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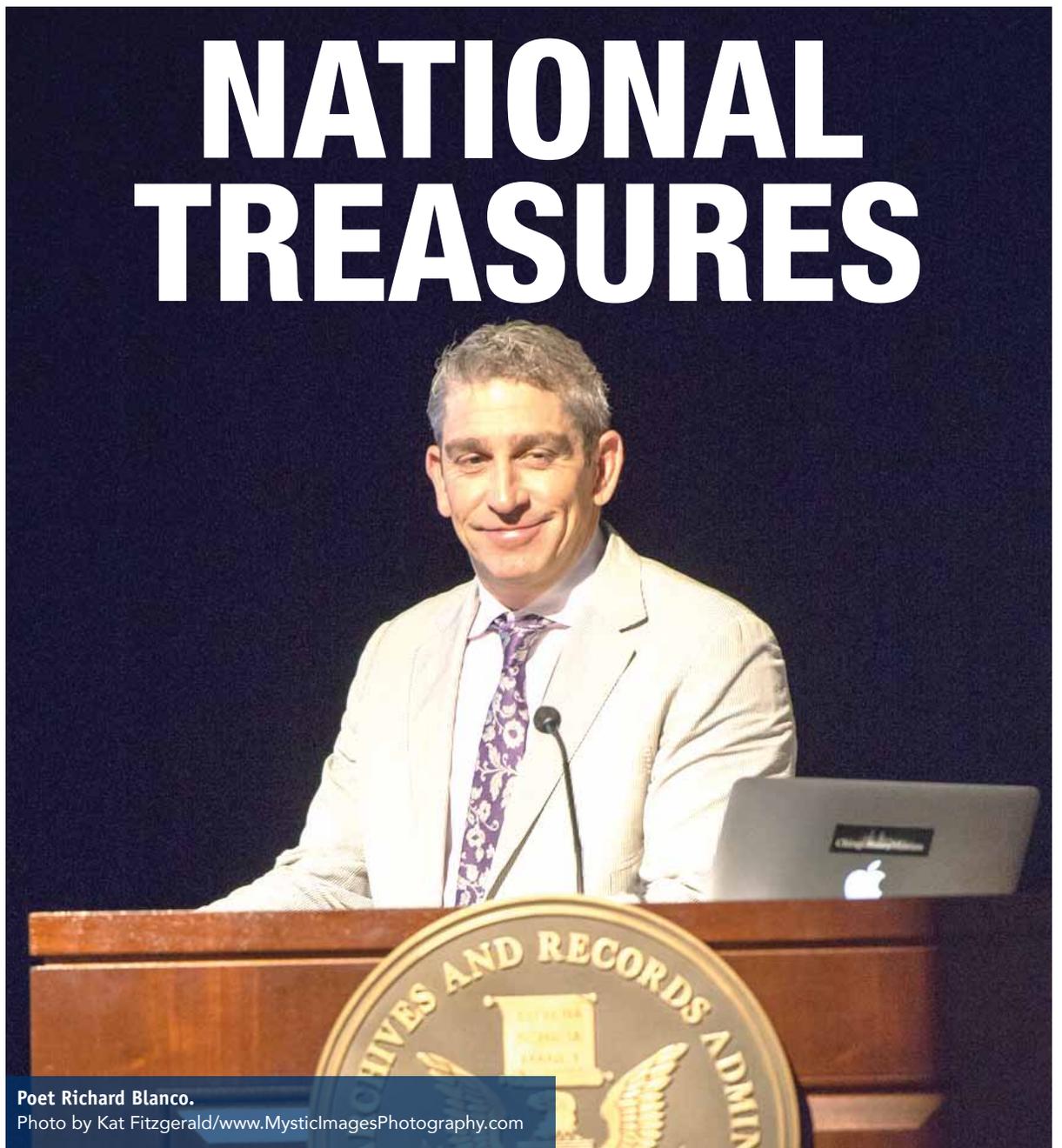
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BRIT BY BRIT
 Talking with the stars of 'Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie.'
 Photo from Fox Searchlight

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Poet Richard Blanco.
 Photo by Kat Fitzgerald/www.MysticImagesPhotography.com

Poet Richard Blanco keynotes National Archives LGBTQ Human and Civil Rights discussion

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Speaking at the Chicago History Museum July 16, poet Richard Blanco said that his work has long been dominated by a search for and a remembrance of "home," adding that he frequently evoked "a universal longing to 'belong' to someone or someplace."

Growing up as part of a Cuban family in Miami, Blanco said there were two representations of 'home' that frequently haunted his imagination: Cuba, of which his exiled family frequently spoke, and the generic representations of American families, like the Brady Bunch, that populated afternoon TV reruns.

"This was the only America that I thought existed. I wasn't

sure that I belonged to America or what part of America belonged to me," Blanco said.

Blanco was the inaugural poet at President Barack Obama's second inauguration in 2013; he was the first openly gay person, and the first immigrant, to fill that role. He was in Chicago July 15-16 as part of the National Archive and Records Administration's (NARA) National Conversation on Rights and Justice series, which this month focused on LGBT human and civil rights.

Blanco spoke about the importance of studying and preserving historical documents, illustrating his point with a 1978

Turn to page 6



RACHEL WILLIAMS
 Activist talks about BYP100, recent shootings.
 Photo by Danielle Scruggs

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JIM FLINT
 Baton founder looks forward while turning 75.
 Photo by Hal Baim

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RITA ADAIR
 Activist talks about upcoming book, social work.

17

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OH, SHEILA
 Sheila E. (left) was among the musicians providing a lot of entertainment at the Taste of Chicago.
 Photo by Vern Hester

REMEMBERING SANDRA



A vigil was held in the Loop on the one-year anniversary of Sandra Bland's death that occurred while she was in custody.
 Photo by Nina Matti

'KIN' DO
 WCT reviews the theatrical production Kin Folk.

A TALL ORDER
 On the reality show My Giant Life, 6'8" Katja Bavendam is planning to have a child with her 5'2" wife.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ
 Find out the latest about Abby Wambach, Christian Siriano and rapper Deadlee.

JAZZIN' IT UP



Trans star Jazz Jennings was among those at the TLC Block Party.
 Photo of Jazz (center) with her parents by Nina Matti

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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Looking at workplace bias against trans people of color

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

In April 2012, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) determined in the case *Macy v. Holder* that transgender and gender non-conforming people are a protected class under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects people based on sex.

This EEOC ruling was affirmed by numerous court decisions, the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice. These federal en-



N.C. trans resident Austin Fonville.

Photo courtesy of Fonville

findings make it illegal to discriminate against transgender and gender non-conforming people across the country despite some state and local municipalities lack of employment protections for these individuals.

According to the EEOC site "the commission has obtained approximately \$6.4 million in monetary relief for individuals, as well as numerous employer policy changes, in voluntary resolutions of LGBT discrimination charges under Title VII since data collection began in 2013."

President Obama's Executive Order 1148, enacted in July 2014, took this ruling a step further. It explicitly forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in both federal agencies and private firms who receive federal contracts.

Despite these national employment protections, a number of transgender and gender non-conforming people have either not gotten hired, been denied a promotion, were harassed and/or were fired from their jobs, especially transgender and gender non-conforming people of color. This aligns with national trends that show people of color across the board are often discriminated against in hiring and when promotions are considered in favor of white people.

One of the reasons this persists is because employers often ignore the EEOC federal statute in favor of state and local laws which omit LGBTQ people from discrimination protections. Just under half of the states protect against employment discrimination in the public and private sector based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This discrepancy would be eliminated if the Equality Act—that would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in all areas including employment—was passed by Congress and signed into law by the president.

Since the EEOC ruling is relatively new, data is still being collected on how many transgender and gender non-conforming people of color have continued to experience negative workplace environments, haven't been hired or were fired.

Among the many transgender and gender

non-conforming people of color who've been discriminated against since the EEOC ruling is Austin Fonville of Beaufort County, North Carolina. Fonville—who identifies as a Cuban African-American transgender male, attends community college in nearby Pamlico County, North Carolina and was the school's Student Government Association president last year—told Windy City Times it's only gotten worse since HB2 was signed into law.

"HB2 made my life worse," said Fonville. "It's opened me up to cruelty from my school's board members and pointed a spotlight on me even more than there already was. People have been reluctant to hire me because I may cause them to lose business. Within this small community, there aren't many secrets. It's hard to prove why you don't get a job, but when someone tells you directly, 'Look, I like you but I can't hire you because they won't let me' that says it all."

"I'm in school to be a group counselor, but they make it difficult here for me to offer help to the LGBTQ community. I don't have a criminal record, so there's no reason why I can't get a job. When I apply for jobs, if someone knows me from before, they feel it necessary to inform people of my previous name/pronoun. This can potentially put me in danger. I'm in the process of applying to colleges further north so I can leave this state, because not only have I been targeted, my wife and daughter have as well."

In Sept. 2013, the Movement Advancement Project, the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), the Human Rights Campaign and the Center for American Progress put out a report—A Broken Bargain for Transgender Workers. The report included information from the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, which "found that the unemployment rate for transgender workers was twice the rate for the population as a whole (14 percent compared to seven percent), with the rate for transgender people of color reaching as high as four times the national unemployment rate."

The survey also found that "24 percent of transgender people in the U.S. identified as people of color, compared to 22 percent of the general population."

Going further, the survey notes transgender people indicating they were denied employment due to their gender identity with the numbers being higher for transgender people of color—47 percent of Latinx, 48 percent of Black and 56 percent of multiracial respondents.

Another finding stated 78 percent of transgender and gender non-conforming employees were harassed in the workplace with transgender people of color having even higher rates of harassment.

According to the survey results, transgender people of color (other than those identifying as Asian) were also more likely to report having lost a job than their white transgender counterparts.

This data was compiled prior to the EEOC ruling and the recent findings by the Williams Institute at UCLA that showed there are twice as many transgender adults in the U.S. than previously reported—an estimated 1.4 million or 0.6 percent of the total population.

Later this year, the NCTE will release the results of the U.S. Trans Survey, which was conducted in late 2015 and had more than 27,000 respondents. The new survey report will contain data about the workplace experiences of an unprecedented number of transgender people around the nation.

See EEOC.gov, TransEquality.org and LambdaLegal.org.

GUEST VIEW

BY NADINE SMITH



The Problem is Fear: Gun control and the LGBT community in the wake of Orlando

I am a pretty good shot with a rifle.

I won a turkey shoot as a teenager. I have destroyed clay pigeons and discs skeet shooting with a double-barreled shotgun. I trained on an M-16, an adaptation of the AR-15. So when I talk about guns, I understand the allure—and the repulsion. I wore a uniform when I fired that M16. Civilians should not be walking about with that kind of firepower.

huddled in camo gear as part of their make-believe militias.

They wish it were not so. They cannot accept the story that they are the bad guys, because they believe, when push inevitably comes to shove, we will be begging to join them as the boogymen come for "decent people." They believe they have faced up to an inconvenient truth the rest of us want desperately to avoid. They have a story

that is as logical and powerful to them as it is cynical and dangerous to us: "I'm a good person. I'm not looking for trouble, but I will protect mine."

We may mock the "good guy with a gun" rhetoric, but the idea that a good heart and

"But we make a mistake if we simply believe the NRA's dollars have purchased the conscience of legislators."

The Senate's failure to impose the bare minimum gun safety measures is unconscionable. I will do my best to remove these cowards from office for dereliction of duty.

But we make a mistake if we simply believe the NRA's dollars have purchased the conscience of legislators.

It isn't simply the money; it is the ideology of fear. It is their central story that the world is doomed to become a terrifying place of scarcity: that when the oil is gone and the water is scarce we will all go feral and only the strong will survive. Our decline cannot be halted; collapse is inevitable.

Will it be roving bands of "urban" home invaders that come for our families? Activated terrorist cells? A tyrannical government that will turn on the docile, weapon-less masses it is supposed to serve?

These are the fears, spoken by the survival cultists but whispered by an inner voice even to those who aren't

a weapon, real or imaginary, will save us inundates us daily. The simplicity of this ideology is as attractive as it is self-fulfilling. Their xenophobia, racism, and fear of all difference is what is eroding our social contract. Guns are not making us safer, as mass shootings and the normalization of daily carnage attest. In difficult times, we need each other. We are not islands. It is why we don't permit hoarding or price gouging in the wake of a hurricane. Our lives depend on cooperation.

These blaze of glory fantasies cannot be indulged. Weapons capable of mowing us down in our schools, theaters, places of worship, our nightclubs do not make anyone safer. These are weapons of mass slaughter, and their flow must be stopped. But we delude ourselves if we think this is simply a matter of money.

The problem is much deeper than money. The problem is fear.

Nadine Smith is the co-founder and CEO of Equality Florida, the state's largest organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



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BLANCO from cover

letter from Harvey Milk to then-President Jimmy Carter, asking for the president's help in defeating the anti-gay Briggs Initiative. The LGBT community often faces what he called a deficit of institutional memory on its own history, since "issues like Stonewall, Anita Bryant and Matthew Shepard aren't in history books."

He added, "I see these historical documents as a kind of poetry ... They memorialize these issues by humanizing them."

The arts play important roles in exposing audiences to history as well as the humanity of an oppressed community. After that, Blanco said, "It gets difficult for our foes to deny our humanity."

A poet's job is to give their audience a collective vision of hope, he added. "All great artists and leaders understand that ... Art is great at letting us envision a future. 'Maybe this is who we are. This is the hope of actually being that way.'"

Early in Blanco's career, he compartmentalized the many facets of his identity. "I thought that my story as a Cuban American had nothing to do with my sexual identity as a gay man," he said.

But as his work evolved, he began to see parallels between the aspirations of the LGBT and Cuban American communities. Both, he realized, were searching for a sense of home, which he described as a safe space "where someone can live their life without fear, to belong to someplace culturally."

Blanco read several of his poems and discussed his formative years. He shared pictures of himself as a child: One of him relaxing with his cat, another of him writing, yet another of him visibly uncomfortable at a Little League game. He was introverted and shy, so writing offered a way to make his observations known, he said.

Much of his presentation focused on his grandmother, whose sharp criticisms and outright homophobia played a part in formulating his self-consciousness. When she did not like something, Blanco said, his grandmother immediately dismissed it as "gay." Introducing his poem "Queer Theory, According to My Grandmother," he was blunt: "I do hope you laugh at her, not with her."

But despite her cutting observations, Blanco was ultimately forgiving of his grandmother and said that growing up she was in many ways his best friend. He noted that, looking back, she'd given him numerous insights into "the complexities of human behavior," adding, "What's going on is a particular type of homophobia tied into machismo. It's about secrecy, pretense and pretending."

Blanco spoke of and read a poem about the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando in June. "Growing up in Miami, Orlando was a second home," he said.

He further reflected on political and social turmoil across the United States. "I think our country is at a crossroads," he said. "I think we need to decide what kind of nation we want to be."

Blanco concluded with his inaugural poem and spoke about how, being given the opportunity to deliver it, he felt as if he was finally "at home." He also realized, he said, that America was a "work in progress."

"Without hope, of course, we have nothing left," Blanco said.

Opening remarks at Blanco's talk were delivered by Kim Hunt, executive director of Pride Action Tank; National Archives Foundation board member Fay Hartog Levin; Mario Camacho, president of LEAGUE at AT&T; and United States Archivist David Ferriero. Poet and activist Antonio Gray introduced Blanco. Michael Hussey of NARA moderated a discussion after the talk.

The National Conversation on Rights and Justice is a yearlong series presented by the National Archives "to advance discussion across the nation that forefronts the challenges to rights and justice that persist as we celebrate the 225th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights through the National Archives' Amending America initiative," according to a NARA statement.

The online edition of this article has links to video from the event.

National Archives panels cover legal, trans, socioeconomic issues

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) hosted a series of discussion panels July 16 with local and national speakers highlighting current concerns in the LGBTQ community.

The discussions, which took place at the Chicago History Museum, came as part of NARA's yearlong National Conversation on Rights and

But when Goldberg offered a look at rights of transgender Americans, the picture was much more stark. She illustrated that, in a number of states, the rights of trans persons were disregarded, if not being attacked outright by conservative elements. "This is horrific," she said, later adding that "bathroom-rights" bills were ultimately a gateway for state politicians to attack the home-rule of municipalities and other local governments.

From left: Dale Carpenter, Tyrone Hanley, James Bennett, Naomi Goldberg and Mary Morten discuss legal issues facing the community during the opening panel.

Photo by Tracy Baim



From left: Imani Rupert-Gordon, Myles Alexander Brady-Davis, Abbe Land, Naomi Goldberg and Mary Morten discuss socioeconomic issues.

Photo by Matt Simonette



From left: Owen Daniel-McCarter, Sarah McBride, and Precious Davis.

Photo by Matt Simonette

Justice series, which address civil and human rights in a number of communities and take place in cities across the United States through 2017.

The opening panel discussed legal issues facing the community and featured James Bennett of Lambda Legal; Naomi Goldberg of Movement Advancement Project; Dale Carpenter of University of Minnesota; and Tyrone Hanley of National Center for Lesbian Rights. Mary Morten of the Morten Group was moderator.

Goldberg opened with a presentation on recent progress in LGBTQ rights since full marriage equality came about in the summer of 2015.

"Marriage equality was in many ways a cascade," Goldberg said, noting that even some of the least progressive states had shown some improvement on acknowledging the rights of gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens. "This is starkly different than where we were a year ago."

"They've realized there is a lot of fear around bathrooms," Goldberg said.

Goldberg was joined in a second panel focusing on socioeconomic issues by Myles Alexander Brady-Davis of Howard Brown Health; Abbe Land of the Trevor Project; and Imani Rupert-Gordon of Affinity Community Services. (Morten again moderated.) Goldberg gave another overview, noting that, thanks to census data, we now know that same-sex couples are present in numerous communities across the nation.

"That's one stereotype we need to push against—that we're only in big cities, that we only live on the coast, that we don't live in the South," she said.

The panelists spoke on the importance of collaboration between large and small organizations to tackle significant issues, particularly those that are intersectional.

"We can no longer approach our work without approaching it through that lens," said

Land. "We really have to start viewing our work in a totally different way. ... After the horrible massacre in Orlando, many organizations came together. ... It was the first time in a long time. where that happened."

"Push the egos aside so we can work together," added Brady-Davis.

Brady-Davis' fiancé—activist Precious Davis, a diversity professional and social justice facilitator—moderated a final panel focusing on issues affecting transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Owen Daniel-McCarter of Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and Sarah McBride of Human Rights Campaign Foundation joined Davis.

McBride discussed the overlap between issues affecting both trans persons and persons of color, noting, "All of the fights against inequality are inextricably linked. ... There's no

question that the trans movement and Black Lives Matter have a lot to learn from one another. At the end of the day, these fights are about being able to walk down the street without the threat of violence."

She added that the onslaught of anti-trans laws so soon after the LGBT community's victories for marriage equality "is a reminder that progress is not always linear."

Daniel-McCarter noted that, after the Alliance surveyed a number of Illinois trans students, the results showed that issues like bathrooms and gender-pronouns were not necessarily their chief concern. Instead, many were worried about safety and crime, just as other students were.

"What we're talking about is creating a space where our transgender students can learn," he said.

The panel ended on an optimistic note, as all acknowledged recognition for the trans community brought about under the auspices of the Obama administration, with Davis mentioning that many people she knew had now been to the White House.

"Sometimes it's taken longer than we've wanted—that's a fair critique," said McBride. "But time and time again, everything within their power, they have eventually delivered for us."

United States Archivist David Ferriero delivered closing remarks after the panels.

See more event coverage online.

Trump names Pence as running mate; LGBTs criticize move

Presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump made it official July 15 as he announced Indiana Gov. Mike Pence as his running mate.

"I am pleased to announce that I have chosen Governor Mike Pence as my Vice Presidential running mate," Trump tweeted. Trump held a series of auditions with Pence and other top contenders such as New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and well-known figure Newt Gingrich.

Pence is known for his conservative ideology—something pro-LGBTQ groups noted in their press releases.

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) President Chad Griffin said, "Donald Trump just doubled down on his agenda of hate and discrimination by choosing the notoriously anti-LGBTQ Mike Pence for his ticket. Mike Pence has never left any question about his animus toward LGBTQ people, from peddling a hateful and damaging 'right to discriminate bill' in Indiana last year, to his longstanding opposition to marriage equality—positions shared by Donald Trump.

"Hillary Clinton has laid out the most ambitious agenda for LGBTQ equality that our nation has ever seen from a presidential candidate. She will not only protect the gains we have made over the last eight years, but fight for full federal equality day in and day out in the White House."

HRC also said that "Pence became a national disgrace in 2015, for his 'license to discriminate' bill that could have allowed businesses to deny service to LGBTQ people—and subsequently defending the bill over an outcry from the business community and a majority of Hoosier voters. In a now notorious interview with ABC last year, Pence refused to answer eight separate times when asked whether businesses should be able to discriminate against LGBTQ people."

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund Deputy Executive Director Russell Roybal said in a separate release, "In selecting Mike Pence, Donald Trump has picked a vice-presidential running mate who is best-known for a law that was so extremely anti-LGBTQ that businesses, organizations and major events threatened to flee Indiana in droves. One can only imagine what sort of impact this type of person might have on the lives of LGBTQ people across the country, and on our nation's economy and future."

Equality Forum Executive Forum Malcolm has also weighed in, saying, "The selection of anti-gay crusader Gov. Mike Pence, along with the homophobic Republican party platform and a deafening silence on the LGBT Equality Act completes a trifecta of hate from Donald Trump on LGBT rights. Although Trump claims he's a 'friend' of the LGBT community, his rhetoric is in direct contrast to his actions which are deeply



GOP vice presidential candidate Mike Pence. Official headshot

troubling and sends chills down the backs of 20 million LGBT Americans and to those who believe in civil rights for all citizens."

Brian C. Johnson, the executive director of Equality Illinois, also criticized the selection of Pence, saying, "In March 2015, we in Illinois watched in shock as Gov. Pence signed into law a bill that established discrimination against LGBT Hoosiers as statewide policy. So not only do Hoosiers legally feel the sting of prejudice and intolerance due to the actions of Gov. Pence, but Illinoisans who are protected under Illinois state law from discrimination could be refused service and be discriminated against as soon as they cross the state line, which they must do frequently for travel and work.

"With Gov. Pence, the man whom Donald Trump believes should be one heartbeat away from the Oval Office, Trump chose a man who has made a career out of advocating for and implementing right-wing policies that are anti-LGBT, anti-women, anti-immigrant and anti-low income people."

Pence was running for re-election as governor; however, Indiana law prevents him from seeking two offices at once.

Pence, 57, was born in Columbus, Indiana. He graduated from Hanover College with a B.A. in history and went to law school at Indiana University. Reportedly, Pence is a favorite of conservative brothers Charles and David Koch.

Department of Human Rights; activist Rick Garcia; East Aurora School Board Vice President Alex Arroyo; and attorney Ed Mullen.

Headlining speakers for the convention were announced July 15. Those include First Lady Michelle Obama, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and DREAMer Astrid Silva on July 25; former President Bill Clinton and "Mothers of the Movement," including, among others, the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Sandra Bland on July 26; President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden on July 27; and Hillary and Chelsea Clinton on July 28.

Protests greet RNC attendees

Protesters made their way to Cleveland, Ohio, for the Republican National Convention (RNC) this week. Security is high, but it's not keeping away those with a message to the GOP.

Julie Gram from Cleveland led hundreds of marchers July 17 across the Hope Memorial Bridge during the Circle the City with Love rally, where they held a 30-minute moment of silence, spanning the entire bridge. Also, the "Shut Down Trump and the RNC" protest took place through the streets of Cleveland, with groups such as Black Lives Matter joining.

The RNC will run through Thursday, July 21.

Photo by Tim Carroll; more images at WindyCityMediaGroup.com. See more online.



July 17 protest in Cleveland, Ohio, against Donald Trump and the Republican National Convention.

Photo by Tim Carroll

ELECTIONS 2016 LGBTs among Illinois delegates

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A number of individuals from the LGBT community will be among the Illinois delegates at the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

Illinois delegates include consultant Michael Harrington; Ald. Ray Lopez (15th Ward); Ald. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th Ward); Rocco Claps, former director of the Illinois



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Activist Rachel Williams talks #SayHerName, BYP100, intersectionality

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Chicago native Rachel Williams has been an activist since their high school years at Chicago Public School's John Hope College Prep in Englewood. Along with their activist work, Williams also served on the student council and competed with the policy debate team at their high school.

Born in 1991, Williams grew up on the Far South Side. Like a lot of Black queer high school students, they struggled with accepting their identity. (Williams uses the pronoun "their.")

"I knew about BYP100 for quite some time before I actually took the plunge and joined their organization because I'd been scarred by other organizing spaces," said Williams.

Williams is also involved with the #SayHerName campaign—an initiative of the African-American Policy Forum think tank that raises awareness and seeks justice for Black women who've been subject to police violence. They got involved when one of the leaders of BYP100 at the time brought them in as a co-lead for the campaign.

"The #SayHerName campaign was created to address how Black girls, women, femmes and



Rachel Williams.

Photo by Bob Simpson

"My high school activism was limited to putting ribbons together in solidarity with Jena Six and also being an ensemble member with About Face Youth Theatre," said Williams. "Going north to Boystown and the Center on Halsted [the Center], I realized that this supposed utopia for LGBTQ people was a fantasy for those of us who weren't white cisgender gay men with a hell of a lot of access and money. Black and Brown youth were over-policed and made to feel not valued, but at the same time were used to bring funding into the Center. We were forced to go through the side door because we aren't a good representation to what the perfect clientele was. This was the a turning point for me as a Black queer person."

During Williams' high school years, between 50-60 students were lost to violence; this fact, along with their experiences in Boystown, has fueled their activism since the mid-2000s. Williams explained that, at the time, they thought the only way to do community work was to go to college, so they went to Kentucky State University, a historically Black college, but didn't finish school.

"I don't have plans to finish my degree at this point of my life," said Williams. "Maybe one day when or if college education doesn't equal debt and having to hold off building a family because of the debt that you acquired trying to subscribe to a fake-ass American dream. Plus a degree shouldn't define your intelligence or worth in a capitalistic society."

Williams returned to Chicago in the fall of 2013 and immediately dove into activist work. In November 2014, Williams got involved with Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) and currently serves as an organizer with the group.

gender non-conforming folks are treated by state sanctioned violence, intra-community violence as well as intimate partner violence and how that ties together," said Williams. "Because when the Black community at large talks about these issues, it's directed at cisgender Black males who most of the time identify with heteronormativity."

Along with their work with BYP100 and the #SayHerName campaign, Williams is also a debate coach at Michele Clark Magnet High School—a CPS school on the Far West Side of Chicago.

"I spent most of my high school career in policy debate," said Williams. "I wanted to give back in a way that's transformative, so I became a debate coach."

In light of the recent events in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and outside of St. Paul, Minnesota, where police shot and killed Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, respectively, Williams told Windy City Times that "the assault on Black bodies by the state has existed since the inception of the 'new world.' The notable deaths of Black men, including Alton Sterling, Philando Castile and Alva Brazier—[the latter] in Houston, Texas—aren't uncommon. The fact that we actually don't know the names of the countless nameless Black women (cis and trans), girls, femmes and men who've been killed by police is disturbing."

"Rodney King's beating brought the horror that Black folks have known about all our lives. Before camera phones, the collective consciousness of America took the words of the police for the truth and justified the execution of Black bodies. In this moment where Black death is playing on replay for mass consump-

tion, the disregard for the families and friends who have to watch their family member's execution for ratings or newspaper sales is the new age version of lynching. The fact that two Black men were found hung in Atlanta and New Orleans isn't lost on me, either."

As for how their identity influences the work they do, Williams said, "I identify as a fat, differently able-bodied [they have cerebral palsy, a condition that permanently affects body movement, muscle coordination and balance], queer, Black femme. As a person at the margins of society in so many ways, I'm in a unique position to amplify the most marginalized voices in the work for Black liberation. When I look

at a lot of organizations, I don't see any Black folks who are differently able-bodied, so I try to push the door open because many of us have felt neglected in spaces. One of my missions is to make sure that spaces are accessible and inclusive of everyone."

Williams is also working on political education and deep community building and plans on continuing their liberation work for the foreseeable future.

As for Williams' message to the world, they said, "Stop overpolicing Black and Brown folks."

See <http://byp100.org/> and <http://www.aapf.org/sayhername/> for more information.



Angie Wines' display in Lake View on Pride Sunday.

Photo courtesy of Wines

Annual Pride party remembers Orlando

BY MATT SIMONETTE

For Chicagoan Angie Wines, the June 26 Pride Parade was to be like it had been for the past several years.

Wines, who lives on the West Side, set up a large tailgating party along Halsted.

"I'm a chef and I love to cook," she said. "We show up at the parade early, stake out a spot and watch the parade. What we do is no different from what other people do, just on a larger scale. This year, we had about 135 people join us; last year it was about 150."

But Wines decided that her 2016 Pride gathering was an opportunity to pay tribute to the the persons killed and injured in the Pulse Nightclub shooting. She and friends created signs that remembered the individuals who lost their lives there.

"I was inspired by the people who took part in the vigil at Center on Halsted," Wines recalled. "It kind of made me ask myself, how we wanted to remember these people. I wanted to bring attention back to them and away from the politics that have surrounded this, back to the people whose lives were lost."

She and six friends spent the Friday evening of Pride weekend creating the signs. Wines' girlfriend suggested tying the signs together "to represent these bonds that would not be broken," Wines added. "I had a lot of help, but I didn't know what I was getting into."

Preliminary weather reports suggested rain, so they thought the signs would need laminating to protect them from the elements. Wines arranged for an expedited job at her local FedEx outlet, which was likely to be an expensive proposition. But she was stunned when, after placing the order, the FedEx manager called her back.

"She was so moved by what we were doing, she took up a collection from her employees to cover most of it," Wines said. The manager raised the rest of the money contacting other outlet managers.

Wines was impressed by how respectfully people looked through the memorial the af-

ternoon of the parade. "People were really taking their time to go through," she said. "That made me feel like, as challenging as this was to do, it was worth it."

Hearing on HB2 set for Aug. 1

On Aug. 1, U.S. District Judge Thomas Schroeder will hear arguments about blocking provisions of the controversial anti-LGBT law House Bill 2 (HB2) while a lawsuit filed by six LGBT North Carolinians is pending in federal court.

The law, passed in an emergency session of the General Assembly in March, bans transgender people from accessing restrooms and other facilities consistent with their gender identity and blocks local governments from protecting LGBT people against discrimination in a variety of areas.

Guide released for uninsured, underinsured

The Chicago Health Guide: Resources for the Uninsured and Underinsured was unveiled at a July 12 press briefing with health care and community leaders during the 41st Annual Conference of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN), held at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

NAHN, the National Black Nurses Association, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago and Pfizer RxPathways presented the publication.

The guide is a comprehensive listing of healthcare resources that are available to help uninsured and underinsured residents of Chicago. The guide (presented in a bilingual format) provides health tips and contact information for healthcare organizations.

The free guide will be available to the public via the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago office, community health centers and other community-based service providers as well as through 888-720-1337 (toll-free). For more information on Pfizer RxPathways, visit PfizerRxPathways.com.

New blood-donation rules for gay men slowly take effect

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in December, significantly reduced the timeframe during which gay men would have had to abstain from sex in order to make blood donations, down to 12 months. Many blood donation centers, however, have been slow to put that new rule into effect.

Chicagoan Michael Albert, a sign-language interpreter, began calling donation centers monthly after the change, only to be told that they were unprepared with new paperwork and changing over their computer systems. He had long wanted to donate blood.

"Every time there would be a natural disaster or something bad, like Sandy Hook, I would always want to donate, and end up thinking, 'Son of a bitch,'" he said. "For years, I thought, 'I can always lie; I know my blood is safe,'" he said. "But I just couldn't lie about it."

Albert, like many gay men, became even more eager to donate after the Pulse nightclub shootings in Orlando in June. "After Orlando, I called right away," he said.

The Pulse shootings highlighted numerous problems in the blood-donation system. After

the incident, rumors circulated that the FDA would lift their ban on donations from sexually active gay men, but those proved to be false. Many gay men have wanted to donate, but couldn't, even as blood supplies ran low.

But Albert learned that LifeSource blood centers would begin accepting donations from gay men on July 18 and was finally able to make an appointment.

"We had to look at our processes," said LifeSource Regional Executive Director Eva Quinley. "It sounds like a very simple change, but we had to look at the different areas that change can affect."

Those included their questionnaires, databases and staff training, she said.

"We submit those changes back to the FDA," Quinley added. "Sometimes they have additional changes they want made, and sometimes they just go ahead and approve it. Fortunately, they approved them outright in this case."

Albert donated at the Evanston LifeSource blood center on July 18, the first day he was able. He joked that he was glad to donate, but lamented the reason he could: He hadn't had sex or traveled recently.

"I told my friends what I was doing today,



Michael Albert (left) with phlebologist Michelle Fiola. Photo by Matt Simonette

and at first they'd say, 'Congratulations.' Then they'd realize why, and say, 'Oh, I'm sorry, it's kind of true; the way the criteria are listed, if you're really boring, you make a great donor,' he said.

Phlebologist Michelle Fiola, who attended to Albert, said that she was glad to see the new rule taking effect. "We're trying to replenish the supply—blood is needed so badly," she noted.

She took Albert's information and prepared him for the donation process. Once Fiola stuck him and adjusted the needle, he asked, "So, we're flowing?"

She said yes, and Albert added that it "hurt so good."

"Welcome to the family," replied Fiola.

"I can't wait to see what you do for Thanksgiving," he answered.

After Albert was finished, he said he planned on donating again in the near future, and he hoped that gay men who met the eligibility criteria would do so as well.

"Part of the reason I hope they come forward if they can is that maybe the FDA will see that the world doesn't collapse, that the blood supply is safe, and they can look into reducing the window," he added.

Manning attempts suicide; lawyers decry breach

On July 5, reports surfaced that trans whistleblower Chelsea Manning was rushed to the hospital from the prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, after an apparent suicide attempt.

On July 11, Chelsea Manning's attorneys Chase Strangio, Vincent Ward and Nancy Hollander released the following statement jointly:

"After not connecting with Chelsea for over a week, we were relieved to speak with her this morning. Though she would have preferred to keep her private medical information private, and instead focus on her recovery, the government's gross breach of confidentiality in disclosing her personal health information to the media has created the very real concern that they may continue their unauthorized release of information about her publicly without warning. Due to these circumstances, Chelsea Manning requested that we communicate with the media and her friends and supporters on her behalf.

"Last week, Chelsea made a decision to end her life. Her attempt to take her own life was unsuccessful. She knows that people have questions about how she is doing and she wants everyone to know that she remains under close observation by the prison and expects to remain on this status for the next several weeks."

In 2013, Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison for espionage when she divulged classified information to WikiLeaks while working as an intelligence analyst in Iraq.

Center on Halsted reveals new leadership

Center on Halsted announced new leadership within the organization. The new leaders are slated to advance the Center's stated mission "of securing the health and well-being of LGBTQ people of Chicagoland and assist in guiding the organization in its new three-year strategic plan."

Kim Fountain, Ph.D., is joining the organization in the newly formed chief operating officer position, a role that involves assisting CEO Modesto Tico Valle in executing the strategic plan while overseeing programs and grants.



Richard Turner. Photo courtesy of Turner

Fountain was previously executive director of the Pride Center of Vermont.

Also, longtime LGBTQ-rights activist Richard Turner has been chosen to chair the board of directors. Turner, now retired after a long career in professional philanthropy, was one of the first inductees into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame.

Chicago House unveils new leaders

Chicago House and Social Service Agency has welcomed new leaders to assist the organization in achieving its objectives and to serve individuals and families who are disenfranchised by HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ marginalization, poverty, homelessness and/or gender nonconformity.

Ray Koenig, partner at Clark Hill PLC, will lead Chicago House's board of trustees as the new chair, replacing Ray Lechner, who served as chair for three years. Koenig, who recently served as internal vice chair, will be joined by Ryan Garrison, of seoClarity, as external vice chair; Kinley Preston, of Vanite'a Paul Mitchell Focus Salon, as internal vice chair; Drew Ferguson, of DeVry, Inc., as secretary; and Tom Smith, of BMO Harris, as treasurer.

The board of trustees also welcomed the ad-

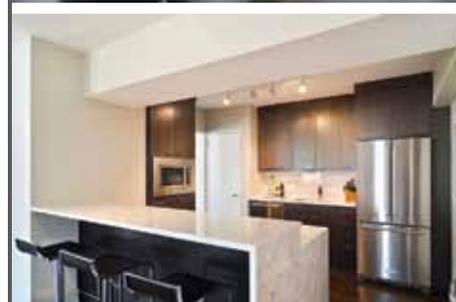
dition of Damon Cates, senior associate vice president and campaign director at University of Chicago; Robert Fojtik, public affairs manager at AON PLC; Lindsay Gaskins, founder/CEO of Marbles: The Brain Store; Steve Sondheimer, senior compliance analyst at Chicago Housing Authority; Maritxa Vidal, director of health education, community outreach and marketing at

Puerto Rican Cultural Center: VIDA/SIDA; and Adam Zebelian, assistant state's attorney at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

In May, Chicago House announced Scott Ammarell as the new CEO following an extensive national search.

For more information about the organization, visit ChicagoHouse.org.

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Boutique Real Estate, Worldwide

Legendary Baton owner Jim Flint looks ahead, at 75

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

In their 2011 biography of one of the Chicago LGBTQ community's most longterm entrepreneurial figures Jim Flint: The Boy From Peoria, authors Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen described the owner of the nearly half-century-old Chicago landmark The Baton Show Lounge and the founder of Continental Pageantry Systems as "something of an enigma to those not familiar with him."

"This former Baton twirler from Peoria is an ultimate juggler," Baim and Keehnen added, "happiest when all his 'batons' are flying through the air—preferably on fire, with Flint on roller skates for an added level of risk as well as showmanship."

On July 25, at the renowned Lincoln Park concert venue Park West—aptly based in what began in the 1920s as a Vaudevillian theater and became another of the city's focal points of provocative entertainment—Flint will celebrate his 75th birthday surrounded by just a fraction of the people his work has affected; each an inheritor of the lessons learned and battles won since the day as a child that he "leaped into this stream of humanity with eyes wide open."

Much like Flint himself, they are lives and careers he shaped and elevated from obscurity to extraordinary.

The evening, which begins at 8 p.m. and ends "when Jim says it's over," will feature more than 30 performances, including Desiree DeMornay, Tiffany T. Hunter, Dana Douglas, Maya Douglas, Jackie Couture, Brooke Lynn Hytes, Kalil Valentino, Angel Saez, Joey Taylor, Mykul, Valentine, Antonio Edwards along with a host of surprise special guests from across the country.

It promises to surpass the boundaries of the unforgettable which are Flint's trademark, however it would not be Flint if the event were wholly self-serving.

Each of the performers are donating their time in order for proceeds from the celebration to benefit the Orlando Pulse Employees Recovery Fund set up by Pulse nightclub co-founder Barbara Poma following the June 12 massacre that claimed 49 lives.

"The most important thing about this birthday is making sure what happened in Orlando never happens again," Flint told Windy City Times. "So [the event] is a tribute to Orlando and will help those who are in need."

Flint was at his Baton Show Lounge offices when Windy City Times caught up with him. While most people at 75 might have long since hung up the customary uniforms of their professions in favor of an equally mainstream set of golf shoes, Flint has no such appetites.

The love for what he does and the people and community with whom he works is too pronounced.

Besides, the dreams he has yet to realize both for himself and others leaves little time for reflection or even an interview centered upon an abbreviated repetition of a life already detailed in Baim and Keehnen's book.

For Flint, this is a time to look forward.

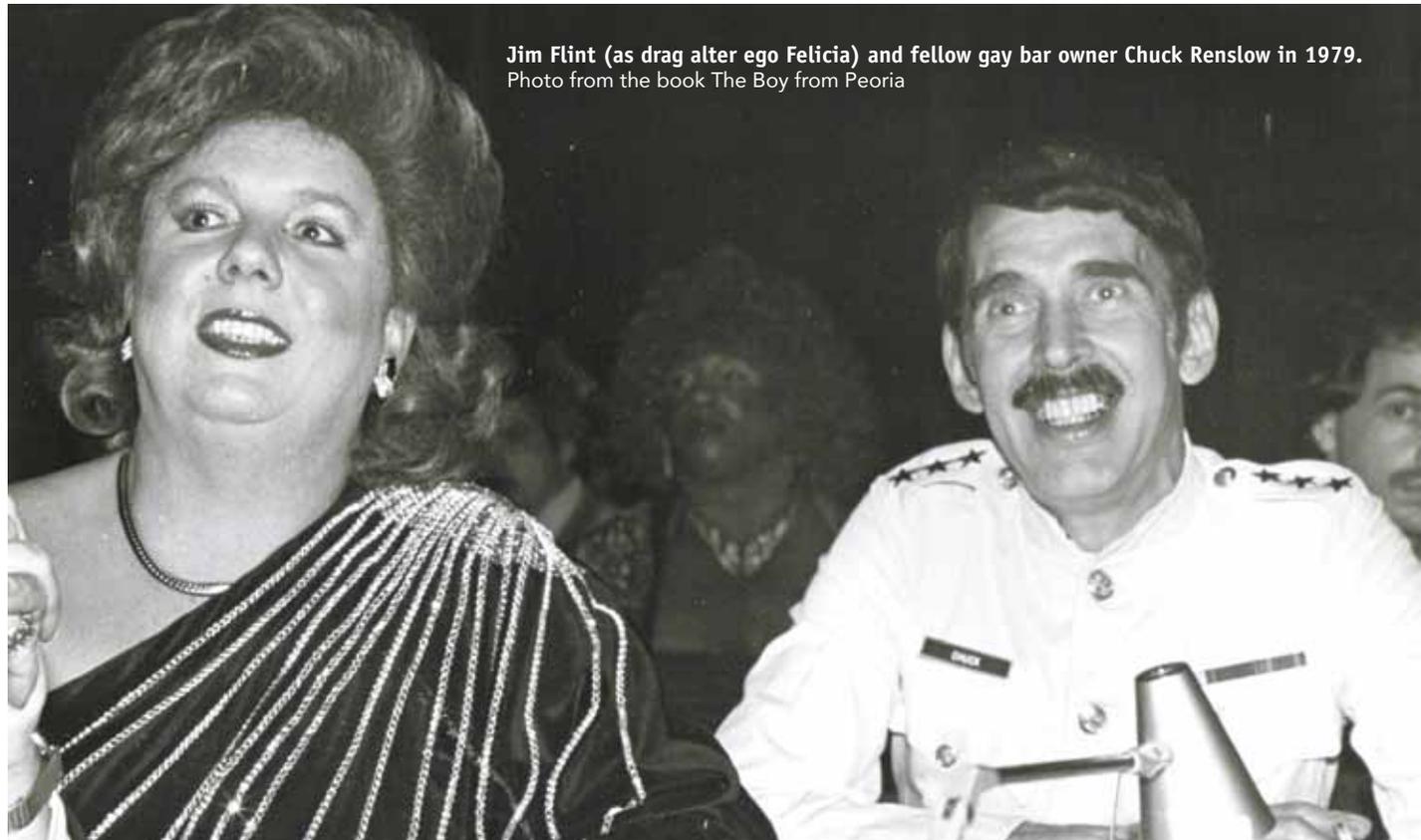
Naturally he looks at the progression of the LGBTQ movement in a way that is antithetical to the conventional visionary or impatient activist.

"I think we have to be a little slower in the way we move things along and get people to adjust through education," he said. "You get

people into your corner so the base is much larger before you try to make a lot of changes."

Flint believes that, if the political process is ignored, whether out of cynicism or lethargy, those changes are imperiled.

"We have to get out into our community and make sure everybody out there registers to vote to get people in office who support us or want to move our agenda forward," he said. "So many just sit back and gripe and complain but they don't even vote. Everybody needs to be



Jim Flint (as drag alter ego Felicia) and fellow gay bar owner Chuck Renslow in 1979. Photo from the book *The Boy from Peoria*

politically involved. I remember the first gay-rights bill we pushed in Chicago. We did it just to see who was and who wasn't in our corner so we knew who we had to go after."

He said he credits the Gang of Four—Art Johnston, Jon-Henri Damski, Laurie Dittman and Rick Garcia, who were the architects of Chicago's groundbreaking 1988 human-rights ordinance ending discrimination due to sexual orientation—as an example of the methodology's success.

"A lot of times we have the wrong spokespeople out there," Flint asserted. "We have to get together and instead of having people speak for us, we all must have the same agenda."

A chorus of dissonant voices each with their own goals faces an uphill battle when it comes to protecting the transgender community. It is a community so deeply intertwined with Flint's work and advocacy as an ally that Baim and Keehnen credited him as being "part of the reason transgender issues are more prominent today."

"We've had transgender people comfortably use [public] bathrooms for years," Flint said. "And very few have pushed that idea forward. People like Alexandra Billings and Candis Cayne have pushed that farther and a lot more educationally than Caitlyn Jenner did. She came into the community not knowing a lot and then started turning it against her by her politics."

The commotion and division wrought by figures like Jenner is a far cry from the LGBTQ community Flint remembers.

"In the earlier days we were much more together," he said. "We had to be. We looked out for and searched for people. We built our allies together. Today, instead of using social media like Facebook for education, promotion and building the community together, there's so many people out there slamming each other and being completely destructive."

Recently, that side of social media was aimed at drag performers.

Flint took a pivotal role in raising the art of drag from the shadowed ambiguity of a stage which Baim and Keehnen described as a "piece of plywood on top of 16 beer cases" into entertainment so embedded in popular culture that the who's who of celebrities who have visited the Baton Show Lounge stretches as long as the line to get into the club on a Saturday night.

The Miss Continental Pageant Systems Flint founded 37-years ago has received an international prestige that helps launch its contes-

erybody there is a star."

Even when his performers leave the Baton, Flint follows their careers like a doting father.

"Every time I read something positive or I see someone like Candis Cayne in [the TV show] Dirty Sexy Money, I am so very proud of my time with them," he said.

There is no doubt that many of the Baton's performers have drawn from Flint's own lessons and the challenges he surmounted. Paramount among Flint's recollections of those challenges were the police and the mafia.

"Being a poor boy from Peoria, I never realized this sort of thing went on," Flint said. "It's funny because it's 50 years this month that the Club Chesterfield was raided in 1966. The mob was going to use me as a scapegoat. But I met a lawyer named Ralla Klepak and here I am."

In the *Boy From Peoria*, Flint remembered that "they were using me, trying to bargain me through the court system as a way to find me guilty so I'd be gone. Then they could say, 'Hey,

tants into the kind of careers which even those who reach the Miss Worldly heights of its cis-gender counterparts can only dream of.

Yet, particularly on social media, even the myriad of performers who, under Flint's employ, have magnified and brought distinction to the art of drag have found themselves excluded from the LGBTQ movement while a number of vitriolic commentators have declared drag performers as beneath the increasingly multifaceted membership of the transgender community.

"We shouldn't be separated at all," Flint said. "We might have differences of opinion. We might not like this person or that for whatever reason but we certainly don't have to start showing our negative side on Facebook. Let's keep our community positive and show people who we are."

No matter what the disparagements they receive on social media, Flint is proud of each and every one of the Baton's family past and present. Again, he remembered Billings, who worked at the Baton for five years before eventually going on to an award-winning theater, TV and film career.

"What a role model. She's just so positive," Flint said. "She gives me a lot of credit for that. In all the years at the Baton we've been very accepting of everybody no matter who they are. I am very lucky. I have my own family and I have my drag family. A lot of them are like my kids. When I started the Baton, I found people that I was very comfortable working with. I built a family atmosphere. In our dressing room we don't have jealousies because ev-

the bartender who was a bad element is gone, we didn't know what was going on. In that way they could reopen. They were trying to use me as the scapegoat to get the bar license back after the raids."

Testifying at subsequent mob trials put Flint at his most vulnerable.

"Those first mafia trials were very hard," he said. "I didn't know if I wanted to keep moving. I wanted to pick up and run somewhere and hide because I was scared to death. I got through it because I was myself. Because I am gay. I am very proud of who I am. I have never felt discriminated against because of who I am. I treat people the way I want to be treated."

When he was organizing the first Miss Continental Pageant in 1980, Flint needed people who knew what was possible with that sort of unwavering faith in the strength of their identities.

"Getting contestants to believe that we could successfully do it was hard," he said. "The only pageant going was Miss Gay America and they didn't let any person enter who had hormones or silicone or any body enhancements, so I wondered if we would ever get enough people together to get it going. We ended up with 14 and kept moving from there. This year we are going to have 51 girls and 34 boys."

"I never thought it would get where it is today," Flint added. "We're into Canada, Puerto Rico, Hawaii. I never believed this would happen."

Turn to page 11



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in the LIFE

Matt Kirouac

TEXT BY ROSS FORMAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF KIROUAC

- **Age**
28
- **Relationship status**
Married to Bradley Kirouac
- **Neighborhood**
Ukrainian Village
- **Job title**
Freelance writer/editor for companies such as Zagat, Chicago Scene, Dining Chicago, Plate Magazine and Choose Chicago
- **Favorite movie**
Silence of the Lambs
- **Hobbies**
"Running, reading, watching movies at home, sneaking candy into movie theaters, board games, bowling and riding my bike."
- **Favorite app**
Instagram
- **Little-known fact**
My right ear is crimped, sort of like an elf, and when I was in elementary school I used to tell classmates I was secretly an elf who worked at the North Pole.

Matt Kirouac was approached by Gatehouse Publishing last spring about writing a book about Chicago as part of its The Hunt series. The problem was the publishing house is in Singapore, which is where the series started before eventually coming to North America. So, for Skype meetings, Kirouac often was in pajamas at 10:30 p.m. on a Sunday, since Singapore is 12 hours ahead.

"But the process was fun and very gratifying, mostly because it was such a personal passion project, and the book is essentially a glorified journal of all things I love about Chicago—from restaurants and bars to galleries, activities, sights, museums, shops, etc.," Kirouac said. "I wrote it from late spring into late summer, so it took me a few months. A ton of content, so it took plenty of time, and I worked many weekends."

Kirouac had another obstacle to complete the book: His wedding was the same week as the book deadline.

The Hunt Guides: Chicago is about 100 pages, costs \$12 and is now available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble distribution, at The Art Institute of Chicago and a few local independent businesses as well. The book has nine chapters of neighborhoods, and Kirouac said one of the hardest parts was simply narrowing down the neighborhoods, "since Chicago has so many great ones packed with unique culture."

Ultimately, he went with Andersonville, Lincoln Square, Lincoln Park, River North, Wicker Park, West Loop, Pilsen, Hyde Park and Logan Square. Each chapter had about 10 venues, which was a profile of a different independent business that he likes.

"I feel every venue [mentioned in the book] does a great job exhibiting the varied character and style of the neighborhoods," he said.

Kirouac's husband, Bradley, did most of the photography for the book.

The book also features a 48 Hours section of his top picks for things to do if you only have two days in the city. Plus, there are different themes chapters, such as winter activities, lakefront activities, museums, hot



dogs and deep-dish pizza, and rooftop spots.

"The neighborhood chapters were definitely my favorite part," led by Wicker Park, he said.

The Hunt Guides is geared to both locals and tourists, he said.

"One of the coolest parts of the book is the 'ambassadors'—guest recommendations from Chicagoans across a wide spectrum of careers and backgrounds, each recommending their personal picks for Chicago venues," Kirouac said. The ambassadors include Liz Pesnel, Managing Director of Third Coast Percussion; Erin Hartz from the One of a Kind Show; Jared Batson from The Nomad Food Company; Andrew Kaplan, who works for Rachael Ray; and others.



Locations featured in The Hunt Guides: Chicago include (L-R) Chicago Brauhaus, National Museum of Mexican Art and Hyde Park Records. Photos by Bradley Kirouac

FLINT from page 10

Indeed, could a boy from Peoria ever have dreamed that he would one day be sharing a cocktail with legends in film, politics and sports?

"I remember in the '70s when people like Joan Crawford and Rock Hudson were coming to the Baton and I was sitting and talking with them. Getting to know them was really inspiring," Flint said. "I have to give a lot of credit to my mother who always pushed us. She was the great role model and I had a great family."

In his interview for the book, Flint recalled his mother being back at work two days after delivering his younger brother Ronnie—one of 13 children. "She had all of us and she had a responsibility to provide for us," he said.

That sense of responsibility has never left him.

"I feel like I've done my job but sometimes I feel like I haven't done enough," he admitted. "You always have to build together a unit in which you can all share ideas. I was very fortunate. I remember myself and three other bartenders were talking about AIDS and thinking this was too big for us. We organized a big meeting at the Baton and then another and that's how Chicago House started and moved forward."

There are many dreams for Flint yet to realize. He wants to see a cure for AIDS in his lifetime. He wants to see those souls that were lost to the disease immortalized, not just as names on a quilt but as people with their own detailed biographies—pages torn away by the disease but who "must be remembered over and over."

Meanwhile Flint wants to see Miss Continental take a further step into the public eye through becoming televised.

"If you look at Miss Universe last year, Miss Puerto Rico had the same gown as Miss Europe Continental had on that year only in a different color," he said. "So a lot of these girls do watch

our pageants and copy what they see because we are so advanced when it comes to fashion and how to wear it."

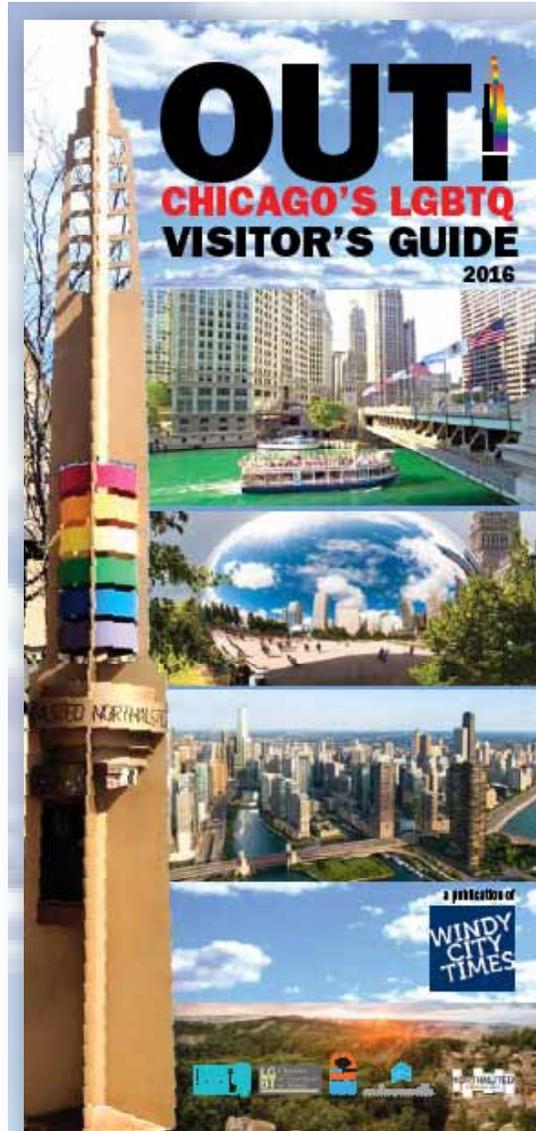
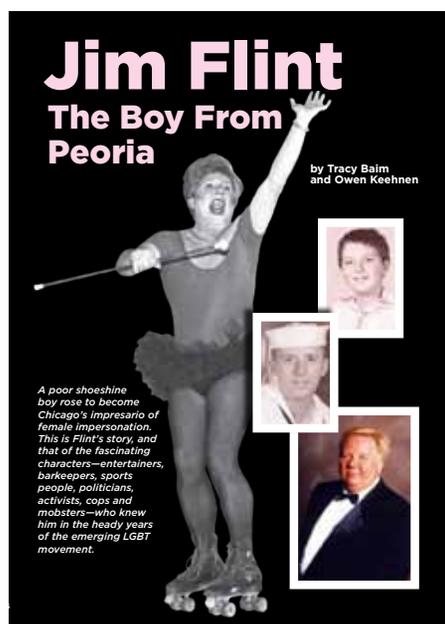
That dream will be realized in the same way that the enigma of Jim Flint may best be summarized: strength of will and the belief in the limitless possibilities of existence.

The Baton is three years away from turning 50. Flint was in no hurry to predict what will happen on that birthday and beyond.

"When we get to 50, we'll see what we're going to do after that," he said.

For more information about Jim Flint's birthday party, call 312-527-2269, M-F 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

To buy a copy of Jim Flint: The Boy From Peoria, visit <https://www.amazon.com/Jim-Flint-Peoria-Tracy-Baim/dp/146639840X>. It's available in both color and B&W editions, also from Women & Children First Bookstore.



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letters



**Samantha
POWER**

A call on governments: Integrating LGBTI rights into foreign policy

Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, spoke at the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on "A Call on Governments: Integrating LGBTI Rights into Foreign Policy," to the Global LGBTI Human Rights Ministerial, July 13. Her remarks, as delivered, are included below.

Let me begin by thanking the government and civil society leaders chairing this conference: from Uruguay, Foreign Minister Nin Nova and Ovejas Negras; and from the Netherlands, Foreign Minister Koenders and COC-Netherlands.

I had planned to be in Montevideo with you but, unfortunately, the escalating violence in South Sudan has kept me here at the UN. Much as I regret missing the opportunity to meet many of you in person, I'm honored and incredibly humbled to be able to speak with you today.

Being an advocate for LGBTI rights these days can feel almost schizophrenic. While more than 50 countries worldwide now prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, more than 70 countries criminalize consensual same-sex conduct. In elections last month in the Philippines, voters elected both a Senator who called gay couples "worse than animals," and the country's first-ever transgender Representative.

In Brazil, which has a proud history of pushing for LGBTI rights at home and abroad, including introducing the first-ever UN resolution, in 2003, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—a monitoring group has documented nearly 1,600 killings of LGBTI people over the past four and a half years. That's approximately one LGBTI killing per day in Brazil, every day, since 2012. And while same-sex couples now have the right to marry in all 50 American states, and people no longer have to hide who they love to serve in our nation's military—you can still be fired from a job because of your sexual orientation, and an estimated 40 percent of trans people in the United States attempt suicide—approximately 30 times the national average.

You all know these ups and downs, because you live them day to day. Consider this very conference: while some civil society participants can live tweet and blog about the issues discussed here in real time, others have to keep their heads down, they have to keep a much lower profile, knowing that calling attention to their work here—or any of your efforts to advance LGBTI rights—could lead to harassment, imprisonment, or worse in their home countries.

To state the obvious: Governments do not have to choose between advancing LGBTI rights within their own countries and around the world. We can and must do both.

How? First, we must be willing to use all the tools in our toolkit to shift the policies and attitudes of the governments that condone or even fuel discrimination and violence against LGBTI people.

Let me give you just one example: Last July, President Obama traveled to Kenya, a country where having a consensual same-sex relationship is punishable by up to 14 years in prison,

and where a 2013 poll found that 90 percent of people think society should not accept homosexuality. Now, even before the President set foot in Kenya, protesters took to the streets to warn him not to bring the issue up. Their arguments will be familiar ones to many of you—including that the U.S. should not impose its views on people with different cultural and religious traditions. An argument, I would note, that the diversity of advocates in this room—the room you are in—clearly rebuts.

Here is how President Obama responded when asked about the issue at a press conference in Nairobi with Kenya's president: he said, "I believe in the principle of treating people equally under the law ... and that the state should not discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation. ... [W]hen you start treating people differently—not because of any harm they're doing anybody, but because they're different—that's the path whereby freedoms begin to erode and bad things happen. ... And as an African-American in the United States, I am painfully aware of the history of what happens when people are treated differently, under the law."

President Obama's point was that there's no legitimate alibi for violating basic human rights. Treating people differently because of who they are is always wrong. So while it is wise, and indeed necessary, to ask which tactics will be most effective in advancing equality—we can't let the false justifications of culture, sovereignty, or anything else hold us back from fighting discrimination. That's why we are not only standing up for LGBTI rights in public statements, but also through other means, such as the diplomatic efforts of our nation's first-ever Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI persons, the great Randy Berry, who is with you in Montevideo and has gotten to know many of you in his travels to 43 countries.

Second, we must work to integrate LGBTI rights into the DNA of multilateral bodies like the UN. It may seem self-evident that the institution whose Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that "everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms ... without distinction of any kind" would fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; yet too often, throughout history, it has not.

Here are a few ways we and partners, many of whom are in the room there, have worked to change that record in the last few years.

In 2011 and 2014, we worked with partners on the UN Human Rights Council to pass resolutions compelling the Council to systematically document LGBTI rights violations around the globe—a key step toward breaking the pattern of impunity for such abuses.

In August 2015, we co-chaired the first-ever UN Security Council meeting focused on LGBTI rights—on the persecution of LGBTI people by ISIL. In doing so, the world's foremost enforcement body for peace and security signaled that it is wrong to violate people's rights because of who they love.

Just last month, as you know, a Latin American led resolution created the first-ever permanent Independent Expert at the UN to provide consistent reporting on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity—an initiative that 628 NGOs from over 150 countries rallied behind. When a group of countries tried to block the effort—calling it reckless and arrogant, and even calling for a vote to strip the resolution of its title—those same Latin American countries vigorously beat back those efforts.

Of course, these steps have not yet succeeded in stopping widespread discrimination and violence against LGBTI people. But with each of these "firsts," we weave another thread of LGBTI rights into the fabric of universal human

rights, and we chip away at the misconception that LGBTI rights are somehow subordinate to other human rights.

None of these are steps that we have taken alone; in each instance, we've worked with a coalition made up of countries from the global North and South. I will never forget the words of my Chilean counterpart at the UN when I asked if his country would co-sponsor the Security Council's session on LGBTI rights, again, an unprecedented occurrence. He said: "We are with you. We may be all alone, but we are with you." In the end, thankfully, we were not all alone.

And we've had to defend virtually every one of our collective gains working with partners—governmental partners and Civil Society partners. Consider the UN Secretary-General's 2014 laudable decision to extend benefits to the families of all UN employees, including same-sex couples. In March 2015, Russia launched an effort to try to strip these benefits, which would have sent a totally devastating message that LGBTI families do not deserve equal rights within the UN's own house. We and our partners fought that effort vigorously, and in the end we succeeded. Out of 193 countries, only 43 voted with Russia.

Now, I recognize the obstacles that we governments must overcome—and the risks that we face—pale in comparison to those confronting many activists here. And that is precisely why governments at this conference, as well as those not at this conference, must do much more to support you.

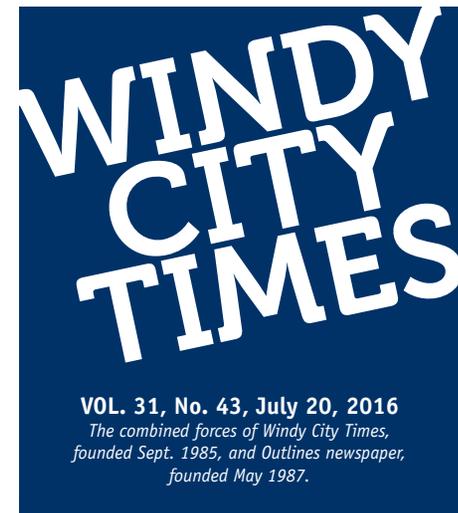
Let me conclude. Prior to Orlando, the worst mass killing of LGBTI people in the United States occurred in 1973, in New Orleans, when a gay club called the UpStairs Lounge was firebombed, killing 32 people trapped inside. The story made front page news in the local newspaper, which described the grisly scene in detail, but not one of its many stories mentioned that the attack had targeted a gay club. And though it was the worst fire in the city's modern history, local officials made no public statements, nor did national politicians. Multiple churches refused to hold services for the victims, and no one was ever prosecuted for this heinous crime.

Compare that to the response to the horrific attack in Orlando, where, in the words of a doctor who treated the injured, "after the worst of humanity reared its evil head...the best of humanity came roaring back." First responders rushed to the scene. Residents lined up for hours to donate blood. The city and our nation mourned. At the U.S. Mission to the UN, we had to put out four condolence books—because so many representatives of other governments came to write messages of solidarity. In many of your countries, you participated in vigils and other public shows of support.

Perhaps most moving were the stories of the 49 individual victims, which have revealed the beautiful diversity of just a small sliver of the LGBTI community—from the Army reservist, to the travel agent who organized international tours for LGBTI people, to the young man who, in 2003, was the only person brave enough to come out in his high school of 2,500 people. As President Obama said after meeting with relatives of the victims, "These families could be our families. In fact, they are our family."

That is the difference 43 years has made. That is the difference when a society moves from one where existence of LGBTI persons is not even acknowledged—much less embraced—to one where we are finally recognizing LGBTI rights as human rights. Our work—the work of governments and of civil society—will not be finished until LGBTI people are welcome in every nation, every community, and every family.

I thank you.



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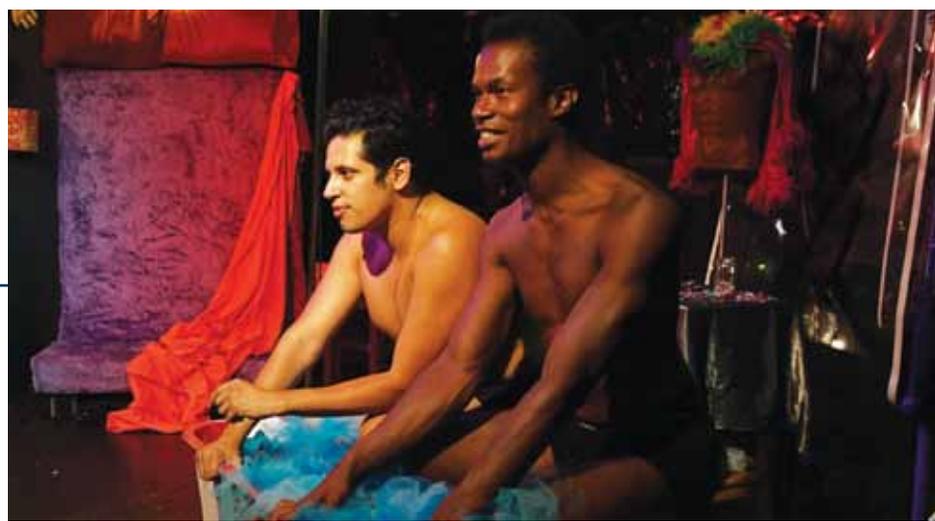
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LondonHouse's rooftop bar.



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Mr. Midwest Rubber at Touche.



'Space' exploration

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Richard Gamboa (left) and Sean Parris co-star in *Space Age*.

Photo by Jose Rivera

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Finding [HOME]

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

When Andrew Volkoff took over as artistic director for the LGBTQ-focused About Face Theatre in 2013, one of his producing goals was to make each new show by the About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT) debut on an annual basis rather than unveiling a world premiere every two years.

Largely tasked with that accelerated artistic schedule has been Ali Hoefnagel, About Face's education and outreach director. Though Hoefnagel said it took some major adjustment at first, AFYT is meeting Volkoff's goal—especially with the latest show *AD HOC [HOME]* premiering this week in the Claudia Cassidy Theater at the Chicago Cultural Center.

"Last year we did *15 Breaths*, which was an examination of intergenerational queer relationships, and I think that a large theme that emerged from that which we really didn't intend for was an idea of family and chosen families created from our queer communities," Hoefnagel said. "That was something that stuck with us and with the ensemble quite a bit."

It's a theme that resonated with AFYT ensemble member Isis Mendoza, a trans actor asking to be identified on second references with female pronouns.

"The title of the show came very much from that same theme of family and chosen family," Mendoza said. "We decided on *AD HOC* for the title, which means coming together to serve a specific purpose, and we added *[HOME]* for that imagery of intertwining leaves and branches forming a safe home."

Unlike last year's AFYT show, *AD HOC [HOME]* doesn't follow one specific set of characters through a dramatic journey. Instead, Hoefnagel and her co-director Kieran Kredell steered the 13-member AFYT ensemble (who are between the ages of 14 to 23) to write more of a series of personal vignettes.

"We're not following one specific person," Hoefnagel said. "We do follow a progression and we do follow a narrative which happens to be of the ensemble and all of their experiences. We are going in specific chapters of our lives, so there is a through line and it does move in a linear fashion."

The general public gets a very limited chance to see *AD HOC [HOME]*, since it only plays eight public performances. Yet the show will go on to have a future life as it is adapted into a 30-minute touring piece by About Face's Youth Task Force to travel to various schools, libraries and other community groups for the upcoming season.

"A lot of my experiences as being a trans per-

son—like my relationship with my dad—play a big role I have for the text of the show," said Mendoza, who has been part of About Face's outreach efforts in the past. "I very much enjoy doing the outreach shows and talkbacks, it kind of gives me a glimpse of what I might like to do in the future—either being part of an ensemble or going solo in starting conversations and sharing your truths and making queer theater."

The About Face Youth Theatre Ensemble's world-premiere production of *AD HOC [HOME]* plays from Thursday, July 21, through Sunday, July 31, at the Chicago Cultural Center's Claudia Cassidy Theater, 78 E. Washington St. A 7:30 p.m. preview is Thursday, July 21, with an official press opening 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 22. The regular run is 7:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays and 2:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are pay-what-you-can at the door. Advance reservations can be made by calling 773-784-8565 or by visiting AboutFaceTheatre.org.

From Profiles to Pride

Like many in Chicago's theater community, Pride Films and Plays executive director David Zak was unsettled by the allegations of abuse at Profiles Theatre that were reported on by the Chicago Reader earlier this year. In the wake of the controversy, Profiles Theatre soon shuttered.

But Zak and Pride Films and Plays have stepped in to take over Profiles' former theater spaces along Broadway Street with the new umbrella title of the Pride Arts Center. The 90-seat space at 4139 N. Broadway will be renamed The Broadway and will be the primary home for Pride Films and Plays productions starting in 2017. Meanwhile, the 50-seat studio at 4147 N. Broadway will be renamed The Buena and will be primarily used by visiting theater companies.

"It was a relatively quick process," said Zak, noting that Pride Films and Plays previously produced the Jeff Award-winning musical *Under a Rainbow Flag* in one of Profiles' spaces. "What makes it attractive to us as a space is the fact that with the two theaters, you can be performing in one and the other could be generating rental income."

Zak said most theatergoers probably won't see any irony in his LGBTQ-focused company taking over the former Profiles spaces. Back in 2009, Zak shut down Bailiwick Repertory Theatre in large part because he didn't want to carry on the real estate and upkeep responsibilities of running a theater complex at 1229 W. Belmont Ave. (Theater Wit would later take over and renovate the space into the three-theater venue that is there today.)

"We're excited about the spaces where we can show films, have guest artists like GayCo or Hell in a Handbag or maybe gay choruses," Zak said. "Not everyone will be LGBTQ-related or all the works won't be LGBTQ-themed, but we wanted to make sure that people sharing the space with us have the same sort of energy and dedicated to work to restore those spaces."

Zak said Pride Films and Plays opted not to switch venues from Rivendell Theatre for its fall production of *Resolution* since so much preparatory design work had already been completed. Producing theater companies interested in renting the 90-seat Broadway and the 50-seat Buena spaces right away should call Pride Films and Plays at 800-737-0984 or send an email to prideartschicago@gmail.com. For more information, visit PrideFilmsAndPlays.com.



The cast of
AD HOC [HOME].
Photo by
Christopher Semel

DOUBLE REVIEW

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Playwright: Shakespeare

At: First Folio Theatre, Mayslake Forest Preserve, Oak Brook

Tickets: 630-986-8067;

FirstFolio.org; \$29-\$39

Runs through: Aug. 14

Bite: A Pucking Queer Cabaret

Playwright: Derek Van

Barham, after Shakespeare

At: Pride Films & Plays at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.

Tickets: 800-737-0984;

PrideFilmsAndPlays.com; \$25-\$30

Runs through: Aug. 14

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

A Midsummer Night's Dream is Shakespeare's comedy in which mortals and fairies intersect in a mythological forest as fairy king Oberon (Michael Joseph Mitchell) quarrels with fairy queen Titania (Johanna McKenzie Miller), plays tricks on four human young lovers and turns blue collar guy Nick Bottom (Steve Peebles) into a donkey.

There are lots of different ways to do "Dream," which has been "translated" into operas, ballets, movies, comic books, rock versions, puppet adaptations and gender switch-genderfuck manifestations. It's nice, therefore, that First



Bite: A Pucking Queer Cabaret.
Photo by Carolyn Reynolds Photography

Folio Theatre director Hayley Rice has provided a straight-forward, plain-spoken, low-concept interpretation for the Mayslake Peabody Estate Forest Preserve. At the same time, Mary's Attic hosts a jukebox genderfuck shorthand version, Bite: A Pucking Queer Cabaret. Rest assured that fairies rule the night in both.

First Folio offers Midsummer in its entirety, with Angela Weber Miller's Art Nouveau-inspired scenic design providing a graceful arabesque of curving tree trunks as backdrop for the action. Elsa Hiltner's mixed-genre costumes are vaguely 18th-century for mortals and vaguely

pop/mod for fairies and colorful for all, with lovely patterned gowns for the leading ladies.

Act I is slow going, filled with exposition and the set-ups of the various intertwined storylines, but the show springs to life after intermission for a very lively second half. The well-known scene between the four young lovers lost in the forest—their affections altered through interference by Oberon's assistant, Puck (Sydney Germaine)—is especially successful as is the play's penultimate delight, the blue collar artisans' bumbling theatrical

THEATER REVIEW

Space Age

Playwrights: Ricardo Gamboa and Sean Parris

At: Free Street Theater at Pulaski

Park Field House, 1419 W. Blackhawk St.

Tickets: Freestreet.org;

Pay-what-you-can admission

Runs through: Aug. 1

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Artistic and romantic collaborators Ricardo Gamboa and Sean James William Parris have done their homework on their new confessional two-man performance art piece Space Age (For Colored Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When The Universe Is Not Enough).

Director Reshmi Hazra Rustebakke has Gamboa and Parris readily incorporate creative

staging bits into their Free Street Theater show that so shocked early 1990s right-wing Republicans when they were pioneered by the likes of the "NEA Four" (a group of performance artists who were denied individual performance grants by the National Endowment for the Arts due to "controversial" material in their work, which included LGBTQ content).

For instance, both Gamboa and Parris take a page from Tim Miller by performing the entirety of Space Age in their underwear (although Miller went further with full-frontal moments). And aping Karen Finley, notorious for smearing chocolate all over her bare torso, Gamboa gets a jar of salsa poured down his front while recounting a spicy bedroom encounter.

It's nice that Gamboa and Parris pay homage to their performance art predecessors, but one wishes that Space Age was better-focused and curated. Ostensibly a personal mediation on

how Gamboa and Parris' lives as 30-something gay men were shaped by pop culture's lack of Latino and Black role models, Space Age often feels overburdened with too much material. It's as if the show's stars, frightened at never getting to do another show, were determined to cram in as much content as possible.

Like two ricocheting pinballs, Gamboa and Parris recount unsettling childhood stories filled with homophobia and abuse before enacting whole scenes from the Nightmare on Elm Street or Batman film franchises. Recent personal tragedies get bumped up against coming out dilemmas involving alcohol and anonymous Craigslist hookups.

These are all fascinating topics, but many are so glibly treated that you wish Gamboa and Parris offered more elaboration. Also, many of the film reenactments can come off as self-indulgent—especially when these campy hom-

production of Pyramus and Thisbe, with Nick Bottom as Pyramus. The four lovers are played with aplomb by Sarah Wisterman (Hermia), Tony Carter (Demetrius), Ali Burch (Helena) and T. Isaac Sherman (Lysander).

This production isn't electrifying, but it makes a most pleasant and pretty summer evening, especially if you come early and picnic. First Folio has taken steps to minimize the mosquito population (near zero on cooler evenings), but the fireflies still twinkle charmingly as night falls.

Pride Films & Plays director/adaptor Derek Van Barham throws away most of Shakespeare in Bite: A Pucking Queer Cabaret, in which Oberon (Kevin Webb) and drag queen Titania (Raymond K. Cleveland) magically rule a gay bar. They quarrel over their open relationship, with Titania noting "Open means honest and that you are not." The mortals who stop for a drink are three women and a man, presenting shifting affectional possibilities.

Bite offers an eclectic mix of 17 pop songs in 90 minutes, among them hits recorded by Adam Lambert, Britney Spears, Nicki Minaj, Rufus Wainwright and even Mama Cass. Some are sung live, some lip-synced and others sung over the original recordings. The dozen performers are strong-voiced and passionate. The choreography by Van Barham and Christopher Young is far better than necessary, adding greatly to the lively show. Bite begins silly and shallow but deepens through the appropriate, varied music selected by Van Barham and music director Jeff Bouthiette.

FYI: Pride Films & Plays has taken over the former Profiles Theatre at 4147 N. Broadway and will begin producing there in September.

ages go on longer than the explanations of why Gamboa and Parris were so influenced by these fictional heroes.

Despite the show's faults (and its curious title since fantasy films are name-checked more than sci-fi ones), Gamboa and Parris prove to be very dynamic and engaging performers who are clearly bursting with talent—and sweat thanks to the inadequate air conditioning (coolers of water and soda are on hand for sweltering audiences).

Gamboa and Parris clearly have a lot to say and share as gay performance artists, and it's great that they're creating material for and about themselves. Space Age may be an imperfect start, but the duo have the makings of a winning collaboration if they can make future shows more exactly shaped and honed.

THEATER REVIEW

Between Riverside and Crazy

Playwright: Stephen Adly Guirgis

At: Steppenwolf Theatre,

1650 N. Halsted St.

Tickets: \$20-\$89

Runs through: Aug. 21

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When the 2015 Pulitzer Prize was awarded to Stephen Adly Guirgis' wry examination of marginalized citizens struggling to get by—and not particularly choosy how they do it—against overwhelming odds, nobody suspected that the troubles of these disenfranchised lowlifes would be vying for national attention a year later. Don't come expecting cheap ripped-from-the-headlines hindsight, though. Keep your fists at your sides and hankies in your pockets, and you will emerge wiser.

The major trouble revolves around Walter Washington, a policeman before his career was abruptly curtailed by injuries sustained in an after-hours bar shooting. Since the shooter was another policeman and the gunfire accompanied by racial epithets—Walter



Eamonn Walker
in Between
Riverside and
Crazy.

Photo by
Michael
Brosilow

is African-American, by the way—rather than accept a settlement, the 30-year NYPD veteran sued the city. Eight years later, the case is still pending, but Walter's anger remains unabated, its corrosive influence evidenced in the deterioration of the Washington family apartment into a refuge for son Junior's ill-starred business ventures and itinerant acquaintances (who call Walter "Dad" and drift in and out of the household like so many stray cats). Walter's former colleagues advise him to put an end to the attrition, but only after a visit from a church volunteer—who may not be what she appears—is the proud old man finally stirred to action.

It takes a while for us to consider that

everybody in the play might not be what they appear, because characters who say things like "if it weren't for your being totally wrong, you'd probably be right" were, until recently, dismissed by urban audiences as buffoons afflicted with the compulsive loquacity engendered by a diet of whiskey, junk food and rooftop reefer. Racism within the ranks of our constabulary is no longer funny, however, nor is the hardscrabble economy of a working class seeing their security erode under unchecked bureaucracy and injustice. Recognizing this, director Yasen Peyankov has instructed his cast to take the high road, endowing each character's every utterance with empathy and the unlikeliest of plot twists—even a detour into Magic Realism—with plausibility. In a universe governed by chaos, anything is possible.

Eamonn Walker's Walter commands Collette Pollard's comfortably cluttered stage with patriarchal presence, while the supporting performances are everything we have come to expect of the Steppenwolf ensemble, Special mention is due Lily Mojekwu, however, whose portrayal of the mysterious Brazilian-born voodoo sorceress posing as a "Church Lady" holds us spellbound from the first exotic syllable (courtesy of dialect consultant Tanera Marshall).

CRITICS' PICKS

Chimerica, TimeLine Theatre, through July 31. Nick Bowling directs an incisive take on Lucy Kirkwood's Olivier Award-winning drama questioning what might happen if a determined U.S. photojournalist tried to uncover the identity of the famed "Tank Man" in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing. SCM

Company, Writers Theatre, Glencoe, extended through Aug. 7. It's Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's groundbreaking 1970 Broadway musical about a New York bachelor weighing the pros and cons of marriage. SCM

GhostBustier: The Story of the Real Ghost-busy, Gorilla Tango Theatre, through July 23. Those naughty burly-girls of Bucktown who brought you Game of Thongs and A Nude Hope are at it again. MSB

The Grapes of Wrath, Gift Theatre, through Aug. 14. Frank Galati's Tony-winning adaptation of John Steinbeck's classic American novel is ingeniously flat-packed into Gift Theatre's very intimate space with an enormous ensemble that is insightful and shockingly relevant in its non-traditional casting. SCM

—By Barnidge
and Morgan

PERFORMANCE

Hot-button issue at center of 'Privilege to Pee'



Honey West in Privilege to Pee. Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

Although a theater's Monday night stages are traditionally dark, Stage 773 of Lakeview's Circle Theatre was lit by an ensemble gold mine of talent July 11.

The evening brought a capacity audience continually to their feet, while wiping away the tears of laughter and poignancy wrought by some of the city's most ethereal voices in often deeply personal choices of songs, each tied together in the defiant message "It's a Privilege to Pee. Owning your Identity and Other Basic Human Rights."

While the exceptional has become a hallmark of the 30-year-old organization under the helm of Artistic Director Nicholas Reinhart, Privilege to Pee was particularly unique as it formed a part of the Full Circle Series created after Chicago director Matthew Gunnels passed away from cancer in 2014 and a benefit performance of Gunnel's 2012 critical and box-office hit production of Reefer Madness was held with all proceeds donated to the nationwide nonprofit Fight Colorectal Cancer.

The Chicago-based nonprofit Chicago House and, in particular, the organization's TransLife Center, were the beneficiaries of those who lent

the full weight of the joy they take in their art to Privilege to Pee.

Organized through the efforts of Reinhart and the evening's hosts, Landree Fleming and Bobby Arnold, just a few of the highlights included a beautifully funny performance of "Velociraptor" from Circle Theatre alum Michelle Lauto, an audacious rendition of "Beautiful" given by a magnificent Danielle Davis, a passionate and angelically delivered "The Life I Never Had" by renowned performer Dixie Lynn Cartwright, while an equally moving James Nedrud belted "I am What I Am," from La Cage Aux Folles.

Legendary artist Honey West and Dreamgirls star Donica Lynn provided the evening's denouement with exquisite performances of "Come In From the Rain" and "I'm Here," respectively.

"We are gathering together to celebrate who we are," Fleming said in a press release. "Not just the things that make us different from one another, but what unifies us: our humanity."

For more information about the Circle Theatre, visit: Circletheatrechicago.org. For more information about The Chicago House TransLife Center, visit ChicagoHouse.org/causes/translife-center.

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SPOTLIGHT

If you missed The New Colony and Definition Theatre's January co-production of **Byhalia, Mississippi**, Evan Linder's critically acclaimed and Jeff Award-winning drama is back with its entire original cast in a much-anticipated revival. Thanks to Steppenwolf Theatre's Visiting Company Initiative, Linder's astute and cutting drama returns to make audiences question modern-day race relations. It all kicks off when the wife in a proudly trashy couple unexpectedly gives birth to an African-American baby in a northern Mississippi town. Definition Theatre and The New Colony's revival of **Byhalia, Mississippi** plays from Friday, July 22, through Sunday, Aug. 21, at Steppenwolf Theatre's 1700 Theatre, 1700 N. Halsted St. Tickets are \$30-\$35; call 312-335-1650 or visit Steppenwolf.org.

Caption: Evan Linder and Liz Sharpe in **Byhalia, Mississippi**. Photo by Joe Mazza/Brave Lux



KNIGHT at the movies

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Absolutely Fabulous; Star Trek Beyond; The Witness

Sweetie sweetie darlings

Patsy and Edina—those two narcissistic, hard-partying London-based “sweetie darlings” who took the world (and just about every gay bar’s TV set) by storm—are back, 25 years after the Britcom debuted in the early ‘90s. In **Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie**, their first on-screen romp, Jennifer Saunders returns as Eddy, the trend-chasing publicist whose most renowned client is ‘60s pop singer Lulu, and Joanna Lumley is right beside her as Patsy, Eddy’s fun-loving best friend who works as a sometime fashion editor.

The immediate questions hanging over the movie—“Are they still relevant?” and, more importantly, “Are they still funny?”—are quickly answered: yes and yes. The expected wisecracks, zingers and sight gags flow faster than the “champers” as the duo do everything they can to satisfy their unending craving for attention and illicit pleasures. They seem to have been hermetically sealed, a bit longer in the tooth, a bit wider (“I think I am now officially fatter sideways than I am front on,” Eddy whines mournfully) but just as outrageously self-centered.

The plot focuses on the accidental drowning by Eddy of supermodel Kate Moss in the Thames. Hounded by the paparazzi and the authorities, the divine duo, with Eddy’s granddaughter Lola in tow, head to the French Riviera in search of one of Patsy’s old loves, a rich roue she hopes to ensnare in exchange for financial security for the both of them. When that doesn’t work, Patsy dresses in man drag and weds one of the world’s wealthiest women. Naturally, the cops and the press are hot on their trail amidst all these shenanigans. Director Mandie Fletcher, who helmed the most recent AbFab incarnations and has overseen years of British comedy television, keeps things moving at a brisk pace.

Saunders, who created and wrote the TV show, has also penned the film script, tossing in cameos for everyone from Jon Hamm to Rebel Wilson to Dame Edna to Graham Norton to Joan Collins—more than 60 celebs in all. All the favorite characters from the show—Edina’s conservative daughter Saffy, her ex-husband Marshall (who has now gone trans), Eddy’s dim-witted assistant Bubble, her dotty but insightful mother, and Patsy’s speed-talking fashion editor Magda—are all back and garner their share of the laughs. (One of my favorite scenes takes place in a drag queen-packed lesbian bar where Saffy (the ever-patient Julia Sawalha) sings a mournful karaoke version of Janis Ian’s “At Seventeen.”) Several new characters—Eddy’s uber-gay hairstylist (a very funny Chris Colfer) and the aforementioned granddaughter (Indeyarna Donaldson-Holness)—have been added to the line-up, bringing new laughs.

Best of all, of course, are those two incorrigibles Edina and Patsy—as endearingly, hilariously awful as ever.

Sulu is gay!

The Star Trek movie franchise reboot returns with **Star Trek Beyond**, a third edition that looks to be pretty darn snazzy. (The film wasn’t screened in time for WCT deadlines.) Captain Kirk (Chris Pine) and his logical No. 2 Spock



Chris Pine
in *Star Trek Beyond*.
Photo from
Paramount

(out actor Zachary Quinto), along with the rest of the crew of the SS Enterprise (including Anton Yelchin, the young actor who was killed recently in a tragic accident, as Chekov the engineer) find themselves facing a deadly alien threat when they are stranded on a hostile planet.

The big news for the LGBT community is, of course, that the character of Sulu (played by Harold & Kumar’s John Cho) is not only gay but he’s got a husband and a child, presumably awaiting back on Earth. Although LGBT rights activist/actor George Takei, the original Sulu, has gone on record that he would have preferred a new character of the queer persuasion, Simon Pegg, who co-wrote the screenplay (and returns as crewmember Scotty), respectfully disagrees. Either way, I’m more psyched now than ever to go Trekking.

Editor’s note: Read an interview with Saunders and Lumley on page 20.

Kitty lives

James Solomon’s documentary **The Witness** focuses on the horrific 1964 incident in which 28-year-old Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death outside a Queens, New York, apartment building while 38 witnesses sat by and did nothing. But were there really 38 witnesses? Was the New York Times story reporting that number and other details, taken as fact and embroidered into our culture ever since, entirely accurate? Kitty’s young brother Bill, a child at the time, has admittedly never found closure and digs deep into the story, determined to bring to light not only a more complex version of what happened, but also to free his sister from her identity as just a victim of a terrible crime.

This he does. As Bill tracks down surviving witnesses and pieces together other forgotten details of the crime, the lively, feisty young woman—a lesbian—that was his sister Kitty, fairly leaps off the screen through vivid memories (including those of her girlfriend), rare photographs and brief vintage footage. The result is both a loving homage and a truly thought-provoking redress of history. The film plays at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., beginning Friday, July 22. <http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org/thewitness>

Upcoming movie calendar

Highlights from films (alphabetized by date) opening in Chicago, July 22 and 29 (with some descriptions coming from studio press materials):

—**Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie** (July 22): See details above.

—**Café Society** (July 22): The latest from Woody Allen, set in New York in the ‘30s, stars Kristen Stewart, Jesse Eisenberg, Blake Lively, Steve Carell and Corey Stoll.

—**Equals** (July 22): Two Kristen Stewart movies in one week! In this one, Nia (Kristen

Stewart) and Silas (played by super-hottie Nicholas Hoult) begin a forbidden and passionate romance in a futuristic society where emotions have been outlawed, leading them to attempt a dangerous escape.

—**Star Trek Beyond** (July 22): See details above.

—**The Witness** (July 22): See details above.

—**Looking: The Movie** (July 23): The end is here for out writer/director Andrew Haigh’s HBO series focused on a group of gay men in San Francisco. The include the sweet but commitment-shy Patrick (the criminally talented gay actor Jonathan Groff); his drug-addled best friend Augustin (Frankie J. Alvarez); and Dom (Murray Bartlett), the muscular, bearish elder statesman of the trio.

Haigh’s naturalistic approach—which found critical favor in his sublime gay romantic film *Weekend*—caught the fancy of many viewers (this one included) but bored many more

to tears, hence the series cancellation after two seasons. So now, with the film, all the loose ends are going to be wrapped up in this 85-minute film finale. <http://www.hbo.com/movies/looking-the-movie>

—**Nerve** (July 27): Partnered with a mysterious stranger (Dave Franco, brother of James, and who played gay in *Neighbors 2*), a high school senior (Emma Roberts of *Scream Queens* and *American Horror Story*) plays a popular online game that starts to take a sinister turn.

—**Jason Bourne** (July 29): Former CIA operative Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) starts to remember his past. How’s that for a short synopsis? Damon reunites with director Paul Greengrass for what promises to be an action-packed thriller that will find Damon’s Bourne outsmarting the entire CIA and, no doubt, everyone he encounters.

‘Transparent,’ ‘Her Story,’ RuPaul among Emmy nods

The 68th annual Primetime Emmy Award nominations were announced July 14, with a diverse list of nods that included *Transparent*, RuPaul’s *Drag Race* and *Modern Family*—as well as *Her Story*, a web series that looks at the lives of trans women.

Some of the nominations are as follows:

—**Outstanding Drama Series:** *The Americans*, *Better Call Saul*, *Downton Abbey*, *Game of Thrones*, *Homeland*, *House of Cards* and *Mr. Robot*

—**Outstanding Comedy Series:** *black-ish*, *Master of None*, *Modern Family*, *Silicon Valley*, *Transparent*, *Veep* and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*

—**Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series:** Keri Russell (*The Americans*), Taraji P. Henson (*Empire*), Claire Danes (*Homeland*), Robin Wright (*House of Cards*), Viola Davis (*How to Get Away with Murder*) and Tatiana Maslany (*Orphan Black*)

—**Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series:** Anthony Anderson (*black-ish*), Will Forte (*The Last Man on Earth*), Aziz Ansari (*Master of None*), William H. Macy (*Shameless*), Thomas Middleditch (*Silicon Valley*) and Jeffrey Tambor (*Transparent*)

—**Outstanding Reality-Competition Program:** *The Amazing Race*, *Amazing Ninja Warrior*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *Project Runway*, *Top Chef* and *The Voice*

—**Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality-Competition Program:** Ryan Seacrest (*American Idol*), Tom Bergeron (*Dancing with the Stars*), Jane Lynch (*Hollywood Game Night*), Steve Harvey (*Little Big Shots* starring Steve Harvey), Heidi Klum/Tim Gunn (*Project Run-*

way) and RuPaul Charles (*RuPaul’s Drag Race*)

The trans series *Her Story* received a nomination for Outstanding Short Form Comedy or Drama Series. *Her Story* is co-written by Jen Richards (*I Am Cait*) and Laura Zak (#Hashtag), is directed by Sydney Freeland (*Drunktown’s Finest*), with cinematography by Berenice Eveno. Executive-produced by Eve Ensler and produced by Katherine Fisher, *Her Story* features predominantly LGBTQ women, on and off screen. As the series notes, “*Her Story* is about two trans women in Los Angeles who have given up on love, when suddenly chance encounters give them hope.” Among the actors in the IndieGoGo-funded production are Richards, Angelica Ross and Fawzia Mirza. (A Windy City Times profile of the production is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Web-series-aims-to-tell-realistic-trans-experiences/54013.html>.)

TheWrap said that notable snubs included *Girls* and *The Good Wife* while shows receiving their first nominations included *The Americans* and *Master of None*. Also, despite winning Best Supporting Actress two years in a row, Orange Is the New Black star Uzo Aduba was not nominated in 2016.

Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* was nominated for Outstanding Variety Special and got three other nominations, including Beyoncé herself for directing. *Orange Is the New Black* only received one nomination, for Outstanding Casting for a Drama Series.

Game of Thrones had the most nominations with 23, followed by *People v. O.J.’s* 22. HBO led all networks with 94 nods.

The 2016 Emmy Awards airs on ABC Sunday, Sept. 18, with Jimmy Kimmel returning to host, having last performed the duty in 2012. For more information, see Emmys.com.

PROFILE

Rita Adair talks activism, upcoming book, social work

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

When Rita Adair moved to Chicago five years ago, she'd already made a name for herself as an activist and social worker in her hometown, Madison, Wisconsin. Adair currently lives in the Edgewater neighborhood; however, she'll be leaving the city at the end of the month to travel and write a book.

Born in 1955 to a white Norwegian mom who was a professional costumer and an African-American dad from the South, Adair—the middle child among six siblings—spent her childhood living in a variety of places, attending many schools in both the United States and Canada due to her stepdad's—Sailor Art Thomas—career as a professional wrestler with the WWE. (He was named Mr. Black Adonis in 1973.)

As Adair entered high school, her family settled in Madison, where she attended Madison East High School. She didn't graduate but later went back and got a high school equivalency diploma. Adair studied social work at the University of Wisconsin at Madison for a while but didn't complete her studies, as she was also working full time as a single parent.

"The state of Wisconsin tested and licensed me as a social worker/counselor without completing my degree because of my many years of social work experience," said Adair.

In addition to being a foster parent to 23 teenage girls over a period of 17 years, Adair spent the bulk of her working life as a social worker for Dane County in Wisconsin. She worked in the Dane County District Attorney's Office for 16 years in many roles—the Coordinator for the Dane County Prostitution Project, Community Service Coordinator and Intake Counselor as well as facilitating domestic violence classes and teaching criminology.

"I spent most of my time at the district attorney's office dealing with domestic violence and sensitive crime cases," said Adair. "I got tired of being in the office and meeting people after they committed a crime. I decided I wanted to work in the community, so I took a job as the Community Social Worker with Dane County Human Services. I did that for 13 years before I retired in 2011."

While working for the county, Adair also owned an upscale LGBTQ blues-and-jazz club in Madison called Adair's Lounge.

Adair not only helped those in her community by raising millions of dollars for various agencies, developing programs and changing neighborhoods for the better; she took her activism national. She was the co-organizer of the 34 Black women contingent from Madison to the 1997 Million Woman March in Philadelphia and spearheaded the resettlement of 30 people to Madison following Hurricane Katrina. Adair raised \$155,000 in the first 24 hours after the hurricane hit and continued to fundraise after that.

"My mom was a Freedom Rider," said Adair. "I come from a long line of activist work so it didn't surprise me that I became an activist myself. In 2005, I was voted the most newsworthy person in Dane County and was honored by the state of Wisconsin (certificate of commendation), the Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus (citation by assembly), and the Madison Police Department and Dane County Executive for my community work."

Adair noted that her family is accepting of people's differences because of her parents' status as a biracial couple. She explained that when her mom's best childhood friend, Lor-

raine, came out in the '70s as transgender and took the name Larry it was no big deal to anyone in her family.

Even though Adair knew about Larry when she was in elementary school, she was still influenced by the Black Baptist church she attended.

"I got a clear message from church: I'd go to hell if I was a lesbian," said Adair. "I didn't want to go to hell so I did what I was supposed to do which was get married to a man and have children. It wasn't until I was 45 and two times divorced that I was able to live my life authentically. Actually my mom told me I was a lesbian. I'll never forget that day. She asked me when I was going to stop this (wanting a man) and admit I was a lesbian. Her acceptance made me know it was okay to be a lesbian and live my life."

Adair had two children and adopted her youngest daughter—Tyrone Adair (deceased), Raven Adair and Brandi Grayson. She has six grandchildren (two deceased) and two great-granddaughters. Grayson followed in her mom's footsteps and founded Young Gifted and Black, is the chair of #BlackLivesMatter Madison and continues to teach, protest/march and speak locally and across the country.

"When I had my first relationship with a woman, we moved in together right away," said Adair. "It was the classic U-Haul lesbian joke. I didn't want my grown kids to know because I still wasn't sure what I was doing. After a few months, my son and I were in the car and he said to me, 'Mom, you still think you have to earn my respect?' and I said, 'What did you just say?' and we looked at each other and I said, 'You're talking about Tina' and he said, 'Yes, mom—why did you think you couldn't tell me?' He told me that he got together with his sisters and they decided he would be the one to talk to me. My kids are fine with me being a lesbian."

When Adair retired, she'd already made Chicago her second home, having traveled to the city to hang out with the Black lesbian community here. She went to parties and joined groups ahead of her move; when she arrived she dove right in and got involved on the planning committee of Women of All Colors Together, also known as Women of All Cultures Together (WACT). Adair also volunteered at the Center on Halsted's front desk.

Until recently, Adair was also the co-chair, alongside Toi Williams, of Affinity Community Services' Trail Blazers committee. She also created Adair Entertainment and started the 2nd Sunday Parties for queer women who don't really like the nighttime bar scene; Adair also created/managed two professional lesbian lip-sync groups—Style & Swagg and Seduction—as well as a Facebook page, LezInColor, on which queer women can let people know what's going on across the country.

"WACT is pretty informal and has an active membership of about 60 people who show up to our first Sunday of the month pot lucks held at members' houses," said Adair. "As for Affinity, we did some groundbreaking work including events and raising money."

Other than finding a larger, more diverse queer woman community, the underlying reason for Adair's move from Madison to Chicago is because of what happened with her son Tyrone and his family.

"In December 2009, Tyrone committed familicide," said Adair. "He shot and killed his two daughters (my grandchildren) and each of their moms. He also killed himself; after



Rita Adair.

Photo courtesy of Adair

that, I wasn't able to do my work the same way, so that's why I decided to retire. When anyone was talking about what he did, they always began it by referencing me because I was a well-known member of the community. I wasn't treated badly. The people were actually very kind to me but it was really hard to stay in Madison."

Although Adair loves Chicago and what she's done here, she explained that the reason why she's decided to put her stuff in storage and travel is so she can focus on the book she's writing about her life with Tyrone.

"I want to learn more about familicide so I can educate people," said Adair. "I'm also

going to look at mental health issues within the African-American community, guns [access] and domestic violence. I've started doing this research, attending conferences and doing public speaking and what I've learned is this is very common unfortunately. There aren't enough services for the family members of those who've killed other people. Those families are judged and not given any support. It's hard when an adult child of yours does something wrong. No matter how adult your child is, others judge the parents."

Adair noted that when she completes her book she doesn't know where she'll land; however, Chicago is still in the running. She said Chicago gets a bad rap due to gun violence and the politics of City Hall, but she doesn't see the city that way.

"The truth is Chicago is a vibrant, diverse, incredible place to live," said Adair. "I wish people would discover Chicago the way I have, especially what the LGBTQ community has to offer."

In terms of what she does for fun, Adair was a professional background vocalist off and on for 30 years. She also loves attending spoken-word events, does interior design, spends time outdoors and swims. (She was a swimmer at the 1967 Youth Olympics in Montreal, Canada.) Recently, Adair and her best friend went skylining in the Wisconsin Dells and she's planning on going race-car driving and jet skiing next.

As for what Adair wants to convey to the world, she said, "Sometimes I think it's easy for us to have passion but the hard part is to take action. It's important to light the match and I mean that in a good way. We can't keep sitting back and wallowing in our emotions. There are many things that need to be addressed and we all have to get involved."

To join WACT, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/152344554812622/>. More info about Lez In Color is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LezInColor/>.

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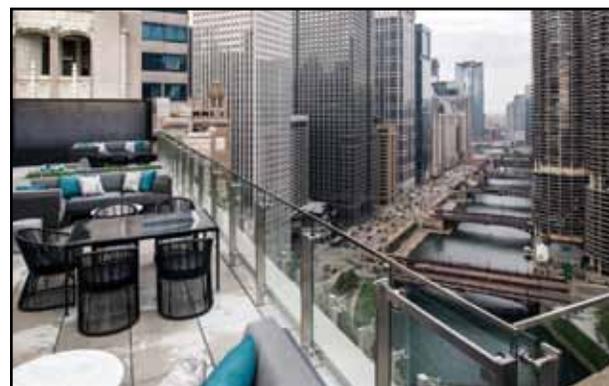
LondonHouse Chicago's rooftop bar

BY ANDREW DAVIS

LondonHouse Chicago's rooftop bar (85 E. Upper Wacker Dr.; LondonHouseChicago.com) is at the center of a lot of buzz these days—and one of the reasons becomes obvious when going to the dining establishment, as it's the only tri-level rooftop venue in Chicago, as it's on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd floors of the LondonHouse hotel (called, respectively, LH on 21, 22 and 23). LH on 21 houses an indoor bar with some



LondonHouse salad (left) and the view from LondonHouse Chicago's rooftop bar. Nicholas James Photography



imaginative cocktails and culinary fare, while there's an outdoor terrace on LH on 22, which has one of the most expansive views in the city. Exclusive in-dome dining awaits at the exclusive LH on 23. (Also, it was interesting how people made themselves at home at LH on 21; it seemed all that was missing were pajamas—not a criticism, but merely an observation.)

(By the way, there are different packages available through Aug. 31 on LH on 23's cupola, although some are a bit pricey: For example, the proposal experience in the cupola is \$500 per person [two to three guests] and the LH on 22 tasting table experience is \$180 per person for

six to 12 guests. See <https://londonhouse.tocktix.com/#/home#tickets>.)

It says a lot that one can go to the rooftop bar on a rainy day and still be impressed with the view. Although the visit on LH on 22's terrace was brief during a recent stormy evening, I could still see that the view atop Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive was absolutely breathtaking.

As for the food, the quality is pretty high (although the quantities of dishes vary). Chef de cuisine Jacob Versteegen's grilled lamb (with cucumber yogurt and marinated cucumber noodles) was fall-off-the-bone great while the addictive cheese bread rolls also contained andouille sau-

sage. The cold smoked salmon tartare (which has a knockout smoky presentation) was fantastic, as was the rye berry risotto.

And don't forget the drinks: I had a frothy concoction called Peach Treats that was absolutely divine, and there's an extensive list of wines and cocktails.

The only (off-site) complaint is that clicking on the menus on the website kept taking me back to the hotel's homepage—well, that, and that I didn't stay long enough: This rooftop bar is wonderfully impressive.



TOUCHE

Fetching images from the Mr. Midwest Rubber 2016 contest, Sat., July 16. Photos by Kirk Williamson

THE SOFO TAP

OTTER: Gotta catch 'em all! Sat., July 16. Photos by Kirk Williamson



SIDETRACK

Oh, Bey-hive! All Things Beyonce, Wed., July 13. Photos by Jed Dulanias



"I think that it is a project that is misconceived and (sadly for the players) badly cast. The producer and director seem to have missed the point entirely." —Richard O'Brien, writer of The Rocky Horror (Picture) Show (and the original Riff Raff), gives his opinion on the FOX remake starring Laverne Cox as a "sweet transvestite."

Many of my older readers never thought they'd see a drag queen with a TV show—with the exception of Milton Berle and Benny Hill. A more recent generation thought it'd seen it all when RuPaul got a show—in fact, most of the Logo network centers around RuPaul. How do you top that? By making history with an Emmy nomination as Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality Competition Program. Not only did Ru get a nomination—she was nominated alongside Jane Lynch (Hollywood Game Night), Tom Bergeron (Dancing with the Stars), Ryan Seacrest (American Idol), Steve Harvey (Little Big Shots), and Tim Gunn and Heidi Klum (Project Runway)—officially making it the gayest category in Emmy history. RuPaul, who once notably said, "I'd rather have an enema than have an Emmy," is likely a long shot. But it's an honor just to be nominated. "I dedicate this Emmy nomination to outsiders everywhere,—brave souls who stick to their dreams and make the world a more colorful place," RuPaul said. I think she just said the Emmy should go to Tim Gunn!

Elsewhere on Logo, Lance Bass is helping a male supermodel find love—'cause he's a giver. The network is touting Finding Prince Charming as the "first-ever gay dating show"—obviously forgetting James Getzloff and Boy Meets Boy from Bravo in 2003. OK, so that show did have the unfortunate twist of sprinkling some straight suitors into the mix ... just to make it icky. Be that as it may, we hear that Logo encouraged its 20 prospective beaus to amp up the drama and cattiness while filming in an LA-area estate. I'll be interested to see how many of the hunks hook up with each other—something ABC's "Bachelor" franchise rarely has to worry about.

Regarding the guy handing out the roses (or whatever a gay bachelor hands out—PREP, perhaps?), Robert Sepulveda Jr. has been described as "an interior designer with Puerto Rican roots who now lives in Atlanta." But regardless of what the network says, this isn't the 33-year-old's first attempt at finding love on camera. Way back in 2011, he was cast on Bravo's Most Eligible New York—a show I don't believe ever aired. Around that time, he was romantically linked with Marc Jacobs. When asked about their relationship, he said, "We are friends, and I don't really want to comment any further"—so I guess they were an item.

Not surprisingly, Robert also has an extensive modeling portfolio in which he's featured wearing as little clothing as possible. He's 6'2," 195 pounds, has a 42-inch chest and a 30-inch waist—or at least he had a 30-inch waist once. As for that all-important measurement, he's a 10—in footwear, silly! He also occasionally throws some blond highlights into his luscious salt-and-pepper locks ... but who am I to judge? He also appears to be circumcised, as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

L.A. may slow down in the summer, but it sure ain't boring. This past week, we had the Dreamgirls reunion (with exclusive and extensive footage on BillyMasters.com), Diana Ross at the Hollywood Bowl, and Broadway royalty at



Robert Sepulveda Jr. will be the belle of the ball on a gay Bachelor-type show. Facebook photo

the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. That last bit was when the Ahmanson Theatre hosted the national tour of Grey Gardens starring Rachel York and Betty Buckley. The highlight of the evening happened before the show even started. As the lights dimmed, in scurried Angela Lansbury—well, as much as a 90-year-old can scurry! Some people noticed and applauded, but then the pre-show announcement was made. You know—the one about no taking of photos, silencing your cell phones, unwrapping your candy. Except the person making the announcement was Angela Lansbury—who starred in Blithe Spirit in the same theatre last year. After the pre-recorded speech ended, the audience started applauding. I said, "Wouldn't it be great if ... wait—she's up!" Yes, Lansbury got out of her seat, bowed and got a standing ovation! It was certainly a special moment (that we caught on camera, of course).

Sometimes those of us in the media use the power of the press to persuade producers. I can think of two instances where I wrote about something hoping to make it happen—and in both cases, I was successful (and, no, I will not tell you the details). But sometimes such attempts are ludicrous, such as a recent item by our sister-in-gossip, Cindy Adams—you know, the one with that bun on her head. I think her bun was on a little too tight when she said that Carol Channing had been approached to fill in for Bette Midler during matinees of the upcoming Broadway revival of Hello, Dolly! In Adams' defense, she did say that it was an improbable rumor and one that the producer and publicist had denied. And then Carol Channing spoke out: "At no point has the topic of my filling in on matinees been discussed, with either the production company or with Bette. In fact, I find the very suggestion to be an insult to Bette." THAT'S the ludicrous part? That Bette would need someone to fill in at matinees? Because the idea of the 95-year-old Channing playing Dolly again is so plausible (but I'd LOVE to see it).

Christopher Meloni certainly doesn't mind attention from the gays. One fan recently Tweeted, "@Chris_Meloni: I finished the Oz series two days and I'm depressed about it (especially with the end of your character), how to handle?" Meloni accommodatingly responded thusly: "Take a shower and pretend I'll be joining u" To help get you in the mood, we'll show you every inch of him in the shower on our website.

When RuPaul's dreaming of an enema, it's definitely time to end yet another column. You can get an expanded version of this column—with photos—at www.BillyMasters.com—the site that always goes deep. Although we didn't have room for an "Ask Billy" question, you can always send your queries to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Meloni passes me the soap! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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Jennifer Saunders (left) and Joanna Lumley in *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie*.
Image from Fox Searchlight



MOVIES

Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley: The 'sweetie darlings' of 'Ab Fab' talk

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Those sweetie darlings—the appallingly self-centered, hard-partying PR maven Edina “Eddy” Monsoon (played by Jennifer Saunders) and her constant gal pal, the blonde beehived man-trapping, chain-smoking sometime fashion editor Patsy (played by Joanna Lumley)—are back.

These iconic characters, first seen in the hit Britcom *Absolutely Fabulous* that Saunders created and wrote, were sensations on both sides of the Atlantic from the get-go. Beloved from the start by the gay community, *AbFab* mania reached a fever pitch in the early '90s, when the show was at its height. Although the pair have been occasionally glimpsed in the ensuing years, not much has been heard from Patsy and Eddy since the mid-'90s.

All that is about to change with the impending release of *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie*. Saunders and Lumley are most definitely back—as are the rest of the show's familiar characters, along with a batch of new ones—and are as over-the-top as ever.

Saunders again took on writing chores in addition to playing Eddy while Lumley, who makes 70 look enviable, hams it up as the nasty but delightful Patsy. The wacky plot revolves around this horrifically funny duo fleeing to France after Eddy accidentally knocks super model Kate Moss off a balcony and into the Thames.

Windy City Times participated in a teleconference with the two stars from their home base in London during Pride weekend.

Q: Happy Gay Pride from Chicago, ladies.

Jennifer Saunders: Thank you.

Joanna Lumley: Oh, we love Chicago.

Q: Joanna, you announced recently that Patsy has gone transgender. Will Edina be part of this?

JS: She's always far behind.

JL: Patsy's been a man before. Patsy was a man in series two. We had a flashback to the '60s, [when] she had a mustache and was dressed in a Sgt. Pepper coat to be like a Beatle.

JL: This time she didn't bother to go the whole hog and take the hormones and have something stitched on. Through her experience, she's knows that they drop off after a year, so this time she just glued a mustache on and put her hair back and thought she could

probably get away with it. After all, she's only trying to attract a 90-year-old person who can't see.

Q: I'm still a little bit confused about Patsy's gender, so I—

JL: You're confused?

Q: Patsy does some very mild cross-dressing in the movie, and it's hinted she was once a man. I was wondering: Is she a transgender person who was born male and transitioned to female? If so, was that always the intention, or is that a recent thing in the movie?

JL: Patsy was born a girl and was a woman, but she took some hormones in the '60s because she fancied being a man, and then went down with Edina, her best friend, to Morocco and had a very poor operation, and it withered away and dropped off after a year.

So, she stopped taking the hormones, shaved a bit and went back to being a woman. She was a man again.

JS: It's always been just something to play within the kind of Euro-trash idea, too, I think.

JL: She thinks by combing her hair back and putting on a very bad false mustache. And [she] keeps the mustache on even when she's blatantly wearing women's clothing. I don't think they care. That's the truth. As it turns out, nor does the woman that she's marrying.

JS: I think it's about it doesn't matter. Be who you can be and want to be.

Q: I loved all the celeb cameos in the film. Was there somebody you wanted who you didn't get—Anna Wintour, perhaps, or Kate Bush?

JS: No. I mean, to be honest, no because you always end up with the people who are available on the day and who you love and who you know and who are easygoing and happy. I don't think we ever—we just said, “Look, we're having a party. Will you come and be in it?” Lots of people turned up and were incredibly generous.

Q: How do you update the characters from the end of the series to the movie? Does the time—

JS: Well, we just get older. It so happens. Edina gets older and fatter, and actually Patsy doesn't change at all. She's just sort of embalmed and remains exactly the same.

Q: You have an exciting low-speed chase in the film. Jennifer, you have to exercise from your front door to your car door and Joanna, you have to grab a cigarette from the mouth

of a man in the café as you pass by. Can you talk about the difficulty of doing your stunts in your fabulous frocks?

JL: We insisted on doing our own stunts. Obviously, it's a reach from a car traveling at almost three miles an hour to take a cigarette off a completely supine man. It was a bit challenging. I managed it. Jennifer, would you like to add something about how you managed to get on the scooter to go—

JS: Yes. I'd never been on a scooter before, and they wouldn't let me wear a helmet. I was very, very brave. It's almost the most exercise I've ever done.

Q: Do you want to talk about your costumes, though?

JS: Patsy, cool as ever. Edina, well...

JL: Well, Edina is always over-ambitious, should we say, with her costume. She always thinks she's going to be really thin by tomorrow and never is so is squeezed into some appalling outfits.

Q: She looks fabulous.

JS: Thank you. Thank you.

Q: I want to know. How did this current move toward political correctness in pop culture affect your writing of the screenplay?

JS: Quite a bit, to be honest, only because people are much more ready to be offended these days. Also, if you write a movie, you have a raft of lawyers telling you who you can offend and who you can't offend, and who's going to sue you and who won't. So, it was quite an issue, I have to say.

Q: I'd like to know which celebrity you would like to kill in real life.

JS: I would never kill anyone, but I'd quite like to slap Donald Trump.

Q: So, *Ab Fab* is unique in a lot of ways for me because it was a show about women, written by women. Has the environment changed very much for women as far as the television world goes?

JS: I don't think it has, actually. It makes me a bit sad that, if anything, that people seem to want to go back to an old model of normality, and sitcoms seem to want to be about ordinary families and things that aren't very interesting. I just think it's a bit sad. It's a shame that life is still depicted in a very straight way, I think.

Q: Yes, it is interesting to me. It's one of the other things that I always find so striking about the show, too, is you involved gay characters and trans characters and a broad

cross-section back when it wasn't really that PC to do it. So, thank you for that.

JS: Oh, it's been our pleasure, actually. We owe the gay community a huge deal, too, because they've helped make the show popular, and we love having them as fans.

Q: Your gay fans have always adored both of you. I was just wondering why each of you think you've connected so deeply with the LGBT community because you have.

JL: I think, from Patsy's point of view, she's very easy to copy if you're a boy and want to dress up as Patsy because Patsy's quite tall. You just want to get your good, yellow wig on. Lots of lovely, red lips. Most men have very good legs—much better than mine—so men's beautiful legs showing in good stockings. Nice pair a high heels. Glass of champers. Cigarette on the go. Dark shades on. You're there.

JS: I think as far as the characters go, they live for each other, and they live a life they don't apologize for. They don't need men. They don't need a relationship in order to have fun and get on in the world.

Q: All the drugs and the drinking and the facial injections and all of that really resonated with the hard-partying, 1990s gay male crowd, many of whom have toned it down in the meantime. I was wondering whether you were concerned at all, when writing this, if that wouldn't resonate with today's LGBT crowd.

JS: Do you know, when you write it, I write it to amuse Joanna, really. I think if you wrote it with too many people, too many audiences in mind, you'd die of the pressure. I just basically write what I think will be funny, and what I wanted is if people could see this film, and not have known the series and still enjoy it, but that it would also satisfy people that knew the series extremely well.

Q: I want to know if you guys are friends outside the movie.

JS: We are friends. We're very good friends.
JL: We've known each other now for 25 years, and we know each other very well.

Q: Do you think there's going to be a sequel?

JS: Well, Joanna keeps telling me there's going to be a sequel, so there's going to be a sequel. [Laughs]

<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/absolutelyfabulous/>

Thursday, July 21

Double-Dutch: An Exhibition by Sam Kirk Tunes by DJ Demchuk. Drinks by Arbor. Kirk shares her experience bouncing between Chicago and Brooklyn, self-funding her own "residency" with a second studio and home in Brooklyn to immerse herself in culture, fall in love, and explore the layers of her multiracial and queer identity. Through Aug. 30 7:00pm - 10:00pm IPaintMyMind Gallery 2545 W Diversey, Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/978885732195617/>

Chicago Michfest Gathering, free Toshi Reagon Show With the Heritage Blues Orchestra 5:00pm Pritzker Pavilion Millennium Pk 201 E Randolph St Chicago <https://www.facebook.com/events/1529562137349458/>

Out & Equal Citywide Pride Event Featuring LGBT Chamber of Commerce Learn about the work of the LGBT Chamber, members, how companies can engage with LGBT-owned businesses, about the unique challenges faced by LGBT businesses in engaging companies and how LGBT Business Resource Groups (BRGs) and/or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can connect with and influence supplier diversity decisions within their organizations. Register online. The event includes hors d'oeuvres and refreshments. 5:30pm - 7:30pm Charles Schwab 430 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016CWPCHasSchwab>

She100 Proposal presentations. Questions and proposals can be sent to sheonehundred@gmail.com. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Groupon's Corporate Headquarters, 600 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago

**'DUTCH' TREAT Thursday, July 21**

IPaintMyMind Gallery will show "Double-Dutch: An Exhibition by Sam Kirk."

Photo of Kirk courtesy of the artist

<http://she100.org>

Textual Empowerment: Lesbian Publishing in the 1970s and 1980s The 1970s and 1980s was a period of initial development and growth of lesbian publishing with networks and collectives that taught running printing presses and publishing practices, helping women take full control of the printing and distribution processes. Exhibit running through September 2016. 6:00pm - 9:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.gerberhart.org>

Friday, July 22

LGBTQ Artists Gallery Opening: Kenny Yip & Mathew Adaczyk Kenny Yip - 2nd

Floor Gallery. Matthew Adaczyk - 3rd Floor Gallery. \$5 suggested donation at the door. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/new-events-details.cfm?ID=11305>

Author Lauren Weisberger, author of The Devil Wears Prada New York Times Bestselling Author debuting her new book *The Singles Game*, sexy and wickedly entertaining novel about the world of tennis. Talk, Q&A, signing. 7:00pm Anderson's at Hollywood Palms, 532 S. Route 59, Naperville, IL <http://books.simonandschuster.com/The-Singles-Game/Lauren-Weisberger/9781476778211>

Bye Bye Liver: The Chicago Drinking Play New cast has all-new sketch comedy and games. In between audience members can play Game of Neighborhoods. \$15 table seats cost \$20. 21+ 8:00pm The Public House Theatre 3914 N. Clark St. Chicago <http://thepubtheatre.com/show/bye-bye-liver-2/2015-12-04/>

Saturday, July 23

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 St., <http://dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com>

Puck and Grind benefits LBGT athletes Burlesque and hockey team up again to create awareness for LBGT athletes and benefit the You Can Play Project. Tournament is all-ages to attend but after party is 21+ 12:00pm Johnny's Ice-House West, 2550 W Madison St., Chicago <http://www.puckandgrind.com>

10th anniversary of Gay Games VII in Chicago Gay Games VII attracted nearly 12,000 athletes from 70 countries, with Opening Ceremony at Soldier Field and Closing Ceremony at Wrigley Field. A percentage of the sales of MillerCoors

products will benefit Pride Action Tank and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. Free. RSVP online 5:00pm - 6:00pm North End 3733 N Halsted St Chicago Tickets: <http://events.aidschicago.org/site/R?i=zW9Vi19uu330VnnujNzV5g>

Pride Action Tank fundraiser Celebrate the 10th anniversary of Gay Games VII, which was held in Chicago July 15-22, 2006. Gay Games VII attracted nearly 12,000 athletes from 70 countries, with the opening ceremony at Soldier Field and closing ceremony at Wrigley Field. Percentage of the sales of MillerCoors products will benefit Pride Action Tank and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. Free. RSVP online 5:00pm - 8:00pm North End 3733 N. Halsted St.; <https://www.facebook.com/events/261200290917350/>.

Chicago Bound: The Great Migration of the Blues A Chicago Park District Night Out in the Parks presentation. Narrated by Cheryl Corley. Lucy Smith's Autumn in Augusta. Lucy, vocals. Ernie Adams, drums. Runere Brooks, bass. Marcin Fahmy, keys. Donovan Mixon, guitar. Free 5:00pm Taylor Park, 39 W. 47th Street (at Federal) 312-747-6728 <http://www.lucysmithjazz.com>

Sunday, July 24

aChurch4Me Sunday Worship Service A place to find peace, comfort and always needed prayer. 11:00am AChurch4Me MCC, 7366 N Clark St, Chicago <http://www.achurch4me.org>

Monday, July 25

Limelight Series: Who is Alexa Grae? An evening with multidisciplinary opera and movement-based queer performance artist ALEXA GRÆ, the inaugural participant of 2016's Chicago Queer Arts Mentorship Program (CQAMP). Live performance of "Sur la nuit" combining French opera and electronic soundscape in addition to a film preview of the|prince. Following performance ALEXA GRÆ will

be joined by mentor Steve Abrams and CQAMP Program Director Joseph Varisco for a conversation with audience. 7:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <https://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=12211>

Tuesday, July 26

Author Reading: Amy Rose Spiegel, ACTION: A BOOK ABOUT SEX ACTION interweaves Spiegel's own sexual autobiography with sex-positive advice on one-night stands, relationships, and everything in between. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago (773) 769-9299 <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/author-reading-amy-rose-spiegel-action-book-about-sex>

Thursday, July 28

Lollapalooza 25 Grant Park 337 E. Randolph St Chicago. See Lollapalooza.com. **Lambda Women & Wine: a pop-up event for LGBTQ women** Women's Council of Lambda Legal's third pop-up event. Free and open to all LGBTQ women 5:30pm Joie De Vine 1744 W. Balmoral Ave. Chicago

Author Reading: James Magruder Love Slaves of Helen Hadley Hall 7:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago (773) 769-9299 <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/author-reading-james-magruder>

OUT and PROUD: A Rainbow Celebration benefit for The Center Orlando Cabaret diva Melissa Young and Nick Sula takes audiences on a tour of the gay rights movement through song and comedy. One night only benefit for The Center Orlando. Reservations online or by phone. 8:00pm Davenport's Piano Bar and Cabaret 1383 N Milwaukee Ave Chicago 773-278-1830 <http://DavenportPianoBar.com>

'Art AIDS America' coming Dec. 1

Art AIDS America—a groundbreaking exhibition that underscores the presence of HIV in art in this country—culminates its U.S. tour at the Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., Dec. 1-April 2, 2017.

This temporary space has been created in a former bank by the Chicago-based Alphawood Foundation to bring the exhibition to its only Midwest venue.

This is the first exhibition to explore how the AIDS crisis forever changed American art. Since the first reports of mysterious illnesses in the early 1980s, HIV and AIDS have touched nearly every U.S. resident in some way. While acknowledging and honoring the enormous anger, loss and grief generated by the epidemic, the exhibition refutes the narrative that AIDS is only a tragic tangent in U.S. art. Instead, Art AIDS America offers a story of resilience and beauty revealed through the visual arts, and of the communities that gathered to bring hope and change in the face of a devastating disease.

The Chicago presentation of Art AIDS America will feature more than 100 significant contemporary works in a wide range of media—from oil on canvas and photography to three-dimensional installations and video. The artists represented include Judy Chicago, Chloe Dzubilo, Karen Finley, Robert Gober, Félix González-Torres, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Derek Jackson, Kia Labeija, Annie Leibovitz, Robert Mapplethorpe, Kiki Smith, Joey Terrill, David Wojnarowicz and Martin Wong. Added to

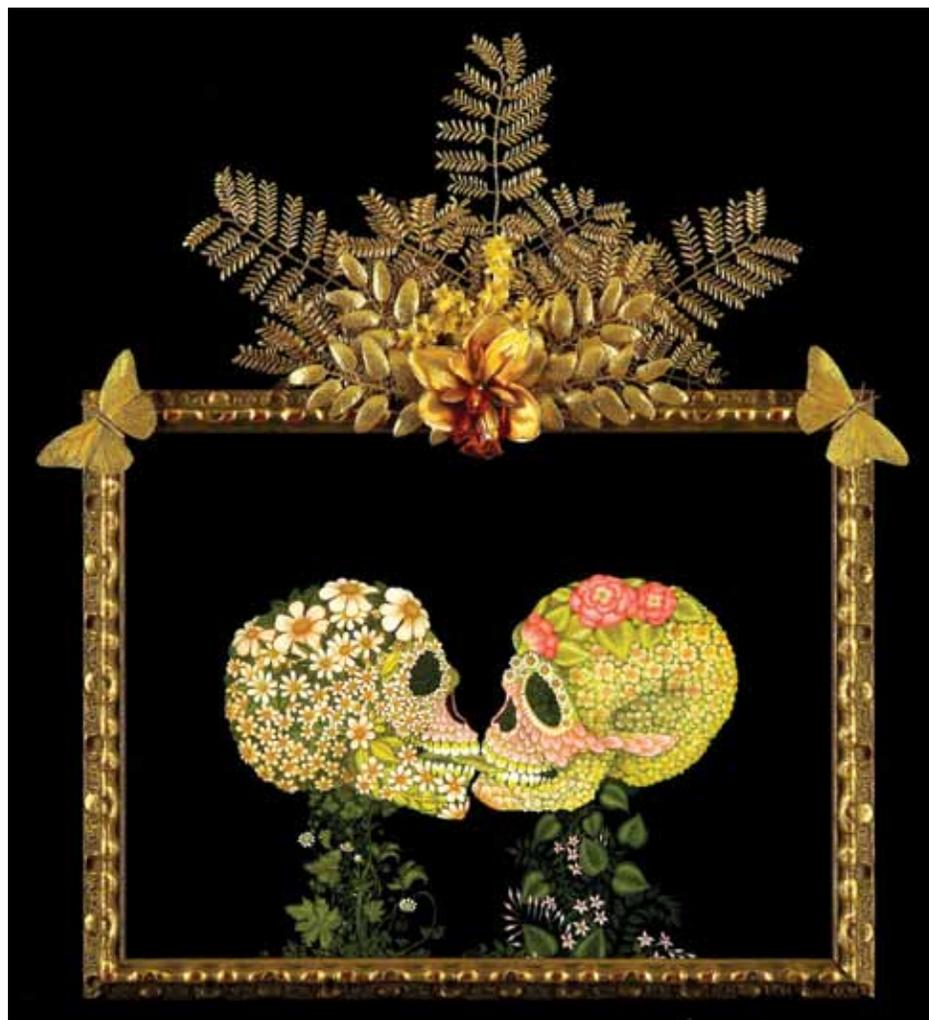
the traveling exhibition exclusively for its Chicago presentation will be works by a variety of other artists, among them major works by famed Chicago Imagist Roger Brown.

Racial and ethnic minorities have historically and presently not benefited from the same visibility as white male artists in shaping the narrative of the epidemic. The Chicago presentation of Art AIDS America will include additional works by artists, as well as programming, focused specifically on expanding the exhibition's inclusivity. Related programming in the form of panels, discussions and performances will explore how the underlying issues of race, politics, culture and institutional practice have created barriers to more equitable representation.

Admission to the exhibition will be free with timed tickets; it opens on World AIDS Day. Prior to Chicago, Art AIDS America will have appeared at the Tacoma Art Museum in Washington state, the Zuckerman Museum in suburban Atlanta and the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York City.

Major support for the exhibition and catalogue has been provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. Additional support for the U.S. tour was provided by the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art and by Gilead Sciences.

Tickets will be accessible this fall by visiting ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org.



Tino Rodriguez's Eternal Lovers (2010), one of the Art AIDS America exhibit items. Photo from event website

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WCPA names new artistic director

Windy City Performing Arts (WCPA) has announced the selection and appointment of Dr. Eric Esparza as the artistic director of Windy City Gay Chorus and Windy City Treble Quire.

In addition to directing WCPA's flagship choruses, Esparza is the director of choral activities and vocal area coordinator at DePaul University in Chicago. He conducts the DePaul Chamber and Concert choirs, and teaches courses in

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choral music. Prior to joining WCPA, Esparza was the artistic director and conductor for International Voices Houston, United Nations Association International Chorus and World Voices Houston.

Esparza holds several degrees, including a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting from Boston University.

His debut performance will be at Windy City Performing Arts' holiday concert in early December. Visit Windy-CitySings.org.

July 20, 2016

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WCPA Artistic Director Dr. Eric Esparza.
Photo courtesy of the WCPA

BOOK REVIEW

Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation

by Jim Downs

\$27.99; Basic Books; 262 pages
REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

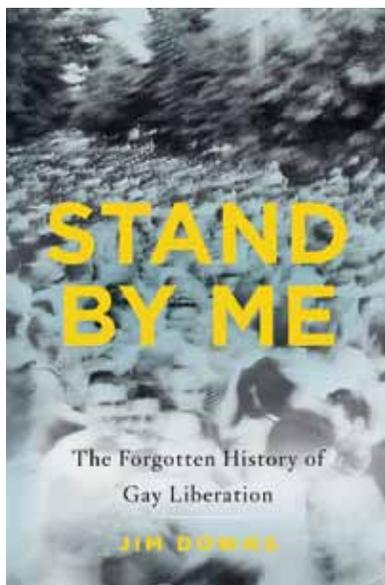
You had no idea.

How could you know? No one ever told you, nobody sat you down to explain what was what. You were blissfully unaware, kept in the dark for far too long, but read *Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation*, by Jim Downs, and you may see the light on a few things.

Years ago, when he was a college student, Downs spent evenings with his best friend in a back room in the William Way Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in Philadelphia, poring through archives. Then, he had no idea of the value of the old newspapers and articles he'd found—but after seeing a documentary on the 1970s and AIDS, he suddenly understood.

Bothered by conclusions drawn in the movie—specifically, what he felt was a focus on promiscuous sex—he returned to the archives. It was there that he saw how much of LGBT history is unknown or misunderstood. His research led to this book.

One of the more shocking things he dis-



covered was "the largest massacre of gay people in American history." (This was before this year's tragedy in Orlando, Florida.)

It happened on June 23, 1973, in New Orleans: A group of 120 gay, lesbian, and straight worshippers was holding a church service on a Sunday night on the second floor of a building in the French Quarter. They were members of the Metropolitan Community Church, which had been established so that LGBT individuals had a safe, inclusive place to worship. On that night, they were raising their voices in song when a still-unknown person threw flammable liquid on the stairs, trapping the congrega-

tion. Thirty-two people died that night.

Downs writes of a New Yorker with a "vision" of a bookstore/gathering-place for "homophiles" to mingle and share ideas, rather than their bodies. He explains how a soon-to-be-famous writer was relentless in his search for gay history in Nazi Germany. He examines how activism and gay politics spurred the creation of gay newspapers, and how LGBT publications affected "people of color" and domestic workers. Coming full-circle, he shows how gay churches and newspapers supported gay men in prison.

In any history, there'll always be surprises, facts and tales that are forgotten or ignored until someone finds and reveals them anew. And that's exactly what author Downs has done here in *Stand by Me*.

Starting with concern over what he perceived to be a simplistic premise for a documentary, Downs moves on to a story that was largely ignored by nationwide news outlets, then to activists and beginnings of an LGBT press. His narrative encompasses the years roughly prior to Stonewall through about the late 1970s, and it includes a number of coincidental connections that are nicely revealed. This book is informative, sometimes horrifying, interesting and—unlike your old high-school history books—ever dry.

Older LGBT readers may not see anything new or shocking here, but younger gay men and lesbians will truly find some eye-openers. If you don't know what you don't know, *Stand by Me* will give you some ideas.

Want more? Look for *A Queer History of the United States*, by Michael Bronski; or *The Gay Revolution: The Story of a Struggle*, by Lillian Faderman.

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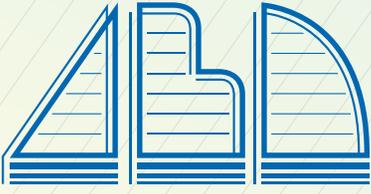
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