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AG Nessel to Reconsider
Predecessor's Opinion on
LGBTQ Protections

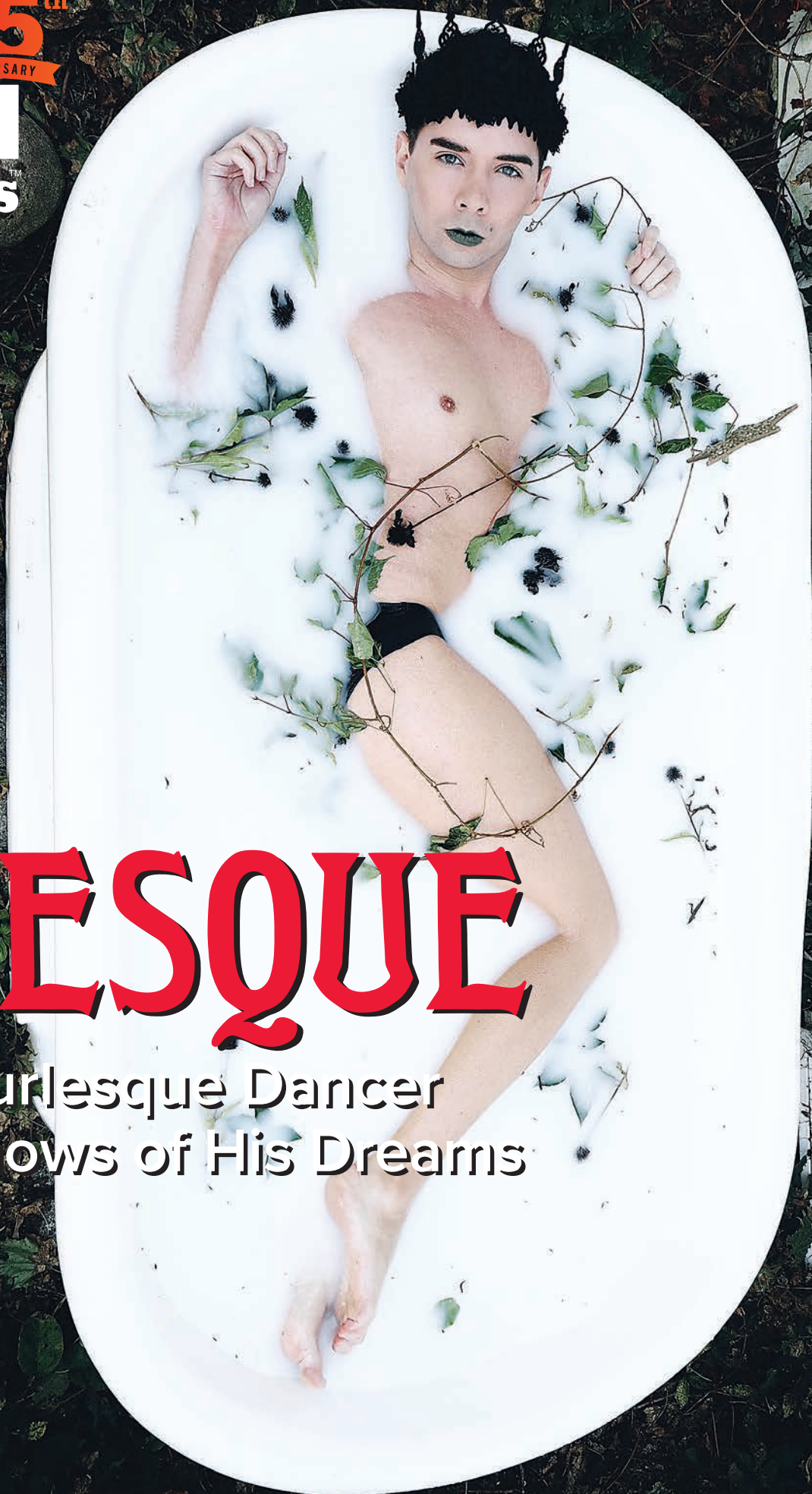
Mark LaChey Elected First
Vice Chair of Michigan
Democratic Party

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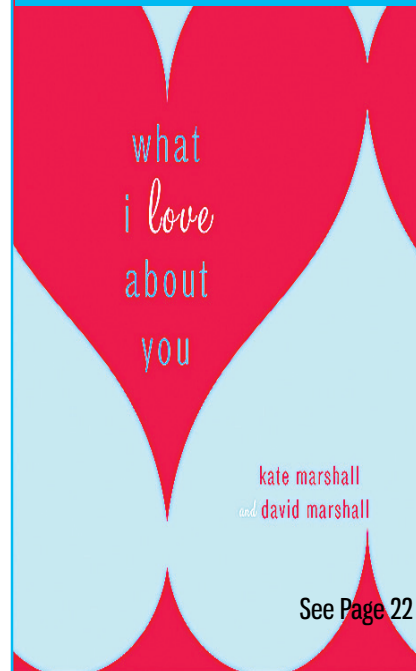
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AG Nessel to Reconsider Predecessor's Opinion on LGBTQ Protections

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

While standing in front of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission at Cadillac Place in Detroit on Friday, Feb. 1, Attorney General Dana Nessel made it clear that discrimination against the LGBTQ community does occur on a daily basis in the state of Michigan.

Nessel detailed what she calls an “ugly reality” with several examples:

- Same-sex moms Krista Contreras and her wife Jami Contreras, were turned away by a pediatrician in Roseville.
- Aimee Stephens was fired from her job at R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes in Garden City when she came out as transgender.
- Same-sex couple Elizabeth Gardiner and Stephanie Citron of Royal Oak were denied health insurance benefits.
- Transgender women – Jessica Storm, Gregory Daniels, Norman Williams, Amber Monroe and Kelly Stough - were murdered in Highland Park after being forced to work as prostitutes because, Nessel said, “it’s next to impossible for many trans women to find gainful employment so they have no other means to feed themselves or pay for shelter than work on the streets.”

After listing those instances of direct homophobia, Nessel said it’s because of LGBTQ discrimination like this that she “welcomes the opportunity” to reevaluate her predecessor’s formal opinion that could expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, education, housing and real estate as well as use of public accommodations and public service.

During the meeting, in a 6-0 vote, the commission approved a resolution directing the Michigan Department of Civil Rights to send a letter to Nessel asking her to reconsider AG Opinion 7305.

“My response without equivocation is that I believe it is incumbent upon me as attorney general of this great state to do just that,” she said. “Justice demands no less.”

History of the Opinion

In July 2017, Equality Michigan and 37 other LGBTQ organizations first petitioned the commission to clarify ELCRA and issue an interpretative statement that laws prohibiting sex discrimination also prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

During a September 2017 commission meeting, following more than two hours of



Attorney General Dana Nessel. BTL photo: Kate Opalewski

public comment on both sides of the issue, the commission’s legal counsel, Assistant Attorney General Ron Robinson, under former Attorney General Bill Schuette, informed the commission that it does not have the legal right to issue an interpretive statement on the issue, and that it is the role of the legislature to address any changes in law.

“And should the commission issue a ruling contrary to the attorney general, the commission would give up its governmental immunity and would be subject to a lawsuit,” he said at the time.

Despite this intervention, the commission became the first of its kind in the nation in May 2018 to issue the interpretative statement.

But in July 2018, Schuette authored an opinion which said “Michigan’s Constitution entrusts the legislature, and not executive agencies or commissions, with the authority to change, extend or narrow statutes.”

Schuette said that state law “prohibits discrimination based on sex but does not cover distinctions based on sexual orientation or

gender identity ... The commission’s ruling is invalid.”

The commission ignored Schuette’s opinion and directed the MDCR to accept, review and investigate complaints of discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

“The Michigan Civil Rights Commission is an independent, constitutionally created and established body,” said Agustin Arbulu, director of the MDCR, in a previous statement. “The commission is not bound by the opinion of the attorney general. The only recourse is for the courts to determine if issuing the interpretive statement was within the scope of the commission’s authority, and that is the appropriate venue for resolving this issue. Until that time, the department will continue to carry out the directive of the commission.”

MDCR is currently investigating 13 complaints. Of those under investigation, five are related to claims of discrimination based on gender identity, and eight are related to

claims of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Nessel told the commission that Schuette’s opinion “runs in direct conflict with years of legal jurisprudence from federal circuit courts from around the nation, including ours, the sixth circuit court of appeals.”

Robinson, who was appointed in January 2019 as the civil rights and civil litigation practice manager in the new attorney general’s office, spoke to his previous position during Friday’s meeting.

“That was the opinion of the old administration,” he said. “There’s a new sheriff in town.”

In fact, Robinson said he has received “reassurance” from Nessel who “said she knows I was in a difficult position at the time ... I’m very excited about the new attorney general and the faith that she has in me.”

Nessel’s Personal Response

Nessel, a Democrat, said she felt it was important to personally address the commission after Republican House Speaker Lee Chatfield appeared for an interview on Off the Record on Friday, Jan. 25. He indicated that even if there were enough votes in the chamber for passage, he would not allow a vote to amend ELCRA to include sexual orientation and gender identity. In support of his decision, Chatfield said, “Personally, I don’t believe people should be discriminated against. But at the same time, I’m never going to endorse a law or allow a bill to come for a vote that I believe infringes on someone’s ability to exercise their sincerely held religious beliefs.”

Advocates hope to expand ELCRA under Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who signed an executive directive on Jan. 7 to strengthen LGBTQ protections. But, according to a Detroit News report, GOP Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey said “that Democratic efforts to expand ELCRA to include LGBTQ protections would likely be ‘heavily contested’ in a GOP-led legislature.”

“Majority Leader Shirkey is out of touch with popular opinion, as the majority of Michiganders believe that LGBTQ people deserve to be treated with the same fairness and dignity as everyone else in Michigan,” said Erin Knott, interim executive director of EQMI. “Equality Michigan stands ready to build bipartisan support around pro-LGBTQ legislation, and is working in coalition with the business community, faith leaders, community member and allies to finally, at long last, expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to make it fully inclusive for all Michiganders.”

Nineteen states – including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia – have full LGBTQ non-discrimination protections in place.

In response to Chatfield, Nessel said, “People who choose to demean others or deny them employment, housing, educational opportunities, medical treatment or goods and services simply because of that persons sexual orientation or gender identity are not religious heroes, they are bigots.”

Chatfield said on the show, “If people today in Michigan were being discriminated against on a daily basis because of their sexual orientation, it would be statewide news, and we all know it.”

To that, Nessel responded, “I believe you are a kind man, a good man, a well-intentioned man, but Mr. Speaker, what you don’t know about discrimination against the LGBTQ community could fill not only the pages of a book, but that of an entire library.”

Nessel said it is her obligation to inform Chatfield that there are hundreds of thousands of people who identify as LGBTQ in this

state, and many of them have experienced discrimination at some point in their life.

“Discrimination which would be greatly reduced or many times eliminated altogether were it just made illegal to engage in that practice in the first place,” she said, adding that states which enact policies have demonstrated to improve productivity rates, reduce turnover, enhance profitability and advance recruitment for businesses.

Nineteen states – including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia – have full LGBTQ non-discrimination protections in place.

“These states also see additional benefits including a reduction in suicide attempts by LGBTQ youth, and as someone who spent more time in my youth than I care to remember thinking of ways to end my life instead of dreaming about what I would one day do with my life, I can tell you this, your words, your rhetoric matter and I would be remiss in my obligations both as this state’s attorney general as well as the first openly gay statewide elected official if I failed to advise you of such,” Nessel said.

The next Michigan Civil Rights Commission meeting is scheduled for March 25. For more information, visit michigan.gov/mdcr.



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Mark LaChey Elected First Vice Chair of Michigan Democratic Party, Roland Leggett Chair of LGBT & Allies Caucus

BY ELLEN KNOPPOW

One day after the state emerged from a record-breaking cold snap, nearly 3,000 Democratic Michiganders gathered for the Michigan Democratic Party Spring Convention at Cobo Center in Detroit. There, credentialed delegates were tasked with electing MDP leadership as well as leadership for constituency caucuses and congressional districts.

The mood of the day-long event was largely celebratory in light of the gains made in the recent midterm elections; however, as 2020 looms, the crowd was advised to remain vigilant. As one elected official quipped, “put the champagne back in the refrigerator.”

The LGBT & Allies Caucus opened with words from Vice Chair Mark LaChey, who was not seeking re-election to that post. Later, he would be elected first vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Party and would become the first openly gay Michigander to serve on the Democratic National Committee.

“It’s gratifying that we are the force in Michigan Democratic politics, and that’s a thank-you to you for showing up, being queer, making sure people know we’re queer, that we vote, that we write checks, that we knock doors and that we are who we are,” LaChey said. “And we have candidates we’ve elected — people who are pro-equality, starting with Gretchen Whitmer, all the way down.”

LaChey said that the pro-LGBTQ executive order signed by Gov. Whitmer on her second day in office didn’t happen in a vacuum. In politics today, he said, one can’t count on people to do what’s right just because it’s right.

“It happens because we’re loud, we’re proud and we make sure people know that we’re in their faces,” he said.

LaChey went on to encourage more LGBTQ Democrats to run for office in 2020. In terms of LGBTQ representation in the state legislature, Michigan has gone from zero to three in just a few years — Tim Sneller and Jon Hoadley in the state House, Jeremy Moss in the state Senate — but the caucus needs to be cognizant of term limits.

“So if you are interested, talk to somebody, make yourself known. We have support,” he said.

Next on the agenda was the election of a new chair and three vice chairs of the caucus. Roland Leggett detailed his experience and, as LaChey had, the power of this group.

“One of the things that has really had the greatest impact for me in this role is the opportunity that we have had to make real change happen for LGBTQ Michiganders,” said Leggett, speaking of his tenure as vice chair.

He went on to give as an example a time during Sen. Debbie Stabenow’s re-election campaign when the caucus was called upon to hold a fundraiser on her behalf. Before doing so, they asked her to sit down with youth and leadership from the Ruth Ellis Center to devise real solutions to challenges that affect that population.

“What you do for us impacts what we’ll do for you,” Leggett said. “And that’s the power of this caucus.”

Stabenow did as requested and, subsequently, her office helped secure funding for supportive housing for LGBTQ youth.

“That would not have happened had it not been for the organizing and the work this caucus does,” Leggett added.

Leggett was elected chair of the caucus over Ricardo White, a candidate for state House in 2018. In his new role, Leggett said he wants to first build on the work the caucus has already started: not only recruiting and supporting candidates that are part of the LGBTQ community, but also those who share the values and interests of the LGBTQ community at the forefront of the legislation they champion.

“We have to ensure that the focus of the Democratic Party also remains laser-sharp focused on the issues that affect our community,” Leggett, adding, “I’m very concerned by the rate at which transgender women of color, in particular, are murdered in the city of Detroit. All of our policies have to wrap around addressing that.”

Leggett lives in Detroit and has two children. He’s on the board of the Ruth Ellis Center and has worked for Equality Michigan as well as the American Civil Liberties Union. A former president of the Human Rights Commission of the city of Detroit, Leggett said, “These issues are personal.”

Leggett said he’s looking forward to working with the three vice chairs — Grace Wojcik, Jacob Johnson and Susan Grettenberger — the members of the caucus and those around the state “to ensure that we can continue to move Michigan forward and to lift up LGBT families.”

Following the caucuses and meetings, elections were held for chair, first vice chair and second vice chair of the party. With speeches by numerous Democratic elected officials like the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, two senators and six members of Congress. Lavora Barnes, former Chief Operating Officer of the MDP, became the first African-American woman to serve as chair of the Michigan Democratic Party; Andy Dillon did not seek re-election.

In nominating LaChey for male vice chair, with the win, he would move up from second



Newly elected first Vice Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, Mark LaChey, with newly elected Chair of the LGBTQ and Allied Caucus Roland Leggett.



Newly elected leaders of the LGBTQ & Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party. Roland Leggett, Chair, and Vice Chairs, Susan Grettenberger, Grace Wojcik and Jacob Johnson.

Continued on next page

vice chair to first, Dillon called him “not only a tireless advocate for folks in the LGBT community, but for all people in Michigan,” further describing him as “proven, tested, respected at the state and the national level.”

In his new role, LaChey will serve on the Democratic National Committee. After winning his election, LaChey said he was “very excited and honored to be the first LGBT Michigander to serve” on the DNC.

“I will do my best to represent the LGBT community, members of the Michigan Democratic Party as well as Democrats across the state of Michigan,” he said. “I was gratified and honored to be asked to serve with Lavora Barnes ... and excited to be working with Fay Beydoun, our new second vice chair. I think the three of us, along with the thousands of others who comprise the Michigan Democratic Party, will make a great team going forward as we head into 2020.”

Attending the convention was Steve Hanses,

Brandon Dillon called Mark LaChey “not only a tireless advocate for folks in the LGBT community, but for all people in Michigan,” further describing him as “proven, tested, respected at the state and the national level.”

a transgender woman who is retired and lives in Royal Oak. Hanses worked as a field organizer during the 2018 coordinated campaign, and said she was hopeful about the work that the LGBT & Allies Caucus is doing and the future of the MDP in general.

“In a packed house, we came and voted for the future of the Democratic Party in Michigan,” Hanses said. “It gives me good hope to know that we’re putting good candidates out there and we’re gonna work hard for the next two years.”

Affirmations, Transcend the Binary Host Peer-Led Support, Education, Navigation Services

BY BTL STAFF

For many in the nonbinary and gender non-conforming community it can be difficult to navigate a binary-focused world. Transcend the Binary — an organization dedicated to “empowering our trans/gender non-conforming community with skill-building, tools, navigation services, planning and support” — has partnered with the Affirmations LGBTQ community center to help provide support to people who may be struggling getting to know their identity. Offered regularly throughout the month, the two Ferndale-based organizations are providing peer-led meetings that can help interested parties find:

- Peer Counseling
- Safe space for families to ask and have their questions answered
- Consults available with doctors, pharmacists
- Skill-building and peer support
- Name change
- Gender marker change
- Transition Planning
- Referral Navigation



“All of our services are free for our community,” wrote event organizers on Facebook. “We blend the talents of social workers, therapists, pharmacists, physician, peer advocates, certified fitness instructors and many more to provide you the best peer-led services available.”

The next available event is on Wednesday, Feb. 13 at 11 a.m. hosted at W. 290 W. 9 Mile Road in Ferndale.

Find out more about scheduling appointments and finding resources by emailing consults@transcendthebinary.org to connect with Intake Coordinator Morgan. For more information visit transcendthebinary.org/our-team.

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Ferndale's SheHive Hosts Release Meditation Feb. 9

BY BTL STAFF

Meditation is a millenia-old practice that has been adopted by people from cultures around the world. Its longevity is likely due to the fact that it provides myriad health benefits to those who regularly practice it. In fact, Forbes even released an article citing studies that document its ability to provide benefits like reducing anxiety, its ability to prevent and treat depression and diminish age and racial bias among those who regularly meditate. On Saturday, Feb. 9, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Ferndale's SheHive will host its own meditation event focused on releasing tensions.

"In this meditation, we will release old emotions and experiences which we have stored in our bodies through a process of meditation, toning and movement," wrote organizers. "After creating safe and sacred space together, we will move through a guided meditation to locate blocked energy and, let healing energy flow through the blockage, releasing that which we no longer need."

SheHive is located at 2505 Hilton Road, Unit 107 in Ferndale. Find more information about the event online at eventbrite.com.

Clerk: Williamston Campaign Crosses State Law

BY KYLE KAMINSKI, CITY PULSE

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in City Pulse.

A board member at Williamston Community Schools could face fines from the Michigan Bureau of Elections after she was anonymously exposed for a string of alleged campaign finance violations.

Karen Potter, who defeated Board President Greg Talberg in November in Williamston's recall election over transgender policy, appears to have repeatedly violated Michigan's Campaign Finance Act in the months leading up to last year's school board election, Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum said. Potter could face fines should the investigation continue.

According to a 14-page report filed by an anonymous "Williamston Resident," various printed and online campaign materials that supported Potter failed to include proper disclaimers for who paid for them. Those advertisements, under law, legally require the name and address of their appropriate campaign committee.

"There were some violations," said Byrum, to whom the anonymous report was sent. Byrum said she confirmed that the accusations were accurate.

"It's absolutely a big deal, said Byrum. "Voters and citizens of Ingham County have a right to know who is paying for election materials and who is paying for these candidates. This is about disclosure, and it's more than just a technicality. There's no reason this type of stuff should've been overlooked."

In many cases, Potter's materials didn't

include a name or address, according to the complaint. Some advertisements also supported her fellow challengers in the recent recall election. Byrum identified them both as violations; State law also bans individual candidate committees from supporting multiple campaigns.

Potter, who was only made aware of the allegations by City Pulse, chalked it up to a simple mistake.

"I am still reviewing everything," Potter said via email. "I can assure you any clerical errors were not intentional, and if there is any error, I will certainly correct right away. I do appreciate it being brought to my attention."

The complaint could result in a series of fines should it be forwarded to the Bureau of Elections. But Potter, who won by a margin of only 58 votes, won't need to worry about her seat on the board. Regardless of the eventual findings, state officials don't carry the legal authority to remove someone from office, Byrum said.

Byrum said anonymous complaints aren't typically reviewed by state regulators, but she invited the anonymous resident to identify himself and file another complaint directly to the Bureau of Elections. An investigation cannot begin until that report is filed, but it would likely confirm the anonymous suspicions, Byrum added.

Potter was one of four challengers who tried to overthrow the board of education at Williamston last year. Three trustees, Nancy Deal, Sarah Belanger and Christopher Lewis, survived the effort to recall them for having supported pro-transgender policies. Talberg was the lone casualty after the votes were tallied.

"I know people had some concerns," Talberg said. "There were clearly times during her campaign that there should've been disclaimers on Facebook, but I know the state law is fuzzy in that regard. She ran a fairly clean campaign. At this point, I'm just rooting for her to do what's best for our children and our schools."

The recall was driven over disputed board policies to protect transgender students. Some parents were intolerant of LGBTQ lifestyles. Others claimed their religious beliefs clashed with the new rules. Many more took issue with policy language that gives the district discretion over whether parents are to be involved in the discussions.

Potter, along with the other challengers, had used their vocal opposition of the policies to guide their campaigns. And the controversial district guidelines — which speak to "gender-segregated" restrooms and the acceptance of transgender lifestyles — ultimately helped send Talberg packing and sowed a deep divide within the community.

Byrum in September also reported alleged campaign finance violations against Julie Conley, Potter and other challengers — Walter Holm, Craig Hagelberger and Debbie Hutchison — under similar accusations. That complaint has yet to generate any state findings more than four months after Byrum forwarded the claims.

"It's shocking, but I'll trust the system is going to look and handle things," added Board President Scott Gaffner.

Visit lansingcitypulse.com for previous and continued coverage at Williamston Community Schools.

Gay Man Found Dead After Lansing Fire

BY BTL STAFF

Known as an incubator for small businesses, the lesbian-owned Lansing Eastside Gateway was ravaged by a fire last weekend that resulted in the death of 43-year-old openly gay employee John Bolan. He was discovered dead inside Sunday morning. In an article by reporter Kara Berg, The Lansing State Journal reported that Bolan had been sleeping inside the building when the fire broke out.

"It is not clear why Bolan was in the building when the fire began at about 5 a.m. Firefighters were told a person who had been sleeping in the back of the building was still inside, Lansing Fire Department spokesperson Steve Mazurek said Sunday," the report said. "Due to structural issues, crews were not able to gain access, he added."

The Gateway's Facebook page shared a

GoFundMe link to aid Bolan's family in providing burial services after the tragedy.

"Not only was the business a complete loss but John lost his life in the battle. John prided himself in being a human first and everything else came later. He was always willing to give of his time and help those that needed it," The post read. "John was not only my brother-in-law he was one of my best friends he will be greatly missed. His brother Patrick and I, along with other members of the family, are asking for your help. We do not have the funds for this unexpected loss and any little bit would be greatly appreciated."

The Facebook page also shared pictures of the results of the blaze with a message of thanks for community members who have shown support.

"Thank you, all, for the outpouring of support after this morning's fire," The post read. "I can't say much; it's still being picked over by the fire crews, but the photos say it all."





Pioneering transgender activist Barbra 'Babs' Casbar Siperstein died at age 76. Washington Blade file photo: Michael Key

Babs Siperstein, Pioneering N.J. Trans Activist, Dies at 76

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Barbra “Babs” Siperstein, a transgender Democratic activist in New Jersey who’s credited with taking a lead role in pushing a pro-trans state birth certificate law for her state, died over the weekend at age 76, according to local media reports.

Siperstein died days after the law went into effect on Feb. 1. The “Babs Siperstein Law” allows individuals in New Jersey to change the gender marker on their birth certificate without proof of surgery and offer a gender-neutral option. The law was signed by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy.

The first openly transgender member of the Democratic National Committee, Siperstein was appointed in 2011 to the Democratic National Committee’s executive committee and served there until 2017. Siperstein was a superdelegate for Hillary Clinton at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.

Speaking with the Washington Blade at the convention, Siperstein was dubious of Trump’s pledge to support LGBT people during his speech at the 2016 Republican National Convention. (Her prediction later proved true.)

“There’s nothing behind it,” Siperstein said. “He said unequivocally that he was going to appoint the most conservative Supreme Court justices. He will say anything.”

Although she was a Democrat, Siperstein wasn’t afraid to take on members of her own party on the issue of transgender rights.

In 2015, Siperstein told the Blade she was “extremely disappointed” in Kamala Harris

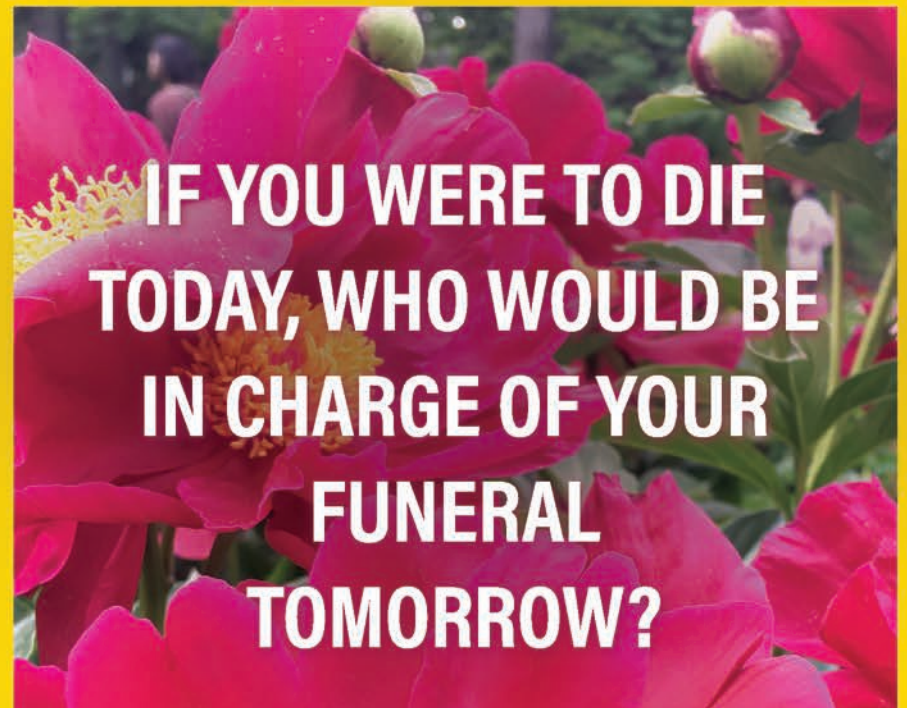
(D-Calif.), now a U.S. senator and a 2020 presidential candidate, for her actions as California attorney general appealing a court order granting a transgender prison inmate in California access to gender reassignment surgery.

“I would think that any political candidate, or any public servant, that would fight to prevent basic and necessary medical treatment for any person would be incompetent to serve,” Siperstein said. “How can you trust any public servant, any elected official, who fights to prevent basic and necessary medical service for any person? Who’s next?”

Sean Meloy, who served as the DNC’s Director of LGBTQ Engagement and is now political director for the LGBTQ Victory Fund, said Siperstein built a strong legacy.

“For so many in the Democratic Party, Babs was the first openly trans person they ever met and she undoubtably changed the hearts and minds of many party leaders who were not yet committed to trans equality,” Meloy said. “She was a constant advocate for the entire LGBTQ community and helped make the Democratic Party more accepting not just of trans people, but trans candidates as well. Her presence in the DNC helped prepare the party and pave the way for trailblazing trans Democratic candidates like Danica Roem and Christine Hallquist – and her impact will be felt for years to come.”

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



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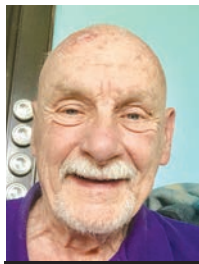
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Black Gay Detroit Friends (Pt. 1)

Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

As a teenager in the mid-1950s, I listened faithfully to country and western music radio — especially Patsy Cline — and later ‘Senator’ Bristo Bryant’s rhythm and blues after high school class broadcasts. (A favorite group was Billy Ward and His Dominoes.)

At age 19, my first partner, ballet dancer and pianist Ernie Gilbert, 23, introduced me to classical music. He was writing for the Wayne University Collegian as entertainment by-liner, and took me with him — a gay “Mutt and Jeff” pairing, if ever — for his reviews of ballet companies, symphony orchestras, soloists, operas and Sol Hurok musical galas at Detroit’s Masonic Temple. And foreign films!

Basically a street kid before I met Ernie, my introduction and our partnership, stretching over four years, changed my life dramatically. He was the best catalyst that happened to my young, formative gay life.

In 1960, Ernie got me a sales job at Discount Records, in the Sheraton Cadillac on Washington Boulevard. It was there that my 20-year friendship with Detroit Free Press music critic Collins George began.

Mr. George was the first black journalist to be hired at the Freep. He was a regular customer at Discount Records. George, prior to his music critic tenure (1953 to 1980), had been a managing editor for the Pittsburg Courier, then and now one of the nation’s major African-American newspapers; and, as a Howard University graduate with a French Language minor, he taught French at Howard briefly.

“I was so nervous during my first class, I had to sit on my hands to keep them from shaking,” George once commented to friends gathered for drinks at his Lafayette Park condo. (A favorite side “dish:” chopped fruit, coconut and marijuana topping, drenched with Grand Marnier.)

When our friendship started, George was also hosting a weekly classical music program for WQRS-FM, playing selections from his extensive collection of hundreds of LPs. He was a close friend of sopranos Leontyne Price and Jessye Norman.

George had a small east-side Iroquois upstairs flat at the time; for him, a real plus — his meals were lovingly prepared by someone whom I never saw, never met, his “feeding lady.”

As I got to know George I introduced him to two close gay friends, Dan Stevens and Cecil Miller. Soon George began referring to us as “my daughters.”

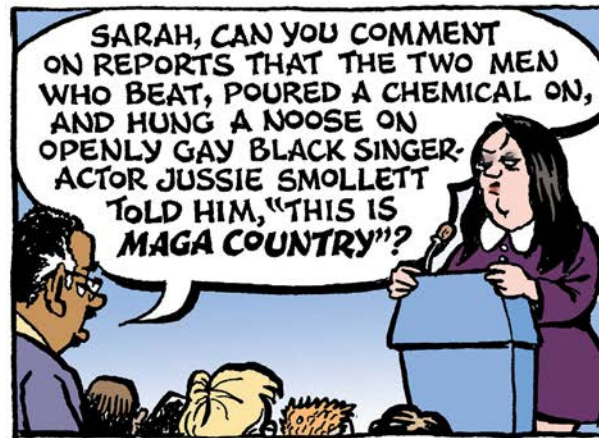
Of course we enjoyed his celebrity company, but we were also content to drink his ample supply of available scotch, recount our adventures of recent and previous seductions, before hitting the bars — cost free thanks to George — on weekends.

George was a gifted storyteller. We learned of his tenure as a World War II news correspondent in Italy, and of a year spent as a conscientious objector in a CO camp with two close detainees: famed British author Christopher Isherwood and Denham Fouts, a handsome escort of much notoriety to gay royalty and final drug overdose demise.

(George is the model for a character in Isherwood’s novel, “Down There On A Visit”. George shared a loving letter with me that Isherwood had written him sometime after the war.)

When I met George, there were two other major newspaper

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



BY JEM ZERO

Viewpoint

Valentine's Day Visibility: To Stay in or Go Out?

As a lesbian, I often feel the urge to be vocally happy in my engagement to a woman. It's a spiteful parry to a book I keep on my shelf as a joke: “The Unhappy Gays,” a messy assortment of Christian ramblings about how queer people are actually miserable, pilfered from the collection of my deceased grandmother.

When seeking visibility, common romantic holidays and traditions are great in reducing the ‘gal pal’ effect — when people assume a sapphic woman is out with a friend, rather than a lover.

What better than Valentine’s Day to be obnoxiously, wonderfully gay?

Too bad my impressions of V-Day have been ... let’s say, soiled.

In February of 2009 I was 17 and working up the nerve to break off my abusive relationship with the adult man whom I’d been dating for two years, long before I was able to come out as queer. This Valentine’s Day will be the 10-year anniversary of that decision. I still have nightmares.

As time passed, I looked forward to V-Day, hoping one year I would finally have a happy relationship. Some years, I dreamed

of the mind-numbingly perfect date of rom-com legend; the kind so good you still remember it when you’re old and crusty. While some years I looked forward to discounted boxed chocolates. There were others where I was in a relationship, but contrary to my hopes, though, I don’t remember anything but the disappointments.

This year, finances allowing, I’m getting married to a woman who makes me feel like the hurt and abuse and neglect I went through as a young adult is finally behind me. If there was a time to plan this magical Valentine’s date, it would be now.

Except ... I’m just not feeling it.

Is it giving up? Am I losing something by letting a romantic holiday be ruined by my trauma?

For some, the decision might be easy. Many feel that Valentine’s Day is a corporate scam that has nothing to do with St. Valentine — whose historical significance is convoluted and highly dubious anyway. It’s not hard to opt out of the celebration.

Say whatever you like, but that doesn’t bother me. If I want to have a nice time, I’m going to have a nice time. It’s not

See **Viewpoint**, continued on next page

► Viewpoint

Continued from p. 10

like my individual abstinence will stop other people from participating in a holiday, and I'm not a big spender anyway. The value to me is the experience and atmosphere. Or, at least, it would be.

The question for me is: "Is it worth it?" I don't think it is anymore.

Is it worth dredging up traumatic memories in hopes of planting new and better ones? Unearthing trauma in therapy is one thing — digging through the dusty box in the back of your attic just to find societal approval borders on self-harm.

It leads me to question why I desire acknowledgment from straight, cisgender people in the first place. The assumption that a gay couple is just two "besties" is invalidating, but deliberately seeking out opportunities to challenge that might be going too far ... then again, I'm totally the kind of person who would kiss my fiancée in front of homophobic protesters. (Another act of defiance from the days when a girlfriend and I had bottles thrown at us while we were walking down the street holding hands.)

I don't think it's wrong to loudly challenge lesbophobic and homophobic attitudes about us, but doing it at the expense of my mental health is a rather poor idea, and even worse in practice.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 11

critics who were gay or supposedly bi. The Times critic, Frank Gill, was married to the publisher's daughter. He was also the advisor for the Wayne University Collegian. (He advised a journalism to scratch his column headline, "Liberace gives gay concert!")

Gill said he had once partied mid-1940s with Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde's queeny companion. He also had one of his music compositions, "Fanfare and Fiesta for A State Occasion" performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The News critic, Joe Mossman, something of a pompous twit, delighted to be the last to walk into a DSO concert at Ford Auditorium, to be seen by everyone, then sit behind George and whisper comments to get George, who had survived two minor strokes, to uncontrollably guffaw out loud.

(Mossman was fired for drinking on the job, and as the result of an intermission backstage visit to verbally abuse dancers from the American Ballet Company for what he felt was lackluster dance performance.)

Dan, Cecil and I took George with us to Chicago one St. Patrick's Day weekend. The river was dyed green, and a living rosary was in the traditional parade. Quipped Dan, "I like the Second 'Our Father' on the right."

At this point in my life, I'm okay with Valentine's just being another day on the calendar. I can make other meaningful anniversaries with my beloved; I don't need the validation of a dead white man who may or may not have actually existed to be a happy, visible lesbian. It helps that my fiancée doesn't celebrate V-day or care about the cultural performance involved.

Maybe I'll change my mind in the future. Maybe another decade will pass and the wounds will be healed, and I'll be able to take this silly Hallmark holiday out of the recycle bin, rinse it off and enjoy it again. I can't say that I won't.

This year, though, I resolve to let Valentine's Day to be just another day. Boring, meticulous and intimate in its own special way; she and I sitting in the same room working or idling, speaking occasionally and enjoying the intimacy of the mundane. Seems like a much more positive way to heal from the ghosts of relationships past.

Jem Zero is a disabled queer content creator. Ze is currently pursuing an accounting certificate to compliment zir career as a writer, photographer and artist. Most days, ze can be found making fruitless attempts to preserve zir spinal integrity while bent over zir computer, pumping out everything from essays on equal media representation to science fiction and fantasy romance with hard-hitting political themes. Connect with zir at www.jemzero.com, at www.facebook.com/jemzero.art, or jemzero.art@gmail.com.

Added George, "You'll do bead work for that, my dear!"

Cecil was 25 when he died. He was scheduled to have minor surgery. He died on the operating table of an unanticipated aneurism. Dan, George and I went to his riverside apartment to remove gay-related items — there were dozens — before Cecil's parents came to town.

George kept a memento picture of himself and Cecil on his writing table. He frequently toasted Cecil, "Miss you ever so, mon cher. A bientot."

Dan died in 1980, at the onset of the AIDS epidemic. He was among Michigan's first.

George died in 1981 during a dinner at a gay favorite downtown Detroit restaurant, Sweitzer's. He had a sudden heart attack triggered by a tracheal throat lodging of a steak sliver.

DSO Assistant Concertmaster Gordon Peterson, attending with him after a Ford Auditorium concert, performed a Heimlich maneuver. To no avail. George died on the table.

The following year I faced up to my alcoholism. What's past is prologue. One day at a time, followed by the remembered bygone music of the sadly rainbow-tempered night.

Faintly heard by the last of George George's gay "daughters." Om shanti.

Creep Of The Week

James Greene Sr.

By the time this column runs, Donald Trump's State of the Union address will be over and done with. But as I'm writing this there's a good 24 hours before



the SOTU. I can't stomach the 24-hour breathless "news" coverage the event is already getting, as if behind the podium will be a legitimate president and not a racist and misogynist buffoon who has done nothing but lie to

the American people.

Anyhoo, it's totes possible that something Trump says during the SOTU address (which I would like to rename the STFU address so long as Trump is the president) will inspire me to write yet another Creep of the Week column about him.

But I'm tired of writing about that fool, so this week let's focus on something lighter: an armed man showing up at a public library to protest Drag Queen Storytime and refusing to leave. You know, to protect the children.

Said man is James "Doc" Greene Sr. a right-wing radio host who filmed himself being asked to leave a library in Houston.

Greene posted the video to YouTube titling it "Arrested for being a Christian." In the video multiple police officers have formed a perimeter around Greene and who ask him, again and again, to go.

The video is peak white privilege. Greene is surrounded by police officers who repeatedly, and politely, ask him to leave and he refuses over and over again demanding to "see the law" he is breaking and asserting that he is "a tax payer." Did I mention he has a gun? Granted it's a concealed weapon (which is totes legal to bring to a library in Texas), but if you don't think Greene's treatment wouldn't have been radically, and violently, different if he was black instead of white, I have a bridge made of MAGA hats to sell you.

Now, you might be wondering, "Well, what was Greene doing wrong? Doesn't he have just as much right to be in the library as anyone?" Well, yes. But if you're in the library making other people feel unsafe, they have a right to ask you to leave. Which they'd already asked of him.

"He was previously banned for filming children at the library, and has been known to cause disturbances," Houston Police Department spokesperson Jodi Silva told Out Smart Magazine.

So when he showed up at the library right

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

But here's the thing: people who bring guns to libraries are the ones most likely to use guns in libraries. Now add in the fact that Greene, who sure has a lot in common with other right-wingers who became mass shooters, believes children are being harmed by people he sees as inhuman.

before Drag Queen Storytime, they did not hesitate to tell him to scram. Greene clearly thought this was unjust and so the library called the police.

In the background of Greene's video, while the police officers have gotten him outside of the building but not off of the premises, the song "I Like to Move It" is playing. So as Greene argues with and disobeys the officers about leaving, the scene is punctuated by calls to "Move it!"

Greene asks, again, why he has to leave and an officer says something like, "You were filming in the library" and Greene responds, "You don't realize they're lying to you. You don't realize they're using you. We have a bunch of homosexuals that are molesting children. They are doing it with your help."

The police are astoundingly calm and polite as they escort him to his car, which he apparently refuses to get into and drive away, and so he ends up getting arrested and his gun confiscated. He complains of chest pains (sure, Jan) and they take him to the hospital.

News reports about the incident say that there was no evidence that Greene planned to use the gun.

But here's the thing: people who bring guns to libraries are the ones most likely to use guns in libraries. Now add in the fact that Greene, who sure has a lot in common with other right-wingers who became mass shooters, believes children are being harmed by people he sees as inhuman. According to The Independent, Greene later claimed in a Facebook video that he was "arrested for being a white Christian" and referred to a librarian as a "Satanist." How much evidence do we need to believe that everyone at that library was in danger so long as he was there with a gun?

And I know I said I wasn't going to write about Trump this week, but it bears pointing out that Greene broadcasts his show in a MAGA hat in front of a cardboard cutout of Trump, a president who has more than any other in modern history emboldened right-wing radicals and encouraged violence.

The State of the Union is deplorable.



Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam speaks at Equality Virginia's annual Commonwealth Dinner in Richmond, Va., on April 14, 2018. He is facing growing calls to resign over a racist picture in his medical school yearbook page emerged on Feb. 1, 2019. Washington Blade photo: Michael Key

HRC Calls on Virginia Governor to Resign Over Racist Yearbook Page

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam is facing growing calls to resign from the Human Rights Campaign and others after his medical school yearbook page with a picture of two men in blackface and a Ku Klux Klan robe surfaced on Friday.

"Northam must resign immediately," said HRC President Chad Griffin in a short statement. "The right path forward is for Justin Fairfax to become the next governor of Virginia."

The National LGBTQ Task Force has also called upon Northam to resign.

"We call on Ralph Northam to resign immediately. Northam's apology isn't enough," said Rea Carey, the group's executive director. "He must step down immediately, allowing Justin Fairfax to serve Virginians. This racist behavior is deeply troubling and unacceptable."

Northam, a Democrat who has championed LGBT rights since he took office in 2018, on Friday in a statement said he is "deeply sorry for the decision I made to appear as I did in this photo and for the hurt that decision caused then and now."

Northam has thus far said he will not resign.

Fairfax, who is currently Virginia's lieutenant governor, would be the state's second African-American governor if he were to succeed Northam.

James Wellemeyer contributed to this article. The Washington Blade will provide further updates to this story as they become available.

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

Migrants Find Refuge at Lesbian-Run Shelter

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS
AND YARIEL VALDES GONZALEZ

MEXICALI, Mexico – Cindy Campos was washing clothes on a concrete washboard in the courtyard of Cobina Posada del Migrante, a migrant shelter in the Mexican border city of Mexicali, shortly after 4 p.m. on Jan. 27.

Campos and her two children – her 6-year-old daughter Alexia and her 4-year-old son Dylan – and her sister arrived at the shelter the day before. Campos, 22, told the Washington Blade they fled Mexico's Michoacán state after her partner was shot to death outside her home.

"We fled mainly because of fear of what will happen to my children, to me," she said.

Campos and her children are among the more than 200 migrants from Mexico and Central America who are currently living at the shelter, which is less than a mile south of the Calexico West Port of Entry between Mexicali and Calexico, Calif., in the Imperial Valley.

A group of local LGBTI residents founded the shelter in 1987.

Altagracia Tamayo, a lesbian activist in Mexicali, currently manages Cobina Posada del Migrante. Casandra, a native of Acapulco who identifies as a transsexual woman, lives at the shelter and oversees its day-to-day operations.

Cobina Posada del Migrante is one of seven migrant shelters in Mexicali, which is the capital of Mexico's Baja California state. It currently receives financial support from the governments of Mexicali, Baja California and Mexico. Casandra was quick to point out to the Blade the migrants who stay at the shelter don't have to pay for anything.

"It's free," she said.

Tens of thousands of migrants who hope to seek asylum in the U.S. have traveled to the border over the last couple of years.

Many of these migrants were traveling in large caravans that arrived in Tijuana, a city that is roughly two hours west of Mexicali, last November and May respectively. Mexicali has not seen this influx of migrants, but many of those who are staying at Cobina Posada del Migrante hope they too can find refuge in the U.S.

José Javier Vázquez told the Blade he and his son left their home in Honduras' Cortés department on Oct. 22, 2018, because of poverty and death threats they received from gang members.

Vázquez, his son and a group of five other people traveled through Mexico on freight trains that are known as "the beast" or "La Bestia" or walked. Vázquez, a farmer whose wife and two daughters remain in Honduras, told the Blade he hopes to cross the U.S. border and seek asylum.

"It's the wish that I have," he said.

Maira González Alvarado from Michoacán state is currently living at the shelter with her



Washington Blade, Michael K. Lavers



Casandra, right, is a transsexual woman who oversees the day-to-day operations of Cobina Posada del Migrante, a lesbian-run migrant shelter in Mexicali, Mexico. She is talking to a group of women from central Mexico who are currently living at the shelter with their children on Jan. 27, 2019. Washington Blade photo: Michael K. Lavers

and other border cities that include Nogales, which borders Arizona.

The Trump administration last week began to implement a controversial pilot program that will force some migrants who ask for asylum at the San Ysidro Port of Entry south of

San Diego to remain in Mexico as they await the outcome of their cases. The Transgender Law Center last fall released the results of an autopsy that shows Roxsana Hernández, a transgender woman with HIV who died while in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody on May 25, was beaten before she died.

"I am not as bad as they say," González told the Blade.

Casandra acknowledged Trump's immigration policy has sparked concern among migrants in Mexicali. She also pointed out closing the border could adversely impact the U.S. economy, in part, because migrants often take jobs on farms and elsewhere that Americans don't want.

"The U.S. would die of hunger," Casandra told the Blade. "It will lose millions of pesos if the port of entry closed for two days."

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

Cindy Campos, a woman from Mexico's Michoacán state, washes clothes at Cobina Posada del Migrante, a lesbian-run migrant shelter in Mexicali, Mexico, on Jan. 27, 2019. She fled her home with her two young children after her partner was killed in front of their home. Washington Blade photo: Michael K. Lavers

two young daughters, including one who was born six weeks ago. She told the Blade her mother is already in the U.S., and she wants to live with her.

"Each day there are seven people killed where I am," said González.

Campos told the Blade that her children witnessed her partner's murder.

"They were there," she said. "All of this was very hard."

The shelter's residents spoke with the Blade against the backdrop of continued outrage over President Trump's immigration policy that includes the separation of migrant children from their parents once they enter the U.S.

Trump continues to demand a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, even though a physical barrier already exists in Mexicali, Tijuana



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Transgender Troops Attend State of the Union as Trump Pursues Ban



Rep. Jackie Speier has invited transgender airman Staff Sgt. Logan Ireland to the State of the Union address.

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), a champion of transgender military service and now chair of the House Armed Services personnel subcommittee, announced Friday on Twitter she had invited Air Force Staff Sgt. Logan Ireland to attend the address.

Ireland, a security forces airman who served in Afghanistan, has been public about being transgender in the military. When the Defense Department sought to implement openly transgender service during the Obama administration, the Air Force consulted Ireland for guidance.

As the Trump administration pursues a transgender military ban, at least four lawmakers have invited transgender people with records of military service to attend to President Trump's State of the Union address in the House chamber in protest over his policy.

Although courts had initially blocked the Defense Department from implementing Trump's ban, the U.S. Supreme Court issued stays on those decisions, essentially greenlighting the policy. (One injunction issued by a federal court against Trump's policy remains in place for the time being, but the Justice Department is challenging that order.)

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), a champion of transgender military service and now chair of the House Armed Services personnel subcommittee, announced Friday on Twitter she had invited Air Force Staff Sgt. Logan Ireland to attend the address.

Ireland, a security forces airman who served in Afghanistan, has been public about being transgender in the military. When the Defense Department sought to implement openly transgender service during the Obama administration, the Air Force consulted Ireland for guidance.

After the Defense Department unveiled plans last year to implement Trump's plan to reverse that policy, Speier questioned former Defense Secretary James Mattis about the ban during a congressional hearing. Holding up a photo of Ireland, Speier asked Mattis to explain why Ireland shouldn't serve. Mattis declined to say, citing ongoing litigation against the transgender ban.

Also on Friday, Rep. A. Donald McEachin (D-Va.), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, announced he'd invite Navy Petty Officer Second Class Megan Winters to the State of the Union address.

"I have been fighting for LGBTQ equality since my time as a legislator in the Virginia General Assembly and have proudly continued that fight in Congress," McEachin said in a statement. "Given the recent Supreme Court decision to allow the Trump administration's transgender servicemembers ban to go into effect while challenges to the policy continue, I am honored to bring Megan, a dedicated patriot, to the State of the Union. Every member of our armed services deserves our utmost respect and gratitude for their service to our country."

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), a 2020 Democratic presidential contender who's set to introduce legislation in the U.S. Senate against Trump's transgender policy, announced Monday she has invited Lt. Cmdr. Blake Dremann, a decorated transgender sailor, to attend the State of the Union address.

"I am inspired by Lt. Cmdr. Blake Dremann's leadership and am honored that he will be attending the State of the Union as my guest," Gillibrand said. "Lt. Cmdr. Dremann is a proud member of the U.S. Navy, he is a loyal patriot who has devoted his career to serving and protecting our country, and he is also one of the thousands of transgender service members serving in our military with honor and distinction. Transgender service members like Lt. Cmdr. Dremann make extraordinary sacrifices every day to defend our freedom and our most sacred values, and President Trump's decision to ban them from military service is cruel and undermines our military readiness."

Dremann, who has been deployed 11 times and won the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal and the Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal, is president of the LGBT military group SPARTA.

Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, last year questioned each of the military service chiefs during congressional hearings on whether having transgender people in the military harmed unit cohesion. Each of the service chiefs answered "no."

According to the statement from Gillibrand, the New York Democrat is set to introduce her legislation against Trump's policy later this week.

On Sunday, Rep. Chris Pappas (D-N.H.), one of the freshmen openly gay members

of Congress, announced he has invited transgender veteran Tavion Dignard from Auburn, N.H. to attend the State of the Union address.

A transgender man, Dignard served in the U.S. Navy from 1998 to 2002 and was honorably discharged, but now is a student at University of New Hampshire, according to a statement from Pappas' office.

"President Trump's transgender service ban weakens and politicizes our military despite the ridiculous claims of improving military cohesion," Pappas said in a statement. "I'm so glad Tavion will be with me to tell his story, share his truth, and stand as a warmly welcomed guest of the United States House of Representatives. As lawmakers, it's our job to hold the Trump administration accountable for its discriminatory policies. Denying transgender Americans their right to serve this country is a disgrace. They deserve equal treatment by their government and the law."

"I thank Congressman Pappas for this unique opportunity to share my story and be a part of this incredible experience," Dignard said in a statement. "I came out as a transgender man because I wanted to live my authentic truth and because I wanted to be the person I needed when I was younger. Being denied that opportunity put up absurd discriminatory barriers and created serious trauma in my life. No transgender service member should have to suffer through uncertainty about the acceptability of their identity or feel pushed out of their job for expressing who they are."

According to a 2014 study from the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, there are more than 15,000 transgender Americans in active duty and 153,000 transgender veterans.

Technically, openly transgender people in the military would be able to continue to serve in the military under the Trump policy — on its face anyway — because it has a grandfather provision for openly transgender people currently in the armed forces. However, openly transgender people wouldn't be able to enlist in the military unless they're willing to serve in their biological sex, and individuals who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria or seek transition-related care after enlisting would be kicked out.

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

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‘Miracles and Glory Abound’ at the Flint Institute of Arts

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Hang at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Emanuel Leutze’s 12-by-21-foot “Washington Crossing the Delaware” is a proud, imposing painting, framed in a brilliant gold. Famous for not only its size but its portrayal of the glory of the American revolution, it features a valiant George Washington on his way to achieve a great military victory against Hessian troops, a victory that would aid in the creation of a country dedicated to serving all of its citizens. Or, at least, that’s the story it tells to some. When Pittsburgh-based artist Vanessa German sees the work, she doesn’t only see its intended narrative, she observes what that storyline is leaving out, too. Specifically, the full truth.

“If you ask the museum, they say that it’s the most famous painting in America. It’s this very heroic image of Washington crossing the Delaware in ice, this illuminated background; and there’s the figures in the boat, they’re supposed to represent all these cultures,” German said. “There’s a Native American person, a black person, a woman, and it’s this really heroic, romantic lie about that war, the man, the time.”

For German, the painting is one of many examples of a theme that is part of a much greater pattern that presents itself not only in the American art landscape but in the broader American culture as a whole: the prioritization of white stories and histories above others, false or not. And German says that, among other things, a primary consequence of perpetuating that racist pattern is the formation of inaccurate narratives in people’s minds surrounding history and about who holds value in today’s society. In fact, a re-evaluation of that more than century-old image became the focus of her latest exhibition, “Miracles and Glory Abound,” now featured at the Flint Institute of Arts through April 20.

German said that when creating the piece she re-examined how she was taught history as a young girl and how pieces like the original “Washington Crossing the Delaware” made her feel.

“I think about the stories that I was told as a little, black, strange, artistic child growing up in Los Angeles about America and about what made America and about who made America, and I would experience the sort of trajectory of that story and the people who looked like they were in that story and the world that I was in,” German said. “It looked like white people made America. [That] white people are safer, healthier, smarter, richer, more beautiful — they’re just everything. ... I’m a black, gay woman on this land and I was never actually supposed to have liberty.”

German added that one can trace that narrative back to “these early romantic, heroic, sometimes very specific works of art that affirm and uplift and sort of solidify this narrative of



Vanessa German in Avery Court, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, 2016. Photo: Allen Phillips Wadsworth Atheneum. Courtesy of the artist and Pavel Zoubok, Fine Art, NY.

these heroic, visionary, hyper-masculine white men that made America,” and decided with her piece to visually, physically and spiritually flip that narrative.

Reimagining Washington

For one entering the gallery housing German’s sculptural installation at the FIA, German’s work brings with it the scale of Leutze’s original piece and then some. As if sucked into the painting itself, viewers enter a space where a three-dimensional Washington leads a similarly positioned crew forward across what can be assumed is the Delaware. The Washington figure, in this case a standalone piece part of a greater whole titled “LaQuisha Washington Crosses the Day Aware,” along with everyone featured in the exhibit, is black and female.

“When I say female, I mean femme, I mean trans, I mean presenting intentionally as, that’s what I mean,” German said. “... So, thinking about not just blackwashing history, how history is often whitewashed, not just taking a thing that exists and making the figures in it black, but doing that and doing it with deep intention.”

That intention, German said, centers around thanks, because for her, the creation of the work was “an act of love.”

“So, it’s not just the Washington figure, it is a single mother figure and it is a single mother figure who is carrying her child with her,” German said. “Because I live in a world where everything around me would be different and healthier and ... would have the spirit of almost edgeless abundance if people

had the capacity to know how remarkable they are, and what is within them, and the sort of reach of humanity that exists in them because they recognize it reflected all around them.”

But as loving as her intention is toward the groups of people highlighted within her installation, German’s reimagination is also a direct confrontation of the lie perpetuated in Leutze’s original work, too. That confrontation is well-summarized in a written piece by Holly Bass titled “The Evidence of Things Not Seen” that accompanies German’s work in an exhibit-specific booklet.

“She inserts and asserts her Blackness, her womanness, her multivalent queerness, into this ongoing American narrative and asks us to consider the birth of this nation, a mythology of chopped cherry trees and founding fathers lying through wooden teeth,” Bass writes. “The artist has said she wants to do ‘violence to the lie.’ What she means in part is the lie that the violence in Black communities is somehow a result of Blackness itself, and not centuries of systemic terrorism meted out against Black people. Lies against Black beauty, the sanctity of Black life, Black joy.”

However, although German’s work is a confrontation of that lie, she said that it’s “not a direct answer.”

“There is a reincarnation of a boat, of the George Washington figure, but the boat is floating on a skirt of water that tumbles off of the back of a little black girl. And she’s carrying that whole boat forward and she looks like she’s marching on water in the figure, but it’s not just that,” German said. “Then there’s also the layers of the fact that you see it’s almost as though the



installation exists in a fictional city park and you see the monument, you see the little girl figure, but then you also experience the wonder of the lookers.”

Surrounding the boat are sculptures of people each experiencing the monument in their own way, some are weeping, others point, while others still flip a literal bird at viewers. When asked how she came to call the work what she did, German said it’s a play on a phrase made famous during the 2016 presidential election.

“... It’s called ‘Miracles and Glory Abound’ on purpose. It’s a tangle and twist and a reassertion of a phrase that is actually very violent to me which is ‘Make America Great Again,’” German said. “And so, it is reaching more toward what Lincoln would call the better angels among us to say, ‘No, miracles and glory abound.’ Which is reaching toward the future, as opposed to ‘Make America Great Again’ which is asking you to cull through some sort of past of myth. A past of theater almost, the theater of America, to find something that was great, but there’s no going back.

“There’s no going back to that,” German continued. “There’s no going back to a time where as a black woman I was never supposed to have freedom, resources or liberty. So, it’s playing on this, it’s functioning on the spiritual

INFO

“Miracles and Glory Abound”

Henry Gallery
Through April 20, 2019
Flint Institute of Arts
1120 East Kearsley St.,
Flint. 810-234-1695. flintarts.org.

plane, but also a political and cultural plane right now. And I think about [how] I just got back from Charlottesville a little while ago and went to Water Street where a young man felt like it was his sort of patriotic duty to run through a crowd of people who thought differently than him.”

Creation of a Power Figure

To someone unfamiliar with German’s larger body of work, the significance that each person depicted in her installations is something known as a power figure might not be immediately clear, but it’s a piece of knowledge that adds another greater layer of depth to “Miracles and Glory Abound.” Each presented figure within the greater installation is a standalone sculpture that carries its own meaning and is constructed from seemingly everyday objects. These objects have been carefully hand-chosen by German to not only achieve a desired aesthetic look, but to impart a deep emotional and spiritual significance. In an essay titled “Inherent Magic,” author, poet and artist Daniel Simmons related German’s sculptures to the West-Central African nkisi, plural minkisi, or “spirits, or objects that spirits inhabit.”

“Like the traditional makers of nkisi, who used various materials available to them, such as bones, nails, pieces of mirrors, and herbal potions to infuse magic into the objects, German also uses things she finds readily available,” Simmons said. “She incorporates objects that have various personal meanings from her life and experiences. Objects of real significance from childhood found abandoned in the community, as well as objects that have other personal and traditional cultural meaning for everyday women and people of color, all become products of spiritual, emotional and aesthetic infusion to be attached to or embedded in the sculptural housings made in the image of Black women.”

Simmons also mentions in the written piece that though German didn’t specifically reference minkisi in the creation of her pieces, it is something that occurs naturally, and the “revelation made her work all the more powerful to me.”

“This seeming historical reference was her honest, innate magical ‘juju’ revealing itself

See **Vanessa German**, continued on p. 18

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► Vanessa German

Continued from p. 17

and not a homage to the traditional tribal works that are found in museums and private collections," Simmons said.

Beyond the items comprising the sculptures, meaning is imparted also through hand-made packets or beads that adorn the work and carry inside of them intentional messages.

"I call them different things; I say that there's an incarnation of them. Depending on where I am and how averse people are to different spiritual language, I will name them different things — but they're swaddle beads, prayer beads or power beads," German said. "They have words inside of them. Sometimes, people will send me people's names and send me language and I will write them out on a big roll of butcher block paper and just cover it and then cut them into pieces and it goes inside of them."

German said, too, that this is a practice evidenced in a variety of cultures across the world.

"It's like Native Americans [who] had medicine packets and so did Haitians and Africans. It's a very old original human technology of sacredness, to wrap something up that's sacred and to keep it close to your heart, to wear it on your body or to put it in the earth," German said. "That's a way that human beings have spoken a language of sacredness across the entire earth."

Defining Beauty and Sacredness

When examining the work, it's clear that German has a specific focus in the creation of power figures that represent black women both straight and across the LGBTQ spectrum. That focus seems to stem from, at least in part, the attempt to partially fill the disproportionately huge vacuum that exists surrounding black female beauty in American society. German, who grew up in Los Angeles and attended school with now famous actors, said that the unrealistic Hollywood beauty standard was solidified in her mind very early on.

"I went to the Los Angeles Performing Arts Conservatory, and you knew who were aesthetically pleasing children. You knew who that was, you knew who they wanted to be on Saturday morning cartoon commercials, like which child sells you Wonder Bread. I started to notice as a child that I never saw happy black people on TV commercials or black families together," German said. "... And so, I grew up not having incarnations of black joy, black happy families and a diverse black beauty because I grew up



Vanessa German. American, born 1976. Prototype for Miracles and Glory Abound, 2018. Mixed-media installation. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Pavel Zoubok, Fine Art, NY. Photo: Heather Mull.

when there had been some black models, but the features of those models fell in line with this one percentile of human beings that look a certain way. That's the world I grew up in, where you didn't see your joy reflected back to you in your face."

At the same time, as a child in the '80s living across the street from a halfway house called Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, German said that she was very early on introduced to a world not bound to heteronormativity. There, she formed a crush on a young black girl who was a skateboarder — a significant memory because that identity, German said, was exceedingly rare.

"She was so rare, and she was a good skateboarder," German said. "And we would go to Santa Monica Beach and I would look for black surfers and you wouldn't see that. Where would you see black people soaring and thriving in these ways that weren't like males in sports? ... That's why Debi Thomas was a huge deal."

And when German's family eventually moved to Loveland, Ohio, German said there were even fewer examples of identities like those present. In fact, she was one of two black families in her new town where she was not exempt from dealing with blatantly racist attitudes.

"It was rare to be addressed with a sense of the fact that my being as a human being, as an earthling, is honorable and beautiful the same way that maple trees and sycamore trees and redwood trees; their beauty just stands; it just is," German said. "It took a long time to be able to have experiences outside of my own sacred time where I had a reflection of the is-ness that your beauty just is.

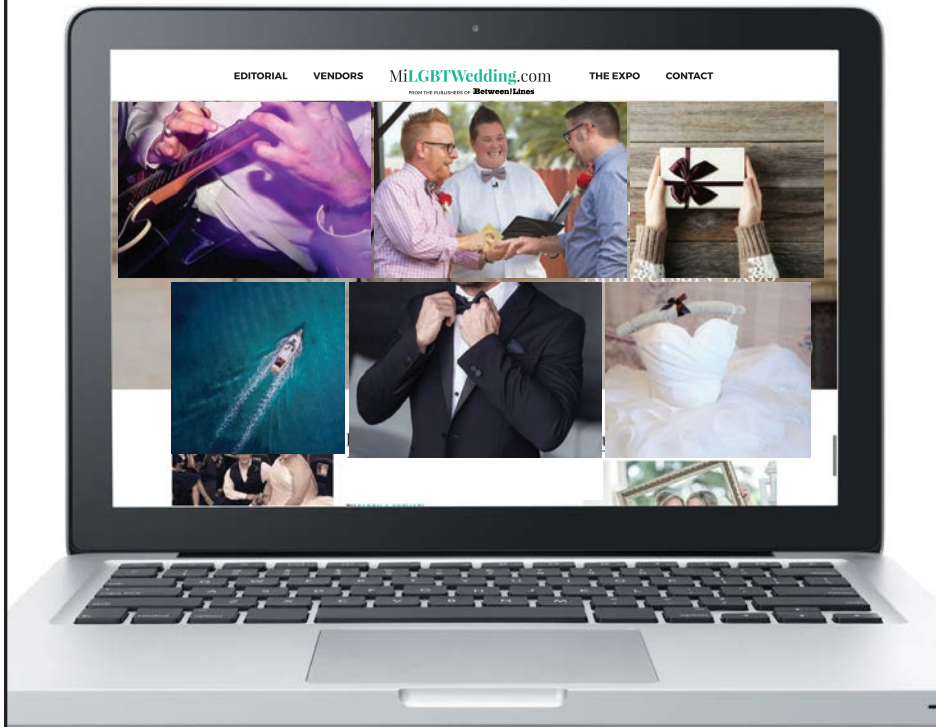
That you are remarkable and you just are and you will not be repeated. Your life is now and it is beautiful and your body stands. I think all of those ways of knowing and seeing and honoring your is-ness are connected so deeply to your deep health, not disregarding your body because everybody else disregards your body and your organs. It's not just the aesthetic beauty it's the beauty of existing."

Today, it's clear when chatting with German that she has a much deeper appreciation for not only her own being but for others that's far greater than was ever intended by America's Founding Fathers. It's unmistakable, too, that her exhibit highlights this appreciation and unabashedly upholds a too-often obscured and diminished narrative of black beauty and power. German emphasizes, too, that the many messages present in the work, though they definitely hold a specific meaning for her as its creator, can certainly change depending on the person attending and experiencing her work. And in fact, she hopes that's the case.

"It's an ingestion that isn't merely aesthetic. It's not just that you're looking at the color blue, right? And then what is trying to diagram that experience for a human being who could have come from Vietnam to live in Flint, that's not [possible]," German said. "[There's] no singular message because I think that, for me, if there's any hope, it is that people would come into the room, you know, to be honest. Be in the room so you move around it and be with it. There's a bench in there, sit down. Be there."

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BOY-LESQUE



A Part-Time Burlesque Dancer Puts on the Shows of His Dreams

Kendall D. Lartigue Photography.

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

As soon as Jeremy Plante turned 18, he went to see his first burlesque show at the Majestic Theatre in Detroit. “I can remember marveling at the way the audience reacted to the performance,” he said recently in conversation. “I knew that, deep down, I wanted to be able to have that effect on people, too.”

Done up in a come-hither costume as his “boylesque” persona Dixon Derrière, (pronounced dicks-in-dare-e-air), Plante now draws from that early influence to make his own marvels on stage.

On Saturday, Feb. 9, and Saturday, Feb. 16, he’ll appear in the International Erotic Art Exhibition in Detroit. Known by some as The Dirty Show, the exhibition features erotic artists from across the globe.

“I am still very new,” Plante warned. But he is learning fast.

Plante’s performances sparkle with Old Hollywood, and it was his love for the era that first led him to the stage.

“Burlesque, at times, is very reminiscent of eras past, and that is what I found alluring about the craft initially,” he said.

Encouraged by friends, Plante said he had been wanting to try burlesque for years, but the timing was never right. Or rather, he explained,

he didn’t have the confidence. Then some time studying at the Holly Hock’s Detroit School of Burlesque in Ferndale gave him the courage to finally “pull it off.”

“I knew that taking the courses offered there would allow me to get my toes wet enough to find out if this was something that was right for me,” Plante said, graduating from the program earlier this year. “I continue to take classes at the school because I believe in constant improvement and the instructors there are always offering more neat courses ... makeup, dance, fitness, you name it.”

Learning the twists, turns and teases of the burlesque trade — like stocking pulls and tassel twirling — builds comfort when being the centerpiece of the room said Plante.

“Confidence in my opinion is probably one of the two most important things when it comes to burlesque,” he said.

The second is to have fun.

“An audience can sense if either of these things are missing, and it will make all the difference in how people remember you,” Plante said.

Absent the voluptuous form that is a hallmark of the burlesque business, Plante focuses on sensually maneuvering his slender frame, in heels to lengthen the legs, with moves that accentuate a butt over bust. His first

“I love playing with gender and this very much allows me to do that. Sometimes I think of what I do as somewhere in between drag and boylesque.”

performance — dancing to a mix of “Malambo No. 1” by Yma Sumac and “Hips Don’t Lie” by Shakira — “It had to be one of the most nerve-racking moments of my life,” he said. “Once I was on stage that feeling changed though. After the performance was over, while admittedly exhausted, I knew I wanted to do it again. I think if I had to pick one word to describe the feeling it would be ... exhilarated.”

Predictably, Plante names contemporary burlesque performer Dita Von Teese as a source of inspiration in performance; “honorable

mentions” include Matt Finish, Chris Oh! and Violet Chachki.

“I hate to sound like a cliché,” he said about his affection for Von Teese. “She to me has been able to take what burlesque was in its glory days and turn it into a mainstream success today.” Adding, “I wouldn’t say I outright try to channel anyone else’s style in particular. I just try to be true to myself and if that happens to be similar to someone else then so be it. I would be beyond honored if anyone did happen to make any performance comparisons between what I do to any of the performers I mentioned because I find each one of them to be truly inspiring.”

More than anything, Plante said he believes people come to burlesque shows because they just want to escape and be entertained.

“Sure, I bet there are some people who might come to ogle, but I don’t believe that is the reason for the majority of people,” he said. “The difference between exotic dance and burlesque is a question I actually get quite often. The main difference to me, lies in the theatricality of burlesque. It’s almost like a cousin to cabaret. I’ve heard it put this way before too: burlesque is the artistry, stripping is what pays the bills. There is a spectrum.”

Playing on that spectrum is what makes the performance fun, said Plante.

“My ultimate goal is to continue to use this as a means of creative self-expression and to inspire others in positive ways through this work,” he said. “I love playing with gender and this very much allows me to do that. Sometimes I think of what I do as somewhere in between drag and boylesque.”

For now, Plante plans to moonlight only on occasion as a burlesque dancer.

“But never say never,” he said. “Who am I to say what prospects may present themselves down the line?” Whatever comes, it’s bound to be entertaining.

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Viewpoint

A Look at LGBTQ Artists in Burlesque

BY OTAYMAH BONDS

One would think that in the field of burlesque, sex and the discussion of it would be welcome, but this may not always be the case. In 2019 there is open discussion about all things LGBTQ as well



as openly gay celebrities, but in the burlesque world, sex and sexual orientation are still considered dirty words by some. Why is this the case? Perhaps the answer to this and many other questions lies in

pondering why humans readily embrace some things and people and not others. Normally, that which is deemed different is looked at with suspicion and approached with caution — as is the case with the LGBTQ or queer burlesque performers.

At the onset, those who decide to perform burlesque are told that burlesque is one big glittering family and that all body types and characteristics are welcome. But one only has to be in that world for a short time to see that this may not always be the case. While many well-known burlesque performers may carry the torch for campaigns like body positivity, self-hatred and body hate, they are markedly more quiet on issues of race and sexual orientation.

When race and sexuality are approached and asked to be spoken about by those who vehemently rally against bodily discrimination, all talks may diminish or downright cease. The lack of discussion within the burly world about said topics has left a gaping hole within the community and left members of the sparkly tribe feeling alienated and misunderstood. And for those who happen to be both a racial minority and LGBTQ, that void is felt even more so.

It's possible also that the topic of sexuality and talks of it may not be seeing many advances in the burlesque world due to an "it's none of my business" mentality that's popular with performers. While it is acceptable to ask a person's method of adhering sequins to a bra, it may not be seen as good taste to inquire about a person's sexual orientation. Another reason

It's possible also that the topic of sexuality and talks of it may not be seeing many advances in the burlesque world due to an "it's none of my business" mentality that's popular with performers.

sexual orientation and gender may not come onto the proverbial burlesque stage, is that some see it as too big of an issue to tackle. Let's face it, burlesquers still haven't even come to any type of agreement as to whether burlesque is stripping let alone whether it's okay to come to a workshop deemed for females if you were not born genetically female.

While the reasoning behind why sexual orientation is not more openly learned about and undertaken may seem small it can be assured that the issue of it is not. The lack of acceptance of LGBTQ performers in the burlesque community creates an unnecessary divide when, in reality, we are all here to make beautiful art, no matter who is in our bed. With the Supreme Court ruling in support of same-sex marriage, perhaps it is time for burlesque to open its arms wider to its LGBTQ artists. After all, burlesque is about society, what makes it and shapes it, and performing about it. And LGBTQ artists are definitely a part of society, whether the burlesque world as a subset of the world wants to acknowledge and deal with it or not.

The Irresistible O is a burlesque and pinup historian, known as the Sepia Queen of Burlesque, the Black Prima Ballerina of Burlesque and the Pin Up Queen. She is the 2015 Burlypicks Michigan Master of Voice, 2015 Miss Pin Up Perfection, 2016 Miss Phobia Pin Up, the Inaugural Miss HotWheels Pinup, and the 2017 Burlypicks Master of Improv. She has been featured by Ohio Burlesque, the blog I Gave My Body, Moxie Dolls Pinups and Burlesque Magazine. She is also a writer for Burlesque Bitch and guest blog writer for Burlycon. Her literary work has also appeared in Burlesque Bible Magazine. O also instructs the world-renowned History of Performers of Color in Burlesque course, and actively teaches and discusses the absence and history of women of color in the pinup, rockabilly and burlesque genres. She also teaches all genres of dance, theater, and vocal arts.

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BY MIKEY ROX

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While finding a bakery to supply your Valentine's wedding cake could be tricky in some parts of this country, head Down Under for exquisitely designed same-sex cake toppers. Australia's Marri Tree Lane offers both sexes singly in light, medium, and dark skin tones to accurately represent the betrothed. \$20, marritreelane.com.au

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Indulge in straight-from-the-farm sweets from

the Fabulous Beekman Boys with their Chewy Goopy Caramels, salty goat milk fudge cookies, or the Snuggle Bundle, which includes a pair of Beekman 1802 enamelware mugs and your choice of Heirloom Pantry Salted Caramel Hot Cocoa or double chocolate hot cocoa – which calls for a stay-in-bed snow day. \$15-\$30, shop.beekman1802.com

Love-Themed Beaded Pins

Handmade beaded pins from celeb-worn Jewels for Hope – in a Pride heart or bouquet of flowers – keeps Valentine's gift giving sweet and simple. Upon checkout, select one of several charitable organizations that a portion of proceeds will benefit, including the Born This Way Foundation. \$35-\$55, etsy.com/shop/jewelsforhope

Fog of Love Game

Settlers of Catan meets RomCom in Fog of Love, a two-player strategy game where players role-play as couples to experience all the milestones, hurdles, compromises, and celebrations of a typical relationship to end

up happily ever after or in heartache – because ya win some, ya lose some. \$50, walmart.com

Customized Skin Care

Artificial intelligence uses your partner's skin type, age, living environment, stress, and other factors to design a personalized Y'OUR Skin Care regimen that includes a cleanser, day cream, night cream, and serum for a smoother, more kissable complexion. \$180, y-our-skin.com

Léon and George Plants

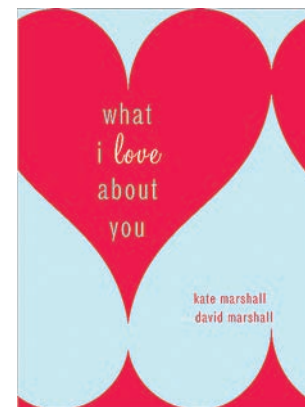
Keep a symbol of your love fresh and vibrant with help from Léon & George, purveyors of stunning, responsibly sourced statement-piece houseplants styled by interior design pros. Choose from 13 varieties of flora, including peperomia, silver evergreen, and bird's nest fern, that each arrive with a wood-crafted dock. For every plant purchased, a donation is made to plant trees for humanity. \$79-\$109, leonandgeorge.com

Travel-Tracking Maps

Travel the country (or the world if you're ambitious) while tracking your progress on push-pin maps from GeoJango. Framed versions as wall art provide a special way to look back on a lifetime of adventure. Sports maps also are available to chronicle tours of MLB, NHL, NFL, and NBA stadiums. \$99, geojango.com

'What I Love About You' Book

If whispering sweet nothings isn't your forte, pick up a copy of the fill-in-the-blank book "What I Love About You," which prompts you to complete evocative checklists, deliver compliments, and otherwise tap into your sensitive side for a gift that your partner will cherish forever. \$9, amazon.com



Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He spends his time writing from the beach with his dog Jaxon. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyrox



Invites You To Valentine's Dance

FRIDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2019 – 7:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.

Open Bar-Family Style Dinner-Dessert-50/50 Raffle-Pot-O-Gold Drawing & Dancing.
MUSIC BY – DoublePlay DJ Services

The Ukrainian Cultural Center
26601 Ryan Road, Warren

Tickets are \$50 in advance \$60 at the door (if available)

Tickets may be ordered by mail or by calling:
General Information/Phone Ticket Orders (586) 573-9932



You're Invited



Join Ozone House for an evening of wine, chocolate and cheese while helping ensure that all LGBTQ+ youth in Washtenaw County receive the safety and support they deserve.

Presented by Liberty Dental

February 12th, 2019

6:30pm

Zingerman's Greyline

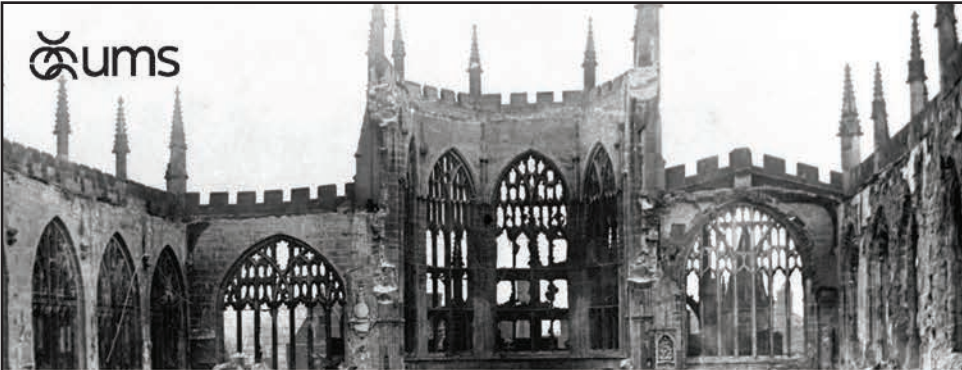
100 N. Ashley Street | Ann Arbor, MI

Register at www.ozonehouse.org

\$75 per guest*



* See our website for special pricing for social workers, teachers, volunteers and more.



Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*

UMS Choral Union
Ann Arbor Youth Chorale
Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
Scott Hanoian, conductor

Thursday, February 16 // 8 pm
Hill Auditorium

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* was commissioned for the re-consecration of Britain's Coventry Cathedral, which was destroyed by a Nazi bomb raid in 1940. The work requires huge forces, including a large orchestra and chorus, two organs, a chamber orchestra that accompanies the soloists, and a boys' choir.

Presenting Sponsor: Jerry Blackstone UMS Choral Union Performance Fund
Supporting Sponsor: Frances Mauney Lohr Choral Union Endowment Fund
Media Partners: WEMU 89.1 FM, WRCJ 90.9 FM, and WGTE 91.3 FM

734.764.2538 — UMS.ORG



In Plain Air International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)

Phyllis Chen and Nathan Davis, composers
James Kibbie, organ
Tiffany Ng, carillon

Thursday, February 21 // 7:30 pm
Hill Auditorium

An interwoven history of mechanical instruments (organ, harmonium, music boxes, carillons, and more), *In Plain Air* is a composition in 13 short vignettes designed to bring the sonic properties of a large organ into a contemporary ensemble context.

Exclusive Presenting Sponsor: Helmut F. and Candis J. Stern Endowment Fund
Funded in part by: The Wallace Foundation
Media Partners: WGTE 91.3 FM, WDET 101.9 FM, and Metro Times



Happenings



Toni Braxton at Fox Theatre

Heading to Detroit's Fox Theatre on Thursday, Feb. 14, is seven-time Grammy Award-winner Toni Braxton. As part of her "As Long As I Live" tour, Braxton is set to perform songs from her new "Sex & Cigarettes" album. Tickets start at \$39.50.

OUTINGS

Saturday, February 9

LGBT Community Chat 11 a.m. Saturday LGBT Chat is an on going social discussion group meets every week to discuss issues LGBT people face. Coming out, dating, and much more. Come join us every Saturday at 11 am. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 w 9 mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Wanda Sykes at the Detroit Music Hall 8 p.m. Wanda Sykes is an American actress, comedian, and writer. She was first recognized for her work as a writer on The Chris Rock Show, for which she won a Primetime Emmy Award in 1999. Detroit Music Hall, 350 Madison St., Detroit. 313-887-8501. musichall.org.

Cougar Hunt Presented by Tito's Handmade Vodka February 9, 8 p.m. All you sexy cougars come out for a fun night to crown Ferndale's Queen Cougar for 2019. Any ladies interested in strutting their stuff for Ferndale Pride, come on out! Winner receives prizes and becoming Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646. ferndalesoho.com. titosvodka.com/events.

Sunday, February 10

Men's Swing/Latin/Ballroom Lessons 4 p.m. Same Sex Men's Touch Dance lessons, Casual Attire This is touch dancing where you hold your partner close. No partner needed, plenty of single men available. Singles, couples,

beginners or seasoned dancers. Jordan Mac Studio 444 W. Maple Suite E Troy, MI, 444 W. Maple Suite E, Troy. 248-288-7624. meetup.com/SHall-We-Dance.

Monday, February 11

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County 6:30 p.m. Come and meet other trans youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700. chippevalleyschools.org.

LGBT Game Night 7 p.m. LGBT Game Night is an opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee and socialize with other LGBT individuals. Java Hut, 165 W Nlne Mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Tuesday, February 12

Serving Up Knowledge: Queering Black History Month 12 p.m. Bring a lunch and join us for our session on Queering Black History Month. Open to all OU students! OC Rooms 128-129, gsc@oakland.edu.

Wednesday, February 13

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genessee 6:30 p.m. Facilitator Sara Griffin, MA, LPC is a psychotherapist and a parent of a transgender son,

eiregriff@aol.com. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023. uufint.org. standwithtrans.org.

Rainbow League Bowling! 7 p.m. This is a fun bowling league and provides a great opportunity for anybody to become acquainted with bowling. The 2018-2019 season celebrates our 26th season. Lodge Lanes, 46255 S. I-94 Service Drive, Belleville. 734-697-9178. info@a2bowling.com. lodgelanes.com. rainbowbowlingleague.com.

Thursday, February 14

Editor's Pick

Bowie & Prince at Windsor Symphony Orchestra

Combining two of music's late greats, The Windsor Symphony Orchestra is hosting a night of classic hits from the two rock stars. The show is on Friday, Feb. 22. Doors open at 8 p.m. Find out more at windsorsymphony.com.



Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County 7 p.m. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620. oaklandumc.org. 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. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Jazz & Soul Singer Sky Covington & Club Crescendo Live Every Thursday Night 9 p.m. Jimi Blues on Keys, Alex Brooks on Drums, Greg Cook on Bass. Northern Lights Lounge, 660 W, Baltimore, Detroit. 248-445-1277. northernlightslounge.com.

Friday, February 15

Forum Foundation Valentine's Dance 2019 February 15, 7 p.m. LGBT Fundraiser: The Forum Foundation Valentine's Dance 2019 ; Open Bar – Family Style Dinner – Dessert – 50/50 Raffle – Pot -O- Gold Drawing – Dancing. Music by DoublePlay DJ Services. No Refunds. The Ukrainian Cultural Center, 26601 Ryan Road, Warren. 586-573-9932. theforumfoundation.brownpapertickets.com.

Sunday, February 17

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 4 p.m. There is no fee to attend the groups. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. 734-747-4363. standwithtrans.org.

Wednesday, February 20

Stand with Trans Support Groups – Livonia – Wayne County 6:30 p.m. Parent Support Group Facilitators Karen Sessler, kssessle@yahoo.com or 734-673-3590 and Scott Sessler, pastorscott@emmanuel-livonia.org or 734-673-2485. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile

Road, Livonia. standwithtrans.org.

Thursday, February 21

Clyde Petersen 5 p.m. Clyde Petersen is a Seattle-based artist working in film, animation, music, installation and spectacle. A proud member of the transgender and queer communities in Seattle, Petersen's work explores identity and narrative form. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

MUSIC & MORE

53rd Annual Detroit RV and Camping Show February 9, 11 a.m. All types of recreation vehicles, nearly 400 RVs, will be displayed. Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi. 586-752-6381. novihomeshow.com. marvac.org.

Valentine Party! Come one, come all! February 9, 11 a.m. Join us for activities, crafts and sweet treats! All ages welcome. Capital Area District Libraries – Dansville Branch, 1379 East Mason Street, Dansville. 517-623-6511. smiley@cadl.org.

The House on Poe Street at The Detroit Repertory Theatre February 9, 3 p.m. Gothic ghosts encounter modern monstrosities when twin sisters inherit the house where Poe is reputed to have composed The Raven. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodward Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 DetRepTh@aol.com. detroitreptheatre.com.

A John Williams Celebration! February 9, 8 p.m. For five decades, Leonard Slatkin has championed the diverse music of America. This three-week festival begins with a cross-country musical travelogue of sorts from Morton Gould, Joan Tower, Leonard Bernstein and Virgil Thompson. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

Om at The Max February 10, 10:30 a.m.

Practice yoga to live music! Certified yoga instructor and DSO Librarian Ethan Allen leads a group yoga session open to all skill levels – accompanied with music performed live by a DSO ensemble. Namaste. The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dso.org.

A John Williams Celebration! February 10, 3 p.m. For five decades, Leonard Slatkin has championed the diverse music of America. This three-week festival begins with a cross-country musical travelogue of sorts from Morton Gould, Joan Tower, Leonard Bernstein and Virgil Thompson, plus Ferde Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

LSO Family Series—Heartwarming Harp February 10, 3 p.m. Members of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra present a short concert for kids. Celebrate Valentine's Day with lovely music from harpist Brittany DeYoung, then make some Valentines for family and friends. Capital Area District Libraries – Downtown Lansing Branch, 401 South Capitol Ave., Lansing. 517-367-6350. cadl.org.

Appalachian Spring February 14, 7:30 p.m. In the second week of programs highlighting American music, Leonard Slatkin leads Adagios for Strings by Samuel Barber and Cindy McTee, Copland's Appalachian Spring, and Leonard Bernstein "Age of Anxiety" Symphony. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

Wanted Dead or Alive February 15, 7 p.m. The Experts in Mystery Entertainment are now performing live public and private interactive murder mystery dinner shows in Livonia and surrounding areas throughout Michigan. Burton Manor, 27777 Schoolcraft Road. shows@themurdermysterycompany.com.

Dragon Training February 16, 11 a.m. Get ready for the new How to Train Your Dragon movie with skill challenges. For

continued on p. 26

*"You're not the person you were born . . .
Who wonderful is?"*

As Bees in Honey Drown

A social satire by Douglas Carter Beane

Gay writer Evan Wyler discovers fame; gets screwed by fame; and gets even. Presented at The Farmington Players.

February 8–23, 2019 Tickets and information at (248) 553-2955 or www.farmingtonplayers.org





Broadway Actor Ned Noyes Talks LGBTQ Identity and 'The Play That Goes Wrong' at The Fisher Theatre Through Feb. 24

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

In an amateur stage production it's not unusual for there to be a few hiccups throughout the show. In fact, even Broadway-caliber performances don't always make it through without a hitch. That is, after all, why "the show must go on" has become such a famous saying both in and out of show business. But in the comedy "The Play That Goes Wrong," that concept is blown way out of proportion when the Cornley University Drama Society does its best to put on a 1920s murder mystery play. Cast members have to deal with stuck doors, forgotten lines, collapsing floors and, according to cast member Ned Noyes, "many things you'll never see coming going wrong, too."

Noyes, an openly gay Northwestern University-trained actor, has performed in nationally touring productions of "Cabaret" along with Broadway shows like "You Can't Take It With You" and is a Broadway cast member for "The Play That Goes Wrong." Additionally, Noyes has had a versatile career in TV and film, appearing in titles like "Boardwalk Empire" and "The Post." Now set to perform at Detroit's Fisher Theatre from Feb. 12 through 24, *Between The Lines* caught up with the "The Play That Goes Wrong" actor to get a feel for the show before its Detroit debut, why it's important for LGBTQ visibility to exist in theater and why comedy is always funnier when it's honest.

"The Play That Goes Wrong" follows a group of students who are trying to put on a murder mystery show. In your career I'm sure you've done many similar performances, but hopefully never ones that have resulted in mishaps as huge as these.

Never quite to this disastrous degree, but some of the moments of the show are

achingly familiar (laughs). Yeah, there was a production of a show I did once where some props definitely had a mind of their own. Once, I had to enter, basically pretending to be a car with these two flashlights standing in for headlights, and, you know, there was a lot of spinning choreography involved. I spun, and the flashlights weren't secured and the batteries, huge batteries, went flying out into the audience. I later found out that they hit a critic (laughs), but he wound up writing a rave review for the play anyway.

"The show must go on" is definitely a theme that's present throughout the performance, but to a crazy degree here. Was that concept a huge mainstay in your education as an actor?

Certainly. I think everyone's quite well aware, even before you begin a training program, what a difficult business this is. It does take quite a fair amount of resilience to even stay in the game as an actor, so as far as when things go wrong on stage, most actors are resilient in that matter.

Were you always drawn to being an actor?

Yeah, from a pretty early age [it was] something I was attracted to. I loved arts, I loved singing, I loved reading and writing, but there was something wonderful about telling a story collaboratively that really drew me to the art form pretty intensely pretty quickly. There was nothing like it for me.

Being an LGBTQ-identified actor doesn't seem that drastic in 2019, and the theater world has a reputation for being welcoming, but you started acting in high school. Were you always confident in your identity around your peers?

Especially in high school it was very much a

See **Ned Noyes**, continued on p. 30

"Daring and dazzling! The most ambitious American play of our time!" – *Newsweek*

Angels in America

Tony Kushner's ten-time Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama!

**PART ONE:
MILLENNIUM APPROACHES**
February 8 to 24, 2019

**PART TWO:
PERESTROIKA**
April 26 to May 12, 2019

See both parts back-to-back
Sunday, May 5 and Saturday, May 11.

Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. His boyfriend, Louis, struggling to cope with the disease and his own fears, abandons him. Alone, Prior struggles until he's visited by ancestral ghosts who herald the coming of a fierce angel. In the ten-time Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, playwright Tony Kushner explores evolving values in America.
This production contains simulated sexual activity and full frontal nudity.

BETWEEN THE LINES DISCOUNT
SAVE \$5 on each adult ticket when you order tickets using promo code **BTL1819**.

Photo by Chuk Nowak Photography

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"LOVE SONG," "BRAVE"

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Groups (12+): Groups@BroadwayInDetroit.com or 313-871-1132 • **OC** 7:30PM May 12

Editor's Pick

Affirmations Food Fundraiser at Troy's Big Salad

Fans and regular attendees of the Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center's programming can help raise money to maintain its programming schedule by making their way to The Big Salad in Troy on Monday, Feb. 25. That day, 25 percent of the restaurant's sales will go directly to the Center. Those interested in participating should let their cashier know they'd like to donate a portion of their bill. The restaurant is located at 738 E. Big Beaver Road. For more information contact Kyle Taylor at ktaylor@goaffirmations.org or call 248-398-7105.



▶ Happenings

Continued from p. 24

age 3 & up. Capital Area District Libraries – Dansville Branch, 1379 East Mason St., Dansville. 517-623-6511. smiley@cadl.org. cadl.org.

In the Mood for Swing! February 16, 7:30 p.m. Swing into Valentine's weekend, paint the town red and get ready to bop as the Michigan Phil takes you back to the age of swing! Vocalist Lauren Norris will join the orchestra sharing music from

The Village Theater at Cherry Hill, 50400 Cherry Hill Road, Canton. 734-394-5300 ext 3. cantonvillageheater.org.

Dispelling Myths about Smoking, Mental Health/Substance Use Disorders and Recovery February 19, 7:30 p.m.

People with mental health or substance use disorder can quit tobacco use. Health educator Rosemary Bak Lowery will shed light on the relationship between tobacco, mental health and substance abuse disorders. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Presents 'Beethoven's No. 5 Destiny Symphony' February 23, 8 a.m. Enrique Diemecke,

conductor; Anthony Elliott, cello; Cheyanne Coss, voice; Beethoven, Barber, Bloch. Pre-concert talks at 6:30, these fun and informative talks take the mystery Flint Institute of Music, 1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-238-1350. thefso.org.

Candy Chemistry February 23, 11 a.m. Experiment with candy to learn science concepts. For age 5 & up. Capital Area District Libraries – Dansville Branch, 1379 East Mason Street, Dansville. 517-623-6511. smiley@cadl.org. cadl.org.

Cabaret 313 Presents Carole J. Bufford February 23, 6:30 p.m. With music made famous by Janis Joplin, Dusty Springfield, Tina Turner, Carole King and more, Carole J. Bufford returns for her third performance with Cabaret 313.

Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-833-7900. cabaret313.org.

Co-Occurring Eating Disorders and Addiction: Implications for Recovery February 26, 7:30 p.m. Tiffany Schultz, LLMSW; Dawn Farm Outpatient Therapist, will explore the ways in which substance use disorders and eating disorders intersect. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

DANGEROUS DAYS: A Performance Tribute to Sinead O'Connor February 28, 7:30 p.m. Detroit Theatre Collective hosts a Benefit Tribute to iconic Irish singer-songwriter Sinead O'Connor (Shuhada Davitt). Detroit artists pay homage to her in this evening of celebration. Detroit. 313-964-8700. encountertheatre@gmail.com. gaelicleagueofdetroit.org.

90th Annual Spring Dance Concert at The Bonstelle March 1, 7:30 p.m. Join us as we highlight national and international works from top-performing artists. Bonstelle Theatre, 3424 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2960. theatreanddancewayne.com.

Stagecrafter's Second Stage Presents 'Sondheim on Sondheim' March 1, 8 p.m. Part musical revue, part documentary, Sondheim on Sondheim gives us an intimate portrait of famed songwriter. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

ART 'N' AROUND

Carrie Mae Weems February 14, 5 p.m. For over thirty years Carrie Mae Weems,

through the use of image, text, film, and video, has created a complex body of work that centers on her overarching commitment to helping us better understand our Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Clyde Petersen February 21, 5 p.m. Clyde Petersen is a Seattle-based artist working in film, animation, music, installation and spectacle. A proud member of the transgender and queer communities in Seattle, Petersen's work explores identity and narrative form. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Erotic Poetry and Music Festival at Tangent Gallery February 23, 8 p.m. Come join us for an eclectic celebration of the erotic arts all in one evening! Featuring poetry, art, music, burlesque and more! Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277.

THEATER

Fisher Theatre Presents 'The Lightning Thief' February 26, 7:30 p.m. The Greek gods are real, and they're ruining Percy Jackson's life. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000 <https://www.broadwayindetroit.com/shows/the-lightning-thief>

Angels in America – Parts I and II February 8, In this two-part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. His boyfriend, Louis, struggling to cope with the disease and his own fears, abandons him. More information about this Hillbery Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. theatreanddance.wayne.edu.

Angels in America: Part One – Millennium Approaches February 9, 2

p.m. In Part I of this two part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. Hillbery Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. wsushows.com.

The House on Poe Street at The Detroit Repertory Theatre February 9, 3 p.m. Gothic ghosts encounter modern monstrosities when twin sisters inherit the house where Poe is reputed to have composed *The Raven*. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 www.detroitreptheatre.com

Williamston Theatre Presents 'To Quiet the Quiet' February 9, 3 p.m. Having suffered great loss and heartbreak in her life, Kathy, now middle-aged and alone, is a woman on the edge. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW. www.williamstontheatre.org/to-quiet-the-quiet

Stagecrafters Presents If/Then February 9, 8 p.m. What if? At the heart of every choice we've ever made lies this question. What if we had chosen differently? How would our lives be changed? If/Then follows Elizabeth, a divorced urban planner who moves Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027 www.stagecrafters.org

Reap the Grove by Caity-Shea Violette February 9, 8 p.m. An estranged family reunites for their mother's final days. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. 313-967-0599 info@matrixtheatre.org www.matrixtheatre.org

Wharton Center Presents 'Miss Saigon' March 12, 7:30 p.m. Experience the acclaimed new production of the legendary musical *Miss Saigon*, from the creators of *Les Misérables*. Wharton Center, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing. 517-353-1982 wharton@msu.edu

DID YOU KNOW? In the Metro Detroit area, African-Americans have a higher risk for HIV infection than nearly every other demographic. **GET INFORMED! GET TESTED! GET TREATED! KNOW YOUR STATUS!**

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THU, MARCH 28 – 7:00PM
vs. ORLANDO MAGIC

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The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce have partnered with the Detroit Pistons to bring you Pistons Equality – Celebrating Pride Night on March 28th. Grab your friends and family to see the Pistons take on the Orlando Magic for an exciting night of Detroit Basketball. Each person that purchases a ticket will receive a limited edition Pistons Equality - Celebrating Pride Night t-shirt. Come early to watch PRISM Gay Men and Allies' Chorus of Metro Detroit sing the National Anthem! In addition, there will be a specially choreographed halftime performance aimed around the LGBT community performed by the Pistons Dancers and an exclusive post-game experience. A \$5 proceed from each ticket sold will benefit a local LGBT charity you choose when you checkout. Please place orders quickly because packages are limited!



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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Sarah Paulson flies over the cuckoo's nest

Ryan Murphy, the man who currently owns most of television, has another show coming. It's called "Ratched," and you'll need to reach back to at least the 1970s to get the title's reference, because that was when the film adaptation of Ken Kesey's novel "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

won Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor, and, for the purposes of this explanation, Best Actress for Louise Fletcher, who played the monstrous Nurse Ratched. For this upcoming project – already given a deal for two seasons and 18 episodes – newcomer Evan Romansky has created an origin story, one that will star Murphy regular Sarah Paulson as a younger version of the nurse who grew to be a demon of the mental health care system. And there's an all-star cast rounding out the event: Judy Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Corey Stoll, Amanda Plummer, Sharon Stone and Finn Wittrock, among others. You'll be hearing plenty about it as the airdate approaches. It's Netflix, after all; they know where to find you.

Laverne Cox and Sara Gilbert move to 'Weird City'

Jordan Peele is, how they say, on a roll. From "Get Out" to the upcoming "Us," to the planned "Twilight Zone" reboot: if he touches it, people want to see it. And now he's working on a new series for YouTube Premium called "Weird City," alongside "Key and Peele"'s Emmy-nominated writer Charlie Sanders. The premise is comedic sci-fi, and it'll be an anthology series, which means lots of one-off guest stars. Cast so far are people like Sara Gilbert, Ed O'Neill, Rosario Dawson, Michael Cera, LeVar Burton, Dylan O'Brien and Laverne Cox, all in as-yet-unknown combinations and storylines. Six episodes are coming later this year to YouTube Premium – in case you didn't know that existed, you're welcome – so you've got some time to learn how to throw it from your phone to your TV.

Call Michelle Williams 'Miss Ross'

When Beyoncé starred in "Dreamgirls," she wasn't playing Diana Ross specifically, but OK she actually sort of was. And now, in brand new



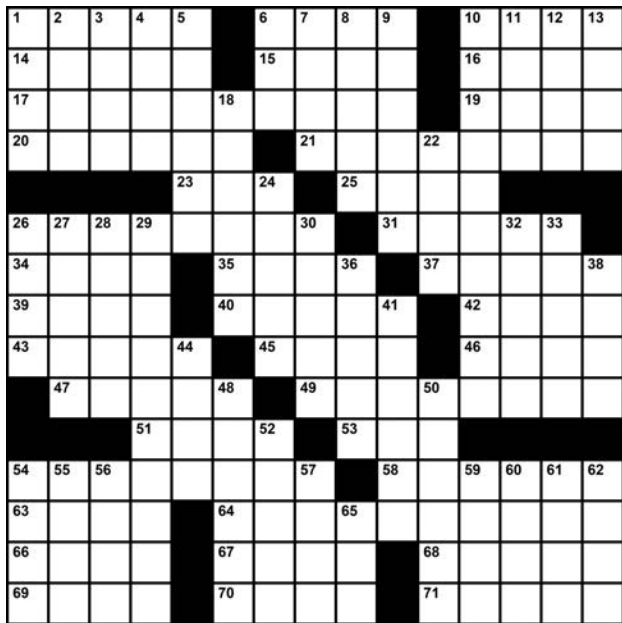
Jamie Lee Curtis. Photo: Starkzenzy

Destiny's Child-member-playing-Diana Ross news, Michelle Williams will be portraying the real deal for a series coming soon to BET. It's called "American Soul" and its plot is aligned with that of the legendary TV show "Soul Train" and its impact on American pop culture. Sinqua Walls ("Power") will star as Don Cornelius, with Williams as Ross, Gabrielle Dennis ("Rosewood") as Tina Turner, Bobby Brown as soul singer Rufus Thomas, singer K. Michelle ("Love & Hip Hop: Hollywood") as Martha Reeves and, completing the triple play, Kelly Rowland as Gladys Knight. Now all DC members will have at least one musical legend role on their resumes (and in Beyoncé's case, having also played Etta James, two). The show is coming up quickly, Feb. 5 on BET, so spend all your free moments until then dancing around to "I'm Coming Out."

Jamie Lee Curtis RSVPs to your queer wedding

Unless she's been to your wedding, you might not instantly know the name Sara Cunningham. But she's the mother of a gay son, and she's written a memoir about it titled "How We Sleep At Night." And what makes her story unique is that wedding thing. Last summer Sara got national attention by posting on Facebook that she would be a stand-in mom at any LGBTQ wedding that found itself rejected by the biological parents. And now Jamie Lee Curtis has purchased the film rights to Cunningham's 2014 book, presumably as a starring vehicle for herself. Curtis was quoted in the Washington Post as having been "moved by [Cunningham's] journey," and now we're imagining a heartwarming dramedy where the "Halloween" heroine buys upwards of 27 dresses to wear at a variety of queer nuptials, dashing across town in a zany get-me-to-the-church-on-time speeding car chase to attend her third ceremony in one afternoon. These are free ideas we're giving you, Hollywood.

Romeo San Vicente is usually Best DILF at weddings.



37 Played (with)
 39 Drug cop
 40 Like a stripper's attire
 42 Tiny speck
 43 Coming soon
 45 Spanking spot
 46 Suffix with leather
 47 Masters
 49 Annie Leibovitz's workplace
 51 Will "beneficiary" McCormack
 53 "Look at Me, I'm Sandra ____"
 54 The top Miami Sol players, e.g.
 58 "____ fi" (Gomer's USMC motto)
 63 Taylor of "I Shot Andy Warhol"
 64 Psychopathic assassin of 17-Across
 66 Apple of a sort
 67 Some guys do it nocturnally
 68 Use a rubber
 69 Hill with a flat top
 70 Some IRAs
 71 Of the kidneys

9 Rubicon crosser
 10 She plays 64-Across
 11 Draft eligible
 12 "South Park" owner of a gay dog
 13 Niles and Frasier to Martin
 18 City near Vesuvius
 22 Kid needing a butt-whipping
 24 Word with smart
 26 "There ____ there there" (Stein)
 27 Point of view
 28 Vital carrier
 29 Network that airs 17-Across
 30 Serengeti sight
 32 City in the land of the Samurai
 33 ____ music (do Britten's job)
 36 Golfer Sam
 38 Regard as
 41 Weatherspoon once of the LA Sparks
 44 Cheeky
 48 They have holey bottoms
 50 Lee portrayer in "Capote"
 52 Whodunit start
 54 Like a Muscle Mary who works out
 55 What they do behind bars
 56 "Uh-oh!" to Lord Byron
 57 Freudian undergarment?
 59 Verlaine's mother
 60 Scheme
 61 "Frozen" queen
 62 Rod attachment
 65 Some O.C.S. grads

Oh Dear

QPuzzle

Across

1 Notes to Tammy Baldwin's staff
 6 Greenish-yellow fruit
 10 Buffy creator Whedon
 14 Playground retort
 15 Part of San Francisco's BART
 16 Not taken in by
 17 Spy-action thriller series with Sandra Oh

19 James of "East of Eden"
 20 "Bewitched" mother
 21 Mommies of a child
 23 Clean-air org.
 25 Hard to come by
 26 Allie on "Weeds"
 31 They hold balls in pool halls
 34 Oscar, to Felix
 35 Phallic fish that need no lube?

Down


1 It comes before ends meet
 2 Sinead O'Connor's country
 3 21-Across may do this
 4 Norse port
 5 Evening engagement
 6 What you touch when you get to first base?
 7 Hershiser of baseball
 8 Cut

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Oakland County Swears in its First Openly Gay Circuit Court Judge

BY DREW HOWARD

Oakland County saw its first ever openly gay circuit court judge join the bench this week at the swearing-in ceremony of Jake Cunningham last month.

Cunningham, a graduate of Western Michigan University Law School, was joined by friends, family and colleagues who praised his work ethic and empathic nature. Cunningham will fill an empty seat on the Oakland County Circuit Court's Family Division following his 3 1/2 year stint as a judicial staff attorney on the same docket.

Mary Ellen Brennan, presiding judge of the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court and mentor to Cunningham, said the judge's victory is also a win for Oakland County residents, including transgender claimants.

"Transgender citizens seeking a legal name change as part of their transition want a judge who will be kind," Brennan said. "I along with my family division colleagues will benefit from his generous work ethic, his insight, his humor and his friendship. The work he is set to do is important, and he will be really, really good at it."

Cunningham's new position in the Family Division will see him handling cases involving divorce, custody, child support, juvenile abuse, termination of



BTL photo: Drew Howard

parental rights and juvenile delinquency – among other things. In a July interview with *Between The Lines*, Cunningham described the new role as a "natural progression" for his career.

State Sen. Jeremy Moss praised Cunningham's character while highlighting his role in the 2018 rainbow wave. Moss made history in November when he became the first openly gay person to be elected to the 11th state Senate district.

"Another thing Jake and I share in common is being part of this rainbow wave of 2018," Moss said. "Jake and I were talking about it, and we think that Jake is the first openly gay official elected

in Oakland County county-wide, and would be among the first openly gay judges to serve in the state of Michigan."

Moss continued: "I think that is so critically important, especially in the Family Division, as Oakland County's LGBT families are looking for credibility, for justice, for somebody who has sympathy with things our community is facing. We couldn't put a better person that spot to represent us."

Cunningham was also joined by his partner Mark of 11 years, who the judge described as the "campaign MVP." Through law school, the bar exam and the 2018 campaign, Cunningham said his partner has supported him in all of his professional aspirations.

"I think everyone here tonight would agree if this campaign had an MVP, it'd be you," Cunningham told his partner. "From the at-home treasury work, at-home emotional support, putting your life on hold for this, your incredible sign installations, extensive Snapchat documentary and the hours upon hours you spent into putting this video together today, you truly deserve the title MVP both in this campaign and my life. I love you."

More information on Cunningham's goals, objectives and experience can be found in our July candidate profile on pridesource.com.

► Ned Noyes

Continued from p. 25

thing I wasn't quite ready to deal with. Being part of the theater community eventually actually made that transition much easier for me in college, but it's definitely come a long way since I was in high school. I love seeing these movies like "Love Simon" — it seems achingly familiar of course, but also it seems like the world has come quite a long way now in terms of being something that more people are proud of their friends for dealing with in high school when it's the most difficult to.

Do you think when you came out it helped you as a performer? Or do you feel it didn't make an impact?

I think anything that's stopping you from being the most authentic version of who you actually are is going to hold you back in so many ways in life,

but certainly artistically expressing yourself. Being very sure of who I am and taking that to the world enables me to understand people better. If you're constantly trying to hide a part of who you are, that's going to make you a terrible artist.

I heard a comedian once describe performing while in the closet as similar to having one hand tied behind his back.

Oh, precisely, that's a great metaphor for it. And I think the audience can tell, too, if something is being held back. Truth is always at the root of the best comedy.

Beyond LGBTQ performers, the LGBTQ community makes up a large number of theater fans, too. Was that audience base part of your consideration when you came out?

No, I can't say that I ever actually thought about that. It's a wonderful thing that it

exists, I think, for people to have that kind of community if it's not accessible to them within their immediate circle. I think it's a wonderful thing, and it's a plus side to the rise of social media that people can find people who share their passions online and share those passions together, but I can't say I was ever aware of that.

Why do you think LGBTQ visibility is important, even if you're not performing in an LGBTQ-specific role?

Visibility is everything. It enables people to be progressive in so many ways; the more people you know who are gay, the less you're able to discriminate. It's hugely important for everybody, I think, both within and out of the gay community.

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