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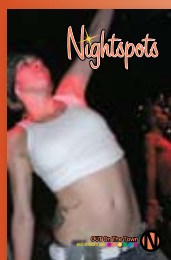
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**GALA HAS ITALIAN FLAIR**

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**Nightspots**

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# ENDA Explodes

BY LISA KEEN

A major controversy has erupted within the LGBT community over a decision by U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., to seek passage of a new version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that both excludes gender identity and, in the view of a major gay legal organization, is so "riddled" with "loopholes" as to seriously diminish its ability to protect gay men and lesbians from workplace discrimination.

Opposition to the new bill was so strong and grew so quickly during the past week that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., announced Monday that a committee vote on the measure that had been slated for Tuesday would not be held until "later this month, followed by a vote in the full House."

Pelosi's announcement came in a joint statement Monday evening with Frank, Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., and Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., who chairs the House Committee on Education and Labor which is handling the legislation.

The statement was unusually cryptic, saying only that the decision was based on their discussions with "with congressional leaders and organizations supporting passage of ENDA."

But the clamor behind the scenes was anything but cryptic. LGBT organizations from around the country had waged an unprecedented effort to stop the new version of the bill from proceeding. Nearly 100 signed onto an Oct. 1 letter to Miller, saying they were opposed to the "strategy and process" behind the new version.

Frank had, on Friday, issued a five-page explanation of the strategy, saying that supporters of the legislation "have the votes" they need to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act "as it has historically existed, banning discrimination on sexual orientation"—that is, without gender identity.

"After we are successful in winning that vote," said Frank, "I will urge the Committee on Education and Labor to proceed with out next step, which will be to continue the educational process that I believe will ultimately lead to our

being able to add transgender protections."

## 'Riddled with loopholes'

But opposition within the LGBT community to Frank's proposal had been mounting dramatically even before he issued his statement. And on Monday, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund issued an analysis of the new bill, saying it was "riddled with loopholes" that would diminish protections based on sexual orientation.

"The recent version is not simply the old version with the transgender protections stripped out," said Kevin Cathcart, executive director of the group, "but rather has modified the old version in several additional and troubling ways." Cathcart said there was a "huge loophole through which employers ...can claim that their conduct was actually based on gender expression, a type of discrimination that the new bill does not prohibit."

"You can't be fired for being a lesbian or a gay

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**THE REAL BEALS**

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**FALL**

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**SURVEILLANCE**  
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# WINDY CITY TIMES

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Lesbian U.S. Congressman Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., has written a piece in honor of Gay History Month. See page 12.

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Oh, what a feeling! Jennifer Beals talks with Windy City Media Group's Amy Matheny about *The L Word*, *Flashdance*—and cooking. See page 23.

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This week's online-only features include:

- Media Watch
- An interview with ALMA Board President Julio Rodriguez about the Runway ALMA.
- A talk with the CDC's Gregorio Millett (right), who will be at an Oct. 10 forum in Chicago
- A brand-new Melissa Etheridge interview

photo courtesy of Millett



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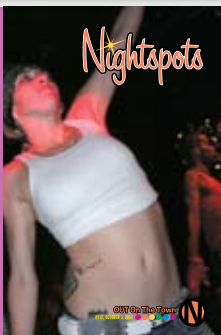
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Nightspots

### GIRLFRIEND, PLEASE

Amy Wooten talks with Trish Bendix and Jamie Murnane, formerly of *CHILL Magazine* about their new blog *Girlfriend Is A Homo*.

photo by Kirk Williamson.



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## ENDA from cover

man, but you can be fired if your boss thinks you fit their stereotype of one," said Cathcart.

The new version also states that it does not prohibit an employer from excluding domestic partners from health insurance benefits while providing them to the spouses of heterosexual employees.

"The old version," said Cathcart, "at least provided that states and local governments could require that employees be provided domestic partner health insurance when such benefits are provided to spouses."

Two dozen national groups—led by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality—signed onto a letter Fri., Sept. 28, asking House Speaker Pelosi to "oppose any substitute legislation that leaves some of us behind." By Mon., Oct. 1, that list had grown to 93—42 national groups and 51 state and local groups, including Equality California, the Empire State Pride Agenda, Equality Texas, Equal Rights Washington, Equality Illinois, and the Triangle Foundation of Michigan.

Only one group based in Frank's home state of Massachusetts—Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders—signed onto the letter. While the Human Rights Campaign signed onto the letter to Miller asking that the vote be postponed, it was noticeably absent from the letter to Pelosi stating opposition to the bill.

In a teleconference phone call Monday, NGLTF Executive Director Matt Foreman called the effort to oppose exclusion of gender identity in the bill as "a watershed moment" in the LGBT civil rights movement. He said the lobbying efforts to stop that over the last few days was "one of the most grueling and difficult" political experiences he's ever experienced.

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, told reporters during the conference call early Monday afternoon that the "situation is in flux" and that she was optimistic Tuesday's scheduled vote on

the new version of the bill would be canceled.

David Smith, a longtime congressional insider and vice president of programs for HRC, said his organization was "baffled" by the sudden decision by Frank and "House leadership" to get behind a version of ENDA that omits gender identity.

"Anybody who was afraid of the issue would have been afraid of it on the hate crimes bill," said Smith.

The House approved a hate crimes bill in May which includes crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity. But even as it passed, the White House issued a statement saying that "senior advisors" to the president would recommend he veto it. (There was no indication whether those advisors might have been or included Attorney General Alberto Gonzales or Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove, both of whom have since left their positions.)

Speaker Pelosi initially backed Frank's two-bill approach, saying it "has the best prospects for success on the House floor."

"For my 20 years in Congress, ending discrimination against gays and lesbians has been a top priority of mine," said Pelosi, in a brief statement released to the press on Sept. 28. "While I personally favor legislation that would include gender identity, the new ENDA legislation proposed by Congressman Frank has the best prospects for success on the House floor. I will continue to push for legislation, including language on gender identity, to expand and make our laws more reflective of the diverse society in which we live."

Smith said HRC's board voted in 2005 to support ENDA only if it includes gender identity. That, he said, left HRC in the awkward position of being "neutral" on Frank's new version of the legislation.

### Penises in the women's room?

While Smith acknowledged that right-wing groups have certainly been "going at it" in warning of ENDA leading to various scenarios of

male teachers wearing dresses to school, he said has no evidence that such negative lobbying has led to the current decision by the bill's leadership to drop gender identity.

Right-wing groups are doing their share to rally support against ENDA, regardless of whether it includes gender identity. But such groups tend to focus on gender identity when making their case. Concerned Women for America published

an essay on their website, claiming that ENDA could lead to situations in which parents would be "forced to explain to Junior why Ms. Johnson at parochial school has a five o'clock shadow, calves like Schwarzenegger, an Adam's apple the size of a golf ball and is stuffed into a miniskirt like a ten pound turkey in a five pound bag." And a website called "Americans for Truth about

**Turn to page 31**

## Groups Back Trans-Inclusion

BY AMY WOOTEN

More than 90 national and state organizations that signed a letter delivered to Congress Oct. 1, urging to keep the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) trans-inclusive, including organizations with local ties.

Equality Illinois (EQIL) was one of the first state organizations to respond with an immediate "all-or-nothing" attitude. After all, the State of Illinois, Cook County, the City of Chicago and organizations in areas such as Moline got anti-discrimination laws on the books without leaving the trans community behind.

EQIL's Rick Garcia described the news of the introduction of new legislation that would exclude protections for trans individuals as "very disturbing" and "sad."

"If protecting transgender people can play in Peoria and Moline, it can and should play in D.C.," Garcia said. "Congressman [Barney] Frank bailed on transgender Americans," Garcia continued, describing Frank as "hardly a leader" in the LGBT community.

Garcia added that when it came to the passage of a statewide non-discrimination bill in Illinois, there was a suggestion that protections for trans people be taken out. "They said it would make it 'easier' to pass it," he said. "We dug our heels in and said that is not a topic for discussion."

Mary Morten, an Illinois board member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), worked on the Illinois and Chicago human rights ordinances. She expressed disappointment and surprise. "I think sometimes we forget that we all are oppressed, and have to move forward together as a community," she said. "To forget those of us who are marginalized and under-represented in our own ranks is a huge, huge shortcoming, and will only continue this state of injustice."

Many have also expressed dismay that the largest LGBT-rights organization in the country, Human Rights Campaign (HRC), hadn't made a statement or joined the over 90 other organizations as of early Oct. 1. Later that day, HRC did join the chorus against the compromise.

Without any urging from staff, the NGLTF board reaffirmed its commitment to the trans community by only wanting to work towards an inclusive ENDA, according to Morten. "I'm very proud we have taken this stand as one of the three largest LGBT organizations," she said. "They are standing strong, that either all of us move ahead, or none of us do. I think that is the right thing to do."

Morten described it as "confusing" that a national organization, especially one that has previously stated support for the trans community, would not join the forces. "At a time when

we desperately need their support, apparently we don't have it," she said.

Below is a just a partial list of the organizations that signed the letter:

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs  
National Coalition for LGBT Health  
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc.  
National Stonewall Democrats  
National Transgender Advocacy Coalition  
National Youth Advocacy Coalition  
American Institute of Bisexuality  
Bisexual Resource Center  
DignityUSA  
Equality Federation  
Equality Project Investor Advocates  
Faith In America  
GenderPAC  
Freedom to Marry  
Immigration Equality  
International Federation of Black Prides  
Lambda Legal  
Matthew Shepard Foundation  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
New Ways Ministry  
Out & Equal Workplace Advocates  
PFLAG  
Transgender American Veterans Association  
Transgender Law and Policy Institute  
Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund

### STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Equality Alabama  
Equality California  
Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center  
Transgender Law Center (California)  
Equal Rights Colorado  
Love Makes A Family (Connecticut)  
Equality Florida  
Equality Illinois  
Indiana Equality  
One Iowa  
Kentucky Fairness Alliance  
Equality Maine  
Equality Maryland  
Triangle Foundation (Michigan)  
OutFront Minnesota  
Equality Mississippi  
Montana Human Rights Network  
New Jersey Lesbian & Gay Coalition  
New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition  
PFLAG-New Hampshire  
Equality New Mexico  
Empire State Pride Agenda (New York)  
Equality North Carolina  
Basic Rights Oregon  
Equality Advocates Pennsylvania  
Equality South Dakota  
Tennessee Transgender Political Coalition  
Equality Virginia  
Center Advocates (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)  
-List compiled by the NGLTF

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# Women File Suit Against City Police

BY AMY WOOTEN

Three women filed suit, alleging that an off-duty Chicago police officer beat them and committed a hate crime against them after they attended the June 24 Gay Pride Parade.

"That day of celebration ended in a nightmare," said the women's attorney, Dana Kurtz.

Kurtz announced on Sept. 27 that the women filed a lawsuit that names an off-duty cop, as well as the City of Chicago Police Department, two Illinois State Police officers and a sergeant for allegedly covering up the incident to protect a fellow officer. She told press that this case is another example of the Chicago Police Department's "policy" to cover up police brutality.

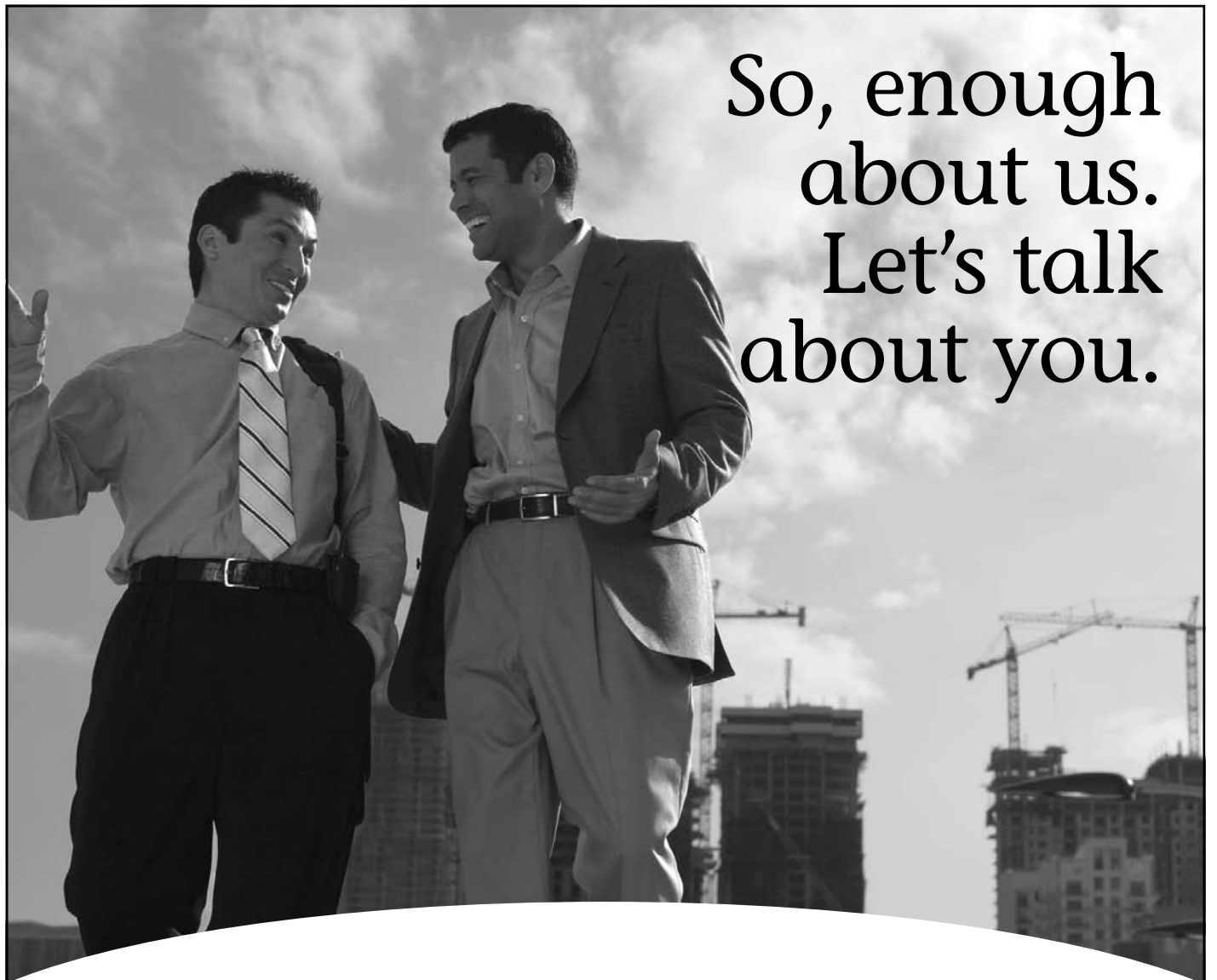
According to the suit, Kelly Fuery and Debra Sciortino claim they were run off I-55 by off-duty cop William Szura the evening of June 24 as they returned from the annual Pride Parade. They say, in an act of road rage, Szura ran life partners Fuery and Sciortino off the road after not letting them pass. The suit claims that the officer stuck a gun in Fuery's stomach and repeatedly beat the two women. The suit also noted that Szura "reeked of alcohol." Friend Nicole Tomaskovic, who was following the two women home in another vehicle, attempted to help out her friends, the suit claims, but was also beaten by Szura. All three women claim that during the alleged beating, their attacker yelled anti-gay and anti-women slurs at them.

Kurtz said that all three women allegedly suffered severe injuries and emotional trauma, while Szura suffered a scratch on the chest.

One of the women called 911, and two state troopers arrived on the scene. According to the suit, it was not until the troopers arrived that Szura identified himself as a police officer. All three women were arrested and charged with battery. Their attorney said the women were harassed and mocked by Szura, who was allowed to roam free while the women were processed.

The women are seeking a change in Chicago Police Department practices, injunctive relief and damages. To date, charges have not been filed against Szura.

A hotline has been set up in order to find witnesses to the alleged attack. The number is 1-888-DANAKURTZ.



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### CNOW Shows Some Love

Chicago NOW held its Tenth Annual Women Who Dared cocktail reception and silent auction on Thurs., Sept. 27, at The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton. The women honored this year were Marcena W. Love and T. Khyentse James (lower picture, left to right). Love is the founder of Personal PAC, an organization dedicated to electing pro-choice candidates to state and local office in Illinois. James is the founder of the Estrojam Music and Cultural Festival. Among the attendees were writer Sara Paretsky and attorney Fay Clayton (upper picture, middle and right). Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; more at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com)



### Luncheon Is a Good Thing

Martha Stewart, executive producer and host of The Martha Stewart Show and founder of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, delivered the keynote address at the 21st Annual Entrepreneurial Woman's Conference on Wed., Sept. 26, at Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand. It was the first day of the two-day event presented by the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC). This year's event offered women business owners the opportunity to network with corporate and government buyers, business experts and other women business owners. Many luminaries attended the conference, including Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley (in bottom photo), as well as former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (above right photo). Images by Kat Fitzgerald; more at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com)

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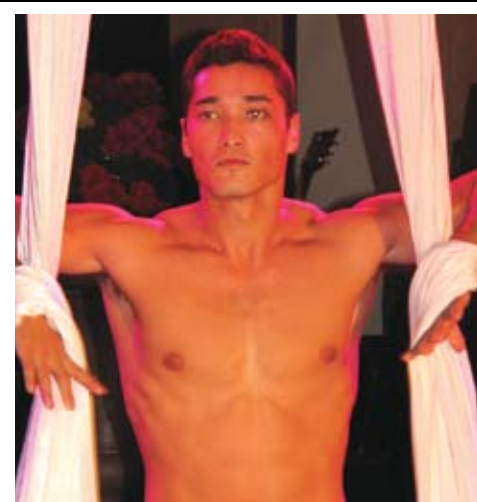






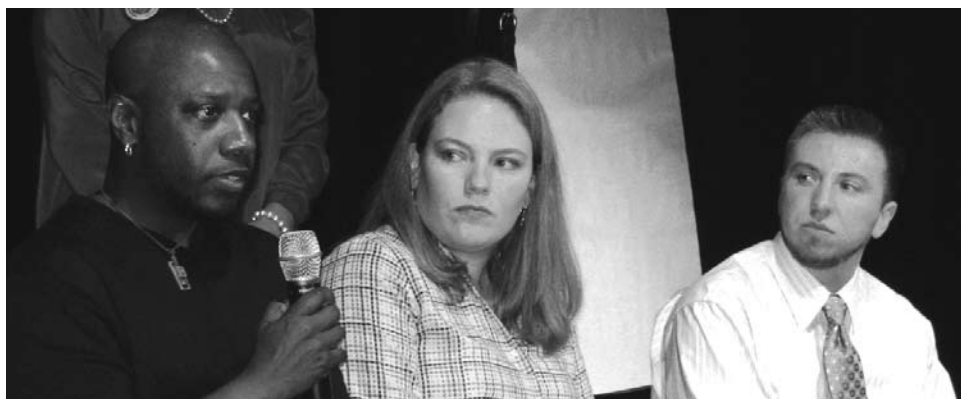


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### A Touch of Italy

The annual World Tour to benefit Chicago House & Social Service Agency had an Italian flair when the organization presented *Bella Notte di Mille Stelle* (Beautiful Night of a Thousand Stars) at the Renaissance Hotel, 1 W. Wacker, on Sept. 29. The creative black-tie event featured an awards ceremony and a VIP reception, among other things. Photos by Emmanuel Garcia; more photos online at [www.windycitymediagroup.com](http://www.windycitymediagroup.com).



Logan Grimes, Laura Grimes and Nick Winter (from left) were among the panelists at the transgender town-hall forum. Photo by Andrew Davis

## Trans Forum Covers Many Issues

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Discrimination, identity and accessibility were among the many topics covered during an informative and rousing trans town-hall meeting that took place Sept. 27 at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted.

Courtney Reid, the Center's senior director of programs who was one of the town hall's organizers and the host of the forum, said that the purpose was of the meeting was "to gather ideas from the trans community" because the facility is in the midst of "strategic planning."

The forum involved a diverse panel of nine trans individuals talking about various trans-related issues; there was also a session during which the audience asked questions of said panelists.

Logan Grimes, a consultant and former board member of The National Center for Transgender Equality, said that education needs to occur "within the LGBT community, within mainstream society and within the transgender community. There's a lot of things that LGBT centers want to know about transgenders, but they don't have the capacity to do that. ... How are you going to provide services to a community if it's not represented in the organization which you work for?"

Pamela Jameson of the Chicago Department of Health said that "so many issues, whether [they] involve safe sex, drugs or body shaping, boiled down to two catch phrases: accessibility (to services) and affordability." She said that many people who are outed as trans find it difficult to go to work or even retain a job—especially if their transitions are not complete; therefore, she said, education regarding employment is extremely relevant.

Laura Grimes—who said she was proud of the work done at Howard Brown, where she volunteered—said that "within LGBT agencies, the 'T' is always silent and that there's a small 'b', too. We have agencies that add 'T' to their mission and then don't know what to do about it. There

needs to be more representation for the 'T'—receptionists, nurses, board members, therapists [and others]." She added that agencies and professionals need to understand the health-care needs of the trans community: "A huge part of my [mental health] practice involves helping trans individuals deal with the crappy services they get at other places. I wish I could bring those people into therapy and keep the trans people out of therapy."

Nick Winter—a heterosexual transman affiliated with GenderWork ([www.genderworkchicago.org](http://www.genderworkchicago.org)), a support group for FTM (female-to-male) individuals—said that the Center currently doesn't offer a lot for the trans demographic. "When I walk into the Center, I wonder if I feel included. I ask if there are resources, and—as far as I can tell—there isn't a whole lot," he said. "There are resources [for youth], but what if you're over 24? And what if a trans person walks into a [support meeting], what if there isn't another trans person there that day? Gender identity doesn't necessarily have anything to do with sexual orientation; how does the Center reach out to those who have gender identity issues?"

Broadway Youth Center's (BYC's) Casey Schwartz talked about the services offered by Howard Brown Health Center and BYC, including support organizations—such as Trans Youth Resource and Advocacy (TYRA); Transgender Women Informing Sisters on Topics of AIDS (TWISTA); and T Time, headed by Lois Bates—and developments such as a Spanish-speaking trans group at BYC and gender-free restrooms at Howard Brown.

The question-and-answer session was rousing and encompassed some issues that were not previously discussed, including spirituality, intra-trans hostility (pre-op vs. post-op), mentors and trans-safe spaces. Gloria Allen—who described herself as a 62-year-old retired LPN "who has seen a lot of things and done a lot of things"—said, "We shouldn't sit back and be quiet. Education is the key." Allen considered herself fortunate (including being in an accepting church), but stressed that younger people "need to stay in school, get an education, be out there and let people know, 'You're going to deal with me!'"

And then there was Vernita Gray of the Cook County States Attorney's Office. Gray, known for

being outspoken, moved the auditorium to excitement and applause when she said, "Without the trans community, where the hell would we be? Our community is led by the trans community. When we stepped out in Stonewall, we came behind those queens in high heels. ... We will never separate ourselves from the letters LGBT. ... Without the 'T', where would our [gay pride] parade be?"

## Citizens Sound Off on Budget

BY AMY WOOTEN

State representatives of Chicago's North Side and the northern suburbs gathered to hear the testimonies of those impacted by Gov. Rod Blagojevich's \$470 million budget cut.

On Thurs., Sept. 27, Loyola's Mundelein Center Auditorium in Rogers Park was packed with heads of local organizations, community members and others impacted by the governor's vetoes of what Blagojevich has called "pork" projects. Reps. Rich Bradley, John D'Amico, Lou Lang, Joe Lyons, Sara Feigenholtz, John Fritchey, Greg Harris and Harry Osterman listened to their communities for hours in order to gather testimony in hopes of convincing the Senate to override the governor's vetoes.

Prior to the testimonies, many representatives mentioned that they feel Blagojevich's vetoes have a political agenda behind them. In a presentation given by a House staff member, it was noted that nearly all House Democratic projects were eliminated, as well as nearly all Senate Republican projects. Meanwhile, no Senate Democratic and House Republican projects were cut. Those saved from cuts, according to the representatives, are all projects of the panel that will approve or reject the Governor's health care plan, Illinois Covered.

The governor's office denies this accusation. "The governor's vetoes represent less than 1 percent of the cut," Blagojevich spokesman Justin DeJong told Windy City Times the following day. "The gross exaggeration of those vetoes made last night only serves to distract the public from the fact that Speaker [Rep. Mike] Madigan, in the House, didn't include enough revenues to meet the state's health care and education needs and to pay for hundreds of member initiatives that they inserted into the budget at the last minute without and public discourse or hearings."

DeJong also said that the House failed to address the state's health care crisis, and the governor "prioritized" health care needs and now "more than 500,000 people will have access to health care," under the governor's plan.

The presentation also included information on how the vetoes—over \$200 million in projects of local significance—have specifically impacted the North Side in the areas of education, health care and social services (including \$700,000 cut from HIV/AIDS education, medicine and prevention), public health and safety and others.

Feigenholtz said that, out of the 13 years she has spend listening to the residents she serves, she doesn't expect the governor to understand what is needed within her community. She pointed out all the people in the room who work on behalf of people living with HIV/AIDS, the disabled, those struggling with substance abuse and more. "We all need to get this money back for these services," she said.

When the event was opened up to the community, topics raised included everything from Alderman Joe Moore (49th Ward) describing how the loss of Cease Fire, a violence prevention project, has deeply impacted his ward to Beau Gratzner of Howard Brown noting that without the money cut by the governor, the organization won't be able to provide 400-500 HIV tests.

Others spoke about cuts made to libraries, the State's Attorney's office, counseling centers, organizations that work on behalf of the disabled and mentally ill and much more.

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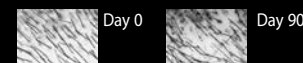
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# LIFT THE BAN.

# NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY ANDREW DAVIS AND AMY WOOTEN

During a recent appearance at Columbia University, **Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadine-jab claimed his country is gay-free**, reported Reuters. Not only did he state that gays and lesbians do not exist in Iran, but likened them to criminals. He is quoted as saying, "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country. ... I don't know who has told you we have it [the "phenomenon" of homosexuality.]"

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace attempted to clarify anti-gay comments he made earlier this year, when he referred to homosexuality as "immoral," Associated Press reported. At a Senate Appropriations Committee, **Pace indicated that he might be willing to change the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy** that bans openly gay and lesbian servicemembers from serving in the military. However, he also reiterated his belief that his upbringing taught him to not condone behavior that is "counter to God's law."

**The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church USA chose to suspend the ordination of gay bishops**, according to HRC. The voted to put a moratorium on confirming gay and lesbian bishops, and to ban the blessing of same-sex unions. The Anglican Church had placed a deadline for the U.S. Episcopal Church.

Christian organization Catholic League announced a national boycott of Miller beer for sponsoring the San Francisco Folsom Street Fair. According to blog Joe.My.God, **Miller has asked Folsom Street Fair organizers to remove its logo from one of its posters**, citing "offensive" imagery.

**A New York student was sent home for wearing a T-shirt that said, "Gay? Fine by Me."** She was told to either get rid of the shirt or go home, reported Edgeboston.com. The high school sophomore, Heathyre Farnham, chose to leave school.

**A Texas teacher resigned after an anonymous source tipped off the high school** that the teacher allegedly appears in over 50 gay wrestling flicks, according to Queerty.com. The teacher denies the claims.

A recent survey of Catholic parents of gay kids has found that **over time, parents can become more comfortable with their children's sexuality**, according to a press release by Fortunate Families, a nationwide ministry. The study, called the Parents Voice Project, also found that

many parents were discouraged by the lack of Church support.

**A charity fund to benefit a Bay Area LGBT counseling center has been set up following the Sept. 13 death of porn star Danny Roddick**, according to Gaywired.com. COLT Studio Group announced that proceeds from the DVDs he is featured in will benefit the service organization New Leaf. Roddick joined COLT in 2005, and was featured in five of its films.

The Washington Blade reports that **House Democrats are considering dropping the inclusion of trans people from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act**. The current wording of the bill would ban employment discrimination of LGBT people, but inside sources say dropping trans protections might make it easier to get the support needed for ENDA to pass.

**The Gaybor District Coalition has been created in Tampa's Ybor City National Landmark Historic District**. The district has become a popular gay destination, and community businesses and residents recently banded together to create a coalition to promote economic growth.

**A Colorado lesbian couple seeking a marriage license were arrested during a sit-in**, according to the organization Soulforce. On Sept. 24, police arrested Kate Burns and Sheila Schroeder from a Denver municipal building after they were denied a marriage application and refused to leave.



**Dozens of LGBT students from the country's historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) attended the Human Right Campaign's fifth "Claim Your Truth" Summit, held Sept. 12-15 in Washington, D.C.** The conference was designed to give students the opportunity to meet, mingle and learn from their peers while developing lobbying skills. Among the presenters were former NBA player John Amaechi and Noah's Arc actor Doug Spearman (above). Photo by Patsy Lynch

## Hillary Stumbles During Debate

BY LISA KEEN

Gay supporters of Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton were quick to the mat after the senator used the word "choice" in reference to sexual orientation during a Sept. 26 debate in Hanover, N.H.

"She did not mean sexual orientation is a choice," said Jin Chon, a spokesperson for the Clinton campaign on gay-related issues. She doesn't think sexual orientation is a choice."

The question—posed during the Democratic presidential debate at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, Wednesday night—was not about the origins of sexual orientation. It was whether the candidates would be "comfortable" having a story about same-sex marriage between two princes "read to your children as part of their school curriculum?" The issue is the focus of a federal lawsuit in Massachusetts, where parents of a second grader in Lexington have challenged their school's inclusion of the book among those to be read out loud to children.

The question was tossed first to John Edwards and Barack Obama, both of whom have young children.

Edwards said he would "absolutely" be comfortable with it, and added that he wants his children to understand "everything about the difficulty that gay and lesbian couples are faced with every day."

It's not clear why Edwards assumed the book would talk about the difficulties gay couples face. The person who posed the question, New England Cable News reporter Allison, did not mention its content—only that parents of a second grader filed a lawsuit seeking to have it taken out of the classroom.

Edwards continued with a long rambling discourse in which he said he "suspects" his two younger children "will reach the same conclusion" as his eldest daughter Cate who "doesn't understand why her dad is not in favor of same-sex marriage."

"I don't want to make that decision on behalf of my children," said Edwards, not clarifying what "that decision" was. "I want my children to be able to make that decision on behalf of themselves. And I want them to be exposed to all the information even in—did you say second grade? Second grade might be a little tough—but even in second grade, to be exposed to all those possibilities. Because I don't get to impose my view. Nobody made me god. I don't get to decide on behalf of my family and my children—as my wife Elizabeth has spoken her own mind on this issue—I don't get to impose on them what it is that I believe is right."

"But what I would do as president of the United States," said Edwards, winding up, "is I would lead an effort to make sure" that same-

sex couples get the same benefits as heterosexual married couples and that the military end the "don't ask/don't tell policy."

"I will be a president," said Edwards, "that leads a serious effort to deal with the discrimination that exists today."

King tossed the question next to Barack Obama, noting that he, too, has two young children at home.

Although Obama said, "I feel very similar to John," his demeanor was decidedly more comfortable than that of Edwards and his answer more enlightened and to the point.

"The fact is," said Obama, "my nine-year-old and six-year-old, I think, are already aware there are same sex couples. And my wife and I have talked about it," although he later clarified that only his wife has talked to the girls about the subject.

While Edwards wanted to make sure his children understand the difficulties and discrimination gay couples face, Obama said, "one of the things I want to communicate to my children is not to be afraid of people who are different. Because there have been times in our history where I was considered different, or Bill Richardson was considered different."

"And one of the things the next president has to do," said Obama, "is to stop fanning people's fears. If we spend all our time feeding the American people fear and conflict and divisiveness, they become fearful and conflicted and divided. And if we feed them hope and we feed them reason and tolerance, then they'll become tolerant and reasonable and hopeful. And that is one of the most important things that the next president can do is to try and bring us together and to stop trying to fan the flames of division that have become so standard in our politics in Washington."

Then came Clinton's turn. She said she respected what Edwards and Obama said and reiterated Obama's point that differences have been exploited for political purposes.

"I think everyone of us on this stage are really personally opposed to that and will do everything we can to prevent it," said Clinton.

"With respect to your individual children," she said, "that is such a matter of parental discretion. I think that, obviously, it is better to try to work with children, to help your children to understand there are many differences that are in the world and to really respect other people and the choices that other people make and that goes far beyond sexual orientation."

The answer appeared to walk a very delicate line between what gays would want to hear and what parents who might be among the "fearful" would want to hear. She didn't say whether she'd be comfortable with such a book being read to a child and appeared to side with those who would prefer, at the very least, to be able to opt out their child from exposure to any positive discussion of gay people in the schools.

Very few gay activists contacted to react to

Turn to page 27

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# WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

## Gay Iraqis win UK asylum

Two gay men targeted by anti-gay death squads in Iraq were granted asylum in the United Kingdom in late September.

Ibaa, 30, had worked as a cultural-programs officer for the British Council in Baghdad. Haider, 29, was a doctor at Baghdad's Al-Nu'man General Hospital.

Both had received death threats from anti-gay militias, and a grenade had been thrown through a window at Ibaa's home. Ibaa's partner, Ali, was kidnapped, tortured and murdered in April 2004 by men suspected of belonging to the Badr militia, according to the London-based organization Iraqi LGBT.

"No words can express how relieved and grateful I feel," Ibaa said after the asylum ruling. "All the years of fear are over."

Said Haider: "When I heard that I had won my appeal, I cried. ... The terrible past was over. This is an opportunity to start my life all over again."

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, "militant death squads" have executed "hundreds" of people solely for being gay, according to Iraqi LGBT.

## UK government tackles homophobic bullying in schools

The United Kingdom's Department for Children, Schools and Families has published a guidebook on "Preventing and Responding to Homophobic Bullying in Schools."

The 140-page book, issued Sept. 21, provides principals, teachers and staff with practical information and lesson plans to help them deal with and eliminate anti-gay abuse.

According to research by Stonewall, the UK's leading gay-lobby group, almost two-thirds of young gay people have experienced anti-gay bullying and 97 percent of gay pupils report regularly hearing homophobic insults at school, a third of the time from adults.

## Moldovan PM supports anti-discrimination moves

Moldovan Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev has thrown his support behind a project to craft anti-discrimination legislation.

Government ministries will work with the non-governmental Antidiscrimination Coalition to write and pass legislation, raise awareness, train public officials and collaborate with the media.

The gay group Information Centre Gender-Doc-M is a member of the coalition, along with groups representing youth, Roma (Gypsies) and other minorities.

## Nova Scotia birth certificate rules for gay parents

The Canadian province of Nova Scotia changed its regulations regarding birth certificates Sept. 20 so that a gay couple can be recorded as a newborn's parents.

The province previously had registered only biological parents, but determined that the policy violated the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Lesbian mom Jamie O'Neill had filed a complaint with the provincial Human Rights Commission after being told the only way she could be named as the parent of her partner's newborn daughter was by adopting the infant.

## EuroPride heads to Warsaw

Members of the European Pride Organisers Association, meeting in Stockholm Sept. 20-23, selected Warsaw as the site for the 2010 EuroPride parade -- the first time the event will be staged in Eastern Europe.

The association said the move "sends a strong signal to a part of the continent where equal rights and acceptance of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders are still minimal."

Polish President Lech Kaczynski, when he was mayor of Warsaw, tried to ban the city's gay pride march and ordered police to halt it, saying he opposed "propagating gay orientation."

Just prior to this year's parade, which drew 20,000 marchers, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Kaczynski's attempt to ban the

2005 parade had violated the European Convention on Human Rights.

"Other cities, such as Moscow and Riga, have to learn that it is unacceptable in Europe to prohibit gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders from appearing in public," said EPOA President Robert Kastl.

Next year's EuroPride festivities will be in Stockholm and the 2009 events will take place in Zurich.

This year's parade and related events in Madrid were the largest ever, attracting some 2.3 million people over a 10-day period.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley



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## ...VIEWPOINTS...

## Not Without Our "T"

BY TRACY BAIM



The GLBT community is not just a series of letters thrown together out of convenience. Rather, our movement includes those

four key letters because each are interconnected in their histories, and their experiences.

It has taken a long time for our community to more fully embrace the differences within, even though "transgender" individuals have always been intimately linked with our movement (from cross-dressing Hollywood stars to drag queens at Stonewall).

But society does not so easily separate us. When an employer fires a butch lesbian because of what she wears, he or she does not do this because they understand the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity. An effeminate gay or straight man may be fired because of how he talks, "like a girl."

And even if our enemies had a sophisticated understanding between homophobia and transphobia, should it matter why they fire a G, L, B or T? Because lesbians are more acceptable to general society (or at least ignored), should we first get coverage for them, and then the bisexuals, then gay men,

and then the transgendered?

No, we will not be divided.

The misguided attempt by U.S. Rep. Barney Frank and U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi to compromise on our rights should be stopped. Most national GLBT organizations are opposed to the moves last week to create a separate and unequal path for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Frank justifies creating a separate gender identity and expression bill because, by including it in the main bill, we risk losing.

The bottom line is that ENDA has very little chance of becoming law because George W. Bush has said he would not sign it. To throw people off a sinking boat now is not only inconsequential to immediate success, it is wrong. New York state learned the hard way, excluding trans coverage in their state law as a compromise, and five years later the trans community still waits for their rights.

The activists should look to Illinois for an example of a "no compromise" plan that succeeded. Our state bill included sexual orientation and gender identity, and it is now the law of the Land of Lincoln.

Rep. Frank's rationale for these maneuvers sounds good on paper, but does not represent the reality for our community. We cannot ever justify exclusion as a course of action. To sever a significant part of our community would be wrong. If it takes losing "T" to get our rights, none of us should want those rights.

It is good that on Monday, Pelosi and Frank said they would delay any

action until the issue is further debated. The rush to compromise was a serious threat to our movement. There should be far more consultation among leadership—there is no one GLBT leader (despite Frank's long years of service) or one GLBT organization that speaks for our community. Rather, there are dozens of key national and state groups, and hundreds of important voices to hear to build a reasonable consensus for our community.

We are glad that Rep. Tammy Baldwin decided not to compromise, at least at this stage. We are glad groups such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are standing firm against this change. We are also happy the Human Rights Campaign joined the tide against the compromise, even if a little later than most.

We do not want our rights at the expense of anyone else. That is too high a cost to pay.

## QUOTES ON ENDA

"As members of the labor movement, we see every day the effects of divide and conquer strategies at the bargaining table. We won't sell out our transgender brothers and sisters for the sake of crass political expediency. Transgender people face the highest rates of unemployment in our community and it would be unconscionable for us to sit idly by and see them stripped from this important piece of federal legislation." — Nancy Wohlforth, Co-President of Pride At Work.

"It is politically inexplicable and unconscionable that some congressio-

nal leaders are rushing to strip protections for transgender people from ENDA—just as the Senate votes overwhelmingly to pass transgender-inclusive hate crimes legislation." — Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director.

"African-Americans did not say, Hey, let's put forth a bill to protect all the light-skinned blacks—those who can pass and are less threatening to whites—and we'll come back to the blackest of the black later. And make no mistake: the transies are the queerest of the queer; they are the ones who need protections more than anyone else. ... Regarding all the high-minded pledges from various people who say we will come back for the transgendered and make sure we add them later: We have seen an unfortunate history of leaving people behind within this movement, I'm sorry to remind you. Soon after the onset of the HIV drug cocktail, for example, many middle class gay white men went back to their lives ... while HIV ravages other communities in this country and much of the rest of the planet. The political will within the gay community in America to help those other communities has all but died." — Columnist and radio host Michelangelo Signorile.

"Without gender identity and expression language, gay and lesbian people will continue to face legal discrimination in the workplace because of their lack of congruence with societal norms of gender presentation and behavior." — The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition.

## Jena 6's Black Leadership Splits Queers

BY REV. IRENE MONROE



The Jena 6 case—in which Southern white law enforcement in Jena, La., unabashedly doled out biased treatment against six African-American high school students—harkens back to this country's era of Jim Crow. And it is a no-brainer as to why there was a mass protest.

What boggles my mind, however, is the protest from many in our queer community toward the LGBTQ individuals and organizations that showed up in solidarity.

For example, Chris Crain, the former editor of the Washington Blade and the man behind the popular blog and syndicated column "Citizen Crain," balked at HRC's president, Joe Solmonese, for appearing at the rally.

"Why pick this case? It doesn't involve discrimination of the type suffered historically by gay Americans. I would agree completely that there is racial discrimination in this country, and that the criminal justice system suffers from prosecutorial abuse, biased jury verdicts and lopsided sentences based on race," Crain wrote. "But ... why pick the Jena 6, ... a case of six bullies who beat, kicked and stomped a defenseless teen unconscious in a schoolyard, as the one for the GLBT movement to

take a stand?"

When your identity, like mine, is the intersection of these two marginalized groups, the question is moot. Crain's question is similar to the mindset of Alveda King, the niece of Martin Luther King, who said gays never had to sit in the back of the bus.

Alexander Robinson of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), the only national African-American LGBTQ organization in the country, showed his solidarity in a statement: "Earlier this summer, NBJC joined the NAACP in its effort to right the wrongs against the Jena 6. We cannot allow the injustice in Jena, La., or anywhere else in the country to go unnoticed or unchallenged and we need your support to do it!"

Crain's question, however, cannot be summarily dismissed, because it is an important one. But his question should be hurled at the Goliaths leading the Jena 6 protest and not at the Davids who followed African-American leadership.

For a different reason than Crain's, I too, ask a question: "Why a rally in support of these six black boys but not the seven black lesbians who defended themselves against an anti-gay attack and were charged with beating and stabbing a white filmmaker? The filmmaker instigated the violence by threatening them and actually trying to choke one of them in the Greenwich Village in August 2006?"

Because of poor legal representation, three of the women pleaded guilty to attempted assault, and were sentenced to six months in jail and five years probation. Again, Jim Crow, noted for its residency "down South," also shows its face here "up North."

So why not a similar outrage coming from the African-American leadership? But is this also a no-brainer?

Cornel West, an African-American scholar and professor at Princeton University, wrote in "Black Leadership and the Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning" that present-day black leadership fails American Americans because it's exclusive of women and needs a gender analysis. "What most disturbed me [is] the low level of political discussion in black America—[its] crude discourse about race and gender that bespeaks a failure of nerve of black leadership."

But the "failure of nerve of black leadership" is in its very own civil rights model, a paradigm historically unabashed about its exclusion of its women and LGBTQ people. And this model of leadership refuses to change from our revered Martin Luther King to our noted opportunist Al Sharpton.

Bayard Rustin, the gay man who was chief organizer and strategist for the 1963 March on Washington that further catapulted Martin Luther King onto the world stage, was not the beneficiary of King's dream. And in a spring 1987 interview with Rustin in "Open Hands," a resource for ministries affirming the diversity of human sexuality, Rustin stated that he pushed King to speak up on his behalf, but King refused.

In John D'Emilio's book "Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin," D'Emilio wrote: "Rustin offered to resign in the hope that he would force the issue. Much to his chagrin, King did not reject the offer. At the time, King was also involved in a major challenge to the conservative leadership of the National Baptist Convention, and one of his ministerial lieutenants in the fight was also gay. Basically, King said, 'I can't take on two queers at one time.'"

And while Jesse Jackson adamantly feels that

Tracy Baim

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# Nikolai Alexeyev: Leading the Fight in Russia

BY AMY WOOTEN

Russian's foremost gay leader of the LGBT movement will be making his first-ever appearance to the U.S. for the Oct. 6 9th Annual Matthew Shepard March, 8 p.m. at Halsted and Roscoe.

Gay Liberation Network has organized the platform for Nikolai Alexeyev to speak about solidarity at the event. The busy gay activist has organized the Russian LGBT community against Moscow's call to ban Moscow Pride two years in a row, leading to bloody attacks and endless court battles. Alexeyev has even had to fight conservatives within his own community.

Alexeyev has been through much in a short period of time. In August, he was charged with slander for outing an anti-gay Parliament member, Alexander Chuev, in what was quite possibly the first outing of a Russian politician. And, on Sept. 14, the activist led a protest outside the Russian Health Ministry against a law that bans gay men from donating blood, which led to arrests. Yet, he remains hopeful.

Alexeyev talked to Windy City Times about looking on the bright side and unity.

**Windy City Times: How is the slander case going? Has it been a nightmare?**

Nikolai Alexeyev: It started in June this year... when we met on one of the central TV channels in Russia. He was positioning himself as a conservative and religious person and things like that. He's always fighting for the electorate and we know that he's gay himself. There has never been any outing in Russian politics. This was probably the first one, ever. At the end of the



Nikolai Alexeyev. Photo by Jonas Hansson

program, he pissed me off so much [laughs], I said if he was gay himself, why are you a hypocrite, and why are you saying these things?

...They are going to say that I'm guilty, and that I committed a crime. I think everything in court will be against me, because there is absolutely no—I don't believe in Russian justice. It is going to be like that. ...I don't believe that it will be in my favor.

**WCT: Let's talk about earlier in September, when Moscow upheld the ban of Moscow Pride. Did you expect that to happen?**

NA: Oh yeah, absolutely. If you take the example of last year's pride, in 2006, we went through all the possible courts in Russia, trying to challenge the ban. We started from the local courts one day before pride day.

...After that we appealed to multiple city courts concerning the decision. Then we appealed many times more until we were up to the Russian Supreme Court, and the Russian Supreme Court...also said it was fine and it was banned legally. This case was sent in January of this year to the European Court, ...but it takes several years to consider a case there.

We absolutely expected it, in light of last year's decision. Next week we are going to appeal the

decision again in Moscow City Court and then after that, we're going to send it once again to the European Court of Human Rights. So we absolutely expected the decision, and we didn't, in any single case, win regarding the expression of homosexual people. Even, for example, with the blood donation pickets on Sept. 14, it's exactly the same story. The event is banned with exactly the same reasoning the events we banned on May 27.

**WCT: With all of these problems, is there anything good that has come out of this?**

NA: Yes, I always say that the main idea is that some people think that we've organized Pride just for the sake of organizing the event on the street and just to [obtain] the right to publicly express what we want to say. This is not true. This is just part of the problem. The problem with Moscow Pride has allowed us to have enormous access to the media. Using this access to the media, we had the opportunity to raise a number of issues, which are very important for the LGBT people of Russia.

...This, I would say, is the most important achievement of the Moscow Pride. At the same time, there is another thing. ...In 2002, we were discussing criminalization of homosexual acts. Today, we're talking about the right to get in the streets and march in the streets. This is a different story.

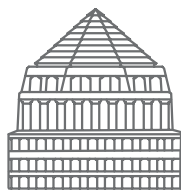
...We organized the first press conference in May 2005. I can tell you that this press conference was not attended by a single journalist. The level of interest in the gay topic was zero. Apart from news about artists, singers and things like that; it had never been discussed [a political discussion of gay rights]. After that, we had another one in July on the issue of the young guys being hung in Iran. ... This was a sort of a turning point of the growing interest of the political LGBT issues in Russia. Then, we announced the first Moscow Pride and the media started to become more and more interested, and now we have...about a 100 journalists and about 20 TV cameras, both Russian and inter-

national. Really, for me, it's unbelievable to see this because I've seen all this way from the very beginning when there was nothing, and then to now, where we are of huge interest of the media. To me, it's unbelievable to see all this.

**WCT: What have you learned that all gay and lesbians need to know when trying to create change, no matter what country they are trying to create change in?**

NA: I think what is very important is to create an idea around which people can gather and organize. As soon as they understand that we have common goals in what we are doing, the progress will come in any case and we will reach a lot. That's why what you had in America, the Stonewall Rebellion, and what are seeing in Russia more than 40 years later—this is just the same thing. It's always very difficult to start it, but it gets so it's not possible to stop it any more. People have to be united in what they are doing, which is very difficult to do.

People see in America that it's different from what we are doing here. I am sort of disappointed when I read about what happened in New York during the Stonewall Rebellion, when I see what happened in San Francisco when Harvey Milk was killed. When I see this and when I see the growth of the LGBT community now in Russia, I get disappointed because I think that people were much more united in what they were doing in America during these years than what we see now in Russia. There is a lot of apathy for Russian politics right now, because people think they can't change anything. Not only gays, but in general. ...In Russia, there is only one group of people, who are always taking the power and not allowing any other operation come to power. They control the television, the financial things and so forth. The Russia situation is very specific in a way. It's like a dictatorship. There is huge progress from the Soviet times, but in a way, it's like a czar—the father of a nation who is always deciding everything for you, and you don't have to decide anything.



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# HISTORY MONTH

## Leaning Toward Justice

To mark October as Gay and Lesbian History Month, several individuals have written pieces detailing events, and their feelings about these happenings. The effort is coordinated by Philadelphia Gay News and syndicated to dozens of gay publications. Windy City Times will run these articles throughout the month of October.

### BY CONGRESSWOMAN TAMMY BALDWIN

In the 1960s, while confronting segregation, discrimination, obstruction of voting rights and physical violence, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often borrowed the words of another pastor, an abolitionist from Boston, named Theodore Parker, to inspire and give strength to those in the civil rights movement. In the fight for full equality, both Dr. King and Rev. Parker reminded their flock what I believe is equally true and relevant today as we discuss the gay rights movement in America: "The arc of the moral universe is long...but it bends toward justice."

You may wonder how I can say that in 2007, when LGBT Americans are still the victims of violent hate crimes and discrimination, still unable to serve openly in the armed forces, still unable, in many states, to adopt children, still unable in 49 states to marry, still denied the full and equal rights that citizenship grants and morality demands.

Gay History Month is an appropriate time to step back from our daily struggles and frustrations to assess how much progress we have made in recent years. Despite political setbacks and sadly, still, hate crimes against the LGBT community, young Americans are growing up in ever-more tolerant times. Ten years ago, Ellen DeGeneres announced she was gay on national television and cynics predicted it would end her career. Earlier this year, Ellen hosted the Academy Awards where a billion viewers around the world were not only entertained by this openly-gay and hugely popular comedian, but then they heard Oscar-winner Melissa Etheridge publicly thank her own "wife" and their four children.

In 1998, the people of Wisconsin's Second District elected me, the first out lesbian and the



Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin.

first openly gay non-incumbent, to Congress. I was only 36 years old and had entered college in 1980, a mere seven years after the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders.

Today, you can go into almost any book store and find aisles of gay and lesbian literature. But one of my friends (now in his mid-sixties) reminded me that when he was in college and beginning to question his own sexual orientation, the only mention of homosexuality came in textbooks next to adjectives such as "deviant," "aberrant," and "criminal."

Right after I graduated from high school, in the summer of 1980, the Democratic Party at its national convention, included this one phrase deep in its thirty-eight thousand word platform: "All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, language, age, sex or sexual orientation."

Two hundred four years after our Declaration of Independence professed that all men are created equal, the first gay rights plank appeared in a major political party platform.

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

I grew up in the progressive city of Madison, in the birthplace of "progressivism," Wisconsin, and I had gone to one of the best public school systems in the country, yet no one had ever uttered the words gay or lesbian in a class. Never mind that there was no gay/straight student alliance or anything remotely like it. There were no openly gay characters on TV. No same-sex partners in advertising. No same sex marriage or civil union announcements in the society pages of the New York Times or any other newspaper. No protections against discrimination for LGBT people in housing or at work. At the time, not so long ago, "Queer" was a curse word and "being

queer" was a curse.

No role model ever told me about the Daughters of Bilitis, the Mattachine Society, or Stonewall; Elaine Noble, Frank Kameny, or any of the courageous leaders who shaped our movement or contributed their art, their science, their sweat, and their intellect to this world.

Well into the 20th century, our nation's and the world's history was never whole and truthful because the role of LGBT people in shaping that history was, quite simply, "the greatest story never told."

After graduating from high school, I went to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. It was during my sophomore year at Smith, 1982, that the first Gay Games were held in San Francisco. Reuters News Service reported:

"Homosexual athletes and their fans from eight countries and across the United States are streaming into San Francisco for the opening today of what has become known as the Gay Games. Some 1,365 men and women, including 62 Canadians, will compete for nine days in 17 events designed to show the world that homosexuals make as good competitors as anybody else."

Last year, the seventh Gay Games were held in Chicago, attracting nearly twelve thousand sport and cultural participants from around the world. Corporate sponsors included Nike, Walgreens, The New York Times, Gatorade, and Ernst & Young, among others.

On Dec. 28 last year, the Chicago Tribune (not the most liberal newspaper in the country) ran an article entitled "2006 Was the Year of the Queer," which read, in part:

"From the annual gay pride celebrations to hosting the Gay Games, Chicago opened its arms to the community. In July, thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered athletes from all over the world descended on Chicago to participate in the Gay Games. Also, The Center on Halsted, the new LGBT community center in Boystown, broke ground and looks to be on schedule to open by mid-2007."

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

During my junior year at Smith, in 1983, Congressman Gerry Studds announced that he was gay; after being censured by the House for having an affair with a 17-year-old page.

In a speech to his colleagues Studds said: "It is not a simple task for any of us to meet adequately the obligations of either public or private life, let alone both, but these challenges are made substantially more complex when one is, as I am, both an elected public official and gay."

It was during that same year, my junior year in college, that I began my own process of coming out...first to myself, then, gradually and cautiously, to others. But as I approached the end of my undergraduate career and looked to my future, I believed that in order to live my life and my dreams, I'd have to make a choice between pursuing a career in public service, perhaps running for office...and living my life in an open and honest way. I did not believe that I could have both.

Now, to some of you, the idea of a society so limited for LGBT people is as foreign as a world without cell phones, iPods, or computers. But for those of you who remember the darkness and loneliness of life in the closet, those memories are still fresh and raw.

In November 1985, a little over a year after I had graduated from college, a small group of elected officials met in West Hollywood, CA. The group, predominantly from the coasts and upper Mid-West, included a few city council members and county board supervisors, a state assemblywoman, and a state senator from Minnesota, Allan Spear. That a dozen or so elected officials would enjoy meeting with each other to discuss their work is not unusual. That they were all openly-gay is extraordinary! And the joy of meeting each other and finding support from one another was another milestone for them and for gay liberation (as our movement was then called).

Keep in mind that, at that time, gay people were still stereotyped as drag queens, predators, or sissies. As perceived by society, gay people were pretty much all men, you know. Gay or straight, it was still very much "a man's world!" Back in the 80s, AIDS, the "gay plague," was decimating our community and bolstering a public image of gay men as promiscuous sex fiends.

These elected officials who met in West Hollywood, were progressive, and multi-dimensional politically. Individually and collectively, they wanted to give a voice to our community and encourage others to come out of the closet and participate in public discourse and the political process.

It was Allan Spear, who said, "Unless you learn and respect the process, you are not going to accomplish what you want to do. You have to use it for your own goals."

As elected officials, they presented a very different public face of gay men and women.

They were patriots who believed in our democracy and knew how to use the political process for the common good. To me and all those who followed them into office, they were courageous

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and generous role models. I can tell you from personal experience, they threw fabulous dinner parties! And the talk at the table was as nourishing and satisfying as the meal.

I had the honor of attending the second such conference of openly gay and lesbian elected officials in the autumn of 1986, just months after my election to the Dane County (Wis.) Board of Supervisors. I was 24 years old. There were a total of 14 elected officials in attendance, and combined with those openly gay and lesbian elected officials who were unable to attend, we figure that we numbered less than two dozen world-wide. As a young person seeking a life in public service and wanting to be honest about who I was, the people I met at those early conferences were a godsend. In time, I've been fortunate to take some of what they gave me and pass it on.

Let me tell you just one story. During my first term in Congress, I received a letter one day from an 18 year-old from a small town in southern Illinois—population forty-four hundred. This young man had a passion for politics.

He wrote, "I was president of my graduating class, treasurer of the student council, and a senior board member on a local community service youth group . . . "I was following my dreams," he told me, "until I realized that I am gay. At that point I gave up."

Surfing the Internet one day, this young man read an article about my election to Congress. He realized that one could be openly gay and live a life in politics. But, he went on to explain, that wasn't the real reason he was writing me.

In his letter to me, he wrote, "You not only saved my hopes and dreams, you saved my life. I have never told anyone this...I was going to give up, not only on my hopes and dreams, but on my life altogether."

This young man, whom I've since met, is now graduated from college, and involved in politics as an openly gay man.

From that first group of pioneers back in the 80s has sprung the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute that each year now assists hundreds of individuals enter careers in politics, government, business and advocacy. The Leadership Institute reports well more than 600 openly gay elected and appointed officials on five continents at the local, state, and federal levels.

Being "out" in our chosen fields, we not only offer hope to other members of the gay community. We offer a new perspective to members of the straight community, many of whom harbor those stereotypes I talked about earlier. Another benefit of coming out is that those of us who are "out" are perceived as being honest ...of having integrity.

When I began my political career, no pollster in her right mind would have advised a Congressional candidate to come out of the closet. It simply was not viewed as being in our best political interest to share that kind of information.

But we've come to learn that, by being "out," we clearly demonstrate our integrity. We prove that we're making decisions based on what is right and honest. We shatter the cynicism that people hold about politicians and people in government.

When I ran for the Wisconsin Assembly in 1992, I remember a man who approached me. I thought to myself at the time, "Here comes trouble." I steeled myself for some ugly words. But he came up to me, right in my face, and said, "Gosh, Lady, you sure got guts. If you can be honest about that, you'll probably be honest about everything." I got his vote, along with the votes of many others who probably don't agree with me on every issue and aren't even comfortable with the idea of homosexuality... but honesty and integrity carry a lot of weight in an election...and in life.

All of us who are openly gay (not just elected officials or movie stars, but all of us) are living and writing the history of our movement. We are no more...and no less...heroic than the suffragists and abolitionists of the 19th century; and the labor organizers, Freedom Riders, Stonewall demonstrators, and environmentalists of the 20th century. We are ordinary people, living our lives, and trying as civil rights activist Dorothy Cotton said, to "fix what ain't right" in our society.

Dorothy Cotton was a key organizer in the civil rights movement in Alabama in the 1960s. She had, and she inspired others to have, faith that, if they used the tools of our democracy, they could effect change; even when it was their government that was denying them their rights.

Using the tools of our democracy the Freedom Fighters pushed forward the monumental Civil Rights Act of 1964. And using the tools of our democracy today, I am proud and gratified to have helped pass this year in the House, a hate crimes bill that protects gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons from hate-based violence. And, by the time you read this, I expect the House of Representatives will have passed, for the first time in history, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that says you can't fire someone because of non-work related factors like sexual orientation and gender identity.

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

We, in the gay rights movement, can learn from Dorothy Cotton and her comrades in the days of the segregated South; and we can learn from another role model of mine, former Wisconsin Governor and Senator, Gaylord Nelson.

He was a man who sat in arguably the most powerful legislative body on earth, the U.S. Senate. He had the foresight to want to protect the environment, but he couldn't get his Senate colleagues to take his environmental legislation seriously. Nelson recognized that in order to enact environmental protections, he needed to engage the people first.

**Representing Wisconsin's 2nd Congressional District since 1999, Tammy Baldwin is the first out lesbian and the first openly gay non-incumbent ever elected to Congress. Baldwin is committed to achieving health care for all. Her constituents know her as a dynamic advocate, not just of health care, a woman's right to reproductive freedom, and equal rights, but for fairness, honesty, accountability, and equal access for all in government and society. Read the full piece online at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com).**

# QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

**"IN IRAN, WE DON'T HAVE HOMOSEXUALS LIKE IN YOUR COUNTRY.** We don't have that in our country. In Iran, we do not have this phenomenon; I don't know who's told you that we have it." — *Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaking at Columbia University in New York, Sept. 24.*

**"THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION TODAY SUBMITTED** a friend-of-the-court brief to a Minnesota District Court urging it to allow Senator Larry Craig to withdraw his guilty plea because the secret sting operation used to arrest him was likely unconstitutional. ... [T]he government can arrest people for soliciting public sex only if it can show beyond doubt that the sex was to occur in public. Solicitation for private sex, regardless if it occurs in a bar or a restroom, is protected speech under the First Amendment. When free speech rights come into play, police enforcement actions must be 'carefully crafted' so that they don't unnecessarily ensnare people who are engaging in constitutionally protected speech. The secret sting operation used by the police to arrest Senator Craig was not 'carefully crafted' to avoid ensnaring innocent speech." — *From a Sept. 17 ACLU press release.*

**"AS I SLIPPED BACK INTO CELEBRITY LAND [BY BEING ON TV'S THE VIEW]** the tasks multiplied a thousandfold, and the letters addressed to me but having nothing to do with the real me—the mother me, the married me, the friend me—the letters addressed to the celebrity me began to pour in again. ... I had gone four years living alone and now my mailbox was overflowing and people were telling me I was fantastic, the funniest, the happiest, the brightest. [Then there] is a shift that happens in the head and that very few celebrities will ever really speak about. ... One begins to believe in the specialness, and a dangerous sense of entitlement takes over. ... When celebrity addiction starts, you become impatient with, and even angry at necessary obstacles. You think you could run a red light or two. And then you do." — *Rosie O'Donnell in her new book, "Celebrity Detox."*

**"IT BEGGARS BELIEF THAT, IN AN AIRPORT WITH DOZENS OF PUBLIC FACILITIES,** [Sen. Larry Craig] just happened to find himself in the one restroom in the entire airport noted

for anonymous sexual encounters. ... Most observers will find it inexplicable that a traveler with access to free food and a comfortable and clean bathroom in an essentially private lounge would go out of his way to seek out a public bathroom. It's virtually impossible for an objective observer not to conclude that the senator was in that bathroom cruising for gay sex." — *Bryan Fischer writing at SunValleyonline.com, Sept. 5.*

**When celebrity addiction starts, you become ... angry at necessary obstacles.**

—Rosie O'Donnell



GLAAD photo

**"I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I WILL NO LONGER BE** on The View tomorrow as scheduled. I had made a request that I be interviewed by Joy, Barbara or Whoopi, but not Elisabeth Hasselback. Unfortunately, the show was not willing to accommodate this simple request so I bowed out. It's really too bad because I've always been a big supporter of the show, but I cannot compromise my beliefs. The good news is that I will be on a whole slew of other shows promoting the new album so I hope you can catch me on those." — *Singer Barry Manilow writing on his Web site, Sept. 17.*

**"I KNOW THIS SOUNDS TRITE, BUT OVER-ALL IT'S FAIRLY AMAZING** to see the major Democratic presidential candidates rallying around the idea of equal rights for same-sex couples, united in their opposition to Don't Ask Don't Tell, and advocating the repeal of the key section of the Defense of Marriage Act. It would be even more amazing if we could get a majority in Congress to pass the teeny tiniest piece of gay rights legislation." — *Syndicated gay press columnist Ann Rostow, Aug. 16.*

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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# GOINGS ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



## BEALS IS COOKING; FALL MUSIC

Jennifer Beals (left) interview page 23. At right, Kristine W, page 19

### THEATER

'Steel' away.  
Page 18.



### KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

'Lust' in the dust.  
Page 24.



### INTERVIEW

Talking 'small'.  
Page 22.



BY DAVID BYRNE AND TONY PEREGRIN

The **Bee Gees** helped define the disco era with gems like Stayin' Alive, You Should Be Dancing and Tragedy. The legacy of the Brothers Gibb lives on with the newly revamped retrospective, simply titled Greatest. Unlike the Bee Gees's Number



Ones collection, this newly updated double-disc compilation focuses on the trio's heyday in the late '70s. Also added are four new remixes of their Studio 54-era mega-hits plus the previously unavailable Warm Ride. During Barry Gibb's appearance on American Idol last season, he made it apparent that The Bee Gees's influence on the music world is impossible to capture on a mere two-disc set. Sure, To Love Somebody and How Can You Mend A Broken Heart are clearly missing, but Greatest has all of the symptoms of a 'Saturday Night Fever.'

It was no surprise

**Thelma Houston** won first place on the TV show Hit Me Baby, One More Time with her flawless take on Alicia Keys' Fallin'. Houston returns with her first album of new material in over 17 years with A Woman's Touch, a collection of covers made famous by men. (Remember, her disco classic Don't Leave Me This Way was originally done by Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes.) Houston takes a breather from the dance floor with a soulful version of Marvin Gaye's Distant Lover, but she picks up the pace with a medley of Sylvester's Dance (Disco Heat) and You Make Me Feel Mighty Real. Her reworking of Sting's Brand New Day ends up more like her 'brand new version,' wholeheartedly claiming it as her own. Two of Houston's other best moments here are the blues-hued Ain't That Peculiar and the closing track Please Send Me Someone To Love.

Also returning with an overdue new album is **Evelyn "Champagne" King**. Accompanied by her husband/guitarist Freddie Fox, King's Open Book marries her history with dance music and R&B. When she reigned with her staples Shame, Love Come Down and I'm In Love, King already had



Evelyn "Champagne" King.

a voice mature beyond its years. It may seem like King has been out of the limelight, but she has constantly been performing and collaborating with other artists. Hearing her now show off her vocal muscle on her latest reveals no signs of slacking. Highlighted by the downtempo title track as well as Skillz, Creeps and The Dance, King's return is certainly worth the wait. Open Book is scheduled to hit shelves this January via RNB Entertainment Group.

When it comes to soul divas who can turn up the funk, 'ain't nobody' can compare to **Chaka Khan**. Her musical legacy spans four decades and her catalog has been tapped by many, including Bette Midler, Whitney Houston, Richard X, Stardust, Diana King, Jaki Graham and Faithless. Now the Chicago-raised Khan is covering others' works, but she is adding her signature piercing wail on Funk This. Jimi Hendrix, Prince and Joni Mitchell are not safe from the wrath of Khan. If you don't think Khan can handle tackling some-

body else's tunes, then 'I feel for you.' On The Waiting To Exhale soundtrack the icon raises the bar with her take of My Funny Valentine and completely transforms Never Miss The Water with Me'Shell NedgeOcello from Khan's hits collection. Produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Funk This is out now and features duets with Mary J. Blige on Disrespectful and Michael McDonald on Carly Simon's You Belong To Me.

The Classic Disco installment of **UME Number Ones** series can make the disco ball turn on its own. Containing mainstream and forgotten classics, this set serves as a well-intended time capsule. Sure, the crossover hits like Flashdance... What A Feeling, Y.M.C.A. and Funkytown draw the listener in, but it is hearing disco treasures such as Mecco's Star Wars Theme and Stephanie Mills' Medicine Song that keeps the party going.

One of my favorite records from the '70s is **Heart's** Dreamboat Annie. Ann Wilson's delivery on Crazy On You acts as an endearing battle cry. The Wilson sisters recently recorded the whole Dreamboat Annie album live and added covers by bands like The Who (Love Reign O'er Me), Led Zeppelin (Black Dog, Misty Mountain Hop) and Pink Floyd (Goodbye Blue Sky), saluting those who made the sisters want to become rockstars. This live DVD and CD serve as the first chapter of the Classic Albums Live series and both are due out Oct. 23 via Shout Factory. Heart's frontwoman just released the solo outing Hope & Glory. Not to worry, her sister Nancy appears on three of the numbers.

She may have been the butt of sophomoric humor on South Park, but **Stevie Nicks** is getting the last laugh. Her standard, Stand Back, has been remixed by Tracy Young, Ralphie Rosario and Morgan Page, and it turned out to be a massive dance anthem for her this summer. Following suit, remixes to Edge of Seventeen have been commissioned by Young and Peter Rauhofer. This year, the Fleetwood Mac singer also issued another hits package, Crystal Visions: the Very Best

Turn to page 21

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## THEATER REVIEW

# The Crucible

Playwright: Arthur Miller

At: Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted

Phone: 312-335-1650; \$20-\$68

Runs through: Nov. 11

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

Twenty years ago, Gary Sinise dismissed *The Crucible* as outside Steppenwolf's rough and raw aesthetic. "I can't see us doing a play where people are called 'Goodie' and wear buckles on their shoes," he's quoted in Richard Christiansen's *A Theatre of Our Own*.

What a difference a few decades make. The buckles and quaintly monikered characters are out in abundance in the Steppenwolf's forceful, unnervingly timely revival of Arthur Miller's classic. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro, the piece roils with relevancy. The rough magic that defines Steppenwolf flows through Arthur Miller's scathing, metaphorical expose of mediocre minds made dangerous by unchecked power. *The Crucible* illuminates a time of *habeas corpus*-free arrests and indefinite imprisonment, of Orwellian trials and language twisted into a mockery of its meaning. From dolls, the self-appointed righ-



Tim Hopper and Ora Jones in *The Crucible*. Photo by Michael Brosilow

teous deduce devil worship; in reading, they see the hand of demons; in stillbirths, the curse of a witch.

Today, the Rev. Parris (Ian Barford, wonderfully smarmy and self-pitying) would insist weapons of mass destruction lurk under every stone in Iraq, while Danforth (Francis Guinan, perfectly pompous and oozing self-righteousness) would ensure that the accused fester forever in some officially non-existent prison.

"No uncorrupted man may fear this court... the pure of heart need no lawyers," Danforth

trumpets, and it's clear we're in the land of both 17th-century Salem and 21st-century Guantanamo.

Shapiro does a mighty job ensuring that the politics of *The Crucible* don't come at the cost of the story—Miller's agit-prop agenda is dramatic rather than didactic here, and that's a major accomplishment. There's no denying Miller's brilliance, but there's also no denying that, in lesser hands, *The Crucible* could—ironically enough—come across as a piece of powerful sermonizing first and storytelling second.

At the core of *The Crucible* is James Vincent Meredith as John Proctor, a man of unmistakable nobility and profoundly human frailties. Proctor's flaws make him eminently empathetic. Called on to recite the 10 Commandments, Proctor remembers them all except "adultery," a lapse that achingly highlights the source of his troubles.

That source is Abigail Williams (Kelly O'Sullivan, a perfect mix of innocence and viciousness). First wooed and then spurned by Proctor, Abigail discovers power and exacts vengeance in wailing fits and wild-eyed accusations. If Shapiro makes a misstep in her direction, it's in not highlighting the fact that Abigail's devastating lies are the desperate recourse of the abused and the powerless. Women in 17th-century Salem had fewer rights than cattle; in feigning demonic possession, Abigail balanced the scales of power.

"I'll cling to no faith when faith brings blood," utters one of the accused. It's a statement that cuts through the centuries in its immediacy.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**Desire Under the Elms**, The Hypocrites, through Nov. 11. Eugene O'Neill's operatic tale of sinister maternity echoes classic Greek tragedy as it tells a story of lust and greed within an all-American family for whom real estate takes on murderous import. CS

**The Hound of the Baskervilles**, City Lit Theatre, through Oct. 14. Don Bender and Will Schutz return under the expert direction of Kevin Theis to portray Holmes and Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle's popular Victorian thriller at its chilliest best. MSB

**Love is Dead: A NecRomantic Musical Comedy**, Annoyance Theatre, through Oct. 26. If you like ABC's *Pushing Daisies*, why not take in James Asmus' loads-of-fun late-nite-style musical comedy involving a necrophiliac mortician? Folks are dying to see it. SCM

**The Sparrow**, The House at Apollo Theater, through Dec. 31. Commercial backers of this remount have high hopes for The House's joyously theatrical tale of a teen with super powers. Think *Carrie* with a compassionate heart, a redemptive finish and good music. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

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## THEATER REVIEW

### Passion Play: a cycle in three parts

Playwright: Sarah Ruhl  
At: Goodman Theatre  
Phone: 312-443-3800; \$20-\$70  
Runs through: Oct. 21

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Religion and politics have been one and the same until relatively recently. Governments supported a state-sanctioned faith or were out-and-out theocracies. Today's global resurgence of theocratic politics is the greatest extant threat to democratic pluralism and individual liberty.

Shining young playwright Sarah Ruhl, a MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient, tackles religion and politics head-on in her sprawling Passion Play, but she personalizes her tale, so it's about individual faith more than formal religion. She eschews obvious preaching or debate, yet there's a party line espoused in each of the play's three parts, respectively set in 1575 England, 1934 Germany and 1969 South Dakota. In each, a historic political leader appears, God-like, to lay down political articles of faith.

In late medieval Europe, the life of Jesus—Annunciation to Ascension—was dramatized in so-called passion plays that became massive pageants involving most of a town's citizenry and craft guilds under Catholic Church direction. Later, these epic shows became secularized, and continue today (even in the United States) often as summertime, outdoor spectacles. Ruhl uses productions of the passion play to comment on the intersection of faith, politics and sexuality in three different eras. What if Pontius Pilate marries the Virgin Mary (that is, the actors playing them)? What if Jesus has a Nazi boyfriend? What if Mary Magdalene really is a prostitute?



Kristen Bush in  
Passion Play.  
Photo by Brian  
Warling

Passion Play is ambitious and complex, and director Mark Wing-Davey has used Ruhl's long-but-barebones text to create a modern theatrical pageant, layered with visual effects and technical devices—some as old as passion plays themselves—and a cast of 16. It's dazzling and impressive, but it doesn't all work because the three-and-half hour show (two intermissions) doesn't have a gut-wrenching emotional climax.

It appears Ruhl has taken on more than she can effectively sustain. The third part especially, set in South Dakota during/after Vietnam, is too long and the least effective. The God-like spokesman, Ronald Reagan, is too much present and too clownish vs. the earlier appearances of Hitler and Elizabeth I. Ruhl's time-leaping, history-inspired work compares well to some Tom Stoppard plays, but Ruhl doesn't yet have Stoppard's intellectual and theatrical mastery.

Wing-Davey compensates by making each successive part more elaborate than the one before, adding quasi-magical flourishes—model ships, giant fish, striking projections—not required by the script. Eventually the size of his production consumes the play, which isn't of sufficient dramatic weight to hold it all up. Wing-Davey is brilliant at bringing out unexpected comedy, especially in Part One and in Ruhl's affectionate jests at theater itself, but he sacrifices character depth in the process.

The large canvas Ruhl attempts to paint may be too vast for complete success, but her effort is worthy, intriguing, entertaining and admirable nonetheless. Artists always should think Big.

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## THEATER REVIEW

## Men of Steel

Playwright: Qui Nguyen

At: Theater Wit at Theatre Building Chicago,  
1225 W. Belmont

Phone: 773-327-5252; \$25

Runs through: Oct. 28

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Just when you thought the live theater was free of blockbuster cinema superheroes...

Wham! Pow! Ker-splat!

Theater Wit brings Qui Nguyen's *Men of Steel* to kick-punch its blend of superhero seriousness and spoof to the live stage in its Chicago premiere. And, wow, what a fabulous jumble *Men of Steel* turns out to be.

*Men of Steel* clearly spoofs the conventions of superheroes in comic books and movies, from the weakling-turned-superhero origin story to the eventual public turning against the all-powerful superhero. Nguyen also throws in some not-very-polished allegorical allusions to the United States as a superpower and its misbegotten blundering, plus a load of class-conscious outrage and gender-identity confusion.

That's a lot to cram into one play. So while you admire Nguyen for the multiple ideas that burst forth on stage, it doesn't hide the cardboard characterizations and preachy and tangential nature of the show.

*Men of Steel* opens with Kelly Ristow, as Lady Liberty (think Wonder Woman), kicking the butt of Robert McLean, as Captain Justice (think Captain America), who has blood on his hands for a vengeful murder. We then flash back to see what set the downfall of this U.S. icon in motion when Erin Myers, as investigative reporter Helen (think Lois Lane), hounds E.B. Smith, as the gay vigilante Maelstrom (think Batman), to find out who is betraying the identities of superheroes.

Along the way, there's a comical 1960s Batman TV-style battle with The Mole (David Roby) and

a great comical meeting with ghetto wannabe superheroes Damon (Bryson Engelen) and Lucas (Edgar Miguel Sanchez) who may have superpowers, after all. There's also an odd detour to a trailer park to meet Roby again as the gender-confused Bryant, who has powers like Bruce Willis' character in *Unbreakable*.

All these characters meet up in a final climactic prison sequence that can be a head-scratcher if you don't go with the flow.

Under Jeremy Wechsler's direction, Theater Wit goes all out on *Men of Steel* with great production values and lively performances from the entire cast. Jeremy Getz's saturated color in his lighting design is an ever-shifting and atmospheric wonder. Laura Brookshire Kollar's colorful costumes are super, while scenic designer Sam Poretta's work with video designer Jessica Ross creates an action-packed world appropriate for any superhero.

The fight scenes choreographed by Kevin Murphy and Tony Sancho (with spoofs of slow motion tumbling) are also clamorous fun.

*Men of Steel* revels in its derivative pop-culture references, so don't go if you prefer superheroes to be confined to the silver screen. Nguyen may have trouble tying all his plot strands and issues together coherently, but he does have a knack with great comic dialogue and spoofing tried and true clichés. Most of all, *Men of Steel* is pure fantasy fun, plain and simple.

THEATER REVIEW  
Coronado

Playwright: Dennis Lehane

At: Steep Theatre, 3902 N. Sheridan

Phone: 312-458-0722; \$18

Runs through: Nov. 3

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Only one, or maybe two, of the desert desperadoes in novelist/screenwriter Dennis Lehane's first conceived-for-the-stage play can be called

truly malicious. But all of them are desperate, and the desperate are often far more ruthless than the outright villainous, despair being a condition blinding those afflicted to alternative solutions providing hope—and, thus, imbuing them with the conviction that they have nothing to lose by risking everything, regardless of the consequences and injury to others.

The action opens at a roadhouse juke-joint in the sun-baked outpost of Coronado, one of many almost-microscopic dots on the map of the sprawling U.S. Southwest. In the corner booth, a pair of lust-besotted lovers plot to murder the lady's husband—a romantic scheme proving unnecessary, but ventured nevertheless. At a table, a strung-out courtesan attempts to seduce her therapist a second time—if not by feminine wiles, then by threats to expose his previous in-

fraction. And somewhere across the room, an old crook and his son reunite following the latter's release from prison for theft, their conversation centering on the whereabouts of the boy's girl friend and the loot, both mysteriously missing.

Eventually, we come to discover that these scenes occur in different time frames, and that some characters are the later incarnations of those we've met earlier. But this isn't a Sam Shepard ramble-through-the-surreal-badlands, however similar its sordid environment. So tightly-constructed is Lehane's intricate narrative and so riveting his preternaturally-eloquent personnel that we never lose our way—or if we think we may have, we are happy to wait until we find it again.

None of this would matter if this Steep Theatre Company production did not realize the author's

SPOTLIGHT  
The Siddhartha Project

They don't call themselves Collaboration for nothing: the collaborative company has asked five Chicago playwrights each to contribute one section of **The Siddhartha Project: A down home, apocalyptic, avalanche of beauty**, inspired by Nobel Prize winner Herman Hesse's mystical novel of Hindu enlightenment. The Siddhartha Project is being staged at the new technologically-enhanced Lumen, a modern design lounge featuring a fully programmable LED light ceiling; custom-built modular furniture; and environmental video and lighting designs to immerse patrons in a flowing, luminescent interior landscape. Sounds like living inside a lava lamp. Groovy, man. Psychedelic. Siddhartha run through Oct. 14 at Lumen, 839 W. Fulton Market; 312.226.9633 or [www.collaboration.org](http://www.collaboration.org); \$25. Photo by Saverio Truglia

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# Kristine W: Fighting—and Winning

BY ANDREW DAVIS

On Sun., Oct. 7, dance-music diva Kristine W will perform at The 720 Club, 720 N. Wells, at a show called "Dance for Leukemia Support" (sponsored by the Leukemia Society of Chicago). The event has a special meaning for the chart-topping singer, as she was diagnosed with the disease several years ago. (Her fight has been successful, as the disease is in remission.)

A day after talking with grade-school kids about leukemia, Kristine W talked with Windy City Times about the disease—as well as lighter topics such as dance music and drag queens.

**Windy City Times:** Yesterday, you gave a speech to some fifth-graders. Tell me about that.

Kristine W: For the next couple of weeks, the Light the Night leukemia walk is taking place around the country, and a lot of different schools are reading about leukemia and talking about it. Some friends of mine, a principal and a teacher, asked me to talk to a class about [the disease]. It got pretty heavy; they talked about family members who had been affected. It opened the floodgates.

**WCT:** And you're quite the fighter.

KW: Yes. Leukemia is an aggressive disease, and it takes you out pretty quickly. Fortunately, I had health insurance so I could fight the good fight, but a lot of people don't have that option. The odds are grim but there is hope, because I'm here.

**WCT:** What did you learn about yourself



**from fighting and surviving this disease?**

KW: I learned that I'm definitely stronger than I thought I was. I've sung songs like Land of the Living and written songs like Stronger, but I never really had to live it; it's really different when you have to live it. In hindsight, my music really helped me because I'd listen to the songs and would say, "OK...you've talked the talk, now you have to walk the walk."

**WCT:** Speaking of Land of the Living, how do you feel that your music has changed since that album was released [in 1996]?

KW: [The music] takes on the vibe of what I'm doing at that particular time. The songs are definitely a musical journal; they take me back in time and I relive those emotions again. [The album] Stronger came about when my grandmother was ailing and when I had my first baby... watching life come into the world and watching life go out was traumatic at the time; I had to be strong for my baby and for my grandmother.

**WCT:** It sounds like you put a lot of yourself into these songs.

KW: It's hard and it takes a long time to put albums together. Sharing is what it's all about, and the thing about dance music is that it can breach some pretty serious topics with a happy dance beat—it doesn't get too heavy that way, and that's what I love about dance music. I'm a pretty lightweight person; I use my music to

deal with the deep side of life.

**WCT:** Tell me about [the newest dance album] The Power of Music.

KW: Now, here we go again. I've been through a really interesting time; I've had my five-year anniversary from leukemia. The last three years that I've been working on this album—and all of my albums take three years [laughs]—have been an organic process. I want my songs to be real; one song, Into You, I've been working on since my Land of the Living days. [The fans are] going to know if I believe what I'm singing, and the songs are your [legacy].

**WCT:** I have to tell you: I remember you performing at what I believe was [the Boystown club] Vortex about 10 years ago, and you were wearing a bubble-wrap dress.

KW: Oh, yeah! [Laughs] That kind of stuff I love to do—stuff that makes people say, "No, she just did not do that."

We went to the Billboard Music Awards a couple of years ago. A friend had given me her old Louis Vuitton bag; I had this drag queen cut it up and make a bustier out of it—and it was the talk of the town. I got in People magazine wearing it. I have it in my closet; I'll bust it out again one of these times.

**WCT:** And you certainly stood out at the Gay Games Closing Ceremony last year. It was one of the highlights.

KW: That big blue Marc Bower cape—he gave that to me.

[Performing in Wrigley Field] was amazing. It

was so much fun. It was neat to be a part of it after hearing about it all these years. It's funny, too—a straight mother of two getting to come to all of these cool events. I just feel like part of the family.

**WCT:** When did you first become aware of your gay following?

KW: When I was on stage in New York in '96 at The Sound Factory. I was working on my album in Europe, and didn't know much about the club scene in the States. Then, I was in Vegas and was told that I had to go to this club in New York because my song was [popular] there—and it was a mob scene.

I think some people thought that I sounded like a Black girl, so they didn't expect a white girl coming out. The audience was cocking their heads, like a dog does, because they weren't sure I was singing live. Then, I sang *a capella*—and they went crazy. Then on the next song, Clu-bland, I started crawling down the runway; they loved that.

**WCT:** How many Kristine W drag queens have you met?

KW: Oh, thousands. My favorite is Laritza Dumont; she's a Latina drag queen and she performs at The Monster in New York—although she's recently moved to Miami, so she'll [probably] be at Parliament House and The Coliseum. She does me very well.

**Doors open at 9 p.m. for the Oct. 7 show. See [www.kristinew.com](http://www.kristinew.com) for more info about the show and her music.**

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# Pansy Division Rocks On

BY AMY WOOTEN

Veteran queer punk rocker Jon Ginoli, founder of Pansy Division, just had a traumatic morning, yet still finds a way to connect the bizarre event to gay politics. This is to be expected from a member of the longtime, in-your-face, gay rock band.

His boyfriend was injured (he's okay!) that morning, but Ginoli still found relevance in the scary situation. "I have healthcare through the store [a record store he works at], and he's on my healthcare," he said. "... It's all because gains that have been made in the last 30 years. ... It's good to think about these things, and how actions have had an effect for the better on gay people's lives."

Ginoli, an Illinois native, had the dream to create the first all-gay rock band while in college. He never thought it could truly happen, but in 1991, history was made. Now the band is back in the studio after five years and kicking off a tour with the newly reformed version of the influential, but short-lived, punk band The Avengers. A Pansy Division documentary is nearly completed, and Ginoli just finished a book on his experience. Ginoli talked to Windy City Times about being at the right place at the right time, the relevance of his band today and more.

**Windy City Times: When the idea was first conceived to have an all-gay band, did you even dream it would last this long, or that you would come this far?**

Jon Ginoli: I think if I had to predict between either one of those happening, I would have picked "lasted longer" than "gotten bigger." The fact that we had this big surge in the mid-'90s made it so there were people that had heard of us then that are still interested in seeing us now. There's still a new group of people who are finding out about us.

... MySpace is amazing for being able to find out that that's what the teens are doing and there's a whole bunch of teens discovering us. I'm just happy that we're still around so that there's all these people who have found us recently who didn't get to see us in the hey-day who will hopefully come see us on this tour now.

**WCT: In April you went back to the studio for the first time in five years. What brought you guys back in there? Was it the political climate or just because?**

JG: ... The new recording came about because I said, "Look, I got two songs I really want to do. These are songs that if we were doing another album, they'd be right on it. ... If you guys are too busy to do it, I'll find other people to do it with. They are really important songs for me." We decided to record those, and we ended up recording two more. We liked them so much, and they turned out so well, we realized we've still got



Pansy Division.

a quality level here that we're satisfied with, so we'll continue. ... We'll be playing some of the new songs on the tour.

I'm very interested in the political climate. ... See, we do songs that are topical, and then we do songs that are outrageous. The new outrageous song is called 20 Years of Cock. I thought, you know, that's something to celebrate. That you've been out long enough (it's been more than 20 years for me) to be able to say, "You can live this way. You can have a life this way." It's not a big political statement, but it's still a statement about freedom, and freedom is really under attack these days from the right wing. Part of what got our band started was we get this idea being brought up in America that America is the land of freedom and we're free to do whatever we want. So, I feel like doing the out gay band is a real expression of the potential of what individuals can achieve by doing something in public that is very personal to them. And other people respond to it because of these personal experiences.

Besides that, we're actually on tour this year opening for another band. ... The fact that I now share two band members from them is just amazing! What's awesome about The Avengers, other than I really like their music, is songs from 30 years ago are topical now. They were really writing things that were about the problems of then that relate to the problems of today. It's come full circle.

**WCT: At what point did you first come up with the idea or dream of creating a gay rock band?**

JG: I grew up in Peoria, and I ended up going to the University of Illinois. I came out when I was in college. I had a band that had made a few records, and that band broke up in '87, and I thought that was pretty much what I was going to do with music. Had a few fans. Didn't get big.

... At that time, I was the only gay member of that band. My band members were fine with that, but I didn't feel I could be real specific about certain things without it sort of taking the focus off the band and putting it on me. That was really quite where I thought having an opening gay band would be helpful, but it seemed like a really unlikely scenario. I left Illinois in '88 and came to L.A., and then went to San Francisco in '89. It took me about a year and a half here before I saw that there was some possible audience for this idea that I had, and I thought the time might actually be ripe for it.

1990 was the year of the queer. That was when the word 'queer' suddenly started being used by gay people as a weapon. We're not going to take this as an insult any more; we're going to wear it as a badge of honor. That was the moment that I first thought that maybe I could really do this. What I'm thinking is right along with what seems to be happening. We were liked from the beginning—a very unlikely scenario.

Pansy Division was the band without commercial possibility that ended up lasting much longer and being much more successful than the band that I started that I hoped would achieve some sort of success.

**WCT: Did you kind of wonder what was going to happen with this because most of the music for gay audiences at the time was club music?**

JG: You had this clubby music for gay men and folk music for lesbians. I remember going to a meeting at the University of Illinois for their gay student group and people sat around strumming Holly Near songs, and I thought, "I like her politics, but I really don't care for her music." ... I'm not going to like something just because it's gay! It needs to be good. I admire Holly Near, but I wanted to break the stereotypes of what a man

should like, what a woman should like if you're gay. I felt like being gay had unlimited possibilities, and I wanted to explore.

**WCT: Gay people can rock out, too.**

JG: It seems obvious now, but it wasn't happening back then. The other thing worth mentioning is right when we started, the year before we had our first record come out, ... was the Riot Grrrl year. That was real exciting for me. I remember when Bikini Kill came out, and I had been waiting to hear a female band like this for years, the same way I had been waiting to hear a gay band for so many years, and realizing I was going to be the one to have to do it. I couldn't form the women's band—that just wasn't going to work. [Laughs] It just seemed like we came up when the possibilities seemed wide open.

It's kind of hard to decide what things are nowadays. One of the things [we] asks ourselves is, "Is there still a point for the band? Is our band still relevant?" We came out of the moment. I think what we found is yeah, there is more acceptance for certain things than there was 15 years ago. Even though there are more gay musicians now, not all of them are singing specifics like we do. If you listen to our music over the years, there is a continuum of topics we've addressed in songs, and an evolution. We started off really brash, got more thoughtful, and now we have both strands of that woven in. We're kind of romantic, too. I think our band is dirty and sweet at the same time.

**WCT: A lot of your songs are about sex. Have you ever gotten comments from people that you're perpetuating a stereotype?**

JG: Sometimes I've heard that. The argument usually is that we should be more mindful of stereotypes of gay men, and not sing about sex so much. ... I think a part of what got us started was the idea that we were outspoken people, and we were going to write songs that reflect us and not come up with material that downplays our personalities. ... Some people are going to feel that way but sex is part of life and I just feel that's the advantage of being gay. Gay people seem to be able to be more open about sex and that kind of approach to sexuality that makes a band like us interesting.

**WCT: What do you think of today's queer music scene?**

JG: ... I'm encouraged that there seem to be a lot of gay people doing hip-hop these days. I'm not a real big hip-hop fan, in general, but I think it's great that people are taking on that form. It's like rock music—it's inevitable. There isn't any reason why gay people shouldn't be doing anything that they like to do musically.

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# Melissa Etheridge: Awakened

Melissa Etheridge isn't wearing much. Just ragged boxer shorts. A worn T-shirt. And some biodegradable slippers. Tammy Lynn Michaels gazes from the bed, pretending to blog about something other than the front-row show she's getting as Etheridge soulfully rehearses Gladys Knight's "Neither One of Us" to honor the legend at a Sept. 10 ceremony. She's swooning over her wife like Etheridge's biggest fan—"This is free, with a no-drink minimum," Tammy writes. "Love, love, love it."

"As far as I knew, she was just blogging. But I didn't know she was blogging about me singing—" Etheridge pauses, breaking into a throaty laugh, "in my pajamas!"

Once the couple, who live in Los Angeles, finally drift into dreamland, they'll awake early. Sometime around 5:30 a.m. Not by an ear-piercing alarm clock, but from the crying of twin babies down the hall: Miller Steven and Johnnie Rose.

"When we got this house, we thought we'd have one more child," Etheridge laughs. "And we have two more children, and they're a boy and a girl—so we can't ask them to share a room."

Read more of Chris Azzopardi's interview with Melissa Etheridge, including her fight against cancer and the naked man who is constantly in her bedroom in this brand-new interview online at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com).

**MUSIC LISTINGS ONLINE: Don't forget to check out our Windy City Times music listings online [www.windycitymediagroup.com](http://www.windycitymediagroup.com).**

## POP from page 14

of Stevie Nicks. After a successful summer tour with Chris Isaak, Nicks is scheduled to perform at The Rosemont Theatre on Fri., Oct. 19.

## The Rainbow Connection

Looking to add all of the colors of the rainbow to your play list? Here are 10 LGBT artists you should know:

**The Cliks**—This Canadian rock band makes no apologies and deservingly got the party started as the opening act to this summer's True Colors Tour.

**Dirty Sanchez, featuring Jackie Beat**—This trio from Los Angeles adds humor to its body of work, which includes covers of Prince's U Got The Look and Soft Cell's Sex Dwarf.

**Girl In A Coma**—Signed to Joan Jett's record label, this trio is breaking out with its cut Road To Home.

**Brian Kent**—Stepping out with his debut, Breathe Life, Kent seamlessly makes the transition from figure skating to music making.

**Joshua Klipp**—Full of energy and life, this multi-talented artist from San Francisco is well onto Justin Timberlake's game and then some.

**Ivri Lider**—Having already become a sensation overseas, this Israeli singer-songwriter is making waves stateside with his electronic ode to a boy titled Jesse.

**Naommon (below)**—Combining the best of the Euro sound and New York underground, Naommon is making an impression with his debut, Allnighter.

**Kirsten Price**—The soulful Price made a steamy video for Magic Tree featuring clips from the L Word. Now, she can be heard covering Sir Duke on Lee Jeans commercials.

**Dylan Rice**—Ever wonder what the Smiths would have sounded like if they had an out front man? This Chicagoan is the answer.



**Swati**—Soft yet harsh, Swati's debut outing, Small Gods, descended to rave reviews this spring.

## The Hits Keep Comin'

While Madonna, Jennifer Lopez and Britney Spears will have unavoidable media onslaughts to promote their forthcoming new albums in the next few months, Pop Making Sense wanted to alert you of 10 worthwhile titles that are due out shortly or that have already been released. As always, details are subject to change.

Gabrielle—Always (Oct. 1)

Reba McEntyre—Duets (Sept. 18)

Joni Mitchell—Shine (Sept. 25)

Alyson Moyet—The Turn (Oct. 22)

Olivia Newton-John—Christmas Wish (Nov. 1)

Pet Shop Boys—Disco 4 (Oct. 15)

LeAnn Rimes—Family (Oct. 9)

Jill Scott—The Real Thing (Sept. 25)

Seal—System (Oct. 30)

Angie Stone (above)—The Art of Love & War (Oct. 16)



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# Kevin Smith: Setting the 'bar'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Famed director/producer Kevin Smith certainly has a history with the LGBT community—whether it involves the controversy with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) regarding one of his movies or his status as an icon of the bear community. Smith's relationship with this demographic continues with his executive-producer role in *small town gay bar*, a documentary (now out on DVD) that centers on past and present gay bars in rural Mississippi. Smith recently talked with Windy City Times about the movie, the Rev. Fred Phelps and going to gay bars.

**Windy City Times:** Since the movie is called *small town gay bar*, I have to ask: Had you been in a gay bar before you heard of this film?

Kevin Smith: Yeah. The first one I had been to was called Feathers; it's in northern New Jersey. My brother took me there around '92 or '93. Plus, I live in a pretty gay world, so I've been to plenty since then.

The other day, I went to my first bear bar. Unfortunately, I wasn't the focus of attachment I was assured I would be if it was open. I would've had my pick of the litter; I would've been Marilyn Monroe.

**WCT:** How long had you known [director] Malcolm [Ingram] before he approached you with his idea for *small town gay bar*?

KS: I'd known him in '94; I met him when I was at the Toronto Film Festival with *Clerks*. And I'd given him a bunch of money to make his first movie, *Drawing Flies*. Then, I was an executive consultant or one of those bullshit credits on the second feature, *Tail Lights Fade*.

We were in post-production with *Jersey Girl* when Malcolm came by the production office. We hadn't seen him in a couple of months, and he brought 10 minutes of the prototype for *small town gay bar* that was shot in a gay bar in Traverse City, Mich.—and it was riveting. It was like your 86-year-old grandfather suddenly handing you a movie he made with a Super-8 camera and it was *Jaws*; you're just like, "Where did that come from? You're an idiot—how did you make something this good?" It was a quantum leap forward for him. Suddenly, he wasn't trying to create something he thought other people would like; he was speaking from his own experience. (By this point, he was out.) I said, "This is genius. You have to do a whole feature. Here's some cash; go out and make it." [The movie] is a snapshot of a world most people don't really get a good look into.

**WCT:** You've said that *small town gay bar* is about family. Talk about that a little bit.

KS: That was something I learned from my brother; I'm fairly close with him and the rest of my family. I love my brother, Don, but we're not of his world. He has his gay extended family, and that was something I picked up from him. The family of the 21st century isn't necessarily a nuclear one—it's the one you create around yourself. *small town gay bar* depicts a bunch of individuals who aren't living their lives in nuclear families; they create them from these watering holes. I kinda dug that.

**WCT:** What was the most surprising thing you saw in the film?

KS: Hands down, the most surprising thing was that someone like Malcolm came up with something this good. [Interviewer laughs.] Second to that would be [anti-gay Rev. Fred] Phelps. That, to me, is spellbinding. You watch Phelps speak and you realize why Adolf Hitler was able to gather an army around him and convince people to liquidate six million Jews, among others. [Phelps] is charismatic, and you get why people like that connect [with others]; he so believes



his message and he's charismatic enough where you go, "The dude doesn't sound retarded [and] he's well spoken"—but what he's saying is so fucking backwards, dark and evil. This guy is beyond the pale. Watching him, your skin fucking crawls.

**WCT:** I think the people who murdered [gay teen] Scotty Joe Weaver [profiled in a segment in *small town gay bar*] would've been congregants in Phelps' church.

KS: If Phelps was interested in having anyone in his church besides fucking family, anyway. That's a close-knit group, man. There are like 70 members who are all related; it's kinda nuts.

[The segment on] the folks who murdered Scotty Joe Weaver, like Phelps', was something that doesn't have much to do with the bars, but it was something Malcolm found a way to layer into the doc so that it makes sense in the context. It strengthens the point of the bar owners about why these bars are so important.

**WCT:** Your history with GLAAD has been... interesting. Did the organization say anything about *small town gay bar*?

KS: I think they gave it a good review, if I remember correctly. But it wasn't so much GLAAD that put me on the shit list as much as it was their media director at the time, Scott Seomin; he took issue with [the movie] *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*. There was a scene in that movie in which one of the titular characters said that he would suck the other guy's dick; it doesn't get more gay-friendly than that in a mainstream movie, unless you're *Brokeback [Mountain]*. So I was like, "What? This is the hill you want to die on?" That same summer, *Rush Hour 2* came out, and that was completely homophobic.

The bittersweet p.s. to the whole affair is that *The Advocate* put us on its top 10 movies of the year, and so did John Waters. I sent Scott an e-mail pointing that out.

**WCT:** What does your brother think of *small town gay bar*?

KS: He totally dug it; he appreciated it. Malcolm said that, while he was going to [film] fests, there was this catty prejudice in the more urban areas. Traditionally, based on media stereotypes, people within the gay community don't like to think of gay people looking like they do in [the movie]: not photogenic, not beefy or muscular—they look like average people. I never asked my brother, "Look—getting past the fact that you wouldn't fuck any of these people with a stolen dick—did the movie connect with you?" He seemed to take it for what it was.

I'm always fascinated by the idea of prejudice within a community that's the victim of prejudice—or that there are levels of cattiness within a subgroup or minority.

**WCT:** Switching gears, I saw a blurb in *Out* magazine in which you said your favorite make-out song is *Freak Me* [an R&B ballad by the group Silk].

KS: [Laughs] Unfortunately, my wife doesn't agree with me. My wife likes this trance CD that we picked up at The Standard Hotel in Los Angeles a few years back. That has become our go-to soundtrack.

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# Jennifer Beals: To 'L' and Back

BY AMY MATHENY

Flashdance made Jennifer Beals the icon of the '80s. She taught us to cut up our sweatshirts, take off our bras with flair and dance until we sweat. She continued her career with diverse roles in films such as Devil in a Blue Dress, Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle, The Anniversary Party, Twilight of the Golds and Roger Dodger. Then came her role as Bette Porter in the lesbian Showtime series The L Word.

Beals is coming to Chicago for a Oct. 6 benefit for GenderPAC, and Windy City Queercast's Amy Matheny chatted briefly with her about Chicago, her film career and, of course, The L Word.

**Amy Matheny: You were born and raised in Chicago. What are some of your favorite things about the city?**

JB: Well, the lakefront; my sweetest memories are at the lakefront, whether it was running or going biking with my family. And the architecture is so spectacular.

**AM: Do you get back often?**

JB: No, I don't. So I'm really, really excited to come home.

**AM: After superstardom in Flashdance, you chose to go to Yale. What was it like for you to immerse yourself in school after Hollywood and the L.A. life?**

JB: Well, I had never had the L.A. life. I was in school when I found out that I got the part. So I went and took a term off to go do the film, and then I came back to school. I had already been acclimated and I already had friends there, so it wasn't that difficult. It really was a relief, because I knew how to go to school, and Hollywood was so unfamiliar to me.

**AM: So they already knew you as Jennifer. Even though you'd done the big film, they brought you back down to earth.**

JB: With that kind of course load, that will



Jennifer Beals. Photo courtesy of GLAAD

certainly bring you back down to earth. But I don't feel like I wasn't on the earth in Hollywood; it just felt very bizarre, like it was just very surreal.

**AM: I could talk forever about the films that I [mentioned above], because those are films that I really like a lot.**

JB: Roger Dodger...when you mentioned that one, that made me really happy. I had such a good time on that film. Working with my friends and being in New York and telling that story was just so much fun.

**AM: It's interesting to look at your film history, how you've had this...core group of people, from Alan Cumming to Tony Goldwin to Marlee Matlin [that you have worked with and known for a while]. But let's talk about The L Word. How was the series pitched to you and the character of Bette Porter?**

JB: Well, I read the pilot, and they told me to keep in mind who I would rather play, whether it was Bette or Tina. I felt like I didn't understand Tina as much as I understood Bette. I really liked all of the complexity that was written in already from the pilot with that, and it's lucky that I chose that because Lauren Holloman is so fantastic as Tina. I never could have done as good of a job with it as she has with that character. It was proposed to me that it was this group of friends and...we're going to deal with their lives and see where it takes us.

**AM: What was the most intriguing thing about the show? It was obviously groundbreaking at the time.**

JB: I never thought about it as being groundbreaking, I just thought, "Wow, this is a fantastic character to play," and she's complicated and interesting and it was just a wonderful gift more than anything else.

**AM: And I imagine it's also such a unique experience to work with a mostly female cast and so many women in production.**

JB: [Laughing] We all tend to cycle at the same time.

**AM: It's got to be a very unique, being around that many women all the time.**

JB: It's a fantastic cast, it is. Everybody is incredibly supportive of one another. The other night we had an eight-page scene around a fire, with 11 characters, and we thought, "How are we going to get through this?" So I just [had] everybody come into my trailer the day before we had to do the scene, and we all ran through [it] until we all knew it...just so that there were no wrinkles when we finally went to camera, and it was great, and everybody was really helpful to one another, and respectful of one another.

**AM: You've been friends with Marlee Matlin for years.**

JB: I have.

**AM: And she has recently been your love**

**interest on The L Word. Did you suggest that she come on the show?**

JB: I didn't. I was told that she was going to have a meeting, and I was really excited about it. It's just been wonderful. She's so funny. The only down side is that she makes me laugh. She's the only person that's ever made me break in a scene, made me die laughing. ... You know, she doesn't have to sign anything or, you know, she'll just look at me and it just kills me.

**AM: What is in store for Bette this season?**

JB: God. Lord, have mercy. It's going to be drama constantly, super drama. Bette and Jody have all kinds of things they're going through.

**AM: The L Word has definitely expanded your activism. Obviously, before The L Word you were not being asked to be the grand marshal of the Pride Parade in San Francisco.**

JB: That was an amazing experience! It was really so much fun. I just wanted them to turn that car around and do it all over again. People were so supportive and sweet, and it was just such a rush. It was such an incredible rush.

**AM: Well, I'm sure they would have turned it around and done it all over again for you. They were probably still partying. ... They would have wondered if they were having déjà vu. You're in town with your co-stars from The L Word, Marlee Matlin and Danielle Sea, for the Gender PAC third annual celebrity cook-off. Tell us a little bit about what you're going to be doing at the event. Are you really going to be cooking?**

JB: I'm going to be humiliating myself.

**AM: No!**

JB: I'm going to be humiliating myself, because I don't cook. Like, I'm not just exaggerating for the sake of storytelling. I really don't cook. Under duress I can cook Thanksgiving dinner, you know, with a lot of thought. But... eating a gourmet meal is not at the top of my list. To me, food is energy and I just move on and get through the day. Now I'm being asked to do something beyond opening a can of tuna. So this will be really fascinating.

**AM: Do you know what you're going to make?**

JB: Hell, no! Am I supposed to? You're scaring me.

**AM: I don't know. I just assumed that if it's going to be a cook-off, we're going to be watching you make chili and Marlee make...**

JB: All I ask is to be the *sous chef*. That's all.

**AM: Well, make sure you get to be Art Smith's *sous chef*. He's the personal chef to Oprah, [and he] also will be there. I'm sure he'll give you some tips.**

JB: Well, I'm hoping to learn something. That's my goal. AND to not have Marlee make fun of me too much. I can guarantee you that Marlee Matlin is going to be incredibly entertaining. I

guarantee it right now.

**AM: Do you have a favorite food?**

JB: No, I don't really have a favorite. I mean, I like cereal. I've been in love with cereal for most of my life.

Gender PAC's 3rd annual Celebrity Cook-Off is Sat., Oct. 6, at the Chopping Block at Merchandise Mart. For tickets and information, visit [www.GPAC.org/l-word](http://www.GPAC.org/l-word). To listen to this entire interview, go to [www.windycityqueercast.com](http://www.windycityqueercast.com).

## Entertainment Briefs

TMZ.com reports that it obtained documents filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court that state former **Lost** star **Michelle Rodriguez has failed to complete the terms of her probation multiple times** for various crimes include a DUI. The entertainment site reported Rodriguez could serve up to 537 days in the slammer.

**Adam Sandler said he would love to be a future gay rights activist** while promoting I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry in Mexico City, the Associated Press reported. "If I can help anybody in any way, I certainly would," Sandler is quoted as saying at a news conference.

According to Towleroad.com, **Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe said at a press junket that he would be willing to take on the role of a character who is exploring his sexuality**. He also added, in response to a reporter's question, that he would "not play a gay character just for the sake of playing a gay character."

Running with Scissors' **Joseph Fiennes will undergo some nipping and tucking of his own as the star of a trans TV show**. Nip/Tuck creator Ryan Murphy's untitled FX drama pilot (formerly titled 4 oz.) is about a husband and father who opts for a sex change, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Bravo's **Project Runway returns for a fourth season** on Nov. 14, and features supermodel host Heidi Klum and a panel made up of designers Tim Gunn, Michael Kors and Nina Garcia, according to Bravo. See [www.bravotv.com](http://www.bravotv.com) to meet the cast.

**Former Men's Fitness editor Neal Boulton recently came out of the closet** after becoming editor of gay publication Genre, according to the New York Post. The married Boulton had previously been spotted smooching Rolling Stone editor Jann Wenner.

**Gay characters on network television shows are declining, while increasing on cable**, according to a study recently released by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). Seven regular gay characters will appear on network television shows during the 2007-2008 season, compared to nine last season. Six of the seven shows featuring regular gay characters are on ABC. On the flip side, cable shows for the upcoming season will feature 40 LGBT characters on 21 shows.

Comedian **Kathy Griffin offended a Tennessee Christian theater group during her Emmy acceptance speech so much that they placed a \$90,000 ad in USA Today condemning her**, according to the Associated Press. The Miracle Theatre Group was offended that Griffin said, "I want you to know that no one had less to do with this award than Jesus. So, all I can say is, 'suck it, Jesus.' This award is my god now."

**MTV is airing a bisexual dating show**, according to a BlackPressMagazine.com press release. "A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila," is a show that will feature 16 men and 16 women who will compete for Tequila's affections. The show is set to debut Oct. 9.



# KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



## Before I Forget; Lust, Caution

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

It's been a spotty year for queer cinema, at best—until now. **Before I Forget**—a French film written, directed by and starring Jacques Nolot that is screening as part of the Chicago International Film Festival—is, hands down, the queer movie of the year. Nolot's film is an unsentimental portrait of Pierre, a 58-year-old former hustler trying to hang on in a world that is swiftly passing him by. Battling the long-term effects of HIV and the inevitable encroachment of old age, not to mention the disappearance of his livelihood and supportive social network of johns and fellow gigolos, Pierre shrugs his shoulders, lights yet another cigarette and gets on with life. Much of the film is made up of observational scenes so long they seem to be happening in real time, and there is no music score and a minimum of



LUST, CAUTION

dialogue. It sounds like a drag, doesn't it?

But Nolot's film is anything but a drag (and it's beautifully photographed to boot). Pierre's *comme si/comme sa* attitude and circumstances are leavened by a droll sense of humor. Pierre and his aging friends also fascinate because they're characters we don't see represented in the movies, gay or straight. Gay hustlers are supposed to be young and hunky and handsome, outfitted with witty repartee and impeccable style. We see Pierre was that way late in the film, when he glances at a picture of himself, young and gorgeous, in a photo album left behind by his dead sugar daddy. But he is completely unsentimental about that past and it's what ultimately arms him to deal with an unforgiving future.

As noted, much of the film is spent observing the reduced circumstances of Pierre's world, but in Nolot's hands the everyday tasks aren't boring. Perhaps that is because Nolot doesn't distinguish between the mundane and the audacious;

simple acts like Pierre reading a book, taking his medication or opening a(nother) package of cigarettes are interspersed with a matter-of-fact visit from a young hustler that features graphic sex or a quickie blowjob Pierre gives a delivery boy.

The conversations between Pierre and his cronies—as to be expected—focus on money. Fear of losing everything and being tossed back to those Mean Streets is foremost in the minds of these aging gigolos. When Pierre's lover of many years dies, having promised him the bulk of his fortune, the family (unsurprisingly) quickly steps in to sweep aside any claims Pierre might make on the estate. In one of the film's most unflinchingly honest scenes, Pierre and another gigolo visit the lover's estate auction and he points out pieces of jewelry, artwork and other items he was promised without a hint of nostalgia for anything other than the loss of income the objects could have brought him. In a few broad strokes, we see how quickly the bourgeois world that supported Pierre for years moves on to the next beautiful boy toy and how Pierre the realist expects nothing less. Nolot emphasizes this when Pierre takes up a young friend's offer to go to a nightclub in drag. Pierre's "what the hell" response to his circumstances ends the movie with what may be one of the most emotionally powerful scenes since the two former child-abuse victims bonded at the conclusion of Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin*.

"Nothing's more boring than an old queen with a head cold," Robert Preston quipped in *Victor/Victoria* back in the early '80s, getting knowing laughs from both straight and queer audiences. We've been conditioned to disparage, pity or entirely ignore older gay men within the community from the moment we became a community, and have usually depicted ourselves this way in our own movies. *Before I Forget*—tough, flinty and refreshing in its emotional honesty—is a great film with a tremendous performance from Nolot that refuses to go that route. *C'est magnifique!* In French with subtitles.

Screens Sat., Oct. 6, at 5:15 p.m. and Sun., Oct. 7, at 4 p.m. at AMC River East, 322 E. Illinois, and Wed., Oct. 10, at 4 p.m. at Landmark's Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark; [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com)

Ang Lee, Academy Award-winning director of *Brokeback Mountain* and the earlier queer-themed *The Wedding Banquet*, is back with **Lust, Caution**. An epic tale of espionage set in Shanghai against the panorama of World War II, the movie focuses on a band of college theatre majors who transform their flair for the dramatic to the political in an attempt to bring down a traitor in service to the mysterious Mr. Yee (Tony Leung Chiu Wai). The lengths to which this band (which includes Wang Leehom's ambitious character, Kuang Yu Min) will go—especially the lovely Wong Chia Chi (Wei Tang)—is audacious. In a variation on Hitchcock's *Notorious*, Wong impersonates the wealthy wife of an exporter who catches the eye of Mr. Yee (whose own wife is played by the ever-gorgeous Joan Chen). Complications arise at first but, eventu-

ally, Wong and Mr. Yee become involved in an extremely heated affair (garnering the picture an NC-17 rating) that brings with it a surprising test of loyalty for both.

Lee's movie—claustrophobic, lush (aided by the sumptuous production design and Alexandre Desplat's ravishing musical score), and a touch florid—feels as old-fashioned as the classic movies it builds on. (There are hints of *Casablanca* and other wartime pictures as well.) But two sequences—the sudden, unexpected murder of the traitor (thrilling and violent with hints of Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain*) and the first full-on sexual encounter between Wong and Mr. Yee—firmly update the classic references for modern audiences. "If you pay attention, nothing is trivial" Mr. Yee comments at one point, stating the essence of Lee's character-driven and very entertaining movies, this one included.

Check out my archived reviews at [www.windycitytimes.com](http://www.windycitytimes.com) or [www.knightatthemovies.com](http://www.knightatthemovies.com). Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site where there is also ordering information on my new book of collected film reviews, *Knights at the Movies 2004-2006*.

Read about the Chicago International Film Festival on page 28.

## DVD REVIEW

### Creatures from the Pink Lagoon

REVIEW BY STEVE WARREN

If *Creatures from the Pink Lagoon* gives you any wood it will be Ed Wood. The spirit of the legendary "world's worst filmmaker" hovers over this uninspired sci-fi horror spoof like a rain cloud over a picnic.

It's hard to make a good intentionally bad movie, because when the result is bad a viewer can't tell whether you did it that way on purpose or not.

The premise is to remake *The Boys in the Band* as a horror movie from the '50s or '60s. In addition to adopting the basic situation of Mart Crowley's play—a birthday party for a gay man attended by some of his closest and bitchiest friends—the movie riffs on the play's dialogue and uses the last names of original cast members for the characters' last names.

It seems mosquitoes are soaking up toxic chemicals from a nearby chemical plant and infecting the men who cruise the Exit 5 Rest Stop (no senators among them) with the "West End Virus," turning them into Romero-esque zombies. One of those infected is Bobby (Bill Morrison), a "rest stop betty" who's been dating idealistic, romantic Phillip (Nick Garrison), whose birthday we're celebrating.

Our host (and token Black) is Stan (Lowell Deo), whose unfaithful partner, Billy (Vincent Kovar, not quite carrying off the "hunk" look he's supposed to have), is in attendance. Randall (Philip D. Clarke) is responsible for most of the bitchy banter, spoken as if channeling Paul Lynde, while his date for the day, Gary (John Kaufmann) is off fooling around with Billy. The only official single is shy Joseph (Evan Mosher), and no one seems to know or care whether he's gay.

The "flesh-eating creatures of the night" come out in the daytime to interrupt the party. I mean, really come out, dancing in a chorus line.

The effects are nothing special, cheap enough to make Ed Wood look like a spend-thrift. It's all in black and white except for some pink tinting to indicate a zombie's POV.

It's kind of like *Psycho Beach Party* without—come to think of it, *Psycho Beach Party* was without everything, too.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Dateland

by Jennifer Parello

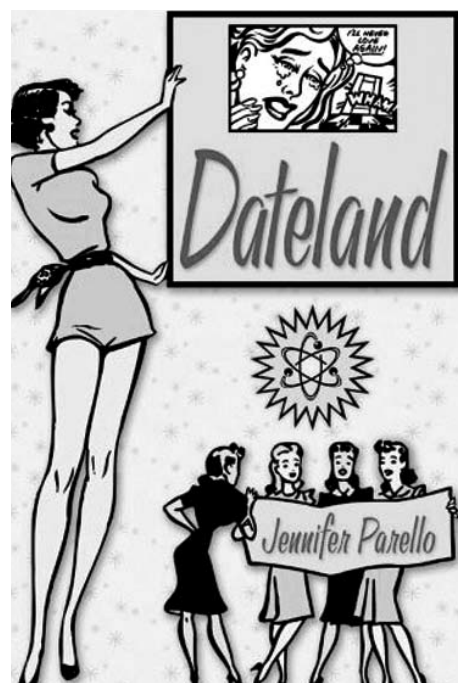
McKenna Publishing Group, 198 pages, \$19

REVIEW BY YASMIN NAIR

Jennifer Parello's debut novel, *Dateland*, is a fun romp through a world populated entirely by lesbians who talk non-stop in the kind of patter made famous—if not entirely likeable—by the television show *Gilmore Girls*. They spend most of their time plotting ways to seduce each other or setting up dates for their unsuspecting friends.

Julia, the narrator, is a partner in a Chicago law firm with her friend Tricia, who lives with Anne in an open relationship—understood as such mostly by Tricia. Jean and Julia move in together but Jean absconds with Michelle just as she's supposed to close on a condo with Julia. Julia meets Claire, who has never been with a woman and who is still close friends with her ex-husband and his current wife. So far, so lesbian.

This central cast of characters is surrounded by every conceivable kind of dyke, from the upper middle-class power couple who decide to give birth to their second child after adopting the first from China because artificial insemination is now the more fashionable option, to the vegans who create an uproar when Tricia walks into a bridge session wearing leather shoes. Julia is a wryly self-conscious narrator who's aware of all her contradictions. When she discovers that a group of squatters on welfare is about to be evicted from a dilapidated 1920s building on the lakefront, she's quick to outwardly empathize with their plight but can't resist making her own



plans: "I nodded my head to demonstrate my mutual liberal outrage. But as I strolled back home and gazed at the muscular skyline of brick and stone, I mentally calculated what it would cost to buy one of the buildings and convert it into condos."

Parello, a columnist for our *Nightlines* and a Chicago resident, writes lovingly of the North Side lesbian community and its hangouts. But *Dateland* reaffirms a central fact of lesbian life everywhere: We are incapable of ever truly separating from our lovers, even after the most disastrous and dramatic break-ups. An army of

ex-lovers, to borrow the title of Amy Hoffman's recent memoir, turns into a cadre of friends.

This is an energetic, lively and hilarious book that doesn't try to be anything other than unpretentious lesbian lit. Ultimately, *Dateland* also reminds me of all the reasons I don't date. Despite their collective show of careless detachment from conventional romance, every lesbian in this book is eager to succumb to the plague of domesticity that overwhelms our community.

Parello's characters, like so many of us, take special joy in living entangled lives. But they all eventually settle into comfortable attachments to those who bring the least pain and complication. Claire, for instance, presented as the ideal, is so adorable, so winsome, so utterly well-adjusted and charming that you'd like to wring her slender neck. Life settles easily for us into a pattern of Sunday brunches and predictable routines, even if they are routines peppered with lesbian drama. We have convinced ourselves that being happy and being interesting are two incommensurable states of being.

E-mail Yasmin Nair at [welshzen@yahoo.com](mailto:welshzen@yahoo.com). Nair blogs at [www.bilerico.com](http://www.bilerico.com).

## MONROE from page 10

LGBTQ people deserve equal protection under the law and that the Constitution should not be amended to ban same-sex marriage, he does, however, think the comparison between gay rights and the black civil rights struggle is "a stretch," as he mentioned at a talk in March 1998 at Harvard Law School. "Gays were never called three-fifths human in the Constitution," Jackson told his audience.

And Sharpton knows both personally and politically how the civil rights model excludes a member of his own family—his sister. In the October 2005 issue of *The Advocate*, Sharpton stated, "I understood the pain of having to lead a double life in the system [since] we grew up in the church." And at the National Black Justice Coalition's Black Church Summit on Gay Rights in January 2006, Sharpton made reference to his sister: "Black, gay, and female. Imagine the social schizophrenia."

Sharpton had promised to take his message of queer justice on the road. But instead, as one of NBJC's and HRC's paid speakers at the event, Sharpton abandoned the message but took the money.

Those LGBTQ individuals and organizations at the Jena 6 protest were joining a broad collation of national and local civil rights organizations. While many in our queer community may think these individuals and organizations engaged in the wrong act for LGBTQ justice and for the wrong reason, they are the ones who are wrong. These individuals and organizations were doing the right thing but working within a flawed model of African-American leadership.

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### KEEN from page 8

the debate watched it and even fewer returned this reporter's calls for comment.

Mark Leno, the openly gay state assemblyman representing San Francisco, didn't see the debate, but after hearing Clinton's response played back to him, he said, "There were some shades of ambiguity to it."

"It brings me back to the issue of marriage equality and why the issue and why the words are so important," said Leno. "Because once we get over that hurdle, these questions won't even be asked anymore. And once it is recognized legally that there is no difference in way people love, this debate goes away. But until we get there," he said, "there will be questions such as this and candidates will be parsing answers to questions and we'll be parsing the words to their answers."

One of the more touchy parsings for the Clinton campaign might have been her use of the word "choice." New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson was strongly criticized from various parts of the gay community when, at the Human Rights Campaign-LOGO gay presidential forum in August, he said he thought sexual orientation was a choice. (He subsequently said he does not think so.)

Hilary Rosen, a longtime gay Democratic activist and friend and supporter of Clinton, said the senator was not talking about sexual orientation when she said "choice."

"I think it was a backward phrasing—as in the issue isn't sexual orientation, the issue is that we need to educate kids about all the many choices that people make about how to have a family together," said Rosen. "She meant the choice to have a family, not the choice to be gay. She supports education programs that are inclusive. And that is exactly what she said in this answer."

Richardson got a chance to redeem himself in the eyes of many Wednesday night when he said—in response to a question from lead questioner Tim Russert of NBC's Meet the Press—that he would not, as president, accept the traditional honorary chairmanship of the Boy Scouts of America.

"I wouldn't," said Richardson, the only one asked that question, "because I think, as president, I would commit myself—that I will be a leader that prevents discrimination based on race, gender and, sexual orientation."



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# Chicago International Film Festival: LGBT Viewing

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Roger Ebert, the 900-pound gorilla of film criticism and a source of continued inspiration to film writers (this film movie critic included), is being honored this year by the 43rd Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF), which runs Oct. 4-17. For his tireless efforts on behalf of the festival for decades, the opening-night gala at the Chicago Theatre is being dedicated to Ebert. The festivities will also feature the world-premiere screening of director Marc Forster's *The Kite Runner*. Forster (*Monster's Ball*, *Finding Neverland*), who adapted the best-seller for the screen, will be in attendance.

Festival Founder and Artistic Director Michael Kutza and his staff have again put together a slate of hotly anticipated films and undiscovered treasures. Star-driven movies like *Michael Clayton* (George Clooney-Tilda Swinton), *Things We Lost in the Fire* (Halle Berry-Benicio Del Toro-David Duchovny), *The Savages* (Laura Linney-Philip Seymour Hoffman), *Gone Baby Gone* (Casey Affleck, in a movie directed by brother Ben) and *Rails & Tiles* (Kevin Bacon-Marcia Gay Harden) will have their first Chicago screenings at the festival.

The number of films showcased at this year's fest has increased to over 100, but only eight of those movies have specific GLBT-themed content. Though there's nothing quite as gay-friendly as last year's career overview evening with Liza Minnelli, the fest offers plenty to look forward to for both the casual and dedicated cineastes. And there will be plenty of star wattage on hand: actors Laura Linney, Casey and Ben Af-



Before I Forget.

fleck, Malcolm McDowell, Anthony Hopkins (who will be here to promote *Slipstream*, which he directed), and directors Ivan István Szabó (*Sunshine*, *Being Julia*) and Alison Eastwood (Clint's daughter, who helmed *Rails & Tiles*) are among the noted film celebrities expected to be in attendance throughout the festival. Actor Jeffrey Wright (*Angels in America*, *Syriana*, *Casino Royale*) will receive a career achievement award as part of the festival's Black Perspectives program. The program will also screen director John Sayles' latest film, *Honeydripper*, which stars Danny Glover; Sayles will attend the screening.

Films will screen at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark; AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois; and the Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport. The opening-night gala takes place at the historic Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State, and the closing night at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph.

GLBT titles include:

1. **Before I Forget** (*Avant Que J'Oublie*) (France): At 58, former gigolo Pierre has lived with HIV for almost half his life. Behind his *laissez-faire* attitude and dark, wry humor hides a man struggling to come to grips with his past and move forward into a more satisfying future.

Rounding out director Jacques Nolot's trilogy on gay life, *Before I Forget* is a frank portrait of an ordinary man coping with his mortality. See my separate comprehensive review in this week's Knight at the Movies column.

2. **Freddie Mercury: Lover of Life, Singer of Songs—The Untold Story** (doc) (UK/Austria): A special presentation of the documentary recognized by Roger Ebert in his 2007 Overlooked Film Festival, Freddie is the most intimate and revealing portrait of the real man behind the larger-than-life character. The director includes interviews with insiders in Freddie's closely guarded life—including his mother, sister, schoolmates, and former lovers.

3. **La Lèon** (Argentina/France): In the remote Argentine wetlands, a rift is growing between two members of a river village whose economy is being threatened by illegal loggers from Paraguay. Otheguy's debut feature is a meditative and determined narrative, meticulously presented in high-definition black and white, full of secrets and suggestions that all lead toward an inevitable and unforgettable confrontation.

4. **Love Songs/Les Chansons D'Amour** (France): A musical transcending societal norms for relationships, love and sexuality, *Love Songs* chronicles the lives of Ismael and Julie, two young lovers looking to spice things up. They invite Ismael's co-worker, Alice, to join their life and their bed, but before long, Julie dies from an embolism, leaving Ismael shocked and torn.

5. **Men in the Nude/Férfiakt** (Hungary): Middle-aged Tibor, unhappy in his marriage and career, never considered bisexuality, but a manipulative 19-year-old male prostitute pursues him and ignites a sexual passion and artistic inspiration that Tibor feared he'd lost forever.

6. **Surveillance** (UK): Adam, a handsome, rosy-cheeked young teacher, gets into trouble after a one-night stand with the heir to a media empire. When the heir turns up dead, Adam becomes embroiled in a cover-up that stretches all the way to the royal family. Shot from the point of view of London's myriad closed-circuit cameras (the movie's most inventive idea), *Surveillance* is a high-tech thriller with, unfortunately, a low-tech budget. Simon Callow relishes his part as a mysterious aide to the royal family who's fed up after years of covering up a ton of royal dirt. Gossipy but somewhat involving.

7. **A Walk Into the Sea** (doc) (USA): Danny Williams, a promising filmmaker and lover of Andy Warhol, mysteriously disappeared in 1966. Attempting to learn more about her lost uncle, the director of the film, Esther Robinson, unearths many of Williams' films, which include the earliest footage of *The Velvet Underground*, glimpses of superstar Edie Sedgwick and interviews with numerous members of Warhol's Factory. We don't find out much about Williams from surviving Warhol cronies or much about Williams himself, but the found footage is spectacular and adds a patina of genuine sadness to this unusual documentary.

8. **The Witnesses/Les Témoins** (France): Set in the late 1980s, amid the onset of AIDS and the end of the sexual revolution, this haunting drama focuses on the contrasts between sex and love; health and sickness; and friendship and romance. Newly arrived in Paris, a handsome young man begins a friendship with a couple adjusting to life as new parents, and soon an unexpected love affair upsets the tranquility of their lives. French with English subtitles. 112 min.

Aside from the GLBT offerings (only three of which were available for screening before deadline), I suggest a trio of films: *The Walker*, a murder-mystery set among the highest corridors of power in Washington, D.C.; *The Savages*, which stars Laura Linney and Philip Seymour Hoffman; and *Michael Clayton*, which stars George Clooney.

Call 312-332-FILM (3456) or visit [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com).

# Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

## Superman Comes Down to Earth for Bret Easton Ellis

No one does urban malaise and amorality better than *Less Than Zero* and *American Psycho* author Bret Easton Ellis. And film adaptations of his work have always been, if not completely successful, at least interestingly of their moment. So it will come as no surprise that one of his lesser-known novels, *The Informers*, is currently in production starring the latest Superman, Brandon Routh. A Los Angeles fable of creepiness inhabited by a host of goodness-deficient people—film execs, rock stars, a vampire, and others—the film boasts an ensemble cast that includes Winona Ryder, Billy Bob Thornton, Kim Basinger, Mickey Rourke (reuniting the 9 1/2 Weeks fun couple), and Ashley Olsen. Shooting for a planned 2008 release, the finished product should be nothing less than fascinating viewing.

## Rodriguez vs. Sigourney in 3D

In the future, on the planet of Pandora, a place populated by humanoids, Earth-dwellers will be deposited and left to fend for themselves. This will prove problematic for them, and some seriously computer-generated battles will most likely go down. That's the rough plot of *Avatar*, the latest supersized film from Titanic director James Cameron, which will star lesbian fave Michelle Rodriguez, Sigourney Weaver, Zoe Saldana and Giovanni Ribisi. And because technology is more fun to talk about than who plays human and who's merely humanoid, the film is being shot in a new digital 3D process that will make this grand-scale adventure pop off the screen like no movie before. Look for the action to leap into your lap sometime in 2009.

## Kevin Smith Makes a Porno

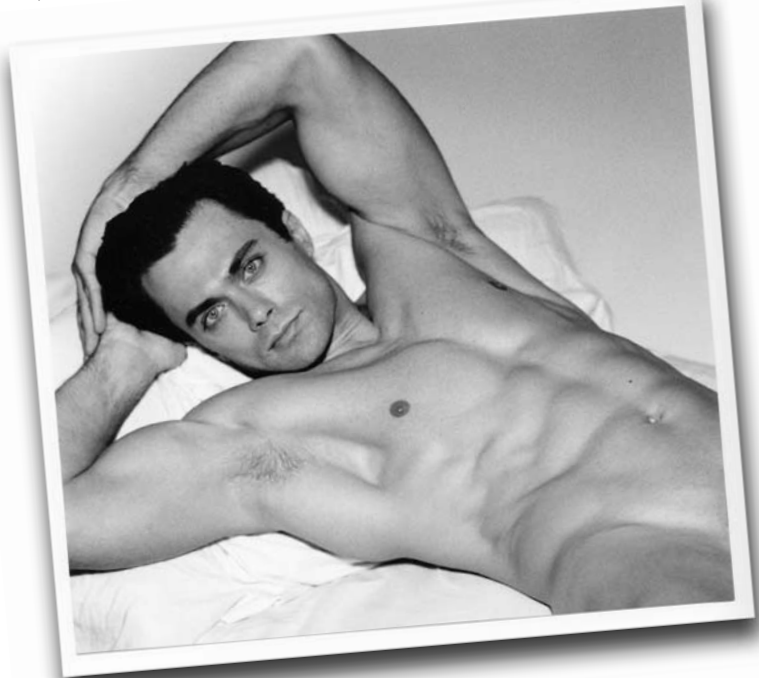
It's not a Kevin Smith movie without some gay content. (See page 22 for a Kevin Smith interview.) Granted, it's almost always of the crudest sort, the kind that even gay audiences sometimes misinterpret, but Smith (director of *Clerks*, *Clerks 2*, and *Chasing Amy*) is very decidedly of the gay-friendly, gay-inclusive persuasion. Which is why it's a no-brainer that his latest sexually outrageous comedy, *Zack and Miri Make a Porno*, will mock human sexuality from both sides of the fence. The feature, still in the pre-production casting stage, involves two 20-something friends who decide to create their own amateur porn company. Originally, Smith's *Clerks 2* star Rosario Dawson was attached, but then she dropped out. Now names like Zach Braff and Seth Rogen are circulating through the rumor mill. The only given? Jason Mewes (the Jay half of Jay and Silent Bob) is attached, so at least Smith's heterosexual life partner is along for the ride.

Romeo San Vicente thinks *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* is the best gay movie of the new millennium. He can be reached care of this publication or at [DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com](mailto:DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com).

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# WHAT TO DO?

## Wednesday, Oct. 3

**Association of Latino Men for Action** Gay Wednesday Nights at Bocadillos. Proceeds benefit ALMA. 8 p.m.-1 a.m., \$5 suggested donation, 6739 Ogden Ave., www.almachicago.org

**Dyke Mic 2.0** All-ages open mic for queer women of all gender persuasions; co-hosted by JT Newman and Nikki Patin. Extended through end of December; every Wednesday. 8-10 p.m., \$10, \$8 with student ID, Center on Halsted Hoover-Leppen Theatre, 3656 N. Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org, www.myspace.com/dykevic2, dykevic2@gmail.com

**Gay Liberation Network** Solidarity reception featuring Russian gay leader Nikolai Alexeyev. 7-9 p.m., \$25 suggested donation (all proceeds go to the Organizational Committee of Moscow Pride), Gerber Hart Library, 1127 W. Granville Ave., www.gayliberation.net, LGBTliberation@aol.com

**Test Positive Aware Network** Committed to Living educational forum: What do all These Numbers Mean? Understanding your Blood Work. 7-9 p.m., 5537 N. Broadway, www.tpan.com

**University of Illinois at Chicago** The Office of GLBT Concerns' series that explores spirituality and sexuality. Keynote speaker and author Christian de la Huerta. 4-5:30 p.m., Behavioral Sciences Building, Room 145, 1007 W. Harrison St., www.glbc.uic.edu

**Women and Children First** Missy Lavender: You Go Girl: But Only When You Want To. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

## Thursday, Oct. 4

**American Veterans for Equal Rights** Chicago Monthly meeting. 7 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., 773-472-6469 or 773-752-0058 for more info, www.aver.us

**Broadway Youth Center** Queer It Up! an LGBTQ community youth project. 6-7:30 p.m., 3179 N. Broadway, for more info contact Lara at 773-935-3151 ext. 225 or larab@howardbrown.org

**Center on Halsted** An evening of cocktails with Project Runway 2's Nick Verreos. 7-10 p.m., 3656 N. Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org

**Chicago International Film Festival** Hundreds of feature films, documentaries and shorts. Through Oct. 17. Films screened in two locations: AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois St.; Landmark's Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark St., www.chicagofilmfestival.com, 312-332-FILM

## Friday, Oct. 5

**Buddy Guy's Legends** Lucy Lawless in Concert. And Oct. 6. 754 S. Wabash Ave., www.lucyconcert.com

**Chicago 3160** Dan Stetzel. 9:30 p.m., 3160 N. Clark St., www.chicago3160.com

**Flesh Hungry Dog Show** Monthly queer alternative, rock 'n' roll cabaret featuring Actor Slash Model and Congress of Starlings. 9 p.m., Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St., www.fleshhungrydog.com

**Hydrate** Lube wrestling (11 p.m.) and DJ Jeannette. 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

**Man's Country** Nude strippers Valentine, Geno and guests. 5017 N. Clark St.

**Mary's Attic** Book event honoring OUT Magazine columnist and novelist Jesse Archer, who will read from memoir, You Can Run: Gay, Glam and Gritty Travels in South America. 8 p.m., 5400 N. Clark St.

**Sidetrack** 312 Urban Wheat Ale Event on roof deck. Give-aways from 8 p.m., 3349 N. Halsted St., www.sidetrackchicago.com

## Saturday, Oct. 6

**Chicago 3160** Gio. 9:30 p.m., 3160 N. Clark St., www.chicago3160.com

**Chicago Eagle** UnderWEAR party. 5015 N. Clark St.

**Gay Liberation Network** 9th Annual Matthew Shepard March featuring keynote speaker Nikolai Alexeyev, Russia's foremost gay leader. Begins 8 p.m., parking lot on the corner of Halsted and Roscoe, www.gayliberation.net, LGBTliberation@aol.com

**Gender PAC** 3rd Annual Chicago Celebrity Cook Out. Featuring Jennifer Beals, Marlee Matlin, Daniela Sea, celebrity chefs. 6-8 p.m., The Chopping Block, 222 Merchandise Mart, #107, www.gpac.org/l-word for more info

**Hydrate** Alyson Calagna. 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

**Lake Forest College** Intercultural Reunion Brunch for LGBT alumni/ae. 9:30-11:30 a.m., Pierson Rooms, 555 N. Sheridan Rd., Lake Forest, free with Homecoming/Reunion Weekend Pass or \$6.50 at door, 847-735-6022 or state@lakeforest.edu

**Live Oak Chicago** Free Saturday series for gay men. This week: Sex, Dating, and Relationships, How We Connect With Other Gay Men. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 1300 W. Belmont Ave., Suite 402, RSVP required, call 773-880-1310 ext. 86 or email mhodar@liveoakchicago.com

**Man's Country** Nude strippers Giovanni, Kurtis, Angel and Cezar. 5017 N. Clark St.

**Olivia Funny Women**, starring Vickie Shaw, Karen Williams, Roxanna Ward. 7 p.m., \$25, Rockford Theater at The Rockford Women's Club, 317 Park Ave., www.rockfordtheater.com, 800-595-4849, www.tix.com

**Scott's** Octoberfest party. Complimentary brats 2-7 p.m. 1829 W. Montrose, 773-528-3253

**St. Hilary Church** Memorial for one-year anniversary of death of Rudy Johnson. 8:30 a.m., at California and Bryn Mawr, m.ski1103@sbcglobal.net for more info

## Sunday, Oct. 7

**Berlin** Madonna-Rama. No cover, 954 W. Belmont, www.berlinchicago.com

**Better Existence with HIV** Multiple events to benefit BEHIV's Massage Therapy program. A tag day at bars in Andersonville and Edgewater includes activities such as guest bartending, raffle drawings and drink specials. See www.behiv.org

**Dignity/Chicago** Mass. 5 p.m., Broadway United Methodist Church, 3344 N. Broadway, www.dignitychicago.org

**Hydrate** DJ Jeannette. 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

**Illinois Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry** Brothers/Sister Congregations: Partnering Communities to Support Marriage Equality. Features Rep. Greg Harris, Rabbi Peter Knobel and others to help congregations reach out to support Illinois' civil union bill. 6 p.m., free, Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Ave., register at http://brothersistercongregations.eventbrite.com or 773-549-0260 ext. 33

**WACT** Monthly brunch. Call 773-562-7465 for more info.

**Windy City Gay Naturists** Potluck & movie night. 5 p.m., RSVP 312-494-2654

**Women and Children First** Sisters in Crime 20th Anniversary Celebration. 5 p.m., 5233 N. Clark, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

## Tuesday, Oct. 9

**Center on Halsted** Gifts of Grief discussion with film screening for LGBT people struggling with loss and grief. 7 p.m., Hoover Leppen Theater, 3656 N. Halsted St., \$5 donation, www.centeronhalsted.org

**Funky Buddha Lounge** Outdanced with Rotten Milk and Hunter. 10 p.m.-2 a.m., RSVP at outdanced@yahoo.com, 728 W. Grand Ave., www.funkybuddha.com

**Gerber/Hart Library** Lesbian Book Group: Self-Made Man by Norah Vincent. 7:30 p.m., 1127 W. Granville

Ave., www.gerberhart.org

## Wednesday, Oct. 10

**@tmsphere** Show with MidTangent Productions, @tmsphere 54. 5355 N. Clark St., www.atmospherebar.com

**AIDS Foundation of Chicago** Lecture, part of AFC Speaker Series and Prevention Conference. Gay, Sexy, Healthy: Strengthening Prevention for Men Like Us. 6-8 p.m., University Center, Lake Room, 525 S. State St., RSVP at www.aidschicago.org/events/conference.php

**Lynn Sage Research Foundation** Benefit luncheon featuring guest speaker Fran Drescher: Light the Way to Find a Cure. 11:30 a.m., \$250 or \$150 for those under 35, Four Seasons Hotel Chicago, 120 E. Delaware Pl., 312-926-7133 for tickets, www.lynsage.org

**Women and Children First** Susan Faludi: The Terror Dream. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., 773-769-9299, www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

## Thursday, Oct. 11

**Bailiwick Repertory Theater** Halloween costume and rummage sale. Great costumes and vintage clothes. Runs through Oct. 13. 12-8 p.m., \$3 donation, bring own shopping bags, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-883-1090 for more info

**Center on Halsted** First Latino/a LGBTQQA conference. Includes workshops, presentation and more. 9 a.m.-7 p.m., \$25 per person, \$10 for students, call Karen at 773-472-6469 ext. 261 or krotstein@centeronhalsted.org for info.

**Chicago 3160** John Jones. 9:30 p.m., 3160 N. Clark St., www.chicago3160.com

**Chicago NOW** Celebrate National Coming Out Day with the Lesbian Rights Team. 8 p.m., T's, 5025 N. Clark St., all welcome, cnowlesbianrightsteam@gmail.com for more info

**Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health** Annual meeting: The Power of Youth. 4 p.m., Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, 800 S. Halsted St., rsvp@icah.org

**Illinois Science Council** Discussion: Is It the Genes or Just the Jeans?—The Biology of Gender. 6 p.m., free, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, www.illinoisience.org

**PFLAG/Woodstock/McHenry** Monthly meeting; meets second Thursday of each month. 7 p.m., Congregational Unitarian Church, 221 Dean St., Woodstock, 815-385-9068, Pflagwoodstock@earthlink.net

## Saturday, Oct. 6



## MARCH IN OCTOBER

Russian gay activist Nikolai Alexeyev (above) will speak at the 9th Annual Matthew Shepard March, which will take place at Halsted and Roscoe.

## Wednesday, Oct. 10



## LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

Gregorio Millett of the CDC (above) will talk at the "Gay, Sexy, Healthy" forum at University Center, 525 S. State.

photo courtesy of Millett

## Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



## ENDA from page 4

Homosexuality" dubbed ENDA as the "Transgender Bathrooms for Business" bill with a photograph of Frank with a quote attributed to him saying, "I've talked with transgender activists and what they want—and what we will be forced to defend—is for people with penises who identify as women to be able to shower with other women."

Last month, in a subcommittee hearing on the bill, Baldwin discussed what she characterized as "confusion" around the inclusion of "gender identity" in the bill.

"ENDA contains language that makes it clear that an employer may establish and enforce reasonable and otherwise lawful dress and grooming standards for employees," said Baldwin. "But it also provides assurances that aspects of a person's gender identity and gender expression cannot be the basis for workplace discrimination. ENDA ensures that an employer cannot fire an employee solely because she is a woman with a 'masculine' walk or a man with an 'effeminate' voice."

Baldwin declined, through a spokesperson, a request for an interview and did not respond to e-mail inquiries concerning specific aspects of the legislation. Baldwin was listed as one of 171 co-sponsors of the bill as introduced this year (HR 2015). As of Tuesday, only four co-sponsors

were signed onto Frank's new bill (HR 3685) that includes only sexual orientation; they are Democratic Reps. George Miller (Calif.), Robert Andrews (N.J.), Deborah Pryce (Ohio), and Christopher Shays (Conn.). Only Miller, Andrews and Shays are signed onto HR 3686 which includes only gender identity.

Baldwin's press secretary, Jerilyn Goodman, said Baldwin's absence from the two new bills which Frank has put forward is "an expression of her disappointment with a two bill strategy" but she "remains committed to getting ENDA to the floor in as strong a form as is politically feasible."

### Prescription for nothing?

The U.S. Supreme Court, in 1989, ruled in Price-Waterhouse v. Hopkins that "requiring individuals to conform to gender stereotypes, even when those stereotypes do not implicate immutable characteristics or infringe on fundamental rights, falls within the prohibitions in Title VII and the Equal Protection Clause on sex discrimination."

Chai Feldblum, a longtime gay legal activist, said that ruling could provide some protection against gender identity discrimination in the workplace, but "it's not been anything you can depend on."

"Many courts," said Feldblum, "are saying that [the Price-Waterhouse decision applies] if

a woman acts in a way that's non-traditional for a woman, but if a woman changes her gender and becomes a man, that is different and is not covered."

In his five-page explanation for submitting separate bills, Frank said, "we do not have sufficient support in the House" to include gender identity in the primary ENDA bill.

"The question facing [the LGBT community and its supporters] is whether we should pass up the chance to adopt a very good bill because it has one major gap," said Frank, in the statement. Frank said that public education and lobbying on gender identity was "much less far along" than that on sexual orientation discrimination.

Frank criticized what he said was "an unwillingness on the part of many, including leaders in the transgender community" to acknowledge that "there is more resistance to protection for people who are transgender than for people who are gay, lesbian and bisexual."

Frank said a head count of support for the inclusive bill made it "very clear" that enough Democrats would throw their support behind a Republican-led effort to delete gender identity from the measure or simply vote against the bill.

While LGBT leaders told Frank they would prefer to not go forward with ENDA at all, rather than delete gender identity, Frank said that would be "a disaster—politically, morally, and

strategically."

"[I]nsistence on achieving everything at once," said Frank, "would be a prescription for achieving nothing ever."

But Equality Maine begged to differ.

"Maine was in a similar situation in the spring of 2005 when legislative leaders wanted to strip gender identity and expression from the non-discrimination bill," said executive director Betsy Smith in a statement issued Monday. "While we understood that some legislators had jitters about the new language, it was simply not acceptable to abandon part of the community. We took the time to educate and succeeded in keeping it in."

*In an effort to stop the path taken regarding ENDA, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), along with organizations such as the ACLU, the National Center for Transgender Equality and the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, signed an Oct. 1 letter addressed to Miller, chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. The intent of the letter was to show the organizations' "opposition to the strategy and process by which [ENDA] is to be considered in the House of Representatives."*

*In addition, an earlier letter was sent to HRC from trans-rights leaders, asking for the organization's support of a trans-inclusive ENDA. Read the full texts of both letters at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com).*

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