

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993



# Campaign to End Michigan LGBTQ Discrimination Falls Short on Signature Collection

## Pride 2020 Goes Virtual Around State and Country

# 'Our Demands Are Simple'



### LGBTQ-Affirming Police Brutality Protest Held at Detroit Joe Louis Monument



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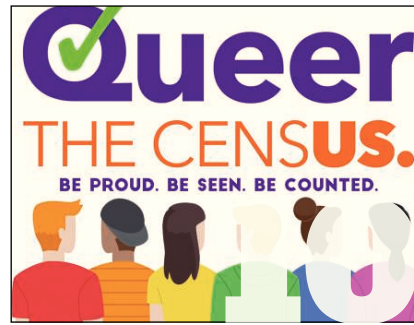
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# LGBTQ-Affirming Police Brutality Protest Held at Detroit Joe Louis Monument

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

On Sunday, Detroit's Monument to Joe Louis was a snapshot of the nation's anger. Chants like "Black lives matter," "No justice, no peace," "Abolish the police" and "Fuck the police" rang out for hours from dozens of protestors. This marked the third day in a row that Detroiters joined thousands across the U.S. in demonstrations against police brutality in light of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. Organized in the space of roughly 48 hours, the peaceful sit-in was the work of Detroit Queer Activist Coalition Founder Dorian Minley, who used the protest as an opportunity to address police brutality against LGBTQ black, indigenous, people of color. He said he couldn't wait any longer.

"I was seeing so many protests, but none of them were centering queer people. I just feel like ... especially in the city of Detroit, we're really at a high percentage of people that are killed by police, especially black trans women," Minley said. "And so, to see not only that there wasn't a safe space for trans women to speak about police brutality, but also that they were being ostracized from these other sit-ins and demonstrations, I felt like I needed to do something."

At the event, Minley — who is the national president of a leather fraternity for trans men, La Fraternité Du Loup-Garou — made a point of stressing that all LGBTQ voices were safe in the protest's space, but that the floor was not open for all to speak.

"You hardly ever hear about a queer trans voice as far as activism is concerned unless we're dying, unless we're a statistic. So, I wanted to give people of color, especially here in the city of Detroit, [a voice]," he said. "We have a big dichotomy here in the city where it's black half the time and then all the people that are getting credit [for activism] are white. Well, that's not what this is. White people will not be permitted to speak at this event just because this is a centered event for people of color and for queer people."

The event also provided care packages for those in attendance, to both keep spirits and energy up and to provide food for "marginalized people who may not have had a meal today."

## "Our demands are simple."

Minley used the base of the monument as a stage to declare a list of demands via megaphone asking for "an end to policing as it exists today in the United States" that includes citizen "access to all unedited records [and] an investigation of any record, accusation or history of wrongdoing by police onto citizenry" and "prosecution of any officer of any rank or standing" shown to have committed acts of violence against citizens. Minley also called for an end to "second-class citizenship, white



BTL Photos: Eve Kucharski



nationalism, class stratification, wage slavery and violent ostracization from the greater society" and willful ignorance on the part of "cis, het and white folks." The names of some of the victims of police brutality were also listed:

Tony McDade, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

When asked why she attended the event, protestor Tauren Keels said it was personal.

"I am a queer black woman, and I every day

watch people that look like me lose their lives to police brutality. This country is not new to oppressing people of color, and I think that the only way this is ever going to change is if we stand together and do something about it. I want to stand with my trans sisters and brothers who are also losing their lives. I mean, trans black women are killed every day so violently; they are not respected," Keels said. "... [I want people] to realize their own privilege and to recognize that just because it doesn't affect you directly doesn't mean it's not a problem. This is a human problem. This is a problem for all people. If one of us isn't free, none of us are free. ... So stand with us, even if you don't get it, respect it and come here. Help. Have a voice about it. If you see something wrong, say something."

Having just come from a different demonstration in Royal Oak, a protestor who chose to only be identified as Will seemed hopeful after seeing the turnout at the sit-in.

"I'm here because I want change. And the atmosphere today is amazing as far as all different cultures coming together, because when you deal with hate, hate doesn't want that. Hate doesn't want people of different sexual orientations, different communities coming together seeing this," Will said. "We have to understand that in order for us to be strong we must come together as one not only for protests but also when we have to vote. ... We must come and have this conversation and not just do hearsay. Something has to happen."

## Coming to the Crowd

As the event continued, Minley jumped off the monument's base and walked through the group, offering the megaphone to voice the concerns of the crowd. Notably, a protestor addressed the value of meaningful white allyship, instead of empty words.

"Listen for a fucking second. It's not just support, it's not just about standing up, it's about showing up and showing out. We're not just tired because we're targets, we're tired because not only are we having to hear you tell us that you love us we're having to hear you tell us that you see us. We're hearing you tell us that you're listening, but you ain't doing shit. You want to talk about being radical, but you refuse to disassociate from the folks that are causing us harm? What the fuck is up? That's not radical," the protestor said. "... And if our anger makes you resistant, check on that. Look at that, confront your shit. Confront your demons."

Shortly after the protestor's statement, heads turned in the crowd toward a significant police presence. More than a dozen police vehicles turned the corner escorting a march thousands-strong that walked down Jefferson Avenue. Marchers carried similar signs and raised fists in solidarity with the demonstrators at the monument.





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BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

**P**ride Month is here, and although LGBTQ Michiganders and allies will be celebrating at a distance for the time being, there's still plenty to enjoy. Many events have gone online, others have been rescheduled; still others, unfortunately, have had to cancel. Here's BTL's latest update.

## Motor City Pride: Postponed.

A virtual event will run through the month of June. Motor City Pride's Virtual Pride event is not a replacement for the postponed 2020 Motor City Pride festival but instead celebrates the historic significance of June as LGBTQ pride month. Designed to spotlight the LGBTQ community as plans for a physical festival continue to evolve, the event will feature a wide variety of virtual experiences. During the month of June, the Motor City Pride website will be transformed into an immersive experience featuring rich content from local artists, entertainers and vendors along with resources and features from community-based groups. The Virtual Pride event went live June 1 at motorcitypride.org. The centerpiece of the virtual pride event will be the two-hour Celebration of Pride live broadcast on Saturday, June 6, from 3 to 5 p.m.

## YpsiPride: In-person event canceled.

There will be a Facebook Livestream on Friday, June 5 at 5 p.m. Find out more online at here: [facebook.com/YpsiPride/](https://www.facebook.com/YpsiPride/)

## Kalamazoo Pride: In-person festival canceled.

Instead, enjoy a month long of virtual events. The full list can be found here: [stillproud.org](https://www.stillproud.org).

## Holland Pride: Canceled.

See [outonthelakeshore.org/holland-pride/](https://outonthelakeshore.org/holland-pride/) for virtual events, including a virtual Free Mom Hugs event on June 6 from 12 to 3 p.m.; a virtual 5K June 21 to 27 and more.

## Michigan Pride: Canceled

## Grosse Pointe Pride Parade: Week-long virtual event, June 13 to 20.

- Community Artwork
- The Walk: Everyone is invited to responsibly walk the march route, South to Maire, sometime during the week. Please obey the current social distancing guidelines for our state and the CDC. A special GP Pride 2020 audio track has been created to listen to at any time, but we think it would be great paired with the walk.

Learn more online: [facebook.com/gppride/](https://www.facebook.com/gppride/)

## Up North Pride Week: All in-person events canceled.

Check back at [upnorthpride.com/](https://www.upnorthpride.com/) for updates on virtual events.

## Macomb County Pride: Canceled.

The event is rescheduled as upcoming virtual event with potential for an in-person event in the late summer or early fall. Follow social media for updates at [facebook.com/macombcountypride/](https://www.facebook.com/macombcountypride/).

## Ann Arbor Pride: Virtual

Saturday Aug. 1 <https://www.annarborpride.com>

## Grand Rapids Pride

Saturday, Aug. 1, 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. <https://www.grpride.org/festival/>

## Flint Pride Festival

Rescheduled for Saturday, Aug. 1, 2 to 8 p.m. <https://www.facebook.com/FLINTGAYPRIDE/>  
Transgender Pride in the Park: Saturday, Aug. 8 <https://www.transgendermichigan.org/>

## Ferndale Pride

Rescheduled for Saturday, Sept. 26, 12:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. <https://www.facebook.com/events/469664323885724/>

## Royal Oak Family Pride

Rescheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 7, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

## U.P. Rainbow Pride

Rescheduled for June 19, 2021 <https://www.uprainbowpride.org/>

[uprainbowpride.org/](https://www.uprainbowpride.org/)

## South Lyon Pride

Canceled <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1207963102708653/>

## Great Lakes Bay Pride:

Canceled <https://www.facebook.com/events/2738998126182741/>

## 5 Macomb County Communities Declare June Pride Month

It all began with Eastpointe. That municipality was the first in Macomb County to proclaim June Pride Month, by a narrow vote, last June. Since then, the rainbow trend has swept the county, instigated by the newly-formed Macomb County Pride initiative. Warren and Utica issued Pride Month resolutions earlier this year, while Clinton Township and Mt. Clemens followed suit last month; Eastpointe renewed theirs, too.

"We at Macomb County Pride are excited that so many communities in Macomb County are establishing June 2020 as Pride Month!" said Phil Gilchrist, chair of Macomb County Pride, via email. "Even though we won't be able to host a Pride Festival this year, we are glad to see this support for the LGBTQIA community, and commend this municipalities on their actions to make Macomb County a welcoming place for us."

*Follow Macomb County Pride on Facebook for the latest updates. [facebook.com/macombcountypride](https://www.facebook.com/macombcountypride)*

# Campaign to End Michigan LGBTQ Discrimination Falls Short on Signature Collection, Changes Course

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

**F**ar short of the 340,000-plus signatures required to put its ballot initiative before the voters in November, Fair and Equal Michigan, the campaign to secure equal rights for LGBTQ Michiganders by expanding the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity, will be submitting 178,000 signatures to the Board of Canvassers tomorrow. This represents 158,000 collected signatures via pen and paper in addition to the remainder collected digitally, an innovative strategy adopted April 13 and untested thus far as to its legality in the state.

Today, the campaign will file a lawsuit with the Michigan Court of Claims to recognize the impact that the novel coronavirus has had on its ability to exercise a Constitutional right to petition the legislature and therefore lower the

threshold of signatures required. Fair and Equal Michigan representatives will ask for relief from the 180-day time limit otherwise required to collect them and extend that date to July 13. Alternatively, the campaign is asking to "stop the clock" until restrictions on gathering are lifted and in-person canvassing is safe. Plaintiffs also include State Rep. Mari Manoogian and State Sen. Adam Hollier based on their right as legislators to vote on initiated law.

To run the campaign successfully, the campaign to secure equal rights for all LGBTQ Michiganders had as its goal well over 500,000 signatures. Using independent verification, 75 to 80 percent have been found to be valid.

There are a number of reasons the ambitious strategy to collect hundreds of thousands of signatures using DocuSign technology came up short, according to Fair and Equal Michigan President and Co-Chair Trevor Thomas.

"People are reluctant to give out personal information on the internet due to the threat of phishing scams," Thomas said. "COVID-19 also reduced voter and media attention that would potentially have this, instead it was focused on the pandemic. Economically, with every major retailer moving to online-only sales, our advertising costs increased and signature completion rates were unsustainable. ... At one point, the cost per one completed digital signature was as high as \$89 a signature. We brought that cost down, but time was not on our side.

"The bottom line is this: digital signatures had never been tested before," he continued. "We learned daily and we constantly optimized the campaign. But there is no substitute for traditional, face-to-face canvassing that allows the campaign to collect signatures at a volume that provides a strong rate of return."

On a video call open to the press, Thomas assured viewers that Fair and Equal Michigan is "going to continue to pursue this with vigor."

"To protect our progress, honor the support we've received and [the] volunteer energy [given] and make sure it proceeds unabated. And even especially at a time of great difficulty such as our public health crisis, it is now when our Constitutional rights must be upheld," Thomas said. "And so we'll continue our stand that every Michigander deserves an equal chance at success without the threat of being fired, harassed or demoted just because of who you are or who you love."

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, Attorney General Dana Nessel and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer have been briefed on the campaign's plans to file with the Michigan Court of Claims.



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## Motor City Pride to Host June 6 Virtual Pride Celebration

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

While summer Pride festivals are a great opportunity for celebration, they're also annual reminders of LGBTQ history and the important strides that activists have made in the fight for full equality. In that spirit, Motor City Pride is hosting a Virtual June Pride event on Friday, June 6, from 3 to 6 p.m. in order to "spotlight the LGBTQ community as plans for a physical festival continue to evolve" in light of new coronavirus health concerns.

"It's a two-hour event that we're planning, and during the event, we've asked eight of the performers who we were going to have at the festival to do a little four-minute segment," said Motor City Pride Chairperson Dave Wait. "We have four different hosts who are going to be filling in between those segments on air and talking about the things that we do at the festival. We've asked, and are in the process of asking, some elected officials and celebrities to submit little welcomes and greetings and that type of thing."

Wait said that those interested in tracking updates for both this event and upcoming plans for a 2020 Motor City Pride sometime later in the year are encouraged to consistently check back on [motorcitypride.org](http://motorcitypride.org), which is being consistently developed to highlight upcoming plans.

"All of our vendors are invited to submit information so people can be connected with them in a virtual marketplace," he said. "We're going to have a kind of a live Instagram social media feed so that people can make comments, we're working to have some are submissions to be a section on the website, and then we're also [displaying] our history that shows our movement, primarily in Michigan, over the past 50 years."

Ideally, he said, the virtual event will be as close of a replication to a physical day spent at the festival as possible. And because attendees won't be able to join together this year, Wait said that the organization is encouraging social media involvement to show individual Pride support at home.

"Probably at the start of Memorial Day weekend, we'll be asking people just to submit to us via social media what they're doing during Pride month. Maybe they're decorating their house or putting up colors at their home," Wait said. "And we want to have individuals sending in their artwork. ... Art can be very healing during these challenging times we have."

Wait added that anyone, even those who aren't artists, are encouraged to share their artwork because Pride is a celebration designed to bring people together.

"This is a celebration until we can meet again so that we can all connect to celebrate and continue working toward full equality for everybody in the state of Michigan," he said. *Keep up with updates online at [motorcitypride.org](http://motorcitypride.org).*

# Black LGBTQ Community Innovates Black Pride in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

BY BTL STAFF

LGBT Detroit, the city's premier black LGBTQ service provider and producer of Hotter Than July, the world's now longest-running, uninterrupted Black LGBTQ Pride celebration for the last 25 years, is taking its 2020 festivities digital. In light of the novel coronavirus pandemic plaguing the country, the host of the Midwest's largest Black Pride has determined that the best way to keep its community spirits high and pride flowing, while maintaining safety, is to transition its annual core events to web-based and application platforms such as Zoom and Instagram. Rather than cancel the event, the organization has decided to improvise how it engages its audience. Titled and themed "25th Anniversary Hotter Than July," the three-day community gathering will run from Friday, July 24, to Sunday, July 26, and includes a range of activities, from its digital picnic and a 25-year retrospective to its candlelight vigil and what may be the nation's first online house ball competition. Last month, the organization's board issued a statement in support of the annual event's transition:

"LGBT Detroit's Board of Directors recognize the current state of our emergency and its particular impact on African American residents of southeast Michigan. We stand united as a part of the solution by digitally outfitting Michigan's flagship LGBTQ+ event, Hotter Than July. The goal of the 2020 '25th Anniversary Hotter Than July' schedule is to condense the events and decrease the risks of COVID-19 exposure to our community and the public while maintaining the historic spirit of Hotter Than July. LGBT Detroit will use the available resources of the digital age to honor the tradition set 25 years ago — uninterrupted," the statement read.

As has been true throughout the history of HTJ, LGBT Detroit is ensuring its constituents are informed and

engaged in the current political moment. Throughout the celebration, LGBT Detroit will also mobilize its constituents to do their civic duty by participating in the agency's get-out-the-vote campaign to combat voter suppression. The agency also plans to do its part to ensure maximum Black LGBTQ+ participation in Michigan's U.S. Census drive, a process that determines federal funding allocations for the resources and services on which many members of the community rely.

"It's critical that our community remain a steady, vibrant and knowledgeable force in Michigan with a voice that is recognized, heard and, most importantly, considered by Michigan's power brokers," said LGBT Detroit's Social Outreach Coordinator and Legislative Advocacy Specialist Jerron Totten.

In addition to his regular role, Totten is also curating activities with dedicated event stakeholders.

"It's vital that Hotter Than July continues to be an effective and consistent way we engage the public in an ongoing conversation about what issues are necessary and important for us to draw our attention to," he said. "Particularly as we look to the challenging economic and political picture ahead."

Moreover, in the spirit of both the Black LGBTQ+ and the broader community's health and safety, LGBTQ Detroit is supporting the state of Michigan's COVID-19 identification

efforts by offering coronavirus antibody testing at its headquarters during the three-day period, one of the first queer agencies in the area to do so.

"We do what Black and LGBT people in Detroit have always done in the face of adversity: meet the challenge with ingenuity, bravery and creativity," said Executive Director of LGBT Detroit Curtis Lipscomb. "Protecting one another while still claiming our joy and power has been at the heart of our resistance since the very first Hotter Than July some 25 years ago. This moment is just an extension of what we do and who we are. We will not let the very real ravages of this virus in our community change that for our people."

The 25th Anniversary Hotter Than July runs from Friday, July 24, to Sunday, July 26. For a full listing of events as well as their dates and times, please visit the LGBT Detroit HTJ webpages at: [lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly](http://lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly).

To further keep abreast of LGBT Detroit events, mobilizations, and campaigns, please follow the organization on any of the following social media platforms listed below:

Instagram: [@detroitHTJ](https://www.instagram.com/detroitHTJ)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/detroitHTJ](https://www.facebook.com/detroitHTJ)  
Twitter: [@hotterthanjuly25](https://twitter.com/hotterthanjuly25)

*Find out more about LGBT Detroit online at [lgbtdetroit.org](http://lgbtdetroit.org)*





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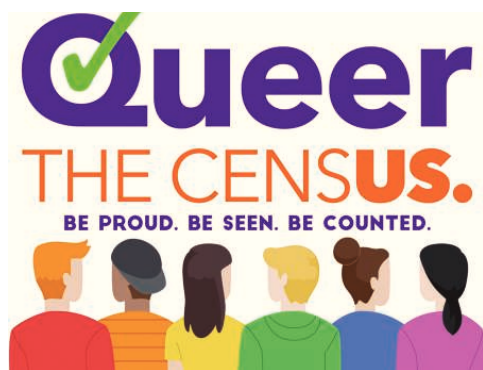
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## Queer Be Counted: LGBT Detroit's Census Project Airs June 16

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT — LGBT Detroit is a nonprofit organization that serves Detroit's LGBTQ community. It has announced the rollout of a series of "Get Out The Census 2020" during COVID-19, and the inaugural Be Queer Be Counted Census 2020 Pep Rally even will air virtually on Zoom and Facebook Live platforms on Tuesday, June 16.

Be Queer Be Counted aims to ensure the successful count of LGBT+ people in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties. As a virtual campaign, Be Queer Be Counted highlights why a Census count is especially meaningful during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The second broadcast of the Be Queer Be Counted Census 2020 event will occur on Tuesday, June 23.

"LGBT Detroit recognizes that this time for our world is especially unique due to COVID-19 and the unforeseen challenges in the new normal of civic and social engagement," said Chunnika Hodges, Community Advocate and Be Queer Be Counted Project Lead. "... Completing the census is how we change the landscape of our legislative representation in local, state and federal governments — also to ensure that our communities can become healthy, safe and thriving neighborhoods for our families, friends and neighbors."

LGBT Detroit was founded in 1994 and it commits to furthering its mission of increasing the prominence and visibility of Detroit's LGBTQ culture. In addition, organizers say that the nonprofit is dedicated to building a "strong, healthy and vibrant community with a focus on youth and young adult development, sexual orientation and gender-identity education and advocacy, and emotional and physical well-being."

For more information about Be Queer Be Counted Census 2020 or to get involved [lgbtdetroit.org](http://lgbtdetroit.org) call/email Chunnika L. Hodges at (313) 397-2127;106 or [Chunnikahodges@lgbtdetroit.org](mailto:Chunnikahodges@lgbtdetroit.org).

## Ferndale Mayor on Pride Month, Coronavirus and Being an Ally

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

### Pride During a Pandemic

While this is the 19th consecutive year that Ferndale is recognizing June as Pride Month, for a number of reasons it will be quite different from years past. Certainly, the obvious ones are those necessitated by the governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order, like postponing Ferndale Pride and canceling the public Pride Flag-raising ceremony. But Pride month is also different this year because it's the first one with a newly elected mayor after Dave Coulter left office last year following nine years of service. With that in mind, Between The Lines checked in with mayor Melanie Piana.

"All of our events are impacted this year," Piana said, regarding the novel coronavirus pandemic. "We're taking a wait-and-see approach month by month, because this is how the pandemic is going; there's changes every week. And as we prepare to slowly open up, we'll be taking a look at how to do that safely. But for Ferndale Pride, I think what the organizers are trying to do is to innovate."

She described how Ferndale Pride plans to "elevate and recognize" Pride right now in ways that don't involve gathering, like a Pride-decorating contest for homes that extends beyond Ferndale's physical borders. Called "We're Home and We are Here," it is also hosted by Affirmations, Downtown Ferndale and the Ferndale Community Foundation. Piana said that every year outside her own home, the Coexist flag is switched out for a Pride one.

"I think every household will do with what they have ... and we've seen a lot of creativity in Ferndale through this pandemic, which has been great," she said. "The outpouring of support for one another and helping everybody and putting signs in your windows and drawing chalk on the sidewalk — I have no doubt that our creative residents will figure out a way to celebrate Pride, and in a way [that prioritizes] staying at home."

### Up to the Challenge

A city council member for 10 years prior to being elected mayor, Piana never could have envisioned that three months into her tenure she would be leading Ferndale in the face of a global pandemic.

"It was stressful, no doubt, in March when all the executive orders came down and everybody's life was turned upside down," Piana acknowledged. "We were definitely feeling that in the city government, because we are trying to make sure that accurate, truthful and timely information is given to our residents about what's happening and taking cues from Oakland County executive government as well as the governor."

Piana discussed some of the ways the city is doing what it can to support its small businesses that have been hard-hit and its residents too, especially the most vulnerable. The city launched a wellness check for seniors through the Ferndale senior group, and they are also addressing the needs of those who are food-insecure: the city received an award from



Ferndale Mayor Melanie Piana

local food entrepreneur Jack Aronson that enabled the distribution of 1,000 meals to low-income seniors; Council member Kat Bruner James and Piana project managed and coordinated with other organizations including Affirmations.

"As new opportunities arise to address problems, we careful vet them, are thoughtful and figure out how to do it well and rapidly, because this has all been rapid-paced ... and shifting," Piana said. "Everybody's felt it. Everybody is adjusting, myself included."

When she's not responding to the latest executive order or facilitating food distribution, Piana finds plenty that's appealing about being mayor—not that she doesn't find the less "glamorous" aspects any less gratifying.

"I'm approaching my 11th year serving our community and being mayor is definitely being a voice for the community and really just trying to figure out how to make the city stronger, and I love being a part of that—engaging with the residents," Piana said. "I'm definitely a policy wonk. I love policy because policy is what changes the direction of a city, that a local government has control over. Like putting out a resolution for Pride, putting your values into practice. And I'm just very grateful for this opportunity to continue to serve our residents and do that as we evolve as a community as we look to figure out how to make our city stronger."

### Living One's Values

Returning to the Pride Month resolution, Piana reflected on the importance of symbols. After all, a rainbow flag is not a law or ordinance — it is a piece of fabric. She was firm in stating her belief that such symbols are significant.

"They're signals, really," Piana explained. "They're signals of support — ongoing

support and commitment by your local government when they do that, and by the government leaders. It's part of the values of the city of Ferndale — inclusiveness is one of our core values ... as a city. And how do you live those values? How do you instill them in day-to-day practice? The flags and the symbols are all a part of the signal that these are our values as a community, and we're living by them."

Clearly, Piana is an ally to the LGBTQ community. When asked whether she had any doubts about being accepted as mayor of Ferndale since she is not LGBTQ, despite winning her race by a wide margin, she was frank in her response.

"You know, I really appreciate that question because I was worried about it, with two mayors who were gay, the first gay mayor in the state of Michigan [Craig Covey], and then the second [Dave Coulter], how would the community accept me?" she asked. "But [I've shown] my commitment to the values of inclusiveness and being an ally ... and I have been supportive; I have signed onto the Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination ... to make sure nondiscrimination laws are put into place."

"I'm doing my best as an individual and in my role as mayor to make sure that we continue to do the things that our residents who are LGBTQ feel safe and respected, and as mayor I continue to champion on the legacy of former leaders on behalf of our community."

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# Ypsilanti Pride Festival Virtual Livestream at 5 p.m. on June 5

BY BENJAMIN DECKER

The Ypsi Pride festival is far from being canceled. But this year, rather than the traditional block party that takes up most of downtown Ypsilanti and South Washington Street, the festival will be held on a Facebook livestream on June 5 starting at 5 p.m.

"We never discussed canceling it. We were really just starting to talk about how we could still have a presence in the community for Pride month," said Heather Berkovitz, chair member of the YpsiPride festival.

The stream will consist of performances by many local entertainers. Viewers can expect to see drag performances, burlesque shows, live music from bands, poetry readings and even a message from Ypsilanti's Mayor Beth Bashert. After the lineup of entertainers, there will be an afterparty that will go until around midnight with several DJs.

"Anyone who applied to be live will have either submitted a video to be shown or be live in front of us. It is just out of their living rooms as opposed to the Ypsilanti big stage," Berkovitz said. "We are encouraging people during the event to tip the performers, just like we would if they were on the stage. To give a little extra of what they have is important because this is how a lot of the performers make a living."

The performers' Venmo, Cash App and PayPal accounts will be listed on the screen during the performances for the audience to be able to send tips. Between each performance, there will also be brief commercials that advertise local businesses that have sponsored Ypsi Pride and the vendors who planned to sell their merchandise at the festival. There will also be information on local nonprofits that usually gather a lot of volunteers and recognition from their booths at the Pride festival.

The decision to go virtual was in question for weeks before the original stay-at-home order was issued.

"We started to see the writing on the wall as it was mixing with our anxiety of planning an event that was supposed to encourage people to meet up in such a tight space on Washington Street," Berkovitz said.

In addition, the chair members of Ypsi Pride have come up with another way to show support for the LGBTQ community throughout Pride month. The Ypsilanti Area Rainbow

Decoration, or Project YARD, is a way to decorate Ypsilanti with as many rainbows as possible during the entire month of June. There is a Facebook page dedicated to ideas on how to decorate and to share pictures.

"We're decorating the town with rainbows and encouraging everyone in Ypsilanti to do the same," Berkovitz said. "So whether that be your front porch, windows, yard or trees, just throw up handmade decorations and whatever you can do to make your house look gay as possible."

On May 31, Berkovitz and several other volunteers are getting downtown Ypsilanti ready for Pride month early by painting rainbows on as many crosswalks as they can.

"Our main goal in doing this is to have as much presence in Pride month as we can while having everyone being safe at home and social distancing," Berkovitz said.

In addition, several local businesses have agreed to paint their windows with rainbows to be part of the Pride celebration.

"We just want to thank people for continuing to support Ypsi Pride and hope they tune in at 5 p.m. on June 5," Berkovitz said. "We have hope that with everyone staying at home we can see them in person next year."

To tune in to the livestream and more details on the Ypsilanti Pride festival, visit [facebook.com/YpsiPride/](https://facebook.com/YpsiPride/).

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## Free Mom Hugs Hosts June 6 Virtual Pride Event

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

As the world settles in to the start of another month of quarantine, a heartfelt hug might sound like the perfect remedy for isolation-related loneliness. That's why even though Free Mom Hugs might not be able to provide physical comfort, the Southeast Michigan chapter of the nonprofit is hosting its very own virtual event on June 6.

"We had the idea probably about two or three weeks before events started to get canceled, because, in true mom fashion, we always have a plan B," said Southeast Michigan Chapter Co-Leader Jill Lash with a laugh. "So we kind of modeled this on our national [branch]. They go on tour every year for May for Mother's Day and we based our virtual Pride off

of their virtual tour."

A true "tour" of the state, from noon to 3 p.m. virtual attendees will view "pep talks" and messages of support from statewide, local and national LGBTQ leaders.

"We've got the Traverse City Pride Center involved and they sent us a video singing a song, and we've got some [messages] from some of our Grand Rapids huggers with a video. So we're doing a Michigan virtual Pride tour featuring larger cities and even some rural areas where the community is growing; we plan on featuring many regions in Michigan," Lash said. "We've got some from Bay City and Jackson and St. Joe and Holland, and we've got, of course, tons from Southeast Michigan."

The event will also showcase a variety

of entertainment including musical acts, drag shows, spoken word performances and music.

"We have 11-year-old drag youth advocate Desmond [Is Amazing] and some vocal musicians in the community who have made videos of them singing and sending the message that no matter where you live or if you may be stuck at home with unaffirming or intolerant parents, we're here for you. There are people in your community who love you and want to send you a hug at this time," Lash said. "... We want to give some people some visibility and love and light and all of those things."

Learn more about the upcoming virtual event online at [freemomhugs-mi.org](http://freemomhugs-mi.org).

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## Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

### A magic moment recalled!

About a dozen days ago tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow — at my age how can I be sure? — I was gifted with a pair of John Lennon enchantment glasses. Gold-rimmed. Sunset orange. Autumn-tinted. Pre-Donald Trump, to be sure. No Mike Pence tri-focal fog-up.

Reflected in my hand-held vanity, two-way mirror, these magic spectacles make me look and feel younger. (To be honest, not an easy thing to do at my gravity-compromised, sag-along-with-me age.)

The two-circle Lennon spectacles came rainbow wrapped. Gay tasteful in a box filled with magic sequins and let's pretend glitter.

Oh, yes! With a note.

And, surprise of surprises! A note written in cursive writing — thanks to the Republicans, of late rapidly becoming a lost art form — one word: "Imagine!"

Underneath the sequins and glitter is a folded patchouli-scented parchment. A map. Headline: "Things Once Happened at Downtown Detroit's gay intersection. Midnight's the bewitching moment. Follow! In or out of high heels or leather."

And, in small lavender hand lettering, "Count the years backward. Say the magic word. Put on these glasses. For a minute or two, be glad you were gay way back then ... 1960 Detroit!"

Let me be honest. I'm a born skeptic. I arrive 15 minutes early. Promptness is the courtesy of kings — or queens, in my case — as the old saying goes, and I discover, to my chagrin, two empty, dimly lighted downtown city blocks. Farmer and Bates.

Come on, MoTownners, you've got to be kidding! Where are the 1011, the Silver Dollar, La Rosa's, the Hub Grill greasy spoon?

I stop counting backwards at number 60, which it turns out, is just a few seconds before midnight. Looking about for safety's sake, seeing I'm not in harm's way, I — with just a touch of coming out nervousness — put on my Lennon specs, and ... oh, my stars. Mary, I can't believe it!

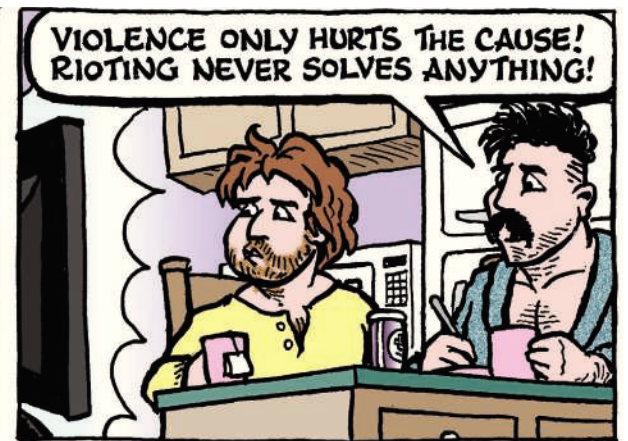
Farmer and Bates is suddenly alive with hundreds of tourists eagerly watching from behind street-lined wooden barricades. There are shouts of approval. Loud applause, as one by one, gaudy costume by glorious costume, drag queens by drama queens arrive, turn, bow, pause regally for yet another take of in-your-face grandeur.

"You like what you see folks? You bet your sweet straight bippies you do!" chants Lola Lola, pausing grandly before the entrance of one of the intersecting streets of several gay clubs. "This year's trade, next year's competition!"

She blows a kiss to the crowd as imaginary light bulbs flash. And out of nowhere, blue side of the moon perhaps, a recorded band lip-syncs "Hello, Dolly!"

Even in this imaginary, make believe world of once-a-year royalty on parade, there's got to be a star. Just to be sure it's all for real, I push my Lennon glasses back on my nose. Oh, my.

See next page



## Viewpoint



BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

### Living in the Shadow of COVID: Caring for Our Communities

I ended our Mother's Day FaceTime conversation with my son telling me to be careful and stay safe. As I sat in my solitude, I thought about the irony of him telling me to be careful and stay safe as that had been my mantra to him for years.

I grew up learning that to be Black in America, especially if you were male, was tantamount to walking around with a target on your back. My parents talked to us, but especially to my brother, about Emmett Till, James Chaney and other African Americans who had been killed just for being Black. We were warned repeatedly of the dangers just for living while Black.

From the day I had to let my son go out into the world his safety has been paramount. We had had "the talk" several times, increasing its urgency as he grew into manhood. When he moved to Chicago to attend college, we talked about it recognizing he was as much at risk from the campus police

for being Black on a predominantly white campus as he was hanging out on the southside at parties or clubs.

When he moved to New York again for school, we had the talk after unarmed Amadou Diallo was killed by four New York City police officers.

I'm supposed to tell him to be careful and stay safe but because of COVID-19 we closed our Mother's Day conversation not at I love you but with, "Please be careful and be safe Mom!"

I understand his concern. I am an older, African American woman, living in the Metro Detroit area, which has been recognized as one of the hotspots in this pandemic. In Michigan, deaths from the virus as in many urban areas across the country have disproportionately affected the African American community. Over 40 percent of Michiganders that have died from the COVID-19 virus are African American, a racial demographic that makes up only 14 percent of the state's population.

See Viewpoint, continued on next page



## ► Viewpoint

Continued from p. 14

I get it! I'm staying indoors as much as possible. When I go out, I wear a mask and gloves and practice social distancing. That's taking care of me, but how do I/we take care of our community?

Battling this pandemic has turned a spotlight on systemic disparities that we in the Black/Brown/LGBTQ community have known all along. Poverty, inadequate access to health care, food disparity immediately come to mind, but drilling down that there is so much more.

LGBTQ people collectively have a poverty rate of 21.6 percent, which is much higher than the rate for cisgender straight people. Among racial and ethnic groups, African Americans have the highest poverty rate, 27.4 percent, followed by Hispanics at 26.6 percent. Workers earning poverty-level wages are disproportionately female, Black, Brown or between the ages of 18 to 25 years of age.

Essential employees stocking shelves, providing care for the elderly/infirm in facilities and homes, along with the baristas, waitstaff and others we take for granted every day, they often don't make a living wage or have sick time. Schools are closed and many have not only to deal with childcare but home schooling.

What about the children? A high percentage of young black children — under age 6 — live in poverty. Many of these children relied on schools for one-to-two meals a day. And although we think everyone has access to the internet, broadband is not available to many. The education gap between children from the most disadvantaged homes and their peers is now at its highest level, and it has been for more than a decade.

## ► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 14

Yes! Of course, it's Hazel Hobbs arriving by top-down, 1960-something red convertible.

Her gown, a year in sewing sequin by sequin. She radiates class! And chic. Her muscular Prince Charming companion holds up a sign: QUEEN OF FARMER & BATES! The crowd — straight and gay — roars its once-a-year, awe-struck Halloween Night approval.

I look at my self-winding watch. How quickly time runs down when you're having last-minute fun. Or so it seems tonight. Just as I reluctantly turn to go, an old-familiar parade passes by.

Somehow gathered for my imagined

And while many folks complain about having to wear a mask at Kroger with its one-way aisles for social distancing, others don't have a store to go to in their neighborhood. The Michigan Department of Agriculture has labeled 19 Detroit neighborhoods as food deserts that lack accessibility to quality and affordable food.

While mainstream media has bombarded us with statistics, images of fools marching on Lansing or more concerned about their personal freedom than spreading the virus and those daily briefings of misinformation from the White House, there have been heroes/angels working at the grassroots level.

I've seen the best coming from my communities. We are delivering food to those who are house-bound and/or collecting food for distribution. We are setting up hotspots so children can have access to internet and study from home. We are driving by in car caravans so special birthdays and other occasions are acknowledged. We are putting money — sometimes from those stimulus checks — on others' Cash Apps. And we are sitting down together virtually, putting aside differences, to find ways to get resources to those doing the work.

I don't know what the days ahead might bring as we come out from this pandemic, what normal will be. I do know this: I want to be careful and safe, but I want to live in a community where we are all cared for and safe. The good news is I'm not alone!

---

*Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. Her blog radio podcast "Collections By Michelle Brown" airs every Thursday at 7 p.m. Current and archived episodes can be heard on Blog Talk Radio, iTunes, Stitcher or SoundCloud. Follow her on Facebook at facebook.com/CollectionsByMichelleBrown/.*

benefit. I'm gently touched. Perhaps one final farewell with feeling for me. They wave in gaily passing ... I nod nostalgically...

Big Red, Jean, Eve, Rusty, The Empress, Miss Bruce, Tall Dick, Virgil, Tabu, Rita Hayworth, Fran, Flo, Uncle Jimmy, Little Mama, Mack, Drano, Sky, Eve Taylor, Che Che, Fran & Wally, Bookie, Fat Jack, Bessie, Billie Hill. Rosie Bonham, Andy, Sam, Chunga, Bobby Johns, Billy & Maurice, Ruthie Ellis ... Hugs! Godspeed!

Gay today. Gone tomorrow.

---

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

# Creep Of The Week

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

## Racism

I'm writing this on June 1, the beginning of Pride month. Simultaneously, across the country people are protesting and tensions are escalating over the issue of racism.

This is, of course, related to Pride. Many cite the Stonewall Riots in 1969 as the pivotal moment in the LGBTQ rights movement. You can only oppress people so much, abuse them for so long before they start to fight back.

We've had a problem with racism in the U.S. for over 400 years. Many police departments began as an effort to protect the system of slavery. The roots of this problem are deep.

I don't condone violence. I don't condone destruction. But I definitely think that police murdering a Black man is a much bigger deal than a police cruiser on fire, and if you don't, well, you might be a racist.

There is so much hurt and anger in this country. And sadly we have no leader at the highest level of government. We have a white supremacist Twitter troll masquerading as the president. And he's just making things worse. He's urging state governments to respond violently. He's promoting the idea of shooting looters. To say he is incapable of leading is true, but he also doesn't want to. The more chaos he can create, the better his chances are of reelection.

Trump and far too many in America don't see racism as a problem, they see Black people and allies rising up against 400 years of oppression and violence and intimidation as the problem. Everything was fine so long as everybody pretended that everything was fine.

Remember when Colin Kaepernick dared to kneel next to the football field during the National Anthem in order to protest police brutality against Black people? That was a peaceful protest. And racists lost their minds. Trump called him a "son of a bitch." Mike Pence walked out of an NFL game because kneeling players upset him so.

And, of course, these same racists are losing their minds about the much less peaceful protests happening across the country.

Remember how the very phrase "Black Lives Matter" upset so many white people, even some who would swear up and down that they don't have a racist bone in their bodies as if racism is something that lives inside of a skeleton rather than a perpetual vehicle of violence that is always active even when it is silent? "ALL lives matter," they said. White people literally took a protest against Black people being murdered and made it about themselves. Many of these white people would

**There is so much hurt and anger in this country. And sadly we have no leader at the highest level of government. We have a white supremacist Twitter troll masquerading as the president.**

likely say, "I don't see race," as if race is some kind of spectral aura rather than a defining characteristic in a country that devalues brown and black bodies. This isn't Halloween. This is a 365-day, 24/7 haunted house that we ask Black people to walk through every day, multiple times a day. And if they dare complain about it? Then we crank up the fear factor. We give police departments with a history of violence against citizens military-grade weaponry and gear. We give them tanks. We say to them, "Go out and hurt the people who are pushing back against the hurt. Go hurt them more."

And there is no correct way to protest this. The way the message is delivered isn't the problem. It's the refusal of those in power to hear that message, to keep ignoring Black voices, to spell out "La la la, I can't hear you" with tear gas.

It is heartbreaking to see these protests happening right now because there is still a highly contagious and potentially deadly virus sweeping across the country. And yet we have, as a country, pushed people past the brink. You can't see a virus. You can see a police officer kneel on a man's neck until he dies. You can see white people protesting against public safety lockdowns with assault rifles, threatening to kill elected officials and having the police do nothing. You can see the very real and every day aggression of racism.

And so we have yet another crisis on top of yet another crisis and a president who doesn't see either crisis as a problem. In fact, Trump no doubt is thrilled about the protests taking place because he gets to act like a tough guy and urge violence against "thugs" and hope that this is enough to distract the country from the fact that well over 100,000 people have died in a matter of a few months from COVID-19.

There were people who said they voted for Trump because they were tired of "the system" and wanted to burn everything down and start over. This was, of course, supposed to be a metaphorical burning. And yet, here we are.

It will take a lot of hard work, a lot of soul-searching, a lot of real change to actually address racism in America. As a country, we've risen to many challenges. But this one is sinking us deep.





## Ann Arbor Film Festival, Virtual

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The Ann Arbor Film Festival has announced a virtual happy hour to celebrate Pride Month. That hour, scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, will take place via Zoom. Hosted by former \aut\ Bar owners Martin Contreras and Keith Orr, the event will feature special guests Harrod Blank, director of the documentary film “Why Can’t I Be Me? Around You,” and its star Rusty Tidenberg.

Admission to the happy hour is included when you rent “Why Can’t I Be Me? Around You.” The film is streaming and available for rent for only \$10 when you use coupon code AAFF-PRIDE!. The film is available to rent on The Michigan Theater website. The coupon code is good through June 4.

“The Festival decided to do monthly streams of feature-length films from the Festival, in part to try and raise some funds as they took a huge hit without their ticket sales, which are their main source of revenue,” said Orr. “Why Can’t I Be Me? Around You” is their first film in the series.”

It also the winner of the \aut\ FILM Award for Best LGBTQ Film at the 58th Festival this year. The award honors the film that best addresses and gives voice to LGBTQ issues. Contreras and Orr have supported this award for over a decade to celebrate and validate the diversity of voices that achieve excellence in filmmaking.

The film, “Why Can’t I Be Me? Around You,” focuses on Tidenberg, an auto mechanic and drag-racing aficionado who shocked friends and family by coming out as trans. Followed for eight years by filmmaker Blank, she guides us through the aftermath of her transition, as growing acceptance among her straight-talking Southwest community still doesn’t ease her romantic and professional woes. Interwoven with lively tales of gender-nonconforming individuals on the art car circuit, Blank’s film is a sensitive and unpredictable love letter to people who fight to be unapologetically themselves.

“It is thought-provoking,” Orr said about the film. “Rusty has a different take on gender, and a voice well worth hearing.”

To find out more information about the film, visit [michtheater.org](http://michtheater.org).

# Bravo, Berkley: Small-Town Feel, Inclusive Heart

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

## Berkley, Out of the Closet

“Where you want to be” is the motto of Berkley, Michigan, and now more than ever, “you” is directed toward the LGBTQ community. Just since December, the city council enacted a conversion therapy ban, issued a resolution in support of adopting an updated nondiscrimination policy and renewed its declaration of June as Pride Month. All three initiatives received unanimous support by council.

Jacob Robinson and his partner, Jesus Suarez, moved to the Southeast Oakland County community with a population of around 15,000 less than a year ago. They settled on Berkley after some bids in Ferndale didn’t pan out when they were house hunting, and the couple couldn’t be more pleased. Robinson said he appreciated the outpouring of support at the recent city council meeting via Zoom videoconference where numerous residents spoke during public comment in support of the Pride Month proclamation and the nondiscrimination policy which were on the agenda.

“I think what was most inspiring for me on that call was — only moving here less than a year ago — having so many people on that call that we had met in the community,” Robinson said. “Specifically, there were three of our neighbors, specifically people who live on our street that I spoke with directly ... and asked them if they would jump on the Zoom call and express support, and they were on there as well.”

One of the individuals who spoke in favor of the nondiscrimination policy was a resident of 16 years named Jess, who described the formation of a recently established Facebook group comprising Berkley residents who are LGBTQ and allies.

“Through a series of events we began to see the need to organize our community beyond a simple picnic and simple rainbow flags,” Jess said during public comment. “Our community, we were to find, was in dire need of attention to establish laws and ordinances that prevent discrimination and promote equality and inclusiveness for all of its citizens, including the LGBTQ community. Today I’m happy to see that we are

going in the right direction to finally make real change and to bring Berkley out of the closet. Our needs stretch far beyond this ordinance, however, and it is our goal with this initial ordinance to bring awareness and real change that promotes visibility and acceptance in Berkley of the LGBTQIA residents.”

## Model for the Region

For Robinson, LGBTQ protections are “essential and definitely something that I think should be expected in any city,” he said. “When we moved, and we were part of the Facebook group that started discussing having a Berkley Pride, a big component of that was ensuring we had specific policies within the city that spoke to our rights as people. [Councilmember] Natalie Price has really stuck to what she said she would help us do: ensuring that we have rights within our city.”

Price, who is serving her first term on the council, said that LGBTQ rights were an important part of her platform as a candidate. And while the conversion therapy ban was in the works prior to the election, she said she was proud to voice her support for the ban at her first meeting in December.

“Part of my campaign when I ran for council was that I wanted to contribute to Berkley being an intentionally inclusive and welcoming community,” Price said. “I feel like Berkley has so much potential. The neighbors, the people that I’ve gotten to know — I’ve really seen how welcoming and caring they are. And to make sure our policies and our laws reflect that ... and potential residents and businesses and visitors know that about us, I felt like that was very important. So ever since I was elected, I was pushing for a more comprehensive nondiscrimination policy in Berkley. [I’m] very grateful that Oakland County expanded theirs, kind of paved the way and created a great model for me to make that pitch to the city.”

“I think we have a lot going for us: a small-town community where everyone seems to know each other, but the benefit is you form such genuine, positive relationships with the neighbors, the councilmembers, city staff—especially with COVID, “we’re all in this together” has taken on new meaning in Berkley,” Price continued. “I think that’s always been true in Berkley,

but you definitely feel that now. That’s been a really positive thing for me and my family and I think for many members of the LGBTQIA+ community here in Berkley as well.”

Price said she uses the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index as a guide for her goal toward creating a more “intentionally inclusive and safe community.”

“I’m looking forward to what’s next,” Price said. “What can Berkley do to make it clearer that we are safe and supportive to everyone? What aren’t we doing yet? What can we do better? The unanimous support of council and all of the initiatives makes me very confident that even though there’s work to do, we’re gonna get it done. We’re gonna be a model for the region for this kind of work to make sure that we are safe, inclusive and welcoming.”

## Engaging the Residents

In terms of “what’s next,” Price noted that several members of the LGBTQ community contacted her after the city council meeting with that very question. She said she told them all the same thing: stay involved; let your voice be heard by joining any of the various city boards and commissions or by running for office. In addition, the city is beginning its master plan process, and she’s encouraging people to partake in one of the focus groups to truly have a say in the future direction of Berkley.

“There’s so many opportunities to volunteer to shape the city,” Price said. “The city will benefit if members of the LGBTQIA+ community are involved.”

Robinson, who has experience in event planning, said he is looking forward to helping organize a Pride event in Berkley in the future. Price, whose children have experienced Drag Queen Storytime at the Huntington Woods Library and whose family regularly attends Pride events each summer, said she can’t wait to see such an event in the city she represents, too.

“I’m sure there will be a Pride event in Berkley in years to come,” Price said. “I’m sure that when that event is put before council, it’ll receive absolute support from us. Can’t wait to see it happen and come participate and celebrate all that Pride stands for.”





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# LGBT Lawmakers Lead Effort To Push Mail, Absentee Voting

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Amid concerns the coronavirus pandemic could endanger voters seeking to cast their ballots in the 2020 election, LGBT members of Congress have launched an initiative with the Human Rights Campaign to call on states to expand access to voting by mail, early voting and absentee ballots.

The project — called “Vote Equal, Vote Safe” — is part of a larger endeavor within the Human Rights Campaign to identify the estimated 57 million “equality voters” in the United States — LGBT people or voters who prioritize LGBT rights — and ensure they’re taking part in the election.

Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement that early business openings in Georgia and court decisions requiring voters to head to the polls in Wisconsin — both criticized for exposing people to the coronavirus — illustrate why alternative voting is necessary.

“As our nation continues to battle COVID-19, it is clear this pandemic will affect how millions of Americans will vote this fall,” David said. “From Wisconsin to Georgia, partisan politicians have put their own political interests ahead of the health and safety of voters. We will not stand for this and will not be silent. Our community has been subjected to voter suppression before and we will not be passive in the face of efforts to disenfranchise us again.”

Among the leaders of the initiative are Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), the most senior openly gay member of Congress, and Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.). Both are co-chairs of the Congressional LGBTQ Equality Caucus.

“During this pandemic, we should be doing everything we can to protect people’s health and their access to the ballot box — expanding vote by mail is critical to ensuring that,” Takano said in a statement. “I’m grateful for the work HRC is doing to make sure that the voices of our community are being heard, while their safety is prioritized. As someone who votes by mail, I encourage everyone to register to vote, to request a mail ballot, and to exercise their right to vote safely from their home.”

Enumerated as goals in a statement on the launch of “Vote Equal, Vote Safe” is online voter registration, same-day voter registration, allowing no excuse absentee voting for everyone, allowing no witness requirement for absentee voting and allowing community organizations to help collect and deliver voted, sealed ballots.



Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.) and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.). Photos via Facebook.

If ballots must be cast in person, the initiative calls for extending early voting times and dates, increasing the number of in-person early voting places and Election Day polling locations and following CDC safety guidance at all in-person voting locations.

As Democrats have pushed for greater access to voting by mail and absentee voting, President Trump and Republicans have resisted those calls. Trump has claimed voting by mail could lead to voter fraud, which critics have denounced as baseless.

Michael Ahrens, a spokesperson for the Republican National Committee, expressed skepticism about the Human Rights Campaign initiative.

“Republicans want people to vote,” Ahrens said. “We actually register more than the DNC does. Democrats and their allies are currently suing several states to remove existing safeguards like ballot signature verification and a ballot receipt deadline of Election Day, safeguards that over 80 percent of voters support. They are also trying to legalize ballot harvesting nationwide, where unaccountable paid activists go door-to-door to collect thousands of ballots, a practice that jeopardizes people’s health as well as the security of their ballot. Americans deserve to have confidence in their elections, but many of the Democrats’ proposals would actually undermine it.”

Also participating in the “Vote Equal, Vote Safe” are Sens. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), the first out lesbian elected to the Senate, and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.).

Voting by mail proved crucial in 2018 for the election of Sinema, now the only out bisexual in Congress. Although returns initially showed her opponent, then-candidate Martha McSally,

in the lead, Sinema was declared the victor days later after ballots cast by mail were counted.

“Arizonans have voted by mail safely and securely for years, and it’s time the rest of the country follow Arizona’s lead,” Sinema said in a statement. “The Human Rights Campaign’s ‘Vote Equal, Vote Safe’ Initiative will help ensure everyday Americans can exercise our constitutional rights while staying safe during this public health crisis.”

The priority states the Human Rights Campaign has identified in the 2020 election: Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin. Three of these states

— Michigan, Nevada and Pennsylvania — have changed election laws since the 2018 election to allow for expanded access to the ballot box, according to the organization.

According to HRC, many individuals in minority or underrepresented communities distrust voting by absentee vote or mail voting. As part of the “Vote Equal, Vote Safe” project, the organization says it will work with partners to boost the percentage of voters who vote by mail or absentee.

Joining the Human Rights Campaign and LGBT lawmakers in the effort are Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn), both of whom have been cited as possible running mates for Joseph Biden.

Harris cited the anti-LGBT policy decisions from the Trump administration as reasons to ensure “equality voters” should have a range of options to cast their ballot in November.

“As President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence continue attacks on the LGBTQ community, the stakes couldn’t be higher this election for Equality Voters,” Harris said. “This is why we must ensure that everyone can safely make their voice heard and have their votes counted as the nation continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic. This election year, we have the opportunity to send a powerful message at the ballot box: That anti-equality voices won’t win.”

As part of this effort, volunteers with the Human Rights Campaign each week on Tuesday have been holding virtual phone bank sessions in which they call potential voters, seek to identify them as “equality voters” and ask them to vote by mail or absentee.

Lucas Acosta, a Human Rights Campaign spokesperson, said the phone-banking efforts have been underway for 12 weeks, but declined to comment on the number of voters contacted.

Not enumerated in the announcement on the launch of “Vote Equal, Vote Safe” are state voter ID laws, which critics say are intended to restrict votes from minorities, youth, the elderly and transgender people whose gender identity may not match the gender marker on their IDs.

Acosta, however, said the project will “definitely” cover voter ID laws and build on efforts to overturn them.

“We will continue to oppose unnecessary, overly stringent voter ID laws and work to undo them in states across the country,” Acosta said.

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

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## Transgender Michigan Helpline Continues to Take Calls Amid Pandemic

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Rachel Crandall-Crocker is a licensed master social worker and the executive director of Transgender Michigan. In addition, she's the primary volunteer for the Transgender Michigan Helpline. She explained its function and that it serves a vital role in the transgender community, now more than ever.

"The helpline has been in existence for over 20 years," Crandall-Crocker said. "It is exclusively a trans helpline. We get calls from people wanting to come out and we get calls from professionals. And lately, we've been getting calls from people regarding being alone and isolated as a result of COVID[-19]."

"A lot of people in my community were so alone and isolated already," she continued. "Then all of a sudden, they're isolated completely alone."

She mentioned that she talked to one individual who hadn't talked live to another person for over a month.

As a psychotherapist with 40 years of helpline experience, Crandall-Crocker is well qualified for this work. Still, it's intended to be available 24/7.

"We have one other transgender person who has an awful lot of experience; however, I take the majority of calls," Crandall-Crocker said.

Although they may miss a call occasionally, Crandall-Crocker said they try to always be at the ready. She also stressed that it's not a suicide hotline.

"I'd like to add that we are a helpline," Crandall-Crocker said. "It's OK if people have an issue and they just want to talk about it. There are some lines that are specifically suicide intervention. That's not what we are. We are a helpline. If someone is real lonely, it's OK that they call."

## Heather Mae, Crys Matthews to Headline Singing OUT Virtual Pride at The Ark

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Even at the best of times, Pride festivals are a reprieve from many of the daily struggles faced by the LGBTQ community. There, acceptance is given freely, and if done right, the celebration allows any and all participants to present as their most authentic selves. Now, as June approaches during a global pandemic, Pride month might seem like it's lost a lot of its luster as festivals across the globe are being canceled, rescheduled and indefinitely postponed. That's why LGBTQ musicians Heather Mae and Crys Matthews felt it was more important than ever to host the Singing OUT Virtual Tour at The Ark on Tuesday, June 16.

Viewers can buy tickets and view the self-described social justice musicians who have gotten together to create a supportive experience to "lift one another up" and "celebrate our stories and our people." The duo has hosted two previous in-person Pride tours and individually made careers out of tackling some of the toughest societal issues through music. Mae, who has been described as "the queer Adele," and Matthews, who has been called "the Woody Guthrie of our generation," have set up a virtual night of music, games and more. Ahead of the show, BTL caught up with Washington, D.C.-based singer Heather Mae to get her thoughts on the value of sticking together during hard times, her inspiration for this event and the importance of Pride.

### What inspired you to put on this tour?

For many people, Pride is the only time that they can express the way they identify and they can be proud of who they love and they can not feel like a freak in their hometown. And every year for the last three years we have done a Pride tour where Crys and I go on the road and it's called Singing OUT and it's grown so much in the last three years, from not having anyone really show up the first year, to last year selling out a ton of the venues that we played. And this year we were going to be the biggest ever, we were playing bigger venues than we had ever played before, and we were set up to sell out in a bunch of them already. And then this COVID thing happened and festivals started getting canceled. And so, we made a decision that it's one thing for people to lose jobs from not playing shows, but for us, it's another thing where people are in isolation and in unsafe situations and Pride is being taken away. No. We will not stand by and watch that happen. So, we're making a virtual tour.



### Were you always inspired to write music? And what made you pursue social justice topics and themes in your work?

Right about the time I found out that I am queer as queer could be, I had to stop singing because I got [vocal] nodules. And that threw me into the greatest depression of my life. I realized that I had bipolar disorder, too, and I need to get help. So I stopped singing and I made a vow, a literal promise, to the universe or God or whatever, that if I got my voice back, I would dedicate my career to social justice music and to making the world a better place, which meant I would come out in my music. And about a year later I got my voice back. I immediately ran into the studio and put it to songs, released my first social justice album, and it became what I thought was me just being, "I'm queer, and I love myself, and I love who I am, and I'm fat and I'm body-positive, and I'm angry about women's inequality and my friends of color getting killed in the streets. I will not be quiet anymore." I realized that I was actually creating a fanbase of people who not only identified with all those things but also people who support those people as well. And without me trying to create a career around the social justice movement, it just happened.

**A lot of artists are in the same situation and they're doing similar virtual performances. Has this unique moment in history inspired you to create more?**

Yeah, definitely. For me, I started writing "I Am Enough," and it was my announcement to the world that I am a social justice songwriter, I'm changing everything, and I'm dedicating my career to building a legacy of making the world a better place, dammit. This career's hard enough, but I'm determined (laughs). So I released that, and then I went on the road and I toured for the next two years, and then I came home. And I realized that the one thing my fans kept talking to me about was mental health. And for me, I was just really struck by that. It hit me that I had never actually talked about that explicitly, and I knew it was because I'm so afraid of being labeled the crazy one, and that stigma around being insane. I'm already fat, I'm already queer, I don't need to add on another thing where people will other me, and I don't like anything that boxes me. And so, I wrote an album all about mental illness and the struggle of breaking away from those labels and trying to find the light in the darkness. And that is the thing that I've really been focusing on, and, my God, I hate to say that I'm so glad I released it now because my fans need it, but wow, right now it's really hard. It's a really, really weird time to be alive right now.

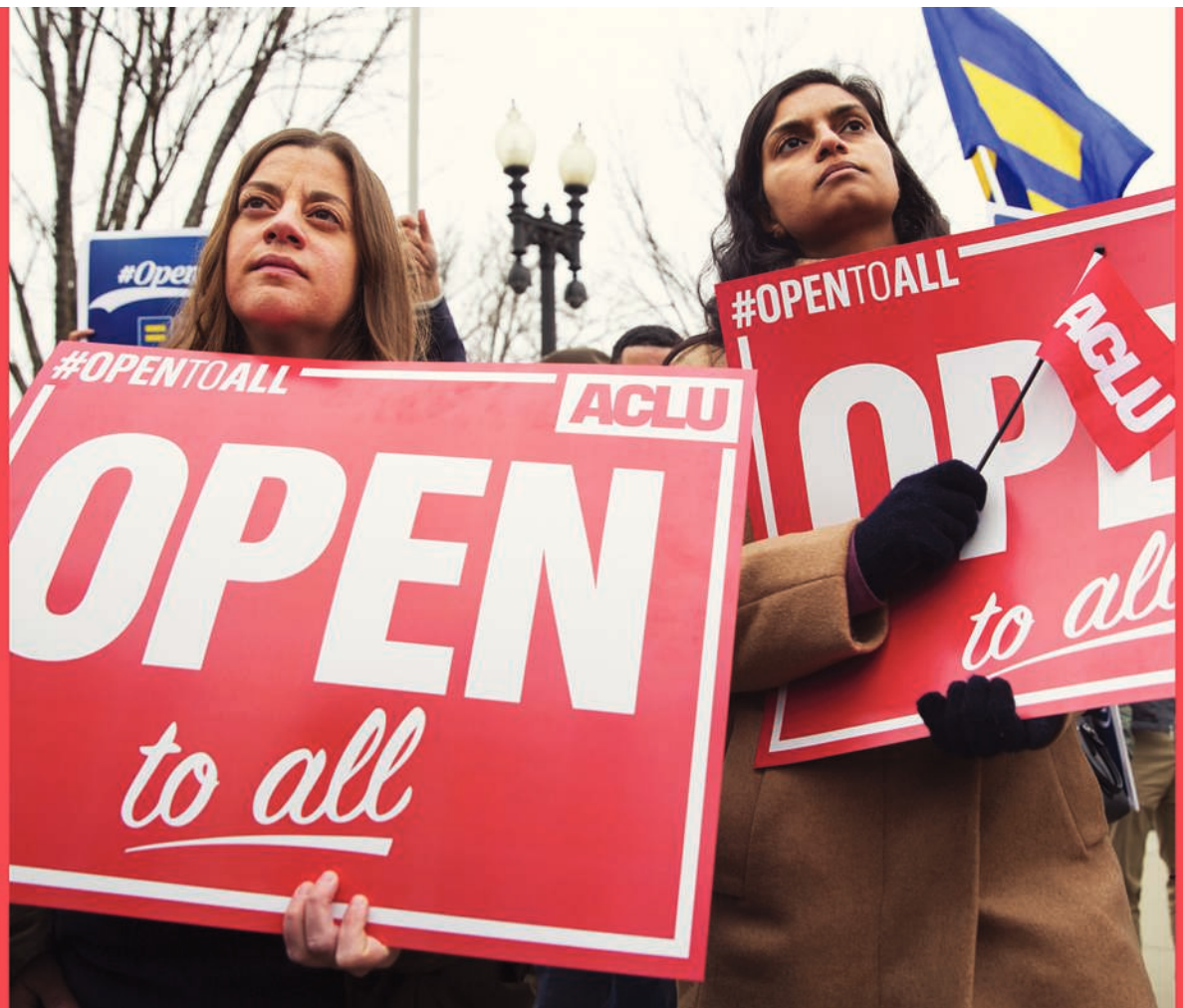
*Singing OUT will be held on Tuesday, June 16, at 8:30 p.m. EDT. Tickets for the show are \$15. To read the full interview visit [pridesource.com](http://pridesource.com). Find out more information about the show visit [theark.org](http://theark.org).*



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# The Unlikely History of a Gay Porn Landmark

## Filmmaker Rachel Mason on the Netflix Doc She Made About Her Parents Who Ran a Gay Porn Empire

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Gay porn is not what straight, religious-conservative married couple Barry and Karen Mason thought they'd become known for. But for over 35 years, they owned a bookstore that sold videos like "Confessions

of a Two Dick Slut" and "Meat Me at the Fair" in West Hollywood. And now thanks to their daughter, filmmaker and artist Rachel Mason, her parents' story is a Netflix documentary.

For the couple, however, selling and producing gay porn was just business as usual. Hard times forced Karen, a former journalist, and Barry, a former special visual effects engineer who worked on Stanley Kubrick's "2001," to think fast, so they took over Circus of Books, which became a queer cultural institution. Karen and Barry, who still own the building even though Circus of Books closed in 2019, would go on to become wealthy LGBTQ activists and PFLAG parents.

But in the 1980s, the business was kept a secret from their three children, including Rachel and her gay brother Josh, who appear in "Circus of Books" along with former porn star Jeff Stryker and "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars" winner Alaska Thunderfuck. TV titan Ryan Murphy executive produced the film.

Here, Mason discusses the power of straight parents as activists, what it says about porn that celebs who shopped at the store won't openly

admit it, and the awkward dinner table talk her parents have with her partner, transsexual porn star and activist Buck Angel.

**It's funny to hear your mom say in the doc, "I don't know what you're gonna make out of all this filming. No one is going to be interested in this." And now, of course, it's on Netflix for the world to see.**

That's her whole constant mantra: No one's gonna care, this is not interesting to anybody. I think that was her way of having a smokescreen. Of course it's actually fucking amazing that I'm like, "Deep penetration on these videos you made sent me to college." How could that not be interesting? You know, I think it's her way of misdirecting, but also at the same time it could also be true for her: It was not interesting. This was a boring job for many years. (Laughs.)

**It's like when she walks by the dildo wall but won't look at it.**

(Laughs.) I do have to say there's a part

of her, sadly, that is really kind of prudish and disgusted by her whole thing. I find that offensive and sad because I love and appreciate everything that she was involved in, and I actually think that the work she did was critical.

**Do your parents bond with Buck over porn?**

It was really funny the first time we had a family dinner. My mom said, "Do not bring this up to my grandma," my mother's mother who is still alive. "Do not bring up the business at the dinner table tonight." And of course, we're sitting there and there's dead silence; then my mom was like, "Buck, I have a question. I got an email today from one of these distributors – do you ever work with this guy?" I'm like, "Mom! You totally outed him as being in the business!" She's just so business-focused that it's kind of hilarious. But my parents and Buck can just talk shop together, and I can listen and be kind of coming up with the sequel in my head, or like an episode for the TV series.



### How do they feel about being Netflix-famous?

In a weird way it's a good time to be an anonymous celebrity because everyone's wearing masks. (Laughs.) You know, my mom's a totally reluctant celebrity, if you want to call her that. She really is a subject right now. And I think on the one hand it's uncomfortable for her when people walk up and know her for something she kept a secret for several years.

### Your mom seems like the kind of person who really knows how to command a room.

She got up on the stage at Outfest and just said, "Had I known you guys were all going to be here, I never would've agreed to doing this." The audience is laughing and it's like, "Mom, you just got an audience of 2,000 people to laugh." But she's like, "Now can I go? I don't like this." (Laughs.) That's part of her sheer brilliant comedic instincts. She kind of knows, like Woody Allen, that she has this kind of nebbishy, over-the-top insulting quality that is just so funny.

### And her dynamic with your father – the way she interjects when he doesn't tell the full story – is really hysterical.

I think that's part of their comedic duo vibe that is so amazing. I have to say, I milked it for all that it's worth in the documentary. (Laughs.)

### How did the idea for the documentary come to you?

It really began in 2004. I had taken a lesbian and gay studies class, as it was called at the time, and it was about just sort of the history of LGBTQ experience. So the teacher, Jonathan D. Katz, a very prominent media studies scholar, his focus was on Robert Mapplethorpe, specifically gay imagery and photography, and the art that wasn't above ground. It was sort of this subculture, and I remember my parents had Robert Mapplethorpe books in their store and I mentioned it to him. I said, "You know my parents carried his stuff?" And he was like, "What was their store?" And I said Circus of Books and he said, "Wow, Rachel, that is the most important store on the West Coast and that store really helped me to come out." I think he was himself from LA; I was at Yale at the time. I was like, "What do you know about Circus of Books?"

I didn't know my parents' little LA weirdo store would've been something anyone would've known this far east, let alone at a fancy school like Yale. So it just gave me an impression that I needed to do something about it. And he said, "This is part of gay history. It's not just a little store. It's actually the historical record because gay history didn't have a chance to be documented because it was underground." So when the store started to close in 2015, that's when I started really documenting it in earnest.

### And your mom had low expectations. She didn't

think this film would amount to anything.

Oh yeah – no.

### What does she think of the finished film?

She just feels like I did a good job, basically. And that it just would be better if it were about anyone except her. (Laughs.) One thing she says that I have some sympathy for: "I don't picture myself looking this age." I'm following her around at age 75. A lot of it is unflattering because she let me follow her around, and she's, like, squatting down to pick up DVDs (laughs). It's kind of funny. I kept being like, "Mom, turn this way. I don't like this angle. It's not good." But at the same time, I'm chasing her – she moves like a motherfucker!

### Did your mom ever try to control the narrative?

Kind of. But I know how to work around that.

### What was it like to learn about Josh's struggle to come out during the making of the film?

That was one of the interviews that actually I reshot because I had shot the film in a different way going into it. I was working hand in hand with Cynthia Childs, my producer, and I was going to be more of a distant subject. When I started to cut the film together, the most poignant moments were in all of the different interviews when people would look at the camera or look at me and say, "Your dad was going to go to jail." I was like, "Shit, they're talking to me; I need to actually be seen and heard on the other side of this." I didn't get that with my interview with Josh.

The second time around, I did the questions, and I didn't expect my own reaction to be so shocked by what he said. I was really so blown away, and it was so horrible to hear these things and to look back at myself with a sense of shame that I so was a self-absorbed teenager who loved everything gay and was wanting it, and here's my poor little brother who's trying to be so perfect and trying to hold it all together. And here he has this freaky, insane sister being an artist, and maybe that's what gay looks like to him. And the store is also this crazy place where a lot of people died of AIDS, and he sees that world. So he's caught in between these images that are not realistic of what he could have for himself as a gay man.

### What was it like to hear the stories of your parents' relationship with those who were dying of AIDS, and how they kind of became surrogate parents to them because their families disowned them?

I feel like that is part of the real untold story and untold chapter in gay history – it's not exclusive to my parents. When you think back to the AIDS crisis, these men were dying in these horrible situations alone in the hospital because people were afraid to touch them. The bravery of not just my parents but all the different people who would show up for these men was so profound. I really have

See *Circus of Books*, continued on p. 24

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## ► Circus of Books

Continued from p. 23

to say I look at my parents in a really heroic light myself at that moment, but I also think back on the fact that there were other people like them.

**Before our call, I was talking to my dad. There's been some tension among family members on Facebook, and we're still having a hard time wrapping our heads around the fact that some of them still support Donald Trump.**

I'll tell you: My partner and lover is Buck Angel and his parents are Trump supporters. What I think is really fascinating is he talks to them and he actually fully gets into it. I think it's important to address it full-on and be like, "OK, you can support the guy who is gonna actually take your son's right to exist." If you have the stomach to engage, it's actually a good idea to engage.

**Your parents remind me of my dad.**

Is your family Christian or religious?

**Yeah. They're Christian and Catholic. My dad identifies as a Baptist, but he supports me and he lets people know he supports me.**

That is really powerful, if he does let people know that he supports you.

**Well, our conversation stemmed from a Facebook war with family members who are anti-LGBTQ. My dad commented and said to them that he supports me and who I am, and that what they're saying could potentially harm LGBTQ people.**

That's very powerful when people like your dad and my mom similarly do that because those are the most important activists. You and me being queer and waving our rainbow flag is actually sort of not really tipping the scale for those people; it's people like your dad and my mom who are actually saying, "Look, I am still gonna go to church and I'm gonna find it in the Bible where Jesus says we can love everybody. And in the Old Testament, where you can reinterpret the word, the actual definition of what it means to lie down with another man, in fact, and totally recognize that there's the possibility that we have a wrong interpretation here."

**The film comes at a time when queer spaces are vulnerable to the pandemic and are at risk of closing. Having gone through that experience with your parents, what are you feeling?**

First off, my heart's breaking for all the businesses. I look back at the strange timing: I could've never predicted that I'd be making a story about a story that's unfolding currently, and that we're in the time of a pandemic and the documentary is entirely basically based in the time of a pandemic for the gay

T	R	A	M	P	P	A	S	S	L	A	T	E			
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Puzzle p. 29



community. It's almost like we're living in that active moment where everyone is deciding the thing that you see my mom trying to decide when she's talking about whether or not she can close the business. People are wrestling with that. All businesses.

**Did you ever wonder why the store catered to gay men and not queer women?**

I guess that's sort of interesting. Certainly there were lesbian clerks and women customers, and there were trans people. They had trans clerks and trans customers, and in fact they had Buck Angel work there – the very first trans guy to basically do porn at all. So there was a variety. But probably the vast majority were gay men. I think it's because that exact neighborhood was called Boystown (laughs) and it was located in a gay boys' neighborhood. I'm not an expert so you can't quote me on this, but it's pretty well known that men are the predominant consumers of pornography, especially in a store where you have to walk in and physically appear. Also, it was a meeting ground. I think it just naturally became a hotspot for gay culture.

**What did you find out from Ryan Murphy about shopping at the store?**

Ryan basically said that store was so important to all gay men in LA. I think he was just no different. In fact, Ryan happens to be a very famous, powerful gay man – and I won't name names – but think of any gay man who was alive at that time in Hollywood and they no doubt went into that store.

**Did you try to interview any of these other men?**

Yeah, I've reached out to a few – again, I won't say the names – and I've noticed things have leaked out here and there and I'm like, "Wow, I don't know who said that. The gossip mill." I will just say think of a (famous) gay man over 50 and they were in Circus of Books.

**So the gossip is true?**

Absolutely. And celebrities who aren't even straight or gay or male. Rose McGowan posted that she loved the store's selection of Italian Vogue, and Kathy Griffin posted about how she did her Christmas shopping at the store. So the celebrities who've come out, that's awesome and fun and cool. It does speak volumes that people can't just jump out and wave the flag of, "Yeah, I went to that store; it's a porn store." Because porn still has a stigma. I think that's what we're looking at right here, and I really hope to be part of the change that destigmatizes it.

*As editor of Q Syndicate, the 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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# Michigan Community Resources

## 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  
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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)  
[www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter](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).

## Get Listed, Promote Your Events

You can add or update any listing by going to [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com) and clicking on Yellow Pages. Once you submit your listing, our staff will contact you to confirm your information.

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@tscoopdetroit.org](mailto:info@tscoopdetroit.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
- Professional Organizations
- Religious & Spiritual
- Senior Living
- Seniors
- Social/Community Organizations
- Sports
- Substance Abuse
- Transgender Groups/Services
- Women's Health
- Youth Services





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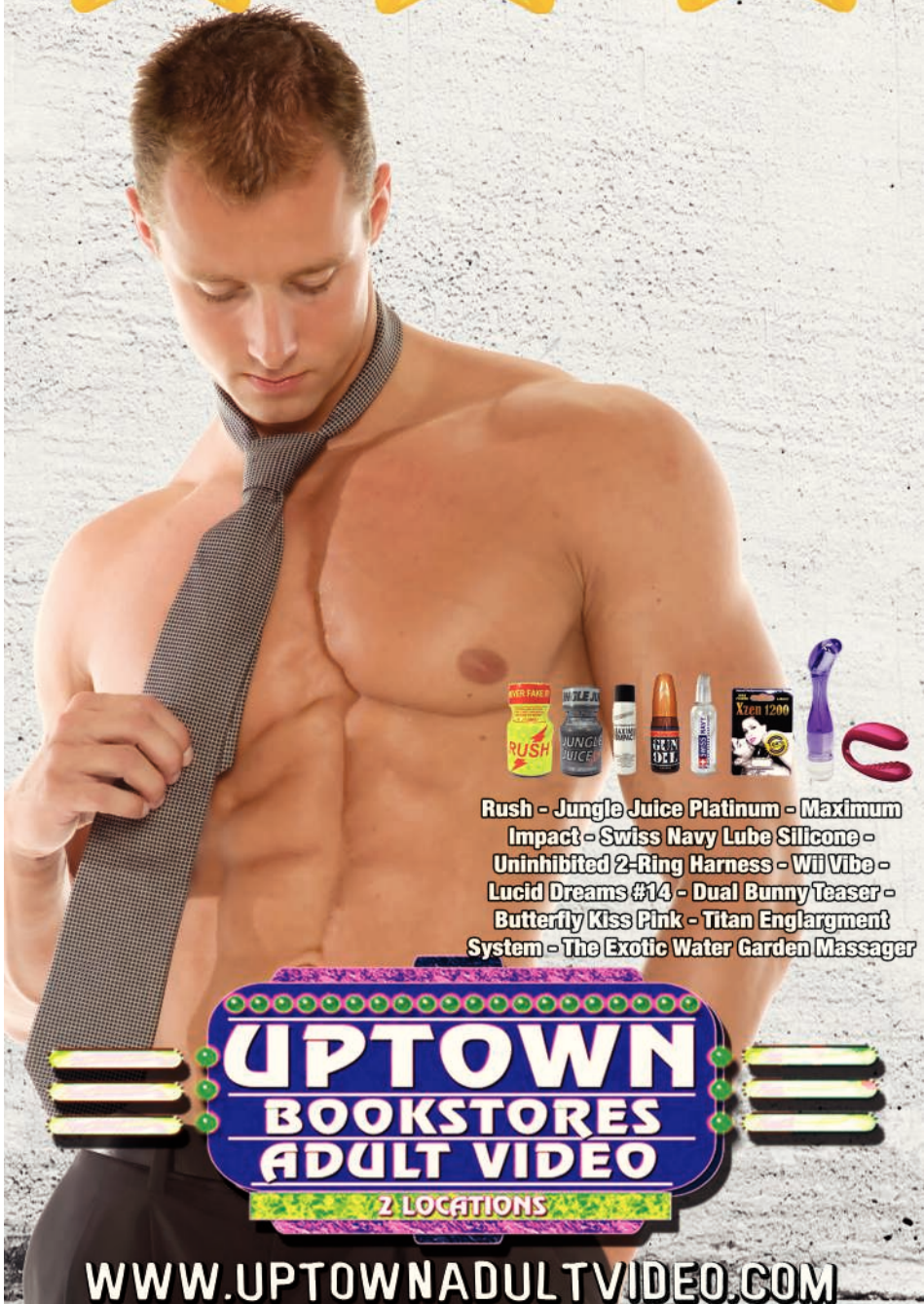
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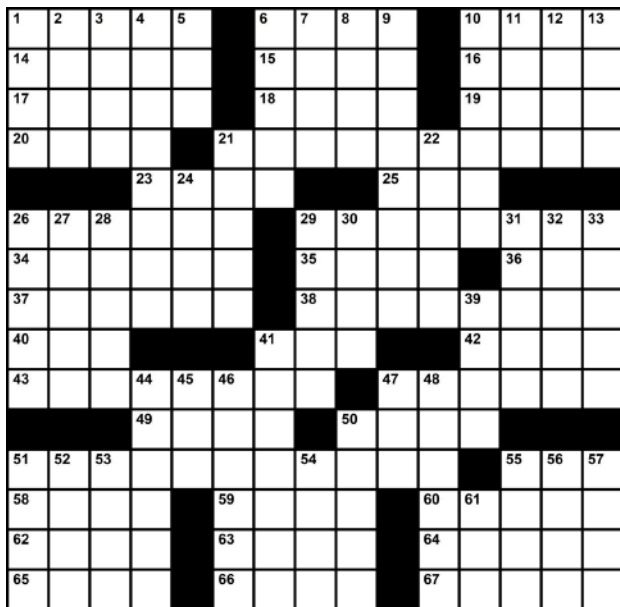


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 38 See 37-Across  
 40 Poem of Sappho  
 41 Ebenezer's exclamation  
 42 With respect to  
 43 Mound accessory  
 47 Dorothy's home  
 49 Prep for a marathon, with "up"  
 50 Fork feature  
 51 The first Chinese American Hollywood movie star  
 55 Startled cry  
 58 One with a foamy head  
 59 Voyeur's confession  
 60 Writer Dykewomon  
 62 Male escort  
 63 Conn of "Grease"  
 64 "The Wizard of Oz" producer Mervyn  
 65 They're performing, in "Fame"  
 66 Leave in the text  
 67 Rimbaud's room
- 10 Martin of "Ed Wood"  
 11 Processes wine or cheese  
 12 That's bull, to Frida  
 13 Ghostbusters role  
 21 Witherspoon of "Legally Blonde 2"  
 22 Part of UHF  
 24 She danced with Whoopi in "Ghost"  
 26 Can't bear  
 27 Madrid museum  
 28 One of the "Maneater" singers  
 29 Joltin' Joe  
 30 Cut glass  
 31 Archaeological sites  
 32 Former NFL player Tuaoilo  
 33 Tennis star that goes either way?  
 39 Kopay's team  
 41 Tend tots  
 44 Wearer of wax wings  
 45 Locale for Brando's "Apocalypse Now"  
 46 Brady Bunch hair style, at times  
 47 Family  
 48 Kushner's " \_\_\_ in America"  
 50 Namely  
 51 "Mamma Mia!" band  
 52 Not even once, to Dickinson  
 53 Straight, to mixologists  
 54 Get one's feet wet  
 55 Dixie Chicks' "Goodbye \_\_\_"  
 56 Organic compound  
 57 Danny of "The Court Jester"  
 61 DeLaria of comedy

### Q Puzzle

- 20 Murphy, whose three favorite icons from "Hollywood" are in this puzzle  
 21 "Pillow Talk" star  
 23 Bad day for Caesar  
 25 Plug extension  
 26 Orbital high point  
 29 Old people may take them out for a blow job  
 34 Lullaby composer  
 35 Anatomical passage  
 36 Milk, in a way  
 37 With 38-Across, "GWTW" Best

### Down

- 1 Peter the Great, for one  
 2 Prefix for fruit for Rita Mae Brown  
 3 China setting  
 4 " \_\_\_ in the Garden of Good and Evil"  
 5 Drench Trump in a Russian video  
 6 Colombian coins  
 7 Mapa of "Switched at Birth"  
 8 Chiang Kai-\_\_\_  
 9 Really sucked

Clues P. 24

## Hollywood

### Across

- 1 Disney canine  
 6 Word after "Hail Mary"  
 10 A little behind  
 14 Bright, to editors  
 15 For most students  
 16 With mouth wide open  
 17 Bear  
 18 Penetrate slowly  
 19 Burning software

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## PBS Debuts 'PRIDELAND' Series that Explores LGBTQ Identity in U.S. South

BY BTL STAFF

PBS is celebrating LGBTQ Pride Month with the launch of "PRIDELAND," a new one-hour special and short-form digital series that follows host and actor Dyllón Burnside — of "Pose" fame — on a journey across the South. The six-episode short-form series will launch on PBS Voices, a new documentary-focused YouTube Channel by PBS Digital Studios, that debuted on Tuesday, May 26. A one-hour companion special, also hosted by Burnside, will premiere on Friday, June 12 at 9 p.m. ET on PBS, PBS.org and the PBS Video App.

"Being a queer boy raised in the South, I had distinct memories of feeling like I could never be my authentic-self there, so I left seeking acceptance and affirming communities. But I never left my southern roots," Burnside said. "I wanted to go back as an adult and see if things had changed, and I'm proud to report that they have. Although there are still many challenges for queer folks in the south, which is home to more LGBTQ+ adults than anywhere else in the U.S., I'm in awe of everyone I met who are creating change in their communities. I believe that authenticity is a superpower, and these queer heroes and allies are truly inspirational."

"PRIDELAND" addresses how and why attitudes toward the community have changed, the ongoing challenges still faced by LGBTQ+ people, as well as stories of celebration and the vital role of allies. In their own voices, members of these communities answer questions that help to create real understanding of who they are and what it means to be their authentic selves in the places they call home.

The digital episodes of PRIDELAND will kick off PBS Voices, a themed channel bringing together curated content from member stations across the country to fulfill viewers' curious minds. Each program featured on PBS Voices will feature an array of fascinating, relatable miniseries celebrating shared human

experiences.

The "PRIDELAND" one-hour special will be available to stream starting Friday, June 12 on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and the PBS Video App, available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV and Chromecast.

### See a list of premiere dates below.

Episode 1: "Out, Proud & Southern: Dyllón Burnside's Story"

Premieres: Tuesday, May 26 on PBS Voices

Episode 2: "An Openly Gay Pastor's Journey to Acceptance in the Bible Belt"

Premieres: Tuesday, June 2 on PBS Voices

Episode 3: "Polyamory, Demisexuality, and Being Transgender in the South"

Premieres: Tuesday, June 9 on PBS Voices

Episode 4: "The Heartwarming Story of One of Alabama's First Same-Sex Adoptions"

Premieres: Tuesday, June 16 on PBS Voices

Episode 5: "Championing LGBTQ+ Healthcare in Mississippi"

Premieres: Tuesday, June 23 on PBS Voices

Episode 6: "The Bakery Battleground: The Mississippi Baker Standing Up For Gay Rights"

Premieres: Tuesday, June 30 on PBS Voices

One-Hour Special: PRIDELAND

Premieres: Friday, June 12, 9 to 10 p.m. ET on PBS

For more information about the series and PBS' upcoming episodes, go online to [gaybe.am/OT](http://gaybe.am/OT).



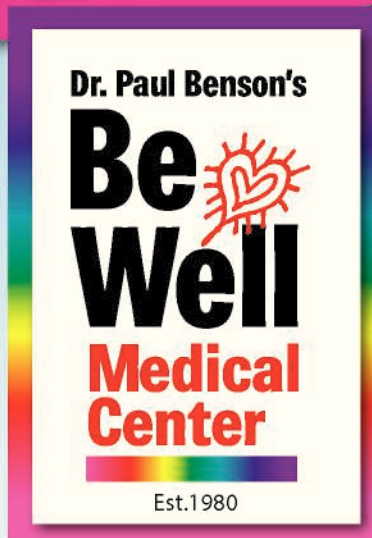
# On the Edge of Primary Care PODCASTS with Dr. Paul Benson



**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.

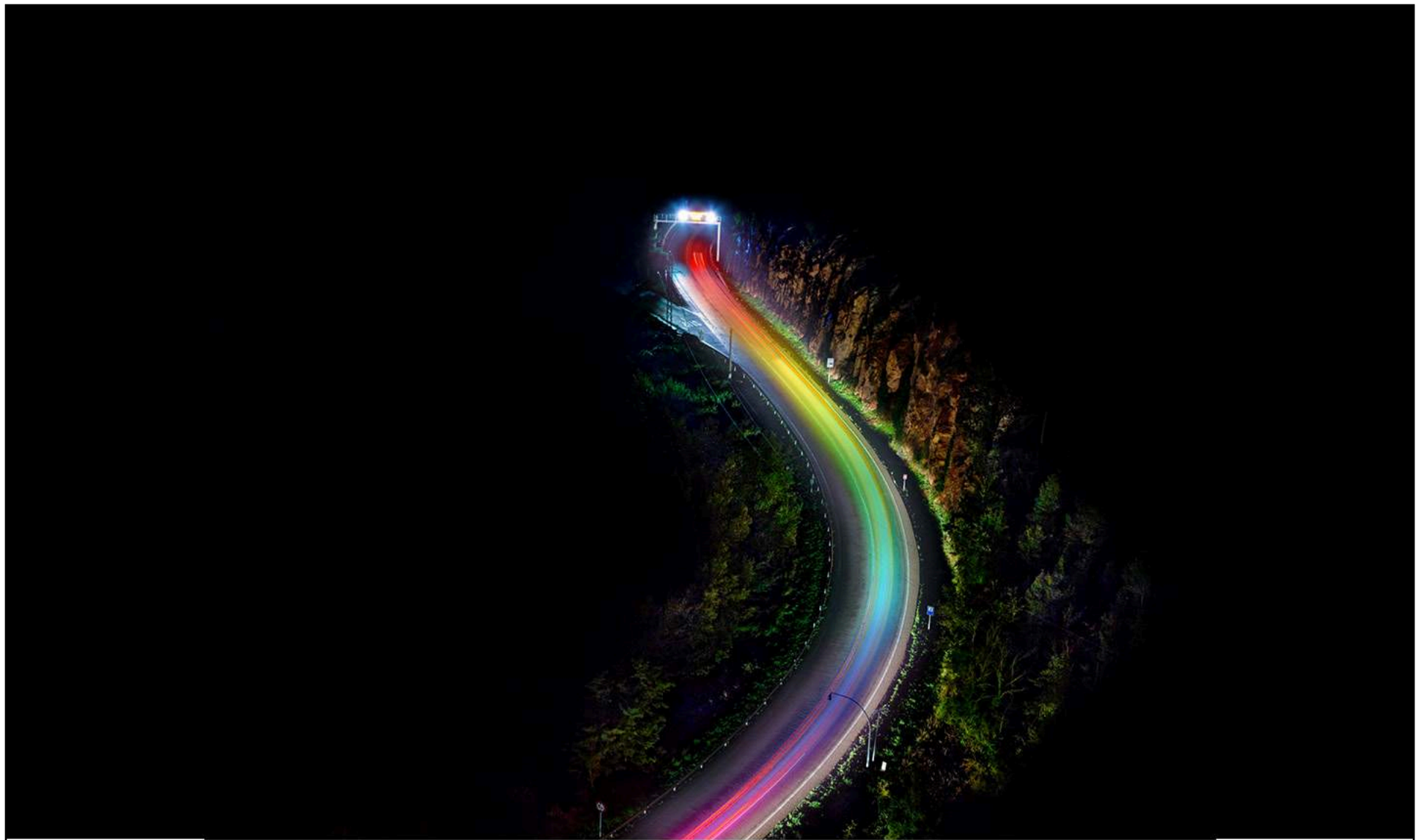


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## **MAKING SURE ALL ROADS LEAD TO EQUALITY**

General Motors is proud to support the LGBTQ community. As the first automaker to support the Equality Act, we celebrate and embrace your mission to spread awareness through diversity and inclusion.

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