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6 COVER STORY

Photo: Chris Sutton

CORRECTION

In the subhead for the story "For Nonbinary Photographer Quinn Kirby, This Assignment Was Personal" from our last edition, out June 23, we misgendered Quinn Kirby by using she/her in place of the correct they/them pronouns. Please note Quinn's correct pronouns are they/them. We are sorry for this error.

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'Vote Like Your Life Depends On It': Nessel, Whitmer On SCOTUS Decision Overturning Federal Right To Abortion

By Jason A. Michael

Arsonist Who Burned Pride Flag in Lansing Caught on Video, Almost Ends Up in Flames

By Todd Heywood

Could Transphobic Ohio-Style Genital Inspections Become Law in Michigan, Too?

By Jason A. Michael

After 'No' Vote on Pride Parade, Berkley Community Members Call on Councilman Dennis Hennen to Resign

By Jason A. Michael



Gov. Whitmer and AG Dana Nessel. Photo: Jason A. Michael

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Congratulations! Now that we're into July, you've reached the halfway point of a year that has already felt like a decade. It's tough out there, in so many ways. If there was ever a time to lean into the loving embrace of a like-minded community, it's right now. Pick one (or all five) of these queer things to do now or in the very near future — we know you'll find something meaningful, joyous or just plain fun.

Get Hotter Than July

Just go ahead and clear your calendar from July 15 to July 17, when Hotter Than July, the world's longest-running, uninterrupted Black LGBT+ Pride celebration, returns to a less pandemic-impacted world. The weekend will be jam-packed with exciting and memorable events, including a headlining concert featuring Da Brat on July 16 at MotorCity Casino Sound Board, a candlelight vigil, an endorsed candidates forum, an art show, a worship service, a special Sunday brunch and a dedicated testing zone.

Events held at various locations. Get tickets and learn more at hotterthanjuly.org.



Da Brat. Photo: Sound Board



Tunde Olaniran. Courtesy photo

Experience a Uniquely Detroit Art Installation

The undefinable Flint native Tunde Olaniran, who headlined this year's Ferndale Pride, is the multi-disciplinary artist, musician, singer and performer behind "Made a Universe," a short film and exhibit on display at Cranbrook Art Museum through Sept. 25. Olaniran and other local artists worked together on an "immersive, parallel journey through Olaniran's creative universe," according to a press release about the exhibit. Billed as contemporary horror, the film "examines what it means to unlock your power in the face of fear and repression, and how one must unify various fragments of their psyche to connect with the world and themselves on a deeper level," Olaniran said in the statement.

"Made a Universe" was shot on location throughout Detroit. Learn more at cranbrookartmuseum.org.



Patti LaBelle. Photo: Sound Board

Don't Miss These Gay Icons

Need proof that the Detroit area concert season is in full swing? Consider the fact that three big name, LGBTQ+ loved performers will hit the city over the course of four days this month. On July 15, Dionne Warwick is set to play Music Hall Center at Greektown Casino, followed by Patti LaBelle at Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel on July 17 and Elton John at Comerica Park July 18. All three veteran performers have dedicated decades to their music careers, amassing huge, global LGBTQ+ followings along the way. As if that wasn't reason enough to catch them, Warwick and John are also on their farewell tours (or, like Cher, so they say).

Tickets are still available for all three shows at ticketmaster.com.



Miz Cracker. Photo: Instagram

Catch This Catwalk Catfight

War on the Catwalk, featuring a laundry list of "RuPaul's Drag Race" contestants, visits The Fillmore July 7 in downtown Detroit. That "Drag Race" energy will get your engine going as "Ru girls" like Olivia Lux, Crystal Methyd, Kylie Sonique Love, Heidi N Closet, Priyanka, Icesis, Jimbo and Kandy Muse square off in a competition-style performance hosted by Miz Cracker. Promoters promise a "hilarious opportunity for performers to display their charisma, uniqueness, nerve and talent."

War on the Catwalk is an all-ages event. Buy tickets and find out more at detroittheater.org.



Join an LGBTQIA+ Substance Recovery Group

When it comes to breaking free from problematic substance use, joining up with other people in recovery can make a world of difference. Wherever you are on your journey to recovery from alcohol and/or drugs, the LGBTQIA+ In Recovery Group welcomes you. The group meets every Thursday at 4:30 p.m. at the Recovery United Community Center in Fraser and is part of the Center's mission to "build an authentic connection of recovery, hope, and community through meaningful relationships and profound advocacy."

Learn more at [rucfraser.com](http://ruc Fraser.com). Recovery United Community Center is located at 32577 Garfield in Fraser in Northwest Macomb County.

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

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FROM THE BIBLE BELT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAMPION

LGBT Detroit's Jerron Totten on Why He Made the Move and Why the Stakes Are So High Now

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

LGBT Detroit Social Justice Engineer Jerron Totten has been “getting out the vote” in various capacities for decades.

Totten, 33, a native of Reidsville, North Carolina, located just outside of Greensboro, had worked on the Obama for America campaigns — both of them — and Hillary for America, too. It wasn't until 2017,

however, that he visited Michigan, the state that would later become a key part of fulfilling his career dreams.

That year, Totten visited Michigan at the invitation of Detroit City Council candidate Nguvu Tsare, who

hoped to draw on Totten's vast political experience in getting out the vote that year. But it was his introduction to LGBT Detroit Executive Director Curtis Lipscomb that proved pivotal.

“It was an instant love affair,” Totten recalled. “Curtis really took to me, and I took to him.”

By the end of 2018, Totten was becoming a regular, visiting three more times to help Lipscomb with projects like Hotter Than July (HTJ), a Pride event celebrating Detroit's LGBTQ+ community. A few months later, Lipscomb asked Totten to take the leap — move to Detroit to officially join up with his agency as social outreach coordinator and legislative advocacy specialist. A recent change to Totten's title (to Social Justice Engineer) encompasses all of his primary roles.

Since he's been with the agency, Lipscomb said “there has been a seismic shift of how education, advocacy programs and services are delivered in Detroit. ... I am very fortunate to have his ear, energy, devotion and trust.”

But Totten, who had previously lived in D.C. and Northern California, was initially unsure of moving to Detroit. “I had moved a couple times, and what I did say was this was probably my last move,” said Totten. “I was getting too old to keep moving.”

Today, Totten oversees five different programs at the agency, drawing especially on his experience in political organizing, experience that has guided his work with Michigan Voices and Black Votes Matter, two organizations gathering signatures for a ballot initiative that would protect Michigan abortion rights.

“We've worked with those two organizations to make sure the public was aware of what was at stake,” said Totten, noting that the state requires 425,000 signatures by July 11 to place the issue on the November ballot. “Once the issue is put on the ballot, then we have to make sure that people get out to vote.”

From Brooklyn to boys

Growing up in North Carolina, Totten attended Elm Grove Baptist Church with his family. It is an understatement to say he was heavily involved with the church.

“I was in the junior young adult choir, the mass choir, the gospel choir, the junior praise team, young adult ushers and junior missionaries,” he said. “Plus, I won the Bible quiz six times.”

But his childhood was not always easy. He was an only child born to a mother who was only 16 years old. He frequently suffered from respiratory issues he would, thankfully, eventually outgrow.

Totten said his mother, who worked multiple jobs, including as a hair stylist on weekends, sacrificed a great deal for him. “My mother worked a lot,” he said. “But my grandmother was mom number two. She filled in the gap for my mother. And I also had a good church family and great godparents. ... I had a large village of people who poured into me.”

Totten said that, growing up, his grandmother “was a firecracker, and I think that's where I get a little bit of my spice from.”

While in middle school, Totten met a girl named Brooklyn who asked him to be her boyfriend.

“I don't think I really knew what that meant,” he said. “But we would hold hands and I'd walk her to her house.”

Things would change quickly between the two once Brooklyn got up the nerve to be a little bold. “She just hauled off and kissed me,” Totten recalled. “And I have never felt more disgusted in my life. I thought to myself, ‘I didn't know I had to kiss her.’”

Around that time, Totten started to realize he was different from other boys. He experienced a bout of grief and shame, but when he did eventually come out, he was pleased to find he was not met with the condemnation many gay boys who grew up in church face when they come out. “The response was very positive,” he said. “I'm very fortunate. I know that my story is a lot different from a lot of other people's stories ... I can walk into my home church hand in hand with my fiancé, and no one says a word.”

That fiancé is artist Brandon Merriman-Boddy, who was actually an RA in the same dorm building Totten lived in at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Somehow, the two never met at that time. Instead, it would be some 10 years later before they met through “Grindr or Jack'd. I don't remember which,” Totten said with a laugh.

The two quickly started dating, but Totten knew by then he would not be back in North Carolina for long. “I knew that my time organizing wasn't done, but I didn't know where or how I'd be doing it,” he said.



Jerron Totten and his fiancé, Brandon Merriman-Boddy. Photo: Inpaq Sutton

Joining Whitmer's LGBTQ+ council

It was only four months later that Totten got the offer to move to Detroit. Merriman-Boddy, Totten said, tried to be nonchalant when he first heard the news. "He tried to play it cool, but when he dropped me off at the airport, he broke down crying."

For the next year, the two dated long distance, seeing each other only once a month. Then the pandemic hit and Merriman-Boddy spent three months in Detroit with Totten. Eventually, Merriman-Boddy relocated to Michigan to be with his love. The two got engaged last year and plan to get married in September 2023 in Mexico.

"You don't see commitment like ours in the community very often," Totten said. "I mean, 'lucky' isn't the word. 'Fortunate' isn't the word. I use the Biblical term 'helpmate.'"

Merriman-Boddy is "not a partner that sits on the sidelines and watches me do the work," Totten said. "He assists me in the

work that I do, and I wouldn't be able to do it without him beside me."

That work today includes being named to the 15-member LGBTQ+ For Whitmer Leadership Council, which was put together to get the governor reelected.

"I am humbled and very excited to be appointed," Totten said. "I look forward to working with Gov. Whitmer to build a fairer, safer Michigan for everyone."

On a national level, Totten acknowledged that many voters are not pleased with Biden's success so far. "The message in 2020 was, 'We've

got to get Trump out of office,'" he said. "And the voters that we're talking to are not seeing the changes that they wanted to see after they worked to get Trump out of office."

Once Trump was banished from the White House, Totten said he was hoping to see more action from Biden and the Democratic-controlled Congress. "The expectation," Totten said, "was that those people we put into office would not be passive on the issues that are important to us."

Totten said Black voters are disappointed that Congress passed an anti-Asian hate bill before passing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

Voters now want to know if the Dems are going to protect voter rights and keep other campaign promises. Those issues must be addressed and addressed soon, Totten said, as the voter base grows weary.

"Our voter base is tired," he said. "They are exhausted, and they were hoping to see more change than what they've seen."

In addition to getting out the vote, Totten works with various other programs at LGBT Detroit, including organizing HTJ, and he could use some more

help there, too. For this year's event, which will be held July 15-17, they began organizing in November of last year.

"Anybody can join the HTJ organizing committee," he said. "The committee members that I do have are among the most dedicated people I've ever worked with, and I couldn't be more grateful."

Looking ahead, Totten said his life plan is simple: "I want to be happy with my partner and try to impact as much change as possible. Those are really my only long-term goals."



Jerron Totten, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Curtis Lipscomb. Photo courtesy of Jerron Totten



at Hodges...



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Da Brat, Remixing Gender for a Generation

How the Rapper Brought Up Big Questions in My Black Family

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS



Growing up in a Black middle-class household in the early '90s, the only force more powerful than God was

gender. In our childhood home, there were boys and there were girls. Boys did boy stuff, and girls did girl stuff. There was little tolerance for anything outside or in between. And unless you were the actual Holy Spirit — who was inexplicably white, male and silky-haired — the blending of the two genders was rarely welcomed.

I don't remember anyone telling me exactly how to act like a boy. There were clues and suggestions, sure, but no one came out and said, "This is what a boy does." What I do remember is all the times I was quickly scolded for being girly or wanting to do girly things — a puppy, I was, learning from corrective action.

For boys to act like girls was wrong. Really wrong. Unless, of course, you are joking. Are you joking? Good then.

When I first saw Da Brat, who is headlining *Hotter Than July* on July 16, in her vibe-setting music video for "Funkdafied," off her platinum album of the same name, I thought: This is easy. She isn't even trying to act like a girl. This is obviously a joke. But the punchline never came. Just praise.

I learned that everything had a gender, even music. Girls were supposed to like the girl groups and the boy bands. But boys were supposed



Emell Derra Adolphus as a child. Courtesy photo

to like the boy bands too, which was confusing to me because I only liked the girl groups, and I was repeatedly told that boys like girls.

When it came to rap music, the gender roles were more straightforward: The boys rapped, and the girls were supposed to dance. Described as the female Snoop Dogg, Da Brat made me want to do both.

From a mix of family, TV and movies, I slowly learned that Da Brat was allowed to remix her gender because she was a "tomboy." And there were other tomboys, such as Queen Latifah, MC Lyte and The Lady of Rage.

The term tomboy implied that what they were doing was temporary, just a phase, and all girls can be tomboys as long as they eventually come to their senses and start wearing gowns.

My mind worked overtime as I wondered: If girls can be tomboys, can boys be tomgirls?

I learned the answer the hard way in elementary school, then in middle school, and a little more in high school. And unlike being a tomboy, boys acting like girls in my Black family was treated as a condition that needed to be cured.

Codifying it all was what I saw and heard in church, movies, TV shows and

music. Men in dresses are a frequent punchline in Black culture, and women doing a man's job was always meant to be funny because they couldn't possibly handle it. But as a small, impressionable kid who is only trying to survive in the world, I could see through the bullshit, even though I wasn't trying to.

As the youngest, having an older sister and an older brother meant I could see the differences of these gender roles acted out in real-time. But seeing it for myself didn't help me understand much more of anything.

Despite having terrible aim, the boys were supposed to stand while using

the bathroom. Sitting down was always much more comfortable. Boy clothing, covered in numbers to subliminally guide our interest into sports, were meant to be baggy and loose, which made running during a game of tag hell. High-heeled shoes? Absolutely out of the question, even though they made me tall enough to punch kids twice my size.

In my eyes, Da Brat had something I didn't: support. This made me a fan of her music, and eventually want to be her because she was able to be different and defied expectations.

She has since come out as a lesbian and is now happily engaged, so looking back, it all makes sense. But for an impressionable child, she gave me the first taste of hope that you can break the rules, be who you want to be and move forward on your own terms. Da Brat was the gateway that led me to Lil' Kim, then Missy Elliott and Madonna (yes, that Gap commercial they did together) then to Prince, and any other figure who wasn't afraid to go against gender norms. Somewhere along the way, I found myself and I found peace. Watching them, I understood that sometimes people might need to catch up to you before they understand you — but that's not your problem.

To this day, I still stop and silently thank Da Brat for existing whenever I see her on TV or mentioned in music, because I know so many of us wouldn't be able to hang on unless we saw how she handled being herself.

In the end, I understood why both genders would like and idolize Da Brat. It was simply a matter of breaking the right rules at the right time.

Emell Derra Adolphus is a writer from Detroit. Read more of his work at youvegottmell.com.

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Pride Source Wins First National Journalism Award for Excellence in Transgender Coverage 2022

In June, the Association of LGBTQ Journalists (NLGJA) announced that Pride Source is being awarded Excellence in Transgender Coverage 2022. This is the media company's first-ever NLGJA award in its nearly 30 years as a publication.

NLGJA recognized Pride Source's story "How Two Detroit Ballroom Godmothers Made Sure VICE Got the Whole Story About Murdered Trans Woman Kelly Stough," written by Ellen Shanna Knoppow, as "exemplary work."

"Winning an NLGJA award for Excellence in Transgender Coverage is not only an honor, it's a responsibility I take seriously," said Knoppow, who lives in Southeast Michigan. "Not too long ago, a trans woman told me, 'The 'T' is never silent.' I hope to amplify more of those voices in the future."

A ceremony recognizing Pride Source's win for the 2022 Excellence in Journalism Awards winners will be held during the NLGJA National Convention in Chicago from Sept. 8-11. Pride Source is the only LGBTQ+ regional press outlet to have won an NLGJA award this year. Other awardees include national outlets such as NPR, VICE News, NBC News, them., the Los Angeles Times and The New York Times.



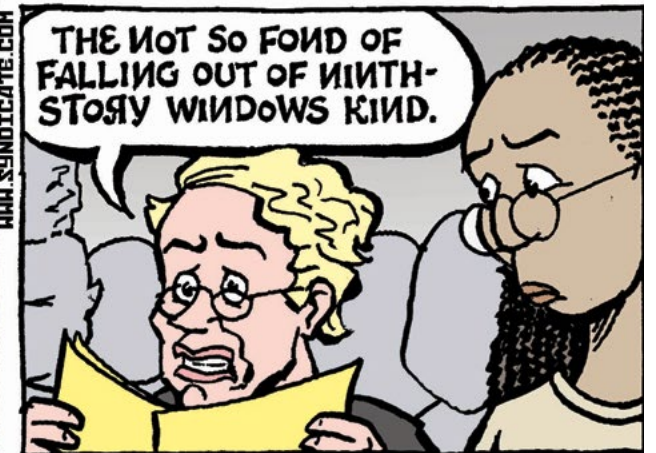
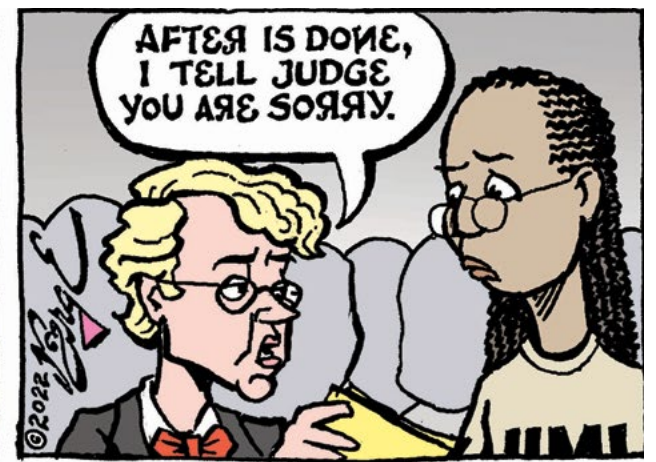
Ellen Shanna Knoppow

"My team of writers and editors work fiercely to tell a vast array of stories that have the power to change lives and policy for LGBTQ+ people every day," said Pride Source's Chris Azzopardi, who began leading the editorial team as Editorial Director in early 2021. "Ellen is a master at her craft and a passionate storyteller, and so I'm thankful to NLGJA for recognizing the care and consideration that went into writing this story. It's an important one, as it brings to light the national epidemic of anti-trans violence while also, in its grief, finds resiliency in Detroit ballroom culture."

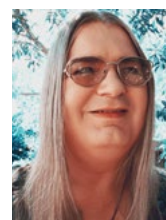
"Very proud of Ellen and of our entire Pride Source editorial team," Azzopardi added.

PrideSource.com is published by Pride Source Media Group, LLC. based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Established in 1995, PSMG produces the award-winning biweekly LGBTQ+ print publication, Between The Lines and the Michigan Pride Source Yellow Pages.

The NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists Excellence in Journalism Awards were established in 1993 to foster, recognize and reward excellence in journalism on issues related to the LGBTQ+ community.



Yes, Women Are Affected By the Loss of Roe. But So Are Trans People.



By Gwendolyn Ann Smith

I am sure you don't need me to tell you this: in a 5-4 ruling, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which established constitutional protections for abortion, as part of a 6-3 ruling to uphold an abortion ban in Mississippi. The decision is a devastating rollback of the rights of women and so many others.

In the wake of the decision, Justice Clarence Thomas has called for overturning several other cases, including *Obergefell v. Hodges* and *Lawrence v. Texas*. This would, of course, be the end for a lot of LGBTQ+ rights wins in the courts in this century.

It is notable that Thomas stopped short of considering the reversal of *Loving v. Texas*. Perhaps because with that one — unlike the others — he has a personal investment in keeping it intact, as Thomas is in an interracial marriage, and enjoys the legal protections gained via the

Loving decision.

Much like Thomas, the conservatives on the Supreme Court telegraphed their willingness to overturn *Roe* late last year, and a leaked copy of the decision just a few weeks back showed exactly where things were bound to go. We should be prepared for *Lawrence*, *Griswold* and *Obergefell* to fall as soon as the next session.

As dire as this is, however, I want to light an even more urgent fire: at their heart, the fight for abortion rights and the fight for trans rights as intertwined. Both are very much about body autonomy, and who has a say over what you can and cannot do with your own flesh. We cannot have a robust trans rights

movement without being a part of the abortion rights movement.

For that matter, transgender people who happen to have uteri have just as much to lose by this ruling. A large part of the transgender community is directly affected by the loss of *Roe*.

There has been a lot of anger directed not just against conservatives, but also democrats in the wake of this ruling, with many



See *Roe*, next page

“

Your tears and your rage are powerful. Use it to anneal yourself into the most effective version of you, a tougher self, ready to fight back.

→ Roe

Continued from previous page

— frankly, including myself — arguing that they are not doing enough. On the very day Roe was overturned, we saw members of Congress take to the steps of the Capitol and sign “God Bless America”. Meanwhile, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded by reading a poem.

Further, the Democrats have seized this moment to return to their regular messaging around voting. I, who have voted in every election since I came of age to do so, am nonplussed by this.

I did not, after all, vote for a poet nor a church choir. I voted for lawmakers, and I expect them to do everything they can to codify the rights lost to this illegitimate Supreme Court.

At the same time, I know that I’m not their audience for this message: It’s the roughly 80 million people who did not vote in 2020, who are probably not that fired up about 2022 or 2024. If they stay home, and the Congress flips to Republican control, we will see no further positive action to protect body autonomy or civil rights. For, likely, a generation.

Yet, “just vote” isn’t the answer, and it is cold comfort for those who do show up. We need a Congress and a president who are not just saying the right words — when they are not singing, of course — but are acting on the needs of the people. If all they can do is once again plead for votes, then what is their purpose in Washington D.C.?

If I may, it is as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: “We will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” We know where the GOP stands, but what

will our allies in the Democratic Party do at this juncture? This is a time for bold moves — not reciting poems.

In the end, however, it isn’t about the Supreme Court, or the Democrats, or even the president. In the end, it is up to us.

There are nine justices on the Supreme Court. There are 525 members of congress.

There are 329 million or so Americans, and we need to understand that the only person who is going to save us is ourselves. We can’t expect anyone else do the job for us.

We will need to donate to abortion rights causes, and volunteer. It will finally be time to address the subject with friends and family, especially those who will be difficult to converse with. It is time to take to the streets, to the airwaves, to any place we can. It is time to be ready to fight back — metaphorically and otherwise.

Yes, those of us who haven’t gone to the ballot box had best go and do so, presuming we can. Yet we also need to be calling on our representatives, from either side of the aisle, letting our voices be heard. Our opponents are counting on our complacency, and expecting us to feel demoralized and afraid.

In the last few days, many tears have been shed over this decision, mine included. At the same time, many of us are afire with rage at the stripping away of our rights.

When a blacksmith crafts an object, they will often take the red-hot metal and quench it in water and other substances to rapidly cool it down, strengthening the piece.

Your tears and your rage are powerful. Use it to anneal yourself into the most effective version of you, a tougher self, ready to fight back.

They’ve taken enough from us. Let’s not hand them anything else for free.

Gwen Smith will not cede an inch. You’ll find her at www.gwensmith.com.

CREEP OF THE WEEK

U.S. Supreme Court Rolls Out Red Carpet, White Hoods for Fascism



By D’Anne Witkowski

Well, this sucks.

Even when you know something terrible is coming, you’re never quite prepared for the moment it happens. And yet here we are: The United States Supreme Court has overturned Roe v. Wade. Pregnant people no longer have the right to an abortion. It’s up to individual states now.

Remember when marriage equality was like that? When you could be legally married in, say, California and then travel back to your home state of, say, Michigan, and no longer be legally married (like my wife and I)? That was awful. And that’s what people are going to have to grapple with during one of the most challenging times of their lives: pregnancy. For many, it will be a life or death situation. And they will die. Just like the good old days.

Oh, and that state by state marriage recognition thing? The conservative majority on the Supreme Court wants to go back to that, too. They said so in their decision to overturn Roe: that they want to go after the decisions that legalized birth control, decriminalized gay sex, and brought us marriage equality.

Justice Thomas wrote in his opinion that we should reconsider Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell (birth control, gay sex, and marriage equality) in order to “correct the error” established by those cases. Note: As many legal experts have pointed out, that same interpretation of the 14th Amendment’s due process clause was behind decisions about interracial marriage and desegregating public schools, though Thomas failed to mention those cases.

What’s particularly galling about all of this is that two of the Supreme Court justices, Thomas and Kavanaugh, were credibly accused of either sexual harassment and sexual assault during their confirmation hearings. The women doing the accusing — Anita Hill, who said Thomas sexually harassed her, and Christine Blasey Ford, who said Kavanaugh assaulted her at a party in high school — were excoriated by the media and both of these men were rewarded with lifetime appointments to the Supreme Court. And they’ve used that power to take away the right of a pregnant person to control their own bodies and futures.

And as if that all isn’t bad enough, Kavanaugh was nominated by Donald Trump, a man repeatedly accused of rape who still managed to become the most powerful man in the world.

And that man appointed two other conservative justices. And here we fucking are.

When I got the news about Roe v. Wade being overturned, I was sitting on the balcony of a rented apartment in Alicante, Spain, looking out over the Mediterranean Sea. That night my wife and I took our son to Festa de Sant Joan, a festival where beautiful things are literally set on fire, celebrating the tradition of burning “useless objects” as the summer solstice arrives. And as we watched this towering sculpture of, among other elements, a geisha playing a Japanese stringed instrument, dragons and an oni demon mask, burn, I could feel the heat even though we were a good distance away. And as the crowd cheered the destruction, I couldn’t help but think of how Christian extremists are burning down the United States, pushing us closer and closer toward fascism.

And the Republican Party loves it. The Jan. 6 hearings are yet another very clear example of the direction they’re pushing the country in. They don’t give a fuck about women or democracy or autonomy over one’s own body. They care about power. And fascism is an all-you-can-eat buffet of power free from the worry over pesky things like human and civil rights.

I joked to my wife that we should stay here in Spain instead of traveling back home at the end of our vacation. Both she and my son speak Spanish. I know enough Spanish to get by. But I would be sad to never see my dog again. Not to mention our family members and friends who live in the United States.

“God made the decision,” Trump told Fox News. “I think, in the end, this is something that will work out for everybody.”

And this is the man Republicans want to install as Ruler for Life. The man they are willing to scrap the country for. Because they wanted this. Overturning Roe has been the prize ever since it was decided. But it won’t be the end. Christian extremists are just getting started and feel more powerful than ever.

Both Republicans and Democrats feel like the Roe decision means good news for them in the midterms, depending on what pundit you’re listening to. But the fact is, the majority of Americans support abortion rights. Not to mention birth control, marriage equality and not arresting consenting adults for having sex.

It’s easy to be discouraged, but please vote.

Vote out every one of these Republican fascist creeps at every level of government. If Republicans are soundly defeated across the board, I think that is something that will work out for everybody.

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- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
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Photos: Toni Mua

Already Making History

Toni Mua Would Be First Transgender Woman of Color Elected to the State House

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

On April 22, Toni Mua tweeted, “Hi I’m Toni Mua & I believe I just broke history as the first trans person to run for state legislature in Michigan! I’m doing this to change the face of politics and to rebuild community trust. Please follow and donate.” She included a photo of herself with paperwork in hand.

As a 25-year-old transgender woman of color running to represent Michigan’s 10th State House District, Mua recognizes she’s already made history just by being an openly trans candidate for the state legislature. Nationally, if elected, Mua would only be the second trans woman of color elected to any state legislature, following Stephanie Byers of Kansas. And from what Mua told BTL, it sounds like this young woman is ready to shatter some glass ceilings.

The 10th State House District comprises Detroit’s lower east side and the Grosse Pointes.

It’s where Mua grew up. “I’m honestly running because I feel like there’s a need for a new generation of leaders to step up,” Mua said. “And since redistricting and being raised and born in this district and having close ties to it, I thought it was time for me to give back.”

As she embarks on her plan to enter public service, Mua said what motivates her is the desire to help people. She has a brother who is disabled, and she has experience helping with things like the Special Olympics and Autism Speaks. Today, “I actually have a crisis management firm,” Mua said. “So my degree is in business and crisis management. But before that, I was actually a make-up artist and a beauty professional for New York Fashion Week.”

At the Creating Change conference a few years ago, Mua met representatives from Planned Parenthood. As a volunteer for Planned Parenthood Advocates since 2019, Mua

said it was her work with the organization that helped propel her into the world of politics. She said what they do “felt so near and dear to my heart.” She’s not only tabled at events, she went to Washington, D.C. with Planned Parenthood to talk to members of Congress about Title IX.

In terms of her own district’s needs, Mua would like to see a solution to chronic flooding.

“I believe

the biggest issue for District 10 is the water infrastructure issue, noting that “a lot of family and friends who also live in the district have been impacted by the several times that it flooded. And I just feel like there has to be something more that we could do to ensure that this doesn’t happen. Our houses have flooded more than 10 times over the past decade or so.”

Mua would also shine a light on education issues in Lansing if elected. She’d fight for greater educational opportunities for students and more resources for teachers.

“I feel like education is [at] the forefront of everything that I believe in,” Mua said. “If it wasn’t for the education and the resources that I had growing up, I wouldn’t be where I am today, so I definitely want to expand educational opportunities statewide.”

Mua faces a tough challenge, as she is running a campaign against an incumbent Democrat. But she is not deterred. As a matter of fact, originally, Mua planned to run for Congress, then decided she could achieve more at the state level. Part of the reason she went in a different direction was to get her feet wet in politics.

According to Victory Fund data, out of the 38 openly trans women in public office across the country, eight are in state legislatures. A member of the Chicksaw Nation, Stephanie Byers is the first transgender Native American elected to office. Mua’s mother, a nurse, immigrated from the Philippines and her father is Black. A win by Mua would represent a significant milestone.

“Making history would be something important. Not only to me, but I feel like we need better representation in our state legislature,” Mua said. “How do you go about speaking for someone you can’t empathize with on a different level, when you don’t even want to speak or just deal with them in general? I feel like this is really important for representation from the different communities at the table coming together.”

Mua wants to center other marginalized voices, too.

“I just have a passion for helping people and using my voice to help put others’ voices at the forefront,” Mua said. “Because whenever I walk into a [room], people are gonna stare. And if they’re gonna stare, I might have to just give them a reason to.”

Learn more about Mua’s campaign at @tonimua on Instagram. Early voting has begun. Election Day is Aug. 2.



Monkeypox Lands In Michigan: Here's What You Need to Know



BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The inevitable has happened. A man was recently diagnosed with the monkeypox virus at Dr. Paul Benson's Be Well Medical Center in Berkley. It is believed to be the first known case in the state.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is confirming the test results. But the man, who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, tested presumptive positive for Orthopoxvirus, from which monkeypox stems. According to Dr. Benson, the man is from Oakland County and had recently traveled domestically. Out of privacy concerns, that is all the information he would release.

Benson called being the first medical center in the state to report the monkeypox virus in a patient a "dubious honor." He went on to say that monkeypox reaching Michigan is "really not surprising since it is a contagious condition and people are back to traveling internationally."

As of July 1, the CDC

reports 460 confirmed cases of monkeypox. So far, it has traveled to 32 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Globally, 5,783 cases have been confirmed in 52 different countries.

Monkeypox is not a "gay disease," Benson said monkeypox likely escaped Africa, where it originated, from a gay man who subsequently spread it to other gay men through intimate or close contact.

"There has been a concern that monkeypox is a MSM [men who have sex with men] disease and [that] perhaps it will become the next HIV epidemic," said Benson. "Since identification of monkeypox in 1970, that has not been the case."

Even though it's been widely reported that the monkeypox virus has been appearing in large numbers of MSM, Benson said such reporting may be misleading. "The number of monkeypox cases reported thus far are way too few to make this correlation to gay men," he said. "The CDC cautions physicians to be on the lookout

for monkeypox without regard to gender or sexual orientation."

Monkeypox is spread by direct contact or from respiratory droplets through prolonged contact. "It's harder to contract than Covid and easier to get than HIV," Benson said. "HIV requires a 'fluid' exchange and monkeypox does not." Symptoms of monkeypox can sometimes imitate the flu, and the virus usually produces a rash or sores. A person remains contagious until the rash has disappeared and the sores have scabbed over and fallen off.

Think you might have monkeypox? Here's what to do.

If you suspect that you may have monkeypox, you should isolate at home, said Benson. If you have an active rash or open sores, you should stay in a separate room or area in your house if you live with others. And you should not

See **Monkeypox**, page 34

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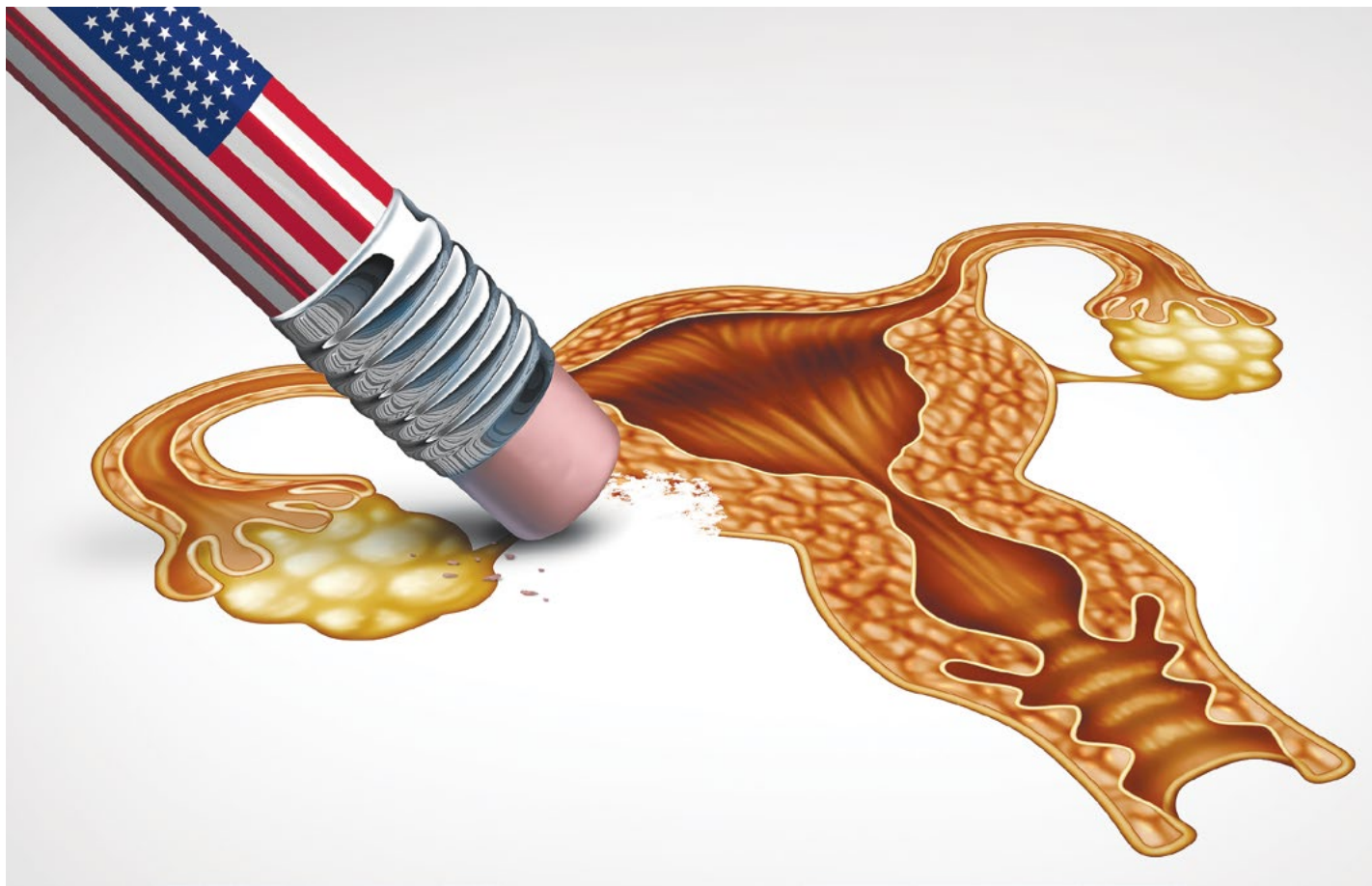
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If Abortion Is Banned In Michigan, Is IVF Next?

Experts Have More Questions Than Answers About the Future of Assisted Reproductive Technologies

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

As of press time on July 5, abortion is legal in Michigan. But after the Supreme Court so cruelly overturned *Roe v. Wade*, that right hangs in the balance.

Attorneys and lawmakers face mounting pressure to determine the extent of the fallout from the Court's 6-3 decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Among other potential issues, they question what an abortion ban means for the future of in vitro fertilization (IVF). BTL spoke with attorney Amanda Shelton, whose legal practice focuses on LGBTQ+ families.

"Right now, we're in a fortunate yet precarious situation," said Shelton, who is also a married lesbian and parent. "Because of the reversal of *Roe*, we have an automatic trigger back to our 1931 abortion law, which essentially prevents abortion without exception, but for the life of the mother. But it's very unclear what that really means."

What "hovers" over us right now, says Shelton, is an injunction issued by Judge Elizabeth Gleicher in the Court of Claims,

which essentially leaves Michigan at the status quo while awaiting a final decision from the Michigan Supreme Court that will determine whether the 1931 law is constitutional. Shelton sounds hopeful.

"We do have a more liberal majority than we have had in the last 40 years," Shelton said, "so it feels fairly confident that we will get a good decision. But there's absolutely no guarantee of that. At the same time, we are working on the constitutional ballot initiative, and those signatures are due on July 11th."

The Reproductive Freedom for All ballot initiative would add abortion rights to Michigan's Constitution. Enough signatures have been collected, according to organizers; however, they will continue their efforts in order to ensure a strong defense against aggressive signature challenges.

As Michiganders navigate these uncharted waters, one of the many unknowns is the legal status of in vitro fertilization (IVF), a procedure which sometimes requires a selective reduction of embryos for viability or to protect the life of the pregnant person. It is, after all, a type of abortion. Destroying unneeded embryos could suddenly be problematic, too. And if that's the

case, existing frozen embryos might need to be stored indefinitely.

In IVF, sperm and eggs are combined in a lab to create embryos, one or more of which is placed in a person's uterus. Patients often choose to store additional frozen embryos for future IVF cycles. Some experts believe that discarding extra or unneeded embryos is not affected by the abortion ban, but in some states, they question whether destroying embryos would be considered homicide under "personhood" laws. Michigan does not have such a law, though bills have been introduced in the past.

"I think it puts both women and doctors in a really precarious situation," Shelton said, adding that doctors are forced to question whether they're prepared to risk prosecution for performing a procedure. "The whole conversation between patients and doctors is incredibly hard. Weird, uncomfortable conversations. And it just shouldn't be that way."

Shelton stressed the tremendous impact a ban on IVF would have on LGBTQ+ people, in particular, as the procedure is a very common method of forming families for many in the community. Twelve years ago, that's the method

Heidi Smith — who is a strong ally to the community — used when she wanted to have children but suffered from infertility.

"I have polycystic ovarian syndrome," Smith explained, "which can cause the eggs not to release, basically, or grow enough. So, you have to go through treatment and lots of monitoring to monitor your follicles for egg growth and whatnot." Smith said the process involved multiple medications including injectables, "tons" of doctor's appointments and cost a significant amount of money.

After three rounds of treatment, Smith had a positive pregnancy test, and her doctor thought she might be carrying multiples. Indeed she was — five babies in all. At that point, the doctors looked concerned, Smith said.

"They said, 'This is not good. This is, like, extremely risky,'" Smith said. "'We do not recommend that you go through with this pregnancy.' They just said this right away. They said, 'Let's go talk about it.' So we went back to the doctor's office and she immediately started going over all kinds of statistics about my health or, you know, the chance of death in this process."

They discussed the statistics of all five babies surviving and the chances of severe disabilities. Smith was sent to a doctor who specializes in high-risk pregnancies, then another. They discussed options. She was referred to a doctor who had developed a new procedure intended to increase the likelihood of the babies' survival, as well as Smith's life.

"Emotionally, could we handle carrying them all and losing them or [face] the risk to my own life?" Smith asked. "[We did] all kinds of stuff to see what would be the best decision for us, and we decided to go with the reduction to twins."

Smith underwent the procedure. She carried the twins until 17 weeks, when one of their water broke. In the end, she lost both of the remaining twins. For those who look down on her decision to reduce, Smith has a message.

"When you see people say that people don't value life, I totally value life," said Smith, whose daughter was born at 26 weeks. "I've seen it before my eyes. I've seen the different stages and the fragility. And I've watched my daughter fight for her life outside my body. But I just don't think it's fair, the situation that we're in, because nobody would choose to go through painful things. Does that make sense?"

The day the abortion ruling was no longer a promise but a done deal, Rep. Samantha Steckloff and her staff began work on legislation that would ensure IVF treatment stays legal.

"We're in this interesting limbo," said Steckloff, echoing Shelton. "If not for this injunction, we would have no idea. This law, this 1931 law, was written in the 1800s, well before any medical advances. And then you add in *Roe*, which was 1973. And then the first IVF was in the '80s. So nothing's been looked at since this technology became prevalent. And the only reason I have a feeling this is an issue and why I'm aware of it is because I've been working on IVF for some time."

See IVF, page 18

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→ IVF

Continued from page 16

Steckloff was diagnosed with cancer in 2015. Facing the loss of her fertility as a result of chemotherapy, she and her boyfriend went through treatment and had the embryos frozen. What complicates matters now is Steckloff is no longer with her partner from that time.

“That was the first time I started understanding that the legal ramifications in general of an embryo are very weird,” Steckloff said. “You would have to get permission. I would’ve had to get permission from my ex-boyfriend to use [the embryos]. And if he said no, and all my chances were in embryos, then I would’ve completely lost any chance for having a child. So moving forward, I have been trying to figure out personally what my journey is.”

IVF is increasingly common, emphasized Steckloff, who said she has many millennial-age friends who have sought treatment. In fact, 55,000 births occur annually via assisted reproductive technologies (ART), of which IVF is the most common. According to CDC data, in 2019, ART was responsible for 2.1 percent of all births in the United States. One third of Americans say either they or someone they know has undergone infertility treatment.

Steckloff also mentioned surrogacy, not only common for cancer survivors but also for LGBTQ+ people trying to conceive. However,

Michigan is one of two states where the practice is illegal. Steckloff has been pushing a surrogacy bill for two years.

“I remember being in a conversation in a representative’s office, a Republican representative, and their chief of staff was there talking about how they went through IVF,” Steckloff said. “And we started talking about why Right to Life and the Catholic Conference is so against surrogacy. And it predominantly has to do with the embryos. So that’s why I know this embryo situation is already an issue. So that’s how I came about looking into codifying a law.”

Shelton advises clients — or anyone — considering IVF to have very clear conversations with their doctors about what their intentions and expectations are in forming their family. Patients must be assured doctors will adhere to their wishes. It’s critical to discuss contingency plans in the event that things go awry.

Personally, Shelton said she was experiencing anger, fear and grief.

“Although we saw the train coming, it’s still shocking that it hit us,” said Shelton, referring to the Dobbs decision. “I am mourning for my clients who are now racing to me. I have gotten 10 calls in the last two business days about trying to rush through second-parent adoptions because people are terrified that if same-sex marriage is overturned, they’re gonna lose rights to their kids. People are panicking. It’s heartbreaking.”

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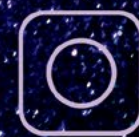
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Jeremy Moss's Perfect Clapback

Democratic State Senator Critiques Republican Leadership Who Buried His Proposed Pride Month Resolution

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

State Sen. Jeremy Moss is getting the last laugh after Senate Leader Mike Shirkey, a Republican, tried to add offensive language to his proposed LGBTQ+ Pride Month Resolution. The Senate had passed the same basic resolution only last year — on Moss's third attempt to get it passed — but this election year, they sabotaged it.

Shirkey tried to amend Moss's resolution by adding the phrase, "Though not every citizen in Michigan agrees with the lifestyle of the LGBT community, it is agreed that every life is special, precious, unique and loved by the creator, and each person is created in God's image."

Moss was rightly offended and not having it. Unable to reach agreement, Shirkey sent the proposed resolution back to committee, in essence assuring it would not be presented for a vote during Pride Month. But Moss wasn't done yet. When a similar resolution celebrating Craft Beer Month came up, Moss added an amendment to the bill exposing the ridiculousness of Shirkey's actions.

"Although not every citizen in Michigan agrees with the lifestyle of consuming alcohol, it is agreed that every beverage is special, precious, unique and loved by its creator, and each



Jeremy Moss.

beer is created in its maker's image," read Moss's amendment.

The resolution was then adopted with Moss's language included. Still, while it was a minor victory, the entire debacle showed just how far Michigan's LGBTQ+ community has to go to achieve full equality and a modicum of respect from Republican elected officials.

"The Republican leadership regresses and again throws Pride Month back into the trash heap," Moss said. "I guess the cruelty is the point. There are LGBTQ people like me in all sectors of

the Michigan economy who only wish to contribute, be good neighbors and not have the government interfere with their freedom to live their lives."

Recently, Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project, told BTL that Shirkey's disingenuous plan was par for the course for the Republican majority in the state legislature.

"The bottom line is the legislative majority in Michigan in both the House and Senate have not been willing to move forward or to support anything that is pro-LGBTQ," said Kaplan. "So this is kind of consistent. ... It's about recognizing Pride Month, it's not talking about lifestyles or people's religious beliefs. It's just recognizing that all people should be afforded dignity."

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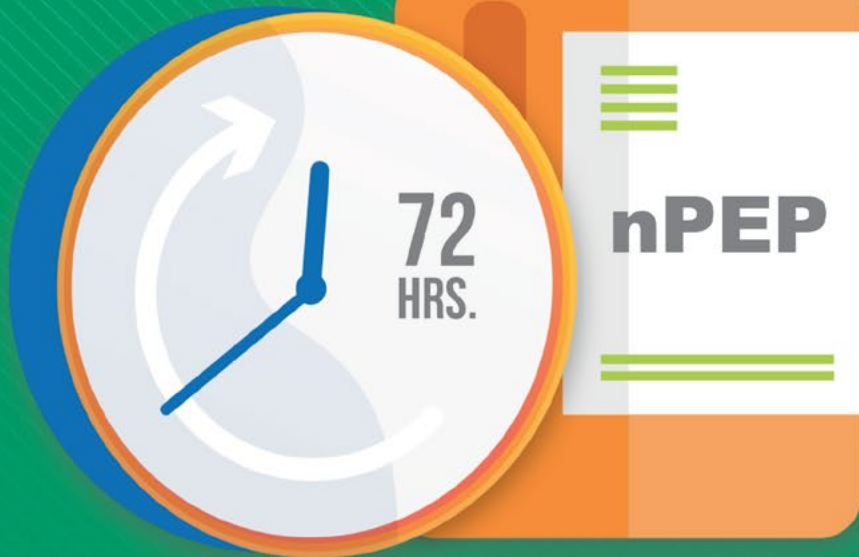
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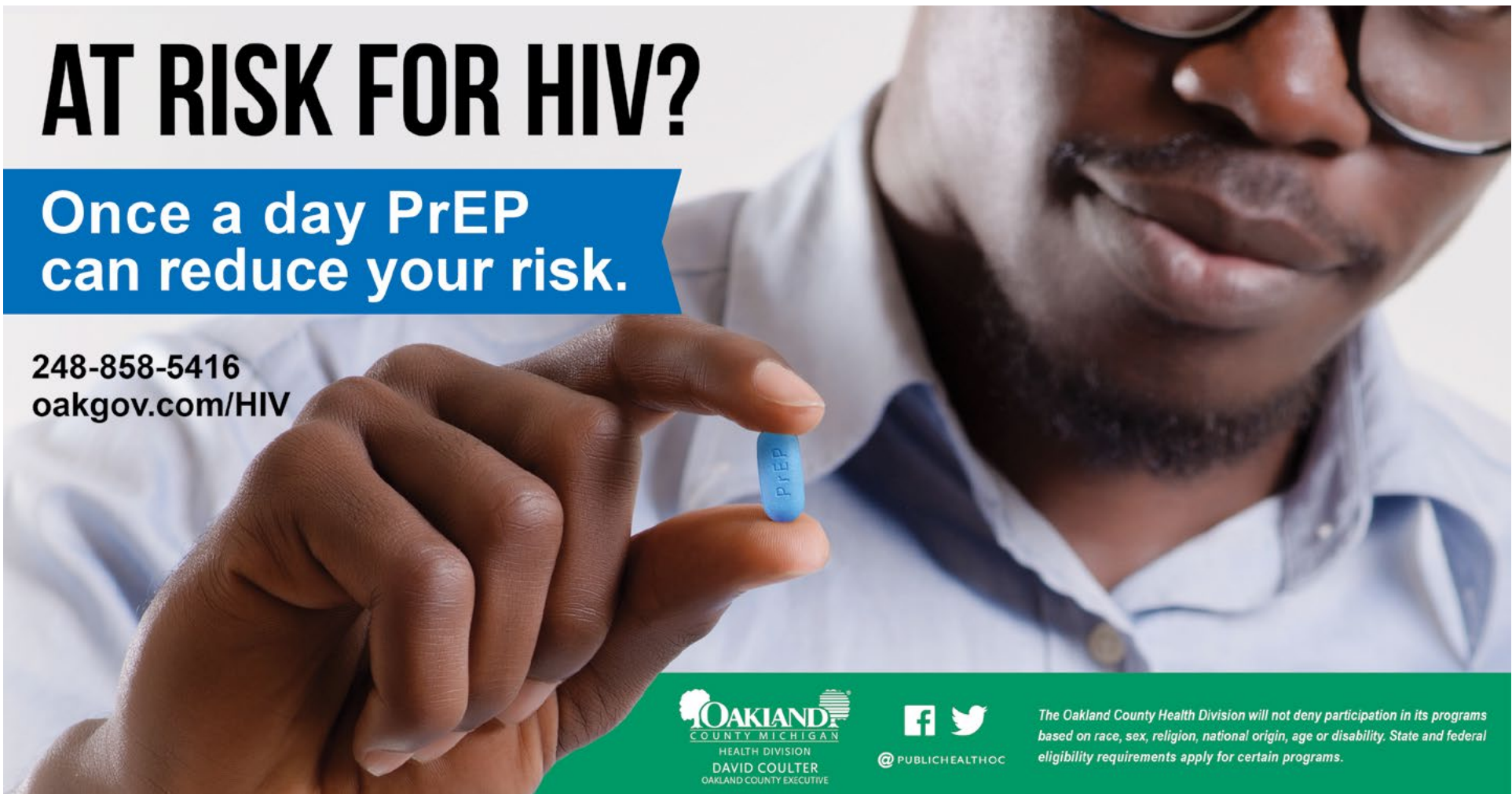
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Michigan drag performers Jadein Black (left) and Hershae Chocolateae. Courtesy photo

The Michigan War on Drag

Republicans Attacking Michigan Drag Queens Accused of Creating ‘Fake Culture War Issue’

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Decaying roads and crumbling bridges, record inflation and gas prices along with the mass exodus of college graduates are apparently not big enough stories for Michigan Republican candidates to work into their platforms these days. No, there are other important issues these candidates are running on — and some pretty bizarre promises they’re making.

Case in point, gubernatorial candidate Tudor Dixon, who has pledged that, if elected, she will “sign

a bill that creates severe criminal penalties for adults who involve children in drag shows,” she recently tweeted. “This type of behavior is criminal child sexually abusive activity. We will make Michigan the toughest state in the country on child sex abusers.”

Dixon went on to tweet Dana Nessel directly after the Michigan attorney general joked while speaking at a civil rights conference that drag is fun and there should be a drag queen in every school. Nessel made the remark in jest (though we wouldn’t be surprised to know she does love

a good drag show), but Dixon was apparently too stiff to appreciate the humor.

“I’m calling out your party’s current efforts to normalize the sexualization of children, and you have nothing meaningful to say,” Dixon tweeted Nessel. “So, as the top law enforcement officer in Michigan, will you join me to criminalize involving children in sexualized drag shows?”

Nessel quickly clapped back.

“Your benefactor, [former U.S. Secretary of Education] Betsy DeVos, has been a greater threat to

school children in Michigan than drag queens have ever been,” Nessel responded, acknowledging that the charter school advocate had recently endorsed Dixon.

And Dixon’s not alone. Matthew DePerno, Republican candidate for attorney general, appears to be following a similar attack strategy. “Dana Nessel continues to show just how completely out of touch she is with Michiganders,” he wrote in a press release posted on Twitter after she made the drag queen comment. “Dana Nessel is extreme.”

These Michigan Republican efforts

are not exactly a novel approach. Texas State Rep. Bryan Slaton recently announced he plans to bring forth a bill that would ban drag shows in the presence of minors saying, “drag shows subject underage kids to inappropriate sexual content by adults.” And in Florida, Gov. Ron “Don’t Say Gay” DeSantis, suggested recently that children could be removed from their parents’ custody for taking their kids to drag shows, stating, “We have child protective statutes on the books. We have laws against child endangerment.”

See *Drag*, page 26



Advice to Be Well

From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson



I'm a transgender female on Estradiol. My new cis-gender male partner is living with HIV. He is taking medication and has an undetectable viral load. I would like to protect myself the best I can from contracting HIV. I'm concerned about taking PrEP at the same time as taking gender affirming hormones. He says he can not transmit the virus because he has an undetectable viral load. What should I do? – PJ

Dear PJ,

This is a great question. If your partner has an undetectable viral load, there is zero chance he can sexually transmit HIV. This is what we call U=U. This stands for Undetectable = Untransmittable. If testing concludes that the viral load is less than 200 copies, HIV cannot be transmitted.

In short, I would recommend PrEP for any individual on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) who is at risk for HIV. Taking PrEP does not affect the amount of estradiol or testosterone in the bloodstream. In other words, PrEP does not affect any part of masculinizing or feminizing HRT.

However, there is more nuance here. Specifically for trans-feminine individuals, there have been a few small studies showing that estradiol lowers the amount of Tenofovir (one of the medications in

oral PrEP) in the blood and tissue. Importantly, this small decrease in Tenofovir has not been shown to reduce the effectiveness of PrEP.

While there is no official data available on the effectiveness of injectable PrEP and HRT, there would be no suspected interaction between injectable PrEP and estradiol.

I want to encourage you to continue to have these conversations with your provider. There are constantly new studies and data coming out and we want to empower you to ask questions and be the driver of your health.

The Be Well Medical Center is participating in a long-acting injectable PrEP clinical trial which requires an injection once every six months instead of taking pills. To enter the trial you must be at high risk for contracting HIV. Additionally, the sponsor is giving priority to transgender and African American individuals. For further information on entry into this trial contact the Be Well Medical Center Clinical Trial Department at (248) 544-9300, option 7.

I have been hearing that the monkeypox virus is a LGBTQ+ disease. I am very concerned that any new sexual contact could transmit monkeypox to me. It's reminding me of AIDS and the early

1980s. I have many sexual contacts through social media. Are my concerns legitimate that this is a new LGBTQ+ disease? – GG

Dear GG,

There is no science behind the idea that monkeypox is a LGBTQ+ disease, and there is no correlation to HIV. Sensational journalistic reporting at this time will only create a stigma that is unfounded, untrue, and not based on any science. The CDC is asking physicians in the United States to be aware of monkeypox in their differential diagnoses when evaluating symptomatic patients without regard to gender or sexual orientation.

Monkeypox has been present in many African countries for decades and has never been considered a gay disease. In spite of the name "monkeypox," it does not come from monkeys, but from rodents. There has been no definite correlation of monkeypox to men having sex with men to date.

Recently, there have been a couple of hundred cases of monkeypox reported from a dozen or so countries outside Africa, and many of these reported cases are among gay and bisexual men. Statistically, with such a small number of cases outside Africa, a generalization that there is a

predilection towards men having sex with men is very premature and not based on statistics and science — it's especially early to make a correlation when the number of reported cases is so small.

The monkeypox virus is not found and cannot be spread in genital fluids like HIV. Like COVID-19, it can be spread by very close-range respiratory droplets, but unlike COVID-19 virus, it cannot be spread through the air over longer distances. The virus is transmitted by direct contact with an infected individual. Monkeypox usually has symptoms similar to the flu with a rash that could be on the genitalia or other areas on the body.

We hope this information helps. Be Safe... and to your good health we remain.

Since 1980 Dr. Paul Benson's Be Well Medical Center has been an inclusive medical center celebrating diversity. Do you have a health related question for Dr. Paul Benson and Dr. Mark Bornstein? Submit your questions to bewelladvice@pridesource.com. This article is a sponsored editorial produced in collaboration with Be Well Medical Center. Between The Lines's journalism is made possible with the support and partnership of advertisers like Be Well. Learn more about Be Well from their ad below.



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→ Drag

Continued from page 24

Michigan queens clap back

Here in the Great Lakes State, drag queens are speaking out and calling on politicians to focus on real issues instead of inventing imaginary problems aimed at dividing people.

Jadein Black is proud to be a drag queen. She is the founder of Boylesque, a group of drag and other performers who raise money for various charities. Black also serves as show director for Ann Arbor Pride.

On Saturday, June 25, Black was outside the Ann Arbor Public Library in a tent attempting to read to children as part of the library's Drag Queen Story Time program. Before she could, she was approached by a group who identified themselves as members of the Pride Boyz. The group started shouting out Bible verses over a megaphone in an attempt to drown Black out.

"In my 15 years of drag and supporting my community, I have never received this harsh of a reaction to my work," Black, a former teacher, said. "I absolutely love bringing drag to our younger generations. It is so important for them to see that they can be whomever they want to be."

Black, who had to call on local police to shoo away the naysayers, went on to say that it's important for kids, whether they grow up to be queer or straight, "to see that we are all human beings who deserve to receive love and acceptance."

Metro Detroit-based drag queen Raven Cassadine has, like Black, taken part in several Drag Queen Storytimes and other family-friendly Pride events where drag queens were present. She said it's "actually quite offensive" to have her artistry, which she has perfected over the past 18 years, maligned and referred to as "child sexually abusive activity," as Dixon did.

"They're miserable," she said of such politicians. "They need to find someone to

point a finger at, and they try to make things an issue that are not, to make themselves relevant. They are very close-minded."

Republicans, she said, don't appear to rely much on facts.

"Their facts are not facts," said Cassadine. "They're [repeating] conspiracy theories that they made up. Growing up, I saw nothing but straight people, and I'm not straight. Seeing drag doesn't make anybody gay."

Black agreed.

"Drag artists are not the issue in any scenario," she said. "Just like Stonewall, we are the ones using our voices to help protect our community. Yes, not all drag shows are meant for children. But neither are all movies, books, TV shows, or other types of venues. The world is far too big to be worrying about what a single person in size 14 heels is doing, in my opinion."

"We need to continue spreading love and positivity so that generations to come aren't scared to grow up in this world we've created."

Parental rights concerns

Another stakeholder in this scenario is parents, who hold a legal right to decide what is age-appropriate for their own children. The policy that Dixon has proposed would severely infringe on parents' rights, said Jay Kaplan, the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project Staff Attorney.

"The whole theory that somehow being around a drag performer is criminally sexually abusive to children, I think, if this ever were to become policy, it definitely could be challenged on constitutionality interfering with parents' rights to parent their own children and make their own decisions."

Kaplan said he thinks that not only are Dixon's statements disingenuous, they're "reflective of the moral and policy bankruptcy of her campaign. When there are so many serious issues facing Michiganders, she chooses to come up with a fake culture war issue."

"Drag performers are in no way a harm to children or anybody else."

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Aaron Foley on Scruff, 'Housewives' and More

Favorite "Housewives" franchise: Potomac. "I watched the first season with my mom. She's really into Karen Huger. My theory is that Potomac was originally going to be filmed in Detroit: old money and philanthropy."

Best thrift find: "Ooh, I'll get five books every time I go to Dollar Tree, and I got a stack of books that I've only spent \$30 on."

Cats or dogs: Foley says both, but his adopted orange tabby Chuck would strongly disagree. While living in Detroit, he adopted the 10-year-old cat from the Royal Oak Animal Shelter.

Skill acquired during the pandemic: Free-style cooking, especially one-pot meals with a goal of zero waste. "My grandmother always used to cook with tomato paste. I realized this is just 89 cents a can and I can make a whole meal out of it."

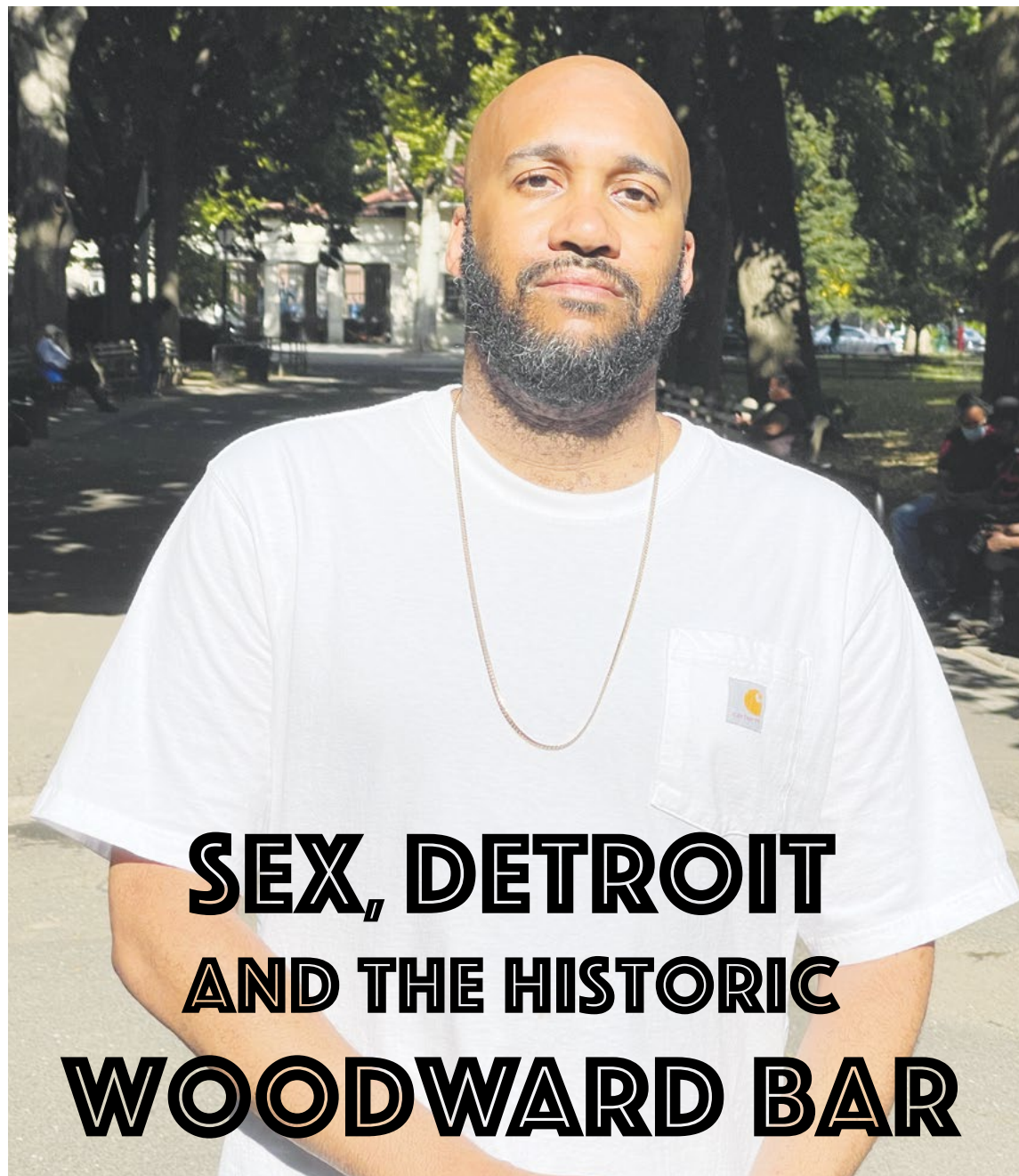
Motor City nostalgia fix: Faygo and Vernors, ordered online.

Biggest Detroit snack craving: Better Made potato chips.

Best app for networking and dating:

Foley leans into Scruff (and recently booted Tinder because it's "annoying"). "It seems to be the one of choice," he says about Scruff. "And it works in New York as well as it works in Detroit, honestly."

Walk on the wild side: "In New York, there's a more risqué one called Sniffies, but I refuse to touch that one."



Aaron Foley. Photo: Paul Jones III

How This Journalist's Debut Novel Incorporates All Three

BY JILL A. GREENBERG

When Aaron Foley heard about the recent fire that burned down the historic Woodward Bar & Grill, notably the oldest LGBTQ+ bar in Detroit, he couldn't stop clicking refresh. The native Detroiter, journalist and author somberly watched updates from hundreds of miles away in New York City.

"I was looking at these really horrific pictures. Drone shots of this fire at the Woodward. I was in disbelief," he says from his place in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighborhood in Brooklyn. "The gay scene literally changed overnight."

The Woodward Bar & Grill plays a prominent role in Foley's debut novel "Boys Come First," which follows the friendship of three Black gay men in Detroit. One of those guys is Dominick, who has one goal: he wants to be married before he turns 35. After losing his advertising job and his boyfriend, all within 30 minutes, he moves from New York City back to Detroit as the clock continues to tick. He reconnects with his best friend Troy and meets Remy, a real estate agent who specializes in the Villages of Detroit. The storyline luxuriates in the Motor City, as it explores the bonds of friendship, gentrification

and the idea of Old Detroit vs. New Detroit.

In addition to establishing the Woodward as a home base for the men in "Boys Come First," the book also bar hops, with memorable shout-outs to Menjo's, Adam's Apple, Gigi's and the Hayloft Saloon.

The author was in his early 20s when he started going to the Woodward, which he recalls playing "gay music, house music, hip-hop, rap, R&B"

"There was nothing quite like it," he says. "It felt like a straight club that attracts a mostly gay audience."

"In San Francisco, the gay bars are pulsating, electronic, EDM-type

vibe, and people get down to it. But there's nowhere quite like the Woodward because there, people are also doing the Detroit hustle. You just don't see that elsewhere."

Foley's early exposure to gay clubs happened after he came out while a student at Michigan State University. At the time, there were two gay bars in Lansing's Old Town: Spiral and Esquire. Both, he says, "offered standard-issue gay club dance music, neon lights. Mid-Michigan appeal"

Eventually he set his eyes on the city.

"In Detroit, there's a porous color line between Ferndale/Royal Oak gay bars and the ones in Detroit," Foley says. "I wager to say a lot of queer Black folk stay within the city limits."

Foley found himself drawn to events geared toward Black queer people, like Hotter Than July, founded in 1996 to celebrate Detroit's LGBTQ+ community. "I feel like I'm at home with my people," he says about attending HTJ in the past, where he has seen "people voguing, things that are firmly rooted in Black queer culture. And of course, the music's good. We need something like that in Detroit." (This year's event will be held Friday through Sunday, July 15-17.)

Community gatherings provide an opportunity for connection and cultural storytelling, the things that propel Foley's writing, no matter the form. He spent 10 years telling community stories as a reporter for the Lansing State Journal, then continued this path as editor of BLAC Detroit magazine. In 2020, he was appointed founding director of the Black Media Initiative at the Center for Community Media at the Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY.

From 2017-2019 he worked as the City of Detroit's storyteller, a new aptly named position created by Mayor Mike Duggan to give voice to the people who live there.

The TEDx-Detroit Talk vet (he presented at the Fox Theatre, and again virtually

"I was like, my parents are gonna read this at some point. But I can't censor myself for my parents. This is real life. It's what people do. It's what my friends do."

during the pandemic) gave one presentation on "How to Live in Detroit Without Being a Jackass," which is also the title of one of his books. In it, he offers essential advice, notably how to avoid acting like an ignorant racist when you talk to a Black person.

Foley currently works as senior editor at PBS NewsHour in New York City. He considers that his day gig, saving evenings and weekends for his creative work. It's in this time that he wrote "Boys Come First."

While the novel allowed him to let loose creatively, writing the authentically hot sex scenes gave him pause.

"I was like, my parents are gonna read this at some point," he says, laughing. "But I can't censor myself for my parents. This is real life. It's what people do. It's what my friends do."

And when his friends do talk about sex, Foley takes good mental notes. Getting graphic helps other queer men feel like they are part of the conversation, he says. The dirty details pay off in "Boys Come First" during discussions about modern-day lube options (still using Anal-Ese? Girl, please.), bottoming for beginners and snorting cocaine off an erect penis.

And yes, Foley's mom has read the novel. She loved it so much she couldn't put it down. But no, she didn't mention the sex scenes, though she did tell him she wasn't a fan of the drug use. (He told her not to worry!) His father hasn't read it yet, "but I always tell him 'no rush.'"

Foley's parents raised him in a "very traditional household" in the Russell Woods neighborhood on the west side of Detroit, during what he calls the Old Detroit era. Kids on his street listened to slow jams on WJLB radio, years before it was owned by iHeartMedia

Inc. Everyone in his class had school teachers who looked like them — teachers who were Black. Same with city politicians and leadership.

"So I think when we talk about having role models, having people to look up to, and always being aware

of your identity but never having to feel uncomfortable in it, that's what I mean when I'm talking about Old Detroit," he says.

But today, he says the vast majority of New Detroit folks don't have that connection; elements of Old Detroit from his childhood and young adulthood have simply vanished.

"When we walked down the street, every house was occupied. We knew each other on the block, but obviously the forces of economy disrupted so much of that," Foley says. "There are definitely people of a certain age group who remember what Detroit was and are still grappling with what it's like to be in Detroit now."

As gentrification took hold and rapidly changed the face of downtown, Foley and his friends witnessed the transition from Old Detroit to New Detroit. This shift brought with it more questions, ones that ultimately found their way into his book.

"Boys Come First" was written in Detroit shorthand — by a Detroiter, for Detroiters. So he casually drops "The Giant Slide," "the big tire" and Charles Pugh. For out-of-staters: The slide is on Belle Isle; the 80-foot-tall landmark UniRoyal Tire is along I-94, south of Detroit; and, well, you can look up Charles Pugh on Google. He gets the prize for this line, perhaps his most memorable use of Michigan nostalgia: "I can ride dick like the penny horse at Meijer."

"We started looking at Detroit for what it's becoming as opposed to what it was. How that impacts what some people are experiencing," he says. "Do my actions contribute to the eradication of Old Detroit? Do they contribute to a certain kind of gentrification? Where do I stand? Do I preserve the old or go toward the new?"



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Jason Hoskins. Courtesy photo

Southfield City Councilmember Could Become Michigan's First Black, Openly LGBTQ+ State Legislator

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

According to State Sen. Jeremy Moss, Jason Hoskins is the most prepared person to run for the State House District 18 seat — probably more prepared than Moss was when first elected back in 2014.

Hoskins, candidate for Michigan's 18th house district, said it was his internship in then-Gov. Jennifer Granholm's public policy division that sparked his passion for politics and helped shape the man he is today. Now in his second term as Southfield city councilmember, and with almost a decade working for two state legislators in Lansing behind him, Hoskins believes he has the experience to be ready on day one to tackle the issues important to his community and to the state.

"I interned in [Granholm's] policy division and had a fantastic experience shaping public policy for the state," Hoskins said. "That experience led me down this path of public service, and I wouldn't be here today or [have]


met so many of the wonderful people I've met in politics without that experience?"

The 18th State House District includes Southfield, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Farmington and Farmington Hills. Two-term state representative Kyra Harris Bolden, who would be eligible to run for that position in the newly drawn district, has opted, instead, to run for Michigan Supreme Court this term. "We're very happy about that," Hoskins said. With Bolden off the ballot for the house seat, Hoskins stepped in to compete in the Aug. 2 Democratic primary election.

In 2019, when Hoskins was first elected to the Southfield City Council, he had no idea that within a few months a global pandemic would upend business as usual. Yet Hoskins remained focused on helping Southfield move forward.

"Even through [Covid], we've been able to do a lot of great things," Hoskins said. "One, we didn't have to lay off any employees at the city,

See **Jason Hoskins**, page 32




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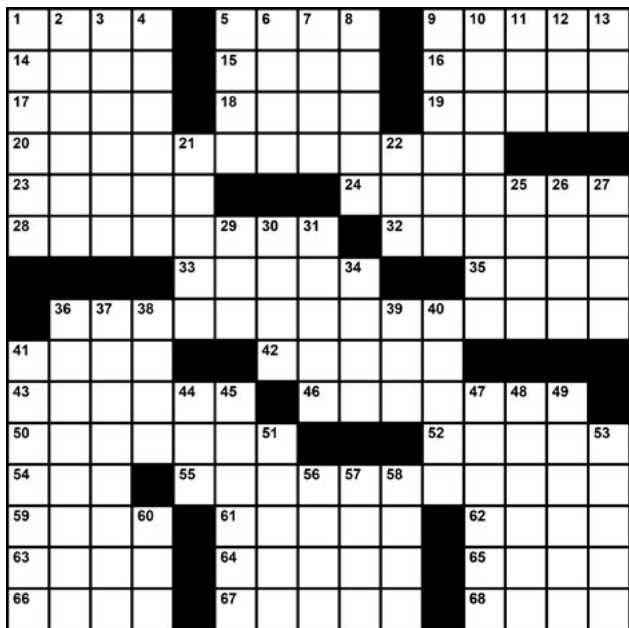
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was a ___"
 41 Sign over
 42 He comes once a year
 43 Ashcan targets
 46 Cars from the land of the samurai
 50 Product introduction
 52 Poles for your first mate?
 54 Alicia of "Falcon Crest"
 55 Source of this puzzle's quote who just came out
 59 Clubs for Cubs
 61 Shore of Palm Springs
 62 Movie theater
 63 Used a forked tongue
 64 "Family Ties" mother
 65 Friendly opening
 66 Slips up
 67 Log Cabin list, e.g.
 68 Type of personal lubricant

13 Hrs. in P-town
 21 Try a Rick Rodgers cookbook, e.g.
 22 Three R's org.
 25 TV newsman Brit
 26 Miss in a Cole Porter song
 27 Whitman and Dickinson
 29 It may come before long
 30 Catch them in South Beach
 31 Patron of Ire.
 34 Cube designer Rubik
 36 Like Cary Grant
 37 One who worships someone other than the Divine Miss M?
 38 Elite Navy diver
 39 Sexual tail
 40 Watts in King Kong's hand
 41 Not terminal
 44 Hard top
 45 Napped leather materials
 47 Powder for bottoms
 48 Town in da Vinci's land
 49 Balls
 51 Govt. promissory note
 53 Hagar's dog
 56 "Lord of the Rings" singer
 57 Avoid premature ejaculation
 58 Golden showers cry?
 60 Radical org. of the '60s

Down

1 Card game with tricks
 2 "Java" trumpeter
 3 Casablanca dirt
 4 When nymphomaniacs need sex
 5 Singer Anita
 6 Drivers get off on it
 7 Title used by Uncle Remus
 8 "Take it off!"
 9 Succeeds a la Log Cabin
 10 Like a queen
 11 "A Chorus Line" song
 12 Dick, for short

How Not to Be Single

Q Puzzle

Across

1 Gay-friendly student org.
 5 Crystal balls, e.g.
 9 Be a ham in "Hamlet"?
 14 Novel idea
 15 Come quickly
 16 Nathan and family
 17 Facetious "I see"
 18 Nat. counterpart in MLB

19 Spit out
 20 "I thought I was searching for a ___"
 23 Susan in "All My Children"
 24 Where to get a collar for a bitch
 28 Workplace for Michelangelo
 32 Penetrating
 33 Loaded for bear
 35 Top's betting phrase?
 36 "...but maybe what I really needed

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→ Jason Hoskins

Continued from page 30

which is something that a lot of cities had to do because of Covid. We also made a number of police reforms because of the issues with policing that we saw following the George Floyd murder.” Hoskins was also excited to talk about the Northland redevelopment, which will bring retail and much-needed housing to Southfield. He plans to continue addressing the lack of affordable housing statewide.

“We’ve hired a diversity, equity and inclusion officer for the city,” Hoskins added. “And now we look at the equity impacts of what we’re doing — in everything we do — much like we look at the fiscal impact of what we’re doing. And that’s something that I spearheaded. I went to a conference in March, and I found out a city in Oregon was doing it. And I was like, ‘Oh, we should really be doing that here in the city.’”

From the time Hoskins began working for State Rep. Rudy Hobbs through his eight years with State Sen. Jeremy Moss, including while Moss was a state representative, he has been a staunch advocate for his community.

“He’s done an incredible job progressing in this role,” Moss said of Hoskins. “He knows the full scope of the office from constituent services to legislating. And in 2019, he made a decision to seek public office on his own, and I was really glad that he did. He was already known by the

residents of Southfield as a problem solver in our office.”

Hoskins named a few of his accomplishments during his tenure in Moss’s office, including a bipartisan bill package on housing, efforts to combat price gouging during Covid and promoting transparency through legislation compelling the state legislature and governor’s office to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Moss called Hoskins his “right-hand person.”

“Jason helped me to work on proposals to strengthen the law in Michigan that would go after price gouging,” Moss said. “He literally read 30 other state statutes on price gouging to figure out where did Michigan lack protections for our consumers and how can we remedy that? And as a result, we introduced legislation last session, which we’re gearing up to reintroduce with the support of Attorney General Dana Nessel. That is Jason’s research.”

If elected, one of Hoskins’ priorities is to improve state revenue sharing. Simply put, his district is not getting its due when it comes to infrastructure.

“Right now, everyone around the state gets the same amount of money to fix their roads,” Hoskins pointed out. “And you know, quite frankly, in Metro Detroit, our roads are getting used a lot more than somewhere up north. And so, changing that formula is very critical to making sure that we are spending extra money on communities [that] are spending

extra money on their roads when they could be using that money in other places.”

Combating voter suppression is also critical to Hoskins’ platform. Because of his passion for voting rights and civil rights generally, Hoskins started a chapter of the ACLU while he was a law student at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law and subsequently served in leadership positions within the organization. After earning a degree in political science at Eastern Michigan University, Hoskins earned a master’s in public administration with a concentration in local government. He has also worked as an adjunct professor at Lawrence Tech University.

Because it was through Hoskins’ initiative that the city of Southfield established a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) position, BTL asked his take on the backlash that school boards are increasingly experiencing from parents and government officials related to bogeymen called “CRT” and “DEI,” which are simply letters that signify the “radical left.” Hoskins is impatient with those who are suspicious of what diversity might bring.

“Our diversity is our strength,” Hoskins said, speaking specifically of Southfield. “You know, [we have] great housing and great housing prices; we’ve been named one of the best places to start a small business, one of the best places for Black women to flourish financially. And one of the best places for seniors to retire. We’re doing pretty good. And I think part of it is

because we embrace diversity.”

Hoskins said the backlash against critical race theory (CRT), which has never been part of the K-12 public school curriculum, is not only overtly racial — it is plainly racist. What Hoskins advocates for is cultural competency in education. He’s particularly concerned that LGBTQ+ students and students of color learn their history in this country, too.

If elected, Hoskins would be the first Black openly LGBTQ+ member of the Michigan state Legislature. He said that while he didn’t seek out that distinction, he recognizes that being a “first” comes with it a certain responsibility.

“When you’re talking about banning critical race theory, and you’re potentially thinking about bringing up ‘Don’t say gay’ bills, I think it is very important to have people of color speaking out and queer people of color speaking out,” Hoskins said. “And so that is a responsibility that I know I’ll have if I’m elected, but it’s certainly a responsibility I’m willing to take on because it’s needed.

“And I hope that if somebody else sees another queer person of color stepping up, they too will see that it’s OK. And they’re able to step up as well.”

Learn more about Hoskin’s campaign at votejasonhoskins.com. Early voting has begun. Vote now through Aug. 2.



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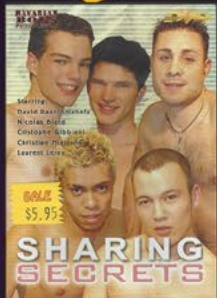
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→ Monkeypox

Continued from page 15

only separate yourself from other people, but from pets, too.

While there are no treatments specifically for monkeypox infections, "Monkeypox and smallpox viruses are genetically similar," said Benson, which means that "antiviral drugs and vaccines developed to protect against smallpox may be used to prevent and treat monkeypox virus infections." Tecovirimat is one such antiviral that may be recommended for people likely to get severely ill, such as patients with weakened immune systems. But in most cases, the virus goes away on its own within a few weeks.

The first case in the state

It was Benson's physician's assistant, Mark Rosen, who saw the patient who presented with symptoms of monkeypox. Rosen said he recognized the patient likely had the virus "right off the bat. He was showing a bunch of pustules all over his body, on his arms and legs, and a couple on his face." Rosen added that "the minute he showed me, I thought about monkeypox, and before I could say that, he said, 'I'm afraid this could be monkeypox.'"

Rosen asked additional staff at the medical center to examine the patient. Then there were a series of calls made to the Michigan Department

of Health to learn the logistics of testing and how to proceed. The patient, he said, was in the center for quite a while.

Doctors and physician's assistants, too, of course, train to be ready for anything, and Rosen said he was not surprised to see a case of monkeypox in Michigan.

"I was kind of mentally prepared to see it at some point," he said. "I wasn't in too much shock because we're used to things like this with Covid nowadays."

Vaccine on the way but not in state yet

As of press time, Michigan health officials had not received any doses of Jynneos, the smallpox vaccine that is also used to prevent monkeypox or reduce its severity, which is being kept in the Strategic National Stockpile. Detroit Free Press reports that, per the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the state will order the Jynneos vaccine "as appropriate."

According to a White House fact sheet, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) expects to make 296,000 doses available to the nation in the coming weeks. More than 750,000 doses will be made available over the summer, followed by 500,000 this fall. In total, 1.6 million vaccine doses should be available this year.

In addition, the White House reports, states and territories may also request a second smallpox vaccine, FDA-approved ACAM2000.

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