

WINDY CITY TIMES

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FAREWELL, OBAMA

President Barack Obama delivers an emotional farewell in Chicago.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

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Sen. Duckworth with VP Joe Biden at her swearing in.
Photo from Duckworth's office

RING IN THE NEW: NEW CONGRESS, NEW PRESIDENT, OLD DIVISIONS

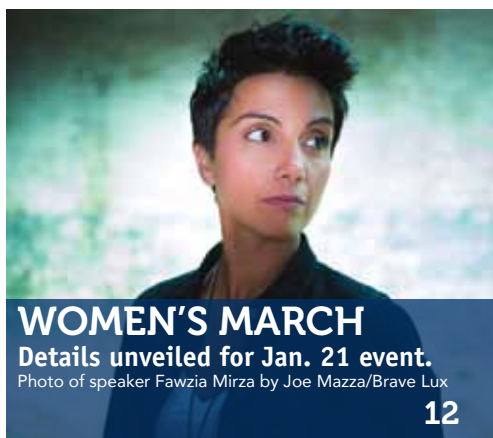
BY DAVID THILL

President-elect Donald Trump said that marriage equality is “done” and “settled” when he sat down for an interview with CBS’ Lesley Stahl on 60 Minutes shortly after the election. “It’s law,” he stated.

But his choice for vice president, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence—who drew national criticism in 2015 when he signed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act into Indiana law—raises concerns, U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly, of Illinois’ 2nd Congressional District, told Windy City Times. “Supposedly, President-elect Trump is accepting and open-minded,” she said, “but ... we’ll see.”

The results of the presidential election left many members of underrepresented groups, including the LGBTQ community, unsure of what the coming years hold for them, on local, state and national levels. Statements via spokespeople, tweets, and the president-elect’s own mouth

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WOMEN'S MARCH

Details unveiled for Jan. 21 event.

Photo of speaker Fawzia Mirza by Joe Mazza/Brave Lux

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WINTER THEATER/ DANCE PREVIEW

Photo from Aladdin by Deen van Meer

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POLICE PROBLEMS

DoJ report shows problems with CPD and LGBTs.

Protester detained by police during Millions March Chicago.
Photo by Tim Carroll Photography

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Above photo: President Obama with Michelle and Malia.
 Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

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www.WindyCityTimes.com

WELCOME TO MIAMI

Miami Beach (left) beckons with its various attractions—including warmth.
 Photo by Ross Forman



SEEING RED



Bent Nights reviews shows by Mutts, Archie Powell and the Exports, and others.

Photo of Archie Powell by Vern Hester

KAROL-ING ALONG

Chicago writer Andy Karol is profiled.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Jennifer Holliday, American Horror Story and Anna Wintour.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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GALA

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8:00pm Program and Dinner

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Mona Noriega,

Commissioner, Chicago Commission on Human Relations

Business Leadership Award Recipient:

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Planned Parenthood prepares for fight of its life

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

In as much as conservative Republicans have waged their crusade against the civil and human rights of the LGBTQ community, they have sought to wield the same authority in both clandestine and overt efforts to control the reproductive lives of women.

A woman's right to the governance of her own body has been a battleground of increased intensity ever since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the right to privacy of Jane Roe.



Planned Parenthood.

Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood offers a wide range of services to millions of women, men, trans and gender non-binary individuals across the country. Because abortions are among those services, the more-than-century-old sexual and reproductive health organization has consistently been the target of legal attacks and domestic terrorism aimed at its centers and employees.

Somehow, it has weathered all of these storms.

But now, with the coming installation of President-elect Donald Trump, GOP members of the Republican-controlled 115th Congress are attempting to seize an opportunity to cut some 40 percent of Planned Parenthood's budget (or more \$500 million in federal funds—none of which goes to abortion services).

Planned Parenthood's services go well beyond abortion. The myriad affordable and free services the organization offers include birth control, mammogram referrals, cancer screenings, gynecological care, HIV and other STD testing, reproductive education and health counseling, men's sexual health, PrEP and even help with smoking cessation.

For more than a year, the organization has also

provided the transgender and gender non-binary communities with Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) which, in the majority of cases is an essential step in both mental and physical well-being.

Windy City Times spoke with Dr. Amy Whitaker, the medical director of Planned Parenthood of Illinois, to ask if Planned Parenthood can weather the present storm.

"The real consequences are going to be for our patients," she said. "In a lot of the language about defunding Planned Parenthood, there's this idea that we just get a check from

the government. But that's not how we receive federal funds. We basically receive [them] by seeing women and men who have Medicaid for their insurance or who are using money from the Title X Family Planning Program to get their services with us. So the consequences are going to be that those men and women will not have as many options for where they are able to get their healthcare services."

According to Whitaker, a coordinated congressional assault "repealing the ACA [Affordable Care Act], defunding Planned Parenthood, limiting Medicaid and Title X services will leave patients without coverage and [they] will miss out on vital healthcare services."

This includes the men who use Planned Parenthood.

"STI testing is for both men and women," Whitaker said. "We provide vasectomy services for men, PrEP, partner treatment for sexually transmitted infections and our sex-ed programs are for everybody."

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GUEST COLUMN

BY RA MENDOZA



The Embodied Power of Standing Rock

I remember the last evening at Oceti Sakowin so clearly. I had begun the day with a plan, but like the few days before, ended the day surprised by the ways my plans had failed to work out in the best of ways.

I had planned on attending meetings and doing outreach (volunteering) at the kitchen like I had done the day before. But instead, my meeting turned into a much-needed time of debrief and process for those of us planning on heading home. My outreach time at the kitchen turned into a few hours standing at the seven councils fire or sacred fire. (The original Sioux tribe was made up of Seven Council Fires. Each of these Council Fires was made up of individual bands, based on kinship, dialect, and geographic proximity. This fire was lit when the seven councils joined together again at Standing Rock.)

One of the wrestlings I navigated over my time at camp was this internal tension of "doing" versus "being." I place ultimate importance on what I can do, how I can be helpful, how I can meet a need—but for me, Standing Rock wasn't a place where I was needed based on what I can do necessarily, but for what I can long for, pray for, and embody. So following the invitation of impromptu process time of the morning, I went to the sacred fire and stood there. As I stood there, I found myself being welcomed into another space of intentionality and process.

A group of about 70 women walked into camp from the main road and encircled the fire. Men were asked to stand toward the back and I moved forward. For the next hour or so female elders and leaders spoke of their stories and experiences, named the pain and trauma of the sexual violence enacted on their bodies—sacred, life-bearing bodies. Women are life givers, the water is a life giver. There was this intense circular connection being made in that moment between humanity and creation, between women and water, between mother and earth. This was a connection, a reality, that was natural and infused into life for the Lakota, Sioux, and all Native peoples. But for me, a Mexican American woman, this moment of connection, this moment of story, this moment of powerful truth and vulnerability felt like a gift—an invitation—for me to connect with a power

much deeper and much more real than I have experienced before.

I came to Oceti Sakowin not quite sure of all the reasons why, but guided more by this feeling of invitation. I've been drawn to activism and justice work for the last four years. My job keeps me in spaces where I'm able to educate and train people with similar desires to enter into the same kind of work, but my relationships keep me continually in this heart space where I keep asking the question of the realness of embodiment (solidarity); knowing the issue and critically thinking with our minds, working towards the intended goal with our bodies, and also feeling the intensity of the longing for restoration ... and healing.

Standing Rock was a place of healing for me. It was a place of embodiment. What I mean by that is this: The call to justice, to stand alongside the Standing Rock Sioux to protect the water was a movement to bring an end to the finalization of the pipeline and call out the corruption of Energy Transfer Partners and to name the historical genocide of Native peoples that is happening again if this pipeline goes into effect. The call to end this pipeline, to kill the black snake (the pipeline), for me has become an embodied call to see and to love and to and to pray and to recognize the sacredness that we, humanity, and creation hold.

Standing Rock is a place that is allowing the healing and reconnection of humanity and creation in a way that is powerful and it has shifted me. I'm wondering how those shifts will manifest in my life. It is really more like anxious anticipation. I left there with a deep longing to love more, to honor those I see, to root myself in the sacredness of life, and to let it all change me. That is the gift of Standing Rock, that is the kind of generative justice I long for. It exists, it can be lived and felt, and I want to follow it.

After the women finished sharing and the circle dispersed, I walked back to our campsite. I paid attention to each step I took. I walked slow. When I got to our camp space I sat on the ground and held the dirt in my hands. I looked at the sunset and felt the color in my heart. Four days earlier I entered camp with so many emotions and a deep eagerness to learn and serve and offer whatever I could.

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Left: President Barack Obama.

Photos in this story by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

"That's why we've ended torture, worked to close Gitmo, and reform our laws governing surveillance to protect privacy and civil liberties. That's why I reject discrimination against Muslim-Americans. That's why we cannot withdraw from global fights—to expand democracy, and human rights, women's rights, and LGBT rights—no matter how imperfect our efforts, no matter how expedient ignoring such values may seem."

Obama also said, "Our democracy is threatened whenever we take it for granted. All of us, regardless of party, should throw ourselves into the task of rebuilding our democratic institutions."

He concluded with, "I am asking you to hold fast to that faith written into our founding documents; that idea whispered by slaves and abolitionists; that spirit sung by immigrants and homesteaders and those who marched for jus-

tice; that creed reaffirmed by those who planted flags from foreign battlefields to the surface of the moon; a creed at the core of every American whose story is not yet written: Yes, we can. Yes, we did. Yes, we can."

Obama cites LGBTs in farewell speech

President Barack Obama bid a fond farewell to his presidency at McCormick Place on Jan. 10 in a speech that covered everything from acknowledging hometown roots and family to "rebuilding democratic institutions."

He mentioned many different minority communities during his talk, including Muslims, African-Americans and LGBT individuals.

At one point, he said, "Protecting our way of life requires more than our military. Democracy can buckle when we give in to fear. So just as we, as citizens, must remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values that make us who we are. That's why, for the past eight years, I've worked to put the fight against terrorism on a firm legal footing."



Left to right: Vice-president Joe Biden, Dr. Jill Biden, Malia Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, President Barack Obama.



Performers included Eddie Vedder with the Chicago Children's Choir (above) and BJ the Chicago Kid (below).



WCT releases 2004 tapes of Obama talking LGBT issues

Two audiotapes from Barack Obama's campaign for U.S. Senate from Illinois have been released by Windy City Times newspaper. The audio is in the online version of this story, at <http://tinyurl.com/Obama2004LGBT>.

Both tapes were recorded by WCT Publisher Tracy Baim, the first on Jan. 7, 2004 in a one-on-one interview during the crowded Democratic primary, and the second on May 7, 2004, after he won the primary and attended a standing-room-only LGBT fundraiser for his campaign.

The transcript of the interview was published Feb. 4, 2004 in full, and also ran in Baim's 2010 book, *Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage*. The speech from May 7 was never published, but event photos ran in Windy City Times. A week after the interview was published, Obama responded with a letter to the editor clarifying his views.

The release of the tapes is timed for the president's final days in office. The tapes are among thousands of archival materials in the Windy City Times collection, and the paper is just now starting to digitize cassette audio tapes used by reporters during the weekly newspaper's first 31



President Obama in 2004.
Photo by Tracy Baim

years in business.

In 2009, soon after Obama was first elected president, Windy City Times released a copy found in its archives from a 1996 written candidate's questionnaire in which Obama said he was in favor of same-sex marriage. He later changed course and opposed it in favor of a compromise, but before his 2012 race for a second term, he revolved back to his 1996 position, as stated to *Outlines* newspaper (which merged with Windy City Times in 2000).

The May 7, 2004 benefit was a politically packed event, with local and national politicians, including a lot of prominent LGBT donors. As WCT stated at the time: "GLBTs raised nearly \$100,000 for the campaign of Democrat Barack Obama for U.S. Senate from Illinois last Friday night downtown. U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton was supposed to speak, but her flight was delayed after a long day of Senate hearings. Two other U.S. Senators and two U.S. Reps did attend in support of Obama: Sen. Jon S. Corzine (D-NJ), Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill), and Illinois Democrats Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Rahm Emanuel. Ald. Tom Tunney and Michael Bauer hosted the event."

See WindyCityMediaGroup.com/lgbt/Windy-City-Times-releases-2004-tapes-of-Obama-during-Senate-campaign-/57756.html for audio links plus related links to transcript of the original interview and more.

Officials send letter to Trump about Cabinet appointees

In an open letter to President-elect Donald Trump, 156 elected officials express grave concerns about his Cabinet appointees, and implore Trump to "be a president for all Americans."

U.S. Reps. Sean Patrick Maloney and Mark Pocan—as well as openly LGBT mayors, state legislators, city councilmembers and other LGBT elected officials—are among the letter's signers.

Signers from Illinois include Chicago Ald. James Cappleman, Raymond Lopez, Deb Mell, Tom Tunney and Carlos Ramirez-Rosa; state Reps. Kelly Cassidy and Greg Harris; Oak Park Village Board Trustee Colette Lueck; Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Commissioner Debra Shore; and Evanston Ald. Mark Tendam.

Aisha C. Moodie-Mills, President & CEO of Victory Institute, said in a statement, "This letter urges the President-elect to govern by those core American values, and to put forward legislation and policies that improve quality of life for all Americans."

DOJ mentions LGBTs in CPD minority-policing report

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A Department of Justice (DoJ) report released Jan. 13 said that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) has been using excessive force and violating the rights of Chicagoans—especially persons of color—and issues a number of suggestions intended to bridge the chasms between CPD and many of its constituents.

Among the recommendations included in the report were adding LGBT liaison officers in each district, and more stringent enforcement of policies protecting transgender individuals.

One portion of the 164-page report details recommendations to improve community policing strategies that would supposedly “humanize” police officers and community members in each others’ eyes. To that end, the DoJ recommends utilizing community liaison officers for various minority groups within each police district, among them the LGBT community, Muslims, limited English-speakers and persons with disabilities. The report further suggests that the liaisons meet monthly to coordinate outreach efforts and strategies. There is currently only one CPD liaison for the LGBT community.

The report also points to deficient investigations into hate-crimes, often because of poor communication within the department and poor training for police officers about the logistics of hate-crimes. CPD’s Civil Rights Unit must be notified before hate-crimes investigations can begin, but the unit only has two investigators for the entire city. In recent years, according to the report, the Civil Rights Unit has never opened a hate-crimes investigation in the murder of a trans person.

“Not only are members of this community upset that these crimes were never investigated as hate crimes, but they are also concerned that CPD’s failure to solve any of the murders reflects a lack of commitment to these cases,” said the report.

The DoJ report further maintains that more outreach is needed to assuage concerns by members of the trans community that their rights will be respected should they be in police custody or otherwise interact with officers.

“CPD updated its General Order governing interactions with transgender individuals in December 2015, which is commendable,” the report said. “However, the community has expressed concerns about the policy, including that it fails to ensure that transgender individuals are classified by their gender identity and does not require officers to ask an individual their preference regarding the gender of the officer to conduct a search.”

In a Dec. 13 statement following the DoJ report’s release, Karen Sheley, police practices proj-

ect director for ACLU Illinois, called the report “an indictment of policing in Chicago, from how police behave on the streets of the City to how police are managed. Segregation in Chicago magnifies the impact of these policies on communities of color. Black and Latino Chicagoans face the worst of police misconduct, disproportionately experiencing unconstitutional behavior like excessive use of force. Out-of-date policies and lack of training result in harm for people with disabilities, especially related to mental health, and transgender people. ... Today must be a wake-up call to change how Chicago is policed.”

Trans patron: Nightclub’s apology is insufficient

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A trans individual who was allegedly misgendered and denied entry to a Chicago nightclub said Jan. 12 that the nightclub’s attempt at an apology was insufficient, according to DNA Info.

Jay Graber said that when they (their preferred pronoun) as well as friends attempted to enter PRYSM Nightclub, 1543 N. Kingsbury St., on Dec. 30, they were turned away; Graber was wearing a dress. Employees first said the problem was Graber’s shoes, which they changed. Graber and their party were still not admitted, and alleged that the employees mocked and misgendered them as well as their friend, who is also transgender. Their ticket was marked as “male.”

Graber complained about the incident on social media and has said they are considering a complaint with the city’s Human Rights Commission, and that an attorney offered to represent them pro bono in a lawsuit.

The nightclub finally responded to the allegations on Facebook Jan. 10, saying that it would be hiring a “community educator” to instruct employees presumably in inclusivity and diversity issues. It also offered Graber a refund for the tickets they bought for the Dec. 30 event and to put them on the guest list for an upcoming show.

Graber replied, “Regarding your offer of free tickets: Will my complimentary ticket say ‘MALE?’ like the one I was issued Dec. 30?” Graber responded. “Literally every member of your staff with whom I interacted that night misgendered me and I’m not trying to deal with that nonsense again.”

PRYSM is at the site of the former nightclub Crobar.

DNA Info’s story is at <http://dnainfo.com/2jyCWjrj>.

Berlin nightclub’s washroom vandalized

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A washroom at the popular Boystown nightclub Berlin, 954 W. Belmont Ave., was vandalized on Jan. 14, according to social-media reports.

The perpetrators drew swastikas and wrote “King Trump” on the washroom wall, and smashed a mirror.

On a post appearing on Berlin’s Facebook page, employee Greg Haus wrote, “This is so upsetting



Words scrawled in Berlin restroom. Facebook photo by Jonnie Lisak

to me. I’ve been working at this amazing venue for much of my adult life... Chicago celebrates diversity & acceptance, yet our current political climate made some hateful person think it was ok to deface the place with this kind of nonsense.”

Berlin management did not immediately return a request for comment, but Windy City Times will update the story as more details become available.

Torres to work with Howard Brown

Crispin Torres is moving from Lambda Legal to Howard Brown Health.

Torres, the community educator at Lambda Legal’s Midwest Regional Office, will start at Howard Brown on Feb. 1. He will concentrate on policy and legislative work there.

In an email he said, “I am very excited for this new opportunity, albeit sad to say goodbye to some of my community partnerships through Lambda. However, I am certain we will find new ways to collaborate in the future!”

Correction

In the review of the Art AIDS America exhibit (in the Jan. 4, 2017 issue), it should have stated that the Alphawood Foundation has renovated the former MB Financial space at 2401 N. Halsted St. and converted it into the Alphawood Gallery for the purpose of creating a temporary home for the exhibit.

Windy City Times regrets the error.

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POLITICS from cover

have fact-checkers scrambling and civil-rights groups at the ready, with many people asking their elected officials variations on the same question: "What happens next?"

Court rulings and executive orders

"I think it will be very hard ... to do anything significant about the gains that have already been made" for LGBTQ rights, said U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9, discussing the U.S. Supreme Court's marriage equality ruling in *Obergefell*. "I've talked to people who worry about the legality of their relationships. But I think it'll be very hard, and I think the pushback will be fierce if there really are efforts" to repeal marriage equality.

President Barack Obama has taken several actions to protect LGBTQ rights, such as signing a 2014 executive order that prohibits federal contractors from discriminating against employees on grounds including sexual orientation and gender identity. The U.S. departments of education and justice also released guidelines protecting transgender students in schools that receive federal funding, though a Texas judge issued a nationwide injunction preventing those guidelines from taking effect.

Injunction or not, though, Schakowsky noted that the new administration can simply undo the Obama administration's orders. "We would have—if we could have—put those [orders] into law, but we couldn't" due to congressional gridlock. So, since legal action cannot prevent their repeal, political action on the part of citizens—petitions and demonstrations—can help prevent it, she said.

The Sessions question

The opening of the 115th Congress brings confirmation hearings for President-elect Trump's choices to fill his Cabinet. Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, Trump's nominee for attorney general—a post that carries with it key responsibilities in enforcing civil rights—has been met with skepticism from legislators, who question Sessions' history of opposition to civil rights, reproductive rights and LGBTQ rights as a senator.

"I'm concerned," Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin said regarding the nomination. "What does that mean, in terms of lawsuits that will be filed—or won't be filed—from the Department of Justice? Will he aggressively enforce the laws as they exist in protecting minorities, including those in the LGBTQ community?"

During confirmation hearings, Sessions stated that he would respect the rulings of *Obergefell v. Hodges* and *Roe v. Wade* when heading the Justice Department, as well as the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, a law that classifies attacks based on sexual orientation and gender identity as federal hate crimes. (He opposed that law's passage in the Senate.)

He also dismissed allegations that he had made racist remarks in the 1980s, which at that time kept him from being confirmed for a federal

judgeship.

Sessions is one of many Cabinet nominees that raise concerns for Senate Democrats, said Durbin. (Others include Rep. Tom Price of Georgia, nominated to head the Department of Health and Human Services, and Betsy DeVos, nominated to head the Education Department.)

However, Durbin pointed out that while hearings may raise questions by members of Congress, the Republican majority in the Senate makes for easy confirmation of the president-elect's Cabinet nominees, plus there is deep concern about appointments for federal judge posts, including the Supreme Court.

Congressional gridlock

Recent issues such as gun control, the future of the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"), and the Supreme Court vacancy left by the late Associate Justice Antonin Scalia have highlighted the rift between the two major parties in Congress. All of the legislators *Windy City Times* spoke with noted the difficulty that comes with trying to pass bipartisan legislation.

Tammy Duckworth began serving as a U.S. senator in the new session of Congress. She now represents the whole state of Illinois, which is considerably more mixed than the largely Democratic 8th District, which she represented in the House. However, she said, many investments in the state—such as in rails, roads, and education—"do not have political labels."

She acknowledged there will be disagreements between members of different parties, but said she tries to approach every conversation "with the assumption that whoever I'm talking to loves this nation as much as I love this nation, which makes it easier to find a way to work together."

"It's a different ideology," said Kelly. "Maybe

the same goal, but ... different ways of getting there."

"It is really tough."

Kelly noted that the 21st Century Cures Act—which passed both chambers overwhelmingly in December before being signed into law by President Obama—was a positive example of the two parties working together. That bill provides \$4.8 billion in new funding for the National Institutes of Health.

Other bills face more opposition. For example, Schakowsky has co-sponsored legislation seeking to repeal the Hyde Amendment, the controversial legislative provision that blocks certain federal funding—primarily Medicaid—for most abortions. Despite Democratic support, that legislation has not successfully passed the House.

In the Senate, Durbin is currently seeking reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act, which expired in 2013. The law provides shelter and outreach services for homeless youth, and in its newest version includes non-discrimination provisions for sexual orientation and gender identity.

"Under Democratic control, this was an easy ask," Durbin said. "If you go out at night and find homeless youth in the city of Chicago, a great percentage of them are there because of their sexual orientation [and gender identity], and the fact that they've either been thrown out of their homes or don't feel welcomed, or are threatened in their homes. So, I really think this is an act of mercy that we need to reenact."

Duckworth stated her position simply: If Republican interests align with what she feels is best for Illinoisans, she will work with them. "But if they are going to propose policies that will harm Illinois families or roll back important civil-

rights protections, then I'll be there to stand up and oppose them."

What constituents can do

"I know the result of this presidential election was dispiriting for so many people," said Duckworth, "but we can't give up, because there's a lot of work to be done."

Constituents must not overlook current issues, Durbin said. "The repeal of the Affordable Care Act is important to everyone in America."

He and Schakowsky were present at the December opening of the Howard Brown Health facility in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. "I'm impressed with the services that [Howard Brown is] offering to the community and beyond," said Durbin. But "they are in jeopardy if there is a repeal of the Affordable Care Act without an adequate replacement. So, this is an issue which I hope everyone takes personally, whatever your status in life, whatever your orientation."

Kelly urges her constituents to be involved in the political process all the time, and not just during election campaigns. This includes reaching out to legislators. "We have to be held accountable," she said, and constituents can do that by voicing support or opposition for a bill, or simply sharing ideas. "We don't know everything ... so people that have experience in a certain area" can share their insights with legislators.

She recently held her second LGBT stakeholders meeting. The gathering, which Kelly plans to be a twice-yearly event, drew a mix of elected officials, business and non-profit leaders, and constituents of the 2nd District, to discuss the role of LGBTQ rights in the new congressional session and presidential administration. Also in attendance was Rep. Mark Pocan of Wisconsin's 2nd Congressional District, a co-chair of the House LGBT Equality Caucus.

Volunteering and donating to organizations are also valuable ways of contributing, Kelly added, "even if you don't do it for a [legislator]... . There's an avenue for every interest."

Schakowsky expanded on that idea, noting that many advocacy organizations send out action alerts with information about what constituents can do to have a stake in legislative issues. "So stay in tune with those," she said. "Social media lets us do that now—to really know, minute to minute, what's going on."

She and Durbin also noted that, in addition to national debates, citizens of Illinois (and readers of *Windy City Times*) have issues to focus on within the state. The ongoing lack of a complete budget in Illinois is a "political and economic disaster," said Durbin.

Illinois is one of 36 states that will hold gubernatorial elections in 2018, and "we have to be ready" for that, said Schakowsky.

Going forward

In the wake of a contentious election—and almost a year during which Senate Republican leaders refused to hold confirmation hearings for President Obama's Supreme Court nominee—some Democrats are resistant to working with Republicans, who will now control both houses of

U.S. Rep. Schakowsky, U.S. Sen. Durbin and David Munar at Howard Brown opening.

Photo by Hal Baim



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Congress as well as the White House.

However, newly elected Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in an interview with CNN, "If we can work with [President-elect Donald Trump] and be true to our principles, we're not going to reject him." That position has drawn criticism from some progressives, who feel Democratic lawmakers are too quick to compromise.

"We're in a difficult position here," said Durbin. "Donald Trump the candidate said things that most Democrats agree with on a lot of issues," including Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, as well as his stance on reworking trade agreements. "Those are basic Democratic positions," Durbin said. "So what Senator Schumer was saying is, we would like to stand with the president in those areas of commonality."

But Durbin added, "We're going to oppose [the president-elect] and the congressional Republicans when they go after what we consider to be our basic values."

Schakowsky agreed. "It's not to oppose him for the sake of opposing him," she said, also noting Trump's campaign pledges to maintain programs such as Medicare and Social Security. But "so far, his [Cabinet] appointments don't really prove that point. ... We'll judge things as they come."

Indeed, Trump already seems to be running a different show than his predecessors, and his positions on certain key issues remain largely unknown. For example, it has been standard practice for incoming presidents to divest their business assets in order to avoid conflicts of interest, said Schakowsky. But, she added, "he's not standard."

Durbin noted that, on issues such as LGBTQ



Center on Halsted CEO Modesto "Tico" Valle, U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly (Ill.) and U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan (Wis.). Photo from Kelly's office

rights, presidential candidates typically stake out a position during the course of their campaign. However, "This has not been the case when it comes to Donald Trump. ... In terms of where he is personally, where his Cabinet will be, what his administration will do, I think that's unresolved as we think about it today."

Inauguration day protests in Chicago

Activist Andy Thayer reports on actions this Friday, Jan. 20 in Chicago:

Two huge protests are going to meet up. One starts at Daley Plaza at 3 p.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Daley-Plaza-Downtown-Chicago/524104144279966>), which will then march to Trump Tower (really, just south of it @ Wacker and Wabash) for a 5 p.m. protest organized by another group (<https://www.facebook.com/events/359935351008861/>).

Earlier that day, there's also an event at Rudy Lozano Library in Pilsen, which has two Facebook events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1700932496864506/> and <https://www.facebook.com/events/1626512560978292/>, which seems to be an organizing event. It's headlined by Jorge Mujica, the principal organizer behind the huge immigration rights / anti-Sensinbrenner bill in 2006.

PASSAGES

Juan Colon

Juan Colon—a special educator at Pulaski Elementary International School of Chicago and a native of Caguas, Puerto Rico—passed away surrounded by the love of family on Dec. 27, 2016. He was 48.

Colon was the beloved partner of 14 years to Jon Howell; devoted son of Carmen (Ira) Myerson and Juan Colon Sanchez; loving brother of Kamalich (partner Cary Samourkachian) Colon; grandson of Juanita Diaz; nephew of Dory (Jose Acevedo) de Jesus and Gloria (Sandy) de Jesus; and best friend of Angel Lebron and countless others.

Also, he was the faithful companion of Nena, a chocolate lab. Services are private. For information go to JuanColon.info.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to Howard Brown (HowardBrown.org) or ARTreach (ARTreachChicago.org).

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



Juan Colon.

GUEST COLUMN from page 4

That night as I sat on the ground I realized that this camp and this time had transformed and healed me in ways I will continue to recognize as I live, work, serve, and offer whatever I can to the causes and movements that seek to dignify and humanize myself and those around me.

I am humbled each time I am reminded of my time there. I pray for the water protectors, for those still at camp, for those who are protecting the pipeline, and I pray for those of us who carry

this sacred message back to our communities.

Ra Mendoza, originally from Los Angeles, is a recent transplant to Chicago (and is loving it!). Ra works for Mission Year, a faith-based year-long service program as the recruitment/academic/diversity coordinator and is also a first year student at McCormick Theological Seminary. In work, in school, in life Ra loves people and is drawn to cultivating spaces where authenticity, vulnerability and connection can be fostered among people different from each other.



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UMC's Bishop Karen Oliveto visits Chicago

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

United Methodist Church (UMC) Bishop Karen Oliveto was in Chicago over the weekend of Jan. 13 for the Winter Warming conference that, according to its website, is "a reconciling United Methodist gathering for a fully inclusive church co-hosted by NIC Reconciling Task Force & MFSA."

Oliveto is UMC's first openly lesbian bishop having served, for eight years, as the senior pastor for Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco (the denomination's fifth-largest church at 11,000 members).

Oliveto said she was ordained in 1982 and started her ministry in 1983.

"I've served 18 congregations, campus ministries, as an associate dean for academic affairs at Pacific School of Religion," she said. "I was the first woman in United Methodist Church to serve in one of our 100 largest churches. As a bishop, I have been assigned to the Mountain Sky area of United Methodist Church which includes Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and one church in Idaho."

"It's about 400 United Methodist Clergy," she said. "There are churches in that area covering 417,000 square miles."

Oliveto also answered a question about the importance of Reconciling Ministries Network that, according to its website, "mobilizes United Methodists of all sexual orientations and gender identities to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ's inclusive love."

"I think it's very important," she said. "Whenever there's a group of people who are relegated to the margins, it's so important that we have a group of people committed to making sure those voices are heard, to instruct churches in becoming welcoming and to do a lot of education."



Bishop Karen Oliveto.

Oliveto had this to say about how she would characterize UMC's challenges moving forward:

"There are four ways to understand how we look at God and study God: Scripture, tradition, experience and reason, and when you put those four together, you and I can study scripture, we can look at church history together, but you and I bring our own experience and reason into it, and you and I can come from totally different ends of understanding and still see each other as faithful," she said.

"Part of the challenge is it's tough working

with that diversity," she said. "As the United Methodist Church grows exponentially outside of the U.S. in the last 20 years, and into more conservative cultures, more conservative areas. I would say the U.S. church would have settled in a much more open position eight years ago, maybe 12 years ago, if it weren't for the votes of the global church, but we are a global church."

"Once you start talking about inclusion/exclusion, you realize it's not just LGBT people that we need to be talking about," she said. "The church isn't always a just and open community for all people: people of color, the poor. How do we help the church learn to move into the fullness to which it is called and that is a church where all people are welcomed, where all people can be seen as equals and as gifted and as beloved children of God?"

Oliveto also talked about her own position as bishop and whether she has ever felt a sense of isolation in the job.

"It's hard when you're the only one," she said. "You have to make sure you're getting the spiritual substance you need. I had to make sure and my colleagues who would keep nurturing my soul and keep me healthy and keep reminding me of what God wants from me."

McCarter introduces anti-LGBT bill in state Senate

BY MATT SIMONETTE

State Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon), on Jan. 11, filed legislation prohibiting state and local governments from retaliatory action against an individual or individuals if they act under the belief that a marriage is an institution reserved for unions between a man and a woman.

The bill, SB0064, was referred to the Senate's assignments committee and is one of several attempts by McCarter to legislate against marriage equality. He filed similar bills in January 2014, a few months after same-sex marriage was legalized in Illinois, and July 2015, shortly after the Supreme Court declared it to be the law of the land. Neither attempt gained much traction.

"He seems to do it every session," said Rick Garcia, senior partner with the lobbying firm Foremost Strategy, who was present when McCarter introduced the bill. Jan. 11 was the first day the Senate was in session for the calendar year.

SB0064 also says that individuals would be protected from government action if their alleged discrimination is rooted in the belief that "sexual relations are properly reserved" to a marriage between a man and a woman, and the legislation empowers those individuals to sue the government when they are accused of such discrimination. The proposed law ties into a number of court cases across the country where vendors want to be legally indemnified for refusing to serve customers for reasons tied to gay marriage. Illinois, for its part, is fairly explicit in protecting LGBT persons in public-

Oliveto also recalled her early childhood and recollected the first time she was called to ministry and her first sermon.

"From the minute my mom dropped me off at Sunday School I knew I had found a home," she said. "I think I was three-years-old. I loved the stories of faith and I loved the music that taught me more about faith. I was more and more involved. I found myself wrapped in unconditional love and unconditional acceptance from God that was expressed through that community. So I heard my call to ministry when I was 11-years-old. I preached my first sermon when I was 16. I became a student pastor at the age of 18 and just wanted to be the best pastor I knew how to be. God deserves nothing less."

"I was born on Good Friday and raised in the town of Babylon, which is on Long Island in New York," she said. "As I was grappling with an understanding of my sexuality which really happened during my first year of seminary, something that I had tried to deny my whole life started to peak through and I started to really see my story reflected in the stories of my gay and lesbian fellow students."



Illinois state Sen. Kyle McCarter.
Official head shot

accommodations laws.

"This kind of stuff has purchase at this moment, given what's going on in the states around us," said Garcia. "But in Illinois we have firewalls all the way to make sure we are protected from laws like this. That doesn't mean we can sit back and relax when this happens though."

Also, Equality Illinois released a statement denouncing the bill. SB 64 is an assault on our shared Illinois values of fairness, justice, and equality," said Equality Illinois Brian C. Johnson. "SB 64 is not about religious freedom. On the contrary, the bill targets LGBTQ people for discrimination in Illinois. SB 64 would turn back the clock on what we have achieved in Illinois. We call on the General Assembly to reject this mean-spirited legislation."

The legislation can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2j888Qk>.

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Women's March on Chicago Jan. 21

Chicago will be among more than 380 cities around the world hosting women's marches Jan. 21, the day after the U.S. presidential inauguration. While the largest march is expected in Washington, D.C., with thousands of people from Illinois attending, one of the largest marches outside of D.C. is expected in Chicago.

Jackson Boulevard at Lake Shore Drive, immediately south of the Petrillo Bandshell, will be the new kick-off point for the Jan. 21 rally and march. People can start gathering on Jackson at 8:30 a.m. An entertainment program begins at 9:15 a.m. with Lucy Smith. The official program with speakers and additional entertainers begins at 10 a.m., with the two-mile march kick-off approximately 11:30 a.m. The march will go through the downtown area and end at the rally site, where people will then disburse.

Organizers decided to locate the stage on Jackson rather than at the bandshell to protect

Grant Park from damage. The combination of unseasonably warm temperatures (high expected in the 50s Saturday), rain (bring rain gear), and anticipated large numbers of marchers threatened to turn the Petrillo's grassy field into a mud pit. There will only be seating up front for the disabled and elderly, but people can bring portable chairs if they wish to carry in the march, or leave behind.

Marchers are asked to gather on Jackson, where the stage will face west and back up near Lake Shore Drive. Drop off points will be at Columbus and Jackson, unless crowds force closure of Columbus. Jackson Boulevard will be closed to thru traffic from Lake Shore Drive to Columbus. There will be a disability access drop off point (no parking) at Lake Shore Drive and Jackson.

Co-chairs of the Women's March on Chicago are Liz Radford and Ann Scholhamer, two Chicagoans who came together after the presidential election

to create a collaborative response.

Starting at 10 a.m., Ari Afsar, Karen Olivo, and Samantha Marie Ware from the cast of Hamilton will speak and perform. A diverse line-up of speakers including representatives from Planned Parenthood, Youth for Black Lives, Mothers Against Senseless Killings, the Hadiya Pendleton Foundation and more will highlight the rally.

Attendance numbers for the march continue to grow rapidly, now with more than 120 registered supporting organizations sending marchers and more than 22,000 people confirmed to attend on the March's social media platforms.

Information on accessibility, speakers, and the march route are available at womensmarchchicago.org. Due to the rally location change, some information is still being updated. Please check back for updated information.



Speakers and performers include Fawzia Mirza (top), Reyna Wences (above, left), Lynn Mooney (above, right) and Lucy Smith (below).



Liz Radford (left) and Ann Scholhamer, co-chairs of the Women's March on Chicago, working late at night on the planning.

Photo by Tracy Baim



Cleopatra Crowley-Pendleton (above) and Anne Christophersen (below).



Eman Hassaballa Aly (above) and Tamar Manasseh (below).



Clockwise from top left: Rev. Dr. Janette C. Wilson, Esq., Sara Paretsky, Khadine Bennett, Channyn Lynne Parker.

Speaker and performer list, alphabetical and in formation:

- Ari Afsar, Karen Olivo, and Samantha Marie Ware: From the cast of Hamilton, Performance
- Jaquie Algee: Director of External Relations, SEIU Healthcare of Illinois and Marilyn Katz: Co-Founder of Chicago Women Take Action
- Jean Albright: Master Sergeant (retired) U.S. Air Force
- Eman Hassaballa Aly: Muslim community Activist, TRUST Collective
- Faith Arnold: SEIU Healthcare Illinois, Fight for \$15
- Khadine Bennett: American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois
- Eloise Diaz Bahrmassel: RISE Movement
- Ann Christophersen & Lynn Mooney: Women & Children First Books
- Cleopatra Crowley-Pendleton: Hadiya Pendleton Foundation
- Rabbi Shoshanah Conover: Temple Sholom

of Chicago

- Pat Dowell (3rd), Susan Garza (10th), & Michelle Smith (43rd): Alderwomen, City of Chicago
- The Full Court Press Second Line Drummers: Performance
- Kids Off The Block and Diane Latiker: Speaking and Performing
- Eva Lewis, Maxine Aguilar, Maxine Wint, and Yahair Tarr: Youth For Black Lives
- Lights of Zion: Performance
- Tamar Manasseh: Mothers Against Senseless Killings
- Fawzia Mirza: Actor/Producer, Emcee
- Sara Paretsky: Author, Sisters in Crime Creator
- Channyn Lynne Parker: Transgender activist, TransLife Project Manager
- Rahnee Patrick: Independent Living at Access Living
- Maria Socorro Pesqueria: President, Mujeres Latinas en Accion

- Tiffany Pryor: Executive Director, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health
- Liz Radford and Ann Scholhamer: Co-Chairs of the Women's March on Chicago
- Lucy Smith: Performance
- Shani Smith: Lead Marshall of Women's March on Chicago, Safety Instruction, SEIU Healthcare Illinois
- So Chi Voices: Performance
- Opal Staples: Performance
- Katie Thiede: Vice President of Development, Planned Parenthood of Illinois
- Kimberly Wasserman: Executive Director, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
- Reyna Wences: Organized Communities Against Deportations
- Rev. Dr. Janette C. Wilson, Esq.: National RainbowPUSH Coalition

PLANNED from page 4

Among the most vulnerable of Planned Parenthood's patients are members of the transgender community whose struggles in receiving adequate healthcare are in lockstep with community-wide poverty rates, due to discrimination at all levels of society.

Planned Parenthood has been a life-saving oasis for the transgender community's health and wellness. It has also been an impassioned mission on the part of Planned Parenthood of Illinois Associate Medical Director Liz Higgins

"Planned Parenthood Federation of America has had protocols on providing hormone therapy and transgender healthcare for well over 10 years at some of our other affiliates," she said. "September of 2015 was when we officially started providing services and it was really a combination of me asking over the years and also having an administration willing to expand the services here in Illinois."

Higgins noted that Planned Parenthood of Illinois initially began providing HRT for transgender adults 18 and older.

"In the last three months we've been seeing 16- and 17-year-olds as well," she said. "For our adult patients, we work on the informed consent model. We work with a social worker and clinician team here in Planned Parenthood. Someone doesn't have to have a referral from a primary care provider."

The organization provides consistent lab tests

to ensure safe HRT administration.

"Monitoring is very patient-specific," Higgins said. "The first year, we started at just a couple of health centers in the Chicago area. It took a while for us to get going. We opened up some sites in central Illinois. The past few months, service has really bloomed and we've been seeing a lot more patients."

She added that there has been little or no pushback from communities across the state and that, even if Planned Parenthood is defunded at a federal level, "we absolutely are going continue to provide services for all people including hormone therapy."

It was a defiant tone echoed by both Whitaker and Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards, who promised the GOP "one hell of a fight."

"There are no federal funds that are used for abortions," Whitaker said. "Republicans in the past really believed that family planning should be available for everyone. We will keep fighting to provide comprehensive services for all patients who need them. We've been fighting for years. Our supporters have been as strong as ever. We feel very positive and ready for the fight but we're going to have to fight really, really hard on this one if we're not going to let our patients go without. I feel like we're always saying 'this is going to be the fight of our lives.'"

For more information on Planned Parenthood of Illinois, visit PlannedParenthood.org/planned-parenthood-illinois.

WOMEN'S MARCH from page 12

More than 100 groups are supporting the march, including those listed online here http://womens121marchonchicago.org/our_supporters/. Key partners providing additional support include:

- AIDS Foundation of Chicago
- American Federation of Government Employees Local 704
- Chicago Foundation for Women
- Chicago Teachers Union
- Chicago Women Take Action
- Common Cause
- Illinois Education Association
- League of Women Voters of Illinois
- National Coalition of American Nuns
- National Rainbow PUSH Coalition
- National Organization for Women
- Planned Parenthood Of Illinois

- Pride Action Tank
- Service Employees International Union
- Sierra Club
- Windy City Times
- Women & Children First
- Women Employed
- YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

Windy City Times' publisher Tracy Baim is among the "champions of the March" helping with behind-the-scenes planning. The march has been inclusive of LGBTs from its launch.

See <http://womens121marchonchicago.org/speakers/>.

On Twitter: [womensmarchchi](https://twitter.com/womensmarchchi).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1274648525889466/>.

Also see this link for other cities in Illinois and across the world hosting sister marches: <https://www.womensmarch.com/sisters/>.



Left to right: Jean Albright, Maria Socorro Pesquera, Opal Staples and Rabbi Shoshanah Conover.

Writer Maggie Jochild dies

Writer Maggie Jochild—whose Twitter account described her as a "third-generation lesbian," "a sixth-generation Texan" and "radical poet pacifist novelist disabled optimistic"—died Jan. 6. She was 61.

Alison Bechdel, on her blog *Dykes to Watch Out For*, had sent out good wishes to Jochild in a Jan. 3 post. Bechdel added that Jochild "met her partner, Margot [Williams], through this blog years ago. Margot has managed to get from the UK to Austin, TX, to be with Maggie."

On GroupNewsBlog.net, Jesse Wendel wrote that Jochild "was a fierce advocate for women, children, the disabled, dykes, people of color, for the underprivileged." Jochild's novel *Ginny Bates* is described here as "an amazing exploration of life lived intentionally by women, as free of the patriarchy as possible."

Wendel added that Jochild "was predeceased by her family, including her mother Mary Jo and her younger brother Bill. She is survived by her beloved Margot Williams, and a vast network of loving friends, cyber and tofu, in Austin and around the world."

Poll: 10M LGBTQs reside in U.S.

The portion of adults identifying as LGBTQ increased to 4.1 percent in 2016, from 3.5 percent in 2012, according to Gallup.com.

This translates to 10 million LGBTQ adults living in the United States—an increase of approximately 1.75 million from 2012.

This analysis is based on interviews with a random sample of more than 1.6 million U.S. adults as part of Gallup Daily tracking. Across the five years of data collection, more than 49,000 respondents said "yes" when asked, "Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?"

Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin said in a statement, "This survey reflects the fact that in just the past four years, there has been a historic increase in American adults boldly coming out as LGBTQ, often at great risk, but it does not take into account the countless LGBTQ Americans who remain closeted—especially in areas of the country where our community lacks protections from discrimination and violence.

"However, the Gallup survey does confirm what we already know—the LGBTQ community is at a turning point when it comes to political relevance."

Women's March in Chicago



JANUARY 21, 2017

<http://womens121marchonchicago.org/>

viewpoints



**Francesca
GAIBA**
Truthout

Most people have all-gender restrooms at home. Why not have them everywhere?

Just in time for holiday shopping last month, the retail giant Target absorbed some boycotting noise from a conservative website calling for a boycott of the stores because of its policy of allowing transgender customers to use the bathroom of their choice.

The website, 2nd Vote, has been shut down by its web hosting company for having “hateful” and discriminatory content.

The debate over the use of public bathrooms by transgender people is raging across the country.

In Texas, State Rep. Jason Isaac, R-Dripping Springs, has spoken out against the local school district for its decision to allow a transgender girl to use the girls’ bathroom in a local elementary school.

In South Dakota, the 2018 ballot may include a question about banning transgender students from certain bathrooms and locker rooms, an initiative spurred by the governor’s veto of a controversial bill that would have required students to use the bathroom and locker room matching their biological sex at birth.

But while the conflict rages, the reality is that more U.S. lawmakers have been arrested in public bathrooms for inappropriate sexual behavior than have transgender people. Transgender people are more likely to be victims of violence and harassment in this country than they are to be perpetrators of violence. According to a new report from the National Center for Transgender Equality, close to 60 percent of transgender people in the U.S. have avoided using a public bathroom out of fear for their safety. It is they who are not safe in public bathrooms.

Right-wing media and politicians have consistently sought to portray transgender people, especially transgender women, as potential “sexual predators” in bathrooms. Those claims were used to justify controversial bills in North Carolina and South Dakota that restrict their access to public bathrooms. LGBTQ advocates have debunked those claims, and the backlash against the North Carolina bathroom bill seemed to bolster the emergent transgender rights movement.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump’s administration is threatening to further institutionalize transphobia on a national scale, curtailing the civil rights of transgender Americans. Trump’s election may also mean that the Supreme Court will not hear the transgender bathroom case, Gloucester County School Board v. G.G., as it had planned to do.

Since public bathrooms are a significant site of violence and harassment for transgender and gender nonconforming people, it is not surprising that many transgender and gender nonconforming people avoid using them.

Students who don’t feel safe using the restrooms in their schools and campuses are “holding it.”

Imagine not being able to use a restroom for hours when needed. Over time, this can lead to significant chronic physical and mental problems, ranging from urinary tract and kidney infections to distress and anxiety.

A 2007 study for the Virginia Department of Health found that 11 percent of transgender and gender nonconforming people cited lack of safe restrooms as a barrier to accessing health care. More disturbing, a 2016 study by Dr. Seelman at Georgia State University found that “both denial of access to bathrooms and denial of access to campus housing due to being trans* were statistically significantly associated with a higher incidence of suicide attempts over a lifetime.”

This is a public health problem and a civil rights problem.

The first step needed is to increase the number of public bathrooms that transgender and gender nonconforming people can use without fear of harassment or violence. A simple solution is to change the municipal building codes to require all public accommodation businesses to make their single-stall bathrooms gender-neutral.

Requiring single-stall bathrooms to be gender-neutral

Most codes mandate that a business with two single-stall bathrooms make them gender-specific. But the concept of a single-stall gender-neutral bathroom is not new. Most of us have one in our homes—a bathroom with a toilet and a sink and a door that locks, and that can be used by people of any gender, regardless of how they identify. The White House has one.

Given that single-stall bathrooms are used by one person at a time, they eliminate interaction with other people, thus reducing the likelihood of the harassment and violence that trans and gender nonconforming people face in gendered multi-stall public bathrooms. This type of bathroom also serves the needs of other groups. Parents or guardians of any gender who need to use the baby-changing station or help their opposite-sex child to the bathroom benefit from gender-neutral bathrooms, also known as family bathrooms. In their absence, parents must send their opposite-sex children to the bathroom alone.

People of any gender who assist their loved ones or care for disabled or elderly people in the bathroom would also benefit.

My own parents are an example. My father helps my mother, who uses a wheelchair, when she needs to use the bathroom. Put the toilet that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in a women-only bathroom, and my father cannot enter it to assist my mother.

Additionally, designating two gender-neutral bathrooms side by side in a bar or restaurant will eliminate the ridiculous waiting line that women often endure while the men’s bathroom is empty.

Cities that have implemented this change include Washington, D.C., New York, Philadelphia, Austin, Seattle, Santa Fe, West Hollywood and more recently, San Francisco. In these cities, all businesses and city buildings are required to designate single-stall bath-

rooms gender-neutral.

Changing the building code regulating single-stall bathrooms is a simple and inexpensive but powerful change that municipalities across the country can implement to significantly improve the health and safety of transgender and gender nonconforming people, and that allows all people, regardless of how they identify, to use the restroom in peace. This proposed legislative change only requires an inexpensive change in a bathroom’s sign. LGBTQ organizations like the Chicago Restroom Access Project (CRAP) are ready to donate gender-neutral signs that businesses can hang on their bathroom doors as soon as the building code is changed.

Redesignating multi-stall bathrooms

However, single-stall gender-neutral bathrooms are only one step toward an inclusive solution. While they are becoming more and more common in new businesses and new constructions, a phenomenon called a “gender-neutral revolution” in the design world, the majority of buildings do not have single-stall public bathrooms.

The most logical solution to this problem is to build public support for the redesignation of certain multi-stall bathrooms as open to all genders—a change that requires no architectural interventions beyond a change in signage. The Santee Education Complex, a high school within the Los Angeles Unified School District, is just one of the many institutions nationwide that have embraced this solution. UC Berkeley is working toward all-gender multi-stall bathrooms. Missouri State University has one, as does LaGuardia High School in New York. The Center on Halsted in Chicago, the most comprehensive LGBT community center in the Midwest, provides its visitors and staff with plentiful all-gender multi-stall bathrooms, while complying with code by offering two gender-specific single-stall bathrooms.

Large institutions have an advantage in that for them to redesignate a multi-stall bathroom, it’s not necessary for all people in the institution to feel comfortable using an all-gender multi-stall restroom. Invariably there will be only one or two of these in a building or on a campus, with the rest remaining traditionally gendered and available for anyone who prefers them.

To address lingering public anxieties about all-gender bathrooms, however, some designers are also implementing architectural changes to create more privacy within multi-stall bathrooms redesignated as all-gender spaces. These architectural changes include replacing shorter partitions between stalls with floor-to-ceiling walls and a real door that locks, essentially creating a row of gender-neutral, single-stall bathrooms that share a sink area, with one or more of the bathrooms ADA accessible.

This solution provides both access to an all-gender bathroom and a higher level of privacy and safety than a regular multi-stall bathroom.

To be sure, this solution requires broader revisions to the municipal building codes, allowing these all-gender bathrooms to be counted toward the bathroom fixture count, so that they don’t need to be created in addition to gendered bathrooms but can instead replace some of them. This solution also requires some construction costs. Many businesses,

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Hedwig and the Angry Inch is part of WCT's winter theater preview.

Photo by Joan Marcus

WINTER DANCE SPECIAL

Winter dance is warming up

BY LAUREN WARNECKE

This year is shaping up to be mellower one for many local dance companies, many of which are still recovering from a prolific fall dance season filled with ambitious projects and world premieres—scaled back, perhaps, but no less exciting for all brands of dance fans.

—The Harris Theater has a very full calendar this winter, of which the notable engagements include **Batsheva Dance Company** (Jan. 27-28) and the return of **Brian Brooks** for his second engagement as the venue's inaugural choreographer in residence. Brooks pairs with New York City Ballet's famed former ballerina Wendy Whelan for a one-nighter Feb. 24.

After their popular duet appeared in Whelan's 2015 national tour, the duo creates their second project together with live chamber music by Brooklyn Rider. Batsheva, the Israeli contemporary dance company which has informed and inspired pretty much everyone, is the creative home to choreographer Ohad Naharin, whose *Last Work* performed for two nights at the Harris are in his iconic Gaga style. On Friday, the company will be presented with the 2016 Ruth Page Award, followed by a moderated discussion with Naharin following the performance. This one's not to be missed.

—Locals in residence at the Harris this winter include **Hubbard Street Dance Chicago** (March 16-19) bringing back some of last season's favorites: Lucas Crandall's spectacularly fun *Imprint* and the serene and sorrowful *Solo Echo*, by Crystal Pite. The theme of the evening, however, is Nacho Duato, whose *Jardi Tancat* will be restored

after several seasons on the shelf and complemented by a new-to-Hubbard Street duet from the choreographer's *Multiplicity*.

The main highlight of **Giordano Dance Chicago's** two nights at the Harris (March 31-April 1) is a new staging of former River North Dance Chicago artistic director Frank Chaves' 1993 *Grusin Suite*, originally created at Giordano's well-known Jazz Dance World Festival. On March 5, *Visceral Dance Chicago* teams with the Chicago Philharmonic for the telling of a Fyodor Dostoyevsky's story. The creative rendering of *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* features artistic director Nick Pupillo's choreography to music by Dmitri Shostakovich, Osvaldo Golijov, and Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, among others. 205 E. Randolph Dr., HarrisTheaterChicago.org

—After an exhausting *Nutcracker* season unveiling **The Joffrey Ballet's** new production by the ballet/Broadway legend Christopher Wheeldon, a winter contemporary program at the Auditorium Theatre will be delightfully understated. The company revives Wheeldon's *Fool's Paradise* and Wayne McGregor's *INFRA*, rounding out the program with the Chicago Premiere of Justin Peck's *Year of the Rabbit*. It's a program that may challenge Joffrey's audiences, but then again, so did the *Nutcracker*. 50 E. Congress Pkwy., Joffrey.org

—Also at "The Aud," **Thodos Dance Chicago** will celebrate its silver anniversary March 11 as part of the venue's "Made in Chicago" dance series. The program boasts a trilogy of works, one brand new, based on a signature work of artistic director Melissa Thodos. This downtown performance follows a winter engagement at Skokie's



Fool's Paradise, by Christopher Wheeldon

Photo by Cheryl Mann

North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Feb. 25 that will include Thodos' stunning *Near Light*, created in 2015 as a tribute to her late brother (NorthShoreCenter.org). **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** makes its annual stop in Chicago March 22-26. It's a shorter engagement than usual, but packed to the gills with varied programs and Chicago premieres, including MacArthur "Genius" (and Chicago favorite) Kyle Abraham's work *Untitled America*. Fear not, *Revelations* closes every night. Auditoriumtheatre.org

—The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents a new exhibit dedicated to one of the 20th century's most prolific choreographers: Merce Cunningham. Running Feb. 11- April 30, the **Common Time** exhibit boasts original artifacts from an extensive collection of drops, costumes, and renderings at Minneapolis' Walker Art Center, a co-presenter of the event. The art exhibit is complemented by four performance events,

including the first-ever U.S. appearance of Ballet de Lorraine (Feb. 18-19) performing, among others, Cunningham's *Sounddance*, which is reputed as one of his favorite works. Also on the Edlis Neeson stage, former Cunningham dancers **Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener** present *Tesseract* March 23-25, an immersive collaboration between dance and 3-D video created with radical filmmaker Charles Atlas. 220 E. Chicago Ave., MCACHicago.org.

—Worth a note are two ballet companies celebrating their fifth anniversaries: **Chicago Repertory Ballet** March 24-26 at the Biograph Theater including director Wade Schaaf's elegant one-act *The Four Seasons* (2433 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago-RepertoryBallet.com) and **Ballet 5:8**, performing work inspired by the *Scarlet Letter* at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave., March 18-19. AthenaeumTheatre.org.



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- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark "tea-colored" urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY® and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

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DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

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- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; loss of appetite; light-colored bowel movements (stools); nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking DESCOVY. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

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DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

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- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of DESCOVY. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking DESCOVY.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with DESCOVY.

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Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with DESCOVY.

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- Go to DESCOVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit DESCOVY.com for program information.



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THEATER REVIEW

Men on Boats

Playwright: Jaclyn Backhaus

At: American Theater Company,
1909 W. Byron St.

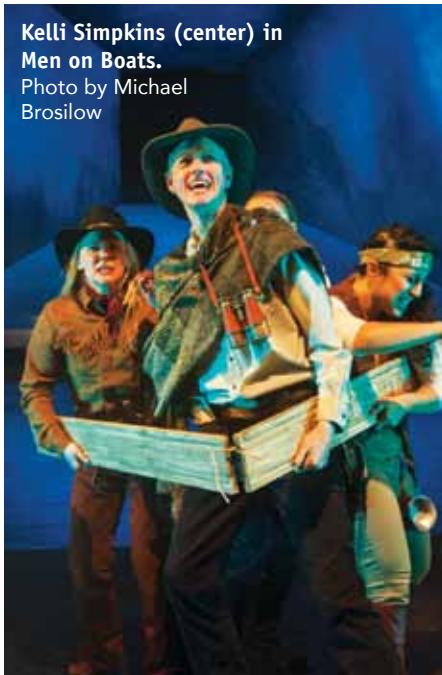
Tickets: 773-409-4125; atcweb.org; \$38

Runs through: Feb. 12

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

One of the greatest journeys of my life was a 12-day rafting trip through the Grand Canyon. It connected me to indescribably vivid and majestic scenery, a profound natural spirituality and human history dating from the Anasazi. I was on a large neoprene raft, but the Colorado River also was dotted with colorfully-painted heavy wooden dories, identical to rowboats used by John Wesley Powell and cohorts in their ground-breaking 1869 expedition through the Canyon.

I was, therefore, excited to see *Men on Boats*, about Powell (Kelli Simpkins) and the expedition. It wasn't what I expected, to put it mildly. I must

Kelli Simpkins (center) in
Men on Boats.Photo by Michael
Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

The SundialPlaywright: adapted by Paul Edwards,
from the novel by Shirley JacksonAt: City Lit Theatre at the Edgewater
Presbyterian Church, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.

Tickets: \$29

Runs through: Feb. 12

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

In an uncertain world, rarely is there a shortage of free-floating dread (dubbed “anxiety” by the shrinks).

Since putting a name to unseen terrors provides an illusion of control, this inescapable condition has been attributed, at various times, to

forces spiritual, natural and industrial. Prominent among the first is the Biblical prophesy of a holocaust destroying all earthly life (excepting its adherents, of course). The invention of the atomic bomb, however, introduced the secular specter of a cataclysm annihilating both good and bad alike.

The propensity of nebulous fears to intermingle is what propels Shirley Jackson's tale of a snobbish, self-centered clan confronted with a premonition of impending doom. The newly ascended matriarch, who proposes to eject most of her recently deceased son's kin from the commodious family residence, is skeptical of an elderly aunt's claim to have been warned by an ancestral ghost of cataclysmic danger beyond the boundaries of their gated estate, but soon its members are busy converting their home into a bunker ensuring

be careful here to separate expectations—built-up or assumed, for whatever reasons—from execution. I knew going in that the expedition's 10 men were played by women or “genderfluid” actors, so that wasn't it. I've seen many substantial cross-gender performances. What shocked me was the approach of playwright Jaclyn Backhaus and director Will Davis, which was one of burlesque masculinity and exaggerated comedy from the opening moment. For the life of me, I could not figure out—still can't—what's funny about Powell, his men and their dangerous and grueling three-month expedition into terra-almost-incognita.

In fairness, Backhaus' script doesn't minimize the challenges Powell faced, detailing boats splintering on rocks, men washed overboard and saved (Powell never lost a man to the river), food and supplies lost, all of which are acted out in vigorous physical sequences. Nonetheless Backhaus seems more interested in revealing the explorers' petty egos, eccentricities, jealousies, need for acclaim and second-guessing of Powell's leadership. Yet the dialogue and cartoon-like acting prevent audiences from ever discerning who

could still be only the imaginings of frightened children in hiding.

In performance, the degree to which the individuals in this uniformly unpleasant tribe recognize their own shallow values imposes a brittle candor upon those resisting the growing malaise, while reducing those capitulating thereto to the helpless dithering found in Agatha Christie thrillers. A stage with more shadowy corners (where lurk our own hobgoblins) would also better serve this brand of creeping unease. No one can deny that Jackson spins a shivery-good yarn, though, nor that the cast assembled for this City Lit production doesn't exercise unwavering control of its atmospheric complexities.

That's one interpretation, anyhow. Literary scholars may recognize hints of Edger Allan Poe's *Mask of the Red Death* in Jackson's premise, as science-fiction buffs may hearken to the fantasies of H.P. Lovecraft. A decade later, witchcraft conducted by the sullen pre-adolescent heir to the property would be the culprit, or perhaps a conspiracy perpetrated by relations threatened with eviction. Our author never reveals the source of the delusional behavior, and if adapter/director Paul Edwards decides to throw us a big, fat, aeronautically inaccurate clue at the last moment, it

these men really are, beyond pioneering Westerners and Civil War vets.

Ultimately, *Men on Boats* appears to skewer the history of America's western expansion, and the sense of white males doing manly things, especially at the expense of those who came before them. Arguably, the play's most pointed line has Powell saying, “The natives have probably named all this already, and here we are naming it after ourselves,” while an epilogue of sorts comments on fleeting fame and the dust of history. Why all this is done with mockery rather than, say, irony is beyond me.

Men on Boats has a spell-binding physical setting by William Boles, a giant shadowbox that's an abstraction of a deep and narrow canyon with towering, striated walls, supplemented by Brandon Wardell's lighting. Melissa Ng's creative and amusing costumes drip with individual detailing and seem inspired by spaghetti Westerns. The performers are robust and vivid to a “man,” with each finding excellent specific details to define his persona. Even so, I doubt if viewers will come away with new knowledge or feeling emotionally engaged.

THEATER REVIEW

Her America

Playwright: Brett Neveu

At: Solo Celebration at the
Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: \$34-\$48

Runs through: Feb. 12

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

In theater jargon, the term “vehicle” indicates a play or production designed to showcase the talents of a particular artist, often—but not always—at the expense of other dramatic factors (plot, character, plausibility, etc.). Brett Neveu's conveyance for Chicago icon Kate Buddeke meets this definition, but his efforts to impose a second agenda thereupon encumbers it with unnecessary baggage.

Our setting is a home basement overflowing—like most such storage spaces—with the detritus of its residents stretching back generations. Its sole occupant is a woman of indeterminate

age, discovered to be the mistress of the house, but presently bunkered down against invasion by a pack of aggressive dogs. As she cowers in fear and confusion, occasionally peering out the ground-level window at her pursuers, she takes comfort from the surrounding welter of family artifacts and the memories generated thereby, which she recounts to an unseen, perhaps imaginary, companion whose location is gradually localized to a large steamer trunk.

No, this is *not* one of those body-in-the-box thrillers, although we might be forgiven that assumption, given the propensity of fiction writers in the last three decades to portray lower-middle-class citizens as uneducated, immoral, meth-and-moonshine-crazed troglodytes. Neveu's flyover-country damsel in distress is no murderer—indeed, has always obediently accepted her lowly status and restrictive options—but in a gallant attempt to generate compassion for her plight through affixing blame to social conditions, he has created a persona not so much a human being, possessing a distinct personality, as a catalogue of stereo-

typal experiences compiled from media images of rust-belt refugees just recently brought to popular attention.

Neveu's intentions are admirable, but his full-out weep-for-the-innocent-poor campaign only succeeds in sentimentalizing those he would ennoble. That task falls to Buddeke, who reaches beyond the checklist text—further muddled by the author's ambivalence toward abusers and enablers alike, hackneyed diatribes aimed at the usual religious, economic and domestic brainwashes and a curiously anticlimactic *Big Revelation*—to endow her Kmart-clad heroine with dignity and pathos. If this necessitates occasionally slipping into emotional excess (a hazard catalyzed by Lindsay Jones' incidental score overamplified use of Aerosmith's “Dream On”) under the collaborative guidance of Linda Gillum, the resulting 70 minutes in this *Solo Celebration* welcome of a new year never cease to engage—and maybe even enlighten—audiences too long ignorant of their fellow travelers.

CRITICS' PICKS

The Christians, Steppenwolf Theatre, through Jan. 29. Religious beliefs and business basics uncomfortably collide in Lucas Hnath's thought-provoking drama about faith and followers. SCM

The Rosenkranz Mysteries, Opus Magna Musica at the Royal George, extended through Feb. 12. This isn't your everyday razzle-dazzle lookma-no-hands legerdemain, but a gentle blend of the historical and the imaginative. MSB

The Weir, Irish Theatre of Chicago at Den Theatre, extended through Feb. 4. Like children at bedtime, audiences demanded another story and so you have three more weekends to hear the ghostly yarns that propel Conor McPherson's heartwarming tales of loneliness in the hinterlands. MSB

Women, The Cuckoo's Theater Project at Collaboration in Flat Iron Arts Building, through Feb. 4. By plonking down self-absorbed 21st-century teenage girls into the plot of Louisa May Alcott's beloved 19th-century novel *Little Women*, playwright Chiara Atik and her cast find plenty of laughs in this sharp and inclusive stage spoof. SCM

—By Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

What of the Night?

Playwright: María Irene Fornes

At: Cor Theatre and Stage Left Theatre at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: 773-975-8150, or CorTheatre.org or StageLeftTheatre.com; \$18-\$30

Runs through: Feb. 12

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

What to make of What of the Night?

There are so many questions about Cor Theatre and Stage Left Theatre's co-production of Cuban-American lesbian playwright María Irene Fornes' experimental play.

First off, there's the play's title—its symbolic significance and what it really should be. When was the title shortened? Why was it previously billed as "And What of the Night?"



Stephen Loch and Nelson Rodriguez (front) in What of the Night?

Photo by Ian McLaren

Did director Carlos Murillo think to re-examine What of the Night? as a timely warning? Its cyclical structure begins with violent desperation during the Great Depression and ends in an imagined future feral existence following an economic disaster.

How could Murillo have known that the first two scenes would feel so relevant in light of the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress dismantling the Affordable Care Act? Should we see folks resorting to desperate measures to buy medicine for sickly family members in the 1930s or lesbian lovers in the 1950s as a disturbing near-future preview?

Why does Fornés give so many characters the same names throughout the work's four distinct time periods? Are they the same people aging from the first scene on, or is it pure coincidence that characters share the same distinctive monikers like "Rainbow" (Kathryn Acosta) or "Birdie" (Dionne Addai)?

Is the second half of the play supposed to show the society-destroying greediness of the abusive bisexual power brokers Joseph (Stephen Loch) and Ray (Nelson Rodriguez)? Since Helena (Kate Black-Spence) is married off to Ray as a problem-solving measure, is she supposed to be a tragic feminine symbol?

Why is there such a long Act II dream sequence for Ray? Why must the Asian characters in it be so offensively stereotyped?

Do the actors themselves sometimes feel that the play is beyond their acting abilities despite game stabs at the script? Or might they have liked more time with a dialect coach due the variable quality of accents like Allyce Torres as the not-too-convincing German lesbian Greta?

Will some annoyed audience members question why What of the Night? was named a Pulitzer finalist for drama in 1990? And are there enough people out there to put up Fornés' deliberately dramatic obtuseness over a patience-trying running time of nearly three hours?

Are you not at all surprised that I can't provide concrete answers to these questions about What of the Night? Or is it likely that Fornes would be happy that each and every audience member made up his or her own minds about this confounding play?

Jeremy Ashley Owens.
Photo by Jill Howe



NUNN ON ONE: COMEDY

Jeremy Ashley Owens riffs on Cher and being ridiculous

BY JERRY NUNN

Jeremy Ashley Owens is showing the funny side of life with his popular Chicago series You're Being Ridiculous. In the show, a different topic is featured each run. Currently, family is front and center, with games, choices and lightbulbs all planned for the future. Sounds ridiculous? It is all part of the fun.

Founded in 2010 by Owens, the cast rotates to include locals that tell a humorous or touching story about themselves keeping with the theme.

Windy City Times: Start off with where you are from originally.

Jeremy Ashley Owens: I am from Stuttgart, Arkansas. It is the rice and duck capital of the world!

WCT: Did you study theater there?

JAO: Yes. I went to the University of Arkansas and studied theater. I moved to Chicago for graduate school in 2000.

WCT: How did You're Being Ridiculous begin?

JAO: I had the idea for a while. When I was at Weber Grill, I was still in grad school. When I got out of school the stress of being an actor

was too much for me at the time.

In 2010, when I was laid off from Weber after the economy tanked, I felt Oprah and the universe was trying to tell me something. I loved theater and wanted to be onstage talking about what I wanted to talk about. I didn't want it to be memorized because that scared me. I wanted a safe, happy place where I could talk and be in charge of it. I didn't want to do it alone. I wanted other people with me.

I decided on a monologue show where I will set the theme. I could write the story and read it to the audience. I begged a lot of people to do it with me. It was right around my 35th birthday so it felt like a coming out of sorts.

I thought it might only happen one time and was happy if that was all that happened. It worked!

The next show didn't happen until over six months later. Now we do about four a year. I do the Fillet of Solo Festival and a gay-Pride show at Women & Children First bookstore in addition to that.

WCT: So it is growing?

JAO: Yes. We are at Steppenwolf right now.

SPOTLIGHT

Chicago Children's Theatre is simultaneously celebrating its future and its past this month. The recent opening of Chicago Children's Theatre's new headquarters for classes and small-scale shows in the former 12th District police station in the West Loop coincides with the revival of one of the company's biggest hits. Back in 2009, Ralph Covert (Ralph's World) and G. Riley Mills received much acclaim for their anti-bullying musical **The Hundred Dresses**, which was based upon Eleanor Estes' still-relevant 1944 children's book. The Hundred Dresses continues through Sunday, Feb. 12, at the Ruth



Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn St. Tickets are \$10 to \$39; call 872-222-9555 or visit ChicagoChildrensTheatre.org. Photo by Michael Brosilow

Turn to page 23

LGBT critics announce Dorian Award nods

The Gay and Lesbian Entertainment Critics Association (GALECA)—composed of more than 170 film/TV critics and entertainment journalists across the U.S., Canada and the U.K.—revealed its nominees for the best in film and television of 2016.

The selections come across 24 categories, and are mainstream and LGBTQ-focused, with 20th Century Women and The Lobster among the titles in the varied movie races. Among show nominees on the TV side: Black Mirror, The People v. O.J., London Spy and Looking: The Movie.

Moonlight leads with seven nominations, with La La Land earning six. In addition, John Waters has been named the Timeless Star, given to an actor or performer whose exemplary career is marked by character, wisdom and wit.

The winners will be announced Thursday, Jan. 26. The group's annual Winners Toast, honoring a select group of 2016-17 winners, is set for Saturday, Feb. 18, in Los Angeles. See GALECA.org.

Siskel's Oscar panel Jan. 24

The Gene Siskel Film Center (GSFC) of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), 164 N. State St., will present the 89th Academy Awards® Nominations Panel on Tuesday, Jan. 24, 4:30-5:30 p.m. A reception will follow.

Associate Artistic Director of the Chicago Humanities Festival Alison Cuddy will moderate a panel discussion about this year's nominees—the good, the bad; the shoo-ins and the snubs—with Chicago film critics J.R. Jones (Chicago Reader), Sergio Mims (Shadow and Act, WHPK 88.5 Chicago), Pamela Powell (The Daily Journal, Fete Lifestyle Magazine, Reel Honest Reviews, The Reel Focus), Ray Pride (Newcity) and Dean Richards (WGN News).

Admission is free.

Also, the Siskel's Oscar fete, "Hollywood on State: Where You're the Star," will take place Sunday, Feb. 26; doors will open at 6 p.m. The 89th Academy Awards® HD Telecast begins at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets (\$100 general admission/\$200 VIP) can be purchased at SiskelFilmCenter.org or 312-846-2072.

Riva Lehrer talk on Jan. 25

Project& will present a conversation with Riva Lehrer, who's a Working in America exhibit participant, artist and activist. The event will take place Wed., Jan. 25, 12-1 p.m., at the Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State St.

She will talk about her working life.

Lehrer is known for depictions of those who have rarely been the subjects of portraiture. In order to create an image, collaborators talk about what it means to be disabled, LGBTQ and/or a

member of another marginalized community. The resultant portraits reflect these stories.

This presentation is part of Working in America, a national multimedia initiative created by Project&.

See <https://chipublib.bibliocommons.com/events/search/index>.

National comedy benefit Jan. 19-21

In response to what the event's organizers have called President-elect Donald Trump's "repeated threats on human rights," comedians in more than 20 cities are coordinating shows to raise money for the ACLU on Inauguration Day Weekend for the WHAT A JOKE Comedy Fest, organized and produced by New York comedians Jenn Welch (The New York Comedy Festival) and Emily Winter (Writer for TV Land, Fusion TV).

On Jan. 19-21, benefit comedy shows under the name WHAT A JOKE will take place simultaneously around the country and in the United Kingdom. In Chicago, the show will take place at The Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave.; visit WhatAJokeFest.com/project/chicago/.

Goodman to show new marquee

Goodman Theatre will illuminate its brand-new marquee for the first time during a public ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 19, at 5:30 p.m. The

illumination event is aligned with The Ghostlight Project, a national effort of U.S. theater.

The iconic vertical marquee above the Goodman's Dearborn Street main entrance will match the look and dimensions of the original sign, which was erected in 2000 and irreparably damaged by an electrical fire last spring—but feature greater illumination functionality and energy efficiency.

According to a press release, the marquee will remain lit around the clock for the foreseeable future.

Wayne Brady joining 'Hamilton'

Five-time Emmy Award winner and Grammy nominee Wayne Brady is joining the Chicago cast of Hamilton (as Aaron Burr) Jan. 17-April 9 at The PrivateBank Theatre, 18 W. Monroe St.

Brady will return for his eighth season as the host of CBS' Let's Make A Deal as well as the fifth new season of Who's Line Is it Anyway on the CW this year.

Hamilton is the story of founding father Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant from the West Indies who became George Washington's right-hand man during the Revolutionary War and was the new nation's first treasury secretary. The musical features hip-hop, jazz, blues, rap, R&B and Broadway.

See BroadwayInChicago.com.



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Namir Puja Mohindra and Richard Costes in *Vanya*.
Photo by Scott Dray

WINTER THEATER SPECIAL

The winter classics: Old and not-so-old

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Classics...

The very word is an attraction for some but a turn-off for others, which is understandable if an old play is presented as a stodgy museum piece, or used as a springboard for some ill-conceived deconstruction. Fortunately, the finest and greatest theater pieces remain pulsing and pertinent for contemporary audiences through the universality of their characters, stories and humanity.

Phedre, Trap Door Theatre, through Feb. 11—Jean Racine, the 17th-century French playwright, created a powerful play of taboo lust, jealousy, innocence destroyed and terrible vengeance in this tale from Greek mythology of a beautiful queen in love with her pure-hearted and heroic stepson, the handsome Hippolytus. This adaptation by Paul Schmidt modernizes the language (the Racine original is in Alexandrine verse) if not the story itself (trapdoortheatre.com).

Vanya, Rasaka Theatre Company @ The Edge Theater (5451 N. Broadway), through Feb. 3—This has been quite a season for Anton Chekhov's 1899 comedy, *Uncle Vanya*, a daisy chain of unrequited love, middle-aged regret, misplaced self-sacrifice, eccentricity and ego-centrism, all set at a country estate. First, Lookingglass Theatre brilliantly staged Aaron Posner's contemporary Americanized retelling, *Life Sucks*. Now Rasaka is presenting an adaptation by Lavina Jadhvani which turns *Uncle Vanya* (the title means, literally, "Uncle Johnny") into a tale of the South Asian diaspora in contemporary America. If that's not enough, the Goodman Theatre presents *Uncle Vanya* in a modern adaptation by Annie Baker, Feb. 1-March 12. The Rasaka version, *Vanya*, or *That's Life*, promises to offer American India folk songs and move backwards in time (RasakaTh-

eatre.com).

Cymbeline, Strawdog Theatre Company at The Factory (1621 N. Howard St.), through Feb. 25—Shakespeare's rarely-staged fantasy romance calls for a highly-inventive production to make its sweeping story work. Set partly in Roman Britain and partly in Rome itself, it tells of chastity wronged, an evil queen, betrayal, long-lost children and a clownish prince in a soap opera-like story. It can be great fun or a tedious, confusing slog. We hope for the former (Strawdog.org).

Love's Labors Lost, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Feb. 7-March 26—Canadian master director Marti Maraden returns to Chicago to direct The Bard's wittiest comedy of manners, about flirtation and love among the educated and royal Upper Classes. Sure, there's some low comedy, too, but LLL is cut from altogether different cloth than most other Shakespeare romantic comedies. The cast features numerous veteran Chicago actors, and the production is certain to be handsome and lavish (ChicagoShakes.com).

Carmen, Lyric Opera of Chicago, in repertory Feb. 11-March 25—A new production (with the Houston Grand Opera) of Bizet's racy and sweaty tale of passionate but careless love, seduction, smuggling, betrayal and bullfights. Hard to believe that this vastly-popular opera, with a dazzling and colorful score, was a failure when first produced in 1875. This new production will have a 20th Century look and features an extraordinary cast of sexy singers. If you've never been to an opera, try *Carmen*. Hey, you already know some of the music (LyricOpera.org).

The Fantasticks, Quest Theatre Ensemble @ the Blue Theatre, 1609 W. Gregory, Feb. 17-March 26—The original 1960 Off-Broadway production ran for 42 years (yes, that's 42 years) and not so long ago everyone knew this whimsical and

sweet little romantic musical, featuring "Try to Remember" and "Soon It's Going to Rain" among its lilting or comical songs. Nowadays, *The Fantasticks* isn't seen often on professional stages, so this new production is welcome. Quest does well with musicals, and Quest performances are free (QuestEnsemble.org).

The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui, Trap Door Theatre, March 9-April 15—A demagogue muscles in on the 1930s Chicago meat-packing industry. Mr. Ui, as created by playwright Bertolt Brecht in 1941, looks and acts a lot like Adolf Hitler. Or perhaps Vladimir Putin. Or conceivably Donald Trump. He's self-serving, whining, manipulative, insinuating, crafty, a liar to the core and no

one takes him seriously until it's too late. Victor Quezada-Perez directs. *Trap Door's* tiny space should put the physical action in your face (TrapdoorTheatre.com).

Iolanthe, The Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company @ Mandel Hall (1131 E. 57th Street), March 10-12—This still-popular 1882 hit contains, arguably, Arthur Sullivan's finest music and certainly some of William Gilbert's most clever lyrics. A send-up of the House of Lords and British politics, it concerns mortal peers-of-the-realm and immortal fairies who fall in love. Musically, this production is sure to be first-rate with an orchestra from the University of Chicago's Department of Music (gilbertandsullivanoperacompany.org).

The Most Happy Fella', Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre @ No Exit Cafe, 6970 N. Glenwood, March 10-May 7—This 1956 Broadway hit was composer/lyricist Frank Loesser's follow-up to *Guys and Dolls*, and it's one of the most gorgeous and musically-lush Broadway shows ever written. Set in the 1930s Napa Valley, it concerns a December-May romance in California wine country, with a few complications (of course) added. Loesser himself was in love at the time and poured his emotions into a dazzling score of Mozartean melodies. The show has opera proportions yet remains very Broadway. Theo Ubique—which generally amazes—will squeeze this big show into the very intimate No Exit Café space. The show's hits include "Standing on the Corner," "Joey" and "Big D" (TheoUbique.org).

Picnic, American Theater Company, March 17-April 23—It opens on St. Pat's Day and closes on Shakespeare's birthday. William Inge's 1953 classic of mid-20th Century realism injects a handsome young man into stultifying small-town life and he riles things up. The deeply closeted Inge often created such alluring and unavailable men, and American Theater Company (ATC) director Will Davis intends to refashion *Picnic* by incorporating an Inge-like character to observe his own fantasy male. ATC's website (ATCWeb.org) mentions *Dust Bowl* songs, which are wrong for the 1950s. Here's hoping Davis isn't changing the time period.

Charles Busch in Chicago Jan. 29-30

Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, will present Charles Busch: *That Girl, That Boy* on Jan. 29-30 in The Broadway in the center.

This is the first time this theatrical legend will play his solo show in Chicago. And this is the first of what will be quarterly Pride Arts Center Presents events featuring prominent performers from the world of theater, music, film and more.

Busch—a two-time MAC Award winner, Tony nominee and drag legend—will bring an eclectic program of songs both contemporary and from the past.

Musical-theater mainstay Tom Judson is the musical director, and will duet with Busch on several songs.

Tickets are \$40-\$75 each; visit <http://bit.ly/charlesbuschatPAC> or call 800-737-0984.



Charles Busch.
PR photo

CULTURE CLUB

OWENS from page 20

WCT: How did you become involved with that iconic theater group?

JAO: We were at the Mayne Stage in Rogers Park and my friend encouraged some producers to see the show. They enjoyed it and invited us to work with them in their new cabaret space the 1700 Theatre.

WCT: So you are looking for people that write their own material?

JAO: They don't have to. They don't have to be a performer. They just have to want to tell a story that fits our theme. I'm confident that they will make it work if they have a story to tell.

The show is submission-based. Sometimes it is hard because we get more submissions than we can take. Having to say no is the worst part of all of it.

WCT: Talk about Fillet of Solo Festival.

JAO: It is at Lifeline Theatre for three weeks. There have 15 acts brought together. It is in its 20th year being with Live Bait Theater before Lifeline. There are also shows at the Heartland Studio Theatre.

There are tons of good people featured, like Nestor Gomez, who has a solo show.

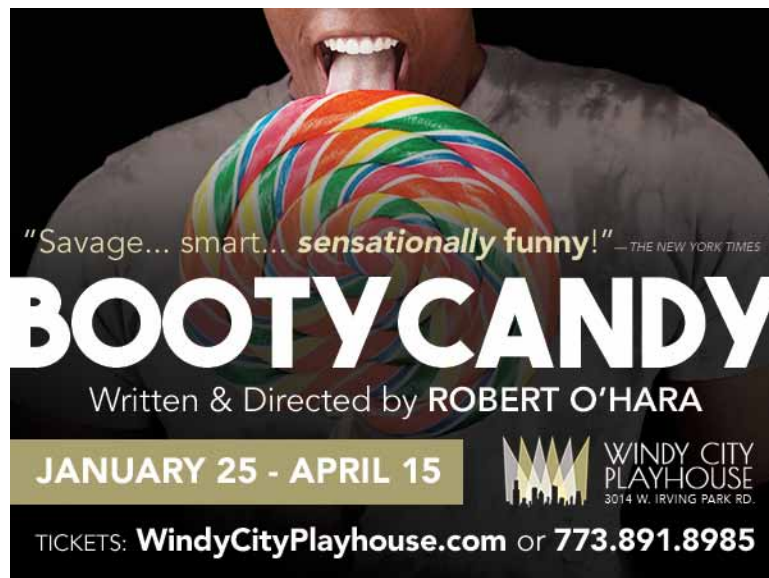
WCT: How was meeting Cher?

JAO: I went to meet her at the Hillary Clinton event here in Chicago. When I went to take a picture with her, she could see that it was too much for me. She grabbed my jacket saying, "I love your jacket, but I'm Cher and, of course, I love velvet!" She then turned me towards the camera for the picture. I felt like I had crazy eyes and was biting my lip. I might have had a mild stroke. Afterward, I got in a fetal position in the other room on the floor!

Get Ridiculous at YoureBeingRidiculous.com, submit a story and become part of the act.

Follow the Fillet at LifelineTheatre.com to find out times and dates for YBR performances along with GayCo, OUTspoken!, and many others. Fillet of Solo runs through Sunday, Jan. 29.

Read the full interview online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



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Adam Jacobs in *Aladdin*.
Photo by Deen van Meer

WINTER THEATER SPECIAL

World and local premieres abound



BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There are plenty of offerings this winter for theater lovers who prize new-to-Chicago and never-seen-before works. Here's a sampling of world and local premieres to watch out for. All shows in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

World premieres

Fantastic Super Great Nation Numero Uno, Second City e.t.c., 1608 N. Wells St. You can bet that this 41st revue will feature some material about the new divisive president elect. (in an open run; SecondCity.com)

Psychonaut Librarians, The New Colony at Den Theatre, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave. Playwright Sean Kelly imagines what flights of fancy librarians get up to late at night in this new fantasy-filled comedy. (now to Feb. 12; TheNewColony.org)

Jim Lehrer and the Theater and Its Double and Jim Lehrer's Double, Theater Oobleck at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St. Mickie Maher has devised a sequel to his 2007 hit *The Stranger*, this time delving into the subconscious of the former PBS news anchor. (Jan. 20-Feb. 19; TheaterOobleck.com)

Diamond Dogs, House Theatre of Chicago at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St. Humans and transhumans are forced to team up to investigate a mysterious alien tower in Althos Low's adaptation of Alastair Reynolds' sci-fi adventure for mature audiences. (Jan. 22-March 5; TheHouseTheatre.com)

By Association, MPAACT at Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. An immigrant teenager and his African-American friend be-

come suspects in a terrorist attack on Chicago in Shepsu Aakhu's new drama. (now to Feb. 26; MPAACT.org)

Captain Blood, First Folio Theatre at Mayslake Peabody Estate, 1717 W. 31st St., Oak Brook, David Rice's adaptation of Rafael Sabatini's promises plenty of swashbuckling high-seas adventure full of intrigue and piratical sword fighting. (Jan. 25-Feb. 26; FirstFolio.org)

Hobo King, Congo Square Theatre at Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave. Javon Johnson's new plays takes its inspiration from a true event of a homeless man who slain by city police and the subsequent fallout in the homeless community. (Jan. 27-March 5; CongoSquareTheatre.org)

Faceless, Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie. An alleged 18-year-old female terrorist faces off against a Muslim prosecutor in Selina Fillinger's tense courtroom drama. (Jan. 26-March 4; Northlight.org)

The Book of Joseph, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, 800 E. Grand Ave. Karen Hartman (Roz and Ray) create a new drama based upon the life of Joseph A. Hollander and his Jewish relatives who might have collaborated with the Nazis. (Jan. 29-March 5; ChicagoShakes.com)

Monster, Steppenwolf for Young Audiences, 1650 N. Halsted St. Aaron Carter adapts Walter Dean Myers' novel about a 16-year-old aspiring filmmaker in juvenile detention. (Feb. 15-March 9; Steppenwolf.org)

The Invention of Morel, Chicago Opera Theater at Studebaker Theatre, 410 S. Michigan Ave. Stewart Copeland's co-world premiere with Long Beach Opera is a sci-fi story of a man stuck on a

lonely island. (Feb. 18-26; ChicagoOperaTheater.org)

Linda Vista, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. A divorced 50-year-old guy faces new possibilities at life after moving out of his ex-wife's garage in Tracy Letts' comic drama. (March 30-May 21; Steppenwolf.org)

King of the Yees, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St. Lauren Yee's family drama concerns the conflicts between a pillar of San Francisco's Chinese-American community and his reluctant daughter in this co-production with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles. (March-April 30; GoodmanTheatre.org)

Chicago premieres

The Tall Girls, Shattered Globe Theatre at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Meg Miroshnik's Depression-era drama focuses on a pioneering women's basketball team in the Midwest. (now to Feb. 25; SGTheatre.org)

Winter, Rivendell Theatre, 5775 N. Ridge Ave. Utah-based playwright Julie Jensen explores the conflict between an aging mother who is losing her faculties and her grown children who have other ideas about her wellbeing. (now to Feb. 11; RivendellTheatre.org)

A Disappearing Number, TimeLine Theatre, Wellington Ave. Simon McBurney's collaborative company Complicité shines a light on the complex and inspirational friendship between Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan and British mathematician G.H. Hardy. (now to April 9; TimeLineTheatre.com)

Circumference of a Squirrel, Solo Celebration at Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln

Ave. John Walch's dark one-man comedy concerns a guy trying to figure out why his father had such an obsessive hatred for squirrels and other rodents. (now to Feb. 12; GreenhouseTheater.org)

The Adventures of Robin Hood, Filament Theatre, 4041 N. Milwaukee Ave. Non-traditional casting comes into play for Oliver Emanuel's stage adaptation of the famed legend of the Englishman who robbed the rich to feed the poor. (now to March 19; FilamentTheatre.org)

Gloria, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St. Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' dark cutthroat comedy concerns twentysomething editorial assistants scrambling to find the next big thing in contemporary media. (now to Feb. 19; GoodmanTheatre.org)

Saturday Night Fever, Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace. Sean Cercone and David Abbinanti are the latest scribes to write a new script adaptation of the hit (and very dark) 1977 disco film that notoriously starred John Travolta. (now to March 19; DruryLane.com)

Earthquakes in London, Steep Theatre, 1115 W. Berwyn Ave. Mike Bartlett's drama focuses on a climate scientist and his three estranged daughters when an environmental disaster befalls England. (Jan. 21-March 4; SteepTheatre.com)

The Nether, A Red Orchid Theatre, 1531 N. Wells St. Jennifer Haley's drama focuses on a young detective who exposes a disturbing brand of entertainment. The script is the winner of the 2011-12 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. (Jan. 26-March 12; ARedOrchidTheatre.org)

The Assembled Parties, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St. Richard Greenberg's 2013 Broadway drama follows the Bascov family in 1980 and in 2000 where planned-for ambitions go awry. (Jan. 25-March 25; RavenTheatre.com)

The Bodyguard, Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. Deborah Cox stars in a touring production of the London stage adaptation of the hit Whitney Houston film musical. (Jan. 31 to Feb. 12; BroadwayInChicago.com)

The Scottsboro Boys, Porchlight Music Theatre at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Kander and Ebb's critically acclaimed 2010 Broadway "minstrel" musical exploring the lives of African-American teenagers who were wrongfully accused of rape in the 1930s. (Feb. 3 -March 12)

The Columnist, American Blues Theater at Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. Award-winning playwright David Auburn (Proof) explores sex, betrayal and Cold War-era politics by focusing on a powerful journalist in Washington D.C. (Feb. 17-April 9; AmericanBluesTheater.com)

Destiny of Desire, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St. Latin American telenovelas are the inspiration for Karen Zacarias' comic drama. (March 11-April 16; GoodmanTheatre.org)

Upright Grand, Citadel Theatre, 300 S. Waukegan Rd., Lake Forest. Laura Schellhardt's drama deals with musical and familial differences between a jazz pianist father and his concert pianist daughter. (March 16-26; CitadelTheatre.org)

Aladdin, Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph St. Broadway star Adam Jacobs launches the North American tour of the hit stage adaptation of Disney's 1992 animated blockbuster. (April 11-July 2; BroadwayInChicago.com)

Travis Turner and Robert Fenton in *Bootycandy*.
Photo by Justin Barbin



BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Don't put away that gay apparel yet. After a stressful 2016, it's time to rally around LGBT plays to raise consciousness and morale while having a good time as well.

Gay history

The Temperamentals, About Face at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Before Stonewall sparked the creation of Gay Alliances, Coalitions or Liberation Fronts, the Mattachine Society fought for the rights of men-who-love-men. (Jan. 19-Feb. 18; www.theaterwit.org)

Blues For an Alabama Sky, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave. A gay male dressmaker who longs to outfit Josephine Baker is only one of the African-American artists struggling to make their fortune in Pearl Cleage's tale of the Harlem Renaissance. (Jan. 21-Feb. 12; CourtTheatre.org)

The Baltimore Waltz, Brown Paper Box at the Frontier, 1106 W. Thorndale Ave. A seize-the-day vacation in Europe gradually morphs into Paula Vogel's farewell to her brother in the waning days of the AIDS epidemic. (Jan. 21-Feb. 19; BrownPaperBox.org)

The Kid Thing, Nothing Without A Company at Berger Park North Mansion, 6205 N. Sheridan Road. A revival of Sarah Gubbins' 2011 drama exploring the consequences of a lesbian couple with misaligned biological clocks. (March 13-April 8; NothingWithoutACompany.org)

Gay today

Bootycandy, Windy City Playhouse, 3014 W. Irving Park Rd. Robert O'Hara's survey of options open to gay, adolescent, African-American males pays homage to George Wolfe's "Colored Museum." (Feb. 3-April 16; WindyCityPlayhouse.com)

Sycamore, Raven Theater, 6157 N. Clark St. Two teenagers—one male, one female—vie for the affections of the handsome new neighbor boy next door, as their parents grapple with changes

in their own lives. (March 8-April 29; RavenTheatre.com)

The Wolf at the End of the Block, Teatro Vista at the Biograph, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave. A boarded-up bar becomes a crime scene, but when its Out gay playwright is Ike Holter, you know this will be no ordinary whodunit. (Feb. 3-March 5; TeatroVista.org)

Gender flips

Henry V, Babes With Blades Theatre Company at City Lit, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. Others may claim the spotlight today, but the Babes pioneered women-playing-men decades ago—look for that "Band of Brothers" speech to take on new dimensions in this unigender rendering of Shakespeare's classic. (Feb. 27-April 1; BabesWithBlades.org)

For Peter Pan on Her 70th Birthday, Shattered Globe Theatre at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. The boy who never grew up (once portrayed only by female actors) brings comfort to elderly siblings in Sarah Ruhl's play, starring her mother, Chicago favorite Kathleen Ruhl. (April 6-May 20; ShatteredGlobe.org)

Gender Breakdown, Collaboraction Theatre at the Flatiron, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave. Dani Bryant weaves real-life testimonials into a symposium on misogynistic prejudice in show business today. (Feb. 22-March 19; Collaboraction.org)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St. The transgender East German "internationally ignored song stylist" returns to share her side of the story of a notorious rock star scandal in a tour of the 2014 Tony Award-winning Broadway revival. (March 7-19; BroadwayInChicago.org)

Just for fun

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Pride Films and Plays at the Pride Broadway, 4139 N. Broadway. Can two drag queens and a transchick on a road trip find happiness and fulfillment? Can a tiny

Uptown storefront house this much Great Gay Hits juke-box musical fabulosity? (Jan. 17-Feb. 12; PrideFilmsAndPlays.com)

Fifty Shades of Shakespeare, (re)discover theatre at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. Get your education and alcohol at the same time—four actors perform the Bard's sexiest scenes in a bar/cabaret and *you* get to choose the cast. (Feb. 3-27; RediscoverTheatre.com)

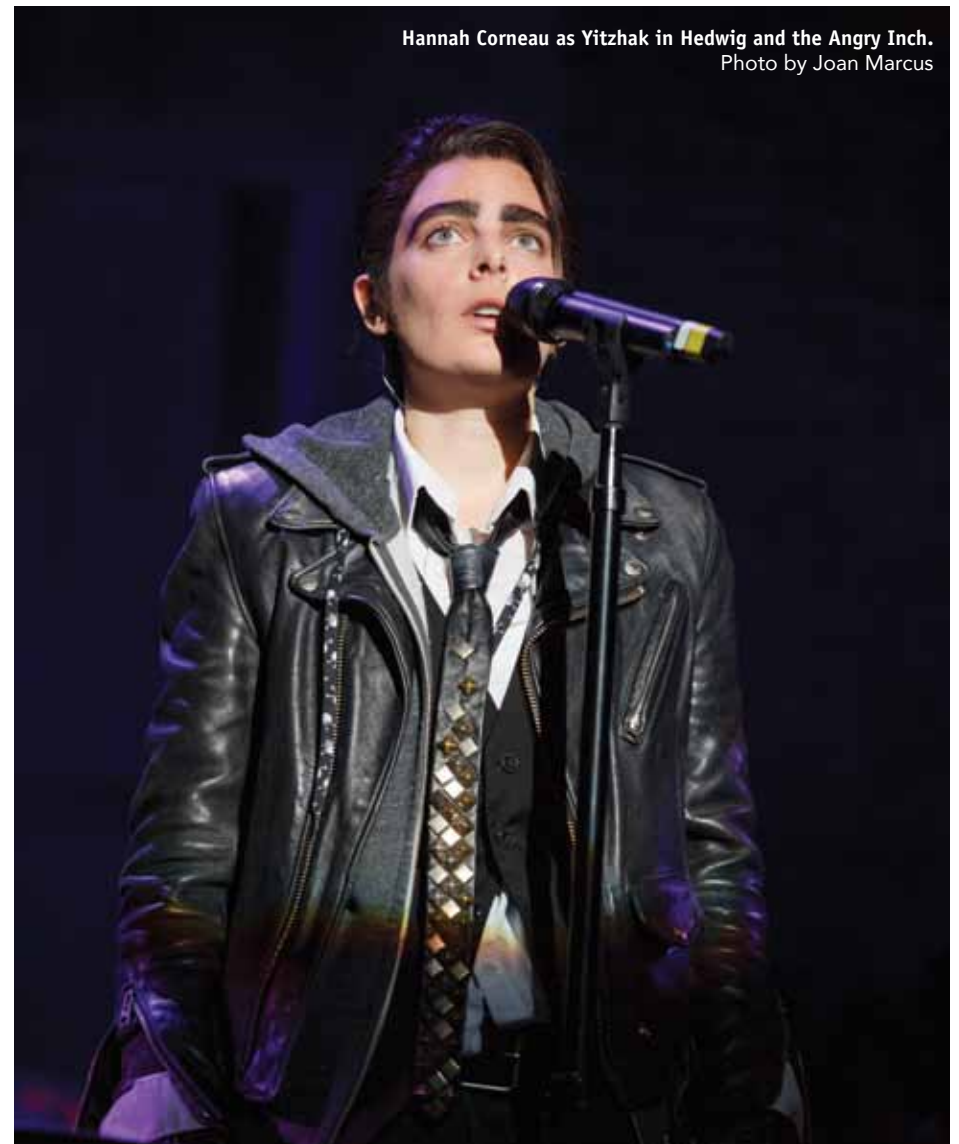
Festivals

Fillet of Solo, Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Greenwood Ave. and Heartland Studio, 7016 N. Greenwood Ave. The line-up for the 20-year anniversary of this showcase for single-voice narratives includes GayCo, the Kates, OUTspoken and Sappho's Salon, along with regulars Tekki Lomnecki and the Sweat Girls. (Jan. 13-29; LifelineTheatre.com)

Rhinofest, Curious Theatre Branch at Prop Thtr, 3502 N. Elston Ave. Theatre Y's production of Hector Alvarez's docudrama *The Ghoul Exhibition* encompasses homophobia, racial profiling, club shootings and much more. (Feb. 2-23; PropThtr.org)

Even if alarmists would have you believe the sky is falling, keep calm and carry on. See you at the theater.

Hannah Corneau as Yitzhak in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.
Photo by Joan Marcus



Moe Vela.

Photo courtesy of Deiv Compton



BOOKS

Pink and Brown in the White House: Talking with Moe Vela

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Moe Vela is the sort of guy who starts speeches by saying, "It's so good for this ugly, bald chubby gay Latino from South Texas to be with you today." Vela's claim to fame? He was a senior executive to the vice presidents in both the Clinton and Obama administrations, and was the first gay Hispanic person to do so.

"People ask me all the time, how do you get to do this twice?" Vela said. "You don't plan it. I was open, I was flexible and adaptable to what the universe brought. I didn't sit there and say this is the exact step by step process that's going to happen in my life. If I had done that, it would have never happened that way."

Trained as a lawyer from a family of Latino lawyers in South Texas, in the mid-'90s, Vela was drinking with an acquaintance who mentioned that the Clinton administration was looking for "lawyer types" to serve in the vice president's office.

"I was a schedule C political appointee in the bowels of the Department of Agriculture," Vela said with a laugh. "Here's this chubby Latino bald gay guy. ... It just wasn't where we would have expected me to be. There was a combination of naivete, innocence and frankly, kind of an enthusiasm, my almost raising my hand like I was in class saying me, me. I was just, like, 'Well, that sounds kind of fun.' I did not even, for a second, contemplate 'This is the White House.' ... I'd just had two or three beers. I probably thought the chances of it were so slim that I didn't even give it any thought."

In his book, Vela writes that those beers were probably the most important of his life. *Little Secret, Big Dreams* covers Vela's family origins

and childhood to his White House years. He tells charming, madcap tales, like when he ripped his pants open on the day Air Force Two and Vice President Gore were scheduled to fly to South Texas. Vela stapled his pants together, the trip went smoothly, and Vela was proud of his ingenuity ... until his pants set off the White House metal detector a few months later. "Buns of steel," he quipped to the Secret Service agent.

Throughout his narrative, Vela displays impressive good humor and an ability to connect with anyone from Joe Lieberman's elderly Jewish mother to actor Rob Lowe. "I've always thought connecting with people is like the basics of life," he said. "And self-deprecating humor is a very powerful and key tool to meaningfully connect with people."

That's why he introduces himself as chubby and ugly. "I feel like that like allows people to feel they can relate with you," Vela said.

Despite his boisterous adult spirit, severe anxiety marred Vela's childhood. He knew he was gay, but he felt he couldn't tell a soul. As an adult working in the White House, Vela and his former partner, Deiv, were victimized by a relatively new Clinton policy: "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Deiv was honorably discharged from the National Security Agency—but only because investigators couldn't prove the couple had had sex.

"You feel so violated when people are telling you 'we know you've been talking to him, we watched you through your window kissing,'" Vela said. "It was a very powerful lesson in the power of legislation, and how it is so vital for us to be vigilant at all times."

While in public service, Vela often felt at odds with his communities. As a "big beefy bear" he never felt fully accepted by the image-conscious

LGBTQ crowd, and other Latinos tended to be insecure when a member of their community succeeded.

"It never dampened my spirit to want to do right by both of my communities," Vela said. "I was a senior policy advisor on both of those communities both times. I did it with fervor, I did it with passion, I did it with complete commitment. I feel proud of that, to be honest."

Vela's White House stints were 15 years apart, and he finds notable differences in both himself and the two administrations he served.

Forum on LGBTQ bars on Jan. 26

Out at CHM—the Chicago History Museum's annual three-event series exploring LGBTQ issues—is launching its 14th year of programming with "Our Bars: Community, Safety, Violence, Sex, and Activism," an exploration of the movement that developed from LGBTQ bars and clubs.

The event will take place Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St. The panel discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. and includes a reception at 5:30 p.m.

Author and historian Owen Keehnen moderates a panel to include community activists and bar owners Art Johnston (Sidetrack) and Marge Summit (His 'n Hers).

This is the first program in the Out at CHM 2017 series, followed by "Art, AIDS, and Activism in Chicago" on Friday, March 31 and "From New Town to Boystown to Lake View" on Thursday, May 18.

Admission to each program is \$20 for the

"In the Clinton White House, that Southern genteel kind of hospitality was everywhere," he remembered. "They rolled up their sleeves, willing to do whatever it takes to do right by people."

By contrast, Vela sometimes found the Obama administration aloof and perhaps overconfident.

"I'm not suggesting the President was that way," Vela said. "The few times I was around him, he was actually not like that at all. And neither was Mrs. Obama. But it was some of his senior advisors who really never stopped being that way."

When Vela suggested looking at the effects of particular policies on niche populations, a senior Obama official told him that he didn't understand the mandate of the election. "We are now one America," the official said. If that moment had happened under Vice President Gore, Vela said he would have started crying. "At 48 or 49, I was able to remain composed," he said. He noted that Obama's 2012 reelection campaign targeted specific populations, just as Vela had suggested happen with policy initiatives.

Although his relationship with both the Gores and Bidens was always respectful and he considers both couples friends, Vela thinks his maturity changed his relationship with the new second family. "I had a little more life experience, and I felt more competent and comfortable," he said.

Despite the fact that his White House career took him by surprise, and a new, less welcoming administration is about to take office, Vela sees value in young LGBTQ people entering government service.

"We as gay and lesbian and bisexual and transgender Americans have earned the equality that should have always been ours in many ways that we didn't have before," Vela said. "It's up to us. Let's do away with our cliques, let's do away with what divides us, let's come together. I'm confident and positive that we will remain moving forward towards that incredible dream of full equality."

Little Secrets, Big Dreams is available on Amazon and at MoeVela.com.

general public, and \$15 for museum members and students; visit <https://www.chicagohistory.org/outatchm>.

Bill T. Jones to speak at DuSable

Art AIDS America and the DuSable Museum of African American History are hosting dancer/activist/Tony-winning choreographer Bill T. Jones at the museum, 740 E. 56th Pl., on Friday, Jan. 27, at 7 p.m.

Jones, who is a passionate HIV-positive artist, will offer a one-night-only presentation (entitled "Return") touching on his decades-long relation to HIV/AIDS.

This program is free and open to the public; a \$10 suggested donation will benefit the DuSable Museum. Advance registration is required, and can be made by visiting https://1466.blackbaudhosting.com/1466/Bill-T-Jones-Art-AIDS-America-Chicago?mc_cid=c512a8d3c9&mc_eid=302e9a21a4 or calling 773-947-0600.

Judge: Secular celebrants can officiate marriages

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A federal judge, on Jan. 4, ruled that certified secular celebrants are authorized to perform marriages in Illinois.

Secular celebrants are trained by the organization Center for Inquiry (CFI)—which advocates for “reason, science and secularism”—to officiate at weddings wherein the couple might not want a religious or government official.

“I am truly relieved by this ruling, and I am ready to get to work,” said Galen Broaddus, a secular celebrant who brought the suit, in a statement. “I think of all the couples who feel marginalized for being nonreligious, who either had to compromise their core beliefs by taking part in a religious wedding ceremony, or else settled for a government wedding. But now they have the opportunity to have one of the most deeply meaningful events of their lives commemorated in a way that reflects who they are.”

U.S. District Judge Colin S. Bruce rendered the Jan. 4 decision. A 2014 court decision ruled that Secular Celebrants could officiate at weddings in Indiana; there are similar cases pending in Texas, Michigan and Ohio.

“We made sincere efforts with the Illinois legislature to have the authority to solemnize marriages extended to secular celebrants, and it’s frustrating that this simple matter had to be settled through the courts,” said Nicholas Little, vice president and general counsel of CFI. “It would be so much easier—and far less expensive to taxpayers—if lawmakers across the country would agree to work with us so that secular couples everywhere can be married in accordance with their values.”

‘Cartooning AIDS’ at Gerber/Hart

A new major exhibition is in the new Sandfield Exhibition Gallery at Gerber/Hart Library, 6500 N. Clark St.

“Cartooning AIDS” features the political cartoons of Danny Sotomayor and looks at how issues surrounding AIDS were engaged through political cartoons, comic books, trading cards and ‘zines for the purpose of political critique, education, and awareness.

The exhibition will be open through April. This exhibition is being presented in conjunction with the Art AIDS America Chicago exhibition (ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org).

Laura Jane Grace in Chicago on Feb. 5

On Sunday, Feb. 5, trans singer Laura Jane Grace will perform at City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph St., at 8 p.m.

Grace is a musician best known as the founder, lead singer, songwriter and guitarist of the punk rock band Against Me! Her solo debut EP, Heart Burns, was released in 2008.

In 2012, she publicly came out as transgender, admitting to years of struggling with gender dysphoria and announcing her plan to medically transition to female. In 2014, Grace was included in The Advocate’s annual “40 under 40” list. In November 2016, Grace released her autobiography, Tranny: Confessions of Punk Rock’s Most Infamous Anarchist Sellout.

Tickets are \$28-\$40 each; visit CityWinery.com/chicago/laura-jane-grace-2-5-17.html.



Participants in Chicago Story Collection Day. Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

VideoOut hosts story-sharing event

NYC-based nonprofit VideoOut (created to amplify the voices of LGBTQ people by sharing coming-out stories and building community) and Chicago-based film-production company Strangewaze hosted Chicago Story Collection Day Sunday, Jan. 15, at Center on Halsted.

Pride Action Tank (PAT) Kim Hunt (left, back row) was one of those who took part. Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond



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the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Mama's Boy

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Mama's Boy Peasant Italian (445 N. Dearborn St.; RosebudRestaurants.com/restaurant/mamas-boy-peasant-italian/) is in an interesting spot.

The eatery is located in River North—and at a location that would seem to invite many patrons. However, there has been substantial restaurant turnover over the years—including with Rosebud venue Joe Fish. (Mama's Boy is also a Rosebud restaurant.)

Hopefully, Mama's Boy will be around for a bit



Corporate chef Fabio Capparelli (left) and grilled seafood (above) at Mama's Boy.

Photos by Andrew Davis

longer than the others.

At a social-media event there a little while back, Corporate Chef Fabio Capparelli explained that the food reflects what he had growing up; now, Executive Chef Massimo Gaffo has taken over the reins, and he seems to know his stuff as

well.

For the appetizer, our attentive server, Lisa, sold my friend and I on the grigliatto misto (grilled seafood). The jumbo shrimp were definitely large, and the calamari and octopus were both very good. My friend (eating especially

healthfully before her wedding) also ordered the baby spinach-and-kale salad, which she thoroughly enjoyed—although Lisa forgot the grilled chicken my friend wanted with her salad. (The mistake was quickly remedied, though.)

My entree consisted of pasta—but with a presentation. Gaffo brought the spaghetti out in a huge parmigiano reggiano wheel, and then scooped out the dish after pretty much immersing it in the cheese; then, the chef slowly pours olive oil on the dish. It's attention-grabbing—although I'm not sure the portion warranted the \$24 price tag. Also, although the dish was tasty, I thought it would benefit from the addition of meat (something my small amount of leftovers confirmed when I combined it with lamb a day later); my friend added that putting an egg (sunny-side up) with the dish might help it as well.

We concluded with dessert, getting a slice of coconut take that was as big as my friend's and my head combined. It was well-baked, with just the right amount of coconut.

So I'd recommend checking out Mama's Boy. Here's hoping it'll be in that spot for a while.



SIDETRACK

Open wide for Sync It!: Dudes, Wed., Jan. 11

Photos by Jed Dulanias



In its third year, **The Sofo Tap's Otter** gets hotter than ever as Chicago's ultimate otter mascot, Woody Woodruff, hosts this year's **Lumbersexual, Saturday, January 21**. Lumbersexual, much like Chicago winters, brings out the rugged side in all of us. Join fellow Chicago otters in sporting your sexiest flannel, plaid or whatever gets you in the mood to tackle some wood ... and some Woody! Beats by Moose the DJ.



Sidetrack is throwing a **Love is Love Party** all day and night, **Friday, January 20**. Sidetrack, along with partners Lambda Legal and Absolut, want to "Make J20 Great Again!" with a bevy of ways for people to come together and to remind all of us that love is still love, resistance goes better with slushies and the LGBTQ community has powerful lawyers that are ready for the fight of our lives.

Sidetrack has a long history of being an epicenter of LGBT activism. Sidetrack co-owner and founder of Equality Illinois Art Johnston often speaks to the importance of bars and their impact on the gay community as places to gather to commiserate, celebrate and, most importantly, activate.

Lambda Legal knows how to fight against a hostile government and will be on hand to help our community engage in the resistance work ahead. Absolut will have a Love is Love photo-booth so that people can celebrate their love, along with a special on their signature Sidetrack Krush from 5-9 pm. iCandee will also be on hand, selling exclusive Love is Love hats and T-shirts, with proceeds from these sales going to support the work of Lambda Legal. There will be inspiring performances from RuPaul's Drag Race star DiDa Ritz and Chicago favorite The Vixen.

"We all need to come together in solidarity on January 20. Public opinion is on our side and we will not ignore this major shift that is taking place in our country with the inauguration; however, we are determined to remain positive and motivated to create change together," says Sidetrack general manager Brad Balof.

Sidetrack will open at 3 pm on Friday, January 20. Show Tunes play 5-9 pm, culminating with a collection of uplifting dance and party music with performances and surprises from 9 pm to 2am.

—Press release



BILLY Masters

"I'm going to give America a happy ending."—**The newest Bachelor, Nick Viall**, discusses his hopes for love the fourth time around. I'm gonna hold him to that.

I'm disappointed in **Jennifer Holliday**. For those of you who may be out of the loop, Donald Trump is having a devil of a time booking performers for the inauguration. An inquiry went out to the Dreamgirls star. While she was considering it, people on the internet immediately went on the attack. "They were calling me coon, calling me house n-----, calling me Aunt Jemima, calling me all kinds of names and asking me to kill myself," she said. I personally saw dozens of vile posts, specifically from members of the LGBT community. People were saying things like she'll never work in our community again, that the gays made her career and they will destroy it. One memorable post said, "Remember what we did to Donna Summer." Ominous indeed.

I assume people who would perform at this inauguration fall into two categories: 1) people who support and voted for Trump, and 2) people who need the money and/or exposure. Holliday went out of her way to say she did not fall into either category. She publicly stated that she voted for Hillary. She said she wanted to sing for America. She wanted to help heal the divide. Her fee would be donated to LGBT charities. Her inspiration was Marian Anderson, the Black opera singer who gave a concert in 1939 at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial to more than 75,000 on the National Mall after being denied the opportunity to sing in an auditorium because of her race. Anderson didn't buckle down under hate—she went forward. But despite Holliday's best intentions, she was met with vitriolic hate from all sides and was essentially bullied to not perform. She apologized specifically to the LGBT community for even considering to perform "for America," and ended her address with this: "Thank you for your posted comments, both the good supportive ones as well as the ugly hurtful ones." When we went low, she went high.

Thomas Roberts' show at MSNBC has come to an end. The show was taken off the air with little fanfare on Dec. 16. The show was a replacement for **Ronan Farrow's** short-lived endeavor. Interestingly enough, Farrow filled in on the Today show over the holidays, so who knows what's ahead for Roberts. In the meantime, the athletic anchor shows off his exercise regime in Muscle & Fitness magazine—a periodical I don't believe ever featured the physiques of Tom Brokaw or Dan Rather. See the sizzling centerfold on BillyMasters.com.

A law was just passed in France making it illegal for parents to spank their children. Now, I'm not advocating spanking in general—but sometimes a kid needs a good whack. Apparently the French Parliament disagrees with me and has issued a nationwide ban on all forms of "corporal punishment." Instead of hitting, parents should try "positive reinforcement." Yeah, and we should



Out journalist Thomas Roberts (left, with husband Patrick Abner) is showing off his fit bod, Billy says.

Facebook photo

also give a trophy to everyone for just showing up!

Do you know who **Nico Tortorella** is? He's a kinda hot actor who appears on Younger and has come out as sexually fluid—so I guess we now have to add an F to the already cumbersome LG-BTQIA; he also has a podcast called "The Love Bomb." A recent guest was someone who knows a thing or two about sexual fluids—gay-porn actor **Colby Keller**. Colby shared his coming-out story with Nico. As a kid, Keller had a box of gay porn under his bathroom sink. Let's stop right there—did Colby grow up having his own bathroom—or was he stupid enough to hide gay porn in the family bathroom? Anyway, one day his parents discovered the box. Colby barricaded himself in his bedroom—shades of "Les Miz." Through the door, his father expressed support for his son and said "everything he could in the language that he possessed to try and comfort me and make it okay for me." Then it was time for his mother. She said, "I wish I had a gun so I could kill you and then blow my own brains out all over this sofa." Colby says his mom had very strong Christian beliefs. After that incident, Keller stopped calling her "mother." Perhaps she would have answered to the term "defendant."

Gay-porn star **Tyce Jax** (legal name Jared Louis Valazquez) was recently arrested for beating, choking and biting his boyfriend. What caused the fight? Tyce caught his boyfriend watching—wait for it—gay porn! I'm speechless. This is the FIFTH domestic violence charge for Jax/Valazquez. As Judge Judy would say, "He's a real winner!"

You know how they say that when you sleep with someone, you're sleeping with everyone they ever slept with? Last week, I went to bed with one number and by the time I woke up, poof, it went up by 500!

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Henry in Florida. "I was binge-watching Girls and saw this hot scruffy actor, **Evan Jonigkeit**. He did a sex scene, but you couldn't see anything. I think you wrote about him before."

Yes, I wrote about Jonigkeit several times in 2012 when he was touring the country with **Kathleen Turner** in Matthew Lombardo's play High. At the time, I was quite taken with his range of acting. I wasn't the only one. When I interviewed Turner (who played a nun), all she wanted to do was talk about him. She said, "I think Evan's one of the most exciting young actors around. I equate him with Jude Law, who I worked with on Broadway in Indiscretions. Evan is quite extraordinary. He's got it." He also appeared nude in the play and was quite hot. And then, as if a gift from the Lord, video of his nude scene appeared in my inbox. You may not have seen all of him on Girls, but you can on BillyMasters.com.

When heaven is a place on Earth, it's definitely time to end yet another column. And don't forget to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that features a wide assortment of heavenly bodies. If you've got a question for me on any topic, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Trump appoints Jennifer Holliday as secretary of pancakes! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed. Jan. 18

Another Door Opens Chicago House, in partnership with Architectural Artifacts. An evening of elegance, intrigue and hope as 60 of the city's top artists and designers create original works of art to be auctioned off to help open doors for those in need. VIP Tickets \$175 include Luxury Scavenger Hunt from 6-7 pm 6:00pm - 10:00pm Architectural Artifacts 4325 N Ravenswood Ave Chicago <http://www.chicagohouse.org/home/anotherdooropens/>

Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise In-depth portrait of the poet, writer, and activist which includes a substantial element of storytelling by the artist herself. Through Jan. 19 7:45pm Gene Siskel Film Center 164 N State Chicago <http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org/mayaangelou>

Thursday, Jan. 19

Refusing to Choose: LGBTQ and Orthodox in Israel Presented by A Wider Bridge at the Lakeview Home of Yoni


THE WRIGHT STUFF
Wed., Jan. 25

Out singer Chely Wright will perform in Evanston's SPACE.
 PR photo

Pizer and Brad Lippitz. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Questions to Laurie Grauer laurie@awiderbridge.org 7:00pm - 8:30pm Lake View Home of Yoni Pizer and Brad Lippitz. Address provided after registration <https://>

Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/refusing-to-choose-lgbtq-and-orthodox-in-israel-lakeview-event-tickets-30343348773?aff=erelexpmlt>

Friday, Jan. 20

GayCo at Fillet of Solo In the Queer and Now 8:30pm Heartland Studios 7016 N Glenwood Ave Chicago <http://www.lifelinetheatre.com/performance/16-17/filletofsolo2017.shtml>

What A Joke: A National Comedy Festival National Comedy fest in response to the President-elect's repeated threats on human rights, comedians in more than 20 cities are coordinating shows to raise money for the ACLU on Inauguration Day Weekend. From Thursday, January 19th, through Saturday, January 21st, benefit comedy shows under the name WHAT A JOKE will take place simultaneously around the country and in the UK. Kristen Toomey, Matt Ryan, Sammy Arechar. \$20. Doors 8pm. 9:00pm 1354 W Wabansia Ave., Chicago Tickets: <http://www.ticketfly.com>

Saturday, Jan. 21

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance (LGBTQ) Support meeting to talk about illnesses, symptoms, treatment, doctors, and personal issues such as dating, relationships and work. Every Saturday. 11:00am - 12:30am Center on Halsted

3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com>

Women's March on Chicago Women and supporters of women mobilize to protect rights and civil liberties. 10:00am Grant Park, Chicago <http://womens121marchonchicago.org/register-for-the-march/>

28th Annual Rhino Fest Curious Theatre Branch and Prop Thtr present the 28th year of the Fest, Thursdays through Mondays through, Feb. 25. \$15 or pay what you can. Time: TBA Prop Theater 3502 N. Elston Chicago <http://http://rhinofest.com>

Men Cuddling Men meetup group \$20 in advance. \$23 at the door. RSVP online, 6:00pm - 8:00pm Rast Dance Studio, 1803 W. Byron St., #201, Chicago <https://www.meetup.com/Men-Cuddling-Men/events/235611309/>

Sunday, Jan. 22

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert the Musical Heartwarming, uplifting adventure of three friends, Tick, Bernadette and Adam, a glamorous Sydney-based performing trio who agree to take their show to the middle of the Australian outback. They hop aboard a battered old bus (nicknamed Priscilla) searching for love and friendship and find... 3:30pm Pride Arts Center, 4139 N Broadway, Chicago, <http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com>

Tuesday, Jan. 24

Oscar Nominations Panel Alison Cuddy moderates panel discussion about this year's nominees—the good, the bad; the shoe-ins and the snubs featuring film critics J.R. Jones, Sergio Mims, Pamela Powell, Ray Pride and Dean Richards. Followed by a post event reception. Free. Kicks-off "Hollywood on State: Where You're the Star" annual Oscars viewing party. 4:30pm - 5:30pm Gene Siskel Film Center 164 N State St., SiskelFilmCenter.org

Wed., Jan. 25

Chely Wright in Evanston Country music singer, who came out on the Today Show in 2012, appearing in support of her recently released eighth studio album, I Am The Rain. 7:30pm Evanston SPACE 1245 Chicago Ave Evanston, IL 60202 <http://www.ticketweb.com>

Bootycandy Based on the playwright's experiences growing up black and gay, this shocking play unfolds in a kaleidoscope of sketches, taking no prisoners when confronting racial, sexual and cultural stereotypes. Through April 16. 7:30pm Windy City Playhouse, 3014 W. Irving Park Rd., <http://windycityplayhouse.com/bootycandy>

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VIEWPOINT from page 14

already highly regulated, are likely to be resistant to expensive changes.

This can be a multifaceted and gradual process. Municipal codes can be changed in regard to single-stall bathrooms—a quick and inexpensive change. Institutions that are able to mobilize community support for the redesignation of certain multi-stall bathrooms as all-gender spaces can also make that change quickly and inexpensively. And the codes can be changed to address wider redesignation and architectural updates of multi-stall bathrooms, with a provision for a longer timeline.

The bottom line is that going to a public bathroom is a basic human need and as our society evolves, the codes regulating our lives need to evolve with them.

Francesca Gaiba, Ph.D., is research associate professor of Medical Social Sciences and associate director of the Institute for Sexual and Gender Minorities Health and Wellbeing at Northwestern University, and a Public Voices Fellow through The OpEd Project. This column originally appeared on truth out's website, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/38679-most-people-have-all-gender-restrooms-at-home-why-not-have-them-everywhere>. On that link you can see the live links for this story.



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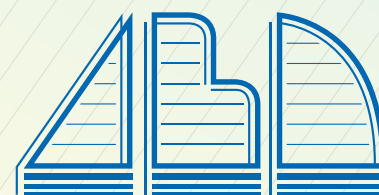
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