

CHICAGO'S GIA GUNN IS PART OF 'RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE'

PAGE 17



# WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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JANET MOCK APPEARS IN CHICAGO PAGE 6

## Marriage 'yes' votes prepare for primaries

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In the years leading up to the 2013 Illinois marriage-equality votes, many politicians fretted behind closed doors about the possible long-term effects of a vote in favor of gay marriage.

This was despite national statistics that show a more than 95-percent success rate for incumbent pro-marriage politicians—and it's nearly 100 percent for Democrats.

And in Illinois, as of mid-February, just seven House members who voted yes on SB10 will face primary challenges March 18.

"The right wing was constantly threatening us with the repercussions of this vote," added Rick Garcia of The Civil Rights Agenda, one of the groups that lobbied for the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act. "But those didn't come to pass."

Many of the primary races have not featured the marriage vote as an issue; the 39th and 40th District races, for example, center to a large extent on discussions of "Chicago Machine" politics, while the 26th District race might just hinge on how voters respond to the incumbent's vote in favor of pension reform. In many cases, the challengers support marriage equality just as much as the incumbents.

But advocates are working to make sure voters turn out for House members who lent their weight

Turn to page 7



Christian Mitchell (above) is among the pro-marriage equality politicians facing electoral challenges. Photo by Matt Simonette



1970 GAY RALLY PHOTOS RELEASED PAGE 10

## COMING OUT/SPEAKING OUT



VIRGINIA'S MARRIAGE BAN OVERTURNED; ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING COMMENTS PAGE 4



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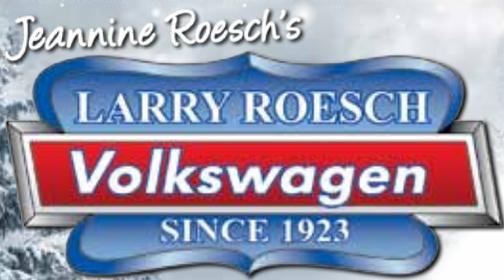
Actress Ellen Page came out last week at a Human Rights Campaign conference; read the entire speech on page 12. Also, Windy City Times talked with Glee actress Lea Michele about her new album (on page 21). Screen shot of Page at the event; Michele photo by Peggy Sirota

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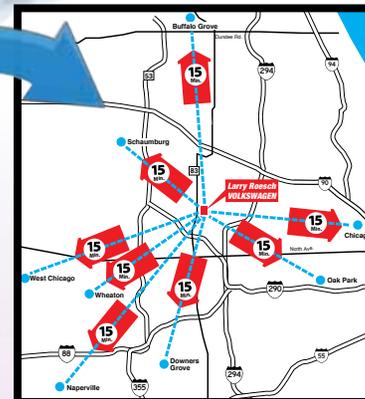
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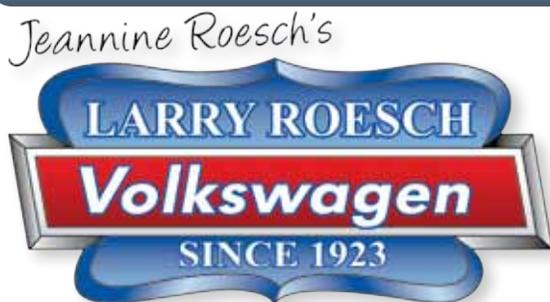


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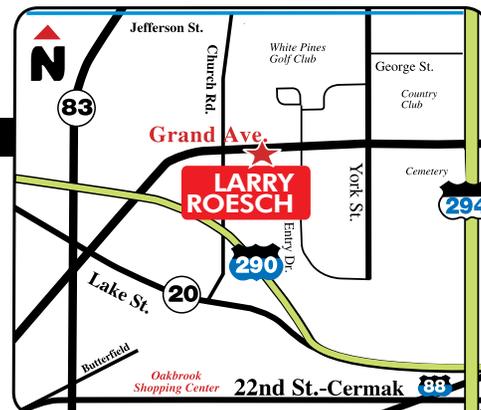
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Images on cover (left, from top): Photo of Gia Gunn courtesy of Logo; photo of Janet Mock by Gretchen Rachel Blickensderfer; photo from 1970 rally by Margaret Olin; official headshot of Va. Atty. Gen. Mark Herring

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#### STYLE GUIDE

Tom and Lorenzo (left) discuss their new book on celebrity life/style, Everyone Wants To Be Me or Do Me  
*Publicity photo*



Lambda Legal's Karen Loewy discusses LGBT seniors and Social Security benefits.  
*Photo from Lambda Legal*



WCT reviews theatrical productions Into the Woods (above) and The Playboy of the Western World.  
*Photo by Evan Hanover*

#### LIFE'S A 'BUTCH'

Elisha Lim's exhibit, "100 Butches," shows drawings of butch and transmasculine individuals.

#### IN THE MIX

Windy City Times talks with Jesy Nelson of the girl group Little Mix.

#### THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Find out the latest about Lee Daniels, Madonna and Orange Is the New Black.

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# Judge strikes down Va.'s marriage ban

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

A federal judge in Norfolk, Va., struck down the state's ban on same-sex couples marrying but stayed the execution of her order that it stop enforcing the law, pending appeal to the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

The decision marks the first time a judge in a southern state has struck down a ban on same-sex couples marrying. Whatever the Fourth Circuit's decision, it will apply to Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and West Virginia.

"Equality isn't something that happens just up north," said American Foundation for Equal Rights executive director Adam Umhoefer, at a press conference Friday morning.

Judge Arenda Wright Allen (an Obama appointee) opened her 41-page decision with a quote from a book by Mildred Loving, the African American woman who, with her white husband, won a lawsuit striking down bans against interracial couples marrying.

"We made a commitment to each other in our love and lives, and now had the legal commitment, called marriage, to match. Isn't that what marriage is?" wrote Loving in *Loving for All*.

In an eloquent, history-laden opinion, Allen acknowledged that a "spirited and controversial debate is underway" regarding same-sex couples marrying, but added, "Our Constitution declares that 'all men' are created equal. Surely this means all of us." She said the ban violates the rights to due process and equal protection and deprives same-sex couples of the fundamental freedom to choose to marry.

"Although steeped in a rich, tradition- and faith-based legacy, Virginia's Marriage Laws are an exercise of governmental power," wrote Allen. "For those who choose to marry, and for their children, Virginia's laws ensure that marriage provides profound legal, financial, and social benefits, and exacts serious legal, financial, and social obligations. The government's involvement in defining marriage, and in attaching benefits that accompany the institution, must withstand constitutional scrutiny. Laws that fail that scrutiny must fall despite the depth and legitimacy of the laws' religious heritage."

The case, *Bostic v. Virginia*, was argued by Ted Olson, David Boies and a team supported by the American Foundation for Equal Rights which pressed the successful challenge against California's statewide ban, Proposition 8.

The decision was dated 9 p.m. on Feb. 13 but entered into the record Feb. 14, Valentine's Day. At a press conference in Norfolk Friday morning, plaintiff Tim Bostic read from the decision an excerpt from a letter by President Lincoln in 1860 regarding the need to end slavery: "It can not have failed to strike you that these men ask for just ... the same thing—fairness, and fairness only. This, so far as in my power, they, and all others, shall have."

Casey Mattox, senior counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom which represented a northern Virginia county clerk who intervened in the case to defend the ban, was out of the office today and could not be reached for comment. But Family Research Council leader Tony Perkins called the decision "another example of an arrogant judge substituting her personal preferences for the judgment of the General Assembly and 57 percent of Virginia voters."

Interestingly, however, judges have struck down only eight of the 21 state and D.C. bans since 2004. Nine of the reversals were done by legislatures, three by voters, and one by a combination of court and legislature. Three of the eight court decisions finding state bans unconstitutional are pending review by federal appeals courts and, along with many other law-

suits, are expected to find their way to the U.S. Supreme Court for a final decision.

Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring, who took office in early January and decided the ban was unconstitutional and that his office would not attempt to defend it, called the decision "a victory for the Constitution and for treating everyone equally under the law."

Allen examined the Virginia ban using "strict scrutiny," the highest level of judicial review, because it infringed upon the fundamental right to marry. Laws violating fundamental rights can pass constitutional muster only if they are narrowly drawn to serve a compelling state interest.

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe released a statement Feb. 14, applauding the decision. And while he said he would continue to enforce the ban as long as it is "on the books," he considers the decision "a significant step forward in achieving greater equality for all of our citizens."

In a telephone call with reporters Feb. 14, attorney Ted Olson praised the "eloquent" and "beautiful" decision written by Judge Allen, saying it should be read by every American.



Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring.

"Judge after judge after judge has determined we cannot any longer withhold the fundamental right to marriage and the right to be treated equally," said Olson. "We feel confident in outcome of this case" on appeal, ultimately to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Olson said he thinks the Supreme Court was constrained by the Proposition 8 case because of an issue involving standing. But he said the

high court could take up the merits on any of the several dozen cases percolating through the federal court system now as soon as next session.

Tim Bostic and Tony London have been together for 24 years; Mary Townley and Carol Schall have been together for nearly 30 years, and have a teenage daughter Emily.

Schall remarked that the decision being issued on Valentine's Day has many special meanings for her. She noted that Virginia's marketing motto has for many years been, "Virginia is for Lovers," and that she and Townley celebrated their 29th anniversary this week.

"The steady march toward equality continues today with this historic decision," said Joshua Block, staff attorney with the ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Project. "Support for the freedom to marry has seen an amazing increase in the past few years, and we will continue to work to ensure that all couples have access to the dignity and protection that only comes with marriage."

The ACLU and Lambda Legal have teamed up in another federal court challenge to Virginia's ban. That case, *Harris v. Virginia*, is in the Western District federal court in Harrisonburg and is proceeding as a class action suit on behalf of all same-sex couples in Virginia who wish to marry.

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## Trans homecoming king fulfills dream

BY ROSS FORMAN

Since his freshman year at East Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, N.C., Blake Brockington has always wanted to be the school's Homecoming King.

"I thought it would be nothing more than that—a dream," he said.

But, on the first Friday of February, Brockington's dream became reality—to the cheering, overflow, soldout crowd attending an East Meck home basketball game.

Brockington, 17, a senior, is believed to be the first openly transgender homecoming king in school history and, perhaps, the entire state of North Carolina.

"I feel this is something that needed to be done eventually and I am honored that I'm the one to have done it," said Brockington, who noted that he is dating (Surrell Thomas, a female). "Living in the same state that deemed same-sex marriage illegal, I never thought that I would have this opportunity. I hope that this allows my peers and school officials [to see] that just because someone is different, they are not less human. I also hope that this opens the doors for transgender policies in schools."

Brockington—who is a drum major in the school's marching band, plays on a rugby team and enjoys photography—was one of 13 finalists to be king. Then it was a battle to raise the most funds for a selected charity: Mothering Across Continents, to help raise money to build schools in South Sudan.

He raised \$2,335.55 of \$3,203.22 that the school will be donating, thanks to local and national support as well as considerable aid from Time Out Youth, a local LGBT youth services agency.

When Brockington officially heard the crowning announcement, he thought, "Am I dreaming?! This is unbelievable."

In an exclusive interview with Windy City Times, Brockington admitted that he did not think the school would support his bid to become king—and some didn't.

But Brockington triumphed. Being homecoming king "was one of my few typical teenage boy aspirations, and I hope that it will pave the way for transgender youth of America, if not the world.

"I have made history and have hopefully

opened eyes, minds, and doors for progress in the community as a whole."

Brockington said he's received "a lot of positive feedback" from peers, mostly female, members of the LGBTQ community, and random people in the local community since the announcement. He also has received "a lot of negative and harsh feedback" from male peers and men of the local community.

"I didn't know that I was 'female' until I was 6. I always knew that I'd eventually be a man. I just never knew what that meant for me, what it was called, or that it was even possible," Brockington said. "I have never blatantly told my family upfront, but I assume that they have gotten the hint. My mom and sister didn't know until I was in state custody. They have been trying. My stepmom was always supportive, just very concerned about my safety. My dad was not accepting at all, but according to my family, he is trying to do better with my name and [male] pronouns."

Brockington now lives in state custody with his foster father, Donald Smith.

Brockington said he has been supported extensively by his "friends, girlfriend, social worker, her co-workers, family court judge, teachers, coworkers, and people of the community." However, he has not been supported by "some of my peers at school, some of my family, people of the community that know that I am transgender, though they are few in numbers."

"My teachers took well to calling me Blake as opposed to my legal name," he said. "My friends have been through my transition with me. I have lost some due to their refusal to accept me and have grown closer to those in my corner. My counselor, administration, and staff that have known me since my freshman year were not receptive of my name and pronoun preference. Part of it was due to ignorance, some of difficulty to get used to it, and some of it was due to their lack of knowledge."

Brockington is planning to attend the University of North Carolina-Charlotte in the fall to major in math and minor in music and education. "My aspirations are not set in stone, but I think that I want to be a math teacher," he said.

Brockington spoke on the youth panel at



Blake Brockington. Photo courtesy of Brockington

last year's Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, and will be there again this year. "[I will] hopefully [be] in charge of a few workshops," he said. "I also mentor an 8-year-old boy that is also transgender. I have helped many guys with beginning and making it through their transitions.

"I am currently trying to win a battle with USA Rugby because they will not allow me to play on a boy's team. I don't want to play on a girl's team and would feel extremely uncomfortable, especially since I have started testosterone. I swam on my neighborhood boys' swim team and never got any negative feedback."



Janet Mock at Center on Halsted. Photo by Gretchen Blickensderfer

# Janet Mock 'Redefines Realness' for Center audience

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSDERFER

Transgender-rights advocate Janet Mock participated in a talk and book-signing (for her work *Redefining Realness*) at the Center on Halsted Feb. 11.

In the Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago's Gender and Sex Development Program, teams of specialists in disciplines that include endocrinology, adolescent medicine, psychiatry and psychology currently work with 66 transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, gender fluid and gender questioning children and their families.

According to Program Coordinator Jennifer Leininger, the young participants range from 4 to 22 years old, and usually arrive via referrals from mental health or medical providers.

"Everyone's path is different," Leininger said. "If it's a four-year-old's family who is calling, they might just want to have their child meet with a therapist to explore their gender identity. There's also a play group, support with school and a multi-disciplinary clinic." The program offers the opportunity for parents to connect with each other.

It is an environment not only equipped to help the children thrive in their chosen gender, but for their parents and families to receive the answers they need to support their child throughout their journey together.

Lurie also offers the LifeSkills Program—a curriculum facilitated and written by and for young trans women to be empowered and educated in topics that range from HIV risk behavior to make-up application.

When they became aware that Mock was going to be in Chicago, the Gender and Sex Development, LifeSkills and Adolescent Medicine Program staff saw a priceless chance for young participants and their parents to experience and be affirmed by Mock's story: one she chronicled in her book *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More* released earlier this month to critical acclaim.

"There's such an under-representation of really strong trans folks in the community," Leininger said. "I think it's a really exciting opportunity to bring someone in who is so open about her story and is such a positive role model for so many of the young people that I work with."

When word got out about the Feb. 11 live interview and book-signing with Mock, the response was so overwhelming that the event had to be moved from Lurie to the Center on Halsted.

Mock—who stepped onto the public stage after a first-person article was written about her journey by a Marie Claire journalist—has written and spoken candidly and extensively about the tremendous hurdles experienced by trans women, their successes and how they are represented in the media. She encourages all trans women, regardless of color, to "live-visibly" in a world so quick to judge them.

So, on her arrival at the Center, Mock immediately got to work sharing lunch with a group of trans people. Led by Center on Halsted Youth Outreach Coordinator Precious Davis and Chicago House TransWorks Coordinator Angelica Ross, they talked openly with the author about the experiences and mounting challenges they face in Chicago. According to them, the gentrification of neighborhoods like Lakeview and Boystown has brought with it a prevailing attitude that young trans people, especially those of color, are no longer wanted. "It's how you are treated in this neighborhood," one participant told Mock about Lakeview. "There were plenty of times when I wasn't even let in my own building. People were closing the door before I could enter."

"For the past couple of years, I haven't seen too many young people or people of color living in this area," Ross noted. "Young people don't live in the neighborhood," Davis clarified. "But this is where a lot of the services and safe spaces [for them] are."

Davis added that it is a trend she has seen in cities like Los Angeles, New York and St. Louis. "This is a systematic issue," she said. The feeling among many of the participants was, despite the rainbow flags and circles along Halsted Street signaling a safe and welcoming LGBT area, that young trans women and trans women of color are seen as prostitutes. Such a perception has meant a cold reception whether applying for a job or visiting neighborhood nightclubs.

"I think about a lot of the work that Fierce does," Mock said, referring to the membership-based organization dedicated to building the leadership and power of LGBTQ youth in New

York City. "Empowering young people to say 'no, these are our streets, these are our neighborhoods too and the reason why this neighborhood is everything is because we're the ones who work here at making it everything.'"

After the discussion, on-stage in front of a standing room only audience, Mock admitted to celebrated activist, advocate and President of the Morten Group consulting firm Mary Morten, that the experience over lunch made her nervous. "I get very anxious in group dynamics," Mock said. "I was like sweating, because that's not the work that I'm built to do."

Mock said that she doesn't think of herself as an activist. "I feel like a lot of the people who are doing the work on the ground, with young people, who are doing grass roots work every single day; those are activists," she said. "I'm a writer who writes about experiences that I had and then also adding a lens and contextualizing those experiences in a political landscape. If people want to take that as activism that's great but I see myself as a writer speaking out about issues that intersect with my life experiences."

However, Mock hopes that *Redefining Realness* will be the catalyst for empowerment for trans people "I feel like I had these unique gifts," she said. "I felt that I could clearly communicate very complicated issues through my personal experiences. In my job as someone that the media is interesting in hearing from I'm always making sure that I say that I am not the exception and also lifting up the work of people who are actually doing this every day."

Looking back at her life, Mock recalled that iconic figures like Alice Walker, Maya Angelou and Harriet Tubman made her feel that black womanhood was something to aspire to. *Redefining Realness* is replete with quotes from them. "It was me paying homage to the people who fed me," Mock said. "Who gave me a sense of possibility and hope, who gave me words and language to dream of a life that I can love someday."

The idea that now she may prove to be a figure of inspiration for young trans people was not lost on Mock. "I can't believe I am part of that process where other young girls see themselves in a book that speaks to them," she acknowledged.

When Morten asked if she had any advice for them, Mock said she doesn't believe they are looking for it. "I feel like anyone who is brave enough to be themselves and be young and be out there and be vulnerable, they know exactly what they're doing," she stated. "The first thing I would say would be to tap into yourself and create a network of people around you. Anyone that's trying to rebut you or tell you that your experience is false or wrong or shameful or sinful, you need to shut them out of your life."

When it came to the question of her well-documented argument with CNN's Piers Morgan, Mock admitted that at the time, the interview was something for which she had little patience at the time. "I was upset that my book wasn't read," she said, "that an article that I didn't write was used as the basis for the interview. I felt like if he would have read ten pages [of the book], literally the introduction alone, it would have made the difference."

Mock said Morgan has not responded to her offer to sit down over a cup of coffee and discuss the issues she had with him.

For Mock, *Redefining Realness* is ultimately on a mission of empowerment, elevation and education for any young trans person, no matter how they are trying to navigate through life. "I didn't know that the experiences I went through were not my fault. Don't shame yourself even more. Society shames us enough," she said to resounding applause.

After the interview concluded, Mock signed copies of her book for a line of people that stretched around the auditorium lobby.

One trans woman named Carrie was thrilled with her copy. "It's very special for me," she said. "I'm very excited!"

## Rutherford seals investigation results

BY MATT SIMONETTE

State Treasurer and gubernatorial candidate Dan Rutherford was served with a federal lawsuit Feb. 13, and on the same day said that he would not be disclosing the results of an internal investigation he authorized about allegations that he sexually harassed an employee and forced them to do campaign work on state time, Chicago Sun-Times reported.

The investigation results will be sealed because they are now evidence in the lawsuit filed by Ed Michalowski, Rutherford's former director of community affairs and marketing, said Peter Andjerkovich, Rutherford's attorney.

Rutherford, who has said political opponent Bruce Rauner is ultimately behind the suit, told Windy City Times Feb. 2 that he was confident the legal matters would not sideline his campaign. But Crain's reported Feb. 14 that the secrecy around the investigation could overshadow discussion of Rutherford's political qualifications.

"You can't hide behind a lawsuit you know is going to be filed," former Illinois GOP Party Chairman Tom Brady told Crain's.

## Spin Nightclub up for sale

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Longtime Boystown nightclub Spin, 800 W. Belmont Ave., has been put up for sale by its owner, David Gassman.

A listing for the club appears on the real estate website bizbuysell.com. The asking

price is just under \$1.5 million, and the listing is being handled by Mike Costanzo of Jameson Real Estate. Only the nightclub itself is for sale.

Costanzo told DNAinfo.com that Gassman, who owns several properties in the area, no longer wants to run the club.

## 'Death of the American Trial' to mark Darrow's death March 13

On the 76th anniversary of famed attorney Clarence Darrow's death, this year's annual Darrow commemoration on Thursday, March 13, looks at the "The Death of the American Trial" with professor Robert P. Burns, author of a 2009 book by the same title.

A special unique aspect of this year's event will be several dozen Darrow-related items from the collection of the late actor Leslie Nielsen, courtesy of his widow, Barbaree Earl. Nielsen was a fan but also played the attorney in theatrical productions.

The day will begin with a brief ceremony near the Darrow Bridge in Jackson Park at 10 a.m., where Darrow's ashes were scattered after his death. The bridge is closed due to construction, so the ceremony will be just to the east of the Darrow tribute marker.

After the ritual outdoor wreath-tossing ceremony, guests will move inside to the Museum of Science and Industry's New Columbia Room for a lecture and discussion on the unlikely future of the U.S. trial.

Darrow, who died March 13, 1938, is remembered for his crusading role as "attorney for the damned" in such controversial cases as the Scopes Monkey Trial, the Leopold and Loeb murder case, and the pardoning of the Haymarket anarchists.

See [www.DarrowBridge.org](http://www.DarrowBridge.org).

## YES from cover

in the marriage battle, which passed the House last fall with one vote to spare.

"Most of these are people who have been in office a long time and are used to taking difficult votes, but you always support the people who supported you," said state Rep. Greg Harris, chief sponsor of the marriage equality bill. "We have to stand up for the officials who stood up for us. Illinois has to reflect other states with marriage equality, where no elected official lost a seat over a marriage vote."

"In all of these races, the challenges are extremely aggressive," added Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "We're down to the last five weeks of the election now, and we really have to get behind the legislators who voted for our community."

To that end, the Equality Illinois PAC is running 18 phone banks, four days a week, through the day of the election to get out the vote for the LGBT community's legislative allies. Cherkasov emphasized that primary elections usually get low turnout, so it's important to pull the lever for pro-equality politicians, who very likely will be called upon to vote for equality-related issues again.

Garcia added, "I think that we have an opportunity on March 18 to firm up our supporters and thank those who hung in there with us until we reached the finish line. It's not enough that we succeed—in this case, our enemies must fail."

As of mid-February, only the following House incumbents who voted "yes" to SB10 had serious primary challengers; all were endorsed by Equality Illinois' PAC:

—**26th District:** Incumbent Democrat Christian Mitchell is being challenged by community organizer Jhatayn "Jay" Travis. Mitchell, at 26, is currently the House's youngest member and was a co-sponsor of the marriage equality bill. He is a protégé of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. But he was one of several legislators targeted for protests in the days leading up to the pension reform bill; Mitchell voted in favor of the bill, which was opposed by numerous unions. Travis lined up support from several unions, among them Chicago Teachers Union and AFSCME District 31. At a Feb. 13 fundraiser in Boystown, Mitchell told Windy City Times, "They have some money now—so we know it's going to be a tough fight. These [education and pension reform] are hard issues, but voters I've talked to like what I've done."

—**29th District:** Incumbent Democrat Thaddeus Jones of Calumet City pledged his sup-

port to gay marriage early in 2013, saying it was "about making equality for everyone," according to nwitimes.com. He is currently running against Kenneth "Kenny" Williams of South Holland, formerly the president of the Thornton Township High School District 205 School Board. Williams was removed from his post because of a 29-year-old Indiana felony conviction; he has an appeal to that decision pending. State law does not preclude his running for a state legislative office, however. Williams is reportedly being significantly outspent by Jones, and has said he will spend the weeks leading up to the election attending public meetings to introduce himself to voters, nwitimes said Feb. 8. Nevertheless, multiple sources said that the election in this district, home to several church communities whose constituencies might not have been supportive of gay marriage, warrants close attention.

—**39th District:** Democrat Maria Antonia "Toni" Berrios, daughter of Cook County Assessor Joseph Berrios, who formerly held her seat, is being challenged by Will Guzzardi, a writer and former Huffington Post blogger. The two ran against one another in the 2012 election, when Berrios won by just 125 votes. Multiple sources expect this race to be close. Guzzardi has never held office, but in August he told dnainfo.com that his run was a "test case" for outsiders hoping to take on Chicago's established politicians.

Chicago Teachers Union has reportedly helped financially back Guzzardi, according to a Feb. 7 Huffington Post report; CTU objects to Berrios' support for pension reform and charter school expansion, as well as refusing to back an elected school board. Berrios has also been criticized for running an excessively negative campaign. Cherkasov of Equality Illinois said this race exemplified why it is important for voters to turn out in primary elections: "When Guzzardi ran against Berrios the first time, it was just a handful of votes that decided it."

—**40th District:** Incumbent Democrat Jaime Andrade Jr., came into his post just this last year when it was vacated by out lesbian Deb Mell, after she replaced her father, former Ald. Dick Mell, in his position. Andrade was previously an aid to Dick Mell. Among his challengers is openly lesbian Mel Ferrand, who got knocked off the ballot after her paperwork was challenged by opponents. She appealed the ruling and told Windy City Times Feb. 1 that she is still waiting for a decision.

Other opponents are attorney Nancy Schiavone, attorney Aaron Goldstein (who handled the defense of ex-governor Rod Blagojevich), activist Wendy Jo Harmston and engineer Mark Pasieka. At a Feb. 9 forum, each of the can-



Toni Berrios (above) is facing a stiff challenge in the 39th District from Will Guzzardi. Photo by Ed Negron

didates painted themselves as offering a progressive alternative to machine-style politics, including Andrade, who said, every vote he casts "is in the best interest of this community—that's who I answer to." Equality Illinois PAC is endorsing Andrade by virtue of his marriage vote, among other factors. Garcia of TCRA said, "Andrade was there and was a friend to our community when it counted."

—**51st District:** Incumbent Ed Sullivan Jr., a Republican, announced his support for SB10 last April, explaining that his mother-in-law is a lesbian and that he was prepared to defend his decision on SB10. He was met with opposition from Illinois Families First, a Chicago-based PAC started by conservative activist Paul Caprio that received its initial funding from Lake Forest businessman Richard Uihlein, capitalfax.com reported. Sullivan's opponent in the primary is Bob Bednar, treasurer of the Lake County Republican Party. Bednar's campaign chairman is Lake County GOP vice chairman Jack Koenig, who has been a vocal opponent of marriage equality. Nevertheless, Bednar maintains that he is opposing Sullivan over government spending: He told the Daily Herald Jan. 27, "Jobs are leaving Illinois. When we lose that business we raise taxes on everyone else who has stayed."

—**77th District:** Incumbent Kathleen Willis is being challenged by Antonio "Tony" Favela, who maintains that Willis is not as "outsider" as she claims, the Daily Herald reported Feb. 1. This is the first term for Willis, who was formerly a librarian at Elmhurst College. She has had backing from Speaker Michael Madigan—"I'm not going to deny that I have the support of the Illinois Democrats, but they don't control me," she told Daily Herald. Willis was reportedly one of the final votes rounded up

for SB10. Favela is a recent law school graduate who served on Melrose Park's zoning board.

—**81st District:** Incumbent Ron Sandack, a Republican, voted "yes" to SB10 after voting against civil unions, but said he changed his mind because gay marriage "promotes conservative values." Sandack's primary challenger, Keith Matune, a Downers Grove social studies teacher, has taken Sandack to task for the vote, calling on him to return money he received from gay marriage supporters, the Chicago Tribune reported Jan. 14. Since the gay marriage vote has been more central to this race, multiple sources say that it warrants close attention from LGBT rights advocates.

### Other races:

—**39th state Senate District:** Incumbent Don Harmon co-sponsored SB10 in the state senate "and has long been a very good friend to our community," said Harris. Harmon, a top lieutenant to Senate President John Cullerton, also filed an amendment to SB10 that would have moved up the starting date for marriages from June. He is being challenged by attorney Bob Galhotra, who told the Daily Herald that his district needed a candidate who would not be "beholden" to the Democratic Party.

—**Treasurer:** Republican State Sen. Tom Cross, of Oswego, is facing off against DuPage County Auditor Bob Grogan to be Republican candidate for Treasurer in November. Cross was a surprise "yes" vote on SB10. When the bill was being argued on the floor in November, he told of how a conversation with his father, a retired minister, was decisive in convincing him that he needed to vote in favor of marriage equality. The primary winner will go up against Democrat Mike Frerichs in November.

Non-incumbent House endorsements from Equality Illinois PAC: On Feb. 14, Equality Illinois PAC announced that the following non-incumbents had earned its endorsement in the House primary race: Mo Khan (D-20th District), Nicole Serbin (D-37th District), Debbie Miller (R-65th District) and Carol Ammons and Samuel Rosenberg (D-103rd District).

Phone bank information: Equality Illinois PAC will be running 18 phone banks for eight of their endorsed candidates Monday through Thursday, through March 18, from 5-9 p.m. The phone banks will be at Equality Illinois' headquarters, 17 N. State St., suite 1020. For more information, call office 773-477-7173 or e-mail either Lucy at lmsall@eqil.org or Patty at pdillon@eqil.org.

Follow Windy City Times in the coming weeks for more election coverage, including a guide to the gays, and endorsements from LGBT-friendly organizations.

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# Groups team to develop safe schools in suburbs

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSDEFER

In 1996, a group of adults in DuPage County came together with concerns that, outside of Chicago, there was no agency, organization or services to support LGBTQ youth. Two years later, they had organized a group called "Questioning Youth Center" and opened up the first drop-in facility in Naperville.

Anne Rickleff, a graduate student and intern with the organization, remembered its beginnings as a quiet and slow progression. "The charter members were worried about risk," she recalled. "They said 'OK, this is Republican land and these people are very conservative.'"

Today the organization is known as Youth Outlook. Its four drop-in centers now cover three counties: DuPage, Kane and DeKalb. The addresses of the centers are not posted on-line. "It's to maintain safety," Rickleff said. "We're talking about young kids."

In its first 10 years, the organization served over 1,800 LGBTQ teens offering them a safe place to meet and discuss a wide range of topics from how to start a gay-straight alliance at their schools, to how to form healthy relationships or how LGBTQ people are portrayed in the media.

According to Rickleff, it is the only agency in the area. "When it comes to providing these services for LGBTQ youth, after Chicago, we are it," she said.

One of Youth Outlook's participants is a 15-year-old sophomore at a high school in Naperville who was outed as a trans male. "There's no question that he's a boy," Rickleff asserted. "But he's been bullied and verbally harassed with derogatory and slang words thrown at him. When he went to the dean of the high school, he was told, on two separate occasions: 'You chose this. It's your fault so just deal with it.'" Rickleff said that the teen has since been diagnosed with depression and engages in regular cutting. "He's said that if he didn't have Youth Outlook, where he can be with kids like him, he probably would not be here," she added.

In 2012, the East Aurora District 131 school board voted to rescind a policy that would have protected transgender children. "We'd gone in there that year and did a whole program that focused on safety [for them]," Rickleff said. "We were not asked back because the policy was overturned."

On Feb. 28, Youth Outlook will team with the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and the Community Network: Professionals Supporting LGBTQ Youth in order to hold a county-wide day session for educators and community advocates to discuss issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and receive information about laws, policies and research that is helping to make schools safer for all young people. The event will be hosted by Alcatel-Lucent's LGBTQ employee resource group at the company's facilities at 1960 Lucent Lane in Naperville. The event is free and begins at 8 a.m.

Rickleff said she believes the day will prove to be an essential step forward in an area where bullying of LGBTQ kids in schools is pervasive and children as young as six are forced to question their self-worth. "Every single youth I have come into youth I meet has wondered 'why is it wrong to just be me and why does every adult I come into contact with, want to change me?'" She said. "When you hear the stories about what they're going through in school it's absolutely terrifying."

David Fischer is the program director of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance—a Chicago-based organization supporting LGBTQ youth in Illinois schools and communities. Fischer said that the event in Naperville is part of the Professional Development the organization provides to schools and communities across



Anne Rickleff. Photo from Rickleff

Illinois. "We know through research that it's the single most effective way to create a safer school environment for young people."

This is the fourth year the event has taken place and, according to Fischer, the response from educators and school personnel has been overwhelmingly positive. "Folks are excited. They want to have information," he said. "In working people studying to be teachers, counselors and social workers, we know that they haven't been prepared to deal with any of these issues before they step into a school. They are instead bombarded with anti-LGBTQ language. They don't know the laws and policies that protect them and their students. They don't know what their responsibilities are and that's an unfair situation."

Fischer—a former employee of Youth Outlook—said that when he was in high school, resources for LGBTQ kids didn't exist. "It was so far outside the Chicago area, that I didn't even know that pushing back against my school system was an option," he recalled. "The alliance exists so that young people everywhere in Illinois understand that pushing back against a system that oppresses them or engages in homophobia and transphobia is absolutely an option."

The deadline for registration for the event is Feb. 21. Participants can register online at <http://bit.ly/1bBKah5> or contact Anne Rickleff [anne.rickleff@youth-outlook.org](mailto:anne.rickleff@youth-outlook.org).

## Prosecutor's assailant gets four years in jail

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Luis Cotto, 24, was sentenced Feb. 11 to four years in prison for beating and stabbing a Cook County prosecutor who had attempted to help a gay couple that Cotto and a friend were harassing, The Chicago Tribune reported.

The incident occurred Sept. 14, 2012, on the 200 block of West Diversey Parkway. The prosecutor, who has since left the state's attorney's office, saw Cotto and his co-defendant, Edgar Diaz, approach the couple and punch one of them.

They began chasing after the prosecutor after he told them to stop. He fell, at which point Cotto and Diaz attacked him, including breaking a beer bottle across his back and stabbing him with it. The prosecutor required 40 stitches.

Cotto had previously pled guilty to aggravated battery; Skokie Branch Judge William O'Brien handed down his sentence. Diaz is currently awaiting trial.



Jacob Szymanski as Harlet Wench (left) with Amanda Lepore and an unidentified friend. Photo from Szymanski

## High school senior going to prom as drag alter ego

BY ROSS FORMAN

Jacob Szymanski is already planning for his senior year at Carl Sandburg High School, which will be Friday, April 25, at the Field Museum in downtown Chicago.

His alter ego, drag diva Harlet Wench, will be in all her glory.

Szymanski, 17, who lives in suburban Orland Park and is openly gay, will be dressing in drag for the Eagles' extravaganza.

"I'm going to my senior prom in drag because I hope to help other kids in the future," he said. "I love doing drag and think this a perfect opportunity to gain some attention for the LGBT community and LGBT youth in specific. If I were to go as a boy, nobody would care, but if I put on the wig, the heels, the makeup, and the dress; suddenly people are interested."

"I want to use this attention in a positive way. People think just because it's 2014 that bullying and discrimination don't occur. Times are changing and it's a lot better, but homophobic behavior is still around in schools and it makes other kids afraid to come out of the closet, or just be who they are."

Szymanski said he does not want to talk about his relationships, but added, "I'm happy." He is an only child whose parents are divorced and he lives with his mother.

Szymanski said that a teacher of his asked school officials for him if it would be OK if he dressed in drag at prom. The Sandburg principal and school deans then, reportedly, had a meeting and agreed it was alright, as long as he met the school dress code.

"I'm not sure the staff is aware, besides the principal and deans, but I do know my fellow classmates have been showing a continually growing amount of support," he said. "It feels so good to know some of these people I grew up with have my back in what I'm going."

"Of course there always [are] a few who think it's 'strange' and think I'm a 'freak.' I honestly don't care because I know all the good I can do with this."

Szymanski said he wanted to end the year with a bang and accomplish something big before he left campus.

"I don't care what anybody thinks, [or] if somebody's parent is offended; that's just too bad because times are changing," he said.

Szymanski said Harlet Wench has attended past Chicago Pride parades and the annual Halsted Halloween parade. In fact, Harlet Wench won a Best Drag contest in 2012, he said.

"I attend any shows that will allow me in," Szymanski said. "I've done little things here and there. It's hard to attend drag events because most places won't let me in until I'm 21."

Harlet Wench also has made appearances at Chicago Comic-Con.

"I always show up in drag costumes channeling my favorite sci-fi characters," said Szymanski, who first went drag at age 12. "I always loved makeup and hair and one Halloween I thought it would be funny to dress up as a woman—and got quite the response. So, getting in drag became a normal thing for me."

Szymanski said his family "totally accepts" his drag persona, "and I'm very thankful for that." Plus, "all of my friends love it to; it just makes things so exciting," he added.

**More about Jacob Szymanski, the real-life Harlet Wench:**

—Favorite subjects in school: Fashion and art

—Least favorite subject in school: Math  
—College in the fall: Still undecided, but most likely Aveda Cosmetology School.

—Career goal: "I'd like to have a career in hair and makeup."

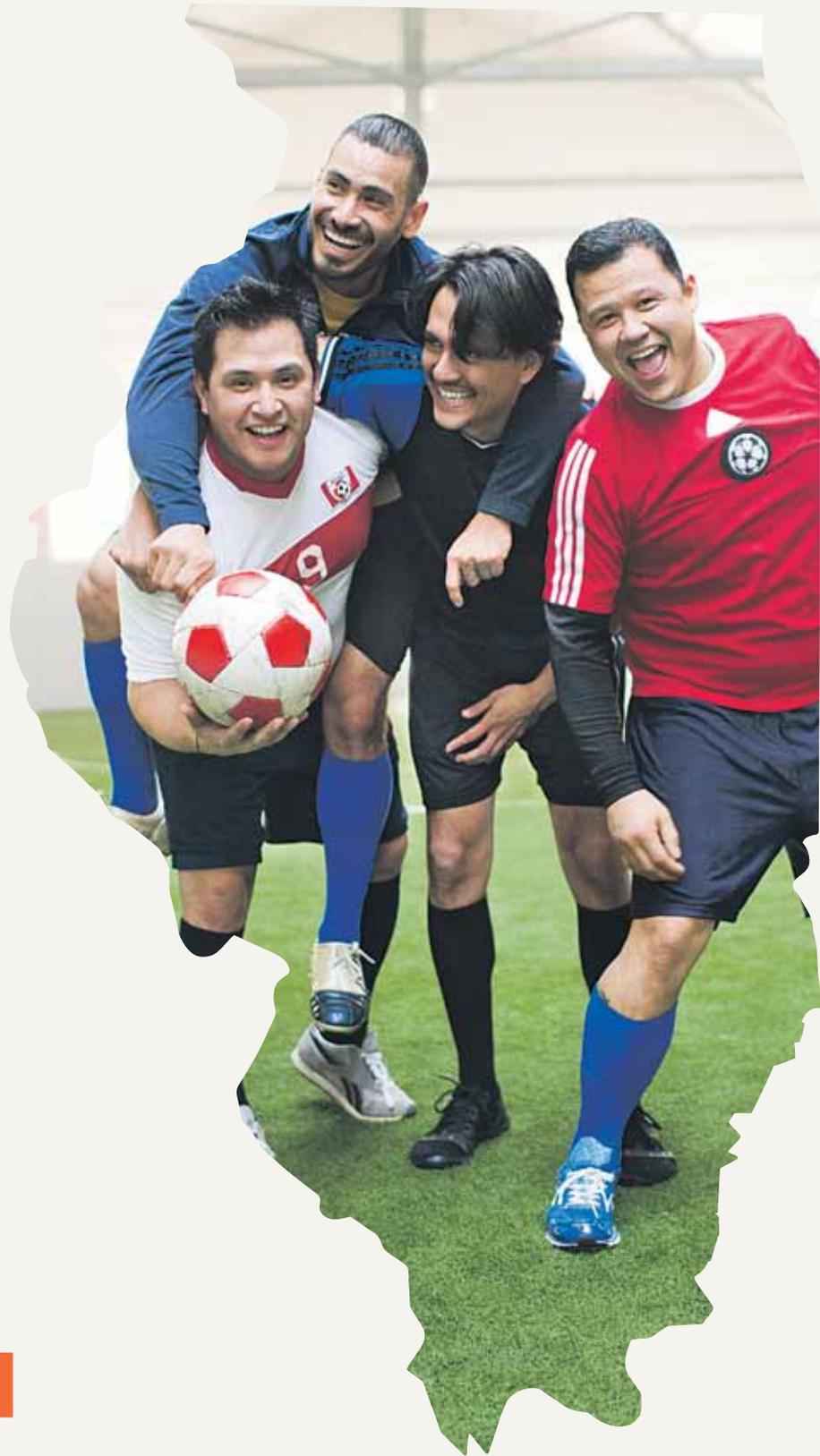
—The quote: "I'm just a teenage boy from the suburbs of Chicago. I love art and beauty, and I'm really just hoping this has a positive impact."

## The Justice Conference Feb. 21-22 in Elgin

The Justice Conference—an annual event that focuses on creating dialogue and action around justice-related issues like human trafficking, slavery, poverty, HIV/AIDS and human rights—will take place Feb. 21-22.

Judson University's Marjorie Thulin Performance Hall of the Alice and Edward Thompson Center, 1151 N. State St., Elgin, will host a simulcast event. The main event will be in Los Angeles.

Registration (\$25) is open at [www.thejusticeconference.com](http://www.thejusticeconference.com).



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# 1970 Chicago Gay Liberation Front rally pics released

Photographer Margaret Olin was at a historic Gay Liberation Front rally in downtown Chicago April 16, 1970, and she shares her photos with Windy City Times in an effort to find some of the individuals photographed here. "I study photography and its uses in activism and community formation," she said.

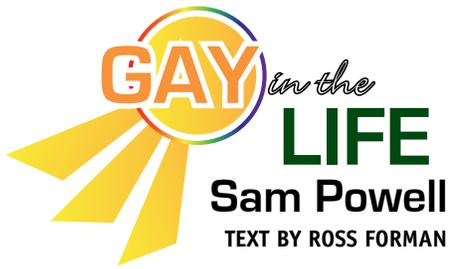
The rally was on Michigan Avenue in Grant Park, across from what is now the Chicago Cultural Center; back then it was the Chicago Public Library.

The Chicago Tribune reported April 17, 1970 on the rally, saying there were one hundred attendees and 150 onlookers; the event is also written up in the book *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, edited and co-written by Windy City Times Publisher Tracy Baim.

The Tribune reported "the rally's theme was 'Out of the closets and into the streets,'" and that signs proclaimed "Gay Power" and "Gay Is Beautiful." Lee Weiner and David Steinecker were among the speakers. Steinecker is among those interviewed on Baim's *ChicagoGayHistory.org* website, posted here: <http://www.chicagogayhistory.com/biography.html?id=792>.

Olin invites readers to contact her at [margaret.olin@yale.edu](mailto:margaret.olin@yale.edu) if they recognize anyone in the photographs or have any other information you would like to share. All responses will be kept confidential. Photographs used with permission.





Sam Powell has been a real estate professional since 2002, and is now the president of the Chicago chapter of the Women's Council of Realtors (WCR). She previously has served as the organization's vice president of membership and secretary.

Powell also is involved with the Chicago Association of Realtors.

"To be president of the Women's Council of Realtors Chicago Chapter is truly an honor," Powell said. "I take pride in the years I have been engaged and involved in this organization, the heart, sweat and tears that have gone into all that we have accomplished as a group, [which] makes me so proud.

"It is up to me to continue to facilitate the direction that our chapter has taken, and leverage responsibilities to the talents of those involved in the chapter, and those who raise their hand expressing an interest in being a part of our chapter.

"In order to grow we have to continue to put systems and processes in place to handle the growth and success that the chapter has been experiencing. Empowering our chapter on a committee level, and enlarging our voting board are my first two steps. I have the honor of being surrounded by truly amazing men and women who dedicate their time and have dedicated their time to help me create an amazing team around me."

Powell said the best part of her job is, well, there isn't just one best part.

"It's a lifestyle, a career. My life is my job; work and play go hand in hand," she said. "I enjoy what I do, and that's why I do it. I volunteer in my industry and outside of my industry because it is true to who I am. I work with really cool clients who enjoy my company as much as my skills in real estate. Being good at what you do and enjoying it at the same time is always my goal. I learn every day; I succeed and fail every day and in every transaction I take something away from that experience whether it be sharing something I did different, to learning how I could have done something different, [and more]."

Powell said she is known for her casual dress and her bulldog negotiation style. "I enjoy the analytical part of my career ... and the relationships," she said.



**Age**  
40

**Neighborhood**  
West Loop/Fulton River District

**Relationship status**  
Partner of 21 years with Jen Thompson

**Job title**  
Real Estate Professional at Ask for Sam LLC, powered by Dream Town Realty

**Hobbies**  
Volunteering, eating, drinking local brew beers, factory tours, and "chillaxing in the Lazy Lagoon at Six Flags."

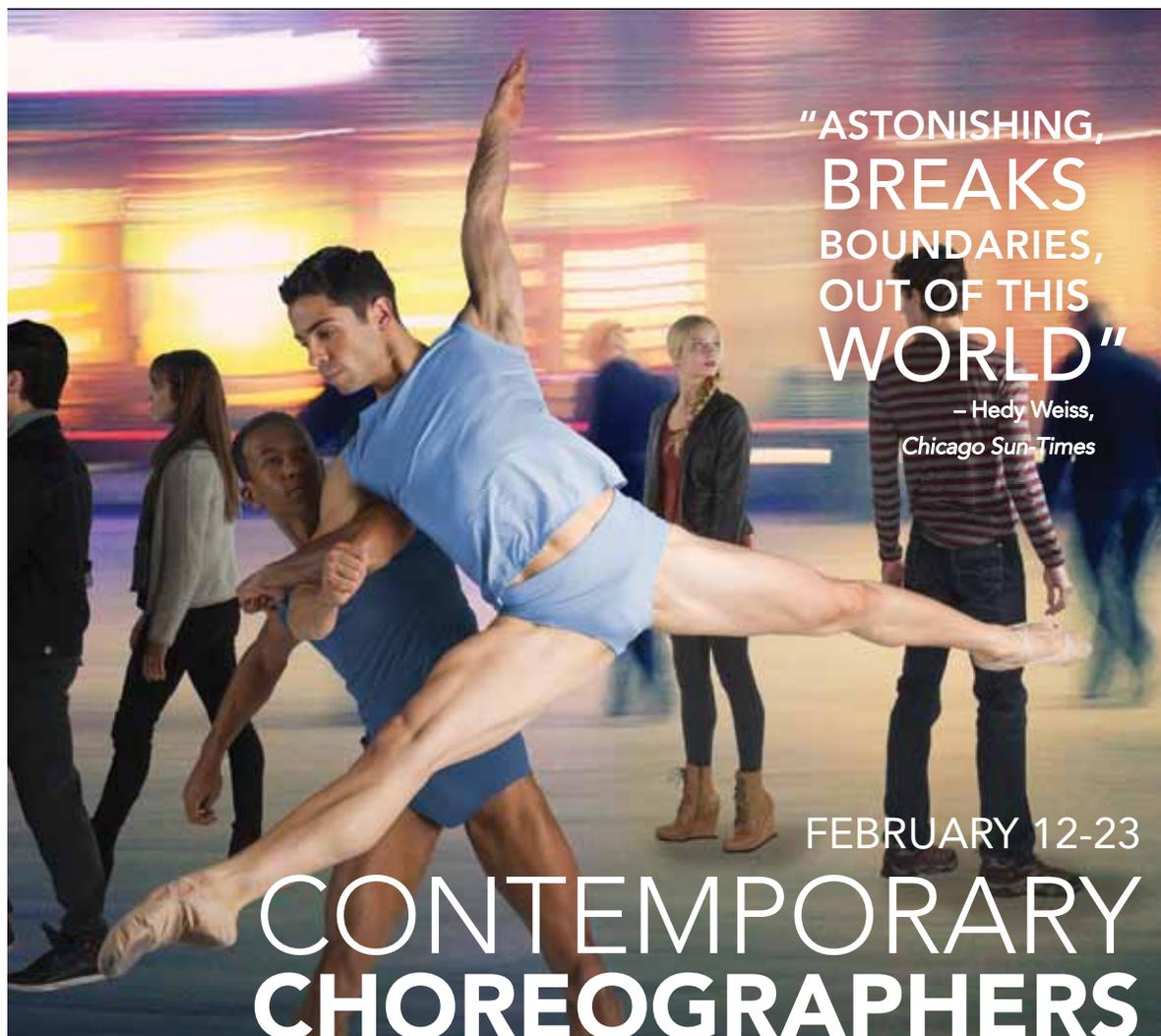
**Favorite color**  
Yellow

**Favorite pizza**  
Amy's brand of a cheese-less mushroom

and caramelized onion

**Overcoming obstacles**  
"Realizing that I had more to offer than I gave myself credit for. I was never given the guidance and encouragement from my immediate family. I looked for that elsewhere, and it took a while for me to realize that I did not have to look far, that the self-confidence

**Little-known fact**  
"My father was in the Air Force and after being charged with sexual abuse by my sister and myself, spent years in Leavenworth Penitentiary and tore our family apart. Choosing not to be a victim and focusing on creating my own version of 'family' brought me strength and empowerment to grow into the 'kid' I am today."



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Chicago Sun-Times

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 Community Marketing, Inc.

ELLEN  
PAGE

## 'I am gay'

Actress Ellen Page (*Juno*; *Hard Candy*) came out as lesbian in a speech to the Human Rights Campaign in Las Vegas on Valentine's Day.

What follows is the speech she delivered at "Time to THRIVE," a conference to promote the welfare of LGBT youth that was held at Bally's Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Thank you Chad [Griffin, Human Rights Campaign president], for those kind words and for the even kinder work that you and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation do every day—especially on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people here and across America.

It's such an honor to be here at the inaugural Time to THRIVE conference. But it's a little weird, too. Here I am, in this room because of an organization whose work I deeply admire. And I'm surrounded by people who make it their life's work to make other people's lives better—profoundly better. Some of you teach young people—people like me. Some of you help young people heal and to find their voice. Some of you listen. Some of you take action. Some of you are young people yourselves ... in which case, it's even weirder for a person like me to be speaking to you.

It's weird because here I am, an actress, representing—at least in some sense—an industry that places crushing standards on all of us. Not just young people, but everyone. Standards of beauty. Of a good life. Of success. Standards that, I hate to admit, have affected me. You have ideas planted in your head, thoughts you never had before, that tell you how you have to act, how you have to dress and who you have to be. I have been trying to push back, to be authentic, to follow my heart, but it can be hard.

But that's why I'm here. In this room, all of you, all of us, can do so much more together than any one person can do alone. And I hope that thought bolsters you as much as it does me. I hope the workshops you'll go to over the next few days give you strength. Because I can only imagine that there are days—when you've worked longer hours than your boss realizes or cares about, just to help a kid you know can make it. Days where you feel completely alone. Undermined. Or hopeless.

I know there are people in this room who go to school every day and get treated like shit for no reason. Or you go home and you feel like you can't tell your parents the whole truth about yourself. Beyond putting yourself in one box or another, you worry about the future. About college or work or even your physical safety. Trying to create that mental picture of your life—of what on earth is going to happen to you—can crush you a little bit every day. It is toxic and painful and deeply unfair.

Sometimes it's the little, insignificant stuff that can tear you down. I try not to read gossip as a rule, but the other day a website ran an article with a picture of me wearing sweatpants on the way to the gym. The writer asked, "Why does [this] petite beauty insist upon dressing like a massive man?"

\*pause\*

Because I like to be comfortable. There are pervasive stereotypes about masculinity and femininity that define how we are all supposed to act, dress and speak. They serve no one. Anyone who defies these so-called 'norms' becomes worthy of comment and scrutiny. The LGBT community knows this all too well.

Yet there is courage all around us. The football hero, Michael Sam. The actress, Laverne Cox. The musicians Tegan and Sara Quinn. The family that supports their daughter or son who has come out. And there is courage in this room. All of you.

I'm inspired to be in this room because every single one of you is here for the same reason.

You're here because you've adopted as a core motivation the simple fact that this world would be a whole lot better if we just made an effort to be less horrible to one another. If we took just five minutes to recognize each other's beauty, instead of attacking each other for our

differences. That's not hard. It's really an easier and better way to live. And ultimately, it saves lives.

Then again, it's not easy at all. It can be the hardest thing, because loving other people starts with loving ourselves and accepting ourselves. I know many of you have struggled with this. I draw upon your strength and your support, and have, in ways you will never know.

"I'm here today because I am gay. And because ... maybe I can make a difference. To help others have an easier and more hopeful time. Regardless, for me, I feel a personal obligation and a social responsibility.

"I also do it selfishly, because I am tired of hiding and I am tired of lying by omission. I suffered for years because I was scared to be out. My spirit suffered, my mental health suffered and my relationships suffered. And I'm standing here today, with all of you, on the other side of all that pain. I am young, yes, but what I have learned is that love, the beauty of it, the joy of it and yes, even the pain of it, is the most incredible gift to give and to receive as a human being. And we deserve to experience love fully, equally, without shame and without compromise.

"There are too many kids out there suffering from bullying, rejection, or simply being mistreated because of who they are. Too many dropouts. Too much abuse. Too many homeless. Too many suicides. You can change that and you are changing it.

"But you never needed me to tell you that. That's why this was a little bit weird. The only thing I can really say is what I've been building up to for the past five minutes. Thank you. Thank for inspiring me. Thank you for giving me hope, and please keep changing the world for people like me."

Page is playing Shadowcat in the upcoming film *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, and has joined the gay-rights drama *Freeheld* opposite Julianne Moore.

For the video, see the online version of this story at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Actress-Ellen-Page-comes-out-as-lesbian/46248.html>. The video had more than 3.2 million views on YouTube as of Feb. 16.

## LETTERS

## Smoke screened

Dear Editor,

As a former smoker, I understand firsthand the power of tobacco addiction and how difficult it is to quit. Fortunately, the overwhelming evidence of the dangers of cigarettes and second-hand smoke, successful public health campaigns and an emphasis on making children aware of the medical, physical and financial harm that cigarettes cause have led to a drastic decrease in smoking and tobacco sales across the country over the past decade.

During my time as state representative, the Illinois General Assembly has worked diligently to curb cigarette usage and protect the safety and welfare of smokers and non-smokers alike. This January was the fifth anniversary of the Smokefree Illinois Act, which ensures that public buildings, businesses, restaurants, workplaces, and government buildings are kept smoke-free and healthy.

In 2011, I sponsored a bill that requires insurance companies to cover the cost of smoking cessation products and services that help people quit. This law continues to break down the financial barrier that prevents too many smokers from kicking the habit for good and living healthier lives. Insurance companies did

not oppose this measure because they realized that small investments to reduce tobacco use now will yield much more beneficial long-term results.

CVS' decision to no longer sell tobacco products in its stores is commendable. This forward-thinking action is a strong message that reinvigorates their mission of "helping people on a path to better health." By focusing first

on healthcare and wellness rather than on the short-term goals of their shareholders, CVS is a leading example of corporate responsibility.

This is a tremendous step in the right direction, and I hope other companies follow suit.

Sincerely,  
 Sara Feigenholtz  
 State Representative, 12th District

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

# GOINGS-ON



WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



## 'STRANGER' DANGER

Movie critic Richard Knight Jr. takes a look at the gay French erotic thriller *Stranger by the Lake*. See page 16.

### THEATER

**'Soul' man.**  
Page 14

*Photo of Brian Nelson in Chicago's Golden Soul by Danny Nicholas*



### DISH

**Ink spot.**  
Page 18

*PR photo of squid-ink pasta at Kinmont*



### SPORTS

**Host duties.**  
Page 22

*Photo of Chicago Force by Preston Tewell*



### SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

# High 'Marx'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

The Strawdog Theatre world premiere *Miss Marx: or the Involuntary Side Effect of Living* is not quite a homecoming for 33-year-old playwright Philip Dawkins, a onetime Windy City Times 30 Under 30 honoree.

Back in 2006, Dawkins and director Eric C. Reda rented out Strawdog's Hugen Hall space to present the double-bill *Ugly Baby*, which was filled to the hilt with comically gay stereotypical characters and a fair amount of gender-bending drag.

"We were like, look, nobody's hiring us. Nobody knows who we are. We have this project that we think is kind of fun, so let's do it," Dawkins said during a recent telephone interview, clarifying that *Ugly Baby* was just a rental, whereas *Miss Marx* is fully part of Strawdog's regular season (which Dawkins credits to his friend, director Megan Shuchman, for bringing it to the attention of the company).

"One of the wonderful things about Chicago is you can do something like that with a budget and not break the bank. Whereas in a place like New York, you'll go broke self-producing," Dawkins said about *Ugly Baby*. "We didn't have any money and this was pre-Kickstarter, too. We just did a few things like have a cocktail fundraiser and we put on a show—very Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney finding a barn and putting on a show."

Since then, Dawkins has kept at his playwriting, having two major Chicago premieres with *The Homosexuals* in 2011 for About Face Theatre (where he is an artistic associate) and *Failure: A Love Story* at Victory Gardens Theater in 2012 (where he is an ensemble playwright member). Both these shows have been

produced multiple times regionally across America, and with future commissions lined up from Steppenwolf Theatre, Northlight Theatre and Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis, Dawkins is nearly in a place where he can largely support himself full time as a writer.

Yet Dawkins also teaches playwriting as an adjunct professor at Northwestern University and Loyola University.

"It complicates my schedule, but it keeps me honest," Dawkins said about teaching. "It's a lot of accountability and it keeps me fresh. The greatest way to learn is to teach and I learn quite a bit from my students."

With *Miss Marx*, Dawkins is doing another form of teaching by dramatizing the life of Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of philosopher Karl Marx. Dawkins was surprised at how little people know about Eleanor Marx, who carried on her father's activism in Victorian England by fighting for social and sexual equality.

"The more I learned about who [Eleanor Marx] was and about who she was, I was like, 'Oh my god, I can't believe that somebody hasn't written an opera about this,'" Dawkins said. "In many ways, her story is relatable to today for a lot of reasons, particularly on how you exist as a leader, speaking for people who can't necessarily be heard on their own—the pressure and anxiety that comes from that."

Dawkins was additionally fascinated with Eleanor Marx when he learned how she worked as an actress and translator, notably being one of the first to do English translations of works like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. She also did a lot of union organizing and sought to distribute then-illegal information about birth control.

"She's pretty much an all around social bad



Philip Dawkins. Photo by Nicole Radja

ass," Dawkins said, adding that she also defied gender norms by dressing in a more masculine way and living in a common-law marriage with fellow socialist Edward Aveling.

"I think we are currently in a prudish, suffering Victorian age when anybody who wants to speak out for the rights of anyone else or even mention the words socialism or feminism in leadership and individuality, people try to jump down your throat and cut you down for

attempting to have an opinion," Dawkins said, adding that this was another reason he wanted audiences to draw parallels to the characters in his play to today.

But instead of a lecture, Dawkins emphasized that his play is essentially a love story exploring the stresses of activism on a one-on-one relationship. And he's also happy so far with how Strawdog is realizing the play.

"I am really blessed with some rock star actors, and I really feel like they understand these characters and they are really bringing it," Dawkins said. "I've been a fan of Strawdog for a long time and I think they do compelling, exciting and risky theater. Even though this is the first time I'm officially working with them, it doesn't feel like it because I've been so much in their orbit."

**Miss Marx: or The Involuntary Side Effect of Living** continues in previews through Sunday, Feb. 23, with an official opening night at 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 24, at Strawdog Theatre, 3829 N. Broadway St.

Regular performances are 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays with 4 p.m. matinees on Sundays through Saturday, March 29.

Preview tickets are \$15 and \$50 for a Board Preview at 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 22 (includes post-show reception). Regular run tickets are \$28; call 866-811-4111 or visit [www.strawdog.org](http://www.strawdog.org) for more information.

## TimeLine hosting event with Aussie playwrights Feb. 23

TimeLine Theatre Company, in collaboration with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and the Australian Consulate, will host several of Australia's best and brightest performance writers for a day of discussion and play readings on Sunday, Feb. 23, at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Writers Reg Cribb, Tom Holloway, Lally Katz and Maxine Mellor are visiting Chicago as part of a tour of the United States that also takes them to Los Angeles and New York City this month.

Call the TimeLine Theatre Box Office at 773-281-8463, ext. 6, or email [boxoffice@timelinetheatre.com](mailto:boxoffice@timelinetheatre.com) to request reservations.

## Hubbard, Second City collaborate

Hubbard Street Artistic Director Glenn Edgerton and Executive Vice President of The Second City, Inc. Kelly Leonard, announced a collaboratively devised production by the two performing-arts organizations.

It will have its world premiere Oct. 16-19, kicking off Hubbard Street's 2014-15 season at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Millennium Park.

Internationally renowned soprano Renée Fleming—creative consultant for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and singer of the national anthem at this year's Super Bowl—initiated a similar collaboration in 2012 between Lyric Opera and The Second City.

The resulting revue of comedic sketches and satirical vignettes, *The Second City Guide to the Opera*, premiered at Chicago's Civic Opera

House in January 2013.

Hubbard Street and The Second City's collaboration will involve performers from both companies plus Hubbard Street 2.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**Crime and Punishment**, Mary-Arrchie Theatre at Angel Island, through March 16. Dostoyevsky's groundbreaking novel stripped down to 90 minutes and a dozen characters played by three virtuoso actors make for an evening as educational, and far more entertaining than the CliffsNotes you remember from your schooldays. MSB

**The Lark**, Promethean Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, through Feb. 22, and Saint Joan, ShawChicago at the Ruth Page Center for the Performing Arts, through Feb. 24. Joan of Arc was the first female war veteran, and you have one more weekend to hear Jean Anouilh and George Bernard Shaw weigh in on how her service to her country was, uh, rewarded by her superiors. MSB

**Port Authority**, Writers' Theatre, through March 2. Exquisite acting and commonplace speech elevated to poetry infuse this tender and introspective piece about three Irishmen of different generations who bare their rueful souls about the women who got away. JA

**Sons of the Prophet**, American Theater Company, through March 9. A lot of tragic things happen in Stephen Karam's Pulitzer finalist drama about two gay brothers who lose their father. But thankfully there are also lots of laughs (both awkward and poignant) to make this finely cast sad tale a very enjoyable one, too. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

## THEATER REVIEW

### Chicago's Golden Soul

Playwright: Jackie Taylor  
At: Black Ensemble Theater,  
4450 N. Clark St.  
Tickets: 773-769-4451;  
[www.blackensembletheater.org](http://www.blackensembletheater.org); \$55-65  
Runs through: March 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Nothing in this world happens alone. In order to keep its account of Curtis Mayfield's life and career within the limits of modern performance practice, Black Ensemble was required to excise enough material for another full-scale musical—so the savvy Jackie Taylor commandeered the Windy City music industry headquartered along what historians dubbed "Record Row."

Imagine an urban promenade, its sidewalks teeming with pedestrians packing guitars, horns, portable drums and thick folios of sheet music. That was South Michigan Avenue from 1964 to 1979—specifically, the blocks between the studios of Chess Records at 2120 (yes, just like in the Rolling Stones song) and those of Vee-Jay at 1449—where artists trawled for producers willing to give them an audition. The rhythm-and-blues melodies that would define the era might have been emerging in Detroit,

Memphis and Philadelphia, too, but Chicago's inclusion in the pop pantheon is well-founded. When the *second measure* of an introductory riff draws cries of recognition from the back rows of the audience, we're not talking house concerts.

The show's generous exhibit of significant aural moments includes familiar classics such as "Raindrops" and "Hello, Stranger" (hits for Dee Clark and Barbara Lewis, respectively), as well as the indispensable "Duke of Earl," with Gene Chandler toggled up his trademark top hat and tails. We are also acquainted with such legendary artifacts as Billy Stewart's James Brown-meets-Cab-Calloway arrangement of the retro-rep "Summertime." Ditties spawning the dance craze of the '60s and '70s are recognized, too—the Twist, the Twine and the "Go-Go-Gorilla" (a heavy-duty version of the more mainstream "Monkey").

Even the cast of 10 Olympic-stamina vocalists eventually are forced to concede that "there's so many [songs], we can't do them all," as they exhort us to search the Internet for information that their play's text cannot supply. The Impressions, the Chi-Lites, a bevy of female chart-toppers and other luminaries whose photos and local roots—neighborhoods, alma matters—we see displayed on video screens, are covered in medleys or countdowns, offering only brief hints of their influence. Since the refrain to "Welcome Home" takes on fresh resonance in 2014 and Dudley Owens' whinnying sax would electrify any room, any time, would it be too much to ask Taylor to write yet another show?

## THEATER REVIEW

### Gypsy

Playwright: Arthur Laurents (book),  
Jule Styne (music),  
Stephen Sondheim (lyrics)  
At: Chicago Shakespeare  
Theater, Navy Pier  
Tickets: 312-595-5600;  
[www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com); \$48-\$88  
(special: \$20 for buyers under 35)  
Runs through: March 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

An iconic score, brilliant orchestrations, a fervent back-stage story, a titanic starring role and an overture that is the quintessence of Broadway ... Gypsy is one of the greatest musicals, yet it's an odd duck having no chorus line and relatively little choreography. What it has, in spades, are wit, conflict and characters of a complexity rarely found in musical comedy.

These things came consciously into focus as I watched this new production, directed by Gary Griffin with unusual intimacy made possible by a deep thrust stage, which puts the show in the middle of the audience. The opening-night performance was slow and too deliberate at first, but soon picked up speed and steam. By Act II it had overcome sound system issues in Act I (or so I think), in which dialogue and songs seemed flat and often-soft (or perhaps my ears had adjusted).

Griffin's powerful cast mixes masterful local veterans such as Keith Kupferer (Herbie, a leading man at last!) and Barbara Robertson (Tessie Tura, the stripper) with out-of-towners Louise Pitre (Rose), Jessica Rush (Louise) and Erin Burniston (June), adding a gaggle of appealing kids for the early scenes of Louise and June as child performers. The show features period-perfect and clever costumes by Virgil Johnson (just look at those coats made from blankets), and a skewed setting by Kevin Depinet which elongates a gold-gilt proscenium arch (the picture frame around a stage) and cantilevers it outward over the thrust stage, all but shouting "show biz!" Above all, Valerie Maze conducts a glorious 14-piece orchestra that plays the hell out of the original orchestrations (modified



Gypsy. Photo by Michael Brosilow

by Rick Fox) and, golly-gee, it sounds *fabulous!*

This production has emotional power and plenty of musical punch, but I have a conceptual problem. Ethel Merman, for whom *Madam Rose* was written, was 51 years old when *Gypsy* opened on Broadway in 1959—when she was 20 years too old for the role. With two daughters neither yet 10 years old, Rose is 30 at most and still alluring when *Gypsy* begins, and barely past 40 at the end. Alas, Merman set the casting standard for most subsequent productions and Pitre, distinguished though she may be, is even older than La Merman, and you can hear it in her voice. Also, few directors signal that Rose and Herbie are lovers and neither does Griffin (the 1989 Broadway revival with Tyne Daley and Jonathan Hadary did, and it was directed by co-author Arthur Laurents, who oughta' know), but it's important to the relationship and Rose's character.

Kudos to Rhett Guter and his graceful, athletic dancing of "All I Need is the Girl," which Mitzi Hamilton choreographed. Too bad his character is a one-off!

Chicago Shakespeare kicks off its Sondheim double bill—one of the most anticipated "entertainment highlights of 2014" —Chicago Sun-Times

# GYPSY

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Jason M. Hammond and Joel Behne in 4PLAY. Photo by Michele Stein

**THEATER REVIEW**

**4PLAY: Sex in a Series**

**Playwrights:** Graham Brown, Nathan Faudree and Lisa Roth  
**At:** trip. At Den Theatre, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave.  
**Tickets:** 800-838-3006 or [www.tripnyc.org](http://www.tripnyc.org); \$20  
**Runs through:** March 15

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

4PLAY: Sex in a Series is a comic dating drama that starts out unconventionally with an intriguing play-within-a-play structure, but ultimately it doesn't live up to its promise of being something truly different. This is disappointing, since 4PLAY has plenty of enjoyable witty dialogue and amusing performances before it fizzles by the tidy end.

The production originally debuted in 2004 with the New York-based company trip., which returns to Chicago with one of its signature works. From the start, 4PLAY defies expectations since the audience is invited to stand and mull around the largely bare Den Theater studio space, or to scramble to find a perch on a number of surrounding multi-level platforms. The show also begins in a very fragmentary way with its choppy text, which introduces a number of the sexually fluid and mostly unnamed New Yorker characters.

4PLAY centers around a nervy playwright/director (Graham Brown) who becomes enamored of a hip auditioning actress (Cyra K. Polizzi) who becomes his inspirational leading lady on the play he's constructing. The actress shares a three-room apartment with a longtime friend (Rosa SanMarchi), and she gradually becomes enamored of their new lesbian roommate played by Erin O'Brien.

But things get complicated when the actress' bisexual younger sister (Tamara Lynn Chambers) visits town, and when an earlier drunken gay fling between the playwright/director and the new beau (Jason M. Hammond) of his gay best friend (Joel Behne) is uncovered during that tired truth-revealing plot device of a drinking game.

4PLAY is at its best when it shows its young characters nervously and daringly entering into new relationships, negotiating around notions of couple-hood, compatibility and sexuality. One also wishes that the play-within-a-play structure was exploited a bit more, since it provides Becca Savoy (as the stage manager) and Clare Cooney (as another auditioning actress) plenty of amusing asides full of snark and sarcasm.

Directed by writer/actor Brown, 4PLAY largely works despite its lack of sets and the free-flowing staging that often features actors observing scenes that their characters are not technically supposed to be included in. And though there is plenty of smooching (both of the straight and gay variety), I'm not so sure that warrants the late-night start time of 10

p.m. for 4PLAY.

The production entertains the most when it aims for witty sitcom banter and romantic situations. Yet you can't shake how it doesn't fully live up to its artistic potential in terms of its initially daring structure.

**SPOTLIGHT**



Pride Films and Plays (PFP) offers a very timely enhanced reading titled **Sochi: Three Short Plays About Gay Athletes**. On the bill are DC Cathro's Commemorative Edition (about a Jewish boy with a crush whose life is turned tumultuous during the 1988 Olympics), Rich Espey's Hoya Saxa (about two athletes in a locker room) and George Smart's Olympic Fever (about a gay athlete questioning whether to compete in Sochi).

PFP's staged reading of Sochi: Three Short Plays About Gay Athletes is running once at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 24, at the Center on Halsted's Hoover-Leppen Theater, 3656 N. Halsted St. Tickets are \$10 and \$5 for students and seniors; call 800-838-3006 or visit [www.pridefilmsandplays.com](http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com). Images of Cathro (left) and Smart courtesy of PFP

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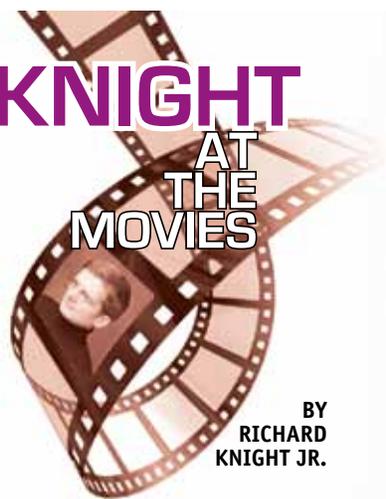
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# KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



BY  
RICHARD  
KNIGHT JR.

*Stranger by the Lake* and *Hawaii*, two sunlit and sex-soaked queer movies, are arriving this week to chase away the winter blahs of this eternal freeze for ice fatigued Chicagoans. Even better: Both films—one thematically dark, the other light—are tremendous.

For the entire film, openly gay French writer-director Alain Guiraudie's *Stranger by the Lake* takes place at a nude beach in France on a secluded, sun-drenched lake leading to a dense forest—a perfect cruising spot for the gay men who are found there day after day swimming, tanning and trolling the forests for anonymous trysts. Franck (played by Pierre de Ladonchamps) is among the regulars—a handsome, boyish looking man with a good body who has no trouble finding guys to hook up with. It's so easy that he's bored with the usual assortment. He chats up Henri (Patrick D'Assumcao),



*Hawaii*.

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PICTURED: KATE FRY. PHOTO BY MICHAEL BRISLOW.

a heavysset middle-aged man who sits alone, staring out at the lake, whose non-judgmental point of view strikes a chord within Franck.

Then Franck spots Michel (Christophe Paou) for the first time. With his beefy musculature, Tom Selleck mustache and confident air, Michel is the kind of distraction that Franck has wanted. The two chat each other up but, much to his disappointment, Michel has a jealous lover. That night, hanging out longer than usual, Franck accidentally witnesses Michel drowning the lover—but does nothing. The next day he nervously glances around for Michel, who doesn't seem to be there. Then, at dusk, there he is—the proverbial Adonis striding naked out of the water. Michel walks right up to Franck, asking to share his towel. Franck's lust gets the best of him and a hot (and very explicit) affair commences between the two. Soon the lover's body is discovered and, not long after, both Henri and a perceptive police detective suspect the truth. At the same time, Franck's desire begins to turn to love. As the noose begins to tighten and the violence escalates, will Franck's conflicting emotions be enough to keep him quiet about Michel?

Guiraudie's tricky, complex movie has found nearly universal acclaim since it debuted at Cannes last year (winning him the directing prize and the film the queer Palm award). The film's suspense aspects have been favorably likened to the voyeurism of Hitchcock—especially his *Rear Window*. It's an apt comparison, although the movie's low-key thriller aspects aren't quite as deliciously exciting as in that Hitchcock masterwork. But Guiraudie's larger theme—the sometimes-thin line between sex and death tied to the depths of desire one person can feel for another (especially when one of those gorgeous men just happens to be a murderer)—is worth all the hosannas that have greeted this great queer erotic thriller. The film, which played here last fall at both the Chicago International Film Festival and Reeling, opens Friday, Feb. 21, at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport Ave.. [www.musicboxtheatre.com](http://www.musicboxtheatre.com)

Queer eroticism is also the winning drawing card of *Hawaii*, an Argentinian film from writer-director Marco Berger.

Sexual tension runs rampant as two young men slowly discover their attraction for one another during a long hot summer in the Argentinian countryside. The humidity and animal magnetism rise daily when Eugenio (Mateo Chiarino), an introspective writer who is living at his family's lakeside home, accepts the request of his former childhood friend Martin (Manuel Vignau), who is down on his luck, for handyman work. As the languid, humid summer days pass, the desire between the two men (who are only interrupted once in their solitude by a brief visit from Eugenio's brother) becomes almost unbearable.

But sexual confusion also reigns as the two

slowly become reacquainted. And though lust is in the air as the two go about their daily chores (Berger creates a palpable sensual languor aided by the lush tropical locale), it's a toss-up to see whether Eugenio or Martin—who are often shirtless or naked in each other's presence—will make the first move. Berger's contemplative, sultry film is not only the ultimate tribute to the slow burn, offering queer audiences a delectable payoff, but it's also a very well-acted character study. The film, which debuted in Chicago last fall at Reeling, is out on DVD from Canteen Outlaws. <http://canteenoutlaws.com/hawaii/>

"LGBT rights is in its revolutionary phase right now. It's frightening for some, it's revolutionary for others. But what does that mean for Black people who happen to be LGBT?" That's the question activist Sharon Lettman-Hicks—who's with the National Black Justice Coalition—asks at the outset of filmmaker Yoruba Richen's compelling documentary *The New Black*. And though Richen's movie can't possibly provide a definitive answer by its end 80 minutes later, it explores this often divisive issue with a depth and understanding that helps to fill a gap that has been desperately needed.

Richen brings the issue sharply into focus as it follows the 2012 campaign for (and against) same-sex marriage in Maryland through the lens of the African-American community. In an even-handed, thoughtful manner—surprising giving the propensity for nastiness from the opposition that usually accompanies the grappling for even the smallest gains by LGBT activists—*The New Black* manages to find compassion and parity on both sides. The movie is gifted with individuals who, like Lettman-Hicks, speak with effortless eloquence in discussing their feelings on the subject. (The impassioned Lettman-Hicks also states about the struggle for LGBT equality: "This is the unfinished business of Black people being free.")

As the film tracks the progress of the anti-gay Question 6—a referendum to overturn the same-sex marriage law in Maryland, a state in which African-Americans make up 30 percent of the population—it goes backstage, inside the Black church, considered the all-powerful bastion of conservatism and the wellspring of so much homophobia that sought to enact it. Yet Richen finds a measure of compassion and, even here, viewers are left realizing that this is a much more complex and thorny issue for the African-American community, which has been painted time and again with the anti-gay brush, than is normally reported.

With openly lesbian filmmaker Yvonne Welbon (*Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100*) producing, *The New Black* is the rare documentary that illuminates both sides of the issue it examines. The film opens Friday, Feb. 21, at Facets Cinematheque, 1517 N. Fullerton Ave. <http://www.newblackfilm.com/>

## TELEVISION

## Stun Gunn:

Chicagoan in contest to be 'America's Next Drag Superstar'



Gia Gunn.  
Photo by  
Nestors Photography

BY TONY PEREGRIN

"I would love to say that I am the 'coy Asian girl,' but it's probably more the 'aggressive Asian girl,'" said Gia Gunn, 23, a resident of Rogers Park, when asked to describe her character on the sixth season of RuPaul's Drag Race premiering February 24th. "I'm in character 24/7. I am the same personality in and out [of] drag," added Gunn, also known as Scott (Scotty) Ichikawa.

Rumor has it the recently crowned Miss Roscoe's 2014 Queen of all Queens is something of a sharp-shooter when competing for the coveted title of "America's Next Drag Superstar," but the Windy City Times is anything but Gunnshy when it comes to finding the T. During a recent phone interview, Gunn revealed the secret to her success (invest money in your drag), the details behind signing with Shangela's entertainment management company, and why drag tutorials on YouTube are for basic bitches only.

**Windy City Times: RuPaul has said season six is the "most outrageous and sickening cast to date" and that she is "quite frankly scared of these queens." If RuPaul is scared of this group—then I am running for cover!**

Gia Gunn: [Laughs] It is a great cast, although there were a lot of things stirred up [this season] and a lot of great things brought to the table. The cast is super well-rounded and no one is alike at all in terms of personality, appearance, type of drag, anything.

**WCT: Describe the first time you were around RuPaul live and in-person. Did you Ru(e) the day or was it fabulous?**

GG: I guess I didn't truly believe I was there until I saw her. It's a breathtaking moment when you are on the runway and there she is in full-drag just like on T.V. It's an honor to be in the presence of someone who has started this legacy. There's not a lot of one-on-one time with you and RuPaul, so I can't say I found her intimidating, necessarily. But when you are on the spot—it can definitely be intimidating.

**WCT: How many times did you audition for Drag Race, Gia?**

GG: Just once—I think my audition tape showcased who I am in drag and out of drag. I provided a lot of clips showcasing all of my different looks and costumes and that probably wowed them—and my background in traditional Japanese theater probably caught their attention.

**WCT: You mean Kabuki, specifically, right?**

GG: Yes; Kabuki is one of the most ancient art forms there is, and it is one of the most varied because there are all these different schools and houses and styles of performing. I was fortunate enough to have an actual dance master from Japan—the real deal, not someone who just opened up a shop here in Chicago. I've been dancing in a group since I was 7 years old, and for a boy doing this it was super-unheard of, but I was born with a passion for it. I think that stood out to my Japanese community in Chicago and I've had a lot of support.

**WCT: I'm guessing by now most RuPaul's Drag Race fans in Chicago know the origin of your character name Gia Gunn—which you've said is a combination of "Gia" from the biopic starring Angelina Jolie and "Gunn" from Project Runway's Tim Gunn.**

GG: Yes; I really wanted a name that was simple and to the point, and very feminine.

**WCT: As you likely know, the 1998 HBO movie Gia depicts the story of Gia Carangi, considered by some to be the first American supermodel. After she became addicted to heroin, her modeling career spiraled downward, and she eventually contracted HIV and passed away at the age of 26. Is your character name an homage to Carangi, since she led such a fascinating, and in some respects, tragic life?**

GG: No, I didn't think about it, to be honest. I loved the name and stuck with it.

**WCT: RuPaul's Drag Race can be a transformative experience, physically and emotionally. How did Drag Race affect you?**

GG: I learned what it meant to truly be in your own zone and to have no one else there to coach you. Everything was on me, and I'm not used to that in everyday life. I've always had someone there to hold my hand, even in terms of getting there—this was the first time I've been on an airplane by myself. I also learned more about my character. I've never had the time to really think about the details, the little things about my persona. I was always a well-defined drag queen, but Drag Race has put me at a different level, with different expectations from people and I think it's great—it's everything that I have worked really hard for.

**WCT: Halleloo, speaking of working hard—earlier this year, Shangela, another Drag Race alum, announced a new business venture called Say What Entertainment, a LGBT entertainment-management group that boasts an impressive roster of Drag Race's**

**stars including you, Alyssa Edwards, Vivienne Pinay and others. How did you get involved with Shangela and her talent-management group?**

GG: Well, I met Shangela awhile back when she was in Chicago, through our mutual friend Jade. But I really got linked with Say What Entertainment via Laganja Estranja, one of the other girls from season six. Laganja and I are super-close—she is my season six sister, and I really trust her. Laganja, who is also represented by Say What, referred me to Shangela and she contacted me and we came up with a good plan, which is really important because when you come back from Drag Race there is always this question of "What now?"

**WCT: There's no question that Chicago drag-queen talent is part of the Drag Race legacy at this point. What advice did some of the Chicago dolls give you about the show?**

GG: DiDa Ritz was with me prior to going to Drag Race, and one of the biggest tips she gave me was "Don't read the blogs. Don't please the haters." And do "me" to the fullest—and do not look back. Everyone here in Chicago was so supportive—Monica Beverly Hillz, Jade, we are all close. They encouraged me to let people see who I am behind the fishy talent.

**WCT: Who were your favorite guest judges this season?**

GG: I want to leave it as a surprise!

**WCT: Earlier today, Us Weekly online actually broke the roster of celebrity guest judges.**

GG: Well, I didn't know who half of them were. [Laughs] I can tell you there were some good ones, some relevant ones—judges who will actually make sense to people who will have people living to see them on the show!

**Note: Celebrity guest judges on season six include Neil Patrick Harris, Adam Lambert, Paula Abdul, David Burtka and Game of Thrones star Lena Headey.**

**WCT: This season features American Idol season seven grad Danny Noriega competing as Adore Delano. Did you recognize him when she pranced into the workroom?**

GG: I'm super-super stupid and very late when it comes to social media and TV shows and this and that, so I had no idea. Some of the girls knew; Courtney Act definitely knew. She was on the same show in Australia.

**WCT: Did her experience on American Idol give Adore Delano a leg up on the competition?**

GG: It definitely gave her a leg up—definitely! Adore Delano's character is so personable and so well-developed, and I think that experience really helped him. That being said—I also know that being on a drag-competition show is completely different than being on American Idol, okay? [Laughs]

**WCT: I know Carmen Carrera, another Drag Race alum, has inspired you, Gia, because she is fishy and feminine. Now, put your reading glasses on, girl—who are the dolls that you don't admire?**

GG: [Long pause] Maybe Jinx Monsoon—she didn't deserve to win. I can't say there is anything about her that is a Drag Race winner.

**WCT: If you were to teach a class for drag queens competing in future seasons of RuPaul's Drag Race, what words of wisdom would you impart on your pupils?**

GG: Amateur queens come up to me at the bar all the time and ask for advice, and I always tell them they can watch all the drag tutorials they want on YouTube, but until they dig deep down inside and find out who they are as a performer, and until they dig deep down inside their pockets—not much is going to happen for them.

Invest, invest, invest in your drag-queening. I swear it can be as simple as that. If you spend the money, people will respond to that. And remember, a good drag performer comes from within—you're born with it. You can't simply take advice and apply it and be fabulous. You have to figure it out for yourself and you will flourish—at least that is how it went for me.

**Season six of RuPaul's Drag Race premieres on Logo, Feb. 24.**

**A kick-off party will take place at Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St., on Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 9 p.m. (There is no cover.) Season six contestants Gia Gunn, Miss Darienne Lake, BenDeLaCreme, Laganja Estranja, The Bianca Del Rio and Adore Delano will take the stage. See [www.roscoes.com](http://www.roscoes.com).**

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WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES



## Kinmont

BY MEGHAN STREIT

When I heard that the people behind one of my all-time favorite Chicago restaurants, Nellcote, opened a sustainable fish and seafood restaurant, I was intrigued. **Kinmont** opened just a few weeks ago in the River North space that previously housed Zealous.

Kinmont derives its name from a 19th century fly-fishing lure that early sustainable fishermen used to catch artisan salmon. In keeping with that theme, the restaurant serves primarily locally sourced fish from the Great Lakes. The menu is rounded out with some choice selections from both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, including oysters, Maine lobster and Alaskan crab legs.

The remodeled space is very dark, with just a few small windows opening onto Superior Street. The cool industrial space is warmed with antique-inspired touches like gold chandeliers and ornate rugs that are hung, whimsically, on the ceiling rather than the floor. Kinmont doesn't veer into kitschy nautical decor. Classic blue striped napkins and a few hanging

lanterns are the only nods to a seaside theme. This restaurant knows it's in the Midwest and it's quite comfortable with that.

There's an ample selection of appetizing starters. In addition to raw oysters by the dozen and chilled seafood like shrimp cocktail, you'll also find several unique hot appetizers. The Door County whitefish chowder is the Midwestern answer to New England's clams, and boy, does this soup succeed. The rich and creamy base is loaded with lots of mild whitefish and tender chunks of potato. Small bits of bacon and plenty of fresh chives render the soup at once hearty, but fresh tasting. It's sprinkled with a few crisp and buttery oyster crackers, a cut above the standard variety that comes in little plastic packages.

Slightly less impressive, but still good, is the crab gratin. This sizzling hot starter has everything it should need to be phenomenal—fresh crab meat, aged cheddar, chives and potatoes—but it misses the mark with a soupy consistency and a tad too much salt. And, the gratin is regrettably served with saltines for dipping. I understand the chef's desire to make the gratin relatable and comforting with such a humble cracker but, frankly, the rich dip would benefit from a more delicate crostini.

As is so often the case, the best starter at Kinmont is the simplest. In this case, it's the house rolls and butter. They don't come free of charge like many inferior breads, but \$2 buys you a piping hot mini-cast iron pan filled with four freshly baked sourdough rolls. They taste like they are made with love—and lots and

lots of butter. They are a little greasy to the touch, but don't let that stop you from slathering them with the house-cultured butter. It's whipped super-soft and sprinkled with sea salt, and when you eat it, all is right with the world.

Don't let the robust appetizer menu fool you. Kinmont is not a small-plate restaurant—a refreshing change in our shared plate-obsessed culture. You can go retro and actually order your very own entree. Fresh fish is the name of the game. Instead of filets that have traveled for days (or longer) from one of the coasts, Kinmont serves up fish that's caught right here in the Midwest, like trout. If you order one of the simply prepared catches of the day, add on some sides like sauteed kale or charred beets. The bar menu is craft beer heavy, which is exactly what you want to drink with this kind of hearty and straightforward food.

There's also a small selection of clever fish-focused entrees. I really enjoyed smoked trout "Reuben." The sandwich starts with two marbled slices of homemade rye that are buttered very liberally and grilled to a nice crisp. Smoked trout makes a refreshing substitute for corned beef, especially with plenty of crisp sauerkraut and tangy Thousand Island dressing. The Reuben is served with a heaping mound of hot and fresh French fries, which are good enough, but the Reuben is the undeniable star of the show. My one criticism is that the sandwich was a bit on the salty side, a theme that recurred throughout my meal.

Also worth ordering is the squid-ink spaghetti. The pasta has a thicker, doughy consistency

that lets you know it's homemade. In addition to coloring the pasta black, the squid ink lends a briny flavor. The spaghetti is dressed simply with lemon juice, mint and red chile, which combine to form an unexpectedly delicious and light flavor profile. The pasta is so good that the relatively small shrimp it's served with don't do it justice. The shrimp were fresh and flavorful enough, but pasta this good deserves a larger, more succulent prawn or two.

The dessert menu is limited to two American classics—apple pie and chocolate chip cookies. The apple pie is served with cheddar cheese sauce, to which I am ideologically opposed. But if you like that sort of thing, I imagine it's fabulous at Kinmont. I opted instead for the chocolate chip cookies, which are soft and chewy. They are elevated just a notch with lots of rich dark chocolate. The cookies are served with ovaltine butter cream for dunking. It's a cute touch, but it doesn't actually add much flavor.

I envision long-lasting success for Kinmont. The staff is warm and welcoming, the food is inspired (and buttery!), and you know exactly where the fish comes from. It's the kind of place you can feel good about eating at over and over again.

**Kinmont is at 419 W. Superior St.; call 312-915-0011 or visit [www.kinmontrestaurant.com](http://www.kinmontrestaurant.com).**

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# Black film students at Columbia aim to have work recognized

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSERFER

Raina McKinley and Donavin Whisler are two Black freshman graduate students at the Columbia College school of Cinema Arts and Sciences. They also serve as president and vice president of the Black Film Society at the school. The society has created a documentary called Black Sheep. The film's director, McKinley—who identifies as genderqueer—said it is a film with a purpose.

"I've been hearing from other Black students [in the film program] that their work isn't being recognized," she said. "They are getting pushed aside in their classes." McKinley said she is the only Black student in one of her film classes. The curriculum has yet to cover the work of any Black directors and, according to McKinley, she had to give up an idea for a documentary about queer women of color and social media in favor of a film about hockey.

Whisler said that, in her class, the percentage of Black students is extremely low. She said that she wanted to film a documentary about either hip-hop culture or gender norms in the Black community. "We were supposed to partner up with people who had similar ideas," she said. "No one volunteered to work with me so now I have to drop both of my ideas to work with two other people on something else. I can't do something relevant to the Black experience."

McKinley said that she doesn't believe the department's curriculum contains any diversity at all. "Your professors get to choose a lot of what we screen in class," she said. "The only film with a person of color that I know of that's been screened is Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing, which everyone has already seen. In fact any other kind of project that's not a white male director is not brought up in class."

Vaun Monroe is the assistant professor in the Arts and Sciences Department and teaches screenwriting, directing and film studies. He said that there is only one other Black instructor in a faculty that includes 20 tenured members. "It's difficult to be a professor of color," Monroe said. "There's a bias in the tenure track that eliminates worthy professors of color and women from being able to take their rightful place in the faculty."

Monroe said that, while the students of the film program are an increasingly multicultural group, the curriculum has stayed the same. "It doesn't reflect these demographics in the content of the curriculum," he said.

By way of example, Monroe talked about filmmaking classes where students are paired up to work in teams. "What has been found is that good ideas put forth by Black students are routinely relegated to the scrap heap," he said.

The Black Film Society hosted a roundtable event to discuss the issues that African-American students face in Columbia's film program. "We talked about a lot of experiences people have had with discrimination, being overlooked, pushed aside, not having help with their projects," McKinley noted. Black Sheep documented that discussion. "We are giving our peers a voice through this film," she added.

"These are not isolated incidents," Whisler insisted. "It's widespread."

The society invited Kwang-Wu Kim, D.M.A., president and CEO of Columbia College, to a screening of the Black Sheep documentary on Feb. 26 along with of the film department chair Bruce Sheridan and Vice President of Student Affairs Mark Kelly. This is the second time the society has attempted to screen the film for faculty members.

Monroe said that he wants to see that each of the demands for department equality set forth in the student's documentary are met. "I

think they are reasonable in what they have asked for," he stated. "Columbia says that they want their filmmakers to be the authors of their time and to make change. I think it's brilliant that our film students use their filmmaking abilities to ask for something that they feel is missing from the program. They pay the same tuition that everyone else does."

"I came to Columbia because their huge thing was diversity," said McKinley. "I believe I found it in the overall college atmosphere but not at all in the film department."

Monroe—who has been with the school for six years—said that both he and the students love Columbia. "I think it's a fantastic film program, but they have a blind spot that needs to be addressed," he said. "If Columbia wants to be inclusive then they should welcome getting this information to help facilitate making the changes that they say they're about."

McKinley agreed. "The program doesn't rep-



From left: Don Whisler, Luther Hughes, Raina McKinley and Salyndrea Jones. Photo courtesy of the Black Film Society

resent the students that it has. I think the school is great and when you love something that much you don't leave it. You try to make it better."

While Sheridan could not be reached for comment, a representative from Columbia confirmed that Kim would be attending the screening.

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## Tuesday, Feb. 25

**Frontrunners/ Frontwalkers Chicago** A club for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transexuals and friends who are interested in running and walking together along Chicago's great open lakefront, meeting twice weekly, on Saturdays at 9am and Tuesdays at 6:30pm 6:30pm Totem Pole in Lincoln Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/52950773133/>

**Joan Rivers** Iconic comedian, CEO, talk-show host, actress, author and Second City alumna Joan Rivers. Free. Theater seating is limited. 6:00pm Film Row Cinema of Columbia College Chicago 1104 S Wabash 8th Floor <http://www.colum.edu/conversations>

**Parent workshop on bullying** Will focus on the difference between teasing and bullying, warning signs that your child is being bullied or bullying others, how to monitor social media sites for signs of cyberbullying, and what procedures parents should follow to report bullying. Alderman Tom Tunney co-sponsoring with Bulldog Solution Inc. 6:00pm Hawthorne Scholastic Academy, 319 N. Clifton St. <http://www.bulldogsolution.com/home.html>

## Wed., Feb. 26

**Everyday Ethics in Dementia** Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services is the most extensive senior services network on Chicago's north side. For over 115 years, CMSS has faithfully served older adults in Chicago by continuing to develop new programming that meets the changing needs of the population. CMSS' key services include assisted and supportive living, dementia care, rehabilitation services and senior home care. The organization also offers home repair services, subsidized housing and outpatient wellness services to Chicago area seniors. Learn more at [www.cmsschicago.org](http://www.cmsschicago.org) 8:00am - 9:30am 2720 W. Foster Ave., Chicago <http://www.cmsschicago.org/events.aspx>

**Affinity Forty Plus Meeting** Includes but is not limited to individuals who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women who are at least 40 years of age. Led by Glynis Morris. Activities defined by participants. Meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month. 7:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306 <http://www.affinity95.org>

**GenderQueer Chicago** GenderQueer Chicago is a grassroots, peer-led group that works to create safe spaces for all of us to talk about, think about, explore, and express gender. They are open to those who wish to talk and think about gender. Gender-Queer Chicago meets every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 9:00pm. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted St., <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

Sheridan Rd <http://www.orchadash.org/>  
**Affinity Trans Focus Group** Monthly on the third Thursday. Info: [affinitytransfocusgroup@affinity95.org](mailto:affinitytransfocusgroup@affinity95.org) 7:00pm - 9:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306 <http://affinity95.org>

## Friday, Feb. 21

**Author Queer Clergy: A History of Gay and Lesbian Ministry in American Protestantism** Minnesota author RW Holmen chronicles the journey of gay and lesbian Christians to be fully accepted and fully included in the congregations of mainline Christianity. 6:00pm Augustana Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministries, 55th St., Hyde Park (773) 493--6451

## Saturday, Feb. 22

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago Fun Run/Walk** A club for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transexuals and friends who are interested in running and walking together along Chicago's great open lakefront, meeting twice weekly, on Saturdays at 9am and Tuesdays at 6:30pm 9:00am Totem Pole in Lincoln Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/52950773133/>

**Glory vs. the Wolves:** A staged reading to raise awareness about rape culture Rachel Bykowski, author. Explores rape culture through the eyes of four women who are held captive and never allowed to learn of the outside world. Co-sponsored by 20% Theatre Company Chicago. Suggested \$3 donation benefits the Women's Voices Fund. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

**Asians & Friends Chicago** Chinese New Year's dinner Registration 6-7pm. Dinner @ 7pm 8:00pm, <http://afchicago.org/blog/>

## Sunday, Feb. 23

**Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago** Meeting every Sunday from 10:30 to noon, featuring a speaker on a variety of topics—personal ethics, education, psychology, politics, philosophy, medical care, equal rights, the environment, etc., followed by a coffee hour. Free and open to the public. Also Sunday School, weddings, service projects, book group, film group. 10:30am - 12:00pm Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago 7574 N. Lincoln Ave. Skokie, IL 60077 <http://www.ethicalhuman.org>

**Scott Duff hosts LGBT radio talk show** LGBT-specific talk show "Out Chicago" on

## Wed., Feb. 19

**Open House at The Hartwell** Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services is the most extensive senior services network on Chicago's north side. For over 115 years, CMSS has faithfully served older adults in Chicago by continuing to develop new programming that meets the changing needs of the population. CMSS' key services include assisted and supportive living, dementia care, rehabilitation services and senior home care. The organization also offers home repair services, subsidized housing and outpatient wellness services to Chicago area seniors. Learn more at [www.cmsschicago.org](http://www.cmsschicago.org) 4:00pm - 6:00pm 5520 N. Paulina St., Chicago <http://www.cmsschicago.org/events.aspx>

**Robin Kelly** Congresswoman of Illinois' 2nd District is holding a reception in support of LGBT rights and equality and Kelly's reelection bid for Congress. \$75; Host \$300; Chair \$750. 5:30pm Progress Bar 3359 N Halsted St.

**GenderQueer Chicago** GenderQueer Chicago is a grassroots, peer-led group that works to create safe spaces for all of us to talk about, think about, explore, and express gender. They are open to those who wish to talk and think about gender. Gender-Queer Chicago meets every Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 9:00pm. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

**Drag Show** Three professional Chicago stars and two RuPaul's Drag Race stars, Detox and The Princess. Benefits PFLAG. 8:00pm Mohr Student Center, 555 N. Sheridan Road, Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL 60045 <http://www.lakeforest.edu/live/events/475281-drag-show>

**James Franco and Frank Bidart: Off the Shelf** Discussion on film and poetry focusing on Franco's short film Herbert White. Tickets are \$10-\$15 online or by phone. 8:00pm Thorne Auditorium Northwestern University School of Law, 375 E. Chicago Ave., Chicago 312-494-9509 <http://www.chicagohumanities.org> Tickets: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/event/3087>

## Thursday, Feb. 20

**Congregation Or Chadash Happy Hour** Meet new friends and familiar faces while learning about our programs. Free appetizers, games and drink specials for \$10. For more information, contact Laurie Grauer at [membership@OrChadash.org](mailto:membership@OrChadash.org). 6:00pm - 8:00pm Big Chicks 5024 N



## JOKE HOLD

### Tuesday, Feb. 25

Joan Rivers will be at  
Columbia College, 1104  
S. Wabash Ave.

Photo by Vero Image

interests. It is sponsored by Windy City Times and Center on Halsted. 11:00am - 1:00am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Lavender-University-launches-LGBTQ-programs/43375.html>

**Winning Works: Choreographers of Color Awards 2014** Three world premieres by Justin Allen, Stefanie Batten Bland and Norbert De La Cruz III. 7:00pm Harris Theater for Music and Dance 205 E Randolph Dr <http://www.harristheater-chicago.org>

**The Tease** New extravaganza for Chicago House has two live performances with burlesque and aerial acts, an event created by Keith Elliott and Todd Kiech, the producers of Dance For Life & Chicago Takes Off, Sidetrack-sponsored open bar, available to all attendees and is one of the first events to be held in the new Moonlight Studios space in the West Loop. First show 7:30pm. 10:30pm Moonlight Studios, 1446 W. Kinzie St., Chicago [http://www.chicagohouse.org/event\\_the\\_tease.html](http://www.chicagohouse.org/event_the_tease.html)

## Sunday, March 2

**On the Red Carpet** Annual Oscar event and fundraiser for Center on Halsted. One of the Center's signature events, On the Red Carpet welcomes over 400 donors, patrons and supporters to gather and enjoy the Academy Awards at a fun and festive event. \$125-\$75-\$40 6:00pm Park West Chicago 322 W Armitage Ave <http://www.centeronhalsted.org> Tickets: <http://community.centeronhalsted.org/OTRC>

## Saturday, March 8

**Matthew Morrison** Broadway and television star to take the stage at Dominican University's 34th Annual Trustee Benefit Concert and Gala. During the concert, the university will present WTTW 11, Chicago's premier public media organization, with the Bravo Award for its significant contributions to the arts. Concert tickets start at \$27. Tickets to the gala, including the concert, cocktail reception and dinner, are \$350. 8:00pm Lund Auditorium Dominican University 7900 W Division St River Forest, IL 60305 708-488-5000 <http://www.dom.edu/advancement/giving/benefit/index.html>

**A Champagne Toast to Jazz Royalty** Annual benefit shhh...OUT! Lakeside Pride Jazz Ensemble. Special feature on the music of the great Billy Strayhorn, one of the first and few openly gay composers of his time. 6:30 p.m. reception. \$25 advance. \$35 door. 7:30pm, Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted St. <http://lakesidepride.cloudaccess.net/index.php/champagne.html> Tickets: <https://www.vendini.com/ticket-software.html?t=tix&e=d9d478622a8cc6c432dabee2334bb95e>

## Saturday, March 1

**Lavender University: Lourdes Torres** Making Familia from Scratch: Towards a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago. Discusses efforts to name Latina lesbians as agents of change and active subjects of a multiracial history of grassroots organizing. Lavender University is a 9-month lecture series featuring top academics and activists in the LGBTQ community. Lavender University is a 9-month lecture series featuring top academics and activists in the LGBTQ community, working on a wide range of research topics and

## WCT seeks nominations for 30 Under 30 Awards

CHICAGO—Windy City Times is seeking to recognize 30 more outstanding LGBT individuals (and allies) for its annual 30 Under 30 Awards.

Nominees should be 30 years or under as of June 30, 2014, and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health, activism, academics, sports or other areas.

The deadline to nominate individuals is Friday, April 18.

Windy City Times Managing Editor Andrew Davis coordinates the awards program for the paper. Hundreds of people have been honored by the paper in the more than 10 years since the awards were established. Most honorees have gone on to great success in their careers and educations, including working for the Obama presidential campaign and

administration, plus individual successes in music, legal, professional and academic careers and much more.

Individuals, organizations, co-workers, etc. can nominate a person by emailing [Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com](mailto:Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com) or faxed to Andrew Davis' attention to 773-871-7609. Self-nominations are welcome.

The nomination should be 100 words or fewer, and should state what achievements or contributions the nominee has made. Nominators should include their own names and contact information as well as the contact information and the age of the nominee.

Note: Following the policy instituted in 2005, individuals can only win once. Those have won the award since that year are ineligible for this year's awards.

Windy City Times, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center on Halsted and Chicago House are sponsoring the event.

Honorees will be notified in May and recognized at a free ceremony Thursday, June 26, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

## WCT publisher's book on ALA's 'Rainbow' list

The 2014 Over the Rainbow Project book list—which the the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT) of the American Library Association (ALA) sponsored—was decided at ALA's recent midwinter meeting in Philadelphia.

Among the Top 10 books for the year are Barrie Jean Borich's Body Geographic and Windy City Times Publisher Tracy Baim's Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America.

This year's list includes 71 titles published between July 1, 2012 and Dec. 31, 2013. The committee's mission is to create a bibliography of books that exhibit commendable literary quality and significant authentic GLBT content and are recommended for adults over age 18.

The Over the Rainbow committee includes Robert Graziano, Chair, Chicago; Kelly McElroy, Chair-Elect, Iowa City, Iowa; David Combe, Ventura, Calif.; Annaliese Fidgeon, Northridge, Calif.; Jessica Louise Jones, Santa Fe, N.M.; Louis Munoz Jr., Brooklyn, N.Y.; Robert Riding-er, DeKalb, Ill; and Nel Ward, Newport, Ore.

## Lakeside Pride searching for band directors

Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles ([www.lakesidepride.org](http://www.lakesidepride.org))—Chicago's family of instrumental ensembles for the LGBT community—is conducting two music director searches for the Lakeside Pride Freedom Marching Band and the shhh...OUT! Lakeside Pride Jazz Ensemble.

Christina Zurcher, the current Lakeside Pride Freedom Marching Band leader, will be completing 10 years of service as music director this year. After five years as shhh...OUT! Lakeside Pride Jazz Ensemble music director, Omar Fong-Bances decided to step down from his leadership role in January.

Potential candidates may submit their applications using the information published on [LakesidePride.org](http://LakesidePride.org) under the "About Us" section of the website.

Applications should be submitted no later than Friday, March 7. Interested candidates may direct general questions via email to the appropriate committee at either [jazzsearch@lakesidepride.org](mailto:jazzsearch@lakesidepride.org) or [marchingsearch@lakesidepride.org](mailto:marchingsearch@lakesidepride.org).

NUNN ON ONE

# Lea Michele

## gets 'Louder,' shows 'Ambition'



BY JERRY NUNN

Many know Lea Michele from the hit Fox television show *Glee*, in which she plays overachiever Rachel Berry. The role has garnered her two Golden Globe nominations as well as an Emmy nod.

Michele started at a very young age in musicals like *Les Miserables* and *Fiddler on the Roof*; then she originated the part of Wendla on Broadway in *Spring Awakening*.

After *Glee* made it big, she dabbled in a few movies such as the comedy *New Year's Eve* and the upcoming animated film *Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return* where she plays Dorothy Gale.

This year, the talented young lady enters a new chapter of her life with her album *Louder* (on Columbia Records) and her first book, *Brunette Ambition*.

She took a break from filming *Glee* to speak with *Windy City Times* about her connection with Chicago.

**Windy City Times:** Hello, Lea. Thanks for taking time out of your busy day to talk about your first album. Why did you decide to go this direction with the songs?

Lea Michele: I took my time in this whole process. I gave a lot of thought and care to what sound I wanted to make, as well as what message I wanted to relay with this record. At the end of the day after the recording of it I really feel we put out something really special.

**WCT:** You went for strong power ballads, as



opposed to a Britney Spears pop album.

LM: Well, I come from a Broadway background and with the television show I have been exposed to lots of different types of music and sounds. I feel as a performer I put my emotions forward first. That is how the album sort of evolved.

**WCT:** It sounded like you stretched vocally for the track "Battlefield."

LM: "Battlefield" was written by Sia. She's so incredible and such a genius as a songwriter and singer. I think in everything she writes you can really hear the emotion in the chords and the words. I love songs personally like that.

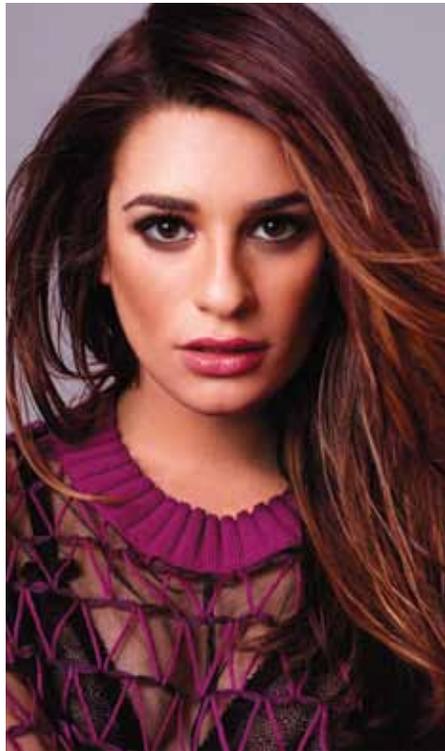
When I heard "Battlefield" for the first time I knew it was going to be something that I definitely wanted to sing.

**WCT:** Did you have a big choice of people to work with on *Louder*? You must know a lot of people from *Glee*.

LM: No, it was a pretty organic process. I co-wrote some of the songs. I was thankful for the people that gave me some of their songs, like Sia and Christina Perri. I feel like I am starting out in this whole recording world from the beginning.

**WCT:** Are you making plans to tour with *Louder*?

LM: I cannot wait. No plans have been set in stone yet but we are definitely talking about



Lea Michele. Photo by Peggy Sirota

it. I am really looking forward to getting the opportunity. I come from a background of performing live onstage so that is really where I feel the most comfortable.

**WCT:** I saw you perform on the *Glee* tour in Chicago.

LM: Really? Let me tell you something: I have the best memories of Chicago from that *Glee* tour. We always say Chicago was the best time. I think I got three tattoos while I was in Chicago. I have only been to one club in my entire life, and it was in Chicago. I had one day with Kevin McHale and we were doing press all day there. I think if you ask anyone from the show where they had the craziest memories, it is definitely in Chicago.

**WCT:** What club did you go to?

LM: I have no idea. I had never been out before in my whole life. My cast will tell you, "Seeing Lea at a club is like seeing a unicorn!" They talk about it as the one and only time, like that's it and I will never go out again. I did it in Chicago.

**WCT:** You must have to protect your voice and not be out in smoke machine-filled clubs.

LM: I would rather be at home with my cats.

**WCT:** I heard about your two cats! [Both laugh.] What tattoos did you get in Chicago?

LM: I got a tattoo of Imagine with my cast member Jenna Ushkowitz and Kevin McHale, then me, Jenn, and Amber Riley got little star tattoos together. It was so fun!

**WCT:** Is Chris Colfer, who plays Kurt Hummel on the show, your gay best friend or do you have another one somewhere?

LM: [Laughs] That is so funny to me because people ask me who my gay best friend is but, for me, whether you are gay or straight, a

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person is a person. I don't categorize anyone for their sexual orientation. I think every girl needs a gay best friend and thankfully I have my fair share but I don't want to put any labels on anyone like that. People are who they are.

**WCT:** You have performed at many LGBT fundraisers in the past, such as the Human Rights Campaign and Broadway Care/Equity Fights AIDS, so the community appreciates the support.

LM: Oh, yeah. I grew up in New York so I was supporting [Broadway] since I was 7 years old. Growing up in the theater community is really who I am. I am really thankful to be a part of it.

**WCT:** Talk about this new book.

LM: It is called *Brunette Ambition* and it is coming out in May. It is a really fun lifestyle, how-to book. I have great chapters on my family [and] *Glee* as well as awesome chapters on fashion, beauty, and fitness. It covers the whole landscape of Lea Michele's life.

**WCT:** Well, I know you have to get back to set. Come visit Chicago on a concert or book tour.

LM: I definitely will. I need another tattoo!

**Louder lands in stores on March 4. Visit [www.LeaMicheleMusic.com](http://www.LeaMicheleMusic.com) for more on Michele's projects.**

## See Billy Masters' column online.

### Facets hosting showing of gay Cuban film

In partnership with the Center on Halsted, Facets is showing a special screening of the documentary *Free Havana* on Sunday, March 2, at 3 p.m. at the Facets Cinematheque, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave.

This special event will include a Q&A and reception with Cuban director Eliezer Perez Angueira following the film.

From the Batista era to the Revolution to the Mariel Boatlift to present-day Cuba, *Free Havana* explores the evolution of gay life from a time when homosexuality was considered a punishable crime to a movement of equality that includes free gender-reassignment surgeries.

For more information, email [abbey@facets.org](mailto:abbey@facets.org).

### James Franco at NU School of Law Feb. 19

The Poetry Foundation and the Chicago Humanities Festival will present "James Franco and Frank Bidart: Off the Shelf" at Thorne Auditorium, Northwestern University School of Law, 375 E. Chicago Ave., on Wed., Feb. 19, at 8 p.m.

Poetry Foundation president Robert Polito will moderate a discussion on film and poetry with Bidart and Franco. The program will focus on Franco's short film *Herbert White*, which is based on Bidart's poem of the same title.

Tickets are \$10-\$15; visit [www.chicagohumanities.org](http://www.chicagohumanities.org) or call 312-494-9509. See [www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/event/3087](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/event/3087).

# Chicago to host women's football championship

BY ROSS FORMAN

The motivation to repeat as national champions of the Women's Football Alliance (WFA) just became a little stronger for the 2013 champion Chicago Force.

It was just announced that Chicago will host the 2014 championship game Aug. 2 at Lane Stadium on the campus of Lane Tech High School, 2601 W. Addison St.

"We're excited to have the opportunity to host the national championship," said Force owner Linda Bache. "We're hoping to be the first team in WFA history to win back to back championships. It would be an unbelievable accomplishment and especially memorable to do [so] in our home city."

The WFA's 2014 National Championship Weekend kicks off Aug. 1 with the inaugural Alliance Bowl. Two teams that did not advance to their conference championship game will play in the 2014 Alliance Bowl.

The festivities continue the following day with the fifth-annual WFA All-American Game, as the stars of the American Conference battle the top players from the National Conference.

The 2014 WFA National Championship game will start at 5 p.m. and, for the fourth consecutive season, it will be broadcast on ESPN3.

"I decided to apply to host the championship for a couple of reasons," Bache said. "I thought it would provide great motivation for us to return to the championship in the quest for a repeat, for the opportunity to play for a title in front of our home fans, many of whom could not travel to San Diego last year to support us, and also as a way to give back to the sport by putting on a great championship event."

But that means it will be a lot of work to plan, organize and staff, Bache said, especially if the Force is again playing in the title game.

"We need sponsors, media coverage, support from the local community and volunteers to staff the event," Bache said.

The Force has submitted a bid to host the championship game three times in the team's 12-year history—and hosted the 2008 game at North Park University, which Chicago lost to Dallas.

"This [announcement] will serve as tremendous motivation for us to get back to the championship," Bache said. "As the defending champions, it would be a pretty difficult pill for us to swallow to host the championship for two other teams. The team's sole focus is to repeat our undefeated season and hoist the trophy again, but this time in our city with our fans."

Bache said that Ald. Bob Fioretti "was critical" in helping secure Lane Stadium for the championship weekend. Fioretti also was the sponsoring council member for the resolution from the City of Chicago designating January 5th, the day of the team's ring ceremony, as Chicago Force Day in honor of the team's perfect 2013 championship season.

"Team sponsors Dave Gassman and Andrea Raila enlisted the assistance of Alderman Bob Fioretti when we were seeking out an appropriate venue for the event," Bache said. "Dave Gassman has been a sponsor of the Force since its inception and continues to be our primary means of sponsorship. Andrea came on as a sponsor last year and has been a whirlwind of much-needed support. She was instrumental in creating more awareness of our achievements within the city and state."



The Chicago Force. Photo by Preston Tewell

Lane Stadium holds 4,000 and Bache said that, if the Force is in the championship game, it hopefully will be standing-room only.

"It's a historic venue that was recently renovated with new field turf, lights, locker rooms and concession stands—it's beautiful," Bache said. "A number of former NFL athletes played at Lane Stadium during their high school careers, [including] Fritz Pollard, the first African-American named to the Walter Camp All-American team. Pollard was one of the first two African-American players in the NFL and also the first African-American head coach in the NFL."

## FFC Gyms offering 'Everest Challenge'

FFC Gyms will be running The Everest Challenge through March 22, which will allow members and non-members the chance to see if they could cover the distance on a treadmill, stair-mill or bike to the summit of Mt. Everest (29,035 feet) and earn the chance to win prizes like a \$250 gift certificate to REI.

The cost is \$49 for FFC members and \$99 for non-members, who will then receive a five-week membership at any FFC during the duration of the program.

Sign up online at <https://ffc.com/everest-challenge> or at the gyms.

### Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC



Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas. He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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