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Michigan Faith Leaders  
on Religious Exemption



# BUILDING ON 'LOVE, INCLUSION, FAIRNESS, EQUITY'

Michigan Episcopal Church to Consecrate, Ordain  
First Out Lesbian Bishop Bonnie A. Perry

Photo by Charlie Simokaitis.



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# Building on ‘Love, Inclusion, Fairness, Equity’

## Michigan Episcopal Church to Consecrate, Ordain First Out Lesbian Bishop Bonnie A. Perry

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

For many in the LGBTQ community, the words “religion” and “progress” are seldom considered synonymous. Still, it’s vital not to downplay the value of those pro-LGBTQ religious activists who have led the charge in both securing rights like marriage equality and normalizing the acceptance of LGBTQ people in faith communities. In the case of the Episcopal Church, although its track record hasn’t been perfect, it’s impossible to deny its quick adaptation to social change. For example, after the Supreme Court secured marriage equality in 2015, the Church immediately took steps to update its policies and allow same-sex couples to be married. Prominent church leaders like Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry were quick to defend that decision among other less-accepting religious leaders.

On Feb. 8 Michigan’s Episcopal Church will make history with another inclusive move when it ordains and consecrates the Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry as its 11th bishop diocesan. An out lesbian, she will be the first openly gay priest to be elected bishop since the church was founded over 200 years ago and will be responsible for overseeing over 70 congregations and more than 16,000 baptized congregants. Perry will succeed the Rt. Rev. Wendell N. Gibbs Jr., who has served in his position since 2000. Also notable is the fact that she was selected among three other female nominees from across the U.S.

Chosen in June and officially bishop-elect since Nov. 1, *Between The Lines* interviewed Perry twice: once after her election and two months before she officially takes the reins. She shared her goals for the diocese, what drew her to the priesthood and gave her thoughts on today’s religious landscape.

### Building on Existing Foundations

When Perry first spoke with BTL she was still serving in her position as the rector of All Saints’

Episcopal Church in Chicago. Considering the changes in both her role and environment, she said that first and foremost, her job is to listen and learn.

“In order to do a good job I really need to know what the issues are, what the needs are, what the gifts are and what people both in our churches in the Southeast section of my new state — and the people who are not in our churches — what they’re longing for,” Perry said.

Six months later and a month and a half into her role as bishop-elect, Perry echoed that sentiment, adding that she believes in the Church’s gospel values of “love, inclusion, fairness, equity” and is “committed to them being enacted in our public sector in our communities.”

In short: Perry said she will be focused on partnerships during her term as bishop.

“So that means we’re going to build on all that is going on right now — we have incredible churches in my new diocese — and continue to build partnerships in the private world and in the government world between those groups and faith communities, because we have to,” she said. “That is the call of the gospel and I am deeply committed to embodying that.”

She emphasized that those partnerships extend to the conservative congregants she will be overseeing during her tenure too, meaning that “bridging chasms” between both conservatives and progressives will be a priority.

“Not everyone, as you would find in every community, is progressive. There are some folks who are super faithful people who have a conservative view on theology and on politics. And I am very committed those people also having a full participation and full life in our faith community. This is not monolithic. And for me, as someone who is a lesbian who has over my life been excluded for being a lesbian for my progressive theological beliefs, I know what that feels like. So I’m not going to do that to anyone from the conservative perspective, because I know how bad it feels,” Perry said.

To her, the values of inclusion and fairness embody “gospel values” that she will strive



Photo by Mechelle Sieglitz Castelli.

to uphold, building on what her predecessor Gibbs will leave behind. She added that what has heartened her in this pursuit is the pro-LGBTQ community organizing she's seen on congregation visits in communities "I might not have automatically expected it."

"... Whether I'm in Lincoln Park or in Wyandotte, [I'm] hearing the prodigious, overt welcome for LGBT people," she said. "... And looking at people who are saying, 'We care, we welcome, everyone gets to be God's people and come and be with us.' Ten years ago people didn't even say trans or know what trans was, and to be in a congregation in Wyandotte in the

whether it be in a religious setting or in the public sector, Perry said that she feels that no one should be excluded.

"I know that the Episcopal Church in Western Michigan is very welcoming of LGBT people, so I mean when I read that article, I know that there are at least a dozen churches in Western Michigan where the judge could attend and be warmly welcomed and received. So that just makes me sad. I believe that when we offer communion to people ... we don't own that table," Perry said. "It's not my table or the Episcopal Church's table or the Catholic Church's table. It's God's table, and when God sets a table all are welcome. Everyone gets to come unquestionably, because we don't own

people would have made it my primary identifier and limited my ability to do ministry. And because people have worked so hard — LGBT people and our allies — that's all shifting," she said. "But then I get invited, called by the people in the diocese of Michigan to lead our diocese and knowing all of who I am and what a gift. I think any time we limit folks and say, 'You can't bring all of who God has created you to be to the table,' we're losing part of their gift that God has given us."

It is in fact that ability to be accepted and feel "profoundly loved by Jesus" in all aspects of her identity at 16 years old during a Catholic youth retreat that Perry said first made her consider the priesthood a calling. By the time she attended Union Theological School in New York City she said she not only felt called to become a religious leader but to "create faith communities."

"Where people will know the profound love of God so that we can change the conditions of the world for people," Perry said. "For me, God's love doesn't just stop with me feeling good. That then enables an enlivens me to then use those gifts that God has given us to do something good."

Yet ironically, she said it might be her experiences outside of church life that has given her the most perspective on what it means to be the head of diocese in 2020. An avid sea kayaker, Perry not only guides groups but she coaches them as well, and she has done so across the globe regularly for years.

I think that's super helpful because I'm not only speaking with church people. I'm speaking with folks who have lives outside that. And, to be fair and very realistic, faith people, church people have amazing lives outside their faith communities. They have wonderfully nurturing [lives] inside their faith communities, but it's those outside venues that I think really brings — that's where spirit is blowing," she said. "... And the church has as least as much to learn from the secular world as the secular world has to learn from the church. If we cut ourselves off either way then both groups lose."

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*Perry will be ordained and consecrated on Feb. 8 at 10:30 a.m. As part of Perry's election process, she submitted five publicly accessible essay question answers at the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan's website. To learn more about the event and her experience in her previous role visit [edomi.org](http://edomi.org).*

*"I believe that when we offer communion to people ... we don't own that table. It's not my table or the Episcopal Church's table or the Catholic Church's table. It's God's table, and when God sets a table all are welcome. Everyone gets to come unquestionably, because we don't own these things."*

— Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry, 11th bishop diocesan of Episcopal Church

evening really close to Christmas, these people have come on out, and for a trans fellow there [to say] that 'this church saved my life,' that is just breathtaking to me. And it gives me such hope for all of us."

## A Changing Religious and Political Landscape

As welcoming and inclusive to LGBTQ people as Perry's congregants have been in the places she's visited so far, Michigan, like every state, has a varied religious landscape. Just a few weeks ago in a West Michigan Catholic Church, openly gay Judge Sara Smolenski was urged not to come up for Communion — a sacred Catholic rite in which bread and wine is made sacred and consumed to join with Christ — during mass at St. Stephen Church because of her sexual orientation. [See page 9.] When asked how she feels about religious exemptions in service,

these things."

It is, however, clear that that mindset is not shared by other religious leaders. When asked how she has acclimated to meeting regularly with other religious leaders of various faiths in places like Detroit's Religious Council, she said that she has always felt warmly welcomed.

"And there were Islamic people there, Jewish people there, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I was very, very warmly welcomed by everyone," she said. "And the world is changing."

She did note, too, that it is because of that forward-thinking change that she is able to be recognized more fully in her ministry.

"I have to say my sexuality has never been a forefront of my ministry, it's always been completely a part of who I am. It informs who I am, but it's certainly not my primary identifier. But as we all know, in previous years other

# Michigan's Episcopal Church and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Front

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Unlike other mainline Christian denominations, it's undeniable that equality has long been the focus of many of the Episcopal Church's leaders and congregants. For close to 50 years now, Michigan's Episcopal Church has both acknowledged and worked with LGBTQ congregants and groups — if not always positively. Pioneering Michigan LGBTQ activist and educator Jim Toy can attest to having had a firsthand experience with the Church in the late 1960s when he worked as the music director at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church in Detroit. It was in large part due to meetings at the church that one of Michigan's largest LGBTQ activism groups was formed.

"Part of my work was to check calendar announcements, and so in December '69 I was checking the calendar and it said, 'gay meeting.' Well, there never had been, to my knowledge, a 'gay meeting' in Michigan," he said with a laugh. "I went to the priest, who we called daddy-o, and said, 'What is this gay meeting?' And he said, 'What are you talking about?' And I said, 'I saw an announcement that there was going to be a 'gay meeting.' He said no. And one of the guys in the draft resistance group — this is Vietnam war draft resistance — said, 'Could we have a gay meeting here?' And I said, 'Well, if we can't have a gay meeting here, whatever that is, we might as well shut this God box down,' which is how we referred to the church."

After conferring at an Ann Arbor gay bar with his friend, Toy vacillated between attending and not. The night before the meeting, the two met at the bar again and decided to commit saying, 'Oh, well, if we go that means we're gay.'

"And the next day, we got into John's car and drove to the meeting and there were maybe a dozen other people, women and men, just as excited and scared as we were," Toy laughed. "We talked for hours and 'we're going to keep on meeting that's for sure.' And 'we're going to call ourselves the Detroit Gay Liberation Movement,' which we did. And so, John and I kept driving into those meetings and that got to be stale. I said, 'Why don't we start a group in Ann Arbor,' and we put an ad into The Michigan Daily and about 100 people showed up to the meeting."

While this new group was developing, however, Toy said that he soon learned from the bishop at the time, Richard S. M. Emrich, that the original Gay Liberation Front could no longer meet in the church as it had been.

"That went over not very favorably with the group, and they decided to disrupt the diocesan convention business meeting," Toy said.

Held at Rackham Auditorium, protestors attended the meeting and roughly 20 got up on stage. Very quickly, the presiding dignitary adjourned the meeting. Despite these efforts, however, Bishop Emrich did not allow the Gay Liberation Front to continue meeting at the church. Still, the seeds were sown for LGBTQ activism that would continue for decades afterward.

When asked how he felt about the current election of a lesbian bishop, Toy said that it's wonderful to see how far society has come in its acceptance of LGBTQ people.

"I am more grateful than I can say to the people who elected her to serve as bishop," he said. "And that election of an out-of-the-closet woman points out how far along we have come in the intervening years and I am so grateful for that change."

# Michigan Religious Leaders Weigh in on Religious Exemptions

BY JASON A. MICHAEL



## The Rev. Ric Beattie

Pastor and Spiritual Leader, Unity of Royal Oak

### How are religious exemptions being used to harm the greater LGBTQ community?

Religious exemptions allow people to hide behind their prejudices and preconceived notions about people who they perceive as different from themselves. In addition to harming the LGBTQ community, they hurt many communities. In our region, some of the targeted communities are LGBTQ, Muslims, Arabs, persons of color, immigrants, Hispanic-Americans. One of the areas that I have seen is with denying access to services and second-parent adoption.

### How are you as a religious leader helping to fight that harm?

I have historically spoken out about these things from two perspectives: 1. Justice. I believe that the God that I serve is just and loving and we are called to be the same. 2. There is a moral and ethical issue, because I believe that all humans are reflections of one life, which some call God, to get people from differing opinions together to talk to get to know each other. I remind our very inclusive congregation about our responsibility to live what we teach.

### How can we as a society move the dialogue forward?

We move society forward just as we have always moved all the dialogue forward. By speaking the truth without judgment, by daring to be out and share our stories and our struggles. I have been an activist for more than 45 years. I'm 64 years old. Frankly, I never thought in my lifetime that I would see marriage equality but I worked hard at it for a long time. I believe that we're on the verge of a new way of being with each other. That really came into focus with the adoption by the

Supreme Court of marriage equality. The old order doesn't give up easily, and so we've had some pushback. I think one of the things that we do in the LGBTQ community is to remain positive to embrace who we are to share our story with other people. And to get people who have different points of view together to have a conversation.

One of my greatest concerns as a pastor is that we seem in America to have lost the ability to have a dialogue. We have resorted to a one-sided, "you're the problem so shut the hell up and get out of my way" monologue instead of open-minded authentic dialogue. It's time to restore civility. At Unity of Royal Oak, during 2020, we are sponsoring 20/20 several Civic Engagement Open Forums on topics where we seem to be at a stalemate and we may address this one as well.

## The Rev. Elizabeth Bingham

Associate Rector, St. John's Episcopal Church Royal Oak

### How are religious exemptions being used to harm the greater LGBTQ community?

I don't have any specific information or examples of how individuals or organizations are using exemptions. I know what I have read in news stories, but I don't have any firsthand knowledge or experience.

### How are you as a religious leader helping to fight that harm?

In the Episcopal Church, we believe that all are welcome and that everyone belongs. Jesus never sought to exclude anyone for any reason. He was always seeking to bring people together, to break down barriers that separated people. Jesus's message was about love for all people — no exceptions. This is what we preach and teach at St. John's. We are committed to ensuring that everyone feels welcome and loved in our community. This is the St. John's welcome statement that is printed in the weekly service bulletin and is on our website: "Welcome! We are St. John's, a parish that invites you to enter



the open doors of our community and warmly embraces you when you do."

At St. John's, our history has taught us that accepting and embracing true diversity is challenging. As a result, we have come to claim a firm, undying commitment to inclusion. So, here is our invitation to you: regardless of your cultural background, ethnicity, gender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or heterosexual identity, economic status, physical or cognitive ability, you will be not labeled, singled out or excluded here. You will be welcomed, affirmed, embraced and celebrated! We will be better because you are here.

### How can we as a society move the dialogue forward?

From my perspective as a person of faith, I believe we can move the dialogue forward by first recognizing that we are all created by, and in the image of a loving God whose desire for us is peace, justice, equity and love. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry puts it this way: "If it is not of love, it is not of God." We just don't believe that God ever wishes for anyone to be excluded for any reason. God loves and cherishes every person and we are called to do the same.

## The Rev. Sharon Janot

Pastor, Abiding Presence Lutheran Church

### How are religious exemptions being used to harm the greater LGBTQ community?

Sadly, these are attempts to legalize discrimination by another route. Since outright discrimination against LGBTQ folk is, thankfully, falling out of favor, it is another attempt to couch legalized discrimination now under the guise of religion. So, the funeral home worker was fired here in Michigan for so-called religious reasons after claiming federal protections didn't cover gender identity or expression. It is a misuse of religion — primarily coming from a fundamentalist Christian point of view — to cause harm to another, which religious principles prohibit broadly speaking. The case argued in October before the Supreme Court identified a need for clarification of Title VII provisions to include gender identity and sexual expression as protected classes that were not specified when the law was first adopted.

### How are you as a religious leader helping to fight that harm?

Our congregation, Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Rochester Hills, is a Reconciling in Christ community, in affiliation with the organization Reconciling Works. This means that we welcome into full participation in all aspects of our ministry all people and [we] specifically identify LGBTQ folks as included. So, we have families with LGBTQ parents and have the adults involved in leadership, on our board, leading in worship, teaching Faith Formation and serving in outreach. And we publicize this part of our identity front and center on our website and printed materials. In my teaching

See **Religious Leaders**, continued on p. 8

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Jerry Taliaferro, Semaj Brown, 2016

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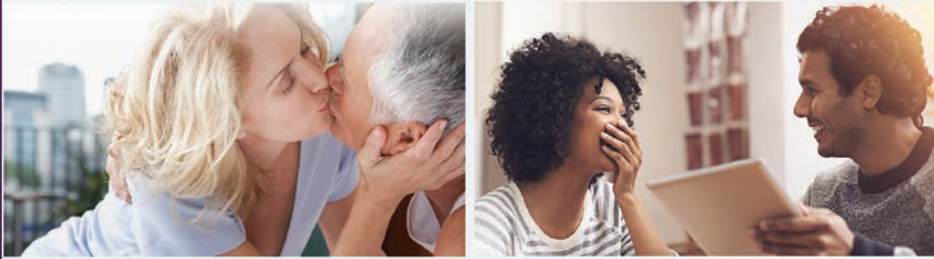
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### ► Religious Leaders

Continued from p. 6

and preaching I cite positive examples of LGBTQ folks in church and society, and I encourage us to think about how we can respond to discrimination. We have work to do, though, and this winter we will be developing a plan for being more active in anti-discrimination work going forward.

#### How can we as a society move the dialogue forward?

Keep lifting up the need for inclusion, identify discrimination where it happens, clarify that not all Christian churches support anti-LGBTQ discrimination and, most importantly, that Jesus did not discriminate against the other nor does the Bible when read non-literally. For the good of church and society we really need to give up a literal reading of scripture, for that is at the root of much of these attempts to codify discrimination.

## The Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow

Senior Pastor and Teacher,  
Metropolitan Community  
Church Detroit

#### How are religious exemptions being used to harm the greater LGBTQ community?

No one should face discrimination because of who they are or who they love, but in Michigan and 29 other states across the country, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people remain vulnerable to discrimination. Currently in Michigan, an infant can be denied medical care because

the mothers are lesbians. Aimee Stephens, from Redford, who identifies as transgender, is currently having her wrongful termination case heard at the Supreme Court. That's because our state lacks express, enduring protections for LGBTQ people. These are just two instances in which residents have been rejected based upon someone else's religious beliefs. In a pluralistic society, we must strive for the freedoms of all people, including those we disagree with. It is wrong to impose our beliefs on others, yet this is what religious exemption legislation is striving to do.

#### How are you as a religious leader helping to fight that harm?

Currently, I am the board president of Inclusive Justice — [inclusivejustice.org](http://inclusivejustice.org) — a statewide coalition of congregations and religious leaders committed to LGBTQ inclusion in our communities. We are working with legislators to help expand protections against discrimination and Inclusive Justice invites others to join our efforts to win these critical nondiscrimination protections. We have to keep up the statewide conversation, including with our family members, friends and legislators. Our goal is to build a Michigan where everyone has a fair chance to succeed and live free from discrimination.

#### How can we as a society move the dialogue forward?

I offer the resource found at [religiouslibertyforall.org](http://religiouslibertyforall.org) that houses a curriculum I authored helping explain the history of religious liberty and how it has shaped current debates. Here is a link to a newsletter article I wrote about a recent trip to Washington DC to meet with legislators: [gaybe.am/N6](http://gaybe.am/N6)





# 'In a Way It's Like a Death'

## Gay Grand Rapids Judge Denied Communion

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

### Profound Sadness

When Father Scott Nolan called Sara Smolenski on Nov. 23, the chief judge of Michigan's 63rd District Court thought perhaps he was reaching out because she hadn't attended services at St. Stephen Church, where she has been a lifelong parishioner, for some time. That was not at all the case. Instead, the young priest asked her to "respect the church" and not come up for Communion anymore because Smolenski is married to her spouse, Linda.

"I can tell you, it's extremely distressing," Smolenski said, of being denied Communion, the sacred act in which Catholics unite with Christ and symbolically form a single body. "I grew up in that church as a kid, as a family, going to the school with all my siblings. It was a big part of my upbringing. So the feeling has been, I'd say, profound sadness because it feels as if a bit of you has been pulled away. It feels as if in a way it's like a death."

Smolenski said she had been attending different Catholic churches regularly and receiving Communion during that time, "never thinking about it." The combination of dissatisfaction with some of the current leadership at St. Stephen along with building renovations kept her and some others away, by choice, for several months. Nolan certainly knew of Smolenski's marriage three years ago to her partner of 30 years, which occurred around the time he began his service at St. Stephen. Notably, Smolenski received Communion from Nolan Nov. 17, a week before his phone call. During that call, he also asked that she not receive Communion from any of the lay ministers who are Eucharistic ministers at the church.

### Selective Discrimination

The Diocese of Grand Rapids issued a statement that supports Nolan's actions. Basically, the Diocese maintains that while the Catholic Church believes in inclusion and acceptance, it cannot abide contradictions to its core teachings: in this case, that marriage is a sacred covenant between one man and one woman. Smolenski calls it selective discrimination.

"I've been Catholic my whole life," said

Smolenski, who is 62. "But I never remember sitting through any religion class where they said if you're gay you can't have Communion. I just was never taught that. And I'm not trying to fight the whole Church. If that's the Church's teaching, I guess my question would be, 'How come you don't apply it? How come you don't apply the rules to everybody? ... If you have a child out of wedlock, or if you're using birth control, or if you cheat on your taxes, or steal' ... you could just keep going with the list. But do they apply it to everyone? It certainly didn't feel that way, from the people that I've been talking to. And so the selective enforcement — it seems random."

The reason Smolenski was not denied Communion on Nov. 17 is most likely that Nolan did not wish to publicly humiliate her, she believes. That's something that did occur with a same-sex couple at St. Stephen in January. There to attend a dinner with their school-age daughter, the couple was denied Communion in the girl's presence. Many were unhappy with the way Nolan handled the situation.

Denial of Communion occurs on a case-by-case basis. At times, it's employed to make a statement, in a political or cultural context. Smolenski doesn't believe that's the case here.

"I think this is a very, very young priest. ... I think he thinks he's doing it exactly by the book, and he has no other choice. But I don't think he's ever had any mentor; I don't think he's ever talked to other priests."

She added that she received a sympathetic letter from someone who's been in the priesthood 50 years and has never considered denying someone Communion.

St. Stephen has been very forward-thinking in its cultural and racial diversity, according to Smolenski. Unfortunately, this incident has caused pain and divisiveness among parishioners. However, a Methodist church nearby rallied in support of Smolenski and her spouse, who is Methodist but not a member of that particular church, inviting them to an inclusive and open Communion service just days later. All faiths and denominations were welcome. She described it as beautiful and welcoming.

"It was just very touching to see another church reach out. 'Cause this isn't just a Catholic issue, really. It's hurtful to a lot of people. You don't have to be Catholic to feel hurt about it, or to feel misunderstood."

### "My Faith Is Strong"

"I'm not a theological scholar in any way," Smolenski continued. "I wouldn't be able to tell you all of the rules of the Catholic church. And there are some who have written in the articles about this, 'Well, she should have known.' Or, 'she's the one living in sin.' And I just say, he asked me to respect the church, and I'm saying it's kind of ironic 'cause it's that very respect and love that I have for the church that I feel so strongly in opposition to the stance that he is taking, that he believes 100 percent is the Church's stance. If it is 100 percent the Church's stance, why is it happening now? And I can't be the only gay person, let's get real. I grew up at that church — that church helped mold me into the person that I am. My faith — and my faith is strong — is part of who I am. Being gay is who I am also. I was born that way. And I don't doubt that Jesus loves me. I'm not perfect."

Smolenski said the experience has not shaken her faith, because her faith is not solely tied to the Catholic Church; first and foremost, it is [based on her] relationship with God. Indeed, there are aspects of the Church as an institution with which she disagrees: women's lack of leadership roles, for example.

While accusations have been made that Smolenski sought attention for her plight, she insists that's not true: a local reporter showed up in her courtroom to speak with her about Nolan's actions — and the next thing she knew, CNN requested an interview. It's been covered widely since then, from Huffington Post to the most conservative of media outlets. Her story has touched many.

"There are a lot of people that are very, very beautifully faith-based people that don't buy into everything that the institutional church stands for," Smolenski explained. "Which is why I think I'm getting so much response from people that feel that this is wrong. People that are writing letters from all over the United States. And it doesn't mean that they aren't good and faithful Christians, or good and faith-based



*"It was just very touching to see another church reach out. 'Cause this isn't just a Catholic issue, really. It's hurtful to a lot of people. You don't have to be Catholic to feel hurt about it, or to feel misunderstood."*

persons. They just think that Jesus welcomes everyone to the table."

Finally, Smolenski spoke of recently arraigining a man who was charged with first-degree murder.

"It dawned on me later, after I was out of the courtroom ... he can have Communion, and I can't," she said, with resignation. "And I thought to myself, 'I would vote that he should be able to get Communion.' There are priests that go to prisons to give Communion to prisoners. And I'm not against it. But it seemed — the dichotomy was not lost on me."

Smolenski hasn't been back to St. Stephen. However, amid the unasked-for attention and personal grief, she reached out to Nolan.

"Last week I wrote him a note and mailed it," she said. "And I just said, 'Father Scott, this has been very sad and difficult. And I know it has been for you, too. Peace, Sara Smolenski.'"



Dave Woodward addresses the crowd at a Planned Parenthood meeting alongside U.S. Rep. Andy Levin, President and CEO of PPAM and PPMI Lori Carpentier, BTL contributor Ellen Shanna Knoppow and supporters.

# Planned Parenthood Granted \$500,000 in Absence of Title X Funds

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

## Investment Partnership

On Dec. 12, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners approved a budget amendment that grants \$500,000 to Planned Parenthood in the absence of Title X funding. Planned Parenthood of Michigan had been forced out of the federal family planning program due to the Trump-Pence administration's changes to the rules for receiving Title X funds. While Planned Parenthood is one of 30 Title X providers in the state of Michigan, its health centers provide care for nearly 70 percent of the program's recipients.

Although Title X, the bipartisan program first enacted in 1970 to provide family planning and preventive health services, long prohibited coverage of abortion care, the new "gag rule" prevents recipients from even discussing abortion as an option or referring patients for that care. It is widely recognized that this is a violation of medical ethics in that it forces health care providers to withhold medical information from patients.

Board of Commissioners Chair Dave Woodward said the grant is the largest investment partnership with Planned Parenthood in Michigan.

"In my thinking, if the president's going to turn his back on women's health care, Oakland County's not," Woodward said of the Title X services that benefit men and non-binary people as well. "We believe it's absolutely important that this level of care is able to continue. So realizing Planned Parenthood wasn't eligible for these funds, Oakland County saw fit to step up and continue the level of support that it was receiving from the state of Michigan as we try

to figure out long-term how are we going to address this need."

Woodward pointed out that not only are Title X services "absolutely essential" to raising health status and ensuring family planning services are available to everyone, being able to provide those services is also important to Oakland County's health accreditation.

"There's really two things that need to happen," Woodward said. First, regarding the "gag" rule: "I think there's the recognition that ... Oakland County residents definitely believe that politics should not have a place in the exam room. And we think this rule needs to be changed. And then long-term, I think with the new leadership in Oakland County, we have a lot of support on bringing family planning services directly into our health department offices," he said, in reference to plans underway to provide expanded services at their health division locations in Pontiac and Southfield.

He said the county would be working with other partners to enable this new initiative and he expected plans to be reviewed and approved at the top of the year.

## Impact on Patients

Egypt Otis, Planned Parenthood Regional Organizer for Oakland County and Flint, spoke to the impact of the loss of Title X funds on patients for whom Title X had subsidized health care services like prenatal care, cancer screenings, birth control and STI testing.

"The Ferndale health center, which is the one in Oakland County, saw more than ... 4,700 patients last year," Otis explained. "And almost all of them had their care subsidized by, or covered by, Title X funds. Our patients,

especially those who identify with LGBTQ community, come to us because they know we give them compassion. We're compassionate, we're nonjudgmental when we deliver care, as opposed to other providers who may not be [as] well trained or well aware of all of the needs of our patients and what they represent."

Otis also pointed out that the Ferndale health center is the sole Title X provider in the county. Clearly, the stakes are high.

"That automatically creates a barrier for those who have no health care and need to go to someplace to receive the health care services that we provide," she continued. "We're doing what we can, of course, and this grant opportunity ... is a great example of communities coming together and problem-solving if it isn't happening with our federal government.

"Title X covers care for people who aren't covered by Medicaid or private insurance. Basically, the people who can least afford to forego care and can least afford to pay for it. So it's essential to public health," Otis continued. "And it is like a testament to the commitment to the community that Oakland County leaders are taking that step."

## For the Record

At the meeting where the vote was taken, a few individuals spoke out against the budget amendment under the mistaken belief that the Title X replacement funds could be used to pay for abortions. For those who would insist that government funds provided to Planned Parenthood are fungible and indirectly fund abortion care, Lori Carpentier, CEO of Planned Parenthood of Michigan, set the record straight

and ensured that they are audited by several organizations annually.

Later, Carpentier said in a statement, "Today's vote showed that Oakland County's leaders value healthy communities and access to the care that makes them possible. We are proud to partner with Oakland County to continue providing access to low- or no-cost reproductive care and birth control at our Ferndale health center."

Given that reliance on the county is not a long-term, sustainable solution to Planned Parenthood's loss of Title X funds, Otis had a few suggestions when asked what concerned individuals can do. First, she urged those who support protecting Title X to contact their members of Congress and make their voices heard. She also suggested becoming a Planned Parenthood member to support the work they do and to stay informed. Finally, she described the power of storytelling as a way to communicate the personal impact of vital programs like Title X.

"Our stories are what connects us to people," Otis said. "We're actually organizing a storytelling event in January. So I would encourage people to connect with their local organizers of Planned Parenthood and figure out how you can be a part of that."

She concluded by sharing her own story of being a Title X recipient.

"If I didn't have that support, I don't know what I would have done."

*To become involved with Planned Parenthood visit [miplannedparenthood.org/get-involved](http://miplannedparenthood.org/get-involved).*

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# Statewide Rape Prevention Study Makes Strides but Misses Mark for Inclusion

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Effective sexual violence prevention is a community effort — that's what researchers concluded in a recent statewide report. In October of 2019 the Center for Healthy Communities at the Michigan Public Health Institute developed the Michigan Sexual Violence Prevention Survey Report set for public debut in early 2020. With roughly 1,200 respondents across the state from both paper and web surveys, it was an effort to provide a metric for sexual violence prevention. The survey's questions intended to get a sense of not only the general public's view on sexual violence and its causes but the comfort level of survivors when seeking support from peers and public services.

"Those who choose to use sexual violence should always [be] held solely and fully accountable for their choices; however, communities also have a role to reduce the risk of making that choice," the report read.

Key questions asked in the process of filing the report included, "How connected are people to their communities?" and, "To what extent do people accept rape myths?" However, though these questions approached the issue of sexual violence in a seemingly well-rounded way, demographically this survey left much to be desired in terms of data collection for the state's most vulnerable communities like people of color and LGBTQ Michiganders.

Sarah Prout Rennie is the executive director of the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence. Her organization did not put forth the study but helped draft questions and "interpret it" by providing input. She said that this report only scratches the surface of the reality of sexual violence for all of Michigan's affected communities.

"There needs to be a better and targeted study. This is sort of our beginning conversation in Michigan, but we would like to seek funding to investigate the populations that were missed by this study," she said. "This is a general sort of funding by the state to get a sense of the temperature in Michigan, but just like folks who are missed by our criminal justice system they get missed by these untargeted and general studies as well."

## Targeted Demographics

The survey's respondents broke down like this:

"Out of the initial survey respondents, 68.8 percent were women and 31.2 percent were men; 77.4 percent were white, 15.0 percent were African-American, and 2.2 percent were Hispanic," it read. "However, the survey results presented in this report are weighted by population proportion to be representative of the actual demographics of adults in the State of Michigan. The survey was broken up into



Equality Michigan's Director of Victim Services Serena A. Johnson. Photo courtesy of Equality Michigan.



sections including connectedness, economic supports, harmful social norms and support for survivors."

Despite a note that 1.7 percent of respondents identified as transgender and .6 percent were in a legal domestic partnership, the survey failed to include any LGBTQ-specific questioning — despite the fact that the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 47 percent of transgender people are sexually assaulted at some point in their lives.

Rennie said that regardless of it being weighted, the study's lack of intersectionality was a key miss, and had the Coalition conducted the study there would have been a more intentional focus on inclusion.

"We try to be very intersectional in our lens, but we do see this data as very useful generally to point out some key general issues surrounding Michigan. And it's our hope that we will continue to reach out to LGBTQ folks and also marginalized folks to get better data as we move forward," she said. "But in terms of funding, that really will depend on the state of Michigan. It may have to happen anecdotally or more in microcosm or grassroots. And the Coalition has an initiative in Detroit that works specifically with Fair Michigan, particularly with the efforts with the prosecutor's office and the advocate Julisa [Abad]."

## Key Findings

In a collaboration that involved a "network of experts" covering sexual and domestic violence, nonprofit and government sectors and academics, the report dealt with four major categories: Connectedness, Economic Supports, Harmful Social Norms and Support for Survivors. Here are key findings from each sections.

### • Connectedness:

Overall, the study found that neighborhood connectedness among respondents is low and that it was the lowest among the connectedness categories including Workplace, Place of Worship and Family. More than 50 percent of respondents said that despite a general sense of trust among their neighborhoods, they did not feel connected to neighbors. Regarding sexual violence prevention researchers found this to be a negative observation.

"Communities with high levels of cohesion are more likely to hold offenders accountable for their choices to perpetrate, as well as to provide more support for victims of violence," the survey read.

However, among the Family Connectedness category respondents reported a general sense of willingness to help, value-sharing and feeling of safety. Each of these questions received

"So it has to be a dedication to reaching that community and knowing that in order to reach that community you have to have members on your staff, on your team, that can actually be on the ground that look like the community that you're trying to serve."

— Serena A. Johnson

positive responses from respondents that numbered at over 70 percent. These results were mirrored in Place of Worship connectedness, with the minimum response rate being 80 percent in the affirmative, and the workplace followed closely behind with 67 percent being the lowest response. Questions in each of these categories focused on trust, willingness to help, how close-knit community members are, how members get along, values shared, fairness and safety.

### • Economic Supports:

This section's key findings said that quality child care is needed — with 2 out of 5 respondents reporting that their child care needs require a minimum of at least 10 hours weekly — that child care problems impact employment — 1 in 8 said that problems with child care resulted in problems that required a change of employment — and that paid parental leave is lacking, as fewer than 40 percent of women in jobs reported having access to paid parental leave.

### • Harmful Social Norms:

This survey found that sexism persists in Michigan.

"Almost half of Michiganders believe that women get a kick out of teasing men sexually and then rejecting them. More than a third of participants think women are too easily offended," the report read.

Additionally, consent in long-term relationships is misunderstood, with almost 25 percent of respondents reporting that do not think getting consent is important when sexually touching a spouse or longtime partner.

Among other notable results, over half of respondents felt that feminists make unreasonable demands of men.

### • Support for Survivors:

Notably, more than a third of Michiganders "agreed with the most popular [rape] myths, including those that blame survivors and excuse perpetrators' behavior." There is also a gap between what people hope will happen and what "often actually happens" when survivors

report an instance of sexual violence.

“Unfortunately, we know from survivors’ reports that community and institutional support is not as common as it may seem from the aspirational results in this report,” the survey reads.

For example, 87 percent of respondents said that they would support someone who makes a report of sexual violence, 88 percent reported that the police would take the report seriously and 85 percent said that prosecutors would take action against the offenders. Rennie said that this discrepancy can be attributed to confirmation bias, which is a phenomenon where respondents feel they will react more positively than they might in reality. She said that only systemic change and similar studies can help to bridge the gap between opinion and reality.

“And that’s reflected in the fact that less than 3 percent of sexual assault perpetrators are prosecuted and end up in prison. So there’s a huge disconnect in what we think we know as a society, and that was really important and what we actually are doing,” Rennie said. “... We need more money and interventions earlier in the curriculum. And it really is about changing social norms at the end of the day.”

## Room for Improvement

Equality Michigan’s Director of Victim Services Serena A. Johnson works to help victims of sexual violence in the LGBTQ community and especially for survivors of color. She said she was never contacted directly to include her organization’s relevant data or resources but would have gladly done so.

“Reporting in general within the LGBT community in our part specifically within the African-American LGBT community, the numbers of sexual assault and rape are extremely high in regards to the black trans women of color in Detroit. And it often goes either unreported, or it’s reported and dismissed — and it’s missed ... including [by] law enforcement because much of the time this population, when they do report rape or things of that nature, there are times when the population has participated in sex work or things of that nature.”

Johnson said that this reality can contribute to a general attitude of distrust between the LGBTQ community, particularly among transgender women of color and the police.

“So whereas a white counterpart might report rape and things of that nature and it’s taken for what it is as rape, when black trans women report it there’s 50 questions of, ‘What’s your profession? What do you do?’ So then it gets [mis]construed and then it’s not necessarily documented as rape — if it’s documented at all,” Johnson said. “So, for that reason, a lot of the time the community does not report it, and it’s the same for many white trans women.”

When asked about the selected questions in the report, Johnson said that while some were effective, others didn’t have an inclusive focus.

“For example, ‘People in my neighborhood

generally get along with each other’ — you could watch the news and hear about the inner-city streets and safety and already know that neighborhood connectedness is not going to be — or ‘economic support.’ This is for who filled it out; This is specific to the white women who have the majority. ... Majority [surveyed are] higher income, majority employed, majority married. ... So a lot of the time when I see reports like this one ... it’s just not accurate to the community that I see on a daily basis.”

## Ways to Improve

Johnson went on to say that because of existing biases, many reports like this one either unintentionally or intentionally ignore those communities with which she works. Beyond simply being exclusionary, often studies like these can fuel resentment and distrust among those communities who aren’t being heard. When asked how she would change the way this particular survey was conducted, she urged the survey-makers to focus on hiring “members who look like the community they’re trying to reach or say that they reach.”

“Not only should they hire them, but they should work to keep them employed with their organization, meaning it’s one thing to hire a trans woman of color but then it’s another thing when you decide to fire her three months later because she doesn’t have transportation to work,” Johnson said. “So it has to be a dedication to reaching that community and knowing that in order to reach that community you have to have members on your staff, on your team, that can actually be on the ground that look like the community that you’re trying to serve.”

Rennie agrees. She said that although the Coalition has more work to do regarding its inclusivity, efforts have already begun.

“We received funding for a statewide sexual assault resources hotline 855-VOICES-4. That is queer-friendly,” she said. “We are actively hiring trans folks and queer folks, as well as it’s run by a gay man to make sure that we’re more aware of sexual violence. So, I want people to know that’s a state resource if folks want to just call and talk about any victimization, because we get people who call who were victimized as children or 10 years ago but they need to deal through their emotional crisis.”

Ideally, the hotline will serve to both protect and connect vulnerable community members with the adequate resources that they need. However, Johnson also emphasized that those who are a part of vulnerable communities and who aren’t comfortable with reaching out to a state-run project should also feel empowered to utilize any of Equality Michigan’s available resources for sexual violence prevention and care.

“Equality Michigan is dedicated to working with other organizations that have made it their primary goal to be inclusive of the community that they say that they serve,” Johnson said. “We’re here to work with everybody. That’s our goal.”



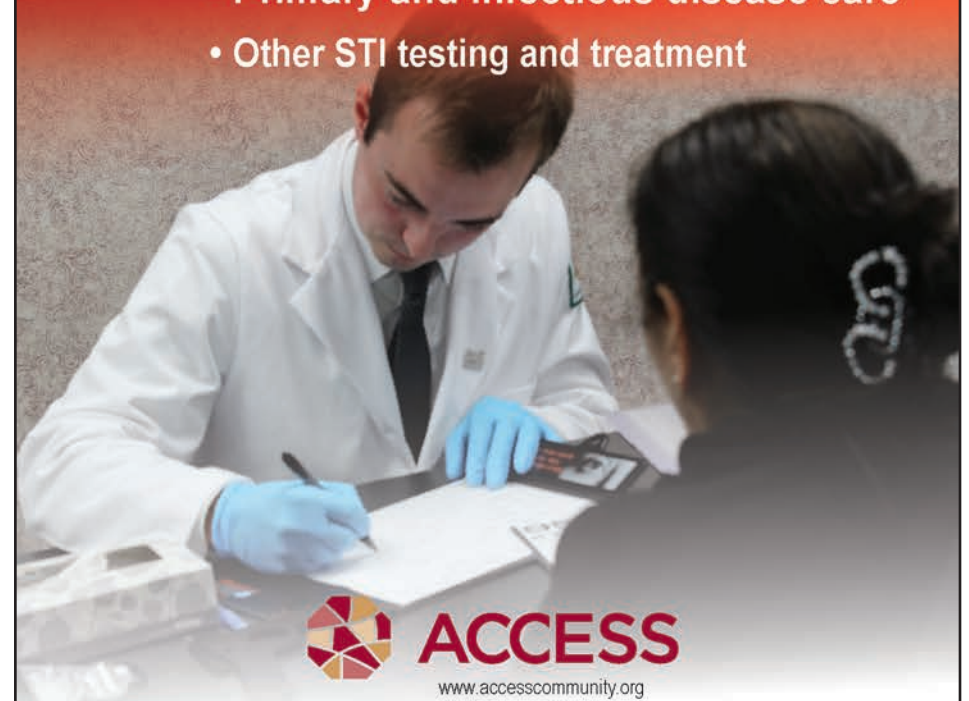
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# What They Said: Religious Exemptions

“In practice, the impact of any such broadened exemption would be especially serious for LGBTQ workers, since many religious employers view being in a same-sex relationship or undergoing a gender transition as contrary to their doctrines and beliefs and thus grounds for termination”

– Shannon Minter, Washington Blade

“All anybody is trying to do is live their lives and be given the service, be treated with respect as anyone else is treated. All we want is equality.”

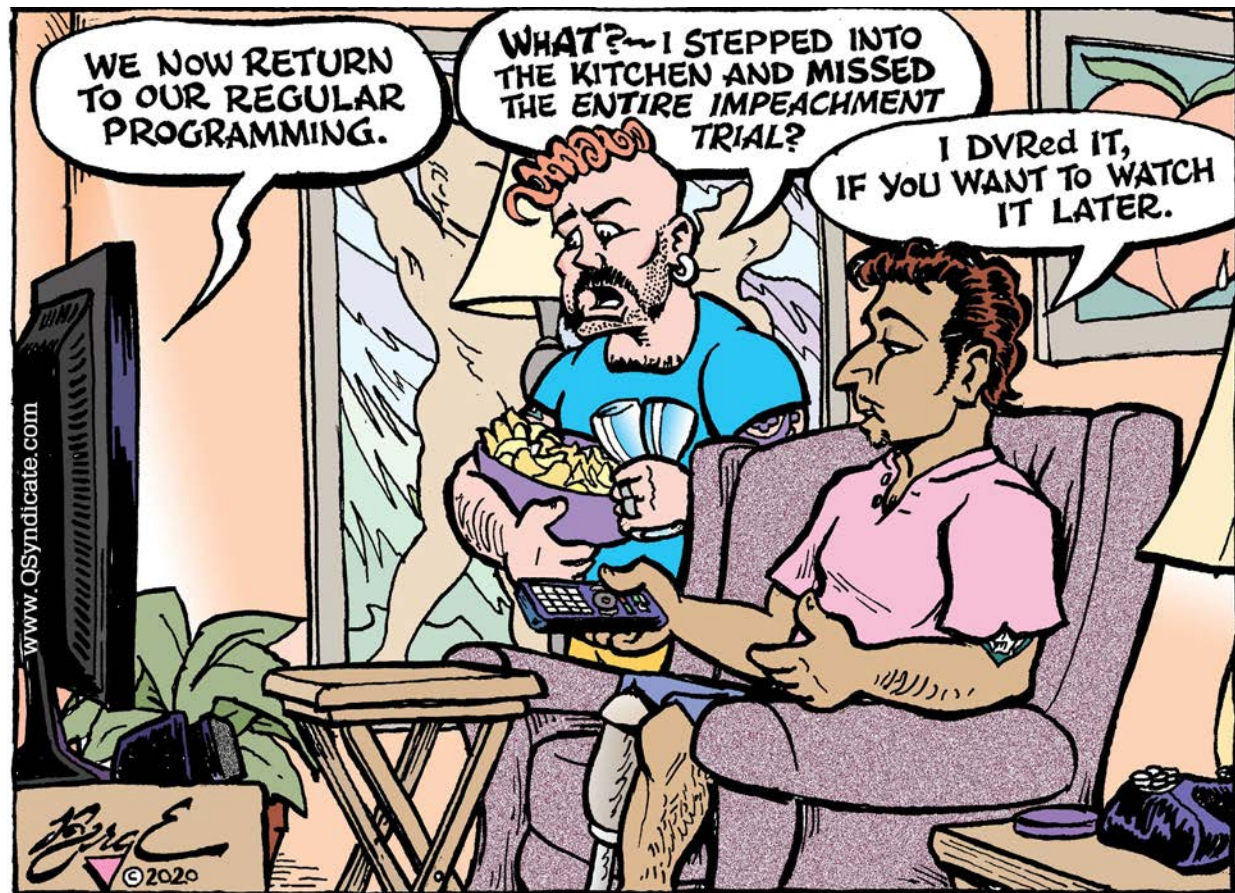
– Petra E., Human Rights Watch

“Religion is being abused and turned into a license to discriminate against LGBTQ people in a range of contexts across the country.”

– PFLAG

“In rural areas, many key services ... are provided by religiously affiliated organizations. And while not inherently discriminatory, these institutions – even those which are taxpayer funded – are increasingly permitted by federal and state religious exemptions to opt out of following existing nondiscrimination laws.”

– Ineke Mushovic, The Hill



## Viewpoint



BY JAY KAPLAN

### How the Trump ‘Medical Conscience’ Rule is Harming LGBTQ Liberty

In November a federal district judge in New York found that the Trump Administration lied. The Court also held that the Administration had overstepped its authority. Let me explain. In May 2019 the Administration issued its “Medical Conscience” rule. We’ve had medical conscience rules in the past that have protected health care employees who refuse to participate in performing abortions, sterilizations and assisted suicides, based on their sincerely held religious beliefs. Our federal civil rights laws require employers to “reasonably accommodate” their worker’s religious practices or beliefs, so long as that accommodation does not cause an undue hardship, or what the Supreme Court has interpreted to mean, more than a minimal expense.

However, the Trump “Medical Conscience” rule goes much further. It includes any and all medical practices

and procedures, including emergency medical care. It goes beyond employees who are directly performing a medical procedure or surgery. This means a receptionist could refuse to schedule a patient for a procedure that they have a religious or moral objection to. This means that paramedics who have religious and moral objections could refuse to transport LGBTQ patients to the hospital.

The Trump “Medical Conscience” rule also expands what constitutes religious discrimination and mandates certain procedures that employers have to follow in order to continue receiving federal funding. Employers (including states) that fail to comply with the rule could

See **Viewpoint**, continued on p. 15

“While more states every year strive to pass laws to protect their citizens from discrimination and advance LGBTQ equality, we continue to see lawmakers sponsor bills that invoke religion, preempt local protections, and target transgender and nonbinary people to allow, and in some cases mandate, discrimination.”

– ACLU

## ► Viewpoint

Continued from p. 14

lose substantial amounts of federal funding appropriated by Congress.

In order to justify the need for this rule, the Trump Administration claimed that there had been a substantial increase in complaints by health care employees being forced to perform objectionable procedures and were being disciplined for failure to do so. This was proven to be untrue during the court proceedings and United States District Judge Paul Engelmayer essentially stated that the Administration had lied. The Court also found that the Administration attempted to take away the authority of Congress to decide how religious beliefs of employees are accommodated and how federal dollars are spent on health care services.

Following the New York District Court decision, two other federal courts in Washington and California also found the Trump “Medical Conscience” rule to be invalid. These are positive developments. Religious liberty, which is strongly protected in our Constitution, doesn’t include the right to be exempt from laws protecting our health or barring discrimination. Medical standards, not religious beliefs should guide medical care. Denying patients health care is not liberty. Choosing your patients based on their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression is not freedom.

The Trump “Medical Conscience”

rule is just one of many policy initiatives from this administration that permit discrimination against LGBTQ people. Already, the administration has proposed new regulations for the Affordable Care Act that would remove protections against discrimination for LGBTQ people regarding health insurance coverage and accessing health care. Just in November the administration issued new guidelines that would permit programs receiving federal funding from the Department of Health and Human Services, including foster care agencies, to refuse to work with LGBTQ people.

It’s important that we are aware about what this administration is doing so that we can speak out in opposition to policies that aim to turn back the clock on LGBTQ equality. We also need to reach out to our allies to make sure that they are informed as well. And we all need to participate in next year’s elections to make sure that our voices regarding LGBTQ rights are heard loud and clear.

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*Jay Kaplan is a staff attorney at the ACLU of Michigan. You can reach him at [jkaplan@aclumich.org](mailto:jkaplan@aclumich.org).*

# Creep Of The Week

## Donald Trump

By the time you read this, the U.S. may be at war with Iran and/or World War III may have begun because we have the dumbest, most impulsive and selfish president in the history of America. Happy New Year.

It’s hard to understate how we are deep into “Trump Presidency: Worst Case Scenario,” a movie that most of us never wanted to see but are now trapped inside of against our will. Trump has been impeached and he’s very mad about being held responsible for his actions because he’s not used to that. And so he’s starting a war with all the planning, care and expertise of a toddler throwing himself to the floor in Target because he’s tired and wants to go home RIGHT NOW!

Charlotte Clymer put it best on the day Trump ordered the assassination of an Iranian leader in between rounds of golf: “Tonight, you will see spineless cowards who never served a goddamn day in uniform wave a flag and cheer on the possibility of sending young people to die in a war against Iran that they would never serve in, started by another coward who watched others sent to die in his place.”

Clymer is an Army veteran, an advocate for LGBTQ rights and is also the press secretary for the Human Rights Campaign. And if you’re not following @cmclymer on Twitter, you’re doing Twitter wrong.

If we had a decent and honest person as the president then perhaps we’d see Clymer as an advisor in said president’s cabinet. Alas, we have a dishonest creep for president, and Clymer is instead subjected to invective against transgender servicemembers.

Let’s turn the time machine back to Aug. 10, 2017, when Trump said of his plans to ban transgender people from serving: “I think I’m doing a lot of people a favor by coming out and just saying it. As you know, it’s been a very complicated issue for the military. It’s been a very confusing issue for the military. And I think I’m doing the military a great favor.”

If Trump wanted to do a lot of people a favor he would resign. That said, he, in fact, was not doing the military a favor as he apparently didn’t even run the transgender ban by the Pentagon before Tweeting about it.

As Clymer points out, Trump has never served in the military. He lied about having bone spurs to get out of it. His oldest sons, as much as they love guns and killing, have also not served in the military. Nor have his daughters. His youngest son probably won’t, either, even if Trump leads us into WWII because rich people don’t fight wars, they just start them.

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

**If we had a decent and honest person as the president then perhaps we’d see Clymer as an advisor in said president’s cabinet. Alas, we have a dishonest creep for president, and Clymer is instead subjected to invective against transgender servicemembers.**

And people are cheering. If you turn on Fox News (don’t), it’s a nonstop celebration with everyone screaming, “Happy New War!” It’s amazing how little these people care about human life. Not the lives of American troops, not the lives of Iranian civilians. To them war is a video game.

Trump is making all of us less safe, but he is especially jeopardizing the lives of transgender Americans.

Monica Roberts, who describes herself on her blog as “A proud unapologetic Black trans woman speaking truth to power and discussing the world around her,” was interviewed on MSNBC about the murder of Dustin Parker, an activist for LGBTQ rights in Oklahoma.

According to HRC, “Parker is believed to be the first violent death of a transgender or gender non-conforming person in 2020.” Sadly, he will not be the last. 2019 was a particularly awful year for transgender people.

When asked about the increase in violence against trans people Roberts said, “What’s going on is the result of several years of anti-trans rhetoric that has been spread by not only the Trump administration but trans-exclusionary radical feminists, also the Republican Parties at the national, local and state level. That rhetoric just doesn’t go out in thin air. It is resulting in violence being directed at trans folks, which in a lot of cases turns fatal.”

When the President tells the country that he’s doing them a favor by booting transgender troops, especially a president who is worshipped as a God by the anti-LGBTQ right, that inevitably leads to violence.

And now Trump is ordering the troops to do him a favor and distract from his impeachment by starting a war with Iran. He may hate trans troops, but he certainly doesn’t care about any of them. He only cares about himself and is willing to start a war to save his own draft-dodging ass.

# Methodist Church Plans Split Over Division on LGBTQ Acceptance

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The United Methodist Church, which has struggled for years with LGBTQ acceptance, has announced a plan for a split in which parishes that oppose same-sex marriage will leave the denomination, but pave the way for LGBTQ inclusion among the remaining congregations.

The new plan, announced Friday, was hailed by both church leaders seeking to overturn the Methodist Church's bans on LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage as well as other congregations seeking to go their own way over opposition to LGBTQ inclusion.

A 16-member group of Methodist bishops outlined the plan in a nine-page "Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation." Under the proposal, churches that separate would get \$25 million in funds from the denomination over the course of four years and be allowed to keep their local church properties.

New York Conference Bishop Thomas Bickerton, one of 16 bishops that negotiated and signed the proposal, said in a statement the contentious nature of LGBTQ inclusion within the church demonstrated the need for a plan for an amicable separation.

"It became clear that the line in the sand had turned into a canyon," Bickerton said. "The impasse is such that we have come to the realization that we just can't stay that way any longer."

Bickerton praised the plan as "a pathway that acknowledges our differences, respects everyone in the process and graciously allows us to continue to live out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, albeit in different expressions."

The Methodist Church, which has an estimated 9 million adherents in the United States and 13 million worldwide, announced the plan nearly a year after the United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis approved a "Traditional Plan" that not only reaffirmed its existing ban on LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage but called for greater enforcement.

Although U.S. delegates at the conference overwhelmingly voted "no," the proposal succeeded as a result of an alliance of conservatives from both the United States and abroad. An estimated 43 percent of the delegates are from overseas and overwhelmingly supported the anti-LGBTQ policy.

Prior to the vote on the "Traditional Plan," the conference rejected a separate proposal that would have allowed the ordination of LGBTQ ministers and church recognition of same-sex marriage. The proposal was voted down 449-374.

The new plan — reached with the assistance of Kenneth Feinberg, a mediator who worked



Foundry United Methodist Church is an LGBT-friendly house of worship in D.C. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

on the federal Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund — requires approval by the 2020 General Conference, which will meet in May in Minneapolis. The process of drafting legislation for the meeting, according to the church, is still underway.

But the church seems to be on its way to adopting the proposal. The plan for separation has the backing of church leaders who are LGBTQ supportive as well as those who are not.

Among those negotiating and signing on to the plan was Jan Lawrence, executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network, which has sought to allow full LGBTQ inclusion in the Methodist Church.

"As a United Methodist who is LGBTQ, my priority at the table was to make sure we addressed the full participation of LGBTQ people in the life of the church, making sure the answer was not 'ask us again in 2024,'" Lawrence said in a statement. "The language needs to be removed now. I am pleased that there is [an] opportunity here for that to happen in 2020."

Also hailing the plan was the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a congregation within the Methodist Church that opposes LGBTQ inclusion and has already taken steps toward leaving the denomination.

"This is a very important agreement, and the most hopeful development in a dispute that has undermined the health and vitality of both local churches and the denomination in general," said the Rev. Keith Boyette, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and one

of the 16 church leaders who negotiated and signed the agreement.

Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, who last summer began the private talks that led to the proposal, encouraged church leaders at the upcoming conference to adopt the plan.

"We humbly offer to the delegates of the 2020 General Conference the work which we have accomplished in the hopes that it will help heal the harms and conflicts within the body of Christ and free us to be more effective witnesses to God's Kingdom," Yambasu said.

In addition to allocating \$25 million for the congregations wishing to leave the denomination, other details of the plan include:

- Escrowing \$2 million to help other potential new denominations;

- To support communities historically marginalized by racism, allocating \$39 million over eight years to strengthen Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander ministries, as well as Africa University (\$13 million of that amount would come from funds the separating traditionalist denomination chose to forgo);

- After the 2020 general conference, holding a special conference for the remaining denomination that would seek to create regional conferences, lift the prohibition on LGBTQ inclusion and repeal the "Traditional Plan."

- Allowing a central conference made up of Methodist leaders outside the U.S. to choose with a two-thirds vote to affiliate with the new denomination (The vote deadline would be Dec. 31, 2021, and if no vote is taken the conference remains in the Methodist Church);

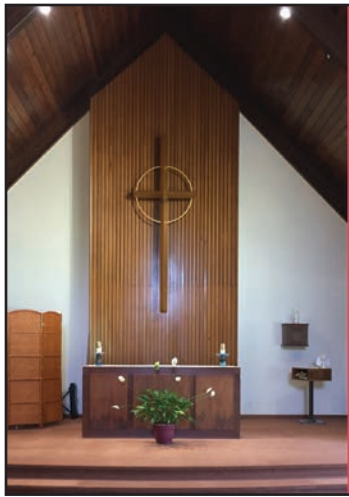
- Permitting the pension plans of the United Methodist Church to remain in place for all current clergy and lay employees, even if they affiliate with the new Methodist denomination as proposed under the plan.

Michael Vazquez, Religion & Faith Program Director for the Human Rights Campaign, acknowledged the split with the Methodist Church was painful but offered a positive outlook.

"The United Methodist Church's decision to split, while a result of the denomination's anti-LGBTQ posture, is an opportunity for the Church to make amends and reconcile with its LGBTQ family," Vazquez said. "We honor the work of LGBTQ Methodists who have fought and worked for reform. Ultimately, the Church's decision to split leaves many LGBTQ Methodists who want to be fully included in the life of the Church in limbo, trying to determine their place in a Church that has still not embraced them."

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





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# IN FOCUS: Kevin Jennings Brings New Leadership at Lambda Legal

BY KAREN OCAMB

Kevin Jennings is not a lawyer so why was he tapped to lead Lambda Legal, one of the LGBTQ community's most important national organizations?

"Well that was sort of what I said when Lambda called me," Jennings told the Los Angeles Blade by phone before officially starting on Dec. 2. "They said, 'We're not looking for a lawyer. We have lots of brilliant lawyers. We're looking for an experienced organizational leader,' — and that I am. I've been a leader of the LGBT movement for over 30 years and this is really a critical time for a movement, particularly for Lambda. The right wing has a very clear strategy to use the court and all of [President] Trump's horrific judicial appointments to roll back everything we've won over the last 40 years. Lambda is going to be a key player in stopping that."

Jennings is "very excited" to be taking the helm at this pivotal juncture.

"Everything I've been working for my entire adult life since I marched in my first Pride in 1986 is at risk now. We're in real danger of losing things that we thought just a few years ago were safe. I'm very excited to be part of the resistance and making sure that doesn't happen," says Jennings, best known as the founder of GLSEN and assistant deputy secretary for the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools at the U.S. Department of Education during the Obama administration.

Jennings boldly underscores and pounds home the point.

"The right wing is coming for us through the courts," he says. "This is their whole strategy. They've been planning this. People think a lot of things about the right wing — they are not stupid. Never underestimate them. They know exactly what they are doing. They are coming for us through the courts, and we know that, and we are waiting and we are ready."

Jennings intends to emphasize the education aspect of Lambda's incorporated name — Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

"The courts are going to be the central battleground," Jennings says. "Much of what we've won could be taken away through the courts. It doesn't matter if you're a lawyer right now. The courts are where it's at and everybody needs to be paying attention to what's happening in the courts."

Jennings points to Jay Sekulow, head of the American Center for Law and Justice, as "the mastermind of the right wing litigation strategies" and the American Legislative Exchange Council as producer of their model legislation.

"They have very carefully invested over 50 years to build a whole infrastructure of organizations," Jennings says. "They have the Federalist Society, where they have built a very sophisticated infrastructure that identifies young people in law school and begins training



Kevin Jennings: new leadership at Lambda Legal Kevin Jennings (Photo courtesy of Lambda Legal)

them and grooming them and preparing them for court appointments. They're brilliant at what they do. I will give them credit. They play a long game. We've got to be just as smart on our side because they make strategic investments that they expect to pay off in 10, 20, 30, 40 years, and we've got to be just as strategic on our side.

"What they're doing right now is they are reaping the investments with people like [Supreme Court Justice] Brett Kavanaugh, investments they made decades ago. We've got to be doing the same thing. We've got to be investing in long term change in the same way they are," says Jennings.

As a national leader and forever a teacher at heart, Jennings knows how to listen to the community's needs and frustrations, including about the past several years at Lambda.

"I plan to build a plan for the organization that responds to those concerns and frustrations," he says. "I know that there is a real need to address people's frustrations that are out there and I come in aware of that and prepared to listen to those and to address them."

The larger context for Jennings' plan is Lambda's 46-year history and its "very well documented track record of success" plus Jennings' own superlative track record as a leader in the LGBTQ community for over three decades. Additionally, Jennings' own story adds that degree of authenticity that he personally grasps LGBTQ issues that are too often overlooked or overshadowed.

"I grew up in a trailer park on an unpaved dirt road in an unincorporated town in rural North Carolina in a single parent family," Jennings says. "My mother worked in fast food restaurants and cleaned people's houses. That's how she supported us. My entire childhood was below the poverty line. I was the first person

in my family to graduate from college. I understand the needs of our community members who are struggling with poverty and other factors in a firsthand visceral way because I've lived there."

Jennings intends to put his decades of experience to public use.

"We've got to help people understand the issues and explain them and teach people, and I think that that is where I, because of my background as an educator, can contribute a great deal to Lambda. We have to not just educate judges, we have to educate the public. We have to work in both the court of law and the court of public opinion."

Jennings is intent on developing coalitions to strengthen the LGBTQ hand.

"Probably because I was a teacher, I believe strongly in the concept of playing well with others, and the leaders in this movement know me as someone who believes in the power of collaboration," Jennings says. "Lambda already has a strong record of collaborating with other organizations and I plan to build off that reputation, as well as my own track record of collaborating with other organizations to strengthen those relationships because I believe that our movement is at its best when we're all working together. We each have unique roles to play and when we're collaborating and leveraging each others' strengths, it makes the whole community stronger."

He acknowledges that Lambda Legal has not always lived up to that reputation, such as at times during the up-and-down struggle over marriage equality.

"Prop 8 was a dark chapter in many ways in our community," he says. But he emphasizes Lambda's long participation in the Legal Round Table, which brings together all of the various groups that do litigation.

"I think that structures like that — bringing people together so that there is dialogue and people are trying to collaborate — are really important and I'm really committed to keeping those structures going and building even more of them."

Out of that dialogue will come new strategies to deal with the shifting legal landscape of the Trump administration packing the courts with young lifetime appointees.

"Trump's nominees fill one quarter of the seats on the nation's Circuit Court of Appeals. He has seen more Circuit Court judges confirmed, more by this point in his presidency than any other past president in U.S. history,"

says Jennings. "They have packed the courts systematically and carefully under Trump and they still have at least 14 months to go. The landscape has shifted dramatically against us, and we need to recognize that means that we are going to have to focus on developing a very robust distinct strategy"

Given Trump's legal legacy, victory for the LGBTQ community may look very differently for many years to come.

"Victory, on one level, is going to consist of stopping horrific things from happening," says Jennings. "We're going to have to be very selective and very strategic in how we use litigation to try to advance a proactive agenda."

"We're going to have to be strategic in two ways," Jennings continues. "Our selection of which circuits we bring cases in, and what arguments we make because in some circuits, we are going to be DOA [dead on arrival] because they have appointed such extremist judges. And we are going to be facing judges who subscribe to very different philosophies than the ones we have been used to encountering. We are going to have to make new kinds of targeting."

Jennings says he's "completely confident" in Lambda's brilliant attorneys. "But we're going to have to be very strategic when we are trying to advance good things," he says. "We're going to have to have a surgical approach to advance any positive things. It was never easy, but it has gotten exponentially harder, thanks to Trump."

Jennings cites his experience at GLSEN as an example of strategically reframing the argument.

"25 years ago when we were trying to get Gay/Straight Alliances [GSAs] instituted in schools around the country, the principals were telling kids they couldn't start them," says Jennings. "David Buckel, who was a Lambda attorney, found a piece of legislation called the Equal Access Act. This said that if you allow students to form clubs, you had to allow them to form any club they wanted to form. Now it was written intended to protect the rights of students to form clubs like bible clubs and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. That was its intent. But David said we can use this to say you have to allow kids to form Gay/Straight Alliances. He was able to convince the courts to interpret it that way so that it protected the rights of kids to form GSAs."

Jennings calls such creative thinking "judicial jujitsu." No longer can LGBTQ and ally attorneys expect the courts to agree with old arguments.

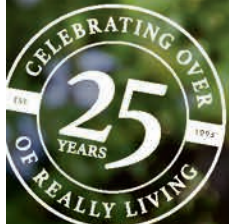
"It's an unfortunate thing that the right wing has politicized our judiciary so extremely, but since they've done it," says Jennings, "we are not going to stand by and be idle. We are going to fight fire with fire."

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

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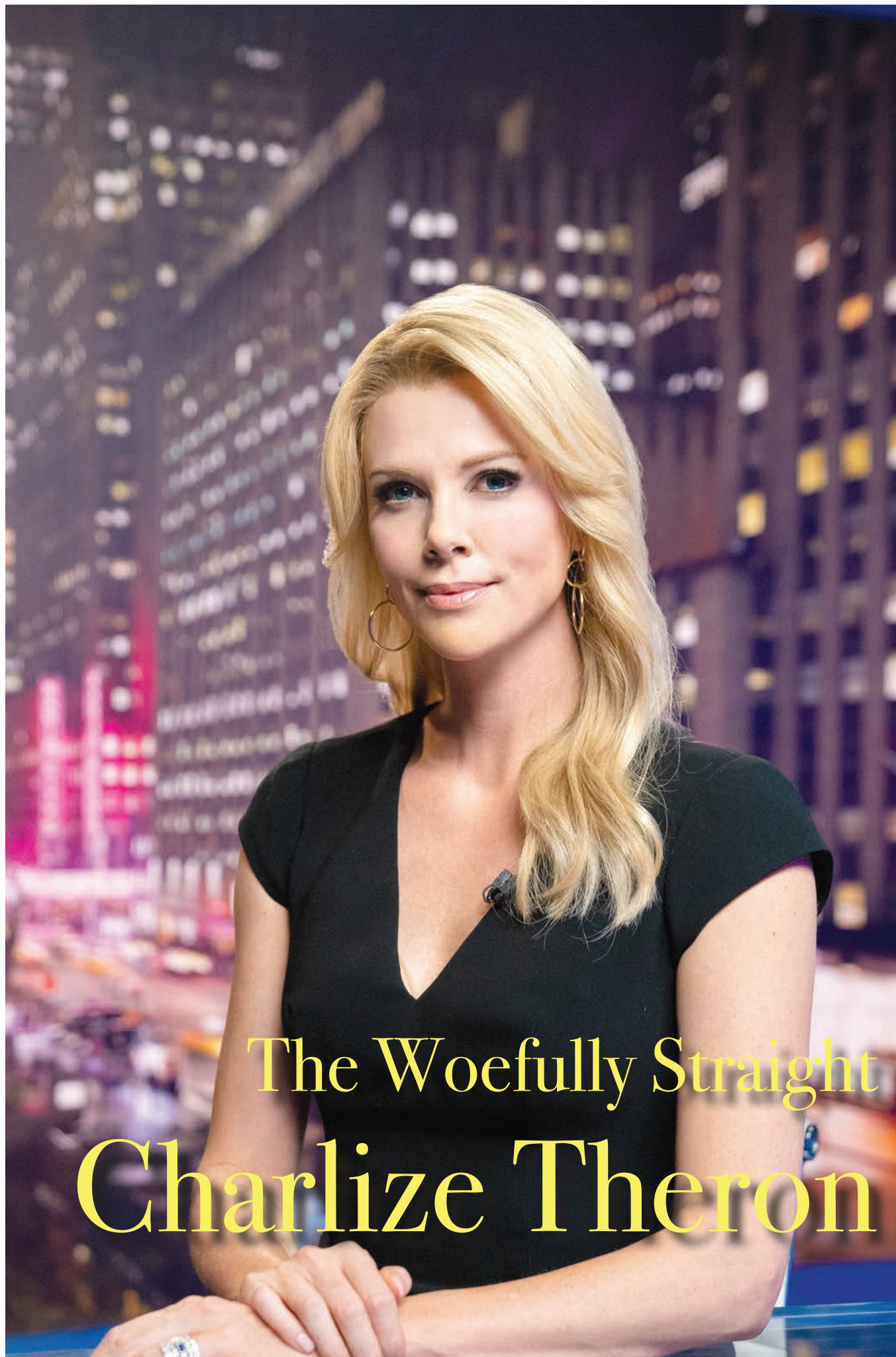
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## 'Bombshell' Actress on Queerness in Her Films and Getting Her Daughter's Pronouns Right

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

"Oh my god, you're gonna make me cry, stop it," Charlize Theron tells me at the end of our recent phone conversation, humbled. But I'm simply being honest when I express gratitude for her continued dedication in seeing that LGBTQ people are represented on screen.

Since her Oscar-winning portrayal of real-life murderous prostitute Aileen Wuornos in 2003's "Monster," playing opposite Christina Ricci as her lover, the 44-year-old actress has been personally responsible and invested in portraying a cadre of queer and bisexual characters to aid in normalizing non-heterosexuality in film, allowing LGBTQ characters to exist beyond their identity alone.

In the 2018 Diablo Cody-written film "Tully," Theron embodied an overworked mom named Marlo, her bisexuality casually revealed. For her sapphic action-thriller "Atomic Blonde," Theron's agent character, Lorraine Broughton, shared a sex scene – no explanation necessary – with another female spy, played by Sofia Boutella.

In "Bombshell," which she executive produced, Theron hands off the queerness to co-stars Margot Robbie and Kate McKinnon. Both work at Fox News and play, respectively, Kayla Pospisil, a queer, Christian associate producer new to the network, and Jess Carr, a closeted lesbian producer (and closeted Democrat) who's been with Fox long enough to know she can't be out. While their characters are composites of real Fox News employees, Theron inhabits a precise replica of polarizing network anchor Megyn Kelly, down to her husky voice and facial resemblance.

Before our near-tears epilogue, Theron spoke candidly about when she first became aware of "really fucked up" anti-LGBTQ culture, how she chooses to stand against it with her film work, figuring out she was straight ("it's a little bit of a bummer") and getting her trans daughter's pronouns right.

**You've been an ally for as long as I can remember, and you even have a GLAAD award – the Vanguard Award, which you won in 2006 – to prove it. When did LGBTQ causes first become important to you?**

I think I was always aware of it. I grew up in South Africa in this kind of farm community, and our neighbor had a gay son but nobody talked about it. He just always was hanging out with his "friend" and nobody wanted to admit it; it was something that was so unspoken. So, I think I've always had this awareness of like, "That's just really fucked up."

**How did you know he was gay?**

Because my mom just one day said, "Yes, he's gay." And I went, "Well, why is nobody saying anything?" And there was this complicated conversation around, "Well, you know his father doesn't want to admit that, and it's just a weird thing." South Africa was just very

conservative and religious, so from the age of 4 I can remember living there and next to this boy who was gay, and nobody wanting to talk about it.

**And now you celebrate the LGBTQ community both in your work and in your own life. I saw you went to Pride this past June, and you wore what looked like a rainbow tutu and I still want it to be a rainbow tutu.**

It is a rainbow tutu!

**Do you make Pride an annual tradition?**

Yes, we do. I try to always get my family to go and support, and these people live in my community and I love them, and so whenever I can support or be of support, of course I would be there.

**At what point in your career did you realize that you had an LGBTQ following?**

Oh, wow! I never really thought of that. (Laughs.) Yeah, listen, I try to live my life not compartmentalizing people. I am very aware that the world does that, so it's this kind of position that you wanna take where you just want to normalize everything and not talk about it in such a walled-off, labeled sense.

**Though the mission is to normalize, in many parts of the world it's not normalized. It can be easy to feel like we're living in a bubble.**

I'm very vocal about what I believe is the right thing to do and how we should treat each other, and at the same time I feel like the thing that maybe I could bring to the table in moving all of this stuff forward is to just make sure that the stories that I tell and the characters that I play reflect the world, which is the gay and lesbian community, in a way where we're not asking a million questions around it. This is just how it should be.

But I know what you're saying, and so the advocacy part of it is, if I'm on a stage or if somebody asks me, I will, of course, always speak out. But I think my strength as an artist is that I can just play these characters and have nobody even ask a question about it. That is really what I want the world to be, and that maybe, hopefully, the more we see that, the more we just don't ask so many questions anymore.

**Based on your track record when it comes to queer characters in film, why do I have a hunch that you are responsible for giving us some queer ladies in "Bombshell"?**

(Laughs.) No, I wish I could take credit for that, but no. It was something that was written in the script when I got it and I thought it was really interesting. And it is so interesting that people kind of go, like, "Wait, I don't understand." I was like, "You can't understand that a conservative Jesus-loving girl could also love other women?" I'm like, isn't that so strange?

Listen, it was great that it was in there and it wasn't something that I brought up. And we definitely wanted to make sure we handled it in a way that felt authentic. Again, to me, I always

say, "Are we asking too many questions? Are we underlining things too much? Why can't this just live and breathe in its own space and just let it be?" And that's what I love about that relationship. We don't set up a lot of explanation as to why they end up sleeping together or whether she's gay or not; these are all things that I think you have to work within the nuance of all of that instead of underlining everything.

**Have you challenged queer narratives in any of your past films?**

No, I've been really lucky that I've worked with people who are very like-minded and want to explore those things. I think the only one that I really kind of fought for that wasn't originally in the story was "Atomic Blonde." I mean, she was never kind of bisexual or anything like that and that to me was just like, why not? I mean, come on.

**Even if the rest of Hollywood tends to shy away from portraying same-sex sex scenes as intimately as other sex scenes, you have not. Do you recognize a double standard in the treatment of heterosexual sex scenes versus same-sex sex scenes?**

I mean, I think if you look at the sex scene in "Atomic Blonde," we didn't cut away! (Laughs.) I feel like I just personally don't struggle with that: handling or treating it any different. For me, the bottom line is, you're playing real people and real human dynamics and that's where these things have to live and breathe, and when you start kind of thinking that one is different than the other, I don't really know what the point is, then. Then you should probably just not even touch it, you know? If you're not willing to be as accurate and authentic as you possibly can, then just don't bother. It does a disservice, I think.

**LGBTQ representation and authenticity in film is an ongoing conversation in the industry and among LGBTQ community members, and you've talked about going through a period of sexual exploration when you were younger. I wonder, because of those experiences, does it make it easier to access queerness in films?**

No. I experimented and I did what I think every young person should do: feel brave enough and free enough in order to figure it out. It's not like the stuff is laid out on a piece of paper for us; we have to kind of go through a life, and until you have certain experiences you don't really know who you are. I was just lucky that I grew up in a house where my mom was never scared of those things. My mom always said, "Figure it out. I don't want you to be me. Go figure out what it is for *you*." And I think it was because of that I got to share those things with her; when I did go on those explorations I had this person that I could share it with, that I felt safe with, who wasn't going to judge me or label me. But it turns out – ahh! – that I am straight. It's a little bit of a bummer.

See **Charlize**, continued on p. 22



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Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie star in "Bombshell." Photo: Hilary Bronwyn Gayle SMPSP

### ► Charlize

Continued from p. 21

#### For many women, yes, Charlize, it is.

(Laughs.) So I never had enough experience where I think it's like, "Oh, I feel like I'm working this out in my work." It really is just more about honoring the story and the film and the character that you're playing and that what's right is right, and you want to take care of that and treat it empathetically and authentically.

#### Have you had that same conversation your mom had with you with your own children?

They're a little too young, but we definitely have these conversations whenever they say, "I'm gonna get married" and I'm always like, "What is it gonna be? A boy or a girl? What is it gonna be?" I love that my kids just know that that's a normal question to ask. One of my daughters (4-year-old August) is convinced that she's gonna be married five times and it's gonna be three boys and two girls, and I just love that she has the freedom to think that way. God knows what it's going to be, but I love that she feels safe enough to explore in her little-girl brain that anything is possible and that she's gonna go and discover that for herself.

#### I get the impression you're the kind of mom who is incredibly conscious about the kind of world your children grow up in. I'm curious if having a daughter who happens to be transgender influences your decisions when it comes to taking on the LGBTQ characters you do or, for that matter, don't.

Well, this is all pretty new for us, so it hasn't really kind of come into question. I don't really necessarily know if it will. My daughter's story is really her story, and one day, if she chooses, she'll tell her story. I feel like as her mother, for me, it was important to let the world know that I would appreciate it if they would use the right

pronouns for her.

I think it became harder for us the older she got that people were still writing about her in the wrong pronouns, and also I was still talking about her in the press using the wrong pronoun. It really hurt her feelings. I don't want to be that mom, and that was really why I said what I said a while back (in an interview with *The Daily Mail* earlier this year, Theron revealed that her eldest daughter, 7-year-old Jackson, told her at age 3, "I am not a boy!").

I haven't really talked about it ever since, again, because outside of just asking that respectfully of the press – and the world, hopefully – the rest is really private and it's her story, and it's really up to her to decide if she wants to share that.

#### As someone who has sought to normalize queerness in film, how far do you think the industry has come in doing that? Are you seeing progress?

I am! Listen, it's never enough. I think that we can't become complacent – that's a very dangerous place to get to – but I feel so hopeful and optimistic when I see shows like (HBO's queer-inclusive teen drama) "Euphoria" and I see the characters and the actors in that and, again, the normalization of it, the fact that nothing is underlined and nothing is being overly explained to you. You're kind of just being dropped into a world of real people living their lives and struggling with real things that people struggle with – especially that young people struggle with. I'm optimistic when I see stuff like that being generated in our industry. I want more of it, and I think we're always going to need more of it.

*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, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.*

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## Free Royal Oak Social Run Mondays

**R**un, drink and socialize at Running for Brews, a free biweekly 5k running club designed to help people connect alongside friends and hobbies. The group will meet next on Monday, Jan. 20, at Royal Oak Brewery.

“Running For Brews is for all of those who enjoy getting out and breaking a sweat amongst the company of other fellow runners and then topping it off with an awesome craft brew and some great conversation,” write event organizers. “We meet up every Monday night at the Royal Oak Brewery at 7pm and then

proceed to run a beautiful 5k (or whatever distance you want) route in Royal Oak and then end our joyous run with cold brews for all runners (or glass of H2O) and some great conversation at The Royal Oak Brewery. ALL levels of runners, joggers, walkers and just drinkers are welcome to join us! All runners MUST sign our one-time online waiver: <https://bit.ly/2AKOZ17>.”

*Royal Oak Brewery is located at 215 E. Fourth St. in Royal Oak. Find out more online at [meetup.com](http://meetup.com).*

## ‘Forever Plaid’ at Stagecrafters From Jan. 17 - Feb. 9

**T**he story of Sparky, Smudge, Jinx and Frankie, “Forever Plaid” follows an amateur pop quartet looking to make it big, but on the way to their first major show they’re killed in a terrible road accident. But that’s not the end for them, it’s simply the beginning. The show will be playing at Stagecrafters in Royal Oak from January through February.

“As the four men stage a

miraculous musical revival from the other side. Filled with delightfully goofy patter and the beloved classic hits of the 1950s sung in pitch-perfect harmony, ‘Forever Plaid’ will be a fun-filled, plaid-fabulous time for everyone.”

*This show runs approximately one hour and 40 minutes and is rated PG-13. Tickets start at \$23. For more information about showtimes and ticketing visit [stagecrafters.org](http://stagecrafters.org).*



## Royal Oak Toy Show Jan. 18

**V**isit the Royal Oak Farmer’s Market for a peek at vintage toys from collectors around Metro Detroit and beyond. Attendees can bring toys to sell, buy toys or simply take time to excite their nostalgia. Find out more information about the Royal Oak Farmer’s Market online at [romi.gov](http://romi.gov).



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# Hear Me Out: Best Albums of 2019

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI



## 10. Miranda Lambert, 'Wildcard'

After flooding a sublime double-disc album with her post-divorce feelings (hey, divorce is hard!), Miranda Lambert got her groove back and then finally decided that life is “pretty bitchin,” a sentiment she shares on “Wildcard.” “Yeah, I’m a turner,” she sings on the standout “Bluebird,” casually cool, earning your own optimistic tears. “I turn pages all the time. Don’t like where I’m at, 34 was bad, so I just turned to 35.” Lambert also, in many ways, turned the page on what a country music artist could sound like, experimenting with a punch of classic-rock on “Track Record” and a charged psychedelic-rock edge on “Mess With My Head.” Then there’s Lambert, the observer, on the nod to her country roots, “Dark Bars,” which will make you feel like even when you actually are, you’re never *truly* drinking alone. And the rest? Pretty bitchin’, too.

## 9. Sturgill Simpson, 'Sound & Fury'

Country-rocker Sturgill Simpson’s “Sound & Fury” was spectacularly insane. I was enveloped by it. I was scared by it. I couldn’t stop listening to it. It rides in tame enough with “Ronin,” before blasting into action and never letting up, each track fusing into the next, a big fuck you to – well, to a lot. Including nosy music journalists. It bombards you with a constant procession of heavy, loud feelings that whip through you at a fast and

furiously pace, and if you’re never walked into a fire after getting into a car accident, well, at least now you can say you feel like you have.

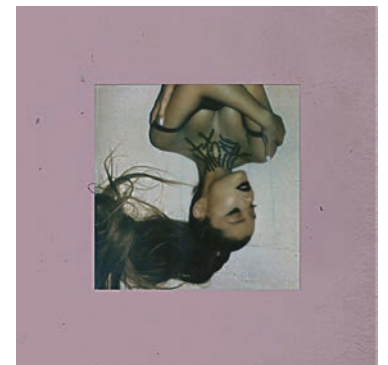
## 8. The Highwomen, 'The Highwomen'

Having Brandi Carlile, Natalie Hemby, Maren Morris and Amanda Shires join forces for these songs about women, written by women and sung by women is perfectly in tune with the times. With women’s stories and experiences taking center stage in a broader sense, the leading ladies assembled as a powerful and necessary collective, The Highwomen, to show the male-dominated country music genre just what women can do. Their smart, witty and emotional self-titled debut explores love, family and politics with a keen sense of their place in the world. “Redesigning Women” already sounds like a modern-day classic, and the rousing story-driven title track honors persecuted women. Through and through, the quartet demonstrates what I’ve always known to be true: Women do it better than men.



## 7. Ariana Grande, 'Thank U, Next'

Bop on bop on bop. Before “Thank U, Next” I was half sold on Ariana Grande, but I’ve finally come around to the pop star after this fusion of pop and hip-hop, stacked with moods and hooks and enough vocal flutters to give a clipped bird its wings. It’s the first time I’ve truly thought of Grande as a tastemaker – and also a human being. The proof is evident in what I found to be her warmest song to date, “thank u, next,” which reshapes a cheeky kiss-off into a message of authenticity, positivity and



self-love. And when Grande wasn’t giving you reasons to love yourself, she was – with “7 rings,” a satirical take on millennial greed – making you feel like you deserve anything you want, with a wink.

## 6. Sharon Van Etten, 'Remind Me Tomorrow'

I couldn’t shake Sharon Van Etten’s emotionally piercing fifth album, but it was “Seventeen” that made me want to roll down the windows, pop open my moon roof, and then, “Perks of Being a Wallflower” style, cruise the interstate. Sung to her 17-year-old self, it is the centerpiece of Van Etten’s latest work and also a downright masterpiece, with its Springsteenian lyrics capturing a mood relatable to anyone who managed to survive that year: “I see you so uncomfortably alone, I wish I could you show how much you’ve grown.” If your 17 was anything like Van Etten’s 17 (or my 17), you’ll lament a time that seems so far gone now, but yet, through Van Etten’s wistful lens, not so distant at all.

See **Hear Me Out**, continued on p.30



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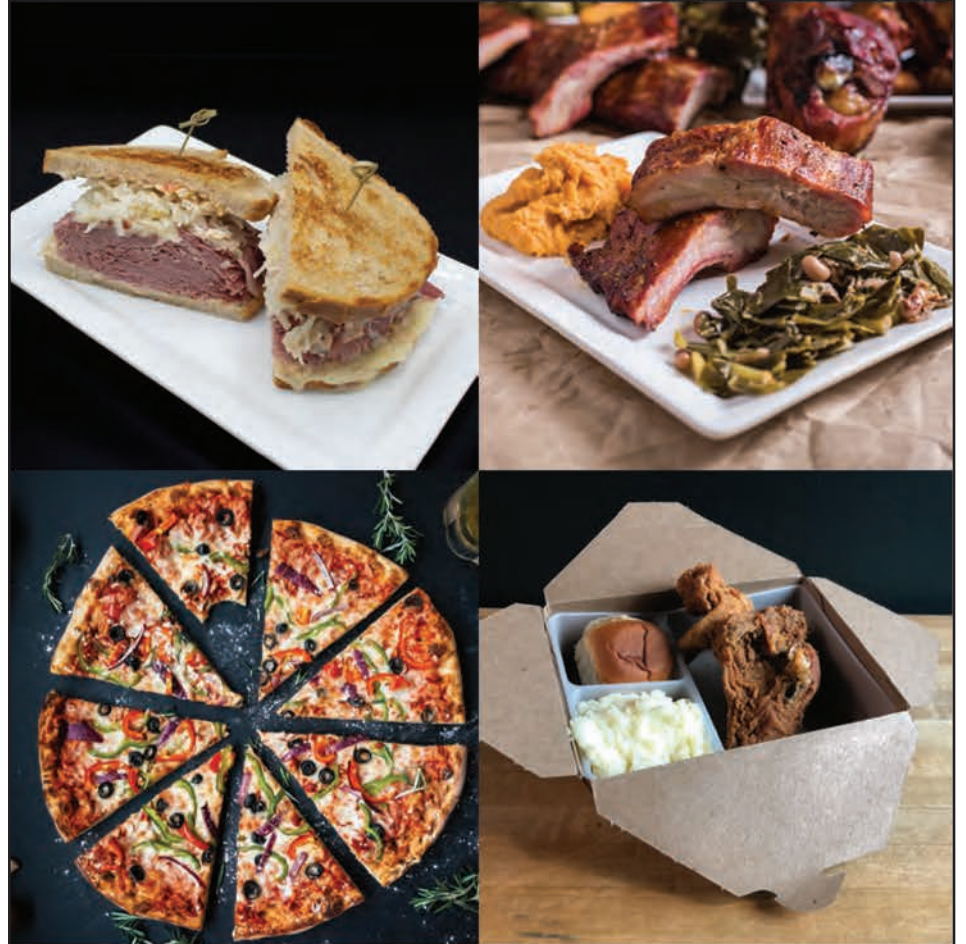
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# Happenings

## ASHANTI AT MOTORCITY CASINO HOTEL SOUND BOARD JAN. 19

Singer, songwriter, record producer, dancer and actress Ashanti is coming to the MotorCity Casino Hotel Sound Board stage in Detroit. This chart-topping artist made a name for herself with hits like “Foolish,” “Rain On Me” and “Rock wit U (Awww Baby)” and has been certified triple platinum in the U.S., selling 6 million copies worldwide. Find out more about tickets, this date and upcoming ones online at [ashantithisisme.com](http://ashantithisisme.com).

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## OUTINGS

### Thursday, January 9

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County** 7 p.m. All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. This group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month @ Orchard United Methodist Church.

### Monday, January 13

**Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County** 6:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group: All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. Come and meet other trans\* youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051

21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700. [chippewavalley.schools.org](http://chippewavalley.schools.org).

### Tuesday, January 13

**Karaoke Nights in the Cyber Center** 7 p.m. Join the LGBTQ+ Game Club every 2nd Tuesday of month, from 7 to 9 p.m. for Karaoke in the David Bohnett Foundation Cyber Center! Affirmations, 290 W 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. [goaffirmations.org](http://goaffirmations.org).

### Wednesday, January 15

**Stand with Trans Support Groups – Livonia – Wayne County** 6:30 p.m. Free to all, group meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile Road, Livonia. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

**Transgender Support Group – Westland** 6 p.m. Free adult support group held on the third Wednesday of each month at the Westland Public Library Meeting Room B. All trans, non-binary and GNC people + allies welcome. Facilitated by Emma 800-842-2954. Westlan Public Library, 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. [westlandlibrary.org](http://westlandlibrary.org).

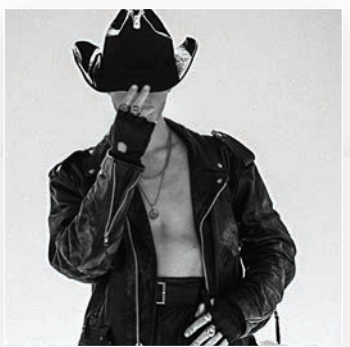
### Thursday, January 16

**LGBTQ+ Magic: The Gathering Club** 3:30 p.m. All skill levels welcome to play Magic: The Gathering, a trading card game based on a wizard's duel. Affirmations, 290 W 9

## Editor's Pick

### GREYSON CHANCE AT THE SHELTER JAN. 19

After his 2010 performance of Lady Gaga's song "Paparazzi," Greyson Chance shot to fame on YouTube, earning millions of views. Fast forward to today, and Chance is an award-winning artist who has toured around the world and is now promoting his second album "Portraits." Find out more about his upcoming performance at The Shelter at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit at [saintandrewsdetroit.com](http://saintandrewsdetroit.com).



# Editor's Pick

## 'A BRONX TALE' THROUGH FEB. 2 AT THE FISHER THEATRE

Hailed as "Jersey Boys meets West Side Story," "A Bronx Tale" is a Broadway musical hit that takes viewers to the Bronx in the 1960s. There, a young man is "caught between the father he loves and the mob boss he'd love to be." Visit [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com) for more information about the musical and showtimes.



Mile Road, Ferndale. [goaffirmations.org](http://goaffirmations.org).

### Wednesday, January 22

**The Believers Are But Brothers** 7:30 p.m. An electronic maze of fantasists, meme culture, 4chan, the alt-right, and ISIS. We live in a time where old orders are collapsing: from the post-colonial nation states of the Middle East to the EU. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. [smt.d.umich.edu](http://smt.d.umich.edu).

### Sunday, January 26

**Community exhibition opening featuring poet Semaj Brown** 1:30 p.m. Join the Flint Institute of Arts and Flint Poet Laureate Semaj Brown to celebrate the opening of Community. This exhibition features works in multiple mediums from some of the most important artists from the 19th Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-234-1695. [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org).

### Tuesday, January 28

**Strand with Trans Support Groups - Ann Arbor - Washtenaw** 6:30 p.m. Trans Support Group meeting the 4th Tuesday of each month @ Journey of Faith Christian Church. Parent Support Group Facilitator - Yma Johnson, [ymaj1968@gmail.com](mailto:ymaj1968@gmail.com) or 734-780-4092. Trans Youth Support Group Facilitator - Joy Cavanaugh, LPC Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org)

### Wednesday, January 29

**Is This A Room: Reality Winner Verbatim Transcription** 7:30 p.m. June 3, 2017. A 25-year-old former Air Force linguist named Reality Winner is surprised at her

home by the FBI, interrogated, and then charged with leaking top-secret evidence of Russian interference in our voting system Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. [smt.d.umich.edu](http://smt.d.umich.edu).

### Monday, February 3

**White Feminist** 7:30 p.m. Gender and privilege collide in this scathing comedy that will grab you by the pussy hat. James and Anne Duderstadt Center, 2281 Bonisteel Blvd., Ann Arbor. 734-763-3266. [dc.umich.edu](http://dc.umich.edu).

### Thursday, February 13

**Home Sweet Home Ozone House Celebration** 6:30 p.m. Show your pride and support for LGBTQ+ youth in our community at the 7th annual Home Sweet Home event, presented by Liberty Dental. Ozone House 100 N. Ashley St., Ann Arbor.

### Saturday, February 22

**Back in Black: A Black History Month Celebration** 9 p.m. Drag benefit for Ruth Ellis Center, put on by Beauty Beyond Drag Productions. Creston Brewery 1504 Plainfield Ave. NE, Grand Rapids. [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com).

## MUSIC & MORE

**Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting** January 9, 7 p.m. LGBTQ Toastmaster Club focusing on Professional and personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. [lawrencemoeb@gmail.com](mailto:lawrencemoeb@gmail.com). [toastmastersclubs.org](http://toastmastersclubs.org).

**LEGENDARY - The Music of Great Hollywood Movies** January 17, 8 p.m. Out Loud goes to the movies and sings all the great movie music. Selections include Another Day of Sun, Dancing Queen, Skyfall and Gimme Some Lovin'. Towsley Auditorium at WCC, 4800 E Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor. 734-265-0740. [olc.online.org](http://olc.online.org).

**Minnesota Orchestra** January 25, 8 p.m. The Minnesota Orchestra returns for its first UMS performance since its 1972 debut in an all-Sibelius program, including the stunning and rarely heard Snöfrid with the UMS Choral Union. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**Martin Katz & Friends - What's in a Song: Hugo Wolf's Complete Mörike Song** February 5, 8 p.m. There are many important art song composers, chief among them Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Richard Strauss, but Hugo Wolf occupies his own special place. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 734-763-3333. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

## THEATER

**Bright Colors and Bold Patterns** January 10, 8 p.m. Bright Colors and Bold Patterns is a play by Drew Droege is described as a "hyper-verbal and tragicomic one-man show that asks some essential questions about contemporary gay life. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 248-545-5545. [theringwald.com](http://theringwald.com).

**National Theatre Live in HD: All My Sons** January 19, 7 p.m. Academy Award-winner Sally Field (Steel Magnolias, Lincoln) and Bill Pullman (The Sinner, Independence Day) star in Arthur Miller's blistering drama. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**A Bronx Tale** January 21, 8 p.m. Three years ago, Academy Award nominee Chazz Palminteri teamed up with Academy Award® winner Robert De Niro, Tony® Award winner Jerry Zaks and Tony® Award nominee Sergio Trujillo to create this streetwise musical - based Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).

**Jesus Christ Superstar** February 4, 8 p.m. Jesus Christ Superstar is an iconic musical phenomenon with a world-wide fanbase. In celebration of its 50th Anniversary, a new mesmerizing production comes to North America. Originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. 313-237-SING. [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).



PUZZLE P. 31

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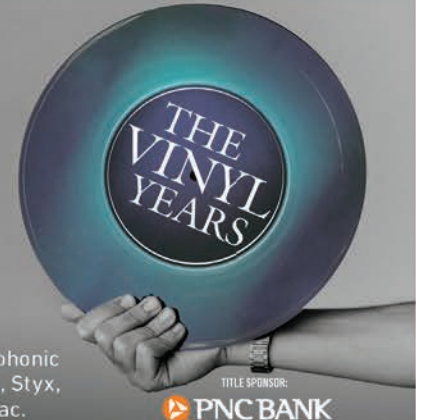
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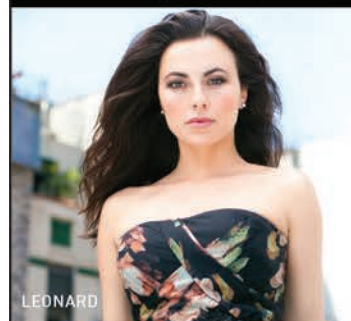
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Fri., Jan. 31 at 8 p.m.  
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Continued from p. 26

**5. Tanya Tucker, 'While I'm Livin'**

You get the impression Tanya Tucker might not have made another album after her last, released in 2009, if it weren't for Brandi Carlile, one of the most talented singer-songwriters of our time and now a true gay saint for getting a country legend back in the saddle. Produced and co-written by Carlile, Shooter Jennings and Carlile's longtime collaborators, twins Phil and Tim Hanseroth, Tucker's resurgence takes a few notes from Carlile's own sincerely real methodology, delivered by way of Tucker's sincerely real (see: ragged, husky) voice. These are classic country songs that cut deep, and that's palpable on Tucker's version of "The House That Built Me," which movingly compliments Miranda Lambert's original cut. Lambert longed for home as a child who'd grown up and moved away; with a few lyrical tweaks, Tucker is the longing mother whose children are grown and gone. There's even more feeling packed into "Bring My Flowers Now," a heartbreakingly vulnerable piano elegy that's like looking at a life through the rear-view mirror.

**4. Bon Iver, 'i, i'**

I once listened to Justin Vernon, the songwriter and frontman of the group Bon Iver, play underneath a blanket of stars. My body on scraps of grass, I just let him take me away. I approached listening to "i, i" in a similar way, which is to say, I didn't overthink his enigmatic verses and baffling non sequiturs. Based on the spiritual connection I feel – *feel*, since this is music that speaks to you in weird, discordant tones – I'm finally coming to the realization that maybe understanding any of this isn't the point anyway. By the end of "i, i" which I've only listened to alone – no stars, no festival crowd, just whatever language I may one day distill from all of this – I felt not alone but connected to something much bigger.

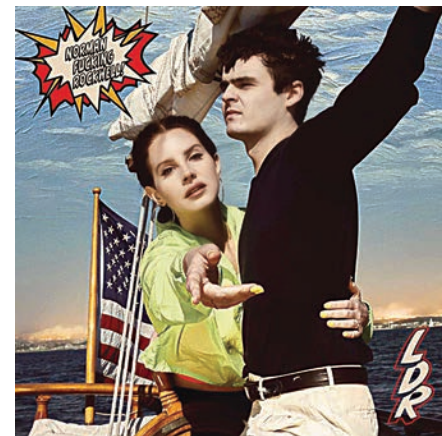
**3. Carly Rae Jepsen, 'Dedicated'**

Where could Carly Rae Jepsen go after "E•MO•TION"? A career-defining body of work, it was also arguably the best pop album

of 2015. It seemed nothing could even remotely come close to achieving that same level of pop greatness. Upon their release, songs from "Dedicated" felt looser, more low-key, though the coyly sexual, Cyndi Lauper-inspired, Squeeze-ish "Want You in My Room" was a sure bet from the get-go. For "Dedicated," Jepsen let "E•MO•TION" be "E•MO•TION" and created something entirely special in its own intimate, pleasurably dialed-back right.

**2. Vampire Weekend, 'Father of the Bride'**

My favorite album of last year, Kacey Musgraves's "Golden Hour," imparted breath and light into our dark, disquieting global climate; that same serenity runs through Vampire Weekend's buoyant "Father of the Bride." Recorded without former member Rostam Batmanglij, Ezra Koenig's sound isn't fussy, instead leaning into a majestic simplicity that stands out against Vampire Weekend's other albums, the haunting "Modern Vampires of the City" and the punchy "Contra." In many ways, this feels like the band at their most earnest, with a relaxed, traversing sound as new and invigorating as daybreak.

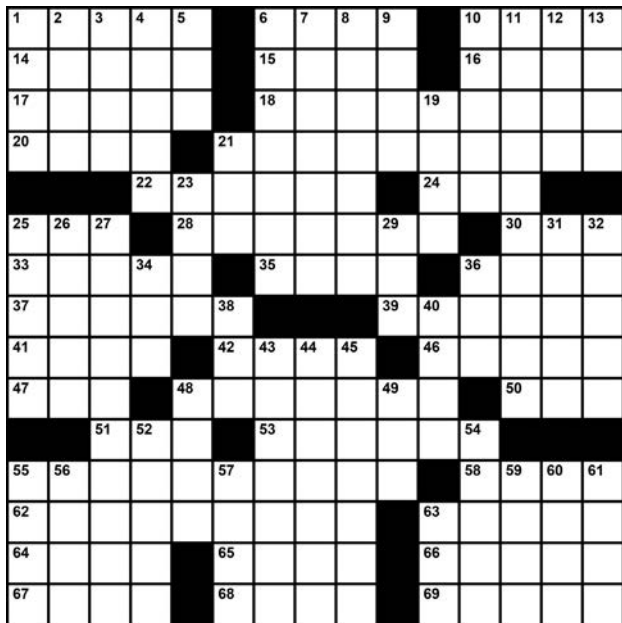


**1. Lana Del Rey, 'Norman Fucking Rockwell!'**

Even if Lana Del Rey's "Norman Fucking Rockwell!" wasn't the best-sounding album

of the year, it certainly would be one of the most important. But Del Rey's best work yet manages both feats. Elegant and cool thanks to Jack Antonoff's understated production, the album is fitted with Del Rey's casual delivery of a commentary (sometimes earnest, sometimes low-key caustic) on American politics, celebrity and suitably, given our current patriarchal times, the perpetual state of men as disappointments (but she's not giving up just yet, as she concludes, "hope is a dangerous thing for a woman like me to have – but I have it"). One of modern music's greatest songwriters, Del Rey writes incisively and vividly about her longing for her past and the America we lost. The collective spirit of "Norman Fucking Rockwell!" is euphoric and seductive, and like a flower in bloom, fuller and even more captivating over time.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him at [chris@pridesource.com](http://chris@pridesource.com).



- 37 With 39-Across, 1-Across as an Olympic athlete  
 39 See 37-Across  
 41 Variety  
 42 Sexy clothing material  
 46 Like Machu Picchu  
 47 Doe in Disney's "Bambi"  
 48 Most abrupt  
 50 "\_\_\_ Pinafore"  
 51 USMC barracks boss  
 53 Uses a gifted tongue  
 55 Another mischaracterization of bisexual women, per 1-Across  
 58 Animal groups that cruised with Noah  
 62 Tabled  
 63 Rock Hudson/James Dean flick  
 64 They say it matters  
 65 Where to find hot buns  
 66 Grant of "Weeds"  
 67 Hawkish deity  
 68 Untouchable head  
 69 See 1-Across

- 11 What to wear on nudist beaches  
 12 Some of Mary's lambs  
 13 Go in only partway, at the beach  
 19 Actor Omar  
 21 "Gigli" actress, briefly  
 23 Nat. counterpart in MLB  
 25 Faux pas  
 26 Cocktail ingredient  
 27 Claim 10 inches, for example  
 29 Month for Kahlo  
 31 Get the cappuccino foamy  
 32 Picks up  
 34 Abner's comic strip partner  
 36 He blew on pipes  
 38 Avian Aussie  
 40 Box with a tail  
 43 Eating away  
 44 Headway  
 45 "Good grief!"  
 48 Partner of Caesar, in comedy  
 49 Sault \_\_\_ Marie  
 52 Yields  
 54 Hooch maker in Gomer's Mayberry  
 55 Ingrid's \_Casablanca\_ role  
 56 Drag queen's leg need  
 57 The race \_\_\_  
 59 Corduroy rib  
 60 What comes after "Come..."  
 61 A Brit soldier may shoot it off  
 63 Not swallow easily

**Down**

- 1 Served like Billie Jean  
 2 Christmas threesome  
 3 Part of a healthy stud muffin?  
 4 Give a large bosom, e.g.  
 5 Hi-\_\_\_ graphics  
 6 Some have sex on this  
 7 Without wasted words  
 8 He smoothes out his lipstick  
 9 Sundance's Place  
 10 Tyler of "The Talk"

**Team USA-LGBTQ**

**Across**

- 1 With 69-Across, Olympic athlete who just came out as bisexual/pansexual  
 6 "How can \_\_\_?"  
 10 From the top  
 14 Antonio Bandera's meat  
 15 Get soft  
 16 Early caucus state  
 17 "Great Caesar's ghost!"  
 18 Demonstrated for gay rights, e.g.

- 20 Flintstones' pet  
 21 Mischaracterization of bisexual women, per 1-Across  
 22 Artful Dodger target  
 24 Swan Lake step  
 25 "Can you \_\_\_ little faster?"  
 28 Pilgrims to Mecca  
 30 Poet who inspired "Cats," initially  
 33 Avoid going straight  
 35 Brontë's Jane  
 36 Gyro bread

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# Find over 300 Non-Profit Listings Serving Michigan's LGBTQ Online @ pridesource.com

## AIDS/HIV

There are dozens of AIDS/HIV organizations and resources listed at [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com). Here are just some of them:

### Metro Care Coordination Network

Free, comprehensive services for those living with HIV/AIDS.  
877-931-3248  
248-266-5545  
[Metrocarenetwork.org](http://Metrocarenetwork.org)

### UNIFIED - HIV Health & Beyond

3968 Mt. Elliott St.  
Detroit MI 48207-1841  
313-446-9800  
[www.miunified.org](http://www.miunified.org)  
Michigan HIV/STED Hotline  
800-872-2437

### Matrix MAC Health

429 Livernois St.  
Ferndale, MI 48220  
888-226-6366  
248-545-1435  
<http://www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/matrix-mac-health/>

### Macomb County STD Clinic

27690 Van Dyke  
Warren, MI 48093  
586-465-8440  
<http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDSCounselingTesting>

### Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLSHA)

196 Cesar E. Chavez Ave.  
Pontiac, MI 48343  
248-209-2647  
[www.olhsa.org](http://www.olhsa.org)

### Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Service (ACCESS)

Sterling Heights Center  
4301 East 14 Mile Rd.  
Sterling Hts., MI 48310  
586-722-6036  
[www.accesscommunity.org](http://www.accesscommunity.org)

## Advocacy

### Equality Michigan

19641 W. 7 Mile, Detroit, MI  
313-537-7000  
[equalitymi.org](http://equalitymi.org)  
[Facebook.com/equalitymichigan](https://www.facebook.com/equalitymichigan)

## Campus

Currently there are 19 organizations listed as active online at [www.pridesource.com/](http://www.pridesource.com/) yellow pages. The following are some in the southeast Michigan area:

### U-M Ann Arbor

Spectrum Center  
[Spectrumcenter@umich.edu](mailto:Spectrumcenter@umich.edu)  
<http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>  
734-763-4186

### Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

[gsc@oakland.edu](mailto:gsc@oakland.edu)  
[www.oakland.edu/gsc](http://www.oakland.edu/gsc)  
248-370-4336

### Eastern Michigan University

LGBT Resource Center  
[emich.edu/lgbtrc](mailto:emich.edu/lgbtrc)  
734-487-4149

### The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

[ltu.edu/student\\_affairs/lgbt.asp](http://ltu.edu/student_affairs/lgbt.asp)  
**Wayne State JIGSAW**  
[Facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW)  
[wsujigsaw@gmail.com](mailto:wsujigsaw@gmail.com)

## Community Centers

Michigan has eleven active LGBTQ community centers, with a tenth planned in Lansing. Here are three of them.

### Jim Toy Community Center

Ann Arbor  
[www.jimtoycenter.org](http://www.jimtoycenter.org)  
[@LGBTDetroit](https://www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter)  
or follow them on Twitter @JimToyCenter.  
319 Braun Court  
Ann Arbor, MI  
734-995-9867

### LGBT Detroit

Detroit  
[www.lgbtdetroit.org](http://www.lgbtdetroit.org)  
[@LGBTDetroit](https://www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit)  
20025 Greenfield Road  
Detroit, MI  
Phone: 313-397-2127

### Affirmations

Ferndale  
<http://goaffirmations.org>  
[www.facebook.com/Affirmations/](https://www.facebook.com/Affirmations/)  
or follow them on Twitter @GoAffirmations.  
290 W. Nine Mile Road  
Ferndale, MI  
248-398-7105

## Legal

### American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan

Jay Kaplan, Staff Attorney, LGBT Project  
2966 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI  
[www.aclumich.org](http://www.aclumich.org)  
313-578-6800

### Fair Michigan

PO Box 6136  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
877-432-4764, 313-556-2300  
[fairmichigan.org](http://fairmichigan.org)  
[Facebook.com/fairmichigan2016](https://www.facebook.com/fairmichigan2016)

### Know Your Rights Project

Outlaws U-M student group  
[outlawslegal@gmail.com](mailto:outlawslegal@gmail.com)  
734-995-9867

## Older Adults

### SAGE Metro Detroit

290 W. Nine Mile Rd. Ferndale, MI  
313-578-6812  
[sagemetrodetroit.org](http://sagemetrodetroit.org)  
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

## Political

### The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

[Facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP](https://www.facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP)  
Stonewall for Revolution  
[www.facebook.com/stonewall4reolution](https://www.facebook.com/stonewall4reolution)

## Professional Groups

### Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 32446  
Detroit, MI 48232  
[detroitlgbtchamber.com](http://detroitlgbtchamber.com)  
1-800-DET-LGBT

### Ties Like Me

Professional networking events  
third Weds. 5:30 - 8 p.m.  
[TiesLikeMe.org](http://TiesLikeMe.org)  
Suits And The City  
Lansing, MI  
[suitsandthecity@gmail.com](mailto:suitsandthecity@gmail.com)  
[www.suitsandthecity.org](http://www.suitsandthecity.org)

## Transgender

### FtM Detroit

<https://www.facebook.com/FtMDetroit/>  
[ftmdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:ftmdetroit@gmail.com)

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You can add your event to the Pride Source Calendar online and in print by going to [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com) and clicking on Calendar, then "Add Event." Send any press releases and announcements to [editor@pridesource.com](mailto:editor@pridesource.com)



## Find a digital version of PrideSource Magazine online under Our LGBT Yellow Pages

### FtM A2 Ypsi

[ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com](mailto:ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/>

### Transgender Michigan

23211 Woodward Ave.  
Ferndale, MI  
[info@transgendermichigan.org](mailto:info@transgendermichigan.org)  
[www.transgendermichigan.org](http://www.transgendermichigan.org)  
800-842-2954

### Trans Sistas of Color Project

19641 W. 7 Mile Rd. in Detroit  
313-537-7000 Ext 107  
[info@tscopdetroit.org](mailto:info@tscopdetroit.org)  
[www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/](https://www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/)

## Youth

### Ruth Ellis Center

77 Victor Street, Highland Park, MI 48203  
[info@ruthelliscenter.org](mailto:info@ruthelliscenter.org)  
Facebook: Ruth Ellis Center  
313-252-1950

### Ozone House

102 N. Hamilton Street  
Ypsilanti, MI  
734-662-2265  
734-662-2222

### Stand With Trans

Farmington, MI  
[www.standwithtrans.org](http://www.standwithtrans.org)  
248-739-9254

## Find these resources online

- Adoption Services
- AIDS/HIV Hotlines
- AIDS/HIV Organizations
- Alzheimer's Association
- Animal Shelter
- Anti-Violence
- Archives/Collections
- Campus; Student and Alumni Groups
- Cancer Support Groups
- Choruses
- Community Centers
- Employee Resource Groups
- Families and Parents
- Foster Care
- Foundations and Funders
- Hotlines & Switchboards
- Labor Union
- Legal Organizations
- Museums
- Music Groups
- National Organizations
- Political Organizations
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- Transgender Groups/Services
- Women's Health
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## Community Connections

### Semaj Brown to Perform at 'Community' Exhibition Opening at FIA

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Semaj Brown, Flint's first poet laureate, will read poetry inspired by art in this month's "Community" exhibition at the Flint Institute of Arts. Brown will perform at its opening Jan. 26. In addition to works inspired by the exhibition, Brown will also perform works from her new book, "Bleeding Fire! Tap the Eternal Spring of Regenerative Light."

Brown is an accomplished author, dramatist, playwright and educator. Two of the pieces Brown was inspired by in the Community exhibition are Renee Stout's "Marie Laveau" and Whitfield Lovell's "Epoch." During her performance, Brown will read a poem inspired by each of them.

After the performance, Brown will take part in a tour of the exhibition along with members of the FIA curatorial staff.

"Community is defined as a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common, especially one practicing common ownership," says the



FIA's website about the exhibition. "In a museum, community is not simply people living in the same place, but individuals coming to a shared space to enjoy the common ownership of their museum collection. In this spirit, 'Community' celebrates works by African-American artists in the Flint Institute of Arts collection."

This exhibition features works in various mediums by some of the most important artists from the 19th century to present day, exploring themes related to community, including ideas of history and place, identity and representation, and social justice and self-expression.

Works by Romare Bearden, Chakaia Booker, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Renee Stout, Kara Walker and Yvonne Wells, among many others, are included.

The opening will conclude with Brown doing a book signing. The event is free and open to the public. Brown's performance will begin at 1:30 p.m. For more information, visit [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org).

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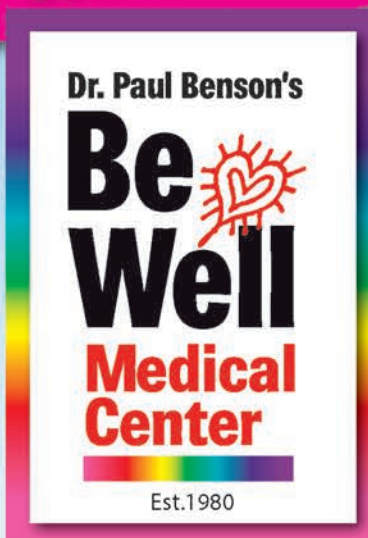
# On the Edge of Primary Care PODCASTS with Dr. Paul Benson



**Dr. Benson is launching a new podcast series for 2020!**

Use your cell phone to capture the QR code above, or visit our website, Spotify, Apple, or Google for access.

Since 1980, our medical team has been committed to providing compassionate, sensitive care for all lifestyles. The topics and specialists featured on the podcast will help you keep pace with the most up-to-date info to improve your health!



**1 Why We Sleep?** (Dr. Benson) Release: **1/2/2020**

Sleep is one of the most important, but least understood aspects of our lives and wellness.

**2 Living with HIV in the 21st Century** (Dr. Benson & Caleb Youngblood) Release: **1/16/2020**

HIV is a chronic manageable disorder, perhaps easier to live with than Heart Disease or Diabetes. Learn the latest about the HIV virus, new therapies, and the lessons learned from our history of dealing with HIV and its social stigma.

**3 On the Edge: Transcending the Standard of Care**

(Dr. Paul Benson, Dorea Shoemaker & Gretchen Haughton) Release: **1/30/2020**

Take matters into your own hands and become an active participant in your health. We'll discuss Cannabidiol (CBD) and its properties to improve and manage health with an expert, Dorea Shoemaker. CBD may be a new and safer alternative for pain instead of Tylenol or ibuprofen. We'll also discover benefits of whole food supplements to keep us healthy.

**4 The Transgender Population – Understanding and Embracing this Population** (Leon Bullough) Release: **2/13/2020**

A report from the World Professional Association on Transgender Health's (WPATH) Annual Conference. Hormone Replacement therapy is only a part of the transitioning process. Community and mental health support is essential for success. Individualized care plans based on evidence based

medicine and created to match each individual's desires and pace is essential to make the transition process a safe and healthy journey.

**5 Sexual Health and HIV Prevention**

(Dr. Paul Benson & Mark Rosen) Release: **2/27/2020**

We'll discuss sexually transmitted infections and their prevention. Many healthcare providers sweep this topic under the rug, but outcomes improve when we talk about how to stay healthy and infection free. Sexual health is not simply the absence of disease. It's living comfortably without fear or stigma; and embracing your sexuality while living day to day in your comfort zone.

**6 Living Well Over the Age of 50**

(Dr. Benson and Colin Colter) Release: **3/12/2020**

We'll discuss simple steps you, with the assistance of your doctor, can implement to live longer and healthier. Proper health maintenance makes a big difference at any age, but becomes even more important as the decades pass. We'll talk about prevention and aggressive strategies to manage co-morbidities sometimes encountered as we age.

We can't turn back the clock, but you *can* improve your heart, liver, brain function, kidneys, and virtually every organ system.



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