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WORLD AIDS DAY

AIDS Activist Peter
Staley on His Memoir
'Never Silent'

TICKING HIS WAY TO THE TOP

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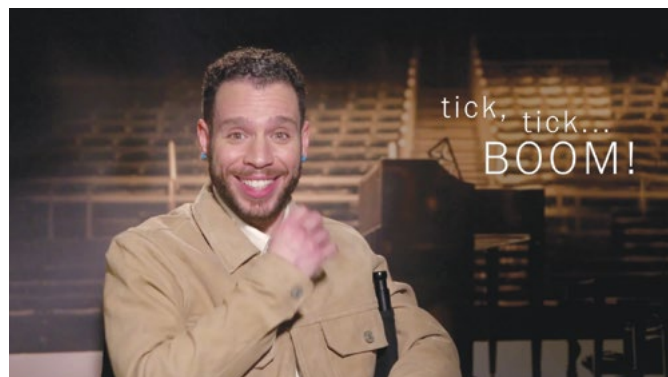


12 COVER STORY

Photo: Netflix



Find Pride Source on YouTube to check out all of our latest videos, including new interviews with JoJo Siwa, Robin de Jesús, and Jinx Monsoon and BenDeLaCreme.



VOL. 2948 • NOVEMBER 25, 2021

ISSUE 1188

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS

Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Tom Wesley
tom@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL

Editorial Director

Chris Azzopardi
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

News and Features Editor

Jackie Jones
jackie@pridesource.com

News & Feature Writers

Lawrence Ferber, Ellen Knoppov, Jason A. Michael, Drew Howard, Jonathan Thurston, D'Anne Witkowski, Jill A. Greenberg, Eve Kucharski

Copy Editor

Sarah Hunt

Columnists

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown, Mikey Rox, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Dana Rudolph

CREATIVE

Cartoonists

Paul Berg

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen, Roxanne Frith, Tih Penfil

ADVERTISING & SALES

Tom Wesley, 734-263-1476
tom@pridesource.com

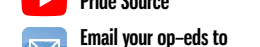
Ann/Andy Cox, 248-613-2513
anncox@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now

BY JACKIE JONES

Listen, we know you're tired. This year has been relentless. So you can imagine how excited we are about the extended weekends and holiday observances coming up. We're ready to relax, celebrate and recharge. If you're on the same page as us, here are five queer things you can do during your holiday downtime.

Reflect on Loved Ones at Marygrove's Solidarity and Unity Event

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 1, come together for a day of Solidarity and Unity on the Marygrove College historic campus in Detroit. The World AIDS Day Community Committee (WADCC) will celebrate World AIDS Day 2021 in their annual ceremony. Chair of WADCC Ron Doe says this year he's "most excited that we will be able to spend some time together and that we will be in person." There will be free food, raffles, educational opportunities and more. In addition, family members and friends whose loved ones have passed away will reflect on their loss in a slide show, which will be presented during the event. Temperatures will be taken, and masks are encouraged for unvaccinated people.

Register for the event on Eventbrite.



Photo courtesy of Alexxnder



Find a Community at Transgender Life Support

If you're a transgender person who recently came out, or an ally looking for support, then this group is for you.

Attendees meet at Ferndale's Affirmations Community Center every Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. and online through Discord. "We have a lot of experienced people in the group, and that helps a lot of new people that are coming into the community," said Helena Blakemore, the group's facilitator. "It's really grown well. We're one of the largest growing trans support groups in the country." In addition to a safe space, the group also provides a directory of businesses and organizations that are allies to the transgender community. Registration isn't necessary.

For more information go to Affirmations' website.



Photo: A24

Watch a Dysfunctional Family Survive on Thanksgiving

Queer "Impeachment" star Beanie Feldstein, along with Steven Yuen ("Minari"), Amy Schumer ("Trainwreck") and Richard Jenkins ("The Shape of Water"), star in the Showtime and A24 film "The Humans." The film, about a dysfunctional family, takes place during Thanksgiving night in New York, as three generations discuss Brigid's (Feldstein) recent move in with her boyfriend Richard (Yuen) and Aimee's (Schumer) recent breakup with her girlfriend. The movie is based on the Pulitzer-nominated, Tony-winning play of the same name from writer-director Stephen Karam.

The film premieres on Nov. 24. on Showtime.



Photo: Atlas Illustrations

Participate in #GivingTuesday for Black and Brown Women

LGBT Detroit's Woman 2 Woman welcomes all in their day of global generosity as they celebrate #GivingTuesday on Nov. 30. The group recognizes the day as a day of giving in any way to help support Black and Brown lesbian/bi-attractual women in their fight to elevate their voices. Woman 2 Woman's monthly podcasts series, entitled Lingo Function, is aimed at providing physical and emotional well-being.

For more information and to donate, go to lgbtdetroit.org/give.



Photo: Detroit Zoological Society

Stroll Through Detroit Zoo's Wild Lights Event

What could be queerer than strolling through the glitz and glam of the Detroit Zoo's annual light show Wild Lights? Not really sure, to be honest. For 40 magical nights from Nov. 20 through Jan. 9, 2022, you can view more than 280 sculptures on display at the zoo. According to a statement by Detroit Zoological Society, the annual event "receives glowing reviews each year by visitors who have made it a holiday tradition." Guests will enjoy uniquely designed, festive vignettes and holiday treats. Ticket packages range from \$17 to \$38, and the viewings are on select nights.

For more information and to purchase tickets, go to the Detroit Zoo's website.



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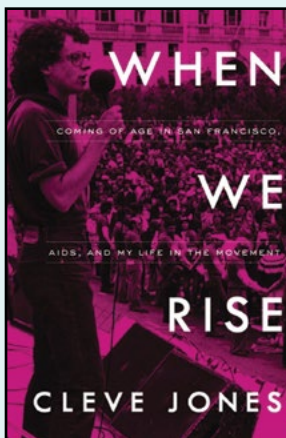


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5 AIDS-Related Must-Read Biographies

BY LAWRENCE FERBER



Peter Staley's "Never Silent" isn't the only outstanding memoir or biography by those who endured the worst years of the AIDS crisis (Sarah Schulman's mammoth 736-page "Let The Record Show," also released this year, is built around 200 interviews with ACT UP New York members including Staley). Here are five to add to your shelf or audiobook queue.

Borrowed Time (1988) Paul Monette

Award-winning author Monette, whose work included poetry, essays and movie novelizations, penned this wrenching, moving chronicle of how AIDS cruelly stole away his life partner, Roger Horwitz, between 1985-86 despite privileged access to early treatments.

"An eloquent testimonial to the power of love and the devastation of loss," wrote Publisher's Weekly. Sadly, Monette himself also succumbed to AIDS in 1995, just short of the protease inhibitor cocktails that brought so many back from the brink.

At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament (1992) Derek Jarman

Late queer British filmmaker Jarman was a provocative trailblazer (and launched the career of his muse, Tilda Swinton), and his last film, "Blue," was made when he went blind due to AIDS complications. Re-released in 2010 and easily found via Amazon and other retailers, his 1992 book serves as an impassioned biography and, at times, a pissed-off call to arms.

Body Counts (2014) Sean Strub

Strub, the founder of POZ Magazine, recounts everything from his youth as a "politics-obsessed," closeted young man working at the U.S. Capitol in D.C. to, when diagnosed with HIV, diving into activism with ACT UP and encounters with the likes of Gore Vidal, Keith Haring and Bill Clinton. He also tells of many heroes and villains in the AIDS pandemic. Staley credits Strub's memoir, which he also appears in, as an inspiration for writing his own.

Plague Years: A Doctor's Journey Through the AIDS Crisis (2020) Ross A. Slotten, M.D.

A young family physician in Chicago, Slotten's first year of practice in 1984 saw his career and personal life take an unexpected turn. Patients with HIV/AIDS became a focus for Slotten — while he worried about his own chance of contracting HIV as a gay man — including an ex-lover he feared may be positive. A compelling insider's view from the medical frontline.

When We Rise (2017) Cleve Jones

A Harvey Milk protege who carried on the trailblazing gay politician's iconic bullhorn — literally! — and founder of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, tireless activist Jones put his colorful life, including a generous dollop of sex and celebrity namedrops, to the page in this breezy yet decades-spanning autobiography. Fun fact: it was mostly written during late night sessions at "Milk" screenwriter Dustin Lance Black's dining room table!



Courtesy of Rick Reinhard

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

AIDS Activist Peter Staley on His Memoir 'Never Silent,' His Museum-Worthy Penis and Friend Dr. Fauci

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

A key member of AIDS activist group ACT UP and a named plaintiff in the ongoing lawsuit against Gilead and other pharma companies for illegally extending the patent of PrEP and HIV medication tenofovir, Peter Staley will tell you that his life is an open book. Yet it took years of nudging from friends, including Anderson Cooper, to actually write that book himself.

Released in October, Staley's "Never Silent: ACT UP And My Life In Activism" (Chicago Review Press) is a jaw-droppingly frank 269-page read boasting a foreword by Anderson and back cover blurbs by Hillary Clinton and "Angels in America" playwright Tony Kushner.

While Staley's experiences with activism and HIV — he was diagnosed with what they called "AIDS-related complex" in 1985 — comprised part of David France's acclaimed 2012 documentary

and 2016 book "How To Survive A Plague," "Never Silent" details firsthand his personal highs and lows, including sexual and romantic, and his transformation from a closeted Wall Street bond trader to out-and-proud full-time activist. It includes some of ACT UP's most outrageous, effective actions, like infiltrating big pharma and government offices and covering hateful GOP Senator Jesse Helms' house in a giant condom.

The book also delves into the infighting that led to ACT UP splintering, Staley's later crystal meth addiction and his subsequent (and outrageous) street poster campaign to combat its use, how he stopped the Oscar-winning movie "Dallas Buyers Club" from being subverted by an AIDS denialist screenwriter (Vanity Fair recently published a gripping excerpt:), and exploits with policy power players like Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Recently, Staley, who also co-founded and serves as secretary of PrEP4All, discussed the book's

numerous revelations, things he left out, Matthew McConaughey, and X-rated bucket list accomplishments.

How did you become friends with Anderson Cooper, and how did he encourage you to write a memoir?

Well, he was blown away by [the 2012 documentary] "How To Survive A Plague" and reached out by email and said, "If you ever want to get together, I'd really love that." I jumped on that right away of course, and we had dinner and he gave me a tour of his house, I met the boyfriend, and that's how it started. And within a week of that dinner he sent me a text: "You should write a memoir." That's when I disclosed to him how much I *hated* writing, and he said, "It's not that bad; you write a little bit at night before bed and by the end of the year you've got half a book written." My response was: "I'm not going to end my day doing something I hate. You don't

realize how much I hate it!" And I didn't start writing until 2017 or 2018.

What was one mistake you wanted to avoid while writing this?

The biggest was being a blowhard. Overstating my importance. I think I've been pretty good at self-reflection most of my life, and I'm proud of what I've done, but I'm incredibly conscious of the fact that none of my first five years as an activist would have been noticed by anybody or made any difference if it wasn't for the fact [that] I was just one member of a huge movement. 99.9 percent of my power derived from the collective for a good five years.

I was surprised by your level of frankness, especially regarding your sex life. The reveal that you contracted herpes even before your HIV diagnosis seems important, given how stigmatized that virus remains even today.

Before AIDS, herpes was on the cover of Time magazine and people would commit suicide when they got a herpes diagnosis. It was AIDS before AIDS. It was a really horrifying diagnosis so, yeah, it was rough. But to be honest, I didn't consciously think of that, to fight herpes stigma. You couldn't tell my HIV seroconversion story without mentioning that's how I found a doctor who helped save my life, [the late] Dr. Dan William.

Is there any progress on a herpes vaccine? It feels like doctors and pharma have just thrown their hands up.

It's true. But if I [take acyclovir] every day I never have an outbreak. Acyclovir came out after my HIV diagnosis, and I asked if I should stay on it every day and my doctor said yes, so I've been on it every day since and have not had an outbreak.

You discuss your relationship with the late journalist and filmmaker Robert Hilferty, whose movie "Stop The Church" famously documented ACT UP's "die-in" at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989. However, you don't mention his tragic

suicide in 2009. Why is that?

I also don't mention that Jef Mittleman, the beautiful Oberlin boy, died of an overdose, possibly a suicide — we don't know — in a hotel room in NYC in 1994. The book is episodic, and each chapter tells of one specific action or period of time in my life, and if you were central to that narrative as I'm telling it, you're in the book. It's 99 percent me and 1 percent the people next to me. I don't tell the rest of their stories, because that would chop up the narrative.

But I loved Robert. That grin and laugh, there was something a little wicked about the guy, like he always had some goods on you. He was really perceptive and could read a person so quickly, and my god he was sexy, and I don't think he'll mind a posthumous rating: he was *incredible* in bed!

Is there any story you left out and would, if you ever do a follow-up, include first?

Yeah, about a failed action, hopefully with a successful second attempt. I posted on Facebook in late August this cryptic message

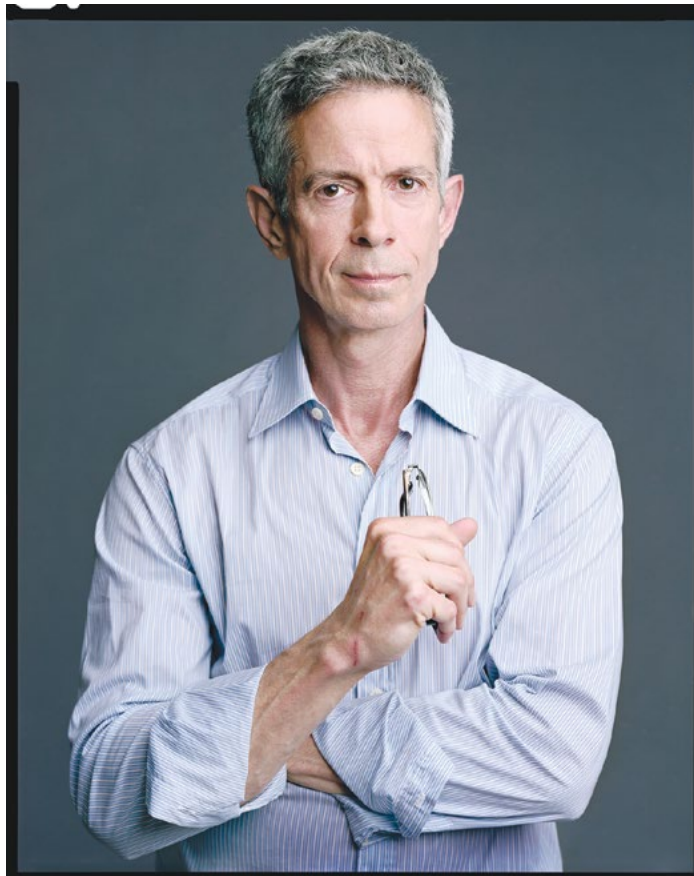


Photo courtesy of Independent Publishers Group

about how I was mourning the five-year passing of an action that failed, but might be reattempted. It involved dozens of people, a substantial budget, and was all very hush-hush. We managed to extract ourselves from the situation without getting arrested, and that allows us to attempt it again in the future. The issue [it addresses] has not gone away. But if I do a memoir in my '80s, it'll be in that one!

See Peter Staley, page 26

UPCOMING: FALL SPECIALS

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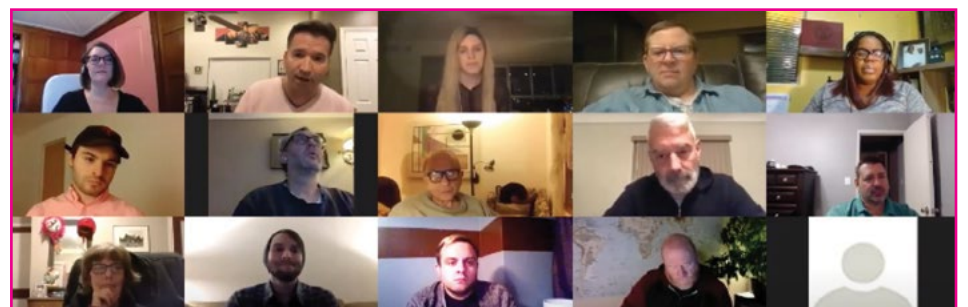
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Photo courtesy of Alessandro Biascioli

6 Ways to Combat HIV Stigma

BY JACKIE JONES

We've come a long way when it comes to HIV and AIDS misinformation. But the stigma and discrimination surrounding the conditions during the height of the AIDS epidemic in the '80s still lingers today. For patients, the impact can be devastating — not only can medical biases and discrimination lead to medical mistreatment, but it can also be detrimental to their mental and physical well-being.

“People living with HIV often internalize the stigma they experience and begin to develop a negative self-image,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “They may fear they will be discriminated against or judged negatively if their HIV status is revealed.”

For the LGBTQ+ community, who are disproportionately affected by the disease, we are constantly fighting against this stigma. Here are six ways to combat it.

Educate yourself and others

It's to your and their advantage to know the facts. Discrimination is rooted in ignorance about the virus and how it spread.

Stopping misinformation first starts with educating yourself — and maybe your support group — about the virus. Contact local public health professionals such as Ruth Ellis Center (REC), Corktown Health or Affirmations about HIV/AIDS information, counseling and testing.

“Over the last 40 years, HIV has evolved into a treatable chronic disease,” says Maureen Connolly, medical director at REC. “In my mind, as a provider, [HIV is] on par with something like diabetes or something like asthma, where, yes, it does require attention, and it does require care, but people can live really long, healthy lives.”

Know your rights

Those with HIV or AIDS are protected under

federal laws. Unfortunately, there aren't many, but laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act offer solace in the workplace, the housing market and other settings. For example, ADA requires employers to accommodate employees with disabilities such as HIV/AIDS.

“Persons who are discriminated against because they are regarded as being HIV-positive are also protected,” according to the Department of Justice website. “For example, the ADA would protect a person who is denied an occupational license or admission to a school on the basis of a rumor or assumption that he has HIV or AIDS, even if he does not.”

Open up to those you trust

Not everyone needs to know your HIV status. That, of course, is something that you get to disclose based on your timing.

Before divulging that information, sit down and think about who you trust enough to share

your status. For some, that decision is easy, but for others, culture, religion or medical mistrust stops them from disclosing even the possibility of being exposed. Although it's stressful, having open conversations about HIV and AIDS is an enormous relief, no matter your status. Even reaching out to trusted medical professionals offers help.

“What I find to be really challenging is [that] the stigma on HIV and AIDS is stuck in the '90s,” Connolly says. “The emotions around it really do not reflect reality anymore. If someone is living with HIV and is on treatment, [and] the virus in their body is really low, then they can't pass it on through sex... If people are taking care of themselves, then they're taking care of their partner.”

Seek safe support

Support can be as simple as someone willing to hold your hand during a difficult day. It doesn't take much. But knowing that help is available from a safe, comforting person can make a significant positive impact on patient health.

According to a study conducted by National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), emotional support has “powerful health benefits for people living with HIV.” These benefits include: “less depression, positive health behaviors such as adherence to medication, improved coping and quality of life and slower progression of the disease to AIDS.”

If you're not comfortable seeking comfort from friends and family, locate a public health department to find HIV/AIDS support groups or a counselor. If you're lucky enough to have a close network, then consider volunteering to help dismantle some fears.

Become an advocate

This one may be hard for those who just received their diagnosis. But for those who've been battling the virus for years: consider working in politics. It's probably one of the best ways to counter the circulating stigmas and discrimination on HIV and AIDS.

Get tested

Contact your primary care physician or a local clinic to get a test. According to Kyle Taylor, development and community relations manager at Affirmations, one of the best ways to combat HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination is to use their free testing services. He suggests utilizing the partnership resources Affirmations shares with Matrix Mac Health, Unified and the Oakland County Health Department to get counseling or to get information, especially for those facing a new diagnosis.



A Quick Guide to Deciding If PrEP Is Right For You

The HIV Game-Changer Is Free to Most People

BY JASON A. MICHAEL and SARAH HUNT

Since it was approved by the FDA in 2012, HIV-prevention drug PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) has been hailed as a game-changer and an undisputed success in the war against HIV/AIDS.

Until recently, however, the life-changing medication was out of reach for many people because of its high price tag — depending on which of the two brands prescribed (Truvada or Descovy, which is approved only for cisgender males and transgender females), the drug can cost more than \$20,000 annually without insurance.

Today, Michigan residents can receive PrEP under a federal program available through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, often free of charge.

The “Ready, Set, PrEP” program helps people without prescription drug coverage who have tested negative for HIV and who hold a prescription for PrEP from a physician. While medications are fully covered for those who qualify for the program, patients may need to share the costs of clinic visits and lab tests, depending on their incomes.

Michigan residents can also connect with local resources like Corktown Health Center, ACCESS Clinic, Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG) and Unified to get started.

David Ponsart, high impact prevention program manager at Matrix Human Services, recently broke down the myths and mysteries of PrEP, so if you’re wondering whether PrEP is right for you, this list is a great place to start.

What should I consider before deciding to go on PrEP?

Before you begin taking PrEP, Ponsart suggests undergoing a personal assessment. Ask yourself questions like:

- Are you thinking about PrEP because you are inconsistent about using condoms or don’t use them at all?
- Do you have a partner or partners that are HIV positive and not undetectable?
- Do you like to have receptive anal intercourse (bottom) with multiple partners known or unknown?
- Are you thinking about using PrEP while you are single and seeking a long-term monogamous relationship?
- Is PrEP your primary prevention tool or in conjunction with condoms? Does the risk of HIV infection outweigh the costs of PrEP or the side effects?

These, according to Ponsart, are all very important things to think about, and your answers to these questions will help you and your health provider make decisions about your treatment. Understanding your own personal risk and thinking carefully about how you plan to use PrEP for your sexual health practice is the most important part of starting PrEP.

See **PrEP**, page 26

Not ready to ask your doctor for an HIV test?
Don't want to go to the clinic during COVID?



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This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

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- ▶ Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

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- ▶ Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- ▶ BIKTARVY and other medicines may affect each other. Ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist about medicines that interact with BIKTARVY, and ask if it is safe to take BIKTARVY with all your other medicines.

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- ▶ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. If you develop new or worse kidney problems, they may tell you to stop taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- ▶ **The most common side effects of BIKTARVY** in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (6%), and headache (5%).

These are not all the possible side effects of BIKTARVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking BIKTARVY.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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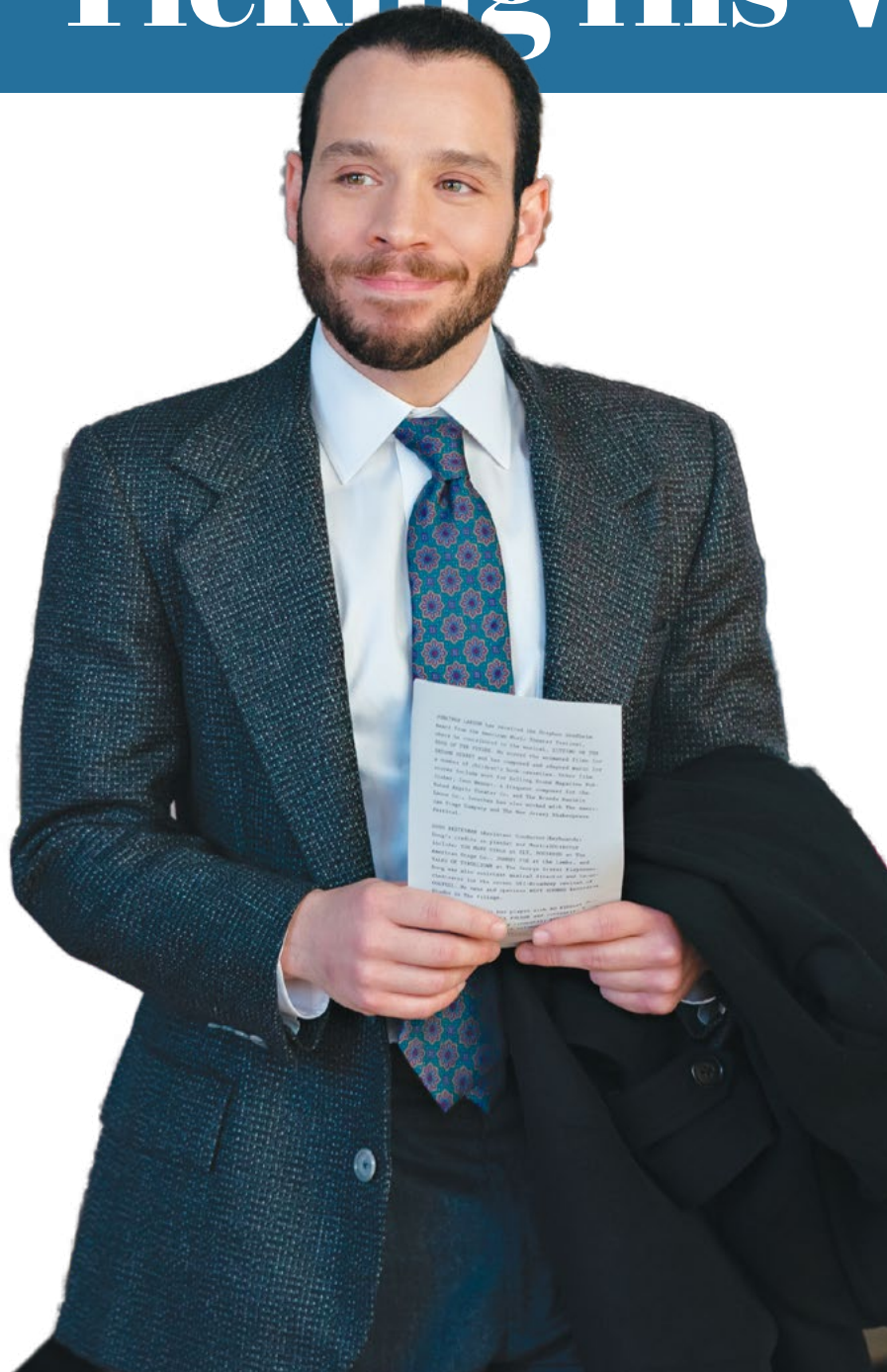
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 **GILEAD**

Ticking His Way to the Top



Robin de Jesús as Michael in "Tick, Tick... Boom!" Photo: Netflix

Robin de Jesús Starred in Broadway's 'Rent' in 2005. Now, He Has a Memorable Role in the New Film About Its Creator.

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It's a Jane Fonda kind of day for Robin de Jesús. The 37-year-old actor says so on Zoom, where he appears from Beverly Hills, his face beaming in that Fonda light, for a day of press to talk about "Tick, Tick... Boom!"

The film has earned positive reviews for its story about Jonathan Larson, the creator of "Rent" who wrote the music and book for "Tick, Tick... Boom!" — first performed in 1990 — as

he was desperate for his major musical-theater breakout hit as a struggling artist in New York City's SoHo. He's got great friends, some queer. Less great is his apartment, but hey, it's NYC and you do what you have to if you want to be a star playwright. The film is set against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis that tore through the LGBTQ+ community, ruthlessly killing some of the people Larson loved most.

Larson did, of course, eventually become a star thanks to "Rent," but died the morning

of its Off-Broadway preview performance, on January 25, 1996, after suffering an aortic dissection. He was 35.

Directed by Lin-Manuel Miranda with a screenplay by Steven Levenson, the film adaptation of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" — in theaters and on Netflix — finds Andrew Garfield in deep as Larson, and delightfully so. His embodiment is simply radiant. But as his best friend and roommate Michael, Jesús meets Garfield at his level. The film is Jesús's second for Netflix that started as a stage production. He played Emory in both the star-studded Broadway revival of "The Boys in the Band" in 2018 and last year's Netflix film adaptation.

Here, Jesús talks about the rare opportunity to depict a loving relationship between a straight man, Larson, and his character; how he'd definitely be game for a sequel to the 2003 queer cult film "Camp," where he played a gay teen, and also almost giving up on acting altogether because he wasn't happy about the LGBTQ+ roles he was being offered.

I watched "Tick, Tick... Boom!" twice in 24 hours. It moved me deeply. Did it feel the same way for you as it might for the audience?

Yeah. I think growing up, being a kid who was a nerd and loved [the musical] "Sunday in the Park with George," a story about a writer and his relationship with his creativity and how he navigated that, I always said to myself, "I hope I get to have a story like that someday." And that's very much what this is. It feels very personal for us, because everyone in the cast knows what it's like to negotiate all of these questions.

Yeah, I was thinking about that. I also was thinking about the fact that you got your start on stage in "Rent" on Broadway in 2005.

Ain't it weird?

I don't know. You tell me.

It's weird that it's not weird, if that makes sense? It's weird that I've been in this business 20 years now, which means that there are certain relationships that I've had time to marinate, so that when I dip back into them, they're so much richer. They're so full-bodied, and that's what this was, because if I was havin' a rough day, or struggling with something, there was always the reminder of, like, either a parallel to "Rent," something I was going through, or just the gratitude that I was feeling that I got to touch this man's words again, 'cause there's something very special about Jonathan. Jonathan's simplicity

allows his very, very human themes to come out, because it's never like, "Oh, there's some bad guy." It's: "It's life. It's complicated." It's people establishing boundaries that are healthy for them, but might not be healthy for you, even though I love you. [Laughs.] That to me is so much more human.

How much did you learn about Jonathan that was new to you while doing the movie?

There definitely were new things, but the thing that was the coolest was to have Jonathan's sister, Julie Larson, on set, 'cause she's one of the executive producers on the film. Even just having her presence provided different information, like knowing that's what his sister looked like and that she had that relationship with him. There's something about her presence that was very grounding, and really cool.

How deep did you get into Michael and his backstory? Did you have to do a lot of research?

It's funny, because with this, it was very different than other things, because Steven Levenson wrote such a great screenplay. There was so much meat on my character; there was so much there. So many layers that I felt like the script alone gave me so much. Of course, I did research — more research on the periodness of it all, reminding myself of the AIDS epidemic and how it affected the climate of New York City at that time. But the big thing I needed to do was just get to that open, vulnerable place. Having played so many big, big characters, this for me was a much more subtle performance than people might be used to from my previous work. So, I wanted to make sure that that emotional availability was ever-present.

You mean, more subtle than Emory in "The Boys in the Band"?

[Laughs.] Yeah, exactly. Exactly!

I was thinking about what it would be like to have Emory and Michael in the same room.

[Laughs.] Oh, that would be so funny. I actually feel like they would get along. I love the idea of two queer Puerto Ricans living in New York City in different periods just, like, sharing stories.

Did your involvement in "Rent" have anything

See **Robin**, page 34



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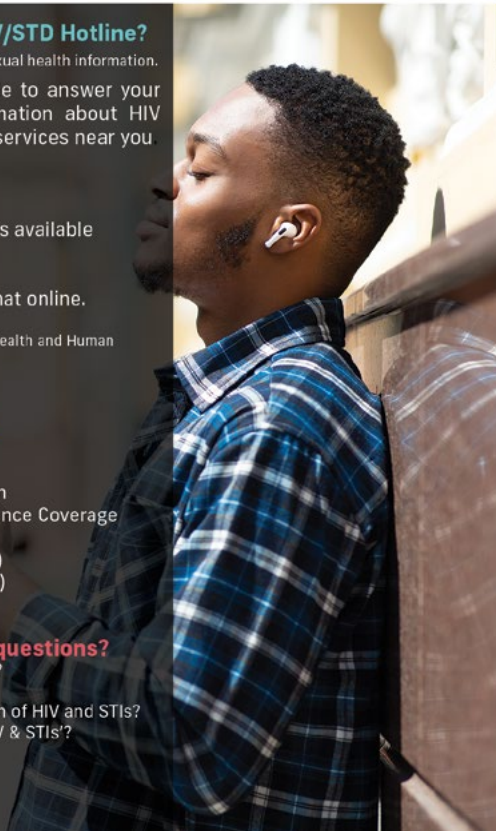
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Dana Nessel Has Nothing to Apologize For

BY TOM WESLEY



“Two Bloody Marys” is what Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel consumed at the MSU-UM men’s football game on Oct. 30, according to a statement she released on Nov. 10 via Facebook. Michiganders were quick to applaud and deride the Nessel — the comments made in response to her official statement showing just how nasty we are to each other.

Prior to being co-publisher of *Between The Lines*, I worked a decade with college students who, like attorney general Dana Nessel, had too much to drink. In fact, I started my career at Michigan State University and have talked to thousands of 18 year olds about alcohol, weed, and navigating the turbulence of college. Hundreds of them had to talk to me because they were drinking at a football game.

“Despite drinking too much, Nessel did it right: a designated driver and a supportive wife helped her out with fluids and painkillers.”

When I met with the unending number of first-year college men at MSU — because that’s the largest demographic who has trouble responsibly consuming alcohol in college — I often asked what messages they received about drinking. This was a decade ago when Pitbull’s party persona was all over the airwaves next to cans of Bud Light and nearnaked women. Most understood the

messaging: to have a good time, drink. To get girls, drink. But it doesn’t matter if the students were cognizant of it — the marketing strategy works. A lot of major brands — be it sports leagues or entertainment — are inseparable from alcohol.

In my experience, most people have to learn for themselves not to drink too much. One or two bad nights can teach a young person to take it easier next time. But adults, given their experience as young people, know that they can make mistakes because they take precautions and plan appropriate when consuming a few brewskis.



Viewpoint

Reflections on Transgender Day of Remembrance

BY JASON A. MICHAEL



After writing for *Between The Lines* and *Pride Source* for the past 22 years, I’ve lost track of exactly how many Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) vigils I’ve attended. This year was the 20th year

for the Metro Detroit vigil. So, I figure I’ve covered at least half of those. But, while attending this year’s vigil, sadly, I noticed it was no different from any other.

On Friday, Nov. 19, a day before the actual TDOR, the Metro Detroit service took place at Zion Lutheran in Ferndale. There, the names of 310 transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals from across the world who died tragic, violent deaths over the past year were read aloud.

So far in 2021, 72 transgender people, mainly transgender women of color, have been killed here in the U.S. alone. Unfortunately, when they die, mention of their deaths cannot often be found on TV or in the newspaper. And when they do appear, the victims are often misgendered or referred to by what the trans community calls a “dead name.”

I know a little something about dead names. I may be a white, cisgender homosexual, but I’m one whose father threatened to kill him for being gay if ever he should see him again. Then he told me I was dead to him already and ordered me to change my name. So I did, and like many transgender men and women, the day I did was something of an Independence Day for me. I felt free and like my true self for the first time.

Now, please be clear. I’m not comparing my situation in any way, shape or form

“These were real living, breathing people, and they had people who loved them and whom they loved.”

to what trans folks go through daily. I’m simply saying that, as a reporter, my personal experience with a “dead name” helps me to empathize greatly and take great care to get it right when I’m covering

See **Reflections**, next page

www.PrideSource.com

→ Dana Nessel

Continued from previous page

“Two Bloody Marys” can mean a lot of different things. Were the shots of vodka poured and measured? How much food did she have in her system? Was she under any stress at the time? What about hydration? Over what period of time was the alcohol consumed? All relevant questions, that is, for someone who actually needs to hear it.

But Dana Nessel is not an 18-year-old frosh at MSU. Dana Nessel is an adult who is allowed to consume alcohol. She did so, and then after realizing she needed assistance, she asked for it.

Gold star! Seriously. There was no DUI, no heavy machinery, no operating

of deadly weapons. Just a bunch of grief over a football game.

It doesn't take a lot to be a responsible consumer of alcohol. Know how much you're drinking and how your body will respond. If something goes wrong, ask for help. Don't drive, don't perform medical procedures. And for the love of those around, don't text your ex.

Despite drinking too much, Nessel did it right: a designated driver and a supportive wife helped her out with fluids and painkillers. So unless Nessel actually did throw up on someone — then, yes, in that case she should apologize to that person — we can only hope that all those griping about “Tailgate-gate” check their righteous judgment at the door.

→ Reflections

Continued from previous page

trans issues in general. This is especially true when I'm given the somber task of reporting on another senseless murder of a trans person here in Michigan.

Shelly “Treasure” Hilliard, whose body was found in bits and pieces scattered around Detroit's east side is a name I'll never forget. Coko Williams, shot and left in the street to die, was another. Then there was Kelly Stough, known to many as Keanna Mattel, who was shot by a man who self-identified as a “preacher.” And I can't forget about Natasha Keianna, whose lifeless body lay in her car decomposing for over a week before authorities responded to multiple pleas to investigate from the man whose house the car sat in front of.

But while I remember the names, I never knew the individuals. But someone did. Lots of people did. These were real living, breathing people, and they had people who loved them and whom they loved. Many had families, friends, people who valued them, sometimes relied on or counted on them. Some were parents, and all of them were somebody's children. And none of them deserved to die for simply trying life as their authentic selves.

I don't know the struggle of being transgender, and I've often remarked that I thank God I don't. Being gay, and coming out in the '80s while AIDS was ravaging the community, was hard enough. Still, I look to my transgender friends, and I admire their bravery and courage. From the friend I escorted to the University of Michigan Hospital and waited on while she underwent a seven-hour long gender confirmation surgery to my own niece, who I watched embrace her trans identity from the ground up, taking her shopping for clothes and to early doctor's appointments to get on estrogen and testosterone blockers.

Then there are the transgender community legends I've written about and gotten to know over the decades, like Rachel Crandall-Crocker and Michelle-Fox Phillips. And next generation leaders like Lilianna Angel Reyes and Jey'nce Poindexter Mizrahi. I don't just write about them. I look at them with awe. I don't have half the strength that any one of them do.

Transgender people live fearlessly. In a sense, I suppose they have to. If fear were something they were capable of giving into, they wouldn't be who they were — who they truly were. So I remember the dead, but I also salute the living. Not just on one day of the year, but every day of the year.

Creep Of The Week

Montana Senator Wants to Know Why LGBTQ+ Keep Hitting Themselves

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Do you have the devil in you? If not, then what are you waiting for? 'Tis the Season, after all.

Flu shot season, that is. And COVID-19 vaccination booster season. And if saving your own life or the life of someone else — not to mention keeping yourself and others out of the hospital and from suffering a serious illness — isn't a big enough incentive, how about a big ol' helping of Satan?

According to “Demon Slayer” Stella Immanuel, getting the COVID-19 vaccine puts the devil in you.

“If you've taken this vaccine, there's a way out,” she tells right wing talk show host Pete Santilli, a self-proclaimed “raw & real” commentator. “If you repent and cry out to God for Mercy, he will deliver you.”

OR you could look at the vaccine as a gift from God? I mean, if you believe in that. If not, it's fun to tell people your blood is flowing with the power of Lucifer.

To be clear: Vaccines are not witchcraft. Get vaccinated if you haven't already. JFC.

Speaking of JFC, a State Senator in Montana had some really charitable things to say about LGBTQ+ people recently.

The Missoulian reported that on Nov. 17, Sen. Theresa Manzella (a Republican, obviously), said out loud into a microphone during something called the “God, Country, Family” tour, that if LGBTQ+ people didn't want to experience physical violence, then they should have decided to NOT be LGBTQ+. “They like to play the protected class card and they're the minority and they're discriminated against and they're scared to walk down the street hand in hand,” Manzella said. “I've got to tell you, I think those are normal consequences associated with the choices they made.”

Apparently this is the Christian way of saying, “Fuck around and find out.”

Manzella has since said she was taken out of context, but Missoulian reporter Skylar Rispens says she was not. According to Rispens, who posted a transcript of the remarks on Twitter, Manzella continued, “We don't prevent them from doing that. Besides being a minority, my rights and your rights are given to me and you as individuals by God and protected by the Constitution, and the smallest minority on earth is the individual. And those who deny



Sen. Theresa Manzella. Photo: Twitter

individual rights cannot claim to be defenders of minorities.”

Huh. Okay. So SHE has rights that can't be denied, but LGBTQ+ people don't, I guess?

It all comes down to religious freedom, see. Why should good Christians have to — oh, I don't know — refrain from violence against their fellow man if they think their fellow man is a pervert?

“My right to live a righteous lifestyle based on my sincerely held beliefs does not end where their choice to live a perverse lifestyle begins,” Manzella said.

Also, according to The Missoulian, there were 15 protesters outside of this event who “donned pride flags, a rainbow fish windsock and handmade signs along the road to greet attendees on their way to the church and show their support of local LGBTQ youth.” Thank you sincerely to those 15 people.

Oh, and apparently the church's “tour” was held at a location on Clown Lane? CLOWN LANE? And people say that God doesn't have a sense of humor.

Unsurprisingly, people are upset about Manzella's comments. The Democrats in Montana's legislature want her stripped of her seat on the Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee. According to the Billings Gazette, House Minority Leader Kim Abbott and Senate Minority Leader Jill Cohenour sent a letter to Senate President Mark Blasdel, a Republican.

“Sen. Manzella's remarks are nothing short of offensive, dangerous and unacceptable,” the letter read. “LGBTQ Montanans have always been valued members of our communities, and they deserve the basic dignity and respect owed to everyone in our state — the most basic of which is to be able to live their lives without fear of violence.”

But people living with the constant fear of violence is basically the Republican M.O. these days. Vote them out. Everywhere.

Ann Arbor Native Brian Michael Smith Is First Trans Man on People's 'Sexiest Men Alive' List

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

For the first time ever, this year's People's Sexiest Men Alive list includes a trans man, actor and Ann Arbor native Brian Michael Smith.

"I've been called many things, this is a first," said the "9-1-1: Lone Star" star in a post to his Instagram account. "Incredibly honored to be included in this list with so many actors I admire. Big love to [People] for the historic shout-out."

"The '9-1-1: Lone Star' star was one of People's Ones to Watch in 2021," People wrote in their write-up of Smith. "And we will definitely not have a hard time keeping an eye on him."

Smith, who attended Pioneer High School, spoke to BTL's Chris Azzopardi earlier this year about realizing he was transgender.

"I grew up in a very Southern Baptist traditional household and a very heteronormative space, so when I did start to hear even just the word 'gay' it was in the negative connotation that kids use in middle school," he said. "On talk shows and in tabloids, all I saw were negative depictions of transwomen. I didn't know an actual transman existed until I was 20. The first was Jamison Green on this website, and I saw this fully functioning adult man, a writer, and he's all these things I was."

It was then that Smith had a revelation.

"When I saw that transmen existed, I knew exactly who I was. It was this very beautiful, eye-opening, tears-with-joy moment when I realized that there's a future for me," he explained.

Smith wasn't the only LGBTQ+ person to be recognized by People. Provocateur Lil Nas X also made the list, along with "Pose" star Dyllón Burnside and Smith's "9-1-1" co-star Ronen Rubinstein.



Brian Michael Smith. Photo: Instagram / @the_brianmichael



Carrick Copeland speaks during a press conference on the gender neutral option for nonbinary and gender nonconforming Michiganders. Photo: Tom Wesley

Michigan Residents Can Now Select Gender Neutral Option on State IDs. Here's How.

In Just Three Steps, You Can Update Your ID

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Michiganders who identify outside the male/female binary can finally hold a state ID or driver's license with the correct gender marker thanks to a new Secretary of State policy.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson announced the change on Nov. 10 during a press conference at Affirmations LGBT Community Center in Ferndale. The new option, which allows non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals to not have to choose a gender marker they do not identify with, is now in effect.

Benson, surrounded by a group of LGBTQ+ activists and allies who she's been working with on the issue for some time, beamed as she announced their work was done.

"I am proud to offer state identification that bolsters the safety and accurately reflects the identity of more Michigan residents," said Benson. "For years we have been working with the LGBTQIA+ community and upgrading our own technology to make this possible in order to ensure that government works for all people of Michigan."

Carrick Copeland from SAGE Metro Detroit, who identifies as non-binary, said the change would benefit their entire family.

"Every day and throughout the course of history, non-binary people like me, my partner and my child have been forced to select between limited options that do not represent or include us," Copeland said. "Each time we navigate this impossible quandary, non-binary and gender non-conforming people are reminded that we exist among systems that do not validate or even acknowledge our identities."

Copeland pointed out that according to the National Center for Transgender Equality's most recent U.S. Transgender Survey "when transgender and non-binary people have shown a form of identification with a name or gender that did match our gender presentation, nearly a third were verbally harassed, denied benefits or service, asked to leave or assaulted."

Other activists who spoke include Jey'nce Poindexter Mizrahi of the Ruth Ellis Center and Trans Sistas of Color, Jay Kaplan of the ACLU of Michigan and State Senator Adam Hollier (D-Detroit).

Hollier said he was proud that Michigan is joining the list of 20 other states that already allow residents to select an X marker on state ID cards, a move that he said reflects "our shared belief that all Michiganders deserve the dignity and respect of being known by their true identity."

Here's how to correct your gender on your Michigan state ID or driver's license:

1. Complete a Sex Designation Form, available online and at any Secretary of State branch office.
2. Visit a Secretary of State office and bring your current Michigan driver's license or state ID. You are encouraged to schedule your visit for a license or ID correction ahead of time at Michigan.gov/SOS or by calling 888-SOS-MICH.
3. Pay the correction fee (\$9 for driver's license, \$10 for state ID), and have a new picture taken. The updated license or state ID will be mailed within two to three weeks.

"Assigning people a certain binary gender doesn't conform with reality," Hollier added, "and I'm proud that Michigan is stepping up to uplift, help and support nonbinary, intersex or gender-nonconforming residents who have been unfairly marginalized by our elected officials for far too long."





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Alanna Maguire Is Married to Local Government

The Fair Michigan President (and Wife of Dana Nessel) on Her Plymouth City Commission Seat



Alanna Maguire. Photo courtesy of Alanna Maguire / Focal Point Studio

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Local government matters. Who sits on your city commission is important because those are the people who make the decisions that are closest to your front door. Municipal races don't get the kind of breathless horse-race coverage that, say, a presidential election does. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't pay attention.

Alanna Maguire has definitely been paying attention.

Maguire, 36, won one of four open Plymouth City Commission seats on Election Day. While there were only four candidates running for the four seats, the three highest voter getters would be seated for a four-year term and the final candidate would get a two-year term. Maguire was elected

to a four-year term.

"This is really where local decisions that really impact you and your neighborhood are made," Maguire tells BTL. "It's important to have your voice heard and to understand and help shape the community where you live."

Maguire says she ran on issues that are important to her, like environmental protection, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. "My day job is I'm a finance manager for a renewable energy company," she says. "I want to see a lot more focus on green space development, environmental sustainability practices, composting — things that we can do at the local level."

Maguire attributes her election success to her longtime ties to the city. "I'm a lifelong resident of Plymouth, so I have really strong community roots," Maguire says. Maguire also

has strong roots in the LGBTQ+ community. She is the president of Fair Michigan, a group that seeks to secure legal protections for LGBTQ+ people. She is also the wife of Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

"[Plymouth is] actually a much more progressive community than I think people might realize," she says, pointing to a human rights ordinance passed in 2014 that includes protections for LGBTQ+ people. "It made me feel like my family belongs here; we're accepted," she says. "We are a welcoming community. We want people to feel safe and accepted."

Maguire and Nessel are parents to 18-year-old twin sons Zach and Alex, who attend Michigan State University. Maguire says she and Nessel have worked to instill "compassion and empathy" in their sons.

"I think that's how Dana has approached her office, caring about other people, especially people who have been marginalized," she says, adding that they also value "integrity and honesty" in their family.

With Nessel such a prominent public figure, the current era of political polarization and Republican extremism has been difficult for their family. Nessel has received death threats, and Maguire herself has been the target of threats and rude comments.

"It's hard to get used to," she says. "It's one thing to disagree with someone and to make it about the policy disagreement," even going so far as to call someone an idiot for having that position. "But rising to, 'I think you're an idiot, and I want to kill you or harm your family' is a very scary thing."

She says she thinks her sons are safer

away at college because "people know where we live."

"I worry about the safety of my whole family and I wish, no matter how angry you are about something, you take a step back and try to put yourself in our shoes and think about how it feels to live like that," she adds. "It's not pleasant — I can tell you that."

Still, she supports Nessel in her role. "I try to remind her first of all that I'm very proud of her," she says. "I think that her heart is always in the right place, and she's always thinking about how best to lead the state in the Attorney General office."

Similarly, Maguire, just recently sworn in, is thinking about how best to lead Plymouth and says that the negative political climate did not dissuade her from running. In fact, the timing finally felt right. "I had been thinking about it for a few years, and there were always things that got in the way," she says. "This time I felt like I could commit the time, energy and effort in order to be successful with it."

Maguire doesn't just want to fill a commission seat, she wants to actually represent Plymouth residents and encourage people to be active participants in their city government.

"[The City Commission meets] every other Monday at the city hall... and there's always a section for citizen comments," she says. "It's a way to have a say in where you live and the direction of your community, and it helps us when people participate to know what is important to our residents."

Maguire acknowledges that what often inspires citizen engagement is when government isn't meeting the needs of its residents. "People start paying attention locally when they're unhappy about something. Then you have people coming to the meetings," she says, complaining about things like garbage pick up. "If your city is running smoothly, you take it for granted."

Overall, she says, Plymouth seems to be generally very satisfied with their city government, an indication "that things are going well in the city."

The commission is currently focused on long-term planning. "We are formatting in writing, on paper, about what we want our community to look like in the next five years and how we're going to do that."

Maguire grew up in Plymouth with her mother, Mary Maguire; father, Raymond, and two younger brothers, Evin and Ross. Her mother was on the local library board for many years and is the founder and current president of the Plymouth Democratic Club.

"She was a big inspiration to me growing up," Maguire says, noting that her mother taught her "how to work for the community, how to advocate for causes that are important to me, and things like that."

Mary also serves on the board of Fair Michigan and works with the National Marriage Challenge, the non-profit formed to help cover the legal costs of DeBoer v. Snyder, the Michigan marriage equality case that made it all

See **Alanna Maguire**, page 25



Alanna Maguire and wife Dana Nessel at the Michigan Democratic Party endorsement convention in April 2018. Photo courtesy of Alanna Maguire



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The Public Library: Gateway to Knowledge or Portal to Porn?

Some Parents In This Small Michigan Town Are Afraid of What Their Kids Can't 'Unsee'

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

It's hard to imagine a kerfuffle over putting library cards in the hands of school kids. But in Williamston, a small town east of Lansing considered politically purple, there have been some heated discussions.

The Student Success Initiative, which grew out of an Obama-era program, was implemented recently by the Capital Area District Library (CADL), a library system serving much of Ingham County, including Williamston. Through this program, schools leverage the resources of the community's public library to assist students with their

academic work. It's quite simple: Public school kids are automatically signed up for a library account unless a parent opts out.

Some parents in Williamston don't like that.

"We went through our first nine schools, and it went fairly well," said Scott Duimstra, executive director of the CADL.

In Williamston, the 10th and final school, it was a different story.

"The controversy was [over] some of the content that we have in our collection," Duimstra said. "Now, being a public library, we explained that we have a wide variety of materials that represent a variety of backgrounds, a variety of author points of view. And as diverse as our society is, you see that

diversity reflected in the library's collection as well, too.

"I think what some of the parents were complaining about is if their students are just given these library cards that they could check out material that either the family might not agree with or that might not be age-appropriate for the children," he continued.

Some of the complaints from parents originated at a recent Williamston Community Schools school board meeting, where a parent waved around copies of Maia Kobabe's award-winning memoir in graphic novel form, "Gender Queer: A Memoir."

"If a little child or any child looks at that, they can't unsee that," the parent said. "The library

does not rate or cordon off any of this material."

"What we tell parents is we encourage parent involvement in their child's use of the library," Duimstra explained. "So, if you have a concern that your child may check something out that you don't want them to check out, the best way to kind of counter that is to use the library with your child. And so we tell them that the library's role is to not be the parent in that situation."

Students participating in the program can check out up to three books, audiobooks or magazines, and they have access to the library's public computers. They aren't able to download or stream content from the library system's

See **Public Library**, page 22

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Photo courtesy of the Bass Family

Remembering Treva Bell Bass, Detroit Radio Mogul and LGBTQ+ Philanthropist

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Treva Bell Bass, who died November 8, was born into one of the most prominent and well-respected African American families in Detroit.

Bass made her entrance into the world on July 31, 1955, the same year her grandfather, Haley Bell, a dentist and businessman, founded the Bell Broadcasting Company and launched radio station WCHB in Detroit.

Bell and his son-in-law Wendell Cox, also a dentist, were the first African Americans to be granted a broadcasting license in Michigan, and WCHB was the first Black-owned radio station in the country to be built from the ground up. Throughout the 35 years it operated, WCHB and sister station WJZZ significantly influenced African American culture in Detroit.

In other words, Bass was born into a life of great expectation. She was the daughter of a dentist and (for a time) WCHB executive Robert Bass and his wife Dorris, a socialite. Bass was expected to be a prim and proper debutante and come out to society. “Coming out,” in this case, did not mean telling her mother she liked girls.

But Bass handled all the pressure with a certain grace and nonchalance.

“She was unaffected by all that,” said longtime friend Patrick Heron. “She knew where she came from. She didn’t talk about herself or her background. If she got to know you and she trusted you, she would tell you. But she had situations where people took advantage of her.”

After graduating from Cass Technical High School in 1972, Bass moved to Los Angeles for a while and tried becoming an actress. After that, she experimented with a few employment possibilities. Finally, the family business called to her, and she graduated from Specs Howard University before becoming the chief engineer at the radio stations.

“She liked what she did,” Heron said. “She loved the radio stations. She loved being an engineer. But the administrative part she was not fond of. When they had a board meeting, it was a meeting of the family, and those were the days she was stressed out. She’d call me after a board meeting and say, ‘I’m picking up a six-pack, and I’ll be there in 10 minutes.’”

In 1996, Bass and the rest of her family decided to sell the stations to the fledgling Radio One conglomerate for a reported \$34 million. Bass considered herself retired after the stations

were sold. She and her wife and partner of 33 years, June Washington, split their time between their residence here in Bloomfield Hills and their homes on St. Croix and Martha’s Vineyard.

Bass was known for being vivacious, kind and endearing — and for her million-dollar smile.

“What first drew me to her was her love for my children,” Washington said. “She was so kind. I miss everything about her. Our conversations. Our jokes. I will miss just feeling her presence in the house and around me all the time.”

Bass supported, with not just her money but her time and talent, a fledgling Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center in the 1990s. Through the years, she contributed to organizations such as HRC, Ruth Ellis Center and Hotter Than July – Detroit Black Gay Pride, as well as various HIV/AIDS organizations and African American causes. She also lent support to her wife’s Ladies of a Current Affair social club. And like each member of the Bell family, Bass was a lifetime member of the NAACP.

Speaking on Bass’ accomplishments and contributions to Between The Lines (BTL) and the Pride Source Media Group, former BTL co-publisher Jan Stevenson said this at Bass’ funeral, which took place Tuesday, Nov. 16 in the chapel of the Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery in Warren:

“June and Treva invested in this crazy project and helped us get the thing off the ground,” Stevenson said. “They supported us all through the 25 years we owned the paper — right up to and including when we sold it last year. ... It is not hyperbole to say that without the support of Treva and June, Between The Lines would not exist today.”

Bass is survived by Washington and their three daughters, Ebony, Princess and Raven, and three grandchildren, Jabran, Dylan and Bella. Donations can be made to www.birthdetroit.com.

→ Public Library

Continued from page 20

website and don’t have access to DVDs or the “Library of Things” unless they sign up with a parent for those privileges. Further, parents have access to their child’s library account, something Duimstra explained is par for the course since parents or guardians are financially responsible for the materials.

Barb Shumer is a retired librarian who has been a board member of Stand with Trans, the Michigan-based organization that supports families with transgender kids, since 2016. “It’s just so sad, really, that parents operate from such a position of fear that they feel that they have to protect their children from information that provides all points of view,” Shumer said.

While public libraries have a wider array of books, materials and resources than school libraries do, it’s “extremely unlikely” kids would access materials inappropriate for their age or

grade level, Shumer said.

“I worked as a children’s librarian at public libraries for over 30 years in various communities, and I really can’t remember it happening,” Shumer said. “Through all of time, children and families have so much to gain and so little to lose in having free and easy access to the breadth and depth of public library materials.”

Shumer has read “Gender Queer: A Memoir.” In fact, for Stand with Trans, she’s spent the last several years compiling an ever-growing book list of transgender- and nonbinary-related books geared toward kids. It can be found on the Stand with Trans website, along with other resources. Entries for each book are annotated and titles are grouped by age-appropriate level.

“Gender Queer: A Memoir” contains some sexually explicit content, which is why Shumer said she can understand the parents’ objection to it for younger kids. Yet, she points out, it’s clearly identified as a young adult book.

Both Duimstra and Shumer recognize a trend in parents’ latest attempts, however

misguided, to protect kids from being exposed to certain kinds of knowledge. And yet, the public library is not the only source of kids’ media consumption: They may be exposed to social media, television, movies, music and other content without much parental oversight.

Perhaps because gender identity is one of the hot button issues of the day, “Gender Queer: A Memoir” has become something of a lightning rod. For the past couple of months at least, parents have been “waving around” copies of Kobabe’s book at school board meetings from coast to coast. (In those cases, parents demanded the book be pulled from the school library’s shelves.)

Kobabe responded in a Washington Post op-ed. “Removing or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth,” Kobabe wrote, “who might not yet even know what terms to ask Google to find out more about their own identities, bodies and health.”

Duimstra said he was uncertain how many students have been pulled from the CADL

program by their parents, since schools manage student participation and share information with the library to set up the accounts.

“I would just say, libraries are founded on First Amendment access, and that’s access to all types of content: books, films, media,” Duimstra said. “And it’s something that we protect to the highest of our [ability]. And so if we ever get what’s called a request for reconsideration of our titles, it’s highly unlikely that we would take something out of our collection.” He did say, however, they might consider whether or not the title was in an age-appropriate area.

Shumer brought up the First Amendment, too. She referenced the American Library Association’s definition of intellectual freedom as it relates to libraries:

“Intellectual freedom is the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is one of the core values of the library profession; it promotes access to information and guides the defense against censorship.”



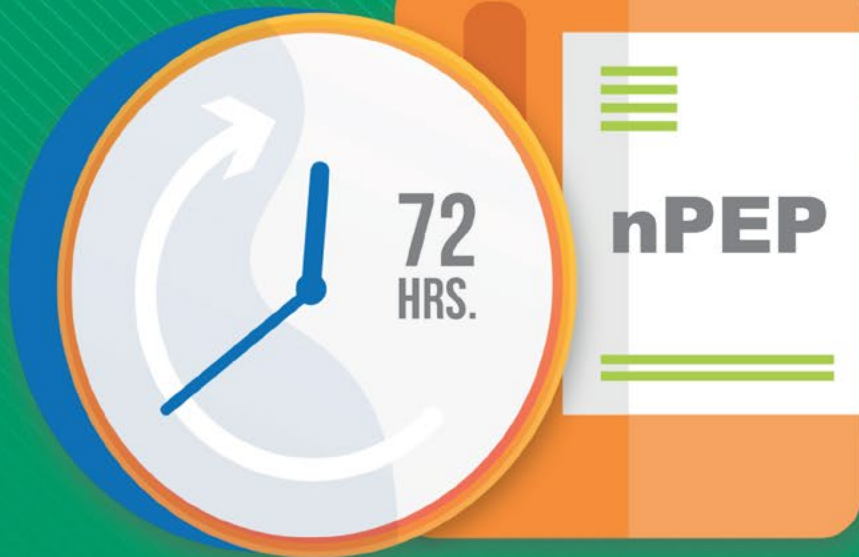
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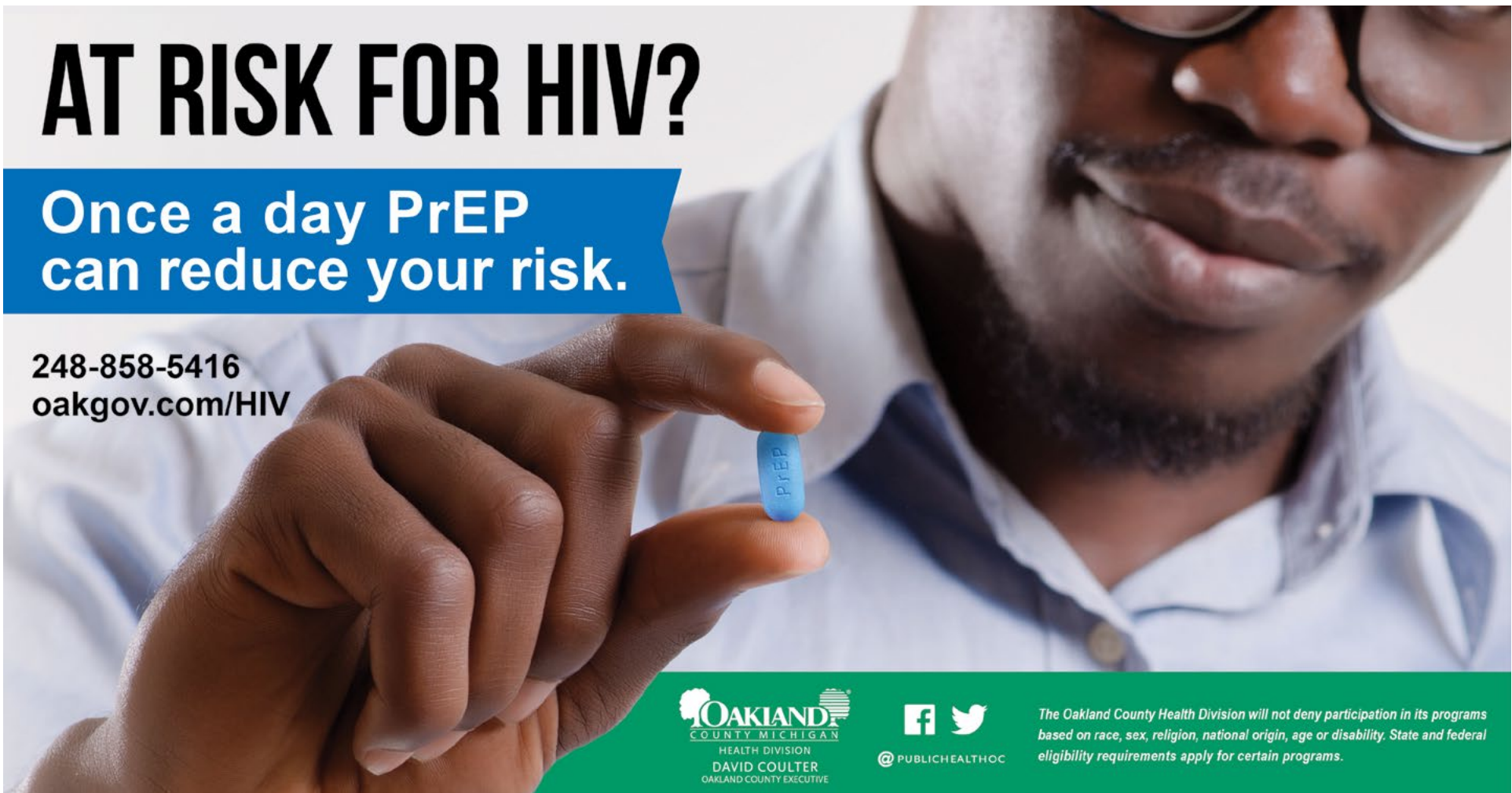
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MCC-D Launches Grace Bacon Day in Honor of the 'Mother of the Michigan Transgender Community'

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Depending on who you ask, Grace Bacon is known as either the mother or grandmother of the Michigan transgender community. But, however you recognize Bacon, one thing remains true: she is the founder of Crossroads, the first social and support group for the transgender community in Michigan. In addition, she is a respected LGBTQ+ advocate who has dedicated more than four decades of her life to this important work.

And due to her pioneering efforts, she was recently honored with a Grace Bacon Day celebration at Metropolitan Community Church - Detroit (MCC-D). The celebration, co-sponsored by Transgender Michigan and the Gender-Identity Network Alliance, was held Nov. 14. It is a part of a month-long effort by the church to focus on trans and non-binary issues.

Regarding her upcoming honor, Pride Source reached out to Bacon, who explained how her experience as a transgender woman dates back to her formative years.

"I've been crossdressing since I was a kid, really," Bacon, now 80, said. "I didn't have a name for it. I just put on some of my mother's things every once in a while, and I enjoyed it"

In 1952, Bacon, born in Flint in 1940 and raised in Swartz Creek, started to see life differently. Then, when Bacon was barely a teenager, Christine Jorgensen became the first widely-known person in the United States to have gender affirmation surgery. Jorgensen wrote about her experiences in a 1953 issue of *The American Weekly* in an article titled "The Story of My Life."

"She came out with the name transsexual, and she mentioned the word transvestite in her article," said Bacon. "From then on, I gathered that I was one or the other. I was not too sure which."

Having gathered some knowledge of her identity, Bacon continued crossdressing throughout her teen years. But she kept it a secret.

"I didn't talk to anyone about it," she added. "I didn't admit anything to anyone. I went through my life in high school and was pretty much the same as other kids except every once in a while when the shades were drawn, and nobody was home, I'd dress up a little bit."

After high school, Bacon went to college but soon dropped out and enlisted in the Army. She spent three years in the service, married a woman and had a couple of kids. Still, she dressed up from time to time.

"Finally, it got to the point where it wasn't enough, and I had to come out," she said.



Grace Bacon. Photo: Facebook

Bacon heard someone call into the radio show *Flint Feedback* who claimed to be a crossdresser at about this time. The host had very little expertise on the subject and invited anyone with knowledge of it to call the show.

"So, I called him, and by this time, I had done a lot of reading and researching, and I knew quite a bit about it. So I talked to him, and he invited me to come on the show."

Bacon appeared on the show about every six months for a few years. Then, gradually, she got bolder.

"By this time, I'd come out to the point where I wore a dress to work and was, of course, chastised by the management," she said.

But Bacon was persistent. And after noticing a lack of crossdresser representation in the Midwest in 1977, she founded Crossroads.

"I'd seen in some of the periodicals popular with crossdressers mentions of various crossdressing clubs on the East Coast and on the West Coast, but nothing in between," Bacon said.

"I operated out of a post office box in Flint and wanted to collect people to get together for social events," she added. "I thought we could form some type of community so people could get out and do some things. I wanted to do them myself. So I built a certain notoriety, and I drew a lot

of respect from people in the crossdressing community. I took the opportunity to expand the organization, and it kind of snowballed after that."

Bacon also created the Be All You Want To Be weekend for crossdressers and members of the trans community, as they were slowly starting to be called. The regional event, which ran annually for three decades, drew large crowds to the Midwest.

From 1991 to 2012, Bacon took time away from Crossroads and married again. By the time she came back, the group was meeting in Affirmations in Ferndale. As time went on, the group's work inspired members to create several specialized groups. Rachel Crandall-Crocker had formed Transgender Michigan and Michelle Fox-Phillips had Transgender Detroit and, eventually, the Gender-Identity Network Alliance.

Undoubtedly, were it not for Crossroads, these groups might have never come into existence.

"She is, I would say, the mother or grandmother of the trans community in Michigan," said Fox-Phillips. "She's been advocating for our community forever. What MCC-D is doing is totally amazing. She needs to be honored."

And what does Bacon say when she's referred to an icon or a pioneer?

"Holy crap," she said with a laugh. "Is that me?"



Alanna Maguire (second from right) with twin sons Zach and Alex and wife Dana at the Michigan Capitol on Inauguration Day, on January 1, 2019. Photo courtesy of Alanna Maguire

→ **Alanna Maguire**

Continued from page 18

the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and became part of Obergefell v. Hodges, the June 26, 2015 decision that made marriage equality a nationwide reality.

In fact, Maguire and Nessel met while working together on the DeBoer case, Nessel as one of the lead attorneys and Maguire as a project manager. “It’s a nice way to meet actually,” Maguire says. “I think that part of what I love so much about my relationship with Dana is that we do really work well together, and we’re very supportive of each other. And what we accomplish, we do together.”

Maguire and Nessel got engaged on April 28, 2015, the date of the oral arguments of Obergefell. “She asked me to marry her after she came out of the Supreme Court after the oral arguments,” Maguire remembers. “It’s a pretty cool story.”

Another cool story is the order in which the Maguire family met Nessel. “My wife met both of my parents before she actually knew me at all, which is pretty funny,” Maguire says. Nessel worked with Raymond Maguire when the two were both Wayne County Prosecutors and also when Nessel was in private practice.


“She met my mom actually because she was looking for community support for the DeBoer v. Snyder case and she learned that there was a Plymouth Democratic Club,” Maguire recalls. “She went to one of our club meetings and introduced herself to my mom and told her what she was doing with the legal case.”

Mary Maguire got to organizing to support the case, helping to put on a fundraiser at Affirmations that raised over \$20,000.


Maguire remembers the day of the Obergefell decision. “It was just such a joyful occasion when the decision came down in June of 2015,” she says. “I’ve never seen so many people so happy.” Being a part of that was “so incredible,” she says. “Marriage is not just a nice of paper — it’s so much more than that.”

Which is why when asked what her most prized possession is, she says it’s her marriage license. “Because I know how hard we had to fight for that and how long,” she says. “Everything that it symbolizes. I had it framed. It’s up in my office.”

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How can I get a PrEP prescription?

Ponsart says there are several avenues for accessing PrEP — starting with a local resource like those mentioned above can be a good approach. As an alternative, you can try a telemedicine app like MISTR, PlushCare or Nu-Rex. Remember — you must be and remain HIV negative in order to take PrEP.

Here are the basic steps for starting PrEP:

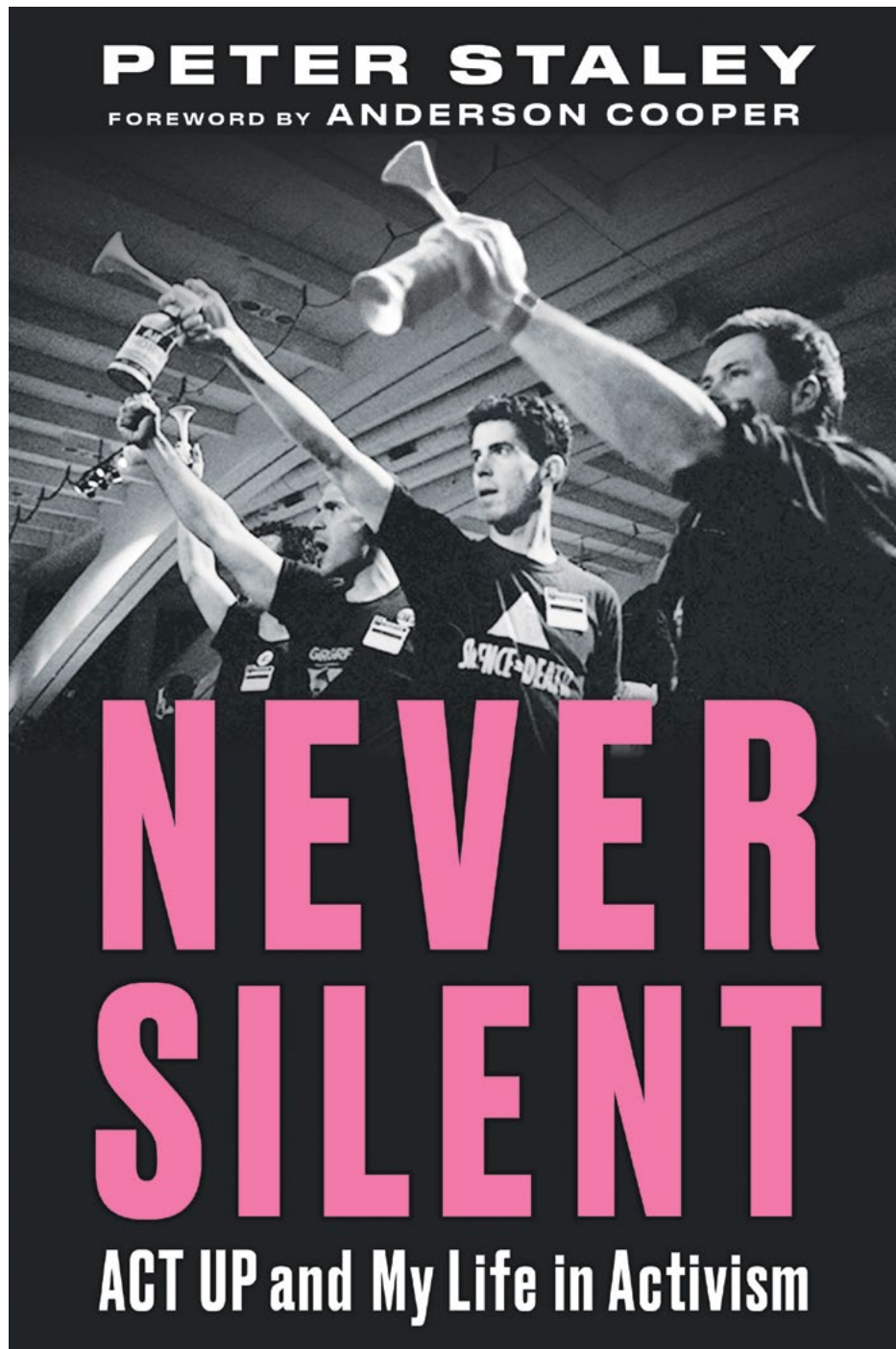
1. Set up an appointment with your primary care doctor or other healthcare provider who can prescribe PrEP.
2. You'll be tested for HIV and STIs like syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and Hepatitis B. Your doctor might order other tests, as well — for example, to test kidney function.
3. The doctor will prescribe PrEP on your first visit or after test results come back.
4. Start taking PrEP daily, keeping an eye on any side effects (most are mild, like upset stomach, but contact your doctor if you experience significant side effects).
5. Return for HIV and STI screening every few months.

What if I test positive for HIV?

Ponsart says patients who become infected with HIV are often prescribed PrEP medications as part of combination treatment approaches. It's important to stay informed about your HIV status throughout your PrEP treatment — remember PrEP drugs are preventative treatments and can't treat HIV on their own.

Ponsart says PrEP is a “critically important tool” available for HIV prevention. He notes that PrEP is actually more effective at preventing HIV infection than condoms. In fact, he says, “if we all just used these two things together, we could eliminate HIV in our lifetimes.”

He says it is “heartbreaking” that PrEP remains out of reach financially for so many people. “The people in our community who are most at risk for getting infected with HIV are the ones least likely to have access to insurance or to PrEP,” he says. This group includes LGBTQ+ youth less likely to have access to primary medical care because they are experiencing homelessness or have been forced into survival sex work. “One of my goals is to reach into our community and help as many of those people as possible,” he says.



→ Peter Staley

Continued from page 7

I understand you were firm on not wanting ACT UP to be in the main title. What other possibilities did you consider before settling on “Never Silent”?

I was scrambling for title ideas during the three years it took to write. A lot of memoirs use something personal that's not obvious but you discover its meaning when reading the book. David France of all people suggested one that was like a lightbulb going off in my head: “Please Remain Calm.” You can hear me say it in “How to Survive a Plague,” and it became a funny line I would use whenever we invaded the offices of a pharmaceutical company. And it has a double meaning. I was known for not being one of ACT UP's

hotheads. I was not a screamer. My activism was always very politically driven and I rely on logic and model myself on Spock. But the publisher said no. The publisher wanted something obvious, and I'm always bad at reading the fine print in contracts, and in the publishing industry, unless you're a Barack Obama, you have *no* say in the cover or title of your book!

I'm surprised that the publisher didn't title it “Dr. Fauci's BFF” or “Matthew McConaughey and Me”!

I met Jared Leto, but I never actually met McConaughey. “Dallas” and “Plague” came out at the same time, and we were at a couple of events together for the awards circuit and there was one moment I saw him leaving early, by the door alone waiting for his Uber, and I thought I'd go up to him and say, “Hey, Matthew, I'm the guy who caused so much

trouble before you started shooting!” But I left him to his phone.

Speaking of Fauci, the final chapter is titled “Dinner With Tony,” which addresses his evolution from “tentative leader unwilling to rock the boat” during the 1980s to a good friend. Can you elaborate further on how he's changed?

He slowly shed the widely held stubbornness of his peers in the scientific community that going slow and being methodical was sacrosanct. Without abandoning the basic tenets of high-quality scientific research, there are all sorts of inventive ways to speed things up and expand access at the same time. He applied many of those lessons to COVID-19.

Has he read the book yet?

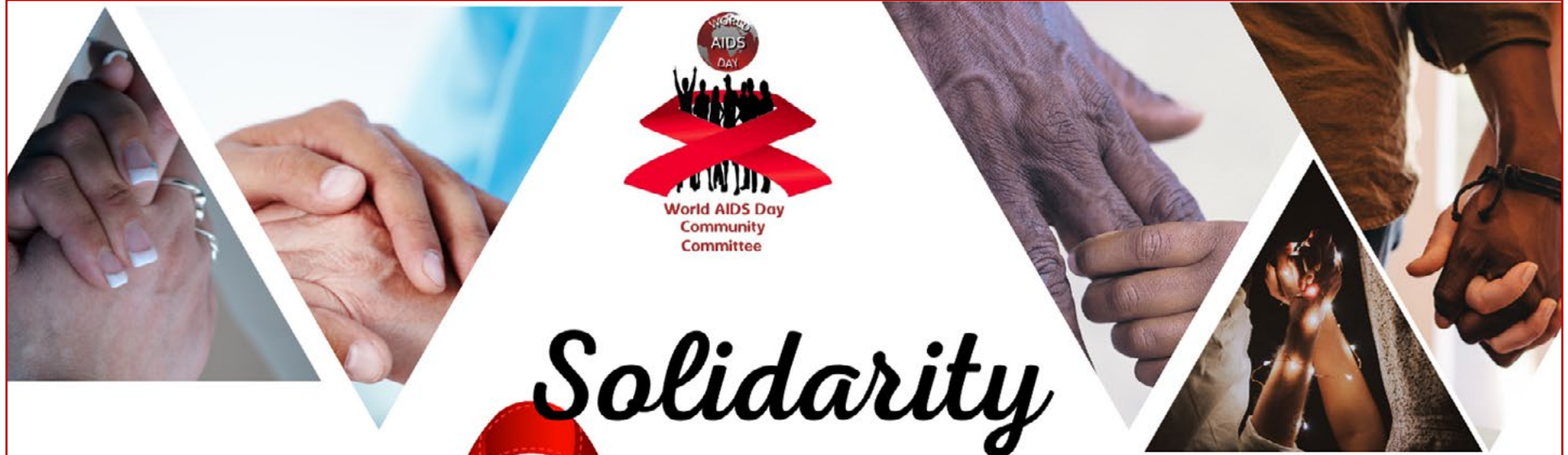
He just got my book twice — an inscribed hardcopy for his bookshelf, and a Kindle version that's easier on his old eyes.

What's the biggest perk or upside of having your story told through movies and books over the past decade? Are there activist groupies?

I love the activist groupies! I wish they were a larger percentage of the community, but that's what tipped the scales for me diving into writing. Not writing this book would be a lost opportunity, and that opportunity is inspiration because I've been contacted every week since 2012 by some millennial queer through social media [who] just saw “Plague” and it changed their life. A subset of them I stay in contact with and they've become activists, gone into medicine, or nonprofit work. That has blown my mind. They're the ones who give me hope and I adore all of them.

Are shirtless pics welcome too?

Yes. Dick pics. And I will send one back! Another story I didn't tell in the book was [filmmaker and artist] Gregg Bordowitz was working at GMHC [a NYC-based AIDS service organization formerly called Gay Men's Health Crisis] and tasked with creating a series of X-rated safe sex videos that were funny and sexy and had lots of condoms and dental dams. This was 1989. He mentioned this to me and I said, “I'll do it. I'm gonna die in a few years, I want to do porn. It was on my bucket list, what the fuck do I care? I gave up the dream of being president someday!” So I did a safe-sex short and that summer they premiered the video as part of the international AIDS conference in Montreal on a gigantic screen, and every AIDS activist in the country was there. I'm in the audience slumping down, my hands over my eyes. [Laughs.] If you dig far enough, you can find it! It was actually part of Gregg's exhibition at MoMA PS1 this year! My erect penis was in a museum! Bucket list!



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DANCING FEARLESSLY into the Spotlight

Photo: Peacock

Teen Dance Sensation JoJo Siwa on Coming Out and Making History on 'Dancing with the Stars'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

This year, JoJo Siwa made history as the first "Dancing with the Stars" contestant to compete with a same-sex partner. With Jenna Johnson, she performed the Argentine tango to Britney Spears, did the cha-cha to Lady Gaga and busted out her best moves for a sexy queer rumba to Janet Jackson.

And maybe, somehow, you've missed all the JoJo buzz, which means you probably also missed her "Grease" foxtrot, but you should know this: JoJo is everywhere right now. That's great because she's queer, and we love to see LGBTQ+ visibility on TV, especially on shows like "Dancing with the Stars" where you least expect it.

But JoJo, who made Time magazine's annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2020, has actually been dancing for years -- which is a strange thing to say about someone who's only 18. JoJo, however, got her start at 9 when she competed on the "Dance Moms" spinoff "Abby's Ultimate Dance Competition" during its second season in 2013.

JoJo is as beloved on "Dancing with the Stars" as she is on YouTube, where she has amassed over 12 million followers (that number, she tells me, "exploded" after she came out earlier this year, in January). Now she's teamed up with her mom, Jessalynn Siwa, who's also her manager (hence, "momager"), for their own Peacock show, "Siwas Dance Pop Revolution." Over eight episodes, JoJo

mentors and choreographs 11 tweens, some of her biggest fans, as they compete to be a part of XOMG Pop, a new pop group. The crowned group will open for JoJo on her 2022 tour.

Recently, JoJo, alongside Jessalynn, spoke about being fearlessly queer, going through a public romance and breakup with ex-girlfriend Kylie Prew, and what it feels like to inspire other LGBTQ+ youth to come out.

How are you bringing diversity and inclusion to "Siwas Dance Pop Revolution"?

JoJo: You know, we wanted to create a girl group that was for everybody and for everybody in the world to be like, "That one's like me." And I think that we have made sure that the kids who

are in the girl group, and even the kids on the show, have all been able to have their say and make this exactly what they want it to be.

As a queer person yourself, who was the person that made you say, "I see me in you"?

JoJo: I looked up a lot to Freddie Mercury and Lady Gaga. I like what they stand for. I mean, "Born This Way" is literally a gay anthem for everybody in the world and the most genius song ever and, for me, that song hits so home that it's literally my life.

Did you ever hear from Gaga after lip-syncing "Born This Way" on TikTok?

JoJo: No. [Whimpers.] Don't mention it, it

makes me sad.

Jessalynn: One day, one day.

As somebody who's representing the queer community on "Dancing with the Stars," and now with your own dance show, why do you think LGBTQ+ representation is important in shows like these?

JoJo: I think that something that's really great about today's day and age is, being gay or being a part of the LGBTQ community is not only accepted, but it's also celebrated. And I think that every single day it's less weird and less not typical. Every day it's becoming a little bit more normal for everybody, and, I mean, being normal is boring. Nobody wants to be normal; everybody wants to be a little different. So I think that it's something to be celebrated, not scared of.

Growing up in Omaha, Nebraska, which in some people's mind might be more conservative, was it ever weird for you? What was your experience growing up as a queer person there?

JoJo: Growing up I didn't know many gay people. I knew a few people on my mom's side of the family. Her godson is gay, and he was probably one of the first people that I ever knew to be gay. I think being in the dance community, I know of a lot of people there who were gay. It never, ever once for me was wrong. And I think that's something that you always told me; you were never like, "Oh, that's weird."

Jessalynn: No, it's not.

JoJo: Like, it doesn't matter. I love the person [who's like], "If my kid comes out to me as gay, the next thing I'll do is ask him what he wants for dinner." I started dating my first girlfriend on January 8th. So what is the difference between January 7th and January 8th for me? There's none. One, I'm happily in love and dating and have a girlfriend and the other, I'm halfway in love and she's just not my girlfriend yet. So it's like, there's no difference. Nothing changes inside the person that wasn't already there.

I am so happy to see you live so unabashedly bold as somebody who is in the queer community, but I also wanna shout out to your mom and say it's equally as important to see a parent be as supportive as you are.

Jessalynn: Thank you. I think kids just wanna feel love from their parents and be accepted and unconditionally able to be themselves no matter what, and that's what I always tell JoJo: "I love you no matter what." And I've been saying it for

18 years, and I'll say it for a hundred more.

Jess, what has it been like for you to see her live so boldly, just completely unabashedly out, loud and proud in such a public way?

Jessalynn: You know, I'm so proud of her. I'm so proud of her because she's so brave. And the world is crazy, and sometimes I'm sure it's hard to be brave — and it's hard to be out there and put yourself out there — but she just does it and she loves it, and she's happy. And it's really cool, and even as someone that's older than her, it's inspiring. To look at somebody so young and so brave... well, we only have one life to live, you know? "Live your best life" is something else we say a lot, and I truly love to see JoJo just living her best life.

JoJo: Thank you.

Jessalynn: You're welcome.

That's so sweet. JoJo, what's your life been like since coming out? You have over 12 million YouTube followers, and I imagine that number surged as soon as you made that statement.

JoJo: Right away it did — it exploded. And I think it's a thing that a lot of people may've been scared of for me, and I was never scared of it myself. I kind of just did [it] and then, if anything, went bad then it went bad and I didn't care because I was happy, and if I lost everything because of who I love, then so be it.

How aware have you become of the influence that you're having on LGBTQ+ youth who may not be comfortable with who they are?

JoJo: I think that every kid has a feeling when they're little and you know how you feel, and you don't really know how to make what you're feeling OK. And I think that having somebody to look to, to be like, "Oh, I'm like they are," is really special, and I love that I get to be that person for a lot of kids.

What advice might you give to a young queer person who's really struggling with their sexuality?

JoJo: I would say, if you did it a month ago, would you regret it? And depending on the answer, I hope the answer would be no. Because I think sometimes just in the moment it's scary, but think if you would've done it a month ago, would you be OK with it today? And hopefully that answer will be yes. And then I would just say, "So that's how you'll feel in one month."

When it came to coming out publicly, what was




JoJo Siwa and her "momager" Jessalynn Siwa. Photo: Peacock

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Photo: Netflix

‘The Power of the Dog’ Doesn’t Idealize Queerness and Is Better for It

The New Cumberbatch Film Is No ‘Brokeback Mountain’ Repeat

BY GEORGE ELKIND

Growing acceptance has created a new suite of possibilities for queer storytelling in mainstream films. The sly, charged and freely oppositional work of the New Queer Cinema that dominated Hollywood in the late ’80s and early ’90s (itself influenced by gay creators like the multi-disciplinary David Wojnarowicz and Bavarian auteur Rainer Werner Fassbender) can often feel distant today.

Reflecting a conservative shift in Hollywood, works about queer people — and particularly

cisgender gay males — have trended lately towards uplift. There’s a desire, even a longing, for the gauzy, romantic, and most positive forms of depiction, and it’s not so hard to imagine why. These versions of queer life were long thought unimaginable. But that doesn’t make them particularly real, either.

Forget queer identity posing any enduring problems or even concerns for movies’ characters; regardless, often, of questions of genre, period or milieu, such matters have become politically and socially incidental. Whether through the long summer vacation in “Call Me By Your Name,” ferris wheel kisses in “Love, Simon,” or the picket-fenced form of gay family life presented in “Eternals,” these stories serve as a for-some-welcome escape hatch from everyday life. Portraying queer folk as role models (or literal superheroes) by celebrating monogamous, nurturing

relationships with appeal across a range of audiences and tastes, these works suggest that actualizing acceptance should be easy — and why not? The queer people in them are so like everyone else that they might as well be straight.

But what about when everyone else isn’t happy, and the world isn’t so kind? This true-to-life, less utopic version of existence should sound more familiar. In writer-director Jane Campion’s new adaptation of Thomas Savage’s 1967 novel “The Power of the Dog,” fantasy becomes reality for no one and honeymoons exist as brief stops at scenic overlooks, or within the space of idling memories and daydreams.

The film follows a whole cast of characters, headlined by two unlike brothers, the Montana ranchers Phil and George Burbank (played by Benedict Cumberbatch and Jesse Plemons,

respectively) who are unable to live in a state of ease. After George, the gentler of them, quietly marries Rose, a local innkeeper (sweetly played by Plemons’ real-life wife Kirsten Dunst), he tries to integrate her with her gangly, effete and quite enigmatic son Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee) into their shared home. After marrying into the family, Rose — and later Peter, who’s off to study medicine for much of the year — move out to the Burbanks’ ranch, where they attempt to make a life together along with Phil and George.

Cumberbatch’s Phil isn’t the one married to Rose, but the two make a bitter match. Spitting vitriol at her and Peter, who he teases over his delicate craft projects, he labors to project a macho demeanor at every moment he can. Wearing spurs indoors, spurning baths and

See **The Power of the Dog**, page 32



Photo: Peacock

→ JoJo Siwa

Continued from page 29

the scariest part for you, JoJo, but also for you, Jess?

JoJo: Honestly, there was nothing scary about it for me. I had zero fear of coming out.

Jessalynn: For me, just the unknown. I didn't ever want to say anything wrong or bad; just tell me if I do. And with the pronouns, I'm trying to learn, I'm trying to figure it out.

JoJo: Even somebody like Demi Lovato — there's somebody who I looked up to since I was a baby, and Demi came out as non-binary this year. Sometimes when we're talking about Demi, you'll accidentally say "she." But Demi actually said, "It's OK as long as you're trying."

This can be personal for a lot of people, but in hopes that maybe this will help other queer youth come out to their parents, would you mind sharing how you came out to your mom?

JoJo: Honestly, I got in the car and my mom said, "You really like her, don't you?" And this [was] after Ky and I had spent a few nights together. My whole family was there, and it was our last night together, and we kissed. And I said, "Yeah." And my mom goes, "As a friend or as more than a friend?" And I just said, "As more than a friend." And my mom then said, "I figured." [Laughs.]

Jessalynn: [Laughs.] That was like a one-minute conversation.

JoJo: Yeah. It lasted one minute. It was easy. She made it easy on me, and truthfully, I knew my feelings for Ky, but if we didn't kiss I would've just said, "Just as a friend." Like, it was only because it was so real to me that I was comfortable with fully telling everybody.

What do you remember from that moment, Jess?

Jessalynn: I remember sitting on the Sprinter [Camper] waiting for JoJo to come back and then when she came back and she was crying 'cause she had said goodbye, I knew. And I just remember thinking, "I really need to know." Like, I just wanted the scoop, but I was afraid. But then before I even knew what I was saying —

JoJo: You were saying it.

Jessalynn: I was saying it. And then it was just simple, and we just carried on. And then you were sad because you were separating and I was like, "Tell her to come to California for the weekend."

JoJo, you've gone through both a public romance and a public breakup. What has that been like for you?

JoJo: Honestly, it's been a rollercoaster. The good news about it is, I am still best friends with Ky, and she will forever be the first girl that I was ever in love with and the person who made me realize that I was gay and the person who made me so happy, that I was so in love with, that I was head over heels for. And I'm so lucky that even though a romantic relationship ended, our platonic relationship is still there, and our friendship is still there and she's still one of my best friends.

We talk almost every day still, and she is awesome. So supportive of "Dancing with the Stars" and "Dance Pop." She loves [the] little kiddos on the show, so they all love her. It's tricky to navigate because the world always has their own view on things and their own opinion on things, so when the world started speculating [about] things between the two of us, I was checking in with Ky being like, "Hey, you good? You want me to say anything?" So it's tricky. But one day at a time, and you just keep moving forward.

Dancing with another female partner, Jenna Johnson, on "Dancing with the Stars," has meant a lot to a lot of queer youth. What has it meant to you?

JoJo: It has meant a lot to me. I think that being paired with another female for the first time ever, first-ever same-sex couple, is such an honor. And I wanna use the word brilliant — it's so brilliant because love is so accepted and so celebrated that it's not weird; it's cool, it's nice, it's awesome. And every week Jenna and I are faced with the new challenge of figuring out how to do a new style with two females. But we always get through it, and we always make it out on the other side.

This interview has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

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Benedict Cumberbatch as Phil and Kodi Smit-McPhee as Peter in "The Power of the Dog." Photo: Netflix

→ The Power of the Dog

Continued from page 30

torching stacks of perfectly usable — and salable — cowhides, Phil's a man whose every breath taken in must be followed by an exhalation of spite.

But as the 1925-set film makes quite plain, there's an urgency — arguably a necessity — to at least a portion of Phil's viciously gendered performance. When Peter, as much a driving mystery as a viewer surrogate in the movie, finds some clues to Phil's secret queer identity, the pair form an improbable bond.

But "Brokeback Mountain" this is not. More a frontier psychodrama than an action-driven western with the kinds of shootouts or even fisticuffs one might expect, "Power of the Dog" makes its rugged environs an extension of the domestic, rendering it a story less about people adventuring out than working to live with themselves and each other at home. This struggle's not exclusive to its queer characters — everyone in it is connected by interlinked burdens. Refusing a fantasy space or the kind of martyr-victim roles that might prove gratifying — and familiar — to viewers from works like "Brokeback," Campion's visions of conflict here don't require or even allow

for the sanctification of anyone.

At the same time, "Power" treats queer identity and desire as an identity and set of impulses that are irrepressible, offering a vision and sense of self that doesn't always sit easily with one's immediate company or society at large. While "Brokeback Mountain" treated queer life

"While 'Brokeback Mountain' treated queer life as a kind of personal and social problem for those who lived it in its particular time and place, it also used 'cowboy' as an identitarian counterweight, a way of assuring viewers that its men were 'still men.'"

as a kind of personal and social problem for those who lived it in its particular time and place, it also used "cowboy" as an identitarian counterweight, a way of assuring viewers that its men were "still men," presenting them as traditionally

masculine so as to dramatize the absurdity of the world around them refusing to accept them.

Campion calls this sort of bluff, however; no matter what way Phil performs or strives, he's still caught in some way at the margins — if not by others than by a deep knowledge he holds about himself. Campion's idea of existential discomfort — or simply knowledge — of who you are isn't something to just honeymoon or fishing-trip away from (even when it could be attempted as in "Brokeback"), but it's not some cross born nobly either. Phil and Peter occupy the vast Burbank estate and could go off to anywhere on the Burbank tract, but what would it really matter? Culture and its scripts are things we carry with us.

Campion's dramatization of culture, identity and desire proves complicated. In "Power," as in life, queer personhood, like gendered roles and performance, are wrapped up in complex matrices of denial, egotism and self-mythologizing. Separation from the mainstream isn't easy or clean here, nor is tidy assimilation possible in any honest sense. What Campion's made here is a deeply critical work that, by disallowing saints and martyrs, manages to treat these conflicts — and identities — as messy in the ways they still so often are.

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Andrew Garfield as Jonathan Larson and Robin de Jesús as Michael in "Tick, Tick... Boom!" Photo: Netflix



Robin de Jesús, Mj Rodriguez and Ben Ross in "Tick, Tick... Boom!" Photo: Netflix

→ Robin

Continued from page 10

to do with your involvement in "Tick, Tick... Boom!"? Was that important to Lin?

I don't know that it affected Lin casting me, but I do know that he clocked it. After he saw my audition and pieced that together, I think it allowed him to receive that as affirmation that I was the right choice. I think it let him know that I was gonna come in devout to Jonathan, and that I was gonna come in devout to the story and just leave it all on the table.

On a scale from zero to Jonathan Larson, how eager were you to leave your mark on musical theater when you first got your start in the business?

Oh, are you kidding me? I came out that gate, y'all, like, "I'ma be the next Bernadette Peters." [Laughs.] I wanted to be a part of that legacy of the shows, and honestly, it's really, really funny [because] "Heights" gave me that [Jesús starred in "In the Heights" on Broadway during its 2008-2010 run], I remember thinking, "All right. Well, what's the goal now? You did that thing you wanted to do." Now, I wanna just tell good stories. I wanna make sure I'm contributing to my people and furthering us, but also, I just want to go to work.

At this point in your career, how do you recognize when a story is a good story?

There's a feeling. A thing that lets you know. A gut feeling. And I always listen to that, 'cause I feel like when you don't listen to the gut, it's just disrespectful. [Laughs.]

So what would it take for you to sign on for, say, a "Camp" sequel?

Oh, all day every day! There was talk of "Camp" becoming a TV show or a movie, and I don't know what's happened since, but I'll come back as a counselor.

That needs to happen. Netflix, are you listening?

From your mouth to God's ear.

God being Netflix.

[Laughs.] Yes, *that*. I mean, they are the musical-theater gods right now. Netflix is killing it with this. Netflix really realized, "Oh, we have this whole new crop of theater fans that have come up that want to see these stories," and musicals are cool again, and hopefully they're going to stay there. I think we'll know in a couple years, but I feel like Netflix is the one leading that.

Like your character Michael, did you ever consider giving up musical theater and acting for a career that might've been more linear and provided more security?

I thought about leavin' a couple times, and many things brought me back, but ultimately, it's like, I have no other talents. Like, there ain't shit I can do. [Laughs.] This is it. So, I had to figure it out.

When in your career did you consider doing something different?

So, post-"La Cage aux Folles," I was spinning for a bit, because I found myself only being called in for underdeveloped queer characters who were just reduced to being really, really over the top with no meaning whatsoever. And my thing always is, I love big characters, but flesh them out. Give them depth as well.

So, in my 20s, I said, "You know what you're gonna do, Robin? You're just not gonna work. You're gonna wait for the business to realize, 'Oh, he's not doing that,'" and it didn't always work. I realized, "Oh, I should go do

regional theater. I should stay in New York and do the thing that everyone wants me to do. Subscribe to the type casting, get the paycheck, and do this other show. At least I'm exercising my muscles." And then after a while, I would fight [for] opportunities in New York to showcase something differently. But in that navigation, it was hard, and I was mad at the white supremacy of it all.

What would your great American musical be about if you were to write one at this point in your life?

I felt so inspired by "Nomadland" that I was like, "Yo, is there a world where there is something similar in structure like this, but about the food sovereignty movement happening in Puerto Rico?" They're just trying to figure out how to be sustainable, since the government is completely corrupt, and no one wants to accept the fact that Puerto Rico is a colony. So, everyone's just trying to figure out how to do it on their own, and the food sovereignty movement, I think, is gonna be a huge part of that. So I'm kind of curious. I think there's a story in there.

I think it's time to get the pen and paper out.

Word. Yep.

And then say goodbye to the rest of your life.

[Laughs.] Try to be like Lin!

Andrew studied musical performance specifically to prepare for the role of Jonathan. Did he lean into your musical-theater knowledge at all to do this movie?

Yo, he leapt in. Like, Andrew was like, "I'ma just jump. I'ma just see what happens," and he just fully embraced it and committed to it. You know, he talks all the time about the intimidation of being around people who have been a part of the musical-theater world

for years, and I'm sure he did experience that. I don't mean to negate that, but it didn't always present that way.

He was really baller and really courageous and was like, "I'm just gonna go for this," to the point where it was always shocking whenever he finished the first number in the movie, "30/90," 'cause that last note, it was consistent! It was always there, and it was gut, you know? It was a full-body experience for him singing that last note. It's beautiful.

To your credit and his credit, your friendship is something to behold in the movie, because you guys have the history of friendship that sometimes just doesn't translate on screen. I mean, I believed that you were friends since you were kids.

It's definitely the thing I'm proudest of — being able to model that friendship to other straight males and gay males and, really, to all folks.

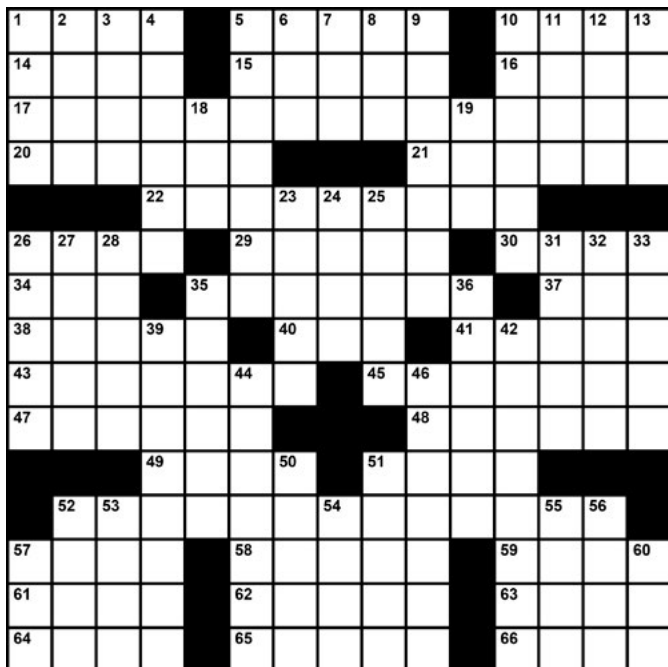
That's a beautiful thought, actually. I'm glad that you mentioned that.

I can't think of any other film where I've really seen that modeled as beautifully as this and as intimate to the point where I think, actually, a lot of people don't clock it, because it's just so natural to us.

I've had a couple friends say, "Wow, I didn't even realize. I've never seen that before. I didn't realize what a big deal that was," and that's partially because Andrew and I, early on, clocked that we had a love story in the film, as well.

Lastly, why do you think Jonathan Larson's story, as it's told here, and even though he was straight, is an important piece of LGBTQ+ history?

So, actually, I kind of want to tie that to what we just said. It's so cool and so beautiful that Jonathan, a straight white man, wrote these musicals in the '90s, and he wrote them with more creativity and diversity and thought than a lot of folks now. When you look at all the Black and brown characters that he's written for us, they're so fleshed out; there is so much there, there's so much to play with. And even when they're messy, there's no judgment on that. There's no poverty porn or race porn happening. There's no exploitation in that way. It's just: People are complex, they're human, and they should be allowed to be that way, regardless of their race or ethnicity. It's like... just damn, Jonathan. Imagine what he would have done if he was still with us.



- 35 Aroused in bed
 37 Physicians' org.
 38 Bear
 40 Solidly behind
 41 She's George
 43 More of the advice
 45 End of the advice
 47 Drenching rain
 48 "Three's Company" actress
 49 Butch neckwear, perhaps
 51 Broadway ticket souvenir
 52 Figurative friend of gay men, and source of the advice
 57 Broadway slave
 58 "Damn Yankees" song
 59 "Why should ___ you?"
 61 Rod attachment
 62 Ewing matriarch, on "Dallas"
 63 Boy of Kahlo's country
 64 Make messy
 65 Queer coins
 66 "Quills" subject
- 10 Bend over and grab them
 11 Baudelaire's liver
 12 Musical based on "La Bohème"
 13 Ford contemporary
 18 Egypt and Syr., once
 19 One to Rohm
 23 Roll with the punches
 24 O-o-o-o-oka., once
 25 Discharge, among soldiers
 26 Former leader of Syria
 27 Elevation with a flat top
 28 Sport of the Chicago Sky, for short
 31 Peter of "Say Uncle"
 32 Colette's love
 33 Husband and husband, for example
 35 Butler's "___ for Strings"
 36 Eat with enthusiasm
 39 Swiss soldiers, in WWII
 42 Sweetie-pie
 44 Gets hot
 46 Will subjects
 50 South Beach souvenir
 51 Bit of mistletoe
 52 Deity of Debussy
 53 Lines from Lesbos
 54 Yellow Sea feeder
 55 "East of Eden" director Kazan
 56 Split
 57 Place for tats
 60 Ballerina's perch

Down

- 1 Cut
 2 Cukor's "A ___ of Her Own"
 3 "Lord of the Rings" singer
 4 Lynn Redgrave's "___ Girl"
 5 Of milk
 6 Gershwin of "Of Thee I Sing"
 7 Sportscaster Berman
 8 Offspring of a queen
 9 Bedside table money

Advice from a Friend

Across

- 1 Cassini of A-line dresses
 5 Dooryard bloomer, for Whitman
 10 Bushy do
 14 Fielder's call, to Bean
 15 Contest venue
 16 Witty Coward
- 17 Start of advice from a friend
 20 Cause anguish to
 21 Boneless cuts
 22 Hamlet, to fans?
 26 Word after "Dear"
 29 "Do" in "The Sound of Music"
 30 Broadway opening for a lot?
 34 Long sandwich, for short

See p. 24 for answers

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