

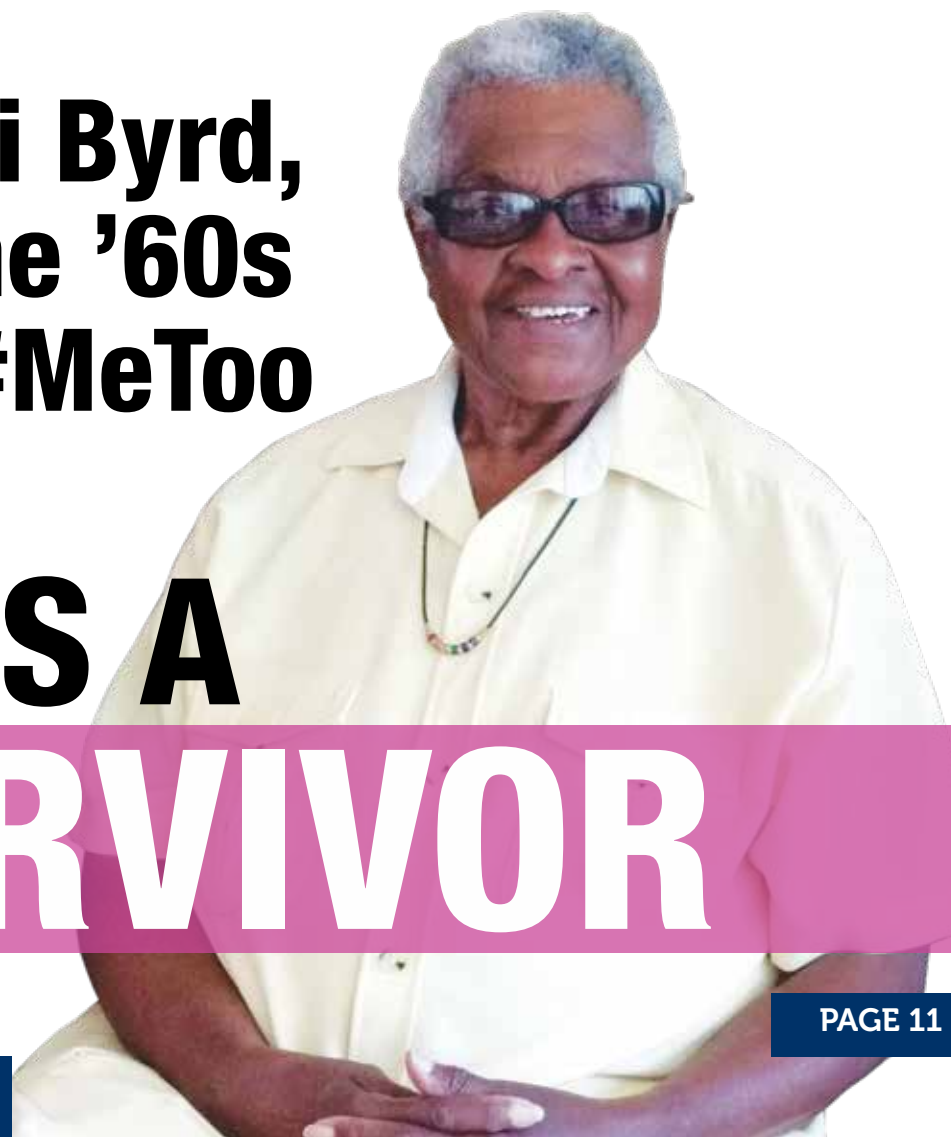
WINDY CITY TIMES

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

VOL 33, NO. 50 SEPT. 5, 2018

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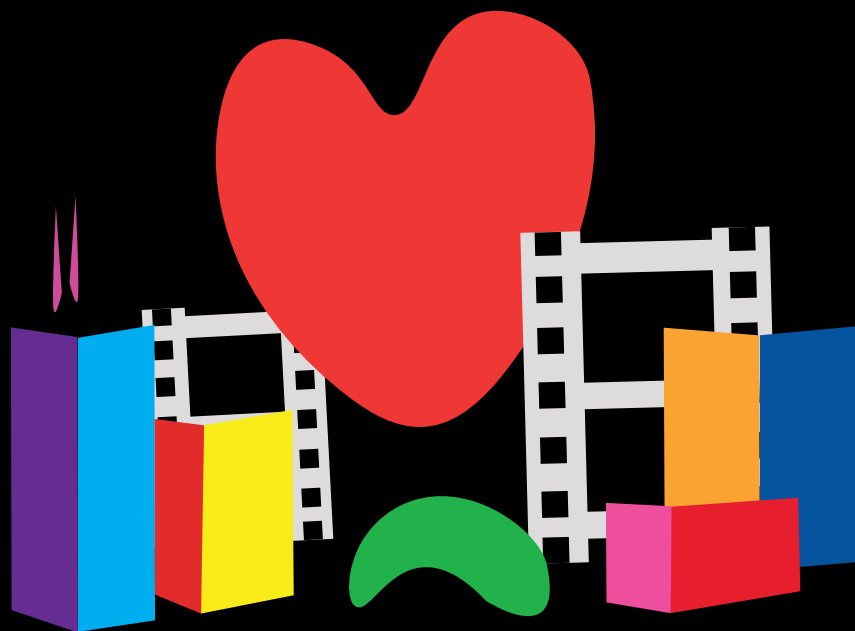
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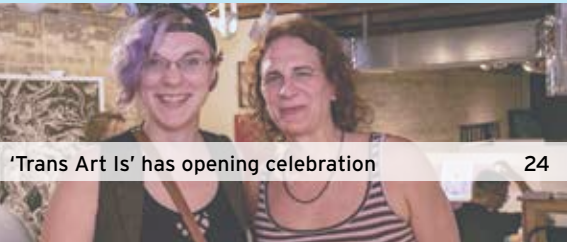


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The Trans Art Is exhibit opened Sept. 1.
Photo by Chuck Kramer

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CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

WCT's value travel column takes readers around downtown L.A. (left).
Photo by Bill Malcolm

PIZZA ON EARTH



Vinny's Pizza Bar offers a variety of enticing culinary delights.
Photo of pork-shoulder pizza by Andrew Davis

MERCEDES BOY

Mercedes dials the 2018 S-Class back to 560.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Mel B, the Miss America competition and Justin Bieber.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

This Week's Featured Properties



Ideally located on an oversized 30x140 lot on a one-way street in Lincoln Park, this custom Metzler-Hull solid-masonry house, designed by noted architect Dan Wheeler, reflects a rare & impressive attention to detail in its design, construction & finishes. Dreamy yard, three car garage.

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GUEST COLUMN

BY KAREN TOPHAM



Challenges face the creators of Tootsie 2.0

In the 1982 hit movie *Tootsie*, Dustin Hoffman plays Michael Dorsey, an out-of-work actor who, in a fit of desperation, decides to audition for a job as a woman. “Dorothy Michaels” gets the role and, through a series of actions a real woman of that era would never have tried (including changing scripts willy-nilly and hitting a costar over the head with a stack of papers) becomes a star and an icon for women everywhere, a symbol of women standing up to men.

The sexist message that it just might take a man to help women be strong is buried beneath more positive messages about growth and understanding, but it is nonetheless present.

Also present is a not insignificant latent homophobia and transphobia, manifested in the repeated jokes about how Dorothy looks (“I’d like to make her look a little more attractive; how far can you pull back?” “How do you feel about Cleveland?”) as well as an aborted relationship between “Dorothy” and Les, the father of Dorothy’s young female costar, Julie.

In its time, *Tootsie*, which is undeniably funny, was seen as provocative and empowering, its minor indiscretions ignored in favor of its light hilarity and Hoffman’s Oscar-nominated performance.

Adapting *Tootsie* into a musical suitable for 2018 sensibilities, then, is a bit of a tightrope walk: For the Broadway-bound production opening Sept. 11 in Chicago, composer David Yazbek

been significantly updated in this new incarnation. He acknowledges that “Michael makes a terrible decision in order to get a job. I don’t think he is aware at all at the beginning of the piece of the ramifications of what he is doing, but at the end of the piece, which is what Robert (Horn) has done, he acknowledges how many people he is offending with this terrible decision.”

That level of understanding and contrition is missing from Hoffman’s 1982 character. In the film, Michael does grow from the man who makes all sorts of “terrible decisions” to one who can tell Julie, “I was a better man with you, as a woman, than I ever was with a woman, as a man” and mean it. That shows a kind of understanding but it’s a long way from seeing the real mess he’s made of everything and all of the people he has hurt.

“I think one thing our show is successful in is Michael’s ability to feel remorse and understand how heinous this act was and change and grow from it,” said Lilli Cooper (*Spongebob Squarepants*, *Spring Awakening*), who plays Julie in the musical. Fontana agreed. “People battle all the time to find their authentic selves and he co-opted that for his own personal gain,” he said. “But (Michael) has remorse and has to learn from the insanity he’s engaged in.”

Some of that insanity in the film comes from others’ reactions to his cross-dressed character. Here’s movie Les speaking to Michael after learn-

“Adapting *Tootsie* into a musical suitable for 2018 sensibilities, then, is a bit of a tightrope walk. ... Composer David Yazbek (a Tony winner for *The Band’s Visit*) and book writer Robert Horn (13) and director Scott Ellis have had to preserve the central story but at the same time make it more palatable both from a gender bias and sexual identity perspective.”

(a Tony winner for *The Band’s Visit*) and book writer Robert Horn (13) and director Scott Ellis have had to preserve the central story but at the same time make it more palatable both from a gender bias and sexual identity perspective.

The writers say that this is precisely what they have done. “A number of surprises and twists” are in store for audiences, said Horn. “[Audiences] will be pleasantly surprised by the choices we’ve made.”

Playing the starring role of Michael Dorsey/Dorothy Michaels is Santino Fontana (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, *Frozen*, *Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella*). Fontana feels that his character has

ing “Dorothy” is really a man. “The only reason you’re still alive is because I never kissed you.” In 1982 audiences found the line hilarious. Today, it fairly drips with both homophobia and transphobia. The musical’s creators say that the line is among those that have been excised—leaving the script the better for it.

In the musical version, said cast member Reg Rogers (who plays unrepentant sexist director Ron Carlisle), that scene isn’t about transphobia or homophobia “as much as a man whose wife had died and it was the first time he’d put his heart out there and he was pissed off that he’d been taken for a sucker.”



Above: Director Scott Ellis, producer Scott Sanders, choreographer Denis Jones, Robert Horn (book) and David Yazbek (music). Below: From left, cast members Michael McGrath, Andy Grotelueschen, Sarah Stiles, Santino Fontana, Lilli Cooper, John Behlmann, Julie Halston and Reg Rogers. Photo by Catey Sullivan



Julie Halston (who plays soap opera producer Rita Marshall), agreed. “In this musical it’s all about human beings. It’s not necessarily about transgender issues, but it is sort of elevated to be about humans. In its attempt to be less specific it becomes bigger.”

“If something was to diminish a man or a woman, it’s gone,” Halston said, adding that she also believes the musical is very attuned to 2018 views on gender and sexuality.

Rogers affirmed that. “This production is stronger in the sense that what Michael learns from wearing a dress is much more moving in this

story. It was a gimmick in the movie, but in the musical, the dress really takes him through a journey,” he said.

Michael’s “beautiful journey,” Rogers added, is one that the entire creative team had to be on as well.

“If the journey resonates now, it’s relevant today,” Rogers said. “If it fails to resonate, we’ve all failed.”

Tootsie opens Sept. 11 at the Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph. For more information, got to <https://tootsiemusical.com>

Karen Topham is a writer, retired high school English teacher, director, liberal mom, transgender activist and political commentator. Topham was the first openly transgender teacher in America.

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Lambda Legal, WCT file FOIA request on Kavanaugh's records

Lambda Legal and Windy City Times have filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel in Washington, D.C. for records relating to Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and LGBTQ issues.

The FOIA requests the following to be produced within 20 business days and seeks expedited review of this request for the reasons identified below:

"All records reflecting communications (including emails, email attachments, text messages, instant messages (such as AOL Instant Messenger), telephone call logs, calendar invitations/entries, meeting notices, meeting agendas, informational material, draft legislation, talking points, any handwritten or electronic notes taken during any oral communications, summaries of any oral communications, or other materials) regarding the termination or reassignment of OSC employees from the Washington D.C. office to the Detroit, Michigan office or other office locations based solely or partly because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or interpretations of language extending or revoking employment protections for LGBT employees generally between Brett Kavanaugh and former Special Counsel Scott Bloch or former Deputy Special Counsel James Renne."

The search should include all locations likely to yield responsive records but should, at a minimum, include the following search terms: Trefry, Clay, Homosexual, "sexual orientation," "ship out," license.

The letter additionally stated: "You should institute a preservation hold on information responsive to this request. Lambda Legal and Windy City Times intend to pursue all legal avenues to enforce its right of access under FOIA, including litigation if necessary. Accordingly, OSC is on notice that litigation is reasonably foreseeable. ..."

"While judicial opinions reflecting Judge Kavanaugh's tenure as a federal judge are readily available, equally important records reflecting his credentials and conduct prior to his appointment to the federal bench are not. In particular, Judge Kavanaugh served as President George W. Bush's staff secretary from 2003–2006, a role in which he would have had access to 'nearly every document that reached the Oval Office' during that timeframe. But Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, over objections from Senate Democrats, has refused to request documents from Judge Kavanaugh's tenure as staff secretary, claiming such records would provide little insight into Judge Kavanaugh's fitness to join the Supreme Court. However, as Senator Sheldon Whitehouse has pointed out, 'Judge Kavanaugh said himself his time as President Bush's Staff Secretary was "in many ways among the most instructive" for his career as a

judge.' Certainly, to the extent any records from this time period reflect Judge Kavanaugh's views and advice to President Bush on any number of important and contentious issues, they are highly relevant to the confirmation process. ...

"Given their focus on issues affecting and of interest to the LGBTQ community, Lambda Legal and Windy City Times request records from Judge Kavanaugh's tenure in the White House that bear on LGBTQ issues, which he would be likely to encounter in cases before the Supreme Court. For instance, during his 2004 reelection campaign, President Bush advocated for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. As another example, less than a year after Judge Kavanaugh's tenure as staff secretary ended, a bill colloquially known as the Matthew Shepard Act, a revived version of LGBTQ hate crime legislation that had been in the works for years, was introduced as a bipartisan bill. Despite versions of the bill passing in both the House and the Senate, President Bush indicated he would veto the legislation. Most relevant to this request, leaders of OSC during the Bush Administration were implicated in an effort to purge LGBTQ employees by reassigning them to a distant office. ...

"Judge Kavanaugh's views and advice concerning these issues have direct relevance to the public's understanding of his prospective treatment of similar issues likely to come before the Court in coming years. Justice Kennedy, whose seat Judge Kavanaugh has been nominated to fill, has been the author of and/or deciding voice in a number of crucial decisions advancing and defending LGBTQ rights. Judge Kavanaugh's record, in contrast, has been criticized (by Lambda Legal and others) as hostile to LGBTQ and other civil rights. Therefore, the requested records are vitally important to provide a robust picture of Judge Kavanaugh's positions on cases implicating LGBTQ issues that he is likely to encounter as a Supreme Court Justice.

"Since Donald Trump and Senate Republicans refuse disclose Judge Kavanaugh's involvement with Bush-era scandals like the reassignment and termination of LGBT workers at the Office of Special Counsel during the time that Kavanaugh served as Staff Secretary in the Bush White House, we have taken matters into our own hands and have filed a FOIA request to learn the full scope of his involvement," said Sasha J. Buchert, staff attorney at Lambda Legal. "From what little we know about this notorious purge of LGBT workers, it is evident that senior members of the Bush White House—and likely Brett Kavanaugh—were at the center of the scandal. LGBT people, and all Americans, deserve to fully understand the views and positions taken by a lifetime nominee to the federal bench and Lambda Legal will continue to fight for that transparency."

Emanuel not running for re-election

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has announced that he will not be seeking to retain his post in the 2019 city elections.

Emanuel, who entered office in 2011, had previously insisted he would be seeking re-election next year. But in remarks given Sept. 4, Emanuel said, "Today, the time has come to make another tough choice. As much as I love this job and will always love this city and its residents, I have decided not to seek re-election.

"This has been the job of a lifetime—but it is not a job for a lifetime," Emanuel said. "You hire us to get things done—and pass the torch when we've done our best to do what you hired us to do."

He added, "I have approached public service the only way I know how for the last 23 years—giving 100 percent, 24 hours a day, seven days a week—for President Clinton, in Congress and in its leadership, as President Obama's Chief of

Staff and finally as your Mayor. For the last seven and a half years I've given my all every day and left everything on the field. This commitment has required significant sacrifice all around."

Emanuel presided over numerous controversies during his administration, ranging from police brutality allegations to property-tax increases and school closings. He frequently pledged support to the City's LGBT community, however, regularly appearing at LGBT functions and walking in the Chicago Pride Parade. He drew criticism on some occasions, such as when his administration disbanded the City's LGBT advisory council. Local activists, many of them LGBT, have also criticized his administration's handling of housing and homelessness issues.

Emanuel had already amassed a sizable war chest to fund a re-election. With 12 candidates having already placed their hat in the ring for the mayor's office, a high-profile election season is sure to follow for Chicagoans.

Lori Lightfoot, an African-American lesbian attorney, is among the top tier of candidates in the race, having raised significant funds since her campaign was announced.



Black gay caucus hosts 'Clutch Your Pearls'

BY VERNON HESTER

On Aug. 29, The Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus held the second annual Clutch Your Pearls, a fundraiser and social event involving the group's participation in the Annual AIDS Walk/Run. Guests were treated to a gay African-American quiz competition (with winners receiving copies of the books *In the Life-A Black Gay Anthology* and *Freedom in this Village: Twenty Five Years of Black Gay Writing*), an assortment of games (with the Jenga competition being a big hit), and discounted food and beverages. The event took place at Pearl's Southern Comfort at 5352 N. Broadway.

Executive Director Erik Glenn said, "We're always excited for opportunities for more social spaces for men in our community and it's clear we live all over the city: north, south, east and west. Clutch Your Pearls is a small, intimate gathering. ... It's remarkable what can happen in such an intimate space."

Glenn also spoke briefly on what the caucus does and why there is a need for this fundraiser, saying, "The Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus is aimed at health equality ... creating great health and a great life. What we do is often, behind the scenes, making presentations and building partnerships to reach that end.

"We did this event last year in the same space and it was a great success toward raising funds and giving us flexibility to respond to needs in the community."





Edward Rapp (L) and Dan De Marco.
Photo from Cremation Society of Illinois

PASSAGES

Edward George Raap

Edward George Raap—a retired architect and world traveler, of Chicago and Puerto Vallarta—passed away unexpectedly but peacefully after a brief illness. He was 78.

Raap was the beloved life partner of 35+ years of Daniel J. De Marco; dear father of Brian Edward Raap and Darrell Jon (spouse Tracy) Raap; and

son of the late Edward Adam Raap and Henrietta Zoetvelt Raap.

Services are private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to Howard Brown Health, P.O. Box 13500, Chicago, IL 60613; 773-388-1600, ext. 1012; or <https://howardbrown.org/donate/>.

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

Incoming NU student killed in gun crossfire

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A 25-year-old incoming Northwestern University student was killed Sept. 2 as he waited for a bus in the Rogers Park neighborhood, caught in gun-fire exchange between two other men.

Shane Colombo, who was scheduled to enter Northwestern as a doctoral student in the upcoming semester, had recently purchased a condominium unit in Evanston, a few blocks away, according to Chicago Sun-Times. A California native who had recently moved to the Chicago area from New York City, Colombo was engaged to a man, Vincent Perez, with whom he'd been in a long-distance relationship.

Colombo was pierced in the abdomen as the result of stray gunfire as he walked on the 7600 block of Clark Street at about 8:25 a.m. on Sept. 2. He was taken to St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, where he was pronounced dead about an hour later.

Northwestern officials released a statement signed by President Morton Schapiro and Provost Jonathan Holloway about Colombo's death on Sept. 3: "This is a terrible loss for our community, and we all feel grief and heartbreak for Shane and his loved ones. We also want to reassure our faculty, staff and students that Northwestern has no higher priority than the health and safety of our students. There is no justification for such violence. As a University community we remain

more resolved than ever to identify the causes of violence in our larger community—and to work toward solutions that will create a better life for all those within it."

Chicago Sun-Times' report is at <https://bit.ly/2NhwQgk>.

Holocaust museum's gala Sept. 6

On Thursday, Sept. 6, Illinois Holocaust Museum's Women's Leadership Committee (WLC) will host its annual End of Summer Soirée 6-9 p.m. at Rockwell on the River, 3057 N. Rockwell Ave.

There will be cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and special entertainment. In addition, a silent auction and raffle will feature items such as an eight-day Viking River Cruise for two.

Visit ILHolocaustMuseum.org/wlc.

Correction

In the Aug. 22 issue, the person in the photos with Gary Chichester in his recollection of 1968 is Jerry Cohen.

Windy City Times sincerely apologizes for the error.



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- ▶ **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. If you develop new or worse kidney problems, they may tell you to stop taking BIKTARVY.
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Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.

- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.

The most common side effects of BIKTARVY in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (5%), and headache (5%). Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

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- ▶ **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements. BIKTARVY and other medicines may affect each other. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist, and ask if it is safe to take BIKTARVY with all of your other medicines.
- ▶ **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if BIKTARVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking BIKTARVY.
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You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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

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BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults. It can either be used in people who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements.

BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

Do NOT take BIKTARVY if you also take a medicine that contains:

- dofetilide
- rifampin
- any other medicines to treat HIV-1

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Tell your healthcare provider all your medical conditions, including if you:

- Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
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Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that interact with BIKTARVY.

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- Those in the “Most Important Information About BIKTARVY” section.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- **The most common side effects of BIKTARVY** in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (5%), and headache (5%).

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

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

HOW TO TAKE BIKTARVY

Take BIKTARVY 1 time each day with or without food.

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- This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to BIKTARVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5.
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit BIKTARVY.com for program information.



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 Version date: February 2018

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She's a survivor: Sandi Byrd, from '60s institutions to #MeToo

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Soon after Sandi Byrd, 76, graduated from high school, she started expressing to her mother that she was attracted to women. That's when her world turned upside down.

"My mother sent me to a mental institution, Fairhill Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, based on my family's suggestion to 'cure me' because they were very religious and had a strict interpretation of the Bible," said Byrd. "This was in 1960, when you were not an adult in Ohio until you turned 21, so my mother had the legal right to send me there without my consent."

The doctors told Byrd's mother almost immediately that there was nothing wrong with her daughter and she needed to accept that she was a lesbian—but she did not listen.

"Something devastating happened to me about five months into my stay at Fairhill," said Byrd.



Sandi Byrd with her parents in 1954.

Photo courtesy of Byrd

"The hospital was in the process of expanding, and, instead of caring for me, this orderly took me to the new area and raped me. He threatened me and my family with violence if I told them what happened, so I kept it quiet. But it had to come out eventually because I would not be able to hide it [a pregnancy that resulted from the rape]."

"When my mother found out and went to the administrators, the hospital agreed to waive my hospital fees and the man was fired. I was transferred to an unwed mothers facility. When my daughter was born in 1961, I never saw her because she was immediately taken away from me to be adopted. They also forced me to give her a name. I did not want her to be adopted but the decision was taken out of my hands."

One of the ways Byrd coped with being in Fairhill was writing poetry in spiral notebooks that she has kept to this day. Byrd shared one of the poems, "Life at Fairhill," and her rape story at a recent Affinity Community Services (Affinity) WOMB poetry group meeting. Byrd is a longtime supporter of Affinity.

After giving birth, Byrd moved back in with her parents but that it was unbearable to be in such a repressive environment again.

"I did not stop expressing myself as a lesbian. I ended up spending every moment [that she was not working] at this woman's house until the last bus left for the night," said Byrd.

Due to her mother's death and other factors, Byrd decided to move to Chicago and live with her grandmother in the West Woodlawn neighborhood.

"I came here in 1961 right after my mother died, because she wanted to be buried where she grew up," said Byrd.

Byrd's plan was to save money and find her own place because her grandmother was very strict. She worked in the catalog business at Spiegel, Sears and Montgomery Ward as well as a number of factories for the first six years.

When Byrd wanted to change her career trajectory, she applied for the U.S. Post Office and CTA in 1966. The post office job offer came first so she chose that route.

"I worked at the O'Hare Airport location my entire career from 1967-1998," said Byrd. "I came in as a sub and then was a clerk and finally a supervisor. I was an America Postal Workers Union representative and would go out of town for union business to Springfield, Illinois or Washington, D.C. When I retired, I discovered I did not have enough units for Social Security, so I got a job as a Chicago Public Schools bus driver and did that for 10 years with two companies."

Byrd credited her cousin Edward, whom she moved in with shortly after arriving in Chicago, with introducing her to DJ Terry the Fox.



Sandi Byrd.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

"Terry told me everything I needed to know about the South Side LGBT scene," said Byrd. "I did not discover the North Side LGBT community for many years and saw the racism that existed between the two queer communities first hand when I would go to CK's in Lincoln Park in the 1970s. They would only allow a certain amount of queer Black women in the bar at a time."

Byrd dated a number of women for a few years each until she settled down with Claudia Brown, who is now her wife. They knew each other for years as friends and when Brown divorced her husband, they started dating in early 1996. The couple had a commitment ceremony on June 29, 1996, became domestic partners in June 2004 and had a Civil Union on June 20, 2011.

"The Cook County Clerk's office told us our Civil Union was now considered as being married," said Byrd. "Claudia's daughter embraced me right away and now we have two grandchildren."

"Sandi is a very loving person and that is one of the reasons why I married her," said Brown. "When we started dating, I showed her that I loved her for who she is. We enjoy each other's company and have a great time whether it is hanging out at home or going out socially. I love her dearly and will do anything for her."

Over the years, Byrd has become more involved with Chicago's LGBT community including attending C.C. Carter's POW-WOW poetry group for most of its 10-year existence and becoming an Affinity member in 2005. Since then, Byrd has attended many Affinity and WOMB events.

"I have known Sandi for 30 years and when we met we became friends instantly," said Affinity co-founder TED Dobbins. "I have always admired her adventurousness and the fact that she is a go-getter. Her spontaneity has helped me be more adventurous myself. She always sees

the good in people and once she knows you she is in your corner for life. When the clubs shut down in our area she invited all of us to hang out at her house. Her parties were always uplifting and fun."

Byrd explained that she has always been church oriented but did not find the right one until she discovered Rev. Johnnie Coleman and her church, Christ Universal Temple.

"When Coleman retired I decided to find an LGBT-friendly church, Power Circle Congregation, and have been going there ever since," said Byrd. "I also do a lot of volunteer work for them."

Bowling was also a part of Byrd's life for 33 years until she retired last year.

"We always went to the Women's International Bowling Congress tournaments and later the United States Bowling Congress tournaments," said Byrd. "We won sometimes, but the best part was the fun we had as a team."

Byrd is a member of the International Toastmasters and has spoken many times, winning second place during their humorous contest category. She also writes speeches and is trying to get back into writing poetry.

Both Byrd and Brown love to travel and have been on several cruises. The first time Byrd went to Europe was in 2012 during a Mediterranean cruise where she saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa, among other landmarks.

The main thing Byrd is worried about these days is the political climate that arose after the 2016 election.

"Our country is going backward right now," said Byrd. "Every civil-rights achievement is being attacked and it is all due to the GOP. We have to stay strong and fight back at every turn, including marching in the streets every day, against this assault on our rights."

Trans woman found murdered in Chicago alley

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A 24-year-old transgender woman was murdered on Aug. 30 on Chicago's South Side, according to sources. Her body was discovered at the alley of 40th Street and King Drive late in the morning that day, after persons nearby said that they had heard gunshots.

The woman is still listed as a Jane Doe by Chicago Police department, but she was identified at about 6 p.m. that day as Chicagoan Dejanay Stanton. According to Dawn Valenti, a crisis responder with Chicago Survivors, which assists family members and others impacted by violent loss, Stanton was legally recognized as female.

According to a Chicago Police Department spokesman, Stanton was discovered with a gunshot wound to the head and was transported to Stroger Hospital, where she was pronounced dead. Area Central Detectives are investigating. The Aug. 30 police statement only identified Stanton as a female Jane Doe; her death was officially ruled a homicide after an autopsy Aug. 31, according to Chicago Sun-Times.

"I hate going out on these kinds of calls," said Valenti. "But this is my community, and I have to do it."

News of Stanton's death circulated quickly on social media, where Stanton used the online moniker De'Janay Lanorra. Friends and loved ones described their memories of Stanton and expressed their grief.

Activist LaSaia Wade, executive director of Brave Space Alliance, posted to Facebook: "So we lost another sister here in Chicago. Sending her family and loved ones peace and justice! Rest in power, Dejanay Stanton."

Wade added, "She was so sweet. Every time you saw her she had a smile on her face. She was just



Dejanay Stanton.

Photo from Stanton's Facebook page

trying to live her best life as a young girl."

Kimuni Ebony wrote: "I can't think. I can't sleep. All I can think about is you, De'Janay Lanorra."

Marqueda Johnson also posted: "All down my timeline is you, baby De'Janay Lanorra. This is so heartbreaking. I'm hurt. I'm hurting for your family."

A balloon ceremony was held the evening of Aug. 31 and was attended by numerous loved ones, friends and other community members. At that gathering, in comments posted to Facebook by Daishe Davis, her mother pled for persons with knowledge of the crime to come forward, adding, "She didn't bother [anybody]. She meant the world to me."

Stanton is the 18th transgender woman in America to be murdered in 2018. Another transgender woman, 18-year-old Vontashia Bell of Shreveport, Louisiana, was also killed Aug. 30 in the early morning.

Organist taunts Cubs player with gay-friendly songs

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Atlanta Braves organist Matthew Kaminski's playlist for recent Chicago Cubs acquisition Daniel Murphy included "Born This Way," "What the World Needs Now is Love" and "Lola," in what was presumably a reference to the Murphy's past comments about the LGBT community, according to Vice.

Second baseman Murphy's hiring by the Cubs was controversial, since in 2015 he said that he "disagreed" with the fact the former ballplayer Billy Bean was gay. The comments were even more pointed since Chicago Cubs co-owner Laura Ricketts is a lesbian.

On Aug. 26, Ricketts weighed in on the matter on Twitter, writing "There were several thoughtful conversations among Cubs executives, my brothers and me, as well as with Billy Bean, MLB's Am-

bassador for Inclusion and the subject of Daniel's 2015 comments. ... After these considered and thoughtful conversations, which took place precisely because of the Cubs' sensitivities on the matter, I was on board with the trade."

The Chicago Cubs-Atlanta Braves game took place Aug. 30.

The Vice article is at <https://bit.ly/2Py7Dfr>.

Trans girl, 12, bullied by parents in Okla.

Achille, Oklahoma, has become a center on controversy since local parents bullied 12-year-old transgender girl Maddison Kleeman Rose, according to a Vice News item.

The bullying started after Rose used the girls' bathroom at the Achille Public Schools. (The adults apparently neglected to tell her the location of the staff bathroom—part of an arrangement her parents worked out with the school after staff learned she was trans back in fifth grade.)

One parent named Jamie Crenshaw posted on Facebook, "The transgender is already using the girls bathroom. ... Enough is enough." Things escalated, including a planned protest and counterprotest, until the school closed for a few days. (The Crenshaws had not responded before the Vice News item went to press.)

Rose and her family had moved to Achille from Sherman, Texas, where they said the pre-teen was bullied during her transition, Time.com reported. Rose's mother said she plans to move her family to Houston, even as Maddison said she would not allow the negativity of certain parents affect her.

Achille Mayor David Northcutt—who happens to be openly gay—ironically said "the days of running someone out of town is over." He said he was sad when he heard about the Roses leaving Achille.

The Vice News item is at https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/3ky94k/this-12-year-old-girl-was-driven-out-of-her-town-for-being-transgender. The Time article is at <http://time.com/5381993/oklahoma-transgender-speaks-out/>.

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Model claims racial, sexual-orientation biases against Ford

BY JAKE WITTICH

A Chicago-based model dropped from Ford Models claims he was discriminated against for being gay and Asian-American.

Chufue Yang, a 21-year-old Hmong-American who signed to Ford Models in April 2016, was dropped by the agency Aug. 15 after months of feeling he was being discriminated against, he said.

"When I got the email, it was almost a sigh of relief," Yang said. "Before that, I had already felt like I didn't own my body anymore, and I saw how me being queer and a person of color influenced my career."

Yang said he received fewer opportunities than models who fit the stereotypical straight, white and muscular mold predominant in the industry, and that his agent told him it would be harder for him to get jobs because he's Asian-American.

"I didn't take it to heart because I wanted to pave my own way, but I was the only queer person of color signed onto their board, so I feel like I was the guinea pig for them," Yang said.

Representatives from Ford Models did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The agency took steps to erase Yang's identity, including changing his height on his modeling portfolio and misrepresenting him in a Models.com feature that his agent set, according to



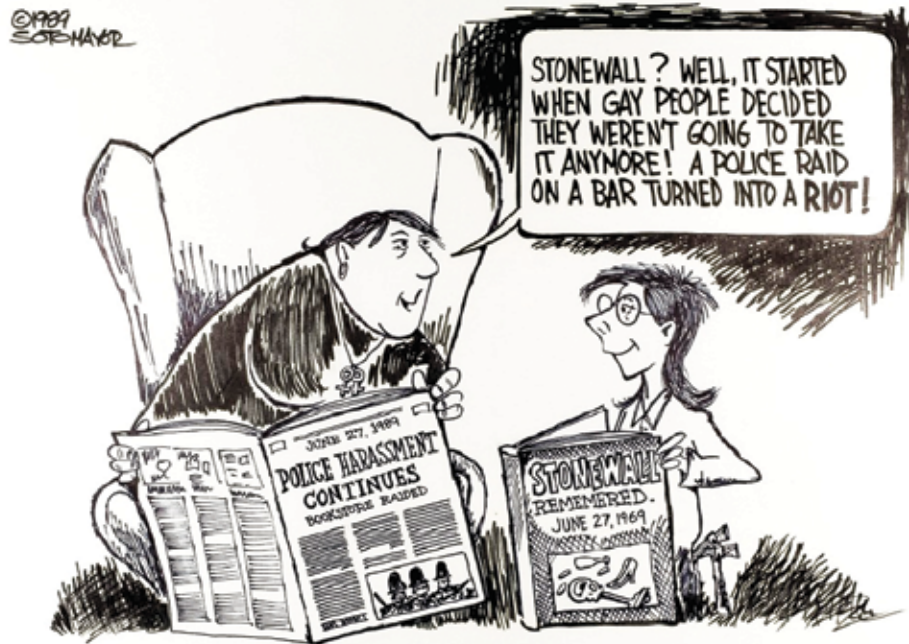
Chufue Yang.

Photo courtesy of Yang

Yang. The feature, published within the site's NEWfaces division, assumed Yang's ethnicity by saying he came from Minnesota via Mongolia.

"At the end of the day, it's the industry's fault—not my agent's or Ford Models' fault," Yang said. "Discrimination is an industry-wide problem that's taught me to stand firmer on my values and what I want to do as a model, which is be the representation I never had growing up."

Read the entire account online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.



Marking Danny Sotomayor's 60th b-day

Danny Sotomayor—an AIDS activist, artist and ACT-UP Chicago co-founder—would have turned 60 on Aug. 30. He passed away on Feb. 5, 1992.

Pictured is a Sotomayor cartoon from 1989.

Image courtesy of Lori Cannon

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GET TO THE CENTER OF ARCHITECTURE

NATIONAL FEATURE

Deadnamed

BY LUCAS WALDRON AND
KEN SCHWENCKE, PROPUBLICA

The way cops in Jacksonville and other jurisdictions investigate the murders of transgender women adds insult to injury, and may be delaying justice.

Note: This story was updated Aug. 10 to reflect that an arrest was made in the non-fatal shooting of a 23-year-old transgender woman.

Aea Celestice, a Black transgender woman living in Jacksonville, Florida, has the most basic of plans for the next chapter of her life: She hopes to get out of town before someone kills her.

Celestice, 32, has good reason to worry. Over the past six months, four Black trans women in the city have been shot, three of them fatally.

Celine Walker, 36, was shot to death in her room at an Extended Stay America hotel near the University of North Florida on the night of the Super Bowl, Feb. 4. On June 1, Antonia “Antash’a” English, 38, was killed outside an abandoned home north of downtown. And on June 24, Cathalina James, 24, was gunned down in a room at a Quality Inn on the city’s south side.

The cases have left Celestice and others in Jacksonville’s transgender community rattled but it’s been the handling of the investigations by authorities that’s stirred outrage. In public statements and official documents, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office has repeatedly identified the victims as men, refusing to call them by the names they chose to use in their lives.

While an arrest has been made in the shooting of a 23-year-old trans woman, all three murders remain unsolved, and the insistence on referring to transgender women as men has left Celestice wondering just how much effort is being made to find the killer or killers. She wonders whether anyone outside of her community cares.

“There doesn’t seem to be a concern for anybody,” Celestice said. “I guess other people have other things going on in their lives than being concerned about a trans woman getting murdered.”

Studies show that transgender women are disproportionately likely to be victims of violent crime, not just in Jacksonville, but nationwide. Yet most local law enforcement agencies persist in handling these cases much like the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, or JSO.

The transgender community has a word for calling a trans person by the name they no longer use, one that conveys a double meaning when it involves murder. It’s known as “deadnaming.”

Across the nation, ProPublica found, some 65 different law enforcement agencies have investigated murders of transgender people since Jan. 1, 2015. And in 74 of 85 cases, victims were identified by names or genders they had abandoned in their daily lives. Our survey found that arrests have been made in 55 percent of the killings of

transgender people nationwide in the last three and a half years. The overall clearance rate for murders in the U.S. is only slightly higher, at 59 percent.

Advocates say that not using the name and pronoun a person was known by can slow down an investigation during its most critical hours. People who knew the victim or who saw them in the hours before they were murdered might only have known them by their preferred name and gender.

“If Susie is murdered, don’t use ‘Sam,’” said Monica Roberts, an activist and journalist who tracks murders of transgender people. Roberts worries that deadnaming both prevents the community from identifying victims and fosters mistrust of police.

Police at the handful of agencies that routinely use victims’ preferred names and pronouns say not doing so can damage the agency’s relationship with the transgender community, or alienate friends and family.

“That might lose the cooperation of the friends and family—the people we need to solve the case,” said Detective Orlando Martinez of the Los Angeles Police Department.

In investigating the murders of Walker, English and James, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office says it has just followed its policy, which is to identify people based on a medical examiner’s report and whatever name and sex are listed on their state identification.

After Walker’s death, the sheriff’s office referred to her in reports and public statements as a man and released a male name to the media, one she hadn’t used in years. Friends and activists called the agency, asking officers to respect Walker and use her chosen name, but say they were told that wasn’t how the agency handled such cases.

Bailey Bolden, a transgender woman and friend of Walker’s, said JSO told her the agency can’t assume that a man with breast implants identifies as a woman. Bolden said she viewed both JSO’s refusal to call her friend “she” and her interaction with the agency as deeply disrespectful.

When ProPublica reporters emailed JSO to ask for press releases sent out about James’ murder and referred to her as a transgender woman, public information officer Melissa Bujeda corrected us. “The victim is listed as a male,” she said.

Members of Jacksonville’s LGBT community say investigators have taken a low-key attitude towards a series of murders that should trigger alarm in any city.

Jacksonville is the 12th most populous in the country, with one of the largest police forces. And yet, it is not doing what smaller cities with far fewer resources have done. For example, the New Orleans Police Department sent a liaison to a town hall with the LGBT community within two weeks of two murders of transgender women last year.

It took more than a month after the third murder for the sheriff’s office to hold a public meeting and that gathering came only after sustained



Aea Celestice.

Photo by Gioncarlo Valentine for ProPublica

pressure from advocates and trans women, including rallies, phone calls, vigils and meetings.

Investigators say they have no evidence the shootings are related. To many in Jacksonville, that misses the point, which is that the attacks have been targeted against a vulnerable group with few defenders.

For Celestice, simply being a Black trans woman in the city right now feels unbearable.

“I have to get out of here,” she said. “I have a lot to offer, and it would be a shame if my life was cut short because someone decided that they wanted to kill me.”

Jacksonville is not unique. Transgender people are routinely misidentified by law enforcement officials in cities across the country.

Savannah Bowens, a 30-year-old transgender woman living in Jacksonville. Bowens is a pastor at her church and outspoken about the fight for respect in the transgender community. (Gioncarlo Valentine for ProPublica)

“Job-wise, [changing your name] helps,” said Savannah Bowens, a 30-year-old transgender woman in Jacksonville. “I think one of the root causes to why we deal with so much in our community is jobs.”

Bowens changed her name in 2017, after an employer noticed her old name on her driver’s license and called her into the office to question her about it. She decided then that she needed to legally update her identification.

“I don’t want to become a statistic,” Bowens said about potentially losing a job. “I don’t want to have to be that girl that people see walking the streets or prostituting.”

The consequences of getting clocked range from derogatory comments to death. In 2016, Dwanya Hickerson, a former sailor in the U.S. Navy, killed Dee Whigham, a 25-year-old nurse, by stabbing her 190 times in a hotel room in St. Martin, Mississippi. Hickerson, who admitted he had been chatting with Whigham online for several months before meeting in person, claimed he “lost it” after discovering she was transgender

during sex.

Name and gender changes to official documents can sometimes require court orders or come with onerous restrictions. In some states, such changes are not available to those with felony convictions, or require genital surgery that people may not want or be able to afford. For transgender people who move to states other than the ones they were born in, changing official records can be a bureaucratic nightmare.

About half the states bar felons or other people with criminal histories from changing their names. Cost can also be a factor. Name changes run from \$25 to \$400, though many courts will also waive those fees for people who can’t afford them.

Those who go through the court process are by no means guaranteed the desired outcome. Judges have broad discretion to deny name and gender marker changes, and it’s not uncommon for them to do so. The Utah Supreme Court heard arguments this year from attorneys representing two transgender people who were not allowed to change their gender on official documents.

“It’s a very frustrating, disjointed legal system right now for gender marker changes,” said Arli Christian, the state policy director for the National Center for Transgender Equality, or NCTE.

Note: ProPublica is investigating the barriers transgender and gender-nonconforming people face in changing their name or gender marker on government-issued IDs. Those who have had problems changing your name or gender marker can visit <https://www.propublica.org/getinvolved/have-you-had-problems-changing-your-name-or-gender-marker>.

This article is at <https://www.propublica.org/article/deadnamed-transgender-black-women-murders-jacksonville-police-investigation>. It was published with the permission of ProPublica.

The entire article about deadnaming is at [WindyCityMediaGroup.com](https://www.propublica.org/article/deadnamed-transgender-black-women-murders-jacksonville-police-investigation).

Chicago House opens trans drop-in on West Side

BY VEE L. HARRISON

Chicago House has opened a transgender drop-in space on Chicago's West Side.

Chicago House is a social-service agency that serves individuals and families who are disenfranchised by HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ marginalization, poverty homelessness, and/or gender nonconformity by providing housing, employment services, medical services and retention services.

Serving as a replica of the original trans safe drop-in located on the North Side at 1925 N. Clybourn Ave., Chicago House's new location is at 9 N. Cicero Ave. The location is a safe place for trans-identifying individuals on the West Side seeking services such as housing and medical assistance.

Chicago House is sharing office space with Task Force, another local social service organization, and is offering services at its West Side location Wednesdays 2-5 p.m. The North Side location will continue to be available for individuals in that area Monday afternoons.

Chicago House, which started as an HIV/AIDS organization in the 1980s, added transgender programming a few years ago. Since 2014 the organization has served nearly 600 transgender people in Chicago, according to the director of the agency's Trans Life Center, Josie Paul.

The mission of Chicago House's Trans Life Center is to provide medical, legal, and housing assistance to transgender people, primarily transgender women and primarily transgender women of color.

"Chicago House is a safe space where individuals can come in and participate in any of the services we provide," explained Paul. "We don't put up barriers to accessing services. We provide the service the individual is looking for."

Paul said that some services in the city makes it difficult for transgender individuals to receive the services and day-to-day assistance they may need. For example, some organizations require certain gender specifications and identification given at birth to provide services—Chicago House provides services to all transgender individuals, no matter their gender assigned at birth.

"We accept our clients and trust and value their self-determination," said Paul.

The only requirement is that the client must be 18 or older to receive services from Chicago House.

Paul said that it is very common for transgender individuals to be faced with hate crimes, abuse and even murder. The streets become a concrete jungle for transgender people, on all sides of the city. In this case, Chicago House realized the need for a safe drop-in on the West Side, in a particular area where transgender women have been violated and some even lost their lives.

"We recognize that this is a place a number of women have faced violence and murder on the West Side," said Paul.

Cicero Avenue is, in certain places, a rather



Reyna Ortiz.

Photo courtesy of Ortiz

infamous stroll, and transgender women can be particularly vulnerable in those spaces. This is why Chicago House's new location matters—it's convenient, and right in the heart of where their support is needed.

"We realize that our model on the North Side was successful, but those important services aren't accessible to all those who need them on the West Side," said Paul.

Reyna Ortiz, Trans Safe Coordinator at Chicago House, works with several of the clients who visit the North Side location and will now be working with clients on the West Side. She said it is a very rewarding job to work for Chicago House and

she's been with the organization for four years.

"A lot of trans women, specifically Black and Latino, are living in terrible poverty and that poverty branches off to other issues," said Ortiz. "Every client comes with a different story."

Ortiz works with the the transgender clients at Chicago House and learns firsthand of the needs most of the individuals are seeking. She said when she first meets a client, she has a very real and uncut conversation. Once the client is assessed, she works with other staffers at Chicago House to determine beneficial resources of the client and how Chicago House can provide those resources.

Ortiz said that many transgender people face discrimination and homelessness. Some do survival crimes, including sex work. Chicago House is known for housing assistance for the LGBTQ community, and housing is a serious issue among transgender people.

"Housing is the foundation of life," said Ortiz. "Society cannot expect anyone to flourish without housing."

Chicago House also helps with tasks such as employment and helping transgender clients obtain identification such as driver's licenses and birth certificates.

"The overall goal of the new Chicago House trans-safe drop-in is to see an amazing resource center for trans-identified people on the West Side," said Ortiz. They are working with transgender people on Chicago's West Side to "eliminate life-threatening issues and provide resources to help them."

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letters

*Howard Brown Health
and Humboldt Park*

To: Sol A. Flores
Executive Director
La Casa Norte

Dear Ms. Flores:

We, the undersigned residents and LGBT leaders of the Humboldt Park community, are deeply concerned about the possibility of Howard Brown Health (HBH) coming to our community and setting up shop without engaging in a communication process that involved having conversations and reaching out to community stakeholders and leaders doing critical work in Humboldt Park.

It is unfortunate that we had to find out about this possible arrangement through social media and not through direct outreach or communication from La Casa Norte or HBH. We not only find it extremely disturbing but also disrespectful, given the historical challenges that LGBT communities of color have had to undergo in interfacing with the larger mainstream LGBT organizations, like Howard Brown.

Howard Brown perfected the art of Walmart-ization on the South Side community of Englewood. As a large LGBT organization, Howard Brown leveraged its mass resources and muscled community-based organizations out of the picture. Without regard to organic, community efforts of those living and working in the community, the North Side agency landed in Englewood, opened its doors and sucked the oxygen out of the funding landscape—in essence, a form of institutional gentrification.

While Walmart marshals its treasure to drive out small, local business owners and dominate retail, Howard Brown has successfully copied this model by monopolizing communities' access to healthcare funds from local, state and federal health agencies. Both have tragic consequences on the lives of communities and indigenous leadership.

Howard Brown is now maneuvering to open for business in Humboldt Park. Without consulting local Puerto Rican/Latino, LGBT leaders and institutions that have engaged in this work for decades, Howard Brown is reopening its Englewood playbook and taking it to the Puerto Rican/Latino community. While needed resources are always welcome, the paternalistic attitude of riding in on its white horse to save the community is a well-worn trope. There is no hint of respect for what the community has accomplished and no desire to work with its recognized leadership. There is no reason to believe Howard Brown will build on and complement the successes of the community's decades of experience working with (as well as being a part of) the LGBT community in Humboldt Park.

This tragic misstep is evidence that Howard Brown lacks the humility and respect to the indigenous

LGBT leadership in the Puerto Rican/Latino community of Humboldt Park. And what is most disturbing is that the president/CEO of Howard Brown is of Latino descent and should have known better in terms of engaging our community given the historical challenges communities of color have faced with larger mainstream LGBT organizations. This is not only appalling, but also not acceptable.

While HBH deserves recognition for its pioneering work at the dawn of the AIDS pandemic, it did minimal work in Latino communities. In Humboldt Park, homegrown community organizers scrambled to strain resources to serve a mostly overlooked area of the city that was one of the hardest hit by the AIDS crisis in the nation. Our people were dying. Thirty years later, Vida/SIDA still provides critical, life-affirming services from the heart of Humboldt Park. A spinoff of Vida/SIDA, fashioned by many of the same people, is El Rescate—the Midwest's first transitional housing program for LGBTQ youth.

The Humboldt Park community boasts in our indigenous leadership that led to the furthering of LGBTQ projects and initiatives. For HBH to set up establish operations in the heart of our community without so much as an email is a considerable sign of disrespect at best, and a hostile attempt to go Walmart on Humboldt Park at worst.

Based on HBH's history with this community, we expect the worst. In 2012, HBH approached the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) to collaborate on a federal grant that targeted the health of the Latino transgender community of Chicago. HBH recognized the PRCC's long-standing and successful work with this vulnerable sector of the Latino community. After the two agencies signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU), HBH received essential data from the PRCC, and shortly thereafter exercised its right under a clause to terminate the MOU. HBH made sure it was the sole recipient of the large federal grant. While that might have been legally defensible, it was morally reprehensible.

We are strongly opposed to having HBH in our community and want to work with you and La Casa Norte to develop alternative solutions that are indigenous in nature. We, the leaders of Humboldt Park's LGBTQ community, call on HBH to cease and desist its plan to roll out a health center in Humboldt Park. While HBH is welcome to collaborate and complement the decades of success the Puerto Rican/Latino community has enjoyed through the past decades, we reject any and all attempts to sweep aside the effective, organically driven work the community has developed, which has inspired articles, scholastic research and countless presentations at national health conferences.

Thank you and we look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss our concerns about Howard Brown. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ruben D. Feliciano at 312-414-5814.

Sincerely,

Jessie Fuentes, co-chair, Puerto Rican Agenda; Ruben D. Feliciano, co-chair, Puerto Rican Agenda Housing Committee; Juan M. Calderon, chief operating officer, Puerto Rican Cultural Center; Janeida Fuentes, Puerto Rican Agenda National Boricua Human Rights Network; Leony Calderon, Nelson Rodriguez and Zenaida Lopez, community residents and LGBT leaders; Lisa Cruz, TransChicago-Humboldt Park; Roxanne Pixley, TransChicago and business owner; Ricardo Jimenez, program director, Vida/SIDA; Jesus Hernandez Burgos, TransChicago-Humboldt Park; Roberto Sanabria, Vida/SIDA co-founder & LGBT leader; and Doris Rodriguez and Maritxa Vidal, TransLatina Coalition

Cc: David Munar, Howard Brown Health Center

Howard Brown Health and La Casa Norte issued a joint response:

To whom it may concern:

La Casa Norte's new residential and community center is the culmination of many years of planning and hard work to further the organization's mission assisting families and youth facing homelessness.

The new site will make available 25 units of supportive housing to assist families and youth in rebuilding their lives. The new facility will house numerous social services and anchor La Casa Norte's central administration of its citywide services. Because of its pioneering work serving LGBTQ and homeless youth through the Broadway Youth Center, Howard Brown Health has been invited to establish a satellite clinic at La Casa Norte's new location so residents and existing La Casa Norte clients may benefit from onsite clinical care.

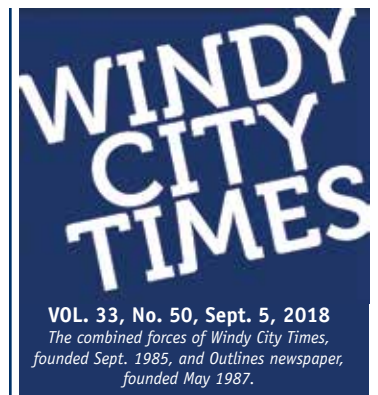
Standard to all Howard Brown locations, patients may receive full-spectrum primary care on a sliding scale, ranging from \$0 to \$25, based on income. No one will be turned away because of their inability to pay. Howard Brown's clinics are led by members of their local communities and each site works closely with community leaders to respond to needs on the ground, a priority embraced in the development of the new location at La Casa Norte.

As we plan our new collaboration, both organizations remain deeply committed to partnership with other groups and residents devoted to fighting homelessness and healthcare inequities facing communities of color, immigrants, youth, families and LGBTQ people.

Sincerely,

Sol Flores, Executive Director
La Casa Norte

David Ernesto Munar
President/CEO, Howard Brown Health



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(MAILING ADDRESS ONLY)

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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WCT reviews the one-woman production *Big Giant Love*.

Photo by Scotty Jones

THEATER FEATURE

Theater community talks August Wilson on production's eve

BY REGINA VICTOR

August Wilson (1945-2005) is a U.S. playwright best known for *The Pittsburgh Cycle*—10 plays that capture the African-American experience in each decade of the 20th century.

Wilson has had a profound effect on this writer and thousands of Black artists. My professional contemporaries were the understudies and the assistant directors and designers on his premieres. Now they are able to take the reins of these productions themselves and make new discoveries.

In 2016, this journalist was lucky enough to be an assistant director on a production of *Fences* at California Shakespeare Theater with Raelle Myrick-Hodges. Myrick-Hodges was invested in making the play relevant to the Black woman's experience, so the company went into the community, visiting senior centers and shelters and interviewing Black women about their perspectives on family, love and the ability to forgive. Those recordings were used by the sound designer to bring those modern women into the world of 1950's *Fences*, making their experiences flow seamlessly with Rose's.

Chicago artists came together to share their own experiences with Wilson's work, and why it's still relevant to them today:

—Ron OJ Parson, director of Court Theatre's *Radio Golf*: "I always want to direct August Wilson. I learn something new every time I direct his plays. Wilson is one of the most profound and prolific Black writers in history. *Radio Golf* in particular has such resonant moments surrounding

gentrification, it's hard not to see how this play isn't relevant."

—James Vincent Meredith, actor who portrays Roosevelt Hicks in *Radio Golf*: "We're about to have our final dress tomorrow, and I'm scared shitless. The fact that I'm working with August Wilson vets who have done a number of Wilson's plays—and yet still are in the weeds—is almost comforting.

"[I]t lets me know that whether it's your first August Wilson or your 21st, the language, the energy, the pace, the construction of a scene, the specificity, the emotional weight [is all] on a precise edge. [W]ithout the proper attention to detail and enough reps, the tires of the show just won't grip right.

"The language is so precise. Alfred Wilson [Elder Joseph Barlow in *Radio Golf*] mentions the music—when the language is spoken with the attention and care it demands, and it almost sings. Conversely, you can miss a word or invert a phrase, and instantly say to yourself 'naw, that ain't right.'

"His plays almost feel like a proving ground to an actor of color. You can do many other classical works, but August Wilson will expose you. You can't hide. You have to tell the truth. That should be true of all theatre for an actor, but Wilson's work absolutely demands it."

—Ronald Conner, actor in productions such as *Congo Square's Jitney*, *King Hedley II*; Court Theatre's *Seven Guitars*, *The Piano Lesson*; and Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*: "August Wilson influenced me as



Chuck Smith (left) and Anthony Irons in August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*.

Photo by Liz Lauren

performer on a cultural level because his characters felt like they were plucked right from my grandmother's kitchen.

"When I read his plays, I immediately understood the vernacular and the rhythm of the language. He remains relevant to American theatre because he provides a voice to the marginalized. As long as there is a working class in America there will be a place for August Wilson."

—Nambi E. Kelley, actor in Goodman's *Two Trains Running*, TheatreWorks' *Seven Guitars*, Fountain Theatre's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*: "August never went to college. He didn't even graduate high school. But he made his living as a writer, the most important Black writer of our time. In spite of all his accomplishments, accolades, and plays, I am left with what an incredibly humble human being he was.

"What an inspiration he was to me as a young playwright. How kind it was of him to spend 45 minutes hearing about my play and how he tried to help me get clarity on it from a professional perspective; how meeting him and spending a meal with him made me believe that I could make

a living doing the very thing that he does."

—Wardell Julius Clark, actor/director, Court Theatre's *Gem of the Ocean*; actor in Carver Theatre's *Fences*: "I love language, and August wrote how we talk. Any time you are able to inhabit one of his roles, it's like going home. I find new resonances and deeper understanding in each of the plays the more I read or see or teach them. The work is so rich, and it continually deepens."

—Ike Holter, playwright (*Sender*, *Prowess*, *The Wolf at the End of the Block*): "One of the most interesting things about August Wilson's legacy was the way he pushed for people of color to direct his work. It would be easy to just give these plays over to whoever wanted them, but his insistence in building the resumes of Black people is astounding and it's still reverberating.

"It also is helpful when doing new plays: instead of just taking whoever is thrown at a project, you, as the writer, have the power to say 'know what? I need someone who not only can understand these people, but IS one of these people.'

Turn to page 21

THEATER REVIEW

A Shayna Maidel

Playwright: Barbara Lebow

At: TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave.

Tickets: 773-281-8436;

TimeLineTheatre.com; \$40-\$54

Runs through: Nov. 4

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

A Shayna Maidel, first produced in the mid-1980s, is among the most successful of the many plays about those who survived or avoided The Holocaust. In this TimeLine production, it succeeds almost in spite of itself.

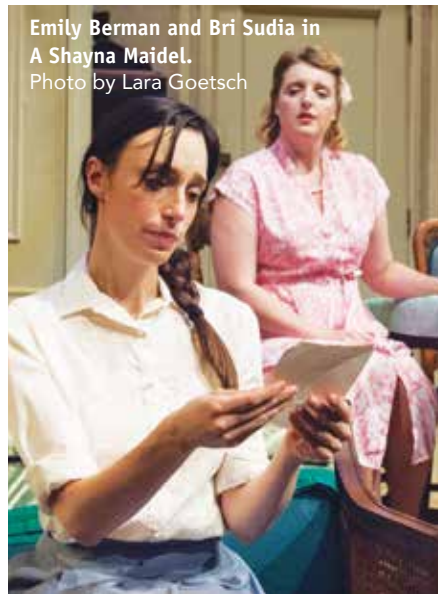
The play's language is credible enough but often is stiff and unspontaneous, while the plot utilizes arbitrary and artificial mechanics similar to 19th-century drama. It's also nearly devoid of humor and sentimentality—a hard, stern play in

which the three principal characters deeply repress their emotions. Like an October rose, however, it blooms late with an incident that—although artificial—provides necessary emotional release for the characters and audiences, and a bittersweet happy ending.

It's set in 1946 New York City, where 69-year-old Mordechai Weiss (Charles Stransky) is a successful Brooklyn businessman. He came from Poland in the '20s with his daughter, Raisel, just four. He planned to bring over his wife and older daughter when he'd made enough money, but the Depression wiped out his savings and then came Hitler. Although never vulgar, Mordechai is loud, peremptory and exhibits no emotion other than impatience. Raisel, meanwhile, is thoroughly assimilated. Living in a small-but-stylish Manhattan apartment, she calls herself Rose White (Bri Sudia until Oct. 21) and has few memories of her sister and none of her mother, not even that her mother called her "shayna maidel," Yiddish for "pretty girl." And then the sister, Lusía (Emily

Emily Berman and Bri Sudia in A Shayna Maidel.

Photo by Lara Goetsch



THEATER REVIEW

Big Giant Love

Playwright/performer: Maureen Muldoon

At: Madison Street Theatre, 1010 W.

Madison St., Oak Park

Tickets: 708-406-2491;

mstoakpark.com; \$15

Runs through: Sept. 23

BY KERRY REID

Solo performer Maureen Muldoon's autobiographical show (first in the new Power of One series at Oak Park's Madison Street Theatre) starts, quite literally, with a sign—one reading "A Pansexual Transgender Lives Here." The words are embla-

zoned across stripes of pink and blue—"a flag for a country I've never been to before," she tells us. And then she adds, "I need to Google that shit."

But it's hanging on the bedroom door of her teenager and youngest child, who also uses the sign (in smaller print) to inform his mom that he now uses masculine pronouns. And the search engine Muldoon really needs before talking to her kid is the one that takes her back through her own early life.

Fear was the guiding factor for her, she tells us. As the "baby sister" in a large Irish Catholic family in New Jersey's "Springsteen country," she never worked up the courage to jump off the high dive. Her mother worried about her being holed up in her own bedroom as a kid, "living in my own little world." ("It wasn't that little,"

she adds—a sign of the defiance bubbling just underneath her seemingly compliant surface.) Nuns scolded her for asking too many questions in class. Sex equaled shame—but also provided a temporary balm after an early profound loss. No wonder Muldoon worries about screwing up this first crucial conversation with her newly out trans child.

It's not that she's judgmental. Far from it. But she worries about how her kid will be accepted in a Midwest suburb. (Given the recent stories about the bullying and death threats faced by Oklahoma trans teen Maddie Rose and other crimes against trans people, those fears aren't unfounded, of course.) Muldoon wonders if it would be easier for both of them if her child came out as lesbian instead, then instantly berates herself. "I

Berman), unexpectedly arrives in New York as a Holocaust survivor.

All three Weisses are haunted, although Rose and Mordechai don't know it until Lusía's arrival triggers survivor's guilt. The left-behind mother/wife (Carin Schapiro Silkaitis) is the main ghost, but Lusía also is haunted by a childhood friend (Sarah Wisterman) and, especially, by memories of her lost young husband (Alex Stein). Can the three understand each other? Do they share anything other than blood? Can they be a family?

As directed by Vanessa Stalling—who's really come into her own in the last two years—all the performers are effective and gain our empathy except Stransky, who's not supposed to be sympathetic. Still, the play lumbers along—not because it's boring but because its deliberate pace offers no resolution without the late plot surprises.

The look is splendid. In short, the production has the integrity we've come to expect from TimeLine.

shouldn't have hierarchies of what is or isn't appropriate."

Muldoon brings a self-effacing charm to this tale, laced through with bits of made-up songs. Love of music was a survival strategy in her family of "passive-aggressive hummers." And when she finally knocks on the door and starts talking to her son, it's clear that they're helping each other grow up by being honest with each other.

Her meditations on the imaginal disc—the cells that survive the process of a caterpillar self-digesting before it turns into a butterfly—are a touch heavy-handed as a metaphor for metamorphosis. But Big Giant Love succeeds at showing how parenting is also a process of sometimes-messy, but absolutely necessary, transformations for the future achieved through confronting the past.

THEATER REVIEW

Fires of Nero: Rise of a Dictator

Playwright: Aaron Harris Woodstein

At: Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.

Tickets: <https://www.stage773.com/>;

\$15-\$20

Runs Through: Sept. 9

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

Rome has no shortage of cautionary tales among its rulers. Famously, Nero fiddled while the city burned, or so the spotty historical record says. In *The Fires of Nero: Rise of a Dictator*, playwright Aaron Harris Woodstein proposes to plumb Nero's psychological depths, explaining why this young leader brought ruin to his empire.

But when a play starts by quoting *Gladiator*, and covers 14 years' time in 70 minutes, there is little room for insight or compelling conflict. *The Fires of Nero* is a portrait of excess that indulges its worst impulses.

Nero (Nate Hall) is crowned emperor—or im-

perator, as he prefers to be called, for reasons never explained—after the death of his stepfather, who was clearly poisoned by Nero's over-attentive mother, Agrippina (Rebecca Sparks). As musician Paris (Danny Ferenczi) and yes-man Anicetus (Val Gerard Garcia Jr.) encourage his worst paranoid impulses, advisor Seneca (Kamil Borowski) attempts to temper his spending and poisonous plots. Agrippina ushers in the death of Nero's brother, while his wife Octavia (Rachel Hancz) and his mistress Poppaea (Ellie Campbell), as well as many men, vie for his affections.

This plot blurb makes the play sound more orderly than it is in performance. Nero may have been a pansexual man whose squashed artistic endeavors and abusive maternal relationship primed him to destroy everyone around him—but the playwright provides no dramatic through-line to flesh out this idea. If Nero is meant to be a contemporary warning about acting as bystanders during unjust rule, the parallels to now just aren't present in the script, and Woodstein undercooks every scene, allowing extended sequences of violence, particularly against women, to stand in for characters' conflict. Historical events unfold with little con-

text, and the mounting number of deaths became funny rather than tragic.

Moments of camp peer out of certain performances, particularly in Garcia's work as sycophant and stooge. But such humor motivates further confusion. Director Seth Wilson asks Sparks and Borowski, both very solid, to play their roles straight, while Hall is encouraged to blow the roof off Stage 773's studio space. The fights, directed by Matthew Perry Smith, feel like they go on forever, thus becoming exploitative. Scenes of intimacy, done by Tori Keeling, feel rough and ill-chosen.

The music, directed by Luke McLoughlin and written by Woodstein, fails at scope and dirge-like seriousness, with an early listing off of character relationships to Nero mimicking the opening number of *Hamilton*. The costume design, completed by Sparks, puts everyone in a collection of shiny and rapidly changing togas, and the less said about the simulation of funeral pyres via orange tulle, the better. The resulting miasma of distracting elements left me exhausted long before Rome finally burned. If Nero is meant as a warning, there are too many bells and whistles sounding for us to hear it.

CRITICS' PICKS

Gaslight District, The Second City E.T.C., open run. The 42nd E.T.C. revue waxes sardonic about Trump, improvises a song, cleverly incorporates an audience member and trumpets its multi-ethnic, multi-amorous cast. It's sure to change with the headlines. JA

Vietgone, Writers Theater in Glencoe, through Sept. 23. Miss Saigon this isn't! Qui Nguyen delivers a hipster-slick account of our allies in that long and dirty war that destroyed their homes and our morale that emerges all the more tragic for its refusal to traffic in sentimental stereotype. MSB

The African Company Presents Richard III, Oak Park Festival Theatre. Based on the true story of an African-American theater company in 1826, playwright Carlyle Brown's drama is timely, thrilling, tragic and joyful. It is also reason for hope: When art goes up against bigotry and violence, art ultimately wins. CES

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan

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THEATER FEATURE

In 'Second Skin,' playwright uses horror to explore gender, identity

BY AMELIA OROZCO

When Kristin Idaszak was writing *Second Skin*, she spooked the hell out of herself.

"I was looking for a genre I don't usually write in," she told *Windy City Times*. "In the research process, I made the mistake of watching [the acclaimed Australian horror flick] *Babadook* by myself, at night. The story was different but the use of the monster to talk about a larger, emotional experience is the same," she said.

The scares didn't end with the movie: Idaszak's *Babadook* viewing was followed by a run-in with a spider and a drive down a dark road. She took both as signs she was on the right path with her play, which opens in previews Tuesday, Sept. 11, at the 2B Theatre in Wicker Park's Den Theatre.

The world-premiere (a recipient of the Kennedy Center's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award and the Jean Kennedy Smith Playwriting Award) Wildclaw Theatre production centers on a woman called home to care for her dying mother. The play's theme of redemption is universal, Idaszak said, and will play well in the intimate, 50-seat theater.

Windy City Times: Why the horror genre?

Kristin Idaszak I'm really interested in the things that haunt us. The ghost is a metaphor or a function for the extreme of living with anxiety. Anxiety is so pervasive, it's become a social condition. This genre drew me because I was able to take an experience that's debilitating and tackle it in a way that is theater.

WCT: You've got 30 seconds to describe *Second Skin*. Go.

KI: This is a play about the mistakes we make, [and] about the way we hurt the people we love the most. And how we can live an entire life in the mistake of the moment, and the anxiety that comes from that.

WCT: In an age of digital media, how does telling this story feel in a live space?



Kristin Idaszak.

Photo courtesy of WildClaw Theatre

KI: It's powerful to be in a room full of friends. [It is] a space we don't always get to inhabit. It conveys how radical it feels to just be telling the story.

SPOTLIGHT

Average age of entry for a child sold into prostitution: 12. Average lifespan thereafter: 7. The facts surrounding trafficked children ensure that Mary Bonnett's drama *Monger*—inspired by interviews she's done both trafficked children and the men who buy them—is tragically timely. Director John Mossman (pictured) helms the story of a grieving mother and an attorney charged with interviewing her about her child's disappearance. It runs through Sept. 30 at Herstory Theatre at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. Admission is \$35



(a portion of proceeds go to vetted organizations fighting child trafficking); visit <http://www.herstorytheater.org/>.

Caption: Photo courtesy of Mossman

The all-woman cast [Stephanie Shum, Paula Ramirez and Hilary Williams] grapples with a part of my experience with gender and gender identity, the anxieties around caregivers, about caring enough, my queerness. It can only happen when we are all in a room together. You cannot replicate it.

WCT: Compared to your other work, how personal is this?

KI: For me, this is a really deeply personal play. Even though it's a magical world, my hope is that there is something about the actors that the audience connects with. The actors are so deeply vulnerable and deeply committed to telling this story. It's an opportunity to feel a little bit of the possibility for redemption and, hopefully, cry.

WCT: What are you looking for on opening night?

KI: I sit in the back of the theater and watch the audience. I watch closely, when they sit back, when they really pay attention, when they are

looking at the program, leaning forward or holding their breath. It's really magical. It feels really nebulous and it's compelling to watch.

WCT: Who do you see as the audience?

I believe that even those who might not go see theater but are invested in this genre can use this for dealing with larger, political questions in a way that is fun. It is unapologetically a thrilling experience to have.

WCT: During the writing process, do you imagine [the play] one way, while it may turn out another way on stage?

It's not drastically different. I always have something in mind. I leave enough room for the other artists involved. What begins as a kernel grows and there's real joy in finding collaborators. It's even more exciting than you can imagine who share this.

Second Skin runs Sept. 11-Oct. 13 at the Den 2B Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. Tickets are \$15-\$30; visit <http://thedentheatre.com>.



Some of Dreamboat's ensemble members. Photo by Ray Glass

COMEDY FEATURE

Dreamboat offers LGBTQ improv

BY DELIA KROPP

The two women singing as a warm-up act to an iO improv show on a recent Thursday night were not an unusual act: Solos or small groups precede every performance of Dreamboat, a fresh young troupe at the world-famous iO (formerly the Improv Olympic) Theatre.

So what made this evening more than a little different? For one, performers Debra Duncan and Kayla Quiros would be exchanging marriage vows in just two days. The audience couldn't resist the romance of it all, and greatly enjoyed their little set of three songs, covers from the group Secret Sisters and one very touching original titled, appropriately, "Love Song."

For another, the 10-member improv team that followed the warm-up is the first all-queer show in the history of the iO. Until Dreamboat, co-founders and co-producers Duncan and Rachel Smith said, there was no solely LGBTQ improv team at the iO.

The time is now

Both graduates of the iO's year-long train-

ing program, Duncan and Smith thought it odd that the acclaimed company didn't already have a queer troupe, aside from temporary events during Pride month.

"Then the house team we were on together got cut, so it was 'well, if we're ever going to do it, now's the time,'" Smith said.

Dreamboat has about 30 ensemble members, most of whom perform in other shows as well. Of these, 10 perform at any given Dreamboat performance. Somewhat surprisingly, this is not an evening of Pride-themed performances. The set this writer saw featured very few explicitly LGBT characters or content. Even most "couples" improvised in the moment were cisgender and straight.

"I think that's just a difference between improv and sketch. We aren't going out with any specific thematic goals we want to hit," Smith said.

"Last week the show was *very gay*," Duncan added. "It just depends on how we're all feeling in the moment. I don't feel we have any goals, or any template, because people aren't overthinking about any improv they have to do. Whatever happens, it's because people aren't thinking, in a very beautiful way."

Read the entire feature about Dreamboat online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

BOOK REVIEW

The Great Believers

by Rebecca Makkai

\$24.99; Penguin; 257 pages

REVIEW BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

Rebecca Makkai pulls you in.

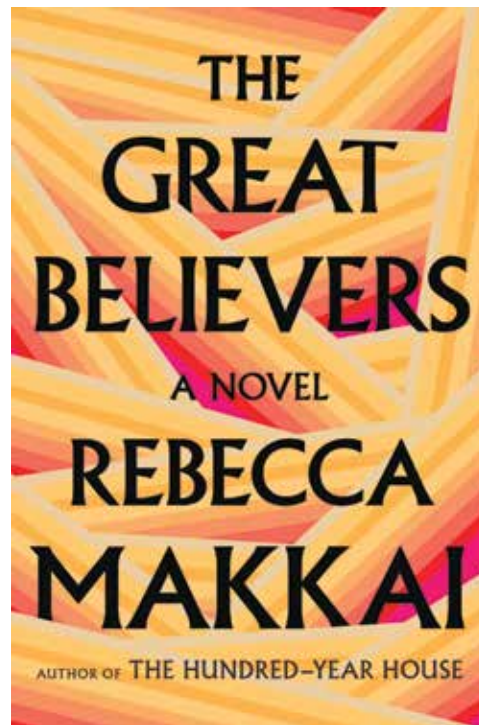
Whether you're a wide-eyed writing student hanging on to her every word, a bibliophile listening to her interview another author at The Book Cellar or Women and Children First, or a reader thousands of miles away tearing through her latest, Makkai's voice is hypnotic. Whatever she cares about, so will you by the time she finishes a sentence. Her latest, *The Great Believers*, is by far her most-hyped (she even appeared on *Late Night With Seth Meyers* last month to plug the book) and with good reason. Makkai's magnetism is on full display, and her empathetic take on the AIDS crisis and its aftermath makes for a heartwrenching must-read.

The Great Believers alternates between two distinct eras with a series of related characters. In the late 1980s, Yale Tishman fundraises for Northwestern University's art gallery while watching his friends die. His partner is pulling away, his intern is showing more than a professional interest, and Yale is hit especially hard by the loss of his friend Nico. Over two decades later, Nico's younger sister Fiona has come to Paris hoping to find her adult daughter, who's succumbed to the influences of a cult.

Those of us who were young or not even born at the height of the AIDS crisis have heard the stories. Funerals happened weekly, sometimes daily. Entire apartment buildings were wiped out. Everyone was either scared to have sex or threw caution to the wind, disregarding protection in fits of nihilism. Makkai brings these struggles and more to life, eschewing sad-sack clichés in favor of thorough characterizations and many funny moments (because if you can't laugh during the darkest of times, when can you?).

Both Yale and Fiona are achingly real in their longing for visual beauty and human connection, and relentless in their quests to find something real, whether that's a sketch from an obscure 1920's artist or face time with a long-lost grandchild. The people in their world throw themselves into photography, fundraising, printing a gay newspaper that would horrify Ronald Reagan. Every character in *The Great Believers* has an arc and a purpose, so human it's almost hard to bear.

And in the midst of a crisis, jobs have to be done and life lived. Makkai gives work-related road trips and coffee-house chats as much dramatic weight as she does memorial services. Flirtations happen in rest rooms, life-altering conversations take place during nanny gigs at the Lincoln



Park Zoo. Rather than make every event epic, Makkai finds the truth in quiet, otherwise mundane moments and her beautiful sense of detail (sticky strawberry wine during a tryst, an abandoned cat with a personality) infuses life into a story about death.

Alternating between Yale and Fiona's narratives, *The Great Believers* is a breathless page-turner. I cared deeply about both characters and their struggles and found myself thinking about them when I was away from the book. I even kept an eye out for them in my neighborhood, having a drink at Sidetrack or taking in the sky at Belmont Harbor. Makkai's characterization, dialogue and plot are flawless, taking a much-discussed subject and turning it into a story that's simultaneously universal and deeply personal.

Not much is written about the AIDS epidemic outside of New York and San Francisco settings. *The Great Believers* hits Chicagoans where we live, with a host of recognizable locations. (Yale dreams of buying a place on Briar and Halsted; Fiona works at Brown Elephant, among other loving details.) Makkai did her homework, and it shows, placing the reader firmly in the time and place, whether it's a Boystown bar in 1989 or a French gallery in 2015. And whether or not you know someone affected by AIDS, the novel's central theme will firmly resonate: those we love will leave us, and we have no choice but to move on while remembering and yes, believing.

AUGUST from page 17

"Yes, I believe that many different types can see things clearly, but it means something more when we are shut out of these jobs, time and time again, to make way for a white person. When I say 'I need someone of color to direct this,' the theater knows there has been an established precedent of that happening."

—Derrick Sanders, director of productions such as Marin Theatre's *Wilson's Fences*, Signature Theatre's *King Hedley II*; and Kennedy Center's *August Wilson's 20th Century*: "August Wilson is one of my primary influences as an artist. He allowed me, very early in my career, to participate in the development and production of two of his Broadway bound shows. I am a more detailed, sensitive, and lan-

guage driven director, because of his mentorship.

"He revealed to me that every moment of a play is a delicate kaleidoscope of love, pain, joy, expectations, disappointments, tears and terrors meant to lift our audience to a cathartic understanding of themselves and the space they occupy."

—Chuck Smith, director of Goodman's *Two Trains Running*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; dramaturg, Goodman's *Gem of the Ocean*; curator, Goodman's *August Wilson Celebration*; and fellow, Penumbra Theatre: "The theater artists who hung out at Dixies following *Penumbra* rehearsals and performances had a running joke, 'Be careful what you say around August 'cause it'll end up in a play.'"

Radio Golf runs through Sept. 30 at Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis Ave.; visit <https://www.courttheatre.org>.

Music of the Baroque holding September concerts

Music of the Baroque kicks off its 48th season with the free event "Baroque in the Park," the organization's Millennium Park debut, on Wed., Sept. 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion.

Longtime Music of the Baroque Music Director Jane Glover will direct and radio personality Carl Grapentine will host this concert highlighting three major works featured in the organization's 2018-19 season: Mozart's *Requiem*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, featuring concertmaster Gina DiBello as soloist.

Music of the Baroque's 2018-19 season continues Saturday, Sept. 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Harris Theater and Sunday, Sept. 16, at 3 p.m. at Skokie's North Shore Center with Mozart's *Requiem*, the work featured in the movie and stage play *Amadeus*.

Ticket are \$25-78 each; visit Baroque.org or call 312-551-1414. Discounts for groups, students and seniors are available.

CULTURE CLUB

Craig Hella Johnson.
PR photo by James Goulden



NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

Composer brings Matthew Shepard's memory to life

BY JERRY NUNN

Craig Hella Johnson is a choral conductor and composer who is keeping an important person's legacy alive through music.

Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered in 1998 after being tortured and tied to a fence in near freezing temperatures by two men. His attack and death led to hate crime legislation being created and passed as law. His mother, Judy Shepard, became a LGBT activist and his life became inspiration for a show coming to Ravinia Festival in Highland Park, Illinois.

Johnson has a strong background in music, studying it throughout school. He founded and is the artistic director for the group Conspire, which won a Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for its album *The Sacred Spirit of Russia*.

Windy City Times: Tell our readers about you.

Craig Hella Johnson: I am from northern Minnesota. I received a piano performance degree in college at St. Olaf.

WCT: Like Rose Nylund from *The Golden Girls*—St. Olaf?

CHJ: [Laughs] It's a real choral school and they finally gave her an honorary degree. I was at University of Illinois, Juilliard and did a doctorate at Yale.

I have been in Texas for over 20 years. I came down for a job at the University of Texas in Austin to lead the choral program. I was the artistic director at Chanticleer and for many years director of the Victoria Bach Festival. I have been the resident artist at Texas State University. I also do a lot of guest conducting.

I am the founder of Conspire. That is my main

job. We are celebrating our 25th anniversary along with these tours this year.

WCT: You live with your partner in Texas?

CHJ: Yes—Philip Overbaugh.

WCT: How did you get started with the Matthew Shepard project?

CHJ: It has been an extraordinary and meaningful project to be involved with. Back in 1998, when I first learned about Matt Shepard and what had happened to him really pierced my heart. I had the initial instinct in wanting to respond in some way.

As a choral conductor, I imagined creating a passion piece for Matthew Shepard. I felt I need to commit time to it. In 2012, I decided to really step forward with it and did a workshop by 2014. In 2016 we had the complete version of this. It was something we needed to do as a personal expression. I was glad Conspire was interested in performing it and Harmonia Mundi was interested in recording it.

The fact it has taken a more extended journey has been really beautiful. We are doing three tours this year. We have sang it at Boston Symphony Hall last year and student groups at Harvard. With commemorating the 20th year of Matt's life and death a lot more performances with other groups will start springing up.

WCT: Describe the show.

CHJ: It is a 100 minutes long, so concert-length, with no intermission. We focus on the last days of Matthew Shepard's life and the tragic events that occurred. At the beginning we introduce Matt as a living vibrant person. There is a movement called "Ordinary Boy" that really brings snapshots of him. It is not his death story, but his life story.

There are some of his own words that we share from his journals when he was in high school and early college.

I talk about the pieces as a form of meditation so the listener can face some of these existential questions. These expressions of hate and violence is something we can hardly fathom. Is love with a capitol L anywhere to be found?

It is about Matt, but also the listener, too. There are questions about why this would take place in our world. The piece ends in a place of hope. We don't leave these performances in the dark of it all. We leave this invitation in a place where hope can lead us.

There is a feeling of connection and renewal. The experience is a hybrid for sure. We are a professional choir, so those are our roots. I conduct from the piano. We have eight instruments. It is a

broad spectrum of styles. There are classical elements with country folk songs, blues and Gregorian chant. It is intended to reach many listeners. It is stylistically rich in that way.

WCT: Are there visuals?

CHJ: There are some beautiful visuals that hold the work. We see pictures of Matt and read words from his journal. They are projected in his own writing. It is lovely what our team has put together here. I'm very inspired by what they have done.

WCT: Has Matthew's family seen this?

CHJ: Yes. They are super-supportive and have been from the beginning. Judy first saw it in Boston at Symphony Hall.

WCT: Have you heard the Elton John song "American Triangle?"

CHJ: Of course. Elton John has heard our music also. He wrote a note to Judy expressing approval for the piece and admiration for it.

WCT: Jason Marsden, from the foundation, is involved somehow?

CHJ: Yes. He is the director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation. He travels with us often and will speak at our talkbacks after the concert. This has really been a partnership and they have been very supportive.

WCT: What do you want audiences to take away from your show?

CHJ: I want people to have an experience of coming into the conference hall, to slow down and breathe. I want them to connect with themselves and others.

In the title I love the word "considering." I like to invite people to a place of consideration. I hope it can connect us.

WCT: You won a Grammy. Where do you store it?

CHJ: It is actually on the piano at home. Everybody wants to hold it. The group has been nominated eight times so it was nice to win.

WCT: What is next for you?

CHJ: We have September, October and April tours. We have a full year of the 25th-anniversary celebrations in Austin so several concerts throughout the season here.

I am working on a new piece that should be completed in the fall of 2019. I am having a great time making music and I feel fortunate to be able to do it.

Visit Ravinia.org for the tickets to Considering Matthew Shepard on Wed., Sept. 12. For more on the choral ensemble, visit Conspire.org.

Andersonville Arts Week Sept. 12-16

The Andersonville Chamber of Commerce (ACC) will present the 16th annual Andersonville Arts Week on Sept. 12-16—a month earlier than prior years.

Featuring nine art genres, more than 60 local businesses and more than 150 artists, ACC will highlight arts programming throughout the neighborhood over the course of a five-day event. Art genres showcased include visual, theatre, dance, music, handmade, culinary,

kids/family, public and literary.

Returning mainstays of the event include the Self-Guided Art Walk (all week), which transforms local businesses into art galleries visitors can enjoy at their leisure, and the Friday Night of Artists Receptions & Neighborhood Parties on Sept. 14 at 5-10 p.m.

ACC will host a pop-up Arts Week headquarters in an available storefront at 1511 W. Berwyn Ave. at 5-9 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 14; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 15; and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 16. A full schedule and map of participating locations are available at Andersonville.org/aaw.

ART

Jamaican fruit and flowers bloom in Chicago

BY ANA SERNA

Cris Avery's anatomy brought him and Armani Dae together in 2014.

The two artists officially met for the first time at a Community Kinship Life conference in Philadelphia, where Dae lived at the time. Avery, a co-founder of CK Life, conducts conferences nationally for the organization that aim to educate the trans community on gender-affirming treatments and surgeries, health and wellness in the trans experience. Their objective is to create a "space for trans people to come into their best possible self," a mission that Avery and Dae have embraced to the fullest.

One of the many types of conferences that CK Life offers members are surgery Show-and-Tells, where people can see how different bodies heal after transitioning procedures. It's done "in a respectful way," said Avery. "Nobody touches [and] there's no catcalling." According to Avery, those conferences are the most beneficial in areas where people who have not had surgical procedures feel more alone or would need to travel several states away to see a doctor. It was in that setting, after Dae had gone to a few conferences led by Avery, where the two began sharing more of themselves with each other.

"I walk in and I get my seat, and the first person up [on stage] showing and telling is Cris," said Dae of one of his first times at a Show-and-Tell conference, "I was like, is Cris taking his pants off?!" The two had been running in the same circles for months but hadn't properly introduced themselves until then. When they found out they were both creative, a friendship blossomed organically.

"As I learned things [about gender-affirmation surgery], I helped other people," said Avery. "I have a background in insurance counseling, so I used that to help people get their procedures covered by insurance." Dae became one of those people.

For Avery and Dae, one thing led to another—helping each other through their individual journeys led to them sharing their art with each other.

Jamaican Fruit is a three-book autobiographical series written by Avery. Jamaican Fruit, Ripe Jamaican Fruit and Real Ripe Jamaican Fruit follow him through his transitional experience up until the gender-affirmed man that he is today. As the titles suggests, growing up with a Jamaican cultural background plays a big part in Avery's identity and personal expression.

"I kept all my art ... my writing, in a box for 12

years. I was focusing on my own medical transition," says Avery. "That's what kept me alive," he said, referring to his art. The Jamaican Fruit served as an outlet for Avery to purge all the feelings he was struggling with during his transition.

Similarly, Dae's photography and paintings helped him deal with the body dysphoria that often accompanies the trans experience. "The majority of my artwork is about celebrating our journeys ... and our bodies. There's no prototype of person. There's no one way to look," said Dae. "Regardless of race, sexuality, whatever it is, we're all beautiful. It seems like, often, trans bodies are the last on the totem pole."

Dae has four published books: Exposed Truth, which is a black-and-white photo book, and his three-part series titled after wildflowers, Hyacinth, Bachelor's Button and Touch Me Not. Exposed Truth is a compilation of photographs and stories featuring only trans bodies of color. The WiLD series is a more personal project, as it is a collection of poems, lyrics and messages to those who try to censor trans experiences. Dae's visual artworks as well as his writings capture the journey of struggling to, and then finally, embracing the body that the subject lives in.

Dae, who also comes from a Jamaican family, faced rejection from relatives both when he came out and when he came out as transgender "I said to myself, 'you're going to live your truth now or you're going to kill yourself,'" said Dae. "And I wasn't going to do that."

It makes sense that Avery and Dae are showcasing their work together, as even though they create pieces in different mediums, their message is the same. Avery brings the Jamaican fruits and Dae brings the Jamaican flowers—blossoming concurrently. "I chose to ... be myself out in the open," said Dae. "You can choose to tell people, 'this is my truth; this is who I am. You can either take it or leave it.'"

Avery and Dae say to expect a variety of everything: dance, singing, hearing passages from both artists' books, visual artwork, as well as education on the trans experience.

Avery and Dae said they hope that the audience leaves their exhibition with a newfound appreciation for the beauty of each of their unique bodies. "When you're born, you're naked. Before you have to hide [your body] and layer it with clothes, makeup, wigs—you're naked," said Dae. "Celebrate your body as it is."

The "Jamaican Fruit & Flowers Artistic Experience" will take place Friday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m. Mind + Hand, 5400 S. Pulaski Rd. Admission is free with a book purchase or preorder, or \$10 without one at the door.



Cris Avery (left) and Armani Dae.

Photo courtesy of Avery

Cher to release ABBA covers CD Sept. 28

On the heels of appearing in the film *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*—which features ABBA songs—Cher will be releasing *Dancing Queen*, a new album of all-ABBA hits, on Sept. 28 through Warner Bros. Records.

In a press release, Cher said, "I've always liked Abba and saw the original *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, I was reminded again of what great and timeless songs they wrote and started thinking, 'Why not do an album of their music?' The songs were harder to sing than I imagined but I'm so happy with how the music came out. I'm really excited for people to hear it. It's a perfect time."

Some of the songs on the album include "SOS," "The Winner Takes It All," "Waterloo," "Mamma Mia" and the title song. Those who pre-order the new album will immediately receive Cher's rendition of the song "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)"; visit <https://wbr.lnk.to/DancingQueen>.

Cher is scheduled to be awarded a Kennedy Center Honor on Dec. 2 in Washington, D.C. Also, she is a co-producer of the *The Cher Show*, which ran this summer in Chicago and will run on Broadway starting Dec. 3, and will be touring Australia and New Zealand in September. She is currently performing a residency at MGM Resorts.

Martha Wash in 'WaistWatchers' in Sept.-Oct.

WaistWatchers The Musical! makes its Chicago premiere at the Royal George Theatre, 1641 N. Halsted St., beginning Sept. 13 for an open run, with a press opening Sept. 21.

Produced by Dana Matthow and featuring musical icon Martha Wash—known for singing the powerful anthem "It's Raining Men," and "Everybody Dance Now"—the musical takes a light-hearted and hilarious look at women dealing with their relationship to food, friendship and fitness, while celebrating the power of female friendship on the journey to self-acceptance.

In addition to Martha Wash starring as Connie (Sept. 13-Oct. 28), the Chicago production will feature Sarah Godwin (Cindy), Seandrea E. Earls (Cheryl) and Katherine S. Barnes (MC). The creative team includes Matthew E. Silva (director), Alan Jacobson (creator, book and lyrics), Vince Di Mura (music) and Dani Tucci-Jurruga (choreography).

Tickets start at \$45 each; visit WaistwatchersTheMusical.com or call the Royal George Theatre Box Office at 312-988-9000.

'Trans Art Is' opens with celebration

The Chicago Therapy Collective—which works to create a safer, just and inclusive Chicago for transgender/gender non-conforming individuals—hosted an opening-night celebration of a “Trans Art Is” gallery exhibit at the Andersonville Galleria, 5247 N. Clark St., on Sept. 1.

The exhibit will run throughout September. (It will be open seven days a week.)

In addition, there will be a “Trans Art Is” live outdoor performance at Berwyn Avenue and Clark Street on Saturday, Sept. 15, 6-9 p.m.; and a closing-night party on Sunday, Sept. 30, 3-6 p.m.

Visit “Chicago Therapy Collective” on Facebook or stop by ChicagoTherapyCollective.org.



Trans Art Is curator Hereaclitus Here Vernon (left) and Iggy V Ladden, founder of Chicago Therapy Collective and Trans Art Is project director. Right: Mookily 10, by Lemon Wood.

Photos by Chuck Kramer



WCT COLORS

Windy City Times: An LGBTQ History Coloring Book Series



This week's Windy City Times Coloring Book illustration of icons from LGBTQ history is of lesbian tennis legend **Billie Jean King** by artist Ingrid Skare. King, born in 1943, has remained a vital contributor to the women's sports movement well after her peak years as a tennis icon, from her 1973 Battle of The Sexes win over Bobby Riggs to making sure the women were treated fairly in prize money. A former No. 1 player, she won 39 Gran Slam titles, and is one of the top athletes of all time. King founded of the Women's Tennis Association and the Women's Sports Foundation.

Del Shores in Chicago in Sept.

Professional theater and school Windy City Performs (WCP) has announced Del Shores—the mind behind the Sordid Lives series—as its first guest artist-in-residence this fall.

Sordid Lives, Shores' fourth play, opened in Los Angeles in 1996 and ran 13 sold-out months. In 1999, Shores wrote and directed the film version of Sordid Lives starring Beau Bridges, Delta Burke, Olivia Newton-John, Bonnie Bedelia, Leslie Jordan and Beth Grant, along with most of the cast from the play.

Shores will perform his new production, Six Characters in Search of a Play, the weekends of Sept. 15-16 and 22-23 at the Playhouse @ Jefferson Park, WCP's performance home at 4766 N. Milwaukee Ave. In addition, Shores will lead workshops on Sept. 17-20 on auditions, scene studies and writing.

Tickets start at \$25 each (\$45-\$75 for the workshops); visit <http://windycityperforms.com/Event-List/>.



Del Shores.

Photo by Rosemary Alexander



Left to right: Miss Continental Plus Chy'enne Valentino, Mr. Continental Sir Valentino, Miss Continental Stasha Sanchez, pageant system owner Jim Flint, Miss Continental Elite Lorna Vando. Photos by Jack Neilsen

New Miss Continental chosen

Labor Day weekend concluded with the crowning of Stasha Sanchez as the new Miss Continental, Monday, September 3, at The Vic Theatre. Sanchez rose to the top from a field of 27 candidates to emerge the winner.

Sanchez joins fellow 2018 titleholders Miss Continental Plus 2018 Chy'enne Valentino, Miss Continental Elite 2018 Lorna Vando and Mr. Continental 2019 Sir Valentino, who himself was crowned Saturday, September 1 at the Park West.

Photos by Jack Neilsen



WINDY CITY TIMES

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To exhibit, contact: terri@windycitymediagroup.com

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Memories, medals bring joy to Chicagoans at Gay Games in Paris

BY ROSS FORMAN

As the traditional flag moved from Paris 2018 to Hong Kong 2022, thus ending the 10th version of the Gay Games on Sunday, Aug. 12, there were plenty of tears—of pride and joy, not just sadness that the quadrennial sports and cultural extravaganza had come to an end.

The closing ceremony was held in the Parvis de l'Hôtel de Ville with more than 5,000 participants and volunteers attending.

The Paris 2018 Games spanned nine days, with a variety of sports, culture and festivities—and more than 13,000 participants, including 10,000 athletes and about 3,000 volunteers. Plus, more than 200 media from 30 countries covered the Paris Games, organizers said.

Chicago was represented by more than 170 participants in Paris, and many returned to O'Hare International Airport with gold, silver and/or bronze medals.

Dawn Barcus, for instance, won the bronze in the 5K race.

"I was thrilled to win my medal," said Barcus, 49, who competed in the 5K race, the 10K race, and the half marathon, representing Chicago Frontrunners. "There's got to be a video somewhere, which I would love to show my mom.

"You would have thought I'd won the race rather than [finishing in] third-place in the 'middle-age woman' division. The race was in a beautiful, very hilly park and it was raining. I finished, said hey to the Chicago Frontrunners, photographed my results and left the venue. I got on the train, showed my results to some other runners who said, 'You should go back.' So I did.

"When I was called up to the podium, I jumped up and down the whole time and couldn't stop smiling. I've done well in other races and certainly did not run my fastest, but it was the Gay Games. It was so moving. Few of my friends were still there, but everyone in the crowd cheered and cheered. In fact at the next event, I was recognized as the very excited Chicagoan who won a medal."

This was Barcus' third Games, following Cleveland and Chicago.

Russ Klettke won silver in the triathlon, in the men 60-64 division, though he was three days shy of turning 60.

"The Paris Gay Games were my fifth since 1990, and they are always an affirming experience," Klettke said. "Meeting gay triathletes from a few dozen other countries reminds me we're all just one species with shared interests and a lot to give to the world.

"When the Russian team entered the stadium at the Opening Ceremonies, there was an elevated applause. At first I thought, 'Russia? They're the bad guys.' And then I remembered that LGBT Russians are under a lot of threat right now. What a brave act for them to be here."

Klettke added, "They performed 'This is Me' from the movie *The Greatest Showman* at the closing ceremonies. I'm probably the last gay guy who never heard it before that night and it brought me to tears. The song sums it up for me: Being an aging gay triathlete is kind of a quirky thing, and there were many hard things that happened along the way, but it's exactly who I am and who I want to be."

Mel Ferrand traveled overseas with the four-star Chicago flag, and returned with two bronze tennis medals, in mixed and women's doubles.

Josh Bradley spends his summer Sunday's playing softball in the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), and that paid off in Paris. He won silver in slow-pitch and gold on a fast-pitch team. "I'm so proud of my teammates," he said.

Steve Figg grabbed three diving gold medals.

Brian Gilbert scored diving bronze.

"Gay Games X in Paris was an amazing experience," said Figg, of Windy City Diving. "What a privilege to compete internationally. I can't wait



Josh Bradley.

Photo courtesy of Bradley

for Hong Kong 2022."

Even without a medal, memories were plentiful for the Chicago contingent.

Jackie Kaplan-Perkins and Ann Kaplan-Perkins competed in the triathlon in Paris, with their son, David.

"David competed, too—just finished way before us," Ann said. "It was a beautiful course and



Jackie Kaplan-Perkins (middle), Ann Kaplan-Perkins and son David at the Gay Games.

Image courtesy of Ann Kaplan-Perkins

a great day."

Bernard T. Bartilad, 50, also participated in the triathlon (Olympic distance) and though he didn't win a medal, he beat his goal-time of 3:30, finishing in 3:25.

"We always look forward to the Gay Games where we all get together celebrating diversity, culture, friendships and love of sports. Having it Paris was so special since it's one of my favorite cities," Bartilad said. "This is the first time I competed in a triathlon outside the U.S. and it's in Paris, how awesome is that. This also was a milestone since it was the first time I swam without a wetsuit, which was a little bit worrying, but it worked out well."

Bartilad was joined overseas by his husband, Michael Herman, and their son, Adam, 11.

Herman actually won gold in ballroom dance and it was Adam's second Gay Games as a spectator.

"[Adam] joined us in Cleveland in 2014, where he got hooked on the Games. He can't wait to participate in Gay Games 2026," Bartilad said.

The three walked together in the Paris Opening Ceremony, "which will always be memorable," Bartilad added.

Bartilad also was joined in Paris by his sister, Rose, and brother-in-law Cid—for their first Games experience. "They had a blast," Bartilad said. "Truly, the Gay Games brings people together."

The Paris event was the fifth Games for Bartilad.

"I will always remember the Paris Games because of Paris and we were with friends and family celebrating the Games and the city," he said. "We meet friends who are now part of our family.

"Thank you to the organizers of the Paris Gay Games and the Federation of Gay Games for a job well done. We look forward to participating in Hong Kong Gay Games in 2022."

Eric Lueshen, of Chicago, said the Paris Games brought him "an overwhelming sense of joy and

contentment—from achieving goals many told me were impossible due to health conditions I've been through and continue to suffer, to seeing beautiful sights, and to hanging out and meeting many old friends and new."

Lueshen won gold in the high jump, and two silver.

"Back surgery, neuromuscular disorder, and other injuries couldn't stop me from achieving a goal I set four years ago as I watched as a spectator at the Cleveland Gay Games," Lueshen said. "When doctors told me 13 years ago that I'd never play sports again, I let their fears dictate my life for 11 years. I'm forever proud of realizing that I am way stronger than I could have imagined and said yes to playing beach volleyball and getting back into competitive sports again two years ago. This has been a very emotional journey for me, and I'm grateful for all of it."

Lueshen added, "Just being able to compete again has been one of the biggest wins of my life. Bringing home three medals (silver in both discus and shotput) is the icing on the cake. Sports have always held a special place in my heart. Competing again has filled a void and made me feel more whole again. I will forever cherish my experiences at the Paris Gay Games, and I look forward to defending my high jump gold medal at the Hong Kong Gay Games in 2022."

Mickael Simon was among a group of competitors representing the Team To End AIDS, an endurance-sports program of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC). He ran the 13.1-mile Half Marathon, finishing with a PR (Personal Record), cutting five minutes off his personal best time. "What a great week it [was]," Simon said.

He finished in 1.32.16, placing 46th overall, 43rd among male and 13th in his age category—and with plenty of pride.

LeMikas Lavender also represented T2 in Paris—in running and swimming events. "Had an amazing half-marathon, with the Arc de Triomphe as the backdrop," he said.



"When I saw **Ariana Grande** on the program, I thought that was something at Taco Bell!" — **Bishop Charles H. Ellis**, who presided over **Aretha Franklin's** funeral, shares his thoughts on Miss Grande after her performance—a comment that was criticized on social media as racist. Ellis was forced to apologize for groping Grande—touching her breast very clearly during his interaction with the star.

ATTENTION ALL MEDIA OUTLETS: Can you please get your shit together? I hate to start off like this, but it's really getting out of control. First, Fox News used a photo of **Patti LaBelle** in its tribute to Aretha Franklin. And then, the BBC used a photo of **Jenifer Lewis**!!! Y'all, Jenifer's like a generation younger than Aretha. Come on—all Black people do not look alike. Next you'll say all gay people look alike—and I swear to you THAT'S not true.

The confusion stemmed from Jenifer's performance at the Aretha tribute concert that took place on the eve of the funeral. Accompanied by the prodigious **Marc Shaiman**, Lewis sang a self-penned composition, "Thank You, Aretha." Standing under the illuminated "Aretha" sign, the Brits simply got confused ... as they are wont to do. But there was no confusing Jen's sentiment, as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

Prior to Jenifer, people watching the concert at home saw Patti LaBelle sing a teary rendition of "You Are My Friend." Except, she didn't. Sure, she sang it ... at a concert at the Dell Music Center in Philadelphia a week earlier. They simply filmed it and rolled it into the tribute concert, and most of the home viewers were none the wiser. That's what I'm here for.

Then there was the funeral. Thank God I was watching from home. I was able to put it on pause, go out to eat, watch a little more, take a nap, etc. Poor **Bill Clinton** looked like he was gonna pass out. Many people commented on **Rev. Jesse Jackson's** distressed appearance. In case you don't know, late last year he announced that he's been diagnosed with Parkinson's. So, I attribute it to that. Some of the people who didn't come, sent flowers. Folks like **Barbra Streisand**, **Tony Bennett**, **Sir Elton John**, **Mariah Carey** and **Diana Ross** all sent enormous tributes.

Me-oh-my-oh—that was SOME hat on **Miss Cicely Tyson**! For much of the service, I wasn't even sure there was someone under it! But, God love her, the 91-year-old legend launched into a freewheeling adaptation of Paul Laurence Dunbar's "When Malindy Sings," rechristened, "When Aretha Sings." Then there was **Chaka Khan**, who I thought was wearing a choir robe ... or two. In case you were wondering, her fan had dual purpose—it not only kept her cool, but also had the lyrics to "Going Up Yonder" printed on the back! A very tasteful and appropriate **Jennifer Hudson** paid tribute to Aretha with "Amazing Grace," further cementing her position as Franklin's appointed portrayer for the proposed biopic. Fantasia kicked off her shoes and stalked the stage



Billy details what happened at the tribute concert for Aretha Franklin (above).

Photo by Jerry Nunn

with "Bridge Over Troubled Water." **Stevie Wonder** was the penultimate act, with "As," backed by Shirley Murdock, Dottie Peoples, Angie Stone and, wait, once again, Miss Jennifer Lewis wailing "Always." After that, **Jennifer Holliday** ended the ceremony with "Climbing Higher Mountains" as the casket was taken out of the church.

I believe the whole "show" (for lack of a better term) was stolen by **Gladys Knight**, who sang rings around everyone with "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Bridge Over Troubled Water." (You can never hear that enough times.) But she inadvertently caused quite a bit of gossip. On her way into the funeral, she revealed that she met with Aretha about a year earlier. Gladys said, "At that time, we shared the fact that we had the same disease." So, it wasn't a stretch that most people thought Knight revealed she, too, has pancreatic cancer. (She does look quite thin.) In a statement she released later that day, she said, "I'd like to clarify that Aretha and I discussed both of us having cancer, mine was stage 1 breast cancer and hers was pancreatic. Due to early detection, I am cancer-free and grateful for that." She also chastised the media for spending time gossiping about her—especially on a day where we should be "celebrating Aretha's life and massive contributions to our world."

The next day, we had **John McCain's** funeral—more notable for people who were not there (or purposely banned) than for those who were. I will say it did my heart good to see **Laura Bush** hand **Michelle Obama** a piece of candy—talk about reaching across the aisle! However, one gesture left me a bit cold. Is it acceptable in the Episcopal tradition for a reverend to take a selfie? First, do reverends typically carry their cellphones during a service, let alone a funeral? Secondly, isn't it at least a little rude to ask **George W.** for a selfie when **Obama** is standing right next to you? Reminds me of when I ran into **Joanna Cassidy** at the Emmys, but I'll save that for another time.

Apparently, **JC Mounduix** (the gay little person on Big Brother who go-go dances) is involved in yet another scandal. According to eagle-eyed watchers of the 24/7 feed, he was seen rubbing a sleeping **Tyler Crispin's** arms and kissing his armpits. JC claims he was trying to comfort Tyler, who was having nightmares. Many called for his

removal from the show. The producers, clearly trying to avoid another ice cream scooper incident, were quick to respond: "We spoke with all three of the houseguests separately in detail about the incidents. Tyler and Haleigh explained to the producers that they in no way felt threatened, unsafe or sexually harassed." For the time being, JC (and the entire Moonves family) can keep their jobs!

Lastly, we hear that the Venice Film Festival premiere of **Bradley Cooper's** A Star is Born, starring **Lady Gaga**, was interrupted when a freak lightning storm caused a power outage. Damn, **Barbra's** powerful!

When a star is born while others pass away, it's time to end another column. Even though we're ending another season, the gossip's just heating up at BillyMasters.com—the site that never takes a vacation. We didn't have room for an "Ask Billy" question, but I'm here for you 24/7. Send your queries along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Taco Bell introduces the Ariana Grande Chalupa! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Brunches at Kit Kat Lounge and Lark

BY ANDREW DAVIS

It's safe to say that weekend brunches at **The Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club** (3700 N. Halsted St.; KitKatChicago.com), are not the same as almost any other spot in the city.

For almost two decades, the Boystown spot has a very lively brunch, complete with a stable of seasoned drag performers who know how to command a crowd's attention—and my recent visit was no exception. Performer Madam X thrilled the crowd by dressing as Miley Cyrus, Cher, Lady Gaga and others, and singing (not lip-synching) their songs—and, at one point, deftly taking all the money several women had, including the dollar bills sitting on the table. (Interestingly, Madam X told Windy City Times after her performance that she doesn't want to be famous, for fear of losing her connections with the audience.)

If you're looking for a drink, this is DEFINITELY the place—as Kit Kat boasts more than 200 different cocktails, including an enviable list of martinis, such as the Peggy Lee (vodka, orange, banana liqueur and cranberry), Hopscotch



Madam X in performance (left) and Rice Krispie French toast at Kit Kat Lounge.
Photos by Angelique Smith



(vodka, butterscotch schnapps and cream) and Sangria (red wine and brandy) martinis.

As for the food at the “Divalicious Brunch”—well, what can I say? It was pretty much hit-and-miss. The beignets were solid and my friend really enjoyed her Rice Krispie French toast—but the steak in my skillet dish was tougher than a calculus assignment, and I basically ate around it. Service was also noticeably slow (and with a two-hour limit at each table, patrons might be at the mercy of the servers), although the telegenic server was very nice. (Other offerings range from coconut shrimp salad to Avocado Two Ways to, of course, the Kit Kat Burger.

So I would recommend Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club—as far as the entertainment and drinks go. As for the cuisine, overall, it's not quite diva-worthy.

Lark—under new management

Meanwhile, there's a different kind of fun at nearby restaurant Lark (3441 N. Halsted St.; <http://larkchicago.com/>), which, intriguingly, has been under new management since February (supplanting LKH)—Kit Kat co-owners Edward Gisiger and Ramesh Ariyanayakam, and Managing Partner Ralph Fasano.

Disco music greets you upon entering, daring you not to at least tap your feet even while waiting for a seat. However, there are also all sorts of games, including Jenga. (The people at the table next to us in the impressive patio area played Mystery Date.) Even if the large-screen television outside switches to sports, tunes by Donna Summer, Chaka Khan and others continue playing—providing a surreal, yet sill enjoyable, feel.

As for the food, it's interesting that Kit Kat's management is involved at Lark as well, because the food was definitely tastier (not exotic, but well done) than at the other spot.

My friend absolutely loved the BELT (bacon, egg, lettuce and tomato sandwich), while the turkey club put a smile on my face (in part, thanks to some supremely wonderful ... tater tots). The avocado toast was quite delicious as well—but the crowning glory was the Margherita pizza, complete with a wood-fired Neapolitan crust. However, if that's not your thing, several burgers are available, including the Lark Smash (a tantalizing item with two quarter-pound beef patties, applewood smoked bacon, ham, white cheddar, crispy onion rings, lettuce, tomato, and onions on a buttery brioche bun). And if you have the willpower/stomach room to try a S'mores pizza for dessert, then more power to you.



Lark's Margherita pizza.
Photo by Andrew Davis



Happy 16th anniversary!
Joseph Stevens Photography





Cat Power.
Photo by
Austin
Conroy

Riot Fest featuring full-album sets

Riot Fest—a celebration of punk, rock 'n' roll, hip-hop, metal, indie rock and roots music—will take place in Chicago's Douglas Park on Sept. 14-16.

This year's highlight will be that several acts will perform their seminal albums front to back—often in celebration of an LP's landmark anniversary. Those acts include Bad Religion, Cypress Hill, Dignable Planets, Fear, Lagwagon, Spitalfield and Suicidal Tendencies.

A few of the other slated acts include Pussy Riot, Cat Power, Sum 41, Andrew W.K., Liz Phair, The Jesus Lizard and Flogging Molly.

See <https://riotfest.org/>.

Second City, HBH team for Women's Health Fair

The ladies of The Second City and Chicago's premiere women's health organizations are collaborating on the first-ever Second City Women's

Health Fair, with She the People & Women's Health Services at Howard Brown Health (HBH) as hosts.

The event will take place Thursday, Sept. 6, at UP Comedy Club, 230 W. North Ave. The fair will begin at 6:30 p.m., while the show She the People: Girlfriends' Guide to Sisters Doing It for Themselves will start at 8 p.m.

Representatives from groups including Planned Parenthood of IL, Chicago Women's Health Center, Early to Bed, Empowered Therapy and Howard Brown Health will be on hand before they take in a performance of Second City's The Second City's She the People: Girlfriends' Guide to Sisters Doing It for Themselves—a sketch show created, designed and performed entirely by the women of Second City.

See SecondCity.com/womenshealthfair.

Classic-car show Sept. 8-9 in Rosemont

The Chicago Classic Auto Show welcomes Grand Marshal Larry Klairmont to share more than 80 years of automobile expertise and an abundance of meticulously preserved cars from Klairmont Collections.

The Chicago Classic Auto Show will bring the entire classic-car community together for a celebration of automotive history, exhibiting more than 600 automobiles on Sept. 8-9 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Rd., Rosemont.

Tickets are \$20-\$150 each; visit <https://www.showclix.com/event/chicago-classic-auto-show>.

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WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Sept. 5

R.O. Kwon in conversation with Rebecca Makkai The Incendiaries Author Conversation and Book-signing. Fractured love story and a brilliant examination of the minds of extremists and of what can happen to people who lose what they love most. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com>

Thursday, Sept. 6

Barbara J. Risman, Where the Millennials Will Take Us Book Launch Party. Inside the minds of today's young adults, showing the great diversity of their strategies for negotiating the gender revolution. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Friday, Sept. 7

Latinx Heritage Month LGBTQ Gallery Opening celebrating Latinx Heritage Month with the art of Sandra Antongiorgi, singer, songwriter, and painter from Puerto Rico. 7pm performance by AfriCaribe professional dancers and musicians with traditional drumming and dance of several Puerto Rican 'Bomba' rhythms. Free 6:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.santongiorgi.com/>

Jamaican Fruit & Flowers Artistic Experience A project by two Jamaican American trans men of color. Featuring Armani Dae, Cris Avery. Copies of Jamaican Fruit on sale on Amazon and Kindle. 7:00pm



WHEELIN' IT IN Sept. 8-9

The 15th Ride for AIDS will take place this weekend.

Photo of 2017 riders Angie Frank and Yvette Pryor by Julie Supple

- 10:00pm Mind + Hand, 5400 S Pulaski Rd. 2nd Floor <http://events.eventzilla.net/e/jamaican-fruit--flowers-artistic-experience-2138951662>

Games We Play exhibit ongoing Highlights LGBTQ-themed board and trivia games. Through October 2018 9:00am - 5:00pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives and Howard Brown, 6500 N. Clark St. <http://gerberhart.org>

The Sip online show Live show every Friday night, three gay men from diverse occupations and life journeys discuss everything from world headline news to pop culture from a Black LGBTQ perspective. 6:00pm - 7:00pm On line <http://goo.gl/pL7wWA>

Maeve Higgins Maeve in America: Es-

says by a Girl from Somewhere Else Reading, Q&A, and book-signing. Collection creates a revealing portrait of a woman who aims for the stars but hits the ceiling. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com>

Saturday, Sept. 8

Peoria Pridefest 2018 One Voice. One Community. Bringing back PRIDE to the Whiskey City. RSVP online to get event updates. 11:00am Peoria RiverFront Events, CEFU Center Stage @ The Landing in Peoria <http://www.peoriaproud.org/events/peoria-pridefest-2018-2>

Ride for AIDS Chicago, 15th anniversary Test Positive Aware Network's signature two-day fundraising event where local AIDS Service Organizations, LGBT organizations, and health allies participate to raise money for their own organizations. New route through three different states, ending in a new camp in Michigan. Time: 7 am Starting point Chandler Park, 1028 Central St., Evanston <https://www.tpan.com/rideforaids>

Chicago Classic Auto Show with Grand Marshall Larry Klairmont Celebration of automotive history, exhibiting more than 600 automobiles, including rarities, Through Sept. 9. events throughout and Women 'N Wheels Pavilion 10:00am - 8:00pm Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Rd., Rosemont <http://www.theclassicautoshow.com> Tickets: <http://www.showclix.com/event/chicago-classic-auto-showark-st> <http://andersonvillegalleria.com>

Gay is Good: Homophile Activism before Stonewall Detailing the beginning of the homophile movement in the U.S., its peak during the ECHO and NACHO conferences, and eventual decline after the Stonewall Riots. Through September 10:00am - 4:00am Gerber Hart Library

and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.gerberhart.org>

Sunday, Sept. 9

The Oracle Challenger Series Pro tennis A combined ATP Challenger Tour and WTA \$125K tennis tournament. Championship matches. To participate as a ballkid or volunteers, email tfey@desertchampions.com 10:00am Chicago's XS Tennis Village, 5336 S. State St. <http://oraclechallengerseries.com>

Greater Chicagoland Pagan Pride Family-friendly celebration of Pagan, Heathen, Druid, Wiccan with workshops and discussions, public rituals, over 75 vendors and live entertainment. Free. Donation of pet supplies or non-perishable food items benefit Lakeview Pantry, CatVando, and Gypsy Cats. Volunteer at staff@chicagopaganpride.org 11:00am - 6:00pm Mills Park, 217 Home Ave., Oak Park <http://www.chicagopaganpride.org>

Asians & Friends '90s-Themed Anniversary Party Do your best Fresh Prince or don your flannel grunge for Asians & Friends Chicago's 90's-themed Anniversary Party. Questions to webmaster@afchicago.org 3:00pm - 7:00pm Dan and Mike's Halsted Hot Tub rooftop at 3526 N. Halsted <http://www.asians>

Wed., Sept. 12

Eric H. Holder Jr 82nd Attorney General of the United States (2009-2015) discusses the pressing issue of voting rights in the United States 7:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E Congress Pkwy; 312-341-2300 <http://www.auditoriumtheatre.org/shows/a-conversation-with-eric-holder/>

Andersonville Arts Week Self-Guided Art Walk to artists on display in pop-up gallery fashion at more than 50 locations. Guides/maps available at participating locations at Chamber. Through Sept. 16

11:00am - 6:00pm Start Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, 5217 N Clark <http://andersonville.org>

Thursday, Sept. 13

Common in conversation on Activism and Dissent in an Age of Polarization Hip-hop artist, poet, and native Chicagoan Common leads a timely conversation as part of Roosevelt University's 3rd annual American Dream Reconsidered Conference. 7:00pm Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University 50 E Congress Pkwy Chicago 312-341-2300 <http://www.auditoriumtheatre.org/shows/a-conversation-with-common/>

Official RuPaul's Drag Race World Tour Favorite drag stars return with new show hosted by Bob The Drag Queen with performances by the queens from Season 10 and fan favorites Kim Chi, Valentina, Shangela and Violet Chachki. Doors open 8pm 9:00pm - 9:30pm Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E Randolph Dr Chicago <http://vossevents.com/events/werq-the-world/>

Dreamboat - An All LGBTQIA+ Showcase Solo acts from a queer performers in music, stand up, sketch, drag, and an improv set highlighting talent in the community. Thursdays through Sept. 27. \$10. 10:00pm iO Chicago, 1501 N. Kingsbury St. 312-929-2401 <http://www.ioimprov.com/search/?q=dreamboat>

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