

Robert Gant: I, Spy

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Wilson Cruz at Roosevelt

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Sarah Hoagland Honored

page 7



nightspots

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MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL:

A Tale of Two Moms

This is the first of a two-part account of Christy Webber and Jennie Rule's journey to motherhood.

BY OWEN KEEHNEN

It's tough to out-butch Christy Webber. The small-town girl from Montrose, Mich. (near Flint), grew up loving to hunt, fish, skate and snowmobile. The outdoors was her playground. As a teen she was the National Powder Puff Motorcross Champion. She attended college at the University of Denver, where she received her Bachelor's Degree in physical education and played sports for the university, most notably as a star on the women's basketball team. After college Webber worked briefly as a P.E. teacher, but always felt she had some bigger contribution to make. Soon after, she discovered that something and over the next two decades Webber has made an impressive name for herself in Chicago with her landscaping business.

Jennie Rule met Christy Webber eight years ago at Girlbar on North Halsted. That night, Rule recalls coming down the stairs and being first captivated by Webber's white shoes. At first glance she thought, "Thank God; finally a lesbian with some fashion sense!" At that point in her life, Rule had been with a couple of women, but was looking to go back to men. In the months to come, Webber would change all that.

A theater major at Western Michigan Univer-

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A then-pregnant Christy Webber (left) and partner Jennie Rule. Photo by Brian McConkey



Sweet Fashions

Cool clothes, hot models and tasty food were all in abundance at the "2008 Chicago House Spring Brunch & Fashion Show: Candyland Couture" at the Winter Garden of Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State, on May 4. Among those in attendance was former "Project Runway" contestant Steven Rosengard (right photo). Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more on page 7, at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and at www.MysticImagesPhotography.com

LGBTs rally on May Day

BY YASMIN NAIR

Rainbow flags dotted the landscape of this year's May Day rally, as an amorphous LGBTQ contingent marched along with groups demanding the legalization of the undocumented; worker's rights; and an end to raids and deportations. While official tallies put the numbers at about 15,000, Jorge Mujica of the March 10 Movement (a key organizing group) put the number closer to 50,000 in a post-march interview. Marchers felt that while the numbers were fewer than last year's, the issues were still as tangible for queers and immigrants.

This was not the first time that queers have marched at the May Day immigration rally, but it

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Models were part of the scene at Chicago House's Spring Brunch & Fashion Show. See page 7.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

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Psychiatrist Martha Hernandez, M.D., talks about being part of BEHIV's mental-health team. See page 11.

Photo by Frank Failing of Male Image Photography

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- Media Watch
- World roundup
- Theater: Around the World in 80 Days; Speech and Debate (right)



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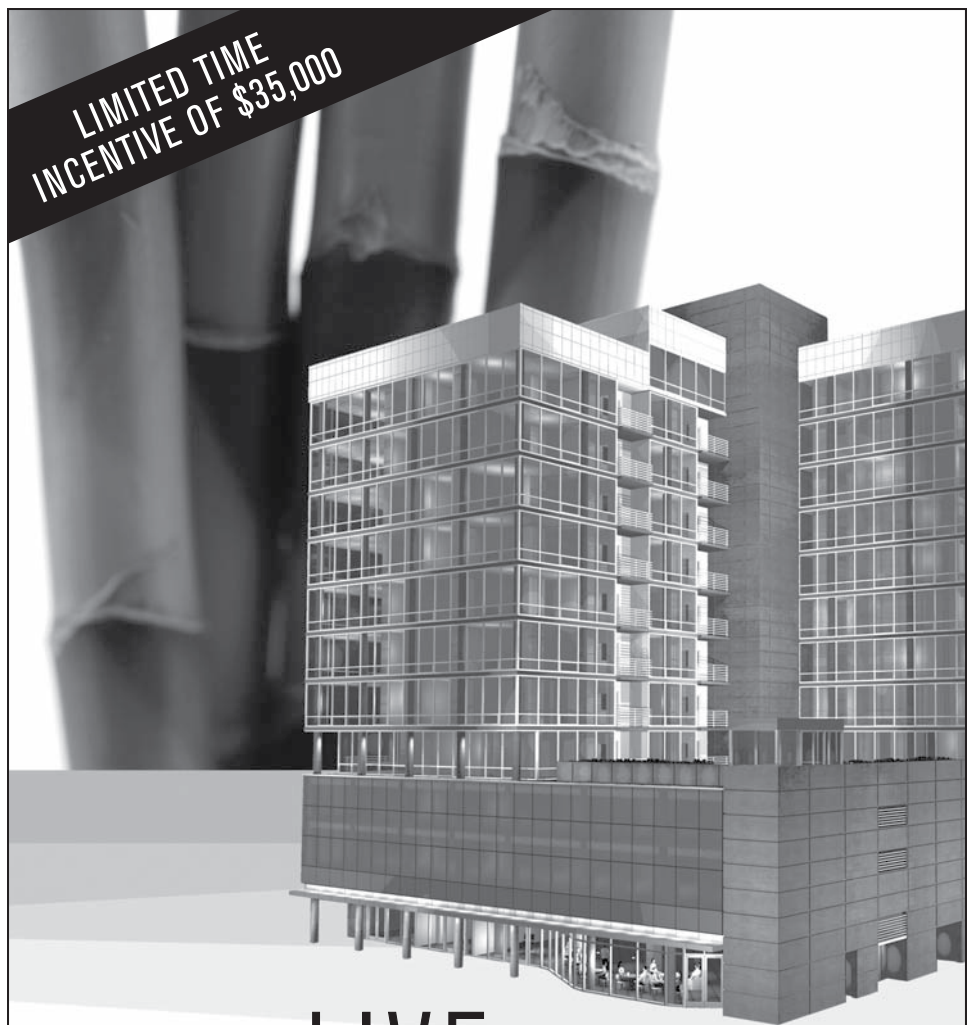
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Photo by Cassandra Damm



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U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif. Photo by Bob Roehr

AIDSWatch 2008

BY BOB ROEHR

Frustration, hope and a dedication to change through the coming election were common threads marking AIDSWatch 2008 at a rally at the foot of the Capitol April 29. The theme was "AIDS at Home."

"We have more information about this disease than any other ... yet we do not take this information and use it to do something about the problem in the proper way," said Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif. "In the final analysis, the money appropriated does not match the talk."

"We have an opportunity to ask our candidates about the issues. We know that they have waxed eloquently about healthcare in general. I have heard no specific discussion about HIV/AIDS," she said.

"I have heard no specific commitment to increasing the funding for AIDS from any of the candidates. Now, their hearts may be in the right places, but I want to hear them talk about it. I want to hear them make it a priority."

Waters is a superdelegate to the Democratic National Convention and has endorsed Sen. Hillary Clinton.

She spoke movingly of her own dedication to the fight against AIDS, from the early days meeting people kicked out of their homes by their families, through her own sister's struggle and ultimate death from the disease, to the ongoing fights for funding.

"Anybody can rattle off the facts. ... But when are we going to get to the national strategy? The well-defined plan that talks about the responsibility of all aspects of our society, that will identify the resources that are needed, the work that is to be done, by whom it is going to be done, the goals we are going to set—it is time for us to get a national strategy."

The U.S. requires that the countries it helps through PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) develop a national HIV/AIDS plan, but the U.S. lacks one of its own. Programs are fragmented and gaps are numerous.

Waters lambasted the Bush administration for its current budget proposal that increases Ryan White funding "only by a measly \$1.1 million this year, while it would require an increase of \$614 million just to meet the bare needs of this country." The proposed budget would cut CDC HIV prevention funding by \$2 million, while an increase of \$832 million is needed.

"Ladies and gentlemen, It is not enough to say that I am sick and tired of George W. Bush; I am. But we have to be clear when we talk to our friends about what we expect from them."

"I wish I could tell you that I am confident that we are going to get the increases, that we are going to get a President and a White House that will work with us to develop a national strategy—but I'm not. That is why we have got to ask the questions," said Waters.

Democratic control of Congress has not brought increased funding for HIV programs.

Assistant Majority Leader Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said learning that basketball star "Magic" Johnson had AIDS brought home the fact that "it was a problem that could reach into the lives of anyone." A congressional hearing soon thereafter left him so shaken that he went home to Chicago and called his three teenage kids into the room to talk with them about AIDS.

Durbin said the entire annual budget of the Ryan White CARE Act is just over \$2 billion; "That is one week in the war in Iraq. And when we talk about expanding it, the [Bush] administration says we can't afford it."

"It is heartbreaking to me that we are spending \$10-15 billion a month on a war in Iraq and say that we can't afford the basic health care that people need through the Ryan White CARE Act."

"A strong American begins at home with a caring leader who reaches out to help the people of this country," the Senator said.

Rep. Donna M. Christian-Christensen, D-Virgin Islands, said, "With the overwhelming numbers in sub-Saharan Africa and the growing global epidemic, too often the needs at home have not been placed at the same level of importance. When one looks at the picture of HIV/AIDS here, at least in the African-American community, it begins to parallel what is seen in the Caribbean."

"With the overwhelming numbers in sub-Saharan Africa and the growing global epidemic, too often the needs at home have not been placed at the same level of importance. When one looks at the picture of HIV/AIDS here, at least in the African-American community, it begins to parallel what is seen in the Caribbean."

She called for programs that are "free of all of the political and ideological limitations that have been placed on AIDS funding in this country and around the world these past few years."

RALLY from cover

was the first time that queer groups had issued a call-out to organize under rainbow flags. At the rally itself, several queer immigrants marched along with groups like the youth contingent of the March 10 Movement, while others looked to march under the rainbow flag as the official queer block. The LGBTQ presence seemed, at first, to consist largely of non-immigrants, a fact commented on by some.

Mariela Alburges was among those who came to march as part of the queer contingent: "I'm definitely here because of the call-out." She was positive about the potential for solidarity among queers and immigrants, but she also said, "A lot of the visibility is being taken or being overshadowed by the white queer community. ... It's important for [our] allies to also acknowledge that we need more queer immigrant leaders to be out here. The front lines don't have to be headed by white queer men. I am a little worried about how we're organizing ourselves."

One young non-immigrant marcher acknowledged the largely white queer presence but said, "It's mostly but not exclusively white. ... A lot of the LGBT organizing is racially divided; a lot of it is white-focused." She spoke about the need for solidarity, a word that echoed through the crowd.

The queer contingent was eventually joined by ALMA (Association of Latino Men for Action). Opinions on what constituted queer immigrant issues varied based on how the marchers identified themselves, and there seemed to be some confusion about the issue of marriage and binational couples. While many spoke about the need for what Andy Thayer of GLN (Gay Liberation Network) called "equal naturalization rights for binational couples," they were surprised to learn that the issue only affects documented people.

There was more clarity about the war on Iraq, as this year's rally was the first one to take on an explicitly anti-war agenda. An organizer with the March 10 Movement said this was because "a lot of immigrants ... are at the front lines of the war," and because there has been a significant shift in public attitudes towards the war. Thayer, whose group is involved in anti-war efforts, spoke about immigration issues and the war, and the possible reasons for the dip in attendees: "People are frustrated because they come out against the war but politicians have ignored us. We are at a march today whose central demand is legalization but that is not at on the agenda of any of the major presidential candidates. Instead, you've got Barack Obama appropriating the immigration slogan 'Sí, se puede' ('Yes, we can') but supporting building the damn border fence. That is crass opportunism at its worst."

In talking about the smaller numbers, Thayer acknowledged people's frustration but also



Karen Rothstein (left), Aurora Pineda and their son. Photo by Yasmin Nair

said that "some people are [living with] the mistaken notion that Santa Claus is going to come on Nov. 4, and they're in for a very rude awakening. ... These issues aren't going to go away." For queer immigrants at the march, the issues were somewhat different, as were the reasons why there might be fewer people. Nicole Perez, who has ties to the immigrant community, said: "I know people who are getting deported because of no-match letters. People who are undocumented, afraid in a world where fear is a real issue, who couldn't get out of work ... Safety is an intense issue. I'm here for my family, people who are undocumented, too afraid to march, people who can't take the time to march."

For Alburges, the march was about, "basic healthcare access ... the basic recognition of us being immigrant as well as queer ... and of [not] having to choose between our identities ... between my *latinidad* and my queerness." Jorge Cestou spoke about equal marriage rights for queers: "We have the same challenges as the mainstream gay community—marriage is not recognized between gays and we have to deal with [the fact that] we cannot immigrate our partners."

This year's rally also saw a larger youth presence than at previous rallies. Mujica pointed out that "these are the sons and daughters of those who marched in previous years. Many can't vote because they're under 18, or are undocumented, or have parents who are undocumented. So the alternative is to march."

Overall, most were positive about the effects of a queer presence at the march, and thought that it furthered what Perez called a "multi-issue agenda." Aurora Pineda pointed out the difference from previous years, where she and her partner, Karen Rothstein, had felt gawked at. Rothstein missed the queer spectacle of last year's march, but for Pineda, "There's great energy; [queers are] so sure of themselves. They [the people marching] don't give a fuck." Pineda and Rothstein brought their three-month-old son to the march, and their presence dovetailed with the cries for preserving families that rang throughout the march.

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UCC churches seek to include LGBTs

BY AMY WOOTEN

In order to further boost LGBT inclusion, the leaders of nearly a dozen North Side United Church of Christ (UCC) churches are putting their heads together.

While hundreds of UCC churches and ministries have gone one step beyond saying they are welcoming to LGBT folks by officially and publicly declaring to be open and affirming (ONA), this cluster of North Side ONA UCC churches wants to take it a step further. A consortium of North Side UCC ONA churches, which includes several with openly gay and lesbian leaders, started meeting to reassess their participation in the local queer community. They wish to re-evaluate where these area churches are now and what should be done next.

Several North Side churches are involved in this effort, including Bethany UCC, Bethlehem UCC, Church of the Three Crosses, St. Paul's UCC, Wellington Avenue UCC and others.

The area is already unique in that a large majority of the UCC churches on the North Side have been ONA "for decades," said Rev. Dan Dale of Wellington Avenue UCC.

"We probably have the highest percentage of openly LGBT clergy of any denomination in any geographic area of the country," Dale added. Area UCC churches have also had openly gay and lesbian individuals in their congregations for decades.

"We've called this group together because we have been active leaders, participating as a part of the LGBTQ community for decades, and where are we now?" Dale said.

According to Dale, the group's purpose is to reevaluate the participation and integration of area churches in the LGBT community, and ask what needs they could and should be responding to.

"It's interesting the degree to which over the last 20 years, as being Open and Affirming congregations, the differences in how the LGBTQ community are integrated in the churches," Dale said. While at some churches, LGBT individuals might be involved in the anti-war movement or other issues, at others, such as Pillar of Love Fellowship Church, they might be focused on healing and affirmation.

A crucial addition to the group of churches involved in this effort is the radically inclusive Pillar of Love Fellowship Church, which holds weekly worship services at the Center on Halsted. Pillar of Love was founded by the out Rev. Phyllis V. Pennese as a church organization that specifically addresses the needs of the LGBT community and, in particular, LGBT people of color.

"I don't think that it would be incorrect to say that Pillar of Love coming to the North Side has been instrumental in helping galvanize this collegiality and collaboration," Pennese said.

Dale agreed, and told Windy City Times that Pillar of Love's move to the North Side played a large role.

Pillar of Love has a predominately African-American LGBT congregation, which Pennese calls a "flip side" to the majority of area ONA UCC churches.

"I think it's crucial for them to have us involved," Pennese said. "We are living this every day. It's not just something we do or adjust to or do a culture change to make room for the LGBT community. We are the LGBT community."

While other denominations are debating the issue nationally, the UCC is in a unique position because it has been involved in LGBT inclusion for over 30 years. UCC adopted an ONA resolution in 1985. Since, over 700 UCC congregations have voted to become ONA.

For a complete list of area ONA UCC congregations, see www.uccoalition.org.

Read the entire article at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Confab focuses on LGBTs and immigration

BY AMY WOOTEN

During the week of the large immigration march downtown, members of the community gathered at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, to discuss the many ways LGBT and immigration issues intersect.

At the April 30 Immigration at the Margins conference, members of various aspects of the LGBT community touched on just a small number of ways immigration issues impact the LGBT community, from corner day workers and sex workers to domestic violence.

"A lot of us are part of many worlds—queer, immigrants and more," said community activist and Windy City Times writer Yasmin Nair. "A lot of us have to deal with immigration."

During a two-hour discussion, conference participants tried to shed light on issues complicated by immigration issues.

Jessica Acee, a coordinator of the Latino Union's Albany Park Workers' Center, spoke about the issues Chicago immigrant day laborers face each day, such as health and safety abuses; wage theft; and police abuse. Given a "20-year onslaught of the far right," Acee said, it's important to also talk about issues like racism, sexism and heterosexism in order to better and fully understand the framework.

Sex work and immigration were also discussed during the afternoon plenary session. Young Women's Empowerment Project co-director Shira Hassan discussed the issues Chicago girls and women in the sex trade face each day.

"It's always intersecting," Hassan said of both sex trade and immigration issues. "But it's only in the past year people have been frothing at the mouth about the sex trade and immigration," she added.

Read the entire article at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

LGBTs among Obama delegates

At least three LGBT individuals—Mike Bauer, Lauren Verdich and David Munar—were among those selected May 5 by the Illinois Democratic Party Convention to be at-large delegates for Sen. Barack Obama at the Democratic National Convention.

In addition, lesbian Renae Ogletree, also an Obama delegate, was among seven chosen to be on the Platform Committee. The Platform Committee—which is responsible for drafting and recommending a proposed national platform for approval at the Democratic National Convention—is one of three "standing committees" of the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

The national convention will take place Aug. 25-28 at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colo.

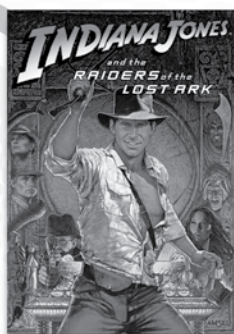
Chicago lesbians exchange vows

Julie Bruno and Susan Laurie, two Methodist lesbians from Chicago, exchanged vows May 2 in a park adjacent to the Fort Worth (Tex.) Convention Center—where United Methodist delegates had voted earlier in the week to continue outlawing homosexuality, according to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. More than 200 Methodists attended the ceremony, which was presided over by a layperson. The delegates had also decided, among other things, against gay and lesbian clergy being ordained.

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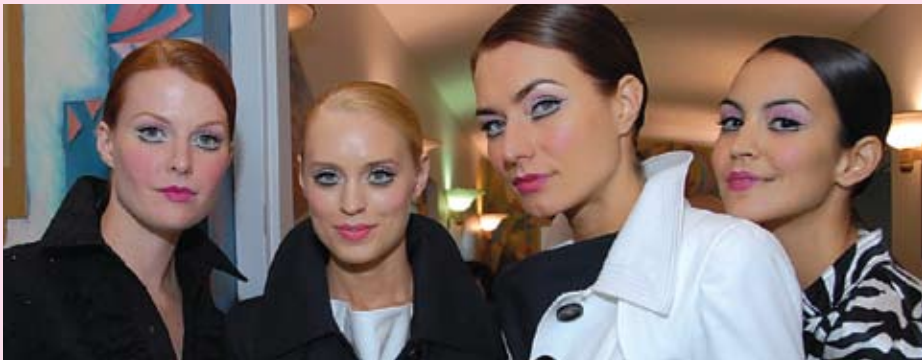
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Fashion and flavor

Hundreds of attendees packed the the Winter Garden of Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State, on May 4 for the 2008 Chicago House Spring Brunch & Fashion Show, which featured a "Candyland Couture" theme. In addition to models and entertainment by dance troupes such as the Hip-Hop Connexion Dance Crew, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity received an award from Chicago House. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com



Hoagland honored at NEIU

Sarah Hoagland—a founder of the Institute of Lesbian Studies and a professor of philosophy, women's studies and Latino/a-American studies at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU)—was honored May 3 at the school's commencement convocation with the Bernard J. Brommel Distinguished Research Professor Award, given annually to the faculty member who best demonstrates excellence in research and scholarship. Brommel, a longtime supporter of the LGBT community, is professor emeritus of communication, media and theater at NEIU. Photo of Hoagland and Brommel by Anne Leighton



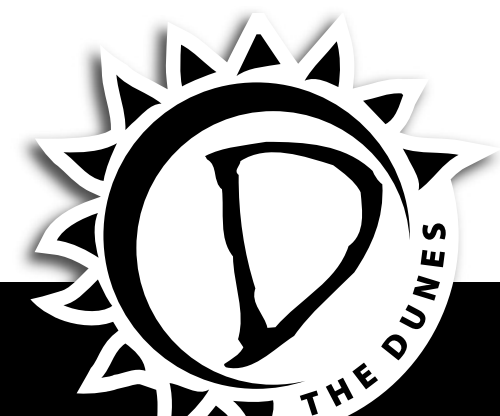
Cruz at Roosevelt

Openly gay television and movie actor Wilson Cruz—whose oeuvre includes TV's "My So-Called Life" and "Noah's Arc" as well as films such as Coffee Date—discussed his career and life at a forum entitled "My So-Called Life: Coming Out, Family Life and Homelessness" at Roosevelt University May 1. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com



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Bill Greaves and Kim Edwards listen to youth at the April 29 gathering. Photo by Yasmin Nair

Issues aired out at youth forum

BY YASMIN NAIR

Since its opening in 2006, the Center on Halsted has been a destination for queer youth, many of whom have been coming from the South and West sides to use its resources. Over the years, there has been rising friction between the youth, who are mostly of color, and area residents and businesses in a largely white neighborhood. Issues include the shortage of services for queer youth and reports alleging their noise and disruptive behavior.

On April 29, Father Tommy Avant Garde organized a town hall for youth and community members to speak out. The meeting was held at Grace Episcopal Church, 637 S. Dearborn, and moderated by Simone Koehlinger, of the Chicago Department of Public Health. Also present were Kim Edwards, director of education at the Commission on Human Relations, and Bill Greaves,

the mayor's GLBT liaison. Koehlinger began with questions directed towards the youth; these ranged from asking what made them want to use the Center and what factors might dissuade them from doing so.

Several youth spoke about the comfort of being in a queer-friendly space: "We can hang out and be ourselves." Others felt targeted because of their race: "They [area residents] look at me as a black person. I'm walking down the street and they'll stare real hard; they'll watch me." Several youth said they felt unfairly targeted by police.

Youth spoke about living where they either had no queer community or felt unsafe because of their queer identity. A white adult said that he couldn't fathom the issue of "hatred" in the youths' neighborhoods. This prompted activist Marc Loveless to respond that he was "greatly disturbed how the coming-out experience is being viewed so differently for these young people. You can't see that they're in the same situation as you were as young white gays?" He went on to say that thinking of African Americans as exclusively homophobic was "dehumanizing and marginalizing."

When asked about setting up more queer youth programs in the area, youth responded that there are already such places in their neighborhoods, "but they need more support." Several said that they needed recreational places that stayed open later. (The Center currently closes at 8 p.m. on weekdays and 5 p.m. on Saturday).

Dana Starks, chairman of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, said that he was frustrated at the lack of solutions, even after many such meetings, and several in the audience echoed his frustration.



Alderman Sandi Jackson (top, middle) with Richard Z. Wright, his mother (top, left) and grandmother (top, right) at Jeffrey Pub. Photo by Mark Corece

Sandi Jackson speaks at Jeffrey Pub

BY MARK CORECE

The historical Jeffrey Pub, 7041 S. Jeffery, became another instrument of change April 28 when it hosted a much-needed discussion about the current state and the future of Chicago's South Side Black gay community. 7th Ward Alderman Sandra "Sandi" Jackson—accompanied by her husband, U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr.—spoke on her political positions and what she plans to do to implement her main agenda, change.

"I came into this position naively, thinking that I could snap my fingers and everything would be OK," stated an enthusiastic Alderman

Jackson. "I know that, if we work together, we can make change. It's going to take time but it can happen."

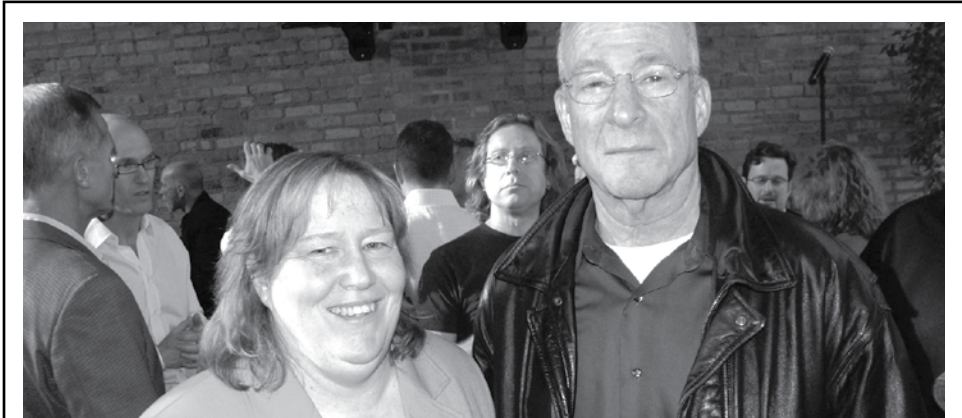
Jackson also talked about South Side development proposals that would provide growth that could potentially help the entire community: "We are doing marketing analysis on things like a space for an artist community on 75th St. and a Jazz Row to bring the bistros and musicians right here."

Jackson also extended her concerns about the LGBT community: "Aside from development, a social community is very important. Better treatment of LGBT people is essential for economic development because we are all in this community."

The night was full of surprises, such as appearances from various LGBT community leaders and awards given to the Red Ribbon crew—consisting of Ben Montgomery, Michael O'Connor and Marc Loveless—for its efforts and accomplishments in the struggle for HIV/AIDS. The crew's most recent achievement is the Red Ribbon lottery ticket that allots 100 percent of its proceeds to improving the lives of those with HIV/AIDS.

Another attendee, Walker Tisdale of Howard Brown Health Center, came out "to show support and get a sense of what's going on," he said. "I am really encouraged to come out and hear the politicians speak about important issues, such as HIV/AIDS, even in a non-election year."

Alderman Jackson remained open and frank about her objective and where LGBT people fit in: "We don't have particular goals—in regards to the LGBT community—right now but once we get past the first stages, future goals will be initiated for all people."



Police woman

New 23rd District Police Commander Kathleen Boehmer (above, left) conducted a meet-and-greet with local business owners at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, on April 30. Photo by Kirk Williamson



Avenue of delights

The five-diamond-rated Avenues restaurant at The Peninsula Chicago, 108 E. Superior, welcomed Curtis Duffy as its new *chef de cuisine*, and marked his arrival April 28 with an exclusive dinner prepared by Duffy for Center on Halsted. Photos of (left) Mike Demetria, Sarah Schmidt and Robert Kohl; and (right) Patrick Sheahan, Peninsula General Manager Maria Zec and the Center's executive director, Tico Valle, by Mel Ferrand

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NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY AMY WOOTEN

A sculpture of historic gay icon Harvey Milk will be unveiled at the San Francisco City Hall on May 22. Milk was a politician and gay rights activist who was assassinated along with San Francisco Mayor George Moscone in 1978. The bronze sculpture of the self-described "Mayor of Castor Street" was created by the Daub, Firmin and Hendrickson Sculpture Group. The Harvey Milk City Hall Memorial Committee is still seeking funding for this historic occasion. See www.milkmemorial.org.

A Memphis high school principal is getting heat from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for allegedly outing two gay students who are romantically involved. ACLU attorneys claim that the school official violated students' right to privacy when she posted the names of the gay couple, which was shown to teachers, staff, fellow classmates and their parents. The two students say that they have had to deal with an onslaught of harassment since the outing. The principal had teachers and staff report known student couples, both straight and gay, to help reduce public displays of affection. The list was then publicly displayed, according to the ACLU.

When Human Rights Campaign announced its U.S. Senate candidate endorsement list, many noticed the omission of openly gay North Carolina Democratic candidate Jim Neal, who is running for Elizabeth Dole's seat. Neal, who will run against state senator Kay Hagan in the May 6 primary, told the Washington Blade, "Maybe I'm not gay enough," when asked about the lack of support from the national LGBT organization. While Neal has been open about his sexuality and position on gay rights issues, Hagan has kept quiet about where she stands. HRC's move

has received heat from many, including columnist and blogger Dan Savage, who called an HRC endorsement for Neal a "no brainer."

An openly gay Queens City Council candidate running for the seat formerly held by Dennis Gallagher has been the target of an anti-gay flyer sent to a number of households. Candidate Charles Ober was the target of a five-paragraph anonymous flyer that read, "You need to know that one of the candidates ... is a faggot," according to Gay City News. Ober is the former board president of a local LGBT center. The flyer also warned that if elected, area neighborhoods would become "Queerville U.S.A." It also called Ober a "pedophile." Ober held a news conference to shed light on the issue, and was joined by Republican candidate Thomas Ognibene, who spoke out against the personal attack and hate speech.

At the 2008 General Conference, United Methodists voted against changing its position on homosexuality. The denomination's highest governing body voted to keep the United Methodist Church's statement that homosexuality as "incompatible with Christian teaching." Delegates also rejected a measure to change the Church's definition of marriage to include same-sex unions. However, delegates approved a resolution opposing homophobia.

The U.S. Presbyterian Church lifted a censure that was placed on a retired lesbian minister in 2007. The Church's highest court lifted the censure placed on Rev. Jane Adams Spahr for conducting two same-sex unions in 2004 and 2005 because they were ceremonies, not marriages. According to the laws of the Church, by definition "a same-sex ceremony is not and cannot be a marriage," the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. ruled. "One cannot characterize same-sex ceremonies as marriages for the purpose of disciplining a minister," the final ruling continued.

Read the world roundup at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Mildred Loving passes

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The woman who started a ball rolling toward knocking down laws banning interracial marriage and who, late in life, also spoke out against bans on gay marriage has died.

Mildred Loving died Fri., May 2, in Milford, Va. She was 68. The cause of death was not available, but gay activist Mitchell Gold, who met with her a year ago about speaking out against anti-gay marriage laws, said Mrs. Loving was already quite frail with arthritis and cancer at that time.

Gold—founder of Faith in America, an organization that fights religious bigotry against the LGBT community—said he and two colleagues visited Loving at her rural Virginia home in early May 2007. They were hoping to persuade her to take part in an event to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the *Loving v. Virginia* decision that struck down anti-miscegenation laws. Gold said they talked about the Loving case and "what's happening to gay people."

"We asked if she would come to Washington [D.C.] and be a significant part of the celebration," said Gold. He recalled she said she would if she could, "but it was clear her health was failing...and we didn't know whether she could physically make it." So, instead, said Gold, Loving prepared a statement that was read at the celebration.

In that statement, Loving said, "I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry. Government has no business imposing some people's religious beliefs over others."

Despite the stark parallels between bans against interracial marriage and those against

same-sex marriage, it has not been common for civil-rights activists to underscore those similarities. Because of her statement, Loving, who had herself been very shy about efforts to paint her as a civil-rights hero for her legal battle against miscegenation laws, was seen as taking a bold step.

Loving was only 23 years old when she and her husband, Richard, were living in exile from their hometown in Virginia because of a conviction for violating the state's law against whites marrying non-whites. They moved to Washington, D.C., rather than spend a year in jail, the penalty for violating the law. That's when Mrs. Loving wrote a letter to then-U.S. Attorney General Kennedy for help. He advised her that the newly passed Civil Rights Act of 1964 would not be of help to them in challenging the law but suggested she contact the American Civil Liberties Union. That led to the historic lawsuit challenging the 40-year-old Virginia law, and similar laws in 19 other states at the time.

The facts of the Loving case also have some striking similarities to those of the *Lawrence v. Texas* case that struck down sodomy laws in 2003. Richard Loving, who was white, and Mildred, who was Black, were arrested in the privacy of their own bedroom in the middle of the night after an anonymous caller tipped off law enforcement officials. And, said Evan Wolfson, head of the national Freedom to Marry group that advocates for same-sex marriage rights, arguments invoked then against interracial marriage were very similar to those invoked now against gay marriage.

"The defenders of the discriminatory laws invoked the Bible, invoked their own view of morality and made similar kinds of claims about the disastrous consequences if interracial couples were treated the same," said Wolfson.

Read the entire article at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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VIEWPOINT

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REV.
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Obama's chickens have come home to roost

Religion plays too important of a role in today's theater of American politics. Given the collapsing of church and state since Bush came into office how and where and why a presidential candidate worships or not, unfortunately, speaks to his or her electability—which brings us back again to Obama and his pastor.

While Obama has denounced Rev. Jeremiah Wright's incendiary remarks. Suspicion, nonetheless, still surfaces about not only his professed faith as a Christian, but now also his electability as president.

The Black church is a central, powerful and revered institution in the African-American community. While a community organizer working with local churches on the South Side of Chicago, the Black Church captured Obama's attention. Obama says he came to understand "the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change." However, suspicion now abounds questioning how much Obama really covets the power of the Black church for his own political aggrandizement, rather than for its religion.

"When Obama picked a 'church home,' he chose one that helped him with another weak spot in his biography. Before Obama joined Trinity United, Rev. Wright warned Obama that the church was viewed as "too radical ... Our emphasis on African history, on scholarship ..." But Obama joined anyway. With that act, he had become significantly blacker—and more like local voters," wrote Edward McLelland of salon.com

"Part of the cultural divide between the half-Kenyan Hawaiian and his Chicago neighbors, most of them products of the Deep South's black diaspora, was bridged. Look, for better or worse, the reality is that politicians and aspiring politicians sometimes appear to make choices about religion based at least in part on political expediency."

Obama knew to pander to his base.

But unbeknownst to Obama's plans to ride Wright's back long enough to get the needed Christian stamp of approval to win religious voters, his misguided calculations are now like chickens coming home to roost.

Rev. Jeremiah Wright is one of this nation's most revered African-American ministers. He is an iconic image not only of the Black civil-rights era, but he is also the iconic image of the Black church, Black liberation theology and of today's Afrocentric churches whose pride is captured in Trinity's motto: Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian.

Trinity's Statement of Faith says:

"Our roots in the Black religious experience and tradition are deep, lasting and permanent. We are an African people, and remain "true to our native land," the mother continent, the cradle of civilization. God has superintended our pilgrimage through the days of slavery, the days of segregation, and the long night of racism. It is God who gives us the strength and courage to continuously address injustice as a people, and as a congregation. We constantly affirm our trust in God through cultural expression of a Black worship service and ministries which address the Black Community."

However, positioning himself as the post-racial candidate, Obama's candidacy has done nothing but collided with this nation's old nagging paradigms and practices of race and racism in America.

Some in the Generation X era that Obama has successfully wooed would depict Rev. Wright and his civil-rights cohorts as old-school Negroes. And Obama's address on race in Philadelphia would even suggest that:

"The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress has been made; as if this country—a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black; Latino and Asian, rich and poor, young and old—is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. But what we know—what we have seen—is that America can change. That is true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope—the audacity to hope—for what we can and must achieve tomorrow."

While things have shifted a tad for those of us still on the margins of society, the benefits of the change have befallen only those who come from or have ascended to the upper tiers of society's socioeconomic ladder. While race still matters, as Cornel West waxes eloquently about, the daily bite and sting of racism, however, is cushioned by class and socially upward mobility that gives the illusion, to some, that we are now in a post-racial era, especially in light of presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

Peter Boyer's article in the Feb. 4 issue of The New Yorker titled "The Color of Politics: A Mayor of the Post-Racial Generation" stated the following, explaining this "post-racial" generation of African Americans that includes Barack Obama, Harold Ford, Cory Booker and, my governor, Deval Patrick:

"Their deeper kinship resides in their identities as breakthrough figures —African-American politicians whose appeal transcends race. Men reared in the post-Selma era and schooled at elite institutions, developed a political style of conciliation rather than confrontation, which complemented their natural gifts and, as it happens, nicely served their ambitions."

This political style these men employ is depicted by Shelby Steele in his recent book, A Bound Man: Why We are Excited about Obama and Why He Can't Win. Steele states that in the African-American community there two types of people—a "bargainer" or a "challenger."

What is a "bargainer" or a "challenger?"

According to Steele, a bargainer strikes a bargain with white America in which they say I will

not rub America's ugly history of racism in our face if you will not hold my race against me.

A "challenger," on the other hand, does the opposite of a "bargainer". A "challenger" charges white people with inherent racism and then demand they they prove themselves innocent by supporting Black-friendly polices like affirmative action and diversity

So why did Obama give his speech on race?

Was his speech on race to bargain with American voters by assuaging white fear? Did Obama want to tell white America that he is not too Black-identified for them not to elect him, especially now knowing of his 20-year association with Rev. Wright and Trinity Church.

Or was Obama's speech on race also to challenge Black Americans to vote for him albeit his racial mix, background and ideology are different, because his Black presence is enough? In other words, is Obama so post-racial to the extent that he will not speak out candidly about this country's legacy and present-day perpetuation of racism that Rev. Wright preaches about?

The term "post-racial," unlike its reality, is gaining cultural currency in today's American lexicon with a younger generation of people of color who, some say, are more adept at being "bargainers" and also amenable to being "bargainers" rather than "challengers" because they are the progenies of a post-Black civil-rights era.

However, in trying to save his political career, has Obama's post-racial platform has come back to bite him? And Rev. Wright is like a bad penny that keeps rolling back into Obama's life and can't get rid of.

By exploiting Wright, the media has used Obama's religious narrative— real and imagined—to capture the public's attention. And the media's spin on his pastor is more about this country's uncritical patriotism predicated on espousing a rhetoric that all is good with and in America than addressing its unjust foreign and domestic polices.

When news got out about Wright fiery sermons, Obama first said he never heard them. Then, he recanted by saying he denounced only those objectionable ones. But Wright has now spoken up. And at the National Press Club, Wright explained Obama's Orwellian remarks:

"We both know that if Senator Obama did not say what he said, he would never get elected. Politicians say what they say and do what they do based on electability, based on sound bites, based on polls—Huffington, whoever's doing the polls. Preachers say what they say because they are pastors. They have a different person to whom they're accountable. As I said, whether he gets elected or not, I'm still going to have to be answerable to God, November 5th and January 21st. That's what I mean. I do what pastors do. He does what politicians do."

Where Obama ran afoul is that he didn't think his involvement with Rev. Wright would collide with his carefully crafted post-racial electable message.

But maybe there's a bigger lesson here that Obama is now learning. And it's this: Whether he dons the face of a Christian and/or the face of a politician in this bid for the White House, no lie lives forever. Like chickens, they eventually come home to roost.

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Dr. Martha Hernandez. Photo by Frank Failing of Male Image Photography

Martha Hernandez: The doctor is in

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Martha Hernandez, M.D., is a psychiatrist in a unique position. She is one of the few such physicians on staff at a local HIV/AIDS agency—in this case, Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV). Hernandez recently talked with Windy City Times about her professional background and the services she provides.

Windy City Times: Tell me about your background.

Martha Hernandez: I have a private practice in Indiana, and live here in Chicago in Hyde Park. I went to Rush Medical College, did a year at St. Joe's and did the rest of general psychiatry at Michael Reese [Hospital], and did two years of a fellowship in child and adolescent [psychiatry].

Psychiatry is a great vehicle to understand the workings of the mind and heart. I really have a passion for working with empowerment—but this has come over time, of course. I didn't know why I was directed toward psychiatry, but now I know why. I think empowerment is the biggest issue, and that's why I've been really honored to work [at BEHIV].

WCT: Let's talk about BEHIV. How did you come to work there?

MH: Julie Supple, the social service director at BEHIV, and I worked together in Indiana for many years. [Plus,] we're both from Chicago. So she called and asked me. (I was in a different place at that time.) She asked me how I'd like to be a therapist—which I absolutely love.

I can tell you that I believe in the human element and the heart issue, and I believe in the issue of healing versus being totally biological. I use biology, of course; I'm an M.D., so I do give medications, but it's not my first line of defense. I think that if you don't have a connection with your patients, it's impossible to talk about treatment. My approach is more holistic. I'm thankful for the allopathic approach, but allopathic medicine only looks at the symptom and if [need to] know the source. So who walks into my office is there for a reason, and they teach me as much as I can teach them. Then, my issue is how I can help.

WCT: And what types of services do you specifically provide? Group therapy? Individual therapy?

MH: We have access to group and individual [therapy]. We have a phenomenal massage therapist, by the way; HIV and AIDS can cause a great deal of neuropathy and pain, and the massages are fantastic. [The therapist, Delores Diaz] also offers flower essence [therapy], which involves the essential oils of the flower. We also have an art therapist, which [we need]. The connotations of this disease are sociopolitical, biological and humanistic. Ten or 15 years ago, the patients would go home to die. But guess what? They didn't die. So the question is, "What do you do?"

WCT: So there's a whole team to help these clients.

MH: Right. And I don't tell anyone to stop

taking medication, but what we offer is talk of complimentary medicine or supplement. There's nutrition as well as attitude and belief. We have art, we have massage, there's me and we have these great case managers.

WCT: Do you have a background working with HIV-positive clients?

MH: I didn't go to school to learn to work with them, but I have had HIV-positive people in my practice.

The human condition offers many journeys. This is one journey. I work with terminally ill patients who believe, in their minds, that they're dead. Since I see the world with a holistic point of view, all sorts of issues—political, socioeconomic, gender issues—are still part of the human experience.

WCT: In general, what is the biggest obstacle regarding your clients?

MH: Money. I treat them on a sliding scale; most of the time they are free or, for their own self-esteem, something is exchanged. We probably offer the best sliding scale in humanity. [Laughs]

WCT: What do you think is the biggest obstacle they face emotionally?

MH: It was when they went home to die; here they are alive 10 years later. They ask "Why me?" and "What am I going to do now?" If I can empower them on any level, it's great. This is a work in progress.

Some of the other challenges involve the fact that, because of the medication and the virus, they just can't come. There's the possibility of exposure to different infections or there's the cold. So the issue of finance and the issue of "Where do we go from here?" are [the biggest obstacles].

To contact Dr. Martha Hernandez, call 847-475-2115, ext. 102, or e-mail drhernandez@behiv.org.

Local Events

Cork it: Equality Illinois is hosting a Spring wine tasting, The "Un-Stuff" Wine Tasting, from 6-9 p.m., May 7, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted. Tickets are \$20 per person. Learn about 75 wines from around the world. See www.eqil.org.

That's Broadway: The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs presents So in Love with Broadway, a performance by Laura Freeman and Bradford Newquist, with pianist William Underwood, on May 7, 7 p.m., at Maxim's, 24 E. Goethe. Tickets are \$25. RSVP at 312-744-1423.

Marsha, Marsha, Marsha: Lesbian gospel singer Marsha Stevens will perform at two area venues. See Stevens in concert May 9, 7:30 p.m., at Union Church of Hinsdale, 137 S. Garfield Ave. She will also perform on May 10, 7:30 p.m., at Wesley United Methodist Church, 21 E. Franklin, Naperville. Both concerts are free and open to the public.

Lotsa leather: A grand opening reception of Command Presence: Images from the Leather Community, photographs from the Leather Archives, will be held May 9, from 6-8:30 p.m. Cost is \$5, and the exhibit runs through May 31 at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted.

Work it: The Righteously Outrageous Twirling Corps (ROTC) Chicago will throw its annual fundraiser, Armed and Fabulous: The COVERGURLS of ROTC May 17, 8-10 p.m., at Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted. Proceeds will benefit Test Positive Aware Network. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at www.rotcchicago.org.

Tasty treats: Join Howard Brown on May 19 for A Taste for Every Palate. The event will take place at the Museum of Contemporary ART, 200 E. Chicago. Call 312-505-0221 for tickets and information.

Picture perfect: DePaul University presents Tokyo-based performer and gay-rights activist Takao Kawaguchi in a multimedia performance called "A Perfect Life" May 23, 7 p.m., at the Student Center Atrium, 2250 N. Sheffield. See aperfectlife.kawaguchitakao.com.

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

"I DON'T THINK THAT THE LGBT COMMUNITY SHOULD TAKE ITS CUES FROM ME or some political leader in terms of what they think is right for them. Real change comes from the bottom up, not the top down. As your president, I will fight to make LGBT equality a reality at the federal level. But it is the LGBT community that has to decide what is in their best interest, and to help make it happen by engaging actively with the political process." — Barack Obama to the Carolinas gay newspaper *Q-Notes*, April 30.

"[I]MMIGRATION IS A FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY AND I am going to do everything I can to eliminate any disparities in any benefits or rights under our law at the federal level so that all people will have available to them every right as an American citizen that they should, and that would include immigration law." — Hillary Clinton, speaking in support of giving spousal-immigration rights to gay Americans' foreign partners, to *Philadelphia Gay News*, April 3.

"I'M FOR BARACK OBAMA ALL THE WAY. THE CLINTON CAMPAIGN HAS taken a desperate turn and has, I think, shown its true colors. How dare they use fear against Americans after these past seven years? I'm really tired of politicians telling me what to be afraid of. On the other hand, Obama is hopeful, grounded and clearly intelligent. He is, relatively, an outsider to the beholden D.C. club, and I think that is what America is calling out for. ... He represents I think the true spirit of the beginning of the 21st century. Looking back, I feel like we've all had enough of the fear and the arrogance, and losing our place in the world. Our very big idea of a country and democracy has been brought to a near end by very small people." — Openly gay R.E.M. singer Michael Stipe to *Salon.com*, April 1.

"I THINK THAT THE 'BORN GAY' THESIS IS A CROCK. P.c. ideology is usually simplistically social constructionist, but when it comes to

gayness, biology currently rules the roost. Of course it makes no sense. As I have written in the past, homosexuality is an adaptation, the product of a multitude of social and psychological factors. I believe we are all born with a capacity for bisexual expression, which may or may not evince itself, depending on circumstance." — Writer Camille Paglia in her *Salon.com* column, April 9.



I think it [same-sex marriage] should be legalized.

—Singer Janet Jackson



GLAAD photo



"IT'S WONDERFUL TO BE HERE AT THE LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS NATIONAL CONFERENCE ... because, I mean, let's be honest, it's fun to be here. When I see this great enthusiasm, I said to myself: 'What happened to all of you? Where were you when I opened up "Hercules in New York"?' That movie went in the toilet." — California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger speaking April 11 in *San Diego*.

"I HAVE SOMETHING OF A WEAKNESS FOR POTATO CHIPS. An enormous weakness, actually. I live and die for salty, crispy food. I'd rather have potato chips than ice cream or chocolate." — *Queer Eye* food guy Ted Allen to *San Diego's Gay & Lesbian Times*, April 17.

"I THINK IT (SAME-SEX MARRIAGE) SHOULD BE LEGALIZED. I THINK IT'S ABOUT FINDING YOUR SOULMATE. It's finding that person you connect with. But most people don't get it right. Look at me! The thing is, I don't know if I ever will or won't get married again. I'm very happy where I am. I just think I jinx marriages, but that's not going to stop me from loving." — Singer Janet Jackson to *E! Online*, April 22.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

Shocked's change; Carly widens her net

In an interview with the LGBT newspaper *Dallas Voice*, singer Michelle Shocked—who had a huge lesbian following in the late '80s and early '90s—said that she has become an evangelical gospel singer. But more interesting (or surprising), she also labelled same-sex love immoral.

According to Daniel A. Kusner's article, which was published April 17, Shocked's "extreme liberalism might be why [she] was inappropriately identified as lesbian." When questioned about her sexual orientation, Shocked requested that Kusner look up a 1990 interview with *Outlines* (which merged with *Windy City Times* in 2000) that has often been cited as the singer's "coming out."

In that article, conducted by Christie Nordhielm, Shocked said in part, "I was with my first woman lover about a year and a half ago. To be honest, the real fear of coming out of the closet, not fear, but the real pressures of coming out of the closet had been if you

had certain problems identifying yourself one way or the other." However, in the *Dallas Voice* interview, Shocked said that she would be "honored" to be called an honorary lesbian.

In the *Dallas Voice* interview, Shocked also confirms her religious metamorphosis, stating, "I am a believer. I am a devout practicing Christian." However, she has also spoken out against the Iraq War, which she said has cost her some fans.

Meanwhile, Carly Simon seems to be widening her net. In an interview published in the LGBT publication *Bay Area Reporter*, Simon was asked if Cyndi Lauper had contacted her about being on the True Colors tour. Simon's response was, "Well, the part that I could be involved in is the gay and lesbian part. The part that would be hard for me is to commit to a tour because I'm not very comfortable being onstage. ... I don't consider myself to be not gay."

To read the full *Dallas Voice* article, see www.dallasvoice.com/artman/publish/article_8677.php.

To read the full *Outlines* article, see www.dallasvoice.com/instant-tea/2008/04/25/michelle-shocked-said-what-1990-outlines-interview-surfaces/.

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo courtesy of here! TV

SPY ANXIETY

Robert Gant (left) is a man of action in here! TV's *Kiss Me Deadly: A Jacob Keane Assignment*. Read our interview with Gant on page 17.

THEATER

Going to 'Town'.
Page 15.



MOVIES

Talking about 'America'.
Page 16.



TV/DVD

Working it out.
Page 22.

Stage Door
Jonny

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs has announced 283 recipients of \$1 million (total) in annual CityArts (sic) grants. As always, a number of LGBT-identified or LGBT-influenced artists and organizations are on the receiving end of grants ranging from \$1,100 to \$8,000 (depending on the side of the organization). A partial list of grantees includes: Cerqua Rivera Art Experience, Chicago Cabaret Professionals, Chicago Women's Caucus for Art, Chicspare Production Company, Gerber Hart Library, HealthWorks (sic) Theatre, Same Planet Different World Dance Theatre, Shattered Globe Theatre, Tellin Tales Theatre, Babes With Blades, TUTA, About Face, Bailiwick, Joel Hall Dance Center, Chicago Historical Society (Chicago History Museum), Chicago Gay Men's Chorus, Deeply Rooted Productions and Porchlight Music Theatre. Notably absent this year, although a recipient in past years, is Windy City Performing Arts.

The *Shamelessboyz* were in town last week for a one-night stand. Jonny's readers will recall that these Brit thespians have appeared in Chicago twice in Bailiwick Repertory's summer Pride Series (*Seduction* in 2006, *Dangerous* in 2007). This time they brought a new show in development, *Strawberry Daiquiri*, for a single workshop performance at Theatre Building Chicago on April 28. Although most of the developmental work has been done in London, the *Shamelessboyz* were invited to Milwaukee's Bucketworks Playspace for a three-night stand last week and added one night in Chicago. Both Midwest stops came about because company director Peter Bull also is associate producer of *Shout! The Mod Musical*, now playing the Drury Lane Water Tower Place Theatre through June 22. The real Bull tells Jonny that *Strawberry Daiquiri* will be performed in a play festival in the U.K. in June,



Takao Kawaguchi. Photo by Chi Jang Yin

after which it will play as part of the *Shamelessboyz* London season. "Then, depending on how it is received in the U.S., (we will play) seasons in New York and Chicago," said Bull.

Hubris Theatre Company and the Center on Halsted are going their separate ways. Hubris was one of four performing arts groups in residence at the Center's Hoover-Leppen Theatre for the Center's first year of operation, during which Hubris produced a three-play season. (The other resident companies were About Face, GayCo and Windy City Performing Arts.) A press release issued by Hubris indicates the decision to terminate the Hubris lease was made by Center management, citing a need to expand core programs, although that seems pretty vague to Jonny, as none of the other resident arts groups has been affected. Hubris will produce its 2008-2009 season at the Victory Gardens Greenhouse on Lincoln Avenue, beginning Aug. 2 with Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*. FYI: Victory Gardens has just sold the building for \$2.25 million and it soon will be known only as the Greenhouse Theatre.

Jonny's connection to things Japanese rarely is more than sushi or someone whispering "Ai" in Jonny's ear. However, Jonny has been con-

tacted by Miho Matsugu, a professor of Japanese literature at DePaul University, who wants Windy City Times readers to know about a special event May 23. A Perfect Life is a multimedia performance by **Takao Kawaguchi**, an acclaimed Tokyo-based performance artist and gay activist who is well-known in Japan. Kawaguchi uses his own experiences as the basis for *A Perfect Life*, which is an experimental

and collaborative project. Prof. Matsugu tells Jonny that members of DePaul's queer student organizations and faculty will participate in the production, which is at 7 p.m. at the Student Center Atrium, 2250 N. Sheffield). See perfectlife.kawaguchitakao.com.

Jonny always says there's nothing like planning ahead except, of course, spontaneous sex, and one should plan that ahead, too. In any case, there are several events coming up *next fall* that Jonny's readers may wish to put on their calendars now. First, two powerhouse sketch comedy troupes, **GayCo** and **Schadenfreude**, will team up Oct. 18 and 25—as the Presidential election campaigns reach their climax—to lampoon us all with a charming little revue graciously titled *This Country's F*cked!* or *God Damn, America*. The shows will be at the Lakeshore Theater and will benefit the Crossroads Fund. There will be two shows each night for which tickets, \$20, already are on sale.

Also coming next fall are concert engagements by two favorites of LGBT audiences. First, on Oct. 27, **Sandra Bernhard & The Rebellious Jezebels** will perform two shows at the intimate Steppenwolf Theatre as part of Steppenwolf's Traffic

Series. The show, *A Sandra Bernhard Halloween*, welcomes drag queens and kings—oops! Jonny means they welcome audience members in costume. Tickets (\$50-\$60) go on sale June 19 at 11 a.m. (and you can bet they'll sell out fast). Also likely to sell out—although at a gargantuan venue—is the one-night stand by **Lily Tomlin** at the vast Rosemont Theatre, Nov. 1, *An Evening of Classic Lily Tomlin*. Through May 15 you can order tickets before the general public through www.windycitymediagroup.com (then hit the Lily Tomlin billboard link).

CRITICS' PICS

Dead Man's Cell Phone, Steppenwolf, through July 27. A man dies in public and a young woman answers his cell phone setting off events that could inspire a sitcom. Sarah Ruhl's play isn't deep but it's funny, stylish and brilliantly performed. JA

Die! Mommie, Die!, Hell in a Handbag at Bailiwick; through June 1. Charles Busch's spoof of 1960s films with fading actresses "of a certain age" is an outrageous scream of drag delight in the beautifully manicured hands of camp-masters Hell in a Handbag. SCM

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Gift Theatre, through May 18. Stephen Adly Guirgis' dense saga boils down to a single, profound question: If God is all forgiving and unconditionally loving, why is Judas damned to an eternity of unbearable grief? Michael Patrick Thornton plays the damned with profound, provocative despair. CS

The Skriker, GreyZelda (sic) Theatre Group at Angel Island, through May 10. The Faerie Queens of yore get no respect nowadays, but Caryl Churchill's shape-shifting Skriker is out to change all that in this seductively shivery GreyZelda production. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

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Russian on the Side's Mark Nadler. Photo by Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

Russian on the Side

Playwright: Mark Nadler

At: Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted

Phone: 312-988-9000; \$34.50-\$55

Runs through: June 15

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The 1941 musical play titled *Lady In The Dark* featured a novelty number in which an effete photographer expressed his affinity for Russian composers by proceeding to name 49 of them. Since the actor playing the role was a young vaudevillian named Danny Kaye, the tongue-twisting roster was performed in a mind-boggling 38 seconds, and the rest is history. This lyric by Ira Gershwin, set to a melody by Kurt Weill, is at the foundation of Mark Nadler's one-man "comedy-in-music adventure," stopping off in Chicago at the Royal George on its way to Broadway.

"I can't sing anything unless I know what

it means!" declares Nadler at the start of the show, his subsequent research into every last one of the classical tunesmiths cited by Gershwin comprising the framework for a lecture augmented by audio and visual aids that frequently meanders—with impeccable logic and impish audacity—into the American Songbook. The revelation that Peter Ilich Tchiakovsky was gay, for example, is followed by a sweet rendition of Frank Loesser's "The Ugly Duckling", enhanced at the appropriate juncture by a riff from—what else?—Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Or the similarities in the themes of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka's 1836 *A Life For The Czar* and Richard Rodgers' 1943 *Oklahoma*, which lead to a discussion of the latter's famous offspring, two of whom—Adam Guettel and Mary Rodgers—are represented by full renditions of the passionate "Icarus" and, for a scherzo, the nostalgic "When Daddy Wore His Very Soft Shoes." Playgoers hoping for a learning guide to all the music played in the show will *not* find one in the playbill, but Nadler, ever the nurturing professor, assures us repeatedly that we are bright enough to absorb his analytic circumlocutions, even to joining in a sing-along with the polysyllabic patter-ditty by the end of the evening.

Part Tom Lehrer, part Liberace, part Red Skelton, part (a *large* part) Danny Kaye, Nadler epitomizes the brand of entertainer known on the Catskills circuit as a "tumbler"—a multi-talented clown whose purpose is to create tumult, whether engendered by verbal witticisms, physical gymnastics or old-fashioned sentimentality. Certainly, someone who can tap and shuffle with his feet while simultaneously massaging the ivories and warbling in triple-forte deserves some sort of award for sheer stuntwork. And if Nadler sometimes comes off like an overachieving schoolboy showing off for his mother's clubfellows, no one can deny that he keeps his promise

SPOTLIGHT

Whitney Houston...



Is it possible? Can it be 11 years since Whitney Houston's behavioral issues were making news? Sketch comedy troupe GayCo set up shop at the same time, mentored by The Second City. Since then, GayCo has made history as the first fully-nude queer drag genderfuck sketch troupe to open for Joan Rivers in Las Vegas. However, GayCo never rests on its laurels—not when it can resurrect them instead. And so GayCo has revived its very first hit, **Whitney Houston, We Have A Problem**. The 60-minute show (leaving time to dine, drink and dance afterwards) runs through May 25 at the Hoover-Leppen Theatre, Center on Halsted; 1-800-838-3006; \$20. Extra shows have been added May 22 and 25 for IML.

to send us home smarter than when we arrived.

THEATER REVIEW

Picked Up

Playwright: team written; conceived by Dean Evans, Jay Torrence and Ryan Walters

At: Neo-Futurists, 5133 N. Ashland

Phone: 773-275-5255; \$15 (Thursdays pay-what-you-can)

Runs through: May 17

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

On Wednesday I had a discussion about geriatric audiences at Chicago's well-established theater companies. On Thursday I went to the Neo-Futurarium, where I was the only person over 40 and the only person with gray hair (well, salt-and-pepper). Two things were apparent: (1) I was a duck out of water, receiving suspicious "What's he doing here?" looks, and (2) I was the only discerning member of the audience.

The Neo-Futurists' current show has a great gimmick. Duplicating the process of a weekly sitcom, they gathered a team of writers each of whom played Lead Writer for two weeks, guiding the others into crafting six half-hour (roughly) scripts for sitcom pilots. Book-ended by a wicked framing device, they are presenting the six pilots for one week each, with the audience voting as to whether or not the pilot should be "picked up" by the network.

I saw the Week 4 pilot, *No Place Like Home*, for which Lauren Sharpe was head writer and director. It drew heavy laughs from the twentysomethings and thirtysomethings, and sometimes was funny in a macabre and/or offensive way, but for the most part was lame. I gave it thumbs

down and was outvoted 49-1. As I said, I was the only discerning member of the audience.

The essential problem is that *No Place Like Home* made no effort to be a viable sitcom pilot. Rather, it condescended towards sitcoms. It purported to be about a young woman who returns to her small-town roots after disappointment in the big city. What it was, instead, was a country-fried burlesque of Southern gothic, and a rather broad one at that, tossing into the hopper dream sequences, lots and lots of gay jokes (every man in the pilot was gay, including the heroine's father, and not in a positive way) and even a murder—which one always sees in sitcoms, of course. A typical gag line: "You guys hear how Mr. Beamer dry-humped that dead pig?"

It's a challenge indeed to craft a true sitcom script that establishes a consistent context, if not always a believable one, and manages to be funny through character. Creating a *Shock Theater* version is just lazy; you always can draw attention by dropping your drawers. In fact, the framing device—which remains the same for each pilot—nearly does that as three men strap polystyrene phalluses to their legs and joke about Charna Halpern, Del Close and "the next dead bloated Farley." This material is tasteless insider stuff for improvisational actors, but at least it's true lampoon.

No Place Like Home is over; perhaps the final two pilots, *Too Much* and *The Mime*, will be better. Or maybe I'm just too geriatric to get it.

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Don Giovanni. Photo by Liz Lauren

OPERA REVIEW

Don Giovanni

Playwright: Mozart/Da Ponte

At: Chicago Opera Theater at Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph

Phone: 312-334-7777; \$35-\$120

Runs through: May 11

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

If Chicago Opera Theater's (COT's) new production of Don Giovanni was a movie, it would be slapped with an "R" rating for sexuality and violence. Thank heaven for that.

Mozart and Da Ponte's 1787 opera is often done with period costumes and storybook settings. Yet this prettified approach often lulls audiences from the danger of the title character who is a murderer and a serial seducer (or rapist) of women.

Director Diane Paulus' brilliant modernization of Don Giovanni smacks audiences upside the head with this fact. By setting the opera in a swanky New York gentlemen's club complete with sexy pole dancers, swilled liquor and simulated copulation, Paulus presents a valid picture of where Don Giovanni would hang out nowadays. (No doubt many elderly opera patrons used to stately productions will be shocked).

But in this case, Paulus' directorial choices are valid dramatically in conjuring the decadent world of a cad whose sexual conquests number in the thousands. The English supertitles are slang-filled ("hooked up with" is used) and reflect the slight plot changes Paulus has cleverly instituted (for instance, a zombie replaces a walking, talking statue from Hell).

Here, Don Giovanni (Ian Paterson) is the club proprietor, bossing around his club-kid servant Leporello (a comically gangly Matt Boehler), and having his way with his staff of strippers and wealthy guests. After seducing Donna Anna (Rhoslyn Jones) by guile, Don Giovanni makes the tragic mistake of shooting what looks to be her mob boss father Il Commendatore (Andrew Funk). That sets off a chain of events that leads to Don Giovanni's bloody comeuppance.

Along the way, Don Giovanni encounters vengeful ex-lover Donna Elvira (Krisztina Szabo, dressed as a dominatrix whose brittle exterior hides her co-dependent longing) and the soon-to-be-wed couple of Masetto (Michael Brown as a volatile frat boy) and Zerlina (Isabel Leonard as his partying girlfriend). Donna Anna's fiance Don Ottavio (Michael Colvin) also arrives on the scene (whose upstanding attitudes gives you an inkling of why Donna Anna might have strayed).

Clearly, the orgy scenes in Stanley Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut* have had an influence on David Woolard's skimpy costumes and masks amid Riccardo Hernandez's stylish red and black lounge set. The bursts of physical violence also make you think of Martin Scorsese mob movies.

Through it all, conductor Jane Glover leads a gorgeously traditional account of Mozart's timeless score which is emotionally and dramatically sung by the entire young and lovely cast.

Thanks to Paulus, COT's Don Giovanni has been given an invigorating jolt of danger and modern relevance. But COT may want to warn viewers ahead of time (particularly those going to the free live simulcast at the Pritzker Pavilion on May 9). A nice family outing this Don Giovanni is definitely not.

THEATER REVIEW

Old Town

Playwright: Brett Neveu;

composer: Mikhail Fiksel

At: Strawdog Theatre, 3829 N. Broadway

Phone: 773-528-9696; \$15-\$20

Through May 31

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Old Town is Strawdog Theatre's new musical that explores the leadership dynasties and the sometimes shady political doings in Chicago, that town famously known as "The City that Works." So it's a disappointment that playwright/lyricist Brett Neveu and composer Mikhail Fiksel's writing for Old Town doesn't live up to that Windy City motto.

Instead of just focusing on one family like the Daleys, Stogers or Madigans, Old Town is an agglomeration in the fictional political Weltz clan. Cook County Board President Jerry Weltz is up for re-election, and he's behind in the election-night polls.

Neveu and Fiksel opt to have Weltz absent at the election-night party, and instead look at his troubled family, hovering political operatives and the media looking for cracks to exploit in the family's façade. That's a lot of choice material, but Neveu and Fiksel fail at shaping it all into that notoriously difficult form of a musical.

Neveu is great at the snappy political dialogue, less so with his so-so and convoluted lyrics. For my taste, there are far too many individual moping expositional songs. By the time we get to the minor character of alcoholic Weltz son, Scotty (Christopher Hainsworth), it's too much.

Far better are production numbers that use musical and dance forms to comment on the political game. The tango becomes a contentious interview between TV reporter Karen Mosher (Shannon Hoag) and Weltz wife Liz (Anne Sheridan Smith) which is lively with Eileen Mallary's choreography. So is the "Politics as Usual" number with harmonizing lobbyists and contractors (Tom Hickey, Danny Taylor, John Moran, Damian Vanore) swarming around County Clerk Cindy Weltz (Kat McDonnell).

Otherwise, Old Town frequently feels as rudderless in direction as the cast members playing campaign supporters who meander around throughout the show.

If the material isn't the greatest, the entire Strawdog ensemble acts the hell out of it under Kyle Hamman's direction. They may not be great singers (which is apparent when trained singer Smith belts out a powerful speech), but they all can hold a tune and sell the text.

McDonnell is a great example. Even if the metaphors in the lyrics of her unhappy song are baffling, she gets the point across with plenty of waterworks and pained body language. She pairs greatly with John Ferrick who plays the campaign manager Daniel Deering who isn't the greatest at hiding his love for her.

Another thing to admire is the hulking set of Mike Smallwood that incorporates uniquely Chicagoan structures throughout. The live score performed by the Denizens also sounds polished (if a bit too loud at times when paired with these actor-singers).

As a musical, Old Town doesn't work. But at least there is enough talented potential throughout to encourage candidates Neveu and Fiksel to run again.



Old Town. Photo by Don Cardiff

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



America the Beautiful, Film Notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

The poster for Darryl Roberts' documentary *America the Beautiful* asks the question "Is America obsessed with beauty?," and when one considers our plastic-surgery, youth-oriented, trashy-reality-show-mad culture, the answer isn't just a resounding, ironic "yes," it's a Susan-Powter-Stop-the-Insanity "YES!" Stop the insanity, indeed.

As Roberts' insightful and entertaining film makes clear, this obsession with physical perfection has wrought inestimable damage to our collective psyche and, worse, doesn't show any sign of abating. It's a huge topic, but Roberts manages to stuff in a lot of sobering statistics as he tackles a host of the usual culprits while unearthing new variations on the topic. Roberts' personal approach is not unlike that of Michael Moore, though his spoken commentary isn't nearly as snarky and you don't feel him man-

aging the material; moreover, the humor in the film (and there's lots of it) isn't mean-spirited. His approach is looser, more free-form and it feels like the personalities come through intact with their honest responses to his queries (and Roberts—with his shambling, deceptively easy-going manner and large comportment—could be the African-American doppelganger of Moore).

The film begins with the contrast between two 12-year-old African-American girls: Ashley, who frankly describes herself as "ugly" without a whisper of derision or self-pity and Gerren Taylor, her supposed opposite who is destined to become the darling of the New York designer runway shows. By the end, in a devastating summation, Taylor will seem to end up where Ashley has begun. In between, Roberts follows Taylor's ascent as he sidebars into everything from an ad executive talking about women's different levels of "beauty involvement" to a particularly dreadful story of plastic surgery gone wrong; the toxic substances hidden in perfumes and cosmetics; a Web site for "beautiful people" only; an anthropologist studying the adverse psychological effects of television's idea of beauty on young teenage girls in Fiji; the continued rise of anorexia and bulimia; and on and on. Eve Ensler, gay gossip columnist Ted Casablanca, Paris Hilton, Red Hot Chili Pepper's Anthony Kiedis and assorted other experts on the subject make appearances as Roberts explores his subject.

As Roberts' movie also makes clear, the inherent shallowness of the cult of beauty has become blurred with the rise of our celebrity culture and our standards of beauty have become much more rigid with the proliferation of technology, too. Breathtaking good looks used to be reserved for movie (and later TV) stars. Mere mortals couldn't hope to look like the gods and goddesses on the screen and, honestly, they still can't (it's called lighting, make-up and CG effects, people) but dismantling and reveling in the flaws of the airbrushed, carefully constructed non-human facades of the star beauties via



Darryl Roberts, director of *America the Beautiful*.

the gossip Web sites and rags hasn't lessened the insatiable need to try and physically emulate them (especially for women, and a case could be made for gay men as well).

America the Beautiful is a great film that explores some of these questions—a provocative cautionary tale that, fingers crossed, might also act as a wake-up call. The film opens Friday and plays exclusively at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema. Don't miss it. www.americathebeautifuldoc.com

Film Notes:

—The Music Box Theatre offers a weekend of movie genres for every taste. On Fri., May 9, the 1979 Midnight Movie "classic" **Rock-n-Roll High School**—which features Halloween's P.J. Soles as a Ramones groupie who leads a student revolt against the oppressive, rock-music-hating principal, Miss Togar (the hilarious Mary Woronov)—will screen at 8 p.m. Rock critics Greg Kot and Jim DeRogatis, co-hosts of "Sound Opinions," will host the event and presumably chat with special guest Woronov about her frequent co-star, the late gay actor-writer-director Paul Bartel, who makes a cameo in the film.

Woronov is again the special guest Sat., May 10, when host Rusty Nails presides over his annual **Sci-Fi Spectacular**, which once again promises no less than 12 hours of sci-fi thrills and kicks off at noon. The marathon includes Island

of the *Lost Souls* (the 1932 masterful version with gay actor Charles Laughton in the leading role), *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (both from 1956), 1981's *The Road Warrior* (look for the crazed Wez, the gay killer with the Mohawk and his pretty blonde boy-toy who gets taken out by the feral kid's deadly boomerang), 1975's Paul Bartel's *Death Race 2000* (which co-stars Woronov), 1982's *Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Kahn* (with hunky Ricardo Montalban as the villain), and, finally, 1987's *Robocop*.

The weekend concludes Sun., May 11, with a screening of 1981's **Mommie Dearest**—The Mt. Everest of Mother's Day movies ... on Mother's Day. Dick O'Day (the alter ego of yours truly) hosts the 2:30 p.m. pre-show, which includes a Joan Crawford look-a-like contest, festive prizes and a performance by The Joans, David Cerda's Joan Crawford rock band, followed by the 3 p.m. "interactive" screening. Early arrivals will also get a chance to pose for photos with Joan and Christina dolled up in their matching pinafores by renowned photographer Rick Aguilar (proceeds to benefit Season of Concern/Chicago). A few of those V.I.M. (Very Important Mother) \$20 tickets (1:30 p.m. brunch at Violet and preferred seating at the screening) are still available. Advance tickets and further information on all three events are at www.musicboxtheatre.com.

—Chicago Filmmakers presents **Dyke Delicious Series 5: Invisible Women** (in front of and behind the camera) Sat., May 10. This edition of the long-running series includes *Lip*, a 1999 short subject that focuses on Hollywood's history of sidelining Black actresses into the stereotypical role of the maid (and "giving lip" to their white bosses) and *Women Who Made the Movies*, a 1992 overview of women behind the camera that includes directors Dorothy Azner and Ida Lupino. As usual, the evening begins with a 7 p.m. social hour followed by the screenings at 8 p.m. Co-presented by Black Cat Productions. www.chicagofilmmakers.org

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

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Darryl Roberts and the 'Beautiful' people

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

Filmmaker Darryl Roberts takes his time when making a movie. Over the last 20 years, there have been just three: *The Perfect Model*, his debut feature in 1988, which was followed by a drama called *How U Like Me Now* in 1993 and, now, *America the Beautiful*, his first documentary. Roberts, a native Chicagoan and African American who performed with *Second City*, created the film over a five-year period.

America the Beautiful has run in dozens of film festivals and has won tremendous critical and audience support. It plays an exclusive engagement in Chicago at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema beginning Fri., May 9.

Windy City Times: This idea about America's obsession with beauty has been ruminating inside your head for a long time, I take it?

Darryl Roberts: Not in reference to a documentary, but I think for a lot of my life I was a victim of falling only for beautiful women without realizing I was a victim. I think that kind of ruminated under the surface and came out in this documentary.

WCT: This resonated with me because this obsession with beauty and the perfect physique is a long standing issue in the gay community.

DR: Funny you mention that. Last November I did a screening at a film festival and fashion stylist Michael Holdaway was there with his

best friend, Ted Casablanca from the E! Channel, and they're big in the gay community. I was thinking, "I wonder what they're going to think?" Afterwards, they said that they loved it and Ted went on the E! Channel the next day and told everyone they needed to see the film and that was awesome.

WCT: I was surprised to see the film open with two Black teenagers and one saying point blank without any problem, "I'm ugly." That stunned me because I remember reading a lot of articles over the last 10 years claiming that young Black girls did not go through the same body-image problems that young white girls did.

DR: For decades, this was absolutely true. There was a very distinct difference between young white and Black girls and their concept of beauty. Being thicker was a source of pride, and to be really skinny was really thought of as negative. It wasn't until recently—and they say this is happening within the last six years—Black girls started getting plastic surgery and they've started having body-image problems. The advertising industry is so pervasive that they've just broken down that wall.

WCT: This [film] has got to feel great after all this work and all these years. It sounds like it was a real labor of love.

DR: It does and it was.

Read the entire interview at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Robert Gant: The spying game

BY ANDREW DAVIS

For years, Robert Gant entertained audiences on the Showtime series *Queer as Folk* as kind-hearted professor Ben. Now, he has moved on to other projects—notably, the here!TV movie *Kiss Me Deadly: A Jacob Keane Assignment*, where he plays the title character (a spy who happens to be gay) opposite Shannen Doherty. Gant discussed various aspects of the movie with Windy City Times—and also talked a little bit about coming out and politics.

Windy City Times: Could you tell our readers what *Kiss Me Deadly* is about?

Robert Gant: It's about a guy who has this past as a spy. He was a spy behind the [Berlin] Wall back in the day. We start this movie just before the wall falls and he—along with Marta, a spy cohort—no longer becomes relevant because the life he knows ceases to exist.

So he's a retired spy. He's now a photographer; he has a child and a partner he loves. At the top of the film, his past, in the form of Marta, shows up out of nowhere—and she can't remember anything except that people are after her. So Jacob is dragged very begrudgingly back into that life he wanted nothing more to do with.

The film, in many ways, is about moving him back into something that's so threaded into his fabric. Fight it as he may, he's taken on the garb again and has assumed the role he had long since put aside. So the film sets him up to be the spy again.

WCT: Speaking of which—and without getting too specific—I was wondering if that very last scene was more business or pleasure for your character.

RG: I think it's supposed to have that ambiguity. The guy [that Keane talks with] is an operative, and he's coming to Jacob with an assignment, but there's clearly some energy. I think that [scene] launches him into what he's going to become.

WCT: So we can expect a whole franchise or series?

RG: I suppose so. It's up to the here! network, but I think that's what they've been talking about—and [the following movies] will be even more sexy and exciting.



Robert Gant and Shannen Doherty in *Kiss Me Deadly*. Photo courtesy of here! TV

WCT: That's going to be kind of hard to top [*Gant laughs*], because there's plenty of eye candy for men and women, like [*villain*] Ian Roberts.

RG: Yes, there is—and I think that's definitely intentional. Yet, at the same time, one of the cool things is that [Jacob] just happens to be gay; it's part of the back story of who he is. He represents a role model, of sorts, in the fictitious realm. We're beginning to have a number of role models in life. Over the many years, we have [individuals] that young [gay] people can look to who will cause them to feel better about themselves. One thing we haven't had—but that straight people have had—are these fictional characters like Superman and various superheroes and spies. This opens up a new door, and [having a character like Jacob] continues to move us forward; this pushes us to a place we haven't been to before. And it was a heck of a lot of fun; I've always wanted to do an action film. It was a terrific experience, and I loved the director. It was also nice to get a bit of a detour from the heavier, dramatic stuff, which I love as well.

WCT: What was it like working with Shannen Doherty? People have said and heard so many things about her.

RG: Honestly, it was great; she was a trouper. I had the same kind of uncertainty, and I think that she has matured and come into her own as a person. She was committed to showing up and being professional and doing good work. At the same time, one of the wonderful things about

her is that she has this great diva quality—in a good way. She's strong and has a real sense of power. One reason that gay men are drawn to diva-type women is that [these women] buck the system. She was really great, and we had a really great time talking about boys and other things.

WCT: You filmed this movie in New Zealand, which is one of my dream destinations. What was that like?

RG: Unfortunately, I was under such a time constraint that I got there, worked nonstop and had to leave immediately after [filming]. So I was in and around Auckland the whole time. It was great, but it's not overly distinctive. But I look forward to going back and having that whole other experience.

However, I love the people. They're so real, authentic, easygoing and fun.

WCT: Now, I want to talk about being out. I recently spoke with a singer who said that, essentially, there is no reason for anyone to not be out in show business. How do you feel about that statement?

RG: Wow. I don't agree, not even a little bit. I think that people get to their truth when and how they get to it. It's a little presumptuous of me to try to contemplate what anyone else's experience has been.

I had a tough time when I first came out. The family experience was one that certainly did not foster being out in any shape or form—and I know of examples that were much more severe than mine. "No reason?" Well, I think that people have their own processes for finding out the truth. Quite honestly, it doesn't inherently serve us to have someone on the front line who isn't happy with who they are; they're likely to be self-destructive or what have you. They have to move beyond self-loathing or self-judgment.

It would be great if everyone were out, but it needs to happen in an organic way. To say that everyone must be out is a bit nonsensical to me; it doesn't make any sense.

The other part of the "no-reason" thing is that some people feel that their ability to earn would be diminished [if they came out], and that may or may not be true. I'm sure that there are parts I haven't gotten because I'm openly gay, and I know that there are parts I have gotten because I'm openly gay. I can't speak to the experience that anyone else would have. It does feel presumptuous for me to know what anyone else's experience is going to be.

[*Gant is told that the singer is in his early 20s.*]

Well, *that's* why. I get it. I think it's great that someone is in that kind of a place for themselves, where they can't fathom why someone might hold back. Maybe a younger person did not face the same kind of discrimination and benefited from having lots of role models. Maybe it's youthful naivete—I don't know. I look forward to everyone feeling the wherewithal to be who they are.

WCT: On the political front, you have been involved in a gay-vote mobilization effort.

RG: Yes. I feel that we have some talented people who are options for us, and I have a perspective about using one of our great potential candidates too soon; I feel like we'd shoot ourselves in the foot. But it's just one perspective.

We're looking at two people with powerful potential, so we have some significant options. But it's been great for me to know what I feel. The game plan I have mapped out in my head is 16 years of Democrats in the White House and, most important, there are the Supreme Court justice nominees who would go with 16 years of what I see as Hillary-Hillary-Barack-Barack. That's a thrilling prospect, [but] who knows what will unfold? I'm open to whatever shows itself. At the end of the day, all I do is advocate on behalf of what I believe [in] and trust the results.

Kiss Me Deadly: A Jacob Keane Assignment will air on here! throughout May. Visit www.hereTV.com to find out more.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ready

Written by Elizabeth Gregory
\$26.00; Basic Books; 298 pages

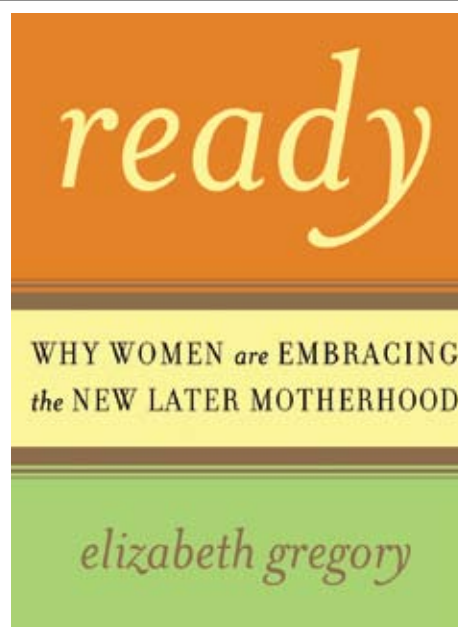
This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor

Written by Susan Wicklund
\$24.95; Public Affairs Books; 268 pages

REVIEW BY YASMIN NAIR

Elizabeth Gregory's *Ready* is about a phenomenon she calls "later motherhood," of women having children, either biologically or by adoption, in their forties and beyond. Susan Wicklund's *This Common Secret* is about her twenty years of experience as an abortion provider and the changing landscape of abortion rights. Wicklund's clients are rural pregnant women in need of abortions in a world where clinics sometimes remain for only a few days a month. Gregory is the Director of Women's Studies and Associate Professor of English at the University of Houston. Her book draws from a small sample of 132 women, all of whom share her privileged background.

Wicklund writes about her own alienating ex-



perience with abortion, with cold instruments and colder nurses, and her subsequent resolve to ensure that she could provide women in similar situations with a far more supportive atmosphere. But abortion rights have, by law, become increasingly restrictive and onerous for poorer women in particular. For many, the fight for "abortion rights" may well be a moot point.

Wicklund has had to bear witness to it all, from the abortion protestor who showed up for an abortion and still called Wicklund a sinner, to

the man who brought in his daughter to abort the child he'd fathered. On woman lost her job because of the required 24-hour waiting period which forced her to take extra time off that she couldn't explain.

In sharp contrast, Susan Gregory's book is optimistic to the extreme. She sees a brave new world where birthing technologies and adoption opportunities make for a perfect world where anyone (in her social class) can become a parent. It never occurs to her that women might not want that chance; it's clear she feels that having children is the ultimate mark of adulthood. Or, as one of the women puts it, "I could never have shown up [for them] in my twenties because I was too busy trying to show up for myself."

Her eagerness to render childrearing in the sunniest of terms prompts Gregory to make bizarre statements, as in her description of international adoption: "part of the hope around adoption in impoverished countries is that the children who are adopted out will gain the education and resources needed to return as adults and help make things better for their birth country." It's unclear why she would ignore the economic duress that forces countries like China and India to turn into baby factories in the first place. Or that adoptive children are not sent out as economic emissaries to the world.

Even more disconcerting is her willful ignoring of the issues of child-rearing that face most parents today. Gregory gets around all that by

only focusing on women of her own class, leading her to write blithely that "highly educated women spend intense amounts of time stimulating creativity in small numbers of children, preparing those kids to be the innovative workers the market now demands." Such statements are typical of her placement of women's bodies and the children they bear or adopt as agents of neoliberalism.

Gregory's book cloaks reproduction in terms of choice and technology. Wicklund provides a stark look at the realities of reproduction from the other side. Her book gives us the perspectives and experiences of women for whom giving birth might be an unwanted experience but whose rights to terminate their own pregnancies are increasingly being eroded by the very economic system that Gregory celebrates so joyously. Elizabeth Gregory shouldn't be held directly responsible for the world that Wicklund inhabits, but a book about reproduction could at least be more aware of the socio-economic circumstances surrounding the same.

Placed next to each other, these two books provide unsettling insights into a climate where the ability to reproduce and the ability to cease reproduction are mired in a complex entanglement of access and privilege. Seen through these two lenses, motherhood emerges less as a privileged and natural process of adulthood and more as an experience mediated by women's gendered relationships to inequality.

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MOMS from cover

sity, Rule moved to Chicago to study at Second City. After graduating from their conservatory, Rule performed in a number of plays and musicals in Chicago. The evening she met Webber, Rule was planning to move to New York City in three weeks. She did relocate and by the end of the summer had been cast in the nationwide tour of the children's classic "Lyle Lyle Crocodile." The show earned Rule her union card. When the tour ended, she returned to Chicago.

Webber was interested in Rule from the start, and was no stranger to going after what she wanted, a fact which is apparent after the briefest glance at her resume. Christy Webber Landscapes began in 1988 with two employees and a mower and now boasts 100 trucks and over 250 employees. She has won the Chicago Entrepreneurial Award from Inc. Magazine five years in a row and this past March was inducted into The Chicago Area Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame. The first major growth spurt in her business came in 1998 when Webber put in a bid and won the contract to care for the grounds of The United Center, home of the Chicago Bulls. Since then the growth of Christy Webber Landscapes has been astronomical. Large municipal subcontractors started using her regularly and, soon, Webber was also receiving various City of Chicago maintenance contracts. In addition to her numerous residential and commercial jobs, Christy Webber Landscapes holds contracts for maintenance on the grounds and gardens of Midway and O'Hare Airports, McCormick Place, Lincoln Park Zoo, Navy Pier and The Museum of Science and Industry. However, her crowning glory is Chicago's newest landmark: Millennium Park. Webber is extremely proud of the phenomenal tree and shrub work her company has done on the 24.5-acre grounds.

Yet, despite her singular career success and seemingly happy home life something was lacking, at least for her partner, Rule. "Webber didn't want kids originally. It was me who always had dreams of the family and the house and the hard working husband." Finally, things were at an impasse and Rule had to make a decision. "It was actually her decision," Rule said. "I said to Webber, 'Look, I really want to talk to you about this because if you truly don't want any children I might need to move on.'"

The 46-year-old Webber was torn for a bit. Then, while having tea one Sunday afternoon with a lesbian couple in Hyde Park it suddenly became clear. According to Rule, "Webber and I were relaxing, watching our friends' boys play ball in the yard and she turned to me and said, 'Hey Jen, why don't you have one and I'll have



Christy Webber, Jennie Rule and baby Oliver. Photo by Nancy Garrity

one? We'll both do it." Their friends were thrilled that Webber had changed her mind. They said it was a wonderful idea and reassured Webber that she wasn't too old to carry a baby.

However, Rule had her doubts: "We knew Webber was menopausal, so there was no way her eggs were going to hold and we didn't want to adopt. It was important for Webber to be involved in the process rather than simply having me inseminated. Webber decided she wanted to carry the child." Webber never wanted to be on the periphery of anything. If the two women were going to start a family it had to be about the both of them.

Wasting no time, they promptly made an appointment at the Fertility Center of Illinois in late March 2006. The *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) clinic at 900 N. Kingsbury has been helping infertile couples since 1976 and is world renowned for its high success rate. The attending doctor, reproductive endocrinologist Brian R. Kaplan, M.D., is a respected leader in the area and has one of the largest and most successful practices in the field. Still, Rule had misgivings about Webber carrying a child to term: "I really believed that when they looked at us and saw Webber is stressed and menopausal, that she actively runs a company, and that she also smokes that they were going to tell me to do it. We went in there and told him what we wanted and he said, 'Okay, Jennie. We'll take your eggs and put them in Christy and you'll have a child. I was stunned. It was that simple.'"

The two agreed that the overwhelming mood of the clinic could be depressing: "The waiting room was overrun with all these straight couples and so many women. It was packed every

time we went there. There was just such despair, worry, and desperation. It was hard not to feel it. For many of them this was the last shot. We were new to it all. We didn't know what we were doing. We didn't have an appreciation of how tough it can be. What scared us the most in that waiting room were all the pictures on the walls of twins and triplets."

Webber was quick to point out that those fears were soon quieted. The two weren't looking for a multiple-birth pregnancy, which oftentimes can include an array of risk factors such as premature births, low birth weight, caesarians, disability and even death. "We signed an agreement that we would go with the most viable egg and would selectively reduce if more than one egg took," said Webber. Though it was a unanimous decision, Webber admitted that the choice made her uncomfortable. "It just seemed really ungodly to me." Luckily, it was a decision the two women were never forced to make.

The couple also opted to have an anonymous sperm donor. "We decided to go to California Cryobank for sperm," Rule said. "We knew a lot of men who would have been great candidates, but we didn't want them to have ties or claims to the baby. If we were going to do this it was just going to be about the two of us."

"We paid the cost to get a full donor profile. We could see a form of his head. We wanted good-looking, tall and, most importantly, we wanted a donor who would match so that the kid would look like us—someone of Finnish, German [and] English descent. But they show you so much more for the full price, where the ears are placed, what sort of jaw and nose the donor has, eye color, everything. It's kind of weird because at a certain point you feel as though you're catalogue shopping for your baby."

By the end of the summer in 2006 all the preliminaries were in order and the couple began going to the Fertility Center branch in Highland Park for injections and pills that were primarily a combination of birth control and hormones. Their cycles had to be in sync so when they harvested Rule's eggs Webber's body would be receptive. Taking those medications caused Rule to develop a blood clot in her leg. The clot resulted in a delay of three or four months in the process.

To hear Webber and Rule discuss the entire IVF ordeal was fascinating. It seemed that once the wheels were set in motion that events simply unfolded. "We were flying by the seat of our pants. We were both sort of bluffing each other and going through with the shots and stuff. I don't think we ever really thought we would end up with a child."

Harvesting Rule's eggs caused some inconvenience, primarily in the timing. The date set was also the weekend that Rule's brother was getting married in Michigan. The two drove to Highland Park at 6 a.m. The nurses took Rule into a tiny cubicle and had her put on a hospital gown. After receiving the anesthetic the last thing Rule recalled was asking the nurse, "Are you the cabana boy?" Upon awakening, Rule was asked her age by the doctor. When she replied that she was 38 the doctor smiled and said, "You have more eggs than a twentysomething." Webber promptly asked him if he wanted to buy some. The doctor flatly responded, "No, she's too old."

Still a bit groggy from the egg retrieval, Rule got in the car and the couple was off to the Michigan for the nuptials. Rule was amazed at how good she felt once the anesthetic wore off. "I was fine. They said I might be sore but I really didn't feel a thing. That night I think I even danced to Michael Jackson's 'Thriller.'"

Exactly three days later Webber went to the Highland Park facility for the *in vitro* fertilization. When Webber entered the fertilization room, she noticed the large-screen TV. "I looked at that and asked the doc if we were going to watch the game," she said. Besides Webber and the doctor, a technician and a scientist were also present. Webber was not drugged when Dr. Kaplan began the process. His movements appeared on the large-screen monitor. Using vaginal ultrasound, the technician coached him

towards the optimal spot for successful uterine insemination. When Kaplan finally found the ideal place, the other doctor gave the eggs to Kaplan which were then injected. "I didn't feel much of anything," Webber said. "They put three fertilized eggs inside me. After it was all over I got up and they all shook my hand and congratulated me. I told them I'd had sex a lot rougher than that! And we all laughed. I drove myself home that day and I remember thinking on the drive, 'Christy Webber, now what the hell have you done?'"

When Webber returned to the clinic for her follow-up visit, she remembered the nurse doing the ultrasound. After a bit the woman smiled and said, "I hear another heartbeat. You're pregnant!" Webber thought it was a joke: "I never in a million years thought it would take. I just never thought it would work. I told her I had bled a little bit over the weekend. I guess that was just one of the other eggs not taking."

Conscious of the expense of all this, Webber and Rule ended up returning all the unused fertilization drugs and needles to the clinic (along with some Christy Webber Landscapes T-shirts) for people who wanted to get pregnant but were having trouble paying for the procedure. The average base cost of an IVF cycle is about \$15,000 and subsequent cycles using frozen embryos run about \$5,000. As it was, the costly procedure was covered almost entirely by Webber's insurance.

The fertilization was a success, but pregnancy was hardly a bed of roses for the landscaper: "I was the most miserable pregnant lady you could imagine. I was sort of ashamed at business meetings where it felt like they were saying, 'Oh no; here comes the pregnant lady with the hormones.' I wasn't Christy Webber; I was The Pregnant Lady. As a boss, I didn't want to use the hormones thing as an excuse, so I covered up being pregnant and wore baggy clothes. I hardly wore any real maternity clothes. Being pregnant felt like a weakness. They sure loved me at the clinic, though. The doctor loved to parade me around. I was the 46-year-old pregnant lady."

A born worker, Webber was hardly one to let a little thing like being pregnant get in the way of running her business. "I was driving the snow trucks, running the company, screaming, and working long days," she said. "I got up early because I couldn't sleep and would start sending emails at about 3:30 a.m. Then I would go into work at 5:30 a.m. and work 12-14 hour days. I had tons of energy. Well, I was tired but I couldn't lie down, especially as time went on because of this gigantic thing inside of me. I've got to admit though, it worked out well being pregnant in the winter because when you're pregnant you're hot. That was the best insulator. I plowed snow all winter and didn't need to wear all the typical heavy snow gear. I was plowing snow down at Millennium Park riding the Skid-Steer front-shovel loader and dumping all that record snowfall into the trucks. To tell you the truth, I was happy to work. I was thrilled to work and so sick of people trying to protect me. The one time I did get scared was when I was plowing behind Menards and hit a sewer cover. That really knocked the wind out of me when I went forward and hit the brace. It worried me and made me pause and just say, 'Okay Webber, just cool it and quit being such a stud.'"

Seeing Webber pregnant was a bit unsettling for a lot of people who knew her. Roger Post, Webber's best friend and the vice president of Christy Webber Landscapes, told Webber he didn't like looking at her pregnant. "I was Rog's buddy," Webber said. "We hung out. It was really hard for him to look at me that way. I can see how it would be strange. It's not so hard now that I've had the baby because he has lots of friends with kids." Webber claimed that, overall, her staff is thrilled that she's no longer pregnant. "Oh, God. I was on a rampage at work and at home," she said. "I was hormone-crazy. I'm surprised Jennie didn't leave me. I was scared shitless and every time I went in to have them

Turn to page 22

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Wednesday, May 7

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs

So In Love with Broadway, a performance by Laura Freeman & Bradford Newquist with pianist William Underwood. 7 p.m., \$25 includes hors d'oeuvres, Maxim's, 24 E. Goethe St., RSVP 312-744-1423

Great Chicago Places and Spaces "Love on Halsted Street" panel discussion about whether Jane Addams can be considered a lesbian and what this would mean to Chicago's LGBT communities. 6:30 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St., free and open to the public

Windy City Gay Idol 2008 Eighth event of 6th annual talent search contest. 8 p.m. signup/9 p.m. start, @mosphere, 5355 N. Broadway, www.windycitymediagroup.com for rules/regulations, www.myspace.com/2007windycitygayidol

Women and Children First Bookstore Elizabeth Berg: The Day I Ate Whatever I Wanted & Other Small Acts of Liberation. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com, 773-769-9299

Thursday, May 8

AIDS Foundation of Chicago Make a Statement: Design for the Cure, hosted by Steven Rosengard of Bravo's Project Runway. 7 p.m., \$50, Le Passage, 937 N. Rush, www.aidschicago.org

Chicago History Museum Out at CHM series presents "Screaming Queens and Lavender Panthers: A History of Transgender Activism" featuring activist and expert Susan Stryker. Cocktail hour 5:30 p.m., program starts 6:30 p.m., \$12/\$10 museum members, Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St., www.chicagohistory.org

Northwestern Memorial Foundation HOPE committee 6th Annual Egg-Stravaganza to raise money for HOPE, which supports the Women's Program at the HIV Center at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. 5:30-8 p.m., Perfect Pear Art Gallery, 712 N. State St., tick-

ets at 312-926-7133, http://foundation.nmh.org/HOPEGift

Windy City Gay Idol 2008 Ninth event of 6th annual talent search contest. 9 p.m. signup/10 p.m. start, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.windycitymediagroup.com for rules/regulations, www.myspace.com/2007windycitygayidol

Women and Children First Bookstore Ana Elena Puga, translator, and Mary Poole, actor: Finished From The Start and Other Plays. 7:30 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com, 773-769-9299

Friday, May 9

Center on Halsted Command Presence: Images from the Leather Community. Photographs from the Leather Archives. Grand opening reception. Runs through May 31. 6-8:30 p.m., \$5, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Gay Liberation Network Monthly live program on Chicago Access Network TV. 6:30-6:55 p.m., cable channel 21 in Chicago, www.gayliberation.net

MORE for Gay Men Movie Night: Licensed to Kill. 6:30-10 p.m., \$5 includes movie, discussion and light refreshments, Wright Institute, 445 E. Ohio St., 312-329-1200

Union Church of Hinsdale Lesbian gospel singer Marsha Stevens. 7:30 p.m., free and open to public, 137 S. Garfield Ave., Hinsdale, www.uchinsdale.org

West Suburban Gay Association Dinner as Ristorante Amalfi. 7:30 p.m., 298 Glen Ellyn Rd. in Bloomingdale, west_burbs_gay@yahoo.com, 630-512-0100, www.wsga.com

Women and Children First Bookstore Betty Shiflett, Patricia Ann McNair and Mahmoud Saeed: F Magazine reading. 7 p.m., 5233 N. Clark St., www.womenandchildrenfirst.com, 773-769-9299

Saturday, May 10

Brotherhood of the Phoenix This Chicago neo-pagan order for GBT men holds Firdance: A celebration of the bright

tide. Workshops 5:30-6, ritual 7:30-10 p.m., 1900 W. Fulton St., www.brotherhoodofthephoenix.org, 773-572-6600

Chicago Filmmakers Dyke Delicious Series 5: Invisible Women (In front of and behind the camera). Screening of Lip and Women Who Made the Movies. 7 p.m. social hour, 8 p.m. screening, \$10/\$8 Reeling members, 5243 N. Clark St., www.chicagofilmmakers.org

Chicago Lesbian Brunch Group Red White & Blue: A Reflection of the American Struggle, photography opening reception. 6-10 p.m., Coffee Pot, 2725 S. Archer Ave., http://gaypros.meetup.com/283

Equality Illinois To Secure, Protect and Defend: A Seminar to Educate LGBT People on the Importance of Legal Protections. Space limited. 12-5 p.m., Leather Archives and Museum, 6419 N. Greenview, RSVP by May 1 at 773-761-9200 or archives@leatherarchives.org

Jackhammer Team Steamworks benefit, for TPAN & BEHIV, Team Steamworks (for Ride For AIDS) will be selling Jell-O shots and raffle tickets, win porn, bar tabs and more, 11 p.m., 6406 N. Clark St., 773-743-5772

Wesley United Methodist Church Lesbian gospel singer Marsha Stevens. 7:30 p.m., free and open to public, 21 E. Franklin St., Naperville, www.wesleyumcnaperville.org

Windy City Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf Fundraiser. Food, raffle prizes and more. 5-10 p.m., Spyner's Pub, 4623 N. Western Ave., www.wcrad.org, diving1058@yahoo.com

Sunday, May 11

Ministry Cabin Reconciling Journey—Affirming Devotional Study for GLBT Christians. 6:30 p.m., 4025-A Route 34 in Oswego, www.GLBTChristian.org

Music Box Special showing of Mommie Dearest, with Hell In a Handbag Prod., special appearance by The Joans, Joan Crawford look-alike contest, hosted by Dick O'Day, 2:30 p.m., 3733 N. Southport, 773-871-6604

Sun., May 11



OH, 'DEAR'

Dick O'Day will trade Xanadu for Mommie Dearest when he presents the latter film at The Music Box, 3733 N. Southport.

Photo by Rick Aguilar

Thurs., May 15



GIRLS ON FILM

"Wonka Ball 2008: Caught on Film" will take place at Gallery 1028, 1028 N. Hooker.

Photo from 2007 gala by Andrew Davis



Life is a cabaret

Better Existence with HIV (BEHIV) welcomed over 300 guests to the Woman's Club of Evanston, 1702 Chicago, on April 26 for its fifth annual Club BEHIV & Cabaret gala, which featured an "April in Paris" theme. All monies raised benefit BEHIV's programs for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. NBC-5 Chicago's LeeAnn Trotter emceed a program where Michael McNamara and Kevin Putz were honored with the Director's Award for their many years of support of BEHIV and Chicago area AIDS service organizations. Also, Rae Lewis-Thornton received the President's Award for her 20-plus years of activism educating youth about the dangers of HIV. For more information on BEHIV, visit www.behiv.org or call Eric Nelson at 847-475-2115, ext. 104. Photos courtesy of Eric Nelson

Strip appeal

Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) held its Chicago Takes Off cast party April 29 at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark, to thank individuals for helping the organization raise \$120,000 through its annual event, which took place Feb. 9 at the Park West, 322 W. Armitage. Attendees got a chance to relive the torrid show, courtesy of a DVD of the event. Photos by Kirk Williamson



Workout scene featuring Jackie Warner (top).

Jackie Warner in your home

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

Jackie Warner's hit Bravo reality show, *Work Out*, is back for a third season—with all the tension and drama audiences have come to love, though Warner says her relationship this season is relatively drama-free. She's also got several new ventures in the works, including an in-home workout DVD, *Workout: One-on-One Training with Jackie*. What is in store for fans? *Windy City Times* spoke with Warner to find out.

Windy City Times: What can viewers expect from season three?

Jackie Warner: Oh, boy. Basically, you get a sort of inside view of a new relationship for me, and also how that unfolds under the eye of the camera. Let me just give you a hint: Reality TV isn't good for relationships. It's real hard on them. My mom comes to visit, and it's touching and humorous. People that are getting under my skin might finally be going this season.

WCT: Can we expect the same level of drama this season?

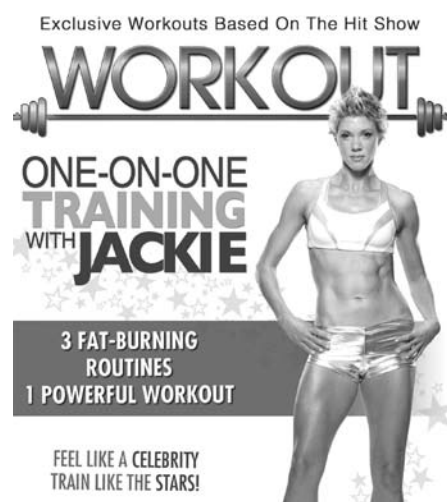
JW: No; I really don't have much drama in the relationship. I don't have much drama in my

personal life right now, but you definitely see the cracks showing. We moved very fast in this relationship—which I never do—but it was a weird extenuating circumstance, and you kind of see that really unraveling.

WCT: Do you have any good relationship or dating tips you can share?

JW: Oh, boy. [Laughs] Yeah, I actually said this a while ago in an interview: I'm great at giving relationship advice, but terrible at receiving it because I'm a very passionate person. This is something that I think you understand about me: when I want something, I get it. I go for it, and whether it's right for me or not ... but my advice is make a list of 3-5 must-haves in a person. Make that list and carry it around with you, in your wallet or the car, and really, really stick to that must-have list. I started doing it now and I will do it until I meet that partner, which I'm not looking for now, but I'm just saying ... when you go on the first, second or third date, ask those questions. If they don't fit that criteria, get out of there.

WCT: How has the experience of doing the show changed from the first season to the third one?



JW: I feel that the trainers are really quite mean and rude to me this season, whereas they never did that before, which I thought was odd. I think it is largely due to them trying to get camera time, because it was totally out of the blue, and I didn't have any issues with them but, again, I think people are savvy now and they want to be on TV.

WCT: Has anything changed for you as far as your position as a role model for the gay community?

JW: I'm not an outspoken person. I rarely do gay and lesbian events. I don't latch onto a cause, because I feel that just living my life as a regular person on national TV does tons more for the cause than if I carried a banner. Really,

what I try to do within the show is show how fluid and natural a lesbian relationship is. It's like anything else and, hopefully, viewers see it. That's the only way I protest. I think it's the most effective way to protest, allowing people to familiarize themselves with the gay and lesbian lifestyle and not fall into stereotypes so much.

Read more about Jackie Warner at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Chix Mix Productions hosts a Jackie Warner appearance at Circuit, 3641 N. Halsted, at 10 p.m. See www.chixmixproductions.com for more information. Cheetah Gym and Windy City Media Group are co-sponsoring the event.

SPORTS NEWS

Smash & Tickle June 7

Smash & Tickle '08, the second annual 2nd City badminton tournament, will take place Sat., June 7, at the Broadway Armory, 5917 N. Broadway.

There will be singles and doubles events. A drop-flight format will be employed, with a minimum of three matches to be played. There will be four divisions, covering all skill levels.

The fee will be \$30 for one event and \$45 for both. E-mail secondcitybad@yahoo.com to receive registration information.

Murder case postponed

In South Africa, the case of five men accused of raping and murdering former national women's soccer team player Eudy Simelane has been postponed for further investigation until May 13, the Independent Online reported.

According to Sunday World, Simelane was attacked because she was lesbian.

Soccer legend Joseph "Skheshkheshe" Mkhonza described Simelane's death as shocking, adding, "Eudy was one of the most dedicated administrators. She was deeply involved in [the] development [of soccer]," according to the Sowetan.

D.C. to host huge LGBT aquatics event

The District of Columbia Aquatics Club (DCAC) and the Washington Wetskins Water Polo Team are hosting the upcoming 2008 International Gay and Lesbian Aquatics Championships (IGLA).

More than 1,200 athletes are expected to convene in Washington, D.C., June 19-22. The IGLA Championships provide competition in the sports of swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming.

For additional information and to register, visit www.igla2008.org.

MOMS from page 20

check on the baby they kept saying, it's getting bigger."

Overall Webber and Rule found most people very accepting of their desire to become parents. Some people found it strange or unusual, but nothing more. The two women are also quick to explain that they found nothing but acceptance on a professional level, though at times the two admit the sometimes impersonal nature of IVF clinics and the technology involved made them feel very much like a statistic. "A successful statistic, but a statistic nonetheless. We were a success story and not Rule and Webber, not people."

Sadly, professional acceptance of lesbians wishing to become parents through IVF isn't always the case. In Webber and Rule's home state, The Michigan House of Representatives passed a Conscientious Objector Policy Act in 2004, which states that healthcare providers can refuse to perform a procedure, fill a prescription or cover treatment for something they object to based on moral, ethical or religious reasons. It was supposedly passed so pharmacists wouldn't have to prescribe the morning-after pill and doctors wouldn't have to perform or assist with abortions, but it's easy to see how this act could be abused. In Webber and Rule's case, it could have been a technician who said, "Sure, I believe in IVF, but I don't think it's right for two women to have a baby." In other words, the technician can refuse a procedure based on who is having it done, which makes the objection not about the method used but about the identity of the patient. Reckless legislation of this sort provides loopholes for discrimination.

In mid-March, Rule went home to Birmingham, Mich., to attend an elaborate baby shower thrown by her brother and sister. The baby was still a month away so Rule thought nothing of leaving a busy Webber in Chicago. Instead, Rule brought her friend, Jennifer Lachica, for moral support and companionship on the drive. On Friday night, when they arrived, Webber called

to say she felt funny, but Rule shrugged it off. "Christy Webber always feels funny, so I told her to relax," Rule said. The next day, Rule and Lachica were out shopping with Rule's sister looking for various baby items when Rule's cell phone rang. It was Webber again. She said, "Something is really wrong. You had better start looking for a flight home." Rule did her best to reassure Webber. She told Webber they were a month ahead, and reminded her that everyone they had talked to said first births are always late. "I told her it can't be that, but for the next two hours I was on pins and needles pretending to have a good time," Rule said. Then Webber called again. This time she said, "Jen, my water broke [and] you've got to fly home." Understandably, Rule panicked.

Read *Windy City Times* next week for the conclusion of this article.



Christy Webber (left) and Jennie Rule. Photo by Brian McConkey

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