

DAVID  
KATO'S  
MURDER

PAGE 6

# WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN,  
BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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LGBT GROUP  
SUPPORTS RAHM

PAGE 7



JENNIFER BEALS

PAGE 19



Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn is surrounded by legislators and activists after he signs the state's civil-unions measure, making it law. Civil unions will become legal on June 1. Read our coverage, starting on page 8. Photo by Hal Baim; hundreds more are at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>

## ELECTION GAYS



As part of our coverage of the 2011 election, Windy City Times interviewed the three openly gay candidates running for alderman in the 46th Ward. They are (from left, and in alphabetical order) James Cappleman, Don Nowotny and Emily Stewart. See the interviews starting on page 10. (Out alderman Tom Tunney and gay candidate Jose Arteaga will be profiled next week.) Left photo courtesy of Cappleman; middle and right photos by Andrew Davis



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this week in

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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**THE STATURE OF 'DAVID'**

Disc and That has a rundown of some recently released and upcoming DVDs, including David's Birthday (left).



Jay Gleason weighs in on the new civil-unions law and estate plans.  
*Pic from Gleason*

WCT talks with Deborah Gibson, who recently starred in Mega-Python vs. Gatoroid.  
*PR photo*

**DISNEY AT DAVENPORT'S**

WCT took in AIDS Legal Council of Chicago's Disney Songbook event that featured Justin Hayford.

**WARD OF THE DANCE**

Read about the recent 46th Ward aldermanic forum, with 11 candidates.

**THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT**

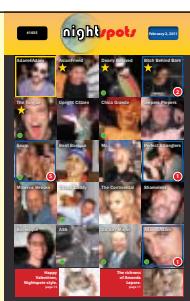
This week's entertainment round-up includes bits on Tom Ford, Fran Drescher and Boy George.

plus

**DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

The Valentine's Love Grind(r)

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# LGBT response to DADT training is mixed

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The Pentagon, on Jan. 28, said training to prepare for implementation of the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) could begin as soon as next month.

But reaction from LGBT groups was mixed, and a 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals panel has rejected a motion from the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) to halt proceedings on a legal challenge to the ban pending in that court.

It has been just over a month since President Obama signed the bill to repeal of the military's ban on openly gay servicemembers.

And Pentagon officials thought they may be ready to begin implementation of the new law within the year.

But General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said there is no hard and fast date by which the Pentagon believes it will be able to implement repeal.

The law Obama signed in December requires that the president, the defense secretary, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff "certify in writing" that implementation of repeal can begin without compromising military readiness.

Cartwright said that the individual service chiefs would be able to put a "pause" on the process if they run up against any unforeseen obstacles but that certification could happen before all troops receive direct training.

Aubrey Sarvis, head of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said he thinks the Pentagon is taking "thoughtful steps to move toward certification and implementation of open service."

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) President Joe Solmonese was guarded.

"While this implementation plan is a step

in the right direction," said Solmonese, in a statement released Friday, "it is critical that the Department address benefits issues and non-discrimination protections so that all service members are treated equally."

The Pentagon, said the HRC statement, "does not go far enough in calling for parity in benefits that could be accomplished through revised regulations that add same-sex committed partners to the definitions of 'dependent,' 'family member,' or other similar terms. Such a step would be consistent with Obama's June 2009 memorandum that all federal agencies take steps to extend benefits equally to lesbian and gay employees, where permitted by law."

Meanwhile, the ACLU said it is "disappointed" with a Department of Defense memo that stipulates the department will not provide any compensation for servicemembers discharged under DADT. The organization noted that, servicemembers discharged under DADT have been "entitled to half of the sum paid to other honorably discharged service members to ease their transition into civilian life."

"The least that the government can do is make the victims of this discriminatory policy whole," said Joshua Block, a staff attorney with the ACLU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Project. The ACLU filed suit in a federal court in New Mexico last November seeking full compensation for those discharged under the policy over the past six years.

"Service members who have been unconstitutionally discharged because of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" said Block, "should receive the separation pay to which they are entitled."

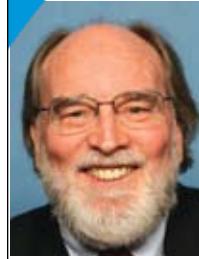
The lawsuit pending in the 9th Circuit, filed and won by Log Cabin Republicans at the U.S. district court level, will proceed. The DoJ is due to file its brief on the appeal Feb. 25.

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NATIONAL NEWS



—Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie (left) appoints lesbian supreme ct justice



—Don Imus calls Rachel Maddow 'gutless coward'

—Paintball attacks a hate crime



Roberta Achtenberg. Photo from Cal State University website

## Obama makes three big appointments

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

President Obama, on Jan. 26, appointed two prominent gays to important positions in his administration and nominated an openly gay attorney to a judgeship for the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Roberta Achtenberg, a longtime lesbian civil-rights activist in San Francisco and the first openly gay presidential appointee (under President Clinton), has been named as a commissioner on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. She will be one of eight members of the commission—four of whom are appointed by the president and four appointed by Congress.

Jeffrey Levi, who once headed the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, received an appointment as a member of the newly created Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

And Obama nominated openly gay attorney J. Paul Oetken to become one of 44 judges serving the federal district court that encompasses Manhattan. The U.S. Senate must approve Oetken's nomination. If approved, Oetken would become the second openly gay judge in that federal district, along with Deborah Batts. He would be the third openly gay federal judge in the country, along with Emily Hewitt of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. Clinton appointed both Batts and Hewitt.

Oetken is not Obama's first openly gay nominee to the federal bench. In April of last year, he nominated Edward DuMont to a position on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal District. If approved, DuMont would be the first openly gay appointee to a federal appeals court. But DuMont's nomination—along with that of many others—has been tied up by Republican opposition in the U.S. Senate.

Oetkin served as associate counsel to the president in the Clinton White House and served as an attorney-advisor with the Clinton Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. He currently works as senior vice president and associate general council for Cablevisions Systems Corporation. Oetkin served as a clerk for former Justice Harry Blackmun, one of the U.S. Supreme Court's more liberal justices.

Achtenberg, who co-founded the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and is a former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, is best known as "that damn lesbian." That's the designation flung her way by notoriously anti-gay U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. Helms opposed Achtenberg's appointment as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and

Equal Opportunity at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under Clinton. The Senate approved her appointment over Helms' objections. She later worked with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the San Francisco Center for Economic Development.



Gen. James Cartwright.

## SF teens interview gay elders for video project

A new 14-minute video has just been made available for gay teens to learn about the history of the gay community. The newly formed Pye/Harris Project produced "Coming Out in the 1950s: Stories of Our Lives."

In the video, three teen journalists interview gay elders about their experiences in coming out during the McCarthy era, when there was no visible gay community. Stories include Hadley Hall, an ROTC member who was outed and summarily discharged; Ron Rebholz, an academic who gave up a promising relationship to pursue an education because of the fear he experienced if the relationship continued; and Phyllis Lyon, on her experiences founding of the first lesbian organization in America, the Daughters of Bilitis.

Those interested in having a copy to share with a youth organization or gay-straight alliance should e-mail [pyeharrisproject@aol.com](mailto:pyeharrisproject@aol.com).



President Obama during his State of the Union speech. Photo by Patsy Lynch

## Gays weigh in on Obama speech

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

President Obama once again brought up the issue of gays in the military during his annual State of the Union address. Last year, he called for repeal of the federal law barring openly gay people from serving. This year, just a month after having signed a bill to repeal that law, the president urged universities which have barred military recruiters over the gay ban now allow recruiters back on campus.

"Our troops come from every corner of this country—they are black, white, Latino, Asian and Native American. They are Christian and Hindu, Jewish and Muslim. And, yes, we know that some of them are gay. Starting this year, no American will be forbidden from serving the country they love because of who they love."

That drew applause.

"And with that change," continued Obama, "I call on all of our college campuses to open their doors to our military recruiters and the ROTC. It is time to leave behind the divisive battles of the past. It is time to move forward as one nation."

That drew a brief standing ovation.

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese welcomed President Obama's words concerning the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," but added that "there remain a number of pressing issues for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community when it comes to economic security."

"The President and Congress can do much more to ensure the economic empowerment of LGBT people including ending the unfair taxation of partner health benefits, prohibiting workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and ensuring that all married couples have access to the same federal benefits and protections for their families," said Solmonese, in a statement released before the president delivered his address to Congress. "We look forward to working with this President and allies in Congress on the challenges ahead."

But Robin McGehee, director of the activist group GetEQUAL, expressed disappointment.

"Tonight, President Obama missed an opportunity to lay out an agenda and strategy that continues progress made toward LGBT equality—removing the burden of being second-class citizens and acknowledging our families," said McGehee, in a statement. "Sadly, while national hero Daniel Hernandez sat with the First Lady to witness this historic speech, he did not have the luxury of sitting there as an equal—for that, our elected officials should be ashamed. It is time for the President to put the power of the White House behind the passage of legislation that would give the right of full federal equality to LGBT Americans. As a community, it is our

promise and our obligation to continue the work of holding both the President and Congress accountable for the inalienable human rights, dignities, and freedoms we all deserve."

He did not, as some LGBT activists had urged, set a new goal for Congress—repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

Obama did include an openly gay man as one of his special guests in the House visitors' gal-

lery Tuesday night.

The man was Daniel Hernandez, Jr., who was singled out by many news accounts as one of the heroes to take action during the Jan. 8 shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, Ariz. Hernandez, who was serving as an intern in Giffords' Tucson office, rushed to her side and provided first aid that many have said saved the congresswoman's life.

A number of Twitter messages from various people noted that Tuesday was also Hernandez's 21st birthday. One Twitter message was from the account of Rep. Giffords, saying: "From the entire Giffords team: Happy 21st Birthday Daniel Hernandez! Sounds like you have fun plans tonight :)"

CNN indicated it was the first Twitter message from Giffords' account since she was critically injured in the shooting. Giffords is still recovering from her wounds and is at a rehabilitation hospital in Texas.

Cameras scanning the gallery showed Hernandez early during the broadcast of the State of the Union. But Hernandez appeared to be standing near the back of the gallery, not seated near First Lady Michelle Obama, as expected.

In response to concerns about the hostile political environment, many members of Congress eschewed the usual seating arrangement of Re-

publicans on one side and Democrats on the other, and sat together.

Three of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices chose not to take seats at all and did not attend the State of the Union address. They were the three most conservative—Justices Antonin Scalia, Sam Alito and Clarence Thomas.

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U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

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# Prominent Ugandan activist killed; newspaper, U.S. evangelicals blamed

BY REX WOCKNER

Prominent Ugandan gay activist David Kato was killed in his home Jan. 26, just 23 days after winning a lawsuit against a tabloid newspaper that published his picture and pictures of other gays along with the headline "Hang Them."

Police said a robber entered Kato's home near Kampala early in the afternoon, struck him in the head with a hammer, and left in a vehicle. They later arrested Kato's driver and are looking for his handyman, who they said is an ex-con. Kato died en route to a hospital, according to Human Rights Watch.

"David Kato's death is a tragic loss to the human rights community," said HRW's senior Africa researcher, Maria Burnett. "David had faced the increased threats to Ugandan LGBT people bravely and will be sorely missed."

Kato was the advocacy officer for the organization Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG). He had been a leading voice in the fight against the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which has been before Uganda's parliament since October 2009.

The legislation would imprison for life anyone convicted of "the offense of homosexuality," punish "aggravated homosexuality" (repeat offenses, or having gay sex while being HIV-positive) with the death penalty, forbid "promotion of homosexuality" and incarcerate gay-rights defenders, and jail individuals in positions of authority for up to three years if they fail to report within 24 hours the existence of all LGBT people or sympathizers known to them.

Kato was one of three plaintiffs in the recent successful lawsuit against Uganda's Rolling Stone newspaper, which published photos, names and addresses of numerous gay people, including Kato, along with a headline that said, "Hang Them." Kato's photo was on the cover.

The Kampala High Court ruled that the plaintiffs suffered violations of their constitutional rights to life and to privacy of the person and the home, and ordered the newspaper, which has no relation to the U.S. Rolling Stone, to pay each plaintiff \$643 plus court costs.

"(P)ublishing the identities of the applicants and exposing their homes coupled with the explicit call to hang them because 'they are after our kids,' the respondents extracted the applicants from the other members of the community who are regarded as worthy, in equal measure, of human dignity and who ought to be treated as worthy of dignity and respect," the court said. "Clearly the call to hang gays in dozens tends to tremendously threaten their right to human dignity. ... (T)he exposure, of the identities of the persons and homes of the applicants for the



David Kato.

purposes of fighting gayism and the activities of gays, as can easily be seen from the general outlook of the impugned publication, threaten the rights of the applicants to privacy of the person and their homes."

The newspaper article said, in part: "The mighty Rolling Stone is glad to reveal some of the most horrible secrets in gay community, which is bent on recruiting at least one million members by 2012. Dishearteningly, gays are after young kids, who are easily brainwashed towards bisexual orientation. ... The leaked pictures of Uganda's top homosexuals and lesbians have renewed calls for the strengthening of the war against the rampage that threatens the future of our generation by hanging gays. 'Unless government takes a bold step by hanging dozens of homosexuals, the vice will continue eating up the moral fibre and culture of our great nation,' ... said a radical church leader who preferred anonymity."

In a statement, SMUG said that Kato "has been receiving death threats since his face was put on the front page of Rolling Stone magazine, which called for his death and the death of all homosexuals."

Val Kalenda, board chair of Freedom and Roam Uganda, blamed Kato's killing on "the hatred planted in Uganda by (visiting) U.S. evangelicals in 2009."

"The Ugandan government and the so-called U.S. evangelicals must take responsibility for David's blood!" she said.

Some U.S. news reports and gay activists have blamed the U.S. visitors for inspiring the Anti-Homosexuality Bill during their visits to the country.

"David was a true hero, a man who gave his energy and finally his life for others' freedoms," said Scott Long, who headed HRW's LGBT Rights Division for several years. "The foreign Christian leaders who have supported the spread of murderous homophobia in Uganda ... should search their consciences today and beg forgiveness."

According to Political Research Associates: "The targeting of Kato and other LGBT Ugandans follows an intense demonization campaign fostered by right-wing Christian activists from the United

Feb. 2, 2011

States. A March 2009 conference in Kampala ... featured notorious American anti-gay campaigners, who promoted the idea of a sinister global homosexual conspiracy to corrupt Uganda. Conference speakers advocated parliamentary action to thwart this 'international gay agenda' (and) met with Ugandan lawmakers and government officials, some of whom drafted Parliament's infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill."

In a statement, SMUG Executive Director Frank Mugisha vowed to carry on Kato's activism.

"No form of intimidation will stop our cause," he said. "The death of David will only be honored when the struggle for justice and equality is won. David is gone and many of us will follow, but the struggle will be won. David wanted to see a Uganda where all people will be treated equally despite their sexual orientation."

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a statement that said, in part: "David Kato tirelessly devoted himself to improving the lives of others. As an advocate for the group Sexual Minorities Uganda, he worked to defend the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. His efforts resulted in groundbreaking recognition for Uganda's LGBT community, including the Uganda Human Rights Commission's October 2010 statement on the unconstitutionality of Uganda's draft 'anti-homosexuality bill' and the Ugandan High Court's January 3 ruling safeguarding all Ugandans' right to privacy and the preservation of human dignity. His tragic

death underscores how critical it is that both the government and the people of Uganda, along with the international community, speak out against the discrimination, harassment and intimidation of Uganda's LGBT community, and work together to ensure that all individuals are accorded the same rights and dignity to which each and every person is entitled."

President Barack Obama said: "I am deeply saddened to learn of the murder of David Kato. In Uganda, David showed tremendous courage in speaking out against hate. He was a powerful advocate for fairness and freedom. The United States mourns his murder, and we recommit ourselves to David's work. At home and around the world, LGBT persons continue to be subjected to unconscionable bullying, discrimination and hate. In the weeks preceding David Kato's murder in Uganda, five members of the LGBT community in Honduras were also murdered. It is essential that the governments of Uganda and Honduras investigate these killings and hold the perpetrators accountable. LGBT rights are not special rights; they are human rights. My administration will continue to strongly support human rights and assistance work on behalf of LGBT persons abroad. We do this because we recognize the threat faced by leaders like David Kato, and we share their commitment to advancing freedom, fairness and equality for all."

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

## Russia appeals Euro Court's Pride ban ruling

On the last possible day, the Russian government on Jan. 22 appealed a European Court of Human Rights ruling from last October that struck down Moscow's yearly bans of public gay pride events.

The government asked the court's Grand Chamber to reconsider the ruling that had been made by a smaller group of the court's judges.

Plaintiff Nikolai Alekseev, founder of Moscow Pride, predicted the Grand Chamber would deny the request for a rehearing within two to three months, "which means the verdict will come into force before the sixth Moscow Pride on May 28," he said.

In its decision, the court said that former Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's routine bans of gay pride violated guarantees of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the areas of freedom of assembly and association, right to an effective remedy and prohibition of discrimination.

The court ordered payment to Alekseev of 12,000 euros (\$16,313) in damages and 17,510 euros in costs and expenses.

The judges rejected Moscow's excuses for the bans, which included the alleged need to protect public order, health, morals and the rights and freedoms of others—as well as the desire to prevent riots.

In reality, Luzhkov had vowed to never allow a gay pride parade in Moscow no matter what. He called gay parades "satanic" and "weapons of mass destruction," and called gay people "faggots" ("gomiki").

"(T)he main reason for the bans on the gay marches had been the authorities' disapproval of demonstrations which, they considered, promoted homosexuality," the court's registrar said in a summary of the ruling. "In particular, the court could not disregard the strong personal opinions publicly expressed by the Moscow mayor and the undeniable link between those statements and the bans. Consequently, the court found that, as the government had not justified their bans in a way compatible with the convention requirements, Mr. Alekseev had suffered discrimination because of his sexual orientation."

At the time, Alekseev said: "This decision is a major victory for us because no judge, no lawyer and no politician will any longer be able to tell us that the bans of our events were law-

ful. This decision is the first to recognize that the Russian law on freedom of assembly contradicts with the European Convention. It is a gift to all democrats and human rights activists in Russia."

Small groups of LGBT activists defied Luzhkov's bans each of the past five years, provoking him to send riot police to arrest and sometimes beat them. The gatherings also were routinely attacked by anti-gay hooligans.

## Philippines activists request international hearing

Activists in the Philippines are seeking international pressure to encourage a committee vote in the House of Representatives on a bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

House Bill 1483, "An Act Defining Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Providing Penalties Therefor," would protect gay and trans people in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, health care, transportation, social services, civil service, the military and other areas.

"Discriminatory acts against LGBT citizens in the Philippines are rampant yet are largely unreported and not provided corrective measures," said the activist group ProGay Philippines. "Gay men are constantly harassed by police officers, transgendered women are not allowed to use their preferred gender on identity papers, and lesbians are paid lower wages. These are the result of the lack of protective laws that can punish discrimination and allow the courts and government agencies to receive complaints. ... We need your help in getting our honorable representatives in the House of Representatives to pass this bill through the Committee on Justice quickly so that the entire House can vote this bill and send it to the president for signing."

To e-mail the Justice Committee, visit [tinyurl.com/philcoj](http://tinyurl.com/philcoj). Address comments to the committee chair, the Hon. Niel Tupas Jr., and the committee secretary, Narcisa Guevarra. For a sample letter, see [tinyurl.com/progafil](http://tinyurl.com/progafil). For more information on the bill, see [tinyurl.com/filbill](http://tinyurl.com/filbill).

—Rex Wockner  
Assistance: Bill Kelley

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# LGBT group forms to back Emanuel in mayoral race



Rahm Emanuel at the Jan. 28 press conference launching the LGBT and Allied Committee for Rahm Emanuel. Photo by Tracy Baim

BY TRACY BAIM

More than 200 people have signed up for the new LGBT Committee for Rahm in Rahm Emanuel's race for Chicago mayor, and about 50 of them showed up for a press conference at the Center on Halsted Jan. 28. The committee also includes straight allies.

The location was symbolic, since as a U.S. representative, Emanuel helped secure a \$1.25 million federal earmark to help build the LGBT community center.

Former Center on Halsted Board Chair Robert Kohl, co-chair of Emanuel's campaign, introduced the committee to the press, which was out in force the day after Emanuel learned from the state Supreme Court that he will remain on the mayoral ballot. Community activist Mona Noriega introduced Emanuel, saying she liked his sometimes controversial style.

Emanuel pointed to his accomplishments, including the center's funding and working to eliminate bullying in schools. He mentioned the state's civil-unions bill but said he looked forward to lobbying in Springfield for full marriage rights. He mentioned the accomplishments of the Obama White House on LGBT issues, while Emanuel was chief of staff, including repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," passing the hate-crimes law and issuing an executive order banning

hospitals that receive federal funds from discriminating against LGBT families—something Emanuel said he pushed Obama to do after hearing about the Janice Langbehn-Lisa Pond case in Florida.

Emanuel said he will keep on course with Mayor Richard Daley's progress on LGBT issues, and said he would take it further, possibly including city pension benefits for gay partners. He also promised to continue working to make the police department more accountable on transgender issues.

All four of Chicago's openly gay elected officials are backing Emanuel: Ald. Tom Tunney, state Rep. Greg Harris, state Rep. Deborah Mell and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Debra Shore. Only Harris missed the event, due to a scheduling conflict. Other politicians attending include state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, Ald. Mary Ann Smith, state Sen. Heather Steans and former state Sen. Carol Ronen. Mayor Daley's liaison to the LGBT community Bill Greaves, and Kelly Cassidy and Veronita Gray of the state's attorney's office were all at the endorsement event as well, but as individuals.

Community activists at the event included: Pat Ewert, Modesto "Tico" Valle, Clark Pellett, Jim Bennett, Israel Wright, Jr., Dane Tidwell, Paul Fairchild, Jill Metz, Ronna Hoffberg, John

Feb. 2, 2011

Barry, Dave Reithoffer, Michael Bauer, Roger Simon, Dave Samber, Vicki Raymont, Kevin Boyer, Norman Sandfield, Bill Kelley, Dalila Fridi, Gary Chichester, Tom Chaderjian, Brandon Neese, Stan Sloan, Laura Ricketts, Beth Plotner, Rhett Lindsay, Jerry Pagorek and Darr Gapshis. An official list of all Emanuel LGBT and allied supporters is on the Emanuel campaign website.

Kohl announced there would be an LGBT fundraiser for Emanuel Feb. 11, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at The Ivy Room at Tree Studios, 12 E. Ohio. There is

a \$30 minimum donation, and RSVP is required at <http://www.chicagoforrahm.com/LGBT>. Kohl and Pellett are event co-chairs, along with Mark Cozzi, Fred Eychaner, Todd Hamilton, Ray Koenig III, Phil Lumpkin, Gail Morse and Lauren Verdich, Tom O'Briant and David Boul, and Laura Ricketts.

A mayoral forum sponsored by more than 32 LGBT groups is also being planned, Wed., Feb. 9, and Emanuel is expected to attend.

## Choi refuses to repay Army

The U.S. Army has ordered out gay activist Lt. Dan Choi to pay \$2,500—what it calls the "unearned portion of your enlistment or re-enlistment bonus. However, Choi said he will not pay because he was discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

In an open letter to President Obama, Choi wrote, "I received a \$2,500 bill from your Defense Department Finance and Debt Services. Specifically, you claim payment for 'the unearned portion' of my Army contract. Six months after my discharge under the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy I have tried to move forward with my life, and I was inspired by your clarion calls for our progress as one nation towards a more just society. I have served my country in combat and I have tried to live my life by the values I learned at West Point in continued service to our nation. ... Today I also witness the disgrace of a country that perpetually discovers methods to punish its own citizens for taking a moral stand.

"...It would be easy to pay the \$2500 bill and be swiftly done with this diseased chapter of my life, where I sinfully deceived and tolerated self-hatred under Don't Ask Don't Tell. Many thousands have wrestled with their responsibilities and expedient solutions when confronted with issues of this magnitude. I



**Lt. Dan Choi.** Photo by John Fenoglio

understand you also wrestle with issues of our equality. But I choose to cease wrestling, to cease the excuses, to cease the philosophical grandstanding and ethical gymnastics of political expediency in the face of moral duty. My obligations to take a stand, knowing all the continued consequences of my violations, are clear.

"I refuse to pay your claim."



Mona Noriega (above) introduces Rahm Emanuel. Photo by Tracy Baim

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# Illinois civil-unions bill becomes law

BY KATE SOSIN

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn faced a standing ovation so loud he was forced to shush a packed room at the Chicago Cultural Center as he stepped onto the stage to sign the state's civil-unions into law Jan. 31.

"This is the moment that will be remembered," said Gov. Quinn before he sat down to sign. "On this Jan. 31, in the year of 2011 when we came together here in Illinois, in the Land of Lincoln and made this happen."

More than 1,000 people packed the downtown building for the event.

The Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act (SB 1716) grants same-sex couples all of the same state rights as married Illinois couples.

"I think the greatest thing about Illinois is that we're a welcoming, hospitable, accepting place," said Quinn. He called Illinois "something special. Because we believe in civil rights and we believe in civil unions."

Present were LGBTQ activists, parents, couples, reporters, politicians and veterans from across the state. The GAR Rotunda, on the fourth floor of the Cultural Center, was so crowded that audience members pressed into the back of the room and lined the side aisles.

Most of the attention was on State Rep. Greg Harris, who sponsored the bill in the Illinois House of Representatives. Harris appeared exuberant. "I couldn't be happier," Harris told Windy City Times. "I am very, very proud. If you look at the crowd, you can see how significant this is. There are people from all over the state who have come here because this is changing their lives."

State Sen. David Koehler, D-Peoria, was also recognized for his sponsorship of the bill in the senate. Koehler said he was "honored" to have been a part of the legislation and dedicated to the bill to his own daughter, who is gay. "It's through her eyes that I see this," Koehler said. "Justice looks a bit better [today]."

Several LGBTQ groups participated in the program leading up to the signing. Jim Darby and other members of American Veterans for Equal Rights led the room in the pledge of allegiance. The Chicago Gay Men's Chorus preceded the event with a song called "Brand New Day," and attendees clapped and sang along, took pictures together, and congratulated one another.

"I knew that it would happen," said Stacy Fox, 29, who attended the signing with her partner. "But I'm actually surprised it happened so soon. I thought it would be five or 10 years down the road." Fox will unionize with her partner, Rebecca Siegel in July. She hopes her family will see her relationship as legitimate a result. The two



**Left:** Laura Ricketts and Fred Eychaner attend the signing. **Right:** Pepe Pena, Art Johnston and Dawn Clark Netsch are all smiles. Photos by Hal Baim. Hundreds of more photos by Kat Fitzgerald and Hal Baim at [www.windy citymediagroup.com](http://www.windy citymediagroup.com)



were engaged in October, but never imagined their ceremony would be legally recognized.

Still, an overwhelming sentiment among attendees was that civil unions were not the end point, but a stepping stone for many who want same-sex marriage legalized. "There is still work to be done," Harris told the audience. "Things can get better."

Illinois civil unions will entitle same-sex (and heterosexual) couples most of the benefits of marriage. However, Illinois civil unions might not be recognized in states that do not offer similar protections for same-sex couples. Same-sex couples with Illinois civil unions may still need to file power of attorneys, single-parent adoptions, and other measures to ensure they are protected if they leave the state.

Quinn did not comment on whether or not he would support same-sex marriage legislation, but several speakers encouraged the crowd to push for "full equality," suggesting that while historic, SB 1716, was not enough.

Rick Garcia, the now-former Equality Illinois public policy director, shared similar sentiments with Windy City Times. Garcia, who was seen by many as instrumental in the passage of SB 1716, was controversially ousted from Equality Illinois in December. He expressed his excitement over the signing and fiercely reaffirmed his commit-

ment to fighting for same-sex marriage without Equality Illinois.

"I am overwhelmed," Garcia said before the signing. "This is the culmination of so many people's hard work and so many things. So we're one step closer to full equality in the great state of Illinois. We still have a way to go. I'm not going anywhere."

Garcia was not included in the program, but a mention of his name by openly lesbian state Rep. Deborah Mell caused a thunderous round of applause and a partial standing ovation, during which Garcia tearfully blew a kiss to the audience.

Throughout the ceremony, the audience members screamed, laughed, jumped up and down, sang, cried and even shouted praises at Harris. Reporters and photographers climbed onto chairs to see the governor introduce Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, state Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka, state Treasurer Dan Rutherford and others. But when Quinn returned to the microphone and announced he was ready to sign the civil-union bill into law, the rowdy room quieted.

**Turn to page 18**

## LGBT coalition to host mayoral forum

CHICAGO—A broad coalition of Chicago-area LGBTQ organizations are hosting a Chicago Mayoral Candidates Forum on LGBT issues.

The forum will be held Wed., Feb. 9, at Adler School of Professional Psychology, 17 N. Dearborn. The coalition is offering the candidates the opportunity to speak directly to the LGBTQ community and to educate voters as to their vision of the office of the mayor of Chicago with a focus on issues directly impacting LGBTQ people. Moderating the event will be Tracy Baim, publisher and executive editor at Windy City Media Group.

All the major candidates—Gery Chico, Rahm Emanuel, Carol Moseley-Braun, Miguel del Valle, William Walls and Patricia Van Pelt-Watkins—have accepted the coalition's invitation to participate in the Forum.

The coalition is coordinated by leaders from the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Affinity Community Services, Amigas Latinas, the Association for Latino Men for Action, Equality Illinois and LGBT Change. The organizers' goal for this forum is to educate the community on the candidates' positions and commitments to LGBT inclusion in city policy. This forum is the culmination of a three-month long process which included community forums held across the city of Chicago that aimed to inform and educate the community and candidates on LGBTQ concerns via issue questionnaires. Completed questionnaires, as well as additional information on the process, are available at [www.eqil.org/NextMayor.html](http://www.eqil.org/NextMayor.html).

This is the first time that such a broad coalition of LGBT organizations has come together to participate in the electoral process.

The coalition includes:  
 Affinity Community Services  
 Amigas Latinas  
 Association of Latino Men for Action (ALMA)  
 AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
 Bisexual Queer Alliance  
 Boricua Pride  
 Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus  
 Chicago Transgender Coalition  
 Center on Halsted  
 Equality Illinois  
 I2I: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago  
 Illinois Safe Schools Alliance  
 Illinois Gender Advocates  
 Join the Impact Chicago  
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 Orgullo En Accion  
 POW POW Inc.  
 Public Pride Alliance  
 The Civil Rights Agenda  
 The Literary Exchange  
 TransActions  
 Video Action League  
 Windy City Black LGBT Pride  
 Call the sponsoring groups for RSVP info, which is expected to be released by one week prior to the forum.



Former Equality Illinois Public Policy Director Rick Garcia and state Rep. Photo by Hal Baim

# Transgenders involved in name-change project

BY KATE SOSIN

On Jan. 28, a group of transgender people did something that many of them had done already—they filed name changes. This time, however, the paperwork was not for them, but for eight other gender-variant people new to the process.

The day marked the launch of The Name Change Mobilization, a project of the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois (TJLP), an organization that provides transgender people with free criminal defense and other legal services. Every last Friday of the month in 2011, TJLP attorneys, interns and volunteers plan to assist gender-variant people in legally changing their names. Jan. 28 marked the first of those days, and TJLP advocates at the Richard J. Daley Center appeared excited.

"We're trying to help folks feel fabulous and amazing and not restricted," said Owen Daniel-McCarter, a TJLP attorney who developed the idea for the project in conversations with young people at Broadway Youth Center (BYC).

At a small table on the 12th floor, TJLP interns and volunteers sat waiting for new applicants. Two volunteers translated paperwork, written in English, into Spanish. At the counter behind them, a TJLP advocate stood waiting with an applicant. Daniel-McCarter described the scene as "joyous."

"So many of the folks who are helping do name changes have gone through the name changes themselves," he said. Daniel-McCarter said TJLP wants transgender to be able to support each other through the process, rather than relying on attorneys, judges and clerks.

"The fact that you even have to go through

a process to change our names is really complicated," said Daniel-McCarter. Daniel-McCarter said that a host of barriers at the Daley Center from the possibility of encountering transphobic judges, to a building full of police, lawyers and judges, can discourage transgender people from changing their names, especially transgender people who have been incarcerated before. Further, Illinois name changes cost more than 500 dollars, money that many gender-variant people don't have.

"A lot of trans folks are low-income or no-income because of systemic discrimination," Daniel-McCarter said. Along with helping file name changes, TJLP interns showed applicants how to file fee waivers. The organization also paid for necessary copies and notarizations.

Most who applied for name changes with TJLP assistance were paired with volunteer advocates, but McCarter and TJLP attorney Avi Rudnick remained on hand to help with more difficult cases.

But more important than logistics, said Baylie Roth, a TJLP intern, is the backing of other transgender people through the process. "It's scary here," said Roth, pointing up and down the tall hallway on the 12th floor, the constant clicking of high heels and leather shoes behind him. "It's just nice to have folks support you, to know that there are just people who understand here for you."

McCarter expects that TJLP will help 100-150 people change their names in 2011. Those interested in volunteering for the mobilization or changing their names can e-mail namechange@tjlp.org or visit <http://www.tjlp.org>.



Owen Daniel-McCarter (center, back row), along with Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois. Photo by Kate Sosin

## Sotomayor's commentary

©1990  
SOTOMAYOR



This cartoon from the archives of Lori Cannon, by the late cartoonist and AIDS activist Danny Sotomayor, perfectly reflects the ongoing struggle the LGBT community has with infighting and cannibalizing its own. Lori submitted the cartoon and notes the 19th anniversary of Danny's death from AIDS is Feb. 5.

## Town hall looks at civil-union measure

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

The Center on Halsted held a town hall billed as the "State of the (Civil) Union Address" Jan. 27. More than 40 individuals attended.

The panelists were Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov, DePaul University professor Elizabeth Kelly, state Rep. Greg Harris and attorney Ray Koenig. In December the Illinois Senate approved a bill that makes civil unions legal for same-sex couples throughout the state.

The event was organized to answer questions from members of the community about what the law does and does not do. Once Gov. Pat Quinn signs the bill the law goes into effect June 1. State Rep. Greg Harris, who authored and was a sponsor of the bill, talked about the history of getting political support for the legislation. He explained that when they changed the language

from gay marriage to civil unions, poll numbers increased in their favor.

Attorney Ray Koenig clarified certain specifics, saying that a civil union would provide gay couples the same state rights as those with a marriage license. Gay couples with marriage licenses from any of the six other states and districts (Vermont, Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Washington, D.C.) where gay marriage is legal would now be recognized as a civil union in Illinois and vice versa. However, an Illinois civil union is not recognized outside of any of those states.

Both Harris and Koenig cautioned that it would take a while before agencies, such as hospitals, became more informed about the law, and that those who seek to marry should get a power of attorney. Rights related to health are one of the 648 state rights, benefits and protections that will go into effect, but there are still more than a thousand federal marriage rights that will not. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is one of the big legal obstacles for gay couples today.



From left:  
Bernard  
Cherkasov,  
Beth Kelly,  
Greg Harris  
and Ray  
Koenig III.  
Photo by  
Emmanuel  
Garcia

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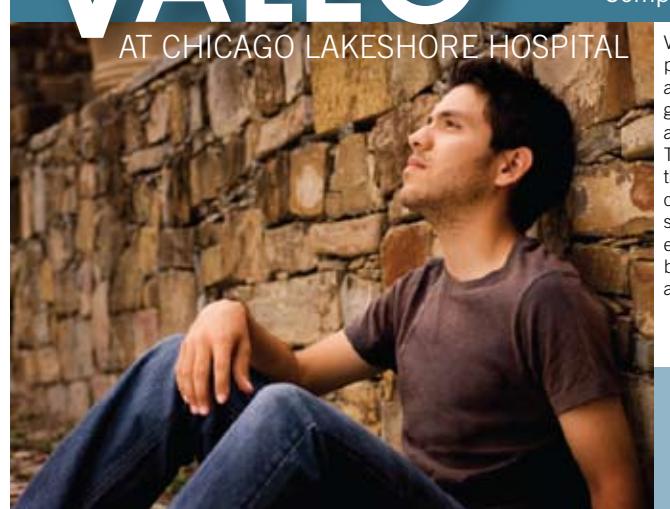
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*Windy City Times interviews  
three gay candidates  
for 46th Ward alderman*  
**ELECTIONS'11:  
46TH WARD**

# James Cappleman

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAUT

By practically all measures, 2010 was a pretty good year for James Cappleman. In addition to emerging as one of the leading candidates to succeed Helen Shiller as the 46th Ward's new alderman—a feat he almost accomplished when he first ran against the incumbent in 2007—the 58-year-old social worker also is newly engaged to his longtime partner, Richard Thale. Thale proposed the night of Nov. 30, when the Illinois House approved a civil-unions bill.

But the bulk of the wedding planning will have to wait until after Feb. 22 for Cappleman, who is contending with 10 other challengers—including two other openly gay or lesbian candidates—in what is arguably the city's most watched aldermanic race. Windy City Times recently spoke with Cappleman about his campaign.

**Windy City Times: What motivated you to give this race a second try?**

James Cappleman: For the same reason why I ran the first time. I've been a community activist for over a decade and I've worked on numerous projects related to public safety and encouraging more economic development in the ward. It's been through my work with the community—with Heather Steans, Greg Harris and the police commanders in the 20th and 23rd districts—that I've learned what works and what doesn't work in helping move this ward forward. I'm running again to be an advocate for the community, but I want to do it on a full-time basis now.

**WCT: How does this campaign compare to 2007, when you challenged Helen Shiller?**

JC: It's much harder now because I know what I need to do to win. I ran a really good campaign last time and was outspent by hundreds of thousands of dollars, but running a good campaign means you have to focus on using your time well, getting those volunteers and getting money. More people living in the ward have contributed money to my campaign in 2010 than all the other candidates combined. People in the community know me a lot better now and they're throwing their support behind me. We're feeling really good about how this is going, but I'm not taking anything for granted. I'm working like I'm way behind, but I know that is not the case.

**WCT: What are some of the biggest concerns you've heard from LGBT people living in the ward and how will you address them?**

JC: The biggest concern I've heard over and over again is focused on public safety. We've had a lot of violence in the ward this past year—the last couple of years—and I think there's a reality there and then there's a perception. I think both have to be addressed because we act on what we believe and people are going to avoid shopping in the area because they have the perception that there's a lot of crime.

We're finding that there's a lot of people in gangs that are using retaliation against people



James Cappleman. Photo from Cappleman

in other gangs and that's what really needs to be focused on. We can use more police to address that. I believe that will and has helped tremendously, but we need to look at what led some of these people to join gangs. Using evidence-based best practices, we know those who are more likely to join gangs have intense anger management issues and we know teachers can identify their students with those issues early on. What helps kids, especially older kids, deal with their anger is the use of peer relationships. ... I would like to see them working with some of the neighborhood businesses and service providers, not only helping them out but giving them an opportunity to have an adult mentor who's going to give them some hope they can get job training and better their lives as well.

**WCT: There are many social service programs based in the ward, including HIV/AIDS agencies, who are being particularly threatened by the current economic conditions. How will you work to protect them?**

JC: I work for ACCESS Community Health Network, which offers clinics in low-income areas, and we are hurting because the state is so far being in reimbursement, too. It's becoming a crisis and the sad point of the matter is that if we don't address these peoples' needs with HIV, we'll pay in the long run. I'm a huge advocate for healthcare, which is why I've been involved in the non-profit sector for the past 21 years.

**WCT: Currently Chicago's only other openly gay alderman is Tom Tunney. Has he offered you any advice?**

JC: He has offered me advice, including advice I took back in 2007. The advice given to me was that the 46th Ward is an exceptionally diverse ward, including some groups who are in conflict with each other ... For example, some people are saying we need more affordable housing and others are saying "absolutely no" to more affordable housing in the 46th Ward ... My stance is that we can have affordable housing, but we need to make sure we do it right, locating it in a neighborhood with low poverty and making sure it's designed well. My job is to work with all of these different groups and bring them all together. I've had the experience of doing that.

**WCT: What sets you apart from the other candidates in this race and why are you the best choice?**

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JC: What sets me apart is that I am the only candidate who has been a community activist in the ward for over a decade, doing it all as a volunteer and doing it while also having a long history of collaborating with so many people in the neighborhood.

I've been somebody who is a doer rather than a talker. You'll see some of these candidates making these wild suggestions about what they can do to make this ward better and, honestly, when

you start really looking closely at how that's going to work, it falls apart. It falls apart because they don't have the experience of working with the community and with its elected officials to find out what really does and doesn't work. I have that experience.

Visit <http://www.jamesforchange.com> for more information on Cappleman's campaign and platform.

## ELECTIONS'11: 46TH WARD

# Emily Stewart

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Emily Stewart may be one of the younger candidates, but she will be the first to tell you that youth does not equal naivete. Stewart, an out lesbian and corporate finance attorney (and one of 11 candidates in the race for 46th Ward alderman), has a business and community background that she feels will serve her well should she become alderman.

Windy City Times talked with Stewart (who was recently endorsed by the Chicago Sun-Times) in her Lake View office about several issues, including her background, a school for LGBTQ students and Rahm Emanuel.

**WCT: Your background is pretty interesting. Could you tell our readers about it?**

Emily Stewart: Sure. I was born and raised in Uptown on Argyle Street and it was a pretty rough neighborhood back then. I played soccer on the lakefront. In addition, I went to Japanese school at the Buddhist Temple.

**WCT: What was that like?**

ES: Well, my mom had gone to the same school so I had a reputation to live up to, because everyone loved her. But I think I missed the mark a little bit. [Laughs] But it was great; I learned about Japanese culture and the language.

So my grandmother was a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, and I actually have a very religious family back in Japan; I was just back there recently. So it was great growing up. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to do a lot of activities with neighborhood kids because my parents tried to shield me from everything that was going on. Then I went on to St. Ignatius, NYU and Northwestern University School of Law.

**WCT: What compelled you to enter in this race?**

ES: The board has been divided for so long, and politics have gotten so ugly. I'm sure you've seen the footage of Helen [Shiller] running from the entrance of Truman College to her car. So, I really think that there needs to be someone who can unite all the residents of the ward—and I didn't see someone who represented all the interests in the ward.

The second reason I ran is because I'm very concerned about our budget, and none of the candidates talked about that before I got into the race. That's been my major focus since day one.

**WCT: Tell me about your political experience.**

ES: I actually think my corporate-finance background—sitting with business people to come to a solution about their problems—is more relevant than my past experience working on campaigns. I did work on one, down in Galesburg, Ill., and I worked on a U.S. Senate campaign in Chicago.

**WCT: You mentioned the budget earlier. Do you feel that is the most critical issue for the 46th Ward?**

ES: I think it's one of the most critical issues. The thing is that budget affects so many other things. If you don't have a truly balanced budget—Mayor Daley is often quoted as saying, "We have a balanced budget," but that's because he's dipped into reserves to pay off the deficit. I think [budget] affects job creation, business development, crime.

One of the things I notice when I walk through Uptown is that I know who the drug dealers are, and so do the residents; they can point them out to you on the street. So the issue is literally that open. It's not that the police don't know; I really believe it's a lack of resources, and that's something I want to focus on.

**WCT: Your detractors are going to say you're young [30] and inexperienced. What would you say to those critics?**

ES: Well, I would say that my professional background and my education are very important; the quality of [those things] is not something everyone brings to the table. In addition, some of the most powerful and effective aldermen started when they were very young: Ed Burke, Gene Schulter. I don't think [age] has anything to do with it; a lot of people be-



Emily Stewart. Photo by Andrew Davis

lieve that I bring a mastery of a lot of the issues to the tables—and a lot of the candidates don't bring that.

**WCT: Could you talk about the extent of your involvement with the LGBT community, including organizations you've been involved with?**

ES: My main involvement with the LGBT community has been professional in the sense that I've worked with my old law firm to actively hire qualified LGBTQ members and mentoring them.

But the LGBTQ community has given so much to me. I grew up going over to Cafe Pride, on Addison and Halsted, every Friday for years. I don't think I could ever repay the community for what it's done for me. [The cafe] was such a wonderful place to be.

**WCT: What do you think about the fact that there are so many out candidates in this race? Do you think it might provide some sort of edge? Do you think it won't matter?**

ES: As a gay person, when I was growing up I was always looking for role models so I do think it's important for gay youth to have these role models, and I think [44th Ward Alderman] Tom Tunney is one of them; he definitely broke barriers. Do I think it'd be great to have more [out candidates]? Absolutely. I think it'd be great to have a lesbian on city council.

I don't think it's going to give people any particular edge, because there are so many of us. But it's a testimony to the diversity of this ward and this community.

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UIC

Turn to page 27

**ELECTIONS '11:  
46TH WARD**

# Don Nowotny

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Openly gay candidate Don Nowotny has been superintendent for the 46th Ward for almost two decades—and during that time, he feels that he has fostered relationship and seen how this district can achieve progress. (He went on leave last Sept. 30 to campaign full-time.) He is running to be Alderman Helen Shiller's successor on a platform of public safety, low-income housing and economic development.

Nowotny—who said that he is sometimes called “the ponytailed man” because people may not remember his name—met with Windy City Times recently at his office. During the discussion, he talked about his background, the platform and hypothetical criminal investigations.

**Windy City Times: Just so that people know, what does a ward superintendent do?**

Don Nowotny: Each ward has a superintendent who is directly responsible for street cleaning; garbage and sanitation issues; and snow removal—and, then, works with other departments to bring city services to the ward.

**WCT: So how long have you lived in this ward?**

DN: I lived at 4300 N. Marine, which is a vintage condominium, for about the last 10 years. Before then, I lived farther north in Uptown on Argyle and Marine for about five years.

**WCT: So you've seen a lot of changes in this ward. You announced your intention to enter this race long before Helen Shiller said she would step down. What compelled you to enter?**

DN: Well, I think it was time for me to move on from Streets & Sanitation, and I enjoy working with all the residents of the ward, bringing city services and dealing with quality-of-life issues. As ward superintendent, I've had a great opportunity to work with all people from across the ward, from condo owners to [those] in high rises and even the homeless people. And I think what we all need to do is work together to move the ward forward.

The ward has been divided quite a bit in the last number of years. Having the opportunity to work with everybody, I think we can work together to make this a better ward.

**WCT: Divided, how?**

DN: Usually by economic level.

**WCT: How much political experience do you have?**

DN: [Laughs] Well, I was high school president. When I came out as a gay man in the late '80s, I got involved in the community; before then, I was involved in professional organizations and environmental groups. After coming out, I was on the board of Howard Brown [Health Center] for a while; then, I helped start the Illinois Gay Rodeo Association and then I got involved in the Illinois Federation of Human Rights, which is the forerunner of Equality Illinois. Through that organization, I started getting involved in politics and, although I've never run for any political office, I've been involved.

The other thing is, in the condo building we live in, I've been on that board for nine years and the board president for two and a half years. I believe that is great training for alderman. Two and a half years I was vice president. the president resigned, the treasurer resigned, the property manager quit and the head janitor left; people were yelling at each other, and our building was on deferred maintenance for 20 years. Two and a half years later, we had our annual meeting in September; we did a \$1.5 million assessment, which nobody liked. But if you lay out all the facts and make [the residents] part of the process, people understand why things have to be done. Now, people are talking with each other, and are cordial again.

High-rises are like a neighborhood. We have



Don Nowotny. Photo by Andrew Davis

seniors on fixed incomes, we have unemployed people, we have foreclosures—people in high-rises sometimes are not the wealthy [ones] people think they are. So it's been good training for me because you're dealing with assessments and quality-of-life issues.

**WCT: So you see the condo and the association as a microcosm of the ward?**

DN: Yes, a little bit. But we have other issues, such as housing.

**WCT: Now, of course—to extend the metaphor a bit—you're possibly going to be interacting with 49 other condo presidents. Are you prepared to deal with all of the machinations that could happen in city council?**

DN: [Laughs] That's a very good question. I'm really excited about next May; we're going to have a new mayor for the first time in about 22 years, and we could have 15-20 new aldermen—and I will be very independent-minded. I will look to build coalitions, but I'm not just going to roll over and support something the mayor or other aldermen want if I don't believe in it.

**WCT: Even if that could come back to bite you?**

DN: Absolutely. As alderman, you have to think about what's best for the residents of the 46th Ward.

**WCT: I remember you launching your campaign at the European and U.S. Auto Service last May, and you talked about the issues in your platform. Which do you feel is the most important?**

DN: I think, right now, it's safety. We've been dealing with gang shootings; just a couple weeks ago we had a killing about two blocks from here over drug territory. People need to feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods—and this goes across all economic lines. We need to get a handle on the drugs and guns, and get them out of the ward.

**WCT: And how do you do that?**

DN: Right now, we're very lucky because Kathleen Boehmer, the commander of the 23rd [Precinct], is very hands-on. She's talked about putting in more police cameras as well as tying the business cameras at Truman [College] to the 9-1-1 center.

But the one thing that I've talked to her about that she's already started to do is identify problem areas in the ward, and then look at the buildings around those areas to determine if there are people living in those buildings who shouldn't be—and I'm not saying that all the

problems come from low-income areas. There are buildings that are well-run, like 920 Lakeside; it's a 200-unit Section 8 building. So my thought and the commander's thought is to start working with property managers to make sure that who is living [in a building] is supposed to be living there.

If the manager/owner wants to work with us, that's great. If they don't, an alderman can put pressure on the building—calling in other departments for inspections, calling in the fire department for inspections. That would force them into working with us.

**WCT: What about the LGBT residents of this ward? I didn't see a page devoted to LGBT issues on your page—was that a conscious choice?**

DN: I'm an open gay man. There's so much more to me than being a gay candidate. All of the residents are important to me, and I will fight for all of their rights. I believe that I will fight as hard for gay rights in the ward as I will for Hispanics or Asians or Buddhists or Native Americans. We have such a diverse ward that I want to represent them all.

**WCT: That was a nice aldermanic answer. [Nowotny laughs.] You mentioned that you were a Howard Brown board member. Obviously, the spotlight has been on Howard Brown recently. Did you take any lessons away from what's happened there?**

DN: [Beats desk repeatedly, smiling] Open transparency, open transparency, open transparency. And that's a good lesson for us in the 46th Ward, and in Chicago. There's been a lot of discussion about TIFs [tax-increment financing] recently and there are people who don't understand where the money is coming from and where the money is going. Decisions are made about zoning that the community is not part of, and I would be an alderman that would take a lot of input.

In the first 30 days, I would establish five standing committees: safety, economic development, zoning, education and health & welfare.

fare. But we might have to go outside and get some professionals for the economic development committee; we'd need urban planners and marketing people to create a master plan of the business streets of the ward.

My undergraduate degree is in landscape architecture from Iowa State, and I understand the value of master plans to bring in desirable retail and successful businesses to the ward. Along with safety, the more retail we get, the more people we get on the street and the more that pushes gangs out.

So getting the residents involved [is important].

**WCT: Let me ask you this: Do you believe that if an alderman is being investigated for illegal activity, he or she should step down while being investigated?**

DN: That's a very good question. If the process could be expedited, then "yes." But if it's a long, drawn-out process, I think that asking someone to step down when they're not really proven guilty is unfair. But if someone is accused from day one and it could go to trial or committee within 30 days, then I would say that person should step down—without pay.

**WCT: Are you behind any one mayoral candidate?**

DN: Not right now. I can work with any of the candidates, and I'm excited about having a new mayor and an independent city council.

**WCT: Is there anything you wanted to add?**

DN: I think the diversity of the ward is one of our strengths. We have Black, white, Latino, Asian, gay, straight people of every economic background and religion. Although that can be a challenge, I think it's our strength, and most of the ward residents like that. So it will be the challenge of the next alderman to unite people to live in harmony.

The way we do that is that, when there are issues, we get people to sit down, like a round-table. We, as a group, can come up with a compromise solution; we're all part of the process.

See <http://www.DonNowotny.com>.



For rates and availability contact:

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# CHM talks sex, language and identity

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Chicago History Museum (CHM) inaugurated the eighth year of its Out at CHM series with a "Sexicon: Language & Identity" program Jan. 27.

"Sexicon" featured a 10-member panel, each person talking briefly about the relevance of a particular word/term in their lives and identity formation. Erica Meiners, associate professor at Northeastern Illinois University and the moderator, introduced the evening's theme with a play on the term "Formerly Known As," which is also the name of a popular dance party on the first Thursday of every month at Big Chicks: "All queers are formerly known as ... language has been a marker and a tool for sovereignty and self-determination ... as simple as our ability to recover and also demarcate our tactics to produce pleasure, community and recognition."

Pointing to the ability of words to represent power, she noted examples such as that of feminists pushing for "Ms.," Latinos using Chicana/Chicano to signify a particular political identity, immigrant rights advocates using "undocumented" rather than "illegal," and anti-prison organizations advocating for "formerly incarcerated" over "ex-cons."

For some on the panel, their words meant reinventing and appropriating terms that have historically been used to demonize LGBTQ communities. Emilia Chico, an organizer with the Chicago Dyke March Collective, said "dyke" was "a word that helped me transform language into action." She recalled that her mother reminded her of a time when the word "ruined lives," but that she, Chico, went on anyway and felt empowered as she walked the streets of Chicago during the march "and the crowd goes fucking wild."

Kim Hunt, executive director of Affinity, similarly took "queer," and admitted that while she now embraced it, her initial encounter with the word made her cringe: "I could not figure out why anyone could want to call themselves queer when 'queer' had negative meanings." Hunt noted that the use of "queer" shifted between generations, and that she honored the experience of elders for whom the word still had negative connotations but also supported women in their 50s and younger who appropriated it as a word that made them feel "open, undefined, and free."

The singer and musician Scott Free took on "bear," as in, a gay man whose body type (larger and often more hirsute than is considered the norm) is both a proclamation of freedom from a muscular gay aesthetic and a fetish object in its own right. Reading through what he said was

culled from the Wikipedia entry on the subject, Free elicited laughter from the audience as he concluded that "when bears have their own porn category, you know they've arrived."

Chuck Renslow, activist and founder of the International Mr. Leather (IML) contest, explained the term "leather daddy," a dominant man who establishes often long-standing relationships with one or more submissive men in exchange for sexual and/or cultural mentorship. While studiously reading through what seemed like a complicated set of rules and established conventions of hierarchy and dominance that dictate the relationship, Renslow wryly noted, off-the-cuff, "I mean, it's not the Boy Scouts, even if it seems like it sometimes," and the audience burst into laughter.

Christina Kahrl, executive editor of Baseball Prospectus, a baseball think tank, spoke about the word "transsexual," noting that, unlike with "gay" or "lesbian," being in or out was not an option. Kahrl, who is MTF, said that she often found herself explaining the word and her identity to friends, trying to tell them, "This does not mean that you are just 'super-gay.'" She said that she was constantly deflecting stereotypes, beginning with her mother who declared, on hearing the news of her transition, "Well, you have to give up sports," or the colleague who exclaimed, "But you drink Guinness!" She concluded by saying, "I do not just wear the word transsexual; I own it."

A similar tone of ownership was struck by Michael Rivera, a design professional who spoke about "gay," and his coming out and moving from Cincinnati and then to Puerto Rico before finally coming to Chicago, and of how his various communities in the different places became more gay and less straight. He concluded with words that prompted much applause: "My word is 'gay.' I am gay."

The writer and spoken-word artist Michelle Renae took up another term denoting sexual identity, "bisexual." Addressing a common stigma that bisexuality is a temporary category where "people pause on their journey to Gay Town or Straightville," Renae said she saw it as indicative of sexual fluidity, and that she was happy "to play hopscotch on the Kinsey scale."

Claudia Perry, an insurance agent, took up the word "ally," saying to the audience, "How much lube you use is entirely up to you, and I will defend your right to do it."

Fashion designer Tommy Walton was resplendent in a pair of high-heeled and open-toed laced stilettos that literally lit up as he walked onto the stage in an all-black suit and black gloves, from which hung silver-colored chains. Walton's word was "realness" which, he explained, denot-

Feb. 2, 2011

ed a form of passing, "to fit into an environment that is not your own or a class not necessarily yours." He said that the word has since been co-opted and stolen by the world of hip-hop as "keeping it real." Realness, he emphasized, is "the refusal of the mundane in your life." Hearing back to the theme of sexual fluidity and of the panel, he said, "All these words ... butch, dyke etc. one time or another, I'm going to be all of those things."

The concluding discussion and audience responses touched upon how these words shifted in meaning in relation to historical and genera-

tional shifts and the development and, sometimes, the breakdown of community among LGTBQ people.

Renslow's presence at the event prompted a protest by members of Unite HERE, a union that has been calling for a boycott of the Hyatt Regency Chicago, saying, for instance, that the hotel "has done massive layoffs." Outside, they distributed flyers praising Renslow "for the advancement and cohesion of the leather and the greater LGBT communities," but urged him to move IML from the Hyatt.



**At the announcement of the CHM's historic LGBT exhibit Out in Chicago, opening May 21, were, from left: Melissa Hayes, James Alexander, Jennifer Brier, Jill Austin, John McGowan and Sharon Gist Gilliam. Photo by Tracy Baim**

## CHM announces 'Out in Chicago' exhibit to open May 21

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Chicago History Museum (CHM) announced that its "Out in Chicago" exhibit will open May 21. The announcement was made at a cocktail reception before the first program of its long-standing series, entering its eighth year, Out at CHM, "Sexicon: Language & Identity," Jan. 27.

The exhibit is believed to be the first major LGBT history project undertaken by a mainstream urban history museum in U.S. history.

Melissa Hayes, vice president of external affairs at the museum, introduced the brief remarks by board members and members of the planning committee. The first to speak was board chair Sharon Gist Gilliam, who spoke of the function of the museum in the context of the city's history and that of the LGBT community in particular saying, "We tell the stories of Chicago one at a time. We make complex stories more accessible [and] we base our exhibitions on research and scholarship. Out in Chicago will demonstrate diversity as a key strength in Chicago's success. It provides opportunities for civic engagement and discussion and most importantly ensures the preservation of a significant part of this city's history."

James Alexander, also a member of the board of CHM and co-trustee of The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust (a major supporter of the Out at CHM project), recalled the first meeting on Nov. 8, 2001 when a small group of community members, including Evette Cardona and George Chauncey, got together to make long-term plans to reflect the museum's commitment to LGBT history. At the time, according to Alexander, the decision was made to ensure "an extended series of programs, substantive and thoughtful, dealing with LGBT history that would culminate in a major LGBT exhibition."

John McGowan, of the investment firm Northern Trust Corporation (the exhibit's major corporate partner), also spoke of the first time he received an invitation from CHM for the Out series, noting that it came not in an opaque brown envelope but as a brightly colored, oversize postcard "with words like 'transgender' and 'homosexual' written all over it: it just screamed gay." He said this was one of

the first indications that CHM was not "timidly courting the LGBT community but made it clear that the museum wanted to be part of the LGBT community." He also said that their family memberships were the first time he and his partner had been acknowledged as a family.

Jill Austin, museum curator, and Jennifer Brier, professor of history and gender and women's studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, are co-curators of the upcoming exhibit, which will cover 150 years of Chicago history. Austin spoke of how "LGBT communities have continued to have an influence on this city [and] its politics" and that Out in Chicago would detail that influence and history in four major aspects: individuals as urban dwellers, relationships and couples, social networks and communities, and how LGBT communities "have expanded into the public sphere, attaining a body politic and a critical mass."

Austin said the exhibition will be constructed around themes including the stories of individual Chicagoans, past and present; the building of families and homes; exploring the evolution of communities and city neighborhoods; and the communities' expansion into the political sphere.

Discoveries show that LGBT Chicagoans were active as early as the 1850s, shortly after the city's founding, CHM said in a press release. The curators' research uncovered an ordinance from 1851 that prohibited openly dressing in opposite gender clothing. "This exhibition is a unique and timely opportunity to interpret our knowledge based on our historical expertise, and making what we know as scholars and researchers available to the public," stated Brier.

The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust is a sponsor of the entire Out at CHM project. Northern Trust is the lead corporate sponsor for the Out in Chicago exhibition. The Chicago Community Trust, Pauls Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Sara Lee Foundation, UBS, and The Goodworks Fund are providing additional support. CHM thanks the following for their support of the exhibition: Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett, Art Johnston and Jose Peña, Charles R. Middleton and John R. Geary, Shawn Donnelly, Greg Cameron and Greg Thompson, Patrick M. Sheahan, and Esther Saks. The official hotel partner for the exhibition is Fairmont Chicago, Millennium Park.

More details will be forthcoming on the museum's website, <http://wwwby.chicagohs.org>. Windy City Times will be providing more coverage in the months leading up to the opening. The exhibit will be open through March 2012.



**Back row, from left: Tommy Walton, Michael Rivera, Chuck Renslow, Scott Free, Erica Meiners and Christina Kahrl. Front: Michelle Renae, Claudia Perry, Emilia Chico and Kim Hunt. Photos by Tracy Baim**



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROSS FORMAN



As the old saying goes, when life gives you lemons, make ... bamboo plants.

Well, that's the version Tu Bloom has lived, loved, perfected and prospered with.

Bloom came to Chicago from his native Viet Nam when he was 6. He graduated from Taft High School in 1997, Loyola University in 2001, and then started working in Corporate America. He ultimately became a director, managing about 50 people and earning a six-figure salary.

Then, in early 2006, his world came crashing down.

In March of that year, his dad died about three weeks after being diagnosed with stage-four cancer. Two months later, his Vietnamese grandmother died.

"I was thrown a curveball. It was a very difficult time. My life just fell apart," Bloom said. "I was devastated."

Bloom quit his lucrative job to care for his mom and younger sister.

Fate, though, led to a fortune—or good fortune.

Bloom started selling home-made, hand-designed lucky bamboo plants on eBay—and he quickly made more than \$1,500 in a month, with only about 15 hours of work per week.

"People just really liked my cute designs," Bloom said.

So, as the weather started getting cooler in 2006, Bloom wanted to build a greenhouse to further his floral fantasies. And through free ads on Craigslist, he acquired everything needed to build a greenhouse, including the glass, windows, doors and more.

Bloom's personal North Side greenhouse is now the size of a standard, one-car garage. It measures 14-feet long by 12.5-feet wide by 11.5-feet tall. It's now filled with miniature grapefruit plants, bamboo plants, various tropical houseplants and much, much more—even a 500-gallon koi pond, filled with 28 fishes.

Bloom has grown and flourished in the floral and landscape garden design community.

"I get to improve people's lives, personally and professionally, through my love for living designs," said Bloom, who works with cut floral and live rooted plants.

"A lot of people are confused [about] what I do. They think [the plants are just] cut floral, but it's actually rooted, live plants in a container that are sustainable for a prolonged period of time."

Bloom has clients across America, not just locally. His designs can be small and simple, or glitzy and glamorous.

And some are extremely high-profile, too.

Take, for instance, the 53rd annual Grammy Awards show on Sunday night, Feb. 13. Bloom will be there, working his magic as Tu Bloom Designs will be showcased as his company was selected to design all of the floral and luxury container gardens for the entire red carpet arrivals area—and last year was the first time such attention to detail was given to the prestigious red carpet.

"I'm still in shock mode," about getting this job offer, Bloom said. "It's such a great honor and I'm still in awe that so many people are starting to get captivated by my designs."

Last year's Grammy work led Bloom to get a call from Katherine Jackson, Michael's mother, who wanted Bloom to redevelop the entire landscape and garden area for the fabled former Jackson home in Gary, Ind., to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the superstar singer's death.

Bloom also has designed the interior floral arrangements for the private dressing quarters of Lady Gaga, Elton John, Mary J. Blige and Beyoncé.

Bloom's blooming brilliance also has been chosen for another high-profile client, though he can't name names.

"I work with some of the most popular people in the world ... and I water their plants," he said, laughing.

The young entrepreneur said his biggest challenge is business organization, figuring out how to successfully grow and maintain that personalized care and interaction for all his clients.

And Bloom does get dirty himself, digging in the dirt.

"Oh my God, I have the greatest job in the world," Bloom said. "[Building] that greenhouse [in 2006] saved my life."

It seems to have certainly changed it, too.

## the stats

<b>Name</b>	Tu Bloom
<b>Age</b>	31
<b>Title</b>	President/CEO (Tu Bloom Designs®)
<b>Relationship status:</b>	Dating Thomas Basile, 31, project manager (Tu Bloom Designs®)
<b>Nickname</b>	"Plant Doc"
<b>Neighborhood</b>	Andersonville
<b>Pets</b>	Three dogs (Lexi, Lani, Roxy) and two canaries
<b>Fun fact</b>	Close to finishing his graduate degree at DePaul University



## Tu Bloom

Florist



Bloom with project manager Thomas Basile (left), whom he is dating.

**Wed., Feb. 9  
7:00 p.m.  
Julia Borcherts  
Gina Frangello  
Christine Sneed  
Fiction Reading**

**Sunday, Feb. 13  
4:30 p.m.  
Lois Roelofs  
Caring Lessons: A Nursing  
Professor's Journey  
of Faith and Self**



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# VIEWPOINTS



**SHAUN  
DONOVAN**

## Access to housing for every family

Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Last month, we were reminded of Dr. King's insight once again, as President Obama signed legislation repealing "Don't Ask Don't Tell" into law. It was a moment, the President noted, "more than two centuries in the making."

The historic repeal of DADT is only one part of the Obama Administration's larger fight on behalf of the LGBT community. Whether it is giving same-sex couples hospital visitation rights or ensuring federal workers can afford long-term care for their partners, this Administration is committed to fighting discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.



**REV. IRENE  
MONROE**

## Black America still thinks AIDS is a gay disease

To date, more than 230,000 African Americans have died of AIDS.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one in 22 African Americans will be diagnosed HIV-positive in their lifetime. And, it's the leading cause of death among African-American women between the ages of 25-34 and African-American men 35-44.

The inception of World AIDS Day began, many would say, when the world was in need of prayer. But that was all we had at the time.

In 1988, the World Health Organization designated Dec. 1 as the day to pause and reflect on the magnitude of the devastating effect this disease was having on domestic and global communities.

Because there is still neither a vaccine nor a cure, a prayer is sometimes all a person thinks he or she has in the face of an epidemic that shows no sign of abating.

But in 2010 we can do more than just pray now. We can act!

"If we don't work together to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in our community, then who will? Let's take matters into our own hands and stop the spread of the epidemic. It is a new day," Roslyn M. Brock, chairman of the NAACP's national board of directors, wrote in an open letter in November to the Harvard University Center for AIDS Research two-day symposium "The Forgotten Epidemic: HIV/AIDS Crisis in Black America."

The symposium examined the increasingly critical HIV/AIDS epidemic in Black America. This symposium was the first in what will be a series of meetings, exploring how and why HIV/AIDS has become an overwhelmingly Black disease in the United States.

According to the Black AIDS Institute's August

I'm proud that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is part of that commitment, as we work to make inclusivity and diversity cornerstones of America's housing policy. Indeed, from conducting the first-ever national study of LGBT housing discrimination to instructing our staff to be vigilant about whether any LGBT-based housing discrimination complaints can be pursued through the Fair Housing Act, we've worked to ensure our core housing programs are open to all.

That's why we recently announced a new rule ensuring LGBT individuals and couples can benefit from HUD programs.

Our proposed regulations will make clear that the term "family" includes LGBT individuals and couples as eligible beneficiaries of our public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs.

Unfortunately, while HUD programs are designed and administered to provide a decent home for every American, we've seen evidence that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and families are being arbitrarily excluded from some housing opportunities.

For instance, two years ago Michelle DeShane, a lesbian, wanted to add her partner Mitch, a transgender male, to her housing voucher. The local housing authority denied her request because the couple did not meet its definition of "family."

The housing authority then referred the couple to a neighboring housing authority—because,

2008 report "Left Behind," the number of people living with HIV in Black America exceeds the HIV population in seven of the 15 focus countries in the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) initiative—a program helping to save the lives of those suffering from HIV/AIDS around the world in countries like Haiti, Dominican Republic, India and South Africa, to name a few.

In other words, if HIV-positive Black America were its own country, standing on its own like Haiti or Nigeria, Black Americans would rate ninth with the epidemic in the world. And the epidemic is heavily concentrated in urban enclaves like Detroit; New York; Newark, N.J.; Washington, D.C.; and the Deep South.

There are many persistent social and economic factors contributing to the high rates of the epidemic in the African-American community—racism, poverty, healthcare disparity and violence, to name just a few—but the biggest attitudinal factor still contributing to the epidemic and showing no sign of abating is homophobia.

While we know that the epidemic moves along the fault lines of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, and that HIV transmission is tied to specific high-risk behaviors that are not exclusive to any one sexual orientation, homophobia still continues to be one of the major barriers to ending the AIDS epidemic.

And although famous HIV-positive heterosexual African Americans—like tennis great Arthur Ashe, news anchor Max Robinson, and rapper Eazy-E—all died of AIDS, and basketball giant Earvin "Magic" Johnson, who is still living with the virus, highlight the fact that anyone can contract the virus, many still see the epidemic as a "white gay disease," suggesting being gay or having sex with someone of the same gender puts you immediately at high risk.

One of the reasons, in my opinion, is how data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is read and reported on the epidemic that perpetuates the confusion.

For example, "MSM," is the CDC clinical control-coined acronym for "men who have sex with men," but it should not be used to depict openly gay or bisexual men individually or collectively. And the controversial term "down low" (DL)—wrongly accusing Black MSMs for spreading the virus throughout the African-American heterosexual community—should not be used to depict openly gay or bisexual men individually or collectively.

as they were apparently told, the neighboring housing authority "accepts everyone—even Martians."

That's not right. No one should be subject to that kind of treatment or denied access to federal housing assistance because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

And so, through this proposed rule, the Obama administration is ensuring that when it comes to housing assistance funded with taxpayer dollars, they won't be.

Specifically, it adds "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" to the list of definitions applicable to HUD programs.

It clarifies HUD regulations to ensure that all eligible families have the opportunity to participate in HUD programs regardless of marital status, sexual orientation or gender identity.

And it prohibits inquiries regarding sexual orientation or gender identity and makes clear that gender identity and sexual orientation should not and cannot be part of any lending decision when it comes to getting an FHA-insured mortgage.

Every American family should have the opportunity to make a home for themselves free from discrimination. That is why this rule is so important—and it's why all of us at HUD are so proud to announce it.

**Shaun Donovan is the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.**

But many conflate the subgroups to be a synonym for "MSMs." So when the CDC puts out the data that MSM of all races remain the group most severely affected by HIV, and white MSMs account for the largest number of annual new HIV infections of any group in the U.S., followed by MSMs of African descent, many in the African American community still think of the epidemic as a "white gay disease." And with more than 18,000 people with AIDS still dying each year in the United States, where gay, bisexual and MSM represent the majority of persons who have died, the homophobia stays in place.

While the data may be accurate about this subgroup of men in the African-American community, the story is, at best, incomplete, and, at worse, intentionally skewed.

Although awareness of HIV/AIDS is anemic throughout communities of the African diaspora, it is gay and bisexual men as well as MSM who are more easily identified with having the virus because they have been and are continually tracked in CDC studies; thus, there is more data on these groups.

But the truth is this: While nearly 600,000 African Americans are living with HIV, and as many 30,000 newly infected each year, there is still within the Black community one in five living with HIV and unaware of their infection—and they are disproportionately heterosexuals.

As long as we continue to think of HIV/AIDS as a gay disease, we will not protect ourselves from this epidemic.

**Send letters and viewpoints to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Items may be edited for length or clarity.**

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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 Community Marketing, Inc.

# GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by  
Jason  
Nocito

## 'SKINS' AND OUTS

Windy City Times talks with the actress who portrays the lesbian Tea on the controversial MTV show Skins. Read page 18.

### THEATER

**Out of Africa.**  
Page 16.

Photo by Lara Goetsch



### REAL ESTATE

**Oil's well that  
ends well.**  
Page 20.

Photo courtesy of Kelly Fondow

### EVENTS

**Let it 'Snow.'**  
Page 23.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald



## Dancin' Feats

BY ALICIA WILSON

The short weeks of February are filled to the brim with dance. Dance works happening around the city features choreography that causes us to take a different look at ourselves, our relationships and the world we live in. From multi disciplinary collaborations to varying styles of dance within one program, dance in Chicago this month celebrates coming together to share stories through movement. Check out some of the highlights of what is happening in dance this February:

The Joe Goode Performance Group is known for blending dance, theater, music and spoken word to illustrate the human experience. Creating pieces that touch on strong emotions and stories of overcoming life's obstacles, San Francisco-based choreographer Joe Goode will bring an evening of powerful dance to Chicago. On the program is Wonderboy, a collaboration with master puppeteer Basil Twist that tells the tale of a peculiar superhero isolated by his gift of super-sensitivity. The piece is presented in the style of Broadway hit Avenue Q, where the puppet operators are visible and play characters of their own. Wonderboy features music by Carla Kihlstedt (Tin Hat Trio) and Matthias Bossi. Also on the program Goode's legendary solo, 29 Effeminate Gestures, a 12-minute piece providing an insightful exploration into the paradox of gender language.

Joe Goode Performance Group will be presented at The Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan, 8 p.m. Feb. 3-5; tickets (\$26-\$30) or more information are available at <http://www.colum.edu/dancecenter> or 312-369-8330.

With a new name and new logo, River North Dance Chicago (formally known as River North



Joe Goode performance. Photo by RJ Muna

Chicago Dance Company), presents its annual Valentine's concert. The program features a piece by internationally recognized tango stars Sabrina and Ruben Veliz. Titled "Al Sur Del Sur," this work for 12 dancers brings a hot Latin feel to the company. Music for the work includes Duo De Amor, Eduardo y Juliana and Vuelvo Al Sur by acclaimed Argentine tango composer Astor Piazzolla, as well as other selections, including Ma y Pa by Roberto Alvarez, A La Sombra Del Fueye by Victor Lavallen and Pavadita by A. Aieta. Also on the program is Duets, by Artistic Director Frank

Chaves, a piece that compiles his celebrated duets The Mourning, Fixe, and At Last. Chaves will also present Love Will Follow (2001), and Hidden Truth (an excerpt from the larger work Forbidden Boundaries). Rounding out the evening is the full company work Evolution of a Dream (2009), the solo Beat, and excerpts from the Robert Battle solo Train. A full evening of sensual, spicy and celebrated dance for the valentine holiday!

River North Chicago Dance Company will present their Valentine's Weekend Engagement at The Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E.

Randolph, 8 p.m. Feb 11-12, 3 p.m. Feb 13; tickets (\$30-\$65) or more information are available at <http://www.harristheaterchicago.org> or 312-334-7777.

The Seldoms present Stupormarket, a new dance theater work choreographed and directed by Artistic Director Carrie Hanson about the economic blowout and the ongoing wobbly recovery. This culmination of a three-year long project about the economy, expands upon two previous short works—Thrift (2009) and Death of a (Prada) Salesman (2009). Stupormarket also features sound design by Richard Woodbury and lighting design by Julie Ballard.

The Seldoms will present Stupormarket at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 8 p.m. on Feb. 17-19, and 3 p.m. on Feb. 20; tickets (\$18) or more information are available by visiting <http://www.theseldoms.org> or by calling 773-327-5252.

Showcasing his new work that explores the complexities of identity, love and parentage in non-traditional families, Robert Moses' Kin comes to Chicago. Entitled "The Cinderella Principle: try these on, see if they fit," the work blends virtuosic dance technique with layered storytelling. A collaboration with award-winning playwright Anne Galjour, Moses' work centers on the process of identity formation within non-homogenous "constructed" families, and reflects on new ways of looking at and understanding self definition. The piece originated from in-depth interviews with families throughout the San Francisco Bay area. Other collaborations for the piece include violinist/composer Todd Reynolds and DJ/beat boxer Kid Beyond. Also on the program are two Chicago premieres: Approaching Thought and Towards September. Both works feature choreography and original sound scores by Moses.

Robert Moses' Kin will be presented at The Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan, 8 p.m. Feb. 24-26; tickets (\$26-\$30) or more information are available at <http://www.colum.edu/dancecenter> or 312-369-8330.



In Darfur. Photo by Lara Goetsch

## THEATER REVIEWS

### Eclipsed

**Playwright:** Danai Gurira  
**At:** Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie, Skokie  
**Phone:** 847-673-6300; \$30-\$50  
**Runs through:** Feb. 20

### In Darfur

**Playwright:** Winter Miller  
**At:** TimeLine Theatre Company, 615 W. Wellington  
**Phone:** 773-281-8463; \$28-\$38  
**Runs through:** March 20

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Two Chicago-area theater companies are shining uncomfortable spotlights on the horrific treatment of women caught up in the middle two African nations' crises.

Northlight Theatre in Skokie looks at the lives of four "wives" in a rebel leader's compound during the Liberian Civil War of the past decade in the regional premiere of Danai Gurira's *Eclipsed*, while TimeLine Theatre offers the Chicago premiere of Winter Miller's drama *In Darfur* which shows the struggle to get news out about ethnic genocide in Sudan.

*Eclipsed* seems less interested in strong narrative plot and more focused on the difficult choices women must make if they hope to survive in a war. The choice to become another "wife" to a rebel leader or to take up arms as a child soldier is what faces The Girl, well-played by Paige Collins first with wide-eyed innocence then churning anger.

As a young teenager with more schooling than the head wife Helena (Alana Arenas) and pregnant wife No. 3 Bessie (Leslie Ann Sheppard), The Girl also sees the power and freedom that wife No. 2 Maima (Tamberla Perry) wields as a heartless guerrilla soldier. There's also peace negotiator Rita (Penelope Walker), who also has an ulterior motive to find her kidnapped daughter.

Director Hallie Gordon is great at getting the women's personalities to shine throughout, which is helpful since Gurira's play is focused so heavily on the women's day-to-day actions instead of producing a satisfying overarching conflict.

Much more dramatically compact and unsettling is *In Darfur*, which receives a powerful and high-tech multimedia TimeLine Theatre staging by director Nick Bowling. Though playwright Miller deals with ethnic cleansing in the Sudan, she makes the drama about the diverging agendas of its characters who are trying to do some good amid such chaos.

Raped and left for dead by government-backed militias, Darfuri English teacher Hawa (a soulful Mildred Marie Langford) journeys to an aid organization hospital where she is told by the Argentine-American doctor Carlos (Gregory Isaac) that she is pregnant.

Into the mix comes New York Times reporter Maryka (Kelli Simpkins), who spars with her editor Jan (Tyla Abercrombie) in her efforts to find the perfect source to get the story out to the world.

What follows is a battle of wills between many of these key players as they weigh their agendas and actions into what could be disastrous life and death decisions. Miller adroitly stirs up audience outrage and sympathy in equal measures, making *In Darfur* a harrowing and important global drama of our time.

Some people might shy away from these difficult plays. But they're both outstandingly realized and compelling in their own ways, and hopefully empathetically eye-opening as well.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**The Beauty Queen of Leenane**, Shattered Globe Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, through Feb. 27. A revitalized Shattered Globe Theatre picks up the pieces of this almost defunct company to produce a strong and dramatically satisfying staging of Martin McDonagh's bleak and violent Irish drama. SCM

**Spamalot**, Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace, through March 6. You don't have to be a fan of Monty Python's Flying Circus to enjoy this sublimely silly and Broadway-caliber production that is blatantly (yet lovingly) ripped off from the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. SCM

**Travels with my Aunt**, Writers' Theatre, through March 27. This intimate work of theatrical fabulosity, adapted from Graham Greene's comic novel, is visually and verbally stylish. Its dazzling four-man cast all play the Aunt, and everyone else! Don't miss. JA

**Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**, Steppenwolf Theatre, through Feb. 13. In 1962, what we wanted was catharsis, but reconciliation is more needed in 2011. Steppenwolf finds both in Albee's play to render it a true American classic. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

## THEATER REVIEW

### Being Harold Pinter

**Playwright:** Vladimir Scherban  
**after Harold Pinter**  
**At:** Belarus Free Theatre at Northwestern University (Feb. 4-13) and Chicago Shakespeare Theater (Feb. 18-20)  
**Tickets:** 1-847-491-7282 (Northwestern); 1-312-595-5600 (Chicago Shakespeare); \$20  
**Runs through:** Feb. 20

BY JONATHAN ABARBANE

Since performance and religious ritual emerged together from the smoke of pre-history, theater has had the obligation to address social and political issues as art mirrors life. Sometimes this results in theater which is far more valuable as a statement than as a work of art, which is the case with *Being Harold Pinter*.

The Belarus Free Theatre was formed in 2005 in Minsk (capital of Belarus) in opposition to the police state government of this former Soviet republic. From its inception, the troupe has been subjected to government censorship, legal harassment and physical intimidation. Company members have been arrested and jailed on frivolous charges, been fired from jobs and have been forbidden to travel. Sometimes the company has had to perform in secret. The recent rigged re-election of Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko led to street riots which were crushed, and severe repression of artistic freedom. With their personal safety at risk in Minsk, the Belarus Free Theatre has been embraced in the United States, with their month-long Chicago visit hosted by the Goodman and Chicago Shakespeare theaters,

Northwestern University and the League of Chicago Theatres.

*Being Harold Pinter* is Belarus Free Theatre's signature work. It's a theater piece without any running characters with whom to connect, or a single arc of action to follow. The production uses simple and inexpensive techniques of presentation so the show can travel quickly and be performed almost anywhere: it requires only four chairs, a large plastic tarp, a few hand props and six actors in black suits.

It's built on excerpts from the plays and speeches of Harold Pinter, the 2005 Nobel Prize winning British author. Pinter's plays of the 1960s-1980s are considered part of the Absurdist tradition and focus on destructive (although often funny) human relationships within domestic settings (families, lovers, friends). From the mid-1980s onward, Pinter's work became highly political as he used the pen to expose the horrors of torture and repression in Eastern Europe and the Middle East (which, in time, placed him in opposition to some American policies). *Being Harold Pinter* follows the trajectory of Pinter's work and thought, and interjects first-person accounts of brutality and imprisonment in Belarus that echo Pinter's work, as well as a reference to Abu Ghraib.

The end result is a fast-paced 75 minutes honed to physical perfection by a young company which has performed it for several years. It's impactful rather than beautiful, choosing to make a large statement in lieu of telling a story. Alas, the story of *Being Harold Pinter* isn't one of fictional characters; it's a real story happening to real people on a daily basis around the world, and it's made the Belarus Free Theatre an international *cause célèbre*.



Being Harold Pinter.  
Photo by Liz Lauren

## THEATER REVIEW

### Madagascar

**Playwright:** J. T. Rogers  
**At:** Next Theatre Company, 927 Noyes, Evanston  
**Tickets:** 1-847-475-1875;  
<http://www.nexttheatre.org>; \$30-\$40  
**Runs through:** Feb. 20

BY JONATHAN ABARBANE

*Madagascar* is an onion: it reveals the depths of its characters and basic exposition only layer-by-layer. At first, author J. T. Rogers's literate language alone must hold you, or the hints of mystery he drops, for it takes time for anyone to comprehend the network of lies, half-truths and cloudy memories he eventually unveils.

Initially, we meet Lillian, June and Nathan in a hotel room overlooking the Spanish Steps in Rome, but they aren't there at the same time or together. Slowly connecting the dots, we learn that Lillian is mother to twins June and Paul, and wife to an aloof, powerful and frequently absent husband/father. In time, Lillian takes family friend Nathan as her long-time lover. This particular hotel room in Rome is where Lillian always took her children or lover. Growing into adulthood, Paul learns of the Lillian-Nathan affair and takes it as betrayal. His response is a sinister and sick psychological punishment that pushes his mother and sister to the edge. Through the intertwined monologues of Lillian, June and Nathan, often speaking in the past, we learn the story.

Besides a devastating portrait of Lillian, the focus of the play is on the unseen Paul, a human monster that both Lillian and June adore in almost god-like fashion. In a stew of Freudian implications worthy of Henry James, Paul wants no man and no thing to come between himself and them, freely acting on Oedipal and Electra impulses (as I see it) to destroy his family.

This is powerful material but it's not a powerful plot. *Madagascar* isn't a play of action or incident, but of character. It requires an astute director and three extremely capable actors to make it click and keep it interesting for an audience. Fortunately, this Chicago premiere has the team it needs. This is not material which can be rushed, and director Kimberly Senior unzips the onion at a relaxed pace that's never too-slow. Carmen Roman is utterly perfect as the elegant and patrician Lillian, her pain as unexpected as her passion. Cora Vander Broek as June brings a sense of life-unfulfilled to the quiet sister/daughter who is competent but lost. Finally, Mick Weber beautifully underplays Nathan, the plain-spoken survivor of, and witness to, the family disaster. At the same time Nathan is the unwitting catalyst.

Jack Magaw's set nicely captures the sense of an old palazzo turned into a once-elegant hotel. The room is spacious but stripped-down and bare-bones with peeling plaster. One must imagine its polished and paneled elegance just a few years earlier, when Lillian made it—and Rome—the center of her life. Now a-crumble, it's a metaphor for the family disaster played out within its walls.



Trinity River Plays. Photo by Eric Y. Exit

**THEATER REVIEW****Trinity River Plays**

**Playwright:** Regina Taylor  
**At:** Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn  
**Phone:** 312-443-3800; \$25-\$78  
**Runs through:** Feb. 20

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The recent success of Steppenwolf's August: Osage County and their current production of Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? having affirmed audiences' tolerance for long sits in service of intricate Dickensian yarns, Regina Taylor's "trilogy" may yet become the single play-in-three-acts it wants to be. As it is now, in its present incarnation, the literary structure is that of a two-parter-with-epilogue, even as its dramatic arc is that of a one-act bookended by both a prequel and sequel.

The first segment (or chapter, or episode), titled Jar Fly, introduces the women of the Spears clan in 1978: brainy 17-year-old Iris, whose single-mom Rose is away for the summer acquiring the education that leads to managerial salaries, leaving her daughter in the care of jovial Aunt Daisy, risk-taking cousin Jasmine and earthy step-uncle Ray. After precisely the kind of domestic trauma we expect of such shared-family dynamics, we proceed to 1995 and Rain, where we learn of Iris' successful writing career and failed marriage, all of which pale when Rose is diagnosed with cancer. It remains for Ghost-

story, the last of the plays, to reconcile Iris with her mother's death and the secrets that continue to haunt her surviving kin.

No matter how you slice this text into easy-to-digest portions (did I mention Iris' identification with cicadas, or the flower garden that might explain the family's curious naming of its female children?), there's still no denying the cozy appeal of tough women and clueless men enduring trials to emerge triumphant, both physically and spiritually. As portrayed by a carefully-selected cast under Ethan McSweeney's direction, Taylor's characters are uniformly endearing—even the villains, before the plot demands that they behave badly. Steven Cahill's thunderstorms and Tyler Micoleau's sunrises generate the requisite shock and awe, while Todd Rosenthal's replication of a well-tended home with yard and patio in northern Texas exerts a powerful attraction on citizens chafing under a snowy Chicago winter.

Trinity River is, fundamentally, the saga of an author searching for her "voice", its climax occurring when she suddenly finds herself at a complete and terrifying loss for the words that are her solace and protection—an abandonment that Taylor need never fear. With the exception of some protracted phantom conversation in the final moments, hers is a voice capable of conjuring seemingly endless images as lush and vivid as Mama Rose's flowers in full bloom.

**SPOTLIGHT**

Affectionately known as "The Glums" in the U.K. or more glibly as "Les Miz" in the United States, the worldwide smash hit musical *Les Misérables* returns to Chicago in a new 25th-anniversary tour that (shockingly for some fans) does away with the original production's trademark turntable. Instead, this new production utilizes lots of digital projection to tell the epic story of a do-gooding convict on the run in 19th-century France. *Les Misérables* plays through Feb. 27 at the Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph. Tickets are \$18-\$90; call 800-775-2000 or visit <http://www.broadwayinchicago.com>. Photo of Jeremy Hays as Enjolras in the new tour by Deen Van Meer

**THEATER REVIEW****The New Electric Ballroom**

**Playwright:** Enda Walsh  
**At:** A Red Orchid Theater, 1531 N. Wells  
**Phone:** 312-943-8722; \$25-\$30  
**Runs through:** March 6

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Maybe it's just the selection of plays that are exported to the United States, but American audiences might be forgiven the impression that in Ireland, it is always pre-1962, that its citizens live exclusively in remote villages serviced by mid-1930s technology, and that all its women are either unmarried or widowed, but unanimous in their quiet suffering amid both social and geographical isolation. We Yankee chicks had Betty Frieden and Helen Gurley Brown to awaken us to new possibilities—remember that word, by the way—but in this island nation, we are given to understand, there is nothing to prevent its female population rusting away like discarded farm machinery.

The crazy ladies in Enda Walsh's contribution to the genre are the sisters Ada, Breda and Clara (A, B, and C—get it?). Ada—at 40, the youngest of the trio—works a desk job in the town's fishing industry where, years earlier, Breda and Clara entered the dance club of the title, returning home that same night never to venture forth again. Since misery loves company, when retellings of the incident with which the elder siblings reaffirm their decision fail to persuade Ada to share in their seclusion, they invite local fishmonger Patsy to take part in a charade designed to prove, beyond doubt, that



The New Electric Ballroom. Photo by Michael Brosilow

the possibilities offered by the outside world lead only to unbearable disappointment.

In the beginning, however, we have no inkling of the gloom in store for us. Tragedy is customarily performed at a slow tempo, but Walsh greets us with Clara reciting the sorority oath at warp speed with, literally, her face to the wall. And just when we think we've stumbled upon Lucky's speech in Waiting For Godot, the dialogue screeches to a Pinteresque halt, followed by Patsy bursting in with a tub of Ionesco-expressionist mackerel. And this is before Clara and Breda, attired in vintage glad-rags from circa 1958, dress up their gentleman caller in the suit once worn by the Man What Done Them Wrong (sharkskin, naturally).

Fortunately, this Red Orchid production boasts an ensemble of character actors as deft with neo-absurdist fare as with nose-to-the-dirt realism. Under Robin Witt's razor-edge direction, Kate Buddeke, Kirsten Fitzgerald, Laurie Larson and Guy Van Swearingen deliver performances cutting to the core of Walsh's often-precious wordplay to reveal the unspoken anguish simmering beneath the peaceful surface that continues to embody the Irish ethos.

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# 'Skins' debuts in the U.S., brings on lesbian character

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

Bryan Elsley brought his U.S. version of the show *Skins* to the United States via MTV, and it debuted Jan. 17. The scripted show follows a group of high school students living in Baltimore, Md., through the ups and downs of adolescence with all its complications and gray areas.

The premiere episode followed closely in the footsteps of the original British show's first episode, which aired in 2007, but it is said to diverge in many ways from the original series as the season progresses.

Still, the characters in the U.S. version remain almost identical to the British show, with one major exception: The gay male character, Maxxie, has become lesbian character Tea.

*Skins* is known for its touching and thoughtful portrayal of its gay and lesbian characters. The show has had gay characters in every season and in seasons two, three and four, the gay and lesbian characters remained central to the progression of the show. Despite Elsley's history with LGBT inclusiveness, there has been much speculation and questioning around his decision to change the gay male character to a lesbian character. One theory for the change is that a U.S. audience is more accepting of lesbian sexuality than gay male sexuality. In several interviews Elsley has denied this as the basis for the character change.

Regardless of the reason, the show has now aired and brought a new lesbian character into this country's living rooms. Windy City Times spoke over the phone with Sofia Black-D'Elia, who plays Tea, about the show's LGBT storyline.

#### Windy City Times: Tell me about Tea.

Sofia Black-D'Elia: I play Tea, who is a very confident girl. She's openly gay. She's kind of the wild card of the group. You don't really know what to expect from her. She thinks she has herself very put together at the start of the series and, as most teenagers come to realize, she has no idea. She's also very clever—kind of too clever for her own good. So she is constantly looking for someone that can compete with her and make things more exciting.

#### WCT: What do you like about her?

SBD: I kind of love how she is so comfortable with herself and how confident she is with her sexuality. ... She's very honest. She is just such a confident character. I think that is really great.



Sofia Black-D'Elia, who plays Tea. Photo by Jason Nocito

With teenagers, you usually see a lot of insecure girls so it's fun to play a girl that is really secure in who she is.

**WCT: There has been a lot of discussion and questions around Bryan Elsley's decision to change the gay male character to a lesbian character. What are your thoughts about that?**

SBD: His reasons for doing it are all his own and trying to understand that man is extremely hard because he is brilliant. ... from my viewpoint I think a lot of people have been saying that the character was changed because it is easier to have a gay female on television than a gay male. I don't really see that at all, and I watch a lot of TV.

I think gay characters in general are kind of hard to come by. I think Tea, the way that she treats her sexuality, is even harder to come by. There is no tearful scene when she comes out of the closet. All of those things are kind of avoided, because I think when you look at high school today, it's not really the case anymore. She just kind of represents a large amount of teenagers that don't have anyone on television to represent them.



Some of the male cast members of Skins. Photo by Jason Nocito

Feb. 2, 2011

WINDY CITY TIMES

**WCT: The show is well known for its thoughtful portrayal of gay and lesbian characters. Do you feel any pressure following in the footsteps of these beloved characters?**

SBD: I definitely feel a lot of pressure. I think all of us feel pressure for different reasons because the original show is so incredible and we are all fans. But like everyone else on the show, I kind of had to go into it and put that out of my mind and just accept the fact that we are creating our own show and I had to create my own character. I'm a huge fan.

The Naomi/Emily storyline is probably my favorite, favorite *Skins* storyline out of all four seasons. I think it was beautiful and so touching and really great to watch, but Tea is so different from the other gay characters and so different from the other characters that have been on *Skins* before. I kind of went into it with the same mindset as everyone else in my cast that this is our show and we have to make it our own, because trying to repeat any performances or live up to any expectations will only lead to disaster.

**WCT: Are you prepared emotionally for personal responses from the audience, sharing**

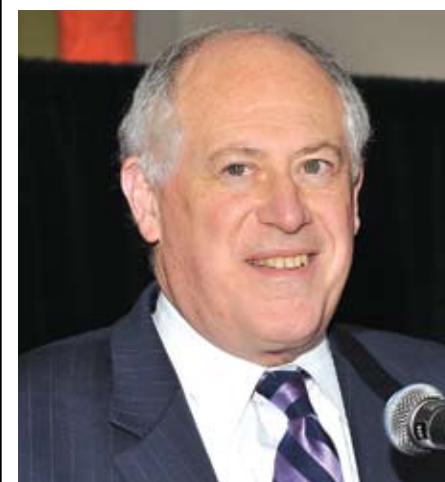
their own stories with you? A lot of other actors receive some very emotional letters from LGBT fans who relate to their characters.

SBD: I guess because we are all just anticipating the show coming out right now; I haven't allowed myself to think of all the personal things that will happen for me once the show airs. [Laughs] Now you're going to make me think about it. I'm excited. I really hope that people see how real of a character she is. I think that the decision she makes might throw people off but at the end of the day she's so human. So when people relate to that, I think I am a very small part of Tea, and Bryan probably should get all of the letters but, yeah, we'll see what happens.

**WCT: Do you have anything that you would like to add about Tea?**

SBD: I think that Tea is going to be one of those characters that people are going to look at with a lot of ideas in their head prior to her even showing up on television so I guess for now people that are interested in watching, just wait for her episode and wait to see how everything plays out before you judge her.

## CIVIL from page 8



Gov. Pat Quinn. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

Several anticipated minutes passed as the governor signed the bill and passed pens to Harris, Mell and legislators and supporters. U.S. Reps. Mike Quigley and Danny Davis were joined by numerous state elected and appointed officials. When Quinn finished signing, the room erupted in cheers.

After the signing, most of those gathered headed to another part of the building for a celebration catered by the Hearty Boys and underwritten by businessman/philanthropist Fred Eychaner.

Illinois is the sixth state to grant same-sex couples significant partner recognition. Civil unions will go into effect June 1. All couples in Illinois who have married or unionized elsewhere, will automatically be recognized as in a

civil union.

To support families protected by the new law, Lambda Legal and Equality Illinois launched the Civil Union Tracker.

"We have had a surge of calls to our Legal Help Desk since November when the law passed the legislature," said Camilla Taylor, Senior Staff Attorney at the Midwest Regional Office of Lambda Legal in Chicago, in a press release. "[Our] goal is to provide a much-needed service to same-sex and different-sex couples in civil unions, and to their children."

The Civil Union Tracker can be found at <http://www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/il-civil-union-tracker>.



State Rep. Deb Mell. Photo by Hal Baim



Politicians and appointed officials on stage at the signing included, from left: Mike McGrath, Rocco Claps, Rep. Deb Mell, Sen. David Koehler, Rep. Mike Madigan and Rep. Greg Harris. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

# NUNN ON ONE



## TELEVISION

## Jennifer Beals cracks the 'Code'

BY JERRY NUNN

Jennifer Beals has appeared in more than 50 films over the years. She is beginning a new television-related endeavor on Fox, where she returns to her roots in *The Chicago Code*.

**Windy City Times:** Hello, Jennifer. I didn't realize you grew up on the South Side of Chicago.

Jennifer Beals: I did. I also lived on the North Side—everywhere but the West Side.

**WCT:** You don't currently live in Illinois now, do you?

JB: No I split my time between L.A. and Vancouver. My new show is a mid-season replacement so we will see if it is picked up for another 22 episodes and I will be in Chicago more.

**WCT:** It was great watching the new show *The Chicago Code* and seeing all the sights.

JB: Well, Chicago is really a character in the show, hence the title change.

**WCT:** What was it originally called?

JB: Ride-Along, the ride with the cops on their beat kind of thing.

**WCT:** I like the name *Chicago Code* much better.

JB: I do, too. I think it is more evocative of what the show is about. You are dealing with the power within the city and the code for the different levels and areas of the city.

**WCT:** You play the first female police chief named Teresa.

JB: She is a superintendent, as its called in Chicago.

**WCT:** Are you similar in ways to this character?

JB: Oh gosh, no. I am not nearly as driven or organized. I have to talk out loud a lot in order to get myself out the door, to remember where things are and get them together. I would aspire in many ways to be more like her but no I am

very different. For example, I don't know how to use a gun. [Both laugh.] Nor can I be seen backhanding people in the street for various rea-



Jennifer Beals. Image from Fox

sons.

**WCT:** Did you have a little training for this show then?

JB: There was some because it was so foreign to me. There were ride-alongs with Detective Folino, who was our technical advisor. He was terrific. We had meetings with various administrators. We realized there was a physicality that I needed so I started boxing a bit and doing more aggressive sports such as swimming and running.

**WCT:** That must be how you stay looking so young!

JB: I don't understand that. I don't feel like I look young. That is not how I experience myself; if someone experiences me like that then God bless them!

**WCT:** You have the hottest sidekick, Antonio, on the first episode.

JB: Isn't he so cute? He is a lovely actor. His name is Manny Montana and he was really wonderful to work with. There was no end to the amount of teasing that went on around the set. We just had a really great time with each other. I have the old-lady taste and he tried to help me be a little more hip with my music taste.

**WCT:** I just watched you in the [Denzel Washington movie] *Book of Eli* the other day.

JB: Oh, that was a really great experience.

**WCT:** Was that filmed out in the desert somewhere?

JB: New Mexico. I love the Hughes brothers. I

would do anything for them. They are so smart and very creative, incredibly supportive of the people around them. I loved the character.

**WCT:** It was an interesting part to play.

JB: Working with Gary Oldman was so much fun. He made me laugh every day. He is dedicated to what he does. He gets in there and doesn't give up until he gets it. Frankly, Jason Clarke, from the Code, is very similar in that way. He's like a dog with a bone, you know?

**WCT:** I can imagine.

JB: He doesn't drop it until he's got it.

**WCT:** I interviewed and met your L Word sister, Pam Grier, last year.

JB: Oh you did? It was so exciting that she did that book. I am really proud of her.

**WCT:** It was hard for her to bring some of that up.

JB: It must have been. She has had such an amazing life. We had dinner one night years ago with my brother. He is a writer and told her that she had to do a book. We encouraged her to get on it.

**WCT:** Speaking of books, Judy Shepard told me you donated proceeds from your book to her foundation.

JB: Yes, I did. I really love the Mathew Shepard Foundation and the work that they do. I think she is such an extraordinary woman, leader and mother. I had their banner put on my float for the Thanksgiving Day parade in Chicago.

**WCT:** I saw you speak at the Human Rights event years ago. Your dedication to LGBT rights has been amazing over the years. Why do you feel so connected to us?

JB: I think after playing Bette Porter on The L Word for six years I felt like an honorary member of the community. They are not just gay issues. They affect everybody because they affect the fabric of our community. I am in a position to be helpful.

**WCT:** Well, it means a lot to us on our side.

JB: It just seems like a no-brainer. I don't understand ["Don't Ask, Don't Tell"]. I do understand that people are indoctrinated and they have their point of view but hopefully slowly but surely we can help change the paradigm. That's what I hope for and it's happening little by little. It's not easy.

**WCT:** What is the difference between The L Word set and the *Chicago Code* set?

JB: On The L Word set we were very aware of what was going on in the news and various issues. There was a time when I was on the Chicago Code set and in the van with teamsters and other cast members. There was an amazing milestone that happened for gay marriage over the summer and I was cheering in the car. I announced to everyone and they looked at me like I was crazy, like what do I care kind of thing? I was trying to explain how it affects everyone and then thought, "I am in another world now." I have a whole other battle here. We are not in Kansas anymore!

**WCT:** Definitely not in Dorothy's world anymore. [Both laugh.]

JB: No we are not. That was funny.

**WCT:** Did you ever think the movie *Flashdance* would have such a fan base so many years later?

JB: I don't think of my career in that way. I try to do one project at a time. I try to focus on the thing before me and not make it into a grand plan.

**WCT:** My friend wanted me to mention that he loved the short-lived television series *2000 Malibu Road* [with Drew Barrymore].

JB: That's hilarious, thank you. You know what is fascinating? The guy that filmed the credits for *2000 Malibu Road* was the director for the third episode of *Chicago Code*: Guy Ferland. It is a fantastic episode and actually my favorite. It is the payoff so see it.

**WCT:** I will. So you have different directors throughout the season?

JB: Yes and they each bring their own style. Guy has a very strong visual sense and a great script. It's a really interesting show because you are dealing with power and corruption, not just in the street, but in the halls of politics. You are making the connection between the two. That is something that's compelling. It's not just for the people Chicago, but I think Chicago does it best.

**The Chicago Code** rides into your televisions on Fox Monday, Feb. 7. Check local listings at <http://www.fox.com/chicagocode>.

## Center's Oscar party Feb. 27

On Sunday, Feb. 27, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, will host its annual "On The Red Carpet" Oscar Party.

Guests will enjoy sponsored cocktails and buffet while the Academy Awards are broadcast live on the big screen in the Hoover-Leppen Theatre. For those who prefer to mingle, video monitors will be stationed throughout the third floor—even on the roof garden, which will be encased in a heated tent exclusively for the night's event. Guests may bid on vacations, spa packages and more in our silent auction throughout the evening.

For the first time ever, the center is conducting an Oscar prediction competition. For \$10, guests can submit a ballot with their predictions before the telecast begins, and results will be tabulated throughout the night. The person with the most correct predictions will be announced at the conclusion of the ceremony, and will split the winnings with the center.

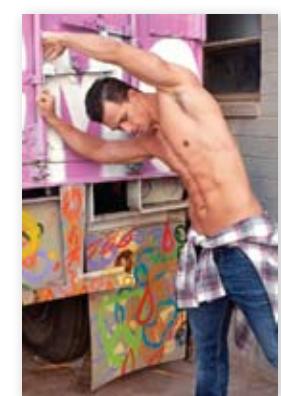
Doors open for the red carpet pre-show at 6 p.m., and the telecast begins at 7 p.m. Director-level tickets (\$75) include admission to the party, and producer tickets (\$125) include reserved telecast seating in the theater with table service. See <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>.



Jennifer Beals in *The Chicago Code*. Photo courtesy of Fox

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## Kelly Fondow talks suburbs, selling—and BP

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Kelly Fondow is a real-estate agent who knows about dichotomy—after all, she shows properties to clients in the city of Chicago as well as suburbs such as Berwyn and River Forest. Fondow—who lives in the Chicagoland area with her longtime partner, RoiAnn—talked with Windy City Times about differences between the areas as well as buyers/sellers, her own background (which includes working with petroleum giant BP) and “steering.”

**Windy City Times: Is this the slow season for real estate?**

Kelly Fondow: Well, typically it is deadly slow starting from Thanksgiving through January. Usually, you see the beginning of a “spring market” right after the Super Bowl. But I’ve been busy since the second week of January.

It was a very quiet second half of the year [last year]. That first-time home buyer’s credit went away and the people who bought felt hurried—and business just stopped. I think people started thinking over the holidays, and people are ready to buy. It feels to me and people in my office that it’s been a very nice start to the year.

**WCT: So I was reading about your background on GayRealEstate.com...**

KF: And who knows what it says there. It’s been a while since I’ve messed around on there. [Laughs]

**WCT: ...and it states that you were once in the heart of corporate America. So how did you come to be involved in real estate?**

KF: I just decided; I worked for BP, actually. [WCT: Oooh.] Yes, I know. They were always big oil, but they didn’t always bring a shiver up everyone’s spine when I said it. [Laughs]

I had been in human resources for many, many years, and the last seven or eight were with BP. We had worked in London, we had come back to Chicago and they were going to try to move us to Houston—and my partner and I decided that we weren’t moving to Houston. If we don’t stay here, our kids will never have a place to come home to.

I took a severance package from them, which was nice. And I decided that I didn’t want to be in the position of handing people their walking papers, which I had done for two years at BP. It was emotionally draining; it was horrible. I figured it was a good time for a change, so I held my breath and jumped in.

I started in 2008, when the market was starting to fall apart; I watched a lot of realtors around me really struggle with the new reality. I didn’t know any better; I hadn’t worked in real estate. I just worked really hard and it turned out great.

**WCT: So when did you know it was for you?**

KF: Oh, within the first few months. Actually, I had the mental chops and it turned out that a lot of the personality traits that made me a good HR director were transferable. You become a shrink and counselor to buyers and sellers. I tend to have very intimate relationships with my buyers; it’s one of the biggest decisions they make.

**WCT: You cover a pretty large area, don’t you?**

KF: I do. I’m from Wisconsin, [but] I’ve been in the Chicago area for, what, nine years now?



**Kelly Fondow. Photo courtesy of Fondow**

I know it very well. I started in areas I know pretty well; I do about half my business in Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park. I probably do another 35 percent in Chicago. Plus, I worked for BP so long in the western suburbs that I know that area pretty well, and that tends to be referral business from BP.

However, sometimes are surprised by how little they can buy for their money, depending on where they come from. If they come from L.A., for example, there’s not so much “sticker shock.”

**WCT: Are there any key differences between conducting transactions in the city and the suburbs?**

KF: Oh, absolutely. What I’ve found is that every community has a distinct real-estate personality.

The transaction, once the negotiation has happened, tends to be pretty predictable. However, typically, in the suburbs, listing agents use lock-boxes; if I’m representing a buyer and make an appointment, I can let myself in the house and take my clients through. In Chicago—probably a good 90 percent of the time—an agent representing the seller is at the property to show it.

Also, in the city the scheduling is much more precise. In the suburbs I can say I’ll be at a place between 10 o’clock and 11 o’clock on a Tuesday morning. If I’m showing a property in Andersonville [in Chicago], I’ll say I’ll be there at 10:15, meet the selling agent, take my client through and then we’ll go to the next property. It changes many things, like what I discuss with clients in the property; you have two agents there in addition to the home seller.

**WCT: It sounds like it’s more laid-back in the burbs, which sounds like a reflection of life itself in the city versus the suburbs.**

KF: Absolutely. It’s a completely different animal.

**WCT: I have a question about a [concept], and I hope you can clear things up for me. When I recently spoke with another realtor, we talked about the whole idea of “steering.” She said, for example, that you can’t tell a gay client that Boystown is a predominantly gay area of Lake View.**

KF: Right.

**WCT: But when I looked at your profile, it said, for example, “Kelly Fondow has provided these details about Berwyn, Illinois: Berwyn is quickly becoming a top destination for Gay families.” Isn’t that steering?**

KF: Well, I take steering incredibly seriously and I think, as a realtor, we all have to do that. With that said, when I am working with clients, I believe it’s professional to help them make decisions, especially if it’s a client who’s not from the Chicago area. If a person asks me what neighborhoods are specifically gay-friendly, I have no problem discussing that.

**WCT: One of the places is cover is River Forest. Admittedly, I know nothing about River Forest. [Fondow laughs.] What can you tell me about that particular suburb?**

KF: First of all, it has a beautiful housing stock; a lot of these houses were built from the late 1800s to the 1920s. It’s on the Green Line and the Metra, so it’s a 10-minute [ride] to the Loop. It has a very, very strong school system. It’s a sister community to Oak Park, and they share a high school. It also has a small business district it shares with Oak Park.

**WCT: What’s one piece of advice for sellers and one piece for buyers?**

KF: My advice to sellers—and, obviously, it depends on their situation and why they’re selling—is to not wait, hoping that prices start climbing. Things will [get better], but not quickly. So my advice to sellers is the same as my advice to buyers.

A lot of people are waiting for things to change. What we have right now are very low interest rates that are beginning to [increase]. It’s a perfect time for buyers to buy right now. Interest rates are at 4.75 percent; at their lowest last year, they were 4.35—which is absolutely unheard-of. It’s a good time for buyers and sellers to make decisions. It’s going to be a long time before things get better.

See <http://www.KellyFondow.com>.

## Real estate news:

**—Buying Berkus:** Nate Berkus—the interior designer who rose to fame through his appearances on The Oprah Winfrey Show and now has his own New York-based talk show—has listed his seven-room Gold Coast condo for \$2.65 million. Berkus, 39, paid \$1.5 million for the condo, which is almost 4,000 square feet, in 2003. In 2006, he paid \$550,000 for a one-bedroom, 550-square-foot unit in Manhattan.

**—Loehmann’s, Kenneth Cole close:** On the commercial end of things, the women’s apparel discount chain Loehmann’s closed its 27,000-square-foot State Street store Jan. 29, according to Crain’s. It also has closed a store in Oak Brook, although the stores in Northbrook and Morton Grove are still open.

Also, Kenneth Cole—the clothing, footwear and accessory line—recently closed its shop at 540 N. Michigan after more than a decade in the space. It was the only store in the state; two off-price outlets are still in Aurora and Gurnee.

**—Going postal:** A local real estate investment firm wants to transform a former post office in Streeterville with restaurants and other retail tenants after paying \$5.9 million for the two-story building, Crain’s reported. Newcastle Ltd. bought the 15,500-square-foot property at 227 E. Ontario, which the U.S. Postal Service recently moved out of after leasing for many years. “Properties don’t come available in this market very often,” says Newcastle President/CEO Michael Haney. “We think it’s an excellent location for a retail property.”



**Dorothy Brown.**

## Cook County clerk’s mortgage surplus fund

The office of the Clerk of Circuit Court of Cook County, Dorothy Brown, has more than \$17 million in mortgage surplus money ready to be claimed by Cook County citizens, according to a media release.

Last year, the Clerk’s Office disbursed more than \$1 million to 37 individuals who were owed mortgage surplus funds. In 2009, \$2 million was disbursed to more than 50 individuals. The list of real estate escrow surplus cases goes as far back as 1990, although the largest concentration of cases begins in 2000.

The clerk’s office has mortgage surplus amounts ranging from 13 cents to \$460,000. Many people are owed surpluses in amounts between \$3,000-\$10,000.

Log on to <http://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org> and click on “Mortgage Surplus Search.” For more information, call 312-603-5455. People may also go to the clerk’s office at the Daley Center, 50 W. Washington, and go to the accounting department on the 10th floor.

People who have mortgage surplus money because their foreclosure cases are on the list must then go to the clerk’s office’s chancery division; file a notice of motion (send notice of motion to the bank’s attorney) and a petition for turnover of surplus funds. They will then be given a court date when the petitions will be heard before a judge. If the judge grants the release of the funds, the accounting department will issue surplus checks.



**Kenneth Cole’s Chicago store has closed. Photo of Cole by Andrew Davis**

## BOOKS

# Wade Rouse speaks the 'Relative' truth

BY TONY PEREGRIN

Wade Rouse, Saugatuck resident and author of America's Boy and At Least in the City Someone Would Hear Me Scream, is back with another collection of uproarious essays—It's All Relative: Two Families, Three Dogs, 34 Holidays and 50 Boxes of Wine.

Tethered to yearly celebrations we are all forced to endure (anniversaries, birthdays, Thanksgiving), as well as occasions especially near and dear to the Rouse clan (Oscar night, the Miss USA Pageant, Arbor Day), Rouse reminds us of all of the ways we love, humiliate, frustrate, and forgive one another—especially family members—365 days a year.

Rouse, often referred to as "the sexy Sedaris," opened up to the Windy City Times about his new collection of comic essays; book-tour horror stories; and how Chelsea Handler and her dog Chunk are involved with his new, forthcoming "pet" project—a dog anthology.

**Windy City Times: Wade, talk a little about how your new memoir is different than all the other family-holiday memoirs crowding bookstore shelves.**

Wade Rouse: This memoir is totally universal. I mean, what person can't relate to this book? We all share our family stories and holiday dysfunction with friends, neighbors, co-workers, therapists.

Really, though, this is the first "all-holiday" memoir, one not just focused on Christmas, but on 34 holidays throughout the year, including the traditional and, well, the not-so-[traditional]. I cover Easter, Fourth of July, birthdays, anniversaries, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's, but I also cover the odd holidays, like Arbor Day, St. Patty's (all about Chicago!), Secretary's Day and Pez Collectors National Convention Day.

Really, holidays are our "memory moments" and yet [they can be] the toughest times for many families and for many gay people. On the surface, this looks like an essay collection, but I put great thought into which holidays and why, so the narrative flow is like that of a full memoir, one that ebbs and flows, and has incredible humor and impact, so that by the end of the book, you feel as if you've lived in the Rouse House your entire life. I think holidays are like Campbell's soup: They are life, condensed.

**WCT: As you just mentioned, It's All Relative also lampoons non-traditional holidays like Barbie's birthday. Does [Rouse's partner] Gary mind that you've told the entire world that he "believes Barbie is his baby?" Or is he accustomed to your writerly shenanigans at this point?**

WR: Gary does believe that he birthed Barbie (well, all 20 of his Barbies—even his new Thanksgiving Barbie) out of his mangina. Nothing embarrasses Gary, or really, any of my family—which is truly amazing. Gary lets me write about him without edit, which is the biggest blessing in the world, although, I must say we've had our touchy moments (especially in my first memoir when I intimated he didn't know what "parched" meant—which, by the way, he didn't). That's the tricky part about memoir: You're writing about those you love most, often in a very unflatteringly honest light. But, Gary is the most honest person I've ever met, and such honesty doesn't make him flinch. He welcomes it. I think it's hard because people expect him to be constantly flighty, for instance, or outrageous 24-7, but readers must remember that I'm writing about only a piece of our lives.

One of the things I'm most proud of is writing about my relationship with Gary. I'm one of the few gay authors who really writes in-depth about his relationship: The beauty, the horror,

the trials, the love that all couples experience. My last memoir, At Least in the City Someone Would Hear Me Scream, was a Today show Must-Read and featured in USA Today, and the mainstream press really celebrated how I depicted my relationship of nearly 15 years. I want to be a role model for not only for the LGBT community but for straight people, too. My parents, Gary's parents, all of our grandparents, were married for over 50 years, and they worked their asses off to make their relationships thrive. They are my role models, and I want to show the world that we have a true marriage, no matter what society may think.

**WCT: What is your favorite thing about touring behind a new book?**

WR: Touring is a bit like being an actor and talking about your movie: In both instances, it's a project you likely completed a year and a half or two ago; you're in the midst of new projects; and you have to revisit the old work, which is the new work in the public's mind.

Thankfully, I'm an author that loves to tour, read his work and meet his fans and readers. It's a part of my job that I adore, and I'm glad, because it's a requirement to be an author today. Unless you're a Franzen, the days where you can just sit at home and write, and do nothing to promote are long over. You have to meet and greet, and blog and build your brand, even interpretive dance. Many authors are one-and-dones because they don't promote, or feel it's beneath them, not author-y. But, you can have the most amazing product in the world, and if people don't know about it, it's doomed. Publishers have cut their workforce, like everyone, and a publicist has a ton of books on her plate at any given time, so you must take a lot of it on yourself.

**WCT: Writers often have favorite horror stories from their time on the road promoting a book. What are yours?**

WR: I have loads of strange signing/touring stories—a guy once in St. Louis swore he went to high school with me, but I couldn't remember him (or, later, find him in any yearbook). He told Gary, "I know Wade better than you ever will!" Which, to me, is code for "He's going to end up in my trunk without pants and with a lot of duct tape around his mouth." At the end of the event, he was waiting outside the doors and began to follow us. We alerted security, who asked him if he needed help to his car.

There was also the guy who walked up and said, "Draw a kitty cat!" When I asked why, he said, "Because I love kitty cats, and no author has ever said no!" He was sweating and laughing like Paul Lynde, and was clutching something in his pocket. So I drew this hideous cat (I cannot draw—a first-grader draws better than me) with an arrow pointing to it, beside which I wrote, "My pussy." He was not amused. But I was.

**WCT: You'll be doing a couple of readings/signings in Chicago on Feb. 9 and 10. You boys live just outside of Saugatuck, so I imagine you and Gary visit Chicago fairly often.**

WR: We head to Chicago a lot still, either as part of work (book signings, lectures, writing workshops), or just when we need a few days in the city to shop, or catch a show. Typically, we stay either with friends (publishers love it when you save them a buck or two), or Random House puts us up at Sax Chicago or The Majestic.

We usually do hit Boystown one night; we always eat at a new restaurant, and we always try a new coffeehouse. The one thing we always try and do is find a new neighborhood to explore, and we also wander Michigan Avenue. Gary and I always like to run [along] the lakeshore—no matter the temperature—when we're there, and we always hit Unabridged Books or The Book Cellar.



Wade Rouse. Photo courtesy of Rouse

can make it.

**WCT: Your next project is titled I'm Not the Biggest Bitch in the Relationship—which sounds like a book on dating for gays but it's actually a dog anthology.**

WR: Best. Title. Ever. Right? Yeah, "Bitch" is a humorous dog anthology I created and am editing, which will be published in November from NAL/Penguin. I always wanted to do a book about our dogs (Gary and I have two rescue mutts, Marge and Mabel—we like sturdy, old-school, grandma names for our pets—who are the loves of our lives) that was in my humor brand: sarcastic, edgy, hilarious, a book that was sort of the anti-Marley-and-Me, a book that made folks laugh, had no tragedy and was about the fact that most owners are more neurotic than their dogs. I also wanted to do something that helped shelters/charities. So, I came up with "Bitch," and worked my pretty little tail off to assemble a great group of hilarious writers and comics to contribute essays about their dogs, and their relationships with them. I then reached out to the Humane Society of the United States [HSUS], which jumped on board and is backing the project tremendously. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the HSUS as well as contributor charities and shelters.

Chelsea Handler's dog, Chunk, "wrote" the foreword, and it is amazing. And I have 11 New York Times best-selling authors on board (including Chicagoan Jen Lancaster, Laurie Notaro, Rita Mae Brown, Jill Conner Browne, Jane Green, Beth Harbison, Caprice Crane); great comics, like Alec Mapa; and even a Tony winner (Jeff Marx, who co-created AVENUE Q). This anthology is amazing, and I'm so proud of it.

**WCT: Reveal something about yourself that might surprise your readers.**

WR: I lost 120 pounds. While I was in the closet, I ate nonstop. Now, I'm an exercise nut (many critics now call me "the sexy Sedaris"). Running and working out keep my sane and balanced, free my mind to be creative, while also stopping it from spinning constantly.

Also—I had no connections in publishing. I was discovered in the "slush pile," meaning my letter and manuscript were chosen from a bin of thousands by my great literary agent. I believe if you have talent, a unique voice, skin of steel, incredible determination and ability to take rejection while wanting to change the world, you

Chelsea Handler's dog, Chunk, "wrote" the foreword, and it is amazing. And I have 11 New York Times best-selling authors on board (including Chicagoan Jen Lancaster, Laurie Notaro, Rita Mae Brown, Jill Conner Browne, Jane Green, Beth Harbison, Caprice Crane); great comics, like Alec Mapa; and even a Tony winner (Jeff Marx, who co-created AVENUE Q). This anthology is amazing, and I'm so proud of it.

**Wade Rouse will be giving a reading, talk, Q&A and signing at the Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State, on Wed., Feb. 9, at 6 p.m. and at The Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln, on Thursday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m.**

**Tues., Feb. 22, 7 p.m.**

**Tracy Baim: The Half Life of Sgt. Jen Hunter**

with special guests



and



**Bev Spangler** and **Kelli Strickland**  
Come for a reading from the book, and a special performance of the play Half Life by Bev Spangler. Play reading by Spangler and Kelli Strickland, who were both in the film Hannah Free.



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## BOOK REVIEW

# Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States

by Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie and Kay Whitlock  
\$27.95; Beacon Press; 216 pages  
REVIEW BY YASMIN NAIR

Major progress has been made on the road to LGBT "full equality." Don't Ask, Don't Tell has been repealed, and while gay marriage is only legal in a few states, gay organizations have already earmarked millions for that fight. Most significantly for some, the Supreme Court made a landmark decision in the 2003 case of *Lawrence v. Texas* to finally end antiquated laws against sodomy.

It's *Lawrence v. Texas* that convinces many LGTBs that queers can no longer be criminalized. As gay marriage appears on the horizon, LGTBs stand at the foot of the rainbow ready to hoist themselves over it and rappel downwards on the other side to the promised land.

But, meanwhile ... in 1999, Bernina Mata, a Latina lesbian in Illinois, was sentenced to the death penalty in a case where Assistant State's Attorney Troy Owen declared that she had "a motive to commit this crime in that she is a hard core lesbian ... ."

In 2001, Freddie Mason, a Black gay nurse's assistant in Chicago, was arrested after a verbal argument with his landlord "and anally raped with a billy club covered in cleaning fluid by a police officer who called him a 'nigger fag.'"

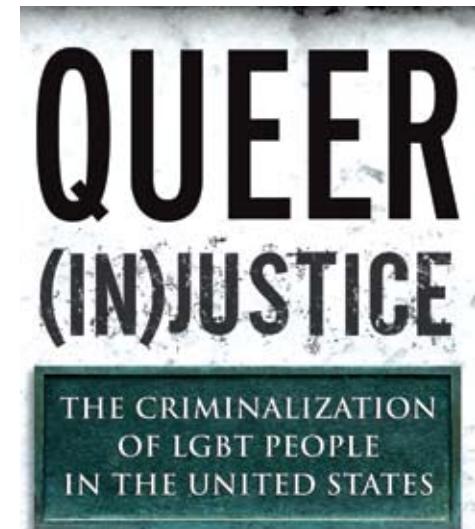
Feb. 2, 2011

coherent mess), the book is eloquent and seamless.

In seven chapters filled with unstinting accounts of detail, acute analysis and historical research, the authors seek to complicate and unsettle what we might understand as the criminalization of LGBT people. The fact that they prefer the term "criminal legal system" rather than the more commonly used "criminal justice system" provides one way to understand this book's intent. For them, this "reflects an acknowledgment of the reality that this system has not produced anything remotely approximating justice for the vast majority of people in the United States ... but rather bears major responsibility for the continuing institutionalization of severe, persistent, and seemingly intractable forms of violence and inequality."

Queer (In)Justice pulls no punches in laying out how this system brutalizes the most marginalized while remaining confident that no one will pay attention or care much. In the case of Johnson, Reverend Dwight Montgomery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said that he was appalled but added, "I certainly don't condone transgender [sic] or homosexuality." At the same time, mainstream LGBT groups jumped on the opportunity to use the case to advance hate-crimes legislation, without criticizing the police department for failing to end what was clearly a systemic problem that could be handled with existing laws in place.

This is the kind of contradiction that this book unpicks so artfully: the fact that the mainstream LGBT community on the one hand expressly wants law and order to work on its behalf even as it sees the history of how that very system



JOEY L. MOGUL,  
ANDREA J. RITCHIE,  
and KAY WHITLOCK

race, income level and sexual and gender identity (perceived or otherwise). Thus, "[a] narrow telling of the story of sodomy laws also creates mutually exclusive categories of 'people who are discriminated against on the basis of race' and 'people who suffer oppression as queers.'" And so, Johnson, a Black, poor, transgender woman who could not access drug addiction treatment programs because she refused to present as a man, was at once ignored by her supposed community of gays and targeted by a system that recognized her socio-economic vulnerability and punished her for talking back.

The book is critical of the mechanisms ostensibly designed to provide correctives to such cases. In a chapter-long critique of hate-crimes legislation, they point out the fallacy of such. Originating in the 1950s as a way to ensure that African-Americans would get fair treatment under the law, hate-crimes legislation persuades us to ignore the fact that law enforcement itself specifically targets what might be deemed protected categories (lesbians, Black gay men, transgender women). In addition, they convince us that bias-based violence springs from individualized and ignorant impulses, allowing us to forget that "behavior that is racist, homophobic, transphobic ... does not occur in a political vacuum."

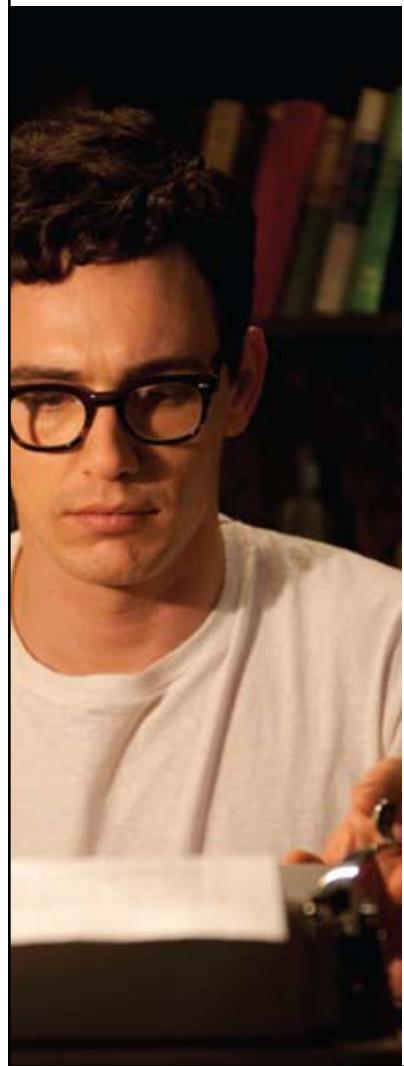
Queer (In)Justice, written in an accessible style for a general audience, is a much-needed corrective to the idea that "law and order" operate as just and abstract concepts in a system that will protect the innocent. It persuasively argues that innocence is a shifting category, contingent on visible markers of race and class privilege. A concluding chapter provides alternatives to the rush to involve conventional policing systems. For instance, in Tennessee, following the Johnson murder, the Tennessee Transgender Political Coalition began calling on transphobic businesses to provide more employment opportunities for transphobic businesses and for shelters to end their practice of turning away transgender people and forcing them live on the streets.

It's here, though, that the book runs the risk of occluding the clarity it otherwise provides so well. In writing about the accomplishments of various alternative queer groups, for instance, it mentions, a few times, Chicago's Queer to the Left (Q2L) for its campaigns against gentrification and the death penalty, describing it as a "multi-racial, grassroots group." I was, along with Joey Mogul, a member of Q2L. Even until her acknowledgments at the end of the book, where she speaks of it in the past tense, it's hard to discern that the group in fact no longer exists. In and for its time, Q2L did excellent work but by the time I left in about 2003, some months before its eventual demise, it was entirely white and mostly male (a colleague wryly



Joey Mogul.

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has consistently worked to deny it the most basic rights—until relatively recently in our history, Chicago police could arrest lesbians for wearing trousers that closed in the front, not the back or sides as "ladies" might wear.

What explains such contradictions? The answer, as Queer (In)Justice reveals, lies partly in the mainstream LGBT community's recent accession to a position of power and influence such that it genuinely believes that it is above such treatment. It also lies in the fact that LGTBs extrapolate very specific lessons from the histories that we understand and/or uncover. For instance, the commonly related narrative about sodomy laws is that they represented the worst of Puritanical impulses and that their repeal now means the end of the criminalization of LGBT people.

But those most affected unjustly by an already unjust criminal legal system are also marginalized on account of any and every combination of

Turn to page 23

## Feeling the 'Wrapture'



Chicago House & Social Service Agency hosted "Champagne Wrapture Snowball 2011: Clicquot in the Snow" Jan. 27 at the Mid-America Club.

Veuve Clicquot, Belvedere Vodka and Grand Marnier provided the bubbly treats and specialty cocktails. In keeping with the theme, the suggested attire was "stylish snow bunny." Photos by Kat Fitzgerald ([MysticImagesPhotography.com](http://MysticImagesPhotography.com)); see more online at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com>

## QUEER from page 22

noted that my departure meant a sudden depletion in at least three constituencies), and its internal and external politics displayed the kind of racism and homo/heteronormative agenda it had originally sprung up to combat; its last public action was pro-gay marriage.

I provide this in part to disclose my prior working relationship with one of the book's authors (Mogul and I still operate in intersecting activist circles) but also to caution against a tendency of the left/progressive organizing world to erase, even if with the gentle nudge of omission of certain facts, the more troubling aspects of our individual and collective histories. The authors are not responsible for long histories of the many groups they mention, but they are responsible for at least accurate portrayals and for pointing out that some groups, while they did vital work, have also died out (similarly, Queer Watch, another network mentioned, no longer exists). In forgetting or erasing our pasts, we run the risk of believing that alternative visions can operate without trouble or rancor or that, indeed, that they somehow operate forever. Our fallibility as organizers does not make us any less radical or effective; our awareness of such can only make us stronger.

That aside, this book is a powerful and productively disorienting book, and essential reading for anyone interested in how queers intersect with the criminal legal system. Queer (In)Justice does not present an explicitly abolitionist agenda, but its politics are clear in one telling sentence: "The violence and punishment visited

on LGBT prisoners 'are not anomalies,' and they cannot be eradicated through reform." I suspect that the book's shying away from a more explicitly abolitionist agenda has something to do with the fact that it emerges from an anti-oppression, not an anti-capitalist framework. Which is to say: the problems it illuminates are depicted as arising from the oppression of marginalized communities, but there is little gesturing towards, for instance, the economic machinations of the for-profit prison industrial complex.

That's not a critique as much as it is a statement of fact, and the book's main focus is on the larger legal system. Queer (In)Justice provides analyses and information that have rarely been put together in this form, and those looking for more anti-capitalist and abolitionist work can find it in the writings of, say, Angela Davis—who is frequently cited here. Besides, the sheer force of the evidence that the authors have marshaled will undoubtedly have an effect. A reader might well begin this book wondering, "How can we change this system for the better?" That same reader is likely to emerge with a completely different question by the end: "How can we end this structure forever?"

The three authors of Queer(In)Justice will be at two events in Chicago this month. On Sunday, Feb. 27, at 4:30 p.m. they will read from and sign copies of the book at Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark. On Friday, Feb. 25, they will be at DePaul Center, Concourse Level, for the book's Chicago launch, 5:30-8 p.m., 1 E. Jackson.

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Lake County Fairgrounds  
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service for homes, small businesses and small buildings. We also have fabulous organizational skills (a separate function at a separate cost that utilizes your assistance) for what hasn't been cleaned in many months or years due to long-term illness, depression, physical/mental challenges, for the elderly, if you have downsized and more. Depressed about going home to chaos? We can organize your chaos, straighten out your chaos, help you make sense of your chaos and finally clean what is no longer chaos. **Can we help you? Bonded and insured. Chestnut Cleaning Service: 312-332-5575. www.ChestnutCleaning.com** (4/27-11-52)

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# calendar Q

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## Wed., Feb. 2

**23rd National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change** More than 2,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights advocates will converge to strategize and organize for the critical year ahead and a diverse lineup of keynote speakers. 12 p.m., Minneapolis, Minn., <http://www.creatingchange.org>

**Free: Faith Training workshop by PFLAG** Come learn how to initiate dialogue and plan a panel discussion in your faith community. Not about politics and not about advocacy, this workshop is about the everyday changes you can make in your faith community. 7 p.m., 708-784-1662, Elmhurst College, 190 Prospect

**Gay Liberation Network organizing meeting** Monthly organizing meeting of the Gay Liberation Network. 7 p.m., 773-209-1187, Berger Park Cultural Center 6205 N. Sheridan, <http://www.gayliberation.net>

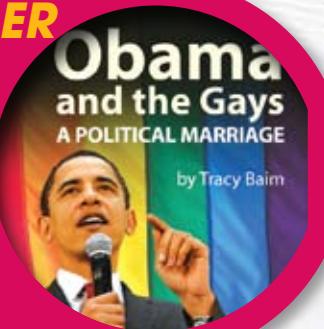
**You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West** Every Wednesday with Honey West! Sing Out, Louise! Take your place in the spotlight! There's not a bad seat in the house. 10 p.m., 773-281-3355, Roscoe's Tavern, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Thursday, Feb. 3

**The Peculiar and the Particular: A Conversation** Curators John Corbett and Jim Dempsey will lead a public conversation in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) Sullivan Galleries with artists Art Green, Tyson Reeder, Mary Lou Zelazny, and curator Lisa Stone. 12 p.m., 312.629.6635, The Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Avenue, <http://www.saic.edu/exhibitions>

## EXECUTIVE ORDER Monday, Feb. 7

**WCT Publisher/Executive Editor Tracy Baim will discuss her book, Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage, at National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan.**



gress, <http://www.auditoriumtheatre.org>

**The Gritty World Premiere of Bordello** Chicago Dramatists will Present The World Premiere Of Bordello, A Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Nominee, By Resident Playwright Aline Lathrop. 8 p.m., 312-633-0630, Chicago Dramatists, 1105 W. Chicago, <http://www.chicagodramatists.org>

**Tearing Down the Walls performance and discussion** ETA Creative Arts Foundation hosts a talk on HIV/AIDS in the African American community following the 8 p.m. performance, led by Dr. John Schneider, assistant professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at the University of Chicago Medical Center. 8 p.m., ETA Creative Arts Foundation, <http://www.etacreativearts.org>

**The Red Carpet of Sound: Musical Pairings, a cappella and with Piano** Patrick Sinozich, a Gay and Lesbian Hall of Famer and renowned for his work as artistic director of the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus, will star. 8 p.m., Wentz Concert Hall, 171 E. Chicago, Naperville, <http://www.chicagocappella.org>

**Charlie's Man of the Month** 10 p.m., Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway, <http://www.charlieschicago.com>

## Saturday, Feb. 5

**Auditions for Gay Cabaret** Seeking actors, musicians, singers, and dancers of ALL AGES for an original theatre piece at Passion Theatre in Oak Park. 1 p.m., 773-426-1168, Passion Theatre 405 S. Euclid, Oak Park, <http://euclidumc.org>

**9 to 12 Bowling** LGBT bowling league held the 1st Saturday of the month at River-Rand Bowl in Des Plaines. 9 p.m., River Rand Bowl, 191 S. River, Des Plaines

**CAKE Chicago.** February is SO VERY... Featuring comedy by Sapna Kumar; music by Diva Kai, Humble Tripe, BullFighter and hosted by Ripley Caine; 9 p.m., 773-274-5463, The Red Line Tap, 7006 N. Glenwood, <http://www.facebook.com/cakechicago>

**DJ Joe Gauthreaux at Hydrate Superstar** DJ Joe Gauthreaux will keep Hydrate's dance floor pumping until 5AM this Saturday! 10 p.m., Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

## Sunday, Feb. 6

**Rainbow Brunch North Shore** Rainbow Brunch is a social group for GLBT men and women who live in the Chicago suburbs; although all are welcome. Contact [rainbowbrunch@aol.com](mailto:rainbowbrunch@aol.com) for more information; 10am, Old Country Buffet, 8780 Dempster, Niles

**Urban Village Church service** Worship is about coming together as community to make space for God to move in us. It's a

place to receive God's grace and love and to give of ourselves, as well. 10:15am, Urban Village Church, Spertus Institute, 610 S. Michigan, <http://www.newchicagochurch.com>

**Super Bowl Sunday at Scot's** Super Bowl Sunday at Scot's with the 12th annual "Slap My Ass and Call Me Sally" chili contest. Bring in your culinary creation before the game. Judging at half time. 1st place wins \$100. 12 p.m., Scot's, 1829 W Montrose Avenue, <http://www.chicagoscot'sbar.com>

**Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** Open to any sexual orientation, gender identity, and any racial or ethnic group, their parents, family members and friends, and any person who cares about the LGBT community. Speaking will be Deborah L. Wilke, a licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and a Nationally Certified (Master's Level) Psychologist. 2 p.m., 630-415-0622, Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, 17 W. Maple, Hinsdale, <http://www.pflagillinois.org>

**Chicago Pride Invitational Annual Super Bowl Party** Come to North End to watch Super Bowl XLV! We will have food, prizes and lots of fun! Benefitting the Chicago Pride Invitational Bowling Tournament and Scratch Masters; 5 p.m., North End, 3733 N Halsted, <http://www.cpi-chicago.org>

**Madonnarama** Get into the groove at Berlin's Madonnarama with DJ Riley York. 10 p.m., Berlin, 954 W Belmont Ave, <http://www.berlinchicago.com>

## Monday, Feb. 7

**Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage author talk** National-Louis University's GLBTQA Community Interest Group and the Public Policy Student Organization present Tracy Baim, author of Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage, a rich discourse on the many facets of policy, politics, and lesbian/gay rights, from gays and lesbians in the military to gay marriage and civil unions, issues impacting civil and human rights, and ultimately, our professional practice, open to all faculty, students and staff. Please see future dates for community book signings. R.S.V.P to timothy.mantz01@my.nl.edu. 5:30 p.m., National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan, <http://www.nl.edu/glbtq>

**Live Band Karaoke with Amy Armstrong** Host Amy Armstrong ushers you to your place in the spotlight as you perform live with the band at Roscoe's! There's not a bad seat in the house; 10 p.m., Roscoe's Tavern, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Tuesday, Feb. 8

**Lambda Legal's 10th Annual "Freedom To Marry 2011" Gala** For the last 10 years, Lambda Legal has hosted the "Freedom to Marry" Gala. After this year's passage of the Illinois Civil Unions Bill, the tenth anniversary of Freedom to Marry is sure to be an energetic celebration. 6:30 p.m., Mexican Fine Arts Center, 1852 W. 19th, <http://www.lambdalegal.org>

**Dating for Gay Nerds** Annual singles Valentine's bash. Includes a cocktail. 7 p.m., Downtown Bar, 440 N. State

**46th Ward Democrats Aldermanic Forum**

A chance to hear directly from the candidates and to ask them questions about the issues; free food and drink specials; open to the public. RSVP Sean Tanner, Sean@The46thWard.org; 7 p.m., 312-576-8822, Holiday Club, 4000 N. Sheridan

## Wednesday, Feb. 9

**Lesbian Love Fest, Dating for Nerds** Annual singles Valentine's bash. Includes a cocktail. 7 p.m., Downtown Bar, 440 N. State

**Julia Borcherts, Gina Frangello, and Christine Snead** Fiction readings by three very talented local writers: Julia Borcherts is a fiction-writing instructor at Columbia



## 'CANDY' GIRL Sunday, Feb. 6

It's all about the Material Girl at Berlin, 954 W. Belmont, when DJ Riley York spins Madonna tunes.

College Chicago: a frequent contributor to Time Out Chicago, Red Eye, and MetroMix, and a co-founder of Reading Under the Influence; Gina Frangello is the author of the novel *My Sister's Continent* and the short-story collection *Slut Lullabies*, executive editor for Other Voices Books and fiction editor for the popular online literary collective The Nervous Breakdown 7 p.m., Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark, <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

## Thursday, Feb. 10

**Judy Shepard and Riki Wilchins speak** "Addressing Hatred & Strengthening the LGBT Community through Personal Action & Professional Support" presentation and panel, presented by Judy Shepard, The Matthew Shepard Foundation and Riki Wilchins, TrueChild. 12:30 p.m., Loyola University Chicago, 25 E. Pearson, Phillip H. Corboy School Of Law, 15th floor

**The Vagina Monologues** Features the voices of women from around the world, their stories funny, witty, impassioned, candid, creating an eclectic mix of narratives all centered around the experiences of being a woman, fatures original Chicago Metropolis cast, through the first weekend in May. 8 p.m., 630-896-6666., Paramount Theatre's Copley Theatre, <http://www.paramountaurora.com>

## Friday, Feb. 11

**Tickled Pink fundraiser for Y-ME** Tickled Pink brings together the city's hip, young or young at heart for a celebration worthy of any V.I.P, all to ensure no one faces breast cancer alone. At the event, guests will walk the pink carpet, sip on delicious cocktails and dine on hors d'oeuvres and late night munchies by many of Chicago's favorite restaurants. Tickets are \$75 in advance. Space is limited. 7 p.m., 312-294-8557, The Underground Chicago, 56 W. Illinois, <http://www.tickledpinkchicago.com>

## Saturday, Feb. 12

**Equality Illinois 20th Annual Justice for All Benefit Gala** Continuing its more than decade-long tradition as the largest LGBT black-tie gala in the Midwest, Equality Illinois hosts this event. 6 p.m., Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S. Michigan, <http://www.eqil.org/gala2/gala2.html>

**Special Linda Eder offer for Valentine's show** One of today's truly great contemporary solo voices, with newly penned originals, great cover songs from pop and country music and new arrangements to some of her classic hits all for \$80. The offer expires Feb. 4. 8 p.m., North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, <http://www.northshorecenter.org/lindaederwcf.cfm>

## WED RECKONING

### Tuesday, Feb. 8

Lambda Legal's 10th Annual "Freedom to Marry" gala will take place at the Mexican Fine Arts Center, 1852 W. 19th.

Photo from 2009 by Emmanuel Garcia

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ChicagoPride.com

# BILLY MASTERS

"We didn't get a nomination 4 best song! That sucks! Diane's song is so beautiful! Maybe she would have had a better chance if someone else was singing it!"—Cher expresses her dismay when "You Haven't Seen The Last of Me" didn't get an Oscar nomination. Maybe, like Cher, the Academy voters didn't see Burlesque.

Last week began with a chance encounter in an elevator with someone who makes my hair color look natural. Picture it—trapped in an enclosed area for several minutes with Derek Hough. He spent the ride glued to his BlackBerry, and when he darted out a few floors before me, I noticed he dropped something. I could have called out to him but the doors were just about to close. (OK, I was more curious to see what he left behind.) It was his temporary ID card that the building issues to all people who check in. I earlier noticed him holding it between his teeth while he texted. And you know what that means—DNA! If I can get in touch with that guy who cloned Dolly, I could grow my own Derek Hough—or at the very least, a sheep with blond highlights who'll bottom!

You wouldn't think that a pop princess from the '80s would be breaking news, but last week it was all about Tiffany. For those of you who don't know, Tiff and Debbie/Deborah Gibson were promoting their SyFy flick, *Mega Python vs. Gatoroid*, on Bravo's gabfest, *Watch What Happens Live*. When Andy Cohen asked about her dating one of the New Kids on the Block, Tiffany tentatively talked about Jonathan Knight, who she described as quiet and shy. (Gibson piped in "and the cutest.") Tiffany continued, "He became gay later. I didn't do it—but he's fabulous." When Cohen asked, "Did you turn him?" (Andy, you should know better), Tiff was happy to give more details: "No. See, I had issues with that. I was thinking maybe I did. But no. Now looking back, when we were dating, he was so much fun. We used to do facials together. I'm like, he was so easy to talk to. And he was fabulous." May I say that if you're using the words "fabulous" and "facials" to describe your boyfriend, he's gay.

In short order, Tiffany was informed that Jon wasn't out. Oopsie! She immediately tweeted, "Really didn't know that was the wrong thing to say. Never meant to hurt Jon." Knight responded, "I'm so devastated....how can I not remember getting facials?" There's that Boston humor we're known for! He then said, "Tiff, please don't lose any sleep over it! I know you weren't being mean and I found it funny." Days later, he followed it up with a blog post which said, in part: "I have never been outed by anyone but myself. I did so almost twenty years ago. I never knew that I would have to do it all over again publicly just because I reunited with NKOTB! I have lived my life very openly and have never hidden the fact that I am gay!" Incidentally, the exclamation points are his, not mine.

This isn't the first time Jon's been outed. Last year, an ex-boyfriend of his sold a story to the tabloids. Said boyfriend was sometime Brazilian model Kyle Wilker, who was paid the princely sum of \$8,000—which was likely twice his annual salary in the motherland. In his exposé, Kyle revealed that Jonathan decided he preferred guys after dating Tiffany—so maybe she did turn him! I'll run photos of the boys on *BillyMasters.com*.

Brazilians aren't the only models cashing in. Calvin Klein's relationship with sometime model/porn star Nick Gruber seems to still be hot and/or heavy since the legendary designer threw his boytoy a 21st birthday party. I always think it's lovely when you can coincide celebrating your beau becoming legal with when you start collecting Social Security. The swanky soirée was attended by such guests as Anna Wintour, Donna



Cher is disappointed with the Academy.

Karan, Ingrid Sischy, Andy Cohen, Vera Wang and her friend, Miss Lysacek—apparently my invitation got lost in the mail! Said invite read: "In the spirit of the New Year and in celebration of Nick Gruber's birthday, please join Calvin Klein for dinner and drinks at Indochine Jan. 21 at 9 p.m. It will be the hottest ticket for New York's gay and fashion elite." I always think that when someone refers to themselves as being part of the "elite," they probably aren't. And I wonder why I wasn't invited! It might have something to do with me running all sorts of nude photos and footage of Nick (pre-reconstructive surgery) on *BillyMasters.com*. I'll run pics from the party, too.

I've been silent about the alleged break-up of Jake Gyllenhaal and Taylor Swift. Here's what I don't understand—why do people think that every guy who has a cup of coffee with Taylor is dating her? And if these two did indeed date, why does everyone think Jake's the one who did the dumping? I mean, look at Swift's track record. After being "dumped" by every eligible bachelor on both coasts, you might need to look in a mirror. If I were Jake, I'd certainly enjoy looking in a mirror—especially given the hi-def nude snaps we've got of him from *Love and Other Drugs*, a film neither I nor most of my fans saw. Fear not—we've got the stills and video on *BillyMasters.com* that reveal Taylor would be a lucky lady if she did, in fact, go out with him. And she'd be walking funny...

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Yawar in Baltimore: "Who is the hot young blond hunky guy who is shirtless in the T-Mobile commercials?"

Ahhh—we got lots of e-mails about him after the previous commercial, where he gave the guy from AT&T a piggy-back ride. Many thought he was Neil Haskell from *So You Think You Can Dance*. It's actually Andrew J. West, who you may recall from "Greek" or more recently \$#! My Dad Says. You may not have been able to place him because he's usually a brunette—and if you're shocked to hear he's not a natural blond, please stop reading this column immediately.

When I'm considering switching my cell service, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Let me make something clear—my little jabs at Derek Hough and Andrew West don't mean I have a thing against guys who color their hair. Let he without Clorox cast the first stone. That said, I do have a problem with bad dye jobs. Didya see the pictures of Ricky Martin's unfortunate polka-dotted look? You can see him (and everyone else) on [www.BillyMasters.com](http://www.BillyMasters.com)—the site that never strays too far from its roots. If you've got a question, drop a note to [Billy@BillyMasters.com](mailto:Billy@BillyMasters.com) and I promise to get back to you before Tiffany admits she also went out with Jordan Knight! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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**Kirk joined our company in 2001 as a sales representative. He has increased his responsibilities over the years to now include managing editor of *Nightspots*, and art director for all of the Windy City Media Group publications.**

# Michael Grimes: Trainer talks about reaching goals

BY ROSS FORMAN

It's resolution time, so that means fitness goals for many.

Or maybe they're just dreams. Some are realistic; some aren't.

They are, though, without question, a lifestyle change.

"Changing the appearance of your body is extremely difficult," said certified personal trainer Michael Grimes, who lives in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood and sees clients at a private gym in Lincoln Park. "That's why most of us don't look the way we want to look. Start with simple changes and work your way up to the big ones."

And definitely start with your diet—don't just focus on how much to lift, or how many miles of cardio conditioning to complete.

"Focus on your diet," said Grimes, 33, who has been a personal trainer for seven years. "Cardio and lifting are great and necessary supplements to the achievement of your fitness goals, but more than half of your success is going to come from your diet."

"Eat breakfast every morning rich in protein and complex carbs. Do cardio first thing in the morning or after you lift [weights], and lift three times per week at least."

"Don't be shy about going to a public gym. I remember how intimidating it was to step into a gym for the first time. Everybody looks like they know what they're doing. Truth is, most don't, so fake it till you make it."

Grimes graduated from West Leyden High School in suburban Northlake in 1995, and then the University of Illinois in 1999. He is single and gay, and logs about 32 training hours per week, with 14 clients, ranging in age from 24 to 62.

"I have a pretty good mix of [clients who I train]—both men and women, gay and straight, bears, twinks, muscleheads, you name it. I train 'em all," Grimes said. "The most common goal for my clients is to lose fat and gain muscle, but you have the occasional client who is trying to improve flexibility, even out a muscle imbalance, be better at a sport, or just keep active as they have trouble doing so on their own."

So Grimes always preaches the S.M.A.R.T. plan. Of course, that's the ritual that includes Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

"The worst thing to do is initiate too much change too quickly," Grimes said. "That's why steady gym-goers know that the gym sucks for the first two weeks of January—because of all the New Years 'resolutionists.' After that, 95 percent of the newbie's have disappeared. Make sure you know your plan of action. That'll help you be a part of that 5 percent that sticks with it."

To that, Grimes stresses learning how to maintain good form on your lifts. "Nothing is more important than that to keep you from injuring yourself," he said. "Swallow your pride and cut down on the amount of weight you're working with."

And always set realistic goals—or unrealistic goals lead to quick failure.

"You will stay more motivated by setting easy weekly goals, such as, 'Don't drink any alcohol all week,' or, 'Do cardio three times this week for a half hour.' Little changes will make a difference in your physique and therefore give you more steam to make more and more changes," Grimes said. "I understand that you may feel insecure about the way you look, or just feel at sea in a strange and foreign place when you walk into the gym. Have a plan of action written out. If you know which exercises you need to do for how many sets and reps, you'll focus more on the task at hand, and less on what's happening around you. Put those headphones in your ears and drown out the world around you."

Grimes said a realistic goal is losing one to three pounds per week, or decreasing your body fat by 1-3 percent per month.

"It can take as long as one year to gain 10 pounds of muscle," he said. "It is unrealistic to think you're going to look like the dude or woman in a fitness magazine in three months."

But, he added, "Exercising not only improves your body, it improves your emotional health, which improves every aspect of your life. That's worth making time for."

**Certified personal trainer Michael Grimes can be reached by e-mail at [mgrimes311@gmail.com](mailto:mgrimes311@gmail.com).**

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WINDY CITY TIMES

now weighing the lowest I have ever weighed as an adult, even less than I did at high school graduation, and am very near to weighing half my former body weight.

"This is a secondary reason I see Mike; when one's skin has accommodated 484 pounds, it does not know what to do when that person hits the 240s. I needed to tone up and muscle definition; all the cardio in the world was not going to give me that."

"Since meeting and working out with Mike [for] about eight or nine weeks, I have dropped an additional 10 pounds, as well as a waist and shirt size. Our first meeting was an hour and a half long where we discussed my goals, timelines, eating patterns, cardio activity, etc. From there we developed a plan and got to work. Each session he checks in with me about my weight, my eating and my cardio activity. By week three, I had already noticed changes in muscle tone, strength as well as how clothing was fitting differently. He is energetic, kind, and cares about his clients. I have worked with two other trainers before, and while both of them were very good, he is something different. If you are thinking about giving a trainer a try, give Mike a call. He offers a deal for purchasing multiple sessions together: Get the 10-pack to start working on your six-pack! You won't regret it, trust me."

**Final thoughts:** "Make sure you tell your friends and family about your plans and that you expect their support. Making a serious commitment to getting in shape will cause you to change how you socialize, and your friends won't be happy about it when you don't want to go out to the bar three nights per week. It helps to have a friend to workout with to keep each other going. Once you start to see your body change, you will feel more inclined to stay away from your old habits that made you fat, or skinny, or weak, and that will change your taste in methods of socializing."



Michael Grimes. Photo by Ross Forman

**More fitness tips from certified personal trainer Michael Grimes:**

**About nutrition:** "Eat meals rich in protein and complex carbohydrates every two to three hours. Make adjustments to how many calories you ingest according to weight gain or weight loss. When you're at a bar, everyone wants to see you drinking, so make it a soda water with a splash of cranberry. That'll keep everyone from asking, 'Why aren't you drinking?'

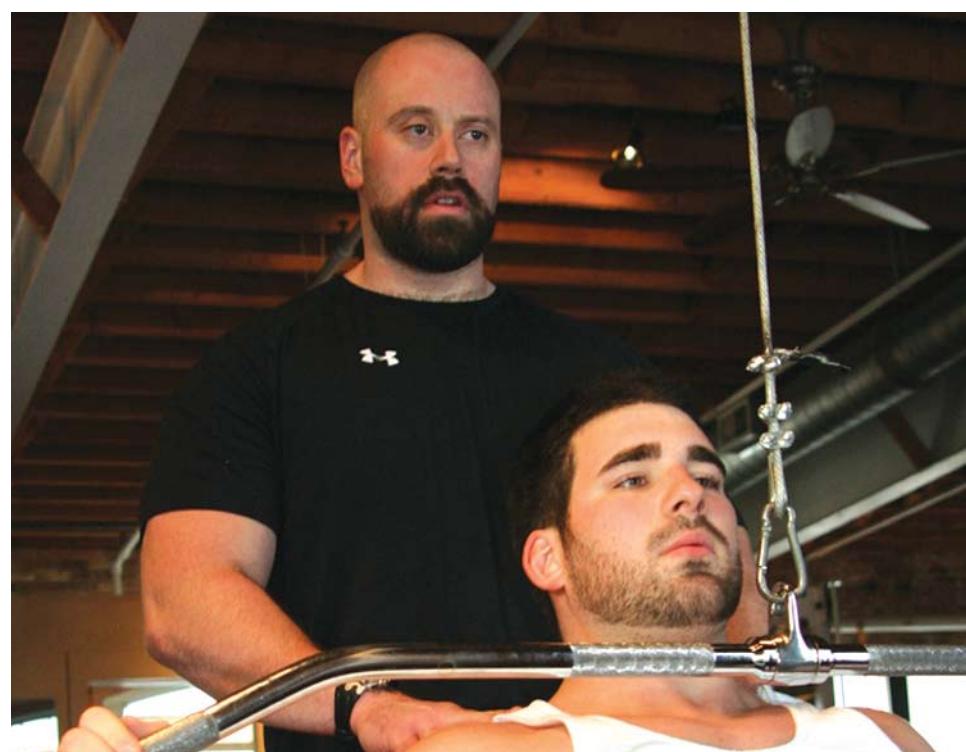
**Three things to make workouts beneficial:** 1) Walk into the gym with a workout program. Don't fly by the seat of your pants. 2) Have proper form. Throwing weights around that are 25 percent heavier than they should be isn't helping you reach your goal. 3) Eat complex carbs before you lift to give you energy to get through your workout.

**Weight lifting or cardio:** Both! Weight lifting increases your metabolism, muscle tone, and bone density. Cardio is weight lifting for your heart, and helps burn off stored energy (fat).

**Fitness within the LGBT community:** "It isn't easy shaking off the first two decades of shame instilled in us for being different. Feeling better about the way you look improves your confidence and makes your life better in many ways. When you have more confidence, you will make better decisions about how you treat yourself, how you let others treat you, and how you treat others."

**About Mike, from client Darryn Dunbar, 42, who lives in Lakeview and is a nursing professor at Truman College:** "I found Mike sort of by happenstance a couple of months ago. Originally connecting in a chat room, I noticed that he was a personal trainer with a goal to get into nursing school. Conversely, I'm a nursing professor who was looking for a personal trainer. After a couple exchanges back and forth, we decided to meet in person to see if this would be a good fit. I had already made a conscious decision to give up my usual team sports of volleyball and bowling this season to put that time, and money, into getting more toned and 'muscularly' fit. Despite being an overweight guy, I am pretty cardiovascularly fit, having run several endurance and short distance events."

"More recently, I had been training for TPAN's AIDS ride, however, an unexpected surgery days before the ride sidelined me from that event. My body changing and weight loss journey began over 7 years ago when I weighed nearly 500 pounds and turned to gastric bypass surgery as a means to assist me in losing weight. One could say I am a gastric bypass success story with the weight I have lost and kept off. In the fall of 2008, I experienced a cycling injury that rendered me unable to exercise. In the next four months, I quickly tacked on an additional 30 pounds. Panic set in and it became clear what I needed to do. In February 2009, I began a weight reduction plan using principles of healthy eating and increasing physical activity. Since then, I have lost that 30 pounds and 50 more,



Michael Grimes (rear) training a client. Photo by Ross Forman

## GAY SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES PROFILE

### Chuck Jacobson

BY ROSS FORMAN

Chuck Jacobson played in the 2008 and 2010 Gay Softball World Series so, of course, he's excited about the 2011 tournament, to be held in the Chicago area and which the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) is sponsoring.

But he just doesn't want to play—if his team qualifies, that is.

Jacobson also wants to umpire games in the 35th annual, weeklong softball spectacle, run by the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Association (NAGAAA).

The series is scheduled for Aug. 29-Sept. 3 at field complexes in Elmhurst, Schaumburg and St. Charles. More than 4,000 players from North America are expected, and this is the first time Chicago has hosted the event since 1983.

Jacobson, 35, who lives in Roscoe Village and drives for FedEx, plays outfield for the Green Team Properties/Gotcha Covered Blinds G-Force, which captured the C-Division championship in the annual 2010 Minuteman Classic gay softball tournament in Boston, Mass.

"I'm excited for the World Series to see the friends I've made over the years at softball tournaments here in my city of Chicago," said Jacobson, who has participated in the Series in Seattle, Wash., and Columbus, Ohio.

In addition to the on-field excitement, the off-the-field experiences certainly are part of the series. Participants are expected to have fun, and the bars in Boystown will probably be out of control that week.

"What makes the series so special is, you get to see all the players who love to play this wonderful sport," Jacobson said.

**STEWART from page 10**

**WCT:** What are your thoughts on a school that would be specifically for LGBTQ students?

ES: I wish it wasn't necessary but children need to feel safe and flourish in this environment—and if we can find enough children who would want to be in an LGBTQ campus, then I think it's great and I would support it.

**WCT: Do you wish there was a school like that when you grew up?**

ES: [Pauses] I don't know. We are a minority, and I liked being able to interact with all different kinds of people. I mean, it's a really brave kid who can come out at 14 years old. But I'm sure there are kids in Chicago who come from families where they don't feel comfortable, so I'd like to see a lot of diversity with the LGBTQ campus.

But I loved my high school so much, and we had teachers who we knew were gay. One of my religion teachers at St. Ignatius was a gay man who unfortunately passed away from AIDS-related complications when I was a student there. I think Ignatius was a pretty welcoming community.

**WCT: Let's say you become alderman. What would you like to accomplish within your first 100 days?**

ES: I'd set up an interactive website; we need to bring this operation into the 21st century, although I will have extended office hours. I want to build some accountability into that system so I can track my office's performance. If you're complaining about a missing manhole cover, for example, and we farm that out, we need to follow up to make sure [that task] is completed.

In addition, I'd like to set up a participatory budgeting committee and framework; it's something I really admire about [49th Ward Al-

derman] Joe Moore. That's part of the uniting process—building coalitions and giving people an opportunity to effect change.

**WCT: Getting back to the race, what do you feel is your biggest asset and what do you feel is your biggest liability?**

ES: I feel that my biggest asset is my corporate-finance background and bringing that to city council. My biggest liability, I feel, is probably name recognition; that needs to be improved.

There are certain avenues to reach a widespread audience to the community. I've been active with my local block club and I've met with St. Augustine College to make the area around it safe. In addition, I've always been active with the Japanese American Service Committee, and even with my elderly neighbors—taking them to the hospital, translating for them.

For my community, there are things that are important, like organizing a postman's protest for one of the postal workers in the community. He was very much beloved, and got 300 people to sign a petition. At a rally, we had 40 people show up to demand that he be returned to our community.

Some people feel that I haven't been active in the community. Well, that's not true; I've just chosen to serve in a way that has not been geared toward running for public office.

**WCT: Are there any LGBT-related issues you want to tackle as alderman?**

ES: I think because the Center [on Halsted] touches the 46th Ward, there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed. I'd like to work with the center to make sure it stays open longer, so we'll see what we can do there.

**WCT: Do you believe that an alderman should step down if he or she is being investigated for illegal activity?**

ES: No, I don't. We've had a lot of corruption

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in Chicago, but people are still innocent until they're proven guilty. Once someone's convicted, I believe they should step down and have their pensions taken away—and that's for all city employees.

**WCT: With your finance background, I want ed to ask you this: What do you feel about the state's recent income-tax hike?**

ES: I felt it was unfortunate but necessary. We were facing another downgrade of our credit rating as a state, and that has been lifted. But the pension liability is so great that there's still a problem; I doubt there is the political will to raise taxes high enough to cover all those pension obligations. It will help the city, somewhat. I don't agree with the corporate-tax increase because I think we need to bring jobs here.

**WCT: Are you supporting or endorsing any mayoral candidate?**

ES: I do respect Rahm Emanuel quite a bit. I think he has the strength to be a great leader for the city. As long as he is on the ballot, I will be voting for him.

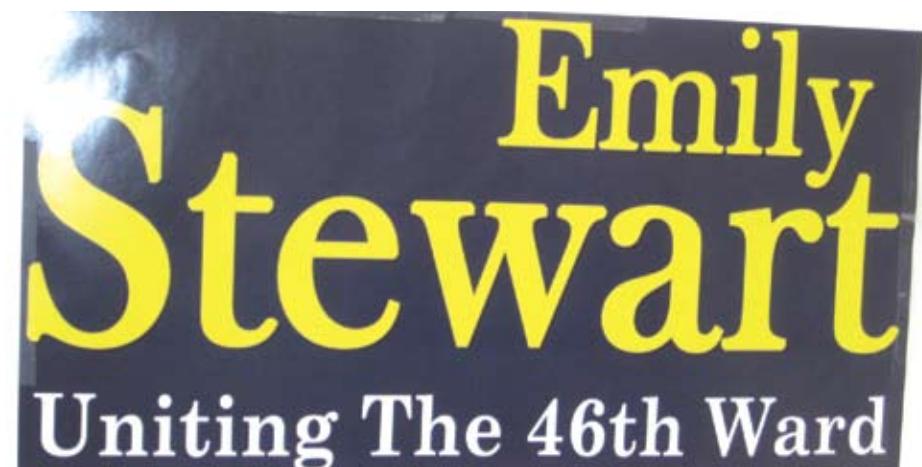
**WCT: Was there anything you wanted to**

add?

ES: One of the most difficult issues facing the city is the budget crisis and a huge reason I decided to run is that no one seemed to be willing to stand up to the special interests in the city, with special interests meaning unions, because they wield so much power in the city. Unions should be powerful entities, but we do need independent aldermen who are willing to stand up for what is right in the city.

We're going to be facing a budget deficit of \$1 billion—and half of that is going to be related to increased contributions to city employees' pension funds. I'm the only candidate who's been saying that pension reform for current city employees must come to Chicago; if we don't do that, we're not going to have the services we need to go forward as a city. It's not that I'm an ideologue; it's just reality. The City of Chicago is not guaranteed those pension funds. I want to help protect employees, and help get the city back on track.

See <http://www.CitizensForStewart.com>.



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