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How Community Leaders Cornelius Wilson, Robert Tate Shaped Hotter Than July into Detroit's Premier Black LGBTQ Pride Event



'Who Am I to Judge?'

Church Music Director Terry Gonda Fired for Same-Sex Marriage

BTL Photo: Adrew Potter



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BTL Photo: Andrew Potter

VOL. 2828 • JULY 9, 2020

ISSUE 1152/53

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

Phone 734.293.7200

PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200

susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200

chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

News & Feature Editor

Eve Kucharski, 734.293.7200

eve@pridesource.com

News & Feature Writers

Michelle Brown, Ellen Knoppow, Jason A. Michael, Drew Howard, Jonathan Thurston

CREATIVE

Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Columnists

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown, Mikey Rox, D'Anne Witkowski, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Dana Rudolph

Cartoonists

Paul Berg

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen, Roxanne Frith, Tih Penfil

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200

jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200

anncox@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
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‘There Must Be a Better Way’: Rally in Support of Terry Gonda



Protestors rally for former music director Terry Gonda, who was fired from her role in the Catholic church for being married to her wife of 26 years. BTL Photo: Ellen Shanna Knopow.

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

On Saturday, June 27, approximately 150 individuals, mostly parishioners of St. John Fisher Chapel in Auburn Hills, gathered outside after mass to rally in support Terry Gonda. Days earlier, Gonda had been officially fired from her job as music director at the church for being married to her wife, Kirsti Reeve. Their marriage was not news to anyone at the church — including its pastor, Monsignor Michael LeFevre — it was the Archdiocese of Detroit that decided to activate its “morality clause.”

Carrying signs with slogans like “What would Jesus say?” and “Who am I to judge?,” members of the crowd expressed grief, anger and confusion regarding the AOD’s decision to terminate the employment of a particularly beloved member of the church family since her college years in the 1970s.

Colleen Sanders, who has been attending St. John Fisher for 30 years, said it was unfair.

“I’m here to support Terry and the gay community,” Sanders said. “My sign says, ‘Love is love.’ It doesn’t matter who you’re married to. So I just get kind of frustrated with this kind of stuff because a person’s private life and who they love shouldn’t have any bearing on their employment. To me, it doesn’t make sense.

“I don’t think there’s gonna be any change, because the Catholic Church is so old and antiquated and hierarchical,” she continued. “They have a lot of man-made rules that — even though I am Catholic and I call myself a Catholic — I don’t agree with. But we do need to show our support so that people know that this isn’t just an individual incident, this is something that’s happening everywhere. And especially the timing with the Supreme Court, just saying you can’t do this, and then the church being exempt — that just seems not right.”

Linda Andrews said she has known Gonda for many years through the church’s young-adult program, which serves those ages 18 to 35. She spoke of her personal experience with Gonda’s love for, and

commitment to, their church and its members.

“I’m here because Terry has brought many people back to their faith,” Andrews said. “When I went through a crisis in my life, she was there for me, too. She spent 30 years working with all different people from all walks of life making sure that they felt like they had a place to call home.

“I think that in particular, anybody that felt any kind of resistance from people in the world, whether they felt that they had questions about faith or questions about who they were, if they felt ridiculed by people, if they grew up being bullied, she always had something to say to make them feel like this church was their home,” she continued. “And I always felt like I was proud to come to a place where they felt people were safe here. She was a big part of that.”

The rally began with a song by Gonda, followed by a prayer and prepared remarks.

Individuals from the crowd were then invited to the mic to express their feelings for their former music director. Gonda’s remarks, excerpted and paraphrased, follow:

“I am devastated and sick in my soul at having to step down from ministry in the very parish that has loved me, shaped me and grown me into the leader that I am today,” Gonda said. “And that the reason given on June 12 for my removal is my legal vowed commitment to Kirsti, a woman who has modeled God’s unconditional love for me for 26 years.”

And yet, she said, they hold love, not bitterness for the AOD’s leaders. They “refuse to demonize good men who we fully believe are doing what they think is best for the church.” Further, she asked the crowd not to attack the church or its leaders by calling them bigots or homophobic.

“I am the Catholic church,” she emphasized. “And our loving faith family at St John Fisher is the Catholic church.”

The question, Gonda said, that moves her and Reeve forward is, “How are baptized Catholics to come together and build bridges to create a healthy church?”

In conclusion, Gonda echoed the sentiment of the day: “There must be a better way.”

‘Who Am I to Judge?’

Church Music Director Fired for Same-Sex Marriage

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

“Morality Clause”

By now, readers may already be familiar with Terry Gonda’s story. She is the former music director of St. John Fisher Chapel in Auburn Hills who was fired from her part-time job there when the Archdiocese of Detroit learned of her longtime marriage to her wife and decided to activate its “morality clause.” That is, being in a same-sex marriage rendered her unfit to keep her job.

Gonda and Kirsti Reeve, her wife of 16 years, recently sat down with *Between The Lines* outside their ranch-style home on a tree-lined street in Royal Oak where they have lived together since their unofficial marriage in 2003 — they were officially married in Washington, D.C. in 2011.

As to the view that their marriage lacks “morality,” Gonda turned that reasoning on its head. A deeply spiritual person, she explained why it was not in spite of, but because of, church teachings that she and Reeve felt compelled to marry.

“It’s not like we are unaware of church teachings,” Gonda said plainly. “The church teaches that [same-sex relationships are wrong]; the church also teaches primacy of conscience,” which she explained in detail.

“You need to do five things,” she said, enumerating with each finger. “Understand the church teachings; understand scripture; understand science, sociology — the best wisdom the world has to offer when you’re making a decision; and then deep prayer and discernment and walk with a spiritual director; and then the impact of any decision on community.”

Gonda said after doing those five things, if one hears “a voice telling you to do something,” one must do it — regardless of church teachings. Therefore, she emphasized, her marriage was not meant in any way to flout church authority. Instead, it was a higher calling of the Holy Spirit: that is, the highest authority.

“We were long-distance for nine years,” Gonda said.

Early on in their relationship, Reeve was living abroad.

“And anyone who knows us, and who knows me particularly, knows that I obnoxiously turn things over and over and over in prayer and logically look at all those five things over and over,”

she said. “And this decision was not handled lightly.”

“Who Am I to Judge?”

Gonda knew something was brewing at St. John Fisher Chapel, where she served in the music department for 26 years — for six years as its director — well before being forewarned on June 12 in an email by her pastor, Monsignor Michael LeFevre, that she was to be fired by the AOD.

Parishioners learned in March there would be a change of priests come July. The incoming priest was described by Gonda as “prayerful and faithful,” but of a particular pastoral approach that was unlikely to fit with their church. Not only that, she pointed out that 85 percent of the church members where he had served most recently had left. Gonda said she could only interpret this move as an “intentional wrecking ball.”

“No disrespect to him,” Gonda said. “I think he’s living in his integrity. And I think we’re living in our integrity, and it seemed like a purposeful mismatch. So I began to grieve.”

In the past, Gonda said, she and Reeve had come to an understanding with their previous pastors.

“I have walked through discernments with my two previous pastors,” Gonda said. “We spoke to our incoming pastor five years ago and were willing to go on this journey with him to [say], ‘Here’s our discernment journey; here’s the fruits of our decisions; whether you think it’s of God ... judge for yourself whether we still belong in leadership or not, in your mind.’”

Gonda described this as the Church’s traditional approach: the pastoral accompaniment. It’s what Pope Francis meant when he asked, “Who am I to judge?”

“I had done a lot of grieving and sobbing and ranting and healing and coming to not only acceptance but I began to have a welling of deep love in my heart for the new priest coming in, Father Dan,” Gonda explained. “So I know that was of the Holy Spirit. In the middle of prayer, and just filled with love — I don’t know this guy, and it was unmistakable. That was a big sign.”

Excited and curious about what was to come, and open to a new approach, Gonda wrote the new priest a letter to welcome him and request a “quiet

conversation” before he landed, as she and Reeve had done in the past. Whether he was too busy or she had been outed, Gonda doesn’t know — she never received a response.

Following the email by LeFevre on June 12, Gonda was officially informed by the AOD that she was being let go shortly before her contract expired June 30.

“They are making a clear statement here,” she said. “Or, to be kind, getting rid of a problem before the new priest had to deal with it.”

Impact

The firing has caused Gonda and Reeve tremendous pain. It has also had a profound impact on parishioners, some of whom have known Gonda for the 30 years she has been a member of St. John Fisher. A rally was held outside the church to show support following mass on June 27. But beyond St. John Fisher, Gonda’s plight has touched many — her story has made news across the globe. She said she’s a bit surprised.

“Somebody being fired in the Catholic church for being gay isn’t news,” Gonda said. “So why would it hit the news cycle?”

She offered a few theories.

“We are all very vulnerable from COVID[-19], and we are having more time to reflect on what’s important,” she said. “We need each other. We miss being with one another and I think that’s been tremendous for people.”

She also referenced the impact of the murder



of George Floyd by the police. People are less tolerant of injustice, as a result.

“Now we’re able to hear better and see better,” Gonda added.

The timing of the Supreme Court decision that ruled LGBTQ employees are protected from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is an obvious factor, too. However, Gonda’s situation does not apply because employees of religious institutions who have “ministerial” roles are exempt from protection.

“And for some reason, somebody who’s been hurt, standing up and saying, ‘I love these people; don’t demonize them,’ and, ‘I forgive them—’ apparently, that’s news,” Gonda said, with a laugh. “That surprises me.”

Despite others’ threats to leave St. John Fisher over her firing, Gonda is staying put. To underscore that point, she said of the incoming

priest, “I’m leading the welcoming party.”

Further, Gonda said it has not at all affected her faith.

“This is not about the faith,” she said. “It’s like trying to leave the country because you don’t like a particular administration. The Constitution’s the Constitution. The Church is the Church.”

The Catholic Church and the LGBTQ Community

At the same time, Gonda is not naïve. She said what she experienced is just the latest in a pattern of church employees in same-sex marriages losing their jobs in this Archdiocese. Hers is the third she knows of. Not only that, church leaders in Metro Detroit have been informed by the AOD not to perform mass for Dignity/Detroit and Fortunate Families, two LGBTQ-friendly Catholic groups. While Gonda remains rock-solid in her faith, she is also speaking out against injustice.

“This is a pattern,” Gonda said. “This is one person’s way to come up with a unified approach in dealing with gays and lesbians. To others, it feels like a witch hunt, because, again, it goes back to intent. What are the fruits of this behavior? There are now people who are LGBT who are working in the Archdiocese who are now afraid of being outed and losing their jobs, who are in terror.”

By contrast, Gonda spoke of the support

rally, which occurred the evening before this interview.

“What we saw last night was the fruits of our marriage,” Gonda said. “Saved lives. People coming closer in their faith. People being nurtured. Ironically, people staying Catholic.”

Gonda acknowledged that many LGBTQ Catholics feel hurt and angry about how they and others have been treated by the Catholic Church over the years. She has a message for them.

“Your anger is valid,” Gonda said. “What I say is, take the resentment, let it go. Become free, forgive and then find a faith community that works for you so you can go deep ... into a relationship with Jesus. And then go out and save the world. Go make it a better place. Find your tribe. Don’t let anyone highjack Jesus from you — and people have.

“I want people to feel healed,” she continued. “I’m a spiritual director. I want people to go in and be transformed and let their light shine. And if you’re just feeling anger and resentment and pointing fingers at the Catholic Church, your light’s not shining. You’re still a bit in jail. I want [you] to be free. That’s my hope for everybody.”

Gonda went on to recommend several LGBTQ-affirming Catholic resources for people who feel conflicted by the Catholic Church’s actions. Notably, she mentioned newwaysministry.org.

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Why It's Legal for Religious Institutions to Discriminate Against LGBTQ Employees — and Why That Might Change

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

The Ministerial Exception, Explained

The separation of church and state, enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, has been a subject of debate time and again by the courts. And while not the central issue, the recent Supreme Court case that ruled that LGBTQ people are protected from employment discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ensured that religious institutions are protected as well.

Those protections, as named by Neil Gorsuch in his majority opinion, include the First Amendment, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and a 2012 Supreme Court ruling that recognized what's known as the "ministerial exception." That is, employees of religious institutions who provide a religious function are exempt from employment protection. Over the years, the courts have grappled with how broad the definition of "ministerial" should be and how it is to be determined.

A case currently pending in the U.S. Supreme Court, *Our Lady of Guadeloupe v. Morrissey-Berru*, involves two fired teachers who alleged employment discrimination — one based on disability, and the other based on age. The outcome of this case could have repercussions for LGBTQ employees of

religious institutions — like Terry Gonda who was fired after three decades as a music director of St. John Fisher Chapel in Auburn Hills — now that LGBTQ employees are protected under civil rights law.

Between The Lines spoke with ACLU staff attorney Jay Kaplan about the two cases and their relation to Gonda's firing by the Archdiocese of Detroit.

"The case before the court involving two elementary school teachers ... seems to be an attempt to ask the court to broaden that ministerial exception," Kaplan said. "In other words saying, 'Just look at the job title itself,' or, 'If they perform some things that are considered to be religious functions, then these parochial schools are automatically exempt.' We wouldn't want to see that.

"With regard to [Gonda's] situation, I think you would also have to look at the totality of the circumstances," he continued. "She was the music director. So you would want to see what that entailed. Did she lead people in prayers? Did she provide any religious instruction? This would not be totally indicative, [but] what was her title?"

When asked, as an example, whether the firing of a black employee by a religious institution for no other apparent reason than race could be permitted under the ministerial exception, Kaplan replied, "possibly."

"Under this ministerial exception, the religious entity doesn't have to ... articulate it," Kaplan explained. "All they have would have to do is put forth this argument that this person's job was primarily a religious function and therefore we could let that person go. And [the person] might allege it was because of their race, yet they still could be exempt from compliance with that civil rights law. Any day now, we're gonna get this opinion [from the Supreme Court]."

Slippery Slope

In the *Our Lady of Guadeloupe* case, one of the individuals is alleging disability discrimination because she was fired from her teaching job after informing her employer she would be taking time off for cancer treatment. Hers was largely a secular teaching role; she taught one religion class from a workbook. And while the case applies to private religious schools, there could be wider implications.

"I think we could go down a dangerous slippery slope with a very broad ministerial exception decision, and we could see more religious entities using that," Kaplan warned. "And it's not even about justifying discrimination. They don't have to. What their argument is, you don't have legal standing to challenge this. ... It doesn't matter that you had cancer, in the case of the one teacher ... we can do that because we have this unfettered discretion to decide whether or not you stay in our employ because you're a ministerial employee."

The Supreme Court justices seemed concerned about this slippery slope, too, as evidenced by their line of questioning during oral arguments May 11. For example, it was asked by one justice whether a coach who leads the team in a prayer falls under the ministerial exception. Another asked about an art teacher who teaches Vatican art.

A Mercy Approach Over a Legal Approach

Terry Gonda, who was not only a music director at St. John Fisher but also a spiritual director, shared her view about the ministerial exception for employees of religious institutions and her hopes for the future.

"I'm not a big fan of forcing peoples' change by law," Gonda said. "Sometimes it has to. In this case, however, I think there's gonna be a stairstep of walking up. So, when positions are non-ministerial — if you're a janitor, if you're a teacher — I think the church needs to abide by those rules the same," she said, meaning they should be protected under civil right law.

Then Gonda addressed the issue of LGBTQ employees directly. "While it may be easy to say, 'Well, it's all in this basket now, of age, race, gender, etc., and therefore, we would never let a church say people of a certain race are inferior so ... they can be in our church, they just can't be leaders—' we would never allow that."

However, Gonda called the church's treatment of LGBTQ employees "a bit different."

"We have to shine a light on it and find a new way to talk about it and not, I think, force this," she said. "I think we need to make it really clear and come right up to that line [through the courts], and then it would be better if the church fixes this itself and figures this out itself, and came up with a mercy approach as opposed to a legal approach."

Kaplan sounded sympathetic.

"The way that you sometimes change things in church, with the church hierarchy, policy and stuff, you do that through advocacy and through membership in the church itself," he said. "We do have separation of church and state. We don't want the government setting policy particularly regarding the religious activity of religious institutions."

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Community Foundation Provides Grants to Metro Detroit LGBTQ Organizations

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan announced that five key LGBTQ organizations have received grants totaling \$200,000 from the Community Foundation’s HOPE — Helping Others through Partnerships and Education, Fund. Each organization received \$40,000 to support operating needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

The organizations receiving grants are:

- Affirmations
- Equality Michigan
- LGBT Detroit
- Ruth Ellis Center
- SAGE Metro Detroit

“2020 has been difficult and different,” said Allan Gilmour, Chair of The HOPE Fund of the Community Foundation. “With multiple crises in our nation and magnified in our region, we adapted our annual grantmaking strategy to meet the current needs of organizations serving the LGBTQ+ community.”

“The grant from The HOPE Fund of the Community Foundation has given us the freedom to be flexible and meet the unexpected needs of the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic.” said Jerry Peterson, Executive Director of the Ruth Ellis Center.

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has been supporting these and other groups for the last 25 years through The HOPE Fund. Many of these organizations — like other nonprofits nationwide — have increased demands and at the same time have had to cancel fundraising events and rethink how to engage donors amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

“We are doubling the annual grantmaking from The HOPE Fund,” Gilmour says. “It was particularly important in these times to be able to proactively support these groups and provide general operating support so that organizations can allocate resources the way they see fit. We are thankful for our donors and The HOPE Fund endowment funds that make this possible.”

The HOPE Fund, established in 1994, was created to strengthen organizations and projects that support LGBTQ+ individuals and families, through targeted grantmaking, projects and technical assistance. To date, more than 173 grants totaling over \$2.5 million have been distributed, resulting in a more responsive array of services, programs and organizations for southeast Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community. The HOPE Fund endowment continues to grow and will be able to help meet future needs of the community.

Learn more about The HOPE Fund at CFSEM.org/HOPE.



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LOVE Wins **Between THE Lines™**

More than \$30,000 Raised in GoFundMe Campaigns for 2 Women Killed in Hit-and-Run

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Coleen Hulling, 29, and Melissa Williamson, 25, were on an afternoon bike ride in London Township in Monroe County on Friday, June 26, when a driver swerved and killed the two women. GoFundMe campaigns have been set up to aid both Hulling’s and Williamson’s families with funeral costs that now have raised over \$30,000.

“As many of you have heard, Friday, June 26th was a tragic day for my family. My cousin, Melissa Williamson, and her girlfriend, Coleen Huling, were killed by a reckless driver while riding their bikes. These incredible women were taken from this earth far too soon and they will be missed by so many,” wrote Kennedy Haight, the organizer of Williamson’s GoFundMe campaign. “... My goal is to ease the financial burden on Melissa’s family. Many of us know the costs that go into a service, and I feel that the Williamson’s should not have to worry about finances during this impossible time.”

On June 27, Michigan State Police reported that a 21-year-old male was apprehended as a suspect in the crime and will be facing charges.

When asked about the possibility of the hit-and-run



Melissa Williamson (left) and Coleen Huling. GOFundMe screenshots.

being a hate crime, Lt. Mike Sura, who is working on the case, said that police are not ruling anything out.

“At this point, I would say we’re looking at everything in the case. I would not want to speak prematurely and say, ‘No, this wasn’t a factor or this was a factor.’ The detectives are following up on all the leads that we have and all the information to put together the best case,” Sura said.

Currently, police are searching for the vehicle, which they believe to be somewhere in Monroe or Washtenaw Counties, a flat black 2000 Mercury Mountaineer.

A service was held last week for both women at Ochalek-Stark Funeral Service.

This is a developing story.

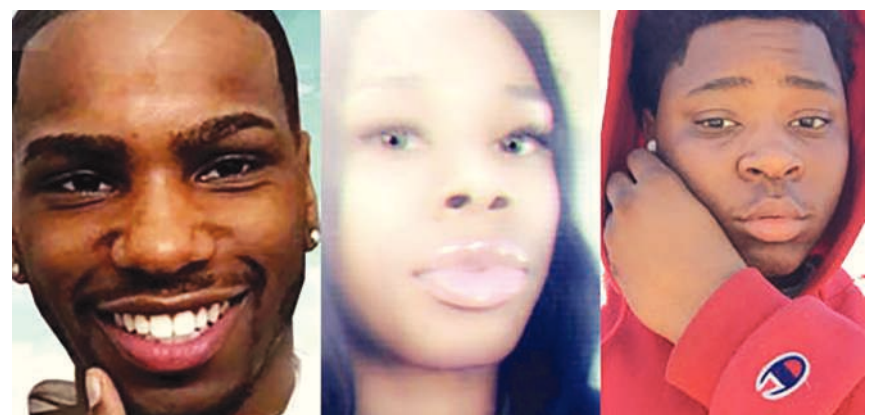
Devon Robinson Sentenced for 2019 Triple LGBTQ Murder

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Last week, 19-year-old Devon Robinson of Detroit was sentenced to three life terms in prison without the possibility of parole for the May 2019 triple murder of two gay men and a transgender woman. Robinson shot and killed 21-year-old Alunte Davis and 20-year-olds Timothy Blancher and Paris Cameron. Prosecutors believe that Robinson’s actions are the result of anti-LGBTQ sentiment.

“This case illustrates the mortal danger faced by members of Detroit’s LGBTQ community, including transgender women of color,” said Alanna Maguire, president of LGBTQ advocacy organization Fair Michigan that handled this case. “The LGBTQ community knows that the Fair Michigan Justice Project, the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office and the Detroit Police Department stand ready to aggressively prosecute these brutal crimes.”

In addition, Robinson was sentenced to two years consecutively for five felony firearm counts and to 10 to 20 years in prison for each of his two counts of assault with



Pictured left to right are victims Alunte Davis, 21; Paris Cameron, 20; and Timothy Blancher, 20.

intent to murder.

At Robinson’s sentencing last year, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy emphasized the importance of stopping future anti-LGBTQ crimes.

“The alleged actions of this defendant are disturbing on so many levels ...,” she said. “We must remain ever vigilant in our fight to eradicate hate in Wayne County and beyond.”



Devon Robinson. Courtesy of the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office.

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HOTTER THAN JULY

How Community Leaders Cornelius Wilson, Robert Tate Shaped Hotter Than July into Detroit's Premier Black LGBTQ Pride Event

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

When most Pride celebrations are winding down at the end of June, Pride is only just beginning in Detroit thanks to Hotter Than July, the second-longest LGBTQ Pride celebration in the country. But whereas the first Pride was a riot, Hotter Than July was created as a reclamation of sorts.

“When we decided to start doing Hotter Than July, we specifically said that this was not going to be one of those things where we got a bunch of naked boys and half-naked women, dancing in front of a bunch of folks,” said Cornelius Wilson, one of the event’s original founders. “This is going to be about education, information, entertainment and family fun. And that’s how we wanted it.”

‘Breaking Barriers’

It started with two organizations. The first being Men of Color, organized by Wilson, focusing on health and education when it came to HIV awareness.

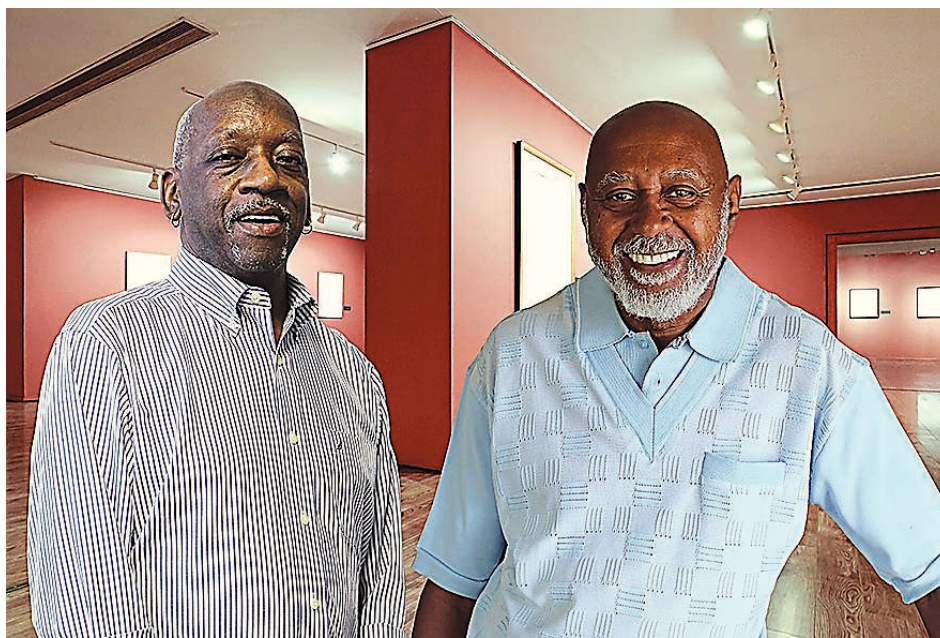
“A bunch of us got tired of going to the club. So we started getting together at our homes and having a discussion party so to speak,” says Wilson, who was working for Community Health Awareness Group at the time. “And as that organization grew, which happened to be CHAG, they started getting money to promote HIV awareness in the Black community. We were asked to start a group and slowly but surely the discussion group became a support group, which became Men of Color.”

Whereas Men of Color focused on health and education awareness for LGBTQ people of color, the Billionaire Boys Club, organized by Robert Tate, was a social group.

“Each month the club would go to different members’ homes and have dinners,” Tate said. “So we got a chance to meet all the different members’ friends.”

From there, the club grew into a network.

“The BBC was breaking barriers in the city because we went places that gay people would never think about going, and they opened their doors and welcomed us in and always welcomed us back,” Tate said. “We went to the Renaissance Club, the Detroit club, the University club — we went all over Detroit doing different events



Cornelius Wilson and Robert Tate.
Photo by Jason Flowers.

and things and they were just so surprised at the clientele that came in, and they were gay; it was just unbelievable.”

A Fateful Meeting

Tate and Wilson met each other during one of Men of Color’s meetings.

“I went to one of their meetings one time, and I was hooked,” he said. “I never missed a meeting once I started.”

It was during the BBC’s weekend anniversary celebration at the end of July when it joined together with Men of Color to start the beginnings of Hotter Than July.

“What Men of Color was doing at that time before Hotter Than July, in particular, we were doing picnics over at Metro Beach or Kensington Park,” Wilson said. “I wanted to get information out in the community about the HIV and AIDS stuff that was going on. So we decided to try and do a combined health fair, picnic time thing. I guess you could say those were the first iterations of Hotter Than July. When we started doing it, it kind of went overwhelmingly successful based on the level of participation.”

Intentionally Inclusive

If Hotter Than July has a little something for everyone, that is by design. The event, started in 1996 to celebrate Detroit’s Black LGBTQ community, began as a way to showcase the multifaceted lives of Black LGBTQ people.

“It kind of evolved,” Wilson said. “In the earlier days, you had pretty much a broad spectrum of participation. You had the old. You had the young. You had other community members that got involved and set up things for the children because we always wanted it to be a family friendly affair. So, you know, we had entertainment and professional entertainment that did some things, but it’s evolved over the years.”

One evolution is how the event goes about networking itself in the community.

“I would say back then when we started it was almost [exclusively by] word-of-mouth. It wasn’t a lot of organizing like it is today,” Tate said. “Back then it might have been at least 10 or 15 social groups or organizations and they all taken part in it and made it comfortable and brought all of the people together because everybody knew somebody. They would bring all those people together and it just blossomed into this wonderful thing that’s been going on for 25 years.”

Cornelius added, “The other thing was that, we had a whole lot of bars that we went to. We

had three or four bars downtown. Through word-of-mouth, some of the bar owners or the folks would come to Men of Color or they would show up at some of the BBC’s functions. So through word of mouth folks would come check us out just because they had heard about this thing.”

Online Interaction

Although Hotter Than July will be virtual this year, Wilson and Tate both agree that it is a natural evolution to fit the needs of the current community.

“I just think that this pandemic has moved folks along the continuum a little bit quicker than we expected,” Wilson said. “I think we were heading in this direction anyway, but I think the pandemic just kind of took us from zero to eight unexpectedly.”

Tate agrees.

“To me, it is so different the way they are doing it, and it’s unbelievable that the planning and everything that they are doing can still make Hotter Than July happen,” he said. “All the different activities that goes on during the week of Hotter Than July, I really think they all play a big part. I can’t really see a change in anything because all of the different activities that go on is what goes on to be successful.”

But no matter whether the event is virtual or in-person, both organizers say that having something for everyone is what has made Hotter Than July last through so many years.

“I believe the thing that made Hotter Than July stand out is that from Tuesday through Sunday there was something uniquely different in the community that no matter how you fit in the community, there was something there that you felt you could connect to,” Wilson said. “And it also gave people in the community who have talents and skills a chance to be highlighted. It put us up front to showcase their talents.”

And talent continues to be a core of what makes Black LGBTQ culture so special in Detroit today.

Emell Derra Adolphus is a veteran culture journalist of 10 years. He is working on his first novel. Reach him at emell@youvegotmell.com.

HOTTER THAN JULY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, JULY 24

5:30 PM - CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

6:00 PM - RETROSPECTIVE: 25 YEARS

7:00 PM - MARVIN LEE BUILDING DEDICATION

8:00 PM - THE SWERV SHOW

SATURDAY, JULY 25

NOON TO 5:00 PM - THE VIRTUAL PICNIC

SUNDAY, JULY 26

10:00 AM - HEALING & SUPPORT SERVICE : THE COUNCIL

11:00 AM - WORSHIP SERVICE WITH ONE CHURCH DETROIT

1:00 PM - SUNDAY BRUNCH WITH BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB

3:00 TO 7:00 PM - THE VOTERS BALL AND DAY PARTY

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New Political Action Committee Benefits LGBTQ Candidates in Michigan

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

By the Numbers

By his own account, Ferndale resident Oscar Renault is “a numbers person.” That’s why, when he calculated how grossly underrepresented the LGBTQ community is in elective office, he wanted to do something about it.

“I do a lot of research, so according to our sources, we currently have just under 1 percent of LGBTQ elected officials in our nation,” Renault said. [by this account, .13 percent] “If I do my numbers correctly, that’s roughly 600 people out of nearly 520,000 elected officials in our country. And while our community consists of 5 to 6 percent of our nation, we should be closer to 20,000 elected officials in our nation to be equally represented.”

Determined to remedy the situation, Renault founded the Unity Fund, a political action committee that endorses and financially assists LGBTQ candidates in Michigan. PACs like the Victory Fund endorse LGBTQ candidates all over the country; this is the first one solely defined by the state’s borders.

“The Unity Fund is a political action committee that consists of citizens — LGBTQ and allies — that came together to support LGBTQ candidates because we see a void in the support currently locally and we all understand that local elections are very important for us,” Renault said. “So we wanted to ... create something that would help our LGBTQ candidates ... to run more successful campaigns. Until we’re going to have campaign reform in our country, running a campaign is very expensive.

“[The] LGBTQ community needs representation,” Renault continued. “We need



people in public offices locally, and we need them in the Senate; we need them in the House. That’s why we all came together, and we decided to pool our resources, contribute ourselves to the fund and then publicly announce the formation so the LGBTQ community [and allies] can come help us finance these elections.”

Background

The Unity Fund was founded in April 2020, just in time to support candidates running for office in November 2020.

“We started talking about it last year, because we got inspired by the rainbow wave of 2018 and we saw how many LGBTQ candidates ran very successful campaigns and we elected some very brilliant people on the state level and locally as well,” Renault said.

The steering committee’s original plan was to form an independent PAC; that way, by backing a minimum of three candidates and with a minimum of 25 individual donors, they could contribute to each of their chosen candidates at up to 10 times the individual donor level. However, due to the constraints brought about

by the coronavirus pandemic, that number of donors was not achieved. Still, they are able to function as a PAC and contribute to campaigns at the individual level. In the future, they hope to scale up.

There are several criteria that candidates must meet to secure endorsement by the Unity Fund. First of all, they must be committed to making a difference when it comes to LGBTQ rights. Legally, they must be formally registered as a candidate either with the county or state. And of course, they must be openly LGBTQ. Because they are a new organization with limited funds, for an endorsed candidate to receive financial support, they must also be strong contenders in their races.

Thus far, the PAC has endorsed and is supporting four candidates: Cynthia Thornton (State Rep, 7th District), Kevin Kresch (State Rep, 27th District) and Jody LaMacchia (State Rep, 46th District) have each received \$1,000 from the Unity Fund. Dave Coulter, candidate for Oakland County Executive, is another candidate who’s been endorsed and will be receiving a donation. 60th House District State Rep. Jon Hoadley has been endorsed in his race for U.S. Congress as well.

As Renault explained, “we are still in our early stages,” so to be considered for endorsement, “We obviously rely on our network, our friends, obviously on professionals,” he said. “We have a source at the LGBTQ Democratic Caucus that provided us with some recommendations... there’s a lot of networking, currently, and we created a list and select the ones in our opinion that would make the biggest impact for the community.”

In addition to financial assistance, there are other ways the Unity Fund aims to help its candidates. Because they have members who

are experienced in the political field, they can be brought in to help with things like training, strategy and networking. In the future, Renault said they’d like to be able to develop a list of LGBTQ professionals who can provide flyers, t-shirt printing and the like.

Get Involved

“If people want to get involved on a different level, they can also become members of our PAC,” Renault said. “They can come join us and be more active, because we are growing and we are going to be expanding and we’ll be looking for people to offer to help us in different areas. An organization like ours is going to have social media outreach; we’ll be doing a lot of fundraising ... we probably will never have a building because we are trying to keep our expenses very low. We don’t have day-to-day activities except to fundraise and meet once in a while.”

Because the Unity Fund is entirely run by volunteers and has no overhead at present, 100 percent of donations currently go to the endorsed candidates.

In the future, Renault simply wants to enable more LGBTQ candidates to seek office in Michigan.

“We would like to see more LGBTQ candidates running successful campaigns, stress-free, hopefully, or with reduced stress and ... winning their campaigns,” Renault said. “And hopefully putting an end to LGBTQ civil rights issues, which is a goal and dream for all of us, I believe.”

To learn more visit unityfundmi.com.

Henry Ford Health System Recognizes Pride Month with Flags Outside Hospitals, Offices

BY BENJAMIN DECKER

Henry Ford Health System has acknowledged Pride month and took it to social media to share its open support for the LGBTQ community. All across the Detroit Metropolitan area, Pride flags stand tall at five of its hospitals and three administrative offices.

“Our nation is facing truly unprecedented and historic times, making diversity, equity and inclusion more important now than ever before,” said Wright Lassiter III, president and CEO of Henry Ford Health System.

This is the second year Henry Ford celebrated Pride month. The initiative was led by the company’s Pride employee resource group, whose members work to provide LGBTQ

patients equitable health care. The Pride ERG also has the duty of recruiting and retaining LGBTQ team members throughout the staff.

“Celebrating our differences with observances like these and learning to understand one another is what truly unites us, as we continue to focus on providing equitable care and reducing disparities within the communities that we serve,” Lassiter said.

The six-hospital system makes sure that at the core of its work, its staff is committed to values of compassion, innovation, respect and results. In its goal to practice inclusion and equality for all patients, representatives said that it only feels right for the Pride flag to stand tall outside the facilities.

Henry Ford has recognized the importance of celebrating Pride month

each June as a way to commemorate the Stonewall Riots in June of 1969, which largely sparked the modern fight for LGBTQ equality. The company plans on planting a Pride flag in front of its facilities every June onward as a tribute to those who fought at Stonewall and to honor the contributions by the LGBTQ community to society today.

“We are committed to providing safe, equitable health care for all and supporting the LGBTQ community. Honoring diversity is one of the key principles at the very core of our organization, not just through our policies and procedures, but through our actions every day,” said Kimberly Dawn Wisdom, M.D., senior vice president of Community Health & Equity and chief wellness and diversity officer for Henry Ford Health System.



Celebrating Pride Month and practicing social distancing are Jacob Sierocki, Henry Ford Health System Corporate Compliance Specialist and Pride employee resource group president, next to a Pride Month flag with Henry Ford Hospital President, Veronica Hall.

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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Win \$2.5 Million (Save. \$499)

It must have been something cogent and articulately pleading in my weekly prayers, but recently I've just been darn lucky. Not once, but twice.

This past week I received an email from an unknown generous "friend" who said he himself had won \$3 million in a Michigan lottery that he was going to share among several LGBTQ organizations and a few gay persons.

"You, Charles, are one of them!" (I couldn't have been that good in bed. Let's say he was a fan of my art.)

The previous week I received a call and was excitedly told I had won a Publisher's Clearing House award of \$2.5 Million, AND! a 2020 Alfa Romeo Giulia. (Che Bella, Mary.)

I'll admit to being intrigued by the possibility that somehow, someway a previous mailed-in entry did get picked. (God knows everybody plays the PCH game for the chance of a lifetime.)

What followed next from my informant was a strictly secret series of two 10-digit numbers to be given as ID when receiving my winning check and the Alfa.

I was cautioned to show no one these numbers.

"There are too many out there who just might take advantage of you, and we wouldn't want you to miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime Mega Bucks winning."

I was then given background about the Better Business Bureau and the IRS monitoring that goes with the handling of the joint winnings.

"Now, Mr. Alexander: Do you prefer your delivery with full publicity TV fanfare, or simply non-publicized handling?"

Playing the winning game, so to speak — modest person that I am — I turned down instant-star publicity, but, nonetheless, I was intrigued.

(Is there a possibility that I have indeed won. What will I do with the money? Will I share it? Will I be generous to LGBTQ friends, organizations, allies? Decisions. Decisions. Decisions!)

Next came the final requirement to get the Italian car rolling, so to speak.

"Go to your nearest Walgreens or Rite Aide store and purchase a Vanilla One Card for \$499. This will be used to initiate IRS and BBB's initial implementations," were the instructions.

"That simple, Charles. Let us know when you get your Vanilla One card, and you'll get your check and 2020 Alfa Romeo in just a matter of days, a week at the most. That's it, lucky guy!"

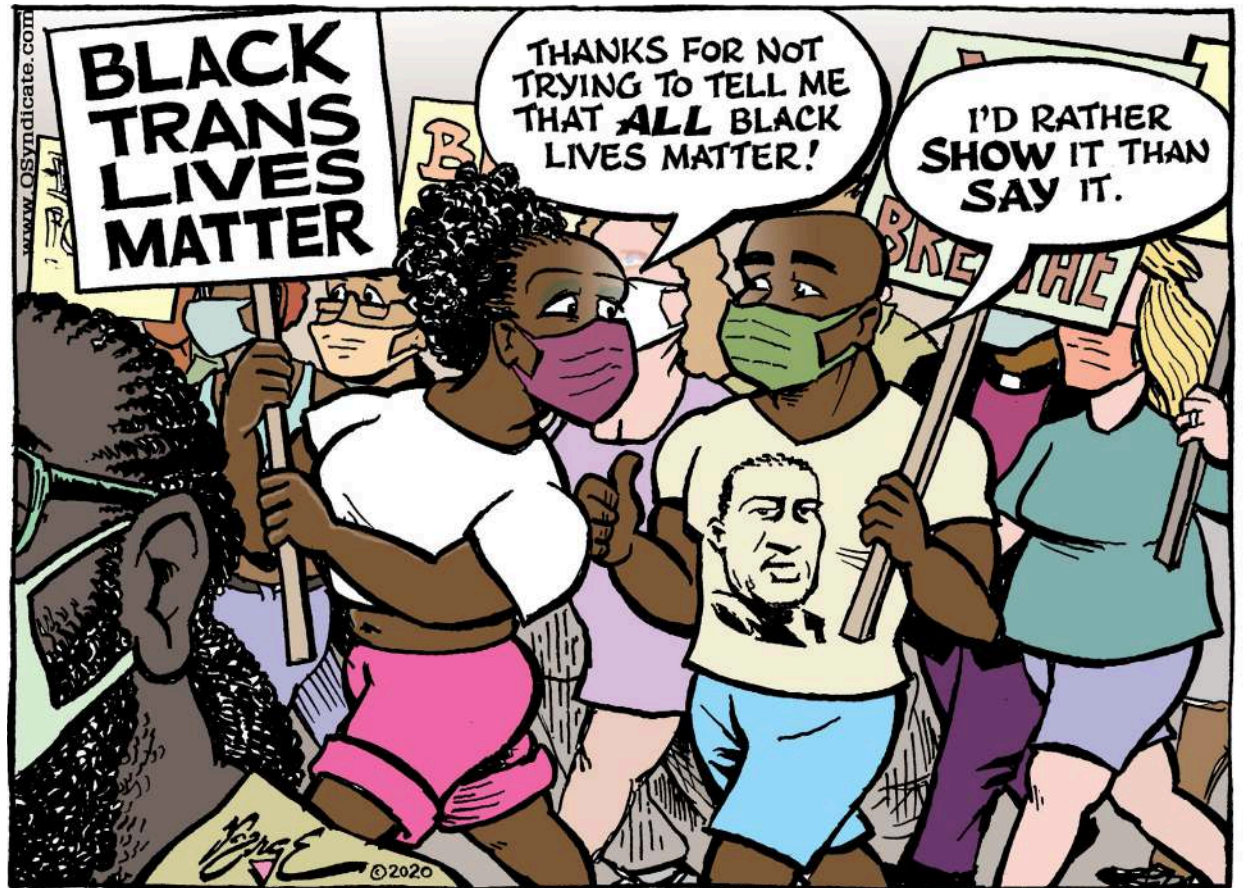
I'll give him credit for his spiel. It was artfully done, and it was ever so cleverly articulated. It was happy in tone. Cheering.

Then came my research. Reluctantly to be sure. (God knows I could use the money. Well, let's say \$100,000 of it. Surely that's not asking too much.)

Here's what I found: The phone call was from Jamaica. The Jamaican Lottery is rife with its own scams. And second: Publisher's Clearing House informs winners of their winning status by email.

In response to a scam of yet another internet vintage, I

See next page



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Transmissions

Water in the Desert

Netflix has recently released "Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen," a documentary created by Sam Feder, Amy Scholder and Laverne Cox. In it, a cast of transgender and nonbinary people examine the history of trans images in movies and television.

It really is a remarkable piece of filmmaking, covering a fairly in-depth history of the good, bad and ugly of trans representation, from D. W. Griffith's 1914 take on a trans character in "Judith of Bethulia" to FX's groundbreaking series, "Pose."

One thing that is clear through so many of the stories covered is just how much of the media centered on transgender characters over the years has not been made for a trans audience. Even the best of them are morality stories attempting to change non-transgender minds to be more accepting of trans lives.

Most, however, fall far from that mark. They are tales of trans serial killers, like Buffalo Bill in "The Silence of the Lambs."

They are also tragic plotlines, such as television shows like "ER" casting transgender women dying due to their bodies rejecting feminizing hormones or prostate cancer. Some, too,

are trans deceivers, wearing clothing associated with a different gender to get a job or find housing, such as in the 1980s sitcom "Bosom Buddies."

More often than not, though, they are played for laughs: caricatures of transgender identity, men in dresses, such as The Three Stooges in ballerina gear.

"Disclosure," however, takes a look at each of these through the trans eye, and it explores how these stories have shaped and affected both the popular view of transgender people, but also their own transgender lives. This, in my opinion, is key.

While "Disclosure" covers a lot of ground, it was the movies and TV shows of the 1970s and 1990s that stuck with me the most. These were the ones I grew up, and the ones I came of age with as a transgender person.

So many of them were such awful depictions, but in their time and place, as a young transgender person, they were also water in the desert. That is, a very problematic representation that, when it is the only representative you have, is far more

See Transmissions, next page

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 14

palatable.

“The Crying Game,” covered in “Disclosure,” is a good example. When the character of Dil — and here’s a 28-year-old spoiler alert — is revealed as having a penis, another character, Fergus, runs to the restroom in a spasm of vomiting.

It’s a terrible reaction, and it set up ages of similar scenes of revulsion at trans bodies from “Ace Ventura” to “Family Guy.” It is a moment that is hurtful, as a trans person, to watch, knowing that even people who were romantically attracted to us — up to that moment — will react to our very flesh with utter, uncontrolled, disgust.

Yet, at the time, it came out, in many trans circles, the view was different. People were excited to see a movie that appeared to have an actual trans person in it. As bad as it all was, it was still so rare to see anything approaching an honest representation as the character of Dil that may within the community largely glossed over how terrible the reveal and subsequent scenes were for that character.

The same could be said for “Boys Don’t Cry.” The film has many sins, not the least of them being the omission of Philip DeVine, a Black friend of Brandon Teena killed the same night, from the narrative. Yet, at the time it was released, many — myself included — were happy to see a big-budget Hollywood film centered on such a tragedy. That Hilary Swank won an Academy Award was, at the time, also viewed as a positive by many in the community, a high-water mark for its time.

Another pivotal moment from “Disclosure” was Billy Crystal’s character on “Soap,” Jodie Dallas, who was planning to transition. Or, as it was put at the time,

“get a sex change.” There wasn’t much trans representation on TV at the time in the 1970s.

Of course, that character was reduced to a gay man shortly after, which was presented in part as to why he wanted to transition in the first place, then he got married to a woman and had a kid who later turned out to be the devil. But that is beside the point.

In looking back on “Soap,” you can see how the character’s female presentation was played purely as a gag: the unshaven face and wash-and-go blonde wig, coupled with a pink satin dress and otherwise masculine body make this clear.

Yet “Soap” was the first time I regularly saw a character who was actually presented as trans, right there on the front room with my parents, hunched over TV trays! This wasn’t Corporal Klinger trying to dodge the Army, or a comedic character like Geraldine played by Flip Wilson. In its time, this was quite the thing to see.

Nevertheless, like so many other examples, the Jodie Dallas character had a dual effect: while it helped illuminate me to my own transness, it was also feeding me a narrative that being trans was a horrible thing. This was all we had, but this was also horrible.

If you are trans or nonbinary, I recommend watching “Disclosure.” Know, however, that it may hit some very soft spots for you. A lot of the material presented in hard to sit through. It is worth watching all the way through, though.

And if you are not trans, you still need to watch this. You will gain a very new perspective on trans lives, and you’ll enjoy a documentary that provides an honest and fresh view on trans representation in popular media.

Gwen Smith would really like to see a whole lot more from the “Disclosure” team. You can find her at gwensmith.com.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 14

was told in no uncertain bitcoin, pay-me-naughty-guy terms that my porn-watching was being recently monitored and that if I didn’t pay up to the sender I would have my friends, my family and my Facebook followers contacted. (Whether or not that was to be facilitated on Zoom is anyone’s guess.)

This scamming, according to an article in the Detroit Free Press, originated in England. To date, a few local internet queens have been so scamed.

I replied to its bitcoin screwup succinctly: “ATTORNEY FOLLOW-UP PENDING EMAIL INVESTIGATION.”

I’ve not heard back from him. Not a peep. (As for porn, let’s hope Biden replaces Trump in 2020.)

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

Donald Trump

Welp, the Supreme Court issued its abortion ruling that everyone has been bracing themselves for and as it turns out... Wait, reproductive rights won? But Kavanaugh. But Gorsuch...

But nothing. The Supreme Court has been issuing rulings lately that have horrified the far-right conservatives who sold this country out to a racist con man in exchange for a couple of Supreme Court seats. Abortion providers can’t be saddled with arbitrary laws intended to shut them down. DACA kids can stay. Transgender Americans are protected from employment discrimination.

Granted, these aren’t the only cases the Supreme Court heard this term, but these are some very unexpected outcomes for both liberals and conservatives.

So, does this mean that lighting the country on fire in order to trash the will of the majority who supports things like reproductive rights and marriage equality isn’t worth it and that judges don’t matter?

Well, yes and no. The damage that has been done to this country under Trump is truly astonishing. So many people dead, so many people sick, so many people unemployed. And then there’s Trump’s racism and misogyny, his unwillingness to learn or take responsibility for anything, his fawning over Vladimir Putin and other authoritarian leaders. This was a risky bet by right-wing conservatives and, unfortunately, they were gambling with all of our lives. And they lost, which means we all lost.

But do judges matter? Does it really matter who appoints them? Yes, they do and yes, it does. Trump has been filling seats in lower level courts like wild, which is something he gets to do as president. But unlike previous Republican presidents, Trump’s picks have been selected because they are ideologically extreme not because they are expected to be good at their jobs. In multiple cases, Trump’s picks were rated as unqualified by the American Bar Association. So this is definitely a quantity over quality situation. And the country will be paying for these appointments for decades to come.

The Supreme Court is important. If Trump gets another term he very well could get to appoint more justices, which would be devastating for everyone who doesn’t look like Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch. Black people, LGBTQ people, poor people, women, immigrants have much to fear from a second Trump term.

People have often voiced confusion about why Trump is so popular with evangelical Christians. He is clearly an unrepentant sinner by their definition. He is morally bankrupt, cruel and dumb. Not exactly the kind of guy Jesus would call his BFF.

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Granted, these aren’t the only cases the Supreme Court heard this term, but these are some very unexpected outcomes for both liberals and conservatives.

But the answer is pretty simple: it’s the courts. Right-wing Christians believe that secularism is strangling their freedom of religion. And they are right, so far as they define “religious freedom” as being able to discriminate against whomever they want and amassing political power by smashing the wall between church and state. And they are pissed about it.

Look, I’ve been following right-wing so-called Christians for decades. They didn’t sell out their principles because they didn’t have any in the first place. Power has always been the end goal. Let’s stop being surprised by their lack of morals.

Along those lines, these right-wing conservatives need a second Trump term more than ever considering recent Supreme Court rulings. They aren’t going to abandon Trump. They need him to get even more seats on the courts. In fact, I predict that the fight to keep their man in power will bring out the very worst in them. And him.

I know, I know. It might seem like we’ve seen the worst of what Trump already. But there is no limit to the depths he will sink. Right now his main objective is to convince Americans that everything is fine and that the economy is perfect even while COVID-19 infections are rising and the number of people who have died is in the staggering 130,000 range. Yet there are still millions of Americans who will enthusiastically vote for him again.

After the abortion ruling came out on June 29 author Jessica Valenti Tweeted, “I don’t know how to process good news anymore.” Very relatable. Because there is so little of it these days. Bad news dominates. Americans spend their time ‘doom scrolling’ looking for the next bad thing. And there’s always a new bad thing. Every time I get a news alert on my phone I feel a wave of anxiety: ‘Oh no, what did he do now?’”

Donald Trump is at the heart of all of this, but a heart cannot survive outside of a body. The body is the Republican Party. Their embrace of this reckless and racist president says more about them than it does about him. He’s never claimed to be “a perfect person,” as he said after the “grab ‘em by the pussy” tape was released. Republicans didn’t abandon them then, they won’t now. Vote them all out.

Obituary: Joy E. Geng

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

July 27, 1944 – June 21, 2020

Joy Geng, one of the first out employees at Ford and a longtime supporter and board member of Equality Michigan — and its predecessor the Triangle Foundation — died Sunday, June 21. She was 75.

Geng, who lived in Dearborn Heights, grew up in Plymouth. She graduated from Plymouth High School before attending Wayne State University where she would eventually go on to earn an MBA. She began in a starting level position at Ford in 1967 and moved up as quickly as a woman could at that time. Geng grew used to keeping her sexual orientation a secret on the job.

In 1991 and at the behest of her next-door neighbor Henry Messer, Geng joined the board of the Lesbian and Gay Foundation of Michigan, which, only a short time later, changed its name to the Triangle Foundation.

“Henry kind of bugged me until I gave in,” Geng recalled in a 2018 interview with *Between The Lines*. “I had a more than a full-time job at that time and I didn’t have a lot of extra time. I had a partner and a family. But he got me.”

Geng was an active board member and worked especially hard in the area of finance, her specialty. Still afraid to come out on the job, it wouldn’t be until 1997, shortly before her retirement, that she outed herself in a story for the Ford worldwide employee newspaper. At the time, as manager of Ford’s retirement and savings plans, Geng was the highest salary grade, active management employee to come out.

“That was the time that I knew I was ready to risk my job, my life, everything for the cause and for the young people,” Geng told BTL in 2005. “I really did it for the young people. I had calls and comments and letters from people from all over the world. I had about 100 people working for me at that time, and I can’t think of one person who didn’t acknowledge that.”

After retiring from Ford, Geng



worked even harder for Triangle, and found other organizations to help out as well devoting countless hours to LGBTQ and animal rights groups.

“I won’t do it for money,” she said. “I do it for the cause.”

When not working for nonprofits, Geng was an avid golfer. She also enjoyed gardening and being by the water at her condo in Oscoda. Though they never decided to marry, Geng and Maria Winiarski lived as partners for 38 years.

“She was hot and had beautiful blue eyes,” Winiarski said when she recalled what first attracted her to Geng. “She was such a dynamic person and I adored how she could take control and do anything.”

Kevin McAlpine served as director of development with Triangle and worked at the agency for 10 years.

“Joy had a practical, no-nonsense approach to life that I appreciated,” he said. “I learned a lot from her. She was a great mentor to many and did so much for the community.”

Paula Merideth served on the Triangle board with Geng for several years. The two became fast friends.

“The thing I will remember about Joy the most, and it’s kind of universal in her life, is whatever she cared about and invested herself in she was steadfast. She stayed with it her entire life,” Merideth said.

Visitation for Geng took place Friday, June 26, at the Dearborn Chapel of Voran Funeral Home.



The makeshift memorial at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla., on May 31, 2020 (Washington Blade photo by Michael K. Lavers)

House Approves Bill to Designate Pulse Nightclub a National Memorial

BY MICHAEL LAVERS

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill last month that would designate the Pulse nightclub as a national memorial.

A press release that U.S. Reps. Darren Soto, Val Demings, and Stephanie Murphy released notes House Resolution 3094 “grants a federal designation honoring the 49 lives taken on June 12, 2016, as well as the survivors, first responders and the entire Central Florida community.”

Soto, Demings and Murphy are Democrats who represent Orlando in Congress.

“I am grateful that the House has passed our legislation to make the Pulse site a national memorial,” said Demings. “We will always honor the family, friends, and neighbors we lost that night. Today, the U.S. House

moved forward legislation that will help to ensure that the memories of the victims will always be a part of our national identity and that they will never be forgotten.”

“Four years ago, we saw the atrocious and destructive nature of hatred plague our Orlando community when 49 lives were taken and 53 others were injured,” added Soto. “As we continue to honor the memory of those lost, I am proud to lead the fight with Congresswomen Val Demings and Stephanie Murphy to designate the National Pulse Memorial. Today, we remind the world that hate will never defeat love, grief can turn into strength and that a place of loss can become a sanctuary of healing. Together, we will continue to open minds and hearts. We will make the Pulse Memorial a national symbol of hope, love and light.”

The onePULSE Foundation, a group founded by Pulse owner Barbara Poma that is planning to build a permanent memorial, on Friday applauded the lawmakers who introduced HR 3094.

“Today, the House of Representatives passed a bill to recognize Pulse nightclub as a National Memorial Site, reminding the world that we will not let hate win,” said the onePULSE Foundation in a tweet.

June 12 marked four years since a gunman killed 49 people inside the nightclub during its Latino night.

The massacre at the time was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

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

Virginia Nondiscrimination Bill Takes Effect

BY MICHAEL LAVERS

A bill that adds sexual orientation and gender identity to Virginia’s nondiscrimination law took effect on Wednesday.

The Democrat-controlled General Assembly earlier this year approved the Virginia Values Act. Governor Ralph Northam signed it into law on April 11.

Republicans, who lost control of the General Assembly last November, previously blocked efforts to ban anti-LGBTQ discrimination in the



The Virginia Capitol (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

commonwealth. Virginia is the first state in the South to enact these protections.

“This victory shows the world that

with grit, determination, heart and purpose, we can achieve the civil rights that LGBTQ people need and deserve,” said Northam in a video for Global Pride, a 24-hour virtual Pride event that took place on Saturday.

The Washington Blade will update this story.

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

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HUD Appears to Defy Bostock Ruling with Anti-Trans Rule for Homeless Shelters

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

In apparent defiance of the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling against anti-LGBTQ discrimination, the Trump administration has announced plans to change Obama-era regulations to allow homeless shelters to refuse to house transgender people consistent with their gender identity.

Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Ben Carson announced in a statement Wednesday the plan would allow homeless shelters to voluntarily establish policies on the admission of transgender people.

“This important update will empower shelter providers to set policies that align with their missions, like safeguarding victims of domestic violence or human trafficking,” Carson said. “Mission-focused shelter operators play a vital and compassionate role in communities across America. The Federal Government should empower them, not mandate a single approach that overrides local law and concerns. HUD also wants to encourage their participation in HUD programs. That’s exactly what we are doing with this rule change.”

In 2016, the Obama administration under then-Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Julian Castro updated the Equal Access Rule, which had been interpreted in 2012 to bar anti-LGBTQ discrimination in government-subsidized homes, to require homeless shelters with single-sex facilities to house transgender people consistent with their gender identity.

But the Trump administration proposal, according to a 28-page proposed rule being circulated among congressional committees, seeks effectively to undo those Obama-era regulations.

The proposal would purportedly preserve the 2012 Equal Access Rule barring anti-LGBTQ discrimination in federally-funded housing programs, but “require any determination of sex by the shelter provider to be based on a good faith belief, and require the shelter provider to provide transfer recommendations if a person is of the sex not accommodated by the shelter and in some other circumstances.”

“For example, under the proposed rule, if a single-sex facility permissibly provides accommodation for women, and its policy is to serve only biological women, without regard to gender identity, it may decline to accommodate a person who identifies as female but who is a biological male,” the proposed rule says. “Conversely, the same shelter may not, on the basis of sex, decline to accommodate a person who identifies as male but who is a biological female.”

LaLa Zannell, Trans Justice Campaign Manager for the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement the proposal is cruel amid high unemployment rates during the coronavirus crisis.

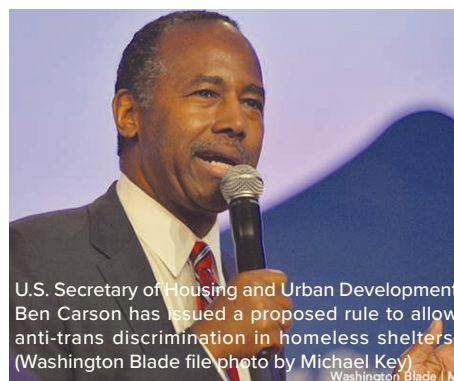
“Housing Secretary Ben Carson: Where should the Black and Brown trans women who have faced discrimination at work and violence in their homes and the streets go after we have been turned away from shelters?” Zannell said. “Shelters funded by taxpayers should be open to all — period. We should all tell the Trump administration that this proposed rule is not only wrong but deadly.”

The proposal justifies the change by asserting the 2016 Obama-era regulations exceeded authority under the Fair Housing Act, minimized local control, imposed regulatory burdens and burdened shelters with deeply held religious convictions, referring to a 2017 memo from former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions requiring U.S. agencies to accommodate religious objections in regulations.

“In some faith traditions, sex is viewed as an immutable characteristic determined at birth,” the proposal says. “Thus, legally compelled accommodation determined on a basis in conflict with the provider’s beliefs could violate religious freedom precepts.”

Further, the rule draws on privacy issues, a concern cited by opponents of allowing transgender people to use the restroom consistent with their gender identity, as a reason for the change.

“HUD does not believe it is beneficial to institute a national policy that may force homeless women to sleep alongside and interact with men in intimate settings — even though



U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson has issued a proposed rule to allow anti-trans discrimination in homeless shelters. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

those women may have just been beaten, raped, and sexually assaulted by a man the day before,” Carson said.

The proposal concedes HUD “is not aware of data suggesting that transgender individuals pose an inherent risk to biological women,” but adds “there is anecdotal evidence” non-trans women may fear being housed with transgender women.

Sharita Gruberg, senior director for the LGBTQ Research and Communications Project at Center for American Progress, said in a statement the proposal “is targeting transgender people for discrimination.”

“Giving shelters a license to discriminate against transgender people would be wrong at any time, but to do so in the midst of a pandemic and an economic crisis constitutes an act of wanton cruelty,” Gruberg said.

According to a study from the Center for American Progress and Equal Rights Center before the 2016 regulations went into effect, only 30 percent of shelters tested were willing to appropriately house transgender people, and 1 in 5 outright refused to provide them with shelter.

The proposal appears to conflict with the recent ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court in case of *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which determined anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a form of sex discrimination, thus illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although that ruling pertained to employment, not housing, the logic in the decision should affect the Fair Housing Act, which bans

discrimination on the basis of sex in housing, and any regulations emanating from the U.S. government on that statute.

Neither the Justice Department, which has been charged with implementing the Bostock decision, nor the Department of Housing & Urban Development responded to the Washington Blade’s request to comment on how the proposal is consistent with the Supreme Court ruling.

Mara Keisling, Executive Director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement the proposal “flies in the face of the Bostock Supreme Court ruling, so it will not stand, but it could still put people in danger.”

“Discrimination and criminalization have left countless transgender people, particularly transgender people of color, exposed to violence and abuse, all while family rejection can leave transgender youth with nowhere to turn,” Keisling said. “Secretary Carson is contradicting the very mission of his department by trying to make shelters less safe for those who need them and further endangering the lives of marginalized people. We will fight this rule like trans lives depend on it because trans lives do depend on it.”

The submission of the proposed rule is the last step in the process before publication in the Federal Register. A 60-day comment period for the rule is expected to start in the coming days.

HUD had previously announced it would gut the 2016 rule for homeless shelters with a rule allowing homeless shelters to refuse to house transgender people based on religious beliefs or privacy issues, but no document until now had reached this point in the rule-making stage, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

The White House didn’t respond to the Washington Blade’s request to comment on whether President Trump is OK with the rule and think it’s consistent with the Supreme Court’s decision in the Bostock case.

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

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The Court: Independent attorneys reviewed the Supreme Court decision and the Attorney General released a statement: we still need to amend Michigan's Civil Rights Act. The Court's ruling was not based upon constitutional rights and applied narrowly to federal employment law, not state law. LGBTQ people still face discrimination in local employment, housing, education, public accommodations and services.

Campaign status: While we are halfway to goal to introduce the first-ever citizens' bill for equality (you've collected 150,000 signatures so far), we'll need \$1.8 million to build the canvassing operations to gather the rest. The Court of Claims recognized that COVID-19 impacted the rights of our nearly 200,000 supporters, allowing us to submit signatures this October. This sets up a legislative vote in lame duck session and a defining moment on equal rights this December.

Financial gap: We have approximately \$1 million in pledges but we are short \$875,000 due to the impact of COVID-19. Adding to the challenge: We have a tight timeline as we'll need to launch by July 15. Let's work to close the gap to achieve our goal of prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ Michiganders and making sure every Michigander has an equal right to succeed.

Why we fight: Trans women of color are still suffering the highest levels of discrimination. It is why we started this campaign in January. This effort remains Michigan's best option for equal rights for all. This campaign remains deeply personal for many people: 311,000 adults identify as LGBTQ and at least 61,000 are youth. The Williams Institute reported 32,900 identify as transgender.

From the bottom of our hearts: Thank you.

Dr. Mira Jourdan, Jeynce Poindexter,
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His Black Queerness, Front and Center

‘Love, Simon’ Star Talks Defiant Solo Album and Social Justice Uprising

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Once Keiynan Lonsdale made no apologies for who he is, the music followed suit. The star of the CW’s “The Flash” and 2018’s gay teen comedy “Love, Simon” celebrates his Black queer identity on his 14-track anthemic solo debut “Rainbow Boy.” Dance-pop song “Gay Street Fighter” is an audacious strut of a rally cry, proclaiming that even God is gay. And with a shout out to “my non-binary bitches,” “White Noise” and its buoyant groove lifts the stories of Black people that have fallen through the cracks.

Lonsdale’s album comes at the same time as “Love, Victor,” the “Love, Simon” spin-off on Hulu. In the series, the 28-year-old Aussie star reprises his role as quiet high-schooler Bram and becomes instrumental in Victor’s journey to authenticity.

When I recently connected with Lonsdale during a Zoom call, he was riding out the last two days of his mandatory 14-day quarantine in a hotel in Australia. At one point, the phone rang. And then it rang again. “Don’t mind me,” Lonsdale said, laughing. “I’m in the Australian quarantine right now, and so, actually, they call and check on you each day.”

In quarantine, Lonsdale has been able to “take stock of the album release, the state of the world...” He laughs again. “And the state of myself.”

Were you feeling as defiant as the music on this album when you recorded it, or was it a personal manifestation?

Yeah, I was 100 percent feeling just as defiant. The songs were written, for the most part, pretty easily. There was so much that was ready to be expressed. And I think the momentum kept building, because I hadn’t felt that empowered to be able to write and make music that was so unapologetic. It felt really, really ripe.

When did you feel you could be unabashedly yourself in your music?

There was definitely one moment; it was three years exactly before I released it, where I had this realization that the best way for me to create would be to hold absolutely nothing back. I realized I was in control of the songs that I would write, and it would be a matter of what the writing led with, or staying in this sort of fear mindset that I had my whole life. And for good reason.

But it felt kind of like a spell was broken, and I was like, “I can say this shit, I can *sing* this shit.” (Laughs) In fact, it’s what sparked me to realize that I could have my own unique voice. Before that I would say that I spent a lot of time trying to be like others, but always wanting to have the gall to be able to be my own (person). But I didn’t know what that meant. So it was nice to

Photo: Clifford Prince King

have that spell broken.

So then being able to mentor a younger gay person on “Love, Victor” and remind him that there’s no one way to be LGBTQ, what did that feel like for you?

It was great to be able to play a role that could share that knowledge, because it’s something that I think each of us have needed to hear at one time: that you are still the one that gets to define who you are. There is no one way, and as much as we like to paint people with the same brush, it’s just not how it works. So I think it sends an important message. I’m glad that’s the route they went with with the (lead) character.

Going back to the fear you said you felt when you were younger, before you came out: How much of that had to do with you being a Black queer person?

Yeah, it had a lot to do with that. I didn’t hear and I still don’t hear ... (there’s) a lack of music that proclaims same-sex love. What’s ultimately needed is that it’s normalized; that hearing a guy sing about a guy or singing about a girl, they can become one in the same and not something that is conflicting or jarring or uncomfortable, or something that people have to avoid.

Photographer Mark Clennon, who has been sharing images of the Black Lives Matter protests and demonstrations across New York City, described sharing Black stories as “whimsical defiance” in a recent interview with Interview magazine. For you, what does it feel like to be sharing your perspective and story as a Black queer person during our current racial justice movement?

It’s both empowering and exhausting. I think a lot of Black people would likely feel this way too, because it’s a story we’ve lived with our entire lives. For a lot of us, we’ve expressed it for a while. You know, I wrote a whole album about my experience, and I wrote the album, like, two years ago. So, it’s coming out now and it’s amazing on one hand that people are listening in a different way than they were before. That provides me with a lot of hope on some days. On other days you just want to live your life. You want to be able to live your life without having to explain it all the time. And so I think that’s where it’s important to have the balance of doing the fight and also knowing, How do you heal at the same time? Take care of yourself? So, yeah. It’s hard to describe.

I’m assuming the song “White Noise” was written a couple of years ago too. During the song, you sing, “All the white noise that we just don’t need, you better move over.” What kind of significance does the song take on now in the midst of this

uprising?

It has reminded me of the necessity of it. I was of the mind where I felt like maybe this song was too on the nose, but then, clearly not. (Laughs) There are a lot of people who don’t understand the importance of this, and I wanted to approach that song with a level of joy and invitation, to be able to point out an issue, pretty clear as day, yet to say that there’s a way forward. I suppose everyone has a different way of how they share their message, and with that song I wanted to kind of teach – and with the album, in general – through song and dance.

You taking pride in your Black heritage on “Ancient One” is a good example of that.

One-hundred percent. Because I think the goal of life is to celebrate that we are here, and that we get to share this experience. It’s important to have reminders that there is a lot to this existence, and that it can be something that is full of rhythm and full of mystery and full of celebration.

“Love, Victor” has been getting attention for its diversity, something many people thought “Love, Simon” lacked. What are your feelings on how the show and the movie handled representation?

I haven’t seen the show in its entirety yet, so I look forward to that. But that was definitely one thing I thought was exciting about this show. When anything is getting a spin-off, you get a little bit worried and you’re hoping that it’s done the right way. But I appreciated that it was taking a turn from the movie and moving forward, taking further steps.

In one way, I’m really proud of “Love, Simon” and how things were represented, but I’m not unaware of the fact that that was one step and that there are still many that need to be taken. As people also said, this is one specific telling of what it is for one kind of person to grow up gay in a fairly accepting environment, in a sort of privileged position. And those are conversations to be had. I’m glad that the movie was both celebrated yet also a topic of discussion of, “How do we keep going?”

When you accepted your MTV Movie award for “Best Kiss” for “Love, Simon” in 2018, what was it like to get on stage as an out queer person and in a dress?

It was super weird because I had come out a few weeks after we’d filmed (“Love, Simon”), so I was out for only 12 months by the time the movie was out. Then I was doing all these interviews and speeches; it was really strange because I only just came out. I was kind of very much in my own experience trying to

See Keiynan, continued on p. 24

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► Keiynan

Continued from p. 23

figure a lot of stuff out.

But you seemed to have known what you were doing when you got on that stage in that dress.

(Laughs) Yeah, well ... I was just trying my best to listen to the spiritual aspect of it and that's what allowed me the confidence to wear what I wanted.

How did you feel up there?

I felt amazing. I was really nervous. I didn't know what I was going to say until I started walking up. It's a surreal kind of experience. But I was over the moon, to be honest. It felt like a dream. And I felt really supported in that moment. And yeah, it was quite magical. I *felt* magical.

Did you see the crowd reactions? They were so into your speech.

I definitely heard them. It was really exhilarating.

I see how you affect a lot of LGBTQ youth, and to

that end, I wondered what you think being out and playing Kid Flash has meant to both LGBTQ and people-of-color communities?

It's meant a lot of things. Because at first it was met with a lot of celebration, but I was also met with thousands of racist comments online the day that it was announced. Same thing when I came out. To be met with such celebration but then also the opposite, it's a funny juxtaposition. But I am proud. I'm happy that Kid Flash is a superhero and the message I know that a lot of kids have been getting is: They've got to watch me as a Black man play a superhero, and then they compare it with the fact that I'm an out queer Black man who plays a superhero. We weren't taught you could do that back in the day. And so if that empowers kids to know they can be limitless, then that's the best thing ever.

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 'Hamilton' Star Sydney James Harcourt Talks Broadway and Loving his Home State

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Sydney James Harcourt is a Detroit success story. Many young actors from Michigan move to New York City hoping to make it in theater, with Broadway, of course, being the ultimate goal. But unlike Harcourt, most can't brag about appearing as an original cast member in a show as lauded as "Hamilton" — a production that many a critic has referred to as a cultural phenomenon. And while live Broadway productions might be dark now due to the dire circumstances of the novel coronavirus, the show must go on. Originally scheduled for a theatrical release in October 2021, "Hamilton" the movie is airing now on Disney+.

Harcourt is in the movie in the roles he originated with the production even before it made it to Broadway. He plays James Reynolds, Phillip Schuyler and the doctor. (On Broadway he would go on to replace Leslie Odom, Jr. in the role of Aaron Burr and appear in more than 700 performances of the show.) He said he had heard little about "Hamilton" when



he participated in a workshop of the play.

"I knew it was a musical that was telling the story of the founding fathers who rap," he said. "My agents were very skeptical about that. But I looked at the material and I thought it sounded good." Harcourt originally auditioned for the role of George Washington.

"It was very laid back. Two auditions. One for the music director and one with Lin [Manuel Miranda, who wrote the lyrics and book]. I was the first person to ever sing 'History Has Its Eyes on You.' He had just written it and brought it in," Harcourt said. "Then I never had to audition again. When we moved to the Public Theatre the cast just went with it, and the same for Broadway."

The show was an instant sensation. It would go on to win 11 Tony Awards. And Harcourt would pick up a Grammy Award for his feature performance on the show's original soundtrack.

"People ask me, 'Did you know early on it was going to be this big

See **Hamilton**, continued on p. 30

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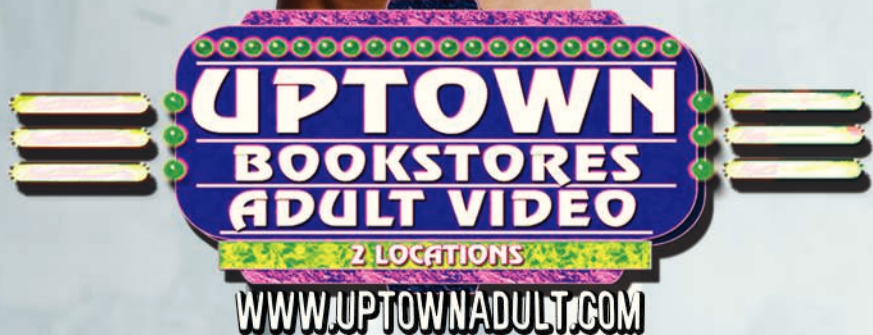
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE >

'Noah's Arc' drops a surprise reunion!

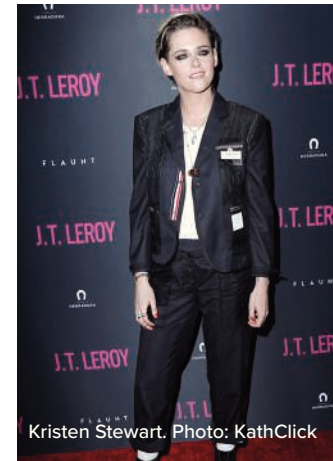
Gone are the days when you could learn about something on the horizon well before it asked for your immediate attention. Beyoncé is silent on a Saturday and drops a new album on Sunday and everyone's like, "Huh? What? OK, lucky us." So, were you pining away for years for a "Noah's Arc" reboot or reunion? Of course you were, and now your wish comes true, a lot sooner than you think. After 12 years, Noah, Alex, Ricky, and Chance are returning with a one-off reunion called "Noah's Arc: The 'Rona Chronicles'" on series creator Patrik-Ian Polk's Facebook and YouTube pages.

The original cast from Logo's 2005 series about a group of Black queer friends - Darryl Stephens, Jensen Atwood, Rodney Chester, Doug Spearman and Christian Vincent - has returned and the scripted episode will be all about - in case the title flew past you - the way life is right now. Patrick-Ian Polk Entertainment and Gilead are presenting the special, which will raise money for Black LGBTQ non-profit organizations, among them Birmingham AIDS Outreach, Casa Ruby, G.L.I.T.S (Gays & Lesbians Living In a Transgender Society), In The Meantime Men's Group, LGBT Detroit, Mobilizing Our Brothers Initiative (MOBI) and The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center. Be there on July 5 at 8 p.m. Eastern, with some cash to donate.

Kristen Stewart will play Princess Diana in 'Spencer'

Pablo Larraín ("Jackie") is set to direct and Kristen Stewart to play Princess Diana in "Spencer," a drama written by Steven Knight ("Peaky Blinders") about one critical weekend in the early '90s life of the princess, and the freeing consequences of decisions she made then. In other words, it's a biopic of sorts, but one that takes the micro versus the macro approach. No tragic death, no heartbreaking and sensational aftermath, just the story of a three-day Christmas holiday that found Diana deciding that her royal life was no longer working (something her son Harry and his wife Meghan Markle have also recently decided for themselves). And the casting is indeed inspired. Now that Kristen Stewart has secured a place in cinema history as one of the most talented and fascinating actors of her generation, she's poised to interpret this character from a place

of understanding, since there was also a period in her own younger life when she was the object of intense media scrutiny and criticism. Call it an anti-fairy tale, and we'll be patient while production schedules remain on hold, but they can just go ahead and take our money right now.



Gabrielle Union snaps up 'All Boys Aren't Blue'

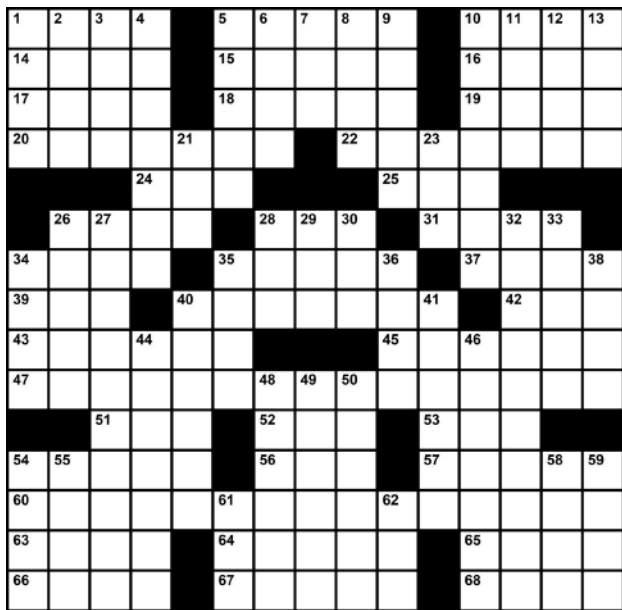
Journalist George M. Johnson's beautiful memoir, "All Boys Aren't Blue," a true story of being queer and Black, explores his childhood, adolescence and young adult life. The book includes stories of being physically assaulted by bullies as a child, of his

fraught relationship with his police-officer father, and of his warm relationship with his grandmother, all while grappling with ideas about gender, masculinity, Blackness, structural racism and growing up. Even better, hot on the heels of its publication, Gabrielle Union - an LGBTQ+ ally and passionately devoted mother to her own queer child - has optioned the book to develop as a series for Sony Pictures TV. We love the title, with its nod and inherent critique of those weird gender reveal parties that straight people seem to love so much, and even though literally nothing is in place yet beyond an intention to make this book into something else, we also love that Union has taken up the cause. More on this one soon.

Ben Whishaw is 'Going To Hurt'

Emmy and Golden Globe-winner Ben Whishaw is set to star in the BBC adaptation of British comedy writer Adam Kay's medical memoir, "This is Going to Hurt." The comedy-drama follows Kay's account of life as a junior doctor on a hospital ward, and is based on a collection of medical training diaries he kept from 2004 to 2010. The series, scripted by Kay, should be fairly eye-opening for American audiences unfamiliar with Britain's National Health Service, which provides publicly funded care for every UK citizen (translation: you don't get slapped with \$300,000 bills for a hospital stay), and is currently under attack from conservative attempts to privatize it. No other casting news has been made public just yet, nor is there a premiere date, but when it hits the States, the AMC network will handle it. Stay safe until then. Wear your mask.

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- 37 Like Cockney's pubes?
 39 The Buckeyes, for short
 40 Be expelled from a basketball game
 42 Peeples of "Fame"
 43 Financial
 45 Horseman that sticks it in you
 47 More of the quote
 51 Bentley of "American Beauty"
 52 Prepare to drag
 53 A.M.A. members
 54 Word with donna
 56 Home st. of Harper Lee
 57 Physical therapy, briefly
 60 End of the quote
 63 Tied, as a score
 64 O'Connor of "Xena"
 65 Fruit center
 66 Wagon train's direction
 67 Bedroom arouser
 68 "___ off?"
- 12 Kunis of "Black Swan"
 13 Alfred Douglas' school
 21 Sonny, to Chaz
 23 General activity
 26 Bright, in book credits
 27 Desperate women in a series
 28 Letters for debtors
 29 ___-de-sac
 30 Rock trigram
 32 One that is often penetrated
 33 Moon of Uranus
 34 Remove from the head
 35 Fairy tale huffer
 36 As it should be
 38 Stat exaggeration?
 40 King of Lawrence's land
 41 Cheap and gaudy
 44 Like mild weather
 46 Product with three heads
 48 The "T" in IGLTA
 49 "All's Well That Ends Well" heroine
 50 Artful dodger
 54 Response to the SCOTUS transgender ruling
 55 "Spamalot" review, perhaps
 58 Popular '60s hairstyle
 59 Queer ___ (fruity beverage)
 61 Lyricist Gershwin
 62 Calculator button

Walk a Mile in Her Shoe

Across

- 1 Gunners shoot it off
 5 Terence of "Priscilla"
 10 "There Is Nothing Like a ___"
 14 At no time, in poems
 15 Moore costar
 16 Ready for press
 17 "Julius Caesar" costume
 18 Wonder Woman accessory

Q Puzzle

- 19 French composer ...douard
 20 Start of a Hannah Gadsby quote, after she said that she doesn't hate males
 22 More of the quote
 24 Looker's leg
 25 Way off
 26 Where to stick your tool
 28 Dick Button's milieu
 31 Kelly once of "All My Children"
 34 Batman and Robin, et al.
 35 More of the quote

Down

- 1 Start to climax
 2 Sneaky Pie cry
 3 Patti Page's "Let ___, Lover!"
 4 Fruits with navels, maybe
 5 Witch hunt town
 6 Peter or Paul but not Mary
 7 T or F, on exams
 8 Drag queen's material, maybe
 9 Scoppettone novel evidence
 10 Comic Lea
 11 Man not made by breeders

Clues P. 20

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- Youth Services

► Hamilton

Continued from p. 26

thing?' And I always tell them there's just no way to know you're going to be a part of a cultural phenomenon like that," he said. "You think it would maybe be the biggest thing that season. But I didn't know I would meet President Barack Obama three times or be standing in the White House.

And for Harcourt, "the journey continues."

"I still don't know what's coming next with this juggernaut in my life. But I do know it's all blessings and all opportunities," he said. "I just try to meet the moment and make the best use of the time I have to be a part of a show that touches people so deeply."

These days, Harcourt splits his time between Michigan and NYC.

"I'm in Ann Arbor right now. I've been here since March. Ever since I heard about the pandemic I said Michigan is the safest place to be. I went to the University of Michigan after Interlochen, and I wanted to still live at home so we moved here. I love New York. It was a place of opportunity when you were living in a time when there was no internet and you had to be in New York or LA just for auditions," Harcourt said. "But Michigan is my favorite place to be



and I come here as much as I can."

When asked, Harcourt said he is also hopeful for Michigan's artistic future.

"In New York, there's an astonishing amount of successful artists from Michigan. There's something in the water here, and I have this hope that the art scene is going to explode here in Detroit and Ypsilanti and Traverse City," he said. "To me, this is the spot. This is the place to be and I'm doing my part to help that happen."

But until concerns about the pandemic die down, Harcourt has decided to sit back, relax and enjoy seeing a taste of the Broadway experience at home.

"We didn't know when it was going to come out. Then, suddenly, four years later you're getting to see what you

did. And for me, watching it back, I don't remember being that good," Harcourt said. "I remember being tired, thinking, 'How am I going to do it again?' Then you see the finished project and the feeling is pride. It really is."

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LEARN THE RISKS.
PROTECT YOURSELF.**

SERVICES INCLUDE

- Free same day HIV results
- Free Hepatitis B and C testing
- HIV education and testing
- PrEP education and referral
- Early intervention services
- Medical and non-medical case management
- HIV care for uninsured
- Primary and infectious disease care
- Other STI testing and treatment



 **ACCESS**
www.accesscommunity.org

Sterling Heights Center
4301 East 14 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48310
586-788-6235

Part of the MetroCare Coordination Network

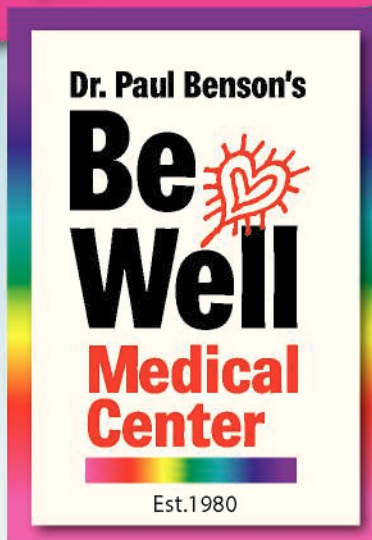
On the Edge of Primary Care PODCASTS with Dr. Paul Benson



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.



@bewellmedicalcenter



1964 Eleven Mile Rd • Berkley, MI 40872
(248) 544-9300 • doctorbewell.com