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on Being Gay Pals

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By Ellen Shanna Knoppow

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY JACKIE JONES

The weather outside may still be winter-ish, and spring is still several weeks away, but that shouldn't stop you from living your best life. Take on the town with a Broadway show about a disco diva, stand proudly at Pistons' Pride Night or take the family to a PG-rated drag event. Whatever you choose, we've got you.

Bring the Family to an All-Ages Drag Brunch

Gather the fam and get ready for a night of outrageous entertainment. Motor City Drag Kings (MCDK) will present All-Ages Drag Brunch, a PG-rated, radio-friendly drag show. Michael Christian, entertainer and co-founder of MCDK, said he hopes "people leave having had a great time with their family" and that the event opens "up some communication and education opportunities within the community and different generations." Doors open at noon and showtime starts at 1 p.m. on March 6. Each ticket includes lunch and a mimosa (21+) or a pop or juice box. In addition, Gigi's, the venue, will offer a full bar and spinning from a DJ.

Go to [Eventbrite](#) to get your tickets.



Photo: Michael Christian



Photo: Broadway in Detroit and Nick Gould

Dance Under the Donna Summer Disco Lights

Donna Summer, the "Love to Love You Baby" disco diva, lived a life for the books. She was a Boston native who risked it all to be the dance floor sensation that we know today. In the play "Summer: The Donna Summer Musical," learn her story with a score of more than 20 classic Summer hits, including "Bad Girls" and "Hot Stuff." Broadway in Detroit calls this show an "electric experience" and "a moving tribute to the voice of a generation." "Summer" runs March 8-20 at the Fisher Theatre. The venue is requiring face masks and proof of a negative COVID test within 72 hours or proof of a full vaccination card.

Visit [Broadway in Detroit's website](#) to get your tickets.



Photo: Detroit Pistons

Grab Your Tickets Early to Detroit Pistons' Pride Night

The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce and the Detroit Pistons are bringing in all the Pride with this March 31 event. Pistons' Pride Night attendees can expect a specially choreographed Pride celebration halftime performance by the Pistons Dancers, limited-edition Pride items and more. Kevin Heard, president of the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce, said, "the Pistons are an amazing partner and not just during Pride Night but all year." Proceeds from each ticket sold will support a local LGBTQ+ charity.

To purchase your ticket, go to [Pistons.com/pridenight](#).



Photo: Detroit Institute of Arts

Come Together With (Motor City) Bears

Motor City Bears (MCB), a gay male social and fundraising activity group for bears and admirers, hosts Affirmations' Motor City Bears meetup. It's a monthly meeting for members and non-members to get together and socialize with people who identify as bears, including biological males as well as male-presenting individuals. "To sum the group up: It's a friendly, outgoing group with all sorts of walks of life," said MCB President Paul Torres. In this in-person meeting, which occurs every second Saturday of the month, attendees will discuss MCB's upcoming events, fundraising efforts and plans for the year. Their next meeting is 4-8 p.m. on March 12.

Go to Affirmations' website for more information.



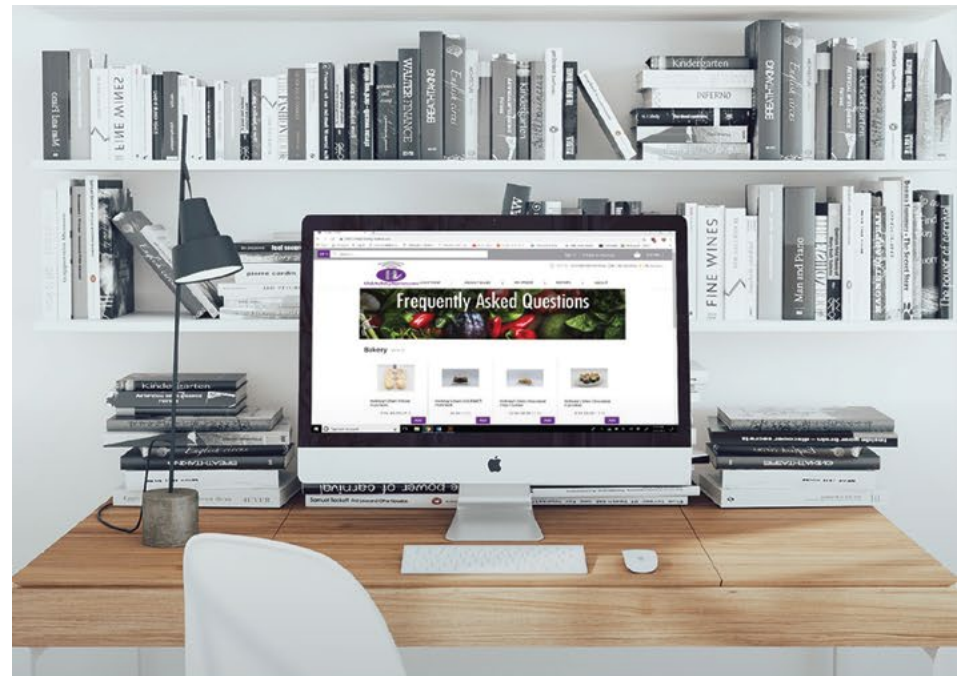
Photo: Ebru Yildiz

Bask in Mitski's Sad-Girl Vibes at Masonic Temple

With a predominantly queer following, indie-rock singer Mitski has become a sad-girl icon. On singles like "Washing Machine Heart" and "Working for the Knife," she delivers haunting lyrics that speak on the depths of life. And at 7 p.m. March 17, she will be bringing her unique sound to Detroit's Masonic Temple as a part of her world tour. The tour comes off the release of her new album "Laurel Hell" and will feature the NYC-based collective Michelle.

Visit Masonic Temple's website for ticket information.

Please check event pages for the most up-to-date scheduling information.



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What Every LGBTQ+ Person Needs to Know About the Threat to Abortion Access in Michigan

The Intersection of Reproductive Justice and LGBTQ+ Rights Is Too Great to Ignore



BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

For anyone who values reproductive freedom, the stakes couldn't be higher. In what's widely considered the most consequential Supreme Court case regarding abortion in decades, a majority of justices appear poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that established a Constitutional right to abortion. A decision on the case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, is expected to be handed down this summer.

"If *Roe* gets gutted completely, then it will become an issue where it is decided by the state," explained Lara Chelian, director of advocacy and development at Northland Family Planning Centers, whose clinics provide abortion care at three locations in metro Detroit. "And that is probably the most dire issue because then it becomes based on your ZIP code where you live [as to] your access to abortion."

The state of Michigan would revert to a 1931 law that has until now been superseded by the *Roe* decision. The law states that, with the exception of saving the life of the mother, providers who carry out abortions would be guilty of manslaughter.

In response, a ballot initiative is currently in the works that would amend the state Constitution to protect the right to abortion. "Our goal in this ballot initiative is to protect abortion access so that people don't have to cross state lines to access reproductive health care when they choose to seek it," Chelian said.

A WDIV/Detroit News poll conducted in January 2022 found 67.3 percent of Michigan voters want *Roe v. Wade* left in place, including 54.7 percent who strongly feel this way.

Not surprisingly, some of the most passionate voices in the debate, like Chelian's, are from those who work in the abortion care field. Between The Lines spoke with Fitz, a patient care advocate at a clinic in Michigan that provides abortion care. Fitz asked that we only use his first name.

"It's upsetting," Fitz said, in regard to the *Dobbs* case. "That's really my feeling about it. We talked about it a lot at work. We are working on the ballot initiative and petition drive which

we're going to be getting out soon, which I'm very excited about."

A gay, transgender man, Fitz began at his place of work by volunteering to help shield patients from protesters outside the clinic, commonly known as clinic escorting. When a patient advocate position became available, Fitz opted for a career change after experiencing burnout at his previous work in nonprofits and in the social work field.

"Immediately, I started loving it," Fitz said. "Like, as soon as I got hired. I was extremely happy. I love my job."

The fight to keep abortion safe and accessible is personal for Fitz. But that's not to say he had an abortion. When Fitz was 19, he gave birth to a child that he placed for adoption. He stressed he was fully aware of the options and made the decision freely. He stays in contact with the family.

"They've been incredibly accepting throughout my transition," Fitz said. "But the big thing about that choice, and when it came in my life, was that it did offer me a choice. Previous to that, I'd been very depressed; things in my life had not been going great."

"I was kind of questioning myself a lot," he continued. "And while I didn't transition or really even know I was trans until a couple of years later, that pregnancy and that choice — and knowing that I had a choice — was a big, huge, life-changing moment for me."

Fitz felt confident that all options were available to him. Yet access includes more than whether or not an option is legal. When it comes to abortion access, LGBTQ+ people often face barriers to a greater degree than the general population. That can be as basic as the health care setting.

"When I have to go to the gynecologist, I really don't feel great about it," Fitz said. And even if the practice has a reputation for being LGBTQ-friendly, "I go in and I'm the only man in the waiting room. Instantly, everybody either is suspicious of me or knows what I am. So even just getting over that hurdle to make it to the appointment is a big challenge."

Chelian explained they go to great lengths to provide a comfortable and supportive environment where she works. It starts with simple things like using the term "pregnant people" instead of "pregnant women."

"[In] our clinics, we work to ensure that

LGBTQ-identified people feel safe, comfortable, and are welcomed as who they are," Chelian said. "So anyone [who] has a uterus and needs access to abortion care, they can come and not fear any judgment or fear any stereotypes. And I think it's something that doesn't get talked about enough."

Setting foot in a clinic is one challenge. The cost of an abortion is another.

"I would say price is probably the biggest barrier for a lot of people," said Fitz, "and, you know, a lot of the LGBTQ population that would need to access those services are predominantly poor. And if they do have insurance, it's state insurance which, by state law, [is] not permitted to cover anything regarding abortion services."

Without insurance or the assistance of abortion funds, an in-clinic medication abortion (abortion pills) or a first trimester surgical abortion both cost \$500 on average. Later in a pregnancy, a surgical abortion can cost several thousand dollars. Then consider that poverty affects 22 percent of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S., compared with 16 percent of the general population. The highest rates of poverty are experienced among transgender people and cisgender bisexual women.

"Intersectionality is always kind of a bitch," Fitz said, speaking of the obstacles LGBTQ+ people might face when seeking abortion care.

As they wait for the Supreme Court decision, both Fitz and Chelian are confident that in the fight for bodily autonomy, the reproductive justice community and the LGBTQ+ community are natural allies. In Fitz's experience, the two communities go hand in hand or are so closely aligned as to be one and the same.

"Almost every LGBTQ person that I know is a staunch, reproductive rights advocate, and vice versa," Fitz said. "I think that discovering yourself and making those hard introspective choices... about yourself is really kind of the core of what it's about."

Chelian said she can see the two groups banding together even more, because the intersection of all of their issues is too great to ignore. "We're all fighting the same thing," Chelian said. "We all want to live our own lives, free of judgment, free of impositions [on access to the] healthcare we see fit for our lives."

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Scan to see Dimitri's story.

Niecy Nash and Wife First Same-Sex Couple to Appear on Cover of Essence

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Actress Niecy Nash and her singer-wife Jessica Betts will become the first same-sex couple to grace the cover of “Essence” magazine in the March/April issue.

“Making H E R S T O R Y,” Nash posted on her Instagram. “Thank you @essence for choosing The Betts as your FIRST same sex couple to cover you [sic] magazine!”

On Twitter, Nash, who is currently appearing in the final season of the TNT series “Claws,” wrote, “ALL BLACK EVERYTHING Black Love. Black Magazine Black Designer. Black Glam. Black Stylist Ending #BlackHerstory month with a bang! @Essence.”

Nash made a big splash in the summer of 2020 when she married Betts in a surprise move. Nash, previously married to men twice, had never before made public her attraction to women or identified herself as having a sexual orientation other than straight.

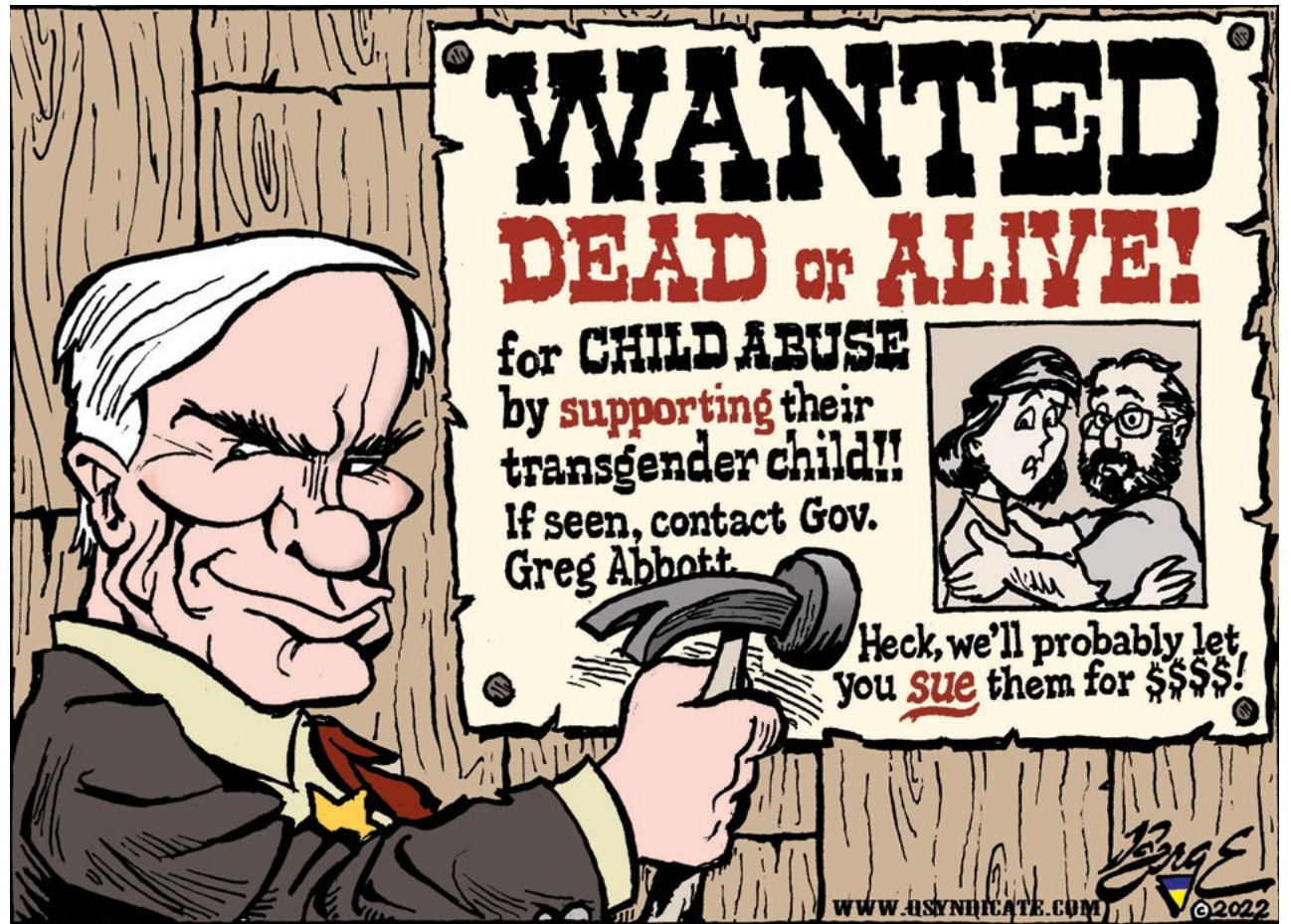
“A lot of people thought it was like a movie or some promo,” Nash told “Essence” about

the buzz surrounding her wedding announcement. “They started calling everybody, and we were like, ‘This is insane.’ I never knew why where you lay your head is such a big deal to other people. I was like, ‘People care?’”

But people, of course, do care and many were pleasantly surprised. Nash certainly didn’t mention anything about liking women when she spoke to BTL’s Chris Azzopardi in 2017, when she was still married to Jay Tucker.

Nash did, however, offer comment when asked who in Hollywood she’d hypothetically be into.

“Katy Perry because Katy Perry is friggin’ adorable and fun and funny and pretty and powerful,” she said. “Then I would probably have to say Queen Latifah and Judy Reyes, who plays Quiet Ann [on ‘Claws’].”



LGBTQ+ Books Helped Me Come Out. Banning Them Won't Stop Today's Youth From Being Who They Are.



By Jason A. Michael

Books by and for LGBTQ+ people, and in particular LGBTQ+ youth, are under attack across the country. In states such as Texas, a single parent need only complain before a book can be banned from a school library. And in Florida, the state legislature is considering a ban on the word “gay” in public elementary schools — a measure Gov. Ron DeSantis has signaled his support for. These homophobic governors are on a mission designed to stunt the emotional and intellectual growth of students, who will, no matter what books are banned or what legislation is passed, find their own ways of learning about who they are.

Growing up in the '80s, I knew no one who was gay. Not a soul. It was a painfully innocent time long before “Ellen” and “Will & Grace” and the world we live in today, where virtually every TV show is now proudly committed to including an LGBTQ+ character. I lived through a gay cultural wasteland where LGBTQ+ characters were largely invisible and, when shown, were reduced to overly stereotypical comic relief.

Books have always been an outlet for me, an only child until age 13. My mom used to read romance novels by Danielle Steel

and I would pick them up after she’d finished. In 1988, when I was 16, I read Steel’s “Family Album.” The story of actress-turned-director Faye Price Thayer, the main character had a son named Lionel who, throughout the course of the story, met an older man and came out to him as gay. It was the first time I had ever stumbled upon gay characters in a book. And I, who had no such older gay man in my life to take me under his wing and show me the gay ropes, came out of the closet alongside Lionel.

It was a life-changing moment. And even though Lionel was just a character in a book, I knew then that there must be others in the world like me.

A few years later, in the early '90s, I actually wrote to Steel, telling her how she’d changed my life and led me to understand and accept that I was gay. Surprisingly, she wrote back a sweet letter that I framed and hung above my desk for years. I was very touched.

But I digress. After “Family Album,” books continued to help me embrace my gay identity and help me feel less alone. On my first trip to Washington, D.C. later the same year, I was standing in line waiting to tour the White House when a man standing behind me opened up a newspaper, affording me a great view of the ad for Lambda Rising, which billed itself as an actual gay bookstore.

See **Book Ban**, next page

“

You can ban our books or even burn them if you like. But our truth will not be erased. Our stories will survive and thrive. And so will our young.

→ Book Ban

Continued from previous page

I never knew such a thing existed. I could hardly skip through the East Wing fast enough before I ventured out and made the lengthy walk from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to NW Connecticut Avenue in Dupont Circle, where Lambda Rising was located. I was in heaven once I walked through the doors of the store. I never knew so many LGBTQ+ books existed. I bought two — all I could afford at the time — and spent much of the rest of my trip to the nation's capital holed up in my hotel room reading.

What I would learn in the years to come was that LGBTQ+ bookstores were the LGBTQ+ community centers long before such centers even existed. It's where you came for information, support and resources. In Miami, where I lived for much of the '90s, I had Lambda Passages on Biscayne Boulevard. Then, when I returned to Detroit there was Chosen Books in Royal Oak, Just 4 Us in Ferndale and Common Language in Ann Arbor. Today, all of these stores are long closed and the era of the LGBTQ+ bookstore is just another casualty of Amazon.com.

But LGBTQ+ books continue to exist. And as long as LGBTQ+ people exist, these books belong on bookshelves everywhere, including in school libraries. Not only are kids coming out younger and younger these days, but kids have older LGBTQ+ siblings, sometimes LGBTQ+ parents or teachers. It's time to stop treating being LGBTQ+ as an affliction,

as Texas and Florida and other states are currently doing. You cannot legislate away gayness.

Today, there are more books being written by and about LGBTQ+ people than ever before. I even wrote a novel of my own a few years ago, called “Easier Said.” LGBTQ+ folks are everywhere you look these days, in film and on television. But it's in books that our stories are truly memorialized and our history most completely recorded.

You can ban our books or even burn them if you like. But our truth will not be erased. Our stories will survive and thrive. And so will our young. Though there is no denying the harm these legislative efforts will cause if successful, we have always been a resilient people.



The LGBTQ+ community must continue to build centers and drop-in spaces for LGBTQ+ youth. We must continue to look out for the vulnerable who are under attack. And we must fill these spaces with books.

CREEP OF THE WEEK

Texas Gov. High Off His Own Supply of ‘Politically Motivated Misinformation’



By D'Anne Witkowski

Texas and Florida continue competing in their race to be named The Worst State in the U.S. It's an absolutely exhausting display of anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry, especially exhausting for LGBTQ+ people and their families. People are under enough stress, damn it. Between the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, who on earth has time to go out of their way to harm LGBTQ+ people and their families?

Republicans, of course.

In Florida the so-called “don't say gay” bill passed in the House and will likely pass in the Republican controlled Senate before it goes to the desk of Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, a man with as much backbone as a shirt and slacks filled with a few cans of Great Stuff spray foam. Will he take a brave stance and not sign this bill he has already praised? Oh, the suspense.

Meanwhile, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, also a Republican, has ordered the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to investigate parents for “child abuse” if they are providing trans-related medical care for their trans kid.

In a Feb. 23 statement, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, also an anti-LGBTQ+ creep, said, “There is no doubt that these procedures are ‘abuse’ under Texas law, and thus must be halted. [DFPS] has a responsibility to act accordingly. I'll do everything I can to protect against those who take advantage of and harm young Texans.”

Everything he can, huh? It doesn't seem like he's doing a very good job. According to KXAN, “Two-hundred and fifty-one children in Texas died in 2020 due to abuse and neglect: and these types of incidents are making an unfortunate spike.”

I don't know who needs to hear this, but child abuse is very serious. We've all heard the horror stories about kids who were being abused and fell through the cracks in a system that was supposedly designed to protect them. But if you talk to any case worker at a place like DFPS, I suspect they're not going to say, “If anything, we have TOO many resources and are doing TOO much for the people we serve. Please add culture-war bullshit to our workload. We are tired of playing hours and

hours of spider solitaire on our work computers.”

While there isn't much in the way of good news here, according to the ACLU, the letter Gov. Abbot and sent to DFPS isn't

legally binding.

The letter has “no legal effect, can't change Texas law, and can't override the constitutional rights of Texas families. No court anywhere in the country has ever found that gender-affirming care can be considered child abuse,” ACLU wrote in a Feb. 23 tweet.

Still, stigmatizing the parents of trans children as child abusers causes real harm. “Although these materials are not legally binding,” the ACLU tweet continued, “they spread fear and misinformation and could spur false reporting of child abuse at a time when trans youth continue to be threatened by state leadership as part of a politically motivated misinformation campaign.”

In defense of Republicans, “politically motivated misinformation” is, like, their thing. It's one of the few things they're good at. So you can't blame them for trying! I'm kidding, you can totally blame them for trying. This is awful and they should be ashamed of themselves.

But they aren't. They never are.

Thankfully, there is real pushback against Abbot's directive. According to NBC News, Christian Menefee, an elected attorney in Harris County who handles civil child abuse cases for DFPS in Harris County, said “My office will not participate in these bad faith political games. As the lawyers handling these cases, we owe a duty of candor to the courts about what the law really says. We'll continue to follow the laws on the books — not General Paxton's politically motivated and legally incorrect ‘opinion.’”

NBC also reports that the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and The Endocrine Society all support gender-affirming care, with the The Endocrine Society stating, “Medical evidence, not politics, should inform treatment decisions.”

And we all know how Republicans feel about medical evidence.

No doubt Republicans across the country have plenty of garbage like this up their sleeves. No matter where you live, reach out to the trans folks and families you know. Let them know you're thinking about them and that there is nothing wrong with them. And vote Republicans out. All of 'em, everywhere.

Local and National LGBTQ+ Homeless Resources

The following is a list of drop-in centers and transitional living facilities across the state of Michigan available to LGBTQ+ youth, along with other resources.

Ruth Ellis Drop-In Center

The Drop-In Center in Highland Park is a safe place for LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-30 to simply be themselves. At the center, you'll have access to hot dinners, food to go, safer sex supplies, computer lab, free laundry, peer support groups, dance floor, help with applications and resumes, and more. The center can also help connect you with the Ruth Ellis Health & Wellness Center and emergency shelter. Call 313-252-1950.

Ozone House

Ozone House in Ypsilanti provides a long list of LGBTQ+ support services, including housing for youth ages 10-17 years old. From their site: "Safe Stay offers a welcoming place for you if you need a safe place to stay or a break from conflict at home." Call 734-662-2222 anytime or text "Ozone" to 734-662-2222 M-F 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Covenant House

Covenant House in Grand Rapids uses a trauma-informed, resilience-focused approach to help homeless, runaway and trafficked youths, including LGBTQ-identifying youth. Call 616-364-2000.

Coordinated Assessment Model

The Coordinated Assessment Model (CAM) is a systematic approach to homelessness in Detroit, Highland Park and Hamtramck that focuses on aligning the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of becoming homeless to available shelter and housing resources.

Alternatives for Girls

The mission of Alternative for Girls (AFG) in Detroit is to help homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation, and to help them explore and access the support, resources and opportunities available to them. AFG can help with shelter for young women ages 15-22, prevention and outreach.

National Runaway Safeline

The National Runaway Safeline is a hotline available 24/7. There is always someone available to listen and offer confidential, non-directive and non-judgmental support. Call 800-RUNAWAY.

OutFront Kalamazoo Tackles LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness with Transitional Housing Project

New Director Says Legacy House Will Put a Dent in Nationwide Epidemic

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

OutFront Kalamazoo (OFK) has hired Cristina B. Suárez-Ross to be the center's new director of homeless youth programs. This comes just as OFK is preparing to open its first transitional living facility, Legacy House. The three-bedroom home in the Vine neighborhood of Kalamazoo will house between six to eight young adults ages 18-24 and provide a live-in staff person who will be onsite at all times.

"No child should ever be kicked out of their home because they identify as LGBTQ+," Suárez-Ross told Pride Source at the end of her first week on the job. "Yet it does very much still happen, and my goal is to ensure that if that occurs, they have a safe, accepting place to land."

Suárez-Ross will oversee two specific projects, the center's Host Homes program and Legacy House. Host Homes involves partnering with families in the community who are willing to open their homes to an LGBTQ+ youth who has been forced into homelessness by their family's unwillingness to accept them.

"Those families go through training to prepare to host the LGBTQ+ youth and act as a support system while the youth attends school, work, etcetera, as well as involve that youth in their everyday lives and act as family to that person," Suárez-Ross said.

Legacy House, meanwhile, will provide transitional living, where individuals will live together while they work, learn independent living skills and work toward achieving independence. While living in the house, residents will receive wraparound services from OutFront and its community partners.

LGBTQ+ youth homelessness is an epidemic, said OFK Executive Director Amy Hunter.

"The need for transitional housing is nationwide," she said. "We have a lot of folks who are chronically homeless in the LGBTQ+ community. [Legacy House] fits a population that needs some longer-term housing to kind of break the cycle of chronic homelessness. We'll have services that will help set our residents up to succeed."

Hunter said that statistics show 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+. A large contributing factor to the problem are the religious beliefs some parents still hold.

"There's a lot of religious opposition to LGBTQ+ folks. We find that people end up in families where the parents just don't understand and are not willing to learn. So, we end up with kids who are tossed out of the house or whatever at a fairly young age."

Locally, Grace Gheen, OFK's director of communications, said Kalamazoo's numbers track with the national average.

"We have a large population of homeless LGBTQ+ people in our area," Gheen said. "The need for housing has been ongoing for many years. Some of the shelters in our area are not as welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community, unfortunately. Thus,



our transitional housing is much needed."

Suárez-Ross agreed.

"Grace is correct about there being a big need for something like this in our area," she said. "I attribute that to a couple of things, but I think the overriding issue continues to be ignorance and a lack of understanding, manifesting as a dearth of attention and energy for these issues."

Organizing, said Suárez-Ross, is critical to tackling these issues.

"I think organizing to address these things — educating the general public and then specifically targeting groups who might benefit from further education and information — in a more comprehensive way is critical. At OutFront, we collaborate with various community partners in order to further educate and involve our community."

Suárez-Ross said her new position is "the culmination of all the work I've done in the field of social work, including working with youth who have behavioral and emotional issues, substance abuse, trauma, and those who have been abused and neglected."

"In all of those areas, my work included LGBTQ+ youth and I quickly came to see what a hugely underserved population that is," Suárez-Ross, who identifies as an ally, continued. "The director of homeless youth programs position allows me to focus on growing the availability of quality services for the LGBTQ+ youth population in our community." Hunter said she expects Legacy House to start housing residents by late spring or early summer.

The road to see the project to completion and get the house open has not been without obstacles.

"It was quite a challenge to find a house that was zoned the right way and that we could use for transitional housing," she said. "It's really been a community-wide project."

So near now to the finish line, Hunter beams when she talks about the project.

"I'm very excited to be this close. I can hardly believe that we actually own this piece of property and will be able to use it for what it's designed for, to put a dent in the homeless epidemic for LGBTQ+ youth. It's very exciting. We're about to start taking applicants and get the rest of the things done that need to be done to the house and get it open."

But, as she said, one house will merely make a dent in the program. Does Hunter see a Legacy House II materializing someday in the future?

"I think we need to get this house up and operating and see how things go. Nip and tuck the program to get it working smoothly and then we'll go from there."

"It's not out of the question, though, that we could find another property at some point," she continued. "But it's not on the near horizon for us. We've got to get this one up and running efficiently first."

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Michigan LGBTQ+ Community Center Network Issues Joint Statement Condemning Russian Attack on Ukraine

Statement Highlights History of Russian Human Rights Abuses Against LGBTQ+ Community

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The Michigan LGBTQ+ Community Center Network has issued a statement condemning Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine. The Network, which consists of 13 LGBTQ+ groups across the state, joined human rights organizations all over the world in calling on Russia to cease its invasion and occupation of an independent country.

"Russia is an extremely hostile place for LGBTQ+ people, and President Putin's dangerous ploy to expand control into Europe is a threat to the safety and rights of the LGBTQ+ community everywhere, especially to our Ukrainian LGBTQ+ family at this time," the statement read in part.

David Garcia, the executive director of Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center in Ferndale, said the Network came together to draft the letter for multiple reasons.

"Russia has continued to show a growing hostility toward the LGBTQ+ community and we fear for the lives and safety of LGBTQ+ Ukrainians should Russia occupy Ukraine," Garcia told BTL. "Russia has created a humanitarian refugee crisis, and while every single human life is important and needs the entire world's help, we felt that as leaders

in the LGBTQ+ community we should draw particular attention to the suffering of LGBTQ+ refugees in this moment"

OutCenter of Southwest Michigan Executive Director MaryJo Schnell agreed.

"LGBTQ+ people are everywhere, including in Russia and Ukraine, and Russia has a horrible, horrible record when it comes to the treatment of its citizens who are LGBTQ+," said Schnell. "We wanted to show solidarity, in terms of people just being attacked. It's something the LGBTQ+ community understands."

In its statement, the Network included an ask for donations to Rainbow Railroad, a global nonprofit organization that helps LGBTQ+ people facing persecution in their home countries based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

"I personally worked with the Rainbow Railroad in my L.A. days as the policy director [of the Los Angeles LGBT Center] when we were trying to get LGBTQ+ people out of Chechnya," Garcia said. "They work all over the world trying to help LGBTQ+ people safely relocate to countries less hostile."

For more information on Rainbow Railroad, visit rainbowrailroad.org.

Holly's City Council Passes Pride Month Declaration

Proclamation Follows City's First Pride Event in 2021

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Without fanfare or discussion, the Village of Holly Council unanimously passed a resolution declaring June 2022 as LGBTQ+ Pride Month at their Feb. 8 meeting.

Introduced by Council member Ryan Delaney, the resolution states that the Village Council:

"recognizes and values the dignity, humanity, and unique contributions of each individual person in our community; believes firmly in the principles of freedom, equality, and justice for all; welcomes all people and believes everyone deserves a space where they can live, work, and play while feeling safe, happy and supported by friends, neighbors and the community; recognizes and appreciates the cultural, civic and economic contributions of the LGBTQ+ community, and is committed to ensuring that our LGBTQ+ community and its members feel safe, valued and empowered in our community and that they know they have the support of village leadership."

The resolution is similar to resolutions passed in other cities, including Ferndale, Hazel Park and Madison Heights.

Delaney told Oakland County Times after the meeting that "I believe it is important that our LGBTQ+ residents know that their dignity is recognized by their community and that they are supported by their local government.

"Actually, I think that this resolution is the very least we can do for our LGBTQ+ residents — and there are many in the Village — and that there is much more that we could do and should do by way of protecting their rights and ensuring that they are free from discrimination."

An annual Pride event and Pride Month proclamations are among ways communities find healing and human connections.

Holly had their first Pride event in 2021, with nearly 100 people gathering at the Holly Vault Collection's Venue 111. Though pictures show Holly's first Pride as a sea of smiling faces with waves of rainbow clothes and flags, there was also a layer of pain, sadness and



fear that connected those in the room who understood that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer is not easy in spite of the progress that has been made.

Parents still disown their gay children. Landlords still turn away same-sex couples, making it harder to find housing. People still live in fear because they can be fired for who they love or how much they stray from stereotypical gender roles. Kids — and adults — face name-calling, harassment and violence. Fear of being themselves, or even shame, takes a psychological toll. And in spite of legalized same-sex marriage and the wave of LGBTQ+ people in the public eye, there is still a long way to go for those who want to simply feel accepted as the human beings they are.

Jerome Raska co-owns Blumz along with his partner Robbin Yelverton. The couple expanded their floral business from Ferndale and Detroit to downtown Holly several years ago.

"I feel inclusivity makes a community," Raska said. "Designating June as Pride Month helps substantiate the village of Holly as a community of acceptance and diversity. We are very pleased to be part of the Holly business community."

For Village Council President Tom McKenney, the answer to why he supported the proclamation is the same simple Latin phrase printed on the Great Seal of the United States: "E pluribus unum!"

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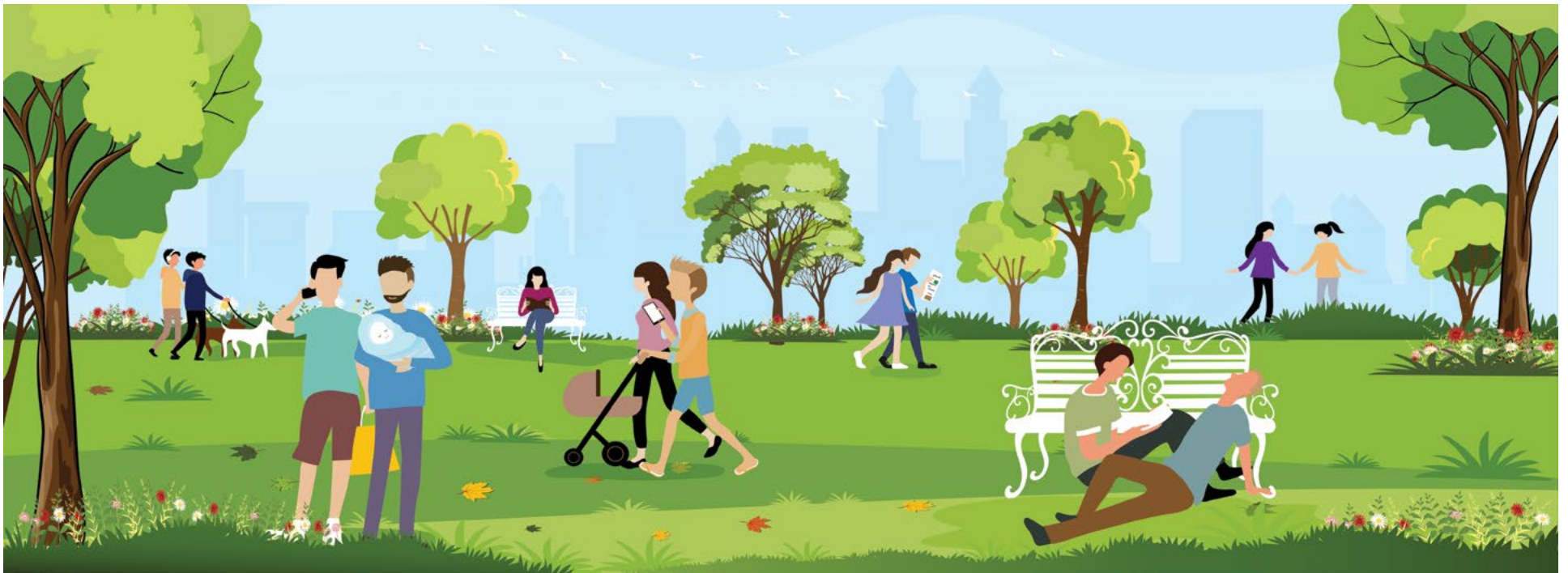


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HRC's Municipal Equality Index: Why Some LGBTQ-Friendly Cities in Michigan Didn't Make the List

BY JACKIE JONES

Every year, Human Rights Campaign (HRC) releases its Municipal Equality Index Report (MEI). In it, they highlight cities throughout the country leading in LGBTQ+ inclusivity and representation.

And, every year, for the past 10 years, major Michigan cities have been included on their list. Just last year, HRC highlighted 11 Michigan cities that varied in scores from 100 to 16. But several LGBTQ-friendly cities were missing. Why weren't some cities included? Especially ones you'd think should be on the list? BTL got in touch with HRC to understand their process.

HRC's process

It takes HRC months to gather information for their annual report. "The research period is typically from February to June, every year," explained Colin Kutney, associate director of state and municipal programs at HRC. "So, that means our internal team conducts research based on publicly available data that includes a program manager, a staff, legislative attorney and a group of law fellows throughout the year."

During this research period, HRC also determines how they will select the cities. For example, last year's 506 cities rated were:

- The 50 state capitals
- The 200 largest cities in the United States

- The five largest cities or municipalities in each state
- The cities home to the state's two largest public universities (including undergraduate and graduate enrollment)
- 75 cities and municipalities that have high proportions of same-sex couples
- 98 cities selected by HRC and Equality Federation state groups members and supporters

Once the city's selection criteria are determined, they pull from public and available documentation to rate draft scorecards, ranking and indexing each city. A city's score is ranked out of 100 and is determined based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and leadership on LGBTQ+ equality.

"Sometimes we look at Google searches or reported statistics of hate crimes to the FBI," said Kutney. "We would go to the report from the FBI and look at that documentation there. But most documentation that supports the scores comes from the cities' websites."

Cities can self-submit their information to be qualified. No Michigan cities participated in 2021, but 11 Michigan cities qualified based on the initial selection criteria referenced above: Ferndale, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, East Lansing, Lansing, Pleasant Ridge, Sterling Heights, Traverse City and Warren, which ranked lowest with a score of 16%.

After draft scorecards are created, HRC then sends those out to the cities for review. "They have

an opportunity to respond, but if we do not hear from the cities, that is what's going to be published in the report," said Kutney.

A queer mecca that didn't make the list

Saugatuck and its next-door neighbor Douglas are much smaller than the majority of the 11 Michigan cities featured in the MEI report. Still, with populations of only 964 people (Saugatuck) and 1,408 (Douglas), according to the World Population Review, the two cities have created something of an LGBTQ+ "mecca," said Saugatuck Mayor Garnet Lewis.

"Our history has shown us to be that," Lewis told BTL.

According to Saugatuck GLBT History Project, Saugatuck-Douglas is the midwest's oldest and most popular LGBTQ+ destination spot. The area has over 100 LGBTQ-owned and friendly businesses and is a vacation hotspot for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Local government in Saugatuck-Douglas is also LGBTQ-inclusive. Lewis herself is an open lesbian who served on Saugatuck's city council before being appointed mayor in 2021.

"It's a very welcoming community," she said of Saugatuck.

Douglas shares in this distinction, something City Manager Richard LaBombard agrees with.

"Douglas as a hub for the LGBTQ+ community has deep roots established by the creative

community," LaBombard explained.

Over the years, LaBombard said Douglas has made continuous efforts to expand its LGBTQ+ support within its community. Though Douglas didn't make the current list of 11 Michigan cities, he does recall the city self-submitting to the MEI report two years ago.

"The city actively investigated how the MEI reporting process works because we thought it was important for the Douglas community to be represented," said LaBombard. "City staff also reviewed current policies and made recommendations to the City Manager to revise several policies and ordinances based on information available in the MEI survey."

Kutney told BTL that "MEI feedback deadline is the last business day in July, and this outreach was far after the 2019 deadline," as the city emailed HRC on Nov. 27, 2019, according to Kutney. "If the city had completed the self-submit process at this time, they would have been included in the 2020 publication cycle."

"I replied on December 19, 2019, and clarified that the MEI would not expand the number of cities rated beyond 506," Kutney added, "but they were welcome to receive a rating through the self-submit process. I sent a link to the self-submit process. We've not received additional correspondence or documentation for assessment from Douglas since this initial outreach."

Other cities that were contacted about their potential efforts to help their city rank on HRC's MEI include Royal Oak, Berkley and Marquette, none of which responded to our inquiries by press time.

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Rachel Miller. Photo: Amelia Falk

How a Dedicated Dancer Is Transforming RAD Fest Into a Must-Attend Queer Festival

RAD Fest Curator Rachel Miller on How Inclusivity Became Central to Annual event

BY JACKIE JONES

“I want this festival to speak up for those who don’t get to speak up very often, especially in dance,” Rachel Miller, Regional Alternative Dance (RAD) Fest curator, recently told BTL.

Miller, who has been curating the Midwest RAD Fest for 10 years, highlights both marginalized and LGBTQ+ performers and artists. But, even before her current role as trailblazing curator, Miller was going against the grain. It started when she was 7 years old, when her mom decided to put her in dance — something unheard of in their Mennonite community in Goshen, Indiana.

“I did not grow up as a conservative Mennonite; I grew up as what they call an English Mennonite,” she explained. “[We are the] Mennonites who dress in jeans and T-shirts, that use electricity and drive cars — all of that. They’re

not necessarily farmers. But it’s still a very conservative community, in that sense.”

She said while growing up, the community believed that if “you are a woman, you marry a man very young” and that “you have babies.”

“I was actually pretty lucky that my parents put me in dance because dance is not something Mennonites do,” she continued. “It’s a very sheltered life.”

Through dance, Miller was able to dismantle Mennonites’ “subjectification of women,” later coming out as a “lesbian or a pansexual, with a little bit of bisexual.”

Growing through dance

Though initially focused on ballet, Miller’s dance interests have evolved throughout the years for various reasons. Around 12 and 13, Miller says, she developed a “distaste” for ballet’s “roots in heteronormative” practices.

“I just didn’t fit into that category, I guess,” she explained. “I was like, ‘Why can’t I do jumps and leaps like the men? I don’t want to do this silly little forward.’”

Because she said ballet typically only allows women to take roles such as “mythical creatures,

or the woman in distress that needs to be saved by the man” she focused more on modern, hip-hop and African dance styles.

These other dances “kind of swept me away,” she said.

While developing and studying modern dance, she was inspired by historic, pioneering women dancers. She looked up to the likes of Martha Graham, the creator of Graham technique — a modern dance movement developed in 1926 — and Katherine Dunham, noted for creating Dunham technique, a style that incorporates Black, Caribbean, African and South American movement styles into ballet.

Through these techniques, Miller said she learned about “the connection that dance gave [her] body.”

Miller’s connection to dance has allowed her to perform all over the country. Her choreographic and screendance works have been presented in South Bend, Las Vegas, New Orleans, New York and at festivals like the Midwest RAD Fest in Kalamazoo, the Detroit Dance City Festival, the Big River Dance Festival in Huntington, West Virginia, and Fringe Festival Praha in Prague, Czech Republic.

See Rachel Miller, page 20



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→ Rachel Miller

Continued from page 18

While developing her dance career and performing throughout the country, Miller was also able to come to terms with her own sexuality. Though she said she dated women in her early 20s, she said she didn't come out to her family until her early 30s.

"I didn't come out right away, either," she said. "I came out by saying 'I have an interest in women, and I think I'm bisexual.' It was a soft coming out."

In 2001, Miller began dancing for Wellspring/Cori Terry and Dancers. And after a 17-year career with the company, she retired and began to take on full-time curatorial duties for the RAD Fest.

"Well, I was dancing with [Wellspring] at the time RAD Fest started 13 years ago," she explained. "And two years into it, they realized they needed to take a different direction with the curator. Before, it was kind of everywhere, and the executive director was handling it and they needed kind of a focus, so that's when they asked me to take over. That's how I got involved. And I've grown the festival quite a bit since [then]."

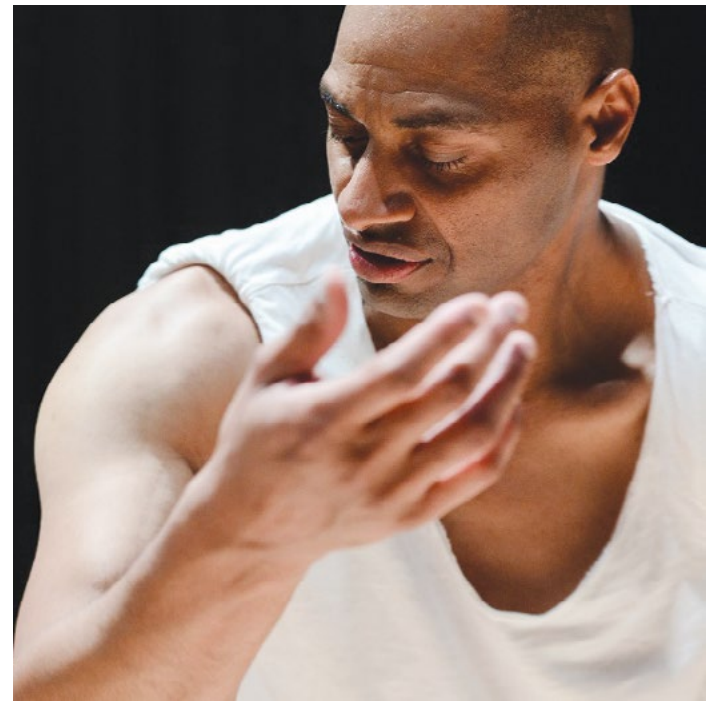
When Miller isn't curating RAD Fest, she teaches as an adjunct dance professor at Grand Valley State University.

RAD Fest's RADical mission

This year's virtual and in-person RAD Fest, set for March 4-6, will highlight more than 200 artists. The festival will include a screendance film series, masterclasses, workshops, a mediated discussion group and several different networking opportunities for artists and patrons.

For the festival, Miller has made it her mission to offer equitable opportunities to RAD Fest performers. This year is no exception.

"When you see a lot of the big modern dance works or the big stage performance works, a lot of times it's by either straight choreographers, male choreographers — those are the people who are in positions of



(Left to right) Nora Sharp and Helanius Wilkins. Photos by Anjali Pinto and C. Carruth

power," she said. "Dancers are not always those people."

Miller's approach to reaching her goal starts with choosing her panel of judges.

"The way I do that is by first recruiting an adjudication panel that is comprised mostly of LGBTQIA+ folks and people of color," she said. "The adjudication panel helps me choose what works to put in the festival."

This process, she says, has helped her broaden her understanding of biases she may overlook. In addition, while reviewing submissions for the RAD Fest, she said she leans on her panel to choose works that properly represent a community.

"If I don't see appropriation in something, it's important for me to have that voice [that does]," she explained.

This is especially helpful considering most of Miller's selections "are queer works or exhibit non-heteronormativity or works that are sometimes political in nature."

An example is RAD Fest's 2020 showcase. "After the George Floyd protest and Black Lives Matter got such a great voice, there were a lot of works that were submitted along those lines

or surrounding those issues," she said. "That 2020 festival was comprised of pretty much all Black Lives Matter performances or had to do with that."

Miller's work to create a radical, inclusive platform fosters a safe space for its performers to explore as well. Helanius Wilkins, who is set to perform his ongoing community-based piece *The Conversation Series: Stitching The Geopolitical Quilt To Re-Body Belonging*, agrees with this notion.

In this year's festival, Wilkins will work with Kalamazoo's indigenous community to better understand their history and heritage. Then, after observing and facilitating workshops, he will gather his content and footage and share it through dance and screen projectors.

"[The dance performance] features an interracial male duet, dancing to become better ancestors," he said. "Inherit in the work, due to it being a male duet, is a journey of reconsidering notions of masculinity and seeing it as being one about both strength and vulnerability."

All this wouldn't have been possible without help from Miller, Wilkins said.

"She has been really wonderful serving as a liaison and collaborator with creating linkages with certain members of the community to make this work possible," he said. "As well as coordinating venues and spaces where the activities of my work take place."

Another performer and dancer at RAD Fest, Nora Sharp, also praised Miller for her work.

This year, Sharp, who has worked with and presented at RAD Fest in the past, will be presenting the first episode of "The Real Dance," a 20-minute reality TV show depicting the lives of primarily queer dancers. They said working with Miller has always been inspiring.

"I feel like Rachel is genuinely excited about dance making and about people's experimentation in their work," they said.

Miller said working with RAD Fest has been "really great so far" and that the group's mission as an inclusive, LGBTQ-focused platform has been noticed far outside of Michigan.

"The word has spread even internationally about it in those terms," she said. "So, while we don't say this is a queer festival necessarily, it kind of is."



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Call Me Mentor

Leslie Jordan and Cheyenne Jackson on What They've Learned From Each Other on the Set of 'Call Me Kat'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Leslie Jordan and Cheyenne Jackson, co-stars in the Fox multicam sitcom “Call Me Kat,” are in separate locations on Zoom, tenderly admiring each other. As an openly gay actor, Jackson (“30 Rock” and “All Shook Up,” his first lead role on Broadway) affectionately acknowledges that Jordan, who’s also openly gay, has been a mentor to him ever since he saw him as Beverley Leslie on “Will & Grace.” Jordan, who admits he doesn’t know how to respond to younger generations who praise

him for paving the way for them, recognizes Jackson for being precisely the kind of actor Jordan is not.

Since January 2021, the “Call Me Kat” actors have come together weekly to make viewers laugh through a seriously unfunny and fraught time. The sitcom, which also features Mayim Bialik, as Kat, and Swoosie Kurtz, as Kat’s mom Sheila, is now in its second season after premiering during the pandemic. As Phil, Jordan plays the gay head baker at Kat’s cat café, while Jackson portrays bartender Max, Kat’s former college boyfriend.

Recently, Jackson, 46, and Jordan, 66, got on Zoom to chat about shooting a sitcom during Covid, the potential for Jordan to get his first onscreen kiss, and why, during one episode, he moves so effortlessly in heels.

How much joy and levity has doing this show brought you during one of the most challenging times we’ll ever experience?

Cheyenne Jackson: It’s brought a significant amount of joy and stability and escapism. I think that’s really what we are all craving right now, because the world feels off of its hinges.

To be able to go to work every day with five other people whom you adore and love and are inspired by, but also just to get to do something that is just unabashedly joyful and happy... I mean, what other show at the end of it has a curtain call? An old-timey curtain call!

It’s really just been such a gift. I know people overuse that phrase, but it truly has [been], being able to be home with my kids, go to work and then be home every day in time for dinner. I’ve only missed, maybe, two bedtimes this whole run. And when we have a week off, I definitely start to miss everybody and can’t wait to get back.

What about you, Leslie? What has the show meant to you, especially as a source of connection during a time when it’s been so hard to connect with people?

Leslie Jordan: We had an amazing beginning because we were going to shoot the pilot and then the pandemic hit. We got to meet each other over Zoom. I don’t think any of us really knew each other. I had worked with Cheyenne a couple times, but none of us were friendly-friendly. And all of a sudden during the pandemic, with the Zooms and getting things ready, they said, “The minute this is over, we’re going back.” When people didn’t even know if they were going to get jobs back, we knew what was ahead, we knew what was coming, and we just kind of bonded. And so by the time we got all of us together, we were just giddy. We just loved each other so much.

And it’s been hard because this show should be in front of an audience. It’s multicam, and it should be shot in front of an audience. And we’re aiming toward that, eventually. But we haven’t been able to have an audience. So we are doing comedy with very little laughter. We’ve had a director lately that screams at everybody and says, “Laugh!” Like those old camera men, they’ve heard it 20 times! You’re not going to get a giggle out of any of them. So we just have to know that what we’re saying is funny and that’s that. It’s been trying, but we have so much ahead of us, and I think this is a show that has some legs.

I read this article that what Fox was looking for with their pilot season was different kinds of shows [they] can pair with “Call Me Kat.” So it seems to me like they’re going to build nights around us. And I just want it to go for a while. I’m at an age. I’m 66. I was thinking if it went as long as “Big Bang Theory,” I’d be like almost 80 [laughs] when it’s over. I’ll be ready to retire. I’d be so rich.

I have appreciation for the show’s queer inclusivity, and I’m getting a real kick out of seeing Cheyenne playing one of the straightest men I’ve ever seen.

Jordan: He’ll walk over to me, and then he’ll go, “Listen, girl,” after he’s just been the butchest. [Laughs.]

What's it like being a part of a show that touches on some really important LGBTQ-specific topics?

Jordan: You know, I feel so protected, I don't know what it is. I just feel like I'm [in] this cocoon because, you know, writers come, they go, this one in and out. But right now we've got some writers that came from "Will & Grace" and wrote my Emmy episode [Jordan won in 2006 for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series]. So everything they write, I adore.

Listen, I've done some stinkers over the years. But every week the scripts just get better and better and better. And we're like, "Wow, they're touching on all kinds of topics." They were whispering the other day that they want to give me an onscreen kiss. I said, "Oh lord." [Laughs.] That'll be a first!

Who do you want to play that role, Leslie, is the question?

Jordan: Well, we approached Rob Gronkowski, that football player. I'm making that up. We did not approach him. [Laughs.] I think he would be good, though; they should ask him. I've got such a crush on him. I don't even watch football, but I'm glued to that TV.

I have an appreciation for one of the episodes this season that touches on LGBTQ+ aging. Leslie, how did that bit about the unique experience of aging for LGBTQ+ people make it onto the show? Was that your doing?

Jordan: People think that as actors we have a lot of say, and maybe other actors do, but I don't particularly... I'm the kind of actor that I think writers love because I show up and just say their words [laughs]. And I learned a long time ago that stage is an actor's medium. Film is a director's medium. TV is really a writer's medium. That's where you have wonderful, wonderful writers. And I know the process, that they sit around that table... "Will & Grace," at one point, had 25 writers. Can you imagine? Twenty-five people sitting around the table, going over [a script] line by line by line. And then you show up, and the actors take off and then speak the words. I'm very reverent. You do your job. I'll show up and bring it to life. Just give me the words. So no, I had nothing to do with that at all. They came up with it. I just loved it.

Jackson: First of all, I've never heard it put that way, the medium; that's really, really cool. I love to think of it that way, and I am of like mind with Leslie that my job is to be a conduit. I go in there, and I take what they give me and portray it. But so much of what they're writing now, especially our new additions that Leslie was talking about, I do believe they're taking from our own lives and who we are in the world. So when they give Leslie a monologue like he did in the car about [aging] as Max, I feel like crying as Cheyenne because Leslie's so brilliant, and Swoosie is so brilliant. The two of them together, I just love their dynamic. Sometimes a paragraph or a scene or just a set of lines will just hit you in

the guts, and that was definitely one where I thought it was a home run. And, yeah, I have to definitely remember, "OK, I'm Max right now." [Laughs.]

Cheyenne, how do you get through a take without laughing when Leslie is in a scene with you, particularly that episode where he learns to ride a bike?

Jackson: [Laughs.] Oh my god, oh my god. OK, so usually we have a lot of material to do, and I'm from the theater, and I love to prepare, and I love to be super solid on my lines. So when I get down there, if there's going to be a bike or Leslie doing his thing, I don't break. But with that particular episode — Anthony Rich directed, and it was really fast, and we have tons of rapid fire, and Leslie with the pratfall — it's hard. To keep us on track is tough.

Did you two first meet on the set of "American Horror Story"?

Jackson: We were trying to figure this out the other day. I think it must have been.

Jordan: I think it was the day that we were shooting in a big theater and they had Trixie Mattel. She was on "American Horror Story" very briefly. You had the actor, and then you had the actor playing the actor, and then it went all... I couldn't keep up with it. But that I think is where we met.

Jackson: But I've known who Leslie was forever and was a huge fan of "Will & Grace," and I can quote all of his stuff, and I constantly do to him. It's one of the joys of this.

Jordan: I just wish he'd butch it up a little bit sometimes when he's doing it. [Laughs.]

Jackson: One of the biggest joys of this has been to get to know Leslie on a true friend basis, because the queer experience in Hollywood is, you have to have lived it to understand it. And I'm in my mid 40s now, and you know, I've been around a while. So I love to have mentors, and I love to have queer mentors. And Leslie has stories and advice and just so much wisdom. And sometimes, if I'm stuck on a line, I will go to him and say, "How do I make this funny rhythmically?" and he'll say like, "Hit that, hit that, and then just drop that." It's just so intrinsic in him, whereas multicam is still new to me. So it's one of my favorite things, being on a show with you.

I'm sure Cheyenne is not the only person to have told you that you're a queer mentor to them. What is it like to hear that from other people in the LGBTQ+ community?

Jordan: I mean, I don't get up in the morning and think, "The mentor has gotten up." [Laughs.] You know, when I got to Hollywood in 1992, West Hollywood was where I dropped anchor. Queers were everywhere, and I thought, "Wow." And then the crisis hit — the AIDS epidemic, which I've seen so many parallels between this pandemic and the last one.

See **Mentors**, page 24

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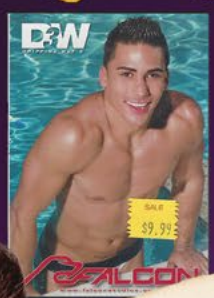
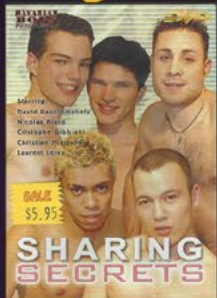
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Leslie Jordan and Cheyenne Jackson in "Call Me Kat." Photo: Fox

→ Mentors

Continued from page 23

I've been through it. I've been through a pandemic. I was on the forefront of Project Angel Food when it got started. I was right there in the meetings when Project Nightlight got started. I was around, and I did my share, and I'm very proud of that. And sometimes I look back and think, "Own it." It's so hard for us. My boyfriend constantly says to me, "When someone compliments you, Leslie, you compliment them back." I'm working on that. I'm working so hard on that. Anyways, whatever. Where were we? What was the question?

You were just about to thank Cheyenne for what he said.

[Both laugh.] **Jackson:** Nice, Chris.

Jordan: And then sing his praises, which Cheyenne... he's trained as an actor. I marvel. I go over there, and he's got a script marked with stuff and I think maybe I should do that. But we all have our process. We all have a way in which we approach it. And his is to be admired, that's for sure.

Jackson: Thank you, Leslie. We're all learning from each other.

Jordan: You know what I am? I met this girl, and I said "When did you decide to become an actress?" She said, "Oh honey, I'm not an actress, I'm a depictress." I said, "You're a depictress, what does that mean?" She said, "I don't do that whole method-y thing. I just depict; then I go home." And well, OK, so maybe I'm a depictress. [Laughs.]

Leslie, you can really work some heels. I know you've joked before that you came out of your

mom's womb and immediately stepped into her heels, so is that why you are such a pro at dancing around in them on "Call Me Kat"?

Jordan: [Laughs.] No, it's because I did drag when I was about 19. We would have drag parties and I was in my hometown; you couldn't get in the bars at 17. So we'd have these drag parties up at this doctor's house — this very wealthy doctor — and we would put together drag shows, and I was Miss Baby Wipes, that was my name. The sweet and petite Miss Baby Wipes. And I could work that stage. I'd do Tina Turner numbers and stuff, when they were all doing Barbra Streisand.

Jackson: I knew that you'd be good in heels, but when we had that episode with heels the other day and you popped them on, he was like "bum, bum, bum, bum, bum!" It was amazing. I can't do that.

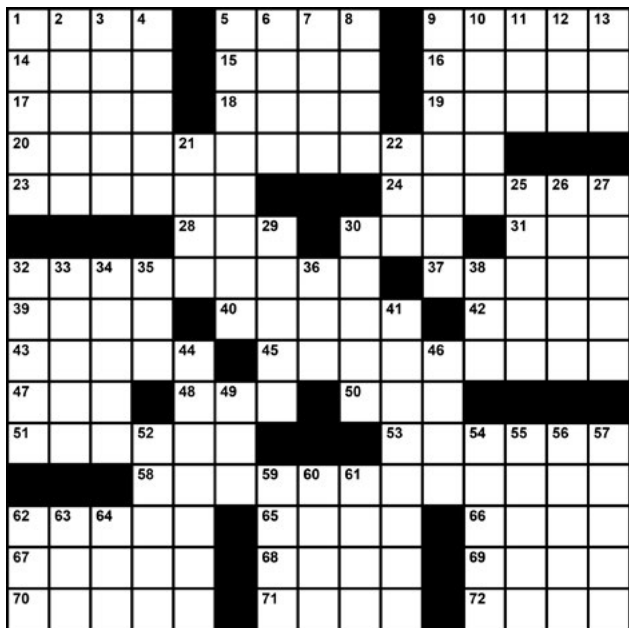
This cast is obviously very musical. And given that there's an actual stage right there on set, how much unprompted singing goes on behind the scenes?

Jackson: Mayim and I often find ourselves behind the pianos just playing, and Mayim is incredibly musical and plays a bunch of instruments, and I love that they write that into the show a lot. But I'd like to see Leslie have a musical moment.

Jordan: I will hear Cheyenne and Mayim just sit down at the piano and sing and think, "Oh, that's wonderful." I was on Reba McEntire's show many, many years ago and she'd do that. All of a sudden she'd start singing and it was like, "My god, that's Reba over there just singing."

Jackson: I want Leslie to do a number after his makeout scene.

Jordan: With the Gronk!



- Oscars (#1)
 37 Flies like a falcon
 39 Diva's piece
 40 Transportation for Liberace
 42 Bear of the night
 43 Fictional falcon's home
 45 2018 film about a gay teen (#9)
 47 Went down on
 48 Road atlas abbr.
 50 La mer, to Debussy
 51 Play the temptress
 53 Much ado about nothing, perhaps
 58 Lesbian romance set in Queen Anne's court (#14)
 62 Rice dish with nuts and fruits
 65 Ingrid's _Casablanca_ role
 66 Surfer's paradise
 67 "My Own Private ___" (#12)
 68 Lorca's half-dozen
 69 Queen's "___ on Me"
 70 Michael of "Miss Congeniality"
 71 Send a message to
 72 Features of Disney's Dumbo

- 10 Sue Wicks, for one
 11 Constellation over Sydney
 12 Stylish, '60s-style
 13 Dottermans of "Antonia's Line"
 21 Un-American idol
 22 USMC barracks boss
 25 It arouses in the bedroom
 26 Bodybuilding-themed porn mag
 27 Reformer Anthony
 29 Able to bend over
 30 Pilot's place
 32 Lesbian parent pair
 33 Take the soapbox
 34 Lubricated
 35 Part of NGLTF (abbr.)
 36 Medical care co.
 38 Nice affirmative
 41 Where pirates land
 44 The Riddler, to Superman
 46 "Star Trek" navigator
 49 Supporter of Spencer-Devlin
 52 Affirmation member, often
 54 Became erect
 55 Sporty Mazda
 56 Colette's "The ___ One"
 57 Commits to another hitch
 59 Balled hand for balling
 60 Toward shelter
 61 Auto engine type
 62 It's a snap for Morgan Gwenwald
 63 Lupino of "Women's Prison"
 64 Troubadour's tune

Romance Parade

Q Puzzle

Across

- 1 Peter Doyle's partner Whitman
 5 "Spamalot" writer Eric
 9 Caesar's postorgasmic claim?
 14 "Firebird" composer Stravinsky
 15 "Chicago" producer Meron
 16 Movie based on "The Price of Salt"
 ("Parade"'s #2 of the Best LGBTQ
 Romance Movies of All Time)
 17 Allies alliance (abbr.)

- 18 Where to find fine meats
 19 "Great Caesar's ghost!"
 20 Lesbian romance set in the
 Orthodox Jewish community (#18)
 23 Get testy with
 24 Units of stone size
 28 Emergency road service org.
 30 Pacifier
 31 Mary's TV boss
 32 Best Picture winner at the 2017

Down

- 1 Section for sax maniacs
 2 From the top
 3 Loads of
 4 Cavalry unit
 5 Where dat bottom took it?
 6 A Scout may do a good one
 7 Taylor of "I Shot Andy Warhol"
 8 Peace Nobelists Wiesel
 9 Top of the world and the bottom

See p. 20 for answers

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A still from "Beyond Ed Buck" on ALLBLK. Photo: AMC Networks

'Beyond Ed Buck' Is a Look at Two Tragic Topics Deserving of Their Own Films

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Ed Buck is a monster. A maniacal, meth-addicted sexual predator. And a racist for good measure. So it's not surprising that "Beyond Ed Buck," the new documentary from Jayce Baron and "Pose" star Hailie Sahar, is a very difficult film to watch.

The story is tragically sad. Buck, a major donor to the Democratic party, convinced down-on-their-luck Black men to come to his West Hollywood apartment. There, he would inject them with hard drugs, including methamphetamine, and have sex with them when they were often too stoned to give consent. The pervert might still be in business if it hadn't been for two men who died in his sex den. And, more tragic still, it wasn't until a third man overdosed in the apartment — this one lived — that authorities really began investigating Buck, an investigation that would lead to his arrest and eventual conviction on all charges.

While the doc tells some of Buck's story, it also explores broader themes, like life in West Hollywood, the fetishization of Black men by gay white men, and the history of Black oppression in the United States. Then the subject segues into Trans Lives Matters and, specifically, the struggle of Black trans women. As the recent death of Naomie Skinner here in Detroit clearly illustrates, the plight of Black trans women is a timely subject. Still, the senseless slaughter of Black trans women is really a subject worthy of its own complete documentary, or, for that matter, a series of documentaries.

Likewise, as the Investigation Discovery Channel-watching true crime buff that I am,

I felt the film did not do the Buck case — or more precisely his victims — any real justice. Who was Ed Buck, really, and how did he evolve into the monster he became? And who, really, were his victims? Gemmel Moore was only 26. Buck, we learn from the film, actually got Moore addicted to meth before he supplied Moore with the drugs that led to his overdose. Moore was, for good reason, scared of Buck.

And Timothy Dean, 55, the second victim, is known to many gay men as a former porn star, the power top known as Hole Hunter. Dean retired from porn several years ago. He went on to work at Saks Fifth Avenue and was actively involved in his church. He had warned friends to stay away from Buck.

But I was left wanting to know more about these two men and how they came to encounter Buck. I would have also appreciated hearing more about his trial and ultimate conviction, his sentence and where he is today. The story just felt incomplete.


For the film's second half, we hear from several trans women about their experiences and their path toward finding self-worth and acceptance. A good portion of time is dedicated to the story of Brian Powers, aka Egypt, an individual who identified as both a gay male and a trans woman who was shot to death in his hometown of Akron, Ohio.

I had not, sadly but not surprisingly, heard about this case. It remains, like the murders of so many other Black trans women, unsolved. And that's a story all in itself.

"Beyond Ed Buck" is currently streaming on ALLBLK.

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