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**Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib
Walks the Walk: In the Pride
Parade and Beyond – PAGE 8**

**The Spirituality of Stonewall
– PAGE 10**

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Cover: Melissa Etheridge In Ann Arbor

NEWS

- 6 Michigan Pride: Proud of What?
- 7 Stronger Together Women and LGBTQ Conference
- 8 Rashida Tlaib Walks the Walk: In the Pride Parade and Beyond
- 9 NextGen: Take Pride in Your Vote
- 12 Oak Park Approves Rainbow Flag, Sets Policy for Future Requests
- 12 LGBT Choir Honors the Musical Legacy of John Bradford Bohl
- 14 An Apparent Trump Win is Really a Huge Trans Victory

OPINION

- 10 Parting Glances
- 10 Viewpoint: The Spirituality of Stonewall
- 11 Creep of the Week: Grayson Fritts
- LIFE
- 16 Melissa Etheridge Has Your Medicine
- 19 Cool Cities Ann Arbor
- 22 Happenings
- 25 Crossword Puzzle
- 26 Hear Me Out

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 **GILEAD**



News Analysis: Proud of What?

Lansing's 30th Pride Festival and March

BY JONATHAN W. THURSTON

50 years ago, Greenwich Village in New York saw a team of police officers raid its gay club, Stonewall Inn. The acts of violence displayed that early morning led to protests, riots, mobs, and hospitalization for both club-goers and officers. Pride was born out of this resistance against police brutality.

In celebration and solidarity with this historical moment, Lansing's 30th Pride parade and festival, held downtown near the Capitol Building, saw many people holding up posters as they marched alongside the parade. One teenager held up a sign saying, "No Cops at Pride." Another held up a similar poster, saying guns shouldn't be at Pride, with a crossed-out figure of a policeman. Yet, of course, there were police at Pride.

Police at this year's Pride are shadowed by the events of this past Friday, when two officers, Lindsey Howley and Bailey Ueberroth, were placed on administrative leave for repeatedly striking a sixteen-year-old girl and threatening to break her leg. Not only is this kind of brutality alive and thriving, but it is also local. It is here in Lansing. The officers that led the parade, hung around the rally, and had a vendor's table at the festival all worked alongside Howley and Ueberroth, in the same department.

When asked their thoughts about some of these juxtapositions, gay man Alex said, "It's tough. I mean, on one hand, we want to feel safe from gay-bashers out there, but on the other, we don't want to feel threatened by law enforcement officers." Another, a teenage girl with a trans pride flag caped around her neck, said, "I like police officers, but I'm not safe with all these guns around. I'm just not."

The parade started at noon, led by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. As the parade progressed toward the Capitol, the crowd joined them. It started out small, as one attendee said, complaining that this was going to be one of Lansing's smallest Pride celebrations. But as the parade marched, the crowd grew. Hundreds became thousands, and the colorful crowd made its

way to the Capitol steps. There were caped crusaders, drag queens, collared pup roleplayers, male models standing in briefs and shoes, and even a fursuiter!

At the steps, the rally began, with speakers like Nessel, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, Lansing Mayor Andy Schor, Rev. Phiwa Langeni of the Salus Center, the Michigan Pride Board, and two transgender teenagers. They spoke of the importance of voting, the importance of not just accepting who we are but also being proud of that, and the importance of progress, of just moving forward.

The festival however was where the capitalism of Pride really began to shine. The festival had live music performances throughout, and a very small space for the hundreds of people pouring in. The vendors seemed to be one of two extremes: either corporate representatives or queer independents. So, yes, we had self-published queer authors, craft makers, even an underwear seller, and the Lansing Area AIDS Network, but we also had AT&T and the Lansing Police Department. Because what true queer can say they're even proud if they're not supporting the #BlueLivesMatter movement? Or if they're not even with AT&T? Can you hear our sarcasm now? Yes? Good!

For many this year, Pride was a place of community and support, and most had a good time, dancing to Lady Gaga, strutting their stuff down the sidewalks, supporting our local queer artists and authors, and cheering for progress, as the rally speakers advocated. You definitely could feel the energy, the positivity, the pride of people being there.

With Stonewall calling to us from the past, it might be worth wondering once more, however, our initial fights for that pride. Last week, Tennessee's Knox County department has an officer who has said publicly, "God has instilled the power of civil government to send the police in 2019 out to these LGBT freaks and arrest them, and have a trial for them, and if they are convicted, they are to be put to death." While it would be a far stretch to say, without evidence, that any of our local officers hold similar mentalities, the fact is that the system allows for these kinds of people to have that kind of power. How confident are we that our pride is just as strong as officers who can abuse their power? How certain are we that our rainbows can stop bullets?

Keep proud. Keep fighting.



Top: Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. BTL Photos: Roxanne Frith.

Stronger Together Women and LGBTQ Justice Conference Coming June 29

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

The Unitarian Universalist faith has long been known as a progressive one, encouraging the acceptance of LGBTQ people and women's rights many decades before more traditionally conservative faiths caught on. The Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network is a faith-based nonprofit that is dedicated to fighting for social justice rights across a broad spectrum of issues, and it will host a conference Saturday, June 29, called Stronger Together. The conference's aim is to raise awareness about the importance of fighting for both women's and LGBTQ rights in a time when they are in danger, according to Randy Block who is director of the network.

"I think currently both women's rights as well as LGBT rights are under attack as well as both of those groups are working to try to promote more justice, more fairness in Michigan and there's a lot those two groups may have in common," he said. "They both are trying to stand up to choose what they do with their bodies; they both are being attacked by right-wing forces in our state and in our country."

The conference will bring speakers from a variety of groups actively working toward social justice goals including State Rep. Christine Grieg, Detroit Police Department LGBT Liaison Dani Woods, Planned Parenthood Community Organizer Emily Clancy, ACLU LGBT Project Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan, Stand With Trans Board Member Emme Zanotti and SAGE Training and Education Coordinator Judy Lewis. Block said that this collection of speakers was put together through partnerships with more than 15 women's and LGBTQ empowerment organizations like the Birmingham Unitarian Church and Planned Parenthood.

"But we wanted to have people who had some stature as far as understanding policies," Block said. "So, on the one hand, we were looking at people who are just up to date with the policy issues, but we also felt that it was important to have speakers who could speak on certain lenses or certain perspectives. So, for example, Judy Lewis can speak as a person from the older LGBT community — there's a lot of older folks that see things differently. And then Emme Zanotti is a person from the trans community, so she's going to bring the trans vision for the perspective on what are threats

and the opportunities."

Block said he hopes that the meeting will not only serve as a way for attendees to learn about important policy changes and different hostilities toward LGBTQ and women's rights but it'll be an avenue to encourage new activism and involvement.

"Sometimes people get discouraged — that applies whether you're a member of the LGBT community or not. There's so many different things that can tell people that there's nothing much they can do about it. So, attending these conferences is one way to get more encouragement to know that there are other



people out there that are fighting for the same things, that there are concrete strategies. There's also going to be workshops for allies," Block said. "So, people who are allies of the LGBT community — maybe it's their brother or maybe it's their neighbor or maybe it's their friend — they need to know how they can play a part."

Block made sure to emphasize that because this event is sponsored by a Unitarian Universalist organization, it'll be approaching these issues from a progressive faith perspective, too.

"It's often people from different faiths that are a big part of the problem for the LGBT community — [like] religious right people that are trying to hold LGBT rights back," he said. "We see this as an opportunity to being an antidote, to say that there are religious people that believe in love, not just oppression by when they say they have a right to deny someone access to medical or to have a partner that they love."

It's a way of keeping things in harmony.

"We're trying to bring that space so we can be a balance to the religious right," Block said. "Which has been very oppressive and a big part of the problem for both women and LGBT justice."

Find out more about the upcoming conference on the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network Facebook page.

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Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib Walks the Walk: In the Pride Parade and Beyond

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Sharing the Love

“You just felt pure love,” Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib said, of the cheers she received at this year’s Motor City Pride parade as she and her team marched down Griswold St. “It was an energy that... was empowering. You felt it in your heart.”

Tlaib’s role as representative of Michigan’s 13th Congressional District was the most obvious reason for her to attend Motor City Pride; in addition, she was invited by NextGen to join them in the parade, followed by a town hall and brunch at Granite City. But for her, it was even more personal: the significance of “showing up” for the LGBTQ community is something she understands as an ally from another marginalized group.

“Look, I’m Muslim in America right now,” Tlaib said. “And if anything, I know what it feels like... when people don’t show up for you. And for me it was about showing up, lifting my LGBTQ neighbors, especially at the time... [when] more and more discrimination is still happening in the workplace... [and] younger people are coming out earlier in their lives and not being supported by their school administrators or even the school community.” She said that being there was a way to “push back” against those things.

“There’s still so much work to do to stop the dehumanization, stop the kind of other-ing that happens in various institutions. So it’s going to take more than just passing bills... it’s also trying to change the culture, trying to uplift those that really right now need a sense of belonging. That’s why it was so important for me to be here.”

On Being an Ally

While this is Tlaib’s first term in Congress, she has already established a record of not merely “talking the talk” when it comes to issues facing her LGBTQ constituents, and the LGBTQ community at large. For one thing, she visited the Ruth Ellis Center in February to meet with representatives from REC and Inclusive Justice, a statewide Michigan faith organization dedicated to addressing LGBTQ inclusion within the faith community. And in March, when the Human Rights Campaign’s Michigan contingent lobbied in Washington, D.C. for the Equality Act, Tlaib was the sole member of Congress to meet with them in person; the others had representatives meet on their behalf.

Being a child of immigrants, Tlaib remarked how her mother was treated because of her accent, and how Tlaib was treated because of her upbringing in general. In response she said she sought out allies, and that such experiences



U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI13) marched with the NetxGen group in the June 9 Motor City Pride Parade in Detroit. TJ Rogers from Freedom House marched behind her advocating for asylum seekers. BTL Photo: Andrew Cohen

spurred her to actively look for ways to be an ally herself. “I never want anyone to feel ‘less than,’” she said.

“It’s not just ‘talk the talk,’” she said, “...but actually showing up and being in the room in a space where maybe I didn’t get asked to be, but I’m coming there anyway... [because] love should be shown to everyone, no matter their sexual orientation, no matter their religious beliefs, no matter the way they look. So it’s always important for me to be there, and to uplift. Not just to be asked to come, but show up without being asked.”

Recognizing an Epidemic

As the member of a group that often gets short shrift in this country in general, and by the current presidential administration in particular, BTL asked Tlaib for her own take on our grossly inadequate response to certain hate crimes: namely, the epidemic of violence and murder of trans women of color, which affects the Congresswoman’s own district.

“You know, there’s such double standards,” Tlaib said. “You look at the application, from the Department of Justice, in regarding hate crimes... if it’s a certain type of group, they’re ‘all hands on deck.’ But when it’s...our trans

sisters, you don’t sense that same passion, that same kind of determination to try to address it. And we all feel it.”

In terms of what she could do as a national leader, Tlaib said, she hoped to expose the issue, to “put a mirror up to our own government,” and ask why attention and resources go toward one group over another. Tlaib went on to express how important it is for this to be a partnership. However, she acknowledged that it’s asking a lot of the LGBTQ community--trans women of color in particular who are victims or survivors--to come forward. It’s something she said resonated with her when she attended a memorial for Kelly Stough, who was murdered last winter, and whose killer was subsequently charged with the crime. Tlaib then said, “as much as it’s scary, use your member of Congress’s office. Use other allies to come forward... And then I can go and say, ‘yes this is an issue that hasn’t been addressed.’”

We’re in This Together

As we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Stonewall, Tlaib agreed that while the LGBTQ community has made great strides, we have mountains to climb and miles to go. Returning the focus to violence against LGBTQ people,

she criticized the reactionary attitude of the government and said its response was lacking in general, but that her disappointment preceded the current presidential administration. She decried the government’s refusal to acknowledge that these hate incidents are “a form of terror, and [when] this intentional targeting of people based on their sexual orientation is not seen at the same level as other forms of hate crime... I want to push back and say to our government, to do more.”

Perhaps when more elected officials take up the issue—especially after more LGBTQ people are elected—the government will be forced to do more. Having representatives in government who truly represent LGBTQ people is key, and as one of the first two Muslim women in Congress, Tlaib can speak with firsthand knowledge about the importance of diversity in electoral politics.

“I now understand why people like us need to be running for office from all different backgrounds,” she said. Tying it to the LGBTQ community, she added, “when we passed the Equality Act, it was our LGBTQ members of Congress that kept us focused, kept us grounded, reminded us of the importance of it.” She said that having them in the room “made a huge difference.”

NextGen: Take Pride in Your Vote

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

After registering young people to vote in unprecedented numbers prior to the 2018 midterms and contributing to the massive youth turnout for that election, NextGen America is only gaining momentum.

According to Staci Lowry, Regional Organizing Director for Wayne and Oakland counties, NextGen is focused on three campaigns in this non-election year: Making voting easy, which locally includes education regarding the implementation of Michigan's newly-passed Proposal 3; fighting for progress, which includes supporting initiatives like the Green New Deal and environmental justice in the cities and counties where NextGen has a presence; and accountability of our elected officials.

But while NextGen may have serious ambitions, they also like to have a good time. With that in mind, NextGen held a town hall brunch at Granite City with Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib after she marched with them in the Motor City Pride parade to stand in solidarity and celebrate LGBTQ friends and family. Holding a Sunday brunch to pay tribute to the LGBTQ community seemed fitting to many.

Among the approximately 50 individuals who marched and/or attended the brunch were representatives from the Human Rights Campaign, Equality Michigan, Affirmations, Stand with Trans, Planned Parenthood, Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan, Detroit Future City and 482 Forward.

“Take Pride in Your Vote” is NextGen’s current decree, and BTL asked Lowry why LGBTQ issues are important to NextGen’s mission and values. Certainly, part of it is that many of their millennial members and volunteers identify as LGBTQ and “we want

to make sure that their voices are heard, because we are ushering in the next generation,” she said.

But there’s more to it, Lowry explained: “It’s important to us because [among] all issues that affect us – for different reasons – there’s a lot of intersectionality, and we often work siloed. And we understand at NextGen that we have to work together in order to make tangible change in our communities, and it often starts with ourselves.”

Congresswoman Tlaib responded to questions on a wide range of topics, from LGBTQ issues to health care to wage theft. One theme that arose continually was that we all have strengths to contribute to the political discussion, via elective office or otherwise.

“People like us need to be running for office,” Tlaib told the young crowd – and that by “us,” she meant “real people,” she explained. “Half of my colleagues are millionaires,” she said. “Their income bracket is completely disconnected with the American people,” and later pointed out, “they even deemed someone like me impossible to get elected.”

Another message Tlaib conveyed was that meaningful, significant change often begins outside of political office: “I’ll tell you,” she said, “the things that are transformative ... the civil rights movement, the women’s rights movement, was always because of movements outside of Congress. So continue pushing on.”

Following the afternoon’s events, Lowry reflected on the experience and described what it meant to her personally for Congresswoman Tlaib to have been there with a single word: “awesome!”

“She is just a force to be reckoned with in so many different ways, supports so many different issues that are true and dear to our hearts, is actively working ... to make policies better for black and brown communities, for LGBTQ, for



At left is Staci Lowry, NextGen Regional Organizing Director for Wayne and Oakland counties with U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaibi during Motor City Pride June 9. BTL Photo: Ellen Knoppow.

working moms,” Lowry said. “So I think that we couldn’t have had a better elected official here at Pride with us.”


Pleased with the turnout, Lowry added that she brought her daughter, too.



“I just think it’s important for us to get together more, and celebrate each other more, and celebrate our small wins,” Lowry said. “We have a lot of fight ahead in a lot of different ways, but I think it’s important to take a day to celebrate.”


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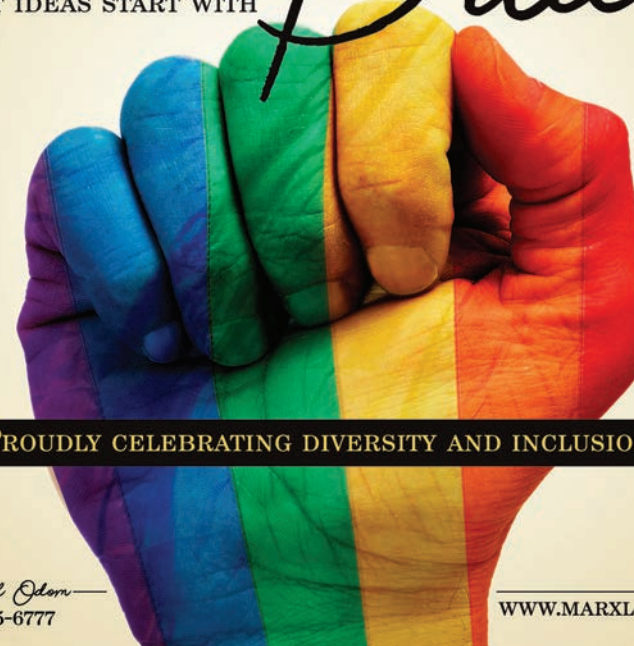
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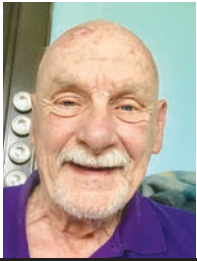
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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Editor's Note: Contributor Charles Alexander fell ill last month and was unable to provide his usual weekly Parting Glances Column. This selection was chosen in honor of Pride month and Stonewall's 50th Anniversary. Everyone at Between The Lines wishes Alexander a speedy recovery. This column first appeared in BTL 6/4/15

Looking Bassakwards

As a teenager I learned the lay of the land from word-of-mouth sharing from those who had navigated Detroit's watering holes years before me. I did however once venture – daringly – on my own into the Greyhound Bus Depot to check out noonday comings and goings. I was cautious. I had been forewarned.

“Miss Tillie goes there all the time. Mind your business, child. If you have to pee, just pee. Don't look anybody straight in the eye!” said street-wise, factory worker Miss Bruce.

Stories of hundreds of arrests for merely glancing at a vice officer – Miss Tillie – circulated. “It's your word against theirs, Mary. Case closed.” Accosting & Soliciting. 30 Dollars or 30 Days!

Just behind the Greyhound Bus Depot was another hangout for gay teenagers: Mama's. One diner star rating over the Hub Grill's none. Mama's was owned by the mother of 30-something, Butch Jimmy (“BJ”), who had as lovers his share of impressionable, gay teenagers.

A moody chef named Frank made sarcastic remarks about anyone he deemed “too queeny.” He also liked to loudly confide, while troubling greasy hamburgers and well-bruised hot dogs, that he had his casket all picked out and knew where he was to be buried. (R.I.P., Frank.)

Mama – short, stocky, ruddy, roly-poly faced – was of ethnic heritage, possibly Hungarian, Romanian. She wore her hair in a tight bun. Dressed in basic black. No pearls. She got her sense of humor by osmosis from gay kids, greeting regulars with a hearty wave of the hand, “Kud-de-vahs! Kud-de-vahs!” “Whores! Whores!”

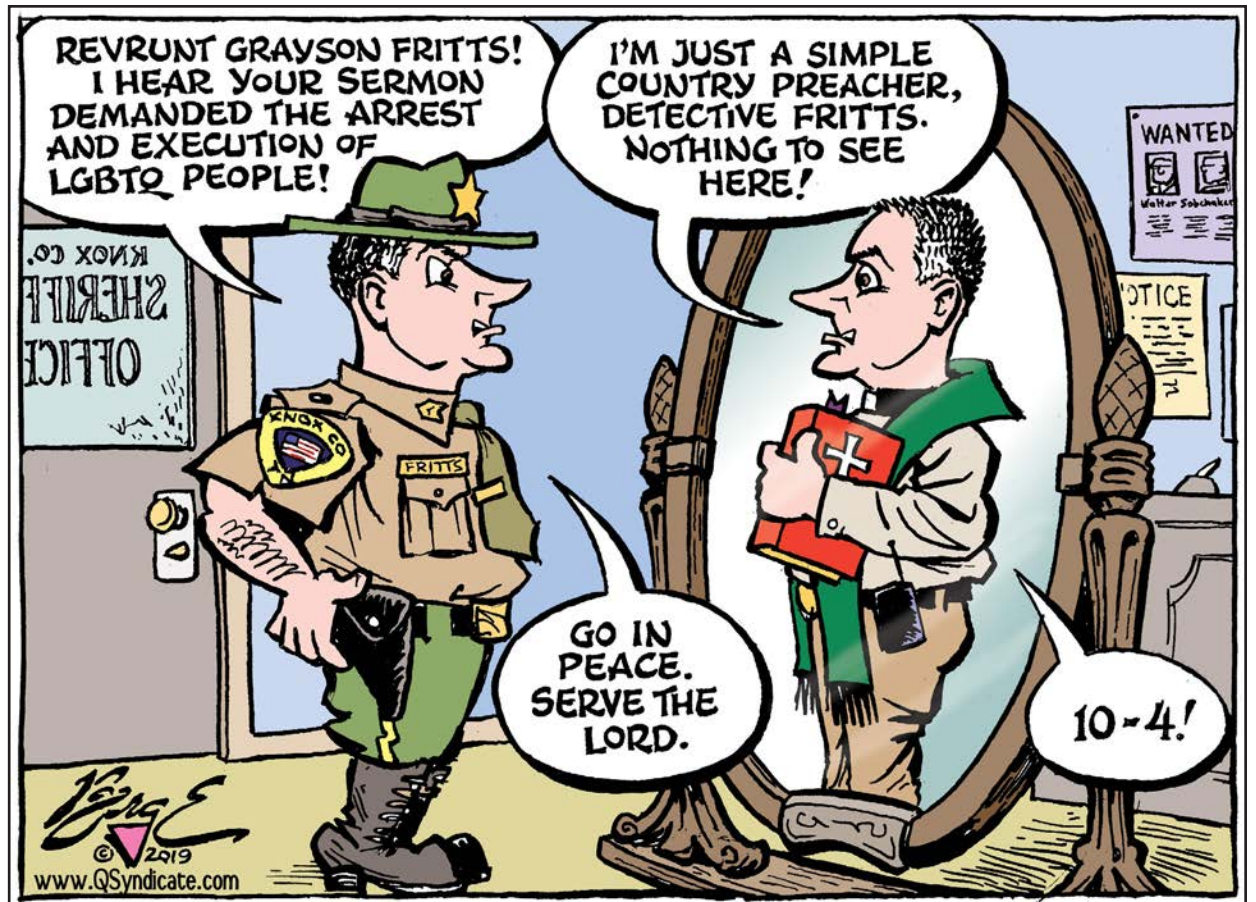
As a teenager, I had no gay-positive role models. I learned how to survive from older, more experienced gays and lesbians. I came to realize that knowing a professional, boss, teacher, professor who was gay could be used to my advantage by letting him – or her – know that I too was “a friend of Dorothy.” It was an on-the-QT bonding. (It certainly helped grades and opportunities at Wayne University.)

A real plus was to know a gay doctor you could consult if a health concern or infection was a problem. (As an OR Tech at Harper Hospital, I was acquainted with two gay urologists.)

Contact in parks, outdoors, on busy streets or cruising areas was done cautiously, obliquely. “Do you come here often?” was one way of touching base, awaiting a suggestive response. (And, it was possible on many occasions to ask someone if he was gay and get as an answer, “Yes! I'm happy. Are you?”)

It was done by looks. Winks. Hints. “Dropping hair pins.”

See next page



Viewpoint



BY ROLAND STRINGFELLOW

The Spirituality of Stonewall

Have you ever been motivated to put yourself at risk in order to stand up for someone else or for a cause? For some, to place themselves on the line is too much to ask. For others, when they see injustice taking place, a motivation that says, “enough is enough” rises within them and they act without thought to the price they will pay. This is what occurred during the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at The Stonewall Inn – an uprising that lasted for two nights.

The opposition labeled it as mayhem started by a group of drag queens and youth who didn't respect law enforcement. Yet, at the risk of being imprisoned, beaten, losing their jobs and livelihood, the uprising at The Stonewall was inspired by those who wanted to defend their humanity and the dignity

of others. Stonewall was a spiritual act, motivated by those who acted in agreement with the God-given truth that we are divinely created and worthy of respect.

When people are motivated to fight back, invariably others will mislabel their actions as unlawful and even ungodly. Only time will tell whether the actions of an individual is righteous or mayhem. But when a righteous motive is involved, there is always one sign of authenticity – and that is peace. People can face incredible odds when they are motivated to see peace in the world. The response at The Stonewall 50 years ago was the pathway for many to leave their shame and fear behind as they saw how they could live as their authentic selves with pride. Those who responded at The Stonewall had no time

When people are motivated to fight back, invariably others will mislabel their actions as unlawful and even ungodly. Only time will tell whether the actions of an individual is righteous or mayhem. But when a righteous motive is involved, there is always one sign of authenticity – and that is peace.

► Viewpoint: Stringfellow

Continued from p. 10

to think about what they were doing. They relied upon inspiration to make things better and thus laid the path for a movement for human equality! Stonewall was a spiritual act.

Very few people question whether the civil rights movement was a spiritual act. We can clearly see the benefit of Dr. King and others' actions and the huge price they paid. At the time that MLK engaged in the civil rights movement, he was labeled a troublemaker, even ungodly by other clergy, for being an agitator. "Why couldn't he just accept things as the way they were?" Yet, he had a burden, an inspiration, to resist the forces that would dehumanize others, especially the plight blacks faced in America. Lesser known than Dr. King, but as equally important were Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, self-described drag queens and queer historical icons.

Both had been present at Stonewall and were inspired to create the organization Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, a group that organized homeless trans youth, drag queens, sex

workers, immigrants and low-income people in New York. So much change for the good resulted because 50 years ago some couldn't accept things the way they were and became agitators in the spark of a moment.

When we work for peace for ourselves or others, whether it happens in the spark of a moment or through a strategic plan, we are creating good to enter the world. However, it is almost impossible to create peace for others when we still have shame and fear in our hearts. Peace is the result of discovering the pathway of self-acceptance and the integration of our authentic self into everyday life. This is a spiritual act. We can then be inspired to advocate for others or resist the injustice in our community and world. On this anniversary, we should all honor those lessors known revolutionaries for the uprising that inspired a movement for many of us to lose our fear in exchange for peace.

The Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow is the Senior Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

Very rarely directly. Gaydar circa 1950s nonetheless. Unlike today, the average straight person knew very little about gays or lesbians. We belonged to what essentially was a secret organization – the Gay Masons! – with passwords, special looks and hand signals.

Categories: Dingle Queen. Rice Queen. Leather Queen. Browning Queen. Rough Trade. Jail bait.

The better gay bars had back entrances. Keep it secret! Survive! Don't get caught! But do enjoy yourself! Just be on the lookout for straight tourists – maybe noisy neighbors – who come to gape and giggle at queers. If need be, switch pronouns when straights might overhear your 'secret' conversations. She for he. He for she.

Yes. It's been a long journey for me.

It wasn't always easy. But then again, it wasn't that hard either. I've survived. And I like to think I've made something useful of myself as an artist, writer, human being who just happens to be gay. Quite gay. Contentedly so. Reasonably happy – most of the time. That's tax-paying life.

Fortunately for today's LGBT youth, it's a better – in many, many respects – world than it was 60 years ago. Yes! Been there. Done with that. Advice for today's newcomers: Take nothing for granted. Speak up! Speak out! Fight back!

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

Creep Of The Week

Grayson Fritts

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

"Can we at least agree that we can hate them?"

That's a question posed by Grayson Fritts, a preacher in Knoxville, Tennessee in a sermon that's been making the rounds on the Internet.

The "them" in question is LGBTQ people. Fritts not only hates "them" he wants "them" put to death.

"The purpose of this sermon is to show you that our government," Fritts says, "like the federal government, the police or what have you should enforce Leviticus 20:13."

"The United States government, or local government, Knox County government, Tennessee government should put murderers to death, should put rapists to death, should put kidnappers to death, should put adulterers to death, should put SODOMITES to death!"

I put "sodomites" in all caps because he literally yells it out in anger as if it's the worst possible category on his list.

"Homosexuality, it should still be a crime, people. Just like murder and rape and all these things," Fritts says. "Government should do their job. Instead of running radar on the interstate, why don't you go arrest some queers, how about that?"

Again, he yells the part about arresting queers, shaking in anger.

"The Bible says the powers that be are ordained of God and God has instilled the power of civil government to send the police in 2019 out to these LGBT freaks and arrest them, and have a trial for them, and if they are convicted then they are to be put to death," Fritts continues. "If you're a policeman then you know what? It should be your responsibility to carry these things out. You bring them to the judges and you let the judges hear the cause and you put that animal to death."

Not surprisingly, people are upset.

Tennessee Equality Project Executive Director Chris Sanders called the comments "reprehensible."

"The symbolism is extremely palpable considering it is pride month and the anniversary of the Orlando pulse shooting," Sanders told a news outlet.

U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tennessee), wrote on Twitter: "Let's be very clear. [Fritts] is preaching about murdering LGBTQ people. There is no ambiguity. There is no confusion. He is suggesting the execution of our friends and neighbors."

But when asked about his sermon, Fritts didn't back down.

"I'm not an anomaly, he told the News Sentinel, adding that other Baptist preachers should "grow a spine" and "stand up just like I'm standing up."

He also rejected the idea that he's inciting violence against LGBTQ people.

"I'm not calling anybody in here to arms,"

"The Bible says the powers that be are ordained of God and God has instilled the power of civil government to send the police in 2019 out to these LGBT freaks and arrest them, and have a trial for them, and if they are convicted then they are to be put to death," Grayson Fritts says.

Fritts told the Huffington Post. "I'm not calling anyone here to violence. I'm saying it's the government's responsibility."

Ah, got it. Average every day people should not put LGBTQ people to death, but the government should. Not that this really softens the whole "death to LGBTQ people."

Thankfully, as a preacher, Fritts isn't a part of the government. But as a Knox County Sheriff's Department detective he totally is.

Which means he's inciting his own damn self to violence, state-sanctioned violence, in fact. He's saying that LGBTQ people should die and that government employees, especially police officers, should have a direct hand in their deaths.

The Knox County Sheriff's Department has put him on paid leave until he leaves the force in July. But as of press time he hasn't been fired.

Meanwhile a prosecutor for the 6th Judicial District is reviewing Fritts's cases for bias.

But don't worry! Fritts says there's no way his law enforcement work was ever influenced by his religious beliefs. And by "religious beliefs" let's remember he's referring to his hatred of LGBTQ people and his subsequent call for their execution.

To explain how he keeps his church life and his state life totally separate he compares himself to a fast food worker making a burger for an LGBTQ customer.

"I'd make them a hamburger because that was what my job would be, you understand?" he said according to KnoxNews.com. "You know, I wouldn't try to purposefully try to damage their food or anything like that."

Um, I'm not a law expert, but carrying a badge and flipping a burger are two very different jobs with wildly different levels of power. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't eat any kind of food prepared by Fritts, and I sure as hell wouldn't trust him with my civil liberties.

Speaking of which, one of the reasons the Sheriff's Dept. says he hasn't been fired is because of concerns about lawsuits over "free speech." But this isn't a free speech issue. Calling for the state to murder people when you yourself are a member the state is incitement to violence. It is not protected under the first amendment. So fire his ass already.

Oak Park Approves Rainbow Flag, Sets Policy for Future Requests

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

With Council members Carolyn Burns and Ken Rich voting no, Oak Park City Council adopted a policy to govern all flag-flying requests, as well as a request made by a young married couple in the city to fly the rainbow LGBTQ Pride flag.

Tyler and Ryan Mims-Beltz got married at the Ferndale Pride Festival June 1. They are also active volunteers for the event. The men say they've been scoffed at, insulted and threatened when they leave the neighboring city to come home to Oak Park. So they came before City Council on Monday to ask that the city fly the rainbow flag in support of LGBTQ+ Pride.

"It may not mean something to some of us in this room, but it makes a difference when you're walking out on the streets of this city and you want to feel welcomed," Tyler said. "Even in states all across the US to this day you can be fired, you can be discriminated against, you can get denied housing simply for being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. That's still a problem. ... By flying this flag in our city this will connect our residents, our business owners, and let them know we have a safe city, that we have elected officials that support us."

With Ferndale, Hazel Park and Detroit all flying the rainbow flag, the couple hoped Oak Park might consider it as well.

And they did – spending a good part of Monday's council meeting debating the wording of the policy. The concern for the majority on council was not if the rainbow flag was appropriate or not, but how the policy could be written to comply with the Equal Protection clause of the US Constitution. The government has to be fair when creating policies that deal with free speech.

"Whatever policy we put on the table will apply to everyone. We have to make sure we are being content neutral," said Mayor Pro Tem Solomon Radner who works as a Civil Rights attorney. The law protects free speech and requires government bodies to be fair in how they apply their policies related to speech. Just three years ago the Supreme Court made a ruling that changed how cities were regulating signage, allowing them to regulate only physical aspects of the signs, not the message. If a city allows signs for one type of message, they must allow them for all. For example, if a city allows real estate signs on lawns, they also have to allow political signs, signs announcing meetings, signs for products, signs that are critical of the government, etc.

Radner's fear was that if the city allowed one group to place a flag, and there were no clear standards in place, they might find themselves in the position to have other groups placing flags that aren't appropriate. "An example that has unintended consequences is in Boston right now with the Straight Pride parade,"



Radner said.

City Manager Tungate, along with input from Radner and the City Attorney, crafted a policy that puts the challenge of filtering out insincere requests elsewhere. The policy adopted by council Monday allows for the placement of flags that are in honor of causes recognized under Presidential Proclamation. Examples of this include Women's History Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and National Hispanic Heritage Month. The policy also limits the flying of the flag to the month of the observance, and it requires at least 30 days notice for a request, and the requester must provide a flag that is 3 feet by 5 feet with appropriate holes.

Tungate found his inspiration while looking at the US Flag Code, which is a Federal statute. The law outlines the treatment and placement of flags, including the requirement that the American flag be flown highest on flagpoles. By looking at the federal law, it got him thinking about using Federal celebrations as a guideline.

The policy adopted by Oak Park Council limits flag placement requests to those associated with federally recognized proclamations, such as Pride Month which was so named by President Barack Obama in 2018. The policy still requires a vote of City Council before a flag is raised, and they can still turn down a request.

Oak Park Council also waived the 30 day requirement and voted to fly the Pride flag for the remainder of the month.

Jeffrey Oliver of Hazel Park is the founder of Michigan LGBT Peer Support Network. When Hazel Park approved flying the rainbow flag last year, Oliver had one with him to give. He took part in a ceremony this year to raise it. He came to the Oak Park meeting to support his friends in their rainbow quest.

"If I was driving through Oak Park and I saw that flag, I would say this is a place I feel safe stopping to shop in, and maybe I might consider buying my next home here," Oliver said.

Ferndale Pride Director Julia Music said that there are people living in Oak Park who are afraid to come out of the closet.

"When a city does things like displaying a rainbow flag, it lets your residents know they are valued as part of the community," Music said. "I guarantee there is someone at home right now who will see that flag, and what they will feel will change their life."

Council member Ken Rich argued against the rainbow flag. "We have a city flag. The city flag covers everybody in the city. The Michigan state flag covers everybody in the state," he said.

Rich said he supports only the governmental flags. "I would be opposed to any other flag," he said.

When asked if other flags had been flown in Oak Park previously, Tungate said that Oak Park had been flying the purple, white, and gold flag honoring 100 years of women's right to vote. That was part of a county-wide effort to spread the word about the history of voting rights for women.

Burns did not give any reason for her opposition to both motions. Council member Regina Weiss wore a rainbow pin to the meeting. She, Radner and Mayor Marian McClellan were all happy to have passed the policy.

The flag will go up within the coming days and be taken down at the end of the month. If the flag is to return next year, someone in the community will have to make the request by the end of April.

This story originally appeared in Oakland County Times

LGBT Choir Honors the Musical Legacy of John Bradford Bohl

BY DREW HOWARD

Flint natives Dorie and Brian Barkey are honoring the legacy of their late son John Bradford Bohl with the creation of a new LGBT choir at their local church.

Bohl, who would've turned 38 on May 24, made a name for himself in the church music scene over his 20-plus years of experience as a singer, organist, director and choir conductor. It was his final goal to create a gay men's choir in Flint before he passed away unexpectedly in August of 2018.

Nearly a year after his death, Bohl's parents are making good on their promise to fulfill their son's last endeavor. On May 24th, Dorie and Brian witnessed the debut performance of the John Bradford Bohl LGBT choir to much enthusiasm at the Court Street United Methodist Church.

"It was an amazing, beautiful concert," Dorie Barkey said. "There was a huge turnout. It was great seeing everyone so thankful and grateful we were doing it."

Bohl's love for music began as early as the age of two with his toy piano, Dorie said. "He went to church every Sunday with his grandparents - he just loved listening to the music," Dorie said. "He would go up to the organ after church, and the organist would allow him to sit next to her."

"He was the only child allowed to push the buttons - she felt he was respectful."

Bohl took his first music lessons at age 7 after the family was gifted a piano. His interest in the instrument led to organ lessons at age 12, Dorie said, which then allowed him to start playing professionally as the assistant organist at St. Paul's Episcopal in Flint.

His passion for music pushed Bohl to pursue it academically at Indiana University. Bohl's professional career took him around the country to Baltimore, Washington D.C. and Albany, New York over the next decade, opening doors to play at the National Cathedral in D.C. as well as the prestigious Kennedy Center.

"He was very well respected, well known in that circle," Dorie said.

Bohl returned to his hometown of Flint following the expiration of his last work contract in Albany, New York. With no position lined up, Dorie said her son was looking for his next source of inspiration.

That's when Dorie proposed that Bohl start his own gay men's choir right in Flint.

"He wasn't feeling real good about things," Dorie said. "When you have a job you get used to working. We were talking one day - something I thought of that he'd be good at would be starting a gay men's choir. He was



really excited. He perked up and said, 'I could do that.'"

Bohl passed away shortly after their conversation in the middle of a trip to Wills Barre, Pennsylvania, Dorie said, where he only made it as far as Pittsburgh.

"He passed away, and I thought I had to do this myself," Dorie says regarding the creation of the LGBT choir. "I have to do this for him."

Dorie enlisted the help of family friend David Lindsey to help organize the new choir. Rather than being exclusive to gay men, Lindsey and John's parents aimed to recruit both LGBT community members and allies to join.

Lindsey's relationship with John goes all the way back to their early days at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. "I knew John when I was a twenty-something singer at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and John was a remarkably talented 12-year-old organ scholar," Lindsey said.

"I didn't get a chance to really know John then. It wasn't until many years later when we used to reminisce about Carolyn Mawby, a choral legend from the Flint area whom we both sung under...it was obvious to me then that John was equally passionate about singing."

Together, Lindsey and John's parents worked to recruit about a dozen members to join the new independent choir, which



they aptly named the John Bradford Bohl Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Choir. The group held their debut performance on what would've been Bohl's 38th birthday at the Court Street United Methodist Church.

Lindsey described the first performance as a "thrill."

"We had close to 300 people there which was amazing for our first concert out of the gate," Lindsey said. "It was a terrific concert, and it felt so good to be a part of something special."

Following their debut, Dorie is thanking the Court Street United Methodist Church for serving as the choir's first venue and helping to make the event happen.

"They did everything they could to make it happen," she said. "Not every church is as accepting as the Court Street Church."

The new LGBT choir is the only one of its kind in Flint right now, according to Dorie. Moving forward, she says the group is in the planning phases of becoming a nonprofit. "People want to donate to us," she said.

For the time being, Dorie and Lindsey are simply celebrating the fact that the choir even exists.

"This group is so much more than a choral ensemble," Lindsey said. "It's a safe space for people to come and be themselves, what that means for the individual."

"I love learning about music, but the wonderful people in this choir are teaching me about life as well."

Flint Pride Festival June 22

BY BTL STAFF

A time for celebration and excitement, June is a significant month for the LGBTQ community because it is also a time for reflection on the hard-won fight for equality that kicked off at the Stonewall Inn 50 years ago. Though only in its ninth consecutive year celebrating that historic moment, the city of Flint is bringing both joy and reverence as it kicks off its festival on Saturday, June 22, at Riverbank Park.

"Pride events are a positive stance against discrimination and violence toward the LGBTQ+ Community," wrote event organizers. "The intent of this event is to celebrate diversity in our city! Affirm gay and transgender individuals, increase

visibility and to build a sense of community."

This year's event is co-sponsored by Wellness Services, Between The Lines, Blue Cross Complete of Michigan, The Greater Flint Arts Council, University of Michigan-Flint, Mott Community College, the Genesee Health System, Mass Transportation Authority Janssen, Lion's Den, Hamilton Community Health Network and Dort Federal Credit Union.

"Flint Pride is an annual community festival that features live music, entertainment, food, educational information, merchandise booths, pin-up contest, children's activities and plenty of fun and dancing," said organizers.

Find out more online at the [Flint Pride Festival Facebook page](#).

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An Apparent Trump Win is Really a Huge Trans Victory

BY KAREN OCAMB

On first reading, the Reuters headline seemed like dismal news for transgender military servicemembers and advocates fighting the Trump trans ban. “U.S. Court Lets Trump Transgender Military Ban Stand, Orders New Review,” the longtime wire service reported on a Friday ruling by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The opening paragraph doused the wound with lemon. “A U.S. appeals court handed President Donald Trump a victory in his effort to ban most transgender people from the military, ordering a judge to reconsider her ruling against the policy, which the U.S. Supreme Court has allowed to take effect,” Reuters reported.

A three-judge panel issued a ruling in *Karnoski v The State of Washington* setting aside the positive April 18, 2018 ruling by District Court Judge Marsha Pechman saying the trans ban probably violated the constitutional rights of trans servicemembers, those seeking promotion and recruits. The 9th Circuit seemed to side with the Justice Department’s appeal of her ruling, explicitly saying that Pechman had not given the military the due deference it usually receives in district courts. The court ordered the judge to try again.

“That finding could strengthen Trump’s position, though the government still had the burden of justifying his policy,” Reuters reported, a policy that Trump announced by tweet in 2017.

And therein lies the hitch upon which the trans ban twists.

“We get another bite at the apple,” an excited Shannon Minter, Legal Director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, told the *Los Angeles Blade*. The 9th Circuit ordered Pechman—one of four federal court judges to rule against Trump’s ban—to review the case again, but this time under heightened scrutiny. That shifts the burden of proof from the trans plaintiffs and their backers to the federal government and affords an opportunity to get to the merits of the case.

Last January, when the Supreme Court voted 5-4 to lift the nationwide injunction against the trans military ban going into effect, many in the LGBT community were crushed. Dreams of service, fulfilling legacies, education and job opportunities were put on hold. Trans servicemembers on the brink of coming out—as previously encouraged by the Obama administration—jumped back into the closet lest they lose their careers in a witch hunt.

Trans individuals were allowed to serve in the armed forces, the Pentagon said, as long as they served in their birth sex and endured the inhumane indignity of inauthenticity. But the Pentagon insisted it did not target trans individuals for discrimination. The ban



Photo by Ted Eytan via Flickr

per pertained more to medical issues and costs and unit cohesion—all of which had been addressed by a RAND Study commissioned by Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who lifted the ban on open trans service in June 2016 with policy backing from President Barack Obama.

“As always, we treat all transgender persons with respect and dignity,” Lt. Col. Carla Gleason, a Pentagon spokesperson, told CNN after the Supreme Court decision on Jan. 22, 2019. The Defense Department’s “proposed policy is NOT a ban on service by transgender persons. It is critical that DoD be permitted to implement personnel policies that it determines are necessary to ensure the most lethal and combat effective fighting force in the world. DoD’s proposed policy is based on professional military judgment and will ensure that the U.S. Armed Forces remain the most lethal and combat effective fighting force in the world.”

On Friday, the 9th Circuit said refuted the DoD, saying the government “discriminates on the basis of transgender status.” Importantly, the 9th Circuit also said that a policy that discriminates on that basis can only be upheld if it meets the same tough standard applied to policies that discriminate based on sex. That elevates transgender people to the same protected constitutional status to gender. That’s a game-changer.

And, since neither the Supreme Court nor

the 9th Circuit ruled on the merits of the case, trans advocates have an opportunity to dramatically expose the cruelty behind the targeted unconstitutional discrimination. In the meantime, all trans cases in the 9th Circuit jurisdiction must be considered under heightened scrutiny with the anti-trans policies providing evidence of “exceedingly persuasive justification.”

“This outcome in *Karnoski v. Trump* is no surprise, since the Supreme Court already lifted Pechman’s injunction,” wrote Slate’s Mark Joseph Stern. “The 9th Circuit found that Pechman hadn’t properly assessed whether former Defense Secretary James Mattis’ final implementation plan shored up the legality of the ban by providing the “considered military judgment” absent from Trump’s impromptu tweets and the resulting scramble to rationalize them.”

“We are pleased that the Ninth Circuit recognized that the district court was wrong to prevent the Department of Defense from applying its policy and also wrong to disregard the confidentiality of matters protected by executive privilege. The Department of Defense will be able to continue implementing a personnel policy it determined necessary to best defend our nation, and the Department of Justice will continue defending that policy as the litigation continues,” DOJ spokesperson Kelly Laco said in a statement.

“Well, it’s not a surprise that the government is focusing on the fact that the Ninth Circuit

technically reversed the district court’s refusal to dissolve the preliminary injunction. That is true, of course—that is the immediate impact of the ruling,” Minter told the *Los Angeles Blade*. “But to note only that is to miss the forest for the trees. The ruling could have reversed the district court and held that the Mattis plan is likely to be constitutional and cannot be enjoined. Instead, it vacated and remanded the issue back to the district court, with instructions that the court should issue a new decision taking into account the panel’s determination that the Mattis plan (contrary to the government’s argument) targets transgender people and that such discrimination is subject to a very serious level of constitutional scrutiny.”

That more serious level of scrutiny also enables the plaintiffs to question more deeply how Mattis arrived at his recommendations for the current policy. The *Los Angeles Blade*, *Politico*, and *ThinkProgress* have all reported extensively on how Trump’s anti-trans tweets originated with anti-LGBT Vice President Mike Pence and his evangelical followers.

As reported in the *Washington Blade*, on May 16, 2019, 85 conservative leaders, many like Tony Perkins, head of the Family Research Council, and scores of retired anti-LGBT military officers, issued a statement opposing transgender service.

“Conservative leaders urgently suggest that the Trump Administration review and rescind the Obama-era policies that hinder military readiness and overall effectiveness,”

the statement said. “Politically correct policies have been imposed largely through administrative fiat. They can be removed in like manner while further study and congressional guidance is obtained. The most problematic policies in this category are those addressing the presence of transgender individuals in the military.”

“While the liberal media insists no thought went into the president’s tweets, the administration has been coordinating with military attorneys behind the scenes for days,” Family Research Council president and leading social conservative activist Tony Perkins wrote in a blog post, The Christian Post confirmed Aug. 11, 2017. “Fortunately, a Pentagon working group had already been established to deal with the issue as part of Defense Secretary James Mattis’s order to delay the enlistment of people confused about their gender.”

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which considers the Family Research Center to be a hate group, wrote this about how they work:

“To make the case that the LGBT community is a threat to American society, the FRC employs a number of ‘policy experts’ whose ‘research’ has allowed the FRC to be extremely active politically in shaping public debate. Its research fellows and leaders often testify before

Congress and appear in the mainstream media. It also works at the grassroots level, conducting outreach to pastors in an effort to ‘transform the culture.’”

There is a good possibility a motive with animus attached might be discovered during the review process. “On the discovery front, the Ninth Circuit similarly held that the plaintiffs are entitled to discovery about the process and provided the district court with a clear road map of how to proceed (including requiring the plaintiffs to make targeted requests and reviewing sensitive documents in camera),” Minter told the Los Angeles Blade.

“In a nutshell, the government’s comment focuses only on one narrow aspect of the ruling and disregards the larger picture, which has opened the door for the plaintiffs to seek a new order enjoining the ban. That is a real game changer and a hugely positive development for the plaintiffs.”

The 9th Circuit ruling also applies to Stockman v. Trump, a challenge brought by Equality California on behalf of its members and seven individual plaintiffs. GLAD and NCLR are counsel in Stockman, along with Latham and Watkins LLP.

The State of California also joined the Stockman v. Trump suit. “Our office is reviewing the decision and will be

working closely with our co-plaintiffs on next steps in the Stockman litigation,” a spokesperson for California Attorney General Xavier Becerra told the Los Angeles Blade.

“This is a hugely positive development. The Ninth Circuit recognized that the Mattis plan clearly targets transgender people, and that the government faces an uphill battle in justifying it,” said Jennifer Levi, Director of Transgender Rights Project at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) in a statement.

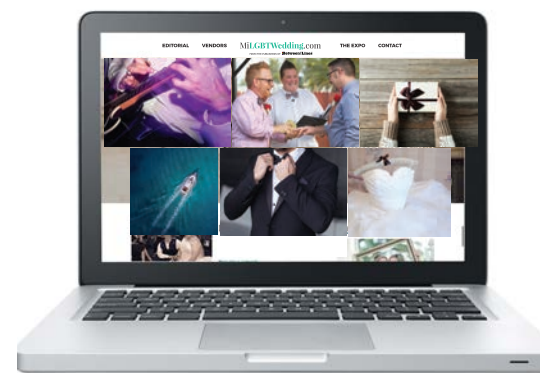
“Equality California welcomes this opportunity to once again make the case for why this ban is harmful to transgender servicemembers, to their families and to our nation’s military. Excluding qualified, dedicated Americans who want nothing more than to serve our country is not only irrational, it is deeply contrary to the military’s own values of judging individuals based on merit, not on irrelevant characteristics that have nothing to do with their fitness to serve,” said Rick Zbur, Executive Director of Equality California.

Minter said he has no idea what kind of timeline the court might establish.

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

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MELISSA ETHERIDGE HAS YOUR MEDICINE

Photo: Lauren Dukoff

Legendary LGBTQ Icon Talks WorldPride and New ‘Totally Fueled By Cannabis’ Album

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Ain't it heavy? Ain't the night heavy? The opioid crisis, national anxiety, school shootings. Our political zoo. The general feeling that the world is always, probably ending.

Because she's a human being even though she's Melissa Etheridge, this all weighed considerably on the 57-year-old LGBTQ icon when she went into the studio to confront the disheartening present-day with a state of mind she calls "balanced," resulting in "The Medicine Show," her first album in three years.

There were deep self-reflective dives into her past, reframing older experiences with a newer,

richer perspective, and there was last year's tragic Parkland shooting, which happened while she was in the recording studio. To find these songs, wherever Melissa Etheridge finds them (not even Melissa Etheridge knows), she blazed cannabis because, she says, why the hell wouldn't she? But the real roots of "The Medicine Show" grow from a place of renewal, reconciliation, reckoning, compassion and healing.

From a stop in March in Copenhagen while on her "Yes I Am 25th Anniversary Tour," Etheridge spoke about seeking answers in inner space, the statement she knew she was making with Amy Grant, and being proud of the fact that she led the way for a song called

"Pussy Is God."

When we last spoke, you were in the early stages of writing "The Medicine Show." You told me then you didn't want to create a protest album, that it was going to put a face on some serious issues, which it does. Why take that approach with these topics?

Because – oh gosh – it goes to your soul more than just preaching something, saying, "We should do this." People are gonna turn off the minute they hear a "should," you know? And so making it – that's art. That's *my* art. You make it personal, and then that's how you change hearts and minds, I think.

As a music consumer, what have you been connecting with in terms of songs that speak to our current times?

Well, I do listen to Kendrick Lamar. I listen to a lot of hip-hop.

Some of those hip-hop sounds have even snuck into your own music over the years.

I'm not very good at making it, but I love to listen to it. With some help, I can make it! But even "Medicine Show," the song, is kind of a rap. So I listen to (hip-hop). Boy, social media now just really connects you up with other artists, and I've been watching the paths of other folks. And even pop artists like Kesha,

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the choices she made, the things that affect the things that affect people and then the art that they make from it. I wouldn't say I was listening to anybody else and them speaking about their times (while making this album). I listen to their *experiences* of the time.

By examining the world right now through your own personal lens, did "The Medicine Show" bring you closer to any kind of truths about the world and the subjects that you wrote about?

I'm pretty solid about what truth is and how the way that I hold my own experience and the way that I define my experience and perceive it is the most important thing. So, taking care of how I receive things is one of the reasons it's hard for me to condemn anyone else. It makes more sense to me to experience and speak of finding a way to stay out of being a victim and stay out of being a judge. You gotta ride right in the middle. And that's balance.

I like the word balance, because we're constantly given opportunities to define ourselves – and we can define ourselves as a victim of something or we can judge others, or we can understand that I make my own life, I make my own choices, and how I'm going to be affected by life. So you can't really blame anybody else or become a victim. But that's a whole other conversation. That's, like, an hour-long conversation.

I recall reading that after your battle with breast cancer you went on an identity and self-love journey. And many of these songs look inside yourself as well as outside. Which songs for you fit into that journey that you've been on since beating breast cancer?

My first instinct is to say all of them, even "The Last Hello," which is just an observation. I was in the studio when the Parkland shooting happened, and their choices – the way that they chose to not be a victim and to come out and say "we need change" – affected me deeply in seeing, "Ah, yes, I'm finally seeing outside of myself," and what I believed in is how we can move forward and create change. So all of the songs, even the subjects that might seem outside of myself, all come from this journey of mine.

How did your song for Parkland end up being a song about the survivors and not the victims?

When I heard the surviving students, and when I saw Emma Gonzalez and David Hogg

get up and speak from their hearts the next day, it was so powerful. I remember reading where there over 150,000 survivors of school shootings – survivors! – and I thought, "Oh gosh, that's a lot of people alive who are affected by this and how deeply they are affected," and so instead of writing a sad song about the victims I said, "What about these survivors and how can one give them hope?"

On "The Medicine Show," you say, "Come on down to mama's farm," referencing your own marijuana business, called Etheridge Farms. What would I find on mama's farm?

You would find medicine. You would find an interest in a growing desire to bring plant medicine to the world, to have people understand health in a different way. And though we talk about – woo! – getting stoned and people only talk about it in that little area, there is so much healing and understanding and consciousness-raising and awareness that plant medicine brings. I've always told people we're trying to go to outer space but all the answers are in inner space.

How does marijuana enhance the songwriting experience for you? And did it on this album?

Yeah! This whole album is totally fueled by cannabis. Oh goodness, yes. (Laughs) For one, it quiets the left side of my brain; the left side of our brain is in charge of keeping us alive, keeping us from stepping out in front of a car; it worries about the future, it regrets the past, it's that voice (saying) "you're no good." Its job is to keep us alive, so it worries. And cannabis, scientifically, I can go into detail: Cannabis quiets that part of your mind and it allows the intuitive (to kick in), the right side, which is all in the now. In the infinite now. Which is really all there is. And that place is where I can open up to the thoughts and instincts and inspiration. I mean, I've been writing songs for a long time and I'm the first one to understand that they come from nowhere. (Laughs) I can't explain to you how I got that idea. But that's what it does. It quiets it.

When have you written a song high that you didn't think you could've pulled off otherwise?

(Laughs) I don't know! I've never thought about it that way. I suppose I could pull it off in another way, without it – but why? That's a funny question.

I guess I wonder if it really allows you to tap into something that you don't think you could without quieting the left side of the brain first.

Well, I don't think I have to be in the world of cannabis to do that. I think one can meditate and one can get to where plant medicine can get them but, again, why? (Laughs)

You're scoring the stage adaptation of the 1988 film "Mystic Pizza," starring Julia Roberts. Are you



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See **Melissa**, continued on p. 19

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► Melissa

Continued from p. 17

done writing it?

Oh no, I just started writing it. Once I said “yes” to doing it, they made a big press release. I was like, “Oh my god, I haven’t even started.”

What’s the connection between the story and what you bring to the table as a musical and lyrical artist?

What I liked about it is it’s a very strong woman story. I went back and I watched the movie, and I remember it making a big impression in the ’80s because it was three lead women and their stories, and it’s about immigrants and it’s about taking the Old World into America and keeping those secret ingredients. Then it’s about the freedom to go find your own dream. It’s a beautiful little story that I think has some beautiful moments, and it’s my first try at this.

As someone who’s won two Grammys and also performed during the telecast, was a change palpable this year for women and the LGBTQ community?

It’s easy to look around and see a lot of change in how our society’s holding women and sort of the empowerment that women have felt since the presidential election of 2016. Because you feel that slipping back and you’re like, “No, no, no, no, we were moving forward,” so you see a lot of empowerment in #MeToo and just equality and equal pay and in the music business. The music business is funny.

How so?

It’s run by 90 percent men, and so it was sort of the last place (to change). And the men in charge of the Grammys, they’ve been around for a long time (laughs) and we witnessed (Neil) Portnow’s, “Well, women need to step up” comment. I wanted to put on my album (and say), “Well, Neil, did I step up?”

But you feel a shift from even opinions like his?

So much. It’s an awareness. It’s a, “Oh, we never thought about it that way,” and that’s what’s happening. I don’t think anyone did it nefariously. I don’t think they said, “We gotta keep the women down.” They just didn’t think about it. And that’s the problem right there: The myopic view of music, as just men making music. I myself have even looked and gone, “Wow, I didn’t think it could be that way either.” It’s been a real change for the last two years. It’s been pretty amazing.

You and recent Grammy winner Brandi Carlile went back and forth on Twitter about how much you admire each other. She actually recorded background vocals for your 2004 song “Lucky,” but you didn’t know each other at the time, right?

Yeah, no. Josh Freese was producing the track and brought her in. She was in Seattle, but then I ran into her at some music convention thing where she ran up to me backstage and said, “Oh my god, I’m such a huge fan.” I’ve been watching her career since then, and I love her music so much and I would love to do more with her and would love to be in more contact with her. I’m just so proud of her.

When I think about your collaborations, one of the most unexpected to me is your duet with Amy Grant on “You Can Sleep While I Drive” in 2000. Growing up, it meant a great deal to me as an Amy fan. My gay world and my Christian world were colliding. At the time were you aware of the significance of a major Christian artist performing with a very out lesbian?

Absolutely! I met Amy in 1988 at a hotel in Amsterdam. We hung out and talked, and she’s just a sweetheart and a

big friend. I’d seen her around at things, and when she and Vince (Gill, who she married in 2000 after a divorce from Gary Chapman in 1999) got together she got flack from the Christian community, and so she always had the belief that it’s un-Christian to hate someone for loving and did not stop for one moment from saying, yes, she would come and sing with me. I thought it was huge and I was very aware of what it meant.

Looking ahead, you’re headlining the WorldPride Closing Ceremony, which takes place June 30 in Times Square. What kind of message do you plan on bringing to the event?

I’m doing three songs and I’m probably gonna stick to the big gay songs. (Laughs) I’ll have to look and see what the audience is like. At the moment I know I start the thing off that night, so maybe ... I really don’t know. It just means a lot to be there. It means a lot that there’s a thing called WorldPride. Just amazing being there, and I’m just gonna love being in the presence of my brothers and sisters.

Which LGBTQ artists give you hope for the future for LGBTQ inclusion in music?

I can’t tell you how excited I am about King Princess. (Laughs) Ahh! Dig her! My daughter’s really into her, and so we’re listening and all of a sudden “Pussy Is God” comes on and I just said, “Well, I’m glad that 25 years ago I did what I did so that today a woman could release ‘Pussy Is God.’” It’s like, so my work here is done. Thank you.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

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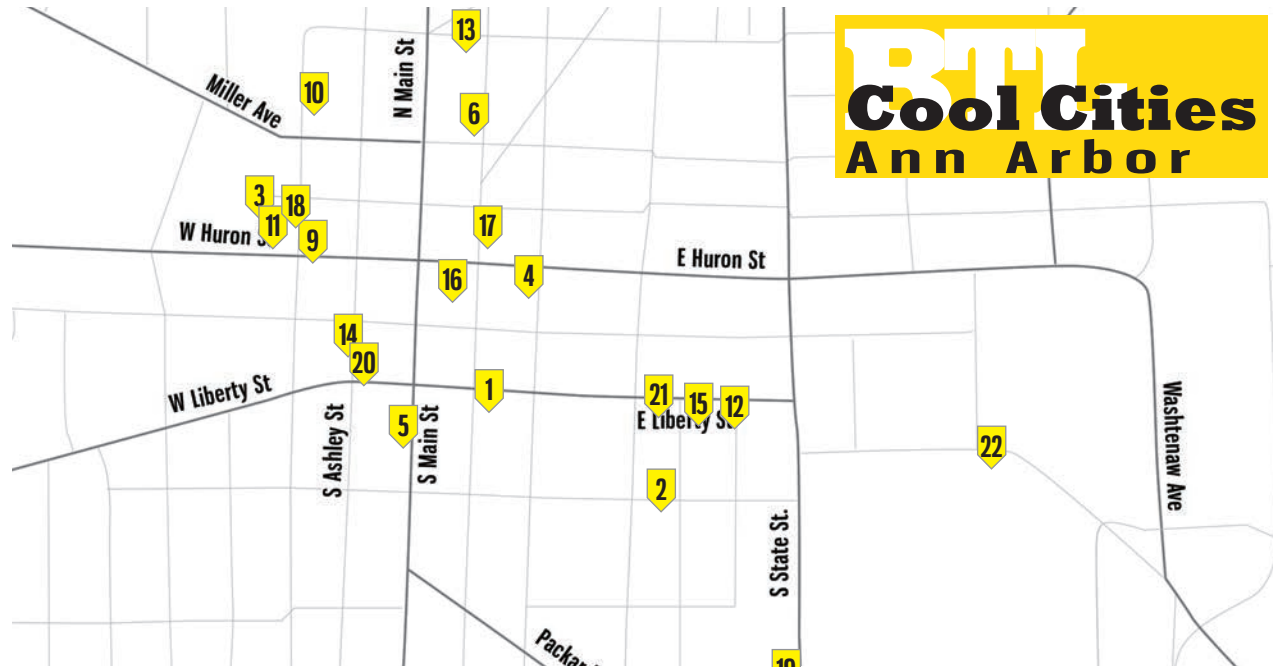
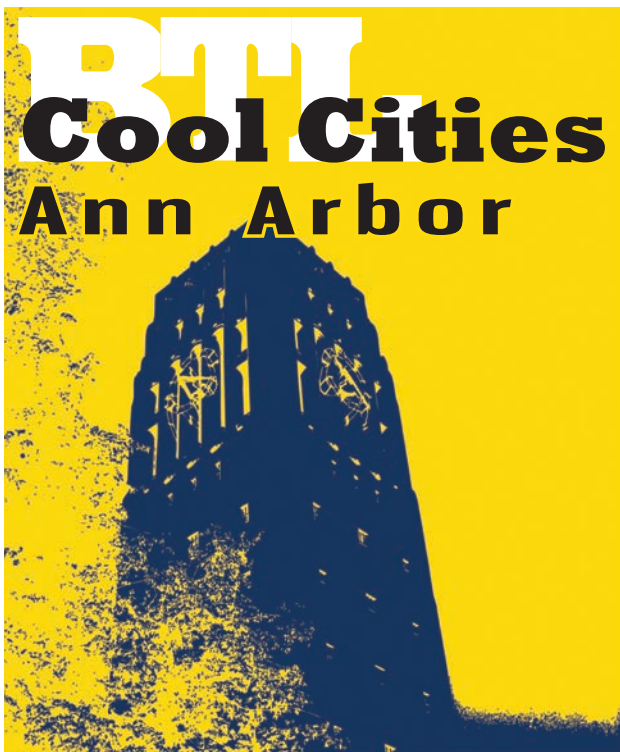
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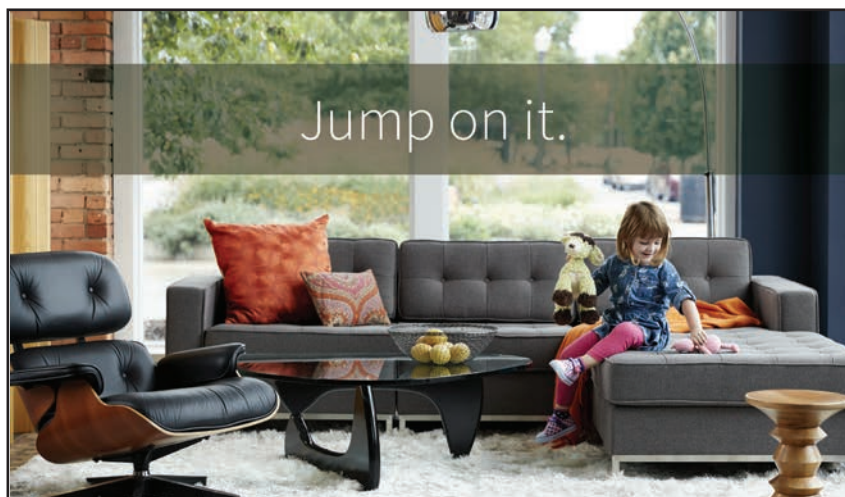


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Happenings

Out Musician Lucy Spraggan at PJ's Lager House June 21

Out pop artist Lucy Spraggan skyrocketed to fame after debuting on "The X Factor" seven years ago and has kept her momentum up since. With the release of her fifth album "Today Was a Good Day," she'll be stopping at PJ's Lager House in Detroit on her American tour. Find out more about the upcoming show by visiting pjslagerhouse.com.

OUTINGS

Friday, June 21

LGBT Social Meet Up 6:30 pm LGBT social meet up group for all lgbt people who want to meet have light hearted discussions and social activities some activities , all is welcomed Hazel Park Community Center, 620 West Woodward Heights, Hazel Park. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com. Michigan Lgbt peer support network facebook

Saturday, June 22

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

Monday, June 24

LGBT Game Night 7 pm An opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee and socialize with other LGBT individuals. An event every week that begins at 7pm on Monday, repeating indefinitely Java Hut, 165 W Nine Mile, Ferndale. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com

Tuesday, June 25

Strand with Trans Support Groups - Ann Arbor - Washtenaw 7:30 pm Meeting the 4th Tuesday of each month @ Journey of Faith Christian Church. An event every month that begins at 7:30pm

on day Fourth of the month, Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. www.standwithtrans.org

Wed., June 26

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 2 pm A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings, and potlucks are held throughout the year. With age comes wisdom but, for LGBTQ seniors, loneliness can often come along An event every week that begins at 2 pm on [day] Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 www.goaffirmations.org

Thursday, June 27

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Farmington Hills - Oakland County 8:00 pm All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. This group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month @ Orchard United Methodist Church. Come into the parking lot and go left down the An event every month

that begins at 8:00pm on day Second of the month, repeating indefinitely An event every month that begins at 8:00pm on day Fourth of the month, repeating indefinitely

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Editor's Pick

Hugh Jackman at Little Caesars Arena June 24

The Academy Award-nominated, Golden Globe and Tony Award-winning performer will head to Detroit on his first-ever world tour. He'll perform music from some of the most recognizable Broadway and film shows in the world like "Les Miserables" all while being accompanied by a live orchestra. Find out more about showtimes and ticketing online at 313presents.com.



Editor's Pick

Radio Campfire at Detroit Podcast Festival

Fans of podcasts and all things radio can get excited for the Radio Campfire "Round Here" audio stories on Friday, June 28. Listeners will get to hear sound portraits and sonic experiments from Detroit about the city. The event will be going on from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at MusicTown Detroit, located at 2301 Woodward Ave. Find out more on eventbrite.com.



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Tuesday, July 2

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County 7:00 pm FREE and OPEN to the community. For parents of transgender kids, this group meets the 1st Tuesday of each month @ St. Mary's In-the-Hills Episcopal Church. Parent Support Group Facilitated by Lisa Goyette, ally, activist. An event every month that begins at 7:00pm on day First of the month, repeating indefinitely St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663 www.stmarysinthehills.org http://www.standwithtrans.org

Thursday, July 4

Pride Night at Thunderbowl! 8:00 pm Meet & Greet First Thursday of every month, unlimited bowling, shoe rental, private room, private bar area, drink specials, billiard room, 250 foot video wall. Come as you are!! An event every month that begins at 8:00pm on day First of the month, repeating until December 5 Thunderbowl Arena, 4200 Allen Road, Allen Park. 313-928-4688 www.thunderbowl.org/http://www.thunderbowl.org/

Sunday, July 7

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 5 pm 2020 St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st Street, Wyandotte. 734-747-4363 www.standwithtrans.org

Monday, July 8

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County 7:30 pm Macomb Teen/ Youth Support Group: Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700 www.chippewavalleyhighschools.org/schools/high-schools/dhs/

Wednesday, July 10

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genesee 7:30 pm Free to all. Trans Youth Support Group meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month @ Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint. Facilitator Sara Griffin, MA, LPC is a psychotherapist and a parent of a transgender son, eiregriff@aol.com An event every month that begins at 7:30pm on day Second of the month, repeating until July 8, 2020 Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023 uufliint.org http://www.standwithtrans.org

Thursday, July 11

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County 8 pm Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620 www.oaklandumc.org http://www.standwithtrans.org

Wednesday, July 17

Stand with Trans Support Groups – Livonia – Wayne County 7:30 pm Free to all, group meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile Road, Livonia. www.standwithtrans.org

MUSIC & MORE

Coordinating a Community Response to the Opioid Epidemic June 25, 8:30 pm Molly Welch Marahar, MPP; WHI Opioid Project Coordinator; and Carrie Rheingans, MSW, MPH; WHI Project Manager, Center for Healthcare Research & Transformation will be joined by a panel to discuss coordinating a community response to St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series

Grace Jones July 1, 7 pm The legendary Grace Jones come to the Masonic Temple on July 1. Masonic Temple Theatre, 500 Temple St., Detroit. themasonic.com

THEATER

Anastasia the new Broadway musical, comes to the Fisher Theatre. Until June 23 Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000 http://broadwayindetroit.com/anastasia

Barbu Electro Trad Cabaret – Cirque Alfonse 8 pm Part of the Ann Arbor Summer Festival entertainment series, Barbu Electro Trad Cabaret by Cirque Alfonse delves into the origins of the circus in Montreal. Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org http://smt.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm https://a2sf.org/events/barbu/

Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents "Williston" Three energy reps travel to Williston, ND to get mineral rights to the last big piece of undeveloped land. A scintillating exploration of how business corrupts people and the fine line between commerce and conscience. Until June 29 Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 DetRepTh@aol.com DetRepTh@aol.com http://www.detroitreptheatre.com/williston

Welcome to Paradise, A World Premiere by Julie Marino at Purple Rose Theatre Company June 20 - Aug. 31. Chelsea, Michigan. Purple Rose Theatre.org



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Solution to puzzle on pg. 25

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Jesse Tyler Ferguson will produce 'Stonewall Forever'

Gay documentary filmmaker Jeffrey Schwarz has built a career digging into queer pop culture, exploring how it has shaped the rest of the world. He's directed "Vito," about openly gay film historian and author of "The Celluloid Closet" Vito Russo. He also made "Tab Hunter Confidential," and "The Fabulous Alan Carr," about the not-so-openly-gay 1950s heartthrob and the flamboyant mastermind behind "Grease," respectively. Now he'll tackle the most iconic queer symbol of all, the Stonewall Inn, the legendary bar that sparked a civil rights revolution for LGBTQIA+ people, in the documentary "Stonewall Forever." Executive produced by "Modern Family" star Jesse Tyler Ferguson alongside his husband Justin Mikita, the film will tell the story of the bar, its status as an iconic queer space, and the people whose lives intersected with it and went on to make history. Will most likely be required viewing when it hits screens.



Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Justin Mikita. Photo: KathClick

Josie Totah, Lisa Kudrow and Whitney Cummings are 'Good People'

Ever since the underloved "Champions" got cancelled, we've been eagerly anticipating Josie Totah's next career move. We've been fans since she stole scenes in the indie comedy "Other People" and are even happier to see her moving forward after coming out as transgender. Now Amazon has Totah co-starring with Whitney Cummings and Lisa Kudrow in the sitcom pilot "Good People." Lee Daniels created the show that revolves around three generations of women working on a college campus and navigating cultural changes happening all around. Totah's character is a confident Generation Z student who challenges her older co-workers' attitudes (and most likely annoys them, hence comedy). Greg Kinnear and Martin Short will co-star. Look for it to drop on Amazon at any given moment, since that's how we're all doing things these days.

working-class roots, through the early '80s club scene (and a stint dancing in the crowd on the British chart show "Top of the Pops") and then on to international fame as lead singer for Culture Club. This story, of course, comes with all the usual demons that attach themselves to fame, but the happy ending is a George who hasn't rejected his over-the-top persona and who came out on the winning end. Now, who gets cast to lip sync for his life (or try singing like Taron Egerton)? Stay tuned.

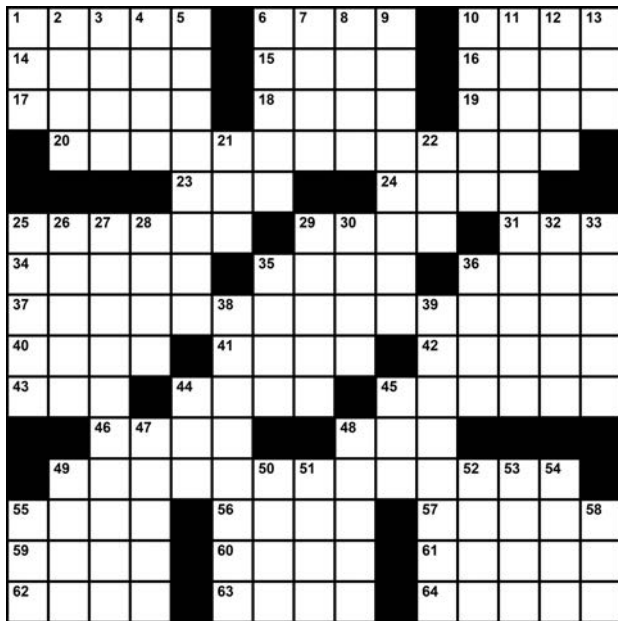
Tilda Swinton re-meets the king of Thai art film

Let's say that, like us, you're a huge Tilda Swinton fan and an equally huge fan of queer Thai art filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul, the Palme d'Or-winning director of the magically strange films "Tropical Malady" and "Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives." Then you waited and waited for a promised project that never materialized when several years ago it was announced that the two would make a film together. For whatever reasons that project collapsed, but now it looks like the pair will work together on a film called "Memoria." Set in Colombia, it's about a woman who is drawn to unknown sounds. It's also an exploration of colonialism and collective responses to danger. And if that sounds baffling, don't worry about it - Weerasethakul traffics in mystery and open-ended meaning. And his enlisting of the most adventurous actress of this generation to partner with is just going to double the pleasure. Proceed weirdly, please.

Boy George gets a biopic

They all come in threes, it seems. After the success of "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Rocketman," another biopic of a beloved and legendary queer performer was begging to be brought to life to complete the set. And winner is: Boy George. Sacha Gervasi ("My Dinner with Herve," "Anvil: The Story of Anvil") is set to write and direct a feature that George will executive produce (just like Elton did, making sure the story gets told to his expectations). The untitled project will dive back in time to George's Irish,

Romeo San Vicente will always tumble for ya.



Show Me the Mon-e QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Stallion's sound
- 6 "A Boy Named Sue" writer
Silverstein
- 10 Simians on Roddy McDowall's
planet
- 14 Transsexual Richards
- 15 Part of UTEP
- 16 "And ___ bed"
- 17 "Rose is a rose is a rose" source
- 18 Alda of "The West Wing"

- 19 "Jabberwocky" starter
- 20 2016 movie in which Janelle
Mon-e played a NASA engineer
- 23 Lodge man
- 24 Missile shot off by the Air Force
- 25 Completely encloses
- 29 Bone to pick
- 31 Da. before Mardi Gras
- 34 Give feedback
- 35 "Cabaret" mister
- 36 Cher's son Chaz

- 37 2018 movie in which Janelle
Mon-e played a social worker
- 40 Man, as a cruising goal
- 41 Enjoys a Rubicon restaurant
- 42 Words before evil
- 43 Born, to Bonheur
- 44 Where to get off in gay Paree
- 45 Women who date men who date
men
- 46 Pride expression
- 48 Chicago cap word
- 49 2018 concept album by Janelle
Mon-e
- 55 Gershon of "Bound"
- 56 Reconciled, with "up"
- 57 Shakespearean forest
- 59 Race track shape
- 60 Stunt man Knievel
- 61 Evans of "Dynasty"
- 62 'N Sync member Lance
- 63 Kristy McNichol sitcom "Empty
___"
- 64 Orgasm, e.g.

Down

- 1 MTF operation
- 2 Amsterdam's land (abbr.)
- 3 R.E.M.'s "The ___ Love"
- 4 Tobias pseudonym
- 5 Took care of
- 6 Slap the cheeks of
- 7 Word with better or other
- 8 Morales of "Resurrection Blvd."
- 9 Antidistestablishmentarianism, for
example?
- 10 Dog that Elroy Jetson stroked
- 11 It shortens leaves of grass
- 12 Vowels of Sappho
- 13 Signal that goes either way
- 21 Dottermans of "Antonia's Line"
- 22 "Weird Al" Yankovic movie
- 25 "Desert Fox" Rommel
- 26 Attorney general of dancer Ron's
dad
- 27 A few have danced with Nureyev
- 28 Caesar's "See!"
- 29 Rosie's role in "The Flintstones"
- 30 Boy who shoots off arrows
- 32 Erect
- 33 Prejudice and homophobia
- 35 Emulate Dr. Drew Alister
- 36 City near Anaheim
- 38 Robin's gay guys
- 39 They're neither gay nor straight
- 44 Granola lesbian's bit
- 45 Blow
- 47 Doctoral hurdle
- 48 Refine ore
- 49 Mariah or Madonna
- 50 Big hole
- 51 Poems of Sappho
- 52 Mistake for Paul Taylor
- 53 First name among lesbian poets
- 54 Beatty flick
- 55 Sailor, in slang
- 58 Locale for Brando's "Apocalypse
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
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Hear Me Out BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

8 New Songs For Your Summer Playlist



Taylor Swift is a gay icon on the job! Céline Dion is flying! Katy Perry is not sexualizing buffets! And then, there's MIKA, your "Ice Cream" man, and country queen Tanya Tucker's stately comeback single, produced by Grammy-winning lesbian extraordinaire Brandi Carlile. Don't let the season pass you by without giving these new summer songs a spin.

"You Need to Calm Down," Taylor Swift

Homophobes, look what you made Taylor Swift do: the pop superstar's second single from her upcoming *_Lover_* album is her gayest yet. She celebrates guys in gowns (and calls out those who don't). She rightfully wonders why protesters with anti-gay signs at Pride parades waste their time. And as confirmed in the lyric video, there's a shoutout to GLAAD, with the line, "Why are you mad when you could be GLAAD?" It gets even gayer when the mega singer-songwriter calls out homophobic haters who gay-hate because, after all, "shade never made anybody less gay." Swift's most political song (it's at least partly about Trump and she doesn't even need to say his name) comes shortly after the singer-songwriter recently released a statement in support of Tennessee's Equality Act.



"Never Really Over," Katy Perry

Baby, she's a firework again. That's more than could be said about Katy Perry two or even six years ago, when the motivational-anthem maker leaned heavily into self-caricature and tried, in an exceptionally on-brand move, to make buffets sexy. That "Never Really Over" has more in common with "Fireworks" or "Roar" is the biggest compliment I've given Perry in years. The single wipes the slate clean – yes, even the text she couldn't bring herself to send, to unintentionally

hilarious effect, on the fatuous "Save As Draft" is finally leaving me – as its percussive snaps and sound-drop effects propel the track into a funky synth-club bop worthy of Robyn-level ranking in the dance-salve canon.

"Rollercoaster," Jonas Brothers

Crying because of a JoBros song: I assure you, this is not where I saw myself at age 36 either. But here I am and here we are, the Disney boys all grown up, reminiscing on youth and presumably their up-and-down relationship with each other on "Rollercoaster." And me, all misty-eyed, flooded with my own boy-to-man memories. Nostalgia will do that, as the JoBros toggle between bouncy Mumford & Sons choruses and mellow verses to achieve an exuberant anthem that will tug at your vulnerable daddy tears.

"Want You in My Room," Carly Rae Jepsen

You can take it from me or you can take it from Taylor Swift, who knows a cute bop when she hears one, which is why she included this slice of '80s heaven on her official Apple Music playlist. But if you're not already listening to "Want You in My Room" from CRJ's gem of a pop album, "Dedicated," well, it's never too late to start living. The greatest joy within your reach at this very moment is hearing Jepsen boisterously shout-sing about having sex for two minutes and 46 seconds. And if you ask me, that's at least 10 hours too short.

"With My Whole Heart," Sufjan Stevens

For June Pride Month, not-explicitly-out but suggestively queer musician Sufjan Stevens released two songs, with portions of the proceeds benefiting two organizations supporting LGBTQ

and homeless children in America (the Ali Forney Center in Harlem, NY, and the Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit). The song's welcome lightheartedness is a shift from the dark skies hovering over his last album, the grief-stricken "Carrie & Lowell." "With My Whole Heart" is sonically ambitious and upbeat, a respite that casts a shimmer with electro fragments that dissolve into a million brilliant tiny pieces.

"Ice Cream," MIKA

Queer glam-pop artist MIKA leaned on his newest single "Ice Cream," the first from his upcoming October full-length, to weather some personal storms and some actual weather (no AC in Italy, where the song came to him) while writing this delectable treat, a sumptuous '90s throwback to signature Prince and George Michael. It's a gay parade of sounds, the beach on a blistering day. And who can argue with what it stands for: "Dare to be the more proud version of yourself," MIKA says. "Dare to be a sensual man, dare to express out loud the desires you always keep inside your head. That's why and how I wrote it."

"The Wheels of Laredo," Tanya Tucker

If anyone was going to get country legend Tanya Tucker back in the saddle, it was going to be Tucker fangirl and openly lesbian Grammy winner Brandi Carlile. Lucky us: co-

producing Tucker's first album of new material in 17 years, "While I'm Livin'" out Aug. 23, Carlile, along with twin bandmates Tim and Phil Hanseroth, aid in the record's wistful, understated comeback single. They wrote it. They produced it. And in the background of Tucker's poignant drawl, with their signature harmonies, that's them you hear on it.

"Flying On My Own," Céline Dion

Our favorite goofy, rubber-faced gay icon, Céline Dion, knows just how to pick up the pieces of her broken heart after losing her husband, René Angélil, in 2016: by channeling her grief and solitude into a rousing, life-affirming dance anthem seemingly created solely for the purpose of helping gay hearts go on and on and on. The mother-of-three recently debuted the empowering club jam during her final show in Vegas, capping a 16-year residency. Her wingspan wide, her voice expectedly sky-bound, her "feet on the runway," the song turns the page on Céline's life and career. But flying on her own? Not with that refreshingly optimistic beat in a room full of gesticulating homosexuals.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. Reach him @chrisazzopardi.



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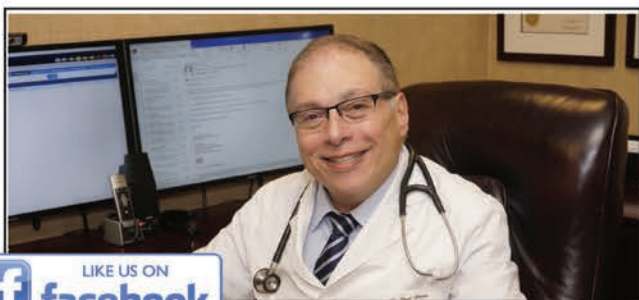
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