

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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BUFF CARMICHAEL

Series to examine life of local LGBTQ-rights activist.

Photo courtesy of Carmichael



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Northwestern Memorial Hospital psychiatric nurse practitioner Tony Amberg.
Photo courtesy of Northwestern Memorial

ON THE FRONT LINES

LGBT nursing professionals talk about pandemic experience

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WORLD VIEW

Global panel looks at impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ people.

Photo of Outright International ED Jessica Stern by Brad Hamilton

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BIDEN HIS TIME

Biden's camp prepares for 'unprecedented' campaign.

Tim Carroll Photography



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Patti LuPone.
Photo courtesy of Netflix

LEAVE IT TO DIVA

Patti LuPone goes 'Hollywood'

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UPCOMING 2020

WINDY CITY TIMES PRINT DATES:

June 10, 2020	Aug. 5, 2020	Sept. 30, 2020
June 24, 2020	Aug. 19, 2020	Oct. 14, 2020
July 8, 2020	Sept. 2, 2020	Oct. 28, 2020
July 22, 2020	Sept. 16, 2020	Nov. 11, 2020

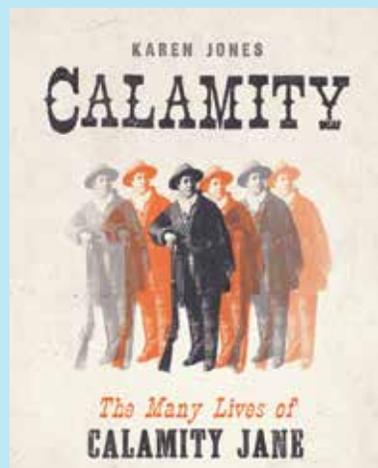
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SMOOTH OPERATOR

Gaywheels praises many aspects of the 2020 BMW 840i (left).
Photo courtesy of Gaywheels.com.

NO PLAIN JANE



WCT reviews the book Calamity: The Many Lives of Calamity Jane.

EVENT HORIZON

Find out about events that have been cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Billy Porter, Charlize Theron and streaming service Tubi.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

This Week's Featured Properties



Serene oasis on a 57'-wide lot; stunning historic all brick home overlooking 37' yard.

5335 N. Lakewood Ave.
\$1,699,000

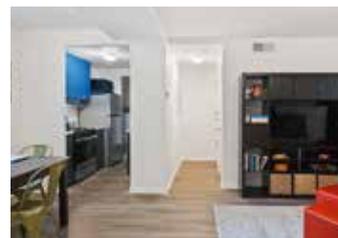
Lakewood-Balmoral



Huge super cool mid-century townhouse.

526 W. Barry Ave., Unit A
\$675,000

East Lakeview



Stylish and smart 1-bed in new conversion.

2750 N. Kenmore Ave., Ground Floor
\$199,000

Lincoln Park



Sleek one-bedroom in full-amenity high-rise.

3200 N. Lake Shore Dr., #403
\$139,500

East Lakeview



Indoor/outdoor architectural masterpiece.

2727 N. Seminary St.
COMING SOON

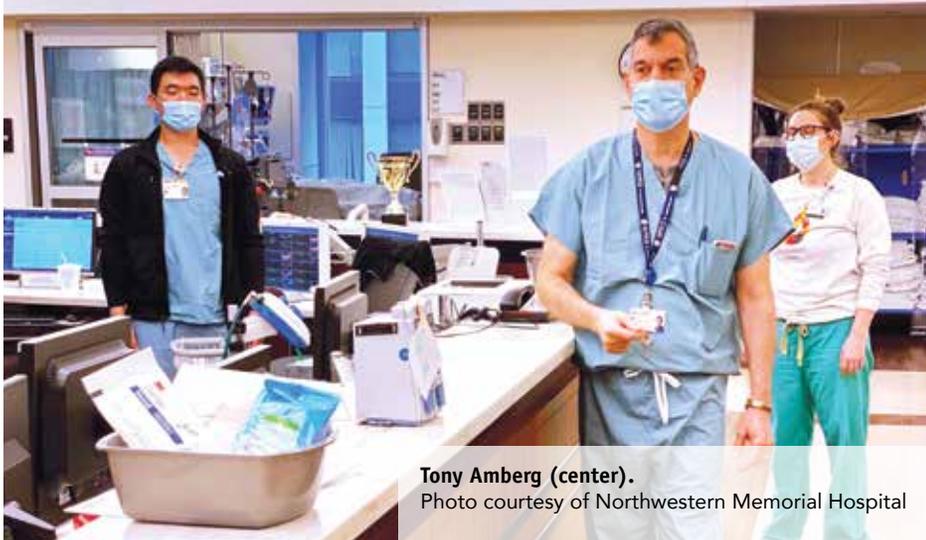
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Tony Amberg (center).
Photo courtesy of Northwestern Memorial Hospital

COVID-19

LGBT nursing personnel discuss pandemic experiences

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Thousands of healthcare professionals in Chicago, many of them members of the city's LGBT community, have been thrown into the frontlines of America's struggle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Tony Amberg, a psychiatric nurse practitioner at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, healthcare providers have had to struggle with the same uncertainties that the public and community members have all had to struggle with: determining an effective response to a relatively unknown illness.

Service providers, public officials and community members had fallen into a "bubble," Amberg said, wherein medical advancements in the last several decades had enabled vaccinations, treatments and cures for many illnesses.

"We got swayed by the idea that this was a disease that attacks the vulnerable, and that young people were immune," Amberg admitted. "Now we see that this is so not true. It attacks people who are very, very fit and knocks them over, as well as those who are not in good shape."

Erik McIntosh, a nurse practitioner at Rush University Medical Center's department of internal medicine, also noted the randomness with which COVID-19's symptoms were visited upon patients.

"I had a 90-year-old woman who had the coronavirus who had no symptoms," McIntosh recalled. "I remember walking in her room, and she said, 'They say I have this coronavirus, but I feel fine'—and she was fine. I remember thinking: 'How can I have this 90-year-old woman be fine, when I just sent a 49-year-old man to the ICU?'"

McIntosh added, "It was just trying to understand this virus that made it so scary."

Both McIntosh and Amberg said that each of their hospital staffs underwent massive and rapid restructurings as the patient loads began to increase. Amberg said that his entire hospital essentially became an enormous COVID-19 ward.

"The degree to which they have moved around thousands of people, and the degree of change that they've managed, has been extraordinary," he added.

Katherine Orlin, an RN clinical manager with

Buffalo Grove residents all in on Pride displays after complaint

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A family whose activism was crucial to bringing a Pride parade to suburban Buffalo Grove were admonished by an anonymous neighbor who inferred that their frontward signage was too flamboyant. But supporters have largely pledged to double down on Pride displays locally as June approaches.

Carolyn Pinta, whose daughter Molly was instrumental in launching the Buffalo Grove parade in 2019, said that the family received an anonymous note asking them to "tone down" the LGBT-focused messaging and decorations they've had in their yard.

The Pintas received the note in their mailbox May 21. Carolyn said that she decided to go public with the note because "it would fuel the fire" for other Buffalo Grove residents to get

Rush Community Based Practices, said that it took just under two weeks between initial conversations about how to handle the pandemic to opening dedicated facilities for patients.

"The reason for even that delay was just getting an infrastructure in place," Orlin explained. "Then overnight, we got the word: 'We're going to get going' and people started showing up the next day."

Orlin's work largely focuses on patients who are experiencing homelessness. She was redeployed to a COVID facility at A Safe Haven, a housing organization, which was operated by Rush and Chicago Department of Public Health.

"The patients were coming from all over Chicago," she said. "...People experiencing homelessness are generally a very marginalized, very underserved population and have a multitude of unmet healthcare needs, way beyond the virus, that they're coming in with."

Media reports about health personnel focus in large part on trauma for nurses, physicians and other staff working with COVID patients. Orlin, McIntosh and Amberg all acknowledged the intensity of the work, but said that the nimbleness and endurance of healthcare workers are significant parts of the pandemic's legacy.

"I think this really is a story of resilience," said Amberg. He primarily provides mental-health support for patients in non-psychiatric hospital units. As the pandemic came to the fore, his full-time job became mental-health support for the staff itself. He leads them in breathing exercises before shifts, for example, to help them stay focused and grounded as they see patients.

McIntosh admitted feeling "emboldened" by the cooperation and dedication he saw amongst his colleagues.

"What I have confidence in was the resilience and resolve of the entire medical team—physicians, physical therapists and even our environmental services team," he said. "When a crisis

out their Pride gear as June approaches. The village's 2020 Pride parade has been reformatted as a "drive-by" event June 7 so that residents can celebrate while still respecting social-distancing guidelines.

The anonymous note, dated May 17 and signed "a concerned Buffalo Grove neighbor," read:

"Hello and thank you for embracing the LGBTQ and gay lifestyle, we appreciate you being part of this community and being our good neighbor.

"Whereas you celebrate gay pride, we take pride in the overall appearance of our homes and neighborhood. That's why I'm asking you to please consider toning down your front yard signage and announcements.

"I'm hoping you do not see this as being out of line, I have been wanting to reach out to you on this for some time now. I also hope you agree this is a much respected community where we should all uphold the look of this upscale neighborhood."

Pinta said she and other neighbors were amused by the suggestion about their neighborhood's appearance of affluence: "Buffalo Grove has a lot of 'upscale' neighborhoods. Our neighborhood is not one of them."

The Pintas have frequently had colorful bal-



Erik McIntosh.
Photo courtesy of Rush University Medical Group

hits, we really come together as a team."

Orlin said the experience allowed her "the unique opportunity to help create a system that helps people who really can use it."

Healthcare providers will remain vigilant for future waves of coronavirus transmissions, Amberg said.

"It looks to me that about 1.1 percent of Cook County and Chicago has already tested positive, which if you think about it, is an enormous number," he explained. "It seems that, at this moment, in every 100 people, there is more than one person already known to be positive. If we play that out, that means that there are a lot of people out there, and that the situation is very ripe for explosion."

McIntosh said, "It's not a matter of 'if,' but 'when.'"

loon displays on their lawn, as well as a Pride flag, among other paraphernalia. But theirs is not the only lawn to be decorated, Carolyn added. Many residents have signs up congratulating graduates or encouraging resolve during the pandemic.

"We just happen to have the lawn that they don't like," she said, admitting that, despite the obvious careful wording, the note came "like a punch in the gut, especially with the Pride Drive coming up. There is so little to be excited about right now."

The note may ultimately backfire, since supportive neighbors say the episode has encouraged them to decorate their yards; one resident told Carolyn: "Looks like I need some Pride stuff."

Carolyn, meanwhile, said the Pintas are only getting started at decorating: "It's not even June yet."

Indeed, a Highland Park lighting designer, after learning about the letter, started preparing a rainbow exterior display for the Pinta home modeled after the White House Pride display when Barack Obama was in office.

"They're going to hate that," Carolyn said.



Howard Brown Health

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TAKE THE 2020 CENSUS

Buff Carmichael reflects on his life and downstate activism

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In this series, Windy City Times talks with activist Buff Carmichael regarding various issues and life developments.

Activist Buff Carmichael has been active in downstate LGBT issues, as well as myriad other progressive causes, since the early '90s.

That was when the newly out-of-the-closet Carmichael came to Illinois from his native Texas thanks to a job transfer and began to work on behalf of LGBT state-residents who, in large part because of their geographic location, did not have particularly loud voices in their communities.

Carmichael was the publisher of the LGBT newspaper the Prairie Flame, and was active in downstate advocates' endeavors to bring marriage-equality to Illinois in the mid-2010s. He has lately been in poor health, but spoke with Windy Times for a three-part series reflecting on his life and activism.

Windy City Times: Speak a bit on the origins for your name.

Buff Carmichael: My father was much older than most dads of someone my age; he was 53 when I was born. His father was murdered in 1893. His name was Billy Carmichael—William Thomas Carmichael. My father was born four months after his father was murdered and was the only child named Carmichael out of a family of 12 children.

There were no birth certificates in those days and not much record-keeping at all. He grew up with the name Buff Carmichael. He didn't know exactly how that came about, but the story he always told was that his father was Billy Carmichael, and he was probably "Little Billy or "Billy Jr.," but if you think about it, in 1893, on a ranch in Texas, it was a typical cowboy situation, and a hero of that era was Buffalo Bill.

It stood to reason that if he was Little Billy, they also called him Buffalo Bill. He joined the army as Buff Carmichael and married my mother as Buff Carmichael, and named me Buf, Jr.

WCT: What was it like growing up gay in Waco back then?

BC: My initial response is, How would I know? The social pressure—being an only son of an only son, who had to carry on the family name in a deeply religious Southern Baptist family—meant being gay was not an option.

In school, I was picked at without mercy. It seems like they all knew I was gay. I didn't know, and I was determined that I wouldn't be. I went into my adulthood absolutely determined that any inclinations that I had towards homosexuality had to be thwarted and disposed of. I can't really say that I grew up knowing what it was like to be gay. I didn't come to terms with being gay until I was married and had children.

WCT: How old were you when you got married?

BC: Twenty-one.

WCT: Your wife eventually discovered the truth about you?

BC: Yes. We tried to maintain a marriage for several years after that, but other issues popped up that eventually led to our divorce.

WCT: How did you try to maintain your marriage after the truth was out?

BC: We had a little agreement that if I said I was going out, she would ask, "Where are you going?" I would answer, "Do you really want to know?" She would say, "Yes, I understand."

Keep in mind, that was taking place, coincidentally, with the outbreak of AIDS. I was trying to enjoy my sexuality without it having any impact on my marriage, which led to loose promiscuity. The longer I lived with that, the more the chances that I would bring something home to my family. The longer I lived with that, it was best for everybody for me to pick one side or the other.

WCT: You eventually ended up in Dallas. What took you there?

BC: We had invested our life savings in a business. I was a funeral director and an embalmer, and we had an unfortunate time. We were having an auction on the front steps of the funeral home, and I was deep in debt to all the suppliers. It just seemed necessary that I get to a bigger city where I could blend in better and I find a job so that I could better support my family.

I went to Dallas looking for work, and over a period of time, went through several terrible jobs, and finally found a good one. But all that, in part, is what put a strain on the marriage.

It was a good paying job [with Johnson Controls] and they were really nice people to work for. But as I was going through a very nasty divorce, they encouraged me to either leave or take the risk of being fired. If I left voluntarily, I would be eligible for rehire.

So I voluntarily left, and went on a downhill slide through poorer and poorer jobs. But I was back and forth in court all the time. I stayed in Dallas, or around its suburbs, until around '92. The job I had in Dallas at the very end offered me the opportunity to be the assistant manager at a new location they were opening in Decatur, Illinois, so I left a lousy job in Dallas to go to a not quite as lousy job in Decatur.

WCT: What was life like for you in Illinois versus what it had been in Texas?

BC: My children had grown increasingly angry with me and I decided to move on with my life. When I went to Decatur, I didn't know how safe it was to be out. By then I was reasonably comfortable in my gay skin, but I was in a new place. I had an old man tell me one day, "These are good people who will accept you know matter



From left: Buff Carmichael with Phoenix Center Executive Director Jonna Cooley, Windy City Times founder Tracy Baim and Scott Cross at the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality.

Photo by Vern Hester

who you are, as long as you're honest. If they find out there's something you've been hiding, they'll never forgive you." That [influenced] my decision to be more open about who I was.

In September of '92, I got a promotion to be manager of the store I worked at. Also in September, I met Jerry [Bowman, Carmichael's late husband]. In November of '92, I got fired. So the next January I moved in with Jerry in Springfield. That was in a whirlwind of a year.

This guy published an article in the paper that he was trying to start a gay community group, so Jerry and I went. There were a whole bunch of people there and of course Jerry knew everybody—I knew nobody. But over the next few months, that evolved into the Central Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

It was set up to have male and female co-chairs, but we couldn't find women to participate at all. I was the male co-chair and was constantly trying to find women to come in and help run it, but had little success with that. But when I got politically active that way, I was always being interviewed on radio and TV, and in newspapers.

I was working as a temp, knowing I could be fired for not having my nails clean or something. So I was really concerned about that, but I thought what I was doing was important, so I did it. I had no bad effects from it. Everybody was very kind.

WCT: How did you come to that realization?

BC: I had an answering machine at home that I could call into, and one day I got a message to

call the State Journal-Register. There was a guy who had been picking out gay men and killing them. His mother had lived in St. Louis, and he had escaped from prison, and there was a nationwide story about who this guy was. Somebody reported that they saw somebody who looked like him in one of our bars here in Springfield.

The person who had been the media contact for the gay community was no longer doing it, so he gave [the newspaper] my number. I asked my boss if I could make a private phone call and did the interview over the phone. I then went in and told my boss that I did an interview, and that it might be somewhat controversial.

She asked, "Are you famous?"

I answered, "More likely I'm infamous."

The next day, when I walked into work, there was a lot of whispering behind my back. But everybody was pleasant and I started doing my daily work.

At about 2:30 in the afternoon, the boss brought her chair to my desk. ... [She said] "We don't care what you do in your time off, or what you stand for or what you believe, as long as you do your work or involve the state [for whom he had the temporary post] in your political action." That was it. People were just as nice as they could be about it.

In part two of this interview, Carmichael discusses his early relationship with husband Jerry Bowman, early downstate activism and his launch of the Prairie Flame.

Global panel looks at impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQI people

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Following the release of OutRight Action International's report "Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTIQ People," the United Nations (UN) LGBTI Core Group hosted a virtual panel "The Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTIQ People" on May 18.

The panel was one of the ways the UN marked this year's 2020 International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), which actually took place May 17.

OutRight Action International Executive Director Jessica Stern moderated the event. Panelists included UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Victor Madrigal-Borloz; Colours Cayman founder/President Billie Bryan; and Mawjoudin We Exist for Equality Secretary General Khawla Bouaziz.

UN LGBTI Core Group co-chairs—Netherlands's Permanent Representative to the UN Karel van Oosterom and Argentina's Charges D'Affaires to the UN Alejandro Verdier—welcomed Iceland and Nepal as new core group members this year.

van Oosterom said that he hopes South Africa will rejoin as a member of the core group and noted that, when asked by the UN LGBTI Core Group, the UN General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, of Nigeria, would not say that "human rights are LGBTI rights and LGBTI rights are human rights."

Verdier said he hopes more countries from Africa and Asia will join the core group in the coming months/years. He noted that OutRight's report found that emergencies like COVID-19 accelerate

vulnerabilities that exist among LGBTQ people and other marginalized communities worldwide.

Nepal's Permanent Representative to the UN, Amrit Bahadur Rai, noted that his country's constitution has sexual orientation and gender identity protections in its constitution. He said that it is vital to make sure that LGBTQ people get equal access to healthcare and are not discriminated against, especially during this pandemic, because "no one is safe until everyone is safe."

Iceland's Permanent Representative to the UN, Jorundur Valtysson, spoke about his country's continued work on advancing LGBTQ equality.

Stern spoke about the many LGBTQ people who are now being forced to shelter-in-place with anti-LGBTQ family members, emphasizing the physical and emotional toll these arrangements have on their well-being—and how many of them are going back into the closet for their own safety.

Madrigal-Borloz said the message that is being sent to the UN General assembly is that "there is no way to understand the integral impact of this pandemic if you erase LGBTQ persons and their lived realities from that picture. ... This pandemic is actively being used to persecute and attack LGBTQ people, attempt to withdraw their rights and delay the incoming of rights they were due because of judicial and legislative means or public policy."

Byran said that people in the Cayman Islands pretend that LGBTQ people do not exist so the focus of her organization is to promote visibility in a safe manner. She added that all the safe spaces they created have been lost due to COVID-19 and this puts LGBTQ people in unsafe homes at risk for harm. Bryan spoke about the new virtual initiative social circles that Colours Cayman will

be rolling out via Zoom calls and various social media platforms.

Bouaziz, whose country criminalizes LGBTQ people's actions, spoke about the economic impact COVID-19 has had on the LGBTQ community because many of them held jobs that are no longer in operation.

Both Bryan and Bouaziz emphasized that their organizations need funds to help LGBTQ people in their countries through this pandemic and into the future.

Other speakers included Canada's Deputy Permanent Representative Richard Arbeiter; Costa Rica's Presidential Commissioner for LGBTI Population Affairs Luis Salazar; and United States Acting Economic and Social Council Representative Courtney Nemroff.

Following the Q&A session, Spain Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN María Bassols Delgado and Uruguay Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Luis Homero Bermúdez Álvarez closed the event.

The full panel can be viewed here: outrightinternational.org/content/2020-un-lgbti-core-group-idahobit-event.

To read UN LGBTI Core Group's 2020 IDAHOBIT statement and OutRight Action International's report visit unlgbticoregroup.org/2020/05/17/idahobit-statement/ and outrightinternational.org/content/vulnerability-amplified-impact-covid-19-pandemic-lgbtqi-people.



Outright International ED Jessica Stern.
Photo by Brad Hamilton

Costa Rica celebrates marriage equality

As of midnight on May 26, Costa Rica became the first country in Central America (and the 28th United Nations member state) to legalize same-sex marriage after a groundbreaking court ruling came into effect.

Reuters reported that the country's constitutional court ruled in August 2018 that a ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional; it then gave parliament 18 months to legislate or the provision would be automatically nullified.

"Costa Rica is celebrating today: marriage equality has become a reality in the country—the first one in Central America!" said the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) in a tweet.

"Today, Costa Rica has made history, bringing marriage equality to Central America for the first time," said Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David in a statement that Windy City Times obtained. "Costa Rica's LGBTQ community has worked tirelessly for years to make today a reality. This victory is theirs, and it inspires the entire global LGBTQ community to continue fighting to move equality forward."

"Now, other signatory countries of the American Convention on Human Rights should follow in Costa Rica's footsteps and adopt the Inter-American Court's guidance by establishing marriage equality. Today is a day for celebration, but also a reminder of the work we still must do around the world in our global fight for recognition and inclusion."

Costa Rica is also the sixth country in Latin America to allow same-sex marriage, following Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay; parts of Mexico have also legalized it.



Aimee Stephens.
Photo by Molly Kaplan

Trans-rights advocate Aimee Stephens dies

Aimee Stephens—the Michigan transgender funeral home worker whose firing led to a U.S. Supreme Court case that could decide the employment rights of millions of transgender and gender-nonconforming people—died May 12 at age 59.

According to NBC News, Stephens had kidney disease for several years and needed lengthy dialysis treatments. According to a GoFundMe for her end-of-life costs, being fired from her

job in 2013 (after coming out as transgender) contributed to "several years of lost income" that her family has been unable to regain.

The Supreme Court is set to issue its ruling in *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral v. EEOC and Aimee Stephens* soon. According to an article Windy City Times ran, the case asks if Title VII's "because ... of sex" language covers discrimination because of gender identity and whether another federal law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) provides an exemption from Title VII if the employer claims the discrimination is based on religious beliefs.

Chase Strangio, deputy director for Trans Justice with the ACLU's LGBT & HIV Project and a member of Aimee Stephens' legal team, said in a statement to Windy City Times, "Aimee did not set out to be a hero and a trailblazer, but she is one, and our country owes her a debt of gratitude for her commitment to justice for all people and her dedication to our transgender community."

Stephens' wife, Donna, issued the following statement:

"Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your kindness, generosity, and keeping my best friend and soulmate in your thoughts and prayers. Aimee is an inspiration. She has given so many hope for the future of equality for LGBTQ people in our country, and she has rewritten history. The outpouring of love and support is our strength and inspiration now."

Stephens is survived by Donna and a daughter, Elizabeth.

A GoFundMe page for Aimee's end-of-life costs is at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/aimee-stephens-endof-life-costs>.

COVID-19

Equality Illinois town hall emphasizes need for mental-health services

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The coronavirus pandemic and the economic devastation that has followed only exacerbated the need for robust mental-health resources for area residents, according to two local advocates.

Matt Richards, deputy commissioner of behavioral health at Chicago Department of Pub-



Thresholds CEO Mark Ishaug.
Photo by Hal Baim

lic Health (CDPH); and Mark Ishaug, CEO of the mental-health agency Thresholds, were featured speakers at Equality Illinois' May 12 online town-hall meeting.

"What COVID did was expose the challenges that our 10,000 clients experience every day," said Ishaug, who also noted that feelings of isolation, disruption of routine and anxiety around the virus were pervasive in American society.

Richards said that the city's five mental-health facilities have remained open during the pandemic. Those are making a hastened transition to telehealth services when allowable, he added, further noting that CDPH has been "thinking about digital supports that we have not historically provided" in delivery of mental-health services.

Government officials and other influential stakeholders tend to regard "mental health" as the presence or absence of mental illness. Many providers prefer the idea be addressed more holistically and integrally to measure clients' well-being, Richards added.

But that means service providers need to be conscientious of the assumptions they make about their clients' resources, especially since

those are increasingly taxed by a medical and economic catastrophe. Ishaug noted, for example, that Thresholds moved its client base to telehealth service delivery when possible, but many of those clients were using pre-paid government mobile phones with limited amounts of minutes.

Homeless persons, incarcerated individuals and persons subject to racially and socio-economically motivated inequities are among those most vulnerable to mental-health complications, both Richards and Ishaug explained.

Richards said "big thinking" was needed from stakeholders to get around funding and logistical complications that will surely appear in the months ahead, particularly with regards to housing services.

Ishaug said that the state government has been helpful in allowing Thresholds to continue and modify its operations. Nevertheless, he added, "This is going to require the state and federal governments to step up" in order that service-providers continue operating.

Richards and Ishaug also both addressed how COVID-influenced traumas will become issues for both clients and service providers in the months and years ahead. Ishaug urged everyone in the community, in the meantime, to be kind and treat one another with patience.

"We're in this for the long haul," he said.

COVID-19

Howard Brown Health to ramp up testing

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Howard Brown Health will be increasing the number of mobile units it deploys to test underserved Chicagoans for coronavirus, according to organizational officials.

The mobile units have been "primarily centering the needs of marginalized individuals on Chicago's South and West Sides," according to Channyn Lynne Parker, Howard Brown's director of strategic partnerships. The units are especially geared for Chicagoans who are not particularly mobile, such as retirees and persons who are experiencing homelessness, she added.

"These areas are particularly vulnerable and under-resourced," Parker said. "The pandemic has highlighted that in a way that has led to a lot of deaths of Black and Brown individuals."

The mobile units have made testing available each week Thursday through Friday, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. But Howard Brown plans on deploying testing sites from Monday through Saturday in the weeks ahead, with an increased number of providers, said 63rd Street and South Regions Medical Chief Maya Green.



Howard Brown Health Director of Strategic Partnerships Channyn Lynne Parker.
Photo courtesy of Parker

Green added that the testing will continue indefinitely: "We'll go on doing it as long as the need is still there."

Howard Brown usually hosts the testing sites with a church or some other community organization, and have so far performed test in the Chatham, West Englewood and Auburn Gresham neighborhoods, among others, Parker said.

Unlike many testing sites, the services are on-demand; those who wish to be tested may have it done without a doctor's referral and without being symptomatic for coronavirus. Persons should expect to fill out forms for both Howard Brown and Illinois Department of Public Health (which processes the lab work); they are then led to the testing area, where their nasal cavities are swabbed. The total time for the swabbing process is about 10 seconds, Green said.

Individuals are also asked about other conditions as well as if they've had coronavirus symptoms. Masks are provided when they are available. Results are usually available in two to eight days.

Without waiting, the entire visit lasts five to ten minutes, Green said, though she added that waits have sometimes been long.

"We've sometimes had people already in line when we've come to set up at 8 a.m.," she said. As such, test providers are conscientious that the testing proceeds as quickly and smoothly as possible, since one of their overall goals is to preserve social distancing.

Parker said that the initiative ties into an organizational objective of tying marginalized Chicagoans into a continuum of care and addressing the social determinants of their well-being. "It has been great to jump and answer this call [to address] a community need," she added.

See HowardBrown.org.



Lawsuit urges speedy release of prisoners

Civil-rights attorneys filed an amended suit in a class-action case, now called *Richard v. Pritzker*, demanding that state officials speed the release of Illinois prisoners who are highly vulnerable to COVID-19, according to a press release from Uptown People's Law Center.

According to the release, "Last month, a federal court recognized that thousands of people in IDOC [the Illinois Department of Corrections] custody are at risk for serious illness and even death if COVID-19 continues to spread through IDOC prisons. Despite this fact, the emergency request for a process that would expedite the release of those particularly at risk was denied.

"Prison settings pose a particularly dangerous risk of spreading the virus with catastrophic consequences, as evidenced by the outbreak in Stateville Prison that overwhelmed the St. Joseph Medical Center in Joliet."

Plaintiffs are represented by the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center, the Community Justice Civil Rights Clinic at the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, Illinois Prison Project, Uptown People's Law Center, Loevy & Loevy Attorneys at Law and Equip for Equality and IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law professor Carolyn Shapiro.

Report shows impact of pandemic on LGBTQs of color

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation—the educational arm of the Human Rights Campaign—released new data outlining the economic impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ communities of color.

"This new data, showing that LGBTQ communities of color are facing the severe economic consequences of this pandemic, is unfortunately not surprising," said HRC President Alphonso David. "We must acknowledge that these communities, particularly LGBTQ people of color, face systemic biases that are placing them at greater risk."

The data shows that:

—38 percent of LGBTQ people of color have had their work hours reduced, compared to 29 percent of white LGBTQ people, and 24 percent of the general population;

—22 percent of LGBTQ people of color became unemployed, compared to 14 percent of white LGBTQ people and 13 percent of the general population;

—19 percent of LGBTQ people of color have asked for delays in payments on bills, compared to 14 percent of white LGBTQ people and 12 percent of the general population;

—14 percent of LGBTQ people of color have asked for delays in rent payment, compared to 8 percent of white LGBTQ people and 7 percent of the general population; and

The data also shows that across all demographics, many feel that they are worse off financially than they were a year ago, and have taken measures to spend less and change their budgets.

COVID-19

Chicago House forum looks at coronavirus, HIV overlaps

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Illinois state Reps. Lamont Robinson and Greg Harris joined local advocates for an online discussion about the intersection between coronavirus pandemic and the HIV/AIDS epidemic the afternoon of May 15.

The discussion, the third part in a series organized by the Chicago House agency, also featured Brave Space Alliance Executive Director LaSaia Wade and Chicago House CEO Michael Herman and was moderated by Chicago Reader Publisher (and Windy City Times owner) Tracy Baim.

Harris, who is also the house majority leader, mentioned a number of parallels, and significant differences, between the two crises.

"The first reaction is to stigmatize people who are sick, or we think may be sick, from COVID," he said, adding that many people regard the medical crisis with an "us vs. them" mentality. Those individuals, who regard the illness as something that happens to someone else, frequently cannot imagine that they themselves are at risk from the pandemic, so do not feel any obligation to change their lifestyle.

Harris, who is living with HIV, recalled that, during the AIDS crisis, gay men, at least initially, were similarly made into the "other" by society; furthermore, persons of color were gradually revealed to be disproportionately impacted. Harris added, "There were disparities in the services

that were available, and the treatments that were available, just as we're seeing now."

Herman said, "It's a huge problem when shaming comes into it. When there is so much shame, it's impossible to move forward from a public health perspective."

Wade said that the transgender and gender-nonconforming communities experience a number of unique health concerns with regards coronavirus.

"Chest-binding [for example] automatically affects respiratory problems for trans-masculine folks," she said. "...It's pressure on the chest, so when you're dealing with COVID-19, it's an automatic [consideration for], 'Should I have to wear this binding to do my work or face the possibility that I might receive some kind of violence if I don't?'"

Wade also noted that trans women taking estrogen are at risk for blood clots. COVID-19 causes blood clots as well, and a combination of the two can be fatal, she added.

Robinson noted that numerous disparities still exist in accessibility to PrEP and HIV-testing for gay men of color.

"It's important as a legislator that I move forward funding for the African-American [HIV/AIDS] Response Act," he added, noting that the fund had recently been depleted. "That's a travesty for our community because it is used to stop the spread of HIV."



LaSaia Wade.

Photo by Liz Baudler

Robinson also mentioned his work for a South Side LGBT Center.

"If that center were in existence today, we would be testing [for coronavirus] there," he added.

Herman and Wade both spoke about preserving their personnel and organizational capacities to mount robust responses to the pandemic.

"We need to make sure that our clients are taking care of their HIV and continuing to go to the doctor, even when they're told never to leave the house," Herman said. "How do we make sure that the continuum of care continues to happen? Those kinds of services are extremely important."

Wade added, "I was not alive during the AIDS

epidemic, but I have been alive during the crisis that trans people have been dealing with since the beginning—being murdered left and right, having to fundraise for trans women and trans men to be buried, or having to fight for them to be buried with the names that they fought so hard to live in. Before this pandemic happened, we were already in a crisis."

Wade praised her partner's emotional support, which she said has been crucial for her own energy to continue working as the pandemic unfolded.

"I have to be able to take care of myself, so I can continue to uplift," she added.



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Forum examines 2020 election preparations

BY MATT SIMONETTE

In the opening moments of a May 19 discussion about maintaining the integrity of the 2020 Illinois elections, Equality Illinois Policy Director Mike Ziri stressed the importance of state residents being vigilant about “the preservation of democratic norms, structures and processes” in the year ahead.

Indeed, even beyond the presidential race, stakes are rarely so high for an election, noted Equality Illinois CEO Brian Johnson. This upcoming contest determines the lawmakers who will draw up the next set of the state’s electoral district.

“I don’t think anyone should ever skip voting,” said Johnson. “But if you are only going to vote in one election this decade, this would be the one.”

Rep. Lamont Robinson, Chicago Votes Executive Director Stevie Valles and Asian Americans Advancing Justice Policy Director Justin Valas joined Johnson, Ziri and Equality Illinois Director of Development Emily Boyce for the May 19 online forum.

Robinson said that the chaotic response to the



Equality Illinois Policy Director Mike Ziri. WCT photo

Biden camp gears up for ‘unprecedented’ campaign

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A representative from former Vice President Joe Biden’s presidential campaign told supporters from Illinois’ LGBT community they’d be running “a campaign that nobody has ever seen before” as they pivot to general-election strategies to unseat incumbent President Donald Trump.

Deputy Campaign Manager Rufus Gifford—who is gay and was previously ambassador to Denmark under President Barack Obama—added during the May 13 online discussion that he’d recently joined the Biden campaign because Democrats “need everybody doing everything they possibly can.”

Reggie Greer, the campaign’s LGBTQ liaison, admitted Biden was theoretically at a disadvantage in two respects: the voting public is quite frequently predisposed towards re-electing incumbents, and the 2020 campaign in all likelihood would be carried out online as the United States grapples with the coronavirus pandemic.

“We are completely throwing out the old playbooks,” said Greer, adding that LGBT voters are a “key part” of the Democratic Party’s constituency. As such, Biden is boasting a multi-pronged LGBT platform, principal components of which include protections for LGBT youth; restoring legal protections for transgender Americans that have been lost during the Trump administration; sign-

ing the Equality Act into law; and making the U.S. a leader in furthering LGBT-rights worldwide.

“There’s never been more at stake in an election,” added Chicago activist Justin DeJong, who is also a former Obama administration official. DeJong asked the participants to engage their online and real-time networks in the months ahead. Online gatherings, he said, would likely function as “virtual campaign rallies.”

A few participants asked whether local campaign officials would be directing supporters and resources to nearby swing-states such as Wisconsin and Michigan. Chicago Ald. James Cappleman (46th Ward) recalled phone-banking for Hillary Clinton in the final days of the 2016 election and feeling panic upon hearing the leanings of voters there, for example. Another participant asked about participating in voter registration drives in Wisconsin.

Greer answered that a key goal for the Biden campaign is making a push for “a comprehensive civic literacy” among voters, an endeavor that would indeed include educational efforts about the importance of voting.

Despite his myriad difficulties in navigating both the pandemic and its economic aftermath, Trump still has been enjoying a sizable fundraising lead over Biden. But Gifford said that the former vice president was quickly catching up to Trump, with both candidates raising about \$60 million in April. Nevertheless, Gifford added, circumstances dictate an aggressive campaign from the Democrats, who will need the support of LGBT voters.

“It’s an unprecedented time and we need unprecedented effort,” he said.

coronavirus pandemic is “a grave reason that we need to be galvanizing our communities and get them out to vote.”

Experts anticipate that the United States will experience a resurgence in COVID-19 transmissions in the fall. As such, Robinson said, the state will need to make robust preparations so that voters have options to cast their ballots outside of election-day polls.

“We want to make sure that no one is left out,” he added.

Valles’ organization has long been committed to expanding voter access, participating in, among other efforts, the opening of a polling place at the Cook County Jail. He maintained that voter-suppression, especially against incarcerated Americans, has ensured that true democracy has never really materialized in this country.

“If you don’t vote, we won’t know if democracy works,” Valles said. As such, election boards and community organizations must work together to both mitigate health risks and ensure a robust turnout, he added, noting, for example, that officials must strive for a younger pool of election judges. Most judges are 60 or older, a demographic that is especially vulnerable to coronavirus transmissions.

Valles additionally noted that some election judges count on the financial stipends that comes with their duties, and said that community members should be obligated to help compensate them for the financial blow that would come with being told to “sit this one out.”

Valas noted that his organization’s constituency is composed of speakers of numerous languages, and that persons from those demographics will need election materials in those languages.

“We want to make sure that folks have access to those materials without a lot of back and forth,” Valas said.

Personal PAC CEO Terry Cosgrove was among the audience for the call, and he emphasized that losing even a few seats in the state House and the state Senate could result in major blows for LGBT- and reproductive-rights.

“It’s only been until recently that we’ve been able to pass things in the state assembly—but only on the slimmest of margins,” Cosgrove said, adding that he “couldn’t imagine going back to that earlier era.”

Valas added, “All policy work is better informed by the active participation of the public,” adding, that, as such, “There’s a lot to get ready for in November.”

Golden Apple surprises out teacher with award

On May 15, Golden Apple—a Illinois non-profit committed to preparing, honoring and supporting exemplary educators who advance educational opportunities for students—surprised Jenine Wehbeh, a seventh and eighth-grade teacher at John B. Murphy Elementary in Chicago, with the prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching.

For the first time in Golden Apple’s history, the awardees are being notified differently than in the full-school environment, and Wehbeh—a former Windy City Times 30 Under 30 honoree—was surprised during a live TV segment on WGN Chicago.

Following a highly competitive process, the 2020 award recipients were selected from more than 730 nominations of 4th-8th grade teachers. The demand for recognition throughout the state was profound, with nominations for outstanding teachers and leaders received from 64 Illinois counties.

Wehbeh is one of 10 Illinois teachers in grades four through eight recognized for superior performance in the classroom and school community.

Northwestern University, Golden Apple’s partner for more than 30 years, provides a spring sabbatical to award recipients at no cost. In addition, each Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching recipient receives a \$5,000 cash award. Award recipients become Fellows of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, a community of educators who support current and future teachers and deepen the learning of students.

The nomination period for the 2021 Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching &

Leadership is open. All are invited to nominate exceptional Pre-K-third grade Illinois teachers and Pre-K through 12th-grade school leaders at GoldenApple.org/awards.

Brave Space Alliance announces board of directors

Brave Space Alliance—a Black- and trans-led “LGBTQ center on the South Side of Chicago that is dedicated to creating and providing affirming, culturally competent, for-us by-us resources, programming and services for LGBTQ individuals on the South and West sides of the city,” according to its website—has announced its board of directors.

The South Side nonprofit’s new board features Pride Action Tank Executive Director Kim Hunt; Chicago Reader Publisher and Windy City Times owner/co-founder Tracy Baim; filmmaker/writer/producer/director Lilly Wachowski; nationally known trans activist and mental-health advocate Valerie Spencer; activist, artist, and journalist Michelle Zacarias; Chicago trans community organizer and small-business owner Tatyana Moaton; and Chicago TransLatin@ community elder and longtime activist Monica Fernandez.

The move to establish a formal board of directors comes as Brave Space Alliance pushes for independent tax-exempt status, following three years of fiscal sponsorship under Trans United Fund and Center on Halsted, in turn.

This announcement marks the latest development in a busy two-month period for the organization, which, in March, opened a permanent office in Hyde Park, and launched a pair of successful COVID-19 emergency response programs to help meet the needs of community members during the pandemic.

Gerber/Hart Library hosts virtual panel on The 10 Percent Show

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The 10 Percent Show was the focus of a May 13 virtual panel hosted by Gerber/Hart Library and Archives.

A cable access Chicago-based LGBTQ monthly newsmagazine, The 10 Percent Show ran for 21 episodes between 1989-1991 and covered politics, entertainment and community organizations.

Northwestern University Ph.D. candidate Lauren Herold—whose research is focused on LGBTQ cable access shows—was the event moderator.

Panelists included The 10 Percent Show executive director/producer Jack Ryan, show co-host/segment producer Sarah Siegel and show segment producer/production crew member Tom Rowan.

Herold asked Ryan why he created the show and how Siegel and Roway got involved.

Ryan said when he attended the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, he met people from the New York City-based Gay Cable Network, giving him the idea to start an LGBTQ-focused show in Chicago. He noted that it took about two years to get the right people on

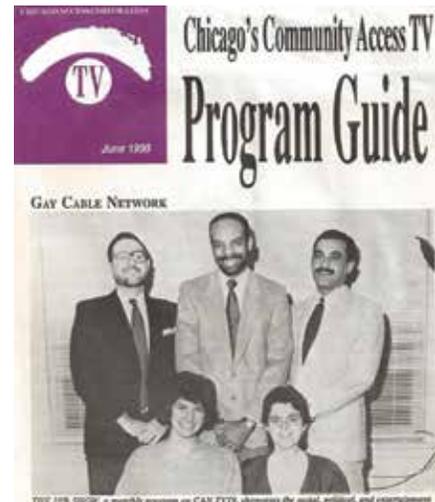
board to do the show for free; outreach included hosting meetings, having a booth at what was then called the Halsted Street Fair (now known as Northalsted Market Days) and talking to the press.

Siegel said at the time she was volunteering for the Horizons Community Services (now Center on Halsted) help line. A friend who was also volunteering suggested they go to a meeting for the show; after that meeting, she signed on to help get the show off the ground.

Roway said he found the show through an article in Windy City Times that included Ryan's home phone number. He said that conversation and going to his first meeting at Ryan's apartment sealed the deal for him.

Everyone reminisced about putting the show together and the various topics they chose to cover.

Siegel said that, outside of having a girlfriend, she really did not know anything about the wider LGBTQ community and doing the show taught her so much. She noted that the show gave her great insights into, among other things, the Black gay community and International Mr. Leather—the



CAN-TV cover featuring The 10 Percent Show. Photo by Sarah Siegel

latter which she would never have attended otherwise.

Ryan spoke about the brainstorming sessions they had during their show meetings, stressing how important it was to all of them to create a diverse program that spoke to the entire Chicago LGBTQ community. He said they did stories on then-Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, alderpeople and a contentious event at Ann Sather that had other news outlets clamoring for the show's video footage since they did not cover it themselves.

Rowan said the show was very topical—meaning they would get segments on the air as quick as possible. He added that he would never have gone to body-positive organization Girth and Mirth if he was not involved with the show.

In terms of the response by Chicago's LGBTQ community, Ryan said Tracy Baim—whom he calls the Claire Boothe Luce of Chicago—was an early supporter, as was Roscoe's owner Jim Ludwig and Sidetrack co-owners Art Johnston and Pepe Pena. He added that the leather community and now-shuttered Mountain Moving Coffeehouse championed the show because they did stories on their groups.

Herold asked about any antagonistic responses they might have gotten.

Ryan said when they were covering an AIDS demonstration a man came up to them and said he wished every gay person would contract the disease. Siegel spoke about a lesbian kiss-in outside of Water Tower Place; two men she was interviewing said the event was "disgusting" and used the "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" line—to which she said, "Well, this is Eve and Eva." The men ended up leaving after another woman asked them why they were watching the event.

Other topics ranged from show finances to the fact that their production company, SBC, stood for "Shitty But Cool."

A Q&A session followed.

To watch episodes of The 10 Percent Show, visit GerberHart.org/the-10-show.

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Is there a doctor...

It's that time again. I need to find a healthcare provider.

I live in a rural community where there is a large turnover of medical professionals and a constant shortage of qualified staff. The health organization that provides these services seems to have difficulty attracting talent. It's common knowledge in the communities it covers that it's a tough employer to work with.

Which isn't to say there are not entirely competent professionals devoted to their patients and performing at least as well as their big city peers. I'm the one who's chosen to live where the question, "Is there a doctor in the house?" may well go unanswered.

My primary provider is pursuing the next step in her career—a step at a deservedly higher altitude. She's a Physician Assistant, but I couldn't trust someone with a full medical degree more. She's perfectly straight, yet never blinched when the issue of my queerness came up. Although she was not taking new patients at the time, she graciously made room for my sweetheart in her practice. How will we ever replace her?

Of course, I asked the same thing when my former doctor left. We all loved her. Once, I had to go into her office and the New York Times was up on her

computer screen. Bonding moment! Another time, I answered my phone and it was a call from a liberal election phone tree. I recognized my doctor's voice and she admitted to thinking she probably didn't need to give me her spiel. Double bonding! Then she was gone.

This year, for the first time, I chose a Medicare Advantage Plan with the aforementioned difficult local health organization. The lure was partial coverage for dental, acupuncture, and vision, bless their hearts. Now I'm limited to the medical providers who are left on their roster after mine departed. Woe is me.

One of my major concerns is finding a gay-friendly person, preferably female. I've always taken my chances, but after the phone tree doctor left, I tried Dr. X. Oh my gosh, what a mistake that was both for me and, I later found out, for all her patients and the staff. It's not difficult to intimidate me and Dr. X was a master at it. She was medical s&m and there I was, a homosexual beneath contempt—and this in the twenty-first century! I mean, you believe what your doctor says, you trust her, you follow her instructions. But Dr. X was just plain mean. She was expert at identifying vulnerabilities and using verbal ice picks to stab them.

So, I'm cautious now. I'm on tip toes. I'll travel hours to see someone with whom I'll be compatible.

My retreating PA had some suggestions, but not one of them is taking new patients in this time of COVID19 and rural staff shortages. I'm grateful she was able to rule out a few pairings she knew would be lethal, to either me or to the doc.

Friends recommended a good woman MD, but she's employed by the Health District and thus, not covered by my plan. Two other recommendations looked excellent, but are not taking new patients.

Facebook can be helpful once in a while. I posted to a local LGBTQ and straight page whose members

were generous with suggestions. There was a well-recommended Pa but the contacts, responding to my search for a female provider, expressed uncertainty that the recommended individual was identifying as female.

Meanwhile, our delightful new lesbian neighbors have also been looking for healthcare, and one actually scheduled an appointment with a woman MD in town, then cancelled when the plague hit, so no input there yet.

Do non-gays have this much trouble finding care? And how do other lesbians approach this headache? Should I simply call the clinics and ask if they employ a professional who is gay-friendly, wait for the pregnant pause and assurance that everyone is treated equally, and the inevitable willy-nilly listing of doctors who can squeeze us in?

There's a neat website, out2enroll.org, which has a search engine for gay-friendly doctors. I plugged in my zip code. The response: "No providers match your search. Try removing some search criteria." Maybe it works in San Francisco, a 10-hour drive from here in good weather.

And then there's <https://www.outcarehealth.org/outlist/>. Same response. HRC has a list, but it only includes hospitals for my state—

Our medical center is not listed. I actually noticed, when I signed up for the Advantage Plan, that sexual orientation is not included in its Equal Employment statement.

What's a dyke to do? What I've always done. Make an appointment with an unknown quantity and hope for an open-minded practitioner who thinks gay patients are as valuable and deserving of respect as heterosexuals. She's out there; it's just a matter of enduring a Dr. X or two until I find her.

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letters

LGBTQ discrimination is a disgrace

The named plaintiff in a landmark Supreme Court case on gay marriage discusses current LGBTQ cases before the court.

May 16, 2020

Re the New York Times article, "Aimee Stephens, 59, Plaintiff in Transgender Rights Case" (obituary, May 14):

Our world has long been gripped by questions of mortality and legacy, perhaps more than ever in recent months as people around the globe have confronted the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel especially heavy as I reflect on Aimee Stephens, who died on Tuesday. This fall, her lawsuit challenging anti-LGBTQ employment discrimination became the first case about the civil rights of transgender people to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Five years ago, my own case seeking the freedom to marry for same-sex couples reached the Supreme

Court, and while the historic opinion bears my name, the soul of the decision really belongs to my late husband, John Arthur, who died before he could see how our love helped move the country forward.

Advocates frequently cite the famous Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. quote "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." But I also believe that for far too many, the arc does not bend toward justice quickly enough.

That was the case for my husband. It's the case for Don Zarda, another plaintiff in the Supreme Court employment discrimination litigation, who died in 2014. And it's the case for so many everyday LGBTQ Americans who keep waiting and waiting to be protected from discrimination.

In 2020, in a majority of states and at the federal level, LGBTQ people lack basic protections from being fired, denied housing or refused service because of who they are or who they love. What a disgrace.

In the coming days the Supreme Court will issue its ruling in the cases brought by Aimee Stephens, Don Zarda and a gay man from Georgia, Gerald Bostock. Whatever the outcome, the fight won't be over. Only

through federal and state legislation can we secure full protections from anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

We all exist in this world for such a short time. While we are here, let us strive to be kind, to be decent, to treat others the way we want to be treated. That's really what we mean when we talk about protecting people from discrimination.

Aimee and Don and John have already left this world. But they've passed the baton to us—to all of us—and they're counting on us to honor their memory, fulfill their legacy and cross the finish line.

Let's not let them down.

Jim Obergefell
Columbus, Ohio

The writer, the named plaintiff in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, is an author, speaker and founder of Equality Vines.

This letter is an authorized reprint of an item that originally ran in *The New York Times*. The original is at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/opinion/letters/jim-obergefell-lgbtq-supreme-court.html>.

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Patti LuPone: A comeback in quarantine

Stage icon talks the series Hollywood, her basement videos and why 'Ladies Who Lunch' will never be the same

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI



Patti LuPone in *Hollywood*.
Photo courtesy of Netflix

In Ryan Murphy's *Hollywood*, the wife becomes the boss, the "Black screenwriter" is simply a screenwriter, and the gay leading man is just himself. Naturally, it stars Broadway icon Patti LuPone, who, in conversations like the one we had recently, thrives on brazen authenticity.

In the seven-episode Netflix series, LuPone portrays Avis Amberg, the wife of a studio head whose work is relegated to the kitchen. But not for long, thanks to Murphy's 1940s corrective where power dynamics shift in favor of the underdogs and outsiders in this alternate reality, a fantasy depiction of Tinseltown's Golden Age reimagined as diverse, inclusive and unabashedly queer.

That LuPone, 71, portrays a grand Hollywood dame and housewife-turned-studio head—in, of course, only the most glam fringed couture—should be no surprise given how she's been commanding the stage through a variety of extravagant personas for a half century. In 1979, as Eva Peron, she won her first Tony for *Evita*; her second win came in 2008, for her portrayal of Rose in *Gypsy*. She's also been nominated for roles in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *War Paint*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *Anything Goes*.

On Broadway is where she was throwing back martinis in Stephen Sondheim's 1970 musical *Company*, as Joanne, until the pandemic lockdown forced theaters to shut down.

Now quarantined in rural Connecticut with her husband, Matthew Johnston, and son Josh, LuPone has been doling out delicious bits on social media. In one video she posted to Twitter, she channeled Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, making a dramatic entrance from her basement steps (when Glenn Close got the role for the Broadway run of the show in 1994, LuPone said she reacted by trashing a dressing room). Other at-home videos of LuPone involve her giving aptly chaotic, hungover tours of her treasure-filled basement.

While on the phone, LuPone is told that she might actually be

happy that, for once, this conversation is occurring between phone lines, not on Zoom. "You're right," she said, roaring with laughter. "It really is the *Brady Bunch*."

Windy City Times: Do you have any more basement videos in the works?

Patti LuPone: My problem right now is focus and structure. If I don't do something in the morning, I'm in bed till 4:30 in the afternoon. So my kid—we've come up with a couple more. We just have to get down to it. We have to get up in the morning and go, "OK, now we're gonna do the video." We have two plans. So we'll see.

The problem, Chris, is it has to be spontaneous. It's the only way it's funny. The day after my birthday when I was so hungover I went, half-asleep, (slurring, drowsy) "Let's ... go ... make ... a ... video, I'm ... re-a-dy." [Laughs]

WCT: If it weren't for COVID, you'd be throwing back martinis on Broadway in *Company*. So I'm happy to hear you're still throwing back martinis—or something!

PL: Well, last night we had frozen strawberry daiquiris, but that was really the first time, because I was texting with a friend of mine and she said, "Go have a daiquiri," and I went, "You know what? That sounds like a good idea." And we seem to have all the fixings for it! So my kid made daiquiris for my husband, himself and me. Then I had red wine, which wasn't too smart. What I'm drinking a lot of right now is red wine. And I'm just trying ... you know it's really easy to let yourself go!

WCT: Have you completely let yourself go?

PL: No! No! I'm holding it together. I have to! [Laughs] Years ago a friend of mine, when he was on unemployment, I said, "What are you doing, Tony?" He said I'm preparing for my comeback! So, Chris, I'm prepping my comeback!

WCT: You made me teary when you recently sang "Anyone Can Whistle" for Stephen Sondheim's virtual 90th birthday party. Do you like performing virtually?

PL: What was difficult about it was the technical aspect. My kid was filming it and I had one AirPod in and I'm going, "I can't really hear," and then my kid said, "You're pitchy," and I was like, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN I'M PITCHY? I'm NEVER pitchy!"

There's always the fear that, you know, you're gonna sound like shit. And Stephen's thanking everybody who partook, and I wrote him back and I said, "The rub is that we all wish we could've done better." It's true. I'm sure everybody thought, "Damn, if only I was in costume and makeup and on the stage at the Philharmonic with a full orchestra behind me."

WCT: You were singing "The Ladies Who Lunch" in *Company*, which Meryl Streep, Christine Baranski and Audra McDonald performed during that same birthday celebration. What did you think of their version?

PL: [Explodes into a thunderous, dragged-out cackle] When it was over, I went, "I'll never be able to sing 'Ladies Who Lunch' again!"

WCT: Yeah? Because they set the bar?

PL: No. I don't think they set the bar—I think they trashed the number!

WCT: They set the bar for trashing the number?

PL: Yeah, exactly! That's what I think! I mean, I say that with great humor, but I'm not going to be able to sing it without thinking of them doing it. [Laughs] This is all joke, by the way! This is all humor!

WCT: Let's talk about *Hollywood*. Does it feel good to be part of a project that's beaming with hopefulness in a time when hope seems harder and harder to find?

PL: Yes, yes, yes. And I hope that is translated across the board. It's hard. It's really, really hard. I mean, I'm having a hard time. We all are. I'm not unique. And my problem is, I don't know who to believe anymore. I'm so confused by what everybody's saying. It's

STREAMING THEATER REVIEW

The Happiest Place on Earth

Playwright: Philip Dawkins

At: Sideshow Theatre online

Tickets: SideshowTheatre.org; \$5+ (pay what you can)

Runs through: Open run

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Playwright Philip Dawkins' many successful works—among them, *Charm*, *Le Switch*, *Failure: A Love Story* and *The Homosexuals*—are diverse in style and subject but display his characteristic wit, insight and effective use of comedy. *The Happiest Place on Earth* is no exception. It bears his customary hallmarks while also embracing a new form for Dawkins: an autobiographical one-person show, performed by Dawkins himself in this 2016 staging.

It's a meditation on the nature of happiness that ends with Dawkins—only 35 when he wrote the play—confessing that he has not been happy “for a very long time.” He questions the sustainability of happiness and knows that “No one lives happily ever after.”

But *The Happiest Place on Earth* isn't about Dawkins. It's about his mother, her three sisters and his grandmother and their trip to Disneyland



Philip Dawkins in *The Happiest Place on Earth*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow

on Christmas Day, 1963. Grandma was just 36 and an unexpected widow with four young daughters. The holiday trip was intended as a healing journey after the sudden death of their young father/husband.

Now, Dawkins is far too skillful to make this

90-minute piece gloomy or somber. He recognizes that Walt Disney and Disneyland are icons of popular culture, and that the “Magic Kingdom” is promoted as “the happiest place on earth.” Thus, his family's grief ironically comes face to face with unalloyed happiness.

STREAMING THEATER REVIEW

To Master the Art

Playwright: William Brown and Doug Frew

At: TimeLine Theatre, streaming

Tickets: TimelineTheatre.com; \$15-\$25

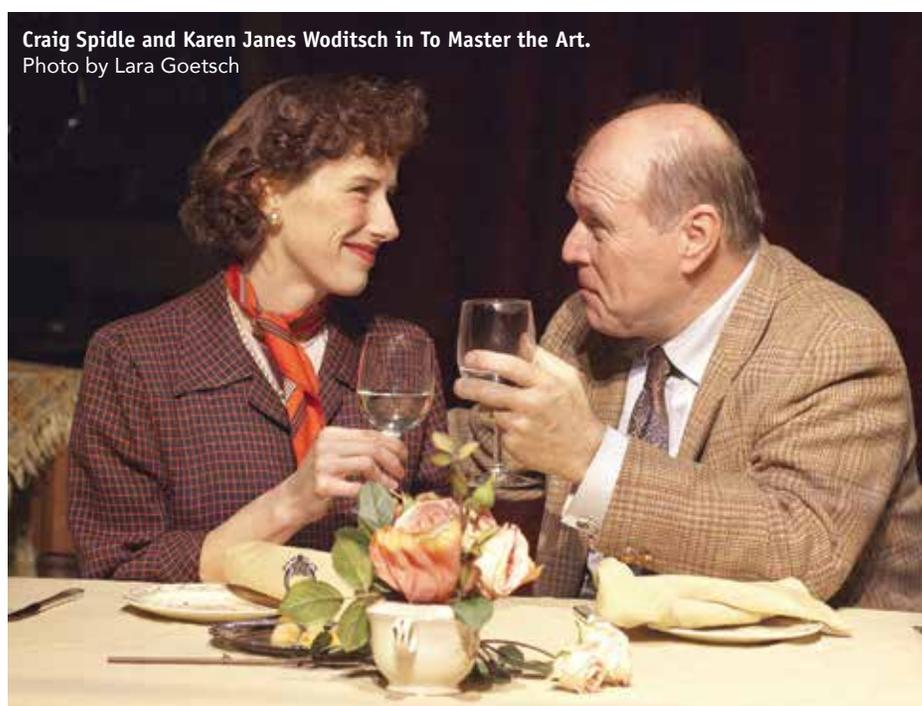
Runs through: June 7

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

TimeLine Theatre commissioned *To Master the Art* in 2008 and presented its world premiere two years later. It was remounted in 2013 for a commercial run at the Broadway Playhouse in Water Tower Place, and this streaming video is that 2013 restaging. It's pay-per-view, giving you (and your household) a week in which to view the show, once you sign up.

To Master the Art is a portrait of celebrated chef Julia Child and her husband, Paul Child, covering roughly 15 years from their marriage in 1946 up to the 1961 publication of Julia's magnum opus, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Most of the play is set in Paris, although they only lived there for five years, but we can allow authors Doug Frew and William Brown (also the director) a bit of poetic license.

It's vastly entertaining, especially Act I, which is peppered it with big laughs. Wisely, the laughs are not simply gags but always grow out of the



Craig Spidle and Karen Janes Woditsch in *To Master the Art*.
Photo by Lara Goetsch

characters. Act II grows more serious—and more intellectually substantial—as Child and her cookbook collaborators (Simone Beck and Louise Berthold) struggle to find a publisher, while Paul—who was a State Department officer with

the United States Information Agency—is caught up in the shameful Red Scare of the 1950s.

Indeed, *To Master the Art* constantly contrasts U.S. culture with European culture of the 1950s and America comes out looking xenophobic, para-

Early on, Dawkins acknowledges the phony, manufactured, controlled happiness Disneyland delivers, but then he goes deeper. “What is happiness inside the park,” he observes, “is more like madness outside it,” invoking the detachment from reality of Fantasyland, the celebration of racist gun violence of Frontierland, the white, middle-class House of Tomorrow of Tomorrowland and the forced 1910 nostalgia of Main Street USA.

But *The Happiest Place on Earth* isn't really about Disneyland, either; it's only a metaphor. This play is about family, young children, loss, parenting and inheritance—not of property but of family narrative. Dawkins' inheritance of family stories is how he enters the narrative himself.

Skillfully and invisibly directed by Jonathan L. Green, Dawkins performs with charm in a classroom setting with a teacher's desk and overhead projector, used to show a Disneyland map and family photos. The video quality is good, except the stage lighting tends to wash out the projections, and the sound—recorded by a camera microphone—may require adjustment for clarity. I upped the treble and lowered the bass.

The Happiest Place on Earth reveals one family's wounds. Almost every family has some wound or other, so the truth and compassion of this work are apparent. The Declaration of Independence promises “the pursuit of happiness” but not its attainment, and part of growing up is understanding the difference. This lovely little play is about that.

noid and boorish. The play's observations on U.S. political and social culture are not lost in today's political climate.

The play also makes clear how deeply Julia and Paul loved each other, and how especially supportive and encouraging he was. We don't learn nearly as much about him as we do about her. Paul held a Fourth Degree black belt in judo and was a poet and photographer, but we learn none of that. However, we learn—and easily embrace—their shared genuine passion for celebrating life through fine food and wine, often expressed in nearly poetic passages. This is the art to which the title refers.

Karen Janes (sic) Woditsch and Craig Spidle are marvelous as Julia and Paul, and the video's close-ups really allow us to see their nuanced, utterly truthful facial expressions. The supporting cast is a who's who of top Chicago actors, among them Janet Ulrich Brooks, Jennie Affelder, Heidi Ketterring and Terry Hamilton each taking on several roles. Hamilton is especially charming and wry as master chef Max Bugnard, Julia's instructor at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris.

The first rate video was produced and edited by Marty Higgenbotham with near-TV quality and clear audio. Composer Andrew Hansen has supplied wonderful musical underscoring, while the women's lovely period costumes are the work of Rachel Anne Healy.



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**STREAMING
THEATER REVIEW**

**School Girls;
Or The African
Mean Girls Play**

Playwright: Jocelyn Bioh

At: Goodman Theatre online at

GoodmanTheatre.org/StreamSchoolGirls

Tickets: \$20

Runs through: May 31

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Ranking in popularity on the list of spectator sports just behind young men inflicting physical damage upon one another is the voyeuristic titillation engendered by exhibitions of young women inflicting psychological pain and humiliation on their peers, especially within the restricted sphere of secondary school. Theatergoers, it appears, never tire of morality fables featuring females locked in a struggle for dominance.

The setting for Jocelyn Bioh's 2017 play is Ghana in 1986, at a boarding school attended chiefly by the daughters of wealthy parents, along with a few scholarship students of humble lineage. Representing the nucleus of the student body is a six-member coterie led by the bossy Paulina Sarpong, whose biting candor ensures the compliance of her adherents—the brawny Nana being the most frequently singled out for vituperation, while classmates Ama, Gifty and Mercy

are content to go-along-to-get-along. However, when a new pupil arrives—an expatriate of fair complexion and United States citizenship—she has the power to refute Paulina's boastful fabri-

cations regarding her connections to The Land of the Free.

Bioh quickly ups the ante when the girls are offered the opportunity to compete for the title of



Kyrie Courter and Ciera Dawn in *School Girls; Or The African Mean Girls Play*.
Photo by Liz Lauren

Miss Ghana in an international beauty pageant—an honor offering not only glamor and prestige for the winner (including a date with pop star Bobby Brown!), but a hefty donation for the impoverished academy and global recognition for their tiny country. Additional intrigue arises from the beauty pageant scout, an alumna of this very alma mater, and formerly the nemesis of its Headmistress. Unsurprisingly, revelations, confessions and catharses soon abound, but also the possibility of recovery and reconciliation.

Playgoers who came to the Goodman Theatre's final preview had no way of knowing that they would be the last to see it performed live on stage for the duration of the current CDC-mandated closures. Luckily, the multiple-camera video filmed by Cody Nieset, Alberto Mendoza and Matt Hooks deftly captures both the virtuosic group dynamics and the carefully-nuanced individual subtexts (when an actor cries, for example, the close-up view reveals a face wet with actual tears) of an ensemble delivering Bioh's exquisitely crafted text under the direction of Lili-Ann Brown and the pinpoint-perfect dialect instruction of Phyllis E. Griffin.

The stage picture assembled by designers Yu Shibagaki (scenic), Samantha C. Jones (costumes) Jason Lynch (lighting), Justin Ellington (sound) and a hardworking technical team is likewise reproduced in vibrant detail on the videotape airing online through May 31 (at a fraction of the live ticket price). Even those viewing it from their sofas can almost—but only “almost”—feel as though they were there on Dearborn Street on the night before the lights all went dark.

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LUPONE from page 13

just ... I just ... ahh. And you can't stick your head in the sand because any minute now we'll be "hi Hitler"-ing [President Trump]. So I'm just really confused. I'm confused, I'm lost.

WCT: So how do you keep your mind straight? By drinking strawberry daiquiris?

PL: [Laughs] How do I keep my mind straight? That's the question! Because my problem has been structure, and I'm the kind of person that goes, "OK, you have to be on the set or you have to be at the theater—OK, great. I know what my schedule is." But without a schedule, I'm lost. I'm going, "I don't know what to do." I guess I am my work.

WCT: For structure, what's the first thing you do in the morning?

PL: I started working out remotely with my trainer. Just to do something, just to feel like something is done. And then as soon as the weather gets really nice I'm gonna walk up our road, which is part of a mountain, and walk back down. And I have shows coming up, unless they're going to be canceled, in January.

I haven't done them in a while, so what I started to do, because the weather still isn't that great where I am right now, I'm listening to the shows that I have to sing in January, just to remember them. I haven't sung them in a while. Then I'll feel like I've accomplished something in the day and it hasn't been—this is our lives! And our lives are being wasted! Not that work is the only thing, but if we can't figure out what to do in the time that we have been given, that's pathetic! It's a blessing, really!

WCT: If you were running Hollywood right now, what changes would you make?

PL: I would listen to the artists, I would listen to the writers. And I would not greenlight pictures because of statistics. I would ignore the statistics, and I would greenlight films and television shows that I thought were going to be beneficial for education and for parents as opposed to, "Well, that was a big hit—let's make 9,000 more of those Marvel comics."

WCT: Would you let them make another Mamma Mia! movie?

PL: [Deliberates, speaks flatly, deadpans] No.

WCT: We don't need a third?

PL: I hate ABBA. I have always hated ABBA. I will not go see Mamma Mia! because I hate ABBA. And I've hated ABBA since I was a kid, because I'm a closet rocker; when ABBA came out, I went, "Oh, you've got to be kidding." My favorite band is The Band, and so if you're a rocker, and if you're a rocker and The Band is your favorite band and ABBA comes along, there's no way. And so I don't support ABBA at all.

WCT: So you haven't even seen the Mamma Mia! movies?

PL: No. Can't support ABBA!

WCT: Is Hollywood the gayest thing you've ever been a part of?

PL: Is it? Let me think.

WCT: Consider that pool party scene—all those naked men, penises hanging out.

PL: Yeah! And the thing that was kind of distressing to me when I was shooting it was: Why am I going home?! Why is Avis going home?!

WCT: Yeah. Why doesn't Avis get to go to the

party?

PL: [Feigns weeping] Why couldn't she just sit there and ogle the penises? No. I go home early.

WCT: Didn't you talk to Ryan about that?

PL: Trust me, I thought about that. But no, I didn't. That was in the script and I went, "OK, I gotta leave the party." But I'm trying to think—is that the gayest thing? Maybe it is. I'm trying to think of anything I've done. I can't remember anything that I do and that I've done. Maybe. I don't know.

WCT: That party that Avis doesn't get to go to—have you ever gone to an industry party



Patti LuPone (right) and Samara Weaving in *Weaving in Hollywood*. Photo courtesy of Netflix

like that in your life?

PL: No. I mean, I've gone to pool parties with tons of Broadway dancers who were gay, but they kept their clothes on.

WCT: That seems less fun.

PL: Well, their bodies were incredible to look at, but they were all clothed—well, barely clothed! Everybody had a speedo on!

WCT: If someone decides to reimagine your life in 70 years, what parts of it would you ask that they keep factually intact and which parts would you allow them to reimagine?

PL: All of it! I think they should keep it all factually intact! It's been a rebellious life. And it's been interesting. I hope it's not over—the rebellion part, and the interesting part. No—they don't have to reimagine anything. It's been a lot of fun.

WCT: You've turned down diva roles in the past, like one that Ryan offered you on Glee. Avis does have some diva qualities, though. What about her divaness made you say yes to playing her?

PL: I hadn't read any scripts when Ryan pitched it to me. All Ryan said was that I was going to be the wife of a studio head and I would inherit the studio and make movies for gays, minorities and women. That's all he told me. But Ryan is such a champion, and I'm not offered a lot of roles, and I'm not going to turn down Ryan or a role that he offers me. He expanded the role for me in the process, and of course it's the most stunning era for women. Every time I would go to a costume fitting I was reeling with delight because the stuff

was stunning. You feel so glamorous in that time period. I felt really, really glamorous, and I'm just thrilled.

I'll tell you: Even though I knew from a very early age that I was born for the Broadway musical stage, I was one of those kids who wanted to go to Hollywood and be a movie star. Who doesn't? If you're in the business, who doesn't want to be a movie star, especially when you go to a movie theater and see your idols up on the silver screen? When I was 12, I saw Disney's *Swiss Family Robinson* with Tommy Kirk and marched out of that movie theater determined to go to

cally see this." We don't get to see a woman over 50 go at it in full view like you two do.

PL: Yeah!

WCT: Did you relish that moment because, for whatever stupid reason, it's still so rare to see that onscreen?

PL: Yep, are you kidding? Gimme more Gina, as they say! I had a sex scene with Dylan McDermott that was rougher but that was cut! Yeah. That was sad. [Laughs]

WCT: What advice did the intimacy coach give you? How does that even work?

PL: He was a great guy. And he was always there

Hollywood and be his leading lady. At 12!

WCT: To be challenging the patriarchy like Avis does—was that cathartic for you?

PL: Yeah, I think so. Any time a woman gets to push back on any kind of male authority, it's cathartic. Push back and succeed. But I seem to have done that all my life, just in life, and then in my career. But I've always kind of pushed back because authority needs to be explained to me. I need to understand, "Why do you have authority? If it's something you want me to do as a human being, I'll do it; but if you are authoritarian about it, I need to understand why."

WCT: When in your career have you felt slighted or like you didn't get what you deserved because you're a woman?

PL: Hmm. A lot of times. I would say the majority of my career—not necessarily on the musical stage. You know, I think I got what I deserve as far as roles are concerned. I think I've had a varied career. But in the development of them, I think that I've been stifled because I was a woman. The opinion that you have is not valued because you're a woman—that kind of stuff. I've always questioned authority and I've always spoken up for what I perceived as injustice. Always. I think it's just in my DNA. That's just how I thought. And it has nothing to do with being a woman or a man—it has to do with me being Patti.

WCT: It was different to watch you have that rough sex scene with actor David Corenswet because I was like, "Oh, wait—we don't typi-

to make us comfortable. I don't know what other intimacy coaches do, but I don't think I need an intimacy coach. I think I know what I'm doing. I'm certainly not uncomfortable, and if I was uncomfortable, I would talk to the director or the actor I was working with. As long as the coaches don't interfere with acting, I'm fine with them. But if they start to interpret for us, then I'm not happy.

WCT: As we near the upcoming presidential election, I was curious: What advice do you have for LGBTQ people who struggle with the fact that some of their family members are still voting for Trump?

PL: Oh, I'm having a real hard time with that, Chris. I don't have family members necessarily that I discuss it with, so I don't know if they do. But I have close friends and I actually had to cut one loose. It's heartbreaking. But I'm thinking of my own mental health and I'm not going to get into an argument with anybody about that Piece. Of. Shit. I'm just not. I can't. I have very dear friends; they're Republicans; it's really hard. It's really hard to talk to people. I don't even want to talk to these people.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

Hollywood is available on Netflix.

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Lola Lennox.

Photo By Daniella Midenge

NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Lola Lennox lives a legacy

BY JERRY NUNN

At age 29, singer Lola Lennox is finally ready to release music and show listeners what she's all about. She was raised in the perfect environment for that to happen. Her mother is singer Annie Lennox, from the pop duo Eurythmics, who has had major stardom with hits such as "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)" and "Would I Lie to You?" Her father is movie producer/director Uri Fruchtmann. Her sister, Tali, is a successful model and actress.

Lola discovered legendary artists like Dusty Springfield, Nina Simone and Ella Fitzgerald as she grew up and signed up for singing lessons at eight years old before attending the Royal Academy of Music.

Television producer Simon Fuller asked Lola to contribute on Discovery Channel's *Serengeti*, with actress Lupita Nyong'o narrating and Godfrapp's Will Gregory creating the score. Each animal is featured in its own song, with Lennox singing on this six-part docuseries set in the plains of Tanzania.

On April 18 of this year, Annie and Lola took part in *Global Citizen One World: Together at Home* to support essential workers and the World Health Organization with a duet of "Must Be an Angel (Playing with My Heart)."

Releasing four songs is the game plan that's set for 2020. Her latest track is called "Pale."

Windy City Times: Start off with how you grew up with music.

Lola Lennox: My interest in music—in particular, singing—started early. I really loved music in school with concerts and singing competitions.

When I was 17, I went to the Royal Academy of Music in London, England. I did vocal undergrad in classical singing. I just did that for the heck of it. I didn't want to be an opera singer. I quit eventually and got a band together. I wrote a lot at home and played a little bit around London.

I moved to LA a few years ago. There is a huge network of musicians out here and I am so grateful to connect with them, because in London I didn't feel I had the same access to other musicians.

I spent two years in LA, honing and crafting my songs with other writers and musicians. This year, I am ready to share my music. I released my first single, "In the Wild," in February. I released my second single, "Pale," about a month ago.

WCT: Did you ever consider a different career besides singing?

LL: I actually didn't, no! [Laughs] It was a bug that bit me from a very early age. It's such a joyful thing. There is so much depth to music, so it really captured me.

WCT: Your family all has [different] talents. Was your family life a reality show growing up?

LL: When it's your family, it's all normal and relative to you. As a unit, we are pretty grounded in our own way.

It was definitely inspiring. My mom was writing and creating things since I was a baby. I grew up knowing how much one gets when they tune into their creativity. That's how I express myself and I see the world through creative eyes.

My mom never pushed anything on me, but I was affected by her work and passion.

WCT: When did you notice all her gay fans?

LL: We would go on the road with her on tour. There would be a lot of LGBTQ fans at the shows, typically the most enthusiastic I would say! They would be dancing and having a great time. There were a few Annie Lennox lookalikes in drag, which was awesome.

My mom has always had a supportive gay fan base. Not to generalize, but for the most part, you are all pretty passionate, joyful people. I don't like speaking broadly, but many have a creative spirit and great taste!

I used to live in West Hollywood, right in Boystown. I went to Pride every year. I loved living there. There was always great energy in the community.

WCT: Your mom has been such an activist for HIV/AIDS. Do you see yourself in that lane?

LL: I am still finding my footing as far as activism. My stepdad has his own charity called mothers2mothers, which is supporting mothers and children in South Africa with HIV/AIDS. My mom has done so much for the cause, I have grown up seeing the tragic affects it has on people's lives. I will always do whatever I can to help people who need it.

WCT: Talk about singing for the World Health Organization.

LL: It was incredible to contribute in that way. Everyone is going through a global pandemic and music is a way to show support. I got to sing "Must Be an Angel (Playing with My Heart)" with my mom. I love that song. It felt like a beautiful family moment that we could share with people.

WCT: How do you distance yourself from your mom in terms of your career?

LL: I don't think of myself that way, but I do try to express myself in the most authentic way. When you are authentic musically and putting everything you have into making beautiful art, lyrics and singing, then the music will speak for itself.

WCT: You worked on "Pale" with Annie, so talk about that.

LL: I wrote "Pale" a little while ago. It was a tough time in my life. I had lost someone very close to me. It was a lot to process, not just because of the loss, but how to reintegrate into the world after that loss.

It had been a demo for a while and we decided to finish it. I went to the studio with my mom and Scott Salinas, an incredible producer and film composer. We felt this was not a typical pop song. We wanted something atmospheric and emotive.

It was incredible to collaborate with my mom in that way. I had such a deep, personal connection to the song and we have that collaboration as

mother and daughter.

I am so happy with how it came out. I hope it can touch people, especially in a time with COVID-19. I just finished the video today, so that will be coming out. I had to do that through the boundaries of COVID-19. I shot it in my apartment with my boyfriend. He was the director and we worked our butts off to make it work without professionals. I'm happy with how it came out!

WCT: Andy Stochansky was Ani DiFranco's drummer and co-wrote "Pale?"

LL: Yes. He was with her for a long time. He has released several albums as a solo singer/songwriter. We are good friends and have written plenty of songs together.

WCT: You have a new song—"Back at Wrong"—ready to be released?

LL: Yes, it will be out this summer. It's a 180 from "Pale." It is high-energy, raw, rough and fun!

WCT: Are you an animal lover, from working on the *Serengeti* project?

LL: I am an animal lover from afar, because the truth is I have the worst allergies. I have a huge respect for nature. Environmental awareness is a huge thing for me to be a part of. We should take care of the planet and *Serengeti* allows us to realize there's a bigger network of life out there than just us.

WCT: Is your mom making new music?

LL: She is releasing some live versions of past songs while she is on lockdown in her home studio.

WCT: What do you want to tell people about you as an artist that haven't heard you yet?

LL: I want to tell LGBTQ people that they rock. I love their passion. I hope they can come onboard this crazy musical journey of mine and enjoy it with me!

To learn more about Lennox, visit LolaLennox.com.



IML officially cancelled for 2020

The annual International Mr. Leather (IML) global convention—pushed back from its usual Memorial Day weekend to Sept. 25-27 because of the coronavirus pandemic—has been officially cancelled for 2020.

On the event's website, it states, "As you know, we have been monitoring the coronavirus situation closely following updates from the CDC, State, and local government. The governor of Illinois and mayor of Chicago have issued plans to reopen Illinois and Chicago in phases. Not until that final phase is reached will large group gatherings and conventions be permitted.

"Movement between phases is dependent on improvement factors and not dates on a calendar. With the uncertainty, we feel for the safety of our attendees, volunteers, vendors and staff that it is best to cancel IML/IMBB 2020 in its entirety now.

"After hundreds of hours of organization, reorganization, debate and frustrations with 2020 we have made this difficult decision. We know most will be supportive, but others will disagree with our decision. Please understand that this makes us as disappointed as

International Mr. Leather 2019.
Joseph Stevens Photography



it does you. However, the health and safety of our community and those around us is far more important, as well as the need to be compliant with the State and Local officials reopening plan.

"To honor this year, with great respect for the world's situation, we choose to not ignore 2020 and will put International Mr. Leather 42 and International Mr. Bootblack 28 in the books as "the year without winners". Instead, we move forward to the future and International Mr. Leather 43 and International Mr. Bootblack 29 when we can be together in May 2021.

"We look forward to releasing materials for 2021 over the next several days, and we cannot wait until our family can celebrate together again.

"We are aware that this cancellation will bring many questions, we implore you to seek the most current information on hotel and package refunds on our website IMRL.com after June 1, which will be updated with several options to meet the individual needs of those who are affected by the change."



BILLY Masters

"Hate and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people started long before Trump and Pence took office. Defeating them will not solve the problem, but it is an essential first step in order to resume our march towards equality."—**Joe Biden**, while stressing his support of the Equality Act. See? Isn't that better than that stupid "you ain't black" quote?

One night I went to bed, and we were in a pandemic. I woke up the next day, and it's as if it never happened. People are walking around, playing, socializing and even tanning. A friend called me earlier today from Macy's. Would you risk life and limb to go to Macy's? OK, I understand it if you have a coupon. But still...

Not everything is back to normal. In South Lansing, Michigan, complaints were made about a complex right up my alley ... or at the very least, alley-adjacent. "Fantasies Unlimited" is one of those stores that has a back room. (You know what kind of back room.) The health officer for Ingham County popped in for an inspection and said, "No way they are six feet apart"—which should go without saying. The back room even has its own name—"Club Tabu." Now it has another name: "Closed By Order of the Department of Health." Not nearly as catchy.

Time for a Whodunit! **Ruby Rose**, who plays the title character in *Batwoman*, abruptly quit the CW show days after the show was picked up for a second season. The producers vow to recast! Why is Ruby leaving? Lots of rumors are circulating—including one about her being injured during a stunt and deciding she wasn't going to risk permanent physical damage. But people whisper that's not the real reason. Allegedly there was a personality conflict. Between whom? My sources are mum, but I'm not one to give up that easily.

Last week didn't go down exactly as planned on



Model **Chris Fawcett** is the subject of this week's "Ask Billy."

Photo courtesy of Sandra Wee Tom

"Billy Masters LIVE!". There was much anticipation for the dual interview with **Lainie Kazan** and **Michele Lee**—speaking for the first time together about their experiences in the musical *Seesaw*. A couple of hours before we went live, Lainie called in sick. Michele was game to go solo—but would only give me 30 minutes (50 if she felt it was going well). The show lasted an hour and a half! Since I had prepped so diligently, I was thrilled to discuss Lee's long and varied career. We even surprised her with **Charles Busch**, who wrote *Tale of the Allergist's Wife*. Michele had a great time and promised to return with Lainie very soon.

On Thursday, we had **Gloria Allred**. She was brilliant as we surveyed the pandemic, the political climate, the upcoming election and her many historic cases. I was aided by news anchor Sue O'Connell and, while it was different than our usual show, it was quite fascinating ... and still fun. You can check out all of our shows on our YouTube channel of Billy Masters TV, or at Bil-

lyMasters.com/TV.

This week, we'll reunite the hot gays from *The People's Couch*. Yes, **Scott Nevins**, **Emerson Collins** and **Blake McIver** will join me on my virtual couch May 26. We'll also talk about "Voice of Hope" (the Desert AIDS Project benefit), the all-star benefit reading of *Del Shores' Sordid Lives*, Blake's upcoming concert and much more.

Did you all watch "Bombshell in Concert?" It was, without question, one of the most THRILLING things I've ever seen. For those who don't know, *Bombshell* was a musical about Marilyn Monroe that was being staged in the NBC series *Smash*. After the series was cancelled, fans clamored for a stage version of *Bombshell*. This concert performance of that score (written by **Marc Shaiman** and **Scott Wittman**) was a benefit in 2015 for The Actors Fund—and was fortuitously filmed professionally for archival purposes. Although it wasn't televised on NBC (where *Smash* aired), it was livestreamed on People magazine's website—also as a benefit for The Actors Fund. (We'll post the link on our website.)

Since it was a benefit, union rules only allowed a week for some vocal and dance rehearsal in a studio, and then a few hours in the theater the day of the show itself. Despite this tight schedule—to say nothing of the fact that the concert happened two years after the series' demise—everything was picture-perfect, including the thrilling choreography of **Joshua Bergasse**. The fact that **Megan Hilty** was effortless was expected from this Broadway vet. It was **Katharine McPhee**—at that point, a Broadway newbie—who blew me away. She handled intricate vocals during difficult dancing with aplomb. And it's impossible for me to let a *Smash* item end without noting the presence of the dreamy **Wesley Taylor**.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Danny in Denver: "What do you know about **Christopher Fawcett**? He's an underwear model and absolutely gorgeous."

You didn't ask, but you'll probably be pleased to hear that Fawcett is openly gay. HOORAY! He's also openly married. BOO! To fill in some oth-

er blanks, he's 34 years old, lives in NYC, and has modeled extensively for DKNY and CK. But, please, don't limit Fawcett to undies. He's also happy to pose in nothing at all—as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

When you'll need two hands to turn this Fawcett, it's definitely time to get out the elbow grease and end yet another column. You may not be stuck at home, but you'll still need some entertainment. Might I suggest you check out BillyMasters.com—the site that doesn't require social distancing. And, of course, go to our YouTube channel of Billy Masters TV and subscribe. I'll make it worth your while. For details on how, drop a note to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Macy's opens up a back room. Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

the DISH

Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Alpana Singh talks restaurants, show in the age of COVID-19

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Since the stay-at-home order was imposed weeks ago, the national restaurant industry has collectively been delivered an economic gut punch.

Windy City Times recently talked with Alpana Singh—master sommelier, Evanston restaurant owner and host of the WTTW show *Check, Please!*—about the state of the industry.

Windy City Times: How are you doing, personally and professionally?

Alpana Singh: I'm okay. It's one of those weird things where you should be careful what you ask for because you just might get it, you know? I get to stay home and cook, and nobody bothers me—and, then, you're [saying], "I take it back. I take it back." [Laughs]

At the end of the day, I don't think anybody in the business expected this. We seriously thought we might be back in two weeks or so. But if I had known on March 16, when we closed the restaurant, that we wouldn't open until June. We're reopening in stages, and I don't know yet if it helps.

WCT: Now, your restaurant [Evanston spot Terra & Vine] is totally closed, right—no carryout or delivery?

AS: Right, but here's the thing: This [situation] will probably exist until there's a vaccine, so I think what operators are looking at is a complete restructuring and pivot. You're basically guessing

and hedging your bets because you just don't know. A lot of it's going to have to be adjusted on the fly, but I think things will be split between inside dining and carryout. I see restaurants pivoting to meal kits, meals to go—turning their restaurants into general stores, with cocktails to go. You're just going to have to break down your walls and expand your business so people can take [items] home.

I also think that what's going to eventually happen is this shift toward dismantling the notion of what a restaurant is. People are getting comfortable having Alinea or Oriole at home.

and figure out how to put them together to make the restructuring work, given the new normal.

WCT: When you talked with WTTW on March 26, you said that restaurants needed help from the federal government.

AS: Oh, yeah. The PPP [Paycheck Protection Program for small businesses] is a hot mess. The problem with it is that you spend your money on payroll within eight weeks of it being deposited in your account—but Illinois restaurants are not open for inside dining and employees may not want to return because they don't feel safe or they may be making more with the unemployment

to pay it back in two years. If you don't spend at least 75 percent on payroll, that turns into a loan.

WCT: What do you think of the Illinois Restaurant Association statement urging the governor to have restaurants open sooner than late June?

AS: It's very frustrating for operators—especially when they and patrons look at neighboring states, where people are going out to dinner. Also, operators are looking at month three of this, and we're facing rent and utility bills. But I also don't fault the governor for following science. There's just so much that's unknown.

I'm torn. Part of me wants the restaurant to open so I can make money to pay these bills. But we also don't know consumer sentiment. The governor actually talked about comfort level—and I said, "Well, they certainly seem comfortable in Wisconsin." [Laughs] Basically, at the heart of this argument, everybody is frustrated and has a lot of anxiety—and there's no clear answer.

The other thing is that the restaurant industry represents an almost-\$1 trillion contribution to the economy, as well as 15 million jobs. Yet, we're not part of the same conversation as, say, the airline, finance or auto industry. I don't know what we need to do to get officials to understand that restaurants need to be supported. It's a chain reaction—there are so many businesses that depend on us: the produce company, the meat vendors, the liquor industry, floral businesses and even the linen industry.

They're talking about opening sporting events. Sports are fun—don't get me wrong—but if you look at the GDP of sporting events versus restaurants, there's a lot of difference. I get it, but it's frustrating.

[Editor's note: After this conversation, Gov. Pritzker announced that Illinois restaurants can open Friday, May 29—for outdoor dining. (Chicago spots are not included in this, as Mayor Lightfoot wants to hold off until June.) Singh was asked her thoughts on this development.



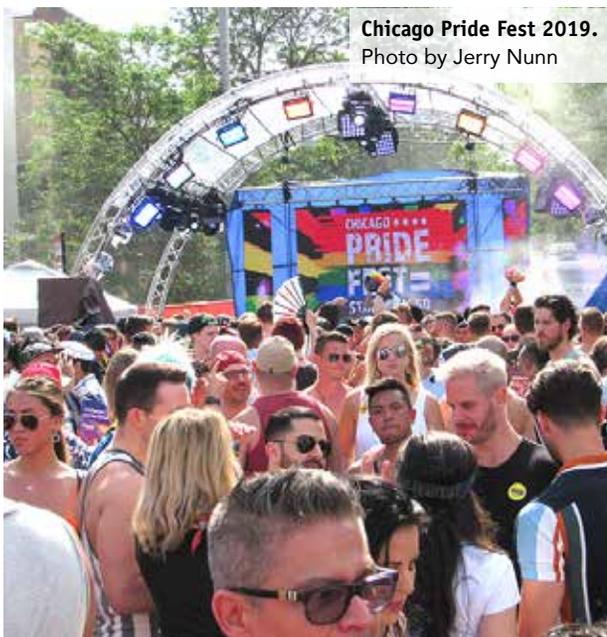
Alpana (second from left) with guests on season 18 of *Check, Please!*
Photo courtesy of WTTW/Ken Carl

There'll be a paradigm shift with restaurants. This one operator was telling me how popular the family meal kits are—like four meals for \$50.

It's a horrible situation but, like with any business situation, you have to remove yourself emotionally, look at all the pieces on the table

payment of \$600 a week. Also, if you're operating at a reduced capacity, you can't have a full payroll.

So, by taking this money, it almost seems like making a deal with the devil where it turns into a loan, further burdening a business that has



Chicago Pride Fest 2019.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

Chicago Pride Fest going virtual

Chicago Pride Fest will mark its 20th year with a virtual festival format.

On June 20-21, the Northalsted Business Alliance will bring Boystown to the world with a streaming Chicago Pride Fest celebrating the love, life and diversity of Chicago's LGBTQ+ community.

Running from 7-9 p.m. both nights, the streaming Twitch event will feature a full line-up with entertainment, activism, greetings and more. Virtual gate donations will benefit Boystown community programming, the Center on Halsted and Howard Brown Health.

Northalsted President Ramesh Ariyanayakam acknowledged how different things will look this year: "Right now our focus is all about planning a Pride celebration for the digital ages. We know this virtual festival will bring much needed connection and hope to our community and beyond and are thrilled to produce this event."

Recently, the Northalsted Business Alliance announced that the original Chicago Pride Fest, originally scheduled for June 20-21,

will be moved to Labor Day weekend, Sept. 5-6.

More details are at PridefestChicago.com. A full programming line-up will be available in June.

Hell in a Handbag updates season with 'Girls,' 'Tiger Queen'

In response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, Broadway In Chicago announced that the upcoming engagement of Disney's *Frozen*—originally scheduled to run Oct. 21-Jan. 3, 2021 at the Cadillac Palace Theatre—will now run Nov. 18, 2021-Jan. 23, 2022.

Current ticket holders will be moved into the new performance weeks automatically.

Patrons with additional questions can contact their points of purchase. All future productions will be under review as further guidance and recommendations are provided by the CDC and Chicago Department of Public Health. Please check BroadwayInChicago.com for additional updates.

Red Stars hosting virtual Pride party on May 28

The Chicago Red Stars will kick off pride month in Chicago by teaming with local businesses and talent for a virtual Pride Party presented by Illinois Bone and Joint Institute on Thursday, May 28, at 7:30 p.m.

A portion of all ticket sales will benefit Howard Brown Health.

The event will consist of both free and paid portions so everyone can participate in some capacity. The free portion will be live-streamed on the Chicago Red Stars YouTube channel and features a performance from Lyric Opera's Desiree Hassler and drag queen Em Merle of The Back Door. The team has also partnered with Women Unite!, a Chicago-based nonprofit, for an "Allyship 101" training session teaching participants how to be an ally to the LGBTQ community in the time of a pandemic.



Fans who purchase the \$40 ticket will receive a Chicago Red Stars pride T-shirt and pronoun pin as well as access to additional entertainment on Zoom. There will be three rounds of Drag Bingo hosted by Em Merle, featuring Red Stars swag packs for the winners. Performances include Kit Kat Lounge Divas Madam X and Shantell DeMarco; a virtual dance party hosted by DJ Sandra Suave; and more.

The Kit Kat lounge is supporting the event with two custom cocktail kits available for pickup or delivery statewide. Patrons can place their orders for the Red Stars Party in a Box or Disco Party In a Box via phone (773-525-1111) or email (contact@kitkatchicago.com).

Fans can purchase tickets to the entire Pride Party event at <https://groupmatics.events/event/CRSVirtualPride>.

Broadway In Chicago reschedules 'Frozen'

In response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, Broadway In Chicago announced that the upcoming engagement of Disney's Frozen—originally scheduled to run Oct. 21, -Jan. 3, 2021 at the Cadillac Palace Theatre—will now run Nov. 18, 2021-Jan. 23, 2022.

Current ticket holders will be moved into the new performance weeks automatically.

Patrons with additional questions can contact their points of purchase. All future productions will be under review as further guidance and recommendations are provided by the CDC and Chicago Department of Public Health. Please check BroadwayInChicago.com for additional updates.

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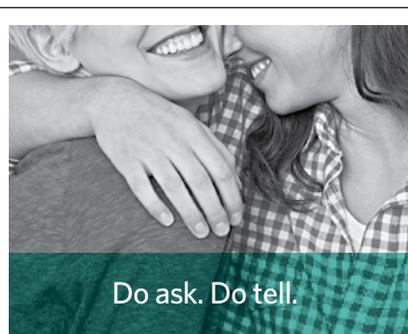
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

[NOTE: Events may not occur because of compliance with guidelines connected with the COVID-19 outbreak. Please contact the venue if interested in a particular event to see if said event is still scheduled.]

Wed., May 27

Virtual Therapy Group Therapy group for trans, gender non-conforming and nonbinary people. behavioralhealth@centeronhalsted.org 4 and 6 p.m. By phone 773-472-6469, ext. 460 <http://centeronhalsted.org>

Thursday, May 28

Red Stars virtual Pride party Teaming with local businesses and talent for a virtual Pride Party presented by Illinois Bone and Joint Institute. Benefits Howard Brown Health. Free portion on Chicago Red Stars YouTube channel with Lyric Opera's Desiree Hassler and drag queen Em Merle of The Back Door. \$40 ticket portion includes additional entertainment and swag. 7:30pm Tickets: <http://groupmatics.events/event/CRS->



FEST OFFER
May 28-29

Iris Sowlat (above) and Allison Fradkin are behind Violet Surprise Theatre's SapphFest.
PR photo

VirtualPride

SapphFest, a digital variety show Violet Surprise Theatre presents a show celebrating queer women and non-binary artists from all over the country and internationally, through storytelling, comedy, music, poetry, performance art. Also on May 29 at the same time. Free 7:30pm Online <http://zoom.us/j/96453653111>

Saturday, May 30

Registration for AIDS Run & Walk Chicago On Saturday, October 3rd, AIDS Run & Walk Chicago is moving forward together to create healthier futures for Chicagoans living with and vulnerable to HIV. Registration now open. runwalk@aidschicago.org 9:00am More info to come Tickets: <http://aidschicago.org>

Howard Brown, TaskForce Community Care Station in Austin Free, confidential risk assessments for COVID-19. Also, anyone concerned about symptoms or possible exposure to COVID-19 may call Howard Brown's nurse triage line 10:00am - 2:30pm 9 N. Cicero Ave. 773.388.1600 <http://HowardBrown.org/coronavirus-faq>

Wonka Ball, About Face Theatre's annual benefit gala POSTPONED Please check with the event organizers to see what the new dates will be. <http://aboutface-theatre.com>

Monday, June 1

Chicago Gay Men's Caucus Chat and Chew Every Monday, the Caucus staff and some special guests will be streaming LIVE from our Facebook page to check in with our community in this time of social distancing. 12:00pm Facebook Live Tickets: <http://Facebook.com/CBGM>

Virtual Therapy Group Black and indigenous people and people of color. behavioralhealth@centeronhalsted.org 6:00pm 773-472-6469, ext. 460. <http://centeronhalsted.org>

Friday, June 5

Frida Kahlo 2020 POSTPONED Originally scheduled for June to August 2020, will be rescheduled for June 5 to Sept. 6, 2021. McAninch Arts Center at College of DuPage 425 Fawell Blvd Glen Ellyn, IL 60137 <http://theccma.org/rescheduled>

Saturday, June 6

Mary Don't You Weep: Utilizing Pandemic Experiences to Understand Difference Part 2. Join the Lighthouse Foundation for a conversation about how faith communities, nonprofits and individuals can utilize our present pandemic experience to better understand difference and to cultivate empathy. 12:00pm - 2:00pm. Email admin@lighthousechicago.org or visit <https://www.facebook.com/LighthouseCChi/>

Sunday, June 7

Buffalo Grove Pride. Now it is a car parade. Family-friendly. 11:00am Checker Dr., Buffalo Grove, <https://www.pintaprideproject.com/pridedrive>

Monday, June 8

Virtual Jeff Awards The Chicago theater community's annual awards recognizing non-Equity theater productions. Information on accessing the program will be available in early June. <http://www.jeffawards.org>

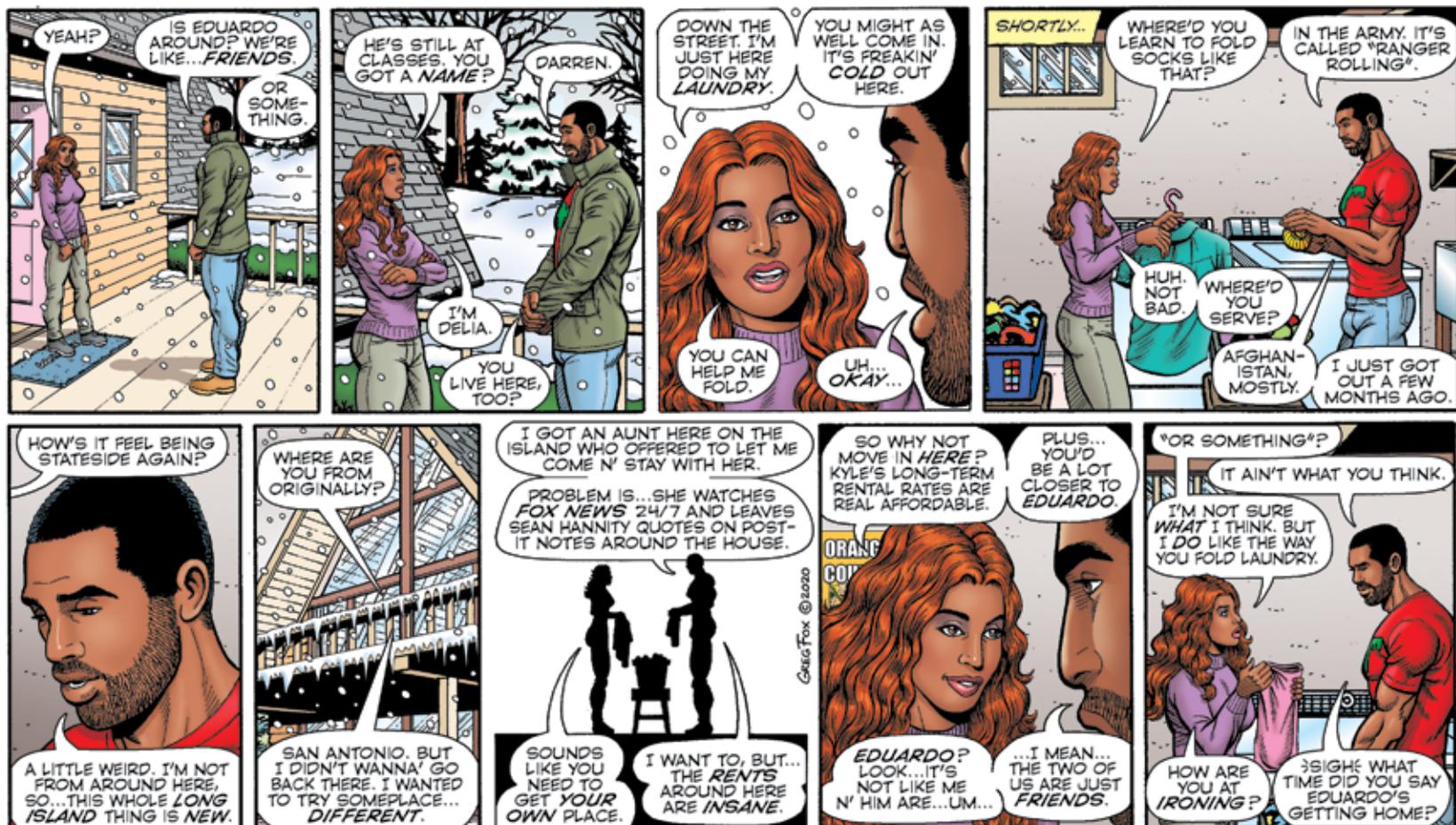
Tuesday, June 9

Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame POSTPONED Induction ceremony after a year of restructuring. Postponed to October. More information to come. Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark Chicago <http://chicagolgbthalloffame.org>

Saturday, June 13

Registration opens for AIDS Run & Walk Chicago On Saturday, October 3rd, AIDS Run & Walk Chicago is moving forward together to create healthier futures for Chicagoans living with and vulnerable to HIV. runwalk@aidschicago.org 9:00am More info to come Tickets: <http://aidschicago.org>

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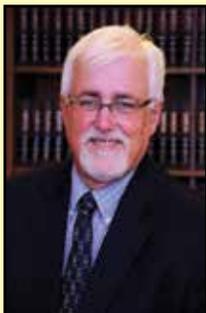
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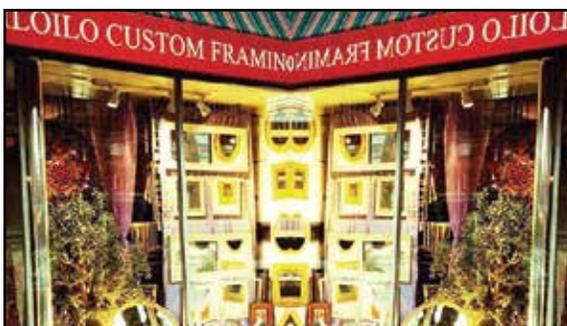


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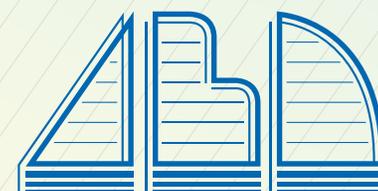


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