Vince Kracht stars as Chauncey Miles in the LGBT production The Nance. Photo by Paul Goyette

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Regina Carswell Russo raises her voice regarding use of the N-word.

Photo courtesy of Russo

SHOWING SOME PRIDE
The local branch of the law firm SmithAmundsen recently held its annual Pride event.

THAT’S SHOW BIZ
Find out the latest about Sir Ian McKellen, Lee Daniels and Halsey.

COLUMBUS DAY
Columbus, Ohio, is a city that’s on the verge of major change.

PR photo of the Hotel Leveque (left)

REGINA CARSWELL RUSSO RAISES HER VOICE REGARDING USE OF THE N-WORD

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Cassidy backs Biss for governor

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Daniel Biss has announced the endorsement of state Rep. Kelly Cassidy.

In a statement, Cassidy said, in part, “Daniel is the only candidate in this race who has a record of enacting real, progressive change, including for the LGBTQ community. When we passed the ban on conversion therapy, when we passed marriage equality—he was there every step of the way, working with me and others in the community, doing the actual hard work of making laws that protect us.”

Biss currently represents the 9th District in the Illinois Senate and previously served one term in the Illinois House representing the 17th District. Among those running against Biss in the Democratic primary are Madison County Regional Superintendent of Schools Bob Dailer, state Rep. Scott Drury, activist Tio Hardiman, former University of Illinois Board of Trustees Chair Chris Kennedy, entrepreneur Alex Paterakis, Chicago Ald. Ameya Pawar and venture capitalist J.B. Pritzker.

The primary election will take place Tuesday, March 20, 2018; the general election will be Tuesday, Nov. 6. Incumbent Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner is running for re-election.

Truth Wins Out closing

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago-based activist Wayne Besen, on June 26, announced that he would be closing his organization, Truth Wins Out (TWO), which opposed so-called “ex-gay” organizations, after 11 years.

With the ex-gay industry largely discredited, Besen thinks the organization has in many ways accomplished its goals, he said.

“When I started the organization, the ex-gay organizations were called ‘the Normandy landing of the cultural wars,’” he recalled. “I started it on a lark, after [former President] George W. Bush invited [former Exodus International officials] Alan Chambers and Randy Thomas to the White House. I said, ‘Enough is enough.’”

Besen had just published a book on the ex-gay movement and was already informally in contact with people needing help. He took umbrage with the ex-gay industry’s stance that lesbians and gays were damaged heterosexuals, and that homosexuality essentially did not exist. Besen also pointed out that lesbians and gays were damaged heterosexuals, and that homosexuality essentially did not exist. Besen noted that anti-LGBT politics are cyclical, with the ex-gay movement. He is launching an online fundraising campaign to ensure that he can continue to maintain and update TWO’s various websites.

Besen launched TWO in New York City, but left because of rising costs there. After a stint in Burlington, Vermont, he hung the TWO shingle in Chicago in late 2013. For now, he hopes to stay, but said he’ll go wherever work takes him; he is looking to move into political consulting or host a radio program. He already hosted a Chicago program until 2017 but was let go after a dispute with his station’s owners.

He noted that anti-LGBT politics are cyclical, however, and didn’t rule out returning to advocacy, adding, “If I need to, I’ll strap my gloves on and come back,” he said. “I will be well-rested and ready.”

Two “filled a vacuum” since many larger larger LGBT organizations at the time were wary of the provocative components of the “ex-gay conversation”—religion, politics and sex—he added. “It was kind of toxic. A lot of people were afraid of it.”

He admitted to becoming wary of two parts of his job, fundraising and dealing with ‘nasty, unpleasant people’ in the anti-LGBT movement. But Besen is also proud of the legacy TWO leaves behind, not least of which is what he said is about “a million dollars’ worth of research” about the ex-gay movement. He is launching an online fundraising campaign to ensure that he can continue to maintain and update TWO’s various websites.

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State’s Attorney Kim Foxx with Kim Hunt (left photo) and Judge Colleen Sheehan.

Photo by Tracy Baim

State’s attorney Foxx hosts Pride reception

Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx continued the office’s tradition of hosting an LGBTQ Pride Celebration. The eighth annual event took place June 26 at Center on Halsted.

Kim Hunt, executive director of Pride Action Tank, received the Vernita Gray Lifetime Achievement Award, named after the longtime lesbian activist and state’s attorney employee.

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy, who was in Springfield working on state budget issues, was honored for her LGBTQ work, including as a former staffer at the state’s attorney’s office. Cassidy staffer Pat Ewert accepted the award. Inciden-
Nat’l LGBT Media Association names Ad POP honorees

The National LGBT Media Association has announced its second annual Ad POP award winners, including many top corporate brand names. Formerly known as the National Gay Media Association, the National LGBT Media Association brings together the top regional newspapers serving the U.S. LGBT communities. Its recent name change, rebranding and updated website reflects renewed focus on inclusion for all of the parts of the LGBT community, and is in line with recent surveys on language choices by the community.

The Ad POPs (Pride in Online and Print) reward the best representations of LGBT advertising in online and print campaigns. LGBT media differs from other minority media by being most successful when it is local. All national ads placed in local LGBT media are automatically entered into the Ad POP awards. The Ad Pops recognize clients, creative and placement agencies, and winners are selected based on their image and messaging.

NGMA represents legacy brand names and new top performing papers: Bay Area Reporter (San Francisco), Bay Windows (Boston), Between the Lines (Detroit), Dallas Voice, Gay City News (New York City), Los Angeles Blade, Philadelphia Gay News, South Florida Gay News, Georgia Voice, Washington Blade, Watermark (Central Florida) and Windy City Times (Chicago).

Rivendell Media, the oldest and most experienced expert in LGBT media, helped coordinate national entries across local LGBT media. “NGMA represents a collective of top publishers in top U.S. markets and is a terrific vehicle for national advertisers to reach the LGBT marketplace,” said Todd Evans, president of Rivendell, which also represents more than 150 other LGBT media companies to advertisers.

“Gay media is local media,” said Evans. “It provides the best on-the-ground information to serve the diverse LGBT community.”

For more information, see NationalLGBTMediaAssociation.com

Twitter: @NatlLGBTMediaAsn
Facebook: National LGBT Media Association

Awards were granted based on 2016 advertising campaigns on both a local and national level, and are as follows:

National:
—Pharmaceutical
ViVi Healthcare
Creative: Havas Worldwide
Placement: PhD
—Non-Profit
This Free Life
Creative: Rescue, the Behavior Change Agency
—Financial
US Bank
Creative: Carmichael Lynch
Placement: Empower Media Marketing
—Automotive
Nissan
Creative: fluent360
Placement: OMD
—Technology
Xfinity/Comcast Universal
Creative: Gallegos United
Media Agency: Mediavest Spark
Placement: Novus
—Travel: Major LGBT Destination
Visit Denver
Creative: Karsh Hagan
Placement: Karsh Hagan
—Travel: Emerging LGBT Destination
OutRVA
Placement: CMI
Creative: In House
—Hotel
Ace Hotel
Placement: In House
Creative: In House

Local:
—Atlanta winner
Presented by Georgia Voice
Metrotainment Cafés
—Boston winner
Presented by Bay Windows
5 Star Travel Services
—Central Florida winner
Presented by Watermark
Parliament House Resort
—Chicago winner
Presented by Windy City Times
Discover
Design by: Michael Lee & Associates
—Dallas winner
Presented by Dallas Voice
Love Field Jeep
Design by: Bedford Advertising
—Detroit winner
Presented by Between the Lines
Detroit Institute of the Arts
Design by: J Blashill and Associates
—New York City winner
Presented by Gay City News
—Philadelphia winner
Presented by Philadelphia Gay News
Sheriff Jewell William
—San Francisco winner
Presented by Bay Area Reporter
Reproductive Science Center
—South Florida winner
Presented by South Florida Gay News
The Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau

Healthcare equality leaders named

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has released its Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) 2017.

In addition to being a tool and resource for healthcare facilities, the HEI is used by LGBTQ patients and their loved ones to find facilities that provide equitable and inclusive care. The ratings for each participating facility are published in the annual HEI report, available on HRC’s website.

Illinois is listed as having 11 leaders in healthcare equality, achieving a perfect score of 100. Chicago facilities include Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, Howard Brown Health, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Rush University Medical Center, University of Chicago Medical Center, University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System and the VA Jesse Brown Medical Center.

Other leaders in the state include Danville’s VA Illiana Health Care System, Lake Forest’s Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital and Oak Park’s Rush Oak Park Hospital. There are a total of 303 such leaders nationally, the report states. See http://assets.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HEI-2017.pdf?ga=2.13347519.982199706.1498733529-210893163.1496353630.

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Kellogg attorney talks LGBTs, role models

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Norma Barnes-Euresti has accomplished much in her career.
Among other things, she is currently vice-president and chief counsel at Kellogg Company. She formerly served as an administrative law judge for the Illinois Human Rights Commission, and also served as an attorney for the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago.
She is also one of 11 new board members at the National LGBT Bar Association and Foundation.

In an email interview, Barnes-Euresti discussed her job, role models and obstacles for the LGBT community.

Windy City Times: What was the biggest motivating factor in you embarking on a legal career?
Norma Barnes-Euresti: For me, my calling has always centered on justice. I wanted to become a lawyer, because I saw from an early age the power that the law had to right wrongs, to create peace. I wanted to be a part of that magic.

My mother came to the United States from Mexico in search of a better life when she was just 19 years old, and got an opportunity to go to a junior college in Kentucky. In the 1970s, we moved to Utah, where my mom worked as a translator for a migrant assistance center. They did a number of great things, both big and small, for the migrant community, and I was always very proud of my mom for the role she played.

Although I was only in grade school at the time, I was impressed that things could be made right via the legal process and made the decision that I would become a lawyer. My decision was further cemented when later another civil rights matter happened in my high school. I never waivered from that choice, even when a teacher told me that I could marry a lawyer, but never become one. Ironically, my wife did in fact go to law school, but I don’t think that is what they meant when they made that comment.

WCT: At one point, you worked with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago. How was that experience?
NB-E: That was a great experience! I am a big believer that everyone should at some point have a job where they are focused on making the community a better place. I also believe that everyone can contribute to a better community, regardless of their job. The work I did at LAFC was very meaningful, and I got the added benefit of collaborating with very talented and committed people. I’m happy to report that the same is true of where I work now.

WCT: What does it mean to be on the board of the National LGBT Bar Association and Foundation?
NB-E: For me, it is a dream come true. When I was a child, I never imagined that such an organization would ever even exist and that I would get to be a part of it. To promote justice in and through the legal profession for our community is perhaps my strongest calling.

WCT: What do you feel is the biggest obstacle for LGBTs in the workplace?
NB-E: I think the biggest issue is still feeling safe enough to be out and proud. Not being able to bring your authentic self to work greatly impedes our ability to reach our fullest potential. That, in turn, hurts the companies we work for. Kellogg recognizes the benefit it receives when employees are able to bring their whole selves to work. Sadly, not every company has been able to recognize that truth.

WCT: Describe a typical day for you.
NB-E: We are a global company, so my weekday crosses quite a few time zones. I partner and collaborate with people worldwide on a variety of employment, labor, benefits, immigration, EEO, employee relations and ethics topics throughout the day. My wife and I make sure that we carve out time to have coffee together in the morning, and that we have dinner as a family every day. Sometimes that means have dinner at an odd hour, but we make each other a priority. Afterward, I catch up on my work email and whatever research I need to get done.

WCT: Who would you say is your role model?
NB-E: I have so many people I admire, so it is hard for me to name just one. A few of them would be Audre Lorde, Barbara Gittings, George Takei, Bayard Rustin, James Baldwin, Ellen DeGeneres and Diana Nyad. I had the pleasure of meeting Diana at Out and Equal last year. It was my birthday, and I got a picture of us with my favorite character, Toucan Sam. Her motto, “Find a way,” is a mantra that I often rely upon to get me through the tough days.

WCT: What are the best and worst aspects of your current position?
NB-E: The best aspect of my job is actually when nothing happens. When we can stop the wrong from happening. In prior jobs, like LAFC, or when I was an ALJ for the Human Rights Commission, the story had already happened. Someone had already been harmed/discriminated against. The only remedy was money, but money does not restore dignity.

At Kellogg, we can intercede very early on to prevent risks. Unfortunately, we aren’t able to prevent everything. The good news is we can work to bring peace and justice to those situations. We can work with the person who has been wronged to remedy and heal their situation. We can always work to help people learn what they have done wrong, and get them to make restitution and avoid that behavior in future. That is actually the harder part of the equation.

The natural tendency when someone does something wrong is to simply reject them, along with their offensive behavior. The problem is that they are then very likely to keep doing the same thing, and will continue to hurt others. Even if they get fired and are no longer in your workplace, they might still live in your community, and can have a negative impact on that environment. If we want to see change, real change, in the places where we work, live and play, we have to be willing to help lead people from wrong to right. Otherwise, we will just keep encountering the negative effects of their destructive behavior.

WCT: What advice do you have for LGBT individuals climbing the corporate ladder?
NB-E: I would recommend a couple of easy areas of focus, and one that will be a little tougher.

First, technical competence in your role. You need to be an expert at what you do, and you will need to invest in yourself outside of work. That means continuous learning to get better at what you do. Attend seminars, read books and articles on the subject, and don’t expect to only do that during working hours. But keep in mind that technical competence is just “table” stakes.

In other words, being an expert gets you to the base of the ladder, but it won’t help you climb. Lack of expertise, on the other hand, will absolutely prevent you from climbing.

Climbing the ladder requires leadership competencies and your personal brand. Be sure that you know what your company needs from its leaders, what its business strategies and objectives are, and that you are living those values and executing on the strategy.

One thing we all have to consider is whether to be out or not. This is very tough for some, but my advice is to try to be out if you can. And if you can’t, think strongly about making a move to somewhere where you can be out. This does not mean you can only live in a state/city that is on the leading edge of diversity. Nor does it mean only work at companies that have a proven track record of walking the talk on diversity. That may make it easier but it’s not absolutely necessary.

It’s important for us to champion the change we want to see in companies and communities that have not made it there yet. I know this will sound unrealistic for some folks who will read this advice. I get it. I have lived quite a bit of my life in locations that had opportunities to become more diverse and inclusive. Keep in mind, when I first relocated from Chicago to Michigan, K-Pride and Allies did not exist. Battle Creek Pride did not exist. There were no ordinances forbidding discrimination. I didn’t know anyone at work who was a member of the LGBTQ community. I understand what it feels like to have concerns about safety.

But I offer that advice for several reasons. One, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to hide your true self. That means you have less energy to devote to your work, and that will impede your ability to reach your full potential and shine. Two, people can tell when you are hiding something, which may lead them to not trusting you. Trust is a secret ingredient to making work move more quickly and effectively. The reverse is also true. If people don’t trust you, it will inevitably act as a huge anchor, and will hold you back no matter how talented you are. It will also hamper your ability to build a relationships at work in other ways as well.

When I wasn’t yet out to everyone, I tried to avoid chit-chat like the plague. I knew that answering a simple question like, ‘what did you do this weekend,’ would involve having to be thoughtful about names, pronouns and activities. As a result, I would immediately shut down any attempts to engage in small talk with me by moving quickly to the business at hand. People experienced me as being cold and disinterested in them as human beings. And if someone thinks you don’t care about them, they will not accept you as a leader. If you can’t lead, you will find it difficult to move up the corporate ladder.

However, if you are devoting all of your energy to being valuable at work, and are engaged and engaging, you will quickly reach your highest potential. If you have the reputation as being a trusted individual, who easily establishes good working relationships that enables you to manage others, you will find that you will quickly move up the ladder.

The risk is that you might not be accepted. If you aren’t accepted, then trust me, you didn’t want to work there in the first place. Because long-term, it will be very difficult to get ahead in that environment anyway, because the negative impact it can have on your energy, trust and relationships will make it very difficult for you to do your best work and reach your full potential.

WCT: What’s one little-known fact about you?
NB-E: Before I was a lawyer, almost all of my jobs involved working with horses. Although my health now prevents me from riding, I have stayed involved and own several racehorses in partnership. My best horse currently is 2015 Horse of the Year, Wiggle It Jigglety.

Read the entire interview online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Politicians talk Equality Act, local politics

BY MATT SIMONETTE

For U.S. Rep. David Cicilline (D-Rhode Island), the most frustrating aspect of conveying the urgency of the Equality Act, LGBT-rights legislation for which he is the chief co-sponsor, comes when he realizes that many people already think that widespread legal protections for LGBT individuals are already in place.

“When you tell people that you can be fired from your job, be denied an apartment, or denied service in a restaurant because you’re gay or lesbian, they often say, ‘That can’t be legal,’” said Cicilline, shortly before a discussion he had alongside Illinois U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly (D-Illinois), and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg on June 19. “The truth is, in most states, it is legal.”

The Equality Act amends the 1964 Civil Rights Act to extend federal protections against housing, employment and public accommodations to LGBT individuals. Cicilline introduced the legislation in 2015, but it was never brought to a vote. He reintroduced the legislation in May.

He said that “ensuring that there is full protection for all members of our community, in every area of life” is paramount. “It’s building those rights into existing civil rights architecture. The categories are listed: race, gender, ethnic origin. It’s really the only way to ensure that members of our community enjoy those rights.”

Congress “catching up on the issue is actually our challenge,” Cicilline added. He is convinced that if a vote were called on the measure it would pass.

“That’s why they don’t call it,” added Kelly. “The Democrats would go for it, and enough Republicans would not want to be seen voting against equality for our community. It’s really up to [Speaker of the House] Paul Ryan. It’s up to one person.”

Every member of the Democratic Caucus—save two who include Illinois U.S. Representative Dan Lipinski (3)—signed on as a co-sponsor of the legislation. Two Republicans also signed on.

“It’s officially bipartisan,” joked Cicilline.

Buttigieg, who this past winter mounted a campaign to become chairman of the national Democratic Party, but lost to former U.S. Labor Secretary Tom Perez, wants to build awareness about the importance of politics at the state and local levels.

“We’re all obviously following the blow-by-blow of what’s going on in Washington, but at the same time it’s often easier for people to understand the impact and implications of policy when it’s at the local level,” he said. “People are also more empowered at the local level.”

He noted that he had just testified before Congress for the first time, noting that he had to be invited to do so. But with regards to the South Bend city council meetings, “Anybody can show up and testify. I tell people, including kids, you don’t even have to be old enough to vote.”

Buttigieg said he is proud that South Bend “has its own version of the Equality Act. In my first term, we passed a non-discrimination bill. It was very controversial. One of the things that made the difference at this debate that, I think went until two in the morning, was this parade of residents—gay and straight, old and young, people of color, religious people—getting up there and saying, ‘This is what it means to me.’ There was a parade of people on the other side, but they were in the harder position because they were standing in front of a body of elected officials asking for a license to continue to discriminate.”

Buttigieg added, “When the vote passed, it became something that was a credit to our community.”

Kelly said that local government “was where the rubber meets the road in so many ways. When I try to talk to people about both running for office—and voting—I say, ‘Don’t forget about local.’ … That’s where you really get your foundation from.”

Cicilline also spoke about the need for the LGBT community to cultivate allies. He praised Kelly as being “a champion for our community in the Congress. She’s been a passionate and strong advocate for our community in our fight for equality. Our success is going to be marked by the willingness, in particular from our allies in Congress, to stand with us.”
Chuck Renslow, 87, a longtime pillar of the LGBTQ community in Chicago and around the world, has died after multiple long-term health issues.

Renslow reigned over a seven-decade empire, starting more than two dozen businesses—bars, discos, photo studios, health clubs, bathhouses, gay magazines and newspapers, hotels, restaurants and bookstores. He fostered organizations and dealt with Mafia and police payoffs, the Chicago Machine, anti-gay government policies, and controversies within the gay community.

Because of his businesses, he also knew celebrities from Marlene Dietrich to Rudolf Nureyev, from Divine to Sally Rand. He even helped with the Kinsey Institute’s sex research.

The founder of International Mr. Leather, owner of Man’s Country and the Gold Coast bar, publisher of the GayLife newspaper in the ’80s, political activist, and much more was an out business owner since the ’50s. He was a critical contributor to a wide range of political, social, business, health and other causes.

In the early ’50s, Renslow founded Kris Studios, one of the earliest and most durable of the physique photography houses. He was an accomplished photographer, including of the ballet. His dance photography is in the Newberry Library dance collection in the Chuck Renslow Dance Photographs collection.

He was the publisher of Triumph, Mars and Rawhide Male magazines, publications mailed and shared across the country as the earliest ways gay men found each other. In 1965, he was a founder of Second City Motorcycle Club, the first such club not on the West Coast.

He opened Gold Coast, believed to be the first leather bar in the U.S., in Chicago in 1958. It closed in 1987, when it was known internationally as the oldest leather establishment in the world.

He was the founder of many bars and sex clubs since the ’60s including Man’s Country, which is still open in Andersonville. In the ’70s, the bathhouse attracted top names on the “K-Y circuit.”

For decades, he and his Renslow “family” ran Chicago’s famous White Party, coinciding with his August birthday. He was reportedly the first to have a float in the Chicago Gay Pride Parade (a flatbed, a gazebo, and three drag queens).

Renslow had many partners over the years, among them Dom ‘Etienne’ Orejudos, who he was with more than 40 years and, and helped encourage Dom’s work as the artist Etienne. He was also involved with Cliff Raven, Chuck Arnett, David Grooms of Wisconsin, Ron Ehemann and Sam ‘Phil Andros’ Steward and encouraged them in their famous work too.

In 1979, he founded International Mr. Leather, which grew out of his Mr. Gold Coast contest and the experience he had managing A.A.U. physique competitions. When Dom ‘Etienne’ died, Renslow combined his collection of Etienne’s art with his own archives from his business and his life; Renslow and Tony DeBlase co-founded the Leather Archives & Museum in 1991. Renslow served as president for many years.

Renslow was inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 1991 and received dozens of awards from the gay and leather communities. He received The Leather Journal’s lifetime achievement award and a Centurion Award as Leatherman of the Century.

He served on the board of directors of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and was a U.S. representative to what was known then as the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Renslow also was involved in newspapers, purchasing GayLife newspaper from its founder, Grant Ford, and publishing it for several years, until it folded in 1986.

Renslow was especially active in politics in the ’70s and ’80s, as the gay community gained clout. He was the founder of Prairie State Democratic Club in 1980, and they hosted events with top politicians from Chicago and Cook County, and even presidential candidates coming through the area. He pushed for the gay and lesbian civil rights ordinance when it was first introduced in the City Council in the early ’70s, and the initial executive order banning discrimination in Chicago city government, as issued by Mayor Jane Byrne.


He served as a Democratic Party 43rd Ward precinct captain for eight years, as a candidate for delegate to the 1980 Democratic National Convention (for U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy), and within the 46th and 48th Ward Democratic Organizations.

His other bars and businesses have included the Chicago Eagle, Triumph Health Studios, Sparrows Lounge, Bistro Too, Zolar, The Club Baths, Center Stage and Pyramid.

In 1958, he was brought to a local court for the distribution and possession of material with “excessive genital delineation.” Unlike some gays, Renslow did not passively wait for a conviction. He and his attorneys fought back, including as evidence nude statues in Chicago. In 1964 the Post Office Department also brought Kris Studios up on charges of pornography. The studios did not use the more common strategy of saying the materials were art; they just denied they were pornography, and the judge agreed that the human body itself, in posing straps, was not porn.

Renslow was born in 1929, raised in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago, and graduated from Lane Technical High School.

Legendary Chicago businessman, activist Chuck Renslow dies

BY TRACY BAIM

Chuck Renslow, the founder of many bars and sex clubs since the ’60s including Man’s Country, which is still open in Andersonville. In the ’70s, the bathhouse attracted top names on the “K-Y circuit.”

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Renslow was inducted into the the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 1991 and received dozens of awards from the gay and leather communities. He received The Leather Journal’s lifetime achievement award and a Centurion Award as Leatherman of the Century.

He served on the board of directors of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and was a U.S. representative to what was known then as the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Renslow also was involved in newspapers, purchasing GayLife newspaper from its founder, Grant Ford, and publishing it for several years, until it folded in 1986.

Renslow was especially active in politics in the ’70s and ’80s, as the gay community gained clout. He was the founder of Prairie State Democratic Club in 1980, and they hosted events with top politicians from Chicago and Cook County, and even presidential candidates coming through the area. He pushed for the gay and lesbian civil rights ordinance when it was first introduced in the City Council in the early ’70s, and the initial executive order banning discrimination in Chicago city government, as issued by Mayor Jane Byrne.


He served as a Democratic Party 43rd Ward precinct captain for eight years, as a candidate for delegate to the 1980 Democratic National Convention (for U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy), and within the 46th and 48th Ward Democratic Organizations.

His other bars and businesses have included the Chicago Eagle, Triumph Health Studios, Sparrows Lounge, Bistro Too, Zolar, The Club Baths, Center Stage and Pyramid.

In 1958, he was brought to a local court for the distribution and possession of material with “excessive genital delineation.” Unlike some gays, Renslow did not passively wait for a conviction. He and his attorneys fought back, including as evidence nude statues in Chicago. In 1964 the Post Office Department also brought Kris Studios up on charges of pornography. The studios did not use the more common strategy of saying the materials were art; they just denied they were pornography, and the judge agreed that the human body itself, in posing straps, was not porn.

Renslow was born in 1929, raised in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago, and graduated from Lane Technical High School.
LGBT advocates, allies decry Senate healthcare plan

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Advocates decried details of the U.S. Senate’s HR 1628, a.k.a., the Better Health Care Reconciliation Act, after logistics of the plan were released June 22.

The intricacies of the plan—the Senate’s answer to the House’s Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA)—were crafted in secrecy. The Congressional Budget Office, on June 26, announced that the Senate plan would result in about 22 million Americans losing their insurance. Both pieces of legislation, which would have to be reconciled with one another if HR 1628 passes the Senate, scale back the Medicaid expansion that was integral to the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“This bill, negotiated by 13 men behind closed doors, represents more of the same from Republicans in Congress. Senate Republicans are willing to deny healthcare to millions of Americans, targeting children and the elderly with almost surgical precision, simply to give the top 1 percent a generous tax cut. To quote President Trump, this bill can be summed up with one word: ‘mean’,” said Clare Duggan of the Indivisible Chicago coalition, which held a rally downtown at Federal Plaza Thursday afternoon.

“The Trump administration and the Republican-led Congress need to stop playing politics with the lives and wellbeing of people,” noted Rea Carey, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund. “Repealing the Affordable Care Act will lead to devastating and irreparable consequences, including increased mortality rates, skyrocketing healthcare premiums, overcrowded emergency rooms, and limited insurance options. Callously denying access to affordable healthcare further underscores the Trump administration’s malice toward the nation’s most vulnerable, including the 1.8 million LGBTQ people who rely on Medicaid, the over 1 million LGBTQ older adults living with disabilities, and the 1.1 million people living with HIV.”

“If the Trump-McConnell health care bill becomes law, it will threaten the lives of countless Americans,” said HRC President Chad Griffin. “For LGBTQ people, who already face health care disparities, this proposal is downright dangerous. Both the House and Senate versions of the bill gut core provisions of the Affordable Care Act and cut off tens of millions of Americans from life-saving health care coverage while increasing out-of-pocket costs. This unconscionable proposal—drafted behind closed doors, without public input—is a disturbingly harmful bill that Senators must reject.”

Scott Schoettes, Lambda Legal’s HIV project director said during a June 22 Facebook Live presentation that the Senate plan was “just as bad, if not worse,” than the House plan for people living with HIV, noting that the Senate plan allowed for the the rolling-back—and long-term elimination—of essential benefits.

“There can be no floor to healthcare plans,” he explained. “They can be pretty subpar, and if you have a chronic manageable condition like HIV, you’re going to have a lot of trouble when the insurance companies pull the legs out from those benefits.”

Schoettes noted that scaling back Medicaid would also have a devastating impact on persons with HIV/AIDS; some 40 percent of such individuals receive Medicaid benefits.

Schoettes and five colleagues recently resigned from the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, citing the Trump administration’s ostensible indifference to the epidemic. During his June 22 talk, he said that the ACA’s passage, which was enthusiastically celebrated by President Trump, as being “the straw that broke the camel’s back” for him and his colleagues.
**Dyke March Collective member responds to criticism and attacks**

**BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND**

During the rally at Piotrowski Park which followed the 2017 Chicago Dyke March held June 24 in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood, an incident occurred involving Dyke March organizers (the Collective) and three Jewish women who were carrying rainbow flags with a Star of David upon them. The women included A Wider Bridge Midwest Manager Laurel Sosha-ny-Anderson. The third girl has not been named, possibly by preference.

Within hours of the Windy City Times report on the march, the incident ballooned into an international controversy. Back-and-forth arguments on social media ensued and commenters, celebrities and advocacy groups weighed in.

Alexis Martinez has been a core organizer with the Dyke March Collective for eight years. She told Windy City Times that because the initial facts of the story were not accurately reported and no one from Windy City Times approached the Collective for a statement, it was unfairly maligned from the outset.

She asked to be able express her account of what occurred in a one-on-one interview.

In agreement with Martinez, the conversation is reproduced here with edits only for space or clarity.

**Alexis Martinez:** The first thing I want to say is that this was never about the Jewish Pride flags. They never came into the conversations. As long as I’ve been an organizer, Laurel has always marched [in the Dyke March] with that flag. I had a conversation on text message with Laurel the night before. She asked me if people would be protesting her Jewish flag. I told her “No. It’s never been an issue and it shouldn’t be an issue.” But I also told her very clearly that we were anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian and she needed to understand that and the nature of the event.

There were Jews there with all kinds of tat-tos, bracelets with the Star of David. That was never an issue. It’s being framed that we asked people to leave because of flags. It just isn’t true. They also were never tossed from the march. They marched all the way from 27th and Lawndale. [March starting point]. Even when they were interrupting the anti-Zionist chants.....

**Windy City Times:** How were they interrupting them?

**AM:** They were taking ‘No walls from Mexico to Palestine’ and they started with “No walls anywhere.” They were disrupting the chants and nobody said anything to them.

What happened at the site [of the rally] was some Palestinian Queers who came up to organizers and said they were being antagonized verbally. The Jewish contingent kept agitating and being aggressive about presenting a pro-Zionist solution is kind of ridiculous.

**WCT:** Others who have spoken about the incident in support of the Collective have said that they did ask the women to put away their flag because the Star of David on a Rainbow flag is pink-washing and, therefore, Zionism.

**AM:** I don’t know which Dyke March Collective member said that. If they did, they were wrong because it just isn’t part of our policy. It never has been. If that occurred, it was an error. It was a very emotional issue. To my knowledge it was the agitation, not the flag that was creating the issue.

**WCT:** So, you are saying that, if the women had minded their own business, enjoyed the rally and not engaged others, that would have been fine?

**AM:** Right. We’re not there to resolve the political issues of the world. Laurel could have approached Dyke March at any point prior to the march and requested to make a statement but she used the occasion as a representative of A Wider Bridge to inject herself into a space and then ferment dissent.

**WCT:** You think that was her intention?

**AM:** Without a doubt, because the media and social media outrage was almost instantaneous and we got hit from every possible site and angle. I have never seen any member of the Collective make anti-Semitic statements. We’re anti-Zionism and people are conflating that into being anti-Semitic. They’re saying that we acted against Jewish queer women and it’s just a complete falsehood. Anyone who interprets our political positions as anti-Semitic is profoundly wrong. They’re misinformed. There’s nothing in our history that indicates that.

**WCT:** Was this the first year that the anti-Zionist stance was so up front? If so, what prompted that decision?

**AM:** No. We’ve always stood for liberation move-ments of what we perceive as oppressed peoples. We never frame stuff in terms of religion. What we stand against is oppressive governments be they in Israel, El Salvador, Nicaragua; if people are struggling for their freedom, we try to show support in the context of the small organization that we are. The State of Israel is not endangered by anything we have to say at Dyke March and neither was Laurel. Nobody attacked her.

When the Christian protestors who were at the rally refused to leave, we got volunteers to stand there holding a blue tarp for almost 90 minutes blocking those people until they gave up. We had to contain a couple of people from trying to jump on [the Christians] and that was real difficult because people were very angry. When we have volatile situations, we want harm reduction but we don’t have any enforcement and we’re definitely not going to ask the police to intervene because we are also anti-police.

But, we need to be in control of our space just like you wouldn’t accept Nazis in your synagogue.

**WCT:** There are a lot of nation states which are oppressive to populations. Example, the British to Northern Ireland, the Australians to the Aboriginal people, France to the Muslims living within its borders, Iran to the LGBTQ people living there. Is the presence of such people or open support of their government’s policies whether verbal or in a manner of dress or a sign also unacceptable at Dyke March?

**AM:** We’re not ignoring that. It’s why you see very few flags [at the march]. But we’re pro-Palestinian. We think that the Palestinian struggle demonstrates a good model for what constitutes oppression. You have a military power that subjugates a group of people. It could be any number of places in the world including the U.S. But I’m not going to stop somebody from wearing a U.S. flag tattoo or whatever. It’s only if you begin to agitate a point of view that creates a condition that could explode into something much bigger. We have to be the judge of that. It’s not just hurt feelings. It could become physical. If somebody gets hurt, we are going to be held accountable. I don’t get sucked into arguments with circular logic. If you want to debate Zionism, there’s other forums for that. I’m not going to ban you from my event.

Inclusivity is a word that can be very loaded because it means, “Do we include the views of the radical Christians who showed up with their insults?” We definitely wouldn’t have Log Cabin Republicans at Dyke March. We center our message on dyke, trans, queer and gender non-conforming people of color. It doesn’t mean we are anti-white. We’re trying to give voice to people who don’t have much of a voice. We are a small group of people who are anti-oppression. We’re not anti-Semitic. We’re not bigots. That’s not part of our conversation.

**WCT:** Is there a danger that the LGBTQ movement is becoming too embroiled in identity politics?

**AM:** Identity politics is another loaded phrase. We’re just as diverse politically as America is. Twenty percent of gay people voted for Trump. How did that happen?

**WCT:** Are we too siloed?

**AM:** Once, we were a radical, political move-
Grauer responds to Dyke March organizers’ claims

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Dyke March Collective member Alexis Martinez, on June 27, offered her group’s perspective on the events of June 24, when three Jewish women became involved in a dispute with other participants at a rally at Piotrowski Park following the 2017 march.

Windy City Times also spoke with Laurie Grauer, one of those women. Grauer—who is Midwest director of the advocacy organization A Wider Bridge, which fosters relationships between the U.S. and Israeli LGBT communities—maintains that she was asked to leave because of her Pride flag, which had a Star of David imprinted on it. Collective members assert that Grauer was disruptive during the event.

Windy City Times: Why did you contact Dyke March officials the night before, and what understanding on the Collective’s stated position on Israel/Palestine did you already have? With that position, why did you still want to be part of the march?

Laurie Grauer: I saw—not on the Dyke March Facebook event page, not on the website—but in social media elsewhere some comments going back and forth about anti-Zionism. I reached out affirming that I planned on coming, as I had for the past 10 years, with my Jewish Pride flag, and indicated that I wouldn’t be wearing anything Israel-related. I’d just be coming and showing my pride as a lesbian Jew. [Martinez] said in the text, ‘That’s fine, I even remember seeing your flag in previous years and there’s never been any problems.’ It was confirming that I’d be doing what I’ve always done.

In this conversation, Alexis talked about there being a ‘Free Palestine’ and that’s not in contradiction with what I believe. I believe there should be Palestinian country with a sovereign Palestinian state, with an Israeli state as well, with the two existing side-by-side, ideally at peace. I didn’t think that excluded me. I didn’t know beforehand that they had said that they were explicitly anti-Zionist. I appreciated a number of things that they said they stood for, for example, halting deportations and rights for people of all different relationship statuses. As far as their website or Facebook page, there was nothing on there talking about Zionism. If people had approached me, I’d always be open to conversation, but otherwise I’d just march and talk, be with people who I’d seen and marched with in the previous years.

WCT: Were you there on your own volition or as a representative of A Wider Bridge?

LG: I was there of my own volition, because I have marched for over the past 10 years. Yes, I am Midwest manager for A Wider Bridge, which I’ve been working since August 2015. I’m also a member of various Jewish communities and various LGBT communities here in Chicago. I sit on boards. I am a member of various congregations and community think-tanks. I’m also someone who’s grown up living in Chicago. I’m someone who does archery. I’m many things—I’m not only ‘A Wider Bridge’ just because I work for them. All these things that I am are closely tied to the local Jewish and queer communities, so that’s why I march in a women-led space for people of different gender-identifications. I march for social justice because I’m also a social worker, and I march with a rainbow flag with a Jewish star because that identifies the communities I most closely identify with.

WCT: But A Wider Bridge did publicly respond to what happened. Why did they step in?

LG: Yes, I’m an employee of theirs, but, beyond me, it’s the idea that people were saying, ‘If you are a Zionist, you can’t be here,’ along with the idea that this was an anti-Semitic action that took place, because people saw the Jewish star and made assumptions about me, and excluded me, when this took place. That’s where this all started from, and came out only when I was approached [at the rally]. Our mission is equality in Israel and equality for Israel. In the ‘equality for Israel’ piece, there’s a space, when there’s an opportunity, to have a nuanced dialogue on Israel, saying that you should be accepted and not excluded because you believe there should be an Israeli state. That’s why they felt the need to step up. That goes hand-in-hand with the portion ‘equality in Israel’ because it’s our job to speak up for the people in Israel in the LGBT community who are working every day to make Israel equitable for all, for people in Israel and for people in Palestine as well.

WCT: The Dyke March collective maintained that you were disruptive at the rally, changing words in the chants and antagonizing people verbally. Martinez said, “The Jewish contingent kept agitating and being aggressive about presenting a pro-Zionist position to Palestinian women.” She also stated that this was “never about the flags.” How do you respond to that? Was it your intention to disrupt?

LG: No. There were three of us. You have to question how three people could come to disrupt a march of 1,500 or 2,000 people. We were simply coming to march. I did not change any words that were being said. If there were ones I didn’t agree with, we stayed silent and that was it. As we walked to the park, and people saw this flag, that’s when people automatically came up to us. We weren’t going up to people and saying they should be Zionists. They were coming up to us and treating us differently, looking at us differently, based on the flags we carried. When questioned, or told what the symbol stood for, then absolutely, I spoke up.

When Alexis approached me, she had been informed by people who perceived the situation a certain way. And when she saw me, my temper was flared because of the people interrogating me about my beliefs, and telling me that I had to leave because of a flag that I have carried for ten years.

WCT: Were you actually ejected from the rally?

LG: They were trying to eject us. At one point, after confrontation, I curled up my flag and was trying to reach a friend on my phone, someone who’d come with me and I wasn’t leaving without her. There were drums going, but I said, clearly, that I was waiting for her. When she came, we stepped off the green and stood around on the sidewalk trying to collect our thoughts and think about what we’d been through. Several times, people told us to leave, and we eventually did before the end.

WCT: The Dyke March became the object of much scorn after the news broke. What are your thoughts on the march continuing? Would you want to see it shut down as some commentators and community members called for?

LG: I wouldn’t want to see the Dyke March shut down. If I felt that, I wouldn’t have been marching in it as long as I have. This is a place where you see women, people of other genders and identities, religious or non-, everything in between, marching together. They are raising awareness about issues affecting our city and nation. People who feel they don’t have a voice, who feel oppressed, can actually raise their voice.

WCT: The Dyke March should not be receiving death threats. No one should. There’s always someone on the other side of the screen.

Also, I’ve heard that people are threatening the Windy City Times, and that needs to stop as well. I recognize that the Windy City Times is a community newspaper, the only newspaper usually covering our issues and we need that. There are times when I’m not happy with how things are covered and that comes with having a community newspaper. This incident is bringing up a lot of feelings and a lot of emotions. It’s bringing up conversations and that’s great. But threatening with violence is not the answer, and if my words mean anything, and can get that to stop, that needs to stop right now.

There’s a reason why the symbol of the LGBT-TIQIAP community is a rainbow. We all come bearing different expressions, but we are most visible when we stand together. There’s a reason why there’s an old cultural adage, “two Jews, three opinions.” We will never agree on everything, but we can progress when we engage and talk with one another.

I consider myself a part of that. This is supposed to be a space about intersectionality, about how all the things that make us up affect how we are seen by society. That speaks to many people and this can be a prime place to show all the different shades and interpretations of intersectionality if people aren’t excluded.

There was actually a really great article in the Forward on this, by Jenna Shaw. She wrote, “This addresses a deeper issue about genuine intersectionality and inclusion within the queer community, as there is a fine line between full inclusion and uncomfortable inclusion.”

Even if they started out with uncomfortable inclusion, but that we could walk together, imagine what we could do with full inclusion.

WCT: This is at least the second time since last year, the first being Creating Change, where controversy came about in Chicago because of differences between activist factions in events touching upon Palestine and Israel. What kind of conversations do you think need to take place?

LG: With Creating Change, it was a national organization that came to Chicago. Once the conference was over, they may have come back for an event or two, but then they were gone. This is something that happened on the ground here in Chicago and involved Chicago activists. I think there is an opportunity for local voices—leaders in the LGBT community, leaders in the Jewish community—to come together on the local level first, about what these social justice passions might be, and how we identify, “That’s who we are.” How can we find ways together? Whether the term is “pro-Palestine,” “pro-Israel,” “Zionist,” “anti-Zionist.” We have these words—put them off to the side, and then what do they mean? Can we find commonality? That’s an opportunity we have here that we didn’t have with Creating Change since it was an outside organization. Again, since it’s local players here, it’s time for local leaders to step up from these communities and try to bring people together. I don’t think anyone is opposed to that.

WCT: Anything else?

LG: I was horrified to learn people are getting death threats over this. I very much want that to stop. Whatever happened on that day, physical violence is never something that came up. No one’s life was put in danger. Tensions rose, but no violence was threatened and I definitely want that to stop. Dyke March should not be receiving death threats. No one should. There’s always someone on the other side of the screen.

Also, I’ve heard that people are threatening the Windy City Times, and that needs to stop as well. I recognize that the Windy City Times is a community newspaper, the only newspaper usually covering our issues and we need that. There are times when I’m not happy with how things are covered and that comes with having a community newspaper. This incident is bringing up a lot of feelings and a lot of emotions. It’s bringing up conversations and that’s great. But threatening with violence is not the answer, and if my words mean anything, and can get that to stop, that needs to stop right now.
Letters to the editor:

The following letters, statements and Facebook posts were shared with Windy City Times in response to the controversy at the Chicago Dyke March. We would not normally dedicate this much space, but we do so to get as many opinions in as possible. WCT stands by our original story the evening of Sunday, June 25, in which those kicked out, and a member of the Dyke March collective, each had an opportunity to give their side. The story continued to develop and more responses were added. WCT does not relish being in the middle of this controversy, as the messenger, and it is certainly horrible that anyone would use this opportunity to give death and other violent threats. We must not threaten one another over our views, and as a community we need to have continued dialogue to try to figure out how best to navigate inclusion of LGBTQs in public events in public spaces.

— Tracy Baim, Publisher

Statement from Christopher Clark, Midwest Regional Director of Lambda Legal Regarding Incident at Chicago’s Dyke March

Lambda Legal has proudly participated in Chicago’s Dyke March for more than 20 years, and we were proud to be there again this past weekend. We are concerned, however, that women carrying rainbow pride flags with the Star of David were questioned about their beliefs and asked to leave. We are even more deeply disturbed by the conversation that has followed the incident, and the anti-Semitic statements that have been expressed in our community’s discussion.

In our work, we strive to protect the voices of all members of the LGBTQ community. Inclusion and mutual respect are part of our core values. Lambda Legal welcomes those who seek to stand with us. We cannot and will not participate in events and activities that exclude people based on who they are. If our movement cannot find common ground in a spirit of inclusion, we all lose.

Chicago Dyke March official statement on 2017 march and solidarity with Palestine

On June 24, 2017, a small group of individuals were asked to leave Chicago Dyke March for expressing Zionist views that go directly against the march’s anti-racist core values. In the days following, articles have appeared in a number of major news outlets that put forward false reports based on testimony that is purposefully misleading. We wish to clarify the circumstances under which organizers and community members alike asked the group to leave.

The group in question was heard disrupting chants, replacing the word “Palestine” with “everywhere,” saying: “From everywhere to Mexico, border walls have got to go.” One of the individuals, Laurel Grauer, is the Regional Director of A Wider Bridge, an organization with ties to the Israeli government that was protested for pinkwashing at the Creating Change Conference in Chicago in 2016. It was later revealed that Laurel was aware of Dyke March’s anti-Zionist position from pro-Palestine memes and art that were posted on the Dyke March page, and was also aware of the fact that her flag could be interpreted as being at odds with that position. The night before, she contacted an organizer to ask if her flag would be “protested.” The organizer told her the flag was welcome, but reminded her that the space is one that supports Palestinian rights.

Upon arrival at the rally location in Piotrowski Park, Palestinian marchers approached those carrying the flags to learn more about their intentions, due to its similarity to the Israeli flag and the flag’s long history of use in Pinkwashing efforts. During the conversation, the individuals asserted their Zionist stance and support for Israel. At this point, Jewish allies and Dyke March organizers stepped in to help explain why Zionism was unacceptable at the march. There was an earnest attempt at engagement with these marchers, and the decision to ask them to leave was not made abruptly or arbitrarily. Throughout a two-hour conversation, the individuals were told that the march was explicitly anti-Zionist, and that if they were not okay with that, they should leave.

Zionism is an inherently white-supremacist ideology. It is based on the premise that Jewish people have a God-given entitlement to the lands of historic Palestine and the surrounding areas. This ideology has been used to justify dozens of laws that discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel, segregated road systems in the West Bank, and forced removal of Palestinian families from their homes in order to make way for Jewish-only housing, among other violent and discriminatory practices. We recognize that Zionism is not synonymous with Judaism, but instead represents an ideology that uses legacies of Jewish struggle to justify violence.

Chicago Dyke March Collective is a grassroots mobilization and celebration of dyke, queer, bisexual, and transgender resilience. Our priority is to ensure a safer space for those who are most marginalized. We welcome and include people of all identities, but not all ideologies. We believe in creating a space free from oppression, and that involves rejecting racist ideologies that support state violence. We welcome the support we have received from Jewish allies and marchers who are as invested in liberation as we are.

The threats that have been made to Chicago Dyke March and its organizers by Zionists worldwide does not even compare to the violence that Palestinians endure on a daily basis while living under Israeli military rule in the name of Zionism. Palestine is being occupied by Israeli military forces, and at the time of writing, Gaza is currently being bombed. This is what we as a collective are most concerned with. Palestinians deserve to live free from violence, and Dyke March will continue to fight for Palestinians alongside all other oppressed communities around the world.

Link: http://bit.ly/2seNLGP

To the editor:

Today’s story filled me with fury. I was one of those who organized the first gay protest march in 1969, exactly one month after Stonewall. Immediately after that, we formed the Gay Liberation Front. I have attended marches year after year, and watched gay people carry flags of all nations. No one was excluded.

This year the Chicago Dyke March, which bills itself as being “inclusive,” removed three Jews who were carrying rainbow flags printed with the Star of David. One woman states that she was told to leave because her flag was a trigger to people who found it offensive. The organizers said that the flag made people feel “unsafe.” What kind of insanity is this, that a handful of Jews expressing pride in both their cultural heritage and their gayness are such a threat? Were they also carrying AR-15s?

For the historically illiterate, the Star of David did not originate with the modern state of Israel. It was first seen on a 3rd or 4th Century synagogue in Galilee. Its use as a symbol of Judaism became widespread in the Middle Ages. Including it on a rainbow flag says nothing one way or another about Zionism. And if someone carrying that flag says she supports the survival of the state of Israel, how is that a threat? Are the pro-Palestinian marchers so timid, so unsure of their beliefs, that they can’t even stand the presence of someone who thinks differently?

This incident doesn’t just “veer down a dangerous path toward antisemitism.” It is antisemitism, pure and simple. And by no coincidence it comes at a time when anti-Jewish, anti-Islamic, and racist hate crimes have risen dramatically.

Martha Shelley
Gay Liberation Front-New York, 1969

To the editor:

I have read Martha Shelley’s letter concerning the dyke march, and as a longtime gay activist and journalist, I wish to clearly state my resounding approval of every single word of Martha’s letter. In the name of everything I have struggled for all my life as an anti-war, anti-racist and freedom-loving gay activist, I reject the repressive anti-Semitic and anti-democratic stance taken by those who expelled the Jewish pride marchers because of their flag and their opinions about Israel.

Allen Young
Royalston, Massachusetts

Statement from Jewish Voices for Peace

As a Jewish organization dedicated to justice for Palestinians and opposition to all forms of bigotry, including antisemitism, Jewish Voice for Peace-Chicago affirms our support for the Chicago Dyke March Collective, a powerful force for justice and queer and trans liberation in our city. While we also hear those who are concerned at the perception that Jewish participants were singled out at the march, we ask that everyone reflect on how events actually unfolded, how Israel has appropriated Jewish identity and symbols, and how that impacts our movement spaces.

On Saturday at the Chicago Dyke March, a small number of members and staff of A Wider Bridge challenged the inclusion of Palestinian human rights as an issue supported by Chicago Dyke March. A Wider Bridge has the explicit purpose of building a movement of pro-Israel LGBTQ people and allies.” “Pro-Israel,” for a Wider Bridge, has included organizing war rallies cheering on the Israeli military during the massacre of civilians in Gaza in August 2014 and partnering with Israeli consulates in the U.S. in organizing pinkwashing propaganda tours.

The A Wider Bridge contingent loudly encouraged fellow participants to erase mentions of Palestine during solidarity chants. When Palestinian attendees approached them, they became hostile while expressing explicit support for Zionism, which was one of the ideologies that march organizers had disavowed because it has led to decades of displacement and violence against Palestinians. After a two hour conversation with organizers and other members, the attendees were asked to leave for not respecting the community norms, including opposition to all forms of racism and violence. One of the people asked to leave was Laurel Grauer, Midwest Manager from A Wider Bridge (AWB), who held a rainbow flag with a blue Star of David identical in color, size and placement to the one on the Israeli flag.

Many other Jews, including members of Jewish Voice for Peace-Chicago, were present at Dyke March wearing Jewish symbols, including Stars of David, t-shirts with Hebrew, kippot, and sashes with Yiddish script, and none of them were asked to leave the event, interrogated about their politics, or were the target of any complaints because of their visible Jewish presence.

The Star of David is a Jewish symbol not inherently connected to the State of Israel. Since much...
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of the media coverage has centered on whether Palestinians can justifiably feel unsafe around a blue Star of David in the center of a flag, we believe it is worth remembering that in the West Bank, Israeli flags bearing a blue Star of David fly above military installations and settlements. Stars of David are painted onto Palestinian homes to intimidate people, near Hebrew graffiti calling for “Death to Arabs.” Palestinian homes are demolished and replaced by Jewish homes flying the Star of David on an Israeli flag.

While for many this incident may have evoked fears engrained in our collective memory of instances in which Jews have been singled out, we believe this incident is a sad reminder of the destructive impact of the State of Israel’s appropriation of Jewish symbols and identity.

As Jewish Voice for Peace-Chicago, we share the Chicago Dyke March Collective’s opposition to state violence, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-Black, anti-immigrant, anti-queer and trans, anti-woman and anti-Person of Color bigotry. As a Jewish organization committed to justice and equality for Palestinians, we invite everybody to work with us in opposing the State of Israel’s use of Jewish identity, trauma and symbols in its oppression of Palestinians.

To the editor:
I could not believe it so I read as much as I could. I called the editor of the Windy City Times to verify a quote by Dyke March organizers. There is no justification for the behavior of organizers at the Dyke March in Chicago.

The Middle East problems will not be solved by condemning and banning the Star of David from your march, but you have succeeded in establishing a precedent for your historically supportive organization as a safe haven for hateful rhetoric aimed at condemning all Jewish members of the LGBTQ community who believe in the historic necessity of a Jewish state.

Saying that you are a Zionist is not a statement of support for the current Israeli government. It is a belief in the State of Israel. How convenient that someone born after the Holocaust can make a statement condemning the existence of a state that was conceived for victims of hate and violence. Refugees who were refused a safe haven found refuge in the State of Israel and they still do. Exactly which refugees do you support? Who do you like enough?

Those who march with a Palestinian flag are not questioned as to the current Palestinian government views. The elimination of Jews. Not just the elimination of the State of Israel, but the eradication of the Jewish people. You can get behind that? That’s just fine with you?

As for the Jewish members of Dyke March Chicago, do you practice your religion or do you just celebrate with lox, bagels and the NYTimes on Sunday mornings? Cowards! You really thought it was justified to condemn and suppress someone carrying a rainbow flag with the Star of David because it looks like the flag of Israel?

Oppression by the oppressed. Congratulations, you’ve made it to the level of oppressor. DykeMarchChicago, perhaps your statement should read, “Dyke March Chicago you can march with us only if WE respect your right to self-determination.” You are no better than the St. Patrick’s Day parades who banned openly gay groups.

This last action shows you have become an organization of short-sighted, close-minded, narrow-minded hypocrites and you dishonor the very freedom that gives you the right to march.

Cara Meiselman
Chicago

To the editor:
As one of the original marchers in New York’s 1970 “Gay Parade,” as well as someone born into a Jewish family, I’m dismayed by the Chicago Dyke March’s rejection of three people who carried rainbow flags with Jewish stars on them. First of all, the allegation that people carried Israeli flags superimposed over the rainbow flag is, judging from the photo I’ve seen, preposterous. Secondly, even if they did, people from other faiths routinely carry rainbow flags that include symbols of their religious affiliations. I find it hard to believe that there was anything other than a strong undercurrent of anti-semitism at work here.

There is nothing inherently Zionist about being gay and Jewish. One can simultaneously support the existence of a Jewish state, reject the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians, and support a negotiated two-state solution. Even if the flag holders were Zionists, so what? A movement that keeps on adding letters of inclusion to its identity—LGBTQIA—has all of a sudden declared that Zionists need not apply?

The leaders of the Chicago Dyke March seem to want some kind of anti-Zionist loyalty oath from participants. We won’t carry American flags, we won’t carry flags with six-pointed stars on them—we will only carry what is considered politically correct at this particular moment in history. That a movement that prides itself on inclusion, and that began by people fighting back, has turned on some of its own because they “trigger” strong emotions is intolerable, and must never happen again.

Jason Victor Serinus
founder, New Haven Gay Liberation Front; member, New York Gay Liberation Front, Port Townsend, WA

To the editor:
The recent events are very unfortunate (“Jewish pride flags banned,” June 24 Windy City Times). One obvious point is that the Star of David on a rainbow flag represents Jewish LGBT people, not the policies of Israel. The exclusion practiced by the Chicago Dyke March organizers is wrong. But given what happened at the Chicago Dyke March and the organizers’ statement, it seems important to address widespread misunderstanding in our LGBT activist community about what Zionism is and what kind of country Israel is.

The Chicago Dyke March statement expresses concern for refugees today. They should also be concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the Jewish refugees and their descendants who left their homelands in Europe and the Arab and Muslim world for Israel in the late 19th and 20th centuries. For Jewish refugees from Russia, Poland, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere who left under duress or were expelled from their
To the editor:

I am writing this letter to the Editor in response to the current online issue of the Windy City Times concerning the incident that occurred at the “Dyke March” on June 24 the day before Chicago’s Pride Parade. It was reported in this article that members of the Jewish community were ejected from the march for showing their pride by integrating the Israeli flag with the rainbow colors. The claim of the Dyke March leadership was the Jewish participants were engaged in pinkwashing, a term used by march leadership to expose hypocrisy.

At the outset let me say as a person of faith I believe in the just aspirations of both the Palestinian people and the Jewish people, though communities are engaged in a just struggle for human rights. Both peoples suffer greatly in the Middle East. In my opinion: the incident was an example of how well intentioned people can get it wrong.

However, I believe this could be an opportunity to engage in bridge building rather than political extremist knee-jerk reactions. It reminds me of the over reaction of Ferguson Police Department. I appeal to the Dyke March leadership to remember its roots of inclusiveness, and use this as an opportunity to call for dialog between the Christian, Jewish and Moslem members of our community. It does not serve the human rights agenda of either of these communities to pit Palestinian rights against gay rights.

Joe Murray, Executive Director, Rainbow Sash Movement (LGBTQ Roman Catholics)

To the editor:

It’s a sad irony to read that the Dyke March, an event originally established to create a safe place for lesbians to celebrate Pride, recently prevented the participation of Jewish lesbians doing nothing more than expressing pride in who they are. Is that how far we have (not) come? I thought that was the point. When did I miss the part when Jewish flags became “triggers” and symbols that make “people feel unsafe.” Warnings about veering “down a dangerous path toward anti-Semitism” have arrived too late. We’re there.

Separatism has always been a dangerous concept because it encourages just that; rather than celebrating who we are in common, separatism does nothing more than to divide us into smaller and smaller parts. Are we not seeing enough of that on a daily basis from the Trump Administration? Removing Jewish lesbians from a march sounds more like a strategy pulled from the Breitbart playbook than anything I would expect to see happening in Chicago.

So, let’s forget some of our own history here in Chicago. As one of the people who spearheaded the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance in the late 1980s, I will never forget the people and organizations that stood at our side during the “early days.” To demonstrate support for the ordinance, we sent out letters to over 100 community leaders and organizations asking for their public endorsements of the ordinance. The first two letters we received back were from Jewish organizations. Many more arrived in the following days. Jewish community organizations and leaders have stood by us from day one. Further, the Jewish community has not only been our longtime ally, but is also part of our collective community.

I recommend that the leaders of the Dyke March take some time to review its mission. Unless their actions change in the future, it may be time to disband.

In the meantime, I look forward to celebrating the faith and pride of the Jewish community on Pride Day, 2018, where everyone is welcome.

Laurie J. Dittman
Uptown

Personal account from Facebook:

Yesterday I was removed from the Chicago Dyke March. I am so upset that I’m no longer upset, so here is a faithful narrative of every event.

I wanted to be in public as a gay Jew of Persian and German heritage. Nothing more, nothing less. So I made a shirt that said “Proud Jewish Dyke” and hoisted a big Jewish Pride flag—a rainbow flag with a Star of David in the center, the centuries-old symbol of the Jewish people. I snapped a picture before the March and in retrospect my happy, proud smile breaks my heart.

I knew the March was a politically fraught atmosphere, so I went in very carefully. I ignored people side-eyeing me. I stayed away from Palestinian flags and Palestinian chants. I actively walked away from people who directly tried to instigate conflict. I thought maybe if I played by their rules, I could just be Jewish in public.

No such luck. During the picnic in the park, organizers in their official t-shirts began whispering and pointing at me and soon, a delegation came over, announcing they’d be sent by the organizers. They told me my choices were to roll up my Jewish Pride flag or leave. The Star of David makes it look too much like the Israeli flag, they said, and it triggers people and makes them feel unsafe. This was their complaint.

I tried to explain—no, no! It’s the ubiquitous symbol of Judaism. I just want to be Jewish in public. No luck. So I tried using their language. This is an interpersonal march, I said. This is my intersection. I’m supposed to be able to celebrate it here. No, they said. People feel unsafe. I tried again to explain about the Star of David. I tried again to use their language, to tell them that not being able to be visibly, flagrantly, proud Jewish on my terms makes me feel unsafe. This is what I said.

But it didn’t work. After some fruitless back-and-forth, during which more people joined the organizers’ delegation and used their deeper voices, larger physical size, and greater numbers to insistently talk over my attempts at explanation, at conversation, I recognized a losing battle and left sobbing.

I was thrown out of Dyke March for being Jewish. And yes, there were other Jews there, visible ones even, who weren’t.accomted, who had fun, even! And yes, Israel exists in a complicated way. But in this case, it doesn’t matter what Israel does or doesn’t do. This was about being Jewish in public, and I was thrown out for being Jewish, for being the “wrong” kind of Jew, the kind of Jew who shows up with a big Jewish star on a flag. No matter how much I tried to avoid conflict, to explain. Oh, maybe there was a way I could have stayed, but rolling up my beautiful proud flag for them would have been an even bigger loss.

This was my community, where for four years I have shown up, stood up, and helped out, and I am broken-hearted.

(Do not want this to turn into a debate about Israel and Palestine in the comments. That is not what this is about. This is about being Jewish in public. Also, I have made this post public and do not mind sharing it doing respectfully.)

Ellie Otra
Burlesque breakdown

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

John Nasca likes a challenge.

Earlier this year, the Pride Films and Plays artistic associate designed dozens of glittery costumes for the company’s regional premiere of Priscilla Queen of the Desert: The Musical—all on a very tight budget. For his efforts, Nasca won another costume design Jeff Award to add to his previous one for a Pride Films and Plays revival of Noel Coward’s Design for Living.

Now Nasca is not only tackling the costume designs for Pride Films and Plays’ Chicago premiere of The Nance, he’s also directing Douglas Carter Beane’s historical gay drama. It’s a play that Nasca has wanted to stage since he saw the 2013 world premiere of The Nance on Broadway.

“I thought it would be a great fit for Pride Films and Plays,” Nasca said.

And that’s despite the elaborate turntable sets designed in the original production. Tony Award-winning set designer John Lee Beatty was able to quickly shift between multiple locations of 1937 New York ranging from an Automat restaurant to the backstage areas and proscenium stage of the long-gone Irving Place Theatre.

“The big challenge for us was to translate that into our space,” Nasca said. “And after many hours of discussion the set designer and technical director, we figured out a way to do it all without a revolving stage.”

Nasca also noted that The Nance is actually a musical masquerading as a drama, since it is filled with full-out burlesque comedy songs. So Nasca is very glad to have music director Robert Ollis aboard for the production leading a live five-piece band.

The Nance focuses on the once-thriving burlesque theatrical world known for elaborate female stripteases and sexual innuendo-filled comedy sketches. One of the popular stock character types was known as an effeminate (and thinly veiled homosexual) dandy known as a “nance”—a likely variation on the derogatory gay putdown “Nancy boy.”

“In writing The Nance, Beane copiously drew from author George Chauncey’s thoroughly researched 1994 non-fiction book Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940. Instead of basing The Nance on a historical actor, Beane created a fictional one called Chauncey Miles that was written specifically for Tony Award-winning star Nathan Lane. (Beane also acknowledges the character was named so as a major thank you to George Chauncey and all of the research in his book.)

To play Chauncey Miles, Nasca sought out gay actor Vince Kracht to navigate the role’s drastic shifts between cartoonish comedy on stage to painful personal moments offstage. Unlike Nasca, Kacht did not see The Nance on Broadway. Yet Kacht feels like that’s a good thing because it allows him to build up his take on the character of Chauncey Miles away from the shadow of Nathan Lane’s towering performance.

“It freed me up to do whatever I wanted,” said Kacht, noting that he drew from many influences ranging from the late gay actor/director Charles Nelson Reilly to Bert Lahr’s performance of The Cowardly Lion in The Wizard of Oz. “For the audience, I wanted to kind of bring things that were familiar to them.”

In addition to personal drama between Chauncey Miles and the young gay man he picks up called Ned (Royen Kent), a lot of politics course through The Nance. Chauncey is a staunch Republican, despite the left-leanings of many of his stripper co-stars who seek out help from the actor’s union.

And in the time The Nance is set, the whole network of New York burlesque theaters were under threat. Just ahead of New York’s staging of the 1939 World’s Fair, then-Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia went on a harsh crack down on all kinds of “vice”—particularly targeting the sexual content in burlesque shows.

Nasca says designing the costumes for The Nance is right in his wheelhouse, since he normally loves exploring the fashions of the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s. But he’s also keen for audiences to learn about the historically coded gay city life explored in The Nance.

Nasca said he also wants audiences to look at The Nance in the context of our own times—especially with so many political divisions and opposing views on sexuality.

“In the four years since the play was written, so much has changed politically in this country. At one point, I realized that it was more relevant now,” Nasca said. “Going into rehearsals and exploring the play, I do see that Chauncey really was ahead of his time where he wanted to be himself both onstage and offstage. Although it’s suggested that he get married to one of the burlesque girls, he also refused to do that because he didn’t want to mask who he was.”

Pride Films and Plays’ Chicago premiere of Douglas Carter Beane’s The Nance continues through Sunday, July 30, on The Broadway stage of the Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway St. Tickets are $30-$40; call 800-737-0984 or visit PrideFilmsAndPlays.com.
What is TRUVADA for PrEP?

TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a prescription medicine that is used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1. To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

◆ You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP. You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.

◆ Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected. If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

◆ You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.

◆ You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP:
  • Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months.
  • If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.

◆ To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:
  • Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
  • Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
  • Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
  • Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.

◆ If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

◆ Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection. TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV and stop taking TRUVADA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

◆ Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status. If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

◆ Also take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

◆ Kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA.

◆ Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.

◆ Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turn yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.

◆ Bone problems, including bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

◆ All your health problems. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.

◆ If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA.

◆ If you are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

◆ All the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

◆ If you take certain other medicines with TRUVADA, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include certain medicines to treat hepatitis C (HCV) infection.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.
IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Have you heard about TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The once-daily prescription medicine that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used with safer sex practices.

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex.
- You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

visit start.truvada.com
TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA for PrEP is a prescription medicine used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1.

• To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

• Have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.

• Take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

• Take 1 tablet once a day, every day, not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.

• Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.

• Use TRUVADA for PrEP together with condoms and safer sex practices.

• Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months. You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

• Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection. TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

• Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

• You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.

• You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you think you were exposed to HIV-1 or have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

• If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

• See the “How To Further Reduce Your Risk” section for more information.

YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER WILL NEED TO DO TESTS TO MONITOR YOUR HEALTH BEFORE AND DURING TREATMENT WITH TRUVADA FOR PrEP.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

• Those in the “Most Important Information About TRUVADA For PrEP” section.

• New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.

• Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.

• Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.

• Bone problems.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

GET MORE INFORMATION

• This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV infection.

• Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.

• Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.

• Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.

• Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

• Learn about prevention programs in your area, such as PrEP clinics and other programs that provide education and counseling.

• Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicine(s) that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

GET MORE INFORMATION

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THEATER REVIEW

Hitler on the Roof
Playwright: Rhea Leman
At: Akvavit Theatre at Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice Ave.
Tickets: ChicagoNordic.org; $25.
Runs through: July 9

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Audiences attending Hitler on the Roof are put in the uncomfortable position of deciding whether or not to sing along with Nazis. But that’s just one of many morally questioning oddball moments in American-Danish playwright Rhea Leman’s hectoring 2011 “play for two clowns,” now making its U.S. debut courtesy of Scandinavian playwright-dedicated Akvavit Theatre.

From the start, Leman shows that she’s theatrically willing to play fast and loose with time and history. Hitler on the Roof takes place in an underground bunker where notorious Nazi propagandist Dr. Joseph Goebbels (Amy Gorelow in male drag and white-fright makeup) has been holed up through to today. Yet Goebbels somehow has kept up with pop culture, often breaking out into songs written well after the end of World War II (and his suicide death in 1945).

“Dr. G” (pronounced “gay” in the German alphabet) is often cowering as if under siege—be it from recorded bombing sounds or real-life rumblings of passing trains. Yet he’s also unrepentant in spouting out his party’s intolerant ideals and still very proud at how the German people installed the Nazis into power.

These portions of Hitler on the Roof feel like a performance-art history lesson, with Gorelow being overworked into a state of exhaustion. It could be invaluable for those who don’t know about Goebbels’ role in the Third Reich, but it can be tiring for those who know their World War II history.

The dramatic dynamic changes when controversial filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl (Jay Torrence in female drag and a busted wig) infiltrates the bunker. The artist behind the infamous Nazi propaganda film The Triumph of the Will has arrived on a mission to convince Goebbels to seek forgiveness and express remorse for his actions. Yet Goebbels wants none of it, and starts interrogating Riefenstahl on her motives and whether she truly regrets working with the Nazis.

Co-directed by Kirstin Franklin and Amber Robinson, Hitler on the Roof is oddly both theatrically clever and tiring at the same time—especially for the perspiration-drenched actors. The design elements are all in tune, with set designer Chad Eric Bergman particularly in fine form with his transformative wall of filing cabinets.

With Hitler on the Roof, Leman’s takes lots of comical pot shots at Nazism while also emphasizing that those ideals did not die out in the 20th century. Leman wrote the play in the face of rising Danish nationalism, though it feels very unsettling now considering how much support the current U.S. president received from white nationalists in the last election.

THEATER REVIEW

Going To a Place Where You Already Are
Playwright: Bekah Brunstetter
At: Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
Tickets: $30-$35
Runs through: July 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Rare is the human being who has not grappled with the mystery of death and its aftermath. Cultural speculations on the realms beyond the grave encompass simple regression to the earth (as observed in animals) and regeneration (as observed in plants), as well as elaborate recycling schemes involving transmigration into altered physical states. Christianity, however, promises its believers eternal liberation from corporal restraints within a mystic sanctuary—descriptions of which differ widely, no first-hand witness accounts ever having been reported.

Roberta and Joe have enjoyed 30 years of marriage, comfortable in their atheist rejection of conventional dogma, but attendance at the funerals endemic to their age bracket brings them into ever-increasing proximity with Protestant Christian gospel lore. One day, while undergoing an MRI for what will turn out to be cancer, Roberta has a momentary vision of a boyish concierge offering her entry into a domain he identifies as heaven. This precipitates a crisis of um, faith as Roberta contemplates the possibility of a future bereft of her beloved husband—misgivings shared by her granddaughter Ellie, whose recent love-at-first-sight epiphany also introduces uncertainty over the wisdom of investment in ephemeral joys.

Fiction exploring the boundaries of mortality tends to avoid knotty theological arguments in favor of whimsical fancies cobbled from a medley of spiritual hearsay. Bekah Brunstetter refuses to traffic in harps, wings or angels from Dubuque dancing on pins, though, instead zeroing in on the fundamental question of where we go after we leave here. The answer, it emerges, lies not in any particular sectarian creed, but in each individual’s personal bliss. For Roberta, the paradise awaiting her is a place of favorite smells, sounds, foods—all the ice cream she wants—and eventually Joe, too, once he discovers where to look for her.

Even a cosmological approach as rational and egalitarian as Brunstetter’s could quickly succumb to sticky sentimentality in the wrong hands, but director Matt Hawkins never allows his actors to engage in stereotypical cuddliness, whether of the geriatric, millennial or bisexual varieties.

Kathleen Ruhl and Art Fox anchor an ensemble making the most of Redtwist’s tiny studio space (no easy task when stage furnishings include a laptop screen, a hospital bed and a motorized wheelchair) to invoke a cozy intimacy belying the weighty issues under scrutiny.

THEATER REVIEW

Johnny Johnson
Playwright: Music by Kurt Weill, libretto by Paul Green, adapted by Gerald Frantzen
At: Chicago Folks Operetta at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.
Tickets: $40
Runs through: July 9

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Some experiences cannot be described in words, war being one of them. The difficulty of summarizing so vast and varied a topic accounts for the similarities evident in their documentation, popular motifs generally focusing on assertions that armed conflict is cruel, that warriors suffer and die at the behest of reckless leaders, and that those who survive are shunned by their fellow citizens as reminders of how quickly popular laces can be gullied by flag-waving oratory.

On the centennial of our nation’s entry into World War One, Chicago Folks Operetta felt the time was right to revive this rarely performed 1936 play-with-music—the collaborative effort of Weimer Republic composer-turned-expat refugee Kurt Weill, who arrived in the United States versus brechtian Songsplie to find himself confronted with a Broadway aesthetic based in frothy spectacle hearkening to the Viennese confections of Sigmund Romberg, and playwright Paul Green, whose tales of racial injustice in the antebellum south drew him to the direction of George Cederquist, bel canto ensemble-based Group Theater. Sharing a conviction of music as a tool for social commentary, these two creative minds forged a pacifist parable constructed on both classical and modernist lines.

Such contrasting elements can make for jarring contradictions in 2017, however. Under the direction of George Cederquist, bel canto vocal delivery and instrumental arrangements for an eleven-piece orchestra (whose volume frequently overwhelms singers in the upstage regions of Stage 773’s cavernous Thrust space) are juxtaposed with expressionistic visual images—a psychiatrist wearing a swami’s turban, a nun swathed in voudou-priestess finery and a roomful of generals transformed into carnival clowns by a laughing-gas attack. The score likewise reflects hybrid sensibilities, weaving hints of bugle calls and patriotic hymns into melodies encompassing sentimental ballads, martial anthems and patter songs in praise of tea and psychiatry.

The assembled cast for this museum-piece embraces its generic characters and timeworn text—the latter newly adapted by Gerald Frantzen—with gleeful gusto. At the vanguard is Gabe, the current U.S. president received from white populism and white fright makeup (as observed in animals) and regeneration (as observed in plants), as well as elaborate recycling schemes involving transmigration into altered physical states. Christianity, however, promises its believers eternal liberation from corporal restraints within a mystic sanctuary—descriptions of which differ widely, no first-hand witness accounts ever having been reported.

Roberta and Joe have enjoyed 30 years of marriage, comfortable in their atheist rejection of conventional dogma, but attendance at the funerals endemic to their age bracket brings them into ever-increasing proximity with Protestant Christian gospel lore. One day, while undergoing an MRI for what will turn out to be cancer, Roberta has a momentary vision of a boyish concierge offering her entry into a domain he identifies as heaven. This precipitates a crisis of um, faith as Roberta contemplates the possibility of a future bereft of her beloved husband—misgivings shared by her granddaughter Ellie, whose recent love-at-first-sight epiphany also introduces uncertainty over the wisdom of investment in ephemeral joys.

Fiction exploring the boundaries of mortality tends to avoid knotty theological arguments in favor of whimsical fancies cobbled from a medley of spiritual hearsay. Bekah Brunstetter refuses to traffic in harps, wings or angels from Dubuque dancing on pins, though, instead zeroing in on the fundamental question of where we go after we leave here. The answer, it emerges, lies not in any particular sectarian creed, but in each individual’s personal bliss. For Roberta, the paradise awaiting her is a place of favorite smells, sounds, foods—all the ice cream she wants—and eventually Joe, too, once he discovers where to look for her.

Even a cosmological approach as rational and egalitarian as Brunstetter’s could quickly succumb to sticky sentimentality in the wrong hands, but director Matt Hawkins never allows his actors to engage in stereotypical cuddliness, whether of the geriatric, millennial or bisexual varieties.

Kathleen Ruhl and Art Fox anchor an ensemble making the most of Redtwist’s tiny studio space (no easy task when stage furnishings include a laptop screen, a hospital bed and a motorized wheelchair) to invoke a cozy intimacy belying the weighty issues under scrutiny.

CRITICS’ PICKS

Jacques Brel’s Lonesome Losers of the Night, Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre at No Exit Cafe, through Aug. 6. This collection of ballads by Belgium’s hippest mid-20th century export is less a comprehensive revue than a tone poem. But when the bard outstrips both Aristide Bruant and Leonard Cohen for romantic melancholy, who can resist? MSB

Late Company, Cor Theatre at Pride Arts Center, through July 16. Everybody talks about gay bullying and teen suicide nowadays, but Jordan Tannahill’s play avoids easy blame-games to explore why solutions remain elusive. MSB

Paradise Blue, TimeLine Theatre, through July 23. Jazz man Blue is squeezed between personal demons and urban renewal in 1949 Detroit, and makes all the wrong choices. This atmospheric play has strong characters and dialog but weak structure. Powerful acting carries it, along with Orbert Davis’ original jazz score. JA

Pilgrims, Gift Theatre, through July 30. Claire Kiechel’s sci-fi drama keeps you guessing as a laconic soldier and a chubby young woman are forced to share a spaceship cabin with a comically perky robot stewardess. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
THEATER REVIEW

Ah, Wilderness!

Playwright: Eugene O’Neill
At: Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.
Tickets: 312-443-3800; GoodmannTheatre.org; $20-$75
Runs through: July 23

BY JONATHAN AABARANIZ

Ah, Wilderness! is a classic sentimental comedy given a sweetheart of a production by director Steve Scott.

It’s a summertime treat from its airy beachfront setting (Todd Rosenthal) and warm-hued lighting (Aaron Spivey), to its comfy costumes (Amy Clark), to its engaging performances generating appreciative laughter. It’s one of three terrific shows about life in early 20th-century America—Parade (Writers Theatre through July 15), set in 1913 Atlanta; Ragtime running concurrently—Parade (Writers Theatre through July 22), set in New York about 1912; and Ah, Wilderness!, set in 1906 New London, Connecticut. Parade and Ragtime are large-scale dramatic musicals about tumultuous social forces shaping 20th-century America, while Ah, Wilderness! celebrates the enduring values of close-knit family life. It’s a hat trick not to be missed, a potent trio about times imagined to be simpler and easier.

Ah, Wilderness! is the most fantastic (as in “fantasy”) of the three as it comes from Nobel Prize laureate Eugene O’Neill (1888-1953), that with a functional, pillar-of-the-community family headed by well-matched, warm-hearted and insightful parents—nearly the opposite of his actual family. Set on July 4, 1906, the play revolves around Richard Miller (Niall Cunningham) and his dad, Nat Miller (Randall Newcombe). Richard, representing O’Neill himself, is 17 and fancies himself a poet and socialist. In due course, Richard gets drunk for the first time, is really kissed for the first time and woos his high school sweetheart as his occasionally rummoxed father guides him with tolerance and small-town wisdom, assisted by wife Essie Miller (Ora Jones). It could be a sitcom pilot if O’Neill didn’t elevate the familiar family circle with wit and intelligence, and take plenty of time to establish the characters. The play ends with a scene so lovingly tender it may bring tears to your eyes.

Several of the actors—but not all—sound miked, which is disconcerting at first but quickly fades as the play unfolds with perfect charm and ease. The pace is leisurely but never slow, moving along with judicious cuts and on-the-nose comic timing. Each chief character has a big moment or two, with famous highlights being Uncle Sid’s (Larry Bates) Act I drunk scene during a family lobster dinner, and Nat’s facts-of-life talk with Richard late in the play. You’ll like these people—even the surly bartender (Joe Dempsey) and the prostitute (Amanda Drinkall). (Didn’t I mention them?) You’ll like this play, and you’ll like this production. It’s “paradise enow,” as stated in The Rubiyat, from which the play takes its title.

BOOK REVIEW

The Harmony of Parts

By John Garabedian, with Ian Aldrich
$29.95; Orange Frazer Press; 411 pages

REVIEW BY LIZ BAUDLER

John Garabedian’s world is a world of technology and song, of competition and fame. It’s the world of Top 40 radio, a world most of us never get to see and Garabedian entered in high school. An early obsessive who bugged his parents for a tape recorder in elementary school, as a teenager Garabedian made a spoof recording of his favorite radio show and gave it to the host. This landed him his first job in radio, and he’s remained there: as DJ, engineer and station owner, ever since. The Harmony of Parts is his story of how he succeeded in radio, constantly adapting to a shifting landscape, and putting him in contact with generations of music fans and stars from Aerosmith to Katy Perry.

Garabedian also had a secret, a secret he was hiding pretty well until a pretty boy named Joe came along. He was bisexual. This revelation got him fired from his first DJ gig—he eventually got the job back years later, but it left him with the idea that openness was potentially scary. Throughout the next few decades, Garabedian constantly balanced escalating work with relationships, though he was often looking for a new job more than a new partner.

Life in radio, at least the way Garabedian lived it, seemed like constant contest of breaking stories and finding new music and new projects to pursue. Readers might find themselves rooting for Garabedian’s stations and relationships to succeed. He clearly had an eye for younger men, at one point falling for a 16-year-old, but also respected their personhood and helped them grow professionally and personally through including them in his radio ventures.

Toward the end the narrative slightly loses steam as Garabedian focuses on his current project, Open House Party. It’s interesting to hear about his championing of Lady Gaga, whose first version of “Poker Face” apparently sounded a little obscene on the radio waves so Garabedian suggested cleaning up the consonants, but it’s more snippets than scene.

The Harmony of Parts is a unique look at a niche world through someone attuned to every aspect of it. It’s worth a read for those who know Garabedian’s radio work and those who hadn’t considered how radio works, and how sexuality can be a burden in any profession.

Studio responsibility index released

GLAAD has released its fifth annual Studio Responsibility Index—a report that maps the quantity, quality and diversity of LGBTQ people in films released by the seven largest motion picture studios and their subsidiaries during the 2016 calendar year.

GLAAD found that, of the 125 releases from major studios in 2016, only 23 of them (18.4 percent) included characters identified as LGBTQ.

Transgender representation remained very low, with only one transgender character counted (the same number as the 2015 report) and, once again, the character was used a punchline in Zoolander 2.

GLAAD also found that racial diversity among LGBTQ characters in film again dropped drastically year over year. In 2016, only 20 percent of LGBTQ characters were people of color, compared to 25.5 percent in 2015 and 32.1 percent in 2014.

The full index is at https://www.glaad.org/sri/2017.

‘Golden Girls’ now through Aug. 26

Due to popular demand, Hell in a Handbag Productions’ campy world premiere The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes is adding six additional weeks of performances, extending through Aug. 26 at Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St.

The production stars David Cerda (who wrote it as well), AJ Wright, Ed Jones and Adrian Hadlock. Shade Murray directs.

For tickets, visit HandbagProductions.org or call 800-838-3006.
Alphawood Gallery debuts internment exhibition

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Seventy-five years ago President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This order set in motion the forced removal and internment, without due process, of over 120,000 citizens and legal residents of Japanese ancestry living on or near the west coast during World War II.

For its first original exhibition Alphawood Gallery, in partnership with the Japanese-American Service Committee (JASC), debuted Then They Came for Me: Incarceration of Japanese-Americans during WWII and the Demise of Civil Liberties at a June 28 opening reception.

The event featured keynote addresses by Japanese-American Citizens League Program Coordinator Rebecca Ozaki and Exhibition Curatorial Committee member and Fermallogic, Inc. COO Roy Wesley.

Alphawood Foundation Executive Director James McDonough kicked off the event by noting the Art AIDS America exhibit that was recently on display at the gallery.

“We wanted to continue telling important stories like that in this space,” said McDonough. “We thought that this [Japanese-American incarceration] story was very important to tell especially at this moment in our country’s history.”

Chicago Commission on Human Relations Commissioner Mona Noriega read a statement from Mayor Rahm Emanuel who was unable to attend. In Emanuel’s statement he noted the importance of remembering what happened to Japanese-Americans so it does not happen again.

Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Commissioner Mark Kelly noted that this exhibit is a reminder to everyone how easy it is to demonize a group of people due to fear and ignorance.

JASC CEO Mike Takada echoed the others about how timely the exhibit is in this current political climate. He also talked about the JASC’s involvement with the exhibit.

Wesley (who spent the first two years of his life incarcerated with his family at Minidoka War Relocation Center in the Snake River Plain 17 miles northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho) spoke about his family’s immigration story from Japan to Portland, Oregon.

“My experience as a third generation Japanese-American, or sansei, is typical of many Japanese-Americans of my time,” said Wesley. “My family immigration histories are also pretty typical of Japanese-Americans who came to America around the turn-of-the-century [in 1900].”

Wesley noted that all of his grandparents built lives rooted in American ideals that were passed along to their children, including his parents. He explained that his family’s way of life was upended when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

“Dad was a 24-year-old president of the Portland Japanese American Citizens League (JACL),” said Wesley. “JACL was fiercely patriotic then as it is today. He rebutted false accusations and rumors against the Japanese-Americans reported in the Oregon Journal and the Oregonian. He was interviewed by the newspapers and he also testified to the Tolan Committee on behalf of the community to prevent incarceration.

“Dad served on the Portland auxiliary fire department and the police department. He trained and marched with the police. He guarded bridges in the middle of the night in case there was an enemy invasion. It’s amazing that he was able to do that in spite of the hysteria against Japanese-American citizens at the time. He also assisted the FBI in identifying Japanese Issei loyalists. He saw this as his patriotic duty.”

Wesley noted that everything his father did was in vain because of the prejudice, hate and discrimination against Japanese Americans at the time.

“I was born on May 5, 1942—the last day we were ordered to go to the Portland Assembly Center,” said Wesley. “Dad had to apply to the War Relocation Authority for an exemption because of my birth. Mom and I had three days at the Good Samaritan hospital before being taken into the Portland assembly center ... I was born and immediately became a suspect enemy alien capable of sabotage and had to be locked up behind barbed wire and guarded by rifle toting soldiers in case I tried to escape.”

Wesley explained that his father was able to leave the camp to go to college (he did this even though he already had his Doctor of Optometry degree). He said his dad chose Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana and that is when he changed the family name from Uyesugi to Wesley after the founder of the Methodist church. Wesley noted that his parents, especially his mother, never recovered from their time in the incarceration camp.

“Remember James Baldwin’s words from I Am Not Your Negro,” said Wesley. “History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history. If we pretend otherwise, we literally are criminals.”

Ozaki read her late grandfather’s (Sam Ozaki) 1981 Redress testimony where he recounted his time at the Jerome War Relocation Center in southeastern Arkansas beginning when he was 17 years old.

“My grandpa was the first Asian American principal in Chicago, a beloved community activist and my best friend and hero,” said Ozaki. “He was one of the only people I ever felt truly listened to me. He made a decision to speak out against the injustice that was done to him and the injustice that continues to target communities of color and marginalized groups in this country.”

Ozaki noted that because her grandfather stood up and spoke about his story in 1981 and later at a Day of Remembrance event commemorating the signing of Executive Order 9066 shortly after 9/11 she was able to understand what resistance means.

When her grandfather said “We will never let it happen again” at the commemoration event she said those words became ingrained in her mind.

“They have come to guide my own path as an aspiring organizer and advocate,” said Ozaki. “More recently I remember my feeling of helplessness as a string of Executive Orders were released ... That the unconstitutional Muslim ban spews from the same hate and fear politics as my family’s history of incarceration. And the mass incarceration and brutality against Black bodies also parallel my family’s story ... I had to find my place in this movement ... We need to remember that we are part of a collective resistance and so many of us have the same vision of an equitable future ... My act of resistance is sharing my family’s story of incarceration ... I urge you to find yours.”

Among the over 200 attendees were two survivors of the incarceration camps—Yuki Hiyama and Chicago Japanese-American Historical Society President Jean Mishima.

Hiyama (who was taken with her family when she was 13 years old to Manzanar War Relocation Center 30 miles southeast of Phoenix, Arizona) said at the time she did not realize they were incarcerated but as an adult she learned the truth. She explained that they got permission to leave the camp in 1944 when her mom got a job in Chicago. Mishima noted that Chicago was one of the welcoming cities for Japanese-Americans during World War II.


The exhibit AlphawoodGallery.org/exhibition/ runs from June 29 to Nov. 19. Admission is free.
Clinton Kelly talks love and ‘Hate’

BY OWEN KEEHNE

The Clinton Kelly memoir I Hate Everyone, Except You has just come out in paperback. In the book, the star of What Not To Wear and The Chew talks about growing up gay, his search for love and acceptance, co-star Stacy London, husband Damon and much more.

**Windy City Times:** How did you come up with the title for the book?

Clinton Kelly: I wanted to encapsulate my mood in one sentence, but in a joking way. When things aren’t going your way and you say, “I have everyone,” but then realize you are with a friend or your husband so you add, “except you, of course.” I wanted that to convey the tone of the book. I don’t really hate anybody. It’s very tongue in cheek.

**WCT:** And it establishes a sort of confidentiality with the reader too. What is the biggest misconception people have about you?

CK: That I care what they’re wearing, because the truth of the matter is, I don’t. You should care what you’re wearing, not me. People imagine I spend my time in the streets of NYC commenting on women’s shoes and things. That was a TV show I was paid to do that. That’s not who I am.

**WCT:** Going along with that, in What Not to Wear, you and Stacy London did fashion makeovers on [more than] 300 women. If you did the same thing with gay men, what do you imagine would be the most common fashion misstep you would find?

CK: This is tricky because I don’t really pay attention. The one criticism I might have is that it seems a little uniform at times. Recently, I was in West Hollywood and went to get coffee and every gay guy in the place was wearing a tropical shirt, short shorts, and pool slides. I didn’t have a problem with the look, but with the lack of variety. The other thing that makes this tricky is I can’t tell who’s gay and who’s not anymore—not by the way they dress. I like the fact that so many heterosexual men are starting to embrace fashion.

**WCT:** With What Not to Wear and the cooking show The Chew, you’ve become a highly visible gay man. What is the biggest surprise you’ve found about being so recognizable?

CK: It’s both wonderful and terrible. I’ve had women cry their eyes out telling me how I’ve changed their lives for the better. Raising the self-esteem of so many women was never something I set out to do and I’m grateful for having a positive impact in the world in that way. The bad part of fame is that I might wake up tomorrow to an email that says I’m going to burn in hell because I’m a fag, or I’m not funny and too ugly to be on television. People can be so mean sometimes. Anybody who puts themselves out there can be the target of the same sort of vitriol. You don’t have to be famous. That’s just a downside of living in today’s society.

**WCT:** Congratulations on winning an Emmy Award for The Chew. Where do you keep it?

CK: I keep it in the guest bathroom. I felt like anywhere else would be too showy and a closet seemed disrespectful to the Emmy. The guest bathroom works. I feel like my guests are more impressed by it that I am.

**WCT:** In I Hate Everyone, Except You, you share several fish-out-of-water anecdotes about growing up gay on Long Island. Have they come to embrace your success?

CK: Yes. I went to my 25th high-school reunion a few years ago and people were just great. I thought, “Wow, so many of you were real d**ks** back in the day and now we’re posing for photos together.” I don’t know if that’s being on TV or people just growing up and stop being idiots, at least some of them. The reunion was really important for me because back in high school all I could think was, “I’m going to show them someday.”

**WCT:** In your book you mention not being a fan of Paula Deen. What cooking personalities who’ve appeared on your show have impressed you the most?

CK: Most cooking personalities don’t impress me that much, except for Ina Garten. She is everything you’d dream she would be. After she was on The Chew a few times, we struck up a casual friendship. This past Christmas season my husband and I went to Paris and we got together with Ina for lunch. She was so incredibly charming and the next day took us to her favorite bakery, and her favorite cheese shop and bought us ice cream. As we were eating the ice cream I turned to Damon and said, “Can you believe we’re hanging out with Ina Garten?”

**WCT:** What food would be impossible for you to live without?

CK: I don’t think I could live without cheese. And wine. And really good coffee.

**WCT:** Reading your book I was really impressed by your flow from one career path to another—freelance writer, editor, What Not To Wear, The Chew, writing scripts, etc. Any idea as to your future career path?

CK: I have a script deal in the works, but nothing has been signed. I’ve had a career philosophy from the beginning that I am only going to take a job if I love it, if I think it can be fun, or if I think I can learn something from it. When it stops being fun or I stop learning, it’s time to move on. Then I put it out to the universe to send me another opportunity and if something comes along that looks right, I’ll take it. That philosophy has worked for me. I believe if you’re doing something you love, your energy and enthusiasm gets rewarded.

**WCT:** Chicagoans will be interested to know you worked at Cornelilia’s Restaurant on Cornelia and Halsted in 1992 when you were at Northwestern for journalism. What was your favorite Chicago thing to do?

CK: I loved show tunes at Sidetrack. It was so much fun. It always felt like a unified group of people having a great time. I used to love to go line-dancing there as well. I also went to Roscoe’s a lot.

**WCT:** Congratulations on your 2009 marriage to Damon and your happy home in Connecticut. What’s your secret to a good relationship?

CK: Damon is a psychologist, so all we do is...
Blake Hammond: ‘Something’ to talk about

By Jerry Nunn

Set in 1959, the hilarious show Something Rotten! is the story of two brothers named Nick and Nigel Bottom living in the Renaissance period. They are competing with William Shakespeare to find success in the theater world.

After a series of mishaps and crazy situations, a production is brought to life called Something Rotten! Be prepared for lots of laughs and a possible b healing in the process for this 10-time Tony-nominated show.

This year, a national tour of Something Rotten! was launched, bringing Blake Hammond back in Chicago, where he has spent time. Over his career he has played many roles, such as Ernie in Sister Act, Chadwick in Elf, Braithwaite in Billy Elliot and Pumbaa in The Lion King.

Windy City Times: Hi, Blake. Where are you from?

Blake Hammond: I grew up in Texas—a small town called Glen Rose. It has about 1,800 people living there and [is] about an hour from Fort Worth and Dallas.

I went to school at University of Texas at Austin, where I studied theater. Afterward, I went to New York for two years, then Chicago for seven years.

WCT: Where did you perform in Chicago?

BH: I did a lot of musical theater. I was in Oak Brook and Lincolnshire. Back then there was Candlelight Playhouse, Drury Lane South and Halsted Street Company.

The last couple of years I was there, I worked on Donny Osmond’s Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat production. I went on tour with it for a year. That motivated me to move back to New York because I had money to just work as an actor. It worked out well!

WCT: Do you have a favorite musical?

BH: I adore Hairspray. It is one of the best books ever and I love the songs.

My favorite dramatic one is Man of La Mancha. It tugs at my heart. I love the play within the play. As an actor it is fun to play a prisoner then transform into a padre.

WCT: How was dressing in drag to play Edna in Hairspray?

BH: [Laughs] Something Rotten! We don’t have lots of free time on these tours. I am proud on stage every day.

Unless I happen to be in a city, like for When Pigs Fly when I was in LA. Years ago we were in the Pride parade. It is hard to do on the road. There is not necessarily a Pride parade in every city that you go to.

WCT: Where are you on the tour currently?

BH: I am in Dallas, so I am home. I have been in Texas for a month. It has been nice to stay with family and have them all see the show.

WCT: Talk about Something Rotten!

BH: It is brand new for each city, because it has never been on tour before. It is a completely new musical that people are not usually familiar with. I love that about it. It is not based on previous story like movies, or a book. It comes out of two brother’s minds and is about two brothers.

It is a love letter to musical theater in a way. It touches on all the different musicals that have happened over history. There are so many references in the show. If you love musical theater you will have a lot of laughs just with that alone.

There is also the Shakespeare component. It is set in 1590s where he is the bees knees. He’s sort of like a rock star. I think it is fun for people that love or hate Shakespeare. He is made fun of so it works on both levels.

What I find is that no matter what city we go to the audiences just come out in droves and just loved it. People say they didn’t know what to expect, but are surprised how funny it is. It is a great night at the theater. People leave smiling from ear to ear.

WCT: Talk about your character, Nostradamus.

BH: He is a soothsayer. He predicts the future. I love him. I play him with a lot of confidence.

I think you would have to be confident to take money to tell the future. He is not that good at it. He sees things that are true, but he doesn’t know how to put them into context. I think that is where a lot of the comedy comes into this character—things that shouldn’t go together go together, but somehow he sees that.

WCT: There are a lot of gay jokes?

BH: Absolutely. There is a Puritan who is the villain, if there is one of the piece. He is against theater. He has a daughter who falls in love with one of the Bottom brothers. The Puritan is about as prissy as they come.

There are also some yummy men in the show. Shakespeare has some back up boys that wear black leather with codpieces. The four of them are H-O-T. That is always fun to watch for me!

WCT: Talk about your recent show Living on Love.

BH: It didn’t last for very long, which was a shame. They didn’t know how to market it I think. Renee Fleming, the opera star, was in this play. They had written it for her and worked with her on developing it. There were six of us in the play. We did it at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. It was picked up for the Broadway run. It was a limited run to begin with, but opened the same time Something Rotten! opened. It has gotten really competitive in New York.

I remember when there were only a few shows opening at a time with empty seats, now shows are waiting to get in. There are like 18 new musicals on Broadway in a season. It is incredible.

I had a great time doing that play. It was fun to be in an original Broadway play since I have done so many musicals in my career.

WCT: I met Renee recently and she was very nice.

BH: She is a sweetheart. I remember in one rehearsal that she asked the cast if we had any tricks for learning our lines. I thought, “You speak seven languages and can sing any opera you can name, so I think you will be okay learning some words!”

WCT: How was the Addams Family experience?

BH: That is one of my favorite roles. Not the greatest show I have been in, though they re-wrote it for the tour, and was improved hugely from the Broadway production.

I loved playing Fester Addams. I played him like a 40-year-old man with the mind of a 10-year-old boy. He is like a child. When they re-wrote the script they made him more of a narrator. It is a fun experience as an actor to step forward and break the wall to talk to the people sitting there. I liked to stand in front of the curtain and look the audience in the eye. That doesn’t happen a lot in theater.

WCT: What are you doing after the tour ends?

BH: It goes on until May 2018. I am signed until January. Who knows what will happen after that. I would love a little time off, but I have enjoyed touring though. I like bringing these great shows to people that would not see them otherwise.

Something Rotten! comes to Chicago July 11-23 at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. Call 800-775-2000 or visit BroadwayInChicago.com for tickets.

Kelly from page 22

Communicate! But in all seriousness, that is so important because you can’t expect other people to read your mind. I think getting married at an older age helps. Know what you don’t want in a relationship and make mistakes, so you can recognize a good guy when you find one. Also, you cannot expect any person to complete you. That’s why you need friends and family. You can’t get mad at your spouse for not being everything you need.

WCT: What individual has been your most surprising inspiration?

CK: Mr. Rogers. There was something about him that when I watched him as a kid that affected my entire life. He was calm and fastidious and creative. I liked his overall sense of life—be calm, be nice, take your time and do things right.

WCT: What do you want readers of I Hate Everyone, Except You to come away knowing about Clinton Kelly?

CK: I want to connect with the readers I can connect with and if you don’t connect with me, that’s fine too. I’m kind of a nice guy who’s done some stupid things in life and made his career in television. Aside from that I’m a normal human being who has lived a fun life.
Roxane Gay talks ‘Hunger’ at CHF

BY NINA MATTI

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) welcomed New York Times best-selling author Roxane Gay for a book reading and question and answer session on June 19 at the Francis W. Parker School. The sold-out event focused on Gay’s recently released memoir Hunger.

Hunger, Gay said, is “a memoir of [her] body.” In it, she explores trauma and fatness and their interactions with sexuality, gender, race and body image.

Although the evening’s subject matter was rather serious, Gay’s wit and sarcasm kept the audience laughing as she read two sections of the memoir and then fielded questions from the crowd of about 1,100. People asked about everything from not conforming to social norms to her favorite franchise of The Real Housewives—which, for the record, is Atlanta.

Several audience members lauded Gay for discussing body image, fatness and sexual violence so openly and noted the courage that she must have to be so vulnerable in her writing. “I don’t think I had the courage but I wrote the book anyway,” Gay said in response. “If I sat around waiting for courage, I wouldn’t do anything. I decided to write this book because I so much did not want to write it. I was so scared of it.”

Gay overcame her fear and, she said, the writing process forced her to confront her body and her sexual assault in a way she hadn’t before.

She encouraged the audience to pursue change, but to “pace yourself. Take time to care for yourself, and I don’t mean in a corporate ‘self care’ way,” she said. “You need to have something for yourself and time off when you need it.”

She said that she “has no idea how [she’s] doing it” herself though. She credits her supportive family, especially her “super cute” five-year-old Black woman, for being her safety net, but she also said that meeting people that she impacts and that relate to her help her get through. “To meet people like you, honestly, is what sustains me,” Gay said to an audience member. “It’s always nice to know that you’re not alone. When you’re a fat Black woman in her forties, you are alone in a lot of different ways.”

Rolling Stones exhibit at Navy Pier

The Rolling Stones’ first-ever major exhibition, “Exhibitionism,” will make its Chicago debut at Navy Pier through July 30.

The Chicago engagement follows the exhibit’s global premiere in London and its star-studded U.S. premiere in NYC. Exhibitionism is the largest touring experience of its kind ever to be staged, and the first time in history the band has unlocked its vast private archive.


CONCERT REVIEW
Michelle’s concert is free of shocks

BY JERRY NUNN

The most controversial thing artist Michelle Shocked did at City Winery in Chicago on June 27 was to not allow photographs to be taken by anyone.

It is a shame because she appeared happy, healthy and ready to perform. While it was nice to see a show where fans were not recording video and snapping shots with their phones every minute, a professional photo taken from the side for a few minutes of the first song would not have been distracting, and would have allowed people who did not attend to see her.

The Pete Anderson Trio kicked off the City Winery show that night. Anderson has been working with Shocked for over 30 years as a producer and instrumentalist. He provided the backing band for the Texas singer after a short break of opening for her. There were some technical problems with her earpiece and a broken cymbal, but otherwise the casual listener wouldn’t have noticed anything wrong until the group called attention to it. The notoriously outspoken singer kept things moving and didn’t need to tell the audience to talk amongst themselves while things were quickly adjusted.

She did restart a song saying that it just wasn’t going right at one point though. The crew had driven straight from New York the night before, so maybe there was no time for a soundcheck.

This show focused on a series of the three Mercury recording albums ranging from the ‘80s and ‘90s, each played at different venues over the course of three separate months. This particular set list was dedicated to 1988’s popular Short Sharp Shocked. There are 10 tracks on the record, which sports an unforgettable cover of Shocked being arrested in San Francisco during the 1984 Democratic National Convention.

She told a few short stories in between several of the tracks, such as using her dog while asking for money for “Hello Hopeville” and the white-on-Black police brutality inspiration for "Graffiti Limbo.”

From the beginning, the artist—who changed her name to refer to shell-shocked victims in World War I—has always been enmeshed in controversy. Her opinions addressing war and the gay community (which switched from pro to vehemently anti) have alienated many of her fans over the years. This night, everything was kept focused on the music that combined many genres, including blues and folk. In fact, she thanked the audience several times for being there.

The crowd sang along to several lyrics with her encouragement and gave her a standing ovation at the end. She ended the night with an encore of “Fogtown,” a hidden track on the record.

Her energy, humor and vocals were all in harmony, boding well for her return shows on July 23 and Aug. 23. Visit Citywinery.com for tickets and information.

Open TV hosts potluck, preview

BY TARINA HARGRAYS

On June 27, Open TV (beta) hosted its Two Queens in a Kitchen preview and potluck.

The free event was held at Reunion Chicago, an art gallery in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Two Queens in a Kitchen (2QIK) is one of Open TV’s most popular series, and it aims to bring relevance to discussions about relationships, sex, family, politics and more.

The potluck was hosted by Open TV’s Elijah McKinnon, who recently became a manager of Reunion Chicago and Aymar Jean Christian, Open TV’s head of development. Guests were able to watch a special preview of 2QIK’s second season while enjoying delicious snacks and drinks.

After the viewing, guests were asked to take an online survey rating the episodes seen.

Elijah McKinnon.
Photo by Matt Simonette

Season two of 2QIK includes Aymar Jean Christian, Kristen Kaza, Eli Micky, Cori Dave, Nathaniel Tenenbaum, Oli Rodriguez, Rashad Hall and Felicia Holman. The full series is set to premiere July 12.

For more information, visit WeAreOpen.tv/open-tv-originales/2qik.
Or Chadash marks Pride with award ceremony, reception

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

On June 23, Or Chadash’s Shabbat was ushered in with a Pride reception and the Am Keshet Community Award ceremony at Temple Sholom.

Or Chadash is an LGBT community group that calls Temple Sholom home and provides a wide range of spiritual and social programming/activities. Since its establishment 41 years ago, all members of the LGBT community and its allies have been welcome to participate.

With Or Chadash coming into Temple Sholom, the facility’s LGBTQ affiliate group, previously named Am Keshet, expanded.

Or Chadash co-chair Edwards Buice founded the Am Keshet Community award six years ago, and described the reception and awards ceremony as a chance to thank certain individuals and organizations for their support.

“I founded the award six years ago because I realized that we’re so busy celebrating, sometimes we forget to thank those that have made the effort to make this happen, that we have a more open society, a more open spiritual organization, that allows us as the LGBTQ community to be who we are, to bring our spouses, our partners, our families and be openly gay or transsexual, or questioning or bisexual without judgement or being exploited,” said Buice.

This year’s award recipients included Aviva Katzman, Norman Sandfield, Dignity/Chicago, Judi Gorman and Pride Parade organizer Richard Pfeiffer.

“‘I was very pleased and very excited that so many individuals came out to celebrate and share the happiness of Pride weekend and to thank the individuals, recognizing them and honoring them for their support throughout the years of the LGBTQ community and it was a great way of us coming together as one community and celebrating, socializing and supporting each other,’ said Buice of the evening’s events, which welcomed about 65 people. “I felt like it was a community building opportunity for the LGBT community, as well as our allies.”

For more information on Or Chadash and Temple Sholom, visit SholomChicago.org.

Award recipients (from left): Norman Sandfield, Ramon Rodriguez (Dignity/Chicago) and Aviva Katzman.

Photo by Melissa Wasserman

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This year’s award recipients included Aviva Katzman, Norman Sandfield, Dignity/Chicago, Judi Gorman and Pride Parade organizer Richard Pfeiffer.

“I’m a very lucky man,” said Sandfield. “I’ve done what I want to do, I contributed, I’ve been thanked for it, this is another cherry on the cake,” said Sandfield, past president of Or Chadash with 24 years on the Board and a member of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame.

“I just felt like the portion from the Torah from this week had a rebellion among the Israelites because they just weren’t happy with the way things were going and life was difficult and imperfect and that ultimately, I think the message is life is not perfect and especially in times like these we have to remember that we just need to keep moving forward and keep showing up,” said Katzman, the first female member of the Jewish clergy to serve within the city of Chicago and cantor of Temple Sholom of Chicago for 28 years (now Cantor Emerita), of what she shared in her brief acceptance speech.

Following the reception and awards ceremony was the Friday night service. Buice said the Pride service was centered around Or Chadash Pride weekend and celebrating the LGBTQ community, but also remembering those who passed away, specifically, the individuals killed in Orlando last year.

“A defiant kiss

Callie Calamia and her girlfriend with the defiant kiss.

Photo courtesy of Calamia

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Callie Calamia (right) and her girlfriend decided to pucker up in front of anti-gay protesters at this year’s Chicago Pride Parade.
Comedian provides a ‘Fay’ ol’ time

BY SARAH TOCE

Beloved comedian Fay Jacobs will grace the Center on Halsted stage for the first time in her career on Sunday, July 9.

Her previous stint in Chicago occurred more than 10 years ago for a reading at Women & Children First and was at a completely different time and place. Now she’s headed back to the Windy City to present her latest rendezvous with aging titled 50 Shades of Fay.

“I’m most looking forward to making people laugh and thinking about how far we’ve come on the road to full equality,” Jacobs told Windy City Times. “Hopefully the audience will laugh with me on the relatable tales of aging in place—whatever that place may be.”

Laughing is indeed the best medicine in times of uncertainty and stress—two items greatly affecting the aging population in America.

“As a humorist, it’s my job to see the tough stuff through a funny lens,” Jacobs said. “My show looks at issues like staying fit...Did you know there’s a smart bra that works as a pedometer? Cataract surgery...It’s terrifying to wake up, look in a mirror and more clearly see your wrinkles; and remembering when we smoked joints instead of replacing them.”

Along with the humor, the show’s narrative follows both the trajectory of the fight for equal rights and some of the hilarious and relatable indignities of getting older.

The bulk of her incredibly relatable performance in 50 Shades of Fay is borrowed from real life—real lives. Jacobs has been a mainstay in women’s festivals around the world, most notably gigs on Olivia cruises and in LGBTQ meccas like Ft. Lauderdale, Winston-Salem, Philadelphia, Allentown, Asheville, Rehoboth Beach, Provincetown and others.

The goal of her repertoire is relatively simple: It’s time to laugh...at yourself.

“When I am telling stories about aging—like when I talk about ‘the organ recital,’ when your friends sit around discussing which of their organs are deteriorating, I hope folks who relate have a good laugh at themselves - and those who don’t see it as funny and learn that it’s okay, mandatory actually, to laugh at life’s humiliations,” she shared.

Millennials have a coveted place at Jacobs’ performance table as well.

“There have been many millennials who’ve seen my show, on Olivia or in P-town, for instance,” she said. “I was especially touched by the young women who’d tell me they had no idea about some of the discrimination issues and hard times in the ‘60s, ’70s and ’80s.”

Inviting the younger crowd in to the wonders of aging is a happy medium for all involved, it seems.

“I am always careful to give the young ones permission to laugh with me for the stories about my getting older,” she said. “They’ll have their turn!”

Does Jacobs have any advice for the not-yet-wrinkled children of our era?

“I tell them, Keep a sense of humor. It will save your butt,” she admitted.

Jacobs has been awarded multiple times for her works of literature and is a staple in the LGBTQ community—and aging community. How does she select which stories to bring to the big stage?

“Since I started touring in 2015, the narrative has stayed pretty much the same, but some of the fun stories get changed, depending on the crowd, or as I have new material published,” she shared.

“At a show in DC last week, I added a story that happened just the day before, when I was online with computer tech support and the fellow in Mumbai, or wherever the call center was, complimented me on my keyboard speed and grasp of his commands, ‘for someone of your age.’ I didn’t know whether to feel proud or report him.”

Audiences who’ve seen Jacobs’ hilarity in person before need not worry about disappointment.

“Folks who have heard me at readings and book conferences will find this show a completely different experience,” she said. “And for folks who have seen it, there are new stories. And truthfully, every show is different because audiences react differently. This one, with a large LGBT audience, should be especially fun since so many of the stories will be relatable to the crowd.”

Jacobs has been married for more than 35 years to her wife, Bonnie. So, how’s married life?

“It’s a 35-year discussion! Bonnie and I met in 1982, got married in Canada in 2003, civil unioned in Delaware in 2012, saw that convert to marriage in 2013 with the Edie Windsor decision. So I think it’s a done deal,” she said.

Did anything substantially change with the added classifications of their relationship during this time? Not so much.

“I never, ever thought I would see marriage equality in my lifetime, so it’s a big deal,” she said. “Of course, our 35-year relationship didn’t really change, just the protections we have—and that’s nothing to laugh at. I can laugh when Bonnie says, ‘It might only be 17.5 years because I only listen to her half the time.’

The wives live in a boat, two condos, two houses and an RV.

“Well, not simultaneously!” she quipped. “In the past 20 years in Rehoboth Beach, we started out in a boat, graduated to two different condos, then a house and an RV and now we’ve become downwind and mobile and live in an... aehm... manufactured home. Actually, it’s great, because we can just turn off the water, lock the door and winter in Florida. But the trailer park jokes have been a blessing.”

Something that Jacobs said hasn’t been a blessing is the current White House administration.

“The only thing our current administration has made great again is late-night comedy,” she said.

Catch Jacobs’ performance of 50 Shades of Fay at the Center on Halsted Sunday, July 9. Tickets are available at https://community.centeronhalsted.org/FayJacobs.

‘BLACK!’ in Chicago in July

Michael Washington Brown, in association with Athenaeum Theatre Productions, present BLACK!, July 20-30, in Studio 2 at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave. Opening night is Thursday, July 20, at 7:30 p.m.

The England-born Brown created BLACK! in 2016. In the production, Brown inhabits an array of characters from Africa, the United States, England and Jamaica, performing each person’s individual perspective and sharing his experiences. The production highlights the nuances and life experiences of various people who are from the Black global community.

The performance schedule is Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 7:30 p.m. as well as Sundays at 2 p.m. The running time is 100 minutes, including a 10-minute intermission.

Tickets are $25; visit AthenaeumTheatre.org or call 773-935-6875.

‘TRUE LOVE’ block party July 21

Howard Brown Health Clark, 6500 N. Clark St., will host a "TRUE LOVE" block party on Friday, July 21, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

This community gathering will reveal the TRUE LOVE interactive sculpture at the Clark Street clinic in Rogers Park. Conceived by artist Bob Faust, TRUE LOVE is proclaimed as Howard Brown Health’s “message for Pride month and beyond.”

See HowardBrown.org.
MARTINEZ from page 10

ment on the fringes of society but essentially our values are still middle class—marriage, a couple of kids, get a nice car, a nice job and everything is alright. We don’t see the need to build solidarity and uplift other oppressed groups.

WCT: Is there a risk, throwing around words like heteronormativity, cisnormativity and so on, of alienating allies?

AM: The problem is that, yes, there are a lot of loaded words that have double meanings to people and we have to be careful how we use them. On the other hand, when people are purposely looking for faults and not to raise their consciousness or to avoid dealing with problems like racism or oppression, there’s a tendency to use the words that we frame our conversations against us.

We do it to each other but sometimes you have to stand on a principle even if it’s highly unpopular. I know that being pro-Palestinian in America is not a popular position. But I don’t do it from a mean-spirited, anti-Semitic point-of-view. I wasn’t raised to look at a person’s religion as a barometer of their actions. I view it like I view the Apache in this country—people who were invaded by refugees fleeing religious oppression and took over a country and their land. Other people say “that’s not valid.” For me it is.

WCT: Let’s talk about the international anger and push-back. What did you experience and why do you think it happened?

AM: I thought Windy City Times failed in its journalistic mission [breaking the story] and not looking for a real response from the Collective before putting Laurel’s position out there. I’m a senior member of the core. Windy City Times should have known that I would be one of the people who could speak about what went down. I’m not trying to defend all the actions of Dyke March. There were mistakes made in there somewhere obviously. In a two-mile march and a three-block park with 2,000 people, we can’t be aware of everything that goes on or is said.

But, once you put that stuff out there, it’s like trying to put the shit back in the sausage. So, by the morning after the march, the Collective was being attacked on alt-Right sites without any feedback from us. It caught us off guard.

I got literally hundreds of nasty stuff on social media—people saying they’re going to petition City Hall to not give us any permits. I was called “enemy number one of Jews in America.” “I know where you live.” “I’m coming after you.” I was threatened with rape, with murder.

People were making comments with absolutely no idea what Dyke March was. They just read that we banned Jewish flags from the march. I’m reading these stories and I’m going “where are they getting this?” By this time, I was only asked for comments by the Windy City Times, WGN News and a couple of online podcasts. We didn’t want a bunch of different messages out there. That’s why I’m talking with your right now.

WCT: Some commentators challenged you to hold the Dyke March in the middle of the Gaza Strip and “see what happens”—that the Palestinians would respond with violence. How do your respond to that argument?

AM: If we had our march nearly anywhere in the world, we run the risk of being attacked. There are Gay Pride marches being attacked everywhere. Even in Israel. Queer people have civil rights there but that doesn’t give you a free pass on not giving Palestinians equal rights. Having equal rights for queer people in the U.S. doesn’t give us the right to ignore the problems that queer people of color face.

WCT: A Wider Bridge has asked you to apologize. Is the answer “no”?

AM: I’m not saying that the Dyke March doesn’t apologize. We’ve publicly apologized for things before. But, from my position, we have no reason to apologize. We did nothing wrong. Those people who are asking us to apologize need to come up with facts. They need to have been there, on the ground and involved in the situation to have some validity.

WCT: Any take-aways for next year’s march?

AM: We’ll just keep on being the Dyke March. We’re part of a tradition. Where we make mistakes, we’ll correct them. Where we do the right things, we’ll reinforce them and make them part of our foundation.


RENSLOW from page 8

Preserving history

The Leather Archives & Museum staff and board issued this statement, in part:

“As L&M’s co-founder, Chuck gave deeply and worked with great passion for over 26 years to save the names and faces of Leather, kink, BDSM and fetish people, communities, and history, and he fought to ensure that Leatherfolk were the ones who would tell their own stories. So that they might better understand and bring enhanced visibility to ‘Leather history.’ As co-founder, longtime President and, most recently, Chairman of the Board, Chuck has left his mark throughout our institution and touched each of us very deeply. He will be missed.

“During this time of grieving and celebrating of Chuck’s life and contributions, L&M will continue to hold its open museum hours. Beginning Saturday, July 1 we will establish a temporary display of rare and remarkable items from Chuck’s private collection for visitors to view in the Etienne Auditorium.

“For the next month, we will also have a letter-writing station available during museum hours where folks can write letters to Chuck that we will then bundle and give to the Renslow family. Those who cannot visit L&M are welcome to write a letter or send a postcard to Chuck and mail it to us via the postal service at 6418 N. Greenview Ave., Chicago, IL 60626 USA. Letters via post only, please.”

In a 2012 speech to the crowd gathered from around the world at International Mr. Leather, Renslow, the political activist, stated, in part:

“I am really proud of the Leather Archives & Museum. The Leather Archives serves as a repository for our history ... a place where future generations will be able to know what has come before. It is never too early to save history. ... Write your history as it was and as you lived it. Don’t rewrite history as others have done. ...

“If you’re here from one of our 50 United States there is something else you can do this year. You can help someone and in doing so, help yourselves. A few weeks ago, during an election year when it could hurt him the most, President Obama became the first sitting President to champion gay marriage. As you can imagine, the right-wing conservatives speak at energized and the only way to off set them is to become energized ourselves. More than any other time in your lives you need to become active and involved in the campaign for President of the United States. We need to re-elect President Obama. This year the choice is between a history making man who stands up for the gay community and tells the world that we must have civil rights. Or ... if he is defeated, we’ll live under Mitt Romney, a self-avowed Mormon conservative who believes that marriage is strictly for one man and one woman.”

Renslow is survived by many friends and family. More details, and memorial info, will be posted as information becomes available.

Renslow’s life is chronicled in Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow, by Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen, available in B&W and full color editions.

CH Distillery (564 W Randolph St.; CHDistillery.com)—called Chicago’s first combination distillery, bar and restaurant—is situated in the West Loop, which is certainly the place to be after a long day of work at the office.

The vibe at CH Distillery is sophisticated, modern and filled with Chicago professionals looking to unwind with co-workers or friends. Upon entering, it is hard not to notice how aesthetically pleasing the location is with the dimly lit, sleek restaurant area on your left and the actual distillery on your right. (Tours of the distillery are every Tuesday and Saturday, and include free tastings.) Once the first round of drinks arrived, I realized that the word “sleek” did not just describe the bar’s physical appearance. To celebrate National Iced Tea Month, CH Distillery collaborated with Argo Tea to create three deliciously refreshing cocktails.

I ordered the “Makes Me Feel Fine,” which is infused with cucumber, mint and lime. This gin cocktail tasted like summer (which is how it felt at CH, thanks to a broken air-conditioning system—that, thankfully was quickly fixed), and is exactly what I would love to be sipping on during a hot day at the beach.

The only thing that could make the cocktail better, however, was the grilled cheese with smoked bacon. Grilled-cheese sandwiches, of course, can be made a variety of ways—and I liked how CH Distillery makes it: juicy, smoky, and burned just the right amount. My dining companion found the pork-belly poutine not quite as decadent as it sounded, and liked my sandwich a bit more.

Overall, CH Distillery is a sophisticated and fun experience. The menu is teeming with savory cocktails and food, and the search for original recipes is always a priority with this spot.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.

—Sonal Aggarwal is a world traveling performer. Raised in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, she left the country after college to travel the world. In March of 2015 while living in India as an artist and emcee, her life took a dramatic turn with a motorcycle accident that led her back to Chicago. During her rehabilitation, she realized that she was meant to do stand up comedy. Now, her infectious energy is on stage all over Chicago.

—Mark Balakoohi was born alongside his twin brother in a refugee camp in Austria to a Polish Catholic mother and Iranian Muslim father. He immigrated to the US as a baby and has grown up in Chicago and the area. Mark graduated from UIC with a degree in business and spent his 20s married and climbing the corporate ladder. Now, in his 30s, Mark downsized to a small Chicago marketing company.

—Patrick Dati is an advocate and speaker for several organizations devoted to promoting LGBTQ rights and preventing childhood abuse and bullying. Dati sits on the board of directors for Break The Silence Foundation, a local domestic violence organization. He also is a national public speaker for The Elite Speakers Bureau in addition to these organizations: Center on Halsted, Teach Antibuilingy, Inc., Dreamcatchers for Abused Children, The National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse and RAINN.

—Erin Diamond is a writer and comedian. She is a frequent contributor to The Paper Machete at The Green Mill. Erin also co-produces The Kiki, a Queer comedy variety show at The Laugh Factory. The Kiki will also take up a summer residency at Transistor in Andersonville beginning July. She is a devoted fan of the band Third Eye Blind.

—The Dutchman was born in this town and has lived here all his life. He was an out bisexual in high school and people just thought he was confused. Ever since he has been very strident about bisexual visibility. He is a leatherman, a family man (with three children), a Latin Mass Catholic and a communist.

—Coya Paz is a Chicago native and singer. She is an artist and emcee, her life took a dramatic turn in March of 2015 while living in India as an artist and emcee, her life took a dramatic turn with a motorcycle accident that led her back to Chicago. Since 1998, he has been at Chicago State University, a university committed to social justice, where he is a professor in Information Studies.

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2002 IML winner Stephen Weber with Renslow, first runner-up Borisz Mos (left) and second runner-up Herb Kaylor (right). Photo by Israel Wright


Photo 1 and 2 courtesy of Renslow; photo 3 courtesy of Jim Flint; photos 4 and 5 courtesy of Ron Ehemann; photo 6 courtesy of Israel Wright; photo 7 courtesy of Gary Chichester
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