

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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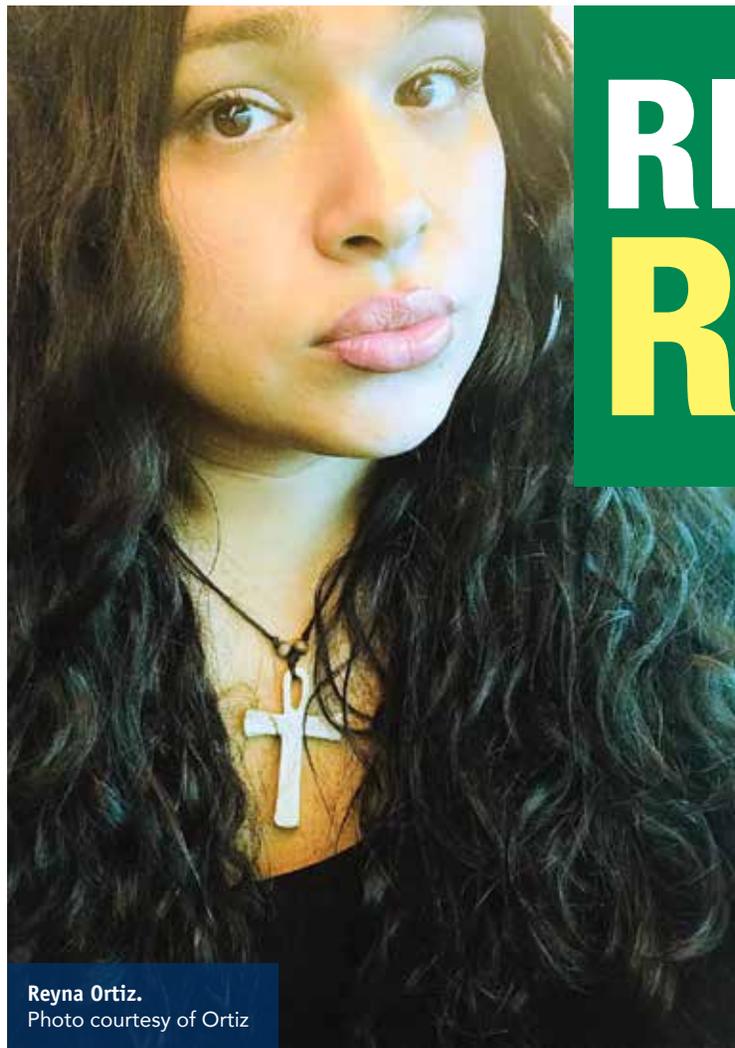
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Out actress Samira Wiley on the second season of The Handmaid's Tale



Samira Wiley.
Photo courtesy of Hulu

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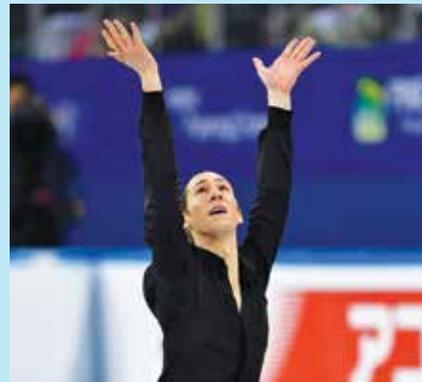


BACH TO REALITY

The Bach Week Festival turns 45 this year.

Photo of Bach Week Festival organizer Richard Webster (left) by Burlingham Productions

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Windy City Times talked with figure skater Jason Brown about this year's "Stars on Ice," taking place locally April 29.

PR photo by Getty Images

THE WHEEL THING

See why Gaywheels calls the 2018 Subaru Outback a "lesbian classic."

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Britney Spears, Nyle DiMarco and Lee Daniels.

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'05 Honda Civic EX	Automatic, Sunroof, 64K, Red, 19171B	\$7,995
'08 Toyota Prius	Automatic, Full Power, Red, 19582A	\$7,995
'09 Toyota Corolla LE/ Nav	Automatic, Sunroof, Silver, 19194A	\$7,995
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'04 Toyota Sienna XLE	Automatic, Sunroof, Leather, Blue, 18966A	\$6,995
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South Asian LGBTQ community organizer Deepa Patel dies

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Original Trikone Chicago board member Deepa Patel, 31, died March 9 at Loyola Medical Center surrounded by family and friends.

Patel, who identified as a lesbian, was the first woman to be elected to the queer South Asian-focused Trikone board. During her time with the organization; Patel started many initiatives including "Ladies Night," keeping the Jai Ho Parties going, having a Trikone float in Chicago's Pride Parade, centering queer women and trans people in the South Asian community and starting a PFLAG group for family and friends of Trikone members. She set an example for other Trikone members by bringing her ally siblings to events and encouraged others to do the same.

Outside of her work with Trikone, Patel spent time teaching the South Asian community-at-large what it means to be LGBTQ.

Patel was born April 6, 1986, in Chicago and was raised in Schiller Park, Illinois. She received her associates degree in nuclear medicine from Triton College and spent her career working at Lincoln Park Heart Center in Chicago's Lincoln Park.

She is survived by her father Dipak Patel, mother Jayshree Patel, sister Roshni Patel and brother Jay Patel as well as many friends.

"She was a proud member of the LGBTQ community and lover of dogs," said Roshni.

"Deepa's willingness to be a visible face of the Trikone queer family and the courage she exuded by engaging with people both within and outside the larger South Asian community vis-a-vis sexual orientation and gender identity, an often stigmatized and misunderstood topic, should serve as an inspiration for future activists in the community," said long-time friend and fellow former Trikone board member Jay Ash Nair. "The pride



Jay Ash Nair and Deepa Patel in 2011. Photo courtesy of Trikone-Chicago



Deepa Patel. Photo courtesy of Patel's family

she took in her chosen family, and in performing those crucial first steps in fostering a community for Desi-South Asian queer folks is the kind of steadfast dedication that will be missed. Above all, I will miss a dear friend."

"From driving our truck at Chicago Pride, securing her own brother to DJ our dance parties and organizing events for queer women, Deepa was integral in shaping Trikone in its formative years," said friend and fellow former Trikone board member Kareem Khubchandani. "Her non-sense attitude, warmth and her commitment to making every member of our organization feel like family made her a joy to be around. I will miss her so much."

"Deepa brought the much needed queer woman's voice to Trikone and had been instrumental in organizing the first kind of events for queer women for Trikone," said friend and fellow former Trikone board member Moses Tulasi. "One of Deepa's strengths was the way she reconciled her activism with her family values. She did not see them as mutually exclusive. She loved her family very much but at the same time she also embraced her queerness and there was no way she was going to abandon either of these aspects for the sake of the other. So she made it work. She gave them enough time to understand who she was and eventually her family became one of the very few South Asian families that visibly supported her at Pride marches and other events. I had always been envious of Deepa as much as I loved her for the kind of formidable life she led—full of love, compassion, grit and grace. It

seemed she was living her life in fast-forward. Little did we know there was a reason for it, to leave us all too soon. The only thing left for us, her loved ones, is to learn from her life and try to make our lives as meaningful as hers."

"I moved to Chicago in January 2012 and contacted Trikone hoping to find a queer South Asian community," said fellow former Trikone board member Anurag Lahiri. "Deepa responded and invited me to the group's Ladies Night gathering, which aimed to make intentional space for queer women, in a community that is predominantly comprised of cisgender, gay men. This was my first Trikone event, and to this day I am still friends with the people whom Deepa introduced me to.

"After that Ladies Night, I went to my first Jai Ho party, where Deepa performed. She was



Sharon Avalon O'Flynn.

PASSAGES

Sharon Avalon O'Flynn

Sharon Avalon O'Flynn—a longtime Lake View resident and retired airline sales rep—passed away peacefully April 17. She was 75.

Sharon was a native of Copiague, Long Island, New York.

An amateur vocalist and vivacious redhead, Sharon is remembered for her Irish sense of humor and storytelling.

She was the daughter of the late Bernard J. O'Flynn and Yvonne Jewett O'Flynn, sister of James Stevenson and the late Maureen Pravasilis, and aunt of Dimitri Pravasilis.

Services are private.

Arrangements by Cremation Society of Illinois, 773-281-5058 or www.cremation-society.com

Activist Donna Red Wing dies at 67

Donna Red Wing passed away on April 16 after a battle with lung cancer. She was 67.

Red Wing was executive director of the pro-LGBTQ organization One Iowa during 2012-2016, expanding the organization's work into new arenas after the battle for marriage equality ended, according to a press release from the group.

Trikone's first drag king. A year or two later, I also performed drag for the first time with her. We performed Desi Girl from the movie Dostana, with another friend of ours. As time went on, I eventually joined the Trikone board as well. Deepa really pushed for Trikone's expanding presence across Chicago and the Midwest and her presence will be greatly missed by myself and our entire community. We will be having a get together every year around the time of Deepa's birthday, to honor the fact that she is the reason we know each other."

Patel's memorial service and cremation took place March 11 at the Bohemian National Cemetery according to Hindu customs.

The family has indicated that all monetary donations should be made to the Human Rights Campaign and/or the Humane Society in her memory.

"Donna was a force to be reckoned with and will be greatly missed by individuals across the country. She called herself an activist and an agitator and prided herself in being called the most dangerous woman by the Christian Coalition at one point." One Iowa Executive Director Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel said in a statement. "Donna inspired so many, including myself. I was lucky enough to get to know her when she first came to Iowa and co-founded One Iowa's LGBTQ Health and Wellness Conference. I wouldn't be where I am today without Donna's support and mentorship."

Before moving to Iowa, Red Wing was executive director of grassroots leadership and chief of staff at Interfaith Alliance in Washington, D.C. Prior to that role, Red Wing led the Lesbian Community Project in Oregon; she helped defeat the anti-gay ballot initiative Measure 9 campaign and was featured in a Sundance Award-winning film about the 1992 fight.

LGBTQ organizations from around the country issued statements mourning Red Wing's passing. "The HRC family is deeply saddened by the loss of our friend, Donna Red Wing. She dedicated her life's work to civil rights and her legacy will forever be woven into the fabric of the LGBTQ equality movement," said Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Senior Vice President for Policy and Political Affairs JoDee Winterhof.

A celebration of Red Wing's life will be held at a later date.



Donna Red Wing. Photo courtesy of One Iowa

Local historian discusses Belmont Rocks' LGBTQ history at forum

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Author, scholar and historian Owen Keehnen discussed "Preserving Us: Documenting Life at the Belmont Rocks" April 19 at Columbia College.

Columbia College's Department of Humanities, History and Social Sciences sponsored the event, which Humanities and Cultural Studies Associate Professor Carmelo Esterrich moderated.

Keehnen explained the Rocks (which he called the "uneven limestone slabs that ran from Belmont Harbor to Diversey Harbor") were the only safe space in Chicago through the 1970s-90s where LGBTQ people could be out in the open during the day. He noted the Rocks were popular during a time when LGBTQ bars did not have windows or if they had windows they were painted black.

In talking about his own experiences at the Rocks, Keehnen said he came to Chicago from Rockford, Illinois, in the '80s; he was looking for a place to get some sun along the lakefront—and that is how he found the Rocks. He noted that he spent every single day of that summer at the Rocks soaking in the openness and meeting new people.

"It really felt like I was coming home," said Keehnen. "I discovered my tribe in a way that the bars did not provide."

Esterrich asked the nature of the Rocks being simultaneously a public and private space, and how people behaved while in that space.

Keehnen said there were a lot of private spaces at the Rocks because of the unevenness of the limestone blocks so people were able to have sex or engage in other taboo activities without being seen, stating, "They were able to hide in plain sight, so to speak."

As for the city monitoring the space, Keehnen said he was aware of several arrests. Keehnen explained that during his research revealed charges including open alcohol, drug possession, swimming, nudity and indecent exposure.

Answering Esterrich's question about when and how did he decide to work on this project, Keehnen explained that last year while he was riding his bike to work he decided to check out the Rocks because he was early that day. He said that, in 2003, the Army Corps of Engineers decided the Rocks were unsafe so they were bulldozed and smoothed out into flat concrete. Keehnen noted that everything is "safe, clean and sterile



Carmelo Esterrich and Owen Keehnen.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

now and nobody was there."

"It hit me like a punch in the gut," said Keehnen. "I took a picture of it and posted it on Facebook with the caption 'the Rocks are dead' and the response was immediate."

Keehnen said he got off of work that day and went through the pictures people had posted, and he posted some of his own from the era. He noted that people kept on sharing their own pictures and stories of how much the Rocks meant

to them and this is how the project of preserving this history was born. Keehnen explained that "the project really found itself." He said that due to the amount of color photos and other artwork he wants to include this will probably be an e-book so it will not be expensive for buyers.

As for how Keehnen is collecting data and memories of the Rocks, he said it has been pretty informal, with him asking people to send their pictures and remembrances, adding that 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney's office has a lot of information about the Rocks. He added the project is not going to be academic, adding it will be a "big, messy, fun scrapbook" for the community and a "way to understand what the Rocks were because it is such a fragile piece of history."

One thing that has struck Keehnen during this process is how many people in the pictures have died of AIDS.

"The community loss during the epidemic makes preserving our history and the story of the era—the lives lived and lives lost—even more important," said Keehnen.

Esterrich wondered whether this project has made Keehnen see the Rocks differently.

"I was really surprised my personal fondness for the Rocks was so widespread among the community," said Keehnen. "If I regret anything about my time there it is that I did not mingle more and take more pictures"

A Q&A session followed.

Keehnen has requested that if people have photos, memories or material about what the Rocks meant to Chicago's LGBT community, to contact him at OwenKeehnen@yahoo.com.

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Trans author/activist Reyna Ortiz talks work, new publishing company

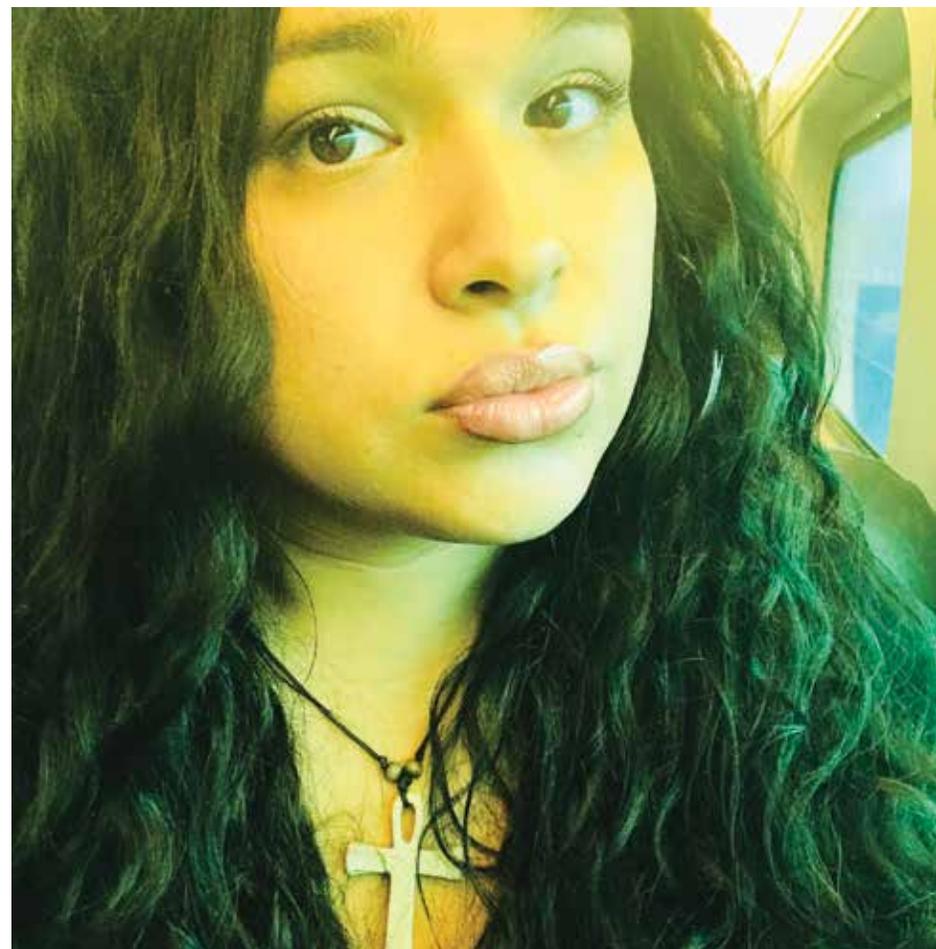
BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Ever since the release of trans activist Reyna Ortiz's book, *T: Stands for Truth: In search of the Queen*, last fall, her life has been a whirlwind of new experiences. Ortiz—who was born in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood and raised in Cicero, Illinois—has been advocating for the trans community since she was a teenager.

"There have been so many great things that have happened since the release of my book,"

"I learned so much about the process of publishing when my book was being put together," said Ortiz. "Having my own company has given me the ability to publish other stories of trans identified people. I am working with other trans people who are willing to share their stories, artwork, poetry or anything else they find important about their experiences. If they are willing to do the work, so am I."

Ortiz explained that it is time to document trans history through personal stories from wide



Reyna Ortiz.
Photo courtesy of Ortiz

said Ortiz. "The one thing that stands out the most is the acknowledgement of my experiences. The majority of people have no idea the life lived by a trans person, especially a trans woman of color. So it is really great when I see people coming to an understanding of not only the complications but the beauty as well."

One of the things Ortiz has done in recent months is start her own publishing company, Trans Fusions Publishing.

variety of people in the trans community. She said there are only a small number of positive influences that that trans community has to hold onto because most of the community's history "has been swept under the rug, dismissed or straight up stolen."

Not only has Ortiz published a book, but she is also Chicago House's Trans Life Center's Trans-Safe coordinator and the Task Force Prevention and Community Services' trans resource navigator

and drop-in manager.

Ortiz explained that her position running Chicago House's Trans Life Center "with staff who are equally dedicated is community-building at its finest. Finding trans-identified people all throughout the city and being able to connect them to a space that you know is going to handle business is refreshing. Connecting a participant to housing, legal, medical and employment in a simplistic way can be life-changing. Trust is important within our community. Participants need to trust you in order to be able to do this work successfully."

When Ortiz is not working at Chicago House she can be found at Task Force Prevention and Community Services or what the youth call "The Vogue School" helping young people at the drop-in space which is "one of my favorite places to be and so much fun."

"The energy of the youth and their love for Vogue is glorious," said Ortiz. "These young people know that they can come to me with an issue and I will try my absolute best to help them work through it. I connect youth to medical appointments, housing resources, employment services and the newly created free legal clinic. Working with trans/gender nonconforming youth is the most fulfilling part of my work. We learn so much from each other and they give me such a different perspective on life. I am so proud of their courage, strength, resourcefulness and resilience."

In terms of Ortiz's journey since high school,

she noted that this year will mark 20 years since graduation. Since that time, Ortiz explained that she has learned "lots of life lessons including learning from my mistakes." She noted that everyone's life should be in transition "spiritually, emotionally, physically and intellectually to keep evolving, learning and for self-growth" and that is how she has navigated her entire adult life.

Over the past two plus decades, Ortiz was also named her high school's prom queen, featured on NPR's StoryCorps and co-founded Trans Women in Real Life.

Ortiz will also be reading from her book at Chicago House's annual Spring Brunch & Fashion Show (which has the theme "Revive! Rally on the Runway") at her favorite library, the Harold Washington Library. She said guests should expect "great energy and a festive time."

"I am so excited for the future of my community," said Ortiz. "The trans community is reclaiming itself and taking responsibility for ourselves. We have lots of work to be done and we also understand that it is time to move forward. My story, our story is about perseverance."

To purchase tickets for the Sunday, May 6 Chicago House event (12:00-3:30 p.m.), visit <http://www.chicagohouse.org/buy-tickets/>. To read more about Ortiz, visit <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Trans-leader-Reyna-Ortiz-on-new-book-being-prom-queen/60911.html>.

Howard Brown wants symposium submissions

Howard Brown's Center for Education, Education, Research and Advocacy invites you to submit an abstract for the 2018 Midwest LGBTQ Health Symposium.

It is looking for presentations, panels and posters that reflect the theme "Moving Towards Health Equity. Strengthening Our Community of Care." The symposium call for abstracts will be open until June 1.

The Midwest LGBTQ Health Symposium Planning Committee is looking for submissions focused on the following competencies:

—Best practices for working with LGBTQ patients in clinic settings;

—Evidence-based strategies to reduce health disparities within communities, focusing on intersections of LGBTQ identity and race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic factors;

—Organizational policies and strategies that facilitate LGBTQ health equity; and

—Understanding of key LGBTQ health advocacy issues and how healthcare professionals can influence LGBTQ health policy.

The symposium will take place Sept. 14-15 at the JW Marriott hotel, 151 W. Adams St.

Submit abstracts at https://events.bizzabo.com/MLHS2018/page/1332073/abstract-submissions?utm_source=General+News&utm_campaign=313d4274e0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_04&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_caabf9aaaf-313d4274e0-134477077.

League of Women Voters lunch April 25

"A Tale of Two Cities: Bridging Chicago's Opportunity Divide" is the theme of the League of Women Voters of Chicago (LWV Chicago) annual State of the City luncheon and fundraiser on Wed., April 25, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at the Union League Club of Chicago, 65 W. Jackson Blvd.

The panelists are Zachary Fardon, managing partner of the Chicago office of King & Spalding and former U.S. attorney, Northern District of Illinois; Evelyn J. Diaz, president of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights; and Juan Salgado, chancellor of City Colleges of Chicago.

Tickets are priced as follows (through April 18): LWV members: \$115, non-members: \$135, and young professionals (35 and younger) and employees of nonprofits: \$75. Union League Club dress code is business casual attire, with no jeans or denim allowed. See LWVChicago.org.

Windy City Black Pride June 29-July 2

Windy City Black Pride will take place this year on June 29-July 2.

Several parties will take place. They include Urbano Blackout, at Fantasy Night Club, 3641 N. Halsted St.; and the 5th Annual Black Party, at Metro, 3730 N. Clark St., among others.

The host hotel will be the Holiday Inn Chicago O'Hare, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave.

Visit <http://www.windycityBlackpride.info/>.



Gathering of Bushes, Clintons, Obamas and Melania Trump at Barbara Bush's funeral.

Photo by Paul Morse

Barbara Bush laid to rest

Barbara Bush—who was only the second woman in history (besides Abigail Adams) to be the wife of one president (George H.W. Bush) and mother to another (George W. Bush)—died April 17. She was 92.

Former presidents and first ladies came together April 21 to honor her life. In a photo captured by Paul Morse—who previously served as a White House photographer during President George W. Bush's administration—the leaders of the past four administrations gathered with first lady Melania Trump in one photograph.

President Donald Trump did not attend the funeral. According to a White House statement, the move was intended to respect the Bush family and “avoid distractions” that his security detail might cause.

Barbara Bush had been hospitalized several times while battling congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder. Her death came only two days after her family announced that she would not seek further medical treatment.

She and George H.W. Bush were not known as staunch allies of the LGBTQ community. However, in 2013, they did attend the wedding of long-time lesbian friends Bonnie Clement and Helen Thorgalsen, with the former president signing the new couple's license, *The Advocate* noted. Conservatives criticized the Bushes for attending the event.

Barbara was also known for her work with members of the HIV/AIDS community, particularly children. In 1989, when many were afraid

to touch HIV-positive people, she visited a Washington, D.C., hospice, hugging and kissing children.

On occasion, Barbara (who championed literacy) was outspoken. Back in 2016, for example, during the Republican presidential primary, she said, “I don't see how women can vote for Donald Trump.”

Barbara leaves behind her husband of 73 years, George H.W., as well as five children: George W., Jeb, Marvin, Neil, and Dorothy. (A sixth child, Pauline, died of leukemia in 1953, at age 3.)

The *Advocate* article is at <https://www.advocate.com/politics/2018/4/17/former-first-lady-barbara-bush-dead-92>.

Ronan Farrow wins Pulitzer

Journalist Ronan Farrow—who recently came out as a member of the LGBT community at the Point Foundation event Point Honors New York—was among those who have been announced as Pulitzer Prize winners.

Farrow, as well as New York Times writers Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, were awarded the honor for public service in recognition of their reports on disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, bringing to light decades of alleged sexual misconduct and sexual assault.

Since the reports ran, dozens of women have lodged sexual-misconduct allegations against Weinstein, who was fired from his company, which recently filed for bankruptcy.

Farrow's mother, Mia Farrow, posted on social media that she was “so so so proud” of her son.



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Above: Modesto Valle, Kate Dolan, and Vicky Raymont.
Below: Valle, Ronna Stamm and Marcia Lipetz.

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com). See more photos with online version of this story



Jody Watley.

Center's Human First gala honors leaders, features Jody Watley

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Center on Halsted's (the Center's) 11th annual Human First Gala, "It Takes Our Village," honored civic leaders Marcia Lipetz, Victoria Raymont, Dr. Tom Klein and Dr. David Gitomer for individual contributions to the LGBTQ movement alongside the ACLU of Illinois who received the 2018 Community Spirit Award April 21 at The Geraghty.

Board of Directors member and event co-chair Angela Barnes and Board Chair Richard Turner welcomed the over 600 people in attendance.

Barnes spoke about the work everyone in the room is doing for the LGBTQ movement, adding that it is "our village because it takes everyone in our village to build community."

Turner noted how "inspiring it is to witness the foundation we have built over the years" and said everyone has to stay motivated in the coming years.

The evening's featured speaker was Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel who, like last year, reaffirmed Chicago's status as a welcoming city. He reminded everyone that the courts have sided with Chicago over the Trump Administration twice on this issue over the past year.

"When it comes to our values of inclusion and cohesion we will stand our ground," said Emanuel. "Whether your family is from Pakistan or Poland, India or Ireland, Mexico or Moldova—where my grandfather came from; if you believe tomorrow can be a better place for your children,

Chicago is your home and we will welcome you to this great city. I say this because at every point the LGBTQ community has pushed this city, this state and the country in the greater effort of believing and also fulfilling our vision of ourselves as an inclusive, cohesive city and society."

Emanuel spoke about the genesis of the Center and how "beautiful" the building is and the community it fosters, especially when it comes to the young people it serves with "love and compassion." He explained that everyday "the values we share are under attack and we have to, as a community, come together and stand our ground. My message to Donald Trump and Jeff Sessions is we will never move from what we believe is right."

Longtime Center supporter Ronna Stamm kicked off the awards ceremony with a recognition of the work all of the honorees have done over the years for the Center to create a "world where LGBTQ people thrive in supportive, inclusive environments." She also bestowed Lipetz with her award.

Videos highlighting each of the honorees work were played ahead of their remarks.

Lipetz said it has been "a pleasure to work on behalf of our community for the past 35 years." She recognized those who came before her and the importance of supporting the next generation as they take the reins of this movement into the future.

Raymont's dearest friend, Kate Dolan, presented her with her award.



Dr. David Gitomer and Dr. Tom Klein.



In her remarks, Raymont said how exciting it was to see people she has known for years as well as the new people she did not recognize who are doing the work now.

Event co-chair Roy Wesley gave Klein and Gitomer (who have been together for 30 years and got married at the Center five years ago) their awards.

Gitomer gave a shout-out to everyone who, like himself, have not sat on boards but "showed up week after week to volunteer and who are the bedrock of our community. I am accepting this award as one of you, the regular volunteers."

Klein talked about the genesis of the Center beginning in their dining room. He also noted the "incredible work" that has been done since the Center opened.

Board of directors member and event co-chair Robert Sash presented the ACLU of Illinois with their award for the work they have done to fight for full LGBTQ equality among other endeavors.

ACLU of Illinois' Director of Communications and Public Policy Edwin Yohnka accepted the honor on behalf of the organization.

Yohnka said that "with Donald Trump in the White House we cannot rest. When we see in the state of Illinois businesses that still try to discriminate against gay and lesbian couples because of who they are we will not rest. At the local level there are still school districts that still will not treat students who are transgender with dignity and respect we will not rest."

The Center's CEO Modesto Tico Valle capped off the evening with a reminder that the LGBTQ community is a village.

"We are one community, one village," said Valle. "It takes our village to care for one another, and as our history has proven, we have been there for each other through thick and thin."

Valle noted the history of tending to the dying and ill during the AIDS epidemic and the work



Turn to page 30

Men Having Babies holds annual Chicago conference

BY VERN HESTER

On April 14-15, The Center on Halsted hosted Men Having Babies Midwest, a surrogacy seminar and parenting expo aimed at gay men who wish to start a family through surrogacy.

The event, along with mirror events in New York City, San Francisco, Dallas, Tel Aviv and Brussels focused on giving gay men and couples a solid introduction to the intricacies of starting a family while offering road maps to navigating the process.

The weekend featured sessions and seminars hosted by successful surrogate gay couples, psychologists, surrogate providers, medical doctors and surrogate mothers on a various topics, including legal processes, planning, budgeting, ethics, insurance and the medical aspects of surrogacy. Prominent among the speakers at the event were Men Having Babies (MHB) Board Chair Anthony Brown Esq., Executive Director Ron Poole-Dayman, and board members Sherman L. Taylor II and Frank Nelson—who have all started surrogate families. Also present were MHB Marketing Director Shelly Marsh and Surrogate Advisory Committee Chair Michelle Pine, who have each helped same-sex couples start families by acting as surrogate mothers.

The first seminar of the conference was “Is surrogacy right for you?,” and featured personal stories from gay fathers and the surrogates who helped them. The segment covered the process of choosing a surrogate, setting up the ground work for a pregnancy, waiting and bonding with the expectant mother, and the birth itself.

The second seminar, “Psychological and Ethical Aspects”—which featured Pine, along with psychologists Dr. Ariadna Cymet Lanski and Dr.

Silvia Schneider Fox—touched on how prospective parents and surrogates can prepare for the pregnancy, the dynamics in their relationship to one another, dealing with the uncertainty of the process, dealing with critical social views of surrogacy, and the experience of children born via surrogacy.

The day's last seminar, “Planning your parenting journey,” was based on the accumulated knowledge of hundreds of gay men who have already gone through the surrogacy process and covered types and components of typical surrogacy arrangements, the typical sequence and timeline for gestational surrogacy, legal considerations in the United States and Canada, financial considerations and risk tolerance.

The second day of the conference started with a seminar on selecting service providers, budgeting and cost-saving tips, and resources for financial support. Following this was an expert panel discussion on budgeting and insurance with Poole-Dayman as moderator and Pine, Virginia Hart, Kristen Hanson and Scott Buckley, Esq. The next panel covered the medical aspects of surrogacy and touched on the medical screening of future fathers, egg donors and surrogates, the creation of optimal embryos, and the IVF process. This panel was moderated by Taylor with input from Dr. Juan Alvarez, of The Fertility Centers of Illinois; Dr. Sigal Klipstein of InVia Fertility Specialists; Dr. Guy Ringler, of California Fertility Partners; and Dr. Elizabeth Barbieri, of ORM (Oregon Reproductive Medicine).

The final section of the conference featured breakout sessions with representatives of various seminar sponsors and service providers for twenty minute group consultations and question-and-answer sessions. At the close of the two-day



Above: Participants meeting providers. Below: Landon Wilson, his son Graham and husband Brian. Photos by Vern Hester

event were two question-and-answer sessions—one on the legal aspect of surrogacy (contracts, parental right, and international recognition) led by Brown while the other focused on the financial aspect (cost-saving practices, The Gay Parenting Assistance Program, or GPAP) and was led by Poole-Dayman and MHB Finance Manager Cat Pursley.

There was also a Gay Parenting Expo featuring more than 25 organizations, clinics, surrogacy agencies, lawyers and supporting community resources.

Men Having Babies is a non-profit organization that was spun off in 2012 from a program that ran at the NYC LGBT Center since 2005. For more information, go to MenHavingBabies.org.



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Bon Foster honoree Pat Logue (second from left) with Lambda Legal's Camilla Taylor, Jim Bennett and Rachel Tiven.

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com). See more photos with online version of this story

Bon Foster event honors judge Pat Logue

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Joy, love and occasional notes of somberness and urgency described the feel of 2018's Lambda Legal Bon Foster, held on April 19 at Morgan Manufacturing.

"In the face of discrimination and mistreatment, we reached out to one another," said event co-chair Julius Carter. "We have always channeled our power, and always created a party."

The event traditionally celebrates Robert Bonvouloir "Bon" Foster, a young attorney who, after his death from AIDS, stipulated his estate should start the Midwest office of Lambda Legal, and the evening's Liberty Award recipient was the

founding attorney of the Midwest office, Patricia Logue. In a video created for the ceremony, Mayor Rahm Emanuel called Logue "a true civil-rights pioneer" and her impact on the lives of LGBTQ people "enormous."

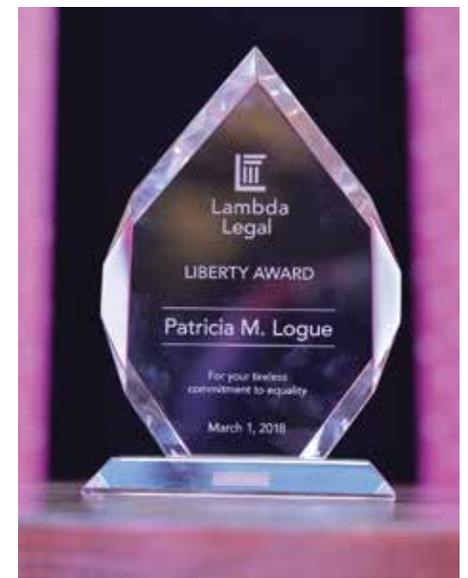
Former Lambda Legal chief development officer and longtime Midwest regional director Jim Bennett added that Logue was "brilliant, strategic" and "not very patient" when it came to wanting rights for all. "She was driven to do everything possible to move all of us forward," Bennett said.

Acting Lambda Legal Director Camilla Taylor highlighted Logue's work in landmark cases, including *Nabozny v Podlesny*, which found that schools had an obligation to prevent anti-gay

bullying, many cases involving LGBTQ parents, and the groundbreaking *Lawrence vs. Texas*.

Windy City Times publisher Tracy Baim, lawyer Paul Smith and Freedom to Marry advocate Evan Wolfson contributed their own recollections of Logue via video. Baim called Logue, "tremendous in terms of community-building," and that her calm presence "kept the community going." Smith recalled working with Logue on *Lawrence* and remembered her "demanding of me that we get this right." Wolfson praised Logue's calm, steadiness, humor and intellect "as a person and as a leader."

Lambda Legal CEO Rachel Tiven concluded the evening—prior to food and dancing—by asking for support in the current political climate, walking the audience through a world where LGBTQ protections and rights were regulated and repealed in a similar fashion to abortion laws. She also celebrated how Lambda's efforts have succeeded overtime, calling the world the organization created "a little bit more loving, and a little more, a little more challenging, colorful and fun."



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Queercore panel held at Loop library

BY VERNON HESTER

As part of the ongoing One Book Chicago Program and Music: The Beat of Our City, the Chicago Public Library hosted a panel discussion and concert April 17 at The Harold Washington Library's Cindy Pritzker Theater titled "Perspectives on Queercore: Fed Up Punks." The event brought together long-standing members of Chicago's queer-punk scene for a discussion on the past, present and future of LGBTQ punk rock and the evolving need for growth, musically and socially.

The discussion was moderated by Fed Up Fest member Ephran Ramirez Jr., and included Mark Leverette (a core member of Black Lives Matter and a member of The Black, Brown, and Indigenous Crew, as well as the band Melanin), Joanna

music made me understand the connection between punk and radical politics."

Amidst other questions, while discussing the importance of building a safe community and spaces, Brown and Freitas made the point that they are largely retired from organizing punk events (the homocore era was from 1992 until roughly 2001) while the reasoning behind the past and current movements is still largely the same. Brown said, "We wanted to create a community during the AIDS crises. What we wanted to do was create a place where you could be punk and gay. Though the punk scene claimed to be inclusive to all, there was still a nastiness toward gays and lesbians. On top of that gender parity was an extremely important thing." Freyre added, "Even though it's the 21st century there



Trans musician Jill Flanagan at queercore event. Photo by Vern Hester

Brown and Mark Freitas (both of Homocore Chicago), Jill Flanagan (as part of The Fed Up Fest Collective and the band Forced Into Femininity), Isabella Mancini (co-founder of Fed Up Fest, and a member of the bands Porno Glows and Cyber Pink), and Olgie Freyre (a non-binary educator and organizer for DIY events). Melanin and Blacker Face provided live music.

Ramirez started the discussion by asking "What impact has punk had on your life?" Freitas said, "It was an open door for me and was the first step in my political awareness." Leverette said, "Growing up in South Carolina and not seeing anyone like me it let me express my rage. Being Black and queer in the South, I didn't see many options around me for uplift and the [punk] scene helped me enormously." Later in the discussion discussion Leverette said, "Being queer and a person of color is a political statement in itself, and the

still aren't enough safe spaces and room to talk about these topics."

Freitas joked, "In the era of homocore, we had to promote shows long before the luxury of the internet. We spent a lot of our time plastering flyers up at all hours of the night, which was extremely exhausting."

When the topic came up about the future of queercore and whether the panelists have seen a change with the times because of it, Mancini said, "Queercore is about growth. Between The Black and Brown Festival, Fed Up Fest, and Clit Fest [a festival that ran in Chicago in 2013], there has been a lot of change—but there's still more work to do." Laverette said that he did not see any change but added, "My focus is on being the change in the scene. ... My whole point is to build up Black youth."



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San Juan mayor headlines DuPage Democrats gala

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

San Juan, Puerto Rico, Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz gave the keynote address at the Democratic Party of DuPage County's (DPDC) annual gala, "Blue Wave 2018: Year of the Woman," on April 15 at Drury Lane in Oak Brook, Illinois.

Ahead of Cruz's remarks, retiring U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez spoke about his connection to Cruz and the work she has done for the people of her city and Puerto Rico, before and after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Gutierrez explained that Cruz has fought for LGBTQ equality and reproductive rights for decades as well as been an advocate for #BlackLivesMatter long before it became a hashtag.

"She is my Sojourner Truth," said Gutierrez.

Cruz (who received standing ovations before and after her remarks) told the more than 700 people in attendance she was humbled to be at the event. She said that she is two generations removed from extreme poverty, and that changed due to her grandmother's insistence on learning how to read.

Talking about the hurricane, Cruz said that the event is the dividing line in her life. She said her greatest fear is Puerto Rico will never be the same again, adding that, for the first days after the storm, there was silence on the island except for the cries coming from people in distress. Cruz excoriated the GOP (including President Donald Trump) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for their lack of response following the hurricane. She said Trump is the "hater-in-chief" who has no respect for human dignity and is killing the people of Puerto Rico with "his bureaucracy."

Cruz recounted her interactions with Trump when he came to Puerto Rico, saying he would not look her in the eyes or even say "hello" to her. She spoke about the infamous paper-towel incident (when he tossed the rolls toward residents) and how disrespectful she felt that was to her and the people of Puerto Rico. Cruz also said she will never shut up or back down from fighting for what is right and just in the world.

"[Trump] was being neglectful on purpose and that is an act of aggression," said Cruz.

In terms of her fellow U.S. citizens, Cruz noted that, unlike the federal government's response, residents offered assistance immediately; these included Chicagoans, who sent 75,000 pounds of food and water to Puerto Rico.

Cruz also called on everyone to vote in November for more Democrats because she needs "friends in high places." She said voting blue is essential to fight against injustice and ignorance as well as racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia. Cruz said the November midterm elections are personal for her and she

will campaign for anyone who requests her assistance.

Speaking with Windy City Times, Cruz said, "San Juan is a city that embraces its diversity and that includes the LGBTQ community. We are actually in the process of establishing an elderly home for LGBT couples and are the only municipality that has a transgender clinic in all of Puerto Rico. The first municipal entity that started working the Monday after Hurricane Maria was our HIV clinic because we know that if you do not have your medication it is life-threatening.

"People who say they are in favor of diversity and then their actions show the opposite like what President Trump has done against DREAMers, minorities, women and dissolving the HIV committee speak louder than anything he says. People have to stand up and be counted and that means register to vote, get educated and then vote for the candidates that will move this country forward including civil and human rights issues and that cannot be found in the Republican party."

Other speakers included Muslim Bar Association President Azam Nizamuddin, DPDC Program Director Ken Mejia-Beal, DPDC Gala Chair Joanne Tyree who noted this is the year of women in politics, DuPage County Board member Liz Chaplin (the only Democrat on the board) and DPDC Chair Bob Peickert who recognized the student March for our Lives leaders in attendance from Glenbard North, Downers Grove North, Hinsdale Central and York High School and Nequa Valley high schools (they got a standing ovation).

Also in attendance were U.S. Reps. Bill Foster and Raja Krishnamoorthi, Illinois attorney general candidate state Sen. Kwame Raoul, Illinois Lt. Gov. candidate (and current state Rep.) Juliana Stratton, 4th District congressional candidate Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (the same area Gutierrez is leaving), 6th District congressional candidate Sean Casten, 14th District congressional candidate Lauren Underwood, state Sen. Tom Cullerton, state Sen. Don Harmon, state Sen. Linda Holmes, state Sen. Laura Murphy, 24th District state Sen. candidate Suzy Glowiak, 47th District state Rep. candidate Jim Caffrey and 49th District state Rep. candidate Karina Villa, among other elected officials and community leaders.

Ahead of the gala, a number of candidates spoke with Windy City Times.

"One of the great things about this campaign is everybody who has issues they want to educate me on have actually reached out to me about those issues and I welcome that feedback," said Casten. "I will continue to be an advocate for the broader LGBTQ community and everything they stand for. I encourage people in the LGBTQ community to contact me about issues they care about as my campaign moves forward."



U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez and San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

"There is so much to do in the months ahead and I look forward to connecting with your readers in person and hopefully as campaign volunteers," said Underwood. "We have a mission of taking on a Tea Party Republican who will not stand up for the families in his District and that is what we are doing every day on the campaign trail with the focus of winning in Nov."

"We are going to do everything we can to defeat Bruce Rauner because we have seen the damage he has done to our state," said Stratton. "Democrats are united and ready to fight for the progressive values that mean so much to us including working for equality and justice across the board and certainly the LGBTQ community. That is something that JB and I have been huge

advocates for and will continue to do that work." "As a result of the primaries, I am a strengthened candidate going into the general election," said Raoul. "The differences between myself and my GOP opponent are a lot clearer, especially my progressive views on social issues, and the voters will have an easier choice to make in Nov."

Proceeds from the gala and subsequent donations will be split between the non-profit organization, Somebody Help Us, which supports Puerto Rican relief and recovery efforts following Hurricane Maria and DPDC's efforts to elect more Democrats in Nov. at all levels of government.

See DupageDemocrats.com/cms2/ and <http://somebodyhelpusalguienayudenos.com/> for more information.

Schock corruption trial continues

Department of Justice prosecutors and attorney for former U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock (R-Illinois) met in a Chicago federal appeals court April 18 regarding corruption charges against the ex-politician, Politico reported.

In November 2016, Schock was indicted on several charges, including wire, mail and tax fraud and misappropriation of government funds, among other things. He resigned in March 2015.

Schock's attorneys have said that federal prosecutors went too far in charging him.

An appeals-court ruling may take weeks or months.

The Politico item is at <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/18/aaron-schock-hearing-corruption-case-532606>.

Two Chicagoans make top LGBT lawyer list

Two Chicagoans have been named to the National LGBT Bar Association's 2018 Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40 list.

Chirag Badlani is a partner at Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym, Ltd., where he represents clients in civil matters, with a focus on civil rights, constitutional law, labor and employment, and commercial litigation. Badlani is also the chair of the Federal Bar Association's LGBT Law Section.

Scott Lerner is a partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. He has experience in complex commercial litigation, including breach of contract, fraud, antitrust and bankruptcy matters.

All awardees will be recognized at the 30th Annual Lavender Law Conference and Career Fair on Aug. 8-10 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City.

'Gay Is Good' exhibit opens at Gerber/Hart

BY LIZ BAUDLER

To the curators' delighted surprise, over 100 people packed the Atrium at the Gerber/Hart Library, 6500 N. Clark St, for the April 21 opening of the "Gay is Good" exhibit. (Perhaps it had something to do with—as director Wil Brant revealed during offhand conversation—Seth Meyers name-dropping the exhibit in a recent monologue.)

Brandt began the evening before introducing historian and UIC professor John D'Emilio by holding up an archive box. The "antique gay box," Brandt said, was part of the William B. Kelley and Chen K. Ooi collection, and its contents sparked the idea of for an exhibit about pre-Stonewall "homophile" movements.

D'Emilio opened by saying that LGBTQ history "doesn't get a lot of circulation in our culture." While Stonewall is presented to the world as the beginning of the LGBTQ movement—and even half of D'Emilio's UIC students were unaware of its role in creating the Pride Parade—he explained there was a "continuous history of LGBT organizations" operating in the '50s and '60s. D'Emilio described that era as the worst time to be queer in U.S history.

In addition to losing jobs, having their mail



John D'Emilio at talk.
Photo by Liz Baudler

tracked and FBI files opened on them, LGBTQ people faced concerted efforts to shame them. According to D'Emilio, a newspaper published the names of those arrested in a raid on Chicago's Fun Lounge in 1964, and the Tribune ran "dozens" of articles about "moral degenerates and sexual pervers" in the early '50s.

D'Emilio described '50s homophile movements as "activism in the most cautious way imaginable," but by the '60s, a few brave individuals were taking steps towards openness. For instance, while '50s activists often wrote under pseudonyms in LGBT publications, in the '60s Barbara Giddings, editor of the lesbian publication the Ladder, printed photos of real lesbians. But larger activism, such as the first public demonstrations, still had a goal of presenting homosexuals as responsible, respectable people.

D'Emilio credited the Chicago Chapter of the Mattachine Society with using the phrase "gay power" three to four years before Stonewall. Chicago was also the site of a meeting called NA-CHO—North American Conference of Homophile Organizations in 1968, where "gay is good" was adopted as an official slogan. While this was a meeting of 30-40 different groups, D'Emilio pointed out that there are more LGBTQ organizations today in Chicago than there were nationally in the '60s.

"Seeing that these people put their lives out there...it makes you feel very included in this long history," Conley said.

Jenn Dentel talked about Chicago lesbian pulp author Valerie Taylor's efforts to make her books a

resource for readers, saying she was "stunned" by the education detail. Taylor, a member of Mattachine Midwest, included real books and locations of gay bars in her stories, and even had characters go to a meeting of a society like Mattachine.

Exhibit designer Kurt Heinrich appreciated reading how "catty" homophile organizations could be with each other in their correspondence. The designs of 60s publications, particularly a 1968 copy of Tangent, inspired the exhibit's colorful circle theme, with Heinrich using the colors on publication covers to create an "alternative rainbow style" for the exhibit. He also enjoyed the various gay slogans found on buttons from the era so much that Gerber/Hart reproduced a number of gay buttons for the exhibit opening—and the audience could be found sporting slogans like "I'm Peculiar" and "It's a Gay World" on their shirts throughout the evening.

Jeff Buchholz, responsible for exhibit text, recalled realizing that all the activists had been working for their cause in their spare time, and that while Gerber/Hart had a considerable amount of material, so much of it would have been destroyed for fear of discovery in the time it was created. Curator Peter Schuster expressed how grateful he was for the Kelley collection and the volunteers who helped sort through it.

"Fifty years ago, 'Gay is Good' was a big deal," D'Emilio said. "It was a sign of things that were shortly to come."

The entire article about the exhibit talk is at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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**Rev. Irene
MONROE**

Another Black Harvard man arrested

I reside in Cambridge. And, the last time an unarmed Black Harvard man in Cambridge was arrested, it made the news. It was when renowned Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates was mistakenly taken to be an unknown Black man breaking and entering into someone's home—it happened to be his own—in 2009. It was a story that went viral internationally, leaving a pox on the city.

This recent arrest of an unarmed Black Harvard man may go viral internationally, too, because the student is from Ghana and the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) prides itself in 2018 since the Gates arrest of being woke.

On April 13, Selorm Ohene, 21, was charged with indecent exposure, disorderly conduct, assault, resisting arrest, and assault and battery on ambulance personnel. The one incontrovertible fact all disputing parties—CPD officers, Harvard Black Law Students Association (BLSA), and eyewitnesses—can agree on is that Ohene was in crisis as he stood naked on a traffic island in the middle of Massachusetts Avenue near Waterhouse across from Harvard Epworth United Methodist Church.

A call to Harvard University Health Services (HUHS) was transferred immediately to the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) and not the Harvard University Police Department—a piece of the puzzle still awaiting a response.

How and why a pool of Ohene's blood remained on the pavement as an ambulance transported him to a nearby hospital for evaluation fits sadly into the broader and disturbing narrative of America's culture of police violence and brutality, systemic violation of Black men's civil rights and their bodily autonomy.

The appropriate use of force is always in dispute when police contest Black men's compliance, and

their safety during the incident. And usually, the outcome is fatal. With Ohene, some say he's lucky because, the outcome was a physical altercation and not his death.

Ohene was pummeled with punches repeatedly to his torso. The CPD report depicts Ohene as wildly combative that three officers from Cambridge Police and another officer from Transit Police were the needed enforcement to gain compliance, place him in handcuffs and "avoid further injury to himself."

"Numerous attempts made by officers to calm the male down were met with opposition and his hostility escalated while officers attempted to speak with him," a CPD official put out in a tweet. "After he was observed clinching both of his fists and started taking steps towards officers attempting to engage with the male, officers made the tactical decision to grab his legs and bring him to the ground."

However, since CPD officers did not "adhere to their stated commitment to using body cameras" and they obstructed bystanders and the BLSA members efforts videotaping the incident transparency of their intentions, actions and of the entire incident from beginning to end will always leave doubt about that evening. And in recalling the event, the BLSA offered a counter-narrative that suggest the CPD officers had no understanding or schooling in trauma-informed training, crisis intervention training, mental health training, and de-escalation techniques. And if these officers did, it all went out of the window immediately seeing a Black male.

"He was surrounded by at least four Cambridge Police Department (CPD) officers who, without provocation, lunged at him, tackled him and pinned him to the ground. While on the ground, at least one officer repeatedly punched the student in his torso as he screamed for help," the BLSA statement reads.

Racial profiling immediately comes to mind when we hear of an incident with white police involving Black and brown males. And with Ohene, a Harvard student, you wonder if he were a white student standing naked and obviously in distress along Cambridge Common in Harvard Square would he had been so dehumanized and humiliated.

On reporting the Cambridge incident, The Grio, the largest online news source of Black America, stated that both "The Boston and Cambridge Police Departments are no different than those in the rest of the country. According to the ACLU, 63% of police stops

in Boston between 2007 and 2010 targeted Black residents, even though Black residents make up less than 25% of the population. As of 2015, the Boston Police Department (BPD) had spent approximately \$36 million to settle lawsuits, most of which were tied to wrongful convictions and police misconduct."

While 30 onlookers were stunned and emotionally troubled by the police handling of Ohene, the use of force against him, according to Cambridge Police Commissioner Branville G. Bard Jr., was an appropriate tactical decision within police procedure.

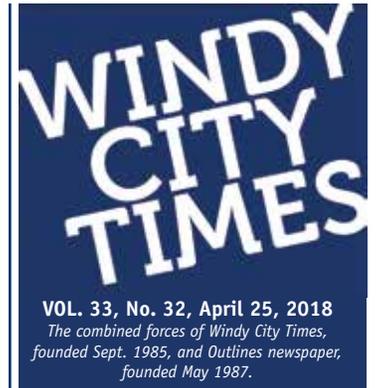
However, many Cambridge residents, especially those of African descent, are not pleased with Bard's handling of and public responses to the incident.

"In a rapidly-evolving situation, as this was, the officers primary objective is to neutralize an incident to ensure the safety of the involved party(ies), officers, and members of the public," Bard wrote. "To prevent the altercation from extending and leading to further injuries, particularly since the location of the engagement was next to a busy street with oncoming traffic, the officers utilized their discretion and struck the individual in the mid-section to gain his compliance and place him in handcuffs."

With just eight months under his belt, Bard, who is African-American, is CPD's new commissioner and is an expert in the study of ending racial profiling. Bard holds a doctorate in public administration from Valdosta State University, and a leadership certificate from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. His doctoral studies had a focus on racial profiling, racially biased policing, immigration, the Bill of Rights and public policy, and Bard's the author of a 2014 book, *Racial Profiling: Towards Simplicity and Eradication*. Bard promises a cultural shift within the police force under his watch.

After Gates arrest, Cambridge City Hall released a report to the public entitled "Missed Opportunities, Shared Responsibilities." One of the findings in the report is that "When police believe they are not in physical danger, they generally should deescalate tensions ... [which] can be a tool for helping to reduce danger by calming a person who is upset or unstable."

Had the arresting officers read this report along with employing the appropriate training techniques Ohene could have been helped—without five blows to the torso and a pool of his blood left on the pavement.



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WCT reviews the production *Blood Mural*.

Photo by Shepsu Aahku

THEATER

Theatergoers flocking to 'Birds of a Feather'

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

It's been more than a dozen years since it was published, but *And Tango Makes Three* remains one of the country's most banned children's books. The penguins in Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson's story of Central Park Zoo's famed same-sex avian couple still evoke consternation from those who insist that only hetero penguins should be allowed to raise chicks.

With the play *Birds of a Feather*, Acito revisits Manhattan's Roy and Silo, two male penguins who hatched and raised a chick together. Opening April 27 at Lincoln Park's Greenhouse Theater Center, *Birds of a Feather* isn't an adaption of the book so much as an anthropomorphic exploration of the controversy Silo and Roy set off.

"They sparked a huge culture war," Acito said. "But it wasn't just Silo and Roy. Lola and Pale Male were literally overshadowing them sometimes." That would be the Upper East Side's Lola and her mate Pale Male, a hetero hawk couple who shared a posh building with the likes of Mary Tyler Moore and Woody Allen.

While Silo and Roy nested with their adopted chick in the zoo, Lola and Pale Male made their home at 927 Fifth Avenue, fewer than 200 feet east of the penguin family. Plans to roust the hawks from their roost on the building's exterior were met with vociferous protests. Breaking up the family, Lola and Pale Male's advocates said, would be cruel.

"The way people anthropomorphized both couples was kind of amazing," Acito said. "People dressed up as birds and protested in the street." For weeks, the traditional family values of the

hawks and 'the gay agenda' perpetrated by Silo and Roy made headlines.

"There was also a class issue," said Acito. "The idea that these incredibly rich people on Fifth Avenue could evict this poor hawk family, that made people angry."

Director Jacob Harvey sees a good deal of humanity in *Birds of a Feather*. "It's got a deeply political narrative and it speaks to the issue of identity, whether it's heteronormative or not. I fell in love with the fun, colorful world of the book and I love how that translates to the stage. It's a really complex, human story told in a fun way," Harvey said.

Many remain many who would put "And Tango Makes Three" out of sight. "There was one woman who read it and decided it was porn since the two male penguins slept in the same bed," Jacobs said. She was stymied, he added, when asked whether the "Curious George" books were also porn, given that the titular monkey and his owner The Man in the Yellow Hat also slept in the same bed.

"The fact that this book is still controversial is a reminder of where we are in our current political moment," Jacobs said. "We can put a lens of politeness over it, but racism and homophobia are prevalent. We've made great strides at becoming a loving and accepting society, but there is still a lot of work to do," Jacobs said.

Acito credits *And Tango Makes Three* with spurring him to write *Birds of a Feather* and to become a voice for marriage equality: "I wrote the first draft of this in 2008. I was absolutely fueled by my outrage over gay marriage at the time." When the Supreme Court legalized same-sex mar-

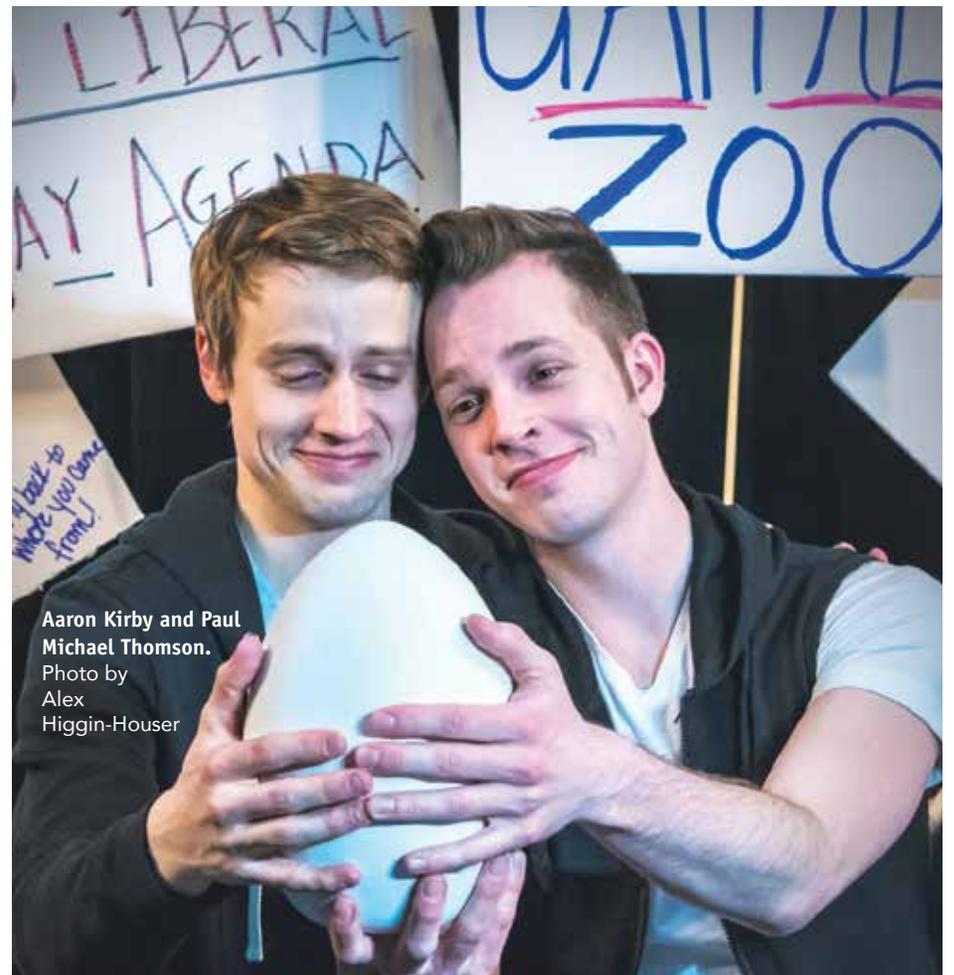
riage, Acito says he felt like a fog had diffused.

"That was pivotal. That was the first time in my entire life that I felt safe in my own country," Acito said. "When the decision came in, I felt like this cloud had lifted. It was a cloud so ubiquitous that I didn't even realize it was there until it was gone.

"There's a line that really resonates with me—'Love is a rare bird.' That's true. Love is so rare in

this life. When you find it, you don't want anything standing in the way. I don't know how you speak to those who'd disagree with that. But I think this play has to power to do just that."

Birds of a Feather runs through Sunday, June 10, at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. Tickets are \$35-\$45; visit GreenhouseTheater.org.



Aaron Kirby and Paul Michael Thomson.

Photo by Alex Higgin-Houser

THEATER REVIEW

Frost/Nixon

Playwright: Peter Morgan
At: Redtwist Theatre,
1044 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
Tickets: \$35-\$40
Runs through: May 20

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

"I shall be your fiercest adversary. The limelight can shine upon only one of us," proclaims the invisible foe on the eve of the decisive battle, his voice emerging from the darkness as the young warrior who will face him on the morrow listens in stunned trepidation.

This isn't Macbeth at Dunsinane or Richard III on Bosworth Field, however, nor will the duel commencing at dawn be swordplay to the death. No, this is 1977 and the location is a posh California beachfront residence where a television crew is preparing to tape what everyone hopes will be earth-shaking wordplay by popular British



Brian Parry
(left) and Jason
Richards in
Frost/Nixon.
Photo by
Jan Ellen Graves

satirist/talk-show host David Frost and disgraced former U.S. President Richard Nixon.

Whether it be Aeschylus, Shakespeare or Aaron Sorkin, success rewards playwrights providing assurance that the powerful and privileged are as imperfectly human as their less celebrated supporters—wisdom granting absolution to authors inclined to liberties regarding historical accuracy. To be sure, by 2006, when Peter Morgan framed his drama-of-confrontation in metaphorical jar-

gon associated with classical tragedy and high-stakes athletic events (boxing, bullfighting, etc.), the crimes lending our villain his notoriety had lost their immediacy.

So while those of an age to have firsthand memories—or hindsight opinions—of the characters depicted in Morgan's docudrama can revel in nostalgic recognition thereof ("Roger Mudd!" declared one playgoer upon hearing the voiceover as we enter), the cojoining of government and

show business portrayed in this Redtwist production requires only minimal acquaintance with the issues referenced therein to be rendered comprehensible. Indeed, the absence of fact-based distractions facilitates the spectator-sport excitement generated by two rags-to-riches champions contending for glory beyond material gain—for the washed-up statesman, exoneration and a comfortable legacy, and for the ambitious upstart, the respect granted his snobbish colleagues.

Under the direction of Scott Weinstein, a cast led by Jason Richards as the sybaritic Frost and Brian Parry (whose visual and aural approximation of his persona is nothing short of uncanny) as the calculating Nixon deliver exemplary ensemble acting, as well as likewise uncaricatured physical replications of their real-life counterparts, even to individual regional accents. Despite a running time of 105 intermissionless minutes and our knowing the outcome from the start, the electricity in the snug storefront room engenders suspense—holding our attention right up to an epilogue being written to this day.

THEATER REVIEW

Natural Affection

Playwright: William Inge
At: Eclipse Theatre Company,
The Athenaeum, 2936 N. Southport
Tickets: 773-935-6875;
AthenaeumTheatre.org; \$35
Runs through: May 20

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Natural Affection—a 1962 Broadway failure—signaled the critical decline of William Inge (1913-1973) after a decade of theatrical success. However, Inge's critical reputation has rebounded, and productions of Natural Affection in 2005 (at the Artistic Home here) and 2013 (off-Broadway) were praised. Even so, it's a difficult play to like, although the rewards for performers are obvious,

and are fully-realized in this Eclipse production.

Natural Affection is overwrought and fraught. It's tense and fervid from the start, with three overlapping storylines screaming "conflict" without subtlety. The violent ending is strongly foreshadowed, but shocking nonetheless because it was expected sooner with a different victim.

The play revolves around Sue Barker (excellent Diane Coates), an unwed mother at 18 who's worked hard to become a well-dressed, well-spoken department store buyer. Now in her mid-30s, she lives in modest comfort with Bernie Slovenk (appealing Luke Daigle), a younger car salesman. Their highly sexual relationship is not without love, but Sue out-earns Bernie which rankles. Sue's son, Donnie (intense Terry Bell), spent his childhood in orphanages whenever Sue couldn't provide care. In trouble at 14, Donnie was sent to a work farm where he was physically (and maybe sexually) abused. Now 17, he's home for Christ-

mas and need not return to "the cage" if Sue will keep him ... but what will Bernie say? Donnie is emotionally inchoate and non-verbal and the three must share a studio apartment.

However, Inge repeatedly diverts attention from mother-and-child "natural affection," mostly through late-40s Vince (an almost too-convincing Joe McCauley) and his ruttish younger wife Claire (an equally convincing Cassidy Slaughter-Mason), who has occasional flings with Bernie. Then Bernie loses his job, Donnie catches Bernie and Claire making out, Vince gets belligerently drunk, Claire goes after Donnie ... and Sue must choose between Donnie and Bernie, triggering the violent end.

There's far too much on the plate before Inge swings back to Donnie—ignored for much of the play—in a primal, Freudian way at the end. It's not smooth playwrighting, but the roles are challenging and juicy, and this cast catches fire under

director Rachel Lambert. The characters largely are self-absorbed and untender—except for Sue occasionally—but the performances are full-blooded.

Natural Affection is a period piece today, with its anti-gay cracks (Inge was closeted and self-loathing), Sue's conflicts over career vs. marriage/relationship, the failures of male dominance and an inarticulate young man (Donnie) who is beyond damaged.

Vince's Act II drunk tirade is the most telling scene. Vince is successful and precisely Inge's age as he expresses complete disillusionment with life, admits hetero-normative failure and manages a dig at Tennessee Williams, Inge's sometimes-friend and mentor. It's a bitterly amusing, thorny diversion from the play's real business.

CRITICS' PICKS

South Pacific, Drury Lane Oakbrook, through June 17. Superior musical values and a stellar cast lift this new production beyond "old warhorse" status. Regrettably, the messages of South Pacific about race and bullies remain as pertinent today as ever. JA

Lettie, Victory Gardens Theater at the Biograph, through May 6. Boo Killebrew's contemplative stereotype-free portrait of an ex-con struggling to mend relations with her kinfolk and start a new life is a role custom-made for rising star Caroline Neff. MSB

The Spitfire Grill, Refuge Theatre Project at the Windy City Café, through May 5. Audiences can escape our chilly spring with this cozy environmental-staged musical celebrating the joys of pastoral landscapes and community. MSB

9 to 5 the Musical, Firebrand Theatre at the Den, through May 20. In Harmony France's savvy reboot, the cast looks like Chicago, sings like a dream and tells a mighty gratifying story. You'll be cheering when the "girls" take over their workplace. Trust me: You want to hear them roar. CES

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge
and Sullivan

THEATER REVIEW

Blood Mural

Playwright: Lauren "LL" Lundy
At: MPAACT, Greenhouse Theatre
Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.
Tickets: 773-404-7336;
MPAACT.org; \$22-\$40
Runs through: May 27

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Someplace on the Far North Side, Dr. E. J. Lockhart (Brittany Davis), a muralist and art professor, is creating a viaduct mural with assistance from her advanced student, Marie Del Pizzo (Elaina Sanders), called "Lady Tee" because she likes Teena Marie.

This world-premiere, two-character play concerns these women: one Black and the other white-appearing but partly Latinx; one a teacher/mentor/artist and the other an apprentice;

one who has persevered to achieve and the other just starting out. Lockhart is kindly but peremptory, praising Marie's talents but also cutting off discussion about art and her own personal motivations. She offers guidance and advice but reveals little about herself.

They need a crisis to overcome together in this 90-minute play, but don't have one. Their small confrontations are commonplace misunderstandings, failures to communicate and unexpected youthful challenges to authority. At the end they prepare to paint, having come to appreciate that they function better as a team than individually. It's a fine cross-generational message, but not dramatic.

Equally important is that the audience never sees a speck of the mural: It isn't painted and little is accomplished physically in the play's span of two or three days. Author Lauren "LL" Lundy doesn't seem to know how such murals are created: clean the walls, prime them with a white base, sketch the outlines of the mural (perhaps with graph lines lightly drawn) and

then paint. I get that the story of Blood Mural is not about the mural itself nor the nature of art—but the creation of the mural is the only physical action the play suggests, and it doesn't happen. Coupled with the absence of true crisis, it makes Blood Mural static and slow.

Lundy would have a more engaging play if she found a way for Doc Lockhart and Lady Tee to reveal themselves to each other through conversation and action rather than monologue. Davis and Sanders are capable and appealing and could handle a larger dramatic challenge. At the very least, prime that concrete wall at every performance, or have it already primed with the mural sketched in for them to paint. There's gotta' be something, because as it stands Blood Mural fails to meet audience expectations in that regard.

The concrete wall itself, splashed with a few typical graffiti, is the solid-looking realistic work of Danjuma Gaskin.



Krystal McNeil
and Tuckie
White in
The Cake.
Photo by
Michael
Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

The Cake

Playwright: Bekah Brunstetter
At: Rivendell Theatre Ensemble,
5779 N. Ridge Ave.
Tickets: 773-334-7728;
RivendellTheatre.org; \$28-\$38
Runs through: May 20

BY KERRY REID

Cake Wars aren't just for the Food Network anymore. In *The Cake*, Bekah Brunstetter (whose resume includes writing/producing for the hit NBC series *This Is Us*) uses the highly publicized cases of bakers who refuse to create cakes for same-sex weddings as her dramatic launch pad. But Brunstetter's play ends up as a kumbaya confederation that dodges harder questions about how we can make peace across social divisions.

Despite some saccharine moments in the script, Lauren Shouse's staging for Rivendell Theatre Ensemble features stellar performances. Chief among them is artistic director Tara Mallen as Della, a bake-shop owner in Winston, North Carolina, slated to appear in the U.S. version of *The Great British Bake Off*. When Jen (Tuckie White), the daughter of a deceased friend comes back from Brooklyn with her African-American fiancée Macy (Krystal McNeil) in tow and requests that Della make their wedding cake, it sets off a series of soul-searching explorations for Della.

The play gets off to a rough start by first introducing Macy, who sits scribbling notes in Della's picture-perfect shop. (Arnel Sancianco's pastel

set and Danielle Myerscough's toothsome prop cakes may cause drooling.) We sense that Macy, who only tells Della that she's visiting from New York and is a writer (she doesn't mention Jen) plans to write a story about Della. But Macy's self-righteous pronouncements about how bake shows are "fetishizing an industry that's killing thousands of people" put a thumb on the scales here. We're predisposed to feel sorry for Della in the face of Macy's liberal shaming.

Ironically, Brunstetter's play is at its best when it focuses on the shame spirals in which all the characters find themselves. Even Della's blunt plumber husband, Tim (played by Mallen's real-life spouse, Keith Kupferer) carries wounds from knowing that he's the reason they've never conceived a child. Della carries scars from being the teased fat kid. White's Jen delivers a terrific moving monologue about how she dissociated during sex with men and only felt truly herself when she found Macy.

The instincts here are laudable. Brunstetter clearly thinks we'd all be better off if we just listened to each other, rather than rushing to cultural/political battle stations. Yet as Macy points out, as a Black queer woman, she's the most marginalized of all. Brunstetter never really acknowledges that there's a difference between someone like Della, who is uncomfortable with other people's private lives, and Macy, whose human rights are under public siege. (In fairness, the play was written before Trump took office.)

But despite this pulled-punch aspect of the story, *The Cake* still offers delectable morsels of vulnerability, performed with gusto and compassion.

STEPPENWOLF

EXTENDED
THROUGH
JUNE 2!

"INCREIBLE... HOW DID THEY DO THAT?"
- Christina, Facebook

"FRENETICALLY FUNNY SATIRE"
- Chicago Sun Times

"QUICK PACED AND QUIP FILLED"
- Daily Herald

"MUST BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED"
- TheaterMania

"DEFINITELY IMPACTED... AMAZING!"
- Stoutmaker72, Instagram

THE DOPPELGÄNGER (an international farce)

A world premiere by **Matthew-Lee Erlbach**
Directed by ensemble member **Tina Landau**

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SPOTLIGHT

If you were ever obsessed (mildly or otherwise) with Hedwig and the Angry Inch, you'll want to check out **33 to Nothing**. Playwright Grant Varjas' music-propelled play includes eight bona fide rock songs, from head-banging ragers to anthemic love ballads. (Everybody gets earplugs along with programs.) The plot follows the fate of a band composed of two lesbians and two gay men. The lesbians are growing up and moving on—ehe gay guys, not so much. Adding to the real feel: Everyone in the cast plays their own instruments, taking



their rhythmic cues from the mighty percussion of Jeff Kurysz. Through May 27. A Red Orchid theatre, 1531 N. Wells. \$30-\$35: ARedOrchid-theatre.org. CES

Caption: Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

A Blue Island in the Red Sea

Playwright: Anthony Moseley

At: Collaboraction Studios in the Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Tickets: 312-226-9633;

Collaboraction.org; \$5-\$30

Runs through: May 20

BY REGINA VICTOR

A Blue Island in the Red Sea at is a crackling world premiere of devised theater from Collaboraction.

Written and directed by Artistic Director Anthony Moseley, the script takes us on a journey through Chicago's racial history using a clever framing device: The Chicago Racism Museum. "Curator" Uday Joshi enters the space, telling theatergoers they are in the Chicago Race Museum, a 4D virtual exhibit, and we are its first-ever audience.

The promise of 4D in a modest—not dinky—blackbox space like Collaboraction's turns out to deliver in the one-two punch of Jose Manuel Diaz-Soto's brilliant set design, and Parker Langvardt's lights. A hollow rectangular platform dominates the stage, with two screen walls and entrances stage left and right. Momentous events in Chi-



The cast of *A Blue Island in the Red Sea*.
Photo by Joel Maisonet

ago's history are projected on the screens while actors depict the scene inside and outside of the walls, creating a textured image that worked much more effectively than video or projection alone.

Andrew Rios led us through the history of the

Puerto Rican Day Parade of 1966, when Arcelis Cruz was shot in the leg by a police officer, inciting a huge civic movement in the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. The story of Emmett Till is conveyed with Dana N. Anderson portraying his mother, giving a heartfelt speech over his open-

casket funeral.

The ensemble is to be commended for not shying away from discomfiting imagery and confronting these horrors directly. Anderson also depicted the story of Leanita McClain, a Black journalist who worked at the Chicago Tribune when it endorsed Harold Washington for mayor of Chicago. McClain's famous piece, "How Chicago taught me to hate whites," was published in the Tribune one year before her death, and it created a beautiful piece with text from that as well as her suicide note, the final line of which which read: "I will never live long enough to see my people free, anyway."

The first half of the play is well-crafted, using joy and poignancy to highlight events like the founding of house music—with a shoutout to Knuckles and the Warehouse, a staple in '80s queer culture. The second half takes us back in time to first rehearsal. Each cast member reveals his or her personal history, with race and real names and stories used. It is a device to explain the cast members' collaboration and choices, including why Moseley, a white man, should be the person to helm such a project. I appreciate the unmasking of intention around this piece, but I think this second half could be half as long. They should trust the work in the first half, which is absolutely brilliant.

THEATER REVIEW

The Doppelganger (an international farce)

Playwright: Matthew-Lee Erlbach

At: Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted

Tickets: 312-335-1650

Steppenwolf.org; \$20-\$114

Runs through: June 2

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

You'll go through most of Matthew-Lee Erlbach's high-octane farce fairly certain you know what it is you're watching. There are 10 slamming doors, lots of groan-worthy puns, and plenty of gags about sex, poop and mistaken identities.

But Erlbach peppers the hijinks with something that is the opposite of farce—something frightening, catastrophic, violent and deeply disturbing. Such is the increasingly evident genius of Urbach's genre-flipping script, directed to perfection by Tina Landau.

Pulling off the whacky antics of farce is one of the most difficult jobs there is in theater. Timing is treacherous. With the slightest misstep, the farce becomes a puerile chore. Weaving lowbrow slapstick with a nightmarish commentary on race and violence and child soldiers? That's farce, with the difficulty level quadrupled.

Landau makes it work in *The Doppelganger*, a play that is hilarious until it isn't. Erlbach has incorporated a hairpin turn into the plot, and when it comes, the audience is abruptly hurtled into a world where laughter has been replaced by terror.



Whit K. Lee and
Celeste M. Cooper
in *The Doppelganger*.
Photo by Joel
Moorman

At first, *The Doppelganger* seems like standard fare farce. We meet Thomas Irdley (Rainn Wilson), the white owner of an African (the country is never specified) copper mine. Thomas has invited Jimmy Peterson (also Wilson), a gay kindergarten teacher from Quincy, Illinois for the weekend. The men met by chance and bonded over the fact that they look like identical twins.

The plot kicks into high gear when Thomas meets with an untimely accident, and Jimmy steps into his shoes. At risk: A massive multinational trade deal that will make all its participants (an arms dealer, programming genius, a military dictator, a Brit with serious gastrointestinal issues and a Brazilian sexpot, among them) wealthy beyond compare.

Thomas's maid, Rosie (Celeste M. Cooper), has

designs on making the copper deal actually benefit the impoverished, war-torn nation by creating a well-aid humanely treated workforce. For the others, "workers rights" are an oxymoron. Their business plan involves a violent coup, the restoration of the dictatorship and, perhaps, a small civil war.

The brilliance in *The Doppelganger* is aptly twofold. First, the large ensemble cast has the timing of a Rolex watch that comes with a secret nuclear option. Second, Erlbach has embedded dialogue with moments of jarring seriousness. One moment, everyone is laughing heartily at diarrhea gags. The next, they're gaping at a land of tragic violence and brutal oppression. The disconnect will leave you uneasy about your potential complicity: Nobody wants to admit that

they're laughing at buffoons who are also architects of genocide.

Wilson and Cooper unarguably anchor Landau's cast. The latter shifts from madcap to dead serious in a heartbeat. Real talk: You do want to see Cooper using a dead fencer as a ventriloquist puppet. It's a role that's exhausting, both in terms of the highly physical comedy and the emotional drama. Cooper is both the co-star of the entire story and so unassuming she blends seamlessly into it.

If you've seen Wilson as office dweeb Dwight Schrute on *The Office*, you might not need reminding of his skills delivering comedy. But if Wilson's work of *The Office* is an eight on a 10-point comed-o-meter, then his turn as Jimmy/Thomas is a 12.

Landau's supporting cast is equally fine. Among the standouts: Audrey Francis as an amorous English politico; Whit K. Lee as a Silicon Valley wunderkind, and Karen Rodriguez as Marina, a Brazilian sexpot who is part Bond Girl, part Zsa Zsa Gabor and wholly her own creation. As a gay Middle Eastern prince who spends most of the second act naked, Andy Nagraj gives both his comedic chops and his undercarriage gets a berserkly amusing workout. There are also James Vincent Meredith as a deposed general, and Ora Jones as the one person in the world who doesn't quake with fear before him.

At one point, the script refers to a love-child between Kim Jung Il and Steve Bannon. It's hilarious ... until you start thinking about just what such a creation would mean for the world. Then? You'll be hoping the bloodied miscreants of *The Doppelganger* get the hook—as soon as you've finished laughing at them.



Liz Norton (left) and Michelle Jasso in *Grand Hotel*.
Photo by Evan Hanover

THEATER REVIEW

Grand Hotel

Playwright: Robert Wright, George Forrest
(music and lyrics); Maury Yeston
(additional music and lyrics)

At: Kokandy Productions at Theater Wit,
1229 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773-975-8150

Kokandyproductions.com; \$35-\$40

Runs through: May 27

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Grand Hotel is more like a silent movie than a musical.

Yes, it has singing and dancing aplenty. It is also chock full of dialogue and characters straight out of a *Perils of Pauline* cliffhanger. The musical (book by Luther Davis; music and lyrics by Robert Wright, George Forrest and Maury Yeston) might have aspirations toward exploring grand themes such as broken dreams, human isolation and class conflict. But it checks out when it comes to depth or originality.

In Kokandy Productions' ambitious, flawed staging, the guests of the titular hotel are easily recognizable stereotypes, trapped in a plot that's soapier than nine months in Pine Valley.

The guests include the suave playboy aristocrat who is laughing on the outside but crying on the inside; the nubile, small-town girl-next-door with stars in her eyes; the dying, pure-hearted grandfatherly sort who helps save the girl from a tawdry life of harlotry; the Russian ballerina who has vowed like the Flame of Saint Petersburg at the bridge that she will never dance again; the ballerina's devoted, tormented mysteriously masculine companion; and the Snidely Whiplash-like captain of industry who all but hisses and twirls his mustachio with twisted glee. Everybody gets a song; nobody gets a soul.

Director John D. Glover has the ensemble chewing on the scenery with more teeth than a cho-

rus line of Osmond stand-bys. Between the script and the performance aesthetic, *Grand Hotel* often seems like it surely must be a parody of a melodrama, but for the fact that nobody on stage seems in on the joke. They take these cartoon characters seriously, and expect the audience to do the same.

A couple of things work.

Scenic designer Jeffrey D. Kmiec has created a gorgeous art deco hotel lobby that's pure opulent elegance. John Nasca's luxuriously detailed costumes are beautiful representations of fashion in the late 1920s, and they move seamlessly with Brenda Didier's choreography.

When it's powering through the ensemble numbers, the ensemble sounds fantastic. Music Director Aaron Benham makes the demanding score—a wild mix of jazzy Charlestons, power ballads, tangos and grand waltzes—sizzle and shine throughout. Leryn Turlington's starlette-in-training Flaemmchen does a fabulous job with "Girl in the Mirror," and Jonathan Schwart sounds joyous and sweet as the gently dying Otto.

Others in the cast don't fare so well. As Elizaveta Grushinskaya, Michelle Jasso is more 1980s jazzercise instructor than prima ballerina assoluta. (The Boris-and-Natasha accent does not help.) And as the dipsomaniac dipsomaniacal Baron Felix Von Gaigern, Erik Dohner sounds glorious but reads more like a kid playing dress-up than a bonafide man of the world.

Finally, there's the overarching framework of *Grand Hotel*. It's a product of a time when the male gaze (please look it up if you need to, I'm tired of explaining it) was the only gaze. The women in *Grand Hotel* are (literally) ballerinas and ingenues, and telephone operators, plus one terribly, terribly unhappy lesbian. The men are dying, rapists, drunks or inconsequential.

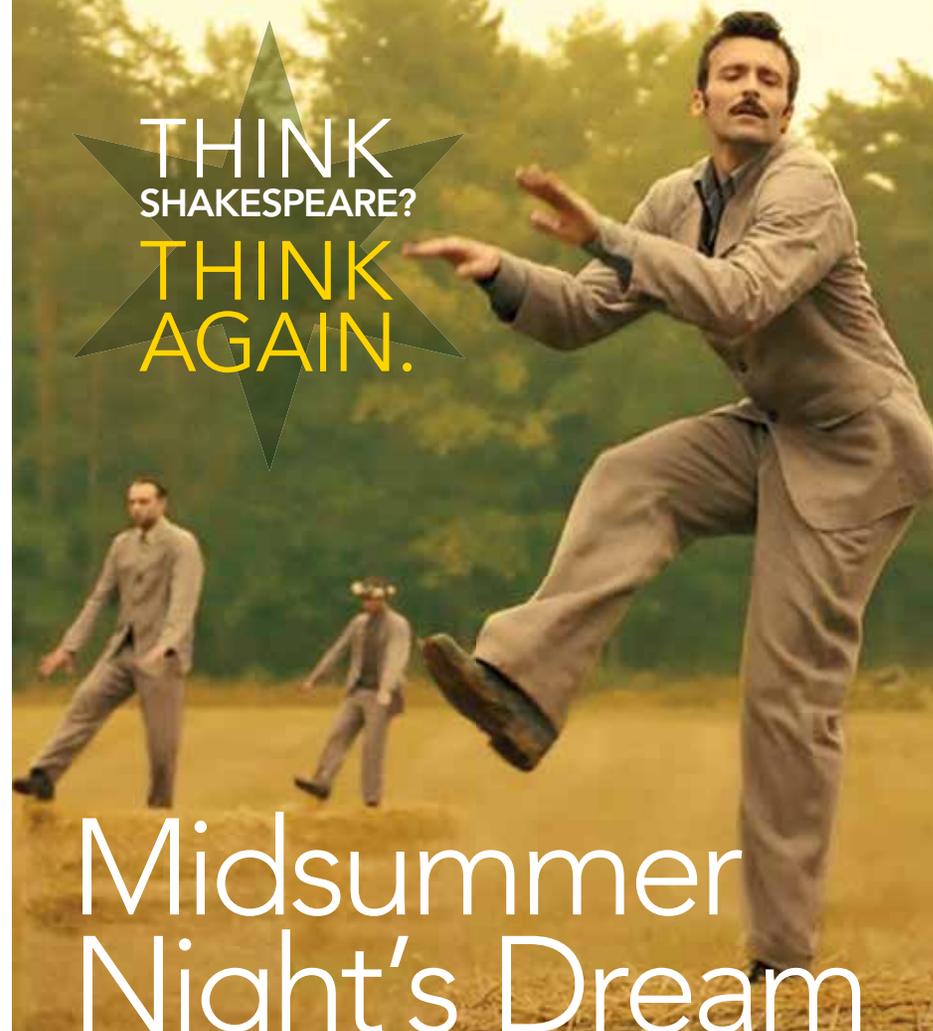
The score might have some redeeming qualities but, on the whole, *Grand Hotel* has aged into unnecessary show. This doesn't necessarily mean it's not potentially entertaining—but it's not a good sign.

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THEATER REVIEW

Disaster!

Playwrights: Seth Rudetsky and Jack Plotnick
 At: The Edge Theater, 5451 N. Broadway
 Tickets: 773-999-9541;
 ChicagoTheatreWorkshop.org; \$ 32.50-42.50
 Runs through: May 6

BY JERRY NUNN

Chicago Theatre Workshop is presenting *Disaster!*, a musical comedy set in the '70s that pokes fun at natural disaster films from the past. The setup is simple, a wide array of characters are thrown together and put into survival mode while singing classic hit songs onboard a casino cruise in this fish out of water comedy musical.

The show hits the ground running from the jump introducing strong personalities ranging from a disco diva to a nun with addiction problems. Director Ben Baylon stays in the tradition of past productions by keeping the show concise and quickly paced. It moves so fast sometimes a few of the lines were covered up by laughter throughout the opening night performance.

There are too many standouts in the cast to mention, but this simply shows how well rounded and smartly written the characters are. The actors were able to put their own spin on it and had moments to shine with fully developed characters. The old expression about being upstaged



with children certainly holds true here. The talented, young Pierce Cleveland plays twin roles and switches genders between Ben and Lisa while taking no prisoners along the way.

Britain Gebhardt steals every scene as the wide-eyed Sister Mary Downer, and her pronunciation of Jesus was unforgettable. Melissa Young and Shane Roberie, as Shirley and Maury, reminded me of the Ropers, and Marcellus Burt and the dance ensemble stepped it up and did the hustle

with toe-tapping results.

Similar retro hit musicals like *Mama Mia!* sometimes have awkward transitions from the plot to the playlist, but this project turns that idea upside down. The lyrics would answer the characters questions that continued to bring the house down. There were a multitude of song choices to pick from and obtain the rights to that it must have been challenging to produce. Another blockade was the fact that some of the songs

were only allowed in past New York productions did not make it to Chicago this time out because of regional rules.

The obscure tracks selected were certainly enjoyable for old and new generations. When was the last time you heard Jigsaw's "Sky High" or Mary MacGregor's "Torn Between Two Lovers?" Times seemed so much simpler when these were the soundtrack to our lives. While songs like "Disco Inferno" would seem obvious, we at least had "Hot Stuff" to start the fire.

"Feelings" worked really well being both humorous and touching at the same time. The hits kept on coming and pushed the campy plot right along. Using a live band located on the wings instead of piped in tracks was a smart move. Singers in the cast like Nathan Cooper and Jessica Van have the chops and vocal range to add some really nice nuances to their perspective songs thanks to being supported by the band. From a large catalogue of artists such as Diana Ross, Donna Summer, and Barry Manilow this team continued hitting all the right notes.

Co-creator Seth Rudetsky attended a post show talk back on April 21. He gave advice to the cast and spoke of the show possibly heading to the West End in London in the future.

Don't miss *Disaster!* in this local production before a hurricane sweeps it out of town.

THEATER REVIEW

Oklahoma

Written by: Rogers and Hammerstein
 At: Marriott Theatre
 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire
 Tickets: \$55-60
 Runs through: June 10

BY KAREN TOPHAM

During intermission of opening night of Marriott Lincolnshire's 75th-anniversary production of *Oklahoma*, a man next to me wondered aloud how well this show fits into the current era. How, he wondered, does it translate into our #MeToo moment?

Director Aaron Thielen obviously has thought through this question, and since he couldn't do much without changing the script, he decided to flesh out the backstory of his heroine to make her a stronger character. Thielen creates a flashback of Young Laurey (Maya Lou Hlava) showing up at her aunt's house bedraggled after her parents have died. Throughout the play, Young Laurey appears at critical junctures to show us the thoughts of the adult version (Jennie Sophia). The result is to give Laurey way more motivation and to highlight her self-reliance (even when it sometimes is undermined by the play's book).

Sophia is an excellent Laurey, possessing just the right combination of spunk and uncertainty to highlight her private longing for Curly (Brandon Springman), and enough stamina to endure some of the emotional swings that the play puts her through. Springman is a fine Curly as well. His "Poor Jud Is Dead" is about the clearest rendition



Brandon Springman
 and Jennie Sophia.
 Photo by
 Liz Lauren

of the song's faux-sympathetic undertones that I've ever seen.

Susan Moniz is a strong presence as Aunt Eller, the village elder of this play, dispensing such words to live by as "I don't say I'm no better than anybody else, But I'll be damned if I ain't jist as good!" and at one point taking charge of a brawl with her rifle. Michelle Lauto is a funny and enjoyable Ado Annie, romping through "I Cain't Say No" and flirting with her two would-be husbands, Will Parker (the talented Aaron Umsted) and Ali Hakim (Evan Tyrone Martin, overplaying a bit but still fun). And Jud Fry, the angry hired man on Aunt Eller's farm, is played brilliantly by Shea Coffman, who manages to elicit much sympathy for a character often played as simply a brute.

Thielen's direction keeps scenes moving right along, making clever use of limited scenery (designed by Kevin Depinet) to set new locales. The dream ballet is a wonderfully staged set piece, with Thielen and choreographer Alex Sanchez use their dancers adroitly to tell this story-within-a-story.

The answer to the question the man next to me posed is: no matter how hard Thielen tried, *Oklahoma* is best viewed as a period piece, a little slice of turn-of-the-20th-century Americana brought by two of America's most gifted musical playwrights. If you love *Oklahoma*, this is one you must see. If you're tired of *Oklahoma*, this is one you should see. It is a production that reminds us of what a stunning, ground-breaking show this was back in 1943, and is a perfect spring (if it ever comes) and summer entertainment today.



MOVIES

Amy Schumer, Aidy Bryant feel 'Pretty' good

From left: Aidy Bryant, Busy Philipps and Amy Schumer in *I Feel Pretty*. Photo by Mark Schafer

BY JERRY NUNN

I Feel Pretty is a new film about being single and the challenges that come along. (It's currently in theaters.)

Amy Schumer plays Renee Bennett, who suffers an injury one day, resulting in her injuries being forgotten and her gaining newfound confidence. Actresses Aidy Bryant and Busy Philipps complete the circle of friends who support each other in the tough city.

Schumer originally grew to be popular on the fifth season of the NBC competition show *Last Comic Standing*. She used that notoriety to create the memorable Comedy Central series *Inside Amy Schumer*. The movie *Trainwreck* brought a Golden Globe nomination and afterwards *Snatched* had her working with her idol Goldie Hawn. Schumer published her memoir *The Girl with the Lower Back Tattoo* in 2016 and the following year landed on Broadway in *Meteor Shower*.

Bryant is best known for *Saturday Night Live* sketches and has a history with Chicago after studying at Columbia College. She performed at theaters familiar to many locals, including iO Chicago, *The Second City* and the *Annoyance Theatre* in the past.

Windy City Times: Let's start off with me saying I want to make a sequel to the movie called *I Feel Gay*.

Amy Schumer: I love that.

Aidy Bryant: Yes!

WCT: It could be a story about a straight man being hit in the head who then thinks he's gay.

AS: That's a great idea. Write that up!

WCT: You both could play the gay best

friends. Why wasn't there a gay bestie in *I Feel Pretty*?

AS: I was the gay best friend! Now that you mention there wasn't a gay best friend. That sucks. Just so you know we did offer a role to John Early from *Search Party*. He couldn't because he was filming.

AB: We didn't just want a gay best friend, we wanted THE gay best friend.

AS: Not that he always needs to play gay...

AB: He's hilarious.

WCT: There was a gay moment in *I Feel Pretty* when your character, Renee, mistakes a gay couple for straight.

AB: You are right.

AS: Also, Michelle Williams seems like she was creeping on me. It didn't wind up in the movie that much.

AB: There's definitely some romance there.

WCT: What do you want to tell people about the movie?

AS: I think they will have a good time. It's a good movie to see in the movie theater and a [joint fun] experience, so go with a group.

It's not something that directly addresses people from the LGBT or people of color, it's not that movie, but it is about feeling good in your own skin, however you are.

It's not about how you look. That's why there was a little weird backlash saying that I wasn't unattractive enough to feel bad about myself. That was so nice, but it's about a woman who struggles with self esteem, which everyone does.

The message of realizing it is all about how you feel is universal to everyone. I really think that everyone will dig this movie!

WCT: I can see how an audience of people who were bullied or picked on could easily identify with the movie.

AS: Yes, and it's not the people that you would think. You don't think people like Michelle Williams or Emily Ratajkowski would ever have a bad day.

WCT: It reminded me of *Pretty Woman* and *The Truth About Cats & Dogs*.

AS: I loved that movie! What an honor to be referenced with those wonderful classic movies.

It's true and not about how other people make you feel. It's about how you make yourself feel. When you listen to a handful of people's criticisms or experiences of you, this is not your reality. Your reality is how you feel and how you really are.

WCT: How did you get involved with *I Feel Pretty*, Aidy?

AB: Just cash! I wanted money.

AS: I slipped her an envelope. I don't know if there's a trail of it.

AB: Amy and I are friends so she mentioned it to me.

AS: I would say we are good friends.

AB: We are becoming friends...

AS: Wow.

WCT: I heard *I Feel Pretty* was moved up to not compete with *Avengers: Infinity War*. If you were going to be a superhero, who would you be?

AS: Pizza Girl!

AB: Okay, I will be Wine Woman. I would have wine that comes out of my pinkie fingers and

Turn to page 30

The creators of the sold-out, award-winning *THE TEMPEST* reunite to spin a tale of suspense and dark magic

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TELEVISION

Samira Wiley is back with a bite in 'The Handmaid's Tale'

BY SARAH TOCE

The Emmy Award-winning dystopian series *The Handmaid's Tale* returns for its second season on Wed., April 25, with a 13-episode arc. With MGM Television producing, this Hulu original is based on the classic Margaret Atwood 1985 novel of the same name. Although the chilling reality of life in Gilead is fictional, its totalitarian roots are aligned with present day fundamentalist fears.

The second season picks up with Offred/June's (Elisabeth Moss) pregnancy and her ongoing fight to free her unborn child from the gruesome grip of Gilead. "Gilead is within you," is a common phrase repeatedly used with Aunt Lydia's "girls" and viewers will see firsthand how this reality affects them as they fight for freedoms once resigned.

Serena Joy (Yvonne Strahovski) rediscovers her passion and an empowerment once forgotten. But how will this rebirth affect her relationship with the values of Gilead and her husband, Commander Fred Waterford (Joseph Fiennes)? Struggling to keep Offred safe is the commander's protector, Nick (Max Minghella), who also doubles as the father of Offred's unborn child with the

commander.

The sweat, blood and tears are palpable in the Colonies as Janine (Madeline Brewer) works herself to certain death alongside Ofglen/Emily (Alexis Bleidel), a college professor who was once married to a woman and was a mother herself before the horrors of Gilead began.

Freedom comes at a cost, but can Moira (Samira Wiley) afford to pay it as she starts over as a refugee in Little America with Luke (O.T. Fagbenle)?

Prior to the show's season two premiere in Hollywood on April 19, Wiley hadn't even seen the new episodes.

"I actually haven't seen any of the episodes—by choice," Wiley said. "It's not often that you get to sit down and watch a streaming television show with an entire audience."

At the end of season one, Moira is last seen walking into a refugee center and being handed a healthcare card, money, kindness, and freedom—but nothing is ever truly free, is it?

"She's not being raped every day ... these are all wonderful things!" Wiley shared. "The life of a refugee is not all wonderful. There's nothing familiar there. There's nothing that she can turn to and say, 'I know that...' The only thing she knows is Gilead. It's like that phrase: 'the devil you know,' you know? She has no community there. She has no friends. She has no family. She has Luke and they're starting to understand how much they need one another and build that familial relationship there. But it's not all roses. It's not easy."

Moira even begins to question her own sexuality after the trauma she endured during her time at "This season is a real question of, 'Who am I?' It's a self-identity question this season for Moira," Wiley said. "There's a scene where there's a question of 'Do I date now? How do I even function? Do I go to bars?' There's no answer and we'll see in a scene where she is actually questioning who she is ... at Jezebel's we see her actually take on a new identity—she calls herself Ruby. Does that come back?"

Women in season two of *The Handmaid's Tale* will begin to understand and reclaim their power, offering viewers a resistance unlike anything seen before on the show. Similar to that of the #metoo movement off-screen, Wiley said the

women of Gilead will "start to use their power as a collective."

Wiley credits her wife of one year, Orange Is the New Black writer Lauren Morelli, for helping to keep her feet on the ground off-set—and out of the head of Gilead's reality.

"There are parts of this show that are with me all the time," Wiley said. "[Lauren and I are] super in love and everything is great—we're happily married and all those wonderful things."

The two worked together on "Orange" when Wiley famously portrayed fan favorite Poussey Washington in the Netflix series. Also on the show was Brewer, who now takes on the challenging task of surviving the wasteland known as the Colonies.

"From above it's just gorgeous rolling hills and cornfields and the sun is setting—it's esthetically beautiful," Brewer said of the Colonies. "Then you put a magnifying glass on it and you see that these women working in the fields are digging up toxic soil and there's smoke billowing up from the ground. These women's skin is coming off and they're losing their hair and their teeth are coming out. They are getting more and more sick. ... It's kind of like Gilead. At first you think, 'Oh, what a lovely little community,' but then you take a closer look and you're like, 'Shit! This is terrible!'"

While Janine sees the Colonies "as a second chance," according to Brewer, Emily sees them as hell on earth. Digging a grave to bury your partner can indeed feel that way. So how does Brewer escape the dark content after a day of filming. She removes the eye. "Getting back into my own clothes and feeling my own skin allows me to step away and back into my own life," even on emotionally charged days when it's not as simple as it seems.

The show's second season will begin with an entirely clean slate—Atwood's story only went to the end of season one of the show. Atwood is involved with the series, but ultimately the results of these women's lives are completely up for grabs. How will this end? Fans must start back at the beginning—and they can do that April 25, when the new episodes start streaming.

Find out more about *The Handmaid's Tale* at <https://www.hulu.com/the-handmaids-tale>.

Trans show part of Fashion Week

A transgender-themed show will be part of Chicago Fashion Week, which is taking place through April 30.

Among the events is "Trans, Media and Fashion," which will take place Sunday, April 29, 4-8 p.m., at EvolveHer, 358 W. Ontario St. The show will feature designs by Angela Wang.

Some of the other events include "Student Showcasing Fashion Installation" (April 25), which Tony Long will host; and the "Ready to Wear Show," (April 28), which will be held at Baderbrau, 2515 S. Wabash Ave.

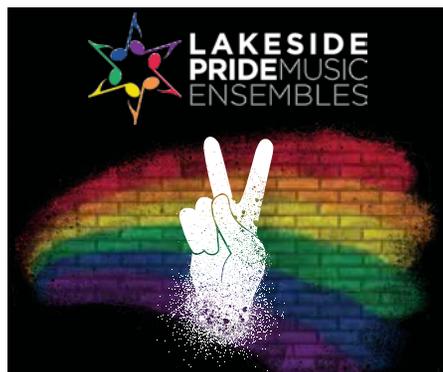
See <https://www.fashionbarchicago.com/pages/chicagofashionweek-registration/> for more information. Tickets can be purchased at Eventbrite.

Springfield drag show April 28

On Saturday, April 28, the Phoenix Center will present Springfield Pridefest Club LaCage Drag Show at the Hoogland Center for the Arts, Theatre III, 420 S. Sixth St., Springfield.

This event is chaired by Deanna Knight. The show will feature top Springfield drag performers, many who are past and/or present title holders including: Mimi Vancartier, Sara Belle Knight, Mahogany Knight, Vincent Knight, Jacquelyn D. Knight, Calexus Carrington Steele and Karmen Mann.

Admission is \$15-\$35; visit HCFTA.org.



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Matchmaking event for older lesbians, bi women coming to Chicago

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Little Gay Book comes to Chicago to help those who are ready to mingle at its Fast Flirting event at Pub 626, 1406 W. Morse Ave., on April 28.

Little Gay Book is a boutique lesbian and bisexual matchmaking firm. Started in the Bay area in 2009, Little Gay Book reaches to women across the nation, offering services including matchmaking, relationship coaching, coaching sessions, wing woman assistance and psychotherapy. Little Gay Book also holds high-tech lesbian and bisexual matchmaking events where women can find romance, business connections and friendships.

Dr. Frankie Bashan is the founder and CEO of Little Gay Book, a doctor of clinical psychology, a relationship expert and coach and a mother of two teenagers.

"From a very early age, I just gravitated toward connecting with people," said Bashan. "I just love people. I have a very interesting knack for bringing people together. Naturally I just would want to set people up with each other and I started to make matches. At the age of 13, I set my dad up with a woman he was married to for 25 years."

With this passion, Bashan became a therapist. While she was having a positive impact clinically in her practice, she wanted to shift away from heavy stuff like helping people manage anxiety and depression, to instead help people find love.

"For years I was doing therapy and I kept gravitating towards working with singles and couples," said Bashan of her experience. "I loved couples work and I loved to help single people build up their confidence, be bold, make shit happen in their lives, in the area of romance. Then I just decided to take something that is a gift, which is matchmaking, and combine it with my psychology background experience and see if I could help our community find quality partners and be more successful in their relationships once they find somebody."

In her current work, she does LGBTQ and ally coaching, explaining it requires all the same tools that she teaches. Her matchmaking and Little Gay Book's events, however, focus on lesbian and bisexual women interested in monogamous relationships.

Her coaching approach, she described, is solution-focused. She looks at the goals people want to accomplish and helps to figure out what is getting in the way, as well as how to overcome those obstacles.

"I think we need to be out there connecting



Dr. Frankie Bashan.
Photo by Su Evers

with each other and having loving caring relationships and we sometimes just need some skills to learn how to make that happen," said Bashan, who identifies as a queer woman. She also added that according to studies, people are happier when partnered up.

Fast Flirting is an event with different locations all over the country for lesbian or bisexual women that want to make new friends, business connections or are looking for relationships.

Bashan developed a software containing an algorithm that does the matching. With this software, Bashan explained, participants have the opportunity to meet people that they will have a greater likelihood of making a successful connection. When mingling, through the software, the participant indicates if she is interested in a particular woman for business, friendship, romance, all of the above or two options. If both women select the same interest, they get each other's email address.

Women show up to the event and meet 12-13 women who fall within their selected range of interest for a five-to-seven-minute date.

Fast Flirting will be coming to Chicago for the first time at this April 28 event. Fast Flirting events are held every four to six weeks and focuses on different age ranges each time. This particular Chicago event will be for women ages 40-plus.

"I'm so excited because Chicago women have been wanting us to bring our events there," said Bashan, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

For more information on Little Gay Book and Fast Flirting, visit LittleGayBook.com.

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Chicago Filmmakers cutting ribbon on new home

BY LIZ BAUDLER

While it's been up a flight of stairs on Clark Street in Andersonville for years, Chicago Filmmakers always dreamed of having a different space for themselves.

"If you needed to get to the classrooms you had to walk through the theater," said Executive Director Brenda Webb of the old location. "You couldn't do both things at the same time. It was definitely run down and funky, and we didn't want to put a lot of money in it, we didn't own it."

Filmmaker Sharon Zurek of Black Cat Productions, who works closely with Chicago Filmmakers

and hosts the popular Dyke Delicious film series, recalled both how eager people were to see those films and how unsuitable the old space could be. "I had ladies come to Dyke Delicious with walkers, and they'd come up the stairs," she said.

Thankfully, the dream has come true for Chicago Filmmakers. The ribbon-cutting for its new space, a converted Chicago Landmark city firehouse at 5720 N. Ridge Ave., is coming up soon—an opportunity that Webb said she'd been looking for since around 2010.

"For a small nonprofit like us, kind of an unrealistic expectation, but I knew that some public buildings had been sold to theater companies for a dollar, so I thought well, gee, maybe we can



Sharon Zurek (right) with filmmaker Catherine Crouch at a Dyke Delicious film night.

Photo by Tracy Baim

do that too," Webb said. She looked at the firehouse, which dates from 1928, in 2013, but with a flooded basement, she assessed it as "too scary to take on" without support. But later that year, the city requested proposals for the space, and Webb became involved.

"I heard about it a couple of days before the deadline, so it was probably the most intense, quickest proposal writing I've ever done in my life," she said.

Then followed becoming a finalist for the space, meeting with the city, working with architects, having to reconceive plans after bids came in too high and needing everything ready to go to begin construction the next business day after closing, per city requirements for the agreement. Then, there wasn't three-phase electricity for the much-desired elevator.

Construction was running overtime, and expecting to move into the space any month now, Chicago Filmmaker's usual schedule of screenings got postponed for all of 2017. But now, established in its new home, the organization is ready to resume, in Zurek's words, "everything we did before and more," including Dyke Delicious's recent triumphant return.

"The way I characterize the change in coming to the space is really deepening our roots in the community," said Webb. "We've always seen ourselves as a community of filmmakers and filmgoers, and it's citywide. Now, in addition to that, what are the communities we have in this geographic area and how can our programming reflect that?"

She's hoping to use the space for increased collaboration and new programming directions, whether with new film groups or local partners, such as Senn High School or Loyola University.

"There's lots of anticipation and expectation, as we came into this neighborhood, and people were so excited to see something happening with the building, which had been sitting here empty," Webb said. "I think there's just a lot of interest in the organization. Now there's a new constituency which sees us as part of the Edgewater community that they want to connect with."

The organization looks forward to broadening its class schedule to appeal to more groups of people, including their ideal audience of working artists. "Traditionally, our classes were evenings

and weekends. Hopefully we can start having some weekday classes for seniors and others, because not everyone works nine to five," Zurek said.

The space will also be a new venue for Reeling, of which Webb is founder. Although straight, the idea for an LGBTQ film festival came to her while reading about queer sensibility in film in the early '80s, and realizing many experimental filmmakers were also queer.

"Does the LGBTQ community even know about these people, that they exist? Probably not. They need to know that the pioneers of experimental film are gay and lesbian: they should know that and they should support that." Webb recalled thinking. "We had been an organization that since our inception had been really dedicated to experimental film, so it was really kind of taking those same filmmakers that we screened—Barbara Hammer and Kenneth Anger and James Broughton—and sort of putting them in a different frame."

And thus Reeling, the second-oldest LGBTQ film festival in the country, was founded in 1981. Webb reconnected with Zurek, a former Columbia College classmate, when the latter dropped off some projectors at the space.

"As a student, Chicago Filmmakers was important to me because I would show my work there. It was a place where you could see your films on a huge screen and invite your friends," Zurek remembered. She feels that the film industry has shifted direction since work first began on the building, and that filmmakers are not just looking for training, but for opportunities to make connections. She pointed out that Chicago Filmmakers can serve as a fiscal sponsor for those looking to make new work, and they host filmmaker meet-ups every other month.

Asked for the best way to support LGBTQ filmmakers, Webb and Zurek were unanimous in suggesting attending screenings of their work and volunteering with organizations like theirs. And there are more concrete ways to support their new space.

"Like a lot of my lesbian friends, we're not used to asking for help," Zurek joked. "If we had three times as much money, we'd have three times as much stuff. We're hoping people will come into a room and go, boy, my company can donate a big

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LED screen, or 'you need new computers.'"

Much of the building's architectural accents have been preserved and repurposed, including a front desk made out of limestone from the old fireman's showers. The space includes an upstairs classroom and in the old fire truck bay, the screening theater, for which Chicago Filmmakers is still looking to acquire proper platform seating. There are plans to have a patio with a green space outside. And Zurek is particularly excited about the larger bathrooms, recalling how in the Clark Street location, "intermission used to be as long as the bathroom line."

Webb added that while the building was sold below market price, they still have a mortgage, and have raised about \$300,000 of their million-dollar capital campaign goal.

"We called the Clark Street address our clubhouse: now we have a new clubhouse," Zurek said. "We do want to grow and offer more services. We brought everything we could with us and we're ready to grow even more."

The open house and ribbon-cutting will take place on Saturday, April 28, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 a.m. with 48th Ward Ald. Harry Osterman; Christine Dudley, Director of the Illinois Film Office; Rich Moskal, director of the Chicago Film Office; Dr. Eric Freedman, dean of the School of Media Arts at Columbia College Chicago; actor Chris "Mouch" Stolte, one of the stars of NBC's Chicago Fire; and other film industry and community leaders.

The event is free; RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chicago-filmmakers-ribbon-cutting-open-house-tickets-45110227906>.

Global play readings taking place May 1-31

International Voices Project (IVP)—marking the ninth season of play readings by playwrights from around the world—will take place at Instituto Cervantes, 31 W. Ohio, May 1-31, with performances at 7 p.m.

The series is presented in collaboration with consulates and other cultural institutions throughout Chicago and this year's engagement features plays from Spain, Serbia, Poland, Syria, Finland, French Canada, India and Germany.

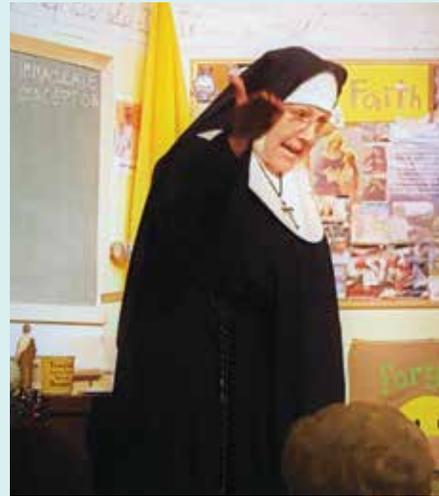
See IVPChicago.org for more information.

'Cornerstone' at ArtSpace 8 in April

Chicago non-profit theater company Nothing Without a Company has announced the location and cast of its next show, Cornerstone.

The production will take place at ArtSpace 8, 900 N. Michigan Ave., third level. The cast features Kenya Ann Hall, Raymond Jacquet, Wanda Jin, Kyle Lovett, Jonathan Mayo, Stella Mensah, Kyle Mundil, Samantha Michelle Nava, Caroline Shaul, Derek Rienzi Van Tassel and Dr. Phranque Wright.

The show will run through April 29 on Thursdays-Saturdays at 7 p.m., and Sundays at 6 p.m. Visit NothingWithoutaCompany.org for tickets.



Rosie Newton in *Late Night Catechism*.
Publicity photo

'Catechism' marking 25th anniv. on June 3

A special 25th-anniversary performance of *Late Night Catechism* will be held Sunday, June 3, at 2 p.m. at the Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St.

Chicago actress Rosie Newton will star as "Sister"—a role she has performed since 1997, both in Chicago and on tour.

A limited number of 25 tickets will be avail-

able for purchase at the original 1993 ticket price: \$8. Those tickets are available directly through the Royal George box office, or at Ticketmaster using the code 25TH. All other tickets are \$30.

In addition, the show will be performed July 14-15 at Skokie's North Shore Center for the Performing Arts; Oct. 6 at Chicago's Beverly Arts Center; and Oct. 21 at Theatre at the Center, in Munster, Indiana.

For more information, go to Nuns4Fun.com; for tickets at the Royal George, call the box office at 312-988-9000.

Bridge Dance Festival through May 6

The Bridge Dance Festival—the culmination of four years of Japanese focused programming at Links Hall, 3111 N. Western Ave., including the National Performance Network Asian Exchange, Beyond the Box and Links to Japan—is taking place through May 6.

It features Links Hall commissioned works by Kaori Seki (Tokyo) and Darrell Jones (Chicago), and J'Sun Howard (Chicago); and it re-engages Chicago-based Kabuki artist Rika Lin's Beyond the Box series, which fuses traditional forms and innovative experiments. The festival also features two international touring works, 100 Light Years of Solitude and *Enmei* (Long Life).

See LinksHall.org.

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- WINDY CITY TIMES

JEFF AWARDS RECOMMENDED

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Siskel showing 'Best of Black Harvest'

The Gene Siskel Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago announced increased funding for The Best of Black Harvest West with a grant of \$8,000 as part of an overall package of \$18,000 from The Allstate Corporation to support the Black Harvest Film Festival.

This grant specifically supports the expansion of the Black Harvest Film Festival's pre-festival series The Best of Black Harvest to create The Best of Black Harvest Film Festival West, presented in partnership with the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and BBF Family Services.

There are screenings presented monthly through May; showtimes vary from screening to screening.

The actual Black Harvest Film Festival will take place Aug. 4-30. The call for entries ends June 8.

All screenings are free and open to the public; visit SiskelFilmCenter.org/black-harvest.

New Armatrading CD out May 18; tour dates announced

Singer Joan Armatrading's new studio album Not Too Far Away, will be out on BMG on Friday, May 18.

This is her 21st album. Tracks include "Loving What You Hate," "Still Waters," "Always in My Dreams," "Invisible (Blue Light)" and others.

Not Too Far Away is the studio follow-up to the trilogy of This Charming Life (2010), the jazz-orientated Starlight (2012) and the blues-based Into The Blues (2007), which went straight to the top of the Billboard Blues Chart—making Armatrading the first British female artist ever to do so.

The album will be supported by live dates in the United States May through July followed by a major tour of the United Kingdom in September. Among her U.S. stops will be Chicago's City Winery on June 9-14.

Not Too Far Away will be released on CD, LP and digitally. Album pre-orders are now available by visiting <https://joan.lnk.to/NTFAPR>.

SAGE LGBT speed mentoring April 26

On Thursday, April 26, 5:30-7:30 p.m., SAGE Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders will hold an LGBT speed-mentoring event at Gallery Victor Armandariz, 300 W. Superior St.

Dinner and drinks will be served at the 21-and-older event.

See <https://actionnetwork.org/events/lgbt-speed-mentoring-night> to RSVP.

Bonnie Hunt to chair Mother's Day race

Award-winning actress and Chicagoan Bonnie Hunt has been named honorary race chair of Susan G. Komen Chicago's 21st Mother's Day Race for the Cure, which will return to Montrose Harbor on Sunday, May 13.

Race for the Cure registration begins at 7:30 a.m., the Survivor Parade is at 8:30 a.m., and the 5K Fun Walk/Run steps off at 9 a.m. There's a Finish Fest Celebration at 9:30 a.m., with awards and a live band.

Registration fees are \$40 for adults, \$35 for survivors, \$25 for youth 5 to 12, and free for 4 and younger. Virtual registration for those who can't make it on Race Day is \$40. Registration fees increase May 12.

Supporters are encouraged to register at KomenChicago.org.

CULTURE CLUB



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BILLY Masters

"I'd rather be the good Nixon than the bad Cuomo."—**Cynthia Nixon** talks about challenging **Andrew Cuomo** for governor of New York.

Whoever said you can't go home again wasn't with Billy Masters last week. As you know, I frequently visit the ancestral Masters Manor in Medford, Massachusetts. In recent years, the city has rehabilitated Chevalier Auditorium, which was once part of the old high school. Your beloved Billy spent countless hours of his childhood in this 1,900-seat venue, which is once again playing host to numerous acts of high regard. I suspect that these people are told that they're playing in the "sixth-largest theatre [sic] in the Metropolitan Boston area." Then they get out of the car and say, "What the fuck is a Medford?"

When I saw that **Wanda Sykes** was there as part of the 9th Annual Women in Comedy Festival, I knew it was a perfect time for us both to revisit our pasts. For me, I got to roam around a theater that played a big part in my life. For Wanda, the memories may have been less pleasant. Her last Boston gig was the 2016 Comics Come Home benefit, where she was roundly booed for her anti-Trump stance. Now, in 2018, she had a new problem. On the morning of the show, she woke up with no voice whatsoever. But, being in Boston, she was able to go to Mass General Hospital and see the same doctor who treated Adele! And that's how, even with diminished vocal abilities, Miss Sykes got through a 90-minute set. She was surely bolstered by the sold-out audience who cheered her on. A few times she struggled and apologized, only to be met with calls of "We love you, Wanda." It was a great night for comedy, and a true exhibition of triumph of the human spirit.

Last week, **Will Smith** revealed that the one and only time he met **Michael Jackson**, they were both in the closet—an ACTUAL closet. It took place at the BET Awards. Michael wanted to meet Will, so he went and hid in a utility closet and asked security to bring Will to him. And that's how Will and Michael ended up in the closet together. If one of them ever had a dream of playing seven minutes in heaven, they got their wish!

After **Bette Midler** left Broadway's Hello, Dolly!, the hope was that the show would host a revolving door of legendary ladies for a few months at a time and play for years—like its initial run on Broadway. We currently have Bernadette Peters on Broadway, and Betty Buckley will be helming the national tour. So while theater folk were wondering who would replace Bernadette when she left, it was announced that person would be...Bette Midler! She will return to the show July 17-Aug. 25, when the show will close—allegedly. I say that because I don't be-



Will Smith (here in Suicide Squad) and Michael Jackson had a secret meeting once, Billy says.
Image from Warner Bros.

lieve it will necessarily close. What if it continues to do good business? What if someone comes up with an idea that could keep the show going? What if Dolly Parton decides she wants to play "Dolly"? What if Patti LaBelle is interested? I believe producer **Scott Rudin** is bringing Bette Midler in for two reasons: 1) As a stalling tactic to see if the show has more life in it, and B) To film it with the original cast. He's always wanted to record this for posterity, but logistically it couldn't be done during Bette's first go-round. So why not do it now? Especially since Bette is bringing back original cast members **David Hyde Pierce** and **Gavin Creel**.

In our "Ask Billy" question, Jake in Baltimore asks, "I heard one of the guys in Black Panther did gay porn. Who was it? And do you have it?"

Shumba Patrick Mutukwa plays an unnamed border tribe warrior in Black Panther. He was also hired to be a dialect coach since he was born in Zambia. So it was like a dream come true—until it turned into a nightmare. He was doing an interview when photos from his porno past surfaced! The *Zambian Observer* wrote that Mutukwa is "actually a p*rn star in America who makes a living out of making p*rnOgraph! material." Yes, that's how they wrote it—which tells me a 12-year-old girl is writing for the *Zambian Observer*. We did some skillful sleuthing and learned that in addition to some amateur solo flicks, he worked for Entertainment West Studios under the creative porn moniker of Shumba Jones. On his social-media page, Shumba Patrick calls himself an actor/fitness model/poet/singer/motivator—in short, the same description porn stars have used since the beginning of time.

In a statement released by his publicist, Shum-



ba confirmed the video: "Recently there was an unsavory video released of Shumba Mutukwa to the Zambian public from his 20s. He was a young man that made a choice not all may agree with. ... Again, he was a young man himself and is not the same youthful person he was." Here's the thing—he's barely more than 30. The videos look awfully recent—some of the ones we found online claim to be only a year old. So, how different of a person is he? Well, I guess he's an employed person—that's a big difference. The publicist added, "He is not now, nor was he ever a gay porn actor." In fact, the publicist said Shumba made the videos with an ex-girlfriend and denied reports that it was a gay porn. You can check him out on BillyMasters.com.

And ... it's time to end yet another column. Let me quickly remind you to check out BillyMasters.com—the site that puts the *Zambian Observer* to shame! If you have a question, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before we find out who else Will met in a closet. Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.



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Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Punch Bowl Social; Dining Out for Life

BY ANDREW DAVIS

When you operate a space that's almost 30,000 square foot, you better have a lot happening.

Fortunately, **Punch Bowl Social Chicago** (310 N. Green St.; <http://www.punchbowlsocial.com/location/chicago>) has so much going on that you could conceivably stay there all day—in a place that can accommodate more than 1,000 people. (By the way, it's part of a nationwide chain, and there's another location in Schaumburg.)

For example, there are several bowling lanes, an arcade (with pinball machines, video games and Skee-Ball), two karaoke rooms, virtual-reality stations, bocci, billiards, board games, marbles, shuffleboard, and even Giant Jenga and Giant Scrabble. (Unfortunately, the Skee-Ball game wasn't working, and several of the Scrabble tiles were missing magnets—which works against a game that's played on a wall. I'm hopeful that all will be working the next time I go there.) There's even a Shinola bike in one corner that people can pedal to charge their cellphones, although I don't know how many people will do that.

Dining Out for Life

The annual event known as Dining Out for Life Chicago will take place Thursday, April 26.

This year, up to 75 local restaurants (including Big Chicks, Urban Belly, Honey Butter Fried Chicken, The Dearborn and others; full list below) will donate all or a portion of their proceeds to HIV/AIDS-service organization TPAN (Test Positive Aware Network). The event returns to Chicago after a three-year absence.

- Andersonville Brewing
- Andies Restaurant
Andersonville
- Angelina Ristorante
- Ann Sather Lakeview
• Antepima
- Appellation Wine Bar &
Restaurant
• The Barn
• Big Chicks
• Byron's Hot Dogs
• Cellars Bar and Grill
- Cerise Rooftop at the Virgin
Hotel
• Cherry Circle Room
- Chicago Diner Lakeview
• Chicago Diner
Logan Square
- Common Club at
the Hotel Virgin
• The Dawson
• The Dearborn
- Drew's on Halsted
- Elixir Andersonville
• Elixir Lakeview
- Found Kitchen & Social House
• Francesca's Bryn Mawr:
Edgewater
• The Gage
- Hamburger Mary's Chicago
• Heaven On Seven
- Honey Butter Fried Chicken
- Hopewell Brewing Company
• HopLeaf
- Howl at the Moon
- Hydrate Nightclub
- Kit Kat Lounge
- Lady Gregory Andersonville
• Lark
• Las Mananitas
• Mia Francesca
• Moody's Pub
• Nookies Edgewater
- Octavio's Cantina & Kitchen
• Old Irving Brewery
- Peckish Pig
- Peninsula Hotel's The Lobby
• PINGPONG
- Purple Pig
- Replay Andersonville
• Replay Lakeview
- Revival Social Club
• Rock Bottom
- Rocks Lakeview
• SoFo Tap
- Svea Restaurant
• Tweet Let's Eat
- Urban Belly- West Loop
- Urban Belly- Wicker Park
• Venicci Italian
• The Veranda Inn
• Vincent
• Wakamono
- Wilde Bar & Grille
- Wishbone North
- Wood Chicago
• Zanzibar



Punch Bowl Social's Holiday Lodge (above) and lobster roll with fries (below).

Top photo by Andrew Davis; PR photo below



Dining Out For Life started in 1991 and is now an international fundraising event raising awareness and over \$4.2 million in vital funds and for those affected by and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. See <https://www.diningoutforlife.com/chicago>.

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

However, this is a food column, so it would behoove me to let you good readers know about the culinary fare. Well, the menu is chock full of so many intriguing-sounding dishes (which the server termed "organic casual food") that it's legitimately an indecisive person's nightmare. (Also, all of the menu items can be ordered anywhere—not just in the main dining area.)

For those who want salads or soups, there are items such as the superfood grain bowl (packed with farro, quinoa, kale and the like) and Cuban black-bean citrus soup. Plates made for sharing include the lobster-bacon fries (a huge plate of sinful indulgence), It's Nacho Mama's (ditto) and Hugh's Pimiento Cheese (Pullman toast with "tender belly" bacon marmalade).

The selections continue with sandwiches like a decent take on the Cubano; the Knockoff Burger, which is like an upscale Big Mac; and an "Impossible" burger (which more and more

restaurants are featuring), a meatless concoction. Main dishes include the OMFG GF Southern Fried Chicken (yes, that's the name), beer-braised brats and Spaghetti, Meet Ball... or Not. Sides range from Brussels sprout slaw to three-bean quinoa salad to house-cut fries.

And THEN there are the "big-baller platters," meant to serve three or four people. For example, the Maine Squeeze (\$70) consists of four lobster rolls, along with kettle chips, creme fraiche and bread-and-butter pickles.

Oh, but let's not forget the actual punch-bowl drinks (e.g., Lord Stanley's Cup), old-school cocktails and even adult milkshakes.

There's even weekday breakfast (in addition to weekend brunch), with mushroom biscuits and gravy, and ricotta-cheese pancakes.

If you can't find something fun to do or eat at Punch Bowl Social, it's your own fault.

Sidetrack's OUTspoken! Series: May's featured storytellers



Donny Acosta



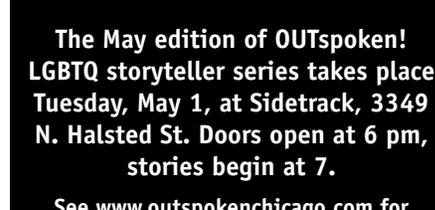
Todd Michael Keach



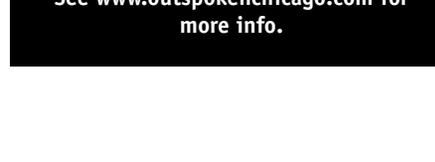
Joel Miller



Elizabeth Powers



Kyle Sanders



Ashley Victoria

The May edition of **OUTspoken!** LGBTQ storyteller series takes place Tuesday, May 1, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St. Doors open at 6 pm, stories begin at 7.

See www.outspokenchicago.com for more info.

—**Donny Acosta** is a queer performance artist from Orange County, California. He works with About Face Theatre as the associate director and performs with the Drinking and Writing Theatre. Donny is also an Aries, a chocolate whore, and he LIVES for Rihanna. Donny enjoys a nice cold IPA or a shot of whiskey. Wink. Wink.

—**Todd Michael Kiech** does way too many things: He's an actor, burlesque performer, clown, storyteller and producer. He is currently working on a show called 'Weird S#!t Todd Does'. He is also a bartender at Sidetrack.

—**Joel Miller** is a graduate of Ball State University and returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Ethiopia 2012-2014). Recently featured on the podcast Sex Intersectional (available on Soundcloud), he has also told stories with the Trap Door story show in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has also performed with bands Silbo Gomero and the Hope Arthur Orchestra. He lives in Edgewater with his books and his plants.

—**Elizabeth Powers'** least favorite day of the week used to be Tuesday, until she happened upon Outspoken. She has always loved stories—especially ones with queer plot lines. In addition to soaking up and sharing stories, Elizabeth enjoys spending time with family and friends, working at a local university and swimming in Lake Michigan. She's from the Chicago area and puts ketchup on her hot dogs. Take it up with her after the show.

—**Kyle Sanders** is originally from the small town of Eminence, Kentucky. In high school, he was voted Most Likely to Succeed, but has yet to deliver on that promise. He's a graduate of iO's improv program and currently blogs for CHIRP Radio 107.1 FM, and has contributed pieces to Bitch Flicks and GIGA: Geek Magazine. His greatest regret in life is shaking the hand of Matt Lauer.

—**Ashley Victoria** is an comedian, artist and mother of four from the west side of Chicago. She is the creator, producer and host of Sex Positive, a variety show featuring artists sharing performances inspired by their sexual experiences and relationships to their own sexuality. She performs improv regularly with the ComedySportz Chicago ensemble and can also be seen weekly at iO in the show Your Fucked Up Relationship and with the powerhouse, all-POC team Dynasty.

WINDY CITY TIMES

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., April 25

LGBTQI+ Cancer Support LGBTQI+ Cancer Support is a drop-in group for LGBTQI+ folk who have been impacted by cancer, including those who are living with cancer, family members, and friends. These drop-in nights occur on the fourth Wednesday of the month. 6:00pm - 7:00pm Howard Brown Health Sheridan, 4025 N. Sheridan Rd.; <http://howardbrown.org/event/lgbtqi-cancer-support/2018-03-28/>

You Joke Like a Girl, All-Women's Open Mic and Showcase Once monthly all-women's comedy night, 7pm sign up, 7:15pm open mic and 8:45pm showcase. Beer or coffee drinks at the in-house cafe at Volumes Bookcafe. Donations are split amongst the showcase members. Find You Joke Like a Girl on Facebook 7:00pm Volumes Bookcafe, 1474 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

Thursday, April 26

Dining Out for Life Chicago City-wide, annual dining and fundraising where restaurant will partner with TPAN to benefit programs educating communities and stopping the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and related conditions. <http://tpan.org/diningout>

**'CHI' ROLLERS
Saturday, April 28**

ChiQ (formerly Garden of Eve) will take place at the South Shore Cultural Center.

Photo by Melissa Wasserman

LGBT Speed Mentoring Night Networking and sharing opportunity that highlights the knowledge and lived experience that our community has to offer. Dinner and drinks. Ages 21+. Questions to engagement@sageusa.org 5:30pm - 7:30pm Gallery Victor Armendariz, 300 West Superior St., Chicago <http://actionnetwork.org/events/lgbt-speed-mentoring-night>

LGBT artist Lavender Country Band led by life-long social justice activist and gay country singer, Patrick Haggerty. \$10 9:00pm The Hideout 1354 W Wabansia Ave Chicago <http://facebook.com/lavendercountry>

Defining Aging for Ourselves Book Reading & Community Discussion John-Manuel Andriote, author of *Stone-wall Strong: Gay Men's Heroic Fight for Resilience, Good Health, and a Strong Community*. 6:00pm Howard Brown Health Clark 6500 N. Clark St. Atrium, 2d Floor Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Defining-Aging-for-Ourselves-Book-Reading-Discussion-April-26/62651.html>

Friday, April 27

Leather Eye For the Preppy Guy Annual leather makeover contest with proceeds going to Vital Bridges' Groceryland Pantry. Prizes include a \$500 leather makeover from Leather 64TEN and tickets to IML in May. 10:00pm, Touche, 6412 N. Clark St., www.touchechicago.com

Jesus Christ Superstar North American premiere with Heath Saunders as Jesus, Ryan Shaw as Judas, and Jo Lampert as Mary Magdalene. Through May 20. \$35. 7:00pm Lyric Opera Civic Opera House 20 N. Wacker Dr. Tickets: <http://jcsuperstar.org>

Saturday, April 28

Chicago Filmmakers Ribbon Cutting and Open House View the new rehab of the 1928 firehouse where Chicago Filmmak-

ers now resides. Film industry and community leaders will be special guests. RSVP by phone. 11:00am Chicago Filmmakers 5720 N Ridge (Entrance on Hollywood) Chicago 773-293-1447 <http://chicagofilmakers.org>

ChiQ (formerly Garden of Eve) Dancing, entertainment, full bar, light bites, community. Howard Brown invites the LGBTQ community and allies to support services for women and TGNC people. Must be 21+ Early tickets \$75. General \$100. VIP \$200. Door \$150. 7:00pm - 11:00pm South Shore Cultural Center 7059 S. South Shore Dr Chicago <http://howardbrown.org/event/chiq/>

Chicago Dragons Bachelor Auction Bid on the rugby studs of Chicago Dragons to raise money for their trip to the Bingham Cup in Amsterdam. \$25 for entry and two drink tickets. 6:00pm Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Lesbian/Bi "Singles Mingle" for professional women 40+ Meet up to 20 women tailored to your type. Bi and trans-inclusive. By Little Gay Book agency. Algorithm uses your profile to match with others attending. Register on line. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Teal Room at Pub 626, 1406 W. Morse Ave, Chicago <http://littlegaybook.com>

Sunday, April 29

Sober Horizons Group of Alcoholics Anonymous All persons with a desire to stop drinking are welcome. 9:30am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted St. <http://www.chicagoaa.org/about-caso>

The Vives Q Sunday Funday Brunch First, food and drinks and, later, karaoke a raffie. 1:30pm feedback and wants for Vives Q programming, based on survey at link. 12:00pm Casa Michoacan, 1638 S Blue Island Ave.; <https://www.facebook.com/vivesq/>

Trans, Media and Fashion, part of Chicago Fashion Week The show will feature designs by Angela Wang. Chicago Fashion Week April 23-30. 4:00pm - 8:00pm EvolveHer, 358 W. Ontario St. <http://www.fashionbarchicago.com/pages/chicagofashionweek-registration/> Tickets: <http://www.eventbrite.com>

Monday, April 30

Authors Barrie Jean Borich and Jeremy Mulderig Reading from and discuss their latest books, *Apocalypse, Darling* and *The Lost Autobiography of Samuel Steward*. 6:00pm Seminary, 5751 S. Woodlawn Ave., Hyde Park <http://www.semcoop.com/event/book-launch-jeremy-mulderig-and-barrie-jean-borich>

Tuesday, May 1

Jeannie Tanner and the Jeannie Tanner Trio Let's Fall in Love with the Music of Harold Arlen. Plus new material for this performance. First show 7:30pm 9:00pm Winter's Jazz Club, 465 N. McClurg Ct., <http://www.wintersjazzclub.com/jeannie-tanner>

More from**Center on Halsted's Human First gala**

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com). See more photos with online version of this story



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HUMAN FIRST from page 8

the Center is doing now with HIV testing, prevention education including information about PrEP. He spoke about the marches the community has done in the past to advance equality and the marches still to come for women, immigration reform, the DREAMers, the transgender community and "until violence, hate and bigotry of all types are eradicated."

Speaking about the future of the Center's reach throughout Chicago, Valle noted the newly opened Transitional Youth Housing Program in the Woodlawn neighborhood and said there is more to come in that neighborhood, in terms of outreach programs.

Valle also called on everyone to offer their support to people experiencing homelessness or to educate people who misgender others. He also reminded everyone what is at stake, especially dur-

SCHUMER/BRYANT from page 21

drowns villains.

WCT: Where is Busy Philipps from I Feel Pretty, by the way? Is she too busy to come to Chicago?

AB: She's vacationing in Hawaii.

AS: She's a mother, wife and an activist—so very active. I think we are trying to spread the cast around, like a virus!

AB: I am from Chicago a little bit. I used to live here. I was at Second City, so I fought for this date.

WCT: You went to Oak Park for school, didn't you?

AB: Yes.

AS: And my sister lived here, not together with Aidy, though...

WCT: How was your Broadway experience in Steve Martin's Meteor Shower?

ing this current presidential administration that is openly hostile to women and minorities across the board, including the LGBTQ community.

"These times are trying our resolve, our spirit and our endurance but we must march forward," he said.

The evening also featured a performance by Chicago-born Grammy winner Jody Watley, who roused the crowd with her signature sound. Following Watley's performance, One Night Band closed the event.

Among the other dignitaries in attendance were Illinois state Sen. Heather Steans, state Rep. Kelly Cassidy, Chicago Ald. Tom Tunney, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner Debra Shore, Illinois Democratic gubernatorial candidate J.B. Pritzker, Democratic Committeewoman Carol Ronen, former U.S. Treasury Department Federal Insurance Office Director Michael McRaith and the Hon. Nancy Katz.

AS: It was awesome. Aidy doesn't count it because I didn't sing.

AB: Sorry, when you sing on Broadway I will give you the cred!

AS: Well, it was amazing and a total dream come true.

WCT: Have you heard from celebrities that you have done impressions of, Aidy?

AB: Not really. I have met Adele and she's lovely, but I never get a phone call the next day saying, "How dare you!"

WCT: Are you doing more stand-up, Amy?

AS: Yes, I have some dates on the books. I am trying to remain healthy and happy. I burn the candle at both ends too much, so I am trying to be kinder to myself, but I am doing a bunch of stand-up coming up.

I Feel Pretty is currently in theaters. Read the full interview online with the actresses at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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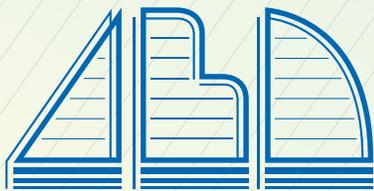
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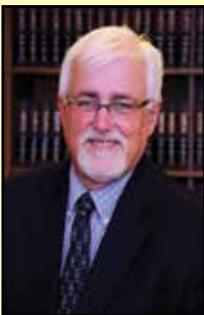


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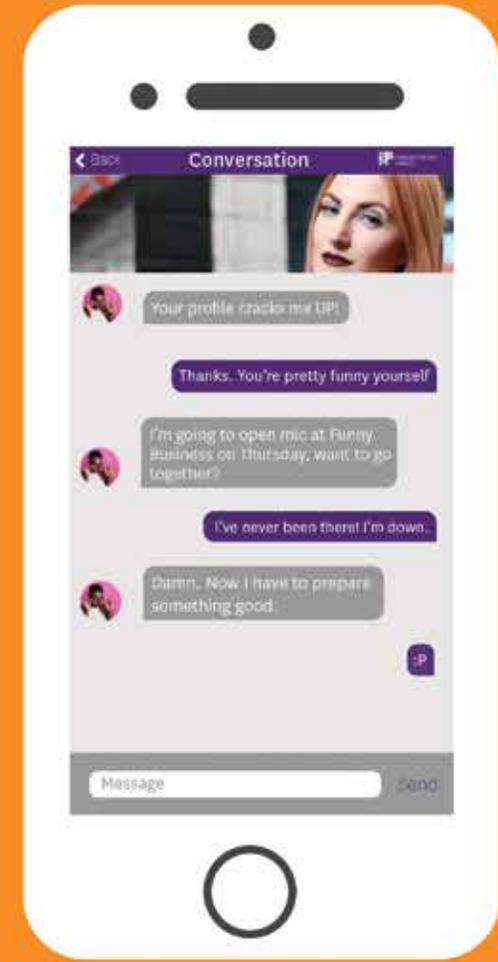
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