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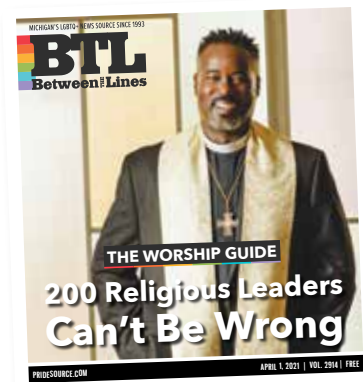


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Photo: Andrew Potter

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR LATEST ONLINE-ONLY PIECES:



Julia Monro, a spokesperson for the German Association for Trans Identity and Intersex People, applied to become a police officer in 2017, but officials denied her application. (Photo via Facebook)

Germany Now Allows Transgender, Intersex Police Officers to Serve Openly

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Biden Outlines Plan for Senate Filibuster Reform: 'It's Been Abused'

By Chris Johnson

Family Equality's Denise Brogan-Kator Announces Plans to Retire

By Jason A. Michael

Viewpoint: Protect Trans Kids in Sports

By Jay Kaplan

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Photo: Andrew Potter

Gay Michigan Pastor Organizes Over 200 Faith Leaders to Call for Passage of the Equality Act, Elliott-Larsen

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Two hundred faith leaders can't be wrong. In addition to being the campaign's tagline, that's the number of religious representatives that Michigan's LGBTQ-affirming, faith-based coalition Inclusive Justice has brought together to sign a letter in support of the Equality Act and Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Though the Act has passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, it still must make its way through the Senate to be adopted.

If passed, the Act would create federal protections that include sexual orientation and gender identity for all U.S. citizens, ensuring that all LGBTQ+ people wouldn't have to rely on an inconsistent patchwork of regional laws to have legal recourse in cases of discrimination. The Elliott-Larsen expansion would ensure that all Michiganders would have protections from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. This effort has been spearheaded by The Rev. Dr. Roland

Stringfellow who serves not only as the pastor for LGBTQ-inclusive Christian church MCC Detroit but as Inclusive Justice's chair.

"Religious support of nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people demonstrates that religious and civil liberties are not contradictory forces," Stringfellow said. "The lack of protections causes harm to our LGBTQ neighbors. Legislators must have the moral imperative to protect and uphold the sacred dignity and worth of all Michiganders."

Over a Year in the Making

While this stand for LGBTQ+ equality may seem like a recent development, Stringfellow said that it's the result of more than a year of campaigning that began with the help of The National LGBTQ Task Force. As part of Stringfellow's work with Inclusive Justice, he is funded by a California grant from the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund to do political advocacy work to convince Republicans and on-the-fence Democrats of the benefits of

the Equality Act. The Task Force is part of a coalition that works to aid in those efforts.

"I dusted off an old presentation that I used to engage in called Turning a Sermon Into a Soundbite. What that was back then was really helping clergy with how to formulate press releases and the difference between a press release and a media advisory of that nature — that was all around the Prop 8 marriage equality campaign. So [I focused on] how people can do that and also how they can speak to their representatives [about the Equality Act today]," he said. "It's a like a twofer."

It wasn't long into this effort that Stringfellow met Barbara Satin — the new director of faith outreach for the Task Force — and Reese Rathjen-Amyx — also of the Task Force — who were both excited to aid Stringfellow in his efforts.

It was then that the former presentation turned into a nationally shared workshop that was even featured at the Task Force's annual Creating Change conference. While there, the presentation was directed largely toward the public and religious leaders, but Stringfellow

began to conceive of using the presentation's tactics to more directly target political leaders unsure of the Equality Act's and Elliott-Larsen's benefits.

"At that time, [former U.S. Rep.] Justin Amash and Fred Upton, who were representatives in the House, were my targets. They were known more to be moderate Republicans and that having a conversation with them very well could turn the tide," Stringfellow said. "That's why I was working in the West side of the state and then we had a clergy press conference in Grand Rapids to launch this."

Earning Political Clout

It was with help of fellow activists that Stringfellow was able to create a smaller version of today's 200-strong faith leader coalition and earn a meeting with both Reps. on two separate occasions in Michigan and in Washington, D.C.

"I use a lot of the lessons from Turning a Sermon Into a Soundbite with Amash, which was that these clergy [who were in the meeting



Photo: Andrew Potter

with me] would tell very moving, compelling stories of discrimination against people or that had happened to themselves or their child,” he said. “And so, as we did this, Amash, who is a man of faith, sat and listened and he used his Libertarian talking points back at us. One of the things we kept saying to him, literally repeating was, ‘We want you to vote your conscience. As a person of faith, it is important for you to vote your conscience.’”

While Stringfellow said he can’t prove that there’s any connection, he was surprised to see that merely a month later, Amash announced that he was leaving the Republican party, citing his conscience as his motivating factor. He did so again when Republican Sen. Mitt Romney supported the impeachment of former President Donald Trump.

“We like to take credit, but we don’t have any hard proof. But the thing was, we were able to contact him and start a relationship with him and from there we met him in Washington, D.C., with another pastor here from Michigan and



Screenshot via Twitter

I just thanked him,” Stringfellow said. “What happened then was an op-ed talking of support of transgender people in the military. We were thrilled with that. I thanked him for that.”

While he was glad to see that his meeting with Amash may have served to change his mind, Stringfellow said that the reaction wasn’t as “dramatic” with Upton. Still, he was glad to get the opportunity to speak his piece for the passage of the Equality Act. Later, he was disappointed by Upton’s homophobic campaign against openly gay opponent Jon Hoadley in 2020, but Stringfellow still chose to reach out after Upton was reelected in 2021 to persuade him to consider his LGBTQ+ constituents.

“Because we want him to do right by us and advocate for our community,” Stringfellow said. “This is the type of work that we are engaged with and are hoping that we can have this type of interaction with our representatives, no matter what side of the aisle they are on. We want you to know that we, as leaders within your communities, it’s important.”

Measurable Growth

Looking back on efforts that began in 2019 targeting only a corner of the state, Stringfellow is pleased at the immense support his campaign for passage of the Equality Act has gotten.

“It was started in West Michigan more than a year ago now, and ... now what was about 50 names is about 200 names. And we literally are from Detroit to Traverse City to Midland to Muskegon,” he said. “It’s all over.”

Stringfellow is quick to point out that there is plenty of diversity among the race, ethnicity and religion of each of the more than 200 campaign signees. He pointed out that The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Bonnie A. Perry as an especially exciting faith leader to have on the list. Not only does she have prominent standing in Michigan’s religious community because she is serving as Episcopal Church’s 11th bishop diocesan, Perry identifies as a lesbian and she has used her platform to be vocally supportive of LGBTQ+ rights expansion. Notably, she wrote an op-ed in support of the Act that was picked up by The Hill.

“It’s like the Bible for many [White House] staffers, so the fact that it got placed there, many people ask, ‘Well, what did The Hill say?’ And the fact that we were able to land that from Michigan and from one of our prominent faith leaders says a lot,” he said.

And while Stringfellow is excited at the statewide and national support he’s gotten in his efforts to aid in the passage of the Equality Act, he’s not stopping anytime soon. In a press release, Perry echoed his thoughts.

“... This letter is a commitment from all of us to keep pushing forward for LGBTQ freedom and dignity, and change is possible in 2021,” she said.

Stringfellow encourages interested religious leaders to join the movement online at inclusivejustice.org/home.

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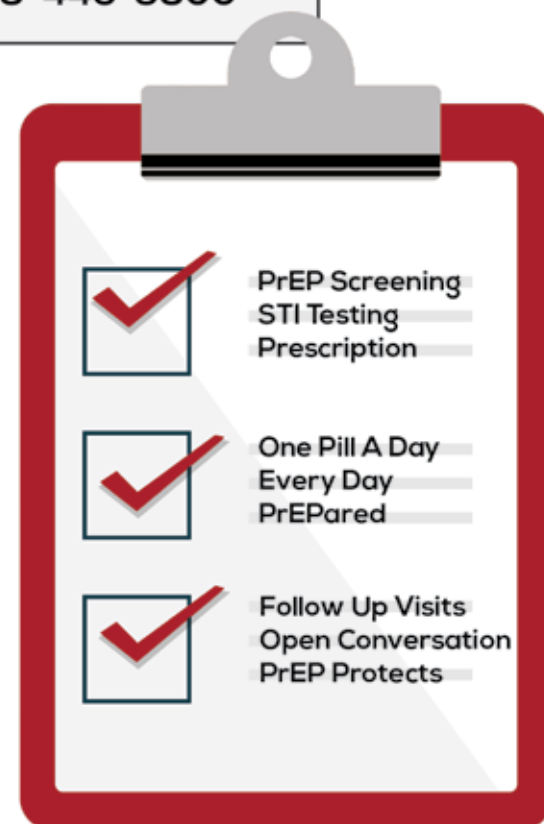
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1 Year Later Catholic Priests Still Banned From Offering Mass to LGBTQ+ Group

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Though it's been a year since the Archdiocese of Detroit prohibited priests from offering mass to LGBTQ+ Catholic group Dignity/Detroit, the order hasn't budged. The decision came as a shock last year to Dignity members as the organization had operated for 46 years as an active LGBTQ-affirming Catholic entity in the state of Michigan.

"The archdiocese prohibited any priest from saying mass for Dignity," said Dignity/Detroit President Frank D'Amore. "Nothing was said about Dignity itself; it was just their roundabout way of, effectively, trying to stop us."

The group is part of DignityUSA, a national organization that offers LGBTQ+ and allied Catholics a place to worship while staying supportive and true to their identities. And while mass can't be offered directly to attendees, that hasn't stopped loyal churchgoers from attending Dignity events, which are held at the chapel at The School at Marygrove.

"There is no mass for Dignity Detroit. What we do on the first Sunday of every month is we visit a parish of one of our former presidors to show support for them," D'Amore said. "Then, on the third Sunday of the month, we meet at Marygrove for a scripture and communion service that we lead ourselves. You don't need a priest for that; anybody can do that."

Since starting parish visits in May of 2020, Dignity/Detroit has visited 10. D'Amore said Dignity members will start the cycle again once they've visited every active priest who offered mass to Dignity members before the ban.

D'Amore said he was never able to appeal the archdiocese's decision because his attempts to schedule a meeting with Bishop Gerard William Battersby, who serves as an auxiliary bishop for Detroit's archdiocese, were refused.

"We never spoke because in one of the last emails I got from Bishop Battersby he said that there was no reason to meet, that it was non-negotiable," D'Amore said.

However, despite the ban on mass, Dignity is able to maintain its lease in the Marygrove

"The archdiocese prohibited any priest from saying mass for Dignity ... Nothing was said about Dignity itself; it was just their roundabout way of, effectively, trying to stop us."

school chapel, which is a Catholic space as it has a valid lease agreement signed through Dec. 31, 2024. D'Amore expects that he will not have an issue renewing it when it expires.

"I have no clue at this point, but I really don't care. I don't see any issue in renewing it because we're not dealing with the archdiocese," he said.

For now, he said he sees no wiggle room when it comes to removing the ban, but D'Amore is glad to at least show support to the priests who offered mass to Dignity's members for years.

"We go to the parishes to support the guys that used to say Mass for us as a way of thanking them," he said. "We owe it to them after all these years ministering to us."

When asked if Dignity/Detroit has released a statement on the Vatican's recent refusal to recognize same-sex couples, D'Amore said no.

"What the Holy Father said was a statement that no priest anywhere can marry a same-sex couple. The Pope encouraged same-sex people to have civil unions, but it could not be recognized by the Church. That's no shocking news, everybody knew that for years. For some reason, some cardinal decided to restate that and that's how that statement came out — but it's nothing new," he said. "We had a service on the third Sunday of the month and some people mentioned it, but everybody was of the opinion, 'So, what else is new?' It's been that way for as long as anyone can remember. So, it really wasn't earth-shaking that he issued this statement."

Learn more about Dignity/Detroit online at dignitydetroit.org.

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 Source: HIV & STDs in Michigan an overview, July 1, 2019, www.michigan.gov*

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Singer Elton John performs onstage at Minsk Arena on June 26, 2010 in Minsk. Photo: Mazzzur

Elton John Blasts Vatican's Same-Sex Union Statement on Twitter

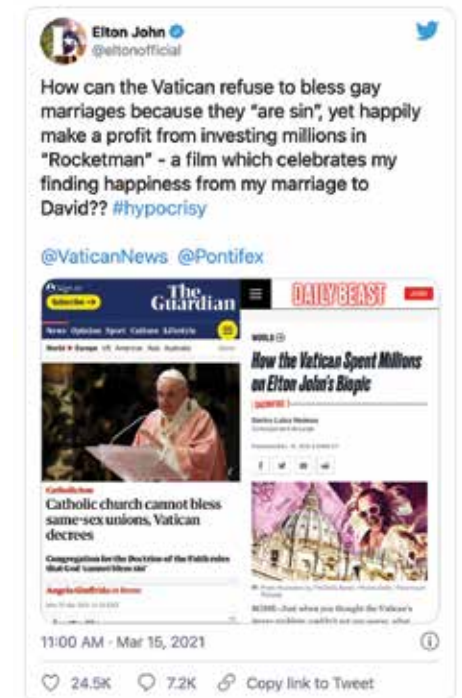
BY JASON MICHAEL

Elton John is pissed at Pope Francis. The pontiff said in a letter issued today through the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the church's orthodoxy office, that Catholic clergy may not bless same-sex unions because God "cannot bless sin." The letter, which was published in seven different languages, offended the openly-gay and flamboyant and prompted John to blast back with a Tweet which seems to reveal the church's hypocrisy.

It was revealed in 2019 that the Vatican, through ties to the Malta-based Centurion Global Fund, which is run by Enrico Crasso and has a large portion of its capital assets fed by the Vatican secretariat of state, had invested \$4.5 million to help finance the 2019 films "Men in Black: International" and the very explicitly gay John biopic "Rocketman." The Vatican released a statement two years ago saying it would review the matter but has offered no follow-up since then.

While there were no claims that investing in these films was immoral or against church teachings, it's the Vatican's choice of films that many find peculiar. The "Men in Black" film franchise purports the existence of aliens and "Rocketman" featured not only male-on-male sexual scenes but also depicts John's history of drug abuse.

Pope Francis has been generally thought to be kinder on the subject of LGBTQ+ issues,



but the Catholic church is visibly far from full acceptance. The letter said that the Church could not approve or accept of "a choice and a way of life that cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God."

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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

A 135-Year-Old Request Fulfilled

I celebrated the return of Spring three weeks ago by helping to fulfill a 135-year-old request by America's beloved poet, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886).

That recent memorable day in March was occasioned by what poet Emily might say was radiantly highlighted by "a certain slant of light."

It was sunny. Warm. Brilliant ... nature stirring. Sixty-five degrees of newly reawakened Spring.

The occasion was indeed all that, and so very much, much more to me.

I was having an impromptu lunch and outdoor celebration with two good friends I had known, admired and worked closely with for slightly over 30 years: Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz, the newly retired co-publishers of Between The Lines Newspaper.

Because of the ever-looming darkness and oppression of COVID-19, Jan, Susan and I had not seen each other for a gloomy, oppressive, social-distancing year.

Our reunion was given a comforting, hopeful touch because as we reunited, all three of us had each gotten our two COVID-19 vaccinations weeks before.

Seemingly out of the surrounding bluest of blue skies, we had an unexpected drop-in guest as well.

"Well. Well! Look who's here," Jan said. "A robin! A sure sign that Spring is either here or on its longed-for way."

"Share this," said Susan, handing me a convenient table cookie that I crumbled and tossed artfully in the direction of our winged guest who unexpectedly flew away.

"Birds are smart," Susan observed. "This one wants just a few crumbs more."

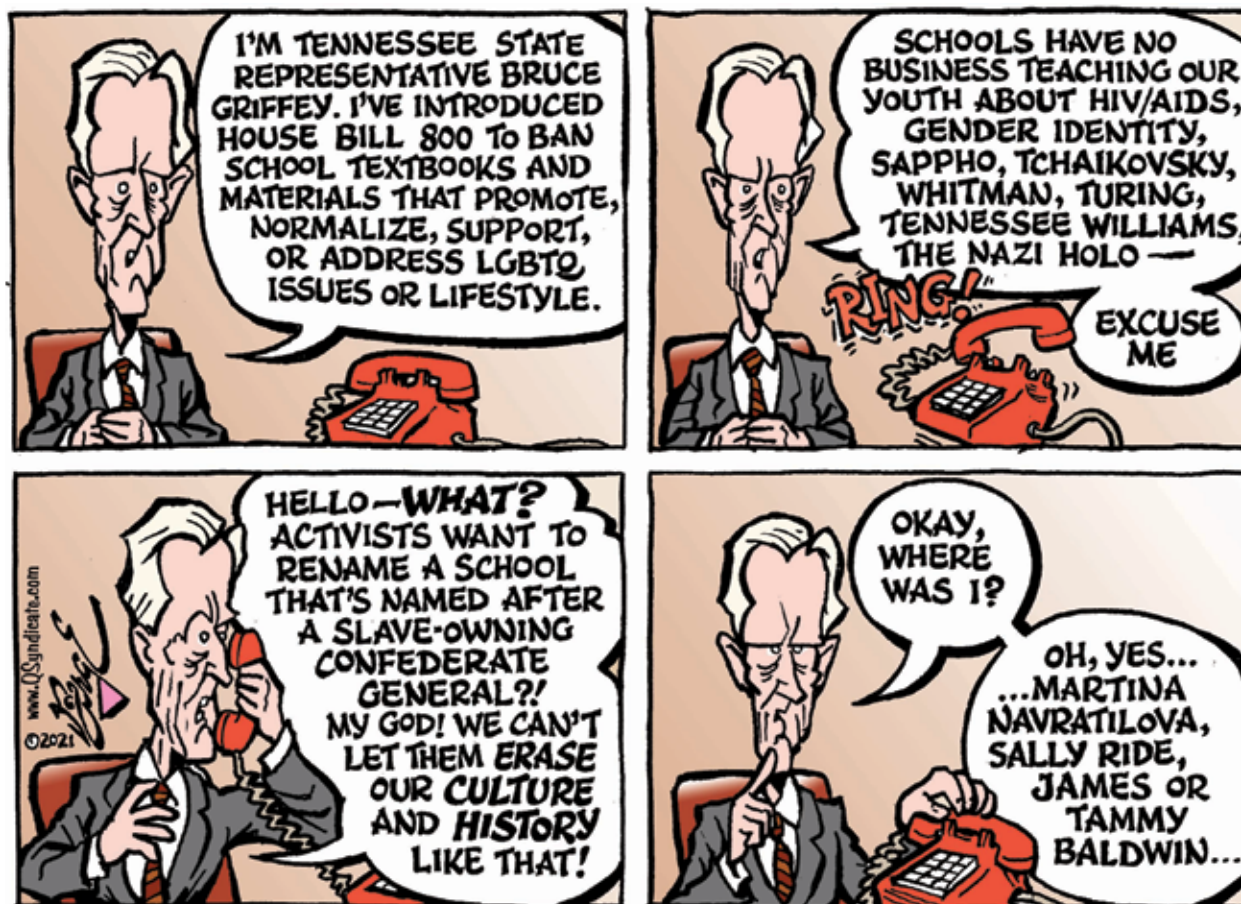
I tossed two, three, four and, indeed, the clever robin returned and stayed put. It ate contentedly and took off again. Mission accomplished.

I recalled to mind an Emily Dickinson poem that was her heartfelt, poetic request that we, reunited three, had also just honored that unblemished Spring-returns-to-Michigan day.

Emily wrote a century ago:

"If I shouldn't be alive / when the robins come / give the red cravat a memorial crumb — / If I couldn't thank you, / being fast asleep, / You will know that I am trying / with my granite lip."

So honored to do so, Emily. Kind thanks for your eternal verse. Virtual hugs to you from Jan, Susan, Charles and our, somewhat flighty, winged guest.



Viewpoint

The Fight Against Michigan's Newest Anti-Transgender Sports Bill



BY KRISTA GIRTY

Michigan Republican Sen. Lana Theis recently introduced Senate Bill 218 that will discriminate against and prevent transgender youth from playing school sports consistent with their gender identity. Last week, several Ozone House staff and community members met virtually with Theis to educate her on the harm this bill

will cause to transgender youth. Our group shared with the senator about the ways rejection increases negative health outcomes for transgender youth. After sharing this evidence and personal testimonies, our group asked her to withdraw her discriminatory and harmful bill. She said she will not withdraw the bill because she believes transgender youth are a threat to a "level playing field." The message of this bill is rejection and rejection kills.

There is currently a coordinated legislative attack going on across the nation, aimed at transgender youth. More than two dozen states have recently introduced a version of this same discriminatory and unconstitutional bill. Mississippi was the first to sign it into law a few weeks

ago. Another sits on the governor of South Dakota's desk waiting to be signed into law. These bills are paving the way for other states to enact similar hateful legislation that is misleadingly framed as a protection of women's rights and Title IX.

We know that gay and transgender youth who are highly rejected by their families and communities are more than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide, nearly six times as likely to report high levels of depression and more than three times as likely to use illegal drugs, according to research from the Family Acceptance Project at San Francisco State University.

This harmful legislation is another form of rejection, as young people are

See **Viewpoint**, next page

Creep Of The Week

Creep of the Week: Gov. Asa Hutchinson

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Arkansas is auditioning hard to become America's biggest nightmare state.

There is a lot of creepy stuff afoot right now. Across the country, Republicans are passing anti-voting legislation because they know they can't win on their ideas, especially since their ideas are racism and more racism, so they have to stop people from voting. Especially Black people. These bills are all backed up by the big lie that the 2020 election was stolen and rife with fraud. It wasn't, despite what Mike Lindell, CEO of My Fascist Pillow, says.

Then there's the Derek Chauvin trial in Minneapolis where a white police officer who murdered George Floyd, a Black man, in public and on video could very well get away with it. This is America, after all, a deeply racist country that both celebrates its racism and is simultaneously in deep denial about its racism. The U.S. is not OK.

Oh, and then there's the continuing COVID-19 pandemic which is STILL A THING despite how an alarming number of people are behaving. The good news is that vaccines are being administered at a steady clip and ahead of the Biden Administration's projections. The bad news is that cases are up in a number of states, including Michigan where I live, and there are wild-ass variants of the virus popping up all over the place. And then, of course, there is the fact that the anti-vaxer crowd is growing because there are an awful lot of people who want to get sick and die to own the libs.

Thankfully, we can always count on Republicans to focus on the very real problems facing this country: transgender people who want to be involved in sports and LGBTQ+ people who want to be involved in medicine — and by “involved in” I mean “receive medical care.”

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson has his finger on the pulse of what's important, signing several terrible bills, including legislation to ban transgender athletes from competing in sports.

“I signed the law as a fan of women's sports from basketball to soccer and including many others in which women compete successfully,” Hutchinson said in a statement.

How much do you want to bet that he either could not think of and/or does not approve of any other sports women compete in “successfully” besides soccer and basketball?

“This law simply says that female athletes should not have to compete in a sport against a student of the male sex when the

sport is designed for women's competition,” his statement continued. “As I have stated previously, I agree with the intention of this law.”

I'm going to take issue with his claim that this bill “simply” says anything. This is not a bill that addresses an actual problem. There isn't a wild influx of transgender athletes demanding to play on girls' and women's teams. The purpose of this bill, and all the copycat bills like it across the country, is to distract from the vitally important issues Republicans are either fine with — like racism — or don't care about — like COVID-19 — or want to stop — like voting. Legislation like this seeks to put transgender people, an already marginalized group, front and center as cannon fodder in the culture wars. Because making people hate each other is the best thing Republicans have when it comes to staying in power.

Not content with singling out only transgender people, Hutchinson also signed the Medical Ethics and Diversity Act, legislation that allows health care providers, employees and insurance companies to deny health care under the guise of “religious freedom” and “moral conscience.” According to The Advocate, the bill “opens the door to widespread discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and others.”

“No one should be denied necessary medical care. SB 289 prioritizes individual providers' beliefs ahead of patient health and wellbeing,” Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David said in a press release issued upon the bill's passage. “In the midst of a devastating and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we should be expanding access to health care and

“I'm going to take issue with his claim that this bill “simply” says anything. This is not a bill that addresses an actual problem. There isn't a wild influx of transgender athletes demanding to play on girls' and women's teams. The purpose of this bill, and all the copycat bills like it across the country, is to distract from the vitally important issues Republicans are either fine with — like racism — or don't care about — like COVID-19 — or want to stop — like voting.”

making it more affordable, not advancing bills that make it harder for LGBTQ Arkansans to receive the care they need.”

Supporters of the bill claim that it's necessary to keep medical workers from leaving the profession during this crucial time, as if having to treat LGBTQ+ patients and not the complete and utter failure of the medical system and the government to equip them with the basic necessities to keep themselves safe during a pandemic is the main problem here.

These anti-LGBTQ bills come on the heels of Hutchinson's signing an abortion ban that he said is a direct challenge to Roe v. Wade. Every Republican's dream is to be the “hero” that gets abortion banned nationwide leaving pregnant women desperate and nowhere to turn until we're all living in the fucking “Handmaid's Tale.”

What Hutchinson calls a dream, the majority of the country would call a nightmare. That is why Republicans need to cheat to win. And they've been devastatingly successful so far. Vote, vaccinate and vanquish hate.

→ Viewpoint

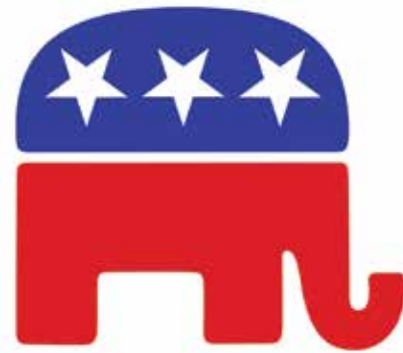
Continued from p. 10

“This harmful legislation is another form of rejection, as young people are excluded from participating both athletically and socially with their peers. This also furthers shame and stigma during a time when youth are doing the important work of identity formation: figuring out who they are in relation to the world.”

excluded from participating both athletically and socially with their peers. This also furthers shame and stigma during a time when youth are doing the important work of identity formation: figuring out who they are in relation to the world.

Many of the young people we work with at Ozone House identify as LGBTQ+ and are experiencing homelessness or other types of housing instability. LGBTQ+ youth is 40 percent more likely to experience homelessness than their peers. Youth come to us in crisis as a direct result of the deadly rhetoric that gay and transgender people don't belong, a message perpetuated by this bill. Individuals such as Sen. This are looked at as experts and their assertions are accepted as truth, leading to hatred and exclusion. As hate crimes against transgender individuals continue to rise, LGBTQ+ youth need our support, protection and validation, not a targeted assault on their identity.

Krista Girty is the Executive Director at Ozone House, a community-based non-profit serving homeless and at-risk youth for over 51 years in Washtenaw County and surrounding communities of Southeast Michigan.



You Can Still Color with Broken Crayons

Repurposing Life's Challenges into Something of Beauty



BY BRIDGETTE PICOU

When we were children, we learned all kinds of things. We learned things as vastly different as our languages and cultures, but one thing that was pretty much universal was coloring. Coloring was a way to teach us our lessons in a fun way.

We were given crayons and taught to color. It kept us quiet in church or at the doctor. It kept us occupied on long car rides. It taught us what color was in the first place. We chose a color and started to scribble. All over the page at first, then eventually, gradually, we learn to color within the lines. We're encouraged to color within the lines. It's actually one of our first subtle lessons in conformity and striving for perfection, although we don't know it. We get better at it with practice. There are contests and prizes for the best picture. Whose picture looks the most like reality? Who stayed in the lines and had the neatest picture?

I can remember my first brand new box of 64 crayons. Five or six shades of blues, pinks and greens! Enough shades so you could actually draw your friends in living color instead of everyone being just one shade of brown or white. I was very proudly a burnt sienna color.



The box even had a sharpener built right into the box. Sharp pointy edges were best for staying in the lines. Then, if you add a brand new book no one had colored in? Best thing ever.

I loved the ones with flowers or the ones with crossword puzzles in them. I remember being in class in elementary school and kids jostling to get the unbroken crayons. There was a definite sense of let down if you got stuck with the leftover mismatched broken crayons. You remember? The ones the teacher had kept from the year or two before? Those were the naked crayons that the paper had been taken off of and that some of the color from the other pieces of crayon had transferred on too.

They had dents in them from being held too tightly, or being nicked by fingernails. They weren't fresh from a box of eight, or 32, let alone 64. Plus, everyone wanted the newest coloring book with all fresh new things to color. If you got an old book, you turned past all the half unfinished pictures, even

the pages that just had a few marks on them to get to the new clean page. After all, the last person didn't want to finish that picture, so why should you? They had colored outside the lines, used the wrong color for the ball, had the nerve to put wings on an elephant. And you can't change one thing into something else, can you?

When I became HIV-positive, I started to become more of an affirmations person. Daily things I could say and read to remind myself I could and would survive day to day. Quotes and affirmations to encourage me to get up and function, and to take my medication, at a time when I wasn't sure if I even wanted to live. Basically, they started out as a way to give myself something to do, until I could figure out what to do. One that resonated within me was "Broken Crayons Still Color." I had been broken (or so I thought), and I was trying to figure out how to turn the page for a fresh picture.

When you break something, you

start to look at it differently when you try to put it back together. Can it be outright fixed, or can it be repurposed into something else?

Broken crayons are a perfect example. If you put tape around two pieces of a broken crayon, you still know it's broken, and it's weak where the tape is covering it up. Glue doesn't stick well to wax, and as it heats up in your hand, it breaks again. Actually using the "broken" pieces is what works best here. The curves of broken crayons could still stay in the lines of a drawing and, in some cases, fit better along the edges and corners. The flat space created by a break? Perfect for shading and covering more surface area more quickly. If you take the only shade of burnt sienna in the bunch and break it in half, you can share and two people can enjoy the color at the same time.

If I am like a coloring book, the pages of my book have marks on them — marks that make people turn past them, without seeing the potential underneath. The stupid yellow someone

used to color my ocean could become a beautiful seafoam green with the right color blue layered over it. Could they see that the black lines drawn across the middle of the page over the green grass could be connected, and instead of being misplaced lines could actually be a stairway to the sky?

My HIV doesn't make me damaged or hazardous goods. It makes me a survivor, with more compassion for people and life. I could have chosen to let my early fears, anxiety and shame color me bitter and broken. It hasn't. It's a choice I have to make at intervals when dealing with stigma and ignorance.

People are like crayons. We really shouldn't pick over and through the broken ones to find only the traits we like. People don't start out broken. Life situations, disease and addictions break them, leaving them naked with pieces of life rubbed off and transferred onto them. Doesn't mean they can't be repurposed into something pretty. Broken crayons, after all, still color.

Bridgette Picou is a licensed vocational nurse in Palm Springs, California. She is also an active HIV blogger and contributor to the CDC's "Treatment Works" public service campaign. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ+ wire service. Visit their websites – <http://thebody.com>, <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com> and <http://poz.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.

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Fostering Age Reversal p. 23

LGBT Detroit Honors Former BTL Co-Publishers Jan Stevenson, Susan Horowitz



BY JASON A. MICHAEL

It was a fitting farewell. LGBT Detroit honored former Between The Lines publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson with the agency's 2021 Women's Herstory Month award during a Facebook Live celebration and discussion that took place with the two longtime LGBTQ+ activists Monday evening.

LGBT Detroit Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb said that when they decided to host an LGBT Honors service during Women's Herstory Month, they didn't have to think long before deciding who to honor.

"We examined folks who had significantly contributed to our organization and the community and they substantially contributed throughout almost 30 years of sponsorship and promotion," Lipscomb said. "It was a no-brainer. This was just us getting together and saying thank you."

How they got here

Horowitz and Stevenson started the evening off by revisiting their illustrious careers in the LGBTQ+ community. Horowitz, for her part, recalled coming out at age 19 in 1972, just three years after the Stonewall uprising. She quickly started marching and demonstrating.

Stevenson, meanwhile, started out a professional musician, a string bass player to be precise. But after realizing she wanted to pursue a different career path, she went back to school and then into corporate banking.

She went on to co-found Affirmations LGBTQ+ Community Center, become its first board president and, eventually, its first executive director. She held that position for five years.

In 1994, both women were serving on the board of the National Gay and Lesbian Force when they met at a meeting

in Washington, D.C.

"It was love at first sight," said Horowitz, who recalled packing up and moving to Michigan pretty quickly after that. "It was the true version of U-Haul lesbians."

Between The Lines had been founded in 1993 by Mark Weinstein, and by the time Horowitz moved to Michigan, it was under the leadership of Shannon Rhodes. Horowitz and Stevenson purchased the paper, which was then a 12-page monthly publication, in the fall of 1995.

For the next 25 years, the couple chronicled the best and worst of LGBTQ-related happenings in the state and across the country. In the course of their work, Horowitz and Stevenson shone a bright light across the community and featured and promoted struggling groups and causes searching for attention and promotion. As other LGBTQ+ newspapers across the country came and went, Stevenson and Horowitz proved they had staying power.

"I feel very grateful for everything about the greater Detroit and southeastern Michigan LGBTQ community," Stevenson said. "It's been an honor to tell your stories. It's a gift that keeps on giving. And the fact that a new generation is able to take the paper over and keep it going. A lot of papers are struggling now. I think we have some people here in the state who are going to give it a good future."

Horowitz reflected back on her time as co-publisher of the paper with pride.

"When someone comes up to me and says they don't feel seen or heard that's a signal to me to do a better job, to take the criticism and see what I can do to change that," she said. "I think we're moving in the right direction. When I think of where this started and who started it and where we are today, I have great hope as an older person," she said. "We've had many times we've had to correct course, and we never got to perfect, but we committed to the process."

Lipscomb, whose personal and professional relationship with Stevenson predates the purchase of the newspaper, said the couple's leadership will be missed.

"Jan has always been a supportive person in the movement period. She understands that we all have parts to contribute to our collective wellbeing," he said. "And Susan is nothing but a powerhouse when it comes to understanding our political landscape. They're friends of mine. And whenever I need advice or guidance, it's nothing for me to call and ask."

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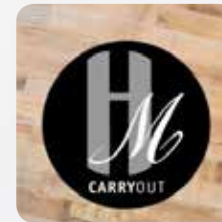
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Photos: Starz

Dominique Jackson **WON'T STOP SURVIVING**

'Pose' Star on the Show's Final Season and Pushing Through the Pandemic

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Model and actress Dominique Jackson can't say a thing about the third and final season of one of the most groundbreaking LGBTQ+ series ever made. It's mid February when we connect, just weeks before it was announced that seven new episodes of "Pose," the FX drama about New York's drag ball subculture during the HIV/AIDS crisis, will premiere May 7. And then it will end, with a tide-changing legacy forever linked to its name.

When it debuted in 2018, the series set a record for the number of out LGBTQ+ people in its cast, especially trans women of color. At the time of our talk, Jackson said the cast was in the process of shooting. But when pushed to offer even the slightest tease of what's to come, she remained playfully taciturn about her character: "All I can tell you is Elektra is going to be Elektra."

Elektra Wintour, of course, is the fiercely resilient house mother, who last season formed her new house, the House of Wintour, and went full-on dominatrix. In season two's last episode, in a leather bustier, with a whip in her hand, she ordered a client to heel. And then there's that dead

client whose body she housed in her apartment.

So no, Jackson's life doesn't completely mirror that of her character. But their experiences are, to some degree, shared. Like Elektra, who is the fictional protégé of ball-culture icons like Crystal LaBeija, Pepper LaBeija and Paris Dupree, Jackson also found refuge in the underground world of ballroom culture while in Baltimore and New York in the '90s, after a period of childhood trauma she experienced while living in the dual-island nation Trinidad and Tobago. She jumped around to several houses primarily populated by Black and Latinx trans outsiders, eventually settling into the House of Sinclair in NYC, a safe haven that helped her survive homelessness and substance abuse.

Aside from her breakout role on "Pose," Jackson is upending gender norms on the third season of the Starz series "American Gods," a series about the culture clashing of Old and New Gods. She embodies the latest incarnation of the shape-shifting "Mr. World" as a ferocious, bat-wielding, glam Black woman, now called "Ms. World."

Just after giving a keynote address at the National LGBTQ Task Force's Creating Change conference, which was virtual this year, Jackson spoke about how reliving Elektra helped her survive the pandemic and why "Pose"

actors other than Billy Porter deserve awards acknowledgement. She also explained how the superhero fantasy world of "X-Men" aided in her survival as a trans woman, even though she initially hesitated because "everyone, the people, are talking about it" on the internet. In other words, they really, *really* want Dominique Jackson to play Storm.

How're you doing? How has lockdown been for you this past year?

Lockdown was kind of a push to revitalize myself, a push to really look back at myself, look back at my life, understand the things that were happening for me and start to create what I wanted. Of course, in the beginning, there was a panic, there was great fear, there were even times where I just felt like, you know, just give up. Because during the pandemic, we were locked down and it was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm blessed with all these amazing opportunities and now I'm gonna lose them." There was that fear.

And then George Floyd was murdered and that just pushed everything over the top. And trans women were being murdered back to back every week. I was ready to give up. I didn't give up, but I was ready to give up. I just felt like there's no place for us in this world.

If they were killing Black men, what are they gonna do to trans women? And there we were being murdered.

What kept you going?

I'm the type of person that I really looked into myself first. I tried to find out what I could do to make things better, and in speaking to people and doing little Elektra things on TikTok, it gave me hope reliving my character, to really just do something besides just sit in the house and worry.

My fiancé and I were doing challenges together. That really helped to brighten me up, pull me out a bit. And I realized that sitting there and panicking was not going to help me. It was just gonna make me sick. It was gonna keep me in that depressive mode, and I had to fight through it. I remember how I fought through not having a green card and fought through wanting to be on television, just fighting all my life, and I was like, "Now is not the time for me to stop."

I read recently that when we're experiencing despair it's important for us to remember past moments of resilience in our lives. It can get you out of that spiral.

Yeah, it did.

You famously don't do many interviews. Based on what I've read, you don't like talking so much about your success, because you kind of feel like it paints a false narrative for the trans community as a whole. Is that right?

Well, yeah. I'm really selective with interviews because I feel like sometimes it's just, "OK, let me get the story." And you give the story and you keep reliving your traumas. It's just something that is put out there over and over and over again; it becomes exhausting reliving your trauma. I'm reliving trauma by some of the things that we have to do on "Pose." So, for me, I want interviews to be about and really for my community. I really want them to have a message that's going to be sent to my community, and not just an article to say, "Oh, we represented the trans community; we have Dominique Jackson."

So how do you navigate that behind the scenes? How do you know who to talk to and who not to?

I'm a person that believes in doing research, and I have a great management team. So they know exactly what I'm looking for. And the other thing is, I'm about my work, and I'm about putting that onto the screen. And I put everything that I have (into it), because I want people to understand that being trans is just a part of my journey. That doesn't mean that I can't be a great actor. It doesn't mean I can't be the best doctor there is, it doesn't mean that I can't mow the lawn or lay concrete. It doesn't limit me. And I want my community to know that hard work does pay off.

I'm curious to know what some of the questions are about being a trans woman that you don't want to answer anymore. And do you feel like it's a tricky situation that you're in given the fact that you've become this accidental activist?

Well, yes, and you see that's why I'm selective with my interviews. Because I am, kind of, and that's what I've been deemed. It was not what I was trying to do. It just happened. I realized I was getting so many responses on Instagram of how I inspire people, and I was looking at myself going, "Who, me?" For me, it's not about, "Oh, look at me, I'm an activist." It's just that I know that I want what I want, and I know that I'm going to have to work hard to get to it.

And questions — it depends. If I'm speaking at a college or I'm speaking to my community, it's a different story. But when it

comes to my surgeries, some people ask some really stupid questions like, "What made you want to do that?" And I also have a book. So I feel like, you know, sometimes people can just read the book. I mean, it's as raw as possible. And you know, you can get that information.

I'd like to shift gears to "American Gods." From what I understand, you didn't even have to audition for the show; the role was offered to you. Before, you had to really fight for roles. So what did it mean to you to just be offered a role like this?

It was beyond phenomenal. It was just a thing of like, I'm validated, I'm seen, they see me as an actor. And that's what this is all about: It's about the visibilities, about being seen, it's about being acknowledged, and being acknowledged so that people don't fear you. This is not about acknowledgement and validity to say, "Oh, look, I'm a queen." This is about: I am here, I am a human being just like you, so see me, allow me the comfort and allow me the ability to fail, if that's how you see it. But don't judge me just based on my journey as a woman.

Do you find that you are now being offered more roles in general?

(Laughs.) Well, I've only really been offered two. (The other was in the movie) "Chick Fight," and still, of course, I did a little reading for them. It feels great. It's just a phenomenal



feeling, and to know that at times I felt ashamed that I didn't go to school for this. But it just goes to show that sometimes, some things are just in you.

Working at (Bronx LGBTQ Community Center) Destination Tomorrow and raising

See **Dominique Jackson**, page 18

Miner's Den

→ Dominique Jackson

Continued from p. 17

kids in the past, I always say, “You have to guide kids,” because if someone was there to say to me, “Look, I see you like to build characters and act, I see you love the stage” instead of limiting me from the stage by saying



to me, “Look, only girls do that” or making it about gender — it was limiting to me. And so, when I danced and I did ballet, I was laughed at, and I was like, “Listen, I wasn’t even doing this for anything but for the art, for the love of being able to escape normality for a second and bring something else to life and see people enjoy it.” I loved when I danced and people just sat in awe. It made me feel like I had purpose.

Is that the same feeling you get when people watch you as Elektra and they tell you how much they love you in that role?

Sometimes that can be a bit overwhelming, because, again, I wasn’t receiving love like that before. So it’s like, “Wow.” It’s comforting to the heart, it makes me feel like I’m a part of the human race. It makes me feel like I belong.

Regarding your role as Ms. World on “American Gods,” what do you think that we can learn from her?

Well... (laughs), that’s a really, um, kind of difficult question to answer since this lady is walking around busting heads open with bats. So, I don’t recommend that you walk around, bashing people in the head with bats for having an opinion. But Ms. World, again, it’s about a woman, and people don’t understand, when you are marginalized, anything that

you get makes you feel like you are coming out of that when you have faced oppression.

So, as a Caribbean woman, as an immigrant, as a Black woman, as a trans woman — as all these women combined to make my whole — I see strings, I see power, I see now we’re not looking to those that are in power. When we create Loki, it’s usually this male thing. So therefore, when we see Ms. World, we see

that a God can transform, a God can change, and Mr. World now is of the world. And being of the world, you should be inclusive of everyone.

How have superhuman fantasy roles been helpful to you in navigating your own identity?

Well, OK, I don’t want to really say this, but I have to. Because I really don’t wanna talk about it, because everyone, the people, are talking about it. For me, I’m just honored by them talking about this: But growing up the X-Men was very dear to my heart. Because, at that time, I was

basically homeless, and couch-surfing at times. A group of us were staying at one of our friend’s grandmother’s houses; she was in the hospital at the time. And so we were all gathered there because that was our place to stay for the moment. I didn’t have to pay for a hotel for the night; it meant that I didn’t have to go to the street. So when we found comfort and warmth, we kind of gathered there. And there was the “X-Men” saga, “The Dark Phoenix Saga,” that was playing at that time, and we were just so enthralled.

And while growing up, of course, I watched the “X-Men” and I loved them. I loved them, but it was in that moment, and again in meeting my children’s family in Baltimore, and then coming to New York, we all watched the “X-Men” because the “X-Men” represented us. We would go to the grocery store and help someone carry groceries. We would do everything for someone, and they would still turn around and talk down to us and curse at us and throw things at us. Imagine you helped someone to their car with their groceries and they turn on the light and they realize that you’re different and then they take their fruit and throw it at you and tell you to get away from them. You just helped them.

For me, Storm had an accent; I’m Caribbean. So Storm was just my girl, my go-to. I love her

character. I love everything about her. And it was the resilience, the beauty of her, the resilience of where she came from as Ororo Munroe, from her origin stories of being in her village, of even having a nephew and going back wanting to help her village but yet she protects her village even when they called her the Weather Witch. But she still protects them. And I see that in a lot of the trans community. We are so pushed to the side, but yet we’re there to be mothers, we’re there to be fathers. We’re there to protect people. We have kids of our own. So the superhero fantasy, for me, was always her, because it not only helped us escape, but it let me know that people saw and would realize that at some point in time that being different or strange from what society deemed to be the norm didn’t make us bad people.

You have no idea, if you sit back and listen to the things that people would say about us, I would even be afraid of myself. Before I even understood who I was, I would hear people speak, and the way in which they spoke about people like myself, I was like, “Oh my god, I need to kill myself because I know I’m different.”

I feel like every young person needs a role model like that, because oftentimes we don’t have ones in real life to look to, so we have to look to imaginary characters.

She-Ra: Princess of Power was another one. I love She-Ra.

Regarding “Pose,” what are your thoughts on the response from the LGBTQ+ community who think it’s time for other actors from the

series to be recognized for their roles and their accomplishments on the show?

Well, yes, I do believe that my castmates should be recognized for their work, especially Angelica Ross and Mj Rodriguez. Billy has been given his flowers, and I am extremely ecstatic for him for that. As far as Indya (Moore) and the rest of the girls, I do believe that they should have been nominated at least for some of the awards. Because we’re not just telling a true story or doing research to tell a true story — we’re telling our own lives.

We are reliving our trauma, we are being triggered constantly by things that we overcame in life, and constantly giving it back and giving all our energy just to be able to show people what we go through and those that are going through it that they’re not alone. So, I believe that recognition should be there for my castmates. For myself, I really, really want to be undeniably everything. I really want to go into fantasy roles. I believe that there’s a lot more I have to learn and I have to give before I start receiving awards. (Laughs.) I’m so serious because I just feel like, you know, Elektra is me. She’s dear to my heart. She is the woman that I said I would never become, but the woman that I was surrounded by all my life. I want the opportunity to show that I can play outside myself, like with “American Gods.” Give me a vampire role and I am there.

When it comes to trans representation, what is the next frontier? Where do we go from “Pose,” which has been so groundbreaking, obviously.

Yeah, “Pose” has been extremely groundbreaking, but we have other things that have come about. We have “Legendary” on HBO Max. Hollywood is opening their eyes and realizing that this is not just a cash cow. These stories *need* to be told, and especially in this time. I feel like we are gathering all these stories, telling the truth of everything, removing the blinders from people’s faces, so that we can move forward and really, really get to equality.

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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Photo: Kath Click

Fortune Feimster Is Giving the Gays Something to Talk About

Comedian Talks Pandemic Success, Michigan Connections and Nearing an Even Bigger Break

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Fortune Feimster's mouth has been going and going and going. "I talk a lot right now," says the Southern comedian who hails from North Carolina, coughing and clearing her throat as we — that's right — talk on Zoom.

In addition to a daily radio show and her weekly podcast, Feimster, who rose to fame as *The Person You See Everywhere* in *Bit Parts* (including "Chelsea Lately," "The Mindy Project" and "The L Word: Generation Q"), has been doing press to talk about the projects she's a part of that have all come out during the pandemic to satiate our need for existential relief. Aside from her own Netflix comedy special "Sweet and Salty," she can be seen hamming it up in a steady flow of films: "Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar," "Chick Fight," "Friendsgiving" and "Yes Day," a Jennifer

Garner-led family comedy also for Netflix. On TV, she stars in Kenan Thompson's NBC sitcom "Kenan" and voices multiple characters on the Fox animated series "Bless the Harts."

The pandemic has been good to her booming acting career, but also to her love life: Feimster married wife Jacquelyn Smith in a small ceremony in October. She says it's made her an even bigger fan of Michigan given that Jax, as she calls her, is from the Mitten State. "We try to spend at least one holiday — or weekend or two — out there in either Detroit or East Lansing or Grand Rapids. We like it all."

During our conversation, Feimster, yes, talked some more — this time about how her character in "Yes Day" might actually be gay, being drawn to the insanity of "Barb and Star," and feeling like, at last, Hollywood might be ready for her to go from bit part to *big* part.

How are you doing? I feel like, finally, there's some light at the end of the COVID tunnel.

I'm doing a lot better. It does feel a lot more hopeful, thank goodness. I mean, it's been a doozy. I can't believe it's been a year. I think we're all thinking back to, you know, where were you when Tom Hanks got COVID? (Laughs.)

Shit got real at that point.

It got real. I don't know why it took that. That first half ... you know, I was supposed to go on this big tour, and my first tour date was actually going to be Grand Rapids on March 15, and they canceled it the night before I was supposed to leave.

We were so excited to go to Michigan, 'cause all (Jax's) family was coming in. But then it just kept going and kept going. (Laughs.) And everybody had to kind of make the most of

it. But no one was, like, having a great year, so you have to think and realize the whole world is going through this really hard time. And I think we're getting through it, so I'm feeling optimistic.

A year ago, here in Michigan, at least, it was like, "OK, 14 days. Just stay in your apartment. Don't leave. And then it's gonna be over."

Yeah, we were so naive. We were rescheduling shows for May of last year, which seems laughable now because we're still trying to figure it out for fall of 2021. I was lucky I got to hunker down with my lady Jax and my dogs. My pets — that's who got us through this time, for sure.

Are you still on the bottle-of-wine-every-other-day regimen?

I got better. That was definitely the first, like, four months. We had to finally be like, "OK, maybe not every night. Maybe once every couple days." Thank god Hollywood started trying to get back rolling (in) I want to say October or so. So I've been really lucky the last few months to be working again. And so, I feel some normalcy when I go to work, even though it's very different at work. Everyone's masked up and (in) face shields. It's a different environment, but whatever it takes to get to do it.

What kind of projects are you working on right now?

I just wrapped the sitcom "Kenan" for NBC. I have a recurring role. I did not foresee that one coming, so that was a nice little cherry on top. I've been doing "The Netflix Afterparty," which is really cool, with David Spade and London Hughes. And then I had all these movies — I think I've had five movies — come out in the last six months. (Laughs.) Which is crazy, but it's because I filmed all of them before the pandemic and they all got held up, the release dates got pushed. They were supposed to originally come out at different times and then, all of a sudden, it was just like, release the movies! (Laughs.) People are like, "You're everywhere."

You seem to pop up in the most random of places. You've played janitors, grave diggers, a fairy gay mother...

Now I need Hollywood to let me do more than be the fun pop-up that brings some laughs. I'm ready to really sink my teeth into some bigger roles. So hopefully that's coming.

Is that what you've been working toward?

Yeah, I do a lot of development, I do a lot of writing, and I've sold a couple movies to Amblin (Entertainment). In the past I've sold TV shows to ABC. So I'm trying to get one of those movies off the ground that we've written. We wrote another movie in quarantine that we hope to pitch around. I created those TV shows because I was trying to give myself an opportunity to, like I said, be a bigger part of a show.

And I got to film my pilot for ABC, which is really cool, even though that didn't move

forward. It eventually led to me doing “The Mindy Project.” So now with movies, I’ve been kind of focused on writing movies, because I’ve been lucky to be in a lot of movies, especially lately. Sometimes in Hollywood you just have to write that yourself.

So I have, in honor of “Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar,” this special little “Barb and Star” cup.

I love it. That was one of my favorite movies to do. That was such a treat, seeing that come out. The only bummer is: that’s a movie you want to see with a house full of people in a theater. It’s one of those movies, I think, that is infectious, ‘cause people are laughing (and) it makes other people start laughing and you’re all laughing together. So I’m glad it came out (so) people can enjoy something silly during quarantine. But hopefully — I don’t know if you can, like, release the movie online and then also put it back in the theater. (Laughs.)



Do you know any women like Barb and Star, or Pinky? Are you friends with any?

Oh, gosh. I mean, I’ve hung out with plenty. I’m from the South, so those outfits are certainly, uh, not foreign to me. We’re all like, “These outfits are hysterical.” And people from home were like, “That’s what I wear.”

In addition to “Barb and Star,” of course, you’re in “Yes Day.” You play Jean, the paramedic. Is it



Fortune Feimster stars as a member of the Talking Club in “Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar” (top) and as Jean, the paramedic, in “Yes Day.” Photos courtesy of Lionsgate and Netflix.

The movie’s gonna live on in gay cult film culture anyways, so every year, actually, it should get a theatrical release.

I hope so. It does seem that gay men in particular really took to that movie, which makes me so happy. People either loved it and are obsessed with it, or they were like, “I hated it. I turned it off after 20 minutes.” And I just wanted to be like, “Well, maybe you aren’t the target audience.”

Did you know what you were getting yourself into when you signed up for that movie?

I knew that my part was pretty subdued. Like, we were the Talking Club and that we were sitting around, talking about ridiculous stuff. I was on a plane and I read (the script), and I was cry-laughing reading this. Most scripts you’re just kind of going through like, “Yeah, that’s cute. That’s cute.” You know? But this had me crying. So I knew the movie was insane, and I was like, “God, how are they going to pull this off?” And I was like, “If they’re asking me to be in this movie, I’m being in this movie. It’s the best thing I’ve read in so long.”

Why Pinky? Is there a story behind your character’s name?

There’s no backstory. There’s very little backstory on the Talking Club, which makes me want Kristen (Wiig) and Annie (Mumolo) to write a sequel, which also involves the Talking Club. I want the sequel to be them coming back from their trip, telling the Talking Club.

safe to say that you probably shouldn’t be, um, driving an ambulance?

One-hundred percent, I should not be. Yeah, Jean (owns a) fleet of ambulances, even though she sucks at driving that one. It’s always fun to pop in as these characters, like you said, that kind of just are a little off. That’s kind of my brand of humor.

And I love this movie, ‘cause, well, first off, Jennifer Garner. I’ve been a fan of hers for so long. And I was nervous to meet her just because she’s done so many projects and is still in my category of “movie star,” which you don’t have as many these days. And she was so lovely. In my very first scene with her I had to drive the ambulance. And I felt like Jean because I was ... I didn’t know. I mean,

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

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Courtesy of Lionsgate

→ Fortune

Continued from p. 21

I feel like in the last year because of the pandemic every day has been a “no day.” I mean, even for the adults, right? What will be your “yes day” when you can finally say yes to the things that you’ve been saying no to?

Oh, man, just hugging people. My friends, especially. A lot of hugs. I mean, every day is a yes day for me when it comes to like, “Are we gonna order out or have wine?” I’m always like, “Yes.” So I will just be excited to reel in my yeses. But I will just be excited to get to travel again and see my family. And so, I’ll be saying yes to a lot more social activities, whereas before I was like, “I just wanna go home and sit on my couch.”

What’s the history between you and the other ambulance driver, Karen, in the movie? Because I get the impression that they could have been a couple. I mean, you took her life savings.

I know. I feel like they were alluding to ... I mean, they never told me what their actual relationship was: if it was a relationship, if it was best friends, if I was her best friend and took her life savings. Uh, then that’s a really bad friend. If it’s her partner, then that’s OK. (Laughs.) I’m gonna assume that Karen’s probably my partner and my lady.

You’re also featured in the upcoming FX docu-feature “Hysterical.” Can you talk a bit about your involvement and what it seeks to examine about you and other queer women comedians?

It was spearheaded by Jessica Kirson, who’s a very hilarious, respected comedian out of New York, who is also gay. She and the producers just picked what women they wanted to highlight, and we were lucky enough to be included and just share experiences about being a woman in comedy and what that means. They filmed us each at our house and then a little bit on stage. It’s definitely not easy being a woman in comedy. And so, it just sort of highlights our journey.

It’s a journey that isn’t talked about as

much. You see tons of things on standup, and it’s usually very male-dominated. So this is just coming at it from a very different perspective, a very inclusive perspective, as far as LGBT and women of color. People with different backgrounds, people with different voices, women with different experiences and what they talk about on stage. I’m happy to be a little part of it.

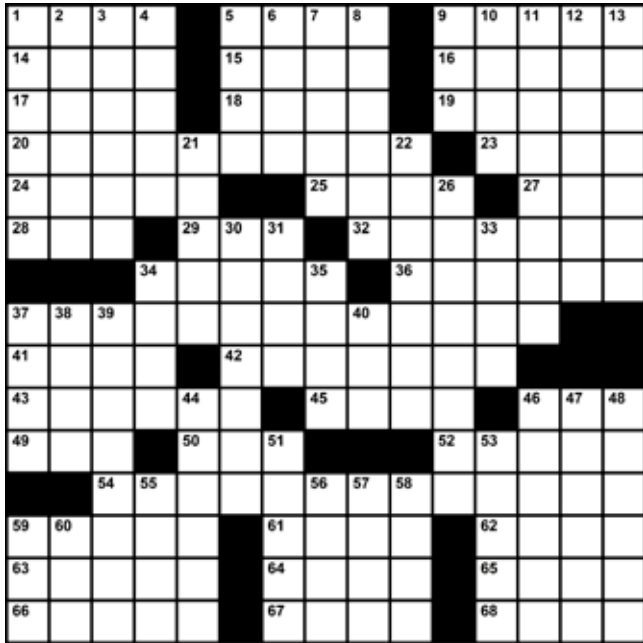
Before you go, I want to wish you congratulations on your Netflix special, “Sweet and Salty,” which received a Critics’ Choice nomination.

Oh, thank you. Appreciate it. Yeah, it was my first hour special. I had done a half hour with Netflix, and this was a big jump for me to get to do an hour. I was so ready for it. I was working this material a ton. I was really proud of it. And to get to share my story and my journey about coming out and figuring out who I was, and being representation for people and having it be on this worldwide platform, where people who might live in places where they don’t know a lot of gay people or they don’t see themselves in another person — it was really special to me to be able to do that, and make people laugh at the same time.

I got so much love from it and it was incredible, but I didn’t know if the industry was paying attention at all. That they are watching and that they saw something in it was really special. Just really made me feel, finally, after all these years of being out in LA and putting in this work, that people noticed, and it meant a lot to me. And now I’ve got to work toward the next one.

This interview has been lightly edited and condensed 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.



Fostering Age Reversal

Q Puzzle

- 1 Six feet under
- 5 Beginning of "Wicked"
- 9 Foster
- 14 Art Deco name
- 15 "Brothers & Sisters" matriarch
- 16 Ketchup catcher
- 17 Palindromic time

- 18 Like a muscle Mary's waist
- 19 George of "The Gay Sisters"
- 20 Start of a quote from 9-Across
- 23 River of Flanders
- 24 Blair, who kissed Gellar
- 25 "West ___ Story"
- 27 Away from NNW
- 28 Wood and more
- 29 It's a snap

- 32 Bergen of "Murphy Brown"
- 34 Khartoum's country
- 36 They serve dictators
- 37 More of the quote
- 41 Potent opening
- 42 "Fortune and Men's Eyes" writer John
- 43 Fashion designer Pucci
- 45 Hospital work
- 46 "Brokeback Mountain" grazing area
- 49 Karen Walker, perhaps
- 50 Michael Jackson hit
- 52 Richard Chamberlain's "The ___ Birds"
- 54 End of the quote
- 59 Look from Snidely Whiplash
- 61 Iroquoian language
- 62 Jessica of "The Illusionist"
- 63 Chef Des Jardins
- 64 Long-jawed swimmers
- 65 Pasolini's bone
- 66 Hooded jacket
- 67 Sapphic poems
- 68 Where movies are made

Down

- 1 Poet Levertov
- 2 Ate away at
- 3 Pacific formations
- 4 Blue material, but not porn
- 5 Pay your share, with "up"
- 6 Bud of "Harold and Maude"

- 7 Threesomes
- 8 Like Shakespeare's feet
- 9 Short punch
- 10 "Aida," to Gomer?
- 11 Salad topper
- 12 Dramatist Eugene
- 13 Feniger's main dishes
- 21 On the fritz
- 22 He played Lou Grant for MTM
- 26 Whole shebang
- 30 "My own private" state resident?
- 31 Colette's coffee
- 33 Result of getting rear-ended
- 34 The good earth
- 35 Undercover crack investigator
- 37 Lesbian couple in "Bambi"?
- 38 Some biathlon gear
- 39 Sweaters and such
- 40 Org. for rim jobs?
- 44 Peninsula where the rain falls mainly on the plain
- 46 Thelma's lady friend
- 47 "The Importance of Being ___"
- 48 The Jets, to the Sharks
- 51 Frida's husband
- 53 Penniless persons
- 55 "Doggone!"
- 56 NG: New alum
- 57 Emerald isle
- 58 Madonna in "Dick Tracy"
- 59 Motor fuel additive
- 60 Org. that likes to shoot off


See p. 14 for answers

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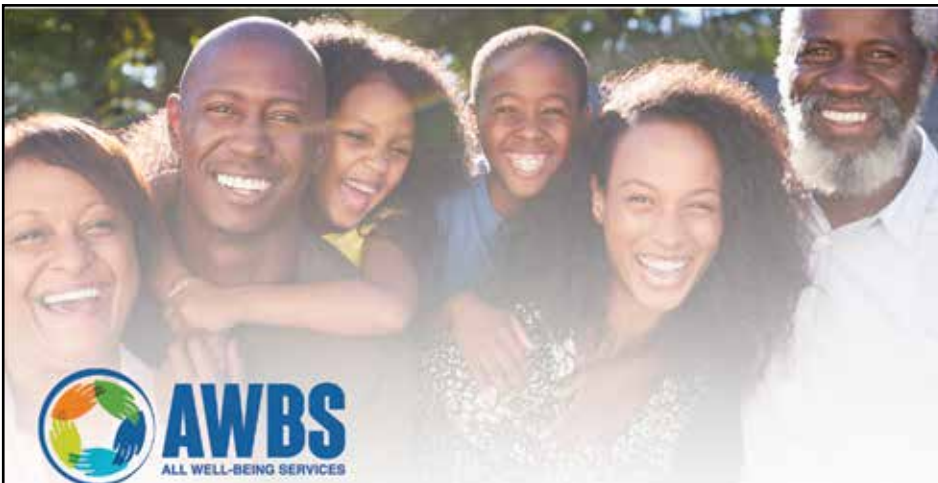



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