

# WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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## GAYLON ALCARAZ

Activist talks new job, campaign lessons.  
Photo courtesy of Alcaraz

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## BITTER-SWEET

World of Chocolate marks World AIDS Day.  
Photo by Kat Fitzgerald  
(MysticImagesPhotography.com)

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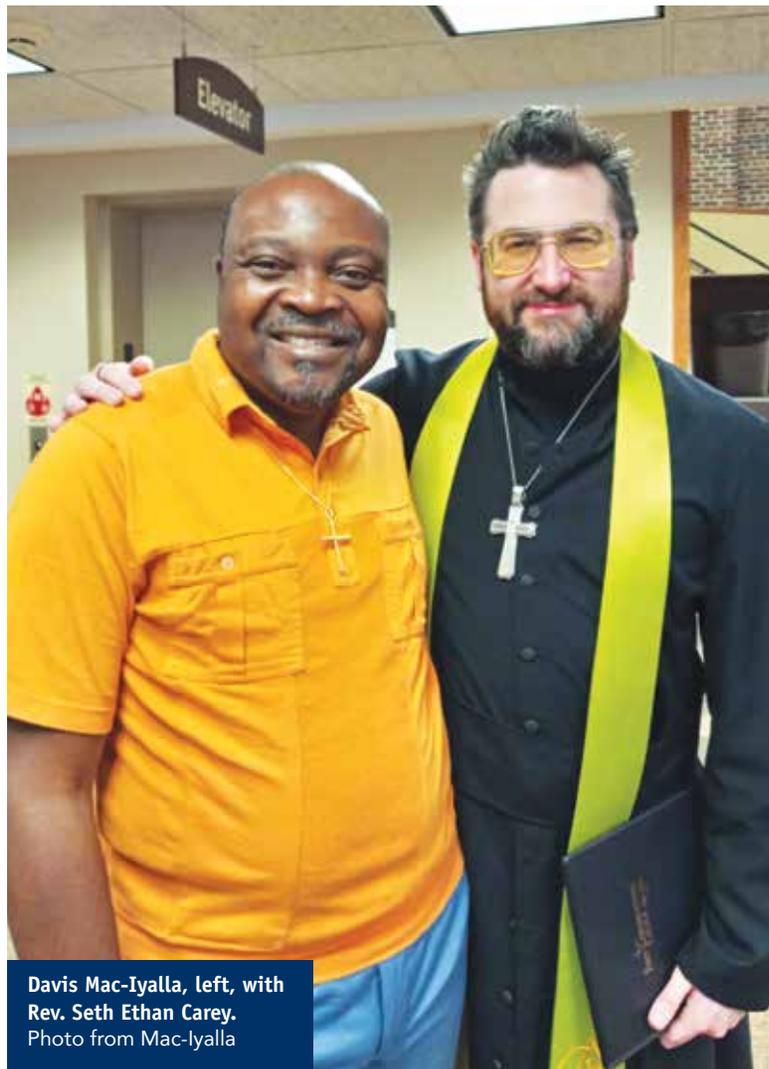
WINDY CITY TIMES **ARTS & THEATER** WEEKLY

**BUTT SERIOUSLY**  
PRODUCTION PUTS SAUCY SPIN ON THE NUTCRACKER

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Davis Mac-Iyalla, left, with Rev. Seth Ethan Carey.  
Photo from Mac-Iyalla

# Nigerian activist on fight for LGBT rights

# OUT OF AFRICA

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## WINDY CITY TIMES' 2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

WEEK TWO OF TWO

PAGES 27-30



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## DIVE RIGHT IN

Greg Louganis (left) answers some inquiries in 10 Questions with Vic.  
Photo courtesy of Greg Louganis Archives

## STRAW DEAL



Former Chicago Bear Ryan Mundy (above) and business partner Philip Causgrove discuss capitalize on the reusable-straw trend with SWZLE.  
Photo courtesy of Causgrove

## HAIR YE, HAIR YE...

Hairstylist Andrew Martinez talks about the latest trends in urban hairstyles.

## THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Zac Efron, Viola Davis and Trent Reznor.

plus  
**DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

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# Nigerian LGBT activist on his journey and fight for equal rights

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Davis Mac-Iyalla has been an LGBT activist in his home country of Nigeria and across West Africa for decades, first with Changing Attitude Nigeria and now with the organization he founded in 2016, Interfaith Diversity Network of West Africa (IDNOWA).

"IDNOWA was created to work for the inclusion of LGBT+ persons and a world governed by respect and dignity," said Mac-Iyalla. "When it was established we searched for a country in West Africa to register the organization since it was impossible to do so in Nigeria. We discovered Ghana was the best place for that to happen and our members agreed with this decision. After my appointment as pioneer executive director, I had to relocate from London back to Accra, Ghana where I live with my partner Olivet. I could not be directing and leading the organization from the diaspora."

Mac-Iyalla's journey as an LGBT activist was circuitous. He was born and raised in Port-Harcourt, Nigeria, and had a happy childhood.

"I am one of the lucky ones to be born into a family where my both parents were senior civil servants," Mac-Iyalla told Windy City Times. "I graduated from the Teachers Training College in Degema, Nigeria, and taught primary school students and Social Studies and religious knowledge in a secondary school in Nigeria. I was also a principal at Saint John Anglican Primary and Secondary School before I left Nigeria."

Recently, Mac-Iyalla, who is also a lay minister, was invited to speak at the Illinois LGBT-inclusive First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn by senior minister Rev. Seth Ethan Carey.

"It was a new experience for me to speak to a congregation that is mostly white and willing to listen to what I had to say," said Mac-Iyalla. "When I was introduced, I got a standing ovation and that is a good sign. I am hoping our partnership in faith and social justice will continue for a long time. I knew the interest in talking about what folks like myself are going through in Nigeria and West Africa on the whole was real by the questions I got from the attendees."

"As a pastor, I am well aware of texts in the Bible that contradict this theology of being open and affirming to LGBT people; but I also read the Bible through the lens of Christ's teachings, which prioritize love and grace above the laws of ancient societies," said Carey. "We believe that love brings God joy, and we hope to do our part to build a world where love is celebrated in all of its forms."

"I was introduced to Davis by our pastoral intern, TJ Hauger-Williams, who has worked with him in the past. Davis' story is truly a heartbreaking and inspiring one, and I felt it was good for our congregation to know that people like him are working for LGBTQ rights in parts of the world where those rights are the most fragile, if indeed they exist at all."

As for the current situation in Nigeria, Mac-Iyalla said the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act has made it impossible to be openly LGBT in the country. He explained that the law criminalizes LGBT people and anyone who is convicted faces 14 years in prison.

"Most LGBT+ Nigerians live private lives," said Mac-Iyalla. "What we have seen recently and is still going on is police invading private parties and accusing the people of organizing same-sex marriages. Conservative religious leaders in Nigeria are working with the security forces to set up and blackmail suspected homosexuals so they can persecute them. We also have unofficial police who use mob tactics on LGBT+ people, including attacking them violently. In such cases the police and authorities turn a blind eye. LGBT+ people are unsafe in Nigeria."

In terms of what transgender people specifically face, Mac-Iyalla said they are at risk since people do not recognize that they exist. He explained that Nigerians on the whole believe it is a western identity that has been imported to West Africa.

"Many activists like myself are fighting back by creating awareness about the issues," said Mac-Iyalla. "Others are working on litigation and appealing the law and some of us are using the United Nations system to promote the rights of all people."

Mac-Iyalla is also a member of Global Interfaith Network. He said IDNOWA has received much needed support from International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association and Inclusive and Affirming Ministries South Africa.

As for what role average Americans can play in helping LGBT people in Nigeria and West Africa in general, Mac-Iyalla said, "They can support our local initiatives and developments financially and continue to put pressure on your government to promote the human rights of all people including LGBT+ at the UN and other international platforms. People are starting to show compassion for the rights of LGBT people outside of America and I am hoping that by keeping the conversation going this will grow."

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



Davis Mac-Iyalla (left) and Rev. Seth Ethan Carey. Photo courtesy of Mac-Iyalla

## Judge says transgender artist's suit can proceed

BY MATT SIMONETTE

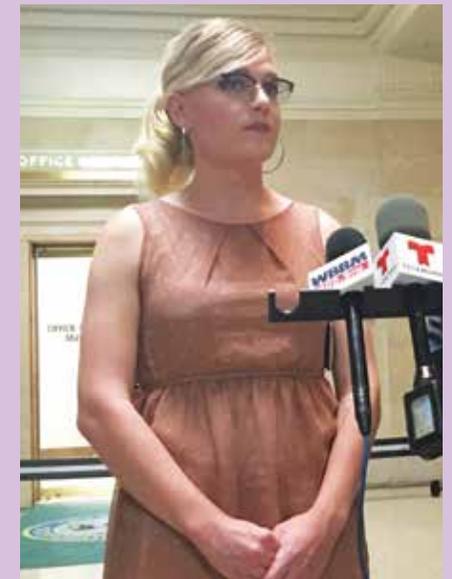
A federal judge ruled in mid-November that a transgender woman's lawsuit against the City can move forward.

Judge Andrea Wood ruled Nov. 12 that Bea Sullivan-Knoff could proceed with a lawsuit challenging Chicago's ban on exposure of female breasts in establishments that serve liquor, which Sullivan-Knoff, a performance artist, originally maintained is both unconstitutional and goes against the state's Human Rights Ordinance. Sullivan-Knoff further asserts that exposing her body makes up an integral part of her act.

While dismissing some aspects of Sullivan-Knoff's claim, Wood denied the City's motion to fully dismiss it, indicating that as such "both sides will have the opportunity in discovery to explore whether, how, and to what extent the exposure of female breasts—as opposed to male breasts—creates a sexual environment, and whether, how, and to what extent this legitimates the differential treatment of females

and males under the [City's] Ordinance."

Sullivan-Knoff filed the suit in Aug. 2016. At the time, her lawyer, Mary Grieb, said the city's law "reflects 19th-century ideas about gender and sex, and gender and identification."



Bea Sullivan-Knoff in 2016. Photo by Matt Simonette



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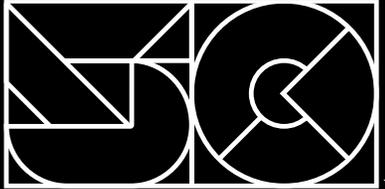
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## World of Chocolate provides dessert for a good cause

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Hundreds of community members visited AIDS Foundation of Chicago's (AFC) annual World of Chocolate celebration and fundraiser at Revel Fulton Market, 1215 W. Fulton Market, on Nov. 30.

Nearly two dozen vendors from across the region participated, among them CH Distillery, Chocolat Uzma, Sofitel Chicago magnificent Mile, Langman & Eagle, Terry's Toffee, Vanilla, Starbucks, Hilton Chicago & Towers, Prasino, Wow Bao, Cocoa Exchange, Just bLike U Like It, Cindy's, London House, Uptown Brownie, Noir D'Ebene Chocolat et

Patisserie, St. Jane Chicago, Margeaux Brasserie, Zed 451, My Chocolate Soul and Vivere Chocolates.

Guests were given "passports" to encourage them to collect stamps—and treats—at from each of the chocolatiers. AFC this year garnered with Walgreens Boots Alliance to make the event "zero-waste"; chocolatiers were asked to use only recyclable, reusable and compostable products. Decorations were provided by Kehoe Designs.

Since its inception in 2001, World of Chocolate has raised more than \$2.1 million of vital HIV/AIDS services



Photos by Kat Fitzgerald ([www.MysticImagesPhotography.com](http://www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)). See more online at [www.WindyCityTimes.com](http://www.WindyCityTimes.com).



# Vida/SIDA marks 30 years with gala

BY VERN HESTER

On Dec. 1, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center-Vida/SIDA celebrated its 30th anniversary and acknowledged World AIDS Day with an anniversary gala at 3949 Gallery. Despite the cold and rain, the event was packed with guests who were treated to a full buffet dinner, music and dancing from a live band, several performances and a silent auction. Outgoing U.S. Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-4th District) was the key speaker.

After an opening red carpet and cocktail hour, emcees Jesus Hernandez-Burgos and Aliana Leyra Lalique greeted the guests and started the evening. Puerto Rican Cultural Center Executive Director Jose E. Lopez spoke about Vida/SIDA's important role in the Latinx community during the height of the AIDS crisis.

He said that in 1988, many in the community refused to address the crisis despite an atmosphere of shame and fear with widespread deaths and the anti-Latinx tradition of holding funerals with closed coffins. Lopez said, "We started Vida/SIDA because everyone has a right to express themselves, and we wanted to celebrate the lives of people who are living with and have died from AIDS."

"Many in the community did not want to deal with the crisis, but we insisted on confronting it. The name 'Vida/SIDA' translates in English as 'Life/AIDS.'"

Amid thunderous applause, Gutierrez said, "We are celebrating 30 years of healing and growth in the community. It feels good to see the growth in our community." Gutierrez went on to speak about being an activist alongside Lopez and Gutierrez's own successor, Chuy Garcia, decades ago in the 1980s; he then spoke about the present administration and the continued fight for human rights: "Why do Black lives matter? Because of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King [Jr.], who laid down their lives for the fight. They matter because Black people are responsible for me being here. We're all in it together; we work on civil rights regardless if you are trans, Black, Puerto Rican, Muslim."

On the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria and the Trump administration's response to it, Gutierrez said, "We are the richest, most technically advanced country in the world. Did we act that way with Maria? Did we act that way with Puerto Rico?" He closed out his words by saying "I am not retiring from being an activist. ... When there is still a fight for rights, you cannot rest."

As the program closed, staff members and founders were recognized for their service to the community through Vida/SIDA. Later, guests were treated to a rousing performance by Humboldt Park band Orquesta Leal.

Sponsors for the event included Howard Brown Health, Norwegian American Hospital, Gilead, Nellie's Puerto Rican Restaurant, Milady Velazquez and The AIDS Foundation of Chicago.



Left photo: Attendees at the gala. Right photo: Jose E. Lopez (from left), U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez, Stacy Epps and Soraida Arocho. Photo by Vern Hester. More photos are at [WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://WindyCityMediaGroup.com)



# Event focuses on revolutionary Cuban punk-rock band

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Nonprofit arts and education group QUEER, ILL AND OKAY brought a neglected component of Cuban history to the mainstage with a screening and panel discussion on Los Frikis, a group of Cuban punk rockers in the late '80s who intentionally contracted the HIV virus to be put into state-run sanatorium camps. In collaboration with Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, QIO hosted the event on Nov. 30 at the museum to bring to light a troubled past in HIV and AIDS history and honor World AIDS Day, which was Dec. 1.

Cuban documentary filmmaker Vladimir Ceballos, who was a Friki in Cuba during the movement, shared his personal experiences of living during the "Special Period" of Cuban history and its economic destruction after the Soviet Union stopped supporting the country. This created a lack of resources for many citizens, which is why Los Frikis—ostracized from society and looked to as the enemy from the government because they dressed differently—who listened to punk rock and didn't fit the mold of the Cuban regime's idea of the "new man," turned to desperate choices when they found out they had contracted the HIV virus.

"Being a Friki was a rebellion," Ceballos said, speaking through a translator. "The government saw us as the enemy."

Radio Ambulante's Luis Trelles, a Puerto Rican journalist and producer, presented an audio documentary on Los Frikis and how they were treated by the authorities. With a socialist government crumbling and lack of access to information and contraceptives, there was no discussion of safe sex or proper healthcare in Cuba at the time, the documentary said. Los Frikis had created a tight community where those who felt outcast could express themselves freely and enjoy American rock music, but facing the HIV epidemic was a challenge they were not prepared to face, Trelles told the audience.

Ceballos agreed and said the state of disinformation in Cuba at the time was so strong that he and all his friends had to make the difficult decision of socialism or death, which is the name of one of Ceballos' documentaries he produced undercover in Cuba.

The sanatoriums were originally created to quarantine the Cuban soldiers coming back from Africa who had contracted HIV but it turned into a prison camp of sorts. Because there were such different laws and "inequality on the streets" in Pinar del Rio, Ceballos said, Los Frikis thought that it would be best to live in the sanatoriums, where they could listen to rock music openly, have access to proper medical treatment and healthy food—all things they could not do on the

streets. No one could leave or walk about freely, but for Los Frikis, it was worth that sacrifice. They saw it as a way of living by their values and expressing themselves in any means they could.

"There is a link that can't be undone between that self-injected movement and self-expression and that there was a punk aesthetic that went into this very hard decision," Trelles said.

As the movement took off, Ceballos said, it became like a fashion statement to self-inject with HIV to get into the sanatorium. But the honeymoon phase did not last long, and soon many HIV-positive people died in the sanatoriums.

Ceballos had to flee to the U.S. in 1976 and has only been back shortly to film for his documentaries on Los Frikis—undercover. He said he cannot go back to Cuba because he would be arrested for "working with the enemy" in the eyes of the government. As a result, his work has never been seen in Cuba, but that's where it needs to be seen the most, he said. He has created two documentaries on the movement; "Cursed Be Your Name, Liberty" was the first produced in 1994 and the second is called "Socialism or Death."

"I wanted to make [the documentary] in Cuba because I wanted to show the youth there that it wasn't a good idea to be injecting the HIV virus," Ceballos said. "[Leaving the country] is the price I had to pay to show the world," he said.

After all of the discussion about the past, Trelles asked Ceballos and playwright Krystal Ortiz, who just returned from Pinar del Rio to interview the last Frikis who had self-injected themselves with the virus, what lives on about the historical time. Ortiz plans to write a play about the self-injecting movement and said its relevancy is an example of Cuba as an island of contradictions.

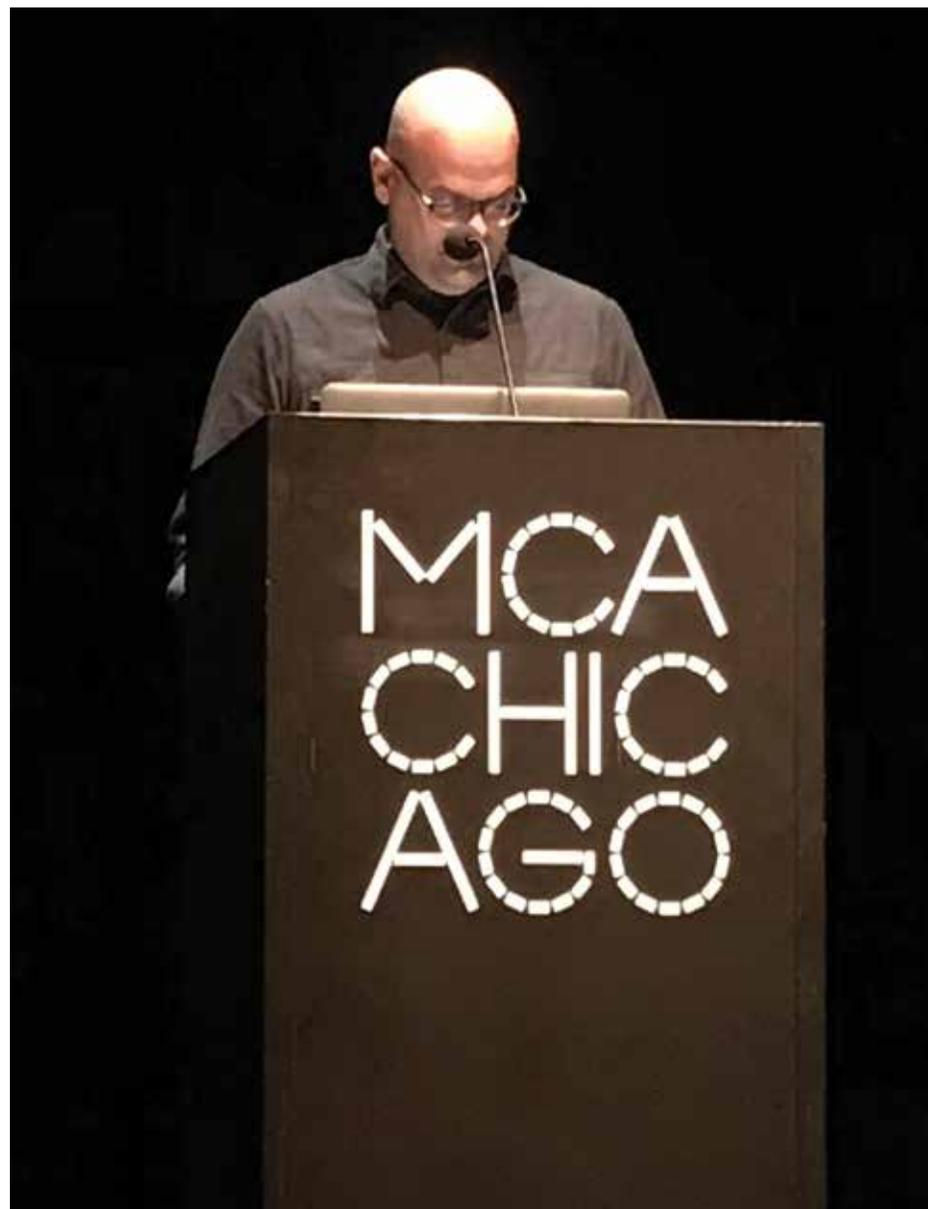
"It will always be relevant in how extreme it is in nature—that there was a whole community who felt they needed to die in order to live," Ortiz said.

She also shared a video message from the last Frikis she interviewed; They said they are happy, living on their own and are now getting good medical treatment. They had hoped to attend the event in person, but the current immigration issues from the Trump administration and the U.S.-Cuba relationship made it difficult to travel.

Ceballos said he sees the legacy of the movement from a philosophical perspective.

"Death is a door that you can open to find freedom," Ceballos said, which he believes is a perfect tie to existentialism and the self-injecting movement.

**People can get more information about Ceballos' first movie at <https://www.dmovies.org/2016/10/29/cursed-name-liberty/> and watch the beginning of the film at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3rTSIqgTJc&t=6s>.**



Luis Trelles.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

## Democrats nominate Pelosi as speaker

On Nov. 28, U.S. House Democrats resoundingly picked current Speaker Nancy Pelosi as their nominee for the same position.

Pelosi was nominated as speaker in a closed-door meeting by a vote of 203-32 vote. However, some Democrats have been attempting to derail Pelosi's run—and she will probably need 218 votes when the entire floor votes in January.

Also, U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer, the current minority whip, was elected majority leader in the new Congress, while Rep. James Clyburn is majority whip.

LGBTQ media-advocacy organization GLAAD issued a statement praising Pelosi's nomination. GLAAD President/CEO Sarah Kate Ellis said, "Congresswoman Pelosi was with us when

many were against us. As the current administration aims to erase LGBTQ people from the fabric of this nation at every turn, we need an ally like her holding the Speaker's gavel and fighting for acceptance of all Americans."

## Asians & Friends holiday party Dec. 16

On Sunday, Dec. 16, at 5 p.m., LGBTQA organization Asians & Friends Chicago will hold its annual holiday party at The Piggery, 1625 W. Irving Park Rd.

The spot features BBQ and comfort food. Attendees should be prepared to split the cost of the meal, but they can order drinks separately at the bar. There will also be a "bring a gift, get a gift" policy.

Email [AngelChgo@aol.com](mailto:AngelChgo@aol.com) or call 312-409-1573 to RSVP.

# Chicago braces for long mayoral season

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The announcement this past fall that Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel would not be seeking another term in the 2019 election opened an already-crowded playing field even wider. Some 21 individuals had submitted petitions by the deadline date, Nov. 26.

It's unlikely that all those persons will appear on the ballots in February, however. Candidates and their allies will spend the next several weeks challenging the authenticity and thoroughness of their opponents' petitions; likewise some will surely face financial difficulties or be unable to muster widespread interest. Voters' final choices won't be determined until well into the winter.

A number of potential candidates have voiced support for LGBT rights in various capacities, be it in media interviews, appearances at community events or public advocacy for our issues. Windy City Times will follow the election closely in the months ahead.

As of Nov. 26, candidates included Cook County Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown; former City official and 2011 mayoral candidate Gery Chico; former U.S. Commerce Secretary Bill Daley, son and brother to two previous mayors; activist and Austin Chamber of Commerce Director (and for-

mer 2015 mayoral candidate) Amara Enyia; former Ald. Bob Fioretti, who also ran for mayor in 2015; activist Ja'Mal Green; attorney Jerry Joyce; attorney John Kozlar; former prosecutor and Police Board President Lori Lightfoot, the first openly lesbian Black mayoral candidate in the city's history; former Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy; state Comptroller Susana Mendoza, who was just re-elected in November; Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle; entrepreneur Neal Sales-Griffin; former Chicago Public Schools CEO Paul Vallas; and businessman Willie Wilson, another 2015 candidate.

## Historians looking for survey participants

Writers/historians Sukie de la Croix and Owen Keehnen are collaborating on an upcoming project, tentatively called "Tell Me About It," and are looking for folks to answer 10 questions each.

NOTE: Participants can sign their full name, first name, fake name or be anonymous. Responses may appear in print at some point.

If interested, email [OwenKeehnen@yahoo.com](mailto:OwenKeehnen@yahoo.com)



Lori Lightfoot (right) and Amara Enyia (above), two of many mayoral candidates.

Lightfoot photo by Matt Simonette; Enyia photo by Hal Baim



and/or [sukie@chicagowhispers.com](mailto:sukie@chicagowhispers.com) to be sent the questions and brief instructions.

The deadline for submissions is Monday, Dec. 31.

## N.Y. center starts Stonewall project

The Center in New York, NY, has launched Stonewall Forever, a project to find, preserve and share the untold stories of the Stonewall Riots of 1969 and the early years of the LGBTQ rights movement.

The 50th anniversary of the Riots will be noted next year.

According to the project's website, "Stonewall Forever is actively acquiring materials to help tell the diverse stories of the Stonewall Riots of 1969 and the surrounding years of activism from 1968-1971. This growing collection includes photographs, films, interviews, oral histories, protest materials, Pride memorabilia, personal effects and unpublished writings, including letters and diaries, that help to illuminate the lived experience of this historic period."

Visit <https://stonewallforever.org/>.

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# Gaylon Alcaraz on new job, activism and campaign lessons

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Longtime activist and marathon runner Gaylon Alcaraz has been speaking out on LGBTQ equality, anti-violence initiatives, housing rights, gender equality, health prevention and reproductive rights for nearly 25 years.

Alcaraz began this journey by writing letters to the editor when she was pregnant with her daughter.

"Every time something struck a nerve, I wrote a letter to the editor," said Alcaraz. "Many ended up being published. My fingers were constantly typing. I did not even have a computer, so I would get on the Belmont bus and go the library to use the computers. There I would be, big and pregnant with my 4-year-old son, banging out letters to the editor. I remember one of my first letters was about DJ Irene Mojica who was given less desirable timeslots at WGCI. I wanted the public to know about the sexism happening at the radio station." (Note: Mojica, in the '90s, had sued employer Gannett Company, Inc., alleging discrimination based on sex and national origin.)

Alcaraz's first foray into housing rights was through her training with the Metropolitan Tenants Organization. Due to what Alcaraz learned, she was instrumental in restarting the tenant's council in her HUD building, and where she led fellow residents in a \$1 million rehab of the property.

"I joined Affinity Community Services in 1996," said Alcaraz. "From protesting on behalf of Vernita Gray when she lived in South Shore, to marching in protest of the Bus Stop Rapes, to walking through neighborhoods honoring Sakia Gunn among other actions. We were doing so much then. As one of the founding board members, I am proud. That was our baby. That little organization was so instrumental in my activism growth."

Alcaraz was hired as Chicago Abortion Fund's executive director in 2005 and that is where she said she "grew up."

"It was a real eye-opener," said Alcaraz. "I really have to thank Mary Morten for that experience."

When Alcaraz left the Chicago Abortion Fund almost ten years later, she began to consult with not-for-profits on leadership transition, fundraising and event planning. She has worked with clients such as the Boys and Girls Club of Chicago, Project Fierce Chicago and The Illinois Safe School Alliance. Alcaraz is also a Northeastern Illinois University adjunct professor where she teaches classes on poverty and organizing.



**Gaylon Alcaraz.**  
Photo courtesy of Alcaraz

All these experiences, Alcaraz explained, will help her do the work she does as the new LGBTQ program specialist with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

"The experience I bring to the table informs how I will do the work in this new position," said Alcaraz. "I have always advocated for others and that is what this position entails, ensuring that children who identify as LGBTQ get the resources they need. My work has always been for the voiceless. This is just another extension of that."

Alcaraz will continue to work with organizations and teach when necessary, since they do not conflict with her new DCFS position.

Most recently, Alcaraz ran for the 4th District Cook County Commissioner seat against incumbent Stanley Moore. Moore won the primary and was uncontested in the midterm election.

"One of the biggest lessons I learned from the campaign is that there are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends," said Alcaraz. "I also learned most people do not want real and systemic change."

Alcaraz's life's work has been rooted in her up-

bringing where her family struggled with poverty.

"After my father was killed, I stayed with my maternal grandparents a lot," said Alcaraz. "We ended up moving from the South Side to Boyston after his death. That is how I became a North Sider."

Alcaraz attended both public and private Catholic schools—including the now defunct Mother of Sorrows boarding school in Blue Island, St. Sabina and eventually graduating from the now defunct Queen of Peace Catholic High School in Burbank. She earned her BA and MA from DePaul University, focusing on reproductive justice, women and gender issues.

Currently, Alcaraz is working on her Ph.D. in community psychology; her scholarship is focused on reproductive-rights restrictions and how they are intersecting with the prison industrial system.

Among the accolades Alcaraz has received in-

clude induction into Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame in 2013, being named "The Activist" in the Chicago Reader's 2014 People edition (where she was on the cover) and being chosen as one of Chicago Woman Magazine's 2017 "The Fierce 50."

"It was exciting to be inducted into the Hall of Fame," said Alcaraz. "I was floored when I was named 'The Activist' in the Chicago Reader. It was a mind-blowing experience to be walking through the city and see my face in the window of the Reader newspaper boxes. I will never forget that."

When asked what her message to the world would be, Alcaraz said, "You have a responsibility to give back and to pull others along. It is required of you. Try to leave this world better than you found it."



**Nova Maday.**  
Photo courtesy of Maday

## Appellate court denies trans student's injunction motion

BY MATT SIMONETTE

An Illinois appellate court ruled Nov. 30 that a trans student's appeal of a trial court's earlier ruling in favor of her high school is moot since the student has graduated.

The court noted that Nova Maday (who, in late 2017, sued Township High School District 211 in the northwest suburbs) still had legal recourse but the motion in question—an injunction granting her the right to use the girls' locker room facilities at the school—was no longer relevant since Maday graduated this past spring.

Maday alleges that the school discriminated

against her by consigning her to inconvenient public-accommodations during her gym class. Her school was the subject of a high-profile legal battle when a different transgender girl sued for the same type of access. But the school allegedly only accommodated that specific student and did not alter its overall policies.

"The court's decision is very narrow," said John Knight, director of the LGBTQ Rights Project at the ACLU of Illinois and lead attorney for Maday's case, in a statement. "The court would not consider an appeal of a trial court judge's denial of a preliminary injunction because Nova graduated from high school in the spring of this year. At the same time, the court did recognize that Nova can continue to fight the school's restrictive policies, and we will continue that fight. Every school district in the state should see that segregation and isolation of students who are transgender is not permitted in our state under the Human Rights Act."





Molly Pinta (lower left) with elected officials at Coming Out Day event.  
Photo courtesy of Carolyn Pinta

# Buffalo Grove Pride parade, festival on track for June

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A Pride parade and festival is scheduled to take place June 2 in Buffalo Grove, the first time such an event has taken place in that suburb.

The events are currently scheduled for June 2 and a route for the parade has already been determined, according to Carolyn Pinta, whose school-age daughter, Molly, conceived of them this past summer.

"We have at this point raised close to \$20,000," said Carolyn, who added that she, Molly and other stakeholders formed a nonprofit to both help fund the Pride-month activities and supporting events, as well as eventually become a resource for other communities similarly wanting their own festivals.

The parade will cover a one-mile stretch, ending at Mike Ryalko Park. The festival, which is largely sponsored by the village's park district, will be called the "Festival of Diversity," Carolyn said.

"We're really just starting to throw around

ideas," she added. "That end of it is what the park district is footing the bill for. Obviously, there will be aspects from the LGBT community, but we want to incorporate any aspect of culture in Buffalo Grove that wants to be highlights. I can anticipate Indian dance, for example, and booths where every culture is selling their food. There will also be a main stage with different performances, both from the fine-arts division of the park district and whatever outside folks we bring in. There's a lot of talk about drag queens—we've got a lot of drag queens involved."

Molly came up with the idea after attending a gay uncle's wedding; that also inspired her to start a well-received gay-straight alliance at Twin Grove Middle School. Molly herself eventually came out.

Carolyn noted that the organizers have been actively seeking corporate sponsorships for the June events. "We will highlight, highlight and highlight anyone becoming a sponsor, and advertise them like crazy."



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## Committee advances resolution condemning Trump anti-trans proposal

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Chicago City Council Committee on Human Relations unanimously advanced a resolution from the five members of the Council's LGBT Caucus and Ald. Scott Waguespack (32nd Ward) condemning a proposed Trump administration policy change that would essentially define gender identity for federal law purposes by one's genitalia at birth.

The federal policy, which was first reported by the New York Times Oct. 21, would adopt such a policy for Title IX funding.

Ald. Tom Tunney (44th Ward)—who, along with Aids. Deb Mell (33rd Ward), Ray Lopez (15th Ward), Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th Ward) and James Cappleman (46th Ward), is a member of the LGBT caucus—called the federal proposal called the proposal "blatant discrimination."

"I'm not shocked anymore by the rhetoric coming out of Washington," he added. "We have to protect our LGBT brothers and sisters."

Cappleman said the proposed policy "flies in the face of compassion and understanding, and it flies in the face of science."

The City Council's resolution, which will be before the full Council Dec. 12, calls for "Presi-

dent Donald Trump and [the] Department of Health and Human Services to cease attempts to define gender as [a] biological, immutable condition, and calls for the City of Chicago to support and affirm lives in the transgender and intersex community."

Commission on Human Relations Commissioner Mona Noriega detailed a number of attempts by the Trump administration to roll back transgender rights and noted protections that are available locally.

"The Trump administration's consideration of a fixed gender definition may lead to a myriad of legal, medical and social problems for transgender and intersex people," she added.

A witness identifying herself only as "Rachel," who is the mother of a transgender girl in the fifth grade, said that her child had been happiest since she'd been allowed to live as the gender with which she identified.

"Our gender identity is like air—we don't realize we have it until something goes wrong," Rachel explained.

Also testifying in favor of the resolution were Ed Yohnka of ACLU of Illinois, Channyn Lynne Parker of Broadway Youth Center and Anthony Galloway of ACLU of Illinois. Another witness, who regularly attends and speaks at City Council committee meetings, spouted random anti-LGBT rhetoric in his testimony and praised Trump. Aids. Patrick Daley Thompson (11th Ward) and Ariel Reboyras (30th Ward) both asked to be added as co-sponsors of the resolution.



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# AFC holds World AIDS Day breakfast talk

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) held a World AIDS Day breakfast event Nov. 30 at AFC headquarters in the Loop.

Community leaders joined AFC's Community Organizing Manager Coleman Goode to discuss future legislative priorities.

Goode explained that AFC's legislative agenda and policy priorities for 2019 and 2020 will be driven by the results of a survey that was sent out to about 4,000 people via email and at events over the past five months and what was gleaned from this and future events.

The survey included questions repealing and/or modernizing Illinois' HIV criminalization laws, health insurance prescription drug co-pay cards and out of pocket costs, protecting ACA provisions for people living with HIV, the Getting to Zero plan, housing availability for those in financial need, increased medical access and treatment for hepatitis C in the state Medicaid program, ensuring Illinois' Medicaid program works for people living with HIV and full and adequate funding in the state budget for these issues. Also included in the survey is a request to get involved with AFC's advocacy network—the Illinois for Sound AIDS Policy.

Among the attendees' most important concerns were state funding, housing and advocacy outreach. They said reaching out to diverse communities throughout Chicago in their neighborhoods is a key component for understanding those communities' concerns.

One attendee said speaking the language of the community AFC plans on visiting is important and that includes translating written documents into languages other than English.

"We want to make sure what we have gotten on



Coleman Goode at the breakfast.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

a legislative level does not go away and work on expanding those policies moving forward," said Goode.

The discussion also addressed ways to make the survey more accessible to a wider demographic of Chicagoans including sending text messages and having it available at the summer festivals and Pride events to fill out either on paper or electronically.

## President George H.W. Bush dies at 94

There will be a four-day tribute for former U.S. President George H.W. Bush that will include lying in state at the U.S. Capitol for parts of three days, a funeral at the Washington National Cathedral and a burial at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum. The events will conclude Thursday, Dec. 6.

Bush—the 41st chief executive of the country, and one of only two individuals to be the father of another president—died Nov. 30 at 94 in Houston.

His death happened several months after his wife of 73 years, Barbara Bush, passed away at 92.

Bush (the last chief executive who was a veteran) was president during 1989-92, losing a re-election bid to Democrat and Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. He was also challenged by independent billionaire businessman Ross Perot. Previously, Bush was vice president under two-term leader Ronald Reagan.

Among the items associated with his term as president were the first Persian Gulf War and Bush's own "thousand points of light" concept—the latter to describe community organizations' efforts to do good. He was also known for reneging on his "no new taxes pledge," which many speculated was a contributing factor to his re-election defeat.

Like Reagan, Bush is not considered a staunch ally of the LGBT community, although he signed the inclusive Hate Crimes Statistics Act in 1990, Advocate.com noted. However, Bush also was responsible for putting David Souter and Clarence Thomas (the latter considered to be extremely anti-LGBT) to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Also, in 1992, when The New York Times asked Bush, "If in a few years another of your grandchildren came to you, boy or girl, and said



Clinton, Obamas, Bushes and Melania Trump at Barbara Bush's funeral. George H.W. Bush is in front.

Photo by Paul Morse

"I'm gay, what would you say?," he responded, in part, "I'd love that child. I would put my arm around him and I would hope he wouldn't go out and try to convince people that this was the normal lifestyle—that this was appropriate lifestyle, that this was the way it ought to be."

In 2013, though, Bush was a witness to a same-sex wedding in Maine.

In addition to the 43rd president (George W. Bush), Bush is survived by son Jeb, a former Florida governor and 2016 presidential candidate; sons Neil and Marvin; daughter Dorothy; 17 grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. His daughter Robin died of leukemia as a child.

The Advocate article is at <https://www.advocate.com/news/2018/11/30/george-hw-bush-no-ally-no-enemy-lgbtq-people-dead-94>. The New York Times interview is at <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/12/us/the-1992-campaign-excerpts-from-an-interview-with-president-bush.html>.



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# LGBTQ-inclusive La Casa Norte to open new facility

BY ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

Sol Flores, like her first name's meaning in Spanish (which translates into "sun" in English), lights up when she talks about the new Humboldt Park facility for La Casa Norte that is scheduled to open in December.

"What was important to us was to try and sell this dream and get people interested and say, 'We need more infrastructure and space in order to have more case managers, social workers, meals, bus passes,'" Flores told Windy City Times.

Flores—the executive director of the social-justice nonprofit—and her team of volunteers, donors and staff have been hard at work for seven years to get the funds and create a new building for the next chapter of La Casa Norte, which helps families and youth experiencing homelessness and provides educational and financial services to them. The new facility will house more homeless or at-risk families, LGBTQ youth and anyone who needs a place to rest their feet, get food or a meal, a health checkup or toiletries.

With 25 permanent supportive apartments on the upper floors, a community space, administrative offices, a Howard Brown Health clinic, a commercial kitchen and cafe, a food pantry, a rooftop garden, a courtyard and even a small stage for showcasing art, the new building is like its own community. Bringing it all together has taken the hard work of fundraising \$20 million

without losing the building's vision, Flores said. Now, its vision is almost completed—thanks to the securing of \$20 million (\$6 million from private families and donors and \$14 million from the public side).

The five-story building, designed by Landon Bone Baker architects and which used to be a screw factory, embodies the positive energy of La Casa Norte and Flores. The combination of apartments—called Pierce House after Dennis Pierce, who donated the first \$1 million to the project—and the community center called the Foundation Project will be buzzing with life and engagement through workshops, community events, drop-in consultations, art, sustainability and diversity.

Jeff Bone—the principal architect on the project who started working with Flores in 2010—said transparency and engagement are in line with La Casa Norte's principles, seen in the architecture's exterior spaces such as the residential courtyard and the rooftop garden, which embodies sustainability from a design perspective and from an environmental side. He said integrating color, artwork and natural light not only enhance the design but support the building's mission.

"The idea is that people can connect and see the activity and the energy that's happening inside the building from the street," Bone said, adding that it will light up the night. "There is this real transparent idea that is a principle of La Casa Norte."

To Flores, that was important to see in the design. She said she wants people walking by to be amazed at the building and see all the services it is offering to the community. With large modern glass windows going up the front of the building and color on the walls, the building will stand out from its neighbors. Especially since the strip of its location is a food and medical desert in Humboldt Park, she hopes its presence will combat those issues and influence locals to get involved.

In addition to having a food pantry and commercial kitchen, having a federally qualified healthcare center with Howard Brown is a partnership Flores is especially thrilled about because of its safe haven for LGBTQ youth and experience in serving communities. She said anyone in a low-income bracket will be able to get access to doctor visits and checkups, which will expand access to affordable healthcare.

"We chose [Howard Brown] as a partner because of their experience in working with young people experiencing homelessness at the Broadway Youth Center," she said. "They have a really strong, shared sense of organizational culture and a framework for how we serve young people. We view ourselves as a very strong LGBTQ ally and Howard Brown as a source for LGBTQ health, but they also see themselves as being able to serve everyone."

Its inclusive value is another worth reflected in the new space. Flores said she wants the new facility to be a safe space for the LGBTQ community and Humboldt Park. While she said she is proud



La Casa Norte.

Rendering by Landon Bone Baker Architects

of Boystown's reputation as a haven for LGBTQ folks, it cannot be the only one.

"As a woman of color who lives in the community, I am convicted to make sure that this community is welcoming to all of our brothers and sisters," Flores a Humboldt Park resident herself, said. "We have had to fight homophobia, transphobia and the good fight against it—there are things we can do to combat that [like] creating safe spaces here [and] making sure that our staff reflects this community as well."

Delavontay Wyatt has felt the safe space environment at La Casa Norte and is a product of the nonprofit's social justice work. Wyatt, who is 19 and identifies as bisexual, has lived in the one of the nonprofit's supportive housing buildings for 11 months and works at Dunkin' Donuts down the street, a job he got thanks to the organization. He said La Casa Norte is helping him find permanent housing and start college at Truman

College where he wants to study early childhood education and cosmetology. He has also learned life skills such as finances and sex education, a weekly program taught to residents.

"[La Casa Norte staff] are supportive and they are not mean about [being bisexual]," Wyatt said. "I am not the only LGBT person here. We are all family."

Wyatt recently came out as bi and said at first he was scared to do so, but after support from staff and participating in the Pride Parade with La Casa Norte, he felt empowered and part of the LGBTQ community. He has noticed his growth in the past 11 months and now has been conducting interviews and public speeches about the nonprofit's mission. He is not shy anymore.

"They helped me come out of my shell," Wyatt said.

Visit <http://www.lacasanorte.org/who-we-are/> and <https://howardbrown.org/byc/>.

## Families of Chicago Banquet Jan. 5

The Third Annual Families of Chicago Banquet will take place Saturday, Jan. 5, 6-9 p.m., at the University of Chicago's Cloister Club, 1212 E. 59th St.

The official title of the event is "Save Our Scene F.O.C. Banquet 3.0: Three Times a Charm."

Attendees will be treated to a catered dinner and have the opportunity to participate in a silent auction—auction items will be donated by staff, faculty and community members as well as those affiliated with the organization and UChicago. There will also be entertainment, including a special tribute to our community members who have made their transition this past year.

Those with questions should email Lance Keene at [lkeene@uchicago.edu](mailto:lkeene@uchicago.edu).



Sol Flores.

Photo by Ariel Parrella-Aureli

# Chicago sees fewest new HIV infections in decades

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), the City of Chicago saw 752 new HIV infections in 2017.

"The Illinois Department of Public Health [IDPH] is committed to getting to zero new infections in the next decade, so these kind of figures fit into that," said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, MD.

This number is among surveillance figures CDPH was scheduled to release the week of Dec. 3. Among other key statistics for 2017, about 48 percent of persons living with HIV in Chicago were able to achieve viral suppression through medication, at which point there was little likelihood that they would transmit the virus to others.

Among those newly diagnosed, about 82 percent were linked to a provider within one month of diagnosis, and 92 percent were linked to a provider within 12 months, according to the report.

"Our testing ability has been the same, since we have 'opt-out' testing now," added Morita. "People don't have to give [specific] consent to have HIV tests done, so overall, over time our numbers of test have actually increased. ... But

we're always looking for the opportunities to do more and do better, so while we're thrilled about the decrease in numbers of HIV diagnoses, we know that there are certain populations that are at greater risk for [new transmissions]."

Persons who are ages 20-29 years old were the most frequently diagnosed group, representing some 38 percent of new diagnoses. Non-Hispanic Black individuals were the most frequently diagnosed population—representing 54.8 percent of new HIV diagnoses, 64 percent of AIDS diagnoses and 55.2 of late diagnoses. Additionally, men who have sex with men (MSM) represented 3.9 times as many new infections than persons reporting heterosexual or intravenous transmissions.

"As we work on getting to zero, we are really going to focus on those populations to know that there is HIV-testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis [PrEP] available," said Morita.

Highest rates of new infection were seen in individuals residing in the Uptown, Chatham and Washington Park neighborhoods; the highest rates of persons living with HIV overall were in the Uptown, Edgewater, Rogers Park and South Shore neighborhoods.

In addition to reducing the new HIV transmission-rates even further in years ahead, CDPH is faced with high transmission rates of other sexu-



CDPH Commissioner Dr. Julie Morita. Photo courtesy of the City of Chicago

ally transmitted infections (STI). In 2017, there were 30,292 chlamydia cases, the highest number in a year reported to date. Additionally there were 11,720 new gonorrhea cases, the highest number since 2009, and 788 primary and secondary syphilis cases, a number that has plateaued in recent years.

Morita said those numbers are parallel with reports from other cities and noted that CDPH has an information campaign in effect to educate residents about the issue.

"Part of it is making people aware, especially younger people, so that they know that they

should get treatment and care," she noted. "... It's a matter of making people aware, and destigmatizing seeking care, whether it's for HIV, chlamydia or gonorrhea, we want people to get into care or treatment."

Morita added that city health officials and other stakeholders have been trying to apply a more comprehensive address to the HIV epidemic, one that tackles social determinants of health in addition to specific medical interventions.

"We're trying to take that and apply that to other areas of health as well," said Morita.

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## viewpoints



**Joey  
MCDONALD**

## World AIDS Day 2018 ramblings

I arrived at Naval Station Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, ready and eager to be honorably discharged, on March 18, 1980. I was lucky enough to get to spend two weeks in San Francisco before coming home to Chicago.

It was like being in Mecca for this young gay lad. I explored the area: cruising the streets of The Castro, taking pics of the sights like crooked Lombard Street in Russian Hill, tried to channel my inner hippie stoned out of my mind in Haight Ashbury, was confused by a sexy but wacky Scientistologist at Twin Peaks, shared a cigar (among other things) on the Powerhouse patio, had a date at the Balcony, and spent a weekend in San Jose with a shipmate and his wife—all the while, reveling in all that was gay and bohemian and leather and trippy and free.

I was a sexy, horny 24-year-old Black gay man with an education and an agenda, on the edge of manhood and ready to start the rest of my life! I didn't know that there was a ticking bomb building up, set to start exploding—and intent on changing life as I knew it—in little more than a year.

I arrived back in Chicago on April 3 with an agenda: get settled in at home, get a job, find a place of my own, find a boyfriend and settle down. But first, I needed to explore the city and find my community. I jumped in feet first, and, in my first two weeks home, I had hit the Gold Coast, Dugan's Bistro, Club Baths, Broadway Limited, Sherrie's, Manhandler, Machine Shop, O'Banions, Redoubt, Alfie's and Man's Country.

I met people everywhere I went, and for the most part enjoyed being "fresh meat" while it lasted, Like

I said, I was a sexy, horny 24-year-old Black gay man with an education and an agenda. As Annie Lennox would sing many years later, "Sweet dreams are made of this/Who am I to disagree?/I travel the world and the seven seas/Everybody's looking for something. Some of them want to use you/Some of them want to be used by you/Some of them want to abuse you/Some of them want to be abused." It was the culture of the times, and I fell into it. Fully.

Everything was great. I got a job. I got some hang-out places. I ran into a guy I knew in high school, and Ray-Ray and I quickly became best friends. Through him, I met lots of people and made more friends. At the Pride Parade that year, I met a guy named David who was living with his boyfriend Paul, and I found myself in my first poly relationship. Through David and Paul, I met a sweet boy named Heath from Lincoln, Nebraska, that I was immediately smitten with. We began dating at the beginning of November 1980, but our romance was short-lived. In February 1981, lovely, beautiful, 22-year-old Heath would be the first person I knew to die of some weird, mysterious disease. It all happened so quick: He thought he had a cold, then a week later the flu, and then he was so sick he went to the ER and was admitted to the hospital. His parents and brother came, were informed that he had a rare pneumonia and, within two weeks, he had died. That fast.

Over the next couple of years, guys around me were getting sick and some were dying: guys that I knew intimately and guys I called family and guys I knew as friends and guys I kind of knew and guys I didn't know at all. Sick and dying or dead. And you started seeing fear in people's eyes in the bars and on the streets. First, it was one here, one there—including my first roommate, Jim. Then it was a couple. Then there were a few at a time. Then there was a bunch. And you noticed people held you less close, and never kissed you on the lips, and touches no longer lingered, and no one would eat off of your plate or sip from your drink.

In 1982, the CDC announced that this thing that was happening was to be called GRID. And more

guys got sick, and some died, and more guys and more guys. And it hurt. Every single one of their deaths broke me (and everyone else) a little bit. In 1983, the first women were diagnosed with AIDS, proving that it was not a "gay disease," as some had declared. Then children were diagnosed, meaning it was passed on from their mothers. And, always, more guys.

By 1986, the notebook that I had used for a phone book since 1974 had notations about deaths on more than 50 entries. I stopped counting in 1987, when the 220th person I knew had died. And still they died. Then my ex, David died, and his partner Paul shortly after. The Western Blot test (which detects HIV antibodies) was approved, as was the AIDS drug AZT. By the end of 1987, 71,751 cases of AIDS had been reported to the World Health Organization, with 47,022 in the United States. It was also estimated that there were 5-10 million people living with HIV worldwide.

In 1988, Dec. 1 was declared as World AIDS Day.

In 2017, approximately 36.9 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 1.8 million were children under 15.

An estimated 1.8 million world-wide were newly diagnosed as being HIV+.

Approximately 38 million people have died from AIDS and complications of HIV/AIDS since the epidemic began. Many of them were my friends, my loves, my confidants, my mentors, my confessors, my family. I have lost more people than I care to count. Many of them were just on the cusp of being an adult and we never got to see who they would have been or what they would have contributed to the world. Others were well-established doing great things and some did small things great.

Sometimes the faces get blurred, but I never forget them.

**Joey McDonald is a community activist and advocate working toward full equality for all LGBTQ people.**

mortality rates. It is not the case that Black people engage in riskier sexual behavior nor can we blame increases rates on myths about brothers on the down low. Black people are disproportionately impacted because of racism and systems set up to deny us access to health care, preventive medicine like PrEP, and stigma, which forces many to avoid being tested or engaging in conversations about sexual health.

"AIDS needs a cure, but our communities also need resources that cannot be developed in a laboratory. Black and Brown people, LGBTQ people and poor people need better access to quality and affordable healthcare, administered by medical providers who are culturally competent. Our communities need resources to deal with the trauma that results from transatlantic enslavement, anti-Blackness and white supremacy. Our country needs policies that provide uniform and basic human rights professions to everyone.

"The National Black Justice Coalition pledges to

continue the fight for federal policy solutions can save lives. The NBJC has developed the Words Matter HIV Toolkit to support members of our community in having conversations to eliminate stigma and increase testing, treatment, and support. We hope that it serves as a critical resource for everyone engaged in working woke and affirming that Black lives matter. To end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Black community, in our lifetime, it will require each of us to do more and be better at eliminating HIV stigma and fostering welcoming environments where everyone feels safe and supported. On this day, let us remember that the fight against HIV/AIDS is far from over, and we have all of the tools needed to win."

*National Black  
Justice Coalition (NBJC)*

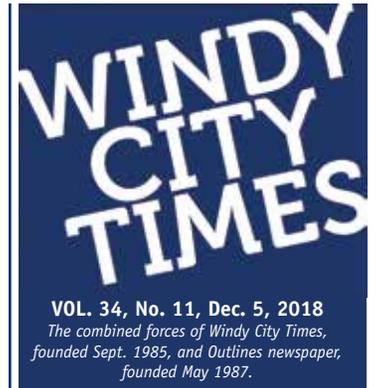
## letters

### A matter of urgency

*In recognition of World AIDS Day (which took place Dec. 1) and to call public attention to the disproportionate impact of the AIDS epidemic on Black communities, National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) Executive Director David Johns released the following statement:*

"We recognize those we have lost to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and acknowledge the work still required to end the epidemic. Today, given scientific, medical, and social advancements no one has to die as a result of HIV/AIDS. Ending the epidemic in our lifetime is not a question of resources but a question of will. Will we fight to ensure that those most neglected and ignored receive the health care and legal protections we all need to thrive?

"In spite of noteworthy improvements in HIV testing and treatment for many communities, Black people still experience the highest infection and



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**BUTT SERIOUSLY**  
PRODUCTION PUTS SAUCY  
SPIN ON THE NUTCRACKER

**PAGE 18**

The Buttcracker: A Nutcracker Burlesque.  
Photos by Matthew Gregory Hollis

## THEATER REVIEW

**The Revolutionists**

Playwright: Lauren M. Gunderson  
 At: Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice Ave.  
 Tickets: Strawdog.org 773-644-1380; \$35-\$40  
 Runs through: Dec. 29

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

You probably haven't thought about revolution—not the kind extolled by advertisers, but the capital "R" off-with-their-heads variety—since history class, but try now to recall what you were told about the toppling of monarchies that didn't focus exclusively on males butting heads and making speeches. The documented contribution of women to the quest for independent rule, however, has always been largely restricted to wives, mothers, daughters and sweethearts serving as



Sarah Goeden and  
 Kat McDonnell in *The  
 Revolutionists*.  
 Photo by Collin  
 Quinn Rice

figureheads or martyrs in support of their sires. Lauren M. Gunderson disapproves this injustice. In her account of the French revolution, Charlotte Corday, the assassin of Jean-Paul Marat, roundly denounces the assumption that she had to be "fucked into" taking action. Gunderson also argues the paradox of a privileged elite championing "freedom" while practicing colonialist slavery and domestic disenfranchisement, the insecurity of an artist's career, the downside of celebrity

and the ironies of faulty foresight. Her diatribe is framed in a scenario proposing a real-life playwright in 1783, one Mme. Olympe DeGouges, striving to be the voice of her turbulent age.

Late in the play, a tribunal accuses DeGouges of writing "a shameless drama, poorly penned" only to have the indignant author protest "It's a first draft!" While this factor might not apply to the play we are watching, there is no denying Gunderson's occasional surrender to an excess

of enthusiasm in her eagerness to explore every last contradiction inherent in her dramatic setting, making for occasional moments of vacant repartee or misplaced inside-jokes bridging gaps between pithier observations.

Gunderson's overstuffed text offers an abundance of deconstructive analysis packed into a mere two hours, with additional clutter provided by a Brecht-Tech ambience involving industrial-warehouse decor, exposed audio equipment and matte-white fashions encompassing a Dolly Parton-sized wig for the deposed Marie Antoinette and a baby-doll frock for Caribbean spy Marianne Angelle. The first heavy snowfall of the season couldn't help but take a toll on the opening night energy level (with Izis Mollinedo's slyly nuanced Corday emerging the sole performance to fully occupy every dimension of the role assigned her in Gunderson's brainy, witty and wordy sprint through three centuries) but what's a revolution without a challenge?

## THEATER REVIEW

**HeLa**

Playwright: J. Nicole Brooks  
 At: Sideshow Theatre Company at the Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.  
 Tickets: 773-404-7336;  
 GreenhouseTheater.org; \$30  
 Runs through: Dec. 23

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

HeLa juxtaposes three storylines linked only abstractly. Each one contains fine scenes that display the skill of J. Nicole Brooks, who benefits as a playwright from her experience as an actor. Collectively, however, HeLa is an odd duck.

Story One presents the cancer-related death of an unnamed Black woman in mid-20th-century Baltimore. Story Two presents a Black 1980s



Deanna Reed-Foster in *HeLa*.  
 Photo by Jonathan  
 L. Green

9-year-old Chicagoan, nurtured by her uncle and cousin, who dreams of becoming an astronaut or cosmologist. Story Three features two once-earthly beings, now adrift yet alive in space—one a Black woman and the other David Bowie's Major Tom. The stories intercut with each other as actors double or triple in various roles.

Only by reading an article in the program did I understand that the dying woman was Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951), whose biopsied tumor tissues

were cultivated into HeLa—the first human cell line to achieve scientific immortality. HeLa cells still are extensively used for medical research and were used by NASA for outer-space experiments, the article noted.

This helped me make abstract connections between the stories: how the dying Black woman unknowingly became part of the inspiration for the young Black girl; how the woman's literal physical essence—shot into space—gave rise to the surreal Black space entity, who offers sage but emotional commentary on our world; how the stars and heavens inspire and connect mere human mortals.

Many may be familiar with Lacks and HeLa—as I was not—via a 2010 book by Rebecca Skloots and a 2017 TV film with Oprah Winfrey. Such informed viewers may plug into this play immediately. But—and it's a big "but"—audience members should not have to read the program for sufficient context to make sense of the juggled stories. If I'd not read the article, I would have

been lost and, therefore, uninterested and dismissive of HeLa. This is a serious dramaturgical problem. A play needn't be literal or realistic, but its context must be self-apparent to viewers.

Still, there are precious and heartfelt moments throughout that are beautifully written, directed (by Jonathan L. Green) and played: a scene of charm yet pain between Henrietta and an affable fellow patient, a marriage proposal during a total eclipse, a man tenderly mourning his wife, a poetic meeting of space entities momentarily breaking their loneliness, a closing celebration of achievement. The fine cast includes Deanna Reed-Foster, Matt Fletcher, Aya Sol Masai Hall (Little Girl), David Hamilton, Nicole Michelle Haskins, Ann James and Carolyn Nelson—all in multiple roles, except Hall.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**The Safe House**, City Lit Theatre at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, through Dec. 16. The occupants of the title dwelling may be a three-generation white, het Norman Rockwell family in suburban Michigan on the surface, but author Kristine Thatcher's savvy filial dynamics render their needs—and solutions—applicable to all demographics. MSB

**The Nutcracker**, House Theatre at the Chopin, through Dec. 30. The House Company's adaptation transforms E.T.A. Hoffman's romantic fancy into a mythic tale of a household battling the sorrow threatening their holiday cheer, their resistance aided by clever reanimated toys, tuneful musical interludes, thrilling sword fights and scrumptious cookies. MSB

**Gypsy**, Porchlight Music Theatre, through Dec. 29. E. Faye Butler is ferocious yet tender in this exceptional production of a legendary musical. Butler was born to play Mama Rose. JA

**The Q Brothers Christmas Carol**, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, through Dec. 30. Even in Year Six, this 90-minute rap/hip-hop version of the holiday classic still is a cheeky, edgy, mile-a-minute delight. You'll smile and tap your toes. JA

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Sullivan

## THEATER REVIEW

**The Butcracker:  
A Nutcracker  
Burlesque**

Playwright: written and choreographed by Darling Shear  
 At: (Sub)version Productions at Reggie's Music Joint, 2105 S. State St.  
 Tickets: TheButcrackerBurlesque.com;  
 \$20-\$40  
 Runs through: Dec. 26 (Wednesdays only)

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

When the Uptown Underground abruptly ceased operations earlier this year, Jaq Seifert's annual Yuletide revue found itself searching for a place to pitch its tent—not just any church basement or banquet hall, either, but a campground capable of hosting pyrotechnics, floor acrobatics and exotic acts of nebulous infrastructure. Fur-

thermore, the location of this vaudeville also needed to promise a comfortable environment for audiences entering into the spirit of its gender-fluid body-positive manifesto.

Fortunately, the once-desolate district just south of Roosevelt Road is well on its way to becoming one of the city's trendiest neighborhoods, its former automobile showrooms now providing nightlife activities for a youth culture steeped in egalitarian diversity. To be sure, the play (as Shakespeare noted) may still be "the thing," but there's no discounting the advantages of a sophisticated light and sound system, a full-service bar and grill, nearby parking, public transportation and copious pedestrian traffic.

The show's improved morale was immediately apparent on its opening night. Based on the 18th-century fairy tale, the story recounts the adventures of meek office manager Clara, whose hired Holiday Party entertainment—a Father Christmas surrogate whose mischievous antics veer a little too far into Tim Curry territory—meets with her workplace supervisor's disapproval. The contrite Kriss Kringle comforts

his humiliated sponsor with a nutcracker in the shape of a soldier, whose candy ration transports them both to the Land of Sweets, where Clara's royal reward for bravely helping her GI Joe defeat an army of rats—no helpless damsel, she—is a sumptuous confection-related entertainment, set to jazz arrangements (chiefly those of Duke Ellington, Glen Miller and Billy Strayhorn) of Tchaikovsky's classic melodies.

The emcee trio of Squeaky Bubbles, Fay LaVerte, and Stevie Kinks keep the action progressing at sprightly pace in a spectacle clocking in at a brisk 60 minutes. Returning are belly-dancer Kamrah Raqs, vodka-swilling sequin-scattering Emma Glitterbomb, Gaea Lady (aka "Hot Chocolate") nibbling daintily on flaming torches, and Evelyn "Mother Ginger" Tension, clad in a layer-cake gown and inviting favored spectators to lick frosting from her hand. Newcomers include Clair Bell, a Calavera Catrina slight-of-hand artist fond of smashed crockery, and Pierre LaChance as a Drosselmeyer far younger and more seductive than his traditional geriatric white-ballet counterpart.

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## THEATER REVIEW

## Familiar

Playwright: Danai Gurira  
 At: Steppenwolf Theatre Company,  
 1650 N. Halsted St.  
 Tickets: 312-335-1650;  
 Steppenwolf.org; \$20-\$109  
 Runs through: January 13

BY KERRY REID

The foundation for Danai Gurira's 2015 play is, indeed, familiar. It takes place in a well-appointed living room as a family prepares for a wedding. Inevitably, tensions build and old wounds bleed anew as secrets emerge. It's a sturdy scenario—and one we've seen many times before at Steppenwolf.

But what makes Gurira's house stand out from the neighborhood of similar dramas is the many ways the Chinyaramwira family of Minnesota—headed by Zimbabwean immigrants and academics Marvelous (Ora Jones) and Donald (Cedric Young)—struggle to define their mutual ties and their individual identities. The impending marriage of eldest daughter Tendikayi (Lanise Antoine Shelley) to Chris (Erik Hellman), a “little white boy from Minnetonka,” is only one part of the culture clash. There's also Aunt Anne (Cheryl Lynn Bruce), newly arrived from “Zim” and determined to perform the “roora,” or bride-price ritual of the old country, for her niece. Inevitably, this unearths old rifts among the sisters, including Jacqueline Williams' wine-guzzling Margaret.

The older generation's sibling rivalry finds its



Lanise Antoine Shelley and Erik Hellman in Familiar.

Photo by Michael Brosilow

mirror image in the strained relationship between Tendikayi, a straitlaced Christian attorney, and sister Nyasha, a free-spirited singer/songwriter/feng shui consultant whose own recent trip to Zimbabwe inspires her to explore her roots. In turn, Chris, a button-downed Lutheran who works at a nonprofit for African economic development, has his own loose-cannon brother, Brad (Luigi Sottile), who drops by to help with the ritual and

finds himself attracted to Nyasha.

Gurira, a well-known actor (the film Black Panther and the TV series The Walking Dead) as well as a writer, is Zimbabwean-American and, pre-

sumably, drew upon that dual identity in crafting these characters who must navigate the choppy waters between assimilation and loyalty to one's first home. In tone, the story moves from high-spirited physical comedy and verbal ripostes, especially in the first act, to more somber notes in the second. Under Danya Taymor's assured direction, the tonal shifts unfold without being forced.

The cast simply couldn't be better. Jones, Williams and Bruce are a thespian dream team, but Young and the younger members of the ensemble hold their own. We clearly see each character struggling to find firm footing as they face riptides of memory and revelation.

All reveal moments of anguish and resentment as well as deep understanding and empathy. Bruce's Aunt Anne may demonstrate her avaricious side in her “roora” demands. But she also carries memories of the Zimbabwean struggle for independence that Marvelous, who calls her country of origin “a sinking ship,” has tried to forget. A recurring bit in which Donald keeps putting up a map of Zimbabwe, only to have Marvelous take it down and replace it with a wreath, moves from being comic to mournful as we learn more about the past circumstances of their lives.

Familiar doesn't take formal risks. It doesn't need to. The family story Gurira tells is evergreen but also fresh, immediate and heartfelt.

THEATER REVIEW  
A Christmas Carol

By: Tom Creamer  
 At: The Goodman Theatre,  
 170 N. Dearborn St.  
 Tickets: GoodmanTheatre.org; \$25-\$119  
 Runs through: Dec. 30

BY AMELIA OROZCO

Charles Dickens' manner of telling the simple man's story lives on in the Goodman Theatre's A Christmas Carol, a Chicago tradition 1978. This most recent production (adapted by Tom Creamer and directed by Henry Wishcamper) is a treasure to see, with sentiments to carry all year long and not just during the giving season. Larry Yando plays Scrooge—the miser turned benevolent spender—for the 11th season.

Together with his younger double, (Asher Alcantara as the Boy Scrooge, Christopher Shepard as Scrooge as a young man) Yando's older-adult version of Ebenezer gives audiences reason to pity and concurrently root for the old lad as he comes to his senses. Ghostly apparitions scare the hell out of Scrooge's unsuspecting soul and show little mercy on Ebenezer as he falls into bed on Christmas Eve. It may as well have been All Hallows' Eve: Some of Scrooge's visitors were grim in both appearance and demeanor (especially Breon Arzell as the Ghost of Christmas Future). Through it all, Yando delivers a deliciously performance with imbued with hilarious antics and physical comedy.

Comedy aside, Ebenezer comes through as the hopeless, tired and stingy old man that he is. Good thing the Ghost of Christmas Past (Molly Brennan) gives this production the pizzazz it sometimes lacks: The action moves at a slower

pace than the Metra at times, but that is to be expected in a story deeply steeped in tradition and values. The plot takes time to unfurl into the fully blossomed lesson intertwined within it. With her quick wit, vibrant costuming, sassy buzz-cut and Cirque de Soleil-worthy moves (Tommy Rapley, choreographer), a ghoul never looked so chic as Brennan.

Equally stunning is Jasmine Bracey's Ghost of Christmas Present. Bracey delivers the goods Scrooge so desperately needs to see—the gloomy day-to-day challenges of the Cratchit family, a large group living on a lean budget. The poor but unreasonably cheery Bob Cratchit (Thomas J. Cox) makes all those uninspired folks who dread trudging back to work after a holiday seem shallow and superficial. After all, the Cratchits are seen giving up creature comforts like heat and silver candelabums in exchange for a humble Christmas feast.

If by this point, audience members had managed to keep a dry eye, they soon gave up that hope with the arrival of Tiny Tim (Paris Strickland, back for the second consecutive year). Aside from being the first female to play Tiny Tim at Goodman, Strickland is also a cancer survivor. This, mixed with the high emotions the Cratchits embody, gives the production huge heart.

The design elements sprinkled throughout (including Keith Parham's lighting, Heidi Sue McMath's costumes, Andrew Hansen's original music and the live quartet of Malcolm Ruhl, Maddi Ruhl, Andrew Coil and Justin Amolsch) add to the splendor and the production's overall grandeur.

There is no time like the present to do the right thing, and Ebenezer realizes this at the nick (no pun intended) of time. A Christmas Carol has the magic of Christmas and the inspiration of a New Year's resolution, all wrapped up in one.

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Sam Kende - photo by Jeff Sorenson

## BOOK REVIEW

## The Best Party of Our Lives: Stories of Gay Weddings

by Sarah Galvin

\$18.95; Sasquatch Books; 226 pages

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Your summer is filling up quickly.

It starts with graduations and confirmations. You've already got a pile of "Save the Date" cards for a bunch of weddings, and the summer wraps up with family reunions and more weddings. It might even end with yours, and in the new book *The Best Party of Our Lives*, by Sarah Galvin, you'll see how "I do" becomes "whoohooooo!"

Even though she "always figured" she'd end up spending her life with a woman, Galvin "certainly had no interest in weddings..." They just weren't relevant to her, except for an irksome knowledge that much of the wedding industry was biased against LGBTQ couples.

Later, as a writer for a newspaper in Seattle, she began getting requests to "crash" weddings and she was "blown away by the things" she saw. Weddings—especially for LGBTQ couples—weren't what she thought they'd be. Their parties were "the best ones imaginable..."

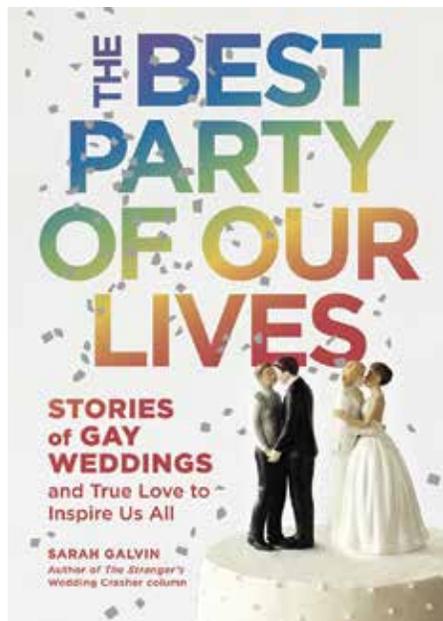
The stories of some she found are in this book.

When a couple looks back on their boy-meets-boy (or girl-meets-girl) story, there's often an element of surprise. There was an introduction, either traditionally or through modern methods like Craigslist, online, or dance rave. Falling in love might've begun with bumps and rough spots, followed by the realization of common interests and the happy idea that you can't get her out of your mind.

No two proposals are alike, although today's couples almost always have some sort of prior discussion on it. The actual "Will you..." might be romantic and accompanied by one or two rings, or it may be an out-loud wondering if moving in together meant more than merely sharing a home. And just like the proposals are varied, so are the budgets, which usually leads to a DIY ceremony that more reflects the pair.

Some of the couples in this book had domestic partnerships long before they married. One couple debated marriage altogether, figuring that

## BOOKS



there was no reason to wed as an "affirmation of the love they'd known was true" for years. Some invited nearly everyone they knew, while one couple sent "Don't Save the Date" tchotchkes. There were cakes and cake-toppers, toasts and gifts, and one "[23]-year relationship [that] deserved a party..."

So you got engaged over the holidays, or maybe you've got love on the brain. How do other LGBTQ couples make their special days... special? "The Best Party of Our Lives" is packed with ideas on that.

It's also packed with another thing: stories that are very Seattle-centric. Author Galvin said she "started with" Seattle couples but she never really got any farther than that, although LGBTQ couples get married all over the place. I would've absolutely liked to see wider coverage from this book; the minimized area doesn't make it bad—it makes it a lot of the same.

Even so, if you've got stars in your eyes, a ring on your finger, and romance on your mind, you'll barely notice. For you, newlywed-to-be, *The Best Party of Our Lives* will fill you with happiness.

Want more? Look for *The Wedding Heard 'Round the World*, by Michael McConnell and Jack Baker; or *The Essential Guide to Gay and Lesbian Weddings*, by Tess Ayers and Paul Brown.

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## SPOTLIGHT

**The Book of Merman:** Merman meets Mormons in the musical tale of Missionaries attempting to "save" the legendary Broadway belter. In Flying Elephant's production, composer Leo Schwartz packs the score with original music to tell a tale of self-discovery, showtimes and evangelizing youth. Runs through Jan. 6 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Tickets are \$40; visit [Stage773.com](http://Stage773.com).



Photo by Evan Hanover

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The Joffrey Ballet. | Photo by Cheryl Mann.

## MEASURE FOR MEASURE

## Yuletide tunes

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

We don't think any music director would program "Oh, Holy Night" and "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" back-to-back, but both are part of the vast array of music which contributes to the holiday season. Sacred or profane, traditional or contemporary, profound or ridiculous, Hanukkah or Christmas or Kwanzaa, holiday music offers something for everyone.

Even Lyric Opera of Chicago is ringing the holiday bell, marketing its production of Jules Massenet's *Cendrillon* (Cinderella)—a Lyric Opera premiere—as a spectacular holiday treat (with early December and then January performance dates). The following events only scratch the surface of the season's musical riches.

**Christmas Mubarak**, Silk Road Rising at The Chicago Temple, through Dec. 11—Christmas Mubarak is a first-of-its-kind musical featuring texts from the Quran and New Testament that celebrate the birth of Jesus as told by Muslims and Christians. "Mubarak" is the Arabic word meaning blessed, and is commonly used as a greeting during Ramadan, the month-long Islamic sacred observance. The 90-minute show features actors from Silk Road Rising and choir members from the First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple. Corey Pond is the adapter/director and Erik Nussbaum is the choir director. Tickets/info: [SilkRoadRising.org](http://SilkRoadRising.org); \$25-\$35

**The Lakeside Singers**, various venues, Nov. 30, Dec. 7-8, 7:30 p.m. (all concerts)—Now 20 years old, the wonderful Lakeside Singers present the holiday mix *Oh, What Fun...* at venues in Evanston, Chicago and Naperville. The Chicago locale is the impressively pseudo-gothic Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue at Chestnut. The program will offer the type of *mélange* which is the signature of the group, combining cross-cultural classical music from around the world with choral arrangements of jazz, gospel, rock, folk, R&B and other contemporary genres. The Lakeside Singers are directed by founder Robert



A Doo Wop Christmas Show.  
Photo courtesy of the McAninch Arts Center

Bowker, a renowned musical polymath we first met 40 years ago in the advertising biz, for which Bowker was one of the nation's top jingle singers.

**A Doo Wop Christmas Show**, McAninch Arts Center (Glen Ellyn), Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m.—The Doo

Wop Project, a six-man group dedicated to the deeply rhythmic '50s-'60s doo-wop genre, spins holiday songs in ways you've never heard before. This is just one of several holiday musical performances at "the MAC," as the McAninch Arts Center is called. On Dec. 14 (8 p.m.) Gavin Coyle offers **A Celtic Christmas** of Irish and American holiday songs, accompanied by guitar, piano, harp and flute. Then, Dec. 31 **the New Philharmonic**, the MAC's resident orchestra, will usher out the old year with 2 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. concerts of polkas, arias, light classics and movie music under music director Kirk Muspratt. Tickets/info: [AtTheMAC.org](http://AtTheMAC.org); \$35-\$67 (depending on the event)

**Hanukkah Concert**, Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe), Dec. 9—Call it Jewish jazz, call it Russian Dixieland, call it exotic and oriental ... whatever, everyone begins to sway when the clarinet and violin moan and swing and Klezmer music fills the air! Two one-hour concerts, 11AM and 1 p.m.. Ticket includes admission to the Garden;s Wonderland Express holiday attraction. Tickets/info: [ChicagoBotanic.org](http://ChicagoBotanic.org); \$20 (in advance)-\$23 plus parking

**Holiday Brass and Choral Concerts**, various venues, Dec. 13-16—Nothing announces the holiday season better than the stratospherically-

## THEATER

high clarion call of a baroque trumpet, or modern version thereof, certain to be heard during the annual seasonal concerts by **Music of the Baroque** chorus and brass ensemble. The bill includes Gabrieli, Praetorius, Anonymous and other carols, chants and joyful works for brass and voice. Venues are Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest (Dec. 13, 8 p.m.); St. Michael Church in Old Town (Dec. 14, 8 p.m.) and the Divine Word Chapel, Northbrook (Dec. 15-16, 3 p.m.). Tickets/info: [Baroque.org](http://Baroque.org); \$25-\$90

**The Messiah** and **Do-It-Yourself Messiah**, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Dec. 15-18, 7 p.m. (2 p.m. Dec. 16)—The Big One, the famous oratorio by George Frederick Handel performed—as it has been EVERY December since 1879!—by **the Apollo Chorus of Chicago** with orchestra and distinguished soloists. The full, uncut version will be offered Dec. 15-16. Then, on Dec. 17-18 **the International Music Foundation** takes the stage for its 43rd annual DIY Messiah in which a volunteer orchestra performs the score with professional conductor and soloists and YOU, the audience, as the chorus on such all-time hits as "Hallelujah!" and "For Unto Us." Tickets/info: [HarrisTheaterChicago.org](http://HarrisTheaterChicago.org); \$35-\$70 (Apollo Chorus); \$15 (Do-It-Yourself). NOTE: Legit tickets for the Do-It-Yourself Messiah are available ONLY through the Harris Theater. NOTE: **The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus** also performs *The Messiah* in four concerts at Symphony Center, Dec. 20-23, with tickets starting at \$85.

**Merry-Achi Christmas Concert**, Copernicus Center (5216 W. Lawrence Ave.), Dec. 16, 3 p.m.: The Mariachi Institute of Chicago—you probably didn't know there was one—presents its third annual holiday concert offering authentic Christmas season Mexican music. The Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuellar is the featured guest ensemble, accompanied by the Ballet Folklórico de Los Angeles. Expect lavish and colorful costumes, violins, trumpets, guitars and more. Tickets/info: [CopernicusCenter.org](http://CopernicusCenter.org); \$40-\$75

**Holidays on Stage & Screen**, **Lakeview Orchestra**, Athenaeum Theatre, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m.: Music from *The Polar Express* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* will be performed along with familiar works by Tchaikovsky, Anderson and Bizet. The five-year-old Lakeview Orchestra is an outstanding volunteer ensemble of advanced non-professional players led by musical director Gregory Hughes. Innovative vocal group Vox 3 also will perform. The beautifully -restored Athenaeum Theatre has been part of Lakeview/Lincoln Park cultural life for 107 years. Tickets/info: [AthenaeumTheatre.org](http://AthenaeumTheatre.org); \$20

**Chicago Jazz Orchestra**, Studebaker Theater, Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m.—Dubbed **ELLAbration** (sic), the concert will feature the complete 1960 Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn big band version of *The Nutcracker Suite*, plus vocalist Dee Alexander performing holiday songs favored by Ella Fitzgerald. The Chicago Jazz Orchestra, now 40 years old, is under the leadership of co-founder Jeff Lindberg. The venue, the beautifully—restored historic Studebaker Theater on Michigan Avenue—could not be lovelier. Tickets: [ChicagoJazzOrchestra.org](http://ChicagoJazzOrchestra.org); \$35-\$45

## Christmas Mubarak.

Photo by Andy Lynn



# Red Bull festival features LGBT talent

BY JERRY NUNN

Red Bull Music Festival Chicago presented a late-night music event called Futurehood & Friends at the Wicker Park nightclub Subterranean.

The concert venue filled two floors with people from the LGBT community ready to be entertained with a variety of talent. Many were from the Chicago-based, LGBTQ-centric label Futurehood that is spearheaded by rapper Mister Wallace and producer Anthony “aCeb00mbaP,” also known as aCe, Pabey.

Although no longer working with Futurehood, trans artist KC Ortiz is still a friend with the collective. Ortiz brought fierce raps and beats to the dimly lit stage upstairs.

DJs played in between brief set ups for performers Blu Bone and Kidd Kenn.

Born and raised in Chicago, openly gay rapper Roy Kinsey performed with his two moms for his segment. He took the crowd to church and described his choir background earlier in the evening sitting down with Windy City Times, “We used to sing “Joyful, Joyful” from Sister Act 2. I had the rap part. I have been doing this for a very long time. In fifth grade, I wrote my first rap song. In college, I put my first album out.”

Although he had always written songs about

band and that, in turn, inspired the jacket and hat Kinsey wore during the performance.

He brought a duo called Mother Nature to support him toward the end of his set. Kinsey became involved with Futurehood from his college friend aCe and the Banjo Report, a weekly dance party that aCe threw that later turned into Futurehood. “We bonded through music and culture,” Kinsey said.

The operation of Futurehood was started by aCe and Mister Wallace in 2016 with the release of the Faggot EP. Wallace was the headliner for the Subterranean show, bringing an out-of-this-world artistic piece for spectators.

Before his set, he spoke of his live music being improv and playing in the moment. He stated, “I

like to vibe it out.”

He described himself as “an alien inhabiting a form 3,001 years in the future.” His goal is create an identity and evolve along the way as a person.

Futurehood continues to evolve as well, as a movement of artists and chosen family in the Chicago area that simply won't be defined. Wallace explained, “We may not be popular in mainstream society, but I am here to create a platform for them. I find the artists from the ether. People can reach out to me and we will find a way to navigate their dreams. I am the cool mom and their life coach!”

**For future releases, such as Wallace's upcoming music COOL MOM, visit Futurehood.net.**

## MUSIC

men, he musically came out on his third album Beautiful Only where he addressed someone of the same sex. He feels he is growing into his voice on his new 11-track album, Blackie: A Story by Roy Kinsey.

His song “Ring Ring” was inspired by his hus-



The Vixen.

Photos by Jerry Nunn



Mister Wallace.

# STEPPENWOLF FAMILIAR

A joy-filled comedy about a wedding celebration, an unexpected guest and a secret that will change a family forever.

**2 FOR 1**  
TICKETS  
NOV 28-30  
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By  
playwright  
Danai Gurira of  
Black Panther  
fame





John Grant.  
Photo by  
Shawn  
Brackbill

NUNN ON ONE

## John Grant weaves 'Magic' spell on fans

BY JERRY NUNN

Out singer John Grant was born in Michigan, started a band called The Czars in Denver and eventually moved to Europe. Along the way he created a legacy of solo work that included his

debut album, *Queen of Denmark*. During London's Meltdown Festival, he announced he is HIV-positive while he was onstage with Hercules & Love Affair.

His record *Pale Green Ghosts* had him singing three tracks with artist Sinead O'Connor and dur-

ing the album *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* had guest vocalists Tracey Thorn and Amanda Palmer. He recorded with singer Robbie Williams on the album *The Heavy Entertainment Show*.

Grant's 2018 album, *Love Is Magic*, music brings him to Chicago while on a world tour.

## MUSIC

**Windy City Times: Where in the world are you face timing from?**

John Grant: I am in the Netherlands. I have two days off before my show here. I am on tour so all over the place. We were in Milan, Germany for several shows, before that England. We are just getting started.

**WCT: Where do you live?**

JG: I am in Iceland.

**WCT: Do you ever run into Bjork on the street?**

JG: Yes, a few times. She's around, but I haven't seen her in quite a while.

**WCT: How many languages do you speak?**

JG: Around five—German, Russian, English, Icelandic and pretty solid Spanish.

**WCT: Talk about the new album, *Love Is Magic*.**

JG: I started this record down in Cornwall in a studio surrounded by modular synths in an incredible house. It was a beautiful setting in the Cornish countryside. I spent about 10 months doing the record going back and forth between Texas, Cornwall, Iceland and England.

I was doing a big Scott Walker concert. I had a festival that I curated in England. With everything, it took me about a year to get the whole thing done. I spent a lot of time getting the rich sounds right. On a big system it sounds fat, lush and gorgeous.

I wanted to get my love for the '70s AOR (album-oriented rock) ballads. I like to write those on the piano. It was nice to take my time with the sounds.

I took my time, but towards the end I like when I am given a deadline. I am a perfectionist and would probably never put it out. I would just

**Turn to page 34**

## Jane Lynch, Kate Flannery make the yuletide swing

BY JERRY NUNN

Actresses Jane Lynch and Kate Flannery are teaming up this holiday season and hitting the road. The album—*A Swingin' Little Christmas!* Jane Lynch—features Lynch, Flannery and singer Tim Davis. It was recorded in 2016 and has led them to perform 34 shows all over the country this season.

The Tony Guerrero Quintet supported them for the two City Winery shows on Nov. 30 in Chicago. The single "Winter's Never Cold" brought them a number eight hit on the Billboard charts.

Lynch and Flannery spoke briefly before the set with Windy City Times. The two talented performers originally met at Second City in Chicago but really grew to be friends at the Annoyance Theatre.

When asked how gay the yuletide would be at this concert, Lynch laughed. "This show is for everybody, but it's very campy. It's just for the

community and nobody else," the out entertainer joked in a sinister Sue Sylvester voice. "I love the meaning of 'gay' now, because it means what it actually means instead of what it used to mean—and you can quote me on that!"

The group is on a tour bus and out on the road these days. Flannery said a must-have item on the bus is a popcorn popper and Lynch's only demand was to listen to MSNBC on her earbuds. Lynch explained, "We are not actually sleeping on the bus—although I slept for eight hours on the bus the other day on the way to Chicago from Kansas, and it was perfect. We are in hotels because we are divas!"

She then said Flannery was the biggest diva on the tour, "only because her throat is sore so we are all working around it." Much like *The Brady Bunch Christmas* episode in which Carol Brady had to battle throat problems during a performance, Flannery tries to rest. "This show has a big range. It is easy to sing the songs in the stu-



Jane Lynch (right) and Kate Flannery.  
Photo by Jerry Nunn

dio but can be difficult live. We are doing it one show at a time," Flannery confessed.

Many years ago, the two were both in *The Real Live Branch Bunch Show* that grew out of Chicago improv in which Lynch played Carol and Flannery played Alice the maid, among other roles. "We

did that episode that you mentioned and I had to sing," Lynch said.

She was then asked if there will be more *Ralph Breaks the Internet* movies planned after the success of the current one. [Editor's note: Lynch voices Sergeant Calhoun in the animated movie.] Lynch said, "I think they left it where there will be more. It was so delightful and such a gem."

Flannery—who played a drunken Meredith on the U.S. version of the TV comedy *The Office*—was questioned about her favorite holiday drink. "It's called a white trash Russian. It's just vodka and Yoo-hoo." Lynch followed that by saying she no longer drinks but used to love coffee and Baily's while living in Chicago. Flannery then said, "That's like a time machine for me. It reminds me of the Gaslight across from the Steppenwolf Theatre in the old days." The *Glee* actress reminisced that the Gaslight is no longer there but it had "great hamburgers served in understated plastic baskets and wax paper."

The duo have a show called *Two Lost Souls* that they just performed for two nights at New York's Cafe Carlyle, and will take it to Largo at the Coronet in Los Angeles on Jan. 22. They are hoping to take *Two Lost Souls* around to more cities when they're not on the current holiday tour.

## BOOK REVIEW

**She Wants It**

By Jill Soloway

\$27; Pegasus Random House; 241 pages

REVIEW BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

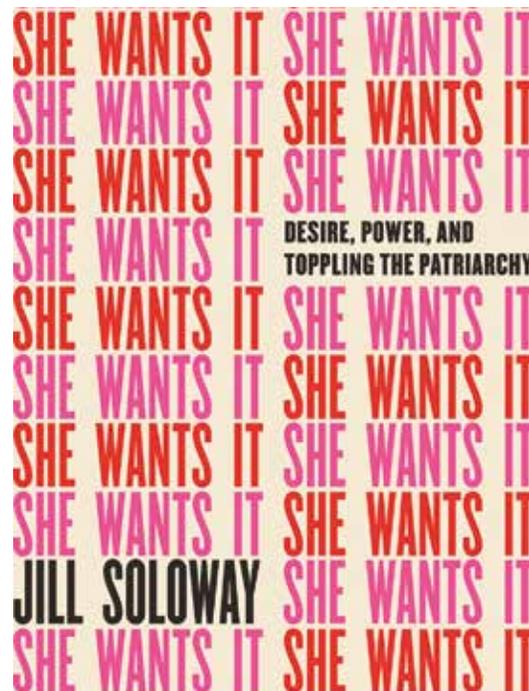
Jill Soloway can tell a story.

Celebrity memoirs are a dime a dozen, and often require one of two elements to be legitimately good reads: a specific angle or an interesting background on the memoirist's part. Soloway has both. Over the course of *She Wants It*, the nonbinary, Emmy-winning writer and director explores the idea of those who aren't straight, cis men wanting something. Anything. Whether it's representation, human rights or career success, Soloway argues, wanting is a radical act. And over the course of Soloway's life, they have learned to want.

Soloway was a married, straight-presenting, culturally Jewish mother of two when their parent came out as transgender. If this sounds familiar, it's the premise for *Transparent*, the very first Amazon series that became a smash success. As Soloway processed and eventually reconnected with their parent Carrie, they wrote and directed the indie film *Afternoon Delight*, featuring two complex female protagonists. A former writer for cable series like *Six Feet Under* and *The United States of Tara*, Soloway struck out on their own with *Transparent*—and struck gold with an unconventional, dysfunctional family story heavily inspired by the Soloways of Chicago's West Side.

No matter how you feel about *Transparent* (and despite its critical and commercial success, the show had plenty of naysayers), there's no denying Soloway's powerful voice. They are strong, funny and brutally honest about their shortcomings: conflating professional and personal fulfillment, acting on impulse rather than instinct and perhaps most egregiously, casting the cis male actor Jeffrey Tambor as transgender parent Maura Pfefferman. Soloway admits they never considered casting a trans actress in the role, and that *Transparent* may not have aired at all were it not for Tambor's name attached to the project. Though Soloway sought to rectify the mistake by hiring queer and trans individuals in every department of the series, they own their misstep, as well as the privilege they enjoyed for so

## BOOKS



long as a heterosexual-presenting white woman.

Soloway also tackles their personal life: coming out as queer shortly after *Transparent*'s debut, and later as nonbinary. Acknowledging their queerness put an end to Soloway's marriage, but led to fulfilling relationships with women and an even deeper connection with family. Soloway's journey through sexual and gender identity and how it manifests in their love life and in *Transparent* makes for a wild page-turner.

As Soloway learns to balance their familial, romantic and LA relationships, the reader is along for a bumpy but ultimately fulfilling ride that culminates in MeToo and the ensuing Time's Up movement, of which Soloway is a founder. *She Wants It* is a book to consume in one sitting: the rare memoir that doesn't idealize or sugarcoat, but presents life as the messy, funny and fascinating journey it is.

**'Stand Up for Red' marks World AIDS Day**

BY JOHN STADELMAN

On Nov. 29, Center on Halsted partnered with DIFFA/Chicago to host the second annual Stand Up For Red indoor street festival, bringing together local restaurants, musicians and artists to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in preparation for World AIDS Day.

The Center's gymnasium was arranged to simulate a street fest, complete with lights strung up over the booths and the air savory with the smells of fresh bites while bands rotated onstage.

Participating restaurants offered samples of their dishes, including the Lunch Lady J (a sloppy joe) by lesbian-owned One North, Inspired Catering & Event's oregano spiced chicken skewers, turkey-fennel meatballs in goat cheese by Ashley Cheek catering and mushroom tostadas prepared by the Silver Fork culinary and hospitality vocational training program. Tito's provided cocktails crafted specially for the event.



Deja Blue Band.  
Photo by John Stadelman

Artists included Mark Narens of The Black Couch Studio and Gallery, CNfactory selling handmade pop culture screen prints and Handcrafted Wellness offering soap and skincare products.

Drag queen Silky Ganache emceed, starting the event with a moment of silence honoring AIDS victims. This was followed by beats from DJ Madrid and performances from musicians including the Deja Blue Band. Silky Ganache rounded things off with a Christmas-themed routine.

## CULTURE CLUB

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# Fiction round-up: LGBTQ+ YA fantasy

BY LAUREN EMILY WHALEN

As winter blows into Chicago—and freezing temperatures with it—the temptation to curl up in front of the fire with a good book is strong.

As the world burns with political dissent, the desire to escape to another world is equally strong. Since Harry Potter burst onto the literary scene in 1997, the world of young adult (YA) fiction has bewitched as many adults as teenagers. Here are five fantasy novels featuring LGBTQ+ characters and authors to spark your imagination and warm you from the inside out.

**1. The Seafarer's Kiss—Julia Ember** (\$15.99; Interlude Press; 224 pages)

Three words: queer Little Mermaid. Julia Ember is a bisexual, polyamorous Chicago native who now calls Edinburgh, Scotland home. The Seafarer's Kiss is her sophomore novel, the tale of Ersel, an independent 19-year-old mermaid who rescues, and subsequently falls in love with, a stranded shieldmaiden named Ragna. Trouble arises when Ersel's childhood paramour gives an ultimatum, and the mermaid makes a deal with mythic troublemaker Loki whose motives are never what they seem. Ember's poetic voice gives this fresh take on an old classic a distinctive lilt, and Ersel's epic quest for true love is one for the fantasy canon.

**2. Mask of Shadows/Ruin of Stars—Linsey Miller** (Mask: \$10.99; Sourcebooks Fire; 322 pages) (Ruin: \$17.99; Sourcebooks Fire; 370 pages)

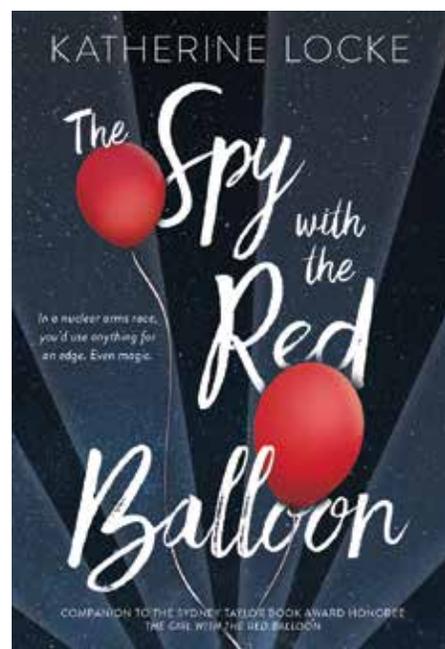
Mask of Shadows and its recently-released companion, Ruin of Stars, are a duology featuring a genderfluid protagonist (a recent and welcome trend in YA literature). Sal Leon is a skilled high-way robber but longs for something more than the next heist. When Sal learns of a competition to join the Queen's personal assassin team, they see it as a golden opportunity—but the stakes are high and the competition deadly. Will Sal live to attain their real goal: revenge against the no-

## BOOKS

bles who destroyed their family? Both books are an exciting rabbit hole with a compelling main character who will stop at nothing to achieve greatness.

**3. Black Wings Beating—Alex London** (\$17.99; Macmillan/Farrar, Strauss and Giroux; 432 pages)

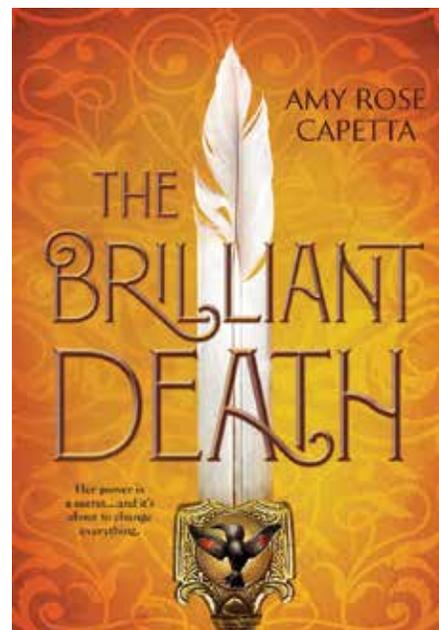
Brysen will stop at nothing to protect the boy he loves, even trap the most dangerous game. In the world of Black Wings Beating, both birds of prey and the falconers who control them are treated with the utmost reverence. As Brysen and his asexual sister Kylee set out to catch the deadliest bird of all, the Ghost Eagle, they find themselves on a fantastic and often surprising journey. Gay author Alex London is a former journalist who reported from refugee camps and conflict zones overseas before setting up permanent camp in the States. Black Wings Beating is the first in the Skybound series and will leave readers hungry for the next installment.



**4. The Spy With the Red Balloon—Katherine Locke** (\$17.99; Albert Whitman; 368 pages)

Based just outside Chicago, Albert Whitman & Company's YA offerings have a universal appeal. Author Katherine Locke's The Girl With the Red Balloon, was a hit for Whitman, garnering pres-

tigious acclaim. Its recent companion, The Spy With the Red Balloon, follows queer Jewish siblings Ilse and Wolf as they navigate the violent and complex landscape of World War II. Both are blackmailed into using their magical powers into building the atom bomb for America and going undercover to sabotage Germany's nuclear war efforts. Locke's plotting is magnificent and their prose thoughtful and empathetic, making for a wild ride through one of history's darkest times.



**5. The Brilliant Death—Amy Rose Capetta** (\$18.99; Penguin Young Readers; 352 pages)

Amy Rose Capetta's debut YA novel Echo After Echo was a captivating tale of intrigue, murder and same-sex romance set against the backdrop of Broadway. Her latest, The Brilliant Death, combines magical realism and fantasy with the same page-turning suspense.

Teodora and Cielo are both shape-shifting stre-gas (witches), mastering their powers in a nation harshly controlled by powerful Mafia families. But when an attack leaves Teo's father in a coma, she must make her way to the national palace to fight for what is rightfully hers. Both Teo and Cielo are genderfluid, their love story as integral to the action as their adventures in shape-shifting. The Brilliant Death has received glowing reviews from Kirkus, Booklist and Barnes and Noble Teen, and is a welcome new addition to any queer fantasy collection.

winning plays and her impact as a leader in her industry.

She is best known for her roles of Michonne on AMC's The Walking Dead, and Okoye in the films Marvel's Black Panther and Avengers: Infinity War. Upcoming projects include Gurira adapting Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book Americanah into a miniseries; also, her play The Convert will be staged at the Young Vic theatre in London in December.

To obtain tickets, which start at \$100 each, call 312-654-5632 or email [speialevents@steppenwolf.org](mailto:speialevents@steppenwolf.org).

## 'Santa Speedo Fun Run' on Dec. 8

The annual Santa Speedo Fun Run will take place Saturday, Dec. 8, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

Sign-in and registration will start at noon, with the one-mile run through Boystown starting at 2 p.m. There will be awards, entertainment and door prizes with Debbie Fox at 2:30 p.m.; and an after-party with Dixie Lynn Cartwright at 5-8 p.m.

Among other highlights, six men wearing luxury underwear by Richard Dayhoff will dash for donations for the Center on Halsted. See <https://www.sidetrackchicago.com/santa-speedo/>.



From 2017's Santa Speedo Run. Photo by Jerry Nunn

## Double Door to reopen in Uptown

The nightclub Double Door—which originally closed in 2016 and which hosted acts as varied as Common and the Rolling Stones—will reopen in Uptown at 1050 W. Wilson Ave., [Fox32Chicago.com](http://Fox32Chicago.com) noted.

The old Double Door had to close after 24 years in the same spot in Wicker Park because of a rent dispute. In the area where the new Double Door will be, there are already venues such as the Riviera, the Aragon and the Green Mill; in 2019, renovation of the Uptown Theater will commence.

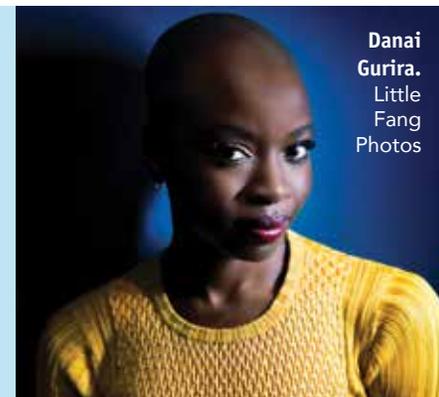
The new Double Door is slated to open next fall.

The Fox32Chicago item is at <http://www.fox32chicago.com/news/local/chicago-music-club-double-door-to-reopen-in-uptown>.

## Steppenwolf to honor Gurira Dec. 10

Steppenwolf Theatre Company has announced that Obie-, Helen Hayes- and NAACP Award-winning actress/playwright Danai Gurira as the honoree at the 10th annual Steppenwolf Women in the Arts fundraising luncheon on Monday, Dec. 10, at the Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel, 221 N. Columbus Dr., at 12 p.m.

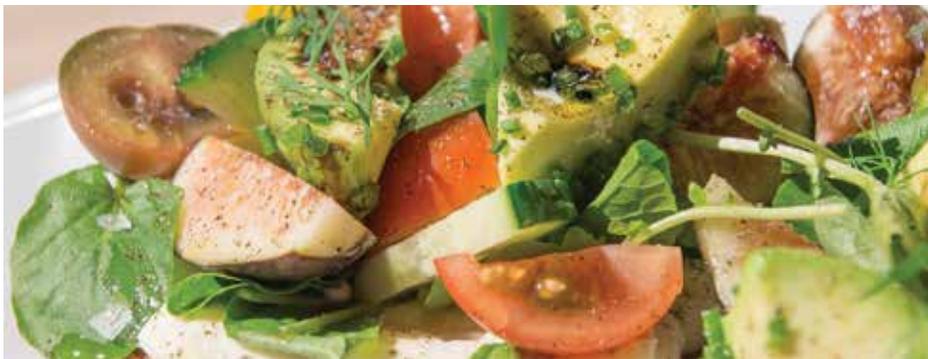
Gurira will join Steppenwolf Artistic Director Anna D. Shapiro for a conversation about her on-stage and on-screen acting career, award-



Danai Gurira. Little Fang Photos

# WINDY CITY TIMES' 2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

## WEEK TWO



### Staying in the Loop

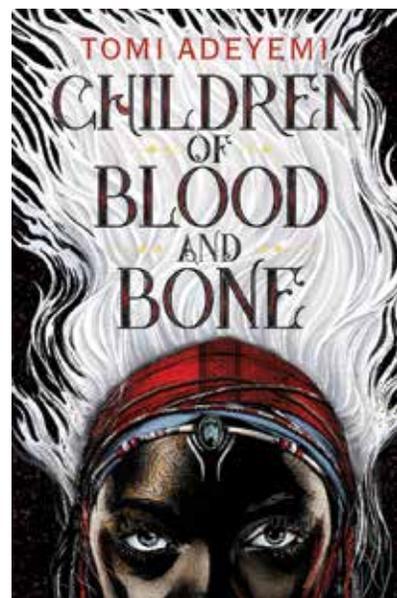
Located in Chicago's theater district, **The Dearborn** (co-owned by lesbian Amy Lawless and her sister, Clodagh) serves some pretty cool dishes, ranging from Not Billy's Scotch Egg to honey lavender-glazed duck breast to caramel apple churros. Make someone's day by purchasing a gift card to this spot. (Various prices; <https://www.thedearborn Tavern.com/>)

### Heavy Petal

A cute stocking stuffer, **Petal** is the newest sparkling beverage to lead what's been called the "rose revolution." Flavors include Original Rose, Mint Rose and Lychee Rose—and the drink has zero calories, zero sugar and no caffeine. Also, since it's just blooming (pun intended) in the industry, you'll be ahead of the game. (\$27.48 for a variety pack; [DrinkPetal.com](http://DrinkPetal.com))



Photo by Erik Marthaler



### 'Bone' ranger

Haven't heard of the book **Children of Blood and Bone**? Where have you been? This first book in a new West African inspired fantasy series (think Black Panther with Magic) has sold more copies in its first six months than any first book in a major young adult franchise since Harry Potter. Be sure to check out this book (which, of course, is being made into a film). (\$14.24; <http://www.tomiadeyemi.com/books/>)

### Ross examination

**Diana Ross** puts her indelible spin on holiday classics such as "The Christmas Song," "Winter Wonderland" and the title song on the CD **Wonderful Christmastime**—a collection of holiday recordings from Diana Ross that were first issued in 1994 and have been widely unavailable since. (There are also covers of non-holiday tunes such as Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed" and the gospel classic "Amazing Grace," among other songs.) (\$12.59; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com))



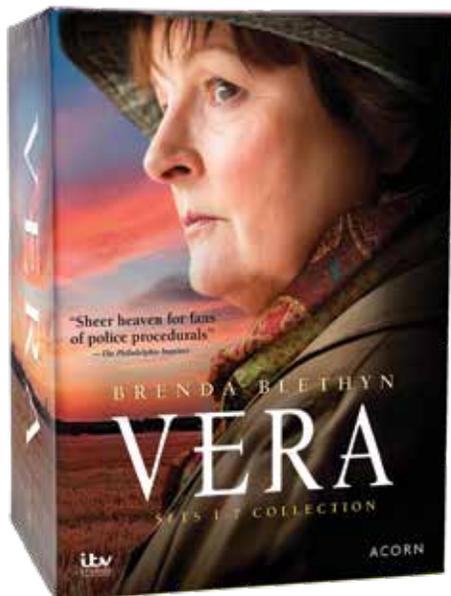
### I'll drink to that

From the popular Italian liqueur, **DISARONNO** (an amaretto-like liqueur) has partnered with Italian fashion house **TRUSSARDI** to launch a limited-edition bottle dressed in the brand's notable texture and greyhound logo. (In addition, the limited-edition collaboration will also be available in six mini-bottles.) Look fashionable and drink fashionably with the brand DISARONNO wears TRUSSARDI. (Various prices; <http://www.disaronno.com/en>)



### An Epic snack

Gay-owned, Indiana-based **Epic Popcorn** is the first NGLCC (National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce)-certified popcorn company—and it offers more than 65 rotating flavors, including Dill Pickle, Fruity Loops (my fave), Pizza, Cinnamon Toast and much more. However, you can also feel healthy about eating this, as Epic features non-GMO corn, pure coconut oil, 100% non-tans-fat cheese and gluten free flavors. (Various prices; <https://epicpopcorn.com/>)



## It's a mystery to me

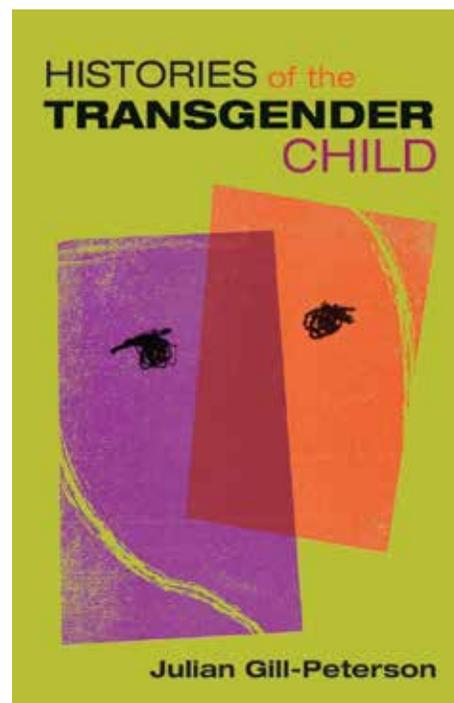
If you like your British murder mysteries, they rarely come better than **Vera**—and the very popular series (with Oscar nominee Brenda Blethyn) is now in a box set through Acorn with sets one through seven. And if you're really into this subgenre, Acorn TV is available in a gift subscription for just \$49.99/year. (\$219.99; <https://acorn.tv>)

## Pacman fever

**Addicted** offers swimwear, underwear, fetish attire and casual clothes for the man who likes to let it hang out—so to speak. Exhibit A: PacMan-style underwear that shows a video character gobbling something other than those dots... (Various prices; <https://addicted.es/en/>)



Photo by Leonardo Corredor



## 'Histories' lesson

Julian Gill-Peterson's **Histories of the Transgender Child** uncovers a previously unknown 20th-century history when transgender children not only existed but pre-existed the term "transgender" and its predecessors—playing a critical role in the medicalization of trans people, and all sex and gender. (\$24.95-\$100; <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/histories-of-the-transgender-child>)



## Here's the dish

Give the gift of sushi-making this season. Chicago Japanese restaurant **Arami** offers hands-on, authentic sushi demonstrations on the third Wednesday of every month. The hour class, by Arami's Executive Chef Joseph Fontelera, includes a hands-on (edible) maki and temaki instructional followed by a three-course prix fixe dinner. (\$60 each; <http://www.aramicicago.com/upcoming-events/>).

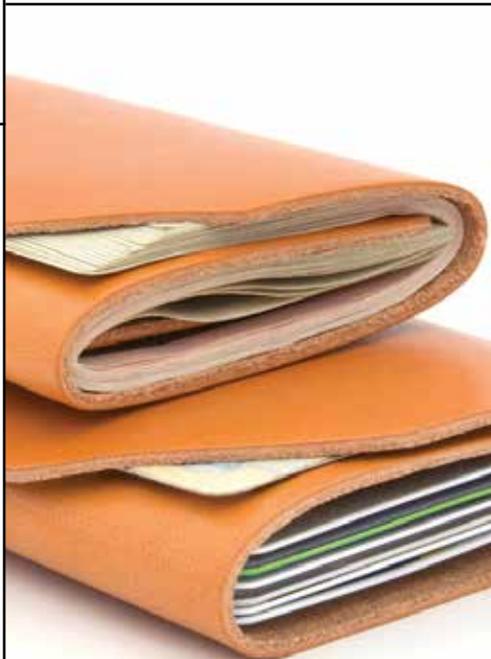
## Twisted sister

The Museum of Contemporary Art's store has a lot of innovative items, such as the **twisted spectrum bag**. Perfect for running errands or a casual night out, the faux leather bag can be effortlessly transformed from clutch to wristlet to handbag—and in a colorful way. (\$44.95; <https://www.mcchicago.org/>)



## Leather or not

**Ezra Arthur** specializes in high-quality leather accessory products, whether they're wallets, belts, bags or even stationery (with the items having been in publications ranging from USA Today to Men's Health). Trust me: The feel is fantastic. (Various prices; <http://ezraarthur.com/>)





## The bite stuff

**Baked by Melissa's** bite-sized cupcakes make the perfect gift for those who want something sweet but don't want to overindulge (although some have argued the merits of eating a gallon of ice cream in one sitting). (Various prices; <https://www.bakedbymelissa.com/>)

## Air apparent

**AirSelfie2** is a revolutionary pocket-size flying camera that connects to a smartphone to take hi-def photos (12-megapixel resolution) from the sky. Its turbofan propellers can thrust up to 50 feet in the air, letting the user capture wide, truly original photos and videos. Your friends will wonder how you got some of those photos. (\$199.95; <https://www.airselfiecamera.com/>)



Photo by Alan Davis

## Body and 'Soul'

Chicago's **Black Ensemble Theater** is known for having the coolest musicals, like the current *Women of Soul* and *A Holiday Cabaret*. Purchase tickets for you and your better half, and get set for a toe-tapping good time. (\$35-\$65 each; <https://blackensembletheater.org/>)



## Game on

Hammacher Schlemmer has released **The Atari Home Arcade**. (Those older than 35 may remember the name "Atari.") A 17" flat-screen LCD displays the pre-installed games' two-dimensional graphics and colors, and people can choose from the *Asteroids* cabinet (with a knob wheel control and *Asteroids*, *Tempest*, *Major Havoc*, and *Lunar Lander* games) or *Centipede* cabinet (with a trackball control and *Centipede*, *Crystal Castles*, *Millipede*, and *Missile Command* games). (\$399.95; <https://www.hammacher.com>)

## Bodi language

After eating some of the items in this guide, you might want to work off some of those calories at a spot like the local fitness facility **Bodi Shak**. Classes have such catchy names as *FIRM*, *DRENCH*, *SURGE* and *BLAZE*, and will definitely challenge your body on every level. Get a friend a gift certificate—and you might want to purchase a class or two yourself. (Various prices; <https://www.bodishak.com/>)



Photo by Aldrin Del Carmen

## Pop and lock

The **Tapplock One** has much more to offer than your standard lock—and, therefore, offers much more security. The smart padlock's state-of-the-art capacitive fingerprint sensor allows you to access your items in under a second and the corresponding app can be used to give temporary, remote access to others. Your valuables (whether it's jewelry or your great-grandmother's recipes) have never been safer. (\$99; <https://tapplock.com/>)



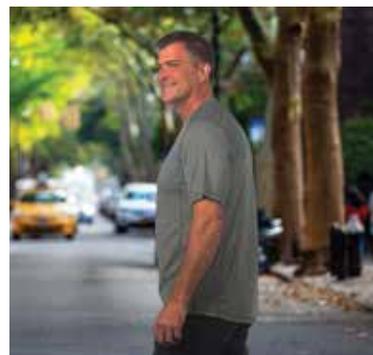
## BLAQ is beautiful

Charcoal is being used for a lot more than grilling these days. Witness **BLAQ**—charcoal-laden skincare products that target toxins and extract impurities. Whether it's the *BLAQMask* or even the teeth-whitening wand, the results can be impressive—and you won't have to use those briquets. (Various prices; <https://blaq.co>)



## Art-felt

The website **Art.com** has what it calls “the largest online catalog of wall art and decor”—and, with a selection like that, there’s something for everyone. Moreover, dozens of items are currently discounted at 50-60 percent. Score! (Various prices; art.com)



## Tee time

There are your standard workout T-shirts—and then there are **SCOTTteVEST** tees. The moisture-wicking shirts are machine-washable, and are even have single-zippered pockets made specifically to hold your cash, credit cards or keys. You’ll wonder why you hadn’t purchased it before. (\$45; <https://www.scottevest.com>)



## Now and Zen

With everything happening in our lives today, it’s more important than ever to take some time to relax. **Buddha Board** might just be the answer; as a mess-free temporary “painting” board that utilizes the natural element of water, it can be used by anyone anywhere to simply ‘be’ in the moment and enjoy their creativity. The Buddha Board comes in its original size, the 5” Mini Buddha Board, or the Enso, the enhanced version of the Mini Board. Release your inner artist and de-stress simultaneously. (\$14.95-\$34.95; <http://www.buddhaboard.com/>)

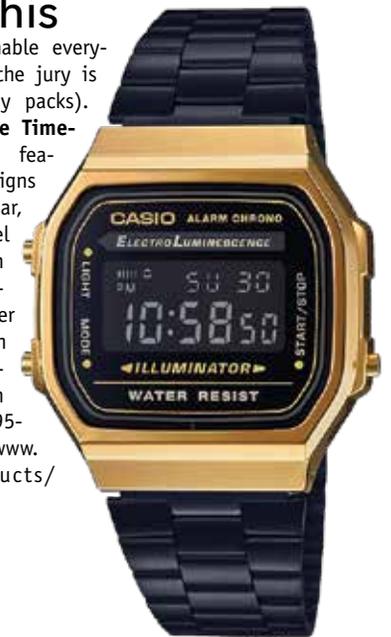


## 50 scent

**Helmm** is a men’s deodorant and antiperspirant that smells great, looks good and actually works. With Helmm’s delivery box service, you never have to think of deodorant again—and fragrance offerings (which can be used in Helmm’s reusable nickel-plated, laser-engraved zinc container) include Trailblazer, Coastline, Hudson and Night Market. (\$25; [helmm.com](http://helmm.com))

## Watch this

Retro is fashionable everywhere (although the jury is still out on fanny packs). The **Casio Vintage Time-piece Collection** features those designs from yesteryear, with stainless-steel bands and even more colors. Moreover, there are other functions, such as an auto calendar, stopwatch and more. (\$49.95-\$69.95; <https://www.casio.com/products/watches/classic>)



## Shake and bake

Evanston bakery **Hewn**—known for its hand-forged, artisan bread and pastries—recently launched its first cookbook, *Heritage Baking*, through Chronicle Books. And unlike some books on foods, this one features a lot more than recipes (although it has 45 of those): Through first-hand stories from Ellen King, this cookbook aims to change the way consumers look at bread. (\$29.95; <https://www.hewnbread.com/>)



# a cradle song



written by mark zubro  
illustrated by u.s. reed

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—**Jeanne M. Dams**,  
author of the Dorothy Martin mysteries

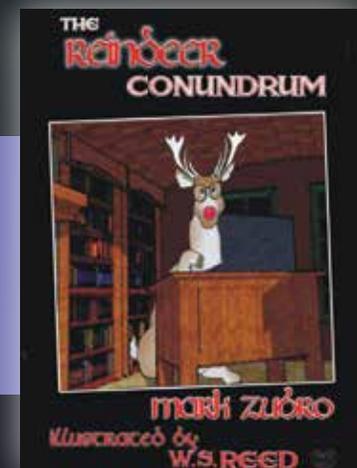
"**A Cradle Song** is a wonderful, heartwarming story, and just right for Christmas. Open this present and enjoy!"

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Also still available: Last year's holiday book, **The Reindeer Conundrum**





# A Cradle Song: Part Eight

WRITTEN BY MARK ZUBRO; ILLUSTRATED BY W.S. REED

A Cradle Song, written by Mark Zubro and illustrated by W.S. Reed, debuts in the Windy City Times as the new holiday classic. Filled with travail and woe, warmth and great joy, it is a story for the ages. It will appear in ten installments from Octo-

ber 17 to December 19 and will also be available for gift giving as an e-book and as a paperback. For the true joy and meaning of the season, this is the book you want to read.

Today **A Cradle Song: Part Eight**.

## Chapter Nine: Part Two

If it was his own son Matthew, he knew what he would do. Move mountains to get what he needed.

Luke explained to the leader what his examination showed and what medicine he thought the boy needed.

The leader got very angry. He raged around the tent.

Luke knew what was wrong, fear for the life of his son drove the man to even greater extremes. Luke didn't know if he'd live to see the next minute.

As always, the vision of his wife and children flashed through his mind.

The leader wanted a miracle that Luke thought was only a bit of medicine away.

Luke said, "I will go get the medicine. I will come back."

The leader conferred with his minions. They all left the tent. The woman who'd come with stood next to Luke. She told Luke she was the boy's mother. She thanked him and wished him well. Then she sat on the cot next to her son.

Luke remained nearby.

An interminable amount of time passed. Then with a rush, the leader returned. He barked commands. Minutes later, Luke was in the cab of a truck. Through the windshield, Luke saw snow swirling in the dark. The storm continued to rage.

Luke, the driver, and the leader crammed themselves into the front seat. Before the driver started the engine, the leader held the muzzle of the gun to Luke's head. He shoved the gun so that Luke's head bent at a forty-five degree angle. The leader said, "If you try anything, you die."

Luke nodded.

The driver turned the key, and moments later they started off. They didn't turn on the headlights. Another harrowing journey ensued. None of them spoke. It seemed like they drove for hours before Luke began to see lights in the distance.

At a signal from the leader, the driver stopped and let the engine idle. The leader pointed his gun at Luke. "We are at a ren-



dezvous place. You will walk from here. The medicine is ready, but they will only give it to you. You will walk back here. If you do not return, I will destroy the entire village you see in front of you. All the men, women and children will die in the flash of a few moments."

"Why don't you just go in and take the medicine?"

"I can't risk them destroying what I need. It was a delicate negotiation. These are not your people, but they are also not my people. They would not trust one of mine. You, they will accept and believe."

Luke walked through the cold and dark. He'd been allowed to bring his blanket to wrap around himself as a supplement to his jacket. The wind found every opening in his clothes. He blew on his hands to try to keep them warm. He hadn't had gloves since the day the camp had been overrun. His feet crunched over the snow. The storm had not let up.

Following the directions from the leader,

Luke arrived at the rendezvous point.

No one was there.

Luke sagged in hopelessness. His knees met the ground. He bent over and his hands touched the cold snow. As he knelt in the small drift, he saw two boots. He looked up.

A soldier in a warm coat stood over him. He smiled, held out his hand, and helped Luke rise. The soldier said, "Would you like to come in and get warm?"

Luke said, "I need the medicine. I need to get back."

"We can protect you."

Luke shook his head. "I gave my word. A child might die. They'll kill you all if I don't go back."

Luke's whole body slumped, ready for despair. The soldier tapped Luke's elbow. The man took off his gloves, reached into a pocket, pulled out several vials, and gave them to Luke. The soldier nodded and said, "That should do it." Then he handed Luke his pair of gloves. "I think you need these.

I can get another pair."

Luke said, "Thank you." As he walked back to the truck, he put them on. They were very warm.

Back at the camp, Luke injected the boy with the medicine. Through the night as they waited, the whole time the leader stood next to Luke between him and the cot where his boy lay. The mother sat on the floor at the foot of the bed alternating looks between her son, her gruff husband, and her boy's possible savior.

Through a long night, the boy breathed heavily.

Luke was desperately tired and wanted to sleep. He was closer than he'd ever been to giving up completely. If it wasn't for the pictures of his wife and children that ran through his mind, he thought he might welcome death, but he wanted to live for them, to see them and be with them again.

With the dawn, the fever broke.

Joy filled Luke's heart.

The leader gushed over the boy, then over Luke. After embracing her son, the mother touched Luke's hand.

"You proved faithful at great peril," the leader said. "What do you wish in return?"

Luke almost collapsed with hope. He whispered, "I want to see my wife and children. I want to go home."

The leader said, "I will make it so."

Another perilous journey through the next night ensued. Luke was delivered to an empty clearing. He was told his side was a mile farther down the road. He wandered through the night back to his own lines. Walking through the cold and desolate countryside was almost a comfort, even with possible dangers.

It took a frightening long while to get through the guards and the checkpoints and to prove to them he was who he said he was.

Very quickly, he was told he would be transported home. It seemed the fearful leader had influence even here. Luke's superiors asked few questions.

His most evil enemy was making sure he would be going home.

## Chapter Ten: Erik

Reginald, the little car, woke early on that Christmas Eve. The first thing he said to Erik was, "I hope I get picked today. Wouldn't it be a perfect day for it? Do you think I'll get picked today? Is there anything I can do to help me get picked?"

Erik had a kindly heart. He didn't want to dash Reginald's hopes, to tell him how unlikely it was that anyone would even realize they were here, not this far back. All that felt like it was too enormous and an awful thing to reveal. Instead, Erik said soothing things all day, no matter how many times Reginald went on and on. No matter how many children they saw walk by who didn't even notice them in the slightest.

Erik knew the ache of loneliness, the desire to be part of something. The little car was annoying, but it was more companionship than Erik had had in years. Perhaps Reginald was tiresome, but Erik felt he could afford the time for kindness.

When the sun began to set that day, even Reginald began to get quiet.

Then when full dark had fallen, and the lights in the store were turned to their brightest, Reginald said, "It's hopeless, isn't it? Please don't lie to me."

Erik could think of little to say. What was there to say? He felt so bad himself.

He had his own depth of disappointment to deal with. He almost said something harsh, but then stopped. It would do no good, and probably just contribute to the day's despair. Erik managed to say, "There's still a little time."

On his shelf, in this store, hope was in short supply. Erik may not have much, but he wasn't going to take it away from others, certainly not Reginald, the lonely little race car.

## Chapter Eleven: Matthew

Matthew had no presents to give for Christmas and no one to give them to. He remembered he'd always had a bright happy home for Christmas, and now it was suddenly all gone. In his home at Christmas time, lights always twinkled. A star shone at the top of their little tree.

Matthew followed the passage and came to the bridge. The Isle of Misfit Toys was most lit up on Christmas Eve. It was as if a million stars had come down from the sky then burst to wild glows greater than a billion fireworks. Matthew was dazzled. In great wonderment, he crossed the sparkling bridge.

It was neither warm nor cold on the Isle of Misfit Toys, but altogether pleasant and calm.

A sweet old grandmother-looking woman met him on the other side. She wore a great flowing dress covered with multi-hued droplets of crystal that both captured and reflected light.

She smiled broadly. When Matthew met her gaze, he understood without her saying anything the rules for the Isle of Misfit Toys. Matthew knew there were always rules for everything. Somehow, he understood, he could pick one gift for himself and one gift for each person in his family.

Matthew saw crowds of children at the windows and doors of the little shops. He didn't see any parents. What was better, the children looked like him. No fancy clothes, no bratty bragging, no privileged sneers, just happy, smiling faces as they gawked.

At every corner, there were little food carts with brightly colored canopies. In each of them, Matthew saw steam rising from warm food. He smelled baked bread and chocolate chip cookies fresh from ovens.

What seemed to Matthew like Munchkins from the Wizard of Oz stood on boxes at each kiosk at all the intersections. The first little man smiled at Matthew. He said, "Matthew, would you like a grilled cheese sandwich and some tomato soup?"

How did he know my name, thought Matthew? But the little man didn't look dangerous. And he saw other children taking

food as the vendors said their names. On this day, with the toys free, so were the snacks, sandwiches, cakes, and hot chocolate the vendors gave away.

Somehow, the people at the kiosks knew which children had eaten and those who were now just trying to be greedy. Those were gently turned away. And really the marvels of the toys were too dazzling to be distracted by anything else for too very long.

Matthew ate his soup and sandwich. They tasted wonderful. As he savored each bite, he watched children leaving on the path back. All their faces beamed with contentment. Some were burdened by gargantuan boxes that housed the largest toys. Most had normal sized boxes, a few of which were brightly decorated or had great colored bows.

Finished eating, Matthew began the walk up the magic road. Only a few steps up the cobbled street, through a store window, Matthew saw a million flowers, more blooms than in any garden he'd ever seen or imagined. In one corner of the display window were vases of metal roses in every color that Matthew thought could exist in the whole world. Three spotlights shone directly down on them from the ceiling. The roses glimmered and sparkled. He knew his mom would love one of them.

**End of part eight. Part nine coming next week.**



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# Pro-LGBTQ sports group looks to increase membership

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Just more than four years ago, Chicago's Jake Lenz was searching for other LGBTQ individuals who worked in sports and entertainment as connections. When he did not find who, or what, he was looking for, he knew something had to change.

Lenz, a sponsorship marketing specialist and Good Sports and You Can Play Project regional board member, met Jim Andrews at a conference in Chicago in 2015. That was a game-changer for him. Andrews, who worked at the sponsorship firm IEG for 31 years and was the About Face Theater board chair for five years, quickly became a mentor to Lenz because he was the only other gay industry professional he knew.

Due to Andrews' mentorship, Lenz was able to meet other out professionals and grow his network and that is when the idea of HomeField Alliance came to fruition. Lenz said this is the first organization of its kind focused on the business side of the sports and entertainment industry. So far, HomeField Alliance has a growing membership from around the U.S. and Canada.

Lenz and Andrews decided to join forces with David Slade, WFYI-Indianapolis Public Media's chief development and marketing officer who previously led the United States Tennis Association's LGBTQ employee resource group, as co-founders and board members in 2017 with Noel Guevara coming onboard as a board member earlier this year. Guevara is the Arizona Diamondbacks' spe-

## SPORTS

cial events and community outreach coordinator who launched LGBTQ initiatives for the team, including its first Pride Night.

Andrews said the name came from the "core of what we were creating, which was a passionate community of people rooting for each other, and creating a positive environment of support. This is clearly exemplified by the support a team feels from its fans while playing in their home town. Win or lose, those fans are there to help push their team to success, amplifying each others' cheers week after week, season after season, giving their team that home field advantage."

The mission, according to its website is, "to be the leading voice and resource for LGBTQ professionals in the business of sports and entertainment. Offering professional development, networking and at-work ally programs, in addition to creating industry awareness and conversation, HomeField Alliance will provide our members with the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop in their professional careers regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

Andrews explained that they decided to make Chicago the organization's headquarters because it is centrally located and easily accessible to host events.

"From a sports and entertainment perspective, Chicago is one of the premiere cities in the world," said Andrews. "Chicago's teams and ven-



**Jake Lenz.**

Photo courtesy of Premier Partnerships



**David Slade.**

Photo courtesy of USTA

ues have storied histories, wildly passionate fans and an incredible ability to create community, even when we would be called crazy elsewhere, for leaving our homes in the middle of winter for an outdoor event. Our city also boasts some of the best corporate citizens of sports in the world, whether it's an equipment manufacturer or a sponsor focused on making sports and entertainment a core of their marketing efforts."

In terms of what the organization wants to accomplish, Slade said "in a big way, we hope to legitimately impact the culture within the sports and entertainment industry by giving employees and organizations the tools to create inclusive environments, removing stigmas around the LGBTQ community and by fostering community across cities and between organizations. In a small way, we hope that by connecting LGBTQ professionals to other individuals, they have the chance to learn from and connect with people who they otherwise might not have been able to do so with."

As for how they are going to address gender and racial diversity within their leadership ranks, Lenz said it is one of their top priorities.

"We cannot advocate for diversity unless we start from a place of diverse thought, background and experience," said Lenz. "It is that simple, so it is a sticking point for our entire board to make sure that while we now have male, female, gay, lesbian and African-American representation, we continue to add differing views and perspectives in order to provide the best possible impact for all our members."

The organization launched its mentorship program in September, and will be hosting some regional events next year and a member summit next summer.

Membership fees are \$40 annually, and any membership purchased in 2018 will be good through the end of 2019. Any inquiries should be sent to [info@homefieldalliance.org](mailto:info@homefieldalliance.org).

See <https://homefieldalliance.org/> for more information.

## GRANT from page 24

work on it until the end of time otherwise.

**WCT: How does your music reflect your day to day life?**

JG: I have been thinking a lot about my trajectory in music and life recently. I am learning to love, which usually means having a good relationship with loving yourself first before you can love others. That has been a particularly difficult journey for me personally.

I know I am not the only one, but there are people out there in the world that have a good relationship with themselves. They attract healthy relationships as a result of that.

I have been in a lot of destructive relationships, but the last one was very nurturing. It helped me realize that all the work I have been putting into myself in the last 14 years has been yielding good results. I have great people around me. That is what I have always wanted.

**WCT: You have been open about having anxiety. What helps you?**

JG: I initially took Paroxetine, brand name Pax-

il, back in 1994. It is to deal with severe anxiety and that was helpful to me.

These days people should look at caffeine intake. It is also good to have someone to talk to about every day living, like a therapist.

**WCT: We come from the same generation where we were bullied for being gay so I am thinking that was where some of the anxiety came from.**

JG: Oh yeah. I was basically told I wasn't on the same level as other human beings. There is a spiritual side as well where we are separated from the creator of the entire universe for being what you are. You must change to have a place in society or any other world after this one. That sets you up for problems right there. That led to substance abuse for me.

**WCT: Well, it must be great to put out music as a way of dealing with it.**

JG: It is. I think if I wasn't working on my issues then the music would further my downfall. If I were wallowing in self pity or rage I wouldn't get anywhere. The music would just be a toy to escape and would eventually destroy me.

When you are young it doesn't matter what was done to you, as an older person you need to figure out a way to survive and thrive in this world.

**WCT: In the "Love Is Magic" video, what was behind all of the dogs?**

JG: That idea was pitched to me by someone who sent in the treatment. I liked the idea that humans can experience the unconditional love of an animal that is almost impossible to get from humans. I thought it was nice to see a snapshot of this type of love.

**WCT: Do you own a dog?**

JG: No, I don't. I would like to, but can't with this type of career.

**WCT: Was the video for "He's Got His Mother's Hips" inspired by past Peter Gabriel videos?**

JG: It was. It wasn't my idea, but the guys that pitched it to me wanted a love letter to the "Sledgehammer" video and Eurythmics "Missionary Man."

**WCT: How was working with Kylie Minogue?**

JG: She's a badass and super-lovely to work with. She's kind and gracious. She's been through

a lot and it is nice to consider her a friend. We are not close, but we keep in touch.

Everyone just shit their diaper when she walked onstage and sang "Glacier" with me at the Royal Albert Hall in London. That was epic.

She invited me to sing at her Christmas show after that. I really like her. She's impressive.

**WCT: What [will] your stage show at Lincoln Hall be [like]?**

JG: We have a big crew around us. We have a band. We present the music in the best possible way we can. I am excited about connecting with the crowd.

I won't have Kylie with me or won't have Sinead O'Connor fly down from the rafters on a platform!

**WCT: That would be so great, though? Dressed as an angel just in time for the holidays.**

JG: Totally!

**See Grant live at Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln Ave., on Sunday, Dec. 9, at 8 p.m. Ticket information for the show is at LH-ST.com.**



## BILLY Masters

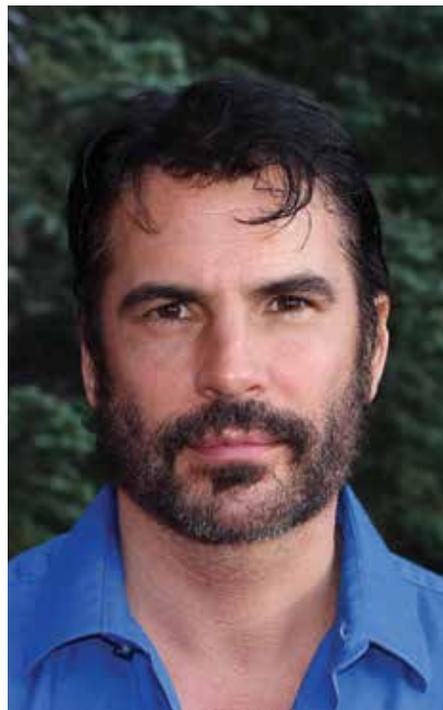
"I thought the stain was going to be bigger. Y'know, it was so low. To me, it was probably he hadn't pulled up his pants and just hit her with a wet tip!"—Wendy Williams' takeaway from The Clinton Affair documentary.

Last week, we commemorated World AIDS Day. In our current political climate, it almost makes sense that the White House would single out **Mike Pence** to participate in a ceremony. Why, it's like OJ speaking on domestic abuse. And, what better way to combat AIDS than conversion therapy? (I say this dripping with sarcasm, in case that didn't come through.) If you don't believe me, you obviously didn't listen to what Pence had to say—or, rather, what he didn't say. He somehow managed to talk for several minutes about HIV without ever uttering the word "gay" or mentioning the LGBT community! But he did manage to squeeze in this little factoid—the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (known as PEPFAR) has \$100 million earmarked for religious organizations. Is it just me, or does that sound a tad excessive? I mean, how much does it cost to hand out condoms to priests?

In a related story, **Pope Francis** made it clear where he stands on gay priests. In the book *The Strength of Vocation*, the Pope says that homosexuality in the church "is something that worries me"—of course, he said it in Italian but, happily, your Billy is bilingual: "For this reason, the Church urges that persons with this rooted tendency not be accepted into ministry or consecrated life." This includes priests, monks and nuns—all of whom take vows of celibacy. What if you have those tendencies and are already in the church? Franny has some advice for them, too: "It is better that they leave the priesthood or the consecrated life rather than live a double life."

A Delta Airlines pilot is hoping to keep his job after sending a Grindr message to a passenger: "I see you're on my flight. Enjoy the ride to Chicago." Now, I ask you, in these days of questionable customer service, isn't that a nice message? Sure "enjoy the ride" on a sex app could be taken a variety of ways, but I'm accepting it as innocuously as I do when a hot flight attendant asks me if I'd like "warm nuts." Apparently, the recipient of this message was not as blase as moi. He told the *New York Post*, "My reaction was I knew I needed to get off this plane as fast as I can." Again, the phrase "get off" is open to interpretation.

Remember a few weeks ago how we told you that porn star **Austin Wolf** filmed himself having sex with a flight attendant in a Delta lavatory? Well, in-flight sex is running rampant. Diego Barros isn't actually a porn star—he sells underwear and likes to pose in them (and out of them, too). He was recently on a flight where he was sitting in one of those first-class cubby holes. So, what does one do when alone and bored? Yes, exactly. He filmed himself masturbating. I dunno—I guess it's scandalous. It's certainly illegal. And you can see it on BillyMasters.com.



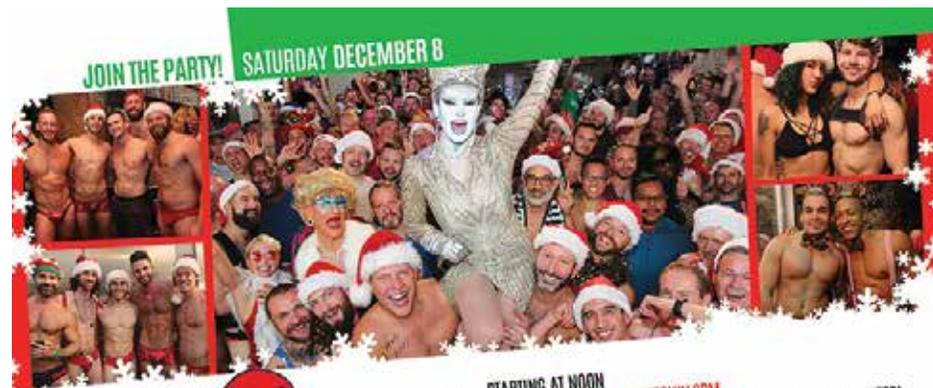
Thom Bierdz's newest book is one of Billy's gift-giving suggestions.

PR photo courtesy of Harlan Boll

Without further ado, we bring you more of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions." **Thom Bierdz** has the distinction of not only being the first openly gay actor to appear as a regular on a daytime drama, he also played a character who was openly gay. Of course, neither the actor nor the character started out that way. When Phillip Chancellor III was killed off of *The Young and the Restless* in 1989, Bierdz went into something of a freefall.

When his character returned from the dead 20 years later—as soap characters do—it was revealed that he faked his death because he wanted to live openly as a gay man. If you think that sounds bizarre, wait till you read *Young, Gay & Restless*. It's a gripping story of a handsome young man trying to make it in Hollywood, hitting the heights of daytime drama one day, and then bartending at the Soap Opera Digest Awards the next. Dichotomy is a regular part of Bierdz's life. While he was being pursued by some of the best-looking men in Hollywood, he was still feeling inadequate about his looks and took some drastic measures to change them. Throw in one brother who committed suicide and another who killed their mother, and you have a story that's stranger than fiction. By the way, Bierdz is marking his second appearance on our "Gift Giving" list. His previous book about the murder of his mother, *Forgiving Troy*, made our list in 2009. You can get his books—and his artwork—at ThomBierdz.com.

The good thing about having lasted so long in this business we call show is that I've grown up with many of the people I write about. The acclaimed **Thirsty Burlington** and I go back a LONG way. Long before I started writing this column, I spent years hosting shows in my native Boston. One of the regulars in attendance was the young



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**Scott Townsend.** To have watched Scott transform himself into Thirsty Burlington, one of the world's premier **Cher** impersonators, has been a joy for me. But that was nothing next to the joy I felt watching the film "Thirsty" and seeing how this extraordinary person developed. It was also a pleasant surprise to see my friend Jonny Beauchamp play Scott in his early years! If you are a fan or new to the Burlington brand, this is a film I cannot recommend enough. You can grab it on Amazon or watch it on Amazon Prime.

When I'm still Thirsty for more Burlington, it's time to end another column. I forgot the worst part of the holidays—peppermint bark. Don't get me wrong, I love it ... a bit too much. So while I am out doing a few extra thousand steps, you can check out BillyMasters.com—the site that's always a step ahead of everyone else. But even while exercising (or eating), I can respond to your every need. Drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Pope Francis starts giving out Bibles with a strip of condoms as a bookmark! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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# the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### Conrad's Grill; Swissotel's Santa Suite

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Apparently, students at Michigan State University know how to party—and how to eat after one.

The fast-casual restaurant **Conrad's Grill** (1422 N. Milwaukee Ave.; <https://www.conradsgrill.com/>)—a staple in the university's city of East Lansing, Michigan—has made its first foray outside that state, selling its delicious (and very filling) items in Chicago's Wicker Park area.

And this place specializes in what are called "tot wraps"—wraps loaded with meats, cheeses, sauces and, yes, tater tots. It's a twist on the fries that some have stuffed in their wraps.

The selection of tot wraps is staggering, and intriguing. For example, the O.G.C.T. contains chicken tenders, mozzarella cheese, lettuce, tomato, hot sauce and a choice of sauce; and the Jemalty, a giant wrap laden with grilled chicken, ham, bacon, tater tots, cheddar cheese, sour



**The Hangover Helper at Conrad's Grill.**  
Photo by Kailley Lindman

cream, BBQ sauce and ranch. (Any wrap can be customized—just let Cameron and Joe know. As for another question some might have, no, there isn't a cardiologist in the restaurant.)

I tried the Hangover Helper, which contains a sinful mix of scrambled eggs, double sausage, American cheese, mayo and tots; and (later) the ever-popular Dweeb, an olio of chicken tenders, bacon, tots, cheddar cheese, mac 'n' cheese bites and extra ranch. These items are so filling that I could only try half a wrap in one sitting—meaning you'll definitely get your money's worth.

But wait—there's more. Sides include pickle fries (exactly like they sound), broccoli-cheddar bites, mozzarella sticks, waffle fries and other items. The brownie may seem like an afterthought, but it's actually one of the best I've tried recently—especially if it's warm.

If you're hungry, Conrad's Grill is a can't-miss

option. And it has the cutest mascot, a dog fittingly called Tot. (I'm sure Tot is the reason for the fire hydrant-accented bench in the restaurant.)

### Swissotel's Santa Suite

'Tis the season: Chicago is now enveloped in seasonal and holiday wonder, with there being some truly memorable offerings to experience.

Take the **Swissotel's Santa Suite** (323 E. Upper Wacker Dr., 41st floor; <https://santasuite.eventbrite.com>), in which a five-room presidential suite has been converted to a seasonal wonderland. The theme "Christmas Around the World" is reflected in the 16 inspirational Christmas trees from countries including Greece, Peru, Germany and Mexico.

And this family-friendly environment has something for everyone, from a bar for adults to activities such as face-painting and letter-writing for kids (and, ahem, a few "older kids," as this one wished for world peace—and vacation tickets). Adults and kids also have the opportunity to sit on Santa's lap.

And since this is a food column, it would only make sense to discuss the goodies there as well. The night I went featured waitstaff with pumpkin-bisque shooters and other hors d'oeuvres—but there's also a large table of sweets ranging from M&M-filled cookies to miniature cotton-candy items. In addition, there are (or were) 22,000 pieces of candy in canisters and on dishes throughout the suite—and they are for the taking.

The suite offers elf-guided tours and visits with Santa throughout the month on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

By the way, do you want to stay here overnight? It is possible—for just \$2,500 a night Monday through Wednesday starting this week. Other packages include a Holiday Treats Package starting at \$209 a night and the Elf Decorated Room Package starting at \$349 a night through Dec. 31. These packages include overnight accommodations, access to the Santa Suite, and milk and cookies before bed.



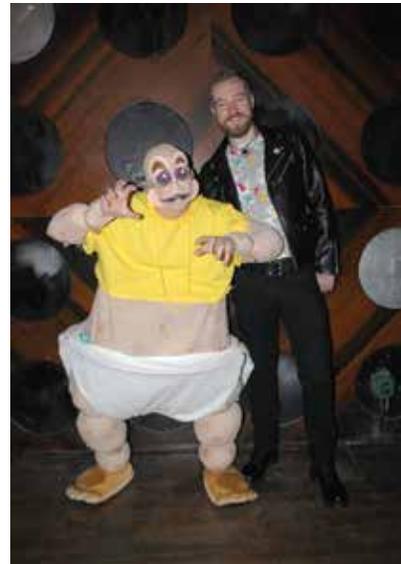
**Cookies at Swissotel's Santa Suite.**  
Photo by Andrew Davis



## BIG CHICKS

Bellies like bowls full of jelly at the annual Night of 1000 Santa, a benefit for Toys For Tots.

Joseph Stevens Photography



## BERLIN

GeekHaus presents Before Time: A Prehistoric Cosplay Variety Show.

Joseph Stevens Photography

## 'When Adonis Calls' through Dec. 9 at Pride Arts

Thompson Street Opera Company is collaborating with Pride Films & Plays on the production *When Adonis Calls*, which will run Fridays through Sundays Nov. 30-Dec. 9.

Fresh from its premiere at Asheville Lyric Opera, *When Adonis Calls* follows a correspondence between an accomplished author and a younger fan. The opera utilizes an ensemble of a string quartet and a percussionist; the Poet and Muse are sung and acted by two baritones, and physicalized by two dancers to illuminate the complexities of a gay relationship in the 21st century.

The opera stars Chicago favorite Jonathan Wilson as the Poet, and presents the Chicago debut of baritone Nathan James Kistler as the Muse. Pride Films & Plays Artistic Associate Derek Van Barham will direct.

Admission is \$15-\$30 each; visit <https://whenadoniscalls.brownpapertickets.com/>.

## 3Arts announces award winners

Chicago-based nonprofit grantmaking organization 3Arts awarded 20 Chicago artists with unrestricted grants at the 11th annual 3Arts Awards Celebration at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

The celebration, which drew more than 300 attendees, honored the 10 annual 3Arts Awards recipients with \$25,000 grants, along with 10 recipients of Make a Wave, an artist-to-artist giving initiative in which recipients receive \$1,000 each.

The 2018 recipients of \$25,000 3Arts Awards are dancers/dance educators T. Ayo Alston and Anna Martine Whitehead; musicians Brittany "BrittanE" Edwards and Ben LaMar Gay; teaching artists Leida "Lady Sol" Garcia and Elgin Bokari T. Smith; playwright/actor Sandra Delgado and costume designer Christine Pascual; and visual artists Dianna Frid and Hýong Ngo.

The 2018 Make a Wave recipients include Nura Aly (violinist, educator and dancer); Silvia Inés Gonzalez (interdisciplinary artist and educator); Krystal Grover-Webb (visual artist and educator); Jo de Presser, aka Marlon Bilups (DJ); Joelle Lamarre (soprano, teacher and playwright); Jenna M. Lyle (experimental musician and performer); Krystel V. McNeil (actor); Gonzalo Escobar Mora (visual artist and experimental filmmaker); Carolyn O'Brien (composer); and Ana Santos (actor).

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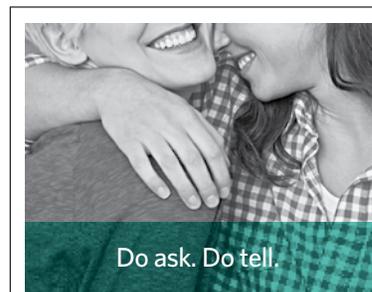
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## 'Haunted Christmas' Dec. 7-8 in suburbs

The creators of the 13th Floor Haunted House Chicago, 1940 George St., Melrose Park, will host "Krampus: A Haunted Christmas" Dec. 7-8, 7-11 p.m.

Chicago's world-famous 13th Floor Haunted House has been transformed to tell the tale of Krampus, a nightmarish demon, who has kidnapped not only the bad but also the good children at Christmas.

Tickets start at \$27.99 each; visit [KrampusHauntedChristmas.com/chicago](http://KrampusHauntedChristmas.com/chicago) or [13thfloorchicago.com](http://13thfloorchicago.com).



**Krampus.**

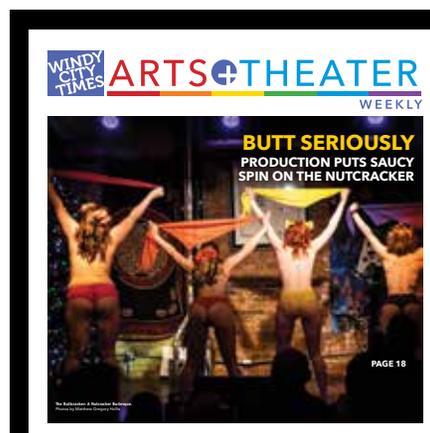
Photo courtesy of Julia Shell PR

## 'Unicorn Ball' Dec. 15 at The Shapiro

The 2018 Unicorn Ball—Brave Space Alliance's largest annual fundraiser—will take place Saturday, Dec. 15, at 9 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Shapiro Ballroom, 1612 W. Chicago Ave.

This has been called the official queer "coming out" party of the year, as Brave Space celebrates trans liberation and power in the city.

Tickets are \$20-\$250 each; visit "2018 Unicorn Ball" on Facebook or Eventbrite.



[artsandtheaterweekly.com](http://artsandtheaterweekly.com)

# WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

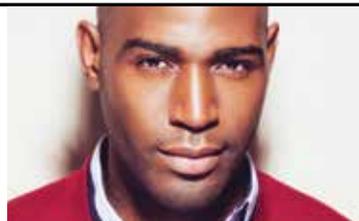
## Wed., Dec. 5

**Chicago 00: The 1968 DNC Protests exhibit ongoing** Exploring a watershed moment in U.S. politics—the 50th anniversary of the convention protests—with the new virtual-reality experience. 12:00pm Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark St., Chicago <http://chicago00.org/experiences.html#dnc>.

**2018 LGBT Chamber Winter Soiree** Participants and honorees build relationships, network with up to 100 prominent guests, enjoy a top-shelf open bar and refreshments and enjoy stunning views and the twinkle of the city's lights. 6:30pm - 10:00pm City View Lofts, 324 N Leavitt St. Suite 200, Chicago <http://business.lgbtcc.com>

**Queer Eye's Karamo Brown** First openly gay African-American in the history of reality television, co-founder of 6in10.org on mental health and self-esteem of those affected by HIV and author of Know Thyself: Using Your Uniqueness to Create Success. Free 7:00pm Evanston Township High School Auditorium, 1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston, <http://familyactionnetwork.net>

**GenderQueer Chicago** Discussion based group for genderqueer and nonbinary transgender related topics in a safer space for nonbinary trans people. Free. Questions to [genderqueerchicago@gmail.com](mailto:genderqueerchicago@gmail.com) 7:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/requestspeaker/>



## 'EYE' WITNESS Wed., Dec. 5

Queer Eye's Karamo Brown will give a talk in Evanston.

Photo courtesy of Royce Carlton

**Nia & Ness** Black, lesbian, dancer-poet performance art duo based in Brooklyn, NY, touring with spellbinding and passionate poetry and dance, opening hearts, stealing breath, inspiring minds. 8:30pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave. #108 Chicago <http://affinity95.org>

## Thursday, Dec. 6

**American Veterans for Equal Rights monthly meeting** AVER is a non-profit, chapter-based association of active, reserve and veteran servicemembers dedicated to full and equal rights and equitable treatment. This monthly meeting supports the chapters work in outreach

and visibility for LGBTQ veterans year round. On Facebook, see AVER Chicago Chapter. 7:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago

**One of a Kind Holiday Show** Shopping, live runway shows, gourmet foods, an emerging artist market, fine art gallery, activities. Through Nov. 9. \$12 for all days. 8:00pm The Mart, 222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza <http://www.oneofakindshowchicago.com>

## Friday, Dec. 7

**Book signing. New Media Futures: The Rise of Women in the Digital Arts** Dramatic story of Midwestern explorations in digital arts, a web of fascinating relationships which helped usher in the digital age that propelled social media. 4:00pm - 6:00pm Gallery 400, College of Architecture and the Arts, UoI at Chicago, 400 S. Peoria St. [http://cada.webhost.uic.edu/Gallery\\_400/G400\\_homepage\\_a.html](http://cada.webhost.uic.edu/Gallery_400/G400_homepage_a.html)

**World AIDS Day with AIDS Healthcare Foundation** One Million Lives in Care. Musical guests and entertainment including Frankie J and Jermaine Dupri. 6:00pm - 10:00pm Lacuna Lofts, 2150 S. Canalport Ave. <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/world-aids-day-chicago-tickets-52629233454>

**Late Night Andersonville** More than 70 businesses participating with deals, seasonal refreshments, free trolley rides, more. Women & Children First offering 20% off 2019 calendars and boxed holiday cards 7:00pm - 9:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

**New Erotica for Feminists: Satirical Fantasies of Love, Lust, and Equal Pay** Author Reading Caitlin Kunkel, Brooke Preston, Fiona Taylor & Carrie Wittmer.

Imagine a world where all erotica is written by feminists. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

## Saturday, Dec. 8

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers** Chicago Weekly run/walk. Followed by brunch. 9:00am Kwagulth Totem Pole Addison & Lakeshore Dr. <http://frontrunnerschicago.com>

**Santa Speedo Run** Dress up your Speedo, run and party to raise money for the Center on Halsted. 12 p.m. sign in, registration. 2 p.m. 1-mile run through Boystown. 2:30 p.m. awards, entertainment, prizes 12:00pm Begins at Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., Chicago [http://events.centeronhalsted.org/site/TR?fr\\_id=1110&pg=entry](http://events.centeronhalsted.org/site/TR?fr_id=1110&pg=entry)

**Elton John Tribute Concert** Holiday Fundraiser Concert for Gallery 1070 and Edgewater Artists in Motion Acres To Miles will open with soulful rocking original music. Chicago staple Great Moments in Vinyl doing the best of Elton John's Goodbye Yellow Brick Road and other hits. Two drinks included. \$25 7:00pm Gallery 1070 Auxillary Building, 1101 W. Granville <http://www.bitly.com/gallery1070>

## Monday, Dec. 10

**10th Anniversary Women in the Arts Luncheon** Honoring Danai Gurira. 11:30 a.m. Registration 12:00pm Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel 221 N. Columbus Dr Chicago <http://www.steppenwolf.org/>

**Gay Fathers of Greater Chicago** Network of gay men who have children living with us or apart from us. Free. Questions to [stakacs14@gmail.com](mailto:stakacs14@gmail.com) 7:30pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N

Halsted Chicago <http://gayfatherschicago.org>

**Howard Brown Insurance Enrollment Assistance** Need help navigating health insurance for 2019? Howard Brown Health is here to help. An open event to answer all your questions about insurance open enrollment. Assistors will even help you choose a plan that best fits your needs. Open Enrollment ends on December 15. To get started early or browse plans that might work for you, visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/>. 4-8 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., Chicago <http://www.facebook.com/events/2079516115694675/>

## Tuesday, Dec. 11

**George Takei's Allegiance to Broadway** George Takei's ground-breaking Broadway musical on the big screen. Straight from its Broadway run and inspired by the true-life experience of its star George Takei (Star Trek, Heroes), Allegiance follows one family's extraordinary journey in this untold American story. 7:30pm Various theaters Tickets: <http://www.fathomevents.com/events/george-takeis-allegiance>

## Thursday, Dec. 13

**Presentation opens exhibit of AIDS awareness stamps** Norman Sandfield, whose significant collection of Red Ribbon and Rainbow Pride stamps resides at G/H, will present on the 25th anniversary of the 1993 Red Ribbon for AIDS Awareness US postage stamp. Exhibit through February 2019 includes AIDS Awareness stamps from around the world. Free 6:30pm Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.gerberhart.org>

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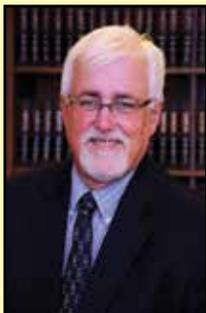
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