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County

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Lawmakers, Medical Experts Speak Out Against Anti-Trans Health Proposal

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

A coalition of 125 House Democrats and the American Medical Association submitted but two of the hundreds of thousands of comments to the Trump administration in opposition to a proposed rule that would exclude transgender people from non-discrimination protections in health care.

The comments were submitted Tuesday to the Department of Health & Human Services as part of the comment process for the proposed rule change for enforcement of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, which was announced in May just before Memorial Day weekend.

The Trump administration proposal would roll back an Obama-era rule interpreting Obamacare, which bars discrimination on the basis of sex in health care, to apply to cases of anti-trans discrimination, including the denial of transition-related care and gender reassignment surgery.

The rule change also seeks to roll back the interpretation of the law as it pertains non-discrimination protections for women who have had abortions and individuals with limited English-speaking ability.

The group of 125 House Democrats who submitted a formal letter in opposition to the rule were led by Reps. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Joseph Kennedy III (D-Mass.) and Diana DeGette (D-Colo.).

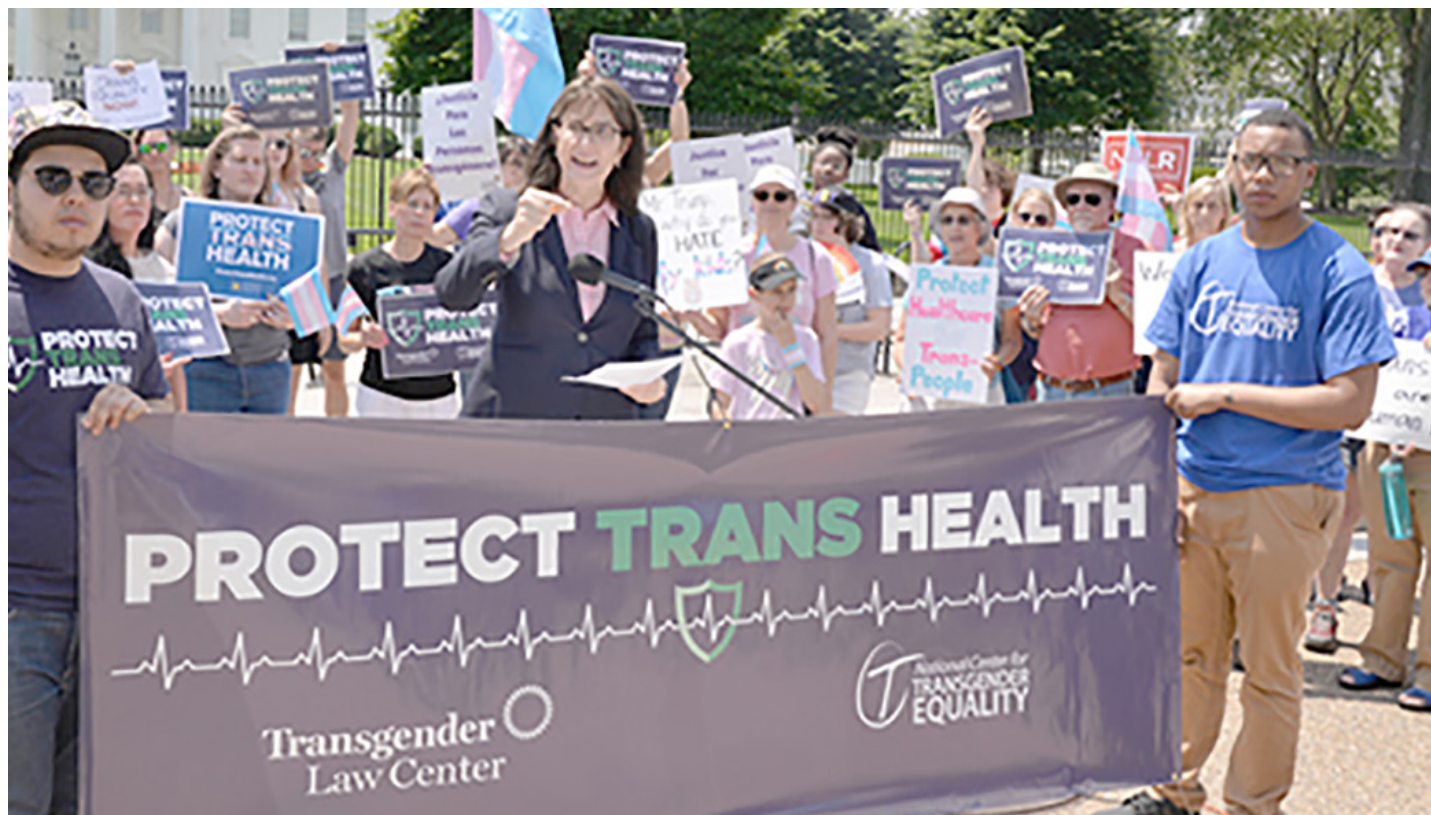
“Let me be clear: Patient care should be determined by what’s best for the patient, not a provider’s personal beliefs,” Lee said in a statement. “This proposed rule would place even more barriers to care for groups who need it the most, especially LGBTQ+ people, people needing reproductive health care, those whose first language is not English, people of color and people with disabilities.”

The American Medical Association, the nation’s largest association of physicians and medical students, also submitted a formal letter in opposition to the proposed change.

“This proposal marks the rare occasion in which a federal agency seeks to remove civil rights protections,” the letter says. “It legitimizes unequal treatment of patients by not only providers, health care organizations and insurers but also by the government itself — and it will harm patients. Such policy should not be permitted by the U.S. government, let alone proposed by it.”

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey also led a coalition of 22 state attorneys general in submitting a comment in opposition to the rule.

Another comment was submitted by the



Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, speaks at a rally in front of the White House on May 29, 2019 against anti-trans health measures. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

Leadership Conference Education Fund, which said the proposal “would sow discrimination back into the health care system.”

An advocacy group for people with chronic conditions known as “I Am Essential,” which says the change “will make it much harder for people with serious and chronic health conditions to afford and get what they need,” submitted comments signed by 122 organizations.

The National Center for Transgender Equality says it has gathered with the Transgender Law Center more than 20,000 such comments in opposition to the rule change and the coalition as a whole has gathered more than 110,000 comments.

The proposed rule-change is a double whammy for the transgender community, which already endured a rollback in health care protections after the Department of Health & Human Services implemented a “conscience rule” allowing medical practitioners to deny services that violate their religious beliefs, including treatment for transgender people.

As transgender advocates solicit comments in opposition to the rule, anti-trans groups have been mustering their forces to submit comments to support of the Trump administration change.

Last week, the anti-LGBT Family Research

Council sent out an email blast soliciting comments from supporters in the support of the anti-trans rollback. The Family Research Council didn’t respond to the Blade’s request to comment on the number of comments it obtained.

The comments are intended to inform the Department of Health & Human Services’ implementation of the proposed rule. Regardless of the comments, if the administration deems the measure appropriate, the rule will become final.

A Department of Health & Human Services spokesperson said the department “takes seriously” congressional inquiries and public comments and will respond appropriately and in a timely fashion.

“Every person should be treated with dignity and respect and HHS is committed to vigorously enforcing all of the civil rights laws as entrusted to us by Congress, before, during and after any rule-making,” the spokesperson said.

It should be noted the regulation the Trump administration seeks to rescind was already moot. U.S. District Judge Reed O’Connor had enjoined the U.S. government from enforcing the Obama-era rule as a result of a lawsuit filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton. The Trump administration under former U.S.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions declined to appeal the decision.

Transgender advocates had long anticipated this proposed rule change from the Trump administration and during the comment process sounded the alarm for supporters of transgender rights to submit letters in opposition to the policy.

Gillian Branstetter, a spokesperson for the National Center for Transgender Equality, said the Trump administration should pay heed to the breadth of the voices in the comments against the proposed change.

“We’ve been deeply moved by the massive outpouring of support for the health care access of transgender people from friends, families, allies, providers, faith leaders and trans people themselves,” Branstetter said. “These include countless stories of fear, prejudice and ignorance experienced by trans people when they need it most. HHS must acknowledge the enormous risks posed by this rule for severe harm to marginalized people and public health as a whole.”

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

Gavin Grimm Wins Case Against Virginia School District

BY MICHAEL LAVERS

A transgender man who challenged his Virginia school district's bathroom policy has won his case.

U.S. District Court Judge Arenda L. Wright Allen of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia on Aug. 9 ruled in favor of Gavin Grimm, who in 2015 filed a federal lawsuit against a Gloucester County School District policy that prohibited students from using bathrooms and locker rooms that did not correspond with their "biological gender."

The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Allen ruled the district discriminated against Grimm when it enacted the policy.

Grimm was a sophomore at Gloucester County High School when he filed his lawsuit. He said in a statement from the American Civil Liberties Union, who represented him, that it is "such a relief to achieve this closure and vindication from the court after four years of fighting not just for myself but for trans youth across America."

"I promise to continue to advocate for as long as it takes for everyone to be able to live their authentic lives freely, in public and without harassment and discrimination," said Grimm.

The U.S. Supreme Court was scheduled to hear oral arguments in the case in March 2017.

The justices remanded it to the 4th Circuit after President Trump rescinded guidance to public schools that said Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires them to allow trans students to use restrooms based on their gender identity.

Media reports indicate the Gloucester County School Board is expected to appeal Allen's ruling.

"Every student should feel safe at school, regardless of gender identity," said Human Rights Campaign State Legislative Director and Senior Counsel Cathryn Oakley in a statement. "Transgender students are covered by Title IX and the United States Constitution and are entitled to the same rights and protections as every other student."

"With the Trump-Pence administration's barrage of attacks on LGBTQ people in this country, including against students, we are pleased that yet another federal court decision has reaffirmed legal rights and dignity of transgender people," added Oakley. "Congratulations to Gavin Grimm and the American Civil Liberties Union on this milestone victory."

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Gavin Grimm has won his lawsuit that challenged his former Virginia school district's bathroom policy.

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County Commissions Take Lead on Expanding LGBTQ Rights in Michigan

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Editor's Note: This piece originally incorrectly listed Oakland County as "taking the lead" in passing a resolution supporting the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Shortly after publishing this original piece, BTL learned that commissioners in several other Michigan counties have passed similar resolutions. Below is an updated version of the piece that includes those counties.

Oakland County Sends a Message

In a series of moves that could serve as leverage toward expanding LGBTQ rights in Michigan, first-term Oakland County Commissioner Penny Luebs is one of several county commissioners across the state leading the charge.

According to an Aug. 6 video with Luebs and Board of Commissioners Chair Dave Woodward that was posted on Facebook, the County Commission has adopted a resolution supporting the expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

Oakland County is not the first county in Michigan to adopt such a resolution. Coincidentally, Isabella County adopted a similar resolution Aug. 6 as well. Ingham and Washtenaw Counties adopted resolutions in 2014 and 2015, respectively, while Jackson County adopted a resolution in June.

"I think Oakland County is a welcoming county, and we're emphasizing that in any way we can," Luebs told *Between The Lines*. "We appreciate everybody, their contributions."

Luebs said the resolution was sent to Lansing. "We feel this is an important issue that will impact people's lives," she said, later adding, "Each person, you treat with respect. I don't understand the other side of it. It seems normal to me. To put it in writing perhaps will help people understand."

Blue Wave

Luebs is one of five new Commissioners. Flipping the seat held by Republican incumbent Wade Fleming secured a Democratic majority on the Commission for the first time in more than 40 years. That district, District 16, encompasses Clawson, half of Troy and a very small part of Royal Oak. Prior to the 2018 election, Luebs was Clawson's longest-serving mayor.

"We're moving in all different directions," Luebs said with a laugh. "It almost seems

"We feel this is an important issue that will impact people's lives. Each person, you treat with respect. I don't understand the other side of it. It seems normal to me. To put it in writing perhaps it will help people understand."

- Penny Luebs

that with a majority on the board now, we all have good ideas and we're all moving in those directions, and there's so much to talk about. So it really is quite exciting."

However, Luebs refused to take all the credit when asked about the progress of the newly Democratic-majority Commission.

"It's not just me," she said. "I can't take that limelight or that credit. The board staff is very welcoming. They're good at what they do. They answer questions, they provide information, they provide background. Everybody is quite helpful. We have mentors, we have role models. We have a lot of activity. It's comfortable, and it's exciting," she said, although she's "not sure those two words go together" but agreed she feels very welcomed.

To further illustrate the changes happening as a result of the new leadership, Luebs pointed out, "We appointed the first woman to the road commission. We're moving toward more diversity. We appointed the first two African-American women to the [Parks and Recreation] board," she said, citing various ways Oakland County is not just "talking the talk."

Bipartisan Support, Hope for the Future

In the video, Woodward noted that state Sen. Jeremy Moss, who represents part of Oakland County, recently introduced legislation to amend ELCRA — the latest of numerous attempts over the years. It has the support of other state legislators as well. And Woodward emphasized the resolution had bipartisan support of the commission.

"I think it really speaks volumes to have a bipartisan vote in support of expanding protections for the LGBT community," Woodward said, adding that they will ask



Oakland County Commissioner Penny Luebs and Board of Commissioners Chair Dave Woodward address the crowd at the Greater Royal Oak Democratic Club, May 4.

members of the state legislature from Oakland County to be "champions and leaders" on this issue. Woodward thanked Luebs for her leadership.

"It is the right thing to do," Luebs said, as the video concluded. "It's past time."

The death of Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson on Aug. 3 leaves many unanswered questions as to the county's direction in the long term. Democratic leadership is a real possibility for the first time since the 1970s.

Meanwhile, in Mt. Pleasant

Concurrently on Aug. 6, Isabella County passed a resolution in support of ELCRA. BTL caught up with County Commissioner James Moreno to get the longtime social justice and political activist's take on the developments in his own county, and the prospects for ELCRA's future.

"What I'm trying to do is build momentum, like a snowball" rolling downhill, Moreno said, "It's in limbo. It's in committee," he said, regarding the legislation never having had a hearing.

Of his own county's board of commissioners, he expressed frustration with some conservative members whom he said told him, "We can't immediately do this."

"It's 37 years late," Moreno pointed out.

Sounding fairly confident that a county-by-county strategy is a winning one toward putting pressure on Lansing and ultimately amending ELCRA, Moreno stated that "timing in politics is very important."

"It's the difference between getting something done and not getting it done," he said.

Moreno speaks with the authority of an 18-year elected official as well as someone who's

managed political campaigns, worked on ballot initiatives and done collective bargaining.

"And besides," he continued, "I don't really think Republicans want to be seen as the bad guy all the time."

As a matter of fact, a "bad guy" scenario was narrowly avoided in Mt. Pleasant on Aug. 6. In a work session that preceded the meeting, one of the commissioners suggested that he would propose a religious exemption amendment to the resolution.

Moreno set the scene for the meeting that followed the work session: a packed room, audience members such as the mayor of Mt. Pleasant and public comment that included moving testimony by two young people. Whether the commissioner in question realized his amendment defeated the purpose of the resolution or he didn't want to be on the wrong side of history, he never introduced it and "passage was unanimous."

"I didn't really plan on that," Moreno said. "It was kind of miraculous. And wonderful."

Returning to the big picture, he said, "It basically boils down to human nature: people want to be liked, especially politicians. And so I'm hoping just enough of them will be good, so we can make this happen."

Moreno noted that the Michigan Association of Counties usually sends the various resolutions to each of Michigan's 83 counties. That's one way to spread the news and encourage others, simply by planting the idea.

Finally, in reference to the fact that Oakland County adopted a resolution on the same day, Moreno returned to the analogy of a snowball getting larger and more powerful as it rolls downhill.

"I can sense that happening right now," he said.



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County Executive Dave Coulter: A New Day for Oakland County



BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Making History

“It’s overwhelming and it’s humbling at the same time,” Dave Coulter said, less than 24 hours after being appointed Oakland County Executive. “And yet, I’m mostly excited to get to work on the policies that I have long championed, and I am honored to be able to be the person to begin the transition in Oakland County to a more progressive, inclusive and collaborative government.”

While it is historic that Dave Coulter is the first openly LGBTQ countywide officeholder in Oakland, what is equally historic is that on Aug. 16 he became the county’s first Democratic County Executive since that position was created in 1974. Further, as a result of the 2018 elections, Democrats hold a majority on the board of commissioners for the first time in more than 40 years.

The two weeks of political jockeying that followed the death of L. Brooks Patterson finally ended with Coulter’s appointment. And while the appointment was unexpected by some, he is not only an experienced politician with ties to county government, Coulter also made clear that he would not seek election to the position in 2020.

Coulter’s career in elective office began in Oakland, well before serving as mayor of Ferndale. A county commissioner from 2002 to 2010, Coulter was the Democratic minority leader for most of that time, and the only openly LGBTQ county commissioner in the state for his first two terms. He said he looks back fondly on his time there.

“I learned so much about local government there, and I took a lot of what I learned from Oakland County to Ferndale,” Coulter said.

First, he said, was the value of creating a multi-year budget to better anticipate challenges and avoid crisis management.

“The other thing I learned from Oakland County, is that although I disagreed with a lot of the things Brooks did, I never disagreed that he hired really smart, capable people to work with him, and I tried to take that philosophy to Ferndale as well,” Coulter said. “Hire good people and let them do their jobs. That has become my management style. And it works.”

Getting to Work

Coulter said that he has two immediate priorities: staff and budget. Less than a day after his appointment, Coulter was already focused and in command. He’s asked Hillarie Chambers, chief of staff to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, to head up the transition team. With just 10 days to announce his deputy executives and a number of other appointees, the clock is ticking.

Next up, there is the approval of the budget. That must happen by the end of September. Coulter said he needs to review the budget and be confident that it maintains the County’s AAA bond rating. He explained its significance very simply: great ideas require sound financial planning. To emphasize this point, he posed some rhetorical questions:

“You can have all the great policies you want, but how are you going to pay for them? How’s it going to work? I’ve seen a lot of good ideas fail because they weren’t executed well or they weren’t funded well. There’s no shortage of things I want to do, but do we have the right resources and the right talent in place to actually execute them? So that’s why those two things are sort of the foundation of doing everything else.”

2018: The Blue Wave Hits Oakland County

For those following last year’s election, it’s evident that Coulter’s appointment is not the start of a progressive movement in county government but is made possible with the new-as-of-2018 Democratic majority — despite having a former Republican county executive whose veto pen loomed large.

“I’m really encouraged and excited,” Coulter said. “Many of the things they’ve advanced are things we’ve done in Ferndale and things I wanted to do when I was on the Board.”

He also lauded Commissioner Penny Luebs on the effort she recently spearheaded: a non-binding resolution in support of amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for LGBTQ people. (See related story p. 6)

“I couldn’t be more excited about that,” Coulter said of the resolution. “Frankly, I am supportive of the kind of progressive vision they have displayed as well as their willingness to be collaborative partners with other counties and cities in the region. There’s a lot more we can do to lift our whole region up together.”

While Coulter said he could not yet address questions on future policies that he would champion, such as countywide LGBTQ protections, he did issue the following guarantee: “As I did as mayor, I will fight for equality for all of our residents and non-discrimination policies that guarantee equal rights for all of our residents.”

A Unifying Leader

Whether one would characterize the two weeks preceding Coulter’s appointment as a chess match or a free-for-all, most would agree Coulter stayed above the fray — likely because few even thought of him as a contender. After all, he did announce his bid for state representative in July. Some have chafed that Coulter neither applied nor interviewed for the position, which was not a requirement. He explained.

“I did not apply because I did not campaign or seek this position,” Coulter said. “And at the time of the applications, Dave Woodward did apply and I was supportive of him being appointed, so there was no reason for me to even think about it. It wasn’t until Thursday that I found out that Dave ... could rescind his resignation and rejoin the board and that sort of changed the equation politically.”

Woodward had rejoined when it became clear the 10-10 board would not be able to find a candidate agreeable to everyone. It wasn’t until the Democrats had regained the majority that Coulter said they approached him.

In Coulter’s words, the Democrats said,

“Your name has been floated as someone who might be a unifying leader that everyone could rally around, and would you be interested? That didn’t happen until Thursday. And my response was, ‘I don’t want to join this battle. I don’t want to fight for this. But if you all believe in a united fashion — at least united Democrats — that I could serve in that role and you would be supportive, then I would be open to that.’ That’s how it came about.”

As for Coulter’s plans beyond 2020, he addressed that, too. Last month, Coulter launched his campaign for state representative for Michigan’s 27th House District. With the 2020 primary election just one year away, Coulter said he’s not certain where that stands.

“I have to evaluate that,” he said. “That’s what I was campaigning for — not county exec. And that’s what I had begun to do. I don’t know today if it’s possible to focus on both those things. You know, politicians run for office while they’re in office all the time, but my first priority has to be Oakland County government. If a state rep. race proves to be too much of a distraction, I won’t do it. In a short amount of time, I’m going to be thinking about whether that’s still possible.”

A New Day

Among the comments Coulter made immediately following his appointment was this: “I may not have been your first choice, or second choice or third choice, but I know that you all came here to put the interests of Oakland County first, and so do I.”

He elaborated for this interview.

“That was directed at my Republican friends, because I get it. You didn’t want to vote for me today. That’s fine. I know you, and I know you’re here to do the right thing. And I think at the end of the day when the hurt feelings are over and the passions subside, then we can work together. Because we did it when I was there. And we can do it again.”

Conciliatory words aside, Coulter wasn’t shy about envisioning what the future may hold for Oakland County with him at the helm and his colleagues on the Democratic-majority board of commissioners.

“Non-binding policy positions can’t be vetoed,” Coulter noted, in reference to Luebs’ resolution. “But I want to do more than that. I want to change policy. And we couldn’t do that until this day. That’s what’s so critical. Now we don’t just have to just give out opinions, we can change policy in Oakland County. That’s why it’s a new day. And Dave Woodward and the Board have an advocate and an ally in the executive’s office. And that just opens up a lot of possibilities for us.”



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EQMI to Host Its Mission Equality 2019 Fall Reception

Equality Michigan is a statewide LGBTQ political advocacy organization that has been aiding in the fight against targeted violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ community for more than 25 years. Now, as September draws nearer, the group is making plans for its annual fall reception, this year called Mission Equality.

“Join Equality Michigan, Michigan lawmakers, LGBTQ community leaders and keynote speaker Attorney General Dana Nessel for our 2019 Fall Reception: Mission Equality,” wrote event organizers. “You do not want to miss this upscale night on the town at Roostertail with stunning views of the Detroit Riverfront and skyline, delectable food and drinks and awards for equality leaders. Year after year, this event builds the relationships that form the foundation of our political progress and has raised over \$215,000 to date.”

Tickets start at \$175, sponsorships available. All proceeds benefit Equality Michigan Action Network and Education Funds, advancing LGBTQ rights in Michigan. Contact eknott@equalitymi.org.

Growing Calls for Resignation of Michigan Civil Rights Director

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Public controversy has surrounded Michigan Department of Civil Rights Executive Director Agustin Arbulu since early August when documents were released alleging that in May he urged a department employee to “check out” a woman’s “ass” among other lewd comments. That employee is Communications Analyst and former BTL contributor Todd Heywood, who said after he confronted Arbulu about the statements he was told he wouldn’t understand because he didn’t “like women.”

Joanne Bridgford is an equal employment opportunity administrator for the Michigan Department of Corrections and investigated this incident. In a July 16 summary memo she concluded that “it is more likely than not, that Director Arbulu did make inappropriate, offensive comments regarding women to Mr. Heywood in violation of the work rule [for prohibiting harassment].”

“In addition, Director Arbulu more likely than not made additional comments to Mr. Heywood regarding his sexual orientation,” the memo went on. “The comments and communication did interfere with Mr. Heywood’s employment and created an offensive work environment for him.”

Bridgford also included that “... Director

Arbulu did make inappropriate comments to this investigator when he indicated that he did eventually see his daughter at a subsequent listening session and that ‘she looked hot.’”

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer examined the memorandum and in an Aug. 2 letter to the Commission, made up of eight evenly divided Democratic and Republican members, asked why they did not take steps to fire Arbulu who was appointed in 2015 by former Gov. Rick Snyder.

“I have serious concerns with the Commission’s decision to retain the director in his position but remove him from certain responsibilities while he receives training related to this matter,” the letter read. “The findings in this report about the director’s actions runs headlong against the very mission of the department. For the same reason, I also have serious concerns about the director’s ability to lead the department moving forward and the department’s ability to carry out its mission and serve the people of Michigan.”

Whitmer does not have the authority to fire Arbulu herself. Since the release of the news, various politicians including state Rep. Laurie Pohutsky, Sen. Curtis Hertel Jr. and Minority Leader Christine Greig have called for Arbulu’s resignation and the group Progress Michigan also started a petition campaigning for his removal from office. The Detroit News reported

that the Director of Law and Policy for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Daniel Levy informed Arbulu that he could no longer work for him and would use his annual leave to examine his future in his role.

“I have been wrestling with this decision for some time and after taking the weekend to reread the statements you have provided in response to your initial offending comments, I find I have no other option,” Levy wrote. “I am simply not able to properly do my job under the present circumstances.”

Despite this push for Arbulu’s removal, The Detroit News reported that Chair Alma Wheeler Smith has decided to keep him on staff and pursue a “restorative justice discipline model” in hopes of reintegrating him into the office. Wheeler Smith added that, “If that doesn’t work to the commission’s satisfaction, the commission can take other action.”

The Detroit Free Press reported that Arbulu called his actions a “mistake” that he regrets and said that he would like to continue in his role. Regarding the comments about his daughter, Arbulu wrote, “I only mentioned this to the investigator to set the stage. The fact was I was looking for my daughter and excited to see her, but Heywood thought he was a ‘stereotypical perverted old man.’”



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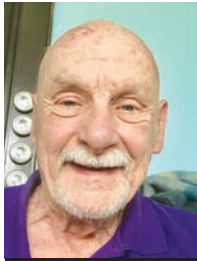


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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

A Summer Day, Lost and Found

Editor's note: This column first appeared in BTL in Nov. 2012. As many BTL readers know, Charles suffered a stroke on Memorial Day this year and he continues his recovery at Henry Ford Village in Dearborn.

Wednesday of last week is a flawless autumn day for biking. The sun is radiant. The temperature's 76. There isn't a trace of resistant wind to pedal against.

I once more unchain my 1982 Schwinn, red-and-white, second-hand-recovered, 10-speed bike for what I'm sure will be a last ride until spring 2013.

Although I can't run once around a city block, I'm in good shape to bike ten, fifteen, or twenty miles at a go. (In September I did the 30-mile Tour DeTroit. My butt was sore but I finished by doing an extra five miles to return home.)

My friend artist Jon Strand calls for a favor: please says he, sounding like a clogged drain pipe, pick up Alka Seltzer. "I haven't had a cold like this in some time." I agree, and visit a nearby drugstore as requested.

Jon meets me at his door with Archie, his black lab with one good-luck white toe, lets him out for a bit of doggie business, thanks me, says he's going back to bed. Be well, I encourage.

I bike to the River Walk two miles away. It's a familiar route that ends for me at the Coast Guard station, where I will sit and enjoy the gift of an exceptionally rare autumn day, a day that summer somehow forgot to include in June, but thankfully made up for in October.

The Detroit River is calm, serenely blue/green, with hardly a ripple of current, separating our city from Windsor across the way. The moment sparkles effortlessly. The view is memory sharp, flawlessly focused.

As I ride slowly I find fewer people fishing. There are no big boats at anchor, no pleasure craft cruising the slowly undulating river. No seagulls darting about. Not a fanciful cloud in the sky. All is seeming perfection (before an electoral storm?)

I pass Cobo Hall and am amazed at its ongoing architectural enhancements. I pass by what was once Ford Auditorium, seeing in its place a green grass park. In front of the GM building I hear no broadcast classical music playing, but find several couples basking in the sunshine.

Stopping at the concession stand I sit in the cooler shade. My name is unexpectedly called out. It takes me awhile to recognize James, whom I met five years ago. Once incredibly handsome, he has put on much weight. Turning his life around, he now works for the city. His assignment the River Walk. I wish him well.

Once at the Coast Guard station I kick stand my bike and sit content, fully aware the day's a bonus. In front of me a young mother with two young boys, and a baby in her arms, is sitting among the rocks. The boys are happily throwing stones into the river.

Soon one of the boys approaches me. "I'm four. My name

See next page



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

A Battle Won, but the War Rages On

Transmissions

When Gavin Grimm, at long last, has won his case. When Grimm was a sophomore at Gloucester County High School in Virginia, he came out as a transgender boy. As soon as he opted to use the boys' restroom, the Gloucester County School Board decided to require that all changing rooms and bathrooms, "shall be limited to the corresponding biological genders, and students with gender identity issues shall be provided an alternative appropriate private facility."

Grimm refused to use the girls' restroom, as well a broom closet that had been jerry-rigged into a restroom. With the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, Grimm sued the school under Title IX.

For the uninitiated, Title IX is part of the Education Amendments of 1972, a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As written, Title IX is as simple as it is groundbreaking: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education under the Obama administration issued guidance that clarified that transgender students were protected from sex-based discrimination under Title IX and that trans students needed to be treated in a way consistent with their gender identity when it came to their time in school.

This, of course, has led to a lot of the arguments against trans students being given such treatment and helped elevate right-wing attacks on transgender rights. It is also something that the Department of Education under the Trump Administration has been eroding, including Education Secretary Betsy DeVos declaring in 2018 that Title IX doesn't allow trans students access to restrooms appropriate to their gender identity.

The Department of Health and Human Services has been trying to go a step further, declaring that sex is determined at birth, halting recognition of transgender people's gender identity on a far wider scale.

Grimm's case has gone back and forth. Initially dismissed by Judge Robert G. Doumar, who also claimed that being transgender is a "mental disorder," the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Doumar's ruling and sent the case back to district court.

Eventually, the Supreme Court stayed the 4th Circuit and even decided to take up the case, but changed its mind in early 2017, citing DeVos' new position on trans students and Title IX.

The Gloucester County School Board eventually sought to dismiss the case, which was denied by U.S. District Judge Arenda Wright Allen. She also declared that, in spite of the Department of Education and the Supreme Court, Grimm

See Transmissions, continued on p. 13

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 12

had a valid claim under Title IX.

Last week, with Grimm requesting a summary judgment, Allen awarded him fees, expenses and a token dollar for damages. More importantly, Allen issued a permanent injunction that requires the school board to update Grimm's transcripts to reflect his gender identity.

This is a very big deal. Even in the era of President Donald Trump and his rabidly religious conservative administration doing all they can to strip away the rights of transgender people, amongst so many others, in this, we have at least a solid victory.

This is the second good win in recent week, of course. I've recently talked about the end of North Carolina's House Bill 2 with a victory for us in Carcaño v. Cooper all but sticking a fork in the anti-transgender "bathroom bill" that ended Gov. Pat McCrory's career and cost North Carolina roughly \$400 million dollars in jobs and investments.

Yet while we can and should celebrate these victories, we also cannot be complacent. The next battle is on the horizon.

On the 8th of October, the Supreme Court will be hearing a couple of cases that could devastate LGBTQ rights for decades to come, quickly quashing any joy we might feel in the wake of Grimm's win.

In Harris Funeral Home v. EEOC it is argued that the termination of Aimee Stephens, a transgender woman who sought to transition on the job and was subsequently fired, was discrimination on the basis of her sex and that terminating her violated Title VII.

Title VII, in short, does for employment rights what title IX does in schools.

This case is similar to Zarda v. Altitude Express and Bostock v. Clayton County — both of which are tied to sexual orientation discrimination is a form of sex discrimination under Title VII — and could effectively strip LGBTQ people of any hope for federal protections. Given the current makeup of the court, this should frighten you right now.

All of this, too, is during a time when transgender people have largely been stripped of their ability to serve in the military, based on the flimsiest of arguments — and yet accepted by this Supreme Court.

DeVos and the Department of Education are also taking another stab at things with their Office of Civil Rights looking into Connecticut's treatment of transgender athletes. They are doing the opposite opposite of the Obama administration by using Title IX to claim that non-transgender girls are facing sex discrimination by allowing transgender girls to compete with them.

The Trump Administration, with the support of the Republican congress under Mitch McConnell, has been busy installing very conservative judges across the country. As their numbers swell, it is highly likely we will see more and more challenges against our rights — and some of them we are likely to lose in this climate. This is why we need to be ready to fight for new leadership in 2020.

So, while Gavin Grimm has won his battle — and with it, may have helped protect every other transgender student — the war is far from over.

Gwen Smith encourages you to support the ACLU — and to be ready to vote next year. You'll find her at gwenSmith.com.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 12

is Justin Thomas Allen. What time is it, mister?" I answer two-thirty. He calls out to his mom. He smiles joyfully, carefree, and hands me a little yellow flower. The perfect touch for an autumn day in the late autumn of my life.

Charles@pridesource.com

Celebration of Charles

There will be a celebration of Charles and his extraordinary artwork Sept. 29 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Affirmations. Charles will attend this art opening that will feature dozens of his pieces for sale and by online auction to benefit The Charles Alexander Care Trust. All are welcome to come enjoy the art, talk with Charles and acknowledge this extraordinary man's commitment and devotion to his art and the LGBTQ community.

Creep Of The Week

Log Cabin Republicans

A day after it was announced that the Trump Administration was planning on making it easier for federal contractors to discriminate against LGBTQ workers, the Log Cabin Republicans did the only thing that made sense: they endorsed him wholeheartedly.

In a very out-of-touch opinion piece in the Washington Post, LCR Chair Robert Kabel and Vice Chair Jill Homan wrote, "Since taking office, President Trump has followed through on many of his commitments to the United States, including taking bold actions that benefit the LGBTQ community."

Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?

Trump's administration is the most anti-LGBTQ, like, ever. He's appointed a score of anti-LGBTQ judges, kicked transgender service members to the curb, endorses anti-LGBTQ candidates, supports so-called "religious freedom" laws that are a pass for discriminating against LGBTQ employees and customers. That's just a partial list. He is literally working to undo every gain LGBTQ people made under President Obama.

But please, LCR chairs, do enlighten me about his "bold actions that benefit the LGBTQ community."

Trump has "committed to end the spread of HIV/AIDS in 10 years, through the use of proven science, medicine and technology," they write.

First of all, the distrust of science by Republicans has only accelerated under President "Windmills Cause Cancer" Trump. Republicans also have vowed to do away with the Affordable Care Act, which includes protections for pre-existing conditions like HIV/AIDS, not to mention the fact that the ACA has allowed many people to access care who previously were unable to get insurance. Oh, and there's the fact that many of Trump's supporters in the religious right still believe that AIDS is God's punishment and that gays are subhuman and sex-crazed and need to pray to Jesus to make them straight. So spare me the "Trump is going to end AIDS" bullshit.

Kabel and Homan also claim that "Trump has used the United States' outside global influence to persuade other nations to adopt modern human rights standards, including launching an initiative to end the criminalization of homosexuality."

Ah yes, no doubt other countries are looking to the U.S. for pointers on how to elevate human rights standards. Maybe the globe will be inspired by how Trump has earned the adoration of literal Nazis and helped to embolden white supremacist terrorists. Or maybe they are jealous of our "guns are more important than human lives" policies. Surely the world is impressed that Trump is cracking down on asylum seekers and immigrants by taking their children and locking them in baby jails with no plans for how to reunite these families.

Actually, Kabel and Homan likely see his treatment of immigrants as a plus.

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

So because the GOP put gay billionaire Peter Thiel on stage at their convention instead of hate troll Pat Buchanan all is well and good?

Regardless of who they put on stage, the Republican platform for 2016 was the most anti-LGBTQ platform ever.

"His hard line on foreign policy has protected LGBTQ lives," they claim.

Trump's foreign policy has protected LGBTQ lives? Was it when he tried to goad North Korea's Kim Jong Un into war via Twitter? Or was it when he scrapped the Iran nuclear deal and seemed hip to go to war with them, too? Was it when he declared that Russia, a country that has extremely punitive anti-gay laws, was America's BFF? The fact is, Trump's policies have made Americans less safe at home and abroad. We are literally the laughingstock of the world because we have such a supremely stupid and vile president. Trump makes the nation weak.

Kabel and Homan also claim that Trump's "tax cuts have benefited LGBTQ families and helped put food on their tables" and his "aggressive negotiations on trade deals have preserved LGBTQ jobs."

Sure, Jan.

If you're wondering why LCR would embrace such a destructive and hateful administration, Kabel and Homan make the argument that things aren't as bad as they were, therefore they're good as they are.

"For LGBTQ Republicans, watching the 2016 GOP convention before Donald Trump took the stage was like a dream fulfilled," they wrote. "The distance between that event and Pat Buchanan's hate-filled exhortation against the LGBTQ community in Houston in 1992 is a powerful measurement of how far we've come."

Ah. So because the GOP put gay billionaire Peter Thiel on stage at their convention instead of hate troll Pat Buchanan all is well and good? Regardless of who they put on stage, the Republican platform for 2016 was the most anti-LGBTQ platform ever. Even worse than in 1992. Just because the GOP realized that public homophobic hate is a bad look doesn't mean they don't still embrace it in private and enact policies that advance their anti-LGBTQ agenda.

Look, just because you're in a relationship where your partner used to punch you in the face on the regular but now only slaps you sometimes doesn't mean your relationship has gotten better. And yet here are the Log Cabin Republicans not only accepting their abuse but praising their abuser. And that hurts all of us who are in this relationship involuntarily and desperately want to break up.

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LGBT Detroit to Go on Tour: Educating Michigan on New HIV Laws

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

LGBT Detroit is hitting the road for a five-city tour for black gay men to educate them about Michigan HIV law reforms. Community forums are scheduled to take place Sept. 11 through 15 in Flint, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Ypsilanti. The tour, titled Sex, Hooking UP and the Apps, is intended to educate Michigan's black LGBTQ communities in key urban centers about the new state HIV criminalization law reforms.

The first community forum took place in Detroit in May in conjunction with Adodi Detroit, Onyx Great Lakes and the Black Bear Brotherhood. The event began as an interactive and informative community exchange on the dramatic changes that have occurred for black gay men of the last several years. These range from the advent of PrEP to marriage equality. There have also been a number of significant changes in the medical community's understanding of HIV transmission and prevention that informed the state's HIV criminalization reforms. The reforms were advocated for by the Michigan Coalition for HIV Health and Safety and successfully proposed by State Rep. Jon Hoadley to bring the law more in line with the latest in HIV scientific findings.

"It was long past time for the state law to reflect the science and the reality of how people engage in relationships and intimacy with one another," said LGBT Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb. "For too long people living with HIV have been criminalized for their acquisition of a disease that doesn't discriminate and for daring to engage in normal



"It was long past time for the state law to reflect the science and the reality of how people engage in relationships and intimacy with one another,"

LGBT Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb

sexual relationships with others, even when no HIV has been transmitted and even when the accused has disclosed his status and/or used protection. The law has also been abused as a retaliatory tool in serodiscordant relationships leaving those with HIV highly vulnerable to unsubstantiated charges."

The goal of the community forums is not just to highlight policy reforms but to also talk about how the changes in LGBTQ rights, HIV law, policy and culture have specifically impacted black gay male identity, intimacy and relationships. That goes for both those old enough to remember when being gay was considered a mental illness and to those younger men who've grown up with unprecedented access to positive gay images, rights and cultural acceptance.

"A lot has happened to black gay men that impacted how they relate to one another, a great deal of it informed by the ravages of HIV on our community and by policies that once made the intimacies between men illegal and socially unacceptable, whether positive or not," said Jerron Totten, LGBT Detroit's social outreach coordinator. "No one has really explored what strain or impact these

laws and policies, both regressive and progressive, have put on black gay men's idea of themselves, the way they have sex or don't and on the way they trust. ... We hope these candid discussions with our community begin to correct that."

The Sex, Hooking Up, and

the Apps tour is specifically focused on black gay and bisexual men in Michigan because they have the highest HIV rates both statewide and nationally. They are also among those most likely to be charged under these laws. Well-supported by both the gay and straight community, HIV criminalization laws were originally enacted decades ago in over 20 U.S. states at the height of the AIDS pandemic under the belief that such laws would curb the spread of HIV and penalize those knowingly transmitting HIV to others. However well-intentioned at the time, advocates have argued enforcement of these laws have been racialized and discourages HIV testing since these laws only apply to those who know their HIV status. These laws also largely ignore irrefutable science proving HIV cannot be transmitted by those treatments that make those infected "virally undetectable" even when condoms are not used.

In most states with these laws, HIV is the only communicable disease for which one can be incarcerated as a felon for transmitting a disease. Signed into law by Gov. Whitmer, Hoadley's reforms account for the science by reducing the culpability of those who do engage in protective measures by being virally suppressed, use condoms and/or had no demonstrable intentions of exposing others to HIV.

"The new reforms aren't perfect, but they are a start in significantly reducing the stigma associated with having HIV and begins to factor into the equation both the science and the real world sexual and relationship experiences of people living with the virus," Lipscomb said. "The benefits here are real."

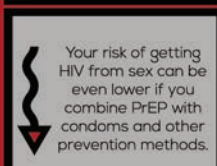
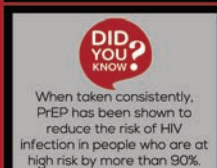
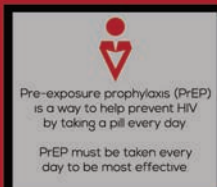
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C2P Continues Detroit's Fight Against HIV/AIDS

Local Coalition Set to Host Informational Event on PrEP, Detroit's Walk to End HIV

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

With a rate of HIV infection in Detroit almost four times higher than that of Ingham and Saginaw Counties as of a 2017 statewide HIV study by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, it's fair to say that the city's struggle with the disease is ongoing. It found that HIV infection is particularly impactful among African-American people across the state, with 11 times more males and 13 times more females who are infected compared to the white population. However, as bleak as those statistics may look from the outside, there are groups working toward HIV's eradication within the city altogether. Arguably the biggest of them all is Connect 2 Protect, a coalition made up of community organizations fighting the disease and pooling resources to raise awareness and education about stopping its spread. Registered Nurse Ayanna Walters is its coordinator.

"C2P started out as a research project under the Adolescent Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions, and it started in 2012 and ended in 2015 because of the funding and they got all their data. Our medical director, Dr. Elizabeth Secord, wanted to continue the mission and continue C2P and I started here in [Wayne State University's] Horizons Clinic in 2007 as a research nurse and just got more involved in the community," Walters said. "... By doing the research, I've seen the numbers, I've seen the clients that have come through with different scenarios and I said, 'We have to do something in the community to get everyone to get everyone to wake up!'"

That's when Walters got involved and founded Warriors



Achieving Knowledge Education Understanding Pathways Purpose or WAKE UP, a nonprofit dedicated to making people, specifically youth, aware of sex education and preventative measures for sexually transmitted diseases and infections. It was because of Walters' push for community awareness that Secord approached her about getting involved with the continuation of C2P. It wasn't long before the group was having regular meetings.

Upcoming Activism: PrEP & Proud Campaign Sept. 14

Today, the coalition group has grown to regularly meet with dozens of local HIV-prevention groups and is now planning its latest event: the C2P Detroit PrEP & Proud Campaign. To be held on Sept. 14 at the Wayne County Community College Downtown Campus, this event will feature free HIV testing; blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose screenings; spoken word and music performers; a free gift card giveaway; and free food. Walters said the event is an attempt at a hassle-free way to get Detroiters interested in preventing the spread of HIV via Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis or PrEP, an HIV-prevention medication that reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by over 90 percent.

"I would say that the majority of our patients who are newly diagnosed didn't know about PrEP and I think that's disturbing because PrEP has been out for the last four years. Because we did a PrEP study and also there's a lot of trust issues when it comes

to medications, especially in the African-American community," she said. "First, we don't like to go to the doctor and just taking the medicine. And even the stigma of taking PrEP: you can be heterosexual and take PrEP but not everyone knows that [and asks], 'Oh, why are you taking PrEP?' The stigma is just around medication linked to HIV and that makes it an issue. I have a lot of issues, too, having our clients come in and be on insurance and a month or so later not on insurance."

Walters said that attending the September campaign will provide answers to getting on PrEP, its effectivity and how to combat stigma. The last two hours of the day's event will also serve as a kick-off rally to the newly branded Detroit Walks to End HIV (formerly known as AIDS Walk Detroit).

"Initially, when we got that the Walk was going to happen, we talked about doing the campaign so one of the suggestions was to have the campaign a week prior to the walk to tie into the walk, and then ... they decided to collaborate with us that Saturday and have a kick-off rally for it," Walters said, referencing the fact that the Walk has been postponed to allow for a revamped version next year in 2020. "Sometimes, you have to reword things to get peoples' attention."

To find out more visit Connect to Protect-Detroit Facebook page. The PrEP & Proud Campaign will last from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14 at the Wayne County Community College Downtown Campus. The last two hours of the event will be dedicated to the Detroit Walks to End HIV kick-off event.

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Backlash Surrounds Trump Endorsement by Log Cabin Republicans

BY LISA KEEN

The national gay Republican group, Log Cabin Republicans, made a big splash Aug. 15 when it published a commentary in the Washington Post announcing its decision to endorse President Trump for reelection. The public's reaction was not celebratory.

In the comments section under the endorsement article, readers characterized the endorsement as equivalent to “Chickens for McNuggets” and “Jews for Hitler.”

Charles Moran, an openly gay Trump delegate to the 2016 convention who is on the Log Cabin board and serving as its spokesperson, said the response to the endorsement “has been what was expected.”

“Our chapters are thrilled — they wanted this overwhelmingly, so this really is of benefit for them,” Moran said. “[And] the left, especially the gay left, is apoplectic.”

Andy Towle at Towleroad.com called the endorsement “delusional.”

Earl Fowlkes, chairman of the Democratic National Committee's LGBT Caucus, said he couldn't understand “how an LGBTQ organization of any kind can support an individual who has consistently shown a disregard for the rights of LGBTQ Americans.”

Not Just the Left

But it was not just the left criticizing the endorsement. Former U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) said he doesn't support the endorsement. Log Cabin founder Rich Tafel said he doesn't support the decision either.

“While I find President Trump's positions on LGBTQ issues to be mixed, he would get as many poor marks as good ones, including the ban on transgenders in the military,” Kolbe said. He said he “regrets very much that they have taken this position, especially so early in the campaign.”

Tafel said, “I just don't think Trump's a good leader and he's not a conservative.”

The timing of the endorsement was both unusual and unfortunate for the group.

In the past, Log Cabin's board has put off endorsing a candidate until very close to the convention. In 2016, it put the endorsement vote off until just two weeks before the election — and they voted to “withhold” endorsing Trump. This year, they've taken the vote 10 months ahead of the confab.

And the endorsement arrived between two high-profile moves by the Trump administration to take stands against LGBTQ equality — one in a Supreme Court case, the other in a federal contractor regulation.

“It takes a certain level of perverse chutzpah,



or a certain level of confidence in your gaslighting abilities, to claim that President Trump is good for LGBTQ people in the same week that the Trump administration moved to let federal contractors use ‘religious exemptions’ as an excuse to discriminate against LGBTQ Americans in the workplace,” wrote Daily Beast Senior Editor Tim Teeman.

On the same day the endorsement article ran in the Washington Post, the U.S. Department of Labor published a proposed rule change in the Federal Register, saying it would “clarify” the civil rights protections for “religious organizations” that enter into contracts with the federal government. The change would allow contractors to “prefer” hiring people “who share their religion” and to “condition employment on acceptance of or adherence to religious tenets as understood by” the employer. LGBTQ legal organizations say the proposed change gives a “green light” to employers wishing to discriminate against LGBTQ people.

On the day after the endorsement ran, Solicitor General Noel Francisco submitted a brief to the U.S. Supreme Court arguing that the justices should rule that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does not prohibit discrimination based on gender identity. The court will hear arguments on the case, *Harris Funeral Home v. EEOC* in October.

Anti-LGBTQ Presidential Moves

Most critics of the endorsement cited one or more of the many other actions the Trump administration has taken that have appeared to undermine equal treatment of LGBTQ people. Starting soon after Trump took office, the Trump administration has banned transgender people from serving in the military and withdrew Obama-era guidance from the departments of Education and Health and Human Services that had sought to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ people. It instructed the Census Bureau to remove any mention of LGBTQ people on upcoming surveys and instructed all departments to remove barriers to employers

using “religious” or “moral” reasons for gender-based discrimination. The Department of Justice has put the Trump administration on the side of employers who discriminate against LGBTQ people in several cases and sought waivers for states to discriminate against LGBTQ people in foster care.

The Log Cabin endorsement essay makes only brief reference to these actions.

“While we do not agree with every policy or platform position presented by the White House or the Republican Party,” stated the endorsement, “we share a commitment to individual responsibility, personal freedom and a strong national defense. ... We are committed to letting all qualified Americans serve in the military, and Log Cabin Republicans was a leader in the legal fight to end the ‘don't ask, don't tell’ policy. We oppose the transgender service restriction and will continue to press the administration to reconsider.”

“To be treated equally, fairly and justly under the law is our goal, and we know that ‘Inclusion Wins’ is a mantra we share with the president,” concluded the essay. “The Log Cabin Republicans endorse Donald Trump for reelection as president.”

The endorsement essay was bylined by Log Cabin Republicans' national board chairman Robert Kabel and Vice Chair Jill Homan.

Log Cabin Credits Trump

Kabel is an attorney who served as a special assistant to President Reagan and was appointed to the White House HIV Advisory Board by President George W. Bush. Homan is a member of the Republican National Committee's executive committee. Both live in Washington, D.C., and both served on the Republican National Committee's Rules Committee at the 2016 convention that nominated Trump.

According to Kabel and Homan's essay, President Trump has taken “bold actions that benefit the LGBTQ community.”

The endorsement credits Trump with having “committed to end the spread of HIV/AIDS in 10 years,” using U.S. influence to “persuade other nations to adopt modern human rights standards” and “launching an initiative to end the criminalization of homosexuality” in other countries. It applauds the president for having appointed openly gay diplomat Ric Grenell as ambassador to Germany and says Trump has appointed “many LGBTQ” people to serve in his administration.

The Log Cabin press release announcing the endorsement said the Log Cabin board consulted with more than 50 chapters in 21 states before voting for the endorsement. Spokesman Moran said the group also had “multiple meetings with senior campaign officials at HQ in Arlington before we started this process, and they were enthusiastic.”

“Throughout this process, they were welcoming of our support, were desiring of our endorsement and offered technical assistance if needed,” Moran said.

After the endorsement, he said the group received “shares, retweets and kind words from the highest levels of the RNC and Trump campaign.”

The Republican National Committee made no mention of the endorsement on its website, but RNC Chairman Ronna McDaniel did retweet the Post article on her Twitter site.

Dan Innis, a gay Republican and a former state senator in New Hampshire, said he hopes the endorsement will “keep the issues of the GLBT community front and center in [President Trump's] policy decisions.”

“I was a strong advocate for the endorsement,” said Innis. “While no one agrees with everything a president does, President Trump has been steady in a number of areas that are important to me. Overall, I think he is supportive of our community.”

Split in the Log Cabin

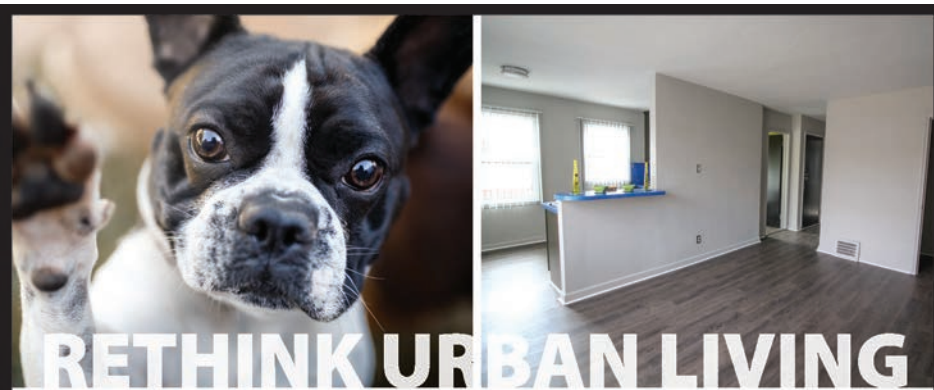
But Casey Pick, a former program director for Log Cabin, expressed shame over the endorsement.

“I know personally the calculations that go into Log Cabin's decision of whether or not to endorse a presidential candidate,” wrote Pick in an essay posted on her Facebook page. “I saw the aftermath of rejecting George W. Bush, I was part of the process leading to the endorsement of John McCain ... and mine was the hand that wrote the announcement and explanation of our endorsement of Mitt Romney in 2012.”

In the Romney endorsement, said Pick, “we did not sugarcoat the candidate's flaws; we acknowledged that we were coldly weighing the benefits of having a conservative we felt we could work with in office against our calculation that the Federal Marriage Amendment he had supported was no longer a threat and making a call that would have allowed us to be a voice of influence on behalf of LGBTQ people if Romney were to have won.

“I am not ashamed to have written that [Romney] endorsement,” Pick continued. “I am convinced that the Board of Directors of today's Log Cabin Republicans should be ashamed to have put their names on this one.”

Rich Tafel, who founded the national Log Cabin group in the 1990s, said, “We often think that polarization is between the left and right, but when you get into the conservative movement, there are huge divisions over this president. This endorsement is a good example.”



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JUDITH LIGHT AND THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY

Veteran Actress Talks Current Feminist Movement, Her New Soap-Star Role & the 'Transparent' Finale

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Judith Light got her start on “One Life to Live” in 1977 as housewife-turned-prostitute Karen Wolek, but the luminous screen and stage actress couldn’t be confined to a daytime soap. Her boundless range and abundant empathy for others are suffused into nearly a half-century’s worth of characters she’s played with the same gentle spirit that greeted me on the phone recently. Her role on the classic 1980s sitcom “Who’s the Boss?” further established her as one of our great leading ladies. That success, in particular, gave the LGBTQ activist a platform to become one of only a few celebrities willing to speak out on HIV/AIDS during the height of the pandemic. Somehow, though, it always seems like Judith Light is just getting started.

At 70 years old, an age when many actresses can’t find screen work, Light has been doing some of her very best. As Marilyn Miglin, the wife of one of serial killer Andrew Cunanan’s victims, she was devastatingly



Photo: Robert Ascroft

perfect in Ryan Murphy’s “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story.” With just a brief role in two episodes, she still managed to catch the attention of Emmy voters, who nominated her for her portrayal of the distraught cosmetics entrepreneur. In addition to the two consecutive Daytime Emmy Awards she won for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for playing Karen Wolek, Light also received two nominations for her portrayal of Shelly Pfefferman, the wife of Maura, a trans woman, on “Transparent.”

Her latest role in the indie dramedy “Before You Know It” has her coming full circle: Light plays Sherrell, an aging soap star trying to rise above Hollywood’s ageist and sexist attitudes. Sherrell becomes an important figure in the lives of Rachel Gurner (Hannah Pearl Utt, who directed and co-wrote the feature), a lesbian stage manager, and her sister, Jackie (co-writer Jen Tullock), as they reconnect with the actress, their presumed-deceased mother.

Recently, Light spoke warmly about how her role as Sherrell reflects this latest feminist wave and the evolution of LGBTQ characters in her work. Then, because Judith Light can’t be contained, and because sometimes she’s a life coach, she waxed poetic about believing in the power of possibility.

Sherrell is like an onion being peeled back as the movie progresses.

That’s a great way to describe it, Chris. Thank you. That’s so great that you saw it, because that was in the writing, that was in the way we developed the character from the very beginning.

But Judith, I do want a full order of soaps starring Sherrell. I want more wigs and more sassing young girls on the street who are getting her autograph for their grandma.

(Laughs) How divine, right?

And she’s so glam. Over the years you’ve rocked some glam looks — did you have a style vision

for Sherrell?

No, actually, we didn't. We looked at different pictures of soap stars and their hair and we thought, "Oh, this could be really good." But we had to be very careful that we weren't going to go make her a caricature and go over the top. Hannah really had a lot to do with the look and the wardrobe. She didn't want her to be something that was goofy or weird, none of us did. If you're playing a soap opera character, someone who's on a soap opera, you have to be really careful and appropriate so that it's a real person, not just somebody who's somebody you can write off easily. (Sherrell) was created with a kind of expansiveness and understanding of who she actually is and what her life was like and what her choices were. It's a very real person.

I did totally eat up all the very good-bad dialogue you got to deliver as Sherrell during the soap scenes, and with such fun melodrama in the first scene. And in that fur! Then she slaps her co-star because she thinks the scene needs it. It seemed like you were having fun.

Oh, it's a joy. That's also great writing, that's also when Jen and Hannah were putting it all together and we were all talking about it together. We were really talking to each other about the characters, what they would do, where they would go and how they would be perceived.

Not that you've slapped someone, but have you ever gotten so carried away as a particular character in a scene that you just lost yourself in that character and abandoned the script because something else felt right?

Never.

No?

No, no. That's not professional. I would never do that. Now, when we would do scenes on "Transparent," would we know the dialogue? Absolutely. Would we abandon it at certain points? And would Jill (Soloway, the "Transparent" creator) feed us different things or would we throw in different ideas? Absolutely. Anything like that has to be done under the framework of safety – that everybody feels safe – and in the context of never going beyond or making anyone feel scared or treating someone improperly. To me, it's unacceptable. You just don't do that. There's nothing more important on a set than making sure everybody feels safe.

Have you ever witnessed that happen on a set before, though?

No.

It just happens in Sherrell's world.

But look at what's happening to her: She knows that things are falling apart. She knows that she's not being paid attention to. It doesn't come out of nothing and nowhere; it comes out of this desire to be seen, to be heard, to be relevant, to be young, to be cool, to be chic, to

be trendy. To be everything.

She's fighting for her dignity.

Absolutely. Perfectly said.

Well, it's very palpable. What's your take on her attitudes about how women have to be portrayed to be considered desirable?

That's out of the way the world and the culture are. That's what she's been taught, that's what she knows. That's *all* she knows.

How do you feel that's relevant to the real world?

She doesn't fit anymore as she's getting older, and that's frightening for her. She feels uncertain and scared. These are a lot of things that a lot of women are experiencing right now, and that's probably what made this such a valuable project to me, to show that.

All women are going through this at a certain age, feeling less behind and not relevant. Feeling the connection with my women friends and women in general – we are holding ourselves in a different framework now. We are standing in a very different – no pun intended – light, to really demonstrate to ourselves and to the world who we actually are. Those things that the culture has, in some cases, smothered us with and had us be quiet about, we are no longer doing that. We're not victims; we're powerful. And I think that's what you see Sherrell learn as the movie goes on.

I liked that the lesbian daughter's queerness was a footnote — we're seeing a lot more of that, where LGBTQ characters are written into a story without their sexuality being a focus of the story. Is that something you appreciated about "Before You Know It"?

Hello!

I know, being a gay icon, I figured as much.

Honey, I'm not an icon.

I can call you an icon.

Well, thank you. But of course it's like, "Oh, OK, so she's looking for a girlfriend; so what about any of that? So what?" That is something that I love about this, and that's very much Hannah and Jen. It's not a focus.

Listen, in the early days, we had to do that. We had to make it pointed. It had to be about that. Now, there's an incorporation of the LGBTQ community into the world where it doesn't have to be outlined and highlighted in some way. Now, look, in some places it still does. I don't know if you saw Frank Bruni's column ("Hate Is So Much Bigger Than Trump") in The New York Times, but it's really powerful. We forget that people still relate to the LGBTQ community in the way that these people had written letters to him about him being gay and it's so lovely that we could do that in this film. But it's still not where the world needs to be, and you know

See **Judith**, continued on p. 21



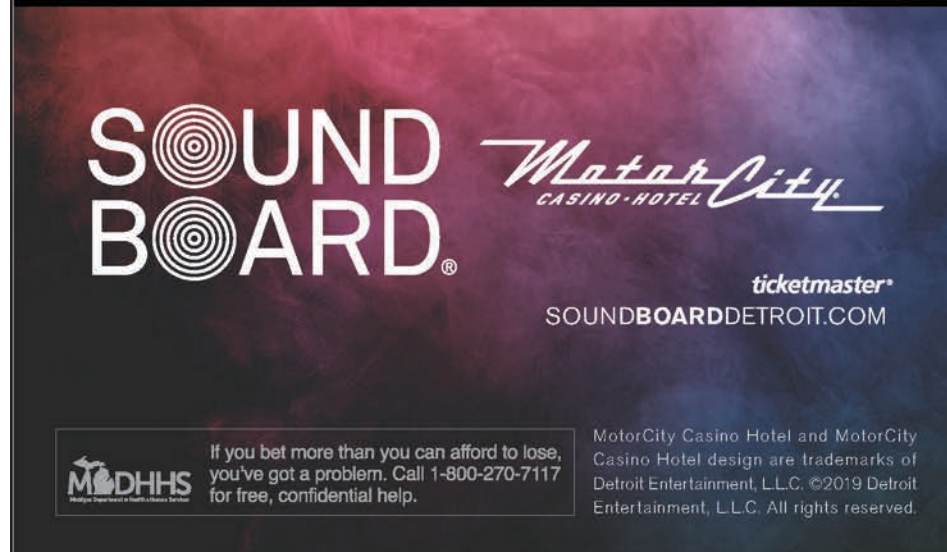
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► Judith

Continued from p. 19

that, and I know that.

I'm curious about how you make the choices you do, because your motivations are striking and admirable. What boxes do you have to check before you sign on to a project these days?

Thank you for noticing, and yes, I've had some really wonderful things come my way. There's been some real shifts for me since "Ugly Betty" happened. It's always the character for me. It's always, "Who is this person? How is this person there to serve the piece? How is this person someone that could wake up the audience to what they might be seeing or feeling in their own lives? How does it translate for them?" So I've always got the audience in my mind as I'm looking at something: "How does this make a difference? How does this matter? Who are the people I am working with?" When you get to work with people like Jill Soloway and Ryan Murphy, you're in a rarefied atmosphere. Right now I'm doing a project ("Manhunt: Lone Wolf") with a wonderful producer, Michael Dinner, and it's about the Olympic bombing in Atlanta in 1996.

What clicked for you about Ryan Murphy's upcoming Netflix show "The Politician"?

I actually can't tell you a lot, but Bette (Midler)

and I, last November and December, we shot the last episode of the first season and now we will start shooting the second season sometime this fall, where it's Ben (Platt) and Bette and me and just a bunch of others. So I don't know! I just don't know where they're going to go with this. When it drops, you'll be able to see what kind of character I'm actually playing.

With "Transparent" ending, what about Shelly are you going to miss the most?

Everything. I love her. And it's so funny, because in the beginning people used to say to me, "Oh my god, I can't stand her. She drives me crazy." Then they would say, "... and I love her so much." It's true, there's this gentle, fragile soul underneath all of that craziness, pushing people away and telling people what to do. And yet, I've had people say to me, "My relationship with my mother changed after falling in love with Shelly." I love that about her. That's a great creation. That's a woman in her mature years who finally gets to have her voice back, and in so many ways. I just trust that it will be that for so many people who see this musical finale, that there's a real sense somewhere that they'll miss her too, but they will be reminded of who she actually is and the joy of her.

When we last spoke, it was just after I watched the very first episode of "Transparent." I told you the kindness, love, empathy and compassion of the show really resonated with me. Now, we're at the end. What do you hope the legacy of

"Transparent" will be?

All of what you just said. All of that. From the very first to the very – to *this* completion. Mind you, with every ending is a beginning, and I wouldn't be surprised if there was more that came about within the structure of this. Wouldn't surprise me at all if there was more.

Are you hinting that the cast may reunite down the line for more episodes?

No, no! I'm not hinting. I'm just saying – look, things like that cannot be contained, and there is always the possibility. I am a big proponent of possibility. I'm not making definitive statements about anything – about the ending or the beginning or the anything. Seriously, I don't know. And I'm not being coy. I just don't know anything.

However, I hold the world in a way that allows for all kinds of possibilities, all kinds of openness to things, and I'm always surprised by how things turn out. I was just talking to somebody about it, and I've said it in several interviews recently because it seems so apt to me in relating around "Transparent," which is that: Soren Kierkegaard, the philosopher, said that, "Life can only be understood backward; but it must be lived forward." We all think, "We know this." We don't know anything.

As I get older, I keep thinking, "Well, maybe I'll know more next year."

No, honey. No! And hopefully you won't. It's not about imposing what you think in your

mind is gonna happen. Whoever thought we were gonna get marriage equality? I mean, look at that. Look at what it took to get that. So you cannot make blanket statements about how things are gonna be. We're all looking for that because in the structure of the human condition, we don't like uncertainty. It's scary. We think we have to know. Well, what would happen if we all didn't have to know? Didn't have to make statements about things that it had to be a particular way? What if we could just stay in the place of being completely open?

It's getting to that place that is the real journey, and the real struggle.

It's not actually a journey – it can literally happen right now. If you could choose to let go of the mind that got programmed to tell you that you have to know everything or think about everything and be on top of everything and be perfect about everything, what would life be like? Who would you be? You would be somebody that you already are and forgot you were.

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 The New York Times, GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.



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Queer Author,
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Godman Finds Truth
Through Travel

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

To take a trip requires a ticket, but only a journey begins with friends. Such is one of many themes stowed away in author Julián Godman's debut work "Andanzas, Vol. I, Friends" published by Bang Pang Editorial earlier this year. The staging across the book's four short stories is Godman's abundant travels, from Detroit to America's Eastern Seaboard and as far as Armenia where he shares family heritage. Yet the main attraction of these travelogues is always friendship and how relationships enrich Godman's understanding of politics, sexuality and other social studies. In a book reading last month at the Carrie Morris Arts Production in Detroit, Godman shared lessons from roads less traveled.

"When I travel, I often am met with differing social norms and differing views on life in general," Godman said. "How

one approaches life, how one perceives everyday things like work, family, friendship. I am a meditative, slow-moving traveler."

Andanzas is the Spanish word for "wanderings," and that is Godman's preferred method of travel. No itinerary. No hotels.

Like a local, he said, he yearns to be among the people. Familiarities form, he explained, and suddenly far-flung places feel like home.

"I see the similarities in people, humanity," Godman said. "I see the same type of fear of the unknown, the same type of innocence and the same type of altruistic care for things greater than the individual. These concepts are more of an influence on my approach to storytelling than they are directly talked about in the book."

He added, "Purposely, I tie settings together to encapsulate how alike we all are and how universal I see friendship to be. The four short stories are first-person accounts of friendship and how we perceive friendship through adversity and everyday life."

Appropriately, Mariana Ayón RV, Godman's good friend and publisher, designed the book's cover art to be relatively neutral.

"Partly so people don't peg or make

assumptions about what is inside," Godman explained. "Judg[ing] a book by its cover is something we all do so we felt a graphic design was a stronger direction to go than a picture. The colors play off some of the emotions and narratives in the book."

Godman studied at Wayne State University and Marygrove College before quitting school altogether after not being able to decide on a definitive direction.

"After switching majors from Mandarin and Eastern studies to linguistics and French, I realized at some point that I like too many things, like to explore too many things, and one field for the rest of my career was never going to be enough," he said.

So Godman tackles them all frequently. He is the purveyor of the herbal tea brand, Tonic & Juice, available at select cafes in Detroit, and he regularly hosts pop-up dinners to share his love of Armenian cuisine.

"We ended up running out of food at this past one," he shared. "People loved the food, and the space created. ... I want people to let loose, have a good time and maybe even make new friends at my events."

In his travels, breaking bread with strangers plays a pivotal role in breaking the ice, he added.

"I really don't identify with a lot of things in the LGBT community, which, much to my dismay, has been alienating. Lately, mainstream media has been talking a lot about sexual spectrum and that we all have some feelings, some attraction to all people. I am hopeful we continue down this path."

"Last year I got to teach a bunch of young adults how to talk about and write about food at an education center called TUMO in Armenia. We built our own food blog and focused on multilingual stories of Armenia's harvest season through what food meant to us, to family, to tradition and, most important, perceptions of what food represented to us personally," Godman said. "It was a total blast."

When it comes to Godman's knack for writing, he credits his mother, who was also an artist and a graduate of psychology and social work.

"I think a lot of the decisions I have made throughout my life have been heavily influenced by her," he said. "My voice, I've come to realize, is in a constant state of flux, evolving."

The same state of flux applies to Godman's views of sexuality in Andanzas.

"To be totally honest, I've struggled with this. I've identified as bi, gay and even asexual. OkCupid has a bunch of other sexualities that I've explored, like sapiosexual or demisexual. I've deduced my own personal identity to be 'maybe' to all of these. It's never really clear to me. I usually opt for queer," he said. "I think a lot of this has to do with how culture and society, even within the LGBT community, peg things about me, assumes things, thinks I have to be one way or another. I really don't identify with a lot of things in the LGBT community, which, much to my dismay, has been alienating. Lately, mainstream media has been talking a lot about sexual spectrum and that we all have some feelings, some attraction to all people. I am hopeful we continue down this path."

In the story "Of swimming, and friend I do not own," he explores his appreciation of male beauty and longs for affinity in friendship. In "Tolstoy, friend unconditional" he parallels how the appearance, distinction and sex of a friend changes throughout their journeys.

"My life is gray," Godman said, yet the book's purpose is not about clarity. It's about hope and faith in "true friendship."

"In the short story 'Of swimming, and friend I do not own,' I share a scene of me drowning, or attempting to not drown, in waters just off the coast of Maine. The people I meet and friendships found along my travels, I ask and have faith that one will be able to help me not drown, to teach me to swim better. It's a metaphor for life, humanity and needing friendship, [and] companionship and faith in those friendships."

Find out more about the book and how to purchase it at juliengodman.com/andanzas.

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Photo: Amazon Studios

Warmed Up and Ready to Run

Actress Jillian Bell Talks Gay Running Friends and Her Plan to Showcase More LGBTQ Stories

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Rest assured, I'm not spoiling anything when I say Jillian Bell runs a lot in "Brittany Runs a Marathon." All that sweat and all those tears aren't exactly taken from the 35-year-old actress' life – in case you hadn't noticed, this is about Brittany and her running – but it could very well metaphorically dovetail with Bell's career and the infinite miles she's clocked to get to her own finish of sorts: a starring role.

For her first lead part in a film, Bell portrays out writer-director Paul Downs Colaizzo's real-life best friend in his heartfelt debut feature, which won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival in February. When we first meet Brittany, her life is in shambles. Landlord issues, job issues, friend issues, and according to her doctor, a less-than-ideal BMI issue. So she runs. Short jaunts at first, then longer, steadier stretches. But as she trains for a marathon, Brittany learns that self-acceptance and personal growth aren't just the result of going the literal distance.

Starring concurrently in bisexual director Lynn Shelton's "Sword of Trust," which premiered recently at SXSW, Bell's credits also include a smattering of comedic TV series like Comedy Central's "Workaholics" and "Idiotsitter." Film-wise, she starred alongside Scarlett Johansson and Kate McKinnon in the bachelorette-party-gone-wrong farce "Rough Night" and "22 Jump Street," her mainstream breakthrough, playing the scene-stealing, deadpanning rival to Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill's doofus cop duo.

Bell phoned recently to chat about wine runs with a dear gay friend, shooting a scene with Bob the Drag Queen and her commitment to telling LGBTQ stories.

In real life, do you have any gay friends who'd run a marathon with you?

(My friend) Kyle would actually be *amazing* at running a marathon. He would be cheering the entire time. The only thing: He would want to stop midway to just grab a little bit of rosé, which would make us very sick for the rest of the marathon.

Conveniently, he might already have that in his Hydro Flask as you run.

You know the ones that are attached to the hat and you just slurp out of them? That would be Kyle's situation. But he'd be a blast. We'd have so much fun. We'd probably laugh the whole time.

Do you have LGBTQ friends in your life who've pushed you to be a better version of yourself in the way that Brittany's gay friend, Seth, does in the film?

Absolutely. One of my best friends is Fortune Feimster. She's hysterical. She is the coolest friend of mine. We did (The Groundlings') Sunday Company together and then we ended up living next to each other in apartments. Then, when she moved into a house, I moved into a house nearby. I keep telling her I'm stalking her for the rest of her life.

She's had me on her podcast and we've talked a lot about our careers because we've both been very blessed to have some great stuff happen. She's always encouraging me; I'm always encouraging her. And she's kind of my touchstone of someone who just makes me very, very happy. I think she's been so smart in her career – the decisions that she's made and what she's decided to do and what it says about her – and she's one of my best

friends and I'm a big fan of hers.

I love Seth and how supportive he is of Brittany – but what I really love is that he's not just the token gay best friend. He also has a whole, full life of his own. Remember when gay characters only existed in films for the sake of the female protagonist? This feels like progress.

I know, I know. This was written by Paul and he is a gay man, and the character he wrote that was basically inspired by his own story is Seth. This is sort of a love story for her of what she went through and how she achieved these goals, and Seth is a very important character in this movie. He's always so positive and encouraging, and you're right: He's seen in the light that is different from a lot of films as the gay best friend. I think that that is such a wonderful and important thing.

And of all the families portrayed in the film, he seems to have the most together, stable family unit.

Yeah, he's married, he has a kid, and all he wants is to have another kid and get in better shape in his life and he's doing great. He's a successful human being and that is important to showcase in film. It makes me really sad when it isn't and so I'm just happy that our film is a part of doing something hopefully right.

Do you find that gay male directors have a special way or a different sensibility when it comes to telling a female-centered story?

I can only speak to my relationship with Paul and how we worked together, and there were moments where we would just cry together and moments of great strength. And we had

moments where we would laugh till we were on the floor. We just had each other to lean on throughout this whole process, and it was a big bonding moment. Not only was he doing this almost for the second time in his life, because it's about his real-life best friend, but it was his first film that he was directing and that he wrote, so that was a huge achievement. We just had a really strong connection and we both were very passionate from the beginning about this story and how we weren't sure if people would get it. We're so excited now that, for the most part, people are understanding what this story is about. That makes both of us very happy.

Before you began filming, you said it was going to be very challenging because of how the movie deals with women's perceptions of their bodies. But you also were hoping it might be more therapeutic than difficult. Well, you've done the film. Was filming this like therapy?

You know what? Both kind of happened. And I was expecting that. Sometimes you spiral out after these things, sometimes it's therapeutic. It was both, but in a healthy way. It just sort of made me look at my relationship with my own body and how I was talking about myself. I can only speak from my perspective, but sometimes you'll look at other people, some of your best friends, and think, "Oh, they're all wonderful and beautiful and lovely and smart," and then you'll go home and you'll say awful things to yourself that you would never say about anyone else. I just felt like this movie hits on that and how society treats you but also how you treat yourself. What it feels like to choose yourself for the first time.

By doing this project, I also felt like I was

running my own marathon. I didn't really want to address (these themes) in either film or television unless it was doing it right, and this is the first film that I read that was sort of a transformation story, but it wasn't like "girl gets skinny, girl has a better life." To me, that's very important to put out there for women *and* men. I shouldn't say I'm surprised, but it's been overwhelming how many men relate to that and how difficult it is when you don't come out looking like Adonis. It's a lot.

By the end of her journey, I was weeping. Because – shocker! – gay men have body image issues too.

Awww. I'm so glad you liked the film and you related to it. This is why we did it. I haven't seen a movie like this in a very long time, maybe not ever, where I thought, "These are real humans, this is a real human story." There are raw emotions here, and there's vulnerability in a way that's so beautiful and isn't always showcased in film. I just really wanted to be a part of that kind of storytelling.

Your filmography has been very LGBTQ-inclusive. As Alice in "Rough Night," you were the perfect ally-friend to Blaire and Frankie, played by Zoë Kravitz and Ilana Glazer.

Absolutely! We wanted to get them back together! I mean, how cute is that couple? And they were always fighting with each other and we were like, "You like each other! Get back together!" I was so happy with that ending too, because I don't think I was around when they were shooting that part of the scene where they end up being back together at the end and I loved the way it was handled. It was so beautiful and real.

Also beautiful: that cameo from Bob the Drag Queen, who was the DJ while you girls danced to "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)."

Oh my goodness, Bob the Drag Queen. Amazing! We had a really good time. I think that was our second day of shooting, and I remember I was so nervous because my character was the one that had to know the dance perfectly because she holds onto her college memories for dear life. So I was in my own head about the dance – and then everybody else was losing their minds over Bob! I was like, "I'm so excited to be working with you *too!*" We were so thrilled that we got to work with Bob.

While writing for "SNL," do you recall any LGBTQ-oriented sketches you wrote?

I'm trying to remember. It's funny: I just did an interview today where they were showing a clip from something that I wrote and it was a sketch called "Your Mom Talks to Megan Fox," and it was just a mother talking to Megan Fox and how funny that conversation would be. But, actually, I'll be honest with you: I did *not* get a lot of stuff on the air (laughs). I don't remember most of my sketches, but I'll say this: I don't remember anything really making it on.

As Cynthia in "Sword of Trust," you play a lesbian. Is this the first lesbian character you've played, and

what can you tell us about her?

I'm trying to think if it's the first lesbian character I've played – it might be, technically! I will just say I believe it was originally going to a woman who's a lesbian – I wanna say that (laughs) – and they called me last minute because she had to go shoot another project, which is very exciting! But I'm hoping I did it justice. We had the best time shooting. Michaela (Watkins, who also stars alongside Bell in "Brittany Runs a Marathon") and I were ... I would say careful. We wanted to make sure they seemed like a real couple and they really cared about each other. I think that comes across in the movie, that they would do anything for each other. It's really sweet.

As a comedian, are you conscious of what lines should and shouldn't be crossed when it comes to queer content?

Absolutely. One of my good friends is non-binary and we've been trying to figure out a way to showcase more artists in the LGBTQ+ community. We would love to do something where there's an actress who wants to work with a new up-and-coming director who is trans, or a non-binary short film where it's showing them being the one who saves the day when there's a plane attack. We are just like, "What are interesting stories we haven't seen before in making people superheroes or just showing normal life?" Like in our movie, with Seth. Just showcasing more of that.

There was this sort of unofficial questionnaire online, and they were asking a bunch of questions about what they have and haven't seen in film and television. The amount of LGBTQ people that wanted to be seen but also not killed off immediately was so upsetting to me and it opened up my eyes to the fact that that happens and how sad that is and, you know, if they're gonna do a remake of "Harry Met Sally," what is the gay version? I'm curious to see that. I would love to see that. I would pay for a ticket to go see that film because we've seen it the other way for so long.

Speaking of role reversal, what's the latest on the Disney remake of "Splash" with Channing?

Yeah, we're trying – we're trying! It's being written right now. Really excited about it. Anything to work with him again because he is a doll of a human being and, I mean, it would be such a dream come true. I would be playing, basically, the Tom Hanks part, and what is more thrilling than that?

And, to boot, Channing as a merman.

Yes, Channing as a merman! I'm giving the people what they want. That's what I'm trying to do.

At the very least you're giving me what I want, so thank you.

Yes, I'm doing this for you, Chris. (Laughs)

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Netflix's 'Styling Hollywood' Features Successful Black, Gay Couple

Netflix continues to create original LGBTQ-focused programming and the latest addition is "Styling Hollywood." The show follows the lives and careers of husbands Jason Bolden and Adair Curtis of JSN Studio. While Bolden stays busy styling A-list stars for the red carpet, Adair runs the couple's interior design firm.

For the upcoming first season, streamable on the service Aug. 30, Bolden and Adair work with such talent as Yara Shahidi from "Black-ish" and "Grown-ish," "Empire" star Taraji P. Henson, Gabrielle Union and director Ava DuVernay. Adair will also tackle renovating the home of former "Psych" star Dule Hill.

Bolden made the list of "25 Most Powerful Stylists in Hollywood" put out by The Hollywood Reporter this year. He told Out magazine that the show will feature "two black men who love each other and their careers are doing really well. I personally know what it looks like for me because I live it. But I also look out sometimes and have to say, 'I don't see anything that mirrors myself and my husband.'"

The show has already received advance praise from DuVernay, who tweeted, "When your stylist is so stellar he has his own Netflix show. I know I speak on behalf of all the women who you help sparkle, we're so happy and proud of you, your talent, your verve, your warm spirit. Congrats! XO!"



Happenings



THE B-52S 40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

Since they got their start 40 years ago, The B-52's have reached audiences worldwide and sold more than 20 million albums. On Saturday, Sept. 14, the group will keep that momentum going when they visit the Meadow Brook Amphitheatre to highlight this milestone anniversary. They will perform with special guests OMD and Berlin. Tickets start at \$29.50. Find out more online at 313presents.com.

Activist, Author Rita Mae Brown in Conversation With Wade Rouse Sept. 5 in Saugatuck

Famed author of "Rubyfruit Jungle" and social and animal rights activist Rita Mae Brown is set to make an appearance at The Saugatuck Center for the Arts on Thursday, Sept. 5 from 6 to 9 p.m. Joining her is bestselling Michigan author and resident Wade Rouse. Organizers say the evening will be filled "with personal stories about writing, literature, publishing and life as well as behind-the-scenes dish with the best-selling authors and pals."

This event will also serve as a fundraiser for children's programming at the Center.

"Proceeds from the evening support the SCA's cost-free children's programming, something Wade is passionate about," organizers wrote.



"Wade has, in the past, done several fundraising events for the SCA, helping us tell the story of what the SCA does for and with regional schools, at-risk students and migrant children."

Find online at gaybe.am/ad.

OUTINGS

Friday, August 23

LGBT Social Meet Up 6:30 p.m. Lgbt social meet up group is a group for all lgbt people who want to meet have light-hearted discussions and social activities. Hazel Park Community Center, 620 West Woodward Heights, Hazel Park. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Saturday, August 24

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. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 w 9 mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Monday, August 26

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 Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274.

redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Tuesday, August 27

Strand with Trans Support Groups - Ann Arbor - Washtenaw 7:30 p.m. Trans Support Group meeting the 4th Tuesday of each month. Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. standwithtrans.org.

Wednesday, August 28

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 2 p.m. 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 Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Friday, August 30

22nd Annual Arts, Beats, Eats The 22nd Annual Arts, Beats & Eats will take place in Downtown Royal Oak. The festival offers more than 200 performances on nine stages, a highly ranked juried fine arts show and local

restaurants. In Downtown Royal Oak artseatsbeats.com.

Sunday, September 1

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 5 p.m. There is no fee to attend the groups. This group meets the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. 734-747-4363. www.standwithtrans.org.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Adrian-Lenawee County 6:30 p.m. For Trans Youth. Support Group information, contact facilitator Socorro Sevilla, MSW: socorro@hilltopcounseling.org. Hilltop Counseling, 115 W. Maumee St., Adrian. 313-909-5408. standwithtrans.org. hilltopcounseling.org.

Tuesday, September 3

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Lake Orion / Oakland County 7 p.m. 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,

Editor's Pick

CARLY RAE JEPSEN DANCE PARTY AT EL CLUB SAT. AUG. 24

On Saturday, Aug. 24, El Club will host Party For One: A dance party dedicated to the music of Carly Rae Jepsen. DJs will be announced. General Admission is \$5. Find out more information online at elclubdetroit.com.



ally, activist, St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663 www.stmarysinthehills.org <http://www.standwithtrans.org>

Thursday, September 5

Pride Night at Thunderbowl! 8 p.m. 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! Thunderbowl Arena, 4200 Allen Road, Allen Park. 313-928-4688. thunderbowl.org.

MUSIC & MORE

World's Largest Plant-Based Potluck Picnic August 24, 1 p.m. Enjoy live music, comedians, games, raffles and more! Speakers include Dr. Joel Kahn and Paul Chatlin. Bring a plant-based dish to share and a copy of the recipe to Seaholm High School Athletic Field to Seaholm High School, 2436 West Lincoln St., Birmingham. pbnsg.org.

CATS September 3, 7:30 p.m. CATS, the

record-breaking musical spectacular by Andrew Lloyd Webber that has captivated audiences in over 30 countries and 15 languages, is now on tour across North America and is coming to Detroit! Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

Lenny Kravitz at the Fox Theatre September 5, 8 p.m. Extending a two-year world tour, Lenny Kravitz is returning to the Midwest for the North American leg. He'll be stopping by The Fox Theatre playing music from his 2018 album "Raise Vibration." Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-471-6611. gaybe.am/nA

Social Distortion, Flogging Molly, The Devil Makes Three, Le Butcherettes September 6, 6 p.m. Punk rock bands Social Distortion and Flogging Molly are teaming up with The Devil Makes Three and Le Butcherettes on their summer tour. The four bands will head to the Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill, 14900 Metro Pkwy, Sterling Heights. 586-268-9700. freedomhillampitheater.com. gaybe.am/yl.

Reba McEntire September 7, 7:30 p.m. Reba McEntire comes to the Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill in Sterling Heights Saturday, Sept. 7. Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill, 14900 Metro Pkwy, Sterling Heights. 586-268-9700. freedomhillampitheater.com.

Jonas Brothers September 7, 7:30 p.m. The Grammy Award-nominated powerhouse trio Jonas Brothers are heading to Little Caesars Arena on their "Happiness Begins Tour." This tour coincides

with the release of their anticipated "Happiness Begins" album. [gaybe.am/JP Little Caesar's Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-349-5777.](http://gaybe.am/)

Snarly Puppy September 8, 7 p.m. A Brooklyn-based collective that grew out of the celebrated jazz program at the University of North Texas, the band — which features a rotating cast of musicians playing guitars, percussion, horns, keyboards, and even strings Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave, Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

Amadeus – Film with Live Orchestra September 15, 2 p.m. Winner of eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor, the 1984 motion picture Amadeus makes its UMS debut projected on a large screen, with Mozart's celebrated works performed live by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave, Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

K.Flay September 20, 7 p.m. Singer, songwriter, rapper, and musician K.Flay was nominated for two awards at the 60th annual Grammy Awards. The Crofoot, 1 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. 248-850-9333. thecrofoot.com.

All About Eve – National Theatre Live in HD September 22, 7 p.m. Gillian Anderson (X-Files) and Lily James (Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again!) star in All About Eve, the story of Margo Channing. A legend and true star of the theater, the spotlight is hers and Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

Detroit-Born Gay Artist James C. Harrison Featured in Schmidt's Antiques Exhibit

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

At times figural and at others completely abstract, the work of openly gay artist James C. Harrison is hard to classify. So much so that even regular patterns in his pieces take on different feels depending on the work — but that variability of style might just be part of Harrison's genius. Elizabeth O'Connell, one of the curators of Harrison's work at the Schmidt's Antiques auction house, said that it makes him "a fascinating guy to study."

"We essentially have 50 years of his work and he has these recurring symbols, but you would think they were all done by a totally different artist," O'Connell said. "The draw for us with Harrison's work, and other past reviewers throughout his career, is that he's got this amazing sort of Detroit grittiness about him that is prevalent throughout all of his work. But we chose specifically to go with a more comprehensive timespan."

The earliest work featured in the exhibit is from the 1940s up to the late '80s near the time of his death. Harrison's work, along with that of fellow Detroit-born modern artist Darin Latimer, will be available for public viewing every Saturday now through the end of August at Schmidt's. The exhibit is called "Imaging Each Other."

"[The title] fits on multiple levels and it fits really well with the relationship between the two artists' work," O'Connell said, referencing their similar styles. "Darin ... became a professional artist based on his inspiration from Harrison's work."

And the title itself came from one of Harrison's works. Harrison was known for meticulously revising and annotating his works as well as providing detailed titles to his pieces.



James C. Harrison

"... The titles being these kind of cutting, almost soundbites. And it's a dream come true if you're trying to think of a title to go through his work," O'Connell said. "He just has this kind of searching rawness about his work that reflects both the Detroit jazz scene, the Detroit art scene as well as his own personal life."

O'Connell added that Harrison is a rare example of a mid-20th-century artist who openly explored his sexuality throughout his works.

"In my experience, he is a bit of a rarity in that sense. It works with his seeking out for the truth within himself and his own identity outside of his sexuality and the fact that he's so willing to express his sexuality in this way," she said.

For those interested in viewing the exhibit, O'Connell's advice is to take a while to really ingest the varied meaning behind each of Latimer's and Harrison's works. Regarding Harrison's pieces in particular, paying attention to the time period in which each work was created is important as the exhibit features works of his from his time in Detroit, his time entering the New York art scene and his most prolific period in the '80s.

"It's an exhibit that ideally people should take a lot of time to go through," she said. "It's very cerebral and very layered and it's easy to see it as something that almost looks visually cacophonous at times, but it's all very intentional and it's all very rich in depth."

To find out more about the exhibit and how to purchase works visit schmidtsantiques.com.



Editor's Pick

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS AT THE FILLMORE

Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats blends classic elements of folk, Americana and rhythm and blues to create a unique sound that's been taking the music world by storm. Detroiters will get a chance to hear that sound live when the band makes its way to The Fillmore in Detroit on Tuesday, Aug. 27, at 7 p.m. Find out more information online at thefillmoredetroit.com.



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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Viola Davis sings the blues

The Academy Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role went to Viola Davis for the 2016 film adaptation of August Wilson's "Fences." And sometimes you stick with what worked before, so another Wilson adaptation, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, is headed to Netflix, with Davis starring as legendary lesbian "Queen of the Blues" Rainey. The story concerns Rainey recording a record in 1920s Chicago, and all the tensions that accompanied her artistic and personal life. Taylour Paige ("Hit The Floor") will play Rainey's lover, Dussie Mae, and other notable co-stars include Chadwick Boseman and "Fear the Walking Dead's" Colman Domingo. Denzel Washington, who starred with Davis in "Fences," is producing, actor-writer Ruben Santiago-Hudson ("Billions") is adapting the play for the screen, and gay theater director and filmmaker George C. Wolfe ("The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks") will direct. This one's going to hit Netflix in 2020, and probably scoop up its share of award nominations soon after. Brush up on your blues before then.



Jennifer Beals

Will 'Can You Keep A Secret?' revive the rom-com?

We, as a people, need and deserve more romantic comedies than studios have been giving us lately. The world is overrun with superheroes instead of meet-cutes, and we consider this to be a movie-based hate crime. It's so dire out there that sometimes we find ourselves watching those terrible Hallmark films just so we can have a taste. Coming soon, then, to quench our desire, is

"Can You Keep A Secret?" Based on the best-selling novel by Sophie Kinsella, this story's meet-cute is more like a meet-terrifying, when a young woman (Alexandra Daddario, so good in the underrated "We Have Always Lived in the Castle") spills all her secrets to a man (Tyler Hoechlin, "Everybody Wants Some!") on a plane when they think they're going to crash. When they don't die young, she learns that he's her new employer. Along for the romantic turbulence is Kimiko Glenn from "Orange is the New Black" and her "Orange" co-star, Laverne Cox, who, based on her IMDb roster of upcoming projects, is currently from pretty much everywhere and everything. Hurry up, movie, and teach us to laugh at love again.

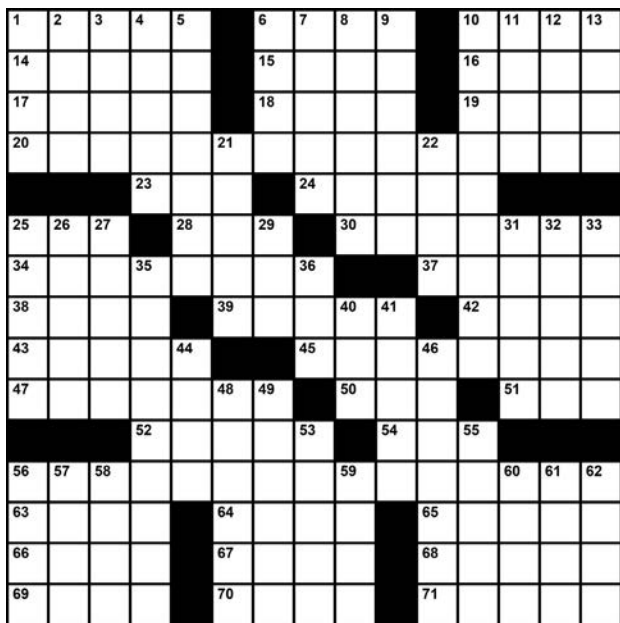
Nisha Ganatra is making music

Bill Pullman, Eddie Izzard and Diplo have joined the cast of "Covers," the upcoming comedy from Focus Features, with a screenplay by first-timer Flora Greeson, to be directed by Nisha Ganatra ("Late Night," and the '90s lesbian classic "Chutney Popcorn"). The three new cast members will join Dakota Johnson, Tracee Ellis Ross and Ice Cube in a love story set in the fast-paced Los Angeles music scene. If the name Diplo is unfamiliar to you, it's because you're not paying enough attention to the world of DJs-as-music-producers, because he's worked with Sia, Lil Nas X and Beyoncé, to name a few, and this will be his first major acting assignment. Production on this one is taking place right now, with a drop date sometime in 2020. We don't know who sings in the film, but if we learned anything from 2000's "Duets," the one where Paul Giamatti belted out an Otis Redding song and Huey Lewis crooned "Cruising" with Gwyneth Paltrow, it's never to be surprised.

Here's your latest 'L Word' revival casting update

Each new press release brings us closer to the TV event of 2019. We are referring, obviously, to "The L Word: Generation Q" the Showtime series that will matter more than all other Showtime programming that has ever existed. We already know that Jennifer Beals, Katherine Moennig and Leisha Hailey are back, still living the lesbian high life in Los Angeles, only now their paths will cross with fresh faces played by Arienne Mandi ("Baja"), Leo Sheng ("Adam"), Jacqueline Tobi ("Easy") and Rosanny Zayas ("Orange is the New Black"). And just announced, the cast expands with Olivia Thirlby ("Juno") and our favorite lesbian stand-up comic Fortune Feimster ("The Mindy Project"), as well as Lex Scott Davis ("The First Purge") and Sophie Giannamore ("Transparent"). We also finally have a premiere date, and it's as though Showtime heard us refer to this revival as "Lesbian Christmas" and decided to make it so: the eight-episode series drops Sunday, Dec. 8. Thank you, Ms. Santa.

Romeo San Vicente is counting the days.



- 38 Sauce brand
 39 Lubed up
 42 Like a poor excuse
 43 That is, to Cicero
 45 More of the quote
 47 Pardons
 50 Directional ending
 51 Organ pleased by Bernstein
 52 "My place or ___?"
 54 Sex toy battery size
 56 End of the quote
 63 1847 Melville novel
 64 Gather, after spilling seed
 65 Urvashi Vaid's birthplace
 66 Burning software
 67 Woods of "Legally Blonde"
 68 Physics Nobelist Bohr
 69 Go off, on Broadway
 70 Phillippe of "Gosford Park"
 71 Lavatory door sign
- 12 Ornament in "Cleopatra," perhaps
 13 Deep pink
 21 Senatorial staffers
 22 Wasn't straight
 25 Month of the National Day of Silence
 26 Novelist Charles
 27 Big name in synonyms
 29 Night stalker
 31 Give the slip to
 32 Cel mate of Nala
 33 "Do" in "The Sound of Music"
 35 Beat around the bush
 36 Rilke's ice
 40 "Evita" narrator
 41 Islam's sacred text
 44 Horny sound
 46 Forever young
 48 1930's-40's villain
 49 Without restraint
 53 Milano opera house, with "la"
 55 Bill T. Jones' partner Zane
 56 Cutting edge creator
 57 Financial page heading
 58 Petty of "Orange Is the New Black"
 59 What you do at the other end
 60 Genie portrayer Barbara
 61 Russian River deposit
 62 Give some lip to

The First Woman Elected

QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Producers of rainbows
 6 Words before about
 10 Nicky, in "Funny Girl"
 14 Seminal computer
 15 "The Great Masturbator" painter
 16 Second opening?
 17 Port in the land of samurai
 18 Patsy's "Ab Fab" partner
 19 Lodge members
- 20 Start of a quote by Jeannette Rankin, first woman to be elected to the House
 23 Mean Amin
 24 Medium for Frasier Crane
 25 JFK posting
 28 Hoopla
 30 "Curbing lesbianism" advocate
 May of the UK
 34 More of the quote
 37 Michelangelo masterpiece

Down

- 1 Sneaky Pie cry
 2 ___ many words
 3 Thailand, once
 4 George of "Star Trek"
 5 Series with gay veep Cyrus Beene
 6 Baltic Sea feeder
 7 George of "Robot Monsters"
 8 Dated
 9 Saudi Arabian capital
 10 Part of the Musketeers' credo
 11 Soda shop treat

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Community Connections

Flagstar Bank's Beth Correa 'On The Menu' at LGBTQ Chamber's New Business Breakfast Speaker Series



Beth Correa

BY BTL STAFF

Beth Correa, SVP and Director of Corporate Responsibility at Flagstar Bank, knows a lot about how big businesses respond to their LGBTQ employees and customers. She's led programs of inclusion at some of Michigan's largest employers, and she's also seen how some companies have stumbled in their outreach — or lack thereof — to LGBTQ people within and outside their organizations. On Sept. 12, Correa will bring her wealth of hands-on experience to "On The Menu," a new monthly LGBTQ Business Breakfast Series created by the Detroit Regional LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce.

"We are so excited that Beth has agreed to speak at the first in our new breakfast speaker series," said Jan Stevenson, VP of the Chamber. "She is smart, principled and has unique

experience as an effective leader and ally at Flagstar, in the business community and with numerous nonprofit organizations."

In her current role at Flagstar Bank, Correa has overall responsibility for community investments and diversity and inclusion initiatives. She also serves as the Director of the Flagstar Foundation. Correa took a leadership role in the formation of Flagstar Bank's LGBTQ employee resource group and had played a similar role at Comerica Bank a decade earlier when she spearheaded that bank's creation of a LGBTQ employee group and marketing outreach campaign.

Currently, she is extremely active in the greater Detroit community, volunteering and serving on numerous boards including Inforum, The Michigan Humane Society, the Detroit Public School Foundation, the Ruth

Ellis Center and Affirmations' capital campaign committee, among others.

Organizers said that this new speaker series intends to engage audiences with topics that are relevant, interesting, important and actionable for LGBTQ people in business and their allies. On the second Thursday morning of each month, Affirmations in Ferndale will host these breakfast discussions and the Chamber invites any and all interested parties to join in the conversations.

A full, catered breakfast service starts at 7 a.m., the program begins at 8 a.m. and will conclude before 9 a.m. Affirmations is located at 290 West Nine Mile in Ferndale. Tickets are available online at gaybe.am/I3. Tickets are \$16 for chamber members, \$21 for non-DRLGBTCC members. For more information on the DRLGBTCC go to Detroitlgbtchamber.com.



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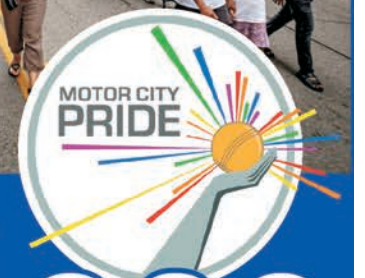
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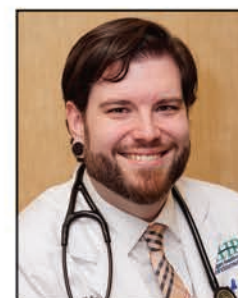
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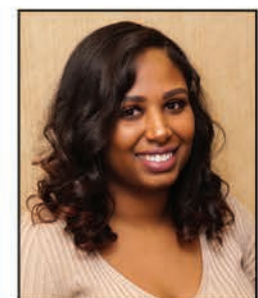
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