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‘Conscience’ Policy at HHS Dangerous to LGBTQ Health

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Southeast Michigan Religion and Health Officials Outraged by New HHS Rule

By Eve Kucharski

The LGBTQ Community is no stranger to stigma. It infiltrates lives daily, and, sometimes, in cases of life or death, it can be deadly. Dr. Soumya Rangarajan, an internal medicine physician, said that she’s seen it take lives firsthand.

“There was a 50-something gentleman who I saw a couple of years ago when I was taking care of him in the intensive care unit. He was a gay male and had been in and out of (care),” Rangarajan said. “He didn’t have support or anybody that could take care of him. He comes into the hospital with chest pain, and we don’t really have much background on him.”

After weeks in the ICU and multiple cardiac arrests, Rangarajan and her colleagues realized that the patient’s situation was irreparable. To ensure his quality of life in his final moments, she and her team consulted an ethics committee on how to proceed.

“We finally made him what we call ‘Do Not Resuscitate,’ and he did pass within a few weeks of coming in,” Rangarajan said. “It was a really heartbreaking story because he was from a more conservative state where his family kicked him out when they found out he was gay, and I feel like because of that, he never sought medical care. It just kept advancing and advancing to the point that he ended up coming in with this massive heart attack that ended up ending his life.”

Stories like these are why Rangarajan and other medical professionals are highly critical of a new division of the Department of Health and Human Services called Conscience and Religious Freedom. The division just proposed a new rule that would allow medical providers to not give abortion-related services to patients on the grounds of religious or moral objection. However, critics argue that the law’s broad language and usage of terms like “sterilization” procedures could be viewed as a direct attack on gender reassignment surgery for transgender people, among other vulnerable populations both in and out of the LGBTQ population.

Patrick Yankee, the chief development officer for Corktown Health Center, an LGBTQ clinic in Detroit, said that this rule legally reaffirms stigma.

“That fear of disclosing something because of how people might react is really alive and well,” Yankee said. “I think, with a lot of people who are in the LGBT community and with people who are HIV-positive who are not LGBT, it just reinforces that idea that something is not good about your status.”

Cortkown Health’s Chief Operating Officer Teresa Roscoe agrees.

“I think it opens the door to broader discrimination under the guise of protection for religious beliefs, and, unfortunately, the proposed rule seems to be pretty broad and there doesn’t seem to be a lot of limitation about how one could assert that type of a concern,” Roscoe said. “From our perspective it appears pretty darn broad.”

Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow is the senior pastor at MCC Detroit – an LGBTQ congregation. He also takes issue with the rule because of its ambiguity, and because of its potential to do harm.

“I support religious liberty. Where I don’t support it is when it encroaches on a life and death situation or peoples’ dignity,” Stringfellow said. “I think that, even with the Masterpiece bakery case. Some people say, ‘Fine, if you don’t want to service LGBT people or anyone who you don’t care for, then go ahead and put the placard out. Let people know. You should have the right to do that.’ People don’t want to do that because they don’t want to receive the backlash that would surely come from that. My thing is, then you can’t have it both ways. If you want to practice this, then tell people up front what this is.”

Cortkown Health’s Medical Director Dr. Latoryna Riddle-Jones said that the danger of patients walking into a situation where they expect equal and fair treatment only to be denied, can be far worse than simply avoiding and non-inclusive practice. However, Riddle-Jones said the rule’s follow-through to health insurance can be even more insidious than refusing service outright.

“The change that is more alarming to me is that small businesses and employers can decide to provide healthcare insurance that doesn’t have all services available to all people,” Riddle-Jones said. “I think that is definitely in the direction of really overturning Roe v. Wade. That is their effort in all of these rule changes. There’s discrimination when it comes to gender, discrimination when it comes to sex, I feel like we’re going back decades right now.”

Currently, the proposed rule is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on Jan. 26, at which point a 60 day period of public commentary will commence before it can be finalized. Comments can be made online on regulations.gov during this time.

The Corktown Health Center expects to see over 800 patients in the coming year. The clinic is located at 1726 Howard St. in Corktown. For more information, call 313-832-3200.

New HHS Division Slammed as Tool for Anti-LGBT Discrimination

By Chris Johnson

Consistent with media reports indicating the move was coming, the Department of Health & Human Services on Thursday formally established a conscience division that critics say will allow medical practitioners to deny abortion-related services and treatment to LGBT people on religious grounds.

Roger Severino, a former Heritage Foundation scholar and now director of the HHS Office for Civil Rights, said in a statement the new agency — called the Conscience & Religious Freedom Division — will help enforcement of laws designed to protect religious freedom.

“Laws protecting religious freedom and conscience rights are just empty words on paper if they aren’t enforced,” Severino said. “No one should be forced to choose between helping sick people and living by one’s deepest moral or religious convictions, and the new division will help guarantee that victims of unlawful discrimination find justice.”

As a Heritage Foundation scholar, Severino expressed anti-transgender views, such as opposition to allowing transgender people in the U.S. military and the Obama administration’s litigation against North Carolina’s anti-trans bathroom law House Bill 2.

Acting Secretary of Health & Human Services Eric Hargan echoed Severino’s praise for the new division in a statement.

“President Trump promised the American people that his administration would vigorously uphold the rights of conscience and religious freedom,” Hargan said. “That promise is being kept today. The Founding Fathers knew that a nation that respects conscience rights is more diverse and more free, and OCR’s new division will help make that vision a reality.”

The new division was unveiled Thursday at HHS in an event with both Hargan and Severino as well as members of Congress who have anti-LGBT records, including House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) and Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.).

But LGBT groups decried the establishment of the Conscience & Religious Freedom Division on the basis that it would enable religious objectors to refuse to treat transgender people or provide abortion-related services.

Rea Carey, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, said in a statement the new division is a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“We are not fooled: The new office announced this morning is meant to make it easier for people to discriminate, not to protect people of faith,” Carey said. “Health professionals have a duty to care for
all their patients regardless of one’s gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, creed, race, political views, gender or disability, and no one should be denied care for being who they are.”

Creation of the division was first reported on Wednesday by Politico in an article indicating HHS would establish the agency as part of a proposed new rule enabling religious exemptions for medical providers. Although the new agency was created, no new rule has been published in the Federal Register.

HHS hasn’t responded to repeated inquiries from the Washington Blade on the nature of the new division or whether a new rule would be forthcoming.

Gregory Angelo, president of the Log Cabin Republicans, was among the LGBT groups that criticized the new division as means to enable anti-LGBT discrimination.

“It’s amazing how the same people who regularly deride the LGBT community for seeking special rights are now reveling in the creation of special rights for themselves,” Angelo said. “Log Cabin Republicans is proud to support both religious liberty and LGBT equality, but the Conscience & Religious Freedom Division at HHS seems primed to tip the scales in favor of overly broad, vague, and frivolous complaints that disproportionately impact the LGBT community in matters — quite literally — that could mean life and death.”

Jason Lemieux, director of government affairs for the Center for Inquiry, said in a statement the new division is at odds with the Trump administration’s stated commitment to ensuring access to health care.

“It is a dereliction of the department’s vital responsibility to the health of all Americans, placing the dogmatic beliefs of a few above the health and lives of the people they serve.”

Cheering the creation of the division as means to protect religious freedom, on the other hand, was Tony Perkins, president of the anti-LGBT Family Research Council.

“Health care providers and others protected under federal conscience laws should be greatly encouraged that HHS will address any government actions taken against those who have objections to participating in an abortion or purchasing health insurance that includes abortion,” Perkins said. “Americans should not be forced to choose between their faith and their desire to help patients.”

In contrast to the Trump administration, the Obama administration issued a rule interpreting the provision barring sex discrimination under Obamacare to bar medical providers from discriminating against transgender patients or women who have had abortions. After a legal challenge, however, HHS was enjoined from enforcing that rule as a result of a court order issued by U.S. District Judge Reed O’Connor in Texas.

The Center for American Progress published a report on the same day the HHS division was created indicating a significant minority of LGBT people have faced denial of services in the medical sector. The report, titled “Discrimination Prevents LGBTQ People from Accessing Health Care,” is based on a 2017 survey conducted by the organization.

Among the findings was 29 percent of transgender people surveyed said a doctor or health care provider refused to see them because of their gender identity. Another 12 percent said a health care provider refused to provide them transition-related care.

For individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer, the survey found eight percent said a doctor or other health care provider refused to see them because of their sexual orientation. Another six percent said a doctor or other health care provider refused to give them health care related to being lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

Shabab Mirza, an LGBT research assistant at the Center of American Progress and co-author of the report, said in a statement the conscience division “is the latest in the harms the Trump administration has enacted on this community.”

“These data show the breadth of the discrimination that LGBTQ people, and especially transgender people, experience in health care settings,” Mirza said. “From avoiding doctor’s offices out of fear of discrimination, to hearing demeaning language, to being denied care outright, it is no wonder that LGBTQ people report poorer health than their peers.”

Conscience & Religious Freedom Division is created days before the anti-abortion rights March for Life rally in D.C., which President Trump is set to address via a video message. Trump may address the creation of the new division in remarks to the crowd.

“This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
Non-discrimination Policies Trigger Recall, Lawsuits
Community Near Lansing Caught in the Middle of Battle for Equality in Schools

BY TODD HEYWOOD

Leaders of the Williamston Community Schools in Ingham County are facing blowback from a small, but vocal, group of opponents to a series of reforms meant to protect LGBTQ youth in the district.

First, four members of the Board of Education — Greg Talberg, the board’s president and members Christopher Lewis, Nancy Deal and Sarah Belanger — are facing recall petitions after the Ingham County Election Commission voted 2 to 1 to approve the petition language Jan. 9. The petitions call for the recall of the board members for their support for amending Williamston Community Schools’ policies to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

The district of about 2,000 students is located 20 miles east of Lansing.

This was the fourth time at the plate for Williamston resident Jonathan Brandt in attempting to get language through the election commission, which is composed of Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum, Ingham County Treasurer Eric Schertzing and Ingham County Chief Probate Judge Richard Garcia. Garcia and Schertzing cast votes approving the recall petition language.

Belanger, Deal, Lewis and Talberg sued the election commission last week in Ingham County Circuit Court. They claim in their suit that the language approved by the commission was “neither factual nor clear.” The case has been assigned to Judge Joyce Draganchuk, who is the former Chief Deputy Ingham County Prosecuting Attorney.

“This recall effort targets a school board that has an overwhelmingly positive approval rating for doing exactly what they did in this case – advocating for every student’s right to access education safely and as their authentic self,” said Emily Dievendorf, president of the Lansing Association for Human Rights, a local LGBTQ advocacy group. “The Williamston that voters love is represented by the same school board members that are under attack today.”

On Friday, right wing anti-LGBT activist David Kallman filed a federal lawsuit against the district on behalf of four adults and three children. According to a press release from Kallman’s Great Lakes Justice Center, the suit claims the challenged policies “deny students’ their right to privacy, dignity, and personal identity,” “violate parents’ right to be notified of their children’s health decisions,” “Parents’ and students’ right to free speech is denied,” “violate Title IX by allowing boys to take spots on girls’ teams, or vice versa” and “violate the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act by creating a hostile and offensive environment.” The suit claims further that the board acted beyond its authority in adopting the policies.

Kallman has tried similar legal maneuvers in Michigan courts previously, but has been rejected. His anti-LGBTQ history dates back to 2000 when he claimed Jackson Public Schools were improperly allowing a Gay Straight Alliance, while preventing the formation of a Bible club. That’s an allegation he had to withdraw. He fought tooth and nail to prevent the Delta Township Board of Trustees from approving a comprehensive human rights ordinance that includes the LGBTQ community in 2013, sued Planet Fitness in Midland for allowing a transgender woman to use the women’s locker room and most recently attempted to intercede on behalf of former a Jackson City Clerk who improperly certified petitions to repeal that city’s nondiscrimination ordinance.

The attorney’s legal drive is linked to his nonprofit organization Salt and Light Global. That organization believes that only conservative evangelical “Bible believing” Christians should serve in elective and other leadership positions in the U.S. His collaborator on that ministry, William Wagner a Cooley Law School professor, co-wrote a 2007 paper with former Michigan Assistant Attorney General Andrew Shirvell on pro-life issues. Shirvell came under fire, and was ultimately fired by then Attorney General Mike Cox for his stalking and blogging of openly gay University of Michigan student body president Chris Armstrong. Armstrong filed suit against Shirvell, and won a $4.5 million ruling.

Dievendorf slammed the lawsuit in a statement to BTL.

“These lawsuits are a desperate attempt to thwart progress for LGBTQ kids that put the fears and venom of warring adults above the safety and education of Williamston’s students,” she said. “The plaintiffs are relying on bias, ignorance and a misreading of the U.S. Constitution to bring them victory.”
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Jon Hoadley: Representing Daily Lives in the State House

BY JONATHAN W. THURSTON

Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo) is running this year for State House for District 60, and, if elected, this will be his third and final term for the House. For Hoadley, a seat in the House is about representing the common man.

“I’ve always ran,” Hoadley said, “because I believe in a Michigan that believes in people. I want to tell the stories of the people who work and live in our community and state.”

A lot of this interest in the daily lives of people stems from Hoadley’s background. He comes from a family of educators and tries to bring that perspective into his politics.

“How can kids compete globally, especially when there are laws in place to take money from schools to support corporations?” Hoadley said.

He extends that critique of corporation-based funding more generally, too.

“It’s about raising wages,” Hoadley said. “Ending giveaways to the most profitable corporations at the same time our small businesses aren’t getting those breaks. Your profitability should be based more on how you work.”

Hoadley’s primary platform focuses on social justice and the environment. Along with other LGBTQ voices in the state legislature, Hoadley fights for equality in the State House.

“We have to be at the table when decisions are being made. I continue to do that work whether that’s standing up for those who dream or making polluters pay,” he said. “These are things I’ve been really proud of doing.”

Something Hoadley is not as proud of is the state of federal affairs currently.

“I am incredibly disappointed that we have President Trump,” Hoadley said. “I think his words and actions represent some of the worst examples of what leadership can look like. And putting other people down to put other people up. Telling blatant lies. This is not America at its best.”

However, despite these critiques, Hoadley remains hopeful and inspired by everyday people, people who fight against Trump’s agenda, whether it’s rallies, protests or even just word-of-mouth. To Hoadley, these are examples of people challenging that system.

“They are saying ‘I don’t like where the country is going, and I can see the result if I’m not involved.’ People all over the country are coming to help,” he said.

Hoadley said it’s a good sign that more LGBTQ people are running and winning in places across the country.

“It’s not just one place that elects an LGBT candidate. We see that success all over the country. It’s diversifying the faces and voices of who are LGBT candidates.”

However, Hoadley thinks we need more of that diversity here in Michigan.

“I’d love to see even more running in Michigan in particular and every corner of our state. We’re telling compelling stories of people’s lives. That’s what we should be doing in the first place.”

Still, in America, running for any office as an LGBT candidate is tricky.

“It’s important to note that in plenty of places being an LGBT candidate still sets you potentially back from the starting line, and you have to push forward a little more to overcome those challenges. When you find LGBT candidates that you agree with, since a lot of times those candidates have to do just a little bit extra, do a little bit extra and support them. Support them in social media. Tell others about them,” Hoadley said.

Hoadley encourages members of the community to support LGBTQ candidates by paying attention to the organizations that are looking at these candidates, such as the Equality Michigan PAC and the Victory Fund.

“Reach out to these organizations,” Hoadley said. “By seeing how these kinds of organizations interact with candidates, we can see how to better support LGBT diversity and representation in political roles.”

When asked what the biggest takeaway from 2017’s political environment for him is, Hoadley said this: “We win when people get involved.”

Connect with Jon Hoadley online at housedems.com/hoadley.
Report: Record Number of Anti-LGBT Homicides in 2017

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

A new report from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Project has found the number of anti-LGBT homicides in 2017 was 52 – making it the recorded worst year ever for murders of LGBT people.

The report, published Monday, comes after a mid-year report in August signaling 2017 was the worst year ever for anti-LGBT homicides. The new report, however, indicates anti-LGBT violence increased even further after that report and reached 52 deaths by the end of the year.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Project, that’s the highest number ever recorded in its 20-year history and represents an 86 percent increase from 2016. Beverly Tillery, executive director of the Anti-Violence Project, said in a statement the report is “a wake-up call for all of us” and blamed the anti-LGBT policies of the Trump administration for the increased violence.

“Our communities live in an increasingly hostile and dangerous climate, after a year of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and policies coming from the White House, federal government agencies, state and local sources and in our communities across the country,” Tillery said.

“Anti-LGBTQ violence has long been a crisis, but NCAVP has watched the escalation of violence this past year with great concern.”

Included in the report is a graph of the number of anti-LGBT homicides in 2017 compared to violent deaths of LGBT people in recent years. (The recorded numbers don’t count the 2016 mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., which killed 49 people and wounded 58 others.)

NCAVP found 2017 was the worst year on record for anti-LGBT homicides.

Among the key findings pulled out by NCAVP in the report:

* The victims of these hate violence related homicides have overwhelmingly been transgender women and queer, bi, or gay cisgender men;
* There was a significant increase of reports of homicides of queer, bi, or gay cisgender men, from 4 reports in 2016 to 20 reports in 2017;
* For the last five years NCAVP has documented a consistent and steadily rising number of reports of homicides of transgender women of color, which continued into 2017;
* In 2017, NCAVP collected information on 27 hate-violence related homicides of transgender and gender non-conforming people this year, compared to 19 reports for 2016;
* 22 of these homicides were of transgender women of color; and
* Of the total number of homicides in 2017, 71 percent of the victims were people of color: 31 (60 percent) of the victims were Black, 4 (8 percent) were Latino, 2 (4 percent) were Asian and 1 (2 percent) was Native American.

The report includes a list of the 52 LGBT individuals lost to hate violence in 2017 as well as the circumstances of their death.

“I urge everyone to read the stories and look at the photos of the 52 individuals lost to hate violence in 2017 – they are our friends, family, co-workers and fellow LGBTQ community members,” Tillery said. “NCAVP will continue to say their names and re-commit to doing all we can to prevent hate violence and support survivors.”

Read the full report here.(gaybe.am/vR).

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
I n 1953, a madam by the name of Polly Adler wrote a tell-all best seller about her 30 years in the brothel business, “A House is Not a Home.” It created a sensation.

(1 was too young to apply for a real estate license; but I do recall my parents talking hush about Polly while I tried to listen for Good Housekeeping details. Glass to the bedroom wall.)

I was 13 when I got an inkling that something was more than “a miss” on my own inner city block. An older, macho guy about 25 asked me if I knew where the “party girls” – said with a wink and an elbow nudge – hung out. “You know, kid. The whore house.”

I hadn’t a clue why he hit on me. Maybe he was nearsighted and thought I looked butch, or sexually precocious beyond my prepubescent years. I learned later that the bordello was around the corner from me. The Hickory House Restaurant. Upstairs. Short ribs. Long rubs!

One hot summer at Samhat delivery I met my first “sex worker.” Miss Blonde Bombshell answered her door in a see-through nightie. I dutifully surrendered my bread, milk, cheese, grapes. And, not knowing what else to do, I bowed. Instead of a tip I got a cleavage peek. (I would have preferred the tip.)

At 14, I delivered groceries for Samhat’s Market, a Muslim brothers-owned store, where I also learned a smattering of Arabic: Keef-holic? (How are you?) Mah-ah-salamah! (Thank you!) Nish-good Allah! (Praise Allah!) Fee-kee honi. (Best left untranslated.)

I also found myself, one scary evening, ducking behind counters during a bang-bang armed robbery at the Samhat Market. But that’s another story.

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I’m sure her intentions were meritorious. To help me earn my Boy Scout Badge for exploring unknown, impregnable terrain.

To be truthful, I wasn’t much interested in her kind of tenderfoot instruction. My boyhood motto: To light a fire, rub two sticks together. Long enough. Hard enough.

Probably the most famous 20th century brothel was Salon Kitty. Established by the German Gestapo in the fashionable west end of Berlin at the onset of World War II. It was a high-class operation catering to horny Axis diplomats (German, Italian, Japanese), war heroes, politicians.

Kitty’s workers were glamorous madchen, motivated not by sex for fun and/or profit but by a sense of patriotic duty to the Vaterland. Heil Hitler! Deutschland uber alles! (Germany over all. Or, more accurately: Germany on top of everyone! Donald Trump take note.)

Kitty Salon was electronically bugged. The girls were trained to tease, titillate, twist classified information from clients. Fascist Italy’s Prime Minister, Count Ciano, was a frequent guest. He was rated an “indolent lay” by staff. Meglio che scrarn!

Few earthshaking diplomatic secrets were ferreted out at Kitty.

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To be truthful, I wasn’t much interested in her kind of tenderfoot instruction. My boyhood motto: To light a fire, rub two sticks together. Long enough. Hard enough.

Probably the most famous 20th century brothel was Salon Kitty. Established by the German Gestapo in the fashionable west end of Berlin at the onset of World War II. It was a high-class operation catering to horny Axis diplomats (German, Italian, Japanese), war heroes, politicians.

Kitty’s workers were glamorous madchen, motivated not by sex for fun and/or profit but by a sense of patriotic duty to the Vaterland. Heil Hitler! Deutschland uber alles! (Germany over all. Or, more accurately: Germany on top of everyone! Donald Trump take note.)

Kitty Salon was electronically bugged. The girls were trained to tease, titillate, twist classified information from clients. Fascist Italy’s Prime Minister, Count Ciano, was a frequent guest. He was rated an “indolent lay” by staff. Meglio che scrarn!

Few earthshaking diplomatic secrets were ferreted out at Kitty.
**Viewpoint: Brown**  
Continued from p. 8

Last year across the country we marched together, our children in tow, not just in protest of the election but for the protection of all we hold dear.

We still believe the greatness of this country lies in its diversity, inclusion and equality for everyone — all of the huddled masses whether born here, brought here as children or immigrating here. We are all yearning to breathe free.

We continue to resist and it’s women leading the charge.

Thousands of women came to the Women’s Convention planning strategies and actions to “reclaim” our time.

Women in office are speaking out and holding their male political counterparts to task. And we have seen even more women thinking about and running for office.

Women, people of color and members of the LGBTQ community were elected to office across the country in record numbers last November.

And despite 45’s endorsement, Alabama’s Roy Moore, was defeated. That election which saw a large turnout from voters, especially black women.

The #MeToo movement has finally put the spotlight on sexual assault, harassment and just bad behavior. It’s time we call out the exploiters. It’s time we call out the exploiters.

In her Golden Globe acceptance speech Oprah Winfrey talked about a new day on the horizon! A new day finally dawning because of a lot of magnificent women.

She was speaking to the women primarily in that room, but I say it is because of the magnificent women — black, white, brown, of all colors, ethnicities, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as a few good men, that we stood together to make our community strong, to fight for what we believe! So we are going to march on.

We say to The White House, McConnell, Ryan and the Grand Old Party of Prevaricators, Predators, Perverts and Phonies - your time is up!

And we are not going to keep fighting about 2016. We say to the democrats, we are watching you too. Hear our voices! Do your job and open the doors to all of us and our new ideas and this new wave of women joining your ranks.

And finally, to our dear confused sisters who continue to vote against their own best interest, We always love you, even though we don’t like you right now. If you can’t vote for yourself vote for your daughters, your granddaughters, those little girls born every day who will live under the choices you make. Wake up and stay woke!

So, I’m going to ask you - Whose time is this?

This time is ours!

Now let’s grab them by the midterms and take our power to the polls!

Now let’s grab them by the midterms and take our power to the polls!

Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. Her blog radio podcast “Collections By Michelle Brown” airs every Thursday at 7 p.m. Current and archived episodes can be heard on Blog Talk Radio, iTunes, Stitcher or SoundCloud. Follow her on Facebook at facebook.com/CollectionbyMichelleBrown.

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**Parting Glances**  
Continued from p. 8

Salon, but everyone had a helluva good time, at least until the Soviet Ruskies came and raped and ravaged the city up one end and down the other.

As far as the spy brothel business goes, we Americans did the Germans one better. We set up a male brothel, operated patriotically. Cost efficiently. Wiretapped. Run by the FBI. (Somebody’s gotta do it, Mary, er, J. Edgar Hoover!)

The brothel (or “peg house” as it was called) was located near — no big goose step! — Gay Street in Greenwich Village. Reports the late, prolific writer Isaac Asimov, who dug up this steamy tidbit for his “Facts & Figures” collection: “the decor was nautical.” (But nice!)

“The house was staffed with multilingual agents for the purpose of extracting shipping — and receiving! — information from sailors. The FBI later claimed it was a very successful operation.” (Especially for those sailors on the multilingual pegging end of the business. Ship, ship ahoy! Turn over, and drop anchor!)

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Face Book images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Ian Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

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**Creep of the Week**

**Alex Jones**

Is it true that some gays treat other gays terribly? Well, yes. Of course. Because gays are human and some humans are trash (see: Alex Jones).

Alex Jones of the conspiracy-laden, right-wing echo chamber that is Infowars took a closer look at the so-called Women’s March on the Jan. 22 episode of The Alex Jones Show. What he found will shock you: litter(ally).

After ranting about the evils of soy lattes (“women who drink them can’t get pregnant,” he said) Jones refers to an image of attendees at the LA Women’s March standing with signs that read things like, “Reclaiming my time” and “Trump Lies.” Some of the women are wearing the pink knitted “pussy” hats.

“Just look at these people. They look like people escaped out of a mental institution,” Jones said, making me wonder if he’s ever seen The Alex Jones Show. He then calls them “a bunch of dirty pigs.”

Jones and his correspondent, Millie Weaver, were beside themselves about the empty Starbucks cups littering the march site. And they have a point! Littering is wrong. So the moral is, “Pick up after yourselves!” Got it. Liberals owned. So we’re done here, right? Ha, no.

Jones went on to say that the Women’s March litter means that Los Angeles is turning into Haiti, which he describes as “deforested and a hell hole,” adding that “their national religion is devil worship.” A totally logical conclusion to an argument that ladies shouldn’t throw cups on the ground. He’s definitely a very stable genius.

If you love his theories about littering, you’ll love his theory about LGBTQ suicide, which he shared on Jan. 21.

“The gay community … on average, they have the highest level of suicide globally of any group,” Jones said, which is not untrue. The suicide rate for LGBTQ people is alarmingly high.

“And it’s not because folks are being mean to them,” Jones continued. “It’s because that community is being mean to them.” And by “that community” he means the gay community.

In other words, LGBTQ don’t kill themselves because of outside oppression and discrimination. Nope. They kill themselves because they’re a bunch of catty bitches.

“I’ve witnessed it for myself,” Jones said. “I’ve had friends, family, neighbors that are gay. You go to their party, they’re being meaner than hell to each other.”

I’d like to point out the use of the past tense “had” to describe his gay friends, family and neighbors. Presumably they stopped associating with him after watching his show. Either that or he stopped associating with them after they refused to buy the “proprietary” vitamin supplements Jones pedals on his website.

And what did Jones mean when he said, “You go to their party?” What gay people are inviting this man to their parties?

“A lot of gay people are really mean,” he lamented.

“Let’s not lie about that, and let’s not lie about how [gays] treat each other,” he said.

“And that lesbians have the highest level of abusing each other.”

I’m not sure what he means by “highest level of abusing each other.” If he’s talking about domestic violence then, yes, that’s an actual problem that exists in some lesbian relationships. But it also exists, at a much higher rate, in heterosexual relationships, and Jones doesn’t seem concerned about that.

Is it true that some gays treat other gays terribly? Well, yes. Of course. Because gays are human and some humans are trash (see: Alex Jones).

And there are definitely some killer queers out there with razor sharp wits and lashing tongues. But I’d argue that the external obstacles gays face play a much larger role in suicide rates than some queer dishing out devastating reads at the bar.

I can’t help but think Jones has been binge watching too much RuPaul’s Drag Race.

But if he truly is so concerned about gays committing suicide, I’m sure he’d be more than happy to donate some of his vitamin supplement money to The Trevor Project (thetrevorproject.org).
Panama Signals it Will Comply with Landmark LGBT Rights Ruling

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

The government of Panama has signaled it plans to comply with a landmark Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruling that recognizes same-sex marriage and transgender rights.

Vice President Isabel de Saint Malo on Tuesday announced the Panamanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified all government agencies about the ruling. She pointed out to reporters during a Panama City press conference that the Panamanian Constitution “guarantees the principle of nondiscrimination as the court’s ruling has in fact established.”

“We are sure that with it we will be able to advance an agenda of equity and nondiscrimination even further,” added Saint Malo, according to TVN, a Panamanian television station.

The court issued its landmark ruling on Jan. 9 in response to the Costa Rican government’s request for an advisory opinion on whether it has an obligation to extend property rights to same-sex couples and allow trans people to change their name and gender marker on identity documents.

The Organization of American States, which is based in D.C., created the Costa Rica-based court in 1979 in order to enforce provisions of the American Convention on Human Rights. The Jan. 9 ruling is legally binding in Panama and the 19 other countries that currently recognize the convention.

“She is complying with the opinion itself that calls upon member states to adjust national law and practices to implement the full human rights protections for LGBTI people,” Iván Chanis Barahona, president of Fundación Iguales, a Panamanian advocacy group, told the Washington Blade on Wednesday from Panama City. “This decision of the Panamanian government is consistent with a long tradition of international support and respect of the inter-American human rights system, and Panama’s recognition of the binding, ipso facto jurisdiction of the court on all matters relating to the interpretation or application of the American Convention on Human Rights.”

The Panama Supreme Court in 2017 heard oral arguments in a case that would extend marriage rights to same-sex couples. Chanis – a lawyer who lived in D.C. for seven years and worked with the Organization of American States before returning to Panama in 2016 – is working pro bono on it.

“We have a really solid case,” he told the Blade last September during an interview in Panama City.

Saint Malo and Panamanian First Lady Lorena Castillo both publicly support marriage rights for same-sex couples. TVN reported Saint Malo did not say whether her government has any immediate plans to allow gays and lesbians to legally marry in the country.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
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January 25, 2018 | BTL
First Active Duty Gay Couple Wed at West Point

BY MARIAH COOPER

A gay couple wed in a historic ceremony on Jan. 13 that marked the first same-sex wedding at West Point, according to the New York Times.

Capt. Daniel Hall, 30, and Capt. Vinny Franchino, 26, exchanged vows in their blue mess uniforms at the Cadet Chapel in front of a crowd of 150 family, friends and other military officers. The couple, who both serve as Apache helicopter pilots in El Paso, Texas, exited the chapel under an archway of sabers.

Hall and Franchino met in 2009 when Hall was a senior and Franchino was a freshman. Although they were initially attracted to each other, they were forced to stay silent due to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

“Through mutual friends at West Point, we had each learned the other was gay, and though we were attracted to one another, we couldn’t say or do anything about it,” Hall told the New York Times.

When “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed, they decided to openly pursue a relationship. Hall and Franchino went on their first date in 2012. However, homophobia was still rampant.

“That’s where some guy called us both faggots,” Franchino says.

The couple met another obstacle when Hall was deployed to South Korea. They agreed to date other people but eventually decided to get back together.

Although things haven’t been easy for the couple, Franchino says the freedom to be who they are is worth it.

“We’ve experienced everything from people feeling awkward around us to being called faggots while holding hands and walking down the street, stuff like that,” Franchino says. “But despite what we’ve been through, nothing was worse than having served during the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ years.”

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
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A Dream Wedding

Couple Ties the Knot in Prince Charming Ceremony

BY JONATHAN W. THURSTON

Many people grow up dreaming of the Cinderella–Prince Charming wedding. And last September, one couple got to see their dream come true during their Prince Charming–Prince Charming ceremony.

Dr. Theodore Carson Baker, II (60) and Richard William Thomas, Jr. (57) are, in Baker’s words, “nontraditional.” They met in 1999 at an HIV retreat and, despite challenges over the years, have remained together.

Both Baker and Thomas are disabled veterans. While Thomas was a computer technician who joined the navy to enter computer repair, Baker joined the army around 1978 and stayed for 10 years as an army medic and surgeon technician. Afterward, he went to medical school in 1991, left in 1996 and became a counselor.

While their future wedding would become a dream come true, their proposal was in less ideal circumstances. “I got into a very tragic car accident,” Baker said. “They took me to the hospital, and I was DOA but went into cardiac arrest on the table for 11 minutes.”

They managed to revive him, but he was in a coma for three days. “I don’t remember anything for that whole week. I don’t remember getting into the accident.”

And that’s when Thomas proposed to him, right there in the hospital. “We would have gotten married years ago, but, due to the laws, we thought about it, but we didn’t have legal marriage.”

He accepted the proposal in September 2015. They had their wedding two years later. The couple was married at the Drayton Avenue Presbyterian Church in Ferndale (Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit). Their reception was held at DeCarlo’s Banquet & Convention Center in Warren.

“I had two years to get ready,” Baker said.

But he was already a different person. He had a traumatic brain injury due to the accident. While it did not affect his memory, multiple visits to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor revealed there were issues with how he processed information.

“I had to literally relearn how to walk, talk, use the phone, keyboard, computer … When I got out, I couldn’t play video games like I could when I was a kid. I could only do one task at a time.”

Managing all of that trauma along with a wedding was a difficult task. Even with these struggles though, Baker and Thomas wanted a big wedding with all the trimmings.

“It was a Cinderella and Prince Charming thing … well, a Prince Charming and Prince Charming,” Baker said with a laugh. “The number of people, how big it was, how long it was, we did it with all the pomp and circumstance. We did the chauffeurs and everything.”

When it came to planning, Thomas handled the money, while Baker handled more of the management tasks. “With each thing that was done,” Baker said, “I had to do it or find somebody to do it. The person I found to do it had to check with me, and I had to check back on them. It was a nightmare. The preparation was atrocious, yet, for some reason, it was the grandest time of my life.”

Coming from the 60s, the two are still amazed at their marriage.

“It was allowed,” Baker said, “to be married in a church, and we’re going to church and getting married in front of God and everyone. The fact that we were able to do this and present to people, ‘Look at this. We’re going to do this just like when my sister got married!’”

If given the chance to do it over again, Baker said he would have second thoughts about the planning, “but I’d still marry him!”

For people with wedding plans as big as Baker and Thomas’ (BATO’s, as the pair loves to be called), Baker has very specific advice: “If you have a handful of people, maybe four or five that you can absolutely trust to do a thing and know what they’re doing and you trust them to do it, and you have a lot of money to pay for things, do it.” Otherwise, he said, don’t aim for a wedding like his.

Their wedding had the title of “Diamonds and Pearls.” And they focused intensely on the fashion, giving all the women pearls for the occasion. For Thomas’ suit, they went to Nan’s Wearhouse for Tuxedos, and for Baker’s tailoring, they went to Saginaw Suits and Alterations.

Now, a year later, they live happily together with Thomas’ mother and their three dogs.

It was a Cinderella and Prince Charming thing … well, a Prince Charming and Prince Charming. The number of people, how big it was, how long it was, we did it with all the pomp and circumstance. We did the chauffeurs and everything.

— Dr. Theodore Carson Baker, II
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Activist on How His Transness ‘Was the Issue That Made Me Stop Acting,’ Cult Seduction and His Thoughts on Working With Mom Cher

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

As radical right-winger Gary Longstreet on last year’s “American Horror Story: Cult,” a far cry from his own liberal leanings, Chaz Bono had his breakout role at the age of 48. Why did it take so long for Bono, who just happens to be Cher’s transgender son, to make his mark as an actor?

Because Bono was often in conflict with the female gender of the person he was playing but didn’t know why.

At least not at first.

Then, suddenly, his interest in male roles changed more than just his acting career – in 2009, the activist transitioned from female to male. Years later, in 2016, Bono followed a recurring role as Reverend Rydale on “The Bold and the Beautiful” with a foray into Ryan Murphy’s “American Horror Story” anthology, first on “Roanoke” and then on the prolific TV creator’s grisly Trump-era “Cult.”

Here, Bono opens up about why understanding his gender identity was the long first step to acting again, the “bizarre” possibility of working with mom Cher and what he’s learned about LGBTQ representation from trans youth.

One of my favorite parts of you starring in “American Horror Story: Cult” was reading your mom’s tweets about the show.

You know, she gets confused a little bit. (Before I was killed off) she was in Vegas, and she and her best friend Paulette did a binge of the show, but they didn’t know I had gotten killed already, so I think that was a realization. She tweeted me about that and was like, “Was this on yet?”

What was it like to be part of a show that is steeped in total conservative radicalism with a cast that is so LGBTQ-oriented? The contrast is so ironic.

Yeah, it was interesting, ‘cause I would say, for me, I had two very distinctive experiences on the show. The first part of it was what you just said: very steeped in a lot of people in the community, and then those who are just incredibly open-minded. But then all of these guys come in and I started spending all of this time with all of these young actors and extras, and it suddenly became a different experience. That was the first time for me that I started to feel like I was in a cult, and started to experience what that feels like and the comfort it brings.
Are you saying you could understand the appeal of a cult?
I could understand the appeal a little bit, yeah. I’m somebody who keeps up with the news obsessively, but there was something really nice about when I’d go to work, turning my brain off and being with a bunch of younger actors who were really exuberant, like this full-on, testosterone-driven experience of all of us hooting and hollering and just waiting on every word that Evan (Peters) would say as (cult leader) Kai. That group mentality is very – I understood how it could be very seductive at certain times.

I found it seductive too, but I couldn’t figure out how much of that was because the guys were so hot.

(Laughs) Well, yeah, that didn’t really do it for me, but some of the guys were really great actors. We got along really well, because I’ve done a lot of theater and I’ve been at my acting studio for five years now. I’m used to being around younger actors because I haven’t been incredibly successful in my career, so I’m around young actors all the time, so I feel very comfortable and know what it’s like to be the new guy, because that’s how I felt last season (on “Roanoke”). We kind of all bonded (on “Cult”), and it was just this really strange experience, like this group mode mentality. And you know, we were obnoxious. It definitely became a presence on set – and, I mean, I think I was maybe less obnoxious because I’m 48. (Laughs)

Why have you purposefully avoided playing trans roles?
It’s really a twofold thing. First of all, I really consider myself a character actor, and I really like playing parts that are very different from myself. That’s what I enjoy about acting, that’s what’s fun for me, and I think it’s what I’m really good at.

I don’t really have any interest in playing a trans guy because I don’t want to play something that’s close to me. If I wasn’t trans, I probably would wanna play a trans person because that’s the kind of actor I am, but it doesn’t interest me that much because I’ve seen so many actors that I know who are trans playing trans parts and I wanted to try to establish myself as not that. I wanted to show people that that’s just a ridiculous thing and I didn’t want to get pigeonholed, so I just waited and took small stuff here and there that wasn’t that because it’s just not the career that I want.

While working for GLAAD as entertainment media director in the ’90s, you were a consultant on Ellen DeGeneres’ sitcom, “Ellen.” Considering the show’s lead, Ellen, is gay, what did it mean to be a consultant on that show?
I looked over scripts. I was doing a lot with them as far as – there was a tremendous amount of press and hoopla around the coming out stuff. We were working to coordinate a lot of that stuff for her, and then doing a lot of press because she did so little. So, picking up a lot of slack. I was actually on one of the episodes right after the coming out episode, which was fun, and just kind of there for them. It’s so long ago that I just remember always being there and always organizing shit around that.

She’s a lesbian, so she knows how to portray that (laughs). But there were other questions that came up about other stuff related to the community and little specifics here and there about being a lesbian. You’d probably be surprised to find out that – because one of my good friends is the guy who handles all trans stuff for GLAAD, and so I know this – about the number of calls that he gets from actors, writers, producers and people who want to get it right.

You hear stories from celebrities who don’t necessarily want their child to go down the same showbiz path they did. Was that the case for you growing up?
No, not at all. My mom was actually the one who got me into acting. I was 14 and a really miserable kid in middle school, not relating to other kids at my school and just really unhappy, and my mom made me go to an acting class. I was kind of like, “Oh god, why do I have to do this?” and I ended up totally falling in love with it. Then, I auditioned for a performing arts high school and got in and moved to New York, so yeah, my mom has always been incredibly supportive of creative endeavor.

Regarding your sexuality and gender identity, I know you’ve gone through a lot with her.
She has evolved a lot!

She’s getting the pronouns right these days?
She does get the pronouns right. Now she just gets mixed up and calls me my brother’s name. (Laughs)

Ha! Well, every mother does that.
Yeah, right! But yeah, she’s been supportive. For me, I didn’t know that I was trans at the time, but it was the issue that made me stop acting. I knew that I couldn’t play women. And I didn’t really know why at that point. I chalked everything up to being gay and masculine.

When did you come to the realization that you couldn’t play female roles?
I was 18. I was a senior in high school and I got cast as a male in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” our big senior production at performing arts, and it was the first time that I really felt like I knew what I was doing and felt comfortable and was really good. It was like, “OK, why do I have a handle on playing a middle-aged man? Why is that easier than playing a teenage girl?”

Did you process this on your own? Did you talk to your mom?

See Chaz, page 20
Always hustling.

I don’t know. I mean, yeah, I’ve got little projects and stuff that I’m working on, but that kind of stuff takes forever. I’m hoping to have a better pilot season than last year and, yeah, we’ll see.

Are you interested in self-financing and self-directing? Have you collaborated on any projects with your mother?

No, I haven’t collaborated with her. Yeah, that would probably do. That would be so bizarre, but I think she’s very talented (laughs). But I don’t have any interest in directing. I’m just not a very visual person, but I do have an interest in getting projects off the ground and producing. I produced a play out here – a Lee Blessing play called “Down the Road” – and I would probably do more.

As GLAAD’s former entertainment media director, are you encouraged by the increase in trans representation in media? What do you see as far as trans representation goes?

It’s really interesting because I facilitate a group once a month with a bunch of other people for an organization that I’m on the board of. It’s a big organization with lots of moving parts, but I facilitate a group for trans youth, and so we had a conversation recently and all these trans kids – basically middle school through college – were talking about representation. It was interesting to hear from them, because as an adult with a long life growing up in the ’80s where there was – forget about no trans representation, there was no gay or lesbian representation – my feeling is, “Wow, we’ve come so far.”

But, listen, these kids they were like, “God, why am I not seeing XY and Z? I’m not seeing this, and I’m not seeing that.” It was a really interesting perspective to see because, yeah, we’ve come a long way, but there’s still a long way to go. And the people who need to see themselves reflected in media really badly are not getting their needs met. The number of trans youth just seems to be growing vastly and they are not seeing themselves represented, and when they are, it’s the same story. It’s always about figuring it out and transitioning and they’re like, “I don’t want to see that anymore. I want to see a trans person in sci-fi. I want to see a trans person in fantasy. I want to see trans people represented in the kind of stuff that I like. I’m not seeing that.”

Is that something you want to see as well?

Honestly, it’s not something I think about that much. My life is so much about my acting career, and so what I want is to just get more work (laughs), so it’s hard. And when I think about politics or that kind of stuff, there is, to me, just so many bigger fish to fry. It’s been so long for me since I needed to see myself reflected in anything that you forget, so it was an interesting lesson. Because I don’t need to see myself reflected. I don’t need to relate to a character because they’re trans. If I were to say all of the things that I am, trans is at the bottom of my list, so it doesn’t affect my life in any way. It’s just a thing. It’s not a part of my identity at all.

Does the fact that last year we elected trans officials, such as Danica Roem of Virginia, excite you?

Yeah, totally, that was amazing. That was awesome. That was a little bit more exciting, but I have to say I also get excited about any person that is a minority – that is the first person to get, in this climate, ahead.

So, any people of color, people of Muslim faith, anybody who is marginalized. Because at this point in my life, I see us all as the same thing. I really don’t differentiate. To me, I’ve evolved to the point where we’re all the same, and I think if everybody could get there we’d be such a very large, strong majority. So, I was really excited by all the women who took office, and there was a woman of color who got elected where that had never happened before, so all those milestones were exciting for me.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).
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Leonard Slatkin, conductor
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SAT., FEB. 24 AT 8 P.M.

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Leonard Slatkin, conductor
Michelle and Christina Naughton, piano
FRI., FEB. 16 AT 10:45 A.M. & 8 P.M.

SPECIAL FRENCH FESTIVAL EVENTS

Le Ciné Cube
Screening of Round Midnight
SAT., FEB. 17 AT 5:30 P.M.

Valentine’s Day with Cyrille Aimée
WED., FEB. 14 AT 7 P.M.

Julien Labro
THU., FEB. 15 AT 7 P.M.

Le Ciné Cube
Film shorts • Live Music
FRI., FEB. 16 AT 10:30 P.M.

Le Ciné Cube
Screening of “Tour de France”
WED., FEB. 21 AT 7 P.M.

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January 25, 2018 | BTL | 21
Lansing’s Old Town Hosts 5th Annual Chocolate Walk

Perhaps mixing chocolate with exercise isn’t an idea that many would consider, but in Lansing it has certainly stuck, as Lansing’s Old Town debuts its fifth Annual Chocolate Walk.

“Throughout this event, community members have the opportunity to get to know Old Town and all of its unique businesses, retailers and restaurants,” said an Old Town Commercial Association press release. “All are encouraged to come and take part in the Old Town chocolate walk and collect gourmet chocolates just in time for Valentine’s Day.”

With the purchase of a ticket, participants will each receive a 2-pound chocolate box to fill to the brim with sweets, a punch card and a map. From 3 to 7 p.m., event-goers will follow the provided map to each participating business and collect its featured gourmet chocolate. And attendees can expect more than simply stopping off for treats.

“We are excited to continue the tradition of providing a warming station at the Old Town Marquee at our Chocolate Walk,” said the press release. “Participants can pop in for some hot chocolate, generously donated by Eagle Eye Golf Club, and warm up from a Michigan winter evening.”

Based on sold out attendance from last year, the Old Town Commercial Association advises interested individuals to sign up early.

Tickets to the 5th Annual Chocolate Walk in Old Town cost $25 in advance and $30 day of. To purchase tickets, visit otca.wildapricot.org/event-2784887. For additional information about the event contact the Old Town Commercial Association at vanessa@oldtownmainstreet.org or call 517-485-4283.
Grammy Award-Nominated Composer to be Featured in Two MSU Music Concerts

BY BTL STAFF

The week of Jan. 28 will be a busy one for Adam Schoenberg. After attending the 60th Grammy Awards in Madison Square Garden for his nominated work “Picture Studies,” he’ll be flying to East Lansing for two follow-up performances on Jan. 29 and 30.

Schoenberg is a professor at Occidental College in Los Angeles where he runs both the composition and film scoring programs. He is also a classical orchestral composer and film scorer and he has worked with a variety of “major American orchestras, including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (‘Up!’ and ‘La Luna Azul’), the Kansas City Symphony (‘American Symphonic’ and ‘Picture Studies’), and the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Aspen Music Festival and School (‘Bounce’),” according to an MSU press release.

Schoenberg’s works have also been premiered in several notable venues like the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, the New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Hollywood Bowl.

His following performances will be under the direction of MSU Professor of Music and Director of Bands Kevin Sedatole.

“Adam Schoenberg’s compositions are a delight to bring alive, and I’m thrilled to be leading back-to-back performances with ‘Musique 21’ and the MSU Wind Symphony,” Sedatole said. “Presenting his work through our contemporary ensemble and the Wind Symphony will show the breadth of his invigorating style. The fact that he and Zhou Tian are nominated for Grammys in the same category and the timing of the awards adds to the fun!”

Tian is an MSU associate professor who is also nominated for a Grammy Award this year, for his work “Concerto for Orchestra.”

The Musique 21 concert will feature “Bounce for Two Pianos,” “One Acquainted with Night for Solo Flute and Piano” and more. The Wind Symphony performance will also include a version of “Bounce” and Schoenberg’s Grammy-nominated piece.

Tickets for these concerts are $10 each, $8 for seniors and free for students with ID and attendees under 18. To find tickets online or find more information about these events, visit music.msu.edu, or call 517-353-5340.
Outings

Thursday, Jan. 25
2018 Creating Change Conference
1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Sutler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C., http://www.thetaskforce.org


Sunday, Jan. 28
2018 Creating Change Conference
1:00 am Alexa Elizabeth Rodriguez, Ben de Guzman, Eliot Sutler, Rodney McKenzie, Jr., and Terrance Laney will be serving as host committee co-chairs. Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington, D.C., http://www.thetaskforce.org

Tuesday, Jan. 30
Trauma, Chemical Use and Addiction
7:30 pm By Tara Bridge, PhD, ACOW, LMSW, ACTP. Learn about the relationship between addiction and trauma, and recovery from both conditions. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series

Friday, Feb. 2
Swing Dance Party 9:00 pm Dust off those dancing shoes and come decked out in your best vintage attire for the ultimate swing dance party at The Cube in Midtown Detroit. Arrive early for a dance lesson and your favorite Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 3135765162 https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=4760&prod=4759

Wednesday, Feb. 14
Valentine’s Day With Cyrille Aimee 7:00 pm “A massively talented international chanteuse,” exclaims the New York Observer. Spend this Valentine’s Day with your special someone and French cabaret vocalist Cyrille Aimee. TICKETS: $49 – VIP Experience – Includes reserved section premium seating and Max M & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 3135765162 https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=4765&prod=4764

Music & More

Friday, Jan. 20
Does Addiction Treatment Work?
7:30 pm By Carl Christensen, MD, Ph.D., D-FASAM. Learn about the relative efficacy of various treatments for addiction. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series

Friday, Jan. 26
The Novi Home Show Jan. 24-26 2:00 pm Suburban Collection Showcase, 4 Novi, 3950726381 gmoneette@allseasoncommunications.com gmoneette@allseasoncommunications.com www.novihomeshow.com

41st Ann Arbor Folk Festival 6:30 pm The 41st Ann Arbor Folk Festival, a fund-raiser for The Ark, Ann Arbor’s non-profit home for folk, roots, and ethnic music. Doors Open: 6:00 pm Show Starts: 6:30 pm Ticket Price: $42.50-$200 (one night); $75-$360 One event on Jan. 27 at 6:30pm Ann Arbor Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 555-555-5555 http://www.theark.org

Mary Lambert at the Blind Pig

Mary Lambert got a kick-start to her career in 2012 when, in a pinch, a friend reached out to her for help with a song for Macklemore and Ryan Lewis: “Same Love.” Informed by her experience as a lesbian and a Christian, she wrote the hook within three hours. Now she’s on tour with her queer pop EP “Bold.” She’ll be at Ann Arbor’s Blind Pig on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 8 p.m. Tickets start at $18. The Blind Pig is located at 208 S. 1st St., Ann Arbor. Ticket information can be found online at blindpigmusic.com and marylambertsings.com/shows.

Editor’s Pick

American Landscape: An Exploration of Art & Humanity by Nabil Mousa in Dearborn

Featured in the New York Times for his work, Nabil Mousa incorporates two seeming opposites in his exhibit “American Landscape.” First, the politics of LGBTQ rights in the U.S., while weaving in the cultural tensions of his native, Syria. This mixed-media exhibition focuses on the hope for greater equality in a world of changing politics and religion. His work will be displayed at the Arab American National Museum from now till April 8. Viewing the exhibit is free with museum admission. The museum is located at 13624 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 313-582-2266. More information can be found online at arabamericanmuseum.org/american-landscape.
Editor’s Pick

Two Nights of Greensky Bluegrass with Joshua Davis at The Fillmore Detroit

Combine a dobro, banjo, guitar, upright bass and a mandolin, and you’ve created Greensky Bluegrass’ lineup. Originally from Kalamazoo, the quintet has been making music for 18 years, and has nearly a dozen albums to its name. Famous for its unique take on bluegrass music, the five-piece group will be at The Fillmore Detroit with Joshua Davis for two nights, on Feb. 9 and 10. Tickets start at $29. More information can be found online at thefillmoredetroit.com and greenskybluegrass.com/tour. The Fillmore Detroit is at 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

Saturday, Feb. 17

Thursday, Feb. 22

Friday, Feb. 23

ART ‘N’ AROUND

Monet – Framing Life and Church: A Painter’s Pilgrimage. Travel to distinct places and time in history to experience the world as these two artists did. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave.,Detroit, 313-833-7900 http://www.dia.org

The Art of Containment 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Containment is a word we use to limit our freedom, the freedom of others, and the freedom of our environment, yet our very essence is freedom. 3rd Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. 248-544-0394 lawrencetriangallery@gmail.com lawrencetriangallery@gmail.com

DMTC Library Series: Anatomy of a Scene 7:00 pm Join Detroit Mercy Theatre Royal Oak Public Library for “Anatomy of a Scene” – A movie scene. A scene from a play, do scenes work? The University of Detroit Mercy Theatre Royal Oak Public Library, 222 E 11 Mile Rd, Royal Oak, 2482463700 https://www.facebook.com/events/146099340153947/ A2CT Junior Theatre Audition Workshop 10:00 am A2CT will hold a workshop on auditioning for Junior Theatre productions on Saturday, Feb. 3, from 10:00am to noon at the A2CT Studio, 322 W Ann St, Ann Arbor, MI, 48104. As a part of A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W Ann St, Ann Arbor. 734-971-2228 https://www.a2ct.org

DMTC Library Series: Community Show and Tell 7:00 pm Join Detroit Mercy Theatre Company at Ferndale Area District Library for “Community Show and Tell: Music that Inspires.” Join us and share a song or piece of music that inspires you or your life. This female public library, 222 E 9 Mile Rd, Ferndale, 248 546 5004 https://www.facebook.com/events/108153576853807/ A2CT Auditions for Arcadia 7:00 pm Ann Arbor Civic Theatre announces auditions for its main stage production of Arcadia by Tom Stoppard, directed by Melissa Frelich. Auditions will take place Thursday and Friday, Feb. 8 and 9, beginning at 7 A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W Ann St, Ann Arbor. 734-971-2228 http://www.a2ct.org/audition

Safari Circus: These Are My Friends 7:00 pm Performance Arts Safari CIRCUS, performs with The Theatre bizarre Orchestra under the leadership of Tom Stoppard, directed by Melissa Frelich. Performances are opening the show including; Michigan artists Josie Pace, Lushes LeMaan, Scott Dambacher (Scotty D.), The F.A.I. Corps The Crofoot, 1 S. Sagina,Pontiac. 248-850-9333 www.thecrofoot.com https://www.facebook.com/events/1486917419719/
 Stand with Trans Adds Support Groups and Holiday Celebration

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Valentine’s Day can be a stressful time for many, particularly someone who might be dealing with coming out. That’s why Stand with Trans is hosting a Share the Love Valentine’s Day Party for both trans people and their families. Stand with Trans is a 201(c)(3) organization whose mission is “to provide the tools needed by transgender youth so they will be empowered, supported and validated as they transition to their authentic life.” It’s an effort to create a safe space for people to start off the new year in a safe, non-judgmental space.

“It’s a social event. The last two summers we’ve had a big family picnic, and so we made a decision that we would add another social event throughout the year, and we decided to do that in February,” said the organization’s Founder and Board President Roz Keith. “And, it was an opportunity for families who had transgender members to come together.

So, it’s a great way for the kids to connect, families get to meet each other, to just have fun, relax and find community with each other’s families. There’s no pressure to do anything beyond just hang out.”

Attendees are encouraged to bring a dish to share with other guests at the free event, and come dressed in their finest Valentine’s Day attire. The event will feature a wide array of activities ranging from face painting, music, crafts and of course, food.

Although the event isn’t a direct celebration of the organization’s recent addition of nine new support groups, the timing ties in well with this expansion. Keith said the groups will be a valuable new addition to Stand with Trans’ current services.

“The support groups are really important because it’s an opportunity for the parents to share what’s going on in a safe, non-judgmental space,” she said. “A lot of times I think parents, who may be supportive of their child, are hesitant to come because they feel like maybe their opinions will be judged, or they’re not understanding certain things and it’s hard to put that into words; that their issues and struggles may be so different that they don’t feel comfortable opening up.”

Keith said that the groups are not therapy, they’re peer support groups that vary based on the intended audience.

“We have parent support groups, we have trans youth groups and we have one - and soon two - groups for young children,” Keith said. “Those aren’t really support groups, those are really play-based gatherings.”

According to Keith, the meetings have been so successful that it’s usually the kids who beg their parents to bring them back again.

“So, the youth, I’ve heard from several families that once they come, they’re the ones asking their parents, ‘Can we go back?’ They can come, they can hang out, have some conversations and, again, it’s a safe space with other kids that, ‘get it,’” she said. “So they’re not explaining themselves, and they look forward to it.”

Meet Transgender Evangelist Selena Little

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

S elena Little, who might just be Michigan’s first out African-American transgender evangelist, is making her presence known at pulpits across the state.

As a member of the ministerial team at Whosoever Ministry United Church of Christ in Grosse Pointe Farms, Little is thriving.

“She’s exceptional,” said Rev. Dr. Selma Massey, the pastor of Whosoever. “I think that for too long we have forgotten about the transgender community and she gives an opportunity to be educated and be informed so we can put our arms around the transgender community and not leave anyone behind. With Selena telling her story then others will be encouraged to revisit the idea of knowing God.”

Little tells the story of when she first began her transition from male to female in the early ’70s.

“I was about 16,” Little recalled. “Before then it was illegal, unless you had an entertainer’s license, for a man to dress in women’s clothes. So when the law changed then it made it a little easier for me.”

Though she had support at home, Little’s friends at school failed to embrace her as she changed her physical appearance.

“My friends didn’t agree with my transition,” Little said. “All of them knew I was gay but there was something about my transition that they didn’t grasp. So it made it difficult for me to go to school. I dropped out in the 11th grade, though I later went back to get my GED.”

While living authentically as a woman, Little married a man in 1974.

“I met him in Buffalo, New York and he eventually came here and asked my mother and father if he could marry me,” Little said. “They said yes. My father got married a man in 1974.”

I started my transition all over again while I was at Technicolor,” she said. “It was very good to me.”

While still working at Technicolor, Little began reconnecting with her faith.

“I’ve always had a desire to be in ministry but I didn’t know how it would fit with my being transgender, because of what the world thinks,” Little said. “But I decided to step out on faith and become more involved. I was led to go to a place called Full Truth Fellowship of Christ Church.”

In 2012, Little was ordained an evangelist by Pastor Ronchele Andres.

“It meant that God had a special purpose for me,” Little said. “I’ve always wondered why would he create me the way that he did. It was very baffling to me because I loved him so much. I knew that God doesn’t make mistakes. He knows exactly what he’s doing. So I always said when he came to create me, even before I was in my mother’s womb, he would need someone who was transgender to help people. He created us all for his purpose and that’s how I feel about me. When I was ordained it meant the world to me.”

Today, Little has six grandchildren and one great grandchild.

“The grandchildren call me papa,” Little explained. “Some people look at us a little strange but that’s what I want them to call me because that’s what I am to them.”

Reconnecting with Her Faith

In addition to performing in clubs, Little got a job at Technicolor where she stayed for 22 years.

“It was the late ’80s and I was so correct. Love conquers all.”

“I used to sneak out of the house and rent a hotel for the weekend and perform,” Little said. “Then my oldest daughter came to me one day and said, ‘Dad, you don’t have to get a hotel to do what you want to do. We saw pictures of you and you are so beautiful.’ We cried and I was so overwhelmed with joy because I realized that what I had believed was true. Love conquered all. It was really scary. I really didn’t know how my children were going to react to my new life, and I was so correct. Love conquers all.”

I was so overwhelmed with love and a desire to share it with others,” Little said, was in trouble.

“Now that the kids had gotten older, Phil felt some kind of way about going back to her old life and I felt some kind of way about going back to my old life,” said Little. “So I went back to being Selena.”

Initially, Little tried to hide her transition from the children.

“I used to sneak out of the house and rent a hotel for the weekend and perform,” Little said. “Then my oldest daughter came to me one day and said, ‘Dad, you don’t have to get a hotel to do what you want to do. We saw pictures of you and you are so beautiful.’ We cried and I was so overwhelmed with joy because I realized that what I had believed was true. Love conquered all. It was really scary. I really didn’t know how my children were going to react to my new life, and I was so correct. Love conquers all.”

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Psychic
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Editor’s Note: This is a sampling of the hundreds of Michigan non-profits working with the LGBTQ community across the state. From time to time this print resource will emphasize different sectors as space permits.

AIDS/HIV

There are dozens of AIDS/HIV organizations and resources listed at www.PrideSource.com. Here are just three of them:

**AIDS Walk Detroit**
Contact info@aidswalkdetroit.org or 248-399-9255 for more information. The walk takes place this year on Sunday, Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. at the Royal Oak Farmers Market

**Macomb County STD Clinic**
27690 Van Dyke
Warren, MI 48093
586-465-9217
http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDS/Testing

**Matrix Ryan White**
HIV/AIDS Program
120 Parsons Street
Detroit, MI 48201
888-226-6366
248-345-1435
www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/yanrwhite/

**UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond**
3011 W. Grand Blvd. Suite 230
Detroit, MI 48202
313-446-9800
www.miunified.org
Michigan HIV/STD Hotline
800-872-2437

Advocacy

**Equality Michigan**
19641 W. 7 Mile, Detroit, MI
313-537-7000
equalitymi.org
Facebook.com/equalitymichigan

Find over 300 Non-Profit Listings Serving Michigan’s LGBTQ Online @ pridesource.com

**AIDS/HIV**

Currently there are 19 organizations listed as active online at www.pridesource.com/

**LGBT Detroit**
Detroit
www.lgbtdetroit.org,
www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit
or follow them on Twitter @ LGBTDetroit.
2002S Greenfield Road
Detroit, MI
Phone: 313-397-2127

**Affirmations**
Ferndale
http://goaffirmations.org
or follow them on Twitter @ GoAffirmations.
290 W. Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI
248-398-7105

**Legal**

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan
Jay Kaplan, Staff Attorney, LGBT Project
2966 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI
www.aclumich.org
313-397-2127

**Fair Michigan**
PO Box 6136
Plymouth, MI 48170
877-432-4764, 313-556-2300
fairmichigan.org
Facebook.com/fairmichigan2016

**Transgender Groups/Services**

**Stonewall4Resolution**
Facebook.com/Stonewall4Resolution
877-432-4764, 313-556-2300
PO Box 6136
Detroit, MI 48204

**Legal**

Know Your Rights Project
Outlaws-U-M student group
outlawlegs@gmail.com
734-995-8867

**Older Adults**

SAGE Metro Detroit
290 W. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale, MI
313-578-6812
sagemetrodetroit.org
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

**Political**

The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party
Facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP
Stonewall for Revolution
www.facebook.com/stonewall4revolution

Get Listed, Promote Your Events

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Send any press releases and announcements to editor@pridesource.com
FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND PRESENTS

41ST ANN ARBOR FOLK FESTIVAL

JANUARY 26 FRIDAY, 6:30 PM
JASON ISBELL
AND THE 400 UNIT
JJ GREY & MOFO
LORI MCKENNA
STEPHEN KELLOGG
DEAD HORSES
CHASTITY BROWN
JOE PUG, EMCEE

JANUARY 27 SATURDAY, 6:30 PM
JOHN PRINE
AIMEE MANN
MOUNTAIN HEART
BIRDS OF CHICAGO
THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS
THE WAR AND TREATY
JOE PUG, EMCEE

THEARK.ORG
FINDYOURFOLK.ORG

2018 HILL AUDITORIUM
FIND YOUR FOLK
*program subject to change

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THE ARK BOX OFFICE ONLINE AT THE ARK.ORG
BY PHONE AT 734-763-TKTS

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NOW OFFERING INTEGRATED TESTING

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• Rapid Hep C
• Gonorrhea
• Chlamydia
• Syphilis

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Matrix MAC Health in Ferndale & MidTown Detroit • Affirmations in Ferndale

MONDAY
Matrix MAC Health FERNDALE 9AM-4:30PM Walk-in
Affirmations FERNDALE 5:30PM-8:30PM Walk-in or Appointment
MidTown 9AM-7PM Walk-in
THURSDAY
Matrix MAC Health FERNDALE 9AM-4:30PM Walk-in
FRIDAY
Matrix MAC Health FERNDALE 9AM-5PM Walk-in
MIDTOWN 11AM-2PM Walk-in
SATURDAY
MIDTOWN 3rd Saturday of each month

NO SUNDAY TESTING

Call 1.888.226.6366 to make an appointment or for information. 1(888) A CONDOM

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