

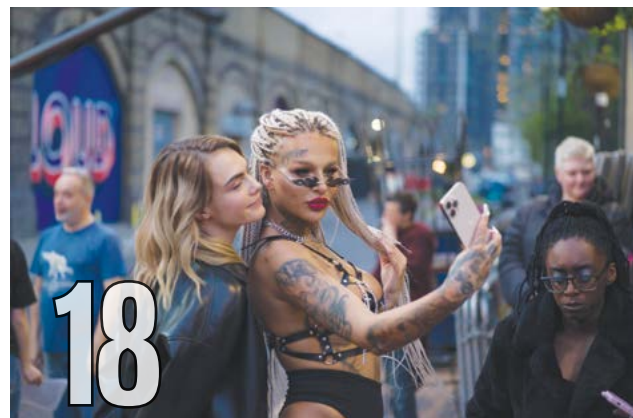
MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between the Lines™



Gigi's Turns 50

The Oldest Gay-Owned Gay Bar in Detroit Is Now a Half-Century Old



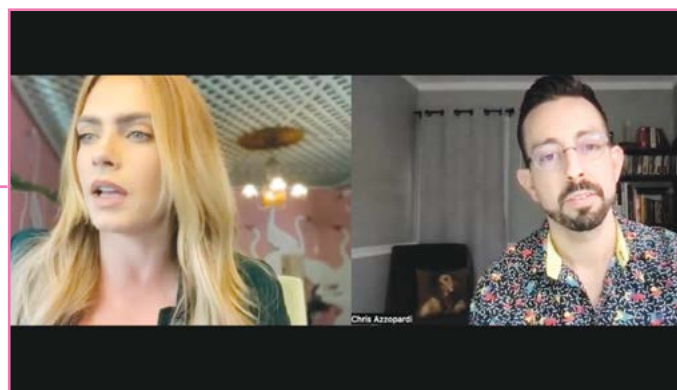
- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Gigi's Celebrates 50 Years: Many Queer Bars Have Closed — But at Gigi's, the Music Hasn't Stopped
- 8 Queer Fear as Michigan Republican Party Gives Top Spot to Election Denier Kristina Karamo
- 9 PRISM Men's Choir: A Brotherhood of Advocacy and Disco Fever
- 10 The Promise of Equal Protections: Whitmer Hosts LGBTQ+ Roundtable to Discuss Elliott-Larsen Amendment
- 10 Mourning Detroit Performer Courtney Tori Graves
- 11 Brother Thomas Zerafa, Activist for LGBTQ+ and Numerous Progressive Causes, Dies at Age 71
- 13 In the Wake of Brianna Ghey's Murder, It's Time to Reexamine Trans News Coverage
- 15 Betty Who Helped Me Embrace My Queer Identity. Now She's Embracing Her Own.
- 16 There Goes Your Money: From Madonna to Beyoncé, the 2023 Detroit Concert Season Has a Gay Icon for Everyone
- 18 Cara Delevingne Can Finally Be Her Queer Self
- 22 An Invaluable New Resource for Donor-Conceived People with LGBTQ+ Parents
- 23 'Princess Power' to the Rescue: Producers Drew Barrymore and Savannah Guthrie on Helping Kids Love Who They Are



Photos courtesy of Jason A. Michael, Tim Retzlaff and Gigi's Facebook

Only on Pridesource.com

Find **Pride Source** on YouTube to check out all of our latest videos, including interviews with Shania Twain, Cara Delevingne, Drew Barrymore and Billy Porter



VOL. 3109 • MARCH 2, 2023

ISSUE 1221

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS

Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL

Editorial Director

Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Assistant Editor

Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

Senior Staff Writers

Ellen Shanna Knoppow, Jason A. Michael

Writers and Columnists

D'Anne Witkowski, Jon King, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Tim Retzlaff, George Elkind, Eve Kucharski

CREATIVE

Cartoonists

Paul Berg

Graphic Designer

Sarah Wolf

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen

ADVERTISING & SALES

sales@pridesource.com

Director of Sales

Tim Powers
734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

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

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate



2022 AWARD WINNER



"Pride Source"



Follow us @pridesource



@pridesourcemedia



Pride Source



Email your op-eds to
editor@pridesource.com



Sign up online to receive our E-Digest

Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2022

5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Somehow, we're three months into 2023. By now, you've either kept up with those New Year Resolutions or opted to chart a different course, free from the expectations of 2022 You. 2023 You is in luck in either case, because there's a big world out there just waiting for whoever you are, wherever you are. This month, create beautiful music with strangers, check out a one-of-a-kind show featuring trans comedians, advocate for homeless, queer youth and support your local library.



April Clark and Grace Freud. Photo: Twitter

Laugh It Up at a Queer Comedy Show

"Girl God is the most popular trans comedy group performing today, if not ever," says the press release for Girl God's ongoing tour, set to hit Detroit's El Club March 16. Considering the duo, comprised of writers April Clark and Grace Freud (who has written for "Rick and Morty," The Onion and other places you've heard of), has been selling out shows coast to coast and racking up the views online for their uncategorizable sketches, it's hard to argue. Expect a funny, surreal, interactive performance with a big focus on the pair's trans and queer perspectives.

March 16, 7 p.m., El Club (4114 Vernor Highway, Detroit). Tickets at [GirlGodLive.com](https://www.girlgodlive.com).



Dress Up All Purrrty, Support a Good LGBTQ+ Cause

Looking for a great excuse to have a memorable night out? The Together in Pride Gala, set for March 9 in Midland, hits all the right notes: cocktails, music, dancing, an auction and more. Not only can you dress to impress at this no-jeans event, but you'll be supporting Great Lakes Bay Pride, a Midland-based organization that funds a laundry list of LGBTQ+ support services including peer groups, the Harmony Diversity Choir, networking events, Pride Month activities and advocacy work.

March 9, 5:30 p.m., Midland Country Club (1120 W. Saint Andrews Road, Midland). Ticket link at greatlakesbaypride.org.



Advocate for Homeless LGBTQ+ Youth

Ozone House in Ypsilanti tackles the ongoing struggle too many LGBTQ+ youth face every day — housing insecurity. "Young people who are BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA2S+ are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, foster care, and in our juvenile justice system due to systemic racism," said Megh Hollowell, Ozone House development associate. Together with the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH), the organization will hold a day of homelessness prevention advocacy at the state capitol in Lansing on March 15. The groups will call on elected officials to address the prevalence of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth among people experiencing homelessness, living in foster care and battling the juvenile justice system. "We are committed to eliminating these disparities and addressing the impacts these broken systems have on young people," Hollowell added.

March 15, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Michigan State Capitol (100 North Capitol Ave., Lansing). Learn more at ozonehouse.org/events.



Let Your Heart Song Out

There's a song in your heart (whether you know it or not) — here's your chance to sing out in imperfect harmony with strangers and friends alike. The Choir! Choir! Choir! Singalong tour comes to The Ark in Ann Arbor March 5 and will have audience members harmonizing in honor of Beatles legend George Harrison's 80th birthday. Along the way, you'll be expertly guided by choral professionals who will create an unforgettable musical creation on the spot. Like magic, even inexperienced "choir members" will find they have played a role in creating something very special.

March 5, 7 p.m. at The Ark (316 S Main St., Ann Arbor). Ticket link at theark.org.



Support Your Local Library

Who knew librarians would emerge as the superheroes we didn't even know we needed in a troubling era? It's true. These defenders of free speech and inclusion have been out there all along, quietly upholding American values and helping people connect to the world around them in so many ways. It's not just books — your local library likely offers a slew of free offerings like computer classes, crafting groups, lectures, gaming events, meeting space, research assistance and resources like tax forms, not to mention an essentially endless list of totally free things you can check out. In addition to books and DVDs, many libraries offer things like board games and puzzles. For example, the Ann Arbor District Library allows patrons to check out art prints, home tools, telescopes and more. So, look up your local library and support a community resource that has always had your back.

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





Nickki Stevens. Courtesy photo

Gigi's Celebrates 50 Years

Many Queer Bars Have Closed — But at Gigi's, the Music Hasn't Stopped

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Gigi's, one of the most beloved and respected gay bars on the Michigan map, is celebrating a milestone few venues manage to reach — 50 years in the business. It's a business that has changed dramatically over the past five decades, but the core that has kept patrons coming back remains intact.

Partly, Gigi's retains its charm thanks to its family atmosphere. Folks who go to Gigi's seem to come back again and again through the years. And key staff members and former title holders, dating back to the '70s, still continue to come regularly. It's a place where everybody knows your name — or at least your alias.

Though I don't go out much these days, I still consider Gigi's my home bar. I was 17 in 1989 when I made my first trip to Gigi's just

off Southfield on Warren Road. The bar had already been open for 16 years and the reigning Miss Gigi's was Peaches LaFleur, long since deceased but remembered for terrific numbers such as Tina Turner's "I Can't Stand the Rain," which she performed holding the spine of an umbrella with tattered pieces of tarp hanging from the end of the spokes.

Other former Miss Gigi's, like Lady T Tempest, Renee Peters and Edie Franklin, were regular performers at the time. As was Rosalyn Delight, whose signature number was a

Crystal Gayle parody called "Donuts Make My Brown Eyes Blue," during which she actually threw donuts — day olds, I'm told, into the audience.

But Gigi's fabled history began

long before I first walked through its doors.

The bar's gay roots date back to the very early 1970s. Who originally owned the bar and when it actually opened is unknown. It is believed to have begun operating in the early 1960s as a bowling alley called Parkland Recreation. Starting in 1968, the bar was owned by George Mugianis. During his tenure, Café Gigi's, as it was then called, was a supper club for a time. The establishment featured female go-go dancers, many of whom were allegedly lesbian, and soon attracted a large female crowd.



DJ Chico and his Boyz. Photo: Jason A. Michael

In 1973, 35-year-old Tony Garneau, a former grocer, acquired the bar and turned it all the way gay. Quite the accomplishment for that time, just four years post Stonewall. The Woodward Bar & Grill in Midtown held the distinction of being Detroit's oldest gay bar until its untimely demise by a three-alarm fire last year. But the Woodward was owned by William Karagas, a straight man and, later, his widow Elaine. That makes Gigi's the oldest gay-owned gay bar still in operation in Detroit.

Gigi's holds another distinction as well. The Woodward, for many years, was just a gentlemen's bar. No women allowed. Gigi's, by comparison, was one of the very first mixed clubs. Men and women, Black and white — everyone partied together thanks to Garneau's open-door policy.

Franklin, Miss Gigi's 1978, has history with the bar predating Garneau's purchase. She first came to the bar in 1972 and began performing just a few years later. Back then, things were much different from today.

"The cops would come down every now and then," she said. "They'd check and make sure you had on men's underwear, because you couldn't perform if you weren't wearing a piece of men's clothing."

Performers also had to trek downtown to get a performer's license before they could grace the stage. Back at the club, the police weren't the only ones harassing Gigi's and its patrons. Some nearby straight neighbors weren't too happy to have a homo bar on the block.

"The straight people would start trouble out in the parking lot during the day," recalled Tempest, Miss Gigi's 1983. "Tony would say, 'Grab a stick, girls. Out we go.' We'd all go out there with pool sticks and fight them off."

Though she didn't take the crown until 1983, Tempest had been a regular at the bar and had performed there since 1976. After her reign was over, she handed the crown to Miss Gigi's 1984, Renee Peters, whose memories of bar owner Garneau are fond.

"He was a real positive figure," Peters said. "He was good to everybody."

Franklin agreed. "He was like a father to all of us," she said. "He was one of the greatest persons I've ever met, an amazing guy."

Franklin, Stevens and Tempest were certified stars by the time I

found my way into the bar, on the arm of a young man I was dating who did the lights for the drag shows downstairs inside Gigi's Cabaret. Nickki Stevens would soon transform the cabaret room, struggling to turn the basement into something classy. She succeeded.

In 1992, Stevens would take home the Miss Gigi's title and, after her reign, was kept on as the bar's show director, a title she holds to this day. Stevens not only books the talent, but stars in the Saturday night shows herself and handles all the reservations, bar décor and almost every aspect of the Cabaret's

what they're doing.' I would answer, 'Dear, I am not going anywhere. I would work for you for free.'

"He was there for me when I was 18," Chico continued. "He took care of me, and I was loyal to him. I loved him."

In addition to the drag shows and the scantily clad male dancers, there have been male impersonation nights at the bar as well, along with great Super Bowl and New Year's Eve parties. The bar has tried various nights and themes, such as Hollywood Squares night, and the crowd has fluctuated through the years. Other bars have come

Diva Cliché (Miss Gigi's 1998) and DeAngela "Show" Shannon (Miss Gigi's 2000), who still performs at the club regularly, all took the title home and continued to entertain the masses in Gigi's Cabaret Room.

"Gigi's has been there for me and I for them," Shannon told Between The Lines in 2021. "They groomed me and prepared me for my career the correct way, which allowed me to accomplish most of my goals in performing."

Shannon has won a total of 73 titles, but Miss Gigi's "was one of the most meaningful I ever won, to be sure," she said. "It represented home to me."

Miss Gigi's pageants are elaborate productions, and each year comes with a new theme. There is also the Miss Amateur Gigi's pageant and the Miss Gigi's Classic pageant as well as the Mr. Gigi's pageant. It may be the biggest title outfit in the state.

In my late 30s and early 40s, I was trying to get my groove back. I became a regular at Gigi's once again. It still felt like home to me. I was thinner than I had been in years and, in hindsight, going through something of a premature mid-life crisis. (I always was ahead of my time.) My niece would accompany me to the bar for Fuck You Fridays with longtime hosts Shannon and Sabin. Sometimes we'd even make it on Monday nights, when Stevens hosted the party, as well.

Like all bars, Gigi's was forced to shut down during the pandemic. It was during this period that Luis Mandujano and his husband Joshua were approached about purchasing the bar. Mandujano was retiring from the Army.

"I was going to have to take pension money that I had set aside for my golden years," he recalled. But Mandujano, who has been a regular at the bar for years and had even worked for a time as one of Chico's Boyz, saw the potential and took the challenge.

With the bar temporarily closed, they got busy cleaning up and updating the bar, including adding new point of sale systems, credit card machines, new plumbing, painting and more.

"Luis and Josh have done a lot to upgrade the bar," said Stevens. "They did a lot to upgrade the bar, doing things I've always dreamed of but the old corporation never had the means to do, or the want to do, for years."

"I tried and tried," Stevens went on. "But it was like putting lipstick



on a pig with staple guns and duct tape and paint." Slowly and surely, though, things started improving.

Looking at the bar and its golden anniversary from a historical perspective, historian Tim Retzliff said Gigi's "has certainly been an important mainstay in the community. It's lasted 50 years at a time when LGBTQ+ bars are closing all over the country. It's really an achievement."

Retzliff, who teaches queer studies at Michigan State, has actually taken two classes to the bar on fieldtrips. "There's nothing like it," he said. "The space there and the atmosphere."

But for all its family feel, don't get the false impression that Gigi's is not a favorite among young queers. They flood the club, particularly on Friday and Monday nights, especially since Gigi's is open to those 18 and up. Lex Hunter, 30, is one of them. He was Mr. Gigi's 2020-2022.

"Gigi's is home," he said. "I know I can always come back there. We at Gigi's want people to feel the same way when they walk through our doors. That they — anyone — are welcome anytime."

Still, the bar's history is not lost on Hunter.

"We owe it to everyone who in the past 50 years has put time, blood, sweat, tears and their all into keeping this bar open so that people feel they have a safe haven," he said. "It's a place to be yourself and enjoy the magic that Gigi's has brought for the last 50 years. I'm thankful to be part of that legacy."

And as for Garneau's legacy? What would he think about Gigi's still going strong today?



Current Gigi's interior. Photo: Facebook

operations.

There's more to Gigi's than drag, though. Just ask DJ Chico, who started visiting the bar in 1979. He started spinning there in 1983 and still does. He is also in charge of the male dancers at the bar, appropriately known as Chico's Boyz.

Chico recalled Garneau as a "very generous man who cared about gay kids and wanted them to have a place where they belonged." Through the years, other bar owners would pass by the bar and try to poach him. But Chico said he never entertained the thought of leaving. "Tony would say, 'I know

and gone. Some have managed to steal Gigi's crowd away for a while, but the bar has always persevered, and the crowd always eventually came back."

I was absent from the bar for several years in the '90s while I lived in Miami. But when I got back in town in 1997, the party was still in full swing. Garneau had passed away in 1991, leaving the bar to six longtime employees who tried to honor his traditions. The show went on and Miss Gigi's became the crown all the girls wanted. Only the best would wear it, however. Performers such as April Summers (Miss Gigi's 1980),



Courtesy Tim Retzliff

"He would be happy it's still open," said Chico. "Back then, being open as a trans or fem wasn't an option. So he'd be happy that it's in the open now. And he'd be thrilled the bar is definitely popular with the new kids. Tony would be dancing in heaven if he knew that."

As for me, I still make my way into Gigi's from time to time. Sometimes I can still feel the excitement the 17-year-old me felt when I first walked through the doors into the smoky darkness, my tribe all around me.

Even now, after one of the bar's signature stiff drinks, I can make my way onto the dance floor, close my eyes and almost remember what it felt like to be young and free. Who says you can't go home again?

The official Gigi's 50th anniversary party is set for Tuesday, March 7. Gigi's is located at 16920 W. Warren in Detroit, just three blocks off the Southfield Expressway. For more information, visit facebook.com/GigisDetroit.



Kristina Karamo. Photo: KristinaKaramo.com

“

Honest Abe is rolling over in his grave.

— gay Republican Casey Hoffman

Queer Fear as Michigan Republican Party Gives Top Spot to Election Denier Kristina Karamo

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Known primarily for her spectacular loss to Jocelyn Benson in Michigan's 2022 secretary of state race, queer-bashing Kristina Karamo, an election denier, has secured a seat as chair of the Michigan GOP in what some believe may lead to an irreversible march off the extremist deep end. Or a mass

exodus.

"If aliens landed in Lansing and said, 'Take me to your leader,' about half of the Michigan GOP would direct the aliens to Mar-a-Lago, Florida," said Casey Hoffman, an openly gay Republican attorney and former Michigan State House candidate who lives in Menominee with his husband. "Honest Abe is rolling over in his grave," he added.

Hoffman attended the Feb. 18 convention. He said not everyone in the Michigan Republican Party is a radical.

"The purpose of this convention was to elect strong MAGA leadership that would be submissive to Donald Trump should he claim victory in Michigan's 2024 presidential contest," said Hoffman, clear-eyed. "I worry that the 2020 election was

a dress rehearsal for 2024."

One Washington Post reporter in attendance described the convention as "chaotic," "rowdy" and "contentious." And while the event sounded like a three-ring circus — complete with an appearance by My Pillow Guy Mike Lindell — leaders like openly gay Jason Morgan are dead serious in their fear that the way political matters are conducted in this state have gone dangerously awry. Morgan is first vice president of the Michigan Democratic Party and a state representative from Ann Arbor.

"My first thought was actually genuine and deep concern for the future of the Republican Party," Morgan said, regarding reports of the convention, "because I very much believe that parties should have disagreements about policy and issues of legitimate concern, and that doesn't happen when one party elects a leader who is just completely out of touch with reality."

Karamo's outrageous views about the queer community make clear just how out of touch with reality she really is. As reported by Media Matters, on her podcast, "It's Solid Food," Karamo claimed in 2020, "God did not intend for people to be transgender, or he did not intend for people to have sex with people of the same sex." She believes "supporters of transgender youth are 'agents of the devil' who are 'helping children go to hell.'" Readers should be warned, "The entire Pride Month is celebrating rebellion against God's design for human sexuality." Those are but a few examples.

Morgan referred to "an endless list of outlandish comments that [Karamo] has made." As reported in BTL, Karamo blames the supposed rise of paganism and witchcraft on performers such as Ariana Grande because they celebrate female empowerment. Known as a QAnon conspiracist, Karamo also claimed, "Darwinian evolution is a total scam." Add to that her persistent refusal to concede her 2022 midterm election loss — by 14 points. And her belief in the existence of demons.

"I absolutely see her as a threat to the queer community," Morgan said.

Morgan thinks the best parallel to Karamo's election to chair the Michigan Republican Party is Trump's victory in the 2016 Republican presidential primary. At the time, "a lot of Democrats and moderates were thrilled that he won that primary because it seemed like it would make it very easy for a Democrat to win that election," Morgan said. However, that wasn't the case.

"I think that is an important lesson for everyone," he continued, "that we should have the best candidates and the best leaders put forward in all of our political parties, so that no matter who is in charge, we have the most reasonable and sensible people there who are, at the very least, going to believe in the integrity of our electoral system."

On that point, Morgan and Hoffman agree. "The Michigan Republican Party needs to start acting like an adult organization," Hoffman put forth. "I'm worried about the future of the Republican Party, and I don't know if Kristina Karamo is going to be the unity candidate that we need to unite the MAGA faction and the old guard."

Karamo won her election after three rounds of voting, ultimately beating Trump-backed Matt DePerno 58 to 42.

For the record, Hoffman did not vote for Karamo. He opted for Ted Nugent-endorsed Scott Greenlee.

"[Greenlee] was the only adult on the ballot, in my opinion," Hoffman said. "He voted for President Trump, but is not owned by President Trump. He's helped to win over 100 races. His platform was party unity; he talked a lot about fundraising and good finances. He seemed like a very credible pick."

Hoffman sees no conflict with being LGBTQ+ and a Republican.

"I think the Republican Party got it wrong by inserting itself into the business of marriage in the first place," Hoffman said. However, "Where some see contradiction, I see logic: I can't think of anything more conservative, or more Republican, than keeping the government out of my home or my marriage."

A Brotherhood of Voices

PRISM Men's Choir on Community, Advocacy and Disco Fever



Jake McClory sings a solo as part of the PRISM Gay Men and Allies Chorus of Detroit. Photo: PreppyMan Photography

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

As the Covid pandemic shuttered businesses and put community activities on hold, PRISM Gay Men and Allies Chorus of Metro Detroit, like so many other choirs across the country, shut its doors. It was a devastating blow for the choir's members, and not entirely because the music stopped.

"When people come to PRISM, no matter who they are or where they are in life — or even where they are musically — it's a space for them to belong," says PRISM's artistic director, Darin DeWeese.

DeWeese accepted the artistic director role in the midst of the Covid shutdown, tasked with shaking off the choir's dust and emerging from those quiet days as the thriving, ticket-

selling ensemble it had been. The pandemic was, by many measures, a low point, but on the climb back out, DeWeese found a few silver linings on the other side.

"I think it gave everybody kind of a newfound love or a newfound appetite for what they missed," he says. "I think it brought to light just how treasured some of these groups are — not just choirs, but all queer groups across Southeast Michigan and what a role they play in our lives." DeWeese says members were hungry for music "more than ever," but also for the feeling of community and togetherness that comes with being a part of PRISM. The 2022 holiday shows marked a return to both normalcy and chosen family for many of the group's members.

PRISM, like other 501c3

nonprofits, relies on patrons and grant funding. DeWeese says PRISM's advocacy goals are always at the forefront. "We're always looking at, 'How can we push this organization forward in an advocacy way for our community, our members and for our patrons?'" he says.

Shane Dunbar, chairman of PRISM's board of directors, says PRISM selects organizations to support each season, which has recently included a local food pantry. Soon, the organization will pair up with Stand with Trans and Ruth Ellis, supplying the new Clairmount Center, a housing community in Detroit focused on helping queer young adults, with personal care items. "It's really our way to give back to the community, not just with our voices, but with our hard

work and money, as well," Dunbar says. "We're really excited to get out into the community as much as we can and give back as much as we absolutely can."

Jake McClory, who joined PRISM in early 2022, adds, "I'm so impressed with the direction the group is headed, not just musically but as a top-notch LGBTQ community organization. With increasing attacks on our community from far-right politicians and activists, PRISM isn't just focused on gay rights. The group is standing up for reproductive rights and trans rights and partnering with local groups."

As the choir prepares for its first show of the 2023 season, a disco-themed concert set for June 2, DeWeese is hard at work bringing together the talents of nearly 100

singers who come from a wide range of musical and personal backgrounds. The group is made up of queer men and allies from all over the Southeast Michigan area and represents multiple generations. The youngest member is around 19 and the oldest, in his 80s.

Some members are financially sound and make frequent contributions toward choir operations and the many charitable endeavors PRISM supports, while others are more often on the receiving end of such generosity. The choir includes professionals from the medical and legal fields, students, retirees, service workers and the list goes on. Dunbar says the generosity of choir members includes supporting operational expenses like the new music binders a member recently funded for the choir.

Intersectionality and diversity among the choir's membership has evolved organically since PRISM was established seven years ago, but intentional inclusion has always been the beating heart of this group.

McClory shared his experience as a newcomer. "If you're like me, walking into a space with dozens of gay men whom you don't know can be daunting, intimidating, maybe even scary, especially when we were all wearing masks," he says. "But my fears were short-lived, and I was touched by how many members went out of their way to welcome me in — inviting me to sit by them or to go out for drinks or to karaoke at Pronto! after rehearsal. For over a year, I've gotten to know queer men of all ages and walks of life. I've found a group of friends who share similar passions and love to have fun. And I've formed relationships that will last the rest of my life."

DeWeese says new members are paired up with a "chorus buddy," a veteran performer who knows the ropes. "We always have a sense of 'No one left behind,'" he explains. "People do come in with some nerves

See **PRISM**, page 14

The Promise of Equal Protections

Whitmer Hosts LGBTQ+ Roundtable to Discuss Elliott-Larsen Amendment



(Left photo) Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and leaders in a roundtable discussion on LGBTQ+ rights. (Right photo) Dana Nessel and Jason Hoskins. Photos courtesy of Whitmer's office

On Friday, Feb. 24, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer held a roundtable in Ferndale with LGBTQ+ community leaders and allies. Those at the table included Attorney General Dana Nessel, State Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield), Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter and longtime transgender activist Michelle Fox-Phillips. The discussion was moderated by State Rep. Jason Hoskins, the first Black, openly LGBTQ+ Michigan legislator.



A longtime ally whose daughter, Sherry, is openly lesbian, Whitmer was there to show her support, but by and large, she let the LGBTQ+ community members do most of the talking on how expanding Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation would impact them and others in the community. Legislation aimed at this expansion passed through the Senate's Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee earlier this month and the Senate is expected to vote on the bill shortly after press time.

Whitmer, meanwhile, seemed ready to codify the legislation right then and there: "It will be a joy to affix my signature to the bill and get it done," she said at the end of the discussion.

— Chris Azzopardi

Loving Chosen Family Mourns Death of Local Performer

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

While many queer folks build and create chosen families for themselves, Courtney Tori Graves, also known as Courtney Cokks and Tori Escada, leaves behind an especially large contingent who claimed her as their own. The popular model and showgirl and longtime Woodward Bar & Grill bartender died Feb. 16 at the age of 45.

Top of the list was nightclub personality Ms. Honey, who called Graves her daughter.

"My world has crumbled, and I will never be the same," Ms. Honey posted to Facebook. "My heart, my daughter, my Tori – Daddy loves you always. I am not OK, and I will never be ok again."

And in another post, Ms. Honey also shared her devastation.

"I'm in shock and so much pain I can't talk nor breathe," she said. "My heart has been ripped out of my chest. ... Please keep praying for her family. This is too much for me to bare. God, please take care of my daughter in heaven as I tried to take care of her here on earth."

Jey'nce Poindexter Mizrahi, by comparison,

called Graves her mother.

"Honored to be your daughter as we both navigated life from survival mode to actually living life and thriving," Mizrahi said in a post on Instagram. "I must now grapple with the fact that my love circle and those I trust is one trooper down."

Mizrahi added that Graves filled a void after her biological mother died.

"She knew you, and respected the love and time you served me in support in a way that ... allowed me to be used by God."

DeAngela "Show" Shannon called Graves a sister.

"Tori, I watched you grow from a teen, always full of smiles, bright eyed, and bushy tailed, so eager to become what you later in life mastered as the beautiful woman, loving mother, caring niece, supportive sister, and respectful daughter to so many of us," Shannon posted on Facebook. "You will truly be missed, but never forgotten."

Nina Ross Detroit posted a video clip of Graves, adding, "I found this beautiful video of Courtney Cokks and wanted to share it with all of those hurting from her sudden passing. My thoughts, love, and continued prayers are

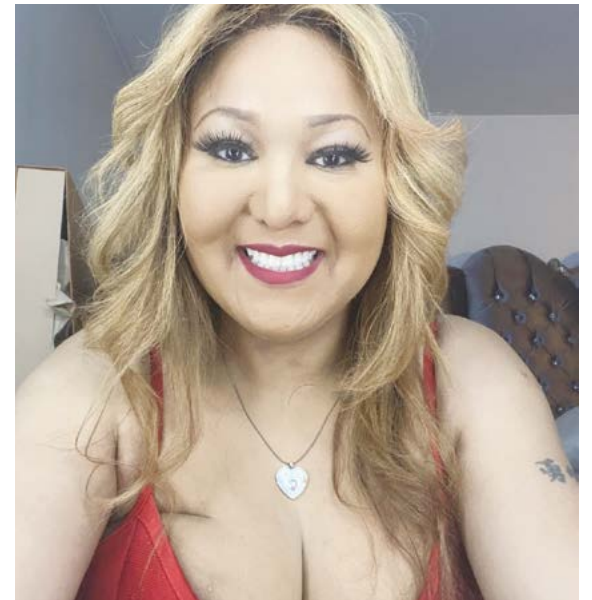
with you all. She looks so beautiful, happy and loved in this video... Rest peacefully Tori 🌟 and thank you for always being so kind, loving and caring to us all."

Timothy Clark called himself Graves' brother.

"It's just simply amazing how many times she would randomly text me 'I'm just checking on you' and 'I love you,'" he said in a Facebook post. "I don't think it ever got more real in friendship than having that woman by your side. A true realest, I'm gonna miss her so much."

The list of those who claimed Graves is long. She was big on the Detroit Ballroom scene and was mother of the House of Escada. In 2015, Graves won the annual Miss Motor City Continental pageant.

Graves grew up in Detroit and graduated from Redford High School in 1995 before studying information technology at Wayne State University and business administration at American Intercontinental University in Atlanta. She also received direct care worker



Courtney Tori Graves. Photo: Facebook

and first aid certifications and worked in the healthcare industry.

In a Facebook post from April of last year, Graves revealed that she had been having mini strokes. Still, her spirits were up, and she thanked her chosen family.

"This amazingly beautiful group of people I know, in my heart, make my life even more amazing than I could have ever dreamed of," she said. "I am blessed, adored, forgiven, respected, appreciated, loved, needed, wanted, free to love, free to be loved, everything that I am entitled to and so much more that I never would have guessed."

Brother Thomas Zerafa, Activist for LGBTQ+ and Numerous Progressive Causes, Dies at Age 71

Zerafa Told BTL in 2013 That, ‘I Have No Regrets in My Life, Just Work to Do’

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

This year, Brother Thomas R. Zerafa, activist and prolific volunteer for LGBTQ+ and numerous progressive causes, would have celebrated his 50th anniversary of coming out as gay. He informed me of this milestone in December and suggested BTL write a story for the occasion. It had been 10 years since he was last celebrated in our publication, and I kept that thought simmering on the back burner. Sadly, Zerafa didn't quite make it to that incredible milestone. He died Feb. 13 at age 71 after recent health struggles.

As the story goes, Zerafa was 22 years old and his parents came

from Florida to visit when he wasn't feeling well. Weeks later, he received a letter that his father had been "confused" by some of the literature he saw in Zerafa's apartment. Zerafa said his mother "was nice about it." At first they struggled, but his parents weren't judgmental and came to accept him.

Zerafa and I were introduced after the memorial service for another local LGBTQ+ elder, the artist and writer Charles Alexander. It was actually the second time we met; I remembered him from an Oak Park/Huntington Woods Democratic Club meeting where I sat next to him at a bar to watch one of the gubernatorial debates before the 2018 primary. I was there

giving a spiel for the Human Rights Campaign and he made sure I knew he was Brother Thomas (Zerafa took vows as a Franciscan brother in 2018) and that he was gay. He made an impression on me.

At the memorial, I didn't expect to have a conversation about death with someone so close to death himself, but now it makes sense that I was present to record his thoughts about Alexander — which never made their way into print. I consider it a meaningful coincidence.

"[Charles Alexander] was absolutely one of the most learned



See **Thomas Zerafa**, page 14

Thomas Zerafa. Photo: Facebook

Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.
Trillium Real Estate Helps People Make Good Decisions.

Sandi & Linda
www.trilliumrealtors.com

323 Braun Ct. Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-302-3011





Marco Rubio Wants To Re-Ban Trans Service Members, Protect Military From Pronouns



I'm currently in Florida visiting my sister and my in-laws who live here for some reason. I mean, I know there are good things about Florida. But this state has elected some

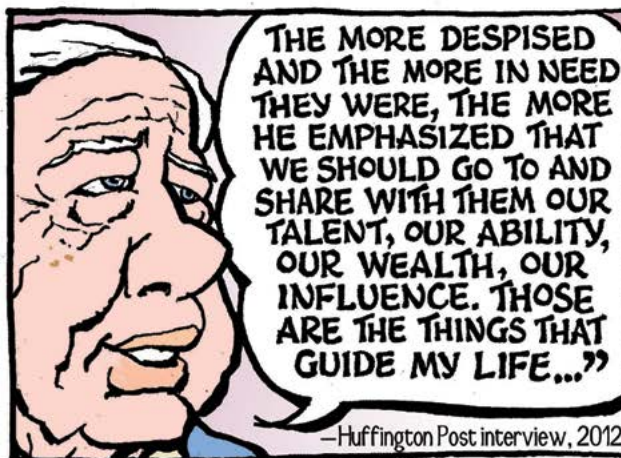
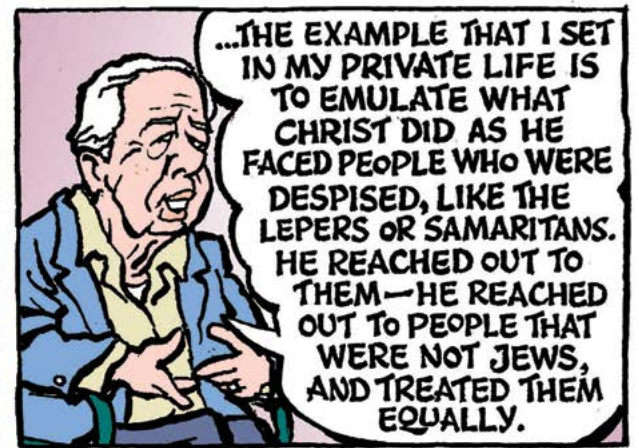
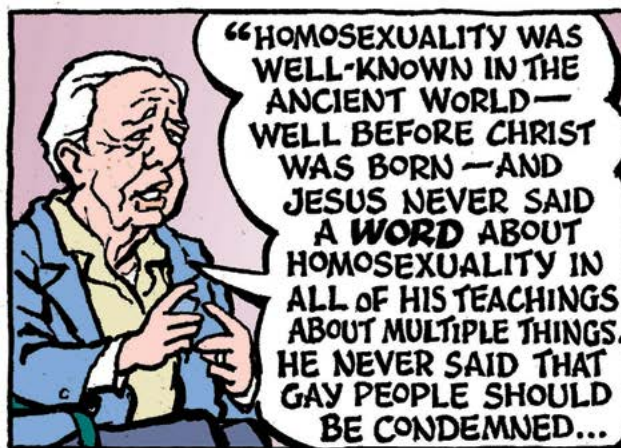
exceptionally terrible leaders. The people running the state are, by and large, right-wing extremists who really, really hate LGBTQ+ people.

I mean, for one thing, Florida is the home of the "Don't Say Gay" bill that Gov. Ron DeSantis gleefully signed into law a year ago. Any discussion of sexual orientation or gender in school before the third grade is deemed "inappropriate." As a result, there are empty school library shelves while books await review by "certified media specialists" lest a book about gender, sexual orientation or race get past the "woke" police. DeSantis, who is not a certified media specialist as far as I am aware, says that reviewing a book shouldn't take more than two minutes. ABC News reports that there are over a million books needing review. Reviewing one million books at two minutes each would take 1,389 days. That's almost four years, and that's assuming the reviewing is happening around the clock.

Just in case you feared that Florida only had terrible people in the state government, rest assured they have terrible people in the federal government, too.

Case in point: U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio. The Florida Republican understands that there are many priorities vying for attention in his home state and in the country as a whole. So he is doing what Republicans do: focusing on something that is not a pressing issue and manufacturing outrage about it — bonus points if it hurts people.

And so Rubio has declared that he wants to re-ban transgender service members. If you recall, disgraced former President Trump banned transgender service members, but



—Huffington Post interview, 2012

President Joe Biden reversed that ban. Rubio wants the ban back. He claims that transgender people are compromising military readiness because... pronouns?

"The military has strict standards for who can and cannot qualify to serve," Rubio says in a press release. "Biden has turned our military into a woke social experiment. It is a stupid way to go about protecting our nation. We need to spend more time thinking about how to counter threats like China, Russia and North Korea and less time thinking about pronouns."

Calling the U.S. military, one of the country's most conservative institutions, "woke" is, well, quite a stretch. Also, "a stupid way to go about protecting our nation?" Did a 12 year old write this press release? Also, it's pretty insulting to everyone in the military to say they're not thinking enough about how to counter international threats because they're too preoccupied with pronouns.

In order to save America from the grave danger transgender service members pose, Rubio has introduced the "Ensuring Military Readiness Act" to "ensure all service members' gender markers match their biological sex."

The legislation gives the Secretary of Defense a whole 90 days to get rid of all trans service members.

Trans service members can stay on if

“Just in case you feared that Florida only had terrible people in the state government, rest assured they have terrible people in the federal government, too.”

they're not, like, too trans and can serve as their biological sex. Anyone who wants or has had gender-affirmation surgery is out for sure, though.

This legislation doesn't come out of the blue. Rubio put out a recent report titled "Woke Warfighters: How Political Ideology is Weakening America's Military." On the cover of the report there is a camouflaged helmet with rainbow tipped bullets tucked into the band that reads, "Proud to serve."

"The DoD's insistence on promoting individual identity and self-actualization in recruitment and retention efforts, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community, is dangerous," the report reads. "The appeal to self is corrosive to unit cohesion, yet it is only growing."

The bill is supported by noted anti-LGBTQ+ groups like Heritage Action,

Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America.

"The notion that we can continue prioritizing making our military more 'woke' is a specious notion," says Lieutenant General Boykin of the Family Research Council in Rubio's press release. "Every decision made by the President and Congress regarding our military should be made with the readiness of our military in mind. What the Senator is proposing would set us on a pathway to spend our time and money preparing for war with not only China but other adversaries that loom on the horizon."

So not only is this right-wing guy saying that trans folks are bad for the military, he also seems really excited to go to war with China. And "other adversaries." Yikes.

Pray for peace. And vote out Republicans.

In the Wake of Brianna Ghey's Murder, It's Time to Reexamine Trans News Coverage



BY GWENDOLYN
ANN SMITH

On the afternoon of February the 11th, a girl by the name of Brianna Ghey was found on a path in Culcheth Linear Park in Warrington, Cheshire, England. Pronounced dead at the scene, she was the victim of multiple stab wounds.

Ghey was a 16-year-old trans girl who hosted a TikTok channel. Other trans folks like her work around the labyrinthine National Health Service to legally acquire Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

She also faced years of transphobic bullying, including being beaten at school. I suppose this isn't surprising, as most trans women have faced similar — and the climate in the UK toward transgender people right now is exceedingly toxic, pushed by the media elevating anti-trans voices, particularly from so-called “gender critical” people who have sought to demonize transgender people, particularly trans women, at every turn.

Even in death, the media altered their first reports of Ghey's death, removing the word “girl” and digging up the name she was assigned at birth to add to their reporting. As it is, the UK government will do the same to her: Gender Recognition Certificates are not allowed for UK minors, and as such her death will legally be registered to a name and gender that do not reflect the person Brianna Ghey was.

On the morning of February the 16th, a coalition of New York Times reporters, contributors and others, sent an open letter to the paper. The Times, following the lead set forth by the UK press, has begun to run regular anti-transgender pieces.

“We write to you as a collective of New York Times contributors with

serious concerns about editorial bias in the newspaper's reporting on transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people,” the letter begins.

The letter cites 15,000 words of front-page coverage debating trans medical care in just the last eight months, exclusive of other pieces present in the Gray Lady. You can read the full letter at nylletter.com. I'd urge you to do so, as it goes into some detail about the biases presented by the paper, as well as how this coverage has influenced the battle over trans people in state houses and courts country-wide.

As an aside, we've seen over 300 new anti-LGBTQ+ bills filed across the U.S. since 2022, attacking trans health care, participation in sports, use of school restrooms, and — the worst of them — bills that are forcibly detransitioning trans people and preventing them from updating their birth certificate and other identity documents.

In response to this letter, The New York Times did three things.

First, they sent a response via the Time's Director of External Communications, Charlie Stadlander, who ignored the letter in question entirely, focusing on a companion letter spearheaded by GLAAD, arguing that the Times's “journalistic mission” was different from the advocacy organization's mission.

Second, they distributed an internal memo, threatening their staff who signed onto the letter — again, only citing the GLAAD letter, not the aforementioned one from Times contributors or others.

Finally, on the morning of February the 16th, they ran a piece by Pamela Paul called, “In Defense of J.K. Rowling.”

I should back up here a bit. While I am sure that Rowling and her Harry Potter franchise needs little introduction, it is her work post Potter that deserves some scrutiny. Of note is her outspokenness against transgender rights,



Brianna Ghey was murdered in Cheshire, England on Feb. 11. Photo: Family of Brianna Ghey

declaring that “trans women retain the same pattern of sex offending/violence as males,” adding later than, “it is dangerous to assert that any category of people deserves a blanket presumption of innocence.”

She has also gone out of her way to support many of the same “gender critical” bigots who have become all-too-commonplace in UK anti-trans discourse, including praising one who compared transgender women to “blackface actors” who “get sexual kicks from being treated like women.”

This is without even touching on the books under her pseudonym Robert Galbraith, which have included very unflattering and false depictions of transgender people.

Rowling recently had a hand in a new video game, *Hogwarts Legacy*, and a lot of its publicity ended up

hinging around her transphobia and the game's anti-Semitic plot line. I'm of the opinion that the company leaned into that a bit, knowing they could count on an “own the libs” backlash to move copies of the games while the die-hard Harry Potter fans would rationalize their purchase. Even the late reveal of a transgender character to the game — with the obviously male-coded name of Sirona Ryan — was likely a calculated token attempt to appease the critics.

Rowling herself has stated on more than one occasion that she views the continued sales of Harry Potter items as a sign that a silent majority agree with her — though the growing tarnish on her own legacy has started to lead to attempts to whitewash her anti-trans views, claiming she was

merely “misunderstood.”

Enter the New York Times, who on the day after an open letter complained about their reporting, and six days after the brutal murder of Brianna Ghey has left the UK trans community reeling, publishes their part of Rowling's rehabilitation, claiming that, “nothing Rowling has said qualifies as transphobic.” I'd say the above statements and actions can stand on their own.

Brianna Ghey is dead, murdered in a virulent anti-trans climate brought forth by the UK media, as well as the money and influence of people like Rowling, lending her voice and pocketbook to UK “gender criticals.”

We do not need to repeat their mistakes here and fuel any more deaths.



A lighter moment. Photo: PreppyMan Photography

◀ PRISM

Continued from page 9

when they've never been in a musical setting like that before, but I think they quickly realize 'Oh, this isn't anything to be scared of. I can figure this out and I'm gonna learn a lot along the way.'

No longer a newcomer, McClory says, "I feel so fortunate to be part of

such a supportive queer community. Recently, we unexpectedly lost one of our longtime members, and PRISM organized a memorial for friends and coworkers. Every single person who shared their memories spoke about what a safe place PRISM was for him — a refuge — from all the demons and turmoil he faced in life. And that's exactly what PRISM is for me."

Though DeWeese currently

works as a real estate agent serving the Metro Detroit area, it's his background as a high school and middle school music teacher that has distinctly positioned him to helm the choir. In many ways, he says, the unique mix of skill levels and backgrounds is similar to the groups of students he taught over the years. "There's always people filtering in and out and all different skill levels. That's

a space where I feel I thrive really well in being able to cater to those who are singing and reading music at a super high level — making sure they are feeling musically fulfilled — but catering to the newer skill level, as well."

Another way the group stays true to its goals for inclusion and representation is by evolving to reflect the many talents members offer in addition to singing ability. Lately, this has meant incorporating dance into performances. Dunbar says many of the members can "really move." "We found out that we have many talented people who can dance," he says, "And so, now we have more to offer in our performances for everyone. People really enjoy seeing us do things other than singing."

One fan favorite is the audience singalong at the end of PRISM's holiday concerts, when everyone in the venue sings "Silent Night" together. The holiday shows typically sell out, and Dunbar expects similar enthusiasm for June 2's Disco Fever at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. "People love when the show is something familiar, and this one will have something for everyone," he says.

DeWeese says PRISM's diversity has helped guide selections for the Disco Fever show in an interesting way. "Our age range really plays to one of our strengths, because we've got people who lived through the

disco era and the AIDS epidemic and everything that came with that time," he says. "So, they approach disco very differently than our members under 30 approach disco."

DeWeese says modern artists like Dua Lipa represent a new era for disco, but the distinct disco sound is as recognizable in that music as it was in the '70s. "It's just a modern take on disco, so that newer energy and perspective is represented here, too," he explains.

In addition to Lipa, the choir will perform songs by Donna Summer, ABBA, the Bee Gees, Gloria Gaynor and openly queer '70s disco star Sylvester, who died from AIDS complications in the late '80s. "It's always important for us to have queer representation either by composers, arrangers or artists like Sylvester, one of the iconic, openly queer people of the disco era," DeWeese adds.

DeWeese couldn't reveal all the performance features audiences can expect in 2023, but says every PRISM show includes "surprise and delight" elements. "You're gonna show up and you're gonna hear great music, but we always have surprises up our sleeves," he says. "We are really gonna dig into costuming and there will be incredible dance numbers. The surprise and delight meter? It's going to be off the charts."

Visit prism-chorus.org for tickets and to learn about joining the choir.

◀ Thomas Zerafa

Continued from page 11

persons I've ever met in the gay community," said Zerafa, who knew Alexander for at least 45 years. "He was a very outgoing man and very generous with his time. Once you met Charles Alexander, you had a friend for life. And he never forgot your name or things that were peculiar to you. He always kept that in mind, and he himself allowed himself to be open to everybody he met.

"He will be missed but his spirit continues to live, and it lives through everybody who he ever met," he added. "And as we're sharing a dessert buffet, he's at the heavenly banquet being fed forever. And I look forward to the day he welcomes each of us to where he's at now."

Thomas R. Zerafa was born July

30, 1951 in Detroit to Joseph and Imelda (Gauvin) Zerafa. With a bachelor's of music degree from Marygrove College, Zerafa was a music minister in the Archdiocese of Detroit, serving many parishes over the course of his career.

"Tom was active in the early years of Affirmations," said Jan Stevenson, the organization's first executive director and former co-publisher of Pride Source Media Group and BTL, "and I came to appreciate his wry sense of humor, intelligence and fierce sense of justice. We shared a love of classical music — he being a church organist."

In a Facebook post, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter called Zerafa "a kind and dedicated soul passionate about his faith, his community and his politics. His backyard BBQs in Oak Park were welcome events where he helped connect his myriad of friends, and he will be dearly missed." Coulter later added, "[Zerafa's] commitment to social justice, especially for the

LGBTQ community, but also on a host of other issues, was in his DNA."

Politically, Zerafa was involved in various capacities with the Michigan Democratic Party. He also ran for mayor of Oak Park in 2007, endorsed by the Victory Fund and the Triangle Fund PAC. At the time, he talked about what drew him from Detroit to Oak Park six years earlier.

"The racial diversity of the city attracted me," he said. "Gay people live in all parts of Oak Park. It's a very accepting city." He pledged to work for a comprehensive human rights ordinance.

Zerafa was well known for his service to the LGBTQ+ community. Organizations and causes that benefited from his involvement over the years include but are not limited to the Wayne State Gay and Lesbian Liberation Front, Affirmations LGBTQ+ Community Center, Dignity Detroit, Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, the

Triangle Foundation (a predecessor to Equality Michigan), One Royal Oak and the Gay Connection, where he served as program chair. Zerafa was also active in opposing Proposal 2, the so-called marriage amendment, which sought to ban equal marriage rights, civil unions and domestic partnerships in Michigan's Constitution.

Zerafa was also passionate about environmental causes. He recently traveled to Washington D.C. as a volunteer, where he lobbied for climate action with the Sierra Club and Citizens Climate Lobby. Additionally, Zerafa was a board member of the Motor City Freedom Riders, which fought to bring mass transit to Southeast Michigan.

In 2006, Zerafa received a Community Service Award at the 21st annual Pride Banquet. Before receiving his award, Zerafa commented, "My first reaction was, 'At least it's not a Lifetime Achievement Award.' My work isn't done yet. But then again, I guess it's

a plateau to look back at, but there's still a mountain to climb."

Many know Zerafa for his community gatherings. Aside from his barbecues, he held holiday and block parties.

Exceedingly generous with his time and efforts, Zerafa's final word on death can be summed up in what he told BTL in 2013:

"My life is not about me. It's about service and I intend to do just that until my last breath. My bags are packed whenever God is ready to take me. I have no regrets in my life, just work to do."

Zerafa is survived by his brother, Joseph (Theresa), of Livonia. Preceding him in death is a brother, Larry; sister, Linda Montoya; and his parents. In accordance with Zerafa's wishes, he will receive a green burial. Friends and family will gather on Friday, April 14, from 9:30 a.m. until time of memorial Mass at 10 a.m. at St. Mary Catholic Church, 730 S Lafayette Ave., Royal Oak, 48067.



Betty Who. Courtesy photo

Betty Who Helped Me Embrace My Queer Identity. Now She's Embracing Her Own.

The Artist, Who Studied Music at Interlochen Center for the Arts, Has Been On Her Own Queer Journey

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Betty Who has been a Pride festival staple for years, but only recently did the Sydney-born pop performer (real name Jessica Anne Newham) more boldly lean into her queer identity. As a longtime lesbian fan, I was obviously thrilled about this courageous embrace of self. But even before I knew she was part of the LGBTQ+ community, I was drawn to Betty Who's music. For me, it began when I discovered her song "Wanna Be."

The song tells the story of the unique brand of heartache that comes from unrequited love, and it

is set to a soft-pop track that builds just enough tension in the first 90 seconds to release spectacularly in the chorus. All that combined with the lyrics, "I know she's sweet, but she isn't me. Where she lies in your eyes, that's where I wanna be," stole my gay heart when the song came out in 2017.

That year, I was still in the process of coming out to my family and personally connecting the dots on why all those "close friendships" I had with girls over the years were the products of powerful crushes (yikes). When I tell her this in our interview ahead of her March 18 show at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit, somewhat

embarrassed, I'm relieved Betty is glad to hear of this.

"Wanna Be" is big lesbian anthem energy, so I'm so glad it spoke to you," she says. "Thanks for sharing that with me. Love this for you. Love that you were in your era. I think it's really interesting: You want to be cool with who you are on your own terms, but so much of our experiences and perceptions of ourselves come from being reflected back by the people we love. In some cases, especially if you have fans, by the way that people see you and experience you."

The release of those expectations is the running theme behind Betty's latest album "BIG!," which harnesses

the power of pop's bubbly energy and pairs it with thoughtful lyricism. Straight away, listeners hear the title track's message — one of self-confidence and empowerment even when unable to adhere to society's normative expectations. In Betty's case, it's not only about being queer; it's about her physical size. She is 6-foot-2, so it's not simply a metaphor: "I'm a big, big girl," she tells me, laughing.

Perhaps the most poignant lyric on that song is, "I won't apologize for taking up space," which could be about literal size or can be applied to any number of intersectional identities that aren't perfectly in

line with the status quo. I tell Betty how the lyric resonates with me personally as both a queer person and as a woman who has struggled with confidence in the past, and she acknowledges her own emotional connection to the song. When she wrote it, she said she was "thinking about the 10-year-old girl in me who needs that song so badly and didn't have someone in her life or in the public eye who was singing music that felt like it spoke to me."

"It's been really impactful for me to talk to particularly women who

See **Betty Who**, page 17



Beyoncé. Photo: Parkwood Entertainment

There Goes Your Money

From Madonna to Beyoncé, the 2023 Detroit Concert Season Has a Gay Icon for Everyone

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

There's a distinctly powerful feminine energy emanating from Southeast Michigan these days as a slew of women artists have announced their upcoming tours. There's a woman for everyone, from long-established gay icons like Janet Jackson and Madonna to rising queer artists like Betty Who and Hayley Kiyoko to stadium-shattering talents like Taylor Swift, Pink and Beyoncé. So, break out that wallet — it's take-

my-money season.

Betty Who

March 18, Saint Andrew's Hall

In support of her newest album "BIG!," queer Australian pop singer and Interlochen-educated Betty Who will bring her Big Tour to Detroit March 18 when she plays Saint Andrew's Hall. Expect a super queer experience thanks

to an opening performance by "RuPaul's Drag Race" star Shea Couleé. Who recently talked about her relationship with music in a BTL interview. "There's like a chord or kind of a zone or genre of music that will hit a place inside of me," she said. "It makes me feel invincible, unstoppable. All of the things. Whatever the emotional reaction is to that music, that was the feeling I was chasing the whole time I made 'BIG!'"

Saturday, March 18, 7 p.m., Saint Andrew's Hall. Ticket link at bettywhomusic.com.

Hayley Kiyoko

May 3, Saint Andrew's Hall

Lesbian pop star Hayley Kiyoko will ride her rising star into Detroit May 3 when she brings her Panorama Tour to town. Panorama marks Kiyoko's first major headlining tour in four years — the singer-songwriter opened for Panic!

At the Disco in 2019 supporting her debut album "Expectations," and then went into a Covid-induced hiatus. Kiyoko talked to Rolling Stone about coming out as a lesbian when she released that album. "I felt like I was catching up with my authentic self," she told the publication. "I feel like it happens a lot with queer people. Once you come out, it's like catching up with time. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I can share who I love! I wanna tell this story! I wanna tell that story!'"

Wednesday, May 3, 6 p.m., Saint Andrew's Hall. Ticket link at hayleykiyokoofficial.com/tour.

Janet Jackson

May 24, Little Caesars Arena

It's hard to believe Janet Jackson's record-breaking "Control" album came out 37 years ago, in 1986, shortly followed by the "Rhythm Nation" era. It's harder still to comprehend that the performer has been doing her thing for more than 50 years, since she was paraded onto a stage as a preschooler as part of the Jackson showbiz family. Jackson's Together Again tour, featuring Ludacris, is sure to blend '80s/'90s nostalgia with the timeless appeal that made Jackson a household name since before today's younger generations were even born.

Wednesday, May 24, 8 p.m., Little Caesars Arena. Ticket link at janetjackson.com/tour.

Taylor Swift

June 9 and 10, Ford Field

If you have a ticket for one of Taylor Swift's Detroit shows, you're in for a queerly good time. And if you don't have a ticket, well, we all know you aren't getting one, but that doesn't mean you can't join in the lovefest when the Swifties take over Detroit June 9 and 10. While Swift herself has (at least, so far) remained famously straight over the course of her career, she's also evolved into a vocal LGBTQ+ ally who is putting her money where her mouth is with this outing. Swift's The Eras Tour will feature up-and-coming lesbian superstar girl in red (aka Marie Ulven Ringheim) and singer-songwriter Gracie Abrams.

See **Gay Icons on Tour**, page 26



Betty Who. Courtesy photo

◀ Betty Who

Continued from page 15

often reference that line to me,” she adds.

And just like in “Wanna Be,” the song “BIG” hits that perfect, nearly 90-second-in sweet spot for a fittingly huge proclamation: “Baby, I was born to be big.” The rest of the album follows suit with songs like “Blow Out My Candle” and “I Can Be Your Man,” before gently ending with a series of softer tracks and, finally, “Grown Ups Grow Apart, musically scaled down, but still big on the emotions. Hearing the songs from the album, I am surprised to learn that Betty was feeling far from confident when she wrote it.

“Then I wrote ‘Blow Out My Candle,’ I listened back to it and was like, ‘Oh man, this is really an anthem for me,’” she recalls.

“After I heard the music back [I was] like, ‘Oh my god, am I really this confident? Can I really pull this sound off? Can I really be this butch? Is that cool? Am I loving that? Does that feel like me?’” she adds.

After a few listens back to the album, she made her decision.

“All of a sudden, listening to the music I made, I was like, ‘I have to go sing this and carry this. Is this who I am? That’s so cool. I guess I have to lean into this music that I just made.’”

Style-wise, a change is also apparent. In 2023, Betty Who’s internal confidence radiates outward through her appearance, with a sense of fashion that is decidedly now more masculine.

“You should see how many Pinterest boards it took to get here,” she says, laughing. “It takes you so long. I just turned 31, and I feel like I’m only now just locking in on it. And I look back at me at 25 trying to decide what to wear on stage, and I was like, ‘I don’t fucking

know. I don’t know who I am or what I want or the story that I’m telling.”

Recent as it is, Betty attributes pandemic isolation to giving her the time and distance away from the public eye to further embrace her queerness and, as she says, “unlearn” some behaviors that no longer serve her. During that time, she had an epiphany.

“Oh, have I been playing dress-up in a woman’s world for my entire life? I’m trying to live up to an expectation of a person I have never been in my life, which has been a big problem for me,” she says. “It’s like mourning a life that was never meant to be yours in the first place.”

After 10 years of creating absolutely memorable pop tracks, Betty Who’s “BIG!” marks an important milestone in her career. It’s a marker of personal growth and a total embrace of authenticity — no easy feat but not at all off brand. During Betty’s decade-long career, she’s made a name for herself creating consistently catchy, often ’80s-inspired bops that have amassed millions of views and streams. (Makes sense since her favorite invention is the synthesizer.)

On top of that, it’s undeniable that her music is as deftly crafted as it is energetic. She is after all a graduate from Michigan’s own Interlochen Center for the Arts, consistently ranked as one of the best music programs in the nation. She says that her time at Interlochen, where she studied cello, gave her many of the building blocks to become a successful musician, not least of which being the time and support needed to explore her passion for her instrument, singing and songwriting.

“I had an incredible cello teacher, Crispin Campbell, who could sense in me that I was very much not going to be a classical cellist,” she says. “In my senior year, when he heard that I was

going to Berklee [College of Music] for voice instead of cello, he spent half my lessons doing the curriculum that he had to teach me, and the rest of the time he spent teaching me how to accompany myself and sing at the same time.”

Betty’s classical training certainly shines through in each of her releases. She plays many of the instruments on “BIG!” and creates arrangements that prove she knows more than a thing or two about song structure. But as impressive as that is, her appeal lies somewhere far beyond the training. There’s something infectious about her energy and passion for music that translates into a powerful but hard-to-explain feeling of confidence and power that she notes as the driver behind her latest album.

“There’s like a chord or kind of a zone or genre of music that will hit a place inside of me,” she says. “It makes me feel invincible, unstoppable. All of the things. Whatever the emotional reaction is to that music, that was the feeling I was chasing the whole time I made ‘BIG!’”

It’s a feeling that’s present in all of her tracks, like her own personal queer brand. Betty herself notes that she considers English as her first language, music as her second, and that certain types of music possess a unique power over her. For me, I feel it’s definitely there in songs like the earworm that is her “Queer Eye” theme song (for obvious reasons) and “All of You” (a favorite deep cut of mine). In fact, I think it’s that intangible energy that resonated so much with me when I discovered her music for the first time, and what made me stick around.

Betty Who will be performing at St. Andrew’s Hall in Detroit on Saturday, March 18. Find tickets at bettywhomusic.com.

DALE’S LAKEFRONT COTTAGES - CASEVILLE, MI

4 BEDROOM LAKE HOUSE

SPECIAL RATES FOR FALL, WINTER, AND SPRING!



SLEEPS 10!
BOOK NOW
FOR SUMMER
2023!
(989) 856-8480

DALESLAKEFRONTCOTTAGES.NET



Make Lemonade from Your Lemons
Puzzle on page 25

one-of-a-kind
JUST LIKE YOUR LOVE



Contact us to get started on a custom design,
made just for you and yours.

Lewis Jewelers
SINCE 1921 "YOUR DIAMOND STORE"

300 S. Maple Rd., Ann Arbor
734.994.5111 | LewisJewelers.com



Cara Delevingne. Photo: Christina Belle/Hulu

Cara Delevingne Can Finally Be Her Queer Self

How ‘Planet Sex’ Host Is Unlearning Queer Shame and Helping Others Do the Same

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

On Zoom, where I recently met with Cara Delevingne, my ’90s-retro, rainbow-speckled button-down was, to my surprise, the first thing that came up.

“Nice shirt,” the model-actress told me, gushing when I mentioned picking it out of my closet in honor of just how queer “Planet Sex” is. The six-episode Hulu docuseries, which features Delevingne as sex-

curious host, is still gayer than even the gayest rainbow shirt; within the first few minutes, Delevingne is judging a queer twerking contest. In fact, the entire series, dedicated to the “sexy queertastic people of the world,” is devoted to investigating various realms of queerness — and in doing so, illuminating parts of Delevingne’s own sexuality as a queer genderfluid person. Over the course of the series, she attends her first-ever Pride festival and, with the

help of Gottmik, the first openly trans performer on “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” transforms into a butch drag king.

In our recent interview, Delevingne talked about how Hollywood affected her feelings on being queer, unlearning the shame around her sexuality, and why her identity now as a public figure is more authentic than ever.

How much did the current political climate right now play into just how

queer and sex positive you made this show?

I think that’s how I wanted it to be. Because I think queer under the umbrella, it all can mean anything. It just means being different, however way. Everyone is different; we are not all the same. We wanna fit in, we wanna belong. But at the same time we wanna be individuals. So I wanted it to include everyone. And I think in that is queerness. And I love that, that’s my favorite thing

in the world and I think leading with that, it brought me so much freedom. It brought me so much relief and love and, you know, it’s where I learned how to love myself.

So from the bottom of my heart, that’s what I wanted. I wish this kind of show existed when I was a kid. It would’ve made [it] so much easier. But I think the journey and the struggle and the adversity was

See **Cara Delevingne**, page 20



Crown Pharmacy

Specializing in providing world class HIV pharmaceutical care

866-575-3784 (toll free)
www.crownpharmacy.com

24401 Plymouth Rd., Redford, MI 48239
313-532-DRUG (3784) 313-532-3718 (fax)
crownpharmacy1@aol.com
HOURS: M-F 10 am - 6 pm Weds 10am-5pm
Closed Weekends and Holidays




Low Cost Pet Prescriptions

Advertise With Us!

734-263-1476
sales@pridesource.com

Support Michigan's LGBTQ+ Newspaper and Grow Your Business!

Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit

It's Time for Spiritual Spring Cleaning

Join Us
In-Person or Online

Sundays at 11 am

290 W. 9 Mile,
Ferndale, MI 48220

 MCCDETROIT
 
 **MCC Detroit**
 MCCDETROIT.ORG

MERITHOT

CREATE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY.

Merithot helps awesome companies create remarkable brands, strategies, websites and content.

Creative Marketing made with ♥ from Ann Arbor, MI

www.merithot.com



From "Planet Sex." Photo: Hulu

◀ Cara Delevingne

Continued from page 18

something that made me who I am. But I just hope, especially in terms of people's families or when people watch this, that they can have conversations that may be tricky. Because they can at least find the right wording or identify with a person that they see.

Can you remember something — a film, a TV show — that you clung to that really made you feel more comfortable with being queer?

I don't know. The thing is... I guess I sought a lot of, like, Elton John or musicians. But there weren't a lot of female ones. It was men. And so that still kind of made me feel a little... less. I mean... [laughs] Billie Jean King? I met her.

I was 22, though. So, it was a bit late. But not really. I think a lot of the things I surrounded myself were like... I guess porn was the first time I saw two gay women. But it wasn't good, and it was definitely... they weren't gay. I got scared of it, because I probably liked it.

You are a big deal star. And this is important because of your platform.

I thought you were about to say, "You're a big gay." I was like, thank you.

You are a big gay.

A big ol' gay.

As someone with a massive following, though, I was wondering what are your feelings on how you've seen yourself versus how the media has portrayed who you are when it comes to gender identity and sexuality?

I think a lot of the times in the media, I was playing a part, always. But I was comfortable doing that because it meant I could kind of keep my own life to myself. But then to be honest, I didn't really ever process or actually deal with anything. Or see what I was going through as I was going through it because inside I felt just confused and very lost, and very... without an identity, almost, because my identity was work. My identity was the parts I was given or the person I was meant to be or the brand I was working for. It wasn't really ever me.

It was a whole, big old mess, really. It didn't really make sense. But then I think in the show, looking back on it, I realized how much I love being a woman. I am genderfluid, for sure, but I liked playing between masc and femme and all those things. And I just think the binary of gender was so constricted when I was younger. "Boys play with this and girls play with that." And I didn't like what girls played with. But that didn't make me a boy. But I got confused within that because I just wanted the same opportunities.

But again, I like to now decide when I really wanna be super femme or not. I like to be able to

decide that because generally as a person I just like to be comfortable in what I look like and what I wear. But inside, I'm a woman and I'm sensitive. But I think it's a lot deeper than that. I have a lot of masculine energy in me. We all have feminine and masculine energy, every human being. So I think that was a big thing for me, because I did question it a lot. I was like, "Am I non-binary? What am I?" But I'm not. But I love anyone being and feeling how they [are]. I do think that gender is too binary. But then, for me, I was very happy to have my pronouns.

It sounds like you learned a lot about yourself through making this show, and maybe got to the truth of who you are?

Yeah. I guess especially in terms of relationships and kind of abolishing the shame. Which I didn't really have, but it made me realize how much I used to have and how much I hadn't dealt with it. And how much I just kind of brushed it aside when actually I was like, "What am I really looking at here?" But the narrative I had wasn't my own; it was other people's. So that shame wasn't really mine to hold and I had to give it back to the people who put it on me.

You say in the show that growing up famous can stunt a person's growth, even when it comes to sexuality. I'm wondering specifically about

Hollywood, because some people might think, "Oh Hollywood, it's so queer. It's a great place to immerse yourself if you're queer, to be accepted." How did that affect your journey to discovering your sexuality?

It was not like that for me at all. One of my first experiences with it was actually Harvey Weinstein who said to me, "You cannot be with a woman." He was just like, "We need to find you a beard." And I was like, "Who is this fucking stupid fat man?" He wasn't nice. He was just a horrible man. Obviously we know that now. But he was like, "You'll never work. No one will believe you as a straight character." And I was like, "Oh, fuck. That's bad."

So there was just stuff like that, especially I think as a model no one cared either way. But they weren't gonna celebrate it. I think it just stunts your growth a lot as in you don't have time to be yourself. Or at least I did not. I felt like everything that was happening in my life, emotions and things, I just had to shove it down and keep going. Which is no one else's fault but my own. I just... it was an easy way to run away from my stuff.

What was the most valuable takeaway for you from the whole experience of immersing yourself in queerness through "Planet Sex"?

I think how much community and support is important. How much we can't do this alone, anyone. Life, I'm talking about, generally. That through community and through connection, we can do the things that were not possible to do alone. And loving that and appreciating that. But also being vulnerable in that. I think a lot of times I would just show up kind of giving a surface experience [of] myself and it wasn't real. Because I was just so scared of being rejected and so scared of people leaving, I guess.

But I love myself. I'm me. Messy, done up, all the things. It just makes me who I am. And if I love that then that's the most important thing. I think a lot of this is more to do with self-love. I was just in a place of complete discovery. I was like, "Oh, what do I believe about relationships? What do I believe about all of these things?" Sometimes it's OK not to know either. It's OK not to know; it's OK to keep discovering. It's OK to question and wanna change.

There were so many moments where I thought I had it all figured out or I wanted to so badly have

it figured out because I was like, "Then I'll feel safe." But the problem is it doesn't work like that. And sometimes you end up running into a dead end when you think you know it and you just don't. And it's OK.

Aside from "Planet Sex," there's your part in "Only Murders in the Building," where you play artist and gallerist Alice Banks, the love interest of Mabel Mora, played by Selena Gomez. Both shows feature queer representation, but "Only Murders" reaches people who may not see queer representation, or may not seek it out.

That's why shows like that are so brilliant because it's not a gay show where people go, "Oh this, I know, it's 'The L Word.' We know what we're getting here." I think that's why mainstream media and mainstream shows should do that more often where it's not the main two characters or the whole story is based around queerness. It's like, queerness is everywhere. So that's how a show should be. It should be slipped in and it should be a conversation and it should be a part of it. When we wanna make queer content and we push it very hard, it's gonna reach just other queer people and not what we want it to be: more normalized. So that's why I was so grateful for that show and I think it was such an incredible way to do it.

What's it like to bring that sort of representation to the screen with one of your closest and dearest friends, Selena Gomez?

I mean, it's an easy day of work, isn't it? It's great. Especially when you love each other and I respect her so much as an actress and as a person. So it was just fun. It was great. And that show in general. Steve [Martin] and Martin [Short], everyone. It was just brilliant. I was basically playing myself too. Apart from I'm not that evil. I'm not a psycho.

Will we see you in the next season?

No, I wish. The lesbian went too overboard.

I think people had complicated feelings about that relationship in that last season.

Yeah, they did. It happens. I get it. Alice Banks is a nutcase.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

MIUNIFIED.ORG

Sexual Health Screenings

STI TESTING
HIV TESTING
SUPPORT SERVICES

UNIFIED
hiv health and beyond
LIFE CONTINUES. LIVE HEALTHY.

Access Care and
Prevention Services.
Start at MIUNIFIED.ORG



MICHIGAN HIV/STD HOTLINE

800-872-2437

Find Additional Sexual
Health Resources.



at *Hodges...*



SUBARU

PCH-22 **ASCENT**



**HODGES
SUBARU**
Metro Detroit's "Subaru-Only Dealer"

21205 Woodward Ave • Ferndale • MI • 48220

248.547.8800 • www.hodgessubaru.com

HOURS: **MONDAY** - 9:00A.M. - 7:00P.M.
TUESDAY - FRIDAY - 9:00A.M. - 6:00P.M.
SATURDAY - 10:00A.M. - 2:00P.M.

EVERYDAY!

EXCELLENT SERVICE • OUTSTANDING SELECTION • FANTASTIC PRICES....

BIDWELL TOVAREZ PLLC

PROVIDING BANKRUPTCY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES



Providing personal and compassionate assistance with financial problems including Chapter 7 and 13 bankruptcies, foreclosure, garnishments and elimination of second mortgages.

What clients say about Bidwell Tovarez:

"Most trustworthy and experienced"

"Outstanding representation"

"Services with a personal touch"

Bidwell Tovarez PLLC

333 W 7th St., Ste. 140 432 N. Saginaw, Suite 800

Royal Oak, MI 48067 Flint, MI 48502

248-270-3333 810-222-6422

www.bidwelltovarez.com

david@bidwelltovarez.com

Call 248-270-3333

We are a debt relief agency. We help people file for bankruptcy relief under the Bankruptcy code.



BRINGING WELLNESS TO LIFE

AWBS MISSION: To meet the needs of individuals, families and the community by providing integrated health services which foster well-being and self-sufficiency.

AWBS offers a variety of services to all members to function at their greatest potential by using trained professionals and best practices.

SERVICES OFFERED: Mental Health Services, Substance Use Disorder, Prevention & Treatment, HIV Prevention, STDs Testing, Primary Care, Health Workshops, Intellectual Development Disabilities Services, Skill Building, Family Support and more.

TRAUMA INFORMED GROUPS: • Anger Management • Dialectical Behavior Therapy • Recovery • Smoking Cessation • Trans Trauma (T-TREM)



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR APPOINTMENT
CALL (313) 924-7860 | www.awbs.org



An Invaluable New Resource for Donor-Conceived People with LGBTQ+ Parents

BY DANA RUDOLPH

COLAGE, the national organization for people with LGBTQ+ parents, recently released an updated edition of its groundbreaking guide for donor-conceived people with LGBTQ+ parents. It's an invaluable resource for youth and young adults—but also feels critical for the parents and other adults supporting them.

"Donor Conceived: A Guide for People Who Have LGBTQ+ Parents and Were Born via Donor Conception and/or Surrogacy" is a revised version of the organization's 2010 guide specifically for donor conceived people (DCPs) with LGBTQ+ parents. That focus is important. As the new introduction notes, "Although we acknowledge there are many DCP born to straight parents, the experience of DCP with LGBTQ+ parents is unique and presents specific challenges and joys. We recognize that DCP with straight parents may

not agree with or understand our perspectives on these issues—this guide is for us, by us."

The new guide also expands the scope of the earlier version, which only included people born via sperm donation. COLAGE National Program Director Angel Martin explained to me, "We know that donor conceived people have very diverse experiences and conception stories so we wanted to include language about and perspectives from those born through egg donation and surrogacy as well."

The new guide has also updated terminology. "In the past decade, awareness and terminology around gender has evolved towards more inclusive terms that recognize that gender is not binary," Martin said.

"A lot of the guide references reproduction so this updated guide uses medical vocabulary rather than gender-based vocabulary."

There are separate chapters for

DCPs who know their donors, for those with unknown donors (either completely anonymous or "open identity," allowing contact when the child turns 18), and for those born through gestational surrogacy. Each chapter is packed with the varied experiences of DCP COLAGers in their own words, sharing their differing thoughts about the relationships they have or want to have with their donors. One said, for example, "I don't know who my donor is, and while I have been curious at times, it isn't something of any importance to me or my family"; in contrast, another said, "I was extremely curious to know who my donor was, why they had chosen to be a donor, and their medical history. Finding out who he was had been on my mind for years."

The guide stresses, "There is no right or wrong way to feel about these topics," but notes that the examples provided may help readers "take

comfort in the fact that you are not alone in your experience." The emphasis is on what DCPs themselves may be feeling and empowering them to make decisions that are right for them. The guide even suggests ways that they can discuss donors with their (the DCPs') parents — sometimes an easy thing, but other times complicated by parents' differing considerations.

Other topics covered include the pros and cons of trying to contact a donor or half siblings; deciding whether to try and find the identity of an unknown donor; how to build relationships if you do, and where to get support.

Another useful chapter covers "Talking to Others About Your Family," looking in detail at some of the hurdles DCP COLAGers might face, from concerns about using sexual terminology ("sperm," etc.) to dealing with people's incorrect assumptions. It offers sample

language that people may wish to use, depending upon their specific type of donor conception, but also importantly notes, "It is okay to not tell everyone how your family was formed or who your parent(s) are."

A section of "Advice for Prospective and Current Parents" is a must-read for any LGBTQ+ parent who (like myself) has used or is considering donor conception. (I suggest that parents read the whole guide — but especially this section.) If you've ever wondered whether or how to talk with your kid(s) about their donor(s) or pondered some of the feelings your kid(s) may have about being donor conceived, this is for you.

Aimed at DCPs, but also useful for parents is a section titled, "What Are My Rights? A Legal Resource for People with LGBTQ+ Parents Born via Donor Conception," which discusses vital questions like "Who is legally considered my parent?" "If my parents are separated, do both my parents have rights to parenting time?" "Can I find out who my anonymous donor is?" and more.

A section of "Advice for Teachers, School Administrators, and Others Working in Schools" suggests ways to normalize different family structures in classrooms; how to communicate with DCPs and their families about who the student considers their parent(s); why Mother's/Father's Day projects and family tree exercises can be challenging for DCPs and how to find alternatives; and other ways of being respectful and inclusive without divulging more than a student wants known about their family.

There is information here, too, about opportunities to get involved with COLAGE and where to find relevant books, films, and more.

"We view this as a living document and are excited to add even more stories to this guide in the future," Martin said. "We are grateful for the original author's efforts in spearheading this guide and hope that donor conceived COLAGers find the updated version useful."

COLAGE also recently updated its People with Trans Parents resource guide and is working on a guide for adopted COLAGers. Download all the guides free from the COLAGE website (colage.org).

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ+ parents.



Madison Calderon as Bea, Andrew Rannells as King Barton and Tan France as Sir Benedict in "Princess Power." Photo: Netflix

‘Princess Power’ to the Rescue

Producers Drew Barrymore and Savannah Guthrie on Queer Representation, Gay Dads and Helping Kids Love Who They Are

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Now White? I don’t know her. These days, the delicate, demure princesses from the earliest days of Disney films are history, replaced by a more socially progressive kind of young lady royalty that puts leadership and skills first, frilly dresses a distant second.

In fact, in “Princess Power,” a new Netflix kids show from executive producers Drew Barrymore and “Today” co-anchor Savannah Guthrie, the show’s theme song says it all — “no matter what we wear, we’re gonna be right there.”

Based on Guthrie’s bestselling book series, “Princesses Wear Pants,” co-written by parent educator and psychologist Allison

Oppenheim, the show is full of girl-power positivity for every kind of kid seeking aspirational get-’er-done determination and the power of friend-family. Those messages, along with a valuable one on self-expression, are a part of the queer-inclusive, pro-feminist fabric of the 14-episode series, which follows princesses of four major fruit kingdoms: Kira Kiwi, Beatrice

“Bea” Blueberry, Rita Raspberry and Penelope “Penny” Pineapple. They all love and accept each other as they do their part to change the world by helping their fellow “fruitizens.”

And then, of course, there are the gay dads. Voicing Beatrice’s fathers are actor Andrew Rannells (King Barton) and “Queer Eye” style expert Tan France (Sir Benedict).

According to their character descriptions, “While King Barton isn’t as much of a daredevil as his husband and daughter, he’s a brilliant pilot and feels as much at home in a biplane as he does in the kitchen, where he’s a master of bold and surprising concoctions.

See **Princess Power**, page 24



"Princess Power" producers Drew Barrymore and Savannah Guthrie. Photo: Netflix

Princess Power

Continued from page 23

... Princess Bea gets her playful streak from Sir Benedict — he has a similar gleam in his eye and an equal love of adventure."

"I just think that once we went from book to the show, we were trying to expand the world in every way you can imagine," Guthrie said on Zoom about the decision to make Bea's parents a same-sex couple.

The show, she says, is designed for any kid looking to find versions of themselves, or who they want to be, on screen. "You don't have to see a carbon copy of yourself," she said. "You just have to see an aspect that you can connect with and that tells you you're accepted. I think that's really in the DNA of the books and now the shows, and it's so meaningful to us to be able to do that."

A show where powerful princesses can change the world and break down gender norms fits right within the motivating force behind some of Barrymore's most popular work, like "Charlie's Angels" and "Boys on the Side." It's something the actress, who is openly bisexual, is keenly aware of.

"I did grow up on things and

characters and humans and themes that made me believe as a young girl that I didn't have to become a boy, or as a young woman trying to make films like 'Charlie's Angels,' you don't have to try to be a man or take men down," she said. "For me, it's like, 'How do we love everyone and how do we make everybody feel?'"

For Barrymore, she connected to Guthrie's books just like she has some of her past characters, including her streetwise fighter character Dylan Sanders in "Charlie's Angels."

"There can be things in the creative world and the human realm that just make you feel like you can do it," she said. "These books seem like that to me. This show, I hope, is that for people. Because that is exactly what happened to me in my life through other characters or roles I got to play or stories that I was told. It is who I am today because of it."

Guthrie, who's been the co-anchor of the NBC morning news

show "Today" since 2012, felt inspired to become the journalist she is today after watching Katie Couric as a kid, so she gets it.

"I didn't have perfect hair, I didn't look a certain way," she says. "I didn't know that I could make it into this business the way I was. When I saw how Katie did it, I knew that I could. There was a place for me. So even in that little narrow sense, I can't make a comparison, but I do understand the power of example and the power

of seeing yourself and believing that if that person can be there, if they can be accepted, then maybe I could be accepted as well."

With recent rhetoric from anti-queer conservatives aimed at LGBTQ+ kids, from "Don't Say Gay" laws to a troubling movement to ban queer-centric books from American libraries, the show — even if it is just a kids show about princesses — conveys a strong, necessary message to those who need to hear it.

"It's simple: You belong. You're here too. We see you," Guthrie said.

"I hope that it's empowering," she continued. "I hope that it feels

embracing. I hope that anybody who watches it feels like they're seen, even if it's just one aspect of themselves that they recognize.

Even in the silliest way."

"I love a platform like Netflix," Barrymore added. "I love the world you created in the books. There are worlds for everyone that include everyone and trying to speak and reach everyone. [Those are] the things I want to be a part of."

Certainly, when it comes to queer-inclusive kids content on TV, there are more options than ever — options that better reflect people who live in our real world. Those include two other animated Netflix series: "Ridley Scott," featuring Rannells as one of Ridley's dads, and "She-Ra and the Princess of Power," which also casts queer characters as heroes.

Elsewhere, the animated comedy-horror show "The Owl House" on Disney+ stars a bisexual character named Luz Noceda and features a two-dad household and a non-binary character, while Hulu's "Steven Universe" has been celebrated as one of the queerest kids shows on TV.

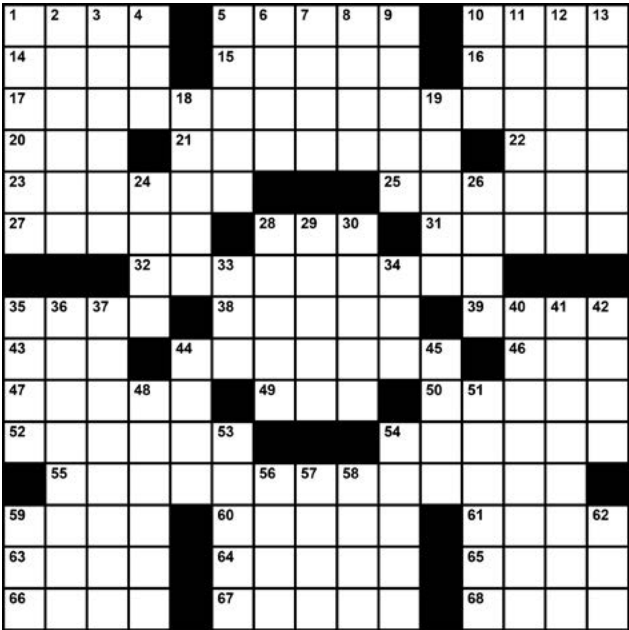
"I feel like there's always more work to be done," Guthrie said regarding LGBTQ+ representation in kids programming. "You can never rest on your laurels. But I think you also have to acknowledge progress and be grateful for that and keep it going."



“

I hope that it's empowering. I hope that it feels embracing. I hope that anybody who watches it feels like they're seen, even if it's just one aspect of themselves that they recognize. Even in the silliest way.

— Savannah Guthrie



Make Lemonade from Your Lemons

Across

- 1 Shakespeare's "anon" updated
- 5 Concern of GLAAD and NLGJA
- 10 Sourpuss
- 14 Not using the tongue
- 15 Where a top lays?
- 16 Antifur org.
- 17 Start of a quote from 59-Down

Q Puzzle

- 20 Tango number
- 21 Celeb dancer on "DWTS," say
- 22 Elbow-bender
- 23 "Boys Don't Cry" Oscar winner Swank
- 25 Gay in the library
- 27 Arrow shaft
- 28 Posed for Berenice Abbott
- 31 Playbill lists
- 32 More of the quote
- 35 NBA or NRA

Down

- 1 Bessie of the blues and more
- 2 Start of Richard Hatch's motto
- 3 Peter of "Florence of Arabia" fame
- 4 Keanu's role in "The Matrix"
- 5 "Dearest" role for Dunaway?
- 6 Singer on "Lord of the Rings" soundtrack
- 7 Cabinet div.
- 8 Start of an Evan Wolfson memo
- 9 Deuce follower, for Mauresmo
- 10 Cross-dresser M. Klinger's rank

- 38 "Brokeback Mountain" setting
- 39 Like a member that's not upright
- 43 Beginning of a hickey?
- 44 Device to assist penetration
- 46 Heston was once its pres.
- 47 In a frenzy
- 49 Bonheur's word
- 50 Move barely
- 52 Units that make it seem like more inches
- 54 Threatening words
- 55 End of the quote
- 59 Lip service?
- 60 Easy putt for Spencer-Devlin
- 61 Give ___ to (approve)
- 63 "Da Doo Ron Ron" beginning
- 64 Didn't dine out
- 65 Look at a hottie in a bar
- 66 Angry in., for example
- 67 Leases out
- 68 Ancient European language

- 11 Witherspoon's favorite cups?
- 12 Tops
- 13 Uses a turkey tool
- 18 Megan's "Will & Grace" character
- 19 Support for someone on their knees
- 24 Ball of film
- 26 Barrie's boys
- 28 Seattle's WNBA team
- 29 Sound in a studio
- 30 Lott of Mississippi
- 33 In need of lube
- 34 Drink served with fruitcake
- 35 Cukor's rib donor
- 36 Sooner or later
- 37 "Bali Hai" setting
- 40 Joke by Wanda Sykes, perhaps
- 41 Michelangelo paintings, e.g.
- 42 Strip in the locker room
- 44 Kind of milk
- 45 Light brown
- 48 Whitecaps off South Beach
- 51 Used car transaction
- 53 Phallic oral pleasure
- 54 Black pussy cats, e.g.
- 56 Dark time, in ads
- 57 Counterfeiters' nemeses
- 58 Cut out
- 59 First trans Grammy winner Petras
- 62 Anal insertion procedure (abbr.)

See p. 17 for answers

Prism of Possibilities Psychotherapy

Christine Cantrell, PhD

Fully Licensed Psychologist



Give yourself an extreme self makeover ...

- ▼ Speak Your Truth
- ▼ Discover What You Want
- ▼ Create Your True Self
- ▼ Heal Old Hurts, Find Wholeness

Located in Royal Oak
www.christinecantrell.com
christinecantrellphd@gmail.com

CALL NOW! 248-591-2888



- 1 MANY STIS DON'T CAUSE SYMPTOMS
- 2 TESTING IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW
- 3 GET TESTED TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR PARTNER HEALTHY

Visit or Call iDecide Health Clinic
100 Mack, Detroit, MI 48201 | (313) 876-4319



Delivered Straight to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get *Between the Lines* delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE



Hayley Kiyoko and Pink. Photos: Trevor Flores, Andrew MacPherson

Gay Icons on Tour

Continued from page 16

Friday and Saturday, June 9 and 10, 6:30 p.m., Ford Field. Very, very sold out.

Tori Amos

July 9, Meadow Brook Amphitheatre

The singer-songwriter and powerful pianist is set to take Detroiters on a dreamy, heartwrenching journey July 9 at the Meadow Brook Amphitheatre — just like she's been doing since the age of 13, when she played her first gig at a gay bar (Mr. Henry's in Washington, D.C.). Amos will turn 60 by the end of this summer's Ocean to Ocean Tour, but she's yet to steer away from her roots. She's still shying away from the mainstream and thriving

while releasing a steady stream of haunting, thought-provoking tracks that tell stories in a way no one else can.

Sunday, July 9, 7:30 p.m., Meadow Brook Amphitheatre. Ticket link at toriamos.com/tour.

Big Freedia

July 15, Sound Board at Motor City Casino

Big Freedia, the Grammy-winning artist also known as the ambassador of New Orleans bounce music, will hit the Motor City Casino Sound Board stage July 15 in a show sponsored by LGBT Detroit as part of the organization's annual Hotter than July program. Big Freedia boasts collabs with heavy hitting music acts like Beyoncé, Lizzo and Drake and a solid and growing solo career that has seen her hosting "Dick Clark's Rockin'

New Year's Eve" and appearing on shows like "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and "The Problem with Jon Stewart." Expect a genre-defying (and gender-defying) mix of rap, hip-hop and New Orleans vibes with a big dose of queer spirit.

Saturday, July 15, 8 p.m., Sound Board at Motor City Casino. Ticket link at bigfreedia.com/tour.

Beyoncé

July 26, Ford Field

Beyoncé didn't break the internet (and Ticketmaster) like a certain other artist did when she announced her Renaissance World Tour last year, but there's a similar freak-out energy among the BeyHive. And if Detroit is like most of the other cities on the list, the show will likely sell out, so act fast! Beyoncé delighted her queer fans last year when she dedicated the "Renaissance" album to her late,

gay Uncle Johnny — hopefully, we'll see plenty of representation on the tour, too. So far, the superstar has kept her opening act(s) quiet.

July 26, 7 p.m., Ford Field. Ticket link at tour.beyonce.com.

Madonna

Aug. 5, Little Caesars Arena

Hating on the Material Girl might be all the rage these days, but Madonna's queer fans respect the iconic, international pop star for the way she's been proving her allyship for four decades (and for the way she's been flipping off her naysayers for just as long). The Celebration Tour brings Madonna back home to Detroit Aug. 5 for a queer-influenced spectacle featuring special guest Bob the Drag Queen.

Saturday, Aug. 5, 8:30 p.m., Little Caesars Arena. Ticket link at

madonna.com/tour.

Pink (with Brandi Carlile)

Aug. 16, Comerica Park

First of all, Brandi Carlile is opening for Pink. Second, a Pink show is a guaranteed good time. Most likely, she's only going to perform on solid ground for a small percentage of the show. The rest of the time, she's bound to be suspended overhead, leaping through fiery hoops or something, while somehow maintaining the high-energy rhythms that punctuate her extensive back catalog. Considering this tour is called Summer Carnival, there's no telling where the adventure may lead.

Aug. 16, 6:30 p.m., Comerica Park. Ticket link at pinkspage.com.

CultureVerse

Here's to the
creators
& keepers
of art, culture,
and knowledge.

CultureVerse provides technology, training, consultation, and other resources in order to create equitable and sustainable opportunities for artists, educators, students, and preservationists.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.CULTUREVERSE.ORG
BACKGROUND IMAGE: ARTWORK BY MIKE HAN

Norton's 
FLOWERS & GIFTS

Delivering Amazing Quality
since 1892.

800-862-8667 | www.nortonsflowers.com
We Deliver the **WOW!**



LOCATIONS IN YPSILANTI & ANN ARBOR

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993
BTL
Between! Lines



PRIDESOURCE

Are You Ready To
Introduce Your Business
to the LGBTQ+ Community?

PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE

OAKLAND
COUNTY
HEALTH DIVISION

**Monkeypox
vaccine
Available!**



FREE

Affirmations
290 W 9 Mile Rd, Ferndale

Updated clinic dates are
available on our social
media @goaffirmations



**ALL DATES ARE BY
APPOINTMENT ONLY**

- Call 1-800-848-5533
- Choose option 3
- Answer a 5 minute screener to assess eligibility
- Set your appointment
- Arrive at Affirmations at your appointment time

One dose will provide protection. To be FULLY vaccinated you must receive a second dose. Call the Oakland County Health Department to schedule your first or second dose.

AFFIRMATIONS
LGBTQ+ Community Center
All Are Welcome.

VALID THROUGH 2.28.23

FERNDALE'S ONLY FULL SERVICE MED SPA
ELIZABETHFACE+BODY

15% OFF INMODE LASER

MORPHEUS8 RESURFACING
LUMECCA SPOT TREATMENT

\$100

GOLD
FACIAL

\$150

MICRODERMABRASION FACIAL

\$225

MICRONEEDLING TREATMENT



Find us on
Instagram!

CALL US TO LEARN MORE
248.268.1655
WWW.ELIZABETHMEDSPA.COM
928 E 10 MILE RD FERNDALE MI 48220

