

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

VOL 31, NO. 19 FEB. 3, 2016

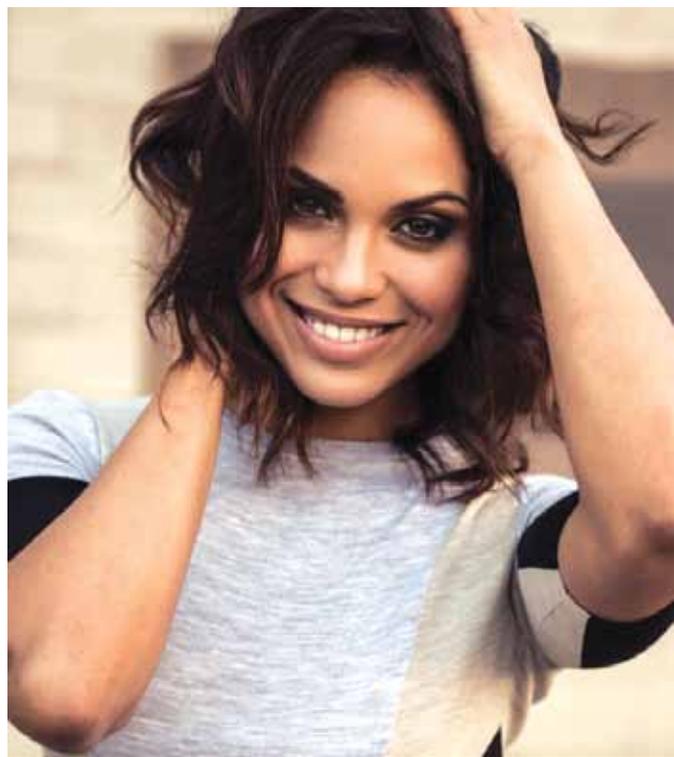
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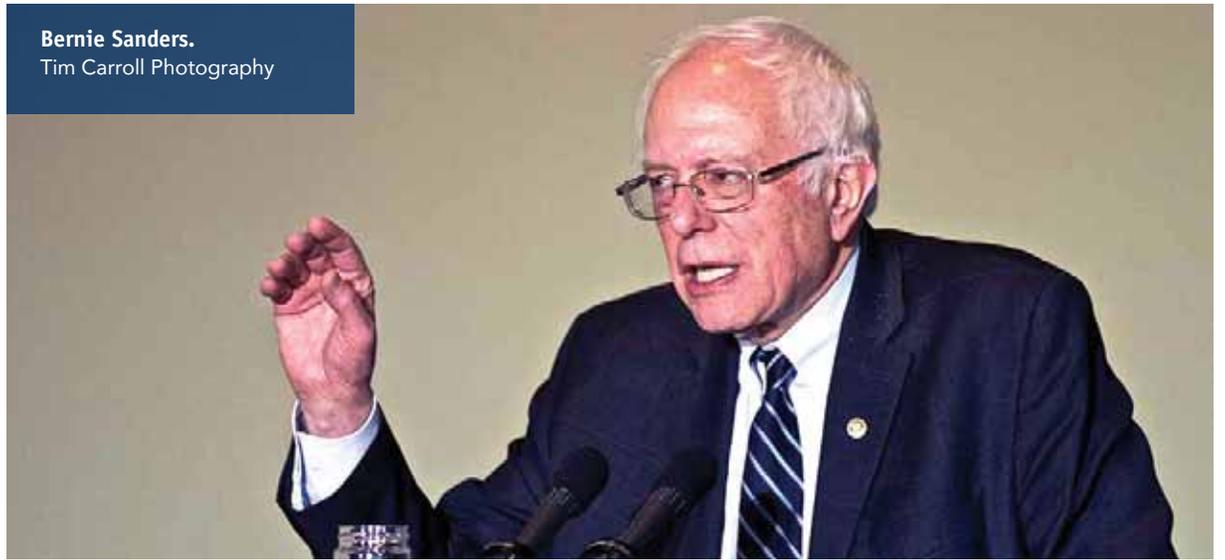
Hillary Clinton.
Tim Carroll Photography

THE RACE IS ON

Tight race between Clinton and Sanders



PARTY TIME
Actress Monica Raymund and others spearhead the monthly pop-up party Clandestina. **22**



Bernie Sanders.
Tim Carroll Photography

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

There were some interesting LGBT moments in the days running up to Monday's Iowa caucuses—caucuses in which Human Rights Campaign-endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton appears to have essentially split the vote with U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and an early favorite among some Log Cabin Republicans, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, finished surprisingly strong. With 99 percent of the vote counted, Secretary of State Clinton

had won 49.9 percent of the Democratic delegates in Iowa Monday night, while Sanders appeared to have won 49.6 percent.

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas won the Iowa caucuses by securing 29 percent of the votes for the Republican nomination. Real estate mogul Donald Trump came in second with 24 percent, followed by Rubio with 23 percent.

Cruz had anti-gay Iowa activists Bob Vander Plaats and U.S. Rep. Steve King on stage with him as he made his victory

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MENTAL HEALTH
A weekly group supports those with depression or bipolar disorder.
Photo of group leader Robert Kazel from Kazel **8**

TURNING TEN
Local LGBT group i2i: Invisible to Invincible marked a decade of existence.
Photo of Ryan Vilorio and Joy Messinger by Carrie Maxwell **7**

'COCKED'
New play looks at the issue of gun ownership.
Photo from Victory Gardens Theater **13**

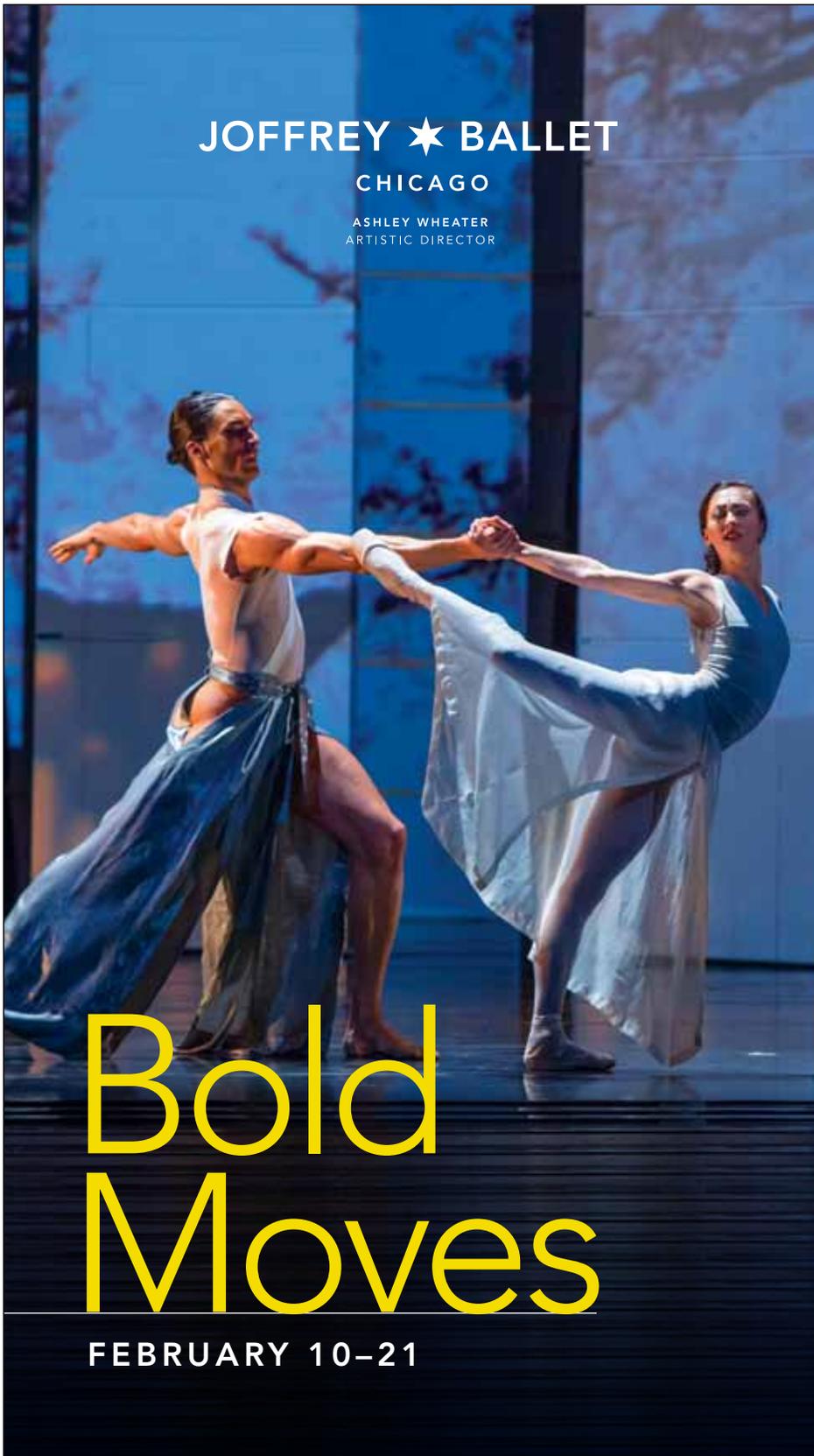
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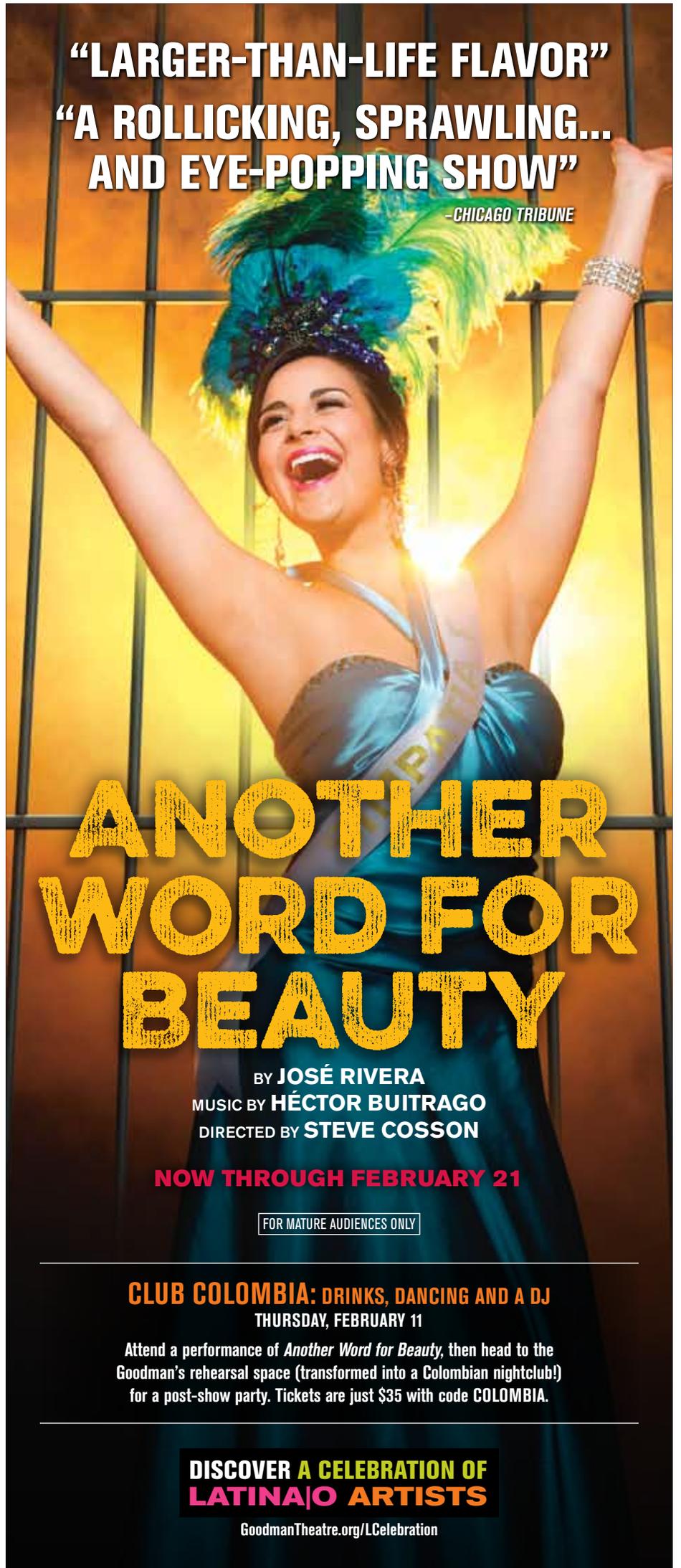
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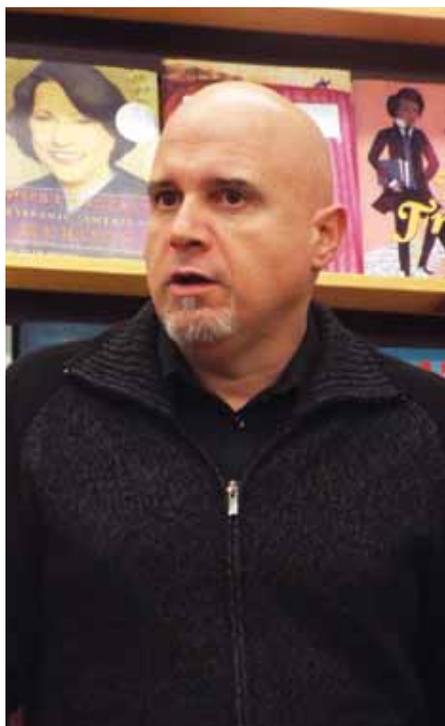
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'QUEER' AND FAR
 Salvador Vidal-Ortiz (left), Letitia Gomez and Mona Noriega held a discussion about the book *Queer Brown Voices*, which discusses Latino/a activism.
 Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

THE 'FIGHT' STUFF



Jess Godwin (above), Branden James and Meghan Murphy were among the performers at the inaugural "Fight Song" charity show.
 Photo by Vern Hester

A TEACHABLE MOMENT

Teacher Jeffrey Tomlinson discusses coming out of the closet.

VACATION VIBES

The 12th Annual Chicago Travel & Adventure Show recently took place in Rosemont.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Darren Criss, Cate Blanchett and Archie Panjabi.

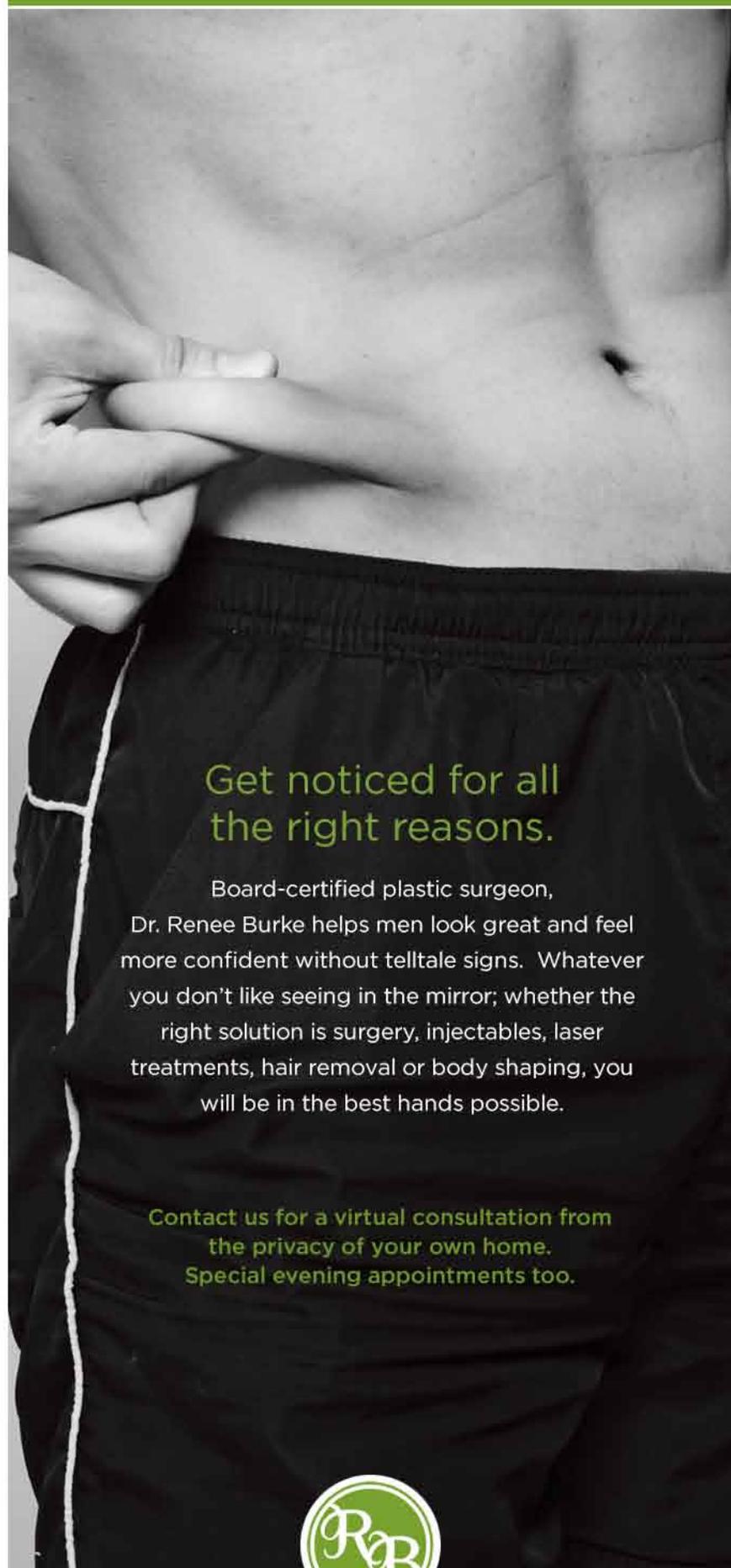
plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

'HOLMES' STRETCH



WCT reviews the theatrical production *The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes*.
 Photo by Brett A. Beiner

SOME THINGS CAN'T BE SOLVED AT THE GYM



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Drag performers allege discrimination at beauty-supply store

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

On Jan. 23 at around 5 p.m. eight drag performers with the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus entered Elim Wig & Beauty Supply on North Broadway in Uptown to shop for wigs for their upcoming drag show.

Brandon Trumfio, one of the shoppers, explained that they decided to shop at Elim because they had been buying wigs from the store for more than 10 years and had great experiences with the store staff in the past. He noted that he'd just bought a wig at Elim a week prior to the group's visit and was there to help his friends pick out their wigs.

"We started at the jewelry stores on Clark Street and had a great time purchasing accessories," said Trumfio. "We walked in and headed to the back, where two of the four employees in the store happily helped us pick out and try on some wigs. At the time, there were three other shoppers in the store.

"After about 20 minutes, this lady from the front of the store—whom I can only assume was a manager—came back and started yelling at us. She specifically said that there 'were too many of us.' What does that mean? Too many gay men shopping at once? She also said we 'were making the other customers uncomfortable' and finally the kicker—that 'this store was for women' and that 'you have to go.' We were all so shocked that we didn't even know how to respond and proceeded to leave without even putting up a fight.

"Personally, I have never experienced such blatant discrimination in my whole life. I've never been kicked out of a store and told that I wasn't allowed to shop there. I feel like we had just stepped back into a time machine—to a time when discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity was allowed. But this is Illinois, and we have protections against discrimination like this."

Reginald Owens and Mark Sherman were among the other individuals involved in the alleged incident.

"The associate asking us to leave 'because this is a store for women' is an absolute slap in the face," said Owens. "We were at a jewelry store on Clark Street an hour before we went to Elim and spent well over \$500 at that store. I really can't comprehend the logic of asking eight repeat customers to leave because one customer has homophobic issues. Every day it becomes more obvious that there's a struggle we have yet to win. But I'm a proud Black gay man who does drag and I will continue to lift myself up and fight every day."

"We decided to go to Elim because, in the past, it's been known by us as a tolerant and welcoming place," said Sherman. "We were respectful to the merchandise, well mannered and polite customers looking forward to making some purchases. After trying on several wigs with employee assistance, a woman employee who was not previously assisting us loudly and aggressively told us to 'make our purchases and leave,' 'you have to leave,' 'you are making customers uncomfortable,' [and] 'This is a store for women, not men; you have to go.'

"We quietly gathered our belongings from the front of the store and left the premises without a word—shocked and in awe. Most of us had shopped at that store for wigs, jewelry and make-up for years. We felt comfortable there. That only added to how shocking it was to be asked to leave because we were 'men in a women's store.'

"Specifically, for me, I have been out of the closet since 1995. I have experienced hate, verbal abuse and discrimination my entire life for nothing more than the crime of existing



Alleged discrimination victim Brandon Trumfio.

Photo by Gina and Tony Photography

just as I am, living as a gay man. Over the years, these types of incidents have lessened in number and the world has become a much more tolerant and accepting place to live as a social minority. However, there's nothing quite like the same knife cutting open the same wound. The pain and hatred of discrimination is just as raw and ugly as the first time it is experienced."

When asked about the incident in question, Elim Wig & Beauty Supply President Michael Yim said, "No customer was 'kicked out' of Elim Wig & Beauty Supply on Jan. 23, 2016. ... If the customers who made this allegation to your publication were not fully satisfied with our service, we kindly extend our invitation for them to visit us again. We would be more than happy to assist them in any way we can."

Trumfio has also shared their story on social media and filed an official complaint on behalf of the group with the Illinois Civil Rights Bureau.

"At the very least this will be on their record so that if further complaints are filed against Elim, the city can take action," said Trumfio. "I will say that finding the proper place to report a civil-rights violation was kind of tricky, as city websites are a little hard to navigate. My first thought was the Better Business Bureau, but they do not handle discrimination claims. So, I continued searching and found a form for the Civil Rights Bureau at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/civilrights.html."

EI releases LGBT adoption guide

Equality Illinois has released a resource, "Growing Your Family: A Guide for Prospective LGBT Adoptive Parents."

The report contains an overview of adoption law and topics to consider as individuals or families start the process of adoption or foster care. It also includes a list of agencies in Illinois and their stated policies toward same-sex couples and LGBT individuals.

Download the guide at http://www.equalityillinois.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/EI-Adoption-Guide_FINAL-1.20.pdf.

Open To Thinking

BY NICK PATRICCA WITH KATHERINE KAUFKA WALTS



The Child Soldier: From the Congo to Chicago

The forced use of a child in armed conflicts profoundly injures the person coerced and gravely insults the idea of the dignity of a human being—an essential value of our civilization and of our self-understanding.

UNICEF estimates that more than 300,000 boys and girls under the age of 18 have been forced in over 30 conflicts worldwide to use violence against others. In these armed conflicts, children are used as soldiers, messengers, smugglers of drugs and arms, and sex slaves. Some children are forcibly recruited; others are driven to join by poverty or debt. Some are 'recruited' with drugs, made compliant by addiction.

In the complex interaction of violence and social systems, some children join armed groups to seek revenge for violence enacted against them or their families. ISIS has been recruiting boys as young as

his uncles who operated a drug smuggling network between Texas and Chicago. Frederick would have preferred to be in school, but his uncles made it clear, through psychological and physical coercion and abuse, that he had no other option than to work for them. Eventually, Frederick escaped and received a T-visa as a victim of human trafficking.

Frederick is not alone. For many Chicago youth, there are little perceived or actual alternatives to survival in violent communities ruled by gangs, much like the stories of their brother and sister child combatants in other parts of the world.

Studies are emerging drawing parallels between the child soldier and urban youth in gangs, between war zones and urban zones of endemic violence—social, emotional, and economic as well as physical.

Mental health researchers such as Patricia K. Kerig have identified parallels with the trauma effects of child soldiers and urban youth involved in criminal gangs. While trauma typically is understood as a result of victimization, children who are forced to commit acts of violence, whether they are child soldiers in Africa or child gang members in El Salvador or Mexico or Chi-

cago, suffer post-traumatic reactions on a par with those who are victimized.

In her March 2013 essay, "Child Soldiers, Gang Members: Reconceptualizing Urban Violence in America," Valerie Strattan Guerra makes insightful parallels between the child soldiers in war zones and the urban child gang members in Chicago 'combat zones'—indicating how we might apply the therapeutic insights from the studies of the child soldiers to our management of our children caught in violence.

Knowing what we know about child soldiers, gang-involved youth, and trauma, we need more study and exploration of how to better respond to Chicago's gang-involved youth. Instead of treating gang-involved youth simply as criminals, we should acknowledge the nuances of their crimes within a trauma-informed framework to address the injustices they've experienced, as well as those suffered by the community.

We hope the authorities in Chicago are prepared to join this effort to re-think police and judicial responses to the systemic violence in our city that is destroying too many of our children.

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"UNICEF estimates that more than 300,000 boys and girls under the age of 18 have been forced in over 30 conflicts worldwide to use violence against others. In these armed conflicts, children are used as soldiers, messengers, smugglers of drugs and arms, and sex slaves."

10 to be suicide bombers. Nigeria's Boko Haram has been abducting scores of young women and selling them as sex slaves as well as using boys as combatants.

The issue of the child soldier came to the forefront in our Western media when the Lord's Resistance Army, one of Africa's oldest armed groups, forcibly recruited more than 65,000 children between 1986-2006 (UNICEF) as armed combatants for their wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and adjacent countries.

Most of the child soldiers we hear about are in wars far from our borders. But street gangs in the United States can operate at times like armed groups in other parts of the world. Adult gang members often begin their lives in the gangs as children, starting as messengers, errand boys, or drug mules and then graduating to larger crimes. Some of our urban gang members in fact come from civil wars and drug wars in other countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.

In many situations, the conceptual lines distinguishing a child soldier and a child gang member are hard to draw.

In one of her first cases as an attorney, Katherine Kaufka Walts, co-author of this column, worked with 'Frederick,' a bright, teenage boy, brought to the United States from West Africa to be a drug runner for

Nick Patricca is professor emeritus at Loyola University Chicago, president of Chicago Network and playwright emeritus at Victory Gardens Theater.

Katherine Kaufka Walts is the Director of the Center for the Human Rights of Children and a faculty member of the School of Law at Loyola University Chicago where she specializes in child trafficking.



Dr. Marc Singer.

PASSAGES

Dr. Marc Singer

Dr. Menachim (Marc) Singer died Nov. 18, 2015, while visiting family in Israel.

Singer was born July 29, 1950, in Romania, the son of Ilana and Max Singer.

He is survived by life partner Michael Hora; mother Ilana; children Ronit and Solomon; brother Dov and his wife, Ola; three nieces; and a large gathering of friends throughout the world.

On Feb. 21, 2016, there will be a celebration-of-life service, remembering and honoring Marc at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre, located at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., at 11 a.m.

There will be a brunch reception following in The Irving Harris Family Foundation Reception Hall.

Donations may be made in Marc's memory to: The Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, 208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60604.

Kit Duffy memorial held at Sidetrack

Nearly 100 people turned out to celebrate the life of longtime LGBTQ ally Kit Duffy Jan. 31 at Sidetrack bar.

Duffy, who was Mayor Harold Washington's gay liaison in the 1980s, played a critical role in building bridges between the gay and mainstream communities during the fight for the city's gay-rights ordinance, and in the community's battle against HIV/AIDS.

Katy Hogan, who worked alongside Duffy in the Washington campaigns for mayor, emceed the event. Speakers included Art Johnston, co-owner of Sidetrack, who spoke about working with Duffy on the city's gay-rights bill.

Also speaking were state Sen. Mattie Hunter (who met Duffy while they both worked to elected Harold Washington in 1982), reporter Laura Washington (who said Duffy had "nerve"), Bennett Johnson (who said Duffy was a change agent who never saw race), Ellen Hostmalingen (from Norway) and Jennifer Robinson.

Food for the memorial was donated by Ann Sather Restaurant, Pastoral: Artisan Cheese, Bread & Wine, and the Hearty Boys. Sidetrack



Laura Washington at the memorial.
Photo by Tracy Baim

donated and Matthew Harvat created the flower arrangements.

The memorial is on video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PF00cpX7d8&feature=youtu.be>.

The article on Duffy's passing is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Kit-Duffy-dies-Mayor-Washingtons-gay-liaison-/53739.html>.



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First trans murder of 2016 in Texas

Austin, Texas, resident Monica Loera, 43, has become the first transgender murder victim in the United States in 2016.

Loera—who was misidentified as male in some media reports—was shot Jan. 22, according to BuzzFeed. Police said they arrested JonCasey William Rowell, 29, over Loera's death. He was charged with first-degree murder and is being held in the Travis County jail on \$250,000 bond.

Loera's death—which was Austin's first homicide this year—comes after 22 trans homicides took place in 2015. Nineteen of the victims were individuals of color, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

The article is at <http://www.buzzfeed.com/davidmack/trans-woman-killed-in-texas-shooting#.bgGMJKn4zy>.

Corrections

In the article in the Jan. 27 issue about the photography book regarding trans life in Cuba, the activist is Mariela Castro and, according to Eric Politzer, there is one only disco in Havana.

Windy City Times regrets the errors.

Report: Trans youth more likely to have autism

BY BOB ROEHR

Nearly a quarter of young persons diagnosed with gender dysphoria, or transgender, screened positive for Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, according to a new paper in the academic journal *LGBT Health*.

The study was a small retrospective review of intake files of 39 children at Boston Children's Hospital. Lead author Daniel E. Shumer explained, "We found that 23 percent of kids fell into the possible, likely, or very likely category when using the evaluation tool to screen for Asperger's."

Asperger's is a term that has been used to describe "higher functioning" autism spectrum disorder, or kids that have elements of autism spectrum disorder but are still able to communicate and have social interactions, he says. Some persons with Asperger's have become particularly adept at writing computer code.

The findings complement a 2010 study from Amsterdam that used more rigorous diagnostic criteria for autism in evaluating 204 youth at a clinic for gender dysphoria. It found that 7.8 percent of those children also met the criteria for having autism; that compares with an autism rate of 0.6 to 1 percent that other studies have found in the general population.

John Strang looked to see if the reverse was also true. He examined records of 1,605 children treated at Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC, in a paper published in 2013, and found that 5.4 percent of the parents of children with autism and 4.8 percent with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) also reported gender variant behavior in their child.

"Having autism is a burden; a lot of things in the world change when you have autism," said Strang. "But adding transgenderism, or maybe some of them aren't transgender but they are just exploring gender, that is complicated in itself."

He anticipated that dealing with both issues might increase the level of anxiety for these kids. But it turns out, that was not always the case.

Often the kids with autism "weren't really noticing the social expectations or the social biases as much as someone without autism," said Strang. "They were less anxious about the trans piece, they were less worried about what people thought," and more accepting of their own sense of identity.

But at the same time, having both conditions adds another layer of complexity. He says, "Knowing how to navigate in a world that is not really friendly with people who are trans can be tricky when you are missing social cues."

Shumer said it is important that parents and medical providers be aware of the increased possibility for co-occurrence of autism and gender variance. If treating patients for one condition, they should screen for the other and be prepared to treat it.

"There also may be implications for how to provide informed consent for things like hormonal interventions," he added.

Strang said he shares those concerns. He has been working with others to develop recommendations on how to best address the needs of people dealing with both autism and gender dysphoria. They hope to publish that paper later this year.

[Editor's note: Windy City Times asked Scott Leibowitz, MD, an attending psychiatrist at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, about his impression of the findings.]

He said, "First, it's important to contextualize these findings. When a study uses a set of screening questions instead of a more formal diagnostic interview, the rates of a particular finding are much more likely to be higher than actually do exist in the population. That said,



Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago's Scott Leibowitz.
Photo from Leibowitz

based on the Amsterdam study (which did, in fact, use a diagnostic interview), there does seem to be a bona fide increased rate of Asperger's disorder among transgender individuals than in the general population."

However, he added, "I would caution the public from over inferring the importance of this. This does not apply to a large majority of transgender individuals. The relevance only matters when trying to help the individuals who are both transgender and Asperger's, as their transition-related needs may differ from other transgender individuals. They may need more support around detecting social cues related to safety and understanding how their gender identity and expression adapts within the society that they live."

In addition, Leibowitz said, "It's also important that mental health providers not overly rush to a diagnosis of Asperger's disorder in the transgender population simply due to a person having challenges with social interactions. ... Lastly, as with all individuals, it's important not to assume that these aspects of life define the very essence of who they are. Like with everyone else, transgender youth who are Asperger's have many other facets of their identities that need nurturance and support from their families, peers, and schools."]

Large anti-gay rally takes place in Italy

Italians staged a mass rally in Rome's Circus Maximus Jan. 30, urging the government to reject legislation that offers same-sex couples legal recognition and some adoption rights, *France24.com* reported.

Organizers were hoping for as many as one million attendees. However, journalists at the scene estimated the numbers to be in the tens of thousands.

The bill is due to be voted on in February, but the government is deeply divided over the issue.

Italy is the last major country in Western Europe that has not offered rights or recognition to same-sex couples, and the European Court of Justice has regularly criticized the Italian government for failing to act. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi promised to pass a law by the end of last year, but has faced fierce opposition.

The article is at <http://www.france24.com/en/20160130-italy-gay-marriage-civil-protest-family-day>.

Trans woman, newly out of jail, launches fundraiser

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Eisha Love—a 26-year-old transgender woman of color released in December, 2015 after serving nearly four years in the Cook County Jail without trial—has announced a *youcaring.com* fundraising campaign designed to help her get back on her feet.

On the campaign's website, Love detailed her need for clothing, a laptop in order to engage in job training and resume dispersal, and assistance with her phone bill until she secures employment.

"Just being released from jail and starting over this really helps me make sure I don't have to go back to the things I was doing before I got arrested," Love told *Windy City Times*. "I'm trying to stay on the right path." According to Love, the future of that path involves speaking out to student groups alongside advocacy organizations and helping others.

"If another girl goes through the same situation as myself, I can help her reflect on her



Eisha Love.
Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

life," Love asserted. "So she can do things in a more positive way."

As of publication, Love's fundraiser has already exceeded half its \$5,000 goal.

"People have been so generous," she said. "When I first put it up, I didn't think that people would go as far as they went within one day. I was just so amazed and I really appreciate it."

To donate to Loves campaign, visit: <https://www.youcaring.com/eisha-love-511716#VqpHXyG0eZ4.facebook>.

Rush Center first to provide trans health-care benefits

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Chicago's Rush University Medical Center will provide comprehensive transgender health care benefits to all employees enrolled in the organization's health care plan.

Rush announced the move in a Jan. 16 press release that stated that transgender care benefits will include "counseling, hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery and all other treatments related to gender transition."

It is the first hospital in Illinois to offer such benefits.

Tanya Friese, DNP, RN, CNL, USN (ret.), is an assistant professor and vice-chair of the organization's LGBTQ Health Committee, founded in 2014 as part of Rush's Diversity Leadership Council.

She credited the genesis of the decision with the impassioned leadership and commitment of Brad Hinrichs, a now retired assistant professor and administrative vice-president of transformation at Rush University Medical Center.

"Brad was a member of our diversity leadership group which was in existence prior to us starting the LGBTQ Health Committee," she told *Windy City Times*. "Transgender health care was always very important to him but we did not have a vehicle to move it forward. When the committee was started, he took it on as his personal project. He was able to take our ideas and find additional champions across many different professions in different aspects of the medical center. He was integral in helping us transform some of the benefits for our employees."

Friese stated transgender health care was always one of five priorities set out by the committee and that Rush's relationship to the greater Chicago community played an integral role in its inclusion.

"Every initiative we've done particularly related to diversity and inclusion has answered a direct need that we have heard on several fronts," she said. "We had patients that voiced their concerns, we had employees that voiced the need and our students are forthright. A lot of us have worked with different aspects of the LGBTQ population and have known trans people for years so having that intimate knowledge of the need, joined our voices together."

Rush has recognized a national trend which is moving towards an understanding of the



Tanya Friese.
Photo from Friese

transgender experience.

In fact, the move has had a quantitative effect across Rush's campus as its various colleges follow the lead taken by the Medical Center in terms of inclusion of transgender health into their curriculums.

"The students are very excited that we are out about the transgender population," Friese asserted. "At their request, eventually we are going to be adding a lot more [trans related] content to our medical school and health sciences management curriculum."

She added that, with assistance from Howard Brown Health's Cecilia Hardacker, RN, she is working to integrate transgender health care into content carried by Rush's College of Nursing.

"We will be educating the next generation of providers in a much more thorough way," Friese said.

As part of the equally meticulous examination into the possibilities of providing transgender health benefits, Rush did a cost-benefit analysis.

"It came out very positively," Friese said. "The benefit would be much more to the employer and the covered individual than there would be any set back related to insurance cost. I was very surprised to find that we were the first medical center to provide the coverage. Now that we have made this move, I am wondering why other institutions do not."

LGBTQ API group celebrates 10 years

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago (i2i) held a fundraising event at the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) Jan. 30.

Founded in 2005 as a multi-gender, multi-ethnic group, i2i is, according to its website, "a community-based organization that celebrates and affirms Asians & Pacific Islanders (APIs) who identify as LGBTQ in the Chicago area."

i2i holds monthly potluck socials, hosts and co-sponsors educational workshops and events, and has participated in community efforts such as a coming-out support group focused on those who identify as API LGBTQ and a monthly support group for API LGBTQ people and their families/friends. In the past, they were also involved with the Chicago Dyke March Collective and the LGBT Mayoral Forum Coalition. The organization is also a member of the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA).

Ahead of remarks by i2i leaders, guests noshed on refreshments provided by three Andersonville/Uptown Asian-American locales—Middle East Bakery & Grocery, North Garden Chinese Restaurant and Shan Restaurant.

Core member Ryan Viloría emceed the event, and spoke about the history of the organization.

Viloría explained how the queer world and more specifically i2i has transformed and adapted over the years to meet the needs of the community.

"I'm so proud to be able to welcome all of you to JASC," said JASC CEO Mike Takada. "This year, we're celebrating our 70th anniversary. ... There are social-justice needs and people and groups that can benefit from the services that we provide ... To me, this is just one example of a way that JASC can be relevant in this day and age ... I'm glad to be an ally to i2i. Congratulations on your 10th anniversary."

Other speakers included Liz Thomson and I Li Hsiao (two of the members of the collective that formed i2i) as well as core members JJ Ueunten and Kim Nguyen.

Hsiao noted the role that Glenn Magpantay (executive director of NQAPIA) played in the formation of i2i while Thomson spoke about the formation of the group and how they came up with the organization's name. Thomson also noted the years of dedication and hard work of two of the founders not in attendance—David Amarathitada and Karl Kimpo.

"Although at first our name wasn't in the top three choices, we landed on Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago because Lola Lai Jong, one of the other founders, strongly encouraged us to reconsider the name choice, which was my idea," said Thomson. "Our name shows the hopeful progression between being an invisible community in many different ways including our race and ethnicity but also queerness, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to being invincible. Our shortened name, i2i, represents two people coming together."

Ueunten previewed upcoming events and Nguyen encouraged attendees to buy raffle tickets and participate in the silent auction.

i2i members were also invited to speak about what the organization has meant to them. Speakers included Joy Messinger, Randy Kim and Jin Wu.

The silent auction included a variety of items and services—an Angel's Restaurant gift certificate, Bulls tickets, a two-hour photo session, an energy healing session, neighborhood bike tour, a one-year membership to Old Town School of Folk Music, a variety of books and graphic novels including a book edited by former i2i member Kevin K. Kumashiro and many



Mike Takada.
Photo by Liz Thomson

items from Early to Bed.

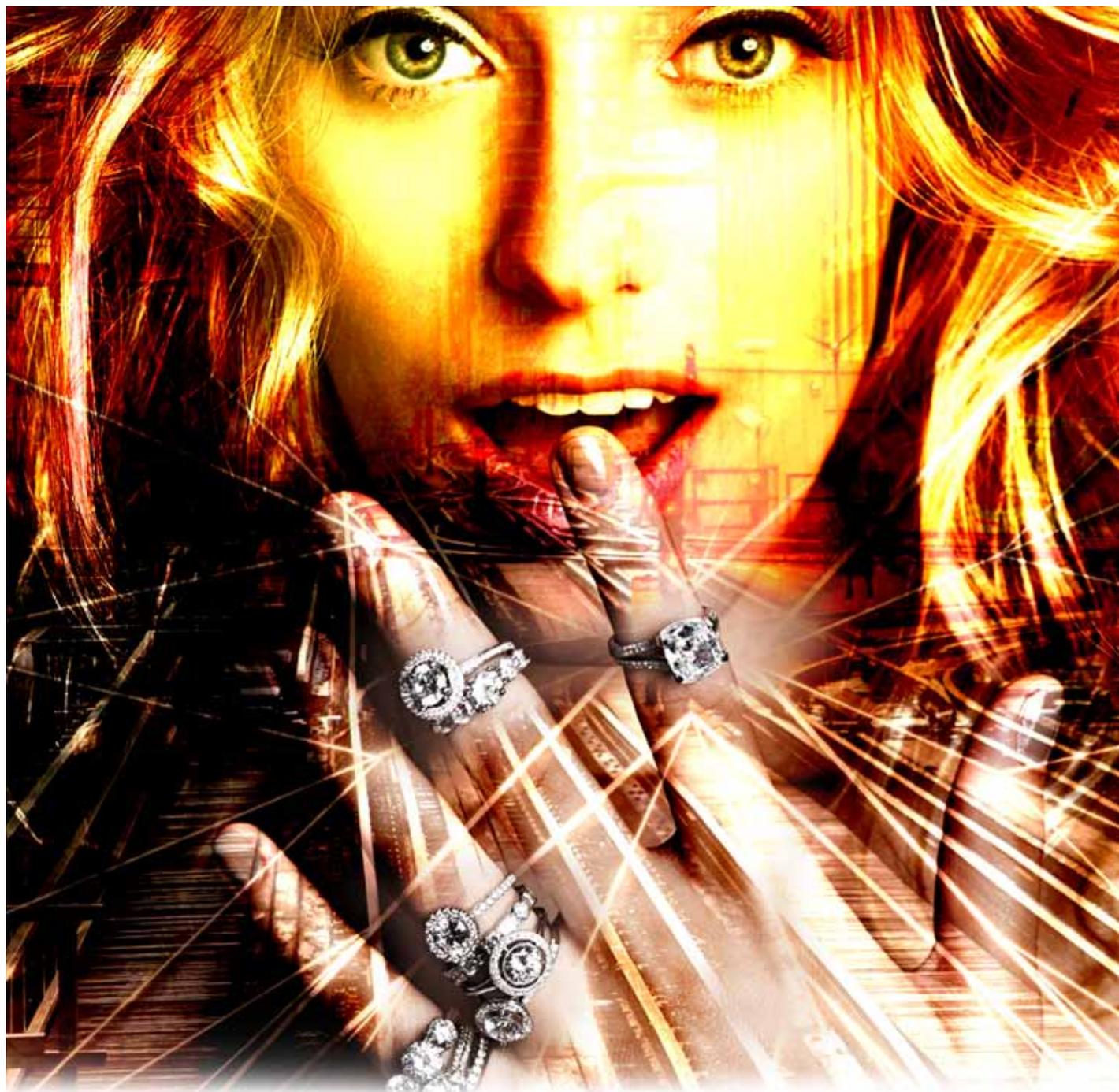
The event also featured a tribute video with various members of the larger Chicago-area LGBTQ community extending well wishes to i2i.

See www.chicagoi2i.org for more information.



From left: i2i event organizers and speakers Jin Wu, I Li Hsiao, JJ Ueunten, Randy Kim, Joy Messinger, Ryan Viloría, Lyk Yoeun, Liz Thomson and Kim Nguyen.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell



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Local mental-health group provides multiple benefits

BY SKYLAR BAKER-JORDAN

Following a large number of clinic closures and record budget cuts, the state of mental health in Chicago has made national headlines over the past year. In 2012, Mayor Rahm Emanuel closed half the city's mental health clinics, and budget cuts at the state level coupled with often high deductibles found on the Affordable Care Act insurance exchange have left many in the city's LGBT community struggling to access professional care and turning increasingly to alternative means of support.

"The system is overwhelmed," said Robert Kazel, the president of a local chapter of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (or DBSA) that meets weekly at the Center on Halsted. His is one of only a handful of DBSA chapters nationally which focus on the LGBT community. It recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, and has grown exponentially since then, something Kazel puts down in part to the dwindling mental health resources available to the community. "We have some people who are really desperate to find help but haven't been able to."

Kazel attributes this to several factors, from the clinic closures and budget cuts to insurance deductibles and the lack of mental health professionals in private practice. He says many have been unable to find help "either because they can't afford a therapist or doctor" or they've been placed on waiting lists by clinics and outpatient departments.

It's a concern shared by Kelly Ducheny, the

Director of Behavioral Health at Howard Brown Health Center. "We'd always love for there to be more resources," she said. Recent years have seen services "significantly contracted," she said. "There are always more folks requesting care than we can immediately provide. We get really concerned. I don't want people to have to wait."

Over the past year-and-a-half, Howard Brown has shifted its model-of-care to an incidence-based model, focusing on episodic and goal-oriented care. Each episode of care entails 24 visits with a therapist, at which point patients who desire additional care are referred out to services which can offer more prolonged care. "After a period of time, folks can return to us for another episode," she said.

Ducheny stressed that the change was not prompted by any budget cuts or clinic closures, but rather seen as a way to better serve patients, and one which most patients have found beneficial. "A far majority of clients are finding this model helps them focus in on the piece of work they want to do in that episode and the episodes are running easily six to nine months."

Nicole (a pseudonym), who has been attending the DBSA group at the Center for around three years, found that the new model was not a fit for her, though. While she feels "their medical staff is top-notch," she is concerned that Howard Brown—like other providers—"is so backlogged when it comes to therapy." Nicole, a trans woman, believes Howard Brown is "one of the few places that's actually well-



Robert Kazel.

Photo from Kazel

versed in trans therapy" and that the episodic care has really limited their ability to help her long-term.

Nicole used to be on Medicaid, but lost it because she made too much money when she began collecting disability insurance due to her depression. She found private coverage on the insurance exchange, but selected an HMO by mistake. "I couldn't find a therapist in my HMO," she said. She's recently switched to a PPO, but said, "The closest therapist in my PPO is about 569 miles away." Even if a therapist was closer, her deductible of \$4,000 makes accessing care costly.

"Just in terms of resources, it's very hard to find a psychiatrist," said Marji Leslie, another DBSA member who attends meetings at the Center and has served in various capacities, including on the national board of directors. Leslie considers herself "lucky" to have found her therapist 20 years ago, but adds that "Many people really can't find a psychiatrist in general because they don't take insurance anymore." The pool becomes even more limited when looking for an LGBT-friendly mental health professional.

It's a problem Kazel frequently sees. Many therapists, he said, "are not receptive to receiving a lot of forms of insurance as payment." From his research—Kazel is also a journalist

who has covered the insurance industry—those in private practice who do accept insurance are unlikely to accept Medicare or Medicaid.

Ducheny is also concerned that "there are fewer places who accept sliding scales and uninsured folks who can't pay standard fees." But she said there are also "a lot of resources to help people access Medicaid or ACA plans" that could suit them. Howard Brown itself has devoted staff to helping people navigate the insurance exchange and enrollment process. "We can certainly talk to them about the different kinds of things different plans offer and help them investigate what's going to be the right match for them."

For people who can't find affordable insurance or treatment, or who wish to enhance their care, DBSA is a great option, Ducheny added. "We regularly refer clients to DBSA," she said. "I think that getting support in a group of people who have some personal experience with some of the things that are very impactful in your life can be a compelling home."

It's a sentiment echoed by Leslie. Finding the LGBT DBSA group "really felt like I was coming home," she said. "It is a safe place especially to talk about not just personal issues but the way that society impacts on being gay or trans."

The shared experiences of being both LGBT and living with mental health issues also keeps Nicole coming back. Without a regular therapist, Nicole relies heavily on the peer support she receives from friends, but also the group. She originally attended a DBSA group geared towards veterans, but it wasn't a good fit for her. Finding the LGBT group, where "we have a lot of shared experiences," has been very beneficial, she said. "DBSA has been great for me."

"I think people feel most comfortable talking to people, in general, who share their life experiences," Kazel said. "It's kind of a double closet that a lot of people with mood disorders and who are LGBT live in. Sometimes they're in or out of one closet. Sometimes they're in or out of the other close," he said. "This is a place where people can come and speak completely freely and not have to worry about any closets."

The DBSA LGBT group meets every Saturday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St. Visit <http://www.dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com/> or call 872-216-3272 for more information.

One Indiana RFRA bill is stopped, another advances

In Indiana, Senate Bill 66—a so-called "Super RFRA (Religious Freedom Restoration Act)" bill—was stopped Jan. 27, IndyStar.com reported.

The measure, which also would have repealed last year's so-called RFRA "fix," failed to advance from a Senate committee after Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Brent Steele, R-Bedford, said the "timing is incorrect."

"These rights belong to each and every one of us," the proposal's author, Sen. Mike Young, R-Indianapolis, said, "and I'm trying to protect every one of those rights for everyone in this room."

However, Senate Bill 344—which would add sexual orientation, but not gender identity, as a protected class to state civil rights law—has advanced. The Indiana Senate Rules and Legislative Procedure Committee passed the bill, which now goes to a full Senate for a vote.

"Senate Bill 344 provides such a broad license to discriminate based on religion that it is nothing short of a Super RFRA," said Camilla Taylor, counsel in the Midwest Regional Office of Lambda Legal, in a statement. "This bill also does not even pretend to protect transgender Hoosiers, excluding them en-



Lambda Legal's Camilla Taylor.

Photo by Kate Sosin

tirely, which is completely unacceptable. As written, SB 344 is designed to hurt LGBT people in Indiana. Anyone who supports this bill doesn't have the best interests of the LGBT community in mind."

There has been a tug-of-war in Indiana and other states between religious conservatives and gay-rights activists, with the latter feeling that RFRA's sanction discrimination.

The original articles are at <http://www.indystar.com>.

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ELECTION from cover

speech Monday night. On that stage, Cruz praised the 48,000-plus Iowans who voted for him at the caucuses. He said the campaign was about getting back to Judeo-Christian values.

Rubio's strong third place showing in Iowa may have been due in part to his being endorsed by the state's largest newspaper, the Des Moines Register. But it was certainly one of the more stunning LGBT moments when the endorsement from the Register chided Rubio for wanting to fight "the battles of the past" against same-sex marriage. Following the Iowa Supreme Court's ruling that required equal treatment for same-sex couples, the Register all but called for a movement to recall the court's justices.

Other LGBT moments in the later days of the Iowa campaign included Duck Dynasty star Phil Robertson, who supported Republican Cruz, railing against marriage between same-sex partners as "wicked" and "evil," and Republican frontrunner Trump reiterating his already stated disagreement with the U.S. Supreme Court striking down state bans on such marriages.

Cruz didn't explicitly mention the Supreme Court ruling against state bans on marriage for same-sex couples, but he told CNN Sunday that, as president, he would on "Day One" reverse all of President Obama's "illegal" executive orders. Rubio repeatedly promised the same. Although the executive orders have not been deemed "illegal," President Obama has signed executive orders to prevent discrimination against LGBT people in employment by federal contractors and in hospital visitation policies.

All three Democratic candidates have repeatedly voiced their support for equal rights and dignity for LGBT people.

During her speech to supporters late Monday night, Clinton said she knows her administration can "protect our rights—women's rights, gay rights, voting rights, immigrants' rights,

workers rights."

Sanders' speech Monday night focused on income inequality, tuition-free college, raising the minimum wage, stopping the pipeline to prisons, and climate change.

Donna Red Wing, a longtime LGBT activist nationally and now executive director of the statewide LGBT group One Iowa, said both Clinton and Sanders had strong support in the LGBT community there.

"I certainly cannot gauge where the LGBT community is around the top Democratic candidates," said Red Wing last November. "Sanders has an amazing ground game and people in the community love him for his long-time and un-wavering support of LGBT equality. Clinton, on the other hand, also has a great many supporters in the community and an exceptional campaign, one that is gaining traction."

By Jan. 19, Clinton picked up a key endorsement.

The Human Rights Campaign board endorsed Clinton, saying she had "unveiled the most robust and ambitious LGBT plan any candidate for president has ever laid out" and has a "long record as a champion for LGBT rights both in the U.S. and, notably, around the globe."

Later that week, HRC President Chad Griffin joined Clinton at a campaign event in West Des Moines and introduced her to a rally and, according to the Des Moines Register, said, "All of the progress we've made and all that we're still fighting for—all of it—is on the ballot this year."

The Register said Clinton told the crowd of about 900 supporters, "We have to end the travesty that under our Constitution, you can get married on Saturday and because of it, fired on Monday."

Meanwhile, Log Cabin Republicans stepped up its campaign against Clinton, posting a video of her comments in 2002 and 2004, saying she did not support marriage for gay couples.

"Democrats and members of the LGBT community have given Hillary Clinton a pass on

past transgressions and even allowed her to rewrite the history of the gay rights movement; Log Cabin Republicans will not," said Log Cabin national president Gregory Angelo. "It's time for the people of Iowa—and the country—to know that when it mattered, Hillary Clinton was wrong on gay rights."

Both the Republican and Democratic fields shrank even before the caucuses were over Monday night. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee suspended his campaign for the Republican nomination.

Former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley an-

nounced he was suspending his campaign for the Democratic nomination. O'Malley, like Clinton and Sanders, had a strong record in support of LGBT equal rights.

Now the smaller fields move to New Hampshire, where the first 2016 presidential primary takes place Feb. 9. Clinton has an "LGBT Granite Staters for Hillary" organization in place there, that includes the state's first openly state senator, David Pierce.

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WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

Windy City Times welcomes two amazing individuals to our sales team.



Scott Duff is a Chicago based actor, comedian, theatre educator, and activist. As a founding member of the award-winning About Face Theatre, he helped to create over a dozen original works, including the groundbreaking About Face Youth Theatre. Before joining the Windy City Times team, he was the Director of Communications and Fundraising Events for Season of Concern, the Chicagoland theatre community's fundraising effort providing direct relief for those living with HIV/AIDS and other debilitating illness or injury. Currently, Scott is the host/producer of OUT CHICAGO, a live talk show for the LGBT community airing Sundays, 11 am to 1 pm on WCPT, Chicago's Progressive Talk. He is also the host/producer of Chigaygo!, Laugh Factory Chicago's night of gay and gay-friendly comedy.



Freddie Bain's love for the arts began at an early age. He became a visual merchandiser for the famed Marshall Field's flagship store on State Street. Freddie started designing hats and accessories in 1989. One of his earlier creations can be seen in Madonna's tour documentary "Truth or Dare"; at the same time, he began his career as a DJ. He is currently a 23-year veteran behind the decks, and holds a respected presence in the nightlife event promotion/music journalism field. During his DJ career, he has spun alongside such luminaries as Frankie Knuckles, Derrick Carter and Ralphie Rosario. After completing over five years of music editing for Chicago's notorious Gab Magazine, Freddie coordinated the music coverage and advertising sales for BOI Magazine. Freddie also worked in advertising management for the Chicago-based house music publication 5 Magazine and for Chicagopride.com.

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At Illinois Masonic Medical Center

Spitzer's death draws mixed views on his legacy

BY SARI STAVER

In the wake of the recent death of psychiatrist Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, gay and lesbian psychiatrists have renewed the debate of his legacy.

Spitzer, 83, died Dec. 25 in Seattle. His wife told media outlets the cause was complications of heart disease.

Spitzer was an outspoken and controversial member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), whose textbooks and manuals had long described homosexuality as a mental illness.

But in the early 1970s, when Spitzer joined an APA committee charged with reconsidering that policy, the association began to gradually shift its policies, although not quickly or far enough for many.

The APA removed homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM, in 1973.

Later, Spitzer ignited a firestorm in 2001 when he presented a paper advocating reparative therapy for gays and lesbians who wanted to become heterosexual. Such so-called conversion therapy has been widely discredited as stigmatizing and ineffective.

In 2012, Spitzer disavowed the paper, an apology that was too little and too late for some.

The controversy flared up again following his death when many obituaries praised Spitzer's role as a gay supporter. The New York Times obituary took it a step further, when it included a quote from gay psychoanalyst Dr.

Jack Drescher, who said, "The fact that gay marriage is allowed today is in part owed to Bob Spitzer." Drescher confirmed that quote, which was picked up by media outlets around the world, in an interview with the Bay Area Reporter (B.A.R.).

"I have a very different perspective," said San Francisco psychiatrist Dr. Nanette Gartrell, a lesbian who's a former clinical professor at UCSF and the author of over 70 peer reviewed research papers.

Rather than seeing Spitzer as the primary force behind removal of homosexuality from the manual, "I credit the many scientific researchers whose scholarship demonstrated that psychological adjustment is unrelated to sexual orientation, and I credit the LGBT psychiatrists and psychologists who educated the APA about these findings," Gartrell said.

Others agreed.

Dr. Elizabeth Harrison, a lesbian who's a psychiatrist in Sacramento and a past president of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, credited gay activists—including psychiatrists—who "stepped up and risked their careers to come out and fight the APA."

To credit Spitzer, "is just wrong," she said.

And gay San Francisco psychiatrist Dr. Robert Cabaj, a past president of the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists, called praise of Spitzer "revisionist history."

"Dr. Spitzer was more of a block" in the road in the decades-long fight to remove centuries old prejudicial views about gays and lesbians, said Cabaj.



Dr. Nanette Gartrell.

Photo by Randal Dieringer

But other local LGBT psychiatrists took a more sanguine view.

Gay retired UCSF clinical professor of psychiatry Dr. David Kessler believes Spitzer should be given credit for "opening the door" that let LGBT therapists "put their foot into the room" to begin the dialogue that led to change.

After he conducted and recorded an hour-long interview with Spitzer in 1993, Kessler concluded that "by far" the good (in Spitzer) outweighed the bad.

In terms of Spitzer's controversial stance on the usefulness of reparative therapy to help homosexuals change, Kessler said, "My interview with him was long before that so I really never understood how and why that came about. But he apologized and I forgive him. Nobody's perfect, even Bob Spitzer."

Dr. James Krajewski, a gay retired Corte Madera psychiatrist and a former chair of the committee on homosexuality at the APA, said Spitzer's life "must be seen in perspective."

"I don't think Bob Spitzer did any of this to enhance his career. Had some of his suggestions been rejected by the APA, I think he would've looked very bad. All in all, I believe he will be remembered positively," he said.

Different take

But Gartrell has a very different take on those who defend Spitzer's strategy of trying to implement change slowly.

"One of the things I find so frustrating is that most people believe that homosexuality was removed from the DSM in 1973 and the story ended there," she said.

"In fact, as numerous historical documents and prior editions of the APA manual state, a variation on the concept of homosexuality as a mental illness—known as ego-dystonic homosexuality—was retained as a DSM diagnosis into the mid-1980s, despite a complete lack of scientific evidence to support such a diagnosis," Gartrell explained.

To those who criticized Spitzer for recommending that the APA retain the diagnosis of ego-dystonic homosexuality, rather than eliminate it altogether, Krajewski said, "Bob Spitzer deserves a great deal of credit for helping the APA make some major changes, altering years of tradition."

Drescher shed some additional light on the controversy.

Spitzer, he said, "was an academician, not a clinician, and did not see patients."

Like the other psychiatrists interviewed, Drescher said he also "had issues" with Spitzer's views on reparative therapy.

"Bob was a contrarian," he explained, "and was also very stubborn so it took him a while to admit he was wrong" and apologize.

"I think the gay community owes a tremendous debt to Dr. Spitzer," Drescher said. "He wasn't perfect and, as you know, all our heroes have feet of clay. He had an original mind and he changed the world."

Gartrell noted that Spitzer's 2001 paper has been shown to be "both ineffective and damaging."

"Despite decades of research demonstrating that LGBT people led healthy, happy, successful, fulfilling, and productive lives, Dr. Spitzer only retracted it in 2012," she said.

None of Spitzer's actions surprised Gartrell, who first published her views on him in a book, *Lesbians in Academia: Degrees of Freedom*, edited by Beth Mintz and Esther D. Rothblum.

In the book, and in an interview with the B.A.R., Gartrell said that in 1974—the year after homosexuality had been removed as a mental illness from the APA manual—she applying to psychiatric residency programs. She applied to Columbia University, where she was interviewed by a number of faculty, including Spitzer. After reading over her list of publications, he asked Gartrell if she was a lesbian.

When she said yes, he then asked her if she wanted to be a man. "I said I did not," she recalled.

"When he asked me if I was the butch or the femme in my relationship, I said that I didn't see the relevance of such questions to my application for residency.

"I also told him that I objected to the American Psychiatric Association's continuing inclusion of the concept of ego-dystonic homosexuality" in the APA manuals, "without including a parallel diagnosis of ego-dystonic heterosexuality," Gartrell said.

When Spitzer questioned the usefulness of such a concept, "I said that I had come across many radical feminists who were dissatisfied with their relations with men and wished they could become lesbians," she said.

"It was very obvious to me," said Gartrell, that in the interview, Spitzer "saw me through a stereotypical lens that bore no resemblance to the reality of my life."

When Gartrell's residency application was subsequently rejected, her medical school mentor called the chair of the Columbia psychiatry training program.

"My mentor was told that the admissions committee had decided that my comfort with my lesbianism—in not considering it a problem—had rendered me incompatible" with Columbia's training program.

"Did my career suffer?" asked Gartrell. "Well, no, not at all because I had already been accepted at Harvard" for psychiatric residency.

"But I feared for the countless LGBT people whose lives would continue to be damaged by the attitudes of psychiatrists like Bob Spitzer," she said.

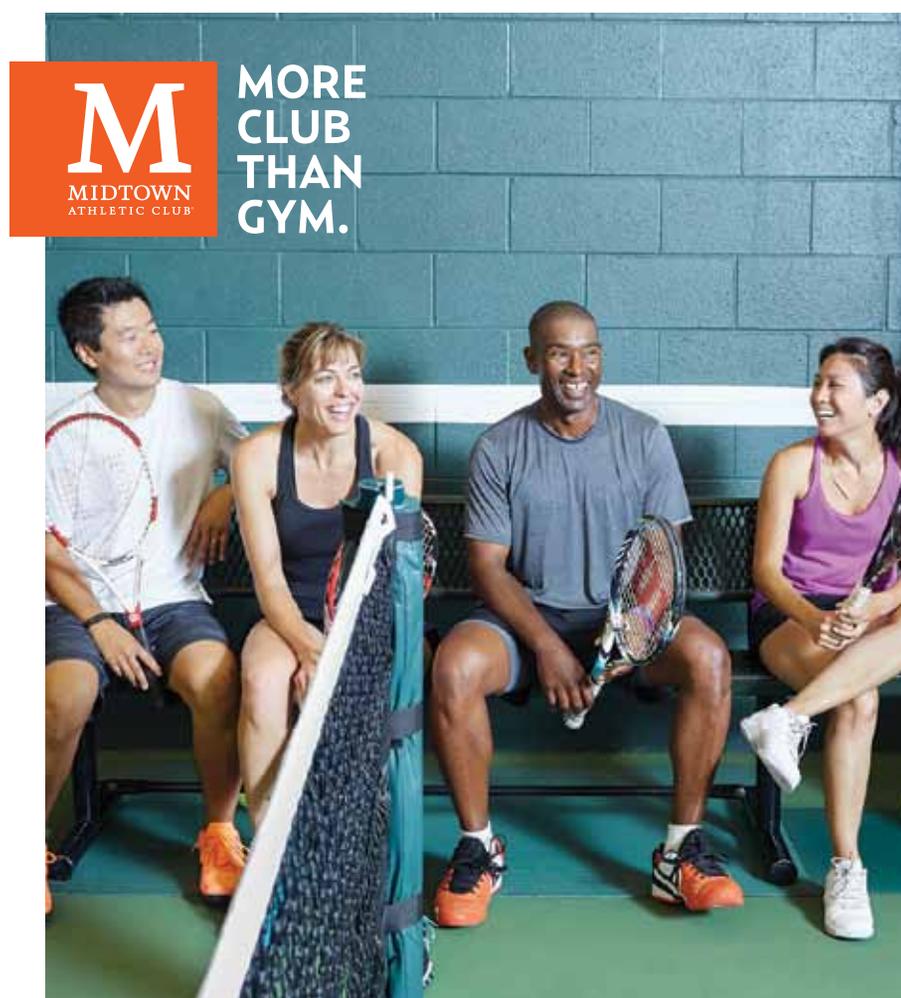
Sari Staver is a reporter at the Bay Area Reporter, where this article first appeared. The article is being reprinted with permission.

DNC names LGBT advisory co-chairs

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) has named its LGBT advisory board co-chairs.

DNC LGBT Caucus Chairman Earl Fowlkes announced that former Houston Mayor Anise Parker and LGBT and HIV/AIDS activist Rev. Jose M. Roman will co-chair the board.

Members of the board will be selected from all 50 states, with a goal to represent the diversity of the LGBT community. Membership of the DNC LGBT Caucus is limited to elected DNC members; however, membership on the advisory board is open to all LGBT Democrats who apply. Applications for the board are still being accepted at <http://my.democrats.org/lgbt-advisory-board>.



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in the LIFE

Charles Samson

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAMSON

- **Age**
37
- **Born & raised**
On the Hawaiian island of Oahu
- **Relationship status**
A boyfriend of 14 years
- **Hobbies**
Singing, volleyball and family time
- **Career**
A clothing and tailoring business called Raqicouture for men's and women's unique apparel.
- **Favorite drink**
Budweiser, or Seagrams and 7-Up
- **Favorite movie**
The Fifth Element
- **Favorite TV shows**
"Anything on The Science Channel, Discovery Channel and The History Channel."
- **Favorite pro sports team**
Seattle Seahawks

Charles Samson has no problem with Chicago's often-brutal winter weather. "Coming from Hawaii, I think of the snow and cold weather as entertainment and [an] adventure," he said. "I've always preferred the cold because I can layer my favorite outfits, [whereas] I can only take so much clothes off [in the heat]."

Samson moved from Oahu and the shores of Waikiki Beach two years ago with his partner and a friend, along with their pets. After a brief time living in Old Town, he now calls Joliet home.

"Since I lost my dear mother to cancer, I decided to move to Chicago to explore a big



city and also to be closer to my mother-in-law," Samson said. "The difference between Hawaii and Chicago is, I miss is the ocean compared to the freezing cold lake.

"But what I love about Chicago is how diverse and colorful it is. From the weather changing on a drop of a dime to the many different types of people I come across."

Samson works at a casual dining restaurant now, yet his true passion is fashion. "My career goal is to open my own boutique in the city, selling my unique and special creations," he said. "Right now, my basement is where all the magic happens."

Samson was actively involved from a fashion front in pageants held in Honolulu, most benefiting LGBT causes.

"One of the biggest obstacles I've overcome is finding out my mother had stage-four lung cancer," he said. "Without hesitation I put everything to the side, moved in with my mother and cared for her night and day till she took her last breath. I never knew how strong I was till cancer came into my life.

"The hardest thing was watching mom deteriorate in front of my very eyes, but the positive thing that came from that was I had the quality time to say goodbye which most people don't get the chance to do.



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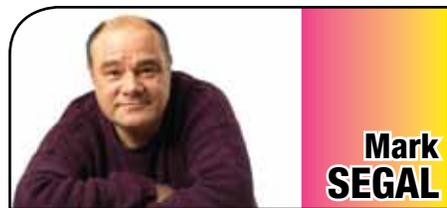


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MARK MY WORDS

Insensitive, anti-Semitic protests

When I was a boy of 13, my grandmother took me to my first civil-rights demonstration to teach me about racism and social justice. She knew those issues well: Our family fled from the pogroms in Russia, others in our family perished in the Holocaust and Grandmom even fought for women's rights.

On that day, I marched with Cecil B. Moore and Robert N.C. Nix. Five years later, in 1969, I'd be a member of New York's Gay Liberation Front and, in the name of justice, we'd march with The Black Panthers to free Angela Davis from her arrest and detention, chanting "Hey hey, ho ho, House of D [New York's Women's House of Detention] has to go." But last week, when I heard LGBT activists at the National LGBTQ Task Force's Creating Change conference in Chicago using part of that slogan against our own community, it was a sad day. And it sickened me to the pit of my stomach.

Creating Change is the largest gathering of LGBT activists across the nation. Typically, all issues affecting our communities are discussed, with people being able to agree to disagree with respect. But a major controversy happened this year. And what usually is and should be a place for dialogue became unsafe. This incident was at the very least insincere, and at its worst anti-Semitic.

A Wider Bridge, which promotes ties between LGBT Americans and Israel, was scheduled to have a reception at Creating Change. But some conference participants complained about an event featuring a group with ties with Israel. Presto, the Task Force cancelled the event. This led to a debate about anti-Semitism, apartheid and political correctness. Eventually, conference organizers did the right thing and reinstated the session. After all, this conference was about "creating change," and change occurs with communication. However, the event led opponents of Israel to protest; such protesters essentially urge people to boycott any LGBT event relating to Israel, not due to its LGBT laws, but because of how it treats Palestinians. They use terms like "apartheid" and "racism."

Here's what they don't state. While Israel is welcoming to LGBT people, Palestinian law criminalizes homosexuality. If you call the Palestinian Authority at the UN Office and ask about LGBT rights, as I did, you'll be treated to hang-ups (first call), laughter and a "Don't you understand our culture?" question (second call) and finally, "We don't talk about that." A fourth call offered a phone number in the Palestinian state for me to call.

The protesters want us to support people who laugh at and criminalize us. They don't explain that LGBT Palestinians escape to Israel for protection. It is so unsafe that the group fighting for Palestinian queer rights is located in Israel. Why? The Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip has declared homosexuality punishable by death. Hamas co-founder Mahmoud al-Zahar has said, "You in the West do not live like human beings. You do not even live like animals. You accept homosexuality. And now you criticize us?"

I've visited and written about the region on many occasions. In fact, I spent time with the first out LGBT organization in Beirut, writing about lesbian women in Jordan and the oppression in Egypt, among other topics. I know the people on both sides well. I was embraced in Beirut and spit on in Jerusalem.

I was at Creating Change to speak about my just-published memoir, which speaks of my numerous arrests and nickel rides fighting for social justice. In many of the cities on my book tour, a young LGBT person asks, "What can we do today to create activism?" So I appreciate many in that crowd at the protest who were there wanting to do something. Unfortunately, they weren't given the facts. They were misled into what became an ugly anti-Semitic rally.

The first question we should ask protest organizers is: If you're suggesting a boycott of Israel because of non-LGBT issues, why not speak out about Palestine's anti-gay laws? Why not explain that many LGBT people have had to escape antigay violence in Palestine? If you were fair, the position should be boycott both, but instead you single out one. And that one place has become a safe haven for LGBT Palestinians. That is anti-Semitism, with a dose of self-hatred. Supporting those who wish LGBT people—us—dead is the definition of self-hatred.

The next question to ask protesters is even simpler: Why are you not protesting the anti-LGBT position of the Palestinian state? Do you approve of the draconian laws of Putin's Russia, or those of Uganda? Palestine is equally as, if not more so, antigay as those countries.

Then there's the issue of racism. That same term has been used to describe our country by the "Black Lives Matter" effort. Have you

called for an international boycott of the United States? No, you single out one entity: Israel, the Jewish State. Yes, "Jewish." We all know why Israel was created, as a safe haven for Jews. We also know how Palestinians have fought Israel, at times suggesting it be wiped off the face of the earth, along with its people, the Jews. Yasser Arafat coined that into a slogan: "From the [Jordan] River to the Sea." To Jews, that slogan represents extermination. Now, imagine being a Jew in a room with 200 people outside banging on the doors yelling that slogan, or wrapping a Palestinian flag over the head of a Jew trying to make his way into the room. That is what happened in Chicago. Windy City Times did a great job of capturing most of the demonstration on video (ow.ly/XByz1).

Many of us would gladly protest Israeli treatment of Palestinians—I myself support a Palestinian state, the so-called "two-state solution"—but that is different than supporting the Palestinian government that wants you put to death if you're LGBT and live on the Gaza Strip. But trapping Jews in a room yelling what is as close to a death slogan as there is ... Does that conjure something? Look up "Kristallnacht." Insensitive, at the very least...

It's great to see this generation wanting to protest injustice, but people need to understand the issues and the lessons of our early fight for equality. Fight first for our community's rights, since, if we do not, nobody else will. LGBT Palestinians can't speak out in their homeland, and your protests only embolden those who keep them from speaking out.

The Task Force acknowledged its mishandling of the situation and said it will work to prevent future incidents. While they may have been unprepared, protest organizers are the ones who need to apologize—not just to those in that room who were forced to leave through a back door for safety, but to the entire LGBT community for their insensitivity and for supporting those who support our oppression.

The term these individuals use is "pinkwashing." From this time on, pinkwashing equals self-hating anti-Semites.

We members of Gay Liberation Front have varied views on Israel and Palestine, but one thing we would never do is act with such insensitivity and suggest support for those who wish to put LGBT people to death or eradicate an entire race of people. Shame on you!

Mark Segal is editor of Philadelphia Gay News. His memoir "And Then I Danced, Traveling the Road To LGBT Equality," is available online or at your favorite bookseller.

of the Jerusalem Open House.

*Religious Action Center of Reform
Judaism Director Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner*

Just one moment

To the Editor:

The statements issued by the LGBTQ Task Force and letter writers condemning the protest against A Wider Bridge have in common one thing: No mention is made of the oppression of the Palestinian people, an oppression of "ethnic cleansing" that goes back to before the establishment of Israel in 1948. One letter writer refers to "non-gay" issues, which could be an oblique reference to Palestinians.

The Task Force claims to be opposed to hate speech and discrimination of any kind, and rightly condemns anti-Semitism as being antithetical to its values. But, what about the decades-long killing, dispossession and humiliation meted out to Palestinians—gay and non-gay alike? Isn't this worthy of mention by the Task Force and those claiming to be concerned about alleged rowdy protest behavior toward conference reception attendees? Or are some lives (Israelis and supporters) worth more than others (Palestinians and supporters)?

Protest condemnations ignore the many Jews participating. The protest was endorsed by Jewish Voice for Peace, which also organized a Shabbat service that preceded the protest. Black Lives Matter and allied groups also participated, recognizing that solidarity with oth-

WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL. 31, No. 19, Feb. 3, 2016

*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.
Nightspot Deadline Wednesday prior to street date.

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letters

Condemnation

Dear Editor:

We condemn the deplorable, disruptive actions of protestors at an event sponsored by A Wider Bridge featuring the Jerusalem Open House during the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change conference.

The failure of the Task Force to ensure the event proceeded peacefully in the spirit of inclusion and dialogue that should be a hallmark of the conference is also deeply troubling.

The Task Force must do significant soul-searching to examine how it allowed such disruption to occur under its auspices even as it reaches out to repair ties with those who were obstructed in their attempt to gather in recognition and celebration of the tremendous work

WINDY CITY TIMES

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A 'Word,' please...

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Windy City Times reviews Another Word for Beauty.

Photo by Liz Lauren

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Gun angst in Andersonville

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN



Kelli Simpkins (left) and Patrese D. McClain.
Photo from Victory Gardens Theater

Lesbian playwright Sarah Gubbins spoke slowly and thoughtfully as she carefully chose her words during a phone interview regarding her world-premiere drama *Cocked* for Victory Gardens Theater. Since the play explores current issues of gun ownership and gun violence in the United States today, it's understandable why Gubbins' responses frequently sounded as if she was treading carefully around a minefield.

"I was moved to write the play because I really wanted to spark a conversation in audiences' minds and with each other about why they felt what they felt about guns," Gubbins said. "And I think when you have issues that are as polarizing as guns are in our country, you know, 'get rid of them' or 'don't take away my guns' which seems to be the knee-jerk responses, that those positions go unexamined. And so I did want to write a play that allowed an audience to spend time thinking about why they felt what they thought."

Currently based in Los Angeles, Gubbins chose to set *Cocked* in her hometown of Chicago by having all the action take place inside a condo in the Andersonville neighborhood. The drama focuses on an interracial lesbian couple of an attorney named Taylor (Kelli Simpkins) and her crime reporter girlfriend, Izzie (Patrese D. McClain). The couple's relationship is severely tested when Taylor's troubled brother, Frank (Mike Tepeli), drops in unexpectedly and upends many of their traditional liberal views.

Cocked was previously seen in Chicago as part of a staged reading for Victory Gardens Theater's IGNITION Festival of New Plays in 2014. Gubbins said it is the first play in a planned trilogy examining guns and gun ownership in America.

"When I started, I discovered that one play wouldn't be enough," Gubbins said. "That question of to own a gun or to not own a gun is really the beginning of the trilogy."

Victory Gardens Associate Artistic Producer Joanie Schultz previously directed the world premieres of Gubbins' earlier plays with lesbian or queer characters like *The Kid Thing* for About Face Theatre in 2011 and *fml: how Carson McCullers Saved My Life* for Steppenwolf for Young Audiences in 2012.

"I think there's something incredibly progressive about having a play that features a lesbian couple, but isn't about lesbian themes," said Schultz about *Cocked*. "We're not talking about the themes of the lesbian community necessarily—they're the themes of all of our communities in Chicago right now. And of course Sarah

is writing from a place that is familiar for her."

McClain agreed that many of the issues explored in *Cocked* are fairly universal, particularly the relationships dynamics.

"The couples' issues that Izzie and Taylor are having really revolve around being able to respect your partner's boundaries," McClain said. "And also those surprising things that come up in a relationship that really puts you on opposing sides of the same argument."

McClain says that Izzie is constantly reporting on the frontlines of gun and gang violence in Chicago. So naturally Izzie's views and personal background are bound to occasionally clash with those of Taylor, whose work mostly keeps her in a law office.

"The way Sarah deals with race in this play is very delicate, but I think it mirrors the way that race has become an issue in a 'post-Obama' era that we're in where everything is not black and white," McClain said. "It really takes a look at the different levels of privilege that we are afforded depending upon who we are and where we come from."

Cocked will mark the third time that actress Kelli Simpkins has appeared in one of Gubbins' plays, and McClain says that her co-star anchors the production.

"[Simpkins] really keeps us in the world of the play and keeps the pulse very honest," McClain said. Since Gubbins, Schultz and Simpkins have all previously worked together, McClain says it's a great working environment since there is such a close collaborative shorthand.

Both McClain and Gubbins feel it's important to be debuting *Cocked* at this time of increased debate over gun violence in light of so many mass-shootings in America. But there's also a strong sense of hometown pride, too.

"I really, really wanted this play to be produced in Chicago and for the Chicago theater community and Chicago theater audiences because it's about them and it's for them," Gubbins said. "I've had readings in Minneapolis and New York and L.A. and the play works fine, but there's something about having an audience that understands just precisely who these people are and where they live and precisely what they're up against. It just brings me such joy."

The world premiere of Sarah Gubbins' *Cocked* plays from Friday, Feb. 12, through Sunday, March 13, at Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave. Preview tickets are \$15-\$40, while regular run tickets are \$15-\$60; call 773-871-3000 or visit www.victorygardens.org.



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THEATER REVIEW

Another Word for Beauty

Playwright: Jose Rivera

At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.

Tickets: 312-443-3800;

www.goodmantheatre.org; \$25-\$75

Runs through: Feb. 21

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Bogata's Buen Pastor (Good Shepard) Prison was, at one time, a convent serving as a women's shelter, before decades of Colombian civil unrest transformed it into a crowded, neglected, ill-supervised facility for the confinement of female criminals, dissidents and other disruptive misfits. Ah, but once a year, during the festival of Our Virgin of Mercy, the detainees are granted relief from their misery through participation in a well-funded, heavily promoted, in-house beauty contest???

Playgoers familiar with Jose Rivera's romantic affinity for glamour and squalor juxtaposed within a magic-realism universe will not be surprised by his attraction to this custom. Ostensibly, its goals are to promote communal solidarity, increase individual esteem, and present an image to the public of these social outcasts conforming to proper feminine decorum—shaking booty in skin-baring Vegas showgirl spangles and stilettos, winking and flirting like sorority girls during rush week. Theater audiences looking back at Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* (which depicts a theatrical presen-



tation performed by the inmates of an insane asylum) may also recall that efforts of well-meaning oppressors to impose an artificial veneer of acceptable behavior upon a subjugated population rarely end well.

Narrative symmetry mandates that each cell block's candidate and fellow supporters

acquaint us with a backstory encompassing scenes depicting her particular where-I-went-wrong moment and her how-I-wound-up-in-jail moment, as well as her how-I-feel-about-it-now and her what-I-dream-of-someday thoughts. Unfortunately, Rivera's love of spectacle necessitates an additional playlist of in-

fectious ethno-pop music composed by Hector Buitrago and performed by Ruben Gonzalez and his four-piece combo, several big-skirted dance numbers choreographed by Maija Garcia,

Turn to page 15

THEATER REVIEW

Mothers and Sons

Playwright: Terrence McNally

At: Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie

Tickets: 847-673-6300;

www.northlight.org; \$25-\$79

Runs through: Feb. 27

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

The title is not *Mothers and Gay Sons*. The setting, in a married gay household, is almost secondary although it's reflective of Terrence McNally as a gay man. Yes, we learn the play's mother, Katherine Gerard (Cindy Gold), is homophobic and repulsed by gay sexuality, but by that point in the play it, too, becomes sec-

ondary. It's really about parenting, which is why it's important that married husbands Cal Porter (Jeff Parker) and Will Ogden (Benjamin Sprunger) have a son, Bud Ogden-Porter (Ben Miller).

The program says this play grew from a 1988 short sketch that examined two survivors of an AIDS-related death: the mother, Katherine, and the lover, Cal. *Mothers and Sons* picks up 20 years later, with Katherine paying a surprise visit to Cal, now happily married and a parent. Katherine seethes with anger at Cal, her dead son Andre and herself. The AIDS terror briefly is revisited, Cal noting that Andre put him at risk and a generation perished, but the play's focus is love and nurturing. Katherine is a hard case, convinced she cannot love or be loved and monumentally resentful that her gifted son found love with Cal, and that Cal has found

love and family with Will. "There is not another Andre," she says. "I want revenge!"

Katherine reveals she married for social advancement not love, aborted a second child (to punish her husband or keep Andre tied to her?) and is convinced that Andre never loved her. All her parenting failures (as she sees them) are countered by what we see of Cal, Will and precocious almost-seven Bud, who literally embraces Katherine with openness as a grandmother figure. Similar to other recent plays, *Mothers and Sons* portrays a gay couple doing a better job at heteronormative marriage and family than heteros.

Katherine is tragic. As do so many mothers, she knew her son was gay before he came out. When Andre was crying over his dying father, Katherine recalls, she said to him "You're crying for what you are. Can you imagine a mother

saying that to her child?" Like the blind Oedipus living out his life as a beggar, Katherine has pronounced judgment on herself for her love failures and made herself untouchable.

McNally packs a great deal into 100 minutes, and each beat is clearly and forcefully played under director Steve Scott. Through moments comic or bristling Cindy Gold preserves her prickly exterior, defying likeability and never seeking pity. Parker and Sprunger skillfully move from affable to conflicted to desperate dealing with their uninvited guest. Young Master Miller is confident, charming and natural. This production made me consider my own mother and partner—and how fortunate I have been in having both.

THEATER REVIEW

The Last Defender

Writer and Director: Nathan Allen

At: The House Theatre of Chicago at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St.

Tickets: 773-769-3832 or

www.thehousetheatre.com; \$40-\$45

Runs through March 13

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Unbeknownst to many, the world recently suffered a nuclear Holocaust and I'm partially to blame for it. And you can be a contributor to mass annihilation, too, if you suit up to be a part of *The Last Defender*, The House Theatre of Chicago's ingenious interactive theater piece now causing lots of amusement and nerves to fray in the bunker-like basement of the Chopin Theatre.

Dreamed up by House Theatre of Chicago founder Nathan Allen, *The Last Defender* isn't a traditional play where people just sit back to watch. Instead, audience members become a thrown-together ensemble of 16 who must all work together or fail together by taking on a series of tasks and puzzles.

The *Last Defender* pays homage to the pop culture of the 1980s, ranging from arcade video games to the Cold War nuclear paranoia of films like *War Games*. In an overtly patri-



The Last Defender.

Photo by Johnny Knight

otic introductory VHS video, the stakes are laid out as the audience control room workers must decide whether to strive for nuclear war, nuclear peace or a compromise scenario.

With the minutes running down on a countdown clock as the audience scrambles to decipher all the mind-bending puzzles devised by Sandor Wiesz, it's easy to overlook all the amazing design work that went into *The Last Defender*. It's a major credit to Chris Burn-

ham's overall art direction for creating a futuristic environment where you feel like you've been plunked down in the middle of a sci-fi film. Be sure to read the program handed out after the experience to marvel at all the individual designers' contributions.

It's also great to reflect on the group dynamics experiment that is *The Last Defender*, too. Each audience member has to don similar orange jumpsuits with nicknames emblazoned on them, so everyone starts out as an equal. No one is assigned to be leaders, though those with the loudest and commanding voices have a better chance of standing out—particularly against the increasing din of computerized voices announcing destruction.

It's also wise to pay heed to the pre-show suggestion "Tight Lips Sink Ships," since communication and delegation skills will be vital for your group of defenders to succeed. And if all else fails, pay attention to the body language of the "Black Bunnies," the silent minders whose actions of will provide vital clues.

Unfortunately, the group I was part of only completed seven puzzles to prevent nuclear destruction. We all made a valiant effort, though I do wonder if we as a group might have had more devilish fun going on the offensive to start a nuclear war rather than striving in vain to avert one.

CRITICS' PICKS

Hairspray, Paramount Theatre, Aurora, through Feb. 21. The hit 2002 Tony Award-winning Broadway musical adaptation of John Waters' quirky 1988 film receives a dazzling production out in Aurora. SCM

House Party, 1923, Annoyance Theatre, through Feb. 14. Mingle with characters from the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald at one of Jay Gatsby's Prohibition-era soirees in Bill Meincke's low-key interactive literary-improv. MSB

Le Switch, About Face Theatre at Theater Wit, through Feb. 21. Frequent big laughs in always-sharp Philip Dawkins' new comedy about a love-challenged gay man, afraid of losing homo identity to hetero-normativity now that gay marriage is legal. Fast-paced production, cute puppy-dog leads and killer punchlines from La Shawn Banks. JA

What I Learned in Paris, Congo Square Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, through Feb. 7. It's 1973, Atlanta has just elected its first Black mayor, but the women on his campaign staff have their own agenda in Pearl Cleage's romantic comedy. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

'First Comes Love' discussion Feb. 11



Photographer B. Proud—author of *First Comes Love: Portraits of Enduring LGBTQ Relationships*—will discuss her book Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. at Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St., with Scott Duff of OUT CHICAGO radio.

Admission is free.

Released in the fall of 2014, *First Comes Love*, according to Philadelphia photographer B. Proud, includes a glimpse into the real lives of the LGBTQ community—unlike the rainbow flag images typically portrayed by mainstream media. Books will be on sale after the presentation, and both B. Proud and will be available to sign. A photo booth will be there, courtesy of B. Priddy Photography, while The Swedish Bakery will provide Valentine treats.

This coffee-table book is just one element of the *First Comes Love* Project—a traveling exhibition of photographs, love stories and video interviews documenting LGBTQ couples who have been together for 10, 20, 30, 40 and even 50+ years.

Prior to the most recent marriage-equality decision, a copy of this book was sent to each of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices.

To order the book or learn more about the project, visit <http://www.firstcomeslove.org>.



Images from the book *First Comes Love*.

Photos by B. Proud Photography

'Beauty in Exile' event Feb. 9

The lecture/discussion event "Beauty in Exile," featuring artist Riva Lehrer, will take place Tuesday, Feb. 9, at Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria St., 2-4 p.m.

This talk is, in part, a memoir of sexual identity and, in part, an examination of the societal wall that excludes the disabled.

This series is free and open to the public. This program is part of "EXPOSURE: A Series of New Developments in Disability Arts & Culture." Featuring the work of Lehrer, Arlene Malinowski and Barak ade Soleil, this new series offers insight into the practices of artists exploring the intersectionality between disability, art and culture.

Joffrey presenting 'Bold Moves'

For its annual winter engagement, The Joffrey Ballet presents "Bold Moves," a program of three contemporary ballets that runs at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., on Feb. 10-21.

The program includes a world premiere by British choreographer Ashley Page, along with the return of two popular works from the Joffrey repertoire: Yuri Possokhov's RAKU and Jiri Kylian's *Forgotten Land* plus live orchestral accompaniment from the Chicago Philharmonic, led by Joffrey Music Director Scott Speck.

Single tickets, priced \$32-\$155, are available for purchase at The Joffrey Ballet's official box office at Joffrey Tower, 10 E. Randolph St.; at 800-982-2787; or at Ticketmaster.com.

BEAUTY from page 14

and far too many oxygen-sucking interludes mocking the agenda of televised pageants, all stretching the opening-night running time to nearly three hours.

No one can deny the professional polish displayed by a cast mostly imported by director Steve Cosson from his New York-based company, who deliver a varied group portrait of the subculture under scrutiny, ranging from Socorro Santiago's matronly Ciliana—born in Buen

Pastor and reluctant to leave her "home"—to Dan Domingues' smarmy "guest host" struggling to retain his machismo amid a barrage of raucous whistles and shrill catcalls. Indeed, so charmed and entertained are we by such novelties as a guerrilla-uniform striptease routine or a ballad of a lover's revenge sung with special fervor by a real-life husband-murderer, that we can almost forget the grotesque irony of the exploitive charade to which we are witness—a brief moment of glory before injustice and corruption reign once again.

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KNIGHT at the movies

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.



Hail, zombies!

This week, your local Cineplex offers two films of very different genres. We have a black comedy about classic Hollywood and a post-apocalyptic variation on a literary classic, neither of which was screened in time for WCT deadlines.

At this point in their career—with an unusually strong track record of more than 15 critically hailed, commercially successful movies—any new film from the Coen Brothers is worth seeing. And the advance word on **Hail, Caesar!**—which finds the Coens bringing back together many of their favorite actors—is promising, indeed.

George Clooney, making his fourth outing with the Coens, stars as a drunken, dimwitted action star who is kidnapped by a mysterious group called The Future. This being Hollywood in the 1950s—which looks to have been exactly what the previews—Clooney's studio calls on its chief "fixer," Eddie Mannix (Josh Brolin), to handle the situation. In the days when it was possible to cover up the private lives and various peccadillos of movie stars, the studios employed these self-described fixers to handle the often outrageous (and sometimes criminal) behavior of their stars and to keep the press and public in the dark. Brolin plays a fictionalized version of Mannix—a real-life executive known within the industry as the king of the fixers for his studio, MGM. Scarlett Johansson, Channing Tatum, Jonah Hill, Ralph



From *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

Fiennes, Tilda Swinton and Frances McDormand co-star in what looks to be a spot-on black comedy, suggesting a cross between the Coens' *Hudsucker Proxy* and *Burn After Reading*.

From the silly we go to the sillier: **Pride and Prejudice and Zombies**. Adapted from the bestselling novel by Seth Grahame-Smith by director Burr Gore Steers (nephew of Gore Vidal), the movie is a comedic horror parody, combining Jane Austen's 1813 classic romance novel with familiar zombie movie tropes. After a plague strikes mankind, turning the dead into flesh-eating zombies, it's up to spunky heroine (and martial-arts master) Elizabeth Bennett (Lily James); her heartthrob, Mr. Darcy (Sam Riley); and company (Jack Huston, Lena Headey, Matt Smith, et al) to fight back. This kind of material requires a deft touch that Steers' previous okay-but-not-great movies (such as *Charlie St. Cloud*, *17 Again* and *Igby Goes Down*) haven't exactly suggested. Regardless, this hopefully will be a lot more fun than *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, a similar film cross-pollination that landed with a thud, pleasing neither audiences nor critics.

New queer cinema pioneer Tom Kalin in town

Out writer-director Tom Kalin—whose 1992 film *Swoon* was an integral part of the New Queer Cinema movement of the early '90s (along with Todd Haynes' *Poison*, Rose Troche's

Go Fish, Gregg Araki's *The Living End* and others)—will be back in Chicago in early February. Kalin will be returning to his alma mater, the School of the Art Institute (he graduated with an MFA in 1987) to speak at its Living Artist Program lecture series at the Art Institute of Chicago, 230 S. Columbus Drive, on Wed., Feb. 10, at 6 p.m.

The program is free and open to the public. After *Swoon*, a retelling of the infamous Leopold-Loeb murder case that focused heavily on the homosexuality of the killers, Kalin went on to make a series of queer-tinged short and experimental films as well as 2007's *Savage Grace*, a recounting of the Baekeland murder case starring Julianne Moore as social climber Barbara Baekeland; Eddie Redmayne as her gay, schizophrenic son; and Hugh Dancy as art dealer Samuel Adams Green, their joint lover (a characterization Green disputed). <http://www.saic.edu/vap/>

Queer-themed movies for everyone!

A batch of films that played LGBTQ film festivals last year—including *Reeling*—are heading to home and digital release in the next few weeks. These include the dramedy **Grandma**, with its galvanizing lead performance from Lily Tomlin (who should have been nominated for an Oscar) as a lesbian poet determined to raise the money so her granddaughter can get an abortion.

There's also **Freeheld**, with Julianne Moore and out actor Ellen Page as a lesbian couple fighting to get pension rights when Moore's character is diagnosed with stage four cancer. Moore—a one-time Oscar frontrunner for her searing performance—and Page are deeply moving in this character drama penned by out screenwriter Ron Nyswaner. The Oscar-winning 2005 short of the same name is included as one of the DVD's special features. Both are available Feb. 9.

Not quite as high-profile but just as compelling are a trio of queer-themed films from Wolfe Releasing. **Naz & Maalik** is the story of two closeted gay Muslim teens trying to hide their budding romance at the same time they are wrongly being targeted by the FBI for suspected terrorist activities.

SAG Awards exhibit diversity

As opposed to the Oscars—which have received a lot of backlash recently over the issue of race—the 22nd Annual Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards, which took place Jan. 30, was a model of diversity.

Idris Elba made his own mark in other ways, winning two awards in the same evening—for best supporting actor in a movie (for *Beasts of No Nation*) and best actor in a television movie or miniseries (for *Luther*).

Also, Queen Latifah won for female actor in a television movie or miniseries for her turn as bisexual blues singer Bessie Smith in HBO's *Bessie*. In addition, Uzo Aduba won for female actor in a comedy series for portraying "Crazy Eyes" in *Orange Is the New Black*. (In addition, "Orange" won for ensemble in a comedy series, beating *Transparent* and *Modern Family*, among others.) Viola Davis prevailed as the top female actor in a drama series for *How to Get Away with Murder*, edging performers such as Robin Wright (*House*

of Cards) and Dame Maggie Smith (*Downton Abbey*). Diversity regarding sexuality also was acknowledged in addition to Latifah's, Davis' and Aduba's wins for portraying characters within the LGBT spectrum. Swedish actress Alicia Vikander became a first-time SAG winner with her award for best supporting actress in a movie for playing the artist Gerde Wegener, who discovers her husband is transgender, in *The Danish Girl*. Also, Kevin Spacey won for male actor in a drama series for his turn as bisexual U.S. President Frank Underwood in *House of Cards*.

In addition, Jeffrey Tambor won for male actor in a comedy series for his turn in the trans-focused show *Transparent*, defeating, among others, out actor Jim Parsons (*The Big Bang Theory*). The Hollywood Reporter noted that nominations for the SAG Awards were announced in December—well ahead of the Academy's Jan. 14 nominations announcement, which provoked protest when all the Oscar acting noms went to white performers.

Upcoming movie calendar

—**The Choice** (Feb. 5)—Yet another big-screen adaptation of a Nicholas Sparks Southern-fried romance blockbuster, this one is about two neighbors (hunky Benjamin Walker and shapely Teresa Palmer) living in a small coastal town.

—**Hail, Caesar!** (Feb. 5)—See details above.

—**Pride and Prejudice and Zombies** (Feb. 5)—See details above.

—MOST ANTICIPATED: **Deadpool** (Feb. 12)—Yet another superhero from the Marvel Comics universe comes to the big screen in this big-budget action blockbuster. The difference this time out is that said superhero, played by hunky Ryan Reynolds, is openly, proudly pansexual—and is more of an antihero.

—**How to Be Single** (Feb. 12)—A dating comedy is told from the female point of view (well, allegedly...) with Dakota Johnson, Rebel Wilson and Alison Brie as three single ladies "sleeping around in the city that never sleeps" in pursuit of lasting love. It's with Leslie Mann and Lily Collins as well as former *Downton Abbey* heartthrob Dan Stevens and uber hunk/model Nick Bateman as two of their quests.

—RECOMMENDED: **Where to Invade Next** (Feb. 12)—In his latest documentary, Michael Moore "invades" a series of countries—Italy, Iceland, France, Germany, etc.—in order to "claim" various social policies (paid vacations for all, gun control, no drug laws, equal opportunities and pay for women among them) from said countries for the United States. Although it's decidedly on the thin side when stacked up next to Moore's more hard-hitting films, this lighter side of Moore still has its eye-opening moments, and the rage and injustice underneath the jokey tone is no less palpable.

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EVENTS

'Clandestina' offers difference—and a cause

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

In 2015, three powerful and transformative Chicago women from entirely different but successful backgrounds found each other and decided to do something about the dearth of safe spaces for lesbian and queer women in the city.

Monica Raymund is an accomplished, award-winning actress who has shared her craft with students at The Broadway Theatre Project and Heifetz International Music Institute. She portrays Gabriela Dawson on the hit television series Chicago Fire.

Alma Izquierdo has forged an equally outstanding career as a make-up artist who has transformed everyone from performers at the Lyric Opera, to Oprah Winfrey to Rev. Jesse Jackson. She heads up the make-up department on the Chicago Fire spin-off Chicago P.D., now in its third season.

Brooke Webster is an entrepreneur who transformed New York's social scene with iconic bars like Cattyshack and Meow Mix. She is now the assistant general manager of the Dusek's, Thalia Hall and Punch House combination establishment in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

Together, they created something that mirrors their singular contributions to society, honors the lesbian, queer and Latino/a culture while even giving a nod to Chicago history.

Clandestina is a monthly pop-up party that—according to a press release—“invites queer women, allies and friends to get together for crafted cocktails, good eats and an ever revolving cast of DJs.”

The first Clandestina was held at Dusek's Tack Room in November last year. It caught on and two subsequent parties grew in size, imagination and the sheer range of sensory delights to be experienced in both unity and safety.

“They've been very well-received,” Izquierdo told Windy City Times. “We've got some wonderful promoters here in Chicago who put on different events for women but I think women like something new, something different. So a lot of people are coming back and spreading the word.”

“I think what's interesting about these parties is that there's a lot in common,” Raymund said. “These women might be different ages, races, identities and experiences but it seems like everybody appreciates more of an elevated experience—to feel like they're going out and having a special evening for a few hours. We're interested in an array of experiences throughout the evening. There is food and an open bar for the first hour. It's not just reflected in the location but in the music. It's a huge factor.”

“It's a really nice, diverse group of people,” Webster said. “Professionally, culturally. We feel like we were offering a very classy situation. The open bar features cocktails named after great lesbians from history. Every detail is carefully thought out.”

The latest Clandestina will take place on Valentine's Day at The Promontory in Hyde Park.

It has both a theme—A '90s Love Affair—and a mission with all proceeds from the event going to the grassroots LGBTQ youth housing collective Project Fierce (PFC).

Clandestina—from the Spanish “clandestino,” meaning secret, covert, a backroom or speakeasy—took shape when Raymund, who had been in Chicago for nearly four years, began to explore the city's queer community.

“I noticed that there wasn't much of a scene out there for girls,” Raymund told Windy City Times.

That began to change after she paid a visit to Dusek's and met Webster.

“She came into the restaurant one night when I was managing,” Webster said. “We started talking about New York.”

“We clicked right away and had a very strong

rapport very quickly,” Raymund recalled. “She told me about how she had founded and ran Cattyshack and Meow Mix.”

“We were talking about how there is no real place for women to go in this town,” Webster added. “She said that we should do something.”

“There was a lot of synergy to begin with,” Raymund said. “I asked her if she would be interested in throwing some parties here with me.”

At first, Webster was reticent.

“I'd been in retirement mode from doing lesbian parties for a long time,” she said. “I came to Chicago with my wife eight months ago to be close to my family. I've done parties all over the country except for Chicago but I was burnt out and busy advancing my career in the hospitality industry. But Monica and I had a great conversation and I was inspired.”

One more collaborator was needed.



At the December Clandestina: Brooke Webster, Sophia Bush (Chicago P.D. TV show), Monica Raymund (Chicago Fire), Marina Squerciati (Chicago P.D.) and Alma Izquierdo. Photo by Tracy Baim

“I knew Alma from work, so I called her and asked her if she would be interested in this experiment we were about to embark upon,” Raymund said.

“Monica was the catalyst and is our fearless leader,” Izquierdo said. “Of course, I accepted.”

The name Clandestina was derived not only from Raymund and Izquierdo's cultural heritages but the kind of atmosphere and sense of safety the women wanted to provide.

“I came up with it as a play on words,” Webster said. “Not that we were trying to hide, but as a way of doing pop-ups that are just for our community—monthly fun events in new

environments that open our queer women's community to experiencing different things whether they be spaces, restaurants or DJ's.”

“We knew that we wanted to bring a little New York to Chicago,” Raymund said. “We wanted it to be an elevated experience but we also wanted it to be very secret and safe. I wasn't interested in something that was a notorious, ubiquitous brand. I have high exposure especially in the town that I film. So having that safety was not only of high importance to me but I knew it would be to the kind of

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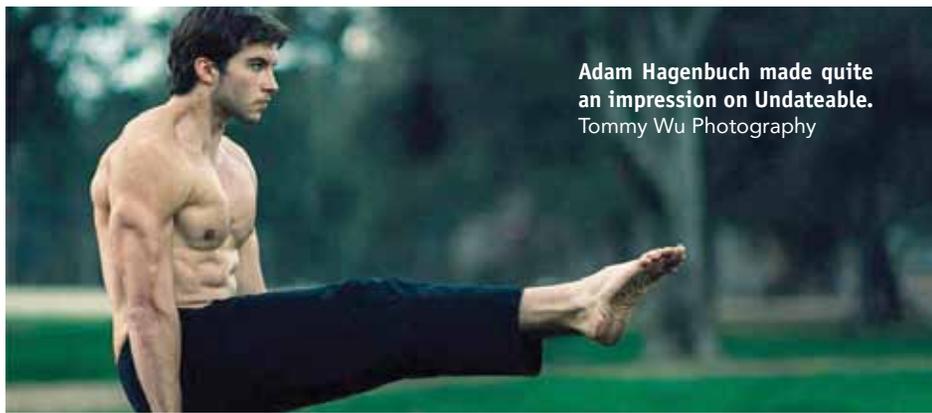
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"Plus, who wants to watch a bunch of amateurs dancing on live TV?"—Julianne Hough as the newly named Sandy Young from Salt Lake City in FOX's Grease: LIVE. Just what we need—a Mormon Sandy!

Here's my opinion about remakes—if you're gonna bother, you better have a new take on the show or performers who blow you away. Neither was the case in this lackluster, joyless rendition. But one must give credit where credit is due—the technical achievements of this live production were astonishing. The sheer scope of the sock-hop scene alone was a marvel (marred by an audio glitch during the hand jive, where no one did the hand jive). But



Adam Hagenbuch made quite an impression on Undateable. Tommy Wu Photography

the biggest misstep was this—if you are going to go to the trouble of having a live audience, use them! We never heard a peep from them, except for applause at the end of songs. This made all the jokes fall flat.

Happily, no one in the cast embarrassed themselves. But nobody covered themselves with glory, either. Aaron Tveit and Julianne Hough are attractive and capable performers—but they had almost no charisma and zero chemistry. Julianne lacks a winsome quality and you never really root for her Sandy, while Tveit was practically the antithesis of a successful Zuko. The most successful performance of the evening was that of Vanessa Hudgens as Rizzo. While it was pretty much a carbon copy of Stockard Channing's portrayal, at least she was interesting and authentically sassy—and kudos to her for pulling it off only hours after her dad lost his battle to cancer. What was left of the part of Kenickie was well played by that hot-ass, Carlos PenaVega. Keke Palmer made the most of her Marty, but someone should teach Jordan Fisher how to strum a guitar. The screen sparkled every time Ana Gasteyer came on as Principal McGee, alongside Haneefah Wood as her secretary, Blanche. Special mention must go to the film originals Barry Pearl and Didi Cohn, who brought some heart and pathos to her all-too-brief scenes as Vi.

Elizabeth Taylor, Marlon Brando and Michael Jackson get into a car together. It's not a joke—it's a film being made by the BBC. The premise is that these three BIG stars were trapped in New York City after 9/11. And since all flights were grounded, they decide to escape the island by driving cross country. It is true that Michael Jackson performed at Madison Square Garden on Sept. 10. And it's said that both Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando went to that concert. While people close to Liz say she stayed in NYC until flights resumed, Jackson's former assistant claims that Michael rented a car, picked up Taylor and Brando, and they set off on a road trip. They allegedly took turns driving, but both Taylor and Jackson were annoyed that Marlon kept wanting to pull over at every KFC and Burger King!

Here's where it gets freaky—in case the rest of it seemed too normal for you. In the BBC film, Michael Jackson will be played by Joseph

Fiennes. Yes, Ralph's younger brother. Yes, the star of Shakespeare in Love. Yes, the WHITE actor! It only makes sense—if you want someone who looks like the Michael Jackson of 2001, are you gonna cast Idris Elba? You know who else was surprised by the casting? Joseph Fiennes! He said, "I'm a white, middle-class guy from London. I'm as shocked as you may be. He definitely had an issue—a pigmentation issue—and that's something I do believe. He was probably closer to my color than his original color." Wait till Jada Pinkett Smith hears about this!

Another big star might be memorialized in a more appropriate way. There is a movement in Baltimore to erect an eight-foot monument in tribute to Divine! The plan was spearheaded by Michal Makarovich, owner of an antique shop, who felt that such a tribute would appeal to fans of John Waters films. He proposes that the monument be on the corner of Read and Tyson Streets, across the street from where Divine (actor Harris Glenn Milstead) ate dog poop in "Pink Flamingos"—in fact, his proposal fea-

tures some bronze dog poop! A Kickstarter campaign has been set up and they are trying to raise \$70K by March 26. You can get more information at DivineMonument.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Henry in Detroit: "I'm glad to hear you're a fan of Undateable. Did you watch the season finale? Who was that hot naked stripper?"

I'm not only a fan of Detroit-based sitcom Undateable—I watch both the live East and West coast feeds. The difference between the two tapings is staggering—including different jokes clearly designed to result in the cast erupting into unscripted hilarity. As to the staggeringly sexy stripper in question, that would be Adam Hagenbuch, who has recurred several times as Candace's ex-boyfriend, Trent. You may also recognize Hagenbuch from The Perks of Being a Wallflower or Switched at Birth.

Beyond that, he's somewhat of a mystery—except he can clearly think fast on his feet, is willing to show off his body, and spontaneously make out with a guy on live TV. Last week, he Tweeted: "Shooting episodes of #SwitchedatBirth and #Undateable this week. Still not wearing a shirt in either. Glad my theater degree is paying off." I dunno about your theater degree, but your gym membership is paying off! While the East Coast version was hot, the West Coast version featured a same-sex kiss and other racy content. Since most people didn't see both, I will post all of the Adam/Trent scenes on BillyMasters.com.

When we're looking forward to a divine erection, it's definitely time to end yet another column. I must say I was so excited to see my friend Jim Colucci during the opening credits of the East Coast feed of Undateable. Jim is an entertainment reporter, the spouse of Frank DeCaro, and author of The Q Guide to the Golden Girls and the upcoming book Golden Girls Forever. You'll be hearing more about that on www.BillyMasters.com, the site that's bicoastal. If you've got a question regarding any coast, send it along to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before FOX announces a remake of Xanadu starring Derek Hough—in the Olivia Newton-John role, naturally. So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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SAVOR Villains

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Boy, has Villains (730 S. Clark St.; Villainschicago.com) undergone a renovation.

Initially, Villains was, essentially, a dive bar. (Manager Marco Silva informed Savor that the establishment's name originated with its first location in 2007, saying it felt like the type of place where Villains would hang out because it was very unassuming.)

Now, it's a midscale restaurant with industrial decor, with Silva saying—and citing his fine-dining background—that there wasn't that type of business in the neighborhood.

However, the newest Villains (which reopened last May) has retained at least one aspect of the older incarnation: an impressive beer list. Forty are on tap, including New Holland Ichabod, Alpine Pure Hoppiness, Founders Imperial Stout 2014 and Southern Tier Pumking. However, there are also



Scallops (left) and pork belly at Villains. Photos by Andrew Davis



some tasty cocktails, as the Sake To Me (gin, sake and lemon) and the Villains Punch (rum, grenadine and bitters) exemplified.

It would also be wise to check out the food. I genuinely enjoyed appetizers such as the beef tongue sandwich (but steer clear of those jalapeños if you're not a fan of heat), heirloom apple salad (endive, ricotta, hazelnuts, and cider vinaigrette—although a little vinaigrette goes a long way) and, my favorite, the grilled milk-braised pork belly (which melts in your mouth), accompanied by salted, roasted sweet potatoes and charred herb salsa.

The entrees are pretty enticing, too. Chef Dennis Stover merges roasted winter squash, crispy Brus-

sels sprouts and broth into a hearty and delicious melange. The pan-seared scallops were also done well and the Villains burger (the only burger hold-over from the older Villains) is one of the better I've had recently; it boasts North Country bacon, aged cheddar, B&B pickles, smoked red onion and beef-fat mayo.

Make room for dessert, though. There's only one item, but it's a doozy: Using his grandmother's recipe, Stover has a buttermilk pie that adds heirloom apples and beer "jam." This eight-dollar item is—as I like to say—worth the price of admission alone.

Note: Villains will institute a Sunday brunch starting on Easter, March 27.



SIDETRACK

525,600 people celebrating the 20th anniversary of Rent, Monday, January 25.

Photos by Jed Dulanias

Y'all betta work!

"Congratulations" to Chicago girls Kim Chi (left) and Naysha Lopez, who are both competing in RuPaul's Drag Race Season 8. The new season, which sees Kim and Naysha competing in a field of 12 contestants, kicks off Mon., March 7, on Logo TV, with premiere parties all over the city. Photo of Kim Chi by Kirk Williamson; photo of Naysha Lopez by Kristofer Reynolds

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thanks **KIRK WILLIAMSON** on his 15th anniversary with our company.

THANK YOU, KIRK!

Kirk joined our company in 2001 as a sales representative. He has increased his responsibilities over the years, which now include being art director for the company, continuing his nightlife coverage for Nightspots, and lending a hand with social media. He has received awards and honors for his work from such local organizations as TPAN, IL Gay Rodeo Association and The Imperial Windy City Court of the Prairie State Empire.

nightspots the big TO-DO

OUR WEEKLY PICKS TO PLAN YOUR NIGHTLIFE CALENDAR



LQKS: Baduizm

Thu., Feb. 4, 10 pm

Berlin, 932 W. Belmont Ave.

Live sets and performances calling for a new Amerykah by JC Brooks, Angeleah RapperChick, Shea Couleé, David, Po'Chop and mistress of ceremonies, Lucy Stoolie. Audio Jack (Sto 'Mo) will be joining [X]P on the decks. Kater Jayne Photography.



Mardi Gras Masquerade

Sat., Feb. 6, 8 pm

Sidetrack,

3349 N. Halsted St.

Complimentary body painting and fun masks. Mardi Gras specialty cocktails featuring Bacardi Rum, Effen Vodka, Jack Daniels Whiskey and Heineken Beer.



Jai Ho: Loveria

Fri., Feb. 5, 10 pm

Big Chicks,

5024 N. Sheridan Rd.

DJ VOXBOX and spectacular performances. Dress for a hot date and come ready to dance until the snow's melted. Open to everyone. \$5 donation requested.

Wed., Feb. 3

Free HIV/AIDS testing at Affinity Community Services Affinity is a social justice organization that focuses on health and wellness, leadership development, and community building for Black lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women and LGBTQ youth of African descent in the Chicago metropolitan area. 1:00pm - 3:00pm Affinity Community Services 1424 E. 53rd St. Suite 306, Chicago 773-324-0377 <http://www.affinity95.org>

Brass Chuckles Comedy: Comedy that Kicks Ass Hosted by Tamale Rocks. Each Wednesday comedians performing stand-up and improv based on a nightly "Performer Challenge." After the mainstage show, there is an open-mic opportunity where anything is fair game. \$10 9:00pm Uptown Underground, 4707 N. Broadway

Thursday, Feb. 4

Wine tasting for a cause Proceeds benefit Heartland Health Outreach's HIV and AIDS services for low-income and homeless Chicagoans. 5:30pm - 8:30pm Binny's Lincoln Park, 1720 N Marcey, Chicago 7732715140 <http://action.heartlandalliance.org/site/Calendar?id=106365&view=Detail> Tickets: <http://action.heartlandalliance.org/site/Calendar?id=106365&view=Detail>

Chi-Town Squares Dance Party LGBT Modern Western Square Dance Club open to everyone and dedicated to having a great time square dancing. 7:00pm - 9:30pm Ebenezer Lutheran Church 1650 W Foster Chicago <http://chitownsquares.org>

Classics of Women's Literature Book Group The Axe: The Master of Hestviken, Vol. 1 by Sigrid Undset. Soaringly romantic and psychologically nuanced, Undset's novel

**ONE MORE TIME Saturday, Feb. 6**

The Equality Illinois gala (the last one with CEO Bernard Cherkasov, above, heading the organization) is at the Hilton Chicago.
Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

is also a meticulous re-creation of a world split between pagan codes of retribution and the rigors of Christian piety. 7:15pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/womensclassics>

Friday, Feb. 5

Domesticated Funny, unpredictable play about a marriage burst apart by a sex scandal investigates gender politics, modern marriage and the sexual mysteries of the animal kingdom. Through Feb. 7. 7:30pm Steppenwolf 1650 N Hal-

sted Chicago <http://www.steppenwolf.org/Plays-Events/productions/index.aspx?id=640> Tickets: <http://www.steppenwolf.org/Plays-Events/productions/index.aspx?id=640>

Tour to End Queer Youth Homelessness: An Evening of Poetry A stop on Loma (aka Christopher Soto)'s national tour to raise awareness about the staggeringly high rate of homelessness among queer youth. Fatimah Asghar, Loma, Richie Hofmann, and Erika Sanchez. 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N. Clark St. Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Saturday, Feb. 6

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

TQI Lounge For Trans, Genderqueer, and Intersex people, a stress-free and relaxed social environment with discussions about gender, sexuality, life, and so much more. 4:30pm - 6:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=11211>

Equality Illinois 25th Anniversary Gala Sometimes drawing more than 1,400 guests, including nearly 100 public officials and many more community VIPs. Begins at 6 pm with silent auction cocktail party and ends at midnight with the post-dinner dance. Tickets begin at \$350. 6:00pm Chicago Hilton and Towers 720 S Michigan Ave Chicago Tickets: https://equalityfederation.salsalabs.com/o/35010/p/salsa/event/common/public/?event_KEY=3544

Uncommon Women and Others Dramatic comedy telling the story of alumnae from Mount Holyoke College meeting for lunch in 1978 to talk about their experiences, some raunchy, others sobering. Fridays,

Saturdays, and Sundays for three weeks. 16+ 8:00pm PM&L Theatre, 877 N. Main Street, Antioch Tickets: <http://www.pml-theatre.com>

Sunday, Feb. 7

WACT brunch and Super Bowl celebration WACT is a brunch and social support organization for lesbians and bisexual women, especially interested in meeting and befriending each other across ethnicities, ages, incomes, etc. We are about togetherness and no one in particular is in charge. Come to one of our brunches, and bring a dish to share. 2:00pm - 5:00pm Contact organizer at torlene@comcast.net for location 773-731-7355

Monday, Feb. 8

Der Rosenkavalier Delectably bittersweet romantic comedy, sublimely beautiful music, plus love triangles and double-cross-dressing!. 6:30pm Lyric Opera Civic Opera House 20 N. Wacker Dr. 312-827-5600 Tickets: <http://lyricopera.org/rosenkavalier>

Movie Musical Mondays: Chicago Monday nights through February, screening past movie musical Oscar winners. \$5 suggested donation at the door. 6:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=11249>

Gay Fathers of Greater Chicago A network of gay men who have children living with them or apart from them. These peer meetings provide a safe, confidential, and welcoming forum for talking about the issues that affect gay fathers. 7:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://gayfatherschicago.org/>

Tuesday, Feb. 9

Chicago Area Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce B2B Lunch Lunch is provided. 30 Second Commercial, member events and announcements, 10 minute educational piece, guided networking. \$20 Pre-

Registered Members, \$25 Members at Door, \$30 Non-Members 11:30am - 1:30pm Chicago Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce 3179 N Clark Chicago Tickets: <http://glchamber.org>

Lecture and Discussion with Riva Lehrer: Beauty in Exile In a world obsessed with physical beauty disability seems exempt from being seen as beautiful. A memoir of sexual identity and an examination of the wall that separates the disabled. Featuring clips from "Self-Preservation: The Art of Riva Lehrer." Program part of Exposure: A Series of New Developments in Disability Arts & Culture. Free 2:00pm - 4:00pm Gallery 400 <http://gallery400.uic.edu/events/beauty-in-exile>

Wed., Feb. 10

SHE100 Quarterly Social and Presentation LGBTQ women's community, organized for charitable, philanthropic and community work in Chicago. Open bar with beer on tap and light food. RSVP with full name so we can add you to the building guest list. sheonehundred@gmail.com 5:30pm - 7:30pm Trading Technologies International, 222 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago Tickets: <http://she100.org>

Panel on homelessness and survival sex in the LGBTQ community Whitney Capps, host and co-creator of The Gala's Art Break podcast, moderates a discussion about LGBTQ youth homelessness and the role the sex trade plays in the LGBTQ community with panelists Tracy Baim (publisher and executive editor Windy City Times and founder Pride Action Tank), Lourdes Nieto (Chicago police officer), Sam Kirk (artist and founder of Provoke Culture as part of her current exhibit "Surviving the Times" through Feb. 24. 6:30pm - 7:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

LETTERS from page 12

er oppressed people is required to strengthen all justice struggles.

Also unaddressed is the "pinkwashing" issue represented by A Wider Bridge, the Israeli government-inspired effort to deflect attention from brutal treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli regime by highlighting a relatively enlightened treatment of LGBTQ folk—at least in Tel Aviv.

Finally, the chant, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," means to me and I think others as well, that the solution to the conflict is a unitary, secular state welcoming anyone who may wish to live within the boundaries of Israel/Palestine. This is supposedly what we have in the United States. Does anyone really want to live in an officially "Christian" United States, where other faiths have legal second-class status?

Bob Schwartz
Chicago

Together and apart

Dear Editor:

It was disheartening and alarming to read reports in Windy City Times and other media about the acts of intolerance at the recent Creating Change conference.

I fear the recent successes in LGBT causes has led to the kind of splintering that we so often see in political parties and corporations when they ride a tidal wave of success. We are still a small minority and no group has more reasons to practice and advocate civility and respect for one another than we do.

Renee James

Let's talk about respect

Dear Editor:

It is shocking that activists shut down a Shabbat service and meeting because it included Israeli LGBT leaders and U.S. supporters.

Jerusalem Open House is a cross-community group that serves both Jews and Arabs, including many gay men from the West Bank. It is part of the solution. The "pinkwashing" protesters could learn about the conflict by talking to these individuals who live with it every day.

Israel is not a racist, apartheid, or colonialist country. The Israeli-Arab conflict is an extremely complex regional conflict. Israel has very real security concerns, as evidenced by the half dozen wars since its founding and the recent knife and car attacks on Jewish civilians and Israeli soldiers. Jews have always lived in Palestine and in the Middle East, and have a right to national self-determination, as do Palestinians, Kurds and others.

Israelis and their American supporters should have the right to convene at a U.S. LGBT activist conference. Respect for diversity includes respect for differences of opinion regarding a complicated geopolitical and historical conflict.

Sean Cahill
Boston

[Editor's note: No Shabbat service was shut down at the conference; the reception that was held after the Shabbat service stopped early due to the protesters.]

Civil disobedience

Letter to the Editor:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu,
melekh ha'olam.

Blessed are You, LORD our
God, King of the universe!

Windy City Times reported that Gay Liberation Network, Black Lives Matter Chicago, and BiNet USA organized a protest against a presentation by a LGBT Jewish group at the National LGBTQ Task Force's Creating Change conference in Chicago.

According to the news articles, online videos and session participants, the protesters exhibited an appalling manifestation of anti-Semitic prejudice. Hotel security could not control the protesters and ensure the safety of the participants; the Chicago Police Department was called in to restore order.

As victims of hatred and discrimination ourselves, LGBTQ people need to disavow our community from the tactics of the protestors. Protestors have the right to protest and express their opinions. However, they need to do so in a civil manner.

The tenor of the protest calls into question why organizations such as Black Lives Matter and BiNet USA decided to align themselves with an anti-Semitic incident. Their guiding documents, principles and purposes make no mention of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

One of the protest organizers—the Gay Liberation Network (GLN), with its self-appointed leader Andy Thayer—has consistently exhibited anti-religious animosity at its various past protests. On the one hand, they are quick to protest any religious group for its anti-gay stances, often with confrontation and intimidation of innocent bystanders. On the other hand, it has NEVER come to the aid of any reli-

gious LGBT group or individual under homophobic attack. The acrimonious practices of GLN makes it clear why LGBT organizations have all disavowed themselves of the GLN: HRC, Equality Illinois, Stonewall Democrats, Log Cabin Republicans, etc.

The protesting groups failed to draw a fundamental distinction between the two Jewish LGBTQ organizations and the Israeli government. Apparently, they have never participated in any dialog with Jewish LGBTQ organizations to foster mutual edification and understanding. The two Jewish groups, A Wider Bridge and the Jerusalem Open House, advocate for LGBT rights in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's occupation of Palestine and treatment of Palestinians is brutal, abhorrent and inhumane, rightfully subject to international condemnation. Jewish LGBT groups are NOT responsible for Israel's loathsome politics in Palestine.

I call upon the GLN, Black Lives Matter Chicago and BiNet USA to issue a public apology to National LGBTQ Task Force, A Wider Bridge and the Jerusalem Open House for the hostile behavior and public anti-Semitism displayed by their protestors. In spite of their anti-racist and anti-homophobic efforts, their misstep reflects a broader issue for the LGBTQ demographic: Our community, with its progressive politics, still regrettably exhibits Anti-Semitism. We all need to participate in cultural sensitivity training regarding Judaism and anti-Semitism.

Let us all pray to God for inspiration, forgiveness and reconciliation. Amen.

In faith and fellowship,
Rev. Rudra Dundzila
Community minister,
Second Unitarian Church

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CLANDESTINA from page 17

demographic we were trying to bring to these parties. I want to make sure that women and queers feel like this is a safe space."

"We want to keep changing it up a bit," Izquierdo noted. "Sometimes it's a lounge experience, sometimes a dance club. We're bringing in talents from our community—singers and performers—so it is truly a different option."

It is an option in which guests and the community must keep consistently engaged if they want to enjoy.

"We send the location to guests a week before and the password three days before the party," Webster explained. "We didn't even put Clandestina on social media at first. We targeted large events that we knew women would be at and we made tiny business cards that were very vague. We just spread the word. That's where Alma came in because she has quite a following in Chicago."

"Alma is one of our strongest promoters, if not the strongest promoter in the entire city," Raymund added. "She made sure that room was filled for the first time. After that first experience we went out a lot. I wasn't sleeping for the first couple of months. We were hitting queer bars and just talking about it. We keep meeting people and expanding the list."

Experiencing their own exponential growth is Project Fierce. Launched in 2013, the collective bought a four-flat building on Chicago's Southside in August of last year which—according to PFC's website—"will provide supportive, collaborative, transitional housing for 10-12 LGBTQ-identified young adults."

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"I've been active in the community for many years," Izquierdo said. "I told Brooke and Monica that the community appreciates it when we give back. So I suggested that we hold an event at least once a year to help raise funds for an organization."

"We knew we wanted to do something to benefit a local organization," Raymund said. "[PFC] does a lot to help LGBTQ homeless youth and that kind of awareness is incredibly important to bring especially given all of the problems that youth are having right now. What's happening on the streets is prevalent. The violence, the lack of education opportunities, the racial tensions are compounded for someone who is LGBT with nowhere to go. I've done homeless youth work before and it is very near to my heart."

"One of things I thought was really important to fund in New York was queer, homeless youth organizations," Webster added. "Alma and everyone we talked to said that Project Fierce is doing something really cool and doesn't have any government funding. I knew how it was to be young and queer and come out at a young age. So an organization out there to help people to get skills while they transition into their adult life is key."

"Youth has been something that I've worked with for quite some time and is near and dear to my heart," Izquierdo said. "Project Fierce is making progress but they still need help."

Clandestina is Sunday, Feb. 14, 8 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. Admission is \$20, and includes open bar 8-9 p.m. There will be DJs Audiojack, All the Way Kay and BK Web, plus a performance from hip-hop star Monie Love. See www.promontorychicago.com.

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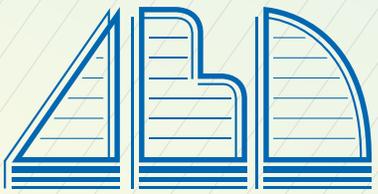


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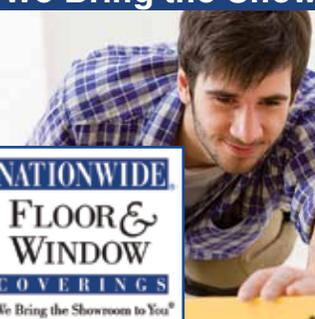
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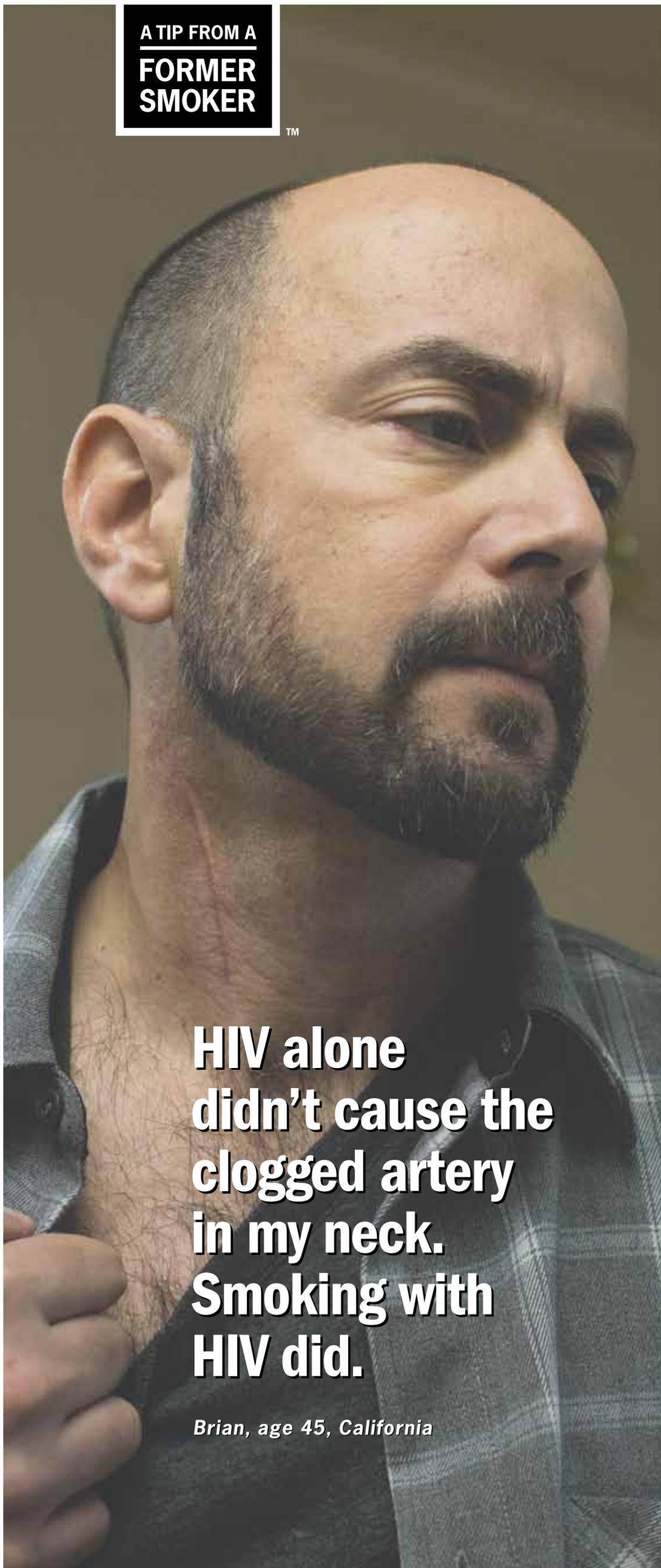
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