



**PETERSON, AMADOR DIE**

PAGE 12

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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**OLYMPIA DUKAKIS**  
PAGE 29

## Anti-suicide project reflects on cases

BY SAMUEL WORLEY

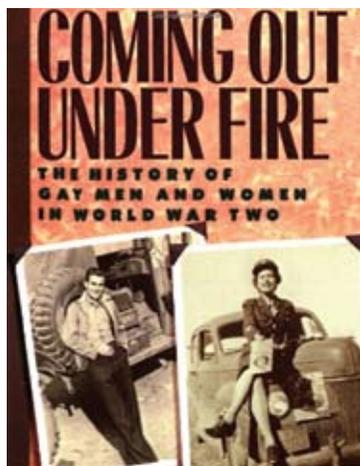
The Trevor Project, a nationwide nonprofit that works to prevent suicide in young LGBT people, maintains a "lifeline": a phone number that teens can call in times of distress. In recent weeks, that line has been flooded with calls. Some come from young people seeking help; but Laura McGinnis, Trevor's communications director, said that a growing proportion of callers are individuals with questions about the organization, or people wishing to make a donation.

The increased volume of calls coming into the lifeline—meant only for emergency situations—is an indication of burgeoning public attention to what some see as an epidemic: the number of suicides—at least five high-profile cases in the past month—of LGBT teens. The suicides have fallen across a wide age spectrum: the youngest, Seth Walsh and Asher Brown, were 13; the oldest and most recent suicide, Raymond Chase, was 19. They have spanned the country, occurring in Texas, California, Indiana, Rhode Island and New Jersey.

The attention, McGinnis told Windy City Times, is a mixed blessing, coming as it has on the heels of tragedy. "Anytime we lose a life, that's always a tragedy," she said. "This additional reporting does not diminish the hurt and pain of the survivors."

"If there is one thing that the end of these young lives has brought, it's more awareness. What we know is that [when] a young person is feeling suicidal, when they know that there are

Turn to page 10



**'COMING OUT' BOOK**  
PAGE 34



**MIKE RUIZ**  
PAGE 32



**nightspots**  
pick it up  
take it home

## In remembrance of...



pages 10, 18

Hundreds of people took part in a vigil at DePaul University Oct. 8 to remember those who have committed suicide in the wake of anti-gay bullying. Windy City Times has a special section featuring essays by people who have been in the depths of despair and know that "It Gets Better"—which is also the name of the YouTube channel launched by Dan Savage to help LGBT teens; that section begins on page 18. The description of the vigil is on page 10. Photo by Denver Smith Photography

# Obama and the Gays

## A POLITICAL MARRIAGE

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Obama marched in the 2003 Chicago LGBT Pride Parade. His volunteers posed with the Senate candidate before the parade. Included with Obama are John Myers (behind Obama's right shoulder) and Kevin Thompson, front row, right. Myers and Thompson are among the current and former Chicagoans interview in the book. Courtesy Kevin Thompson

[www.ObamaAndTheGays.com](http://www.ObamaAndTheGays.com)

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# this week in WINDY CITY TIMES

## NEWS

Federal grant addresses bullying	4
LGBT history along Boystown?	5
LGBTs give Rahm mixed reception	9
Anti-gay pastors in mayoral race	9
Beyondmedia's 'Taste of Ten'	9
DePaul vigil; Trevor Project	10
Gay in the Life: Scott Weddle	11
Petersen, Amador pass away	12
Local events	12
View: Nair	17

## 'IT GETS BETTER'

Essays 18-25

## ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS

Dancin' Feats	26
Olympia Dukakis	29
Music: Big Freedia; Jennifer Knapp	30
Bent Nights: Bettye LaVette	31
Mike Ruiz; NO H8 photos	32
Books: 'Against Equality'; Berube	34
Knight: Red, Conviction; film fest	35
Billy Masters	37

## OUTLINES

Real estate; classifieds	33
Calendar Q	36
Sports: CRU; Hoosier Mama	38

Photos on cover (left): Laird Petersen pic by Tracy Baim, Alicia Amador image by Hal Baim; Olympia Dukakis photo by Deborah Goldstein; photo of Mike Ruiz courtesy of Logo

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## OPEN DOOR

Door County, Wis., has much to offer—as WCT recently discovered.

Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Garcia



Club Industry 2010 featured Richard Simmons (above) and some interesting products.

Photo by Andrew Davis



Federation of Gay Games President Kurt Dahl reflects on the most recent Games.

Photo courtesy of Dahl

## SPORTS WRAP-UP

Read about the Gay Bowl, gay hockey in Toronto and a regatta involving our own Chicago Rowing Union (CRU).

## THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Read the latest entertainment news on Tim McGraw, Wanda Sykes and Zachary Quinto, among others.

## MORE D'EMILIO

Read the entire interview with our historian John D'Emilio about Allan Berube's influential book, Coming Out Under Fire.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

## 'Q' SOMETHING



Amuse Bouche looks at potato soup while WCT takes a look at Gold Coast BBQ restaurant Chicago Q (above).

Photo courtesy of Lee Lampert

Rip Nelson at Mary's Attic  
Finchy's Going-away party at Big Chicks  
Unpugged turns 1

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Kevin Jennings. Photo by Patsy Lynch

## Federal grants address bullying and safe schools

BY DANA RUDOLPH  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The U.S. Department of Education announced today (Oct. 5) the awarding of \$38.8 million in grants to 11 states from a new Safe and Supportive Schools program. The timing comes just days after a media blitz about the suicides of five teenagers, at least four of whom were bullied for being gay or being perceived as gay. But anybody who knows Washington knows Tuesday's grants weren't made in reaction to the recent news.

"It would be inaccurate to say we're doing this as a response to recent events," said Kevin Jennings, Assistant Deputy Secretary for the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) at the U.S. Department of Education.

Jennings, the nation's top official for promoting safe schools, said the latest string of teen suicides driven by anti-gay bullying is, sadly, not a new trend.

"The problem of greater rates of suicide among LGBT youth being linked to school bullying is something that has been documented and known for a very long time," said Jennings.

Jennings has some experience in the matter. As a teenager, he himself attempted suicide and had been the subject of relentless bullying in middle school and early high school. He founded the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in 1990 to help promote safe and respectful climates for LGBT youth in schools.

And the week in April 2009 when the Obama administration offered him the position as head of OSDFS, news broke about the bullying-related suicide of 11-year-old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover of Springfield, Massachusetts, who had been the subject of anti-gay taunts. That news, he said, inspired him to take the job.

Jennings, in an interview, said Education Secretary Arne Duncan has also been long aware that "bullying and harassment are first and foremost an education issue," because he understands kids will not want to be in school if they are bullied and harassed.

Jennings pointed to Duncan's hiring of him for the safe schools position as proof of the Secretary's commitment, and notes that Duncan met with GLSEN student leaders even before that.

Duncan also released a statement Oct. 1 in response to the news of the recent suicides. But Jennings notes that he and Duncan have been prioritizing efforts to prevent bullying since they each took office.

The Safe and Supportive Schools grants announced this week are to "measure school safety" and "to help intervene in those schools with the greatest safety needs." The eleven states chosen to receive this initial round of grants are: Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

The grants require the selected states to implement in-depth surveys of students, family, and staff about school safety issues and "direct grant monies to the schools that the students say have the biggest problems," and to the problems the students identify as the largest. Directing funds based on student feedback, he noted, is a new approach to school safety, of which bullying is a subset.

"This is a major step forward," said Jennings, "... because the only people who really know what's going on in the schools are the kids."

The program requires a four-year commitment by the states to survey schools, direct money to solving the problems, resurvey, and make the survey results public.

For fiscal year 2011, OSDFS has asked for \$165 million in order to expand the program to additional states.

Last August, OSDFS convened the department's first-ever Bullying Prevention Summit, with government leaders from several departments, including Secretary Duncan, who gave the keynote. Also attending were Surgeon General Regina Benjamin and 150 community leaders from around the country. Jennings said that, while many people and organizations have been working on bullying for years, "Never had they all been in the same room before."

"We brought together everybody—from GLSEN to the Christian Educators Association," said Jennings.

During his keynote, Secretary Duncan said it was "an absolute travesty of our educational system" when students worry about being bullied at school "or suffer discrimination and taunts because of their ethnicity, religion, sexual ori-



entation, disability, or a host of other reasons."

Summit attendees heard "incredibly disturbing reports" about the bullying of Muslim students and students with disabilities, among other things, said Jennings.

The next step will be to develop a plan based on the issues raised at the summit. A federal task force, with representatives from multiple offices within the departments of Justice, Health and Human Services (HHS), Agriculture, Defense, and Interior is meeting every two weeks. A larger group, including non-governmental leaders, meets once a month.

Jennings would not give a date for when a plan will be ready. He said he wants to make sure it is "very detailed and very specific" and that "everybody's on board." And he said the department would hold a second summit next year.

"We are committed to a multi-year effort on this."

One near-term action will come from the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Duncan explained in his keynote that OCR would be "issuing policy guidance to schools" to explain that bullying can include racial, sexual, or disability harassment that is prohibited by civil rights laws. It would also outline the legal responsibilities schools have "to protect students from discriminatory harassment."

Russlyn Ali, assistant secretary for OCR, noted in her speech at the Summit that this includes sexual harassment "when students don't conform to traditional gender roles."

A spokesperson for the department said they hope to issue the guidance "in the next few months."

The approach is similar to that taken by the U.S. Justice Department, which intervened in January in the case of a New York teen who was bullied and physically hurt for being effeminate. Justice Department lawyers argued that Title IX, which prohibits gender-based discrimination, also applied to gender expression. In an out-of-

court settlement, the school district agreed to pay the boy \$50,000, legal fees, and the cost of therapy.

Jennings said the OSDFS has also pulled together the many disparate resources the government has on bullying into a new consolidated Web site, [Bullyinginfo.org](http://Bullyinginfo.org), which the office launched in August.

It has also worked with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of HHS, on a Stop Bullying Now campaign initially aimed at middle school students. The Education Department provided additional funding to expand the campaign to elementary schools. (The "What Adults Can Do" section of the site—[stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)—includes a page on anti-gay bullying.)

Jennings noted, however, that there is no federal law on bullying and "no specific protections for students based on sexual orientation and gender identity." As part of the executive branch, he said, "We are given authority to address issues by Congress, so at this point, we're trying to find, in the absence of a national bullying law, what constructive steps we can take."

There are bills in Congress, however, that would provide such laws. The Student Nondiscrimination Act (SNDA) would prohibit discrimination—including harassment—on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in any program or activity receiving federal funds. The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would require schools that receive federal funds to implement and report on anti-bullying programs that include bullying based on a student's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, among other attributes. Versions of both bills are still pending committee action in the House and Senate. They would need to be reintroduced if they are not passed before the end of the current session of Congress.

Federal departments and their employees are prohibited by law from lobbying Congress about specific legislation, however, so the Department of Education cannot move the legislation forward.

On the state and local levels, Jennings said, the department can provide "guidance and resources," such as the Summit and the Safe and Supportive Schools grants. But state and local entities, he said, are "the guiding force in American education," because "92 cents of every dollar spent on K-through-12 education in America comes from state and local taxes."

The department is "trying to provide some leadership," Jennings said, but added, "Anybody who thinks the U.S. Department of Education singlehandedly is going to end the bullying crisis is deeply misguided. We have a very important role to play, but we cannot do this without state and local departments of education, without community-based organizations, without the clergy, without individual citizens, without parents, without kids themselves, also stepping up and showing leadership."

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# Legacy Project hopes to bring LGBT history to Boystown

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Imagine being able to walk down Halsted Street in the near future and have LGBT history right at your fingertips. That's just what Victor Salvo, Lori Cannon and Owen Keehnen hope to do with their Legacy Project. They want to create an outdoor museum right in the heart of Boystown. How do they plan to do this? They want to place four plaques on each of the Rainbow Pylons along Halsted Street to showcase LGBT people who have made a lasting impression on the world.

To better understand the reasons Salvo, Cannon and Keehnen are so passionate about this project the reader has to go back to the 1980s when people were galvanizing around the message of understanding and compassion regarding LGBT people. I recently sat down with the three of them to discuss the project, what they hope to achieve with this endeavor and what events led up to this moment in their lives. They spoke about the early days of LGBT activism which was centered on HIV/AIDS awareness starting with the Second March on Washington on Oct. 11, 1987. (This date has since become the National Coming Out Day.) That epidemic galvanized the entire LGBT community in a way that hadn't been done before. Both Salvo (who was the Chair of the Committee that got many Chicago people to attend the March in Washington D.C.) and Cannon attended the march and what struck them was seeing the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt which had 1920 panels at the time (12 of which Cannon made). When Salvo saw the quilt he realized that so many people would die off without anyone knowing what they achieved. Also, Cannon gave Salvo a poster with images of Bessie Smith, Eleanor Roosevelt, Cole Porter, James Baldwin and a few others and that poster became a touchstone for what the Legacy Project has evolved into; an outdoor, walking museum where the contributions of amazing LGBT people can be read by anyone.

When Salvo and Cannon came back from their first march in 1987 both immersed themselves into LGBT activism around the city of Chicago, but the idea for the Legacy Project was never far from Salvo's thoughts. It was also in the late 1980's when Salvo met Keehnen at the gym where they struck up a friendship that morphed into a dating relationship. They are now former boyfriends but have stayed close friends and because of their friendship they decided to combine their talents along with Cannon's for the Legacy Project.

Salvo's path in the 1990s took him many places including founding the LGPDO (Lesbian and Gay Progressive Democratic Organization) and IMPACT (the precursor to the Illinois Federation of Human Rights that we now know as Equality Illinois). Salvo didn't stop there. He also founded the LGBTP (Gay and Lesbian Building and Trade Professionals) in 1994 and was a member of the founding board of the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in the late 1990s.

Activism wasn't Salvo's only pursuit. He also wrote a column for Nightlines from 1995 to about 2000. Then in 1999 Salvo happened to be reading one of those Time Magazine retrospectives honoring the 100 Most Influential Scientists when he saw the biography of Alan Turing. Salvo had no idea that Turing was gay and that's when it struck him that if he didn't know that certain important people in history were gay (after living a life of LGBT activism) then most of the public wouldn't know this information either. It was then that the rainbow pylons were erected along Halsted Street commemorating LGBT contributions in Chicago that Salvo thought about using the pylons as a way



A mock-up of the proposed Legacy Walk plaque; Victor Salvo and Lori Cannon. Photos courtesy of Salvo

to showcase history.

He also felt that the pylons looked incomplete and adding the plaques commemorating important LGBT people would complete the picture. Salvo decided to meet with Art Johnston from Side Track and Dr. George Chauncey of the University of Chicago to get their take on the project. Both men thought it would be a great idea and Chauncey even gave Salvo a dozen names of people that they could honor. After those initial meetings with both men in the year 2000, Salvo had to put the project on hold so he could attend to his business. He also felt that with the Center on Halsted project taking the public's attention in 2003 the community should focus all their energies on that endeavor. By 2008 Salvo was ready to go ahead with the project and it was while he was working on an archiving project for this newspaper that the project really began to take off. Salvo and Keehnen happened to be working together on the archiving project and during that time Salvo mentioned the Legacy Project to Keehnen. Keehnen was intrigued and became the biggest champion for the project and from that moment on goaded Salvo into starting the real work that was needed.

While Salvo was founding many LGBT organizations in the 1990s, Cannon was hard at work as a co-founder of ACT UP/Chicago and Open Hand Chicago (now called Vital Bridges). Vital Bridges just served its 10 millionth meal to needy people with HIV/AIDS and has also opened food pantries. Cannon has also worked with Chicago House as well as the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, the 1993 Chicago March on Washington Committee, IMPACT, and the Tom Chiola for Judge Committee. Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s Cannon has stayed close friends with Salvo and it was through that friendship that they, along with Keehnen, decided to collaborate on the Legacy Project.

During the time that Salvo and Cannon were working as activists Keehnen was honing his craft as a writer and historian. Keehnen has done many interviews with LGBT people that have appeared in many anthologies and magazines around the world. Keehnen also wrote 10 of the biographical essays in the recent coffee table book *Out and Proud in Chicago*. He is also the Director of Programming and also a Board Member of the Gerber/Hart Library.

Although Salvo, Cannon and Keehnen have had different paths over the last 20 years but what connects them is their desire to see LGBT History preserved. They just needed to find the right moment to go ahead with their idea. Salvo shared with me that it was Keehnen who was insistent that they get the Northalsted Business Alliance (who owns the pylons and would be the "hosts" of the Legacy Project) involved so the project could get off the ground. Salvo set up a meeting in March of this year with the Alliance who gave their blessing to develop the project.

In the process of developing the project they contacted Dr. Cathy Cohen at the University of Chicago and Dr. Lourdes Torres to get nomination ideas for each of the plaques. Since there is a limited amount of space for the plaques Salvo, Cannon and Keehnen decided that a nominating process is the best way to whittle down the list of potential people to honor because there are many more notable LGBT people than the 82



that the Legacy Project can honor. They plan on accepting nominations from anyone who wants to contribute through their website until May 2011 when the process will close. When all the nominations are gathered they will utilize an "advisory council of LGBT Historians to weigh in on the relative significance of their contributions to the overall history," Salvo said. Also, fact checkers and editors will be employed to ensure accuracy for every biography written before the plaques are made. They also shared with me that this project is not just to honor Chicago or Illinois LGBT people; it will also encompass people from around the world and from all racial and ethnic backgrounds going back to ancient history forward into the 1900s.

So what is the underlying idea for these plaques? Salvo, Cannon and Keehnen shared these thoughts with me. They talked about the need to preserve LGBT history for all time so future generations can benefit from knowing who these individuals were and what they did for the community. They want to raise awareness, educate LGBT youth and other young people, unify the LGBT community and finally to make history themselves. Chicago would be the first city to have a LGBT museum connected to the

only Streetscape (Halsted) celebrating LGBT life in the United States. This will also be the first LGBT museum of its kind.

Since there is the only LGBT Hall of Fame (Salvo and Cannon have already been inducted for their previous advocacy work) and Chicago has the oldest Pride Parade in the nation, the trio says Chicago is the perfect spot for this kind of museum. They also talked about Chicago's passion for history and how that makes us uniquely positioned to have this kind of walking museum.

Keehnen also talked about creating a dialogue since most people are not students of history and may not know many of the people that will be honored. Since LGBT history has been erased from most history textbooks there is a need for this kind of museum which will help educators and provide role models for young people searching for people like them, Cannon said. With the recent rash of LGBT youth suicides this project is needed now more than ever, they all said. Keehnen said that education is the best way to combat homophobia and foster pride and with this project they can do both things. Salvo also said, "It will be a transformative experience for people both gay and straight" who might not know these people. Overall, they want to make Halsted Street a destination place for people of all ages with the Legacy Project.

The Legacy Project is still in negotiations with the Northalsted Business Alliance so look for a formal announcement in November on the status of the project. In the meantime they are looking for grants, donations and people or companies to sponsor particular markers. They will also be hosting house parties to raise funds and will be looking for volunteers as the project moves forward. For more information or to submit your own nominations for the project please visit <http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org> or contact them at [info@legacyprojectchicago.org](mailto:info@legacyprojectchicago.org) or at 773-880-5429 (LGCY) after Oct. 17; until that date, they can be reached at 312-608-1198.

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## Patient Information

### ISENTRESS® (eye sen tris) (raltegravir) Tablets



Read the patient information that comes with ISENTRESS<sup>1</sup> before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet is a summary of the information for patients. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you additional information. This leaflet does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or your treatment.

#### What is ISENTRESS?

- ISENTRESS is an anti-HIV (antiretroviral) medicine used for the treatment of HIV. The term HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). ISENTRESS is used along with other anti-HIV medicines. ISENTRESS will NOT cure HIV infection.
- People taking ISENTRESS may still develop infections, including opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection.
- Stay under the care of your doctor during treatment with ISENTRESS.
- The safety and effectiveness of ISENTRESS in children has not been studied.

#### ISENTRESS must be used with other anti-HIV medicines.

#### How does ISENTRESS work?

- ISENTRESS blocks an enzyme which the virus (HIV) needs in order to make more virus. The enzyme that ISENTRESS blocks is called HIV integrase.
- When used with other anti-HIV medicines, ISENTRESS may do two things:
  1. Reduce the amount of HIV in your blood. This is called your "viral load".
  2. Increase the number of white blood cells called CD4 (T) cells.
- ISENTRESS may not have these effects in all patients.

#### Does ISENTRESS lower the chance of passing HIV to other people?

No. ISENTRESS does not reduce the chance of passing HIV to others through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood.

- Continue to practice safer sex.
- Use latex or polyurethane condoms or other barrier methods to lower the chance of sexual contact with any body fluids. This includes semen from a man, vaginal secretions from a woman, or blood.
- Never re-use or share needles.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about safer sex or how to prevent passing HIV to other people.

#### What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with ISENTRESS?

Tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions. Include any of the following that applies to you:

- You have any allergies.
- You are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
  - ISENTRESS is not recommended for use during pregnancy. ISENTRESS has not been studied in pregnant women. If you take ISENTRESS while you are pregnant, talk to your doctor about how you can be included in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry.
- You are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.
  - It is recommended that HIV-infected women should not breast-feed their infants. This is because their babies could be infected with HIV through their breast milk.
  - Talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby.

#### Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. Include the following:

- prescription medicines, including rifampin (a medicine used to treat some infections such as tuberculosis)
- non-prescription medicines
- vitamins
- herbal supplements

#### Know the medicines you take.

- Keep a list of your medicines. Show the list to your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

#### How should I take ISENTRESS?

Take ISENTRESS exactly as your doctor has prescribed. The recommended dose is as follows:

- Take only one 400-mg tablet at a time.
- Take it twice a day.
- Take it by mouth.
- Take it with or without food.

**Do not change your dose or stop taking ISENTRESS or your other anti-HIV medicines without first talking with your doctor.**

**IMPORTANT: Take ISENTRESS exactly as your doctor prescribed and at the right times of day because if you don't:**

- The amount of virus (HIV) in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short period of time.
- The virus may develop resistance to ISENTRESS and become harder to treat.
- Your medicines may stop working to fight HIV.
- The activity of ISENTRESS may be reduced (due to resistance).

#### If you fail to take ISENTRESS the way you should, here's what to do:

- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until it is time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular schedule. Do NOT take two tablets of ISENTRESS at the same time. In other words, do NOT take a double dose.
- If you take too much ISENTRESS, call your doctor or local Poison Control Center.

#### Be sure to keep a supply of your anti-HIV medicines.

- When your ISENTRESS supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy.
- Do not wait until your medicine runs out to get more.

#### What are the possible side effects of ISENTRESS?

##### When ISENTRESS has been given with other anti-HIV drugs, side effects included:

- nausea
- headache
- tiredness
- weakness
- trouble sleeping
- stomach pain
- dizziness
- depression
- suicidal thoughts and actions

**Other side effects** include rash, severe skin reactions, feeling anxious, paranoia, low blood platelet count.

A condition called Immune Reconstitution Syndrome can happen in some patients with advanced HIV infection (AIDS) when combination antiretroviral treatment is started. Signs and symptoms of inflammation from opportunistic infections that a person has or had may occur as the medicines work to treat the HIV infection and help to strengthen the immune system. Call your doctor right away if you notice any signs or symptoms of an infection after starting ISENTRESS with other anti-HIV medicines.

Contact your doctor promptly if you experience unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness while taking ISENTRESS. This is because on rare occasions, muscle problems can be serious and can lead to kidney damage.

Rash occurred more often in patients taking ISENTRESS and darunavir together than with either drug separately, but was generally mild.

Tell your doctor if you have any side effects that bother you.

These are not all the side effects of ISENTRESS. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

#### How should I store ISENTRESS?

- Store ISENTRESS at room temperature (68 to 77°F).
- **Keep ISENTRESS and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

#### General information about the use of ISENTRESS

**Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets.**

- Do not use ISENTRESS for a condition for which it was not prescribed.
- Do not give ISENTRESS to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

#### This leaflet gives you the most important information about ISENTRESS.

- If you would like to know more, talk with your doctor.
- You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for additional information about ISENTRESS that is written for health professionals.
- For more information go to [www.ISENTRESS.com](http://www.ISENTRESS.com) or call 1-800-622-4477.

#### What are the ingredients in ISENTRESS?

**Active ingredient:** Each film-coated tablet contains 400 mg of raltegravir.

**Inactive ingredients:** Microcrystalline cellulose, lactose monohydrate, calcium phosphate dibasic anhydrous, hypromellose 2208, poloxamer 407 (contains 0.01% butylated hydroxytoluene as antioxidant), sodium stearyl fumarate, magnesium stearate. In addition, the film coating contains the following inactive ingredients: polyvinyl alcohol, titanium dioxide, polyethylene glycol 3350, talc, red iron oxide and black iron oxide.

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Former Chicago City Treasurer Judy Rice, Ald. Tom Tunney, Rahm Emanuel and Barack Obama at a 2004 fundraiser. The event was held at Le Passage and hosted by members of the LGBT community for Democratic senate campaigns, including Obama's. Photo by Tracy Baim

## MAYORAL RACE

# Emanuel gets mixed reviews from LGBTs

BY JOEL W. WITHROW,  
MEDILL NEWS SERVICE

As Rahm Emanuel began a "Tell It Like It Is" tour last week to hear the concerns of Chicago citizens, members of the gay and lesbian community gauged their opinion of his impending mayoral campaign.

Real estate developer Robert Kohl recently joined with friends to start Run Rahm Run. The LGBT committee formed to support Emanuel's campaign after a dinner-party discussion turned to the post-Daley future.

The group began circulating an open letter endorsing the former White House chief of staff. With 40 signatures, it clearly stated Run Rahm Run's purpose: "Chicago's LGBT community is soon to lose its BFF, Mayor Richard M. Daley, who is not seeking re-election. It is crucial that the next mayor be someone equally dedicated to the needs of our community."

The letter argues that Emanuel's tangible support for the gay community sets him apart from politicians who merely pay lip service to gay rights.

In 2005, Kohl approached Emanuel—then the congressman for the 5th District—with architectural drawings for the Center on Halsted, a non-profit organization that provides resources and a meeting place for gay Chicagoans. Kohl, who is a former member of the Center's board, recalled the meeting in an interview Oct. 6:

"After spending about an hour with him explaining what the center is, he said, 'This is fantastic. How can I help?'"

A year later Emanuel secured \$1.25 million in federal funding for the new \$20 million structure.

"It was a huge undertaking to create the center that we have," said Sarah Sumadi, director of communications for the Center on Halsted. "Certainly, that wouldn't have been possible without his support."

But others in the LGBT community said that—in the absence of substantive legislative reform for the gay community—Emanuel's funding for the center was politically motivated.

"Funding like this is a time-honored mechanism to buy off the leadership of a constituency," said longtime Chicago activist Andy Thayer. "While that may be good for getting some constituents jobs or funding, it leaves the vast majority out in the cold."

Rick Garcia, director of public policy for Equality Illinois, said Emanuel's voting record on gay issues as a congressman was impeccable. But after he entered the White House in 2008, his impact on gay-rights politics was met with greater

skepticism:

"There is a sense in Washington of foot dragging—on the Employment Non-discrimination Act, Don't Ask Don't Tell, and gay marriage," said Garcia. "People see Rahm's fingerprints all over it."

Speaking from personal experience, fellow Run Rahm Run founder Tom O'Briant disagrees.

In 2009, he had lunch with Emanuel, then the White House chief of staff, in Washington. O'Briant brought to Emanuel's attention a New York Times article on Janice Langbehn, who, because she was gay, was denied access to her partner of 18 years as she lay dying in the hospital.

O'Briant said he was stunned when, in April 2010, President Obama ordered a memorandum securing hospital visitation rights for same-sex couples.

Kohl and O'Briant are not sure what, if any, role Run Rahm Run will play during Emanuel's campaign. But O'Briant said he is gauging members' interest to determine the next step.

Emanuel has also been criticized for his role as a member of President Bill Clinton's team when Don't Ask, Don't Tell was pushed as a compromise instead of fully lifting the military's gay ban.

Equality Illinois is working to organize a mayoral forum for early next year for the candidates to discuss their positions on relevant LGBT issues.

"All of these candidates have to reach out to the whole city," said Garcia. "That's what Mayor Daley did so effectively, and these candidates know that."

## Anti-gay pastors eye mayoral runs

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Two powerful ministers with anti-gay pasts—the Rev. Wilfredo De Jesus and the Rev. James Meeks—are aiming to become the new mayor of Chicago.

De Jesus leads the New Life Covenant Church, located in Humboldt Park. The Chicago Tribune recently reported that he has thrown his hat into the ring. De Jesus is also a commissioner on the Chicago Zoning Board of Appeals.

Last year, Windy City Times reported on De Jesus' plan to succeed Billy Ocasio as the city's 26th Ward alderman; however, Roberto Maldonado eventually was picked to become alderman. Many thought De Jesus' presence would be divisive; however, the official explanation was that he technically did not reside inside the ward.

The possibility of De Jesus being a part of Chicago's city council angered many in the LGBT community. New Life is part of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal fellowship that considers homosexuality a sin. In Chicago, many LGBT activists know him as the pastor who put the brakes last year on a planned Pride Campus,

a school that designers hoped would act as a model school, providing a safe and affirming environment for LGBT and questioning youth and their allies.

It is not known if De Jesus plans to reach out to the LGBT community; however, Meeks already has. Meeks recently talked with Equality Illinois Public Policy Advocate Rick Garcia. On Oct. 5, Meeks took things one step further by holding a closed meeting with a few LGBT community leaders at Equality Illinois' headquarters in Lakeview.

After the meeting, Windy City Times spoke with one of the attendees—Kim Hunt, executive director of Affinity Community Services, which focuses on Chicago's Black lesbians and bisexual women.

Hunt described the meeting as "a free-flowing discussion. He hadn't reached out to our community before, so we were a little [suspicious], a little cynical. Most of the conversation was about trying to help him understand that he cannot assume that people see him as wearing two hats: minister and mayor.

"He [knows] that he's not going to win over the gay community, but he also wants to make sure he doesn't say anything offensive. He was

## Beyondmedia honoring activists at 'Taste of Ten'

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAUT

It's all about 10 for Beyondmedia Education, which, in honor of their organization's 10th anniversary, will recognize 10 media justice honorees Thursday, Oct. 14, as part of a "Taste of Ten" benefit that should pique the interests of foodies and fans of media activism alike.

Since 2000, Beyondmedia Education has worked to turn the camera on women, LGBTQ youth and other marginalized communities that are often excluded from mainstream media messages. Its executive director Salome Chasnoff—honored earlier this year with the Ida B. Wells Award for Bravery in Journalism—told the Windy City Times their mission of organizing for social justice through media arts is one made even more crucial in today's economic conditions.

"In order for the landscape of communication to be as full, rich, authentic and representative as possible of all that we are, we have to continually create space for every voice, no matter how challenging that can be," Chasnoff said. "For people who don't have the skills or equipment or opportunity, you have to keep making those things available."

Chasnoff added that the 10 community activists being honored have all played important parts in supporting Beyondmedia's efforts to foster those opportunities for underrepresented communities over the past decade.

Among the honorees are several recognizable names to the city's LGBT community, including Howard Brown Health Center vice president and chief program officer Joe Hollendonner; Crossroads Fund executive director and founding member of ACT UP/Chicago Jeanne Kracher; DePaul University women's and gender studies professor Ann Russo; and Jane M. Saks, executive director of Columbia College's Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media.

Chasnoff credited Hollendonner for his early recognition of the role media can play as a tool for providing LGBTQ youth with information on HIV/AIDS. Hollendonner was active in the "HIV: Hey! It's Viral" video collaboration between Beyondmedia, Howard Brown's Broadway Youth Center and About Face Youth Theatre.

"Joe's perception of media as a way to deliver education on HIV and access to activism to youth is the basis of his award," Chasnoff said. "HIV education for young LGBTQ people is not just important, it's critical ... This is the issue of young LGBTQ people's time."

also encouraged to be more proactive about what he will do for the community, such as keeping the Hall of Fame, the Office of LGBT Health and the [post of] the mayoral liaison to the LGBT community. He said he wasn't going to dismantle any gains the gay community has made. He didn't know that this infrastructure existed, and I don't think he had a real appreciation [regarding] how progressive [Mayor] Daley has been on issues related to our community.

"The way it ended was that he wanted to have another meeting with more members of our community."

Years ago, Meeks actively campaigned to defeat Senate Bill 3186, which amended the Illinois Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Once it passed both houses of the state's general assembly, former Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed the bill into law January 2005.

Garcia has told Windy City Times that it is possible for a person to change his views, citing how former Congressman Glenn Poshard and current U.S. Sen. Roland Burris have become allies of the gay community despite harboring anti-gay sentiments in the past.

Chasnoff described Saks, also recognized earlier this year as one of 25 Impact Award winners by the Chicago Foundation for Women and a long-staunch ally to queer Chicagoans, as "the best kind of advocate" for media activism.

"Jane has done more than anybody else in this city for media and the arts for women, especially LGBTQ women. She sees media as part of the arts picture, which many people don't. She sees it as an art form," she said.

Other honorees include CLAIM (Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers) executive director Gail T. Smith, Chicago Public Media content development director Steve Edwards, McCormick Foundation journalism program officer Mark Hallett, Access Living's Susan Nussbaum, disability rights advocate Taina Rodriguez-Velarde and Paul Teruel of the Center for Community Arts Partnerships at Columbia College.

Beyondmedia development manager Ronit Bezalel said she is particularly proud of one final honoree—Brenda Myers-Powell—who participated in a workshop with the organization in 2005. Two years later, Myers-Powell co-founded the Dreamcatcher Foundation, a group that reaches out to at-risk Chicago teens.

"We're proud that it [our work] has come full circle with Brenda," Bezalel said. "She is tangible proof of how the work we do impacts peoples' lives."

In addition to the media-justice awardees, the event boasts an impressive roster of some of the city's most celebrated chefs, including Chasnoff's stepson, Paul Kahan, who is the chef at Blackbird, avec, Big Star and The Publican. Other chefs on hand will include Lula Cafe and Nightwood chef and co-owner Jason Hammel and Amazing Edibles Gourmet Catering chef Liz Valenti.

And, of course, every ticket sold to the event supports Beyondmedia's mission and continued survival in a difficult climate for non-profit organizations. While she lauded the group's dedicated core of individual donors, Chasnoff described her organization's 10th anniversary as feeling, at least in part, "like a miracle."

"It's been really hard to stay alive financially while also pursuing our mission in the best possible way to serve our community and stand for justice on a daily basis," Chasnoff admitted. "But we've worked very hard. We take our work very seriously, passionately and add a lot of humor and love for what we do."

**Tickets to Beyondmedia's Taste of Ten start at \$40 and are available by visiting <http://www.beyondmedia.org/tasteoften> or by calling 773-857-7300. The event is to be held at Architectural Artifacts, 4325 N. Ravenswood, at 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 14.**

# DePaul vigil remembers teen suicides

BY JOHN FENOGLIO

It was a somber evening at DePaul University's Lincoln Park Quad Oct. 8. Hundreds of people turned out for a vigil against anti-gay bullying.

The event initially began as a response to the suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi, who jumped off the George Washington Bridge Sept. 22, after two of his classmates posted a video of him having a sexual encounter with another man on the Internet. However, as the number of teens committing suicide has risen (either because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation), organizers expanded the scope of the vigil to show support for all victims of bullying.

Before a sea of flickering candles and rainbow flags, one of the organizers, Matt Zaradich, read the names of nine of the latest victims: Raymond Chase, Tyler Clementi, Cody Barker, Harrison Chase Brown, Justin Aaberg, Billy Lucas, Caleb Nolt, Asher Brown and Seth Walsh.

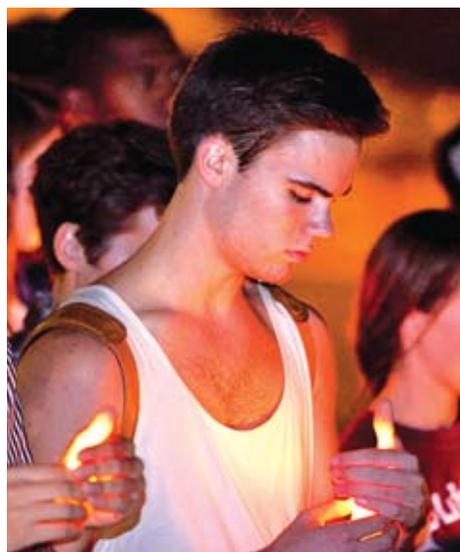
"As we've heard the names of those we lost, I cannot help but think about the humanity that expired with them. I can't help but think of the loss of spirit, the loss of childhood; the childhood for these children who had yet to experience the world as an adult," Zaradich said. He added, "These children suffered the brutality of bullying, driven by a vicious homophobia, that, make no mistake, was learned."

The suicides are part of a string of recent incidences of bullying and violence against gays. On Oct. 3, a gay man and two teenage boys were attacked in the Bronx. According to police, their attackers (nine other young men) beat, whipped, burned and sodomized their victims with a small baseball bat and the handle of a plunger for hours on end.

On Oct. 5, another man, Ben Carver, was beaten in an alleged gay-bashing inside the Stonewall Inn, the historic gay bar in NYC's Greenwich Village. In 1969 police raided the bar, igniting the Stonewall Riots, which are believed to be the beginning of the gay rights movement.

Then there's Chris Armstrong, the University of Michigan's first openly gay student body president, who was targeted by Andrew Shirvell, a lawyer in the Michigan attorney general's office. Shirvell created a blog called "Chris Armstrong Watch," wherein he claims Armstrong has a "radical homosexual agenda." Shirvell went so far as to post a photo of Armstrong with a swastika and a gay pride flag pasted over his face.

Like the spike in teen suicides nationwide, violence against LGBTQ people is far from isolated. In fact, it's on the rise. As reported by Windy City Times, on Nov. 23, 2009, the FBI's latest data on anti-gay violence indicated an 11-percent increase in hate crime offenses based on sexual orientation in 2008. And, while half of all



An attendee at the DePaul vigil. Photo by John Fenoglio

hate crimes were motivated by race, one out of every six was based on sexual orientation. And, recent studies, again, suggest that gay teens are four times more likely to commit suicide and engage in substance abuse.

Moreover, most states do not have hate-crime laws that include protections for gay people. Judy Shepard, a gay-rights activist, knows this all too well. Her son, Matthew, a student from the University of Wyoming, was beaten and murdered because he was gay in 1998. His murderers could not be charged with a hate crime because no such laws (state or federal) recognized protections for gay people.

"Matt once told me, 'Mom, if I could take a pill to be like everybody else, I would.' That was a long time ago. I suppose what remains so difficult about my work today is that I have to keep speaking out about it; that we're still at place in this country where we aren't providing gay people with the same protections as other people," Shepard told Windy City Times last month at the Center on Halsted. To date, Wyoming still does not recognize LGBTQ people under its hate crime laws, despite Mrs. Sheppard's campaign for LGBTQ equality.

At DePaul, the vigil included songs and testimonials from other students who had experienced bullying. Perhaps the message that resonated most, witnesses reported, was this from Zaradich's closing statement: "To all the children listening, here this: You are the most beautiful creatures God has ever created and when the fear is so great and the pain is too much, and the world is too heavy to bear; remember this crowd of people around you right now. Hold tight this image and know that they love you. The strength is within you. So, please survive."

The Oct. 8 vigil was sponsored by LGBT Change, Join The Impact Chicago, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Gay Liberation Network, All Saints' Episcopal Church, 50 Faggots, Affinity Community Services, Adler Pride, The Civil Rights Agenda and Genderqueer Chicago.

## PROJECT from cover

resources available, they're much more likely to reach out to those resources for help."

The media attention paid to the recent suicides—which McGinnis said has more breadth and specificity than in times past—has also brought to light the broader trend of suicide in LGBT teens. Teens on the whole are more likely to attempt suicide than other demographics—100 to 200 attempts for every completed suicide in people aged 15 to 24, as compared to four attempts for every completed suicide for people 65 and older—and LGBT teens, who face social stigma, bullying and cultural homophobia, are at even higher risk. The Trevor Project estimates that LGBT youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers, and LGBT youth who "come from highly rejecting families" are eight times as likely.

In June, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law the Jason Flatt Act, a suicide-prevention bill, versions of which have been passed in four other states. The Flatt Act mandates suicide-prevention training for some school social workers, and adds such training to the list of professional development activities required for teacher certification or recertification.

That bill, however, did not specifically address the heightened risk of suicide faced by LGBT teens. McGinnis said that the Trevor Project supports federal legislation to combat suicide that contains "enumerated policies," that is, specific provisions for sexual orientation and gender identity. The Trevor Project, along with the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), has worked to pressure lawmakers to pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which requires certain schools to put comprehensive anti-bullying policies in place.

That bill—which, as it makes specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity, has been criticized by the conservative group Focus on the Family as promoting "pro-gay curricula"—is pending in Congress.

The legislation recognizes a major cause of suicide in LGBT youth, and one that has been widely blamed for the most recent spate of suicides: anti-gay bullying. In a statement released after two recent deaths, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "These unnecessary tragedies come on the heels of at least three other young people taking their own lives because the trauma of being bullied and harassed for their actual or perceived sexual orientation was too much to bear."

"These young people didn't just die," McGinnis told Windy City Times. "They were bullied."

Even as social acceptance of LGBT people has grown, the prevalence of the Internet—in particular, social-networking sites like Facebook—has made avenues of bullying more dif-



Quinn signs the anti-bullying measure in June. Photo by Sam Worley

fuse, more anonymous and harder to combat. Tyler Clementi, perhaps the most high-profile of the recent suicides, killed himself after his roommate used his webcam to broadcast Clementi having sex with another man online.

Shortly before his death, Clementi left a terse note on his Facebook page: "Jumping off the gw bridge sorry."

Activists are also using the Internet to respond to the most recent suicide crisis. In addition to Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" project, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network launched its own YouTube campaign: "Make It Better" seeks video submissions from young activists working to improve conditions in their own lives. Whereas the focal point of Savage's campaign is adult life—the point at which it "gets better"—the GSA Network says that it wants to provide tools to young people to change their present situations.

In response to the challenge presented by cyberbullying, and as an attempt to reach teens through non-traditional means, the Trevor Project launched two online initiatives: this past summer, the organization launched TrevorChat, a crisis intervention service that electronically connects users with counselors. TrevorChat is not yet operational around the clock: In its current iteration, it is live for a period of time every Friday. McGinnis said that it has been "exceptionally popular."

And since 2008, the Trevor Project has sponsored a social-networking site for young people and allies that seeks to create safe space for expression. McGinnis said that TrevorSpace, which is monitored in order to create a "bully-free zone," has more than 12,000 users. "It doesn't matter the size of your town," McGinnis said. "You can make friends and find a community."

**Learn more about the Trevor Project Saturday, Oct. 16, 6-9 p.m., at the home of Paul Reitz and David Rosen, 1457 W. Addison. The suggested donation is \$45; see <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/TrevorChicago>.**

**Also, entertainers Amy & Freddy, as well as performers from the Baton Show Lounge, are slated to perform at a fundraiser for the Trevor Project Monday, Oct. 25, at Roscoe's Tavern, 3365 N. Halsted. Call the bar at 773-281-3355 for more information.**

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**Wed., Oct. 20  
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Obama and the  
Gays: A Political Marriage**

**Friday, Oct. 22  
7:30 p.m.  
Allison Leotta  
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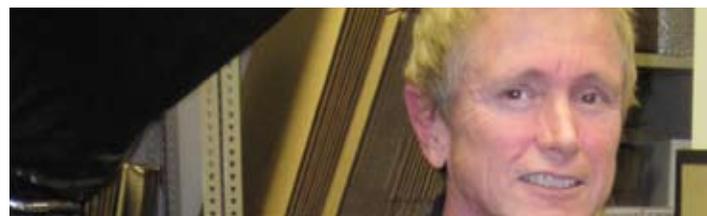


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**Scott Weddle**  
Business owner

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANDREW DAVIS



Scott Weddle prides himself on being a neighborhood fixture. He owns two UPS stores in Chicago, but is primarily known for the one at 1055 W. Bryn Mawr in Edgewater. "We're kinda like the Cheers of Andersonville and Edgewater, where we know everybody by name, and they know me by name," he said. "They expect to see me at this store and, when I'm not, I hear about it."

The Edgewater store opened Feb. 16, 2005, at a time when that entire corner was boarded. "There was no retail here," he said. "I was the first to sign a lease here. This whole stretch [at Bryn Mawr and Winthrop] used to be a Walgreens, but it was closed for 15 years."

"What's unique about [this area] is that it's a very eclectic neighborhood, which brings in every walk of life [to] this store. My staff likes that and I like that, and that's what makes this store [different] from the others."

So why did Weddle decide on a UPS store? "When I decided to leave corporate America, I started looking at different business and UPS had just started re-branding its store. It just seemed like a name that would have longevity, and I wanted a business that would last."

"Also, I'd always wanted to own my own business. It was a big step, and a bumpy journey at times, but one of the best decisions of my life. Success never comes without sacrifice, but I would not change one portion of this journey. In fact, I highly recommend to others, of all ages, to follow their dreams."

When asked if there are any drawbacks, Weddle mentioned two that are familiar to almost every local business owner. "The rent is always going to be high in Chicago, and it's going to bite into what you can do as a business. Also, dealing with city issues is sometimes not so easy; we have so many rules and regulations."

A talk with Weddle mined interesting facts, including that he studied hotel/restaurant management in college; worked at a Ritz-Carlton; and worked for Amtrak for 17 years, living in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Miami. He then moved to Chicago in 2000 to run the Midwest Corridor, "which ran from here to Grand Rapids, to Detroit, to St. Louis, to Kansas City and Milwaukee."

Another intriguing bit is that Weddle almost became a man of the cloth. "After going to Virginia Western Community College to study hotel/restaurant management, I went to Circleville Bible College [in Ohio] to become a minister." So why didn't he complete the program? "It was at Circleville that I accepted my own gay identity, and that brought me out. I saw a lot of hypocrisy in the college and in the ministry, and I knew I couldn't lie to myself and couldn't lie to others. So I finished the college and I decided on a different career."

A typical day for Weddle, who has been on the board of directors for the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce for five and a half years, involves "getting up fairly early and going to one of the two stores—although no matter which one I'm at, I'm usually talking to the other one because of shipping, posters, copies and, during the recession, watching budgets [and] reducing costs." As for the unusual development of opening a second store in this economy, Weddle said, "Warren Buffett said, 'If you've heard the robin sing, spring has already come.' That was my philosophy last year: to go after opportunities, instead of sitting on my fingers."

Looking at Weddle, it's pretty obvious he works out constantly (which probably also helps in getting customers coming to his stores) and eats healthily. Weddle, who works out five times a week, said that "it's possible to eat healthy Southern food. Blackened catfish is healthy. Collard greens made with olive oil and onions instead of fatback is healthy. Macaroni and cheese made with whole-wheat pasta, lowfat cheese and egg whites is healthy. And I stay away from processed sugars."

Lastly, regarding the spate of gay teen suicides that have been publicized, Weddle said, "Something that's been important to me throughout my life is to be a positive role model for the gay kids coming up, especially the male gay kids. It's always been important to live my life with integrity."





the stats

**Name**  
Scott Weddle

**Hometown**  
Roanoke, Va.

**Age**  
"Old enough to know better"

**Relationship status**  
Has a partner of three years,  
Mike

**Favorite food**  
"If somebody's taking me out  
and wants to treat me, I really  
do like prime rib."

**Hobbies**  
Working out, attending  
musicals, listening to old jazz,  
collecting McCoy pottery

**Pets**  
Three cats and two dogs  
(all rescues)





Laird Petersen; Petersen with 44th Ward Alderman Tom Tunney in 1990. Photo on right by Tracy Baim

## Laird Petersen dies at 53

Laird Petersen died from a series of infections Oct. 6 in Richmond, Va.; he was 53. The gay communities and citizens of Illinois and Virginia have lost a true life crusader. A Chicago native, Petersen contributed nearly 30 years of service to Chicago's LGBT communities and counts more than \$12 million he raised for LGBT community-based organizations.

Petersen was a board member and director of development for Gay Horizons (now the Center on Halsted) and helped lead the agency out of a \$190,000 deficit into a \$1.2 million budget. He was the director of prevention services for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), a staff member of the Illinois Federation for Human Rights and a program director for the Chicago Department of Public Health's STD/HIV/AIDS Public Policy and Programs Division.

"Laird was a fierce and fearless advocate, and always quick with a laugh and a smile," said Mark Ishaug, head of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. "He inspired me and countless others, and our work, especially in HIV prevention, has been deeply informed by his insights and experiences. He will be sorely missed."

Petersen also served with the Illinois HIV Prevention Community Planning Group and the Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services, and co-chaired the Chicago Forum on HIV and Aging.

He was chief of staff to Illinois State Rep. Larry McKeon for two years and, most recently, director of social services at Fan Free Clinic in Richmond.

AFC Director of Advocacy Jim Pickett said: "I blame him for getting me into the HIV/AIDS racket. Back when I was the editor of a sassy (obnoxious) gay rag called GAB, he convinced me to join HPPG—the HIV Prevention Planning Group. I was walking in Boys Town (summer 1999) ... and Laird came by on his bike and asked me if I was interested. I had never heard of it, and I couldn't even remember what each of the letters stood for minutes after hearing them. It sounded boring and maybe not something I wanted to do, but he was insistent, and so, and so ... I applied and was accepted into the group. This is a HUGE reason why HIV/AIDS became my

passion and my career. I owe so much of it to you Laird. You saw something beyond 'predictably unsavory'. And I say that sincerely, and with deep gratitude."

Former Horizons Executive Director Bruce Koff said, "There are many wonderful but largely unsung heroes in our community. Laird was among them. Through his devotion and tireless work for Horizons in numerous capacities from the early 1980s, he inspired hundreds of volunteers and donors and left a legacy from which future generations will benefit. I will always remember his gentle humor, his calm in the storm of the AIDS crisis, and his unwavering generosity of spirit."

Another former Horizons executive director, Thomas Buchanan, said that "when I first met Laird, and we were figuring out how to come out of a deep hole at Horizons, we had lunch one day on Belmont. We walked past the old Petersen Furniture Co. building on Belmont near Sheffield, long out of business and out of the family. But the bronze letters in the sidewalk said, 'What Petersen Promises, Petersen Delivers!' He was so proud of that quote from his grandfather, and I imagine the sidewalk is still there. I also remember dressing in a room at the Drake for the first Human First we did together, and him showing me his cuff links, inherited from the Hawaiian royal family through his mother's side of the family. He was so proud of his parents and siblings, and gave everything he did his all. ... He also had great legs!"

Former Chicagoan Barbara Raab wrote, "I knew Laird from the original Horizon days. I can still hear his hearty, throaty laugh."

Petersen was diagnosed with HIV 27 years ago and has been helping people his whole life. He was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2006. Anyone who knew Petersen well knows he threw one hell of a party.

Petersen is survived by his partner of 16 years, Joe Price; sisters Brooke, Barbara and Amy; and brothers Nick (Camille), Christian, Mark (Cindy) and Jim (Nancy).

**In lieu of flowers, please make a donation, either food or financial, to Fan Free Clinic, 1010 North Thompson, P.O. Box 6477, Richmond, Va., 23230.**

**There will be an open house memorial celebrating Petersen's life on Sunday, Oct. 24, 3-6 p.m., at 5000 E. Seminary, Richmond, Va.**



Laird Petersen at the 2002 Pride Parade.

## Alicia Amador dies

Longtime *Mujeres Latinas en Accion* staff member, friend and *compañera* Alicia Amador died of cancer Oct. 7 from cancer. She was 56.

Amador served as a mentor, organizer and leader to youth in the Pilsen community over the course of her three-decade career at *Mujeres Latinas en Acción*. She was a founding member of *Amigas Latinas*, Chicago's Latina lesbian organization.

A lifelong Pilsen resident, Amador held many roles at *Mujeres* including those of counselor, advocate, interim director, and most recently youth services coordinator. Among her many accomplishments, Amador led a successful campaign against tobacco companies who marketed their products to youth, was involved in liquor license reform in Pilsen and Little Village, oversaw organizing efforts to educate youth on reproductive health and justice issues and managed *Mujeres* during a period of difficult transition.

"She was the spirit of our organization and the embodiment of our mission," said Maria S. Pesqueira, president and CEO of *Mujeres Latinas en Acción*. "There was not a phase of our development as an organization in which Alicia was not involved or an active contributor. We are deeply saddened by her loss."

Amador had a contagious laugh and sense of humor. She was well known at *Mujeres* as the resident storyteller and historian who would serve as a constant reminder to maintain focus on the neighborhood needs and mentor the next generation of leaders in the organization. She took new staff on ride-a-longs of the neighborhood in her car, pointing out neighborhood drug spots and gang areas.

But perhaps her greatest legacy was the impact she had on children and families in the Pilsen community.

"She was a teacher," said Miguel Grajales, who worked closely with Alicia in the Peace Program, working with children aged 6-12. "She respected children and reminded us to respect children always. She cared about us."

She held leadership positions in YouthNet, the



Alicia Amador. Chicago Gay History photo by Hal Baim

Harrison Park Advisory Council, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Advisory Board and the Latina Dropout Prevention Project.

"Alicia touched our lives in so many ways," said Neusa Gaytan, program director at *Mujeres*. "She taught us the value of friendship and respect. Alicia will be deeply missed."

Amador is survived by her partner of 15 years, Norma Seledon (a former executive director of Lesbian Community Cancer Project, now known as the Lesbian Community Care Project); her daughter, Dolores; three grandchildren, Angel, Daniel and Jessica; three brothers, Rudy, Celestino and Anthony; and two sisters, Marie and Shirley; and countless extended family members. She is preceded in death by her sister, Maria "Maruca" Martinez, *Mujeres'* first staff member.

Visitation was Monday, Oct. 11, at Funeraria del Angel, 5218 S. Kedzie. A public viewing was held at St. Procopius Church, 1641 S. Allport, Oct. 12.

Amador was interviewed both alone and with her partner Norma Seledon for the Chicago Gay History Project in 2007. Her video is at <http://www.chicagogayhistory.com/biography.html?id=688>.

### LOCAL EVENTS

#### Alliance Brunch at HUB 51 Oct. 17

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance (ISSA) is holding its Alliance Brunch Sunday, Oct. 17, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at the restaurant HUB 51, 51 W. Hubbard.

The event celebrates accomplishments and honors those who demonstrate their commitment to the safety, support and healthy development of LGBTQ youth in schools and communities throughout the state.

Those being honored include State Sen. Kimberly Lightford and state Rep. Karen Yarbrough as Advocates of the Year; Dillin Dee as Activist of the Year; and Ernst & Young as Ally of the Year.

See <http://www.IllinoisSafeSchools.org>.

#### Affinity marking 15 years at Sidetrack Oct. 23

Affinity Community Services (Affinity) has been celebrating its 15th anniversary all year with a series of small events. On Saturday, Oct. 23, Affinity will host a special event at Sidetrack to honor the organization's founders and founding board members.

E. Patrick Johnson—star of the one-man play *Sweet Tea* and author of *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*—will emcee the event.

The VIP reception is 1-2 p.m. and the general-admission event is 2-4 p.m. The admission for the VIP reception is \$30; the price for general admission is \$15. See <http://www.affinity95.org>.

#### Springfield HIV/AIDS center's gala Oct. 16

Phoenix Center, Springfield's source for HIV/AIDS programs and services, has scheduled its 10th Anniversary Fall GAYla at the Hoogland Center For The Arts on Saturday, Oct. 16. Cocktail hour and silent auction begins at 5:30 p.m., followed by a gourmet dinner and the action-packed live auction.

Individual tickets may be purchased for \$50; a table of eight is \$400 (with one free ticket). Contact the Phoenix Center at 217-528-5253 or purchase tickets online at [www.phoenixcenter-springfield.org](http://www.phoenixcenter-springfield.org).

#### UIC's Gender & Sexuality Center programs in Oct.

This October, the University of Illinois's Gender & Sexuality Center will celebrate LGBTQ Heritage Month as well as 15 years of providing or facilitating LGBTQ education, outreach, research and support to the UIC and Chicago/Chicagoland communities. All programs during the month are free and open to the public.

The closing program will be the Compton Queer Knowledge Bowl on Thursday, Oct. 28, at 4 p.m., where students will compete for prizes. Afterwards, there will be a party to celebrate the 15th anniversary. For more information on any of the programs, visit <http://www.gsc.uic.edu> or call 312-413-8619.

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#### Use

KALETRA is a prescription anti-HIV-1 medicine called a protease inhibitor that contains lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to increase the chance of treatment response in people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS and does not stop you from passing HIV-1 to others. You may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1.

#### KALETRA Safety Considerations

Do not take KALETRA if you are allergic to any of its ingredients, including lopinavir or ritonavir. Do not take KALETRA with certain medicines, as they can cause serious problems, death, or make KALETRA less effective against HIV. Some patients taking KALETRA can develop inflammation of the pancreas and liver problems, which can cause death. Patients may develop changes in heart rhythm, large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol, diabetes, high blood sugar, changes in body fat, and/or increased bleeding in people with hemophilia. Some patients may develop signs and symptoms of serious infections they already have after starting anti-HIV medicines. Please see Brief Summary for more details.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch), or call 1-800-FDA-1088 (1-800-332-1088).

If you cannot afford your medication, contact: [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org) or call the toll-free number (1-888-4PPA-NOW) or (1-888-477-2669) for assistance.

For additional information about KALETRA, call 1-866-KALETRA (1-866-525-3872) or visit [KALETRA.com](http://KALETRA.com).

Please see Brief Summary on adjacent pages.

**KALETRA**<sup>®</sup>  
(lopinavir/ritonavir)

Positive  
PARTNERSHIP  
Program

Model is for illustrative purposes only.

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# KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Tablets

# KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Oral Solution

CONSUMER BRIEF SUMMARY  
CONSULT PACKAGE INSERT FOR  
FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION

## Patient Information

Read the Medication Guide that comes with KALETRA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment. You and your doctor should talk about your treatment with KALETRA before you start taking it and at regular check-ups. You should stay under your doctor's care when taking KALETRA.

### What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?

KALETRA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Interactions with other medicines. It is important to know the medicines that should not be taken with KALETRA.** Read the section "What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?"
- **Changes in your heart rhythm and the electrical activity of your heart.** These changes may be seen on an EKG (electrocardiogram) and can lead to serious heart problems. Your risk for these problems may be higher if you:
  - already have a history of abnormal heart rhythm or other types of heart disease.
  - take other medicines that can affect your heart rhythm while you take KALETRA.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms while taking KALETRA:

- dizziness
- lightheadedness
- fainting
- sensation of abnormal heartbeats

See the section below "What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?" for more information about serious side effects.

### What is KALETRA?

KALETRA is a prescription anti-HIV medicine that contains two medicines: lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is called a protease inhibitor that is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

### Who should not take KALETRA?

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please see "Can I take other medicines with KALETRA?" and consult with your doctor about all other medicines you take.

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir and lopinavir.

### What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

KALETRA may not be right for you. Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- have any heart problems, including if you have a condition called Congenital Long QT Syndrome.
- have liver problems, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C.
- have diabetes.
- have hemophilia. People who take KALETRA may have increased bleeding.
- have low potassium in your blood.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if KALETRA will harm your unborn baby. Birth control pills or patches may not work as well while you take KALETRA. To prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA, women who take birth control pills or use estrogen patch for birth control should either use a different type of birth control or an extra form of birth control. Talk to your doctor about how to prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA.
- take KALETRA during pregnancy, talk with your doctor about how you can take part in an antiretroviral pregnancy registry. The purpose of the pregnancy registry is to follow the health of you and your baby.
- are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV-1. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby while taking KALETRA, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. If your baby does not already have HIV-1, there is a chance that HIV-1 can be passed to your baby through your breast milk.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take,** including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Many medicines interact with KALETRA. Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your doctor or pharmacist. Your doctor can tell you if it is safe to take KALETRA with other medicines. Your doctor may need to change the dose of other medicines while you take KALETRA.

### Medicines you should not take with KALETRA.

**Serious problems or death can happen if you take these medicines with KALETRA:**

- ergot containing medicines, including:
  - ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot, Ergomar, Ergostat, Medihaler Ergotamine, Wigraine, Wigrettes)
  - dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Embolex, Migranal®)
  - ergonovine, ergonovine and methylegonovine (Ergotrate, Methergine), ergotamine and methylegonovine
  - Ergotrate Maleate, methylegonovine maleate (Methergine)
- triazolam (Halcion®), midazolam hydrochloride oral syrup
- pimozone (Orap®)
- the cholesterol lowering medicines lovastatin (Mevacor®) or simvastatin (Zocor®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®) only when used for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension. (See "Medicines that may need changes" and "What are the possible side effects of Kaletra?" for information about the use of sildenafil for erectile problems.)
- alfuzosin (Uroxatral®)

**Medicines that you should not take with KALETRA since they may make KALETRA not work as well:**

- the herbal supplement St. John's Wort (hypericum perforatum)
- rifampin (Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®)

**Medicines that may need changes:**

- birth control pills that contain estrogen ("the pill") or the birth control (contraceptive) patches
- certain anticancer medicines, such as nilotinib (Tasigna®) and dasatinib (Sprycel®)
- certain cholesterol lowering medicines, such as atorvastatin (Lipitor®) or rosuvastatin (Crestor®)
- certain other antiretroviral medicines, such as efavirenz (Atripla® and Sustiva®), nevirapine (Viramune®), amprenavir (Agenerase®) and nelfinavir (Viracept®)
- anti-seizure medicines, such as phenytoin (Dilantin®) carbamazepine, (Tegretol®), phenobarbital
- medicines for erectile problems, such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®)

- medicines for tuberculosis (TB), such as rifabutin (Mycobutin®)
- inhaled steroid medicines, such as fluticasone propionate (Flonase®)
- inhaled medicines such as salmeterol (Serevent®) or salmeterol in combination with fluticasone propionate (Advair®). Your doctor may need to change to a different medicine
- medicines for gout, such as colchicine (Colcrys®)
- medicines to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH), such as bosentan (Tracleer®) or tadalafil (Adcirca®)
- pain medicines, such as fentanyl (Duragesic®, Ionsys™, Fentora®) and methadone

**If you are not sure if you are taking a medicine above, ask your doctor.**

**How should I take KALETRA?**

- Take KALETRA every day exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- It is very important to set up a dosing schedule and follow it every day.
- Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- Swallow KALETRA tablets whole. Do not chew, break, or crush KALETRA tablets.
- KALETRA tablets can be taken with or without food.
- If you are taking both Videx® (didanosine) and KALETRA:
  - didanosine can be taken at the same time as KALETRA tablets, without food.
  - take didanosine either one hour before or two hours after taking KALETRA oral solution.
- Do not miss a dose of KALETRA. This could make the virus harder to treat. If you forget to take KALETRA, take the missed dose right away. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Instead, follow your regular dosing schedule by taking your next dose at its regular time. Do not take more than one dose of KALETRA at one time.
- If you take more than the prescribed dose of KALETRA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
- Take KALETRA oral solution with food to help it work better.
- If KALETRA is being used for your child, tell your doctor if your child's weight changes.
- KALETRA **should not** be given one time each day in children. When giving KALETRA to your child, give KALETRA exactly as prescribed.
- KALETRA oral solution contains a large amount of alcohol.
  - If a young child drinks more than the recommended dose, it could make them sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
  - Talk with your doctor if you take or plan to take metronidazole or disulfiram. You can have severe nausea and vomiting if you take these medicines with KALETRA.

- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. It is important not to run out of KALETRA. The amount of HIV-1 virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may become resistant to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- KALETRA can be taken with acid reducing agents used for heartburn or reflux such as omeprazole (Prilosec®) and ranitidine (Zantac®) with no dose adjustment.
- KALETRA should not be administered once daily in combination with carbamazepine (Tegretol® and Epitol®), phenobarbital (Luminal®), or phenytoin (Dilantin®).

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection. KALETRA does not stop you from passing HIV infection to others. Do not share needles, other injection equipment or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

**What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?**

**KALETRA can cause serious side effects.**

- See **"What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?"**
- **Liver problems.** Liver problems, including death, can happen in people who take KALETRA. Blood tests in people who take KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these signs and symptoms of liver problems:
  - loss of appetite
  - yellow skin and whites of eyes (jaundice)
  - dark-colored urine
  - pale colored stools, itchy skin
  - stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **Inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis).** Some people who take KALETRA get inflammation of the pancreas which may be serious and cause death. You have a higher chance of getting pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain while taking KALETRA. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- **Increases in certain fat (triglycerides and cholesterol) levels in your blood.** Large increases of triglycerides and cholesterol can be seen in blood test results of some people who take KALETRA. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- **Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia).** Some people who take protease inhibitors including KALETRA get new or more serious diabetes, or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you notice an increase in thirst or urinate often while taking KALETRA.

- **Changes in body fat.** Changes in body fat in some people who take antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- **Increased bleeding for hemophiliacs.** Some people with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors including KALETRA.
- **Increased risk of certain problems when you take medicines used for the treatment of erectile problems such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®) with KALETRA:**
  - **low blood pressure.** If you get dizzy or faint, you need to lie down. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have fainting spells.
  - **vision changes.** Tell your doctor right away if you have vision changes.
  - **penis erection lasting more than 4 hours.** If you are a male and have an erection that lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.
- **Allergic reactions.** Skin rashes, some of them severe, can occur in people who take KALETRA. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a rash when you took another medicine for your HIV infection or if you notice any skin rash when you take KALETRA.

Common side effects of KALETRA include:

- diarrhea
- nausea
- stomach area (abdominal) pain
- feeling weak
- vomiting
- headache
- upset stomach

These are not all of the possible side effects of KALETRA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

**How should I store KALETRA?**

**KALETRA tablets:**

- Store KALETRA tablets at room temperature, between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C).
- Do not keep KALETRA tablets out of the container it comes in for longer than 2 weeks, especially in areas where there is a lot of humidity. Keep the container closed tightly.

**KALETRA oral solution:**

- Store KALETRA oral solution in a refrigerator, between 36°F to 46°F (2°C to 8°C). KALETRA oral solution that is kept refrigerated may be used until the expiration date printed on the label.

- KALETRA oral solution that is stored at room temperature (less than 77°F or 25°C) should be used within 2 months.
- Keep KALETRA away from high heat.

Throw away any medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need.

**Keep KALETRA and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

#### General information about KALETRA

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Do not use KALETRA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give KALETRA to other people, even if they have the same condition you have. It may harm them.

This Medication Guide summarizes the most important information about KALETRA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for information about KALETRA that is written for health professionals. For more information about KALETRA call 1-800-633-9110 or go to [www.KALETRA.com](http://www.KALETRA.com).

#### What are the ingredients in KALETRA?

Active ingredient: lopinavir and ritonavir

Inactive ingredients:

**KALETRA 200 mg lopinavir and 50 mg ritonavir tablets:** copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: hypromellose, titanium dioxide, polyethylene glycol 400, hydroxypropyl cellulose, talc, colloidal silicon dioxide, polyethylene glycol 3350, yellow ferric oxide 172, and polysorbate 80.

**KALETRA 100 mg lopinavir and 25 mg ritonavir tablets:** copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: polyvinyl alcohol, titanium dioxide, talc, polyethylene glycol 3350, and yellow ferric oxide E172.

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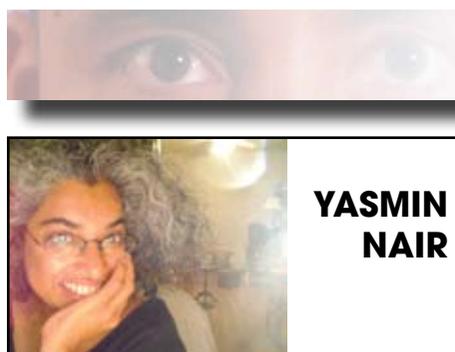
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**"Windy City Media Group generated enormous interest among their readers in this year's LGBT Consumer Index Survey. Out of approximately 100 print and online media partners who participated in the survey, Windy City was the best performing regional media in the U.S. Only survey partners with a nationwide footprint were able to generate a greater number of responses." —David Marshall, Research Director, Community Marketing, Inc.**

 Community Marketing, Inc.



**YASMIN NAIR**

## Queer suicides: Complicate the issue

The last few weeks have seen a flurry of stories about the supposed rise in queer suicides, particularly by youth and young adults. But while the deaths are undoubtedly tragic, they are by no means unusual and have not increased in number; they are simply being reported on more often. The exact reasons why the press would, at this time, take such an interest in queer suicides are the subjects of a future piece. For now, I want to complicate the narratives and stories about queer youth that are being spun in the media and in our cultural discourse.

It is necessary to pay attention, as we have been doing, to why queer youth in particular are more than four times as likely to commit suicide than their straight peers. It is even more important to pay attention to how we deploy and even, on occasion, distort their reasons for doing so. Attempts to provide both reasons and solutions for the problem are often shamelessly manipulative and display a rank ignorance of the many multiple contexts in which queer youth live and die.

Take, for instance, the short but hyperbolic video by Sarah Silverman, where she says: "Dear America, When you tell gay Americans that they can't serve their country openly or marry the person that they love, you're telling that to kids, too. So don't be fucking shocked and wonder where all these bullies are coming from that are torturing young kids and driving them to kill themselves ... because they learned it from watching you."

Kathy Griffin takes this even further on a PSA for the Trevor Project where she says, "That's why it's so important that Prop 8 gets thrown out by the Supreme Court and 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' gets repealed. Because right now the message the government is sending our young people is that it's unacceptable and inferior to be gay."

No. Those are not the reasons why queer children and youth kill themselves. In 2009, 11-year-old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover killed himself in Massachusetts after being taunted, on a daily basis, for being gay. Walker-Hoover did not identify as gay. He lived in a state where gay marriage has been legal since 2004.

There are, of course, several instances of queer-identified youth killing themselves after being bullied on account of their sexuality. And, certainly, the extreme right's hostility to gay marriage or gays in the military does create a climate where there is at least a segment of society used to engaging in hateful rhetoric about queers.

But none of this justifies a logistical leap to the point of arguing that allowing gays to get married or join the army will somehow make people hate queers, or people they think of as queers, less. When a queer gets bashed, the basher isn't thinking, "I hope this person isn't the married kind because THEY would be all right." The issue facing us is not how to make the bigots love us, but the bigotry they express. Which is to say: twisting and turning gay marriage into a solution for queer suicides is an abhorrent tactic to bolster the cause of gay marriage, on which

there is no consensus in the LGBTQ community. The simple truth is that people hate us and will cause us harm. They may hate us because they secretly see themselves in us and are terrified of what that means, or they may hate us simply because they see us as the evil to be wiped out. But they hate us and they will cause us harm. The fact that we might be able to marry will not make a bit of difference to such deep-seated hatred.

To say otherwise is to make a political point—and make no mistake, gay marriage is a political matter—and the Trevor Project, for which Griffin was acting as a spokesperson, has no business mixing politics into its messages about queer youth. When someone commits suicide because life as a queer or being perceived as a queer is so unbearable, it's not because they simply dream of being married someday. It's because their lives are living nightmares.

My 22-year-old friend Hans Aggraito probably put it best: "Just as anti-depression pills are being handed out like candy to people in my generation, gay marriage is offered as the magic bullet to solve all of our gay woes."

I have no doubt that, despite the problems with the Griffin PSA, the Trevor Project is doing vital and important work. But what of preventive measures before that happens? What are the conditions in which students live? For that we need to turn to local organizations staffed by local activists who understand the issues. More importantly, we need to understand that queerness is not all that defines these youth.

Chicago has the most militarized school district in the country and there is tremendous pressure on the schools' minority populations to join the army. The DREAM Act, which would give a chance at citizenship to undocumented youth brought here by their parents before the age of six, has a military option: students can enlist for two years in order to gain a path to citizenship. The districts' military schools already heavily recruit African-American and Latino/a students, building on a prevalent idea that students of color are more likely to need discipline that they supposedly lack in their families. In addition, military service is offered as an economic ladder, promising upward mobility to these students. Students also face tremendous violence in their school neighborhoods: In 2008, more than 500 schoolchildren were shot in Chicago.

When I raise these issues in relation to queer youth, I am often told that these are not queer-specific. But queer youth are also undocumented, at risk of being shot and live in a district where they are preyed upon by the aggressive recruiting tactics of the military. All of these circumstances are a result of the violence of the state, which promises liberation through the possibility of being killed but will not guarantee that students might go to school without the same possibility. Being harassed for being queer only compounds matters for these students.

There have been cases of undocumented youth committing suicide for fear of being deported. And surely it is also possible that some of the suicides we hear of come about because a combination of poverty and lack of support

in schools. Yet, sociologists and cultural critics rarely acknowledge poverty as a cause of death while "sexual orientation/gender identity" is a cause that they find easy to grasp. When the undocumented are discovered to also be queer, the media focuses on the idea that they face the possibility of violence in their countries of origin, bolstering the myth that a state so violent as to refuse legitimacy to these youth can actually now provide protection from the presumed repression of another state. But students, like anyone else, do not live in vacuums where only their sexual identities define their existence. They are acted upon by multiple issues. More importantly, they are also capable of political will and agency. Would queer students want to join a military that will not allow them to serve openly? For that matter, would they even want to serve at all?

Students, queer or otherwise, participate in immigration rallies, sometimes under threat of being expelled. Youth of color enter Boystown only to be told by merchants and residents that they have no right to be there and that they make the neighborhood look too dangerous. They participate in anti-war marches. At a meeting organized by queer youth to address the ongoing problem of racism towards youth of color in Boystown, business owners spoke condescendingly about the lack of resources on the south side. One youth stood up and shot back words to this effect: "We do have places on the South Side, you just don't choose to fund them." Youth are not stupid, and they know when they're being lied to.

The point is that queer bullying cannot operate in a vacuum. A school that is hostile to queer youth is not likely to be safe for many of its other students. The logic that queer suicides have to do entirely with sexual identity erases the complicated realities of what it means to be an LGBT or queer youth, and it turns queer youth into apolitical people who just need to be rescued.

The current rise in the reports of queer youth suicides does not signify either an epidemic or a crisis. What we are witnessing is the ongoing reality of what it means to be queer in a world where we forego complicated, systemic analyses of our issues in favor of simplistic and sentimental rhetoric about love and bravery conquering all. The Trevor Project is a hotline, not a program. While it performs an important service, the long-term work of preventing these suicides in a systemic way can only happen if we consider queer youth as more than just queer. If we are to address the issue of queer suicides, we need to think long and hard about actually addressing the depth and complexity of the problem without resorting to magic pill arguments.

**Yasmin Nair is a member of Gender JUST and the editorial collective Against Equality. She wrote the introduction to the first AE book, Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage. Her work can be found at <http://www.yasminnair.net>. Against Equality is at <http://www.againstequality.org>.**

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Items may be edited for length or clarity.

# IT DOES GET BETTER

A special section of  
**WINDY CITY  
TIMES**

## Wait 'Til the Facts Are In

BY KIRK WILLIAMSON



Screen capture of Williamson reading this essay on YouTube as part of Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" project.

The biggest problem with being young is just that: you're young. When you're 13 or 14, there is precious little hindsight or opportunity for retrospect. While it's a bit clichéd that with age comes wisdom, it's true in the sense that with experience comes wisdom and at that age, you are only just beginning to experience the world in an independent sense. You haven't necessarily been equipped with the tools you'll need to deal with some of life's most pressing issues. Unfortunately, it's also at that age that these issues begin to press... and press hard.

I first became aware of my sexuality around the age of 11. I had begun to fantasize about other boys in my class, and while I never made this known to anyone, I carried on my fantasies with no hint of shame. I had no idea that these fantasies were sexual in nature. I had been raised to believe—to KNOW, rather—that boys will be attracted to girls at some magical crossroads called puberty. Therefore, I "knew" that sex was something between a man and a woman and I "knew" that when I became a man, I would have sexual feelings towards women. If I knew then what I know now...

I finally put two and two together after reading some horrible little book brought home in earnest by my mother. It was one of those everything-you-need-to-know-about-your-changing-body-with-a-Christ-focus books printed to assuage teenaged confusion. It only served to exacerbate mine. I remember two passages most clearly.

The first was a frank description of sex, complete with body parts this and engorged that. It didn't take me long to draw the connection between what this book was describing and what I had been doing in the locked bathroom while dreaming about overnight stays with my school chums.

The second passage is the one that struck me the hardest. In this 200-page book, chock-full of everything I would need to know on my journey into adult Christian sexual expression, there were exactly two sentences on homosexuality (trust me, I did a thorough search). Paraphrased slightly, these two sentences were: Homosexuality is a terrible condition in which people are attracted to those of the same sex. But you don't need to worry about this because it rarely happens to good Christians. Great, now not only do I have a condition, but I'm also a bad Christian!

I never chose to be who I am, I merely came to the knowledge that I am who I am. I never sat down and planned to be gay. I was taught that if you "chose" to be gay, you would have to suffer the hellfire consequences of that choice. Fair enough, I thought. A blazing eternity was sufficient impetus for me to make the "right choices." But I never chose this. How was it fair that I was facing the ultimate punishment for something over which I had no choice? My logic then, with all the knowledge I had, was sound: I must just be a bad person.

Meanwhile, the bullying at school only served to further this hypothesis. It was becoming quite clear that, at the very least, I was not like the other boys. And they spared no opportunity to remind me of that fact. All I knew about being gay I learned from the misguided passages in that adolescent tract from Focus On the Family and from the mocking tone of voices that accompanied all my newly acquired nicknames, such as "faggot" and "cocksucker." I wasn't sure who I was yet as a person, but I knew I did not want to be who I was turning out to be.

And that's the main problem with being young: All the facts are not in yet. I was convinced at that time that I was innately evil and flawed and I really, truly did not want to live. While I never did anything about it, I clearly recall a certain staircase in my high school. It was three stories high and spiraled around an open area that went straight down to the first floor. Many times I figured it would be easier to jump from the railing and plunge headfirst into the speckled green linoleum than to face the taunts and teasing I received because of something deep inside that I hated as much as the teasers and taunters did.

But something told me to hold on. It was not Jesus. It was not social or familial responsibility. It was not even fear. It was the feeling that some way, somehow, things might get better. And they did. Things got much better, and not just for me.

Now that I am older, and the facts are in (for the most part), I live my life as an out, proud gay man. I am the art director of a gay newspaper and the editor of a gay magazine. Every morning I report to work I am proclaiming, "I am here, I am queer, let's get the job done!"

I know that God does not hate me; the truth is quite the opposite. I know that I am happy, healthy, fulfilled and fabulous! While I am not particularly religious, I still live by the basic tenets of good faith: generosity, kindness, caring, humility, love.

And above all else, I know that I am extremely glad that I held on. Had I not, I could not be writing this essay in the knowledge that perhaps just one set of young gay or lesbian eyes might see these words and have that same glimmer of hope for a better future that made me who I am today.

*Kirk Williamson is the art director and a senior account manager for Windy City Media Group (WCMG), in addition to being the managing editor WCMG's Nightspots Magazine. He is a published writer and poet.*

Dan Savage, the nationally syndicated writer, author and blogger, started a new YouTube channel, *It Gets Better*, to give hope to our next generation of LGBTs. The bullying, suicides and all-around difficulties of growing up different are still cause for alarm in 2010, even as society becomes more accepting of LGBTs. Savage started this project before the recent tragic news of more suicides among gay youth.

This week, *Windy City Times* is including a special section on the topic, in the words of our writers and guest essayists, hoping to be part of the dialogue with youth, telling them "it does get better."

*Windy City Times* will be taking submissions of essays to run on our Web site, [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com), and in future issues. Please send your submission to [editor@windycitymediagroup.com](mailto:editor@windycitymediagroup.com)

## Seeing Beyond the Horizon

BY TRACY BAIM

The recent heart-wrenching stories of gay youth committing suicide are just unimaginable horrors for their families and our community. Despite decades of work, and progress, on gay rights, we still see the high cost of homophobia. Gay kids have always been at high risk for attempting suicide. What is different now, it seems, is that parents are more willing to call attention to the tragedies, so that the stories can be told in the media.

Suicide is a very personal topic for me. When I was a sophomore in college, I tried to kill myself. For complicated reasons, in part for social pressure and in part because I feared (and was told) I could not be openly gay and a journalist, I took dozens of pills in an effort to end my life. When it was clear to me that I might not succeed and may instead be damaged physically, I called for help and ended up in the hospital for a week. My school forced me into therapy in order to remain living in the dorm that year.

Therapy did not help, but coming so close to losing my life did change me. I had actually almost been killed twice before, once at the hands of a knife-wielding attacker when I was 15, and again by a driver who ran a red light into the car I was driving, but this was different, this was at my own choosing, and an oddly empowering act. I wrote about the attempt in my poetry journal for my English professor, who just happened to be Mark Doty, now a well-known and award-winning openly gay poet. He was not openly gay back then, and he courageously came out to me in the pages of my poetry journal, telling me, in so many words, "it gets better."

That's why I was very inspired when Dan Savage started his new YouTube channel "It Gets Better." Those few words my professor wrote to me in the early 1980s impacted my life in a profound way. Not just the words, but the risk I knew he took in coming out to me—in trusting me.

From that moment on, and every day since, I have not allowed external forces to dictate who I am, or what I can do. As weird as it sounds, the suicide attempt freed me to be all I could be, without the constraints of society. I am not suggesting people attempt suicide to free themselves—I should not have had to do that to know I could be my own person.

I was actually among the lucky ones. Growing



up, I had a supportive family. I had gay role models (family friends). I was kind of out in high school, or at least defined by the lesbian friends I hung out with. And in college, I was boldly out and started the Drake University women's soccer club that year. I was pretty well received and not a social outcast, at least among the friends I cared about. Yet I just couldn't take it anymore, no matter how busy I kept doing school newsletters, starting groups, or writing articles. Something triggered in me a fear of the unknown future.

But because gays even today have very few immediate adult gay role models, and some come from unsupportive families, the pressures still can be just as much as when I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. And many gay adults are afraid of mentoring gay youth because of the age-old stereotypes about recruitment and molestation. But it is the closeted homophobes (and pastors) who put our kids at risk, not out and proud, well-adjusted LGBT adults. We should no longer fear being out to youth, because they are coming out at ever-younger ages. And some of these kids who are killing themselves may not even be gay, but rather they fit stereotypes and are harassed for being gay—they, too, need to see they have infinite choices ahead. That it will get better for them, too.

I am very fortunate to have survived my suicide attempt. But I do not regret it, because it created a "before" and "after" for me that changed my life for the better. From that moment on I knew it was my choice, and mine alone, to be on this planet. It sounds funny to say that knowing you do NOT have to be here frees you to really BE here, but that has worked for me. No one stands in my way, even if they shout me down at a public meeting about gay rights, or make harassing calls to my work, or send threatening letters in email or snail mail.

To the gay kids, and those who are otherwise "different," I am telling you it does, absolutely, get better. The bullies will not go away, and you may always be called names (someone driving quickly by a recent Rockford gay protest yelled "faggot" from their car at those gathered). But you have to choose to live your life for you, and never mind the bullies. They do not have the power, you do. Find sanctuary if you have to, but know there are people out here who want to help you.

**"School doesn't have to be horrible just because you're LGBT! Schools should be safe for everyone. Through the Make It Better Project, youth and adults can work together to prevent suicide and make schools safer for LGBT youth right now. Go to [www.MakeItBetterProject.org](http://www.MakeItBetterProject.org) to learn how."**

**- Carolyn Laub, executive director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network**

# What Love Does

BY TONI WEAVER

PFLAG mom Toni Weaver wrote the following essay for the PFLAG Open Doors newsletter, and introduced Windy City Times Publisher Tracy Baim to the Pirtles at the recent Rockford, Ill., protest of Exodus; their photo appeared in the Windy City Times coverage of the event. Following Weaver's essay are essays by Amy and her 15-year-old gay son Bobby, reflecting on the harassment he faced, and how his family helped him cope.

I'd like to tell you about a special family—the Pirtles. Amy and Mike Pirtle relocated to this area from Racine, Wisc., a little more than a year ago. Their son, Bobby, spent a miserable freshman year at one of the McHenry County high schools being the brunt of anti-gay jokes and bullying even before he came out. During

the summer he told his parents that he simply couldn't go back to that school in the Fall. Amy and Mike made the very difficult decision to put their home on the market and to rent a townhouse in Lombard so that Bobby could attend Glenbard East High School.

Early on, Amy had been in touch with Shannon Sullivan at Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and learned that Glenbard East has an active Gay/Straight Alliance and rates highly as a school that has taken measures to protect their LGBT students. The climate there should provide Bobby with a safe and nurturing environment in which to learn.

In addition to being a volunteer with the Open Door Clinic in Elgin, Amy has been a dynamic member of our Woodstock chapter of PFLAG, and her loss is devastating, for she has brought so much energy and enthusiasm to the chapter. However, whichever chapter picks her up will be so much the richer.

This is what love does.

# My Dear Children

BY AMY PIRTLE

My Dear Children, I have been blessed with the three of you. You are all funny and bright and talented and smart. You are all brown-haired and hazel-eyed. One of you is a college senior studying biology and environmental studies, and you make beautiful music on the piano and the clarinet, you are interested in animal conservation and working in Australia, and you are quietly wise. Another of you is a marketing major in your second year of college, you sing like an angel, adore your family and friends, you are compassionate, play ultimate frisbee, and have an infectious laugh. You, the third-born, are in high school, you eat, sleep and drink music, love to laugh with your friends, question authority, play a fine game of tennis, love English class, and you never want to be an adult.

Kind of sounds like the stuff a traditional family Christmas letter is made of, right? Bragging on you kids, updating friends and family on your activities, listing your redeeming character traits, only mentioning the positive stuff.

No one wants to read about one of you having such a rough year at school that you turned inward and engaged in some pretty self-destructive behaviors. Or about another of you trying to pick up the pieces of your broken heart. Or about illness or financial strains. No, that would all be TMI for the annual Christmas letter. So we share the sunshine and but-

terflies with others. People like to read about sunshine and butterflies.

And rainbows perhaps ...

Should I mention that one of you is gay? Now that, for some reason, is very newsworthy. That seems to be of interest to anyone and everyone, especially those who have lots of advice on how gay people should be living their lives. That is headline material even to pure strangers who know nothing of you, much less of your strong character and loving heart. Doesn't matter that you save your money to donate to charities, and you are always there for your friends when they need you (not to mention that you have probably saved more than one of your friends from doing something they'd regret during a moment of personal anguish), and you love your family, and you hurt and cry salty tears like anyone else. Nope, once you were "out" (and maybe even when you weren't) that became the one and only thing that not only described you, but defined you ... at least in the eyes of some people, many of whom don't even know you. And as you started having to face the bullies every day at school, it felt to you that life was never going to get better.

While two of you are never identified by others as "the heterosexual one," one of you almost always has your sexual orientation used in describing you. In fact, you overheard another member of your string quartet describe the group to his friend and refer to you as "the gay one." (Forget that you are the violist of the group, which would make more sense as a

latter, despite the fact that we hadn't even lived in our house a full year, and we began the search for a new place of residence. We shopped for schools before we shopped for homes, and after extensive research, I chose Glenbard East High School.

Since I started my sophomore year at Glenbard East, the difference has been incredible. People aren't taken aback when they find out I'm gay (if they haven't figured it out already), and I don't have to worry about what I told who, or remember who knows what. I'm out of the closet, and that's the end of it. The school also has an active GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) that is constantly advocating for and promoting equality and acceptance for all students, not just LGBTQ-identifying students.

If you have parents who accept you, that can be huge. Talk to them. If not, try to find a teacher to confide in. If you can't find that, talk to a social worker at school, especially if you're having acceptance issues. By law, they cannot tell anyone anything you say regarding your gender identity or sexual orientation but they can probably hook you up with some resources to help you. There are telephone hotlines, Internet groups, and other sources of support out there where you can remain anonymous if you want but still get help.

Your school can be a resource to you in other ways too, depending on the administration's resistance (or commitment) to being LGBTQ friendly. Start a GSA—it's illegal for the school to not let you, as long as you fulfill the requirements of every other club. Find teachers who are sympathetic to your cause. If you have an ally in a teacher, that can have a huge effect on your school experience.

# RESOURCES



## THE TREVOR PROJECT

866-4-U-TREVOR  
www.TheTrevorProject.org



## IT GETS BETTER

www.youtube.com/user/itgetsbetterproject

## PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

www.pflagchicago.org

## GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network)

www.glsen.org

## IL SAFE SCHOOLS ALLIANCE

312-368-9070  
www.IllinoisSafeSchools.org



way of identifying you!) Just when you thought you'd met some people who understood and accepted you, you were faced with the stereotyping by a few in the group and suddenly what you thought was getting better, really wasn't.

All three of you have faced the hurtful words of others, whether those words were directed toward you, a family member, a friend. Luckily, you have strong family roots, from our oldest members who love you wholly and deeply to the youngest who look up to you and respect you. Fortunately, you are all stubborn and strong and have a deep sense of right and wrong; you would all defend a victim rather than victimize; you believe it's more important to build people up than to criticize; you know what to make the most of in your lives and what to minimize. You are learning to have tolerance when necessary and that to have acceptance is an even higher calling. Learning these lessons is a sure sign that it gets better. YOU are better.

Sometimes maybe you younger two can see how things get better from watching your older sibling(s); other times maybe not so much. Maybe all of you can look back at the past year and see that those life crises and hurts that were huge in the moment have now faded with time, or have diminished in mean-

ing, or are healing. Things have gotten better, even though those challenges were really not that long ago.

Your experiences, as varied as they are between the three of you, are your personal building blocks that have created and continue to create who you are, what you stand for, and how strong you'll stand. Though you each follow fiercely independent paths, your connections to each other and to your friends and family support your journeys and uphold you with love. You are empowered to look out for each other; to fix what's broken in our world and nurture what's hurting. You can all make change happen so that things do get better in your own lives and in our world. It gets better because you make that happen.

As you travel your roads, my wish is that you'll always make the journey better for others whose paths you cross, especially those who don't feel loved and valued. Take the lessons you've been given and respect life. You may never know how, but you each touch many, many people in your lives. You have the power to make that moment with another a defining moment in your own life as well as theirs. As you help build others up, your own lives will be enriched. And life will get better for everyone.

I love you all forever and ever, Mom.

# It Gets Better

BY BOBBY PIRTLE

Being a teenager really sucks. Especially if you're not "normal" or "socially acceptable." However, it doesn't have to suck. I am told that it gets better after high school; I don't know if it will get better or not, but I do know that high school shouldn't have to be the hell that so many teenagers experience. There are places that will accept you, regardless of your gender identity or sexual orientation. You shouldn't have to "just survive" high school; you should thrive in high school. However, you do have to have ways or strategies to allow yourself to thrive.

My name is Bobby. I am 15 years old, and an openly gay sophomore at Glenbard East High School in Lombard, Ill. I didn't always go to Glenbard East, though. I spent my freshman year at a high school in the Northwest suburbs where I was the target of a near-constant onslaught of anti-gay jokes and remarks. This bullying was not stopped even by teachers who witnessed it. The bullying became so intense that I resorted to cutting myself, and even considered suicide for a period of time. While these ways of coping may seem appealing at first, they do not in any way solve your problems. They simply distract you for a short time, nothing else. Your problems will still be there, you'll just be worse off.

When my parents found out what was really happening at the school, they offered me the options of homeschooling my way through high school or uprooting from our home and moving to a town with a more accepting community and school. I chose the



**Bobby and Amy Pirtle at the gay protest of Exodus in Rockford, Illinois last month. Photo by Tracy Baim**

You might have to look beyond your high school to find an LGBTQ-friendly environment. Community colleges often offer groups for people in the LGBTQ community and its allies. In addition, accepting churches may offer a safe meeting space for LGBTQ people and allies.

Here are some other tips:

- Don't take everything personally.
- Your safety should be your first priority, so be careful what information you share about yourself with others and what environments and situations you put yourself into and who you hang around with.
- Understand that there will always be ignorance and stupidity.

- Try to get to know and surround yourself with accepting people.
- Don't hate.

- Advocate for others who are not treated fairly, as well as for yourself.
- Read and gather information to help you better understand yourself and your society.

However, the first step towards help is accepting yourself. This is the most important survival tactic I can give you. You cannot share your love if you don't love yourself. Never, ever be ashamed of who you are: gay, straight, bi, female, male, and everything in-between. Once you accept yourself, you can start advocating for acceptance of others. It can get better for all of us.

## Surviving Suicide

BY ERIC MARCUS

Over lunch two years ago, just a week after my partner's sister jumped to her death, my friend Karen said, "I bet that's one club your partner hoped he'd never join." Karen and I already belonged to the "suicide survivors" club—and not by choice. Her elderly father had taken his life just months before. And in 1970 my father swallowed an overdose of prescription medication, leaving my mother with three young children to raise on her own.

How do you make sense of something as incomprehensible as suicide? From experience I know that you can't, but that doesn't mean you don't try. You search for answers, seek to place blame—on others and/or yourself—and you wrestle with the complicated brew of emotions from shock and anger to relief and sorrow that follow in the wake of a loved one's suicide death.

Yet, even for a suicide veteran and semi-expert like me—I wrote a question and answer book about suicide in the mid-1990s called *Why Suicide?*—my sister-in-law's death left me asking the same questions almost everyone asks no matter what the circumstances. Why did she do it? What could have been done differently, but wasn't? And what might I have done differently, but didn't.

Once the initial shock of my sister-in-law's death had passed, I decided to revisit my book and write a new edition in the hope it would help me sort through my confusing emotions and make some sense of what I was feeling. My father's suicide was the original inspiration for my book, so it felt right to seek comfort in its pages and to use what I'd learned in the intervening years about suicide, and about myself, to improve upon the original. Perhaps some good, I thought, could come from this latest tragic death.

As I went about my research I was impressed by three things I found. First, there are more people now than in the past who insist on telling the truth about their loved one's suicide. Second, there's been an explosion of new resources for people who have lived through a suicide, from web sites and books to suicide survivor (or "suicide bereaved") support groups. And third, while people often speak more openly about their experiences, many suicide survivors still struggle under the burden of stigma and shame.

Just as gay people once felt compelled to hide because we feared being judged, suicide survivors are often afraid of being judged, too. They're afraid of being thought defective in some way—that someone will consider them a bad parent, spouse, sibling, friend, or colleague. Or, as in my case, the fear is that someone will judge you as "less than," simply because you come from the kind of family where there has been a suicide.

I came by my shame honestly. I was 12 at the time of my dad's death and the adults around



Eric Marcus (left) with his dad and brother Lewis in 1970.

me acted as if my father had done something unspeakable. To that end they never said a word about him or his suicide other than to explain, when pressed, that he'd died of pneumonia. I took my cues from the adults, but rather than lie about the nature of my father's death, I told almost no one that my dad had even died. It wasn't that I'd taken a moral stand. I was so confused and ashamed that keeping quiet seemed like the easier path.

Now that I'm well into mid-life, I'm usually open about being a suicide survivor. Not always, because suicide can be a real conversation stopper and you can't tell just by looking at someone whether they're a member of the same club. But in recent years I find that when I come out about being a suicide survivor, more often than not if the person I'm speaking with lived through the suicide of someone close to them, too, they'll tell me what we share in common. And when that happens, I take great comfort in knowing that I'm not alone.

*Eric Marcus is the author of several books on gay issues and is co-author of the #1 New York Times bestselling autobiography of Greg Louganis. For more information about Eric's recently re-published book, Why Suicide: Questions & Answers About Suicide, Suicide Prevention, and Coping with the Suicide of Someone You Know, please visit: [www.whysuicidebook.com](http://www.whysuicidebook.com).*

*For information about National Survivors of Suicide Day, which is Saturday, November 20, please visit: [www.afsp.org/survivorday/](http://www.afsp.org/survivorday/)*

## Sticks and Stones

BY ALEXANDRA BILLINGS

The following is from the blog of entertainer Alexandra Billings, <http://abilings.livejournal.com/561077.html>

It didn't work the first time, so this time I was determined. I wasn't going to mess this up. I wasn't going to fail. I was going to make sure I didn't come back. No one was going to save me. No one.

The week before, a group of three boys in my Junior High School had followed me from math class to lunch throwing food at my back and calling out:

"Faggot." And "Hey Scotty-girl." and "Are you a girl or a boy?"

When I got to the stairs to go down to the first floor to try and escape, one of them got behind me and tripped me half way down. The other kids in the hallway either laughed or pretended it wasn't happening. I never called out for help, I never went to a teacher, and I didn't share this with my parents. It was so shameful I couldn't bear to repeat it. And no one really wanted to help, I knew that.

The one teacher I went to the year before told me: "Words can't hurt you."

I was 16 years old and my gender identity was now haunting me. I wasn't about feeling trapped, or that I was a woman inside a man's body, I had no idea what that meant, nor did I care. All I knew at that time was that my heart was aching and I had nowhere to go. I didn't have a safe place. I was sick and tired of fighting and sick and tired of trying to hide, and sick and tired of trying to find an answer.

So, this was the answer.

At 5:30 on a bright Saturday afternoon as my mother and my stepfather were outside in the back of our house, I grabbed a bottle of Tylenol and a prescription of sleeping pills from their cabinet and mixed them together in my hand. I stood in the middle of my bedroom with the sun beating through my window and the large tree that covered the front yard casting a huge shadow at my feet. It was warm and beautiful outside. I wanted to leave the earth in light, not in darkness.

I walked over to my bed, took a handful of the pills and downed them with a swig of water. I then took another handful, and then one last one.

I lay down on the bed, put the two bottles on



Alexandra Billings in the 2009 Chicago Pride Parade. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

the floor, and stared at the ceiling.

I waited for something to happen. Something huge. I wanted something extraordinary and brilliant. I was hoping I wasn't just going to lay there and then throw up. I made sure the bedroom door was locked and I left a note on my desk. The last time I was saved in the nick of time by a friend of mine who came over accidentally in the middle of the night and barged in my room on a Friday and got my mom to rush me to the hospital. But that was a Friday night. This was a Saturday afternoon. This was going to work.

And as the shadow on the floor from the huge tree began to bend from the outside world, the ceiling started to lower. My eyes got tired. My mouth got dry. My feet began to tingle. My head got heavy. My stomach ached and felt as if it was turning inside out. And then I felt my heart race. It was pounding so hard it started to hurt my chest. I got scared. Truly frightened. But I wanted this. It was the only thing I could think of.

No more name calling.

No more excuses as to why I couldn't play ball in gym class.

No more getting tripped or beat up next to the pool at Jane Addams Junior High.

No more lying to my mother so I could stay home instead of going to school.

No more dodging boys in the hallway.

No more loud, huge voices ringing in my head.

I closed my eyes. And dreamed.

And I thank God every single day of my life I was found in time by my Mom on that Saturday afternoon. My stepfather bust down the door and they got me to the hospital in time.

A lot of transgender teenagers aren't this lucky. A lot of them actually succeed. And we're worse off. We're missing voices and thoughts and ideas and brilliance and light because we think bullying and texts from other people have nothing to do with being different. That everyone's journey is the same and that there shouldn't be a difference between kidding around and abuse.

I was lucky.

Some kids aren't.

**"This is a moment where every one of us—parents, teachers, students, elected officials, and all people of conscience—needs to stand up and speak out against intolerance in all its forms. Whether it's students harassing other students because of ethnicity, disability or religion; or an adult, public official harassing the President of the University of Michigan student body because he is gay, it is time we as a country said enough. No more. This must stop."**

**- U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan**

## THE FACES of teenage suicide



**Carl Walker-Hoover**  
11, Massachusetts  
Died April 6, 2009



**Jaheem Herrera**  
11, Georgia  
Died April 16, 2009



**Billy Lucas**  
15, Indiana  
Died September 9, 2010



**Cody J. Barker**  
17, Wisconsin  
Died September 13, 2010



**Seth Walsh**  
13, California  
Died September 19, 2010



**Tyler Clementi**  
18, New Jersey  
Died September 22, 2010

# Caleb's Story

BY ROSS FORMAN

Caleb Laieski knows all too well about the dealing with bullies and suicide—he's personally dealt with both, even though he's only 15.

Laieski, a high school sophomore in Surprise, Ariz., first endured bullies about four years ago, while in middle school.

"I have been called 'faggot' more times than I can count," Laieski said. "I've been followed home, shoved into lockers. I have even received death threats in person, as well as via email, texts and through phone calls."

Laieski said things hit rock bottom for him this past May—and that's when he decided to take a stand, to not let the bullies triumph.

"I decided to take this to the public and went on [the] NBC-TV [affiliate in] Phoenix to bring attention to this issue and to also put the Dysart School District and every other district on notice that anti-gay bullying does happen in their schools [and] will not be tolerated."

Laieski sued his school district.

"The school district did update their anti-bully policy to include sexual orientation, as well as ban usage of slang on campus; gay in a negative context," he said. "The lawsuit may still be proceeded with, if the district fails to enforce the new policy; I will be sure to pursue prompt legal action."

And what about the bullies?

Well, some have transformed and now are "friends" with Laieski, he said.

"Many folks who are hateful and intolerant are [that way] simply due to a lack of education," Laieski said. "If you show respect to all, even haters, as I do, it also shows that you are the one with wisdom and tolerance."

Laieski said he is "saddened" by the five recent suicides and "over 1,000 attempts within the month of September."

Laieski is now the founder and executive director for Gays and Lesbians United Against Discrimination (GLUAD), a group dedicated to equal rights for LGBT families and individuals through various means.

"I have lost close friends to suicide and countless have attempted," he said. "I still get random hateful stares and a few derogatory comments, but I'd say this activism has made a major difference in this city and been a wake-up call for all."

"It's very important for all members of the LGBT community, especially our youth, to acknowledge that they are normal and unique in their own forms; that's what makes them, who they are."

"The Dysart School District [in Arizona] has changed its policy to specifically prohibit bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. Numerous teens have contacted me and other staffers, when they have felt lonely or suicidal, and

I offered them help. Further, we have contacted every teacher and principal in the Anoka, Minnesota and Greensburg, Indiana school districts to inform them of LGBT issues after they experienced recent suicides and it's just the start."

Laieski said GLUAD has "countless" volunteers and about 10 non-paid staff.

"Although that sounds like little staff, we have made more accomplishments than organizations with a body for 30+ staff," he said.

Chicago-based Casey Cameron leads a lot of GLUAD's national and Illinois approaches.

"We are currently in the process of contacting candidates in all 50 states to educate them on the issues being faced by the LGBT community, including the alarming issue of bullying and suicide," Laieski said. "We will be making contact with every school, school district, teacher and principal in every city and state, to educate them on how serious LGBT issues are. In our contact, we will be recommending protections and threatening lawsuits if they fail to follow, intervene, or protect all students."

"We will also work closely with local and national media to inform the public of current events and local situations. We will also soon update our website to include resources for suicide hotlines, resources to report discrimination and hate crimes, coming out guides, how to handle bullying, accept suggestions for homeless shelters, provide contact information to lawmakers and including a quote of the month."



Caleb Laieski. Photo courtesy of Laieski

**"But sympathy is not enough—we all have a responsibility to take action, and to keep working until all young people are safe and respected, no matter what their sexual orientation or gender identity. We must push for laws on the federal level and in every state that prohibit bullying and discrimination. We must hold people accountable, and use the courts when necessary. And most importantly, we must love and teach all our children to be their best selves and to respect and support others to do the same."**

**- Lambda Legal Deputy Legal Director Hayley Gorenberg**

# A National Disgrace

BY KARLIS STREIPS

Any suicide carries a tragedy with it. A suicide which occurs because of the bigotry of others carries a double tragedy with it—the one that must be faced by the dead teenager and his or her loved ones, as well as the one which must be faced by society.

All around the world, there are young LGBT people who feel desperate in their environment. They feel alone. They feel sick. They feel (and are) persecuted. Here in Latvia, a psychologist had this to say in a 2006 magazine interview: "A great number of suicides occurs among teenagers with a homosexual orientation. They do not really understand what is happening with them and how to live with it. Public intolerance and negative attitudes drive people into powerful desperation, and suicide is seen as the only escape."

Latvia is, sadly, a country with institutionalized homophobia both in the church and in government. Fiercely and vulgarly homophobic commentary follows any discussion of LGBT issues on the Internet. In that same year of 2006, protesters at one of the country's first LGBT pride events threw sacks of human excrement at marchers, and the police did not intervene. A member of Parliament (!) has referred to ho-

mosexuals as "shit-stirrers." I'm afraid that I can imagine a young man or woman looking at that environment and thinking "not for me." The escape valve in Latvia is free travel within the European Union. I know lots of LGBT people who have simply picked up sticks and moved to London or Copenhagen or some other place where bigotry is not supported by political and religious institutions. But that's not an option for someone in the sixth grade.

And yet what are we to say about America? A kid in California, a 13-year-old called Seth, hung himself from a tree recently. Did he not notice Judge Walker's ruling on Proposition 8? Did he not watch Glee last season and see a young gay man harassed to a certain extent but supported to a much greater extent? Did he not watch Modern Family or Will & Grace or any of the television shows on which LGBT people just go about their lives? Did Seth not see a future for himself in Bakersfield, California or, more particularly, beyond? Apparently not.

The police in Bakersfield talked to the kids who taunted Seth on the day that he tried to kill himself (he lasted for nine days on life support before dying) and found that no one committed any criminal offense. The local television station reported that some of the kids burst into tears. Well, I should bloody well hope that they burst into tears. I should bloody well hope that

so did their parents and all of Bakersfield. And beyond.

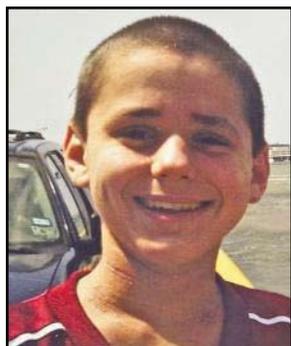
I haven't lived in America for 20 years now, and I have watched with horrified amazement at the rise of the religious Reich in the country of my birth—that hateful, bigoted, hostile movement which claims to be "Christian," but is anything but. It is gruesome to me that so many politicians have been prepared to pander before it. And it is sad, beyond sad to me that Americans have not come together to say that America's promise belongs to everyone. The United States presents itself as a beacon of all that is good in the world. It wasn't anything good for Seth in California. And it is just that little less good because of Seth's story than it would have been otherwise. Nowhere in the world should there be an environment in which an LGBT kid sees suicide as the only way out, not in Latvia, not in Uganda, and certainly not in the United States. What happened to Seth was a national disgrace.

*Karlis Streips worked for Chicago's GayLife newspaper in the early 1980s. Since then he has worked as a television reporter in America, but for the last 20 years he has lived in his ancestral country of Latvia, where he hosts radio and television programs, teaches journalism at the University of Latvia, and works as a translator.*

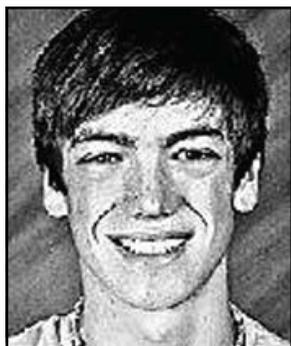


Karlis Streips. Photo courtesy of Streips

These twelve young individuals are just some of the youths who have taken their own lives in the recent past due to bullying. Their tragedies put a face on the ongoing crisis.



**Asher Brown**  
13, Texas  
Died September 23, 2010



**Harrison Brown**  
15, Colorado  
Died September 25, 2010



**Raymond Chase**  
19, Rhode Island  
Died September 29, 2010



**Felix Sacco**  
17, Massachusetts  
Died September 29, 2010



**Caleb Nolt**  
14, Indiana  
Died September 30, 2010



**Justin Aaberg**  
15, Minnesota  
Died July 9, 2010

## PFLAG dad sends letter to youth

BY JOHN R. CEPEK

Dear Youth:

I know it may seem strange that you're getting a letter from someone you've never met. To be honest with you, I feel a little odd writing this letter to people I've never met. But this is a difficult time, and I want to make sure that someone delivers an important message to you.

My wife and I have two sons. We think that they are the best kids in the whole world. They're very different, with very diverse personalities, talents, and interests. One of the other things that makes them different is that one is straight and one is gay.

But the important thing is this: we love them equally.

That's why it is so painful to us to read the reports of the kids out there who have killed themselves because somehow they felt that their lives were not equal or worth living, either because they were mercilessly bullied and teased for being different, or tortured because

they were gay.

That's why I'm writing to you today. There have been a lot of people out there sending some important messages your way. They've been telling you that there are people who can help, and that it is going to get better, and your job is to be strong and stick it out. You should listen to them, because they're right.

But as a dad, I want to send you one more message. Here it is: there are people who love you and accept you for who you are right now. Whether you're gay or straight, it doesn't matter.

I hope that your parents are among these people. I hope that in the same way I'm proud of both my sons, someone is proud of you just because you're there and because you're alive. You deserve that, no matter who you are or how different you feel.

But if for some reason you don't feel like you've got that support, I want you to know that there are parents and families who love you. Maybe they're people you already know. Or maybe they are people like me who you haven't met yet, and the other parents who belong to a group that I'm a member of called PFLAG—Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

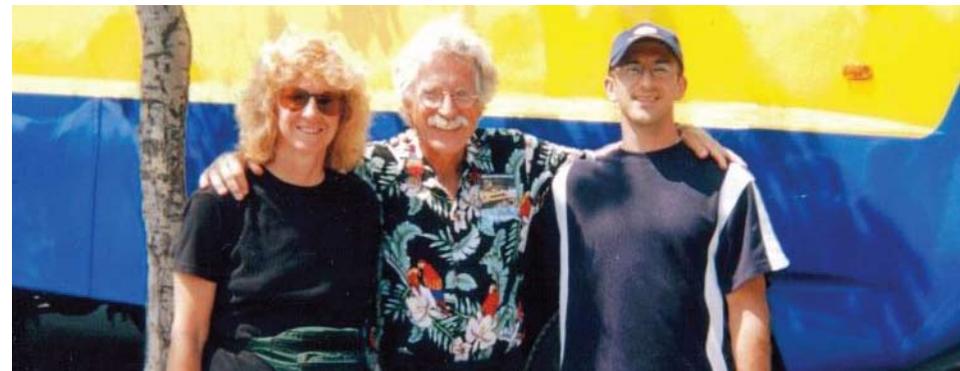
So if you're reading this and feel like no one

loves you for you who are today and who you're becoming, I want you to do something for me. I want you to go online to [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) and find a PFLAG chapter near you. Contact them and tell them your story. Ask them for help. Tell them what you're experiencing, and tell them what you need. These are families who understand what is happening and who want to support you.

I can't imagine a world in which either of my kids felt like life wasn't worth living because people rejected them, and I have a hard time

imagining what some of you might be going through right now. But please know that you're not alone. There are people to talk to, and families and friends nearby who will support you and your own family, too. All you need to do is ask. I hope that one day we will meet and I'll know that you made it. You deserve to be happy, you deserve to be alive, and you deserve to be loved. Lots of people agree with me on that. Trust me.

*John R. Cepek, from the Chicago area, is president of PFLAG National. See [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).*



Char and John Cepak with their son John. Photo courtesy of Cepek

## We Must All Protect Youth from Suicide

BY JUDY SHEPARD

Our family, and the staff and board at the Matthew Shepard Foundation are all deeply saddened by the devastating report of at least the fourth gay or gay-perceived teen to commit suicide in this country in the last month.

Reports say that Tyler Clementi, 18, leapt to his death from the George Washington Bridge near his New Jersey college campus after a roommate allegedly broadcast him in a same-sex encounter behind closed doors in his dorm room, and apparently invited others, via Twitter, to view it online. Regardless of his roommate's alleged tweet, Tyler had apparently made no statement about his own sexual orientation. I'm sure we will all learn more about this terrible tragedy as legal proceedings unfold, but the contempt and disregard behind such an invasion of privacy seems clear. In the meantime, we send our thoughts and prayers to Tyler's family as they mourn their loss.

In the last month there has been a shocking series of teen suicides linked to bullying, taunting, and general disrespect regarding sexual orientation, in every corner of America. Just a

few days ago, Seth Walsh, a 13-year-old in Tehachapi, Calif., passed away after several days on life support after he hanged himself. Police say he had been mercilessly taunted by fellow students over his perceived sexual orientation. Billy Lucas, 15, hanged himself a few weeks ago at his Indiana home after years of reported harassment by students who judged him to be gay. Asher Brown, a 13-year-old in Harris, Texas, who had recently come out, took his life with a gun after, his parents say, their efforts to alert school officials to ongoing bullying were not acted upon.

Many Americans also learned about Tyler Wilson, an 11-year-old boy in Ohio who decided to join a cheerleading squad that had been all-female. As a gymnast, he was interested in the athletic elements of cheering. He was taunted with homophobic remarks and had his arm broken by two schoolmates who apparently assumed him to be gay. He told Good Morning America that since returning to school, he's been threatened with having his other arm broken, too.

Our young people deserve better than to go to schools where they are treated this way. We have to make schools a safe place for our youth to prepare for their futures, not be confronted with threats, intimidation or routine disrespect. Quite simply, we are calling one more time for



Marchers with the Matthew Shepard Foundation in Chicago's Pride Parade. Photo by Kirk Williamson

all Americans to stand up and speak out against taunting, invasion of privacy, violence and discrimination against these youth by their peers, and asking everyone in a position of authority in their schools and communities to step forward and provide safe spaces and support services for LGBT youth or those who are simply targeted for discrimination because others assume they are gay. There can never be enough love and acceptance for these young people as they seek to live openly as their true selves and find their role in society.

Suicide is a complicated problem and it is too easy to casually blame it on a single factor in a young person's life, but it is clear that mistreat-

ment by others has a tremendously negative effect on a young person's sense of self worth and colors how he or she sees the world around them. Parents, educators and peers in the community need to be vigilant to the warning signs of suicide and other self-destructive behaviors in the young people in their lives, and help them find resources to be healthy and productive. We urge any LGBT youth contemplating suicide to immediately reach out to The Trevor Project, day or night, at (866) 4-U-TREVOR [866-488-7386].

*Judy Shepard is president of the Matthew Shepard Foundation board of directors.*

## Gay Kids Are My Kids

BY LEE LYNCH

I'm begging you to vote. The murder-by-bullying must be stopped. As of this writing, five recent suicides by valuable gay kids have made the news. We know there are more and have always been more. Bullying is a throwback to animal behavior: culling the pack to ensure survival of a species. We're no longer animals. We need to cull the bullies now, refuse to seat them on our judicial benches, vote them out of our legislatures, sweep them off our school boards. Forty years after Stonewall is too many years to allow the assault on our gay youths to continue.

We always go to the same hole-in-the-strip mall pizza joint. As regulars, we get to talking with the crew. When one of the waitresses said, "I don't vote," I was kind of shocked. Gosh, who wouldn't want to have a say about what goes on in our country? She has two little kids. Doesn't she want to help shape their future? I told her I'd shame her into voting.

Gay kids are my kids. I want to make the United States a safe and supportive place for them. Because I remember what it was like.



I remember the sheer terror that I'd be outed and the agonizing physical tension of that fear. Walking on the street with my mother, would someone ask if I was a boy or a girl? Laugh, point, use the words dyke, queer, lezzie? Would a school counselor call her in to talk about my odd behavior? When I got sent to a shrink in college, would he tell my father, who paid the bills, the diagnosis was homosexuality? Hypervigilance

is exhausting. It scars a kid. It creates a disconnect with family and non-gay friends. There aren't a whole lot of resources left to cope with the usual stresses of adolescence when you're in constant conflict with a disapproving society.

I remember the disabling depressions, the sense of a darkness suffocating me. Back then, I didn't know that depression could be repressed anger. In my parents' apartment, I pretended all was well when I could and hid in my room when I couldn't. The world was charged negative. There were no upsides, no silver linings, no rosy futures. My best friend experienced the same depressions and tried to kill herself more than once. Writing pulled me back from the many brinks I faced.

I remember the ceaseless unease. You're physically awkward as you grow, socially uncomfortable when you don't fit in, oversensitive to insinuations and shuns. You feel like everyone else knows how to be in the world but you. Sex can get you arrested. Reaching out can get you rejected. Like us, straight kids get bullied, depressed, scared, suicidal. Nobody wants them dead. Nobody throws them off a team, refuses to room with them. Teachers aren't afraid to counsel them.

I remember the great daily, hourly, dilemma of the gay kid: who do you come out to? Which

people are safe? If you take the risk of sharing who you are, at what point will your luck give out and your world explode around you?

I remember the constant search for affirmation, for comfort, for other gay people. You fell into sex, seeking acceptance. You hurt other girls, seeking more. Your adult relationships suffered from these early patterns.

I can vividly imagine what Tyler Clementi went through and how it impelled him to take that long, horrible plunge from the George Washington Bridge. He was barely out of childhood, juggling the challenges of academia, the expectations of family, the jumble of teenage emotions, the call of his talent and the demands of his gay body. I can feel the appalling aloneness that trapped him. The authorities he implored for help couldn't erase the rape of his dignity. The Internet was an outlet, but not a solution.

I can't believe this is still happening. Tyler Clementi and Raymond Chase's deaths, as well as those of untold other young gays, were preventable. Whether caused by individual bullying or by the societal attitudes that set gay kids up for bullying, internalized rage, inescapable humiliation and worse, the result is unacceptable. If we do nothing else, I hope Tyler and Raymond have shamed every one of us into fighting back, at the least, by voting.



Kristi Keorkunian. Photo courtesy of Keorkunian

## Self-Acceptance

BY KRISTI KEORKUNIAN

Ten years ago in April, I was swallowing a large bottle of over-the-counter pills, followed by a bottle of liquid cough medicine, followed by another bottle of pain relievers. I was sweating, bleeding from various self-inflicted wounds on my body, and hoping that I could at least be successful at killing myself, if nothing else.

I was done: with being abused, feeling worthless, being treated like I was an inconvenient souvenir from a failed marriage. Forced to attend a conservative, tea-party-esque right-wing high school (in which, I heard later, several girls were suspended for being gay). I felt I was being suffocated slowly, so I just wanted to expedite the process. I woke up the next morning to my mother standing over my bed, yelling at me for being "such an ungrateful bastard" because I took her entire bottle of pain pills. Not only did I fail at suicide, the woman who gave birth to me was angry at me for taking her drugs. Not a hug, not concern for my well being. Nothing. I spent the rest of high school numbing myself, many times close to the point of death.

Somehow along the way, I snapped myself out of it. I began to live, unfettered by all the damage I'd endured. I chose to live. Not only for myself, but for my community, my LGBT family, my friends, everyone I'd ever wanted to hug.

Fast forward to present day. I watch my four-year-old daughter hug my wife. She tells me "Mama, I love you a million jillion billions! You're the best Mama in the whole entire world!" I have few memories of how much pain I was in for 15 years of my life, and I am a stronger, more resolute woman for surviving those harsh years.

Now I spend my days laughing, kissing my family, loving the new life I've created for myself. My future tree, whose roots I am nurturing every day, is becoming fortified with my passion for creating a better atmosphere than the one I grew up hating. Seeming light years away from my awful childhood and tortured teens, I count my blessings.

Life isn't a piece of cake; the LGBT community is still fighting to be considered equal to the rest of humanity. But keep fighting, soldiers, because the more of our brothers, sisters, daughters, sons and parents we lose to suicide, the further our goal of equality remains. The larger the holes in our hearts become. The more despair we feel for ourselves and our loved ones. But we can and will beat this suicide plague. Together we shall rise, to become whole and win our battles.

Our focus becomes clear and we attain the seemingly impossible. Think of all the historical gay-rights activists who rose up from ashes to change our world for the better. You are just as important as every one of those people. Pour yourself into change if you're hitting rock bottom. Support, guidance, love and a better tomorrow are waiting.

Take the time, not your life.

## The Deafening Silence: In The Closet Of Suicide

BY JOSHUA PLANT

The recent tragic death of Tyler Clementi, an 18 year-old Rutgers University freshman whose sexual tryst was broadcast across the Internet leading to his subsequent suicidal jump off the George Washington Bridge, has gay activists and advocates screaming for a call to action.

This story is not that of one, but of many. Hazing mainly happens in school, especially in college, when many LGBT individuals are discovering their sexual orientation. In the case of Clementi, his unspoken sexuality was exposed twice across the Internet, which begs the question: would this have happened if he were straight? As someone who has been personally persecuted by people of the likes of Dharun Ravi, I tend to think not. Straight people have sex on TV, in magazines and in movies every day; gay sexuality is still not mainstream. Whether the actions of the college students were out of curiosity—or just a sophomoric prank or bigotry—remains to be answered.

In high schools and colleges across the nation, kids and young adults are forced into silence for fear of retaliation. Unless a person of authority personally intercepts malicious behavior unto another student, silence follows. It takes the death of someone to instill change in schools or a community, but these changes are often short-lived and wildly ineffective, since teachers and others are often too passive to defend the meek.

Now, another person is dead. A talented and gifted musician died because of torment inflicted over his sexual orientation. If being gay had to be personified from a state of being into an emotional context, it would be love. So, in essence these people were tortured, and in some cases killed, because they found the ability to love. This isn't a legislative problem; it is one of



Joshua Plant. Photo courtesy of Plant

society as a whole—blind-eye syndrome.

How many more people need to die before something is done? The Matthew Shepard Law helps, but it doesn't do enough as a preventative measure.

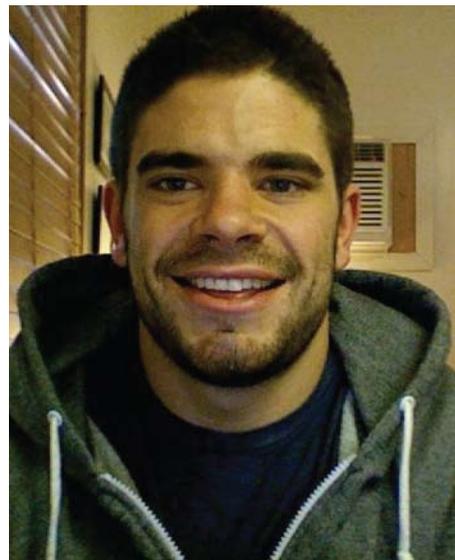
At my high school in Massachusetts, our Gay-Straight Alliance wrote and enacted an anti-harassment policy to reduce the level of violence and hate speech at the school. This policy was left practically unenforced until the death of Phoebe Prince, which led to an anti-bullying state law enacted in her honor. This law was written in blood, just like the Shepard law.

Politicians, such as Tom Emmer, the current

uncomfortable in my own skin I came to a crossroads and I am extremely grateful that I chose to begin that process of self-acceptance rather than continuing to hide.

I don't pretend to know any ultimate truths as to why I am one of the fortunate ones that made it through the turmoil of coming out of the closet. I do know that I went from a chemically dependent adolescent who saw death as my only viable option, once the drugs stopped working for me, to a proud individual who is able to embrace my identity. I am not only a recovering addict. I am not only an artist. I am not only a homosexual. I am not only a son, but I am Chris. When I was a kid, if you would have told me the story of my journey through accepting myself for who I am, I would have thought you were crazy.

Today I believe in being you. I believe you should wear the shoes that fit you, and that accepting yourself for who you are can save your life. I know it saved mine. I am living proof that it gets better.



Chris Hill. Photo courtesy of Hill

Republican candidate for governor in Minnesota—a candidate financially supported by major corporations such as Target, Best Buy and 3M—feels that our society does not need bullying laws. In fact, during one of his campaign speeches, he said that if he were elected governor, he would veto the Safe Schools for All bill, a bill that includes protection for students bullied because of sexual orientation, gender, race, religion and disability.

The Facts, according to Lambda Legal:

- 45% of gay males and 20% of lesbians report having experienced verbal harassment and/or physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation during high school.

- 42% of adolescent lesbians and 34% of adolescent gay males who have suffered physical attack also attempt suicide.

- 20% of LGB youth report skipping school at least once a month because of feeling unsafe while there.

- 19% of gay/lesbian youth report suffering physical attacks based on their sexual orientation.

If LGBT Americans had equal rights and were not treated as a minority, heterosexual kids would grow up thinking of them as their fellow humans. Not a subhuman class that should be persecuted, ridiculed, and tortured because they love someone of the same sex. This problem will persist, more people will die, and more laws will be written in their blood until we start changing on a societal level. Gandhi said, "be the change you want to see in the world," start practicing compassion and let us stop the deaths now.

*Joshua Plant is a New York City-based gay writer, comedian and activist*

## Trevor Project Chicago events

The Trevor Project, the national organization focused on crisis and suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, is hosting a Chicago benefit Saturday, Oct. 16, 6-9 p.m. at the Lakeview home of Paul Reitz and David Rosen. Suggested donation is \$45. RSVP at [www.thetrevorproject.org/trevorchicago](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/trevorchicago) to get the address.

The hosts include Michael Leppen, Anthony Fleming and Waymon Hudson. Trevor Executive Director Charles Robbins will speak about ways to help increase the Chicago presence of this national group.

Additionally, Shawn Hazen is hosting a benefit at Roscoe's bar, 3356 N. Halsted, Monday, Oct. 25. Cabaret act Amy and Freddy will be among the entertainers. They will be joined by performers from The Baton Show Lounge, plus Frida Lay, Debbie Fox, Honey West and many more.



Amy & Freddy.

## Stopping Bullies in Illinois

BY SHANNON SULLIVAN, MPH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ILLINOIS SAFE SCHOOLS ALLIANCE

The tragedies of recent weeks have captured the attention of many across the country. The Alliance Board and Staff extend our deepest condolences to the families and communities who have directly been affected.

These much-publicized events spotlight what we know so well about bullying. Without prevention and intervention efforts that explicitly address LGBTQ youth, our young people will continue to suffer. These events lend urgency to the call to action we sound at the Alliance. We need your support to help us take that action.

The Prevent School Violence Illinois Act signifies a critical step in the safe schools movement; it defines bullying in state law and explicitly prohibits bullying with regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The law empowers our young people and their families to hold administrators and educators accountable for providing safe and nurturing schools for all.

Still, there is much work to do. With the law as our foundation, the Alliance will continue its work educating school personnel, social service providers and government officials, with a focus

specifically on social justice and anti-oppression.

We know there are many opportunities to respond, react and come together around these recent events. We at the Alliance encourage you to Step Up, Step Out and Take Action!

At the Alliance, youth are always at the heart of our work and they, more than anyone, understand the effects of anti-LGBTQ harassment and bullying. It is our belief that they truly are the agents of change within their schools. By providing young people opportunities to become leaders, their vision and energy push forward the LGBTQ safe schools movement.

As part of their commitment to stand up and take action, the Alliance Youth Committee is participating in the Make it Better Project, a campaign launched by the GSA Network in California to provide youth a forum to demonstrate how they have made their schools and communities better, safer, and more accepting for ALL youth. With this project, young people from across Illinois will be uploading videos to [www.makeitbetterproject.org](http://www.makeitbetterproject.org) about their experiences with bullying, activism, and social change.

As always, at the Alliance we draw inspiration from the energy and passion of the young people and adults who join us in our work to promote the safety and support of LGBTQ youth and all students in Illinois schools. Thank you for your time, your commitment and vision for a brighter future.

And as I worked my way through high school, I began seeing signs of things getting better. Ellen DeGeneres came out publicly; Will & Grace became a popular mainstream show; and the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws in *Lawrence v. Texas*. I finally began to believe I could live a happy and safe life as a gay man.

By my senior year in high school, I was near the top of my class, involved in every activity possible, and had support in the administration. I was no longer afraid or ashamed of being gay. I would eventually yell, "I'm gay!" in the cafeteria one day. Aside from a few angered and disgusted looks, nothing happened—I no longer cared what they thought. I felt so relieved and alive!

I went on to University of Chicago where I was able to grow as a gay man in an accepting community, with advisers and administrators who were openly supportive—I even had a gay mentor! On campus, I helped to start a queer religious student group; I served on the university's Committee for Enhancing Support for the LGBTQ Community; and I helped several friends come out to their friends and family. Through the enormous support at college, I eventually became secure enough in who I was that I finally came out to my mom and then, a year later, my dad. They both said they would always love me and that they were proud of all I had done. I was so exhilarated and relieved!

To think ... had I jumped, I would have never known how much they truly loved me.

After graduating college, I became an outspoken advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer issues through my work at the Howard Brown Health Center, Equality Illinois, and the Chicago Department of Public Health.

Now, I'm a medical student at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, pushing for LGBT health reform with the support of the American Medical Association, the American Medical Student Association and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association.

Through it all, I remind myself that it gets better.

Had I given in to the hate of my community, and given up on me, I could not have lived to feel the love of my parents, my sister, nephews, boyfriend, and friends. I would have never had the chance to make someone else's life happy and fulfilling.

I want you to know that it does get better.

## Life's twists and turns

BY CARL G. STREED JR.

As I write this with my boyfriend driving us back to our apartment in Baltimore, Maryland, I cannot help but be surprised by how much of a 180 my life has made.

I say this because when I was 12 and realized I was gay, I wanted to kill myself.

I grew up in a vaguely Catholic home in Zion, Illinois, a small town known for its conservative and religious bent. At that time, being gay was not at all an acceptable lifestyle "choice" in my family, community, or anywhere outside of a major city.

My father, a Vietnam veteran with the U.S. Marine Corp, a former member of a biker gang, and a self-employed lumberjack and construction worker, was vocal about how he would not tolerate a gay son.

My community was even less supportive; children suspected of being gay were tormented in the locker rooms and bullied in the halls. And living in a devoutly Protestant town adamant about saving people from the "moral decline of homosexuality," I felt less than welcome. Even the support I found in the Boy Scouts was taken from me when I heard of gay scoutmasters being kicked out—the Supreme Court would eventually decide in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* that I could be kicked out for being gay).

Naturally, I became isolated and emotionally detached from those around me.

My sense of despair piqued when I confessed to a classmate that I was gay. She had such a look of disgust and said I should just kill myself. That pushed me over the edge.

I would eventually take myself to the Robert McClory bridge that crossed a major road in town, climb over the edge of the railing, and just hang there ... looking down on the traffic wondering how to time my fall.

To this day, whether fear of death or a moment of clarity, I don't know what made me choose to live. I climbed back over the edge of the bridge and just cried.

I resolved then to work as hard as I could so I would get through high school and then accepted to a college far away. Education became my escape.



Carl G. Streed, Jr. Photos by BirkenheuerPhotography.com

## Mother of Slain Teen Gwen Araujo Addresses LGBT Youth Suicide

BY SYLVIA GUERRERO

*On the eighth anniversary of her daughter's murder, Sylvia Guerrero, mother of slain transgender teenager Gwen Araujo, released the following open letter addressing suicide and violence experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth:*

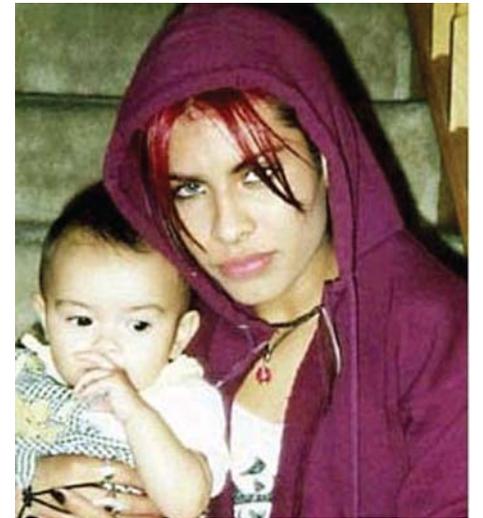
Dear friends of the Transgender Law Center,

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you today. It has been eight years since my beautiful daughter Gwen Araujo was brutally killed because she was transgender. Gwen was the light of my life. She was taken from us at the young age of 17; she was a victim of a culture where people react with violence when faced with difference. It is this same culture that led to the suicides of at least six lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in the last week.

My heart goes out to the families of these young people. I know what it is like to be the mother of a teenager who endured constant bullying. I cannot count the times that I held Gwen in my arms while she cried at the end of the school day. My Gwen was so smart. She could have grown up to be anything she wanted. But her opportunity was taken from her. Years of bullying forced her to stop going to school. She was harassed and threatened every day. At the time, I didn't know that harassment based on gender identity and expression was against the law in California. My calls to the school went unanswered, and Gwen left school because it was not safe.

We need to do better for our children. Every young person has a right to an education. Every young person has a right to be safe. We must honor Gwen by making sure that every young person, every parent, every teacher, principal and school board member knows that discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity is against the law.

If you know a young person who is being bul-



Gwen Araujo (right), whose life was tragically taken in 2002.

lied, please talk to them—let them know someone cares. Listening with your heart can save a life. If you know a teacher, talk to them about how they can support their LGBT students—whether those students are closeted, questioning, or out and proud. Be a resource in your community. Make sure our children feel loved. Make sure our schools are safe.

It has been eight years since I lost my daughter. How many more young lives must we lose before our culture changes? No young person should ever be threatened or harmed for authentically expressing who they are. Each one of us has the power to make a difference.

For information about how to address transgender issues in schools, please check out *Beyond the Binary*, a joint publication by the Transgender Law Center, GSA Network and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. And if you or anyone you know is being bullied, call the Transgender Law Center for help at 415-865-0176.

## Turning the tables

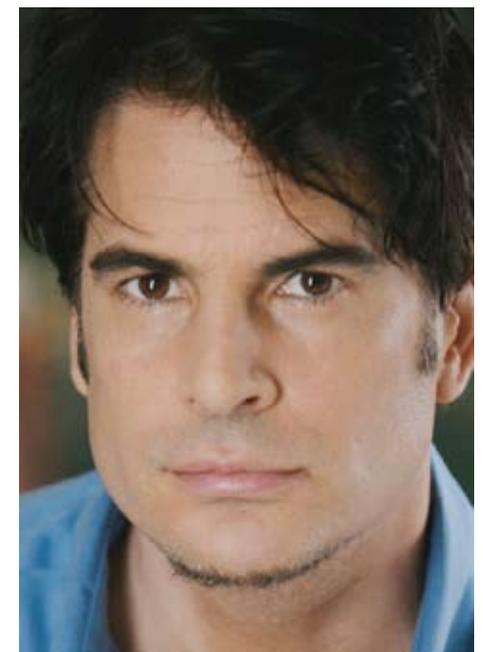
BY THOM BIERDZ

Months ago I found a letter in a bottle floating in the ocean. It looked ancient so I asked my grandfather what he thought and he studied it and said It was really old; a letter from God to Moses.

God wrote how He preferred gay people, so much so, that He wanted gay people to berate straight people and even knock on their doors to tell them that the chosen people (gays) loved them, but the straights have to praise God and change and go gay—or else.

They have to leave their straight spouses unless they want to go to Hell, which is undoubtedly all hetero. I knocked on a few doors in my neighborhood and told straight parents this and they were so angry. I was just trying to save their souls because God asked me to. Well, the letter said that. I mean, kind of it did. The letter had been edited by Kings in power, grandpa admitted, so the kings probably changed a few things over the centuries, but God's message was right there. In scripture. Ink. Well, typeset really, not ink, so it's not like it was THE ACTUAL commandments, so maybe typesetting and language barriers changed a few words here and there, but from what I could read that was God's message.

I took it as my duty to go to schoolyards and so I did and I waved this letter and screamed during recess that straight kids have to change their sexuality to be saved. I forced them to have homo-relations with gay kids, and I forced them to marry gays, and if they didn't have a real attraction I told them they better pretend to want them sexually—or else.



Thom Bierdz. Photo by John Pasqual

A few straight kids, who, let's face it, were probably devil-set anyway, killed themselves when the whole school was making fun of them for being straight. Those were the same kids who ate shellfish and wore the color red when I told them God said they'd go to Hell for that. I feel a little bad but I was doing God's work, according to the edited typeset piece of paper I found which my grandfather said was God's words.

*Thom Bierdz plays Phillip Chancellor III on The Young and the Restless, and he is the author of Forgivening Troy.*



Kit Duffy. Photo by Israel Wright

## Helping Hands

BY KIT DUFFY

A gay teenager calls with, he tells me, a gun in his hand and it is pointed at his head. His friends and family have discovered that he is gay, and he doesn't see much point in living with what they regard as his "shame." Thanking with each breath I took the training Horizons' Bruce Koff has given me, I manage to steer him to a youth program before he ends his life.

A Chicago fireman, one with bravery awards in his file, calls to tell me that since some co-workers discovered he was gay he reports to duty each day and is sent to another station to work, and another and another and another, until the day ends. He's pretty sure the only route out for him is suicide. I beg him to meet me some place where we can talk but he doesn't agree, and I never hear from him again.

A 12-year-old calls, terrified because while he doesn't "feel gay," he only feels complete when

he is dressed as a girl. Gender Alliance receives our call and takes over, welcoming him into a future he'd given up on having.

A young woman calls. She has changed jobs six times already because of the rape threats she gets from co-workers because she is openly lesbian. She is tired of fighting and believes the only alternative she has to suicide is changing jobs once again, and going back into the closet.

In 1983, when I was appointed Mayor Harold Washington's Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Communities, the only telephone listing in the city which specifically mentioned the word "gay" was mine and so I got those calls. Twenty-seven years ago, years of progress for GLBTs, growing openness and acceptance, many more resources for kids and yet ... so many are still in despair, their humanity and identities are still demeaned on a daily basis, and they are still dying.

I confess to having mixed thoughts and feelings when the proposal for a Pride Campus of the School for Social Justice in Chicago was first

made, but no longer. At all costs, we have to protect our kids. It's clear that unless we shepherd them safely through the years during which they are most vulnerable emotionally and even neurologically, we are in danger of losing them, either when they are young or later in their lives when their unhealed wounds are re-opened by hatred and derision.

In a culture where lack of civility prevails and is even glorified, there is little hope for convincing adults to recognize their responsibility to counsel against bullying and to discipline their kids when they are caught engaging in it. Let's then concentrate our efforts instead on building a safe environment for our GLBT children, one which builds in them the confidence and skills they will need to have a chance for the happy and fulfilled lives to which they are entitled.

Let's revive the idea of the Pride Campus, and then let's get it done. And if I may suggest, let's name it for a woman who devoted her life to these kids. Let's name it the Renae Ogletree High School.

## Holding On

BY VERNITA GRAY

In September 1969 in that basement apartment the tears would not stop. Tears flowed for minutes, hours, and days. Tears flowed down my cheeks as I wept and cried and cried out in that in that little apartment. I was alone and lonely. I was an outcast, a lezbo, a bulldagger, and a dyke. I was a reject, and I was Black. Who else on the South Side of Chicago was like me? I was lonely and the tears would not stop. I wanted die, and just be gone away from everyone. I was in despair and wanted to take my own life. I wanted to end my life. I wanted to Not have been born.

If someone had told me that in that fall of 1969 that in the year 2009 I would be a guest at the White House, an invited guest of the president and First Lady, or that I would be surrounded by my GLBT colleagues and allies from across the country, I would have cried harder thinking that person was drunk, crazy or high on drugs. I cried out of fear. I cried because I was alone and lonely and felt strongly there was no one else on the South Side of Chicago. I cried over the picture-perfect life I thought I would never have. I cried and wanted to die. I thought long and hard about what to do and how to do it. I headed off to drown myself in the cold waters of Lake Michigan.

I was afraid of what family and friends would say. I was afraid of not knowing how to be in the world. I was afraid of every derogatory word I

had ever heard used to describe those who were gay. I was afraid of the unknown or of being known as a lesbian or a gay person. So I cried. I cried till my eyes swelled and I could cry and heave no more.

I cried because I was so alone, and I was so frightened by not knowing how to be in the world. I cried out of despair.

It was 1969, and there was NO gay paper, gay magazine [just newsletters], gay website as there was no computer. There was NO gay center, or Chicago Black Gays and Lesbians group. There was NO HRC or Advocate. The words "gay culture" did not exist. I was a part of the dyke, bulldagger, queer community and I considered suicide for many days.

At that time there was nothing good in those words so how could there be good in me.

It would take a whole book to describe the incredible life that I have lived. The love that I never thought I would have I have a hundred fold. The things and gifts that I have been given bring tears to my eyes as I write this.

I realized as I cried in that fall of 1969 that somewhere there was someone else crying like me because he or she was gay or lesbian and I wanted to reach out to that person and say let's cry together.

At the age of 20 I had thought the word commitment was to family, and a job. As I began to think about it I realized that I needed a commitment to love myself and value me. As the tears stopped flowing I committed myself to beginning a love relationship with me. Loving myself for who I am.

I cried as I said to myself, "Vernita you are a beautiful Black, lesbian." Since those days in 1969 to this fall day in 2010 I am committed to building our community. I am a part of creating a community where we all feel cared for and loved. I have a part to play as we all have parts to play. We need every voice and every young person to know that suicide is not an option.

Sadly, I know very well that in some places and spaces our communities of origin may not, and do not give us what we need so we must give it to ourselves. We must build and make the community that we need. We GLBT folks must create a community and a space where suicide is not an option whether old or young.

In 1969, I began by accenting the positive and letting the negative go. So like the James Brown song that said, "Say it Loud I am black and I am proud," I began to feel gay and proud. Now, 41 years later I don't have to wait for gay pride Sunday to be proud. I am proud every day. The loneliness that I once felt has been replaced by so much love. That despair replaced by so much caring. I have cared for so many and so many have cared for me. It has been an incredible journey since that fall of 1969.

We all have moments that we fear change. I have had plenty of those but suicide is not an option.

Growth and change are hard, but self love, and the love from family and friends and a community that I never thought I would have keeps my head up and keeps me moving from one life challenge to another.



Vernita Gray. Photo by Hal Baim

**"No young person should have to endure a life of relentless taunts and harassment, just because they're gay. On behalf of President Obama, I want to make clear that this administration is firmly committed to working with you and other advocates. For we all have to ensure that we are creating an environment in our schools, our communities, and our country, that is safe for every person, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."**

**- White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett at the Human Rights Campaign national dinner Oct. 9**

## There Is So Much More

BY WANCY YOUNG CHO

After years of being called names and harassed by classmates, certain that my parents would disown me and believing that even the best of my friends would shun me if they knew the secrets I was keeping, my only solace came from the box of Tylenol PM that I'd stolen from the drugstore and kept hidden under my bed. For a month or two, I would examine this box multiple times on a daily basis, looking at it as sort of a friend that would take me away from all that I was struggling with. If I went with this friend, I would never have to be called another name or cope with the disappointment of friends and family—I would be free. Then, a month or so before my 17th birthday, I emptied these pills onto the floor of my bedroom and swallowed them, one by one. Crawling into bed, I lay back with my head on the pillow, closed my eyes and waited.

That was 15 years ago. And, it does seem like a long time ago because so many things have happened between then and now. So many wonderful and amazing things have happened that

considering all of it now is absolutely breathtaking. At 16, I had dreams of sipping cappuccinos in an Italian café, writing stories on a Greenwich Village bench, making movies or kissing another man. All those dreams have come true. Those dreams and many of the ones I have had along the way. But I would not have been able to do any of it had I listened to that voice within me that told me there was no point in living.

What I couldn't see then was possibility. The possibility that there was so much more than what other people were thinking about me or, really, what I was thinking about myself.

Today, my mother tells me that she hopes I meet a good man, she openly tells co-workers that she has a gay son and, sometimes, we even check guys out together. Several years ago in undergrad (for being a gay screenwriting major), I was invited to have a hilariously fun dinner with the film director John Waters. Four years after coming out, I wrote a letter while traveling in Africa expressing my support for words like "faggot" and "dyke" to be included on the list of derogatory terms banned from use in the school district where I'd gone to high school and junior high—we were met with total success. Three years after coming out, a Gay/Straight Alliance was created at my former high school and I was asked by those students to return and

speak about my experiences as a gay teen and coming out of the closet. Two years after coming out, my younger brother wrote an article in our high school paper proudly stating his relation to a homosexual while another student wrote a separate article that included a list of teachers that students could turn to if they needed help discussing their problems, the very same teachers that I had turned to for support. And, just before my 18th birthday during my senior year of high school, I wrote a letter to seven of my friends telling them I was gay. I was met with seven hugs and the words, "That doesn't change a thing. You are my friend."

December 7, 1995. That's the day I took all those pills and laid down to die. I cannot tell you how much time had passed with my eyes closed there waiting for death, but something seized me as I lay there that made me sit up and pick up the phone to be taken to the emergency room. What grabbed me was a shred of hope, unrecognizable in that most desperate of moments, that asked me to live another day, then another and another until I began living a whole life I could never have imagined for myself. Today, as cheesy as it may sound, that date is very much like having a second birthday.

I chose to live. And, it is absolutely the best decision I have ever made.



Wancy Young Cho. Photo courtesy of Cho

## GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Frank Masi

## 'RED' RECKONING

Helen Mirren aims to succeed in a different kind of role in *Red*, which co-stars Morgan Freeman and Bruce Willis. See page 35.

## THEATER

'Doo' right.  
Page 28.

Photo by Mieke Zuderweg



## MUSIC

'Big' time.  
Page 30.

PR photo



## SPORTS

Rowing, rowing, gone.  
Page 38.

Photo of Craig Wu by Ross Forman



## DANCIN' FEATS

## Luna Negra's Gustavo Ramirez Sansano on change

BY ALICIA WILSON



Gustavo Ramirez Sansano.

Gustavo Ramirez Sansano is ready to make things happen. Coming to Luna Negra Dance Theater this season as the new artistic director, Ramirez Sansano has plans to expand the audience of Luna Negra and create a space for Latino choreographers to be heard. The company will show its annual fall program Oct. 16 at the Harris Theater, followed by the second annual Noche de Luna Gala at the Chicago Cultural Center. Ramirez Sansano commented on the selection for the program: "Every time I compose a program I want to show different smells and colors and textures of dance. I think the three choreographers in this upcoming show, that we are really different in style. I believe that variety is really the best offer, that people who watch can think of something in a whole different way."

Luna Negra's 2010 fall program will feature the world premiere of Ramirez Sansano's "Toda una Vida" ("All my Life"), a duet inspired by his parents' love story. An abstract narrative of a couple's journey to stay together no matter what, the piece blends quirky gestures with beautiful technique to create dynamic shifts in support and passivity. Ramirez Sansano comments on the choice to create an intimate duet, "When I started (choreographing) I used a lot of groups, but the older I get the more I am all about the relationship between two people. You always look into the eyes of just one other person, and I think the power of connection comes from that place."

Also on the program is the revival of Eduardo Vilario's 2008 work "Deshár Alhát" ("Leave Sun-

day"). This full-company work looks at the traditions, music and culture of the Sephardic Jews who settled in Latin America in the early 20th century. Themes of loss and disappearance surround this piece, accompanied by contemporary Sephardic vocalist Stefani Valadez.

Another premiere for the evening is the North American debut of Fernando Melo's piece "Bate," with Melo composing an additional section of the work for the Luna Negra performance. This piece for five men and two women is a layering of gesture material, grounded movements, set design and props. A motif of roses appears throughout the work, and the relationship between the men and women creates an interesting dynamic of movement.

Windy City Times sat down with Ramirez Sansano to find out more about the transition to Luna Negra and future plans for the company:

**Windy City Times: How has the transition of changing artistic directors been on the company? [Editor's note: Eduardo Vilario left**

**as artistic director of Luna Negra last year to head Ballet Hispanico.]**

GRS: Well, it's a lot of work but with a good team it's easier. There are a lot of new things with the company this season, including many new dancers and creating new works for the tour. Being artistic director, it takes many hours of work to get a normal established, but I am grateful for the support of everyone in the company.

**WCT: As a choreographer, who or what are your biggest influences?**

GRS: I think everything influences me. Even the fact that I am in America, in Chicago, I may not see it right now but I think [your surroundings] plays a part in creating as well. Just even watching people on the subway can give inspiration, how they move their hands, how people talk to each other. In many of my pieces my family has always been my inspiration, and they don't dance. I have always said that creating is a sum of situations.

**WCT: What are you bringing into Luna Negra from your past dancing experiences?**

GRS: Everything. I think all my experiences—from being an artistic director of a small company to being in other companies and seeing how they work—[have] helped to shape what I want to see happen. It is always best to have many experiences, to give you more options. I have had students ask, "Should I do this or do that?" I say, "The more ingredients the better." If you have a lot [of experiences] you have the chance to take some out, but if you don't have much you can only choose from one or two.

**WCT: What are your thoughts on the world of contemporary dance?**

GRS: I don't like to call it "contemporary modern dance;" I call it "arts of movement." I don't like labels and I think the word contemporary puts the movement in a box, and creates expectations. Those expectations are bad, for example if someone goes to the theater for the first time, and unfortunately sees something that they do not like, they will place those feelings on anything labeled contemporary. If you have some-

thing called the "arts of movement," anything can be done. That is the beauty; it's all about your own cocktail. You have to offer your audience whatever you are, or whatever you want to call yourself. Whatever ingredients you need to use to explain whatever you want to say, that is what makes arts of movement.

**WCT: What is your vision for this upcoming season?**

GRS: In general my vision is to expand. I think we have a great platform for Latino choreographers, and I want to create the best environment, the dream place to come and choreograph, that is what I want to offer here. Not just about having the dancers or the studios, but about having the freedom to choreograph whatever we want.

Up until now Luna Negra has been doing bigger theaters, but we also want to expand to more independent places where choreographers can do whatever they really want to do. We also want to expand to a younger audience, which means making shows for kids. Not excerpts from pieces, but actually a show with the intention of being just for children. I am realizing that there is nothing really for the kids, and I want to change that. The kids' show that we are going to do here, that I premiered with my company in Spain, [is] called The Thief of Laughter. I want to show the kids that even though we are competing with Playstation and Wii, a live show is exciting and something really special.

**Luna Negra Dance Theater will perform at the Harris Theater, 205 E. Randolph, on Saturday, Oct. 16, at 6:30 p.m.; tickets are \$25 to \$55. For tickets or more information call 312-334-7777 or visit <http://www.harristheaterchicago.org>.**

**The Noche de Luna Gala will immediately follow the fall program performance in the Sydney R. Gates Gallery of the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph. Individual Noche de Luna Gala tickets, which include premiere tickets to the fall program performance, are \$300. For gala tickets call 312-337-6882 or visit <http://www.lunanegra.org>.**



It Takes a Village, People!

**THEATER REVIEWS**

**It Takes a Village, People!**

Playwrights: The ensemble  
At: Salsation Theatre Company at Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee  
Phone: 773-598-4549; \$12  
Runs through: Nov. 6

**Big Gay Pudding**

Playwrights: The ensemble  
At: White Rainbows at The Call, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr  
Phone: 800-838-3006; \$10  
Runs through: Oct. 23

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

It used to be that GayCo was the only game in town when it came to Chicago LGBT sketch comedy. But now, there are three other gay-leaning sketch comedy troupes performing around Chicago.

Unfortunately my busy schedule didn't permit me to catch Quixotic's Apocalypse: Now in 3-D at the bar Hydrate (now playing through Oct. 23). But I was able to fit in two other sketch shows on one Saturday: Salsation Theatre Company's *It Takes a Village, People!* at the Gorilla Tango Theatre and White Rainbows' *Big Gay Pudding* at The Call. While both shows were rough around the edges, one ensemble's writing and overall performance style was streets ahead of the other.

First the good news: Salsation's *It Takes a Village, People!* delivers plenty of laughs in its all too short 60-minute run time. The company is largely made up of Latino actors and writers, but the humor is targeted all the way at gay men.

Aaron Page starts things off right in a hilarious bit as a feather-boa wielding and singing "Out-o-Gram," making a very public outing of Hugo Rosado's unsuspecting coffee shop denizen quite the side-splitter. Another strong performer is Patrick Garone, who is very funny in butch drag as Mary Cheney (the former Vice President's lesbian daughter) selling militaristic Halliburton "shock and awe"-style outings.

Other broached topics include sex-obsessed online dating, super-sanitary obsessive compulsiveness and ageism in Chicago's shifting gay-bar scene. While director Charles Hall should have pushed some of his performers to put much more oomph into their many comic characterizations, *It Takes a Village...* proves its humor chops with plenty of bite and sweetness.

Now the bad news: White Rainbows' *Big Gay Pudding* was upstaged by its opening act guest troupe, Rabbit Rabbit Sketch Comedy. These three guys of Rabbit Rabbit had a better grip at setting up a sketch and providing a great zinger without plodding along without a firm direction like so many of White Rainbows' sketches.

That's not to say all is bad in *Big Gay Pudding*. Michael Barin and Stanley A. Chong were hilarious in a portable-media marriage proposal sketch, while Matt Utter's self-centered delivery of his lines often proves funnier than the concluding comic button that evades so many of the sketches in *Big Gay Pudding*.

Director Cassie Soliday really should have

reined in the meandering pacing and bizarre sketch topics (for example, I have no idea what the whole point was about the Winnie the Pooh plushy costume, nor the sketches about a Black-sploitation-style magician or an exotic pudding party).

Now you won't find comic perfection with these two troupes. But if you're looking for great gay comedy, one show clearly outshines the other.

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**CRITICS' PICKS**

**Macbeth**, Lyric Opera of Chicago, through Oct. 30. Chicago Shakespeare Theater founder and artistic director Barbara Gaines may over-apply the flying special effects in her operatic debut, but she certainly knows how to lure truly dramatic performances from her starry singing cast. SCM

**The Mamet Repertory**, American Theater Co., through Oct. 31. Two beautifully-acted quintessential Mamet plays in rotating rep: the Hollywood spoof *Speed-the-Plow* and the more pertinent and powerful *Oleanna*, dealing with academic freedom and sexism. JA

**She Loves Me**, Writers' Theatre, through Nov. 21. Luxury casting abounds in director Michael Halberstam's lovely and intimate take on the critically acclaimed 1963 musical comedy romance. You probably won't see this beloved show performed better any time soon. SCM

**Wuthering Heights**, Lifeline Theatre, through Oct. 31. Nobody does page-to-stage romantic better than Christina Calvit, and Gregory Isaac joins Peter Greenberg as the hottest Victorian-age heartbreaker on the non-equity circuit—bring on the handkerchiefs and heaving bosoms! MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

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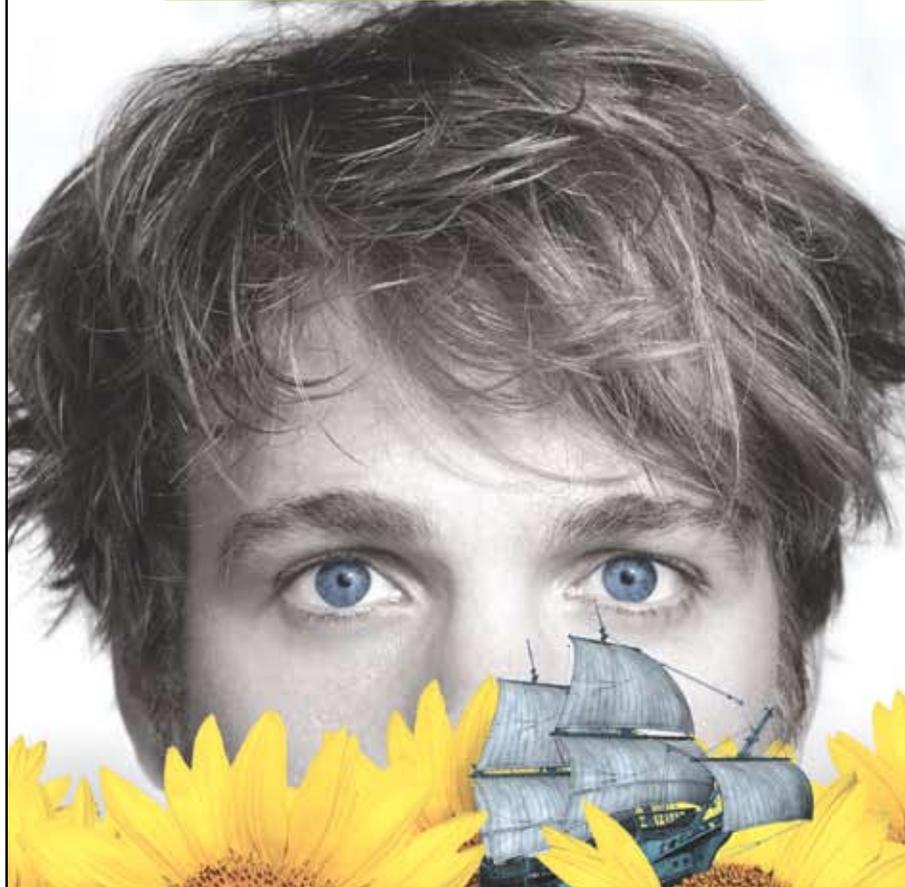
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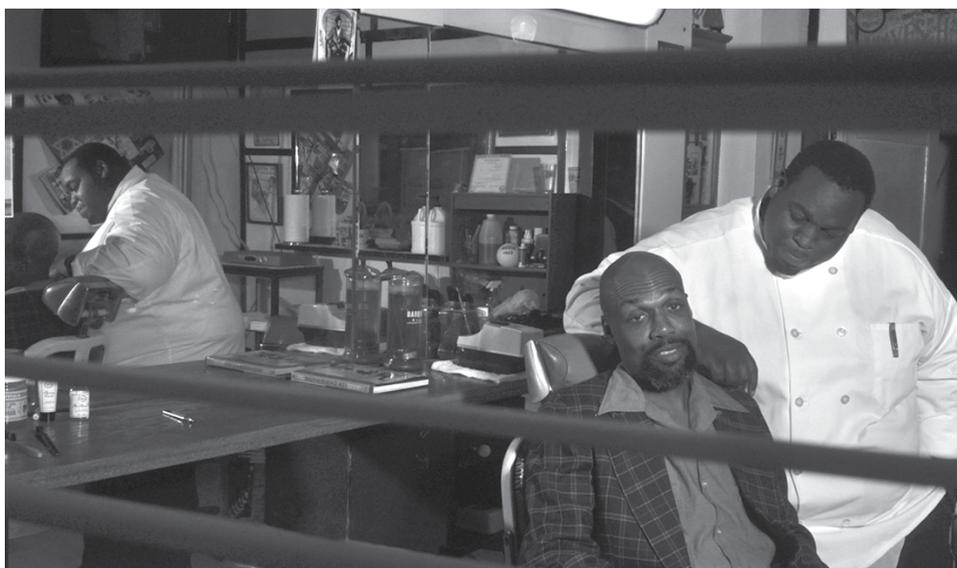
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Doo Lister's Blues. Photo by Mieke Zuderweg

## THEATER REVIEW

### Doo Lister's Blues

**Playwright:** Terry Abrahamson  
**At:** National Pastime Theater  
 at the Old Speakeasy, 4139 N. Broadway  
**Phone:** 773-327-7077; \$30  
**Runs through:** Nov. 28

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Even those who lived through the troubles of the 1960s find it hard nowadays to imagine an America when uttering the word "marijuana" meant that your house could be searched by the police, when singing a 40-year-old pro-union anthem could lead to your losing your job and criticizing the government could find you under surveillance—arrested, if you resisted—by federal agents. This widespread oppression, spanning all demographics, was inevitably applied more harshly to disenfranchised minorities, despite the latter's long experience at keeping their heads down.

DuWane Lister—nicknamed "Doo" for his profession as a barber—has as low a profile as could be desired, despite the Garfield Park riots just outside his basement-shop window bearing a placard proclaiming it "negro-owned" to discourage looters. A composer of sugary love songs in his off-time, Lister welcomes a North Shore-hippie record-distributor seeking to use the store as a vending outlet, seeing in it a source of extra income toward starting a family with his schoolteacher wife. But after his draft-dodging brother is killed during a bungled FBI bust, the peaceful haircut-artist embraces radicalism to write music on darker themes.

Terry Abrahamson's documentary-tinged drama, currently enjoying revival under the auspices of National Pastime Theater, has undergone several rewrites since premiering in 1999 to emerge almost bursting at the seams with cogent observations on its times: the more intense harassment of Black dissenters than that imposed on white protesters, for example. ("It sounds like Pete Seeger," declares an upper-echelon spook of Lister's new lyrics, "That makes it communist.") Or there's the link between the poetry-jazz fusions of the Beat era and the rise of spoken-word performance, culminating in—are you following this?—the expository verse bridging our play's scenes and locating us historically, delivered by a young afrocentric rapper whose identity we discover only in the final moments.

Abrahamson's text might require multiple viewings to absorb in all its dimensions—don't forget the indigenous references: among them, Fahey Flynn, WVON's late-nite deejays and Uptown as a sanctuary for fugitives. But director Victor Cole keeps the story firmly rooted in the microcosmic journey of one humble hero caught amid warring factions beyond his control, played by the engaging Warren Levon with the able assistance of a cast invoking personalities no bigger or broader than the volatile era they occupy.

## THEATER REVIEW

### Company

**Playwright:** music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by George Furth  
**At:** Griffin Theatre at Stage 773  
 (fka Theatre Building), 1225 W. Belmont  
**Phone:** 773-327-5252; \$22-\$32  
**Runs through:** Nov. 14

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

It's said that a drowning person recalls their entire life before perishing. Bobby's life flashes through his mind on his 35th birthday. Oh, only his *current* life, replete with friends—married, single, divorced or in-between—listening to his marital clock tick away, thus making the question precipitated by this occasion whether he will retain his bachelor lifestyle or pursue holy matrimony (aka "settle down").

His crisis is the pretext for a string of Stephen Sondheim meditations on the search for a partner, upper-Manhattan in 1970 style. The wedlocked couples in his circle are far from ideal examples of their ilk: Sarah and Harry bond over karate lessons while lying about their healthy habits. Jenny and David experiment with—ahem!—marijuana. Joanne loathes her privileged life, but husband Larry understands. Amy succumbs to an acute case of cold feet just before her wedding, but fiancé Paul understands. Bobby's unattached comrades offer likewise ambiguous testimony: April's career as a flight attendant keeps her on the move, Kathy has found a mate elsewhere, Marta is having too much fun to marry. And what is Bobby to make of Peter and Susan, whose mutual affection flowers with the termination of their nuptial contract?

The score is Sondheim at his most idiosyncratic—the agitated tempos, syncopated rhythms, erratic phrasing, atonal intervals and soaring fermatas comprising his stock-in-trade very much in evidence. Still, nobody ever went broke celebrating the Noah's Ark imperative, however spurious their defense of that social custom, and this roster includes a sufficient number of wedding/cabaret/audition standards to satisfy fans of all opinions.

Dana Tretta stops the show with the fevered "Another Hundred People," as does Darci Nalepa on the tongue-twisting "Getting Married Today" (despite the aural distortion engendered by the exposed-brick walls in Stage 773's north room), while Samantha Dubina nails the timing perfectly in the anecdote leading up to the wistful "Barcelona." Erin Kilmurray's dance and Ryan Borque's martial-arts choreography lend visual dazzle to what is essentially a collection of soliloquies, while Benjamin Sprunger as the ambivalent Bobby and a mostly youthful, but uniformly attractive, ensemble overcome the quaint sentimentality of their material with a conviction capable of coaxing heaps of weeps from all but the most stubborn loners.

# SPOTLIGHT



The Joffrey Ballet has assembled a starry array of famed choreographers for its season opener, titled **All Stars**. The late George Balanchine is represented with the Joffrey premiere of Stravinsky Violin Concerto, plus a revival of Tarantella. The comic side of the late Jerome Robbins is seen in the company's premiere of *The Concert* (or *The Perils of Everybody*), while famed gay British choreographer Christopher Wheeldon is represented with the company premiere of his 2005 work *After the Rain*. The Joffrey Ballet's All Stars repertory program plays Oct. 13-24 at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress. Tickets are \$25-\$145. Call 800-982-2787 or visit <http://www.joffrey.org>. Joffrey Ballet dancers Victoria Jaiani and Fabrice Calmels in Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain* by Herbert Migdoll

## THEATER REVIEW

### Ghostbox

**Playwright:** Randall Coburn  
**At:** InFusion (sic) Theatre Company,  
 Apollo Studio, 2540 N. Lincoln  
**Tickets:** 773-935-6100;  
<http://www.ticketmaster.com>; \$20  
**Runs through:** Oct. 31

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Because it is presented with all the joy of a Lutheran sermon in Minnesota on a Sunday in January, it's difficult to know if the world premiere of *Ghostbox* is intended as Halloween entertainment or not. If you interpret "entertain" as holding attention, *Ghostbox* is fine. But if you interpret "entertain" to mean amusing, well, forget about it.

OK, it's not boring, but then it's only 50 minutes long. Even so, comprehension comes slowly as *Ghostbox* shifts between present and past, or between past and further past (it's unclear and probably doesn't matter). Reduced to bare bones, a virginal young woman marries a man who, we infer, is worldlier than she. A son is born but, we infer, dies in infancy. The man, Daniel (we don't learn the woman's name), commits suicide having convinced himself that he is impure, immoral and a demon as defined in the New Testament, and that his son's death is his fault. He returns to his wife—the audience must infer whether as ghost or demon—and she hangs herself, thereby reuniting the two of them either in Paradise or Perdition.

All of this—except the hanging—is told in flashbacks which means 45 minutes of *Ghostbox* is pure exposition. Actually, the hanging might be a flashback, too! Much is conveyed via video tricked up to look like grainy home movies of Her and Him a few decades back. Indeed, the video screen is the dominant element in Amanda Sweger's utterly simple set of table, chairs and naked light bulb. When there's no video, the screen remains lit so that a third figure—voiceless and cloaked like Death—can be silhouetted behind the screen, which also is used to project biblical quotations supporting Daniel's despondent view of himself.

This might be an interesting Halloween show if playwright Coburn and director Mitch Golob had given us more to work with, perhaps a trifle of amusement or a touch of gothic horror. But, no, the show is sober as a judge. Coburn, a very hot Chicago property right now, provides so little info about his characters that it's difficult to sympathize with them. Daniel seems a fool overwhelmed by religiosity, which a severe Lutheran upbringing could do to you (or any other Judeo-Christian religion you prefer). Hey, guys, give us a hint about how we're supposed to take this! Can we have some fun?

Performers Victoria Gilbert and Kevin Crispin are engaged and committed, but even in a studio theater they are impossible to hear when frequent elevated trains rattle close by. Also, the video sound is muddy. Both factors compound Coburn's intentional obfuscation. *Ghostbox* needs to be longer. It need not provide greater clarity, but it does need to provide fuller characters.



Ghostbox. Photo by Kevin Viol



## Olympia Dukakis on 'Magnolias,' being pro-choice

BY JERRY NUNN

Olympia Dukakis hit our eye like a big pizza pie, winning an Oscar for Moonstruck. And we will never Ousier in Steel Magnolias and her quick one-liners. She talked about her upcoming appearance on behalf of pro-choice organization Personal PAC as well as her past and future work.

**Windy City Times: Hello, Olympia. I am excited that you are coming to Chicago.**

Olympia Dukakis: I am, too. You know my husband is from Chicago so I am trying to convince him to come with me. I don't know if he will or not. He has some relatives still there.

**WCT: How did you become involved with Personal PAC?**

OD: They called me up. They had heard about my activism so to speak. They asked me if it was something that they thought I could do. This is a good cause.

**WCT: Are you doing a speech?**

OD: Yes, I am doing a speech. There is a general reception, then a luncheon, there is my

speech and then there is a longer reception.

**WCT: Well, I will be there.**

OD: Okay, good.

**WCT: I have to tell you that Moonstruck is my number-one favorite movie ever.**

OD: Aww, thank you!

**WCT: Did you know it would be a hit when you made it?**

OD: Oh, not at all. We all thought it was a small movie but we knew that it was choice as they say, choice meat. Norman Jewison directing, of course, was a big thing. Actresses everywhere wanted the roles. They were terrific parts. John Patrick Shanley was hot at the time. I think he is still hot but, at that time, he was particularly on the news waves.

**WCT: I love his writing.**

OD: Actually it was the first movie that I had decided that I was going to go out of town for. I had to go to Canada because we shot all of the interiors in Canada. The exteriors we did here. So that is the first movie that I left town for after seventeen years.

**WCT: Wow.**

OD: That is what I remember about it. I had done movies in New York but this one was a wonderful part.

**WCT: And it led to other things.**

OD: Oh sure. It led to paying my bills. What about that? That's what it led to! *[Both laugh.]*

**WCT: Yes, and every gay guy in town loved Steel Magnolias.**

OD: Oh yeah, and a lot of women love it, too. You should see it. I travel around and women come up to me and say they have seen it. I actually met someone that had seen it twenty eight times!

**WCT: Oh, my; that's a lot.**

OD: These women get together—families, sisters, mothers, daughters, as well as friends. They cry, they laugh and say the lines out loud.

**WCT: That is great. I watched you in Tales of the City. That was an interesting role to tackle.**



Olympia Dukakis. Photo by Deborah Goldstein

OD: That was my favorite. It didn't change my life the way Moonstruck did but that was my favorite role. It was an extraordinary part. I was so fortunate to have had the part and gotten to know Armistead [Maupin, who wrote Tales]. Alastair Reed was a great director. We did two others but none of them had the depth I thought of the first. That is my opinion, but for me the first one was extraordinary.

**WCT: They are making a musical version of it.**

OD: I know! It will be in San Francisco with the people that did Avenue Q.

**WCT: That will be great.**

OD: I know. I should be wonderful. I met and talked with them. I am obviously too old for the part but they just wanted to hear my responses and what it was like to do it.

**WCT: Sure, and you have a movie coming out this year called Montana Amazon.**

OD: Yes, it is a wonderfully offbeat, quirky, funny movie with horrible things in it. *[Laughs]* You have a combination of horror and humor. It is an interesting movie.

**WCT: And Haley Joel Osment stars as well, and you produced it.**

OD: Yep. Alison Brie is quite good in it, too. They both play my grandchildren.

**WCT: Any other movies coming out?**

OD: Yeah, there is a movie called Cloudburst. It will probably be out in the spring. It is with Thom Fitzgerald. I have done two other movies with him, The Event and 3 Needles. I play an aging dyke in this one and play it with my partner, Brenda Fricker.

**WCT: Oh, yeah?**

OD: We play partners. It is very funny and very moving.

**WCT: I have to check that out. You are never slowing down!**

OD: Well, no. I just turned down something because I had to stop so I could prepare for this play that I am doing.

**WCT: So you are doing a play, too?**

OD: Yes, in New York; [it's] called The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. It is a Tennessee Williams' play. It is at the Roundabout.

**WCT: Well, we will see you when your train stops for a moment in Chicago!**

**Personal PAC's 17th Annual Awards Luncheon begins at 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 18, at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan. For tickets, visit <http://www.personalpac.org> or call 312-422-0055.**



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Joffrey Dancers: Fabrice Calmels, Victoria Jaiani Photo by: Herbert Migdoll

MUSIC: DECIBELLE

# Big Freedia's big bounce

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

On any given night in New Orleans, Big Freedia is working the mic and crowds of mostly women can't get enough. Transformed by the upbeat dance music, the ladies move non-stop and uninhibited until the 20-30-minute set is over, and what's amazing is that with all this ass-shaking and sexual energy flooding the club, the guys fall back and just let the women do their thing on the dance floor.

A performer with over a decade of experience on the bounce music scene, Big Freedia explained in a phone conversation with the Windy City Times, "It speaks to women so much because, well, I know that when I'm in concert the women feel protected and comfortable with my music. They feel like they can let themselves go and dance. I'm very protective of them when they're dancing. It's like they're performing with me so I think women definitely need someone who is not afraid to stand up for them while they're doing their thing and having a good time ... without any guys touching them or coming up to them or just harassing them."

Bounce music is more than 20 years old and has become as deeply imbedded in Nola culture as jambalaya and Mardi Gras. After Hurricane Katrina displaced people all over the country Big Freedia said she and her fellow bounce rappers received a constant stream of requests from bounce fans for the music. "They were like feigning for bounce music all over, asking to have it e-mailed or sent. 'I need to hear some New Orleans bounce music,' because we were displaced all over. It provides a sense of home to people."

Possibly due to this displacement, bounce music has started to penetrate beyond the New Orleans boundaries in the last several years. Mainstream hip-hop artists have sampled the music, bounce performers are touring the country and several media outlets have written features about the music and culture.

Bounce music is constantly evolving with each new performer, but it is characterized by a call and response style and is constructed over two beats that can be transformed indefinitely to create a high energy, party flavor. Prominent bounce performers, many of them gay, queer or transgender, are working tirelessly to bring bounce music to the mainstream.

Big Freedia is one of these prominent bounce performers and she works six nights a week at two to three clubs a night, while still maintaining her day job as an interior decorator; she counts the New Orleans mayor's office as a client.

Big Freedia grew up listening to bounce music. A native of New Orleans, she grew up on Josephine Street, singing gospel music and, in 1999, she said she became obsessed with bounce music after friend Katy Red blew up the scene with her performances. Big Freedia started out performing background vocals for Katy Red and then ventured out on her own.

She now hopes to see bounce music gain the visibility that she believes it deserves. "I would like to see it be totally mainstream. I'd like to see me on the red carpet ... I think it is really close. We are getting a lot of attention, a lot of calls."

Although the music and culture of bounce music is often classified by its regional affiliation and the performance aspect is deeply tied to the experience, on tour in New York City it became apparent that bounce music is easily gaining acceptance and fans across the country. Prior to the show, fans took to the Internet and learned Big Freedia's songs and the dance moves. "The similarity is, most of them make me feel like I am right at home."



Big Freedia.

Big Freedia acknowledged that getting the performance to come across on a recording can be a challenge: "It comes with a feeling and when that feeling comes, I try to go catch the feeling and go record at that time. My voice is very different and unique. When I am on the mic, no matter if it is at the studio or at the club, you think I'm on the mic live. You don't know if I am there or not. People tell me that all the time. You can be at the club and one of my songs coming on and I'm not even at the club, you actually think I'm at the club."

As bounce music emerges Big Freedia has seen reporters try and classify what they are seeing, referring to bounce performed by gay, queer or transgender performers as Sissy Bounce, calling it a subcategory of bounce music, but Freedia said, "The whole thing of that is at the end of the day it's all bounce music. There is no separation between sissy bounce and bounce music. Sissy bounce is just a title, for three individuals actually, in the bounce game. It's just a title that they call our music sissy bounce because of our personal preference, but it's not sissy bounce. It's just bounce music at the end of the day. There is no such thing as sissy bounce."

While hip-hop and rap music are well-known for being less than friendly to the LGBT community and performers, gay, queer and trans bounce artists seem to overcome this challenge and have gained acceptance in the clubs and wider bounce scene.

"It's predominantly women, period. A ton of men love it, but the fan base is 80 percent women. Gay guys and girls love it."

Freedia encourages people to give bounce music a chance and be open to the experience. "Probably by the second song you are getting more into it, definitely by the third one we're captivating you," Freedia said. "You're, like, excited. You might be a little bit afraid of it, but by the end of the show we're going to change your mind about it."

The Decibelle Music and Culture festival is the first performance for Big Freedia in Chicago and she said the show will be a very different, mind-blowing experience: "Try the experience of it. ... Don't judge it from a distance. Come and check it out and you may even enjoy it. You may love it. You may love it. But, I just grant you this, I will do my best to make sure everybody, once they leave, had themselves a good time."

**The performance is scheduled for 9:30 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 16, at Subterranean, 2011 W. North. Tickets are \$10.**

**There will be a Nola Sissy Bounce Dance Workshop Saturday, Oct. 16, 5-6 p.m. at The Black Noise Production Space, 500 W. Cermak, Suite 405, in collaboration with The Savoire-Faire LGBTQ Festival 2010. The suggested donation is \$5-20.**

**For more on the Decibelle Music and Culture Festival, which takes place Oct. 14-16, see <http://www.decibelle.org>.**

MUSIC

# Jennifer Knapp reflects on coming out, Christianity

BY SARAH TEREZ ROSENBLUM

Most of us dream of a career hiatus, an extended period in which to contemplate, recalibrate and breathe. But seven years is a long time, especially if your job reflects your passion. When singer/songwriter Jennifer Knapp, began her "brutal yet essential self-imposed exile," she wasn't sure she'd perform again. Now, this former Christian artist, returns to the music scene with a new album and a fresh perspective. And if you're a Larry King viewer, you know she's also unveiling something more personal: a new (to her fans) sexual identity.

**Windy City Times: How was it to sit in Larry King's hot seat, answering questions about your sexuality?**

Jennifer Knapp: Unnerving, especially when you have five cameras six feet away from your face, but I appreciate his approach. He pretty much asks whatever he wants. When somebody goes for your throat, you know where they're aiming. I love that about him. It was a good experience, one of the first major times I had to address my sexuality publicly. It was certainly a challenge, but having gotten through Larry King, I think I can get through anything!

**WCT: You're incredibly private. What's it like for you to discuss something so personal?**

JK: I never do anything unless I've worked out the worst-case scenario and how I think I'll respond. So when I realized I'd probably release another record, I anticipated it would come to light and I'd have to talk about it. I spent a couple of years just preparing myself for that, finding peace within myself, or I don't know if it's peace so much as courage to just man up and get it done. I had to weigh [whether I wanted] music enough to run that gauntlet before I got on a plane and came back to the states.

It's a challenge, but tons of people are showing up to my shows and sharing stories and experiences that are similar to mine. In particular, people of faith who had the challenge of reconciling faith and sexuality in environments that didn't always support the two together. You find a sense of community in being able to share that with other people. Just [understanding] the dialogue's importance is motivating.

**WCT: Growing up, did you always want to perform?**

JK: My road into doing what I do was almost an accident. I didn't pick up my first guitar till I was 18 years old, a music education major in college. Through my teen years I did a lot of short story, poetry and creative writing, but it wasn't until I got to college that I realized I could integrate all of that and have a pretty good time.

**WCT: Describe your writing process.**

JK: You know those little poetry magnets you put on the fridge? No, I'm kidding. Mostly I pick up my guitar and I just start playing. I don't really write music at all unless I have my guitar in my hand. If I try without it, I'm kind of missing a limb.

**WCT: Your hiatus from writing must have been difficult then. Did you find other creative outlets?**

JK: I thought I was trying to quit the whole thing. Kinda cold turkey, I sold all my gear, didn't buy a journal for years and just refused to do

any of it. With all my traveling, I ended up taking tons of photographs and just looking at the world in a different way. As I look back, I realize I never really stopped my creative process. I'd be having my afternoon coffee in a coffee shop in Europe and drawing the cobblestone streets, if that doesn't sound cliché. But the space away from the spoken part of language allowed the sort of incoherent expression, taking pictures and drawing, and I'm grateful for it.

**WCT: Since your return has your fan base changed?**

JK: Initially, I didn't see the connection between the Christian records I'd done in the past and the music I'm doing now; I didn't know if it would translate or if I'd changed so much that they were in no way alike. The funny thing is, a lot of [fans] say they love my music and know me from that Christian base, but also say, "I don't listen to a lot of Christian music." The kind



of audience I've had a dialogue with for so long are just thinking people. Those people still find that spiritual experience through my music. It's personal, and it leaves room for them to insert their stories. The dialogue is still the same, just not necessarily centered around the conversation of the church.

**WCT: Were you always aware of your attraction to women?**

JK: Not really. My sexuality was on the back burner. From the time I became a Christian in college, having had a religious experience and starting to write about my faith and going on and performing in that mode, I was celibate. It wasn't until I had time to myself that I even began to explore that option. Once I met my partner it was just a journey like so many people who fall in love take. You don't know if you'll make it or what it means but you love that person and you want to figure out how that's supposed to work.

**WCT: Is there a conflict between living a Christian life and a gay one?**

JK: Falling in love with a woman wasn't something I anticipated, but at the end of the day, when I'm by myself there's very little conflict. I'm still on the same spiritual journey that I entered into 20 years ago. The harder conflicts are the pretty typical questions, what will I do? What will everybody say? Certainly, there are conservative Christians holding the line that homosexuality and being a person of faith are incompatible. At the same time, so many other people of faith like the Episcopalians, United Church of Christ and the Methodists do a really great job of including all the people who come to celebrate and worship and share and learn. Those Christians don't necessarily get the headlines, but they're there. The struggle for me was figuring out where my new perspective was going to lead me. It was scary for a while but my faith didn't magically wane the second that I fell in love with a woman; it's still there and it's very much compatible.



Bettye LaVette in concert. Photo by Vern Hester

## BENT NIGHTS

## Bettye LaVette

BY VERN HESTER

"God-DAMN" was the only thing that I could say when I first heard Bettye LaVette sing. It was her version of Sinead O'Connor's "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," and LaVette was barely into the second verse before my jaw hit the floor. That particular recording was from LaVette's *I've Got My Own Hell to Raise* [Anti Records], a disarming album of covers by female writers. But if her choice in material was stellar (from the likes of Joan Armatrading, Aimee Mann, Dolly Parton and Fiona Apple), what she did with it was on an entirely different plane. Gritty, knowing, wise, spiritual and brutal, LaVette curls emotions in a lyric like smoke languidly curling around an ignored cigarette.

In an era where we have an abundance of stunning Black female voices (Patti, Whitney, Tina, Chaka, Alicia, Aretha), LaVette stands apart from the pack; her voice—with all its worn timbres, rough accents and effortless dexterity—approaches soul but has the gravity of life-experienced blues. *My Own Hell to Raise* benefited from Joe Henry's subdued and sparse production which made it all the more personal and intimate. I haven't heard a "soul" album yet that comes straight from the gut and has such nakedness and risk. So after performing for nearly 50 years you wonder why all the recent hype is happening now and why you've never heard of her. Well, that's a story in itself...

Starting at the age of 16 LaVette recorded her first hit, "My Man (He's a Loving Man)," and seemed poised for a promising career. Then a flood of setbacks appeared after she recorded her full-length debut for Atlantic Records at the legendary '60s-era Muscle Shoals Recording studio—where the output at the time included Aretha Franklin's "I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)," Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sall," and Etta James' "Tell Mama." Later in the decade the Rolling Stones cut "Brown Sugar" and "Wild Horses" there while *en route* to Altamont and even David Bowie turned up in the mid-'70s to record his *Young Americans* album. Inexplicably, Atlantic shelved the album, and it stayed in the vaults for decades, not only accumulating dust but a near-legendary reputation. With her shot at widespread recognition seemingly gone she did the only thing she knew how to do: keep singing. After all, she had kids to feed and a life to live.

LaVette had a right to be bitter since many of her contemporaries from the early '60s whom she had befriended and nurtured through the bumpy dawns of their own careers (the Supremes, David Ruffin of the Temptations) hit it big while she eked out a living playing bars and hotels. The twist in the story came with the involvement of a French specialty label that focused on lost and rare soul recordings; they got hold of the forgotten album and, finally, LaVette got the hearing that she deserved.

Now, at 65, LaVette is a new face with an uppity attitude, but you're forced to give her her due because she puts her money where her mouth is. With three albums in three years on Anti

Records she's just released *Interpretations: The British Rock Songbook*, an ironic cover album that's anything but merely that. The irony is that LaVette felt that the Brits who wrote and performed these songs had the effect of crowding Black music and, specifically, Black performers like LaVette off the radio dial.

Still, the idea of a seasoned performer doing a "covers" album is barely quaint and beyond a cliché, but *Interpretations* is a cover album in the same way that a \$1,000 bill is a piece of paper. To say that she reinvents the music is putting it mildly. When Pete Townshend first heard LaVette's reading of his "Love Reign O'er Me" at a Kennedy Center tribute to the Who, he was simultaneously shocked and enraptured. (His hilarious reaction is captured on Facebook.) But Townshend and Roger Daltrey only got a taste of what she was about. To hear LaVette challenge Ringo Starr's "It Don't Come Easy" put the song in such a bracing context that it became her personal blues rather than some catchy ditty on AM radio. I never understood the co-dependent angst of Elton John's "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" until I heard her naked searing take. Unlike Sir Elton, who disdained his own version and sang it with a forced mush-mouthed sense of faked drama, LaVette gave it conviction and bite. And Led Zeppelin's "All of My Love," shorn of Robert Plant's built-in histrionics, became authentic straight-up delta blues rather than blues fed through a rich young Brit's approximation of the blues.

All of this came crashing down on the stage of the Old Town School of Folk Music recently in a lean and dramatic show that had the SRO crowd whipped and exasperated. Strutting out to the Beatles forgotten "The Word" and a funky "I Still Want to be Your Baby," LaVette was slinky, playful, naughty and full of brio. Grabbing the spotlight that eluded her before—and she never let anyone in the room forget it either—she laced her most searing choices with humor and embraceable charm. "A Woman Like Me," a rollicking rocker about the ultimate in romantic revenge, came with a saucy flirt-strut with her twentysomething fresh-faced guitarist Matt Lucas while "You Don't Know Me at All" and Ray Charles' "They Call It Love" had bite to spare. The Rolling Stones' "Salt of the Earth," the Animals' "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," George Harrison's "Isn't It A Pity" and "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" (where she plopped on the stage floor in a lotus position and got lost in the lyrics) shot for the cosmos and hit the mark.

Her finish was even better. Left alone after her band had left the stage, she sang a personal, precise and tactful "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got." After exiting the stage and after it looked unlikely that all the screaming and applauding from the audience would bring an encore, LaVette and Co. came back and finished with a rollicking "Before the Money Came (The Battle of Bettye LaVette)." The song is an autobiographical essay on her struggle and finally hitting the big time, and it was her last laugh. After going out into the audience and shaking hands the last we saw of her was her sailing through the exit still wailing in the lobby. Let's see Aretha do that.

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## NUNN ON ONE: TELEVISION

Mike Ruiz:  
On the 'A-List'

BY JERRY NUNN

Mike Ruiz will be joining several celebrities for the upcoming Logo reality series The A-List: New York. This Canadian photographer shows the world how to not shoot straight.

**Windy City Times: Hi, Mike. What is your nationality, first of all?**

Mike Ruiz: I am Spanish. My father is from the Spanish contingency in the Philippines. My mom is French/Canadian. There is a bunch of other stuff thrown in for good measure.

**WCT: Did you study photography in school?**

MR: No no no, I was a late bloomer. Ironically my dad was a photography buff. I don't know if it was out of rebellion but I could not be less interested. I was a model for years. When I was 30, I got a camera for Christmas and then became obsessed. I was shooting everything in sight. I taught myself everything and voilà instant career!

**WCT: Have you had a favorite subject?**

MR: I have had so many. I love all my subjects! I spread the love equally. I just worked with Kelly Rowland again. She is so sweet and unassuming, just really warm, very touchy-feely. I love that girl. She is so giving, creatively. We did a crazy transformation on her that was for a Dune futuristic-inspired sci-fi shoot.

**WCT: Are you making any more music videos?**

MR: I just wrapped an Erika Jayne music video. I did one three or four months ago and this is the second video that I did. I am actually directing a video for a really good friend of mine Brian Kent.

**WCT: What made you want to do the A-List?**



Mike Ruiz (center, with camera) and the rest of the A-List: New York cast. Photo courtesy of Logo

MR: They asked me and I gave it a lot of thought. I was cast from Facebook, much like Betty White for Saturday Night Live. I thought it was a rare opportunity. I had TV stuff of my own in development and I thought what better way to learn the inside of television production than to do a show? That is how I learn everything. I just do it.

**WCT: Well, that is one way to do it.**

MR: I am not trying to be Meryl Streep or anything. I get to show my skills as a photographer on the show. I have a positive message. I have developed some responsibility to be a decent role model for people. As a gay man I try to conduct myself with a lot of integrity. I think it is important for people to see that being gay does not mean only one thing. It can mean a lot of things.

**WCT: Explain the show to people who don't know about it.**

MR: I don't know either. [Laughs] It is a drama about a bunch of guys living the dream in New York City, having fun and getting taped for TV. It

is entertainment and show biz. The dynamics are engaging. We are not looking to change foreign policy with this show. It's light, fluffy and entertaining. There is some catfighting and bickering. It wouldn't be a TV show unless there was.

**WCT: You have a photo studio in L.A., correct?**

MR: Yes; in fact, I am sitting in it right now. I live in New York but I am out here filming RuPaul's Drag Race.

**WCT: Oh, for season three; that show is fun.**

MR: You don't even know. It is 50 times better. They have taken it up thousands of notches. I am hoping The A List is the same. People thought with Drag Race that it would be over-the-top and campy, with a bunch of queeny gay guys dressed in drag. I can't tell you a lot yet but yesterday we were all sobbing, and there is definitely a much deeper message.

**WCT: I look forward to seeing both shows.**

MR: I am very proud of both things and my contribution to them.

**WCT: Is there anyone that you want to photograph but haven't?**

MR: I have been thinking that I want to shoot people that inspired me from a really early age, like Phyllis Diller with a celebrity transformation. I would do something very fashion-forward with her, edgy and cool. That's what inspires me these days is to take people out of context and portray them in a different way that is jarring to people. Lady Gaga is very inspiring to me; she is fierce and I love her whole message, but what could I bring to her table? I like to re-invent people. As much as I want to meet her, I am not sure that I want to shoot her.

**WCT: I get that.**

MR: Maybe Morgan Fairchild or Prince. I was just having a conversation about Prince last night. He molded me on so many levels. Just to be in the same room, let alone trust me to shoot him, would be mind-blowing.

**WCT: That would be. You have such great opportunities.**

MR: I am hoping that the younger generation will take away from the show many things. I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks with no support and no encouragement. I had a lot of things backed up against me. I listened to my heart and my head and followed my dreams. I hope people will see that you can really accomplish everything if you are not crippled by fear. That is soapbox-y. Let's talk about some bitch fights!

**WCT: Well, let's talk about that hot cover on your old movie, Latin Boys Go To Hell.**

MR: I am still haunted by that, but it was a really cool time in my life and gave me first looks into a whole other world. I am experiencing it now on a broader scale. That was prepping me for things to come.

**The A List is on the Logo Channel Mondays at 9 p.m. Visit <http://www.mikeruiz.com> and <http://www.logotv.com> for listings and information.**

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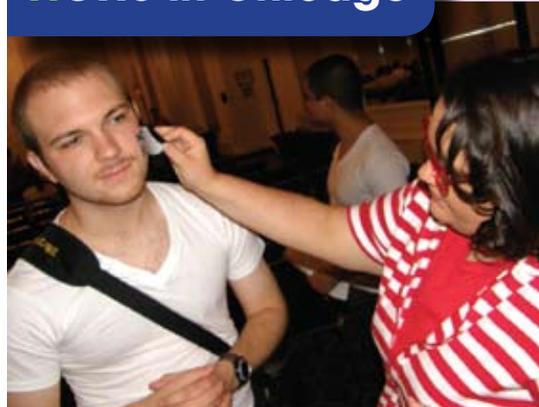


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Hundreds turned out to take part in the NOH8 open photo shoot, October 11 at The W Chicago City Center, 172 W. Adams. Photographer Adam Bouska finally brought his groundbreaking project to Chicago after months of intense interest from Chicagoans. Participants had a "NOH8" temporary tattoo applied to their faces and then were photographed by Bouska in a variety of creative poses. Due to overwhelming response to this photo shoot, the hours were extended to begin at noon instead of 4 p.m., as originally planned. Photos and text by Kirk Williamson



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Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. File No. D10123644 on October 4, 2010 Under the Assumed Name of: Short Stuff Chicago with the business located at 2054 W. Irving Park Road, #3A, Chicago, IL 60618. The true name(s) and residence address of the owner(s) is: Anthony D. Colston II, 4533 N. Paulina, Chicago, IL 60640. (10/13/10- 10/27/10)

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Ryan Conrad and Yasmin Nair. Photo by Andrew Davis

## BOOKS

# Queer writers/activists criticize marriage-equality movement at forum

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Contrary to what some people believe, it is not just conservative heterosexual institutions that criticize the gay-marriage movement. Although their reasoning is different, queer activists also have their criticisms.

That point was clear as editor/contributor Ryan Conrad and contributor Yasmin Nair discussed their (pocket-sized) book, *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage*, Oct. 9 at the Chicago Public Library's Bezazian Branch in Uptown with approximately 30 attendees. (A third contributor, University of Illinois at Chicago professor John D'Emilio, was scheduled to attend but could not.)

One of the items discussed was the blue-and-yellow "greater than" symbol that the group *Against Equality* uses. Conrad said that it's "a rip-off of [the Human Rights Campaign's] logo." The campaign uses an equal sign. (Nair clarified in a post-event talk that "it's our response to this notion of equality. The sign is very tongue-in-cheek, but there also needs to be 'better than' equality, and push for a more radical utopian vision of society.")

At one point, Nair talked about the book's title itself. "People ask, 'How can you possibly be against equality? That's like being against rainbows ... and all things good?' [But] equality ... What does equality mean and how has it been used and deployed over the years to signify anything good and grandiose and progressive? A lot of people say 'progressives' and 'gays' as if they mean the same thing. But what we're contending in this book is that, no, what constitutes the gay movement today is actually the gay right. It's a deeply conservative movement."

In a talk that touched on law, history and even psychology, Nair discussed how things changed for the gay community in the 1990s. "What you get in the 1990s is a break, as it were, for the gay community. You get a rise in the professional, upper middle class of gay people. You also get, at the same time, is this breakdown in the notion of a public sexual culture; so you see Times Square being cleaned out and Disneyfied, for example. And the two things actually come together: a gay professional class and a de-sexing of queer culture (and straight life as well).

"So you get this conservatism. You get gay people who think AIDS is over; in fact, it's not. ... What starts to happen is that there's this idea that 'gay' is a class identity. People have this stereotype: They think that [gays] are all rich and have the picket-fence lifestyle.

"And within that framework of this change, you get marriage coming in. Marriage becomes the ultimate form of respectability."

Nair then drew a connection between two books with the same title—*Why Marriage Matters*—that seemingly come from opposite ends of the political spectrum. "One of them is by Evan Wolfson, who is one of the architects of the gay-marriage movement. The other one is by a member of the Family Research Council, which

is ultraconservative. If you put the two books side by side, you would not be able to tell the difference—because each book tells you exactly the same story, about how marriage is good because it's only through marriage that children feel like they're legitimate. ... There is no difference, really, between the conservative idea of what a family should like and its relationship to the state, and what the gay vision of what that idea is."

Regarding sexualization, Nair said, "Ours is not the type of critique that says gay marriage is bad because we're not allowed to have sex anymore. That's a critique that a lot of radical queers have made: that gay marriage de-sexes us. The point is that gay marriage—as a kind of affective, sentimental movement—has allowed us to forget the kind of economic relationship we're supposed to have to the state.

"So when you talk about [1,138] benefits [that gay married couples are deprived of], those are benefits that we're supposed to have, anyway. You shouldn't have to get married to have your life saved."

However, Nair saved her most passionate argument regarding the relevant and timely topic of gay teen suicides. "What has really appalled us is [how] the recent suicides have caused gay organizations to implicitly or explicitly make the absolutely outrageous, horrendous, disgusting, vile claim that gay marriage was connected to these suicides. ... People have been saying, 'If we had gay marriage [or] if gays had been treated well, these kids would not have committed suicide—to which we say, 'This is utter and complete rotten bullshit.' One of the queer youth who killed himself lived in Massachusetts, which has [gay marriage]. But, also, when someone is being queer-bashed, someone isn't thinking, 'I wonder if this kid's parents are married?' ... Also, these kids are more than just queer; they're undocumented immigrants [and] poor; if they kill themselves, it's because life feels hopeless on a number of different levels."

Nair and Conrad talked about how the importance of the gay-marriage movement has received most of the LGBT-related funding available, to the detriment of other organizations and services. Conrad read an excerpt from his essay, saying, "The gay-marriage campaign has been sucking up resources like a massive sponge, corraling us to give up our last dollar and free time, leaving little sustenance for other queer groups doing critical work in our communities.

"An Equality Maine campaign letter had the audacity to claim that gay marriage is 'the fight for our lives.' I wonder whose lives they are talking about when AIDS service organizations and community reproductive clinics across the state have been tightening their belts and desperately trying to crunch numbers so that more queer folks don't end up unemployed, uninsured or, worse yet, dead."

More about *Against Equality*—an online archive and collective that critiques "mainstream gay and lesbian politics"—is available at <http://www.againstequality.org>.

*Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* is actually the first of three books. The next two will discuss hate-crimes legislation and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Nair and D'Emilio are also contributors to *Windy City Times*.

## BOOKS

# Coming Out Under Fire comes out again

BY YASMIN NAIR

Allan Bérubé's *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* was first published by Free Press in 1990. The book proved a new and startling thesis: that World War II was not only a key political event in the history of the world but a turning point in U.S. gay and lesbian history.

Incorporating a range of materials like oral histories and government documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Bérubé showed how the war had contradictory effects. On the one hand, it compelled people, even those against war, into joining by conscription. On the other hand, it afforded young gays and lesbians the opportunity to leave the confines of their hometowns and to embark upon literal and metaphorical journeys towards worlds of pleasure and community formation that affirmed their sexual identity in new ways.

As the war dragged on, the military, needing more bodies on the front but also suffering from its internalized and intense homophobia, devised new methods, including psychiatric "evaluations," that would allow it to keep gays and lesbians in its forces but simultaneously discard them through dishonorable discharges when they were no longer needed.

Eventually, in 1993, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy codified this contradictory form of discrimination. The times and the wars are different now, and the activism around DADT reflects differing ideological conflicts as anti-war and anti-DADT activists sometimes clash and sometimes mesh on the issue. Regardless, Bérubé's book remains a critical piece of history that provides insights into a new era in gay and lesbian history. Out of print for several years, the book was recently republished by the University of North Carolina press, and it features an introduction by the historians Estelle Freedman and John D'Emilio, who were friends and colleagues of Bérubé. *Windy City Times* spoke to D'Emilio, a professor of history and gender and women's studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, about the impact of *Coming Out Under Fire*.

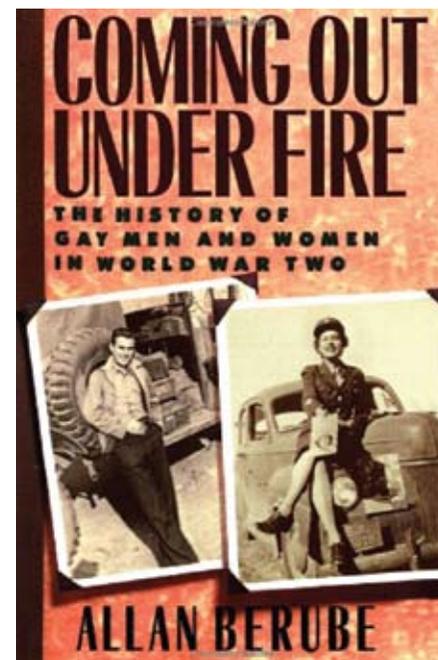
**Windy City Times: Could you talk about the publication history of *Coming Out Under Fire* and what made UNCP decide to bring it back in print?**

John D'Emilio: [Going out of print] is the peril that gay and lesbian authors face when they write a serious book and go with a trade press rather than a university press. The trade publisher promises money and wider distribution up front, which is true initially. But unless you sell a lot of copies, they are not going to keep it in print. And that's what happened with this book. They loved the book, but a book about gays and lesbians, even if it's about World War II, doesn't sell tens of thousands of copies.

As for the re-publication: Estelle and I are the literary executors of Allan Bérubé's estate and we approached the University of North Carolina Press with a proposal that they bring this out in print, and that we do another collection of Allan's writing. This one just required an introduction. The other one, *My Desire for History*, will come out sometime in the spring.

**WCT: What do you think is the lasting significance of *Coming Out Under Fire*?**

JD: There were certainly enough of us figuring out this history at the same time. But it's Allan who was studying and focusing on WWII so intensely, who was doing those oral histories and scoping out government documents through Freedom of Information Act requests. He uncovered a history that no one had talked about, a history of gays and lesbians during the war, and both the persecutions and the freedoms that



came about and he put gays and lesbians right into the heart of this 20th-century experience. But he also showed that WWII was a turning point in gay and lesbian history, that the sex segregation that war encourages and the literal mobility that it gave young men and women in the military made it possible for people to explore their sexuality in a way that, in peacetime, could not quite happen.

And so WWII created something that didn't quite exist before; it gave a push to community formation in cities; it made a segment of a whole generation realize, "Oh, I'm gay, I'm lesbian—and so are all you!" The book is about reclaiming a piece of history that was hidden and that has political implications. It's also about reinterpreting the past. It allows us to see the war as a vital moment in gay and lesbian history.

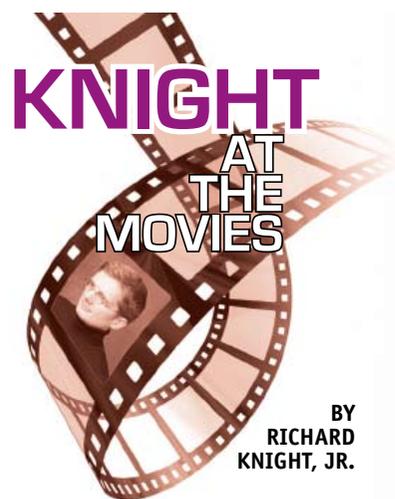
**WCT: Bérubé writes about how this new era creates venues for gay social culture, like gay and lesbian bars. And yet bar culture as a major signifier of queer life seems so commonplace now—could you expand on the effects of the war on them?**

JD: It's not as if there were no gay and lesbian bars before WWII but especially in port cities where gays and lesbians took their leave, like San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., we saw the gathering of so many young people. They were going off to war knowing they might never come back and they wanted to have a good time. That created a market for bars: it allowed these bars to survive economically, and then that boom just continued to the post-war period. Things [like the development of gay bars] that were happening very slowly through the '20s and '30s accelerated because of the war and that acceleration created something new.

**WCT: You mentioned *My Desire for History*, the forthcoming book of Bérubé's essays. What will that [spotlight]?**

JD: It includes works by Allan from his very first years of scholarship at the end of the '70s through the beginning of the '80s through work that was unpublished at the time he died. [Editor's note: Bérubé died in 2007.] The first section is about San Francisco local gay and lesbian history, the second on WWII and the military. The third section is a combination of autobiographical pieces and political analysis in which he uses autobiography to ask questions about sexual identity, class and race; it's more theoretical but very accessible. The last section is about labor; he was working on a book about the Marine Cooks and Stewards' Union, a radical union of the '30s and '40s and a very queer-inflected, multiracial union.

**Read more of this interview, including what motivated John D'Emilio to keep this book in print, online at <http://www.windycitymedia-group.com>.**



BY  
RICHARD  
KNIGHT, JR.

## Conviction; Red; film notes

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

With **Conviction**, the fact-based story of a working mother who becomes a lawyer to free her brother from a murder charge, Hilary Swank gives the kind of performance that has won her two Oscars and might get her a third. Much of that has to do with Swank's innate ability to connect with underdog characters. There's something in these sad-eyed women who grin through adversity that audiences respond to, big-time. And Betty Anne Waters—tough as a bar of iron, taciturn and determined to a fault—is every bit as memorable as Swank's Brandon Teena in *Boys Don't Cry* and Maggie Fitzgerald in *Million Dollar Baby*, the two other characters that netted Swank Oscar gold. These underdogs share the silent resolve to rise above the horrible hand that life has dealt them, and something in Swank instinctively knows how to put these battle-scarred characters across.

In *Conviction*, only the third feature from actor-director Tony Goldwyn (who doesn't appear in the film, but should), Swank shines in a David-vs.-Goliath legal drama that is a great human-interest story *a la* Erin Brockovich or *Flash of Genius*. The film moves back and forth between the hardscrabble childhood of Betty Anne and her brother, Kenny, and their lives as adults just before and during Kenny's arrest and conviction for murder. Set in working-class Massachusetts, the film has the added bonus of listening to actors relish spouting out their dialogue with a "Bass-ton" accent.

Goldwyn, working from a script by Pamela Gray, knows that he's got a good, meaty story, and sensibly keeps things focused on his star and her supporting players. Sam Rockwell, who matches up nicely with Swank, crackles with energy playing the wildcat brother whose time in jail begins to grind him down emotionally.

Clea DuVall plays the trashy mother of his child; Juliette Lewis is marvelous as his even trashier girlfriend; and Minnie Driver is Swank's funny, no-nonsense, sexpot best friend. Other marvelous actors—Melissa Leo, Karen Young, Peter Gallagher, Loren Dean, etc.—make impressions in small but key roles.

In its way, *Conviction* is every bit as old-fashioned as Swank's last starring picture, *Amelia*, the flop biopic of the sunny but doomed aviatrix Amelia Earhart. But where that misguided production mistakenly reduced Earhart's thrilling career and life as a feminist pioneer (and lesbian icon) down to a soggy romance, Goldwyn's film makes sure to provide Swank with a winning character arc that she rides for all its worth. As Betty Anne, Swank soars back to the acting heights audiences have loved her for and her commitment to the character gives the title of the movie a double meaning.

Helen Mirren, another gay audience fave, is back in theatres this week in the action thriller **Red**, the first foray into the genre by Summit Entertainment—the production company responsible for the mega-successful *Twilight* franchise. Bruce Willis stars in the Grand Hotel-sized conspiracy thriller in which a group of former black ops CIA assassins (Willis, Mirren and Morgan Freeman) is forced to come out of retirement when the members' identities are compromised (hence the title, which stands for Retired-Extremely-Dangerous). The movie, based on a series of graphic novels by Warren Ellis, is typical action-blockbuster stuff—entertaining and mindless—that is elevated by the high-wattage cast (which also includes Mary-Louise Parker, Richard Dreyfuss and Ernest Borgnine, who gets a meaty little part) and the sight of a no-nonsense Mirren toting an automatic weapon and taking out enemy minions left and right with obvious gusto. The movie's biggest misstep is having the character played by the ageless, shamelessly sensual Mirren punished by ending up with crusty old Brian Cox (perhaps the least sexy man in movies), who is cast as her old flame, a former Russian agent. Overlook that error in judgment by director Robert Schwentke (*The Time Traveler's Wife*, *Flightplan*), and *Red* makes for great Saturday night date fare.

### Film notes:

—**Women Labor Activists in the Movies: Nine Depictions of Workplace Organizers, 1954-2005** is a new book of film essays by University of New Hampshire associate professor Jennifer Borda. The book reflects attitudes about the labor and women's movements through assorted films of the period including *Salt of the Earth*, *Pajama Game*, *Union Maids*, *Norma Rae*, *Silkwood*, and *Live Nude Girls Unite*. Borda's book examines the difference between the real story and Hollywood's version of the true events. See [http://www.unh.edu/news/cj\\_nr/200oct.sep/lw28book.cfm](http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/200oct.sep/lw28book.cfm).

—Celebrity photographer and WCT contributor

**Steve Starr** has released a new coffee table book called *Starrlight: Glamorous Latin Movie Stars of Early Hollywood* that combines photographs of the stars and period memorabilia, with bios of Maria Montez, Rita Hayworth, Lupe Velez, Carmen Miranda, Delores Del Rio and others. See [http://www.stevestarrstudios.com/buy\\_book/book.html](http://www.stevestarrstudios.com/buy_book/book.html).

Check out my archived reviews at <http://www.windycitytimes.com> or <http://www.knightatthemovies.com>. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.

## 'Darling' highlights film fest's LGBT offerings

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

"Against all odds she stayed true to herself and that makes her very important to any community—not just the gay community. Her aspirations and her determination that she be allowed to be who she decides that she is instead of what other people decide she should be. It's a very strong, powerful, courageous, very American thing. Saying, 'I am who I say I am and I'm going to become who I want to become and I'm not going to let anyone deter me from that or let their prejudices stop me.'"

That's filmmaker James Rasin speaking about the late Warhol transvestite superstar Candy Darling, whose trailblazing life and short-lived career during the late '60s and early '70s are artfully captured in Rasin's fascinating documentary (and his feature-length debut) **Beautiful Darling**, which is screening Oct. 15-16 as part of the Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF), now entering its second week.

Rasin, who hails from Hinsdale but has made New York City his home for decades, toyed with the idea of making a documentary about the seminal transvestite icon for years. He met Jeremiah Newton at a book party 20 years ago and the two became friends. In the ensuing years Newton often talked about his close friendship with Darling, who had died in 1974 of leukemia after a brief, trailblazing career as one of Warhol's self-proclaimed "superstars." Darling, who lived full-time in her film-goddess persona according to her close friends, was the inspiration for Lou Reed's song "Walk on the Wild Side;" starred for Warhol in *Flesh and Women in Revolt*; and was personally chosen by Tennessee Williams to star in a revival of his play *Small Craft Warnings*. Peter Hujar's infamous photo taken on her deathbed (at Darling's insistence) was used as the cover for the 2005 Antony & the Johnsons' album *I Am a Bird Now*.

Newton, who had lived with Darling at various points during their joint struggles in Manhattan, was given access to her personal belongings after her death by Darling's mother; the memorabilia ended up in his apartment. At one point he expressed interest in having Rasin, who had been writing plays and making short films, into turning Darling's story into a film. "It kind of evolved over 20 years, let's say," said Rasin in a telephone interview from New York. "But when we finally started kicking around the idea it went pretty quickly."

Rasin was aware that Newton had items of Darling memorabilia but once he discovered the extent of Newton's cache—including diaries, photos, audio cassettes, videotapes and many other items—that Newton had archived over the years in what Rasin describes with a laugh as "Jeremiah's unique filing system," he felt compelled to bring Darling's story to the world. "It heightened the treasure hunt aspect of putting the movie together," Rasin recalled.

The resulting film—which mixes the priceless memorabilia (including rare footage of Candy in performance, hanging out with Warhol, Dennis Hopper, and Jane Fonda to footage of Tennessee Williams backstage chatting with Darling); diary excerpts read by Chloe Sevigny; and new inter-



Beautiful Darling.

views with Holly Woodlawn, John Waters, Fran Lebowitz and other friends of Darlings—is an expressive portrait of the young man from Long Island once known as James Slattery, who left a singular legacy as Candy Darling, the self-made creation inspired by Hollywood glamour girl Kim Novak and others.

*Beautiful Darling* is also a moving tribute to the close friendship of Darling and Newton, whose memories of that friendship are poignant, sharp and funny. (The film is bookended with footage of Newton arranging for a final burial place for both Candy's ashes and his mothers.) Rasin and Newton will be in town for the screenings of *Beautiful Darling* Oct. 15-16 at AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois, the sole venue for CIFF screenings.

Other LGBT-themed films playing as part of the Fest's OUTrageous program in the last week of the festival include *Amphetamine* (Hong Kong), which screens Oct. 15, 16; *For 80 Days* (Spain), which screens Oct. 18, 19; *Heartbeats* (Canada), which runs Oct. 14-15; and *Loose Cannons* (Italy), which screens Oct. 13, 15.

All films will screen at the AMC River East 21, 322 E. Illinois. Complete information on tickets, show times, special events are available by calling 312-332-FILM (3456) or online at [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com).

## Raquel Welch to be honored Oct. 14

Women in Film Chicago, will host its annual Focus Achievement Awards Thursday, Oct. 14, held at the Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 W. Mart Center. This signature fundraiser provides an opportunity to celebrate and honor Raquel Welch (Hollywood icon), Merri Dee (Chicago legend) and Jamie Ceaser (WTTW hallmark) with Mistress of Ceremonies Michah Materre (WGN-TV news), while building support and recognition within the greater Chicago media arts community.

The evening gala will include cocktails, a dinner overlooking Chicago's skyline, a raffle and a silent auction with items and services from Chicago businesses and those who support Women in Film. Purchase tickets at <http://www.wifchicago.org/site/focus-awards/2010-focus-awards>.

## 'Kids Are All Right' DVD out Nov. 16

The *Kids Are All Right*—the critically praised film featuring Annette Bening and Julianne Moore as a lesbian couple raising two teenagers, as well as Mark Ruffalo as the "donor dad"—will be out on Blu-Ray, Digital Download, On-Demand and DVD Tuesday, Nov. 16.

Among the bonus features supplementing the 106-minute movie are a feature commentary by director/co-writer Lisa Cholodenko; a behind-the-scenes featurette; and "The Journey to Forming a Family," in which Cholodenko talks about her five-year process in bring the film to the big screen.



Hilary Swank in *Conviction*. Photo by Ron Batzdorf

# calendar

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WINDY CITY TIMES



## Wed., Oct. 13

**LGBT Lecture at Elmhurst College** Harry Knox, director of the Religion and Faith Program at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, will deliver Elmhurst College's fourth annual L.G.B.T. (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Lecture, "A Spirit-Filled Movement for L.G.B.T. Equality.": 4 p.m., 630-617-3390, Illinois Hall, Schauble Science Center, Prospect and Elm Park Ave., Elmhurst, <http://www.elmhurst.edu>

**Jessica Halem hosts Sex, Chocolate and Your Pelvic Floor** Women's Health Foundation and Lesbian Community Care Project present physical therapist Holly Herman to discuss the mechanics of sex and Chicago's own "sex"pert, Searah Deysach, of Early To Bed will chat about Setting the Mood. Advance tickets \$25. [molly@womenshealthfoundation.org](mailto:molly@womenshealthfoundation.org); 6 p.m., 773-305-8201, Mary's Attic, 5400 N Clark

**Bisexual Panel Discussion** is a casual, peer-lead conversation group. This is an event for bisexuals, bi-curious, and bi-allies to form community, share ideas, and connect with peers. Come check us out and help build the bisexual community! 7 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted

**You're the Star Karaoke with Honey West** Take your place in the spotlight! There's not a bad seat in the house. 10 p.m., (773) 281-3355, Roscoe's Tavern, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Thursday, Oct. 14

**Free Confidential HIV Testing** Asian Human Services and The Banyan Tree Project is conducting free HIV testing Monday-Friday from 10 AM- 5 PM. Appointments are encouraged; walk-ins welcomed. We

## SAFE SPACE Sunday, Oct. 17

The Illinois Safe Schools Alliance will hold its annual back-to-school brunch at HUB51, 51 W. Hubbard.

Photo from 2009 by Blair Mishleau



are located at 4753 N. Broadway, Suite 700. CTA Red Line Lawrence. 10 a.m., 773-293-8430, Asian Human Services 4753 N. Broadway, Suite 700, [http://www.ahschicago.org/community\\_health.htm](http://www.ahschicago.org/community_health.htm)

**Taste of Ten - a Restaurant Showcase** Beyondmedia Education invites you to celebrate their 10th Anniversary with an evening of food, fun and friends. Indulge in an array of culinary delights provided by Chicago's top chefs. Event includes Media Justice Awards, live entertainment and dancing. VIP tickets \$150, \$80 General Admission, \$40 Low Income; 6 p.m., 773-857-7300, Architectural Artifacts, 4325 N Ravenswood Ave, <http://beyondmedia.org/tasteoftent/>

**Women in Film Chicago's 2010 Focus Awards** Women in Film Chicago, will host its annual Focus Achievement Awards on the evening of Thursday, October 14th, held at the Chicago Mart Plaza. This signature fundraiser provides an opportunity to celebrate and honor Raquel Welch (Hollywood icon), Merri Dee (Chicago legend)

and Jamie Ceaser (WTTW hallmark) with Mistress of Ceremonies Michah Materre (WGN-TV news), while building support and recognition within the greater Chicago media arts community. 6:30 p.m., Chicago Mart Plaza Wolf Point Ballroom, 350 W. Mart Center Dr., Chicago, <http://www.wifchicago.org>

**WTTW Benefit Concert with Clay Aiken** Exclusive one-night-only concert to benefit WTTW Channel 11 with platinum-selling recording artist Clay Aiken, who will perform songs from his most recent album, *Tried & True*, and other hits. 7:30 p.m., (773) 509-1111 ex. 6, Park West Chicago, 322 W Armitage, <http://www.wttw.com/events>

## Friday, Oct. 15

**Big Gay Pudding** White Rainbows presents Big Gay Pudding, proving once and for all that the proof is indeed in the pudding. You will laugh, you will cry, and if you are lucky you may see some people in their underwear. Add a teaspoon of vanilla, a dash of fun, a cup of laughs and chill for about 45 minutes every Friday and Saturday thru Oct. 23 at 8 p.m. at The Call, 1547 W. Bryn Mawr, <http://whiterainbowschicago.wordpress.com>

**The Rocky Horror Show** Just in time for the Halloween, NightBlue Performing Arts Company presents their restaged production of the crowd-pleasing, cult classic musical "The Rocky Horror Show." Audiences are encouraged to dress up as their favorite Rocky Horror characters. 8 p.m., 773-327-5252, Stage773, 1225 W. Belmont, <http://www.stage773.com>

**A Night Out for the LGBT Community** P&J Productions Presents A Night Out every Friday with special guests. Hosted by your one & only MC Kal! We have DJ XL (from StarGaze) spinning the hottest in House, R&B, Hip-Hop, Chi-Town Stepping! We party from 9 p.m. to 3am and our shows are at 12am to 1am. 9 p.m., Temptations Nightclub, 10235 W Grand, <http://www.facebook.com/pjproductions>

## Saturday, Oct. 16

**Midwest Regional March for Peace & Justice** On the eve of the 2010 bi-elections a march to demand an end to wars and occupations, money for human needs, not corporate greed. [lgbtliberation@aol.com](mailto:lgbtliberation@aol.com); 12:30 p.m., Michigan & Congress, 450 S. Michigan

**HIV/AIDS volunteer training** The DuPage County Health Department HIV/AIDS Program is collaborating with Canticle Ministries, Wheaton, and Open Door Clinic, based in Aurora with an office in Elgin, to offer a volunteer training for individuals

interested in working with their organizations as well as people living with HIV/AIDS. Each agency has a variety of volunteer opportunities available. 1:15 p.m., 630-682-7400, ext. 7505, Saint Paul Lutheran Church, 515 S. Wheaton, Wheaton

**Springfield's Phoenix Center Fall Gayla** Phoenix Center, Springfield's source for HIV/AIDS programs and services, gayla cocktail hour and silent auction, gourmet dinner, action-packed live auction. \$50 or \$400 for a table; 5:30 p.m., 217-528-5253, Hoogland Center for the Arts, 420 S. Sixth Street • Springfield, <http://www.phoenixcenterspringfield.org>

**Sappho's Salon** Sexiest Sappho's yet, featuring Girlie-Q burlesque and Searah Deysach from Early to Bed. 7:30 p.m., Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

**Margaret Cho, Cho Dependent Tour 2010** Margaret Cho's new show is a healthy mix of new stand-up and live music. In the spirit of Cho's diverse identity and equally diverse career, the show features her burgeoning foray into the realm of comedy music. 8 p.m., The Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State, <http://www.thechicagotheatre.com/events/margaret-cho-dependent-1010.html>

**Trevor Chicago** an evening of cocktails and hors d'oeuvres to learn more about the life saving work of The Trevor Project. Meet other Chicago-area supporters and Executive Director Charles Robbins as we explore ways to build a larger presence within the Chicago community and saving young lives. Suggested donation, \$45. RSVP [www.thetrevorproject.org/trevorchicago](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/trevorchicago) and location will be included in your RSVP confirmation e-mail. Also, there is an Oct. 25 benefit at Roscoe's Tavern. 6 p.m., Lakeview home of Paul Reitz & David Rosen, <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/trevorchicago>

## Sunday, Oct. 17

**Cocktails & Feigy Fall Frolic with Sara Feigenholtz** Join supports of Rep Sara Feigenholtz for a Sunday afternoon of cocktails and Feigy fall frolic! Tickets are Sponsor: \$1,000 Host: \$500 Guest: \$250 Ticket: \$125; 3 p.m., 8887137563, Cocktail Chicago, 3359 N Halsted, <http://www.sarafeigenholtz.com>

**Queer Dharma Chicago** Queer Dharma meets every Sunday from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Shambhala Meditation center for sitting meditation, discussion & socializing. Free meditation instruction. [queerdharmachicago@googlegroups.com](mailto:queerdharmachicago@googlegroups.com). 6:30 p.m., (773) 230-3886, Shambhala Meditation Center, 7331 N. Sheridan, <http://chicago.shambhala.org/programs.php?cid=170>

**Mary J. Blige "Music Saved My Life" tour** The singing superstar will be joined by Jazmine Sullivan and Miguel who will open. 7:30 p.m., Chicago Theatre, 175 N State St, <http://www.livenation.com>

**Illinois Safe Schools Alliance Annual Back-to-School Brunch** Illinois Safe Schools Alliance celebrates the passage and signing of the Prevent School Violence Illinois Act, recently signed into law by Governor Pat Quinn, which defines bullying for the first time in Illinois law and explicitly prohibits bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Honoring State Senator Kimberly Lightford and Representative Karen Yarbrough. ; 11:30 p.m., 630-232-4987, Hub 51, 51 W. Hubbard St., Chicago, <http://www.illinoisafeschools.org>

## Monday, Oct. 18

**Minibar hosts dinner for Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame** Minibar Ultra Lounge & Café will host a dinner event in which 20% (before tax) of all dinner and liquor sales will be donated to the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. 773-871-6227 for reservations; 5 p.m., 773-871-6227, Minibar Ultra Lounge and



## VICCI SITUATION Monday, Oct. 18

Singer/songwriter Vicci Martinez will entertain at Buddy Guy's Legends, 700 S. Wabash.

Photo by Elizabeth Leitzell

Cafe, 3341 N Halsted, <http://www.minibarchicago.com>

**Vicci Martinez artist showcase** Writes, sings and plays guitar with guitarist Rod Cook, drummer Darin Watkins, bassist Jeff Leonard and keyboard player Eric Robert; 6 p.m., Buddy Guy's Legends, 700 S. Wabash, <http://www.facebook.com/officialviccimartinez>

**Personal PAC Annual Awards Luncheon With Olympia Dukakis.** Personal PAC is a bi-partisan political action committee (PAC) dedicated to electing pro-choice candidates to state and local office in Illinois. 11 am reception, 12 p.m. luncheon. \$150. 11 p.m., 312-422-0122, Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S Michigan, <http://www.personalpac.org>

## Tuesday, Oct. 19

**Women On Top: pH balanced for her Women** On Top is an original improv comedy show spotlighting the fairer side of pH Productions' vast, eclectic ensemble. We boast one of the largest, most hilarious collection of female comedy performers in Chicago. Women On Top is their chance to create comedy without all that nasty testosterone getting in the way. 8 p.m., 773.732.5450, Studio BE 3110 N. Sheffield, <http://whatisph.com>

**Triple at Velvet Rope** Join Velvet Rope as they offer Martinis, Margaritas & Pizzas for cheap! 5 p.m., 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 West Lake Street, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

**Night of 100 Drag Queens - 2010: A Space Oddity** Equality Illinois Night of 100 Drag Queens - 2010 A Space Oddity is sure to please! This is a great night of entertainment and community support (through Oct. 20); 7 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St, <http://www.equalityillinois.org>

## Wed., Oct. 20

**Tracy Baim, author of new book: Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage** Chicago-based journalist Tracy Baim offers an in-depth look at Obama's trajectory on gay issues, including documents, photos, and interviews with Obama illustrating how his views on LGBT issues have changed over the years, as well as the accomplishments and stumbles of his presidential administration. 7:30 p.m., Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark, <http://www.obamaandthegays.com>

**America's Got Talent Live Top 10 Tour** The top 10 performers from this season's America's Got Talent cast will embark on the first ever nationwide tour, America's Got Talent Live featuring among others the glamorous baroque opera singer Prince Poppycock [www.nbc.com/americas-got-talent/contestants/semifinalists/princepoppycock/index.shtml#bio](http://www.nbc.com/americas-got-talent/contestants/semifinalists/princepoppycock/index.shtml#bio); 8 p.m., Rosemont Theatre, 5400 N River, <http://www.agt.aeglive.com>



## BLONDE AMBITION

Saturday, Oct. 16

Comedian Margaret Cho (above) will stop at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State, as part of her Cho Dependent Tour.

Photo by Mike Ruiz

# BILLY MASTERS



Here's a very different look for actor James Franco, courtesy of the folks at Candy magazine.

"Marriage is not a civil right—you're not Black!"—the ever-erudite Ann Coulter shared her views on gay marriage to a group of gay conservatives, GOProud, at its first Homocon gathering. I suspect they'd have no problem if she called them tea-baggers!

I heard that Jason Ritter and Blair Underwood lost quite a bit of weight before they started shooting *The Event*. But that's not entirely true. They actually lost weight in the months after filming the pilot. Blair says: "There's five months between shooting the first episode and the second episode. I saw the pilot and I go, 'Oh, no. Oh, no brother. You need to lose some weight.'" Blair had it easy; he decided for himself. Two days into shooting, Jason was told, "We got you a gym membership and a personal trainer." He's always had a little bit of baby fat that made him so adorably endearing in previous roles, but the studio wanted him tight and taut for *The Event*. The first thing the trainer did was put him on a cleanse. As it turns out, Blair did the master cleanse "for weeks" to get back in shape. He lost 20 pounds, his abs are back, and he feels great. As to Jason, let me assure you he looks fabulous. (He may have lost his ass, but he's young—it'll grow back!)

We've been hearing numerous disturbing accounts of the bullying young gay people endure and how it often leads to suicide. It's been a tragic wake-up call for people who think that perhaps we are immune to these pressures. But the truth of the matter is, this is nothing new. You don't have to look too far back in history to see every minority group has endured this. The Tyler Clementi episode particularly reminded me of how girls in a bygone era would commit suicide or, at the very least, be ostracized if someone started rumors that she was "loose." It should remind us that no one is immune to bullying or being bullied.

Our biggest resource in the LGBT community is The Trevor Project (<http://www.TheTrevorProject.org>). This amazing organization works hard to tell gay and questioning teens that there is nothing wrong with them, that they are OK and they are not alone. Loads of celebs have joined Trevor to film PSAs letting kids know that it gets better. One of the most haunting was that of Tim Gunn, who revealed that he attempted suicide as a gay teen. Happily, he was unsuccessful—or we'd have been robbed of the phrase, "Make it work" (to say nothing of the dashing silver fox

himself). If you text the word "KIND" to 85944, you can make a donation of \$5 to the Trevor Project. Do it today.

Kathy Griffin has always been a supporter of the gay community and always puts her money where her mouth is. In the past, she's raised tens of thousands of dollars for the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center. Now she's helping Trevor. Every dollar that she would have made from her Dec. 16 show at the Gibson Amphitheater in Universal City will be donated to the Trevor Project. Way to go, Kath!

Another funny lady brought the plight of gay teens to primetime last week. In what was to be her last dance on "Dancing with the Stars," Margaret Cho donned a rainbow ensemble for her joyous samba. When asked the message, she said, "It's about having pride in who you are and that's why we wore rainbow colors. Because we want to talk about pride." If only that samba had been a little better...

Our straight allies are vital to spreading acceptance throughout the world. Pop star Robbie

Williams made headlines last week when he was asked by a radio host if he and his wife want to start a family, and would they like to have a boy or a girl. He surprised the host by saying, "I want a gay one. We've talked about it and that's what we want—whatever it is." I suspect there are more than a few readers who would like to call Robbie their Daddy!

Then there's James Franco. The sexy stud has played gay several times, but now he's taken it a step further. He's featured in full drag on the cover of Candy magazine—a publication described as "the first fashion magazine ever completely dedicated to celebrating transvestism, transexuality, cross dressing and androgyny, in all its manifestations." I dunno about all that, but James looks hot in the pics by renowned fashion photographer Terry Richardson! Photos (and outtakes) can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Someone else who's not gay (that we know of) is sexy Brando Eaton, who plays gay on *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* (and showed his ass on *Dexter*—which you can see on BillyMasters.com). Earlier this year, he was a guest star on the short-lived *Miami Medical*. His character needed to be revived with the aid of a defibrillator. In a shocking turn of events, the prop defibrillator ended up being real, giving

Brando quite a jolt! He's now suing the people responsible, claiming he needs "treatment and counseling for the anxiety, flashbacks and apprehension from this incident." In other words, don't go near him with a defibrillator—it could kill him!

Could it be that Josh Duhamel is one of our straight allies? Maybe. He's never had a real public connection to the gay community, and yet... While promoting his film *Life As We Know It*, he said something about his co-star Katherine Heigl that caught our eye: "Personally, I'm a big fan of Katherine's husband, Josh Kelley. So kissing her was like indirectly getting to make out with him." Uh-huh.

When Franco's hiding his candy, it's definitely time to end yet another column. I may be in southern California, but it might as well be Boston. All you people who say New England weather is fickle, we had a 40-degree drop in temperature overnight here in Los Angeles. And yet, it's still sizzling on [www.BillyMasters.com](http://www.BillyMasters.com). For your gossip needs, feel free to drop a note to [Billy@BillyMasters.com](mailto:Billy@BillyMasters.com), and I promise to get back to you before Duhamel gets to actually make out with Josh Kelley! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

## Get the Shot

Help Chicago fight the flu, get the flu shot. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine includes protection against H1N1 and other forms of influenza. If you live in Chicago and don't have a doctor, call 311 or contact the Chicago Department of Public Health.



Call 311 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/Flu](http://www.cityofchicago.org/Flu)



City of Chicago • Richard M. Daley, Mayor  
Chicago Department of Public Health • Bechara Choucair, M.D., Commissioner



The CRU team practicing. Photo by Ross Forman

## CRU love: Rowing with the group

BY ROSS FORMAN

When the alarm went off at 4 a.m., I wasn't too thrilled about getting up for rowing practice. Then again, neither are some members of the Chicago Rowing Union (CRU).

"Waking up at four-something in the morning to get to practice," is the worst part of rowing, said Gabe Cervo, 27, who lives in Rogers Park and is in his first year on CRU.

"Having to wake up before the birds do," is the worst part, added James Frencher, 23, who lives in West Town.

The CRU team practices in Skokie at the Dammrich Rowing Center and I pulled into the near-empty parking lot at 5:07, still not thrilled that I was going to be rowing.

Years ago, George Plimpton had a cool gig as a sportswriter-turned-quarterback for the Detroit Lions, which was ultimately immortalized in the book *The Paper Lion*.

I was joining CRU—for one practice.

Bill Moudry, 36, a data analyst who lives in Edgewater and is an original CRU member, arrived a few minutes later with a few teammates and coach A.C. Chacon. This was CRU's top team that I was practicing with. I was not sure I really knew what I was getting into—or what they were getting with me paddling in their boat.

We started warming up rowing on those machines you see at Bally's, or any major gym. The thing is, I couldn't tell you the last time I rowed at Bally's.

Nonetheless, Chacon showed me the proper technique and mechanics. At times, I just mirrored Moudry in his movements. I didn't have earphones or an iPod, like Cervo, but at least they cranked some current, upbeat hits.

Next, we moved to an indoor pool. Actually, it was kind of two small pools with a walkway between them. There were mounted boats and we rowed. I was on the starboard side, again behind Moudry and trying to mimic his movements.

"Most people don't understand how [rowing] is such an intense full-body workout; it's not just an upper-body sport. It's also a leg sport," said Cervo, who works as a visual merchant for Banana Republic and as a server at Uncle Julio's Hacienda.

"Rowing is very difficult. After eight years, I'm still learning new things, but it's a very rewarding sport."

The indoor training lasted for, oh, about 20 minutes, and then we ventured outside. The sun had come up and it truly was a beautiful morning, but I still wasn't sold on this rowing—which we were about to do on the Chicago River, which isn't exactly as pretty as the water that rolls onto Waikiki Beach in Hawaii.

Matthew Honaberger, 32, who lives in Andersonville and has been with CRU for five months, said the worst part of the sport is the early morning practices, and "the 'beautiful' Chicago River with all of its myriad aromas."

Honaberger is a CRU coxswain—a job that I definitely would like. He's kind of like the team captain. He tells the others what to do, and they

respond. He tells them to step forward, and they step forward. He tells them to paddle, and they paddle.

CRU members listen to their coxswain, and he does none of the physical work.

"The best part about rowing for me would have to be the camaraderie of being on a sports team," Honaberger said. "Being all of 5'2", there are only a few sports where I can actually be competitive ... but as a coxswain, I get the chance to be part of a team that is competitive and where my height/weight is actually a desired quality.

"The biggest misconception about rowing is that the coxswain is only there to yell at the rowers. As a coxswain, you are essentially the coach on the water as well as the navigator. You correct the rower's form, you set the pace of the race, you motivate, and most importantly, you steer the boat."

Chacon showed me the different boats stored at Dammrich and said that some cost \$40,000. Sorry, CRU, I'm using my spare \$40K to buy other things beside another boat for you guys.

Chacon also showed the boats and paddles of New Trier and Loyola Academy. I am glad those high school crew members weren't there, though. It was bad enough that my rowing was seen by CRU members, all of whom are exceptional in my eyes, but I wouldn't want to be embarrassed in front of a bunch of teenagers.

Moudry and the team loaded the boat into the river, while Honaberger instructed their every move. Craig Wu showed me where to step when getting into the boat—and where not to step, the spot where I could put my foot right through the boat. And that wasn't on my agenda.

We boarded with ease and then moved away from shore a bit, so Chacon, in a separated motorized boat, could give instructions. I was just to sit still to start, balanced while others rowed.

I "did great for having only had, and I hate to use this term, a 'crash course' in rowing," Honaberger said. "New rowers in [the CRU] Learn To Row class have one full practice on the rowing machines and one full class rowing in the [indoor] tank room before even getting in a boat. Ross was definitely starting to get some good swing by the end of his session, and he didn't even scream when the boat tilted a little."

Added Moudry: "I've never seen anyone attempt a crash course in rowing in which they jumped in the boat the first day. There was no panicking or flailing or shouting, 'Man overboard!' so I'd say he did well."

After about 10 minutes, we stopped—and then it was my turn to start. Everything I had learned over the past hour or so, I had to show. And ultimately I think I did pretty well. I agree; it can be a good full-body exercise. And rowing isn't something you pick up overnight, but I see the appeal. It's a challenge and was fun.

I just wish I could have stayed in sync better with Wu, Moudry and others. That was the biggest problem I had, but they assured me rowers get better each an every time.

"As long as one is determined and enjoys the sport, anyone has a future with CRU," said Cervo, who started rowing about seven years ago for the University of Florida.

I rowed with CRU's top team for 10 minutes or so and, most important as far as I was concerned, I didn't cause any serious injuries or

damage, or end up in the water.

"The biggest misconception about rowing is that the more strokes you take in a minute, the faster you'll go," said Frencher, who was on the crew team at the University of Michigan. "Efficiency in a boat is much more important than speed. Rowing is very difficult. It takes both power and coordination. And when you're tired, you can't change your pace, because you'll throw off the boat's chemistry."

Added Moudry: "With rowing, everyone in the boat is equally important. If one person works hard, it might make a difference. But if everyone works hard, the results are exponential. This makes it a great team sport where everyone can feel like their effort is noticed. And because the sport requires practice as a team, we tend to spend a good deal of time together. I have met a lot of great people through CRU, some of which have become lasting friendships."

After my stint rowing, I joined Chacon in his boat, while the real pros on this day went at it. They rowed; Chacon barked orders and I enjoyed a free boat ride.

"There are plenty of great parts when it comes to rowing, but some of the views that we get to experience are worth every bad moment," Cervo said.

Honaberger, who works for Midwest Bioresearch, LLC, had never seen a crew team or race before moving to Chicago. He's now part of CRU's Learn To Row program and having a great time.

"I joined CRU a few weeks before I had some very difficult events happen in my life and it was wonderful to have a place to go where I could get things out of my head because I had to focus on rowing for a couple of hours each day. The rowers and coaches have been amazing to me and I feel lucky to have been given the opportunity to be a part of their team and their lives.

"Crew people are great people. Go CRU!"

I agree—especially since I didn't tip the boat.

**CRU will hold its fifth-anniversary benefit Friday, Nov. 12, at Classic Kids Photography, 917 W. Armitage. There will be beer, wine, and hors d'oeuvres, along with a silent auction and door prizes. Visit <http://www.chicagorowingunion.org/benefit> for more information and to purchase tickets.**

**For more information about CRU, go to: [www.chicagorowingunion.org](http://www.chicagorowingunion.org).**

## ROLLER DERBY

### Hoosier Mama is just herself

BY ROSS FORMAN

Erica Jones isn't too different from her roller derby alter ego, Hoosier Mama. And vice versa.

"Some skaters really play into this whole skater character/role, but mine is really just me," she said. "I am a Hoosier, born and raised in Hammond, Ind. Others like to play off the corn idea and I actually do love to eat corn. On the track I have some of the most expressive faces ever and one helluva an attitude, which matches me off the track as well. I'm a very passionate person when it comes to my feelings about things and I tend not to hold that back. I may get angry and loud while skating and hit a bit harder, but that's me in general."

Jones joined the Windy City Rollers in early 2006 after moving to Chicago for her senior year of college, for roller derby and better career opportunities: "I'm glad one of them pulled through for me."

Ironically, a fellow skater suggested the name to Jones—on the night she was recruited.

The other skater asked me what Jones' derby name was, and Jones actually was hoping for a number and no name."

Ultimately, Dayglo Dago tagged her "Hoosier Mama."

"I get compliments on my name everywhere I go," said Jones, who had her first bout June 26, 2006.

"I've been roller skating since I was, like, 5 years old," Jones said. "I would go every Wednesday to Sunday. I also use to Jam skate, which is pretty much synchronized skating with one or more persons, but not in an old person let-me-hold-your-hips-and-skate kind of way.

"It's more about the movement of the feet/skates than the movement of the body while skating around the rink. I quit skating when I was about 16, but then heard about roller derby in Chicago from my hair stylist."

So she Googled "Windy City Rollers" and was trying out weeks later.

"I love roller skating and I'm not afraid of a little contact; this sport just seemed perfect and now I'm addicted," Jones said.

Jones, 29, lives in Pilsen and is a Vault Team Member for the Ultra Diamonds.

Her sexuality is "complicated," she said. "I do not like to place a label on myself. I tend to date whomever I fall for. For the past few years, it has been women though."

Jones said she enjoys skating "because it's different and it's a workout sometimes without even knowing you're working out."

She likes the skating—and loves the contact.

"I grew up with a lot of brothers and they weren't easy on me, so I'm not shy to play a little rough," she said. "To be able to share this with other ladies, and learn and teach each other is just so amazing," Jones said. "It's a sport that is always evolving. Once you think you've learned or know it all, there will always be another skater right there to top you. There's always something to push for, whether it's learning a new skill, strategy or winning a championship."

Hoosier Mama joined the league in March 2006, and was drafted to the Double Crossers shortly thereafter. She ultimately was selected for the first All-Star roster in 2006 and has been a member of the team ever since.

"I played as a Double Crosser for four seasons from 2006-2009, at which point I elected to take the All-Star only status. I am now in the middle of my fifth season as an All-Star," she said. "I've played every position on the track, from jammer to blocker to pivot, and now tend to spend most of my time wearing the pivot stripe."

Hoosier Mama laces up her skates Nov. 5-7 for the annual 2010 Women's Flat Track Derby Association's Championship Tournament, to be held in Chicago.

"[The National Tournament] is going to be sick," said Hoosier Mama. "The best of the best coming to our city, competing to take home the title as the best derby team out there. That's intense and I love that it's in Chicago. It's going to be a high-intensity, high-impact weekend full of greatness. The pure athleticism is going to be amazing."

It would be fabulous to win the whole tournament, which we all want, but right now I want it to be an awesome weekend and for our team to come out proud that we worked as a well-oiled machine and made each other look the best we can.

"We will prove that we are still one of the strongest teams out there."

The November tournament winner competes for the Hydra Trophy, and top contenders include Gotham, Oly and Rocky Mountain.



Erica Jones, a.k.a., Hoosier Mama. Photo courtesy of Jones.

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