

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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CAN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM HANDLE TRANS CHILDREN?

Transgender youth being removed from homes by child welfare agencies



HALF-MAST

Rainbow flag creator Gilbert Baker dies.
Photo by Rex Wockner

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PART ONE BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

On Nov. 8, 1978, the United States Congress enacted a law that would “establish standards for the placement of Indian children in foster or adoptive homes, to prevent the breakup of Indian families, and for other purposes.”

The Indian Child Welfare Act was the result of hearings which began four years earlier.

In their findings, Congress stated that, “An alarmingly high percentage of Indian children, living within both urban communities and Indian reservations, are separated from their parents through the actions of nontribal government agencies or private individuals or private agencies and are placed in institutions (including boarding schools) or in foster and adoptive

homes usually with non-Indian families.”

Congress went on to note that, “The separation of Indian children from their families frequently occurs where one or more of the following circumstances exist: (1) the natural parent does not understand the nature of the documents or the proceedings involved. (2) neither the child nor the natural parents are represented by counsel or otherwise advised of their rights; (3) the agency officials involved are unfamiliar with, and often disdainful of Indian culture and society; (4) the conditions which led to the separation are not demonstrably harmful or are remediable or transitory in character. For the child, such separation can cause a loss of identity and self-esteem and contributes directly to the unreasonably high rates among Indian children for dropouts, alcoholism and

drug abuse, suicides and crime.”

Now, almost 40 years later, stories have been surfacing which suggest those findings and, in many cases, each of the circumstances related to them seem to be happening again—this time to transgender and gender-nonconforming children and their parents in the United States.

In 2014, Windy City Times featured the work of Lurie Children’s Hospital’s groundbreaking Gender & Sex Development Program in Chicago. Since its inception, the program has provided an oasis of medical consultation and mental health assistance with some of the leading pediatric and psychological service providers in the country while engaging in academic studies

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MEN HAVING BABIES

Group is holding surrogacy conference.
PR photo from Ron Poole-Dayan

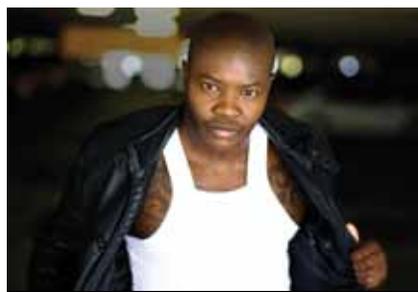
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VIVES Q

Group hold Latinx panel.
Photo by Vern Hester

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XAVIER RIZI TIMANE

Trans immigrant releases
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PP photo

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AUTOBARN

Evanston business aims to be
all-inclusive.
Autobarn’s Grayson Petty. Photo by Liz Baudler

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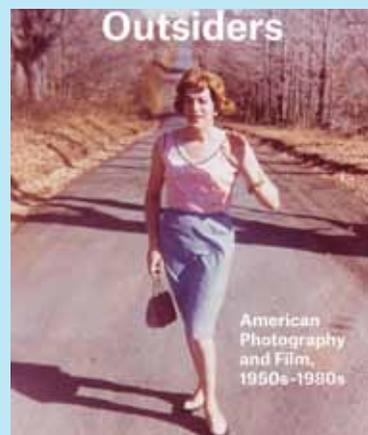
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LET'S TALK ABOUT 'SIX'

Celebrity chef Stuart O'Keeffe (left) talks about his book, Quick Six Fix.
PR photo

PHOTO FINISH



WCT reviews the book Outsiders: American Photography and Film 1950s-1980s.

FLOWER POWER

The Fairy Gardener provides tips to keep those blooms going.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Lee Daniels, Janeane Garofalo and the web series Unicornland.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

HUMAN
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5/20/17

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Fred Eychaner

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Organizers and participants of AFC's healthcare panel included Alexandra Murphy, Christopher Nolan, Zsea Bowmani, Yusef Garcia, Ramon Gardenhire, Justin Koziatek, Edward Wagner and Julio Rodriguez.

Photo by Matt Simonette

Advocates brace for long-term ACA fight

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The GOP's disastrous rollout of the Affordable Health Care Act (ACHA) legislation may have offered hope to Americans relying on the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as well as advocates working on their behalf, but Ramon Gardenhire, vice-president of policy for AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), warned that celebration is premature.

Speaking at a March 30 AFC breakfast in the downtown offices of the Baker McKenzie law firm, Gardenhire noted that, just two days earlier, Republicans had vowed to revive the ACHA, and, in the meantime, could try to weaken ACA with "a thousand administrative cuts."

ACA's impact on Illinois LGBTs has been considerable, he added. Between 2013 and 2015, the number of uninsured LGBTs was almost cut in half, shrinking from 21.7 percent to 11.1 percent. In 2012, 22 percent of individuals with HIV were uninsured; by 2015, that number had been reduced to 15 percent.

Advocates joining Gardenhire spoke at length about how to fortify support for ACA as it comes under fire in the years ahead. Christopher Nolan, MD, of Rush University Medical Center, discussed how health care needs to be better framed as a matter of social justice.

"People not being able to access healthcare is an injustice and should be called or as such," Nolan said. "...When we have policies in place that question the validity of access and rights, we have a commitment to fight and question."

Another physician, Cori Blum, M.D., of Howard Brown Health, said that ACA has been a boon to her patient population. While Howard Brown clients still have to contend with onerous "prior-approval" requirements, she noted, the ACA's structure "improves quality across the board."

Blum added, "It's very concerning to me ... that people we work with will be impacted by these proposed threats."

Zsea Bowmani of ACLU Illinois noted that large numbers of transgender individuals rely on

Medicaid and that numerous intersecting socioeconomic factors complicate health care delivery, even when its financing scheme is not under attack from the government.

Julio Rodriguez, of Association of Latinos/as Motivating Action (ALMA), encouraged audience members to determine how their own work can best fortify the ACA in the years ahead. "We need to expand this room, so people see the intersects between the work they're doing and the work on the ACA," he said.

Rodriguez noted that employers had an especially large responsibility. While some employers might laud less-stringent requirements with a weakened ACA, to do so would be detrimental in the long-run.

"You have to approach this from a talent-development standpoint," he said.

United Way of Metropolitan Chicago's Alexandra Murphy moderated the panel.

Center to mark 10 years at annual gala

Center on Halsted will mark its 10th anniversary with its annual "Human First" gala on Saturday, May 20, at The Geraghty, 2520 S. Hoyne Ave.

Cocktails and the reception will take place at 5:30 p.m., with the awards, dinner and dancing starting at 7 p.m.

This year, Center on Halsted is honoring Fred Eychaner, chairman of Newsweb Corporation and president of Alphawood Foundation. Also, iconic singer Dionne Warwick is slated to perform and Maggie Speaks will dance.

Tickets for the black-tie optional event are \$500 each; visit <https://community.centeronhalsted.org/HF>.

Open To Thinking

BY NICK PATRICCA



"Survival of the Fittest:" Making America Great Again

The first time I was told I did not 'fit' was in third grade. Before nodding off and drooling on her desk, Sr. D. bitterly complained, as she stared me in the eye, about having to teach us Italians and Blacks—unfit to be in her class, fit only for servitude or criminality—in place of her beloved Germans who had moved away to better neighborhoods.

I had never before been told I did not belong or that I was racially inferior. On a daily basis, Sr. D. made sure I understood these 'facts of life' as I wrestled with my own serious doubts about fitting into my world because of my sexuality and my love of ideas and books.

"I had thought, naively, that Social Darwinism in all its sundry forms had been thoroughly discredited by science, reason and morality and could never again be preached from the pulpit, ... I was wrong."

Conveniently for me since I came from a family that had no books, Andrew Carnegie, another believer in the survival of the fittest, had built—right up the corner from my parish school—a free public library where, through the assistance of the wise and learned librarian, I was able to read the works of Herbert Spencer and learn just how inferior I was.

I did not untangle 'survival of the fittest' from scientific theories of evolution until I was 15. With the help of Fr. H., a German priest who tutored me on Darwin's 'Origin of Species,' I came to understand that Social Darwinism had seriously misunderstood Darwin and had made a philosophically invalid application of that biological mechanism to social processes. Natural selection does not mean that the strongest and best triumph over the weak: it means that those biological organisms survive which are best fitted to the actual conditions of their environment—a very different meaning.

Perversely, Social Darwinism, often combining false science with twisted Calvinism, made a virtue of exploiting those most in need and most unable to defend themselves, causing some robber baron capitalists to insist they were doing God's Will when they

underpaid, overworked and mistreated their employees, thus allowing the strong to survive and the weak to perish.

I had thought, naively, that Social Darwinism in all its sundry forms had been thoroughly discredited by science, reason and morality and could never again be preached from the pulpit, declaimed in our political assemblies and taught in our academies. I was wrong.

Trumpism has enabled several new species of Social Darwinism to take center stage, rearing their hideous heads in the ideology, rhetoric and actions of some members of the Republican Party in their efforts to fundamentally change the social contract underpinning our contemporary U.S.A. society.

In the name of liberty, these neo-Social Darwinists have pushed American Individualism to such obscene extremes that I do not recognize my own beloved country. I wonder whether Donald J. Trump himself understands what he has unleashed.

As a rust-belt ethnic Catholic committed to social justice as well as to the liberty of the individual citizen in our republic, I find it difficult to understand how the Jesuit-trained Catholic Paul Ryan can embrace the ideology of Ayn Rand that considers 'altruism' a principle source of evil in society. (SEE: Colin Woodard, *American Character*, 2016, pp. 38, 39.)

The liberty of the adult U.S.A. citizen does not require the death of children from lack of food and healthcare, inadequate gun-control regulations, inadequate regulations on predatory financial practices, the 'right' to pollute the environment, defunding scientific research, attacking innocent migrants, eroding the quality of our public schools, preventing citizens from voting, attacking the rights of sexual and other minorities.

Let me cite the thinking of an intelligent, authentic, conservative Republican, Herbert Hoover: "In our individualism we have long since abandoned the laissez faire of the 18th Century—the notion that it is 'every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.' We abandoned that when we adopted the ideal of equality of opportunity—the fair chance of Abraham Lincoln." (*American Individualism*, 1922, p. 10.)

We need a Republican Party that values both justice and liberty, that rejects racism in all its forms, that understands the legacy of Abraham Lincoln.

Nick Patricca is professor emeritus at Loyola University Chicago, president of Chicago Network and playwright emeritus at Victory Gardens Theater.

Rainbow flag creator Gilbert Baker dies

Gilbert Baker—best known for creating the LGBT symbol known as the rainbow flag—died in his sleep on March 30 in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. He was 65.

Baker's first flag (which had eight colors, but which now has six, after pink and turquoise were dropped) flew over the 1978 Pride festivities in San Francisco. Harvey Milk, San Francisco's first openly gay supervisor, marched under that first rainbow flag in the June 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom parade—months before Milk was assassinated.

Baker was a former U.S. Army soldier who taught himself to sew. He rejected other ideas, such as the pink triangle and the Greek letter lambda, viewing the rainbow as inclusive, celebratory and, of course, colorful.

"That day when he raised the first rainbow flag, he knew that was his life's work. And for every march, every protest, every celebration, every memorial, he was always sewing and sewing and sewing," said Cleve Jones, according to SFGate.com.

ABC News noted that San Francisco's GLBT Historical Society wrote on its Facebook page that Gilbert had donated one of the sewing machines he used to create the flag. Baker also donated one of the 100 hand-dyed reproductions of the flag he made several years ago.



Gilbert Baker.
Photo by Rex Wockner

A candlelight vigil was held March 31 at Castro and Market streets in San Francisco. During the event, the main rainbow flag in the Castro was lowered in Baker's honor and replaced with a new one.

The SFGate.com item is at SFGate.com/bayarea/article/Gilbert-Baker-designer-of-the-rainbow-flag-dies-11042312.php. The ABC News item is at <http://abcnews.go.com/US/gilbert-baker-creator-iconic-lgbt-rainbow-flag-dies/story?id=46510046>.

PASSAGES

Joseph W. Sikorovsky

Joseph W. Sikorovsky passed away March 12. He was 60.

He was born April 30, 1956, to George and Rose Sikorovsky and was the dear great-nephew of Gene and Edmund Sikorovsky. He was a cherished friend of Bill, Andrea, Tom, Randy, Gary, Mat, Connie, Steve, Lee, Billy, Rick, Paula, Richard, John and many, many more. He will be remembered by his friends for his honesty and forthright approach to life.

Joseph graduated from Morton East High School in 1974 and obtained a bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University. He was an employee of Leo Burnett for 27 years.

Joseph was a 20-year resident of Lake View, frequently visiting with his neighbors at the former Caribou Coffee on Broadway. An avid Chicago Cubs and Blackhawks fan, he enjoyed a good cigar and intuitive conversations.

Our community will benefit from Joseph's

legacy of gracious generosity by a living endowment to his favorite charities. He was very hard-working and ambitious, and will be missed by all who had the great fortune to have known him. Services and interment were held at Mount Auburn Funeral home in Stickney, Illinois, on March 16-17.



Joseph W. Sikorovsky.
Photo courtesy of Bill Coda



“We are doing it because we want to encourage others to get tested for HIV. We need to make sure that our health is a priority in our lives.”

— Victor and José “Che Che”

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Rauner orders Human Rights Commission folded into Dept. of Human Rights

BY MATT SIMONETTE

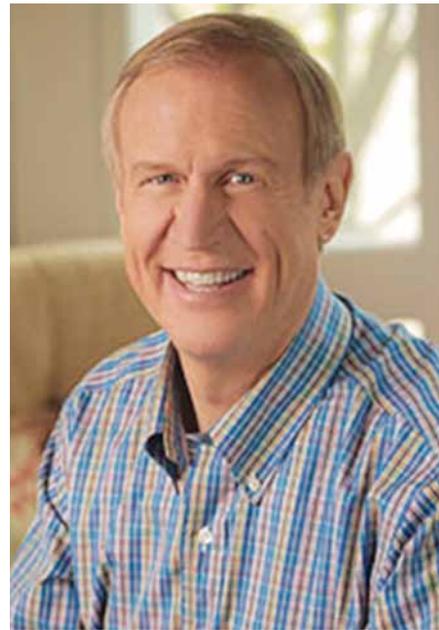
Gov. Bruce Rauner, on March 31, issued an executive order consolidating the state's Human Rights Commission ("The Commission") with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR).

The move was among many departmental consolidations Rauner ordered that same day, and, according to a press release, was aimed at expediting anti-discrimination cases—resolving a case takes on average about four years—and would save about half a million dollars in the first year.

IDHR investigates human-rights complaints, while the Commission adjudicates them. IDHR

has a limited timeframe within which to conduct investigations, but cases often become elongated once they are turned over to the Commission, according to IDHR Director Janice Glenn. She told *Windy City Times* that the consolidation would make IDHR's resources available to the Commission in order to speed up their backlog; the Commission employs about 20 administrative staffers.

"They now have cases going back years," Glenn said. "That is unjust. People who wait normally don't have resources to go through the courts. They're relying on the Commission to hear their case. It's not fair to them, to not get due justice, in terms of having their case heard. Our depart-



Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner.

ment is bigger and has more resources."

Glenn was not yet able to say whether any affected staffers would lose their jobs thanks to the consolidation, but she said the order was largely "an administrative fix addressing a critical need."

The current chair of the Commission is Rose Mary Bombela-Tobias, who said in the March 31 statement, "Illinois has a rich history of strong civil rights protections and this transition will allow our unified agency to fully realize its mission of protecting our residents from unlawful discrimination. I look forward to working with IDHR and our Commissioners on strengthening our ability to assist those who work with our agency."

Glenn said she thought the order would bring about swifter justice for Illinoisans who most needed it.

"This consolidation is going to help the people of Illinois rely on justice and have their case heard in a timely fashion," she said. "It [should] give hope to people who don't normally have access to that."

Openly LGBT Commission members include Aon executive and Howard Brown Health Board Chair Duke Alden as well as Personal PAC CEO Terry Cosgrove.

City introduces ID ordinance

BY MATT SIMONETTE

City officials, on March 29, introduced an ordinance at the monthly Chicago City Council meeting allowing for the creation of a municipal ID program for Chicago residents.

According to a press release, all Chicago residents would be eligible for the ID, regardless of immigration or housing status, criminal record or gender identification and would be accepted by all city departments. The card would also allow transgender individuals to select the marker of the gender with which they identify.

"Chicago is and has been a City that welcomes everyone, and an individual's background should never be a barrier to participating in the economic, social or cultural life of Chicago," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel in the statement. "With this program, we ensure that all Chicago residents have the identification they need to access vital services."

The program would be administered by City Clerk Anna Valencia and would cost about \$1 million. While the city would retain the names of individuals to whom the ID was issued, it would not retain their addresses. Washington, D.C., San Francisco and New York City are among the cities already offering municipal ID cards.

Many details, such as how prospective cardholders could prove their residency, have yet to be determined. Pending approval, the city would next take bids for administering the program, which is expected to be in place by the end of the year.

"At a time when many communities are experiencing setbacks or attacks on their rights, the Chicago Municipal ID program is an initiative where cities can lead by example in reducing barriers, increasing access to opportunities, and empowering residents," said Valencia. "Our City is

stronger when all communities are participating, and we will continue to explore partnerships that will enable all Chicagoans to take advantage of everything this city has to offer."

Would-be shooter pleads not guilty

Indiana resident James Wesley Howell—who told authorities he was headed to a West Hollywood gay-pride event last July, and was found with a loaded assault rifle and explosive chemicals—has pled not guilty to weapons charges, CBS News reported.

Howell was stopped in Santa Monica, California, with a loaded rifle with magazines as well as 15 pounds of chemicals.

He was arrested on the same day as the Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida, in which 49 people were killed.

Howell, 20, is also facing a child-molestation charge after he allegedly had sex with a 12-year-old girl in May 2016. If convicted on that charge, he could receive up to 16 years in prison.

The article is at CBSNews.com/news/james-wesley-howell-ar-15-rifle-gun-explosives-la-gay-pride-plea-not-guilty/.

Note: Results from the April 4 suburban elections are available at WindyCityTimes.com

Cepek memorial on May 12

A memorial for PFLAG activist John Cepek will be Friday, May 12, 4 p.m., UIC's East Side, Cardinal room, 750 S. Halsted St.

Cepek—an LGBT ally (through the group PFLAG, formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) who suffered a brain injury Feb. 27 while traveling in Croatia with his wife Char—died March 15 at age 69.

He was honored at PFLAG National's Straight for Equality Gala on March 27 in New York City. PFLAG National Executive Director Elizabeth Kohm announced the launch of the Cepek Ally Action Fund "to advance our work engaging allies, who are needed now more than ever." Kohm also urged attendees to tell each other "aloha" in honor of Cepek's fondness for Hawaiian shirts.

PFLAG National Director of Learning and Inclusion Jean-Marie Navetta added at the event, "PFLAG was able to take decades of experience supporting and educating families and expanding that work to allies. Helping people learn and become supportive is in PFLAG's DNA, and just needed that spark to get it started; as my colleague, friend and ally Elizabeth Kohm shared earlier, John Cepek had that spark of vision.

"John and his wife, Char, were at the first-ever Straight for Equality learning session that we ever offered. In fact, they even drove me there and sat in the audience, like the good PFLAG parents that they always were."

Previously attacked Wisconsin man fatally stabbed

Andrew G. Nesbitt was fatally stabbed in his Madison, Wisconsin, apartment. He was 46, according to Madison.com.

Darrick E. Anderson, 23, was arrested on a tentative charge of first-degree intentional homicide.

It turned out that Nesbitt, who was gay, was also brutally attacked outside a gay bar in Oshkosh in 2011—an event that spurred him to advocate for LGBT victims of hate crimes.

The 2011 attack left Nesbitt with several injuries, including swelling of the brain and multiple broken bones. Oshkosh residents Lyall Ziebell and Jake Immel-Rhode were convicted of aggravated battery in connection with a hate crime for the attack.

The Madison.com item is at http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/crime/five-years-before-he-was-killed-homicide-victim-suffered-horrific/article_bdb05532-1486-5092-a7a8-115ed81c7ab1.html.

Couple accused of assaulting teen boys

A married same-sex couple is accused of sexually assaulting three teen boys in their Prospect Heights, Illinois, home, WLS-TV reported.

Authorities claimed Christopher Wheeler, 30, and husband Anthony Wheeler, 25, enticed teenage boys to their house. When the boys got to their home, the couple allegedly showed them pornography and gave them alcohol before engaging in sexual activity.

The Wheelers are charged with several counts of criminal sexual assault and aggravated criminal sexual assault. Cash bonds were set at \$3 million for Anthony and \$4 million for Christopher.

The couple, who were arrested March 28, are in jail while they await trial.

The WLS-TV item is at <http://abc7chicago.com/news/prospect-heights-couple-charged-with-sexually-assaulting-teen-boys/1827245/>.

CHILD WELFARE from cover

which continue to fundamentally evolve and positively change the care transgender and gender non-conforming children receive.

At the time, Windy City Times spoke with then Gender & Sex Development Program team members and three families who were part of the clinic. Psychologist Marco Hidalgo, Ph.D. noted that a child's gender expression can be demonstrated as early as age 2. "I've heard a very young natal male say, 'I feel like I'm a girl' and some who have quite a bit more conviction and say, 'I am a little girl. I'm not who my parents think I am,'" he said.

Regardless of the age a child begins to express their gender identity, the immediate reaction of their parents runs the gamut: confusion, shock, self-blame, the hopes that it is just a phase but also, in increasing numbers, a desire for the understanding and knowledge needed to support, love and raise their child in an affirming home.

In one example, a Michigan family talked candidly to Windy City Times about their then 6-year-old daughter Elexa. The mother, Christie, said that she and her husband first noticed something different about Elexa when the child was between 16 and 18 months old. "We were paying attention to choices she was making," she said. "Loving pink, loving purple. Quickly that went into all things sparkly and dress-up clothes. Things like that. We just allowed her to be herself."

The open support of a transgender child often requires an inordinate amount of courage on the part of the parents. Despite all the documented physiological and psychological good they are doing their child through the affirmation of her/his/their gender identity, parents often receive push-back from conservative pundits and organizations, fellow community or church members, educators and even pediatricians based in hospitals, particularly faith-based institutions.

In many cases, such individuals demonstrate a woeful lack of knowledge about transgender lives or a religious and political bias which has been

severely exacerbated in the two years since right-wing politicians and advocacy groups turned bathrooms into a wedge issue.

For that reason and the desire for privacy, many parents are wary of talking to the media about their transgender child. Those who do often wish for the use of an alias and forbid photography of either themselves or, especially, their child.

Rather than looking for public approval via a national press that they simply do not trust not to sensationalize or exploit their child, parents instead seek mutual support from those in similar situations whether in private social media groups, through the national advocacy work of organizations such as PFLAG, or as part of group meet-ups hosted by programs like Lurie.

Some of the parents who are more public about their support for their child often do so in an advocacy role.

Mothers such as noted author Marsha Aizumi work tirelessly to improve the social and political perceptions of transgender children so that other families don't have to raise their children in hiding.

Writer, performer and activist Isabel Rose is the mom of two daughters, one of whom is transgender. She has taken her family to, and spoken at rallies, both in support of the LGBT community and as a parent activist.

After the Orlando Pulse Nightclub massacre of June 2016, Rose and her family went to the vigil outside the Stonewall Inn. She regularly travels to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of Congress.

In the course of her advocacy, Rose has worked with a number of transgender families often as part of the New York-based Family Equality Council which "supports, and represents the three million parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer in this country and their six million children."

Rose received national press attention in February 2017 after she published an open letter to Ivanka Trump in order to put a human face on transgender children. The letter described Rose's daughter Sadie.

"Our once-miserable son is now our thriving second grade daughter at one of New York City's top public schools," Rose wrote. "She wants to be a scientist and a doctor when she grows up so she can figure out how girls like her can become mothers using their own bodies. She takes piano lessons and likes to rock climb and go to museums, loves all the colors and shades of the rainbow, and her favorite flavor ice cream is mint chocolate chip."

The letter went viral.

"I received copious amounts of hate mail," Rose told Windy City Times. "So I made the decision not to hate back but to attempt to educate back. I took some of the most vicious responses and I used them as opportunities to turn around some misunderstandings."

Rose did so via a blog post on the website CafeMom in which she cited some the emails she had received.

One read "There's no way your son could have know (sic) he was transgender at the age of 8. Obviously either you, or your equally deranged husband, brainwashed the poor kid."

"Actually, our child knew there was an incongruity between the way he felt and the way he was being dressed long before he knew the words to explain himself," Rose responded on CafeMom. "As soon as he could gesture, he pointed to girl dolls, dresses, and mermaids. And once our child discovered language, he put together sentences like, 'I'm a girl kitty,' or 'I'm a girl bunny.' He was 3 years old."

Rose told Windy City Times that she was "blessed to live in New York City—an enormously diverse urban environment where there are a lot of universities and schools. So, people are more open minded here."

On the other hand, Rose conceded that "many parents in this community are afraid to go public" because of possible push-back from the communities in which they live.

In Cook County, a legal name change can be published in The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin or another publication such as Windy City Times. According to the New York State Unified Court

System, if a judge grants a name change request in that state, it must be "published as a notice in the newspaper chosen by the court."

Rose recalled that her daughter's name change was published in a "very obscure, rarely read journal. It was reassuring."

"I go to a group once a month of parents of transgender children who are often trying to find out from each other, 'What can we do to help our children?'" She added. "I said, 'This is how you go about changing your name.' All of them were willing to pay a lawyer fee rather than risk the exposure in a paper that would not be read by anyone. That's assuming the lawyer could find a way around that. But it was a sign to me that there is a lot of fear of exposure and repercussion."

Such repercussion has involved child protection agencies nationwide.

The fear of these agencies being used as a tool to remove transgender children by individuals who have objections to the open manner in which parents are raising them is significant.

Windy City Times reached out to parent's groups across the United States. Most trans parents would not even speak off-the-record about the basis of that fear.

The Land of Lincoln

In Illinois, the results were much the same in terms of requests for even a general discussion centered around the activities of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). One anonymous source defined the reason as "an absolute terror of retaliation by DCFS" and then promptly hung up.

Remarkably, even a number of trans advocacy agencies and institutions Windy City Times contacted refused to comment or would only release a brief statement concerning DCFS and transgender children—they may have feared for their own contracts or relationships with DCFS.

However, one such statement released by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois

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to Windy City Times provided some explanation as to the reluctance of individuals and groups to talk about the issue.

"It is important to recall that the possibility of the state removing a child from his or her parents' home without legal justification is terrifying," the ACLU wrote. "And while Illinois law should prevent state officials from removing children without a fair hearing, we are aware of instances where children or their parents may not actually get the due process that the law demands.

"For example, every parent and child has the right to be represented by an attorney in removal proceedings and to challenge DCFS' conclusions," they continued. "Parents, however, are sometimes not well represented in juvenile court. This can be due to attorneys' high caseloads, such as in Cook County where public defenders take on the representation, or because of poor compensation where private counsel are appointed. It is also true that some judges tend to be overly deferential to DCFS and they do not give due weight to the importance of the bond between a parent and their child."

DCFS follows a system of protocols when a call alleging child abuse or neglect is made to the Springfield hotline either by a member of the public or a mandated reporter. That system is extraordinarily complex and difficult for accused families to navigate or understand, particularly without legal representation.

A basic guide released by the Chicago-based Family Defense Center, which advocates "justice for families in the child welfare system," provides parents and other caregivers "general information about the child abuse and neglect system in Illinois" while advising of their rights throughout the process and offering steps for redress.

The guide states that a hotline caller's identity is "protected by a strict confidentiality law" and that callers are protected by "good faith" immunity.

"It is very hard to show that a call was motivated by bad faith," the guide states. "It is not impossible, but the person suing the Hotline caller has to show much more than that the call was not correct."

Once a call is made to the hotline, an operator decides whether the complaint "fits" within the Allegations of Harm as defined by DCFS rules and procedures. If DCFS decides that further action is warranted, a primary investigator is assigned who must attempt to see the child and interview the family within 24 hours of the call.

The investigator then conducts a Child Endangerment Risk Protocol (CERAP) which the Family Defense Center defines as "a list of potential 'safety threats'"

According to the organization, "If the investigator checks any box indicating the presence of a potential safety threat, the CERAP is marked 'unsafe' and the investigator and the supervisor must decide whether further actions are necessary, such as taking protective custody or implementing a 'safety plan.' DCFS policy currently provides that the mere presence of certain allegations automatically results in an 'unsafe' CERAP determination and requires either a safety plan or removal of the child from the

parents."

Records of the subsequent investigation are supposed to be filed within 48 hours although the Family Defense Center asserts that it "rarely sees files that consistently meet that standard."

Investigations must be concluded within 60 days.

The Family Defense Center suggests documentary evidence which those under investigation should submit to DCFS. They include "letters of support from individuals who know your family and parenting skills well."

Some transgender parent advocacy groups nationwide have advised that parents keep "a safe folder" in their home.

The reason for that was described by a member of the TransFamily Support Group of Santa Cruz County on the organization's website.

"I soon found out from parents all over the country, children have been taken away from parents who let them transition," the blogger Heidi wrote. "Some families reported that Child Protective Services (CPS) had been called to their home by 'concerned people' who reported them as abusive or negligent."

On the ChicagoNow website, a parent named Pamela stated that a safe folder should "include a letter from a pediatrician or medical professional, confirming your child's gender identity, a letter from a therapist that both confirms your child's gender identity and the stability of your family or home, and letters from any other health care professionals that can confirm your child's gender identity. You may also want to reach out to friends and family in your child's life, who are willing to write letters testifying to your child's atypical gender identity. Reach out to ministers or pastors that know your child and can support their gender identity, teachers, school administrators, coaches, etc."

Pediatricians and medical professionals are among the list of mandated reporters who are required under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) to contact DCFS when they "have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused or neglected child."

The list is expansive. It includes physicians, surgeons, residents, interns, dentists, chiropractors, Christian Science practitioners, teachers, child care workers, law enforcement and animal control officers.

A May 2015 Manual for Mandated Reporters issued by DCFS stated that the list had been broadened by ANCRA to include "licensed professional counselors in any office, clinic, or any other physical location that provides abortions, abortion referrals or contraceptives."

The Procedures tab of the DCFS website, Section 300 APPENDIX B contains a 140-page catalog of what it calls "narrowly defined" allegations which "identify and define moderate to severe harm, provide a framework for decision-making by SCR [State Central Register] and investigative staff."

Section 10 is defined as "substantial risk of physical injury"—an "allegation of harm is to be used when the type or extent of harm is undefined but the total circumstances lead a reasonable person to believe that the child is in substantial risk of physical injury."

Examples listed are divided into options A and B. Option A includes violent acts towards a child such as smothering, strangling, pushing or shoving.

Option B is classified as "Medical Child Abuse (Factitious Disorder by Proxy or Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome)" [FDBP] and it states that, "Medical Child Abuse is a form of child harm that is characterized by a parent/caregiver who intentionally and persistently lies, fakes, and/or produces illness in the child and repeatedly presents the child for medical assessment/treatment."

In a 2014 article for The Family Defender, Carly McGarr stated, "FDBP is a controversial diagnosis in the medical and child welfare worlds. There are physicians and researchers who doubt its existence, and blame the dramatic rise of FDBP on a medical system that is quick to blame parents, especially mothers, for children's symptoms that doctors cannot explain."



Halema Townsend Facebook post making fun of a trans person (WCT added black boxes).

A growing number of organizations across the United States maintain that FDBP is being used to justify what they call "medical kidnapping."

One highly publicized Illinois Option B case in 2014 involved a then 16-year-old Kansas City cisgender teenager named Isaiah Rider who was suffering from neurofibromatosis.

According to Fox News Kansas City, his mother Michelle "after years of trying to find treatment" took her son to "experts at Lurie Children's Hospital for surgery." Although successful, Michelle contended that Isiah "developed complications and the hospital could not control his pain."

Michelle asked Lurie staff to transfer her son to another hospital.

An article in the Chicago Tribune stated that DCFS then took custody of Isaiah following an April 15 call to the hotline from Lurie.

Staff had "accused [Michelle] of interfering in the boy's medical care, moving him from hospital to hospital across five states, disagreeing with doctors' advice and demanding a powerful sedative to relieve pain that reportedly diminished when she wasn't present."

Meanwhile, the Tribune noted that, "The former hospice nurse—who relatives, friends and her pastor say is a loving, devoted mother—insists that her every effort has been to ease her son's suffering so he can have a normal life."

While the Tribune cited experts who asserted that the allegations made against Michelle "are rare and hard to prove," DCFS insisted that they had enough "credible evidence."

On July 2, 2014, a DCFS judge ruled that Isaiah remain in protective custody. He spent the next five months at Lurie, telling FOX News Kansas City that, "They lied and said a lot of hurtful things about my mom."

Isaiah remained a ward of the state until June 8, 2016, when he was finally reunited with his mother. Supporters for the family maintained, "While we are happy, we are also reminded that this never should have happened. [W]e must not forget there has been a lot of suffering for this family, tremendous pain, torture, and lives significantly altered without real cause."

A case in Cook County

It was a cold March 7, 2017 morning when a group of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals arrived at the Cook County Juvenile Court in the Illinois Medical District. Organized by the Chicago-based Trans Liberation Collective, which seeks "the full liberation of trans people," they were there to support a 5-year-old transgender girl and her family at a hearing which would determine whether DCFS would take temporary custody of the child.

The hearing was presided over by Cook County Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Division Judge Robert Balanoff. The DCFS investigator assigned to the case was Halema Townsend. Also present was a team from the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and representatives from the Cook County of Illinois Public Guardian's Office.

The mother of the child was represented by a private attorney Rina Infelise of Davi Law Group, LLC.

With the mother was a small group of witnesses who knew the family personally and were prepared to testify on their behalf.

The girl had been a patient at Advocate Hope Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn before DCFS intervened following a call from hospital staff to the hotline. The circumstances seemed similar to those of the Rider case.

According to a March 4 Facebook post from a family friend, "The hospital took her because they couldn't make her well and her family wanted to change hospitals. The family had also filed several complaints against the hospital, as recently as days before the 'intervention.' After testing and proof she was in fact sick, they sunk their teeth into miscellaneous nonsense claims and the fact she identifies as female."

The friend further alleged that hospital staff were "refusing to use [the girl's] name or pronouns, more importantly they are breaking this bright shiny happy child. Their reasons for taking her have changed several times, the accusations ridiculous. For weeks, the hospital has lied and deceived, even claiming that [she] admitted to being a boy to DCFS and was 'happy, and doesn't miss you' to the parents."

After the Facebook post went viral, LGBTQ

Nation began a series of articles describing the case. The articles stated that the girl was suffering from epilepsy and type one diabetes. DCFS Deputy Director, Office of Communications Veronica Resa told LGBTQ Nation that the investigation was “unrelated to LGBTQ concerns.”

She told Windy City Times that it was a case of “medical abuse.”

The hearing did not begin until just before the court was to recess for lunch. Even though it was closed, Balanoff called all the family’s witnesses, alongside the demonstrators and Windy City Times, into the courtroom and instructed them to place their names on the record as well as to add a brief description as to their purpose at the hearing.

Balanoff then engaged in a speech during which he misgendered the child twice. Almost in unison, the trans demonstrators sharply corrected him.

Balanoff was taken aback.

“As a person who believes in public protest, I know how important that is,” he said. “I am aware of [the child’s] choices and I respect them.”

Balanoff then asked the family’s supporters and Windy City Times to think about refraining from publicizing the case.

“Please respect [the child’s] privacy,” he said. “Would you want everyone to know what happened to you as a child?” [Windy City Times is not using the child or their family’s names to protect their privacy.]

After lunch, the proceedings began. They lasted into the late afternoon and were continued twice over the course of the next week.

Before each hearing, Balanoff asked supporters to again put their names and purpose on the record before he made another speech from the bench. They were then instructed to leave.

At the hearing on March 10, Balanoff indicated to the supporters that their presence was welcome but unnecessary.

In fact, none of the family’s witnesses were called to testify at any of the hearings. They sat in the courtroom lobby wondering what was happening and offering words of comfort to the mother who would emerge during breaks with tears streaming down her face. She couldn’t tell any of them why she was crying; Balanoff had forbidden her from mentioning anything that was happening in the courtroom.

At one point on the first day, a family friend asked the mother about the investigation that had taken place before the hearing. “You still have the safe folder right?” she wondered. The mother nodded and replied, “The investigator wouldn’t look at it.”

An anonymous source unrelated to the family or their attorneys did tell Windy City Times what was happening inside the doors of Balanoff’s courtroom. This individual stated that they were well aware of the risks in doing so but felt compelled to talk because, “Justice was not being served.”

According to the source, Judge Balanoff, DCFS investigator Townsend, the State’s Attorney and the Cook County Guardian’s office consistently misgendered the child, referring to her throughout each of the three proceedings with male pronouns.

Townsend was one of the principal witnesses called. From the stand, she discussed issues that seemed less related to the child’s medical problems and more about her gender identity, including what color pull-ups the child wore and what sort of toys she was given to play with, as if a case was attempting to be made that the mother was forcing the child to present as a girl because of the FDBP diagnosis of which DCFS has accused the mother.

However, the source indicated that, at no time, was a safe folder brought up or any of the affirming items that Windy City Times suggested might probably have been in it. The source said that Balanoff praised Townsend’s work in open court in front of the accused family.

The source added that defense attorney Infilese raised multiple objections and was consistently overruled.

It is possible Balanoff was unaware of the existence of Townsend’s Facebook page. The public posts on her page were discovered by Windy City Times and captured by screenshots.

Townsend posted a meme on Feb. 8, 2016 which stated “Fuck work.” On Feb. 17, 2016, another meme: “How to be a grown up at work. Replace ‘fuck you’ with ‘OK Great.’”

On March 18, 2016, in a post about a case “that keeps you up all night,” Townsend commented to a friend, “I’m burnt out big sister.”

On March 7, 2016, Townsend posted a pornographic meme which featured a naked, well-built man with female genitalia. “I definitely know one,” she wrote, and added a series of laughter emojis.

One year later and Townsend was delivering testimony which would decide the immediate fate of a transgender girl in Balanoff’s courtroom.

The final day of the hearings was March 13, 2017. According to the anonymous source, Townsend arrived at Balanoff’s courtroom “with a pile of papers.” Before proceedings began, she approached the State’s Attorney, claiming to have more evidence implicating the mother.

“She looked like the cat who had swallowed the canary and told the S.A., ‘I’ve got everything you need right here baby,’ and then smiled at the mother,” the source said. “The S.A. replied, ‘I’m sure you do.’ When the mother’s counsel [Infilese] asked for copies, Halema told her that she had none left and walked away.”

Shortly before the end of the day, Balanoff ruled that the child remain in DCFS custody. She is presently in the care of one of DCFS’s outsourced agencies, although she has had to return to Advocate for treatment.

Since Infilese is bound by the confidentiality of the juvenile court system and attorney-client privilege, she declined to comment on the case. There is no way to tell whether Infilese ever did receive Townsend’s documents or the child’s medical records in compliance with Illinois Discovery provisions. It is also unknown how the testimony of an investigator who has publicly expressed transphobic sentiments was ever considered admissible or why she was assigned to the case at all.

A trial to determine the permanence of DCFS

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custody is supposed to be held in approximately 90 days. However, one individual who works within the DCFS system stated that period of time is not set in stone. It could be much longer due, in part, to the funding issues DCFS is experiencing, as well as questions surrounding the evidence they possess and the discriminatory beliefs of Advocate Hope staff pediatricians in the case.

One of those physicians received his medical school training at Catholic Health Partners. The Ohio-based organization now known as Mercy Health is guided by Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services as defined by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The fifth edition states that “within a pluralistic society, Catholic health care services will encounter requests for medical procedures contrary to the moral teachings of the Church. Catholic health care does not offend the rights of individual conscience by refusing to provide or permit medical procedures that are judged morally wrong by the teaching authority of the Church.”

One question that both this and the Rider case presents is how a group of pediatricians can determine a psychological diagnosis (albeit a contentious one) without a complete examination of the accused parents by a trained psychologist before they make a call to a child protective services hotline.

Meanwhile, LGBTQ Nation contends that the transgender girl in the case is “being forced to live as a male.” Windy City Times is seeking independent verification from the foster agency in which she has been placed.

A troubling trend

Another case in Illinois involving a transgender child removed by DCFS was discovered by Windy City Times. The parent in that case had initially agreed to talk about events that occurred to

them and their family. One day later, they suddenly declined. Indications are that they had received threats from sources unknown and were too frightened of DCFS retaliation to discuss it even off-the-record.

Rachel Ruttenberg is executive director of the Family Defense Center.

“We specialize in the front end of [the child welfare] system,” she told Windy City Times. “We advocate for parents, children and caregivers during investigations and, for the most part, through the administrative appeal process.”

She added that, since the Family Defense Center is independently funded and not by state or federal money, it allows them to “not only take individual cases in Illinois but also try to impact the child welfare system through impact litigation like class action, civil-rights lawsuits and also some policy advocacy.”

According to Ruttenberg, in the 11 years since the organization was founded, they have been able to “impact tens of thousands of Illinois individuals.”

Among the lawsuits listed on the Family Defense Center website is the 1997 Dupuy v. Samuels case, which challenged “several core aspects of child protection investigation as violating the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of due process of law.”

How is an agency that is designed to protect permitted to operate with such a disregard for the rule of law or rights guaranteed by the Constitution including the Fourteenth and Sixth Amendments?

“Unfortunately, what I don’t think the public understands is that the vast majority of investigations that DCFS does are around child neglect which can often be defined in a very vague way,” Ruttenberg explained. “In determining that certain adult parent caregivers are guilty of child neglect, DCFS officials often use personal judgment which, sometimes, can also include bias and other types of information to inform their decision making.”

“The child welfare system is in desperate need of reform. We believe that to our core,”

she added. “Families need support and services but processes can get a little out of hand. Lots of families can be unnecessarily swept into the system. There’s a range of issues [in] how they’re treated in DCFS. We always want to make sure that people’s Constitutional rights are being upheld, that decisions are not being made with discrimination as part of that process and that children are given the opportunity to remain with their parents or family caregivers whenever it is safe and possible for them to do so.”

The ACLU of Illinois added that it “believes the problems families encounter in juvenile courts are much more often due to the lack of resources for legal representation or prevailing attitudes about nontraditional families and families that affirm their transgender children rather than with the legal process for removing children from their homes and placing them in state care.”

“Another organization that has been looking into child welfare agencies removing transgender children is the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).”

A statement released to Windy City Times read that NCLR “has been involved in and heard of cases where a child protective services agency has been called to investigate whether a parent is alleged to be harming their child by either allowing the child to explore their gender or affirming their transgender child for who they are.”

“In addition to working on specific cases, NCLR has also done outreach and public education on this issue to parents, healthcare providers, child welfare professionals, attorneys, and judges across the United States,” the statement continued. “Through those efforts, we have been able to educate people about the importance of accepting and affirming a transgender child and help participants better understand the complex social environments transgender children navigate.”

Ruttenberg noted that, “This is a system that is completely overrun and underfunded. We have no state budget. People are calling the hotline for all sorts of situations. People who are working within that system are overworked and don’t have the necessary training and resources to parse out what needs to happen to help a family. It’s also a system driven very much by fear of a child slipping through the cracks. We don’t want to that happen but that means you are sweeping in lots of families and children who have no business being a part of that system in the first place.”

As far as DCFS hiring investigators who demonstrate an unequivocal bias against marginalized groups of people, Ruttenberg asserted that, “We see lots of folks coming from DCFS who are not equipped to handle their responsibilities. Parents, caregivers and families are the losers in that scenario. It’s just awful. You would expect that DCFS officials would have all the training and resources needed to get their job done because their job is so important. In our litigation, we see the same names popping up over and over again and my educated guess is that there’s something wrong with how DCFS operates in terms of bringing staff on board, training and retaining them.”

Before the discovery of Townsend’s Facebook

posts or the hearing information provided by the anonymous source, Windy City Times engaged Illinois DCFS in a conference call regarding the agency’s trans sensitivity and training.

During the call, DCFS consulting psychologist Dr. Claudia Mosier told Windy City Times, “My first emotional comment is, ‘Oh hell no, we’re not going to use DCFS to harm rainbow kids/LGBTQ families. Hell no!’ We’ve worked hard in DCFS for years to have solid LGBTQ policies, to protect LGBTQ youth. The idea of using us [whose] job is to protect all kids but, in my heart particularly, our rainbow youth, as a weapon to harm them and to harm LGBTQ families is absolutely horrifying to me.”

DCFS Statewide LGBTQ Coordinator Jane Kelly LCSW told Windy City Times that she works with transgender kids in the DCFS system to make sure their identities are respected at all levels. While Windy City Times did not observe Kelly attending any of the hearings, it is seeking verification as to whether or not she is working with the child and family in the case presently under DCFS investigation.

“We are fortunate in Illinois,” Mosier asserted. “Besides the support we have from the director of DCFS [George H. Sheldon], the rainbow committee that we have here, besides LGBTQ services, we have strong legislation here in Illinois.”

The national office of Lambda Legal told Windy City Times that “existing law protects LGBTQ youth and parents from discrimination in the context of child welfare services.”

DCFS detailed the transgender sensitivity training they do have in place, which they indicated reaches all levels of the organization, including social workers and their outsourced agencies.

Illinois DCFS training will be examined in Part Two of the Windy City Times investigation as well as a case that occurred in Los Angeles County in which the mother of a transgender child was investigated twice by DCFS. LA County DCFS also responded to questions about transgender children and their parents as well as the training and transgender sensitivity in which the agency says it engages. Leading psychologists also weigh on the physiological and psychological benefits of a transgender child raised in an affirming home and the consequences to that child if he/she/they are removed and placed in a non-affirming situation.

Lurie Children’s Hospital declined to be interviewed and declined comment for this story.

At time of publishing, the Cook County Guardian’s Office had offered no comment for this story.

— Family Defense Center, visit: familydefensecenter.net.

— For the Family Defense Center Guide for Illinois Parents and Other Caregivers on Understanding and Responding to DCFS Abuse and Neglect Investigations in Illinois, visit: familydefensecenter.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Responding-to-Investigations-Manual-FINAL.pdf.

— ACLU of Illinois, visit aclu-il.org.

— National Center for Lesbian Rights, visit: nclrights.org.

— Family Equality Council, visit: familyequality.org

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Activist Litwok speaks at LGBTQ criminal justice roundtable

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Activist Evie Litwok was the featured speaker at an LGBTQ criminal justice policy roundtable event March 31 at Chicago law firm Hinshaw & Culbertson.

Litwok is a formerly incarcerated, Jewish lesbian feminist and founder and director of Witness to Mass Incarceration. She is currently on probation.

Witness to Mass Incarceration is a digital library of interviews with formerly incarcerated LGBTQ people. The interviews document their stories and experiences during incarceration and the challenges they face upon re-entry into society.

Mike Ziri (director of public policy at Equality Illinois) and Alexis Paige (paralegal at Lambda Legal) welcomed the attendees and spoke about the work their organizations are doing around LGBTQ criminal justice issues.

Naomi Goldberg (policy and research director at the Movement Advancement Project—MAP) introduced Litwok and noted the “Unjust: How the broken criminal justice system fails LGBT people” report that was provided to the attendees.

Litwok explained that her parents were Holocaust survivors and for her family the Holocaust did not end in 1945. She noted that her parents spoke around the country for 20 years to high school and college students about their experiences. Litwok said that, like what Steven Spielberg’s USC Shoah Foundation is doing to document Holocaust survivors stories, it is vital for everyone’s stories to be told so they cannot be erased from history.

“Where there is no information, there will be no history,” said Litwok. “Witness is my way of memorializing mass incarceration, specifically of LGBTQ people.”

After interviewing many people for her Witness to Mass Incarceration project, Litwok surmised that they should never have been incarcerated in the first place.

Litwok noted that despite the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, almost no prison is enforcing this law nationwide. She explained that she has been in two federal prisons and in one of them, Tallahassee FCI, 20 out of the 21 male officers sexually harassed and abused four to six women prisoners a day. Litwok said the officers use intimidation tactics on women prisoners to get sexual favors out of them and no one in prison has an easy time of it because of unwarranted abuse by prison officials.

There are currently 20 million people who have lost their freedom whether they are in prison or jail, in detention centers, on supervised release or are awaiting trial and cannot afford to pay bail, said Litwok.

“The whole system needs to be overhauled, otherwise it will get worse, especially in the age

of Trump,” said Litwok.

In terms of re-entry issues, Litwok explained that she left prison in a physically, emotionally and mentally damaged state and it hasn’t gone away.

“I have no peace or serenity,” said Litwok. “I will never be the same person I was before prison for the rest of my life. I was homeless for 16 months and for the past two and a half years I have been unable to get a job because of my age and felony conviction.”

Litwok called on LGBTQ folks to put their money where their mouth is and pledge to hire one formerly incarcerated LGBTQ person like herself so they can house and feed themselves upon re-entry.

In speaking about her sentencing hearing, Litwok said her mom (who required 24-hour care) told the judge she could would die without her daughter’s help. Litwok noted that after the judge heard her mom’s statement he called her a monster that hurt hundreds of people. She said prosecutors win cases, not on the issues, but through character assassination of defendants. Litwok explained that, when she went to trial, she was innocent, but lost because a prosecutor engaged in character assassination against her.

Litwok noted that each prisoner is strip searched within hours of arriving at prison.

“It is devastating and humiliating to have to be checked for paraphernalia in your private parts,” said Litwok. “You immediately withdraw into yourself to survive.”

She said prison, and especially solitary confinement, makes one have life-long triggers about any noise or law enforcement official, which is why she has a service dog named Ali to help her with her panic attacks.

“Once I came out as a lesbian to the guards they put me on landscaping and snow shoveling duty to torture me,” said Litwok.

Litwok explained that she did not sleep at all in prison. She said that although there are physician assistants in the prison, proper medical care does not exist.

When Litwok accused the medical staff of causing the death of another woman prisoner on a blog (via email) she said she was shackled and put in solitary confinement for the remaining 30 days of her sentence and more. She spent an additional 12 days in prison for posting that information.

“Solitary confinement is unimaginable,” said Litwok. “There is no way to recover from that. ... It was such a horrific experience I did not care if I came out of solitary or not.”

Litwok explained that the only way things will change is if people speak out about mass incarceration the way they did during the recent town halls concerning the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.



Jason Santos, Alexis Paige, Evie Litwok (with her service dog Ali), Naomi Goldberg and Mike Ziri. Photo by Carrie Maxwell

Following Litwok’s remarks, representatives from the Illinois Attorney General’s office, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Legal Council for Health Justice, ACLU of Illinois, National Network for Safe Communities, Trans Life Care Program at Chicago House, Transformative Justice Law Project, Black and Pink, Pride Action Tank, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University, Center on Halsted, ALMA and Elaine Soloway (activist, writing coach, tech tutor and Transparent creator Jill Soloway’s

mom) spoke about the work they are doing and why they think it’s important to address LGBTQ criminal justice issues.

Litwok called on attendees to spread the word about her project so it gets more funding.

Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP hosted the event, with Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal and MAP co-sponsoring it.

See <http://witnessstomassincarceration.org/> for more information and/or to make a donation.



Bending Genders

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Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.



LOVE

WHAT'S
INSIDE



(des-KOH-vee)

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DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **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.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY or a similar medicine for a long time.

ABOUT DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older. DESCOVY is **not** for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY

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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 can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “Most Important Information About DESCOVY” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- 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.

BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

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.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- 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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Crossroads Fund presents annual benefit

BY VERNON HESTER

On March 31, The Crossroads Fund presented Seeds of Change, an annual benefit at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Crossroads is a public foundation that has provided resources for groups working on racial, humanitarian, social and economic justice in the Chicago area for more than 35 years. The organization recognized two organizations and one individual for activism in the areas of immigration, education, and community organization. The evening also included a silent auction, live music, dancing, a dinner buffet, a DJ and the awards presentation.

The Ron Sable Award for Activism was presented to Mariame Kaba and Project NIA for creating multiracial coalitions, building movements through research and creating innovative models for youth organizing.

The Lynda J. Tipton Memorial Award for Social Justice went to Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD), which has led campaigns to fight for families facing separation through immigration raids, detention and deportation. OCAD also was cited for forming bonds with the Movement for Black Lives to educate communities about the intersections of incarceration and immigrant justice. The Donald F. Erickson Synaps-

es Award was given to the Arab American Action Network (AAAN), which has developed strategies and tools to empower the Arab American community, using research and data analysis, speakers' bureaus, family literacy, know-your-rights education and direct action.

The evening got off to a leisurely start as long term friends greeted one another, viewed and bid on auction prizes, and enjoyed the open bar and buffet while The Chicago Academy for the Arts Jazz Combo entertained. With guests far outnumbering chairs, many in attendance good-naturedly chose to sit on the floor to eat.

Emmanuel Garcia, communications and development associate at The Crossroads Fund, started the awards presentation by welcoming the guests and introducing co-chairs Sue Eleuterio and Gary Arnold. In turn, Arnold introduced Crossroads Fund Executive Director Jeanne Kracher, who asked the SRO crowd, "How many of you predicted that Donald Trump would become president of the United States?" Kracher then restated the importance of The Crossroads Fund and why it is imperative that the activism that it sponsors continues to grow.

Program Director Jane Kimondo (in her lead in for the first recipient) spoke about the late and out Dr. Ron Sable, who helped low-income people in the areas of reproductive rights, treatment of prisoners, national healthcare and served as one of Crossroads' founders. Kaba—who spent 20 years doing activist work in Chicago and is now no longer a resident—shyly thanked her very vo-

cal well-wishers for their longtime support.

Both OCAD and AAAN were represented by people from the organizations ranging in age from grandparents to pre-adolescents.

Hatem Abudyyeh, in speaking on behalf of AAAN, delivered a speech tinged with emotion. His organization has supported community members who had to endure the special registry after 9/11, over-surveillance and intense harassment on a daily basis, and sparked the crucial call to action to converge at O'Hare International Airport in protest against the executive order issued by President Trump that affected seven Muslim majority countries. Abudyyeh spoke about longtime AAAN member Rasmae Odeh, who, after fighting an immigration battle for three years, has elected to leave the country because she felt she was unlikely to get a fair trial under the current administration. With this being her last public appearance, many were visibly shaken at her words.



From left: Crossroads Fund Executive Director Jeanne Kracher; Ron Sable Award recipient Mariame Kaba.

Photos by Vernon Hester



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Emmett Till work raises concerns of appropriation

When artist Dana Schutz presented “Open Casket”—an abstract painting of the open casket of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old African-American from Chicago who was lynched in the Mississippi Delta in the summer of 1955—she could not have fathomed the conflagration that erupted.

The painting hangs at the Whitney Museum in New York City but under the daily watchful eye of protestors blocking its view they termed the “Black death spectacle.” Some protestors sent letters of grievances to the museum curators requesting the painting be taken down and others have flatly demanded the destruction of it.

Because Schutz is white, queries abound about cultural appropriation and exploitation, asking whether a white artist can sensitively and appropriately depict Black pain.

The Whitney Biennial aims “to gauge the state of art in America today.” Schutz’s abstraction was inspired by the infamous photograph of Till’s mutilated corpse. The photo first appeared in *Jet* Magazine, that galvanized support for the 1960s civil-rights movement, at the insistence of Till’s mother, Mamie Till Bradley, who wanted the world to see the reality of racial violence on Black children.

In an interview, Schutz shared that the genesis for her painting was the reminder of the recent rash

of unarmed Black males shot by police across the country, and that “the photograph of Emmett Till felt analogous of the time—what was hidden was not revealed.” Schutz shared that, as a mother, she also empathized with Mamie Till Bradley.

While Schutz, and many white mothers like her, no doubt perhaps had their moments “empathizing with Black mothers”—realizing that Travon Martin, Tamir Rice and Michael Brown, to name a few, are their children’s age—none of their children, however, reside in the daily reality of the possibility of not returning to them or being gunned down because of the color of their skin, and then gazed upon like “road kill” (as was the case for Brown).

“Being a mother doesn’t hold water,” Corinne Cooper, a white woman from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, told me. “Schutz may carry a concern for her children’s safety, but has she had ‘the talk’ about what to do if stopped by a police officer?”

“The talk” is a heartbreaking one that is needed for our children’s survival outside the home. Sadly, it robs them their life—like it did 12-year old Tamir Rice. And, undoubtedly, it does psychic and emotional harm to their self-esteem and sense of innocence and fairness in the world.

Because Schutz is a mother who feels pangs of angst and outrage about how Black youth are presently policed in this country, she also feels her expressed empathy—both verbal and artistic—represents all mothers, ignoring how such a claim both essentializes and erases the particular pain, history and context of the source of Black mothers’ pain.

For example, there’s the film sensation and best-seller *The Help*, by Kathryn Stockett, the white protagonist who helps Black maids—because of the love she had for her own—to expose racism in 1960s Mississippi, as if a civil-rights movement isn’t already afoot. Schutz and Stockett, with all their good intentions, reinscribe the trope of the

“white rescuer,” suggesting they know how best to represent and tell Black people’s pain and history.

Some critics have suggested that Schutz should have done what many artists do concerning their artwork: Let viewers arrive at their own interpretations. I’m glad Schutz didn’t, because such an approach doesn’t resolve the issue of whether white artists have a right to tackle thorny issues concerning race. I feel white artists should do so more often than not, highlighting it’s an American problem and not the province of only racial groups.

Painter Norman Rockwell, for example, depicted a horrific moment of our racial past with his famous 1964 painting “The Problem We All Live With,” with Ruby Bridges, a 6-year-old African-American girl, escorted by deputy U.S. marshals during New Orleans 1960 desegregation crisis. The painting invites the viewer’s point of view because protestors are not visible as you see the smashed and splattered wall behind Bridges—a wall with the N-word and “KKK.”

Cambridge academician and artist Estelle Disch, who’s white, doesn’t shy away from racial issues and offered her advice:

“If white artists are going to deal with race, we need to be ready to take the heat and be accountable if we offend people, and then be ready to make things as right as possible, Disch told me. “In the Whitney case, the artist could do the right thing and ask that her piece be removed. An empty space on the wall would make a statement in itself. And she could post an acknowledgement and apology where the painting was.”

Schutz refusing to acknowledge that “Open Casket” aestheticizes Black pain and suffering not only cultural appropriates a tragedy, but she violently dehumanizes Emmett Till, too—which is what his mother wanted the world to see.

Letters to the editor

Stand up and be counted

Dear U.S. Census Bureau Director
John Thompson and Office of Management
and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney:

We write to express our strong disapproval of the Census Bureau’s decision to not include consideration of data collection on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals in the 2020 Census and American Community Survey. While the Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) report released March 28 appears to have initially considered including sexual orientation and gender identity as a proposed subject, we are concerned that the finalized report does not include any reference to proposed inclusion of LGBT identities in the Census or ACS. Additionally, we are deeply troubled that in follow-up statements, Director Thompson claims that the rationale for excluding LGBT identities is that there is no federal need for such information.

As you know, the Bureau routinely collects de-

mographic information through the decennial census and the annual ACS. The federal government, states, and local communities rely on Census and ACS data to determine how resources should be allocated to meet the needs of certain populations. Despite this critical mission, neither of these assessments, nor any other major federal population survey, currently asks respondents to share their sexual orientation and gender identity. This means that even the most basic of statistics—the number of people who identify as LGBT—cannot be counted.

A number of pieces of federal legislation passed by Congress, implicitly or explicitly, include protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Countless programs implemented under these, and other laws, serve LGBT people; some to a distinctly disproportionate extent. There is no doubt that there is both a statutory benefit and a programmatic need to collect sexual orientation and gender identity data if we want federal agencies to undertake their work in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Despite tremendous progress in the fight to secure equal recognition under the law, LGBT Americans continue to face discrimination in facets of

everyday life such as in employment, housing and even in the justice system. There is also compelling evidence that many, particularly transgender people, are at greater risk of being victimized by violence and experience significant health disparities and vulnerability to poverty. While the Census Bureau took an important step forward in 2013 by including the marital status of same-sex couples as part of ACS data on families, the fact remains that we know little else about the social and economic circumstances of the LGBT population at large.

Expanded data collection on LGBT people is needed to help policymakers and community stakeholders understand the full extent of these disparities, as well as identifying the needs of these communities so they can be better served. It is also crucial to our ability to respond with effective and sensible policy solutions that address the unique needs of this vulnerable population. For these reasons, we believe that the Census Bureau should advance plans to expand LGBT data collection in future national surveys and urge you to assist us in reaching this goal.

In your recent statement, you said that the Cen-

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PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Tracy Baim

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER Terri Klinsky
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NATIONAL SALES Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863
SENIOR WRITERS Bob Roehr, Tony Peregrin, Lisa Keen, Yasmin Nair
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(773) 871-7610 FAX (773) 871-7609
e-mail: editor@windycitymediagroup.com or
Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com

www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com
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Made in 'America'

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WCT reviews the production *In To America*.

Photo of Scott Shimizu and Jennifer Cheung by Michael Brosilow

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Unbuttoning 'Love and Sex'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Director Marti Lyons and actor Travis Turner are both cagey about revealing too much about *The Mystery of Love and Sex*. The 2015 drama, by lesbian playwright Bathsheba Doran (*Masters of Sex*; *Boardwalk Empire*), is now making its Chicago-area premiere at Writers Theatre in Glencoe.

"One of the keys of the play is to not give too much away, despite the fact that there are some core central issues about identity and sexual identity," said Lyons, who is making her Writers Theatre directing debut. "It unfolds almost like a mystery with a structure like a detective story in that you don't necessarily know where the play is going."

Yet one obvious clue about what is in *The Mystery of Love and Sex* is revealed with Writers Theatre's very fleshy advertising art. Audiences are unquestionably teased about the provocatively titled play since two of its stars, Turner and Hayley Burgess, are nearly nude.

"That poster is something else," said Turner with a laugh, adding that the photo session was as far back as last summer. "Hayley and I had an early bonding experience shooting that."

Lyons said the revealing poster art was not her idea. Yet she concedes that it does strongly hint at what will go on in the play in terms of onstage nudity.

"The revealing of one's self, obviously there's a literal component to that in our play," Lyons said. "But it also serves as a metaphor for the bearing of one's soul to the one that you love. And the vulnerability of taking the risk for being loved for who you really are and all that entails and the

vulnerability of being in that naked state."

For Turner, the poster art evokes biblical ideas of Adam and Eve and original sin in exploring the fraught friendships between his character of Jonny and Burgess as the play's heroine, Charlotte.

"[The nudity is] not a huge spoiler because when you come to see the play, there's going to be signs posted in the lobby about the show containing nudity," Turner said.

Turner recently left Windy City Playhouse's ongoing production of Robert O'Hara's often confrontational comedy *Bootycandy*, which also had lobby warning signs about onstage nudity, among other things.

Turner was grateful to both Writers Theatre and the Windy City Playhouse for being so very accommodating to him as he juggled rehearsals in Glencoe with his final *Bootycandy* performances in Chicago (actor Edward Mawere has assumed Turner's role of Sutter in *Bootycandy* through April 15). This is also Turner's first time working with Lyons, and he has loved her very detailed approach to the material.

"We spent three or four days at the table just reading the play and really reading the play together," Turner said. "It was some deep, deep textual analysis, which is such a luxury that you don't always get."

Also in the mix for *The Mystery of Love and Sex* are parental figures. Lia Mortensen and Keith Kupferer respectively play Charlotte's parents Lucinda and Howard (roles originally played off-Broadway by stars Diane Lane and Tony Shalhoub), while Jerry Miller plays Howard's father.

"Part of the journey of the piece is that they all make discoveries about themselves and each

other," Lyons said. "One of the core questions of the play revolves around, 'What does it mean to own one's identity within a family unit, and can they love each other not just for who they believe who they are and who they are supposed to be?'"

Lyons is also very keen on the fact that in *The Mystery of Love and Sex*, playwright Doran questions the usual "heteronormative type of relationships" that are in the majority of most dramas dealing with love and romance.

"What we have at the core of our play is actually a profound friendship," Lyons said. "The course of the play is figuring out how this friendship can survive all the twists and turns of life."

"These characters who begin as college kids are certainly questioning everything about themselves. And race and sexuality all have roles in that," Turner said. "All of that is in the mix."

"I do think that the conflict in the play, both internal and external, come from the wrestling with identities," Lyons said. "Charlotte and Jonny have a lot to come to terms with before they can accept themselves and be accepted by their families wholly for who they are."

The *Mystery of Love and Sex* continues through Sunday, July 2, at Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe. Tickets are \$35-\$80; call 847-242-6000 or visit WritersTheatre.org.



Hayley Burgess and Travis Turner in *The Mystery of Love and Sex*.

Photo illustration by Saverio Truglia

THEATER REVIEW

Born Yesterday

Playwright: Garson Kanin

At: Remy Bumpo Theatre Company at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: \$42.50-\$52.50

Runs through: April 30

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Since its premiere in 1946, Garson Kanin's satirical comedy has been largely reduced to a retread of the Pygmalion myth, in which learned men endeavor to educate ignorant women, only to meet with unanticipated results. With present events precipitating renewed interest in cultural divisions refuting our society's claim to interclass fluidity, however, the ramifications of this deceptively frivolous North American classic take the foreground.

Initiating the dramatic action is industrial tycoon Harry Brock, whose stockpiles of Depression-era scrap metal provided the munitions ensuring our victory in the recently concluded war,



Eliza Stoughton and Shawn Douglass in *Born Yesterday*. Photo by Johnny Knight

and who has now brought his money to Washington with the intent of persuading a few senators to support laws favoring his interests. He is accompanied by his decorative girl friend, Billie Dawn, whose droll manners clash with the appearance of respectability needed to accomplish his goals, so Harry's solution is to hire his consort a tutor—Paul Varrell, a crusading reporter for *The New Republic*. The dweebish journalist's unswerving moral compass gradually introduces Billie to

ideologies at the foundation of our government, leading her to become suspicious of her protector's disreputable business practices.

A cursory look at our nation's history will attest to praiseworthy dynasties often arising from dubious origins, but the course of this Remy Bumpo production differs from tradition in that it does not fault Harry and Billie for their plebian birth, nor for their less-than-honorable means of escaping the deprivations engendered thereby,

from early French, English and Scottish colonists, to the forced immigration of slaves and indentured servants, to Eastern Europeans at the turn of the last century, to today's Asian and African refugees.

Playwright William Massolia's documentary approach provides several unusual perspectives, such as treating the 20th-century "Great Migration" of Blacks from the South to the North as an immigrant class, and noting Mexican immigration to California long before it was a United States territory. Ms. Liberty and Ellis Island are there, of course, but so is Angel Island, the West Coast gateway for Asian immigrants.

Above all, Massolia highlights repetitive patterns in our immigration history, from the persecutions which drove many to this country, to the high aspirations which continue to inspire newcomers, to darker patterns of ignorance and in-

tolerance from those who arrived earlier towards later arrivals of different nationalities, religions or races. America has welcomed millions to our Golden Shore, but nonetheless always has had prejudicial laws, sometimes targeting Chinese or Japanese, sometimes Jews or Muslims. It's the same, to this very hour.

In To America is intelligent, revealing and sometimes biting. It's not a play, however, in the sense of continuing characters and ongoing action. Its 400-year chronology is the only arc. Think of it as a spoken word concert presentation. Indeed, the addition of appropriate live music might turn it into a legitimate concert piece. The work has occasional humor but is generally solemn. Surprisingly, *In To America* largely ignores the immigration of Eastern European Jews between the 1870s and 1920s—a significant omission. Labor leader Samuel Gompers, founder of the Ameri-

can Federation of Labor, is cited without being identified as an immigrant or a Jew (and he was both). It's sadly ironic that his voice is one of bigotry, quoted in support of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

The production is seamlessly staged by Dorothy Milne, vastly experienced in stage adaptations of non-dramatic literature. Her multicultural cast of 13, all playing multiple roles, flows smoothly between pools of light (Lee Fiskness) or a simple, open setting (Joe Schermoly). They wear costumes (Rachel Sypniewski) with a homespun look evoking many times and places with no need for absolute specificity. Milne, Fiskness, Schermoly, Sypniewski, 13 actors, playwright Massolia, critic Abarbanel—*In To America* is our story.

THEATER REVIEW

In to America

Playwright: William Massolia

At: Griffin Theatre at The Den, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Tickets: 866-811-4111;

GriffinTheatre.com; \$36

Runs through: April 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

A large ensemble cast in an intimate space presents the United States' history, from the Jamestown settlement until today, as told through the words of America's immigrants—which is all of us who aren't Native American. A few famous folk appear but most are ordinary men and women

edy. (Think Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca.) Our story begins circa 1955, Marion's name recognition and vaudeville experience having successfully adapted to the new small-screen medium of network television, where she now hosts her own variety show. One day, a dancer in the chorus catches her attention—the young country-bred Harriet Houlihan, whose ingratiating overtures soon garner her the mentorship of the show's headliner. As the women's friendship grows, their marketability becomes increasingly dependent on the professional "chemistry" engendered thereby. When the studio bosses propose a plan to put them in competition with one another, each must decide how far she will do to guard her own career.

This kind of emotionally intense material is not easy to play, the slightest misstep risking the narrative's plunge into Charles Busch-style camp—fun, but hardly original. Under Wm. Bullion's direction, though, the characters retain their dignity, never tipping the wink to sportive playgoers prepared to guffaw at the slightest

invitation. This doesn't mean that Barra's text is devoid of humor, chiefly arising from the on-air advertisements touting now-unpopular tobacco, pharmaceutical and household products (along with an anachronistic pitch for a feminine hygiene device unmentionable on real-life television until 1972), nor does it shrink from depictions of outrageous behavior drawing audience disapproval inspired, not by alleged gender-linked duplicity, but by the flagrant sexism exhibited by the industry's uniformly white, old and male executives.

Jon Steinhagen's songs, Andria Emerick Brown's dances and Kate Setzer Kamphausen's quasi-Dior gowns re-create period ambience with museum accuracy, as do the onscreen acting styles of Eleanor Katz and Clara Byczkowski in the roles of the doomed heroines. Even if Mad Men-era estrogen and intrigue are not your cup of colortinis, you can always enjoy Factory's nostalgic portrayal of video entertainment's early years.

CRITICS' PICKS

A Disappearing Number, TimeLine Theatre, through April 9. It's the final days for this play about the most influential person you don't know, Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887-1920). The play is intelligent if not quite fulfilling, but the production is beautifully rendered. JA

Destiny of Desire, Goodman Theatre, through April 16. The sentimental yarns of Charles Dickens were integral in bringing reforms to his society, and so the melodramatic telenovela's claim to being a force capable of changing their world isn't so far-fetched as it may seem. MSB

The Kid Thing, Nothing Without a Company at Berger Park Cultural Center, through April 15. Marvel at all the powerful, up-close performances in director Jake Freund's very intimate revival of Sarah Gubbins' 2011 lesbian drama of mismatched biological clocks. SCM

The Scullery Maid, Idle Muse Theatre Company at the Edge, through April 9. Joseph Zettelmaier's tale of royal intrigue and upstart rebellion pays homage to those brainy historical dramas that the English do so well, while exploring how suicide-seeking assassins are created. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Born Ready

Playwright: Stacie Barra

At: Factory Theater, 1623 W. Howard St.

Tickets: \$25; TheFactoryTheater.com

Runs through: April 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

All About Eve and Sunset Boulevard are as celebrated for their manneristic melodrama as for their iconic status in the annals of Hollywood cinema. Factory Theater playwright Stacie Barra's wry parody of the two seminal films reaches beyond simple ridicule, however, instead reflecting a genre not only enjoyable in its own right, but departing from traditional ageist bias to grant the final victory to the proven survivor.

Our protagonist is Marion Kroft, a showbiz veteran through and through, having launched her career as a child actor, and later, as the smartcracking female partner in cabaret com-



Francis Guinan
and Penny Slusher in
By the Water.
Photo by
Michael Brosilow

THEATER REVIEW

By the Water

Playwright: Sharyn Rothstein

At: Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd.

Tickets: 847-673-6300 or

Northlight.org; \$30-\$81

Runs through: Apr. 23

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

There's a haunting realization at the core of Sharyn Rothstein's *By the Water*, now playing at Northlight Theatre: Not even a Category 1 hurricane can devastate like unchecked pride.

Director Cody Estle serves up a beautiful, modern-day tribute to America's favorite dead salesman, Willy Loman, and asks if all the attention paid to the white, working class shmoe in the 70-year interim has really done him any good.

In *By the Water*, we are greeted with the wreckage of a living room blown apart in the devastating wake of 2012's hurricane Sandy. Marty and Mary Murphy (Francis Guinan and Penny Slusher) try to rebuild their home and rally their neighbors to return to their homes, too. But Marty's obsession with everyone staying their ground becomes so unwavering and irrational that everyone he loves gets painted as an enemy.

Marty labels his neighbors Andrea and Phil (Janet Ulrich Brooks and Patrick Clear), his sons Sal and Brian (Jordan Brown and Joel Reitsma),

and anyone who questions his rebuilding efforts a traitor. But those with the most bluster often have the most to hide.

As Marty and Mary Murphy, Francis Guinan and Penny Slusher create an instantly recognizable long-married couple. They're adept at making the couple at home in their internal conflicts. Slusher's Mary is both shrewd enough to dig her husband out of debt and secure new housing, but sweet enough to do it all in secret to avoid bruising his ego. And Francis Guinan paces his home like a cornered animal as Marty, knowing that an end to his comfort is fast approaching and terrified in the face of it.

Joel Reitsma and Amanda Drinkall return to old habits as Brian and Emily, both licking wounds from their own private destructions. Despite the impulse they have to distrust each other, they are open. Despite the landscape of destruction, they occupy, they may have found a seed of hope.

Only one thing has become hard to stomach (and it's hard to fault *By the Water* for it), but thanks to modern politics, any sympathy that may have been reserved for Marty Murphy, who cheats his loved ones to avoid the hard consequences he knows he'll face, is depleted. Sal remarks coldly to his father that "You couldn't ask for help, you had to take it," and with that, I wanted an outcome beyond easy forgiveness and unearned comfort for him. That said, a little debris barely detracts from this powerhouse of a production.

SPOTLIGHT

Following the 1998 brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard on the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming, playwright/director Moises Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project interviewed dozens of townspeople to get their real-life reactions for the seminal docu-drama theater piece **The Laramie Project**. This oft-produced 2000 off-Broadway drama returns in a suburban Chicago production courtesy of Village Theater Guild in Glen Ellyn. *The Laramie Project* plays from Friday, March 24, through Saturday, April 15, at the Village Theatre Guild, 25720 Park Blvd., Glen



Ellyn. Tickets are \$18; call 630-469-8230 or visit VillageTheatreGuild.org.

Caption: The ensemble of *The Laramie Project* at Village Theatre Guild in Glen Ellyn. Photo by Debi Gitz-Joseph

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Actress reflects on transitioning, Marilyn Monroe connection

BY TERRI-LYNNE WALDRON

Born in Erwin, Tennessee, trans actress Aleshia Brevard knew that she wanted to be a female from an early age, and began her transitioning in the late 1950s.

She also knew she wanted to be a star—and eventually embarked on a journey that involving acting, modeling and teaching. Brevard talked with Windy City Times about her life—and the time she encountered Marilyn Monroe.

Windy City Times: You have said that before World War II—and before you turned 8—you figured that having a penis made it impossible to be a girl, at least in public.

Aleshia Brevard: [Laughs] I knew very early and I started out thinking that I would drape a white Cannon towel over my head and pretend to be [actress] Veronica Lake. But I kept all of that to myself because I truly believed that if anyone—my parents included—knew who I really was, that I would be given away.

WCT: Before your career in Hollywood, you performed as a Marilyn Monroe female impersonator at a San Francisco club called Finocchio's.

AB: That's what publicity said. I've always said that I was not doing Monroe; I was just learning to be myself, and I was young and I was blonde. I did do numbers that Marilyn did so management built me as a Monroe lookalike and impressionist.

WCT: Is it true that Marilyn came to watch you perform at the club?

AB: This came out in a book about Marilyn's life and I didn't know this until recently, but following the filming of [Marilyn's 1961 movie] *The Misfits*, Monroe and some of the hairdressers and some of the of the crew, along with [actor] Montgomery Clift, were in San Francisco and they came to see the show. I did not know that Marilyn was there until the finale and I did recognize her walk as she was leaving—and she turned and blew a kiss. And in the book where this is recounted, they said that she told Clift that my act was like seeing herself on film.

WCT: How did that make you feel?

AB: That was such a compliment. [At the time,] I was young and not very confident and I really could have used that. I wish I could have known that 50 years ago.

WCT: You have appeared in films such as *Hard Country* and *The Love God?*, and on TV in *Night Gallery* and the *Red Skeleton Show*. You have also done theater. Which did you prefer?

AB: Definitely stage. That's where my training was in both undergraduate and graduate school. I loathe to admit that I suppose that I'm bigger than life, so that lends itself much more to stage than it does either to film or TV.

WCT: You had gender-reassignment surgery (GRS) in 1962, but kept it a secret. How welcoming do you think Hollywood would have been had you been open about it?

AB: There would have been no career—period. When all of this began for me, there was no gender community. Even though there is a community, not everyone is going to dine at the same restaurant, so I lived totally in stealth. After surgery I was married four times and my husbands did not know. I wanted a career and I knew that if there was any breadth of my history I would not have that career. I was very fortunate to “pass.”

WCT: As a trans actress working in the '60s, '70s and '80s, what was your goal?

AB: I just wanted to compete on equal footing with other women. I've had some really good meaty roles, everything from Williams to Chekhov. That would have not been possible for me had I been even of a later generation labeling myself as a transgender actress. I just wanted to act without labels.

WCT: At the end of your acting career, you directed and taught theater at your alma mater, East Tennessee State University. Was directing a natural progression from acting?

AB: Yes, I think it was. I went to undergraduate school and graduate school, and I had a double major and one of my majors was in education. Although I was just a skinny kid that was mesmerized by film and wanted a life that was represented on the silver screen, I had sense enough to know that only the lucky were able to break into that business. I sort of prepared myself to teach and that's where I thought that I would end up. Had I known early on how rewarding I would find teaching—and I'm glad I had my career on stage and screen—I wish that I could have done it longer.

WCT: So did you come out to the public about your surgery in your 2001 memoir, *The Woman I Was NOT Born To Be: A Transsexual Journey*?

AB: Exactly. I was no longer teaching university, I moved to California and decided that I still had some energy so I was teaching art in a high school. During that time I was working on the book. But because I had lived in stealth, I had no idea about transgender becoming the umbrella term. When I published the book, I was absolutely shocked that I was spread all over the internet.

WCT: How do you feel about the term “transsexual” today?

AB: I did not go through gender reassignment to be labeled transsexual. I look at that as an awkward phase that I went through—sort of like a really painful adolescence. I don't even think of myself now in terms as transsexual. That's something I experienced and [something] I was.

For more about Aleshia Brevard, visit



Vintage photo of Aleshia Brevard.

Photo courtesy of Clark's Photography School

Special 'Serial Mom' Blu-ray out May 9

On May 9, Scream Factory will present the *Serial Mom* Collector's Edition Blu-ray for a standard retail price of \$34.93.

It includes bonus content such as new interviews with John Waters, Kathleen Turner and Mink Stole, special featurettes and much more. Available for the first time on Blu-ray in North America, this definitive collector's edition contains a collectible cover art featuring newly rendered artwork approved by John Waters and a reversible cover wrap featuring original theatrical key art.

Those who order the Blu-ray directly from ShoutFactory.com and get it shipped two weeks early will receive a limited-edition 18"x24" poster featuring newly commissioned artwork (available while supplies last).

Trikone to show banned Indian film

Trikone-Chicago will screen Jayan Cherian's *Ka Bodyscapes*, a movie that India's film censor banned for “glorifying the subject of gay and homosexual relationships.”

The screening will take place Saturday, April 15, 3-6 p.m., at Columbia College of Chicago's 1104 Cneter, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., room 402.

The screening will be followed by an interactive Q&A session with the director, Jayan Cherian (via Skype), and Chicago-based writer/activist Yasmin Nair. Donations will go toward screening expenses.

RSVP at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1813512318971564/>.

Vives Q! holds Latinx LGBTQ panel and discussion

BY VERN HESTER

On March 26, Vives Q! held "Trans Liberation Now" as part of the Vives Q! Lab monthly discussion event.

The event is an ongoing monthly panel and discussion presentation for community-building and skill-sharing for the trans community. Hosted by Emmanuel Garcia, the panel discussion featured speakers and activists Reyna Ortiz, Alexis Martinez and Tanya Cordova and focused on pending transgender issues, including funding for community services under the Trump presidency; the issue of trans murders and violence against trans individuals; access to medical care; and the effect of budget cuts for trans care at the state level. The event was held at The Task Force Prevention and Community Services Center, 9 N. Cicero Ave.



From left: Lalo Aguayo, Emmanuel Garcia, Tanya Cordova, Alexis Martinez, Reyna Ortiz, June Rodriguez and Karari Olvera Orozco.

Photo by Vern Hester

Many members in the audience were well-known Latinx activists such as Josie Paul, Franky Pina and Karari Olvera Orozco, and the focus stayed on what the individual could accomplish on their own.

"We're here to support each of us," Cordova said in the discussion. A major hurdle she said, is the elimination and lack of funding for care under the current state and national administration and the problem of how LGBTQ organizations are not trained to deal with trans individuals.

Martinez made the point that it is "up to us" to educate those organizations and help them develop services

for the trans community. Ortiz commented that her job in the community is to partner with organizations that can provide certain services and bring them under one umbrella. The tricky thing, she said, was in coordinating those organizations so that they provide services on a broad level with very little money or resources. On the subject of national and state support Karari Olvera Orozco said, "They (the Republican Right) want to legislate us out of existence, and we have to fight to be seen."

A major factor in the dialogue was the need for education for trans individuals of color. "There are real barriers for Black or Brown trans people that don't exist for white trans people," said Ortiz. Those barriers include access to care and the importance of continued education.

Another topic of the discussion was the visibility, which,

for some, can mean vulnerability.

Martinez said that all of these issues are complicated by age and that she, as a trans individual who is past retirement age, has found it especially hard to find employment.

No long-term solutions were reached, apart from the need for more community activism in the trans community as well as in the larger LGBTQ community. The gathering then broke for a feast that participant Lalo Aguayo participated.

The next Vives Q! Labs will be held Sunday, April 30, at Mujeres Latinas en Accion, 2124 W. 21st Pl.

Just a few of the nominated works include Jacqueline Woodson's *Another Brooklyn* (Lesbian Fiction), Darryl Pinckney's *Black Duets* (Gay Fiction), Samuel Peterson's *Trunky* (Transgender Junky): A Memoir (Transgender Nonfiction), Alexa Black's *Steel and Promise* (LGBTQ Erotica), Abigail Child's *Mouth to Mouth* (Bisexual Fiction), E. Patrick Johnson's *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies* (LGBTQ Anthology) and Kokumo's *Reacquainted with Life* (Transgender Poetry).

For more information and to buy tickets, visit LambdaLiterary.org/awards/buy-tickets/.

Lambda Literary finalists announced

LGBT organization Lambda Literary announced the finalists of the 29th Annual Lambda Literary Awards, or the "Lammys."

They were chosen from nearly 900 submissions and more than 300 publishers. The winners will be announced at a gala ceremony on Monday, June 12, at New York City's NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.

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Allyn Mansion mixes B&B charm, hotel luxuries

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Located about two hours from Chicago, the Allyn Mansion in Delavan, Wisconsin, promises bed and breakfast-style hospitality with the attention and amenities of a boutique hotel.

The mansion was built in 1885 as the principal residence of the Alexander Allyn family, wealthy local farmers; it was designed by noted Milwaukee architect E. Townsend Mix. Alexander Allyn died in 1913, and, eventually, the home was bequeathed to his granddaughter Ruth, who made a number of physical and cosmetic changes—some of which destroyed the mansion's telltale characteristics and charm.

Ruth Allyn sold the mansion to the city of Delavan, which quickly sold it to new owners who turned it into a nursing home facility. But new accessibility requirements in the '60s meant that the mansion wouldn't be up to code, and it became an antique store in 1969. That store closed in 1983, and the mansion was purchased in 1984 by its current owner Ron Markwell and his late partner, Joe Johnson, for about \$120,000.

Markwell and Johnson began a painstaking restoration of the mansion, restoring its sitting rooms and bedrooms to their former glory. They had only a handful of the original furnishings and features—among them nine fireplaces and two mantel mirrors—but they did have the Mix's original architectural plans. They restored a number of external features, including the mansion's tower, as well. In 1992, the mansion was awarded

the Grand Prize from the National Trust for the restoration.

Allyn Mansion is now managed by Randy Bangs and his wife Sara; Markwell still lives there, with his dog Daryl usually at his side.

The rooms are themed to various residents and visitors to the mansion. The most plush is the Bishop's Room, featuring a four-poster bed, a fireplace and en suite bathroom. We stayed in the cozier Butler's room.

Markwell admitted to us his initial hesitation at buying the mansion years ago because he was worried that visitors might not want to spend so much time in Delavan. But the Allyn Mansion is located in close proximity to Lake Geneva as well as nearby Alpine Valley in East Troy, which offers skiing in the winter and is a music venue in summertime. Indeed, my partner and I seemed to be the only Allyn Mansion guests that weekend who were not going to see the Grateful Dead at Alpine Valley; we stayed up late speaking with Deadheads from all over the country.

One of the best parts of a bed-and-breakfast (if done right) is, of course, the breakfast. After a restful sleep, Bangs and the staff served up corn bread with fresh roasted corn and poblano peppers, with jalapeño honey; quiche with leeks, mushrooms, goat cheese and sweet balsamic onion jam; and Greek yogurt with pecans, apples and fresh caramel sauce.

Among the other amenities included with some rooms, and available for an extra charge in others, is a relaxing 30-minute massage. Biggs said



The Allyn Mansion.

Photo by Matt Simonette

such features are important to attract millennial-age visitors who are quite often looking for distinctive, non-cookie cutter experiences when they travel. As such, Allyn Mansion will gradually

be renovating the guest bathrooms to add more spa-like features.

For more information, visit AllynMansion.com or phone 262-729-2655.

'Wright Plus 150' housewalk May 20

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust is kicking off a year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Frank Lloyd Wright with special features for the annual housewalk Wright Plus 150, on Saturday, May 20, in Oak Park.

Wright Plus 150 includes:

—Four private Wright homes: The Laura Gale House (1909), the Arthur B. Heurtley House (1902), his Japanese-influenced Hills DeCaro House (1906) and his remodeling in the Harrison P. Young House (1895).

—Refreshments and a tour at Wright's Thomas H. Gale House (1892), an oasis for trust members only.

—A full lineup of featured homes located in an easily walkable loop, just steps from Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio.

There will also be luxury experiences for architecture and design enthusiasts: The Ultimate Plus Weekend Package (May 18-21) and Ultimate Saturday (May 20).



Living room at the Arthur B. Heurtley House (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1902).

Photo by James Caulfield

Tickets to the Wright Plus 150 Housewalk are available at \$90 each for up to four tickets, and \$80 each for Trust members, through Tuesday, Feb. 28; ticket prices will then increase by \$5

to \$10 monthly on a tiered pricing schedule. For more information, visit FLWright.org/wrightplus.

Robie House tours in April

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust will host its semi-annual After Hours gathering at the Frederick C. Robie House, 5757 S. Woodlawn Ave., in April.

Robie House will be open 5-8 p.m. every Friday in April, beginning April 7, and continuing on April 14, 21 and 28. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be served. A small jazz band will perform.

Admission is \$30 for Trust members and \$35 for non-members. Advance reservations are recommended; visit FLWright.org/AfterHoursRobie.

During the evening, guests will have the chance to explore Wright's quintessential Prairie style home at their leisure. April After Hours allows access to Robie House's balconies (weather permitting) and private spaces, which include three bedrooms and two bathrooms on the third floor. Interpreters will be on hand to answer questions.

BOOKS

Psychiatrist talks about 'Letting Go of Living Straight'

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Psychiatrist Loren Olson has said that he had no idea he was gay until age 40.

Despite some early experiences with men and doubts about his masculinity, Olson had married and had children. Influenced by his own journey, Olson, who now lives as an out and proud gay man, focuses his work on the population of men who have sex with men (MSM) but don't necessarily identify as gay or bisexual.

FINALLY
OUT
Letting Go of Living Straight



Loren A. Olson, MD

FOREWORD BY JACK DRESCHER, MD

His book, *Finally Out: Letting Go of Living Straight*, addresses those who are disconnected from the larger LGBTQ community for some reason, whether it be age or background, and those who struggle to understand the pressures that influenced their decision.

Windy City Times: Who is your book's target audience?

Loren Olson: My intent was to talk to those men, who, like myself, were struggling with the decision to come out and were sort of in their midlife. The more I worked on it, the more I realized that that it was information that needs to be known throughout the entire LGBTQ community. Some of the strongest criticisms I've had about coming out late have been from members of the gay community, who say I was just hiding behind my wife. For those who have known they were gay early on, I think it's hard for them to remember how somebody could be as blind to some of the clues as I was, and that was kind of my own question about myself when I started writing the book, how could I not know?

WCT: How do people learn to accept those for whom it took longer to come out?

LO: A lot of it has to do with going back and looking at what our history was really like, and the only way that's going to come out is through

older people telling our stories. The LGBTQ community perhaps can take a lesson from what's going on right now politically. It's very much parallel to McCarthy era in many ways. It's a bit frightening to me because of that.

Many of us who are older have withdrawn from the LGBTQ community, and aren't really telling our stories. The older people have to take some responsibility for that too. Older people who have been out and proud for a long time are kind of burnt out from the political activism. And older people tend to isolate ourselves too much. As far as how to engage, any way there is for us to get together and begin to listen to each other. Not just for our old people to tell their stories, but to hear what the younger people have to say as well.

WCT: What are some common ways that MSM might identify themselves?

LO: A lot of times it's just, "I'm looking for a blow job, and my wife's not going to do that." Some might begin to consider that they may be bisexual, they're having sex with women and men, but a lot of them aren't at that point either: even the label bisexual is threatening. They just don't want to let go of the idea that they're anything but straight. For me, it was "I'm heterosexual with a little quirk." When I first came out, I did not think I was at all on my way to adopting a gay self-identity.

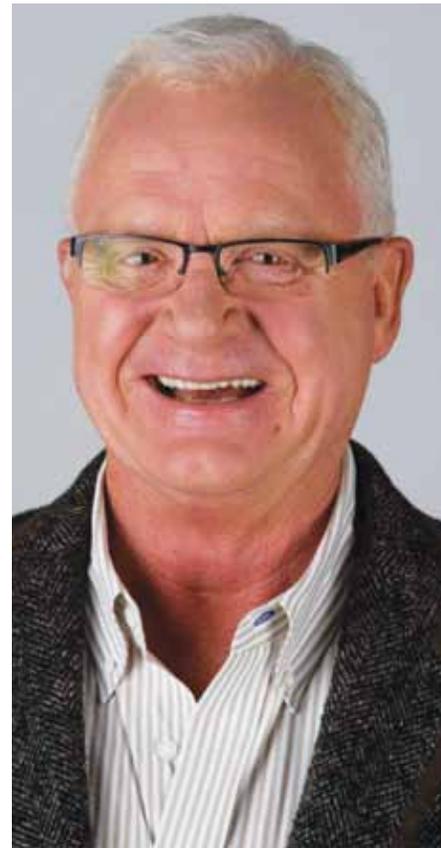
WCT: Do MSM want to be helped? Are they comfortable where they are?

LO: There are those who are satisfied to just go out and have a one-off kind of a sexual experience, and then go on with their heterosexual lives. There are some for whom the label of gay is just way too threatening; it has to do with the incorporation of the stereotypes for what it means to be gay. And then there's some who are just afraid of losing everything. They're established living a heterosexual life and the advantages that go along with that.

Probably the biggest issue for many of them is their relationship with their children. Most of them who have been married to women and have children are very committed fathers, and for me personally, that was a big issue. Even though the marriage was sort of deteriorating before I came out, my biggest concern was, am I breaking this commitment I had to be the kind of father I wanted to be?

WCT: What is helpful for others to know about MSM?

LO: There's not any way of generalizing about them. They're a very diverse population--a lot of their resistance comes from religion, culture, social expectations, there's a whole lot of things that control that. Part of it is recognizing that all of these things impact our decisions, and it's not just one thing that makes us decide not to come out, but all of these things that feed into



Author Loren Olson.

PR photo

the value system we have as adults, and that's a complex picture that comes from our own experiences growing up.

WCT: Why did you want to study this population?

LO: I realized there were a lot of parallels with my experience. As a psychiatrist my commitment is to dealing with people in emotional pain, and I know how much pain so many of these people are in, and that was kind of the driving force behind it. And to recognize that there were a lot of commonalities in those people as well as well as lot of differences.

Even though I wanted to get rid of the pain that I was feeling, it did not seem fair to me to try and impose that pain on other people. If we look at the statistics are around suicide, the rate of suicide for [these] men is about three times that of the regular population, and a lot of has to do with the time of coming out and making these decisions.

WCT: What is the most important bit of knowledge you've gained from working with these men?

LO: One of the things that's affected me is to see some advantages in growing older. We can come to a different reassessment of our value system as we get older, and we don't have to live the life that was dictated to us. I think that's probably the most transformational thing that I've experienced.

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BUSINESS

Autobarn Fiat of Evanston aims to be all-inclusive

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Grayson Petty's no stranger to cars and their drivers: He serviced Toyotas and Hyundais for years. But until he became the service manager at the Autobarn Fiat of Evanston, he hadn't known about the LGBTQ community's clear affection for Fiats. "I think it's because they're tiny and cute," Petty said about the brand's models. "You see a lot of gay guys who come in here, but you also see a lot of trans people. That's a first for me. It's really fantastic."

Seeing Autobarn's diverse customer base made Petty, a transman, feel incredibly at home. In his previous jobs, Petty sensed that though his queerness might be tolerated, his trans identity might not. But in the 8 months he's worked at Autobarn, both coworkers and customers have been supportive, particularly through his recent name change.

"I got new business cards, I got a new email, I got new everything within like a week," Petty said. "I think it only took three weeks or so for people to start using proper pronouns. I've had a couple of customers call and ask for me by one name, and the advisers are great enough to just say, 'Oh, no; this is Grayson, and if they're confused, they're like, oh no, this is what's going on. Nobody is upset about it. A few people will even use the wrong name and they're like, oh, I'm sorry, and I'm like, you don't need to apologize.'"

Petty admitted he'd been "terrified" to change his name as work, but instead found he had nothing to fear. "I'm a manager here: I work with all men," he said. "Some of my guys used to be at Toyota with me, and they've known me as a different person. It's fantastic how everyone's just embraced it."

At Petty's previous job, he could sense coworkers' unease when he wore more masculine outfits. "Even though people said, 'oh, you're queer, that's fine', they didn't care about that because I dressed girly," he recalled. "But as soon as I dressed masculine, it was more of a threat."

He started dressing in a more feminine style, but that led to internal discomfort, which he felt impacted his customer relations. Therefore, Petty understands why people hesitate to be open in a car dealership, but thinks that dealerships can do a lot to encourage people's openness.

"I think if you drive a Fiat and you know that it's a gay brand, then you feel comfortable just coming in here and being yourself," he said. "I have a couple of trans people who are customers, and they'll sit down with me, they'll have a conversation, and they can talk about whatever they want. You don't feel like you have to act some sort of way just because you're getting your car serviced."

While Fiat's gay-friendly reputation contributes to Petty's comfort with Autobarn, he also knows the business itself sends a strong message by employing him in such a high-level position.

"By Autobarn accepting me, it's a way to relay that to a customer without saying, hey, you're accepted," Petty explained. "From our technicians to our advisers, we represent everyone here. We're real people, and we really want to see you and know you. It's been a game changer for me. People might not know I'm trans right away, but they definitely [know I'm queer]. They see my relationship with the technicians, and they can feel that this is accepting."

Building personal relationships is an on-the-job priority for Petty: he will drop off cars for customers who live in his neighborhood, and some even text him about their diets. "You gravitate towards the people that you feel the most comfortable with," he said about working with LGBTQ customers. "If you have to go on a test drive with someone, you want to feel comfortable. I love coming to my job because I love my customers now, and I love getting to know them. There's quite a few customers that come in just because they feel comfortable here, and I love that so much. If your car is here for more than a day, I'm going to give you a call. I just want you to understand that your car is safe, and I want you to understand what's going on with it."

Petty gave up pharmacy school to work in car dealerships: He likes the combination of working with both people and machines. He feels uniquely gifted to explain even the knottiest car situation to his customers, and credits being raised by a family of teachers and his single mom for his abilities.

"I have literally taken apart every single thing that's ever broken in my life, because I am that curious," Petty said with a laugh. [My mom] would teach me how to do stuff, and she'd be like, I don't know what's wrong with it but I know it's like this. My special gift is that I can put any car thing into layman's terms. I just want it to be clear and clean and cohesive. You don't need to understand the workings of an engine. Let me relate it to an oven and how it gets dirty. But, I have to get to know people to be able to explain it."

Seeing car mechanics swindle his mom instilled a strong sense of ethics in Petty. "I pride myself on this service center," he said. "I specifically picked my advisors and technicians because I know their integrity. I think authenticity and integrity are the number one factors in a dealership. Customers come in here and think they're getting ripped off, but you're paying for something that you're not doing yourself or you can't do yourself. Our whole business here is getting you to come back again. And if you feel like I [ripped you off], you're not going to come back here again, so it just doesn't make any sense to do it."

He also wants customers to feel empowered and knowledgeable about their vehicle. "We want you to understand, and we don't want you to feel ripped off, so we'll teach you," he said. "We'll say,



Autobarn Fiat of Evanston's Grayson Petty.

Photo by Liz Baudler

'this is what we're going to do to your brakes. This is exactly how it comes apart.' If you want to learn, I want to teach you, and I have no problem taking a half hour to show you exactly what I'm about to do. I think a lot of people come in and they don't expect that, or they feel weird about asking. I just want people to know, 'come in, ask me!'"

The Autobarn service center isn't just for Fiats: Petty said they can work on any Chrysler brand. "I really want to service every kind of car because I want the gay community here," he said. "I really want to get to know more gay people. I'm just one of those people who wants to know everybody."

He specifically wanted to let trans people know they're welcome at Autobarn, although he finds sharing that message challenging on a personal level. "What does [trans-friendly] even mean?" he asked rhetorically. "I don't know how to say, hey, we're trans friendly. I'd like to bring in trans people. I'm not entirely sure on how to do that, but I'd love it."

Inclusive reputation aside, why does Petty recommend Fiat? "It's not a really expensive car," he explained. "You're looking at most, \$20,000. It is literally the tiniest car on the outside and the biggest on the inside. It's great for the city."

His advice for deciding on a car: take it to a service center, have them do a demo, and get to know it for a day or two. "You let it sit, you drive it again, you get to actually know it like it's your car, and usually if you're interested in it, I'm not going to be like, hey come back immediately. If you want to test drive it, I'm really not upset about it. That's what the car is here for. Try it out. Try it out five times, we don't care, because we want you to feel comfortable in it and want you to come back."

It's the total Autobarn package that has Petty madly in love with his job. "In my experience, this is the best dealership," he said. "I have a lot of customers here who were at other dealerships,

and they didn't like what was going on there. They came to us because there aren't a lot of other Fiat dealerships out there, and it just breaks my heart. I know it's silly, because a lot of people don't spend time with their car dealership, but I live and breathe cars. I just want people to want to come here, if for no other reason than to get a cup of coffee and say hey."

Learn more at FiatUSA0fEvanston.com or RF2K.com

LETTERS from page 16

sus Bureau's goal is to conduct a "complete and accurate census." If this is indeed the goal, then the availability of data on the size, location, and circumstances of the LGBT population should be taken into account. Therefore, the Bureau must acknowledge the concerns regarding the lack of reliable data on the LGBT population in the United States. We ask that you provide additional explanation as to why sexual orientation and gender identity were not included in the Subjects Planned for the 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) report, including justification for stating there being no federal need for data on the LGBT population.

The Census Bureau's data collection efforts have always played a significant role in our ability to understand the communities that we represent and how best to serve them. LGBT Americans—like every American—deserve to be counted and recognized in all federally-supported surveys. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Eighty-six members of the
U.S. Congress, including
U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)
and U.S. Reps. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)
and Raul M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.)

Xavier Rizi Timane.
PR photo



MUSIC

Xavier Rizi Timane: 'Love Is All We Need'

BY BRONSON PETTITT

Xavier Rizi Timane's video "Love Is All We Need" has more than 1 million YouTube views since it was published in late February.

Filmed outside Los Angeles, the video promotes love, strength, tolerance and unity amid President Donald Trump's divisive policies and rhetoric, and features a diverse group of people representative of United States society, including immigrants, LGBT people and those of various racial and religious backgrounds.

Windy City Times had the opportunity to interview Timane about his video and personal background as a trans male African immigrant who became a U.S. citizen.

Windy City Times: Tell me a little more about your video, "Love Is All We Need."

Xavier Rizi Timane: It was inspired just by the Trump win, and all the comments that were very anti-women. I was very surprised he won, but in the interest of the country I was hopeful that he would somehow be able to do something good. I wrote the song right after I started seeing things like the Muslim ban, which they tried to call it a travel ban ... and next was the transgender bathroom situation, because I also work as a coach and a licensed psychotherapist with trans youth.

I was just inspired to write the song because it

seemed like every demographic, other than possibly white Republican males, [was] not going to be embraced.

WCT: What kind of feedback have you gotten from it?

XRT: Most of the emails as well as comments on the page have just been saying, "Thank you for expressing exactly how I feel as well." People have said, "Thank you for embracing all walks of life in America," because we're starting to forget that.

WCT: And you talk a lot of promoting love and acceptance of everybody, especially now in the era of Trump.

XRT: A lot more compassion and understanding is needed. I encountered that when I was working on some of the states that are repealing the bathroom laws.

You always have to imagine how it would feel if it was on your foot. Try to put that shoe on your foot and act from a place of compassion. We really do need it now, more than ever.

WCT: You were born in Lagos, Nigeria, and in a 2015 interview in Ebony you talked about growing up in male-dominated patriarchal Nigerian society. What are some of the challenges you've faced as an immigrant, trans-identified person from Africa?

XRT: Oh, gosh—it was extremely challenging.

Just because there is a lot of patriarchy in the culture, and then couple that with extreme religious beliefs that are anti-gay and anti-trans.

Eventually, yes, I was very happy to get an opportunity to go to school abroad, so I went to London first for some years and then had to transfer to the Los Angeles campus of the same school eventually due to a threat of being dragged back home to get into an arranged marriage at the time.

I've been here [in the United States] since 2000, almost 17 years. I got my citizenship, which is awesome.

But then [the citizenship] also coincided with...the time when, yeah, I was on the brink of being male, and being on hormone therapy, having had all my surgeries, and then it was the era of a lot of black men being targeted by police, and I thought, "Oh, my goodness—I finally transitioned to be who I have always wanted to be since I realized I was trans at 8," and seeing how people reacted with a lot more, like, fear and suspicion, as when opposed to when I was female-identified, so there was an adjustment period with that as well. As far as my family, I'm happy to report that we did reconcile, and I got apologies from them for the exorcisms and all the emotional trauma I went through. We're doing great.

WCT: What kind of things do you see that are positive despite all the negativity of Trump and his government?

XRT: The thing I see is the hope [of] the people, the majority of American citizens. Hundreds of thousands of women who have marched wearing their pink outfits. It's the LGBT community

who is very aware of what's going on, and continuing to act for equal rights. People really have bonded together and are supporting each other.

The good thing with this administration is I feel people were separate before. Black Lives Matter [was] over here in this corner, and then the women's rights were over in this corner, the LGBTs were in this corner, the trans were separate, the Muslims were elsewhere—and with Trump and everything going wrong, everyone has come together. Finally. Like we've come together as a team.

"Love Is All We Need" is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hpiaw_HRayc.

Opera trivia event April 20

Opera devotees and newcomers alike will come together for "La Triviata," a night celebrating the history, artistry, humanity and even the craziness of the operatic art form.

The event will be at the Civic Opera Building, 20 N. Wacker Dr., on Thursday, April 20. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will begin at 6 p.m., with trivia at 7-9 p.m.

Forte Chicago—a female performance team known for its operatic sketches and creative performance style—will emcee.

Admission is \$35 for Lyric Young Professionals, and \$40 for non-members; visit <https://www.lyricopera.org/ConcertsTickets/SingleTicketChooseSection?perfid=14313>.

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Rev. Vernice Thorn (center) with Ka'Kawana Powell (left) and Anna DeShawn.
Photo courtesy of Severe Photographics



Alissa Pagels (left) and Bethany Minor.
Photo by Rebecca Marie Photography

WEDDINGS

DeShawn-Powell

On March 25, Anna DeShawn, founder/CEO of E3 Radio, married Ka'Kawana Powell at Stan Mansion, surrounded by family and friends.

Photo courtesy of DeShawn

WEDDINGS

Pagels-Minor

Alissa Pagels and Bethany Minor are officially the Pagels-Minors now after getting married in Santorini, Greece on March 13.

Planning and concept courtesy of Kesh Events; photo courtesy of Rebecca Marie Photography

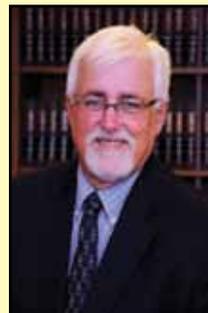
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MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS

Hotel to host diverse wedding event April 9

In the largest wedding celebration in the history of the hotel and the building that houses it dating back to 1893, the Chicago Athletic Association hotel, 12 S. Michigan Ave., will hold "A Love Supreme—described as "an inclusive, joyous celebration of marriage and unity"—in Stagg Court on Sunday, April 9.

A nuptial affair put on in collaboration with local Chicago partners Slo 'Mo, Rose Photo, Marquette Avenue Events, Artistic Blooms and LEAP Weddings, "A Love Supreme" invites LGBTQ couples to exchange their vows in a nontraditional, shared ceremony with the love of 15 partner couples for all-inclusive wedding rate of \$4,680 per couple.

The package include pre-ceremony-, ceremony- and reception-related options.

To become a part of this first-of-its-kind ceremony at the Chicago Athletic Association hotel, couples are asked to contact the hotel at alovesupreme@chicagoathletichotel.com; each inquiring couple will receive a brief application to submit.

'Twink' tour/show through April 16

The new walking tour/show called The Twink on the Fire Escape—during which Chicago comedian and writer Zach Zimmerman tells how a twink wound up on his fire escape—takes place on Sundays at 2 p.m. through April 16. (There's no show April 9.)

"Twink" runs 60 minutes and tells the story in three parts while attendees visiting three locations. First, guests will be taken to a Swedish breakfast restaurant and enjoy a cinnamon roll and a mimosa; then, they'll visit a hot dog restaurant/bar and enjoy a shot; lastly, they will visit the site of the fire escape, where the story reaches its climax.

Tours depart from the intersection of Clark Street and Belmont Avenue. For tickets, visit TwinkOnFire.com.



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MHB speaker Frankie Nelson (center) with husband BJ and son Milo, born via gestational surrogacy. Photo by Lindsay Foster Photography

Men Having Babies confab April 8-9

The 2017 Men Having Babies (MHB) surrogacy conference and expo will take place April 8-9 at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

MHB is a non-profit organization, led by parents and surrogates, that has been helping thousands of gay men worldwide become biological parents since 2012. It offers six annual conferences worldwide and provides financial assistance to prospective parents from more than a dozen countries.

The conference will bring together community activists, experts, parents, surrogates and egg donors who will share their experiences. Prospective parents will benefit from practical and personal peer advice and opportunities to meet leading providers from the United States and Canada at the Gay Parenting Expo and breakout sessions as well as private consultations.

In-depth programs will offer insights from the latest studies about contemporary gestational surrogacy as well as specialty panels on insurance, budgeting, and the medical and psychological aspects of surrogacy. Special attention will be provided to the understanding how possible Trump administration policies may affect the parenting options gay men face, both financially and legally.

Proceeds from sponsorship and exhibiting fees will benefit the Gay Parenting Assistance Program, which annually provides dozens of prospective parents with over \$1 million worth of cash grants, discounts and free services from more than 50 leading service providers.

Also, while gay parenting organizations organized the event, non-gay prospective surrogacy parents are welcome and will benefit from it as well.

Almost all of the 20 exhibitors of the Chicago

conference are among the major supporters of the Gay Parenting Assistance Program, including platinum sponsors San Diego Fertility Center and Golden Surrogacy, as well as Gold sponsors GenePeeks, WorldWide Surrogacy, Canadian Fertility Consulting, Oregon Reproductive Medicine, CT Fertility, Family Source Consultants, Simple Surrogacy and CReATe Fertility Center.

The Chicago conference is receiving support from local and national LGBT establishments, including the Center on Halsted, the Howard Brown Health Center, Windy City Times, Toronto's The 519 LGBT center, Family Equality Council, Gays With Kids and Proud Parenting.

The event will take place on Saturday, April 8, 5:30-8 p.m., and Sunday, April 9, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m., at the Center). Admission for both days is \$20 per person in advance (\$25 at the door, space permitting), and will include lunch and receptions.

Go to MenHavingBabies.org/chicago for registration and additional information.



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On **Tuesday, April 25, 2017**, join more than 50 partner organizations in supporting an agenda including:

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Responsible budget	Education
Labor & Economic Issues	Animal Rights
Immigration	Gun Safety
Criminal Justice Reform	Healthcare
LGBTQ, Civil Rights	The ERA
Disability rights	Homeless

**Tuesday, April 25, 2017
Noon - 3pm at the State Capitol**

www.Illinoiswomenmarchonspringfield.org



TOUCHE

Sweetness (and savory) at Trident International Windy City's 4th annual Cupcake Wars for Broadway Youth Center, Sun., April 2.
Photos by Tom Wray



MARY'S ATTIC

Lady Bunny, Sat., April 1.
Photos by Owen Keehnen



FANTASY

Neverland's Jungle Book party, Sat., April 1.
Photos by Jerry Nunn



BERLIN

VIP party for the Wax Trax at 10th anniversary, Fri., March 31.
Photos by Jerry Nunn

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR SafeHouse Chicago; Baconfest

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Five kung-fu poses...

These constituted the hoop that I and two complete strangers had to jump through once we entered **SafeHouse Chicago** (60 E. Ontario St.; SafehouseChicago.com)—a spy-themed, basement-level restaurant that apparently has a very loyal following in Milwaukee and that just opened in Chicago. (A grand opening took place on March 30 that featured, among other things, a cadre of dancing teens done up, Goldfinger style.)

For those who like themed restaurants, SafeHouse is a gold mine; for those who dislike them, a visit here might spark a thousand eye-rolls.

The decor is all about spying and surveillance.



SafeHouse Chicago.
Photos by C. Williams



(There are several monitors downstairs that let patrons see what others have to do to gain entrance.) There are all sorts of buttons to push on the walls, servers and patrons are called "agents"—and even the food is referred to as "evidence" as we engage on "missions" of eating. (I'd love to see if the agent servers are just as energetic a few months from now.)

Speaking of food (and drink), of course they have spy-related names. My dining companion and I really liked the Spy Sliders, but other offerings include Thunderballs (atomic homemade meatballs), The Provocateur (burger topped with brie and bacon jam) and Fried C4 Cheese Curds. Skip the very blah Furtive Fish Fry and go with The Station Chief's Salmon (one of the best items there). I've yet to try Mata Hari's Meatloaf, but the name alone makes me wary.

SafeHouse isn't for everyone. It either can be quite fun—or it might be a mission impossible.

Baconfest Chicago

Chicago's biggest meat-and-greet took place this past weekend as the ninth annual Baconfest was held March 31-April 1 at the UIC Forum.

Want to be knocked out by a couple stats? More than 4,500 people consumed four tons of bacon. Some of the standouts during the April 1 lunch session included Antique Taco's carnita taco (with roasted pork, queso, pickled onion, Nueske's bacon and) tortilla verde), Pork & Mindy's pig candy cannoli and Honey Butter Fried Chicken's loaded mash (smashed potatoes, fried chicken, pimento Buffalo sauce, bacon crunchies and chive crema). There were even dessert items such as maple-bacon macarons as well as cocktails.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.



Paddy Long's from Baconfest Chicago.
Photo by Andrew Davis



BILLY Masters

One of my treasured proofreaders sent me this email: "I never stopped to think of how the rainbow flag began, and how it could be one person's invention. I just assumed it was 'always there', and always a symbol of gay pride." He had just read about the passing of **Gilbert Baker**, the man credited with creating the first rainbow flag. Since I watch way too much PBS, I already knew Gilbert's story. The army veteran taught himself how to sew so that he could make banners and flags. **Harvey Milk** asked him to come up with a symbol of gay pride, and Gilbert created the first rainbow flag, which Milk carried for San Francisco Pride in 1978. In 1997, Baker's original flag was installed on the corner of Castro and Market in San Francisco. Long may it wave.

The rainbow is also adorning the wrapper of my favorite candy bar. Snickers now sports rainbow shading around its familiar logo as part of a pro-LGBT ad campaign. Snickers is sponsoring a new section on GayStarNews.com that will "tell stories of LGBTI people and provide resources to help you be yourself even at the toughest times." Hmm: Maybe I should look into getting a candy sponsor for BillyMasters.com.

Joan Rivers was chummy with **Prince Charles**. So when she could bring a plus-one for a weekend at Windsor Castle with Charles and Camilla in 2011, she brought **Kathy Griffin**. We knew that part of the story. But last week, New York Magazine writer Yashar Ali Tweeted: "Kathy Griffin called me and told me the craziest story about being at Windsor Castle with Joan Rivers and **Aaron Schock**." Sure, that got your attention. You didn't expect a story about Kathy and Joan to include a mega-hot, allegedly closeted, disgraced ex-Congressman, did you?

Yashar released the story as a string of Twitter posts. We've set the stage—Joan and Kathy are having dinner in Windsor Castle. Now, we cut to the Twitter posts, which I will slightly edit for flow: "Kathy is placed at dinner next to this gay couple. Both in tuxes. One is clean cut and the other is kinda greasy. The clean cut guy is clearly a fan, chatting her up, asks her all about Cher—total gossip session. Fun. Kathy has no idea (keep in mind this is before he became gaymous) that the gay guy she's seated with is a Congressman. Finally she asks what do you do for a living? He says he's a Congressman from Peoria, IL—Kathy is from Oak Park, IL.

"She asks Aaron how he ended up in Windsor Castle and he says that for \$25,000 to the Prince's charity you get this 2 week package. Where you get to hang out with him and travel all around. Huh? Kathy is like this doesn't pass the smell test—\$25K for two weeks? Even if there were a 2 week package—it wouldn't be \$25K to hang out with the Prince et al—clearly a weird lie. She then says ok so obviously you're for repealing DOMA, same sex marriage etc. Remember she's assuming he's out. He gets all curt and is like 'uh no I am not'. Remember he's sitting there with his boyfriend talking about Cher etc.



Did Aaron Schock (pictured here with Ariana Grande) also rub elbows with Kathy Griffin and Queen Elizabeth II? It seems true, Billy says.

Instagram photo

Gimme a break. She accuses him of being a bad gay!!!! He gets super annoyed w/ her + doesn't say 'I'm not gay'. It's more like he was offended by idea that anyone there thought he was gay. So remember there's night 2 of the Windsor extravaganza ... the next night he totally ignores her, cold shoulder etc."

"The \$25k for 2 weeks—also bs, turns out Aaron was there as the guest of the paying guest—we don't know who that is. Cause it wasn't his boyfriend who paid. Here's his date to Windsor Castle [Yashar posted a photo, which we will also post on BillyMasters.com]. Obviously a member of the family, if you know what I'm saying. One of the things Aaron got charged with was accepting an illegal gift ie the Windsor Castle excursion but here's what we didn't know. ... Kathy Griffin was in the loop (unwittingly) years before the rest of us and the Feds. Which is peak Kathy Griffin." BTW, the entertainment for the soirée was **Barry Manilow!** Yashar sums it up like this: "Kathy Griffin, Joan Rivers, Prince Charles, Aaron Schock, Camilla Parker Bowles, and Barry Manilow walk into Windsor Castle ... is the start of the gayest joke ever!"

It's been eons since I've brought you a penis, so I'm going to make up for it with two penii! The first comes to you courtesy of a new show, What Happens at The Abbey. You know what happens at this popular WeHo watering hole? Nothing! The vast majority of employees are straight. So are the vast majority of patrons. I believe Vanderpump's place around the corner has more gays per square foot than The Abbey. We hear that E! told the bar they needed to hire more hot guys. So the newest staff members were "cast." One of the hottest is **Billy Reilich**, previously known as Nick the Gardener on Ellen's talk show. He's what The Abbey calls a "VIP server." I call him money in the bank—at least with all those explicit nudes I have of him on BillyMasters.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Walt in

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BEYLICIOUS DRAG BY
DIDA RITZ, SAYA NAOMI & CHRISTOPHER VIPER

HOSTED BY DIXIE LYNN CARTWRIGHT

Chicago: "Who is **Thom Evans**? I guess he's some rugby player who posed almost nude for an HIV charity. But I don't think I've ever seen anyone so hot. Do you have more?"

Indeed, I do. You see, this ain't Thom's first skin shoot. He previously posed for the "Dieux du Stade" calendar in which he showed all—alongside his virtually identical brother, Max (also a rugby player). Yes, dueling hunky brothers frolicking in flagrante! So, Walt, you hit the jackpot. You'll certainly be jacking something when you see the amazingly hot photos on BillyMasters.com.

When QEII isn't the only queen in Windsor, it's time to end yet another column. Before we close, I would like to note the passing of NYC drag legend Sweetie, after a long battle with cancer. Speaking of sweets, we must remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site brought to you by Jawbreakers ... for obvious reasons. Send your questions to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I sign up for rugby lessons. Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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WINDY CITY TIMES

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., April 5

6th Annual Andersonville Honors Awards celebration and party honoring the top 35 businesses nominated in 2016: Presented by the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce and hosted by The pH Comedy Theater. \$25 tickets available online 6:30pm - 9:00pm Mary's Attic 5400 N Clark Chicago <http://andersonville.org/honors>

Howard Brown Health Annual Meeting Strategic plans are developed with input from community, supporters and patients. The Annual Meeting is free and open to the public. Light refreshments. Reception at 6:00. RSVP to Events@howardbrown.org by noon on April 5. 7:00pm - 8:00pm The Brown Elephant Andersonville, 5404 N. Clark St., Chicago <http://howardbrown.org>

Thursday, April 6

AVER Monthly Meeting Chicago Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, the national organization of LGBT veterans formerly known as Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA). 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.averchicago.org/>
Celebrate the life and legacy of poet

CRYSTAL ROCKS
Sunday, April 9

Former American Idol contestant Crystal Bowersox will perform at City Winery.

Photo by Jerry Nunn

Gwendolyn Brooks Evening kick-off at DuSable of a conference of scholars, writers and musicians including Robin Coste Lewis, Ishion Hutchinson, Ed Roberson, Evie Shockley, Nicole Mitchell and Jamila Woods. Through April 8. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Tonight at DuSable Museum, following days at Logan Center for the Arts <http://voices.uchicago.edu/brooks100/schedule/>

Friday, April 7

Spring 2017: The Frontrunners Couch-To-10K Program membership and kick-off event Running and walking club for Chicago's LGBT community and friends announces a unique training and social program with free coaching and training from accomplished running coaches with annual membership in the club, \$20. Saturdays at 9 a.m. through participation in Proud to Run, June 24. Frontrunners/Frontwalkers is open to all, even those who do not participate in this training opportunity. 5:00pm - 7:00pm Sidetrack 3349 N. Halsted St.; <http://www.frfwchicago.org>

LGBTQ Artists' Gallery Opening Julius D.C. Bautista and Brad Leslie. \$5 suggested donation. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=12836>

Off Center: Live Music at Center on Halsted Live sets from The Joans, Carolyn Reynolds, and Homer Marrs. \$10 suggested donation benefitting homeless youth initiative. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=14162>

Miss Foozie's 20th Anniversary Party Special birthday show to celebrate local drag fav Miss Foozie and all her 'pineapples.' Featuring Chenita Heart, Daisi N. Confused, Evonka T. Rump, Liza and Loki Love. 11pm, Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway, www.facebook.com/events/179122777806542/

Saturday, April 8

Men Having Babies Midwest Surrogacy Seminar and Gay Parenting Expo. Through April 9. \$20 advance, \$25 at door. Lunch and reception included. 5:30pm - 8:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://menhavingbabies.org/surrogacy-seminars/chicago/>

Chicago Force, Women's Tackle Football. Detroit Dark Angels 7:00pm Evanston High School, 2285 Church St., Evanston <http://www.chicagoforcefootball.com>

Sunday, April 9

aChurch4Me Sunday Worship Service Find inclusiveness, peace, comfort and prayer 11:00am aChurch4Me, 7366 N. Clark St., Chicago 773-373-9916 <http://www.achurch4me.org>

A Love Supreme, an inclusive celebration of marriage A nuptial affair put on in collaboration with Slo 'Mo, Rose Photo, Marquette Avenue Events, Artistic Blooms, and LEAP Weddings. LGBTQ couples exchange their vows in a nontraditional, shared ceremony with 15 partner couples. Portion benefiting Howard Brown Health. Contact alovesupreme@chicagoathletichotel.com Time:TBA Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave. <http://chicagoathleticcevents.com/events/a-love-supreme/>

Crystal Bowersox Blues, country, folk and rock, known from the ninth season of American Idol and open about her bisexual identity. All ages. \$28/\$32/\$35/\$38

8:00pm City Winery, 200 W Randolph St., <https://www.citywinery.com/>

Monday, April 10

Career counseling for LGBTQ adults by TransWorks Free and confidential services to LGBTQs 18+. Monday drop-ins for those interested but not yet enrolled. 12:00pm - 4:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago Tickets: <http://ChicagoHouse.org>

Tuesday, April 11

His and His III Cabaret Saluting gay characters of new musicals and out Broadway composer-lyricist Andrew Lippa. Over the course of this season the series has followed the development of gay characters on Broadway. The first part of the evening will feature work from new musicals, or musicals with a Chicago connection. \$25 reserved or \$20 general information 7:30pm Pride Arts Center, 4139 N Broadway, Chicago. Tickets: <http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com>

Chicago Gender Society Social, and educational organization for members of the transgender community, supporters and the public. Meets every month on the second Tuesday. Doors open at 7pm. 8:00pm Stardust Banquet Hall, 5688 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago <http://chicagogender.com/about-us/faq/>

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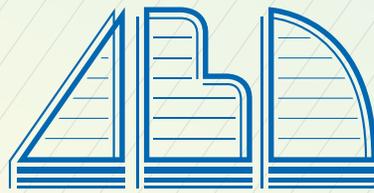
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