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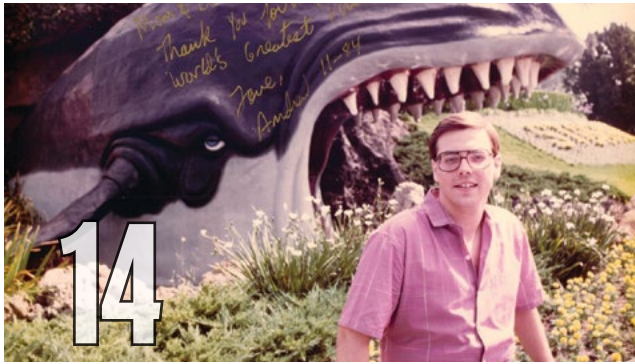
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14



26



40

- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now
- 6 In Metro Detroit, LGBTQ+ Caribbeans Don't Have to Hide Who They Are
- 7 Maurice Tomlinson Is Fighting an Uphill Battle Against Homophobia in Jamaica
- 8 Equality Michigan Urges LGBTQ+ Community to Get Involved in State Redistricting Effort
- 8 The Story Behind Gov. Whitmer's Motor City Pride 'We' Pronoun Jacket
- 12 Stigmatizing Language Prevents People From Accessing HIV Care
- 12 Parting Glances: Three Days to Consider
- 13 Creep Of The Week: Liz Cheney Makes Brave Public Declaration: Her Sister Is Human and Deserves Human Rights
- 14 LGBTQ+ History Month: Until Legal Ruling, Disneyland Banned Same-Sex Dancers
- 20 The Magic of Jason Misleh
- 26 Ferndale Pride Performers
- 26 The Double Life of Reginald Hawkins
- 28 A Queer Detroit Homecoming
- 29 Motor City Pride in Pictures
- 34 Aaron Foley's First Novel Is Based on His Dating Experiences in Detroit as a Gay Black Man
- 40 'Queerantime': A Pet Project That Soothed COVID Isolation
- 42 Pet Peeves: Dumb, Dangerous and Disturbing Things Pet Parents Do That Need to Stop Now
- 44 Sex-Positive Brand Created 'For People to Feel Free and Not Judged'
- 48 'BROS' Will Be (All Queer) Bros



11 COVER STORY

Photo: Andrew Potter



Gov. Whitmer at Motor City Pride. Photo: Andrew Potter

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WATCH: Gov. Whitmer Reveals Becoming 'Proactive Ally' for LGBTQ+ Equality Thanks to Gay Cousin (Exclusive)

By Chris Azzopardi

'I Love You': Gov. Whitmer Affirms Michigan's LGBTQ+ Community Before Leading Detroit Pride Parade (Exclusive)

By Chris Azzopardi

Not Even Intense Rain at a Phoebe Bridgers Detroit Show Could Dampen Queer Spirits

By Jason A. Michael

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now

BY JACKIE JONES

Are you ready for the holidays? Because we're not. With only a few more weeks until consumerism kicks into turbo speed and anxiety inches into seasonal depression, here are some social events to help ease you into the holiday season.

Support the Arts at Westside Art Hop

Ann Arbor's Westside Art Hop, a community event to support the arts, is back for a second time this year. More than 60 local, national and international artists will display their original, high-quality art and crafts from Oct. 16 through Oct. 17 throughout the historic West Side of Ann Arbor. Acrylic painter Ari Simeone, who is transgender, will be there for the second time and tells BTL he's looking forward to discussing art: "It's really awesome seeing people's eyes light up when something that you do speaks to them one way or another, and I think that's just one of the most beautiful things. There's so much brightness and color in the world that we don't always slow down and appreciate it, so me having an opportunity to share that color with people is really a great opportunity."

For more information, visit [Westside Art Hop's website](#).



Photo: Ari Simeone



Photo courtesy of AFSP Michigan Chapter

Walk to Raise Suicide Prevention Awareness

To bring more awareness to suicide prevention, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) annual Out of the Darkness Walks returns Oct. 16 in downtown Ferndale. All ages are welcome to wear honor beads, gather information at AFSP's resource and wellness tent, and watch Stone Temple Pilots lead vocalist Jeff Gutt perform. AFSP chair Sarah Schang tells BTL that this is more than a walk — it's a community event, and "not only for those who have lost loved ones to suicide but also for those who struggle themselves," she says. "This day is all about coming together as one community in an effort to bring an end to suicide and provide hope for survivors of loss and those who struggle themselves."

Registration opens at 8 a.m.; walk begins at 10 a.m. Go to [AFSP's website](#) to register online.



Rage to St. Vincent at the Fillmore

Your favorite genderfluid, guitar-shredding goddess is coming to Detroit. Performing songs from her sixth studio album "Daddy's Home," released earlier this year, St. Vincent will play the Fillmore at 7 p.m. Oct. 20. Expect a cacophony of gravelly, soulful runs and unexpected, glorious key shifts. Face coverings are recommended for fans who aren't vaccinated, per CDC guidelines.

Tickets can be found at [Fillmore Detroit's website](#).



Flaunt at Macomb County Pride

If you missed Motor City or Ferndale Pride, you still have a chance to strut all your queerness at the first Macomb County Pride event in downtown Mount Clemens from Oct. 15 through Oct. 17. The Pride-full weekend starts with a pub crawl on Friday, then a street fair with community resources and live performances on Saturday. It ends with a drag queen brunch at the Creole restaurant Gumbo's on Sunday.

Macomb County Pride President Phil Gilchrist tells BTL that Macomb County's first Pride event was created so the community has a safe place to express themselves. "What we've really been trying to do is connect the LGBTQ+ community in Macomb County," he says. "There's plenty of physical places in other communities, but not in Macomb. So, one of the things that Macomb Pride set out to do was to plan this [first] Pride festival [for the community]."

Information and tickets can be found at Macomb County Pride's website and Eventbrite.



Express Your Feminine Side at En Femme's Supportive Virtual Event

Have you been looking for more (virtual) places to express your feminine side? If so, Grand Rapid's Pride Center's online event En Femme Crossdresser is calling your name. Continuing their weekly Friday event, they will meet this Oct. 15 from 7 to 9 p.m. "Our group offers an opportunity for [people] to find out that they're not alone in this world," Amy Pond, the moderator of En Femme, tells BTL. "It gives them a chance to express themselves instead of sneaking around. Really, it's an empowering feeling to be able to attend a group like ours even for a few hours and actually meet other people just like [you]."

Email info@grpride.org for access to the virtual group.



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(Left) A still from “Os Últimos Românticos do Mundo” (“The Last Romantics of The World”), directed by Henrique Arruda, 2020. (Right) A still from “We are not who they say we are,” directed by Manu Valcarce, 2020. Photos courtesy of Planet Ant

Trans Stellar Film Fest Puts Queer Artists First

Among This Year’s Slate: A Gory Lesbian Ghost Story

BY GEORGE ELKIND

The return to safe and comfortable live events has been a bumpy road for most everyone after many months of Covid-related ups and downs. For the organizers behind the fifth annual Trans Stellar Film Festival, a day-long screening event focused on queer filmmakers opening Oct. 16, navigating that bumpy road is paying off.

Attendees will notice a few changes. Hamtramck’s Planet Ant Theatre will host the festival for the first time — the result of a new partnership that promises to usher in a wider slate of films created by members of the queer community. And, for the first time, the festival will be available in-person and via

an online stream. The central goal for the festival, however — to support queer filmmakers — remains firmly intact.

Lauren Corneliussen, who founded the annual festival out of Midtown’s Cinema Detroit while attending Oakland University’s Film Studies program in 2017, says the changing circumstances around the Trans Stellar Festival haven’t altered its mission. Their focus on spotlighting “queer voices as opposed to just queer content” remains as essential as ever, providing an opportunity for artists from around the world to show their work to a largely queer audience. As in years past, the goal is to show films capturing a wide range of experiments and concerns.

“Sometimes minority filmmakers are pigeonholed into making films

about being a minority even if that’s not what they want to do,” says Corneliussen, who uses they/them pronouns. “So our mission is to lift up voices, to show good movies by queer artists about whatever they want to make films about. Whether that’s about being part of the LGBT community, which it frequently is, or whether it’s about stealing the moon.”

While the subjects, genre and settings of the films vary widely, with each year featuring works by a range of trans and cis queer filmmakers from around the world, queer topics tend to be foregrounded. The festival received many submissions from trans creators, speaking to a welcoming approach that has always been a central goal of Trans Stellar. This year’s lineup is especially dense with horror works, from the gory lesbian ghost story

“New Flesh for the Old Ceremony” to the more bawdy campground thriller “Catfish Killer.”

These offerings are counterbalanced by more quietly intimate stories like “Appetite,” a favorite of Corneliussen’s, which shows two members of a couple exploring their respective needs at a swingers’ party, and “Between Us,” which follows a trans man in Japan trying a male-designated hot spring for the first time. The inclusion of a range of experimental films, portraits and documentary works, too, reflects the diversity of the filmmakers behind them — though foregrounding trans-authored works has always been an aim.

“[The festival] has always been inclusively queer, and the reason we chose to call it Trans Stellar was because we wanted to refocus the community to over-highlight transgender, gender-nonconforming and non-binary voices,” says Corneliussen, referring to a dominant tendency to treat gay, cis and male people as the outward face of queer representation. “Because people sometimes say ‘gay as in queer’ — which can sometimes mean ‘gay as in trans’ — we say why not ‘trans as in gay?’”

According to Kayla Krahn, the festival’s director of submissions, the festival’s focus on artists’ identity rather than a specific theme or genre hasn’t just been about politics; it’s offered benefits that bleed into the films’ aesthetics, too.

“I think that when you see films that you know were created by queer filmmakers, you understand the perspective a little more,” Krahn says. “It’s not so showy, like ‘Oh, look at me, I made a film about these queer people, but I know nothing about the community.’ So I think that you get a lot more out of the film, more out of the filmmaking, because it’s not so exploitative.”

While only queer artists are invited to submit work, the festival’s majority-queer panel considers work with an approach that’s unusually broad-minded, valuing ideas and expression of artistic voice over a film’s budget or degree of polish. And the approach, according to Krahn, has paid off in the lineup, which features mostly short-length works, including many which might be overlooked at other festivals.

“We are about accessibility, and not everyone has access to top-of-the-line cameras. We want filmmaking to be about the spirit of the project, not necessarily how much money you have to sink into it,” says Krahn. She points to past submissions that proved thought-provoking even when shakily produced. “The ideas were there; the thoughts were there. If they just had a little bit of money, it could have been perfect, and we don’t want to pass on a film like that when we want people to see it because it [still] has great ideas.”

That emphasis on accessibility extends in many directions, including a disability-friendly venue in Planet Ant (which also requires proof of Covid vaccination and face coverings to enter the building) and submission fee waivers for filmmakers in financial distress. Decisions like these create a welcoming experience for filmgoers and filmmakers. Sensitive to a range of concerns, the festival’s organizers have also included a raft of content warnings on their film listings for anyone who needs them and have worked to include a Young Adult block of shorts for festival attendees each year. Often, the festival has been attended not just by teenagers but their parents, too.

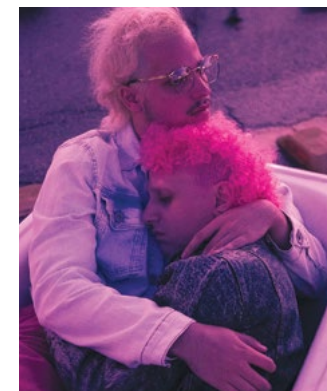
Krahn and Corneliussen (who also serves as a judge) say that these

accessibility and inclusivity measures will broaden and better the slate of works they show. For many international filmmakers working in places like Russia, China and Iran, for instance, the opportunity Trans Stellar offers is unique in that the films can be submitted without

fees and often couldn’t be freely shown in the filmmakers’ homelands.

By focusing mostly on short films and reducing barriers to access, Trans Stellar has been able to showcase a range of works that excite Krahn not only as a programmer but as a viewer. She says audiences can encounter the sorts of works they couldn’t find anywhere else. It’s a unique experience made possible, she suggests, specifically by seeing well-programmed suites of shorts.

“They give you access to a world that you would never have come across if you just stayed in the mainstream media,” says Krahn. “You’re never gonna see this stuff on TV. You’re only gonna find it if you seek it out.”






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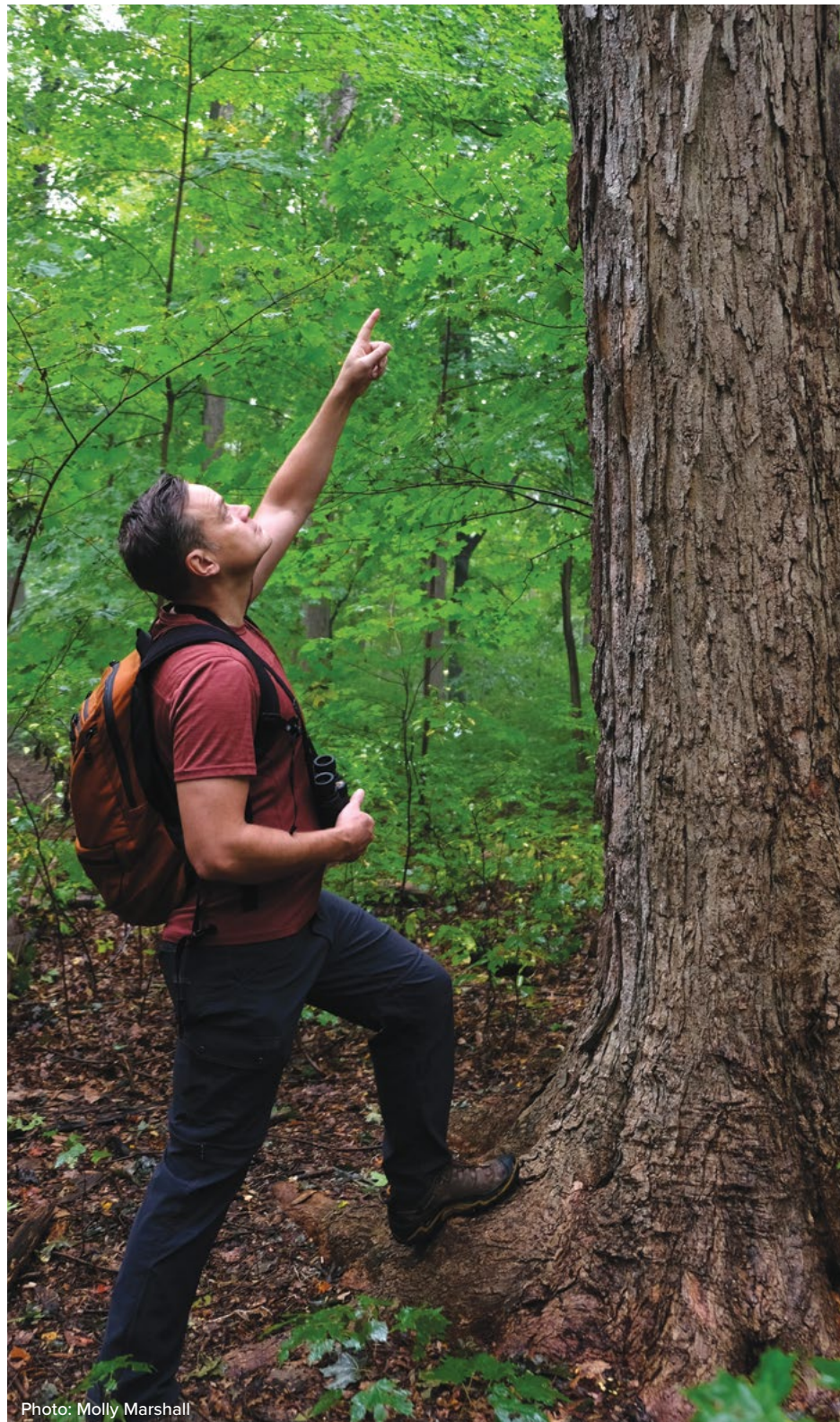


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When Nature Calls, Rich Altherr Listens and Learns



How the ‘Design and Function’ of Nature Is Impacting Auto Manufacturing

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

“It all started with a Beetle.”

This could be the beginning of a story about someone who went on to become a “car nut” engineer or somebody who went on to become an entomologist.

In Rich Altherr’s case, it’s a little of both.

Altherr, 48, is definitely a “car nut” engineer. And while he’s not an entomologist, he is fascinated by the design and utility of nature. He combines both in his application of biomimicry in the automotive industry and as Director of Biomimicry for Metropolitan Museum of Design Detroit (MM-O-DD).

Altherr, who was born in Michigan and has lived here for the majority of his life, describes biomimicry as “the practice of looking under the hood of nature to kind of see how it works and then applying these billions of years of sustainable and regenerative design solutions to human challenges.”

In other words, when it comes to design and function, nature can be an excellent model. On his website, Nature Comes Standard, Altherr gives the example of how an electrical engineer designing a new automotive sensor might look at the way a platypus searches for food by using its duck-like bill to detect the vibrations of prey at the bottom of a pond. Another example is an engineer looking at how locusts move in swarms of thousands without colliding — insights that can help biomimicry engineers improve the safety of autonomous vehicles.

There are, of course, those who use the argument that nature’s design is proof that homosexuality is not natural. But Altherr, who is gay, dismisses that.

“I would challenge them to do some more biological research because there are examples of homosexuality in nature,” he says.

Altherr traces his love of cars back to when he was 2 years old.

“My very first babysitter,” he says, “had a 1970s Volkswagen Beetle.” The babysitter’s name was Leola Reynolds, and 2-year-old Altherr

called her “Reynol Reynol,” which is also what he would say every time he saw a Beetle.

He was in love. (With the Beetle.)

Right down to the smell of the horsehair interior, a young Altherr was hooked. His parents encouraged his interest in Beetle trinkets and toys. When Altherr was 14, he restored a 1975 Beetle, which he still has.

“That’s why I became an engineer,” he says. “Not because I’m a math and science genius. I just love cars.”

He also loves the environment. In the early 2000s, he made personal changes: installing energy-efficient light bulbs in his home, buying organic sheets and towels, installing solar panels, seeking out goods made from recycled materials, and adopting a vegetarian diet. This left him wondering, “How can I carry this over to my work?”

So after 20 years working in the automotive industry, including Chrysler, he “fell in love with the entire concept” of biomimicry and pursued a Biomimicry Specialist certification and a Biomimicry Master’s of Science from Arizona State.

“After years of seeing how vehicles are designed and then their deterioration, I really had this strong inclination,” he says.

He found himself asking, “How can I make my designs more sustainable?” and “How do I apply that to an age-old industry that has a legacy to it that’s difficult to change?”

Altherr acknowledges that the automotive industry has been slow to adopt sustainability. “But as we see, they are moving in the right direction.”

Albeit slowly. “The automotive industry has a lot of legacy things to manage, and in order to put money into future programs, they still have to make stuff that is current,” he says. “They still have to build the gas guzzlers so they can pay for their new electric vehicles.” Whereas a company like Tesla “can just start right out with electric vehicles.”

There’s also the issue of development and being able to prove new technology before it goes on the market.

Photo: Molly Marshall

"A few of those little things have kind of hindered their approach, but I definitely see a lot of great things coming out now that are very exciting," he says. He cites Ford's announcement that they are investing over \$11 billion in electric vehicles with new plants in Tennessee and Kentucky that Ford describes as "massive, environmentally and technologically advanced campuses."

"Excited to see what comes out of that," Altherr says, noting that the large number of electric vehicles that will be rolling out in the next couple of years is promising.

Consumer demand is an important factor. Altherr says that electric vehicles have long been relegated to little side projects for auto companies, "But now customers actually want these [and] if the customer wants it, they can build more."

And while automotive manufacturers have not made a full-on commitment to biomimicry, each company has aspects of biomimicry at play when dabbling in research and development.

"It is a tool," Altherr explains. "It's not a complete replacement for design practices. It's an added lens to the current design process."

Altherr says that he's used biomimicry while working with things like component level design, chassis and suspension.

But it's not just cars that biomimicry is being used for. Altherr is currently working on a sustainable highway in Georgia called The Ray

Highway, an 18-mile stretch of road outside Atlanta in LaGrange. "It is a testbed for sustainable and regenerative design in highway and transportation," he says.

Part of the project is looking to nature to create new road surfaces like "concrete that is sequestering carbon and doesn't take a lot of energy to produce," he says. "And there are examples of that in nature. The coral reef is essentially cement that is underwater that pulls carbon from the water."

The Ray is also "a testbed for connected autonomous vehicles," Altherr explains. "So what we're doing, we're looking to nature. How does nature sense and respond?" He points to locusts and starlings, which "move in sync without ever hitting each other."

Altherr's dream project is what he calls the "biomimicar." He says the biomimicar would take cues from nature for not only the vehicle's design but the manufacturing process. "All the way up and down the supply chain," he says, "[the biomimicar] has been impacted by sustainable design."

This vehicle would clean the environment as it drives down the road, reversing the damage that older cars have done. "For every new car, it's now cleaning up the past."

Altherr, like anyone who cares about the natural world, is very concerned about climate change. "That's why I'm working every day to help reverse it," he says. He advocates that people who want to make changes to be more earth-friendly start small like he did: Make environmentally-conscious purchasing decisions, reduce meat consumption and think about how that styrofoam coffee cup could be replaced with a reusable one to reduce waste.

"Meet people where they are at," he says. "When I started my environmental journey, I don't know that I would have just leaped to biomimicry."

Altherr doesn't see nature and industry as adversaries. "How can there be a mutualistic relationship between the two?" he asks. "There is a balance where an industry can receive the goods of nature while at the same time giving back to nature."

Industry is consumer-driven. "If nobody



Photo: Molly Marshall

cares, then why should industry care?" As consumers are demanding, say, electric cars, the industry is responding. The shift may be slow, but Altherr says it's happening.

Biomimicry isn't just a tool for design; it's a way to connect with the natural world.

"As people use biomimicry," he says, "[they] become more connected with nature."

And when people are more connected with nature, they are more compelled to address threats to the environment like the extinction of plants and animals.

"Biodiversity is a critical element of biomimicry," he explains. When people reconnect with nature, "they see the purpose of having those organisms to learn from. I see it as a slow way to reverse that loss," he says.

Biomimicry is a complex field, but for Altherr, the fundamentals are simple: "If people feel more connected to nature, then they're more likely to conserve it."

Learn more about biomimicry and bio-design at the Metropolitan Museum of Design Detroit's exhibit, "Biomimicry: Design in Nature," on display at Collected Detroit in Corktown through December.

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Stellantis' Controls and Robotics Manager on Why Being Authentic Is Key to His Success

You might be surprised to learn that the LGBTQ+ community is advancing the auto industry — yep, queers are engineering, too. And in addition to owning Backstreet at Large Multiplex, the LGBTQ+ bar in Detroit, and harmonizing with PRISM Men's Chorus, Richardson also works as the controls and robotics manager at Stellantis' Detroit Assembly Complex, at the Mack plant in Detroit. Recently, he took BTL behind the hood of his job.

Your work with robotics is incredibly technical and requires great skill. Do you enjoy it?

It's absolutely stimulating work. One of the things that I enjoy the most is the problem-solving. It's problem-solving at a very fast pace, where seconds matter. The pressure, it's not for everyone. But it's something that has been learned over years of my career to not let it get to me and to be able to think at a fast pace, especially under pressure, and to be able to tune out and focus on the problem and what we need to get the line up and back [to] running. I thrive on the pressure sometimes.

How have you navigated being openly gay in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) industry that's mostly comprised of cisgender straight men?

Through a long, introspective process, I came to the understanding that I am perfect, whole and complete. And with that, I created the possibility to be the best authentic representation of myself. So, basically, I left nothing in the closet but shame, fear and doubt. And then I discovered how amazing



Stephen Richardson at the Detroit Assembly Complex. Photo courtesy of Stephen Richardson

See **Stephen Richardson**, page 12



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→ **Stephen Richardson**

Continued from p. 10

life is once you tell your story. Some may call it “living your truth,” but, to me, it’s just being authentic.

Do you have any advice for those in the LGBTQ+ community looking to get into STEM?

Remember that there are LGBTQ+ members in all communities, especially in highly technical roles. In STEM fields, your technical prowess shines brighter than any other attribute that you possess. Focus on being the best at your craft and everything else will come naturally.

You also own Backstreet at Large Multiplex. How did that come to be?

In 2017, through a series of training and development courses, I overcame my biggest fear in life — which was being myself unapologetically, loving my sexuality, and not trying to please everyone. I developed a mission for the rest of my life, which is to be happy, social and free. Focusing on this mission, I took a stand in how my life is now, and how my future retirement will be. I chose to be active in my investments, and Backstreet was the perfect opportunity.

Through my newfound love of self, I found myself in a well-known gay bar in Detroit, having open conversations with its staff and patrons. While there, I met who eventually would become my business partner, Douglas Keller. We began looking for ways to work together and grow a business that would be socially responsible, providing the

community with a safe space to live, grow and enjoy their lives. Douglas had previous connections with the former owner of Backstreet, as this brand had been around Michigan for more than 40 years. Through our conversations, I became very interested and started researching the viability of owning a restaurant with a bar.

I took a bold step and committed to this project, something that would carry me through the adversity that owning a business and a LGBTQ+ establishment would bring. I analyzed my finances and then started getting to work. Then, [with] my project management experience — gained from my career — and [with] Douglas’ eye for designing a beautiful building, we produced what is today known as Backstreet at Large Multiplex.

How do you manage being an engineer and business owner?

I make sure that I work with my teams in each area, whether at the plant or at the restaurant and bar. I am a servant leader. I constantly look for how I can support the team versus directing the team.

You're an active member of PRISM. How has that helped you throughout your career?

Honestly, I am a new member of PRISM. I am still learning what I can be for this Business Resource Group and what it will be for Me. Overall, I can say that PRISM has provided me an avenue of confidence and growth for my goals. [It has helped me with], Stellantis’ goals [as well]. I’m proud to have the support of PRISM and all of its members as we continue to grow together.

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Head Out on the Highway

Expert Tips for the Perfect Solo Road Trip



BY MIKEY ROX

Sixteen months ago, I sold almost everything I owned, hopped in a van outfitted for living, and hit the road. I had done a few short solo road trips in the past, but this was different. This was permanent. I didn't have a place to call home anymore. Out there was where I lived now.

Nearly a year and a half later, I've learned a lot about nomad life and solo road tripping specifically, especially under the limiting parameters of a pandemic. Since sharing is caring, here are my expert tips on how to plan the best road trip in the year 2021 AC (After Covid).

Prepare your vehicle

Before embarking on any road trip that will

take you more than a few hours from home, make sure your vehicle is prepared. Change your oil, top off your fluids, check your wipers, and rotate or upgrade your tires; the last thing you want on this mobile vacation is frustrating and expensive car trouble. If you're not a card-carrying AAA member, consider becoming one. (Road trips notwithstanding, it's great coverage to have in an emergency.) Because I'm on the road full time now, often in remote areas, I have the premier membership plan that provides me with full benefits, including up to 200 miles of towing, an important perk if the nearest service center is a long distance away. There are lower, less costly levels of coverage that you can purchase to fit your individual needs.

Make sure you know where all your vehicle's tools — including spare tire and its change kit — are located too. I was once driving on New York's back roads late at night with no cell service when I blew a tire that required

me to change it. I spent an hour frightened in the middle of nowhere frantically searching my Volkswagen for the tire-changing tools before locating it in a hidden compartment that I failed to familiarize myself with before I desperately needed it. It's also critical that you learn how to change a flat yourself if you don't already know how. Don't be embarrassed to ask a friend or family member to show you. If you want to DIY it, YouTube has plenty of videos, some specific to your vehicle's make and model. Or, if you prefer a little eye candy with your manual labor tutorials, let one of the hot bois of TikTok educate you.

Flares also are important to have on hand for two reasons: So other vehicles can see your vehicle in the dark and avoid crashing into it by accident and to alert emergency services that you may need assistance. A police officer will stop to help if they see flares marking your vehicle's location. You'll welcome that help if you're stranded at night with

no way to contact anyone else.

Rest up and start early

I hate being rushed and I hate driving long distances, but I often can't help the latter if I have to be from A to B in a short period of time. To allow myself ample breaks on the road, I leave as early as I can with sufficient rest from the night before. I don't drive more than two hours straight without taking a reprieve, and I try to find interesting stop-offs along my route that will allow me to stretch my legs and take my mind off driving for a bit.

Your start time plays an important role in how efficiently you'll get to where you're going. If I'm departing from a metro area, I always leave after morning rush hour to avoid beginning-of-day traffic that will automatically stress me out. Your road trip should be fun;

don't put yourself in a position to get flustered as soon as you leave your driveway.

Have a destination in mind

Some road trippers love the element of surprise on their adventures by ending up where they end up. Not me. I like to have a plan with a destination in mind. Specifically, it's wise to know where you'll end up so you know where you're staying the night. You don't want to travel all day just to pull into a city or town that has no vacancy at its lodging choices. You'll be forced to get back on the road and drive further, and probably out of your way in the dark, to find a safe place to sleep. That's not ideal on any trip, and certainly not while traveling queer and solo.

Add fun stops along the way

To break up the monotony of driving (it'll get tiresome if you're traveling mundane highways with equally unremarkable scenery), I choose a few attractions to stop at along my route.

I love taking an hour or two to explore a small town's shops and cafes, peruse an antique mall (great for picking up meaningful mementos of your travels), or visit historic sites, national monuments and parks. I have an annual National Parks pass, available for \$80 at USParkPass.com, which grants access to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites that fall under the jurisdictions of the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation. Some of these sites require entry fees of \$30 or more, which allows the annual pass to pay for itself in a few visits.

When setting your GPS, type in national monuments to see what's available along the way. I recently traveled to Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala., and discovered the Freedom Riders National Monument, one of the National Park Service's newest installations. I would have driven right past it if I hadn't done the advance research. Plus, I got a little civil-rights history lesson during my stop – something we can all

use in this day and age.

Make it a little gay

With gay bars dwindling in number across the country it can be difficult to find one in less populated areas, and it's not the best decision to get tipsy in an unfamiliar area when you

I look for bathhouses, clothing-optional hot springs (I love a good naked time), and LGBTQ+ campgrounds for an opportunity to unwind with likeminded folx.

have to hit the road the next day. In lieu of those options, I look for bathhouses, clothing-optional hot springs (I love a good naked time), and LGBTQ+ campgrounds for an opportunity to unwind with likeminded folx. You'll be surprised at how many of

these exist when you start searching for them. I can almost guarantee you'll find at least one of these destinations within four hours of your home.

These places are often much less expensive than mainstream destinations as well.



For instance, I stayed in my van at the Oz Campground in Unadilla, Ga., for three nights this spring for around \$170 total, and I popped into the El Dorado Hot Springs outside of Phoenix, Ariz., during my travels late last year for \$30 a night. Day passes are even more affordable if you don't plan to overnight. Pop in for a little R&R and be on your merry gay way.

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



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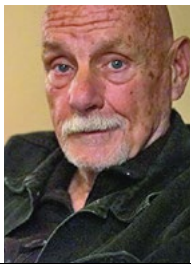


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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Three Days to Consider

As the Allies began to beat the Axis in World War II, a mood of cautious celebration took hold in Detroit's gay bar clubs.

Downtown side streets Farmer and Bates, home to Rio Grande, Silver Dollar and LaRosa's bars, became less secretive. More carefree and obvious (nearby Palais bar was a notorious dyke heaven).

When Halloween 1944 swished around, the Grand Night of Enchantment became an opportunity for daring celebration. Following the end of Prohibition in 1933, getting in drag was accomplished without too much hoopla — or cross-dressing arrests — but only once a year.

During the war years, Detroit's non-military gays — those 40 or older, or those classified 4F with "homosexual tendencies" — along with straights who had flat feet (not necessarily because of high heels) kept the home fires burning and factories going 24/7.

These service rejects — no relation to recent biblical "left behinders" — were in a party mood. The war in Europe was winding down. Finally! So, why not celebrate?

What better time than the only day when cross-dressing is permitted without penalty, threat of incarceration, or, if your makeup's thick enough, likelihood of recognition?

The first Halloween display of queens numbered 25 or 30 brave patrons. Those in other costumes, about 50.

Some wore rhinestone tiaras and sequin embroidered titles across their ample, canary seed-filled boobies.

Miss Victory Garden, Red Cross Rita's Revenge, Rosey Rivet Me and Miss Harry James's Trumpet (pin-up Betty Grable's bandleader husband). It was great fun.

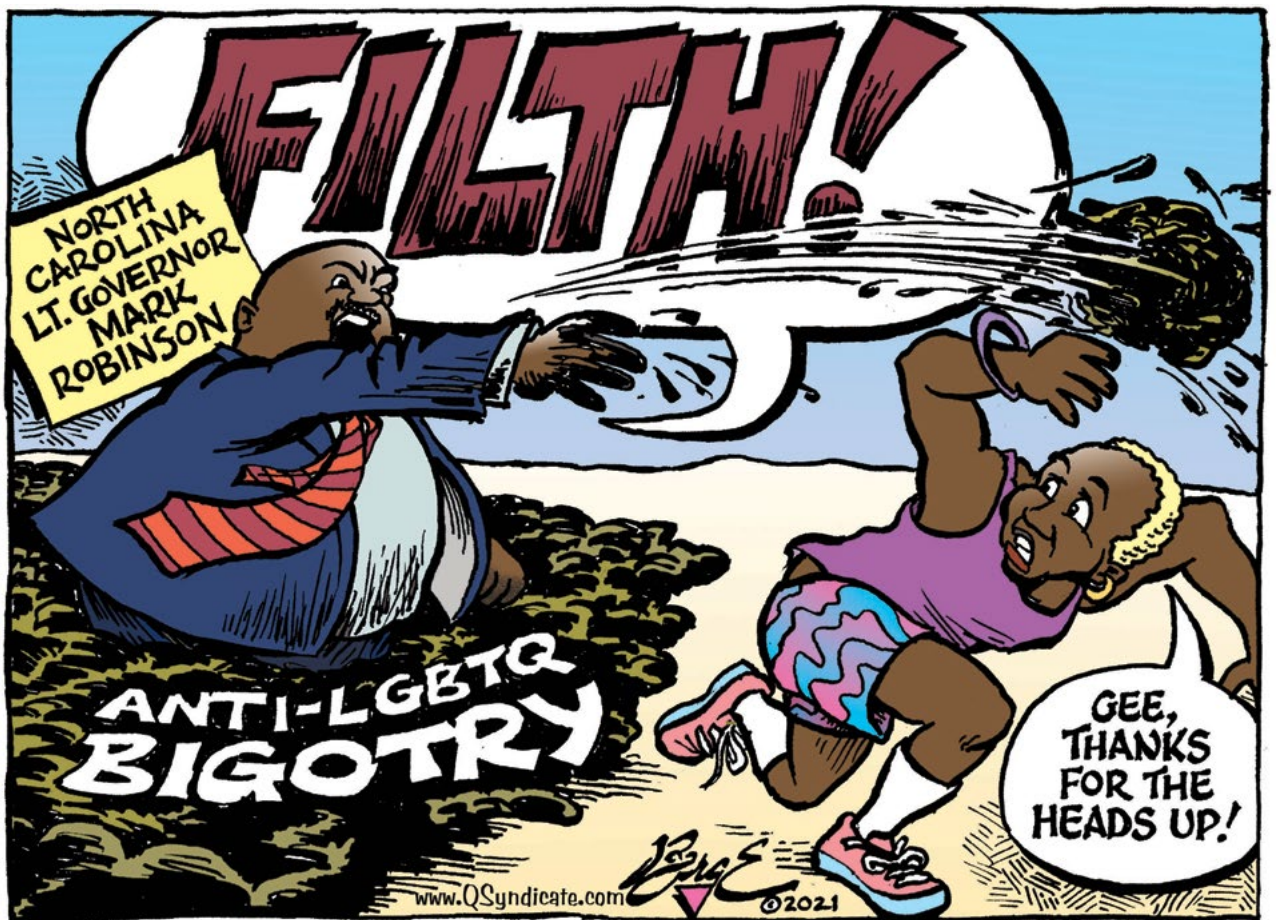
War-relieved and weary Detroit cops looked the other way.

Each year after World War II's end, Halloween was planned to outdo the last. Gatherings grew large. More flamboyant.

Sometime in the early '50s, streets were cordoned off. Hundreds came to see and applaud, and "Ooo!" and "Ahh!" at the queens who arrived in convertibles and on roller skates. Everybody behaved.

In 1969, the year of the Stonewall Riots, things got out of hand. Rednecks threw rocks. Tossed bottles. Shouted, "FAGS!" Ripped gowns. The party was over. Insulted — and very, very smart — gays moved northward to the seemingly safer Diplomat, Gigi's and Woodward bars.

Once home to the Motor City's first Gay Pride Halloween "Parades," Farmer and Bates Streets are now bare-ass naked. Silent, haunted, empty streets. Forgotten. RIP. Rest in pride.



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Transmissions

Times Change

As I sit down to write this column, I find I am picturing myself in a rocking chair on the porch, as if I am about to share stories of the hardships we faced during the Great Depression on the old farm or some such. You see, I was musing the other day on just what the trans community is now versus what it was when I first found it — and what change this has wrought.

You won't, however, find me threatening to turn the garden hose on anyone, lest they avoid my front lawn. No, while times were different then, and I faced certain difficulties that I'll get into below, I am not going to proclaim how the trans kids these days have it easy. How can I even consider this at a time when the far right has practically declared open season on transgender people and where we see record numbers of anti-transgender murders?

The big difference, I feel, is that our community was a smaller one then. I don't mean in sheer numbers, though.

Yes, I suspect far fewer of us realized and nurtured our trans selves way back when. No, I mean in how a township is smaller than the big city, where everything was a lot more quaint and provincial way back when.

As I've discussed before more than a few times, there was little information available when I was growing up about being transgender. There was no search engine I could type the word "transgender" into, unlike the 406,000,000 results I just got from my browser today.

Of course, there wasn't even a browser then. Or, frankly, an internet at all. Likewise, home computers were still a few years off, and computers, in general, were expensive, bulky cabinets with tape drives. The notion of sitting down in your house and tapping into the World Wide Web was still in the realm of "The Jetsons."

It was a cartoon. Look it up.

Likewise, there was nothing in the local library. The card catalog at the local library — yes, this is how you found what books

were there back then — had nothing on the topic to be found under "trans-." No, I did not ride a dinosaur to the library either.

Rather, most of what I learned came either from my mother's tabloids, which focused on trans people as scandal and gossip or from my father's "girlie magazines," which, in the few times they included any trans materials, focused more on the erotic side of trans lives, albeit through a non-trans lens. Much like the tabloids, transgender people were still aberrant in dad's magazine, but with more than a tinge of sexual deviancy.

The final source was courtesy of my third parent, the television. This was thanks to trans-related storylines on some of the popular sitcoms of the day, such as "The Jeffersons" or "All in the Family."

These stories, too, treated trans people as freaks, creating plot lines that typically revolved around the threat to a star's masculinity coupled with a maudlin storyline that amped up a viewer's feelings

of pity for a trans character.

As you can gather, in a world where you would be hard-pressed to even find our stories and, what's more, where our stories were not told by us, for us, it was very hard to even begin to see yourself as anything more than some freak, destined to be an outcast with a terrible, life-destroying script — a creature of scandal, salaciousness and sorrow.

When I began the road to understanding who I was, it became all that more important to find community. I needed to find others who could help me see who I truly was and offer support and resources I lacked.

Once again, this is where that smallness creeps in. There were, at the time, very few prominent resources. I was fortunate enough to find a transgender-specific boutique about a half-hour from me, and from there, I discovered a support group an hour or so further away that met in the back of a local hotel once a month.

The local group, like many others at the time, was really made up of a couple of handfuls of members and maintained a very insular existence. There were both spoken and unspoken ways you were expected to be, and transgressing these norms would often make your membership all but impossible.

There were also some national organizations, albeit these were more focused on local chapters. Likewise, you could find a couple of resource clearinghouses out there. Beyond this, there wasn't a whole lot to be found. We as a community existed, but in small, often regimented pockets.

Then, the internet happened.

We could, all of a sudden, find each other. BBSes sprung up, then dedicated spaces on commercial services like CompuServe and America Online. Soon, the web exploded with personal sites, resources and beyond. The community moved from the rear banquet room of the Holiday Inn to a worldwide, interconnected world where, yes, your home computer can bring up 406,000,000 hits on a single word: transgender.

Yes, times have changed, but it's not an issue of who has things easier.

That is a pointless argument during a time when we are all still having it very, very hard. In some ways, in fact, we may have had it easier in times when people were far less knowledgeable of us and, therefore, less likely to develop organized fights against our very existence.

Nevertheless, times have changed — and what's more, it will continue to. It is up to all of us to shape it into something we can use.

Gwen Smith did not walk uphill in the snow to get to school. You'll find her at www.gwensmith.com.

Creep Of The Week

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson Opens Mouth, Spews Filth

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Dear Readers,

I am not filth. And neither are you. This isn't something that I should have to declare. But readers of this column know that there are people who don't think LGBTQ+ people are human. Far too many are in positions of power where what they say and do has real repercussions for LGBTQ+ people.

One such person is North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

You may remember that in 2016, North Carolina drew a lot of attention to itself with the passage of HB-2, the so-called "bathroom bill" that sought to keep transgender people out of public restrooms. It also ditched any measures to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and told local governments that they weren't allowed to pass such measures.

And hoo boy, were people pissed. The NCAA refused to hold championship games there. Bruce Springsteen cancelled a concert. People were calling for a boycott of the state.

But then Trump won the presidency in 2016, and everything went to hell. Anti-trans measures ramped up across the country. Things went from "Don't be a proudly anti-LGBTQ+ state" to "Don't worry about passing anti-LGBTQ+ bills — Trump will do or say something to distract everyone from paying attention."

Cut to Robinson referring to the LGBTQ+ community as "filth" while speaking at a Baptist church in June.

"It is flat-out child abuse to take your children and tell them they have to attend school. Don't have a choice," he says in a video posted by Right Wing Watch.

There's no reason anybody anywhere in America should be telling any child about transgenderism, homosexuality — any of that filth.

Once children get there, Robinson claims that schools teach "a bunch of stuff about how to hate America. Teach them a bunch of stuff about why they are racists. Teach them a bunch of stuff about transgenderism and homosexuality. I'm saying this now, and I've been saying it, and I don't care who likes it: Those issues have no place in a school. There's no reason anybody anywhere in America should be telling any child about transgenderism, homosexuality — any of that filth."



Mark Robinson. Photo: YouTube

A lot of right-wing talking points here! Let's break them down.

Teaching about America's very racist history, not to mention its present, is not anti-American. Also worth noting that Robinson is Black. Apparently he's one of the few Black Americans not bothered by racism. Must be nice, I guess. Certainly is nice for North Carolina's white supremacists who get to point to their Lt. Gov. as proof that they aren't racist.

And then there's "transgenderism," which isn't a thing, but we know what he means. We get it. He thinks that LGBTQ+ people are filth. Dirt. Trash. Garbage. Sub-human. A very chill thing for a public official to say.

And in the very next breath he repeats it. "And yes, I called it 'filth.' And if you don't like it that I called it 'filth,' come see me and I'll explain it to you," he says. "It's time for us to stop letting these children be abused in these schools."

OK. So teaching about racism and LGBTQ+ people is child abuse. Got it.

I did a Google search for news stories about actual child abuse in North Carolina, intending to give some examples of actual abuse. But I am choosing NOT to share my findings because they are too horrible and sad and tragic and sick. I can assure you, however, that after reading about any of these cases, if you still claim that a child learning that transgender people exist is child abuse, then maybe you don't want to protect children as much as you want to punish transgender people.

In another video posted by Right Wing Watch, Robinson claims that criticism of his remarks is an effort to "intimidate forces on the right into silence."

"I said what I said, and I believe what I said, and many people across this state feel the exact same way," he says, adding, "I intend to double down on my effort against these things that are going on in our classrooms."

Which means that LGBTQ+ people are going to have to continue to double down on their existence and humanity which is, frankly, exhausting and unfair. But that is sadly the world we still live in.

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 **GILEAD**

7 Ways to Empower Yourself During Trans Empowerment Month

Stand With Trans Now Offering 50+ Virtual Trans Empowerment Month Workshops

BY JACKIE JONES

Covid worked hard to cancel any semblance of joy these almost two years, but the LGBTQ+ community worked harder.

At every obstacle, we've pivoted and cultivated space for the community to feel seen and supported through virtual seminars, minimized in-person events and took other unique approaches. Stand with Tran's 2021 celebration of its 2nd Annual Trans Empowerment Month is no exception.

Throughout October, Stand with Trans is offering more than 50 virtual workshops highlighting keynote speakers, entertainment and musical showcases centered on the theme "Be YOU." The workshops encourage LGBTQ+ youth and all trans community members to be their authentic selves, despite recent anti-trans U.S. policies. To offer some guidance, direction and support, here are seven things you can do to empower yourself during Trans Empowerment Month.

1. Find a support group

Finding a support group to navigate your identity is often the first step in being your authentic self. Even if you haven't come to complete terms with who you are, knowing there's a safe space to fumble, ask questions and vent, can make you feel free. When you join a group that helps you laugh and forget about the world, it feels reassuring.

With approximately 1.4 million transgender adults and 1.3 million trans youth in the U.S., there are many options out there. It's just a matter of finding the best fit for you. For those that are still on the search, tap into Transgender Michigan. They've compiled a list of transgender organizations and groups throughout the state that will help make the search stress-free.



2. Immerse yourself in trans representation

If any month is the month to create a cocoon of trans representation, it's this month. Put up your best trans flag or queue up cult classics such as "Paris is Burning." However you choose, make sure it's loud and trans. This month will help in dismantling the negative, often sarcastic, representation shown in the media. Lean into that by living as you are and surrounding yourself with honest and accurate trans representation, not the often-negative representation Hollywood tries to spin as trans-living.

3. Show yourself compassion

Being trans isn't easy in this

world. You contend with external and international battles that are often unaddressed due to a lack of information. It's a good time to show yourself some grace. When those moments of conflict pop up, seek a safe space that will ease the burden of handling all the mental tension. Go for a walk, curl up on the couch with some comfort food or decompress with a hobby. Whichever you choose, make sure you dedicate the space to your wellness

4. Attend a trans-led seminar

Knowledge is power and going to a seminar about trans life is empowering. Good seminars offer perspective, information and awareness that has the potential to impact society as a whole

positively. Aurora Higgs, a Black trans woman advocate and one of Stand with Tran's keynote speakers, sheds some light on the value of learning more about trans issues. "[You must] make sure you're advocating for the community, not just yourself," she said. "I think it's great to self-promote, and I think everyone should, but we also have to let the community know there is so [little] Black trans representation. We must remind the community we are one of many that don't have the privilege of being heard."

5. Reaffirm your pronouns

Don't let your co-workers' passive-aggressive disregard for your pronouns slide this month. Call them out. Pronouns are a significant part

of your identity, and people do not get to ignore that. While choosing your battles is wise, you must stand firm in who you are to continue with the "Be YOU" theme. People need to recognize you. So, go ahead and correct Janice at the next morning meeting.

6. Get involved in changing the world

If you're still learning to navigate your identity, this one may not be for you. But for those seasoned trans folks and allies, getting involved in local and national politics could be the display of power needed to feel self-empowered. Reach out to local officials, work on lobbying initiatives or volunteer at Ruth Ellis Center to advocate for gender-affirming care. National Center for Transgender Awareness also offers a lot of information on how to make your voice heard.

7. Educate yourself on the transitioning process

Coming out as trans brings a lot of questions. Like, should you get sex-reassignment surgery? So for this month, start to ponder if you're ready to transition medically. Consider getting more information on the process. Stand with Trans' Program Manager Lu Evergreen says their seminars help with clarifying some confusion: "We have a lot of surgeons [presenting] who do trans-affirming surgeries," they said. "I think that's helpful for any trans person who [is] considering transitioning medically. They get to talk with the surgeons and get their questions answered."

Learn more and register at <https://standwithtrans.org/beyou/>.



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Photo courtesy of Gabriela Santiago-Romero

From Activism to Elected Office, Gabriela Santiago-Romero Is Answering the Call to Serve

The City Council Candidate Stands to Become First Openly LGBTQ+ Councilwoman in Detroit

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

In middle school, when she bemoaned that cars were causing pollution and contributing to climate change, Gabriela Santiago-Romero's teacher suggested she pursue a career as a scientist. Not interested in math and science at the time, Santiago-Romero rejected that idea. Maybe she could effect change as an elected official, her teacher suggested. Santiago-Romero recalled her dismissive response.

"Aren't they all just old white men?"

Santiago-Romero said she asked her teacher. As a young, queer, immigrant woman of color, Santiago-Romero was none of those things. "I did not think at all that was even an option for me," she said.

Today, a candidate for Detroit City Council District 6, Santiago-Romero still names environmental justice as one of her top priorities. But it took a career devoted to activism to get here and multiple calls for her to serve.

"I'm running for office because I've been asked to do so for a really long time," Santiago-

Romero explained. "I see the difference that it makes having someone who really cares doing that work. I'm a social worker and a community organizer. I care deeply about my community. So I said yes to the challenge of running for office."

Santiago-Romero is currently on leave as the policy and research director for We the People Michigan, a grassroots organization that builds multiracial power to gain economic prosperity and political power for working-class people and families statewide. Santiago-Romero also worked for Sen. Stephanie Chang when Chang

was her state representative and served as an assistant to Wayne County Executive Warren Evans. She was an organizer for the Hillary Clinton campaign and served in the cabinet of Detroit City Councilwoman Raquel Casteñeda-Lopez when she ran for re-election.

It was through her work for Chang — a mentor and friend — that Santiago-Romero learned politics doesn't have to be about "old white men" making decisions behind closed doors. Witnessing government change via forces both external and internal, "I realized that we need to really demystify what is 'politics,'

because we actually have a lot of impact that we can make,” Santiago-Romero said.

In addition to the same concerns for the environment she had as a middle school student, Santiago-Romero pointed to other environmental issues plaguing her community, including the need for protection against flooding and access to clean water.

Just as important, people want their streetlights to work.

“Something that I hear every single day on doors...is [the lack of] basic city services,” Santiago-Romero said. “I think after the bankruptcy things have just not really gone back to normal for many neighborhoods.

People’s garbage doesn’t get picked on time.” Like many of her neighbors, streetlights are missing on Santiago-Romero’s block, too.

“People just want a safe, clean neighborhood,” she continued. “They asked for basic things that you see 20 minutes away from here and in the suburbs.” Santiago-Romero said people tell her they’re moving because they aren’t receiving the city services they pay for through taxes.

Detroit’s District 6 is one of its most diverse, comprising the cultures of Corktown, Midtown and Southwest Detroit. It represents strong Latinx, Black and Middle Eastern communities.

And while the city leans left, it has been Santiago-Romero’s experience that Detroit is less progressive on LGBTQ+ issues.

“The patriarchy is still very real,” Santiago-Romero noted. “Just from experiencing things week to week, there’s always a man asking me if I’m married. There’s always a man asking if he can call me and take me out to dinner. [Being LGBTQ+] is a part of me that I hope is accepted. It is who I am.”

Santiago-Romero’s unapologetic stance about her identity is a far cry from how she felt in middle school, when she was closeted and afraid. It wouldn’t be until she was a grad student that she felt ready to come out. And while she said she has always supported LGBTQ+ rights, Santiago-Romero said her fears may have been related to her Catholic upbringing.

Today, endorsed by the LGBTQ Victory Fund, the Unity Fund and LGBT Detroit Mobilization, Santiago-Romero stands to become the first openly LGBTQ+ councilwoman in Detroit. She’s also been endorsed by 30+ other organizations and numerous elected officials including Chang,

U.S. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, and Santiago-Romero’s current city council member, Casteñeda-Lopez. Having these three strong women of color as mentors has shown Santiago-Romero that “there are good people that can be in office.”

“There are people who would just follow the status quo to not be engaged [and] held accountable, to not do their work and to really serve my community,” Santiago-Romero said. “We should be running to be more like Rashida, Raquel and Stephanie. And we should be running to unseat the folks who failed to engage us, who failed to work for us.”

Santiago-Romero’s activism was nurtured by



Photo courtesy of Gabriela Santiago-Romero

her interest and talent for photography. She was documenting sit-ins and telling people’s stories visually well before she knew it was a viable career option. And although she’s continued to document movements, and said she loves her work for We the People Michigan, she’s ready to take the leap into political office.

We asked Santiago-Romero whether her family supported her political activism when she was growing up. Santiago-Romero said her mother’s first concern was for her daughter’s safety at the protests she documented. But that’s not the only thing her mother was worried about.

“Not anymore, but still very recently, [my mom] would ask me, ‘What are you doing with that business degree?’” Santiago-Romero recalled. “And I just kept telling her that it’s not about the work making me money. It’s about the work being meaningful, and so she’s supportive of that. And I’m really grateful for her.”

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 2. Absentee ballots are currently available.

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Ruth Ellis Center Working to Reduce Medical Trauma Through Gender-Affirming Care Video

BY JACKIE JONES

Simply put: gender dysphoria is a bitch. It's that nagging voice attacking a person's self-esteem when they look in the mirror, walk out of the shower or gaze down at their body. And it's even louder when a person suffering from it seeks medical treatment that doesn't cater to those anxieties.

Ruth Ellis Center's (REC) new Gender Affirming Care video aims to counter those fears and medical biases. The team leading the video's production, release and promotion spoke to BTL exclusively.

"The gender-affirming care video and this entire project is super important for our trans and non-binary folks that are in the LGBTQ community," Celina Ortiz, REC's education and facilitation specialist, tells BTL. "It's often the experience of folks who don't identify on the binary spectrum of male or female, or don't identify as cisgendered, who have traumatic or negative experiences in health care and/or mental health services."

The 25-minute video features narratives from medical providers, as well as LGBTQ+ youth who've come through the REC. All share negative and positive stories about their experiences with gender-affirming care to educate the community on gender-affirming methods.

"This video is for providers, for parents, doctors, therapists — anyone who is serving those who are trans or non-binary to better understand how to serve them, what resources are available to educate themselves about medicine or non-medical transitioning and language that's more accessible to them to serve clients better," Ortiz says.

Since its 1999 founding, REC has been serving LGBTQ+ youth through programs like Integrated Primary Health Services, a partnership with Henry Ford Hospital, and Integrated Behavioral Health Services through the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network.

The REC team decided to produce this gender-affirming video based on client feedback. After documenting and researching their findings, the team discovered a trend. Jessie Fullenkamp, REC's education and evaluation director, explains that "internalized and perpetuated sexism" has "unconsciously or inadvertently created barriers to our affirming care, particularly gender-affirming health care."

The National Center for Biotechnology Information study, Barriers to Gender-Affirming Care for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals, confirms this evaluation. Transgender and gender non-conforming patients who were involved in the study reported "being asked invasive questions that perpetuated beliefs in only two genders and left participants feeling invalidated" when trying to receive medical services.

"There are a lot of pervasive myths about what it means to access gender-affirming medical care," Fullenkamp says. "There are a lot of barriers — especially for people under 18 — that still exist for accessing puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones. This is a huge problem."

The team hopes their new video on gender-affirming medical care can serve as a tool for addressing the problem.

"The entirety of our team is virtually going into spaces to provide training on what it means and what it looks like to have gender-affirming health care," says Ortiz. "Though we're not experts on the subject, this is the most information that's out there about gender-affirming health care, and this is what can be done now. Our training and the video are supposed to be a tool, so folks can be the first in their area, in their county, to replicate [the teachings]."

REC will be working with national groups, including the University of Maryland's School of Social Work Institute for Innovation and Implementation and the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, to increase the distribution of the video.

The latter organization aligns with REC's mission to focus on entities serving children and their families in integrated health, child welfare, and housing, says Nazarina Minaya, REC senior development associate.

Toward the end of the film, pediatrician Maureen Connolly poignantly explains the heart of the video's mission.

"Even if we're not familiar with the health care interventions for affirming someone's transgender identity, we have an opportunity to support them and to let them know that we're going to learn more," she says.

MSU Professors Highlight BIPOC LGBTQ+ Health Inequalities with New Study

'There Is An Assumption That Everyone Is Cishet,' Says Study Participant

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

A new study is underway looking at how the pandemic is affecting sexual and gender minorities (SGM) compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.

Ning Hsieh and Stef M. Shuster, assistant professors at Michigan State University (MSU), are conducting the BIPOC LGBTQ+ Health and Pandemic Study. In an exclusive interview with Pride Source, they revealed some of their initial data.

"It's been disarming to sit with the data," Shuster tells BTL. "The medical field is not usually responsive to LGBTQ+ people and not responsive to people of color. So when you put those identities together, it's a little out of this world how challenging it is for people to navigate health care."

Using in-depth interviews, Hsieh and Shuster hope their study begins to fill a gap in scholarly knowledge on how race, sexuality and gender combine to produce health inequalities among BIPOC LGBTQ+ people, especially during a global pandemic.

"We intend to use the data from the study to inform public health officials who may not recognize the specific precarities of BIPOC SGMs as well as share the findings with medical providers in Michigan to begin working towards alleviating health inequalities and creating a more just health system," reads part of an overview of the study.

The study was initially limited to Lansing residents, but virtual interviews are now open to BIPOC LGBTQ+ people across Michigan. Though participants are still being recruited, completed interviews have

already shown alarming health disparities.

"There is an assumption that everyone is cishet," one mixed-race nonbinary queer person reported in their interview. "At a gynecology appointment with a new provider, I was scolded for not using birth control even though I physically cannot make babies with my wife (my only sexual partner). The nurse told me that, 'Miracles happen.'"

Another mixed-race nonbinary person was told by a provider that "they didn't take nonbinary gender identity seriously and continued to refer to be my assigned gender at birth and made comments directly to me about how they don't believe in all that 'they' stuff."

In a summary of the study, common reasons cited for poorer health outcomes among SGM include social isolation, risky coping behaviors such as tobacco and alcohol use, and delaying health care — all of which are rooted in stigma. Moreover, medical mistrust discourages BIPOC LGBTQ+ people from seeking healthcare except during emergencies and delaying important preventive care.

Hsieh and Shuster want their data to change these findings.

"So our hope is not only to do this research and to publish, but our hope is to reach back out to the medical providers across the state of Michigan and to use this research to start conversations about how to change health structures to become more responsive to the needs of LGBTQ+ people of color," says Shuster.

To take part in the BIPOC LGBTQ+ study, register via the link at [Pridesource.com](https://pridesource.com).

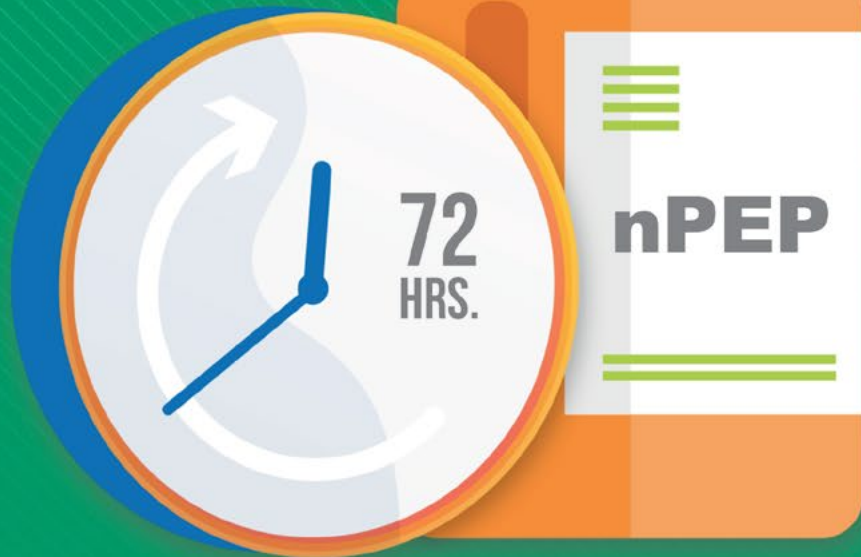


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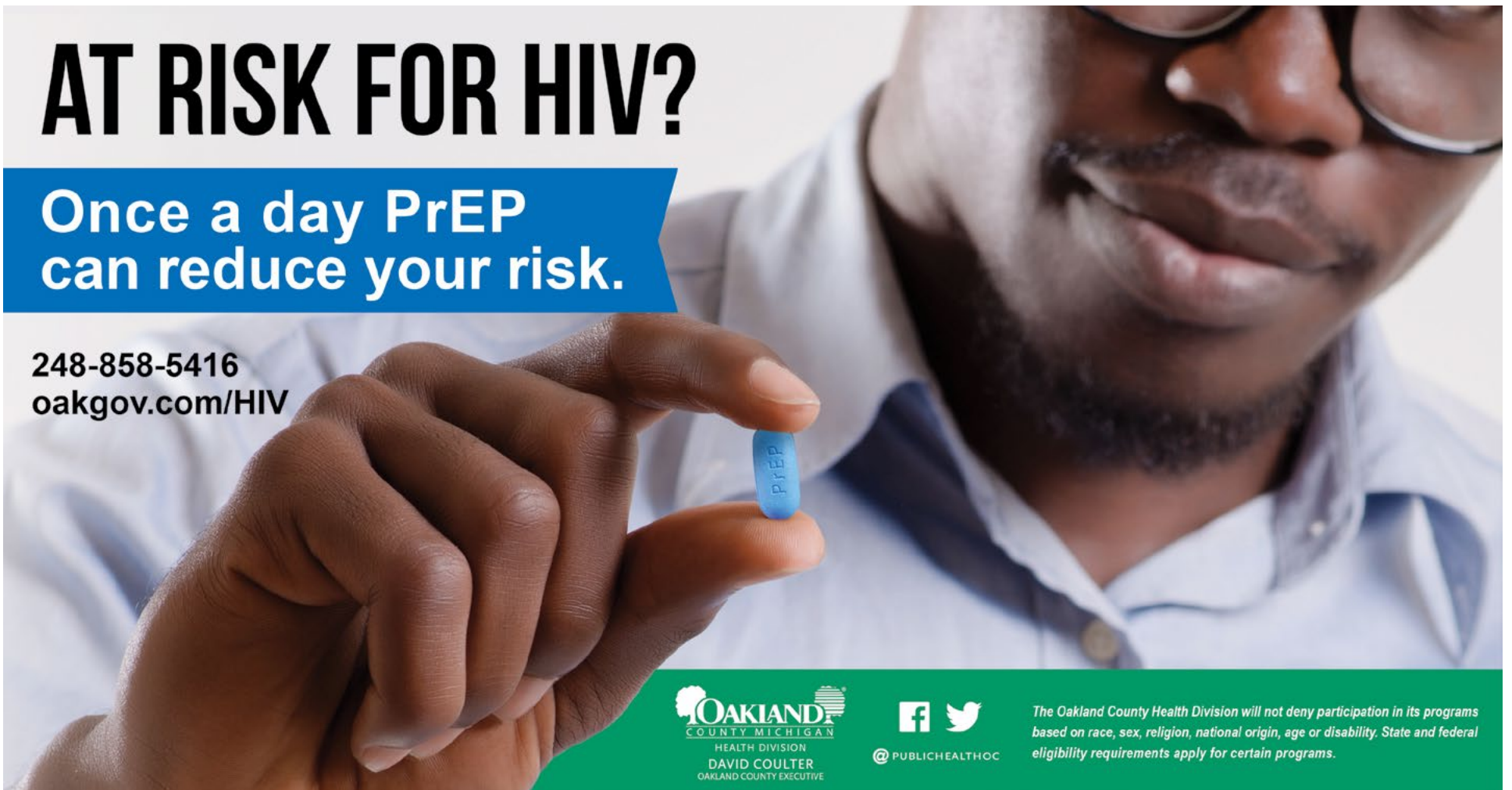
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\$1 Million Grant Awarded to LGBTQ+ Community Partners for Efforts to Boost Covid Vaccination Rates Statewide

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Affirmations LGBTQ community center has announced the launch of a three-year collaboration of community partners across the state designed to increase the rate of Covid vaccination throughout the LGBTQ+ community.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) granted \$1.06 million for the project, including funds for hiring two contract employees. Affirmations Executive Director Dave Garcia, along with Development Director John Joannette, took the lead on applying for the funds, which will also benefit the other nine LGBTQ+ community centers that comprise the Michigan Community Centers Network. Sibling organizations such as Stand with Trans and Transgender Michigan are slated to receive a portion of the funds, too.

“This funding represents one of the largest investments in LGBTQ+ health in the state’s history outside of HIV/AIDS and is Affirmations’ largest grant in its 32-plus year history,” Joannette said.

Each of the sibling organizations will receive a stipend of \$5,000 per year for each of the three years of the grant.

“What I’ve said to them is I will sign

a memorandum of understanding with each of our partner organizations,” Garcia said. “We’re working on those now, and we are basically asking them simply to help us come up with creative ideas in their backyards to reach the ultimate goal of getting more LGBTQ people vaccinated.”

The grant was made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 — also known as President Biden’s \$1.9 million stimulus package — through funds provided by the Plan to the MDHHS.

Garcia said they would be intentional about targeting efforts to underserved populations within the LGBTQ+ community.

“The intersection of race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation has complicated adoption of the Covid-19 vaccine in many corners of the state, including both urban and rural settings, where access has been limited, and education on the safety of the vaccines have been, in some cases, nonexistent,” Garcia said.

“You and I know that within the broad LGBTQ community, there’s a significant African American population and a Latino population and a rural population,” he added. “That’s why we

wrote the community centers into the grant so that we would have home bases, in a sense, across the state.” For example, the Jim Toy Center in Ann Arbor could present opportunities for vaccination clinics or town halls at the annual Ann Arbor Pride celebration.

Garcia said he has witnessed vaccine hesitancy first-hand. He’s encouraging his community partners to think creatively.

“I think it’s going to be a very big challenge,” Garcia said. “Those that want to be vaccinated, in large part, have been. There are exceptions to that, [such as] finding it difficult to get to vaccination sites and things along those lines. We wrote a lot of dollars in this grant for transportation.”

Some of those transportation dollars will be used for services like Uber or Lyft to take individuals to vaccine appointments, while the majority will be spent on enabling the two new hires to travel the state, working with the LGBTQ+ community partners in ways tailored to their unique needs. Affirmations is currently conducting interviews to fill those positions: a Covid-19 Vaccine Project Manager and a Covid-19 Outreach Coordinator.

See **Affirmations**, page 36



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Marshall Kilgore Opens Up About Being a Black Bisexual Man Running for Kalamazoo City Commission

OutFront Director Says He's Committed to Ending Epidemic of Missing Trans Women of Color



Photo courtesy of Marshall Kilgore

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Marshall Kilgore couldn't make it to Motor City Pride this year. Instead, the 22-year-old candidate for Kalamazoo city commission stayed close to home, juggling work, family and campaign responsibilities. Kilgore was still able to celebrate Pride, though: As director of advocacy for the OutFront Kalamazoo LGBTQ+ community center, Kilgore organized and attended the center's inaugural Rally for Equality at Bronson Park that Saturday.

"I love being the director of advocacy," Kilgore said. "And this is what I [get to] do for a living: give people resources, make sure folks feel supported, make sure they know they have not only a listening ear but someone who will advocate for them to live more comfortably here in Kalamazoo in southwest Michigan." And while he may not earn "millions of dollars" working for a nonprofit organization, Kilgore feels fortunate that he's able to be a community advocate from 9 to 5.

Now, Kilgore seeks to advocate not only for the local LGBTQ+ community but for all 76,000-plus residents of Kalamazoo. And even though he graduated fairly recently from Kalamazoo's Western Michigan University — with a degree in political science — Kilgore believes he has the credentials to run a substantive campaign. Certainly, there's the experience gleaned through his day job, but he currently serves as vice chair for the Kalamazoo County Democratic Party, as well. He was also a deputy field organizer in his region for Gretchen Whitmer's 2018 gubernatorial campaign. Additionally, Kilgore got his feet wet last year when he ran for trustee of the Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education.

Endorsed by the LGBTQ Victory Fund and Run for Something, Kilgore has also earned the support of his state rep, Christine Morse, among other local community leaders.

For as long as he can remember, Kilgore has been interested in politics. As a Black and queer person, he said he's found that being political is a "necessity." Kilgore said he's always been very conscious of what was really important to people like him. "It's always been on my mind," he said.

Kilgore said he's running for city commission because "We've got a lot of work to do still in our community." He spoke of safeguarding marginalized groups, "whether it be people of color, BIPOC folks, whether it be queer folks... we've got to elevate the resources for all folks within southwest Michigan and within Kalamazoo." He said he's ready to be a voice for the people, and he's got the "guts and gusto" to



Photo courtesy of Marshall Kilgore

step up, even when acknowledging that some issues are unpopular, including what Kilgore says is the silent epidemic of trans women of color who have gone missing in Kalamazoo.

Another issue Kilgore wants to shine a light on is environmental racism. Tackling it is one of Kilgore's top priorities if elected. A prime example is the poor air quality associated with a high incidence of asthma in certain areas.

"If you're in the nicer neighborhoods or the ones with better income, you're sort of safeguarded from that," Kilgore said. "But if you're on the north side or if you're in areas with lower income... you're [potentially] experiencing asthma symptoms that you never experienced or you would have probably never encountered if a factory or a company that's just letting out junk into the air moves down the street from you."

Kilgore also spoke of the need for "revamping and revitalizing" the city. Likewise, he envisions a Kalamazoo for everyone: "Everyone should be able to live here, work here and play here and feel fulfilled," Kilgore said.

His ability to build coalitions and serve as a unifier will serve Kilgore well on the nine-member city commission, he believes. That's directly related to his familiarity with often finding himself in the minority.

"I think that's been a lifelong experience for me," Kilgore said. "Being a Black bisexual male, often there was no other choice but to work with people who weren't like me." He gave as an example his own experience in higher education, where Black males are among the least likely to graduate.

Today, one of the reasons Kilgore wants a seat on the city commission is to provide representation for people like him — the same reason he ran for school board last year. At the time, he got some pushback. He heard news that some people thought he might "brainwash" children.

"I was stepping up to lead in a pandemic, to

follow the science, to get more social workers and less policemen in our schools," Kilgore explained. "Making sure...our students were involved in the summer and that they could stay up [-to-date] with reading and math and science."

LGBTQ+ representation was one of the reasons Kilgore ran for school board. Instead, he found some people more concerned with his personal life than with policy.

Kilgore described the "static and distance" he experienced having members of the community and community leaders encouraging his run for office, "but then in the back of your mind you have this not completely negative experience — but a pretty rough one — of people putting just who you were born to be right on the line and saying that's a disqualifier," he said.

Since then, Kilgore has learned not to read the comments after media coverage. He made an exception during June Pride Month when community members were reaching out with support.

It's clear that Kilgore loves Kalamazoo and plans to stay. Not surprisingly, what he says he loves most about his city is its diversity. It's more like a salad than a melting pot, he said. It's a place where people of all different backgrounds can come together while remaining their own unique selves.

"I truly do believe that the residents of Kalamazoo...my neighbors, really do value diversity," Kilgore said. "And when you value something, you take care of it, you support it, and you contribute to it. And that is somewhere where I think all folks in Michigan should want to live, right? We should really be pressing for that in every single community. But to already have it cultivated here, it's just such an amazing thing."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 2. Learn more about Marshall Kilgore on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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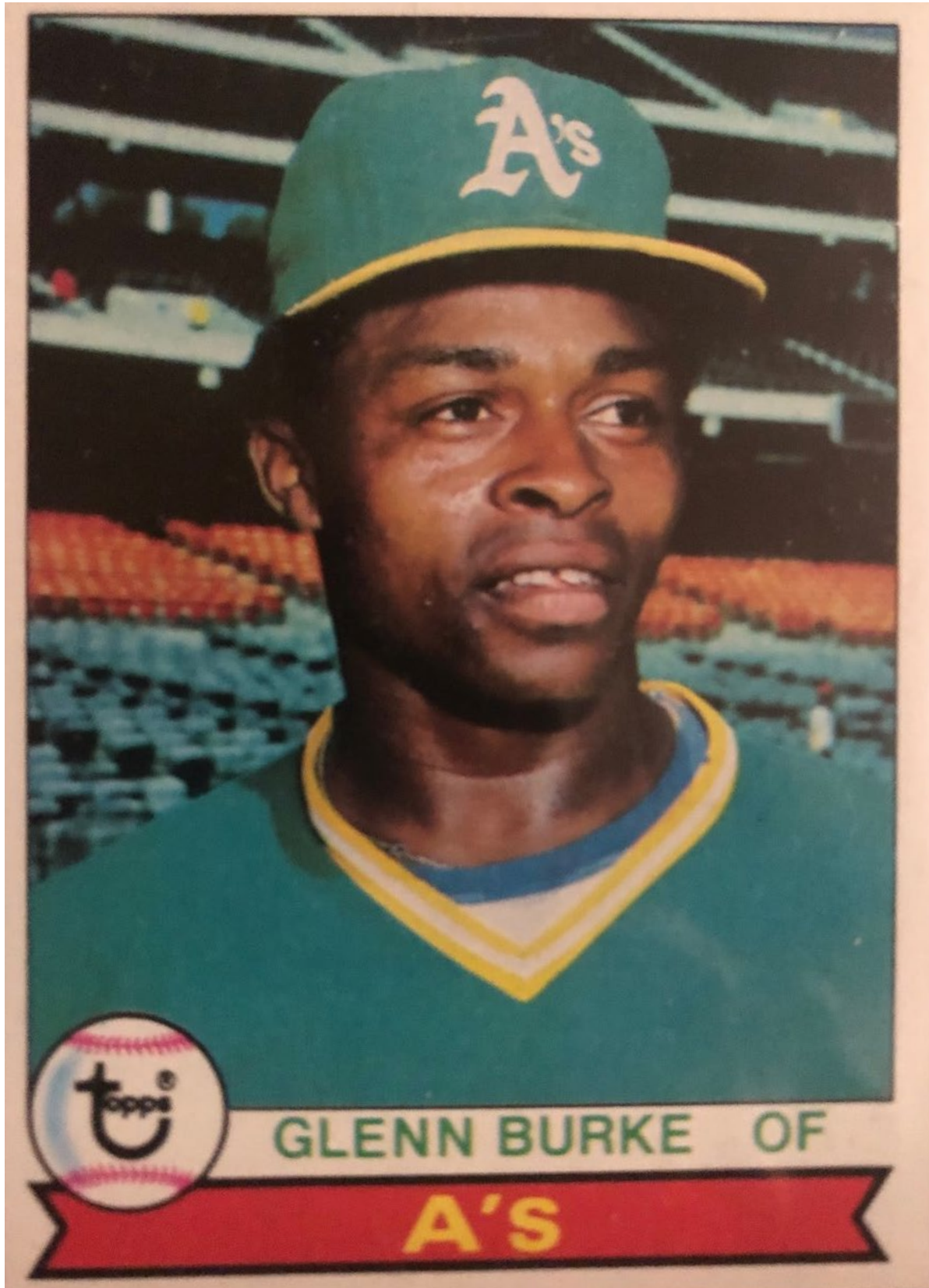


Photo courtesy of Marshall Kilgore. Glenn Burke's 1979 Topps trading card. Photo by Jason Villemez

BY RAY SIMON

You could say that Glenn Burke, the first Major League Baseball player to come out, is having a good season.

In March, bestselling author Andrew Maraniss published a thoughtful biography called “Singled Out: The True Story of Glenn Burke.” And on June 11, 2021, the Oakland A’s renamed their annual LGBTQ+ appreciation event the Glenn Burke Pride Night.

Unfortunately, Burke isn’t here to enjoy the acclaim. He died from complications of AIDS on May 30, 1995, when he was 42. He played four seasons of professional baseball between 1976 and 1979, hitting .237 and stealing 35 bases, before homophobia ended his career.

“Prejudice drove me out of baseball sooner than I should have,” Burke told Jennifer Frey of the New York Times in 1994. “But I wasn’t changing. And no one can say I didn’t make it. I played in the World Series. I’m in the book, and they can’t take that away from me. Not ever.”

Burke seemed destined for the pros. At Berkeley High School in California, he was good on the baseball diamond and even better on the basketball court. According to his childhood friend Vince Trahan, “Glenn did moves in 1970 that Michael Jordan did in 1991.” In 1970, the team went undefeated, and Burke was named Northern California’s Player of the Year.

Considering that, family and friends were surprised when Burke signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers rather than aim for the NBA. But in the early 1970s, baseball was still the national pastime.

Between 1972 and 1976, Burke worked his way up through the minor leagues. In 1973, he batted .309 and stole 42 bases, more than any other player in the Florida State League.

Burke’s teammates were impressed. “In baseball language, eight is outstanding,” said Larry Corrigan in the 2010 documentary “Out: The Glenn Burke Story.” “That’s as high as you can go. And Glenn had an eight arm; he had eight raw power; and he was an eight runner.”

In 1976, Burke played a few games for the Dodgers at the beginning and end of the season. His athleticism was apparent, but he needed to work on his bat. Still, Junior Gilliam, the team’s hitting coach, saw unlimited potential in the phenom. “Once we get him cooled down a little bit, frankly, we think he’s going to be another Willie Mays,” he said.

If Burke was having trouble with the curve, he was struggling even more in his personal life. Until the age of 22, he was a “sexual blank,” as Michael J. Smith put it in “The Double Life of a Gay Dodger,” the 1982 article where Burke came out. Then he reconnected with a former high school teacher.

“The minute he spoke, I knew,” Burke recalled. “I know it sounds a little crazy. Here I was, 22, no sexual experience, nothing. Yet I felt something I’d never felt before, something deep.” Burke knew instantly that he was gay. He also worried that it would hurt his career.

When the Dodgers called Burke up for the 1977 season, there was no time to fret. The squad, packed with great players like Steve Garvey and Reggie Smith, had high expectations. With so many talented veterans, the rookie’s playing time was limited, but his team spirit enlivened the locker room.

163 **A's • Glenn Burke** OUTFIELD

Height: 6'0" Weight: 205 Bats: Left Throws: Right Drafted: Dodgers #17 - June, 1972
Acquired: Trade with Dodgers, 5-17-78 Born: 11-16-52, Oakland, Cal. Home: San Francisco, Cal.

COMPLETE MAJOR & MINOR LEAGUE BATTING RECORD

Year	Club	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	AVG.
1972	Ogden	14	45	5	9	1	0	0	5	.200
1972	Spokane	41	141	31	48	9	1	2	16	.340
1973	Bakersfield	11	34	6	6	1	1	1	3	.176
1973	Daytona B' ch	110	372	68	115	17	2	10	57	.309
1974	Waterbury	51	153	19	38	5	2	1	14	.248
1974	Bakersfield	66	263	46	89	17	0	7	46	.338
1975	Waterbury	119	478	66	129	14	2	12	49	.270
1976	Albuquerque	116	467	72	140	17	10	7	53	.300
1976	Dodgers	25	46	9	11	2	0	0	5	.239
1977	Albuquerque	47	188	42	58	9	5	6	47	.309
1977	Dodgers	83	169	16	43	8	0	1	13	.254
1978	Dodgers	16	19	2	4	0	0	0	2	.211
1978	A's	104	319	25	82	15	2	2	37	.257
Maj. Lea. Totals		228	553	52	140	25	2	3	57	.253

BASEBALL DATES

What Happened
JULY 2, 1963
Giants' Juan Marichal defeated Braves' Warren Spahn, 1-0, in 16-inning pitching duel.

led P.C.L. with 63 Stolen Bases, 1976.

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Statistics on Glenn Burke's career through 1979. Photo by Jason Villemez

Burke is even credited with inventing the high five. In the final regular season game, Dusty Baker walloped a pitch out of the park, making him the fourth Dodger that year to hit 30 home runs, a first in MLB history.

Waiting on deck, an exuberant Burke raised his hand high in the air. The burly outfielder reacted instinctively. "His hand was up in the air, and he was arching way back," Baker said. "So I reached up and hit his hand. It seemed like the thing to do."

Although the Dodgers eventually lost that year's World Series to the New York Yankees, it was a solid rookie season for Burke.

By the following year, however, Burke's personal life had become an issue. During spring training, some Latino players began calling him "maricon." And the general manager, Al Campanis, purportedly offered Burke \$75,000 to get married.

According to Burke's sister, Joyce, it was hinted that if her brother married, his sexuality wouldn't become public knowledge. "And he told them, no," she said. "He wasn't going to live that type of lie."

Less than two months into the season, Burke was traded to the Oakland Athletics. It should have been a triumphant homecoming for the Bay Area native. Unfortunately, the A's were an abysmal club. Management was terrible and many players had no right being in the major leagues. Burke considered quitting and only returned the following year because Billy Martin was named manager.

If Burke thought he was going to get a fresh start, he was sorely mistaken. Claudell Washington, a former teammate, remembers everyone trotting out to center field at the beginning of spring training so that Martin could introduce the veterans: "And then he got to Glenn. He said, 'Oh, by the way, this is Glenn Burke. And he's a faggot.'"

Quickly banished to a minor league club in Ogden, Utah, Burke had had enough. He quietly retired and returned to the Castro.

There, he lived openly as a gay man, played on multiple softball teams, and enjoyed the nightlife.

To some, Burke was a local hero. As Jack McGowan, sports editor for The San Francisco Sentinel, the local gay newspaper, put it, "It was not so much that he was masculine, but that he was superbly athletic, and we were proud because he showed the world that we could be gay and be gifted athletes."

But Burke had difficulty adjusting to life after pro sports. He partied too hard and had trouble earning a living. After being hit by a speeding car in 1987, he couldn't even play softball. Soon, he turned to petty crime and panhandling. Whatever money he scrounged up went entirely to crack. Family and friends were unsurprised when he was diagnosed HIV positive.

Burke's final years were difficult. When he could no longer survive on the street, he moved in with his older sister, Lutha Davis. Wracked by pain and ravaged from the disease, he wore a winter parka over his skeletal frame year-round to ward off chills. He died on May 30, 1995.

Burke once said, "It's harder to be a gay in sports than anywhere else, except maybe president." Much has changed since his death. Although homophobia still exists, LGBTQ+ people have gained more rights and acceptance than he could have possibly imagined. Undoubtedly, he'd be rooting for Carl Nassib, the first NFL player to come out as gay while still playing.

Billy Bean, who is only the second MLB player ever to come out, probably summed up Burke's legacy better than anyone. After meeting almost 60 members of Burke's extended family, the current MLB Vice President and Special Assistant to the Commissioner posted a video to YouTube. "It was easy to see the impact you made on every one of them, which had nothing to do with your baseball talent, and everything to do with the kind of person you were," he said.

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AT THE INTERSECTION OF Sexuality & Disability



Photo: Robert Andy Coombs

Michigan-Born Photographer Robert Andy Coombs Unveils 'Notions of Care' Exhibit

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Disabled people are sexual beings. Unfortunately, this fact is rarely depicted in the media or even something most able-bodied people consider.

Photographer and Yale MFA graduate Robert Andy Coombs seeks to change that with his

work. The quadriplegic artist takes self portraits in a variety of vulnerable, sexual and intense situations.

A collection of his work, titled "Notions of Care," is on exhibit at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University. The intimate photos depict Coombs with other men. Some photos are sexual, some

sensual. As a whole, they depict the tenderness and intimacy of caretaking.

"Caregiving became a huge topic in my work [while at Yale] because I need pre-care and post-care when it comes to sex," Coombs tells BTL via Zoom. "I like incorporating care into foreplay and postplay."

Coombs explains that he needs to be

undressed and redressed and also needs help with any post-sex bathing needed. "People think that...if someone's caring for you that you're going to lose your dignity or independence," he says. "And it shouldn't be thought of like that."

Coombs wants to make care sexy. "When I'm getting washed up by a partner, we do it naked, so that it's fun," he says. "We kind of joke and,

like, they'll bend over me to wash a part of my body so their ass is in my face or their dick is in my face. It's fun. It's sexy."

As a result, "intimacy and care became such a huge topic" of his work. "I think that's what [Frost chief curator] Amy [Galpin] was really going for with this show," Coombs says.

"In sharing details of his personal life, Robert Andy Coombs brings needed perspective to contemporary art and to our popular consciousness," Galpin says in a press release announcing the exhibition. "These photographs offer an extraordinary opportunity to rethink the notion of care."

Frost Museum Director Jordana Pomeroy concurs, adding, "Coombs' work paints a picture about different narratives of love, which he tells boldly and tenderly. This exemplifies great photography—art that pushes, pulls, and inspires deep thought and dialogue, which is why we chose to feature him at the Frost Art Museum."

Coombs found his way into his subject matter following a gymnastics training accident at age 21 while he was an undergrad student in Grand Rapids. He was training to do a double backflip on a trampoline. "I fell, like, 10 feet out of the air on the back of my neck," he says. "And that's where I sustained a spinal cord injury."

Coombs explains that his is a C4/C5 injury. "It's a pretty high injury and I'm complete," he says. "I fucked it up pretty bad."

He adds that every spinal cord injury is different, leaving those injured with varying levels of ability.

"Some people with my level of injury are up walking or in a manual wheelchair," Coombs says. "I can move my arms a little bit to scratch my nose or use my phone a little bit, pet my dog, but that's about it."

After his accident, Coombs spent about a month in the ICU on a ventilator and then a year in recovery.

"After I got off the ventilator, I went to University of Michigan for about six weeks for rehab to learn how to take care of myself and try and get as much function back as possible," he says. Afterwards, he went to live with his parents at their home in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Coombs grew up in the U.P. "I lived in the middle of nowhere growing up," he says. "It was like one of the most idyllic childhoods you could have, running around in the woods and not having to worry about anything."

But like most young people in their 20s, Coombs wanted his independence. He prepared to go back to school at the Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids in the fall and was able to do so with the help of hired caregivers, friends and roommates. "It takes a village. I am thankful that I'm able to surround myself with amazing friends and family to help me out."

There was one area where he did not receive help, however.

"For rehab, we had our independent living classes where we would learn about our disability [and] how to take care of ourselves," he remembers. "There was one class on sexuality and at this point I hadn't



Photographer Robert Andy Coombs' "Notion of Care" exhibit is currently on display at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University. Photo: Robert Andy Coombs

even thought about that."

Coombs had a lot of questions. "We kind of discussed that our brain was our biggest sex organ, but when it came to my questions about actual sex," he says, "they were super uncomfortable about it and they were like, 'Here, you can watch this VHS tape from the '80s or '90s about sex with your partner.'"

Not only was the video heteronormative, it was not particularly instructive.

"I was asking my therapist, 'How does penetrative sex work? Am I going to be able to maintain an erection to have sex with someone?'" he says. "I also asked if I could be penetrated. Could I bottom? Because I like both."

Unfortunately, he says, "They completely

See **Robert Andy Coombs**, page 38

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Rogério Pinto's U-M project dives into complex subjects from death and parental molestation to ethnicity, race and gender. Photo: Niki Williams

When Art Has the Power to Heal

Rogério Pinto Bares His Soul in 'Realm of the Dead' Exhibit at U-M

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

The death of a child is the stuff of nightmares for parents. The pain and the anguish never really go away, and the entire family is reshaped by such a tragic event.

Such was the case for Rogério Pinto, professor and associate dean for research and innovation at the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, after the death of his 3-year-old sister Marília in a devastating accident when Pinto was 10 months old.

"When people die or get maimed," Pinto tells BTL, "it traumatizes the entire family. And because it is preventable, [it causes the family] an enormous amount of guilt. I have heard so many different narratives of what happened to my sister in an attempt to make sense of it, in an attempt to help people survive the pain that they feel and the guilt for not being there, for not watching her."

Marília was hit and killed by a bus in front of the housing project where her family was living in Belo

Horizonte, Brazil. On that bus was Marília's mother.

As Pinto tells it, Marília died in front of their mother, who picked the girl off the pavement and brought her inside, laying her out on the family's table.

"Even though I barely knew her, I vicariously absorbed a lot of those narratives of guilt and of loss and of fear that this can happen again," Pinto recalls. "My mother used to go to the cemetery every day. And guess who she took with her?" Pinto accompanied his mother on a near-daily basis.

"My mother found solace in telling how my sister died to anyone who wanted to listen," he says. "When my mother passed away in 2012, I felt compelled to tell the story for me and for my mother."

Pinto uses art to tell the story of his sister, his mother, himself and the rest of his family in his installation titled "Realm of the Dead," on display at the U-M School of Social Work through Oct. 17.

"Realm of the Dead," which took two years to complete, consists of a series of vintage suitcases and trunks that Pinto has turned into sculptures, each one telling the story of a different part of Pinto's life, including growing up in poverty, the death of his sister, his relationship with his mother, molestation by his father, immigrating

to the U.S. at age 21 and living undocumented in New York.

Each piece of luggage took Pinto weeks or months to complete. "Some need to be reinforced before we can create anything on or inside them," he says. "We asked a lot from each of them as we hammered, glued, and stapled many objects to them, changed the linings, and rearranged their original designs. Depending on the emotional content going into a box, the transformation can take, as I say, more than a month, maybe several months."

The "Mother" case, which Pinto used to convey his feelings toward my mother, took him "about a year to find and to finish."

"Mother," Pinto says, "is a large metal trunk which was painted white with a touch of green. We reinforced the entire trunk with plywood and lined it with velvety dark green fabric representing the trees and grass my mother loved." At the bottom of the trunk, Pinto says, he placed clothes and jewelry that represented what she wore for her funeral and the urn that would hold her ashes.

He also included an image of Brazil's patroness Our Lady of Aparecida, which is also his mother's name. Aparecida means "apparition" or "appeared" in Portuguese. The installation also

includes a painting of a bull that his mother made for him. "I think of it as her self-portrait. So her trunk includes that painting plus a picture of her separated by a net indicating the space between life and the afterlife, the place she is reunited with my deceased sister, the inspiration for the entire exhibit, 'Realm of the Dead.'"

Gender identity plays a big part in Pinto's work. Pinto, 56, identifies as gender non-conforming and uses he/him/his pronouns.

The project draws from Pinto's "Marília," a solo theatrical performance he wrote and performed in 2015. "There's a scene in this installation performance and the original play where I say that at the end of the day, I don't know where I start and where I end when I have all my sisters and my mother inside of my head," Pinto says. "I have been influenced by them so much."

Having these "very powerful women inside" makes Pinto "feel much more like one of them." Pinto has two older brothers. "One of them is gay, as well," he says. "[But] I feel much closer to my sisters in terms of gender identity than I do to my brothers."

Still, Pinto doesn't see gender as a binary. "I think that I'm a mix of the usual stereotypical things that we say are female or male," he says. "Working out my gender identity was coming to

this moment of comfort. [To] me, it's not any more one or the other. It's what I have recreated for myself. It gives me so much more peace."

Pinto's gender identification is very much influenced by his sister's death. "I will never really completely let go of her or the idea of her, and in some ways, I think that I am her," he says. "Not in any pathological way, but I think that I absorbed a lot of her."

"In many ways, my family treated me like a replacement," he says. "Not a replacement that was made to replace her because I was already there. They were missing her. They were mourning her, so it was very easy for them to approach me as the continuation of the little girl they lost."

Now, at age 56, Pinto is still questioning how gender identity is formed and how the events of his childhood have shaped his life. He hopes that his work will inspire others to look inward.

"I hope it will inspire people to use creative means to heal themselves," he says. "It could be a poem; it could be arts and crafts, anything that allows someone to get out of one's mind and create something."

Art, Pinto says, has the ability to help people understand and work through difficult feelings and ideas.

"Research shows that the pursuit of art-based projects and the experience of visual and performing arts can be really good for one's well-being," Pinto says. "As you begin to be able to heal yourself — when you begin to feel better — some space begins to open within yourself so that now you can accommodate someone else, or you can begin to accommodate the plight of another person."

Going beyond individual healing to advocate for broader structural change, he says, is the ultimate goal.

"Anyone who has a mission to help other people really needs to heal themselves first," Pinto says. "I will have more energy and more emotional space to help the next person." He likens this concept to the airplane safety instructions to place your own mask on before helping others. "Things become easier to entertain when you heal yourself from whatever wounds you may have."

While the subjects in Pinto's work are deeply personal and many are difficult for us as a society to discuss, he describes the work as "self-healing."

"I hope that by showing my vulnerability, more people will do the same," he says. "Community mourning and healing is what I think gave me the strength to write the text and conceive the pieces of the exhibit."



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→ Affirmations

Continued from p. 26

Conceivably, the field person would be able to administer the vaccine.

“We’re looking for health professionals that have experience working in underserved communities,” Garcia said. He mentioned an applicant with experience in HIV prevention. “While it’s not the same as Covid, a lot of the relationships that this person has in underserved communities, particularly communities of color, could prove beneficial for a project like this.”

Because few states collect data on sexual orientation or gender identity, it’s difficult to determine the number of LGBTQ+ people nationwide who have been vaccinated against the virus thus far. Even an LGBTQ+ person who’s not closeted can remain invisible.

One report released in July of this year represented a weighted survey of 15,000 self-identified LGBTQ+ community members living in the United States. Nearly all survey participants (92%) reported at least one COVID-19 vaccination shot by the time of the research. For Black LGBTQ+ people, that number was 85%.

Garcia doubts those numbers. Statistics from a survey are not as reliable as a study, he pointed out. Further, Garcia is looking beyond yesterday’s numbers: The grant spans three years.

“I have a feeling boosters are going to play a big role,” Garcia predicts. He also mentioned the unknowns related to variants of the virus. “My point is I think this grant is going to change a lot or evolve over the next three years. And all the more reason for us to be working closely with the [Michigan] Community Centers Network and the various health departments in different counties around the state of Michigan. And who better to

know those relationships in those county health departments than the community centers in those counties?”

Perhaps the success of Affirmations’ earlier vaccine days at the center was due to the center representing a “safer” space for those who mistrust the healthcare system, whether that has to do with historical reasons like issues related to HIV/AIDS or other reasons.

And it’s exactly those individuals — people who are immunocompromised because they are living with HIV/AIDS — who are among those most needing shots in arms. Garcia welcomes ideas for ways to reach them and the wider LGBTQ+ community to help end the devastation of the pandemic.

“Everything’s on the table in terms of the ultimate goal... that they got a shot,” Garcia said.

Garcia admitted he originally thought receiving the grant was unlikely. Both he and LGBT Detroit Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb believe it would not have been possible without the ability of the Michigan Community Centers Network to leverage their resources and leverage their partnerships with government agencies.

“Covid can be prevented by vaccination and recommended public health prevention methods,” Lipscomb said. “This award

Perhaps the success of Affirmations’ earlier vaccine days at the center was due to the center representing a “safer” space for those who mistrust the healthcare system, whether that has to do with historical reasons like issues related to HIV/AIDS or other reasons.

to Michigan LGBTQ+ centers helps educate vulnerable and miseducated residents and heightens the importance and relevance of the Michigan Community Centers Network for statewide collaboration.”

The Michigan Community Centers Network comprises LGBTQ+ community centers and organizations across the state, including Affirmations, LGBT Detroit, Out Center, Ruth Ellis Center, Jim Toy Center, OutFront Kalamazoo, Jackson Pride Center, Grand Rapids Pride Center, Out on the Lake Shore, Polestar LGBT+ Community Center, Equality Michigan, Transgender Michigan, Human Rights Campaign Michigan and Stand with Trans.

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The Eyes of Tammy Faye p. 45

Ahead of Upcoming 2021 Miss Gigi's Pageants, Former Miss Gigi's Remember the Glory Days

Three Pageant Winners Reflect on Their Miss Gigi's Titles

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Gigi's Cabaret, the Detroit gay bar with the longest-running female impersonation show in Southeast Michigan, is back with their Miss Gigi's Pageant from Oct. 23-24. Since its opening in 1972, the bar has been known for first-rate entertainment, and this upcoming pageant is no exception. Running concurrently will also be the Miss Gigi's Classic pageant and the Miss Amateur Gigi's pageants.

In celebration of the upcoming pageants, BTL spoke to four former Miss Gigi's winners about their titles and what this event means to them.

But, first, you must understand that these pageants aren't for everybody. They're taken seriously. To qualify, you must fit specific criteria.

There are three pageants: Miss Gigi's, Miss Amateur Gigi's, and Miss Gigi's Classic.

To qualify for the Miss Gigi's pageant, participants must be 18 or over and not a current bar titleholder. Miss Amateur Gigi's contestants must be 18 or over, not a current bar title or title higher than amateur status, and performing for five years or less. Finally, Miss Gigi's Classic is open to anyone 35 or older who is not a current bar titleholder. All contestants must live in either Michigan or Lucas County, Ohio.

April Summers, whose impersonations of Patti LaBelle and others have taken her to stages across the country and long-term engagements in Las Vegas, New York, Atlantic City and Miami, was crowned Miss Gigi's in 1980.

"It was a great year for me," Summers recalls. "I did Barbra Streisand 'How Lucky Can You Get.' A lot of people know me for Patti. But I did everybody, and that's what I did at Gigi's. I won the first year I went out for it, and I think there were about 14 contestants."

DeAngela "Show" Shannon won Miss Gigi's in 2000, 28 years after her blood aunt, Elaine St. Jacques, won the very first Miss Gigi's pageant.

"Gigi's has been there for me and I for them," says Shannon. "They groomed me and prepared me for my career the correct way,

which allowed me to accomplish most of my goals in performing."

Those goals included winning no less than 73 titles.

"Miss Gigi's was one of the most meaningful I ever won, to be sure," Shannon adds. "It represented home to me."

Destiny Hunter won Miss Gigi's in 2002, but as the current reigning Miss Gigi's Classic, Hunter will hand down her newest title at this year's pageant.

"I always set a goal for myself, and there were just certain things here in Michigan that I wanted," she says. "I had started out at Gigi's ... I was a part of the family, but to me, it just wasn't official until it was on paper. So I applied myself. The first two times, I was first runner-up. I took a year off then and then I came back and ran again, and I took every category and

I won the pageant."

"It was gratifying to become a part of the sisterhood," Hunter continues. "And I haven't looked back."

Coordinating the pageants is Gigi's Show Director and Miss Gigi's 1992 Nickki Stevens. She's been producing or co-producing the pageant since 1993. Stevens is quick to reveal that Miss Gigi's is the longest-running gay bar title in the country.

"You can go to other bars and ask who their titleholder was in 1997, for example," Stevens says. "They couldn't tell you. But at Gigi's, well, once a Miss Gigi's always a Miss Gigi's."

And what does it take to win the crown?

"Professional, reliability, outgoing, uniqueness and determination," she says. "And if you take the first letter of all those adjectives, you get PROUD. To be a Miss Gigi's you must be proud of what you do, proud of who you are and very proud to be the representative of Gigi's."

The theme for this year's pageant is "Hurray for Broadway."

"Themes are thought out three to four years in advance, as I am always looking and shopping for set pieces everywhere," explains Stevens. "Next year is 'Candyland.'"



DeAngela "Show" Shannon, Miss Gigi's in 2000, still regularly hosts shows at the bar. Photo courtesy of DeAngela "Show" Shannon

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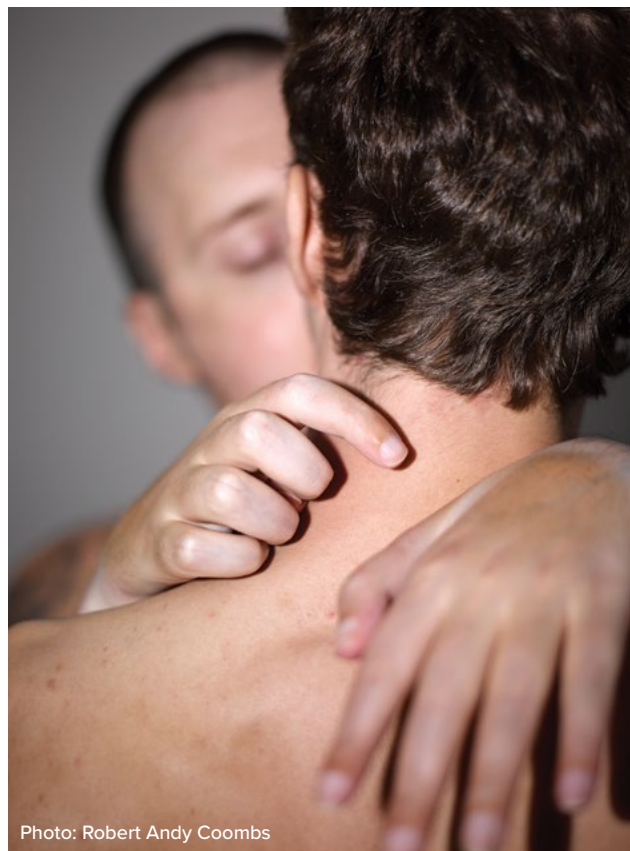


Photo: Robert Andy Coombs

→ **Robert Andy Coombs**

Continued from p. 31

romantic, intimate image like other people do."

Another photo in the exhibit, titled "Frustration," is a close up of Coombs in bed, his eyes rimmed with red. The photo was a result of a disappointing night out with a group of friends. "They weren't well-versed with disability etiquette, which not a lot of people are," he says. They were dancing outside at a resort in Saugatuck when his friends all went inside. "They heard a song and they all rushed out to the dance floor, but the inside dance floor isn't accessible so I'm just sitting there by myself," he says. He called his roommate to come get him. "By the time I got home I was bawling and my roommate tried to put me to bed and I said, 'Go get my camera.' I was thinking in my head while I'm drunk and pissed, 'This is a really good picture.'"

He hopes people looking at the photo "can fucking realize that having a disability is just so infuriating at times," he says.

Infuriating, but life is still absolutely worth living. On

blew me off."

So Coombs did his own research on sex after spinal cord injuries. He submersed himself in the dating scene and looked on sites like Pornhub for wheel chair sex and guys masturbating in wheel chairs.

"I reached out to a few of those men, and they gave me good advice and different things that they use to achieve an orgasm," he says. "I realized there was like no representation of disability in sex, especially when it came to the gay community."

After he graduated in 2013 from the Kendall College of Art and Design he didn't take photographs for several years.

"By that time, I had a good amount of knowledge about how my body worked sexually and my interest in sex," he says. "I have a broad sexual interest, so I think that's another reason why I did self portraits because I knew I could push myself to photograph things that can be considered pornography, but the importance of the imagery outweighed me photographing myself in that manner."

One of the photos included in the Frost exhibition is titled "Sunset at Grand Haven Beach," which depicts Coombs being held by a man on the beach with the waves rolling in behind them.

He says the photo was inspired by the Instagram culture of people posting romantic pictures out at the beach. "I wanted to show that with my disability in mind," he says. "I just wanted to have a beautiful image — a beautiful,

his neck, Coombs has a tattoo that reads, "Giving up is the ultimate tragedy," which he got in 2010.

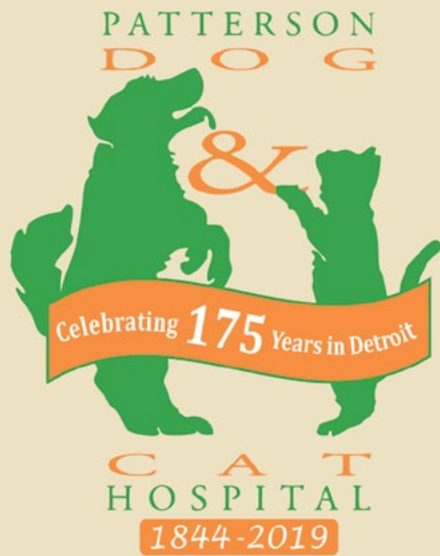
"As I was getting settled back in Grand Rapids after my year at home, my mom and I — she was with me until I got established in Grand Rapids with caregivers and everything — we were coming from outpatient and we were going down the elevator and we saw that quote at Mary Free Bed, which is the rehab hospital in Grand Rapids," he says. "And we kind of just looked at each other and we were like, let's go get tattoos of it."

And so they did. "I got it on my collar bone area and she got it around her ankle. And when my dad came to visit, he got it on his bicep," he says. "It just really resonated with everything."

Coombs attended the opening of his "Notions of Care" on Aug. 14. "It's my first show of all my own work in a museum, so that's crazy," he says.

"It felt so good to see the images how they're meant to be. Because a lot of the time it's just me on my computer screen seeing them," he says. "So being able to see them at the size they are — they're very large — on the metallic paper I print on, with the lighting and everything, to see all the detail and colors... I loved seeing them in their final form."

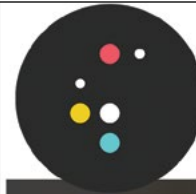
"Notions of Care" is on exhibit at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University until Nov. 7, 2021. For more information, visit the museum's website.



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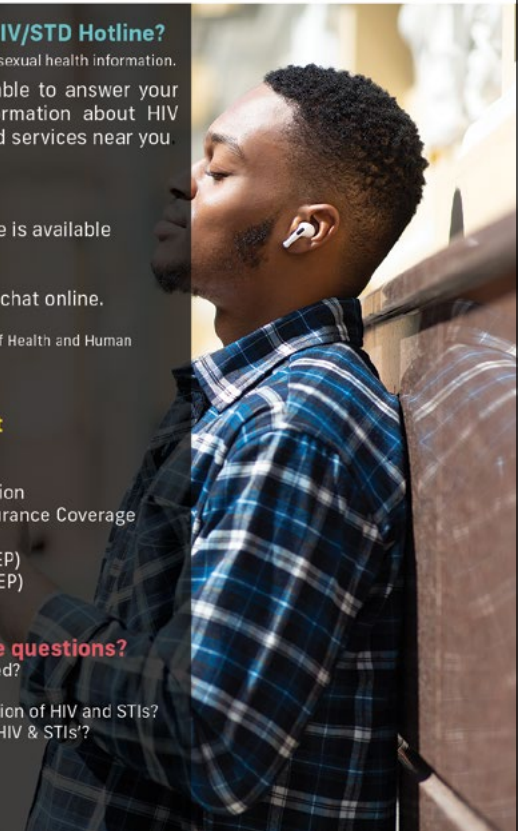
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Shangela Is Spreading Pride With a Purpose, Honey!



(Left to right) Bob the Drag Queen, Eureka O'Hara and Shangela take small-town America by storm on HBO's "We're Here." Photo: HBO

'RuPaul's Drag Queen' Alum Talks Season 2 of 'We're Here'

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

You can't keep Shangela Laquifa Wadley down. Seriously, she came back to "RuPaul's Drag Race" three times. And now, along with co-stars Bob the Drag Queen and Eureka O'Hara, she's back for Season 2 of HBO's "We're Here."

Even when Covid-19 brought the production of the real-life series to a halt during its final episode of its first season, it was months before the drag trio could find themselves back in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to finish prepping their drag kids for their on-stage debut. But in true form, by the time Shangela and the crew returned, it wasn't to hastily cobble together a disrupted season finale — it was with an Emmy Award nod and a second season secured. As Shangela herself would say: "Hallelou!"

On Oct. 11, Season 2 of "We're Here" returned to HBO featuring dozens more stories of self-expression, actualization and discovery through drag. The unscripted series has earned its reputation as a tear-jerker, but never at the expense of the small-town America residents it highlights.

During a call she took from her aunt's house in Paris, Texas, Shangela reflected on the unique insight her own small-town background has given her on "We're Here," why it seems like drag can get anyone to open up, and how the show has given her "an even greater sense of purpose."

"We're Here" is a show that visits conservative small towns across the U.S., which many LGBTQ+ people might find to be intimidating places to visit. But this season you traveled to your home

state of Texas. Did that feel like a homecoming?

Well, I feel like it's such a gift for me to be a part of show like "We're Here," because the show goes across the U.S. to conservative towns that don't really have a huge visible queer presence. And I'm like, "Oh, small conservative town in the U.S.? Didn't have a queer presence? I grew up in one."

I always think it would have been so awesome when I was a kid coming up to see this kind of visibility for artists, drag artists, queer artists just going to small towns and showcasing those particular kinds of stories. So, I think this show is really a huge gift. And when we were able to visit a town in Texas, Del Rio, I was like, "Oh my gosh, totally. Homecoming." Because there's just something about being a Texan and the experience in Texas. And then layer that in with the Black

experience in Texas, the queer experience in Texas — it's something that really unites a lot of us.

You did one show this season in Evansville, Illinois, and a man came up to you with a gun on his hip. But even though he looked intimidating, he loved everything that "We're Here" is doing. Despite your comfort with conservative small towns, do you ever feel nerves when talking about drag in these communities?

I think it's really interesting you bring up Evansville, because that moment outside of the fireworks store just reminded us that even those of us in the queer community, we get stereotyped so much. We meet people and go, "Have you ever come to a drag show?" And they're like, "No," and we're like, "Oh, do you know what drag queens are?" And they have

the worst stereotypes sometimes of what their perception of who a drag queen is. And when that guy walked up it reminded me that even us as queer people, we have stereotypes about other people that we feel might be outside of our community.

A lot of times people say to us, “Oh my god, you’re going to a small town? You poor things. Are you going to be safe? Do you have security? Those small-minded people who don’t support [us].” And then watching the show you learn that you can’t stereotype a town because it’s a small town or because it’s labeled even a small conservative town. And this show definitely shines a light on what the queer experience is like in a lot of these small towns but also the hope that we have that people can change, that the ways of thinking are evolving and the amount of inclusion can be increased if we really go out there and unearth the pockets of support in some of the most unlikely places.

What do you think about drag is so disarming that it makes people open up?

The art of drag is not just about the showmanship of it. Because a lot of people think, “OK, I’m getting in drag: wig, makeup, dress, outfit, heels. OK, I’m a drag queen.” Drag is actually a very cathartic process because you’re breaking down the stereotype or the box that the world may have put you in [or] that you may have put yourself in. And you’re allowing yourself to expand, and you’re allowing yourself to do something that’s uncomfortable, a lot of times, to you. That’s something that our drag kids are going through.

A lot of times they’re like, “I’ve never done this before; I didn’t know it was this much work.” And even in preparing a show for the stage in front of a community of people that they don’t know if they’re going to support them or not, you know, it’s very unsettling to them. But doing something that makes you afraid can a lot of times be very empowering to you, because when you’re able to go through the fire as opposed to walking around it, you come out a stronger person. And that’s what this show does. It inspires strength and courage and love for oneself through their ability to make the leap and become a drag entertainer.

Does “We’re Here” ever cause you to reflect on your own start in drag?

Whenever I’m working with my drag kids, it’s always a nostalgic moment to me. Because for most of them, it’s their very first time

ever being in drag and ever putting on heels, ever putting on a wig, ever putting on a show number. And they’re learning as they go along that drag is not as simple [laughs] as they think it is. But it does offer this great moment of power and strength and excitement.

It reminds me and makes me very nostalgic of when I was baby Shangie and doing it for the first time and just getting that love of not only being on stage but understanding as I continued to grow in drag what it meant. See, my job, in a very short amount of time, is not only to connect with my drag kids and allow them to share their story to work with them emotionally — whether it’s a breakthrough or revisiting some very hard experiences they wouldn’t want to revisit — but it’s about telling

the story and sharing so it unifies us and connects us.

But in addition to that it’s about preparing them for the stage and teaching them that drag is not just about the exterior. Every time you step on the stage is a moment for you to inspire others and connect with others. It’s a moment for you to teach them and educate them about what the drag community is all about.

What do you hope your drag kids will take away from this experience?



My [drag] kids, I want them to feel so prepared and so ready for the moment that they can go out there and they can shine and feel like, “You know what? My momma Shangie prepared me for this. She taught me that it’s not just about, ‘OK, I listened to the song.’” No, baby. You learned the song. You learned the song so well that the people feel it’s coming from your soul, because when we create a number, we are not creating just a little ditty. It’s about telling a message and representing all the pain and all the struggles and all the things you had to overcome in your life. You made it to this point. There is someone out in that audience who is afraid to look at themselves in the mirror, to experience the hardships of life, and then have the hope that it can get better and work toward it. There are people who can’t do that, so you have to represent that on this stage tonight, and do it as a drag queen, so that they know that also who you are does not define who you can be in this world. And in this moment in drag, baby, you are becoming. As Michelle Obama says with the book, honey: “Becoming.” You are *becoming* the drag entertainer that you have created for yourself.

“It’s about telling a message and representing all the pain and all the struggles and all the things you had to overcome in your life.”

See **Shangela**, page 43



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Meet the Michigan Artist Who Won a Muskegon Museum of Art Award For His Painting of a Trans Woman

Bryan Hoffman's 'Kellie Looks Left' Takes Best in Show in Annual Competition

BY JACKIE JONES

Michigan artist Bryan Hoffman was recently awarded the Muskegon Museum of Art's Best of Show Award at the 92nd Michigan Contemporary Art Exhibition for his painting "Kellie Looks Left." The painting depicts a young trans woman named Kellie Durhal, who Hoffman met through his work with the Ruth Ellis Center.

Hoffman tells BTL the win was validating to his work as an HIV-positive artist who's been painting for almost 30 years in New York and Michigan.

"I moved to New York when I was 19 and stayed there until I was 40," he explains. "I was HIV positive and became full-blown AIDS in 1992."

While in New York, he worked as director of advertising and public relations for fashion icon Bill Blass of Bill Blass Group, formerly known as Bill Blass Limited. There, he worked to pay the bills while also privately nurturing a desire to paint. And, in 1996, with a nudge from Blass, he decided to take his art seriously.

"[Bill] said, 'Leave here' because he knew I wanted to paint, and he gave me the kick," Hoffman says. "And after that, I started painting, and I was involved in an organization called Visual AIDS and their archive project, which is focused on HIV-positive artists."

The organization allowed him to show and develop his work, which led to public recognition from magazines like *Art in America*. He says that recognition inspired him to continue with his career for four more years in New York. In 2000, he finally moved back to Michigan.

"My first couple of years back was a big adjustment," he says. "I moved [to Lexington], and there's not really a gay community. That was tough, but then you kind of get into a groove."

That groove included meeting his partner Mark LaChey, falling in love and — after "four or five" years in isolated Lexington — moving to Pleasant Ridge in Oakland County. Then, in 2006, he found the Ruth Ellis Center, which had just opened in



Michigan artist Bryan Hoffman (right) won the Muskegon Museum of Art's Best of Show Award at the 92nd Michigan Contemporary Art Exhibition for his painting of Kellie Durhal, a trans woman. Photos courtesy of Bryan Hoffman

Highland Park. After hearing about the organization's mission to help LGBTQ+ youth, he says he knew he had to get involved in some way.

"I pestered them each week to see if they were looking for volunteers," he says, chuckling. "They just got sick of me, and said, 'Just come in.' So, I was their one volunteer when they first started. And I just fell in love with everything about it."

In time, Hoffman leveraged the volunteer opportunity to a leadership position as board secretary. Looking back, he views this time in his life as pivotal for both his personal life and his artistic growth.

"It's hard to explain the impact that

had on me personally," he reflects. "It changed my work, my art and how I just approached life. The kids there changed my life. Along with people like Kofi [and others]. They nudged me into changing my art from being ironic to being [about] underrepresented people."

Hoffman took that nudge and developed a new project titled the "LGBTQ Portrait." The mission was to focus on LGBTQ+ youth, emphasis on the "T." Working with mainly acrylic while intermittently using graphite, color pencil and gold leaf, he explored his subjects and their identities.

In his artist statement, Hoffman

says he painted his subjects looking directly at the viewer and used circles "to provide a sense of order, chaos, or somewhere in between, depending on where the subject's life [was] at that moment in time." The technique, Hoffman hopes, forces the viewer to focus on the subject "without social cues."

His work with Durhal exemplifies this style. Hoffman says he met Durhal in 2006 and asked to paint her in 2019.

"I painted Kellie when she was coming into her own... because it showed the transition between going from a young person to a more responsible person."



"I painted Kellie when she was coming into her own," he says, noting he chose to paint her looking left with dots settling onto the couch "because it showed the transition between going from a young person to a more responsible person."

After winning the Best of Show award from the Muskegon Museum of Art for his painting of Durhal, he

sent her a percentage of his winnings. He says she was "thrilled."

"I am overwhelmed with joy to find Bryan's portrait of me won Best in Show," Durhal tells BTL. "I never would have thought something from a pivotal point in my life [would] be on the main stage... I am honored to continue positive visibility of transfolk."



Shangela on HBO's "We're Here." Photo: HBO

→ Shangela

Continued from p. 41

Was there a moment during filming where you thought, "We're really making a difference in this person's life"?

Oh my god, every episode. *Every* episode. That's why I'm so excited for people to see "We're Here" and experience the second season because, you know, Season 1 we had six episodes. Season 2 we have eight, so we're telling even more stories. And when I tell you every one — and not just mine [but] Bob's, Eureka's — every story is like, bam, bam, bam! That's why so many people are moved to tears in watching the show, because you find this moment of connection. Because no matter what community we're from, we all know what it feels like to be isolated or to feel discriminated against just for being who you are. There's so much fear in our world because, especially in America, we live in a place where [the LGBTQ+] people have not always been supported and accepted. And a lot of times those of us who live in larger cities or places where there is a huge gay community of support, you forget that there are still these places where people are afraid to even say "gay" out loud for fear that they may be discriminated against, beaten, bullied, looked down upon.

Your positivity is infectious, but how do you find the energy to keep it up in communities where queer identities are not encouraged?

I'm gonna tell you: One part of it is I love drag. I love being a drag entertainer and I love being able to share that with people — especially those who have never had the touchpoint before, right? I'm like, "All right, just wait, baby, you gonna see Shangela; we gonna turn it out." In addition to that, though, this show has given me an even greater sense of purpose.

"RuPaul's Drag Race," I loved being a part of that show, but it was a competition show. You go in, you compete, you're hoping for a cash prize. And it's allowed me to be able to travel the world and connect with so many people around the world in performing. This show is different because it gives me this greater sense of real purpose in life. There is no prize that we're competing for; we're just working to help amplify voices of people who don't get to tell their story very often but deserve to have their stories told. And it allows us, I think, as a community of queer people, to hopefully feel more strongly united in a world where we've had to be socially distant over the last year and been able to get together, whether it's for Prides or just, heck, birthdays, to get to celebrate each other and be like, "Yes, bitch!" You know, it's cool to get to be a part of a show that reminds us of the importance of having a community and remember that everyone doesn't get that opportunity. So, when you see somebody, lift them up. Don't try to push them down. There's enough in the world trying to do that already.

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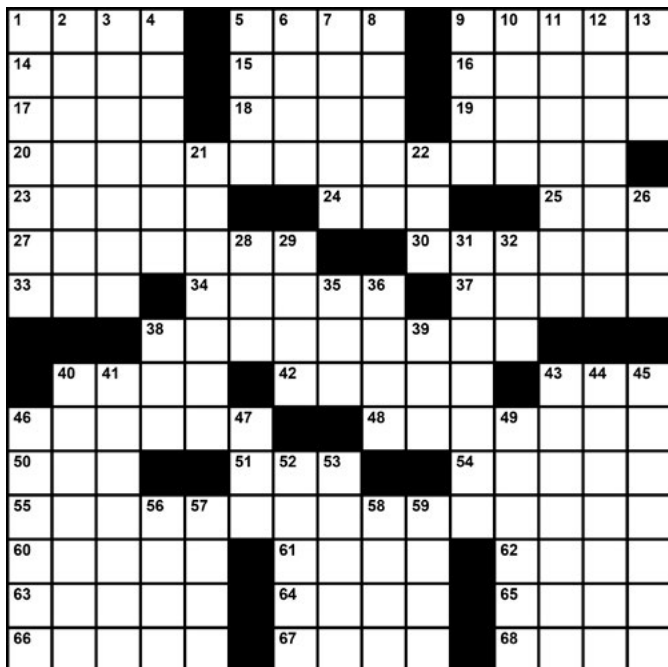
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- 33 Frat hazing prop
 34 New York Liberty and more
 37 Meet prelims
 38 Former husband of Tammy Faye
 40 Some writers work on it
 42 "Cats" was based on his poems
 43 In addition
 46 Way out
 48 Commercial producer
 50 Prez who shared a bed with Joshua
 51 Bob Paris' pride
 54 Small-minded
 55 She played the title role in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
 60 Ram as far up as you can get?
 61 Many a Disney character
 62 Steinbeck title vermin
 63 Olympic award for Megan Rapinoe
 64 TV newsman Brit
 65 Hawkish deity
 66 First partner of 43-Down
 67 One way to cook fruit
 68 Untouchable head
- 6 Collar stain
 7 Where two men get on their knees
 8 Barneys, e.g.
 9 Beginning of "Rent"
 10 "Myra Breckinridge" author Vidal
 11 Salty tasting Asian body
 12 Rita Mae Brown mystery
 13 Above-ground trains
 21 Madonna album
 22 Three-pointers to Kopay
 26 Ends of letters
 28 One of the precious stones
 29 Kemo ____ (Tonto's male partner)
 31 First-rate, to bottoms?
 32 Always, to Emily Dickinson
 35 Grand ____ seizure
 36 Part of a biathlete's gear
 38 It makes a pilot come quickly
 39 Keystone lawmaker
 40 Stopped screwing around
 41 Harris does it over the Senate
 43 He danced in "Silk Stockings"
 44 Picks up on
 45 Reason for a lube
 46 "The ____ Game"
 47 Erie, to fifty million Frenchmen
 49 Renee Richards, once
 52 Sites for three men in a tub
 53 "To Kill a Mockingbird" tomboy
 56 Elite Navy diver
 57 Mykonos, for one
 58 Plate of Bean's
 59 De novo

The Eyes of Tammy Faye

Across

- 1 Tops
 5 Mardi ____
 9 With a wide-open mouth
 14 Went lickety-split
 15 Light tune
 16 Reef buildup
 17 Stephen McCauley's " ____ Enough"
- 18 Not fooled by
 19 Cafeteria stack
 20 Portrayer of 38-Across in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
 23 Oral report source
 24 Gas station abbr.
 25 Nurse in a bar
 27 Wieners
 30 They get roped at gay rodeos

Down

- 1 Charge d'affaires
 2 Flat braid for Whoopi
 3 Like the brainy bunch
 4 Blow a fuse
 5 Look tickled pink

See p. 36 for answers

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If you're over 18 years old,
have NOT been tested for
HIV in the past 3 months or
more, are currently
sexually active, having
receptive anal sex, and
don't always use condoms,
you may be eligible!

Taking hormones? You can
continue to take them
during the study!

**LOOKING TO
INCLUDE PEOPLE OF
COLOR AND
TRANSGENDER
INDIVIDUALS**

Call (248) 544 - 9300 and
select extension 7 today
to see if you qualify!