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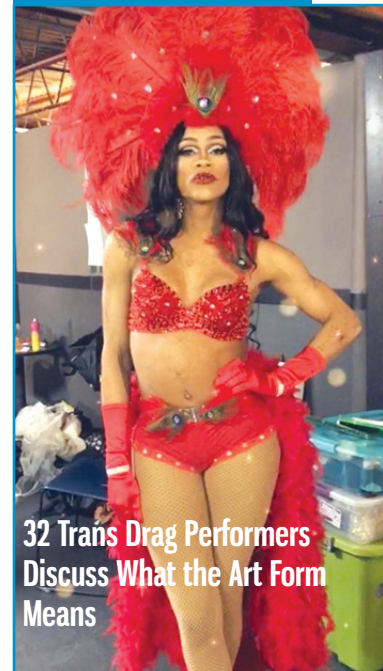
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THE '90S - 1993

March - A Media Journey

News Printing, Inc. of Northville told Between The Lines that they would not print the paper because the owner is "morally opposed" to the publication.

PRINTER REFUSES LINES Cites "moral objections"

The articles, artwork, and ads were in. The design was nearly completed. Between The Lines was ready to take as a new voice for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. I was starting to...

FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:

April - Community Under Attack

The Triangle Foundation's Community Watch Coalition released two reports that revealed anti-gay hate crimes continued to increase in 1992. They were up 4 percent from 1991 with 75 incidents directed at 80 people in the Detroit area alone. (Lesbian couple Susan Pittman and Christine Puckett were shot and killed in their front yard by their homophobic neighbor on May 5, 1991.)



September - Gays On Film

The inaugural Southeast Michigan Gay and Lesbian Film Festival took place at the Magic Bag Theatre in Ferndale from Sept. 24-26. It was produced and sponsored by Southeast Michigan Pride, Inc. The festival featured accomplished directors and award-winning films chosen with help from the San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian

April - The AIDS Decade

715 AIDS deaths were reported in Michigan, according to the Michigan Department of Public Health. AIDS was the second leading cause of death among black men ages 25-44 in Southeast Michigan.



November - UM Does the Right Thing

The University of Michigan Board of Regents voted 7 to 1 to approve an amendment for the Regents Bylaw 14.06 adding sexual orientation to a list of groups protected from discrimination in university policy. The revised bylaw was celebrated at a National Coming Out Day rally.

MARCHES ON WASHINGTON

1963 - The March on Washington was a massive protest march that occurred in August 1963, when some 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Also known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the event aimed to draw attention to continuing challenges and inequalities faced by African

Americans a century after emancipation. It was also the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s now-iconic "I Have A Dream" speech.

1979 - The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was a large political rally that took place in Washington, D.C. on October 14, 1979. The first such march on Washington, it drew between 75,000 and 125,000 gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people, and straight allies to demand equal civil rights and urge the passage of protective civil rights legislation.

1987 - The Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was a large political rally that took place in Washington, D.C. on October 11, 1987. Its



success, size, scope, and historical importance have led to it being called, "The Great March."

1993 - 800,000 to 1 million people attended

the historic March on Washington on April 25 making it one of the largest protests in American history. President Bill Clinton's election turbocharged the movement to "lift the ban" on gays in the military.

2000 - The Millennium March on Washington was an event to raise awareness and visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and issues of LGBT rights in the U.S. It was held April 28 to 30, 2000 in Washington, D.C. A march from the Washington Monument to the front lawn of the Capitol took place on April 30 where the crowd was addressed by several members of Congress and, via video, by President Bill Clinton. Estimates of attendance ranged from 200,000 to 1 million people.



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Jussie Smollett's Empire State of Mind



Photo: Tarrice Love

Actor-Activist on Defying Hollywood Limitations & Pride Past and Present

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Really, aside from a fame-catapulting role on “Empire” and a dreamy croon so velvety you could rest your head on it at night, Jussie Smollett is just like you. Or was: He remembers going to Pride. All the rainbows and free love and free condoms and fiery ex-boyfriend drama.

These days, he has shown up (to Long Beach Pride and Milwaukee Pride) as Singer Smollett, with swoon-worthy songs from his recently released debut — a contemporary R&B collection called “Sum of My Music” that’s as thoughtful as it is hooky — after putting it on the shelf for years because he was too busy diversifying TV. As out musician Jamal Lyon on the Fox drama “Empire,” Smollett, who got his start acting with 1992’s “The Mighty Ducks,” has crashed TV’s straight cis white party by bringing a positive depiction of a gay black man to your living room since the series premiered in 2014. Additionally, the 35-year-old multifaceted talent was featured as a celebrity correspondent during a May episode of the EPIX docu-series “America Divided,” exploring the horrific history of American racism.

Activist, singer, game-changing actor. A no-fucks businessman. Mariah Carey’s music-publishing student. And ... a cookbook scribe? As Smollett’s groundbreakingly boundless career proves, when you’ve faced Pride drama, no one — not ex-boyfriends, not Sony execs — can stand in your way.

How have your life experiences shaped this album?

“Sum of My Music” is the totality, pretty much, of what I’ve been dealing with over the last couple of years. The things with love, the things with my own personal insecurities, and the insecurities others put on you. And I write about my jealousy! (Laughs)

You gotta work it out.

I gotta work it out. I talk about a lot of personal things, and I’ve been singing (“Empire”) soundtracks for a couple of years now, and I’m so connected to the songs that I sing. I’ve written, like, half of the songs that I sing on the show, but it’s nice to be able to hide behind my own stories and my own lyrics that are just for me.

You’ve been in showbiz since you were a kid. As a gay black man, what challenges have you faced in Hollywood?

Umm (long pause). You know, I’d like to... let me think about it. I’ve been so focused on creating my own projects, honest to god. That’s really the message that I’m trying to get out there as much as possible: to create your own pieces, your own projects. Granted, I’m a businessman, but I kind of don’t pay attention to anything except trying to create with my people for my people and saying “fuck anything else.” I’m not interested anymore in convincing anybody that I’m valid enough or my stories are valid enough to tell.

But, of course there are challenges to being openly black (laughs) *and* openly gay. At the same time, what else am I supposed to do? This is who I am. Am I supposed to, in 2018, not live my life now for a role? I have to just keep it moving, and I have to create with people. This is why I’m an executive producer on “Giants,” which is on (“Insecure” producer and actress) Issa Rae’s YouTube channel. It deals with everything from mental illness to homosexuality, and everything in between.

Mariah Carey, who you duetted with on “Empire” and opened for on tour, famously pushed for her own creative control in the ‘90s. And you initially had planned on releasing this album on Columbia Records, until your artistic vision didn’t align with theirs and you released the album on your own indie label, Music Of Sound. What did you learn from Mariah about creative freedom?

I remember being on the phone with her for three hours and her just breaking down publishing for me. When I asked to be let out of my contract and be pulled away from

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my contract with Columbia, I feel like I was armed with knowledge from these types of people like her, and just different artists that I've met or veterans in the business that really kind of held my hand without even knowing it. Like, {ITAL they} thought they were just telling me something smart, but little did they know – or maybe they did know – they were really arming me with what I needed. That's why you should always be unselfish with your knowledge, 'cause you never know if it's gonna help somebody in the future.

From what I've heard you cry when you perform "Freedom," off the new album.

I can't help it.

What is it about that song that gets you emotional?

There's one particular part where I'm like, (sings) "and I don't care what they say, 'cause I know who we are to each other." I cry every single time. And maybe it's because I have to push really hard for that note (laughs)! Or, maybe it's just that it reminds me of how precious love is. And it reminds me of that idea of, I just – I want to love. And I think to me that's why I put Tika (Sumpter) and Cynthia (Erivo) in the video I directed for (the song) and they played lovers, they played partners. And it was just a thing of, I just wanted to show a same-sex couple doing the things everybody does. To me, freedom is just the ability to love and the ability to not just accept. I hate that word "accept." It's not even about that. It's about changing our molecular structure so we recognize love ... and love. If it's two consenting adults, if it's two consenting teenagers, if it's two consenting children, let these people love. Let these people love each other. How can love possibly be bad?

As someone who's been representing a sorely underrepresented group of people on "Empire" – the gay black male community – what has that meant to you?

It really humbles me. And it makes me grateful. I just remember that there was nobody I could see on TV who I could identify with. The very first person that I ever saw who was gay at all, like any member of the LGBTQ community that I could somewhat identify with, was Wilson Cruz (as Rickie Vasquez) on "My So-Called Life." He was someone of color, and I grew up loving people like Elton John, but I couldn't identify with Elton John because that's all I saw. I didn't put two and two together – it wasn't representation. I loved George Michael growing up. I loved Boy George growing up.

“I'm not interested anymore in convincing anybody that I'm valid enough or my stories are valid enough to tell. But, of course there are challenges to being openly black (laughs) and openly gay. At the same time, what else am I supposed to do? This is who I am. Am I supposed to, in 2018, not live my life now for a role? I have to just keep it moving.”

But I didn't connect. And maybe I would've been able to connect more on that level had I seen more people who represented me on that level. So nothing against them. They're wonderful.

Elton subverted the label. Elton was just Elton.

Exactly. I hope we can all get to that point. But representation is so important and the responsibility – something hit me yesterday. I was talking to someone, and I said, "I think a lot of things are debatable about me or certain people who I know who are leaders or whatever, but I think that I'm a good person. And I don't know if good people are supposed to say they're a good person, but I am saying I'm a good person." I take responsibility for all that I am.

But I've been given a platform, and I've worked for that platform. I've been doing this since I was 4. Got my SAG card in 1987. My point is we could use that platform for good, but we could also use that platform for bad, and that shit is scary. You have people looking up to you, you have people who somehow feel affected by what you do. There is a certain level of responsibility that you must take. There is no debate, I don't give a fuck. If the people are listening to you, you should say something worth hearing.

Politically?

Literally regarding anything that is unjust. Anything that is unjust, it is your responsibility to speak up.

People talk sometimes just to, like, sell something or just to be in the news or just to get likes. They'll say something, and they'll go to bed without even knowing what is actually being said and what is actually happening, and that's ignorant and that's selfish.

See Jussie Smollett, page 20

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Young, Old and Canine Embrace Spirit of 2018 Ferndale Pride

BY DREW HOWARD

Ferndale Pride 2018 proved to be the city's most robust and inclusive celebration yet, as thousands descended upon West Nine Mile Road on Saturday, June 2, for a day full of dancing, live entertainment and unity among the LGBTQ community.

Kicked off by Ferndale's Mayor Dave Coulter on the Motor City Hotel main stage, he emphasized the importance of LGBTQ visibility and support in trying political times.

"... if you want to know why we still need to gather, why we still need to come together and be visible, loud and outspoken and be ourselves, it's because there are still people like the president of the United States that would take this country backward and reverse the rights and the gains that we have made," Coulter said. "And we're not going to let him. So, I'm so excited to have you all here."

Then, Coulter introduced Congressman Sandy Levin to the platform to highlight his longtime support of Ferndale and that this year will be his last in office. Levin expressed his support for both Ferndale and its LGBTQ community members.

"It's such a great pleasure to join everyone here at Ferndale Pride. We have a lot of pride in this city and it's provided such leadership," Levin said. "So, it's a pleasure to be here with my family, to be here with my son, to be here with all of you."

Ferndale Pride Event Chair Julia Music then took the stage and wrapped up the event's opening remarks with a reminder to remember those who have fought for LGBTQ rights long before Ferndale's annual event.

"Today the entire LGBTQAI community and their allies come together to remember those we lost, and those who have struggled for our ability to be who we are," Music said. "We come together to celebrate love, humanity and the uniqueness that makes us one of a kind. We gather to find support, resources and smiles."

It was then that supportive city council members and local politicians participated in a rainbow balloon launch to bring the event to an official start.

Ferndale Pride's street fair began promptly at 1 p.m., and featured 40 percent more vendors than last year's celebration. Among the new booths were organizations supporting the asexual and intersex communities, two identity groups that in years past have lacked representation.



At the Ann Arbor Area Asexuals booth, festival-goers had the opportunity to chat with members of the community and purchase asexual accessories, including the group's flag and bracelets styled with the flag colors. Michelle Gaddis, a key organizer behind Ann Arbor Area Asexuals, spoke with BTL on the importance of having a booth at Ferndale Pride.

"We're lucky to be here," Gaddis said. "We're trying to promote visibility - it's still kind of an unknown thing ... Ferndale Pride is an awesome event, and Ferndale is such an LGBTQ-friendly town. I'd say even more so than Ann Arbor."

The Asexual community - or "ACE" for short - was also celebrated with its own balloon launch at 12:45 p.m., before opening remarks were made. The launch was the first of its kind at Ferndale Pride. Prior to the launch, the ACE community was given yet another shout out when a couple, one of whom was a member of the Ann Arbor Area Asexuals, publicly got married at the festival's main stage.

Elsewhere at Pride, it was business as usual. Walking through the crowded street, visitors would be hard pressed to spot a festival-goer who wasn't either sporting rainbow attire, navigating the pavement in six-inch stilettos, carrying LGBTQ merchandise or chasing down the Ferndale Pride mascot for a quick selfie.

As is tradition, Ferndale Pride's mascot



Gordon Matson made himself present in all corners of the festival carrying his customary Pride flag while greeting attendees. This year, Matson could also be seen wearing a tall, papal miter. He said he changed up his typical rainbow headdress at the 11th hour in honor of a BTL cover story labeling him as the "Pope of Pride."

Speaking with BTL, Matson joked that he had no idea where the name came from, but was happy to embrace the title nevertheless.

"The article on me comes out, and it says I'm the Pope of Pride," Matson said. "Where in the hell did that come from? So, my fiancé and I put this together last night."

Another Ferndale Pride attendee drawing crowds was Dolly, a lesbian poodle seen strutting the streets in her freshly painted nails and Pride bandana.

Dolly's owner, Dennis Martin, described her as "fabulous, like me," and confirmed that she gets her nails painted every week with a different color.

"She was rescued from a puppy mill," Martin told BTL. "Her name was Daisy Rose. When she got in my car, I immediately changed it to Dolly. I'm a fan of Dolly Parton."

In addition to being pet-friendly, Ferndale Pride organizers have made a point every year to facilitate a family-friendly environment. BTL spoke with a several first-time Pride attendees to discuss what the event meant to them.

"I got invited with my friend to go here because I've never been," a teen told BTL. "And because I don't get accepted by my parents. This is an accepting place to just, be. It's good."

"I want to show acceptance for all the people who don't get acceptance out here, and to have fun with my friends," another teen said, who began darting around the crowd requesting fist bumps from anyone and everyone following our conversation.

Another teen who spoke with BTL, said this was their first Pride event since coming out several months ago.

"I'm here because it's really fun, and it's a really happy place," they said.

Pride festivities continued past the street fair's hours of operations as attendees made their way to local businesses like Rosie O'Grady's and Pop's Italian to keep the party going.

For more information on the Ferndale Pride 2018 groups please visit ferndalepride.com. More information about the Ann Arbor Area Asexuals can be found online at gaybe.am/Cy.





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Grosse Pointe Residents to Host Pride Festival After Party

BY DREW HOWARD

While Grosse Pointe Pride is scheduled to end on Sunday at 5 p.m., festival-goers are invited to keep the party going over at local “Gay-bors” Ashley and Dante, who will host a community open house mixer for the LGBTQIA+ community and allies.

“This is an informal invitation to any and all who want to participate,” Dante told BTL. “It’s really an open house essentially ... an opportunity to meet our neighbors, meet the people who don’t live in our part of the neighborhood, and also a way to celebrate Pride.”

After being offered a job opportunity in Michigan, Ashley and Dante uprooted themselves from their Chicago residence and into their Grosse Pointe home last September. And while they’ve only been in the area for a short time, they both agree that the community has been especially welcoming.

“Through a Facebook group, we were invited to the Pride event,” Dante said. “And through conversations with some of the people on the forum we were just sort of overwhelmed by how much of a supportive community we’ve moved to.”

“With my partner and I being a same-sex couple in a somewhat mixed neighborhood, we were not sure how we’d be received,” he added.

Dante and Ashley will open their home to the public until 11 p.m. following Grosse Pointe Pride on Saturday, June 9. All guests are welcome to bring a beverage of their choice or a side dish to share.

“Don’t try and hide it!” the open house invitation reads. “Come flaunt it and live it loud with your fellow Grosse Pointe Park Gay-bors (gay neighbors) Ashley & Dante ... come celebrate love and fellowship and make a few new friends!”

To RSVP for the open house mixer, or get in contact with the hosts, please visit the official website <https://sites.google.com/view/grossepointeprideafterparty/home>.

Ferndale Raises Rainbow Flag in Honor of Pride Month

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

A crowd of about 40 came out to Ferndale City Hall on Friday, June 1, to see the rainbow flag being raised in celebration of LGBTQ pride month. The flag will fly just beneath the American Flag for the entire month of June.

The flag-raising ceremony was the brainchild of Ferndale Mayor Pro Tem Greg Pawlica.

“For many years, the City of Ferndale has issued a proclamation declaring June LGBTQ pride month,” Pawlica, who is also treasurer of Ferndale Pride, explained.

“In early May, I realized that I needed to submit a request for the proclamation to the city clerk. Rather than doing the same thing as in years past, I decided I wanted to raise the bar, as we usually do, here in Ferndale.”

Soon, a vision emerged and Pawlica was sending out emails to get it realized.

“I sent an email to Mayor (David) Coulter and the city manager expressing my desire to fly the Pride flag for the entire month of June in front of City Hall and at the 8 Mile welcome gateway on Woodward, and I wanted a small simple ceremony to kick it off,” he said. “As expected, I got their full support.”

On hand for the ceremony was the Affirmations Interim Executive Director Lilianna Reyes.

“We’re really excited at Affirmations, your community center, because we are at the heart of downtown Ferndale and we have such an amazing city council that says, ‘hey, let’s show our pride,’” Reyes said.

Julia Music, event chair for Ferndale



flag 4: Michael Lary, Affirmations Interim Executive Director Liliana Reyes, Ferndale Pride President Julia Music and Ferndale Mayor Pro Tem Greg Pawlica help raise the rainbow flag BTL photo: Jason A. Michael

Pride, agreed with Reyes’ sentiments.

“It’s truly a gift to live in a city where the government officials believe in supporting the rights of LGBT people,” she said.

The evening’s last speaker was an unexpected guest who pleased many with his attendance.

“I just wanted to come by,” said Congressman Sandy Levin. “We’ll see each other tomorrow.”

I think I’ve been to Pride every year and tomorrow I think is going to be another important gathering.”

Following the ceremony, Pawlica spoke further about its importance to the LGBTQ community locally, and its potentially far-reaching effects.

“Issuing a proclamation is great, and I think communities across the country and around the world should continue making those statements of support,” he said. “But a proclamation isn’t continually present as flying a flag in front of a government institution. Flag-raising signifies affirmation, approval, endorsement and commitment. We, the City of Ferndale, are saying to everyone who comes into our city that we support inclusion and diversity, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The LGBT community has adopted the rainbow as their banner. The reality is that everyone can identify themselves in the colors of the rainbow, and the City of Ferndale welcomes you.”

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City of Madison Heights Proclaims June Pride Month

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

MADISON HEIGHTS – On Tuesday, May 29, Madison Heights read into record a proclamation declaring June 2018 as Pride Month for the city. About 15 members of the LGBTQ community were on hand to rally and show their support at city hall.

Before the meeting, Mayor Brian Hartwell shared a prepared statement. It read in part,

“The recognition of Pride Month by the City of Madison Heights is a statement of love and acceptance. We believe – what should be obvious to people with love in their hearts – that people are born free and are equal in dignity and rights regardless of qualities such as their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

“As mayor, as a city council, as a city government representing 30,000 residents, we embrace all of our brothers and sisters with pride, and say to our residents, you deserve safety, comfort, respect, and – if you want it – the right to be left alone. Most importantly our residents deserve to hear from their government officials that we will treat everyone equally. The month of June is a convenient, historic time of year for us to recognize Pride. I encourage members of city council to adopt a Pride resolution tonight. I encourage city employees to strive to protect the rights of all residents. I invite members of the public to celebrate their identities, to have pride in themselves, and pride in the City of Madison Heights.”

Hartwell told BTL, “As a politician, when I present resolutions, like the resolution tonight for Pride Month, critics will always question, ‘why are you doing this? We have no problem in Madison Heights, everyone gets along.’ But that’s just not true. There’s still discrimination in every city, in every segment of our economy.”

Madison Heights does not have an inclusive human rights ordinance, despite persistent efforts by Hartwell over the years.

“The best I was able to get passed was a resolution from our city council asking our state leaders to not create any laws that would discriminate,” he said, “I had support from religious groups, business groups, charitable groups and residents, but I could not get a majority of the elected officials on the council to say, ‘Yes, bring it to a public debate.’ So it never made it to public debate.”

Coincidentally, Hartwell had plans to attend a rehearsal for Prism, the men’s chorus, just before the meeting. Prism rehearses at a church



LGBTQ community members were on hand to rally and show their support at Madison Heights city hall. From left, Nicolas Persinger, Emma Green, Stacey Winn, Francessca Janet Rydock, Msval Bratt, Brianna Dee Kingsley, Nicole Mckayla-hope Tacey, Ellen Shanna Knoppow, Erin Rook, and Tih Penfil BTL photos: Ellen Shanna Knoppow.



“*Discrimination must be confronted. It can be stopped with the law; it can be stopped with love and respect; hate can also be slowly dissolved through education and public announcements like the city’s message tonight.*”

– Madison Heights Mayor Brian Hartwell

in Madison Heights.

“I can’t wait to hear their music,” he said, “It

will give me a little bit of inspiration before I go into the public meeting.”

The effort for the resolution was spearheaded by 18-year-old college student and lifelong Madison Heights resident Emma Green. Green is a student at Ohio Northern University,

where she is studying politics, philosophy and economics, with a minor in public policy.

“I try to stay involved with Madison Heights as much as I can,” she said. “My passions in life are public policy and public service and trying to give back to the community that’s already given so much to me.”

Green was inspired to draft the resolution by her work with Amnesty International. The organization’s focus for the month of June is LGBTQ rights. This also coincided with the city of Hazel Park’s passage of their own resolution one week ago.

Green shared that she is a proud member of the LGBTQ community.

“I’m bisexual, so this is something that’s always been important to me, to be recognized by elected officials,” she said, adding, “the city’s slogan is ‘city of progress.’ And so, this is pretty progressive.”

Originally, Green had planned with Hartwell to present the resolution at the June meeting, but they were able to move it up to May. Things came together pretty quickly, with Green sending out a message to rally support via social media Monday evening. She purchased a pride flag from Affirmations on her drive over, which, with Hartwell’s help, was prominently displayed in city council chambers before the meeting began.

Green spoke eloquently at the meeting on the history of LGBTQ discrimination, and on the importance of the resolution. She cited Mike Pence’s support of “conversion therapy” and current events including the recent decision in Oklahoma regarding discrimination against LGBTQ couples seeking adoption. Green decried the complacency of Madison Heights in general, quoting Desmond Tutu, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Photographer Tih Penfil, who has been documenting Motor City Pride for 30 years and is a Madison Heights resident, has “been

See Madison Heights, page 18

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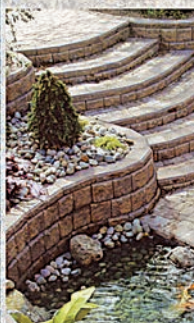


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► **Madison Heights**

Continued from p. 16

in the fight for 40 years,” and was the first to speak during public comments.

“The action taken today by this group, and by this young woman, Emma, shows extreme courage, intelligence and dedication, [and] is going to open things up for the youth of this town, it’s going to open things up to the minds in this town that maybe haven’t been open enough.”

She recalled her experience over the years planning Motor City Pride, “for people who didn’t have much pride when it started, and I remember when the FBI would be on the top of the buildings in Detroit during the parade to video whoever was there, go after them and do backgrounds. So from that lead to now is major. And a proclamation might seem like a small thing, but it is a very large thing. It is saying, ‘we are accepted as neighbors, we are accepted as friends, we are accepted as part of this community,’ and that is a major thing.”

Brianna Dee Kingsley, chief operating officer for Equality Michigan, addressed the city council next, thanking them for exercising their leadership in declaring June Pride Month in Madison Heights.

“What that says to the overwhelming community, is that you are open for business.

That is a very powerful business message of inclusivity and honoring people’s integrity to be their true selves at home, at work, at church and in their community. So, thank you for taking the time to make this proclamation, because as you are aware, we don’t always have these kind of positive messages. So this is a glimmer of hope. It is a light in the dark that in our community that we can be included.”

Kingsley went on to point out that Madison Heights lacks an inclusive human rights ordinance, referencing more than 40 municipalities in Michigan that do. She described the recent ruling by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, which now interprets “sex” discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Kingsley encouraged the city council members to continue to be on the forefront on these issues.

Finally, the city council heard from Stacey Winn, a resident of Madison Heights since the age of ten. “I’m a little emotional today,” she said. “Emma – I’ve known her for quite a while – she frequented our house as most marching band kids do. She has made me beyond proud today. I am a gay woman, who came out much later in life, and still find it very difficult. We have a wonderful community of young people that have supported me in ways that I have never thought would be possible. And I just want her to know how proud I am of her for doing this.”



Emma Green and friend accepting the June Pride Month Proclamation. Alice McKeage accepting the Proclamation for National Gun Violence Awareness Day. Photo courtesy of Tih Penfil

After the meeting, proud community member Val Bralt, who serves on the boards of TG Detroit, GNA and MCC Detroit, summed it up.

“With so many communities behind the

ball with regard to rights of disenfranchised groups, I’m glad to see that Madison Heights is going to be ahead of history instead of trailing it. Congratulations, Madison Heights.”

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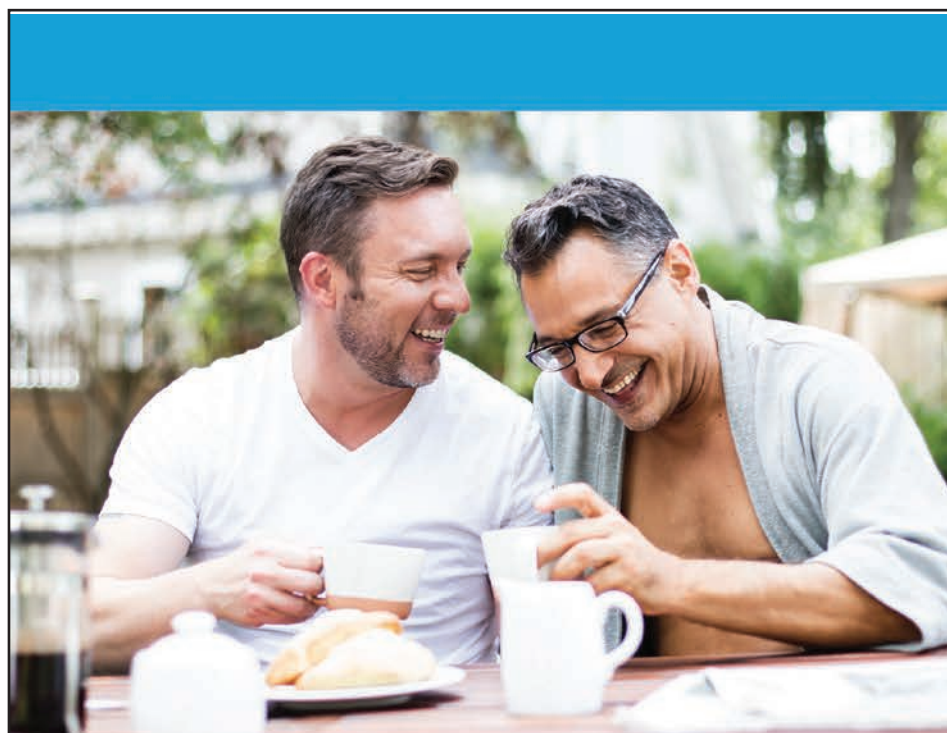
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► Jussie Smollett

Continued from p. 11

Can you tell me about your first Pride event?

Oh god. I had the best time, and then got in a major fight with my boyfriend at the time. See, this is the thing: If your shit is strong, Pride can be a real good time. If your shit is weak, Pride will tear a motherfucker apart!

Oh yeah, it can be drama depending on who you see.

It can be major drama, especially if it's the city in which you live.

Because you're gonna run into ex-boyfriends.

You gonna run into exes, you gonna run into *their* exes. I was dating someone and every single Pride we had an issue. Nowadays, I'm very calm. (Laughs)

You have a cookbook coming out, a collaboration with your siblings; that's how settled down you are.

I have a fucking cookbook with my family – I'm *very* settled down. I'm in a calm, wonderful relationship. My life is just calmer, it's more secure. So now, when I go to pride, it's all love, it's fun. I haven't really been able

to go to a Pride in a couple of years and Long Beach Pride was the first Pride that I've ever performed at because ever since "Empire" started I always said, "No, I don't want to do Pride until I do it for my album. I want it to be special. I want to do it when I'm on tour," and that's what we ended up doing. And it's been fun.

Because I need a husband: What do you cook for your man and are those recipes in the book?

Listen, everybody needs to know how to cook. You got to get your man right.

What's the right man dish?

I'm good at a good stir-fry. That's what I cook for everybody, and I can't give away my secrets of what I throw down and how I throw down and what I throw down with in the kitchen. But it definitely goes down in the kitchen in more ways than one.



What is your Pride message for the LGBTQ community?

To love yourself. Love yourself and love each other. We are literally all we got, and I say this in every single show. I turn the lights up on the audience and I just say, "Society wants us to believe that the world doesn't really look like this, but it does. This is what the world looks like, all different races

and cultures and religions and sexualities and genders and ages and body types and people standing, people sitting, people in a wheelchair, people in crutches." All of that. So my thing is, the people who are yelling hateful things are so fucking loud, and we just need to lower their volume so we can raise up ours for us who want to preach love and who want to practice love." It's that simple.

Listen, I know it's deeper than just that. We have to deal with policy changes, we gotta deal with law changes. We gotta deal with all of that. It's economic. It's all of these things. But everything starts with love. And I hate the term "minority," but if every single so-called minority group were to raise up and join together, we would be a fierce majority that no motherfucker could take down.

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

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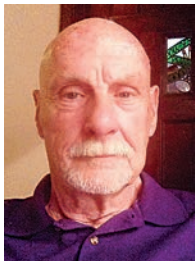


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A Slogan Come True Big Time!

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

“Gay is good. You are not alone.” This was the slogan when the Affirmations LGBT Center opened its doors in Ferndale more than 30 years ago.

It was a bold statement to make at the time: reassurance for many cautious, confused, isolated young people in need of understanding, trained organizational support and a place to hang out.

I had almost forgotten these long-ago welcoming words. The slogan is not used very much these days; if at all. Truth of the matter, it’s now both evident and obvious thanks to Affirmations’ year-round presence and multifaceted LGBTQ services to our rainbow community.

That famed slogan was demonstrated in a big way recently on Saturday, June 2, for the 2018 Ferndale Pride event. This year, it took place along 9 Mile from Woodward Avenue to Livernois, and attracted over 10,000 participants, LGBTQ celebrants, allies, parents with children and well-groomed, well-behaved pets (for what it’s worth, there were no Bible-thumpers lurking about, offering to pray for anyone wishing to change sexual orientation from LGBTQ to straight, and just maybe, straight to LGBTQ, now that the pope has given his seemingly worldwide religious sanction of one man’s gayness).

I don’t know the exact number of such pride events I’ve attended over the past 10 years. Let’s say

five per year, depending upon day and time – including Chicago, Royal Oak, Ferndale and Motor City Pride – but invariably at some point I’m visibly moved to tearful celebration, inward and occasionally outward.

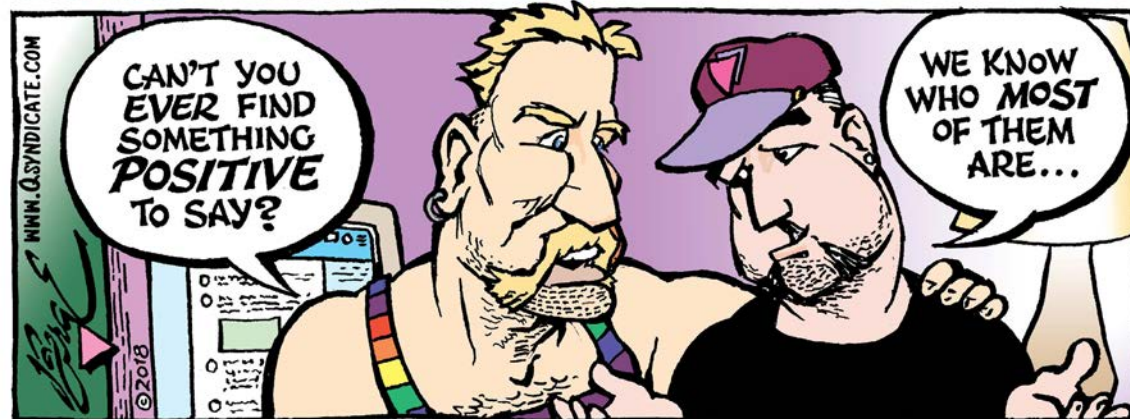
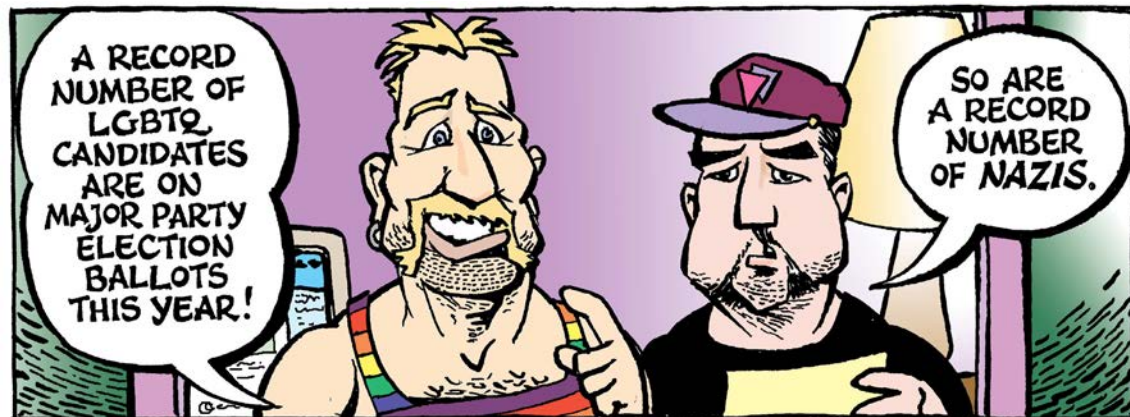
I came out decades ago when we honestly had nothing much special to be proud of. Except our closeted friendships.

I attended Ferndale Pride with my good friends, Gordon Price and Ron Miotke, partners now for over 20 years (Ron provided strong, sustained leadership services to the Triangle Foundation along with Jeffery Montgomery. For Ron and Gordon it was another opportunity to celebrate their shared gay life by once more in public holding hands as they walked together).

At my age I can only do so much walking before getting quickly fatigued, so as Ron and Gordon walked the extra blocks of this year’s Ferndale Pride event, I decided to sit and rest a bit at the Affirmations LGBT Center.

When I sat down, it was half an hour before the pride prom was to begin there. I borrowed a chair from a SAGE table that was being disassembled, and took visual notes. Seniors making space for rainbow youth.

Through the doors and past me came many happy, excited young gays, lesbians and trans youth. I knew they were happy to be there. There was such evident joy. Such a sense of belonging. With many, too, were their parents.



BTL Viewpoint

BTL at 25: The Path to Progress

It’s BTL’s silver anniversary, and for 25 years we have been dedicated to providing news for Michigan’s LGBTQ community. So now, as we celebrate this incredible milestone in not only our history, but that of our readership, we invite you to look back with us.

Over the next 12 months BTL will revisit Southeast Michigan’s historical milestones, traveling back in time to reexamine those events that have changed the face of our community. We’ll be releasing regular historical graphics that take a look at some of the LGBTQ community’s greatest triumphs as well as some of the biggest bumps we’ve encountered on the road to equality. The first of these graphics can be found on page 8.

This emphasis on examining our past is in keeping with BTL’s primary goal: increasing LGBTQ visibility. According to Co-Publisher Susan Horowitz, being visible in the public eye is one of the most effective

ways to fight LGBTQ discrimination.

“All press, all news as the great, late Philip Graham of the Washington Post said, ‘is the first draft of history,’ and we knew very early on that our history was being lost by not being documented and recorded,” Horowitz said. “It was then that people went back, historians devoted themselves to LGBTQ history, and writers wrote books, and filmmakers made film and newspaper activists found their way to producing LGBTQ newspapers. And what the LGBTQ local newspapers do around the country is to continue to document the local community and what our challenges are, our success and our future may look like.”

In the time that BTL has published we’ve seen part of that future unfold, in the vast, overwhelmingly positive change in the local LGBTQ landscape. Today, there are more than a dozen community centers across the state, hundreds of LGBTQ-owned businesses and thousands of annual pride attendees across Michigan.



BTL's first issue in April 1993. Since then 1,069 issues have been published.

Keeping those achievements in mind – and those of the organizations that came before us – we have endeavored not just to cover the news, but to break news as it happens. Additionally, we break it down with thoughtful editorials and commentary to foster a greater understanding of recent events. BTL's goal is to also entertain our readers. We make an effort to regularly supply up-to-date entertainment and arts information happening in the area and nationally. According to Horowitz, Southeast Michigan provides no dearth of stories and content.

"I mean we've published 35,000+ articles. That's an enormous number, that's the equivalent of about 400 full-length books, documenting primarily Southeast Michigan and the state when we could and there wasn't anyone out there that was going to do it," she said. "We had to make that conscious decision, and what shifted so radically is the level of support from the allied

communities both in advertising and in fighting the good fight with us. That's been the huge shift that I've seen and am still seeing during my time at BTL.

We started out small but quickly grew from our humble beginnings as a monthly publication put together in our publisher's basement, to a biweekly paper, and eventually a weekly publication in a professional office space.

But the reason behind our quick growth has always been and always will be our avid readership. It is because of our robust Southeast Michigan LGBTQ community that we have strived at all times to present stories factually in a framework that reinforces our quest for LGBTQ equality and increased presence in the community.

We hope and imagine a future that continues to build on positive change and maintain it for another 25 years.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 22

Supportive. Happy that their children, their teen gay sons and lesbian daughters and children in transition had opportunity for the start of fulfilling lives, careers and loving partnerships.

Thank you, Ferndale Pride! Thank you Motor City Pride! Thanks to the hundreds of 2018 Prides across America! Special thanks to Affirmations! Gay is Good! You are indeed Not Alone!

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Face Book images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

Pride Rainbow

some with caution
some with confidence
some seeking rainbow
courage (now!)

all join hands and
promenade:

black, white
yellow, red
stripes and stars
unfolding

our marching drums
our music, yes
play it proud

(so out it's neatly in)

- Charles Alexander

Creep of the Week

Alliance Defending Freedom

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Welp, gay people can't have cake any more, the Supreme Court said so. It is now the law of the land that cake is intended only for one man and one woman to eat between just the two of them forever and ever. Heterosexuals – and this is the part not being reported by the media – are no longer permitted to eat any other food. It's cake only. The catch, however, is that only married straights can have cake. Everyone else gets no cake.

Some are worrying that preventing single men and women, not to mention children, from eating cake will lead to fraudulent marriages where people only say "I do" for the cake, not for the Lord. It is also feared that gays and lesbians will pose as straight and marry under false pretenses to obtain cake.

Had I realized that I could never have cake again I would have eaten an entire cake all by myself the day before this ruling came down.

It is, to be sure, a caketaastrophe.

Or is it? Well, let's be clear, it would have been nice to get a ruling from the Supreme Court that made clear that discrimination against LGBTQ people is wrong, full stop, forever and ever amen.

But that's not what happened. Instead, the court issued a narrow ruling in favor of Masterpiece Cake Shop owner Jack Phillips, who had been penalized for refusing to make a cake for a gay couple's wedding.

It is important to remember that the Alliance for Defending Freedom is behind this whole thing to begin with. ADF may have an innocuous sounding name, but they are anything but. They have been named a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and have a long history of trying to do really terrible things to hurt LGBTQ people.

The ruling was 7-2, which has led plenty of people to determine that calling the ruling "narrow" was part of a liberal conspiracy to minimize the decision.

But those people are dumb. As the New Civil Rights Movement puts it, "The Court's ruling is being characterized as 'narrow' because it applies to only that one baker. It sets no precedents, changes no laws and basically has zero impact on anyone's rights."

But to hear ADF tell it, the Supreme Court just ruled that anyone can discriminate against LGBTQ people for any reason at any time, so help them god.

That is, well, inaccurate.

We're in for an ugly ride and this should worry you. Short of getting yourself appointed to the Supreme Court, an important thing you can do is vote. Donald Trump is reshaping the judiciary by appointing judges completely hostile to LGBTQ people, not to mention to people of color and women.

"In no way did the Supreme Court grant a license to discriminate around the country," Sarah Warbelow, Legal Director for the Human Rights Campaign, said.

"Anti-LGBTQ extremists did not win the sweeping 'license to discriminate' they have been hoping for," Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin told USA Today. "And today's ruling does not change our nation's longstanding civil rights laws."

In fact, HRC pointed out in a tweet that in the Masterpiece Cakeshop ruling, "SCOTUS acknowledged that LGBTQ people are equal and have a right to be free from the indignity of discrimination." Which is good news.

However, what will likely happen now is that other suits challenging the civil rights of LGBTQ people will gain traction.

We're in for an ugly ride and this should worry you. Short of getting yourself appointed to the Supreme Court, an important thing you can do is vote. Donald Trump is reshaping the judiciary by appointing judges completely hostile to LGBTQ people, not to mention to people of color and women. So, basically, judges who are hostile to the majority of America. He must be stopped. The only way to do that is to elect a Democratic majority in Congress.

Oh, and happy Pride Month. It turns out that the pot at the end of the rainbow is filled not with gold coins, but with cake. And by "cake" I mean civil rights, since this whole thing is about much more than cake. It's about whether LGBTQ people are equal citizens under the law. So vote for people who will make laws that protect us all.

And, yeah, feel free to sneak in some bites of illicit cake. You deserve it.

Q&A with Mayor Mike Duggan

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

As BTL continues the Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination series, we hear from Mike Duggan, who was elected Mayor of the City of Detroit on Nov. 5, 2013, and re-elected to a second term on Nov. 7, 2017. Duggan, born in Detroit, has spent his entire career working in the city to solve some of the most complex issues facing Detroiters, including crime, blight and access to jobs.

Duggan has announced his commitment to making sure Detroit is a safe space where everyone is welcome. This was indicated last year in June when the city of Detroit for the first time raised the rainbow flag at Hart Plaza in honor of LGBTQ Pride Month. The flag, a symbol of LGBTQ rights, will continue to fly throughout the month of June.

Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination is a bipartisan coalition of municipal leaders dedicated to securing inclusive non-discrimination protections for all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, at all levels of government. It is a program of Freedom for All Americans, the bipartisan campaign to win comprehensive LGBTQ non-discrimination protections nationwide. Since its inception, membership in Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination has grown to 307 mayors in 48 states and the District of Columbia, including 19 mayors in Michigan.

Why did you join Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination?

I wanted to make a strong statement that recognizes discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community does exist and that Detroit is a city where they are welcomed.

How does your city promote fairness, diversity and inclusion, and why is that important?

My administration has a commitment to fairness and diversity that's been recognized nationally by the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index, in which Detroit scored 100 percent for the third year in a row in

2017. We have top-level administrators who are openly LGBTQ, and Detroit was one of the first cities in the country back in the 1970s, to enact an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against gay people in housing, employment and public accommodations – later amended to include transgender people, as well. By executive order, I have made

is a welcoming city for all, whether that means people who live or want to live here, or those who want to establish or grow a business here. Programs started by my administration including Motor City Match, which promotes entrepreneurship in the city, have helped LGBT-owned businesses to locate or expand in Detroit.

How do you ensure that your city's objectives are consistently reflected in the actions of municipal employees?

The city's Department of Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity is empowered to investigate incidents of discrimination. I've convened meetings with top LGBTQ leaders to address their concerns and will continue to seek their input and counsel.

Where does your city need to improve?

We can always do a better job of making it clear in public ways that Detroit is an LGBTQ-friendly city. And while we are thrilled that Detroit scores so well nationally as an LGBTQ-welcoming place, there are areas where we can improve the services offered, including assistance for homeless youth and LGBTQ seniors.

What is your vision for your city 10 years from now, in terms of being a welcoming place to live, work and operate a business?

My vision is that Detroit will be a city with a growing population, which includes a growing LGBTQ community. Until Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act is amended to include protections for LGBTQ people, Detroit will continue to stand as an example of how antidiscrimination policies help attract people and encourage growth, because people want to live, work and play in places where everyone is respected and valued.

Stay connected to the city of Detroit online at detroitmi.gov. Follow Mike Duggan on Facebook at [facebook.com/MayorMikeDuggan](https://www.facebook.com/MayorMikeDuggan)



it official city policy that all employees are entitled to a workplace free from discrimination, with violations quickly investigated and addressed. Companies that receive contracts through the city also are required to follow the city's nondiscrimination ordinance.

All city appointees, managers and supervisors must attend classes on the City of Detroit's nondiscrimination policy. This commitment extends to our police department, where there is an active LGBTQ advisory board and Officer Dani Woods is a well-regarded liaison between Police Chief James Craig and the LGBTQ community. The department has also instituted mandatory sensitivity training for officers.

As mayor, what role do you play in challenging discrimination, and making your city more inclusive?

I've made it clear publicly that Detroit

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Supreme Court Sidesteps Major Ruling in Masterpiece Cakeshop Case

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The U.S. Supreme Court sidestepped a major decision Monday in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, issuing a narrow decision based on the facts of the lawsuit in favor of a Colorado baker sued for refusing to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

In the 7-2 decision written by U.S. Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, the Supreme Court vacated the decision by the Colorado Court of Appeals against baker Jack Phillips on the basis the state commission handling his case displayed a religious bias against him.

“When the Colorado Civil Rights Commission considered this case, it did not do so with the religious neutrality that the Constitution requires,” Kennedy writes.

Kennedy concluded his ruling by making clear it provides no precedent for cases in which individuals and businesses assert a First Amendment right to refuse service to same-sex couples, insisting that determination must come at a later time.

“The outcome of cases like this in other circumstances must await further elaboration in the courts, all in the context of recognizing that these disputes must be resolved with tolerance, without undue disrespect to sincere religious beliefs, and without subjecting gay



The Supreme Court issued a narrow decision for an anti-gay baker in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

persons to indignities when they seek goods and services in an open market,” Kennedy wrote.

As evidence of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission’s hostility toward Phillips’ religious views, Kennedy cites language the commissioners used as they heard the case in 2014, including one commissioner’s words that religious views are “one of the most despicable pieces of rhetoric that people can use.”

During oral arguments in the case before the Supreme Court, Kennedy has expressed concern over these words from the commission, prompting observers to speculate the court might issue a decision punting the case and remanding it for reconsideration without hostility toward religion.

In the decision, Kennedy writes those words from the commissioner demonstrates hostility toward Phillips’ religion both by describing as despicable and by characterizing it as merely

rhetorical.

“This sentiment is inappropriate for a commission charged with the solemn responsibility of fair and neutral enforcement of Colorado’s anti-discrimination law — a law that protects against discrimination on the basis of religion as well as sexual orientation,” Kennedy wrote.

But the decision keeps in place Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act. Kennedy writes the ability to refuse wedding-related services to same-sex couples under the First Amendment should be restricted to clergy and laws against anti-LGBT discrimination are valid.

“If that exception were not confined, then a long list of persons who provide goods and services for marriages and weddings might refuse to do so for gay persons, thus resulting in a community-wide stigma inconsistent with the history and dynamics of civil rights laws that ensure equal access to goods, services, and public accommodations,” Kennedy writes.

Kennedy cites the 1968 decision in *Newman v. Piggy Park Enterprises* in which a business cited a First Amendment right to refuse to serve black customers with white customers despite then-recent passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In that case, the Supreme Court found that laws of general applicability are valid businesses are subject to penalty under

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them despite any objections based on freedom of religion.

The timing of the ruling on Monday was a surprise to legal observers, many of whom predicted the Supreme Court wouldn't be hand it down until the final day of its 2017-2018 term at the end of June.

The decision will mean the Colorado Civil Rights Commission is vacated, but there's no reason to think Phillips wouldn't face additional penalties if he refuses service to same-sex couples down the road.

James Esseks, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's LGBT and HIV project, said Monday in a conference call with reporters Phillips doesn't get a free pass to discriminate in the aftermath of the ruling.

"If a new same-sex couple walks into that business, I see no reason in this opinion that Masterpiece Cakeshop is free to turn them away because they asked for that right, and they didn't get that right," Esseks said. "The only reason that they might win is if Colorado's civil rights commission once again engaged in

the kinds of the comments the court viewed as anti-religion. Since I think that's very unlikely to happen, I don't think Masterpiece Cakeshop can't think it is free to discriminate in the state of Colorado because I believe it is not."

The ruling also means the long-running case against Masterpiece Cakeshop, filed by Charlie Craig and Dave Mullins back in 2012 when Phillips refused to make them a custom-made wedding cake, has reached its finish line.

In a joint statement, Craig and Mullins expressed disappointment with the ruling, but said they'd continue the fight.

"Today's decision means our fight against discrimination and unfair treatment will continue," Craig and Mullins said. "We have always believed that in America, you should not be turned away from a business open to the public because of who you are. We brought this case because no one should have to face the shame, embarrassment and humiliation of being told 'we don't serve your kind here' that we faced, and we will continue fighting until no one does."

After the couple sued six years ago, the Colorado Civil Rights

Commission ruled in their favor in 2014 and the Colorado Court of Appeals upheld that decision a year later. Phillips filed a petition before the U.S. Supreme Court to review those rulings, which the Supreme Court accepted last year shortly after the confirmation of U.S. Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch.

Attorneys representing both sides in the case declared victory to some extent. The ACLU, which represented the couple, insisted non-discrimination principles were upheld and Alliance Defending Freedom, which represented Phillips, called the decision a victory for "religious freedom."

Louise Melling, deputy legal director of the ACLU, said in a statement the Supreme Court essentially punted without making a sweeping decision.

"The court reversed the Masterpiece Cakeshop decision based on concerns unique to the case but reaffirmed its longstanding rule that states can prevent the harms of discrimination in the marketplace, including against LGBT people," Melling said.

Kristen Waggoner, who argued the case for Phillips before the Supreme Court as senior counsel to



Charlie Craig and David Mullins are at the center of the Masterpiece Cakeshop case. (Photo courtesy of the ACLU)

Alliance Defending Freedom, said in a statement the ruling was a win for her client.

"Government hostility toward people of faith has no place in our society, yet the state of Colorado was openly antagonistic toward Jack's religious beliefs about marriage," Waggoner said. "The court was right to condemn that. Tolerance and

respect for good-faith differences of opinion are essential in a society like ours. This decision makes clear that the government must respect Jack's beliefs about marriage."

U.S. Solicitor General Noel Francisco had argued before the Supreme Court in favor of

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► Masterpiece

Continued from p. 28

Phillips on behalf of the Trump administration, asserting baking a custom-made wedding cake amounts to artistic expression, and therefore is free speech protected under the First Amendment. Neither the White House, nor the U.S. Justice Department, responded Monday to the Washington Blade's request to comment on the court's decision in the case.

Joining Kennedy in the decision was U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts as well as U.S. Associate Justices Stephen Breyer, Samuel Alito, Elena Kagan, Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas. Dissenting to the ruling was U.S. Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was joined by U.S. Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Kagan, who has previously ruled in support of gay rights, emphasized in a concurring opinion the decision "limits its analysis to the reasoning of the state agencies" and the commission reached the correct conclusion under the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act despite the anti-religion comments.

The Obama-appointed justice compared the Masterpiece Cakeshop to a separate case in which another individual, William Jack, sought cakes disapproving of same-sex marriage in Colorado and was denied service, but received a different outcome from the state commission.

"In refusing that request, the bakers did not single out Jack because of his religion, but instead treated him in the same way they would have treated anyone else — just as CADA requires," Kagan writes. "By contrast, the same-sex couple in this case requested a wedding cake that Phillips would have made for an opposite-sex couple. In refusing that request, Phillips contravened CADA's demand that customers receive 'the full and equal enjoyment' of public accommodations irrespective of their sexual orientation."

Gorsuch disagrees in a separate concurring decision joined by Alito, saying the case filed by Jack is similar and the commission should have given Masterpiece Cakeshop the same outcome.

"Nothing in the Commission's opinions suggests any neutral principle to reconcile these

holdings," Gorsuch writes. "If Mr. Phillips's objection is 'inextricably tied' to a protected class, then the bakers' objection in Mr. Jack's case must be 'inextricably tied' to one as well. For just as cakes celebrating same-sex weddings are (usually) requested by persons of a particular sexual orientation, so too are cakes expressing religious opposition to same-sex weddings (usually) requested by persons of particular religious faiths."

Gorsuch writes in the aftermath of the Supreme Court ruling the commission should re-examine the case and "must afford him the same result it afforded the bakers in Mr. Jack's case."

Another concurrence written by Thomas and joined by Gorsuch concludes Phillips should have prevailed before the commission simply on the basis of his freedom of speech claims.

"It reasoned that an outside observer would think that Phillips was merely complying with Colorado's public-accommodations law, not expressing a message, and that Phillips could post a disclaimer to that effect," Thomas writes. "This reasoning flouts bedrock principles of our free-speech jurisprudence

and would justify virtually any law that compels individuals to speak. It should not pass without comment."

In her dissent, Ginsburg wrote the long process in which the case was reviewed by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission and appealed to the Colorado Court of Appeals should abrogate any concerns about religious liberty.

"I see no reason why the comments of one or two commissioners should be taken to overcome Phillips' refusal to sell a wedding cake to Craig and Mullins," Ginsburg writes. "The proceedings involved several layers of independent decision-making, of which the commission was but one."

The decision means that a final determination from the court on whether individuals and businesses have a First Amendment right to discriminate against same-sex couples may come at a later time. That decision could result from a petition pending before the court in a similar case filed by Arlene's Flowers, a floral shop in Washington State seeking a First Amendment right to refuse service to same-sex weddings.

Many predict Kennedy will step down from the bench at the

end of this Supreme Court term. If that happens, the Supreme Court could issue a decision that makes precedent on this issue with whomever President Trump appoints to replace Kennedy. That justice could be an anti-LGBT pick as opposed to Kennedy, who has authored major gay rights decisions.

Jocelyn Samuels, executive director of the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, nonetheless said the reaffirmation of non-discrimination principles in the Masterpiece Cakeshop decision bodes well for any future consideration of the "religious freedom" issue.

"The scope of the opinion and the endorsement of equal dignity for the LGBT community, the recognition of stigma that refusals of service impose on LGBT people and the citation about Piggie Park...I think that that is a statement that reflects black-letter law, but that we now have broad-support endorsement of from a significant majority of the court's justices," Samuels said.

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

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Michael Christian



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Trans Drag Performers Discuss What the Art Form Means to Them

BY JASON MICHAEL

Everyone has heard of drag, but drag queens and kings are not all the same. Drag is so much more than gay men dressing up as women for entertainment purposes. The art form is practiced by people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and styles vary.

Pride Month is underway, and as drag performers hit the streets, BTL spoke with four Detroit-based trans drag performers – Michael Christian, Cierra Dior Malone, Hailey Charles, and Paige Michaels Chanel – to better understand their experiences as they break down gender stereotypes and gender rules.

The following interviews have been edited for clarity and length.

Michael Christian

What does the average person not know about

what it takes to be a drag king?

It takes a lot of time and investment. We don't just magically appear on stage looking the way we do. There are hours and hours of behind the scenes.

What does being a drag king mean to you?

It's freedom. It's the place I can go to play dress up and live out my best "lost boy" fantasies. It's a completely tangible and accepted neverland for adults.

We hear a lot about drag queens, but not drag kings. Why do you think that is?

Drag kings still aren't as respected by some drag queens. They don't want to give a chance to the kings. For a long time there was a "jeans and wife beater" stigma on kings. There wasn't much make up or costuming. Times have changed though. Make up and costuming is much more creative. We spend a lot of time and money on our art form. Things need to start changing on the local level. People need to step out of their old

thoughts. Especially in venues that are sort of catering or advertising shows to the straight crowds. Why not throw a king in the mix? It can be just as much of a "wow oh my are you serious!?" moment from the crowd.

Can you explain being trans and doing drag?

For me drag began as a comfort. It was the only place I could see myself comfortably in a mirror. Today, drag is more of a self expression. I manage a Starbucks during the day. I make lattes and smile at the world that passes thru and isn't even awake enough to see me.

Once or twice a month I get to dress in rhinestones and hear the crowd cheer. They see me.

To be honest though. It's still the place I'm most comfortable in my skin. With the overly made up masculine features and costuming to enhance it.

What do you think are some of the misconceptions about drag in general?

That it is easy. It isn't easy to get on stage in

front of all those people and perform. Also, that our characters are all that we are. Every single one of us washes off the make up and lives a life in the daylight.

Cierra Dior Malone

Is it hard to be successful in the drag world?

Yes and no. It can be challenging as to what kind of drag you want to do according to how people look at drag. They think you should be this type of performer or look this type of way. But drag has evolved throughout the years where you don't have to be this certain type of a drag queen. You can be whatever type of performer that you want to be ... "RuPaul's Drag Race" has really shown us that drag queens come in all different shapes, forms and sizes.

See Trans Drag Performers, page 40

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Motor City Pride Returns to Hart Plaza This Weekend

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Drawing more than 40,000 people over its two-day stretch, dozens of vendors and performers and hundreds of volunteers, Motor City Pride is a massive undertaking that takes place annually in Detroit's Philip A. Hart Plaza and has done so since 2009. And by all accounts, it looks like the 2018 iteration, happening on June 9 and 10, will be no different. In fact, Motor City Pride Chair Dave Wait said that this year's public interest has been especially enthusiastic and he foresees an especially good year for pride-goers.

"We're excited about all the interest," Wait said. "People registering for things ahead of time, vendors, spaces (all) sold out a month before the festival, our sponsorships; we have more companies that want to support the event than ever that are participating. They are coming to us because they understand the importance of the festival for Southeastern Michigan."

And according to Wait, the variety of vendors will be one of the highlights of this year's festival. In particular, Wait said that sponsors like Motor City Pride's presenting sponsor, Delta Air Lines, are the reasons for the festival's many amenities like five stages of entertainment, varied food and beverage options. It has also aided the many organizations that show up to support the LGBTQ community.

"We really appreciate them, and we wouldn't be able to put on a festival of this magnitude if it wasn't for our sponsors helping with entertainment and the funds for that," Wait said. "We have four or five new sponsors who are helping us out this year and with them helping with those contributions we are able to bring in all this entertainment and staging structure to have the best sound at the music festival."

The entertainment schedule this year will be making use of that sound equipment by highlighting some of Michigan's most LGBTQ-friendly local acts. Pride-goers can get excited for a lineup that features everything from spoken word to local drag legends. Entertainment Director Tristan Putnam said that the 2018 lineup's Michigan-centric focus is certainly not accidental, and that he planned to showcase some of the state's most LGBTQ-affirming talent.

"We highlight the festival with some bigger national acts and some bigger names, but we try to stay very heavy on the local side," Putnam said. "We have a lot of very skilled entertainment in the Detroit area and a lot of them are LGBT or they're LGBT-friendly."

I think out of 52 entertainers, 45 are local. Four coordinators and myself will sit around and review every single submission."

Putnam said that the painstaking reviewing

process was done in direct anticipation of the high levels of interest surrounding the festival's five entertainment stages. He said that so far, he's logged more than 1,000 hours whittling down a list of over 400 hopefuls to create the leaner, meaner 52-strong list of entertainers. When asked about some of the performers he's excited for attendees to see most, two specific bands come to mind.

"I'm really excited to hear Acoustic Ash. She plays at 3:30 on Saturday. She does an acoustic set and is part of the LGBTQ community and I listened to her a couple of times and she has a lot of passion behind her singing. And if I had to pick another one, it's a band that everyone knows: I'm a huge fan of the Killer Flamingos. They're kind of a staple in the Metro Detroit area and they always come back and always play other festivals in the area and they're going to be really fantastic too."

The Killer Flamingos will be playing on the Pride Stage on June 10 at 3 p.m., but attendees shouldn't despair if that showtime doesn't line up with their day's schedule. Putnam said that he's confident that whatever show Motor City Pride attendees catch, it'll be really worth their while.

"I could pick any single person out of these performers; we hand-picked them out of hundreds of performers," Putnam said. "There were actually a couple of people that I wanted to play this year, but we just didn't have the slots to do it."

Lead singer of Little Animal, Rochelle Baker, said she is excited to play at this year's Motor City Pride, too. The LGBTQ ally said that the general demand by artists to play at the festival makes sense because the first time she performed at Motor City Pride, it was unlike any performance she had done previously.

"It's very different. I feel like with other festivals or events that I've played it's a little hard to get comfortable because you're always worried, 'Will people be accepting of what I'm playing?' So, it's a lot easier to feel like you don't fit in and the music I do is a bit different," Baker said. "But at Motor City people took in the music, it felt warm and it was awesome. It felt like people were there with you, rather than trying to evaluate what was going on. People were dancing and really got into it, they were watching and I feel like that's something really special about Motor City Pride."

Baker's unique sound is a blend of R&B and electronic music. She said that the experience of having a supportive audience from the get-go has inspired her to be not only more creative with the music she'll be bringing to Pride, but she said she hopes to get even more performance energy from the crowd on June 9 when she performs on the Pride Stage at 3 p.m.

"I'm excited to play music that's bigger and brighter. And everyone there is just so bright,



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- 4:00 PM Sabin Drag Revue
- 5:00 PM Posh Hammer
- 6:00 PM SIAS
- 7:00 PM Tiffany
- 8:00 PM Haute To Death



Sun. June 10, 2018

- 12:00 PM DJ Marquis
- 1:00 PM Sing-Out Detroit
- 2:00 PM Citizen Jane
- 3:00 PM Killer Flamingos
- 4:00 PM Martha Reeves & the Vandellas
- 5:00 PM Taina Asili
- 6:00 PM DJ John 'Jammin' Collins



Festival Stage

Sat. June 9, 2018

- 1:30 PM The Real Truck N
- 2:30 PM Perry Holmes
- 3:30 PM Acoustic Ash
- 4:30 PM Brad Bowen
- 5:30 PM NWOYE
- 6:30 PM Ladysee
- 7:30 PM LVRS

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:30 PM Matt Wixson's Flying Circus
- 2:30 PM Paisley Fields
- 3:30 PM I'm With Molly
- 4:30 PM Dirk Kroll Band
- 5:30 PM The Band Mint

Underground

Sat. June 9, 2018

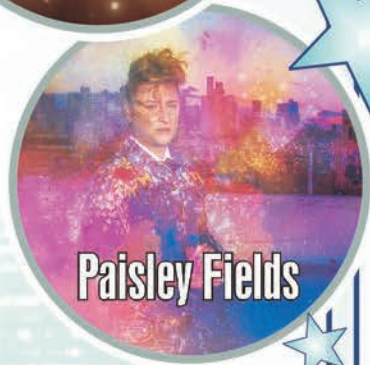
- 1:00 PM DJ COOLKIDSUE
- 2:00 PM Nader
- 3:00 PM DJ Knowledge
- 4:00 PM "Perry Wayne" Th
- 5:00 PM DJ Tom T
- 6:00 PM DJ DigiMark
- 7:00 PM DJ Jace
- 8:00 PM DVJ Mark

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:00 PM DVJ Mark
- 2:00 PM DJ Holographic
- 3:00 PM DJ Tylr
- 4:00 PM DJ Lena
- 5:00 PM TBA
- 6:00 PM Marquis

Schedules are

Stage



Pyramid Stage

Sat. June 9, 2018

- 1:30 PM King Scooby
- 2:00 PM 666 Chainz
- 2:30 PM Kool Breed
- 3:00 PM Troopa
- 3:30 PM Jharid
- 4:30 PM Ku-Laid
- 5:30 PM Philly Fal 313
- 6:00 PM KO DA D.O.N
- 6:30 PM Kitty Delicious | Queer Burlesque

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:30 PM Mikee Anthony
- 2:30 PM Eric Donte
- 3:30 PM James Taylor Jr.
- 4:30 PM Crystal Harding's Drag



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1:00pm - 8:00pm **Festival Events**

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Thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 2:00pm
Vigil for victims of LGBTQ violence | 1:00pm-5:00pm
Family Area, with youth activities & games | 8:00pm
Entrances Close
<small>(No Admittance or Re-Admittance after 8:00pm)</small> | 9:00pm
Festival Closes |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|

\$5.00 cover for everyone over 12 years of age

SUNDAY

Welcome Gates Open at Noon

Noon - 7:00pm **Festival Events**

Five Stages of Entertainment Featuring over 150 Artists
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Over 120 Sponsors, Vendors, Non-Profits & Food Booths
Thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Noon
Parade Sponsored by Fiat | 1:00pm-5:00pm
Family Area, with youth activities & games | 6:00pm
Entrances Close
<small>(No Admittance or Re-Admittance after 8:00pm)</small> | 7:00pm
Festival Closes |
|---|--|--|----------------------------------|

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► Motor City Pride

Continued from p. 34

glowing and looks amazing and has the best fans,” Baker said. “After seeing that I was like, ‘Whoa.’ I want to be more like the people that are there (laughs). I’m hoping to embody some of what I’ve seen.”

Every year Pride certainly draws a collection of “bright” and “glowing” people from all across both Michigan and the U.S. Security Director Sean Rhaesa said that this draw is not only impressive in its size and scope, but it’s something vitally important to the community.

“I wanted to get involved with this community event which I thought was important to our LGBTQ community because of the optics of it all,” Rhaesa said. “People see that we exist, and if we’re in a large event like this, sometimes it’s easy for conservatives to say, ‘There are no gay people in this area,’ but you can’t deny that if you see 35,000 gay people in the same spot.”

Rhaesa said that with each year, especially with the promise of good weekend weather, thousands of people flock to the festival, and this year there’s potential for more than ever before.

“To make things go faster, don’t bring bags (laughs). That day, don’t bring your backpack with you, don’t have too many things in your pockets and don’t bring any weapons with you



Fifty-two acts will perform Saturday and Sunday at Hart Plaza. See centerfold for more information. Photo courtesy

so that you won’t have to go back to your car and put them away,” Rhaesa said. “Sometimes people forget that they have a pocket knife or something in their pocket. I’d rather see people just not bring it at all and not have to worry about it. So, yes, not having a bunch of bags will make the lines go faster and get you in faster.”

He also advises potential festival-goers that though Motor City Pride allows people to bring packed lunches, no outside beverages will be allowed inside the event, barring a

legitimate medical reason.

This year’s event will also include the annual Pride Parade on Sunday, which will begin on the corner of Griswold and Fort Streets, and end at the corner of W. Jefferson Ave. and Bates streets. In addition, this year’s event will host another vigil for the victims of 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting. And Wait said that while Motor City Pride is proud of the “size of the festival” they could always use extra help. Wait advises interested volunteers to reach out any time on or before the morning

of May 8 to sign up for unclaimed volunteer slots and roles, particularly on the last day of the festival.

“They do all kinds of things from welcoming people at the welcoming gates, to working at the beverage area, helping with the set-up, the entertainment and the family area. So, there’s a wide variety of ways people can help out so we can put on the festival,” Wait said. “And Sunday we’re definitely always looking for individuals to help out.”

When asked how he’d go about exploring the festival’s grounds, Wait said that that was easy: he’d start exploring the various vendors.

“We do have a few craft and merchandise-types of vendors that are there, and it’s nice to kind of see who is there right at the entrance,” Wait said. “We invite people to come out to be their authentic self whether they come as individuals or as a group. Or, they can come and meet with some of the nonprofits that are there, they can find things in which they are interested, whether it’s joining a chorus or a sports team or volunteering or just seeing what services different groups have. And then just enjoying the music, meeting people, meeting up with friends and those you meet at the festival. It’s just a great relaxing day and weekend there on the Detroit River.”

A full list of performers, volunteer applications and a history of the festival can be found online at motorcitypride.org. Philip A. Hart Plaza is located at 1 Hart Plaza, Detroit.

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f t

► Drag

Continued from p. 32

What does it take to be a drag queen?

It takes a lot of determination, patience, drive, consistency, and being humble. And knowing what your audience loves and what you love as well.

What is it like to perform drag as a trans woman?

Some people feel like trans women have an advantage over cis men because we have breasts and hips and ass that are not detachable. But some of the cis men who get into drag are very passable as women as well. I think people look at the trans women as being more of a female figure. The girls can get naked and not have to feel bad about a titty falling out or hip slipping or something like that. It's a little bit easier and faster to get dressed as a trans woman than it is as a regular drag queen.

What are your thoughts about being a trans woman and doing drag?

There are drag performers, female impersonators, and we'll call the trans women female illusionists. Some people don't understand because they still consider some trans women drag queens. We all perform. It's just a little technicality between us. One of us, when we take off the makeup and hair, we are still women. The other one, when they take off the hair and makeup, they are men. But in society they group us all in the same boat anyway though.

What does drag mean to you?

Drag is being fabulous, darling. It's just being fabulous. It's just putting your best foot forward and just being fabulous.

Hailey Charles

When did you know you had arrived?

When I won Miss Gigi's in 2008. It felt pretty amazing to know I was one of 43 people – at that time – who had ever won, out of all of the people. So it was like I had finally accomplished something.

What are some of the titles you've held?

I was Royal Junior Miss Michigan and I was Miss Malebox before winning Miss Gigi's. Since then I've won Miss Gigi's Classic, so I'm the first performer at Gigi's to win Amateur, Miss and Classic. As of now there's nobody else who's had all three.

What is it like to perform drag as a trans woman?

I think that it's a little bit easier because you don't have to do all the padding and the breast plates and all that. So I think it's both good and bad because I think a lot of people don't feel that trans people should compete in drag pageants against people who are not trans. So it definitely has its challenges.

What would you say to someone who doesn't understand the difference between a trans woman and a female impersonator?

My only answer for that would be women do various things. That's like saying women shouldn't be construction workers, but we have plenty of women who are cops and construction workers and people who are female impersonators ... You still transitioned to become female. It wasn't a God-given situation. You still put the work in.

What does drag mean to you?

I can't answer that for everybody, but for me I think drag is just an individual's right to be creative. It's just a way for people to express themselves and be creative.

Paige Michaels Chanel

What was your first entry point into the drag world?

Honestly, I started watching some of the older girls in the scene and I was really intrigued by it. Once I started watching pageants I really liked the shows. The pageants are what really motivated me within that. I teach competition dance and I'm very competitive so the competition in the pageants helps build character. It gives me energy. Once I started doing it I started getting booked for shows at a lot of different places and bars.

What does it take to be a drag queen?

Diligence, discipline, dedication. You have to put forth all of you plus some. Drag is like Beyonce's Sasha Fierce. It's you but it's you projected in a different format. You're really just putting your alter ego forward and things that you may not actually do in person, you'll do on stage. The person you want to be on the inside has to be projected 100 percent. If you're not giving the people all of you, they won't give you all of them. So to be successful you have to be true to who you are and you



Paige Michaels Chanel

have to be willing to learn from others. There are so many other people who have paved the way for amateur and newcomers to be here.

How would you describe the relationship between your drag performance and your identity as a trans woman?

It is different. I think that for myself I have to learn a lot of times I don't do enough drag because I'm so used to being naturally feminine. So a lot of times I don't do enough and I've been told in pageants before you're not drag enough. And that's because I live my life as a woman so I just assumed for a drag show me putting on makeup and costumes would be good enough. But in the drag scene it doesn't discriminate. Drag is drag and you have to over exaggerate your makeup, your body, your movement. So I had to learn to drag myself a little more. I thought that being pretty and putting makeup on would be enough. But they're like, "Oh no, girl, you're eyelashes need to be 301s. You need to have a glitter eye."

Have you ever faced or witnessed any kind of bias against trans women doing drag?

For us trans woman it's almost like a night out on the town. We get to embellish what we already have whereas cis men have to invent things. We are already women who are

embodying our femininity a little bit more. It may be a little harder for a cis man when it comes to drag because they almost have to try to be feminine where we're naturally feminine. So a lot of the movements come naturally to us. But I will admit I've seen cis men who have done a really good job, almost better than trans ... I got my butt kicked by a cis man because I thought I didn't have to do as much. I still have to work just as hard to give the illusion when it comes to drag.

What would you say to someone who doesn't understand the difference between a trans woman and a female impersonator?

I will be honest: I was one of those people once upon a time. I felt if you were transitioning and you were taking hormones and steps to be a woman that maybe drag was not something you should be doing. But I've grown and I've learned that a part of your transition is to appreciate where you're going and to pay homage to your past. If it wasn't for your past you wouldn't be who you are today ... If I never saw some trans woman doing drag I'd never be the woman I am becoming today ... I am growing every day as a woman and I have to be able to appreciate the person that I was. I also encourage younger trans woman to not completely give up on who you were before. A lot of the strengths you had before can help you.

What does drag mean to you?

Drag is like my alter ego. It's my inner person shining through and allowing me to be fully me. Allowing me to project my insides to my outsides as loudly as flamboyantly as I'd like to. There is no limit to drag. Drag is up to your imagination. Drag is creative. It's a sense of oneness, a sense of being comfortable and being proud and drag, for me, is being a leader. When you see these drag shows on stage it takes so much for them to do it and get in front of me and be as vulnerable as they are. So drag is strength. Drag is empowerment. Drag is me.

PERFORMING

Cierra Dior Malone will perform during Happy Hour at The Woodward Bar & Grill, 6426 Woodward Ave. in Detroit, on Thursday, June 14.

Hailey Charles performs on Saturday nights at Gigi's Cabaret, 16920 W. Warren Ave. in Detroit.

Paige Michaels Chanel follow on Facebook.

Michael Christian will perform at the Drag Show Afterparty following Great Lakes Bay Pride on Saturday, June 30 at The Red Room, Dow Event Center, 303 Johnson St. in Saginaw.

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5 Things to Know About Motor City Pride Headliner Tiffany

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

For anyone who was a teen during the late '80s, the name Tiffany is probably instantly recognizable. Seemingly out of the blue, the pop star sprung onto the airwaves with pop hits like "I Think We're Alone Now" and "Could've Been" that – let's face it – still slap today. The former teen icon is still busy as ever in the studio, having just released a 2017 single "Can't Stop Falling" and her 2016 album "A Million Miles." She'll likely be playing her new single and songs from that album as well her multiple chart-topping '80s hits when she headlines this year's Motor City Pride at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 9. But, before rushing out to Hart Plaza to hear her perform, check out these highlights from her over 30-year career.

seemed to have the world at our feet. Our friendship continued even after we broke up."

3 She was once a boutique owner.
In 2015, the Nashville-based artist decided to take her longtime love of fashion and turn it into a boutique store aimed at a variety of women. In an interview with ABC News she said this about the store:



"I thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool to open up a boutique that is a little bit of glamour, and a little bit different?' I'm a real girl. I get it. I gain weight, I lose weight. My styles change. My goal is to provide fashion for real women – any size, any age."

Although the boutique itself no longer exists, the singer said via Twitter that fans can expect a "fashion and merchandise truck" soon.

4 Tiffany posed in Playboy.

In 2002 the pop star made an appearance in a 10-page spread in Playboy. The singer said in a 2002 interview with ABC News that her reasons were ultimately because she wanted to have more attention drawn to her music.

"I did it to break down those barriers so people couldn't say, 'Aww, she's still 14,' and I also did it because I couldn't get booked on shows and it was a chance for me to say, 'Hey, if that phone rings, yes, it'll be because of Playboy, but I can talk about my music.'"

5 She has a fear of flying.

Chances are that Tiffany will be making the drive from Nashville to Detroit before her performance, because according to her website's online bio she has an "extreme fear of flying."

"Consequently the singer is always in her car and it's in the car where she gets her inspiration and does most of her writing," the bio continued. "Those personal journals and stories inspired both the new music and to name her album after all those miles she's driven ... 'A Million Miles.'"

To find out more about Tiffany and her upcoming tour schedule, visit tiffanytunes.com. More information about Motor City Pride artist lineups and stagetimes can be found online at motorcitypride.org.

1 "I Think We're Alone Now" was a cover.

Born Tiffany Renee Darwish, Tiffany's mononym became a household name when, at 16, she embarked on a mall tour that shot her to stardom seemingly overnight. On that tour, she debuted her song "I Think We're Alone Now," and its success broke many a record. So much so that in 1987 she held the No. 1 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 charts for two weeks, and another two weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in January 1988.

The song was actually a cover of a song done originally by Michigan-based band Tommy James and the Shondells. The group debuted it on their 1967 self-titled album and made it to No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart. The group is also famous for songs like "Crimson and Clover" and "Mirage."

2 She briefly dated a gay member of New Kids on the Block.

One of the biggest pieces of drama in the early '90s pop culture scene was when New Kids on the Block's Jonathan Knight began dating Tiffany. Later, in 2009, it was revealed that Knight was gay. When asked about her relationship with Knight in a 2012 piece by the Washington Blade, Tiffany said, "Obviously I didn't know he was gay when I was dating him. We were just two young kids that were not born wealthy and suddenly

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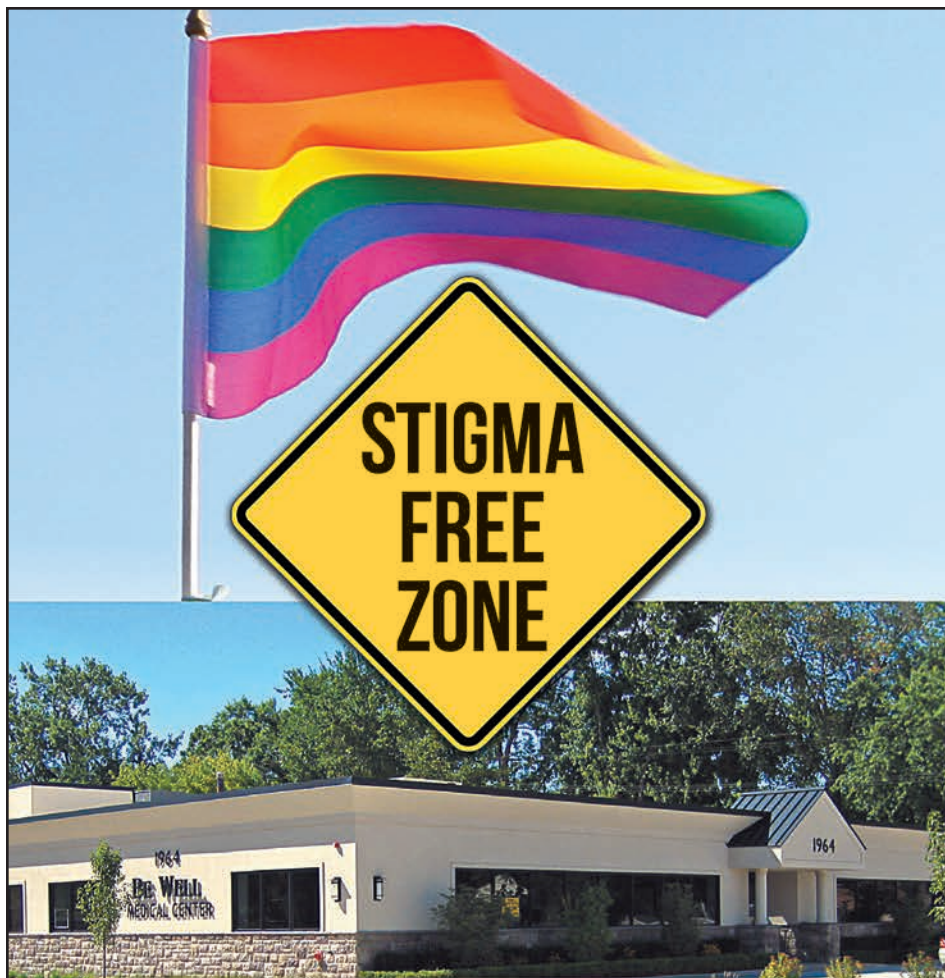
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Ypsilanti Art Exhibit to Honor All Killed in Pulse Nightclub Massacre

BY DREW HOWARD

Like so many in the LGBTQ+ community, Ann Arbor-based artist John Gutoskey didn't need a personal connection to the 49 victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting to validate his profound sense of loss in the months following the tragedy.

And as so many great artists do, Gutoskey wielded his pain and threw it onto the canvas. This weekend marks the opening of the artist's latest exhibit "Pulse Nightclub: 49 Elegies" inside Ypsilanti's 22 North Gallery, which Gutoskey describes as a series made to commemorate each of the 49 people massacred in the Orlando club nearly two years ago.

"When I heard about the massacre, I felt shocked and couldn't even formulate a verbal response to it," Gutoskey told BTL. "I decided the honor the victims with a monoprint for each one of them."

The 49 monoprints - or "single prints/copies" in layman's terms- are not paired with the names and faces of each victim, Gutoskey said, but rather are representative of queer politics, values and ideas as they relate to the Pulse tragedy.

"I worked with different images to talk about queerness and that event, to talk about the idea that a gay nightclub is like a temple, church, and sanctuary for queer people," he said. "My response was as if this attack happened at a church or a temple. These clubs are our safest spaces, a place you can be yourself and not fear for your life or be assaulted verbally or physically."

"It felt like a sacrilege to a safe space."

"49 Elegies" incorporates images of robins and ravens that represent values within the queer community. Robins symbolize the community's sense of compassion, Gutoskey said, a trait the birds showcased in Biblical stories where they pulled thorns out of Jesus Christ's crown.

Ravens, on the other hand, are the outsiders. "Ravens are like queer birds," Gutoskey said. "Signs of a bad omen, considered outsiders, and they love sparkly stuff."

"Ravens are known to line nests with broken jewelry or glass," he continued. "These are queer material, like glitter. I started working with those images, the nest being like a home, and the images of eggs like life, and then added nightclub images."

Gutoskey also made sure to incorporate symbols of Florida (fruits, warm colors, seaside tones) as well as those of Puerto

Rico and Cuba, two countries that several of the Pulse victims called home. The final collection represents six months of hard work, a time in which Gutoskey also utilized to place himself in the mindset of both victims and survivors.

"I tried to put myself in that space, looking at it through different lenses to feel what it was like to hear shots and friends dropping," he said. "To be outside the club, a family



member, or someone in the club."

While Gutoskey has chosen to call his monoprints "elegies," he notes that the exhibit was created to encompass so much more than just feelings of grief.

"An elegy is like a lament and grieving for people who passed, but this also incorporates praise and admiration for lost people," Gutoskey said. "Each print represents a person killed, but there's also a sense of lifting them up and trying to console the people that are left behind. They're not morbid. I'm not trying to make them morbid. They're something beautiful and engaging that tells these stories through the symbols in the work."

The exhibit is scheduled to run until June 30 for the entirety of Pride Month.

In addition to the 49 monoprints, attendees are also invited to take part in a guided meditation session at the gallery on Tuesday, June 12, the two-year anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shooting. For more information about the exhibit, please visit 22north.org.



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WSU will host an event highlighting its LGBTQ history on Tuesday, June 12. One of its panelists, Dr. Tim Retzlloff said about this image: "There was a gay liberation front group at Wayne State and they built this purple wooden fruit cart emblazoned with the phrase 'gay fruit.' They sold apples to raise money for the first pride celebration in Detroit which was in 1972."

WSU Hosts LGBTQ History Panel in Honor of the School's 150 Years

BY BTL STAFF

A lot can happen over 150 years, and in honor of a timeline that spans over half of modern U.S. history, Wayne State University is presenting several panels throughout the year in honor of its sesquicentennial. And, coming up on Tuesday, June 12, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the David Adamany Undergraduate Library is the "Our History at Wayne: LGBTQ Life at Wayne State University panel." WSU Archivist Alison Stankrauff has been the main organizer of these events, and she said she's excited to provide a platform for several LGBTQ activists and historians to speak to WSU's successes and failures in the fight for LGBTQ equality.

"I should say, too, that part of the reason that I got into this profession is because I really believe that archives and historical records can help write the historical record and bring justice where there hasn't been, and write people into history that haven't had a voice," Stankrauff said. "That's a big part of why I wanted to do these panels."

The panel will talk about LGBTQ history through the mid-20th century and will include the voices of Rev. Dr. Renee McCoy, the founder of the Full Truth Fellowship and an WSU alumna who will speak about her experience as a lesbian African-American woman attending school in the '60s; Kim Ferguson, a WSU alumni who began the Wayne State Gay Liberation Front; Lynne Rose, who was the university's first paid staff member devoted to counseling LGBTQ students and Ashton Niedzwiecki, a pansexual transgender WSU alumni who served as the president of the GLBTA Student Union.

BTL contributor Dr. Tim Retzlloff, an LGBTQ historian who teaches LGBTQ studies at Michigan State University, will be

among the voices heard as well. He said that although he didn't attend WSU, he hopes to talk from the perspective of LGBTQ professors.

"One of the things that's interesting to me as a historian is – and something that I'll bring to the discussion – is that in the 1940s and '50s a professor could actually be fired for homosexuality and students could be expelled for homosexuality," Retzlloff said. "People did have their lives disrupted. And during the same decades it was also a place where people who we would now look at and see as LGBTQ could meet and find each other, and the first organization in Michigan having to do with LGBTQ movements, the first organization ever, was a chapter of the Mattachine Society in Detroit which started in 1958 and the three founders, all met each other at Wayne State as students."

Retzlloff said he is excited to have a deep discussion about the school's history with each of the panelists because much of this history isn't widely known by the public.

"So, there's a lot of this history that's not known because we haven't pursued and asked people their stories," Retzlloff said. "For me, one of the purposes of panels like this is to share those stories so that we know those stories and that while we can, we get it firsthand."

According to Stankrauff, there is also a chance that WSU Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer Marquita Chamblee to make opening remarks at the event.

For more information about the event, visit wayne.edu or find the event's Facebook page. The event will be held on the 3rd floor of the David Adamany Undergraduate Library's Community Room.

'America You Kill Me:' Jeffery Montgomery Documentary On Track for 2019 Release

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Known by many for being the face of the Midwestern LGBTQ movement for years, Jeffrey Montgomery was a highly-lauded individual. He won the the Spirit of Detroit award several times, The Advocate named him "Best and Brightest" LGBT activist in 1999 and he even received a Michiganian of the Year award from the Detroit News — among many others. Now, posthumously, it's as if the deceased Triangle Foundation founder is set to receive another. A documentary project called "America You Kill Me" that has been in process since 2013 is finally closing in on its finishing stages and its director Daniel Land is hopeful that there will be a release in early 2019 that lines up with the Creating Change LGBTQ conference.

"That's our intended target right now and we're on target to do that," Land said. "Just because it's been going on for years and we've had a couple of public fundraisers, we'd like people to know that it's moving quickly now, and we'd like to let people know where it is."

Land said that the sudden forward motion of the project is tied directly to an influx of funding that the project received in 2017 which has allowed the self-described "very independent operation" to start tying up loose ends and project hurdles. However, Land said



The late Jeffrey Montgomery, lower right was his brother John, seated and filmmaker Daniel Land at Motor City Pride in 2016. Photo: Tih Penfil

what could make the project go faster is help from the community. He said that the film's forward progress could be increased if locals who once knew Montgomery had any footage of him, about him, photographs of him at events or were willing to share how he had impacted them during his life and activism.

Additionally, Land said he is in the process of editing an early cut of the film that he

would like to submit to film festivals sometime in fall. Currently, the movie has a variety of recorded interviews both with Montgomery before he died, his brothers, several politicians like Jennifer Granholm and Dennis Archer and various local LGBT activists like LGBT Detroit Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb.

Land said that as the end of the project draws nearer he is also looking into using different samples of archived footage.

"There's a lot of stuff on TV a lot and we've acquired — a lot of the material that we need to work with — but we don't

know what that's ultimately going to cost to license and we won't know until the film's pretty close to done, and so we need to know how much we're using and what of which pieces we're using," Land said. "We've got an estimate for that, but if that gets to be a lot more than we thought, I could see us doing another little fundraiser for licensing fees."

When asked what the film means to him as an ally, Land said that the whole point of the project is the "amplification" of Montgomery's work.

"In terms of the audiences that we want to connect with are one, people who are familiar with it who were maybe involved or had a recollection or living through this history ... then young activists where this is like a historical document saying, 'This is where we were, and this is where we are now,' Land said. "But the other group that I'm interested in reaching is people that maybe lean a little bit more conservative who have seen things change and they're a little new to it but they're open to it. Or, even people who are closed to it. I'd like them to see this film and maybe have their minds opened to it and to understand what this struggle was and to understand what people sacrificed. In some ways it'll be a gay rights 101 for people who are new, and a deep dive for those who are more familiar."

More information about the film and its content can be found online at americayoukillme.com. The website also contains a contact page with an email and phone number to reach out about content featuring Jeffrey Montgomery.



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Spiritual Group Offered at MCCD for Trans, Gender Non-Conforming Community

WORSHIP

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

When Nick Daughtry first visited Metropolitan Community Church Detroit four months ago, he instantly knew he was home.

“It was one of things where going in I instantly knew that it was where I belonged,” he said. “It’s a very calming feeling when you find a spiritual place and you know you belong there.”

Since that time, things have continued to fall into place for Daughtry at MCCD, such as the time he effortlessly found himself as co-chair of a new group for transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals in the church.

“I actually sat down at the table during the first meeting on accident,” Daughtry recalled. “I sat down there at fellowship on accident and they were having a meeting just trying to form a transgender or gender non-conforming group to try to do some outreach. It’s something the church didn’t have at the time. So Natalie and I were named chairs and we’re just doing our best to get the group off and running.

Natalie Fitzpatrick, Daughtry’s co-chair, continued the story. “It was kind of I’d call it a grassroots effort,” she said. “A number of trans and gender non-conforming people within the church – maybe with a little bit of prompting from the

reverend – came together and it kind of spontaneously took off from there. The real theme underneath it is sort of you can have a spiritual relationship with whatever you want to call God and still be trans or anywhere on the LGBT spectrum. That, to me, is kind of revolutionary.

“I’ve not experienced a place where I felt that combination was possible before,” Fitzpatrick continued. “So I think that’s what makes us unique. I’m sure somewhere else in the world this exists but it’s the first time that I’ve come across it.”

Jennifer Miracle-Best, a trans ally and spouse, has been helping the group since it started.

“The group was initially formed by a group of members from MCCD who wanted to provide a space for people who are transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, or anywhere else on the gender spectrum to connect with others, as well as to explore their spiritual needs,” Miracle-Best said. “As I’m sure you realize, most LGBT people have experienced some form of rejection, condemnation, discrimination, etcetera, by people who call themselves Christians and often in the name of God.”

Daughtry said he’s like to see the group find different way of bringing people in.

“I have an idea of doing a cooking night and bringing people in and starting from scratch because some people don’t know how to cook and talking to them though food,” he said. “And I have another idea for bringing in a wellness group and having massages because being transgender it’s not that easy for me to go get a massage because I haven’t had top surgery. So finding that connection is hard and knowing that this group is LGBT friendly and they give massages to everyone on the spectrum. It’s important to have those connections and to know those things.”

Though it’s still fairly new, Fitzpatrick said she sees the group expanding quickly.

“I’d like to reach as many people as possible,” she said. “I’d like to let them know there’s a path for them to have a spiritual relationships while being true to who they are. ... We’re not pushing religion on people. We’re simply offering them a place where that combination exists if it’s right for them. It’s more about offering that possibility if that possibility feels right for you.”

The Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, senior pastor and teacher for MCCD, said the group formed organically.

“I’ve been very pleased that over the last year or so our transgender and gender non-conforming individual numbers has been on the increase,” Stringfellow said. “We recognized that we needed to have good spiritual support on what does it mean to come out as trans and be a spiritual person. There are a lot of amazing support groups out there for trans individuals who are doing great work but they don’t focus on the spiritual component and we wanted to fill that void.”



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www.kingofkingslutheran.org

• **Trinity Lutheran Church**
1400 Stadium Blvd.
www.trintyyaa.org

• **Burton**
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4040 Lapeer Rd.
www.ourrisenlordelca.com

• **Detroit**
Spirit of Hope Church
1519 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
www.sohdetroit.org

• **East Lansing**
University Lutheran Church
1020 S. Harrison Rd.
www.ulcel.org

• **Farmington Hills**
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www.antiochelca.org

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www.zionlutheranmi.org

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• **Kentwood**
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www.immanuelmp.com

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www.oslcmuske

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www.faithlutheranokemos.org

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18931 W Warren Ave., Detroit, MI
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<https://www.facebook.com/pg/adamsapple>

aut Bar

Iconic LGBTQ gathering place in Ann Arbor since the early 1990s. Restaurant and bar, serving eclectic menu with a Mexican flair. Located in Braun Court which is also home to the Jim Toy LGBTQ Community Center and Common Language Bookstore. Courtyard open on warmer nights. Hosts many community event fundraisers, rallies and celebrations. Popular with men, women and trans.

315 Braun Court, Ann Arbor
autbar@gmail.com
734-994-3677
www.autbar.com

Briggs Sports Bar

Located in downtown Detroit, across from GM World Headquarters, Briggs Sports Bar is a popular after-work watering-hole. This attractive club draws an energetic crowd to its Trophy Room dance club with "kickass" DJs. The SkyBox rooftop is perfect for enjoying a cocktail while taking in an unrivaled view of downtown.

519 East Jefferson Ave., Detroit,
313-656-4820
www.facebook.com/Briggs-Detroit

Club Gold Coast

One of Detroit's oldest and most popular night spots, Club Gold Coast features male strippers and is open 7 nights a week. Located in the Palmer Park area of Detroit, once the epicenter of Detroit's gay scene.

2971 E. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit
313-366-6135
www.facebook.com/clubgoldcoast

Escape Lounge Nitnight Club

So you've partied all evening but you're not ready to call it a night. Escape Lounge is an all-male, after-hours, all-night eatery & bar. Opens at 10 p.m.

19404 Sherwood St., Detroit
313-892-1765
www.facebook.com/EscapeLounge.gaybar

Gigi's Cabaret

Gigi's cabaret is the longest running female impersonation revue in Michigan, in business over 30 years, and it's a longtime Detroit gay hot spot.

Reservations can be made via Facebook or call 313-584-6525. Open Mon., Thur. & Fri. after 8 p.m. Sat & Sun After 7 p.m. (Closed Tue. & Wed.)

16920 W Warren Ave., Detroit
www.facebook.com/gigiscabaret

Hayloft Saloon

Sports & Video Bar is a male club offering Karaoke, pool, darts, six LCD screens and internet juke box. Open since 1980, The Hayloft is owned by Ron Harrington who also owns the gay bar, Side Traxx in Traverse City. This is a no-nonsense sports bar where men meet other men for fun, friendship and more.

8070 Greenfield Rd., Detroit
313-581-8913
<http://hayloftsaloon.com>

The Liberty Bar

Great little bar in the heart of Pontiac, Michigan. Food, drinks, in business over 60 years. They have a pub menu, with a trendy twist, and an extensive drink menu with a huge beer selection. Open for lunch too. Very friendly atmosphere.

85 North Saginaw St., Pontiac
248-758-0771
www.thelibertybar.com

Menjos Gay Entertainment Complex

Has been a gathering place for the gay community of Metro Detroit for decades. It's also a bit of a Madonna mecca since she used to be a regular when the Material Girl was also a local Michigan girl. The mostly male 20-to-30 something crowd comes for the dancing and entertainment. The Complex includes the Menjos Bar, the Eagle Leather bar and the Olympus Theater. Open Wednesday to Saturday.

928 W. McNichols, Detroit, MI
313-863-3934
www.newmenjoscomplex.com
www.facebook.com/menjoscomplex

Necto Nightclub (Pride Fridays)

Ann Arbor's downtown nightclub, Necto attracts people from University of Michigan's campus and the surrounding area. Multiple weekly & special events. The Pride night has been a staple in Ann Arbor's gay scene since 1984.

516 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor
734-994-5835
www.necto.com

Pronto!

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608 S Washington Ave., Royal Oak, MI
248-544-7900
www.facebook.com/prontovideoabar

Queen's Bar Detroit

But don't be confused by the name. It's not about Queens as in gay men. Queens is named after the NYC borough – the owners have another Detroit bar named Bronx. Although not specifically an LGBTQ bar, Queen's Bar has an unpretentious vibe and clearly welcomes LGBTQ patrons with a super-friendly staff that is very open.

35 Grand River Ave., Detroit
313-285-8019
www.facebook.com/pg/queensbardetroit

Soho Ferndale

This classy spot features wine, jazz, martinis and a comfortable, casual environment. Located right in the heart of Ferndale's gay district, Soho has a weekly line-up of trivia, karaoke, dance parties, and sweet drink specials. Popular with both men and women.

205 W 9 Mile Rd., Ferndale
248-542-7646
www.ferndalesoho.com

Woodward Bar & Grill

In the heart of Midtown, it is the oldest gay bar in Detroit dating back to 1960. It's storied history is reflected in the pictures on the walls and in conversations you'll hear from loyal patrons. The Woodward is open for lunch and dinner with simple but excellent fare, especially their burgers. During the day it serves the many business people in the area, turning mostly LGBTQ after 5 p.m. It's popular with the Black LGBTQ community and is a welcoming environment for men, women, trans.

6426 Woodward Ave., Detroit
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SUMMER PRIDE CALENDAR

JUNE 8

Kalamazoo Pride

6 p.m.

Arcadia Creek Festival Site, Kalamazoo
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

JUNE 9

Motor City Pride Festival

Hart Plaza, Detroit
motorcitypride.org

Drippin' In Denim

9 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Studio 51

1995 Woodbridge, Detroit

\$10 before 10 p.m.; Geminis 1/2 off all night

Attire: Sexy denim, 21+

A Motor City Pride celebration of M. Diddy's birthday and Star Statuz Ent. 10-year reunion

11th Annual Pride Ball: "Magical Mischief"

7:30 p.m.

The Majestic Theater

4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit

Contact Keith at 313-446-9800 or

khughes@miunified.org

statussexy.com/pride-ball

Free entry; Hosted by Unified - HIV Health & Beyond to bring greater visibility and strengthen the relationships with Ball Scene members to help guide them to obtain optimal health.

Kalamazoo Pride

2 p.m.

Arcadia Creek Festival Site, Kalamazoo
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

12th Annual Motor City "Bears in Speedos" Car Wash

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Level One Bank

22635 Woodward Ave., Ferndale

The Bears will be washing cars, truck, bikes, scooters and even a roller blade or two. A portion of the proceeds to benefit the Ruth Ellis Center and Affirmations.

facebook.com/motorcitybears/

Grosse Pointe Pride

9:30 a.m.

Grosse Pointe South High School

11 Grosse Pointe Blvd., Grosse Pointe Farms

We GP's family friendly LGBTQA Pride March. There will be face painting, choirs, food trucks and a big banner to sign. We GP is sharing proceeds with the Ruth Ellis Center.

facebook.com/gppride

JUNE 10

Motor City Pride Parade

11 a.m.

www.motorcitypride.org

This year's parade is themed "Stronger Together" as the state of Michigan comes together as a community

Hart Plaza, Detroit
motorcitypride.org



www.PrideSource.com

Motor City Pride Festival

12-7 p.m.
Hart Plaza, Detroit
www.motorcitypride.org
Cover: \$5

JUNE 15

Pride Night

6-9:30 p.m.
Homer Stryker Field
251 Mills Street, Kalamazoo
A tailgate party that includes all-inclusive food and drink, and three beers. Use the code "kzoopride," to purchase tickets. Proceeds will benefit OutFront Kalamazoo. The first 100 people through the gates will receive rainbow swag from Bell's Brewery, and Sparkleberry will be on tap. Stick around for fireworks after the game.
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

JUNE 15-JULY 8

"St. Sebastian"

Slipstream Theatre
460 Hilton Road, Ferndale
313-986-9156 or insidetheslipstream@gmail.com
Fridays & Saturdays, 7 p.m.; Sundays, 8 p.m.
Tickets: \$12
slipstreamti.com

JUNE 16

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore

7 p.m.
Ferndale High School
881 Pinecrest Drive, Ferndale
Celebrate 10 years of music in the making
facebook.com/groups/singoutdetroit/about

30th Annual Grand Rapids Pride Festival

12 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Calder Plaza (La Grand Vitesse)
300 Ottawa Ave NW, Grand Rapids
facebook.com/grpridefest/
Festival Headliner Betty Who
facebook.com/gppride

Michigan Pride

Old Town Lansing
1232 Turner St, Lansing
facebook.com/MichiganPride

Lake Effect Pride

7-10 p.m.
Four Winds Casinos
11111 Wilson Road, New Buffalo
facebook.com/events/178847742737490

JUNE 18-24

Up North Pride

facebook.com/upnorthpride/

JUNE 23

8th Annual Flint Pride

2-8 p.m.
Riverbank Park, Downtown Flint
facebook.com/FLINTGAYPRIDE

JUNE 23

Holland Pride

12-5 p.m.
Centennial Park
250 Central Ave., Holland
7-11 p.m.
Park Theatre
248 S. River Ave., Holland
facebook.com/outonthelakeshore

JUNE 27

National HIV Testing Day

Visit pridesource.com/directory.html, pridesource.com/calendar.html to find testing events in your area.

JUNE 30

Great Lakes Bay Pride

12-4 p.m.
Wenonah Park, 800 N. Water Street
Bay City
facebook.com/greatlakesbaypride

JULY 12

Kick-Off Movie

6:30 p.m.
Battle Creek Pride
First Congregational Church Cinema Room
145 Capital Ave. NE, Battle Creek
battlecreekpride.org

JULY 13

Blessing of the Bikes

5:30 p.m.
Battle Creek Pride
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
16 E. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek
battlecreekpride.org

3rd Annual Battle Creek Pride Parade

7 p.m.
Downtown, Battle Creek
Followed by a post-parade variety show at Wave Park.
battlecreekpride.org

JULY 14

Battle Creek's Pride Festival

11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
McCamly Park
10 N. Washington Ave., Downtown Battle Creek
battlecreekpride.org



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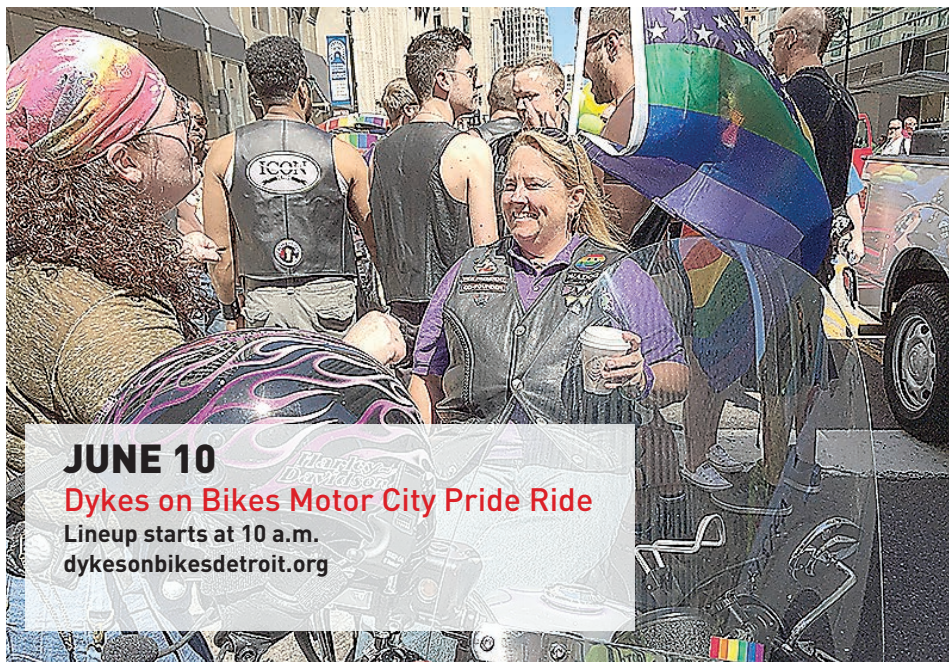
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Lineup starts at 10 a.m.
dykesonbikesdetroit.org

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8 p.m. - 2 a.m.
Partners Bar (Battle Creek's only LGBTQ bar)
910 North Ave., Battle Creek
battlecreekpride.org

JULY 15

Pride Brunch Buffet

1 p.m.
Battle Creek Pride
Clara's on the River
44 McCamly Street North, Battle Creek
claras.com or battlecreekpride.org

JULY 16

Candlelight Vigil

9 p.m.
Battle Creek Pride
Sojourner Truth Monument
2-14 E Michigan Ave., Battle Creek
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JULY 20-AUGUST 5

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JULY 24

Candlelight Vigil

6 p.m.
Hotter Than July
Palmer Park, Detroit
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JULY 25

Opening Party

5 p.m.
Hotter Than July
Woodward Bar & Grill, Detroit
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JULY 26

Fine Art Reception

6 p.m.
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JULY 27

Gathering on LGBTQ Issues

9 a.m.
Hotter Than July
facebook.com/DetroitHTJ/

JULY 28

Palmer Park Picnic

11 a.m.
Palmer Park, Detroit
facebook.com/DetroitHTJ

AUGUST 3-5

Ann Arbor Pride (formerly known as OUTFest)

All proceeds go to helping support the efforts of the Jim Toy Community Center.
annarbortride.com

AUGUST 11

Transgender Pride in the Park

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transgendermichigan.org

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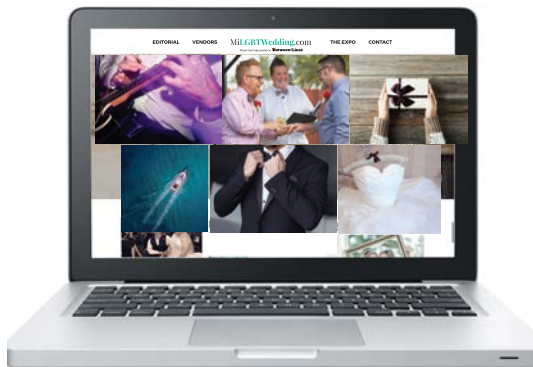
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'Beyond I Do' Ad Campaign Highlights Michigan Couple in Fight Against Discrimination in Post-Gay Marriage Legalization Era

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Just six days after Krista and Jami Contreras' first child was born, they did what any loving parents would do and scheduled their daughter's first checkup. But, when they came into the doctor's office for the visit, they were told the doctor wasn't there and would not be serving their family. They were then told that the doctor who was supposed to serve their daughter had religious beliefs that didn't support the fact that Krista and Jami are lesbians. That was in 2014. Fast forward to present and the Contreras family has now made national headlines with their story, and is involved with a statewide campaign called "Beyond I Do." The campaign's goal is to raise awareness and emphasize that LGBTQ people still suffer from massive rights violations, even post the legalization of gay marriage.

"Our daughter was born in October of 2014. That's when it happened, but we didn't say anything for three months because we were new parents and didn't know what to do. It took a while for it to sink in, what had really happened and in the LGBTQ community you almost start to accept a certain level of discrimination and then the more straight people we told, they said, 'Oh my God, this is not OK,'" Krista Contreras said. "For some reason, gay people were like, 'Yeah, that sucks, but I'm not surprised.' It was interesting, and I think that encouraged us to tell our story."

That was why when the "Beyond I Do" ad campaign reached out to the family they were on board. The campaign is made possible because of a partnership between the Ad Council, a pro bono social campaigning organization, the Gill Foundation, an organization that makes tax-deductible grants available to LGBTQ causes, the CP+B advertising agency and Redscout, a brand strategy and design and innovation agency. The ad campaign currently highlights Michigan as one of 31 states nationwide that allows for places like the offices of medical practitioners to discriminate against LGBTQ people. Krista Contreras said that she believes that if the majority of people understood that much local legislation actively discriminates against LGBTQ people, they would vote for different, more progressive legislators in the future.

"Because people who have the mindset of change might just not understand what local legislation means. So, a big part of why we share our story is that our children have a better future, whatever their sexuality is," Contreras said. "And, just in general to do what we can and make it a better place and to let people know that everyone has the same basic rights to crucial services like health care."

The Contreras' concerns are also

it's important for other people to know that we don't have those rights still and my kids are still very young, but when they're older and they're learning about this stuff in history books, I want them to know that we didn't just stand idly by. We did what we could, we used our voice to try and make a change and, hopefully, they'll be proud of that."

Contreras also emphasized that she doesn't want to downplay the positive and progressive forward strides made for



especially relevant today, too. Currently, the Supreme Court of the U.S. is gearing up to decide the result of an LGBTQ-based religious freedom case, Masterpiece Cakeshop, Lt. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, in which a baker denied a gay couple services because of his religious beliefs. And, just past January the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced a New Conscience and Religious Freedom Division that defends those in medicine who refuse to provide care for LGBTQ people. That's why Contreras said she is proud to be part of this campaign.

"The fact that you can be denied health care just because of who you love is insane. What if a police officer comes to your house and says, 'Oh, you're gay? I'm leaving.' That's the same idea," she said. "It's basic rights and I think

and by the LGBTQ community to date, but wants to make sure that people don't think the fight is over.

"Once marriage became legalized a lot of people thought, 'We've won, the fight is over.' Yes, we have made huge strides in the right direction, but there's still a long way to go. We still don't have equal rights," she said. "The fight is not over until LGBTQ people are treated the same as everybody else and have the same rights to basic healthcare, purchase or rent a home. People are being evicted from their homes for being gay and it's still legal."

To read more about the Contreras' story, go to pridesource.com for BTL's original coverage of their story. More information about the campaign can be found online at BeyondIDo.org.





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Sam Smith at Little Caesar's Arena

Having just released his second album "The Thrill of It All," English-born artist Sam Smith is currently on his second world tour. The out Grammy Award-winning singer has sold millions of records since his newest release and is slated to perform at Detroit's Little Caesars Arena on Friday, June 22 at 8 p.m. More information about the upcoming performance can be found at ticketmaster.com or samsmithworld.com.

Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, June 7

Safetalk Training 5 p.m. Hosted by American Indian Health and Family Services and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, safeTALK is a half-day alertness training that prepares anyone 15 or older, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105

Friday, June 8

2018 Kalamazoo Pride – Love Who You Are! 6 p.m. With the goal of more entertainment, more vending options, and more family-friendly activities, we're hoping to make this the best Pride yet! Arcadia Creed Festival Site, 145 E. Water Street, Kalamazoo, MI. <https://pride.outfrontkzoo.org/location/> <https://pride.outfrontkzoo.org/>

Saturday, June 9

Motor City Pride Festival and Parade 1 p.m. The Motor City Pride Festival and Parade returns to Hart Plaza for Michigan's largest pride celebration! Check our website for all the info on the Festival, Parade, Candlelight Vigil, and all other activities. Hart Plaza, 1 West Jefferson, Detroit. <http://www.motorcitypride.org/#festival>

Sunday, June 10

Grillin' for Food Gatherers 3 p.m. Grillin' is a community picnic for the whole family featuring eclectic live music, gourmet

grilled sausages & side dishes from 30+ local food purveyors, regional beer, and plenty of kids activities! Proceeds support Food Gatherers' Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796 www.foodgatherers.org <http://www.foodgatherers.org/grillin>

Monday, June 11

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 6:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group Event Time: 6:30pm-8pm All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. Come and meet other trans* youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700 <http://www.chippewavalley.schools.org/schools/high-schools/dhs/>

Thursday, June 14

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 p.m. Michigan Employee Resource Groups for Equality (MERGE) Monthly Networking Event. All are welcomed to network. Host by: Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com info@detroitlgbtchamber.com <http://www.ferndalesoho.com> <http://www.detroitlgbtchamber.com>

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 7 p.m. All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. This group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-

3620 www.oaklandumc.org <http://www.standwithtrans.org>

Friday, June 15

Michigan Pride 2018 March, Rally and Festival! 6 p.m. A statewide celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community and allies. The festival kicks off Friday night with the White Party. Olde Town Lansing, Turner Street, Old Town Lansing. www.lansing.org/events <https://www.michigan.org/event/michigan-pride-march-rally-festival>

Saturday, June 16

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore 7 p.m. Come Out and Support Sing Out Detroit Chorus as we celebrate 10 years of making music together. We will be performing some of our favorite songs and will be joined by chorus alumni. Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest Drive, Ferndale. 248-943-2411 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sing-out-detroit-presents-encore-tickets-44325980200>

The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce presents the 2nd Annual Pride Cruise 7 p.m. Come out for a night of fun and food at a pretty affordable price. Network with Chamber members and Corporate Partners. Connect

with the LGBT community on the beautiful Detroit River with Diamond Jack Tours.

2nd Annual Pride Cruise 7 p.m. The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce presents the 2nd Annual Pride Cruise. Come out for a night of fun and food at a pretty affordable price. Network with Chamber members and Corporate Partners. Diamond Jack Tours, Stroh's River Place 201 Joseph Campau Ave., Detroit. 3131-843-9376 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com <http://detroitlgbtchamber.com>

Friday, June 29

Satori Circus presents "Stroke" 8 p.m. SATORI CIRCUS will perform a new original performance art piece titled, 'Stroke' at the Tangent Gallery / Hastings Street Ballroom. Also performing will be the theatrical rock performance group, The Haberdasher from Port Huron, MI. Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Avenue, Detroit. 2484451277 <https://www.facebook.com/events/252206855341425/>

MUSIC & MORE

28th Annual Pewabic House and Garden Show! June 7-10, 6 p.m. Preview Party Fundraiser on Thursday, June 7; Open to the public Friday, June 8 thru Sunday, June 10. Shop ceramic work from over 80 artists, enjoy free docent led tours, with demos by Pewabic staff. Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit. 313-626-2000 <http://www.pewabic.org/gardenparty>

Jerry Seinfeld at Wharton Center's Great Cobb Hall June 7, 7 p.m. America's premier comedian, Jerry Seinfeld, comes to East Lansing to perform his signature stand-up routine. Seinfeld has been hailed for his uncanny ability to joke about the little things in life that relate to audiences. Great Cobb Hall, 750 East West Shaw Lane, East Lansing. wharton@msu.edu <http://www.whartoncenter.com/events/detail/jerry-seinfeld>

Marianne Williamson's National "Love America" Tour June 8, 7 p.m. Historic Detroit Unity Temple is honored to have been selected as the first Michigan

Editor's Pick

MOCAD Hosts 'this is Not Detroit' Exhibit

Tal R. is an artist based in Copenhagen, yet his solo work "This is Not Detroit" reaches as far as Michigan. The work features seven large-scale paintings that represent his views of Detroit neighborhoods that he has not visited himself in varying shades of blue. It is his aim to create a parallel universe where viewers can examine the city from an outsider's lense. More information on the exhibit can be found online at mocadetroit.org.





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▶ Happenings

Continued from p. 62

appearance for internationally acclaimed author and lecturer, Marianne Williamson on her Love America book and speaking tour. Williamson will speak at Detroit Unity Temple, 17505 Second Ave., Detroit. 313-945-4848 pegriffin@sbcglobal.net pegriffin@sbcglobal.net www.detroitunity.com http://www.detroitunity.com

America The Beautiful: Songs from the Great American Songbook, and More! June 8-9, 7:30 p.m. An evening of male choral music paying tribute the vast array of music that is contained in the Great American Songbook. You'll enjoy a variety of American popular music from the last 100 years. First Presbyterian Church of Lansing, 510 West Ottawa Street, Lansing. lansingfirstpres.com http://www.lansingout.org

Brandi Carlile – In Concert June 9, 7:30 p.m. Brandi M. Carlile is a Grammy-nominated American folk rock and Americana singer-songwriter. For our upcoming 2018 spring and summer tour, each online ticket order will include a digital copy of our new album. The Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397 http://www.michtheater.org/show/brandi-carlile

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup Continues! June 9, 8 p.m. It's all part of the saucy, vintage nouveau world of Postmodern Jukebox, a tongue-in-cheek musical project for all ages spearheaded by Scott Bradlee, a revered pianist and genius of song arrangement known for growing his Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org http://smt.d.umich.edu/

about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm http://a2sf.org/events/scott-bradlee-postmodern-jukebox/

A Night in Brazil NextGen Jazz June 9, 8 p.m. Grammy Award-winning Brazilian superstar Ivan Lins is a master of harmony and melody! Lins has written and performed numerous songs that have become jazz classics—recorded by Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones, George Benson, Sting, Max M. & Marjorie S., Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 3135765111 https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=4661&prod=4117

Chicago Samba June 9, 10 p.m. Chicago Samba, led by Mo Marchini, brings its authentic sound and dance mixed with the flavor of Carnaval to The Cube for a taste of tropical Brazil not to be missed! The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5084&prod=5083 https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5376&prod=5375

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup Continues! June 10, 1 p.m. ACRUBUFFO'S AIR PLAY: Fabrics dance, balloons have a mind of their own, confetti turns into the night sky, and a gorgeous canopy becomes a river of silk hovering over the audience in this modern circus. Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org http://smt.d.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm http://a2sf.org/events/acrobuffos-air-play-1

Grillin' for Food Gatherers June 10, 3 p.m. Grillin' is a community picnic for the whole family featuring eclectic live music, gourmet grilled sausages & side dishes from 30+ local food purveyors, regional beer, and plenty of kids activities! Proceeds support Food Gatherers'

Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796 www.foodgatherers.org http://www.foodgatherers.org/grillin

eVenti Verticali's Wanted June 19-20, 7:30 p.m. Aerial theater combines with video projections on a giant outdoor screen and concocts a mind-bending visual comedy extravaganza for all ages. Suspended in a world of animation, two Italian brothers hang from ropes and harnesses. Top of the Park, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-994-5999 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org https://a2sf.org/category/top-of-the-park/

Sam Smith June 22, 8 p.m. Sam Smith's sophomore album, *The Thrill Of It All*, was released worldwide on November 3 via Capitol Records. In support, Smith announced the North American dates for "The Thrill Of It All Tour." Little Caesar's Arena, 2645 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 3133495777

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Main Stage Lineup Continues! June 26, 6:30 p.m. AT THE ILLUSIONIST'S TABLE: Hosted by the world-renowned Scottish mentalist/storyteller Scott Silven, 22 strangers will share an elegant candlelit 3-course meal as mesmerizing illusions complement everything from the cocktails to the dessert course. Ann Arbor Club, 103 E. Liberty, 3rd Floor, Ste 300, Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org http://a2sf.org/events/at-the-illusionists-table-1/

THEATER

Church & State by Jason Odell Williams June 8-July 1, 8 p.m. Just before his bid for re-election, and following a school shooting in his N.C. hometown, a U.S. senator (R) makes a comment that gets leaked, calling into question his stance on guns and God. Matrix Theatre Company,

Editor's Pick

SheHive Tarot Class

A fun and potentially spiritual way to kick off summer could be through learning how to read tarot cards. Ferndale's SheHive is hosting an event presented by Jane Pierce, the organization's "resident intuitive." Pierce will fill in interested individuals on what meanings certain cards have, simple spreads and provide guided readings that will help students develop a high level of confidence in their readings. The event will be held on Wednesday, June 13 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. More information can be found online at eventbrite.com.



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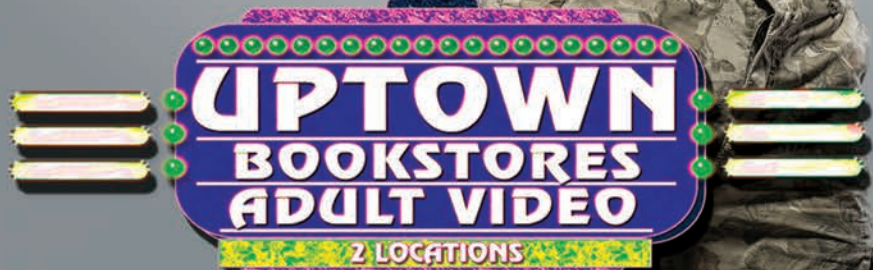
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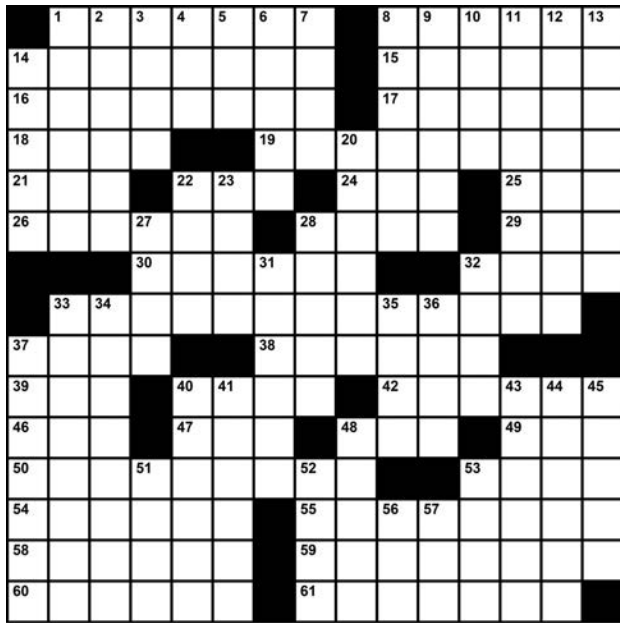
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Q Puzzle



- 26 Lizard in a whirlpool?
 28 Lovers of Ellen, for example
 29 Title for Ian McKellen
 30 Poughkeepsie campus
 32 Pre-kiss insert, perhaps
 33 With 50- and 61-Across, line from the Chinese version of the revival?
 37 Is worthwhile
 38 Circumcision, e.g.
 39 Brief endorsements
 40 ___ bit (slightly)
 42 Like a "Queer Eye" client, at first
 46 Where they shoot "Will & Grace"
 47 West of Hollywood
 48 Legal matters
 49 They could come from Uranus
 50 See 33-Across
 53 Pastry with fruit, perhaps
 54 SautÉed delicacies
 55 Veggieburger, at Hamburger Mary's
 58 Fashion designer Pucci
 59 Maidenhead, for example
 60 Spruce up
 61 See 33-Across
- Down**
- 1 Followed a trail
 2 With "ass," hurried
 3 Tan relative
 4 One ruled by a queen
 5 Plug attachment
 6 Hairy Himalayans
- 7 British carbine
 8 Showy cock's partner
 9 Sigourney Weaver sequel
 10 Life partner
 11 Margaret Cho show
 12 Meeting unexpectedly, with "upon"
 13 Crash into the ground, slangily
 14 Zorro was a gay one
 20 Cause anguish to
 22 Ballet move
 23 Canadian gas brand
 27 Burl of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"
 28 Prima ___ evidence
 31 Castro, in San Francisco
 32 Kunis of "Black Swan"
 33 Escort from the bar to your room
 34 Off rhyme for a lane on "Desperate Housewives"
 35 Activist Clare Boothe ___
 36 Vietnam neighbor
 37 They ring twice, in film noir
 40 Tennis star Mauresmo
 41 Jude Law in "Sherlock Holmes"
 43 Political analyst Ron
 44 Like Christmas tree lights
 45 Lauded makeup maker Lauder
 48 Poet Vivien
 51 Salmon after becoming a breeder
 52 Mary had a little one
 53 Spelling of "Trick"
 56 "What ____, chopped liver?"
 57 JFK's successor

Foreign Film

- Across**
- 1 With 19-Across, Broadway revival of a 1970 film
 8 Home fit for a queen
 14 Wonder Woman's wrist ornament
 15 Cook of "The Maltese Falcon"
 16 Word after poet
- 17 Draws a bead on
 18 Gay rights defender, at times
 19 See 1-Across
 21 Sandra, in a "Grease" song
 22 Cukor's "___ Girls"
 24 Fabric suffix
 25 Bio. or chem.



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I Found Love at a Lorde Concert. Just Not the Kind I Was Expecting.

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

The soundtrack of my love life as a full-grown gay man was written by a 21-year-old woman. I'm 35, so this is slightly concerning to my queer confidante. He doesn't think I need to try to make myself any more available to the Snapchat demo who adorn their faces in cat whiskers and dog snouts. He demanded I "get off Grindr" at a recent Lorde concert in Detroit, rightfully fearing I may end up part of the broken hearts club – been there, done that; he knows – thanks to what Lorde has aptly deemed the "L-O-V-E-L-E-S-S generation."

My first Lorde concert was a sea of rainbow after a glitter storm; the Motor City's queer collective appeared to have been summoned by collective Grindr heartbreak, shared interest in defiant Lorde-like dancing, and the New Zealander's basically perfect album, "Melodrama." Her follow-up to 2013's "Pure Heroine" spoke to me as a hopeless romantic who has turned, thanks to our modern dating era (or whatever we're calling it now) and its ADD culture, into a love cynic.

The frustrating pangs of an opera grad student who won't commit to in-person hangs but lingers from a distance with Grindr taps and messages, even though he has my actual phone number. Or the "emotionally unavailable" one. Or the one I kissed too soon. Lorde's "Melodrama" album actually has nothing to do with these, or any of my latest dating fails. But Lorde knows when it comes to love, I'm the problem, she's the problem, you're the problem. We're all the fucking problem.



Hear Me Out

Lorde in concert is a triumph of spirit and solidarity, with hordes of cool people (cool because they also like Lorde) collectively reveling in a wise-beyond-her-years musical mastermind who just last year, in June, released the Modern Love Bible. AT THE AGE OF 21. She wrote an entire anthology on why love's a little bitch (except when it's not). The songs she sang that night in Detroit spoke to 8,000 people who have lived the very deeply felt lyrics Lorde once typed into her iPhone Notes app. In the context of the show, "I think that you might be the same as me, behave abnormally," a line from the show's opener, "Homemade Dynamite," resonated with a fresh sense of unity in a space where queers came to fume together, cry together, and move on together.

For me, "Supercut" called to mind memories of last year, when I met a man in Palm Springs and took a whirlwind trip to Seattle to see if our budding romance could bud further (it didn't). Lorde danced on stage, my mind danced back to that bittersweet bop being the theme for the weekend and its every fleeting moment. "Liability" presents dating woes with even more glaring matter-of-fact clarity: "The truth is I am a toy that people enjoy till all of the tricks don't work anymore and then they are bored of me." You know she knows she's not alone.

Watching queers hang their arms over their friends' shoulders during "Perfect Places," with Lorde – again, just 21 – lyrically contemplating our endless quest for the magic

answer to contentedness in life and love, was pure exhilaration. Affirmation, even. If perfect places are created by those in them, this was such a place.

"But when we're dancing, I'm alright," she assured, dancing. Earlier, she performed a cover of Frank Ocean's own ode to human connection, "Solo," as if to emphasize the significance of finding our people – or a person. I think I found mine that night, as romantic love and the weight it holds on "Melodrama" took a backseat to all the other ways – lasting ways – love can blossom. I didn't know it, however, until I was letting myself feel everything in a mix of freestyling queer men and women, some older than me, most younger. Suddenly, the

album's heartbreak seemed less heartbreaking; here I was in a buoyant not-so-loveless space with people (other Grindr users even!) who've all felt Lorde's pain on her morose elegy "Writer in the Dark" and wandered aimlessly through love, waiting for our green light, and then, yes, kept going.

That night, I came to get my heart broken. But instead, the maddening thought of romantic love evaporated, and loving gestures surrounded me. With the "Melodrama" album singing me home, I left enveloped in them – dancing, and feeling alright.

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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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Jennifer Aniston and Tig Notaro will be 'First Ladies'

"Jennifer Aniston is very attractive...and I was just like, hey, how about.... we're married," says lesbian comic Tig Notaro ("One Mississippi"). And now they are. Or will be on film, anyway. The premise – one that Aniston agreed to based on nothing more than a pitch – is part of an in-progress script called "First Ladies," and it involves Aniston as the first woman President and Notaro as her wife. It came about when Notaro and her real-life wife and screenwriting partner Stephanie Allynne joked with each other about running for office. Then it became an idea for a movie and then Jennifer Aniston said yes and then Will Ferrell jumped on board, too. This is not the normal way projects come to life in Hollywood, but Notaro is on a roll, in spite of "One Mississippi's" cancellation, and if she's given the chance to do it her way, very funny material happens. This one could take a couple years to see movie screens, but it's a reason to keep on living.



Jennifer Aniston.
Photo: Starfrenzy

'Supergirl' adds transgender character

"Supergirl," the underrated, progressively-minded CW series that keeps on rolling in spite of a network change (from CBS) and a ratings slump, will see the arrival of a transgender character in its upcoming fourth season. Kara Danvers, the reporter identity of Supergirl (Melissa Benoist), will welcome a person named Nia Nal to the newsroom. All current information suggests that this character will take a leading roll

in Danvers' workplace and that the character will also be a trans woman. As trans characters slowly make their way into narratives on network TV, it's beginning to feel like a mini revolution, and each new addition is great news. Of course, casting becomes a flashpoint issue for trans characters, and we're hoping that actual trans actors are the only people being considered. Why not let the cis male actors who want to stretch go find a different way to accomplish their goals. It's simply time.

Will 'Rocketman' downplay Elton John's sexuality?

We are somewhat worried. Not too much, not yet, but a little. See, we watched the trailer for "Bohemian Rhapsody," the Freddie Mercury biopic coming this fall, and like a lot of queer people, we're a little anxious that Mercury's gayness and his death from AIDS will take a backseat to the glory of Queen's music. We will, of course, take a seat on this until we actually see the film. But still, now we can't help being a little nervous by association for "Rocketman," the Elton John biopic that finally arrives in theaters in May of 2019. Taron Egerton plays John in the 1970s when his career blew up with albums like "Honky Chateau" and "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," well before John announced his bisexuality, married a woman, then divorced her and came out as gay in the early 1990s. Directed by Dexter Fletcher – who stepped in to finish "Rhapsody" after the firing of Bryan Singer – "Rocketman" is still pretty firmly under wraps and we'd like to take this opportunity to encourage both movies to add a "lot more homosexuality" to the final mix. Unhappy LGBT audiences will be a bad response for biopics about LGBT heroes, we can all agree.

Romeo San Vicente adds a lot of homosexuality to everything he touches.

Amandla Stenberg talks 'salty' reshoots for 'The Hate U Give'

A film about systemic racism fires a cast member for racism. You can't make up this stuff, and it happened recently to the film adaptation of Angie Thomas's National Book Award-finalist YA novel "The Hate U Give." The story of a young girl (Amandla Stenberg) who witnesses a close friend's murder by police, and who then gravitates toward the Black Lives Matter movement, the film from George Tillman Jr. ("Soul Food") was in the can when it came to light that supporting actor Kian Lawley, a YouTube star, had posted videos with racist language. He was fired and replaced with "Riverdale's" Archie, K.J. Apa, and Stenberg – who identifies as pansexual, non-binary, and prefers the pronoun "they" – was, in their own words, "salty" (for readers who don't keep up with young people slang, it means angry or agitated, you're welcome) during reshoots but says that it improved their performance. Slated for later this year, the drama also stars Anthony Mackie, Regina Hall, Common, Issa Rae and "Grimm" star Russell Hornsby.

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