horrendous, horrific and hellish when it comes to this administration's actions toward LGBTQ people and our families."

"He has turned back the clock on decades of progress, or is attempting to turn back the clock on decades of progress that we have made not only in our community, but also for people in this country who are women, who are black, who are immigrants, who are Muslim, who are poor – and he has been a disaster for democracy," Carey said.

'Grimm' Beginnings

The first major rollback from the Trump administration on LGBT rights was the revocation in February of Obama-era guidance that assured transgender kids have access to school restrooms consistent with their gender identity. Bucking the views of numerous courts, the Trump administration asserted the prohibition of sex discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 doesn't apply to transgender discrimination.

As a result of the decision, the U.S. Supreme Court nixed consideration of transgender student Gavin Grimm's lawsuit against his Virginia high school, which barred him from the boys' room. Grimm graduated without relief, although his lawsuit remains pending



President Trump has fired all members of the President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS. See related story p. 14. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

in lower federal courts.

The Education Department issued a new memo asserting discrimination and harassment against transgender students in school may amount to sex discrimination under federal law, but the issue of bathrooms isn't necessarily covered Title IX.

A few months later in July, Trump announced via Twitter transgender people won't be able to serve in the U.S. military "in any capacity." That tweet and subsequent guidance to the U.S. military reversed the Obama-era change scrapping medical regulations against their service and enabling them to serve in the armed forces.

As a result of four separate lawsuits and court orders against the ban, the Pentagon was barred from enforcing Trump's policy, which meant the administration was blocked from kicking out troops for being transgender or denying payment for gender reassignment surgery. The U.S. armed forces were also required to admit qualified transgender enlistees starting Jan. 1 consistent with a target date set by Defense Secretary James Mattis in a June 30 letter prior to Trump's tweet.

The Trump administration went after the other components of the LGBT community after the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars sex discrimination in the workplace, also prohibits employment

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

When the issue came before the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the Justice Department voluntarily filed a friend-of-the-court brief and sent a high-ranking attorney to argue existing civil rights law doesn't protect gay people from discrimination. That move put the Justice Department at odds with another U.S. agency, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has determined Title VII protects gay people.

Transgender people came next. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions in October issued a memo declaring anti-trans discrimination also doesn't amount to sex discrimination under existing law, reversing a memo from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder asserting transgender people are covered.

That wasn't the only time Sessions issued a memo endangering LGBT rights. In the aftermath of Trump's "religious freedom" executive order, Sessions issued a memo asserting broad protections from individuals and businesses under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Without limiting principle in the document against discrimination, a Social Security worker could refuse to process applications for same-sex spousal benefits, or an employer could refuse to grant family and medical leave to LGBT families.

Controversy in the Courts

The Justice Department also took the side of "religious freedom" over LGBT rights at the U.S. Supreme Court when justices considered the Masterpiece Cakeshop case. A Colorado baker seeking a First Amendment right to refuse to make wedding cakes for same-sex couples brought the case.

The Trump administration sent to argue on behalf of the baker U.S. Solicitor General Noel Francisco, who indicated during oral arguments a shopkeeper should be able to put up a sign saying no wedding cakes for same-sex couples — a belief the White House said Trump shares.

The Supreme Court would likely not have even taken up the Masterpiece Cakeshop case if U.S. Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch wasn't confirmed to the bench. Appointed by Trump

in January, Gorsuch was opposed by major LGBT rights groups. Since his confirmation, the Supreme Court took up the Masterpiece Cakeshop case and he has issued dissents arguing the fight for marriage equality isn't over after the 2015 Obergefell decision.

Maintaining Ignorance

Trump also ignored the LGBT community in more symbolic ways, such as neglecting to issue a proclamation recognizing June as Pride month. The Trump administration has been found to have eliminated questions in federal surveys allowing respondents to identify as LGBT and reportedly barred the Centers for Disease Control from using the word "transgender" among other science-related words from budget documents.

Additionally, the administration's budget request would have restricted funding for civil rights enforcement and cuts HIV/AIDS programs and research by billions of dollars.

Carey said these items — especially the "religious freedom" guidance, which she said is "extraordinarily damaging, and will have long-term impacts for the country" — are among the big-ticket items, but "there are dozens and dozens of things that have happened that aren't in the news."

"I've been working in Washington, D.C., since 1989, and I have worked with Democratic and Republican administrations, I worked through Bush 1 and Bush 2," Carey said. "And this is nothing like those administrations. We always have policy differences, but I think the kind of haphazard and harmful nature of so-called governing by this administration is certainly something that our community hasn't seen."

Consistent Targets

The actions against LGBT people, Carey said, are consistent with the Trump administration's efforts targeting other communities, such as the travel ban on Muslim countries, the elimination of deferred deportation for DREAMers and the elimination of the contraception requirement in health care.

Defenders of Trump on LGBT issues will point to a statement issued earlier in the year in which the White House said Trump is "respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights" and would keep in place a 2014 executive order signed by President Obama barring federal contractors from engaging in anti-LGBT workplace discrimination.

Trump also made at least openly four LGBT appointments, although they're few and far between compared to the hundreds

former President Obama appointed to the administration at all levels of government and the judiciary.

The highest-profile openly gay Trump appointee is Richard Grenell, a Fox News commentator and foreign policy expert who was nominated as U.S. ambassador to Germany. Democrats are blocking his confirmation over comments he made about the appearance of women on Twitter.

Other openly gay appointments are James Abbott, who was confirmed to the Federal Labor Relations Authority; David Glawe, under secretary for intelligence and analysis at the Department of Homeland Security; and Claudia Slacik, who was nominated, but not yet confirmed, to the board of the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Trump also re-nominated lesbian Democrat Chai Feldblum to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which by law requires appointments of both parties.

Gregory Angelo, president of Log Cabin Republicans, noted his organization withheld its endorsement from Trump as a candidate in 2016, but also pledged to call “a ball a ball, and a strike a strike” if he became president.

“This administration has done things that are worthy of praise like maintaining the LGBT non-discrimination executive order, like acknowledging the human rights abuses of gay men in particular in the refugee executive order that was put out earlier this year and the appointment of openly gay individuals, several of whom are members of Log Cabin, to prominent posts in his administration,” Angelo said.

But Angelo said his organization opposed the Trump administration’s elimination of transgender student guidance and the transgender military ban.

Uneven Approach

Treatment of LGBT issues is arguably different in certain U.S. agencies, most notably the State Department. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson retained the position of U.S. special envoy for international LGBT rights, and although Randy Berry left the role, the State Department is expected to fill it. Tillerson also has issued statements recognizing June as Pride month and the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Although President Trump and the White House have said nothing about reports of anti-gay persecution and concentration camps in the Russian republic of Chechnya, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said she was “disturbed” by the reports and Tillerson privately raised the issue in a letter to the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The U.S. mission to the United Nations also joined with France and Brazil to block efforts from Egypt and Russia to remove from an Olympics resolution a reference to Principle 6 of the Olympics Charter, which bars discrimination on the basis of sexual

orientation.

Jessica Stern, executive director of OutRight Action, cited these examples as indications LGBT rights “are increasingly integrated into U.S. foreign policy in spite of the president.”

“We have succeeded by working with allies within this government, allies from other governments, using long-standing policies, and motivating unlikely suspects to recognize that LGBTI people globally deserve our respect,” Stern said. “All of this happens because our movement is strong, loud and insistent.”

However, Stern said the Trump administration’s approach to foreign policy as a whole has by far not been without failures or inconsistent with his domestic LGBT policy.

“Trump’s foreign policy has been about isolationism, militarism, Muslim-bashing, border construction, the control of women’s bodies, and an overall rejection of human rights,” Stern said. “In that sense, his foreign and domestic policies have been remarkably aligned.”

Future Projections

What’s next? The administration will likely continue to fight transgender military service in the courts even if accession begins on Jan. 1 as well as LGBT protections under existing civil rights law. Depending on the outcome of the Masterpiece Cakeshop case at the Supreme Court, the administration will likely embrace a decision in favor of the anti-gay baker, or reject a ruling in favor of the same-sex couple who unsuccessfully sought a wedding cake from him.

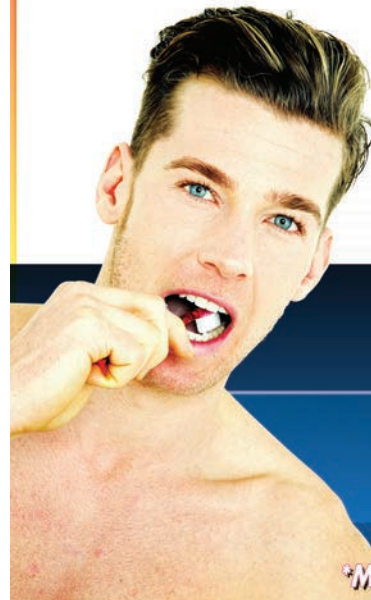
Carey said she expects the Trump administration to “still take actions that will be harmful to our community” — such as U.S. agencies implementing the religious freedom guidance against LGBT people — but any such actions against LGBT people will “absolutely” be met with opposition from the community.

“I think it will only increase,” Carey said. “As I talk with leaders in other movements and other communities, there is a hunger to continue to stand together to engage the many people who perhaps before this year have not been as politically active and are ready to stand together whether it’s in the streets, or in the halls of Congress or in their school boards in their towns to stand together to make sure that the most vulnerable people in this country are not going to be attacked again and again and again.”

The White House didn’t respond to the Washington Blade’s request for comment on whether the Trump administration believes it has upheld a commitment to be “respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights” in its first year.

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

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Trump Fires All Members of HIV/AIDS Council Without Explanation

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

With no explanation, the White House has terminated members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS amid widespread discontent with President Trump's approach to the epidemic.

After six members of PACHA resigned in June, the White House on Wednesday terminated the remaining 16 members without explanation via a letter from FedEx.

Scott Schoettes, a Chicago-based HIV/AIDS activist and senior attorney for Lambda Legal, was one of the six who resigned in June over Trump's inaction on HIV/AIDS and said on Twitter the remaining members were fired.

"No respect for their service," Schoettes said. "Dangerous that #Trump and Co. (Pence esp.) are eliminating few remaining people willing to push back against harmful policies, like abstinence-only sex ed."

Sources with knowledge of PACHA said many council members were fired even though additional time remained on their terms as advisers. The terminated members, sources said, were given the option to reapply after Tuesday.

Gabriel Maldonado, CEO of the Riverside, Calif.-based LGBT and HIV/AIDS group Truevolution, was a remaining member of PACHA and confirmed they were fired, but said the "explanation is still unclear."

"I can only speculate," Maldonado said. "Like any administration, they want their own people there. Many of us were Obama appointees. I was an Obama appointee and my term was continuing until 2018."

Maldonado said "ideological and philosophical differences" with the administration are a potential reason for the terminations.

As an example, Maldonado cited a recent Washington Post report the Centers for Disease Control is banned from using words like "diversity" and "transgender" in budget documents. The CDC director has denied those words are banned.

"I was co-chair of the disparities committee, so much of my advocacy and policy references surrounded vulnerable populations, addressing issuing of diverse communities, specifically looking at the impacts of the LGBT community, namely, the disproportionate impact of HIV and AIDS to people of color, gay men, transgender women," Maldonado said. "And a lot of those key vulnerable populations are not being prioritized in this administration."

Maldonado added he intends to publish an open letter to the community about his termination on Friday.

Also among the terminated members was Patrick Sullivan, a professor of epidemiology at the Emory University Rollins School of

Public Health.

"My reaction is that our focus should be on the policies that PACHA addresses," Sullivan said. "These issues are critical to people's health, and are critical to making new HIV infections rare. At PACHA's last meeting in August, the Council urged the Administration to affirm the National HIV/AIDS Strategy through 2020. Doing this would be a great way for the administration to set the tone and lay out national roadmap of priorities for a new PACHA."

Created in 1995, PACHA has provided advice starting in the Clinton administration and into the George W. Bush and Obama administrations on policy and research to promote effective treatment and prevention for HIV – maintaining the goal of finding a cure.

In September, Trump signed an executive order that renewed PACHA along with 31 other presidential bodies for an additional year.

Trump's termination of council members isn't a first time an administration cleaned house on PACHA. The Obama administration eliminated all of George W. Bush's appointees before making new appointments.

Precedent?

Kaye Hayes, executive director of PACHA, affirmed the council members were terminated on Dec. 28, but said there's more to the story.

"They were also thanked for their leadership, dedication and commitment to the effort," Hayes said. "Changing the makeup of federal advisory committee members is a common occurrence during Administration changes. The Obama administration dismissed the George W. Bush administration appointees to PACHA in order to bring in new voices. All PACHA members are eligible to apply to serve on the new council that will be convened in 2018."

Jim Driscoll, a gay Nevada-based HIV/AIDS activist who supported Trump in 2016, said replacement of PACHA members "is standard practice" for a new administration.

"Now they need to find bonafide community people with appropriate expertise and the ability to adapt to the changed political circumstances," Driscoll said. "It is fully understandable why a president would not want people who oppose his policies and might be happy to see him impeached serving as his HIV advisors. That would serve the needs of neither the president nor of people living with HIV/AIDS."

But Maldonado said the termination of PACHA members during the Trump administration is only partially consistent with the Obama years.

"It is common for appointees to be

terminated and for folks to kind of want their own people in," Maldonado said. "I think where the discrepancy comes in is why a year later, No. 1? Two, many of us, our terms were over earlier this year and we were sworn back in, and three were stayed on nearly four months after an executive order was signed continuing the council."

In June, six members of the PACHA resigned the posts in protest over what they called inaction from Trump on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. An estimated 1.2 million people have HIV/AIDS in the United States and 37 million have the disease worldwide.

Chief among the reasons was the absence of leadership at the White House on HIV/AIDS. To this date, the White House has yet to appoint a director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, which was one of the reasons the six members of PACHA resigned in June.

Budget Cuts

Trump's fiscal year 2018 budget proposal also sought massive cuts to HIV/AIDS programs, including \$150 million on HIV/AIDS programs at the Centers of Disease Control and more than \$1 billion in cuts from global programs like PEPFAR Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria. The Republican-controlled Congress has thus far continued to fund these programs at previous levels.

Maldonado noted the PACHA terminations are taking place at the year's end after the June resignations, which he said is "a little too coincidental."

"The timing is a little bit unorthodox compared to what the Obama administration's approach was," Maldonado said.

Maldonado said he represented a younger demographic on PACHA as the only member under the age of 30, which he said is where the majority of new HIV infections are occurring, and as a young, black gay man.

"I just am coming to the acknowledgment that the traditional tactics of politicking and policy and strategy and negotiation, the kind of standard tools that we're trying to use, that the status quo is no longer acceptable," Maldonado said. "The tactics that we had are kind of obsolete, and now we need to craft new strategy to address the troubling and unsettling revelations, particularly around the silence and inaction that have taken place around HIV and AIDS."

Since the resignations in June, Trump has made public statements on HIV/AIDS consisting of proclamations on National HIV Testing Day and World AIDS Day. Neither statement includes an explicit mention of LGBT people, who are considered to have face the brunt of the disease.

The White House deferred comment to the Department of Health & Human Services, which provided the statement from the PACHA executive director.

New appointments may be coming soon. The Blade reported in October gay Republicans familiar with HIV/AIDS issues and LGBT issues have been among those contacted by a Trump administration official for possible appointments to PACHA.

Gay Minn. Couple Loses Appeal Based on 1971 Marriage License

ST. PAUL, Minn. – A gay couple has lost another legal fight over getting the state to recognize their marriage in the early 1970s, KIMT 3 News, a regional station, reported on Dec. 26.

James Michael McConnell and Pay Lyn McConnell, also known as Richard John Baker, first applied for a marriage license in Hennepin County in May 1970. It was denied because they were both men, a decision supported at the time by the Minnesota Supreme Court, KIMT reports.

As their appeal was pending in 1971, however, James McConnell submitted a second marriage license request to Blue Earth County that listed Pat McConnell as a female living in the county. That marriage license was issued on August 16 but before the month was over, the Blue Earth County Attorney's Office had determined the license was invalid under state law and it was not recorded in county records, KIMT reports.

In September 2014, James McConnell mailed a letter to the Blue Earth County clerk and asked for a certified copy of the marriage certificate. The County Attorney's Office informed McConnell that would not be possible, KIMT reports.

A petition was filed in November 2016 requesting the district court order Blue Earth County to officially record the 1971 marriage license. The court refused and an appeal was filed, KIMT reports.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals has now upheld that refusal, pointing to the incorrect statements made on the marriage license application. The Court also found that the McConnell's have not proven they have suffered a "particular harm" from not having their 1971 marriage recorded, KIMT reports.

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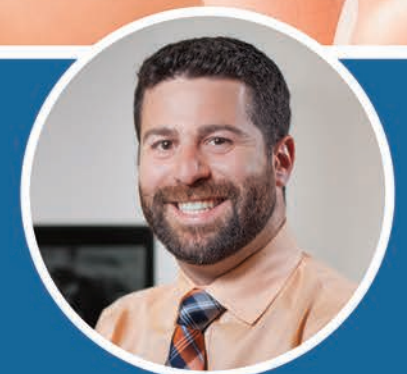
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INTERVIEWS BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Before we forever move on from the rankling crap-stain known as 2017, let's revisit some words of pure delight and encouragement from a heap of A-listers who used their platforms for the greater good as they discussed important LGBTQ issues, their own sexuality, and more.



I don't differentiate a gay wedding from a straight wedding. I just don't differentiate ... I think it's absolutely a fact that all men are created equal, and so I just treated people like equals my entire life. Equals in every single way, no matter what their proclivity is or what their sexuality is, or their color or their race.

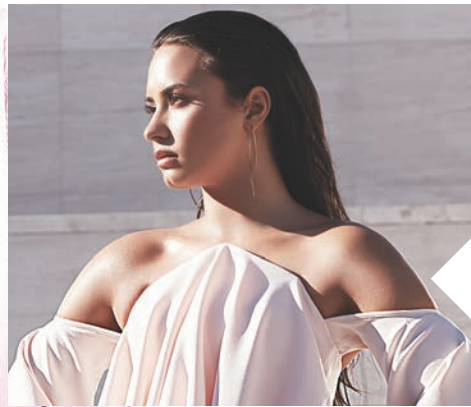
– Martha Stewart

"You tell an emotional story, you can change a heart; if you can change a heart, you can change a mind; you change a mind, you can change the law."

– Dustin Lance Black

"The concept of marriage didn't make sense to me because my (LGBT) friends couldn't do it, and I found nothing wrong with what they wanted. So, I was like, 'Well, then it's not sacred, then it's not what it's supposed to be, so I don't want it.'"

– Mila Kunis



I love who I love. (But) I just feel like everyone's always looking for a headline and they always want their magazine or TV show or whatever to be the one to break what my sexuality is.

– Demi Lovato

2017: A YEAR IN REVIEW...

"The trans experience comes in all different shapes and sizes and races and beliefs, and by beliefs, I mean spiritual beliefs. And we need to start addressing that what we are is not learned behavior. It's not fashion and it's not commentary. It is biological, it is genetic, and it reverberates throughout history – let's start talking about that."

– Alexandra Billings



"(Billie Jean King) just made a joke about my dick in the corridor. I'm like, 'Billie Jean!'"

– Alan Cumming

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

– Nico Tortorella



“(Goldie and I are) both people who will stand up to the death for our gay friends and gay people and what’s going on in Chechnya and the fear of what will happen in the coming years. We’ll be there to fight alongside our gay friends.”

– Amy Schumer



“I wanna be somebody who’s a trailblazer for our community – so a little Toderick in Texas right now can look up to me and say, ‘You know what? I can do it because Toderick did it.’”

– Toderick Hall



“You know what I used to do? This is interesting. When we went through the AIDS period, it was a very scary time, and I would go visit guys and I’d get in bed with them just to be there with them.”

– Goldie Hawn

WHAT THE CELEBS SAID

“(Marriage before equal marriage) just felt gross. What are we gonna do? Have a party and be like, ‘Look at us celebrating this thing you can’t do?’ That’s fucking putrid. Like, 90 percent of our friends are gay!”

– Kristen Bell



“Equality should be a no-brainer, automatic, all the way around.”

– Shania Twain

“(Gay men) really, really love strong women. They’re not afraid of women the way that some heterosexual men are. But they love a strong dame. They love a dame! So, that’s high praise. It’s high praise coming from the gays. So I am thrilled that I am in that club.”

– Allison Janney

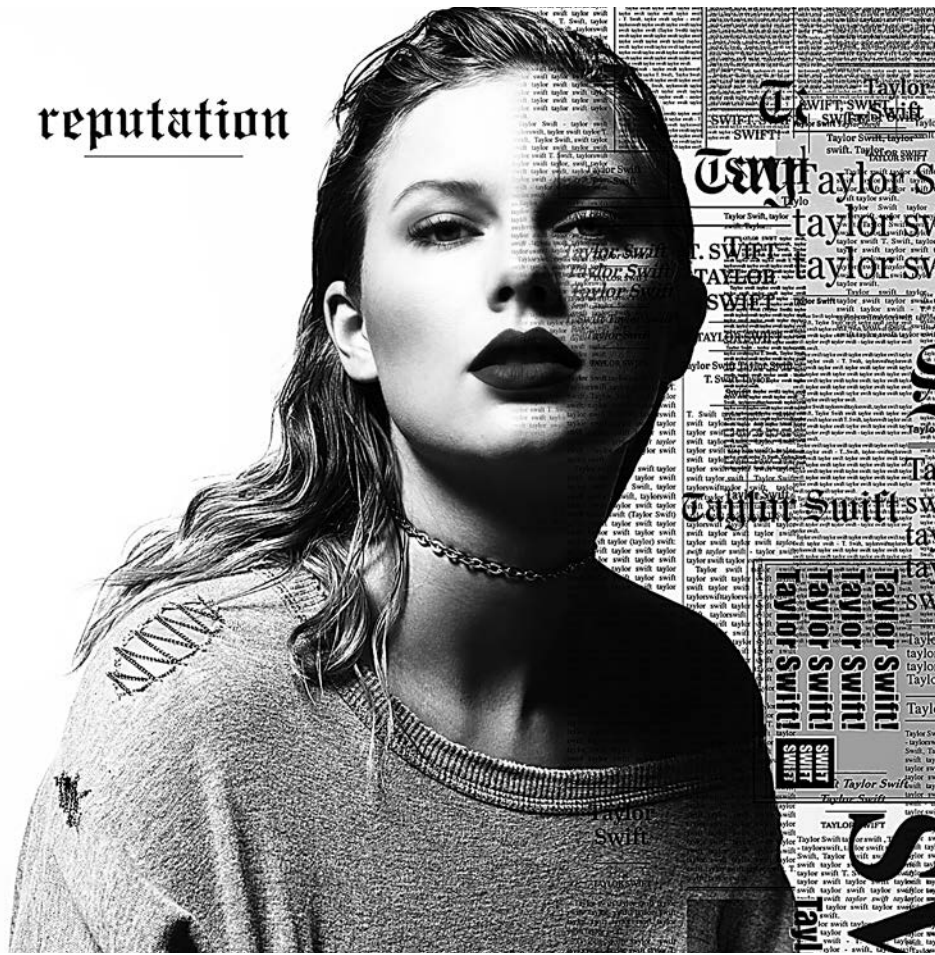
“My people, my family for all these years have always been my allies and have always been very, very important to me, very dear to me through the AIDS crisis and everything. It’s just a natural, very easy extended family for me.”

– Susan Sarandon on her LGBT following



Hear Me Out: Best of 2017

reputation



BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Donald Trump is still tweeting (oh yeah, and somehow still president). Free internet porn could be a bygone luxury thanks to #RIPNetNeutrality. But hey, music in 2017 didn't suck! Read on for the music that saved me, and maybe you, from one of the worst years for queerkind:

10. Tori Amos, 'Native Invader'

To approach dire world affairs with a sound mind, Tori Amos called on her trusty muses to guide her finest release in some time. Themes of love, pain and healing, both in the midst of global and personal tragedy, comprise a set that draws upon Amos' earliest years as her trademark Bösendorfer is our guiding light on the mesmerizing and exquisitely rendered "Reindeer King." Elsewhere, Amos rails the patriarchy on "Bang," while the album's darkest foray, the wayward "Climb," finds her calling upon spiritual forces for some necessary divine political-hell intervention.

9. Beck, 'Colors'

Beck's "Colors" seems to exist entirely in another time and place and political era, a godsend for all of us standing underneath the gray clouds of post-Obama America (hey, somebody has to keep our hopes up). Though he falls back on some familiar Phoenix-like tropes on this bright, buoyant slice of escapist heaven, hearing one of alt music's most introspective minds resist the solemn zeitgeist with work so full of life is refreshingly infectious.



8. Taylor Swift, 'Reputation'

"My name is whatever you decide," Taylor Swift flirts on the thunderous "Don't Blame Me." Illuminating Swift's intent to acknowledge and exaggerate her constantly dissected and criticized persona, the line is, seemingly, a sly nod to haters who still hate. But if old Taylor is dead, who are we left with, then? Not exactly a "new" Taylor so much as a revised, extra brazen version, where she and co-producers Jack Antonoff, Max Martin and Shellback throw gasoline on her pop fire. The songs are big and bad throughout, so it's surprising to hear the tender "New Year's Day" revisit Taylor of yore. Spoiler alert: Old Taylor didn't die.

7. Kelela, 'Take Me Apart'

Nineties R&B was a special kind, and Kelela must think so too. Her sultry debut studio album, "Take Me Apart," is a sleek mid-tempo-teeming set, with the D.C. native conjuring Brandy, Janet and Aaliyah, from the suppleness of her voice to the smooth urban grooves. But Kelela isn't concerned with fitting her music into a box for mainstream consumption, it seems, as her sophisticated artistry subverts the modern-day R&B template with a level of exhilarating old-school innovation.

6. SZA, 'Ctrl'

SZA, which rolls off the tongue slightly easier than the St. Louis native's birthname, Solana Imani Rowe, is a name even your mom might know early next year. Yes, all the cool kids were shook when SZA released her debut, and if there is any justice left in this world come 2018, in February, she might walk away with the five Grammys she's nominated for. As if SZA's glorious take down of arrogant ex-lovers and revelations like "let me tell you a



secret, I been secretly banging your homeboy" weren't reason enough for her to win, "Ctrl" deconstructs every genre that influences it, blazing trails with a unique, ethereal blend of soul, jazz, R&B and chillwave that's all her own.

5. Kendrick Lamar, 'DAMN.'

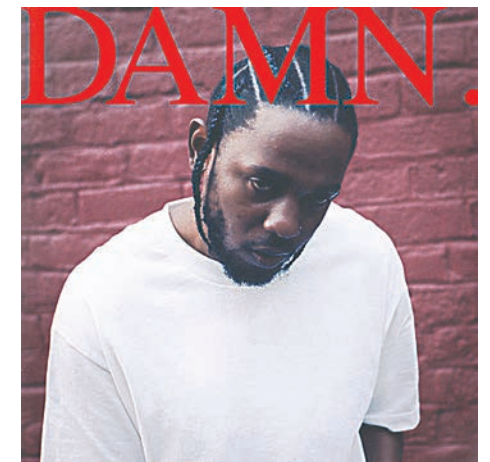
"Bitch, sit down" should be on every mug you drink from in 2018. But for now, it's a Kendrick Lamar line from "HUMBLE.," basically writing the epitaph on the disaster that was 2017. The hip-hop icon, who has breathed the same air as our blessed Queen Bey, is fire on "DAMN.," Tackling Geraldo Rivera, President Trump and gun control, he leaves room for vast self-reflection – and gorgeous jazz flourishes – that makes for an intricately layered look at one's own place in humanity.

4. Perfume Genius, 'No Shape'

If the world is ending, fine, Mike "Perfume Genius" Hadreas will just ride his sequined motorcycle into the sunset, thank you very much. In my mind that is what I see when I hear "Slip Away," which bursts from the seams to reveal a kaleidoscopic surge of aural bliss – a strikingly queer reaction to a fascistic uprising. Breaking his own mold time and time again, one of music's sincerest songwriters takes "No Shape" into a new dimension where escapist fantasy and Sade vibe together. The piano parables of Hadreas' formative years are history, replaced by fresh textural turns that are as boldly queer as his tender poetry.

3. The National, 'Sleep Well Beast'

The quiet beauty of The National's experimental arrangements on their seventh LP reveals itself in the third ear. It strikes first like a mysterious whisper on "Nobody



Else Will Be There,” hushed as if frontman Matt Berninger is singing to you in the dark. Deeper within the “Beast,” the Ohioans take their trademark melancholic, lyrical roots to new Radiohead-evoking rock heights, where synth fuzz fills out “Walk It Back” and a hypnotic undercurrent sweeps the bottom of “Born to Beg.” On the indietronica track “I’ll Still Destroy You,” peace and chaos collide as Berninger reveals, “I’m just trying to stay in touch with anything I’m still in touch with.” Frankness at its finest.

2. Kesha, ‘Rainbow’

Dr. Luke survivor and former Jim Beam-swivving pop bot Kesha Rose Seberty made the queerest mainstream album of the year, drawing from her own dark-horse experiences to create her most authentic recording, vocally and otherwise – one she dedicated to her fellow outcasts and underdogs. From her rise-above credo on the lovely guitar “Bastards” opener to her delightfully weird song about a queer afterlife, “Spaceship,” “Rainbow” is the album 2017’s shitstorm desperately needed: One marked by individuality, empowerment and survival.

1. Lorde, ‘Melodrama’

Grammy nominated for Album of the Year, “Melodrama” pulses with lived emotional fervor, as its forlorn creator struggles to sort through sordid love to find her best self again



amid the remaining remnants (“Supercut,” a vocal paradise) and self-imposed blame (her devastating Kate Bush moment, “Writer in the Dark”). Elegant keys swirl into surging Robyn-esque dancefloor fodder, vocal beds serve atmospheric percussion-like qualities. Thematically, Lorde’s timeless exploration of love’s highs and lows is captivating and wise beyond her 20 years, an album that speaks to the ears as much as the heart.

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

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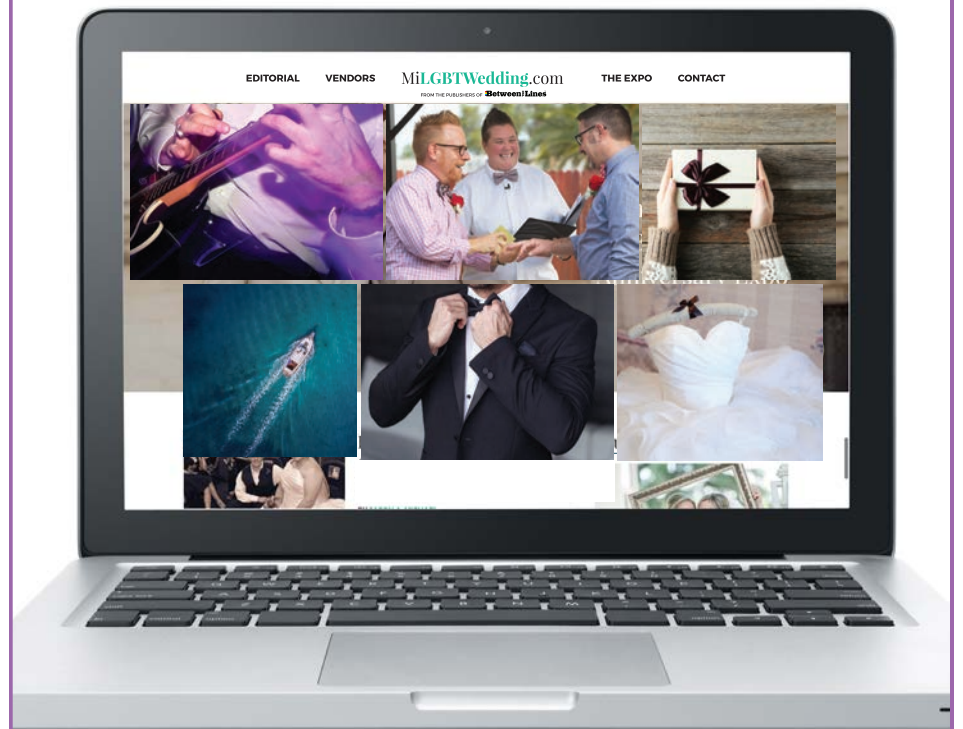
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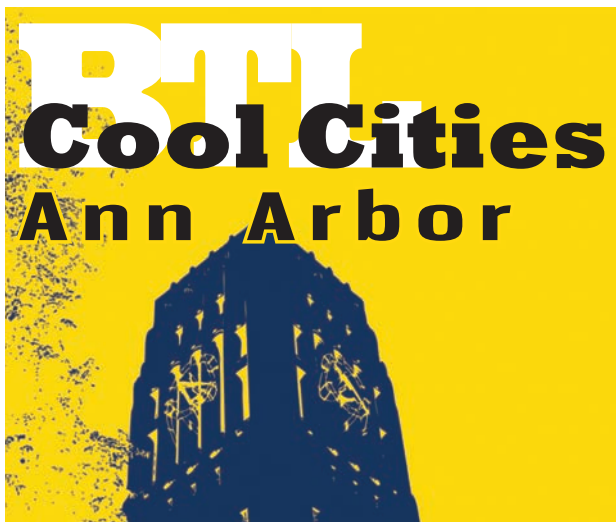
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UMS Explores the Comfort Zone with Three-Week Theater Festival

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

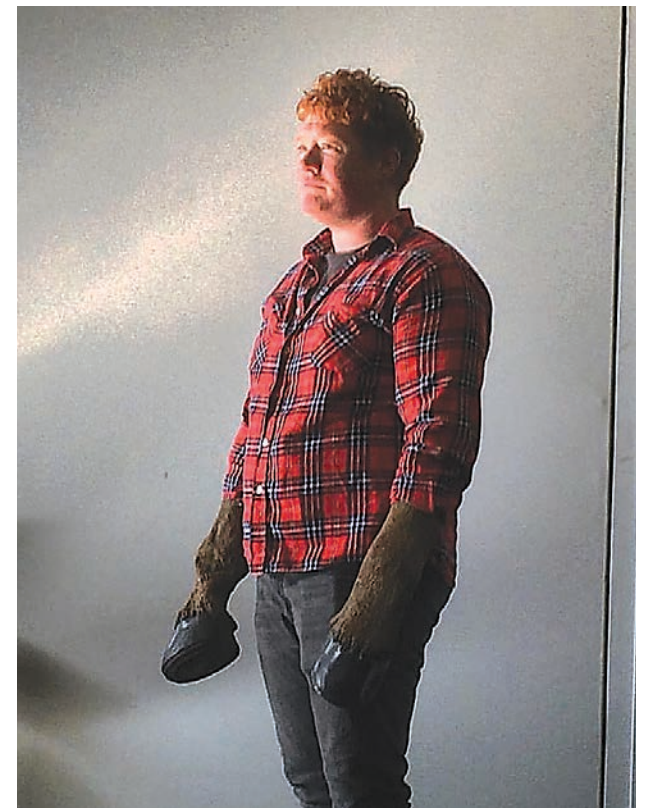
Going out of one's comfort zone is never easy. Sometimes, it can even be difficult to find a productive way of doing that in daily life, but what is true about the process, is that there's often a lesson learned at the end of the experience. Actor and comedian Becca Blackwell knows all about those limitations.

"To me, the ambiguity of my gender – that I changed my name, that I have a moustache – bothers people more than me just passing as a man," Blackwell said. "That, to me, is just the essence of schmerm, or playing any kind of character."

Blackwell is transgender and prefers they/them pronouns, and "schmerm" is integral to their recurring performance "They, Themselves and Schmerm." Blackwell describes "schmerm" as "basically the sound people make when they try to figure out what gender I am."

Part comedy special, part performance art, part bare-bones confessional, Blackwell's performance is meant to challenge, intrigue and most importantly, make transgender topics a bit more visible. Blackwell's content made the performance perfect for Ann Arbor's University Musical Society's upcoming No Safety Net Festival. From Jan. 17 to Feb. 3, the festival will be a "a three-week look at works of theater that embrace contemporary social issues, including slavery and race in America, terrorism, transgender identity and recovery from addiction and depression," according to a press release.

No Safety Net will include four main performances, along with a variety of workshops throughout the three week time



Actor and comedian Becca Blackwell

period. Mallory Shea is the marketing and media relations coordinator at UMS. She said that this festival will be the first time that UMS has put on a group of performances that attempt to start conversations about social issues like this, on such a scale.

Safe Space

"One of the things that kind of makes this important to us, is that we have a relationship with the university here. The university leadership earlier this year has stated that universities should be dangerous places for ideas, and safe spaces for people," Shea said. "So, basically through Safety Net we're just interested in creating a safe space for people with different viewpoints to have an honest dialogue about the social issues that we're facing today. It's just meant to serve as a much larger platform for that."

And, if the topics seem like ones that might be uncomfortable to talk about, Shea said then that's perfect. The performances, above all, are meant to educate.

"It's meant to build empathy, and just put people in other people's shoes," Shea said. "And how they experience the world that we live in."

Besides Blackwell's standup routine, "Underground Railroad Game" will be put on by Arts Nova, "Us/Them" will be put on by BRONKS and Richard Jordan Productions and FK Alexander's "(I Could Go On Singing) Over the Rainbow," with accompaniment from Okishima Island Tourist Association. "Underground Railroad Game" focuses on racism.

"That particular performance is just two performers in that program. They're middle school teachers and they have a lesson

Advertisement for Lewis Jewelers. The logo features the name "LEWIS JEWELERS" in a stylized red font with "SINCE 1921" and "YOUR DIAMOND STORE" below it. The address "2000 W. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor" and phone number "734.994.5111" are listed along with the website "www.lewisjewelers.com". Below the text is a stack of various diamond and gemstone rings.

FESTIVAL

No Safety Net

University Musical Society's upcoming No Safety Net Festival. From Jan. 17 to Feb. 3, the festival will be a "a three-week look at works of theater that embrace contemporary social issues, including slavery and race in America, terrorism, transgender identity and recovery from addiction and depression." No Safety Net will include four main performances, along with a variety of workshops throughout the three week time period.

>> www.ums.org/nosafetynet

Advertisement for the movie "Call Me by Your Name". It features a quote from Peter Travers of Rolling Stone: "★★★★ 'ONE OF THE YEAR'S VERY BEST FILMS.' —PETER TRAVERS, ROLLING STONE". The title "CALL ME BY YOUR NAME" is prominently displayed, along with "OPENING IN JANUARY". The Sundance Film Festival logo is also present. At the bottom, it lists the venue: "ANN ARBOR'S DOWNTOWN CENTER FOR FINE FILM AND THE PERFORMING ARTS" at "603 E. LIBERTY ST. • ANN ARBOR (734) 668-8397 • MICHTHEATER.ORG".

plan that they do as a way of teaching their classroom about the Underground Railroad itself,” Shea said. “One of the teachers is black and the other teacher is white, so it’s really an exploration of race and power and sex.”

Also about a school, “Us/Them” focuses on a real-life hostage situation in Chechnya in 2004. During the event, more than 300 people were held hostage. According to Shea, the performance is an abstract one.

“The performance is really a beautiful piece of physical theater that explores the way children deal with trauma, and the way that we as adults tackle that kind of stuff,” she said. “It’s informed by survivors of the hostage situation, so it kind of takes you into the mind of children and how they would handle that kind of situation.”

Over the Rainbow

Lastly, FK Alexander’s performance explores a dichotomy of musical sound and styles with “(I Could Go On Singing) Over the Rainbow.”

“What FK did is take the final recording that Judy Garland did of ‘Over the Rainbow’ — this is the last time that Judy Garland had sung that song before she died — (and) combine that with music from a self-proclaimed noise band,” Shea said. “She combines this beautiful recording of Judy Garland with this

loud noise band experience. What it really is, is an exploration into some of the radical healing that she has been working on through her recovery from addiction and depression.”

Over the course of the three weeks, more than 22 different performances will be held, giving interested parties an opportunity to see some performances more than once, or pick and choose which ones are most interesting. The festival will end with “Decompress,” a party intended on encouraging self-care after introducing potentially heavy topics. Blackwell said they are looking forward to the performance, but they hope people leave “They, Themselves and Schmeer” with its overarching message.

“I’m not looking for sympathy. I’m not looking for anyone to tell me it’s OK. I’m not out there being all like, ‘Look at all the shitty things that have happened.’ I’m trying to look at the insanity and the weird ways we put limitations on ourselves, and how did I try to break out of that to come to some sort of sloppy conclusion that I’m a work in progress,” Blackwell said. “Who knows what the right or wrong is as long as I’m being authentic to myself. We’re all these bizarre, moving masterpieces that are constantly being worked on.”

Tickets and additional information are available at ums.org/nosafetynet. Read more about University Musical Society at ums.org.



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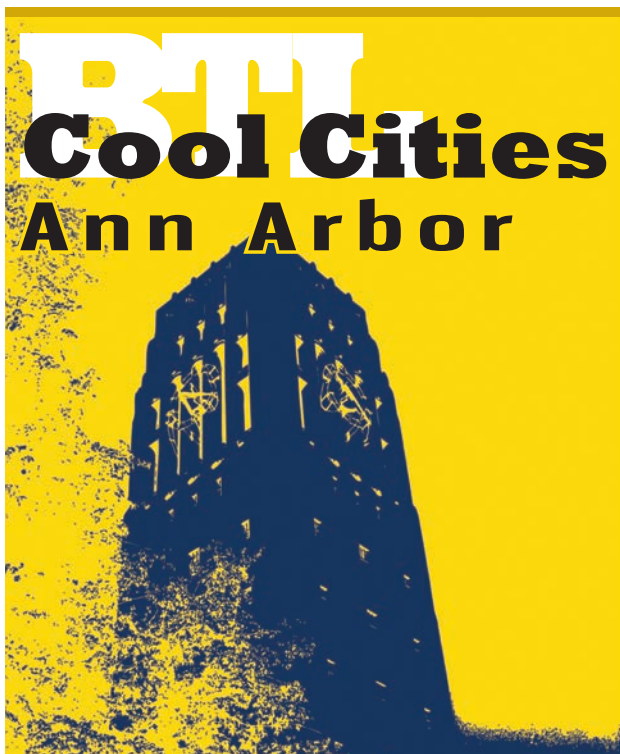
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Jim Toy Community Center Hosts 'Here Comes the Sun' by Nicole Dennis-Benn for LezRead January

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Nicole Dennis-Benn's debut novel was lauded as one of the best books of 2016 by NPR, BuzzFeed the New York Times and more, as well as a winner of the Lambda Literary Award for its storytelling. Now, it'll be the subject matter for the LezRead book club at Ann Arbor's Jim Toy Community Center.

The story follows Margot, a woman who works as a hotel concierge, who supplements her income using her sexuality. She works hard, and all of her efforts are to sustain her younger sister Thandi's education. Dennis-Benn sets the story within a village in Jamaica, weaving in a variety of struggles along the way. Although the story takes place in a seemingly idyllic setting, the novel proves that looks can be deceiving.

LezRead is a book club for lesbians that meets every fourth Saturday of the month from 4 to 6 p.m. The first hour of each meeting is dedicated to literary analysis, while the second hour is more social, with drinks and snacks at Aut Bar. Members are



encouraged to bring a small cash donation to each meeting for use of the community center. New members are welcome, and asked to email kerenem@jimtoycenter.org to join the book club's private Facebook group.

The Jim Toy Community Center is located at 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. More information about the community center can be found online at jimtoycenter.org.

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Lana Del Rey at Little Caesars Arena

Lana Del Rey first shot to fame in 2011 when the videos for her songs "Video Games" and "Blue Jeans" achieved viral status on YouTube. Since then, Del Rey has released five studio albums, "Lust for Life" being the most recent. She will be performing at Little Caesars's Arena on Jan. 17 at 8 p.m. Tickets start at \$39. More information can be found online at lanadelrey.com or ticketmaster.com.

Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Jan. 4

45+ Club 12:00 pm Activity and community group for persons age 45 and up. Play games and socialize in the Affirmations' Game Room. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Saturday, Jan. 6

Friends and Families 12:30 pm Support group for friends and families of LGBTQ identifying persons. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

LGBTQ with HPV 6:00 pm Support, discussion and activity group for anyone with HSV1/2 and HPV. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Thursday, Jan. 11

45+ Club 12:00 pm Activity and community group for persons age 45 and up. Play games and socialize in the Affirmations' Game Room. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Saturday, Jan. 13

Friends and Families 12:30 pm Support group for friends and families of LGBTQ identifying persons. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Tuesday, Jan. 16

Safe and Effective Management of Pain and Addiction 7:30 pm By Carl Christensen, MD, Ph.D., D-FASAM; and Mark A. Weiner, MD, D-FASAM. Learn techniques for effective pain management for people in recovery from addiction. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 <http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series>

Thursday, Jan. 18

45+ Club 12:00 pm Activity and community group for persons age 45 and up. Play games and socialize in the Affirmations' Game Room. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Saturday, Jan. 20

Friends and Families 12:30 pm Support group for friends and families of LGBTQ

identifying persons. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

LGBTQ with HPV 6:00 pm Support, discussion and activity group for anyone with HSV1/2 and HPV. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Winter Gala 7:00 pm Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, 314 South Park St., Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234 <http://wintergala2018.eventbrite.com>

Tuesday, Jan. 23

How to Support Recovery and Not Support Addiction 7:30 pm By Chuck Gehrke, MD, FACP, FASAM. Simple, effective actions for family, friends and others to avoid enabling addiction and support recovery. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 <http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series>

Wednesday, Jan. 24

2018 Creating Change Conference 1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Sutler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott

Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C.. <http://www.thetaskforce.org>

Thursday, Jan. 25

2018 Creating Change Conference 1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Sutler, Rodney

McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C.. <http://www.thetaskforce.org>

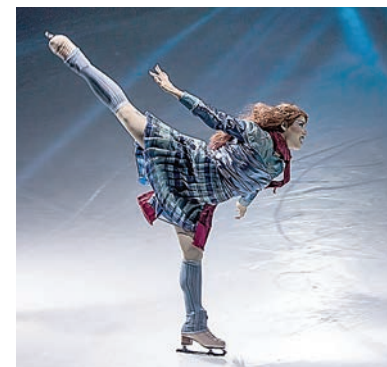
45+ Club 12:00 pm Activity and community group for persons age 45 and up. Play games and socialize in the

Affirmations' Game Room. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Editor's Pick

Cirque du Soleil brings Crystal to Little Caesar's Arena

With more than two dozen shows under its name, in its 30 year existence Cirque du Soleil has carved out a reputation as a trailblazing production company. Now, it is pushing its boundaries even further with Crystal: the company's first on-ice show. Crystal will perform shows at Little Caesar's Arena from Jan. 10 through 14. Shows Wednesday through Friday will begin at 7:30 p.m., with both a 3:30 and 7:30 p.m. show on Saturday, and one 5 p.m. show on Sunday. Tickets start at \$44. More information about tickets and pricing can be found on ticketmaster.com or cirquedusoleil.com.



Editor's Pick



Tiffany Haddish's #SHEREADY Tour Comes to Detroit

Listed as "The Funniest Woman Alive" by Vanity Fair, star of Universal's "Girls Trip" and author of the book "The Last Black Unicorn," comedian Tiffany Haddish has had a busy 2017. Now, she's kicking off 2018 just as hard with two shows at MGM Grand Detroit on Saturday, Jan. 6. The first performance will be at 7 p.m., doors open at 6 p.m., and the second at 10 p.m., doors open at 9 p.m. MGM Grand Detroit is located at 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. More information can be found at mgmgranddetroit.com or by calling (877) 888-2121.

Friday, Jan. 26

2018 Creating Change Conference
1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Suttler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C.. <http://www.thetaskforce.org>

Saturday, Jan. 27

2018 Creating Change Conference 1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Suttler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C.. www.thetaskforce.org

Friends and Families 12:30 pm Support group for friends and families of LGBTQ identifying persons. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 www.goaffirmations.org

Sunday, Jan. 28

2018 Creating Change Conference
1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Suttler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C.. <http://www.thetaskforce.org>

Tuesday, Jan. 30

Trauma, Chemical Use and Addiction
7:30 pm By Tana Bridge, PhD, ACSW, LMSW, ACTP. Learn about the relationship between addiction and trauma, and recovery from both conditions. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 <http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series>

MUSIC & MORE

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Salsa Dance Party feat. Los Gatos" Arrive early for a dance lesson with Award-winning Latin dancer/instructor Mambo Marci and stay for the open dance floor, a live music set, plus food and drink specials! Check website for ticket pricing. Max M. Fisher

Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 9 p.m. Jan. 26. 313-576-5111. www.dso.org

Plant Based Nutrition Support Group
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ART 'N' AROUND

Detroit Institute of Arts "Church - A Painter's Pilgrimage" One ticket sends you on two artistic adventures -- Monet: Framing Life and Church: A Painter's Pilgrimage. Travel to distinct places and time in history to experience the world as these two artists did. Check website for details! Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Nov. 9 - Jan. 14. 313-833-7900. www.dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "Monet - Framing Life" One ticket sends you on two artistic adventures -- Monet: Framing Life and Church: A Painter's Pilgrimage. Travel to distinct places and time in history to experience the world as these two artists did. Check Website for more info. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Nov. 9 - March 4. 313-833-7900. www.dia.org

Flint Institute of Arts "The Art of Containment" 50 plus Vessels from Bloomfield Hills resident Sidney Swidler's Collection, curated & amassed over 30 years! Tickets: Adults \$7, Kids \$5, Senior Citizens \$5, Free under 12, FREE SATURDAYS! Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Oct. 11 - March 18. 810-234-1695. <https://flintarts.org>

THEATER

A2CT Auditions for First Date Ann Arbor Civic Theatre announces auditions for its main stage production of First Date

by Austin Winsberg, with music by Alan Zachary and Michael Wiener, directed by Aaron C. Wade. Auditions for First Date are open to those 18 years and older. Actors need only attend ONE general audition session, Saturday, January 6th or Sunday, January 7th, 2018, at 7 PM at the Ann Arbor Civic Theatre. Studio Callbacks, if necessary, will be Monday, January 8th, 2018. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. Jan. 6 - Jan. 7. 734-971-2228. <http://www.a2ct.org/audition>

A2CT Presents The Explorers Club
Presenting: The Explorers Club by Nell Benjamin, directed by Brodie H. Brockie. Tickets are available online at www.a2ct.org, by calling the office at 734-971-2228 or at the door. Additional information is available by visiting www.a2ct.org. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Arthur Miller, 1226 Murfin Ave, Ann Arbor. Jan. 11 - Jan. 14. 734-971-2228. www.a2ct.org/shows/explorers-club

Constellations by Nick Payne This spellbinding, romantic journey begins with a simple encounter between a man and a woman. But what happens next defies the boundaries of the world we think we know delving into the infinite possibilities of their relationship and raising questions about the difference between choice and destiny. "Who knew that higher physics could be so sexy, so accessible and so emotionally devastating?" - New York Times. Directed by Carla Milarch. Theatre Nova, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. Jan. 26 - Feb. 18. 734-6358450. <http://www.theatrenova.org>

Into The Woods Tickets \$23-\$26.50. Stagecrafters, Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. Jan. 19 - Feb. 11. 2485418027. www.stagecrafters.org

Our Lady of Poison Giulia Tofana and her daughter Girolama are beloved apothecaries, and skilled poisoners. This mother-daughter team run an infamous underground operation to provide unfortunate wives with an escape from untenable marriages. Based on historical events. Check website for details. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. Jan. 25 - Feb. 25. 517-655-SHOW. www.williamstontheatre.org

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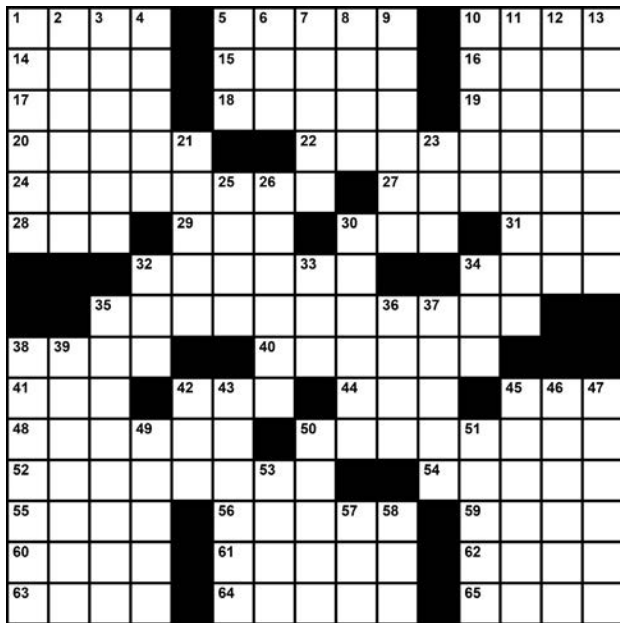
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Q Puzzle



- 38 Manhandle, with "with"
 40 Former editor of "Lavender Magazine"
 41 Capt. von Trapp's home
 42 Octave ends for Bernstein
 44 It means nothing
 45 What Tim might call Tyne
 48 Sisters of Greek myth
 50 With 52-Across, film about summer love between Elio and Oliver
 52 See 50-Across
 54 Spilled one's seed
 55 Not impotent
 56 Intense sounds of lovers
 59 Shoot off a flare, e.g.
 60 Goes to seed
 61 International Male's business, e.g.
 62 Lake of Ohio ferries
 63 Part of GPS (abbr.)
 64 Deviate
 65 World War II turning point
- 13 Looking heartbroken
 21 Old Testament prophet and book
 23 Get behind
 25 It reveals a drag queen's thighs
 26 They cut leaves of grass
 30 "Into the Woods" Tony winner Gleason
 32 MTF operation
 33 Cole Porter's "All Through ___ Night"
 34 Was out in front
 35 Presidential sexual activity
 36 Chains around a knight
 37 Considers carefully, with "over"
 38 Budapest dwellers
 39 Gay porn site
 42 Bear lair
 43 Bitter fruits
 45 William of Lincoln's "Team of Rivals"
 46 Peninsula where the rain falls mainly on the plain
 47 Waterside opera house location
 49 Wave top
 50 "The Gay Caballero" star Romero
 51 Shortened leaves of grass
 53 "South Park" co-creator Stone
 57 Zadora of "Hairspray"
 58 Cunning

Oliver!...and Elio

Across

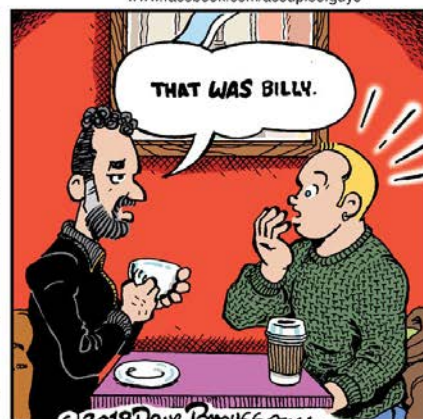
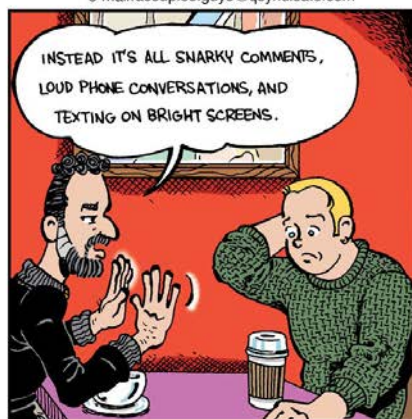
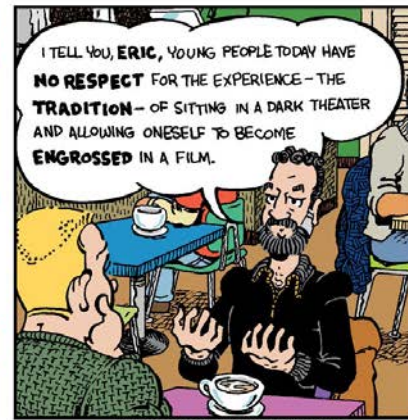
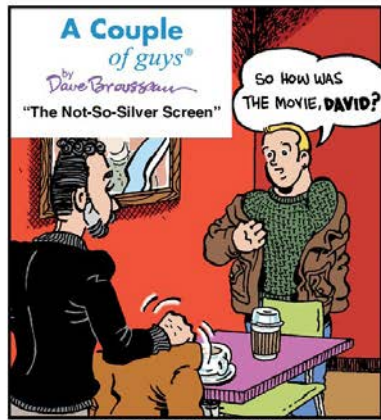
- 1 "The Glass Menagerie" segments
 5 Where two bones touch
 10 Peters out
 14 The Indigo Girls' "___ Line"
 15 Half sib of Liza
 16 Angelina's tomb-raiding role
 17 Clothing designer Chow
 18 Gay rodeo target
 19 Passed with flying colors
 20 Cause winter isolation

- 22 With 24-Across, actor who plays 17-year-old Elio
 24 See 22-Across
 27 Made of rough wool fabric
 28 Kneeler before a queen
 29 Made oneself hard to find
 30 Playwright Orton
 31 Jason of "Chasing Amy"
 32 Serenaded
 34 Alfred Douglas' title
 35 Actor who plays 24-year-old Oliver

Down

- 1 Top floors
 2 LaRue of gay porn
 3 Metallic organ?
 4 One who comes slowly
 5 Some commuter trains
 6 Sodomite in Genesis
 7 Somers of "The Match Game"
 8 "Tell me ___ haven't heard!"
 9 Start to like
 10 Tickle pink
 11 James Buchanan, notably
 12 Straight

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WC SAFE Welcomes Sharron Fincher as new Access Coordinator

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Sharron Fincher didn't always work in sexual assault advocacy. In fact, she held positions across many fields, like healthcare and banking. But according to her, she never really held much passion for those jobs. She said that volunteering after hours was what she looked forward to the most.

"Initially, I just started volunteering with WC Safe more so for the outreach. I like to be out in the community and get to know people, and this is a wonderful community," Fincher said. "It's the second largest sexual assault advocacy organization in the country, which is great, so I really learned a lot from them. The volunteering was amazing, and it made me more passionate to want to be involved. I was invited to work with the organization at Naomi's Nest, which is an addiction recovery center where we facilitated a talk group. And that actually has (grown) into other things, and made me be even more passionate about it."

And then, after finding her groove within the world of volunteering, the stars aligned.

"The opportunity for employment became available, I applied and I thought, 'How great would this be? To not volunteer in what I'm passionate about, but for that to be my career,'" Fincher said. "I applied, and fortunately, they hired me."

Now, Fincher is WC Safe's new Access Coordinator. Over the past several months, Fincher has been helping to develop the new position, which focuses on bringing an understanding of sexual assault to diverse communities.

"I have a wonderful team that's really supportive, and what I do is outreach," Fincher said. "Particularly LGBT, Arabic, Indigenous,

See next page

Huntington Woods Hosts Michigan's First Drag Queen Story Time, More to Come

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

HUNTINGTON WOODS – Story time in Huntington Woods got a little more interesting with the announcement of guest readers for January and February. The Huntington Woods Library has begun hosting what is believed to be the first Drag Queen Story Time in Michigan.

In December, Youth Services Director Joyce Krom invited Huntington Woods native Miss Raven Divine Cassadine and her friend Mr. Red Ribbon Dylan to read and sing stories with children in the community after hearing about Drag Queen Story Times in San Francisco, New York and Boston.

"My hope is that the next generation of kids won't see Drag Queen Story Time as anything unusual, and they'll just see people for who they are," Krom said.

Nearly 100 kids came with their families – so many that the event had to be moved from the library to the recreation center, and that a second story time needed to be added.

"We have had some push-back, but it was far outweighed by the positive responses," Krom said. "There is tremendous support for this."

Miss Raven, wearing a white gown and sparkly tiara, read "Be Who You Are" and "My Princess Boy." The stories gave her a chance to share a little about herself and to ask questions of the kids also.

"This crown is because I like to be proud, and you should be proud of yourself and proud of your friends too," she said.

She shared that she grew up in Huntington Woods and spent about 13 years doing ballet. "It takes a lot of practice and work," she said.

One of her childhood friends was in the audience.

"Growing up, I was a Princess Boy," Miss



Raven said. "And people would laugh at me. But Natalie was my friend. She never made fun of me. She never said anything bad. If anyone said anything mean, she stood up for me."

Mr. Red Ribbon also talked about feeling out of place as a youth in Grosse Pointe.

"I was bullied in high school, but I never let the bullies get to me," he said. "We are all human, remember that. We're all different in our own special ways."

Story time ended with a surprise for Miss Raven. It was her birthday, so the kids sang her "Happy Birthday!" while Krom wheeled in a cake with lots of candles.

"I was nervous coming here," Miss Raven said to the kids. "There's a lot of little people in this room and it made me nervous. I didn't know if you guys were going to like me or not. Do you like me?" she asked.

The answer was a room full of "yay"s and cheers. Afterwards, kids wanted to introduce themselves and give hugs.

Erica and Brian Conklin brought their kids,

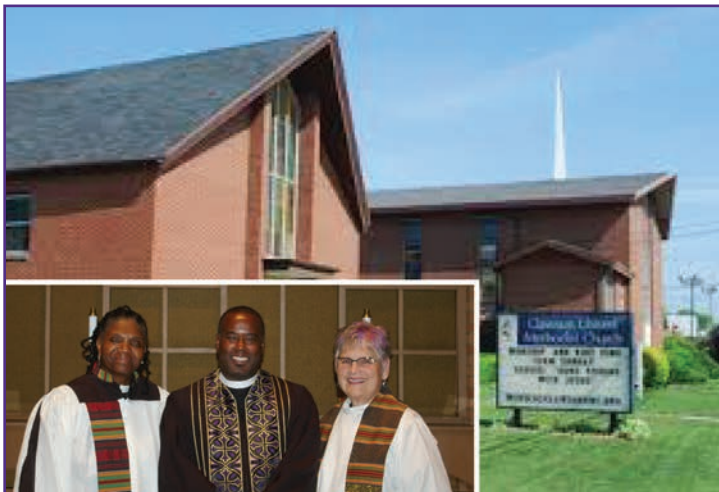
2-year-old Jack and 3-year-old Harper, to the event. They didn't feel any need to explain what a drag queen was.

"We just wanted them to experience it and see all sorts of people. We didn't want it to be a big deal. We just wanted them to have these early memories of experiencing diversity as a social norm. Nothing out of the ordinary."

When asked why she wanted to do Drag Queen Story Time, Miss Raven also spoke of the importance of early memories for the kids.

"We have to start at a young age so they can know about acceptance. And it lets kids know if they feel different that there are other people out there like them. Seeing us can give them someone they can relate to," she said.

The Huntington Woods Library will hold two more Drag Queen Story Time events: 6:30 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 18, 2018; 6:30 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018. They will also most likely be held at the Huntington Woods Recreation Center at 26325 Scotia Road. Register online at huntington-woods.lib.mi.us.



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► **Access Coordinator**

Continued from p. 28

Asian, hearing-impaired, African American, Hispanic – so, any marginalized population is what my job consists of.”

A large part of Fincher’s role focuses on the creation of sexual assault workshops for those marginalized communities.

“And along with that, I’m really working on cultural competency within our organization (so that we are) aware of the differences within cultures and the needs of those individual clients,” she said. “We are creating workshops. I also go out in the community and I create a lot of those as well.”

According to Fincher, these workshops have been gaining traction locally. She said that clients and coworkers alike have been interested in gaining a deeper understanding of cultures other than their own, and the cultural impacts of sexual assault. Although the creation of these programs isn’t easy, Fincher said that it has been going smoothly overall – she said the thing she worried about most hasn’t been a problem either.



Sharron Fincher

“I thought that the biggest challenge would be me. I am a lesbian, a masculine of center presenting lesbian. I know that in other cultures, homosexuality is kind of a sore topic to talk about, but ironically, communities are very open. They’re very interested in what we have to say,” Fincher said. “They’re very interested in learning about us and me and the LGBT community, and the culture of WC Safe, too. So, I’ve been

pretty blessed that there’s acceptance, and what I thought was going to be barrier was not. That’s very warming, because it just lets me know how great Detroit is and how progressive we are.”

Now that Fincher is warming up to the role, she said that her biggest challenge will be to help others get over the stigma surrounding sexual assault victims. She said that many people fear judgment, and avoid getting the help they need because of it.

“When you talk about trans women for example – judgement is huge. It’s, ‘Are you going to believe me?’ Even with people who are commercialized sex workers.” Fincher said. “You just have to create a clean slate for people, and allow them space to tell their story and not judge them and be open to it. Even culturally, if you go across the border some women (who) are survivors may be looked at differently by their families, and you don’t want that and it’s not their fault.”

WC Safe offers counseling and sexual assault advocacy services, in addition to a variety of clinics and workshops. All services are confidential. If you have been a victim of sexual assault and need help, WC Safe can be reached at (313) 964-9701 or online at wcsafe.org. WC Safe is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and is located at 2727 Second Ave., Detroit.

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Find over 300 Non-Profit Listings Serving Michigan's LGBTQ Online @ pridesource.com

Editor's Note: This is a sampling of the hundreds of Michigan non-profits working with the LGBTQ community across the state. From time to time this print resource will emphasize different sectors as space permits.

AIDS/HIV

There are dozens of AIDS/HIV organizations and resources listed at www.PrideSource.com. Here are just three of them:

AIDS Walk Detroit

Contact info@aidswalkdetroit.org or 248-399-9255 for more information. The walk takes place this year on Sunday, Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. at the Royal Oak Farmers Market

Macomb County STD Clinic

27690 Van Dyke
Warren, MI 48093
586-465-9217
<http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDSCounselingTesting>

Matrix Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program

120 Parsons Street
Detroit, MI 48201
888-226-6366
248-545-1435
www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/ryanwhite/

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond

3011 W. Grand Blvd. Suite 230
Detroit, MI 48202
313-446-9800
www.miunified.org
Michigan HIV/STD Hotline
800-872-2437

Advocacy

Equality Michigan

19641 W. 7 Mile, Detroit, MI
313-537-7000
equalitymi.org
[Facebook.com/equalitymichigan](https://www.facebook.com/equalitymichigan)

Get Listed, Promote Your Events

You can add or update any listing by going to www.PrideSource.com and clicking on Yellow Pages. Once you submit your listing, our staff will contact you to confirm your information.

You can add your event to the Pride Source Calendar online and in print by going to www.PrideSource.com and clicking on Calendar, then "Add Event." Send any press releases and announcements to editor@pridesource.com

Campus

Currently there are 19 organizations listed as active online at www.pridesource.com/yellow pages. The following are some in the southeast Michigan area:

U-M Ann Arbor

Spectrum Center
Spectrumcenter@umich.edu
<http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>
734-763-4186

Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

gsc@oakland.edu
www.oakland.edu/gsc
248-370-4336

Eastern Michigan University

LGBT Resource Center
emich.edu/lgbtrc
734-487-4149

The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

ltu.edu/student_affairs/lgbt.asp

Wayne State JIGSAW

[Facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW)
wsujigsaw@gmail.com

Community Centers

Michigan has nine active LGBTQ community centers, with a tenth planned in Lansing. Here are three of them.

Jim Toy Community Center

Ann Arbor
www.jimtoycenter.org
www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter
or follow them on Twitter @JimToyCenter.
319 Braun Court
Ann Arbor, MI
734-995-9867

LGBT Detroit

Detroit
www.lgbtdetroit.org
www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit
or follow them on Twitter @LGBTDetroit.
20025 Greenfield Road
Detroit, MI
Phone: 313-397-2127

Affirmations

Ferndale
<http://goaffirmations.org>
www.facebook.com/Affirmations/
or follow them on Twitter @GoAffirmations.
290 W. Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI
248-398-7105

Legal

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan

Jay Kaplan, Staff Attorney, LGBT Project
2966 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI
www.aclumich.org
313-578-6800

Fair Michigan

PO Box 6136
Plymouth, MI 48170
877-432-4764, 313-556-2300
fairmichigan.org
[Facebook.com/fairmichigan2016](https://www.facebook.com/fairmichigan2016)

Know Your Rights Project

Outlaws U-M student group
outlawslegal@gmail.com
734-995-9867

Older Adults

SAGE Metro Detroit

290 W. Nine Mile Rd. Ferndale, MI
313-578-6812
sagemetrodetroit.org
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

Political

The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

[Facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP](https://www.facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP)

Stonewall for Revolution

www.facebook.com/stonewall4reolution

Professional Groups

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 32446
Detroit, MI 48232
detroitlgbtchamber.com
1-800-DET-LGBT

Ties Like Me

Professional networking events
third Weds. 5:30 - 8 p.m.
TiesLikeMe.org

Suits And The City

Lansing, MI
suitsandthecity@gmail.com
www.suitsandthecity.org

Transgender

FtM Detroit

<https://www.facebook.com/FtMDetroit/>
ftmdetroit@gmail.com

FtM A2 Ypsi

ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/>

Transgender Michigan

23211 Woodward Ave.
Ferndale, MI
info@transgendermichigan.org
www.transgendermichigan.org
800-842-2954

Trans Sistas of Color Project

19641 W. 7 Mile Rd. in Detroit
313-537-7000 Ext 107
info@tscopdetroit.org
www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/

Youth

Ruth Ellis Center

77 Victor Street, Highland Park, MI
48203
info@ruthelliscenter.org
Facebook: Ruth Ellis Center
313-252-1950

Ozone House

102 N. Hamilton Street
Ypsilanti, MI
734-662-2265
734-662-2222

Stand With Trans

Farmington, MI
www.standwithtrans.org
248-739-9254



Find a digital version of PrideSource Magazine online under Our LGBTQ Yellow Pages

Find these resources online

- Adoption Services
- AIDS/HIV Hotlines
- AIDS/HIV Organizations
- Alzheimer's Association
- Animal Shelter
- Anti-Violence
- Archives/Collections
- Campus; Student and Alumni Groups
- Cancer Support Groups
- Choruses
- Community Centers
- Employee Resource Groups
- Families and Parents
- Foster Care
- Foundations and Funders
- Hotlines & Switchboards
- Labor Union
- Legal Organizations
- Museums
- Music Groups
- National Organizations
- Political Organizations
- Professional Organizations
- Religious & Spiritual
- Senior Living
- Seniors
- Social/Community Organizations
- Sports
- Substance Abuse
- Transgender Groups/Services
- Women's Health
- Youth Services

STD/HIV CLINIC

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Health
Department

Services Provided:

- Risk Assessment Counseling
- Free Condoms
- Rapid HIV Testing/Counseling



Testing and Treatment:

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Only, persons 12 and older

- Syphilis
- Gonorrhea/ Chlamydia
- Trichomoniasis
- Non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU)
- Scabies
- Pubic lice
- HEPC

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Box office & Information 313-868-1347

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WWW.ACCESSCOMMUNITY.ORG/SCREENINGHOURS

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In addition to these mainstage performances, UMS will host an extensive residency with many opportunities to engage in the topical content. Visit ums.org/NoSafetyNet for details.



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD GAME ARS NOVA

Wednesday, January 17 - Sunday, January 21
Arthur Miller Theatre

Two middle-school teachers incorporate an interactive role-playing game into their lesson on the history of the Underground Railroad. Outside the classroom, their relationship turns romantic, offering the audience their own lesson about the cross-sections of race, sex, and power.



US/THEM BRONKS AND RICHARD JORDAN PRODUCTIONS

Wednesday, January 24 - Sunday, January 28
Arthur Miller Theatre

Belgium's BRONKS theater company presents a compelling work about the hostage drama in a school in Belsan in 2004, when more than 1,200 people, mainly children and their mothers or grandmothers, were taken hostage. "Work of this quality and intelligence and tenderness reminds us that this is why we make theatre; this is why we watch theatre. And breathe..." (*Total Theatre*)



THEY, THEMSELVES AND SCHMERM

Written and performed by **Becca Blackwell**
Wednesday, January 31 - Saturday, February 3
Arthur Miller Theatre

Part classic standup comedy special, part confessional memoir, and part performance art, *They, Themselves and Scherm* is trans actor Becca Blackwell's disturbingly hilarious personal tale of being adopted into a Midwestern religious family, trained to be a girl, molested, and plagued by the question "How do I become a man, and do I even want that?"



(I COULD GO ON SINGING) OVER THE RAINBOW FK ALEXANDER AND OKISHIMA ISLAND TOURIST ASSOCIATION

Friday, January 26 - Saturday, February 3
Stamps Gallery (201 S. Division St.)

In a moment of undivided love and attention, Glasgow-based performance artist FK Alexander takes your hand, fixes your gaze, and sings directly to you alongside a distorted version of Judy Garland's final recording of "Over the Rainbow," played through a wall of noise by the abrasive noise band Okishima Island Tourist Association. "Desperate, moving, distressing, and beautiful too." (*The Guardian*)

No Safety Net is funded in part by the **Building Audiences for Sustainability** initiative of **The Wallace Foundation**

Media partners: **Ann Arbor's 107one**, **Between the Lines**, and **Metro Times**

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