

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

# Between THE Lines <sup>TM</sup>

**TRANS IN MICHIGAN**  
How the State Has  
Evolved on Trans  
Issues

**THE INTERVIEW**  
Viral Political Satirist Randy  
Rainbow Chats Before  
Michigan Show

**HIS COURAGE, REMEMBERED**  
The Legacy of Glen  
Johnson Is, Partly, His  
Openness

## Bill Was X in Detroit

Revisiting His Queerest Moments

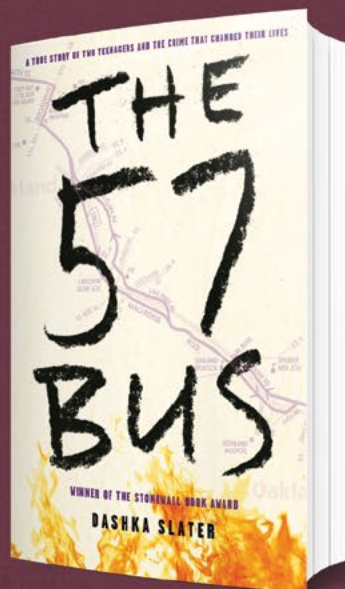


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- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Michigan's Trans Community More Visible and More Engaged Than Ever
- 8 Canceled Because Monkeypox
- 10 Michigan's Homophobia-Fighting Candidates Strike a Pose
- 10 It's Not All About Pronouns
- 11 The Latest Fad In Radical Right Harassment Campaigns? Children's Hospitals, Of Course.
- 14 What LGBTQ+ Families Should Know for Back-to-School Time
- 15 Jazz, But Queer: The Story of Allison Miller
- 16 How First Openly Nonbinary Michigan State House Candidate Thinks We Can Achieve Equity
- 18 'A Particular Type of Courage': Remembering Glen Johnson
- 20 5 Times Lil Nas X Delivered Earth-Shattering Queerness
- 26 Rainbow Rising: An Interview with Randy Rainbow



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# 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

September is that sweet spot between summer debauchery and holiday madness — don't let it pass you by without savoring a uniquely Michigan adventure, a sexy film fest or a mini shopping spree that rounds out your queer music collection. All the details you need to fill up your early September calendar are right here.

## Update Your Gay Icon Music Collection

Just when you thought you had all the important Madonna stuff, it's time to break out the credit card and clear some display space. Released in mid-August, the full 50-track "Finally Enough Love" LP includes — you guessed it — 50 of the record-breaker's No. 1 club hits spanning four decades, many rare or previously unreleased. Our very own Queen Madonna — don't forget, she used to party at Menjo's! — is the first and only recording artist to have 50 No. 1 hits on any single Billboard chart.

And then there's George Michael, who left us that sad Christmas Day in 2016. Happily, his musical legacy lives on. "Older," the gay icon's third studio album, is set for rerelease Sept. 16 as a standalone and as part of an expansive box set that includes "Upper" on vinyl, an essay detailing stories behind the album, and photos previously unreleased to the public. The original release of "Older" produced haunting, deeply personal hits like "Fastlove" and "Jesus to a Child."



Photo: Michigan.org

## Rumble the Bumble in Ypsi

Ypsilanti's eclectic This, That & the ODDer oddities shop will host an event the owners hope will become an annual celebration. The Rumble of the Bumble, set for Sept. 2, will take place alongside the longstanding First Fridays of Ypsi observation and the Festival of the Pollinators.

Peruse local merch from Michigan businesses and artists and stick around for a live professional wrestling match that will pit Big Bruce Buzzbee against Guy Phosate. There's also a dance party sponsored by ypsiGLOW. Organizers encourage festivalgoers to wear costumes inspired by pollinators and flowers — you could be crowned winner of the Festival of the Honeybee Rumble of the Bumble costume contest.



## Go on a Queer Hike or Camp with Bears

Early fall is ideal for basking in nature, and what better way to enjoy the changing seasons than with a queer pal or two? Meetup.com is a helpful resource for connecting with other outdoorsy (or outdoorsy-curious) queer folks. Groups like The Queer Outdoors, based in Ann Arbor, hold queer-friendly activities like hiking, foraging and camping. Find out more at [Linktr.ee/thequeeroutdoors](http://Linktr.ee/thequeeroutdoors) or search for hiking groups on the main [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) site.

Are you a queer man who just needs a weekend away? Camp Boomerang in Orleans (northwest of Lansing) bills itself as "Michigan's Premiere Guys-Only Gay RV Park & Campground." Upcoming themed events include Leather & Fetish weekend and OctoBEARfest weekend. Learn more at [michigangaycamping.com](http://michigangaycamping.com).



### Attend a Sex-Positive Film Fest

The 17th annual HUMP! Film Festival returns to Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater for the first time in eight years on Sept. 10. Expect a Dan Savage-curated buffet of sex-positive short films that explores a wide gamut of sexy topics and features bodies of all sizes, shapes, ages, colors, sexualities, genders, kinks and fetishes. You'll see it *all* here, including hard- and softcore porn, comedies, animated shorts and even musicals.

Learn more about the films and buy tickets at [humpfilmfest.com](http://humpfilmfest.com).



### Staycation in an LGBTQ-Friendly Michigan Locale

With air travel rapidly reaching peak nightmare levels, road trips are where it's at in late 2022. Check out one of these queer-friendly Michigan cities, as documented by the latest HRC Municipal Equality Index (MEI).

\* Detroit received a perfect score on the 2022 MEI. Keep it retro at queer-owned Hotel Royal Oak, or indulge in a couple's retreat at one of downtown Detroit's glamorous high-end hotels, like the famed Westin Book Cadillac.

\* Traverse City scored high on the 2022 MEI and is less chaotic in the post-summer season. Pick up dessert at Grand Traverse Pie Country and grab a drink with the local queer contingent at SideTraxx.

\* Kalamazoo is the perfect place to relive your college experience or as a quick pit stop on the way to the shores of Lake Michigan. The sprawling Bell's Brewery and foodie-fave Bell's Eccentric Cafe near downtown is a not-to-be-missed Michigan treasure.

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

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# Michigan's Trans Community More Visible and More Engaged Than Ever

## How the State Has Evolved on Trans Issues, and What Work Remains

BY JASON A. MICHAEL  
& SARAH BRICKER HUNT

In some ways, Michigan serves as an example to other states on how to advocate for and protect trans individuals. After all, the state Supreme Court ruled in July that Michigan's civil rights act does, in fact, protect LGBTQ+ community members. Our Pride festivals are loud, proud and trans-inclusive, even in more conservative corners of the Great Lakes State.

Dig a little deeper, though, and a larger story emerges. Yes, some Michigan trans advocates say some things are better. But it's important

not to lose sight of the fact that it can still be a dangerous, exclusionary experience to be trans in Michigan.

"Right now, we stand on the edge of a great precipice," said Dina Walters, who will retire this year from serving as vice president of Transgender (TG) Detroit. "No one wants to give back one millimeter of our advances and acceptance. But some would argue differently. Some people want us killed, just for being who and what we are. Even some in the LGBTQ+ community act as if the T should be silent."

It was only a few weeks ago that BTL reported that Naomi Skinner, a Black transgender woman, was found murdered in Highland Park.

Her boyfriend has been charged in her homicide. Earlier this year, a transgender man, Ray Muscat, was murdered in Oakland County, police say, by his girlfriend. And on July 25, Hayden Davis, a 28-year-old Black trans woman, was shot and killed in Detroit.

These are just the latest, news-making events that reveal that Michigan, and the country as a whole, is not always safe for transgender people, especially Black and Latina transgender women. Nationwide, at least 57 transgender and gender-nonconforming Americans were killed in 2021, mostly transgender women of color.

In other words, Michigan and the country at large can be a scary place to be transgender. Organizations like TG Detroit are working to shift the narrative — not only working to protect the community, but to lift it up.

### Increased visibility making a positive difference

As attacks against the trans community increase, the only answer is increased visibility, said Michelle Fox-Phillips, founder of Gender-identity Network Alliance, former

head of TG Detroit and a leader in metro Detroit's trans community for nearly 25 years. "I always advocated for our community to be more visible, from day one," Fox-Phillips said. "I've always known that, just like in the gay community, the more of us that are out, the more accepted we will eventually be."

At TG Detroit's TransFusion conference, which took place July 7-10 at the Dearborn Inn, the four-day event was all about fostering visibility of the transgender community — and growing confidence in trans women to come out and be a part of society.

Samantha Rogers, who founded

TG Detroit eight years ago, said it was her goal “to create something that’s kind of the transgender USO. We give you a three-day pass in Paris to come here and have a great time and recharge your batteries before you go back out there.”

Walters said more than 120 transgender individuals attended TransFusion, working on “feeling completely comfortable in your own skin,” she said. Participants travel together to busy, public places and make it a point to interact with people, many of whom may not have much experience interacting with the trans community.

“When we walk into a venue,” she said, “every head in the place turns to see this sea of visible and confident transwomen. We are normally the ones who are first on the dance floor and set the tone for how the evening plays out.”

Walters said the group dances and socializes with everyone at the venues. “And then the next time something comes up about transpersons in the mainstream media, they can say, ‘I met a bunch of them recently, and they are quite wonderful people.’”

Rogers said she set out to create the type of event she’d want to go to. She didn’t just want to hang around a hotel. “I wanted the girls to socialize,” she said. “But I wanted to put them in mainstream places where, first off, when you’ve got that many girls, they’re safe and they’re confident and they’re empowered.”

If trans visibility is increasing, Walters said the next generation should claim a lot of the credit. Both Rogers and Walters are retiring from their leadership positions in TG Detroit this year.

But Walters said she feels the group is in good hands. “We’re handing the baton [to the next generation],” she said. “The new generation has given us language. You can be demisexual, pansexual, you can be non-binary as they say they are. You know, you hear boomers with a stick up their ass saying, ‘Don’t call me this or that.’ Technically, I’m a boomer. But I’m embarrassed because they’re so stuck in their ways.”

Walters said that as a person in her 60s, it’s a gift that younger community members have developed language that is more precise and accurate. The next generation, Walters said, is “gonna be great. They are authentic. ... They are reverent. They get it. We made sacrifices for them to be visible.”

Sarah Campbell came to TransFusion from Toronto, where she leads a trans support group. “We rock the boat in so many ways that people can’t fathom why we do what we do,” she said of being trans. “We can’t even explain it to ourselves sometimes. So, it’s difficult for us to tell people how it is.” But like Walters, Campbell said she has seen great progress in the last decade. “When we have support groups now, people come in and it’s ‘My grandchild announced they’re non-binary. What do I do?’”

At the TransFusion Gala, awards were given out to three legends in the trans community. Grace Bacon founded CrossRoads, the state’s first trans support group, in 1977. Jaye Marie Carolan of Adam’s Apple was one of the first club owners to welcome TG Detroit. And Janet Law opened Janet’s Closet, a store that

specializes in apparel and accessories for trans women, more than 20 years ago in Wyandotte.

Law first operated Janet’s Closet out of the garage of her Grosse Ile home in 1999, but by 2005 had moved the thriving business next to her machine shop on Fort Street in Wyandotte. Since first opening the store, Law said she has seen “a huge change in the transgender community as far as acceptance from the public. It has exploded.” Law said her business is “lucrative and continues to grow” and that nowadays, “people feel more comfortable coming here because they don’t feel like it’s so taboo. It’s out in the open. It’s talked about all the time.”

Even the bad talk — the transphobia — helps in the end. “There’s so much talk about it where there wasn’t before,” she said. “Even if you’re somehow exposed, you’re not so criticized as you used to be.”

Eventually, Walters wants to see Michigan as a whole become as welcoming as prominently LGBTQ+ cities and neighborhoods. “A member of our transgender community should be free to walk in a downtown street of any city as freely as they can walk down Nine Mile in Ferndale or North Halstead in Chicago,” she said.

## Michigan’s challenging, evolving LGBTQ+ legal landscape

Clear, steadfast progress is being made on trans acceptance and visibility throughout Michigan, but from a legal standpoint, trans advocates face an increasing number of hurdles. Over the past several years, the state’s Republican-majority legislature has passed or introduced several legislative measures that put trans rights in jeopardy, with some legislation targeted directly at trans youth.

“We have politicians whose main card in the game is to pick a group and focus hatred on them so that it mobilizes their base,” said Rogers, who went on to add that after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality in 2016, the focus more heavily came down on the trans community. “Suddenly it became no longer fair game to pick on gay people. So, they went looking for the next group, the next villain.”

Rogers said bathroom usage issues in schools was an early attempt to target the trans community and, most egregiously, trans children. “It actually said more about them, you know, than it did about us. They said ‘If I wanted to spy on women, I just put on a dress and go in the bathroom.’” More popular than the bathroom issue, Rogers said, is now protecting cis women in sports. “The bathroom issue didn’t fly. So they went back to their think tanks and this is what they came up with.”

Across the country, state legislators have proposed more than 240 bills involving LGBTQ+ rights, according to the ACLU. That figure includes more than 100 focused on trans youth.

See **TransFusion**, page 22

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# Canceled Because Monkeypox

## How LGBTQ+ Events Across Michigan Are Responding to the Outbreak

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

With monkeypox cases still on the rise in southeast Michigan, it might be time to reevaluate your approach to basically anything involving skin-to-skin contact. While the virus is not typically fatal, judging by first-hand accounts, it's certainly unpleasant (and unsightly) — often, it's downright painful.

Some Michigan establishments and venues frequented by men who have sex with men (MSM) are taking steps to do their part in slowing the spread of monkeypox, and there's a good chance more will follow as the CDC shapes its guidance on prevention and safety.

Local physician Dr. Paul Benson, founder of Be Well Medical Center in Berkley, promotes a cautious response toward social events during the outbreak. "Individuals can safely attend large gatherings, but should be smart about it," he told BTL. "The risk of contracting monkeypox through the air is not that great — however, if you are in someone's face, that would increase your chances."

Dr. Benson said touching should be avoided in crowds, especially in very close quarters, such as mosh pits.

Some Michigan venues are taking a proactively cautious approach, while others are monitoring the situation but haven't changed their upcoming schedules.

Motorball has pushed back its Detroit dance party events, geared toward the LGBTQ+ community, from Sept. 15-18 to June 2-4, 2023, to coincide with Ferndale Pride. Recently, an announcement was posted to the Motorball site, with organizers writing, "Until more health promotion and vaccination work can be done, and until more research on transmissibility is available, we believe the prudent course of action is to postpone the annual Motorball event out of an abundance of caution."

Local jack off group Motor City Jacks, which touts itself as "Detroit's premier men's masturbation club," has paused its events in line with the



CDC guidelines. "We did not want to potentially contribute to the spread," an organizer who did not give their name told BTL by email. "We are hopeful by next month, enough of our members [will] have been vaccinated and the virus plateaus locally." A message that went out to members said, in part, "We believe it is in our best interest to limit your potential exposure especially because communities we are a part of seem to be disproportionately impacted at this time."

BTL contacted Diplomat Health Club, the men's gay sauna and bathhouse in Grand Rapids. The venue is currently working with the Kent County Health Department.

The Schvitz, a historic health club and bathhouse in Detroit; Body Zone, a bathhouse and gay sauna in Highland Park, and Club Tabu, a men's alternative lounge in Lansing

and Alpena, did not respond to inquiries from BTL by press time.

Meanwhile, the CDC outlines specific guidelines for monkeypox prevention, including advice on social gatherings and specific sexual activities.

When deciding whether to attend raves, parties, clubs and festivals, the agency recommends seeking out information from trusted sources like the local health department. "Consider how much close, personal, skin-to-skin contact is likely to occur at the event," the website reads. "If you feel sick or have a rash, do not attend any gathering, and see a healthcare provider."

Additional CDC guidelines related to social activities include:

- Festivals, events and concerts where attendees are fully clothed and unlikely to share skin-to-skin contact

are safer. However, attendees should be mindful of activities (like kissing) that might spread monkeypox.

- A rave, party or club where there is minimal clothing and where there is direct, personal, often skin-to-skin contact has some risk. Avoid any rash you see on others and consider minimizing skin-to-skin contact.

- Enclosed spaces, such as back rooms, saunas, sex clubs, or private and public sex parties where intimate, often anonymous sexual contact with multiple partners occurs, may have a higher likelihood of spreading monkeypox.

Dr. Benson does not feel it is necessary to cancel events completely, but he said those who are feeling sick or have unexplained skin rashes should stay home. "From my observations, of the cases I have seen in my office, the transmission

occurred after the event, through sexual activity," he said.

Dr. Benson also recommends that patients use condoms for eight weeks after monkeypox lesions have resolved on infected people. While this guideline does not appear in the official CDC recommendations, he said he has observed cases of rectal monkeypox likely transmitted from someone who recently recovered from the virus. "Monkeypox virus has been observed in semen up to two months after the infection cleared," he explained. "There is some debate that it is a dead virus and may not be capable of transmission — I don't agree."

Dr. Benson also stresses that monkeypox is not a "gay disease." As he reiterated, "Anyone can catch monkeypox."





# Advice to Be Well

From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson



**Hi doctor. I am a 60-year-old cis male and my doctor recently told me that I do not need to be screened for prostate cancer. My father has been getting this screened every year since he was 50. This is confusing! Am I missing something?**

This is a great question and you are absolutely right, this is confusing. Prostate cancer screening has changed over the years and I want to make sure you have all the information available so that you can make the best informed decision. The American Urological Association released new guidelines for this in 2018 that are still in effect. This was a change from prior practices. The main reason for this change was that patients were getting procedures performed that were causing more harm than benefit.

Both the American Urological Association and the United States Preventative Task Force recommend individualizing prostate cancer screening with PSA testing. This means each patient may elect or defer screening for their own individualized reasons. It is important to know that the PSA test is not a great test, but it is the best test we have for now. The PSA is frequently inaccurate with events such as recent ejaculation or any prostate stimulation falsely elevating the PSA. Even riding a bike can cause a false elevation! Additionally, if an individual is taking finasteride or dutasteride, it will falsely lower the PSA, so it is important that your doctor knows what medications you take. If you do get PSA testing,

its now recommended to only check every 2 instead of annual testing. This interval can also be individualized.

Another good fact to know, is that most men with prostate cancer will die WITH prostate cancer and not FROM prostate cancer. This is because most prostate cancer is very slow growing.

All that being said, prostate cancer screening should be a shared and individual decision with you and your provider. Benefits of testing are early detection of prostate cancer. One study showed that screening may prevent 1.3 deaths from prostate cancer per 1000 men screened. This is quite low in terms of cancer screenings. Harms of frequent PSA testing are that it opens a door where biopsies and prostatectomies may end up being performed which can cause erectile dysfunction, urinary incontinence and even bowel symptoms. If they had not been screened, these procedures and side effects may have been prevented.

In summary, prostate cancer screening is complicated. I would encourage you to have open conversations with your provider about prostate cancer screening so that both of you can determine the best course of action for you going forward.

We hope this helps!

**I have just recovered from Monkeypox. I initially was treated for a strep throat that eventually was diagnosed as Monkeypox after I developed a skin rash. Do I still need to be vaccinated against Monkeypox? Who should be vaccinated against**

**Monkeypox? What's this I heard about a micro dose of the vaccine? – JB**

Dear JB,

These are all great and important questions. Clinicians and the general population need to be aware of Monkeypox, because if symptoms are not considered early on, the diagnosis may be missed or delayed. This delay could increase the spread of Monkeypox. It is transmitted by touching, including sexually, with an infected individual. It is not easily spread through the air. Symptoms may imitate other infectious diseases. The classic textbook skin lesions may not occur until days after other symptoms. Monkeypox is a new disease in this country and healthcare providers need to consider it when evaluating patients. We've seen late or missed diagnoses of Monkeypox as sore throats, rectal herpes, and warts instead of Monkeypox.

High risk activity includes men having sex with multiple male partners, or close contact with someone you know having Monkeypox. This must be communicated to your health care provider. Health care providers should be asking the right questions by taking sexual histories, although that is not always the case. Without knowledge of an individual's risk would make it impossible to give good advice for prevention. No one is saying not to have sex, just be smarter and aware of your choices, especially if one is having

symptoms of being ill or having a skin rash. Also, the Monkeypox virus has been found in semen up to eight weeks after infection. The virus might be transmitted to others by infected semen, so condom usage is recommended for that period of time after infection.

Men having multiple sexual contacts with other men should get vaccinated. The vaccination process includes an initial vaccination followed by an additional vaccination one month later. We are now vaccinating using an intradermal method. This approach uses a smaller amount of vaccine without reducing efficacy. This gives us the opportunity to vaccinate more people with the limited supply of vaccine we currently have. As the supply of vaccine increases the populations of who should be vaccinated will be expanded. If you have had Monkeypox, you have natural immunity, and should not be vaccinated. Eventually, with vaccinations, we will be able to control Monkeypox. The vaccine has been proven to be effective.

*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](mailto:bewelladvice@pridesource.com). This article is a sponsored editorial produced in collaboration with Be Well Medical Center. Between The Line'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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# Our Angels

## Nessel, Whitmer and Benson Strike Epic 'Charlie's Angels' Pose

Good morning, angels!

Michigan's Trifecta of Female Badassery (Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson) struck this "Charlie's Angels"-inspired pose at the Michigan Democratic Party 2022 State Nominating Convention in August.

Nessel shared the image on Twitter.

@DetroitConcert1 identified the trio as "Michigan's Guardians of Democracy," and we couldn't agree more.

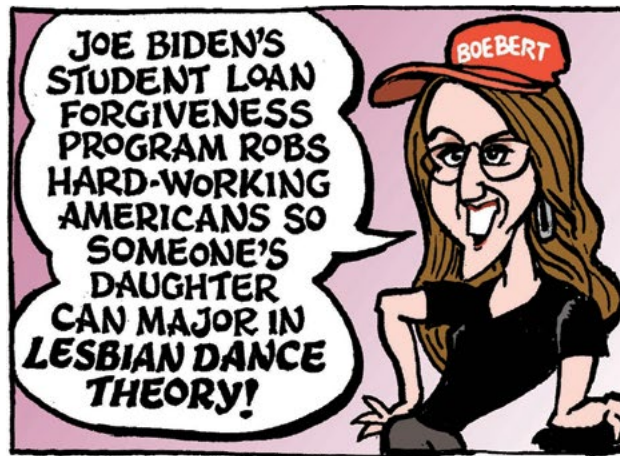
All three officials are up for reelection this November, and it would be difficult to express how vitally important those elections are for the LGBTQ+ community. A mass of voters will be needed to stave off the dark promises being made by dangerous, deplorable Republican candidates who want to erase LGBTQ+ rights and delegitimize the community's contributions to society. They might as well be our angels.

— Sarah Bricker Hunt

Register to vote or check your registration at the Michigan Secretary of State website.



Photo: Twitter/@dananessel



## It's Not All About Pronouns



By Gwendolyn Ann Smith

I've long had a complicated relationship with pronouns.

I really love that the question of proper pronoun use has become more entrenched, at least in so many of the places I frequent. While I'd hardly call it wholly commonplace, I see more and more places that are offering up a place for declaring and/or asking about pronouns.

For many years, I'll admit, I've gritted my teeth about it a bit. I've been in one too many situations where asking me my pronouns are a way to single me out and treat me as something different. I might be the only person expected to offer up my pronouns, with the non-transgender people around me expecting everyone to just know what they use.

My feelings have softened. I've been seeing more and more times where it is the non-transgender people making a point to share theirs, without this sense that it is a chore to them. So many of the applications I find myself using in the workplace, for example, have default spaces for pronouns, as if sharing them is just simply expected. It's oddly refreshing. My teeth get to remain un-gritted now.

Nevertheless, there's still something that doesn't sit right: it's not the pronouns themselves, nor is it the practice of asking them. Those are fine. It's more how this sharing of pronouns seems to serve as the lowest common denominator of trans acceptance, but is so often treated as the pinnacle of allyship.

That can be a problem.

We're in the midst of the biggest backlash against trans rights to date. Our health care is being threatened, both by lawmakers and by right-wing vigilantes. Children — trans and otherwise — are being subjected to intrusive background checks and potential genital inspections. Our liberties and livelihoods are under constant threat. More than two dozen people — that we know of — have been murdered in the United States thus far this year due to anti-transgender violence.

These are big, top-drawer issues, and not ones that are going to quickly go away. The media is all too happy to stoke fears of transgender people, and our very existence appears to be on the ballot in both the 2022 midterm and the 2024 Presidential elections.

We're living in a time when transgender people and their families are leaving their homes and migrating to an ever-dwindling number of safe states. Meanwhile, congressional troll Marjorie Taylor Greene has filed one of the more draconian bills for what will amount to a federal ban on transgender people. Sure, it has no chance of passing in the current congress, but this is not future proof.

I don't say any of this lightly, but transgender people are facing no less than an existential threat.

I love to have my pronouns respected and as I mentioned above, it's great to see that become a more respected practice. Still, will that matter if the only place left for my pronouns is my headstone?

As a slight aside, too: As part of this "culture war" on trans existence, there are plenty on the right who have focused on pronouns. They, too, want you to focus on pronoun use while

See **Pronouns**, next page

## CREEP OF THE WEEK

### The Latest Fad In Radical Right Harassment Campaigns? Children's Hospitals, Of Course.



By D'Anne Witkowski

I don't know about you, but when I want to blow off some steam and air some grievances, there's just no more perfect target than a children's hospital. Whether it's the staff, the administration, the families, or even the children themselves, there's nothing quite so satisfying as making a children's hospital hell for everyone involved.

And before anyone tells me that sounds, well, really messed up, do you know what they DO at a so-called children's hospital? Provide chemotherapy to kids with cancer? Monitor kids with heart defects? Evaluate young people who are suicidal? Set broken bones and heal burns and stitch cuts and save lives?

Well, yes. I mean, sure. But do you know the main thing they do? Mandatory hysterectomies for everyone who walks through the door. Can you believe it? No? Well, good, you shouldn't.

But if you take Libs of TikTok's word for it, Boston Children's Hospital and Children's National Hospital in DC are genital mutilation factories that must be shut down immediately.

Any hospital that provides gender-affirming care for young people is in the crosshairs right now as we are in the midst of an ever-escalating moral panic about transgender people driven by a lot of false information and hateful rhetoric.

On Twitter, in response to Libs of TikTok's post about gender-affirming care at Boston Children's Hospital, the responses ranged from the typical "liberals are monsters" fare to death threats, including that the hospital should be blown up and the doctors fed into a wood chipper. Very pro-life!

Now, if you're old like me, you might be wondering why an account called Libs of TikTok is on Twitter and not, say, only TikTok, all I can tell you is that the world is a multifaceted digital hellscape. Wikipedia explains it better: "Libs of TikTok is a far-right Twitter account owned by former real estate worker Chaya Raichik. The account reposts content created by liberals, leftists, and LGBT people on TikTok and on other social media platforms, often with hostile, derogatory, or mocking commentary."

In other words, it exists solely for making liberals and LGBTQ+ people look bad. Libs of TikTok boasts "news and views you won't see anywhere else," and they're not wrong. Their so called "news" is lies and their views are abhorrent and not deserving of a wider platform. Basically every single claim they make should begin, "Wild if true."

Alejandra Carballo, host of the podcast Queering the Law, frequently calls out Libs of Tiktok on Twitter and calls for Twitter to suspend the account.

"Deplatforming hate works," she tweeted Aug. 30. "It disrupts network effects and eliminates the ability



for bad actors to propagate hate while exposing it to mainstream audiences. That's why large platforms like Twitter have a moral obligation to moderate against hate."

And, as we all know, Twitter is really good at this (#sarcasm). I mean, it only took disgraced former president Donald Trump calling for the overturning of the 2020 election and further inciting his mob of insurrection MAGAs for Twitter to ban him.

This has, of course, led to a flurry of right-wing hysteria about "cancel culture" and the "loss of free speech." Keep in mind, the same people who think that Twitter has an absolute obligation to allow any and all kinds of speech on their website are the people who don't think that Christian bakers should have to make a wedding cake for gays.

Libs of TikTok is odious, but there's no denying the fact that it's very popular. Hateful and ignorant views of LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender youth, is all the rage right now. Literally. It's all the conservative/religious/far right has. These extremists are the ones propping up the Republican Party, a party that has no ideas, no solutions and doesn't GAF about democracy (or you).

I'm sorry to all of the trans kids who are growing up during this time when it is more acceptable to express and be your authentic self than ever, but also a time when outright hatred is directed at you from people with power, from people who advocate violence and from people who are willfully ignorant. My transgender readers, it's not you who has to change. It's them.

If you or a loved one need support, contact The Trevor Project or the Trans Lifeline. You are not alone.

*This sharing of pronouns seems to serve as the lowest common denominator of trans acceptance, but is so often treated as the pinnacle of allyship.*

“

#### ◀ Pronouns

Continued from previous page

they strip transgender people of our unalienable rights.

Consider Florida Congressional candidate Lavern Spicer. She recently tweeted the vastly erroneous statement that there were no pronouns in the Bible, nor were there any in the Constitution. These are ignorant statements made by ignorant people.

I should also note than I used incorrect pronouns for Spicer above, as she also stated via Twitter that her pronouns are "sit your dumb ass down" and "shut up about this foolishness." My apologies, but also no regrets.

You'll find hundreds more like Spicer, however, laser focused on how we shouldn't be so worked up about pronouns, while themselves getting pretty worked up about pronouns. I'm never quite sure how many of them are doing this simply to sidestep an issue of basic decency, and how many are genuinely working themselves up to a froth over a simple grammatical term. I mean, I saw how they got about Mr. Potato Head.

What I do know is that for everyone that I see saying that pronouns need to be eliminated, you can only truly understand what they mean by replacing the word "pronouns" with the phrase "transgender people" in that

phrase.

That is, truly, why this isn't about pronouns.

Right now, we need people who are willing to speak out and tell the truth about trans lives. We who are trans are very tired of the battle right now, and need to be reinforced. What's more, many of those who stand against us — as well as a sizable amount of those who might be willing to listen — are not going to take the word of a transgender person.

They will view us as biased long before they will assume the same of a non-transgender person, even those who have a clear interest in eliminating transgender people as a whole.

In a time of increased attacks on transgender people, we need everyone we can to push back on the disingenuous and false narratives currently dominating the discussion. We're not here to harm others, to replace anyone, to assault your wives and daughters. We are here simply to enjoy the same rights that any non-transgender person has. Like allowing us to have our own pronouns — but yet so much more.

So, I appreciate you sharing your pronouns, but please understand: It is the first step, not the last.

*Gwen Smith's pronouns are She and Her. You'll find her at [www.gwensmith.com](http://www.gwensmith.com)*

## IMPORTANT FACTS FOR BIKTARVY®

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

(bik-TAR-vee)

### MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT BIKTARVY

**BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects, including:**

- ▶ **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking BIKTARVY. Do not stop taking BIKTARVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months, and may give you HBV medicine.

### ABOUT BIKTARVY

BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults and children who weigh at least 55 pounds. It can either be used in people who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements.

**BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

**Do NOT take BIKTARVY if you also take a medicine that contains:**

- ▶ dofetilide
- ▶ rifampin
- ▶ any other medicines to treat HIV-1

### BEFORE TAKING BIKTARVY

**Tell your healthcare provider if you:**

- ▶ Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
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- ▶ Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if BIKTARVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

**Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:**

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

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- ▶ **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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Scan to see Chad's story.



# What LGBTQ+ Families Should Know For Back-to-School Time

BY DANA RUDOLPH

As school-related anti-LGBTQ legislation and policies continue to rise, what should LGBTQ+ parents know about recent moves and how to protect their families? Two experts from Family Equality shared their thoughts with me.

The number of legislative attempts to restrict school materials and discussion about LGBTQ+ identities (so-called “Don’t Say Gay/LGBTQ” bills) rose to 23 in 2022, up from five in 2021, per PEN America. Florida and Alabama became the fifth and sixth states to enact them into law. PEN America also reports that LGBTQ-inclusive books were banned in school districts in at least 26 states. The year has also seen a continued rise in anti-transgender legislation, much of it impacting children and youth in schools.

Family Equality’s Director of Education Law & Policy, Senior Policy Counsel Nikhil Vashee said, “First, know this: Your family has nothing to be ashamed of, and your children deserve the right to learn and grow in a classroom that affirms their family composition no matter what.”

They also emphasized, “Students and

families still retain federal protection against discrimination based on sex and gender identity, and the Department of Education is working on new regulations that will codify these protections. In the meantime, if you or your family experience discrimination — whether you live in a state with a ‘Don’t Say Gay or Trans’ law or not — you can and should file a complaint with the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights.”

The new Department of Education regulations are updates to the landmark Title IX civil rights law. In June 2021, the department issued guidance stating that Title IX protects students from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Although a federal judge in Tennessee temporarily blocked the guidance in 20 states last month, arguing that it had not gone through a formal regulatory rulemaking process, Vashee said that they disagree with the decision and “it may ultimately be a moot point” since the Biden Administration in June initiated the rulemaking process for these changes.

President Biden also issued an executive order in June aimed at advancing LGBTQ+ equality, including developing policies “supporting LGBTQI+ students’ well-being and

academic success” and ones to “promote safe and inclusive learning environments in which all LGBTQI+ students thrive and to address bullying of LGBTQI+ students.” All these moves “show the Administration’s clear commitment to protecting LGBTQ+ students and families from discrimination,” Vashee asserted.

On the state level, one positive move this year was Maryland’s Inclusive Schools Act, which requires public schools and publicly-funded private schools to have comprehensive nondiscrimination policies that include protections for LGBTQ+ students and families. Shelbi Day, chief policy officer for Family Equality, said, “Getting this law passed was a multi-year effort by Freestate Equality and others on the ground in Maryland.” She hopes other states will follow Maryland “by introducing laws that specifically protect LGBTQ+ students and students with LGBTQ+ families.” She explained, “With one in four students with LGBTQ+ parents reporting feeling mistreated in school (even before states began trying to pass ‘Don’t Say Gay or Trans’ bills), it’s imperative that we continue to pass laws and policies that allow young people to learn in safe, welcoming environments.”

Some courts, too, are seeing anti-LGBTQ+

bills for the discrimination they are. In two recent examples, the 3rd District Court of Utah on Aug. 19 halted enforcement of a state law barring transgender girls from playing on girls’ sports teams, and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana on July 26 issued a preliminary injunction requiring that a 10-year-old trans girl be allowed to rejoin her school’s girls’ softball team.

Day said, however, that she expects the next legislative session will see more bills targeting LGBTQ+ kids and families in schools. She invites people to sign up for Family Equality’s e-newsletter at [familyequality.org](http://familyequality.org) to receive action alerts about harmful bills in their states and opportunities for getting involved and speaking out.

Additionally, she said, “We encourage all families to reach out to their elected officials and share why it’s so important to have safe, affirming classrooms for LGBTQ+ families. She suggested finding or starting a group of other local parents to receive advocacy training and find ways to “mobilize the power and passion of parents in creating concrete change.”

She also observed that parents can have a “huge influence” by “[Getting] involved in your school community if you feel safe to do so.” She suggested, “Introduce yourself to your child’s teacher” and, if possible, “consider volunteering in your child’s classroom or taking on a leadership role with the PTA, diversity committee, or curriculum review committee. These are concrete ways you can make your voice heard!”

Vashee advised, too, that many children “have some understanding of what’s happening” via social media, news, or new classroom policies or programs. “Don’t be afraid to start honest, age-appropriate conversations with them about how the presence of these laws in their classroom makes them feel,” they recommended. Family Equality’s website, [familyequality.org](http://familyequality.org), has resources for having these conversations as well as for finding family groups and creating inclusive classrooms.

Day also urged LGBTQ+ parents with any school-age children, and the children themselves if they are 13 or older, to take the LGBTQ+ Families and Schools Study launched by Family Equality, GLSEN and COLAGE ([glsen.org/familystudy](http://glsen.org/familystudy)). This will “help inform education policymakers and the public about what’s really going on in our nation’s schools for LGBTQ+ families” and be “an important tool for fighting anti-LGBTQ+ bias.”

“We know that being out and sharing your story isn’t always easy, especially in times like this,” she affirmed. “But it’s more important than ever. Putting a face to the work is essential in demonstrating just how impactful these harmful bills are and just how urgently we need to pass protections for our families.”

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*Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian ([mombian.com](http://mombian.com)), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1,000-plus LGBTQ+ family books, music and more.*

# Jazz, But Queer

Renowned Drummer Allison Miller to Perform with All-Woman Band at Detroit Jazz Festival



Allison Miller. Photo courtesy of Allison Miller

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

To a casual observer, it may not seem unusual that an ensemble made up entirely of female musicians will hit the main stage at the Detroit Jazz Festival this weekend, Sept. 2-5. But for Allison Miller, who will play drums alongside the five other powerhouse female jazz artists rounding out the group ARTEMIS, it may have seemed impossible only a handful of years ago.

There was a time in Miller's early career when she felt "silenced and invisible," as she wrote in a 2013 Huffington Post essay, "You Don't Play Like a Girl: Queer in a Jazz World."

In her essay, she was forthright about her feelings then: "I didn't know how to be all of myself. How could I speak up without the feat of being the lesbian feminist buzzkill?"

Today, Miller acknowledges it as a turning point in her life when she started vocalizing what she really thought in response to

chauvinistic comments she encountered within the chummy, male-dominated world of jazz. "I started speaking up and challenging men when they crossed that line from funny to sexist," she wrote.

Many of the men she challenged were receptive, and while some did, in fact, stop working with her, Miller has been a bold, vocal feminist and self-advocate ever since, a choice that has served her personally and professionally.

"By writing and publishing that article, I made a promise to myself that I would never again bury my truth," she tells Pride Source. "Embracing my full self enabled me to fully tap into my artistry and experience creative agency."

Miller says today, nearly 10 years after the essay was published, it "fortunately" feels dated to her. "The world is a different place, and I

See Allison Miller, page 19





Emily Dievendorf. Photo courtesy of Emily Dievendorf

# Nonbinary Michigan House Candidate Has Eyes on Equity

## Emily Dievendorf on Importance of LGBTQ-Identifying Politicians, Talks Bugs and Books

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

While she and other white allies were painting an outdoor mural the summer of George Floyd's murder, Lansing resident Emily Dievendorf was hit head on by a white supremacist on a motorcycle. In that moment something became painfully clear to the Democratic candidate for Michigan's 77th State House District: the need for safe spaces and spaces of learning and connection in her community. So Dievendorf sold her house and, with a friend, opened a nonprofit bookstore, The Resistance, near the Michigan Capitol building dedicated to social justice and movement building.

"As a civil rights advocate and somebody who works on how all these issues come together, I knew that there was a need for all to work on our own biases," Dievendorf told Pride Source. "The dialogue between us was necessary. I had never had any money, and I've always been fine with that. So when I sold my house, I had money for the first time ever in my life, and I shifted from owning a house to renting and decided to put that money into a space that I saw available in a historic building."

Now the bookstore is a place where individuals of all ages impacted by oppression can find accurate histories and representation of their own stories.

Dievendorf didn't predict that running for state House would be part of her own story. As a matter of fact, she said "never again" after an unsuccessful bid for city council in 2015. Despite that, she is again responding to a call from her community.

"I entered the race late," said

Dievendorf, who announced her run in March, "after learning that the two folks who had already entered the race had not been in the community very long at all." Dievendorf has lived in Lansing since age 18. "It was important to me that there be somebody in the race who had been working on the ground alongside our most vulnerable communities, and that was wanting to represent the community — not as 'a voice for the community,' but committed to working in collaboration with our communities most impacted by oppression to develop solutions."

True to the grassroots approach that led to her surprising 25-vote win in the primary election — despite being outspent by nearly five to one and lacking the support of Lansing insiders — Dievendorf is relying on future constituents' input to shape the agenda for the district.

"My main priorities, as determined by the folks in my own community, focus around very basic needs, but are also incredibly justice-oriented," Dievendorf said. "What I have noticed is that people still don't have access to a living wage; people still don't have access to housing; people still don't have access to safety."

Dievendorf also believes in overhauling the justice system, which she points out still houses many people for marijuana-related crimes that are now no longer prosecuted after legalization legislation has gone into effect. She is likewise concerned with the lack of parameters for excessive force used by police officers.

"There is so much room for a justice and accountability lens in public policy," Dievendorf said, "and I think that if we start to look at every level of how we draft policy,



that equity will naturally fall into place.”

At 43, Dievendorf has a proven record in the state of Michigan as a champion for social justice, evidenced by her public policy work for Equality Michigan and the Lansing Association of Human Rights (LAHR). She gleaned early experience working for two representatives in the state legislature, which together with work in the nonprofit sector suggests Dievendorf is particularly savvy when it comes to Lansing politics. Viewing it from both sides, she would like to see a shift in the Democratic Party, too.

“Being a more progressive candidate is already something that is distinguishing me,” said Dievendorf, who has worked bills through the House and Senate and who has stopped negative legislation. “Being a more progressive candidate and legislator that understands how the system works is going to help all of us who want to make a difference for those who are vulnerable in Michigan. And that means ensuring that the Democratic Party can strategically become more progressive over time as well, and ideally, sooner is better. It is not going to be a comfortable change for everybody. But it’s the necessary change.”

Dievendorf herself would represent a change, as Michigan’s first nonbinary state representative. And like any trailblazer, she has experienced bumps and road blocks along the way, experiences she said were expected.



Emily Dievendorf in high school.

“It’s of course something that happens from our friends and colleagues in ways that they don’t know,” Dievendorf said, in reference to homophobia and transphobia, “and also from those folks that have visceral reactions to us in open, hateful ways. It is the world. Prior to winning the primary, these reactions were coming out in the form of stereotypes and assumptions and rumors.”

From experience, Dievendorf said she’s learned when it’s best to have a conversation in the face of hate and when that will only further the negativity. She called it frustrating and hurtful. As a public figure, Dievendorf said she’s been receiving hate mail for 20 years. And while sometimes she tells people it doesn’t faze her, “you know it fazes you,” she said.

For that reason, Dievendorf said the queer community needs to support one another. More than anything, she believes queer voices are vital.

“It is necessary that we as queer, LGBTQIA folks are there representing Michigan — because we are Michigan. We have to be the ones to create our own policy, to create the policy related to the issues that impact us. But also, Michigan residents need to be able to see us and know that we exist. They need to know us as neighbors and friends, and our colleagues need to know us, because that is a huge part of people getting past their own biases.”

Dievendorf said it is especially risky at this

time for LGBTQ+ candidates due to the ways hate is so openly and proudly expressed. But, she said, she and others knew what they were stepping into. Dievendorf has her eyes focused on the needs of her community.

“We were stepping into making change for our communities and other communities impacted by bias. But also we were moving into positions where we were going to be set up and almost displayed and available for those folks who don’t like anybody like us — and yet also for them to get to know us better as human beings. And over time, that can make a huge difference for the better. It can also be very

dangerous to us. On a whole though, it can make an incredible difference because it can lead to life-changing public policy.”

The work can be intense, but for Dievendorf, it’s not politics 24/7. Her hobbies are many and varied. She’s proud to be “a huge science nerd” who owns several digital microscopes. As a budding entomologist, Dievendorf has a particular interest in cicadas. She does animal rehabilitation. Skateboarding. Longboarding. And of course, there are her books.

“Yeah, I am somebody who is curious about everything,” Dievendorf confessed. “I own a bookstore, so I read about everything. There are stacks of books on every surface in my house. My great grandma, who is not with us anymore, was a socialist. I remember when I was a little kid, her house was full of stacked books — even in the fireplace — and as a little kid, I was like, ‘Yes, this is my person.’”

*The 77th State House District includes the city of Lansing north of the Grand River as well as parts of southern Clinton County and a small part of Eaton County. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 8. Early voting begins Thursday, Sept. 29.*

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# 'A Particular Type of Courage'

## Glen Johnson, Dead at 61, Was Openly Gay During Precarious Era For LGBTQ+ Corporate Workers

BY TIM RETZLOFF

In a 1997 profile in the Affirmations newsletter, Glen Johnson pledged to contribute "time, money, and enthusiasm" to the Ferndale community center. Over three decades, Johnson gave time, money, enthusiasm and much more to Affirmations as well as an array of other LGBTQ+ and arts causes in Metro Detroit, west Michigan and Chicago.

The life of the longtime LGBTQ+ activist and benefactor will be celebrated with a memorial at the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids on Sept. 24. Johnson died suddenly on Aug. 2 at age 61. According to his younger sister Lori, he had an undiagnosed heart ailment.

Glen William Johnson was born on Aug. 22, 1960 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Just before kindergarten he moved with his family to the Upper Peninsula, where he grew up, graduating from Hancock High School in 1978.

Already sensing he was gay as a teenager, he found refuge at college in Ann Arbor. Johnson earned his B.S. in education at the University of Michigan in 1982 and went on to get his Juris Doctor degree from Wayne State University Law School in 1986. He considered 1986 his year of coming out.

Johnson happened to attend Wayne Law School when a pioneering queer law student group there formed by David Piontkowsky functioned as something of an incubator for gay and lesbian civil rights. Piontkowsky, as president of the Michigan Organization for Human Rights, later litigated a successful challenge to the state sodomy law. Paula Ettlbrick, two years ahead of Johnson, went on to helm the national organization Lambda Legal.

After passing the bar, Johnson joined in with a group of local lesbian and gay attorneys and was out about his sexuality while most of the lawyers involved felt they needed to remain closeted. "He was very open in terms of 'This is me,'" Piontkowsky remembered.

Johnson continued to reside in Ann Arbor while at Wayne State and as he took positions in Metro Detroit with MichCon, DTE and the law firm Barris, Scott, Denn and Drikes.

"Glen was out in the early 1990s in a Detroit corporate law job and it was enormously important and brave for him to occupy that space," recalled Julie Enszer, who met Johnson in her role as Director of Development and, from 1995 to 1997, as Executive Director at Affirmations Community Center. "It was a particular type of courage at the time."

Johnson served on the center's board, a tenure that included stints as board president and vice president.

Tom Wilczak, who knew Johnson from Wayne, sat on the same Affirmations board. For Wilczak, one of Johnson's chief qualities was "a wicked sense of humor in the best way." Speaking

by phone, he saluted his longtime friend's volunteerism and credited Johnson with helping to steer Affirmations in vital new directions.

Enszer concurred. "He saw the value of Affirmations and was deeply committed to that work," she said.

Indeed, Johnson's vision, as expressed in the 1997 newsletter profile, was to see Affirmations secure its own building and to achieve a \$2 million budget. Both goals, over many years, bore fruit. The current facility opened in 2007. For 2022, the center has a budget of \$1.8 million.

"To me, personally, he was an incredible ally and mentor and conspirator," Enszer said.

Also in the 1990s, Johnson purchased a vacation cottage in the Saugatuck area, which he loved. Employment opportunities eventually drew him to west Michigan. In his later career, he assumed executive positions with Fifth Third Bank and Family Office Exchange.

Shortly after moving to Grand Rapids in 2002, Johnson met Tom Merchant on a blind date. The two began a relationship, shared a home and married in Boston in June 2009. According to Merchant, they soon forged a co-mingled extended family of nieces and nephews.

Although they divorced in

December 2020, Johnson and Merchant remained close friends.

While they were a couple, they sought to make an impact through substantial financial gifts. Johnson and Merchant were instrumental, together with Shelley Padnos and Carol Sarosik, in creating the LGBT Fund of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation in 2013.

"Glen was always an advocate for underserved communities," Merchant said, noting that Johnson continued his activism no matter where he lived. In recent years, Johnson supported such causes as Planned Parenthood of Michigan and, even before Johnson moved full-time to Chicago, directing time, money, and enthusiasm to the Center on Halsted.

While he embraced the pursuit of social justice, Johnson was also passionate about culture — specifically film, architecture and art. This was perhaps most reflected in his devotion to the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, a 158-acre botanical and sculptural oasis.

In a 2017 feature published on the Meijer Gardens website, Johnson explained his personal philosophy. "We have no children and we're very fortunate to have great jobs, so we were very purposeful in that giving would be our legacy."

*Glen Johnson's Sept. 24 memorial celebration will begin at 11 a.m. The Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park is located at 1000 E. Beltline Avenue N.E. in Grand Rapids.*



Glen Johnson



Allison Miller. Photo courtesy of Allison Miller

→ Allison Miller

Continued from page 15

have personally gone through a world of change,” she says.

And identifying as queer, she says, has become a “new normal.”

Still, Miller remembers the wave of phone calls and texts she received from colleagues, thanking her for having the courage to write such a truth-telling piece. “It was then that I realized being out and proud in the jazz community was my duty and that my activism and music must walk hand in hand,” she says. “I hope that, by voicing my truth and publicly embracing my queerness and my queer family, I have helped younger queer and trans artists feel safe to be their whole selves.”

Miller acknowledges that younger generations are “actively breaking down patriarchal oppression.” But, as evidenced by recent Supreme Court decisions, for people who are not white men, “we are not out of the woods yet — our freedom is being stripped away again. We’ve come a long way since 2013, but we have a lot more work to do.”

On the whole, the jazz world still skews mostly male, which only makes Miller’s impressive list of accomplishments shine brighter. Much of Miller’s storied career has taken place in New York City, but these days she can be found crisscrossing the globe to share her love of jazz, whether she’s playing, teaching or composing.

She teaches at multiple renowned music programs including the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music (where she was named a Melba Liston Fellow in 2019), the Stanford Jazz Workshop, Centrum in Washington State and Geri Allen Jazz Camp in New Jersey. She also serves as artistic director of Jazz Camp West in northern California.

Miller is also a three-time Jazz Ambassador for the U.S. State Department. Additionally, she has served as Monterey Jazz Festival’s Artist in Residence in 2019 and was appointed Arts Envoy to Thailand for her work with Jazz Education Abroad.

It’s not all jazz, all the time, though. Miller’s boundary-breaking approach has seen her working alongside queer singer-songwriters like Ani DiFranco, Indigo Girls and Brandi Carlile, and she has toured with avant-garde saxophonist Marty Ehrlich and the legendary late organist Dr. Lonnie Smith.

But Miller’s career of late has centered on her affiliation with ARTEMIS, a group of six accomplished female musicians whose eponymous 2020 debut (on the Blue Note Records label) has been described as “state-of-the-art modern jazz, alternately hard swinging, contemplative, commercial and abstract” by Allen Michie in a review for online arts magazine The Arts Fuse.

Miller joined up with the group in 2017. In addition to her work behind the drums, ARTEMIS includes pianist and musical director Renee Rosnes, clarinetist Anat Cohen, tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and bassist Norike Ueda. The musicians, who have each staked out an impressive solo career, hail from across the globe, from the U.S., Canada, France, Chile, Israel and Japan.

While some critics have termed ARTEMIS as a “supergroup,” Miller shies away from the label — and all labels, really. “I think these terms represent an example of media’s addiction to labeling,” she says. “ARTEMIS is a group of jazz musicians at the top of their game who have committed to making music together and developing a band sound. We love playing together and recognize our special music chemistry. We are not a gimmick.”

Miller says the press has an important role to play, but at the heart of it all is the music. “In the end, we and most musicians I know are in this for the creative journey. We want to humbly continue to grow and evolve as musicians and human beings, and we hope to do so with other musicians who are dedicated to the same. This is what ARTEMIS represents to me.”

It’s been more than 35 years since Miller first picked up a drumstick at age 9, but she’s still in love with the instrument she says she is still grateful to play. “I always wanted to play the drums from the time I can remember,” she says. “Music literally moved me and the beat was always where my soul gravitated. I still love drums as much as I did when I was a kid.”

Partly, it’s because there’s a certain physicality related to playing the drums — “the dexterity it requires, the fearlessness it demands, the way playing makes me feel absolutely in the moment and the way a groove makes the audience move,” she says. “I feel so grateful that I get to be the rhythm maker for a living.”

*Detroit Jazz Festival 2022 will be held Sept. 2-5 at Hart Plaza and Campus Martius Park in downtown Detroit. ARTEMIS performs Sept. 5 at 4 p.m. at Hart Plaza. Details at detroitjazzfest.org.*



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**I Am Thumb-body  
Puzzle on page 29**



Lil Nas X. Photo: Filip Cusic

# 5 Times Lil Nas X Delivered Earth-Shattering Queerness

## Queer Cultural Phenom Launches Tour in Detroit Sept. 6

BY JOHN BESCHE

Not very long ago at all, hardly anyone had heard of Montero Lamar Hill. One record-breaking first single, “Old Town Road” (the remix won him a Grammy), and an eponymous debut album later, the artist better known as Lil Nas X has already reached superstardom.

This alone is unexceptional. Call it the nature of fame, the path from anonymity to Album of the Year at the Grammys — he’s been twice-nominated, once in 2020 and again in 2022 — sometimes skews vertical.

That said, even among a constellation of social-media savvy superstars, Lil Nas has done something exceptional. He has somehow managed to cram the

moment-seizing, media-mesmerizing, to-be-discussed-on-Monday happenings that punctuate a storied career into just about a single year.

And he made it gay.

Before he launches his Long Live Montero tour in Detroit at the Fox Theatre on Sept. 6, with another date the very next day, here are five key moments that we can’t stop thinking about:

### Billy Porter ‘That’s What I Want’ music video cameo

The “That’s What I Want” music video is textbook Nas. It’s a sex-infused, high-energy, high-

production-value video that tells a Montero-branded story. In this case, Nas starts a torrid relationship with a male-presenting football player who leaves him to start a family with a woman (in dramatic fashion). In the culmination of what can only be described as gay fantasia, “Pose” star

See Lil Nas X, page 24

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TransFusion's 2022 gathering. Photo courtesy of TGDetroit

### → TransFusion

Continued from page 7

Students throughout the nation are at risk of losing access to gender-affirming healthcare, sports participation and bathrooms that match their identities. Michigan is no exception.

Last year, State Sen. Lana Theis (R-Brighton) introduced a bill that would require Michigan districts to limit gender-specific school sports competitions to only students of the same biological gender, a move that would directly impact the nearly 4,000 transgender students in Michigan (a figure estimated by the Williams Institute in 2020). That bill was passed on to the Education and Career Readiness Committee, which has, so far, not chosen to pursue it.

Recently, state legislators introduced resolutions mirroring Florida's Parental Rights in Education Law (the "Don't Say Gay" law, which went into effect July 1). If passed, Michigan public educators would be barred from presenting any instructional material related to sexual orientation or gender identity before fourth grade.

The fact that these bills and laws are cropping up three decades after the conservative right railed against the picture book, "Heather Has Two Mommies," is alarming, but the way forward, Walters said, is through connection and community. "The trans community is its own unique and, honestly, special demographic," she said. "Yet, we unite with other like members because the need is there for us to fight for the acceptance of all persons, not just ourselves."

### New hope after state Supreme Court decision

It's not all bleak news. Powerful state officials like Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Attorney General Dana Nessel have proven to be outspoken advocates for the LGBTQ+ community, using their positions and power to drive several important initiatives.

Nessel, a lesbian herself, argued before the state supreme court in March that the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act includes LGBTQ+ protections that should be applied in the discrimination case "Rouch World vs. Michigan Department of Civil Rights," which she had requested be sent up to the Michigan Supreme Court, bypassing the appeals court.

In the underlying case, the owners of Rouch World, a wedding venue, had turned away a same-sex couple based on the owner's religious beliefs. Uprooted Electrolysis, a second party to the case, denied hair-removal services to a transgender woman.

In July, the court issued a decision affirming Nessel's argument, ruling that Elliott-Larsen does protect against discrimination over sexual orientation. The decision will no doubt play into the outcomes for pending discrimination cases and in how Michigan businesses operate.

The ruling, Nessel said in a press conference after it was announced, means "no longer having your state government be permitted to view you as a second-class citizen... It means respect, it means equal dignity under the law."

While the GOP seems intent on pushing the narrative that LGBTQ+ individuals — especially transgender people — are "groomers" and "pedophiles," in the world outside politics, Walters sees many positive signs.

One clear indicator that times have changed in some places is the fact that TransFusion was held in historically socially conservative Dearborn. Walters said "pockets of emergence" are popping up all over Michigan these days. "Most universities have LGBTQ+ groups, and the trans members are highly vocal and visual," she said. "And in the workplace, so many major employers have LGBTQ+ employee resource groups."

One example is Pontiac's UWM, which makes it a point to publicize their popular employee resource groups, including an active LGBTQ+ group that includes multiple outspoken trans team members. UWM employee and Jamaican transgender man Anthony Dunkley told Pride Source in June that the way the company embraces and celebrates diversity allows him

See **TransFusion**, page 30



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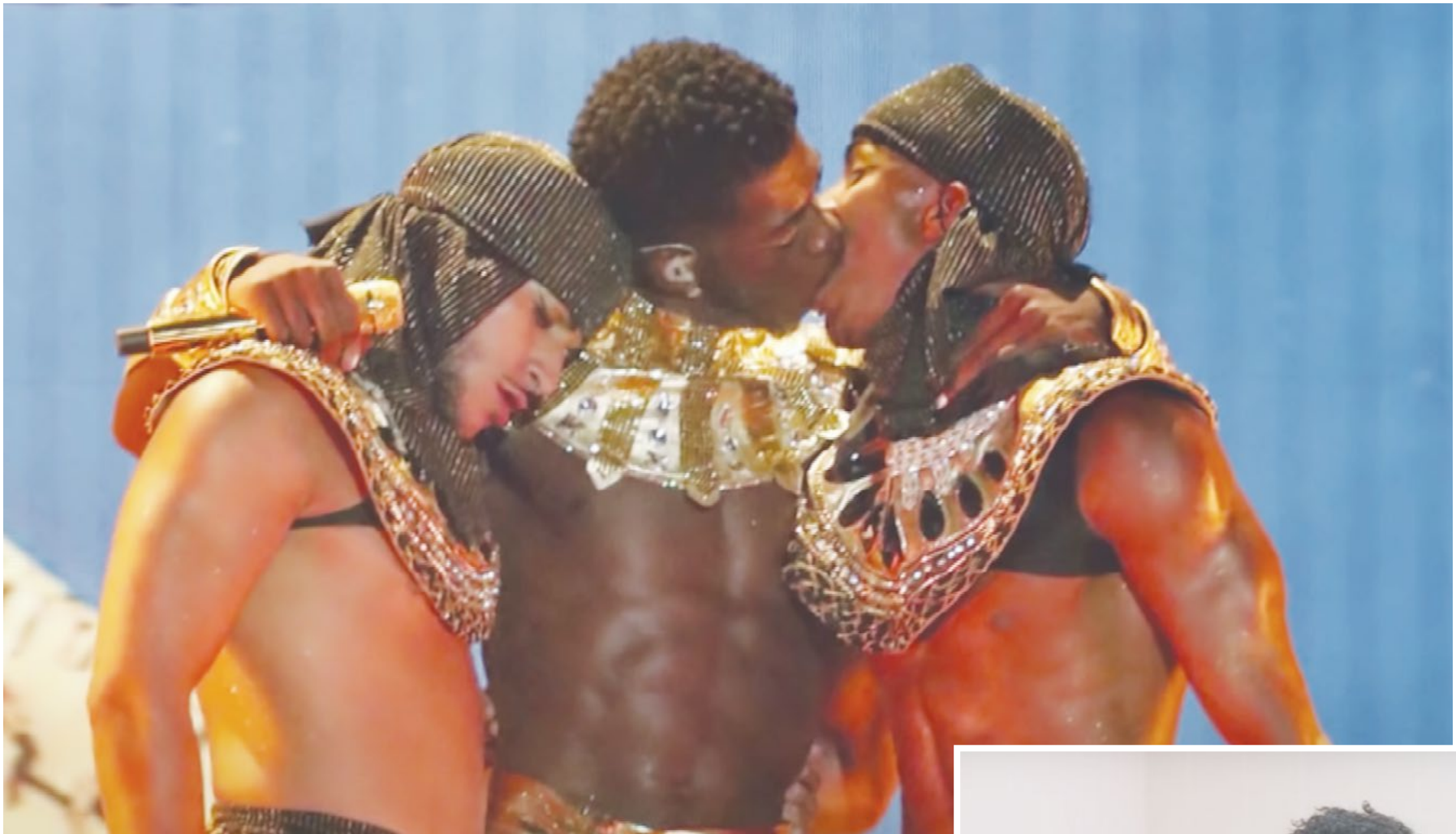
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(Above) Lil Nas X at the BET Awards. Screenshot courtesy of BET. (Right) Nas in the music video for “That’s What I Want.”

## → Lil Nas X

Continued from page 20

Billy Porter stands at the altar of a church. Nas processes down the aisle in a white wedding dress and teary-eyed mascara. Porter hands Nas a black guitar which he wields to deliver the last word, in the logic of a music video. It’s a campy retelling of a tale as old as time.

## Montero takes Maury

Drawing from the cast of “That’s What I Want,” Lil Nas X collaborated with tabloid TV titan Maury Povich to create a 21-minute episode of Povich’s show that was so realistic, many viewers didn’t realize it was a joke. Nas reprises his role as Montero from that video for a high-drama sit down with the football lover and his wife. And yes, someone is NOT the father! Nas and company clearly had a lot of fun exploring the music video narrative on television’s most melodramatic stage. They breathed life into a ... tired corner of television, queering its central drama along the way.

## ‘SNL’ Pride Month song

Anya Taylor-Joy and Lil Nas X wrapped up

Season 46 of “SNL” in 2021, delivering a critically-acclaimed episode complete with a very gay sketch on the eve of Pride Month. Taylor-Joy and the repertory cast romp through Pride Month clichés — unrequited party crushes, theories of neoliberalism — as the pandemic subsides (momentarily, as things turn out). Lil Nas X appears toward the end, and he has some queer icons to thank.

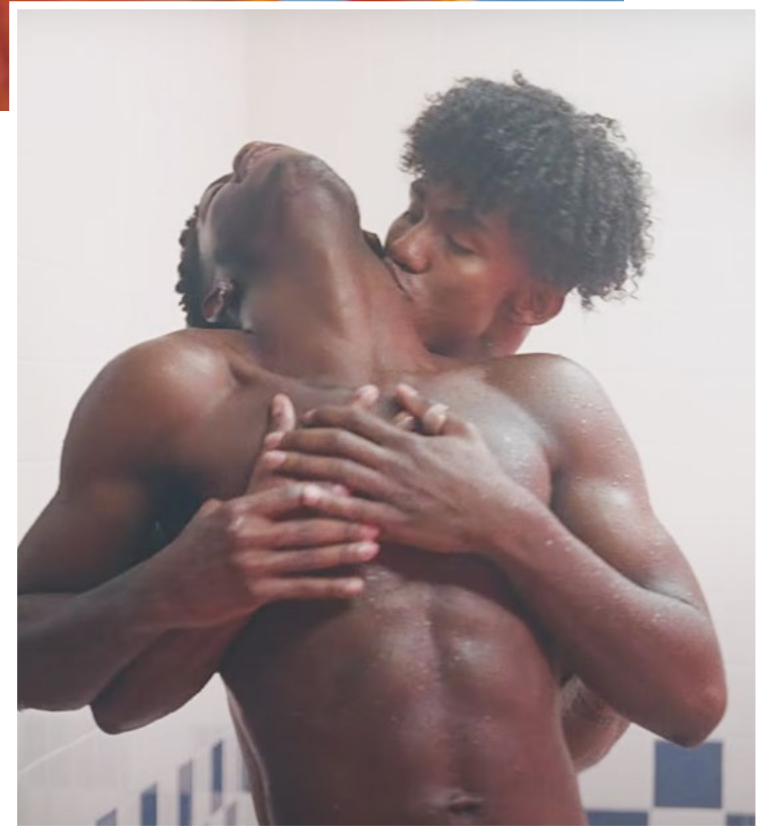
## Montero gives Satan a lap dance, GOP governor fears for souls of impressionable youth

In the “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)” music video, Lil Nas X gives a lap dance to none other than Satan himself. A related collaboration with streetwear brand MSCHF produced “Satan Shoes,” limited edition of the 666 shoes, purportedly made with a drop of human blood. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota tweeted “Our kids are being told that this kind of product is, not only okay, it’s ‘exclusive.’ But do you know what’s more exclusive? Their God-given eternal soul.” Nas’ mic-drop response: “Ur a whole governor and u on here tweeting about some

damn shoes. do ur job!”

## BET Awards surprise ending

In shimmering pharaonic garb, Lil Nas X gave an Ancient Egypt-themed performance of “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)” alongside dozens of backup dancers. It was a typical awards show performance with lots of special effects and an elaborate set. It even ended in one of those carefully choreographed frozen poses. That is, typical until Lil Nas started making out with the backup dancer to his left.





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# Rainbow Rising

Randy Rainbow. Photo: Dirty Sugar Photography

## Before Grand Rapids Show, Political Satirist Talks About Life Beyond His Viral Spoofs

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

There are far worse things happening in the world, clearly, but political-parody sensation Randy Rainbow does have

a bone to pick with some folks. And this time, it's not with Marjorie Taylor Greene. Not even with Donald Trump.

"I'm throwing my team the hell under the bus," he joked on camera, after jumping on Zoom last minute when he was reminded of our interview, which was "on everyone's calendar but mine."

"I was getting ready to take a bubble bath," he said, "but I'm happy to be with you."

At the time of our interview in April, Rainbow was making his press rounds to chat about his debut memoir, "Playing with Myself." The humanizing book recounts his life growing up as an imaginative and misunderstood boy, before he became known for his playful digs at right-wing figures, reworking famous Broadway songs to poke at the sheer insanity of those making really terrible political decisions. We meet

Nanny, his adoring late grandmother; we go back to the video that launched his viral career, when he pretend-called Mel Gibson; we learn about his comedy-meets-Broadway origins and how it became a full-blown career, earning him three Emmy nominations and famous fans such as Patti LuPone and even, yes, Carol Burnett.

Before he launched his summer tour, which stops in Grand Rapids at the DeVos Performance Hall on Sept. 10, Rainbow spoke about his many mom fans, giving people real reasons to hate him, and the "vulnerable places" he went to while writing this book.

**I was talking to a friend about interviewing you and he said, "Will he sing?"**

Why would I just sing? See, this is the fake news on me. Everyone thinks

I'm a lunatic who bursts into song.

**Why would you just sing? Perhaps because you've built a career on it, I don't know.**

True. If we were out having a couple of drinks, I probably would be singing constantly and you would tell me to shut up. But not always.

**In addition to LGBTQ+ fans, you've got a lot of mom fans.**

They hit on me. It's inappropriate.

**They haven't learned consent, apparently.**

Mothers don't know consent. I take it as a compliment. I see it as a Barry Manilow/Liberace kind of thing.

**So the book: You are extremely vulnerable in it, and I just want to tell you that I appreciate you sharing**

**intimate parts of your life with us. I have a real appreciation for the fact that you went to some complex and complicated places. With your family, especially.**

I'm glad I got on the Zoom today, because that's really nice to hear and I appreciate that. I did go to some vulnerable places. I was certainly more raw than I've ever been before publicly.

**Was there a moment where you decided that, "If I'm going to write a book, I need to tell that part of the story to tell my full story"? And if so, when was that moment in the process for you?**

From the beginning, I had every intention of being as vulnerable and as real as I could muster. People have been so generous with their praises — mothers across the

“

*Why would I just sing? See, this is the fake news on me. Everyone thinks I'm a lunatic who bursts into song.*

country. And everyone who has written to me over the years, especially the last five years, and has come to my show and my meet-and-greets, they're so generous with their praise and... gratitude is the word.

They thank me for getting them through. Getting them through Trump, getting them through the pandemic, getting them through their own personal struggles, and they offer their emotional selves up to me, and in a way that's so real. And I realized that's so nice, but it's not really a two-way street at this moment, because these people only know the two-dimensional persona that they've come to know, which is certainly a part of me.

But they don't really know that I am a complicated person who has my own insecurities, and flaws, and heartbreaks, and has faced my own adversities in life. So I wanted to really seize the moment and, as a gift to those followers who have been with me for years and to myself, to really come out and put it out there on the table.

#### What do mothers of LGBTQ+ kids tell you?

I meet so many mothers. So many of them come to my live shows, and a lot of them bring their little kids who sometimes dress up like me and they look like Liza Minnelli, and they've got the bows and the pink glasses. And they say a variety of things, one of which is lovely: "Thank you for being a role model to my child as someone who is unabashedly being himself."

And then sometimes at the meet-and-greets they ask: "My son is behaving this way and I want to support him or her or them. What is your advice?" I'm not an expert on the subject, but I do know that I had a mother who, in my opinion, did the perfect thing, which was create a safe environment for me to be whatever it is I was wanting to be. She didn't push [me] one way or the other, she didn't make it her own thing. She just simply provided a safe space, and to me, that's the best advice I can offer any mother with a little boy or girl like I was. I hope that some of those mothers will read this and get something valuable from it.

#### This is your first book. So what was it like? Did you get up in the middle of the night with a thought and write a whole chapter at 3 a.m.? And how did it compare to writing your musical parodies?

Yes to all that. I don't have to tell you: As a writer, you walk around with these things just popping into your head. So yes, there was a lot of jumping up at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and taking lots of notes. I found the experience to be a lot of things. It was much

more emotional than I thought it would be; I was crying a lot through the good and bad.

These are the memories that have been lighting the corners of my minds, to quote Barbra, for many years, but I never had an opportunity to really flush them out and put them down on paper. So it was very cathartic, very emotional, fun, I loved it, and different in that it was the first time I had done any sort of real autobiographical writing. So that was a pleasure.

Again, one of the most satisfying things about this is that I can say if you love me... because some people love me, some people hate me, and my first thought when someone says anything positive or negative on social media or anywhere else is it's interesting

because you don't know me yet. You actually don't know me. So here's a little bit of the real me, and then decide. Now you can really hate me. Or love me. Choose. But if you're judging, again, that two-dimensional, scripted, campy persona, then you don't know the full story yet.

#### And there's an entire chapter for those who are still hating you because of tweets you sent in 2010 and 2011 that were deemed racist and homophobic, which you apologized for.

There's plenty of sunshine and Santa Claus in this book, meaning I talk a lot about the happy things and the joy and excitement and fun and positive, but that was something that was not so fun or positive that I went through. And I wanted to talk about it because it's a topic that I'm interested in. I'm interested in that conversation, and I now have a personal perspective that I didn't have before. So I wanted to add that to the public conversation. It's not a 15-page mea culpa, it's not a whole apology, because I've apologized for what I've wanted to apologize for.

It was humbling, I learned a lot, but as I say in the end, I can't wrap it up neatly. It's a very nuanced discussion, especially coming from someone who is a comedian and doesn't like putting restrictions on art.



See *Rainbow Rising*, page 28

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Randy Rainbow. Photo: Dirty Sugar Photography

### → Rainbow Rising

Continued from page 27

**Given what happened the night that Will Smith attacked Chris Rock on stage at the Oscars after Chris's joke, does it make you concerned at all for the state of comedy? It was Kathy Griffin who recently expressed concerns about others following in Will's footsteps when a joke is made that someone doesn't like.**

That is a concern of mine, but I don't know if it started that night. I think that we're in a very weird place, and people are angry and taking their aggressions out in places that it really doesn't belong.

We're in such a horrible place in the world and there's war going on and pandemics, and it's just a really heavy time. And I felt bad for a country who tuned in to get a little levity and escape for a couple of hours, and had to see this hero, this person that they idolize... I certainly am a Will Smith fan. They had to see him attack another idol and another hero of ours. That was just so sad to me. It was just sad that we couldn't get that little escape that we just wanted so badly.

**You said that you were concerned before this even happened about performing your own political comedy.**

People ask me all the time, "Are you concerned about that?" I am satirical and I spoof. My satire certainly leans in one direction. But it's something I try not to really overthink because what can you do?

**I wonder if it's easier for people to digest your comedy since it's filtered through an almost cartoonish lens.**

I think I hope so. It's my opinion that I'm

tackling these topics in the most innocuous way possible with show tunes. So it interests me when people get really ticked off by any of my work. I have to question their intentions because it's like, "Are you really that incensed about a song from 'The Music Man?'" People are really interested in being angry these days.

**Going back to the book, what was the most emotional topic for you to write about?**

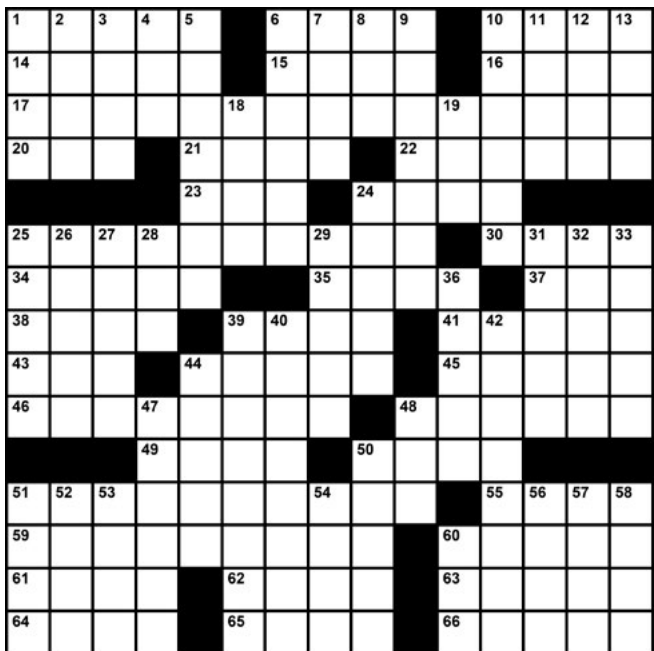
Certainly anything to do with my grandmother, my Nanny, was very emotional.

**She's in the book a lot. It's not only a beautiful tribute to her, but to unconditional love and what that can mean to somebody.**

You have to write the foreword for the paperback edition. You're saying such nice things and things that I hoped came through, and that's so nice. And she does pop up in the book, these cosmic entrances that she makes. Things that I hadn't even thought about until I was writing about emotional things.

When I talk about my cat dying at the beginning of the pandemic, Nanny made her presence known, I believe, in moments like those too. That cat chapter — I feel there should be a disclaimer to the pet people in my audience.

I have been hearing from a lot of the readers who are cat or pet people who say that it's brutal and hard to get through, which I like. That means to me that I did it right. Because it was a brutal experience because we locked down, and then my cat, the only other soul that I was sharing this experience with, got sick two days later. So that was hard. But the happy ending is I got a new cat and she's sitting right here judging me like a bitch.



- 37 Same-sex vow, now  
38 Gets sum  
39 Future queen of "Star Wars"  
41 Chairman Arafat  
43 Keanu in "The Matrix"  
44 Poet Eileen  
45 Heals, like a bone  
46 More of the title  
48 More of the title  
49 Lake of Ohio ferries  
50 Gossip from Ted Casablanca, e.g.  
51 Naked soldier?  
55 Man or Lesbos  
59 End of the quote  
60 End of the title  
61 Milk man?  
62 Really moved  
63 "Streetcar" director and namesakes  
64 Blown away  
65 Some like them hot  
66 Texas teammate
- 11 Like Lindsay Lohan's movie girls  
12 Source of audiovisual AIDS?  
13 Popeye's \_\_\_' Pea  
18 Fall out of contention  
19 Bloomers worn around the neck  
24 They bother bitches  
25 Former coin of Colette's land  
26 "Brokeback Mountain" setting  
27 Grant money to  
28 \_\_\_ in "queen"  
29 Takes a whack at  
31 Vidal's "\_\_\_ to a Small Planet"  
32 Head of costume designing  
33 Language of Leif  
36 Little bikers in a Gay Pride march  
39 Bernie Taupin, e.g.  
40 Linda of "Nick News"  
42 Mounds ruled by queens  
44 Stuck deeply  
47 Screwing, for example  
48 Annoying person, to Harry Potter  
50 Tries to lose  
51 Kelly once of "All My Children"  
52 From the top  
53 Go down  
54 Bone in a limp wrist  
56 Mapplethorpe's "Man in Polyester \_\_\_"  
57 Shakespearean king  
58 Petrol station choice  
60 Gravel-voiced actor Arthur

### I Am Thumb-body

#### Across

- 1 Where to see Tom, Dick, or Harry  
6 Body of water  
10 Shakespeare's Puck, and others  
14 Marilyn's almost normal name?  
15 Ill will, or lack of grace  
16 Pussy sound  
17 Start of a quote from this puzzle's movie

- 20 Broadway scenery chewer  
21 Goes down on  
22 Cross-dresser \_\_\_d'Arc  
23 Auberjonois on "Deep Space Nine"  
24 Blow it  
25 More of the quote  
30 Start of the title of a movie with a woman with big thumbs  
34 Gay-friendly Barrett and others  
35 Knock off

### Q Puzzle

#### Down

- 1 "Hedwig and the Angry \_\_\_"  
2 Nickelodeon explorer  
3 Like a muscle Mary's waist  
4 \_\_\_ Zion church  
5 Like Uranus  
6 Type of torpedo, to 23-Across  
7 Crew tools  
8 Math degree  
9 Wedding hires  
10 Penetrate deeply

See p. 19 for answers

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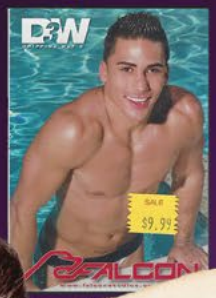
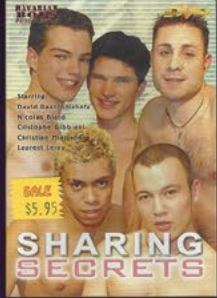
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→ **TransFusion**

Continued from page 22

to be himself and contributes to success. "My team lead once told me that when you invest more into people, success will follow," he said.

Signs of a positive evolution happening in Michigan on the social front include the newly founded woman-centered Fern Fest, which is held where the Michigan Womyn's Festival was held for more than 40 years. The new festival explicitly welcomes transwomen, a direct contrast to the Womyn's Festival, which was the target of backlash when the festival's producer, Lisa Vogel, said in 2014, "We have said that this space, for this week, is intended to be for womyn who were born female, raised as girls and who continue to identify as womyn."

Events like TransFusion are "vitaly

important" to fostering trans acceptance, Bacon said, noting that much has changed since she started the first group for what were then referred to as "crossdressers" over four decades ago. Back then, she had to worry about the group's safety and worried about "what I could do and what I couldn't do."

Today, despite various legal challenges and ever-present danger, the trans community is growing and, in many ways, thriving. The evolution happening in the Michigan trans community is fueled, in part, by a younger generation of outspoken, articulate advocates fortunate to be starting from a

foundation people like Walters, Bacon and Rogers have been building for decades.

Ultimately, the message is simple. In Walters' own words: "We are human beings. We are worthy of love, acceptance and opportunities just because we exist."

"Let love always reign."

*Signs of a positive evolution happening in Michigan on the social front include the newly founded woman-centered Fern Fest, which is held where the Michigan Womyn's Festival was held for more than 40 years.*




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