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Faith-Based Adoption Agency Sues State

**BY BTL STAFF**

A recent Michigan settlement that bans state contracts with foster and adoption agencies that refuse to work with LGBTQ couples has sparked backlash.

On Monday, April 15, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of St. Vincent Catholic Charities and two adoptive families it’s served.

The lawsuit, alleging the new rules violated the group’s First Amendment rights, was filed against the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert Gordon, Children’s Services Agency Director Herman McCall, Attorney General Dana Nessel, the federal Health and Human Services department and its secretary, Alex Azar.

“Faith-based agencies like St. Vincent consistently do the best work because of their faith, and we need more agencies like them helping children – not fewer. The actions by the Attorney General of Michigan do nothing but harm the thousands of at-risk children in desperate need of loving homes,” said Mark Rienzi, Becket’s president, in a statement.

The lawsuit was brought following Nessel’s announcement in March that taxpayer-funded adoption agencies with religious objections to placing children in homes of same-sex couples will no longer be able to cite their faith as a legitimate reason to opt out of providing that service.

Nessel settled a lawsuit with the ACLU of Michigan – that the ACLU of Michigan filed – that challenged the state’s practice of allowing state-contracted, taxpayer-funded foster care and adoption agencies to use religious criteria to exclude same-sex couples.

The plaintiffs, Kristy and Dana Dumont and Erin and Rebecca Busk-Sutton, wanted to become foster parents with the intention of adopting children who are wards of the state, but they were turned down by two faith-based agencies Bethany Christian Services and St. Vincent Catholic Charities. The adoption agencies have contracts with the state of Michigan to act on behalf of the state but turned the plaintiffs’ down because of their own religious objections to accepting same-sex couples.

“Discrimination in the provision of foster care case management and adoption services is illegal, no matter the rationale. Limiting the opportunity for a child to be adopted or fostered by a loving home not only goes against the state’s goal of finding a home for every child, it is a direct violation of the contract every child placing agency enters into with the state,” said Nessel at the time.

According to MDHHS, each agency was providing foster care case management or adoption services for one or more children referred to them by MDHHS. Because the plaintiffs were not seeking direct-placement or private adoption services and because they were not referred to the agencies through MDHHS, the agencies could not reject them under existing state law.

When Nessel took office in January, she reviewed the facts of the case with her team of legal experts and determined that MDHHS could be subject to liability on the claims of the plaintiffs. As a result, Nessel strongly recommended resolving the case on terms consistent with the law and existing agency contracts and that best serve the health, safety and well-being of children in need of state-contracted foster care case management and adoption services.

The plaintiffs and the attorney general’s office, on behalf of its client MDHHS, entered into negotiations and agreed to settle the case.

According to reports, as of February, Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Charities and St. Vincent were responsible for more than 1,600, or 12 percent, of the state’s 13,000-plus foster care and adoption cases. Faith-based agencies have said they would shut down their adoption and foster care services rather than violate their religious beliefs.

Kelly Rossman-McKinney, a spokesperson for Nessel, told MLive, “We have not had a chance to review the complaint. Based on the information provided during the plaintiffs’ counsel’s press conference, it appears that the plaintiffs’ attorneys do not understand the settlement agreement.”

Rossman-McKinney explained, according to the MLive report, that “the state does not take action against faith-based adoption agencies that don’t take a state referral. If the agency accepts a state referral, however, the agency cannot refuse to provide the child with foster care or adoptive services that conflict with its religious beliefs.”

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**We Are All Gods’ Children**

LGBTQ-Affirming Clergy Across the State Show Support for Community in Joint Statement

**BY BTL STAFF**

Clergy across Michigan released a joint statement this week in honor of Holy Week, seeking unity and support for protective policies for all — including LGBTQ people:

As Christian faith leaders across denominations, we are united in the understanding that we must all be free to worship as we wish. Freedom of religion is one of the most important freedoms we enjoy as Americans — that’s why it’s already protected by the U.S. Constitution. But that freedom doesn’t mean that we impose our beliefs onto others, or discriminate.

This week, during Holy Week, one of the most special times of the year for so many people, we are reminded that we are all God’s children, called to build welcoming, inclusive spaces that invite our neighbors in.

That’s why we stand together this week and call for the passage of policies that protect our LGBTQ friends, neighbors and fellow congregants from discrimination. A majority of Americans from nearly every faith support these protections, including Christians, Jews, Hindus, Mormons, Buddhists and Muslims.

It is time for faith communities across the country to speak out about our support for the LGBTQ community, open doors, and heal wounds. No one should face mistreatment or discrimination just because of who they are or who they love. Let us share that message more stridently than ever during this holy season.

Sincerely,
Pastor PJ Anderson, Space for Grace Fellowship Ministries, UCC, Lansing

Rev. Tijuana Gray, Reconciliation Metropolitan Community Church, Grand Rapids
Rev. Joseph Summers; Pastor, Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Ann Arbor
Pastor Matthew Bode, Zion Lutheran Church, Ferndale
Pastor Lindsey Anderson, Detroit Cooperative Church, Detroit
Pastor Jeffrey Ogonowski, Iroquois Avenue Christ Lutheran Church, Detroit
Rev. Adrian Mobley-Bowie, Breath of Life Center, Saginaw
Linda and Tom Karle Nelson, Co Presidents of Fortunate Families (Catholic), Detroit
Randy Block Director, Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network of Michigan
Rev Dr. Roland Stringfellow, African-American Roundtable Coordinator, Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies, Religion Pacific School of Religion
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Connor Berdy: Macomb County’s First Openly Gay Candidate Hits the Ground Running

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Obama’s influence

It’s not every 17-year-old who gets to attend a dinner party at the White House with his mom. That was the fortune of Connor Berdy, currently a candidate for Warren City Council, after President Barack Obama was re-elected in 2012. Berdy and his brother often joined their mother when she volunteered for Obama’s campaign that year.

“That’s when I got my introduction to politics,” Berdy said, adding how exciting it was to be civically engaged in his community for the first time. Obama won; thus, the dinner party.

“At that point, I was just like, ‘Wow, I never thought I would be in this kind of space,’” he said. “I got to shake his hand, and Michelle’s. It was a very inspirational moment.”

Berdy’s mom, Leah Berdy, was inspired, too, as she’s now a trustee on the Warren Consolidated School Board.

Later, Berdy named Obama as his primary political role model, citing Obama’s capacity to encourage and empower people. He said his trademark ability to bring people together was something in particular that struck a chord for Berdy, who is openly gay.

“I remember his last State of the Union speech almost brought me to tears, when he was talking about all the fathers out there who support their gay sons,” Berdy said. “It was just so cool to be able to hear that coming from the president of the United States, that I personally could feel that connection with him.”

Not a Newcomer

While Berdy is 23, and 2018 graduate from Michigan State University, this Gen Z candidate is no newcomer to politics. After changing his major to political science and transferring to MSU, Berdy interned for state Sen. Steve Bieda and was vice-chair of College Democrats of America. Managing Nate Shannon’s successful campaign for state representative came next, and now Berdy works in Lansing for his own state representative, Lori Stone, as her legislative director.

Not only that, Berdy serves on the Warren City Crime Commission; he is involved in other Macomb County Democratic organizations as well.

During his college years, Berdy was never shy about standing up, literally, for causes he felt strongly about. Advocacy and activism were Berdy’s passions. As a senior last January, Berdy made national news when he interrupted the proceedings of an MSU meeting to appoint John Engler interim president after Lou Anna Simon resigned amid the Larry Nassar sexual abuse scandal. Numerous students did not feel the former governor represented their values. And when the announcement was made, there was little time to respond.

“We organized and got people to show up at the board meeting the next day,” Berdy said. “They said, ‘No public comment, no one can talk, we’re just gonna push this vote through.’”

However, Berdy refused to let that happen. After Berdy told his friends, “We should go sit up on the table and block the vote,” that’s exactly what he did, climbing up on the table to make his comments. Headlines and photos of Berdy reached across the state and, having broken the ice, other students aired their opinions as well.

“It was definitely an empowering experience to be able to stand up for what I believe in,” Berdy said. “I spoke my truth in the situation, and then a year later, we won. Things have changed.”

“It’s the City That Made Me”

“Moving Warren Forward,” Berdy’s campaign slogan, is at the heart of the lifelong Warren resident’s vision for his hometown, at a time that Berdy acknowledges can be difficult for people his age to find jobs there, and the reason why many of his peers have moved away.

“It’s the city that made me; it’s the city that raised me,” Berdy said, calling his decision to return home after college and utilize his experience in government and his political savvy a “unique opportunity ... to turn things around.”

“I definitely think there’s so much work that can be done,” he said. “There’s no reason Warren, Michigan, can’t be a word-class city.”

“The biggest thing is diversifying the city’s economy,” Berdy said, when asked to name the number one challenge he’d like to tackle if elected to one of the two at-large seats open on city council. The GM Tech Center is by far the city’s largest employer, followed by TACOM.

“Especially with the auto industry so up in the air, with its future so unknown, I really think we need to start looking right now about what we can do to promote small business in the city, to attract new business, to attract young people to the city,” Berdy said.

He stressed the urgency of being pre-emptive when considering the city’s long-term survival in a globalized economy, particularly in light of the prospect that the tech center could close.

Berdy recognizes and appreciates Warren’s growing diversity, which has accelerated rapidly over the past 20 years or so. It’s not too long ago that Michigan’s third-largest city was notable for being overwhelmingly white. Further, he described his high school’s diverse community, a largely accepting place where he said he graduated with a transgender student who didn’t experience problems there.

Berdy himself was not out at the time, because he said he wasn’t aware of an LGBTQ “presence” in the area.

“So I didn’t have something to look up to or model myself after,” he said. “But coming to know the city more intimately, now that I’m older, I know a lot of gay and lesbian couples that live in the city.

“I’ve never seen Warren as being an anti-LGBTQ-friendly place,” he continued. “I just don’t think our leadership at the moment embraces that or reflects that. That’s something where the campaign becomes personal to me, because if I can be that role model for that high school student that’s looking for something, then that means a lot to me. I think there are institutional barriers in the city government that are wary about embracing that, and that’s what city elections are for.”

Berdy doesn’t anticipate negativity about his sexuality during his campaign, saying, “if they plan to use [that] as something to attack me, I don’t think that will go over well.”

“The residents of the city, they’re supportive,” Berdy said. “My campaign’s not about my sexuality, my campaign is about my vision for the city, how I want to help my community.”

Warren Pride

Could a pride festival be coming to the city of Warren in the near future? If Berdy is elected this November, and has his say, that’s definitely on his to-do list. Not just as a way to publicly celebrate the LGBTQ residents of Macomb County on their own turf for the first time, but it also has great potential to boost business in Warren as well. Everybody wins.

“If I’m elected, I want to have a pride event for the city,” Berdy said. “I think Warren is one of the perfect places to start doing something like that. Having a pride event brings people to the city, it brings people spending money to the city. We can get local businesses to partner and sponsor – these are all things that we should be doing.”

“I’ve tried to promote things like this, but I’ve definitely been shot down at some levels of city government, and so this is something I will spearhead if I am on city council,” he said. “Not just for a pride event, but to promote other diversity we have in the city, other community events and organizations. [It’s] something that I’m very passionate about.”

Find out more about Connor Berdy by following him on social media. Twitter: @ connorberdy.

WARREN’S HRC SCORE

In 2018, the city of Warren scored 14 out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index, which evaluates how inclusive municipal laws, policies and services are of LGBTQ people who live and work there. How Warren’s score breaks down: Twelve points for reporting 2016 hate crimes statistics to the FBI, plus two points for county-wide protection against gender identity discrimination in public accommodations. It should be noted that Sterling Heights, the other large city in Macomb County scored by HRC, received 20 points. Its breakdown was identical to Warren’s, plus additional points for its leadership’s public position on LGBTQ equality (5 points) and pro-equality legislative or policy efforts (1 point). Further, the MEI offers one bonus point for openly LGBTQ elected or appointed municipal leaders. Therefore, because Berdy was appointed to the crime commission in 2017 and is openly gay, the city of Warren should technically have a score of 16. Berdy said he was not aware of this, and suggested that the accuracy of Warren’s MEI may not be a priority for the mayor’s office.
GRACE JONES

JULY 1

MASSONIC TEMPLE THEATRE

PURCHASE TICKETS AT AXS.COM OR THE MASSONIC TEMPLE BOX OFFICE
Justice Elizabeth Clement: On Politicizing the Courts, Child Welfare, the LGBTQ Community and RBG

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

An Unlikely Scenario

Why would Between The Lines request an interview with a Republican justice on the Michigan Supreme Court? To begin with, Justice Elizabeth Clement, like many in the judiciary, would bristle at labeling judges Republican or Democrat. Yet in Michigan, justices are elected, not appointed, and they are nominated by party – although their names appear on the nonpartisan section of the ballot.

Appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder in 2017, Clement spent a 1 1/2 years on the bench prior to the 2018 midterm elections; therefore, she had a record to evaluate. And consider this: should you and your partner split, and your custody battle becomes part of a case that makes its way up to the highest court in the state, Clement could be one of seven justices deciding the future of your family.

Controversy

“...the story was, four Republican-nominated justices, three Democrat-nominated justices and a Democrat is now the chief. How did that happen?” Clement recalled. “I’ll be frank, it happened because we picked the best person for the job. And it was unanimous.”

Democratic-nominated Megan Cavanagh is the newest addition to the court and Clement said that “we are so lucky to have her.”

She called Cavanagh hard-working, open-minded and down-to-earth.

“It’s great for the chief justice and I to have another woman on the court,” she said, and reflected on the changes she’s witnessed since January, describing the group as collegial, respectful when they disagree and commented on the “renewed excitement” she sees.

A New Era for the Michigan Supreme Court?

The Michigan Supreme Court ranked dead last in independence in a 2008 study conducted by the University of Chicago School of a Law – a finding that came as no surprise to many attorneys actively practicing in Michigan at the time and since. That is, certain justices were unquestionably influenced by partisan pressures. Eleven years later, Clement said she hopes the current justices have the same desire she does: to keep politics out of the equation.

“I think our court looks very different than it did 10 years ago,” she said. “And I think the public is going to continue to see that direction … [where] it doesn’t matter who nominated them. They’re making decisions as a collective body, based on the law, based on the facts.”

As an example, she described when the court nominated Bridget McCormack as Chief Justice.

Child Welfare

After graduating from Michigan State University Law School, Clement began her legal career in private practice, focusing on family law. That was part of her interest in serving on the court, an interest she described as twofold.

“My passion has also been researching and writing, and I’ve always been kind of an introvert,” she said, adding that she has had to step out of her shell somewhat in her new role.

And while that is a significant part of her job, she explained that each of the seven justices also serve as liaisons with oversight over the state’s trial courts.

“...the other part of my job is acting as liaison for the Michigan Supreme Court for problem-solving courts,” she said, “which involves mental health issues, drug addiction, alcohol addiction and our veterans, as well as our child welfare system as it relates to the foster care system.”

She called the ability to be involved with both parts of her legal career that she has been passionate about “an amazing opportunity.”

Given Clement’s background in family law, she was well-versed in Michigan’s equitable parent doctrine, which relates to parenting rights for one’s nonbiological children. This can be a challenging issue in custody disputes, and its impact on the LGBTQ community, in particular, cannot be overstated. Marriage equality has shifted the landscape somewhat, however, Michigan remains the only state that recognizes the parent-child relationship solely in the context of a legal marriage. Knowing that she could not weigh in, either way, we asked Justice Clement whether she would be interested in the Michigan Supreme Court taking up a case to look at this issue in the future.

“Yes,” she replied. “Having said that … we have statutes today that do not account for what families look like in general. And I think there is a lot of work that can and should be done across the board. Whether it’s custody and parenting time and all of that, when it comes to any family, regardless of what the makeup of that family looks like.

“In my mind, we don’t want the court stepping into each and every different situation … [because] there’s never gonna be a perfect case that will cover all of it, just address a piece of it,” she continued. “And we’re gonna be left with questions.”

She said she believes there are legislators who are passionate about this issue and hopes they will educate people on the need for statutes that protect parents and children, “because families look very different than they did when these laws were enacted years and years ago.”

The foster care system is an institution whose role is to protect children. And policies that allow foster and adoption agencies to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, etc., have been a minefield for the state. As court liaison, Clement said she’s witnessed this herself.

“I don’t know that you can balance them,” she said, when asked if she envisioned a workable solution. “Do you get to discriminate against a gay couple, or do you get to discriminate against an organization that has religious beliefs? … This is something that is definitely happening in our state, where there's agencies that have very strong beliefs that they should be able to select foster parents or adoptive parents based on set criteria.”

She added, “I anticipate that a case could very well percolate up to our court.”

See Justice Clement, continued on p. 12

BY ANNA ROSE

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See Justice Clement, continued on p. 12
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Have a hateful Easter for Jesus

Just in time for Easter 2019, Fools for Christ (and Donald Trump) — an American Bible GOP group headquartered in Lumbago Falls, Texas — held a press conference on Palm Sunday to publicize “National Hate Someone Special for Jesus Week.”

Fools for Christ spokesperson Rev. Franklin Falwell Robertson called the press conference, “a clarion trumpet call to all true believers marching as to war with the double cross of Jesus going on before.”

The militant media event — covered by a coalition of several tax-free televangelist broadcast stations and nosey shopping market tabloids — followed a stirring sermon by Rev. F. F. Robertson called succinctly: “Hate the sin. Don’t forget to hate the sinner. (For Jesus).”

“As twice-born true believers, we’ve been turning our other cheeks far too long,” said Rev. Robertson. “With a fast-approaching time of the Left Behind just around the corner, we need to return to militancy values of Christian centuries long, long gone by.

“When it comes down to it, in God’s eyes, refusing to serve gays in your place of business because of your Trinitarian beliefs, or to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, or to deny adoption rights to gays and lesbians are all socially redemptive actions.

“Say what you will, doubting Thomases, but the Crusades (especially the Children’s Crusade), the Inquisition with its beacon of repentance, the burning stake and an occasional pogrom now and then, had merit in saving souls, no matter how harsh or seemingly bigoted the Christian strategy.

“For a time, slavery seemed a viable option, too. (It does have New Testament blessing, by the way.) But, for whatever reason of divine intervention, God permitted the Civil War. Don’t get me wrong — war has its place. (Thank Heaven for Christians Trump and Pence. And hopefully Mitch.)

“So that there’s no misunderstanding where Fools for Christ is coming from on its Last Day’s strategy of hating sinners for Jesus, let me emphasize: we are not engaging in our own honest hatred because we of late have been the persecuted minority following our policy on shunning gays, speaking out against feminism and telling other religions they are satanic or too financially competitive.

“Oh, no. Our interest is solely making America a Christian nation. If active hate does the trick, so much the better. If creative Christian hate can change things for national uniformity sake, it’s just steps away from making church attendance mandatory for citizenship; making America’s leaders religiously Republican in their economic outlook. Theocracy with a capital ‘T’.

“But in all fairness to sinners in need of a touch or two of blessed hate: there are degrees of sin. It’s easy to hate a murderer or someone who commits adultery, or someone who Republicans historically win the White House by using fear, and fear is a successful strategy. Here’s the proof:

Nixon: I will maintain law and order, stop the student demonstrations and implement a ‘secret’ plan to end the Vietnam War.

Reagan: I’m the one to stop the spread of radical Iranian thugs.

H.W. Bush: I’ll protect American women against rape. (Remember the infamous Willy Horton ad, which told voters that Democratic rival Michael Dukakis would allow convicted
It’s time to get serious about the upcoming election. I said the same thing when the orange-haired man descended the escalator three years ago. This is not going to be a walk in the park. Start listening to all of America, not just urban America.

► Viewpoint
Continued from p. 10

G.W. Bush: My re-election is about protecting American family and values, marriage between one man and one woman.

Trump: We need to protect our borders from the rapists, killers and drug lords who are storming our country.

Trump’s people are already road-testing the fear campaign and, when former President Barack Obama spoke earlier this week in Berlin, he expressed concern that progressive Democrats may be helping to create an ideological purity that excludes any candidate who does not adher exact.

Republicans claim that Democrats want socialism.

“They’ll take away your money and property,” they say. It’s not that the Republican perception of progressives is true — but it’s not meant to be. These kinds of conservative talking points are meant to frighten voters.

Republican embellish. Let’s just say it as it is: They lie. The problem is that Americans are so frightened, they buy it.

“The criminals are storming the border again” and “The Green New Deal will take away your fast cars, the steak on your table and give you cancer caused by windmills.”

It’s time to get serious about the upcoming election. I said the same thing when the orange-haired man descended the escalator three years ago. This is not going to be a walk in the park. Start listening to all of America, not just urban America. Progressive values are good policy but maybe not good politics. To get elected, you need to practice both. Get elected first and then work toward more progressive policies. Don’t push those policies on an electorate that is already frightened. Hold back on educating the public until after you are governing and can make real change.

Or learn how to talk about progressive issues in a way that doesn’t frighten the average voter, because as we’ve seen, many Americans vote based on emotions rather than issues.

One last point: Relating to this conversation, some LGBTQ pundits have made statements that the out mayor of South Bend, Indiana, running for president is “not out enough.” I believe statements like this are dangerous and divisive, and I want more for our community.

Mark Segal, PGN publisher, is the nation’s most-award-winning commentator in LGBT media.

► Parting Glances
Continued from p. 10

masturbates or watches porn. Worse yet, someone who fails to tithe to the church.

“It’s important to express hatred that gets national soul-saving publicity. The more outrageous. The more nefarious. The better!”

“When it comes down to it, in God’s eyes, refusing to serve gays in your place of business because of your Trinitarian beliefs, or to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, or to deny adoption rights to gays and lesbians are all socially redemptive actions.


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

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Creep Of The Week

Donald Trump

As I write this the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris is on fire. It is a terrible loss to anyone who cares about history. Donald Trump’s response, however, was to tweet to try to tell French firefighters how to do their jobs. Trump probably sees the fire as a business opportunity. Maybe he dreams that the latest Trump Hotel will spring up in its place.

Just in case it isn’t clear, Trump is a terrible person.

Want more proof? Trump’s totally needless transgender troop ban went into effect on April 12. The ban will effectively save America from... checks notes... people who voluntarily serve in it and are willing to risk their lives for the country.

Oh, and in addition to kicking out trans troops, the Trump administration is also hell-bent on kicking out immigrant troops. But don’t worry, the military is addressing the problem by relaxing recruit standards making it a great place for white supremacists who are currently unhappy with their current access to weaponry in their civilian lives.

Whew. I know I’ll sure be sleeping more soundly.

As you remember, this whole thing started with a Trump tweet in 2017, because that’s how we make sweeping policy decisions that directly impact people’s lives, FFS. Many entities immediately came out against such a ban and two years of wrangling in court followed. But the Supreme Court let the plan go into effect in a 5-4 decision further highlighting the fact that ELECTIONS MATTER, especially when a heartless madman gets elected.

The Human Rights Campaign, not surprisingly, denounced the ban.

“At this difficult moment for transgender service members and those wishing to serve their country, every transgender patriot should know that a grateful nation supports you,” said HRC National Press Secretary Sarah McBride. “The Trump-Pence transgender troop ban is dangerous for both transgender people and our national security, which is why a bipartisan chorus of members of Congress, leading military experts and overwhelming majorities of Americans oppose this despicable policy.”

That’s disingenuous because the Venn diagram of transgender people and people who experience gender dysphoria, while not a perfect circle, is pretty damn close to one,” Allen writes.

Allen argues that this ban is basically “don’t ask, don’t tell” for transgender service members. Just as DADT was harmful and wrong when it applied to all LGBTQ members, it is still harmful and wrong now.

One of the biggest complaints Trump and other anti-trans bigots have about transgender people serving in the military is the cost of their medical care. And it’s true, the cost of, say, a gender affirmation surgery can be pretty expensive.

And so there’s this right-wing conservative idea that transgender folks are flocking to the military in order to get their surgeries paid for.

This is not true. But even if it were, SO WHAT? If you’ve got someone who is qualified and capable who is volunteering to serve their country, even going so far as risking their lives, then we should be thanking them not kicking them out because we fear their health care costs.

But, of course, this isn’t really about money. It’s about bigotry. Letting a transgender person wear a uniform of the United States military is tantamount to saying, “This country does not discriminate and care more about someone’s qualifications than we do their gender identity.”

But under Trump, we aren’t that country. Sure, the majority of Americans might disagree with the ban, but they aren’t the people running the country. We’ve got a radical minority at the helm hell bent on hurting the people they don’t like.

If you feel like each day under Trump gets worse and worse, rest assured. You are 100 percent correct.
State Rep. Jon Hoadley Announces 2020 Run for Congress, Listening Tour

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

ow in his third and final term as a state representative in Michigan's 60th House District, Jon Hoadley announced last week his intentions to represent Southwest Michigan nationally. In 2020, Hoadley plans to run against Republican U.S. Rep. Fred Upton who currently sits in Michigan's 6th District seat. Additionally, in an effort to reach out to his potential constituents, Hoadley has started a month-long listening tour with stops all across Southwest Michigan during April.

Hoadley found time in-between tour stops to fill BTL in on some of his national legislative goals if elected, his takeaway from the state legislature and what he's learned as an openly LGBTQ politician.

What was your motivation to do a listening tour after announcing your campaign?

The reason that we're doing the listening tour is because everybody can be the hero of their own story, and there are so many great solutions that are out across Southwest Michigan to the problems that we're facing. And so, I firmly believe that elected officials, if you want to represent people, you've got to be willing to listen to people. So, that's exactly what we're out here doing. We launched with our video on Monday and now we want to make sure that we're both taking our message out on the road and hearing what people want to talk about. We launched on Monday and immediately, the National Republican Committee, the Michigan Republican Party, started attacking me and we know [in] this race, that people will spend millions of dollars telling people what to think about me. And instead, I firmly believe, 'Why don't voters make up their own minds?' So, come meet me, shake my hand, say howdy and decide if I can earn your vote.

Fred Upton's official campaign statement said, among other things that he understands "there are those excited to start politicking, but right now Fred's energy and efforts are focused on solving problems." What is your response to that?

With the urgency of the challenges that our country is facing we cannot wait. So, I've been working to solve problems in the state legislature for the last five years and I'm going to continue working to solve problems in the state legislature until my last day there. At the same time, when we're talking about politicians and the Trump administration trying to take away our health care and that we have major impacts of climate change coming and there are still plenty of places throughout Southwest Michigan where people aren't sure they can drink their water, now is absolutely the time to start facing our challenges head-on and bringing some fresh ideas to this conversation.

What is something you've learned during your time in office?

Day one we're ready to hit the ground running and working on the people who are asking for. But things that I've learned are that, I'm the type of person who believes we can find common ground if we put our head down and get to work we can make good things happen, even in divided government. And I'm hopeful that I can use many of those skills to serve folks across Southwest Michigan. The work takes a lot of energy and passion, and what I've found is that over the last five years, I really feel great when I get to be serving people, when I get to be connecting with constituents, when our team gets to solve problems and so I'm really excited about the opportunities ahead.

You come from a family of educators, will that be a large focus of yours if elected?

Absolutely. Education is going to continue to be a strong priority in our campaign. Overall, I talk about the fact that, for every decision that's being made, whether in Lansing or in Washington, D.C., we should be putting people and communities at the center of our decisions. And nothing hits closer to home than when we're talking about things like education or protecting our environment or even fixing the roads. These are choices that are being made in the budget that are saying given the choice on how to spend taxpayer dollars, I think the better investment is in our kids or making sure that we have clean water and clean air. Or health care that keeps every family secure, safe and healthy instead of yet another tax cut to yet another profitable corporation or billionaire that doesn't need it. And so, that's what I talk about and I think maybe it comes from the fact that I grew up talking about education and from a family of teachers that, for me, when you pencil it out and you look at the lesson plan, this is one of the most important values that we need to be talking about.

What does it mean for the Michigan LGBTQ community in your eyes that an openly gay man is running for Congress?

I think it's an exciting moment that Southwest Michigan could elect a member of the LGBTQ community. As a gay man in the legislature, it matters that our community has representation, it matters that we have folks who are sharing our stories as decisions are being made and so I'm running because the way that we solve problems is going to help people regardless of who they are, who they love or what their family looks like. But I also think it matters that LGBTQ folks see members of their community also making decisions and in these positions representing all of our friends and neighbors.

To find out more about Hoadley's campaign or where to see him during his listening tour visit jonhoadley.com.

Justice Clement

Continued from p. 8

Author's Note: The day following our interview, Attorney General Dana Nessel reversed the state's policy which allowed state-contracted agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ couples. This decision was challenged again with a suit on April 15.

Bottom Line

How Justice Clement might rule on issues that affect LGBTQ Michiganders is not yet known, and she is the first to acknowledge that. She only asks that the community consider her record and the value she places on open-mindedness.

“I tell people that I am a listener,” she said. “Someone that does not have their mind made up, that does not bring bias or their personal opinion to a case. But someone that rather is prepared, looks at the law, looks at the cases and then comes and listens. ... One of my favorite things is talking to my colleagues that share their perspective on something, and get me to see something in a way that I wasn’t looking at it before.”

“I feel that every single person, regardless of anything about their background or who they are today or what they believe in deserves to be treated the exact same as the next person that walks into a courtroom,” she continued. “And that’s just who I am at my core. So I would hope that your readers would actually afford me the same. That if they have questions, they want to get to know me, invite me to things or ask me to come speak. Because I don’t think there’s anything that divides us.”

Clement said also that although she can’t answer specific questions on how she would rule on a case, her track record shows that she is an open-minded justice, too.

“And until those cases come before the court, they’re not gonna have that confidence that they see it in practice, but I think that there’s enough cases out there in the last year and a half they can look to and say, ‘It doesn’t matter what her career path was here, or who she worked for, this is who she is as a justice, and what she’s telling us is her philosophy on how to do her job and who she is as a person.’ And at least be willing to be open-minded to me as well,” she said.

Outtake

“You’re gonna print this and I’m gonna get in big trouble, and I just don’t care. Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” Clement said, when asked to name the sitting U.S. Supreme Court Justice she most admires and why. “She’s a rock star. I know everything about her, I’ve read every book about her, I’ve watched every documentary, every movie. She, to me, as a woman, as a woman in the law, as the mother of four children ... she’s amazing, she’s brilliant, she’s hard-working ... a trailblazer for women, not just in the law, but for women everywhere. And men, too.”
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right: Tonya M. Vaughan, DNP-CNM, FRN-BC
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Mayor Pete Buttigieg Declares 2020 Presidential Campaign

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Before a crowd of adoring supporters in South Bend who braved the rain to hear him speak, Pete Buttigieg made his 2020 presidential campaign official by declaring he’d pursue the Democratic nomination to run for the White House.

“I’m here to join you to make a little news,” Buttigieg said. “My name is Pete Buttigieg. They call me Pete Buttigieg. I am proud son of South Bend, Indiana, and I am running for president of the United States.”

Previously, the South Bend mayor had formed an exploratory committee for a possible presidential run, but hadn’t yet declared a candidacy. His announcement changed that, making his campaign official.


A key component of Buttigieg’s was the economic recovery of South Bend under his watch as mayor after stagnation following the loss of manufacturing — a situation with which many cities in the Midwest are familiar.

More people are moving into South Bend than we’ve seen in a generation,” Buttigieg said. “Thousands of new jobs have been added in our area, and billions in investment. There’s a long way for us to go. Life here is far from perfect. But we’ve changed our trajectory, and shown a path forward for communities like ours.”

Touting the reinvention of his city under new economy, Buttigieg — without ever mentioning President Trump by name — also criticized the American Dream can be restored by seeking to go back to the past under a “Make America Great Again” mentality.

“Because there is a myth being sold to industrial and rural communities: the myth that we can stop the clock and turn it back,” Buttigieg said. “It comes from people who think the only way to reach communities like ours is through resentment and nostalgia, selling an impossible promise of returning to a bygone era that was never as great as advertised to begin with. The problem is, they’re telling us to look for greatness in all the wrong places.”

Policy items Buttigieg mentioned were ensuring climate security, abolishing the Electoral College, preserving the right to abortion, ensuring access to health care and confronting a growing threat of white nationalism.

Buttigieg referenced about the struggles of his youth — in terms of his sexual orientation and intellectual curiosity — when he said the only time he’d go back to the past was 20 years ago to allay the fears of his youthful self.

The candidate said he tell his younger self he’d be “all right” and “one rainy April day, before he even turns 40, he’ll wake up to headlines about whether he’s rising too quickly as he becomes a top-tier contender for the American presidency, and to tell him that on that day he announces his campaign for president, he’ll do it with his husband looking on.”

Prior to his speech, campaign staffers warmed up the crowd at the rally with a chant holding up three separate signs guiding attendees in saying Buttigieg’s often mispronounced name: “Boot-Edge-Edge.”

Nan Whaley, mayor of Dayton, Ohio, heaped praise on Buttigieg during the rally in a speech explaining her support for her fellow mayor.

“He’s someone who’s both a great friend to me, someone who is a compassionate leader for everyday people who have elected him to office, he is the smartest person I know and he is deeply committed to serving our country,” Whaley said.

Whaley concluded with a zinger about the current occupant of the White House that generated significant applause from rally attendees.

At one point, Buttigieg invoked his inner Bill Clinton (and criticized him) by disparaging the Reagan economic policies of supply-side economics he says were embraced by both Republican and Democrats.

“That era, too, is now over,” Buttigieg said. “But much of Buttigieg’s speech was deeply personal. He told the story of his immigrant father who died last year after a battle with cancer, his mother who needed heart surgery as well as his personal story of accepting his sexual orientation.

“Folks, in short, he’s the polar opposite in every way to Donald Trump,” Whaley said. Annise Parker, CEO of the LGBTQ Victory Fund, was in South Bend for the announcement and said in a statement Buttigieg “shattered a lavender ceiling once thought unbreakable, becoming the first openly LGBTQ Democratic presidential candidate in American history and our first real shot at the Oval Office.”

“There is enormous power in an openly gay presidential candidate stumping at town halls in Iowa and speaking to Americans from the presidential debate stage — it changes perceptions of our community and raises the bar for candidates who seek LGBTQ support,” Parker said.

A Victory Fund spokesperson said the organization has not yet endorsed the candidate, but “we recognize the power of this moment for our community and have been working with his team quite closely.”

The newly official candidate — who was unheard of when he started exploring a presidential run at the start of the year — has enjoyed a size boost in the polls in race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Dazzling many supporters with his demeanor and skill at answering questions, Buttigieg also has a captivating personal story as an openly gay mayor, Harvard graduate, Rhodes scholar and Afghanistan war veteran.

A Monmouth University poll published on Thursday found Buttigieg was in third place in Iowa with nine percent support behind Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, who polled at 27 percent and 16 percent respectively. Following Buttigieg was Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Beto O’Rourke, Amy Klobuchar and Cory Booker.

In New Hampshire, Buttigieg is also running in third place. Biden had 23 percent support and Sanders had 16 percent, but Buttigieg followed at 11 percent support.

Parker said Buttigieg’s “meteoric rise is most notable for the support he’s receiving from diverse groups of voters.”

“There are enormous minefields and hurdles to running as an openly LGBTQ candidate, and so far, Mayor Pete has gracefully leapt over them on the world’s largest political stage,” Parker said. “He’s the real deal.”

After Buttigieg concluded his speech, his spouse, Chasten Buttigieg, joined him on the stage, where the two had a quick smooch and
Trump’s Transgender Military Ban Now in Effect

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The Pentagon initiated Friday the transgender military ban in accordance with Trump administration plans for the policy, returning the U.S. military to restrictions on LGBT service that harken to the days of “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

Transgender service members – who had been able to serve openly and obtain transition-related health care since the final year of the Obama administration in 2016 – will now face significant impediments on their service and an outright ban for many of them seeking to enlist.

Aaron Belkin, director of the San Francisco-based Palm Center, said in a statement Friday the policy marks a retreat on civil rights after three years of transgender service with no problems.

“In implementing “don’t ask, don’t tell” for transgender troops today, the Trump administration has put petty politics above military readiness, and personal prejudice above the genuine judgment of military leaders, who have made clear that inclusive service has succeeded for the last three years,” Belkin said. “Today our nation lurches backwards in a disgraceful retreat from the arc of our civil rights history.”

Although the Trump policy is now in effect, Belkin foresees a day in which the ban would come to an end.

“Our hearts break for the courageous transgender patriots who want nothing more than to defend their country, and we pledge not to rest until inclusive policy is restored,” Belkin said. “The transgender ban won’t stand for long.”

In 2017, President Trump announced via Twitter he’d ban transgender people from the military “in any capacity.” Months later, former Defense Secretary James Mattis produced a report on the implementing the policy – allowing limited retentions of transgender troops – after an internal study at the Pentagon.

Although courts had previously barred the Trump administration from enforcing the policy as a result of lawsuits filed by LGBT legal groups, the orders were lifted after the U.S. Supreme Court essentially green-lit the policy by allowing to go into effect as litigation proceeds against it. Subsequently, the Pentagon issued guidance announcing it would implement the ban on April 12.

The Defense Department has insisted the new policy is a medical-based policy applied
to every service member, even though the policy applies to conditions faced solely by transgender people, and is not a ban, even though it bars many transgender people from service.

As described by the Pentagon, the policy discharges service members who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria or are prescribed transition-related care at a later time. For enlistments, a history of gender dysphoria unless the individuals are willing to serve in their biological sex (an extremely small number of transgender people), and people who obtained transitioned genders are outright banned.

The transgender ban contains an exemption that allows transgender people who came out during the Obama-era policy to continue to serve and receive transition-related care. But those troops could face complications, such as if they seek promotions, want to change services or drop out to pursue educational opportunities and seek to re-enlist.

Lt. Col Carla Gleason, a Pentagon spokesperson, confirmed to the Washington Blade Friday the policy is now in effect, but insisted transgender people will be grandfathered in service when asked about any denial of enlistments or discharges on the first day.

“Transgender members currently serving will be able to continue serving so we do not anticipate any discharges,” the spokesperson said. “I am not yet aware of any denials.”

The American Medical Association, which previously said there was no medical basis on which to ban transgender people from the armed forces, issued a statement on Thursday condemning the principles on which the policy is based.

“The DOD regulation also instructs service secretaries to add gender-dysphoria to service-specific lists of ‘administratively disqualifying conditions’ that DoD regulations label ‘congenital or developmental defects,’” AMA President Barbara McAneny said. “The only thing deficient is any medical science behind this decision. The AMA has said repeatedly that there is no medically valid reason – including a diagnosis of gender dysphoria – to exclude transgender individuals from military service. Transgender service members should, as is the case with all personnel, receive the medical care they need. There is a global medical consensus about the efficacy of transgender health care, including treatment for gender dysphoria.”

 continuar from p. 14

embraced as the crowd cheered – but not before the candidate offered encouraging words to his audience.

www.PrideSource.com
It comes up casually, as Ben Platt prefers. Tucked into “Older,” a theatrical juggernaut that doesn’t even try to hide the fact that the actor-singer introduced Evan Hansen to the world (because why would it?), the line is a personal aside expressed on an otherwise universal ballad about wishing to speed up time in your youth, only to hope for more of it as you age: “And will I get to know myself in the place I am / Get to fall in love with another man, and understand.”

If you didn’t already know Ben Platt is gay, this is how he wishes you’d find out. Casually. The theater star turned pop crooner came out in his personal life when he was 12, then landed his Broadway debut in “The Book of Mormon” as Elder Cunningham in 2012. He went on to bag a Grammy and a Tony (he has an Emmy too, putting him on EGOT watch) for his moving portrayal of the titular teen in “Dear Evan Hansen,” also on Broadway. And, of course, he brought literal magic to the “Pitch Perfect” franchise, as super nerd Benji Applebaum.

But Platt’s earnest and emotional Atlantic debut “Sing to Me Instead” is his first public expression of self, at 25. “The main reason I wanted to make this music was to have the opportunity to go around the country and play it live and have that live connection, because that’s what I grew up loving the most,” he says, “and singing live is my favorite thing to do.”

In addition to a 12-city tour, Platt will also star alongside Gwyneth Paltrow, Jessica Lange and Bette Midler this year as a high school go-getter who’s eager to be the actual president – but first, student government – in the forthcoming Netflix comedy series “The Politician,” which debuts Sept. 27. The series, he says, is “in true Ryan Murphy fashion, very queer-positive.”

During our recent conversation, Platt also discussed being the reason so many people are crying, LGBTQ stigma in Hollywood and why he thinks we should move beyond coming-out announcements.

How do you process the fact that you’ve been making so many people cry with this album?

You know, it’s a strange thing. I think it’s just nice to see that people are finding ways to connect to it. I tried to make it as sort of specific as possible because usually that kind of thing begets the most universality, and it’s been really nice that that’s really been the case. And I hope it’s all good, cathartic-type tears and not the bad kind! (Laughs)
First in waves. I think when I first sat down to write the album I tried to just lean on what came in terms of what I thought deserved to be sung about, because I come from the theater, so I feel like my philosophy has always been that you only really sing when there's something emotionally valuable enough to sing about, and that ended up being largely the relationships that I'd had and a couple I was in while writing. So I think it was a mixture of trying to lean on those experiences and those emotions, then also accruing phrases and ideas and conceptual things that I felt hadn't been necessarily stated that way before or said that way before and finding a way to join them.

What hadn't been conveyed that you wanted to say with this album?

"Grow as You Go" is the one that comes to mind only because I had never really heard a song that addressed this cop-out thing that always tends to happen when you're in a relationship and you get to a point where it gets a bit too scary and the person backs out with the excuse of, "I need to go find who I am and I don't have enough legs to stand on as my own person." Of course that's valid in many cases, but I've also found out that it's kind of something to hide behind.

I think if the connection is strong enough, and theoretically if it's a special enough person and it's the right person, then it shouldn't really keep you from experiencing personal growth and finding who you are just because you happen to be with someone else who is also figuring those things out.

Was there ever a time you didn't think an album like this, where you could be your out, authentic self, would be possible?

I think, yeah. If we're all realistic about the world, it's not all roses and it's not all fantastic and we don't live in a vacuum where it's all pure acceptance. And particularly as an actor, there's a lot of stigma surrounding what you're castable as when you're out of the closet, and sort of what characters you can play and how people will view you going forward.

But as far as the decision (to be out), it really was a no-brainer, because if I was gonna try to do something that felt authentic to me and was gonna sort of express any kind of truth in my own life then there would be no room to edit it or change it just because I hadn't expressed those things before.

You say there's a stigma to be out if you're an actor. Do you think gay actors and musicians are asked to keep their sexuality quiet when promoting projects and has that ever happened to you?

I'm sure that's something people encounter. I know that's definitely not something we've moved forward from in general. I have been really lucky personally to work pretty much only in environments where it was incredibly accepting and open – and, I mean, I grew up in the theater where everyone is gay, so it was never an issue (laughs). And I don't necessarily think that an actor's private life, regardless of their sexuality or any of that, is pertinent when you're playing a different character. I think when you're promoting something, it's about the project and the work. What was beautiful about this experience was the work: It was sort of built into the work itself, and it was part of what the content is. And I think it gave me an opportunity to discuss it in the context of art rather than sort of trying to interject it into a conversation about work that was really sort of irrelevant to it.

But I do maybe think there is pressure to present a certain accepted form of masculinity, or to feel like you can still fit into certain boxes so you don't limit yourself. I'm hopeful that is slowly fading away and that everybody can just accept that actors are chameleons and we can play who we can play.

Is it necessary to still make a coming-out announcement in 2019? I gather that you think it's not?

I just don't think it should be perceived as an abnormality at all, and in and of itself, having to announce something suggests that it's departing from the norm or that it's something that needs to be addressed. I think it should just be part of who we are – same as that I'm Jewish, and I'm also gay. The more that it can become an assumed part of reality, the better.

So, for example, it's time to move on from calling you "gay musician Ben Platt." We don't need that identifier anymore, do we?

I agree. Yes, indeed.

In putting forward your own authentic self with this album, have you consciously had to work against the sort of nerdy-kid persona that's been your staple?

Sure – sure! Less the archetype and more so the specific role of Evan Hansen, I think, especially in the context of music, just because I think most people, as far as my voice, are most familiar with that album. So I've tried to really embrace the emotionality of that and how beautiful it is that people connected to that character and my interpretation of that character, and try to use that as a fire under my butt to create my own stuff and to put my own self out there rather than a road block of, "Let me try to change the way that
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Ben Platt
Continued from p. 17

I'm viewed.” Hopefully just by virtue of the fact that I'm now presenting myself free of any character, that's just gonna change the perception regardless of how I posture myself.

Does maturity explain the beard?

Yeah – well, I just prefer to have a beard whenever possible. I've just been playing teenagers so much, like in “The Politician,” that I've not been able to have one. I'm enjoying it while I can.

One YouTube commenter wrote: "Ben’s beard grows as his heart breaks.”

(Laughs) That’s about right!

Alongside Blake Shelton and Zac Efron, you were included in People’s Sexiest Man Alive in 2017, as Sexiest Broadway Performer. Were you prepared for that moment in your career?

Certainly not! (Laughs) That was not something that was ever on my sort of preconceived bucket list! I mean, it's very flattering and very nice, but it was never a conscious goal. It was not like the Tony and the Broadway of all of it, but it was lovely to see! And it made me feel good – and made me want to go out and go on some dates!

Did it get you some dates?

Well, not necessarily from it but it restored a bit of confidence. It was a nice boost.

And then you were on “Ellen” recently, noting you're single, so that couldn't have hurt.

Yeah, exactly! Whenever possible. I’m around.

Are LGBTQ youth reaching out to you expressing what this music means to them? Are you seeing the same tweets that I'm seeing?

It's hard to gauge. This is the first time I've released music on my own, so this is the first time I’m experiencing, like, how to experience the way it's being received. There are so many different measures of that, but definitely as I give the social a scroll, if you will, there are beautiful messages from people. Of course there are messages from youth, particularly LGBTQ youth who feel really affected by the representation and feel really seen and like they can see themselves in the art, which is something that's obviously very beautiful to me. But what's been the most heartening to me is how innocuous that aspect of it has been and how it's really been about the music itself, and how regardless of walk of life or sexuality or age, people are really finding ways that these songs fit into their lives, and that's the ultimate gift: that they become so malleable. That's been really beautiful.

That songs that are very specific to your own life can have universal appeal?

For sure. And that I can sort of express an experience that can then make it maybe easier for someone else to go through that same experience or an experience like that.

What have you learned from other out artists, like Sam Smith and Troye Sivan, when it comes to navigating the music world as an out artist?

I would say from all artists, not just queer artists. But certainly all of my favorite artists, queer or not, are sort of the ones who are true to themselves and more singular to themselves and not really wasting any time trying to fit into a preconceived box. Something that's been really wonderful about working with Atlantic is they've been so reverential to my vision, allowing me to lead the way creatively and really trusting my instinct and my gut feeling, and allowing me to be the kind of artist I wanna be and not sort of “pick a lane” in any way.

I think the only reason it's been successful thus far and people are connecting with it is because they've allowed me to be individualistic. And so I certainly admire any artist, queer or not, who is able to blaze their own path in that way. Just if you're authentic, I think that's the most attractive quality beyond just a beautiful voice, feeling like this is undoubtedly exactly who you are.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in Q, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.
DEARBORN – Twenty-five years ago, a group of dedicated LGBTQ employees of the Ford Motor Company came together to form Ford GLOBE, the automaker’s LGBTQ employee resource group, to unite and network LGBTQ employees, to advocate within the company for LGBTQ equality and to help the company reach out to potential LGBTQ customers. Now, a quarter century later, Ford GLOBE will celebrate its 25th anniversary at a gala dinner June 6 at The Dearborn Inn, in partnership with the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Senior Ford executives, Ford GLOBE current and former members and hundreds of ERG members from dozens of other Detroit area companies will join in the celebration.

The night will feature former NFL player and openly gay diversity consultant Wade Davis and former Ford Vice Chairman Allan Gilmour, who will accept the Inaugural Allan D. Gilmour Award for Outstanding Leadership in Inclusion. Gilmour was the highest ranking out gay executive in the mid-’90s, and supported the formation of LGBT employee resource groups at the big three automakers. He was president of Wayne State University from 2010 to 2013 and has served on numerous corporate boards including Dow Chemical, Whirlpool, DTE and the Henry Ford Health System. The Affirmations building in Ferndale is named after Gilmour and his husband, Eric Jirgens, in recognition of their key role in the capital campaign that funded the center’s creation. Gilmour has also been a driving force behind the HOPE Fund at the Community Foundation.

Former NFL star Wade Davis (left) will talk about being openly gay in professional sports. Allan Gilmour (above) will be honored for his decades of support to Ford GLOBE and the Detroit area LGBTQ community.

See Ford GLOBE, continued on p. 23
Almost everyone on HGTV who is hunting for a house wants “space to entertain,” but what do they really use it for, other than Thanksgiving dinner and other holidays? How about a wedding?

The average cost of a wedding is more than $33,000 and, in some areas of the country, as much as $70,000. Engagements last for a year or more while people prepare for their lavish and expensive wedding.

Costs are skyrocketing – a $12,000 Oscar de la Renta dress, matching $2,000 Jimmy Choo heels, and $3,500 Armani suits for starters. Wedding planners are there to help you spend your money on a pre-wedding checklist.

The venue for the reception is one of the first decisions a couple will make, even basing the wedding date on the availability of the chosen reception hall. Booking the photographer and videographer is also high on the list, as well as finding a caterer, a florist, and either live music or a DJ.

Wedding websites with names like herbandjohngethitched.com are very popular. You can tell the story of how you met, include information about the wedding and reception destinations, create a photo gallery, and post the ever-popular gift registry, where people can see what’s on your wish list, then go on Amazon to buy it much cheaper.

You’ll also need to create a guest list. This exercise will be in the running for “first big fight of the engagement,” so kiss and make up, attend the cake tasting, and buy insurance for your engagement ring, just in case.

Once you’ve agreed on who and how many will attend, send out your Save the Date e-cards, add the guest list to your website with a link to confirm attendance, plan your menu, and follow up with formal invitations as you get closer to the actual wedding date.

Wow! I’m exhausted and broke already, and there’s still a lot of stuff to check off the wedding planner’s cheat sheet. Thankfully, the price of a wedding can be reduced by using your home for such things as rehearsal dinners, receptions, and space for overnight guests.

My favorite wedding was in 1976, before people began to spend their life savings, inheritance, or trust funds for one day of happiness. It was an unconventional church wedding, held at 9 p.m. The bride wore flowers in her hair instead of a veil and carried candles instead of flowers. Her dress was made by her mother’s best friend and the bridesmaids wore halter dresses made from a Simplicity pattern – something they would be able to wear post-wedding.

The reception was held on the screened porch of the family home. Food and alcohol flowed freely. The bride’s mother, who was getting her master’s degree in music therapy at the University of Miami, hired their jazz combo to play at the reception.

The bride’s father, however, left a lasting impression when he dove into the pool in his tuxedo, swam to the other end, raised his glass and asked, “Will somebody get me a Scotch?”

The pictures of the event came out badly and the videographer took his payment of $350 and was never seen or heard from again. Lesson learned: don’t rely on Craigslist to find your wedding professionals.

So, as the season approaches, make your wedding memorable but less expensive by including something personal – grooms in matching, yellow tennis shoes, brides in tuxedos, barefoot on the beach with margaritas, or maybe a reception on the roof deck of your condo. You’ll find many ways to conserve your cash, but whatever you do, get the Jimmy Choo shoes. I’ll look for you at our annual high-heel race.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
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The D.C.-based National LGBTQ Task Force was part of a coalition of more than 15 national civil rights and progressive advocacy groups that launched a campaign last week to encourage members of marginalized communities to make sure they are counted in the 2020 U.S. Census.

In a development that LGBT activists view as a positive change, the 2020 U.S. Census questionnaire will explicitly ask couples living together to define their relationship to their partners in a new way – as "same-sex" or "opposite-sex" partners.

Although the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census counted same-sex couples through questions about gender and relationships, the newly worded questionnaire in 2020 is expected to provide a more accurate count of the number of same-sex couples in the United States.

However, to the disappointment of LGBT advocacy organizations, Census officials declined to include in the 2020 questionnaire questions asking about a person's sexual orientation and gender identity so that non-coupled LGBT people could be counted.

Nevertheless, the National LGBTQ Task Force has said it's important for all LGBT people to take part in the 2020 census.

"Over-counts of privileged people and undercounts of marginalized people reinforce systems of power and oppression in this country," the Task Force said in a statement. "That's why the Task Force is working with our colleagues in the LGBTQ and social justice movements to ensure that all of us, and especially people from marginalized communities, are counted in the 2020 Census."

"Although the Census doesn't explicitly ask about our sexual orientation and gender identity, it is still critical for us to be counted on the 2020 Census," the Task Force statement says, adding, "We need to be counted so our communities can: Get access to federal funds for programs like SNAP, Medicaid, and public housing; have representation in our state, local, and federal government; and enforce our civil rights."

The Williams Institute, an LGBT think tank affiliated with the UCLA Law School, has used data on same-sex couples obtained from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census to extrapolate an estimated count of all LGBT people in the U.S. But former Williams Institute official Gary Gates has said it would have been far better if the Census counted LGBT people directly.

National LGBTQ Task Force spokesperson JR Russ said the group has created a "Queer the Census 2020" page on its website that will be updated each month to inform LGBT people on how the Census will impact them and how they can best participate in the Census. The page can be accessed via the taskforce.org.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
one of the largest funders of LGBT projects in southeast Michigan.

“I am excited to celebrate 25 years of Ford GLOBE with the current and former Ford GLOBE members, allies, and executives along with the rest of the LGBT community,” said Bill Peters, president of Ford GLOBE. “The partnership with the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce highlights to me the importance of working together to achieve the inclusion we desired 25 years ago.”

“Allan Gilmour’s support at Ford, at the HOPE Fund, with Affirmations and countless other projects has altered the very landscape for LGBTQ people for the better,” said Jan Stevenson, co-publisher of Between The Lines and vice president of the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. “He has inspired me and led many others to follow him in supporting LGBTQ people and the projects and organizations that serve them. It’s a real thrill to be able to honor him at the Ford GLOBE 25th Anniversary dinner.”

This is the first of what will be an annual dinner hosted by the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce to celebrate and acknowledge LGBT inclusiveness in Detroit’s workplaces.

This inaugural dinner is supported by Ford Motor Company as a gold sponsor, silver sponsors include Henry Ford Health System and Tito’s Handmade Vodka, bronze sponsors are The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, EY Accounting, the United Auto Workers, Wayne State University and Herman Miller. Table sponsors include Pride Source Media Group, Flagstar Bank and BASF among others.

Tickets are open to the public, start at $50 and are available online at detroitlgbtchamber.com/Ford25.
Pink at Little Caesars Arena April 26-27

Grammy Award-winning pop star Pink is known the world over for her critically acclaimed vocals. Fans will be able to see her perform for two nights in a row, April 26 and 27, at Little Caesars Arena. Joining her in her performance is Julia Michaels, whose platinum-selling debut single “Issues” garnered her “Best New Artist” and “Song of the Year” Grammy Award nominations. Tickets start at $47.45. More information about the show can be found online at 313presents.com and at ticketmaster.com.
**Editor’s Pick**

**Easter Eggstravaganza**

On Saturday, April 20, from 1 to 5 p.m., Beacon Park Detroit will host the 2nd Annual Easter Eggstravaganza. Attendees will experience an afternoon of free activities including an egg hunt, make-and-take crafts, Peep s’mores and a live DJ. The Beacon Parkcde will also be open with more than a dozen classic arcade games like air hockey, NFL Blitz and Spider-Man. Food truck fare and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase. Beacon Park is located at 1901 Grand River Ave. in Downtown Detroit.

**THEATER**

**Williamston Theatre Presents ‘The Gin Game’**
April 20, 3:00 p.m. Weller Martin is playing solitaire on the porch of a seedy nursing home. Enter Fonsia Dorsey, a prim, self-righteous woman. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW info@williamstontheatre.org http://www.williamstontheatre.org/the-gin-game

**Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents “Aubrey”**
April 20, 3:00 p.m. Aubrey Gagnier, a heroin addict, haunted by her role in her lover’s overdose death, seeks out the grave digger and coffin maker. They become each other’s best hope to live. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 DetRepTh@aol.com DetRepTh@aol.com http://www.detroitreptheatre.com/aubrey/

**Ann Arbor Civic Theatre Presents “Farenheit 451”**
April 25, 7:30 p.m. In a dystopian none-too-distant future, “firemen” don’t extinguish fires, they start them. And they know that 451 degrees Fahrenheit is the temperature at which paper ignites – because that is how you destroy books. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 734-836-7469 annarborcivictheatre.org

See Happenings, continued on p. 27
Across
1 Early AIDS play
5 Weathercock
9 Fairy tale start
13 Wise guy
14 Debussy contemporary Satie
15 Vague sense
16 His brother laid him in his grave
17 Garb for Troy Perry
18 The life of Riley
19 Xavier Bettel’s country
22 Home st. of Tallulah Bankhead
24 Make airtight
25 Rainbow shape
28 ___ Tin Tin
29 Starts
30 Opponent of Wade
31 Comic strip named for a vine
33 Online prostitution?
35 The Orlando shooting, for example
40 Go across
43 On-line ‘zine
44 Two queens, e.g.
48 Terse oral refusal
49 Disney’s “That ___ Cat!”
50 Rubik of cube fame
51 “Climb Ev’ry Mountain” peak
52 Ana Brnabic’s country
54 Dam agcy.
55 Susan Feniger may pleasure it
57 Bear or bull
59 Gay leaders of three countries in this puzzle
62 Positions for Patty Sheehan
63 Emma Donoghue’s country
64 Official records
65 Petrol station choice
66 Initiated phone sex
67 “Methinks thou ___ protest too much”

Down
1 Khan’s title
2 Where to put your meat, in a deli
3 Leo Varadkar’s country
4 George Takei’s role on “Star Trek”
5 Dancer Ben
6 They come from pansies
7 Tug on a fishing line
8 Barely make
9 Out partner
10 1953 Marilyn Monroe film
11 “Some of My Best Friends” network
12 Shrek’s shoe size, perhaps
20 Lines through
21 Unexpected victory
22 Boat with a pair of bears
23 Lucy of “Charlie’s Angels”
26 Rimbaud’s king
27 Animation unit
32 Billy of “Titanic”
36 Christ the ___ (Rio landmark)
37 Sharif of “Funny Girl”
38 Prep for a marathon, with “up”
39 Ansonist activity
41 “Got a Rainbow” lyricist Gershwin
45 Erte’s style
46 Turns inside out
47 Guffaws about, as a Kate McKinnon skit
52 Sault ___ Marie
53 Caesar’s arts
56 Schoolyard retort
58 Not much
60 “Some of My Best Friends” network

Gay World Leaders

Editor’s Pick

Pride at The Corner April 23
Ferndale Pride at the crew at Detroit Axe invite you to show off your Axe-throwing skills or learn how to throw in support of Ferndale Pride. A portion of proceeds from ticket sales will be donated directly to Pride as well as to providing Pride supporters with a deal on Detroit Axe Tickets. Axe Brewing Co. beer will also be available. Find out more by following the Ferndale Pride Facebook page.

Happenings

Continued from p. 25

Angels in America – Parts I and II April 26, In this two-part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. Hillbery Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave.,Detroit. http://theatreanddance.wayne.edu/theatre/

Stagecrafters Baldwin Theatre Second Stage Presents “Southern Comfort” April 26, 8:00 p.m. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette,Royal Oak. 2485418027 https://www.stagecrafters.org/on-stage/main-stage/8-southern-comfort/

Jersey Boys at Music Hall! May 17, 8:00 p.m. They were just four guys from Jersey, until they sang their very first note. Detroit Music Hall, 350 Madison St.,Detroit. 313-887-8501 www.musicbox.org https://www.broadwayindetroit.com

Cabaret 313 Presents Kate Baldwin May 18, 6:30 p.m. Kate Baldwin makes her Cabaret 313 debut in How Did You Get This Number?, Electrifying works fill the program with gorgeous One event on May 18 at 8:45pm The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway,Detroit. http://cabaret313.org/shows-tickets/kate-baldwin/

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Christmas terror with ‘NOS4A2’ and Zachary Quinto

Christmas is coming early this year and it’s going to be horrifying. AMC premieres the new series “NOS4A2” on June 2, starring Ashleigh Cummings (this fall’s Oscar-bait, “The Goldfinch,” from which you’ll no doubt be hearing more) and, as the baddest Santa of all, Zachary Quinto. Cummings plays a young woman who discovers she has a supernatural gift for finding lost things, which puts her at cross purposes with and battling against one Charlie Manx (Quinto). Manx is a creature who feeds off the souls of children before leaving them in Christmasland, a place where it’s literally Christmas every day and unhappiness is against the law. It’s all based on the best-selling 2013 novel by Joe Hill, and we’re pleased to know that it will serve as a vigorously dark rebuke to the Hallmark Channel’s insistence on showing bland, white bread Christmas-themed TV movies every other night of the year.

Viola Davis brings Octavia Butler to TV

Viola Davis A-list status means she has a production company now. It’s called JuVee, and she and her production partner, Julius Tennon, have something in store for Amazon: a drama series based on the novel “Wild Seed,” the first of the “Patternist” series from legendary lesbian sci-fi author Octavia Butler. The story of two African immortals – one cruel, one healing – who travel from pre-Colonial West Africa into the far away future, it’s an epic of supernatural struggle that spans history and shapes life on Earth. No cast is set yet – though, obviously, we know we want Viola in there, please and thank you – but it will be co-written by Nnedi Okorafor and filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu, who will also direct. More on this one as it develops, because America is literally starving for lesbian-created sci-fi TV content and there will be no peace until that hunger is sated.

Queen Latifah, Missy Elliott and Mary J. Blige spread the gospel

Among the 150 films on Lifetime’s production slate – yes, you read that correctly, one hundred and fifty – one certainly stands out, and that’s because it’s from a power trio production team comprised of Queen Latifah, Missy Elliott and Mary J. Blige. We’re not here to tell you that there’s anything explicitly queer about this news because at least two thirds of that triangle remain, after all this time, for so very long, quite quiet about their sexuality, which is their right and we absolutely respect their privacy, but still, when Latifah and Missy do anything our ears prick up, you know? Anyway, it’s a film about The Clark Sisters, one of the 20th century’s most important and enduring gospel music quartets. They are, in fact, the bestselling gospel group on the planet. So far the only casting news is Aunjanue Ellis ("If Beale Street Could Talk"), but come on, if Mary J. doesn’t get in on this and sing it until it breaks then what’s going on in Hollywood? Excited about this one.

Diva alert: Judith Light! Bette Midler! Janet Mock!

Ryan Murphy has yet another new show in the works. It’s called “The Politician,” it’s coming to Netflix, and it stars that adorable (and now openly gay) Ben Platt as a high school student convinced he’s going to be president someday, but who must first navigate the choppy, ruthless waters of student government. And in a cast already packed with names like Gwyneth Paltrow, Jessica Lange and Zoey Deutch, new additions Judith Light and Bette Midler will be taking their own turns on set. Even better, "Pose" writer and director Janet Mock will be at the helm for at least one episode of the season. With "Glee" gone for a minute already, and with "Popular" now a fond memory of the early 2000s, we’re ready for Murphy to head back to high school, especially with this kind of diva power.

Romeo San Vicente would vote for Judith Light for president.
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Community Connections

Art Show Grand Rapids Is Calling All LGBTQ Artists

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Known for its biennial ArtPrize competition, Grand Rapids has long been considered a hub for Michigan artists who get to display their work across the city during the 19-day event. However, as prolific as many of the competitors are, artwork from LGBTQ creators isn’t a direct focus, that’s why The Apartment Lounge, a Grand Rapids gay bar, is putting on Art Show this coming June.

“Art show is an outlet and market for LGBTQIA artists to sell and share their works with our community in Grand Rapids,” wrote event organizers. “We found that there wasn’t a large-scale event for our community to be represented and celebrated with their art. There are more and more people in our community that are identifying as queer and with that come many things: A grand culture filled with diversity and inclusivity, stemming from the vein of acceptance. But most importantly, to say ‘We’re here!’”

Though the show’s official date is Sunday, June 9, applications are being accepted now, with a deadline for submissions of May 5. Eric Zuniga is the General Manager of The Apartment Lounge. He said that besides paying the $50 application fee, submitting artists should be aware of two rules:
1.) All work must be original and produced by the artist.
2.) Artwork displayed must reflect the category for which the artist applied.

“I’ve got to go hand-in-hand with what you’re applying to present,” he said. “The art won’t be accepted if you say that you have oil paintings and you show up with papier mache dolls.”

When asked why this year was chosen for the Lounge’s inaugural Art Show, Zuniga said that it’s been in the works for a long time, but 2019 felt right.

“We’ve thought about doing it for quite some time, [but] we didn’t really have the resources as far as personal connections,” he said. “And people in our community that could help us out with the planning process and actually getting the correct wording out and getting people that have actually been participating in art shows before, so that we could actually use that as a skeleton for our event.”

He said one of the most rewarding parts of putting on a show like this is because it’s allowed him to not only form closer relationships with the regular clientele at The Apartment Lounge, but with the Grand Rapids art community.

“The pieces we’ve gotten here have actually been cool,” he said. “Because I am the GM here at the Apartment Lounge, I see a lot of these people [that], unbeknownst to me, they’re actually artists. So, when the work comes in, it’s really cool; it’s kind of a little window into looking past people as patrons and now seeing them as artists in our community. It’s very eye-opening what they’re sharing and what they want to share at our art show that’s coming up.”

The free event will involve shutting down the streets in front of the bar, from Sheldon Avenue NE and Fulton Street E, to allow for artist’s booths and “we’ll have a food truck, a little bar with White Claw and some beers, and we’ll also have free water stations to make sure people are staying hydrated.”

Zuniga said that what he’s most excited for on the day is to expose the local community to the talent of LGBTQ creators and to bring them closer together, too.

“I just haven’t seen a big venue that is mainly focused on LGBTQIA, so that was kind of our whole thought process going into this like, ‘What can we do? How can we create a space for people in our community to be able to share their work?’”

To apply to present artwork in the upcoming event visit The Apartment Lounge’s Facebook or email wh.artsshow@gmail.com with any questions. The Apartment Lounge is located at 33 Sheldon Ave NE in Grand Rapids.

Friday Night Socials at the Salus Center

Lansing’s dedicated LGBTQ community center, the Salus Center, is hosting a weekly Friday social night that’s aimed at getting local LGBTQ folks together to socialize and get to know each other. The next available events are Friday, April 19 and April 26.

“Join me (Mercuri, one of the Salus Center’s awesome interns) on Friday nights for fun times and new friends in a LGBTQIA+-affirming atmosphere!” wrote event organizers. “Activities will change each week. You’re encouraged to bring a snack to share, this is not required. Everyone, kids included, (are) welcome for these free fun nights!”

Previous activities have included a game of Unstable Unicorns, book binding and card making. Attendees are encouraged to reach out in advance of the event to suggest activities, too.

“Have a hobby or skill you’d like to share? Just generally enjoy planning social events and want to help out? Contact Mercuri! Always happy for the help!” organizers wrote.

To find out more about the event visit the Salus Center’s Facebook page or go online to saluscenter.org. The Center is located at 408 S. Washington Square in Lansing.

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As we age living with HIV, our metabolism changes more rapidly than uninfected individuals and so does our well-being. In other words, we get older quicker. These changes include all body systems, such as heart, lungs, brain, liver, bones, kidneys, vision, hearing, gastrointestinal, and more. The number one cause of mortality in older persons living with HIV is not HIV, but non-HIV-associated malignancies, such as colon cancer, prostate cancer, liver and pancreatic cancer to name a few. Thankfully, with all newer HIV medications, the virus itself is not really the problem any longer.

There are many things you can do to enable yourself to live longer and more healthy with HIV. At the Be Well Medical Center, we focus our HIV primary care for our treasured older HIV population, many of whom have been with us since the 1980s. We do the seemingly little things, like early and aggressive treatment for borderline high sugar, cholesterol, or blood pressure. It makes a difference.

Our primary care for the “over 50 crowd” separates good from great. As your healthcare team of coaches, we are constantly reviewing medications to avoid over medicating. Sometimes, less is more. We address and encourage good nutrition, exercise, and tobacco cessation. We provide evidence-based care to protect your liver, bones, kidneys, and other vital body systems. We limit or substitute medicines to reduce risk of falling, especially at night, to help prevent bone fractures. We respect aging livers and kidneys. We have Keyuna Nance, MSW, on site, to aggressively screen for and treat depression that sometimes accompanies getting older.

We will be announcing plans for “Group Medical Appointments” for those over the age of 50. These visits will provide an opportunity to hear from different specialists about combating the issues getting older with HIV. At these visits you can have discussion with your peers and can get your HIV tests completed as well.

This meeting is complimentary and open only to our Be Well patients until April 23, 2019. After that, we will open registration to others as space is limited.

RSVP! It is essential that our patients RSVP by April 23, 2019.
Call 248-544-9300 or email research@doctorbewell.com to RSVP.

Sincerely,
Paul Benson, D.O.

DoctorBeWell.com
Dr. Benson is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University providing training to our next generation of physicians.
He leads our team of professional and talented providers at the Be Well Medical Center, 1964 Eleven Mile Rd, Berkley, MI 40872.