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COVER STORY

Courtesy photo



On Feb. 1 Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II (left) and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer recognized Black History Month 2021.

Here are some of our latest online-only pieces:

Gov. Whitmer and Lt. Gov. Gilchrist Recognize Black History Month
By BTL Staff

Carmen Vázquez, Longtime LGBTQ Activist, Dies at 72
By Michael Lavers

Passing the Baton, Lorri Jean to Exit as LA LGBT Center CEO
By Brody Levesque

Biden Administration, LGBT Detroit Team Up to Talk Equity in First 100 Days
By Eve Kucharski

VOL. 2906 • FEBRUARY 4, 2021
ISSUE 1167

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Cheaven Roberts (left) with her fiancé Lauren Lyon

A Puzzle-Lover's Proposal

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

When Michigan native Lauren Lyon sat down at a Colorado drag queen bingo event just over two years ago, she was eager to get to know the local LGBTQ+ community a little better. She started talking to a group of women and was quickly warned to avoid Cheaven Roberts who was sitting nearby.

"They had just been over at Cheaven's vicinity and they were like, 'Don't go over there. She's a therapist and she'll pick your brain.'" Lyon said. "And I was like, 'Oh! Who's a therapist?' I really wanted to talk to the therapist in the room because I'm also a mental health provider."

Advice promptly disregarded, Lyon made her

way over to Roberts, introduced herself and the two started talking. When they bumped into each other again at another LGBTQ+ event shortly after, phone numbers were exchanged and soon, it was clear they were meant to be. A few months later, when the couple started to toy with the idea of proposing to each other, each in their own special way, Roberts contacted *Between The Lines* Newspaper.

"Lauren comes from a family, in Michigan, of games. They do games all the time; they do crosswords all the time. I had never done a crossword until I met Lauren, but she does one pretty much every day before work," Roberts said. "... All of a sudden it just clicked, and I knew: what if [the proposal] was in a crossword puzzle?"

Not even certain that Michigan had an LGBTQ+-specific paper at the time, native Texan Roberts was pleased to find BTL and that the staff was eager to help in her efforts. She timed the issue, Aug. 20, to be out in time for a camping trip the two had planned earlier.

"Usually, we do crosswords on the iPad and we don't do them in newspapers, but Cheaven was like, 'Oh, I found this queer Michigan newspaper. I thought you would think it was cool.' And then casually said, 'Oh, there's a crossword in this newspaper!'" Lyon said with a laugh. "And sometimes we'll do paper, handwritten crosswords for the novelty of it instead of doing it digitally, so I was like, 'Yeah, let's give it a try.'"

Avid puzzlers as they are, it was tad harder

than expected.

"It was actually pretty challenging," Lyon laughed. "So, we started out doing a section at a time, and then we were like, 'Let's just scan through the clues and start by answering any of the ones we know, because this is hard.' I got to the one about the Women's World Cup, and I knew the answer to that one. I knew that was Lyon. So, in my head I thought of it as Lyon [the French city] and not Lyon [my last name]."

The next clue they got to was also about the women's team, this time about a player with the last name Holiday.

"We were with a couple of friends who were also avid soccer fans who were on vacation and [one of them] happened to be walking by and

See **Proposal**, continued on p. 9

At Royal Oak's Cafe Muse, Fine Dining Dates are Back on the Menu this Valentine's Day

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

A traditional wine pairing dinner at a favorite restaurant may seem out of bounds right now due to the constraints brought on by the novel coronavirus pandemic, but Royal Oak's Café Muse has found a way to bring the experience directly and safely into one's home through virtual wine pairing dinners. Guests pre-select their meal ahead of time; pick up their chosen food and optional wine on the afternoon of the event; follow heating instructions at home; and then tune into a Zoom call where hosts promise a lively evening of wine and food talk — dressing up is optional. After past successes, Café Muse has scheduled its next such dinner for Saturday, Feb. 13.

According to Café Muse chef and co-owner Greg Reyner, the idea was a response to both the restaurant's need for revenue due to COVID-related closures plus a community of food and wine enthusiasts' desperation for something to do. Between The Lines spoke with Reyner, who is openly gay, to hear how sometimes crisis brings opportunity.

"One of the things that made us think we could do this was for Easter we did boxed meals for everyone to pick up, so it was kind of a takeoff from that," Reyner said. "Just doing the next step [was] doing it with Zoom. Doing it with wine pairing, [and] having our wine salesperson, Michelle DeHayes, come in and actually walk us through the wine portion."

Reyner, DeHayes and co-owner David Smith will host the upcoming dinner. For those new to wine pairing dinners, Reyner provided a description.

"We'll go course by course," Reyner explained. "We'll discuss the wine. We'll discuss the food. We'll discuss the history of the wine, how the wine interacts with the food, and we've even had courses where we'll backtrack and try the previous wine to see how that interacts with that course. So it's kind of to educate people as far as, there is no right or wrong wine, but this is something that may work better with this [course], but could also work really work with this course as well."

Reyner reported that of the previous pairings the café held this way, about 80 percent of the individuals who purchased the food and wine packages also tuned in later for the dinner party. He says the set-up appeals to a wide variety of patrons.

"I think that another aspect that a lot of people like is that even though you are at home, you're still in a group with other people," Reyner said. "And I think for the more shy person, this is actually a great opportunity ... because you can actually type in a question. We get a lot of typed-in questions and we answer them. Or people are more comfortable being in their own kitchen or dining room."

There are advantages for the hosts, too,



Greg Reyner

especially for the more well-attended dinners.

"One thing that I've found to be easier is if there's more people participating, because Michelle and I and David actually feed off of the questions that people ask," Reyner said. "It's just being able to interact with your fellow human being even though it's only online and getting their reaction to the food."

"Typically, when we'd do wine dinners in the restaurant, I wouldn't eat and I wouldn't drink," he added. "I would come out and talk, and then go back and serve everything. So this ... gives me an opportunity to be there and actually interact more with the people that are participating."

The four-course dinner will consist of soup, salad, main entrée and dessert. Reyner offered a glimpse of what's in store for prospective diners.

"We're doing lamb chops a la Lark," Reyner said. "The Lark had probably one of the best recipes for lamb chops around. We've actually commandeered their recipe, which is amazing, with hoisin, shallots and honey. And for those who don't like lamb, we're actually doing a tournedos of beef, prepared in the same style with hoisin. And dessert, we're doing apple pot de crème with salted cashews. And the salad, grapefruit with arugula."

The soup is French onion.

While those who purchase the wine pairing dinners will be tuning in from home, the hosts will be broadcasting live from Café Muse.

"We're at the restaurant," Reyner said. "Michelle is my wine merchant; she's kind of in my 'bubble,' so we sit on one screen and there's the cheesy banter between us. David's on another screen. And we do like three different trivia questions during the meal and whoever's correct gets a bottle of wine."

Since the food and wine are sold separately, the dinners also appeal to individuals who simply enjoy fine dining without alcohol. And for those who do enjoy wine, another advantage is that one needn't give a second thought as to who's driving home.

"It's a chance in these trying times to interact and be around other people but still be safe and comfortable," Reyner said.

Feb. 10 is the deadline to place orders for the virtual wine pairing dinner to be held Saturday, Feb. 13 at 7 p.m. See menu for complete details and Café Muse's hours of operation.

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Despite having closed its doors, Ann Arbor Pride Director Joe Schoch has taken the reins of the organization as president. Courtesy Photo: Ann Arbor Pride 2018.

‘We’re Here, We’re Accessible and We’re Dedicated’: Jim Toy Center President Talks 2021 Goals

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

The Jim Toy Community Center has gone through a lot of changes in recent weeks. Simultaneously came the news that it would be forced to close its doors because of the novel coronavirus pandemic and that its past president, Travis Radina, would be stepping down because he was elected to the Ann Arbor City Council. However, newly elected President Joe Schoch, along with a brand-new leadership team, wants to make clear that the center isn't going anywhere. In fact, he's planning on being more plugged in than ever.

“During these tough times ... it's when the community needs us the most,” Schoch said. “... The first thing that I'm going to focus on this year is our community engagement.”

First, he said he'll prioritize virtual outreach through both the center's site and Facebook page to ensure a direct line of contact to the community remains unbroken. Secondly, he plans to use the donations from the Center's \$30,000 GoFundMe campaign to begin a capital fund.

“We, quite transparently, are not in the immediate need to find a physical space. Mainly because we wouldn't be able to use it, and one of the big factors in choosing to close the center now is so that we could be fiscally responsible and good stewards of the donations that we receive,” Schoch said. “So, instead of waiting until we're ready to open up the center, we

want to get ahead of that. We want to make sure that the capital fund could contribute to a down payment or a long-term rental or leasing agreement down the line when options become available to us.”

That's not all that the GoFundMe dollars will assist with, however. Operationally, it'll provide funds to keep the virtual Jim Toy Center running. It would cover things like “insurance, technical infrastructure, outreach, marketing supplies, letters, stamps for campaigns, and things like that.”

“We want to make sure that we are the next iteration of the Jim Toy Community Center will be successful and sustainable and also will be what the community needs. And from that we want to look into doing a community survey and figure out [how to] reintroduce ourselves to the community we're serving and have them have an opportunity to reintroduce themselves to us and really customize the programming — especially during this unique time,” Schoch said.

That's because Schoch is prioritizing a greater community stake in the goings-on of the Center in order to better serve the community.

“I think people should also be aware that as a community center we want to be sure that we're getting the feedback and serving our community accurately and with the right means and manner,” he said. “So, if people do have ideas or specific issues that they would like to see the Center do, I'd love to hear that community feedback and build up our

See **Jim Toy**, continued on p. 9

→ Proposal

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I said, 'Hey, what's the first name of the player Holiday?' Lyon said. "She kind of knew what was up, so she was just, 'Lauren,' and walked away quickly because she didn't want to give anything away."

It wasn't until Lyon started writing the answer down that she began to put two and two together.

"I started writing Lauren and then thought, 'Lauren Lyon? My name is in this crossword? What the hell is that?'" Lyon said. "And then I saw the diagonal, which had some of the words filled in. I sort of was trying to figure it out in my

head before filling anything out, because I was not sure what was happening and then I was like, "'Will you marry me' fits. ... Is this happening? Are you doing this right now?"

"I tried to be subtle, but I'm not very subtle, so I was just staring at her," Roberts said with a laugh.

As Rogers had hoped, Lyon said yes, and the



two now have plans to tie the knot this summer in their home state of Colorado. They plan to keep the gathering to a small group of people of a few dozen at an outdoor venue. The two hope that even Lyon's 98-year-old grandmother in Michigan will be able to make the trip to celebrate a love with many more camping trips — and crossword puzzles — to come.

→ Jim Toy

Continued from p. 8

community center together. We'll be reaching out proactively."

Already, there are new plans to plug into the community from a health perspective. The Center has partnered with Michigan Medicine to sit on its advisory board and provide an LGBTQ+ lens for patient advocacy. New programming is set to debut to further expand upon those goals also.

"This year, in 2021, it's a rebuilding year and a [prep] year for 2022 when the world hopefully looks a little more recognizable and we are able to gather safely in person," Schoch said. "We are still present. We are still engaged. We are still here. And we are very energized to continue supporting our community during these difficult times. I hope people are excited about some of the changes that are going to be coming up — some of those things being increased visibility and accessibility in the community through virtual settings."



Newly elected Jim Toy Community Center President Joe Schoch. Courtesy photo.



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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Holocaust Remembrance

During the Nazi reign of terror that ended only in Germany's defeat by the Allies in 1945, about 15,000 gay men were incarcerated in concentration camps where an estimated 60 percent were brutally worked to death.

Those pink-triangle gays who survived found liberation by British and American soldiers to be of short duration. As homosexual criminals under Germany's Paragraph 175 penal code they were sent back to prison. Many perished there.

Gerhard 'Gad' Beck, a gay Jew of mixed Jewish and gentile parentage, early on because of his classified status was fortunate to serve only one year of concentration camp incarceration.

In his autobiography, "An Underground Life: Memoirs of A Gay Jew in Nazi Germany," he tells of an incident that occurred during up-at-dawn roll call.

An unfortunate gay prisoner, starved, freezing, did not call out his ID number loud enough. As penalty a milk bucket was placed over his head, hands tied and prisoners standing next to him were forced to whack a wooden board over, and over, and over, and over against the bucket.

Beck, who died in 2012 at age 88, was what the 1935 Nazi-imposed Nuremberg Jewish Laws classified as a "mishling," Half Jew, half gentile. His mixed "status" aided his survival.

Beck was also a courageous underground resistance fighter, at one point daring to rescue his Jewish lover from certain concentration camp death. He stole a German Youth uniform, entered Auschwitz, and requested the release of his friend for a fake road building defense project. Beck's pretense worked.

His friend was granted escorted leave, but he then told loved Gad, with much sorrow, that he could not leave his parents behind. He and his family perished in the gas chambers.

Recently some members of Biblical Fundamentalist mental low-wattage have stooped to a new egregious low by telling yet another Trump-like Big Lie — one might add, just like the Nazis propagandists once did — claiming that homosexuals in Nazi Germany were responsible for the Holocaust.

Fundamentalists don't seem to be aware that the New Testament Gospel of St. John is anti-Semitic, blaming Jews, not Romans, for Jesus' death. Pontius Pilate washes his hands of the matter, and turns Jesus over to the mob. Nor do these Bible-belters know that Martin Luther, founder of Lutheranism, wrote an eight-item diatribe of how he felt Jews — killers of Christ — should be treated. It's chilling. Homes and synagogues were to be burned.

Shamefully, and point by vicious point, Luther's recommendations were implemented by the Nazis on Kristallnacht in 1938. The skies were filled with suffocating terror. Gas chambers and flaming ovens followed soon after.

So, should today's Christians be blamed for recent bullying, abuse and murders of Jews?

And what about North Carolina Pastor Charles L. Worley, of Providence Road Baptist Church, who suggests airlifting all

See next page



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Transmissions

A Chance at Healing

A decade ago this year, I had a rare opportunity. Rushed onto a flight in the middle of the week, I made my way to Washington, D.C. I had been asked, quite at the last moment, to go to the White House to discuss transgender issues.

I felt woefully unprepared as I hurriedly wrote out a few pages of notes covering stories I wanted to discuss before heading over to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the West Wing. There, I had the opportunity to address representatives of the Obama Administration specifically on issues of anti-transgender violence.

It was both daunting and deeply flattering, to have the opportunity to sit at the center of a large table, surrounded by individuals representing the administration — and photos of the noteworthy things that happened in that room in the many decades before I came calling — and speak about the things that I find important as a trans woman who has dedicated much of her life to anti-trans murder.

I found it far more important to hear those who surrounded me speak about what each of their parts of the Administration were going to do to help transgender people like me. It was at this meeting that I fully began to comprehend that a presidency was not just about the person at the top, but everyone below

them as well.

Much of what was discussed was already well established, even then, just a couple short years into the Obama Presidency. Many others, big and small, would be enacted over the course of those eight years.

Then it all changed.

In the last four years of the Trump Administration, I have seen everything discussed at that 2011 meeting rolled back. Far from just a military ban, we saw trans rights challenged from top to bottom. For every scant win came more challenges, more directives, more attempts to strip our rights.

To be honest, it can be hard to worry about these things, with families being separated and caged in the desert, with Muslim travel bans, and a failed response to a pandemic that has lover over 400,000 people dead. There's been an amazing amount of evil done in such a short period of time.

That said, I took every trans rights loss very personally. I mentally crossed off everything lost from that 2011 meeting, with the last of it gone in the last few days of the Trump era. While I actually did expect worse for transgender people from the Administration — and I think it would have gotten

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→ Transmissions

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unimaginably worse if Trump had secured four more years — every one of these losses elicited a special grief, a pang in my heart as I wondered if there had been just a little something more I could have done.

This past November, I honestly wasn't sure what would take place. Frankly, as court challenge after court challenge went by, as attempts were made to invalidate votes, and even as we saw rioters — whipped up by the President himself — descend on the U.S. Capitol, I wasn't sure we would make it to the inauguration.

Then, once again, it all changed.

A day before the inauguration. President-Elect Biden tapped Rachel Levine, a transgender pediatrician, to be the Assistant Secretary for Health. The choice made it clear that transgender voices would be a part of this administration. It is important to note that Levine has been a key part of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 response, even while facing pushback largely due to being transgender.

Then, hours after President Biden took the Oath of Office on the capitol steps, he issued an executive order that protected LGBTQ people from discrimination in schools, at work, and so on. It is largely a directive based on last year's Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, which secured workplace protections under Title VII.

By the time you read this it is also quite likely that the Biden Administration will call for an end to the transgender military ban, one of the Trump Administration's first big forays into stripping transgender people of their rights.

This is sending a large, tangible signal that this

administration is working to protect transgender citizens of this country. That said, I'm under no illusion that this won't continue to be an uphill battle in the next four years, nor do I feel that a future right-wing President could not simply change things once more.

Even now, scores of anti-transgender bills have popped up in statehouses across the country, seeking to roll back trans rights. Some of the worst even attempt to criminalize transgender care, mandating prison time for those who provide care to transgender people. Further, even though it will clearly go nowhere, a bill in the Democratically controlled house is also seeking to undermine the rights of transgender students across the country.

Seeing the Equality bill passed will be vital, even knowing that there is sure to be court challenges to same. We are but at the beginning of this battle to make trans rights truly complete, and not so easy to wipe away. We know there will be plenty of challenges to build-in "religious exceptions" that could cripple these same rights, as well as pressure to see trans needs "slow walked" in Congress, in favor of easier bipartisan victories as the populace relaxes into a post-Trump world.

It's good to see progress once again. To be frank, it heals my heart to see these things, once lost, now return.

Yet we need a solid footing, and we need it before the next President can sign it all away.

Gwen Smith would be more than happy to come back to DC this November, COVID-willing. You'll find her at www.gwensmith.com

→ Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

the "queers and homosexuals" and dropping them off into electric-fenced pens until they all die?

There's a slogan making the rounds these days in many mainline churches: "God is good all the time." One can only wonder.

Maybe good just some of the time. For some of the people. Jews and gays not included. Especially if Rebiblican, hatemongers have anything to do about it.

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist, having contributed 700-plus columns, as a well-known LGBT community artist having shared over 1,000 pieces of art via Facebook. He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBTQ center Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at charles@pridesource.com.

Creep Of The Week

The Republican Party

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

President Joe Biden has signed an executive order reversing Donald Trump's ban on transgender service members. This is great news! I mean, kind of. These past four years have been particularly brutal for transgender Americans. The Trump Administration was a very hateful reign, and they reserved a targeted and open hostility to transgender people, from Education Secretary Betsy DeVos telling transgender students that they don't deserve a place to pee or change their clothes for gym class to Trump announcing that transgender service members were no longer welcome, even after sacrificing more for and dedicating more to this country than his pathetic ass ever has.

So, yes, Bidens EO is good news. But it doesn't heal the pain or fix the fractures of this previous administration.

Neither will bringing Trump to justice and holding all who aided and abetted his attack on the U.S. accountable. And this seems to be the argument behind the Republican Party's sudden keen interest in "unity." But, hey, convicting a murderer doesn't bring the person he's killed back to life, and we still think justice should be, like, a thing there, right? So the idea that we should just let a president and his party incite an insurrection and use the Constitution as scrap paper for Q-Anon fan fiction and do nothing about it is pure bullshit from the party that brought us Trump, supported Trump, and still supports Trump. So, like, fuck them.

As I'm writing this, the House is delivering the Articles of Impeachment to the Senate making Trump the only president to be impeached twice, which honestly doesn't feel like enough.

Yet even as Trump is the epitome of disgrace, Republicans are doubling and tripling down on their commitment to him. Make no mistake, Trump wasn't a blip on the GOP radar. He's the whole radar. Republicans who don't support Trump are the minority. All over the U.S. MAGA die-hards are at the helm, sanctioning U.S. House members who voted for impeachment. Or in the case of Arizona Republicans, censuring Cindy McCain, John McCain's widow for opposing Trump and being, like, "Burning down the Capitol is bad." She's not even an elected official.

I, personally, would like to see every Republican who supported Trump and who fueled the fire of insurrection with their lies and blind fealty to this reality host joke held accountable. I'd like to see

them lose their offices as they've betrayed the public trust and the Constitution. I would like to see each and every one of the Capitol rioters arrested and put in jail. Even those who "accidentally" stormed the building — "I thought it was a really nice Starbucks" is not an excuse. And I would love to see Trump impeached by the House and then, this time, actually convinced in the Senate.

Am I angry? Why, yes, I am angry. Trump couldn't even be bothered to do his fucking job and was incapable of it from the start. We're churning toward 500,000 dead from COVID-19. Half a million people! And Biden's administration has walked in to find NO PLAN for prevention. For vaccines. Not a goddamn thing.

Meanwhile in Michigan, Republicans are hell-bent on getting restaurants open to full capacity again and are upset with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's vaccine distribution so far. Never mind the fact that they have themselves to blame for any problem with vaccine procurement and distribution because their boy, Donald Trump, didn't do his job and they were too busy kissing his MAGA ass and pretending COVID-19 was a liberal hoax to care.

We haven't had a national strategy for a year. One can hardly be surprised that states — and, by the way, Michigan is doing better than most — are having a hard time taking on COVID all by themselves. A deadly pandemic is basically a textbook example of what a federal government is for. It is why who we elect matters and why we as a nation need to wrest control away from the party of Trump.

"When I began in the Republican Party officially, the Republican party was the party of inclusion. It was the party of generosity. It was the party of 'country first,'" Cindy McCain said on "The View." "We have lost our way and it's time that we get back on track."

Calling the Republican Party the part of "inclusion" is correct, for a well-to-do white woman, that is. It's anything but and has only become more exclusionary since Ronald Reagan. The GOP hasn't been a welcoming party for a very long time. And they've taken the "country first" idea to one that more closely mirrors fascism than patriotism.

But she's right that they've lost their way. But they've blown up the track when they elected Trump and they just keep digging deeper into the abyss.

HOTTER THAN JULY RETROSPECTIVE

25TH
ANNIVERSARY
HOTTER
THAN
July

The Next 25 Years

BY IRVING MEJIA-HILARIO

A facet of the Black LGBTQ+ community in Detroit, Hotter Than July, just finished celebrating its 25th anniversary. Jerron Totten is social outreach coordinator and legislative advocacy specialist for LGBT Detroit and he is a leader in the movement. He believes the event itself can only continue to grow, saying that its enduring will to continue showing Black Pride no matter what sends out a powerful message.

“It shows our adaptability. It shows that we don’t stop celebrating our Pride for anything or anyone and it shows our resilience. I think our public persona became better and I believe it will get better as we continue with this program,” Totten said.

Public Perception

In the 25 years since HTJ began, public perception of the LGBTQ+ community has shifted greatly. The community has seen an influx of support from so many people, but the fight remains ongoing. And it’s for this reason that Totten and others remain firm on their belief that Black, gay Pride is crucial.

Despite the view on the outside changing positively, so many are still struggling in handling their self-identity. Totten believes that for those who are still working through their accepting stages, Hotter Than July’s digital functions will be able to provide them with a platform.

“I think about people in my hometown, Black gay boys who had not heard of a Black Pride, like I had never heard of a Black Pride,” Totten said. “So having this virtual experience and having open access like that, it provides that experience to people who might not have had it otherwise.”

Hotter Than July had to manage the fallout from the novel coronavirus pandemic and proper messaging around the civil unrest over the summer. The community was, for lack of a better word, hurt and still grieving the deaths of Black men and women worldwide.

For this reason, Totten also believed that this year symbolized something meaningful for their movement.

“Over the summer we had a lot of civil unrest behind the murders of people like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Since 1994, LGBT Detroit has organized around the dynamic interests of people, so we’ve always been here. We’ve always been good and we’ve always been Black,” Totten said. “We’ve always been in a position



Left to right: Jerron Totten and Curtis Lipscomb. Photo: InspiherVisuals (Erin Gray)

to be received effectively by the community, especially during events like the civil unrest over the summer.”

Out of respect to their fallen brothers and sisters, Hotter Than July has always been an event focused on being family-oriented and memorializing people who gave their lives to Black Pride in one way or another.

Community Education and Historical Significance

Providing resources and education has always been one of the forefront centerpieces of Hotter Than July. This is something that Totten never sees changing about the event.

“I love a good party myself, but I think that in a time of a global pandemic we need to be reminded why Black, gay Pride was started,” he said. “We should kind of continue providing education, providing access to resources during Black, gay Pride, of course in addition to the parties.”

If the HIV/AIDS epidemic proved anything, a massive deficiency within LGBTQ+ communities in general was a lack of resources. This especially is something that Totten doesn’t want to see Hotter Than July forget.

“The issue we found is that resources, how to get the help, where to get the help and who would help you,” he said. “That information was not reaching the Black LGBTQ+ community, so Black Prides were started to disperse that information among [it]. That is why Black Pride started.”

Totten, a native of North Carolina, could recall when he was young, and LGBTQ+ Pride, especially Black Pride, was not nationally accepted. Today, some aspects of the conversation have shifted in favor of progress, but he believes it was essential to provide access to the community, especially young people.

“I wish growing up as a young Black man in North Carolina, that we had an event like Hotter Than July. There’s nothing like growing and learning from people who share the same experience as you. It’s a breeding ground for learning from each other and growing from each other’s experiences,” Totten said.

Learning from the past is something that Totten believes will always be necessary at Hotter Than July. It is not only because of how historical context can shift conversations but also because it may inspire those who come after this current generation to build that which is their own.

“You also do want to be able to pass something down to the younger generations,” he said. “I am a firm believer in and saying that we are the new ancestors. So we need to build and sustain something great to pass down to other generations.”

He added that building stable wealth is going to be very important for Hotter Than July, and for Black people as a whole soon.

“Collectively, I think that should be our primary goal over the next 10 to 15 years,” he said.

Future Plans and Growth

In the future, and with support from the community, Hotter Than July will be looking to increase outreach with potential sponsors in the community. According to Totten, finding a balance between community buy-in and sponsorship is crucial in the coming years.

“I think that buy-in is going to be key. There are no financial barriers to any event at Hotter Than July; it’s all free. On the flip side to that, because everything is free, sponsorship is very important is the heartbeat of this program,” Totten said.

Right now, Hotter Than July is mostly an



Jerron Totten Photo: InspiherVisuals (Erin Gray)

event focused on Southeast Michigan and Metro Detroit, but a point of conversation going forward is whether or not this event can make strides across the national stage.

Today, that conversation is one that Totten believes hasn't begun yet. At the moment, when HTJ staff looks forward to the next 25 years, much of the focus will remain on the local community.

"I'm hoping that it will continue to be community-driven; I'm hoping that it will continue to be supported by companies who believe in our mission," he said. "I'm looking forward to putting on display local and national talent for entertainment."

While HTJ's mission won't change any time soon, what will change is the approach to celebrating the event. In fact, 2020's impact was so significant that Totten believes the newly added virtual component should stay.

"This past year, it was entirely virtual. You could watch Hotter Than July happen from your mobile device. That's something that I don't see going away, even when we do return to in-person celebrations. Even when we get back to a place where we can do in-person events, that virtual element will remain," he said. "I think that LGBT Detroit as a whole has moved and has had enough experience one in digital programming virtual programming. That increases our visibility globally, and provides access to people who might not have normally had access to something like Black Pride."

Ongoing Importance

For the community and LGBT Detroit,

having the space to celebrate Black gay Pride is not only liberating but empowering. When there are so many Pride parades, the importance of having one focused on Black, gay Pride is paramount in overcoming prejudice.

Strength in numbers and unity amongst the community is critical to HTJ's success going forward, and Totten recognizes that. Politically speaking, he also believes that it's essential that the community hold a firm stance on improving LGBTQ+ rights and ensuring dignity for all who are Black.

"The Black Lives Matter movement was created by queer Black women, therefore we really can't separate our queerness. I really say this to our Black hetero counterparts, in that you can't claim Black Lives Matter if you don't include all Black lives," Totten said. "I think it's really the time to end separating the two [LGBTQ+ and straight] and thinking that's OK. Because it's not, and this goes back to my point about being educated about who we are and what you've done in history," Totten said.

And because Hotter Than July is an event that only rolls around once a year, it's important to Totten that LGBT Detroit make the most of the time that it and the community have together. Ultimately, there is still so much work to do, and HTJ staff acknowledges that there is still a long road ahead to the goal, but it's undeniable that strides have been made.

"We haven't overcome yet," Totten said. "I think it's important that we learn our history as Black LGBTQ+ people so that we can one prevent any recurrences of any kind of disenfranchisement in the future."

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A Legacy to Carry On



BY BENJAMIN JENKINS

I first met Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz while serving them a plate of pasta with a rainbow Pride bracelet around my wrist. I was working at Noodles & Company as a shift manager. This was 2008 after I had graduated from the University of Michigan-Dearborn where I got my degree in history. I focused most of my studies on American social and political movements of the 20th century.

I was trying to figure out what was next. My serendipitous meeting with Jan and Susan turned out to be my answer. First, I volunteered with Pride Source Media Group in Ferndale and Lansing that Pride season. Then I landed an internship writing brief stories, editing the paper's event calendar and designing ads for advertisers.

Now, 13 years later, I'm stepping into the role of Pride Source's new publisher.

For many years as an employee, Pride Source and Between The Lines were a creative outlet. Working there in those early years, I was able to hone my design skills and become a savvy marketing professional. After serving several years as an art director for the publications, I became a brand manager for a leading software company in Ann Arbor.

A few years later, I chose to leave my full-time job to begin a boutique marketing agency, consulting with businesses across



Publishers Emeritus Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson

the country creating brands, websites, video content and campaigns. Pride Source was one of my first clients.

In June of last year, I met (socially distanced) with Susan and Jan, now publishers emeritus, on their back porch to discuss the future of Between The Lines and my own role in advancing a shared goal: a better, shared experience for all LGBTQ+ people through

storytelling and journalism.

After many thoughtful conversations about these topics, Jan and Susan offered me the opportunity to step in as publisher.

These publications, this team and this community – I hold them in high esteem. The experiences they've afforded me have been a uniquely rich opportunity to come into my own, all the while having been surrounded by

ambitious, confident, political and queer energy that was channeled into telling queer stories.

It's an honor to get to work alongside the established current editorial and sales staff at Pride Source. They will continue to bring the community thoughtful coverage of local LGBTQ+ news and cutting-edge entertainment and celebrity features.

As a queer person, I know the importance of queer media in ensuring that LGBTQ+ voices are heard and uplifted. I look forward to continuing the trailblazing work Jan and Susan have done for over 28 years with Pride Source — and making my own way through the work we do next.

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves in deciding what's next, I need to hear from our readers and the community. We want to know how *you* see your local LGBTQ+ publication best serving the community.

To better understand your interests and needs as a reader, we've produced a short reader survey that we would love for you to complete. We want to know what BTL is to you, and what it should be moving forward. We want to know what you want to read, and how to better connect you with businesses that support the LGBTQ+ community. And since there will always be more Michigan LGBTQ+ stories to tell, which ones we should be telling.

We hope to honor the legacy of Jan and Susan by continuing the work that the BTL team has been doing these last several decades for the community. And how? By telling stories of survival and perseverance that reflect our tenacious community. By highlighting stories of intersectionality and the complexity of our identities. By elevating Black voices and trans voices. By celebrating victories — big and small. And most importantly, by continuing to find ways to bring value to you, our reader.

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Obituary: Evelyn Josephine Fisher, M.D.

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

April 4, 1941 – Dec. 29, 2020

Evelyn Josephine Fisher was a native Detroiter born to parents Josephine and Otto Fisher and raised in Detroit's Indian Village neighborhood. She attended the prestigious Country Day School for elementary and University Liggett School in Grosse Pointe Woods for high school. After graduating, Fisher attended Wayne State University where she studied Russian and was on a pre-med track. She switched to Wayne State University Medical School after her junior year. Following that, Fisher interned at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis and then returned to Detroit to complete her residency at Henry Ford Hospital.

Soon enough, Fisher was a senior staff member of the infectious disease department at Henry Ford. In 1982, Fisher saw her first patient with AIDS and, in a way, found her true calling. Though little was known about HIV or AIDS at the time, Fisher jumped right in and was soon treating a majority of all HIV-related cases in the state.

"She was truly a pioneer in the mid-'80s when we were facing this HIV epidemic in an era where there was a lot of prejudice," said Dr. Paul Benson, who started Wellness Networks, Michigan's oldest AIDS service organization, with Fisher in the mid-'80s.

Fisher was the agency's medical director and sat on the board.

"She stood above that prejudice and was a recognized leader in the community in treating HIV," Benson continued. "Evelyn was a very dedicated

and compassionate physician as well as a community leader and LGBTQ advocate. And, again, this was in times when there was a lot more discrimination in the world and a lot of prejudice against those living with HIV. She treated everybody equally and fairly and did not let lifestyle interfere with giving the best most compassionate treatment she could."



Dr. Evelyn Josephine Fisher. Courtesy photo.

Terry Ryan, who would go on to serve as executive director of Midwest AIDS Prevention Project, now known as Matrix MAC Services, was an early employee of Wellness Networks.

"Evelyn was on the board of Wellness at that time," he said. "She came over to me immediately after I was hired and said, 'Here's my pager number, anything you need to know or any problems, page me and come find me.' We were starting the Michigan AIDS Hotline and she knew I'd be getting lots of calls and we didn't know shit from Shinola about HIV in those days. But Evelyn was always hugely supportive and hugely available. She was one of the most delightful people that I have worked with anywhere over the years, especially in HIV work."

Wellness Networks would eventually become AIDS Partnership Michigan, and Barbara Murray would serve as the agency's executive director for many years.

"Evelyn certainly was part of the founding group of what was back then called Wellness Networks and then became AIDS Partnership Michigan, along with a pretty tight-knit group of

gay men," Murray said. "She was the go-to. She was always going to the Motor City Business Forum and Evelyn spoke regularly at that program back in the late '80s because we knew not a lot. And she was the go-to doctor. Evelyn's presence and letting people know what was going with AIDS, she was just really critical to everybody in southeast Michigan to hear what was going on. She was there all the time."

Fisher's efforts would win her great recognition. The Detroit News named her Citizen of the Year in 1985. In 1987, the Detroit Science Center would give her its Trailblazer Award. She was also presented with the Mercy Award at the University of Detroit — Mercy's 1989 Works of Mercy Dinner. Her work, however, was not limited to the HIV/AIDS realm. She spoke Spanish and this allowed her to become the staff physician at CHASS Center Detroit, a public health clinic in Detroit that specializes in culturally competent care for the Latino community. She also ran the Pallister-Lodge Methadone Clinic at Henry Ford Hospital. In addition, Fisher was a highly respected teacher, researcher and author.

Fisher left Detroit in 1992 and headed to Richmond, Virginia, where she joined the faculty of the Virginia Commonwealth University/Medical College of Virginia School of Medicine. In 2014, Fisher retired and returned to Detroit. In her free time, Fisher enjoyed birdwatching, reading, the Michigan Opera Theatre and all of Detroit's major sports teams.


Per her wishes, Fisher was cremated. Memorial donations can be made to AIDS Partnership Michigan, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda, Amnesty International or The Humane Society.

ACLU Executive Director Dave Noble Accepts New Role as Peace Corps Chief of Staff


In 2019 Dave Noble took over as executive director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan succeeding Kary L. Moss who held the position for two decades. Noble will be leaving because he was tapped by the Biden Administration to serve as the Peace Corps chief of staff. The ACLU of Michigan released a statement saying it was "grateful" for Noble's time as executive director, lauding his accomplishments and wishing him well in his new role.

"During Dave's tenure, we successfully pushed for the passage of 18 bipartisan bills that will begin to transform our criminal legal system; worked in partnership with 140 organizations to launch a multi-million dollar effort to ensure voter turnout among historically disenfranchised people; and shifted our work significantly to address the civil liberties and civil rights concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic," it read. "This advocacy resulted in halting evictions and water shutoffs, as well as the filing of a class-action lawsuit on behalf of medically vulnerable people in immigration detention at the Calhoun County Jail. To date, more than 40 people have been released from detention."


Currently, the ACLU of Michigan board of directors has named Rana Elmir, who has been with the organization for 14 years, to serve as acting executive director in Noble's stead while it launches a search for a permanent replacement.




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THE SIEGFRIED LINE P. 25

Pelosi 'Optimistic' About LGBTQ Equality Act, Calls Passage a 'Priority'



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) says she's "optimistic" about the Equality Act and expects bipartisan support. (Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key)

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said last week that she's "optimistic" about the Equality Act and called its passage a "priority" amid expectations the House could vote on the yet-to-be-introduced measure as early as March.

Pelosi made the comments during her weekly news conference in response to a question from the Washington Blade on the timing of the floor vote for the LGBTQ legislation, which President Biden promised during his campaign to sign within his first 100 days in office.

"I'm optimistic about it because I do think we will get strong bipartisan support in the House and in the Senate," Pelosi said.

The legislation, which Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.) told the Blade he'd introduce in February, has been given new life now that Democrats control both chambers of Congress and the White House, as opposed to the Trump administration when the bill died in the Senate, as Pelosi noted.

"This is such an exciting piece of legislation for us," Pelosi said. "We passed it in the last Congress. No success in the Senate. It went to Mitch McConnell's graveyard, the 'grim reaper.'"

A senior Democratic aide told the Blade that

Cicilline and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), the sponsor of the bill in the Senate, are looking at the week of Feb. 22 to introduce the Equality Act with a vote expected as early as March.

Pelosi said she's working with the two lawmakers "for when we will roll it out," and said after that "we will calendar it."

"It's an early priority for us, H.R. 5," Pelosi said. "And again, it's about ending discrimination."

Pelosi then shifted to praising President Biden, commending him for signing two LGBTQ executive orders within his first week in office, including a directive barring further discharges under Trump's transgender military ban.

"I'm very pleased with what President Biden has done so far, especially pleased about eliminating the prohibition on trans people from serving in the military," Pelosi said. "That too, I think, was a triumph for decency and justice in our country, but some other initiatives that he took about contracting and this or that."

Although the Supreme Court decision last year in *Bostock v. Clayton County* extends vast protections for LGBTQ people under federal law, securing a prohibition against anti-LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace sought for decades by movement leaders, the Equality

Act would take things a step further.

In addition to the explicit declaration that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a form of sex discrimination in employment, education, housing, jury service and credit, the Equality Act would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and LGBTQ status in public accommodations and federal programs.

Further, the Equality Act would expand the definition of public accommodations under federal civil rights law to include retail stores, banks, transportation services and health care services. The legislation would also establish that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act — a 1994 law aimed at protecting religious liberty — can't be used to enable anti-LGBT discrimination.

The Equality Act was the cornerstone of President Biden's campaign promises to anti-LGBTQ people. Biden said he'd sign the legislation into law within his first 100 days in office as recently as October in an interview with Philadelphia Gay News, although he hasn't commented on the bill in the week since he took office as president.

Reflecting on the absence of such protections under federal law, Pelosi continued, "It's amazing that we would even have to do such things, but we're particularly proud of the

Equality Act because it's so comprehensive."

"Again, ending discrimination in the workplace and in every other aspect, not only is good for the LGBTQ community, for our whole society, but also for businesses that want the very best," Pelosi said. "They should be hiring without any concern of complaint about the diversity that they are introducing."

In the previous Congress, the U.S. Chamber of Congress had come out in support of the Equality Act, which Pelosi alluded to in her remarks as she contemplated passage in the Senate. The challenge is greater in that chamber given the 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a legislative filibuster.

"That's why we think we'll have strong bipartisan support," Pelosi said. "We think the business community will help us in the Senate."

Pelosi took a question from another reporter as the Blade tried to follow up with an inquiry on whether the White House has reached out to her on the legislation. Pelosi's office didn't immediately respond to a follow-up inquiry on whether that conversation has taken place.

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

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How Sundance Changed the Landscape for Queer Film and Its LGBTQ Creators

The Premier Film Festival Has Expanded From Two LGBTQ Features in 1985 to Over a Dozen This Year

BY GEORGE ELKIND

Sundance's slate of queer films has grown steadily over the years, as has the scale of the increasingly star-studded festival itself. At its founding in 1985, it wasn't the first festival to heavily feature queer-focused works — that would be Frameline's San Francisco international LGBTQ+ Film Festival, founded in 1977. But by steadily raising the number of queer films included (from two features in 1985 to over a dozen works in 2021), Sundance has

played a crucial role in broadening the range of works made and screened for American audiences.

Before the Berlin International Film Festival and Sundance, according to film scholar and festival historian Antoine Damians, queer films were rarely seen outside of festivals.

"It's almost impossible to separate the history of queer cinema from film festivals: the first queer festivals — of the late 1970s — were largely started by community members and directors as a way to screen films that couldn't

be shown elsewhere," he said. "They quickly became major actors in the economy of queer film and can be credited for creating a market for queer cinema."

Damiens specifically links Sundance's impact on queer cinema to a broader boom in independent filmmaking — and especially the rise of video.

"For the first time, filmmakers were able to bypass theatrical releases: distribution companies could make money by selling films directly to interested consumers. In that period,

we have lots of 'edgy' films being made," he said. "This new circuit of distribution pretty much changed everything for queer cinema."

While distribution has evolved since, Sundance's 2021 lineup stands to expand the queer film canon once again. With films like Rebecca Hall's directorial debut "Passing," which makes the convergence of Black women's desires with questions of racial identity in 1929 Harlem its subject, and "4 Feet High," about a disabled Argentinian teen interrogating her sexuality from a wheelchair, the range of

experiences Sundance's programming addresses this year continues to broaden even further.

In some ways this isn't unsurprising. According to LGBTQ film historian and filmmaker Jenni Olson, Sundance was always a key player in bringing greater prominence to queer works in and beyond the communities responsible for them.

"From the very beginning, Sundance has been a bellwether — each January managing to showcase films that will end up being some of the most important LGBT films of the year," she said. Olson specifically cites works like Oscar winner "The Times of Harvey Milk" (1985), which followed America's first openly gay public official, and Todd Haynes's sly, suggestive "Poison" (1991), which satirized social stigmas around sexuality via period styles and contexts. She points also to "Parting Glances" (1986), which depicted gay life in the AIDS crisis under Reagan; "Desert Hearts" (1986), which featured two women falling for one another in the American Southwest years before "Thelma and Louise" worked similar (albeit platonic) terrain, and cult-favorite "Paris is Burning" (1990), an enduring touchstone of drag culture.

The list of queer filmmakers who found boosts from or launched careers at the festival is also long: Haynes, Norman René ("Longtime Companion"), Gregg Araki ("Mysterious Skin") and Derek Jarman ("Caravaggio") are just a few among many.

In 1992, the proliferation of talent became so pronounced that, after a panel entitled Barbed Wire Kisses featuring a number of rising queer filmmakers, critic and scholar B. Ruby Rich dubbed the snowballing of formidable works a movement, calling it the New Queer Cinema. While the term has stuck best among academics, most have felt the movement's force; movies as disparate as Gus Van Sant's "Mala Noche," Susan Seidelman's "Desperately Seeking Susan" and Cheryl Dunye's "The Watermelon Woman" have all helped make it up.

According to John Cooper, Sundance's emeritus director (and the festival director from 2010-20), this progression and accumulation of queer filmmakers was not so much orchestrated as it was bound to happen as the festival sought out singular works, stories he described in a 2020 article for the Sundance Institute as "not being represented in mainstream Hollywood films" of the time. In the same piece, which recounts the history of Sundance's queer programming, he goes on to suggest that queer films came to prominence as part of a broader wave of new independent works "not just because they represented the 'others,' but because they were, by nature, good and fresh and exciting."

"Although it was a founding goal of Sundance Institute to be inclusive on every level of support for artists, the actual practice of showing diverse work has been a very organic and natural progression," Cooper wrote. "When I think back to the original concept for both the Institute's labs and the Festival itself, the idea was to support the most original and interesting work possible."

This support takes a variety of forms. While

programming and screening may be the most visible mode of advocacy Sundance engages in, the organization provides numerous forms of mentorship and education.

"The Sundance Institute does so much more than just showing films in the festival," said Olson. "Their various filmmaker funding initiatives and labs are an invaluable source of support to filmmakers to make the movies in the first place. They also have a preservation initiative. And LGBT films and filmmakers are generally very well represented in these programs as well."

Once produced and selected, premiering works at the festival offers its own host of benefits, given its role as a marketplace for distributors and a gathering place for a broad range of film professionals. Many works featured at the festival, according to Olson, go on to play a range of queer and mainstream festivals and stand a heightened chance of being picked up for broader distribution as a result.

Because the festival is in January, Olson points out that it has "always served as a launching pad for many of the biggest LGBTQ films of the year." It also means, she notes, that programmers from major LGBTQ film festivals in San Francisco, New York and L.A. can plan ahead for their summer and fall festivals.

This early heightened visibility reached past festivals and distribution into mainstream film criticism of the time. For example, Roger Ebert praised works like 1990's "Longtime Companion" and called "The Life and Times of Harvey Milk" (which Gus Van Sant later adapted as "Milk") "an enormously absorbing film." But it's hard to know if he would have seen them if not for Sundance, or if they had only played at queer festivals.

For Olson, though, showing her work at the festival — something she has done four times now — is more than just a commercial or a career opportunity: "Showing a film at Sundance is one of the most exciting experiences one can have as an independent filmmaker. Of course, partly, it's just so exciting to be part of such a prestigious festival, but also the audiences at Sundance are passionate movie lovers who I have always found to be wonderfully responsive and interested in my work."

Olson attributes the "major force" queer filmmakers present each year in part to the number of queer programmers present across the festival's history (John Cooper, who began working with Sundance in 1989, is one, and Kim Yutani currently serves as the festival's Director of Programming). Many on the programming staff and in leadership positions, too, come from the world of queer-focused film festivals: an experience which likely shapes their work.

"Sundance is about the industry — about film professionals working together, networking, buying and selling film," said Damiens. "It's about getting one's film made and valued. For a queer filmmaker, it also means getting exposure and hopefully distribution in a wide variety

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



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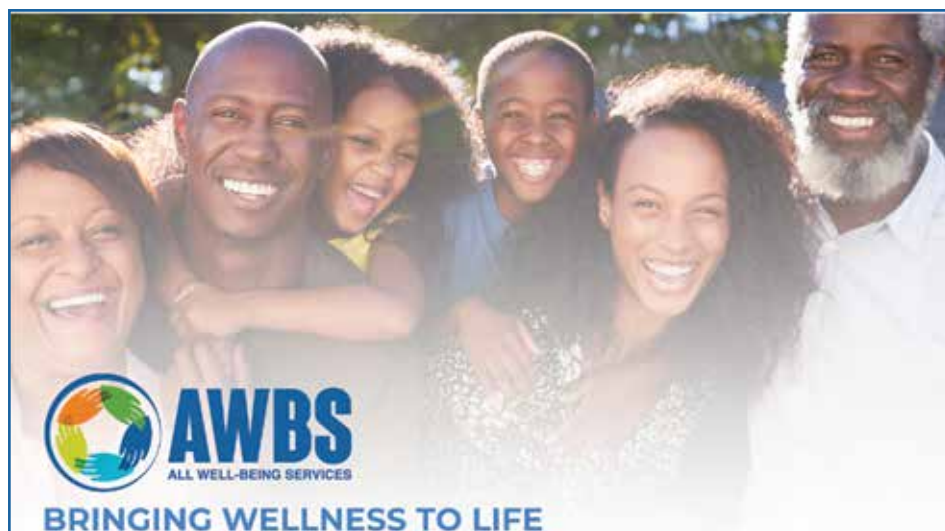
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14 Queer-Inclusive Films From This Year's Virtual Sundance Film Festival Worth Searching For

BY MIKEY ROX

Virtual screenings and collaborative showings with partner organizations across the country allowed home audiences to enjoy Sundance Film Festival's elevated and celebrated independent films — for \$15 a pop streaming via Sundance's online portal — that this year included 14 queer-inclusive entries. From dramatic narratives and documentaries to shorts and a touch of terror, here's what to watch wherever they're distributed now that the festival's proverbial curtains have closed.

Together Together

Trans actress Patti Harrison stars as adrift young loner Anna who's hired as a surrogate for 40-something single man Matt, played by Ed Helms, in this dramedy about the unconventional, non-romantic relationship that the pair develops. *Bleecker Street* purchased "Together Together" late last year, making it one of few Sundance films to secure distribution ahead of the virtual festival. Tig Notaro co-stars.

At the Ready

In El Paso, Texas, 10 miles from the Mexico border, students enroll in law-enforcement classes and participate in extra-curricular activities, like the criminal justice club. But as this Maisie Crow-directed doc details, future careers in border patrol, policing, and customs enforcement clash with the values and people the Mexican-American students in the program hold dear.

Passing

Based on Nella Larsen's same-name novel, "Passing" stars Ruth Negga and Tessa Thompson as mixed-race childhood friends who both can "pass" as white but choose to live on opposite sides of the color line in 1929 New York, becoming obsessed with one another's lives. André Holland ("Moonlight"), Alexander Skarsgard and Bill Camp also star in this Forest Whitaker-produced drama.

Unliveable

Set in Brazil, where a trans person is murdered every three days, Marilene searches for her missing trans daughter Roberta before time runs out.



Ruth Negga and Tessa Thompson star in "Passing." Photos courtesy of Sundance Institute

Flee

Danish filmmaker Jonas Poher Rasmussen presented his animated documentary "Flee," about an Afghan refugee named Amin who arrives in Denmark as an unaccompanied minor only to become a successful academic as an adult. Ready to marry his long-time boyfriend, Amin rises above all odds in this poignant tale of survival and love conquering all.

The Most Beautiful Boy in the World

Fifty years ago, Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti declared Björn Andresén, star of his 1971 film "Death in Venice," "The Most Beautiful Boy in the World," thrusting the then 15-year-old into overnight international stardom. Andresén looks back on the past half-century of his life in this documentary directed by Swedish filmmakers Kristina Lindström and Kristian Petri.

Ma Belle, My Beauty

First-time filmmaker Marion Hill tackles



the oft-complicated particulars of polyamory in this narrative about newlyweds whose fresh start is interrupted by an unexpected visit from the couple's quirky ex.

Ailey

Director Jamila Wignot's documentary "Ailey" includes the namesake visionary artist himself through audio recordings and public interviews recorded before his death in 1989. The film is a dive into the prolific performer's life, from Alvin's Texas childhood to modest beginnings in Los Angeles to his eventual move to New York City, where he established the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

My Name is Pauli Murray

Through never-before-seen footage and audio recordings, directors Betsy West and Julie Cohen introduce Black non-binary legal trailblazer Pauli Murray, whose progressive ideas influenced our country's greatest court battles, including the late RBG's fight for gender equality and Thurgood Marshall's civil-rights arguments.

The World to Come

In this 19th-century period piece from director Mona Fastvold, two married women find solace — and eventually intimacy — in each other's company as their respective home lives on the frontier deteriorates. Vanessa Kirby and Katherine Waterston star alongside Casey Affleck and Christopher Abbott.

This Is The Way We Rise

You can catch this short, about poet/activist Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, and her continued work toward justice for Hawaiian natives, directed by Ciara Lacy, under the American Masters banner on PBS online.

We're All Going to the World's Fair

There's not much pre-premiere information on this American drama directed by Jane Schoenbrun, but if the mystery premise of a teenager documenting the changes she experiences after participating in an online role-playing horror game piques your interest, this film, scored by Alex G, is for you.



4 Feet High

Collaborators from Argentina and France have created a virtual-reality experience for viewers of this film about a wheelchair-confined teenager eager to explore her sexuality despite dealing with body dysmorphia.

Knocking

After experiencing a traumatic incident involving a same-sex partner that sent her to the psych ward, Molly moves into a new apartment where she can't escape the haunting knocking sounds that her neighbors don't hear.

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels.

→ Sundance

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of festivals — queer and non-queer.”

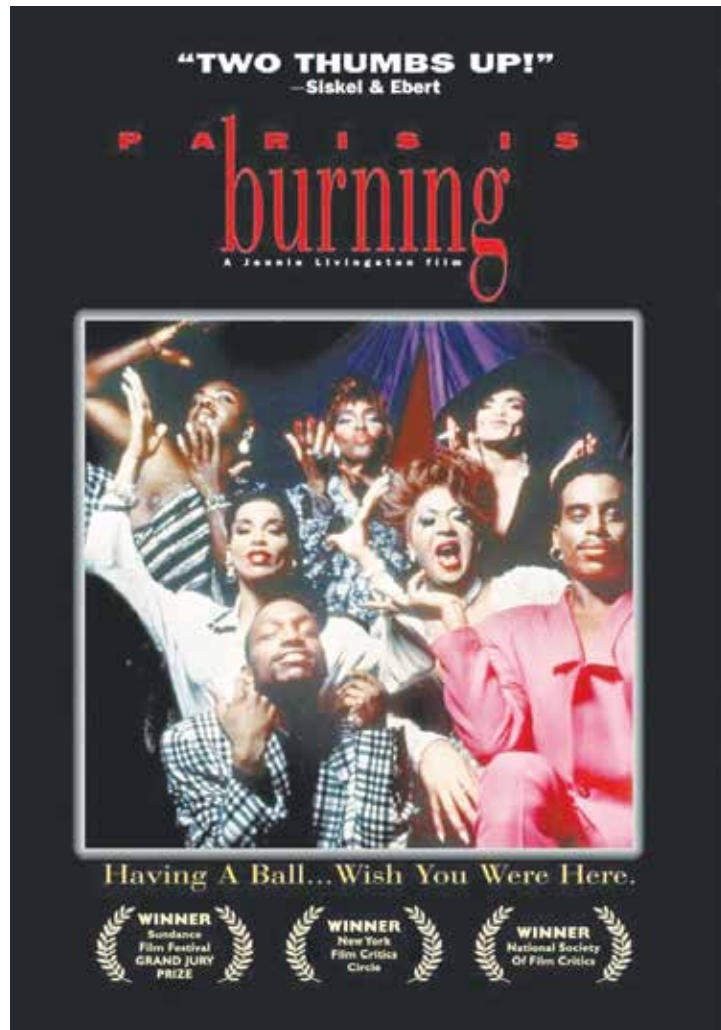
The experience of queer festivals provides, for both filmmakers and programmers, a value of its own. Olson, for instance, makes works meant chiefly for queer audiences, and considers Frameline’s San Francisco Festival as “the peak experience where I know the audience is understanding my vision in a much deeper way.” For Damiens, queer and mainstream festivals spaces are distinct from one another but strongly interconnected.

“Queer festivals are by and for the community. It’s about watching films, in the dark, with like-minded people — about seeing, in the lobby, friends and lovers; exchanging a few moments around a film with one’s community.”

Over time, both Sundance audiences and programming have evolved alongside each other, with the festival becoming more inclusive over time. While early programming often centered gay white men, Sundance’s queer programming has broadened from year to year in both tone and who it features. Compare, for instance, 1990’s “Metamorphosis: Man Into Woman,” which documented a white trans woman’s gender affirmation on video, to 2015’s unlikely breakout “Tangerine,” which more offhandedly centers two trans women of color in an iPhone-shot work that’s much more comic in tone. In some ways, the expansion of digital filmmaking and distribution evokes the rise of video in Sundance’s early days, allowing not just for new subjects but many new directors as well.

The approach has changed in part due to broader shifts in culture and filmmaking’s economic structures, according to Damiens.

“It’s definitely a different political climate: we’re no longer in the sort of sex and moral panic caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic



in the 1990s” — something Damiens cites as fueling the New Queer Cinema. “We also have a lot of queer representations on film, on TV, and online. The stakes are not as high as they used to be. There’s a lot of new channels of distribution that makes it slightly easier to direct a queer film.”

From early and ongoing efforts at foregrounding Indigenous programming to an ever-broadening array of queer films, workshops, and events — along with an increasing focus on intersectional works — Sundance has worked to stay relevant by working to reflect the breadth of filmmaking present in the world at large.

This effort goes for queer films as much as anything else. While New Queer Cinema might no longer be the word for it, Sundance’s continuing emphasis on showcasing a broader range of queer works seems both proof — and part of — a movement that is very much alive.

George Elkind is a writer and media critic based in Metro Detroit.

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Rufus, In Retrospect

V. Tony Hauser

A Grammy Nominee This Year, the Trailblazing Crooner Talks Virtual Pandemic Concerts

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It all started with Rufus Wainwright in his bathrobe. The crooner, at the forefront of virtual pandemic performances in March 2020, performed a song a day at his home piano in the Hollywood Hills during his “Quarantunes Robe Recital” series for fans on IGTV.

Nearly a year into the pandemic, Wainwright has found himself doing what, for him, once seemed impossible — embracing the very technology he had adamantly abhorred. But since concert halls are still temporarily shut down due to COVID, Wainwright has, like many artists, turned to virtual platforms and has even realized their virtues.

“A song a day” turned into 45-minute concerts (no robe, real clothes) for live-streaming concerts platform Veeps, entitled “Rufus-Retro-Wainwright-Spective!” The series continues this year as Wainwright reaches back into his catalog to perform parts of his studio albums “Out of the Game,” “Take All My Loves: 9 Shakespeare Sonnets” and “Unfollow the Rules,” along with cover songs. Additionally, Wainwright performs a special program of soundtrack songs called “Rufus at the Movies”

and two “Rarities” concerts.

Released in 2020, “Unfollow the Rules” is Wainwright’s latest studio album, which earned him his second Grammy nomination for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album. Winners will be announced March 14.

How would you describe where you are on the pandemic front now?

Well, I’m in L.A., arguably the worst place to be on Earth. Obviously we have a new administration, and that’s a great thing. L.A. is actually a good example of just the need of a kind of national strategy. I think without the government behind you, you’re gonna eventually fail (laughs) when you’re dealing with pandemics. So sadly, we are the guinea pig in that experiment. I’m pretty sure we’ve learned that lesson.

I talked to you last year, and at that point we didn’t know what was going to happen with the pandemic. So much has changed that you have had to sort of become more technologically advanced. You have a whole crew working with you.

Yeah, one of the plus sides of this pandemic

situation is that before COVID I really had a very negative view of the internet and social media. I tended to pooh-pooh it on a regular basis and thought it was kind of, you know, below me.

I think it’s still a double-edged sword, obviously, in the sense that there’s very frightening sides of it, especially when you look at the political landscape. But nonetheless, I now rely on it, and I have a lot to be thankful for in terms of what it’s brought me. It’s kept my career going.

I do have a strong sense that there will be a kind of Renaissance after this period. I don’t know if it will match the Italian Renaissance necessarily, but there’s going to be a real outburst of creative work because there’s just a lot to process, obviously.

Are you tapping into that right now?

Oh yeah.

How so?

I’ve been writing a lot. Even though I’ve written two operas and worked on the Shakespeare sonnets project and made a lot of albums, everybody’s always like, “Rufus, when are you going to write a musical? I mean, it’s ridiculous.” So I’ve actually had a chance in this pandemic period to really think of stories that interest me and really start to talk to writers and directors and producers about starting to lay the groundwork for some of the project.

Stage or movie musical?

Either. I think the main goal is just to find that story that speaks to me and others.

What happened to the locks?

I just ... what happened? Well, I’m of a certain age (laughs) where long hair just makes you ... it starts to make you look scary. When you’re young — or not even too young, but let’s say in your 30s and under — you can pull the Jesus card occasionally, but not when you’re over 40. It starts to look more John the Baptist.

A “Rufus-Retro-Wainwright-Spective!” is a mouthful. I actually have to slow down to say it. Can you say that three times in a row? Because I can’t.

Well, it’s good to slow down. Rufus-Retro-Wainwright-Spective, Rufus-Retro-Wainwright-Spective. I say it all the time, so I know it, but yeah, that being said, it’s good to slow down.

How did these retrospective concerts come about?

I have to credit a lot of these ideas to my husband, Jörn (Weisbrodt), who’s also my manager. Before COVID, he started filming me every morning when I would rehearse a little bit and would occasionally put things out on Instagram because that’s what one was starting to do a lot of. Then when COVID (happened), he immediately had the idea of doing a song day, which we did for about 60

days — the Robe Recitals.

So that started then, and that really meant a lot to a lot of people, myself included. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to go through my catalog, and so forth, and sing a lot of songs I hadn’t thought of in a long time.

But then tours were canceled, band members had to be furloughed, and I was like, “I gotta start charging for this.” (Laughs.) We just said, “Well, let’s make it into a real retrospective of my studio albums with a more COVID-friendly ensemble.” So there’s only three of us playing together. It’s been wonderful. It’s been really great.

I also have one or two celebrity guests who come. We’re all tested and we’re all wearing masks, except me. I’m not wearing a mask because I’m singing. We also raise money for a charity of their choosing. We’ve had Jamie Lee Curtis; we had Darren Criss, we had Joel McHale. It’s a bit of a Hollywood hang.

Are you getting used to not performing in front of a real audience? Is that still weird?

I miss performing in front of an audience. I will say that before COVID, I was working too much. I was touring my ass off for years, and that first three or four months, even five months, of COVID was actually a real godsend. I needed to stop. I needed to slow down. I think even the world needed that, just to kind of get some perspective. So I learned to appreciate that, and feel very fortunate that I was able to do that and not lose my job and keep my house and everything. But that being said, I’m dying to go out now. I’m really itching to hit the road.

You’re slated to tour this summer in Europe. Do you still expect to?

Your guess is as good as mine. If I had to put money on a date or a period, I would say August, probably. I could see August really happening. But that’s all I can say. It doesn’t mean that the rest of the summer won’t happen, but I just feel like (there will) be more of a solid system together by August for touring, whether it’ll be socially distant or have smaller capacities. We’ll see.

You’ll also be doing a virtual “Rarities” program. What is that going to look like?

That was a suggestion from one of the fans. It’s kind of an interesting idea. I haven’t gone over the list yet totally, so I can’t really express too much of what’s going to happen. But what’s fun is: I think now I write songs for lots of purposes, whether it’s trying to get on the radio, or for a musical, or for a movie, or what I’m experiencing myself personally. But I think there was a time when I was younger when I really went out on a lot of weird limbs, that kind of youthful sophomoric confidence that I think some of those songs (are) imbued with.

What do you think are your “weird limbs”?

There are probably a lot of songs I wrote back then where I had no sense of purpose. It was completely experimental and completely just

See *Rufus*, continued on p. 22

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Photo: V. Tony Hauser

→ Rufus

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getting lost in the material. Like, I hadn't really loved yet, I hadn't really experienced loss, I hadn't really been sick or seen death. So there's this sort of innocence that exists in some of them, so I'm excited to revisit that funny little boy.

Now that you have lived through some of those life experiences, perhaps your perspective might've shifted in how you perform them or interpret them.

It's funny because right before COVID, or a few months before, I had gone out for the 20th anniversary tour of my first two albums, the "Poses" tour, so I did "Rufus Wainwright" and "Poses" with a band and went all around the world for that. I was pleasantly surprised (laughs) in terms of hitting that material again 20 years later by how — I don't know, for lack of a better word — profound my emotions were at that age, or at least how sincere and true they were. You know, I wasn't being melodramatic; I was really searching. Because I took myself very seriously when I was young. (Laughs.) Probably too much so. But within the music, it was warranted.

Regarding "Unfollow the Rules," I can't believe this is only your second Grammy nomination.

I'm not totally surprised only because I don't know what I do. (Laughs.) I've never been able to define myself. So God forbid the Grammys can! But I think this one — I've admitted it

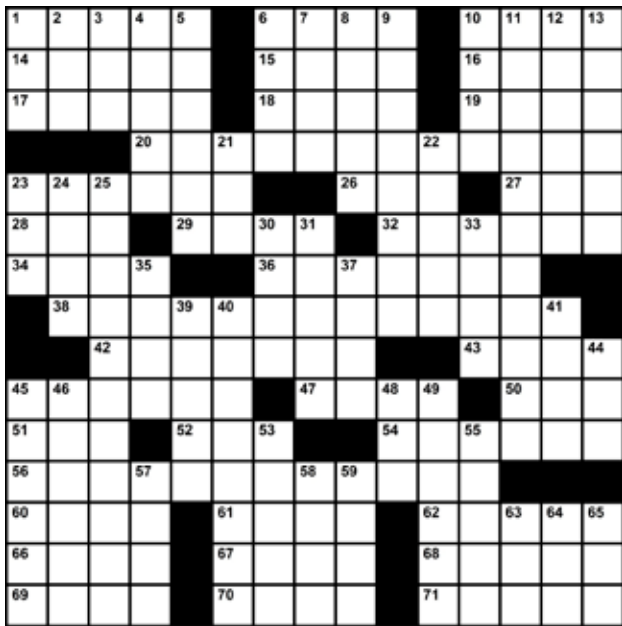
before, and I kind of regret that a little bit, but the cat's outta the bag and, I mean, I wanna win this. (Laughs.) Just to get it over with. So, therefore, I probably won't. But we'll see.

Does this nomination feel any different than the nomination you got for "Rufus Does Judy at Carnegie Hall"?

Yeah, I think when the Judy Garland album was nominated over 10 years ago, I kind of knew in my bones that I didn't stand a chance mainly because at that time I was up against Natalie Cole and Natalie Cole was very sick. She had kidney transplants and stuff, so I was like, "There goes my Grammy." But I feel that with this one there's more of a sense of ... I think precisely what you said: I think a lot of people in the know are like, he probably deserves one at this point.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

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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 60 Open a crack
 61 Ready to be eaten
 62 The I's of Socrates
 66 "Peanuts" oath
 67 Capable of performing
 68 Nuts
 69 Perlman of "Cheers"
 70 Worker at the bottom
 71 Bridges in movies
- 10 Puerto ____
 11 Campaign energetically
 12 Parts for Dykes on Bikes
 13 Olfactory assault
 21 Byron's before
 22 One of the Four Hs
 23 Thornton Wilder, for one
 24 Kind of IRA
 25 Kill Caesar, for example
 30 Coal holders
 31 Firm-fleshed fruit
 33 Attachment found on drawers
 35 Colony dwellers
 37 "Candid Camera" creator
 39 Speed skater Blanchart
 40 Parted the thighs, perhaps
 41 Patron of people in the navy
 44 Silly goose
 45 Hedy of old Hollywood
 46 Wood on a screen
 48 Move one's tail
 49 "The Iceman Cometh" writer Eugene
 53 Where the Kneelers ski
 55 Unswallowed spit
 57 Bear of the night
 58 Not taken in by
 59 Broadway light
 63 When repeated, campy
 64 Even one
 65 Pink Floyd's Barrett

The Siegfried Line

Q Puzzle

Down

Across


- 1 "Ol' Man" of Broadway
 6 Russian singing duo
 10 Sales people
 14 Hawaiian President
 15 "Brothers & Sisters" producer Ken
 16 "Why should ____ you?"
 17 Hairy Himalayans
 18 "Do What U Want" Lady
- 19 Sign over
 20 Start of Siegfried Fischbacher's definition of a hero
 23 Rubber for your mistakes
 26 Charlotte of "Facts of Life"
 27 Gentle handling, initially
 28 Article for Frida
 29 "Queen of Country" McEntire
 32 Licentious
 34 "____ shame"

- 1 Fischbacher's partner Horn
 2 "May ____ of service?"
 3 Winery container
 4 Secretes nocturnally
 5 Bacon serving
 6 Take-out on a cheap date?
 7 "American Beauty" screenwriter Ball
 8 Dangerous pussy
 9 By surprise

See p. 15 for answers

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Wednesday	11 am - 2 pm
Thursday	10 am - 4 pm
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Wear Your Mask!



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Since 1980 Dr. Paul Benson's Be Well Medical Center has been an inclusive family medical center that celebrates diversity. We take pride in our history of creating a safe, sensitive and welcoming space for people of all backgrounds. The care and attention we provide to those who frequently have been neglected by the healthcare industry is something that sets our practice apart from others.

Postponing your healthcare is no longer recommended. We have vigorous protocols to keep you safe. Telemedical visits are available when appropriate. We offer the Rapid 15-minute COVID-19 test and opportunities to participate in COVID-19 therapeutic trials.



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