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INSIDE

The 2021 Pride Guide (So Far)

A Few Words with
Activist Jim Toy

Local LGBTQ+
Leaders Get Hate Mail

PLUS

The LGBTQ+ Spring
Guide to All Things Travel

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Photo courtesy of Alaska Thunderfuck.

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Lesbian Couple Voted High School Prom King and Queen in Ohio

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By Ellen Shanna Knoppow



Annie Wise and Riley Loudermilk, a lesbian couple attending Kings High School in Ohio, were voted 2021 Prom King and Queen. Photo via Facebook

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5 Queer Things to Do Right Now

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Listen queers, we know you've been thirsty for a Hot Gay Summer™ since the one that didn't happen in 2020. While I can't promise you that you'll be able to safely flaunt those quarantine cakes — yes, I see you — everywhere you want, there are still safe entertainment options that exist during the hellscape that is this pandemic. From gay glamping to drag shows to a bit of Pride history, here are five queer things you can do right now.

1



Go Glamping With the Gays

As Michigan continues to thaw out, it's natural to want to go outside again — maybe even stay for a few days. You can do so safely at the CampIt Outdoor Resort in Fennville (which is inclusive, unlike other, more infamous, anti-trans Michigan campgrounds like Camp Boomerang). CampIt has 33 acres of campground packed with amenities to accommodate any of your everyday needs outdoors. And since CampIt provides camping with a queer twist, there's no shortage of events like Prom Night "Into the Woods" Weekend (May 21-23), Leather Fetish Kink Weekend (June 4-6) and LGBT Music Festival Weekend (June 18-20). And if raw nature gets to be too much for you, the LGBTQ-affirming (and shopping-friendly) towns of Saugatuck and Douglas are only 10 minutes away.

Learn about pricing and make reservations throughout the rest of the year at campitresort.com.



Photo: FX

2

Brush Up on Your Queer History with FX's 'PRIDE' Docuseries

In this original FX docuseries, six LGBTQ+ film directors explore the heroism and heartbreak that both defined the history of the gay rights movement and changed the face of the nation. Episodes of the series span the 1950s Lavender Scare, the 1990s "culture wars," the civil rights movement and the nationwide battle for marriage equality. See perspectives from well-known figures like Black lesbian womanist Audre Lorde and Bayard Rustin, a Black gay rights and political activist. You'll also get to know lesser-known heroes of the movement, like lesbian march organizer and activist Madeleine Tress and gay videographer and early vlogger Nelson Sullivan — each of whom paved the way for modern-day LGBTQ+ rights.

Watch the premiere at 8 p.m. Friday, May 14, or stream it on Hulu the day after.



Get Your Instant Disco Fix

Disco is back, and it's Australian. "Disco Instamatic" is the work of queer singer, composer, artist and disco DJ Tanzer in collaboration with Australia's queer screen culture magazine Sissy Screens. Streamable now, this movin' and groovin' installation blends Tanzer's brand-new song "Deep Fried Disco" with drag, dance and visual art. And Tanzer isn't the only artist it showcases. Viewers will see the work of 20 fellow artists who will explore how their identities have informed their work. "Disco Instamatic" is a glamorous time capsule that captures, elevates and amplifies the icon within. In a breathless, glittering moment, the viewer can come face to face with a superstar, in a vignette as intimate as it is dazzling," Tanzer says.

Buy tickets online and learn more at tanzertanzertanzer.com.



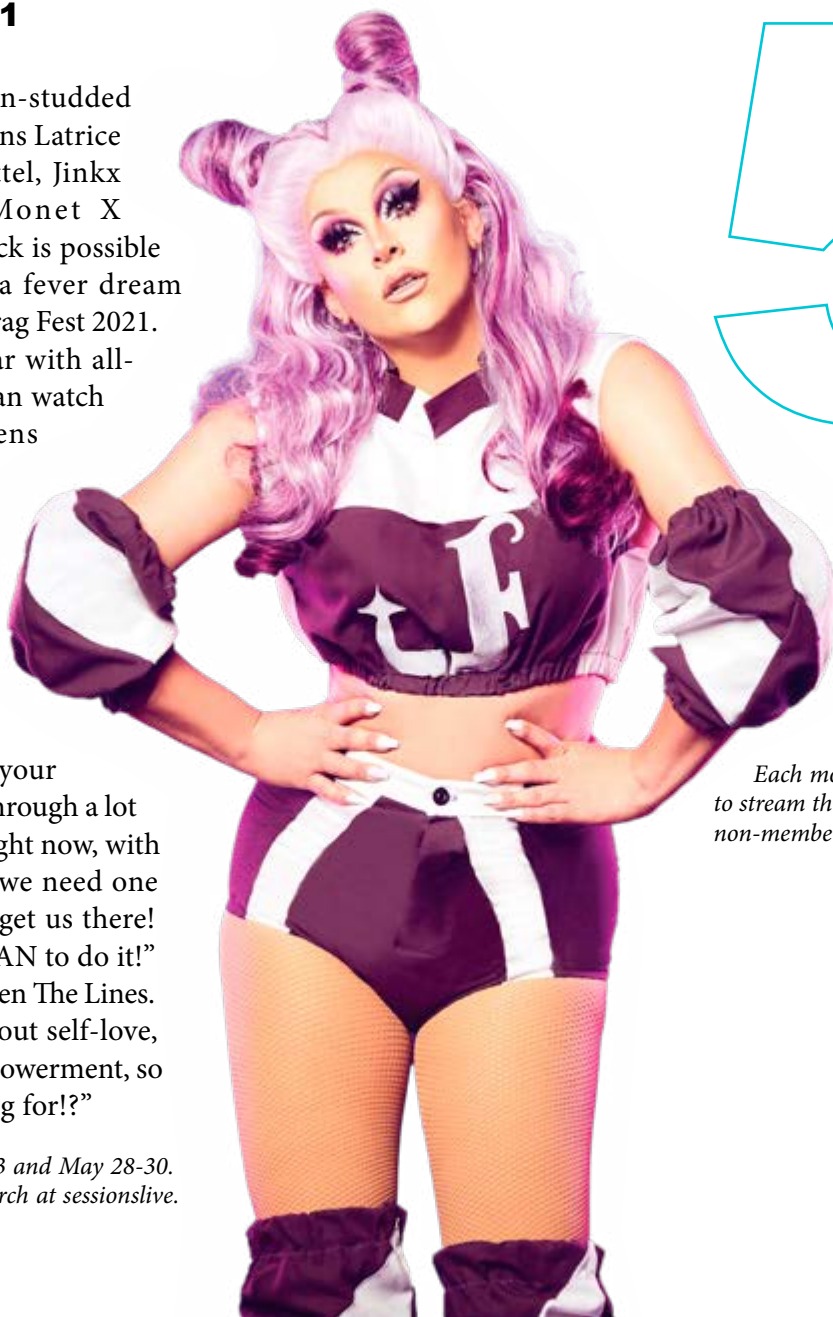


Shantay, Stay Awhile for Digital Drag Fest 2021

Seeing a drag queen-studded lineup featuring icons Latrice Royale, Trixie Mattel, Jinkx Monsoon and Monet X Change back-to-back is possible in more than just a fever dream thanks to Digital Drag Fest 2021. Back again this year with all-new content, you can watch your favorite queens werq unique, 45- to 60-minute online shows over two weekends without leaving your house.

“I’m so excited to be bringing ‘Yes We Jan’ RIGHT to your home! We’ve been through a lot this last year, and right now, with normalcy in sight, we need one more final push to get us there! And I’m the hype-JAN to do it!” Jan Sport tells *Between The Lines*. “This show is all about self-love, acceptance and empowerment, so what are you waiting for!?”

The fest plays May 21-23 and May 28-30. Purchase tickets and merch at sessionslive.com/DigitalDragFest.



Catch a (Virtual) Queer Movie

Originally founded in 1988, Newfest was a direct response to the AIDS epidemic plaguing New York at the time. Then, the festival highlighted subversive queer media; today, it has survived to create a global platform for LGBTQ+ creators to do so from around the world. For those looking to take in a monthly dose of topical queer culture, NewFest Presents might just be the thing. According to event organizers, “Our curated monthly series features topical documentaries and narrative films that reflect the wide range of LGBTQ+ identities, giving audiences an opportunity to experience our stories and stay connected to the community through screenings and conversations with filmmakers and LGBTQ+ leaders.” This month’s film is “A Night at Switch n’ Play,” a behind-the-scenes look at one of Brooklyn’s most popular queer live shows, with a Q&A moderated by drag legend Sasha Velour.

Each month’s featured film is live on the first Thursday of the month and remains available to stream throughout the following weekend. Each screening includes a Q&A. Learn more about non-member pricing and joining benefits at newfest.org/join.



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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Take Your Time, Mary!

Consult any daily horoscope worth its intrinsic wait in days, hours, star signs, planet probabilities and second guesses, and you'll come to the probable (or, improbable) planetary conclusion that everything is indeed a matter of timing.

For most of us, the timing is usually off. But, on rare occasions, it's off and running surprising well (well, well!).

Truth is, coincidences do happen, or by chance they overlap like signs in the moody midnight zodiacal sky.

Take, for example Charles Robert Alexander, Jr. — namely me. I am, of course, very proud to be LGBTQ+. Only this time, the “T” stands for Taurus. (Yes, I'm pretty good at taking the PG bull by the horn!)

For those of my horoscopic readers: I earned my Taurus status by being artfully born on May 12, 1936, in Detroit's Harper Hospital. At my current age, I may well be the first gay birthing of that that center of healing mercy and goodness.

(And, just out of Cass Technical High School, I worked at Harper Hospital as an OR Tech, and actually scrubbed with Dr. Leonard Heath, who brought me into this zodiacal, and occasionally gone-myopic, world.)

By coincidence (or, planetary alignment), May 12 is also Eid al-Fitr in 2021. That's the end of the Islamic month of Ramadan that includes daily fasting. During this fast, that means celibacy, too.

And, while I am not a follower of hallowed Islam, I have been unintentionally celibate of recent past years. Not so much by choice but by deflation of desire due to disinclination of age. (Taking the bull by the horny.)

Another horoscopic parallel perhaps worth mentioning is that the May 13 and 14 publication date of this Between The Lines issue marks my 33rd year of writing for this excellent and informative paper.

(Go figure. On cosmic second thought: don't bother. The stars and planets crisscrossing each other say it was meant to be. Winning the big-time lottery unfortunately was not.)

To celebrate my May Day heavenly crisscrossing, here's a channeled Taurus message for we LGBTQ+ creative, two-spirit avatars:

“LGBT+ [people] are two-spirited souls who are cosmic/genetically gifted with a talent, exceptional skill, ability to offer metaphysical thoughts, insights, love and healing to others once such avatar's gifted uniqueness comes into play and looked-after fruition.

These avatars — gay, lesbian, transgender people — are often so oriented as indication of this unique status [that] is given special care and watch-over by the universe for the ultimate creative benefit and good of all with whom LGBTQ+ avatars will ultimately come into sharing contact.”

Oh, yes! Happy Cinco de Mayo, happy Mother's Day and, lastly, happy horoscopic revised income tax day! (May the moon shine in your Venus and the sunshine radiate your Jupiter! And vice versa. Ignore tax-paying Uranus!



Being a Trans-Affirming Parent is Support, Not Abuse

BY YMA JOHNSON

I've posted quite a bit about trans kids, but I haven't talked about their parents. Republicans are characterizing parents like me as dangerous, reckless, abusive and, in some cases, worthy of incarceration. Since they've spent so much time talking about us, I would like to weigh in on my own behalf and on behalf of affirming parents everywhere.

Parents who affirm their transgender children are some of the most involved, thoughtful and careful parents I have ever met. We live in a crisis landscape, and we understand what it means to take care of each other. Transphobia and bigotry are demons we fight daily. I am an activist at the local, county and national levels, but I began this journey as a parent in crisis.

I didn't understand what it meant for my kid to be transgender, and I needed help. The community of affirming parents

was there for me. I can say unequivocally and without hesitation, if you contact me at noon saying that you know a parent who is in crisis, I'll have two people who are willing to speak to that parent in under an hour. Give me a day, I'll have six people lined up and more help than the person actually needs. That is not because I am an activist; that's because I am a parent. Any affirming parent who has been plugged into our community for a couple of months could easily do the same.

“I can say unequivocally and without hesitation, if you contact me at noon saying that you know a parent who is in crisis, I'll have two people who are willing to speak to that parent in under an hour.”

Viewpoints

I am proud to be on the advisory board of Stand with Trans and a member of HRC's Parents for Transgender Council. I have never seen a request for emotional support through those organizations go unanswered and typically the need is met in a matter of hours. Sometimes the call goes out to affirming parents across the nation. Several people reading this post can vouch for what I'm saying.

We look after our own.

I know parents who can quote parts of the Federal Education Right to

Privacy Act and Title IX. I learned about Michigan's Elliot Larsen Civil Rights Act in support groups. We want to see it amended to include gender and sexual orientation. Affirming parents can cite school policies (or the lack of policies) on trans inclusion in our district and surrounding areas. We let each other know which teachers are affirming.

We can talk in detail and at some length about various transition treatments, including hormones and surgeries whether those procedures are relevant to our kid or not. I have never seen the decisions around hormones and surgeries taken lightly. NEVER.

Our kids often go through a period of academic problems due to bullying, dysphoria, depression and anxiety. Most affirming families have at least a pediatrician and mental health professional involved, but we consult all kinds of experts. We believe in science and evidence-based approaches to transition care.

Many families live in communities where their children are not affirmed. I have seen parents who work full-time drive 45 minutes one way on a weeknight every week so their child can spend an hour and half in a support group or just play with other trans kids.

These are the people Republicans are calling abusive. I am not abusive. My friends and chosen family are not abusive. We love our children, and what we really want is to be left the hell alone to raise our families in a peaceful, inclusive society. But until that day comes, we will never stop fighting for our kids.

Yma Johnson is the mother of a nonbinary college student and a passionate advocate for youth rights. She is a grant writer and nonprofit development consultant who began her career as a journalist in Puerto Rico 25 years ago. She serves on the advisory board of Stand with Trans and co-founded the group's Ann Arbor chapter. In 2020, Yma joined the Human Rights Campaign's Parents for Transgender Equality Council. She co-chairs the Washtenaw County Health for All Steering Committee. She is also a member of the Washtenaw-Livingston County Transgender Task Force. Yma holds a master's degree in creative writing from Eastern Michigan University and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan.

Creep Of The Week

Rep. Jeremy Faison Attempts to Kill Gay Country Music Star Bill

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

You know how they say there's no such thing as bad publicity? And also how they say don't feed the trolls?

Well, in a convergence of the two I have discovered The Brothers Osborne, a country music duo who are, I have on good authority, brothers. They're also really good.

See, I don't listen to country music very much. I'm more of an Ozzy Osbourne fan, myself. But I do love me a good gay musician.

So thank you to Rep. Jeremy Faison, a Republican who made sure to kill a resolution to honor T.J. Osborne even though it had unanimously passed in the state senate. Now you see, Faison had no choice but to send the bill to committee — which is done for the year, but oh well, what can you do? — because of a procedural objection. It's simply Republicans' deep, deep love for the rules that cause them to ITALlook like they're bad faith actors. Again. What bad luck they have.

But, of course, we all know that Faison did it because the T.J. half of the Brothers Osborne is gay. The other half is John. He plays guitar. Hi, John.

"I'm very comfortable being gay," T.J. told Time magazine.

John is comfortable with it as well.

"If I had to have all my money and success erased for my brother to be truly fulfilled in life," John told Time, "I wouldn't even think about it. Not for a second."

According to Variety Magazine the resolution states, "Though T.J. Osborne is not the first country music artist to come out as gay, he is the first and currently only openly gay artist signed to a major country label" and "though it may have been merely a consequence of being true to himself, he has nonetheless become a trailblazer and a symbol of hope for those country music artists and fans alike who may have become ostracized from a genre they hold dear."

And T.J. has expressed concerns.

"I don't think I'm going to get run off the stage in Chicago," he told Time. "But in a rural town playing a county fair? I'm curious how this will go."

Well, consider Faison the legislative equivalent of a rural town county fair, then.

From what I've read and seen, Faison didn't



say, "That's gay" and do a little thumbs-down curtsy or anything. But Faison has a long history of anti-gay creepdom, so we're just calling it like we see it.

According to The New Civil Rights Movement, Faison has supported bills to let adoption agencies discriminate against same-sex couples and in he was one of 53 legislators who signed on to a motion regarding a lesbian couple's divorce advocating that the non-biological mother of the couple's child is not a real mother and should have no rights to the child.

Perhaps his most egregious anti-LGBTQ+ action was in 2012 when he said spoke out against a cyberbullying bill regarding LGBTQ+ youth suicides.

"We can't continue to legislate everything," he said. "We've had some horrible things happen in America and in our state, and there's children that have actually committed suicide, but I will submit to you today that they did not commit suicide because of somebody bullying them. They committed suicide because

they were not instilled the proper principles of where their self-esteem came from at home."

In other words, LGBTQ+ kids kill themselves because they have bad parents who didn't work hard enough to raise heterosexual, gender-normative kids. A very ugly take.

The Tennessee Holler posted a video of Faison sending the bill back to the closed committee on Twitter. The Brothers Osborne retweeted it along with a message for Faison: "We've lived in this state for over half of our lives. [Faison] honored Ben Shapiro who doesn't even live here. Jeremy, let's have lunch one day. On us. Would really like to know more about you as a person."

Now that's a classy response.

Faison responded with, "I would be honored to break bread with you." Not honored enough to, like, publicly honor T.J. in, like, an official way. But yeah, so honored.

I hope that Faison studies his The Brothers Osborne lyrics before he meets them. Because with T.J. gay and all, that means when he sings about people taking each other's T-shirts off in the hit song "Stay a Little Longer," he's taking off another guy's shirt and that guy is taking off his shirt and he's inviting the guy to stay so they can continue to create a clothes pile on the floor. In short, it's gay. Honestly, though, this whole thing is probably very confusing to Faison, right down to the fact that there's no woman in this scenario to do all that laundry.

A Few Words with Pioneering Activist Jim Toy

Toy Recently Received an Honorary Doctorate from U-M

BY TIM RETZLOFF

Fifty years ago this fall, pioneering activist Jim Toy co-founded, with Cyndi Gair, the Human Sexuality Office at the University of Michigan. Now designated the Spectrum Center, it was the first campus “gay office” in the U.S. established to serve what has since come to be known as the LGBTQ+ community.

At its spring commencement ceremony, held partly online due to COVID-19, the University of Michigan awarded Jim Toy the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters. In presenting the degree, U-M Regent Michael J. Behm saluted Toy’s “moral clarity and gentle dignity” in championing social justice.

“Thanks to your vision and courage, LGBTQ students at U-M and institutions of higher learning across the country have access to resources, services, scholarships and programs that celebrate their identities and honor their experiences,” Behm said.

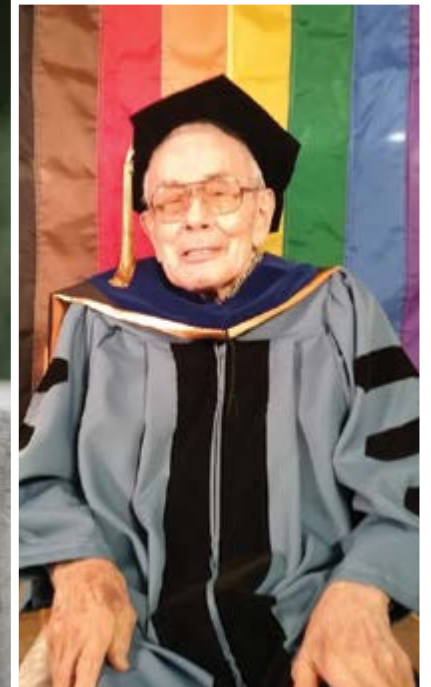
Toy also made pre-recorded remarks that were shared at the ceremony.

“Receiving the honor of such a degree brings with it an obligation and responsibility to work for social justice and equity. I invite all of us to join in discharging this obligation and responsibility.”

I spoke with Jim Toy about the honor, touching on his life’s work and multiple identities in an audio interview via Zoom on May 4. In light of Jim Toy’s weakening health, U-M librarian Scott Dennis, one of Toy’s caretakers and a longtime friend who has been designated to make medical and legal decisions on his behalf, joined in on the call and contributed to the conversation. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

We’re doing this interview shortly after your 91st birthday, and for more than a year we’ve been living with this pandemic. How have you been doing?

Oh, I’ve been doing very well and thanks for all their consideration, for your consideration.



“I think it’s absolutely necessary for all of us to come out. And so I am grateful to everybody who takes that step.”

What does it mean to you to be awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Michigan?

Well, they are very thoughtful and generous and I am grateful to them.

So far as we know, you were the first person in Michigan to come out publicly as a gay man, in a speech you gave at an anti-war rally in Detroit in April 1970. Looking back, how daring was that?

I don’t recall feeling that it was daring. My memory is that I felt it was something we had to do so I did it.

Around the same time, you were one of the speakers at the rally in Detroit for the first Pride celebration. This

is some of your speech that I want to share. You said, “I know that gay stands for love, and that gay stands for life. Maybe that’s all I need to know, and that is all you need to know. So I ask you to come out. Come out for love, come out for life.” To what extent do you feel that it is still necessary for LGBTQ+ people to come out?

I think it’s absolutely necessary for all of us to come out. And so I am grateful to everybody who takes that step.

Something a lot of people are not familiar with and that is sometimes overlooked is your Chinese heritage.

That’s right. I think that’s true. It’s an essential part of my identity, and

for that reason it has shaped my life.

Another aspect of your life has been being an Episcopalian. What do you think of your own journey and the journey the church has taken?

The leadership of the church and the support of the church have been essential in helping shape and guide my identity.

Why is it important to know our history, to seek our history and save our history?

It is important to know, seek and save our history because it is our history, or my history at least, that drives and supports me in my work.

I know that because you were a pack rat, so much of our history has been saved.

Well, I guess that’s one positive aspect of being a pack rat. (Laughs.)

This is one pack rat to another, Jim.

That’s great.

Scott Dennis: I’ll just interject that when we moved Mr. Toy out of his apartment, we sent the Bentley Historical Library an additional

120 boxes of Mr. Toy’s papers and received multiple thank yous from the university.

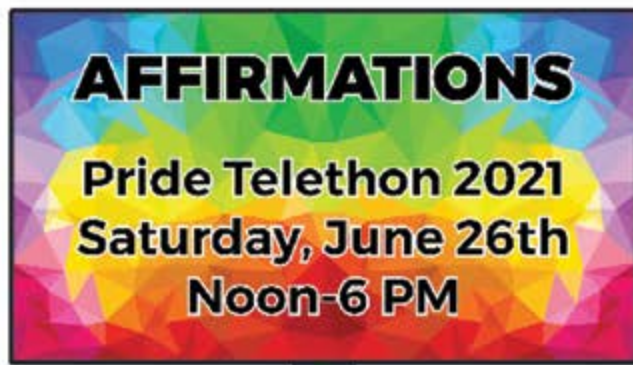
What comes to mind about the emergence of transgender activism and how it has impacted you and all of us?

Transgender activism has inspired and guided me and I hope everyone in our life journey.

As we look to the future, what are your hopes and expectations for the LGBTQ+ community in the years to come?

My hope will be that we members of that community will continue our search for justice and will continue our journey toward the development of our identity.

Tim Retzloff teaches history and LGBTQ studies at Michigan State University.



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Getting Back Out Into the World Safely

Why Geotag? Why Secure Your Lube? Here's Must-Know Advice for LGBTQ+ Travelers

BY LAWRENCE FERBER



As travel rebounds and some international borders open to US residents — especially, or exclusively, if you're fully vaccinated — you'll need to pack more than a suitcase to ensure safe trips during the pandemic's latter days, and far beyond.

After all, it's not quite a COVID-free world yet, nor will it be for a while. (And yes, I'm death-staring at the self-destructive, reckless, stupid gays who traveled to dance parties and other superspreader events during the heights of the pandemic.)

Since the world packs travel hazards besides COVID-19, from accidents to dangerous local scum and villainy targeting queer tourists, here's some dead serious and hunty advice and resources for LGBTQs to take into consideration. Bon safe voyage, bitches!

Get insurance that covers COVID-19 (and yes, your hubby too)

Before booking that flight, cruise, hotel or car rental, secure a travel insurance policy. Be sure it covers COVID-19 related calamities, including hospitalization and cancellations on either your end or that of the airline, cruise line, hotel, tour company, etc. (as many learned since March 2020, their policies did not).

For several years before the pandemic hit, I took out an annual individual policy with Allianz (they've added COVID-19 benefits to some policies), which I made one claim on during early 2019 for a doctor's visit in Singapore. The claims process was easy and paid out in a timely manner — a simple urgent-care illness situation that included medication.

When my husband joined me in Bangkok for just a week, I purchased a single trip policy from Travel Guard for him (which does not appear to cover COVID-19 as of now). LGBTQ-friendly insurance company Seven Corners, meanwhile, offers policies for both singles and same-sex couples, and can even ensure you stay together if a medical Evac is required for one partner: check out the video about clients Daniel & Felipe on their LGBTQ landing page. Seven Corners also offers policies covering COVID-19. Lastly, if you have homeowners' insurance, inquire whether your personal property is covered against destruction or theft while traveling.

Geotag the shit out of everything!

Be sure to activate your phone, pad and

laptop's geolocation features. Worst-case scenario, you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that your iPhone's been stolen if it's suddenly five miles away from where you last left it on a table and can deactivate the device (also, though: don't leave your iPhone on a table).

I've learned it's an all-too-common practice for airlines to take bags off planes pre-departure if the vessel's too weight-heavy or may excessively tax its fuel supply. They won't always confess yours lost the lottery and where it's chilling out, but Apple's new tracking device, AirTag, will essentially spill the tea.

Know the LGBTQ+ laws of the land

Homosexuality is still illegal and even punishable by death in parts of the world. Some of these antigay laws entail toothless legislative holdovers, like Singapore's Penal Code Section 377A, which remains on the books despite ongoing legal challenges and an open, even thriving local gay scene (and entertainers like "Drag Race Thailand" queen Vanda Miss Joaquim).

As of April 2021, countries with death penalty on the books for same-sex relations include Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Northwest Africa's Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.

Beyond the personal safety issue, there's also the question of whether to spend money in places inhospitable to LGBTQs either socially or politically, like transphobic Arkansas, Jamaica and hateful-assed Poland, which continues to piss off the rest of the European Union with its never-ending conveyor belt of antigay and anti-semitic bullshit.

I'll admit, I like visiting Poland. I'm part Polish, although you'd never tell by looking at me. But one night, casually taking photos in a Kraków gay bar, a young gay Pole lunged at me from across the room (he actually dove underneath a table, like a submarine missile, to make a straight beeline), asking why I was shooting in his direction, both enraged and terrified. That was the last photo I took in a gay space. Alternately, to some, traveling to these places is a form of activism, visibility being a necessary part of change, while also supporting the local LGBTQ+ businesses and community.

Human Rights Watch maintains a series of online maps of countries with anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-gender expression laws, plus those

See **Travel Safety**, page 20

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LGBTQ+ Travelers to the Rescue

Queers Have Always Led the Way. Pandemic-Era Tourism Is No Exception.

BY ED SALVATO

Since the tragic events of 9/11 and the abrupt halt to travel that followed, about every 10 years, the tourism industry is knocked back on its heels. The economic meltdown of 2008 and 2009 was even worse on the travel industry than 2001. And the pandemic is a once-a-century calamity exacerbated by the very things that make travel so enriching: large in-person events, meeting new friends at a hotel lounge, slaloming through a crowded bar in a far-flung city.

The travel industry rebooted before, and it will bounce back again soon. And if history is any guide, LGBTQ travelers will be leading the way.

Roger Dow, president and CEO of U.S. Travel Association, the Washington, D.C.-based organization representing all segments of travel in America, says, “Gays lead, and the rest follow. They’re adventurous and like new experiences. They have a penchant for travel far greater than their heterosexual counterparts. They travel more and spend more when they travel. They’re the darlings of the travel industry when it comes to spending and dollars.

“There are a lot of new areas travelers are

going to explore,” he continues. “And the gay community will be there first.”

Each year U.S. Travel sponsors National Travel and Tourism Week, celebrating the value travel holds for our economy, businesses and personal well-being. Recognizing the Power of Travel, this year’s NTTW took place May 2-8 across the U.S. There’s no better time to highlight the unique, unheralded role the LGBTQ community plays in powering travel, especially in times of great crisis.

Recent history has demonstrated that LGBTQ+ travelers — especially those in dual-income-no-child households — are always among the first to travel after social and economic crises. Following 9/11 and again after the 2008/2009 financial crisis, destinations, hospitality companies and travel brands noticed that LGBTQ+ travelers were prioritizing tourism over other purchase decisions, helping fill airplanes, hotels and restaurants and animating destinations. So they began to market to this segment in earnest. Smart travel marketers will note that this is happening again now. We see — anecdotally and with the support of research by Community Marketing, Inc., Harris Interactive and the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association — that this segment travels in higher



One reason queer travelers are uniquely suited to help power the return of travel during this crisis has to do with their decades of experience living under the ever-looming shadow of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, during which they learned the importance of risk mitigation for the good of all.

proportions and intends to book and execute travel in greater proportions than their non-LGBTQ counterparts.

The power of LGBTQ+ travel

Queer travelers tend to have more disposable income and time to spend it, helping fill destinations and hotels, especially during the quieter periods when kids are in school. Being among the first to travel safely, this resilient segment grants permission to others that they can return to travel safely. The LGBTQ+ segment has always been disproportionately present in online platforms, which provide a

safer way to meet and interact with others in an otherwise potentially anti-LGBTQ+ world. They also help achieve travel marketers’ goals by experiencing more, creating social media content and generating buzz.

The segment displays intense loyalty to brands that welcome and include them. There are also surprising halo effects: By signaling welcome to this group, marketers send a sign of inclusiveness to other overlooked and marginalized segments, like Black and Latinx travelers, and the family and friends of queer people are also positively motivated by outreach

See **Rescue**, page 21



Plan a Trip to Northern Michigan's LGBTQ-Friendly Peninsula

BY JASON MICHAEL

It's as far north as you can go in Michigan but well worth the trip. The Keweenaw Peninsula is the northernmost part of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It projects into Lake Superior and includes the cities of Calumet, Copper Harbor and Houghton, among others. You can hike, pedal, paddle and ride countless miles of world-class outdoor recreation trails or listen to Lake Superior's soothing waves as they crash along the area's secluded beach shores. You can tour a copper mine, enjoy some great fishing, visit some beautiful waterfalls or enjoy the many summer events and festivals that take place in the region.

(Lake) Superior stays

A full trip to the Keweenaw Peninsula is not something you can do in a day. You need to plan your lodging. If you're considering Houghton as your "base of operations," call and make a reservation, because spaces are limited! The Country Inn & Suites has lots of perks including complimentary cookies and coffee. Similar offerings can be found at the Holiday Inn Express Houghton Keweenaw, including Wi-Fi, an indoor pool — just scan the code on the Between the Lines ad. For visitors looking for historical charm, try The Vault Hotel housed in a former bank that now serves as a boutique

destination. Traveling on a budget? The Super 8 by Wyndham Houghton might be your best bet with rooms starting at \$98.99 per night. But don't worry. There's still plenty of amenities here including an indoor pool, free Wi-Fi, and free breakfast.

In Calumet, the Laurium Manor Inn, formerly known as the Copper Baron Mansion, is a great option for travelers who love the intimacy of a bed and breakfast setting. And for history buffs looking to stay in Copper Harbor, the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge offers great services

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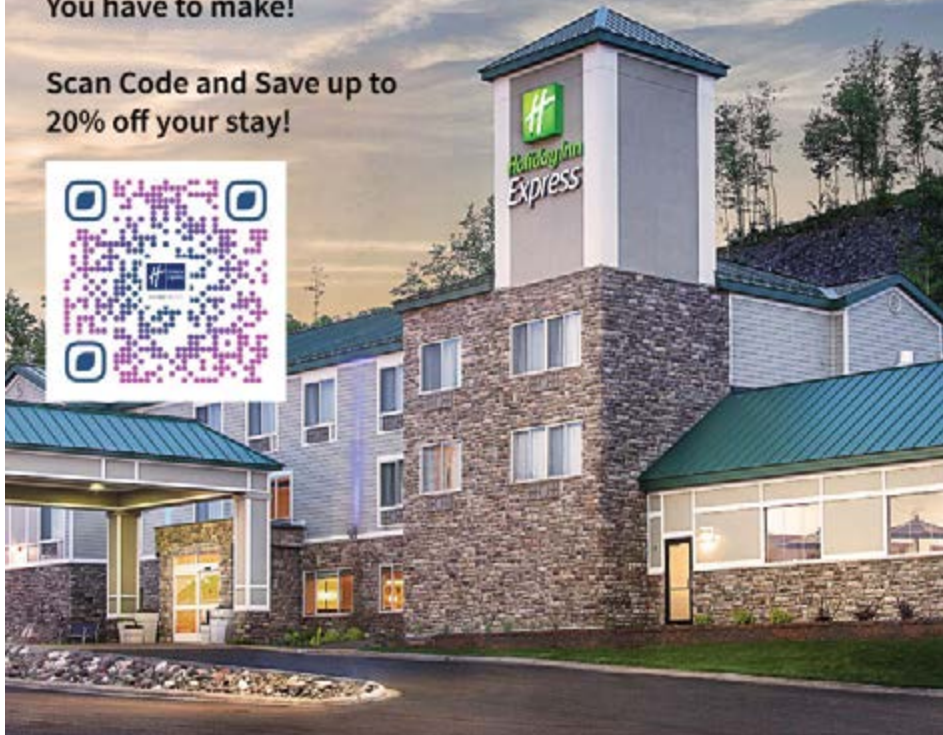
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→ Keweenaw

Continued from p. 15

with a chance to stay in a building built under the Works Progress Administration in 1934 during Frank Delano Roosevelt's presidency.

If you're looking for something different, and something outside of Houghton, try Cedar Point Cabins in Eagle Harbor. Cedar Point Cabins include four seasonal cabins and two year-round cabins situated between Lake Superior and Mt. Baldy on the shore of Lake

Bailey. Each cabin comes with a firepit with wood and chairs, a picnic table and a charcoal grill, cable TV, free Wi-Fi as well as lawn games and canoes and kayaks for use.

Activities for all ages

Now that you know where you're staying, it's time to plan what to do. The Keweenaw Adventure Company can definitely help with that. Here you can rent canoes, kayaks and mountain bikes. Established in 1994, KAC offers a variety of guided day trips as well as multi-day Lake Superior kayak

tours on Isle Royale National Park.

No trip to the Keweenaw Peninsula is complete without taking a mine tour. The region's copper mines tell the stories of the brave individuals who traveled from around the world to seek wealth and prosperity during the copper booms of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The first mineral boom in the U.S. began in 1843. Over the next 150 years over 12 billion pounds of copper were mined from the region. Mines offering tours include the historic Quincy Mine, the Delaware Mine, the Painesdale Mine and Shaft and the Adventure Mine.

Don't want to go underground? How about checking out a gay bar? Or, at least, a bar in Gay, Michigan? Not actually a gay bar, the Gay Bar is named after a former magnate and is gay-friendly offering Yooper charm to ALL customers. Further north, Copper Harbor is home to many summer events — and one





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See **Keweenaw**, page 19

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→ **Keweenaw**

Continued from p. 16

of the best automotive drives in the country with views of the mountains and Lake Superior.

Good eats

Head over to the Michigan House Café & Red Jacket Brewing Company in Calumet after your mining adventure. Dating back to 1895, the café features a large ceiling mural painted by the Milwaukee Artist's Association dated 1906. The massive wooden bar, ornate fireplace, hand-pieced tile floors and restaurant's "gallery of old objects" are as original as possible. The second floor is slowly being renovated as well, and it now offers two suites for overnight lodging.

The market and deli at the Keweenaw Co-op is a place to stop for tasty provisions to take back to the room. The Co-op dates back to 1973 when it operated as a pre-order bulk-buying club to provide the community with natural and

organic food that were otherwise not available at the time. In 1986, the Co-op began operating as a full grocery store and today it remains the exclusive market for goods and services that appeal to consumers who have a meaningful sense of environmental and social responsibility. They also offer great sandwiches and a bakery.

Trip tips

Our findings about this LGBTQ-friendly destination are only the tip of the iceberg. To learn more about the Keweenaw Peninsula's offering, visit keweenaw.info. But two quick tips before you go: make a plan and check the weather. Cell reception is not always great — so purchase some paper maps. Plan ahead, plan to have a good time, and plan to be outdoors on the Keweenaw Peninsula.

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→ **Travel Safety**

Continued from p. 12

with age of consent disparities between same-sex versus heterosexual individuals. It's worth a look. So is travel bloggers Asher & Lyric's whopping 150-country list of best and worst countries for LGBTQ+ travel in 2021, while our own U.S. State Department boasts a fantastic information and resource page for LGBTI international travelers. There, you can find safety tips, how to reach U.S. Embassies and Consulates while abroad ("Consular officers will protect your privacy and will not make generalizations, assumptions, or pass judgment," it promises) and a TSA info page for Transgender Passengers.

Google where you're going before booking tickets

Googling your destination and "antigay" could produce up-to-the minute news developments that may inform your plans. A Molotov cocktail attack on a Laguna Beach, California gay bar in mid 2020, for example, is a pretty clear "maybe not right now."

Egypt has long entailed an LGBTQ+ traveler's fave, but the past few years saw an increase of

disturbing antigay and anti-trans violence, harassment and detainment by the police. Largely Islamic Indonesia keeps seeing waves of political crackdowns on and vilification of queers — including raids of Jakarta bathhouses and, just this past August, a private gay party — while Indonesia's Aceh province is ruled by Sharia law and sees public lashings and life-destroying shamings (plus, this border-crossing cyber hate campaign bullshit). Indonesia's island of Bali, however, is extremely LGBTQ-positive and tolerant, and not informed by hateful fundamentalism. Go there, henny!

Show respect and be smart about PDAs

Life isn't always a gay cruise or a strut down Santa Monica Boulevard. In some cultures, PDAs between people of any gender or sexual identity are completely frowned upon and offensive, so look that up and, even better, look around you once you arrive. Watch (nonchalantly, not in some creepy way) how locals behave before indulging in PDAs (don't be surprised to see men affectionately holding hands like "Sex and the City" girlfriends in Arab countries or India; it's a cultural norm, despite the homophobia). Conversely, if you're in a known gayborhood like Tokyo's Shinjuku



Ni-chome or Mexico City's Zona Rosa, live out loud and flash those conservative locals the gayest smile you can.

Back up critical documents and send to a cloud service

I've never been pickpocketed (and probably jinxed myself writing that), but if this ever happens or you misplace important documents, a wallet, etc., have copies ready in the cloud, including booking numbers and, of course, travel insurance policy. iCloud, DropBox, whatever — just be

sure it's an encrypted service. Now you can more easily request replacements and access important numbers to cancel credit cards.

If you're legally married or partnered, also have copies and cloud backups of your marriage license and anything related to power of attorney and medical access. Especially here in the good ol' freedom-y USA, some nosy "Christian" nurse in an Arkansas or Texas hospital may attempt to refuse a same-sex spouse access to a hospital unless you're packing legal documents and a winnable lawsuit.

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➔ Rescue

Continued from p. 14

to LGBTQ+ people.

Finally, these messages resonate strongly with millennial and Gen Z audiences who plan their travel — as well as plot their careers — to destinations and at hospitality brands whose missions align with their more inclusive values.

The segment has also demonstrated a strong affinity for cruises of all sorts, including all-gay or all-lesbian cruises, LGBTQ+ groups on mainstream cruises, and simply joining mainstream cruises as a same-sex couple or in small friend groups. While cruise vacations are still on a pandemic-induced pause in the U.S., cruise companies — including Carnival, Celebrity, Cunard, Uniworld and the brand-new Virgin Voyages — have all firmly established LGBTQ+ travelers as a core segment.

“National Travel and Tourism Week takes on special significance this year as we look ahead to recovery following the most challenging year this industry has experienced,” says Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line and national chair of the U.S. Travel Association. “Across the country, we are recognizing travel’s value, and the long-standing support of the LGBTQ+ community will help accelerate our rebound. I know that for Carnival, we pride ourselves on an inclusive atmosphere where every guest is appreciated, and we look forward to welcoming them back as soon as possible.”

Travel safety experts

One reason queer travelers are uniquely suited to help power the return of travel during this crisis has to do with their decades of experience living under the ever-looming shadow of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, during which they learned the importance of risk mitigation for the good of all. Wearing masks to protect yourself and others resonates with a community that understands the importance of condoms and PrEP.

According to Randle Roper, co-founder and CEO of VACAYA Full-Ship and Full-Resort LGBT+ Vacations, “[Our] guests showed incredible resilience by traveling safely during the pandemic, and they proved they could adapt to live with health protocols that would keep each other and their loved ones back home safe.”

Travel safety is organically entwined with the LGBTQ+ community’s DNA. In 70+ countries, many popular with LGBTQ+ travelers, homosexuality is criminalized. That includes 11 countries in which death is the punishment meted out for those convicted of homosexuality and other “crimes” of sexual and gender non-conformity.

While travelers would be spared the harsh treatments locals may suffer, they nonetheless have a great deal to consider when traveling. Same-sex couples still receive awkward and uncomfortable service when checking into

hotels with a single bed on the reservation or even simply existing in places where everyone’s assumed to be heterosexual. When a lesbian boards a plane with her legally married wife and their legally adopted children, they could land in a destination where their marriage license is void and their legal guardianship of their kids is in question. Trans and non-binary travelers, especially those of color, may encounter challenges including lack of safe bathroom access, awkward encounters at TSA security and even outright hostility (and worse) in any public setting. In the face of all this, queer people still explore and have a lot to teach the rest of the world about how to travel with intent and joy while maintaining their own safety and that of the community around them.

LGBTQ+ travelers can also show the world how best to support the tourism and hospitality industries in ways that also strengthen their own communities. “LGBTQ+ consumers have the power to make change and support LGBTQ-friendly companies and destinations by choosing to spend their travel dollars with those that support our community,” says Jeff Guaracino, co-author of the “Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality.” “LGBTQ-owned hotels, bed and breakfasts, tour companies, bars and restaurants, festivals and destinations have been especially hard hit by COVID, and as a community, we can support LGBTQ-owned and -friendly businesses and their employees by spending our travel dollars with them first.”

Insights from industry leaders

LGBTQ+ tour companies and travel agents have a direct connection to queer travelers and report strong interest in and bookings of travel. According to Robert Sharp, co-founder and CEO of Out Adventures, “After [releasing] our entire tour schedule through the end of 2022, we saw our largest month of sales in our 12-year history.”

Kelli Carpenter, co-founder of R Family Vacations, adds, “Our highest sales have come from our river cruise products and international tour business, showing that travelers are ready to explore the world again.”

VACAYA’s Roper has seen extremely robust sales over the past several months — including selling out their Antarctica Cruise. “With a starting price of around \$25,000 per room, that was our best sign yet that our community members are ready to break free from their cages and return to travel,” he says.

Robert Geller, founder of FabStayz, agrees: “Pent-up demand is visible, palpable and quantifiable.”

NYC-based Ed Salvato is a freelance travel writer, instructor at NYU and the University of Texas at Austin’s NYC Center, and an LGBTQ tourism marketing consultant.

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Forget What You Think You Know About Flint and Stop by for a Visit

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

It's only 70 miles north of Detroit and well worth the drive. Flint and surrounding Genesee County is finding itself again after years of big manufacturing downsizing operations here. Look closer at the new Flint, and you'll find a proud city coming back to full, vibrant life. Flint and Genesee County is an accommodating locale for travelers looking for an evening out or a weekend getaway. From parks and beaches – yes, beaches that include Clover, Bluebell and Buttercup – to music and first-class entertainment venues, there's something for everyone.

The FIA

Flint is an art town. The Flint Institute of Arts is the second-largest art museum in Michigan. Each year, more than 160,000 people visit the museum and take part in its exhibitions, events and programs. The museum is hosting a new exhibition titled “Political and Personal: Images of Gay Identity.” The exhibition features photos from the Jack B. Pierson Print Collection and runs through July 11.

Walking tours and murals

One need not go indoors to see art in Flint. The Flint Murals/Flint Public Art Project features more than 160 murals in and around the city of Flint. Free guided walking tours of the downtown murals are available from What's Up Downtown or a self-guided tour created by the Flint Public Art Project can be taken using the free app PixelStix.

Performing arts

The Flint Repertory Theatre, a professional, not-for-profit theater in the heart of the city, will be partnering with the Flint Public Art Project to present “Mural Plays,” 25 new micro-audio plays. Each play corresponds to a different mural in the city. Audience members can listen to the plays using the PixelStix app on their phone as well as online at FlintRep.org. Flint Rep Outside will also present Jason Robert Brown's SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD (July 23-25) performed outside on the roof of Flint Repertory theatre.

Kayaking

Spend an afternoon on the water. Kayak Flint is the first paddle rental service in the city, and it allows affordable river access to residents and visitors. Kayak Flint's mission is to help folks explore Michigan's Flint River National Water

Trail. Designated by the National Park Service in November 2020, Kayak Flint makes it easy to get on the water through kayak rentals, guided paddle trips and shuttling. You can just show up and enjoy your trip!

Shopping & making

Looking for something different to do? Make a reservation and visit Factory Two, which bills itself as “Flint's Community Makerspace.” At Factory Two you can take classes that vary from jewelry-making to ironworking with a real forge. And, of course, they also have all the coolest 3D printers to make something original — or just something useful.

While in town, be sure to visit Totem Books. Not your average bookstore, Totem sells books, vinyl, CDs, cassettes and DVDs. You'll also find some sweet vintage T-shirts and Flint-focused pins. We know you collect them!

Dining

If you've worked up an appetite, may we suggest a meal at The Laundry? The Laundry is a casual bistro that serves lunch, dinner and weekend brunch featuring sandwiches, house-made soups, luncheon entrees and specials. Its own organic kitchen garden behind the restaurant provides The Laundry with herbs and vegetables.

And for dinner? Try Sauce Italian American Kitchen. Newly opened in the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Flint, the restaurant is already a mouthwatering favorite that does things the traditional way with pastas cut by hand. Also, soon you'll find the Simmer Rooftop Lounge if you're looking for a cool view with a tasty drink.

Another favorite in Flint is Cork on Saginaw. This bistro-like wine bar and restaurant is located in a beautifully restored old marble building in Flint's Downtown Entertainment District. It features two Enomatic wine dispensers, signature plates, one-of-a-kind desserts and wine events. Live entertainment and seasonal outdoor seating is available.

If you need some caffeine to get you through the day, or just a little coffee after dinner, The Good Beans Cafe is what you're looking for. Good Beans is your spot for Italian espresso-based beverages, assorted teas, smoothies and light edibles. The cafe offers an inviting space for hanging out with friends, live entertainment, private party rentals, seminars, lectures and late-night study sessions for students.

Want to find even more to do? Visit <https://exploreflintandgenesee.org> and plan your trip to Flint and Genesee County today. The whole region has something for everyone.

→ Travel Safety

Continued from p. 20

Don't let your lube spill all over your suitcase like mine did

Ask me about the time the large bottle of Swiss Army silicon lube, which I had previously opened and used some of, burst inside my suitcase en route to Thailand, where I discovered that silicon lube isn't even available (the good news: three cycles through the laundry and the stains were out of my shirts). Bring new, unopened bottles of your favorite lube(s), pack them in a couple of ziplock bags and a large padded envelope, and make sure they — and any liquid for that matter — aren't too tightly pressured by all your other stuff.

If you have preferred brands of condom, bring those too. In some countries, condom brands and sizes can be very different from ones available in the US — just like clothing. You'll be hard pressed to find anything like an XL-sized Magnum in Japan. "Foreigners definitely think that Japanese brands in general are too small," admits Andrew Pugsley, a gay Tokyo-based Canadian expat whose excellent gay vlog Tokyo BTM is chock full of insider deets on the culture, city and queer nightlife.

Japanese condoms are also supremely thin — all the way down to .01 millimeter, which is basically like wearing thick air — which some may appreciate (and take home in mass quantities, just sayin'), but others find less assuring than Lifestyles or Trojans and hard to roll down without tearing. And yes, I've conducted many experiments for the sake of "research."

Watch out for the catfish... and sharks

It can happen anywhere in the world, including home, but apps and hookup sites are swimming with scam artists and bad news freaks. In some countries, apps are used by homophobes and zealous antigay police to entrap, jail and torture LGBTQs. In other cases, you could get robbed, especially in second and third world countries where first-world tourists represent an easy, even deserving in their eyes, mark.

If you do meet someone online, take precautions. In countries where locals target tourists, five-star hotels will often require visitors leave their ID at the front desk and won't allow them to retrieve it and leave until you give a sign-off by phone. If someone refuses to visit your five-star hotel (especially if they use the, "I don't like hotels because they'll treat me like I'm a prostitute" excuse), that's a red flag. And if you do have a new "friend" over, put those valuables in the safe first.

Always keep your medications on you (but not recreational drugs)

Don't put your PrEP in check-in luggage. I repeat: Do not put your PrEP in check-in luggage. Ever. If it's medication you need daily, you're risking missed doses should that bag get lost (or purposely purged from the plane to lighten its load: see above), and worse, if the drug isn't readily available where you're headed. Keep them in your carry-on only!

Also, for fuck's sake, don't bring recreational drugs into a country where you can go to jail for it. It's a really wise use of 60 seconds on Google to look that up, because tourists will not be treated with leniency. It's a lesson you don't want to learn.

NY-raised entertainment and travel journalist Lawrence Ferber has contributed to publications including Entertainment Weekly, New York Magazine, National Geographic Traveler, The Advocate, NewNowNext, The NY Post and TripSavvy. He also co-wrote/co-created the 2010 gay romcom "BearCity" and authored its 2013 novelization.



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Robert Arrington, American, born 1950, *Self-Portrait*, 1985, Etching and silkscreen on paper, 12⁷/₁₆ x 9¹/₁₆ inches. Gift of Mr. Jack B. Pierson, 1986.3.

POLITICAL & PERSONAL IMAGES OF GAY IDENTITY THROUGH JULY 11

This exhibition features selections from the Jack B. Pierson Print Collection. Drawing on Pierson's experience as a gay man, *Political and Personal: Images of Gay Identity* sheds light on the important role sexual identity played in forming some of his collecting habits and includes the work of gay and heterosexual artists.

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Angie Perone. Courtesy photo.

SAGE Metro Detroit Bids Farewell to Angie Perone, Seeks New Executive Director

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

When Angie Perone began as the Executive Director of SAGE Metro Detroit in 2015, the organization had a few part-time staff and a budget of under \$50,000. Since then, SAGE, whose mission is to build awareness and promote change so that LGBTQ+ older adults may age with dignity and authenticity, has tripled its staff, significantly expanded programs and services, and grown its budget to over \$500,000 — not a bad note on which to end a tenure.

Perone, who lives in Michigan with her wife and their 4-year-old son, is leaving SAGE to do health policy work in

Washington, D.C. for a year before moving to the University of California, Berkeley to begin a job as an assistant professor in social welfare and to oversee Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study on Aging Services.

Perone has mixed emotions about leaving SAGE.

"It's time to hand the baton to a new leader, which is exciting but a little bittersweet for me," she says. "But, of course, I'm excited to see this organization continue to grow."



The COVID-19 epidemic has been especially difficult for older adults and LGBTQ+ older adults face some additional challenges that leave them further isolated, including living much of their lives with

legal discrimination and hostility.

"LGBTQ older adults are twice as likely to be single and live alone, four times less likely to have children and rely much more heavily on friends for caregiving," Perone says. "LGBTQ older adults have higher rates of social isolation and health disparities that have significantly increased the mental and physical health risks of COVID-19."

Like many organizations, SAGE had to quickly meet a great need during this pandemic. The ability to adapt and meet challenges often hinges first on an organization's leader and second on its staff and volunteers.

See **SAGE**, page 29



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Position Title: PREVENTION COUNSELOR
Department: MATRIX COMMUNITY HEALTH

Plans and assists with HIV testing & counseling and other sexually transmitted infections. Conducts patient intakes, assesses patients risk, takes patients samples, provide testing results, and assists patients with developing risk reduction plans. HIV Test Counselors provides referrals, linkage to medical care and supportive services. Provides counseling to high risk individuals. Locates patients who are unaware of being infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

INTENSIVE CARE COORDINATOR

Position Title: INTENSIVE CARE COORDINATOR
Department: MATRIX COMMUNITY HEALTH

Works with persons living with HIV who are poly-diagnosed and battling with active mental health or substance abuse issues, along with addressing HIV-related needs. Works closely with the patient's medical providers to understand what their medical needs are in addition to their psychosocial needs. Responsible for patient assessment, service plan development, periodic reassessment of needs, medication adherence counseling, patient education, ongoing monitoring of medical and psychosocial needs, monitoring and evaluation of the patient's progress, and patient discharge from services.

MEDICAL CASE MANAGER

Position Title: MEDICAL CASE MANAGER
Department: MATRIX COMMUNITY HEALTH

Works with persons living with HIV helping them manage their HIV medical care needs to facilitate optimal patient outcomes (viral load suppression); promote ongoing long term engagement in medical care, and ensure appropriate service utilization eliminating any gaps in care. Works closely with the patient's medical provider to understand what the patient's medical needs are in addition to their psychosocial needs. Works closely with the interdisciplinary team moving clients from linkage to care to retention in care through highly coordinated services and efforts.

PATIENT NAVIGATOR

Position Title: PATIENT NAVIGATOR
Department: MATRIX COMMUNITY HEALTH

Works with persons who are newly diagnosed with HIV or not in HIV medical care working to link these individuals into medical care and supportive services. Conducts outreach activities in partnership with counseling and testing partners to locate out of care or unaware individuals; identifies and establishes new referral relationships with organizations for linking newly diagnosed or out of care individuals to medical care; conducts patient intake and assessment; provides risk reduction treatment planning and counseling.

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HRC President Speaks at Detroit LGBT Chamber's COLOURS Conference



Alphonso David.

that changing over time but yet we still face bias and indifference in workplaces.”

Still, our time, David said, is coming.

“One of the most important things is if we're going to realize the full promise of our democracy is to make sure every single one of us has the opportunity to actively participate and thrive in it. You can't have a successful business that refuses to engage in diversity and inclusion and the values associated with diversity and inclusion,” he said. “Most business leaders now understand that there is a legitimate business case to be made for diversity and inclusion.”

And it goes beyond merely hiring a few LGBTQ+ people or people of color as employees for one's business, he went on. It's about recognizing diversity's “inherent value.”

“That is the principle that

I think we're going to be flushing out at the conference,” David said.

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David is scheduled to speak at the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Diversity Council's virtual COLOURS Conference and Pride Awards. Billed as Michigan's No. 1 LGBTQ+ business diversity conference, it features a career fair and many speakers who have been influential to both business and LGBTQ+ acceptance in the state of Michigan. COLOURS runs two days, Thursday and Friday, May 13 through 14, and it will end with an LGBTQ+ career fair. David will speak on Thursday, May 13.

Ongoing corporate equity measures

David also spoke proudly of HRC's Corporate Equality Index which has, since 2002, rated American businesses on their treatment of LGBTQ+ employees, consumers and investors.

“When the Corporate Equality Index started in 2002 there were very few companies that had inclusive LGBTQ policies. I believe at the time we had 3 percent of 5 percent that were LGBTQ inclusive where they were being ranked at 100 percent,” he said. “Today, we have more than 700 that are ranked at 100 percent. They actually have inclusive transgender policies. That is significant for LGBTQ+ people.”

He emphasized the Index is much more than a simple score; it's a reliable reference for the equitable practices one can expect at a business that starts from the moment one applies to the moment they are hired and working. He elaborated on why the CEI is as thorough as it is: “Because if you're not being respected for who you are in a business, if your identity is being devalued, it is very difficult for you to actually succeed because the infrastructure

Equity's importance

David, who has been president of HRC since 2019 and is the first Black man and first civil rights attorney to hold the post, spoke to Between The Lines ahead of the conference. He was direct about equity's value.

“Equity is important to me because I am interested in creating communities and environments that are inclusive and achieve the goals that are outlined by our democracy,” David said. “But when you think of corporate equity, for too long people of color and LGBTQ people have been excluded from the boardrooms of large corporations. We've seen

See **COLOURS**, page 28



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→ COLOURS

Continued from p. 26

doesn't exist to allow you to succeed," David said.

David also mentioned HRC's equity work document HRC prepared for the new administration.

"It has more than 85 policy recommendations," said David. "We identified some priorities in the Blueprint and I'm proud to say the Biden administration has taken an active role in implementing many of those priorities."

Finally, David said he was proud of the recent open letter he sent to corporations calling on them to more actively promote social change. A public statement is nice but it's no longer enough.

"Words matter but so do actions. And as much as we appreciate the statements that have been issued in support of equality we also recognize that actions have an impact as well and, in some cases, a greater impact. So the letter that I issued, the open letter to corporate America, is really asking them, asking business leaders, to all rise up against indifference. We're asking them to not only publicly denounce state legislation

that discriminates against marginalized communities including transgender people. But we're asking them to refuse to advance new businesses in states that discriminate as well as refusing to support sporting events where transgender athletes are banned or athletes who take a knee are penalized."

Why are such actions necessary?

"Those actions are necessary because anti-equality extremists need to understand that their actions come with consequences. And they also need to appreciate that there is a disconnect between what they're doing and what the rest of the country actually want us to do. The majority of the public support equality. Two-thirds of the American public oppose these bills that are being advanced in legislatures across the country. So we're asking for corporate leaders to implement their values. Most corporations have values and we want to make sure they back up their values with action. And that's why we issued the letter."

"The majority of the public support equality. Two-thirds of the American public oppose these bills that are being advanced in legislatures across the country. So we're asking for corporate leaders to implement their values. Most corporations have values and we want to make sure they back up their values with action."

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COLOURS Conference Pride Awardees Announced

A crucial part of the COLOURS Conference is the 2021 Pride Awards. Nancy Schlichting, former CEO of Henry Ford Health System, will be presented with the Allan D. Gilmour award for Outstanding Leadership. The annual award is named on behalf of Gilmour, former Vice-Chair and Chief Financial Officer of Ford Motor Company, who supported the LGBTQ+ community for decades through philanthropy and business leadership. The award is given to a leader in the community who has pioneered the inclusion of LGBTQ people in the workplace and in the community.

Additional awardees include Good Cakes and Bakes with the Small Business of the Year award; Henry Ford Health System with the Corporation of the Year award; State of Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist with the Equity Champion of the Year award; and Ford Globe – Ford Motor Company with the Employee Resource Group of the Year award. – Jason A. Michael

→ SAGE

Continued from p. 24

“From the very beginning [Perone] referred to us as The Team, and she meant it,” says Training and Education Manager Judy Lewis. “She drew on each of us for our areas of expertise and blended it together into a powerful organization.”

SAGE rose to the occasion by significantly expanded programs and services to address the pandemic also.

“We have provided nearly 15,000 meals since 2020 and developed new virtual programming that has served over 1,000 LGBTQ older adults,” Perone says.

An especially forward-thinking service was SAGE’s Friendly Caller program, “which connects LGBTQ older adults with other members of the LGBTQ communities and allies to maintain connection,” according to SAGE’s website. Perone said that the Friendly Caller Program has been used as a model during the pandemic for other organizations nationwide.

SAGE also provided tablets to seniors and launched a program to offer tech support to seniors so that they can keep connected virtually with their community. The program “builds on our intergenerational programming with LGBTQ youth and young adults to support knowledge and community-building across generations,” Perone says.

Connecting generations was a priority for Perone among the staff, as well. “Angie and I come

from two very different places,” Lewis says. “I grew up in the 1950s, in a much more silent generation, filled with don’t and can’t.” Rather than creating a negative intergenerational energy, which some leaders might, Angie has spent the last several years engaging people of my generation — with life experience that might have been dissimilar to hers [and] to people of her generation — in an effort to build bridges and empower all of us.”

Perone said she’s constantly learning from others.

“I’m not an older adult, so a lot of the stories I’m hearing [about the experiences of older LGBTQ+ adults] are from my colleagues and people we serve,” she says. “We’ve achieved a lot in a really short amount of time and a lot of it is because we have a terrific team who is really committed.”

In addition to seniors living in isolation, SAGE also addresses the challenge LGBTQ+ older adults can face in long-term facilities.

Some of those challenges include, “not respecting the name and pronouns of transgender residents, not respecting their choice of clothing,” Perone says.

“You sometimes have staff who are not trained

who are trying to kind of save LGBTQ residents from sin. We’ve had residents who are not allowed to be sexually active with people of the same sex. And then, of course, there’s abuse and harassment by other residents and sometimes staff,” she says. “Some people have been reported being denied care.”

“I’m hoping the new person who comes on board [as executive director] will be as open and recognize that our communities are somewhat disengaged from the broader community.”

— Cornelius A. Wilson, SAGE co-founder and former board member

SAGE recently got a large grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to do training in such facilities.

Working with over nine LGBTQ+ organizations throughout Michigan, “We’ve developed this really state of the art, high-quality training program that is done in-person and online, which has been really

useful during the pandemic,” she says.

SAGE co-founder and former board member Cornelius A. Wilson cited these trainings as an important development under Perone’s leadership.

“I think it was very significant that we were able to secure funding through the MDHHS to provide those trainings to organizations in order to help them become more culturally competent when it comes to helping the older LGBT adult community,” says Wilson who currently serves as SAGE’s program and activities director.

Wilson praises Perone’s focus and says she is “very intentional about what SAGE wants to be for our older adult community.”

“I’m hoping the new person who comes on board [as executive director] will be as open and recognizing that our communities are somewhat disengaged from the broader community,” says Wilson, who would like to see SAGE “offer more direct services” such as housing and rental assistance.

Another area Perone sees as vital is racial justice. After the murder of George Floyd, SAGE held a series of intergenerational conversations via Zoom.

“We had really tough conversations about race and we’ve continued to have these throughout 2020 and 2021,” she says. “They were really well received and bridge some gaps between generations.”

Perone’s hope is that the next executive director is someone “who truly and immensely believes in the cause.”

“This is passion-driven work,” she says. “Obviously we want someone with the skills to deliver what it takes to make the origination grow, but that person needs passion and interest in serving the community. If you have that passion and interest in serving LGBT adults, then everything else falls into place. The baseline most important thing is you’ve got to have that spark, you’ve got to have that passion.”

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Michigan LGBTQ+ Leaders Receive Hate Letter, FBI Notified

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

At least seven LGBTQ+ leaders across Michigan received the same flyer sent by mail in mid-April. With the title “Prophecy: The Punishment of My Gay People,” the letter quoted several Bible verses. All of the letters were postmarked San Diego, but it was confirmed by an FBI agent that a postmark does not necessarily indicate the origin of a piece of mail.

Joe Schoch is the newly elected president of the Jim Toy Community Center in Ann Arbor. He received the letter at his home.



Joe Schoch.

“I expect this kind of stuff to happen in our line of work and our advocacy,” Schoch said. “And, in fact, these things underscore the importance of the work that we’re doing.”

Still, Schoch had concerns. “As I kind of sat down with it a little more, as it digested a little bit more, again with the home address and stuff like that, you start thinking about things,” Schoch said. “...in today’s society with COVID, with political tensions, with the insurrection — all that stuff — I didn’t want to not report it, because you just never know [how] that one letter, [how] that one thing, is going to set off something bigger and unexpected.”

Because of that, Schoch contacted Mary Abouljoud, the FBI community relations specialist overseeing Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community. She works out of the FBI’s Detroit location. He also contacted his local police department as well as Ann Arbor’s and the state authorities. All were quite supportive, he said, particularly the representative from the FBI.

“I wanted the local police to know more for awareness,” Schoch said. “I wanted the local police to know who I am, what had happened, so in case ... one of my neighbors did call the police, that there was some kind of backstory, some history in that record there. So they know that this is more serious [and] respond accordingly — whatever that means to them.”

Schoch emphasized that although it was alarming to receive the letter at his home, he was not scared away from his work, and, in fact, it only encouraged him to get back to work.

“I was originally motivated to get involved in activism and the Jim Toy Center after the Pulse shooting,” Schoch explained. “I went in knowing that I wanted to create safe spaces; I wanted to create safe community — that’s been my passion and goal in this work. And again, [the letter] underscores the need for this.

He also highlighted that just because it’s 2021, there’s still issues that “need to be discussed around race; around sexual orientation; around diversity, equity and inclusion” and this letter highlights that fight’s validity.

“And if it helps to raise awareness to the local authorities, to federal agencies about how we’re supported and that we’re not alone in all of these fights, that to me was a fairly positive outcome,” he said.



Dave Garcia.

Dave Garcia received the same letter at the Affirmations L G B T Q + Community Center, where he is the executive director. He said he’s been the target of this kind

of thing before — be it letters or phone calls — and he wasn’t fazed. However, because of the protest outside the center just one month prior and because he soon discovered others had received the flyers that even made it to some individuals’ homes, it was a bit more concerning.

“We’ve got a lot more important things to do than be distracted by this kind of attack,” Garcia said, citing the food donation, HIV testing and COVID-19 vaccination programs that Affirmations provides. “At the same time, I certainly recognize, especially for young leadership across the state, when you get one of these for the first time ... it can be a bit jarring.”

Garcia encouraged anyone who feels threatened to contact the FBI. He said the Michigan Community Centers Network, the coalition of leaders of LGBTQ+ centers across the state, met via Zoom videoconference with the FBI on April 29. Representatives from statewide LGBTQ+ advocacy group Equality Michigan were invited as well.

“There are a lot of us who are getting older now, like Curtis [Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit] and myself and others who have been in this movement for a while. And we’ve seen this for decades,” Garcia said. “I want the younger generation of leaders just coming up, if they read stuff like this, I don’t want it to discourage them. In fact, it should encourage them to get involved and do the work that is needed.”

Between The Lines followed up with Garcia after the Zoom call with the Michigan Community Centers Network and the two FBI community relations specialists. It went well, by all accounts.

“They spent a lot of time explaining the difference between a hate crime and what is free speech and what is a threat; how to recognize the difference,” Garcia said. “I obviously knew



that stuff, and this letter that we got, like I said before, was not a direct threat.”

However, the FBI made it clear that whether it was hate speech — such as letters or protest signs broadcasting hateful messages — or a direct threat against one’s life, it’s important to report it.

Garcia said that because the Michigan LGBTQ+ community center network had been established, the FBI was able to meet with the leaders of the centers as a group and introduce themselves. They also offered active shooter drill training for the centers, some of whose

leaders took them up on the offer.

Finally, Garcia recalled that one result of the recent protest outside the center was \$10,000 in donations for Affirmations.

“A letter like this, use it to your advantage,” Garcia said, quite seriously. “We used [the protest] to say, ‘Hey, while we’re giving out food and clothes, trying to help the community, we’re dealing with this kind of continued harassment from so-called Christians and we need your support because this kind of thing continues to happen.’ So turn it around and use it as a positive.”

What Is an Anti-LGBTQ+ Threat? We Asked, the FBI Answered.

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

While the homophobic letters recently sent to a number of LGBTQ+ leaders in Michigan did not constitute a direct threat, it’s useful to have a working knowledge of what exactly constitutes a threat, what is hate speech, what is a hate crime and what to do if ever faced with those circumstances. Between The Lines spoke with Larry Stewart, a supervisory special agent for the FBI’s Detroit location. Stewart is responsible for supervising a squad of investigating special agents whose cases involve a couple of major programs, one of which is civil rights.

When asked about a protest featuring signs with hateful messages, for example, Stewart made clear the distinction between hate speech and a crime.

“As much as it’s morally reprehensible, it’s protected by the First Amendment,” Stewart explained. “So some places require a permit or some type of license to lawfully protest and they’re allowed to do it, [but] we in the FBI can’t oversee those things because they’re constitutionally protected activities. So it wouldn’t be anything for us to comment on or to be involved with or anything like that,

it’s just a constitutional right. Unfortunately, that’s just free speech. It’s hate speech; it’s not a hate crime.”

Still, the FBI is interested to know about such incidents in the event that they escalate. In fact, Stewart noted that the FBI did see “a pretty significant rise in hate crimes” from 2019 to 2020. He also stated that hate crimes are a top priority for the FBI, primarily due to the devastating impact they can have on communities and families.

What is a threat?

According to Stewart, the FBI defines a threat as “a serious communication of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence against a particular individual or group of individuals.”

Stewart went on to describe types of threats and what one should do when faced with them.

“A physical threat is an in-person, true threat deemed to place the recipient or others in imminent danger,” Stewart said.

According to the FBI, “imminent” means it’s going to happen, though not necessarily at that moment. If it’s an immediate threat, especially a

See **FBI**, page 38

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TOO SOON? NOT IF YOU'RE ALASKA THUNDERFUCK.

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI



The Reigning 'Drag Race' Queen Has Dirty Jokes for Days in Her First-Ever Comedy Special

Are Alaska Thunderfuck's filthy jokes about Jeffrey Epstein, "genderfluids," labia and poop too much for our world on fire? Alaska, even though she has a song called "Anus," thought maybe they were. She wasn't sure if an assault joke in 2021 would fly.

So the winner of "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars" Season 2 consulted comedy queens Jackie Beat, Sherry Vine and Margaret Cho, no stranger to bowel jokes herself, to see if she was out of her damn mind. They didn't exactly say she wasn't, but they also did give Alaska just enough confidence to release "The Alaska Thunderfuck Extra Special Comedy Special," her premiere standup gig. The special is airing now on OUTtv, the first LGBTQ+ Apple TV channel now available on the Apple TV app.

In late March, Thunderfuck appeared

on Zoom against a palm-leaf-patterned backdrop — "one of the many walls in my giant palatial mansion," she joked. Just like in her comedy special, nothing was off limits: not how some of her jokes fell flat, not what she thinks of the entry rules on "Drag Race," and definitely not how she'd "walk the fuck out" of a hypothetical winners edition of "All Stars" if they, God forbid, did it teams-style.

I feel like with this comedy special, you keep just checking boxes. Drag queen, comedy queen. What can't Alaska do?

I can't do math really good. So I have an amazing accountant. And I also don't know how to use TikTok. I cannot figure it out. My 10-year-old niece is really good at it; she can. I thought I would try and show my variety and try to do comedy. I know I've always been just a look queen and a

glamour girl. So this is a huge step for me to try and tell jokes.

Has a career in drag prepared you for a career in comedy?

I mean, I don't know. It was hard, and I was really trepidatious about doing it because I was like, "Yes, I'm funny, but I'm not a comedian." Like, I have so much respect for

zebra dress, in front of a palm leaf on a pink background.

Are we looking at a giant palm leaf sheet in the background? What exactly is that?

Well, why don't you tell your (readers) that it is just one of the many walls in my giant palatial mansion? It's expensive wallpaper. It may appear to be a duvet cover barely pinned to the ceiling, barely covering the mess of fucking drag behind it, but don't let your eyes deceive you. It is just one of the many huge walls in my mansion.

Going back, were you a funny kid?

I mean, my family has a fucking amazing sense of humor and they're so funny. My mom is so hilarious. My dad was really funny. My uncles are the stupidest, funniest people ever. Humor was always going around and happening in my family. But I was never a funny kid because I was too shy and too scared of people. I was like, "I'm gay and I'm weird and I just wanna hide in my room."

Was comedy a defense mechanism for you like it is for a lot of gay kids?

See, for me, it never got to that point. My defense mechanism was not being seen. I just tried to disappear. I tried to be a gecko and change to the color of the wall. That was my defense mechanism. (Laughs.)

How are you feeling now that this special has been

released into the world?

I feel great about it now. (Laughs.) It's been 87 years since we filmed this. It's been so long, and it's not an understatement to say the entire world has changed so much. We filmed this in pre-COVID Hollywood, and a few months went by, (then) COVID happened. The quarantine happened. All these things happened. I was like, "Is this appropriate? Why the fuck do I need to be like, 'Look at me telling jokes, toots!' Should I even be doing this? What the fuck is going on?" So luckily, we made it a part of the thing, a part of the movie. We have interviews with my comedy guru mentors and they help assure me that the world needs laughter and comedy now more than, I think, ever.



comedians who go out there and pound the fucking circuit of comedy clubs and (are) having bottles thrown at them and learning their craft. I'm like, "I am a visual artist who does drag, who can tell jokes. Sometimes with an OK success rate."

Was it harder than you thought it would be then?

The jokes part, that was great. That was fun. It was learning how to do dance moves. That was harder. (Laughs.) I couldn't just do a comedy special where I tell jokes. I had to be Team Too Much. I had to, like, put in musical numbers and dance numbers and a drag contest.

You being extra — that's not a stretch.

Right. Here I sit before you in a zebra hat,

See *Alaska*, page 36

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2021 Pride Guide (So Far)



Photo: Andrew Cohen

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

By now it's understood that COVID-19 has thrown off long-term planning and that means that Pride season has become a lot more unpredictable. But it's far from canceled! Check out these upcoming virtual and in-person events that will show LGBTQ+ spirit all summer and fall long.

Grand Rapids Pride Festival • June 20 (Virtual)

The 2021 Grand Rapids Pride Festival will mark the event's 33rd year. It will once again be virtual and there will be several events such as book readings, entertainment performances, arts and crafts tutorials for the younger crowd and much

more. Other events taking place throughout Pride month include a Pride Drag Brunch on June 13 and Bingo at Hamburger Mary's on June 16.

Hotter Than July • July 23-25 (Virtual)

This is year 26 for Hotter Than July, also known as Detroit's Black Gay Pride. For 2021,

HTJ will once again take a hybrid virtual and in-person approach much as it did last year. Titled A Very Hotter Than July: A Virtual Celebration, the festival will include a range of both traditional and innovative activities including a virtual picnic, Hotter Than July Art Show, candlelight Vigil and Worship Service. There will also be a Virtual Ball and longtime LGBTQ+ activists Henry Grix, Howard Israel and Robert Tate will be recognized.

Ann Arbor Pride • Aug. 7 (Virtual)

Ann Arbor Pride, previously known as OUTfest, has been an exciting annual outdoor festival since 1995. Hosted by the Jim Toy Community Center, this year's festival may be virtual but it will still be a day of entertainment including vocal performances from local and nationally recognized talent, live music, a variety of drag and burlesque shows, DJ performances, a kid zone and much more.

Holland Pride • Aug. 14

Holland Pride this year will feature, in addition to its Pride Open House in the Park, a poetry contest, free Pride yard signs, a 5K run, a raffle with several Pride-themed prizes and it will all wrap up with a drag show at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

Motor City Pride • Sept. 18-19

Motor City Pride will return to Hart Plaza this year in September. Michigan's largest Pride festival usually attracts major crowds and this year, with the city scheduled to fully reopen by July and the hope of reaching herd immunity around the same time, should be no

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exception. MCP planners are planning on pulling out all the stops complete with a parade, a marketplace and, as always, live entertainment on five stages.

Ferndale Pride • Oct. 2

“We are planning to have a festival,” said Ferndale Pride President Julia Music on the status of Ferndale Pride. “We have not been given any guidance as to if we’re going to be able to have it 50 percent capacity or 100. We don’t know. We’re being told to proceed as if everything is normal.”

Normal means two stages of entertainment, vendors, food trucks and more.

“If things don’t get better, we’ll go virtual. But for now we’re planning on partying in the streets,” Music said. “Ferndale Pride will produce a few events in June as well, including an LGBTQ book club and a Pride family night.”

Pride Dates in Progress

- Michigan Pride (Lansing) – TBD (Virtual)
- Great Lakes Bay Pride – TBD (Virtual)
- Upper Peninsula Pride Fest – TBD
- Kalamazoo Pride – TBD (Virtual)
- Flint Pride – TBD
- Up North Pride (Traverse City) – TBD
- Transgender Pride in the Park – TBD

Photo: Andrew Cohen

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 UK SOUNDSALMOST
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 EMBALMER AENEAS
 VOILA TAPE VEE
 ENGLISH LILNASX
 NATO KOALA ETTU
 SCOT INNER HERA
 OOPS PENNY IDOL

Comparing Tongues p. 37

There is something to be said about laughter being the best medicine. It's gotten me through this last year. Just laughing myself silly watching "Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar." And you could've been in that movie based on your Zoom background. I mean, I don't know why you weren't.

(Laughs.) I know. I was supposed to be Reba McEntire's part, but you know, it's OK. I read for it. Reba McEntire was 12th in line to play Trish. I was 11th. She got it... OK?



Phyllis Rivers.

Phyllis Rivers. Yeah. Because it's a mixture of Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers. But yeah, I just cleared out my joke file and some of them are good, some of them (laughs) you could hear a pin drop. But you know what? That's comedy. I did no workshoping. This was not a finessed comedy set that I had built for years trying out with audiences, trying out different wording. It was literally like, "Here's the jokes. I hope you like them."

When you're up there and jokes are not hitting like you had hoped they would, what are you feeling?

I was feeling like, "This is gonna be good footage." It's like the moment before a nuclear bomb drops. It's just perfect pin-drop silence.

Aside from Margaret Cho, what other comedians did you look up to growing up?

Well, I always loved TV. I was really obsessed with TV. I was always getting told I watched too much TV as a child. So sitcom jokes, that sort of rhythm of the setup and the knockdown and the punchline is sort of ingrained in me. "The Golden Girls" is a part of my bloodstream. That sort of hokey jokey, here's the setup, you see it from a mile away, and there it is — I love that sort of comedy. Which is also why I

Going back to the comedy special: What kind of workshoping went into you preparing for the special?

I'm constantly writing jokes and a lot of them are just really horrible, and they're not funny. But if I hear someone say a word on a thing and then I think of something that rhymes with it, I write it down in a file. It was basically years worth of just bad jokes that I had written and I was like, "We're clearing out the file with this comedy special, OK? We're gonna put the puns in there. We're gonna put the fucking poop jokes in there. We're gonna put the drag jokes in there."

To me, a lot ... like Alaska doesn't talk about dating people or doing drugs. She doesn't talk about that stuff. She maybe does them, but she doesn't talk about it. So I had to make it this other character, which is like this comedian character that Sherry Vine calls something Rivers. Uh...

love Phyllis Diller and I love Joan Rivers and I love — sorry, I'm drinking LaCroix, so I'm burping. I love Rodney Dangerfield so much. Just wacky, goofy — that type of humor is my shit. It's my jam.

I don't wanna get too far off the grid here, but since you brought up "The Golden Girls," it seems like a good time to ask you what you thought of Elliott's Blanche for Snatch Game on the latest season of "Drag Race."

Leave meeting. Um, no. Well, the thing is: It was stacked against her from the beginning. Even RuPaul said, "Molly, you're in danger, girl." (Laughs.) During the walkthrough, RuPaul was like, "Just don't do it, babe. You're gonna drown." Um, and she kind of did.

Would I go in if I got to go do Snatch Game again? I would, probably. That was gonna be one of my characters. If I didn't do Mae West, it was going to be Rue McClanahan. So if I ever go back on "Drag Race," I probably will do it and I will rise up to the challenge. And I hope that it goes better than Elliott's.

How did the comedy jacket and the comedy wig and the entire comedy look help you get into the comedy zone for this special?

It comes down to the power of clothing and the power of drag. It's like different clothes literally make you feel a different way to make you hold yourself a different way. I found it very important to put on the big oversized blazer. I needed it. I needed some no-frills hair, so I wasn't worrying about whether my fucking Cher hair was flowing. Like, no, I just needed short, crazy, crazy hair.

How has being a drag queen been good training for being a comedian?

Well, to me, they're not that different. I think drag inherently is rooted in humor because it's poking fun at the idea of conventions of gender: what is it that makes a man in this society and makes a woman in this society, and those rules are ultimately so arbitrary and so out of nowhere. So just absurd. So drag clowns all of those conventions and calls them into question and makes fun of them and "winks, winks" at you while it's doing it. I think inherently there is humor in the absurdity of just like, What the fuck is gender? What is society? What is clothing?

Being a queen in quarantine this last year — what's that been like?

It's been really hard. And it was really hard on the drag community, because overnight all of your places that you do your thing (at) are gone now. They're closed. And you're also last in line for it to come back. It was really hard on the drag community. But it's also really inspiring because the next day the queens were all like, "Uh, OK, well, I have a digital show now and I'm doing a show on Twitch and I have a weekly show on Instagram." And so it's been really hard, but it's been inspiring to see that drag can survive the apocalypse.

Are you still into these drive-in shows you've been doing? Are they weird? Do you want to ever do them again post-pandemic?

It's a little weird because everyone is so far away and I'm the type of performer... I like to sweat on you. I want you to spit on me when you're screaming. I want to share the microphone with you and exchange fluids with you when I'm on stage. I love getting to be on stage and, yes, the audience is really spread out and they're farther away, but you still get that vibe of having an actual audience. And there's nothing that can replace that.

I loved seeing that a drag king, Tenderoni, won your very own drag competition, The Drag of the Year Pageant Competition Awards Contest Competition. It's a mouthful, you know. I know a mouthful, and that's a mouthful. The competition was all inclusive. What forms of drag would you like to see elevated, and how would you like to see the art form diversify moving forward?

The reason Lola (LeCroix) and I started doing the Drag Queen of the Year Pageant is: drag has always been crazy diverse. It has always been; you're sharing a dressing room with the drag kings and the AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth) performers and the male performers and the burlesque performers. Anyone who has done drag for more than five minutes knows that to be the reality. So we found it really strange that there wasn't a competition that was open to all these different avenues of drag; it was always very compartmentalized.

I mean, "Drag Race" is the sort of gold standard of drag competitions in the current landscape of the world. And the good thing that's hopeful is "Drag Race" is always changing it up and always evolving with the times. So, I could see a drag king getting thrown into the mix. I think it's possible.

I also wonder if it's taken too long to get to where "Drag Race" has gotten. We're on season 13, and while it's great that the first trans contestant is a part of the show, do you think that there are too many rules on the show in general?

Well, OK: I love the fucking show and a lot of people do and it's changed culture and it's changed the world. But they do have rules to entry, and if it were up to me, I would blow the walls off and I would say, "Let's have everyone apply and see what that looks like." Do I think that's going to happen? Probably not anytime soon. But it is hopeful to see the people who put on "Drag Race" are very aware of culture and they are always actively changing the show and keeping it fresh and keeping it current. That makes me hopeful.

Who might you be interested in having a Snatch Game with if there was a winners season of the show?

Oh my god. Jinx, Bob the Drag Queen, fucking Monét X Change — as long as she does Whitney Houston. Sharon (Needles).

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Aquaria, oh my god. Yes, all of that. All of those divas.

If they do the dreaded teams format from "All Stars" Season 1, what winner would you want to be paired with?

If they try to pull that shit, I would leave. I would pull a Ginny Lemon and walk the fuck out because we're not doing that team shit. No, that's trash. They absolutely couldn't do it. And if I had to be on a team, I would want to be on Bob's team because Bob is so fucking funny. We work really well together. And Bob knows everything about "Drag Race." Like, I thought I knew shit about "Drag Race." Bob knows the most about "Drag Race."

What's next for you? Might you record another

album at some point?

Um, maybe.

Okay. You're in the studio.

(Coyly.) I don't know! Stayed tuned.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ wire service. He 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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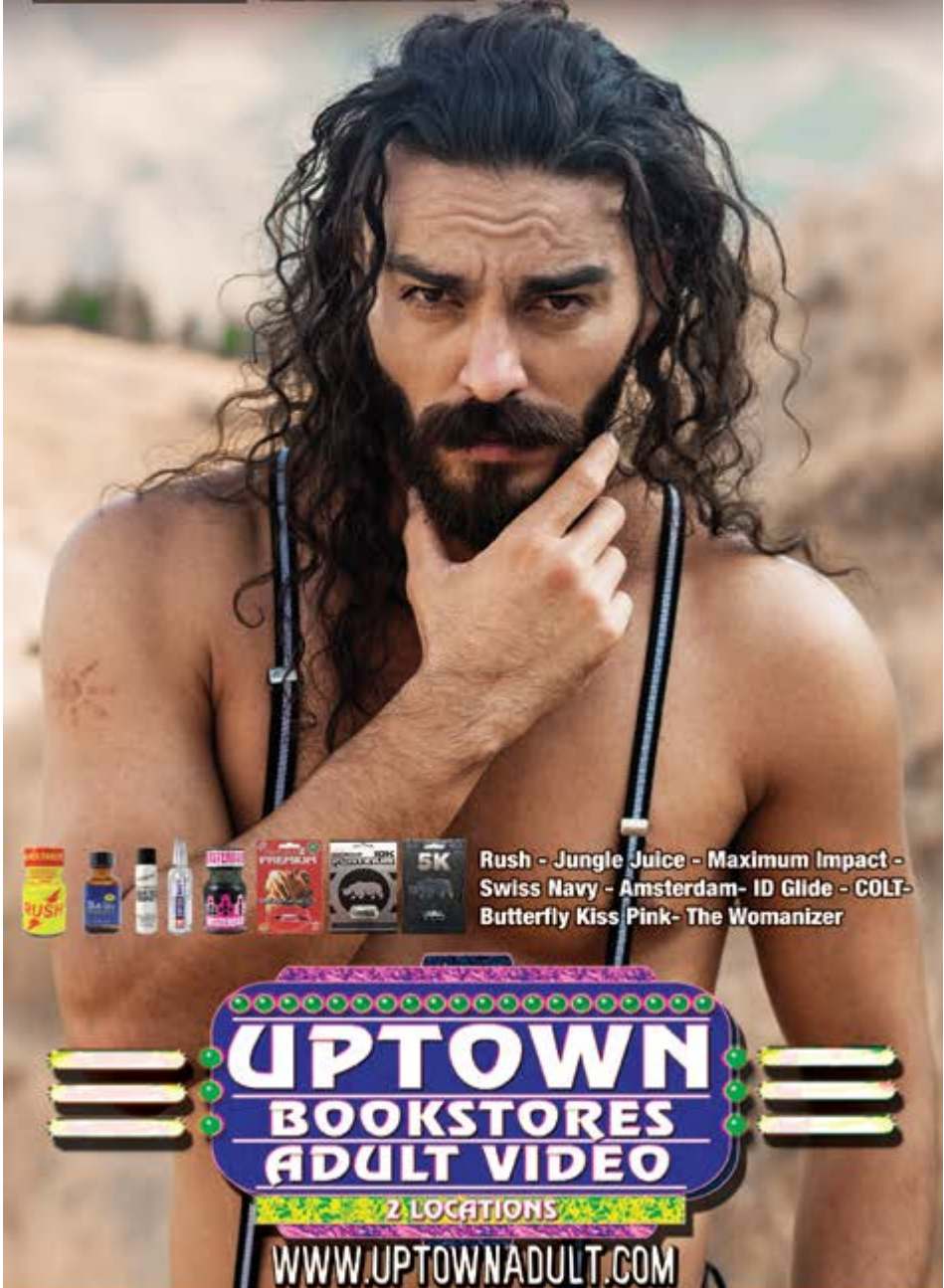
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Continued from p. 31

physical threat, Stewart recommends to always call 911. The other options are to run, hide or fight. If it's possible to run away, do so. If not, hide. The last choice, to survive the incident, is to fight back.

A verbal threat is "an in-person threat, but it's not gonna rise to the level of immediate danger," Stewart said. "Things we would encourage people to do is note the description of the person who made the threat," including license plate number or anything else that would help law enforcement track down the person.

For a phoned-in threat, "we encourage people to remain calm," Stewart said. "Don't hang up [or] try to solicit information to determine if the threat is specific [or] if it's realistic, poses an immediate danger to anyone. If it's possible, while they're on the phone with the caller, and it's an immediate threat, get somebody to call 911."

Noting the caller ID and recording the call if possible are also good practices.

"An electronic threat is also something that's a true threat, received over email or social media," Stewart said.

He emphasized the importance of not deleting anything sent and calling 911 if it is an immediate threat virtually. Stewart said that individuals familiar with preserving electronic data should do so; if not, the FBI can help.

The last kind of threat is a written or visual threat, for example, a written letter or graffiti.

"The mail is kind of difficult because it goes through so many hands, so it's a challenge for us to get fingerprints or DNA off something like that," Stewart said.

However, documenting the date, time and location it was found are all important steps to take for the recipient of the hate mail. If it's a note or letter, Stewart advises trying to avoid directly handling it if possible by placing it in a bag for protection. This way, the FBI may be able to gather evidence from it.

What is a hate crime?

Simply put, a hate crime is any kind of "traditional" offense, such as arson or murder, but with the added element of bias.

"We define it as a criminal offense against a person or property, motivated in whole or part by an offender's bias against race, religion, ethnicity/



national origin, disability, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation," Stewart said.

As he described earlier, a threat is a serious communication of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence against a particular individual or group of individuals. Therefore, it would reach the level of a hate crime if motivated by one of those biases.

"If somebody thinks that they're a victim of a hate crime, obviously, as I stated, call 911 immediately, but then the FBI would conduct a follow-up investigation," Stewart said. "One

of our special agents here that are on my squad, I would assign somebody to it. They would be gathering evidence; they might ask the victim to sit for an interview."

An individual might also be asked to testify in front of a grand jury, which is different from a trial jury in that it is a closed process, meaning that no one who is not involved in the investigation would know about it.

However, even with these tips in

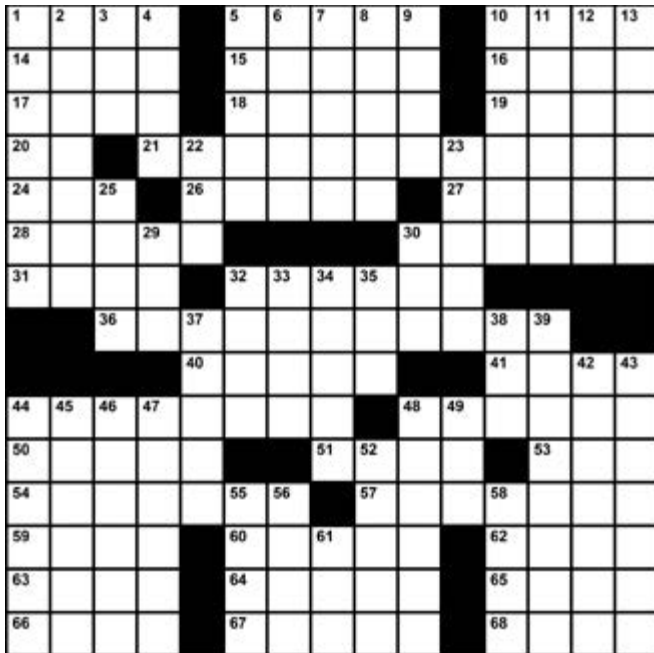
mind, leave the investigation to the FBI is vital, Stewart stressed.

"I don't want your readers or anyone from the public to feel like they have to do anything," Stewart said. "Leave the responsibility to us. Allow us to do our job and we'll take care of it."

Again, he said, if there's immediate danger, call 911.

Also, anyone can call the Detroit FBI office that is routed to the national center that takes in tips. The case will get sent to the Detroit office at which time the victim will be contacted. Mailing evidence to the FBI office in Detroit is also a possibility.

The Detroit FBI Office, located at 477 Michigan Ave., can be reached by calling 313-965-2323. For more information on how the FBI investigates hate crimes, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>.



- 30 State of Frida's homeland
 31 Wall St. group
 32 Vidal's "The ___ of Comfort"
 36 More of the quip
 40 Library device
 41 Soprano Gluck
 44 David, on "Six Feet Under"
 48 Trojan hero
 50 "And there you are!"
 51 It comes in a roll
 53 Turtleneck alternative
 54 End of the quip
 57 Source of the quip
 59 Cold war defense assn.
 60 "Bear" that's not a bear
 62 Caesar's invitation to a threesome?
 63 James VI, e.g.
 64 Kind of circle
 65 Greek queen of heaven
 66 "My bad"
 67 Where to find Lincoln's head
 68 Judy Garland, for example

- 9 "The Talk" cohost Gilbert
 10 Larry of "Dallas"
 11 Melodic, to Bernstein
 12 More tight-assed
 13 Cheech Marin movie locale
 22 Unlock, in verse
 23 TÊa of "Fun with Dick and Jane"
 25 "___ On Down the Road"
 29 St. of the Cathedral of Hope
 30 Tijuana tanner
 32 Play for a sucker
 33 Feminizing tail
 34 Ready for anything
 35 Land of Damascus (abbr.)
 37 Ike's opponent
 38 Toto's home state (abbr.)
 39 Brought up
 42 Copland, for example
 43 Neither male nor female
 44 Just the same
 45 Grace land?
 46 Site of three rings
 47 Puts out
 48 Queen bee's locale
 49 Phallic fish
 52 "Howl" author Ginsberg
 55 Ditch school for the day
 56 Fine-tune
 58 Old fruit drink
 61 Sothern of old TV

Comparing Tongues

Across

- 1 Sound like a spinning top
 5 Taye, the "Black Clark Gable"
 10 Obscene four-letter word
 14 Frequent online claim
 15 ___ Gay
 16 Field of study
 17 Starting from

- 18 Cutter of leaves of grass
 19 Pink lady liquors
 20 London's nation, with "the"
 21 Start of a quip about the tongue of 20-Across
 24 ___ out (abate)
 26 Operates like a chickenhawk
 27 Canvas site
 28 Make heady

Q Puzzle

Down

- 1 "The Double Man" author
 2 How a butch might speak
 3 Parting words
 4 WNBA callers
 5 Balk
 6 Sheehan's words after hole
 7 Sportscaster Curt
 8 Sharon of "Queer as Folk"

See p. 33 for answers

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