US House Approves Equality Act to Ban Anti-LGBT Discrimination

PAGE 16

BBB Holds HIV Town Hall

PAGE 12

Anjelica Huston Q&A

PAGE 18

MAY 23, 2019
VOL. 2721 | FREE
Saturday & Sunday
June 8 & 9, 2019
Hart Plaza, Detroit

$5
for everyone over 12 years of age.

Presented by Delta

Greyson Chance
Tunde Olaniran

Sabin’s Drag Revue feat. RuPaul’s Ongina • DJ Jace
Boy Radio • Haute 2 Death • The Killer Flamingos
LVRS • Hardings Production Drag Show • Lipstick Jodi
Alise King • Laura Rain & The Caesars • Joey Suarez
Acoustic Ash • Alexyn Wundrland • Crayfish Hunters • Delia Kolanowski
Detroit Deep Sessions • DJ DisCDetroit • DJ Digimark • DJ Holographic
DJ Kevin Bailey • DJ Knowledge • DJ Nader • DJ Tone • FurrilloStar
Holmes and Act Natural • I’m With Molly • J. Santino • Jason Ricketts
JHarid • Kevin Bailey • Lele XO and Her Band • Mae James and the Fort St. Union
Namoli Brennet • Outloud Chorus • Paytra • Phresh Syndicate
Remington Taylor • Sam Tolson • SingOut Detroit • Solar Disco Force
The Band Mint • The Doables • The Idiot Kids • The Sympathy Orchestra • Tylr...

#MotorCityPride • Visit MotorCityPride.org to learn more!

Thanks to our sponsors!
Tickets On Sale NOW!

4th Annual
GO GIRL!
Saugatuck

MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2019

WWW.GOGIRLSAUGATUCK.COM
ROARING WITH PRIDE

We stand together with our beautiful brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ+ community. You inspire us with your courage and your pride. Thank you for helping make the world a better place for us all.

20% HOTEL OFFER TURN PRIDE FEST INTO A WEEKEND GETAWAY! Receive 20% off when you book a two night stay June 7-9.

MGM GRAND DETROIT
An MGM Resorts Luxury Destination

mgmgranddetroit.com

If you bet more than you can afford to lose, you've got a problem. Call 1-800-270-7117 for confidential help.
BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Despite operating a martial arts school for decades, practicing various forms for almost 50 years and pioneering early self-defense courses for women across the U.S., Central America and Europe, Ferndale Meijishi Martial Arts founder and instructor Jaye Spiro is kept on her toes by her students. Most recently, when a 17-year-old black belt decided to offer a self-defense seminar in her own high school. Something Spiro said she would have been terrified to do at her age.

“If you put yourself out like, ‘I’m going to teach self-defense,’ at your own high school, you’re going to be harassed. People are going to be threatened,” she said. “And as has happened to me and any other women who have done it, as soon as we’re going to stand up and do it, somebody will come up and say, ‘Well, my friend over here is a third degree black belt and whatever. Can you beat him up?’”

And just as Spiro predicted, her student was challenged.

“She stood up there without even batting an eye, looked at the whole audience and said, ‘If you’re interested in that, you should leave right now, because I am here to help people, and specifically women and girls, who need some tools for empowerment. I’m not here to be challenged or to get involved in beating people up,’” Spiro said. “I was like, ‘Oh my God. At 17? I mean even 10, 15, 20 years ago [that wouldn’t have happened]. I did coach her and specifically women who will challenge, but she just wasn’t having any of it.”

Spiro said that experiences like that bring her joy not only as a teacher but as a woman who fought hard for women’s empowerment since the early days of the women’s movement. Now in 2019, decades removed from the start of her own martial arts practice, Spiro’s school is set to celebrate its 40th anniversary in October. In honor of both that milestone and the upcoming pride season, Spiro sat down with BTL to reflect on the advances in both women’s and LGBTQ equality in martial arts, how she uses her school to promote peace and how she got her own start as a martial artist and activist.

Humble Beginnings and Lessons Learned

Among her other qualifications, Spiro is a seventh-degree back belt in ai mute shotokan karate, a sixth-degree black belt in modern arnis and a student of the balintawak escrima style. However, ask Spiro directly what her greatest takeaway are from her long and storied career and she’ll remind you that martial arts is a practice; as in, it’s not so simple as that.

“So, it’s not like you get something and then you’re done, you have it. Like, you know, you bought your car and now you have your car. As you train and practice and teach, you’re constantly growing. I mean, the martial arts originally are very connected to Buddhism and the practice of Buddhism is to lead to enlightenment and I’m not quite there yet, you know,” she said with a laugh. “But I think that you really learn how to grow with other people and people are always helping, presenting new challenges, ideas and how to keep growing.”

Though she knows that now, Spiro said she didn’t go into martial arts with a goal of pursuing it long-term or perhaps finding something as seemingly abstract as inner peace — though she said she’s since attained that state. Her reasoning was simple: she didn’t want to be scared anymore.

“I started in the early days of the women’s movement and in so many cities there were women just like me who were going. ‘Wait a minute, I want some personal sense of empowerment. I’m afraid,’” she said. “Now, we do have empowerment self-defense classes for women and especially for other marginalized groups. However, back then there was only martial arts so that was the only way to learn confidence, and it’s different than studying self-defense. Self-defense is pretty short-term whereas martial arts is a lifelong, long-term practice.”

Beyond not having places to go and learn self-defense generally, Spiro — who began her own martial arts training in 1971 — said that being a woman was an added obstacle, too.

She remembered that many of the already few women involved in martial arts during that period were forced to clean up after the male students and common public “debates” were had “about whether it was safe for women to do pushups or whether it would hurt their bodies.” Even students at martial arts schools weren’t always fair to their female counterparts.

“There were the ones that would baby you when you sparred with them and there were the other ones who would just pummel you, you know?” she said. “But my teacher wasn’t like that. He had enough sensitivity.”

His leadership and foundational lessons provided Spiro with a good enough basis to eventually start teaching herself, and in 1979 she opened up Meijishi Karate Dojo.

The #MeToo of the ‘70s

Though small at first, the collection of women interested in the martial arts in the ‘70s began to overlap with those in the women’s movement. Eventually, those pushing for overall equality aided in the formation of the National Women’s Martial Arts Federation. That organization is now over 40 years old and its mission still reflects the intentions of the women who formed it: to share skills, resources and to promote excellence in martial arts for everyone involved, regardless of “lifestyle, sexual preference, race, color, creed, religion, class, age or physical condition.” Beyond the formation of that organization with her women’s empowerment peers, Spiro pursued the development of self-defense courses that could be used by women around the world to not only protect them but empower them, too.

“Empowerment and self-defense kind of goes hand-in-hand with martial arts,” Spiro said. “But a lot of the people who teach self-defense aren’t necessarily martial artists and people who teach martial arts don’t necessarily always understand empowerment self-defense which has to do with no victim-blaming, and it has to do with understanding the dynamics of power.”

In many ways, Spiro said she was part of the #MeToo movement of the early ‘70s, leading with a judgment-free mindset in all self-defense courses and martial arts classes.

“We didn’t have the internet but we started Sexual Assault Awareness Month,” she said. “You know, we were connected with these women and we were these women. Some of us were doing martial arts and some of us weren’t and many of us were lesbians. And so, we were sort of on the cutting edge of women in the martial arts, women teaching self-defense, women doing anti-violence.”
Promoting Peace

And though anti-violence and martial arts might not seem like natural companions, Spiro said that her practice has helped her not only become “a better person” but learn “how to interact with others.” Part of that positivity, she said, is because the martial arts community is a very strong one, and in her school, an intentionally diverse one.

“The Meijishi Martial Arts community, it’s touched people; whether they’ve come and stayed or moved I think they’ve taken from this a sense of how to connect well with other people and also to be disciplined and focused,” Spiro said.

However, she does admit that many people don’t come into martial arts with a peaceful mindset, saying that she’s “constantly” fighting against misconceptions surrounding the practice.

“I had a call the other day from somebody and they wanted aikido for their child and they wanted aikido because their perception of karate was that karate was aggressive and that aikido was more cooperative and it depends on how you practice it, it really does,” Spiro said. “Fighting has to do with anger, I think, and self-defense, you may not feel angry at all. You may feel afraid, you may feel neutral, but it’s about taking care of yourself, and it’s not about punishing others.”

And those who practice martial arts to “punish” their enemies don’t tend to stick around too long, either.

“It’s too hard,” Spiro said with a laugh. “It’s too demanding to stay in it for revenge, you know? And those people will end up going out and buying a gun or doing something that they can feel like then they have more power than whoever it is they’re afraid of. I think my instructor showed me right away that it wasn’t just kicking and punching. I mean, from the beginning, you’re breathing, and the breath is the central practice of any meditation. That is incorporated in our classes at the beginning and end of every class we stop and we breathe together.”

That breathing, she said, makes martial arts as effective as any other meditation practice. And in fact, Spiro’s approach over the years to empowerment and peace earned her national recognition in 2016, when she was chosen along with hundreds of other activists across the U.S. to participate in the first ever Summit on The United States of Women, sponsored by the Obama administration and the Aspen Institute.

What Confidence Means

Today, Meijishi Martial Arts occupies a large space in downtown Ferndale – a significant jump from her original space in a church basement – housing Karate classes for both adults and children, modern arnis – a Filipino martial art – for all ages and even a Brazilian capoeira martial art club. Spiro said she takes pride in the fact that she’s created an inclusive environment that has “always been welcoming to men and women.”

“I had friends who had women-only schools and still do, but I always wanted a community that had men and women and I mean the men who come here and commit and have stayed long-term, I think are here because they understand sexism and women’s oppression and they’re excited to be allies and they really are,” Spiro said. “They’re committed to being allies, even though they still slip up. I mean, sometimes they do, it’s almost in our water supply, sexism, racism, but men and women, the way that they are culturally indoctrinated is different.”

Still, despite occasionally confronting some of those familiar battles, Spiro said she’s seen marked progress in how accepted female and LGBTQ people are within martial arts. With that comes confidence that she sees in those students, like with her 17-year-old black belt and even in younger ones, too.

“I had a whole conversation with a 13-year-old girl and a mother about what confidence looks like,” she said. “And that you don’t have to be perfect to be confident.”

And with confidence in oneself, Spiro said, comes strength.

“And Meijishi, this is a strong school,” Spiro said. “It’s very community-based. It’s really different than I think any other school you’re going to find. I never did this for the money, I keep my prices low. I want diversity, I want racial diversity, I want sexual diversity, I’ve always thought that that made us so much better and stronger and so I’ve always tried to promote that kind of community.”

To learn more about Meijishi Martial Arts visit meijishi.com.

www.PrideSource.com
Rural Americans are LGBTQ, too

MAP Study Analyzes Challenges, Benefits of Millions of LGBTQ People who Consider Rural US Home

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Though urban areas are often considered huge draws for those in the LGBTQ community – a 2015 Gallup poll found that San Francisco, Portland and Austin all ranked highest in the country for the largest LGBTQ population – little is written about those LGBTQ people who choose to call rural communities home. However, a study released last month by the LGBTQ Movement Advancement Project, The Equality Federation, The National Black Justice Coalition and The National Center for Lesbian Rights finds that of the 62 million Americans who live in rural areas, between 2.9 and 3.8 or 15 to 20 percent of that number identify as LGBTQ and call rural America home.

“General societal stereotypes and pop culture portrayals of LGBT people suggest that LGBT people live solely in urban settings, while stereotypes and portrayals of rural communities rarely, if ever, include LGBT people – except as targets of anti-LGBT violence, or as people yearning to leave their rural home to migrate to ‘more accepting’ urban areas,” says the study.

The study’s authors go on to say that those stereotypes falsely create “singular understandings” of how and where one can “be” LGBTQ in the U.S., unfairly excluding those who do not adhere to the urban “expectations” of LGBTQ community.

“In reality, not only do LGBT people live in rural America, but many of them want to and enjoy living in rural America,” the study says. “LGBT people in urban and rural areas report similar levels of subjective well-being, health and satisfaction. In discussions with LGBT people living in rural communities, researchers find that for many LGBT people in rural areas, living in a rural area may be just as important to who they are as being LGBT.”

This report will break down key findings within this study, along with its recommendations for serving the LGBTQ community that lives outside of the “traditional” LGBTQ spaces.

Rural Life Amplifies Impacts

The study makes clear at the outset that to find a singular example of the “LGBT experience” would be impossible, but it does show that those members of the community who live in rural America and responded to inquiries by the authors described their communities similarly: “built around family and close-knit community; centered around strong social institutions such as churches, schools and local businesses; deeply connected to place and the environment; and based in a sense of efficacy and self-reliance to make change in their own communities.”

The LGBTQ community living in rural America also is exposed to specific rural issues like the ongoing economic hardships, addiction and substance abuse issues and fewer options for quality health care due to distance. Those challenges, authors found, amplified the overall experiences – positive or negative – of the LGBTQ people facing them. Below are those challenges summarized:

Increased Visibility

The study found that lower population calls more attention to anyone “different,” and that being open about one part of their identity puts people in the LGBTQ community at risk of having that information spread among people more quickly than in urban areas.

Ripple Effects

Due to the interconnectedness of rural life, both positive and negative impressions about a person may spread throughout the community more quickly.

“For example, if a person is excluded from their faith community for being gay, they may have a difficult time at work or finding a job, because their church members may also be their coworkers or potential employers,” the study said. “This effect may also work in a positive way: if a rural church community or employer takes a supportive stand for local LGBT residents, that support can also ripple outward to other areas of life.”

Fewer Alternatives in the Face of Discrimination

Particularly impacting LGBTQ people of color, if a negative ripple effect is felt, LGBTQ people in rural areas have less recourse due to geographic limitations.

Less Support Structure

Geographically, it proves challenging for LGBTQ people to find social and legal support or even basic information on LGBTQ-specific issues.

Family, Faith and Community

The report finds that people living in rural areas create tight bonds and nurture and sustain emotional connections to one another. In positive circumstances, LGBTQ people can find themselves key members of their rural community, though it’s also common to find the opposite to be true, resulting in isolation that impacts prospects for wellbeing and success.

Education and Schools

Though these are “cornerstone institutions” of rural areas, resources and teachers are rarely in adequate supply. That impacts the ability of LGBTQ students to seek help if they encounter hostile school environments.

Employment and Economic Security

Because there are both high rates of entrepreneurship and poverty across the U.S.‘s rural areas, LGBTQ people are exposed to those factors, too. If they live in areas without equal rights protections, that can feel that impact much more than straight and cisgender community members.

Housing and Homelessness

With the affordability of rural housing comes less of it. Discrimination and potential homelessness becomes a more worrisome factor for those who have fewer housing options.

Public Places and Businesses

Also known as public accommodations — examples including coffee shops, health care providers and libraries — fewer options means a greater likelihood for potential discrimination and less access.

Health Care

The likelihood of discrimination is increased in those rural areas that have religious exemption laws. This can make it difficult for LGBTQ people to find quality care suited to their needs in smaller towns and cities.

The Legal System

Poverty traps can be an issue for those communities that have a “reliance on fines, fees and cash bail” where poverty is high. With fewer legal resources and outside help available, this can be a difficult situation to overcome, particularly for those LGBTQ community members of color.

Vulnerability to Discrimination

On average, the report states that public opinion tends to be less favorable regarding LGBTQ issues, “but it is far more diverse than might be assumed.” Still, rural areas are less likely to have non-discrimination policies...
A Must-See Exhibition

Isabelle DE BORCHGRAVE
FASHIONING ART FROM PAPER

6.15.19 – 9.8.19

Flint Institute of Arts
1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint
810.234.1695
flintarts.org

The exhibition has been organized by Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Society of the Four Arts, Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Frick Art and Historical Center, Baker Museum, Flint Institute of Arts, and SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion and Film.

Major funding was provided by FedEx.

Isabelle de Borchgrave
Belgian, born 1946
Maria Maddalena d’Austria (detail), 2007
Mixed media
76 x 47 3/4 x 40 inches
Collection of the artist
for the LGBTQ community living there, fewer LGBTQ elected politicians and less of a sociopolitical infrastructure available to advance an understanding of the community. The study pinpointed three ways in which these factors can come together to expose LGBTQ people to more discrimination.

Public Opinion

“The lower population of rural areas means there are fewer LGBT people in rural areas overall,” the study found. “Therefore, rural populations may be less familiar with LGBT people (and indeed, people in rural areas are less likely than urbanites to have a close friend or family member who is gay, lesbian or transgender).”

However, the study also reports that public opinion in these areas is “complex” and communities should not be written off as opposing LGBTQ equality entirely.

“Certainly, the public opinion landscape may be more challenging in rural areas than outside them, but support for LGBT people exists – and has always existed – within rural America,” the study wrote. “Significant policy and legal work still needs to be done to protect LGBT people in rural areas, but public opinion data show that this significant work can be done.”

Policy Landscape

An exacerbated challenge for rural Americans is the lack of non-discrimination policies in their home areas. This translates to a potential risk for all aspects of life like in schooling, health care, in public accommodations and even in peer-to-peer relationships.

In short, LGBT people in rural areas are disproportionately harmed by the lack of protections and the presence of discriminatory laws,” the study reports. “The current policy landscape demonstrates the clear and urgent need for federal and state nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people, as well as the potential harm from discriminatory laws such as religious exemptions.”

Political Power

Similar to the policy landscape, regarding political power, LGBT people are less likely to be represented and proactively served in their communities.

“LGBT people in rural areas may also face different political challenges than LGBT people in urban areas, such as needing to focus on more basic public education about LGBT people,” the study said. “Given the relative scarcity of resources in rural areas, LGBT people may have different (i.e., not LGBT-specific) priorities altogether. Taken together, these structural challenges mean that LGBT people in rural areas have fewer resources and a strained ability for advocating for the political changes they may need.”

Recommendations

Perhaps the single most important takeaway from this MAP study is that LGBTQ Americans who find rural communities home largely enjoy their lives and the tight-knit relationship they can find there. However, those who are LGBTQ in rural America find that general LGBTQ issues faced in more populated areas are exacerbated, just as the positives are emphasized. To that end, the report’s authors conclude the study with clear recommendations for improving the lives of rural LGBTQ Americans.

“LGBT people in rural areas shouldn’t have to choose between basic rights and protections and the place they call home. This is why it’s critical to pass LGBT-inclusive non-discrimination protections at the federal, state and local level, while also pursuing important advances such as resisting or repealing religious exemption laws that may allow service providers to discriminate, expanding LGBT competency training for service providers and more,” the report said.

Continuing to address those challenges as well as structural ones like health care access will improve life overall for that community, as well as the lives of all who live in those communities and provide “meaningful and long-lasting change.”

The 102 page report can be found online.
To attend this event visit glaad.org.

**Douglas Hosts Community Pride Event in Honor of Stonewall**

A community event will be held in Douglas, on June 1, to honor the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprisings. Before the 1960s, almost everything about living openly as a member of the LGBTQ community was illegal. In New York City, the events of Stonewall sparked a movement within the LGBTQ community.

"Everyone is invited to this community event," said organizer Dale Lower, "all are welcome to come and learn more about Stonewall and celebrate the fight for equality with us."

Main events include a presentation by Elizabeth Estes on the history of Stonewall; a performance by the PerSisterhood Choir; Marsha Caspar and Glenna Dejong will share their story as the first gay marriage in Michigan; a bullying presentation by James Gammicchia with GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) and much more.

*Held at Beery Field Park in Douglas, on June 1, from 1 to 5 p.m. Visit the Facebook Page "Community Pride, MI" or email douglaspridefestival@gmail.com.*

---

**Black Bear Brotherhood, Onyx Great Lakes Chapter, LGBT Detroit Host Community Forum on HIV in Black, Gay Community**

**BY EVE KUCHARSKI**

Life, love and HIV within the context of the black, gay male experience was the topic of a town hall gathering on Friday, May 17, held at LGBT Detroit's brand-new expanded campus known as its #SafeBraveSpace. This meeting was a culmination of the efforts of two groups in addition to LGBT Detroit, The Black Bear Brotherhood – a social collective for black, gay men of size and their admirers – and the Onyx Great Lakes Chapter – a leather fraternal order for men of color. Jerron Totten is LGBT Detroit's legislative advocacy specialist and social outreach coordinator and helped put the event together. He said after meeting both groups at last year's Hotter Than July – the world's second oldest black, gay pride event – he was excited to see the groups collaborate to host community forums like this one.

"They always coexisted in the same community and would be in the same spaces and I believe what happened is that they came to the consensus that we can do more together and make a bigger impact together. Since, first of all, there's a lot of overlap in Black Bear Brotherhood and Onyx and people who have engaged historically with LGBT Detroit," Totten said. "So, why not bring all those people together since we all know each other? And we already know that we have some shared resources and some individual resources that, if we can pull them together, we'll be able to make the most impact."

This particular event drew a crowd of several dozen and was sold out on its Eventbrite page, according to L. Michael Gipson the lead organizer of this meeting, principal of The Black Bear Brotherhood and the event's host. The third of its kind in an ongoing series, Gipson said when he addressed the crowd that he had been eager to tackle the topic of HIV for some time but wanted to be intentional in how it was handled.

"The last topic we did was crystal meth and sex work, the topic before that was political power how do we gain it. Our two-year anniversary is May 27. We purposely have not tackled HIV because when we say black, gay men the first thing that we all hear following that is something about HIV," Gipson said. "But with the update in the HIV criminalization laws and knowing how many of our brothers are, in fact, impacted, we felt it was critical that you know what the law is, both as people who may not have HIV and as people who may have HIV."

---

**Changes to Michigan’s HIV Legal Landscape**

The meeting kicked off with a presentation from the ACLU of Michigan's Jay Kaplan who is the LGBT Project’s staff attorney. He outlined in four points Michigan’s recently adopted HIV statute's originally proposed by State Rep. Jon Hoadley of Kalamazoo:

1.) "A person who knows that they are HIV-positive and engages in anal or vaginal intercourse with another person without first informing that person that they have HIV and has the specific intent to infect that other person can be guilty of a felony – whether or not HIV was transmitted."

2.) "If you’re HIV-positive you don’t inform [your partner], you engage in anal intercourse, you transmit HIV, even if you didn’t have the intent to infect another person, you can be charged with a felony."

3.) "If you engage in intercourse and you don’t inform and you’ve engaged in what is considered to be reckless disregard, even if there’s no transmission, you can be charged with a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison or a $1,000 fine. If they find that there is not reckless disregard, then no criminal charges can be brought. Another flaw in this statute is that they don’t explain what is ‘reckless disregard.’"

4.) "If you’re HIV-positive and you’re in a medical treatment that you’re adhering to and your viral load has been suppressed due to this medical treatment protocol then you..."
can't be considered to have acted with reckless disregard."

Kaplan followed up by saying that though the law still contains flaws, it is a marked improvement from its previous iteration.

"It's problematic with this too because it assumes that everybody has access to a medical treatment program and is going to benefit from the anti-retroviral medications," Kaplan said.

"In the long run, it's much, much better because it's focusing on behaviors, looking at intent in most instances and looking if someone was actually infected, but we still can do better. This was a result of a compromise with the current legislature."

**Understanding HIV Treatment and Prevention**

Kaplan's presentation was followed up by an interactive game show that was played for the audience's benefit to cement information surrounding HIV treatment and to allay some of the fears and misconceptions that might exist surrounding it and those affected by HIV. Gipson shared experiences from his own background and career involving HIV prevention.

"Around the time I was born if you were gay you were considered crazy; it was a mental illness. And then, you were an outlaw or a criminal until about 2002, so I was a criminal from 16 until 2002 anytime I engaged in same-sex relationships," Gipson said. "Then we got same-sex marriage and that was a huge change in what we could expect. We also now have PrEP and in what we can do to prevent HIV. We now have U=U which is information that is totally different than what we used to share with people and, I think, for people who work in HIV prevention as I used to for a time, sometimes we get all this kind of information that's very common knowledge for us over the last five years, but that the public still actually doesn't know."

For instance, though pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP is a preventative measure for HIV, even Gipson's health care providers don't often know its intended use.

"I still, as someone on PrEP, have to educate my nurses, my doctors, the medical assistant, literally every single time I access health care that I'm not HIV-positive, not living with HIV but I'm on this medication which, to them, can only be viewed in a lens of having HIV," Gipson said. "This was particularly burdensome when I was getting surgery for a hernia and so you have new nurses every few hours who would say, 'Oh, I see you have this HIV med; and I was like, 'No, it's not that.'"

Some of the questions posed to contestants covered topics like the effectiveness of PrEP for a daily user in pill form – 90 percent – those who receive it as an injection – 70 percent – and the brand name of the medicine – Truvada.

**Love, Dating and Relationships**

The final section of the town hall meeting opened up the discussion to a panel of six participants, two of whom represented single black, gay males, and two couples both monogamous and polyamorous. Gipson started that portion of the programming with a question about their thoughts on the new HIV rules within the current landscape in Detroit among men who have sex with men.

"Because one out of two black gay men is projected to get HIV it's important to talk about that and also about how does that impact relationships and how we deal with them. In some ways we've gotten some good news and mediocre, OK news about that," Gipson said.

"But as brothers in the community where that is the truth, and we're also still the most likely to get incarcerated under such rules, what were your first impressions of the changes you heard in the HIV criminalization tonight?"

Panelist Thomas Wendell Williams III spoke first.

"For me, the changes that I saw I was still very critical of like the fine," Williams said. "One, I was thinking about the fact that we're disproportionately targeted by this and if a lot of us struggle economically and financially, how are we going to pay a $1,000 fine on top of everything else we're probably dealing with? So that to me was a slap in the face and rubbing salt in the wound of someone that's in poverty."

Other panelists agreed the changes weren't ideal but did seem hopeful that it was a step in the right direction. Ronald Moore was a panelist representing the senior, black, LGBTQ community. He said that in his eyes the changes didn't affect him directly, but he saw how some of the existing flaws could be problematic for those living in poverty.

"It didn't really impact me that much because I think my practice is just to assume that anyone I'm having sex with is positive and I've never relied on what the other person says; I've always relied on myself to take responsibility because I own what happens," Moore said. "I do think it's homophobic and all that stuff, but it doesn't cause me to change."

Gipson followed up with various questions about the impacts of the HIV law and the stigma surrounding the disease even among the LGBTQ community. Overall, when asked about the importance of sharing information even within the community, panelist Amar Rushing summarized it well.

"I think it helps because there's a lot of misinformation and lack of understanding within our own community," Rushing said. "These changes and things that are happening help us connect and learn from each other."

To learn more about the Black Bear Brotherhood visit blackbearbrotherhood.life. Find out more about Onyx Great Lakes Chapter at onyxlgl.com and visit lgbtdetroit.org to learn more about it and its new #SafeBraveSpace.
In Drag for Jesus, Lady T and Chance

GATORADE, Ariz.: I’m a skeptic concerning things supernatural; but the wonder-working weekend I spend reporting for BTL on the Drag Queens for Jesus confab is, well, miraculous – awe-inspiring.

It’s also ecumenical, as the three-day drama-queen pageant coincides with the 40th-anniversary departure to Greater Graceland in the Sky of Elvis Presley, king of kings (as in rock & roll, sideburns, sunglasses, pelvic-articulated gyrations and exit-cue peristalsis go).

With 100 drag queens, two-dozen Elvis look-aliases, a [DQJ] Passion Play non-equity cast of Jesus, Mary, Pontius Pilate, John the Baptist, Salome, ‘Madonna,’ Judy Garland, Mae West, Pope Donald Trump, VP Pence, Pat Robertson, assorted flagellants and semi-naked line-dance slaves, gathered, Gatorade (pop. 1776) is transformed into Vatican City Meets Mel Gibson’s S/M – sandals and mascara – Hollywood West at High Noon.

As usual, Rainbow America flight attendant Chance Ankleman’s posing early at poolside our last day, and, after giving me his trademark wink, flexing his biceps, triceps, abs, glutes, toes, suggests I join him for lunch at the town’s No Spic, No Spam (Show You Green Card) Cafe.

“Two years ago I bought one of your hypnotic pictures,” begins Chance, looking me reasonably straight in the eye. ‘And discovered your hidden ‘for a good time call the artist’ message and phone number.

“I called several times, but never got an answer. Frankly, I was disappointed. Do I get some sort of discount?”

(I must say Chance looks splendid in rainbow-colored Speedo with hidden uplift testicular support, and much more physically articulate than I do in my passion play, sequin-stitched, sag-crotch, WWJD-embroidered loincloth.)

“I’m sorry, Chance, but I quickly grew out of my blue period. Now that I’ve gone exclusively sexting, my subliminal art messages have changed. An artist has to keep pace with his audience. Tell you what, Chance. I’ll pop you for lunch.”

It’s reassuring to find proven once more – thousands of miles from home – and in a small hamlet like Gatorade – that the profession of choice among good-looking gay men is waiter.

(The Guinness Book of Records list the count for gay waiters at 1,795,320.)

“Goodness, what abs,” our gay waiter greets us.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.

“Goodness had nothing to do with it,” replies Chance, off on another bout of winking.

Over our meal of tacos, chili, tortillas, we earful big-time gossip making the Gatorade rounds.

“You may be out-of-towners,” says Hunkers Jones, our waiter, “but three weeks ago, Rev. Dowler P. Sparks had lotsa explaining to do.}
After my brutal journey through this ethical mire, it was devastating when I woke up to find that Michigan’s House and Senate had both voted to ban a common abortion procedure.

▶ Viewpoint
Continued from p. 14

had legitimate concern that I’d have to go to the emergency room. I genuinely feared that I might die.

I’m not in the market for an abortion. In June I will be married to a beautiful woman with whom I want to start a family. Termination of any pregnancy, even before I stop my birth control, is not on the menu ... unless medically necessary. As I am disabled, with family history of high-risk pregnancies, it is an unfortunate possibility.

Many forced birtthers wonder why people like me are concerned about these bills. “Medically necessary” abortions, as they deem them, would be “allowed” for pregnant people who would die without one. Actual legislation and opinions from our lawmakers state otherwise.

An Ohio bill which claims to have an exception for ectopic pregnancies requires that the fertilized ovum be re-implanted into the pregnant person’s uterus. This procedure is medically impossible – it does not exist.

Miscarriage is another issue that brings accusations of ‘infanticide’ upon losing a pregnancy.

In a horrifying move for Michigan’s forced birth community, a lawmaker shared the belief that abortions “should be painful.” Republican State Sen. Kim LaSata said that parents carrying unviable pregnancies should “allow God to take over ... and deliver that baby.”

The idea that “pro-lifers” take an anti-abortion stance to protect children seems to many people like a thinly veiled cover-up for the truth: a desire to hurt and further disenfranchise women.

Catchphrases like “consensual rape” and “life begins at conception” highlight perspectives stating that forcibly impregnated minors should be required to carry the infant because “it’s not the baby’s fault” and “a C-section would be less traumatizing than an abortion.” So much for protecting children.

All I want, as a future parent, is the assurance that I will be allowed to terminate a pregnancy if it is a danger to me. I want this right for every person who is capable of pregnancy, whether that danger is financial, physical or emotional.

Abortion rights are intrinsic to protecting reproductive health. Even if I hadn’t had my own unavoidable pregnancy scare, I would still fight for the reproductive rights of all people.

▶ Parting Glances
Continued from p. 14

McConnell should mind his own business, he says. “Baptism’s a matter of separation of church and State. I paid my 25 cents to use that damned stall ...”

DQH THE CLIMAX: “I’m on stage at the Los Alamos A-Bomb Memorial Theater. The auditorium’s packed. Not a vacant seat. The mayor’s here. Rev. Sparks, front-row center, with what appears to be a recently baptized person. (Unfortunately, still wet behind his ears.)

“The gilded curtain rises. The overture to ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’ blares into high-kick tempo and 100 Drag Queens for Jesus take center stage, blowing kisses everywhere, making signs of the cross, genuflecting – one by one joining a gigantic line dance of sheer mind-blowing jubilation. (You know how drag queens can mind blow. Or jubilate.)

Miracle of miracles, the audience rises and applauds wildly. One or two begin to speak in tongues. (Or, maybe Spanish.) Suddenly, out of nowhere a banner waves, “Have a blessed day. Get in drag for heaven’s sake!” Everybody hugs.

I look adoringly at Chance. He winks lovingly at me. I wink back at him. He winks back at me. Life is good, even if it’s occasionally a drag. Happily – and for a small deposit – we find a private corner to genuflect in.

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

Creep Of The Week

James Dobson

Hello LGBTQ Americans! Are you ready to enslave “people of faith throughout these United States of America?”

Because the U.S. House just passed the Equality Act and, according to James Dobson, that’s our job now.

I don’t know about you, but I’m NOT PREPARED. Also, full disclosure, I’m not interested. The “people of faith” Dobson is talking about have done a fine job subjugating themselves by living in fear of two men kissing or a woman in control of her own uterus. Also, note that I didn’t use the word “enslaved” because let’s not just throw that word around like hundreds of years of that shit didn’t happen in this country and foster the deeply entrenched racism black and brown people are still dealing with.

Dobson, however, is particularly tone deaf on this topic.

“In the history of our nation, there have been times when evil was so apparent – and so heinous – that they stand in infamy decades later,” he wrote for Charisma News. “They include the Dred Scott Decision on slavery in 1857 and the Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion in 1973. Now, we are faced with another such tragic moment in American history.”

Dred Scott, you’ll recall, affirmed the rights of slaveholders and was horrible. Roe v. Wade legalized a medical procedure. Not horrible. I get that Dobson thinks it is, but it isn’t.

And now Dobson is comparing the Equality Act, which would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect LGBTQ people, to slavery and the thing he thinks is the worst thing ever: abortion.

According to Dobson, “This legislation will represent one of the most egregious assaults on religious liberty ever foisted on the people of this great nation. It therein imposes a thinly veiled death-sentence to the First Amendment to the Constitution.”

Wow. That’s some hyperbolic shit right there. A “thinly veiled death-sentence to the First Amendment?” Can someone please let Dobson know that the First Amendment isn’t “Freedom to use your religion as a weapon against people you don’t like?”

Dobson continues, “We must not remain silent as our historic liberties are gutted by Democrats and their friends in the LGBT movement. They will enslave us if they prevail. We must let our voices be heard, first in the U.S. Senate, and then to the world.”

Okay, first of all, just about every right-wing conservative Christian has his or her own radio show so I don’t know what he means by this “remain silent” business. Also, a blanket right to discriminate is a “historic” liberty only in that it belongs in the past. With slavery.

Dobson ends with, “Viva biblical values and beliefs.”

I know what you’re thinking: isn’t “viva” Spanish? Yes! It is. And after vowing to continue to make life as miserable as possible for LGBTQ Americans, Dobson launches into an impassioned plea that we stop ripping Spanish-speaking children from their parents at the border and putting them in cages because it is unchristian.

Just kidding. He did not. That would require some sort of moral code that cared about other people. Somebody should send Dobson a pamphlet or something about Jesus.
In First, House Approves Equality Act to Ban Anti-LGBTQ Discrimination

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

For the first-time ever, a chamber of Congress has approved legislation – with bipartisan support – that would amend the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ban comprehensively discrimination against LGBTQ people.

Under the new Democratic majority elected in the mid-term election, the House approved the legislation by a vote of 236-173 as openly gay Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-N.Y.) presided over the chamber. At other times during debate, gay Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.) and lesbian Rep. Angie Craig (D-Minn.) served as speaker pro tempore.

As a majority of votes for the bill became apparent and as the vote was called, Democrats and guests in House gallery applauded and cheered. Among those giving a standing applause in the gallery were Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, and Sharon McGowan, legal director for Lambda Legal.

Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), the most senior openly gay member of Congress and chief sponsor of the Equality Act, said the legislation would “grant full legal equality to the LGBTQ community here in America” and the vote was “truly historic.”

“The American people think it’s time to protect the LGBTQ community,” Cicilline said. “There is nothing more central to the idea of America than the guarantee of equal protection under the law for every single American.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), wearing a rainbow wristband as she spoke on the House floor, invoked both the Founding Fathers and the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in support of the Equality Act.

“Fifty years after the LBGTQ Americans took to the streets outside of New York's Stonewall Inn to fight against harassment and hate, we take pride in the progress we have forged together,” Pelosi said. “Our Founders, in their great wisdom, wrote in our beautiful preamble – wrote of the blessings of liberty; which were to be the birthright of all Americans. To bring our nation closer to the founding promise of liberty and justice for all, we, today, pass the Equality Act and finally, fully end discrimination against LGBTQ Americans.”

The Democratic caucus was united in support of the legislation. Eight Republicans voted for the Equality Act: Reps. Susan Brooks (Ind.), Mario Diaz-Balart (Fla.), Brian Fitzpatrick (Pa.), Will Hurd (Texas), John Katko (N.Y.), Tom Reed (N.Y.), Elise Stefanik (N.Y.) and Greg Walden (Ore.).

Pocan, holding up a photo of Pelosi wearing him with his husband at his side, said the Equality Act ensure the LGBT non-discrimination protections enjoyed under the law in some capacity in 21 states are part of U.S. code.

“We’re really lucky because we live in Wisconsin, the first state in the nation to pass a gay and lesbian civil rights bill back in 1982, and it was signed by a Republican governor, but that’s not true for a majority of America,” Pocan said. “If we pass the Equality Act, people like Phil and I can be free to love who we love, and we can live where we want to live, and we can work where we want to work without fear of being fired or evicted simply because of who we are or who we love. That’s pretty simple.”

The Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act to ban anti-LGBTQ discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, jury service, education, federal programs and credit.

The bill also seeks to update federal law to include sex in the list of protected classes in public accommodation in addition to expanding the definition of public accommodations to include retail stores, banks, transportation services and health care services. Further, the Equality Act would establish that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act – a 1994 law aimed at protecting religious liberty – can’t be used to enable anti-LGBT discrimination.

The House approved the Equality Act after a tumultuous 90-minute debate in which Democrats affirmed support for equality for LGBT people and Republican stoked dubious and incorrect complaints about children being forced to have gender reassignment surgeries, imposition on women's privacy and penalties imposed on religious organizations.

Leading the charge in stoking fears over the Equality Act was Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.), who said the Equality Act violates fundamental principles of America.

“This bill harms people in so many ways: Destroying safe spaces for women, undermining women-owned businesses, intimidating the free exercise of conscience,” McClintock said.

Drawing on fears of men being able to compete as transgender women in women's sports, said the Equality Act, McClintock said, “Wherever these laws are imposed, biological males have begun to dominate women’s competition.”

Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.), an anti-LGBT lawmaker who last week sought to pass an amendment on the House floor banning the U.S. government from paying for transition-related care, including gender reassignment surgery for transgender people, lamented non-transgender women having to compete with transgender women in sports.

“If we continue down this track, how long will it be before nations recruit men identifying as females to outmedal other countries and ultimately uproot the ancient tradition of the Olympics?” Hartzler said.

The House voted to approve the Equality Act after rejecting by a vote of 228-181 a motion to recommit introduced by Rep. Greg Steube (R-Fla.), The measure ostensibly sought to clarify the legislation can’t be construed to diminish Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which bars sex discrimination and fostered women’s participation in sports.

“Science has proven time and time again that there is a significant complete performance difference between biological males and females from the puberty onward,” Steube said. “From percentage of lean muscle, to heart size, to body fat, to joint ankles, the bodies of men and women are distinctly unique and produce a vast difference in performance ability when it comes to certain activities. In fact, there is an average 10 to 12 performance gap between elite biological males and females athletes.”

Representing Democrats in opposition to the motion to recommend was Rep. Katie Hill (D-Calif.), an openly bisexual member of Congress who disparaged Republicans for “having a man tell me what kind of protections I need in sports.”

“This is fear-mongering about trans women playing in sports,” Hill said. “Are you kidding me? I don’t know if my colleagues on the other side realize that they met trans people, but they have. They definitely have, and I’ve met many, and this motion reflects nothing more than the prejudice of my colleagues.”

Prior to the vote, Rep. Ben McAdams (D-Utah) held with Cicilline a colloquy on the House floor to clarify houses of worship could continue to restrict entrance to its membership and clergy could refuse to perform same-sex weddings despite the ban on discrimination in public accommodations in the Equality Act.

In the event of litigation before the courts, the colloquy would clarify that was intent of lawmakers behind the Equality Act.

“HR5 does not, nor could any legislation, supersede the First Amendment,” Cicilline said. “HR5 allows the standard set by prior civil rights law to not interfere with worship and religious practices by religious organizations.”

Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.), however, said that wasn’t enough in addressing concerns opponents of the Equality Act had on its impact on religious organizations, such as Catholic hospitals or adoption agencies.

“None of us, especially myself, have said anything about houses of worship,” Collins said. “We do know that's the bridge too far. What we are concerned about in the bill is where it says any of these groups or affiliations, Catholic affiliations, Jewish affiliations, who get federal money to do other things, they would come under this, and this is where the RFRA protections is something.”

With 241 co-sponsors in the House, there was no doubt when the vote was scheduled on Friday the chamber would approve the legislation. But the bill now heads to the Republican-controlled Senate, where it faces an uphill battle. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who has called himself the “grim reaper” of legislation approved by the Democratic-controlled House, controls the chamber.

In the miraculous event the Senate approves the Equality Act, the bill would head to the desk of President Trump, who indicated this...
week via a senior administration official to the Washington Blade he opposes the legislation based on unspecified “poison pills” in the bill.

Nonetheless, LGBT rights advocates, who have fought long and hard to pass the Equality Act – an early version of which was first unveiled more than 40 years ago in 1974 – hailed the win in the House as a historic milestone.

Griffin in a statement House approval of the Equality Act is “a major milestone for equality and sends a powerful and profound message to LGBTQ people, especially LGBTQ youth. “

“No one’s rights should depend on which side of a state or city line they live on, and today we took a giant step forward in our journey toward full equality,” Griffin said. “This historic victory would not have been possible without the millions of LGBTQ people and our allies who organized, mobilized and turned out to elect a pro-equality majority in 2018. Now, we will take our fight to the U.S. Senate and turn up the pressure on Leader McConnell to allow a vote on this crucial legislation."

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement the vote was “a proud triumph for the liberty of transgender people nationwide. “

“But we have not come this far to only come this far,” Keisling added. “Leader McConnell must bring this bill to the Senate floor for a vote. Denying transgender people their most basic rights would be nothing short of a moral crime, one that would stain this Senate for years. Now is not the time for brinkmanship, partisanship, or cowardice. Now is the time senators must fulfill their duty to uphold the rights of all people in their states and serve the interests of the nation over the interests of party.”

Equality Act

Continued from p. 16

Ayes to LGBTQ Equality Act:
Dan Kildee (D - MI 5)
Elissa Slotkin (D - MI 8)
Andy Levin (D - MI 9)
Haley Stevens (D - MI 11)
Rashida Tlaib (D - MI 13)
Brenda Lawrence (D - MI 14)

Nays to LGBTQ Equality Act:
Bill Huizenga (R - MI 2)
Justin Amash (R - MI 3)
John Moolenaar (R - MI 4)
Fred Upton (R - MI-6)
Tim Walberg (R - MI 7)
Paul Mitchell (R - MI 10)

Not Voting:
Debbie Dingell (D - MI 12)
Give Anjelica Huston a character so fierce it will single-handedly galvanize the gay community and she’ll devour the role. Unapologetically powerful, her Grand High Witch in “The Witches” wielded kid-hexing Wiccan powers, her ghastly face both a hideous fright and a delicious, drag-queen-dream marvel.

A year later, in 1991, she made weirdness cool as Morticia Addams, bringing a grace all her own to “The Addams Family” as the household’s ghoulish glue. On NBC’s short-lived musical-drama “Smash,” from 2012 to 2013, the Academy Award winner played legendary tough-as-nails producer Eileen Rand. Now, complete with Russian accent, she portrays The Director – the leader of the assassins’ headquarters – opposite Keanu Reeves, Halle Berry and non-binary actor Asia Kate Dillon in “John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum.” A mighty role for a mighty woman.

During a recent call with the 67-year-old actress, just hours before the “John Wick” premiere in New York, Huston discussed her affinity with the LGBTQ community, her wig in “Smash,” and going head-to-head with a giant latex penis during a Pride parade.

What do you think is the connection between your strength and resilience as a woman – both in life and in film – and the gay men who are empowered by you?

Aww! Well, I like to think I empower the people around me, and that definitely is something that I would wish. I think maybe, hmm… I’ve never really considered it. But I think maybe it’s just a sort of similar feeling, similar reaction to certain things, and I think maybe the ability to speak out for yourself even though it might get you in trouble sometimes (laughs). I think that’s something, you know, that we all have to deal with.

You laugh like you might have just had experience with the latter.

(Laughs) Recently, I had a little experience with this Vulture interview (Huston recently gave a controversial tell-all to the news site). But you know, it has to do with speaking your mind and speaking your truth, and I think that’s something that has gone a little bit out of fashion since I’ve been working and giving interviews. (Laughs)

One of the things about the gay community is that they’ve always been outspoken; they speak their truth and they’ve taken a lot of chances in their lives, because often these opinions aren’t popular. But it takes all kinds to make a world, and I think we narrow our sights very much when we constantly adapt to sort of the rigors of everyday life and that everything has to be safe and that everything
And you don’t do that. You don’t play it safe. I’m afraid I don’t. I’d like to a lot of the time, but I don’t really think that that’s my truth, though sometimes it is. But overall, I like to have the freedom to have my opinions that don’t necessarily adhere to everyone else’s. And I think that’s sort of an individuality, maybe. A sign of speaking one’s own mind and not necessarily being influenced by trends and what people consider to be proper.

Because you play these powerful women and because those women sometimes dress exuberantly, many gay men have even given you credit for their gayness. Looking back, what roles of yours do you think could have had that kind of power over them?

I don’t know, and I’m sort of hesitant to say because, again, everyone’s different and I think different things attract different people. But I think overall the parts that I’ve done that are not necessarily cookie-cutter, in which characters have some kind of power even though it’s not necessarily going to win them any kudos (laughs), are the ones who have a personal power that I think is attractive to the gay community.

There was a real appreciation in the gay community for the shade you threw as the evil stepmother in “Ever After,” and with simply a single eyebrow raise.

Aww, well, thank you. (Laughs)

Some in the LGBTQ community have classified Morticia Addams as a gay icon. Do you think she has what it takes to be one?

I can only wish! (Laughs) I loved playing Morticia, and I think, also, probably because she had so much going on – so many corsets and wigs and nails – that yeah, she was almost drag.

Your role as The Director could be potential inspiration for drag queens. When it comes to her look – but also her attitude – what should a drag queen keep in mind?

I don’t know. I think she’s a tough gypsy, she knows the score, she’s lived the life, she is rigorous, she’s strong. And I think that appeals to people. It certainly appeals to me.

How do you explain the fact that, while most kids were scared of you in “The Witches,” gay boys wanted to be you?

(Laughs) Well, she has fabulous powers and she revels in her ugliness and in her vileness; she’s somebody who takes full advantage of being horrible! (Laughs) And in a way, I think that’s something very attractive, to be able to really enjoy your hideous outer shell; there’s something to be said for fully being who you are. And I think it doesn’t necessarily just belong to the gay community, it belongs to all of us who are searching to find a way or searching to find out who we are and how far we can go.

What do you think of Anne Hathaway playing the role you originated?

I think, great, good luck to her. And I hope they find a way to not have to encase her in rubber for seven hours at a time (laughs). The makeup was very challenging on that movie.

CGI has certainly come a long way.

It has, it has. But I think one of the things that’s so beautiful about the Nic Roeg movie is that there was practically no CGI. A little bit around the mice, but overall it was all makeup, it was the Jim Henson workshop, and I enjoyed the reality-based visuals of that film. And actually, it’s rather simply shot. There weren’t a lot of trick shots or anything like that. A few fish-eye lenses, but all of it was sort of based on what the camera could do and not what you could do post.

Will you star in the remake?

Oh, I have no idea. They haven’t spoken to me about it at all. I know nothing about the remake or how closely it will adhere to the Roald Dahl story. I have no idea.

Some gays had problems with your “Smash” wig. They said it could’ve been softer, that it made you look like a drag queen. Are we to assume a gay man did not pick out that wig for you?

(Laughs) Yeah, well, I don’t know – it helped me because I felt it was kind of an armor for my character, and she’s dealing with a lot of volatile, crazy stuff and kind of has to be the anchor in the middle of it. Something about that particular wig – although, no, it wasn’t the soft approach – helped me and kind of grounded me.

What about your role in “Transparent” spoke to you as an actress and as a longtime supporter of the community?

I think “Transparent” was just kind of a wonderful show, and I started to watch it for quite some time before they invited me on the show. I thought it was very moving and also very reality-based, and I loved these characters. I found it very involving. For me, to play a member of the LGBTQ community was important and fascinating. I didn’t want to make it a caricature in any way and so I didn’t go to great lengths to kind of change Vicki’s sexuality. I felt like, you know, she’s a sexual person, she’s not someone who has a rule book about who she should be or if she should fall in love, but she’s a person who’s making it on her own – who’s got her cheese shop! (Laughs) A normal woman making a life who happens to be gay, which I think many people in the community are.

It’s not that you carve yourselves out to be sexually different or to make those choices. A lot of the time the choices make you, and it’s up to you to find your way and negotiate your life. And there’s a lot of resistance out there. People love to criticize. And people
really think they know better. I think a lot of the time we’re dictated by our feelings and by who we find ourselves to be. It’s not that we can go out and carve ourselves a personality a lot of the time.

Your history with the LGBTQ community goes back: In fact, you met your late husband, Robert Graham, at Pride. What brought you there?

I’m not quite sure. I think probably because – I don’t want to say. I can’t really remember why now that you’ve stirred my memory. (Laughs)

Do you have a memory from being at Pride that day?

I’m trying to put two things together. I can only say that it would’ve been a perfect day for Bob and I to meet, for Bob and I to get together, because I think it was a coming together of individuals – and a very artistic love-match, as far as I was concerned. I fell in love with his work, I fell in love with the man, and I think something about the liberation of gay Pride weekend is always a thrill and it’s always a great day in Los Angeles. And probably here (in NYC), although I haven’t spent many gay Pride weekends here. But I think it’s an ebullient moment, it’s a moment you can get out there and show who you are and not be ashamed. And flaunt it!

And weren’t you almost run over by a giant latex penis at a gay parade?

Oh, yes! (Laughs) That was in New York, on 10th Street. That was a gay Pride weekend. Yes, I was stuck behind a latex penis for at least 20 minutes trying to get downtown.

Is there photo evidence of this?

No! None! None. And also, the skies opened, and it began to rain, so it was a huge latex penis and me struggling through the crowd. But there’s actually very little that’s funnier than gay Pride weekend in New York, now that I think about it. The imagination, the costumes! I remember there was a whole team of cocktails trotting down the street, and another one where the people put their faces inside milk cartons and were dancing down the street (laughs). There’s a great sense of fun and liberation and celebration.

With “Smash” and “Transparent,” both of which represent the underrepresented, how much did their cultural significance factor into your involvement?

Well, I think, because they’re current and they’re modern they hopefully represent the strengths in the community, and I think in some way those kinds of characters symbolize a certain freedom and a declaration of independence, and I think we all need that. Especially now.

Especially now, where things are very safe. In actual fact, they’re not that safe (laughs). I think our normal news every day is – there’s a lot that they worry us with. One of the wonderful things about the LGBTQ community is that they kind of throw caution to the winds and it’s a moment where people get together and celebrate the positive rather than the negative.

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 GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.
An Evening Reception for
Jon Hoadley for Congress
THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH 2019
7:00PM - 9:30PM
ROBERT KIDD GALLERY
107 TOWNSEND STREET, BIRMINGHAM, MI, 48009

PLEASE JOIN:
Faye Schuett & Linda Burnett,
House Democratic Leader Rep. Chris & Bob Greig,
Henry Crevier & Howard Israel,
Bryan Hoffman & Mark LaChey,
Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson, Rep. Padma Kuppa,
Hon. Erin Knott, Roland Leggett, David Lilly,
Rep. Mari Manoogian, Sen. Jeremy Moss,
Steven Quinkert & Tom Wilczak,
Nancy Schlichting & Pam Theisen, Rep. Robert Wittenberg,
and Grace Wojcik
(Host Committee in Formation)

CHAMPION $2,600    HOST $1,000
SUPPORTER $500    ADVOCATE $250    FRIEND $100

RSVP ONLINE HERE: ACTBLUE.COM/DONATE/180620BIRMINGHAM
FOR QUESTIONS OR TO RSVP, CONTACT BRANDON@JONHOADLEY.COM OR (313) 666-4626

STATE PRIDE MARCH
March to the steps of the Michigan Capitol and help us make history!
Assemble at 10:45am, step off at noon.

RALLY ON THE STEPS OF THE CAPITOL
let's make our voices heard!
Starts immediately following the Parade.

FESTIVAL
In Old Town
1 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Entertainment featuring Sabin from Detroit, New fame (female duo from Vietnam), and Tell Yo Mama (local Lansing band).
Over 75 vendors, food available, and a community of love.
$10 wristband gets you in all day.


SUNDAY, JUNE 2ND - 11:00 AM
Geary Park, 1198 Earle Blvd., Ferndale

Join us at Geary Park in Ferndale for one of our favorite Sundays - our annual Pride & Pet Blessing Service. Bring your pups to church or photos of your four-legged family member so they may receive a blessing.

Pet Blessing

www.PrideSource.com
Ann Arbor Advertisers
Brookside Veterinary Hospital*
Bassett & Associates........... *
Common Language .............6
Delux Drapery ................. *
Dependable Collision Center.*
Esquire Interiors............... *
First Unitarian Church of Ann Arbor* *
Gail van Langen Ph.d...........9
Greene, LMSW, ACSW,Marge.....10
HIV/AIDS Resource Center (Harl)......... *
Humane Society of Huron Valley...........
Iglesia Martell Law.............11
Jim Toy Resource Center......6
Lewis Jewelers.................12
Lord of Light Lutheran Church*
Merkel Carpet One............. *
Necto...........................15
People’s Food Coop.............16
PFLAG Ann Arbor............... *
Rock Shoppe.................... *
Spectrum Center...............19
Three Chairs Co...............20
Tios Mexican Cafe..............21
Trillium Real Estate..........12
UMHS Comprehensive Gender Services Program ..*
University Musical Society....22
* Not shown on map

Supporting the Community Since
Before it was Cool.

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

Sandi & Linda
www.trilliumrealtors.com
323 Braun Ct. Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-302-3011

www.PrideSource.com
Cool Cities
Ann Arbor
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD • YOUR MARKET
Pinpoint your ad dollars where they will do the most good...
Advertise in the next Cool Cities
TO PLACE AN AD CALL 734.293.7200

MASSAGE MECHANICS
Accessible. Inclusive. Exceptional.
Find us at YPSI PRIDE for FREE massages on June 7th!
734.408.1648
7 S. WASHINGTON, YPSILANTI
YPSIMASSAGEMECHANICS.COM

STATE THEATRE
233 S. STATE ST. • ANN ARBOR • (734) 668-8397 • STATETHEATREA2.ORG

Tios Tequila Bar!

Thursday Late Night Special
1/2 OFF
All Tequilas - 10PM-2AM
Hand-Crafted Mexican Food & Drinks In Ann Arbor

You can now enjoy one of our Classic Margaritas or Sangria Especial along with your scrumptious Mexican meal. Taste the difference!

Home of Adam Richman’s Mt. Nacheesmo Challenge!

401 E. Liberty • Ann Arbor MI
761-6650 • WWW.TIOSMEXICANCAFE.COM

Dependable Collision Center
FREE loaners on any job
(subject to terms and conditions)

5133 Carpenter Road, Suite A
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Phone (734) 528-8581
Fax (734) 528-8953
www.dependablecc.com
We work with all insurance companies!

If you were to die today, who would be in charge of your funeral tomorrow?

Although your partner may be aware of your wishes, they may not be legally entitled to advocate for you. By filling out a Funeral Representative Declaration Form, LGBTQ+ individuals can ensure their final wishes are met.

It’s your life. Call us to take this simple, yet crucial step toward peace of mind today:

734-783-2646

Michigan Memorial
Funeral Home • Park • Crematory
www.MiMemorial.com

Michigan Memorial Funeral Home, Inc.; Michigan Memorial Park, Inc.; Michigan Memorial Park Crematory Company, Inc. These companies are separately owned and operated. Daniel P. Dwyer, President / Owner of Michigan Memorial Funeral Home, Inc.
May LezRead: ‘Of Gryphons and Other Monsters’

BY BTL STAFF

There are hundreds of businesses that advertise in BTL and welcome everyone.
Invest in equality and work with businesses that support Michigan’s LGBTQ community!

Held monthly at the Ann Arbor Jim Toy Community Center, LeRead is a lesbian-centered book club that focuses on bringing together women-loving-women from across the area through a love of reading. The chosen literature features LGBTQ themes. This month, the group will be reading “Of Gryphons and Other Monsters” by Shannon McGee.

“And it looks like Shannon, a Michigander, is even planning to join us! Of Gryphons is the first novel of a young adult, fantasy quartet,” wrote event organizers. “The series features many LGBTQIA+ characters and is already receiving great reviews.”

The novel is set in a mythical world filled with warriors, monsters and magic. Find a full description of the book on the group’s Facebook page.

This event will start at 4 p.m. and will last until 6 p.m. New members should email kerenem@jimtoycenter.org to join the private Facebook group.

Ann Arbor Summer Festival Announces 2019 Artists Performing

BY BTL STAFF

The Ann Arbor Summer Festival’s 36th Season runs from June 14 through July 7 at Top of the Park, six nights each week starting at 5 p.m. The entire festival features an eclectic mix of events showcasing some of the best in music, comedy, film, spoken word, contemporary circus, street arts and family entertainment.

Music Highlights Include:


Ninety-two musical performances will take place on two stages at Top of the Park on the campus of the University of Michigan and in the City of Ann Arbor:

Rackham Stage (915 E. Washington St.)
O&W Acoustic Stage in the Grove (under the Burton Tower on North Ingalls Mall)

For the most up-to-date information, please visit the festival’s website at: a2sf.org. Additional free family activities, beer and wine tastings, Annex community events and art installations will be announced soon. The Movies by Moonlight, Retreat, KidZone and Mainstage series were announced earlier in March and April. The festival series sponsors are O&W, Toyota, and T.D. Ameritrade.

May LezRead: ‘Of Gryphons and Other Monsters’

BY BTL STAFF

Held monthly at the Ann Arbor Jim Toy Community Center, LeRead is a lesbian-centered book club that focuses on bringing together women-loving-women from across the area through a love of reading. The chosen literature features LGBTQ themes. This month, the group will be reading “Of Gryphons and Other Monsters” by Shannon McGee.

“And it looks like Shannon, a Michigander, is even planning to join us! Of Gryphons is the first novel of a young adult, fantasy quartet,” wrote event organizers. “The series features many LGBTQIA+ characters and is already receiving great reviews.”

The novel is set in a mythical world filled with warriors, monsters and magic. Find a full description of the book on the group’s Facebook page.

This event will start at 4 p.m. and will last until 6 p.m. New members should email kerenem@jimtoycenter.org to join the private Facebook group.

Ann Arbor Summer Festival Announces 2019 Artists Performing

BY BTL STAFF

The Ann Arbor Summer Festival’s 36th Season runs from June 14 through July 7 at Top of the Park, six nights each week starting at 5 p.m. The entire festival features an eclectic mix of events showcasing some of the best in music, comedy, film, spoken word, contemporary circus, street arts and family entertainment.

Music Highlights Include:


Ninety-two musical performances will take place on two stages at Top of the Park on the campus of the University of Michigan and in the City of Ann Arbor:

Rackham Stage (915 E. Washington St.)
O&W Acoustic Stage in the Grove (under the Burton Tower on North Ingalls Mall)

For the most up-to-date information, please visit the festival’s website at: a2sf.org. Additional free family activities, beer and wine tastings, Annex community events and art installations will be announced soon. The Movies by Moonlight, Retreat, KidZone and Mainstage series were announced earlier in March and April. The festival series sponsors are O&W, Toyota, and T.D. Ameritrade.
We value diversity in the City of Ann Arbor, and take pride in being different from the rest.

The City of Ann Arbor is an Equal Opportunity Employer
We are proud of our diverse workforce and our commitment to equal opportunity. We do not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived age, arrest record, color, disability, educational association, familial status, family responsibilities, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, height, HIV status, marital status, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, veteran status, victim of domestic violence or stalking, or weight in any aspect of our hiring or employment process. The City of Ann Arbor has earned a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s Municipal Equality Index (MEI), which assesses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer equality in more than 500 cities across the nation.

a2gov.org/jobs

A2ct
Ann Arbor Civic Theatre
your theatre. your town.

presents

CURTAINs

June 6-9, 2019
Thurs @ 7:30 | Fri-Sat @ 8:00
Sun @ 2:00
Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre
911 N. University | Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Tickets and Info: www.a2ct.org | 734.971.2228

YPSI PRIDE
JUNE 7 2019
5-10PM
CELEBRATING WASHTENAW COUNTY'S VIBRANT QUEER COMMUNITY
WASHINGTON ST. DOWNTOWN YPSI
YPSIPRIDE.COM
Solution to puzzle on page 29

OUTINGS

Friday, May 24
LGBT Social Meet Up 6:30 p.m. LGBT social meet up group is a group for all light people who want to meet have light hearted discussions and social activities some activities , all is welcomed, we are on going every ongoing Hazel Park Community Center, 620 West Woodward Heights, Hazel Park. http://Michigan Light peer support network facebook

Saturday, May 25
LGBT Community Chat 11 a.m. Saturday LGBT Chat is an on going social discussion group meets every week to discuss issues LGBT people face. Coming out, dating, and much more. Come join us. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 W Nine Mile, Ferndale.

Monday, May 27
LGBT Game Night 7 p.m. LGBT Game Night is an opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee and socialize with other LGBT individuals. Java Hut, 165 W Nine Mile, Ferndale.

Tuesday, May 28
Stand with Trans Support Groups – Ann Arbor – Washtenaw 6:30 p.m. Meeting the 4th Tuesday of each month @ Journey of Faith Christian Church. Parent Support Group Facilitator – Yma Johnson, yma186@gmail.com or 734-780-4092.

Wednesday, May 29
Affirmations Senior Coffee Catchup 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings, and potlucks are held throughout the year. With age comes wisdom but, for LGBTQ seniors, loneliness can often come along. Affirmations, 290 W Nine Mile Road, Ferndale 248-398-7105 www.goaffirmations.org

Sunday, June 2
Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 4 p.m. the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month @ St. Stephens Episcopal Church. For Parent Support Group information, contact facilitator Kim Tooley, 734-747-4363. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st Street, Wyandotte.

Tuesday, June 4
Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County 7 p.m. FREE and OPEN to the community. For parents of transgender kids, this group meets the 1st Tuesday of each month @ St. Mary’s in The Hills Episcopal Church. Parent Support Group Facilitated by Lisa Gayette, ally, activist. An event every month that begins at 7:00pm on day First of the month, repeating indefinitely St. Mary’s in The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Jooslyn Court, Lake Orion 248-391-0663 www.stmarysinthehills.org http://www.standwithtrans.org

Thursday, June 6
Ford GLOBE 25th Anniversary Dinner, In partnership with the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce 5:30 p.m. keynote speaker will be former NFL player and motivational speaker, Wade Davis. Allan Gilmour, former Vice Chair of Ford Motor Company, will be presented with the inaugural Allan D. Gilmour Outstanding Leadership in Inclusion Award All The Dearborn Inn, 20301 Oakwood Blvd. Dearborn 313-673-3001 info@dearbornchamber.com, www.detroitgbtc.org

Pewabic House and Garden Show – Preview Party Fundraiser 6 p.m. The House & Garden Show kicks off with a ticketed preview party fundraiser. The evening includes the release of Pewabic’s newest ceramics, plus work by more than 80 ceramic artists from throughout North America. Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave. Detroit 313-626-2000 www.pewabic.org

Friday, June 7
Pewabic House and Garden Show 10 a.m. The House & Garden Show features the release of Pewabic’s newest pieces plus work by more than 80 ceramic artists from throughout North America. Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave. Detroit 313-626-2000 www.pewabic.org
Editor’s Pick

Motor City Pride Pre-Party

On Friday, June 7, LGBTQ people from across the Metro area are invited to Detroit’s Club Blu for a Pride pre-party. The event starts at 10 p.m. and will last through 2 a.m. Find out more information on eventbrite.com.

Saturday, June 8
Motor City Pride Festival and Parade
1 p.m. The Motor City Pride Festival and Parade returns to Hart Plaza for Michigan’s largest pride celebration! Check out our website for all the info on the Festival, Parade, Candlelight Vigil, and all other activities. Hart Plaza, 1 West Jefferson,Detroit. www.motorcitypride.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Co-Occurring Disorders: Understanding Self-Medication and Complex Recovery
May 28, 7:30 p.m. Jeremy Suttles, MSE, LMSW, will provide an overview of what co-occurring disorders are, how they are identified, their prevalence St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 www.dawnfarm.org

Movie Music of Spike Lee June 2, 4 p.m. The Movie Music of Spike Lee & Terence Blanchard showcases the stunning scores and songs from Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-567-5111 www.dso.org

Makoto Ozone Trio June 5, 7 p.m. Japanese pianist Makoto Ozone is a unique force in both jazz and classical music. Join us for a one-night-only set with Ozone’s jazz trio. The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. www.dso.org

Coordinating a Community Response to the Opioid Epidemic June 25, 7:30 p.m. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725 http://www.dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series

ART ‘N’ AROUND

Kensington Metropark Art Show May 25, 10 a.m. Join the thousands of people who attend Kensington Metropark Art Fair each year. Kensington Metropark, Milford, 4570 Huron River Parkway,Milford. 810-227-8910 wwww.metroparks.com/

Jeremy Ian Harvey’s New Art Show – Ghost the World June 8, 7 p.m. Local artist Jeremy Ian Harvey is known for his wildly colorful paintings, his new show is a deeply personal one called Ghost The World. Hidden Gate Gallery, 1533 Division Street, Detroit. 313-686-3413 www.hiddengategallery.com

TUESDAYS: College Night FREE LOCKERS for Members 18-25

WEDNESDAYS: Wet & Wild Wednesdays FREE LUBE with a room or locker rental

THURSDAYS: COUPLES NIGHT Couples get a $5 Locker when renting any room

www.PrideSource.com

Editor’s Pick

May Metro Detroit Ecstatic Dance!

At Berts Warehouse Entertainment on Saturday, May 25, all are invited to dance like no one is judging, because no one is. Ecstatic Dance is a Freeform dance, consent-based safe space for all, where music is one’s intoxicant. Substance and alcohol free. Charity Loring, LMSW is host. This event features DJ Sity of HOUSEHEADZ and will play all music genres. Featured live artist for this event is Belozero. Find out more on the event’s Facebook page.
THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

BUY ADULT DVD'S STARTING AT $5.95
EVERY TUES & FRIDAY NEW RELEASE DAY
ALL XXX DVD RENTALS AS LOW AS $2.25 EVERY DAY!

SPECIAL
50% OFF
BUY ONE DVD AT REG PRICE & GET THE SECOND DVD AT 1/2 PRICE
SECOND DVD MUST BE SAME OR LESSER VALUE, RED STICKER ONLY
MAY 31-JUN 4

UPTOWN SPECIAL
XXX DVD’S 3/$9.99
WHILE THEY LAST
MAY 22-28, 2019

White attire is strongly encouraged

Featuring DJs:
Tent:
Justin Elemnt Taylor

Big Room:
Klees

Drag Performances by:
Asio Aviance // Caj Monet // Miss Spiral AM

The White Party: Doors at 8pm
21+ $10 // 18-20 $15

Afterglow Black Light Party:
June 15th // Doors at 8pm //

18+

THE WHITE PARTY
FRIDAY JUNE 14
SPIRAL-DANCEBAR LANSING, 1247 CENTER ST.,
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48906

Hosted by Michigan Pride,
Sir Pizza Grand Cafe
and Spiral DanceBar

UPTOWN
BOOKSTORES
ADULT VIDEO
WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave.
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"
Highland Park
313.889.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile
Between Greenfield & Southfield
Detroit
313.836.0647

Hours:
Mon-Sat 9am - 10pm
Sun Noon - 6pm

www.PrideSource.com
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

LGBTQ Drama ‘Rafiki’ Screens at Cinema Detroit May 24-30

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Originally banned in its country of origin, Kenya, “Rafiki” is the story of two young women who fall in love in a society that criminalizes their relationship. The film, which made international ripples after its ban was taken up to the country’s supreme court where it was lifted for seven days for Academy Award consideration, is set to be shown at Cinema Detroit from May 24 through 30. Paula Guthat is the co-founder and programmer at the venue. She said “Rafiki” is an important film to be shown so that, among other reasons, director Wanuri Kahiu can share her message of love and hope with a large audience.

“I think it’s been a pretty big hit worldwide. More people have seen it around the world than have seen it in Kenya which is ridiculous. When people see the movie they won’t believe it’s banned, but homosexuality is still a crime in Kenya.” Guthat said. “They were willing to show it if she made some changes but those changes would have completely subverted what the director was trying to do, which was to show a relationship that happens to be between two women.”

Guthat went on to say that showing “Rafiki” is a good way to draw attention to international issues of inclusion.

“I think it’s important to see how underrepresented voices see the world, to see other parts of the world and to broaden horizons so we see what’s going on elsewhere. And also because it’s 95 percent a fun film that really does celebrate love,” Guthat said. “And I think we can all use that. And I think there’s amazing work coming out of all parts of the world, not just here.”

To find out more about the film and Cinema Detroit visit cinemadetroit.org.

TYLR_ Talks Movement Music Festival and the LGBTQ Electronic Music Scene

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Thousands of music fans from across the globe are gearing up to visit the birthplace of techno for three days of some of the world’s best electronic music played by dozens of artists across five stages. In advance of the festivities, BTL caught up with Tyler Yglesias or, TYLR_, to his fans, to get a feel for his first time performing at the festival, being an LGBTQ artist in Detroit’s electronic scene and to learn more about his upcoming music projects.

You originally come from Toledo, what made you travel to Detroit?

When I moved up here it really wasn’t for any musical reason, I really wasn’t even in the music scene when I was in Toledo. I got into the scene around 2010. That was my first year that I went to Movement and it was just so incredible and inspiring and spiritual. I just knew I wanted to be involved somehow in the scene and I knew that I wanted to create a space all year-round where my friends could feel the same feeling [they felt] during Movement. So, I decided I wanted to throw parties. I got a really good response and a couple of people came who wanted me to do the same type of thing at their bar. So, me and a couple of friends started getting into DJing and that’s how I fell into the scene and fell in love with it.

Since Detroit is considered the birthplace of techno, does that inspire your music?

Oh, completely. I’ve had so many old-school DJs befriend me and help me like D Wynn, Claude Young, all these people have been so supportive. When I go to other cities and the scene there is not like it is here, it’s very kind of cutthroat. It’s very, “Oh, you’re trying to DJ? I’m a DJ. You can’t do this, you can’t do that.” Here, it’s the complete opposite.

You’re part of the LGBTQ community. What’s it like being an LGBTQ electronic artist in Detroit?

Yes, I am. So, when I first moved up here I started working at two gay bars and that’s kind of where I fell in love with the community before I knew about electronic music. When I was doing parties I was doing this party called BAK DØR at this club called Grenadier that’s not open anymore but I started going back to the gay bars I used to work at and would say, ‘Guys, we have after-hours parties, I would love for you guys to come it’s just an amazing experience.’ And the gay community started responding and before we knew it, the club every Friday was packed full of gay, straight, black, white – it was beautiful.

Why is diversity important to you as a musician?

The importance of diversity is huge. I want everybody to go to my party, I want everybody to feel happy, I want everybody to feel loved. And, really, it’s all about the music. They’re there for the music and to have fun. There could be a straight guy standing next to a drag queen and feel completely safe it should be like, “Oh my God, you’re here to have fun, too.” That’s what I’m mostly trying to do. To change the gay culture musically. Believe me, I love Beyonce (laughs), but I understand when you’re at a club, an underground dark sexy club, you want to hear something that’s not mainstream. Something that’s not familiar that makes you think and say, ‘I don’t know what this is but I love it. It’s making me dance, it’s making me move!’

You’re set to release your first EP soon and go on tour. What inspired that?

Just living in Detroit and now understanding what Detroit really is, now that I’ve learned about electronic music and where it’s going, that really inspires me. So, for me, I really feel like I need to just create something that’s more a reflection of the underground scene. One of my tracks is called “Latrice.” She is actually a party icon in our scene. She’s this amazing black woman that just dances all night, gets down and she’s always at our parties. That’s what I really want to do on my first album. Not my EP, but my first full album, I want to contribute to party people, the club kids. I want to incorporate some type of personal song that maybe not everybody understands even though it’s a really good song, but those people will feel more special about it because they’re the ones coming to my parties.

How does it feel to perform at Movement for the first time?

This is my first year and that alone is kind of mind-boggling to me. I first started going in 2010 and in 2019 now I’m performing. I don’t even have words right now and I’m so thankful for Paxahau for giving me the opportunity. It’s an amazing feeling and I can’t even believe it’s really happening.

TYLR_ will be performing on Saturday, May 25, at the Red Bull Presents Stage. Find out more about him at movement.us.
We are committed to provide quality health care and to serve our patients without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, political preferences, or sexual orientation.

It is our intention not to discriminate, be judgmental, or have bias towards anyone. These are not simply published words, but are practices we strive and train for to do our best each and every day. We must all be respectful and put our commonalities first. Our priority is your good health.

We are here to help you and want each and every one of our patrons to feel comfortable in our patient-centered medical home. It is the essence of equality that defines who we are. Please join us in this endeavor.

**Primary Care • HIV Rapid initiation of Therapy • PrEP • Hormone Affirming Therapy**

**Most Experienced and Knowledgeable**
Established in 1980 as the first Primary Care Medical Clinic in the Detroit area specializing in our LGBTQ community.

**Board Certified in Family Practice & Designated Patient-Centered Medical Home**
by Blue Cross Blue Shield as a Center of Excellence.

**We're a Recipient of the Peter M. Fox Excellence in HIV Credentialing Award**
from the American Academy of HIV Medicine. Also, Dr. Benson was one of the first physicians credentialed and has maintained the AAHIV-S specialist designation since.


**Extensive Network of Sensitive Specialists**
with an ongoing relationship to refer as necessary.

**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:**

1964 Eleven Mile Rd, Berkley, MI 48072
(248) 544-9300
doctorbewell.com

**There is a difference.** We're a patient-friendly Private Practice small enough to individualize care by a staff that knows you and large enough to manage all of your Primary Care Needs.

- HIV Prevention (PrEP), Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), STI testing & treatment
- Hormone Affirming Therapy for HIV positive and negative transgender individuals
- Evening Clinic Hours Monday-Thursday, most Saturdays, and Same Day Appointments
- Full-time Patient Navigator/Advocate Social Worker on site
- Most Insurances accepted
- Ryan White Provider
- Medcart Pharmacy on Premises
- Group Medical Appointments (available soon!)
- Tele-Medical Visits (available soon!)