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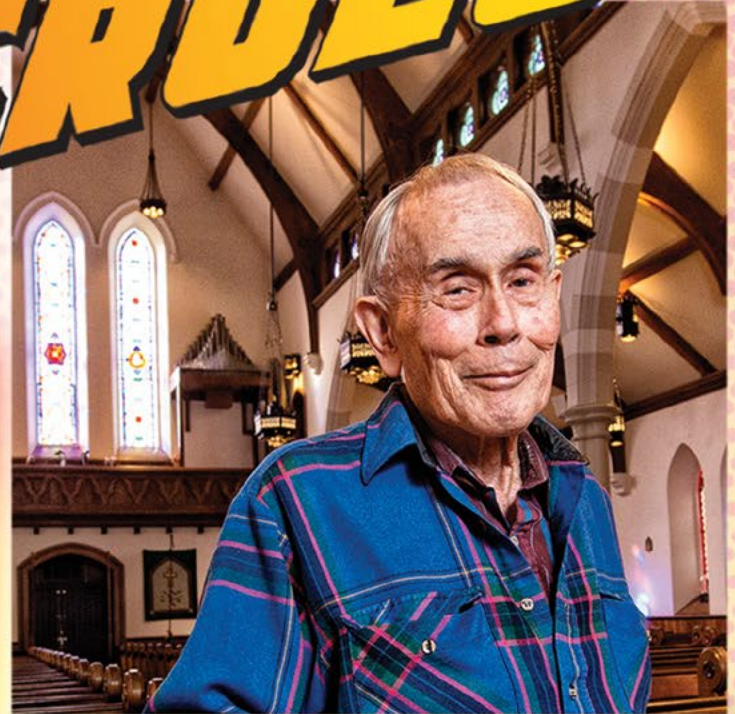
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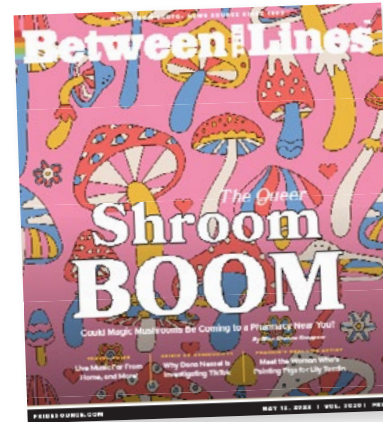
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- 6 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 8 The TikTok Conundrum: Crisis or Community?
- 10 Magic Mushrooms: Coming Soon to a Pharmacy Near You?
- 11 Here's What to Expect From Ferndale Pride 2022
- 12 Biden Announces Karine Jean-Pierre as First Black, Lesbian White House Press Secretary
- 12 No, LGBTQ+ Advocates Are Not Looking to 'Groom' Your Children
- 12 Now Streaming: The Homosexual and Transgender Agenda on LGBTQIADisney+
- 16 Michigan House Republicans Tie Transphobic Provision to Education Budget Bill
- 22 Visit These 8 Lesser-Known Places Where LGBTQ+ History Was Made
- 24 Gay Days Are Back
- 28 7 Musically Delicious Reasons to Get Out of Dodge this Summer
- 32 The Artist Behind the Work of Lily Tomlin's Frankie
- 34 Michigan-Based 'Renovated to Death' Author Draws on Love of Old Houses for First Cozy Mystery Novel



10 COVER STORY

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Ah, May. With Winter (finally) in the rearview, it's time to bust out of hibernation and get with the getting on. Here's a wide range of ideas, including a few you can do from your cozy cocoon at home, if you're not quite ready to emerge to enjoy the season just yet. We won't tell.

Celebrate Agender Pride Day

Celebrate an oft-overlooked group within the LGBTQ+ spectrum on Agender Pride Day May 19. This day was designated to shine a light on people in the community who do not identify as any particular gender. Spend some time learning about the many ways agender folks express their identities (The Trevor Project website is a great place to start). It's also the perfect day to check out Detroit-based Angel Haze, an agender, pansexual, Black and Native American rapper and singer.



Get Bitchy (or Brunchy) with Drag Queens

Southeast Michigan has become a hot spot for excellent drag entertainment, including two not-to-be-missed events. Musical Bitchy Bingo is exactly what it sounds like. Join Jadein Black every Wednesday evening at Hamburger Mary's at the Tower Inn in Ypsilanti for some highly spirited bingo (proceeds benefit a variety of charities). You'll also want to mark your calendar for Michigan Drag Brunch, your chance to eat eggs with several gorgeous, glitzy entertainers. Bobcat Bonnies in Ypsilanti will host Michigan Drag Brunch queens on May 22.

Reserve tickets for Musical Bitchy Bingo at ypsireal.com. Michigan Drag Brunch tables can be reserved at midragbrunch.com.



Jim Toy. Photo courtesy UM

Honor an Important Local LGBTQ+ Trailblazer

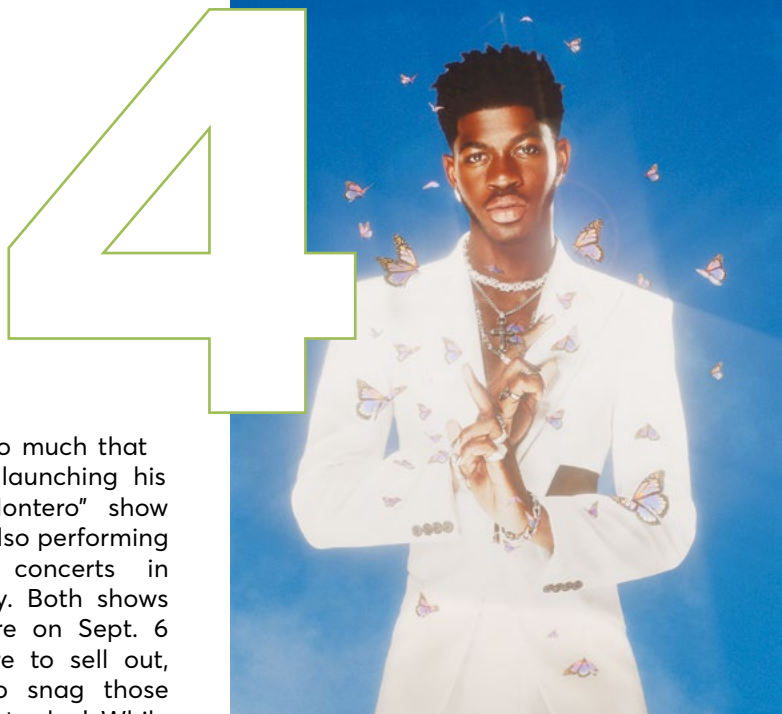
The University of Michigan's Spectrum Center invites the public to the Jim Toy Celebration of Liberation at 7 p.m. May 20 at the Michigan Theater. Toy, who died on New Year's Day, was a co-founder of the Spectrum Center and served as a prominent leader in the Michigan LGBTQ+ community for decades. "As a queer, Asian American activist," the event page reads, "Jim inspired those who knew him and knew of him. He sparked a rebel flame, urging us to continue to question authority, make space for those most vulnerable, and speak out against injustice whenever and wherever we encounter it." BTL spoke with Toy last year when he received an honorary doctorate from UM. "I think it's absolutely necessary for all of us to come out. And so I am grateful to everybody who takes that step," he said.

Reservations are welcome, but not required. Visit spectrum50th.studentlife.umich.edu/events/ to learn more.

Grab Tickets for Lil Nas X

Lil Nas X loves Detroit so much that he's not only launching his "Long Live Montero" show here but he's also performing back-to-back concerts in the Motor City. Both shows at The Fillmore on Sept. 6 and 7 are sure to sell out, so be sure to snag those tickets like, yesterday! While you're impatiently waiting for the concert dates to arrive, revel in all things Montero at welcometomontero.com.

Tickets available now through Ticketmaster and other outlets.



Lil Nas X. Photo: Ashley Buenrostro



Share Thoughts with This Latinx LGBTQIA+ Group

LGBT Detroit invites Latinx LGBTQIA+ community members to help the organization identify issues impacting this unique group. Join the conversation at 2 p.m. May 17 via Zoom. The organization will use the insights provided by participants to help shape its ongoing efforts to advocate for and offer services to every member of the community.

Sign up at <https://bit.ly/3OZToj1> before the meeting.

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

Feel the Music

A collage of three photographs showing musicians performing on stage. The top photo shows a woman singing into a microphone. The bottom-left photo shows a man playing a guitar. The bottom-right photo shows a man playing a guitar and another man playing a violin.

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The TikTok Conundrum: Crisis or Community?

Michigan LGBTQ+ Youth Weigh In as Dana Nessel Investigates

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

My Screen Time notifications are set to Sundays, and they'll usually pop up on my iPhone with a chipper little buzz while I'm eating a late breakfast or, if I'm feeling industrious that morning, an early lunch, still sweating from the gym. My anxiety will prickle as I tap the notification's purple hourglass icon, which will reveal a detailed breakdown of the week's stats. Then I'll begin to fill out my mental report card based on the findings:

9% more screen time this week. (Bad!)

7h 36m daily average screen time. (Needs improvement.)

Most-used apps this week:

YouTube, 21 hours (Eek!)

Prime Video, 6 hours (Well, everyone loves "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.")

TikTok, 4 hours (I've got to cut down.)

Overall grade: C-

Next steps: Take more social media breaks.

While I find it jarring to see the reality of my phone usage laid out so starkly, it has helped

me cut down my overall screen time from my previous highs of nine hours a day. And while I know I still have work to get my time down further, the report doesn't quite represent the full picture: All apps are not created equal. I often have my phone on in the background to keep me company with an audiobook or documentary as I work, walk the dog, cook or exercise. This means that while I am using my phone as much as Screen Time reports, there isn't as much actual screen interaction.

But there is one app that I can't stay off quite as easily as others: TikTok.

That's because the app's content is made up of easily consumed video bits, so once I start watching, it's hard to stop. That, paired with an algorithm that makes one's "for you page" tailored exceptionally well to specific interests (like, really specific — see Black queer forager Alexis Nikole), means that scrolling gets addicting fast for me. This also means that I know that of all the hours I've used my phone in the past week, the four hours of screen time that I spent on TikTok were spent being exclusively sedentary.

But is social media, specifically TikTok, addicting? Results from research studies have so far been inconclusive, largely because the app's creation and subsequent reports about its use are so recent. However, a group of attorneys general across the U.S., including Michigan's own Dana Nessel, are taking notice of reports suggesting TikTok might be causing physical and mental health issues. As of March 2022, the group has launched a nationwide investigation into its effects on young people.

"Recent reports ... raise serious questions among attorneys general across the nation," writes Nessel in a recent press release. "Ultimately, we are concerned about protecting our youth."

When I reached out to Nessel's office for comment, the attorney general addressed TikTok's impact on a specific demographic: LGBTQ+ youth.

"While I cannot discuss the ongoing investigation I joined with my colleagues across the nation, I can be clear in my concern related to social media's impact on the mental and physical health of young people, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+," she tells BTL. "We live in a time when everything is shared on social media. Not only does that foster a comparison culture in which our kids are constantly exposed to unrealistic beauty standards, it also exposes them to the hateful rhetoric spewed by those who hide behind keyboards."

Nessel acknowledged that online engagement can "connect people who otherwise remain disconnected," but said being online also poses real risks that must be addressed by social media platforms bringing in billions of dollars.

"That is why in addition to the TikTok investigation, my office is also engaged in an investigation into Meta Platforms, formerly Facebook, and we remain firm in our stance that Instagram should not launch a version specifically for children under 13."

Meta, the company that owns Instagram, has announced intentions to launch an app for children under 13 because they believe it is "the right thing to do," but has recently paused those efforts.

While at 26 years old my own Screen Time numbers are high in comparison with adults in general, who on average spend about three-and-a-half hours on screens daily, my seven-and-a-half hours spent scrolling puts me squarely in line with, and even a little under, the rates of teens between 13 and 18 years old, according to a Common Sense Media report released this month. But I'm probably not alone with my

inflated numbers. Two years into the pandemic, it's becoming clear that social media usage in general has spiked. In fact, COVID-19 is the reason that many people — myself included — joined the app in the first place.

In the case of 18-year-old, Cadillac-based Baker College student and TikToker Kia Glines (@strxberry.sh0rtcake), the app was a reprieve from the monotony of the pandemic.

"I was really bored — especially when the pandemic hit, I was like, 'Wow, there's really nothing for me to do.' My family was really strict about it, especially my mom, and I wasn't allowed to see anyone for a couple of months — almost a year it felt like," she says.

"But I could scroll, and I could talk online. I've always been able to make online friends; it was really easy for me to click with people," Glines adds. "But seeing that everyone else was going through the same thing as me and that they were all talking about it, it really helped me a lot."

And click with people she did. Glines identifies as a lesbian, and one of her most popular posts was a call to connect with other LGBTQ+ people in Michigan that reached more than 130,000 users. She says that she even made international friends to whom she regularly sends letters and packages.

Outside of offering a light reprieve from quarantine, Glines says that the TikTok community has supported her through more serious matters like homophobia, misogyny, and when she felt that she was romantically reacting to men because of "comphet" or compulsory heterosexuality — a term popularized by Adrienne Rich's 1980 book "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence."

"There are moments when I'm like, 'Wow, why am I attracted to this man? I would never be with him.' And then I'd see other people [on TikTok] and they're like, 'No, this is normal. This is a perfectly normal thing,' and they'll validate who you are. And that was really helpful to me when I was going through that,"

she says. "I was very lucky."

In fact, there is some evidence to show that LGBTQ+ youth in particular may benefit from participating in social media online because of its community-building and supportive aspects. Michigan TikTok user Anthony Peete, 15, says that they joined in 2017 and have stayed on since because in addition to it sparking their creativity, the "platform is very LGBTQ-centered" and the "representation is amazing."

"Honestly, I feel there isn't much that's negative! I've been with TikTok for five years and have never felt unwelcome," Peete says. "[My mental health] has changed for the better! I feel I am more outgoing than ever!"

Glines added that sometimes TikTok can be the motivating factor to be more social in her personal life, too.

"... The more I started doing it, the more I started interacting with new people," she says. "And it is fun. It does get me up and ready and putting on my makeup and doing other things that I really want to do, dressing how I want to dress, because it's like, 'Well, you can't go anywhere that people are going to see you [because of the pandemic].'"

Thyaba, who preferred not to share their last name, is a 17-year-old TikTok user from Michigan and also a member of the LGBTQ+ community. They say that they learn something new from TikTok every day and many videos "really lift up my mood," but that positivity, they add, can depend on the "boundaries people have within social media."

The reality is that TikTok, as with any community, is multi-faceted and complex. And sometimes, the negativity can be overwhelming. For 12-year-old Rocky Bocci, who joined at 11 years old to talk to friends during the pandemic as well, things didn't go quite as smoothly.

"I've made so many friends using it, and I'm so glad! Unfortunately, I've suffered from a lot of hate, bullying and transphobia through

See **TikTok**, page 20



Kia Glines. Photo courtesy of Kia Glines

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Magic Mushrooms Coming Soon to a Pharmacy Near You?

Hazel Park Is the Latest City in Michigan to Decriminalize Psychedelics

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Chances are “magic mushrooms” won’t be available at local pharmacies anytime soon. But if their inclusion in the medical resource WebMD is any indication, the movement to decriminalize what are formally known as entheogenic plants may be gaining steam.

This March, by unanimous vote, Hazel Park became the third Michigan city to decriminalize entheogenic plants, after Ann Arbor and Detroit. Additionally, Decriminalize Michigan has launched a ballot initiative for 2022 that would decriminalize entheogenic plants statewide.

Entheogens are psychoactive substances that induce alterations in perception, mood or behavior. Psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca, ibogaine and the cactus peyote are counted among them.

“I was under the impression that it was a relatively divisive issue, but what I found in reaching out to community stakeholders and residents and others that I know and trust,

everybody was unanimously in favor of it,” said Hazel Park City Councilmember Luke Londo, who is openly bisexual. As an elected official in the local community, Londo, who worked with Decriminalize Nature Hazel Park when drafting the resolution that passed, described it as an opportunity to implement positive change.

Decriminalization is distinct from legalization. Decriminalization does not make a drug legal; it means it is unlikely the drug’s use or possession would be investigated or that consumers would be prosecuted. The designation makes the drug of lowest priority for law enforcement.

Londo is a consumer of psilocybin himself and has found its use alleviates his depression and anxiety. In fact, many studies of entheogenic plants for their therapeutic use have found positive effects on individuals experiencing depression and anxiety disorders, as well as substance abuse and PTSD. It has also been reported, in a study of psilocybin, that repeated use will build high tolerance; however, it does not appear to have the potential for physical dependence.

Londo pointed to what he called the

“complicated relationship” the LGBTQ+ community has with substance abuse, and encouraged consuming responsibly for those who choose to do so. Addiction is more than twice as common in the LGBTQ+ community than it is in the general population. At the same time, Londo noted the efficacy of entheogens in the treatment of addiction when used in modest doses.

“I’m somebody that takes an antidepressant on a regular basis,” said Londo, who is not currently in therapy but has seen a therapist in the past. “I have a medication for when I’m having acute anxiety, but psilocybin, I would say that the best way to really characterize it is a reset. It really provides that level of clarity and self-introspection.”

While psychedelics have been in the news lately for their use in treating many psychiatric issues, entheogenic plants and fungi have been traditionally used by indigenous people in their spiritual practices for thousands of years. That’s the setting in which Carmen Marie Alfaro prefers them. Alfaro is a Two-Spirit/nonbinary person of the Wixarika/Huichol people who lives in Hesperia, north of Grand Rapids.

“I think I’ve always felt the sort of spiritual need to find other ways to interact with what I would consider to be like the divinity of creation and the beauty of everything that is,” Alfaro told BTL. “And so I joined a sweat lodge community that’s based out of Detroit at American Indian Health and Family Services.”

At the time, said Alfaro, they identified as a transgender man. For 10 years they were on hormone replacement therapy with no regrets. However, as a result of an experience with entheogens a year ago, Alfaro now understands their gender identity differently.

“The first time I left that sweat lodge ceremony, I was sobbing,” Alfaro said. “I had no idea what to expect. We’re in a hot, dark tent, drumming and singing Lakota, and I had no idea that it would make me regret my hysterectomy. And so, my journey with plant medicine has basically made me decide to try them to explore that thread. It was sort of like a sweater that was starting to unravel and I wanted to pull it and see what would happen and come out on the other side.”

See **Magic Mushrooms**, page 14

Here's What to Expect From Ferndale Pride This Year

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Ferndale Pride recently announced details for its 2022 Pride celebration, set for Saturday, June 4, including an exciting entertainment lineup and several unique opportunities to join in the fun. For a second time, Flint native Tunde Olaniran will headline the Ferndale Project Main Stage and, for the first time, DJ Jace M will headline the Gage Cannabis DJ/Dance Stage.

"I was thrilled when I saw the entertainment committee's choices for this year's lineup," said Ferndale Pride President Julia Music. "The lineup features a wide range of talent from Michigan along with rising rap star Jackie Faye from Texas."

"Tunde's performances have always left me feeling like I have had a queer spiritual experience," Music said.

So far, Olaniran has released two full-length albums, including 2015's "Transgressor" and 2018's "Stranger." For his part, Jace M has built a reputation for himself around Metro Detroit as one of the region's hottest DJs.

"Jace M is known throughout the area as the DJ that throws some of the best circuit parties," said Music. "His strong sense of mixing and getting everyone dancing is a true gift."

In addition to Olaniran and Jace M, other acts on the Gage Cannabis DJ/Dance Stage will include DJ TYLR, Workout Plan, DJ Skyrah and Cherriel. Also on the Ferndale Project Main Stage, which will be emceed by Bentley James, will be Furillostar, Blow Pop, London Beck, Valerie the Vulture, LVRS, a freshman drag show, the Motor City Drag Kings and Faye.



The annual family-friendly street fair runs from 12:30 to 10 p.m. and is expected to draw thousands to celebrate diversity and unity. More than 180 vendors will participate in the street fair, which will run along West Nine Mile Road between Woodward and Livernois Avenues as well as portions of Planavon and Allen Streets near West Nine Mile Road. Organizers thank fundraising efforts and their sponsors for being able to keep Pride free.

There will be a children's area, alcohol-free activities and a Sensory Zone sponsored by Hometown Restaurants for folks who need a sensory break and space to relax.

Proceeds from Ferndale Pride 2022 will benefit Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center, Ferndale Community Foundation, Gender-identity Network Alliance, Matrix Human Services MAC Health, TGDetroit and Transgender Michigan.

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Karine Jean-Pierre conducts press briefing in November 2021. Photo: Screen capture via White House YouTube

Biden Announces Karine Jean-Pierre as First Black, Lesbian White House Press Secretary

BY BRODY LEVESQUE

The White House announced Thursday that Karine Jean-Pierre has been promoted to be Assistant to the President and White House Press Secretary. Jean-Pierre will replace current Press Secretary Jen Psaki, who will depart from the White House on May 13.

“I am proud to announce that Karine Jean-Pierre will serve as the next White House Press Secretary,” President Biden said in the statement released Thursday, May 5.

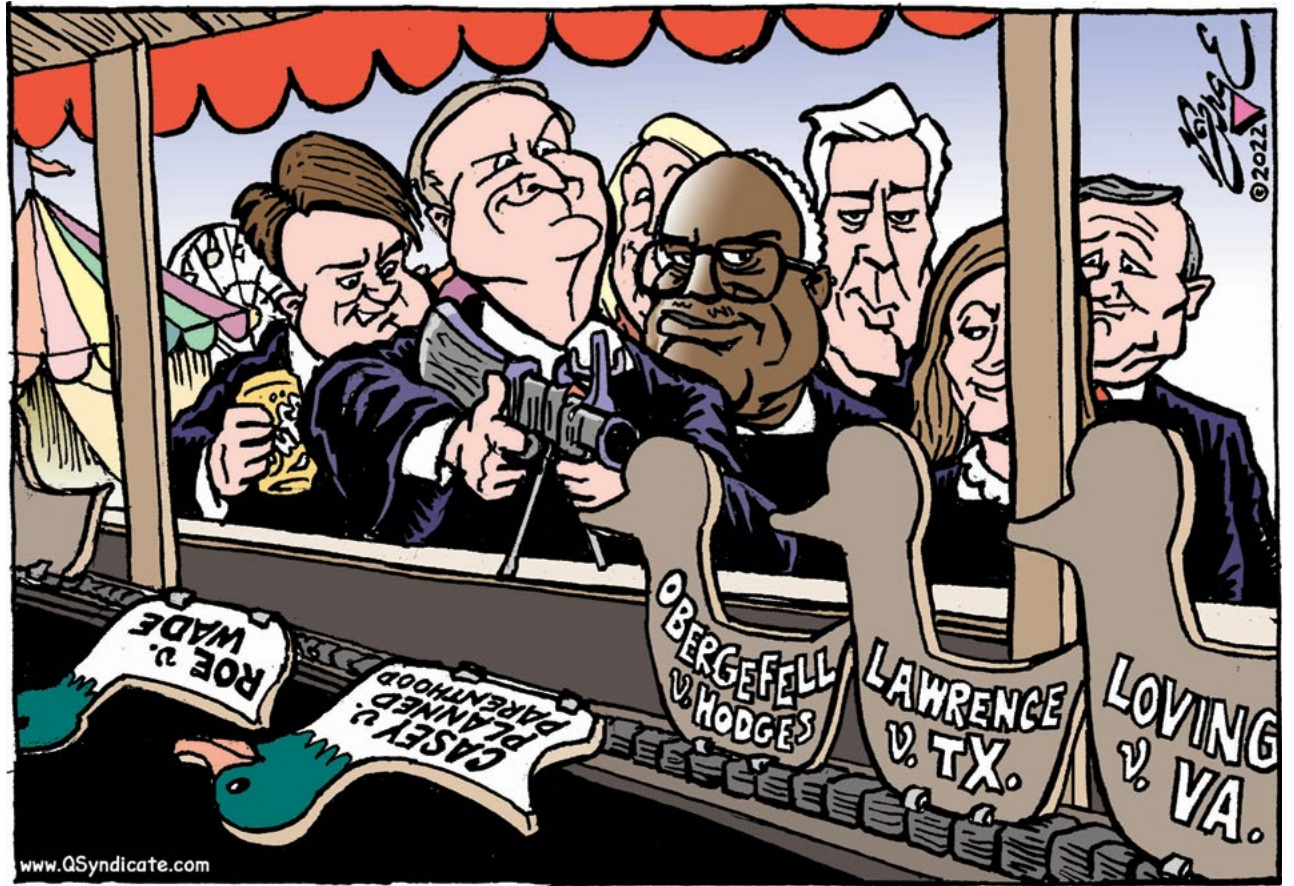
“Karine not only brings the experience, talent and integrity needed for this difficult job, but she will continue to lead the way in communicating about the work of the Biden-Harris Administration on behalf of the American people. Jill and I have known and respected Karine a long time and she will be a strong voice speaking for me and this Administration.

“Jen Psaki has set the standard for returning decency, respect and decorum to the White House Briefing Room. I want to say thank you to Jen for raising the bar, communicating directly and truthfully to the American people, and keeping her sense of humor while doing so. I thank Jen her service to the country, and wish her the very best as she moves forward.”

Jean-Pierre was named to her first role in the Biden Administration as Deputy White House press secretary under Psaki in November of 2020.

Jean-Pierre is not the first Black woman to hold the position as Deputy White House press secretary, that honor belonging to former President George H.W. Bush’s Deputy White House Press Secretary, Judy A. Smith in 1991, and not the first openly gay person to brief the press, Eric Schultz served as Deputy White House Press Secretary during the Obama Administration in 2014;

See **Karine Jean-Pierre**, next page



SITTING DUCKS

No, LGBTQ+ Advocates Are Not Looking to ‘Groom’ Your Children



By Gwendolyn Ann Smith

In Watertown, South Dakota, on the 25th of April, a German teacher at Watertown High School, Calvin Hillesland, handed letters to four trans and nonbinary students. The letters, shared widely on social media by at least two sources, begin as follows:

“I am hoping that by now you know me well enough from class to be able to trust me. I respect you. I support you. I want what’s best for you.

If there were a rattlesnake under a pile of leaves on the path in front of you, I’m hoping you could easily imagine that I would run out ahead of you to warn you. If your home were on fire, I’m hoping you could believe that I would try to help you get out.”

As this point, the letter takes a turn.

“That’s sort of what’s happening now. When you asked me to call your friends by masculine names and I started trying to do that, I was wrong. It was a lie.

I didn’t warn you about the rattlesnake. I didn’t try to rescue you from your burning home.

I hope you’ll forgive me — and I want to “turn things around” now. And like I said — I’m hoping you’ll trust me.

I realize that what you feel is saying something totally different. But feelings are like a mirage. You don’t dare trust in them to guide you. They’re not an accurate reflection of reality.

So what is the reality? What is the truth? How can you know the truth for certain?

Well, biologically, every cell in your body is (female symbol) — female — feminine. That’s the biological (sp.) truth. The same is true for your friends. And it’s the truth that I want to encourage you to pursue. That’s

what a good teacher does, right?”

The letter closed by promising a DVD that “will explain everything more clearly than I can — the spiritual as well as the scientific facts” as well as a piece of candy, as “a symbol of the sweetness that I hope and pray you’ll discover.” A piece of chocolate was included with each, though the promised DVD was not.

Hillesland has been teaching in the Watertown School District for more than a couple decades, and was intending to retire at the end of this school year. He hasn’t been back to the school since word of the letters got out and parents complained, though a statement from the school district was inconclusive in regards to Hillesland’s tenure. It is also unclear if anyone else, such as the school principal was in any way aware of the letters before Hillesland handed them out.

All of this is happening amid a multi-state push against transgender people,

See **Grooming**, next page

→ Karine Jean-Pierre

Continued from previous page

Jean-Pierre's place in history, however, is cemented as a result of her being the first both Black and lesbian Deputy Press Secretary.

Now her place in history is marked by her elevation as the first both Black and lesbian White House Press Secretary.

The daughter of immigrant parents from Haiti, Jean-Pierre was born in Martinique and later raised in Queens, a borough of New York City. A longtime activist and communications specialist, she has a Master's in Public Affairs conferred on her by New York's Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, where she taught as an adjunct professor and lecturer in international and public affairs since 2014.

During the first term of President

Barack Obama she served as the regional political director for the White House Office of Political Affairs.

Speaking with the Advocate magazine in June of 2011 Jean-Pierre reflected on her tenure working for the Obama Administration as an openly LGBTQ+ staffer.

"What's been wonderful is that I was not the only; I was one of many. President Obama didn't hire LGBT staffers, he hired experienced individuals who happen to be LGBT," she says. "Serving and working for President Obama where you can be openly gay has been an amazing honor. It felt incredible to be a part of an administration that prioritizes LGBT issues."

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.

→ Grooming

Continued from previous page

predominately focused on transgender youth. Thirty-two states have proposed scores of bills against transgender people this year.

Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill has become law, prohibiting discussions of gay and trans identities in school thanks to deceptively broad wording.

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott has weaponized the Lone Star state's Department of Family and Protective Services against trans youth, likening trans care to child abuse.

Oklahoma has passed a trans sports ban, and it is gearing up to follow both Florida and Texas' lead in passing bills even more restrictive.

Alabama, too, has made it a felony — punishable by up to 10 years in prison — to provide necessary care for transgender youth, leading the United States Department of Justice to file a complaint against SB 184.

And, oddly, when people speak out against these bills, one term has come up time and again: those who support LGBTQ+ and, in particular, transgender people have been called "groomers."

It's an interesting choice of term, hearkening back to decades-old claims that gays have to recruit children, popularized by Anita Bryant and California State Sen. John Briggs during the push for Proposition 6 in 1978. It is notable, perhaps, that Proposition 6 was seeking to remove gay and lesbian

teachers — as well as their supporters — from being able to teach in the state's public schools. It followed similar bills in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Grooming, in this context, typically refers to seducing or luring a child into a sexually abuse situation. Here, it would seem that those using it to attack opponents of these anti LGBTQ+ and trans bills want to keep the sinister aspect of the term, while expanding the meaning to include those that might influence someone to become LGBTQ+.

When I was a child, I was warned to avoid groomers, who might stop me alongside the road with promises to share a cute puppy with me or ask for my help as some sort of clever ruse. Or, perhaps, they would offer me candy as a way to gain my trust, such as a chocolate.

Perhaps even the same way Calvin Hillesland, the German teacher at Watertown High School, chose to write a letter hoping that his students would know they could trust him, and offering them a piece of chocolate to help them "discover" their "sweetness."

It feels to me that we're looking for the groomers in the wrong places. Such influencing is not what LGBTQ+ advocates are involved in, and, frankly, no one can be "groomed" into being trans, nonbinary, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

LGBTQ+ people simply exist, and one can help them have successful, happy lives — or choose to be like Mr. Hillesland.

CREEP OF THE WEEK

Now Streaming: The Homosexual and Transgender Agenda on LGBTQIADisney+



By D'Anne Witkowski

It was bound to happen. Eventually someone was going to discover that LGBTQ+ people own and run Disney and have

been using it to make kids across the United States queer.

But hey, someone had to challenge Warner Brothers and their creepy heterosexual propaganda. Pepé Le Pew and his continued sexual harassment of Penelope Pussycat and his complete disregard of consent. Not to mention Lola Bunny and Honey Bunny enticing impressionable young rabbits with their curves.

And now a group of United States Senators have written to Charles Rivkin, the Chairman of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, instructing him to keep kids eyeballs free of anything LGBTQ+.

In a letter dated May 4, Senators Roger Marshall, Mike Lee, Mike Braun, Steve Daines and Kevin Cramer write, "Recently, a video emerged showing a prominent executive at children's entertainment giant Disney saying she supports having 'many, many, many LGBTQIA+ characters in our stories.' To the detriment of children, gender dysphoria has become sensationalized in the popular media and television with radical activists and entertainment companies. This radical and sexual sensation not only harms children, but also destabilizes and damages parental rights."

It's a scandal of Republican proportions when a TV executive says that Disney should have more LGBTQIA+ and minority characters. Meaning it is not a real scandal at all, just more fodder for the faux outrage machine to distract people from their drive to rid the U.S. of democracy.

There is no "sensationalized" depiction of transgender people or issues anywhere but in the minds of Republicans and the bills they write to harm trans people. There simply is not a push by the "radical left" to make kids queer or "confuse" them when it comes to gender identity. If there's a push for anything, it's to make sure that LGBTQ+ people are represented on TV and in movies and depicted as fellow human beings. A bridge too far for the conservative right.

Oh, and another thing. Parents don't have the "right" to their kid's sexual orientation or gender identity. That is not something parents have control over. Gay parents can't make their kids gay if they aren't, straight parents can't make their kids straight if they aren't. The parental "right" that positive depictions of LGBTQ+ people and humane treatment of LGBTQ+ kids violate is the

right to be intolerant and hateful with impunity.

Roger, Mike, Mike, Steve and Kevin also call out Disney for its opposition to

the heinous Florida bill that, among other things, essentially bans the mention of LGBTQ+ issues in early elementary school. Never mind that there isn't a push to show kids sexually explicit material or teach things that aren't age appropriate. Again, the message is "LGBTQ+ people are human beings with human feelings and human lives."

"[Disney] has concerningly denounced and vowed to work to repeal a recently passed Florida parental rights law that bans classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in kindergarten through third grade," the Senators write. "Sexual orientation and gender identity instruction often entails a discussion concerning an individual's pattern of emotional, romantic and sexual attraction. Parents all over the country have rightfully expressed outrage over its inclusion in the classroom."

It's true that parents all over the country have expressed outrage, but many of these parents also are screaming that public school teachers are pedophiles, something that harkens back to the "Satanic panic" era in the '80s, where adults went to prison for completely made up bullshit in order to "protect" children. So yeah, a lot of parents are upset, but the majority of parents are not scandalized by the prospect of their third grader learning that his friend Timmy has two mommies.

"In recent years, concerning topics of a sexual nature have become aggressively politicized and promoted in children's programming," the letter continues, adding that this content "often involves the promotion of irreversible experimental treatments that involve surgical and otherwise invasive cosmetic procedures that are detrimental and life-altering, and do not evidence medical necessity."

I'm not sure what kind of Disney+ subscription these guys have, but I have not heard of programs for kids under 7 related to gender affirmation surgery. Nor is gender affirmation surgery performed on little kids. Puberty blockers, which are used in some children, are not irreversible, contrary to what these guys claim.

The only thing "concerning" here is that five U.S. Senators believe there's nothing more pressing going on in the country or in the world than the prospect of a young kid seeing an LGBTQ+ character on TV and receiving the message that LGBTQ+ people are human beings worthy of love and respect.



Carmen Marie Alfaro. Photo courtesy of Carmen Marie Alfaro

→ Magic Mushrooms

Continued from page 10

“Since then,” they continued, “I have actually made the decision to not de-transition, but

maybe re-transition to being more comfortable with my body and the way that it is. And now that’s more accurately Two-Spirit because of the effects that HRT has had on me.”

For anyone considering using entheogenic plants or fungi, Alfaro urges people to seek

out a support community. They named the organization Chacruna, the institute for psychedelic plant medicines, as one resource.

“I haven’t had the good fortune to participate in a lot of ceremonies at this point,” Alfaro said, “but I would prefer to be in peyote ceremonies with the guidance of a teacher, which I’m now working my way back toward. Now that I’ve kind of mastered who I am, I can reach out and connect to others again.”

Like Londo, Alfaro is part of the movement to decriminalize entheogenic plants. So is Julie Barron, a psychotherapist with a Master’s degree in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology and Music Therapy who practices in Ann Arbor. Barron is co-director of Decriminalize Nature Michigan and a board member of the national organization Decriminalize Nature. Barron believes that entheogenic plants never should have been made illegal in the first place.

“We are trying to go back,” said Barron, who created the Michigan Psychedelic Society in 2017. “These are plants and fungi that grow naturally in the ground, and we feel as humans, as animals, as part of this ecosystem, that we should have an open and direct connection and the ability to use anything that comes from the ground.”

“The substances that we’re talking about are actually quite safe,” she continued, then explained what she considers the real reason for

opposition to their decriminalization. “It’s really about a potential point of consciousness or a potential access point that I think the powers that be are worried could get in the hands of humans.”

Barron advocates for the use of entheogenic plants for mental illness such as depression and anxiety. She also believes they can serve as mechanisms for promoting personal growth and spiritual development.

“It’s different for everybody,” Barron said. “I work really closely with people as they figure out what their plant path is.”

Barron said the only people entheogenic plants are particularly risky for would be anyone with a disorder characterized by psychosis, like schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. That’s because they induce a state of psychosis.

“These substances are no joke,” Barron cautioned. “They are accelerators. They’re impactful. And people need to have a good deal of knowledge as to dosing.”

Barron also said that while it may be true for some, most folks shouldn’t expect instantaneous results.

“Don’t just assume you’re gonna go into a psychedelic experience and you’re gonna be changed,” Barron said. “You’re gonna have to do months, and potentially years, of work after an experience to actually make real change in your life.”



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Michigan House Republicans Tie Transphobic Provision to Education Budget Bill

State Rep. Regina Weiss Calls Move ‘Disgusting and Abhorrent’

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Last spring, a bill was introduced in the Michigan State Senate that would ban transgender students from playing on school sports teams that align with their gender identity. Now, with the same goal in mind, House Republicans are joining their Senate colleagues with a provision to the School Aid Budget that would “prohibit boys from competing in girls’ athletic activities.”

The House Appropriations Committee late Wednesday, May 4 approved the School Aid Budget proposal, House Bill 5795, along party lines.

“I received the budget late in the day on Monday, and we saw that that boilerplate language was inserted in the last minute,” said Rep. Regina Weiss (D-Oak Park), a member of the Appropriations Committee and minority vice chair of the subcommittee. She was referring to the conditions that must be met in order for the funds to be appropriated. However, the Governor may declare a provision unconstitutional or unenforceable.

“We know that the real motivation behind this is to prevent transgender girls from being able to play sports,” said Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan’s LGBT Project, “and we saw the proponents of the Senate bill last year. ...never referred to transgender girls as girls. They were ‘biological males,’ they were ‘biological boys.’”

The reasoning for the provision put forth by Rep. Thomas Albert, chair of the Appropriations Committee — that transgender girls have an unfair athletic advantage over cisgender girls — has not been borne out in fact. Myths that transgender girls are not “real” girls or that transgender students belong on their own sports teams are likewise untrue.

Weiss doesn’t accept Rep. Albert’s argument. “He literally said, ‘Because boys are stronger than girls, it is not fair,’” Weiss said. “That was sort of the argument that he made, and that girls could potentially lose out on scholarship opportunities. There’s just no evidence of that happening right now in our state, in our country.”

Further, barring transgender students from playing on the sports team that aligns with their gender identity brings a host of legal issues into play, said Kaplan. “Certainly, it would be discriminatory against trans kids,” he said. “It would raise equal protection issues under the Constitution, because you’re singling out a group of people for discriminatory treatment by the government at public schools.”

Weiss responded to what she called “false arguments.” “All it does is attack and further marginalize one of the most vulnerable groups of children in our schools to score political points, which I think is frankly disgusting and abhorrent,” she said.

Weiss is not only a lawmaker; she is also a former educator for Detroit Public Schools who has taught transgender students in her classroom.

“It breaks my heart,” Weiss said. “I know from my personal experience, and also just from being educated about the matter and reading about it, that our trans students are one of the most vulnerable groups. They have much higher rates

See **Education Bill**, page 18

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→ Education Bill

Continued from page 16

of suicide and mental health issues, and to do anything that would further attack and bully and marginalize them is completely unacceptable. It really, really upsets me to my core as a teacher, but also just as a human being, that anyone would try to do that for any reason. It's unacceptable."

In terms of tactics, Weiss said it was "particularly inappropriate" to enact policy by using the budgeting process.

The number of students who would be affected by this provision is unknown, but it is extremely low. Population-based survey data from 19 states and 10 urban school districts including Detroit found that 1.8 percent of high school students identify as transgender. Until now, the Michigan High School Athletic Association has had a process to review transgender student athletes and their eligibility in their sports. But the complaints are not emanating from that group. And Kaplan says they didn't originate in Michigan.

"All the stuff that they're doing, this is not an organic type of legislation or policy that's just coming out of the Michigan Legislature," Kaplan said. "This is at the national level. Some conservatives' think tank group has said, 'Hey, here's policies to introduce in your state. It's gonna help us get our base out to vote in November; it's gonna help you raise money.' They don't give

a damn about a transgender kid or the damage that they could do."

In fact, bills with language similar to the provision have been, and are being, introduced in state legislatures across the country. Just last week, Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp signed legislation that empowers an athletic oversight committee to exclude transgender students from playing high school sports.

The Senate School Aid Budget proposal did not include the transphobic provision. But even if that language finds its way into the final bill, both Weiss and Kaplan are confident Gov. Whitmer won't sign any legislation that would harm the LGBTQ+ community.

"The good news is, we're only a few months away from another election," Weiss said, "and so I'm hoping that the voters will go out strong to the polls and show up in opposition to a lot of this hatred that we've seen in the Republican Party. I'm hopeful that we'll have an opportunity to flip both the House and the Senate and see a very, very different legislature come January."

Kaplan is looking forward to November as well.

"When does it stop?" Kaplan asked. "It only stops when voters say, 'No, that's enough. We don't want this. This is not right. We're not about this.' I was so pleased by the state Sen. Mallory McMorrow who [recently] said, 'You know what? I'm white, I'm straight, I'm a woman, I'm married, I live in the suburbs and I'm a Christian. And you do not speak for me.'"

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→ TikTok

Continued from page 9

it," Bocci says, adding that the app has negatively impacted their mental health. "It started out awesome, but then people from school found my account and it was kind of ... bad."

When asked what they think Nessel may find in her investigation of TikTok, Bocci admitted that in their experience TikTok was "usually pretty bad, and has a reputation for being so, but some nooks and crannies of the internet are awesome."

On the subject of TikTok's reputation for negativity, Glines shared that as positive and welcoming as her experience has been overall, she's encountered her fair share of struggles, too — both from users and in how it's affected her own mental health.

"There's definitely a negative side [to TikTok]. I'm in college. I can't drive yet, so there's me being in my dorm a lot and

there's not much for me to do. ... I'm always scrolling through whether it be TikTok, Facebook, Instagram," Glines says.

"I'm meeting all of these people I wish I had never met," she adds. "Especially when I was a lot younger, there were a lot of people on there who [would take] advantage of you, and you don't realize it because you're still growing. That really impacted me then and it's still impacting me, and it did put me in a place mentally where I did have to get a lot of help."

One 18-year-old LGBTQ+ TikTok user from Michigan who asked to remain anonymous says that at its most negative, TikTok can show hate "coming from LGBTQ+ people specifically because of the way the app matches you with similar people's content, which can be especially harmful."

"Despite this, I feel that TikTok hasn't negatively impacted my mental health nearly as bad as other social media such as Twitter," they add. "In my experience,

Twitter is a lot of fear-mongering and hate to a much greater extent to anything I've seen on TikTok."

Because of her own experiences online, Glines advises minors to stay away from social media altogether. Still, when asked about the attorney general's investigation, Glines suspects that Nessel will find the answer to be far more "grayscale" than a black-and-white "bad" or "good" verdict for TikTok.

"There are moments where I feel like I'm kind of trapped and this is the only thing that I can do: just sit in my bed and scroll. And it makes me feel kind of bad about myself," Glines says. "There are all these things that I could be doing and, instead, I'm choosing to sit here, and I look at the time and I think, 'Oh my gosh, I just wasted an hour that I'm never going to get back on social media.' But the app really helps build a sense of community. It's really good at making your feed match with the kind of person you are, and that can really help you feel less alone."

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VISIT THESE 8 LESSER-KNOWN PLACES WHERE LGBTQ+ HISTORY WAS MADE



Henry Gerber House. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

BY NAYANIKA GUHA

Small acts of resistance and community building are what have made LGBTQ+ history, and while that history may not be as well documented as we would like, you can still get out your map and start exploring. If you've already covered Stonewall Inn and the Pulse memorial, and are looking to uncover more LGBTQ+ history, we have just the list for you:

Henry Gerber House CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Located in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood, the Henry Gerber House was the home to not only Gerber, a prominent gay rights activist and army veteran, but also to the Society for Human Rights, the nation's first gay civil rights organization, from 1924-

25. The house is one of the oldest landmarks associated with the gay and lesbian civil rights movement and was the place where Gerber started writing "Friendship and Freedom," the first documented gay periodical published in the U.S.

After raids were conducted on his and other society members' houses, Gerber was arrested on charges of obscenity, and the Society was disbanded. In 2015, Henry Gerber House was designated a National Historic Landmark for its

Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit was home to the first-ever meeting of Michigan's first-ever organization for LGBTQ+ people, the Detroit chapter of the Mattachine Society. The meeting was held on August 26, 1958, eight years after the Mattachine Society was founded in 1950. It was one of the first national gay rights organizations, second only to Gerber's Society for Human Rights.

Today, you can book a room at the hotel and

importance in LGBTQ+ history.

Darcelle XV PORTLAND, OREGON

Walter Cole opened the Old Town Portland Club, which is today called Darcelle XV, in 1967, making it one of the oldest drag clubs in the world. Cole, who takes the stage as Darcelle, still performs at the club and might be the oldest still-performing drag queen in the world at 91.

In 2020, Darcelle XV joined the National Register of Historic Places, making it the first Oregon business to be designated a national historic site for its place in LGBTQ+ history. After a brief hiatus due to the pandemic, the club is back in action. Be sure to check the venue's event calendar.

Fort Shelby Hotel DETROIT, MICHIGAN

enjoy the feeling of having stayed at a place where history was made.

The Furies Collective

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A lesbian commune housing 12 women between the ages of 18 and 28, the Furies Collective was located at 219 11th St. SE in Washington, D.C. These European-American feminists divided household labor, clothes and, in some cases, money while sleeping on mattresses in a communal room. Their group's aim was to abolish patriarchy, white supremacy and imperialism. They wrote and explored feminist and queer theory and made it their mission to build lives independent of men. To this end, they taught other women how to do auto and home repair, tasks which were considered to be men's work, and encouraged them to start their own communes.

Members of the collective wrote and published a newspaper titled "The Furies," which was distributed nationally January 1972 until mid 1973. The group was also central to the publication of the lesbian/feminist issue of the Methodist youth magazine "Motive." Both "Motive" and "The Furies" helped establish a lesbian community and created conversation about female identity and relationships and set the tone for feminist discourse for years to come.

Glide Memorial Church and Office

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Glide Memorial Church, established in the 1960s, was deeply involved in grassroots community outreach and activism on issues including women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, addiction, homelessness and racial equality.

The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, and Vanguard, the first LGBTQ+ youth organization, were founded here in 1964 and 1965, respectively.

Most recently, in 2022, the church building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cherry Grove Community



Cherry Grove Community House and Theater. Photo: National Park Service

House and Theater

CHERRY GROVE, NEW YORK

The Cherry Grove Community House and Theater played a key role in making Cherry Grove on New York's Fire Island America's First Gay and Lesbian Town, known to be a safe haven for all, since the 1940s. The Arts Project of Cherry Grove was central to the community's development and integration of gay and lesbian residents there. The integration of LGBTQ+ residents into daily life and events through the community house, back when queer people were openly discriminated against and ostracized, made Cherry Grove the only "gay and lesbian influenced geography" in the United States.

Today, Cherry Grove is home to the world's longest running LGBTQ+ theater, where drag is considered a hallmark of their performances, and the still-active Arts Project, which started in 1948. Buy tickets on their website to attend their upcoming shows.

First Unitarian Society of Denver

DENVER, COLORADO

The First Unitarian Society of Denver (FUSD), a welcoming congregation, was the location of Colorado's first religious ceremony for a same-sex wedding, held in 1975. The wedding between Richard Adams and Tony Sullivan was made official through a marriage license issued in Boulder county, by a clerk who said that there was nothing in the law that specifically makes same-sex marriage illegal.

FUSD has also played a crucial role in many civil rights issues including causes pertaining to race, immigration and more. During the

See **LGBTQ+ History**, page 30

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Politics Is In My Bones



Gay Days Are Back

A Fabulous, Time-Honored Tradition Returns to Amusement Parks Around the Country

BY NAYANIKA GUHA

Dancing on our own. Listening to “Chromatica” on repeat. Watching “Drag Race.” Who doesn’t love *those* gay days? But riding on all the biggest roller coasters under a flurry of colored light with all queers and you’ve got something special. “Gay Days” at amusement parks are indeed special, and if you’re LGBTQ+, you’re invited.

Disney World in Orlando might be the first park that comes to mind when it comes to Gay Days, but several other amusement parks across the country officially or unofficially welcome the

LGBTQ+ community each year for smaller, but just as Prideful, events. From Six Flags Magic Mountain in Los Angeles to Cedar Point and Kings Island in Ohio and Knoebels Amusement Resort in Pennsylvania, many amusement parks across the country celebrate Gay Day every year. Whether officially hosted by the park or not, these special events encourage queer folks in the community to come together, sometimes wearing matching clothes, to celebrate Pride.

At Knoebels Amusement Resort, a Pride picnic has been taking place for the past 27 years, always on the second Saturday in August. While not officially sponsored by the park, the administrators

of this free-admission amusement park have been very supportive of the event through the years, shares Michael Escobar, 65, the planning mastermind behind this event.

“Usually we have speakers throughout the day, including state representatives or local politicians, and sometimes we have performers sing, and we also have door prizes that we give away, such as a computer or a television,” Escobar says. “Due to COVID, this has changed a bit, but we usually have food, and everyone brings food to share. We are waiting to see how COVID is going to decide how



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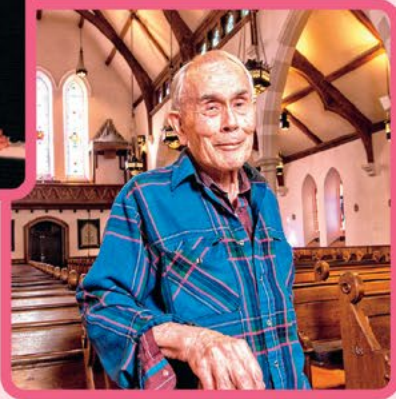
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Caylie Smith and her friends during Gay Day at Six Flags Magic Mountain. Photo courtesy of Caylie Smith

→ **Gay Days**

Continued from page 24

this year goes.”

In an area of Pennsylvania where there is no community Pride event, this picnic provides

a sense of community for queer people there. According to the Pride Picnics at Knoebels Grove page on Facebook, this year’s picnic is set for Saturday, Aug. 13.

Chris Wallace, who has attended several Gay Days at Kings Island near Cincinnati, Ohio, couldn’t agree more about the community

aspect of these events. He says, “It’s hard to find a space where I feel like I don’t have eyes on me, where I can just be me without worrying someone might confront me for simply looking ‘too gay.’”

Wallace says the lines are always shorter on Gay Days at Kings Island. “Smaller crowds mean you get to ride all the big rides over and over,” he adds. Make sure you make the most of this and plan to be in Cincinnati for Pride Night at Kings Island on Sept. 10. Cedar Point, also located in Ohio, hosts an unofficial Gay Day on Father’s Day each year (June 19 in 2022).

Six Flags Magic Mountain is another major park that celebrates Gay Day. Their event, titled “Out on the Mountain,” is set for Sept. 9, and tickets will soon be available on their website. In past years, this event has had drag performers such as Trinity the Tuck and Raven from “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” among others. The event supports several LGBTQ+ organizations, and if you are flying in

from out of town, discounted hotel rooms are available at the Hilton Garden Inn Valencia.

Caylie Smith, who attended Gay Day at Six Flags Magic Mountain back in 2011, says that she definitely prefers going to an amusement park on Gay Day over other days. “You feel so supported and loved by everyone there, and you’re celebrating a part of you that a lot of the world shames you for just because they don’t agree with your sexuality.” She adds, “I’ve definitely gotten some looks at amusement parks on other days that showed judgment against me for showing affection towards another woman. It makes you feel small, and it’s hard on your self-esteem.”

Moises Amezcua, who attended the same event in 2021, feels that Gay Days are important because “growing up, I would go to theme parks and see all the straight couples making out while they wait on the rides, canoodling and holding each other. Although we have come a long way with equality, I still don’t feel as safe to be affectionate with my boyfriend in fear of retaliation or harassment.”

He adds, “Gay relationships don’t really have role models and are not supported as much as heterosexual relationships. It’s nice to have a day where everyone there supports the love you have and want to express.”

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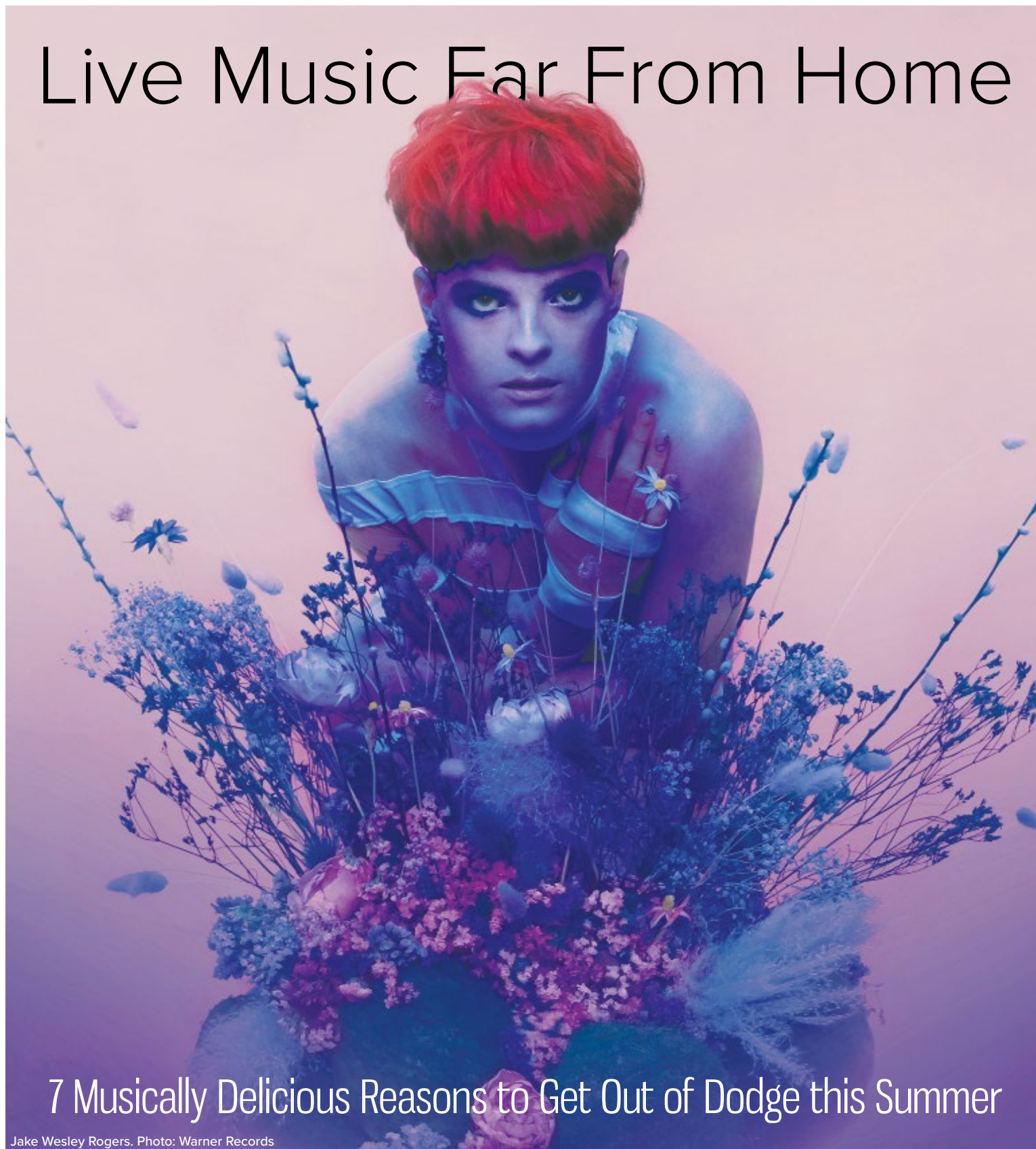
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Live Music Far From Home



7 Musically Delicious Reasons to Get Out of Dodge this Summer

Jake Wesley Rogers. Photo: Warner Records

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

The 2022 summer music scene will seem practically normal this year after a long, lonely, pandemic-

induced drought. You'll find plenty of opportunities to enjoy some live tunes close to home this year, but why not make an adventure out of it? Give in to the lure of beautiful music in the bright summer sun in exotic (or

at least, farther-flung) locales.

These seven musical events are worth the journey. Hit the road (or runway) with your favorite music loving companions and make up for lost concert-going time this summer.

Elton John

VARIOUS LOCATIONS (JULY-NOVEMBER)

The much-anticipated "Farewell

Yellow Brick Road" tour is coming to Detroit July 18 (Elton's only Michigan date), but the tour is your last opportunity to see the sequin-studded, groundbreaking icon rock that fabulous piano in person. If you're a big fan, get out to see him as many times as you can now! Gather up some road trip companions and follow that yellow brick road to locations like Cleveland (July 30), Chicago (Aug. 5), Toronto (Sept. 7 and 8) and Pittsburgh (Sept. 16).

Randy Rainbow

GRAND RAPIDS (SEPT. 10)

If there's ever a time when we need a little Randy Rainbow in our lives, it's right about now, when civil rights appear, once again, to be in the crosshairs of a conservative-leaning Supreme Court. Rainbow's snarky political takes might be dressed up in catchy, musical explosions of satire, but they hit the mark every time. "The Pink Glasses Tour" will also take the stage in a few other select U.S. cities including Kansas City (Sept. 9).

Electric Forest 2022

ROTHBURY, MI (JUNE 23-26)

Electric Forest is a four-day, multi-genre event held at the Double JJ Resort in Rothbury, south of Pentwater near Michigan's sandy west coast. The festival focuses on electronic music and a long list of eclectic, dreamy musical acts like Sylvan Esso, Jake Wesley Rogers, Rainbow Kitten Surprise, The String Cheese Incident and dozens more. Camp (or glamp) for the whole long weekend or pick a day to frolic in the forest amidst one of the most welcoming, community-minded concert scenes you're likely to find within driving distance of Southeast Michigan.

Northalsted Market Days

CHICAGO (AUG. 6-7)

America's first recognized gay village, Chicago's Northalsted, sets the scene for this two-day urban musical and festival. Over 120,000 festival-goers will celebrate the event's 40th year in 2022, whooping it up

along the half-mile-long event featuring live music on six stages, more than 250 vendors, unique art and craft finds, DJs and dancing and all manner of rainbow-imbued good times. Northalsted Market Days headliners include Trixie Mattel, Todrick Hall, Greyson Chance, Jody Watley, CeCe Peniston and more.

Lady Gaga

CHICAGO (AUG. 15)

Go west, Little Monsters! The Lady herself will perform just a few hours away this summer when she hits Wrigley Field in Chicago. “The Chromatica Ball Tour” will only play six U.S. cities, so don’t miss what’s sure to be one of the most memorable concert experiences of the summer.

Outloud Raising Voices Music Fest

L.A. (JUNE 3-5)

Looking for a farther flung adventure?

Revel in a weekend of Pride-flavored musical delight at the Outloud Raising Voices Music Fest in West Hollywood in early June. The festival features a dizzying array of LGBTQ+ fan favorites, including Marina and the Diamonds, Jessie J, Greyson Chance and Jake Wesley Rogers.

Trixie Mattel

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND (MAY 24)

How does one describe Trixie Mattel? It’s no easy feat! As Wikipedia tells us, she’s “an American drag queen, television personality, singer-songwriter, comedian and entrepreneur known for her exaggerated, high-camp style and blend of comedy and acoustic pop.” And, sure! She’s all that, but a Trixie Mattel show is SO much more. Her latest tour, “Trixie Mattel: Grown Up,” will feature a full band and plenty of laughs and good-hearted camaraderie, and let’s be real here — she’s worth traveling to Iceland for.

Can’t make the trek to the land of fire and ice? Catch Trixie stateside at the KP X AP Pride Party in Asbury Park, New Jersey on June 4.



Trixie Mattel. Photo courtesy of Shore Fire Media

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Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico.

in issues of social justice. The Society is open to people visiting and welcomes new members.

Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico PUERTO RICO

Also known as Casa Orgullo, this place was home to the first gay and lesbian rights organization established in Puerto Rico. Founded in 1974, the organization, Comunidad de Orgullo Gay, spearheaded the Puerto Rican

LGBTQ+ liberation movement. Inspired by the Stonewall Riots, the organization spoke up against discrimination through political action, conducted educational programs and garnered public support through its activities. The movement fell through in 1976, but Casa Orgullo remains an important part of queer history in Puerto Rico.

→ LGBTQ+ History

Continued from page 23

1960s, the FUSD church became home to the civil rights organization, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), showing its active interest

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Nancy Rosen in her studio. Photo courtesy of Nancy Rosen

The Artist Behind the Work of Lily Tomlin's Frankie

Rosen's Work Is Currently On Display at Birmingham's Robert Kidd Gallery

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Chicago-based artist Nancy Rosen, the creative force behind Lily Tomlin's Frankie on Netflix's "Grace and Frankie," has watched with glee as the show, popular with LGBTQ+ audiences, has exposed her artwork to the world. Frankie is often seen painting behind her easel in her work shed, and those creations — Rosen's creations — have become an integral part of the show.

To date, 56 pieces of Rosen's art have been featured on the show (now streaming its seventh, and last, season). But that ain't

nothin'. Since the show started airing, art-loving viewers have flocked to Rosen's website. "I've sold 822 pieces because of the show," Rosen, 65, told BTL. "In 44 states and 17 countries. It's wonderful because if you like Frankie's work, you just Google 'Who does Frankie's artwork,' and I come up."

That whopping total might seem impressive, but it's nothing compared to the massive amount of work Rosen has created in her studio in Rogers Park, Chicago. "You can't tell that I sold one painting in my studio," she said. "Because they're all on paper."

Early beginnings

Rosen, whose work is currently on display at the Robert Kidd Gallery in Birmingham, discovered painting at 5 years old, when her kindergarten classmate kept turning down her invitations to Friday playdates.

"Finally, I asked her why she kept saying no, and she said she was going to art class," Rosen recalled. "So, I said, 'Well, then, I'll go to art class, too.'"

Once there, Rosen immersed herself. "My whole life, I've always painted, but I always

made stuff as well. Like I strung beads, I did silversmithing, I did macramé in the day, and that's what filled me up. [My friends] all dropped out, and I kept going. And that's what always filled me."

Rosen's introduction to creating for television came about when her dear friend, Robbie Tollin, executive producer of "Grace and Frankie," told her they were looking for an artist to create work for the Frankie character. Everyone on the show's creative team suggested an artist. Tollin suggested Rosen, the group agreed, and the rest is showbiz history.

"It was a thrill," Rosen said of receiving the call that her work had been chosen. "I had no

idea what I was in for. They didn't either. At first, I did some paintings that they asked me to do, and then they just kept asking me to do more and more. They were figuring out Frankie's character and Frankie's art. So it was a lovely, fabulous, challenging journey."

Tomlin, for her part, told *Variety* that she had not been familiar with Rosen's work before the show, but that she agreed it fit for her character. "Nobody knew what kind of painter Frankie was," Tomlin said. "[Rosen's work] seems eccentric, and a little manic, and wonderful, and dark at times and very comedic at other times. It's just right."

The demands of Hollywood

Once Rosen got the gig, she was quickly surprised by the demands of the job, which would push her creative boundaries to new limits. Such as the time when they told her to paint a pig.

"I would say 'yes,' and then I'd go, 'Oh god, what do I do now?' So then I must Google pigs and start drawing pigs, and I draw them in the way I would draw a pig. It takes my style, my thread through it."

Eventually, Rosen did paint a pig — six of them, in fact — for the studio to choose from. Sometimes, Rosen admitted she doubted herself. But her husband David never did and she relied on him for support. He's the only person she'd let see one of her paintings before it was complete.

"He's the only one I trust," said Rosen. "When I was doing vagina paintings, and I was doing the head of Frankie, I was like, 'Do I have her?' You get so close, and you have to ship it the next day, and he'd come over and be like, 'Not yet.' And I'd be like, 'Shit!'"

Starting out, Rosen said she had no idea what to expect. But her art's role in the show continued to grow. In the third season, Frankie even had a one-woman show, "which meant that Nancy Rosen was having a solo show, and I was like 'Bring that shit on,'" she said. "We curated that show. I showed them my fantasy of what would show. I was able to show work I've never shown before, really."

Not only was her solo show viewed by millions, but Rosen was an extra on that episode, paid to walk around and look at her own art.

As the years went on, Rosen would have a total of 56 pieces of her artwork featured in the show. Thinking back on seven seasons, Rosen tried to explain how her work — Frankie's work — had evolved.

"I did me until they told me to be somebody else. I would never have drawn a poodle," she said. "Then, they said, 'We need you to draw a robot that's a woman who's making donuts, but they're really bagels with sprinkles.' I've never thought about a woman robot, not once in my entire life."

"So maybe the evolution is of me doing stuff that I've never dreamed of in my life," she continued. "I have the skill set to do it. But I would have never done it, if not for the show."



Nancy Rosen and Lily Tomlin. Photo courtesy of Nancy Rosen



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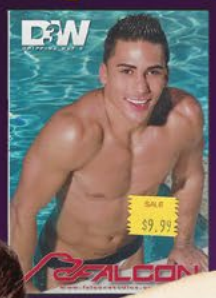
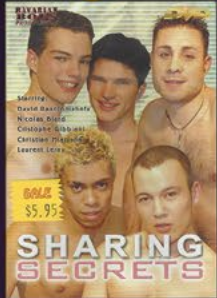
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Michigan Author Draws on Love of Old Houses for First Cozy Mystery Novel

Frank Anthony Polito and Husband Found Their Own Fixer-Upper Home on 'House Hunters'

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

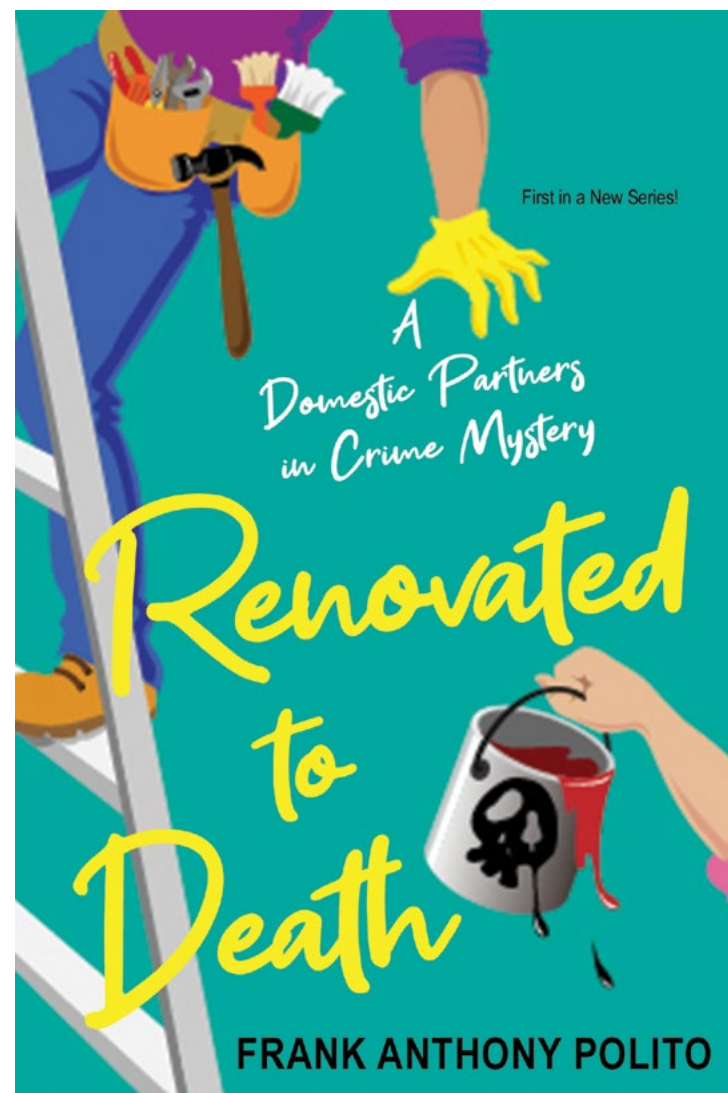
Lambda Literary Award-winning author and Pleasant Ridge resident Frank Anthony Polito has a new book out this month. "Renovated to Death," billed as the first in a new series, will be released May 31 (Kensington Publishing Group, \$15.95). The book is Polito's first cozy mystery and is set in the fictitious Metro Detroit suburb of Pleasant Woods, which is located smack dab between Fernridge and Royal Heights.

"In all of my past books, including 'Lost in the '90s' and 'Drama Queens!,' I set the stories in real cities, like Hazel Park and Ferndale, and I made it a point to mention real places that readers would recognize, like Country Boy restaurant, Pronto! and Gigi's," Polito told BTL.

But cozy mysteries are all about typical small towns that feature typical small town things, like quaint little downtowns with cute little shops. Something Polito's hometown doesn't have.

"If I would've set the story in Pleasant Ridge and had a character who owns an antique store, some reader would no doubt call me out."

The lines of reality and fiction continue to be blurred throughout "Renovated." Polito, a Michigan native who lived in New York for 18 years, moved back home with his partner Craig Bentley in 2013. Polito and Bentley actually found their home while appearing on the HGTV series "House Hunters." They



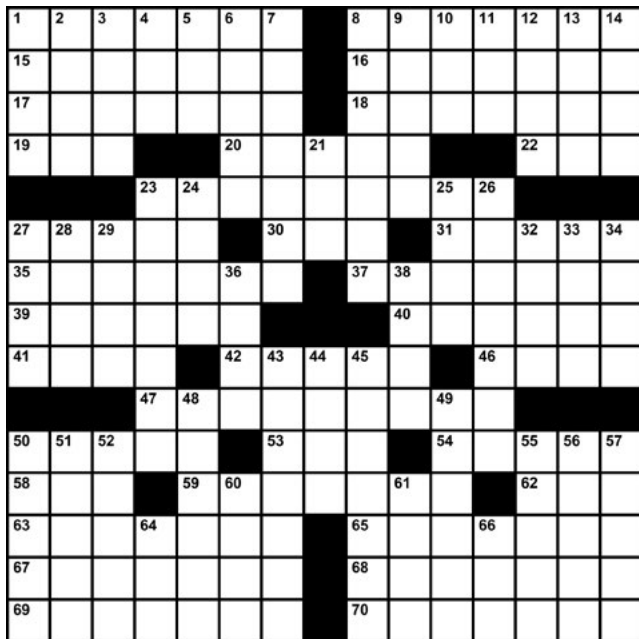
now live in a 1924 Craftsman Colonial that they've lovingly brought back to full life.

In "Renovated," Polito, himself, clearly inspired the main character of writer Peter "PJ" Penwell, who with his partner, JP Broadway, star in their own HGTV series "Domestic Partners." Polito, in real life, loves to watch HGTV.

"My partner and I are definitely HGTV fans, particularly 'Rehab Addict' with Nicole Curtis because we love seeing Detroit and all its beautiful historic houses on TV. Funny thing, the original title for this book was 'Rehabbed to Death,' but my publisher thought it sounded too much like a story about drug addiction, so we changed it."

No drug addiction here, just good, plain ol'

See Frank Polito, page 36



- 40 Looking for gay porn, maybe
- 41 Larger-than-life
- 42 Fruit in a slot machine
- 46 Locker room emanation
- 47 More of the quote
- 50 Refusal to a butch
- 53 "___ be my pleasure!"
- 54 Port in the land of samurai
- 58 "Cat ___ Hot Tin Roof"
- 59 End of the quote
- 62 Like a one-incher, in Dogpatch
- 63 Big name in electronics
- 65 Getting up
- 67 Phallic winter formations
- 68 Secrete white stuff
- 69 Like variety stores of old
- 70 Soldier for former senator Allan?

- 14 Beat, but barely
- 21 Early man's opening
- 23 Old Testament prophet
- 24 River of the country of the Singing Nun
- 25 Counterfeiters' nemeses
- 26 Make noise in bed
- 27 Vaulted area at the Cathedral of Hope
- 28 Cut the crop
- 29 For most students
- 32 Police incursion at Stonewall
- 33 Bond foe
- 34 Body passageway
- 36 Like Albee's three women
- 38 Actress Collette
- 43 Flake of the upper crust
- 44 The M in SMU (abbr.)
- 45 Times when it's hard
- 48 Ancient Greek seer
- 49 "Sister Act" extra
- 50 Like a superbly pitched game
- 51 Not straight up
- 52 Negligee material
- 55 "Are you calling me ___?"
- 56 "Roots" family head
- 57 "Ragged Dick" writer Horatio
- 60 Not now
- 61 Cop flirting in a tearoom
- 64 NCAA jock org.
- 66 Castro Street, on BART

Down

- 1 Golda of Israel
- 2 Poet Broumas
- 3 Sal Mineo, in "Rebel Without a Cause"
- 4 Request to Sajak
- 5 Straight line
- 6 Mayberry teacher Helen
- 7 Swingers of old
- 8 They rubber stamp
- 9 Rest atop
- 10 Pitching stat
- 11 Remote target
- 12 Caesar's others
- 13 Big top, e.g.

Politics Is In My Bones

Q Puzzle

Across

- 1 Queen, for example
- 8 Get it up
- 15 Title girl in a 1968 Turtles hit
- 16 Went around
- 17 Start of why politics is in his bones, per Pete Buttigieg
- 18 More of the quote
- 19 Way cool

- 20 Singer Marilyn
- 22 Went down on
- 23 More of the quote
- 27 Geometry calculations
- 30 Hard top
- 31 Tuesday to 50 million Frenchmen
- 35 Tiny balls
- 37 Patrick of the "Moby Dick" miniseries
- 39 African desert

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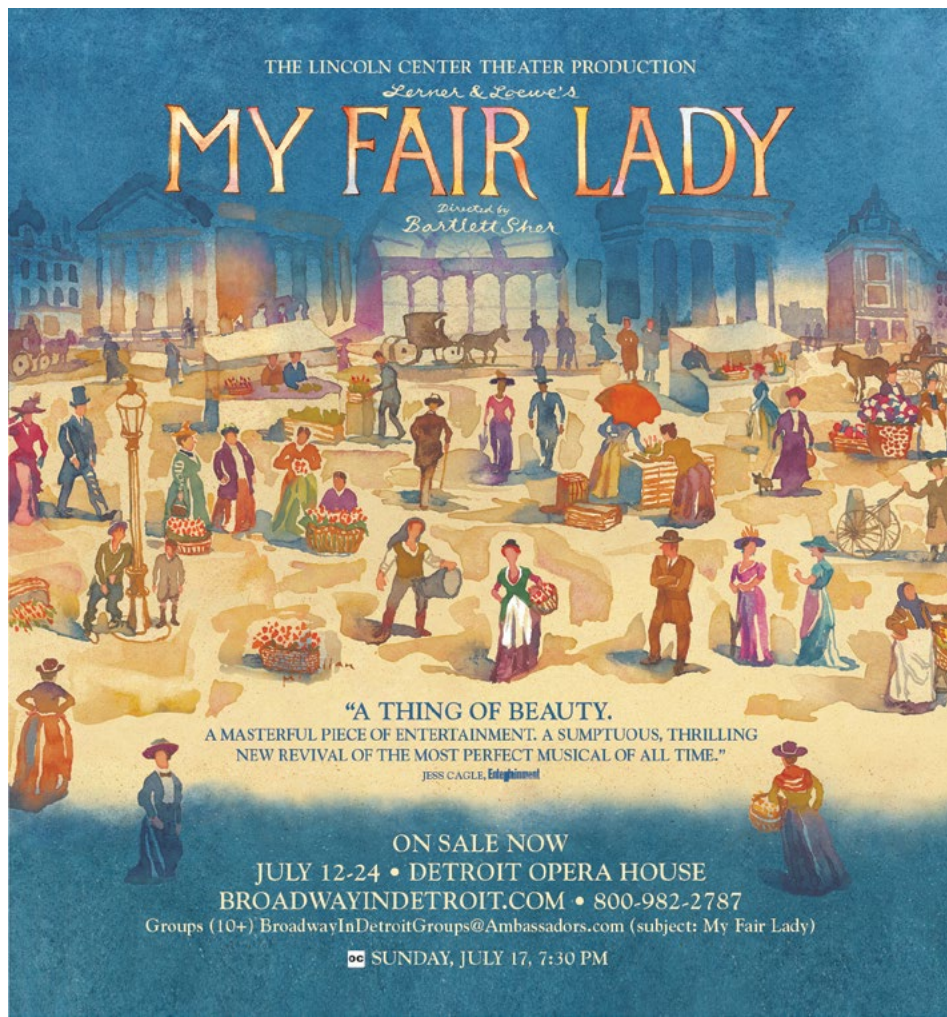
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“In all of my past books, including ‘Lost in the ‘90s’ and ‘Drama Queers!’ I set the stories in real cities, like Hazel Park and Ferndale, and I made it a point to mention real places that readers would recognize, like Country Boy restaurant, Pronto! and Gigi’s.”



→ **Frank Polito**

Continued from page 34

fashioned murder when a dead body is found in a house Penwell and Broadway are to renovate for their show. Though “Renovated” is Polito’s first cozy mystery, he speaks like an expert on them as he explains what makes a good one.

“There are certain tropes that should be

adhered to, since readers go in with certain expectations for a cozy mystery story,” he said. “For example, the stories are usually very PG-rated, the murder takes place off-screen and the protagonist is always a real person and not a trained detective or private investigator.”

HGTV and home reno are both big at the moment, especially as the pandemic forced people to spend larger amounts of time than usual in their homes. In the case of Polito and Bentley’s home renovation, they didn’t work as closely together as their fictional counterparts.

“Craig’s former job as an automotive product specialist took him out of town quite a bit, so I would work on projects whenever he was gone,” said Polito. “This way, I could create a big mess and he wouldn’t have to look at it.”

Still, some of the work they did do together, such as painting the second floor.

“We get along well when we do end up working together,” he said. “We’ve been a couple since we were in college, so we know how to give and take and compromise when it comes to getting the job done.”

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