



Renee Richards.
PR photo

Life at 80

Renee Richards on and off the tennis court

BY ROSS FORMAN

She truly is a pioneer, now 80, who has left her three-fold mark worldwide—as a professional tennis player, a still-practicing ophthalmologist, and an early pioneer for the LGBT community, particularly the transgender part of the rainbow.

Pick a term to tag Renee Richards: icon, legend, role model ... or all of the above.

But Richards now mostly just concerns herself with which way the green breaks and how she'll nail a 10-foot putt.

Golf is her major passion these days and when she retires, soon, likely this year, she plans to move from New York to Florida, partially to skip the cold and snow of a Northeast winter, primarily to play a lot more golf.

"Of all I've done [professionally and as a transgender person] ... it doesn't help me lower my [golf] handicap," she said, laughing.

Richards lives about 80 minutes north of New York City, "in the country, in the woods, on the water," she said of the English cottage she has called home for about 15 years. She lives with her best friend and former office manager of about 30 years—a straight, widowed woman. Richards stopped operating at the end of 2014 and will stop seeing patients later this year. Then the two, and their two dogs, will head south.

Sure, she has a tennis court about 50 feet from her home, but she stopped playing a long time ago. She picked up golf about 20 or 25 years ago, and that's her sporting pleasure

these days—her latest sporting venture.

Richards was, mind you, a New York native who played competitive football team as a teen, participated in swimming meets and was such a talented baseball pitcher that she often attracted the interest of pro scouts.

Begs to wonder, what if ... and yes, she too, thinks about what if she opted for a different life path as opposed to tennis.

"I had ability in baseball. Who knows what would have happened with my life if I ever [got to] pitch in Yankee Stadium. I don't know. But I'm not good at woulda, coulda, shoulda. I don't like that," she said.

What we do know, though, is that Richards excelled on the tennis court. She was the captain of the men's tennis team at Yale University before transitioning, anchored by her lethal left-handed serve. She played professionally from 1977 to 1981, retiring at age 47—but certainly not without controversy amid her transition.

Her first professional event in the female division was the 1977 U.S. Open, and that year she reached the doubles final with Betty Ann Stuart, ultimately losing to Martina Navratilova and Betty Stöve. Richards was twice a semifinalist in mixed doubles (with Ilie Nastase) at the U.S. Open.

In 1979, she won the 35-and-over singles title at the U.S. Open.

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MO' BETTER

Mo'Nique plays maternal in 'Blackbird'
Darnel Williams Photography

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HILLARY CLINTON

Presidential run under spotlight
WCT file photo

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GERARDO RODRIGUEZ

New leader of the GL Chamber of Commerce
Photo by Mandy Johnson

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CHICAGO FORCE

Team scores win #100
Photo by Ross Forman

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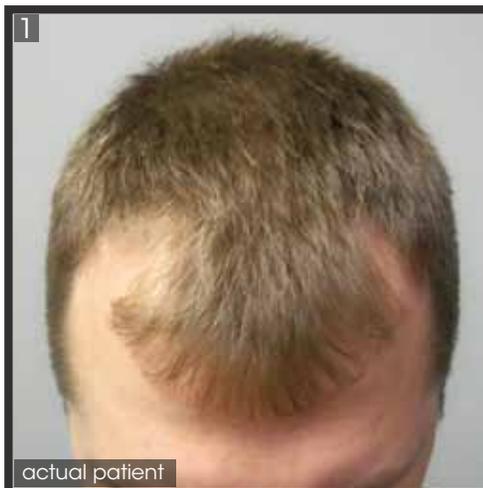


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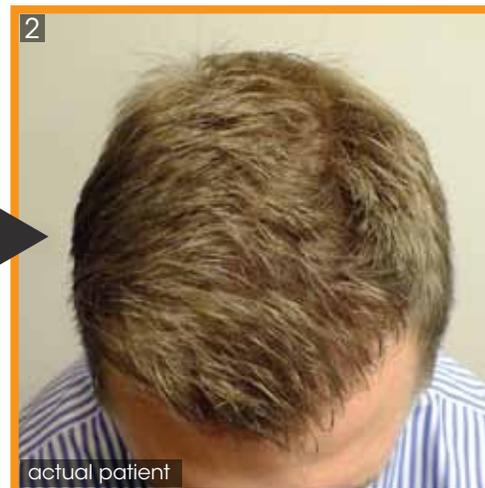
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 Renee Richards on and off the tennis court

MO' BETTER
 Hillary Clinton

CHICAGO FORCE

online exclusives at www.WindyCityTimes.com



NO 'BONES' ABOUT IT
 Bones actress Emily Deschanel talks pregnancy, chemistry and Cyndi Lauper. Photo by Frank Ockenfels/FOX

'BIRDS' OF A FEATHER



Windy City Times reviews the theatrical production *The Bird Feeder Doesn't Know* (above) and spotlights *Down the Moonlit Path*. Photo by Dean La Prairie

RALLYING POINT



The #BornPerfect rally helped to raise awareness about conversion therapy. Joy Messenger at the rally. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

HAVING A BALL

WCT's Jerry Nunn was all over the local scene, stopping at Steppenwolf's *Red or White Ball* and About Face Theatre's *Wonka Ball: Warhol*.

'SILENCE' IS GOLDEN

This month's Ask Lambda Legal covers the annual Day of Silence, which supports LGBTQA students.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Find out the latest about Zachary Quinto, Marilyn Monroe and James Van Der Beek.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

steppenwolf

QUEEN OF FASHION, MARIE'S TRENDING THIS SPRING

Marie Antoinette
 BY DAVID ADJMI
 DIRECTED BY ROBERT O'HARA

"ARENAS DELIVERS A BRAVURA PERFORMANCE" - Daily Herald

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NCLR's Kate Kendell,
Erica Demarest

NCLR and Task Force remove names from Michfest petition

BY SARAH TOCE

Just days after Kate Kendell and the organization she leads, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), removed their signature from Equality Michigan's Michfest petition, another big league LGBT organization is following suit. National LGBTQ Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey has withdrawn her support for the petition.

Kendell and Carey's original letters were met with an outcry from the LGBT community opposed to Michfest's intent on transgender women, and an additional joint statement was released on Saturday, April 11.

"We are writing to state clearly our commitment to the full inclusion and welcome of transgender women, as women, in the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (Michfest). We will continue to actively work to fulfill that goal," the updated response said. "After a number of conversations, we do not believe the petition/boycott is going to be ultimately productive in achieving the goal of a fully inclusive Michfest."

Kendell and Carey added, "There have been a number of misstatements and distortions that have been included in some media reports, social media and blogs about our positions regarding Michfest that have wrongly equated taking our names off the petition with a lack of support for trans women. We have not abandoned our efforts to work for a fully inclusive Michfest. Our goal is a Michfest that fully welcomes Trans women."

The statement concluded, "What we have done is remove our names from the petition in order to pursue an active, intentional dialogue which we hope and believe will be a more productive course in achieving the goal of a fully inclusive Michfest."

The email received that Windy City Times received was signed "Rea and Kate."

Carey wrote in her original letter: "Last year, the National LGBTQ Task Force signed onto a petition organized by Equality Michigan which called upon the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (Michfest) to fully welcome and include transgender women, as women, at the festival," Carey wrote to supporters Friday, April 10. "You took the time to write to me and I appreciate that you did—you and others shared with me your perspectives and experiences on the land that some described as 'sacred,' 'an annual touchstone,' 'iconic' and 'home.' I heard that you are angry and hurt by the Task Force and other organizations signing the petition."

She then added, "In the months between then and now, I have talked with womyn/women who have attended, womyn/women who would like to attend, and other people who have a variety of views. I've talked with our colleagues at Equality Michigan, leaders of other organizations who have been engaged in this, and with transgender women. From these conversations, I have gleaned shared values, differing opinions, and have come to a view

that in order to move forward in any type of dialogue we must move beyond the petition."

Citing support for womyn/women artists, Carey further explained: "The Task Force has asked that our name be removed from the Equality Michigan petition and we will be seeking other ways to be in dialogue about Michfest's intention regarding transgender women. As we reflected on the petition's contents and read carefully letters from concerned people like you, we came to understand that the point in the original petition that called for a boycott of vendors and performers was misaligned with our own support for womyn/women artists, craftspeople and musicians. Although that point was withdrawn from the petition, we recognize and share the deep concern about the possible economic impact on womyn/women striving every day to make a living through their art, craft and music."

As in anything, it's all about the intention—and Carey's letter was full of it.

"Please know that the Task Force's view regarding the Michfest intention is rooted in our core value of inclusiveness and the festival's extraordinary transformative power. For over 40 years, the Task Force has worked for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identified people in all areas of our lives—whether it be in the workplace, the government, companies and, yes, in our own community."

Carey's outreach resembled Kendell's tone in a personal letter she sent to her own supporters earlier in the week.

"We have been involved in a number of conversations with Michfest womyn, Equality Michigan, transgender leaders and colleagues who signed the petition. These conversations have made clear that there are essential values and perspectives we all share and that the petition was not going to be an effective vehicle for a resolution," Kendell wrote to several women, individually, April 7, 2015. "NCLR has removed our name from the petition and will be actively engaged in conversations in which we honor our differences while also pursuing a conclusion that supports the gender identity and inclusion of all women in Michfest. We have faith that such a resolution is possible."

Kendell further explained, "NCLR has come to a deeper understanding of what Michfest means to our community and seeks to honor that through this process. We also acknowledge the Michfest organizers have been involved in an ongoing conversation over the years on this issue. We are committed to honest and forthright dialogue as a more constructive means for seeking resolution and common ground."

The 2015 talent lineup for the Festival stage features lesbian-inclusive acts and performers including BETTY, Cris Williamson, Julie Goldman, Crys Matthews, Bitch and Melissa Ferrick.

Read the full article (including Kendell's and Carey's entire letters) at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Writing For Justice

BY CAROLINE SIEDE



Does voting actually matter?

On one of the mercifully warm days in March, I ventured out of my apartment and ended up wandering around a North Side beach where I saw the words "One person can change the world" elegantly scrawled on a pier. I smiled to myself, snapped a picture, and threw it up on Instagram. But in the time it took me to hit "post" I realized that graffiti is a lie. In fact, one person can't change the world. At least not without a little help

Yet our pop culture is obsessed with singling out individuals. We love superheroes and underdogs, chosen ones and anti-heroes. We enjoy watching one character beat the odds, defy expectations, or define a moment in history. Even our most complex ensemble dramas generally feature a recognizable protagonist. And everything from our sports to our news comes prepackaged with a personal, human-interest angle. It's much harder to tell a story without singling out a key player, and anyone other than a few supporting characters or sidekicks generally fades into the background (that's why blockbusters try to insert as many close-ups as they can in big fight scenes—we need personal storytelling to understand stakes). So we simplify our narratives to center on individual achievements; we tell the stories of people, not groups.

inherently "great" people can change the world. And that sets a huge barrier for activism. If we can't live up to the legacies of Lincoln or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Gloria Steinem why should we even try? But if we think of Lincoln, King and Steinem as one of many voices in a larger movement, it feels less daunting to try to follow in their footsteps.

And while I've been discussing this individualism in terms of history, it has a massive impact on the present as well. The environmental movement is a great example. The majority of conservation advice centers on the things individuals can do: change a light bulb, take a shorter shower, recycle more. These are important small-scale steps, but they also ignore the truly massive scale of the problem. Corporations produce enormous amounts of pollution each day, and to deal with that problem people will have to unite in support of environmental legislation. It will require the force of a movement, not the lifestyle changes of an individual. But since that complex goal is harder to achieve (and less satisfying) than simply replacing one light bulb with another, we focus on our tiny individual contributions and assume someone else is looking out for the big picture. We think one of the mythical "chosen ones" of history and

pop culture will swoop in to save the day.

But there's no guarantee such a person even exists, and it's dangerous to assume someone else is out there fighting for marriage equality or civil rights (as the recent "religious freedom" laws in Indiana and Arkansas have shown). So instead of thinking of ourselves as the

"I may not be a great political organizer, but I have a knack for telling stories so I focus my activism on the written word. I won't be remembered in history books, but maybe I will help the cause of someone who is."

That spills over into our understanding of history as well. We credit great men and women with Herculean accomplishments, forgetting that these people only succeeded because of the support around them. Even our greatest icons did their work in a larger political and social system. The end of slavery is not something Abraham Lincoln gifted to America. Abolition was a complex movement fought by thousands of people including Black thinkers like Fredrick Douglass, feminist groups, Congressmen, political negotiators, and slaves themselves. Lincoln may have been the most high-profile player, but he didn't shape history alone.

The danger of focusing on individuals and not on movements is that we are subconsciously led to believe that only

hero and the masses, let's think of ourselves as dominoes. We can't all cross the finish line, but when, where, and how we fall can change the course of history. The individual domino matters, but so does the chain.

I heard a great piece of advice at a recent Black Lives Matter protest: Apply the skills you have to the causes you believe in. I may not be a great political organizer, but I have a knack for telling stories so I focus my activism on the written word. I won't be remembered in history books, but maybe I will help the cause of someone who is.

Because in the end one person can change the world, but only if they work with others to do so.

Caroline Siede is a freelance writer living in Chicago where the cold never bothers her anyway. You can also find her work on [The A.V. Club](http://TheA.V.Club.com) and [Being Boing](http://BeingBoing.com).

Presidential-campaign landscape shaping up

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The 2016 presidential campaign is shaping up to be a particularly exciting and meaningful one for LGBT people. Here are just a few reasons why:

The campaign manager for Democrat Hillary Clinton, who announced her intent to run April 12, is an openly gay man and her video campaign announcement prominently featured gay citizens.

The announced and expected Republican candidates for president are either against equal rights for LGBT people or struggling to find a comfortable position that satisfies the more conservative Republican primary voters while supporting the majority general public's belief that the law should treat gay people fairly.

The legality of state bans on marriage for same-sex couples will be a major news story during these first few months of the presidential campaign, at least until the Supreme Court of the United States rules on the matter in June.

And the clash between religious beliefs and anti-discrimination laws has reached a new apex in the public's attention, with the passage, in some states, of legislation seeking to enable people to discriminate against LGBT people.

But the Clinton campaign is clearly the focus of the most attention right now.

The former first lady, U.S. senator and secretary of state just announced her plans to run for president in a video posted on YouTube. The video includes a gay male couple walking down a street hand-in-hand, while one partner explains that the men plan to get married this



Hillary Clinton.
WCT archives

summer. They, along with two women snuggling on a couch, are among more than a dozen different people talking about getting ready for a new phase in life—a new job, a new school, a new business.

"I'm getting ready for something, too," says Clinton on the video.

At a later point in the video, just after Clinton says, "When families are strong, America is strong," the video shows two women snuggling on a couch.

Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, have always enjoyed strong support from the LGBT community. But this time around, Hillary Clinton has an openly gay man as her campaign manager.

Robby Mook, 35, is a former head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and served as campaign manager for Democrat Terry McAuliffe's gubernatorial victory in Vir-

ginia in 2013. He worked on the Democratic presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton in 2008 and Howard Dean in 2004.

Richard Socarides, a longtime Democratic gay activist who served as liaison to the LGBT community during President Clinton's White House, praised both Hillary Clinton's decision to run and her choice of Mook.

"As someone who has worked with both Bill and Hillary Clinton for over 20 years, I'm excited to support her and will do everything I can to help get her elected," said Socarides. "I think it's terrific that she's hired the most talented person to run her campaign and that he happens to be gay."

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) posted a notice on its website April 12, identifying the gay couple in Clinton's video announcement as HRC members (and Chicagoans) Jared Milrad and Nathan Johnson. HRC also noted that Clinton announced her support for same-sex marriages in 2013.

Log Cabin Republicans, a national gay Republican group, issued an email April 12, saying the "gay left may be willing to make assumptions about Mrs. Clinton's support for the LGBT community, but Log Cabin Republicans will not."

The email posed nine questions for Clinton to answer, including "did Mrs. Clinton support the original Religious Freedom Restoration Act signed into law by her husband while she was First Lady upon which this new crop of RFRA legislation is based?" The question was a reference to recent and controversial legislation passed in Indiana and other states that would enable citizens and businesses to claim their religious beliefs require them to discriminate against LGBT people.

Gregory Angelo, Log Cabin's executive director, said his group would expect answers from Republican presidential candidates, too.

Three Republican U.S. senators have formally announced their campaigns for president: Ted Cruz of Texas on March 23, Rand Paul of Kentucky on April 7, and, most recently, Marco Ru-

bio of Florida on April 13.

After the Supreme Court of the United States struck down a key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act, Cruz introduced a bill to block federal benefits to same-sex couples in states that refuse to recognize or license their marriages. (The bill has not moved.)

Paul and Rubio have both tried to walk a tricky line between pro "traditional marriage" but not against same-sex marriage.

Last July, Rubio told a Catholic University audience that "we have come a long way" since the days when government banned gays from jobs, bars and restaurants. And he lamented that "many committed gay and lesbian couples feel humiliated by the law's failure to recognize their relationship as marriage." But Rubio said he personally supports the man-woman marriage tradition "not because I seek to discriminate against people who love someone of the same sex, but because I believe that the union of one man and one woman is a special relationship that has proven to be of great benefit to our society ... and, therefore, deserves to be elevated in our laws."

In an interview April 12 with CNN, Paul took a similar position. "I think that there's a religious connotation to marriage. I believe in the traditional religious connotation to this," he told CNN's Dana Bash.

Paul also took the opportunity to criticize the Clintons for accepting donations for their charitable Clinton Foundation from the sultan of Brunei. He did not mention that gays can be stoned to death in Brunei.

Most of the focus right now, however, is on Clinton—the first Democratic candidate to formally enter the 2016 presidential race.

"Every other gay organization out there—every single one," said Angelo, "is cheerleading for Mrs. Clinton rather than doing their duty of seeking clarity on policy issues that will affect members of the LGBT community for years to come."

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Emanuel scores along North lakefront; some winners undetermined

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A number of upsets marked several aldermanic runoff contests on April 7, but some races' final outcomes won't be determined until April 23, when final tallies of absentee ballot voting are announced. The Chicago Board of Elections must allow ballots postmarked on April 6 two weeks to arrive at their offices. That's good news for some candidates whose races will likely be determined by just a handful of votes.

Among those races still being counted as of press time were aldermanic contests in the 10th, 16th, 21st, 31st and 43rd Wards.

Incumbent Mayor Rahm Emanuel defeated his challenger, Cook County Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, with a decisive lead April 7. Out of 586,806 votes cast, about 329,701, or about 56 percent, were for Emanuel while 257,100, or 44 percent, were for Garcia.

While LGBT residents live in myriad locations throughout metropolitan Chicago, residents in some wards with significantly large LGBT populations—areas such as Lake View, Uptown and Edgewater—leaned towards Emanuel. Residents of the 44th Ward favored Emanuel over Garcia 76.24-23.76 percent. In the 46th Ward, Emanuel defeated his challenger 64.64-35.36 percent, while, in the 48th Ward, his lead was 59.35-40.65 percent.

But a significant North Side win for Garcia was the 49th Ward, which contains Rogers Park. He captured 51.64 percent of the vote there while Emanuel trailed with 48.36 percent.

Aldermanic results are posted below. Names that are listed below indicate winners.

2nd: Brian Hopkins

7th: Gregory Mitchell

11th: Patrick Daley Thompson

15th: Raymond Lopez

18th: Derrick Curtis

20th: Willie Cochran

24th: Michael Scott

29th: Chris Taliaferro

36th: Gilbert Villegas

37th: Emma Mitts

41st: Anthony Napolitano

45th: John Arena

46th: James Cappleman

Races without final tallies as of press time included:

10th: John Pope, Susan Sadlowski Garza

16th: Toni Foulkes, Stephanie Coleman

21st: Howard Brookins Jr., Marvin McNeil

31st: Ray Suarez, Milagros "Milly" Santiago

43rd: Michelle Smith, Caroline Vickrey

2015 MAYORAL RUNOFF ELECTION RESULTS Breakdown by ward and candidate

| Ward | Total Votes | Emanuel | | Garcia | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | 10680 | 4723 | 44.22% | 5957 | 55.78% |
| 2 | 14006 | 10801 | 77.12% | 3205 | 22.88% |
| 3 | 12829 | 8489 | 66.17% | 4340 | 33.83% |
| 4 | 13906 | 8184 | 58.85% | 5722 | 41.15% |
| 5 | 13200 | 7274 | 55.11% | 5926 | 44.89% |
| 6 | 12261 | 6964 | 56.80% | 5297 | 43.20% |
| 7 | 12225 | 6903 | 56.47% | 5322 | 43.53% |
| 8 | 15561 | 9104 | 58.51% | 6457 | 41.49% |
| 9 | 13221 | 7693 | 58.19% | 5528 | 41.81% |
| 10 | 11542 | 4644 | 40.24% | 6898 | 59.76% |
| 11 | 12439 | 7634 | 61.37% | 4805 | 38.63% |
| 12 | 6915 | 1745 | 25.23% | 5170 | 74.77% |
| 13 | 14107 | 7844 | 55.60% | 6263 | 44.40% |
| 14 | 8270 | 2948 | 35.65% | 5322 | 64.35% |
| 15 | 6279 | 1997 | 31.80% | 4282 | 68.20% |
| 16 | 7735 | 3992 | 51.61% | 3743 | 48.39% |
| 17 | 9863 | 5429 | 55.04% | 4434 | 44.96% |
| 18 | 14618 | 7537 | 51.56% | 7081 | 48.44% |
| 19 | 20086 | 11921 | 59.35% | 8165 | 40.65% |
| 20 | 7980 | 4298 | 53.86% | 3682 | 46.14% |
| 21 | 15010 | 8823 | 58.78% | 6187 | 41.22% |
| 22 | 7396 | 1449 | 19.59% | 5947 | 80.41% |
| 23 | 11247 | 4874 | 43.34% | 6373 | 56.66% |
| 24 | 8044 | 4205 | 52.27% | 3839 | 47.73% |
| 25 | 9912 | 3817 | 38.51% | 6095 | 61.49% |
| 26 | 8430 | 2926 | 34.71% | 5504 | 65.29% |
| 27 | 10392 | 6638 | 63.88% | 3754 | 36.12% |
| 28 | 9337 | 5378 | 57.60% | 3959 | 42.40% |
| 29 | 13086 | 7499 | 57.31% | 5587 | 42.69% |
| 30 | 7455 | 3053 | 40.95% | 4402 | 59.05% |
| 31 | 8404 | 3172 | 37.74% | 5232 | 62.26% |
| 32 | 12421 | 7729 | 62.23% | 4692 | 37.77% |
| 33 | 9890 | 4388 | 44.37% | 5502 | 55.63% |
| 34 | 13962 | 8559 | 61.30% | 5403 | 38.70% |
| 35 | 8018 | 2751 | 34.31% | 5267 | 65.69% |
| 36 | 8333 | 3533 | 42.40% | 4800 | 57.60% |
| 37 | 10096 | 5910 | 58.54% | 4186 | 41.46% |
| 38 | 12671 | 7602 | 60.00% | 5069 | 40.00% |
| 39 | 13046 | 7610 | 58.33% | 5436 | 41.67% |
| 40 | 12132 | 6471 | 53.34% | 5661 | 46.66% |
| 41 | 18707 | 11961 | 63.94% | 6746 | 36.06% |
| 42 | 13333 | 11313 | 84.85% | 2020 | 15.15% |
| 43 | 14686 | 12245 | 83.38% | 2441 | 16.62% |
| 44 | 12990 | 9904 | 76.24% | 3086 | 23.76% |
| 45 | 15716 | 9309 | 59.23% | 6407 | 40.77% |
| 46 | 13350 | 8629 | 64.64% | 4721 | 35.36% |
| 47 | 16033 | 10080 | 62.87% | 5953 | 37.13% |
| 48 | 14237 | 8450 | 59.35% | 5787 | 40.65% |
| 49 | 10550 | 5102 | 48.36% | 5448 | 51.64% |
| 50 | 10195 | 6197 | 60.78% | 3998 | 39.22% |
| Total | 586802 | 329701 | 56.19% | 257101 | 43.81% |

LAGBAC honors Lambda Legal's Jim Bennett

The Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago (LAGBAC) announced that Jim Bennett, Midwest regional director for Lambda Legal, was honored at the Vanguard Awards Luncheon on April 2.

The Vanguard Awards is an annual luncheon organized by six local bar associations, including LAGBAC. The event is designed to honor individuals and institutions who have made the law and legal profession more accessible to and reflective of the community at large.

In addition to Bennett, awardees included the Hon. Sharon Johnson Coleman, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois (Chicago Bar Association honoree); Virginia Martinez of the Illinois Latino Family Commission (Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois honoree); Anne Shaw of Shaw Legal Services (Asian American Bar Association of Chicago honoree); Justice John O. Steele, Ret., of the Illinois Appellate Court (Cook County Bar Association honoree); and the Hon. Mary Jane Theis of the Illinois Supreme Court (Puerto Rican Bar Association honoree).

For more information about LAGBAC, visit www.lagbac.org.

Creating Change co-chairs named

Mary Morten, Kenny Martin Ocasio, Precious Davis and Joshua Oaks have been named the co-chairs of Creating Change 2016, which will take place in Chicago for the first time next year.

The 28th National LGBTQ Task Force Creating Change conference will take place Jan. 20-24, 2016. More than 4,000 people from across the country are expected to attend.

New Roosevelt president named

Roosevelt University's board of trustees unanimously elected Ali R. Malekzadeh, dean of the College of Business Administration at Kansas State University, as the sixth president of Roosevelt, effective July 1.

He will succeed Charles R. Middleton, who is retiring June 30 after a distinguished 50-year career in higher education, including 13 years as Roosevelt's president.

An expert on strategic management and an accomplished fundraiser, Malekzadeh, a 59-year-old Iranian-American, has been a business dean at private and public universities for 17 years.

Windy City Times has profiled Middleton, who is openly gay; visit <http://www.windy-citymediagroup.com/lgbt/Openly-gay-Roosevelt-Univ-president-to-retire/49031.html>.

United Latin@ Week will be June 4-11

United Latin@ Pride (ULP) has announced that the sixth annual week of LG-BTQQIA Latino/a pride will take place June 4-11.

"We are incredibly excited this year," said Karari Olvera, ULP co-chair, in a statement. "For the past six years, our community has come together to create spaces where we can be ourselves and celebrate the plurality of our experiences."

To get involved or for more information, visit unitedlatinopride.org.

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New chamber ED comes from career built on inclusion

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Gerardo Rodriguez recently took over as executive director of the Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce after a three-month search for new leadership of the nearly 20-year-old organization.

Rodriguez had only been on the job for a week when he spoke with Windy City Times about his new post. He already looked right at home at his desk in the Chamber offices in Lake View. Rodriguez spoke about the confluence of events that brought him to the position and a new challenge in a life and career spent ensuring that diversity and the dreams of small business owners had a prominent and successful place in Illinois.

Describing himself as a straight ally, Rodriguez is no stranger to the challenges presented to minorities in this country.

"I live in Pilsen and I grew up around that area," Rodriguez said. "It was the normal struggle for any Latino family on the South Side of Chicago. My father is a role model to me. We always watched Bruce Lee movies together. He was a warehouse manager for ComEd and he was laid off when I was in high school. It severely impacted my family. It was tough but that's the story of everyday life. So I'm not going to look at that as a hindrance. It was adversity in my face and I just had to overcome it."

Rodriguez took a step forward in that desire by becoming the first person in his family to attend college, completing his undergraduate

degree at Southern Illinois University focusing on creative writing and philosophy. "Honestly I was a young, confused Latino in southern Illinois," Rodriguez acknowledged. "It was culture shock for me and a struggle to succeed there. I was trying to find my place within myself and within a community I was not used to. So my out became my writing and I was always intrigued by East Asian Philosophy."

In 2005, shortly after graduation, Rodriguez was offered a position at the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (IHCC) as a project coordinator and grant writer.

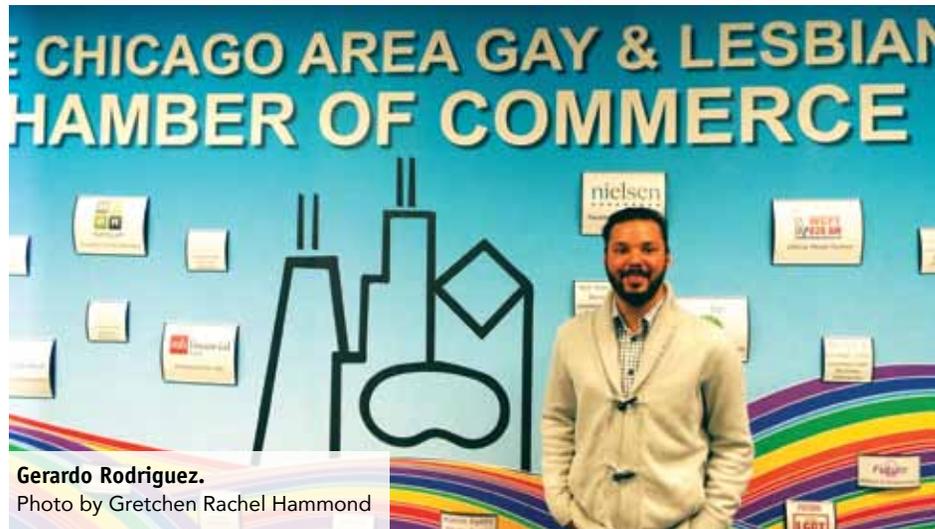
"I remember seeing business counselors working with small businesses and I said, 'Hey, that doesn't look too hard' and, of course, they challenged me to take a go at it. It was scary and nerve-racking but I loved the strategy and idealism behind assisting a small business owner, individual or a family actually get a license to formally do business. The excitement that they showed on their faces that they were legitimate was an amazing feeling and it just took fire within me."

One of the first small business owners Rodriguez assisted was an HVAC (heating, ventilating and air-conditioning) employee.

"He wanted to work for himself," Rodriguez recalled. "He was a big, burly man and he was loud. But he was so nervous while we were filling out his application online that he made me nervous. As soon as we submitted it, he got up and he said 'you don't know what this means to me. You don't know what this means to my family. I feel so free. I feel so empowered.' His

voice got even louder and he was like 'I can't wait to take over the world!' A business is not just a business for Hispanics, it's a family lifestyle. We have a majority of undocumented individuals who are coming here looking for the American dream and there were a good amount of my clients who came from absolutely nothing."

In 2008, the bottom dropped out of the economy and took a devastating toll not only on a number of the business owners Rodriguez had helped get their start but on his own job.



Gerardo Rodriguez.
Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

With grant funding drying up, he left in 2010 to start his own small-business consulting practice focusing on federal contracting.

"I took it upon myself to ensure that small businesses had their voices heard in D.C.," he said. "Right now we can't bid against these large-bundled multibillion-dollar companies on a hundred-million-dollar contract."

Two years later, the celebrated African-American advocacy organization the Chicago Urban League was offered a grant through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to help provide small-businesses with the size, capacity and financial clout needed to enter the federal arena. Rodriguez was a natural fit for the Midwest Regional Teaming Program.

"We wanted to ensure that small African-American-owned businesses got a chance to participate in this amazing opportunity," he said. "Some of the contracts that they landed were \$50 million multi-year contracts. It was amazing."

When a job opening came up at the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Rodriguez saw it as the natural progression of a career spent elevating diverse populations.

"This is no different from the other organizations I have worked for," he said. "I knew I could provide an immediate impact with the small-business LGBT certification work we are doing, to take a lead in that and to engage the community as a whole."

Rodriguez's vision involves adding activism to the Chamber's advocacy. "This organization should take a larger role in not only LGBT small-business issues but all LGBT issues," he

said. "We can't pigeon-hole ourselves. There's something greater. It's not only fighting for small-businesses, it's fighting for LGBT immigration issues, for the transgender community, for inclusion. If we cannot advocate on their behalf then we're not going to be as successful as we need to be."

One significant advancement for which Rodriguez intends to fight is workforce development. "We want to provide training for our small businesses to grow and to be leaders within the LGBT community and we want LGBT

employees of major corporations to be advocates," he said.

When it comes to homeless LGBTQ youth feeling unwelcome in the Chamber's Lake View neighborhood and not being given a chance at employment by many of the business owners there, Rodriguez was fervent.

"We need to address this immediately," he said. "One of my visions through workforce development would be teaching these kids qualified skills to be an employee in the 21st Century. Honestly I would also love to get into dialogues with the Chicago Housing Authority to offer additional living spaces. I want the Chamber of Commerce to take a lead role in this and engage our LGBT members and elected officials like [Ald. Tom] Tunney. There needs to be a pipeline for transgender employees. There is no reason the LGBT community cannot grow even further and it is my goal to see that we are equally represented. That's what I'm here to do."

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YEPP marks fourth anniversary with 'ALIVE'



Bonsai Bermudez.
Photo by Ed Negron

BY ED NEGRON

Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) celebrated its 4th anniversary, "4th YEPPiversary: ALIVE," on April 9 at 835 W. Addison Ave. The night's celebration included performances from past ensemble members and the guest artist, house/dance music recording artist RaShaan Houston.

Also, new ensemble members were introduced. La Tony emceed the event.

The program, "Proposal for Life," was created through the Broadway Youth Center (by Bonsai Bermudez, founder and executive artistic director of YEPP) to develop performances from which to draw upon the life experiences

of street-based LGBTQ youth. Besides creating powerful works, the YEPP team also provides support regarding housing, employment, education, clothing, physical health, legal services and other basic needs. The goal for the ensemble members is that they are actively engaged in their lives and have access to safe housing by the end of each cycle.

To learn more and to support YEPP, visit www.wesayyep.com.

30 Under 30 nominations sought

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

Nominees should be 30 years or under as of June 30, 2015, and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health, activism, academics, sports or other areas.

The deadline to nominate individuals is Friday, April 17.

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

legal, professional and academic careers and much more.

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

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

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

Honorees will be notified in May and recognized at a free ceremony Wed., June 24, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

LGBT Advocacy Day in Springfield April 15

Equality Illinois' LGBT Advocacy Day will take place Wed., April 15, at the state Capitol in Springfield, 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

The organization has stated that its "agenda includes strengthening hate crimes legislation, banning conversion therapy and saving important funding for public services in the state budget."

In addition to talking with legislators, there will be a mixer at Club Station House (306 E. Washington St., Springfield) 4-6 p.m. See "Central Illinois Mixer" on Facebook.

Register at <http://tinyurl.com/LGBT-advocacy-day>. Another Advocacy Day will be held on Wed., May 13.

MPSA conference April 16-19

The 73rd annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference will be held April 16-19 at the Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe St.

Several LGBT-related forums will take place. Among them are "Do National and International Organizations of Counter-Trafficking Meet Needs of Victims of Human Trafficking of Non-traditional Sexual Orientation?" and "Voting and Sexuality: The Impact of Sexual Orientation on Turnout and Vote Choice."

Visit <http://www.mpsanet.org/>.

Lambda Legal's Bon Foster April 22

Lambda Legal's annual Bon Foster event will take place Wed., April 22, at the Art Institute of Chicago Modern Wing, 159 E. Monroe St., at 6 p.m.

The Bon Foster Celebration is named in honor of the man whose legacy was the founding of Lambda Legal's Midwest regional office and the subsequent civil-rights victories fought and won in that area.

For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.lambdalegal.org/bonfoster. For more information, contact Jeff Souva at 312-663-4413, ext. 335.

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RICHARDS from cover

After retiring, Richards ventured into coaching, most notably helping the career of Navratilova.

Richards still follows tennis relentlessly, she said, and remains in touch regularly with Navratilova.

"I am more aware of what's going on in the tennis world than I am in the transgender world," said Richards, who regularly attends the U.S. Open in New York. She is also a member of the event's prestigious Final 8 Club.

Her favorite male player is Novak Djokovic, the Serbian star who is ranked number one in the world. "I think he's a wonderful player, a great spokesperson, representative for the tennis community," Richards said.

Serena Williams is the top-ranked female—and Richards' favorite on that side. "I have to admire the way she plays," said Richards, who

also noted that Madison Keys—who was born in Rock Island, Illinois, and is now ranked No. 18 in the world—"shows great promise."

So who would win, Williams vs. Richards (back in her day)?

"She probably would have killed me," Richards said, laughing.

"Martina was the greatest player who ever lived," she added. "However, you can't compare Martina to Serena because things are so different—the rackets, the technology, the strings, etc. Players now are able to hit the ball so much harder and keep it on the court. You can't compare [players from different eras], be it Rod Laver to Nadal, or [Bill] Tilden to Laver."

Richards' tennis career was, of course, shadowed by her transition, during an era when such a practice was rarely discussed in public, let alone under the worldwide spotlight, as Richards endured.

She didn't want the spotlight, then or now,

or anytime in between.

"It just happened to me, and I just kind of went along with everything that happened," she said. "I had no idea when I was younger that I was going to be able to accomplish the sex change; I had no idea I was going to become this infamous, notorious person who did what I did [in professional tennis]."

She endured death threats, yet often was hailed as brave and courageous.

Richards just wanted to play tennis.

"It's amazing what is going on now [in the trans community], compared to when I was [going through my transition]," she said. "When I was [transitioning], it was all hush-hush. You did it, [then] merged into the woodwork if you could, and you were in stealth mode; you change your name and move 3,000 miles away, like I did, and you tried to live life like a new person, if you could."

"Now, people are announcing on television that they are going to have a sex change."

"The world has just changed so much."

But with the progress, there remains transphobia. Trans teens, for instance, have committed suicide at alarming rates. Richards noted that "there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of acceptance and knowledge, with knowledge being the forerunner to acceptance."

"I do, though, applaud the groups and people who are doing the [advocating], including GLAAD and others."

Richards, though, has never been a loud public LGBT advocate. She never wanted that label. In fact, she doesn't even keep up with LGBT—particularly trans—issues other than when approached for feedback. When she does major interviews, she gets advice. For example, for a recent one with ESPN, she had a briefing from an activist trans woman.

"I had no idea what really was or is going on, such as the struggles for high school [student-athletes] to play on teams [based on] the gender they identify," she said. "So much of my life was stressful, during all of those years when I was going through all of this, so I didn't want to have to dwell on it anymore."

Instead, Richards wanted to advocate in a different way—professionally.

"If you are a busy, practicing eye surgeon, there isn't much time to be an advocate for issues unrelated, of which transgender is part of," she said. "I have thought, and still do, that I can do more good for minorities, including the transgender community, by being a good ophthalmologist and being a good tennis coach and being a good tennis player [more] than being an advocate."

"I never wanted to be construed as an activist because that wasn't me."

Her resume also includes, author.

Richards has written two autobiographies, which focus on "going from Dick to Renee," she said.

Her latest book is *Spy Night and Other Memories: A Collection of Stories from Dick and Renee*. The stories in this book "don't really have anything to do with my transformation ... nor anything to do with my pioneering. [Instead, the book] has to do with the other side of my life, which most people don't have any idea about: my life in medicine, my life in sports, my life with my friends, my life as a parent, etc."

"This book is not focused on sexuality, or gender identity, or anything of the sort."

Richards it was fun to write and reminisce, including remembering a summer camp story from decades ago.

"My ending up being a role model, pioneer was inadvertent; I never set out to do that. I never was a public advocate [for LGBT rights or causes]; I never was a public zealot or anything of the sort," Richards said. "But I was embraced because I stood up and did what I thought I was entitled to do—and other people identified with that, so I became this pioneer. But none of it was for altruistic motives; I was selfish, I wanted to do with my life what I felt I had to do and I wanted to play tennis wherever I wanted to play, so that's what I stood up for. Then all of a sudden, I [became] this pioneer."

And that, she truly is.

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in the LIFE
Greg Cox

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF COX

- **Age**
25
- **Neighborhood**
Lake View
- **Hobbies**
Playing tennis, watching sports, painting
- **Relationship status**
Single
- **Job title**
Primary therapist at New Hope Recovery Center
- **Favorite movie**
Perks of Being a Wallflower
- **Education**
Graduated from the University Wisconsin-Madison in 2012
- **Favorite TV show**
Saturday Night Live
- **Little-known fact**
"I went to the Summer Olympics in London in 2012."

Greg Cox has gone from intern to primary therapist at New Hope Recovery Center, a treatment facility for chemical dependency in Lake View.

Clients come five days a week and are in groups for about three hours a day. Cox facilitates the groups in the morning, which are on a variety of topics and in different formats.

"There is an individual and family component, so clients meet with me for an individual session," he said. "We also try to include the family of origin and/or the family of choice as frequently as possible."

There are family workshops every Saturday where clients and their loved ones participate in group together. "This particular job is a fantastic experience for me because I get to work in the three main modalities of therapy: group work, individual therapy, and family/couples work," he said.

Cox got into therapy by accident ... well, sort of, he said.

"I was a psychology major in undergrad only because I found the classes personally interesting; I never considered it an option as a career," he said. "I thought I would get involved in some sort of biology or medical job. It wasn't until I was approaching graduation that being a therapist seemed like a viable option for me."

"Now I look back and it was always right in front of me; I just never noticed it."

Cox is often reading psychology and self-help books/articles "as a way to learn about specific topics I'm experiencing personally, but also in turn [to] weave it into discussions we have in group."

For example, he recommends Alan Downs' book, *The Velvet Rage*. "It's an incredible capture of the gay man's life experience, but is also easy to read and understand," Cox said.

Cox acknowledged that each client has unique challenges, and he admitted, "that can be overwhelming and exciting all at the same time as their therapist."

"I try to remind myself that I'm not there



to give advice because ultimately that isn't helpful," he said. "If I collaborate with the client and listen to their struggle before I know it they've experienced some relief because their goals for therapy have become my goals for them."

Cox said the best part of his job is when a client tells him that something Cox said really resonated with them. "This is a job with so many unknowns and variables that it is reassuring to know even the smallest impact has been made," Cox said. "It [also] is amazing when alumni clients come back and say, hello. Whether they are sober or have had a relapse it is affirming to know they chose New Hope as their safe space."

The New Hope Recovery Center is one of three LGBTQ-specific addiction programs in Chicago. It's a program where LGBTQ-identified clients can explore the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity, and chemical

dependency, Cox said. "However, it is never limited to only chemical dependency, the conversation always includes some combination of sex, internet, family stressors, trauma, internalized homophobia, bullying, rejection, etc. The list goes on and on, but underneath it all is usually fear."

LGBTRIVIA
Name the controversial 1968 play written by Mart Crowley which was also translated to film in 1970 and featured a group of New York gay men who gather to dish and bicker.
Answer on page 19



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viewpoints



**Dana
RUDOLPH**

MOMBIAN: New edition enlivens 'Two Mommies' for families today

A 25th-anniversary edition of Leslea Newman's children's book *Heather Has Two Mommies*, with brand-new illustrations and updated text, has given the classic new life for families today. And Newman is amazed that some of the children who read *Heather* when it first came out could now be reading it to their own children, she told me in an interview.

The most obvious changes in the new edition are Laura Cornell's full-color, contemporary illustrations that replace Diana Souza's originals. Newman said that she loves how the new pictures enhance the text, showing that "Heather's mothers adore her." For example, she said, it's obvious *Heather* alone picked out her mismatched first-day-of-school outfit, and "That says to me her parents are really allowing her to be herself." *Heather* also "looks really confident" going into her classroom on the first day of school, "and I think that reflects good parenting."

Heather's moms now also, subtly, sport matching rings. To my mind, however, the easy-to-miss rings will have less impact on young readers than the shift in *Heather's* attitude. The original text had her start to cry when she thinks about whether she is the only child at school without a daddy. That always made me hesitate to share *Heather* with my son—I feared it would give him the idea that not having a daddy was something to cry about. In the revised story, however, *Heather* merely wonders if she's the only one without a daddy—without crying—before the teacher takes the whole class on a joyous exploration

of their many-structured, many-race families.

Newman explained the change as part of her becoming "more subtle and nuanced" as a writer. *Heather's* wondering "is much more open to interpretation on the part of the reader," who "can insert him or herself into the story and have his or her own reaction along with *Heather*." It also reflects, to my mind, a climate of growing acceptance, when having a different family structure may be less likely to cause tears.

To understand how far *Heather* has come, it helps to look at her origins. *Heather* was not, in fact, the first picture book to show same-sex parents. That was Jane Severance's 1979 *When Megan Went Away*, about a girl dealing with her mother's partner moving out. *Heather* took off in a way Severance's didn't, however—perhaps because it showed a happy, intact two-mom family.

Newman got the idea for *Heather* when a lesbian mother stopped her on the street and asked for a book that reflected her family. After more than 50 publishers refused to take it, Newman and her friend Tzivia Gover, a lesbian mom with a desktop publishing company, decided to try it themselves. They gathered contributions \$10 at a time—"before Kickstarter, actually licking envelopes"—and co-published *Heather* in 1989. "I really wasn't thinking much past my local community, let alone the national or international community at that point," Newman said.

The next year, LGBT publisher Alyson Publications bought the rights to *Heather* when it launched a line of children's books.

For several years, letters trickled in to Newman from both lesbian and straight parents saying how much their children liked *Heather*. Then, in 1992, controversy erupted. Copies of *Heather* and another Alyson picture book, *Daddy's Roommate*, were used as examples of "the militant homosexual agenda" by an Oregon group campaigning to allow anti-gay discrimination. In New York City, both books were part of a proposed "Rainbow Curriculum" of suggested books to teach respect for all types of families, but were removed in the face of opposition.

Around the country, *Heather* faced challenges in schools and public libraries from those who

wanted it removed or restricted, and earned a top-10 spot on the American Library Association's Most Frequently Challenged Books list for 1990-99. Most librarians supported it, though, Newman noted, and it mostly stayed on shelves.

Slowly, change happened, both in society and in the publishing industry. In 2008, two decades after scrounging for money to publish *Heather*, she was asked by an editor at Tricycle Press to write two board books about same-sex-headed families. She marveled, "I was actually being asked to write these books for kids younger than the *Heather* set, and being paid to do so." Tricycle published them as *Mommy, Mama, and Me* and *Daddy, Papa, and Me*, along with her picture book *Donovan's Big Day*, about a boy on his mom's wedding day. Tricycle was since bought by industry giant Random House, which still publishes all three books. "That's a big shift," she said.

Now, Candlewick Press—an independent publisher of mainstream children's classics like Sam McBratney's *Guess How Much I Love You*—is publishing the 25th-anniversary edition of *Heather*.

Despite this progress, however, Newman noted there are still only a handful of LGBT-inclusive picture books each year. One reason, she said, is that color art makes picture books expensive to produce, and publishers may fear that only the type of family featured in a book will buy it—which Newman does not think is true.

In contrast, she said her own book is not only for kids with two moms "but for kids who have friends who have two moms, for kids who have classmates who have two moms, or kids who don't even know other kids who have two moms, just so that they are aware that families come in all different variations."

While she believes "we still have a lot more work to do," she added, "I hope my humble little book is helping educate kids to appreciate, respect, and celebrate difference."

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of *Mombian* (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBT parents.

letters

Corporate interests

To the Editor:

Windy City Times touts the presence of five LGBTQ members on the new Chicago City Council. But before we congratulate ourselves with high fives, think a moment about whose class interests a couple of these political operatives promote. Are they serving all members of our community? Or do they promote the interests of the already wealthy elites?

Witness Tom Tunney: He's the millionaire restaurateur and Belmont Avenue real-estate baron who apparently doesn't want to share a bit of the wealth with his busboys and wait staff. For Tunney was one of five Council members who voted against raising the minimum wage in Chicago to \$13 by mid-2019. Hiking the wage, he said, would "be bad for business profits," though he was careful not to mention that his own profits might suffer as well. Even the Chicago Tribune told Tunney to be "more independent" of his ward's

business interests.

And witness James Cappleman: He's the toady of real-estate developers who presided over the loss of more than 900 low-rent single-room occupancy (SRO) units in his ward between 2011 and 2014, which almost equaled the total loss of SRO units for the rest of Chicago combined! This is the same guy—a former social worker, no less—who barred a Salvation Army food truck from visiting his ward because it would encourage poor people to hang around.

Back when most LGBTQs thanked Helen Shiller for her AIDS and gay-rights advocacy, Cappleman launched shrill attacks against her for defending the poor in the 46th Ward.

So it's possible to be gay and, at the same time, serve corporate interests against working and nonworking Chicagoans, both gay and straight.

Tunney and Cappleman have made an art form of it.

Bob Schwartz
Roger Fraser

Passages

To the Editor:

I was sad to hear of Carl Sharp's passing (in Windy City Times' April 1 issue).

He was the first person I met in my first visit to a gay bar, in 1978; he was affable, glib and animated. It was at The Flight (1977-88) at Clark and Hubbard, and I was an extremely nervous 18-year-old that night. Carl made it easier as we talked about [the TV show] *Baretta* getting canceled, the Dave Clark Five and Jumbo Jarry's, a nearby hot-dog stand.

I also broke bread with Carl one night at a German-American restaurant near Clark and Ontario. Carl was tougher than a two-dollar steak, but was also as gentle as rain at the same time.

In the same issue of WCT, columnist Billy Masters talked of hearing of the death of a former tormentor in his youth, and Billy almost felt a sense of joy.

Those were my sentiments as, not too long ago, a vicious bully who verbally (and sometimes physically) assaulted me died in a grisly fashion. I took a page from the venerable Mark Twain and said to former peers who knew him, "I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."

Cy Gaffney

Send columns or letters to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL. 30, No. 29, April 15, 2015

The combined forces of *Windy City Times*,
founded Sept. 1985, and *Outlines* newspaper,
founded May 1987.

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WEB HOSTING: LoveYourWebsite.com (lead programmer: Martie Marro)

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WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP,
5315 N. Clark St. #192, Chicago, IL, 60640 U.S.A.
(MAILING ADDRESS ONLY)

Windy City Times Deadline every Wednesday.
Nightspots Deadline Wednesday prior to street date.
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Mother's day

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Actress Mo'Nique (above, with Julian Walker) talks about playing a mother in the film *Blackbird*.

Still from *Blackbird*

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Eclipse focuses on McNally

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Eclipse Theatre Company frames each of its seasons around the work of just one playwright. Throughout the company's 23-year history, award-winning gay playwright Terrence McNally was frequently under consideration, but it wasn't until 2015 that Eclipse finally chose him.

"Coming off of a really exciting, successful season with playwright Lynn Nottage, there is a sense of wanting to shift gears a little bit and there is certainly a lot of comedy to McNally's writing," said Eclipse artistic director Nathaniel Swift who performs in the season opener, McNally's 1991 off-Broadway drama *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, and directs the second, McNally's 1993 drama called *A Perfect Ganesh* which is about two American women dealing with grief while traveling in India. Rounding Eclipse's season is McNally's 1989 gay breakup drama involving obsessed opera queens called *The Lisbon Traviata*, which will be directed by Goodman Theatre artistic associate Steve Scott.

"There's a really important conversation going on in the country right now about gay rights that was certainly a part of the landscape of when we were deciding," said Swift, who identified himself as straight during the interview. "So with the recent legislation in Indiana, that was certainly not something we were anticipating, and that brings us to the forefront in working with a playwright who absolutely explores the issues of gay rights."

But Swift said Eclipse had a very tough time just narrowing down their 2015 season to three choices because McNally is renowned for his prolific and stylistic writing output. Not only is McNally famous for Tony Award-winning plays (*Master Class*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*) and Emmy Award-winning screenplays (*Andre's Mother*), but he has also adapted books for musicals (*Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Ragtime*) and opera librettos (*Dead Man Walking*, *Great Scott*).

Even at age 75, McNally is as busy as ever. On Broadway McNally is not only currently represented with his hit revised revival of his 1986 comedy *It's Only a Play* starring longtime acting muse Nathan Lane, but also with his musical adaptation of Friedrich Schlegel's dark drama *The Visit* co-written with composer John Kander and the late lyricist Fred Ebb. *The Visit* features Tony-winning star Chita Rivera returning to the role that she created in 2001 at Chicago's Goodman Theatre.

Swift said the season was programmed to show off the theatricality of McNally's off-Broadway output and each work touches upon issues affecting the gay community, whether directly or obliquely. For instance, all the on-stage characters in *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* are heterosexual, though they're spending their 4th of July weekend smack dab in the gay vacation mecca of New York's Fire Island because one woman has inherited a prized beach house because her brother passed away from AIDS.

"This is really about straight couples who aren't all together comfortable with homosexuality," said Swift, noting how Eclipse is treating the play as a 1990s period piece rather than making any attempts to update it.

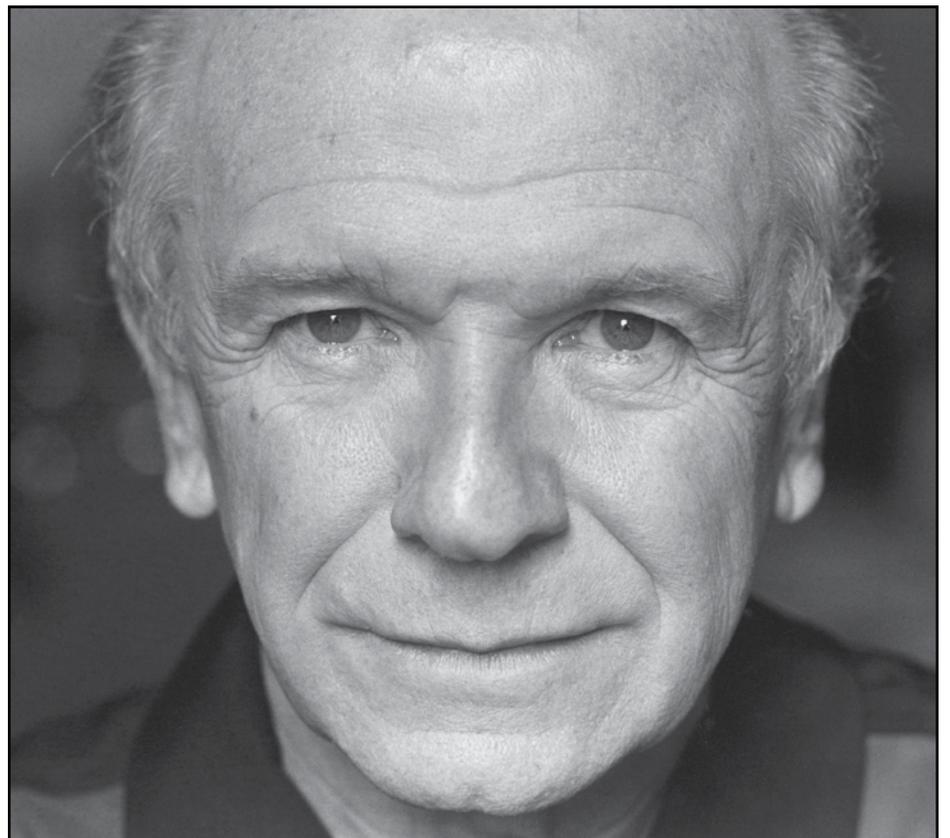
"Our director, Ted Hoerl, is a gay artist who is right at the age of the characters in *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* in that in the late '80s and early '90s and certainly well familiar with the social landscape at the time," Swift said. "The importance of not forgetting the way that we as a country treated gay people throughout the AIDS crisis is part of what *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* is about. To say that we as a country did a disservice to the gay community is really a severe understatement."

"*Lips Together, Teeth Apart* also has a lot of interesting ways that it plays with theatrical conventions with a lot of asides—direct address—to the audience that are used in really creative ways to expose some of the emotional depth of these characters," said Swift, citing one of the challenges of performing the material.

And then there's also the regret of certain McNally works that other Eclipse ensemble members wanted to perform, but were ultimately not chosen for the season. For instance, Eclipse had hoped to produce the Chicago premiere McNally's 2014 Broadway drama *Mothers and Sons*, a sequel of sorts to his Emmy Award-winning TV short *Andre's Mother*, to explore how far gay rights have come in America. But instead Northlight Theatre in Skokie obtained the rights and will stage *Mothers and Sons* in early 2016.

Nonetheless, Swift is looking forward to the rest of Eclipse's McNally season, particularly since they've received very encouraging words from him in about a whole season dedicated to his work.

"McNally said he was honored and excited about the season," Swift said. "He was very supportive and very encouraging about what we were planning and my hope is that he'll be



Terrence McNally.

Photo by Jeffrey Hornstein

able to stay in touch as we go through the season."

Eclipse Theatre Company's *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* plays from Thursday, April 16, through Sunday, May 24, in Studio 3 of the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave. Tickets are \$18 for previews and students,

\$28 during the regular run.

Eclipse's 2015 Terrence McNally season continues with *A Perfect Ganesh* playing July 16 to Aug. 23, and *The Lisbon Traviata* playing Nov. 5 to Dec. 13. For more information, call 773-935-6875 or visit www.eclipse-theatre.com.

Steppenwolf annual gala on May 9

Steppenwolf Theatre Company will join more than 600 members of Chicago's corporate, civic and cultural communities for "Gala 2015" on Saturday, May 9, at Steppenwolf, 1650 N. Halsted St., at 6:30 p.m.

The event will offer guests a unique opportunity to connect with Steppenwolf ensemble members in their artistic home while enjoying a preview of upcoming productions, cocktails, a gourmet dinner, auction, music and dancing with Steppenwolf co-founder Gary Sinise and his Lt. Dan Band.

Gala 2015 will start with a special tribute to Steppenwolf Artistic Director Martha Lavey. Following the tribute, guests will view an exclusive showcase of scenes from Steppenwolf's U.S. premiere production of Rory Kinnear's *The Herd*, directed by ensemble member Frank Galati and featuring ensemble

members Francis Guinan, John Mahoney, Molly Regan and Lois Smith.

Single tickets starting at \$1,000 and tables for Gala 2015 are currently available by calling 312-654-5632 or emailing special-events@steppenwolf.org. The annual gala raises more than \$1 million for Steppenwolf's artistic, educational and community programming.

Sculpture exhibition at Willis Tower

"Jeffrey Breslow: Bolder & Boulder," Willis Tower's first outdoor/indoor sculpture exhibition, will be exhibited April 23-Oct. 30.

Longtime Chicago sculptor Jeffrey Breslow integrates found granite boulders and shaped steel. His work ranges from exuberant tabletop creations to outdoor sculptures weighing as many as three tons.

Visit <http://jeffreymbreslow.com/>.



An Issue of Blood: An Historical Parable.
Photo by Michael Courier

THEATER REVIEW

An Issue of Blood: An Historical Parable

Playwright: Marcus Gardley
At: Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.
Tickets: 773-871-3000 or www.victorygardens.org; \$15-\$60
Runs through May 3

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Marcus Gardley's world premiere drama *An Issue of Blood: An Historical Parable* is sure to inspire some heated debate—especially over the final tableau with a button-pushing audio montage. Many will see this coda as heavy-handed and obvious, while others will argue that it ties together what Gardley was trying to explore in equating American colonial history to modern day U.S. race relations.

Either way, the quick substitution of *An Issue of Blood* into Victory Gardens' 2014-15 season was certainly a leap of faith on the part of artistic director Chay Yew, who also directs the powerfully acted production. Yet *An Issue of Blood* doesn't entirely feel fully cooked as it was rushed to the table.

Originally scheduled in this season spot was Marcus Gardley's developing Great Migration drama *A Wonder in My Soul*. But Gardley asked Yew for a substitution since he wanted to respond to the news cycle stories on African-American men being killed by cops in places like New York and Ferguson, Mo.

With *An Issue of Blood*, Gardley explores how the roots of racism in the United States stretch back to 1676 colonial Virginia, when there was a slave and indentured servant revolt. Here its class and wealth and not skin color that is the major dividing line between those who toiled in servitude and those who wielded power.

How Gardley explores this divide is by creating a worldly and highly educated Black man named John Israel First (a handsome and imperious Tosin Morohunfola), who is the son of the historical wealthy plantation owner known as Negro Mary (a brazenly eccentric and fierce Lizan Mitchell).

Back from three years in England, Israel plans to marry and secure the freedom of the Irish servant Calla (Eleni Pappageorge). But there are complications since Calla is also pursued by the Constable Mason Esau (Steve O'Connell),

while Negro Mary's indentured servants, husband and wife Dozens and Nova Goode (the wonderfully sparring Clevant Derricks and E. Faye Butler), know of plans for an impending servant and slave revolt.

Dramatically, Gardley knows how to construct a gripping story filled with snappy, characterful dialogue. But it is a bit of a jumble with many of historical details not feeling quite right. For instance, the characters wear a grab bag of American era styles by costume designer Izumi Inaba, while the dialects all sound more modern-day rather than what one imagines for the colonial United States.

So even if *An Issue of Blood* doesn't fully feel developed visually or stylistically, at least it's not boring, thanks to its strong performances. And even with its unsubtle ending, *An Issue of Blood* does serve as a potent reminder that the birth of U.S. oppression against Blacks does painfully stretch back to the country's colonial roots.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Apple Family Plays, TimeLine Theatre, through April 19. The affluent, middle-aged Apple siblings discuss each other, life and politics on Election Day 2010 and 2012 in two works playing in repertory. Reality has bruised their liberal idealism and life expectations in Richard Nelson's warm-hearted, witty and political plays, which are brilliantly acted. JA

The Book of Merman, Pride Films and Plays at Apollo Studio, open run. The premise couldn't be sillier, but Leo Schwarz's songs are always a pleasure to hear and, anyway, a show that continues to draw audiences after two extensions must be doing something right. MSB

Love, Loss and What I Wore, First Folio Theatre, Oak Brook, through April 26. A variety of women reflect on clothes and key moments in their lives in this enjoyable take on sisters Nora and Delia Ephron's revue of amusing and touching monologues. SCM

Thunderballs: a James Bond BOYlesque, Gorilla Tango Theatre, opens April 18. The Bucktown storefront theater renowned for its scantily clad spoofs of classic films goes equal op with an all-male burlesque of Ian Fleming's sexy action series. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Murder Ballad

Playwright: book and lyrics by Julia Jordan, music and lyrics by Juliana Nash
At: Bailiwick Chicago at the Flat Iron Arts Center, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Tickets: 773-969-6201;
www.bailiwickchicago.com; \$30-\$40
Runs through: May 9

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

We know upon entering the Flat Iron Arts Center's smaller studio—reconfigured into the King's Club on Manhattan's Lower East Side, complete with drinks, tables and a few elevated seats for the more cautious and/or less thirsty—that before our play is over, somebody will kill somebody else: The band invites us to sing along with a rockabilly version of the venerable broadside ballad "Tom Dooley" and, in the very first song, our storyteller reaffirms the promise of the show's title.

What we *don't* know yet is who will be the killer and the victim, and (significantly) who will be held responsible for the crime. Nor are we going to learn the answers (until the very last moments) of Julia Jordan and Juliana Nash's pop opera recounting the cautionary tale of two urban waifs—"naive, ambitious and underfed"—who eventually achieve security and stability, only to succumb to the lure of their lusty past, making for predict-

ably tragic results. Following 70 minutes of passion, sacrifice, betrayal, passion, fury, despair, vengeance and more passion, blood is spilled and we learn our narrator's part in deciding the fate of slaves to love.

This long-shopworn plot (albeit alleviated by a surprise reversal in its final seconds) is the vehicle for Nash's gritty-edged score evoking romantic recklessness and Apache dance eroticism, embodied in a duet extolling the thrills of "a kiss like a mouth tattoo." Director/choreographer—the two are inseparable in quarters as close as these—James Beaudry weaves the action through the audience to generate an intimacy necessitating, at one point, Amanda Horvath's parading in spike heels atop a bench barely wider than an Olympic-regulation balance beam and, at another, bringing a knife-carrying Chris Logan within inches of spectators' laps. Under Nicholas Davio's music direction, the electronic amplification makes for uniform audibility, though intelligibility was somewhat compromised on opening night by the acoustically reflective surfaces often found in landmark buildings of this vintage.

Don't be too eager to declare your superiority regarding sordid tales of visceral justice, however. Jordan and Nash are not content to let us go home with our smug complacencies intact, instead sending us on our way pursued by a gleeful reminder that sweaty sex and brutal violence is precisely what we came seeking. "It's just entertainment—until it happens to *you!*," the characters taunt us. Don't say you weren't warned.



The Upstairs Concierge.
Photo by Liz Lauren

THEATER REVIEW

The Upstairs Concierge

Playwright: Kristoffer Diaz
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: 1-312-443-3800;
www.GoodmanTheatre.org; \$10-\$40
Runs through: April 26

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

With roots going back more than 2,000 years, farce is the most difficult type of drama to write. The most successful farce authors—among them Britain's Alan Ayckbourn and France's Georges Feydeau—make it their specialty, but non-specialists are drawn to farce as moths to fire, and many are burned. Kristoffer Diaz joins their number with *The Upstairs Concierge*.

The truth is U.S. authors and audiences don't grow up with farce, as Europeans do. We grow up with sitcom, which isn't at all the same thing. Diaz repeats the mistake of many before him: the belief that farce will be successful if it's fast and loud. This is fundamentally untrue. Farce can use speed and noise—and usually does—but only after it's achieved something far more important first: credibility, or the truth of its characters. Farce succeeds only when highly probable people do highly improbable things. Diaz doesn't take the time necessary to establish his characters as bedrock-real. He also places at the apex of his spinning play a character who really doesn't have anything at stake.

Briefly, a swank Chicago hotel is opening three celebrity suites, the doors of which do not lock, with a live-in concierge (Tawny Newsome) to make the celebs (called "pretties") feel like one happy family. The suites are the career highpoint for the husband/wife hotel owners (Cedric Young, Mia Park). The celebs are a best-selling novelist (Sandra Delgado), a vacuous gossip blogger (Jose Antonio Garcia) and a female bunt specialist (Alejandra Escalante) pursued by Major League Baseball scouts. The hotel owner, doubling as a White Sox scout, is the one with something at stake who should be attempting to hold all the other scouts (Yankees, Red Sox, Cubs, Astros) at bay. Instead, the focus is on the concierge, who inexplicably spends all her time keeping the celebs apart rather than making them a happy family, and inexplicably lies to her boss about the bunt specialist.

Diaz makes the further mistake of withholding information from the audience, such as secret elevators in each suite and a past affair between the hotel owner's wife and the blogger. These details should be part of the play's mechanics but instead are meaningless gags. To be sure, there are funny moments and lines in *The Upstairs Concierge*—the novelist miming the plot of her latest book is wonderful—but the structure doesn't work.

Todd Rosenthal's oak-rich two-level scenic design, in Charles Rennie Mackintosh style, is gorgeous. Ms. Theo Allyn steals scenes as the Yankee scout, the sole character utilizing cross-gender casting. Why? Director KJ Sanchez provides speed and energy but cannot make *The Upstairs Concierge* more than fleetingly funny. Diaz's concept is good, but a fundamental rethink is needed.

THEATER

Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson talk 'The Good Book'



Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare.
Photo by Joe Mazza

BY JERRY NUNN

A gay and a lesbian are holding court this spring and tackling one of the best-selling books of all time.

The Bible is explored with the team that originally brought theater audiences the very successful *An Iliad* in 2012. The people behind the world premiere of *The Good Book* hopes for another big hit after recently opening on the South Side of Chicago at Court Theatre.

Brooklyn actor Denis O'Hare has a lengthy theater career from a Tony-winning performance in *Take Me Out* to an Obie Award playing *The Poet* in *An Iliad*. His film projects have included *Milk*, *The Normal Heart*, and *Dallas Buyers Club*. Recent memorable television work includes *American Horror Story*, *True Blood*, *The Good Wife*, and the upcoming FX series *The Comedians*.

Lisa Peterson is a theater director with a varied career of shows including *The Fourth Sister*, *The Poor Itch*, and *Ridiculous Fraud*. She won an Obie Award for *An Iliad*, and a *Light Shining* in Buckinghamshire.

Windy City Times: First off, where did you two meet?

O'Hare: We met here in Chicago doing a play for Remains Theatre Ensemble. That troupe is no longer around.

Peterson: With William Petersen and Amy Morton. I know they are both at Steppenwolf Theatre, but this was before.

O'Hare: It was at the Theatre Building on Belmont, right down from Ann Sather. It was a one-act by Richard Greenberg called *The Author's Voice*.

WCT: I was in the show in college. What part did you play?

O'Hare: I played the troll! After that play, I ended up coming here at Court where I did three plays in a row. I would sleep in the back of the theater between rehearsals and shows because I didn't have time to go home.

WCT: You have paid your dues. What was the big break for you?

O'Hare: Not so much as a big break, but I have had some milestones. The first was here with *Hauptmann*, written by John Logan, where it was eventually transferred to New York. I never came home.

I made my Broadway debut in 1994, but made my biggest splash with *Take Me Out*.

WCT: Were you both always in theater?

O'Hare: Lisa was on the other side of the table with casting.

Peterson: That was just my day job. I got out of college wanting to direct. I've always been a theater nerd.

WCT: How is it working together again?

Peterson: We are back at Court Theatre again because of *Iliad*. We made it to do together as a solo version of the *Iliad*. We started writing it in 2005. I wanted to write with an actor instead of a writer and it turned out to really work. Court did a version of *An Iliad* when we were doing our version in New York. It was very successful for them, and they did a revival of it.

O'Hare: I went out to lunch with Charles Newell, who is the artistic director, and he wanted to know what I was doing next. I said if I was going to write something it would be about the Bible.

Peterson: Because Denis is obsessed with the Bible.

O'Hare: Like all good ex-Catholics! He said that it would be amazing, with the Chicago Divinity School being right here on campus.

Peterson: Denis is a history buff and has a great memory. He knows a lot about the history of the Jewish people. He had been studying the Bible and watching history lectures. I pretty much knew nothing. We starting educating ourselves and reading.

We knew right away this play would not be a solo and Denis knew he did not want to be an actor in it. Unlike *An Iliad*, with Denis in it, this would be a play. We did storyboarding, fast partner writing, improvisation and recorded it.

There is a scene in *The Good Book* using Skype that was inspired by our real-life writing relationship. We spend a lot of time on Skype since are never in the same city. It is a main way that we work.

WCT: Are you expecting controversy with this show?

Peterson: We think there might be.

O'Hare: We have been living in a bubble, so our skin is not toughened up. We did a reading of it at Sundance and it was really well-received there. The Divinity School comes here, and they love it. We are still waiting for the negative backlash but, oddly enough, the more you know about the Bible the more you will enjoy it. The less you know the more you will have an opinion and maybe decide to be offended. Those that want to be offended will be offended.

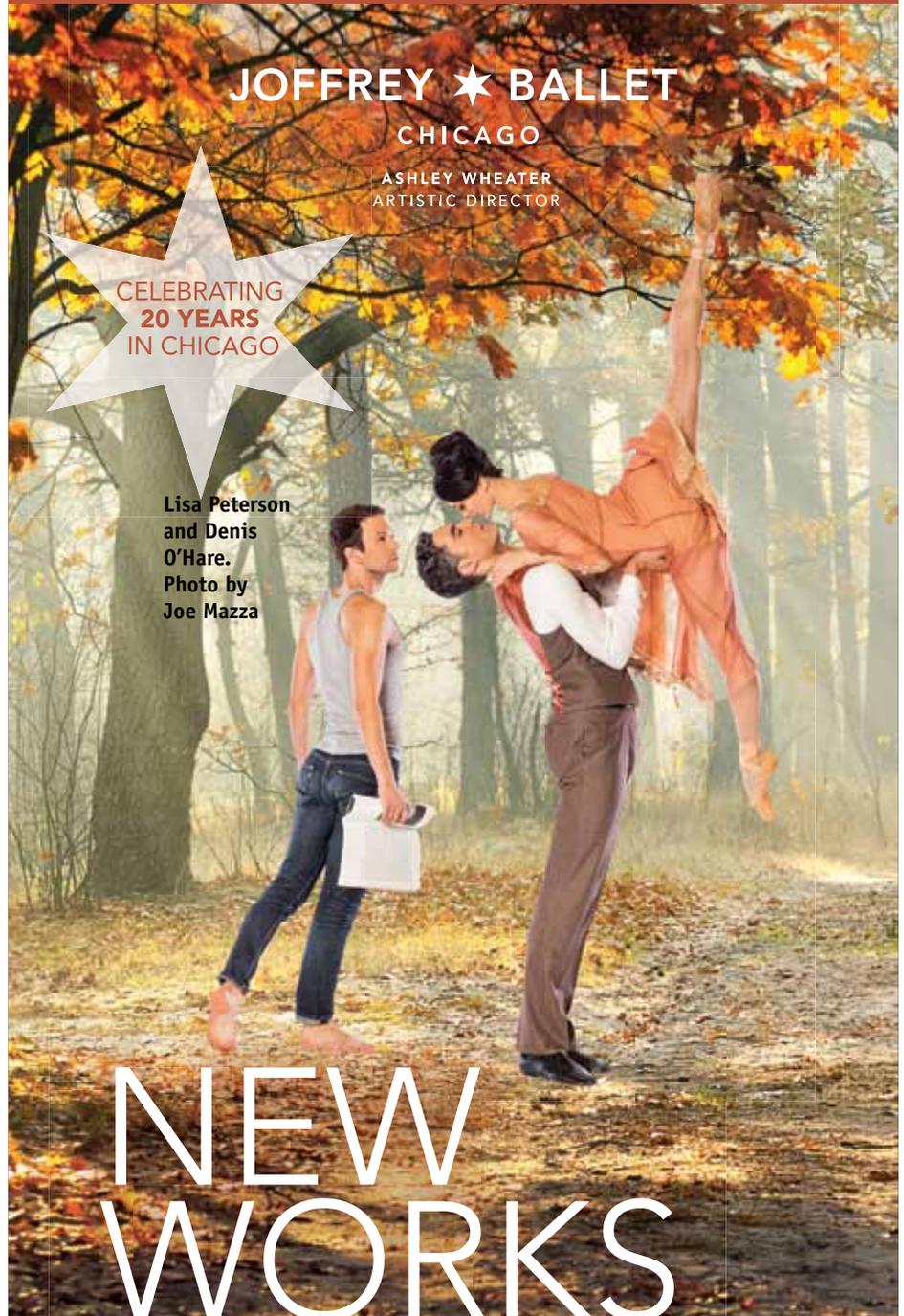
Peterson: Our character holds the Bible in her hands in the first scene and explains that this is the most dangerous text in American culture and we should find out what is in it.

O'Hare: For every quote in the Bible, someone can come back with something completely contradictory. The Bible does not mean one thing. You shouldn't base your religion on John 3:16. One quote cannot encapsulate everything in its entirety. To reduce it to one meaning is ridiculous.

There are seven verses in the Bible that deal with homosexuality. The Bible is mainly concerned with idolatry, not stealing, not divorcing, property, sacrifice, and how to transfer slave's ownership when they are a baby. There is so little about men sleeping with men that it is not a concern. The biggest thing in the Bible is about not worshipping idols. If you decide that those seven verses are the most important verses then you are misreading the document. If you read the entire document those words are swallowed up in a sea of words.

The Good Book currently turns the pages at Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave., until April 19. Visit www.CourtTheatre.org or call 773-753-4472 for ticket information.

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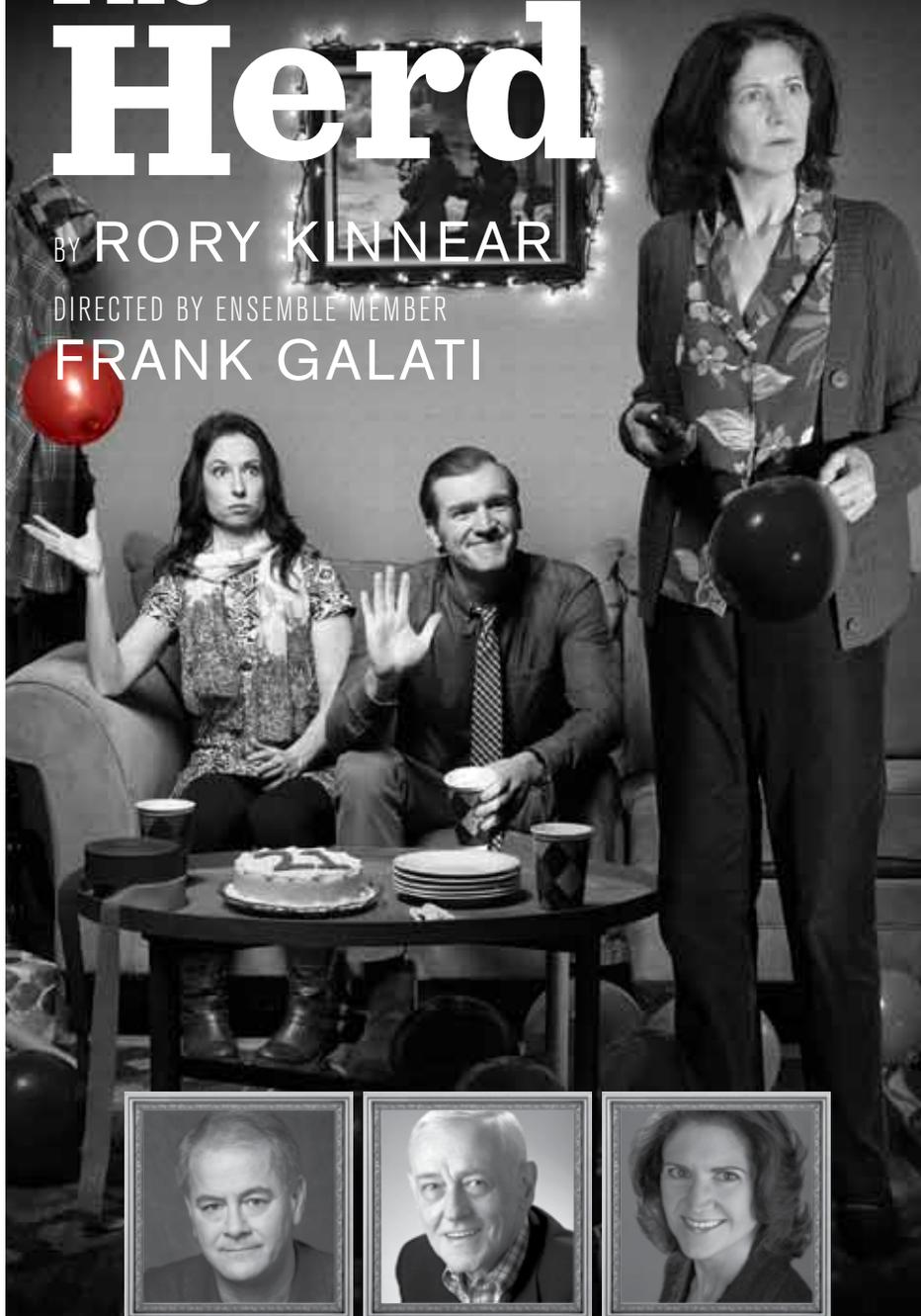
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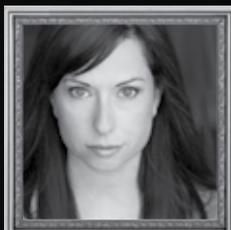
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MOVIES

Mo'Nique: On Queen Latifah, 'Blackbird' and honest mothers

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Oscar-winning actress and comedienne Mo'Nique throws the word "baby" around a lot—as a term of affection, for comedic effect, and when discussing motherhood of her own children and onscreen spawn.

During a phone interview about director Patrik-Ian Polk's (Noah's Arc; The Skinny) acclaimed gay-themed feature *Blackbird*, which she executive-produced with husband Sidney Hicks and stars in, Mo'Nique also tossed out the four-letter-word when expressing her appreciation for, and thanks to, the LGBT community.

"Thanks, to all of you," she shared, "because there was a time before anybody knew who this fat little girl from Baltimore named Mo'Nique was, but there was a community of folks that embraced me and loved on me, baby. It was a kind of love I never experienced before from strangers, so *Blackbird* is truly my love letter to that beautiful community."

The Mississippi-set feature, adapted by Polk and co-screenwriter Rikki Beadle Blair (Stonewall) from Larry Duplechan's novel, stars openly gay newcomer Julian Walker as Randy, a Black Christian 17-year-old with an amazing voice, open-minded school friends—and a tumultuous home situation. His younger sister disappeared without a trace five years ago, and Randy's deeply religious mother, Claire (Mo'Nique), doles out love, grief and homophobia-induced abuse in equal doses. Dad (Isaiah Washing-

ton), now separated from Claire, maintains a distance. And then there are Julian's nightly wet dreams about other boys, including a new and assured gay student, Marshall.

While discussing *Blackbird* during our laughter and "baby"-filled telephone interview, Mo'Nique also touched upon her friendship with *Precious* director Lee Daniels—whose recent claims she was "blackballed" in Hollywood for not promoting *Precious* have caused a rift between the pair—as well as her upcoming performance as lesbian singer Ma Rainey opposite Queen Latifah in HBO's May premiere biopic about queer blues legend Bessie Smith, entitled *Bessie*.

Windy City Times: Just as I was preparing for this interview, I got a call from scammers claiming they're from Microsoft's tech department, wanting to implant my computer with malware and charge me a fortune to remove a virus that doesn't exist. Such cretins.

Mo'Nique: I love those kind of calls because you can have fun with them. You say, 'how's your mother doing?' 'Excuse me?' It throws them totally off their game!

WCT: How did *Blackbird* come your way?

Mo'Nique: Isaiah Washington and I share the same attorney, Ricky Anderson. He called Ricky up and said, 'I believe Monique and Sidney will want to be involved in this project.' By the time we got finished reading page one, we knew we had to be a part.

WCT: Do you like playing bad moms?

Mo'Nique: No, baby! I only played one bad

CULTURE CLUB

mom! What Claire was, was honest, and [acted in accordance with] what she believed. I won't say she was mean. I will say she was conflicted, because there were two things happening. "I believe in this Bible and what it says so much, but I also see my son, who is a beautiful human being," and she didn't know how to balance that.

WCT: At least she didn't throw a TV at him.

Mo'Nique: OK, now! At least she didn't throw a TV! People ask, "What did you walk away with from playing that character?" That woman had an undying faith. Most people would have given up [on finding their daughter] after all those years. But that woman said, no, no, no—the more prayers that go up get answered. She taught me some lessons.

WCT: When cameras weren't rolling, what sort of relationship did you have with Julian?

Mo'Nique: I told him to tell his mother, "Thank you for letting me share you." When cameras weren't rolling, he was very respectful, just a sweet spirit and you feel like, that's my baby. He's so free, and so accepting of who he was, so I really got the opportunity to know that young man and any mother or father would be proud to say that's my son.

WCT: What was the toughest scene to shoot? You do dole out some abuse at Julian, even if it's not a TV projectile.

Mo'Nique: One of the hardest moments for me was when I had to spit on that baby. Because we had to do how many takes? [Laughs] I had to keep spitting and spitting, and every time I was, like, "Julian, I'm sorry, baby."

WCT: Was some special screen spit mixed up for those scenes?

Mo'Nique: No, baby—that's from the pit of my stomach! That's real! Patrik wants it real, sugar! Like the scenes where I had to slap him. I had to slap Julian about 10-12 times. That's a lot of times, and he was turning red. Sidney said, "Momma, you don't have to slap him that hard!" I was like, "Daddy, yes I do! When they

say action, that's not Mo'Nique, that's Claire!" So every time Patrik said action, Claire got mad all over again!

WCT: What sets Patrik apart from all the other directors you've worked with?

Mo'Nique: You know, I would have to say Patrik and Lee Daniels are pretty much on the same page—two directors unafraid to say it. Patrik is this tall, gentle giant who has such a brilliant mind. When you hear him talk, he's very gentle, and you would never know that's what's going to come out on the paper. When you ask, "We're gonna say that?" And Patrik says, "We're gonna say it!" For me and my husband it was such a pleasure. It was a lot of fun.

WCT: Speaking of Lee Daniels, has he responded to your request for a public chat to clear up the whole discussion about you allegedly being blackballed by Hollywood?

Mo'Nique: Not that I know of, no. [But] my baby gonna come around."

WCT: One more Precious-related question—would you do a reunion with Gabourey Sidibe on American Horror Story, playing her mom again?

Mo'Nique: If it makes sense, I sure would do it!

WCT: You and Sidney recently joined the NOH8 campaign. I love the photo of you two.

Mo'Nique: It was such an honor to be a part of that. My husband and I get so tickled when we do things together like NOH8 and Blackbird and the comedy specials, because we've been best friends since the 10th grade and I remember standing on the balcony at our high school and I said, "One day, we're gonna be stars," and he said, "You first." So when we do things like this we look at each other and just chuckle. From the 10th grade to right here.

WCT: How would you respond if a homophobic comment came out of your children's mouths? You and Sidney have a pair of 9-year-old twins.

Mo'Nique: Well, that's not the babies we have, so we know that no homophobic com-

Skilling to receive film honor

Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival announced that iconic WGN meteorologist Tom Skilling will be honored at the 51st Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards Ceremony Wed., April 22, at the Hyatt Chicago Magnificent Mile, 633 N. St. Clair St.

Skilling joins previously announced post-production house Whitehouse Post, advertising legend Tom Burrell and investigative reporter Jay Levine as distinguished honorees for the event, which WGN's Dan Ponce and ABC/Windy City Live's Ji Suk Yi will host.

Skilling will receive the inaugural Chicago Award for his outstanding career forecasting



Tom Skilling.

Chicago's weather.

Tickets to the event (\$75/individual, \$1,000 VIP table of 10 with premium seating) are available at chicagofilmfestival.com. Direct table requests to Managing Director Vivian Teng at vteng@chicagofilmfestival.com.

ments would come out of their mouths. We're raising our babies to accept and love everyone for who they were made to be.

WCT: How was playing Ma Rainey, a 1920s lesbian blues singer, opposite Queen Latifah as fellow queer blues icon Bessie Smith?

Mo'Nique: Playing Ma was amazing, because I feel connected to that woman. She had such a big heart and she didn't take any mess. If you wanted it, she tried to make sure you got it. She loved people and she wasn't ashamed of who she was. People still have a problem with being gay in 2015. Isn't that insane? But you've got to go back to the 1920s and 1930s and it was illegal and they could lock you up, and that woman was unafraid to be who she was made to be. So to be able to bring her to life was such an honor and to be able to play with a living legend, an icon, like Queen Latifah, was such an honor. She is Bessie Smith. When they said "action," her performance—in my humble opinion—is her best performance to date. It's going to blow you away.

WCT: This is a little hot-button to ask, but

I know that if Latifah officially came out it would make such a big difference in the world, and I'm curious how you feel about that.

Mo'Nique: I believe people take their journeys the way they take their journeys. It is their right to take it the way they choose to take it. So I don't have anything to say about it, because it's my journey. She doesn't judge my journey, whatever it may be, so how can I judge hers?

WCT: What's your dream role, if you could play any real person?

Mo'Nique: You ready for this? [Laughs] Cleopatra. In all of her glory and beauty, and tell the real story [of] who that woman really was. She was this amazing, incredible woman who was unafraid to be beautiful and tough.

Blackbird will be released into 10 theaters in five markets on Friday, April 24, along with the subscription-based Urban Movie Channel, according to Variety. The film will also be released via VOD in August.

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New Lyric Opera production generously made possible by The Negaunee Foundation, an Anonymous Donor, Robert S. and Susan E. Morrison, Mr. and Mrs. J. Christopher Reyes, Liz Stiffel, Mrs. Herbert A. Vance and Mr. and Mrs. William C. Vance, and Jim and Vicki Mills/Jon and Lois Mills.

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NUNN ON ONE

Cody Jamison Strand plays it by the 'Book'

BY JERRY NUNN

Brought to you by the South Park team Trey Parker and Matt Stone along with Robert Lopez, of Avenue Q, The Book of Mormon as a musical has entertained packed houses since opening in 2011.

The story of missionaries in Uganda attempting to convert natives has had people rolling in the aisles with off color humor for years now. The show was the hottest ticket in town during its last run and is hoping for the same kind of hilarious religious experience this time out.

Cody Jamison Strand now plays Elder Cunningham after filling Josh Gad's shoes on Broadway. We called the funny guy while in the middle of the tour.

Windy City Times: Hi, Cody. I heard you are originally from South Dakota.

Cody Jamison Strand: I was born and raised there.

WCT: With a conservative background, how did you wind up in a show such as Book of Mormon?

CJS: My father is a pastor of a church and my mom didn't want me to even tell him I was auditioning for the role. After I got the part, we had to tell him. He has seen it about 12 times and really likes it now.

WCT: What do you tell audience members [who] are worried the show is offensive?

CJS: They just have to sit through it until the end. By the end it has a very positive, faith-oriented message. In a nutshell, the show explains that it doesn't matter what a person believes in, just to believe in something.

It does take a little bit of time getting there;



Cody Jamison Strand.
Photos by Joan Marcus



Cody Jamison Strand (right) in The Book of Mormon.

I promise that nothing is dramaturgically gratuitous.

WCT: Have you seen Josh Gad or Ben Platt play your part?

CJS: I have seen Josh do the part on Broadway, but Ben was on tour at the same time that I was playing Elder Cunningham in New York.

WCT: How is it different performing in the show on Broadway, as compared to a touring show?

CJS: Aesthetically, there is not a difference between the two shows. On Broadway you are living in an apartment and have a home. On the road it is just the cast members. On tour that is the only people you will know and get to see regularly every day.

WCT: Do you like all the traveling?

CJS: I do. You get to see the world on someone else's dime so it is a great opportunity.

WCT: Are you heading to home of the Mormons, Salt Lake City, to do the show in July?

CJS: No; that is the other tour. I wish I were. That is going to be the spot to see the show. I have no idea what the reaction will be there.

WCT: Are you going to your hometown South Dakota on tour?

CJS: No—I don't think it will get to South Dakota for quite some time.

WCT: Tell our readers about the flamboyant character in the show. I can't remember if it's stated that he's gay.

CJS: Oh, he's pretty gay! There is a pretty powerful statement on the show about homosexuality and religion—the duality therein. I think it has an important message to say about all of that.

WCT: Can you ad lib the lines sometimes on Book of Mormon?

CJS: That never happens much, but it is live theater. Anything can happen and it often does.

WCT: Do you have a favorite part of the show that you love doing?

CJS: My favorite song to sing is "Baptize Me." It is act two about halfway through the act.

WCT: It must be rewarding to be in such a successful show.

CJS: It is a gift in of itself. It is an incredible experience to be a part of something people respond well to. It's a lot of fun!

The Book of Mormon preaches again these days in the Windy City now through May 17 at the Bank of America Theatre, 18 W. Monroe St. Visit broadwayinchicago.com or call 800-775-2000.

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Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR: Atwood Cafe

BY ANDREW DAVIS

With Windy City Times unveiling its re-designed look in print this week, it seems like the perfect time to discuss a restaurant that's also undergone a renovation: **Atwood Cafe** (1 W. Washington St.; <http://www.atwoodrestaurant.com/>)—which also has a brand-new look on its website.



Atwood has reopened its space in what is now known as Kimpton's Hotel Burnham (formerly known as the Reliance Building, now celebrating its 120th anniversary)—and, frankly, I was almost struck speechless when I entered. Instead of having to walk around to the entrance, the cafe is right there when you walk in—as in, the space is completely open. However, that's not the only difference: The space oozes a much more contemporary feel, thanks



to lighting and the absence of those dark woods. The result is lighter, airy—and more inviting.

Then there's the cuisine. A new chef (Brian Millman, formerly of Uncommon Ground) has added some pizzazz to the menu with offerings: Some are sophisticated and others are almost playful—but everything was delicious when a friend and I went there recently.

Of course, we started with drinks, and The Dapper Scotsman (by Ray Anguiano) was a great way to begin the evening. It's a heady concoction of Famous grouse, campari, carpano antica, lemon, simple syrup and bitters.

Food items are divided into "cold," "hot" and "main" sections. The roasted beets (with Boursin cheese, oranges, fennel, arugula and honey-citrus vinaigrette) were light and very pleasant and we both fell in love with the savory monkey bread (with lemon, parmesan and thyme). As for the lamb meatballs, I thought they were tasty; however, my dining companion went a step further, saying they were as good as lamb he's tried in the Middle East.

The entrees, I'm happy to report, were just as good as the appetizers. The pan-seared chicken was cooked perfectly, and was supplemented by focaccia-and-leek bread pudding, oyster mushrooms, frisee and green garlic cream. We also tried the Rushing Waters trout (complete with lemon confit potatoes)—and this fish was practically as good as the char I had at Sepia a

couple days before.

If you somehow have room for dessert, indulge. The rhubarb upside-down cake (with strawberry cream-cheese ice cream) was just the right size and tartness to make this evening even more wonderful. However, there's also the chocolate espresso pot de creme, which is amazing as well.

The Atwood Cafe: Check out the renovations—and stay for the food.

LGBTRIVIA
From page 11
ANSWER:
The Boys in the Band
Questions from That's So Gay! A Game of LGBTQ Discovery, a 2400-question board game available from Women & Children First Books and on Amazon.com.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., April 15

The Stoli Key West Cocktail Classic Watch as our community's favorite bartenders compete to represent Chicago in the Key West finale. Chance to win airfare to Key West, plus lots of giveaways and surprises, thanks to Stoli. Judges Matthew Harvat and Dixie Lynn Cartwright. Hosted by Stoli brand ambassador Patrik Gallineux. 7:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <http://www.sidetrackchicago.com>

Daring Fiction by indie authors Conversation between Ann Packer and Rebecca Makkai. The two authors will be discussing Ann's highly anticipated new novel, *The Children's Crusade*. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Laughs in the Lounge: April Showcase The monthly comedy showcase, this month featuring Graham Aden, Krista Atkinson, Mike Barton, Carma Nibarger and Lynne Roberts. Special guest host Ricky Lee Barnes. Wine specials. 9:00pm - 11:00pm Rogers Park Social 6920 N. Glenwood Ave. Chicago <http://www.rogersparksocial.com>

Thursday, April 16

Many Identities, Many Stories: Celebrating 20 Queer Years 2nd Story and the The Gender and Sexuality Center at UIC present stories inspired by the GSC's work for self determination and academic success. GSC launches a new fund to support trans, gender non-conforming students. Doors 5:30pm. \$5 for UIC Faculty/Staff/Students \$10 for General Public 6:00pm Moxee Restaurant and Mad Mouse Brewery, 724 W Maxwell St., Chicago. Tickets: <http://www.2ndstory.com>

Chicago International Movies & Music Festival (CIMMfest) The Dicks from Texas tells the story of the men, the myth and the music behind the band that defined Texas hardcore punk. Annual four-day showcase celebrates the connection between music and movies now has LGBQ programming.



MAKE SOME 'NOISE'

Friday, April 17

The annual Night of Noise will take place at the Thompson Center.

Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

\$12 7:00pm Society For Arts, 1112 N Milwaukee Ave., Chicago Tickets: <http://www.CIMMfest.org>

Friday, April 17

Night of Noise Illinois Safe Schools Alliance concludes Day of Silence, which protests the bullying of LGBTQ youth. GSA members talk about their Day of Silence experiences. U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley will speak on issues impacting LGBTQ youth. Mister E. Machine, Chicago-based indie rock group launching their music video with a song about anti-bullying. 5:30pm - 8:30pm Thompson Center Plaza 100 W. Randolph St. Chicago <http://www.illinois-safeschools.org>

Gender Matters Conference at Governors State Panel presentations and keynote speaker David Hanley-Tejeda. Public invited. Free. 5:30pm - 7:30pm Engbretson Hall, Governors State, 1 University Parkway, University Park <http://govst.edu/gendermatters/>

Gene Baur Author, *Living the Farm Sanctuary Life: The Ultimate Guide to Eating Mindfully, Living Longer, and Feeling Better Every Day*. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Angry Fags What happens when activism gets angry. Two men feel helpless when their friend is the victim of an assault. Then, they feel something new: pure, unfiltered rage. 8:00pm Steppenwolf Garage, 1624 N Halsted, Chicago Tickets: <http://pridefilmsandplays.com>

Saturday, April 18

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance (LGBTQ) Support meeting to talk about illnesses, symptoms, treatment, doctors, and personal issues such as dating, relationships and work. Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted 11:00am - 12:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com>

Ancona School's Diversity Symposium: Gender Identity and Fluidity Exploring gender fluidity within the context of parenting and teaching. Welcome coffee reception, keynote, breakout sessions and lunch followed by a theatrical performance by About Face Theatre with a Q&A. Ancona welcomes educators, parents, school leadership and community members interested in multicultural education. 8:30am - 3:00pm 4770 South Dorchester Ave., Chicago 773-924-2356 <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/anconaschool-presents-3rd-annual-diversity-symposium-tickets-14789250045>

The Big Package Auction VIP reception 4-5 pm, live auction 5-8 pm. Join the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus for a silent auction of great packages for trips, art, services and more. There will also be a live auction co-hosted by the Legendary Lady Bunny featuring exclusive and exciting packages, augmented by legendary models in themed costumes who will "take it off" as the bidding increases. VIP tickets \$100; general admission tickets \$50. 4:00pm - 8:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N Halsted St Chicago <http://cgmc.secure.force.com>

Once Upon a Time Gala Annual fundraiser to Children's Place help vulnerable children. TV personality Bill Rancic will host. \$375. Cocktails at 6:30. 8:00pm Union Sta-

tion 210 S Canal Chicago Tickets: <http://childrens-place.org>

Cakes da Killa: No Homo Short doc playing with feature documentary *The Hip-Hop Fellow*. Short doc follows Cakes Da Killa (born Rashard Bradshaw), a 22 year-old up and coming rapper who also happens to be an out and proud gay man. 9:00pm The Society for Arts, 1112 N Milwaukee Ave., Chicago Tickets: <http://www.CIMMfest.org>

Chicago Red Dress Party Building visibility for the HIV/AIDS movement and raising funds for Windy City Sisters and Red Ribbon Party. If you don't show up in red we will have red dresses and red dress ahirts to rent. Advance donation sought. 21+. Questions to info@chicagoredressparty.org. VIP 7:30 p.m. GA: 9 p.m. 1446 W. Kinzie, Chicago <http://www.chicagoredressparty.org>

Sunday, April 19

Healthy Body-Healthy Soul Health and Fitness Fair Center for Jewish Mindfulness, Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell. RSVP by phone. Demonstration 10am. 9:00am - 12:00pm Temple Judea Mizpah, 8610 Niles Center Rd., Skokie, IL 847-676-1566

PFLAG Promotes the well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten the ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Each third Sunday. Questions to pflagchicagometro@pflagillinois.org 2:00pm - 4:15pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago 630-415-0622 <http://www.pflagillinois.org>

PFLAG DuPage chapter Meets the third Sunday of each month 2:00pm St. Paul Lutheran Church, 515 S. Wheaton Ave. Wheaton <http://www.pflagillinois.org>

Monday, April 20

Book of Mormon Cabaret: Turn it On! The cast of *Book of Mormon* in a must-see cabaret benefit supporting Chicago House and Broadway Cares, two organizations each providing essential services for people living with HIV/AIDS. \$50. \$100 VIP 7:30pm The Laugh Factory Chicago 3175 N Broadway Chicago Tickets: http://www.chicagohouse.org/?post_events=book-of-mormon-cabaret

Tuesday, April 21

Homer Marris & The Excellent Adventure Part of the 14th Annual International Pop Overthrow Festival. Celebrating the release of current single and video (feat. Gia Gunn), "It's Amazing," and welcoming new blood from Jim Kramer on bass and Chris Rinere on drums. 10:00pm - 12:00am The Red Line Tap 7006 N Glenwood Ave.

Wed., April 22

Evening for Restore Justice Illinois Featuring Jeanne Bishop, activist and author of *Change of Heart*. Photography and video in the exhibit "Try Youth as Youth." Learn about a new civic organization dedicated to reducing mass incarceration by effectively engaging in the legislative process and elections. Wine, hors d'oeuvres. RSVP by April 15 to jobi.cates@restorejusticeillinois.org 5:30pm - 7:00pm David Weinberg Photography, 300 W. Superior S., Suite 203, Chicago <http://restorejusticeillinois.org>

Bon Foster Conversation, community and cocktails with Lambda Legal. \$200. 6:00pm - 9:30pm Modern Wing, Art Institute Of Chicago, 280 S. Columbus Dr., Chicago <http://bit.ly/bonfoster15> Tickets: <http://www.lambdalegal.org/events/bonfoster>

Thursday, April 23

Give Your Choice A Voice Pro-choice artists Invited to April Speak-Out featuring spoken-word, comedy, music and dialogue about abortion, contraception, adoption, birth, gender identity and reproductive justice. Suggested donation is \$10 with proceeds supporting Chicago NOW and the Chicago Women's Health Center. Interested performers should contact Chicago NOW at chicagonow.org@gmail.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NOW.Chi to guarantee a performance slot. Performers may also sign up the night of the event. 7:00pm - 10:00pm The Heartland Cafe, 7000 N. Glenwood Ave., Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/NOW.Chi>

BOOK REVIEW

Frank
by Barney Frank
\$28; Farrar, Straus
and Giroux; 387 pages
BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

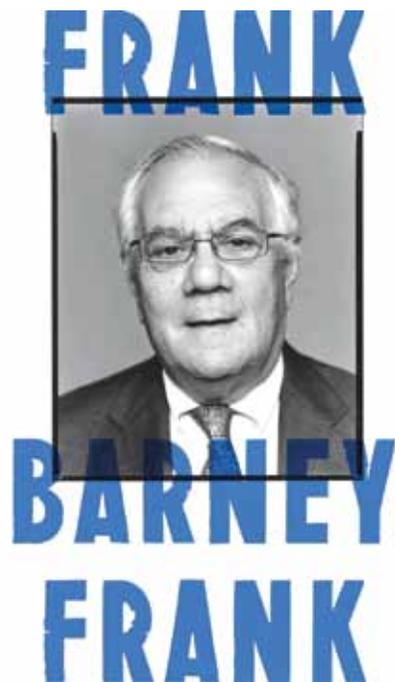
According to what you read in the check-out line at the grocery store this week, another celebrity has released a tell-all.

The thing is, you're sure nothing in it will be surprising, nor are you scandalized. Really, is anything private anymore? Can anyone keep a secret for long? Read *Frank*, by author and former Congressman Barney Frank, and decide...

From the time he was 10, Frank was fascinated by politics. By 14, he understood two things: "I was attracted to the idea of serving in government and I was attracted to ... other guys." He also thought that he had to keep the latter quiet "forever."

Growing up in a liberal Jewish household in New Jersey, Frank's political beliefs were formed early. He volunteered to work on Adlai Stevenson's second presidential run, went to Harvard as a liberal with the occasional conservative viewpoint, and worked for voting rights during Freedom Summer. His volunteerism taught him a lot, which qualified him to work for the Mayor of Boston in 1967, where he honed his political talents, opinions, and negotiation skills. By 1972, he told himself that "an all-out war on homophobia" would be part of his activism henceforth.

Throughout his early political life, however, he was surprised nobody asked him "the question." He says, "...there did not appear to be



any public comment on the fact that an unmarried thirty-two-year-old man was the state's most ardent advocate of gay rights." When he was finally asked, despite his promise to himself, he denied his sexuality; shortly thereafter, he launched a run for Congress that he didn't think was winnable as a gay man.

After the election, he "decided to adopt a hybrid status" to be out privately but not publicly. That changed by late 1989, when he faced action from his Congressional colleagues over his long-time relationship with a male prostitute.

Undaunted, Frank continued to work on be-

half of LGBT rights and consumer issues. His career always came first but by mid-2005, he says he "wanted to enjoy a personal life," having once claimed that he hoped to retire at age seventy-five, in 2015.

"This," he says, "was one of my better attempts at a personal prediction: I was only two years off."

Reading "Frank" is something like taking a tour in a working artists' studio: it's a mess, but there are colorful and interesting things to see here and there.

On the latter, there are enough asides and tidbits to keep readers going and, though they're woefully underrepresented, we're treated to some personal, non-political anecdotes.

Understandably, however, most of what author Frank offers is of a political slant: mostly linear details of his accomplishments, opinions on what happened, and occurrences that are matters of public record—a little braggadocio, a little observation and a lot of ho-hum.

Fans of politics, I think, will be far happier with this book than will others, since that's largely the focus inside. If you'd rather have a more personal memoir, though, know that Frank is merely a tell-some.

Want more? Then look for *Body Counts: A Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS, and Survival*, by Sean Strub; or *Genny Beemyn's A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington D.C.*

people.com/article/barry-manilow-married-3-facts-husband-garry-kief.

Report: Manilow married last year

After years of keeping their relationship secret, People.com confirmed that singer Barry Manilow married his longtime manager, Garry Kief, in a private ceremony in Palm Springs, California, last year.

The affair was a surprise even to the couple's 20 to 30 guests, who attended what they thought was a lunch at Manilow's sprawling Palm Springs estate. Manilow's longtime friend and Palm Springs neighbor Suzanne Somers was reportedly the best man.

Kief also represents Lorna Luft (Liza Minnelli's half-sister, who you might remember as Paulette Rebchuck in *Grease 2*) and Matt Dusk (who was in the Forrest Whitaker-directed film *First Daughter* starring Katie Holmes).

The original article is at <http://www>.

DeGeneres show to film to Chicago

NBC has ordered eight episodes of *First Dates*, an observational documentary series from executive producer Ellen DeGeneres and Shed Media that takes a peek at what happens when a couple meets for the first time and love may be in the air.

Based on a hit UK format, this hour-long series offers a look at a variety of real first dates on one night at the same restaurant.

Production will begin in July in Chicago. No premiere date is set.

Online casting has begun in and around Chicago, Nashville, New York and Seattle at www.FirstDatesCasting.com.

BILLY MASTERS



Billy says that Chad Allen (above) is taking a different path.

"I don't care if Bruce Jenner is transitioning from one gender to another, one political party to another, one religion to another. What I do care about is that Jenner has been a passive participant in what can best be described as a cultural crime that has gone on for years."—Sam Rubin, an L.A.-based entertainment reporter, shares his views on the Diane Sawyer interview with Bruce Jenner. I'm not sure I agree with everything, but I believe Sam Rubin just called Jenner a bottom.

No matter how much you lose, you can always lose more. This past week we got to see Noah Galloway, model and veteran of the armed forces, compete on *Dancing with the Stars* in nothing more than a pair of sweat pants. Well...one leg of a sweat pant, and the other a sweat short. Surely no one wanted us to lose sight of the fact that, in addition to having an incredible physique, Noah is also missing both an arm and a leg. I can't tell you how many fans have written in saying they'd give an arm and a leg to sleep with him! During rehearsals, Noah's partner smashed him in the face and knocked out a tooth. Talk about adding insult to injury!

Remember all those stories about the pizzeria that wouldn't cater a gay wedding and then made more than \$800K in three days via a GoFundMe campaign? And remember how I told you about a campaign started by someone else hoping to raise money for the HRC bringing in less than \$1K in over a week? Well, people are not taking that defeat sitting down. A new campaign has been started—#Pizza4Equality—that would benefit Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Fund to help LGBTQ homeless youth. In the past week, the campaign has raised more than \$140K. While they're still short of their goal (to match the pizza amount), it's a good start.

In light of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, former *Scrubs* co-stars Zach Braff and Donald Faison have offered to help gay couples. The twosome posted a photo embracing on a motorboat with the caption, "If you really and truly want pizza for your gay wedding in Indiana ... we will make it for you." It's almost worth getting married in Indiana. But first, of course, I'd need a spouse—preferably one that likes pepperoni!

We've always known Barry Manilow liked pepperoni. And now it's public. News leaked via the *National Enquirer* that the songbird married his longtime manager, Garry Kief, in a private ceremony last year with Suzanne Somers as "best man." While the couple hasn't made a statement, *People* magazine confirmed the story, adding that it was a surprise for the 20-30 guests who thought they were just coming over for lunch. Barry's former wife, Susan Deixler, said, "I wish him well. I'm happy for him. I'm glad that he's found love and happiness." Well, color me shocked—who knew Barry was ever

married? To a woman?!

On April 24, we'll all know what Bruce Jenner is really doing, since that's when his interview with Diane Sawyer will air. In promos that discuss his "journey," we see Bruce from the back—perhaps to not show that he's wearing blush and lipstick, like "In Touch" had on a recent cover, with the headline "Sex-Change Surgery Gone Wrong." Not to be outdone, the *National Enquirer* has Jenner on its cover: "Bruce's Secret Boob Job! He's Now a 44C". I hope Bruce will be very happy—whichever way he's transitioning.

Another Kardashian has also made some news this week. Rob has gotten an offer from *Playgirl*. They want to feature him in a nude photo shoot, but only if he loses weight. That makes sense—if they shoot him as he is now, it would have to be a pull-out spread. The magazine is willing to pay Rob \$500 for every pound he loses—as if he needs \$50K that badly! They end their offer by saying, "Playgirl wants to know: Is Rob big where it really counts?" Well, he seems to be big in the same places his sisters are.

Long before the Kardashians were wearing dresses and gaining weight, there was Boy George. Well, look out Kardashians—George is gunning for you. The singer has teamed with the producers of the various Kardashian series to develop a reality show about his upcoming move from London to Los Angeles. In his announcement, George said, "If Marge Simpson met Dolly Parton and went dancing with Ziggy Stardust, it wouldn't come close to what you'll see. Why now—why not? Why me—who else?" I hope he can answer all those questions.

Whenever I see the name Gwyneth Paltrow, I invariably roll my eyes. Maybe it's me, but I think she's nutty as a fruitcake. This week, Paltrow announced that she'll spend a week eating on a food-stamp budget to more fully understand the plight of the unfortunate. Her heart might be in the right place, but really? A week? After that, she gets to go back to being Gwyneth Paltrow. It's almost like me deciding to only sleep with people who are in my league. What does that prove? That defeats the whole point of being Billy Masters!

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Teddy in Denver: "I just heard that Chad Allen is retiring from showbiz. Is he still in showbiz? What has he been doing? And what is he going to do?"

In many ways, Chad Allen is the fairy godfather of this column. Without going through the archives (at BillyMasters.com), it seems to me he was one of the first actors we identified as gay. He was certainly one of the first celebrity penises we ever ran. In fact, when I first moved to Los Angeles, I believe he was bottoming across the hall from my apartment. Shortly thereafter, he was having sex with a newbie on a soap (who is still on the soap).

Needless to say, Allen has shown great range and versatility over the years (his last acting gig was being killed on "Dexter"). And now, having turned 40 (and looking better than ever), he's making a change. For the past few years, he's been attending classes at Santa Monica College. He's pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology and is hoping to teach and work in private practice. Toward that end, his website will be coming down in June. But he'll live forever on BillyMasters.com.

When Chad Allen is back in the news, it's definitely time to end yet another column. With all the diversity in this week's column, I barely have room to remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com, the site that always delivers deep dish! If you've got a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Bruce Jenner appears on the cover of *Juggs!* For those Albanians out there, *Krishti u ngjall*. For the Greeks, *Christos anesti*. And for everyone else, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Members of the Chicago Force in the April 11 game.

Photo by Ross Forman

Force scores 100th win with rout

BY ROSS FORMAN

The new-look Chicago Force was just like the old time team on April 11 in the season opener against the West Michigan Mayhem at Lane Stadium on the campus of Lane Tech High School.

The Force dominated the Mayhem, building a 38-0 lead after the first quarter en route to a 63-0 mauling—and the 100th win in team history.

“I saw a lot of things that I was happy with, though obviously there were some things that we still need to improve on,” Force owner Linda Bache said outside the team’s victorious locker room. “I was very happy with our defensive play; it was very active, swarming.”

“We knew we’d get our 100th win this season. I’m just happy we were able to get it here at home, with a lot of our alumni in the stands—because they are the ones responsible for our first 99 wins.”

Former Force players watching the action included Sami Grisafe, Darcy Leslie, Tricia Charbonneau and Amanda Malsch, among others.

Force rookie Cassey Brick opened the scoring at 10:50 of the first quarter with a 79-yard touchdown sprint. She also had a 40-yard TD run in the first quarter and a 55-yard TD run at the end of the second quarter as Chicago carried a 51-0 edge at halftime.

Brick’s dominant offensive showing earned her the Offensive Game Day MVP Award, sponsored by Spin Nightclub and DLG Management.

“[Brick] was lights out, which was not unexpected. She’s a super athlete,” Bache said.

Force quarterback Rachel Gore connected with receiver Jeanette Gray for 2 touchdowns.

Force newcomer Jamie Fornal had a 48-yard interception for a touchdown in the first quarter.

“Jamie played really well,” Bache said.

The Defensive Game Day MVP Award, sponsored by Spin Nightclub and DLG Management, was presented to Sonja Drangsholt, who lives in Norway.

Yes, Norway, as in Scandinavia.

In fact, she arrived the night before the game after three flights, flight delays, and more than 11 hours of commuting. And she was flying home on Sunday night.

Drangsholt, 19, led the team with 8 tackles—and ironically, she had never even practiced with the Force.

“She did exactly what the coaches asked her to do,” Bache said. “I knew she was going to be a standout ... I didn’t expect it so quickly. She really met the challenge.”

Drangsholt said she “had a blast,” though admittedly was “so nervous” before the game.

“I loved it; I’m still in shock [winning the Defensive Game Day MVP Award],” she said.

Drangsholt’s dad, Glenn, is from the Chicago area, and she was able to use some of his frequent flyer miles. Ironically, her mom, Annette, played football on a men’s team in Norway for two years before Sonja was born.

“This was awesome,” Drangsholt said of her Force debut.

Bache noted that Kelsey Casey “played great” on defense, “and we need that.” Bache also highlighted the play of Sarah Rogers.

The next Force home game is May 9 against Indy.

Women’s soccer league announces season

The National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) announced the complete schedule for the 2015 regular season.

The Chicago Red Stars has highlights such as a May 9 double-header with the Chicago Fire at Toyota Park and a four-game homestand to open the se Harbor. There are staggered starting times; the 10K starts at 8:04 a.m., with the 5K commencing at 8:15 a.m.

Interested persons can register at www.proudtorun.org. Race-day registration is also available.

Hall of Fame benefit at Waveland May 9

The Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame’s Annual Celebrity Bowl will take place Saturday, May 9, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Waveland Bowl, 3700 N. Western Ave.

Volunteers, “celebrity bowlers” and attendees are sought. The deadline for bowlers is April 15; for volunteers, April 16-30; and attendees, May 1-9.

RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chicago-gay-and-lesbian-hall-of-fame-annual-celebrity-bowl-tickets-16005675406>.

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