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**Schuette Endorsement  
in Grand Rapids Causes  
Backlash**

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**Pence Urges Voters to  
Back Trump Over Anti-LGBT  
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**Gay Corrections Officer  
Sues State of Michigan and  
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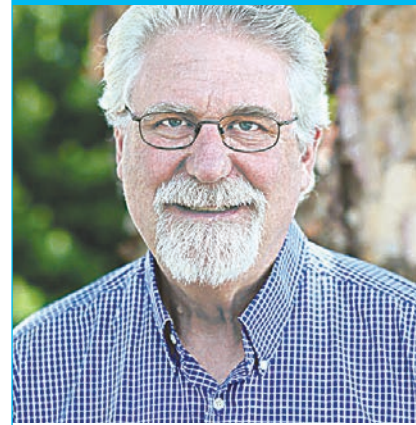
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# Schuetzte Endorsement in Grand Rapids Causes Backlash

## LGBTQ-Friendly Businesses Protest the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

When the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce endorsed Republican Attorney General Bill Schuetzte through its Friends of West Michigan Business Political Action Committee on Monday, Sept. 17, backlash ensued.

More than 50 area business professionals have signed a letter urging the Chamber to rescind its endorsement of Schuetzte for governor in the state of Michigan. The Chamber - which endorsed Lt. Gov. Brian Calley in his failed gubernatorial primary bid - has deleted its initial Facebook post from Monday, Sept. 17 announcing the endorsement of Schuetzte. The post generated more than 150 comments, the vast majority of which were critical of the Schuetzte endorsement, MiBiz reports.

The Chamber's president and CEO, Rick Baker, issued a Facebook statement on Wednesday, Sept. 19 explaining the endorsement of Schuetzte, stating "he aligns most closely with our business-friendly policies."

Baker said his organization understands their endorsement decisions "do not take place in a vacuum and we are open to dialogue to understand the impact of our decisions." He said they remain "committed to diversity, equity and inclusion" and will continue to advocate to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

Schuetzte issued a statement late Wednesday, Sept. 19 that reportedly said he is proud to have the Chamber's endorsement.

"Michigan must be a place where we grow our recovering economy and we ensure there is no room for discrimination of any kind, because all people must be treated with dignity, grace and respect," he said. And then he added, "We will work together to protect everyone, including employment protections and religious liberties."

### Backlash Ignites

The Grand Rapids Pride Center expressed "deep disappointment" on their website and is encouraging other businesses to join in protest. They will suspend any future partnerships with the Chamber and any of its programs, including OutPro, a program for LGBTQ professionals.

The GRPC cited a formal opinion Schuetzte issued in July asserting that under



the state's Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act LGBTQ Michiganders are not protected from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission ignored that opinion and reiterated their support for the interpretive statement they issued in May, interpreting the word "sex" in the ELCRA to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

During the bi-annual West Michigan Policy Forum in downtown Grand Rapids on Monday, Sept. 24, Schuetzte reportedly said his views about offering protections from discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation had been "misinterpreted." If elected governor, Schuetzte said he would work with a variety of stakeholders to close legal loopholes that allow for discrimination, MiBiz reports.

Schuetzte told WOOD TV 8 political reporter Rick Albin in a 35-minute live discussion at the event that "whether it's race, color, creed, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion, there's no place for discrimination in Michigan."

Schuetzte also said he would "look at (Elliott-Larsen), absolutely. And we'll look at it so there's no discrimination."

But Democratic legal counsel for the Michigan House of Representatives, Nathan Triplett, points out that Schuetzte has "spent an inordinate amount of time defending discrimination against LGBTQ Michiganders."

Triplett reminds members of the community via Twitter of Schuetzte's decades-long anti-LGBTQ record.

### Schuetzte's Long Anti-LGBT Record

Schuetzte defended Michigan's discriminatory Public Employee Domestic Partner Benefit Restriction Act, which was struck down as unconstitutional. Schuetzte defended Michigan's discriminatory constitutional ban on marriage equality. Schuetzte defended legislation authorizing taxpayer-funded child placement agencies to discriminate against same-sex couples. He also joined a lawsuit seeking to invalidate the Obama administration's guidance on the rights of transgender students at school.

"The list goes on and on. Schuetzte has been a decades-long defender of anti-LGBTQ discrimination. He has no interest whatsoever in seeing Elliott-Larsen amended to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It's a cynical political ploy. Period," said Triplett.

Some of the other businesses affiliated with the organization that have ended their support of the Chamber include Founders Brewing Co., The Winchester, Donkey Tacqueria, the Apartment Lounge, Creston Brewery, Urban Core Collective and 8ThirtyFour Integrated Communications.

Founders Brewing Co. tweeted on Tuesday, Sept. 18, "We stand with our LGBTQ community and ask the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce reverse their decision. We will be terminating our membership in the meantime and encourage our fellow local businesses to consider doing the same."

Apartment Lounge owner Bob Johnson expressed disappointment in a letter written to the Chamber on Wednesday, Sept. 19.

Johnson posted the letter on Facebook stating this decision "goes against everything" that the business stands for in creating a safe space. Later, the establishment tweeted, "We have severed ties with the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce."

Equality Michigan's board chair, Jim Murray, responded to the Chamber's endorsement fallout.

"We are heartened to see businesses and business leaders standing with us and with LGBTQ equality," Murray said. "It is a testament to the business community that they prioritize diversity and inclusion when choosing who they will support, and we appreciate their commitment to these ideals."

As the former president of AT&T Michigan and a Republican, Murray said, "I know that equality does not have to be at odds with good business or political affiliation. It is a choice. Regardless of what he says now, Bill Schuetzte has never stood with our community, and his record shows that. He chose to be on the wrong side of history, and that is where he'll stay."

### LGBT Chamber Welcomes Support

Kevin Heard, founding board member of the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce, said that ignoring LGBTQ equality and good business practices don't go hand-in-hand.

"You cannot cite business-friendly policies being the reason why you ignore human rights," Heard said. "We must be aware that during the current political climate that we are better united than divided, and someone who has an anti-human rights policy should not be governor of our state."

Heard welcomed all of those who have canceled their membership with the Chamber in Grand Rapids to join them.

"Especially those who are LGBT and allied professionals, including LGBT business owners," he said. "When businesses are open and inclusive they are more sustainable and more successful. An effective business cannot reach its full potential if their talent isn't allowed to bring their whole selves to work or are afraid to be fired because of who they love."

*For a list of Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce members, visit [web.grandrapids.org/search](http://web.grandrapids.org/search).*

# Gay Corrections Officer Files Lawsuit Over Employment Discrimination

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

A gay corrections officer has sued the State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Corrections for employment discrimination. The case was filed in federal court on March 16 by Rasor Law Firm attorneys Jim Rasor and Andrew Laurila on behalf of the plaintiff Ashley Menchaca.

Menchaca, who works at the Woodland Center Correctional Facility in Livingston County, said she has experienced acts of workplace harassment and discrimination, including derogatory comments from supervisors regarding her sexual orientation and gender non-conformity.

“Andrea became victimized in the workplace to no fault of her own,” said Laurila. “We are prepared to fight this out in the Sixth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. ... We believe in this.”

The lawsuit alleges that the defendants discriminated against Menchaca based on her sexual orientation in violation of the federal anti-discrimination statute, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from discriminating against their employees on the basis of constitutionally-protected classes such as race and sex.

The defendants are represented by Michigan’s office of attorney general and intend to seek dismissal of Menchaca’s Title VII sexual orientation discrimination claim.

Andrea Bitely, spokesperson for the attorney general’s office, declined to comment as this case is pending litigation and they are awaiting a ruling by Judge Terrance Berg.

“The attorney general’s office for the state of Michigan – which has a track record of spending millions of public monies fighting against the rights of LGBT people – is arguing that it’s okay for the state to discriminate against LGBT folks on the basis of their LGBT status,” said Rasor. “The attorney general’s role is to protect all Michigan citizens from discrimination. This is just one more example of why the attorney general’s agenda is hateful and discriminatory.”

Since 2016, the MDOC has paid more than \$3 million in damages in seven lawsuits that accused the MDOC of employment discrimination, the department said in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

The MDOC has an appropriated budget for 2018 just over \$2 billion.

“This is a huge employer of people in our state that wants the right to legally fail to protect LGBT folks in the workplace,” said Rasor, noting that the MDOC does a “miserable job” of protecting women, minorities and disabled workers who they have successfully represented in employment discrimination cases.

He said, “We have recovered millions and millions of dollars for clients subject to discrimination at the MDOC. ... The state of Michigan has paid our clients out of the public

budget. It’s costing taxpayers a fortune.”

MDOC employees who feel they have been discriminated against at work are encouraged to call the Rasor Law Firm or their attorney to bring the MDOC to justice. Beyond that, members of the community can and should vote in the upcoming election.

“If every single LGBT citizen in Michigan made sure that they went to the polls in November, we’ll have a much better chance to elect a Democratic team that can help turn this around,” said Rasor, adding that under Gov. Rick Snyder, the state of Michigan continues to fight against expanding civil rights protection to include sexual orientation.

The state of Michigan is part of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, which has before now refused to recognize that Title VII protects employees from sexual orientation workplace discrimination on the basis that sexual orientation is distinct from sex discrimination.

Beginning with the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the Court struck down as unconstitutional amendments to Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio’s state constitutions defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman, lower federal courts have taken an increasingly expansive view of sexual orientation workplace discrimination protection.

Most recently, in a unanimous March 7 decision in *EEOC v. R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes, Inc.*, a case originating in Michigan’s Eastern District Court, the Sixth Circuit held that discrimination on the basis of transgender status is “necessarily” discrimination on the basis of sex and therefore prohibited under Title VII.

LGBTQ people are not a protected class in the state of Michigan. However, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission took action in May to address anti-LGBTQ discrimination. The Commission voted to approve a motion to adopt an interpretive statement that “discrimination because of ... sex” includes discrimination because of gender identity and discrimination because of sexual orientation.

The attorney general’s office issued a formal opinion in July asserting that under the state’s Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act LGBTQ Michiganders are not protected from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission ignored that opinion and has continued investigating complaints.

“Instead of the attorney general actually spending his time defending the citizens in the state of Michigan against predatory lending or predatory insurance practices, or discrimination, he is spending his time fighting to discriminate against citizens,” said Rasor. “We are among a team of trial lawyers that continue to bring them to justice and expose their inability to protect workers in the workplace.”

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AJ Sims Photo by Reel Artsy Photography

# Advocates for Change

## Local Leadership Program Gives Youth International Voice

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

AJ Sims said he is passionate about two things: LGBTQ laws and transgender rights. He has been able to pursue his passion by way of a youth advocacy project at the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park. In partnership with London Bell, Sims is mentoring and building support among young people for international law and human rights.

He met Bell while visiting the Ruth Ellis Center where he started going at the age of 15 to dance and visit with friends.

"I knew I wanted to help people, but didn't know how," said Sims, 20, of Detroit. "We started talking about how to better the community."

Bell, 41, is an International Human Rights Law and Policy Advocate, an ally and friend of the LGBTQ community, a National Council Member with the United Nations Association of the U.S. and Board President of the Greater Detroit Chapter of the United Nations Association.

"It was the perfect match," said Bell about meeting Sims. "AJ has been a really good partner in gathering the youth and talking to

the youth in the community. They are excited about what we're doing because he encourages them to be excited."

Since the project launched in October 2017, together the pair has been able to organize three United Nations 101 sessions to discuss different United Nations agencies and how to use the United Nations system to advocate on a global level for local issues.

"We met with young people who are quite passionate about their rights and the rights of others. We sat and hashed out what's important to them. They wanted to know how they could further use their voice to be advocates for change - encourage people to step out and not be afraid. Why sign a petition? Why vote? Why show up at a rally?" asked Bell pointing to a couple areas of concern like violence, discrimination, abuse against transgender women of color and stigma and access to resources for those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

"People in other parts of the world are experiencing the exact same issues. Their rights are not being protected. Justice is not being served. They do not have access to institutions of justice just like in the U.S. and so, for me, it's

helping young people and people of different generations understand that we're more similar as global citizens than we are different."

When asked what makes this project different from others, Bell said, "I believe that it's different because it is youth-driven and youth-focused. It's also going to have a local, national and global component to it. When we're finished going through this project, our young people will be well-versed in how to incorporate advocacy strategies into their activism, how to develop relationships with our leaders and members of Congress and they are also going to



to develop relationships with our leaders and members of Congress and they are also going to

### AJ's Tools of Engagement

Kristi Faulkner Dance  
kristifaulknerdance.com

UNIFIED - HIV Health & Beyond  
miunified.org

WSUP (Wayne State University Prevention Team)  
wsup313.com

understand our role at the U.N. And if they want to take further their activism, how to use the U.N. system to do so."

The project will last six months and the group will travel to Washington D.C. in the fall of 2018 and potentially to the United Nations in 2019 to attend the United Nations Association's Global Engagement Summit. The Summit is the largest annual gathering of Americans at the United Nations in support of the principles and work of the United Nations.

"Come in, sit down - we need you - and let's talk about some of the things you're passionate about and let's see where your talents are because you have them and we need them," said Bell to young people interested in joining the project. "From the shyest person to the most vocal, there is so much that each person can contribute. From using social media to signing petitions to making phone calls to our elected officials or being someone other people can seek answers from."

Sims reiterated the benefit of participating. "I never thought I could change somebody's life doing what I do every day," he said. "I've seen change happen and I know it's possible - in people, in institutions and in myself."

Connect with London Bell online at [LondonJBell.com](http://LondonJBell.com) and AJ Sims at [aj.sims@ruthelliscenter.org](mailto:aj.sims@ruthelliscenter.org).



AJ Sims Photo by Miz Korona



### London's Tools of Engagement

Ruth Ellis Center  
[ruthelliscenter.org](http://ruthelliscenter.org)

United Nations  
[un.org](http://un.org)

Bell Global Justice Institute  
[bellglobaljustice.org](http://bellglobaljustice.org)

*This article originally appeared in Pride Source Magazine. Between The Lines interviewed seven young LGBTQ people and allies who have grabbed ahold of their "Tools of Engagement," and with their confidence have become role models and leaders building positive networks and influencing others.*

# Businesses in Ferndale Received Anonymous Anti-LGBTQ Hate Mail

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Over the past weekend several businesses in Ferndale, along with the police and fire departments, received an anonymous letter that city officials say amounts to anti-LGBTQ hate mail. The letters, which were postmarked from Houston, Texas, claim to be from someone who visited Ferndale over the summer and was put off by the number of rainbow pride flags that they saw flying high in the city.

The author of the letter lambasted Ferndale for being gay-friendly.

"You have rolled out the red ... no, rainbow carpet for them," read the letter in part. "This is madness."

In addition, the letter, which was accompanied by a pamphlet titled "Doom Town," goes on to compare the LGBTQ community with people who perform bestiality.

"I have read history's record regarding a perverted Roman woman who somehow induced a goat to have sexual intercourse with her in public view," the letter said. "Such brazen bestiality is horrible and appalling, and yet I

suspect that if such a woman were to perform such an act at 300 East 9 mile Road the city fathers would erect a statue in her honor!"

Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter was quick to condemn the person who wrote the letter and their message.

"The anonymous coward that sent this hateful mail will only serve to strengthen our resolve to be an inclusive and welcoming city for everyone," said Coulter in a post on Facebook. "I encourage anyone who received the letter to report it to the Ferndale Police Department."

The Ferndale Police Department also released a statement on the matter.

"The letter contains no threats however its condemning language and the violent tone of the accompanying literature can be inferred as threatening," the statement said in part.

*If you received a letter, the Ferndale Police Department asks that you contact them by mailing detectives@ferndalepolice.org. You are asked to include your name, telephone number and a photo of the letter and envelope.*

# Democratic Michigan House Candidate Accused of Embezzling Over \$100K from Campaign

BY BTL STAFF

In midst of her campaign to represent Oakland County's 39th House District, Michigan House of Representatives candidate Jennifer Suidan was told drop out of her race by state party officials after being accused of embezzling over \$100,000. In a report by WXYZ-TV it was said that the Democratic candidate was subsequently terminated from her position at the Goodman Acker law firm. The firm handles funds for several Democratic candidates. The accusations against Suidan were made by Oakland County Treasurer Andy Meisner, who said in a public statement

that he noticed "irregularities regarding my campaign committee Andy Meisner for County Treasurer."

"I immediately notified law enforcement to make sure that this egregious behavior be brought to light and that justice be served," read the statement. "I have full faith in the authorities and am confident that a thorough and complete investigation is being conducted."

Meisner went on to say that the misappropriation of money "relates solely" to his campaign committee and that "no taxpayer resources were affected."

Currently, the case is being investigated by local law enforcement.

# Breaking: Nikki Joly Charged in Connection with 2017 Arson

BY BTL STAFF

Jackson County Prosecutor Jerry Jarzynka said on Tuesday, Sept. 25 that the defendant, Nikki Joly has been charged in connection with an Aug. 10, 2017 house fire. Joly has been charged with first degree arson which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Two dogs and three cats were killed in the four-alarm fire and two firefighters were taken to the hospital.

Joly is a well-known local LGBTQ activist who lead the Jackson LGBT Center at the time the fire took place.

A preliminary examination is scheduled for Oct. 11 at 9:30 a.m. in District Court

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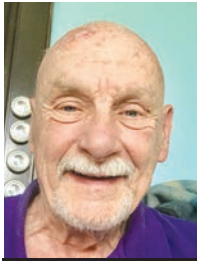


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## Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

### A Doggy Bag in Time

A \$10.5 million, GOP-funded study undertaken by the Institute for the Regionalization and Redistricting of Dogs, Cats, Kittens & Pups sheds new — and controversial — light on how we humans treat our tailed friends.

The Good Ol' Pets study, conducted over five conscientious years without objection, and six contentious days without consensus — and in spite of Vice President Pence's penchant for well-trimmed K9-to-5, neutered work hounds — finds that "persons of rainbow persuasion make the best dog owners, but have no role modeling influence on cats — although this should not be viewed as homo [or hydro] phobia directed toward America's feline population."

The controversial study claims that, "Dogs owned by gay males are happier, better mannered, more likely to [high] heel and fetch than dogs reared by [straight] breeders. These dogs generally shed less during summer and do their sniffing and hydrant marking in a casual but enticing manner — unless encountering a viable canine subject [or owner's leg] out leashing."

Interesting, too, is the finding that "all breeds, with the exceptions of pekinese, chihuahuas and dachshunds, show competitive sporting instincts — catching frisbees, treeing squirrels, chasing unmarked police cars — when raised by urban lesbians registering on a demographic scale of Partying Down 21 to U-haul Subdued 39.

"Rottweilers, when dyke trained, tend to be a fanatic, one-owner breed. They also sit well on Harley's. Lipstick lesbians prefer well-groomed lap pets and in more intimate surroundings a well-trimmed, short-haired, frisky bichon frise."

Breeds raised by drag queens "rarely snarl — or, if they snarl, do so in cultivated — but exemplary deep-throated — tones. They [the dogs] are also less likely to eat carryout leftovers. They also show a preference for gentrified dog houses that are painted in bright earth colors, edged with lavender lattice work.

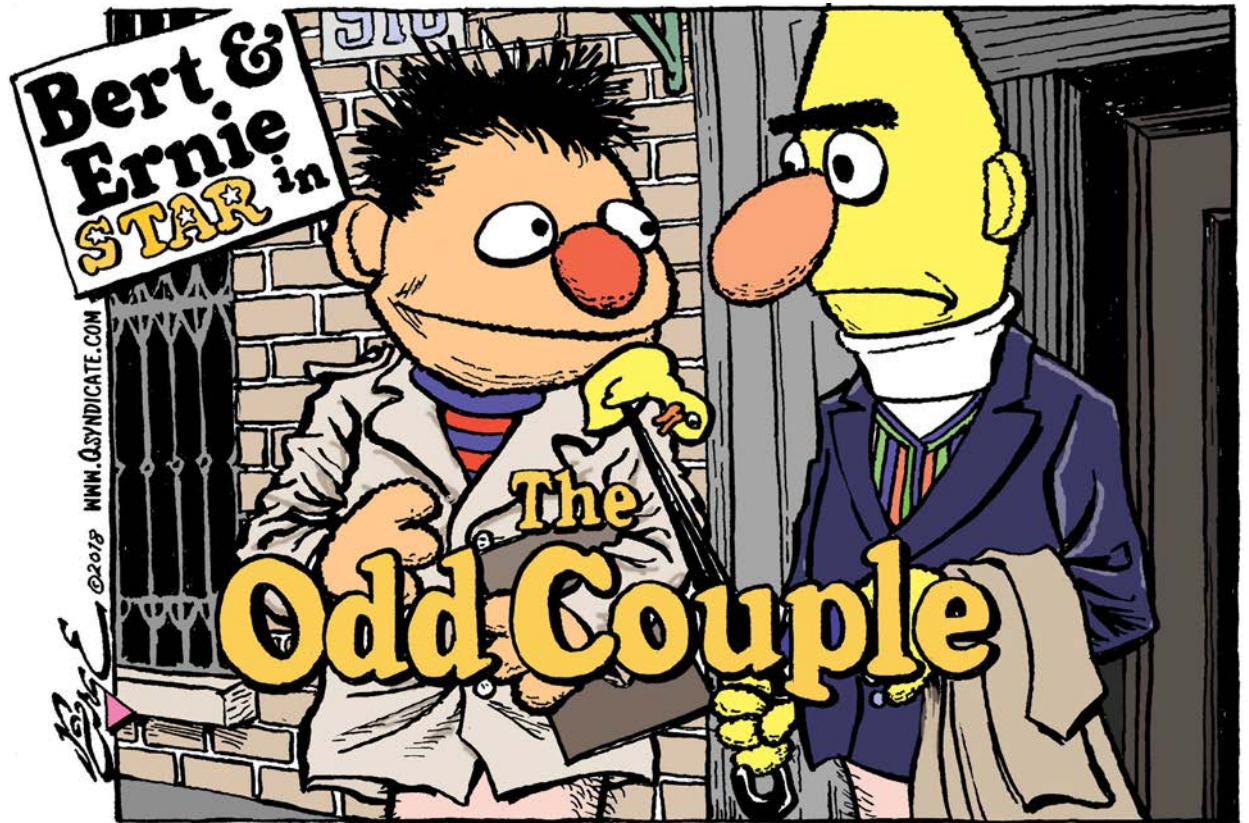
"Collar choices are rhinestones; though studs and spikes are popular with the pit bull barbell set."

A disappointment — understandable from a sociological perspective — is found with ever-finicky cat populations. To wit: cats raised by LGBTQ people are just as likely to be as independent as cats raised by straight people.

"The truth is," the study sagely observes, "cats just don't give a rat's winkie if you're straight, gay, bi or just pussy-questioning. If you feed them [the cats!] on time they couldn't care less."

**"Rottweilers, when dyke trained, tend to be a fanatic, one-owner breed. They also sit well on Harley's. Lipstick lesbians prefer well-groomed lap pets and in more intimate surroundings a well-trimmed, short-haired, frisky bichon frise."**

See **Parting Glances**, continued on next page



**CAN TWO DIVORCED PUPPETS WITH NO SEXUAL ORIENTATION SHARE AN APARTMENT FOR 49 YEARS WITHOUT DRIVING EACH OTHER CRAZY?**

## Transmissions

### A Beacon of Hope



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Recent reports say that 0.7 percent of teens identify as transgender. At the same time, a recent study from the American Academy of Pediatrics reports that 50.8 percent of trans masculine people attempt suicide, with gender non-conforming people doing the same 41.8 percent of the time. Also it reports that 29.9 percent of trans masculine people also attempting to kill themselves.

These seems painfully unsurprising. Especially given the epidemic levels of violence transgender people face, cast against a backdrop of increased discrimination and stigma brought on by a hostile administration that seeks to cut back on our rights at every turn.

This is a time when the religious right sees the transgender community as it's new, post-Obergefell target, seeking to force us out of existence at every turn — and often times literally.

Meanwhile, we also see other groups forming alliances with the right, or sharing similar views, attempting to cut transgender people off from public accommodations, crisis centers and other vital needs. A lot of doors may be closed to us today.

That is what makes the following news so welcome.

In light of those fairly grim statistics, AAP is releasing a new policy statement on transgender and gender-diverse children and adolescents. Its goal is a simple one: to help parents and pediatricians aid the health of our youth while seeking to lessen the effects of discrimination.

This is a great step, and falls in line with other recent statements in support of transgender people. For example, the World Health Organization has moved transgender people from its classifications for mental illness, moving gender incongruence to its list of sexual health conditions.

These steps, in particular that of the AAP, are nothing short of life-saving.

I find that I often end up sounding a bit like the grizzled oldster I have become, sharing yarns about walking uphill to school with newspaper stuffed in my shoes to plug the holes. It seems a common response, endemic to humans and their histories. We glorify our pasts while also claiming the hardships we faced somehow made us stronger and better people.

That said, when I think of how hard it was, all those years

See **Transmissions**, continued on next page



## ► Transmissions

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ago, to find information on being transgender, and how unaccepting the culture was of people like me, I don't find myself falling into some misguided feeling that I am somehow all the better for having fought my way through those days. I simply got lucky, while many of my peers did not.

All these years later, however, I'm not sure that those younger than I face a less antagonistic world than I did. Trans youth still find themselves kicked out of homes, facing violence and stigma at school or in the streets, and dealing with an increasingly hostile world.

What the AAP is trying to do is help change that. This is an organization of 67,000 medical professionals, and having them out there trying to make the world better for trans and gender non-conforming youth is notable.

First and foremost, they are recommending a more "gender-affirming" approach, providing a nonjudgmental stance, in order to help these kids feel safe and non-stigmatized. This alone is a huge step, given that many trans youth may feel they are not being taken seriously.

AAP is also recommending comprehensive health care for trans youth, and appropriate family-based therapy that can help caregivers, families and siblings of trans youth.

They're also pushing for respectful health records that take into account a person's gender identity, advocating for health insurance plans that assist trans and gender non-conforming youth, and even pushing for additional laws and policies to promote acceptance.

For several years, we've seen a pushback from the right over Obama-era policies that supported trans students in public schools. The current

Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, seems plenty hostile towards those policies as well, meaning we cannot expect this administration to serve as an advocate for our youth.

As such, the AAP is stepping into some of that role. It's helping to change minds and effect policy while our government fails to protect its trans citizens.

What the AAP is providing here is nothing short of a bright beacon of hope that we can focus on, one that can help us to keep moving forward in an otherwise very bleak and barren landscape.

I know I often talk about how bad things are, which is all the more reason why I want to point out something like this. These recommendations will reach a lot of people and those people are likely to help make change in their own medical centers and clinics.

Indeed, this could be just the start of something: through the actions of AAP, we may see even more organizations to come forward. After all, we need even more medical professionals coming forward to advocate for transgender people of all ages.

More than this, we need society at large to heed the actions of the AAP, and begin to shift in favor of supporting transgender and gender non-conforming people in this society.

While I said that things may not have improved a whole lot for transgender people since I was first feeling my way through the dark, there is one thing that has changed: more people can learn about trans people, and learn about us a lot younger.

As such, it becomes all the more vital that doctors and others are ready, armed with the best information and a compassionate heart. This is a great first step in that direction.

*Gwen Smith likes the positive steps. You'll find her at [gwensmith.com](http://gwensmith.com).*

yet church uncollared – majority: puppies and kittens.”

The diatribe indulges in half-truths: “Gay men tint poodles to flaunt society,” “Rainbow doggy scarves, leather cat harnesses, rubber play toys will bring America poop-scooping to its knees,” “Dog shows are gay grounds for crossbreeding” and “Would you want a leader dog for the blind trained by a drag queen?”

The editorial concludes with the usual sit-up-and-beg-for-money in the name of America's cultural war: “to save God's four-footed creatures from secular pampering, non-procreative knee-humping, and unmitigated, undiapered, public park hounding.”

Two arfs (and a ho-hum — yawn — meow!)

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

## Creep Of The Week

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

### Bryan Fischer

Greetings fellow “Demons of Hell” who oppose the lifetime appointment of an accused sex offender to the Supreme Court of the United States. Gosh, is it hot in here or is it just Hades?

The American Family Association's Bryan Fischer used his Sept. 24 “Focal Point” program to rail against the evil doers standing in the way of Jesus Trump's righteous path.

“Satan, if you're going to get to Brett Kavanaugh, you are going to have to go through us, because we are standing firm in the strength and the power of the Lord,” Fischer said.

In other words, the women accusing Kavanaugh are agents of the devil. You know, how bitches be lyn' about rich and powerful men because of how rewarding it is for the accusers' personal and professional lives. After all, women love death threats. They love being told to kill themselves. They love having to flee their homes. The love compromising the safety and security of their loved ones. The prize is ruining an innocent man's life.

Actually, the only person talking about a prize here is Fischer.

“There is a prize here, and that's the placement of Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court,” he said. That is what Satan does not want to see happen. He's using every trick that he has in his arsenal to fight that, to keep that from happening.

And every trick is, of course, a woman scorned. No wonder the Equal Rights Amendment never got passed! Equality is the work of Satan.

“That is [Satan's] holy grail right now, to stop Brett Kavanaugh from being seated on the Supreme Court because Brett Kavanaugh represents such a threat to his agenda: to use the Supreme Court to advance a regressive, backwards, anti-biblical, anti-Christian, anti-American point of view,” Fischer continued. “He's had control of the Supreme Court now in every meaningful way since the 1960s, he's not going to let go of that without a fight.”

Hmm, I wonder what “regressive, backwards, anti-biblical, anti-Christian, anti-American” points of view he's talking about? The right to abortion and the right for same-sex couples to marry come to mind. I have a feeling he isn't talking about Citizens United.

Look, I don't believe in Satan, but I do believe that Fischer is crazy enough to believe the things he's saying and that he has followers crazy enough to believe him.

But can we just take a moment to reflect on the fact that the United States has an

**Do not sit the midterms out. Vote on Nov. 6, even if only to gloat to Bryan Fischer that you were compelled by Satan to do so.**

accused, and admitted, sexual assaulter as president who is being treated like a savior by the Christian right? And how President Sex Crimes is now poised to get a second (hi, Clarence Thomas) sex-crimmer on the Supreme Court bench?

I mean, sure, it might seem like things are falling apart, what with more accusers coming forward to say that Brett Kavanaugh has done more heinous things than just that one-time, free-pass, whoopsy daisy, boys-will-be-boys attempted rape in high school. Sadly, we don't live in a country governed by people who care much about women being assaulted, otherwise we wouldn't have Mitch McConnell vowing to get Kavanaugh's nomination rammed through.

If we cared about women we wouldn't constantly be framing these narratives as, “He said, she said, but she's probably lying.” We have woman after woman — and some men, too — coming forward with their stories of assault. The evidence is overwhelming that this is a deeply rooted and widespread problem in America. There's something very broken about how we raise boys and what we allow of men this country. And when those boys and men have wealth and privilege behind them, well, they can do anything. Even grab 'em by the pussy.

If we cared about women we'd have done something about it a long time ago and voted these creeps out, never mind not voting them IN to begin with — remember, millions of people, the majority of white men AND women voters, heard Trump brag about sexual assault and then VOTED FOR HIM ANYWAY.

That said, there are SO MANY WOMEN RUNNING right now. And I mean running for office, which is great. Though sadly there are a lot of women running from men, too. But if we elect women who actually care about women — aka Democrats. Republican women are fired — we might actually get laws enacted that protect women rather than just laws restricting what women can do with their reproductive organs.

Do not sit the midterms out. Vote on Nov. 6, even if only to gloat to Bryan Fischer that you were compelled by Satan to do so.

## ► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 8

There is a footnote of alarm. For reasons unknown strays seem to lose most of their nine lives when kept by in-power affiliated masters [Log Cabin Republicans]. This applies whether 'fixed' or 'unfixed.' [The strays, not the affiliates.]

Not everyone's pleased. In The Family Way (ITFW) — a right-wing organization representing 63-million ferret and pre-op skunk owners — headquartered in Fragrant Bush, Montana, expresses “moral outrage” over the GOP-sponsored study in its monthly newsletter, The Litter Box. [Edit: Letter Box]

“The gay agenda stops at nothing,” whines the editorial. “Not only do gays want special rights — the right of dog and cat owners to marry each other and to adopt non-dander allergenic children — now they want to cuddle, pet, stroke, hug and fondle, as same-sex-sniffing household pets, Christian America's inarticulate — and as

# Pence Urges Voters to Back Trump Over Anti-LGBT ‘Religious Freedom’ Acts

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Vice President Mike Pence counted on Saturday President Trump’s actions in favor of “religious freedom” — considered by LGBT rights supporters as means to enable anti-LGBT discrimination — as reasons for why conservative voters should turn out in the congressional mid-term elections to back Republican candidates and the Trump administration.

Pence made the remarks before attendees at the Values Voter Summit, an annual D.C. confab for social conservatives hosted by the anti-LGBT Family Research Council.

The vice president counted Trump’s actions in favor of “religious freedom” as reasons why voters should support Republicans in the mid-terms as well as with other factors, including a booming economy, lower taxes, support for immigration enforcement and a tougher stance on America’s adversaries across the globe.

“Our administration has also taken action to protect and promote our first freedom, the freedom of religion and religious liberty for every American,” Pence said. “Last year President Trump chose the National Day of Prayer to announce new policies to protect the religious liberty of every American regardless of their creed. We’ve taken action to protect the conscience rights of doctors and nurses.”

Although the Trump policies Pence referenced on the National Day of Prayer didn’t explicitly contain any language seen to hamper LGBT rights, it directed U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions to draft further to ensure “religious freedom” is protected.

Sessions ended up issuing guidance that allows individuals and businesses to act in the name of religious freedom — often used as an exercise for anti-LGBT discrimination — without fear of government reprisal. Nowhere in the guidance is there a limiting principle assuring the right to free exercise of religion should be an excuse to engage in anti-LGBT discrimination.

The second policy Pence referenced is the establishment of the Conscience & Religious Freedom Division at the Department of Health & Human Services, which critics say allows medical practitioners to deny abortion-related services and treatment to LGBT people on religious grounds.

HHS followed up with a proposed rule change that allow medical practitioners to invoke a religious exemption to get out of offering abortion-related services and transition-related care for transgender people, including gender reassignment surgery. Other provisions condoning religious counseling were construed as allowing federal payments for



Vice President Mike Pence speaks at the 2018 Values Voter Summit. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

widely discredited “ex-gay” conversion therapy.

Pence himself is known for taking action in the name of “religious freedom” to enable anti-LGBT discrimination. As Indiana governor, Pence signed into law a “religious freedom” measure widely criticized for allowing individuals and businesses to refuse service to LGBT people. After an outcry from LGBT rights supporters and the business community, Pence was forced to sign a “fix” limiting the ability to discriminate under the law.

The vice president alluded to further actions in favor of “religious freedom,” predicting Brett Kavanaugh will soon “will soon be Justice Brett Kavanaugh” upon confirmation by the U.S. Senate and issue rulings in line with social conservative thought.

“Judge Brett Kavanaugh is a man of integrity with impeccable credentials and a proven judicial philosophy,” Pence said. “On the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, he wrote more than 300 opinions that reflect a strong record of support for limited government, religious liberty and our Second Amendment. He’s a conservative who will interpret the Constitution as written, and his record and career deserves the respect of every member of the United States Senate.”

The confirmation of Kavanaugh, which is opposed by progressive and LGBT rights groups, is being held up in the U.S. Senate after the emergence of allegations from Christine Blasey Ford he attempted to sexually assault her in 1982.

Alluding to the allegations without enumerating them, Pence said he and Trump are “confident that Senate Republicans will manage this confirmation properly with the utmost respect for all concerned.”

For these “religious freedom” actions and other efforts, Pence urged attendees at the Values Voter Summit to come out in support of Trump during the upcoming congressional mid-terms and to tell others “we’ve been fighting for the values that make this nation great.”

“With 45 days to go, my fellow conservatives, as you’d heard at this summit, now is the time for the sake of America to pray, to vote, to stand,” Pence said. “And I know you will. The other side is mobilized, and some say they’re motivated as never before. But I say we must match — in fact, I say we must surpass — the energy of the American left and their enthusiasm and passion. And if we do, we will win.”

Pence faced criticism from LGBT rights supporters by agreeing to attend the Values Voter Summit based on the anti-LGBT policy objectives the Family Research Council and the speakers that appeared on stage before and after him.

David Stacy, government affairs director of the Human Rights Campaign, said speakers at the Values Voter Summit are known for expressing support for conversion therapy and condemned Pence for appearing with them.

“The practice of ‘conversion therapy’ is abuse and can be life-threatening, which is why a growing number of states are banning it,” Stacy said. “And the denigrating language they direct at LGBTQ people send a dangerous message — particularly to LGBTQ kids — about their equal dignity and worth. Once again, Mike Pence is making clear that he stands with many organizations and leaders who promote hate and fear. We know those are not true American values.”

## LGBT Candidates Could Produce Rainbow Wave in November

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

With the 2018 congressional mid-terms fast approaching, a record number of LGBT candidates are seeking election to all levels of government ranging from federal office to state attorney general, many under a banner of challenging President Trump.

Amid expectations of a “blue” wave of Democratic wins in November, political observers say wins for these LGBT candidates constitute a “rainbow” wave and break pink ceilings in races where no LGBT candidate has won before.

The LGBTQ Victory Fund, which endorses LGBT candidates, has backed 218 candidates so far in the 2018 cycle. That’s up from the 160 candidates the Victory Fund endorsed in 2016 and the 162 it endorsed in the 2014 cycle.

Annie Parker, a lesbian former mayor of Houston and CEO of the Victory Fund, said in an interview with the Washington Blade her organization endorsed slightly half of “an unprecedented number” of more than 430 openly LGBT candidates running this cycle.

“It’s part of a larger surge of candidates who are women candidates, who are people of color, candidates who are from immigrant communities — all of whom feel they are under attack and want to have a place in the political process to push back on some of the rollbacks on civil rights,” Parker said.

Among the candidates Victory Fund has endorsed this cycle are 13 candidates running for federal office, including two running in U.S. Senate races, four candidates running for governor, as well as candidates seeking state legislative seats and statewide office.

Another factor in having a record number of openly LGBT candidates running for office, Parker said, is the success enjoyed by previous LGBT candidates who sought office and won elections.

“Success breeds more candidates who want to obtain that same success,” Parker added.

In the aftermath of the 2018 primary season, the Democratic National Committee is claiming an even broader number of at least 126 LGBT candidates this cycle as a result of these hopefuls winning the Democratic nomination in their states.

The portion of non-incumbents in this list is high. Of the 19 openly LGBT people nominated by Democrats for federal office, 14 are non-incumbents. Of the 13 openly

LGBT people nominated by Democrats for statewide office, nine are incumbents.

Democrats also nominated at least 101 openly LGBT non-incumbents for state legislative seats across 32 different states and U.S. territories, according to the DNC.

Lucas Acosta, director of LGBTQ media for the DNC, said the party is proud of the number of LGBT candidates running under the Democratic banner this election cycle.

“In 2018, LGBTQ Democrats are stepping up to the plate, making history, and breaking records,” Acosta said. “Our community deserves a seat at every table and a voice in every legislature. Too often, decisions about us are made without us. That’s why the DNC is excited to support LGBTQ candidates up and down the ballot across the country.”

Many of these LGBT candidates would achieve significant milestones by winning elections no LGBT person has won before:

- Two candidates — Jared Polis and Lupe Valdez — could be the first openly gay people to win elections as governor. Polis is running in Colorado and Valdez is running in Texas.

- Another candidate, Christine Hallquist, is running in Vermont and could be the first openly transgender person to be elected and serve as governor.

- In Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown is seeking re-election after being appointed to office and winning election to one term. Brown, who was the first openly LGBT and first out bisexual to win election as governor, would be the first openly bisexual person to win re-election as governor.

- In Arizona, Kyrsten Sinema could be the first openly bisexual person elected to a seat in the U.S. Senate. Also running for re-election to the U.S. Senate in Wisconsin is Tammy Baldwin, an LGBT favorite and the longest-serving openly gay member of Congress.

- Two candidates — Ricardo Lara and Nelson Araujo — could be the first openly gay people of color to win election to statewide office. Lara is running in California to become insurance commissioner and Araujo is running in Nevada to become secretary of state.

- The 14 non-incumbent openly LGBT Democratic nominees running for federal office could significantly shake up LGBT representation in Congress if they each won. Those wins would more than triple the current number of eight lesbian, gay and bisexual lawmakers serving in the House and Senate.

In the aftermath of primary season, Democrats have nominated for governor one candidate for each letter of the LGBT acronym.



Jared Polis, Kyrsten Sinema, Nelson Araujo and Tammy Baldwin are LGBT candidates running in November. (Washington Blade photos by Michael Key)

Valdez represents the lesbian community in Texas, Polis represents the gay community in Colorado, Brown represents the bisexual community in Oregon and Hallquist represents the transgender community in Vermont.

Parker said LGBT candidates are “achieving milestones just by sheer number of people running,” but particularly in those gubernatorial races.

“With four candidates interestingly representing every aspect of the alphabet — lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender,” Parker said. “We’ve broken a milestone just by them becoming nominees whether or not they win in November.”

Parker said the LGBT women candidates are poised to make great strides in the upcoming election as female candidates generally have won over male contenders in the 2018 primary season. Among them are Gina Ortiz Jones, a lesbian Air Force veteran running for Congress in Texas, and Angie Craig, who’s running for election to Congress in Minnesota after losing by one point in 2016.

“Whether lesbian or bisexual or straight, women candidates are outperforming male candidates in most races,” Parker added.

In contrast to the wide array of LGBT candidates the Democrats have nominated for office, the Republican Party’s embrace of LGBT candidates is much smaller. There has always been a significant disparity in the number of LGBT candidates nominated by the parties, but Republicans have in years past usually at least fielded one openly LGBT candidate, such as perennial Massachusetts congressional candidate Richard Tisei.

The Victory Fund — which as a bipartisan organization has traditionally endorsed Republican LGBT candidates as long as they support LGBT rights — has thrown its support behind five GOP contenders this cycle, four of whom will be on the ballot in November.

But Parker said the number and nature of

LGBT candidates running on the Republican ticket has declined from previous years.

“There was a slow rise of Republican congressional nominees,” Parker said. “For example, in 2012, there was one, in 2014, there were two, in 2016, there were three. Unsuccessful, but they were running. This year there were none.”

Parker attributed the lack of LGBT candidates running under the Republican banner to the anti-LGBT policies of the GOP and Trump administration.

“It’s not there aren’t LGBT Republicans,” Parker said. “I think the Republican Party is making it harder and harder for mainstream, fiscally conservative, socially liberal candidates to get elected and there are candidates either choosing to stay closeted or switch parties or not run.”

Gregory Angelo, president of Log Cabin Republicans, said LGBT candidate recruitment “has never been the mission of Log Cabin Republicans,” but disputed the notion LGBT Republican candidates are in decline.

“There were a number of gay Republicans running for federal office this year, all of whom Log Cabin Republicans was tracking; unfortunately none emerged victorious in their primaries,” Angelo said.

Significant attention is also being placed on transgender candidates, who previously had infinitesimal representation in public office. That changed in 2017 after Virginia State Del. Danica Roem (D-Manassas) became the first openly transgender person elected and seated to a state legislature and other transgender candidates won in local races.

The Victory Fund has endorsed 11 transgender candidates this cycle, eight of whom will be on the ballot in November. The most high profile is Hallquist’s quest for the governorship in Vermont.

Parker credited Hallquist for being nominated in “the highest level race” for

a transgender candidate and being “a well-qualified candidate, very comfortable with the issues in Vermont and well known in the state.”

“The fact that voters in Vermont got behind an openly trans candidate in a big way and carried her to a primary victory and positioned her to be the Democratic nominee as governor is... a new milestone for the community,” Parker said.

Drawing a distinction between transgender candidates and the decline in LGBT Republican candidates, Parker said “there are more out trans elected officials than out Republican LGBT elected officials.”

But being nominated for public office is one thing and winning the election is another. Many of these LGBT candidates face daunting odds in winning election in November and may have to rely on the boost from the expected “blue” wave to achieve victory. Among them is Hallquist, who’s running against a popular GOP incumbent in Vermont.

In Texas, a Quinnipiac poll found Valdez is significantly behind Gov. Texas Greg Abbott, who as part of a significant anti-LGBT record made an unsuccessful attempt at passing anti-trans bathroom legislation a priority. Abbott leads Valdez 58–39 percent among likely voters.

But in Arizona, a new CNN poll this week shows Sinema leading Republican opponent Martha McSally by seven points, 50–43.

Parker cautioned against placing too much emphasis on the need for these candidates to win election to make an impact.

“Don’t discount the fact that they run and whether or not they win or lose,” Parker said. “If they run good races and address issues important to their constituents, they are plowing the ground for the next wave of candidates, and the next and the next.”

Still, Parker acknowledged wins for these candidates would be significant, especially if they’re part of a “blue” wave that wins a majority in the U.S. House, or even the U.S. Senate, in November.

“Many of them are in marginal seats, ‘red’ to ‘blue’ seats,” Parker said. “If they win their seats, they’re going to be part of the Democratic wave that looks poised to sweep into Washington and if there’s a change in leadership in the House of Representatives, it creates a whole new ball game.”

*These articles originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.*

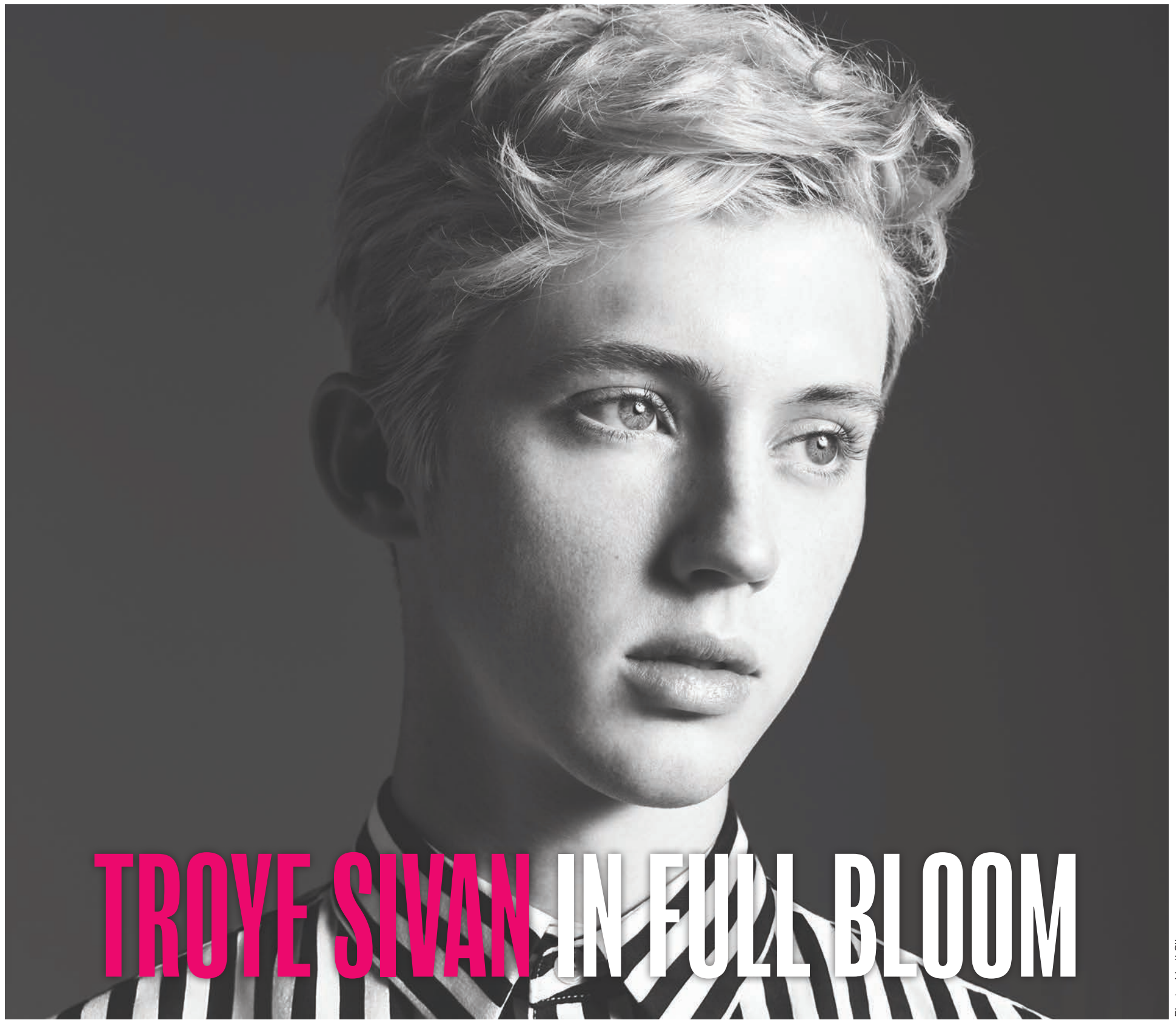


Photo: Hedi Slimane

# TROYE SIVAN IN FULL BLOOM

## The Out Pop Star on His Uninhibited Second Album & Finding Power in Femininity

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Nobody is stopping Troye Sivan except for maybe Troye Sivan. No queer-averse label bosses, no identity-stifling pressure to be anything but who he is: the LGBTQ community's precious paradigm of unapologetic, unicornian queerness.

But even with the YouTube-launched pop fixture's steady mainstream rise, with assists from Ariana Grande on a single featured on his sophomore album, "Bloom," and a live duet at a recent Taylor Swift concert, the 23-year-old's follow-up to 2015's "Blue Neighborhood" refuses to sacrifice self for commercialism.

And he won't stop there this time, not during

this album cycle (or ever): In the seductive video for the album's first single, "My My My!," Sivan works a room doused in the carnal grit and flashing lights of a gay bar's seedy backroom – and also an entire street – in a blistering heat as hot as the shirtless guys feeding his desire.

He's coy about its subject matter, but Sivan wrote an entire song about bottoming too.

I tell the South African-born, Australian-reared Sivan that "Bloom," notably an official single, is the perfect Monday song to crank on your way to work, or at a family gathering. Its gay-sex specificity perhaps lost on heterosexuals, the anthemic send-up is concurrently a love song and the most liberating of queer secrets. Giggling, he tells me, "That

was the goal.”

Elsewhere, the celebratory, spirited and brazenly gay “Bloom” turns the page on Sivan’s youth, which was cast with wistfulness and, admittedly, tentativeness on “Blue Neighborhood,” his first Capitol Records album. That same sentimental lilt – but now, with winks – also marks his burgeoning adult years captured on “Bloom”: losing his virginity to an older man during a Grindr hookup (the dreamlike, fraught-with-reality “Seventeen”); recognizing he’s failed his better half (the tender and winsome “The Good Side”); and a strutting, newfound sexual liberation, with “Bloom” and “My My My!”

Sivan’s transparency is hardwired: He truly can’t be anything but himself. This is clear on “Bloom,” but holds true during conversation, as Sivan talks about deriving power from femininity, working through residual queer issues, and dealing with the fear of shooting “My My My!” with a crew of dudes bigger than him.

**Did you imagine you’d be answering all these questions about sex after “Bloom” was unleashed into the world?**

No way. Honestly, I never would’ve thought I would have written that song. That song came out of a session that I felt wasn’t going too well. It was me and my best friend (and producer) Leland, us being like, “OK, well how do we make the most of this day? Let’s just start messing around and having fun.” And we wrote it that night – never, ever thought that it would see the light of day. We ended up with something that I thought was really, really cool and interesting and real.

**Mainstream culture has come around to same-sex love, but gay sex is still taboo. Does your frankness about gay sex on this album feel radical or political?**

Not really. I wanted to make music for people like me. The first album I was conscious of trying to keep things really digestible for as many people as possible. This time around I had a different set of goals, which were to really, actually, accurately represent where I feel like I am in my life. And if it’s talking about going out and partying, or if it’s talking about staying at home and cooking in the kitchen – or if it’s talking about sex – whatever it is, I wanted a 20-year-old queer person to hear this and be like, “Oh yeah, this is, like, legit.”

**What influenced you to deliver something more queer-specific?**

It was having all of these really inspiring experiences and meeting all of these really inspiring people. You know, whenever I start writing music, my number one goal, always, is to keep things honest and real, because I think it’s the only way to stay relevant and stay true over a long career. I wanna be doing this for the rest of my life, and I don’t know if I’m gonna be able to be thinking about cool concepts and things like that for the rest of my life. But I’ll always be able to speak about

## INFO

### Troye Sivan

with guest Kim Petras

7:30 p.m. Oct. 14

Fox Theatre

2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit

[olympiaentertainment.com](http://olympiaentertainment.com)

where I am in my life, that’s always gonna be there. So I fall back on that, and I wanted to not hold anything back. It’s so cool to me to be able to celebrate all of those things I was celebrating in my real life. So, why not go for it and talk about that on the album?

**When did the album’s more defiantly queer narrative begin to take shape artistically?**

It was probably just the moment where I had immersed myself in the LGBTQ community. When I think about my real life, I have almost exclusively queer people around me in L.A. I’m living in this little bubble right now where I forget sometimes that it’s a thing and that there are, like, straight people in the world (laughs).

**I’m sure that you’re reminded when you perform in small towns that aren’t like West Hollywood.**

Right, exactly. And then I travel to somewhere like that or I’ll go home to Australia – or I’ll just read the news – and very quickly get reminded just how lucky I am and how specific my experience is. But my hope is that it’s an experience of hope for people, that they hear this and feel like, “Oh, that’s possible and I can go and live this happy and healthy and fulfilled, fun life.” And see that there is, 100 percent, another side to the world.

**For some gay people, coming out doesn’t mean the personal battle has been won – there’s still overcoming sexual repression. I feel like you work through some of that on this album.**

Probably, yeah. Totally. And I think just in general a lot of the residual issues that queer people deal with have also completely followed me into my older life, just internalized homophobia that I’ve held onto without meaning to from when I was, like, 13 or whatever. It’s like, “Oh no, you can’t talk about that or you can’t sing about that.” I’m doing my very, very best to actively throw all that away. It’s been really empowering.

**What has been the most challenging part of navigating the music industry as an unapologetically out gay man?**

Normal music industry stuff. I came into the industry at the perfect time for me, a time where people were willing to let me be who I am and say what I want and do what I want, so that’s been the biggest blessing. All that really leaves is just personal challenges of like, what do I want from my career? Am I making

See **Troye**, continued on p. 14

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► **Troye**

Continued from p. 13

sure that I'm releasing the very best thing that I possibly can? And what's inspiring to me? And do I want this to be a radio smash, and if I do, how am I gonna get there? Or do I just want this to be something that means something to people, and how am I gonna get there? It's been fairly typical music industry stuff, which I feel really thankful for, because I think 10 years ago, it would've been a whole separate set of worries and issues that now feel much more intense than dire.

**Is your goal to make gay radio smashes?**

I actually don't know. For me, I've walked this line between having a really young, active online audience – a similar audience that you would see at an Ariana Grande or Justin Bieber show – and then also wanting to do these really subversive queer pop songs. I think my approach to it is not thinking too much about what I want commercially, just letting things happen, making stuff that I like. Hopefully if I like it, somebody else is gonna like it.

**When you performed "The Good Side" on "SNL" in January, I got lost in you getting lost in the song. For a performance like that, are you in the moment? Or does your mind tend to wander beyond the performance?**

I'm mostly just in the moment. Sometimes I think about the lyrics. I try not to think about them too much because, like "Good Side," it's one of the most personal songs on the album and that can get kind of weird, being that vulnerable, so I try not to let myself go too deep into the hole. But in general, I'm just thinking about doing the song justice.

**You have a role in the forthcoming film "Boy Erased," starring Nicole Kidman and Russell Crowe as parents who send their child to a conversion-therapy camp. What about the film resonated with you?**

The script. I just couldn't put the script down. It really tore at me. Then I read the book and started immersing myself as much as I possibly could in that world. My coming out experience – and the moment where I accepted my sexuality as something that I couldn't change – was a weight off of my chest. This wasn't for me to deal with; it was more for everyone else. I had come to the point where I had accepted it within myself, and then it was about navigating through the rest of the world: my family, my friends.

So, the thought of going to a program like the one in the film at that crucial, vulnerable moment and being told, "No, this is 100 percent back on you, and you're filling a God-shaped hole in your life with these tendencies" was one of the most harmful and hurtful things that I can imagine. It's

been proven to be ineffective and extremely dangerous, and you're signing these kids up for an impossible task. It really hit home and struck a chord with me, and I haven't wanted anything as bad as I wanted this role in this movie, so I just auditioned and thankfully got the part.

**Your sister once caught you in a vulnerable state, dancing to Madonna's "Like a Prayer." When did you become comfortable with that kind of vulnerability on stage?**

It's still really new to me. I think the "My My My!" video was a huge step for me personally; that was a moment where I really had to actively pep talk myself into it. I knew that was the way I naturally wanted to move to the song, and that was the way the song made me feel, but that didn't make it any easier to do in a big group of people – especially with burly cameramen! (Laughs) It was scary! But when I pushed through, I felt how amazing it felt. It felt so right, and now I have to retrain my brain a little bit to be able to do that on stage and to be able to do that in front of other people.

**How do you get into that mental space?**

It's a really active decision that I have to make. I have to actually think about it and push through a lot of nerves and vulnerability. And, again, the only reason I do it is because it's what feels right to me. That's what I would do in private. So, why the hell not do it publicly, and celebrate that?

**You were scared of your feminine attributes as a child. Can you tell me about your journey to embracing femininity? And when you do embrace it now, how it makes you feel?**

I was really scared of it in my childhood, and it was something that I definitely tried to shy away from. Now, I celebrate it as such a source of power for myself. I feel so liberated and free, and I'm having fun. And femininity is magical. Who wouldn't want to be feminine?

It took me a second to get to that point, but now that I'm here it's so fun to be able to push through all of those worries. On the other side of that is such a liberated existence where you can just do whatever you want, and it's just been a pleasure.

**How would you compare where you were to where you are now?**

It's like night and day. It feels really artistically inspiring to me, really personally inspiring. And I'm just much happier.

*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](http://www.chris-azzopardi.com) and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).*

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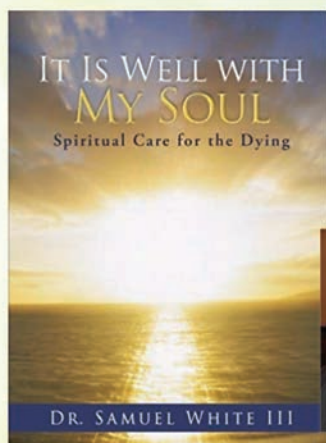
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# Chloë Sevigny is Still Drawn to Outsiders

## 'Lizzie' Actress on Why She'd Turn Down a Trans Role Now and Legacy of 'Boys Don't Cry'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Chloë Sevigny knows the power of words, so she's very careful with them, warily tiptoeing to the end of an answer when asked about the influence of her seminal trans-landmark film "Boys Don't Cry." The 1999 dramatization of the murder of real-life Nebraskan transgender teen Brandon Teena (Hilary Swank) garnered the 43-year-old indie queen and style icon, who played Teena's girlfriend, Lana Tisdel, an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress.

Director Larry Clark's 1995 film "Kids" came first, with Sevigny portraying an HIV-positive teen. But Sevigny would go on to amass a body of LGBTQ films and roles, including "If These Walls Could Talk 2," "Party Monster," "Will & Grace" and "Broken Flowers," playing Jessica Lange's lesbian assistant. In 2012, she portrayed trans contract killer Mia in the British miniseries "Hit & Miss," a part she now says she'd pass on if it were offered to her today. (Actress Scarlett Johansson recently withdrew from playing a trans character in the forthcoming "Rug & Tug" after facing LGBTQ backlash.)

Currently, Sevigny stars in and co-produces "Lizzie," featuring the actress' first lead role in her 50-film career. The thriller explores infamous 19th-century alleged murderous Lizzie Borden through a queer lens, which, according to this version, goes like this: Lizzie (Sevigny), to rebuke the patriarch who's getting in the way of her romantic pursuit of maid Bridget Sullivan (Kristen Stewart), slaughters her father and stepmother with an ax. And so, Sevigny can now add "real-life killer lesbian" to her abundantly gay resume.

### What has led you to so many LGBTQ characters?

The marginalized, the misunderstood, the outcast – you know, I grew up super sensitive as a child, and my brother and I were pretty rebellious in a small town and were really into just questioning the status quo. I have a lot of older peers who are gay and knowing the struggle and what they fought through, and having so much respect and admiration for the times that they've lived through – not that the struggle is over by any means, but just the perspective that I think gets lost. Post Trump, with all the conversations that are being had, and everyone's like "oh god, it's so horrible; I can't watch the news," but thank god everyone is talking about how political the systems are.

I really feel like change is happening.

### Why do you think you didn't experience the same backlash that Scarlett Johansson did for signing on to play a trans role?

It was just a different time then. When they came to me with that role I said, "I don't understand why you don't cast a real trans person," and they said, "We can't get the



Photo: Roadside Attractions

funding because we can't find anyone that has a big enough name, in all honesty." And I just felt like it was an important story to tell, and I loved the writing and I loved the creators and I wanted to be a part of it. If that opportunity came to me today, I would pass, for sure, 100 percent. It was just, unfortunately, what was acceptable then. I think it wasn't as challenged, and it should be.

### What are your thoughts on whether LGBTQ actors should exclusively be playing LGBTQ roles? And with that in mind, how did you approach Lizzie's sexuality?

Well, I want to respect (the community) and their stories and who they are as people, and I feel like (Lizzie and Bridget's) love was born out of the confines of the environment they were in at the time; they were looking for escape in one another. I feel like it's kind of beyond the boundaries of queer, straight, you know?

We had a good writer, we had lots of out cast members who really respected the story and wanted to be a part of telling it, and I admire them all for being out and for coming forward and supporting the project. I mean, I feel if gay men or women can play straight, I don't know (laughs) if it's fair to do the reverse. But I just hope that there's more opportunities, for everyone – especially the

people who are marginalized.

### Did it mean something to you to have someone who is not heterosexual, Kristen Stewart, play Bridget, who is also not heterosexual?

It... did. But she was also my first choice just as an actor, not the person. I have so much respect for her choices, and I could go on and on about her performances, but I like her

moment?

She was starved for recognition; she just wanted to be seen as she was and she felt really that she didn't have a voice, and I think she wasn't valued by her family or her community and she found somebody who valued her and could hear her and who wanted to listen to her and talk to her. There was so much physical attraction between them, but also just what that person was for her. She was on a quest for freedom, and she goes to the most extreme thing you can do and in the end kind of loses it all.

### As someone who's known for her queer roles, when you get stopped by an LGBTQ person on the street, which film do they tend to most recognize you from?

"Boys Don't Cry," for sure. They say every actor has one thing that they get recognized or known for, and for me it's "Kids," but from the gay community it's probably "Boys Don't Cry." I think there are just a lot of references for that movie and it meant a lot to a lot of people.

### Next year marks 20 years since "Boys Don't Cry." How do you reflect on the effect that movie had?

Just like... I just think at that time when it came out there just wasn't a lot of representation of that community, on screen or on television or anywhere – oh my god. So sensitive around this subject. (Laughs) I'm always like, I'm gonna get taken down for anything I say – it's just a hotbed. It feels like it's almost hard to talk about this without feeling under the gun, for some reason. Because it's like, you can't say the right thing.

But I feel like it was important to the world. Not even one community in general. As far as building tolerance and acceptance and educating people and portraying a person and seeing the violence acted out against them and how heart-wrenching it is and humanizing a story, it was a really important thing to be a part of. I had read all the articles about Brandon Teena and was already obsessed with the story before being offered the audition and I wanted to be a part of telling that story.

*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](http://www.chris-azzopardi.com) and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).*

persona. For me, I've always been attracted to directors or other actors that I feel like have more than just that going on – that aren't just, like, theater nerds (laughs). Not that there's anything wrong with theater nerds! But I feel like she really represents something to a lot of generations, with "Twilight" and beyond.

### You've said what you had in mind for this film didn't align with director Craig William Macneill's finished feature. How about Lizzie and Bridget's sexuality – was that explored as deeply as you had hoped?

I think when I said that I was more talking about the process because we had been through so many different incarnations of the script. Things were changing even until the last moment. It's the power of the edit, things you have to let go of. There was more between our relationship, kind of questioning it, and deciding she doesn't want to go any further and then coming back. And probably in the overall course of watching the movie it would've muddled things, so you kind of have to accept in the edits how things work and how some things don't, and that's just the process of filming.

### There's an intimate scene where Bridget and Lizzie almost kiss, but trepidation holds them back. How were you reading Lizzie in that

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**Happenings**

## OUTINGS

### Thursday, September 27

**2018 Voices – A Detroit Legacy VIP Reception** at 6 p.m. Main event at 7 p.m. REC honors Margaret Cho. Tickets available at [ruthelliscenter.org](http://ruthelliscenter.org). Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700.

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County** 7 p.m. Free. All youth welcome. Orchard United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

**Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting** 7 p.m. Professional & personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. [lawrencemoeb@gmail.com](mailto:lawrencemoeb@gmail.com). [speakout.toastmastersclubs.org](http://speakout.toastmastersclubs.org).

### Saturday, September 29

**10th Annual Fall Fundraiser – An Evening with Ozone House** 6:30 p.m. Ozone House is a non-profit organization that works to "meet the needs of runaway, homeless, and high-risk youth and their families." Domino's World Resource Center, 30 Frank Lloyd Wright Drive, Ann Arbor. 734-930-3030. [ozonehouse.org](http://ozonehouse.org).

### Tuesday, October 2

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County** 7 p.m. Free. Open to the community. For parents of transgender kids. St. Mary's In-the-Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

### Sunday, October 7

**Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group** 4 p.m. Free. St. Stephens Episcopal Church. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. 734-747-4363. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Adrian-Lenawee County** 6:30 p.m. Free. For parents of transgender kids. Hilltop Counseling, 115 W. Maumee St., Adrian. 313-909-5408. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

### Monday, October 8

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County** 6:30 p.m. Teen/Youth Support Group. Free. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700.

### Wednesday, October 10

**Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genesee** 6:30 p.m. Free. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy., Flint. 810-232-4023. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

**Culture Lab: Screening of Original 'RoboCop'** 8 p.m. Explores how beauty intersects with multiculturalism, the intricacies of gentrification, gender politics and unbounded assimilation of technology. Senate Theater, 6424 Michigan Ave., Detroit. 313-894-0850. [senatetheater.com](http://senatetheater.com).

### Thursday, October 11

**Culture Lab: 'The Aesthetics of Tomorrow'** 6 p.m. Features artists and theorists working on the cusp of technological innovation: Mark Pauline and Eyal Weizman's. Senate Theater, 6424 Michigan Ave., Detroit.

**Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer** 6:30 p.m.

Monthly Networking Event. All welcome. Hosted by Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP required. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646. [detroitlgbtchamber.com](http://detroitlgbtchamber.com).

### Friday, October 12

**Culture Lab: Seeing and Being Seen** 6 p.m. Three artists' works show how identity is both formed and performed and how this process can be obscured, embraced and exalted. Dream The Church of the Messiah, 231 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-267-1010.

### Wednesday, October 17

**Stand with Trans Support Groups – Livonia – Wayne County** 6:30 p.m. Free. 12+. Reach out to [ksessle@yahoo.com](mailto:ksessle@yahoo.com), 734-673-3590 and [pastorscott@emmanuel-livonia.org](mailto:pastorscott@emmanuel-livonia.org) or 734-673-2485. 2020 Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile Road, Livonia. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

### Friday, October 19

**Voices of Freedom** 6 p.m. John Prendergast is a human rights activist and New York Times best-selling author who has focused on peace in Africa for 30+ years. Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622. [freedomhousedetroit.org](http://freedomhousedetroit.org).

### Saturday, October 20

**Affirmations Fall Fling 2018 – Save The Date!** 7 p.m. Live entertainment, hors-d'oeuvres, drinks, desserts, raffle and silent auction. 21+ and Costume Optional. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105.

## MUSIC & MORE

**Tig Notaro at Masonic Temple** Sept. 28, 6:30 p.m. Tig Notaro is a stand-up comedian, actor, writer, producer and director. Detroit Masonic Temple, 3011 W. Grand Blvd, #1100, Detroit. 800-854-2196. [templedetroit.com.themasonic.com/events.php](http://templedetroit.com.themasonic.com/events.php).

**'Star Wars: A New Hope' in Concert** 8 p.m. Full feature film is projected onto a large screen in Orchestra Hall. One event on Sept. 29 at 8 p.m. One event on Sept. 30 at 3 p.m. Max M. & Marjorie S., Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. [dso.org](http://dso.org).

**Mega March for Animals, Presented by Sellers Subaru** Sept. 29, 9 a.m. Join around 1,000 supporters of the Michigan Humane Society and their dogs on a two mile walk along the Detroit RiverWalk. Cullen Plaza (formerly Rivard Plaza), Detroit. 313-566-8200. [detroitriverfront.org](http://detroitriverfront.org). [MichiganHumane.org/megamarch](http://MichiganHumane.org/megamarch).

**10th Annual Fall Fundraiser – An Evening with Ozone House** Sept. 29, 6:30 p.m. Food, drinks, music, performances and raffle. Domino's World Resource Center, 30 Frank Lloyd Wright Drive, Ann Arbor. 734-930-3030. [hruid@ozonehouse.org](http://hruid@ozonehouse.org). [dominos.com](http://dominos.com).

**Big 80s Flashback Bash!** 8 p.m. Big '80s Flashback Bash celebrates all genres of '80s music all night long! PJs Lagerhouse, 1254 Michigan Ave., Detroit. 313-961-466. [facebook.com](http://facebook.com).

**Gil Shaham and Enigma** Oct. 5, 8 p.m. Shaham plays Prokofiev's "First Violin Concerto." One event on Oct. 6 at 8 p.m. One event on Oct. 7 at 3 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. [dso.org](http://dso.org).

# Editor's Pick

## Detroit Folk Festival Oct. 6

On Saturday, Oct. 6, from noon to 11 p.m., folk fans can get excited to hear 25 of the area's folk and acoustic artists perform. The proceeds from this event go to benefit the InsideOut Detroit Literary Arts Project. The project's intention is to immerse students in poetry and literary self-expression to encourage creative thought. Folk festival tickets start at \$10. More information can be found online by visiting [gaybe.am/lw](http://gaybe.am/lw).



**Mega March for Animals, Presented by Sellers Subaru** Oct. 6, 9 a.m. Join around 1,000 supporters of the Michigan Humane Society and their dogs as they walk up to two miles beside Kensington Metropark's Kent Lake. 4570 Huron River Parkway, Milford. 810-227-8910 [events@michiganhumane.org](mailto:events@michiganhumane.org). MichiganHumane.org/megamarch.

**Sky Covington in Concert** Oct. 7, 5 p.m. Sky Covington and Friends Jazz Concert and Jam Session. Hosted by: Michigan Democratic Future PAC. Reception Tangent Gallery, 715 E. Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277. [isaacrobinsom.com](mailto:isaacrobinsom.com).

**Dancing in the Street: A Symphonic Tribute to Motown** Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m. Celebrate Motown and artists like Marvin Gaye, The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, and more. One event on Oct. 12 at 8 p.m. One event on Oct. 13 at 8 p.m. One event on Oct. 14 at 3 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. [dso.org](mailto:dso.org).

**The Firebird** Oct. 18, 7:30 p.m. Experience Stravinsky's "The Firebird" under the Fabian Gabel. One event on Oct. 19 at 10:30 a.m. One event on Oct. 20 at 8 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. [dso.org](mailto:dso.org).

**Voices of Freedom** Oct. 19, 6 p.m. John Prendergast is a human rights activist and New York Times best-selling author who has focused on peace in Africa 30+ years. Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622.

**Christopher Titus** Oct. 20, 7 p.m. Christopher Titus' new show takes the audience on a wild ride through his personal life, and proves why he isn't qualified to be a father, and why childless couples win. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. 4th St., Royal Oak. 248-399-2980. [royaloakmusictheatre.com](http://royaloakmusictheatre.com).

**The Intersectionality of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Substance Use/Substance Use Disorders** October 23, 7:30 p.m. David J.H. Garvin, LMSW; and Barbara Niess May, MPA, MSW, will discuss the relationship between domestic violence/sexual assault and substance use. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. [dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series](http://dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series).

## ART 'N' AROUND

**'Star Wars and the Power of Costume'** 10 a.m. "Star Wars" and the Power of Costume" explores the challenges in dressing the "Star Wars" universe. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-833-7900. [dia.org/starwarsattheDIA](mailto:dia.org/starwarsattheDIA).

**16th Annual Michigan Renaissance Festival** 10 a.m. Take a time-travel adventure into the 16th century. Renaissance Festival Location, 12600 Dixie Hwy., Holly. 248-634-5552 [info@michrenfest.com](mailto:info@michrenfest.com). [michrenfest.com](http://michrenfest.com).

**Ariel Waldman** Sept. 27, 5 pm Ariel Waldman currently sits on the council for the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts Program, which aims to nurture radical, science-fiction-inspired ideas that could transform future space missions. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. [stamps.umich.edu](mailto:stamps.umich.edu).

**Satori Circus 30th Anniversary Performances** 8 p.m. Performance artist Satori Circus celebrates 30 years with performances of his avant-garde theatre of the absurd. Tangent Gallery, 715 E. Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277.

**The Post-Photographic Body: See Me As I Feel** Oct. 5, 7 p.m. Renowned Michigan dancer, choreographer and video artist Peter Sparling presents his first solo exhibit of acrylic paintings. Oct. 5-7, 19-21, 26-27 22 North Gallery, 22 N. Huron St., Ypsilanti. 734-757-5708. [22north.org](http://22north.org).

## THEATER

**The Totalitarians by Pete Sinn Nachtrieb** Through Sept. 9, 2 p.m. Politician Penelope Easter is a disaster of a candidate: impulsive and crass, with a closet full of skeletons. When she enlists the help of Francine, a silver-tongued political operative, the two embark on a madcap. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. [A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com](mailto:A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com). [theatreanova.org](http://theatreanova.org).

**Stagecrafters Presents 'The Wild Party'** Through Sept. 9, 2 p.m. It's the Roaring '20s and vaudeville stars Queenie and her lover, Burrs, decide to spice up their lives by throwing a sizzling party

at their Manhattan apartment. 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. [stagecrafters.org](http://stagecrafters.org).

**Outvisible Theatre Presents 'Unsportsmanlike Conduct'** 8 p.m. After spending a drunken night with an NFL quarterback Kaylie Robbins rebuffs his sexual advances. Outvisible Theatre, 18614 Ecorse Road, Allen Park. [info@outvisibletheatre.com](mailto:info@outvisibletheatre.com). [outvisibletheatre.com](http://outvisibletheatre.com). [unsportsmanlike-conduct.com](http://unsportsmanlike-conduct.com).

**Wittenberg** Through Oct. 13, 7:30 p.m. Hamlet, a student at Germany's University of Wittenberg, is caught amid an escalating debate between Martin Luther and Doctor Faustus. The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway, Detroit. [tasiopeg@udmercy.edu](mailto:tasiopeg@udmercy.edu). [tasiopeg@udmercy.edu](http://tasiopeg@udmercy.edu). [TheTheatreCo.com](http://TheTheatreCo.com).

**'Star Wars: A New Hope' in Concert** Through Sept. 30, 8 p.m. Full feature film is projected onto a large screen in Orchestra Hall, with John Williams' One event on Sept. 29 at 8 p.m. One event on Sept. 30 at 3 p.m. Max M. & Marjorie S., Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. [dso.org](mailto:dso.org).

**A2CT Presents: Antigone** Through Oct. 7, 8 p.m. A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. 734-971-2228. [a2ct.org](http://a2ct.org).

**Stagecrafters Presents 'Fool for Love'** Through Oct. 14, 8 p.m. In a rundown motel on the edge of the Mojave Desert, former lovers May and Eddie square off to make sense of their intensely volatile relationship. Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. [stagecrafters.org](http://stagecrafters.org).

**'CHICAGO' Returns to the Fisher Theatre!** Oct. 16, 8 p.m. "CHICAGO" has everything that makes Broadway great: a universal tale of fame, fortune and all that jazz; one song after another and dancing. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. [broadwayindetroit.com/shows/chicago](http://broadwayindetroit.com/shows/chicago).

**'THE STONE WITCH' by Shem Bitterman Michigan Premiere** Oct. 19, 8 p.m. Peter Chandler, a starving artist with his own literary aspirations, is hired to help "The Great Man" finish his overdue book, an unlikely friendship ensues, secrets are revealed and the lines of reality begin to blur. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. [A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com](mailto:A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com).

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## Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist Ron Suskind at Wharton

EAST LANSING — Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and bestselling author Ron Suskind will speak at Wharton Center as part of Michigan State University's World View Lecture Series on Monday, Oct. 15 at 7:30 p.m. in the Cobb Great hall.

The lecture series features a variety of world-known experts on a variety of topics, and is made possible by MSU's Office of the President with support by both the Wharton Center and the Leading Voices Series of MSU's College of Arts & Letters. The best-selling author, Suskind, has written six books and been published in such publications as Esquire and The New York Times.

"In this deeply personal but universally resonant presentation, Suskind shares (his son) Owen's journey from quiet solitude to animated communication," write event organizers. "Their motto — your passion is your pathway — now guides educators, therapists and parents in tapping the deep potential in all of us."

Suskind will be referencing his work "Life, Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes and Autism."

"(It) examines his family's 20-year adventure with his son, Owen," said event organizers. "Having lost his speech at age 3, Owen used animated Disney movies to make sense of the world. As his family learned to 'speak Disney' along with him, Owen created a method to help his parents and medical experts reach kids with autism. Their story was also made into a 2016 Oscar-nominated documentary with the same name."

Tickets start at \$24. For more information about the event, visit [whartoncenter.com](http://whartoncenter.com) or call 517-432-2000.

# EQMI to Host 2018 Fall Reception

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Following with tradition, LGBTQ advocacy group Equality Michigan is slated to host their annual 2018 Fall Reception event on Friday, Oct. 5. It will feature not only a new Bridge Builder Award but 2018 Olympic bronze medalist Adam Rippon as its keynote speaker. Development Manager for Equality Michigan Charlie Howard-Putnam said he's excited about both Rippon's appearance and the opportunity for the LGBTQ community to familiarize themselves with local politics.

"His activism during the Olympic games and since has been a true inspiration in the LGBTQ community. His honest and genuine ability to speak the truth and show the world his authentic self is inspiring people across Detroit and the world to do the same," he said of Rippon, adding that he was the perfect choice for the Fall Reception. "The tone and the focus of this party is to get political leaders to get to know the LGBTQ community in a more personal way. And, it's for the LGBTQ community to get to know the politicians so we can

advance LGBTQ civil rights."

This year, the event recipient of the newly-created Bridge Builder Award will be CMS Energy Corporation and Consumers Energy Company President and CEO Patti Poppe.

"And we're thrilled to have Jim Fitterling the Chief Executive Officer of Dow Chemical Company who is coming to present her with the award," Howard-Putnam said. "One of maybe just two (openly gay) CEOs of a Fortune 500 company, he's truly setting an example for companies around the world and the LGBTQ community."

The event this year is sponsored by Consumers Energy, Dow Chemical Company and DTE Energy. In addition to Poppe's award, four other "standout members of the LGBTQ community" will be honored at the Fall Reception.


"Our Change Maker Award is for somebody who has been making change in our community for a long period of time. That's going to Melvin L. Larsen who is the co-author of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Our Youth Award is going to a young trans woman of color for her activism and leadership in the community,

and she works with the Ruth Ellis Center and her name is Brandi Smith," Howard-Putnam said. "Our McAllister Award is going to Adrian Goodstal. She partnered with Equality Michigan to help us open the first dedicated shelter to trans adults in the Michigan area. It's called Mel Trotter Ministries in Grand Rapids. Our Catalyst Award is going to Alma Wheeler Smith for getting us the biggest win to date for LGBTQ civil rights. She currently is working with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission."

Howard-Putnam said that this year is promising to be the best-attended yet, with a consistent trend of healthy increases year after year.

"I think something that's really important is that when we relaunched our event in 2016 we had about 200 attendees," he said. "Last year we raised that up to 300 attendees and this year, we're hoping to exceed 400 attendees. We're growing fast and I think that growth shows something."


To find out more information about the Fall Reception and how to donate to Equality Michigan's cause, go online to [equalitymi.org](http://equalitymi.org).



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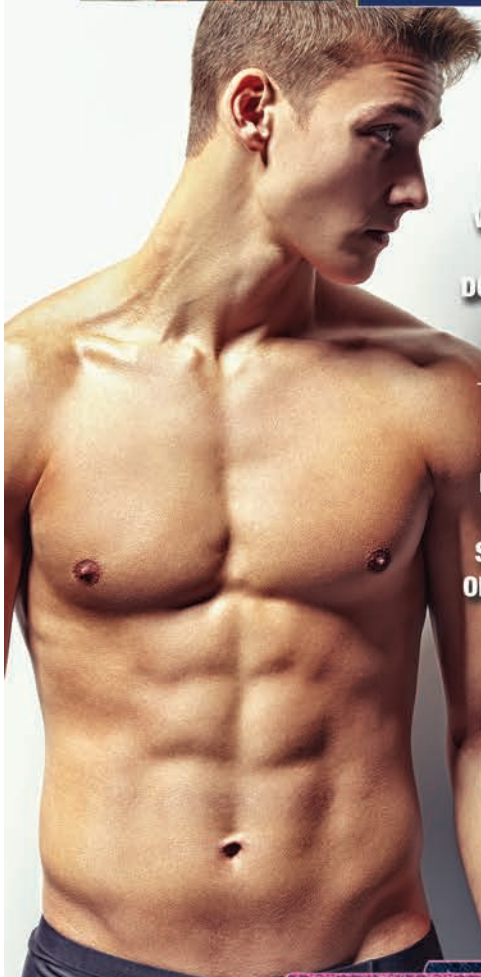


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## Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

### Heidi and Tim deliver a lot of look

Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn are taking their act on the road. Amazon, in its quest to take over every last inch of Earth that isn't already nailed down, has made a deal with the "Project Runway" mainstays to develop a new reality fashion series, one that will premiere in over 200 countries and territories. There are zero details available right now regarding content, but it means that the Emmy-nominated "PR" pair are jumping ship (and if you aren't a diehard fan, be real: did you even realize it was still on television?) and moving into the realm of global reach. Amazon is using vague signifiers like "narrative" and "fresh" to describe the project we aren't allowed to know about, and they're referring to something called a "shoppable experience" for the viewing audience. Frankly, we don't care about any of that stuff; we love Tim and Heidi and we want them to be able to invent a new thing that will bring us back into the fold.



Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn.  
Photo: KathClick

### Jim Parsons makes room at the 'Inn'

In 1999, "The New Yorker" published "The Inn Crowd," an article by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Tony Horwitz detailing the controversy surrounding the Inn at Little Washington in Rappahannock County, Virginia.

The residents of the area were split over whether or not to be decent human beings and welcome a gay couple and their business, or be stereotypical rednecks and run them out of town. Two decades later, that slice of American life is in the process of becoming a sitcom produced by "Big Bang Theory" star Jim Parsons, "Young & Hungry" creator David Holden, and producing partner Todd Spiewak. The series is in development at NBC, and though no cast has been officially announced, it's assumed that Parsons will star. We're

also assuming that in 2018 the homophobia will be made somewhat more adorable and easily turned to sweetness by the end of about the fifth episode, and we're totally fine with that. Create the world you want to see and all that.

### Broadway needs Taylor Mac. Broadway gets Taylor Mac.

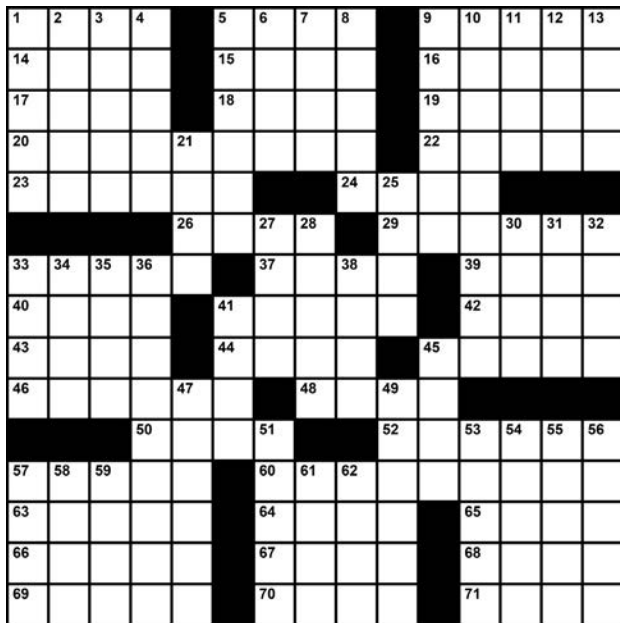
Andrea Martin, entertainment's longstanding MVP for several decades now, is going back to Broadway, accompanied by Nathan Lane, who is no slouch himself. The pair will star in "Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus," by Taylor Mac. Who is Taylor Mac, you ask, and why is there someone named Gary associated with "Titus Andronicus"? Well, Taylor Mac is an artist (one who uses "judy," lowercase sic, as a gender pronoun) and one of theater's most innovative voices. Mac is the creator and star of one of the most buzzed-about American cultural events in recent memory, "A 24-Decade History of Popular Music," the author of the acclaimed play, "Hir," and a MacArthur Fellow, speaking of no slouches. "Gary" is Mac's Broadway debut, and it is what the title suggests, a comic sequel to Titus Andronicus in which Lane and Martin are servants who have to clean up the carnage in the aftermath of war. We hate to jinx by getting too revved up, but this has all the signs - rising creator on a roll meets comedy legends - of being something very special, and we're just going to hand it all the Tony Awards now.

### Sugarbaker & Associates back in business at ABC

"Designing Women" might be happening all over again. ABC has confirmed a "script commitment" with creator Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, which isn't the same thing as a series order, but it's good enough for us to get overly excited about. If you weren't in the '80s you should know that this show was about four women at an Atlanta interior design firm who hung out a lot and made jokes about social issues and the out of control shoulder pads were a moral universe unto themselves and these women were, in a word, amazing. If there was any rivalry with the equally amazing Golden Girls we never paid attention to it and now, goddess willing, we're going to have "Sugarbaker: The Next Generation." No cast yet, no details at all, just the shining golden hope of television that comforts and makes conservative men irrationally enraged. Fingers crossed for a chance to revisit the classic "night the lights went out in Georgia" monologue.

Romeo San Vicente's self-created world looks a lot like Folsom Street Fair.





- birthplace)  
 37 "More" singer Perry  
 39 Type of seaman  
 40 Stick in the fridge?  
 41 Masters  
 42 Rowlands of "An Early Frost"  
 43 R. Nureyev's land, once  
 44 Like the 13 Amer. colonies  
 45 Mullally of "Will & Grace"  
 46 Fitzgerald character  
 48 Lorca's house  
 50 Dawn direction  
 52 Walk, in Sue Wicks' sport  
 57 With everything counted  
 60 Kevin Keller is a character in this TV teen drama series  
 63 Bitch and moan  
 64 From square one  
 65 Gomer's "anti"  
 66 Cause to come out  
 67 Mae West's "She \_\_\_ Him Wrong"  
 68 Former anchor Roger  
 69 "God loves everybody," to Jane Spahr  
 70 Sooner city  
 71 Takes advantage of pupils?

- 7 Pre-coll. exam  
 8 Preserves meat  
 9 Member, in slang  
 10 "His name may be Moose, but I'd describe a certain \_\_\_"  
 11 Does a circumcision, e.g.  
 12 Leave the stage  
 13 Changes colors  
 21 Melissa Etheridge's "\_\_\_ Am"  
 25 Med. care grps.  
 27 Home st. of Maupin  
 28 Margaret Cho, for one  
 30 "\_\_\_ to differ!"  
 31 Bone by the radius  
 32 Lindsay Lohan's "\_\_\_ Girls"  
 33 Skater Mattis  
 34 "Lohengrin" soprano  
 35 In case  
 36 "...of his as \_\_\_"  
 38 Prefix with byte or hertz  
 41 Vibrators and such  
 45 Golf sportscaster Dave  
 47 What Cassie teaches on "Glee"  
 49 Like some mushy fruit  
 51 It may be rough  
 53 Affleck's "Chasing Amy" crush  
 54 Like the Ambiguously Gay Duo?  
 55 Write "The Hot'l Baltimore"  
 56 Gives temporarily  
 57 Rapper who's a thespian  
 58 Church section  
 59 Shakespearean stream  
 61 Aware of  
 62 Caesar's post-orgasm cry?

## Kevin Keller

## QPuzzle

### Across

- 1 Bargain sign at Barneys  
 5 Basketball to Eliza Doolittle?  
 9 Gave a butt whipping  
 14 Guilty or not guilty, to Perry Mason  
 15 Constellation bear  
 16 Sticky stuff  
 17 Opera solos

- 18 Dark greenish blue  
 19 Nickname for Brian  
 20 Kevin Keller portrayer and source of the quote at 10- and 36-Down  
 22 Birds' abodes  
 23 Rubber  
 24 Climb, as a tree  
 26 'N \_\_\_ (boy band)  
 29 Whoopi Goldberg plays one in "Ghost"  
 33 After "New" \_\_\_ (Urvashi Vaid

### Down

- 1 Patrick Stewart's final frontier  
 2 What you better not be calling me  
 3 First lesbian magazine "Vice \_\_\_"  
 4 Makes less difficult to bear  
 5 Yell upon leaving the closet?  
 6 Milk go-with

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## COMMUNITY CONNECTION

# Common Language Bookstore to Host Discussion with Author Oct. 6

BY BTL STAFF

On Saturday, Oct. 6, at 6 p.m. Bill Mathis, author of “Face Your Fears,” a novel that deals with disability, the LGBTQ community and family, will be at the Common Language Bookstore.

“Face Your Fears’ uniquely challenges traditional perceptions of normalcy when it comes to disabled persons’ interests, desires and sexual orientations,” say event organizers. “He will be introduced by Michigan Educator Roberta (Ronni) Moore O’Toole, a licensed professional counselor, certified social worker and retired school guidance counselor.”

Author, journalist and fellow writer James Brock praises “Face Your Fears.”

“Author Bill Mathis provides insight into the challenges of students with disabilities. This book is a valuable resource for all professionals that work

with young people,” Brock said. “Face Your Fears’ is a novel of a lifetime of love. With strong, compelling characters, this story follows the very different lives of two young men from childhood into young adulthood as they grow to face who they are and who they will become. Tragic to triumphant, by turn this sweeping saga is a modern classic.”

Mathis will read several excerpts from his book, explain his motivations for writing the story, answer questions and sell and sign copies of the books. Books are available for purchase at the bookstore.

Mathis spent over 40 years in youth work and directing foster care programs before retiring. He grew up in Clarksville, Michigan, graduated from Northwood University, and spent 23 years directing YMCA camps in Illinois and Michigan — which included camps programs for disabled youth. He helped open and direct a foster care agency in Lockport,

Illinois. When he retired in 2013, he began writing. “Face Your Fears” is his first novel to be published, and he has three more in progress. He writes, reads, travels and lives in Beloit, Wisconsin, with his partner.



*The Common Language Bookstore is located at 317 Braun Court in Ann Arbor. For more information about the book, the event or Mathis, reach out to billmathiswriter@gmail.com or find out more on billmathiswriteretc.com. Contact Common Language Bookstore at glbtbooks.com or by calling 734-663-0036.*

# WSU Hosts Transgender Day of Empowerment

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Known as a celebration of self and understanding, the Transgender Day of Empowerment is a day dedicated to encouraging members of the transgender community to both feel confident in who they are, and to connect more deeply with themselves. On Sunday, Sept. 30 Wayne State University’s LGBT Student Advisory Board and the Gender Identity Network Alliance will come together to celebrate this day by putting on a full-day conference at the university’s Student Center.

“This year’s theme is Embrace Your True Self, so we want people who are trans to accept themselves, love themselves, and it’s called the Transgender Day of Empowerment, which is different from the two other large transgender holidays,” said Cara Mitrano, event organizer and WSU LGBT Student Advisory Board founder. “We have the Transgender Day of Remembrance which is about remembering those who have been lost due to suicide or violence and then, also founded by Rachel Crandall-Crocker, on March 31 is the Transgender Day of Visibility which she started to say, ‘It’s not just about sadness and remembering those we’ve lost, it’s also about making us visible, and for people to know about us,

the struggles of our community and so that they know that we’re here we want to be included.”

Attendees will be able to attend a variety of events from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. that cover topics ranging from embracing one’s strength, to navigating the workplace in the midst of transition.

“We have a wide variety of presenters,” Mitrano said. “We have Roz Kieth from Stand With Trans and she’ll be facilitating a discussion. Then Dr. Sandra Samons and Dr. Stephen Rassi will be speaking about Discovering Your True Self. Gerri Carney will be speaking about the particulars of seeking and obtaining a legal name change, so there’s some practical information. And we might also have facilitated discussions on relevant topics, too. So, there’s something for everyone at this event, whether you’re trans yourself, an ally or really just looking to learn more about the trans community.”

Keith is the founder and board president of Stand With Trans, an organization that develops educational events for both transgender kids and their parents. She said she’s excited to attend an event that will provide another outlet for people to learn more about the transgender community.

“My experience has been that anytime you can provide education to

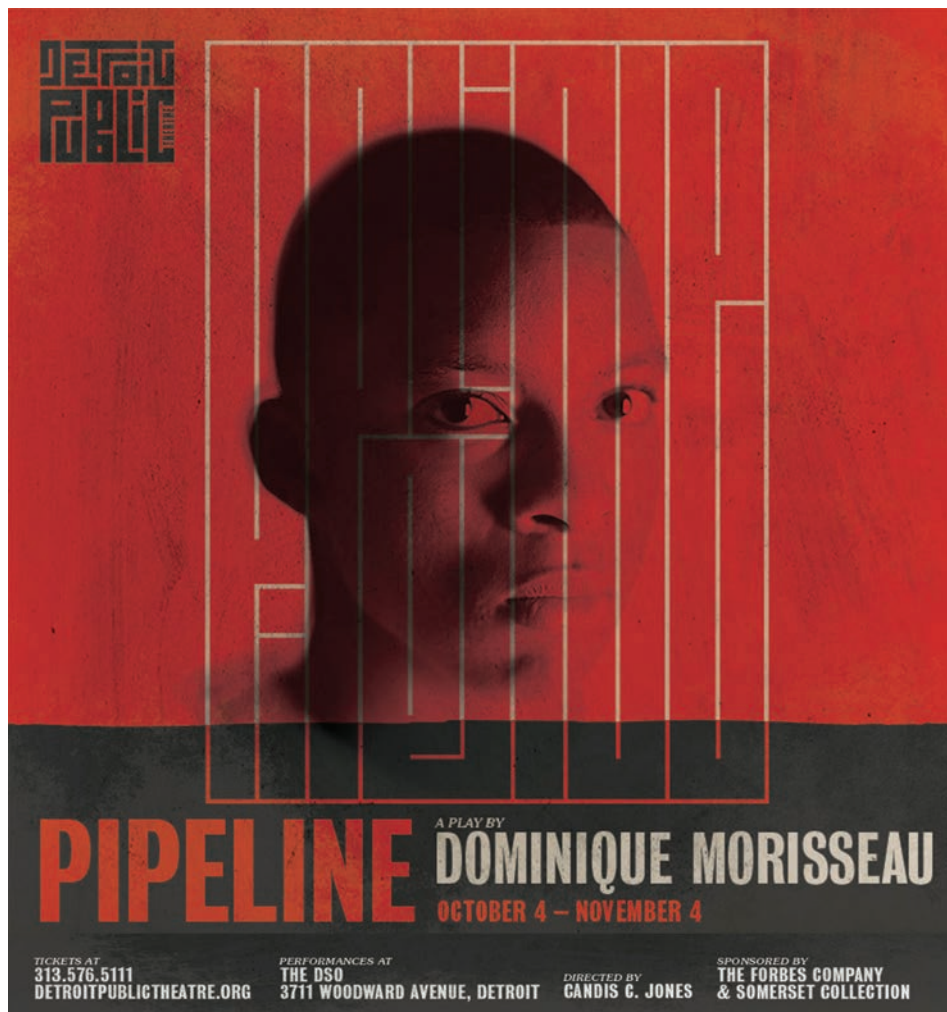
the community, invite others, potential new allies, into a new space to learn and to connect and perhaps encourage greater acceptance, that it’s a win-win for everyone,” Keith said. “The transgender community gets an event that’s celebratory of that particular community and the allies or potential new allies who come in are able to learn more and make connections.”

In particular, Rassi, who has presented at several other TDOE events, said that he’s been pleasantly surprised by the openness and positivity of the transgender youth in attendance.

“I know that there have been times where they’ve had some presentations where there were a lot of adolescents or teens who were trans, and they were so willing to share with the audience, with all of these adults of all ages,” he said. “These young people were fearless. They were open and sharing how they felt and how they thought, and that was amazing. And it was so good that they could be such a good example for their elders. It’s gotten more like that over the past years.”

*The event will be at the Student Center Ballroom on Wayne State University’s Campus, 5221 Gullen Mall Detroit. Learn about the event online at events.wayne.edu or find the event on Facebook.*

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