

JENIFER LEWIS TALKS BIPOLAR DISORDER, IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS

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Order protects LGBT fed workers

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

In a sudden but not necessarily unexpected gesture, the White House indicated June 16 that President Obama will soon issue an executive order to prohibit federal contractors from discriminating against employees on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The White House official could not say how soon

Obama intends to sign the executive order. But the news came during Pride Month and just two weeks before the White House hosts its annual reception in celebration of Pride Month. And it came just one day before Obama was scheduled to be at an LGBT-related fundraiser for the Democratic National Committee in New York.

It also came as much of the nation's attention is riveted to a escalating civil war in Iraq that threatens to provoke U.S. military response and to an "urgent

humanitarian" crisis in which more than 1,000 unaccompanied minors are crossing the border from Mexico into the United States every day.

Word that Obama plans to sign a federal contractor executive order to protect LGBT employees spread lightning-fast.

The Human Rights Campaign called the news the "culmination of six years of advocacy by the members

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NEW CONCEPTS OPEN IN FORMER SPIN SPACE
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VICTOR CHARLES AWAKE AMONG ACTIVISTS AT AFRICAN LGBT EVENTS
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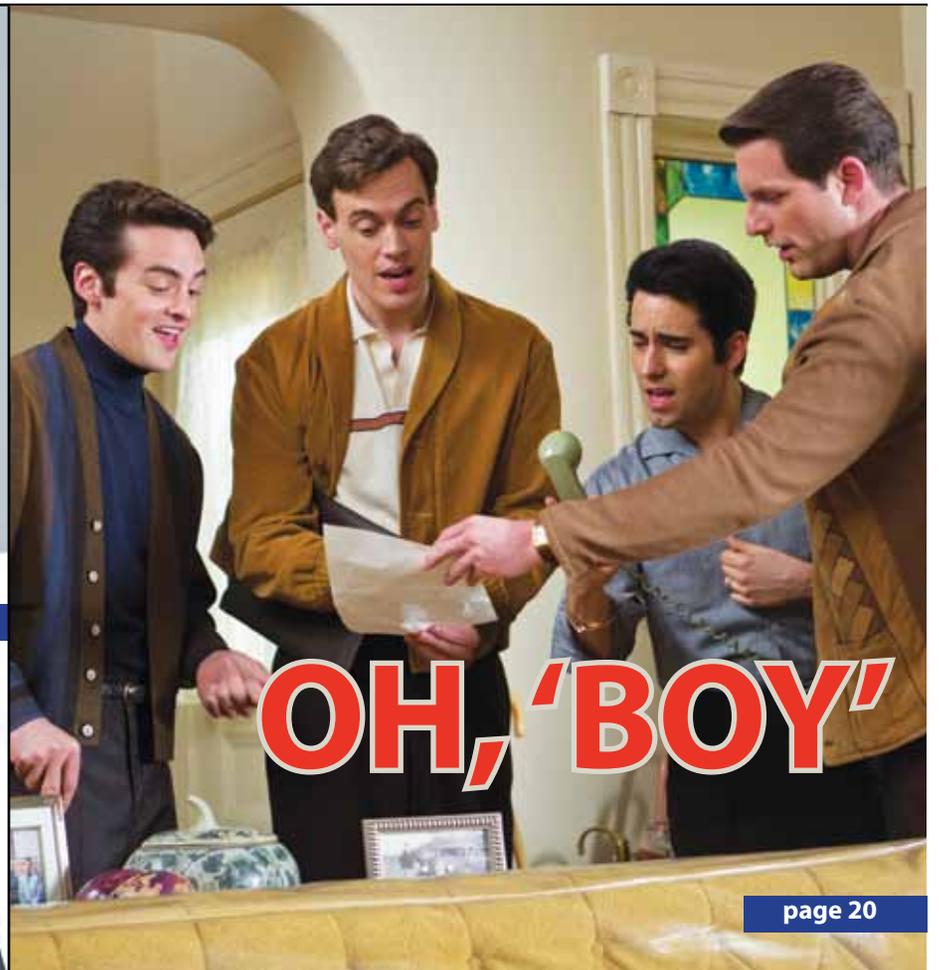


JENNIFER HUDSON PART OF PRIDE FEST LINE-UP
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'GLEE'-FUL

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OH, 'BOY'

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Among the items on this week's entertainment menu are (left) Alex Newell, who plays Unique on the TV show Glee; and (above) cast members of the upcoming film Jersey Boys, which Clint Eastwood directed. Photo of Newell by Ricky Middlesworth; still from Jersey Boys by Keith Bernstein

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Images on cover (left, from top): Photo of Jenifer Lewis by David Rice; photo of David Gassman in front of Spin sign by Ross Forman; photo of Victor CharLes Aweke by Carrie Maxwell; photo of Jennifer Hudson by Barry Brescheisen

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'CASE' IN POINT
Prop 8 plaintiffs Kris Perry and Sandy Stier as well as director Ben Cotner (left) talk about the film The Case Against 8.
Photo by Dan Merlo Photography



Lookingglass Theatre held its annual Madhatters Ball.
Photo by Jerry Nunn



Singer David Paige talks about being an LGBT ally and living in Chicago.
Photo by Jerry Nunn



The Chicago Blues Fest brought a rockin', spiritual vibe to town this past weekend.
Photo of Dr. John by Vern Hester

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LGBT groups band against ENDA's religious exemption

BY CHUCK COLBERT

Growing numbers of national and statewide LGBT organizations are coming out against the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), saying that while it bans workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, the federal law also would allow religious organizations to discriminate against LGBTs even in non-ministerial or non-pastoral capacities.

Advocates for LGBT equality maintain the proposed religious exemption, unprecedented in civil rights legislation, would in effect gut the non-discrimination protections.

Shannon Minter, legal director for the San Francisco-based National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), said in an email that NCLR now "strongly oppose[s] any religious exemption in ENDA or any other federal, state, or local non-discrimination law that is broader than the religious exemption that already exists in federal civil rights laws."

"We do not support legislation that will create a new and broader exemption for LGBT people than exists for other protected groups," Minter said. "While we are confident the current discriminatory religious exemption in ENDA will not be part of the final legislation, we will not continue to support ENDA if it is not changed to be consistent with Title VII's religious exemption."

The 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VII in fact contains an exemption that addresses a narrow issue, specifically the interest of a religiously affiliated organization to create a community of fellow believers.

Accordingly, the exemption allows faith-based organizations to hire employees based on their religion in order for the entity to maintain a religious community, a faith based-identity. Title VII does not restrict protections in the law against workplace discrimination based on race, sex, or national origin.

Reached by telephone, Minter said that if ENDA were enacted in its current form it would be "the first time in any civil rights legislation at any level, to my knowledge, expressly permitted discrimination on any other basis other than religion."

He added, "There is a long history now of accommodating religious beliefs, by permitting certain narrowly defined religious employers to favor individuals from the same faith."

"That Title VII exemption," explained Minter, "is reasonable" as "religious liberty is important. That kind of accommodation, we have decided for a long time now, makes sense."

"But never, ever," he added, "has a civil-rights law—certainly not at the federal level or state level—said in addition to that, you can also discriminate on the basis of other protected categories, such as race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity."

Minter said that "sanctioning that type of discrimination is antithetical to the whole purpose of an anti-discrimination statute."

"And to set the precedent that there is somehow something special or different about anti-discrimination laws for LGBT people that warrant that kind of unprecedented and unprincipled exemption would open a door that we do not want to open. I think it is very dangerous."

In a similar vein, Mark Snyder, a senior communications manager for the Oakland-based Transgender Law Center (TLC), emailed that his organization is now "unable to support ENDA in its current form."

At the same time, he added, "We are fully committed to continuing to work for the pas-

sage of a law like ENDA that contains an exemption for religious organizations that is no broader than the exemption in Title VII."

In his recent comments, Snyder reiterated TLC's "grave concerns" about the religious exemptions that were voiced last spring in a joint statement, along with NCLR, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

That statement spelled out the implications of a faith-based exemption in the proposed legislation: It could provide religiously affiliated organizations—far beyond houses of worship—with a blank check to engage in employment discrimination against LGBT people.

"Some courts have said that even hospitals and universities may be able to claim the exemption; thus, it is possible that a religiously affiliated hospital could fire a transgender doctor or a religiously affiliated university could terminate a gay groundskeeper," TLC's statement said.

In addition to NCLR and TLC's opposition to ENDA, GetEqual and Queer Nation no longer support its current version.

For its part, New York City-based Queer Nation has called for a comprehensive civil rights law that would ban discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and federally-funded programs.

The Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal, ACLU and the National Center for Transgender Equality all support the current measure but remain concerned about any religious exemption carve-out provisions.

Moreover, recent legislative attempts at the state level in Arizona, Idaho, Kansas, Oregon, Tennessee and South Dakota by social conservatives and the far right that would enable persons to discriminate against LGBTs and same-sex couples based on religious beliefs opposed to homosexuality have only raised the level of concern.

On the matter of social conservatives' efforts to empower discrimination against LGBTs, Jay Michaelson, Ph.D. offered his assessment.

"Religious conservatives have really succeeded at 'moving the goalposts' here. Just two years ago, this kind of broad exemption was a huge compromise for the Obama administration, in the context of the Affordable Care Act. Now, ENDA's backers are offering it up as the default position. That is a huge, silent victory. And we all know what the ultimate goal is: Religious exemptions for anyone who wants one, including corporations and individuals. That would represent a tragic erosion of the rule of law," he said.

Michaelson, a visiting scholar at Brown University, authored the 2013 report, "Redefining Religious Liberty: The Hidden Assault on Civil Rights." He said that it's "gratifying" that some organizations are saying that ENDA in its current form is "too high a price to pay."

"Employment non-discrimination is vitally important, but at what cost?" Michaelson said. "Hopefully, progressive members of Congress will insist on an appropriate, narrow exemption for churches and religious functionaries, while rejecting this over-broad one that would leave hospital orderlies, school cafeteria workers, and shopping mall security guards without protection."

Statewide groups weigh in

Several statewide LGBT groups are also voicing their own growing uneasiness, including Equality California, which said in a June 9 statement that it "supports passage of" ENDA, "but strongly oppos[es] the broad religious exemption attached to it."



National Center for Lesbian Rights' Shannon Minter. Photo from the organization

"Ensuring that all American employees are judged on the quality of their work, not their sexual orientation or gender identity, is fundamental to achieving full equality," said Rick Zbur, EQCA executive director-elect. "But that protection shouldn't come with an asterisk or loophole, and that's what this religious exemption is—a way to promise full protection without delivering it. This exemption undermines the value of ENDA and it must be fixed."

In voicing concerns, EQCA, which rarely weighs in on federal legislation, also pointed to California's anti-discrimination protections "that don't include this broad religious exemption."

"These protections have been proven fair and effective in the nine years since they were enacted," EQCA's statement said.

Another statewide LGBT group, Equality Illinois, also issued a statement on ENDA, insisting the religious exemption provision be removed from "any bill that moves forward in either chamber."

Like its California counterpart, Equality Illinois said it supports ENDA because of its overarching aim to "prohibit workplace discrimination against LGBT Americans" but opposes "including any exemptions that would give LGBT people less protection than other protected groups already under civil rights law," according to the statement.

And like EQCA, Equality Illinois points to its state's 2005 Human Rights Act, which "has worked effectively to protect LGBT employees on the same terms as other groups."

Over the telephone, Bernard Cherkasov, executive director for Equality Illinois, said it is not out of the ordinary for statewide LGBT groups to speak out on federal issues.

"We have a great relationship with members of our congressional delegation, with senators and a good number of our U.S. representatives, who are champions of LGBT equality," he said. "It was so important for us, from a state that fought for transgender inclusion in our own state version of ENDA, without those overly broad religious exemptions, with our partners and supporters, to say it is possible to pass state employment non-discrimination without religious exemptions and without selling out and getting those overly broad religious exemptions that are unprecedented in federal civil-rights legislation."

Since Equality Illinois spoke out—the first statewide gay group to do so—any number of statewide LGBT groups have followed suit.

On the East Coast, the statewide LGBT group

MassEquality, for example, and Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, a legal advocacy organization, said that while they still support ENDA, the religious exemption provision should be removed.

"Support for marriage equality is at an all time high and increasing, and yet many LGBTQ people across America still experience alarming rates of discrimination at work, at school, in housing and in public accommodations simply because of who they are," said Kara S. Core-dini, MassEquality executive director. "ENDA is about ensuring fairness and equality, both of which are undermined by [a religious] exemption that would result in second-class protections for LGBTQ people."

Voicing agreement with Cherkasov, she added, "State-based LGBTQ groups have an essential and effective role to play on federal matters. After all, every federal issue is ultimately experienced in the state communities we call home."

For its part, "GLAD still supports ENDA in this Congress while we strongly oppose its religious exemption and hope it will be changed," said spokeswoman Carisa Cunningham, the organization's director of public affairs and education.

ENDA passed the U.S. Senate on Nov. 7, 2013, by 64-32 vote, marking the first time that legislative body approved federal civil rights legislation banning anti-LGBT employment bias. In 1996, the Senate failed to pass ENDA by vote of 49-50.

Other stumbling blocks remain.

For instance, the current version of ENDA contains a provision that would ban state and local governments from "retaliating against religious groups that take action only permissible because of [ENDA's] religious exemption clause."

And House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) has said over and over that he would not bring ENDA to a vote, claiming the legislation is unnecessary and would lead to frivolous litigation.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposes ENDA in its entirety, with San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone penning a letter to a Senate committee explaining the Catholic Church's reasoning against the measure.

The pro-LGBT Catholic group Equally Blessed, which includes Dignity/USA, New Ways Ministry, and Chicago-based Call to Action, among others, wrote (on Sept. 16, 2013) to senators in support of ENDA but at the same time, the coalition raised concerns about any religious exemptions.

"We urge you to remove ... the religious exemption from the current draft of the bill. Our nation's religious institutions have nothing to fear from legislation that treats every citizen as though they were equal in the eyes of God," the letter read.

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OBAMA from cover

and supporters of the Human Rights Campaign, LGBT and civil rights leaders, and allies on Capitol Hill."

It also comes after months of mixed signals from the White House. On Jan. 31, John Podesta, the former chief of staff to President Clinton who had just joined the Obama White House as counselor to the president, said an executive order was "under consideration at the White House—we're looking at that."

But then White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, on that same day, said he didn't have any updates on "a hypothetical executive order for LGBT non-discrimination" and added that it's "the wrong approach." He said the president thought ENDA is "the right way to go here."

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Reps say they'll be mindful of ENDA exemption

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Two U.S. Representatives from Illinois said that politicians would have to be vigilant about making sure that provisions within the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) don't undercut the bill's effectiveness in stopping hiring- and on-the-job-discrimination.

Activists have in recent weeks been concerned that the so-called "religious exemption" in the ENDA bill is far too broad, and would give churches and religious organizations far too much leeway were they too discriminate against non-ministerial personnel, such as administrators or janitorial staff.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, shortly after speaking at the State of Edgewater breakfast sponsored by the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce June 6, admitted that, given the moribund state of the current Congress, passing ENDA was unlikely in the near future so, "We haven't begun to really look at the language of the bill yet. But we want to make sure that it is as effective as it can be in protecting against discrimination."

In a statement to Windy City Times, U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley said, "The Employment Non-Discrimination Act remains the best path to ensuring LGBT Americans are treated equally under the law with the same workplace rights as other protected groups in this country. Any exemption should be extremely narrow in scope, and every day that we continue allowing

discrimination against the LGBT community is another day that justice is delayed."

Equality Illinois was among the organizations that said, though they endorse of the bill, they do have reservations about the provision.

"Illinois' own Human Rights Act, enacted in 2005 with bipartisan support, has worked effectively to protect LGBT employees on the same terms as other groups," said CEO Bernard Cherkasov in a June 3 statement. "The organization To add new and far broader religious exemptions to LGBT nondiscrimination laws would set a dangerous precedent for new carve-outs to other existing federal civil-rights law."

Federal judge orders stay on Wis. marriages

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Marriage-equality supporters in Wisconsin received the disappointing, yet expected, news June 13 that same-sex marriages had to be put on hold. U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb issued the directive one week after a previous ruling said the state's marriage ban—which 59 percent of the state's voters approved in a 2006 referendum—was unconstitutional.

The ruling ended what was a frenzied week for LGBT Wisconsinites, as they rushed to wed before State Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen could get an injunction while he filed an appeal.

Crabb's ruling did not explicitly order that marriages could begin, so county clerks were left using their own discretion as to whether or not to issue licenses. According to USA Today,

about 600 licenses were issued to same-sex couples in 60 counties. Twelve counties refused to issue the licenses, while others adhered to a five-day waiting period, leaving some people who had obtained licenses late in the week in a legal limbo.

In the June 13 ruling, Van Hollen said that allowing the marriages to continue would be ignoring legal precedent: "If I were considering these factors as a matter of a first impression, I would be inclined to agree with plaintiffs that defendants have not shown that they are entitled to a stay. However, I cannot ignore the Supreme Court's order in *Herbert v. Kitchen*, 134 S. Ct. 893 (2014), in which the Court stayed a district court's order enjoining state officials in Utah from enforcing its ban on same-sex marriage. It is impossible to know the Court's reasoning for issuing the stay because the Court did not accompany the order with an opinion, but, since Herbert, every statewide order enjoining the enforcement of a ban on same-sex marriage has been stayed, either by the district court or the court of appeals, at least when the state requested a stay."

In a statement, Van Hollen said, "By staying this ruling, she has confirmed that Wisconsin's law regarding same-sex marriage remains in full force and effect."

Dane County Clerk Scott McDonnell was the first clerk to begin issuing the licenses. He told Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, "I'm disappointed [Crabb] stayed her own ruling but I defer to her knowledge of the federal courts and I'm looking forward to the day when I can issue same-sex marriage licenses again."

Crabb's June 13 ruling explained that she gave no directives to officials in the original decision because she was giving both sides an

opportunity to file supplemental materials regarding the content of the injunction.

Plaintiffs had asked Crabb to include language that would have exempted county clerks from criminal prosecution by the state for issuing same-sex marriage licenses, and also would have allowed both same-sex partners' names to appear on their child's birth certificate. She refused those requests, maintaining they were outside the scope of the original request.

Vigil held for trans immigration-rights activist

In California, loved ones gathered for a vigil June 14 to honor transgender activist Zoraida Reyes, 28, who was found dead behind a restaurant in Anaheim, according to CBS Los Angeles.

The Anaheim Police Department there were no visible wounds on Reyes but they listed her death as "suspicious."

Reyes fought hard for transgender and immigration rights, friends said.

The Chicago-based Association of Latinos/as Motivating Action (ALMA) issued a statement regarding Reyes' death. The release reads, in part, "Zoraida's death is an unfortunate reminder to all of us—that LGBT Latino/as, especially undocumented immigrants, continue to live in fear as a result of these heinous acts that happen too often. Just because this happened in California, does not mean it has not already happened or it won't happen again here in Illinois."



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LGBTI solidarity in Africa discussed at community forum

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

LGBTI solidarity in Africa was the topic of a forum focused on advocacy, support and accompaniment at the Episcopal Church Center June 14.

About 40 people attended the event that activist Brent Holman-Gomez moderated. Holman-Gomez works within the welcoming church movement, immigration equality and the Gay Liberation Network.

Speakers included Rev. Judith Kotze, lesbian minister and director of Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) South Africa; John Adewoye, a gay Nigerian-American, founder of Courage Nigeria and the Center for Integration and Courageous Living, co-founder of Chicago LGBT Asylum Support Program (CLASP), and a former Catholic priest; and Victor Charles Aweke, a bisexual Nigerian-American currently working with the Center for Integration and Courageous Living and CLASP.

Kotze's remarks focused on what is happening regarding LGBTI discrimination and anti-LGBTI laws in Africa. She explained that since we live in a global village that is connected via social media governments in Africa can't get away with enacting anti-LGBT laws in a vacuum. This has given LGBTI people in Africa a safe virtual space to share their stories with each other and that has led to education, encouragement, and a way to find hope, noted Kotze.

The recent anti-LGBT sentiment in Africa is a direct result of evangelical Christians in the U.S. and other nations exporting their homophobia to the African continent, said Kotze. Kotze explained that although South Africa has the most liberal constitution in terms of LGBT equality there is still a persistence of corrective rape among black lesbians.

"In this global village we don't have the luxury to step aside and ignore what is happening in Africa. ... We need to stand in solidarity so we can make the journey towards LGBTI equality together," said Kotze.

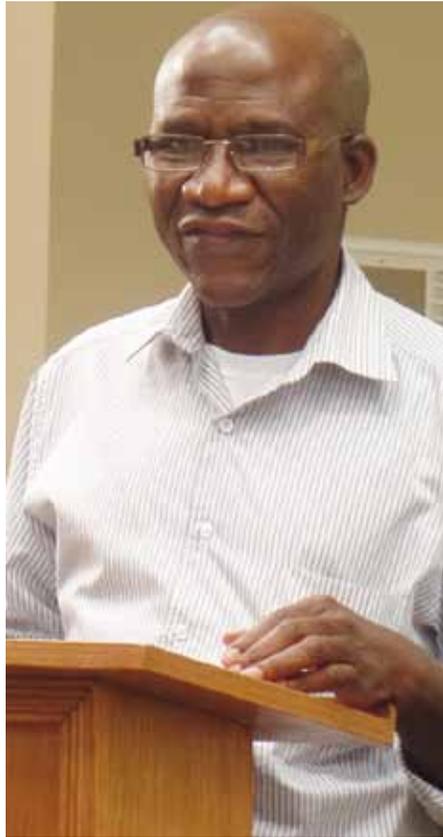
Adewoye spoke about the pathways that exist for persecuted LGBTI people in Africa to find safe havens elsewhere in the world including the U.S. The reason why Adewoye said he came to the U.S. was to be free from being gay meaning his goal was to undergo "conversion therapy." Instead, Adewoye explained that his world opened up the longer he was in the U.S. and he was able to fully embrace himself and come out as gay.

"The new wave of anti-LGBT rhetoric and actions is pushing educated and skilled people out of Africa," said Adewoye. "What is happening to African LGBTI people can happen to any of us when we step outside of LGBT friendly nations and enter nations that have anti-LGBT laws."

Adewoye noted it is still difficult to get an asylum visa approved for LGBT people coming to the United States and other LGBT-friendly nations, adding that the situation needs to change.

Aweke's presentation highlighted the health concerns that persist due to persecution of LGBTI people in Africa. In 2010 Aweke along with others in his native Nigeria started an HIV positive group for gay men so they could talk about their HIV status. The lack of education surrounding HIV/AIDS and condoms in Africa is persistent, said Aweke.

Aweke explained that threats of violence due to the work he was doing on behalf of HIV positive gay men forced him to flee his country. The question Aweke posed was, "What can we do as individuals to help the LGBTI community in Africa?"



Gay Nigerian-American John Adewoye. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

A Q&A session and breakout discussions on worldwide/church advocacy, U.S. policy and Chicago resettlement followed the panelist's presentations.

During the worldwide/church advocacy discussion, the issue of accompaniment and its full meaning were explored by the group. They talked about the ways that U.S. activists can link arms with LGBTI friends in Africa. The US policy group discussed immigration reform as it pertains to LGBT asylum seekers and the Chicago resettlement group spoke about the needs that CLASP has in the areas of housing, meal prep, transportation, and funding as the number of asylees increases.

A reception and screening of the documentary film *Call Me Kuchu*—about the last year of David Kato's (Uganda's first openly gay man) life—took place after the forum. IAM and CLASP received all the proceeds from the reception and film screening.

Forum collaborators included the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches, CLASP, Gay Liberation Network, IAM South Africa, St. Luke's Lutheran Church Logan Square and Truth Wins Out.

See www.lgbtiafricachicago.blogspot.com and www.facebook.com/LGBTIAfricaChicago for more information.

Africa-focused forum examines theology, queer reality

BY JASON CARSON WILSON

People of faith gathered June 13 at the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches-sponsored Chicago Forum on LGBTI Solidarity in Africa to discuss and share theological reflections on and the reality of being LGBTI on the continent.

"Sometimes we pretend as if this is an isolated reality," the Rev. Julie Boleyn, Unity Lutheran Church of Berwyn pastor and Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries co-chair, said. "This affects us all."

The forum was among Pride events held this weekend, highlighting the coalition's theme—"Solidarity: Standing on the Side of Love," with organizers saying that misuse of religion has helped make being LGBTI a harsh reality for queer Africans. Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N. Broadway, hosted the forum.

"It can be abused—something that hinders," Boleyn said.

She moderated the forum, which included Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary professor Cheryl B. Anderson as well as Judith Kotzé and Ingrid Schoonraad of Inclusive & Affirming Ministries (IAM) South Africa.

Anderson, who is a straight ally, illustrated the dangers of misused religion. Anderson researched HIV/AIDS for the last decade. She's traveled to Africa regularly for the last five years.

Besides skin color, heritage and history, Anderson said Africans share something else with their African-American brothers and sisters—high HIV rates.

"Globally, HIV is a disease that [predominantly] Black people have," she said.

Religion, particularly Christianity, has played a part in the spread of HIV, according to Anderson. While she noted that Blacks are predominantly Christian, Black Muslims have lower HIV rates. Biblical interpretation, Anderson said, has supported a paradigm of male dominance and female subordination.

"Men are privileged," she said. "It's an easy way to spread the virus."

High HIV rates and high rates of gender-based violence go hand in hand, Anderson added. According to the Bible, Anderson said, it's unnatural for privileged males to be subordinate.

Anti-gay supporters view being gay as being subordinate males. That idea helps fuel homophobic attitudes worldwide. Anderson acknowledged battling those attitudes during her time in Africa.

Of course, homophobia is rampant in the United States as well. While homophobia isn't confined to the Black community, Anderson couldn't deny its prevalence there, given its prevailing religious leanings.

"Black people tend to be evangelical conservatives," she said.

Anderson noted that the late Audre Lorde's notion of the "mythical norm" perfectly describes the evangelical Christian. Lorde, a lesbian writer, radical feminist, womanist and civil-rights activist, declared straight, White, Christian males were, essentially, the American society's ideal.

Canada gets first openly gay premier

The Ontario Liberals won a majority June 12, making Kathleen Wynne the province's first elected female premier and Canada's first elected openly gay premier.

MetroNews.ca noted that this win is the Liberals' fourth consecutive win and was accomplished despite multiple accusations of corruption the entire campaign.

Wynne first concern is to pass her \$130-billion, left-leaning spring budget, The Toronto Star reported. "I'm very eager," Wynne told reporters outside her office after meeting Lieutenant-Governor David Onley to set the legislature's return for July 2 with a new cabinet from a Liberal caucus that is 11 members larger.

Wynne acknowledged "challenges" surrounding the province's finances as the economy recovers and her promise to eliminate the deficit by 2018, which Conservatives say will require deep cuts in spending she did not trumpet on the campaign trail.

On a related note, CBC journalist Robert Fisher has apologized for twice saying during

Schoonraad, a White South African woman, described the challenges of working in several African countries. Religion has been one of those challenges.

"I've been 'too gay' for the churches and 'too churchy' for the gays," she said.

Schoonraad, a self-described feminist, shared witnessing female subordination in action. She recalled when a prominent church leader came to a workshop and a woman bowed in front of him. Subordination, in part, has put 15-year-old African girls most at-risk for HIV infection.

Lack of education is the other problem, Schoonraad said, adding she learned sexuality isn't discussed in schools or churches. Knowledge is the key to freedom, she said.

"There will be no LGBTI liberation without [discussing] sexuality," Schoonraad said. "People are dying. They are dying in the name of God."

Jesus, according to Anderson, shows us that they're dying in the name of another god. She said the Jesus she knows didn't marginalize the marginalized.

"He went against traditions," Anderson, an Old Testament scholar, said.

Interestingly, Anderson said anti-gay preachers do not consistently preach from the gospels. Despite their reading of Biblical text, Anderson said Jesus hasn't forsaken LGBTI people.

"Where two or more are gathered, Jesus is with us," she said.

Chicago LGBT Asylum Support Program (CLASP) Co-Founder John Adewoye said engaging African religious leaders is essential to liberating LGBTI people. However, Adewoye stressed how ingrained homophobia is in their minds.

For instance, despite being a former Catholic priest, Adewoye said people have questioned whether he's a Christian. So, he wasn't optimistic communications would be fruitful.

"They don't listen," Adewoye said.

In response, Anderson said laity can be very effective. She said congregation booed its pastor, after he preached anti-gay message.

"We just need to keep working with every single group," Anderson said.

The Biblical scholar said misinformation about what the Bible is and what it says is prevalent. That misinformation creates dangerous situations for people around the world. Kotzé said Black lesbians in South Africa are targeted for "corrective rape."

"How can rape be corrective?" she said. "[There's] no uproar in society. It's normal. We need to be educated."

Kotzé said education is a key to the liberation of LGBTI people.

"You need to change their hearts," she said. "Make it safe for discussion [of sexuality]. If our hearts are open, that isn't enough. You need to move. Go and open the door."

a live broadcast that being lesbian is a "lifestyle choice," GlobalNews.ca noted. "What I meant to tell people was that she had chosen to make sure that she was out and that everybody knew she was out. She never hid this issue," he said.

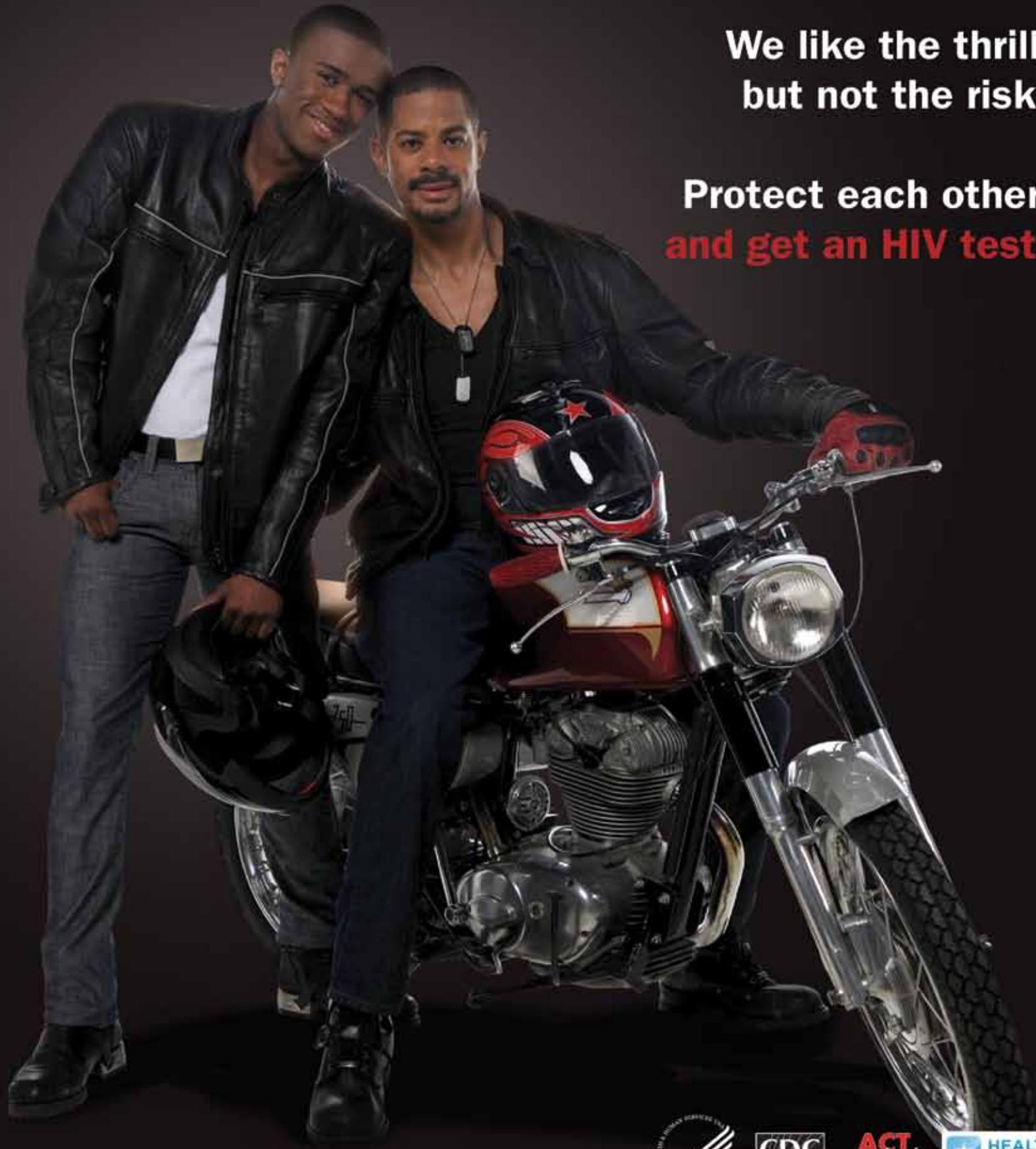
Trans GOP candidate prevails in Nevada

An openly transgender woman claimed the Republican nomination in her bid to represent Nevada in the state legislature, The Washington Blade reported.

Lauren Scott, who's transgender and a veteran of the Persian Gulf War, won the Republican primary election for Nevada Assembly District 30 in a contest against Adam Khan by taking 58 percent of the vote. The district—which includes parts of Reno—is heavily Democratic, but Scott pledged to fight to win the general election.

In the general election, Scott will face off against Democratic incumbent State Assembly member Michael Sprinkle.

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Two new concepts open in former Spin Nightclub space

BY ROSS FORMAN

Three straight men are now running two new concepts at one of the most popular intersections of Chicago's Boystown community in Lakeview. They know the spotlight is shining brightly on their every move, especially as they launch both during Pride Month and with an additional onslaught of revelers in the area during the mega-popular North Halsted Market Days in August.

"We could have done what everyone else had done before us, and that is just repackage [a business after buying it], and not be willing to take some risks. But with great risk comes great reward," said Jason Zilberbrand, 40, who grew up in Lakeview, now lives in the West Loop, and is the co-owner (with Jordan Zabinger, 30, and general manager James Rhine, 38) of the property at the northwest corner of Halsted and Belmont streets, which formerly housed Spin Nightclub.

There are now Whiskey Trust and Chloe's—the two new concepts that encompass the near-11,000-square-foot facility that previously was Spin, including a little-known outdoor garden that certainly should grow to be as popular in the summer as the rooftop deck at Sidetrack.

Both will open Thursday, June 19.

"We are bringing something to this neighborhood that doesn't exist right now. We think we are going to be the blueprint for this area going forward," Zilberbrand said.

Spin closed in late May when it was announced by former Spin owner Dave Gassman that the bar had been sold—and renovation/construction at the property started immediately, which Zilberbrand said is in excess of \$1 million. He also said the deal to purchase Spin was agreed before the end of 2013, though it didn't become public knowledge that Spin was even for sale until this past February.

"Dave had an icon in this neighborhood. Spin is special to a lot of people. And Spin will have a special place in everyone's heart, forever," Zilberbrand said.

Rhine added, "There are aspects of what we're doing that still will incorporate [the old] Spin."

That includes old signage that will be used "as an homage," Rhine said.

Zilberbrand said Whiskey Trust and Chloe's will have a "very, very, very large presence" at Pride and Market Days. "I think everyone is going to be watching us to see what we're going to do as straight owners," he said. "But I'm in touch with this community, regardless of my sexual orientation."

"There will be nuances of what Spin once was so people understand that we have not turned our back on what Spin once was. That said, it's our opportunity to demonstrate our product to a worldwide audience."

As for the enormous rainbow flag that waved from the building during Pride, it's not going anywhere. In fact, "it was not an option" to not have the flag, said Zilberbrand, whose crew told Gassman early on that it really wanted to keep the flag.

There will be the entertainment factor for Market Days and the Parade that are Spin-like, said Zilberbrand, who confirmed that it "possibly" will include scantily clad dancers.

Despite the spotlight, none of the three are nervous. In fact, Zilberbrand added, "I thrive in pressure-cooker situations ... and this is a challenge, being a straight business-owner coming into a gay community."

The former Spin space will be split almost evenly into Whiskey Trust and Chloe's, and

there will be about 25 employees (not including DJs and the security staff), most of them members of the LGBT community. At least eight former Spin employees will call Whiskey Trust or Chloe's their new employer.

"Whiskey Trust is an old-school saloon, social club, pour house, with farm-to-table food and cocktails," said Zilberbrand, who noted that local forager Dave Odd will be bringing goods daily for that night's food and cocktails.

The chefs are Maxwell Robbins and Jacob Verstegen, both of whom have a lengthy, storied history of cooking in Chicago.

The upscale Whiskey Trust will offer 24 craft beers on tap, and none of the common beers such as Coors Light. There will be a daily, changing cocktail menu, depending on what's been foraged.

They will produce their own vodka, bottled in Ravenswood. And the whiskey will be aged for two years, produced off-sight.

"We have famous mixologists, award-winning chefs, in my opinion the best staff I have ever seen, along with world-famous interior designers. When you look at the whole package, there isn't anything that we're not capable of offering," Zilberbrand said.

Visitors can enjoy dinner for less than \$20 per person.

Craft cocktails will cost \$12-14 each, while craft beer will be \$6-\$8.

"We're not trying to compete with the Bud Light-[drinking] crowd," Zilberbrand said

Rhine added, "We feel like this neighborhood has just been accepting what's been offered to them."

Whiskey Trust will look like a pre-Victorian, distressed space that was discovered in a time capsule, Zilberbrand said. The front portion will be the tavern, while the back room will be for the live performance stage and an educational center for distilling, plus a private party room.

"We want to make an investment in this community, and that's how we've been approaching this project since day one," said Zilberbrand, whose first job ever was in Lakeview.

"I want to be able to provide the community with a more sophisticated approach. We are [located at] the gateway to the most famous gay community in the world, and we're very proud of that fact. And we really feel there is a need in this area for our product."

Chloe's is a throwback to nightclubs of the late 1980s and early 1990s, they said.

"It's a dance club, a place for people to have fun. We are stressing music, sound and lighting," said Zilberbrand, who noted that they gutted the whole sound system used by Spin and installed a state-of-the-art sound and lighting system.

Zilberbrand said it was a "substantial [financial] investment," which included bringing in a programmer from one country and an installer from another country. "It was absolutely a massive undertaking," he said.

Rhine added, "With nightlife now, so many people are going out now trying to impress everyone else. We're making the venue impress the customer, instead of the customers feeling they have to show up to a venue to impress everyone just to get inside. It's our job to impress the customers, so they want to come back."

The interior at Chloe's features the art work of noted gay, Los Angeles-based street artist Homo Riot, among others.

House music will be commonplace at Chloe's in an "upscale [club] without the pretentiousness," Rhine said.

And, yes, Chloe's is officially tagged as a gay nightclub.



From left: Jason Zilberbrand, James Rhine and Jordan Zabinger. Photo by Ross Forman

Whiskey Tavern is not being labeled anything, or primarily geared for any demographic.

"I really think the gay community is going to be blown away—with both places," Zilberbrand said.

Both Whiskey Trust and Chloe's will be very visible and active within the gay community, including sponsoring sports teams, as Spin did for years.

The marketing director for the two establishments is Chelsea Prosser, an out lesbian who played college basketball.

Zilberbrand said they will have full security on the whole block, and they have met with aldermen, area police, and others locally to discuss past crime/security issues around the old Spin.

"We've got an incredibly sophisticated and high-end security crew, all on the payroll. They work for no one but us, and they are going to make sure the community is safe from what's been going on, [particularly] late at night weekends," Zilberbrand said. "We are taking security very, very serious."

"Safety is my number-one concern, and we've gone to great lengths to make sure this area is safe."

Chloe's will regularly have a cover-charge, but also be the spot to see celebrities. And the owners say it will include A-list celebs. In fact, Zilberbrand said, "We are launching with one of the biggest acts in the world."

He would not name the opening-night act, or even offer a hint.

"I can say, you'll be blown away if you show up," he said.

Staff attire at Chloe's will be in tune with the theme of the club, yet done sexy with a strong focus on the gay community, Zilberbrand said.

At Whiskey Trust, staff might be dressed in shorts, jeans or khakis.

And as for the days of scantily clad employees at the building, they are gone.

"Dave has been instrumental in helping us," Rhine said. "While Spin is no longer here, the essence of some of what Dave brought to the table is still very much a part of what we're doing."

Little Jim's holds 'final' anniversary celebration

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Little Jim's, 3501 N. Halsted St., the oldest remaining bar on the Halsted Street strip, held its 39th—and final—anniversary celebration June 14 as the bar prepares to change its name and its ownership.

ChicagoPride.com reported June 10 that the bar will change hands July 1 and be known as LJ's. The bar will be now be owned by the building owner, who is proprietor of neighboring businesses The Ram, Cupid's and Leather Sport.

"A 'tradition' comes to an end," said a posting by the bar on its Facebook page. Property manager Jeff Shand emphasized in another posting that the bar would not be closing, and would continue to "remain open with the same staff ... and the same love."

Billing itself as "the original hookup bar," Little Jim's was opened by Jim Gates in 1975, and was one of the first gay bars in the Boystown area.

"Jim you will be missed," Shand said in his posting.

Gates, who now spends most of his time in Florida, told Windy City Times that, "The time was right—I'm 76 years old, and the time was just right."

The landlord of the building, who Gates said is based in Philadelphia, had long been interested in purchasing the bar and "I was interested in selling," he added.

Gates has kept a low profile locally, mostly remaining in Florida while the sale has transpired. However, he will be back for the anniversary.

"Once I'm out of it, that's it," Gates said. "I'm making a clear break. I've made a life for myself in Florida."

Little Jim's is the second oldest gay bar in Chicago, after Jeffrey Pub on the South Side, which was opened in the 1960s.

Attorney Joey Mogul to receive award June 18

The Illinois Academy of Criminology (IAC) will hold an event Wed., June 18, 12-2 p.m., at the Union League Club of Chicago, 65 W. Jackson Blvd.

The IAC Scholarship and awards will be presented. Among those receiving awards is attorney Joey Mogul, who will be honored with the Anne O'Brien Stevens Award.

The Honorable George N. Leighton is slated to receive the Norval Morris Justice Award "for outstanding efforts to promote justice and correct injustice in the criminal justice system."

Tickets are \$40 each, with tables of 10 for \$400; visit <https://iacluncheon.eventbrite.com>.

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Entrepreneur bids to open downtown LGBT hotel

BY MATT SIMONETTE

"Are you ready for some fierceness?" Paul Sanders asked as he prepared to show off his ideas for Hotel Blue, a concept he's preparing in order to bid for Essex Inn, 800 S. Michigan Ave.

Hotel Blue, if Sanders' bid is successful, would be the city's first full-service hotel geared toward the LGBT community. Sanders and a group of investors are preparing to make the bid in mid-June. They have already secured \$21 million from a Boston-based investment fund, but are still searching for additional sources of financing.

Sanders said that, though many mainstream hotel chains try to maintain an appearance of being gay-friendly, LGBT travelers might want to be thoughtful about where they are spending their money. He refused to name the hotel group, but mentioned one hotel chain that included a certain book in each nightstand. "It's not the Gideon's Bible, but a book from a certain group, and if you go to that group's website, you can see their real views on gay marriage and other LGBT issues."

Sanders is a former United Airlines executive who was laid off in 2010. Since then he has been working on his idea for a hotel welcoming mainly all members of the LGBT community, and other travelers and local residents as well. "It's not about gay boys, lesbians, or transgender people, it's about all of us, including our fierce transgender friends," he said.

He has worked in a variety of hospitality industry positions at the same time as he's been seeking financing, to better acquaint himself with the logistics of the business, mostly with Marriott hotels in Chicago and i Hotel in Champaign, Illinois.

"Paul is coming to this with a depth of experience—he taught himself the hotel development business," said Kathleen Robbins, a co-founder and investor in Hotel Blue. "I think that the market he identified is very real."

Robbins, Sanders and co-founder and investor Anton Novak, are all Air Force veterans, and Sanders said all were interested in a project that would be gay-inclusive but give back to the community as well. Sanders' mother is also an investor in the project.

Novak, who also was an airline pilot but now runs a bakery in Reno, Nevada, said that he had "travelled around the world extensively, but [as a gay man] quite often wasn't made to feel truly welcome" in many hotels. At the same time, he added, he wants to be conscientious about not having a hypersexualized concept appealing only to gay men: "It's not someplace about being 20, blonde and beautiful—it's about how we come together as a community."

Sanders said that their group had already been attempting to give back to the community by donating to several local organizations, among them Equality Illinois, Center on Halsted, River North Dance and Rotary International. Novak added that the donations came from about 10 percent of his initial investment, spread out over three years.

Originally thinking that the project should have some proximity to Lakeview, the group first targeted their concept for the Inn at Lincoln Park. "We thought we could do it in an area that could serve a component of the LGBT community, and we worked on that for 18 months, but we were unable to secure the financing."

Sanders was also discouraged by some of the strife that had broken out in Lakeview in the summer of 2011. "There were some issues between the young-

er folks in the LGBT community and what some other folks would call the 'establishment,'" he said. "That was concerning for me, especially when I read some of the comments on the stories in the Tribune and Sun-Times. There was a tone of anger, fear and exclusivity. It was hard to say where those comments were coming from, but my assumption was, people who lived in that neighborhood. It let me know that there is instability in that part of town."

After investigating a property in Las Vegas, the group eventually settled on a hotel in the Loop, which is where most of the city's hotel business is centered anyway. "In the hotel business you can't get around the economics," Sanders noted. "We want to do a hotel that serves everyone and is 'of the community.' It has to be somewhere where everyone wants to be."



Paul Sanders. Photo by Matt Simonette

Sides"—is well positioned to take advantage of two population trends. First, the South Loop has an emerging gay and lesbian presence, and, second, the Michigan Avenue corridor is home to several thousand-college students, according to Sanders.

Essex Inn is family-owned, but the current, second-generation owners have expressed interest in selling. The property has 254 rooms, and Sanders' plan calls for 249. It also calls for a few luxury suites, which he refers to as "Premiere Suites" and "Eleganza Suites," adding "Yes, I grew up in the era of Paris is Burning."

The hotel had completed a renovation in 2011, so many of the rooms and their fixtures, as well as the public spaces, are up-to-date. Sanders said that most of their own renovations would go into the hotel's underutilized pool and deck areas, which he plans to convert into an entertainment venue called "thE Extravaaganza." He would like to slightly reduce the size of the pool, and utilize the space for shows and dancing.

Sanders, Robbins and Novak all said they were concerned that the space not just be aimed at wealthy gay men, and said the price for rooms would initially hover between \$175-200 on regular occasions.

Robbins added, "It's not going to be a sterile environment. It's going to be someplace cheap, hip and welcoming."

"We're not looking to be the White Party host hotel—we are looking to be an experience that the entire community can be proud of," Sanders noted, adding that he looked forward to the day when a "Hotel Blue" sign illuminated out onto the Chicago skyline. "People would see that and say, 'Look at what Chicago did.'"

The name, incidentally, was chosen for two reasons. The first was symbolism of the color blue as it exists within the central part of a rainbow, encircled by the other colors. The second is that, "Blue is the name of my much loved, and long-gone, English bulldog," Sanders said. "I can't help it—I'm gay as hell."

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Hillary Clinton speaks out for LGBT rights during Chicago visit

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSERFER

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton strongly asserted her support for LGBTQ rights during a June 11 visit to Chicago—the first public event in a tour promoting her memoir, *Hard Choices*. Clinton was interviewed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who asked her about her December 2011 speech in Geneva, Switzerland, during which she said, “Gay rights are human rights and human rights are gay rights.”

“I was seeing an increasing backlash against LGBT communities,” Clinton told Emanuel. “Laws being passed that would criminalize behaviors, even leading potentially to the death penalty and I began to vigorously protest with governments in many parts of the world. Some just need to be brought along. They truly are not well-informed.”

Clinton went on to call out Russia President Vladimir Putin on the anti-gay laws enacted in his country in 2013. “What Putin’s doing in Russia with all these laws against the LGBT community, that is just a cynical political ploy,” she said. “I’ve had shouting matches with top Russian officials about this.”

She explained that she tried to put her Geneva speech into a context that allowed governments, activists and businesses to join in the protest of those countries that dehumanize LGBT people via legislation or direct—often violent—action. “We have a long way to go,” Clinton said. “This is going to be an ongoing struggle and the United States must be on the front lines of LGBT rights.”

Clinton and Emanuel appeared in front of a sold-out audience at the Harris Theatre of Music and Dance as part of a notable roster of 2014 speakers planned by Chicago Ideas, a non-profit that gathers thought leaders from around the world “to provoke new ideas and inspire actionable results.”

In introducing Clinton, who was born and raised in Chicago, Emanuel noted that “every time she returns to our city, our heart fills with pride.” Clinton walked on stage to a standing ovation.

“It’s wonderful being here and seeing so many of the places I grew up with,” Clinton said from the podium, “To see first-hand how much opportunity and optimism—challenges to be sure—that really mark this great city.” She also saluted Emanuel’s over two decade long friendship and relentless energy.

During a 40-minute interview, Emanuel not only posed his own questions but took some of the audience text-messaging.

“Hillary, ‘dead broke.’ Really?” Emanuel asked, referring to her June 9 interview with ABC news during which she spoke about the family’s financial situation after leaving the White House in 2001.

“It may not have been the most artful way of saying that Bill and I have gone through a lot of different phases in our lives,” Clinton replied. “That was then; this is now. We have gone through ups and downs like a lot of people but we are grateful for the opportunities we’ve had.”

In terms of opportunities for women and girls, Clinton said both she and President Obama agreed that it had to be central to foreign policy.

“When women and girls are educated, have healthcare, participate in their economies, their societies, those countries are more stable, they’re less likely to fall into conflict, they’re less likely to breed extremism,” she said. “Where women can participate in the economy, the Gross Domestic Product of these countries grows.”

Emanuel described Clinton as a “feminist

trailblazer” and asked what she would say to those who claim feminism is something that merely “happened in the past.”

“I don’t think you’ve lived long enough,” Clinton answered. “A feminist is someone who believes women should have equal political, economic, social, cultural rights. I don’t see anything controversial about that.”

Clinton noted that, despite some progress, there are still tremendous gaps in female equality worldwide. “We have places in the world that don’t even register the birth of girls,” she said. “We have a lot of places that still kill girls or allow them to die. Then we have denial of education. Ultimately what we want is every person to live up to their full, God-given potential.”

In addressing immigration, Clinton said she



Hillary Clinton. Photo by Sarah Elizabeth Blickensderfer

strongly believes negative attitudes about immigrants are based on a “gross misunderstanding.”

She went on to challenge David Brat, a Tea

Party candidate who upset Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor during a Virginia primary June 10.

“His argument was this: ‘There are Americans out of work, so why should we allow immigrants into our country to take those jobs?’ Clinton stated. “The answer is not to throw out of work and deport the 11 million immigrants who are contributing already to our economy. The answer is to grow our economy and create more jobs. Immigrants come in at the bottom and work their way up. We need to have a well-informed fact-based conversation.”

Looking forward, Emanuel wondered if compromise on issues such as a balanced budget or children’s health care was ever going to be possible in a country divided along party lines.

“Without compromise, we don’t have a democracy,” Clinton replied. “You have people who believe that it’s their way or the highway. You have people who point fingers at anybody who deviates one small inch from what perfect is. That is not the way democracy works. That’s a theocracy. Don’t vote for anyone who proudly says they’re against compromise because they are fundamentally saying they are against the American experiment in democracy.”

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Protesters at NEIU. Photo from Mike Lackovich

NEIU protests over Walesa building continue

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Activists, students and other members of the Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) community are continuing actions aimed at having the name of a campus building named after former Polish president and labor leader Lech Walesa changed.

About 30 protestors congregated on the NEIU campus June 11, according to organizer and student Mike Lackovich, shortly before the university's board of regents' bimonthly meeting.

"We're holding [NEIU President Sharon] Hahs and the board of trustees to the same standard that we are held to," Lackovich told Windy City Times, adding that the board's silence on the matter in effect enables hate speech. "Stu-

dents are held to a code of conduct regarding the language they use."

Lackovich, in recent months, has been helping spearhead a protest was launched last year after Walesa's March 2013 comments that gay politicians in Poland had no right to a prominent position in politics there, even suggesting that they "sit to the rear" of parliament chambers or "behind a wall." He refused to back pedal from the comment, maintaining that he was not homophobic the following day, pledging, "I will not apologize to anyone."

Several panels and discussions were held on the matter at NEIU, but, in the end, the university did not change the name of Lech Walesa Hall, which was dedicated in a 2009 ceremony that Walesa himself attended.

In April of this year, Hahs released a state-

ment to the NEIU community that said the name would remain: "Overall, I believe the Dialogue process and Outcomes reflect that President Walesa's comments neither define the man nor cancel his achievements. They also reflect that we agree that those comments remain contrary to our Values, and that we re-affirm our support for inclusion on an equal basis of all members of our community."

That month, a number of protestors spoke at the Board of Trustees meeting, asking that the proposed name change be included on the Board's agenda for June. But the Board refused.

At the June meeting, faculty member Shelly Bannister, who has also been active in the protest efforts, spoke during public comments, noting that the group's objections to the name had been met with silence from the board.

"This isn't just theater—this is our way of publicly communicating with you," Bannister said, addressing the board. "I don't know how else we can do this. I don't know how else we can reach out to you."

Lackovich said that he and fellow protestors

will for now keep trying to apply pressure to the administration, and hope to put the matter before Gov. Pat Quinn.

"We have to skip over [the board of regents'] heads on this," he added. "We are going to have a tent at Pride Fest, and bring this to people's attention."

Shelly Bannister's comments can be seen at <http://youtu.be/WmKLQmq48v0>.

Wojcik to receive state bar award

Professor Mark E. Wojcik of The John Marshall Law School will receive the 2014 Community Leadership Award from the Illinois State Bar Association at the organization's 138th Annual Meeting on Friday, June 20, at the Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva, Wis.

Among other things, Wojcik founded the first gay-rights organization at The John Marshall Law School and the first gay-rights committee of the Chicago Bar Association.



From left: Howard Simmons, Charlie Stephan, Julia Simmons and Barbara Kay. Photo by Hal Baim

Gay siblings marry partners in double wedding

A South Loop wedding held June 2 was a double treat for the Simmons family. Julia Simmons and her brother Howard married their partners—Barbara Kay and Charles Stephan, respectively—at the Keith House in Chicago on the day after same-sex marriages became legal in all Illinois counties.

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke officiated the ceremony, her second since a court ruled marriages could start early in Cook County. She is the first Illinois Supreme Court Justice in the state to preside over a same-sex marriage here.

The couples billed their day as "epic." The men have been together 25 years, and the women 16 years. Both Julia and Barb have children, so they were also in attendance, along with other family and friends. Howard and Charles live in Florida, so they made the trip to Illinois because their own state does not allow such unions.

Photo by Hal Baim; more photos with the online version of this story, under "Celebrations"

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GAY *in the*
LIFE
Najee Searcy
TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
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Age
23

Neighborhood
Pilsen

Relationship status
"Dating a beautiful being."

Orientation
"I identify as a full-force cisgender gay male."

Jobs
A singer/songwriter, and makeup artist for NARS at Bloomingdale's

Hobbies
Biking, tennis and kayaking. "I never used to bike until I used Divvy and fell in love. I am now a proud bike-owner and rider."

Little-known fact
"I hear visual actions that make no sound."

When Najee Searcy was 5 or 6 years-old, his mom placed him in a children's choir for a year, known as the Northern Illinois Children's Chorus. He also has long sang along with music on the radio and to music videos.

"My voice and teamwork with my nationally recognized DeKalb High School Chamber Chorus has taken me all the way to Montreal, Canada, [and] it will take me so many more places I am sure," he said.

On June 1, at Progress Bar in Lakeview, Searcy sang John Legend's "Ordinary People" in the Windy City Gay Idol competition.

"I performed it to remind everyone in the realest sense that, no matter your credentials or uniqueness, we are all just ordinary people. Perhaps by pausing and taking a moment to enjoy life and each other, we will better our condition," he said. "It was remarkable. I loved every moment and was floating in my soul while sharing it. I believe the entire bar was utterly shocked and completely fulfilled with a beautiful performance. You know, when one is on stage so much can go right and so much can go wrong. That night, it all went right.

"Although I did not win, I performed well but only had one friend there

to vote because I entered spontaneously. The performers who won gave their all and were fully supported by a lot of friends voting, which is how it should be done. I had a blast regardless."

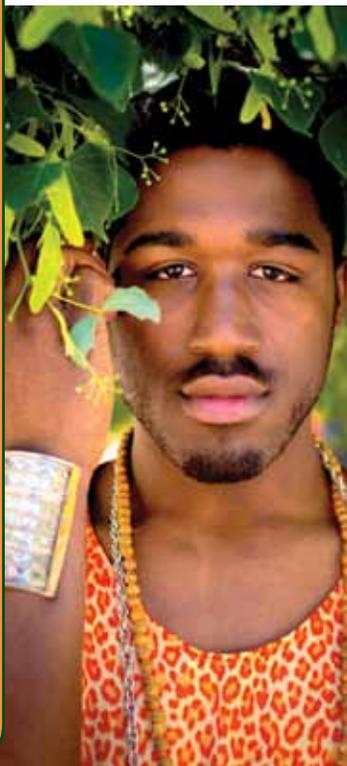
Searcy said singing is his release. "Some of us cope with life in expressing ourselves through business, politics, physical or mental exercise, and art to name a few [way]," he said. "Singing and musicianship are the tools that allow me to release the pressure of emotions within my soul. This is why my voice carries so much emotion and hearth. I am forever fused with singing."

By day, though, he is a professional makeup artist for NARS Cosmetics at Bloomingdale's, 900 N. Michigan Ave.

"I get to make men and women look and feel glamorous all day long which in turn makes me feel great," he said.

He has been a makeup artist for almost four years.

"It is a job that requires creativity, patience, self-control and [is] lots of fun," he said.



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PHOTO BY JOHN GRESS

VIEWPOINT

WINDY CITY
TIMES

VOL. 29, No. 38, June 18, 2014

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Community Marketing, Inc.

DEBRA
SHORE

We get two lives: My trip to the D.R.—and back

After an intense week-long trip to the Dominican Republic that the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) sponsored, I suppose the question plaguing me and the others is this: Why should we care (and what can we do) about violence against women and girls, about the mistreatment of transgender sex workers, about discrimination against members of the LGBT community in the Dominican Republic when we have similar problems and marginalized people right here at home?

Shouldn't we focus first on our own backyard—for what moral authority do we have if we do not seek justice for the marginalized in our own communities? Many in our group struggled with this, aware of the colossal chal-

lenges of poverty, crime, violence against women and girls, and poor education in our own city.

And yet, we as Jews have an imperative called *tikkun olam*. It means "to repair the world." How we choose to fulfill that obligation takes many forms. I consider my longstanding volunteer work to restore prairies and oak woods in the Cook County forest preserves one way of repairing the world. Yet note that the imperative directs us not only to our own backyards and cities, but to the world—to find common cause with people far beyond our political, cultural, and social borders.

Meeting with trans* sex workers in Santo Domingo and representatives from *Red de Voluntarios de Amigos Siempre Amigos* (REVASA), the LGBT-rights group there, forced us to check our privilege, to challenge our assumptions, and to discover what we share across long divides of language, religion and culture.

I know that our group already had an effect on some of the people we met. Arcy Rosmery, a young lesbian who was one of our interpreters, had never met Jewish people before and saw among us the diversity in our faith practice. When I spoke to the members of REVASA about the importance of having openly gay people serve in public office, I repeated the phrase that U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin so often uses: "If we're not at the table, we're on the menu." They laughed when I said that, but it hit home, and I suspect they will use that in their work in the future.

It's worth noting that AJWS, after a long and thoughtful evaluation of its work, decided to take a "rights-based" approach to global-justice work. Instead of supporting organizations that work in developing countries to dig a well here or build a school there, AJWS supports grassroots organizations that work to empower people to gain their own seat at the table, to fight for their rights through communal action. This work is harder and takes longer, and we don't know yet if it will be successful. But in the end, I suspect it's the only approach that has a chance of changing lives and cultures. "Yes we can," said then-candidate Barack Obama, the emphasis being on "we." "You have the power!" said Gov. Howard Dean. And we do.

After we returned to Chicago, as I was trying to manage my re-entry from the Dominican Republic, I happened to listen to a song by Mary Chapin Carpenter called "The Hard Way." In it, she sings:

*We've got two lives,
 One we're given*

And the other one we make.

"Yes!" I thought. "That's right." Isn't that precisely the question we are wrestling with upon our return from our trip? What are we to make of the lives we are given? How are we to fulfill our imperative to repair the world?

Debra Shore is a commissioner for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.

LETTERS

Come together

Dear editor:

Over the IML (International Mr. Leather) weekend, I had the chance to talk with and meet many of the contestants and some of the executive board of the event. During my conversations with them, I heard the refrain of "brotherhood, community, trust," and it struck me that these were the guiding principles for the leaders of the leather community. I have heard the same thing from the members of the drag community. These are encouraging words; however, one recurring word troubles me: insular.

As head of the fundraising committee for the Imperial Court of Chicago, I have made it a point to be as inclusive as possible by inviting people into the vision of the community I feel we as an organization should be striving for. I have met Mister Chicago Leather 2014, Miguel Torres, and local drag performer Tara Hymen. We have agreed to work toward a vision of the Chicago gay community that breaks out of the insular circles we have observed. As visible leaders in our various circles we see the need for the concept of brotherhood to reach beyond solely the leather community and the need for the concept of sisterhood to reach beyond the drag/performing community. We believe it is time for the Chicago LGBTQ community to once again embrace the strength that we can provide to each other as a whole.

As we approach Pride, we are taking a look back at the history of pride during a ceremony celebrating the life and work of Chuck Renslow. During the production of this show, we have realized that from the '60s to the 2000s—as we fought for our civil rights and equal treatment and recognition—we stood together. We respected varying expressions of our personal sexuality, defining what it meant to each of us to be gay men and women, with a wide range in between.

Currently, we each have experiences of our friends telling us, "I don't go to that bar, or to that place, because drag isn't welcome, be-

cause leather isn't welcome, or those guys have attitude." The three of us believe this is counterproductive and hypocritical. Over the next several months the three of us are planning events designed to bring our circles together for two common causes: homeless gay youth and preserving gay history. We believe it is the leaders' responsibility to provide mentorship to our youth and to teach them our history. All three of us can point to an individual in our past that gave us that guidance and our people's verbal history. That gave us safe space to decide for ourselves what it meant to be gay and what kind of person we wanted to be inside our community.

Now that we are in a position to give back as it was given to us, we feel that teaching our younger generation our history—as violent and dark as it can be—is vital and essential. We must all know, at least on the edge of our conscience, that we not far from a time when we were killed for walking down the street; arrested for holding another guy's hand in a bar; denied the right to own property together; fire-bombed in our churches; and refused access to a church to hold a funeral service. Our history is so much more than the holocaust of the '80s and '90s that was allowed to happen because "it was killing all the right people."

As we celebrate marriage equality in our state, let us remember that the struggle is not over for brothers and sisters in places like Texas, Kentucky or Florida. Join us in taking an evening to remember why we have pride, and why it is still necessary.

Neil James Douglas St. James
 Chicago

Women and AIDS

To the Editor:

Thirty years ago, there was a saying: "Women don't get AIDS. They just die from it."

It wasn't a joke: AIDS presents itself differently in women, including invasive cervical

cancer. Women were not included in clinical trials. Because they didn't show the same tendencies towards Kaposi's Sarcoma or lymphomas, they were ignored. They were denied Social Security disability because, according to the CDC's definition (which the Social Security Administration uses), they didn't have AIDS.

It wasn't until 1994—thanks to the aggressive efforts of women in ACT UP NY—that the CDC changed its AIDS case definition to include the cancers and opportunistic infections that affected women.

Now, in the fourth decade of the epidemic, the Social Security Administration is moving to eliminate those woman-specific manifestations while they are studied:

"We propose to remove the guidance on HIV infection manifestations specific to women in current section 14.00F4 for two reasons.

"First, the proposed HIV infection listings do not contain criteria that are gender-specific. We would evaluate the manifestations of HIV infection using the same criteria regardless of a person's gender.

"Second, while we recognize that manifestations of HIV infection may still affect a person's ability to function, we believe that the guidance in the following sections instruct our adjudicators to consider signs, symptoms, and effects of treatment when evaluating the severity of a person's HIV infection and resulting functional limitations."

It's unacceptable that, 20 years later, we have to fight this fight again. Join ACT UP and others across the country in standing up for women's health—again.

Victoria Noe
 Author: *Friend Grief and AIDS:
 Thirty Years of Burying Our Friends
 Member, ACT UP NY*

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo courtesy of Callie Lipkin/Vaudezilla

GETTING CHEEKY

Scottish Play Scott takes a look at the burlesque act Vaudezilla. See below.

THEATER

'Floor' show.
Page 16

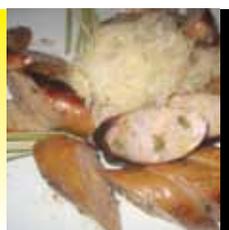
Photo from *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*
from Eclectic Full Contact Theatre



DISH

Sausage fest.
Page 26

Photo of sausage at Prost
by Andrew Davis



SHOW

Here's Jenifer!
Page 23

Press photo of Jenifer Lewis
by Camrin Williams



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Gotta have a gimmick

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Journalists are supposed to quote the real names of people they interview for articles. But when it comes to quoting burlesque performers who theatrically flaunt their bare flesh for all, they will strangely guard their legal names while hiding behind the cover (or as they might say the "mysterious allure") of a clever stage name.

So for this advance column on the 4th Annual Windy City Burlesque Festival, you'll be hearing from local striptease queen "Red Hot Annie." Annie is not only the "C.E.Oh!" of the Chicago burlesque troupe Vaudezilla, she's also an executive producer of the festival which takes over Stage 773 from Thursday, June 19, to Saturday, June 21.

The majority of festival performers are from the Chicago area, but there are also North American entries from Canada, California, New York and Georgia. European performers from as far away as France, Italy and Sweden are also in the mix.

"The great thing about modern burlesque is that it really is an art form that appeals to women," Annie said, adding that's not just leering men who go to burlesque striptease shows. "It's largely produced by women, the majority of the performers in the show are obviously women, and then really the majority of the audiences are women."

This made-by-women-for-women theatrical ethos has in many ways warded off criticisms that might have come previous waves of feminists who might have condemned burlesque as degrading or objectifying female sexuality. And as Annie points out, burlesque nowadays embraces a wide variety of body shapes and forms.

"What makes burlesque important as a modern art form is that it is super body-cognizant and female positive," Annie said. "You will see a wide range of types of women represented in the show, which is unusual when you're talking about taking off your clothes. That's one of the things that I think helps draw a female audience because a lot of women when they go to see a show, they can relate to the performers on stage. They can go, that is a performer who looks like me."

There's also a growing queer sensibility in terms of participants and approaches, too. Annie points out that Vaudezilla has gay and straight male performers, and that one of the headliners this year is male.

"Russell Bruner is from Portland, Oregon, and he will charm the pants off you as he's charmingly taking his pants off," Annie said, also excited about other headliners like Jeez Loueez, who heads an African-American-focused burlesque troupe in St. Louis and the award-winning burlesque performer (and jewelry designer) Iva Handfull from Seattle.

So whatever one's sexuality may be, Annie said all be welcome at the Windy City Burlesque Festival.

"Hopefully whoever is taking their clothing off on stage, in an ideal world they are doing it in a way that's creative, or builds a sense of anticipation or surprise," Annie said. "The audience's interaction is critical to burlesque. You really want that audience riled up and rowdy regardless of what their orientation is."

The 4th Annual Windy City Burlesque Festival runs from Thursday, June 19, through Saturday, June 21, at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. The Anything Goes! Burlesque Show is 8 p.m. June 19 and 10 p.m. June 20 and 21. The Classic Burlesque Show is 8 p.m.



Vaudezilla. Photo courtesy of Callie Lipkin/Vaudezilla

June 20. The Pop Culture Burlesque Show is 8 p.m. June 21 and the Naughty Burlesque Show is 11:59 p.m. Saturday, June 21. Tickets range between \$18 to \$25 for individual shows, while a \$125 all-festival pass is also available. For more information, call 773-327-5252 or visit www.windycityburlesque-fest.com or www.stage773.com.

What about 'Love'?

The ensembles of Windy City Performing Arts

(WCPA) performed a concert titled "It's About Time" last year for its contribution to Pride Month, focusing on the hoped-for passage of same-sex marriage in Illinois. Now that the marriage equality is a statewide reality, the Windy City Gay Chorus and the women's ensemble Aria are focused on "Just Love," the title for this year's Pride concert.

"There was kind of a double entendre by using the word 'Just.' The fact that this is 'Just' as in 'Right,' and that our love could be recognized," said WCPA artistic director Paul Caldwell about the chorus' first concert under the new state law. "This is a celebration of love and many different kinds of love."

Hence, there are songs about different stages of love, including one about being jilted. There's also the parental mother-and-son song "I Love You More," which is an excerpt from a larger choral work called Tyler's Suite that was commissioned following the suicide of spied-upon college student Tyler Clementi.

"From the time that he was a small child, whenever Tyler and his mother would part or say goodnight, one of them would say, 'I love you' and the other would say, 'I love you more,'" said Caldwell, adding that the Windy City Gay Chorus plans on performing the full Tyler's Suite in March of 2015. "It's a song written by Ann Hampton Callaway for Tyler's Suite reflecting on the fact that now that they have had a final parting and she loves him even more. It's a duet between a mezzo soloist and a men's chorus and it's ravishingly beautiful."

Windy City Performing Arts' choruses Aria and Windy City Gay Chorus perform "Just Love" at 5 and 8 p.m. Saturday, June 21, at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1650 W. Foster Ave. Tickets are \$20. Visit www.windycityings.org or www.brownpapertickets.com for more information.

Note: Scott C. Morgan is a member of the Windy City Gay Chorus, albeit on a leave of absence from the organization.



Monstrous Regiment. Photo by Kelsey Jorissen

THEATER REVIEW

Monstrous Regiment

Playwright: adapted by Chris Hainsworth
from the novel by Terry Pratchett
At: Lifeline Theater, 6912 N. Glenwood Ave.
Tickets: 773-761-4477;
www.lifelinetheatre.com; \$40
Runs through: July 20

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Move over, Dirty Dozen! At ease, Inglorious Basterds! The members of the undefeatable squad called by its foes the “monstrous regiment” are a team of literally monstrous misfits: Carborundum, the phlegmatic troll; Igor, the hunchbacked field surgeon; Wazzer, the sky-pilot mystic; Maladict, the recovering-addict vampire; Tonker and Lofty, the orphanage run-aways; and Ozzie, the former bartender. Their superiors in the Borogravian army are the weaselly Col. Strappi, the wise Sgt. Jackrum and the effete Lt. Blouse. All of them have personal reasons for enlisting that will only be revealed in the heat of battle.

Those familiar with the literary career of Terry Pratchett (who commands his own yearly international conference in the UK) know to expect sly social commentary in the guise of a mock-epic fantasy structured with the slapdash glee of a Dungeons and Dragons tournament. For those encountering the exhaustive Discworld series for the first time (like me), Chris Hainsworth’s adaptation deftly avoids becoming bogged down in arcane backstories from previous volumes to locate us firmly in the present, the Balkanesque conflicts providing a canvas for discussion of war’s eternal stupidity.

This is no windy allegorical polemic, however. Under Kevin Theis’ direction, this motley band of, uh, brothers emerges as a gang of live-action cartoons, with smart, slapstick antics always grounded in individual personalities. (Caffeine withdrawal represents a serious threat when coffee is a bloodjunkie’s methadone, for example, and the old socks-down-the-trousers approach to she-male drag gets funnier when an entire platoon... on the other hand, I’m not gonna spoil THAT surprise).

The wordplay likewise brims with the delight of an author who obviously loves his language, replete with puns and allusions inserted so unobtrusively as to register without stopping the flow of the action, as well as a dry humor (“I’ve starved before,” Sgt. Jackrum warns his troops,

“There’s no future in it”) refreshingly devoid of the juvenile snark too often infecting sword-and-sorcery satire.

The swift physical pace would mean nothing without verbal agility as well, but Lifeline’s dream-team ensemble never misses a step, despite costumes that include a prosthetic hump for Igor and full-body granite-camo armor for Carborundum (“You can’t get blood from a stone”) and special effects encompassing spectral visions, crossbow fire and big bangs just when you need them. The results are two and a half hours of giddy—and surprisingly wholesome—fun, even if, as the sergeant observes, “A regiment never met an entendre it couldn’t double.”

CRITICS’ PICKS

5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche, The New Colony and Chicago Commercial Collective at Chopin Theatre, extended through June 22. It may still betray its roots as an improvisation-built sketch, but this comedy about a group of egg-loving “widows” facing disaster in 1956 America still earns plenty of laughs—especially in the perfect environmental setting of the Chopin Theatre basement. SCM

Haymaker, The Neo-Futurists at the Neo-Futurarium, through June 28. When a playwright invites his friends to join in his pre-adolescent action-movie fantasy, the thrilling stunt work often has to accommodate multiple viewpoints—which is when the fun begins. MSB

Love Tapes, The Inconvenience at Angel Island, through July 5. The always-fascinating Mary Williamson and Chris Chmelik play a pair of shy lovers hiding behind their mini-cams in this sweet and sexy comedy—oh, come on, like you’ve never lied shamelessly in an effort to impress somebody. MSB

Mud Blue Sky, A Red Orchid, through June 29. Three female flight attendants and a teen-aged male pot dealer in a motel room, but it’s not an adolescent porno fantasy unless cougars are your thing. The situation is highly improbable but the acting and comedy are excellent. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Laughter on the 23rd Floor

Playwright: Neil Simon
At: Eclectic Full Contact Theatre
at the Athenaeum, 2936 N. Southport
Tickets: 1-773-935-6875;
www.eclectic-theatre.com; \$27
Runs through: June 29

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Laughter on the 23rd Floor is Neil Simon’s valentine to the prickly genius of comedian Sid Caesar and the gifted, competitive, neurotic mostly Jewish men—and one woman—who wrote his early 1950s pioneering TV variety show, the youngest being Simon himself. It’s a sentimental play about difficult people that Simon wrote for love. Any company staging it must appreciate that fact.

Eclectic Full Contact Theatre gets it right under director David Belew, balancing the cartoonish antics within the writers’ room—the play’s New York high-rise location—against the genuine human qualities of each individual writer: vanity, neediness, defensiveness, vulnerability, heart and the underlying seriousness of purpose with which they approach the task of being funny.

The events themselves are fictionalized (those who were there say none of it happened and all of it is true) so Sid Caesar becomes Max Prince (Michael Woods), Neil Simon becomes Lucas Brickman (Parker Guidry), Mel Brooks becomes Ira Stone (Charlie Wein) and so on. It’s not about what happens in any case, because

this work has less plot than anything else Simon has written. Curiously, it also is far less joke-driven than much of Simon’s work, or at least his earlier work. There are many, many funny lines to be sure, but this play is character-driven.

The generally youthful Eclectic cast features Woods as Prince/Caesar. Except for being tall, he bears no resemblance to the bearish Caesar, but not to worry: He has the manic (literally) persona of the hard-drinking, pill-popping, driven comedian down cold. He can stare vacantly into space at one moment—off in some other reality—and whirl on a dime to direct pin-point laser focus on one of his writers. The thing about Max (and Caesar) is that he demands no less of himself than of his writers and usually more.

Kirk Osgood as Milt Fields, Andrew Pond in the pivotal role of head writer Val, Alex Levin as Brian, Scott Edward Mills as Kenny, Lisa Savegnago as Carol and Jessica Lauren Fisher as Max’s secretary and go-fer complete the cast. A true ensemble piece, each actor has his/her moments of focus in which Simon lets us glimpse behind the professional façade in an atmosphere of controlled chaos verging on combat at times. Simon is skillful, too, in deepening the play by incorporating life beyond the 23rd floor circa 1954: McCarthyism, the execution of the Rosenbergs and battles with craven network executives over America’s taste in comedy.

Pat Iven’s writers’ room set is bare-bones but functional. The telephone is too new and the typewriter (vanishing mysteriously in Act II) is too old. But the show isn’t about the phone or typewriter or set. This valentine is funny and wistful.



Gwendolyn Whiteside in *Grounded*. Photo by Johnny Knight

THEATER REVIEW

Grounded

Playwright: George Brandt
At: American Blues at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.
Tickets: 773-404-7336;
www.americanbluestheater.com; \$19-\$49
Runs through: July 13

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

For most of the last century, wars were fought chiefly by unmarried men and women who enlisted for two to four years, during which their lives were almost totally immersed in the military environment, where those assigned to combat duty devoted their waking hours to killing when ordered to do so (while avoiding being, themselves, killed). For the last two wars, though, service personnel have been reservists, called from their civilian lifestyles to the front lines as needed for a few months at a time.

Our protagonist begins as a career combat pilot in the U.S. Air Force—a swaggering Top Gun enamored of the Wild Blue Yonder and the power that comes of dropping bombs on unseen bad guys. Marriage and parenthood interrupt temporarily, but soon our ace is back on the job. Ah, but technology now dictates that tasks once accomplished from a cockpit in the sky be executed from a windowless trailer by computer techs who stalk America’s enemies and, with the touch of a button, incinerate them via remote control drone missile. Destroying evil in the “chair-force” (as this video-game combat is scornfully dubbed by its practitioners) is not without its adrenal attractions, but the luxury of dispensing death from a safe distance creates different hazards.

These unforeseen consequences are addressed by George Brandt, who surveys the terrain of this new battlefield with a candor unbiased by Hollywood clichés (e.g., mummy or daddy cheerfully skyping with loved ones in the USA, as if overseas deployments were weekend business trips). For one, the base of operations for stealth warfare is Nevada—a desert landscape not unlike that of Afghanistan, especially when your work environment precludes ever seeing daylight. For another, the surveillance cameras scrolling the monochrome satellite images mandate that you watch your faceless targets die—often slowly. When air strikes are drive-bys conducted in 12-hour shifts only an hour away from the living room housing your own spouse and baby daughter, security cameras in malls suddenly become menacing.

None of the concerns that Brandt invokes would matter if Gwendolyn Whiteside—did I mention that our jet jockey is a woman?—and director Lisa Portes had been content to wring hands and hankies for audiences looking only for a good cry. Both, however, go above and beyond to ascertain that our heroine’s long fall to the ground originates from a height sufficiently tragic to earn, first, our concentration, then our sympathy and ultimately, our contemplation of the grim psychological price exacted by wars upon those who fight them.

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THEATER REVIEW

Avenue Q

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 At: Mercury Theater, 3745 N. Southport Ave.
 Tickets: 773-325-1700 or
www.handbagproductions.org; \$25-\$65
 Runs through: Oct. 26

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Avenue Q shocked the theater world by besting *Wicked* in the categories of Best Book, Best Score and Best Musical at the 2004 Tony Awards. Not long after that, the critically acclaimed puppet show spoofing *Sesame Street* angered U.S. Broadway promoters by announcing that Avenue Q would forgo a national tour in favor of an exclusive Las Vegas production.

Ultimately, Avenue Q in Sin City closed much earlier than expected, and the musical finally played Chicago in 2008 and 2010 for brief touring stops. By then, Broadway musical hits like *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* all proved that the Windy City could more than handle a successful long run, and that Avenue Q's favoring of Las Vegas over Chicago was ultimately a bad bet.

To get a sense of what a Chicago sensation Avenue Q might have been, head over to the Mercury Theater for its superlative local staging helmed by L. Walter Stearns. Avenue Q started life off-Broadway in 2003 (and has since returned there in 2009), and the show fits perfectly in an intimate space like the Mercury.

Stearns' take on Avenue Q smartly honors the template of the original production, but differs in some key areas. The cast is bigger, with not so much puppeteer doubling going on. And like the London production, the role of former child



Avenue Q. Photo by Brett Beiner

star Gary Coleman is played by an African-American man (an amusing Donterrio Johnson) instead of a woman.

Russ Walko's puppet designs are appropriately in the same vein of the *Sesame Street* types they're spoofing, but in different colors and hues. The actors manipulating the puppets may not have the same life-like panache that the original production had with former Jim Hen-

SPOTLIGHT



Playwright Jon A. Gleason imagines what might happen if the late drag camp superstar Divine were alive today and taking part in a wide-ranging dinner interview in his comedy *My Dinner with Divine*. Find out what's on the menu when The Chicago Mammals' production of *My Dinner with Divine* plays at Zoo Studios, Suite 205 at 4001 N. Ravenswood Ave., at 10:30 p.m. Saturday, June 21, 28, July 12, 19 and Aug. 2. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Visit www.brownpapertickets.com or www.chicagomammals.com or call 800-838-3006. Advertising art for The Mammals' *My Dinner with Divine*

son puppeteers in the cast, but they still do a very good job.

More importantly, you do get to feel for the real-life dilemmas faced by these twenty and thirty-something characters made out of faux fur and felt thanks to strong and comic performances by the likes of Jackson Evans (Princeton), Leah Morrow (Kate Monster), Adam Fane (Rod, the closeted gay Republican), Stephanie Herman (Lucy), Daniel Smeriglio (Nicky) and Thom Van Ermen (Trekki Monster).

The humans are also great, particularly the

spitfire Christine Bunuan as Christmas Eve, partnered to the lovable oversize schlub of Sean Patrick Fawcett as Brian.

So if you've previously missed Avenue Q during its previous two touring stops or the local NightBlue Theater staging at Stage 773, rush now to see it at the Mercury. The real-life lessons in love and relationships presented *Sesame Street*-style (complete with profanity and full puppet nudity) is not only all-out hilarious, but extremely poignant and touching as well.

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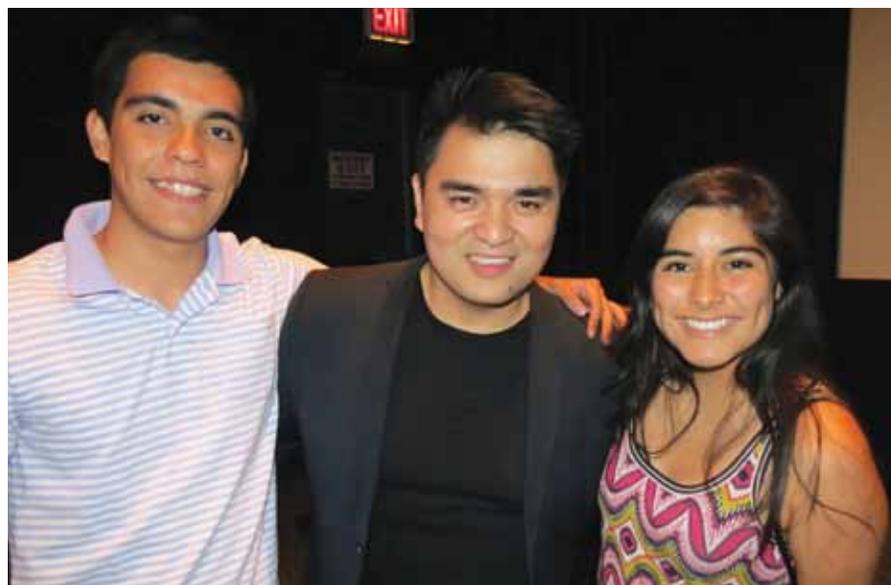
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Jose Antonio Vargas (center) with fans on June 13. Photo by Jerry Nunn

Jose Antonio Vargas visits Siskel Center

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas has come out twice—as a gay male and as an undocumented immigrant from the Philippines.

On June 13-14, he attended screenings of his new documentary *Documented* at the Gene Siskel Film Center.

The story follows Vargas' relationship with his mother, who has remained in the Philippines, and the life he's made in the United States. He lobbied for Obama's DREAM Act, which allows young immigrants to apply for citizenship, but did not meet the age requirement himself. His quest in becoming legal continues to this day.

He handled questions about citizenship during a question and answer portion to the evening directly after the screenings.

He stated, "Papers alone are not going to solve this problem. Culture is politics. Before we can change politics I think we need to change the culture. LGBT rights in the past 10 years have taught us that. Can you imagine same-sex marriage without Ellen DeGeneres on the cover of Time Magazine?"

Vargas was also on a past cover and insisted on bringing 30 more immigrants in for the photo shoot.

He went on to say that the DREAM Act is the most LGBT-inclusive movement that this country has seen.

Vargas eventually had to end the sometimes emotional questions from the audience then met many afterwards. He added that he's a fan of Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel, and that he felt honored to have his movie screened in the theater.

Documented continues to play at the Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., through June 19. Look for showtimes and ticket information at www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

Photo and text by Jerry Nunn

NUNN ON ONE: TV

A 'Unique' interview with Alex Newell

BY JERRY NUNN

Alex Newell entered the limelight during auditions for The Glee Project on the Oxygen Network. The show surrounded a group of hopefuls competing to replace cast members on the successful musical television show Glee. Newell was one of several winners earning a guest shot for two episodes.

To his surprise, his character, Wade Adams—also known as Unique—garnered such popularity that he was asked to return for the fourth season of the show as a recurring member. The fifth season, he was promoted to the main cast.

Last October, Newell was signed to both Atlantic Records and Deep Well Records, and will soon be releasing an album produced by Adam Anders. His current single is "Nobody to Love" by British dance duo Sigma.

Nunn called up Newell to chat a bit before his arrival at Pridefest this weekend.

Windy City Times: Hey, Alex. We spoke briefly in the past during your Glee Project auditions. I'm so very excited talking to you today.

Alex Newell: Yay!

WCT: Growing up in Massachusetts, were you always involved in musicals and theater?

AN: I loved music since I was about 2 years old and started musical theater when I was 13.

WCT: I read your father passed away and your mother raised you. Was she always supportive of you being gay?

AN: Always—number one!

WCT: What was high school like for you in real life? Was it hard being openly gay?

AN: I don't think it was ever hard or a big deal. I feel like I had a mature handling of it all.

WCT: I heard you were accepted into Berklee [College of Music].

AN: I was. I got into Berklee my senior year in December and I was on my way there when Ryan Murphy told my manager I would be used a lot in the next season of Glee and I would have to move to LA.

WCT: It seems like such an opportunity.

AN: Instead of learning everything, I could experience it all.

WCT: How was it being Unique on Glee?

AN: It was fun and still fun. It is a fun character to play. There are not a lot of characters that you can wear crazy outfits and do wild things just like that. Who else can say that a 20-year-old boy gets to play a gay person on national television? It is pretty fun to say random things at times in the role.

WCT: What did you think of the "catfish" finale on season four, when you texted secretly to one of the characters?

AN: They didn't tell us who would be the catfish but we all knew who it was going to be. It was quite obvious and the easiest choice to make it that way.

I love watching Catfish on MTV. One of my friends was on Catfish and was also on The Glee Project with me: Marissa von Bleicken. I haven't watched it yet but I know she was on it.

WCT: Are you returning for the finale of Glee?

AN: None of us know anything yet.

WCT: The producers like to keep people in



Alex Newell. Photo by Ricky Middlesworth

the dark.

AN: They do. It is easier that way.

WCT: Becca Tobin [who plays Kitty on Glee] said great things about you when interviewed her in the past.

AN: She did? Yay! I love her. She's so sweet.

WCT: Let's talk about new music. You were

signed to Atlantic Records?

AN: Yes, I was signed in December when they thought I was locked into Columbia Records who has a deal with Glee. I wasn't signed there because I was still just a guest on the show. Everyone that is a regular on the show has to sign a record deal with Columbia, Sony, and all of that jazz. Atlantic signed before I got in that contract and the rest is history.

WCT: What made you want to cover "Nobody to Love?"

AN: I didn't really know I was covering it. They just said they wanted me to sing it. They gave it to me when I was in the studio waiting to record another song. I spent like 30 minutes on it just singing the two lines until we found the perfect one.

I forgot about the song completely but then I heard it when one of the record executives played it for me. This was literally three weeks before it came out.

WCT: It is your take on it then.

AN: In a way, yes.

WCT: Speaking of someone to love, you have a boyfriend, correct?

AN: No.

WCT: Single and heading to a big gay street festival sounds fun. [Alex laughs.] What will this album sound like?

AN: It will be interesting to figure out what it's going to be. We are still singing songs and figuring out what we want to do. I think it will be predominantly dance with something poppy with R&B to it at the same time.

WCT: Are you touring with it after Pridefest?

AN: I don't know yet.

WCT: Are you allowed to sing Glee songs at the festival?

AN: I haven't even sat down to think about what I am going to sing yet. There will be some Glee songs in there since they have done 600 of them so regardless there will be some Glee songs that I sing.

Turn to page 30

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MOVIES

'Jersey Boys' discuss fifth gay 'Season,' aging in movies

BY JERRY NUNN

Over the years, Jersey Boys—the musical about the lives of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons—has won multiple Tony Awards and thrilled audiences around the world.

The story of four men from the wrong side of the tracks in New Jersey who formed the 1960s rock group is now moving to a new medium: film. The legendary Clint Eastwood directs the flick, with John Lloyd Young playing Frankie Valli, Erich Bergen playing Bob Gaudio and Michael Lomenda playing Nick Massi.

Windy City met the Jersey Boys at the Waldorf Astoria to hear more about this musical movie.

Windy City Times: Hey, Boys. Where is everyone from?

Michael Lomenda: I was born and raised in small town Alberta, Canada, population 5,000. I lived in Toronto for the last 15 years. Just recently, I moved to LA.

Erich Bergen: I was born and raised in New York City just blocks away from Times Square. I left when I was 20 years old to tour Jersey Boys when I dropped out of college. I moved to Vegas to do the show for two years then moved to LA and have been there since 2010. I am moving back to New York in 15 days.

John Lloyd Young: Eventually, when you make the big bucks then you can be bicoastal and have a place in LA and New York.

EB: Even if I was Richie Rich it would give me

stress to have multiple properties!

JLY: I was born in Sacramento and dotted the country after that. I was in a military family. I went to school at Brown in Rhode Island then moved to New York. I spent a decade of my career there and now live in Los Angeles.

WCT: Everyone was in the live version before the movie?

EB: Yes, except for Vincent Piazza, who we left on the plane.

WCT: Where is Vincent?

EB: He's filming Boardwalk Empire. He's much more famous than us and has a job! [All laugh.]

JLY: Michael was the original Toronto company, I was in the Broadway cast, Erich is the second guy to ever play Bob Gaudio.

EB: I did the first national then launched the Vegas company.

WCT: Were you in Chicago?

EB: No; they used San Francisco as the hub where all the tours started. The San Francisco cast left and became the Chicago company. All of them started in San Fran including the Vegas cast.

JLY: When we do our press day in San Francisco they are going to love these guys so much and resent me!

ML: Jerry, we have met before because you interviewed our cast on the Chicago tour.

WCT: I thought you looked familiar.

EB: What did you think of him then?

WCT: It was fun hanging out with the cast in the past. What did you all think of the



Jersey Boys movie. Photo by Keith Bernstein

differences in the movie version, as opposed to the stage?

EB: We love the movie but I don't know if we will ever be able to see it objectively. This show is in our blood but sometimes we don't know if something works or not. Every time I watch it, I hear music and my body goes for a quick change!

JLY: I am starting to get used to it. Last night we watched it here in Chicago and it felt like this is the definitive way now. The musical version is really slickly told and connects to the audience in a very immediate way. You really get into the characters in the film version more than onstage because you move so much onstage.

ML: The more I see it with an audience I realize it is the same story and the electricity is still there. It is nice to sit in the audience and see them enjoy it the same way as the stage production.

JLY: In the musical, the music was the reason for the story and in the movie the story is reason for the music. The Four Seasons wanted a showcase for their music and the story made it possible to put it onstage as jukebox show that worked. The music is incidental in this movie. It could be a story about working class guys but there wouldn't be any great songs.

WCT: It didn't seem like a musical until the credits in the movie version. I wanted Christopher Walken to dance more!

EB: You have to watch that Fatboy Slim video again.

JLY: When we were contemplating that last number with Clint Eastwood we had conversations about that. You can't ignore that this was a Broadway musical for nine years all over the world. It was an international hit.

We were enthusiastic about the last song because it brings back all of the characters that you get to know throughout the film. It is an acknowledgement that we are actors playing those characters. That configuration could never be realistic and is not realistic in the stage version either. Nick is deceased and comes back for a Bollywood ending!

The audience is ecstatic because it is a fantasy and he is not alive. The fact that the movie let's go of the hyper realism that Clint Eastwood has created and for the first time in his career he allows it to go into fantasy.

WCT: A friend of mine worked with Clint Eastwood and said he would ask the actors, "How did that feel?" and then move on. Was that what it was like?

ML: It is surreal to have Mr. Eastwood step out from behind the camera to ask if we can move on.

EB: We answered shakily!

ML: If the boss was happy, then we were happy.

JLY: He just talked about that with us in New York and said when he was an actor he was so frustrated when past directors would talk im-

mediately about what they wanted to without asking him as an actor.

ML: He resented that and just wanted to work together with the director. He wanted everyone to bring things to the table.

JLY: I think that's why people say they love working with Clint Eastwood. How lucky are we that we get to be amongst those actors?

WCT: Let's talk about the gay Fifth Season, Bob Crewe.

EB: I was just in Nashville hanging out with Desmond Child, who has written some of the greatest songs in the past 30 years. Bob Crewe was his mentor. He told me stories about Bob and how is an unsung hero in popular music. The man wrote the lyrics to "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." There are people who have gotten recognition for doing far less.

Bob was a gay man and very flamboyant, but there is a danger in a role that is written that way. It can be over-the-top or go for the laughs.

I am glad that Mike Doyle's performance in this film is very truthful. He makes sure that what comes across is how talented he was and what he created in the studio with voice doubling. Bob wrote a lot of those songs with Bob Gaudio. I'm so glad he's getting the recognition that he deserves.

JLY: I always felt bad he got second thrift but when you produce the movie of your life then you will be the protagonist too. Frankie and Bob were the executive producers of this so they are front and center obviously.

I got to know the real Bob Crewe when we were opening. He was gay but never admitted it, really. He was a gentleman homosexual. He dallied because he was an aristocrat.

EB: There were always women around.

JLY: He never really admitted he was a homosexual. It made him uncomfortable to admit it. He was bisexual even all those years later when we were opening.

Even in the shooting script that we did for Clint there was no acknowledgement to him as the lyricist of "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." In the scene where he pitches the song to me I told Clint that I wanted to work in that Bob Crewe wrote those lyrics. I think that is so important for the record. Clint allowed me to work it into the scene where we talk about the music.

EB: It is in the diner scene where I give him the sheet music to it.

JLY: I wanted to give him a little bit of credit where credit is due. There is a little bit of a risk that he is just the silly homosexual producer. We need to give him more gravity than that because he had a lot more to do with their success.

EB: For the streamlining of the story you get why it is focused on the four guys but that is not an attempt to reinvent history. He cer-

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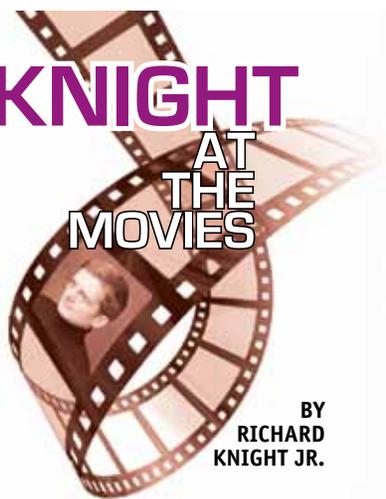
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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT JR.

Ten years of KATM; notes

One of the indelible pleasures of having spent 10 years writing movie reviews for Windy City Times is putting together a year-end "Best of" list, something that all film critics look forward to. I have had the additional pleasure of knowing that my list of recommendations really does serve a purpose, as it's the rare list focused solely on LGBT fare (or those movies that included important queer characters or themes). But what other kind of list would a queer-film reviewer issue?

It's been a puzzle to me over this past decade why so few of the openly gay movie critics focus so much on mainstream movies at the expense of the queer ones. It's so hard to get a gay movie made (compared to their straight counterparts) that it seems not just a kindness but a responsibility for out film writers to emphasize the LGBT films in their lists—or at least make note of them in some manner. But enough of the rant: Are you looking for a cinematic way to celebrate Pride? The movies that made the top of my annual queer movie Top

Ten since 2004—with a few ideas about what's going to make the list for 2014 as well—are a great place to start. Gay or straight, no matter how you label them, these are some kick-ass movies!

2004—**A Home at the End of the World** and **Tarnation** (a tie)—Colin Farrell's multifaceted work in this little seen bisexual relationship film also contains assured, delicately shaded performances from Robin Wright, Sissy Spacek and (then) newcomers Dallas Roberts and Erik Smith. *Tarnation*, in which a gay man fights not just his own battle with mental illness but his mother's as well, was my other 2004 favorite. Jonathan Caouette's searing documentary would be too painful without its hopeful ending while his creative editing of photos, videotapes and archival material on his boyfriend's iMac movie software (for a little more than \$200) was justly touted.

2005—**Capote**—If Philip Seymour Hoffman's performance as the diminutive gay Southern writer immersed in the research and writing of *In Cold Blood* isn't revelation enough, add a great script by first-timer Dan Futterman; the first feature from Bennett Miller; and a quiet, elegiac supporting performance by Catherine Keener as Capote's friend and research assistant (and reported lesbian), Harper Lee. *Brokeback Mountain* (which was second on my list) is no less a masterpiece.

2006—**Shortbus**—John Cameron Mitchell lived up to his enormously creative debut, *Hedwig & the Angry Inch*, with his passionate, thrilling and—due to its hardcore content—controversial sophomore effort. An Altmanesque focus on a group of sexually frustrated New Yorkers, Mitchell's deeply emotional movie is also gloriously and unapologetically fun about sex.

2007—**Before I Forget**—Director Jacques Nolot's low-budget French film also stars him as Pierre, a 58-year-old ex-hustler entering the autumn of his life with no regrets and not a trace of sentimentality. The movie beautifully illuminates the "gay lifestyle" and issues spe-



Weekend.

cific to our community as Pierre goes about his everyday life in Paris. The film is tough, flinty, emotionally honest and, I think, a masterpiece.

2008—**Milk**—Sean Penn's acting acrobatics in the title role are a wonder in Van Sant's unadorned masterpiece, which also features rich supporting performances by James Franco, Emile Hirsch and Diego Luna. The movie also has a great first-time feature script by gay writer (and Oscar winner) Dustin Lance Black.

2009—**A Single Man**—Based on iconic queer writer Christopher Isherwood's 1964 novel, Colin Firth, Julianne Moore, Matthew Goode and Nicholas Hoult look and act sensationally in this stylish and moving retro drama about a college professor coping with the death of his lover. Clothing designer-turned-film director Tom Ford co-wrote, directed, produced and financed this film.

2010—**The Kids Are All Right**—Out director Lisa Cholodenko spent years co-writing the script (with Stuart Blumberg) of her original story of two moms (Annette Bening and Julianne Moore) whose relationship is hitting a really rough patch just when their two teenage children decide they want to meet their biological dad (a free-spirited Mark Ruffalo) who brings their relationship to a crisis point. The script is a master class in screenwriting and the performances are wonderfully complex—funny and heartbreaking at once.

2011—**Weekend**—Gay writer-director Andrew Haigh's relationship drama is a stunningly simple, nearly perfect example of a romance movie whose burgeoning couple just happens to be gay. It was tagged "a gay *Before Sunrise*," but Russell (Tom Cullen) and hookup Glen (Chris New) are anything but tragic beauties in a world that certainly isn't filled with dappled sunsets and rosy dawns. They're just two regular Joes whose lives unexpectedly intersect and who find themselves hopelessly in love.

2012—**How to Survive a Plague**—New York Times journalist-turned-documentarian David France examines the impact that the group ACT UP—in its fight to make strides in curing AIDS—had on the scientific, political and, inevitably, cultural scenes in this searing, enthralling film. The movie is a lot more than a dry history lesson of the group of militant queer activists who refused to remain silent while their brethren lay dying all around them. It's beautifully inspiring and a great cautionary tale.

2013—**Valentine Road**—Marta Cunningham's documentary about the murder of 15-year-old Lawrence King, a gay teen with trans tendencies, by his classmate is explored in this eye-opening film that played festivals and is currently showing on HBO. It's unforgettable.

2014—The year isn't quite half over as I write this but already **Reaching for the Moon** and **Pit Stop** are contenders, **The Normal Heart** and **The Case Against 8** are definites, and there are many titles slated for release in the second half of the year that look very

promising. I eagerly await the next crop of queer movies!

In celebration of my decade as film critic for Windy City Times, on Thursday, June 19, I'll be reading and signing copies of my new film review collection **The Best of Knight at the Movies, 2004-2014** at 7pm at Women & Children First book store (5233 N. Clark).

I will be joined by Windy City Times publisher/editor Tracy Baim, who will read/sign copies of her latest books, **Vernita Gray: From Woodstock to the White House**, about the long-time LGBT activist who recently passed away (co-written with author Owen Keehnen, who will also be there), and **The Fight for Marriage Equality in Illinois**, which takes an in-depth look at the struggle for marriage rights on our home turf (co-written by Kate Sosin). <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/tracy-baim-owen-keehnen-and-richard-knight-jr>

Film notes:

—There are still two more days to see **Documented**, the film from gay journalist, immigration activist and filmmaker Jose Antonio Vargas that chronicles Vargas' story. The film has been playing at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., and continues through June 19. http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org/documented_june

—**The Case Against 8** tracks the legal challenge (and eventual overturn) of California's anti-gay marriage Proposition 8 amendment, and is from out filmmakers Ben Cotner and Ryan White. (See my interview with Cotner and two of the film's subjects, Kris Pery and Sandy Stier, in this issue.) The movie continues at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport Ave., through June 19 and then debuts on HBO next Monday, June 23. <http://www.musicboxtheatre.com/features/case-against-8>

—Since 2011 Windy City Times has been following the steady progress locally based filmmaker Malachi Leopold has been making on his documentary **Alex & Ali** (formerly known as *I Am the Water*). Leopold's film tells the decade-long love story of his uncle Alex, a Peace Corps volunteer, and Ali, an Iranian whom Alex fell in love with during his stay there during 1967-1977.

The love affair between the two men was interrupted when Alex was forced to leave Iran in the wake of the Islamic Revolution. Thirty-five years later, after keeping the relationship alive through letters and phone calls, Leopold was there to capture the moment when the two men reunited in Istanbul. In honor of Pride Month and the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Heartland Alliance International and Left Brain/Right Brain Productions will present a benefit screening of **Alex & Ali** on Tuesday, June 24, at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark St., at 7 p.m. Leopold, Marya Abdul Rahman and Scott Portman will be present for a panel discussion following the screening. <http://action.heartlandalliance.org/site/Calendar?id=105201&view=Detail>

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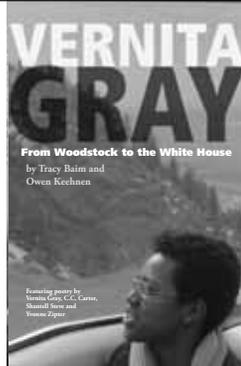
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The Fight for Marriage Equality in the Land of Lincoln by Kate Sosin and Tracy Baim

Windy City Times reporter Kate Sosin and publisher Tracy Baim take an in-depth look at the push for marriage rights in Illinois. The complicated route to equality required money, political clout and a lot of activism to push it over the finish line. Sosin, now a reporter in Boston, will not be at the signing.

Vernita Gray: From Woodstock to the White House by Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen

Vernita Gray lived through some of the country's most riveting civil-rights dramas, as an African American girl from the South Side of Chicago. She came out as a lesbian soon after attending the 1969 Woodstock concert, where she heard about the uprising at the Stonewall gay bar in New York City. Her fight for lesbian equality, and the rights of the entire LGBTQ community, would be her passion for the remaining decades of her life. She was also a poet and a writer, a key player in Chicago's gay liberation movement, and a lesbian separatist during the 1970s. She lost her long battle with cancer just months after becoming one-half of the first same-sex couple to legally marry in Illinois. Hear a bit about her life from the authors of this new book.



The Best of Knight at the Movies by Richard Knight, Jr.

Windy City Times is marking the 10th anniversary of Richard Knight, Jr. as film critic for the paper with the publication of *The Best of Knight at the Movies*, a collection of Knight's movie reviews from 2004-2014. Written from Knight's queer perspective, the book includes more than 150 film reviews and essays. Gay icon Bruce Vilanch has said about the collection, "If Fred Phelps were alive he'd picket this book!" The book will be released in mid-June, just over a decade after Knight joined the paper, and Knight will be at the store to read from and sign copies of his book.



Jenifer Lewis talks versatility, HIV/AIDS and bipolar disorder

BY ANDREW DAVIS

"Am I a great entertainer? Yes I am."

These, ladies and gentlemen, are words longtime entertainer Jenifer Lewis said during a recent interview with Windy City Times—and the sentence embodies who she is: confident, independent, sometimes brash and, yes, talented.

Lewis has appeared in more than 300 film and television projects, ranging from the upcoming movie *Think Like a Man Too* to TV's *Meet the Browns* to the movie *Castaway* (playing Tom Hanks' boss). Some in the LGBT community may also recognize her from the Web series *Jenifer Lewis and Shangela*, teaming with former RuPaul's Drag Race contestant Shangela Laquifa Wadley.

Now, Lewis is bringing her force to Chicago. On Thursday, June 26, the actor/entertainer/motivational speaker will be at The Baton Show Lounge for "Live with Jenifer Lewis!," a Step Up. Get Tested-sponsored event that will have Lewis doing everything from singing to talking about her own bipolar disorder and the impact HIV has had on the community.

As usual, she was her entertaining, candid self during a recent phone interview.

Windy City Times: You're an actor, singer, motivational speaker—and probably a professional chef...

Jenifer Lewis: [Laughs] That's the one thing I don't do. Forget that shit. I'm the baby of seven, and I never cook. Maybe when I'm in love, I cook.

WCT: What do you attribute that to—the fact that you have your hands in so many different pots?

JL: Well, here's the thing, Andrew: I was given a gift. The versatility was there when I was very young; I'd just enter a room and take it over.

I've only had one job outside of show business, and I believe it was my freshman year in college: I got a job at McDonald's toasting the buns. I got fired one week because I burned the buns. I was standing around talking with someone about how I was going to be a star—so the bitches burned. That told me right there to never get a regular job.

The other reason [for the longtime versatility] is that I love it. I studied the craft. I got my B.A. and worked extremely hard to enjoy my success. Great wisdom comes with age, darling.

WCT: You're coming to Chicago, and coming to the Baton...

JL: Here's the thing: They called me. If I can go anywhere, and I have the time, I give of myself. When you've had your day in the sun—and you now are the sun—you just let your light shine and give it all back.

I've always been an advocate for HIV/AIDS. We did one of the first fundraisers back in New York in the '80s; it was called "Divas for Dollars." All the famous cabaret divas got in a limousine, and we'd go from gay club to gay club. I remember my song was [singing], "You make me feel/Mighty real." That first night we raised \$3,000.



Jenifer Lewis. Photo by David Rice

I have personally lost about 175 guys to the disease, and a couple girls. There was a silent war; all we knew was that our friends were dying. The government ignored it so we took it upon ourselves to do something for the cause.

But, getting back, they called me and were very respectful. By the way, Chicago is my favorite city. I was there when I filmed [the TV series] *The Playboy Club*, and I just fell in love with the city. But it's the love of it that [compels] me to go everywhere.

I've been to drag bars, all the Ivy League universities, and I've sung for kings and queens—mostly queens, if you know what I mean. [Interviewer laughs.]

WCT: Let me ask you this: Have you seen a disparity between how whites and non-whites have reacted to AIDS?

JL: I've seen many organizations, and the Black guys were not getting the treatment. But when I found out that shit was going on, I raised my voice. And also, unfortunately, Blacks don't really get the education—and I

think the churches had a big influence in the wrong fucking direction. The churches didn't embrace, metaphorically speaking, the choir director, for example. Who the fuck do you think these kids are? Where do they go?

These are the people I go and talk to—like the kid who has cigarette burns and who are kicked out of their houses just for being gay. And now, what demographic has the highest proportion of AIDS? Black women. It's the desperation that comes with poverty: "I don't care if he got out of jail—that's my man." You can get a swab of saliva, bitch, and save your life. But I do approach this with compassion.

We are the earth mothers and all that shit, but we're fragile, too. I don't think that ignorance is bliss. Educate yourself. I do not suffer fools. We've got to go deep inside. It starts inside.

If I didn't take the time to educate myself about bipolar disorder, I wouldn't have done how dangerous it was. We have to be educated, and the first step is to admit it. I have a friend who owns a salon who shows health videos instead of *The Young and the Restless*.

WCT: You mentioned bipolar disorder. But with some mental disorders, it would seem hard to know.

JL: Yeah, well I didn't know for 33 years. My family would say, "Oh, Jenny's just crazy." Well, yeah—but I also had a chemical imbalance in my brain. Here's the only way you can find out: Who's the cousin who keeps jumping up and down on the picnic table? That's the bipolar motherfucker. Who is the auntie who rages all the time? That's the bipolar motherfucker. You have an uncle up in the attic or a friend who stays in the basement? That's the depression. We have to pay attention to one another, and have the strength and courage to say, "Let's get some help."

Also, a lot of people try to use mental illness has an excuse. I said to my girlfriend, "This is

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Age
32
Relationship Status
Ridiculously single
Your Gay Idol?
Troy Longest (the first out gay person I ever met)
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"I've loved to sing since I was a child and studied musical theatre in college, but often lack confidence when asked to 'be myself' and sing (i.e. karaoke)."



Age
33
Relationship Status
In a relationship
Your Gay Idol?
"My older brother, who was trans and queer in the '90s when I was a teenager and coming out myself. He passed away when I was 21."
Life's soundtrack?
"Happy," by Martin Sexton
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"Because music and singing is my greatest love and passion."



Age
23
Relationship Status
In a relationship
Your Gay Idol?
My lifelong friend, "Grandpa" Will
Life's soundtrack?
"No Boundaries," by Kris Allen
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"I'm more than just someone who loves to sing; I can also entertain with my friendly and socially confident personality."



Age
36
Relationship Status
Single
Your Gay Idol?
Divine
Life's soundtrack?
"I Believe I Can Fly," the Yolanda Adams version
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"Because I have all the charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent that a bitch needs to make it in this world."



Age
Unicorn
Relationship Status
"Currently ethically Non-Monogamous with someone else's toothbrush in my bathroom."
Your Gay Idol?
Laura Jane Grace
Life's soundtrack?
"Reasons to Not Be an Idiot," by Frank Turner
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"There isn't a lot of representation for gender non-conforming pansexual people like me."



Age
21
Relationship Status
In a relationship
Your Gay Idol?
Melissa Etheridge
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"If I should happen to win, I'd use my music to help encourage other young people to follow their dreams."



Age
25
Relationship Status
Single but ready for the right guy.
Your Gay Idol?
Lady GaGa
Life's soundtrack?
"We Can't Stop," by Miley Cyrus
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"I believe I have the ability to take the title to another level and turn myself into a well-known Chicago name."



Age
30
Relationship Status
Single
Your Gay Idol?
Frank Ocean
Life's soundtrack?
"Like You'll Never See Me Again," by Alicia Keys
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
Because "all of the boys and all of the girls are begging to If you seek Amy ..."



Age
35
Relationship Status
In a committed relationship
Your Gay Idol?
Elton John
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"Because I love bringing everyone together through music. Having confidence in myself has brought out the best in me over time."



Age
62
Relationship Status
Single (and fancy free)
Your Gay Idol?
Ellen Degeneres
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"I have been singing since I was 12. I am self-taught and have always dreamed of making it big."



Age
33
Relationship Status
Whipped
Your Gay Idol?
Kelly Clarkson
Life's soundtrack?
Jurassic Park theme song
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"In high school I was voted 'friendliest.' I love people for who they are, and encourage them to accomplish their goals."



Age
58
Relationship Status
Recently separated
Your Gay Idol?
Someone who is admired and respected for their talent and how they present themselves.
Life's soundtrack?
"What the World Needs Now," by Dionne Warwick
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"I share my passion; my many talents; my dedication for rights for all, regardless of age, gender or race."



Age
25
Relationship Status
In a relationship
Your Gay Idol?
Brandi Carlile and Amber Heard
Life's soundtrack?
"Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing," by Stevie Wonder
Why should you be the next Gay Idol?
"When I perform I pour my soul onto the stage. I am completely at home and myself—actually the best part of myself."

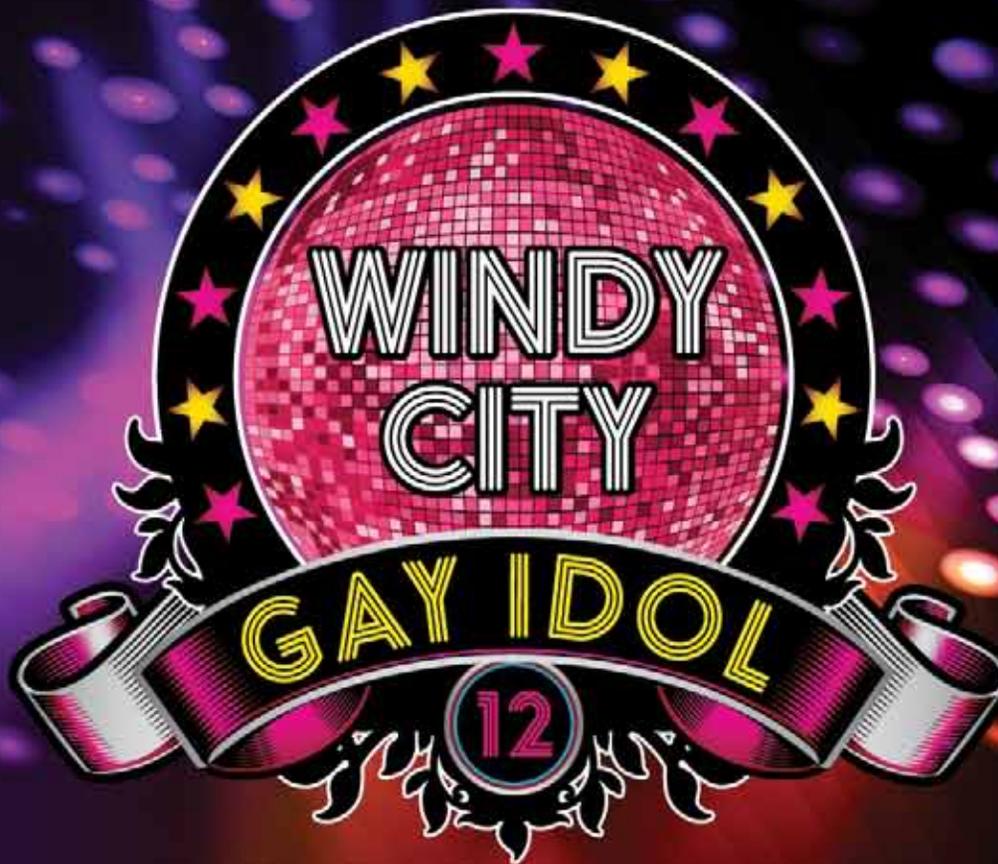
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Le Colonial; Prost's sausage fest

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Le Colonial (937 N. Rush St.; <http://www.lecolonialchicago.com>) is one of the places you might pass by a thousand times (as I literally have), and not enter because it's seemingly inaccessible.

I don't mean that it's physically inaccessible, of course, but that this French-Vietnamese restaurant seems to have the air of a place where the one-percenters go.

Well, I'm here to tell you to set your fears aside: While Le Colonial is definitely elegant (and you certainly feel like you're in another world), the other 99 percent of us can feel pretty comfortable there as well. (The hostess was particularly amiable.) And don't worry about not being able to pronounce the dishes; the server refers to menu items by their numbers.

As for the food, it's as impressive as the ambiance. The cha gio (crisp, fried spring rolls) was a step above the rolls I usually have, filled with shrimp, pork and Asian mushrooms. This

was also true of the banh uot—grilled sesame beef rolled in flat rice noodles. The ca bam xuc banh trang (wok-seared monkfish) had a definite kick, thanks to the accompanying chili.

If there was one dish that didn't quite work for my friend and me, it was the goi bun so (grilled sea-scallop salad), with the mollusks having a grittiness we didn't expect. However, the bo sate (sauteed, diced filet mignon) redeemed things, coming across as exceptionally tasty. Lastly, the banh pho xao (rice noodles with soy sauce, bean sprouts, green onions, red peppers and garlic chili sauce, with a choice of meat or tofu) was as savory as you'd expect that concoction to be. Easy-on-the-eyes server Mehdi skillfully led us through every aspect of the menu, and answered our questions thoroughly.

Also, if you have room, don't skimp on dessert, as the chocolate mousse cake and banana wontons were exceptional.

Now don't be fooled: As one might expect, the fare in this Gold Coast eatery is a bit pricier than the items you'd find in the Vietnamese restaurants in Uptown. However, for a fun time in an elegant atmosphere, Le Colonial is certainly worth a visit (or two).



Above: Banh uot at Le Colonial. Below: From Prost's "MEAT-and-greet." Photos by Andrew Davis



The German restaurant **Prost** (2566 N. Lincoln Ave.; <http://prostchicago.com>) recently had what one might call a "MEAT-and-greet" recently when Fortune Fish & Gourmet invited media professionals to try the eatery's latest introduction: Chef Martin's Alpine Brand Sausages.

Among the wursts Prost has are kasekraiener (pork, veal, Swiss), currywurst (veal, curry, ginger), thuringer (beef, pork, garlic), Sheboygan brat (pork, veal, lemon and herb) and chicken wurst (chicken, garlic), among others. As for what else the restaurant offers, there's everything from a pork belly Reuben to the traditional German fare of schnitzel and pretzels.

Also, as one might expect, there are many different varieties of beer on tap. However, the one this non-beer drinker gravitated toward was the Schofferhofer Grapefruit, a concoction that's 2.5 percent alcohol by volume and that tastes more like juice than beer.

By the way, there's one note: Don't expect German chocolate cake here, as my friend requested. That dessert was actually started in the United States, and named after Sam German.

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Propeller Fund application information session Propeller Fund is administered jointly by Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois at Chicago and threewalls to promote informal and independently organized visual arts activities. 6:00pm Hyde Park Art Center 5020 S. Cornell <http://www.propellerfund.org>

Pride as Art Concert Tix online 6:30pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St <https://www.facebook.com/events/58083583537393/> Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/queer-as-art-concert-pride-edition-tickets-11273055011>

Gerber/Hart Library and Archives Pride Month Open House, Public Meeting The public is invited to drop by and tour the new location at 6500 N Clark Street and to learn more about recent developments at the library. The program will include reports on facilities improvements, volunteer efforts, as well as library and archives management. Q&A session will follow. 7:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 5315 N Clark St <http://www.gerberhart.org>

Rachael Sage Celebrate the release of her new release *New Destination*. Singer-songwriter Diana Lawrence will open with the band *Diana & The Dishes*, 8:00pm. \$10 9:00pm Uncommon Ground on Devon 1401 W Devon Ave., <http://www.uncommonground.com>

Thursday, June 19

Street dedication honoring Dewey Harrington Harrington, who died in 2008, was known in the neighborhood as the "Mayor of Broadway" and was, along with his partner, Walter Kogelis, the longtime proprietor of Pass the Salt and Pepper, a Lakeview gift shop at 3337 N. Broadway. Chicago Gay Men's Chorus will sing to celebrate the legacy of one of our founding members. 10:00am Corner of Broadway and Aldine Ave., Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Street-dedication-set-for-Herrington-/47731.html>

Chicago Gay Men's Chorus Macy's State Street Pride Performance, lower atrium level 12:00pm Macy's on State Street 111 N State St 2nd floor <http://www.cgmc.org>

Illinois Eye-Bank's 16th Annual Gift of Sight Gala: A New Chapter Illinois Eye-

Bank's "Gift of Sight" Benefit honors Corneal Surgeon Charles Bouchard and novelist Sherrill Bodine for their commitment to Illinois Eye-Bank's efforts and mission. Dinner, music, silent auction, great city views. 6:00pm - 1:00am The Peninsula Chicago <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX8SdlQCY5Y>

Sidetrack Anniversary Party Enjoy 1980s prices on domestic beer, well, imports and frozen. Raiding the Sidetrack video library all night long. Beer box seating makes its comeback. Donations to Vital Bridges accepted, including items from their "wish list": paper products; cleaning supplies; grooming items. Catering by four food trucks: Taquero Fusion; 5411 Empanadas; The Fat Shallot; and The Slide Ride. 6:00pm - 2:00am Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St., <http://www.sidetrackchicago.com>

Spanish-language forum on Bible, LG-BTs in June, July For Spanish-speaking people who are interested in exploring the biblical texts from their own personal experience, in a serious way, and in a safe and affirming atmosphere for all people who identify as LGBT. Contact Esther Baruja at estherbaruja@gmail.com or 312-320-1341. 6:30pm - 8:30pm Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ, 615 W. Wellington Ave., Chicago

Affinity Trans Focus Group Monthly on the third Thursday. Info: affinitytransfocusgroup@affinity95.org 7:00pm - 9:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306 <http://affinity95.org>

LGBT Books for Pride Month: Authors Tracy Baim, Owen Keehnen and Richard Knight, Jr. Vernita Gray: From Woodstock to the White House, by Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen; The Fight for Marriage Equality in the Land of Lincoln, by Kate Sosin and Tracy Baim; The Best of Knight at the Movies by Richard Knight, Jr. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Friday, June 20

LGBTQIA Pride Month Gender and Sexuality Tour Bring Chicago history out of the closet with a tour of Hull-House and explore early 20th-century stories of gender non-conformity, diverse definitions of family, and fierce self-expression. Was Jane Addams a lesbian? We'll contemplate this commonly asked question that lacks a

simple answer. 3:00pm - 4:00pm Jane Addams Hull House Museum 800 S. Halsted St. <http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull>
2014 Packet Pick-Up for June 26 5K run See the June 26 entry or website. 6:00pm - 10:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted <http://www.iloveruns.com/pride-5k>

Pride Cruise for Women Chicago Curve presents a private lesbian cruise on Chicago's Leading Lady. Boarding 6:30 pm. Advance tickets only. 7:00pm Depart from 112 East Wacker Dr., Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/669154/>

Step Up, Get Tested The campaign sponsors mobile HIV testing sites all across the Chicago area. Through July 4. 10:00pm Text IL plus your zip code to 36363 for HIV testing facility near you <http://http://stepupgettested.com/>

Saturday, June 21

Savage Runway Berlin's art installation inspired by the genius of Alexander McQueen. Large scale photo art by Josh Evans of Luckyboi Photography and the design talents of Gary Gonzalez and the cast. Performances by JoJo Baby, Enero Ray, Kim Chi, Sissy Spastik, Ruby Dee, Shea Coulee and more. 12:00am - 2:00am Berlin Nightclub 954 W Belmont Ave <http://www.berlinchicago.com>

Evanston arts festival Custer's Last Stand is an arts and craft fair with live music, street performers, a powwow, and food. Donation. 9:00am - 10:00pm Main St., Chicago Ave., Evanston <http://www.custerfair.com>

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Weekly Saturday meetings. A peer-led support and education group for people with mood disorders and family and friends. Ask receptionist for room number. 11:00am - 12:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted 872-216-3272 <http://www.dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com>

Pride Fest Weekend at Kit Kat Lounge and Supper Club Two-day, circus themed party. The can't miss line-up of events include: Diva performances by Sunny Dee Lite and Kinley Preston; fire twirlers; jugglers; acrobat performances; balancing acts; male underwear fashion show (with \$250 cash prize); costume contest (with \$400 cash prize) and more. 11:00am - 2:00am Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club 3700 N Halsted 773-525-1111 <http://www.KitKatChicago.com>

Asians & Friends Chicago Pre-PRIDE Penthouse Party A formal thank-you to everyone who donated or will participate in AFC's 2014 Pride Float. BYOB with beer and wine provided. Bring a snack if you can. Kevin and John host. 2:00pm - 6:00pm Contact an organizer for location 312-409-1573 <http://www.afchicago.org>

Jennifer Hudson at Pride Fest Grammy and Academy Award winner and American Idol finalist returns to her hometown to head-



PICTURE PERFECT

Sat-Sun., June 21-22

Pride Fest will take place on Halsted Street from Belmont Avenue to Addison Street.

Photo of Saya Naomi at 2013 event by Jerry Nunn

line, plus dance and pop/rock music acts on two stages, food and drink and 60+ vendors offering arts, crafts and unique merchandise. Lineup at <http://www.chicagoevents.com/event.cfm?eid=142>. 2:30pm Boystown stage, Pride Fest (Pride Fest runs June 21-22.) http://www.northalsted.com/pages/chicago_pride_fest_2014/147.php

A Salute to Dick Cavett The museum will celebrate Dick Cavett, the television talk-show legend that brought wit and wisdom to late-night television. Dean Richards, Entertainment Reporter/Critic, WGN-TV and WGN Radio 720 AM, will serve as emcee. \$125. 6:30 reception, 7:30 pm dinner, 9 pm program The June 21 salute marks the official kickoff of Dick Cavett: A Retrospective, a video exhibition that will run June 24 to Sept. 27 (Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am-5 pm) in the MBC's Polk Bros. Theater. Museum of Broadcast Communications, 360 N. State St. Tickets: <http://www.museum.tv>

"Just Love" Pride concert Windy City Performing Arts (Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria Women's Chorus) will perform Pride concert. First show 5 pm. General-admission tickets (\$20) are available online or at the door. Seniors (\$15), or students and children (\$10) will be available only at the door. 8:00pm Ebenezer Lutheran Church 1650 W Foster <http://windycitysings.org> Tickets: <http://wcpapride.brownpapertickets.com>

Sunday, June 22

6th annual Pride in the Park picnic No alcohol, all ages. Free to attend, \$5 for food, or \$2 if you bring a dish for 25 people. People under 17 eat free. Must call to reserve dishes. 10:00am Wicker Memorial Park, 8559 Indianapolis Blvd., Highland, Ind. 219-595-2321

Transgender Service at Unitarian Church of Hinsdale The Cure for Myopia: Finding ways to Expand One's View of Transgenderism. Guest speaker on transgender issues will be Deborah L. Wilke, Ed. D, LCPC, NCP, DAPA, Adjunct Faculty Psychology Instructor at College of DuPage, private practice counseling in the LGBT community. Children welcome. 10:30am Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, 11 W. Maple, Hinsdale, 630-323-2885 <http://www.hinsdaleunitarian.org>

Award honoring Joanne Bristol for inspiration and courage An award for Gay and Lesbian members of the church community. 10:30am Euclid Ave United Methodist Church. 405 S. Euclid Ave, Oak Park, <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/How-a-loving-lesbian-couple-made-Logan-Square-Honey/47411.html>

Melissa Ferrick "When you think 'singer-songwriter,' you think of an artist like Melissa Ferrick. Someone who can pick up an acoustic guitar and wow you with both their lyrical dexterity and instrumental prowess." - American Songwriter 7:00pm - 9:00pm Old Town School of Folk Music 4544 N Lincoln Ave., <http://www.oldtownschool.org/concerts/2014/06-22-2014-melissa-ferrick-7pm/> Tickets: http://www.oldtownschool.org/events/event.php?event_id=6314

Tuesday, June 24

Pride Open Mic Including music and performance pieces with guest hosts Cin Salach and Robert MacDonald. pen mic readers are invited to bring your best song, performance piece, or single page of prose or poetry to share. Call the store today to sign up. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St 773-769-9299 <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Wed., June 25

Windy City Gay Idol Finals Competition Highly anticipated competition in Chicago's LGBTQ community, a search for the best amateur LGBTQ or allied singer in the Chicago area. More info and finalized start times to come. 6:00pm Mayne Stage 1328 W Morse Ave <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com>

JERSEY from page 20

tainly deserves more.

JLY: You have to trim the fat sometimes when you are telling the story in a two-hour show. I think it would be deeply insulting to Bob Crewe's legacy to cut him out of the credit for a lot of these things.

WCT: How was the old age makeup?

ML: Long! Most of us had four or five prosthetics on our faces.

JLY: I had seven.

ML: After the makeup is approved you sit there for two hours to get it on. It feels like you are in a full body cast.

EB: You feel like a lot of the women in Beverly Hills!

JLY: Or imagine they would feel... you still have that beautiful elasticity of the late 20s.

EB: Thank you. That was when it felt like Hollywood to me. We were still playing around. We thought we were going to do the whole ending in makeup including "Who Loves You." We were in a conversation with Clint until the end.

ML: In fact, we did a take of "Who Loves You"—which is pretty athletic—as these older gentleman.

EB: After we did the first take he came up to us and said, "We are going to take that out." We almost looked like the guy in the Six Flags

commercial!

WCT: Upcoming projects?

EB: I have an upcoming show on CBS called *Madam Secretary*, with Tea Leoni and Bebe Neuwirth.

ML: I am moving to LA so I can hit the ground running when the dust settles from the movie. I would love to see the floor of my apartment. It is full of boxes and I am sleeping on an air mattress.

WCT: The glamorous movie-star life!

JLY: While Erich is doing a West Wing kind of thing on TV, I am doing the real thing. I was appointed by Barack Obama to the Arts and Humanities Committee after we wrapped. I will be doing some arts advocacy in a really big way. Reagan started this committee and the thrust under Obama is arts education. I will be sharing a school district with Kal Penn in Des Moines, Iowa to help kids in the poorest performing schools and using the arts to bring them up and create better community. It is called Turnaround Arts.

Jersey Boys Movie opens June 20 in theaters everywhere. Jersey Boys The Musical returns to Chicago May 12-24, 2015 at the Cadillac Palace Theatre.

Visit www.jerseyboysmovie.com and www.broadwayinchicago.com.

JENIFER from page 23

who I am." We have to recognize the patterns. We didn't have Oprah when I was kid. There was no 911 if your mother hits you upside your head and you're bleeding.

We have to go to the root of the problem. What's the next question, baby?

WCT: I thought I'd wrap up with something lighter. [This prompts Lewis to laugh, saying, "Let's wrap up with something lighter so we don't leave Ms. Lewis screaming and hollering."] Do you have a bucket list? What do you want to do or who do you want to work with?

JL: My God, young man—what a good question. [Ponders] All I want to do is give back. My nephew fell on hard times and I moved him into my home; he has children and they bring me so much joy. It's all about the physical things now: I garden. I feel 35, I work out every day and I eat healthy foods because I want to enjoy my success.

I've had my trials and tribulations, darling, I really don't need much. I just want to give back. The only thing you can do for anyone is to live your best life—but you can't save anyone else.

I'm not coming to Chicago to do a one-woman show. I'm coming to share what I know. I'll be funny and entertaining, of course—I don't know how to do anything else. But I'm coming for a purpose. It's like when I went on Oprah to talk about my bipolar disorder: I may have en in her arena, but she was in my territory. Treatment and medication have led to a wonderful life, darling. I'm about as happy as I can be because I know who I am.

Someone asked me why I wasn't honored at a [recent] event. I looked that little fucker in the eye and said, "I don't need that honor because I honor myself every day."

For more on "Step Up. Get Tested," see <http://stepupgettested.com>.

Also, Lewis is in the upcoming films *The Wedding Ringer* and *The Magic City*, which she calls "one of the most important movies I've ever made." There's also *Ventura Boulevard*, an homage to *Sunset Boulevard* that she's executive-producing and which *Debbie Allen* will direct.

Lewis' Facebook page is "Jennifer Lewis For Real." Her Twitter is @JeniferLewis.

Read the entire interview online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

BILLY MASTERS

"I went home and I was like, 'Oh my God, I have glitter between my teeth!'"—Jonathan Groff describes the aftermath of making out with Neil Patrick Harris during rehearsal of the Hedwig number for the Tony Awards. During the telecast, the recipient of Hedwig's foreign tongue was NPH's spousal-equivalent, David Burtka.

You know something that's changed since I started writing this column a million years ago? Gay men having children. I never even think of acknowledging the gay fathers out there—with the exception of people like Robert De Niro Sr., Michael Jackson and anyone married to Arianna Huffington. But now, gays are having kids all over the place.

And you know how you can tell something is popular? When Hallmark makes a card to celebrate it. This year, the venerable greeting card manufacturer came out with a line of gay Father's Day eCards. Well, it's not so much a "line" as it is a single eCard, but it's a start. The eCard features a girl celebrating her two dads—one being Caucasian and one being somewhat ambiguously tinted. So if you've got two white dads or an Asian dad, or any other combination, keep on waiting!

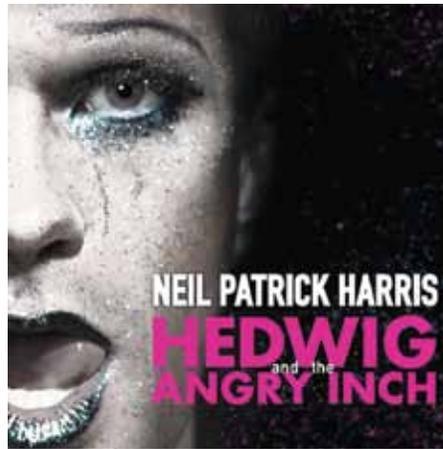
One of our most notable gay dads is Neil Patrick Harris, and certainly his performance on the Tony Awards got some tongues wagging—aside from Jonathan Groff's and David Burtka's, of course. Although Hedwig and the Angry Inch has been doing boffo business at the box office, the exposure (and four wins) at the Tonys created even more of a demand for tickets. This would normally be music to the ears of the producers, but not in this case. You see, NPH was only contracted through Aug. 17 and he has no intention of extending—you can only stretch one inch so far.

By the time he leaves, he'll have been with the show a scant four months—how positively Hollywood of him. In his wake, the lovely Andrew Rannells will don the Hedwig drag, which begs the question: Are people dying to see Hedwig or Neil Patrick Harris in heels? If they take a chance, they'll surely be in for a treat—Rannells wowed them when he played the role in Austin way back in 2001. If you can't get to NYC, you can check him out on BillyMasters.com.

Continuing the "The Normal Heart" lovefest, it's being reported that President Obama called director Ryan Murphy after seeing the film. As Murphy said in his press release, "The whole movie is about Larry [Kramer] trying to get the attention of Washington and 30 years later, to get a call from the President is a full-circle moment." Well, it would be full-circle if Larry Kramer got the call. Something tells me ol' Larry shouldn't be sitting by the phone.

In spring 2012, Charles Busch unveiled an uproarious spoof of those old Biblical epics with Judith of Bethulia. The off-Broadway show was a hit and lured in numerous luminaries to bask in Busch's glory—including the divine Joan Rivers, who I'm sure told them a thing or two about how things really were in ancient times. The entire run sold out immediately, robbing many of the chance to appreciate its hilarity ... or so I thought. Just after the run ended, Charles made a deal for the show to be preserved as an audio recording. The happy result was released last week and it is a delight. You can get more information at GPRrecords.com or buy it at Audible.com.

In two weeks, it will once again be time for the Daytime Emmys. And, once again, the outdated award show has sunk to new lows. After spending the last two years being broadcast on HLN, it is now solely viewable online. Oh, the humanity! As befitting its new D-List stature, it's almost poetic that Kathy Griffin will emcee



As Hedwig, Neil Patrick Harris glitter-bombed Jonathan Groff and David Burtka in his own way, Billy says.

the event. After all, she can now say whatever she wants—no one will be watching anyway. No censors, no FCC fees—unless the FCC is now monitoring websites (in which case, I'm sure BillyMasters.com is on someone's short list). Ever the gracious host, Kathy said (presumably tongue-in-cheek): "I am beyond thrilled to be hosting what I'm told is the most important television event of the year." Shhh—don't break it to her! You can watch all the hilarity live June 22 beginning at 7 p.m. CT at DaytimeEmmys.net.

Our "Ask Billy" question this week comes from Travis in Dallas: "Hey Billy. Glad to have you back in the Dallas Voice. I heard from a friend that a gay porn star is on a new reality show. Can you find out who it is?"

Reality television and porn are strange bedfellows these days. Of course, that's because there are about a zillion reality shows. And since most computers have webcams, everyone in the world is a potential porn star. The most recent addition to the reality/gay porn alum is Jesse Blum on the new E! series Escape Club. (He previously appeared on MTV's Parental Control.)

Apparently, Jesse built quite a following during his time on Fratmen under the moniker Damon. And it seems that his porn career wasn't limited to just one site. He also made videos for Flirt 4 Free and a site that I simply must check out—Gay Hoopla! His E! bio describes the 28-year-old as "a nursing assistant who is tired of cleaning bedpans, working 80 hours a week and taking care of sick people. He is now known more as a webcam model than a health care provider." That may be the official line, but people who knew him in Vegas say he primarily supported himself by doing sessions as a personal trainer, among "other" things. In a refreshing turn of events, he's not shy about discussing this part of his life. He recently posted the following on Twitter: "Yes, I have been nude and done all of that online. Not ashamed but want the world to know I'm more than just a cam model." Perhaps, but I know my fans are far more interested in his past than his present. And we're happy to present it to you—on BillyMasters.com.

When I get to use the word "hoopla," it's definitely time to end yet another column. I hope all of my readers who are dads had a lovely Father's Day. And I hope the rest of you find a daddy of your own. While you're cruising online, do check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that isn't ashamed of anything. Should you have a question for me, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I finish plucking glitter out of my teeth! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

JOIN 93XRT, Terri Hemmert & Tito's Handmade Vodka at Sidetrack Friday, June 20 for the Pride Fest Kick-Off

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Chicago Pride Fest to feature Hudson, Newell

Chicago's annual Pride Fest—which the Northalsted Business Alliance hosts—will take place June 21-22 on Halsted Street between Belmont Avenue and Addison Street.

Alex Newell, an actor and singer best known for his role as Wade "Unique" Adams on Glee, is officially slated to take the stage as one of Chicago Pride Fest's headliners. Another headliner is Grammy and Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson.

The line-up is as follows:
Saturday, June 21

- North Stage**
- 12:30 Pride Drag Show
 - 2:30 Jennifer Hudson
 - 3:30 Pride Drag Show
 - 4:45 Kaci Battaglia
 - 5:30 Pride Drag Show
 - 6:30 Nikki Williams
 - 7:15 Pride Drag Show
 - 8:00 Inaya Day
 - 9:00 Thelma Houston

- South Stage**
- 1:30 Girlband
 - 3:00 Chicago Spirit Brigade (Front of Stage)
 - 3:30 Crush on Radio
 - 5:30 Windy City Cowboys
 - 6:00 Betty Who
 - 7:45 Wedding Banned

- Waveland Stage**
- Hosted by Trannika Rex from 5-10
- Noon - 2:00 DJ Luna
 - 2:00 - 4:00 DJ Katy
 - 4:00 - 6:00 DJ Konzept
 - 6:00 - 8:30 DJ Scotty T
 - 8:30 - 10:00 Captains of Industry



Jennifer Hudson. Photo by Jerry Nunn

Sunday, June 22

- North Stage**
- Noon PetSmart Pet Pride Parade with Miss Fozzie
 - 12:30 Pride Drag Show
 - 1:30 Mya
 - 2:00 Pride Drag Show
 - 2:30 Carlito Olivero
 - 3:30 Pride Drag Show
 - 4:30 Alex Newell
 - 5:00 Pride Drag Show
 - 7:00 Kathy Sledge
 - 8:00 Amber

- South Stage**
- 1:00 PetSmart Pet Pride Parade with Miss Fozzie

- 2:00 The Personnel
- 3:30 Chicago Spirit Brigade
- 4:00 Catfight
- 6:30 Sixteen Candles

- Waveland Stage**
- Hosted By Trannika Rex 5-9 p.m.
- 12:00 - 2:00 DJ Smokey
 - 2:00 - 4:00 DJ MAJR
 - 4:00 - 6:00 Dance Floor Junkies
 - 6:00 - 7:30 Ryan Kenny
 - 7:30 - 9:00 Big Once and Trentino

Hercules & Love Affair offering musical 'Feast'

Big Beat/Atlantic Records has released The Feast of the Broken Heart, the new album from dance music icons Hercules & Love Affair.

"Feast" has the new single "I Try to Talk to You," which features openly gay singer John Grant. The video is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTff8jqPNu0.

Hercules & Love Affair arrived with 2008's debut single, "Blind (Feat. Antony Hegarty)." For more on the group, visit <http://herculesandloveaffair.net/>.

WCPA's 'Just Love' June 21

Windy City Performing Arts (Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria Women's Chorus) will perform the "Just Love" Pride concert Saturday, June 21, at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1650 W. Foster Ave., at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

General-admission tickets (\$20) are available online at windycitysings.org or <http://wcpa-pride.brownpapertickets.com>, and at the door.

Discounted tickets for seniors (\$15), or students and children (\$10) will be available only at the door.

ALEX from page 19

I don't think I can do anything of mine yet but it should be interesting. I will have to give Jennifer Hudson a run for her money!

WCT: What are you going to wear?

AN: I don't know yet—something fun and cool because it will be hot and summertime.

WCT: There is a store called Beatnix on Halsted Street where they have boas and glasses so you could shop there while you are in town.

AN: I love it.

WCT: I believe the last time you were in Chicago was for the Human Rights dinner.

AN: I was, so long ago...

WCT: Talk a bit about the film Geography Club, which you were in.

AN: I did it a couple of years ago right after high school. I was in Los Angeles in a hotel room where they put me on film. In the next few hours I got it and filmed it that summer. It is a good film based on the book Geography Club. It follows a teen struggling to come out who finds a tight group of friends who provide a safe haven in a way. It is gay kids who come together and talk about what they are going through.

My character had a strange way of coming out with doing everything in percentages. We start off being 80 percent straight and 20 percent gay, then 50/50, then 100 percent gay by the end of the movie. It is a fun little movie and on Netflix. I got to work with Nikki Blonsky and Ana Gasteyer.

WCT: I will check it out. See you in Chicago soon.

AN: I can't wait!

Follow Alex Newell on Twitter @Anew92 and to Pridefest on June 22 at 4:30 p.m. on the North Stage.

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—The award in favor of cab driver Venessa Fitzsimmons totaled \$104,711.00—Fitzsimmons v. Universal Taxi Dispatch, Inc., ALS No. 09-0661

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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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