

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE Lines™

Michigan's All-Asian Drag Debut

Inside a night honoring queer
and Asian performance voices

By Sarah Bricker Hunt

A RAINBOW WAVE

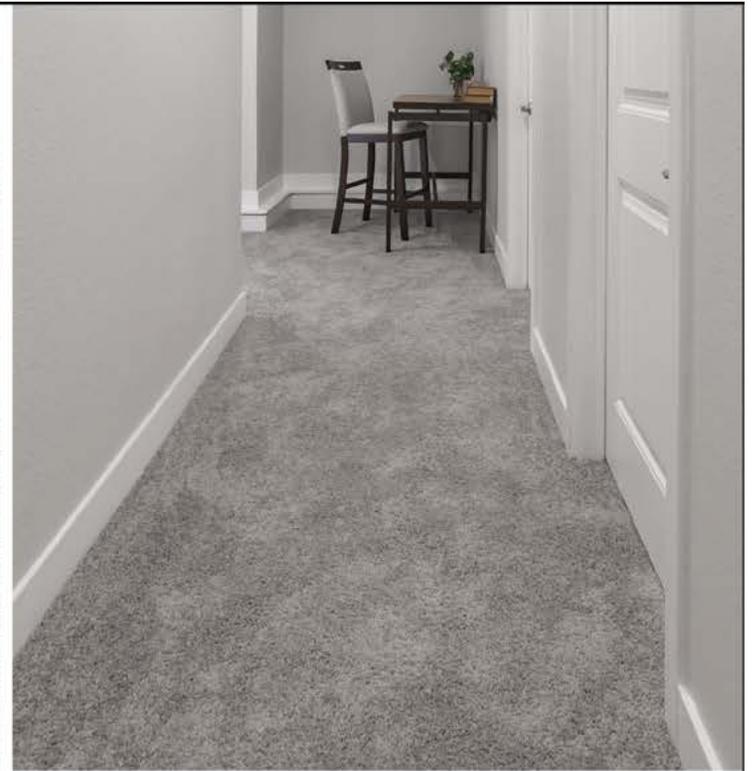
Michigan voters embrace
queer candidates

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Pictured: Kenneth Gibson in drag as Katrina Alexis Monae.
Photo: Nomadic Madam

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

November can be a complicated month for queer folks: equal parts reflection, celebration and carb-loading. Between International Transgender Day of Remembrance and a calendar full of gratitude-themed gatherings, it's a time to honor our losses while also making space for joy, chosen family and maybe a little karaoke-fueled catharsis. Whether you're looking to light a candle, share a meal or just sing your heart out without judgment (OK, maybe a little judgment), Southeast Michigan has plenty to offer.



Stand Together for Trans Day of Remembrance

International Transgender Day of Remembrance, held annually on Nov. 20, honors the memory of trans and gender-diverse people lost to violence and neglect. Across Michigan, communities will gather to grieve, remember and renew their commitment to a safer, more loving world. You can find local vigils and services in places like Ferndale, Ann Arbor and Livingston County, many offering both in-person and virtual participation. For these TDOR commemorations, bring your grief, your candles and your determination to continue showing up for one another.

- Queer Families of Livingston: bit.ly/tdoraqflivco
- Candlelight Vigil At Affirmations Ferndale: bit.ly/tdorferndale
- UM Spectrum Center: bit.ly/UMtdor
- PFLAG Great Lakes: bit.ly/tdorpflaggreatlakes



Celebrate Community Over a Shared Table

Head north to Owosso (just 30 miles north of Lansing) for a warm, queer twist on Thanksgiving: Pridegiving, a potluck where gratitude meets glam. Expect home-cooked (or store-bought — no shame) dishes, friendly faces and space to celebrate the beautiful diversity of our LGBTQ+ community. Please note the organizers specifically mention “come by yourself,” so don't think this is a situation where you need a crew to roll on in!

Plus, there will be craft stations for kids and teens, because we all know that glitter and glue are the real community-binding agents.

Nov. 23, 4–6 p.m., Ollie's Coffee & Café (606 Cass St., Owosso), bit.ly/pridegiving.



Downtown Ferndale. Photo: Andrew Potter

Dance with Chosen Family

While it's true that the night before Thanksgiving is our community's official “see your ex at the bar” holiday at Menjo's and 215 West, it's more about dance floors than drama. Menjo's is turning its entire complex into a 10-hour sanctuary of sound with multiple stages and DJs, while 215 West hosts Thots & Prayers, a popular LGBTQ+ dance party. You can dance away family stress and see all the folks who are back visiting their parents. Might be a whole new dating pool!

Nov. 26, 10 p.m., Sanctuary at Menjo's, (928 W. McNichols Road, Detroit), bit.ly/menjotgiving.

Nov. 26, 8 p.m., 215 West (215 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale), bit.ly/thotstgiving.



Sing Boldly at Uplift Karaoke

If pulsing dance music and crowded clubs aren't your thing, but you still want to partake in the Thanksgiving Eve festivities, consider a pilgrimage to Uplift for their Wednesday karaoke.

Whether you're channeling your inner Stevie Nicks or rounding up all your friends for a heartfelt rendition of "Closer to Fine" (is there any other rendition?), you'll find an encouraging crowd ready to clap, cheer and sing along. It's the perfect midweek outlet before turkey, traffic and tense dinner-table debates.

Nov. 26, 9 p.m., Uplift (210 S. 1st St., Suite 100 N., Ann Arbor), upliftannarbor.com.



Thank Your Queer Champions

This week, try a small act of queer gratitude: Write a thank-you note to someone in your community who made your life a little easier, brighter or maybe even just possible this year. Think of a barista who remembers your name, the trans elder who paved the way, the friend who keeps texting to check in.

Gratitude isn't a feeling; it's a practice that strengthens connection and resilience. Plus, it's cheaper than therapy and feels way better than doomscrolling.



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Gabriela Santiago-Romero and Mike McGuinness. Photos: Instagram

Some Hope, At Last: The 2025 Election Recap

Pontiac elects first out LGBTQ+ mayor while Detroit Council strengthens queer representation

BY NICK FULTON

The 2025 election cycle has come to a close, and there has been a lot of noise around a few high-profile Democratic wins in New York City, Virginia and New Jersey — victories that reflect the electorate's objection to Trump's second term, and more specifically voters' embrace of protections for queer Americans. While Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's win in New York City has made headlines, there were also plenty of moments to celebrate right here in Michigan as Detroit voters pushed forward a night of historic firsts of their own.

City Council President Mary Sheffield will make history as the city's first female mayor, and one of few Black women to lead

major cities across the country. In addition to Sheffield's victory, the city also elected Denzel McCampbell to the council, giving Detroit two openly LGBTQ+ councilmembers. McCampbell will join Gabriela Santiago-Romero, who easily secured her second term. Santiago-Romero made history as the first openly LGBTQ+ woman elected to Detroit City Council. Charlie Pugh became Detroit's first openly LGBTQ+ elected official when he was elected council president in 2009.

In addition to these results out of Detroit, LGBTQ+ candidates made history across the state this cycle. Queer candidates Drew Duncan and Jacqueline Slaby were elected to the Kalamazoo City Commission. In Pontiac, Mike McGuinness, Michigan's first

openly LGBTQ+ elected official, was elected as the city's new mayor.

These victories reflect an encouraging trend of statewide voter advocacy, according to officials who know what it means to break barriers.

"People made a very clear statement. Not only are they actively opposing things that are happening at the federal level, but they're also opposing anti-LGBTQ candidates," said State Rep. Laurie Pohutsky, who serves Michigan's 17th House District and is the first openly bisexual member of the House.

That opposition is especially vital as Michigan's Republican-controlled House mirrors national efforts to roll back LGBTQ+ rights. Pohutsky said those dynamics make

the election of advocates and allies all the more critical.

"It's really important to note that a lot of federal actions were softened because of the actions of our statewide elected officials and our legislatures. So we have protections in place against a lot of really heinous federal actions that other states don't," she said.

This defense of LGBTQ+ rights will be all the more consequential as voters and candidates in Michigan look toward 2026. During the midterms, the state will elect a new governor, a new U.S. senator, 13 new representatives for the U.S. House and countless local and regional officials. Although daunting, leaders across the state count the 2025 cycle as a moment of promise looking forward to 2026.



Jerron Totten (center left) and members of the Michigan LGBT&A Caucus at Motor City Pride in 2025. Courtesy photo

“People are pushing back against Trump policies and they are making it known that they will hold elected officials accountable.”

— Jerron Totten, chair of the Michigan Democratic Party’s LGBT and Allies Caucus

“I feel incredibly hopeful going into 2026 following the elections this week,” said State Rep. Jason Morgan, who represents Michigan’s 23rd House District. “I’m seeing voters elect really a range of candidates who seem genuinely focused on the people.”

That range of candidates will include some dynamic races, with queer candidates up and down the ballot. Jeremy Moss, Michigan’s first openly gay state senator, is running a campaign for Michigan’s 11th U.S. congressional district. Similarly, Eric Chung is running for Michigan’s 10th congressional district. If either or both win, they would become the first openly gay members of Michigan’s congressional delegation.

Across the state, LGBTQ+ rights remain on the ballot. Twenty-one anti-LGBTQ+ bills are currently in some stage of consideration in the Michigan Legislature, measures that could live or die depending on upcoming elections. Nationally, there are 616 such bills moving through state legislatures. According to Morgan, voters now have a sharper

understanding of what’s at stake.

“I know some queer people who in this last election had a sense that Trump and Republicans were somehow coming around on LGBTQ+ issues and would not attack their basic rights. And it is wildly clear now that Republicans will stop at nothing to roll back LGBTQ+ rights in this country from trans rights to marriage equality,” Morgan said. That awareness stems from the GOP’s relentless national focus on trans lives. During the 2024 cycle, Trump and his allies spent nearly \$215 million on anti-trans TV ads alone. This political obsession with trans people has sent a clear message to voters, according to Jerron Totten, chair of the Michigan Democratic Party’s LGBT and Allies Caucus.

“I believe that voters are beginning to see that our community has been used as scapegoats for conservative talking points and conservative policy,” said Totten. “I believe that the voters are seeing that there is no data behind transgender people using bathrooms and committing crimes while they’re in the bathrooms. And I believe the American people are acknowledging that we have far more pressing issues to confront than attacking LGBTQ+ people just for existing.”

Totten’s caucus has already made an early 2026 endorsement of Dr. Abdul El-Sayed for Michigan’s soon-to-be-

vacant U.S. Senate seat.

National polling shows that voters are increasingly rejecting fearmongering around queer and trans people. In key races across Virginia, New York City and New Jersey, the top concerns for most voters were taxes, the economy and the cost of living, not gender or sexuality. Voters want easier lives, and they are ready to fight for them at the polls according to Totten.

“People are pushing back against Trump policies and they are making it known that they will hold elected officials accountable for how they respond, or not, to the infringement of the rights of the American people,” he said.

As voters and candidates turn their attention to the midterms, Pohutsky emphasized the importance of voting as both resistance and activism.

“This is a fascist administration that thrives on chaos and harm that it does to some of the most vulnerable people in the country, namely our community. Everything is on the line. There is no overstating how important 2026 is going to be, so we really need people to obviously get out to the polls,” she said.

For LGBTQ+ Michiganders, this election cycle has underscored both the challenges and momentum shaping the state’s political future. From Detroit to Kalamazoo, voters showed a willingness to elect leaders who reflect the diversity of their communities, and a clear refusal to be swayed by divisive national rhetoric.

As the next cycle looms, Michigan’s growing coalition of queer candidates and allies signals something even more powerful than political wins: a collective insistence that equality, safety and representation are nonnegotiable.

FEEDBACK

Why Print Still Matters in Queer Media

In [BTL Editorial Director] Chris Azzopardi’s recent musings on the state of queer media (“What the Future of Queer News Looks Like — and Why We Need to Hear from You,” Sept. 18 issue), he wrote, “Social media isn’t optional, it’s the newsroom.”

That is, of course, reality. Everyone in sales, media and marketing today knows that digital-first is the only strategy.

That said, please do not underestimate the value of print media. I picked up a copy of *Between The Lines* at a bar earlier this summer and couldn’t believe a high-quality LGBTQ+ news outlet exists in Michigan, and that it still has a print edition.

Print lends credibility and truth in an era when digital media is becoming less and less trustworthy. Print can reach marginalized audiences who may not have access to digital media — the old, the young, those being monitored by disapproving parents, the low-income or homeless.

Additionally, print media is a comfort to people like me who don’t need it. I’m a middle-class, middle-aged professional with internet access and plenty of digital devices. But to detox, cut out doomscrolling, and consume today’s terrible news in manageable doses, I have started to read the newspaper in print and avoid digital. I pick up the *Chicago Sun-Times* on a daily basis, and have subscribed to *Between The Lines* as well. My mental health has improved greatly.

The only negative? All this newspaper reading has caused me to start doing newspaper crosswords on a regular basis, as another form of non-digital entertainment. I guess I am turning into my grandpa. Oh well — like my gray hair, I will embrace it.

— Todd Schultz

Have thoughts on our coverage? We’d love to hear from you. Send your feedback to editor@pridesource.com.

The Ann Arbor Innovator Who Launched Body Alignment Tech After Years of Chronic Pain

BY ANDREA POTEET

Ann Arbor SPARK supports entrepreneurs and startups throughout Washtenaw County with mentorship, funding and accelerator programs. This is part one of our four-part LGBTQ+ Tech Innovator Series, highlighting diverse entrepreneurs shaping Michigan's tech future. See the video companion to this article at pridesource.com.

At 19, Mark Thiesmeyer Hook fell off a roof while running a house painting business, leading to eight years of chronic back pain.

Today, at 52, he says he feels better than he did in his 30s — and he's helping others achieve the same transformation through his innovative startup, Align Athlete, which launched in 2024.

After 26 years running his local gym, Better Living Fitness, and a decade learning alignment techniques from medical professionals, Thiesmeyer Hook discovered that many people's pain stems from structural misalignment that can be corrected with the right tools and knowledge. His first product, the Glute Activator, raised \$77,000 in a successful Kickstarter campaign. Now he's producing Glute Activators in his Ann Arbor garage and shipping them to customers across five continents. Learn more at AlignAthlete.com.

Tell me about Align Athlete.

We're helping people self-align their bodies and learn the tips and tricks that only physical therapists and doctors typically do in their offices. Our first product is the Glute Activator, which addresses what the New York Times calls "dead butt syndrome" — when sitting weakens your glutes by compressing the nerves that fire them. The Glute Activator works by decompressing those nerves and can wake up your glutes in as little as a minute. We're



Don't miss our video on pridesource.com featuring Mark Thiesmeyer Hook, where he shares more about Align Athlete's origin story and why he values LGBTQ+ representation in tech.

also building an app powered by AI that helps users relieve specific pain points and becomes more intelligent with each session.

Why were you driven to create Align Athlete? What problem are you trying to solve?

Even after getting in great shape and becoming an exercise trainer, I was still throwing my back out every six months from ridiculous things like putting on pants or sneezing. I learned these incredible alignment techniques from Dr. Paul Shapiro, but the problem was, you needed someone to do them with you. I couldn't always have someone there to align me before I went for a

run. I started thinking: Can I build tools that help people do this for themselves?

What resources have been helpful to you along the way?

Ann Arbor SPARK has been instrumental. Being an entrepreneur can be isolating, but SPARK has been a true partner. I'm an expert in exercise training, but I'm not an expert in supply chain management or manufacturing. SPARK provided both expertise and seed funding through grants that helped us set up a professional website, hire mechanical engineers for prototyping and get intellectual property protection. Without something like SPARK partnering with me, I don't know how we

would have gotten this company off the ground.

Why is LGBTQ+ representation important in the tech field?

There's a 2023 study showing that LGBTQ+ people have more chronic pain than the heterosexual population. I think that's due to stress — when we go into stressful situations, we tighten up parts of our bodies. As an LGBTQ+ population, we have more of those situations that arise daily, whether it's dealing with discrimination or just the stress of deciding whether to be open in a room. That physical armoring tugs us out of alignment and causes real pain. Having LGBTQ+ voices in tech means

we're creating solutions for our community's specific problems.

What's on the horizon for Align Athlete?

We're scaling up production of the Glute Activator and developing additional tools for the lower back and hips. The big goal is launching our app that will provide personalized alignment routines. I haven't had a single back incident in over two years thanks to these tools — and now I want to help others experience that same freedom from chronic pain.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Ann Arbor SPARK.

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Inside Michigan's First Asian American Drag Night

Rising Voices event creates space for cultural community and celebration

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Zainab “The Rose” Diva had been performing drag for only a few months when she took the stage at Uplift, an LGBTQ+ bar in Ann Arbor, last June. As a Pakistani trans woman and Muslim, she’d spent years searching for spaces where all of who she is could exist at once — her faith, her heritage, her gender, her art.

That night, she found it.

Four drag queens, one drag king and a host took the stage for what the show’s host, Rising Voices, an organizing and engagement organization that does intersectional work focused on the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, believes was Michigan’s first all-Asian American drag night. The performance featured Chinese traditional dance, Vietnamese music and classic Cantonese pop songs woven into acts of drag artistry. For the diverse, multigenerational audience, seeing themselves reflected onstage was often a first.

“As a trans person who is Pakistani and Muslim, I struggle to find representation or belonging anywhere,” Zainab said. “I feel rejection from my ethnic spaces and religious spaces at times for being queer. Drag spaces at least will always have a political aspect to represent marginalized communities, so I always feel at least safe in them.”

The idea to put together a drag show featuring local AAPI performers had been percolating since 2023, born from a conversation between Henry Duong, Rising Voices’ organizing director, and volunteer Joe Liu, following Rising Voices’ first Pride event. The vision: an all-Asian cast drag night in a state where Asian American drag performers rarely get spotlighted.

When Uplift launched its drag program, the timing felt right. Kristine

Patnugot helped bring it to life as part of the organization’s most ambitious Pride programming yet. Rising Voices’ cultural strategist, Patnugot is also a filmmaker who created VH1’s 2010 reality series “TRANSform Me,” which starred Laverne Cox, and was deeply involved with the New York drag and trans community. The month-long celebration included a solidarity march with Detroit Action and a panel on family and kinship.

One performer traveled two-and-a-half hours from Grand Rapids and stayed overnight with a friend just to be part of the show. Another made her drag debut that evening. Performers agreed to learn second numbers with just two weeks notice.

“The spirit of everyone coming together to put this on was incredible,” Duong said. “It helps us as organizers to know there is a need for this and there’s a want in our community.”

While national platforms like “RuPaul’s Drag Race” have featured Asian American performers including Anetra, Nymphia Wind and Plastique Tiara, local visibility remains rare. Rising Voices created this event specifically to showcase Michigan AAPI talent.

QingYu Zhong, who performs as Oliver Woodstock, brought drag king energy to the lineup. Known for live instrumentals incorporating jazz and acrobatic moves from numbers in musicals ranging from “Mulan” to “SpongeBob,” he holds multiple Pride titles and made history in 2021-2022 as the first AFAB nonbinary performer to win a first drag king and the first out non-binary individual to win the National Showman contest.

“I participated in this event because it was the very first AAPI drag show in Michigan,” Woodstock said. “During a period of such concern and fear for those who experience great intersectionality, it is a privilege



Drag performer Xiao Ghossty. Photo: Nomadic Madam

to stand with our community and become a display of courage and a performative act of pushback.”

For Jucy Liu Voutin, the night offered a chance to move beyond Halloween costumes. What started as a Lucy Liu pun evolved into something deeper: a way to explore cultural and gender expression. Out of drag, Liu Voutin presents masculine. In drag, she says she’s “a luxurious spectacle, radiating feminine energy.”

“I thought it was extra special to be part of an event that highlighted AAPI performers, especially as intersectional LGBTQ+ and AAPI perspectives are underrepresented,” Voutin said.

Zainab, a singer-songwriter who brings emotional, lyrical performances to the stage, started drag as a way to express her authentic self as a trans woman and potentially build a music career. “I wanted to express my true self as a trans woman, so my persona is very much realness, soft and feminine but not in an exaggerated way,” she said.

Like most drag performers in Michigan, participants in the all-Asian American drag show do this work part time — the glamour comes with harsh realities. Patnugot highlighted the significant pay disparity between Michigan and major markets like New York City. In Michigan, most performers maintain full-time jobs to support their art, investing substantially in wardrobes, makeup and practice time.

Another challenge reflects the current sociopolitical era. With more than 600 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced in 2024 nationwide, drag has become urgent resistance for many performers. The policing of gender expression makes events like this not just entertainment, but political acts.

“Drag is political, and it’s important that my drag is part of resisting the oppression of LGBTQ+ and AAPI communities which we are facing,” Voutin said. “More Asian representation in drag challenges the ‘model minority’ stereotype that LGBTQ+ AAPI folks will quietly conform to the status quo. We will not stand for it and we will not be erased.”

Woodstock emphasized how local representation affects the national scene. Despite being part of national pageantry, he noted the limited number of AAPI performers at that level.

“The AAPI community is one of the least represented populations in the drag/burlesque community,” he said. “The more visibility there is for this community, the more people will be able to show up for themselves and live their most authentic life.”

Patnugot pointed to cultural context often overlooked. Many Asian cultures historically include concepts of a “third

gender” or nonbinary expression, making drag a continuation of cultural traditions rather than a Western import.

Caitlin Shimoura Goedert, Rising Voices’ digital organizer, noted the audience spanned generations and backgrounds — college students to community elders, across racial lines. “Whether they were white or AAPI or Black, this sort of representation really resonated with them, especially [during] a year like this where there’s so many anti-LGBTQ bills happening,” she said.

The celebration came with real security concerns. The previous year, Rising Voices’ event at the Freer House at Wayne State



Jucy Liu Voutin. Photo: Nomadic Madam

University faced a threat the day before. The team decided to proceed — “everybody said they wanted to, so we did,” Patnugot said — and it went well.

This year, security was a priority. Uplift’s existing security team and safety protocols allowed performers and audience members to focus on celebration rather than potential threats.

For Woodstock, the night offered something rare: complete safety in visibility.

“Being surrounded by my people, I had never felt so safe and seen,” he said. “It felt like coming home and I want the rest of my community to feel how I did.”

Zainab echoed that sense of belonging, connecting her years of Asian American activism to finding validity in drag. “I know in my heart Allah made me queer and trans, and I was given gifts to use in drag and artistry to fight for change,” she said. “Support your communities because all we have is love and each other.”



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

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Kim Davis: Not this Messy Bitch Trying to Ungay America!



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Hear ye, hear ye. Gather round, folks. I've got an important pronouncement to make:

Kim Davis can fuck all the way off!

I know, I know. That's not very nice. But it's a hell of a lot nicer than what she wanted to do to me: invalidate and take away my marriage.

For those of you who have blissfully forgotten, Davis was a county clerk in Kentucky who responded to the Supreme Court's momentous Obergefell v. Hodges ruling in 2015 by refusing to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, citing "God's authority." You know, the opposite of what she was legally required to do.

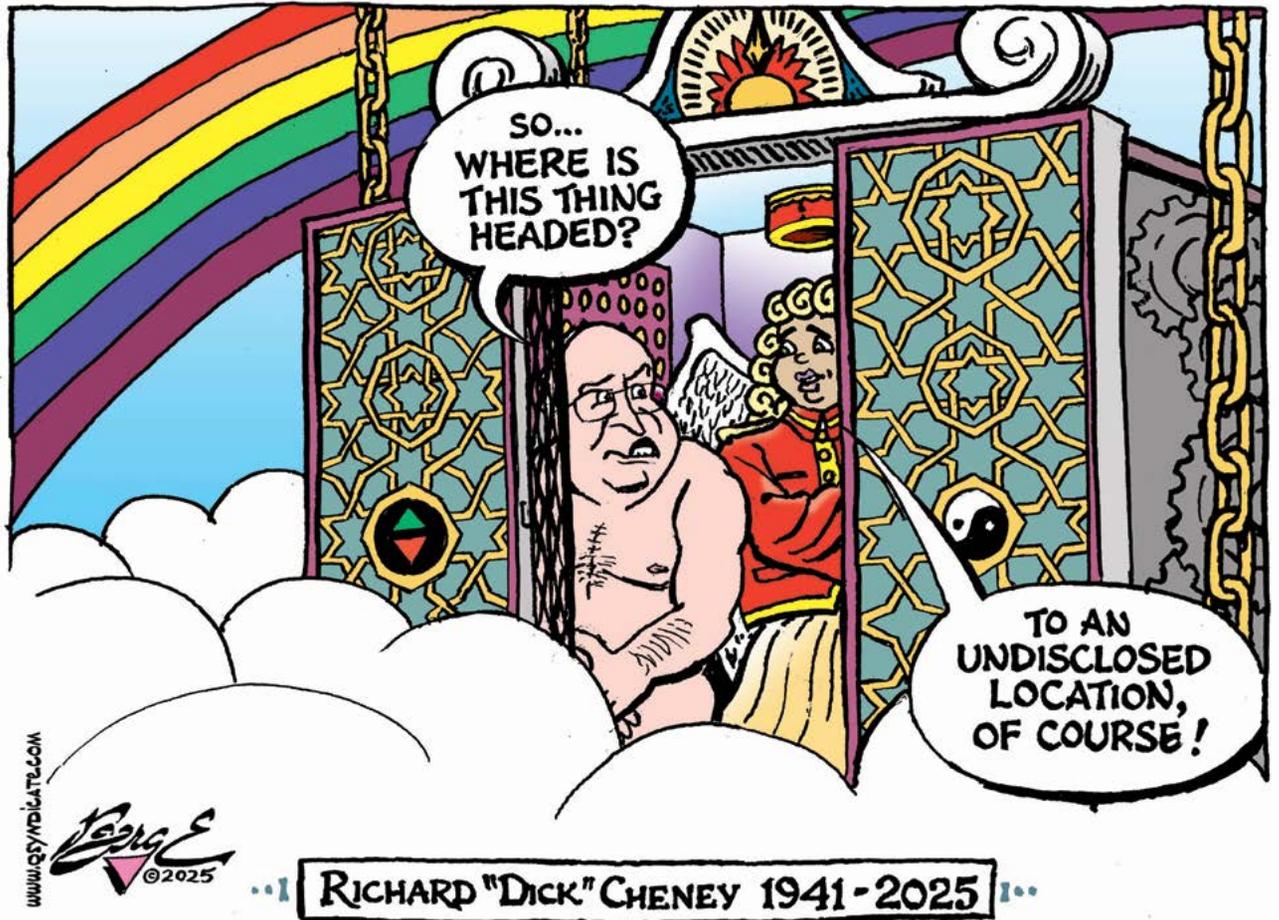
The couple she refused a marriage license to, David Moore and David Ermold, sued Davis and were eventually awarded \$50,000 each plus even more in attorney fees, leaving Davis on the hook for \$360,000 (attorneys make the big bucks).

Davis got mad for and stayed mad for nine years until bringing her appeal before the Supreme Court asking them to somehow use the case she lost as a way to overturn Obergefell v. Hodges entirely.

The Supreme Court told her to go f.... OK, OK. They didn't tell her anything, but they did refuse to hear the case, no reason given. The next best thing! That means that marriage equality is safe for another day!

The Supreme Court told her to go f.... OK, OK. They didn't tell her anything, but they did refuse to hear the case, no reason given. The next best thing! That means that marriage equality is safe for another day!

Not safe for good, mind you. There is a solid right-wing majority on the Supreme Court right now. Justice Clarence Thomas said himself when he helped overturn Roe v Wade that Obergefell v. Hodges was in his sights. It wasn't that they don't want to undo marriage equality. It's that they looked at Davis's case and said, "Oh, hell no. Not this messy



bitch coming in here trying to ungay America!"

But we will take good news when and where we can get it!

And lest you think the Supreme Court has gone woke, earlier this month they took another swing at transgender

people, upholding a passport policy that serves one purpose: to hurt trans people.

"The State Department policy requires passport holders to use their sex assigned at birth as their sex designation, prohibiting transgender people from matching it with their gender identity," explains the Hill. "The policy also removed the option for people to select 'X,' leaving male and female as the only two options."

While you can easily imagine why this might pose a very big problem for

transgender people, whoever wrote the unsigned majority opinion could not: "Displaying passport holders' sex at birth no more offends equal protection principles than displaying their country of birth — in both cases, the Government is merely attesting to a historical fact without subjecting anyone to differential treatment."

Major white-person-saying-I-don't-see-color energy in this opinion. Someone's sex at birth may be "a historical fact," but it isn't an innocuous one. Anti-trans bias is real (as this opinion makes clear) as is anti-trans violence. Forcing

a trans person to come out to every person who needs to see their passport puts them in continuous danger.

The three justices who believe that transgender people are human signed a dissenting opinion written by Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson that reads, in part:

"The Government seeks to enforce a questionably legal new policy immediately, but it offers no evidence that it will suffer any harm if it is temporarily enjoined from doing so, while the plaintiffs will be subject to imminent, concrete injury if the policy goes into effect. The Court nonetheless fails to spill any ink considering the plaintiffs, opting instead to intervene in the Government's favor without equitable justification, and in a manner that permits harm to be inflicted on the most vulnerable party. Such senseless sidestepping of the obvious equitable outcome has become an unfortunate pattern. So, too, has my own refusal to look the other way when basic principles are selectively discarded. This Court has once again paved the way for the immediate infliction of injury without adequate (or, really, any) justification. Because I cannot acquiesce to this pointless but painful perversion of our equitable discretion, I respectfully dissent."

In other words, these three justices told the majority that they were sadistic assholes pretending to be victims who were so full of shit and bad at their jobs that they shouldn't even be justices. And Justices Jackson, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan weren't too chickenshit to sign their opinion, unlike the majority. Also Ketanji Brown Jackson is fire.

Unfortunately, that doesn't change the fact that the majority of the Supreme Court is made up of people who not only will harm LGBTQ+ people (almost) every chance they get, but who will delight in doing so.

State Sen. Jeremy Moss Pushes to Remove Michigan's Same-Sex Marriage Ban

State Sen. Jeremy Moss introduced legislation Nov. 6 that would let Michigan voters remove the state's same-sex marriage ban from the constitution.

The Democrat's move came as the Supreme Court was reviewing a case involving Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples after the 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision. The court has since declined to take up the Davis v. Ermold case, which could have overturned Obergefell, but the threat highlighted marriage equality's vulnerability.

Michigan's constitutional ban from

20 years ago remains in place despite being rendered unconstitutional by Obergefell. If the Supreme Court were to overturn Obergefell in the future, the ban would immediately take effect again, preventing new same-sex marriages in the state.

"Marriage equality in Michigan is only protected by the Obergefell decision," Moss said in a statement. "With these looming potential threats, we cannot leave the future of equality up to the whims of the current or a future court that is keen on rolling back our rights."

Out lesbian Attorney General Dana Nessel voiced strong support for the resolution, noting that marriage equality "has brought hope and joy to so many in our communities, while hurting absolutely no one."

The resolution would require approval from two-thirds of both legislative chambers to place the question on the ballot.



Sen. Jeremy Moss at the Michigan Capitol. Courtesy photo

Michigan House Hearing Sets Stage for Bills Targeting Youth Gender-Affirming Care

Three detransitioners testified before a House subcommittee on Nov. 4, setting up Republican bills to prohibit gender-affirming care for Michigan youth. The hearing, chaired by Rep. Luke Meerman, included no transgender advocates, families or care providers.

The testimony supports three bills introduced in May by Republican lawmakers that would ban hormone therapies and surgeries for minors, allow insurance coverage for detransition procedures and create licensure sanctions for medical providers.

State Rep. Sharon MacDonnell noted that only 1% to 2% of people who receive gender-affirming care later regret their decision. The bills have no chance of becoming law while Democrats control the state Senate and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer remains in office.

Gender-affirming care remains legal and safe in Michigan despite legislative attempts to restrict access.

FBI Stops Alleged Halloween Attack Plan on Ferndale LGBTQ+ Bars

Three men face federal terrorism charges after allegedly planning a Halloween attack on LGBTQ+ bars in Ferndale.

Mohmed Ali and Majed Mahmoud were

arrested Oct. 31 by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, which seized tactical gear, AR-15-style rifles and ammunition. A third suspect, Ayob Nasser — Ali's brother — was arrested Nov. 5. The complaint says the men, inspired by the Islamic State group's extremism, had scouted LGBTQ+ venues along Woodward Avenue near E. Nine Mile Road. All three suspects appeared in court Nov. 3.

Investigators reported that the suspects repeatedly referred to "pumpkins" in their conversations — potentially code for a Halloween-

themed attack. According to federal documents, they discussed copying the 2015 Paris ISIS attacks and the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting.

Ferndale bar Soho responded on Facebook, writing, "It is abhorrent that the LGBTQ+ community would ever be targeted — a community that stands for tolerance, unity and peace."

On Nov. 10, all three suspects waived their detention hearings and consented to remain in federal custody pending preliminary hearings scheduled for Nov. 17.

Honoring Two-Spirit Relatives This November

Native American Heritage Month is a great time to learn more about Two-Spirit individuals. The term niizh manidoowag, from the Ojibwe language, describes people who embody a blend of gender roles, sexual identities and spirituality within Indigenous cultures. Historically revered as healers, teachers and spiritual leaders, Two-Spirit individuals are reclaiming their cultural roles today through Two-Spirit groups across Michigan, including councils in Sault Ste. Marie and Harbor Springs.

Mamdani's Historic NYC Win Centers Trans Support

Democratic socialist Zohran Mamdani won New York City's Nov. 4 mayoral race, defeating centrist democrat Andrew Cuomo 50.4% to 41.6%. The 34-year-old pledged to declare New York City an LGBTQ+ sanctuary, allocate millions toward restoring transgender health care defunded under federal pressure and deploy hundreds of lawyers to combat the Trump administration's anti-LGBTQ+ agenda. Earlier this year, Mamdani protested NYU Langone after the hospital dropped transgender patients under Trump administration pressure.

Perry Wayne Puts Community Over Trump Tariffs

Perry Wayne, Wayne Underwear founder, is pushing back against import tariffs that have made restocking their best lace sellers "extremely difficult." Despite higher costs from the new tariffs, the Detroit company is refusing to raise prices on customers. "Community > profit," Wayne posted on Instagram, thanking supporters for sticking with them while they "fight to keep the brand accessible for everyone."



Photo: wayneunderwear.com

The Trans Community Faces Federal Erasure in Silence

Progressive allies who rallied for a late-night host remain quiet as Trump administration targets transgender Americans



BY ANNI ARBOUR

Good for Jimmy Kimmel.

He got his show back and with it, his bully pulpit from which he can continue battling Trump and his MAGA minions.

Kimmel's triumphant return — which has resulted in his highest ratings ever — was the direct result of a concerted effort by progressives and Hollywood en masse, coming together to boycott Disney products. Nothing catches the attention of a corporation more quickly than losing billions of dollars over a knee-jerk reaction.

Forgive me, but while I applaud the swift reaction and organized outrage that saved Kimmel's show, I'm also a little bitter.

Since Trump and company took office, the transgender community has been the stated target of the administration. They make no pretense of the goal, which basically is to deny our existence, take away our hard-earned rights and characterize us as actual dangers to society.

Consider for a moment what actions the Trump administration has taken against us since January:

On his first day in office, he issued an executive order directing all federal agencies to replace the term "gender" with "sex" in their policies and redefined "sex" to be understood as either male or female, unchangeable and based solely on reproductive cells at

conception. It also directed all agencies to stop issuing documents that reflect a person's gender.

Another executive order cut federal support for gender-affirming care for individuals under the age of 19.

Another order curbed federal funding of any school that supported transgender students' social transition.

He issued the Department of Defense order to ban transgender people from serving in the military and, in some cases, denied trans veterans from receiving retirement benefits they earned.

He tried to ban trans women from participating in women's sports. In light of this, the NCAA quickly instituted such a ban in their competitions.

He directed all federal agencies to limit restroom use to the sex a

That, of course, is only a partial list. Every day brings more bans and threats, so it's hard to keep up. But you get the idea.

So, where is the moral outrage? Where are our champions?

Celebrity types proudly come out and parade their trans children before the paparazzi as some sort of ideological prized calf. And they will issue self-aggrandizing proclamations of support for trans people. But where are the boycotts of companies that are now hostile to the trans community? In less than a week, over 400 entertainers signed an open letter protesting Kimmel's suspension by ABC. Have you seen any such letter protesting our treatment by the federal government?

Street protests popped up overnight in support of Kimmel. Rallies supporting us are generally only attended by trans people. And rarely do they ever make it



If I sound pissed, I am. The transgender community is facing an unprecedented attack upon our very existence. The federal government under Trump is doing all it can to erase any protections we have, to deny us any rights we thought secured and to even define us as violent sexual deviants.

enduring.

If I sound pissed, I am. The transgender community is facing an unprecedented attack upon our very existence. The

federal government under Trump is doing all it can to erase any protections we have, to deny us any rights we thought secured and to even define us as violent sexual deviants.

Yet, all we hear from those we thought to be allies is silence.

No matter what fate Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show will

have, he will be all right. He will still get jobs hosting the Emmys, stand-up comedy specials on Netflix and probably as an honored guest on "The View" or "The Tonight Show." And he will still be a millionaire.

But our fate is far more uncertain and dire.

It galls me when I see people idolizing people in the public eye — entertainers, sports stars, politicians — who pose and preen and virtue signal in order to placate the social media mob.

Stop it. They haven't earned our love. Not until they start treating us with the same respect that they give to others.

Never forget that we are fighting for our lives.

person was assigned at birth.

And most recently, they have been implying that there is a connection between transgender people and mass killings. Some rumors assert that "Transgender Ideology-Inspired Violent Extremism" (TIVE) will be designated as a new domestic terrorist category by the FBI.

onto a newscast.

Democratic politicians and media pundits screamed about the violation of Kimmel's First Amendment rights. I'm still waiting to see Barack Obama, Gavin Newsom (ha!) or J.B. Pritzker take to the airwaves with such righteous indignation about the ongoing discrimination we are

Supreme Court Lifts Block on Trump Anti-Trans Passport Policy While Lawsuit Continues

Ruling allows enforcement during legal challenge but isn't final decision on the case

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

The U.S. Supreme Court on Nov. 6 cleared the way for the Trump administration to enforce a passport policy that forces trans, nonbinary and intersex Americans to carry identification that doesn't match who they are — at least for now.

The 6-3 decision lifts a temporary court order that had blocked the policy while a lawsuit challenging it moves through the courts. It's not a final ruling on whether the policy is legal, but it means the restrictions can take effect immediately as the case continues.

A federal judge in Massachusetts had issued what's called a preliminary injunction — essentially a pause button on the policy — after finding that it likely discriminated based on sex. But the Supreme Court's conservative majority removed that protection Nov. 6, allowing enforcement to proceed while litigation continues.

"I just think what they did shows a shocking disregard for the humanity of transgender people," Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project, told BTL. "To say that there's no harm in having to have your biological gender on your passport to transgender people is just like, what planet are you living on?"

What the ruling means

The policy reverses more than 30 years of State Department practice. Since 1992, passport applicants could request a sex marker different from their birth certificate with medical documentation. In 2021, the Biden administration added an "X" marker option for nonbinary and intersex people and removed the medical documentation requirement.



Trump eliminated both options in January through an executive order declaring the U.S. government would recognize only two sexes. The new policy requires all passport sex markers to match sex assigned at birth.

Sex markers weren't added to U.S. passports until 1977, and the reason was fashion, not security. According to State Department memos, officials were concerned that androgynous hairstyles and unisex clothing trends of the 1970s made it harder to determine someone's sex from their passport photo. The International Civil Aviation Organization adopted the requirement that same decade, though it never explained why knowing a traveler's sex was necessary for identification purposes.

While some countries have followed similar binary-only

policies, others have taken different approaches. The Netherlands began removing gender markers from national identity documents altogether in 2020, determining they were unnecessary for identification. Countries including Germany, Malta, Iceland, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and India currently allow nonbinary or third gender markers on passports.

Federal District Judge Julia Kobick blocked the Trump administration's passport policy earlier this year, finding it discriminated based on sex and warranted heightened judicial scrutiny. A federal appeals court agreed. But the Supreme Court's emergency order now allows enforcement to proceed.

The court offered minimal explanation in its unsigned, four-

paragraph order, stating that "displaying passport holders' sex at birth no more offends equal protection principles than displaying their country of birth."

Kaplan said the decision follows a troubling pattern of the Trump administration using the Supreme Court's "shadow docket" to bypass lower court rulings. The shadow docket is an emergency process where the court often provides little explanation for major decisions.

"Every time the administration doesn't like an initial ruling in a case, they go to the Supreme Court on this emergency shadow docket where the court usually doesn't even offer any explanation for what it does," Kaplan said.

He emphasized this isn't a final decision. The lawsuit will continue in Massachusetts federal court and will eventually return

to the Supreme Court for a full hearing. But significant harm will occur in the meantime.

During the seven months the temporary block was in place, plaintiffs presented evidence of harassment by TSA agents, strip searches and hostile questioning at airports and customs when traveling with inaccurate passports.

The lead plaintiff, Ashton Orr, a trans man from West Virginia, applied for a passport with a male sex marker in January but was told he could only receive a female designation.

The ACLU, which represents plaintiffs in the case, called the decision "a heartbreaking setback for the freedom of all people to be themselves."

See [Passport Policy](#), page 17

Why This Detroit Therapist Is Reclaiming ‘Slut’ in New Book on Sexual Shame

Natasha Wilson’s interactive guide offers tools to rethink sex, shame and identity

BY SOPHIA VALCHINE

For five years, Natasha Wilson thought about fonts. About the perfect “s” for “slut.” About how a single letter could carry the weight of centuries of shame, and how the right curve might help dismantle it.

Self-publishing demands attention to every detail, but for Wilson, a Detroit-based licensed psychotherapist who uses ze/zir pronouns, the stakes went deeper than aesthetics. Wilson’s book, “Slut!: Letting Go of Shame Surrounding Sex and Sexuality,” wasn’t just another self-help guide. It was a deliberate confrontation with one of the most loaded words in the English language.

The seeds of the project were planted long before Wilson began practicing at Integrated Wellness, back when ze was a teenager taking sociology courses at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

“I think it’s such an important part of our humanity,” Wilson said of sexuality, “and the fact that it is so taboo just makes it even more interesting and powerful.”

As a Black, genderqueer, lesbian, pagan, kinky and polyamorous person, Wilson occupied what ze describes as a unique vantage point. Ze could see “the assumptions that people take for granted and the things that people accept without question” in ways that many couldn’t. It was this outsider perspective that Wilson believed could offer something fresh to conversations about sexuality and shame across different communities.

But it wasn’t until ze became a therapist and began hearing clients’ stories that the full scope of the problem revealed itself. Regardless of sexuality, gender identity or cultural background, nearly everyone ze worked with carried some burden related to sex

and sexuality.

“When you actually explore the history of sex and sexuality and culture and religion and the influences of power and power structures, you really understand how it’s woven through all of those elements, yet nobody talks about it,” Wilson said.

Through zir clinical work, Wilson witnessed how shame around sexuality manifested in depression, anxiety, relationship problems and disconnection from one’s body. Clients shared stories of being hurt and alienated because of their desires, bodies and identities. The silence around sexuality, Wilson realized, wasn’t just uncomfortable — it was causing real harm.

This understanding became the book’s foundation, combining self-help workbook exercises with deeply personal interviews. To find people willing to share their experiences, Wilson posted advertisements on university campuses and Facebook.

“Shame and sexuality are embedded in the word ‘slut,’ and it’s a powerful word that has been used to negate autonomy and to promote whatever social paradigm serves those in power.”

— Natasha Wilson

The response was surprising. A diverse group of people came forward, eager to talk about their struggles with sexual shame.

See **Slut!**, page 20



Natasha Wilson. Courtesy photo

Passport Policy
Continued from page 15

“Forcing transgender people to carry passports that out them against their will increases the risk that they will face harassment and violence,” said Jon Davidson, senior counsel for the ACLU’s LGBTQ & HIV Project, in a news release.

What happens next

Emme Zanotti, director of advocacy at Equality Michigan Action Network, said the ruling underscores the importance of state-level protections. “I’m deeply saddened by this Supreme Court once again giving deference to an administration that repeatedly cannot justify its ambitions nor defend the harm it’s inflicting on us,” she told BTL. “Our transgender and nonbinary friends, family and neighbors deserve better from their country.”

“But make no mistake, Michigan is a state where transgender and nonbinary people can still freely amend their state-issued IDs and birth certificates to reflect who they are,” she added. “We at Equality

Michigan will work tirelessly to keep it that way.”

If you already have a valid passport that reflects your gender identity, you can continue using it. But new applications and renewals will now be subject to the Trump administration’s restrictions.

“If you have a current passport that’s current and operative that reflects your gender identity, that passport is good. You’re able to use that,” Kaplan said. “But you can’t change it now” for new applications.

Anyone encountering difficulties with passports or problems while traveling should contact the ACLU for assistance.

This marks the second time the conservative-majority Supreme Court has greenlit a Trump administration policy targeting trans Americans. In May, the court allowed enforcement of a ban on trans service members in the military.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan in dissent, didn’t mince words. “Such senseless sidestepping of the obvious equitable outcome has become an unfortunate pattern,” Jackson wrote. “This court has once again paved the way for the immediate infliction of injury without adequate justification.”

Kaplan drew parallels between the current court’s treatment of trans people and past Supreme Court decisions targeting other marginalized groups, including the 1986 ruling upholding same-sex sodomy laws.

“They defined gay people solely in terms of presumed sexual behavior. There was no sense of humanity that these people were actual people,” Kaplan said. “I think this court has demonstrated through the Skrametti decision, through lifting a preliminary injunction against a military ban and now, in this case, this majority has shown that they don’t see transgender people as human beings.”

He said the decision should serve as a reminder about the stakes of judicial appointments.

“How did we get a court like this? We got a court like this from the 2016 election and the importance of people understanding that elections have consequences, the need to vote informed, but even more so the need to vote,” he said.

Despite the setback, Kaplan remained resolute. “We will prevail one of these days. It’s just very frustrating that this court seems bent on doing the will of this administration.”



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Frank-N-Furter, Frankly
Puzzle can be found on page 21

Lukas Gage Wants You to Know the Messy Parts

‘White Lotus’ star opens up about queerness and writing a memoir with a ‘little shade’

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

In a cultural moment where vulnerability is often curated and identity is endlessly scrutinized, Lukas Gage is choosing something braver: pure honesty. In his new memoir, “I Wrote This For Attention,” the 30-year-old actor and writer doesn’t pull punches, diving headfirst into the messiness of queerness, the humor that keeps us afloat and the uncomfortable but necessary truths about identity, shame, mental health and sex.

Known for his fearless and often buzzy roles in shows like “The White Lotus” (yes, that rimming scene), “Euphoria,” “You” and in films like “Companion” and “Smile 2,” Gage has built a career on pushing boundaries. Now, he’s doing the same on the page. Whether he’s casually recounting the time he had gonorrhea and chlamydia at the same time or unpacking the loneliness behind curated fame, Gage makes it clear: this isn’t about shock value. It’s about connection — especially with the teenage version of himself, and perhaps the teenage version of you — who needed a book like this.

Gage is a master of dichotomy here: vulnerable but never self-pitying, funny without deflection and refreshingly free of the usual PR polish. The actor proves that telling your story — especially a queer one, and especially now, when even the act of sharing it can feel rebellious — is certainly cathartic, but also radical. Told in a voice as biting as it is tender, “I Wrote This For Attention” straddles the line between chaos and clarity — always raw, often hilarious.

In this candid conversation, Gage reflects on the art of storytelling as survival, the power of humor as armor and what it means to reclaim your own narrative in a world that often writes it for you.

Is humor your way into vulnerability, or does the emotional core come first for you? And was that process a part of this book?

I think humor is the most



Lukas Gage. Photo: Sebastián Faena

underrated survival tool, and storytelling is also a way of survival. For me, with some of the traumatic stuff that I talk about in the book — and I do it in real life too — I talk about the lightest things with the most intense seriousness and the darkest things that happened in my

life with a wink and a smile. Part of that is just the way that I cope with it, and also, kind of in a way, having power over it and not letting it consume me or make me feel shameful or small. So that was an important part of the storytelling. Something that’s just true of me as

a person is I like to lead with a little bit of humor with everything.

I think a lot of queer people feel that way and also use humor to defuse hard situations.

Yeah, and performing. Part of the queer identity is performing and putting on these masks.

Refreshingly, this book smashes so much stigma. You write openly about going to therapy, STIs and the messiness of queerness in general. Which piece gave you pause about putting out into the world?

I think there’s backlash to being an oversharer and probably either the STDs or the mental health, but I think that we’re moving forward as a culture — and hopefully shifting the paradigm — by talking about it so openly, and by not being riddled with shame when talking about these things that I don’t believe should be shameful, but we’re taught to be for some reason. I just watched Charlie Sheen’s documentary. He is doing something so incredible by being open about his HIV status and being with men. For someone like him to be so candid and honest about that, that’s how we move forward, and not live in fear and shamefulness. So, yeah, there’s definitely some worry that I say too much, but ultimately, why would I not?

You very matter-of-factly describe getting gonorrhea and chlamydia at the same time. I felt the power of just saying that aloud, and then moving on.

Yeah, you don’t let it have ownership over you and you don’t let it make you feel small. Ultimately, it’s so common and shouldn’t be something that’s met with embarrassment. And yeah, why not [go there]?

You’ve been in the public eye for a while now. What’s a story in the book that allowed you to reclaim it from everyone else’s version of what they thought it was?

There’s this preconceived notion that you’re just handed things, that your

See **Lukas Gage**, page 22

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Slut!

Continued from page 16

"Many people shared that a part of what motivated them to want to share their stories is because they want to also encourage others," Wilson said.

These interviews became Wilson's favorite part of the project. Hearing from people who wanted to help others come to terms with their sexuality made zir feel "grateful" for their enthusiasm and vulnerability. Their stories illustrate how shame operates differently across identities while revealing common threads of isolation and self-judgment.

The workbook portion uses cognitive behavioral techniques to help readers "challenge and reframe thoughts" about sexuality. Wilson also included exercises for relaxation and mindfulness, recognizing that examining sexual shame would inevitably bring up difficult emotions.

"There's the understanding that emotional things will occur," Wilson said.

Then came the title. "Slut!" wasn't chosen lightly or simply to shock. "Shame and sexuality are embedded in the word 'slut,' and it's a powerful word that has been used to negate autonomy and to promote whatever social paradigm serves those in power," Wilson said.

By centering the word that embodies so much of what the book addresses, Wilson hoped to begin the process of reclamation before readers even opened the cover. The goal was provocation, but "not just for the sake of being a provocateur."

When the manuscript was finally complete after countless readings and revisions, Wilson struggled to find a legitimate self-publishing company. But after doing so, the book made its way into readers' hands.

The feedback has been illuminating. Many people assumed the slim volume would be a quick read, Wilson said, "but actually, if you really do the work of reading and reflecting, it does take some consideration."

Wilson wanted readers to question not just their personal beliefs about sexuality, but the society that shaped those beliefs in the first place.

"I really wanted to provoke people to challenge their own thoughts and assumptions, and even the society that we live in, because part of being inculcated in the society is so salient and ubiquitous that you don't notice it, and that breeds a situation

where you don't question it," Wilson said.

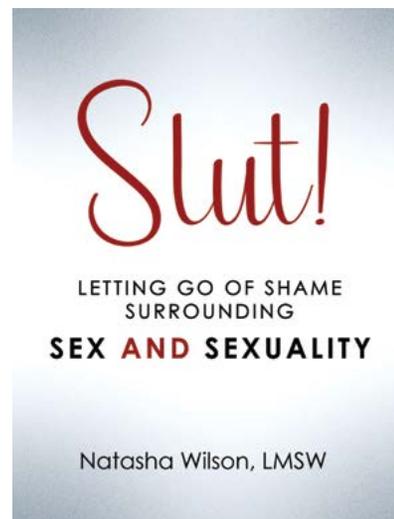
The book has begun reaching audiences beyond Wilson's practice. In May, Wilson appeared on the podcast "Tiffany, Turned On" to discuss the work and its themes of self-exploration, overcoming shame and embracing sexual empowerment. The conversation covered the book's exploration of topics including mindfulness, kink and fetish, queerness, intersectionality, the church's role in shaming

sexuality and dismantling rape culture.

To further extend the book's reach, Wilson launched a YouTube channel called The Tenth Muse as a companion to the material. The channel offers another avenue for people who might not otherwise encounter these perspectives, particularly those in communities where discussions of sexuality remain deeply taboo.

"I wanted to inspire people who may not be able to hear these voices because there's so many places where people just don't have access to that," Wilson said.

"Slut!: Letting Go of Shame Surrounding Sex and Sexuality" is out now.



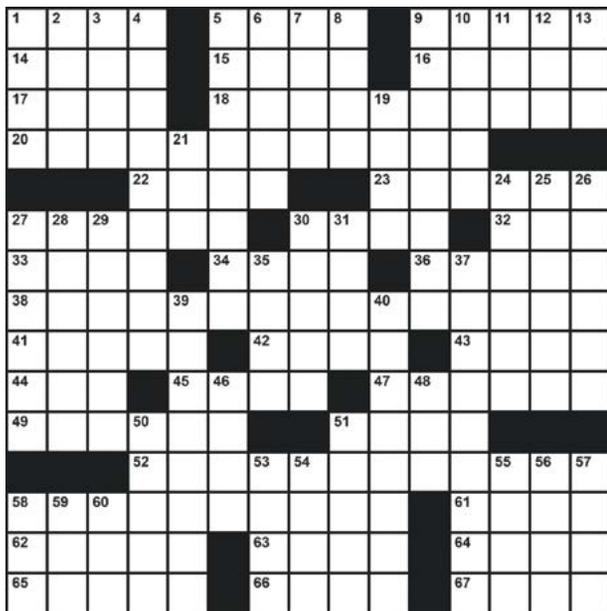
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Frank-N-Furter, Frankly

Across

- 1 Emulated Diana Nyad
- 5 British bigwigs
- 9 Liberace's choice of fur
- 14 Birth state of Langston Hughes
- 15 Memorial column
- 16 Affording no illumination

- 17 One who may want a bone
- 18 Fair amount.
- 20 Start of Frank-N-Furter's self-description: "I'm just a sweet ____"
- 22 Responses to Scar, in "The Lion King"
- 23 Brothel bosses
- 27 Antenna site
- 30 Type of leaf found on a head
- 32 Singer Cole
- 33 Wine region south of the Russian River
- 34 Carbon compound

- 36 Dustin Hoffman biopic
- 38 More of the self-description
- 41 Pernod flavorer
- 42 Just right
- 43 "La ____ aux Folles"
- 44 Love, to Billie Jean
- 45 Sounds from the "Giant" set
- 47 Transported by truck
- 49 Loafer doodad
- 51 Subway Series team
- 52 End of the self-description
- 58 Ride herd on
- 61 Swiss town with a bear mascot
- 62 Annoy during a blow job?
- 63 Star quality
- 64 Politico Panetta
- 65 Perfect for kite flying
- 66 Lorca's pink
- 67 First name among lesbian poets

Down

- 1 Needing Cialis
- 2 Spin like a top
- 3 Elton John Broadway musical
- 4 Reflections from a backside?
- 5 Election Day slacker
- 6 Blow them in the orchestra pit
- 7 Bridle parts
- 8 Online exaggeration, perhaps
- 9 Appropriate
- 10 Paid for a hand
- 11 Initial serving at lunch?
- 12 Like a one-incher, in Dogpatch
- 13 Hot time for Bonheur
- 19 Life partner

See p. 17 for answers

- 21 Pt. of SSN
- 24 Like sex after bed death, perhaps
- 25 Get by somehow
- 26 Did salon work
- 27 Little one
- 28 Realm of C.S. Lewis
- 29 Victor's booty
- 30 Family of Chaz
- 31 Ingrid's "Casablanca" role
- 35 Western defense gp.
- 37 Requiring little or no punishment
- 39 Balls
- 40 Site of Napoleon's final exile
- 46 Pearl Buck character
- 48 Off-rd. transport
- 50 Patron of O. Wilde's homeland
- 51 Birds with gifted tongues
- 53 Glenn Burke, formerly
- 54 Hole entered by a Minute-man
- 55 Have an opening for
- 56 Muscle Marys pump it
- 57 Jodie Foster's role with the King
- 58 Frat boys tap it
- 59 Debussy's water
- 60 They could come from Uranus



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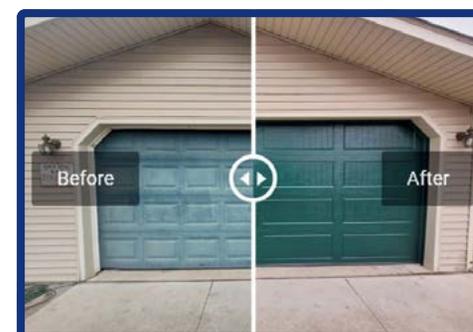
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◀ Lukas Gage

Continued from page 18

life is set. I just think there's been so much work that I've had to do, and so many obstacles that I've had to jump over. I wasn't handed things, and we are living in a culture where you can be famous overnight and in a minute, from one post, become a star. But also, there's more nuances to all of that, and I think we only show this curated version of ourselves, where we're living our best lives on Instagram — or at an award show, or on a talk show — but we don't see those moments in between. Existence feels so lonely, so sad and messy. I just feel like I don't show that part, and I don't get to show that part, and people see this very tiny version of myself. But there's just so much more to me than that.

Was telling that part of your story the reason you wrote the book?

I just always have loved reading, and I've loved nonfiction, especially just reading people that I admire and look up to, or people that I don't have a lot in common with, but I can find where we align and where I can see myself and them. I think that's why I always gravitate toward memoir and nonfiction, and I knew I was always going to do it, I knew I always wanted to write. I said it as a kid, and to be completely honest with you, having the [2023 writers'] strike happen, that was the catalyst to writing the book right now. I had that free time and that whole year to dedicate to writing this book made me fast-forward the process of releasing it. But I do think it's important to be honest and to get everything out there. Breaking the stigmas, having these open conversations that lead to other people having open conversations — that's the hope of it. Also just to have people be entertained and have a good laugh while they read it.

You're making me think about the timing of the release of this book and how important it is to tell queer stories right now given the anti-queer political climate. Where do you think the power lies in sharing your story given the attacks on LGBTQ+ people in the U.S.?

We are living in one of the scariest, darkest times ever, and I guess it's important to me to have all these people feel seen and not feel like we need to be tied down and quiet. But there's fear of it, and I can't say that the timing was intentional at all, but it happened to work that way. It's important right now to stand up for what you believe in and not be quiet. Being quiet and complicit and being silent is not the answer right now. But yeah,

I'm scared every day, truly.

It's easy to feel alone in all of this. I think of 15-year-old Lukas in rural Kansas who needs a story like this.

I just got chills, thank you. That's what it's about, truly. And like I said, we need humility and laughter and lightness in these times, but



also if I can make, like you said, the 15-year-old version of myself in rural Kansas who reads this book feel seen and feel heard and connected, that's the goal of it. I wrote this for attention, but I'm hoping for connection.

In the book, you describe an ex as looking like "if you gave an AI art generator the prompt, 'The Hills Have Eyes' character with an Equinox membership." I cackled. Is writing something like that cathartic? Is it petty? Is it a little bit of both?

I just wanted to kind of say the thing that people have all felt and wanted to say before. I don't know if it's so much about being catty — it was just kind of to make myself laugh. I thought it was funny. And maybe that's also reclaiming the narrative of it, because there was a lot of heartbreak in that story, and I felt really bummed out about it. So if I can make light of it and reflect on it later with a smile and a giggle and a little shade, that's OK, that's good. It's healthy.

Read the full interview online at pridesource.com.



Advice to Be Well



From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson

I'm a 40 year old male living with HIV since 2002. I have been doing very well with that and taking my medications daily. I also have hypertension and diabetes. As I am getting older I am having more and more difficulty with my erections, especially when using condoms. My cardiologist says I should not be taking erectile medications because of an interaction with my heart medications. The inability to have a satisfying erection is becoming more and more depressing. What can I do? – Brian

Dear Brian,

I understand your frustrations. Erectile dysfunction (ED) is actually more common than one may think, especially as one gets older. There is a revolutionary new treatment that might be of benefit for you. It's called low intensity shock wave therapy (LISWT). This innovative technology is clinically proven to improve blood flow and restore sexual performance. This procedure is painless and easy to perform. It works best for those mild to moderately affected. It requires two 10-15 minute treatments a week for 3 weeks. It's not for everyone. It would be nice for many to avoid taking ED medications. Some underlying

causes of ED such as low testosterone or mental health issues, will probably not be amenable to LISWT.

The gold standard equipment for this procedure is the Alma-Duo. Staying physically active, controlling your blood pressure and sugar, and staying well hydrated are other things you can do to help yourself. The Be Well Medical Center providers are experts in Sexual Health. We are completing our training to be able to offer this therapy in the next few weeks with the Alma Duo. We will take a detailed sexual medical history to determine if this procedure might be right for you. More information will be coming soon on our website. Additionally, you can Google "Alma Duo" to learn more about it.

Hi doc. I am a trans female and had bottom surgery 10 years ago. Sometimes I will go months without taking my estrogen as I am happy and comfortable with my transition. Is this bad? Do I have to worry about anything?

Hi there! First, one of the most important parts of transitioning is how YOU feel. Our goal will always be making sure you feel great and are happy with the current state of your transition. That being said, another important

part of your transition is making sure we do it safely. From the doctor's perspective, having had an orchiectomy (removal of testes) and not being on any estrogen does put you at an increased risk of suffering a bone fracture. This is because not having an adequate amount of testosterone or estrogen in your body puts you at an increased risk of a disease called osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is when an individual has decreased bone mineral density. That means that the bones are not as strong and can fracture much easier. This is something that every individual should be screened for as they age. Factors that put an individual at increased risk of osteoporosis are age over 50, low BMI, history of smoking, history of steroid exposure, alcohol use, and parents having had a hip fracture. Even without any of these risk factors, cis women should still be screened for osteoporosis at 65 years old with a DEXA scan. This is the preferred imaging modality to test for osteoporosis.

To go back to your question, it is very important to continue taking some form of estrogen after an orchiectomy as testosterone and estrogen play a pivotal role in bone formation and

remodeling. Having low testosterone and low estrogen will make bones weak and increase your risk for fracture. This is also extremely important for intersex individuals not on hormone therapy.

The good news is that we have a DEXA scan at Be Well! We will be able to measure your bone mineral density at a separate visit and it will very likely be covered by your insurance. This is an important part of your health and we need to be thinking about it just as we think about other health screenings such as colorectal cancer screening or breast cancer screening. Please reach out if you have any questions or want to schedule your DEXA scan.

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



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