

# WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL 37, NO. 4  
SEPT. 1, 2022

## Signal BOOST

Talking with queer mayoral candidate J Saxon

PAGE 4



**KOKUMO**

The queen of queer soul

8



**'THE FIRST HOMOSEXUALS'**

New exhibit at Wrightwood 659

16



**DR. CARLA 'C.C.' CARTER**

Back in Chicago at Beverly Arts Center

6



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KOKUMO: Courtesy of KOKUMO  
"The First Homosexuals" item "Retrato de un anticuario o Retrato de Chucho Reyes y autorretrato," by Roberto Montenegro (1887-1968), Colección Pérez Simón, Mexico, © Arturo Piera.  
Dr. Carla "C.C." Carter: Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

# INDEX

Talking with queer mayoral candidate J Saxon	4	froSkate debuts new shoe collab with Nike	12
Howard Brown pres./CEO reflects on COVID's impact	5	John D'Emilio on new book, 'Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood'	14
Local LGBTQ+ icon Dr. C.C. Carter returns to Chicago	6	Chicago filmmaker releases documentary about Joseph Beam	15
KOKUMO, The Queen of Queer Soul	8	TRAVEL: Orlando	17
Talking with 'World' traveler Annick Adelle	12	TRAVEL: Provincetown	18

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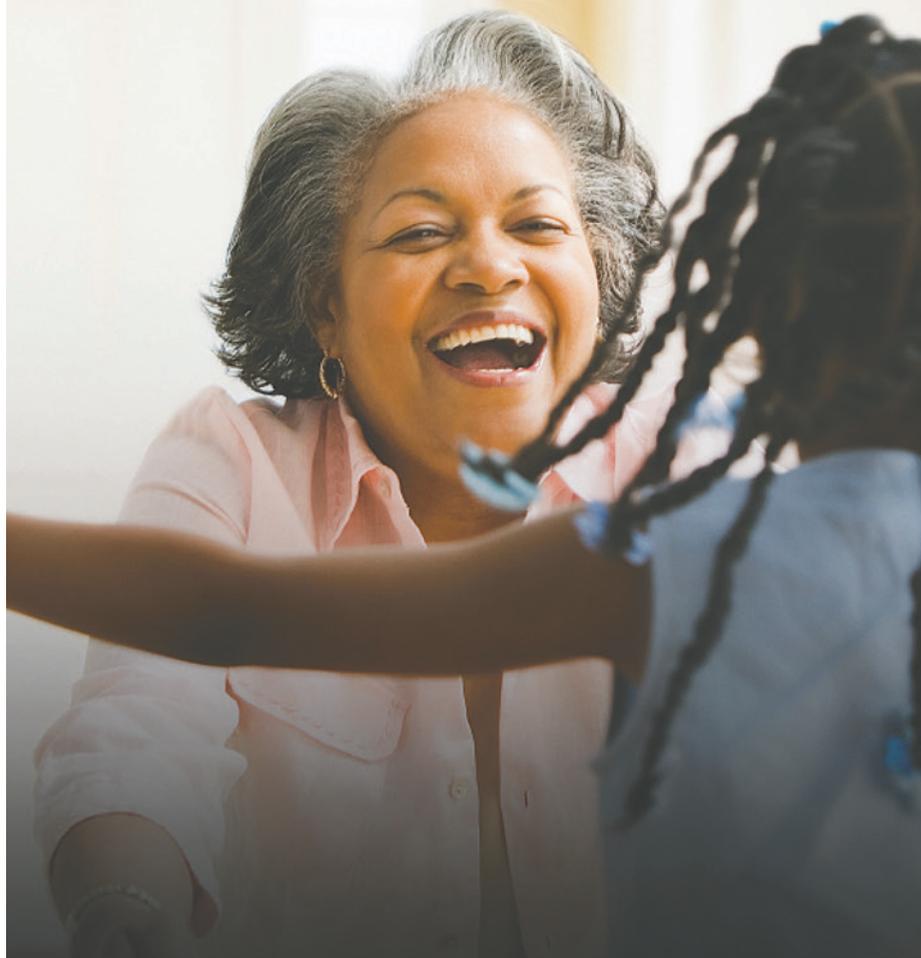
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POLITICS

# Signal BOOST



## Talking with queer mayoral candidate J Saxon

BY ANDREW PIRROTTA

J Saxon.  
Photo by Marisa KM

in the South and West sides. That looks pretty good, but it kinda blindsided me that it came out in this 11th hour. Where was this two years ago? There could have been that effort the whole time. I don't want to be critical of that effort now because it is important to redirect resources to those areas. But I would like to see the same numbers of support that the casino got. It's great to have one project to have in line with the views of progressivism, but we have one plan like that and 10 others that are corporate-minded.

**WCT: It is no small achievement that this city elected a cis lesbian woman. What sort of challenges do you face as someone who is gender non-conforming? Are there any advantages?**

JS: I've noticed that people who have followed my campaign are from gender-diverse backgrounds. They're coming from younger demographics. The advantage to being gender-diverse is that it's so inspiring for people to see someone like themselves in politics. I think that the challenge is that not many people read me as gender-diverse; people use "he/him" for me all the time. I have to consolidate the amount of energy that I have to spare to correct people about how they perceive me. I would rather have them not misinterpret what I stand for over who I am. It's not fair for me to criticize Lori for running on identity politics while also doing the same. I can't lie about who I am. And ultimately, the intersectional identities that I represent inform my values and how I interact with people from certain communities. But ultimately people shouldn't vote for me because I check certain boxes.

**WCT: How do you honestly assess your chances of becoming mayor in a packed race like this?**

JS: The only advantage that I have is that I have totally different stances on these issues. The hardest part for me is currently fundraising to be able to meet the level of visibility other candidates [have]. What I can do is show up at places to fight for people who need to be heard. I go places I have never been to meet people I have never met. To me, it's not about the fact that I have to win because if I am not doing this, how can I expect someone else from my community to stand up for what they believe in? So far, I have many people in my friend group that are inspired just because I am trying. It's to bring people hope that someone who isn't a political insider—who doesn't have this clout—can try and do this and do it in a way that is authentic and sincere in the way that we connect with the communities that we care about.

**Be sure to visit [www.saxonformayor.com](http://www.saxonformayor.com) for more information regarding Saxon's campaign.**

With the 2023 mayoral election rapidly approaching, names such as Ald. Raymond Lopez, businessman Willie Wilson and, of course, incumbent Lori Lightfoot have proven to be some of the most recognizable so far.

However, J Saxon, a genderqueer Bolivia-American activist, hopes to put his name in the mix. Saxon talked about their new bid for the city's big seat.

*Note: This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

**Windy City Times: You have been a critic of Lori Lightfoot since her original bid for mayor. Given the tumultuous last few years, how would you have handled things differently with regard to COVID and the civil unrest?**

J Saxon: With COVID, the major difference would have been consistency. There were a lot of big media criticisms of the extremes we went through in order to keep Chicagoans indoors for the summer of 2020, but then a year later, with the advent of vaccines, we went from 0-60 with our regulations. Suddenly everyone was allowed

outside again, Lollapalooza even happened. ... I would have kept the consistency that local, state and federal governments have dropped. There are currently 500 Americans dying each day of COVID, but we are not giving it nearly the attention it got in 2020 or 2021. In terms of civil unrest, I think that a major criticism I have is the time that the mayor shut down public transit and raised the bridges; this kept working Chicagoans from being able to get home, keeping thousands of people stranded in the financial district.

**WCT: How did your journey for political office begin?**

JS: It all started when I began having political conversations in different friend groups as early as December of last year, trying to figure out who we were going to submit 14 months in advance. I confronted a friend, and they suggested that I run given my online presence and personality. I later got a call informing me of the murder of a close friend in the queer community in Logan Square, and that spurred me to combat Lori from the left and from the queer community. ... Winter is hard here but this winter, in particular, made

me re-evaluate what I care about and who I am. I put the idea on the backburner and went to the AIDS Memorial Garden. And I felt like the event was a glorified electioneering position for Pritzker and Lightfoot. I found the speeches to be offensive—that they were framing AIDS as something that was over. The refrain from both Lightfoot and Pritzker was that a lesson had been learned and that we were applying what we had learned to the present moment. In that moment, I was in the crowd and fuming. ... I walked up to the podium, and I started screaming at Pritzker and Lightfoot. I said, "How dare you come here and tell us that AIDS was a lesson we've learned when there are still people dying every day from COVID? You've taken this out of your responsibility as leaders, but where is your leadership?"

**WCT: In what ways do you think the city is headed in the right direction?**

JS: It's easy to be critical, but it's interesting to see what is working well. I think that some of the newer initiatives that Lightfoot waited until this election year to pull out. The one Chicago plan where we're working to address equity

# Howard Brown president/CEO reflects on COVID's impact

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Howard Brown Health President and CEO David Munar, the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic seemed eerily similar to the AIDS crisis of the '80s.

"We saw all the same patterns at the dawning of COVID—a lot of skepticism, mistrust, medical misinformation, confusion—and then poor response systems," Munar said. "...There was a really strong recognition that mobilizing through public health was a core capacity, and a unique capacity, that we need to share."

Now, well over two years after the pandemic took its hold both across the city and across the globe, Howard Brown Health has been transformed by it. Some of those changes, among them the extensive application of telehealth appointments, have been positive, Munar noted, while other changes, such as increased waits for in-person visits, less so. In recent months, the facility has taken part in efforts to control and treat for transmissions of the monkeypox virus (MPV) as well.

Another challenge has been the Great Resignation, which has also taken its toll on Howard Brown Health. Non-nursing Howard Brown employees, citing burnout, understaffing and what

employees told Block Club Chicago was a "toxic" work culture voted to unionize in August. Nursing employees already unionized in 2019. (In response, Munar said in a statement, "I'd like to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the organizers, everyone who voted, and all staff who push Howard Brown to be the best it can possibly be. As we take the next steps in the process, we will move forward together in support of our patients and clients, seeking at all times to improve the workplace experience for our valued employees.")

Munar said that, at the height of the pandemic, turnover was about 2-5% a month, a figure he said was steep. A huge surge in demand for in-person appointments at Howard Brown further began in 2021.

"A lot of that [that demand] is great," Munar said. "People weren't going in 2020 and people thought that in 2021 it was safe. It all spiked last summer. We saw a lot of people having health complications, not from COVID but from chronic conditions that had not been managed the last few years. We see more viral-suppression [issues], substance abuse, depression and anxiety. There was a real spike in health care needs in that period."

The federal government awarded relief funding to meet the surge in demand for medical services,

but those funds are tapped out, Munar said, adding, "We're having to rework our new cost centers with our old cost structure—that's a challenge that all health centers are facing."

Telehealth capabilities provided some relief for capacity for patients with chronic health conditions such as HIV/AIDS. Patients generally got lab tests on-site and then discussed their results with providers via telehealth. That worked well for patients with online access and the means for privacy, but others who could not get online faced barriers staying on a continuum of care.

"We saw a whole lot of health issues got worse in the first two years," Munar said. "In the hierarchy of needs, maintenance visits took a back seat—the crisis du jour takes precedence over everything else. We saw that."

Telehealth is here to stay, he added, but Howard Brown is using it much less. "Some of the providers were wanting to do more comprehensive examination of patients. Some providers are doing a half-day of telehealth for their patients and it [takes the place of] visits where there

weren't going to be labs or physical exams—to talk about treatments only. The model is physical visits supplemented by telehealth."

Howard Brown has developed several plans should more insidious variants of COVID appear and require massive precautions, and rely on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. "Recommendations have changed and they probably will continue to."

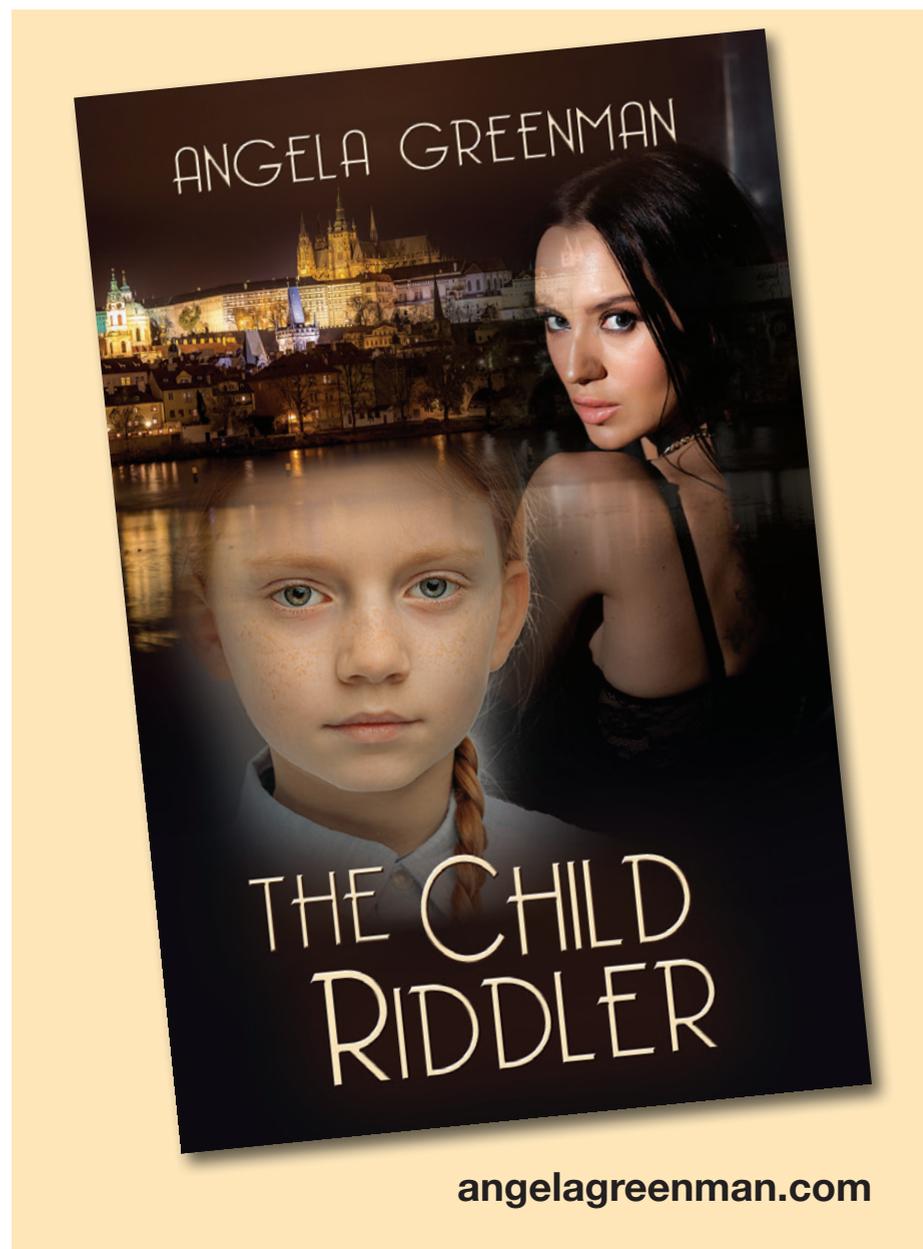
Munar admitted that the entire cost model of healthcare will "continue to be a big issue" going forward.

He added, "It's become more complicated to deliver healthcare, and it's slower. Then there's the telehealth issue—what are the right uses and who pays for it? And the feds discontinued paying for COVID testing for people who are uninsured. Things like that sound like obscure, arcane issues, but over the next period of time, we're going to see fewer of these pop-up COVID testing sites and less access for people who aren't insured. Those are all big issues I've been hearing about."



Howard Brown Health President and CEO David Munar.

Photo by Matt Simonette



# Local LGBTQ+ icon Dr. C.C. Carter

## returns to Chicago in a new position

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Dr. Carla “C.C.” Carter is back.

After being away for a few years and embarking on a few adventures (like graduating from seminary school), Carter—an acclaimed writer, poet, and performer—is back in Chicago as managing director of the Beverly Arts Center. The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame honoree recently talked with *Windy City Times* about adjusting to her new role, being in the LGBT Hall of Fame, and noticing the differences between where she was and where she is now.

**Windy City Times: You’ve been away for a few years—and you were in Arkansas, correct?**

Dr. Carla “C.C.” Carter: Correct. So, a lot of people don’t know that I left [Chicago] specifically because my father has passed away, and my parents had retired there. My family had contacted me, saying my mother wasn’t doing well. So [partner] Ronnie [Fortenberry] and I went down there to visit and realized she wasn’t doing well. Then, Ronnie said, “You only get one mom if you’re lucky” so we dropped everything and [moved] there.

For the first year and a half, my [employer] here didn’t want to lose me so I’d spend two weeks in Chicago and two weeks back in Arkansas. After that, I became a consultant at Philander Smith College. From there, the president saw I had been a teacher so I became an instructor there. Then I co-wrote an application for a \$900,000 grant and became department chair for visual and performing arts.

**WCT: But you also went to seminary.**

Carter: Yes. So I graduated from Jacksonville Theological Institute, but it was the Christian education part of teaching, not necessarily seminary.

**WCT: Okay. I think different people have different ideas of what is involved with attending such a school. What did you learn?**

Carter: So it was no-brainer, actually. I was

looking to get my doctorate in the arts, and I also wanted to be in a space that affirmed all of my intersections. And I’m also a PK [preacher’s kid]...

**WCT: You and Grace Jones.**

Carter: [Laughs] Yes—THAT kind of PK. Those who saw me on stage would say, “Wait-what?” [Both laugh.] But there’s something very spiritual in the erotic so, to me, they coincide.

But this school had one of the few programs that was hybrid even back then [in the 2010s] so I could do it online. I had to travel to defend my dissertation but it was a path I really liked because I could incorporate the counseling component with vocational discernment. I wanted to not bring a religious vibe to the classroom, but bring a practical and spiritual approach. My doctorate is in Christian education, with an emphasis in educational leadership. I recommend it to anyone who’s thinking about going.

**WCT: Let’s talk about Beverly Arts Center and your role.**

Carter: Growing up in Roseland and Chatman, Beverly was like Oak Park/River Forest for the South Side; it’s where Black upper- and middle-class folk lived—although there was the Great Migration to places like Beverly and Mt. Greenwood. The center was a place where you got your formal introduction to the fine arts: dance, theater and visual arts. It’s one of the few community art spaces that’s not specific to one genre; we specialize in all the major art forms.

Everybody here now is new. Our artistic director, Kevin Pease, is dynamic; he graduated from Northwestern. There is a full professional theatrical program, unlike what you’d find at a community theater. Our actors are getting paid and we’re focusing on Chicago stories, directors and artists.

And my job is managing director so we co-lead the organization. It’s working on fiscal management, grant writing and development, and marketing.

**WCT: I didn’t realize—and I’m not sure you know—that it’s been exactly 20 years since**



Carla “C.C.” Carter performing *The Vagina Monologues* in 2008.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

**you were inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame.**

Carter: Oh, my goodness. I didn’t know!

**WCT: What do you remember about that night in 2002?**

Carter: I felt like Sally Field: “You like me. You really do like me!” [Both laugh.]

Honestly, I was just doing the work I loved—and to be recognized for doing spoken-word poetry and being part of *A Real Read* and for doing the work I was doing on the South Side for LGBTQ folk... We had the first all-lesbian and transgender *Vagina Monologues* and I had just written a book of poetry. To be recognized for doing that is something I will always cherish. I still have the award.

Twenty years—wow... I was 38 when I got that; I’m 58 now.

**WCT: So my last question is something I’ve asked a lot of different people. Over the past two years, we’ve all had to deal with COVID and quarantining, we’ve seen the George Floyd murder and experienced the aftermath, and we’ve had a lot of time to think. What did you learn about yourself?**

Carter: Hmm... I’m back in Chicago so that should tell you something.

So Arkansas was interesting, and being in Little Rock was even more. In New York and Chicago, where I spent my formative years, and being able to hold my partner’s hand in public, I was able to be a vocal and unapologetic Black woman. Being



Carla "C.C." Carter with late activist Jackie Anderson in 2012.  
Photo by Ed Negron

in the pandemic exacerbated all the pressures I felt about the intersections that I felt before it. It was unsettling to see and feel the silencing of Black folk during the time of Black Lives Matter, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. In Arkansas, very few people were vocal.

It was quite unsettling to see the proliferation of Trump ads. I had never been in a space like that. However, I'm grateful for that experience because I saw what real advocates had and have to deal with in spaces like that to make even the smallest impact.

I think about Chris Jones, a graduate of Morehouse, who is running for governor in [Arkansas] now. People think he doesn't have a chance; maybe he doesn't, but what we isn't afraid to do is bring the issues of the people to the forefront. That is huge right now.

But I also think about the trigger states and Roe v. Wade. Arkansas [has] all three abortion bans—whether the mother's life is in danger, or if incest or rape is involved. So some forward-thinking people, including myself, bought Plan B; I

was going to give it to the nurses in my school—but the nurse cannot accept it. So there are repercussions for Black, Brown and poor people; Arkansas is one of the few states in which there are more poor white people than people of color.

So you have all that—abortion, the pandemic, the NRA—was starting to build. In essence, I needed my later years to be my greater years. And when I needed it, this job came along on Indeed. Last year, I said, "God, for me to move back to Chicago, I need a job that wouldn't have me go downtown every day. It has to be perfect arts-related job that's financially sustainable because the snow in Chicago is no joke." [Laughs] I pushed the "Send" button on Sunday and I got a call that Tuesday for an interview; [soon after,] I was offered the position. I have been ecstatic.

Some of the programs taking place at the Beverly Arts Center this season include *The Fantastics*, *The Christmas Schooner* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. More about Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St., is at <https://thebeverlyartscenter.com/>.



Carla "C.C." Carter with partner Kayron "Ronnie" Fortenberry in 2011.  
Photo by Jerry Nunn

**"A FLAVOR-BOMB OF A NEW COMEDY"**  
—VARIETY

**CLYDE'S**

BY LYNN NOTTAGE | DIRECTED BY KATE WHORISKEY

**"Feisty comedy is on the menu" (Washington Post) in two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage's latest Broadway triumph.**

Creating the perfect sandwich is the shared quest of the formerly incarcerated kitchen staff of Clyde's, a truck stop cafe. Even as the shop's mischievous owner tries to keep them under her thumb, the staffers are given purpose and permission to dream—finding that "sometimes a hero is more than a sandwich" (New York Times).

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# The Queen of queer soul

## KOKUMO talks about moving to New York City, other endeavors

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

*NOTE: This article contains references to rape and violence.*

The multifaceted artist KOKUMO, The Queen of Queer Soul has recently released a new album, *Wildflowa': Da' Prelude Ta' Freedom Mixtape*, featuring 16 tracks focusing on traumatology, Afro-Elysium and other topics.

KOKUMO's journey features many accomplishments. She wrote a poetry book, *Reacquainted With Life*, in 2016 that went on to win the Lambda Literary Award in the transgender poetry category during the 29th annual awards ceremony in 2017. KOKUMO also won the Motha Art Award in the non-cis female musician category in 2013.

Locally, she was also the recipient of a *Windy City Times* 30 Under 30 Award in 2011. KOKUMO also founded what she said is the first multimedia production company run by a non-cis woman: KOKUMOMEDIA, Inc. With this company she founded Chicago's first transgender pride event T.G.I.F. (Trans, GNC, Intersex Freedom) in 2012 under her KOKUMO Philanthropy subsidiary as well as KOKUMORECORDS and KOKUMO Magazine. Through her KOKUMORECORDS subsidiary, she launched the Underground Railroad music tour.

**Windy City Times: You recently re-emerged after several years away from the public eye. Why did you step away and what made you re-emerge now?**

KOKUMO, The Queen of Queer Soul: I got gang-raped at the afterparty for the Trans 100 in 2014 and after that I had to step away because I did not receive any support from the community. That threw me for a loop because—as a survivor of corrective rape, ritual abuse and family gang rape—I thought that when I was in my twenties that was over with, but here I was with my own LGBTQ community (people I thought were my sisters and brothers) getting gang-raped. After having all my innovations being stripped from me by the skinny, light-skinned girls; now my body was being taken from me in a setting I thought

was safe. I had enough. My heart was devastated because I grew up in a family that did not love me.

I spent the last years of my twenties in a string of mental breakdowns, including time spent in a psych ward, [because of what happened] at the Trans 100. My mind could not process that I would never be loved as a Black, dark skinned, plus-size non-cis woman. My mother, brothers, cousins, uncles and aunts did not love me and I understood that but when I came into the LGBTQ community, I thought I had finally found love which was not true. To me, “community” is just a word used to get funding—which drove me mad. What I had to do was take all that pain, pray for understanding and deliverance from the grief, and then put it into a project which is where my latest album came from.

I am a survivor of physical, sexual, emotional and ritual abuse. The contributions I have made are because I want to be seen, heard and loved just like anybody else.

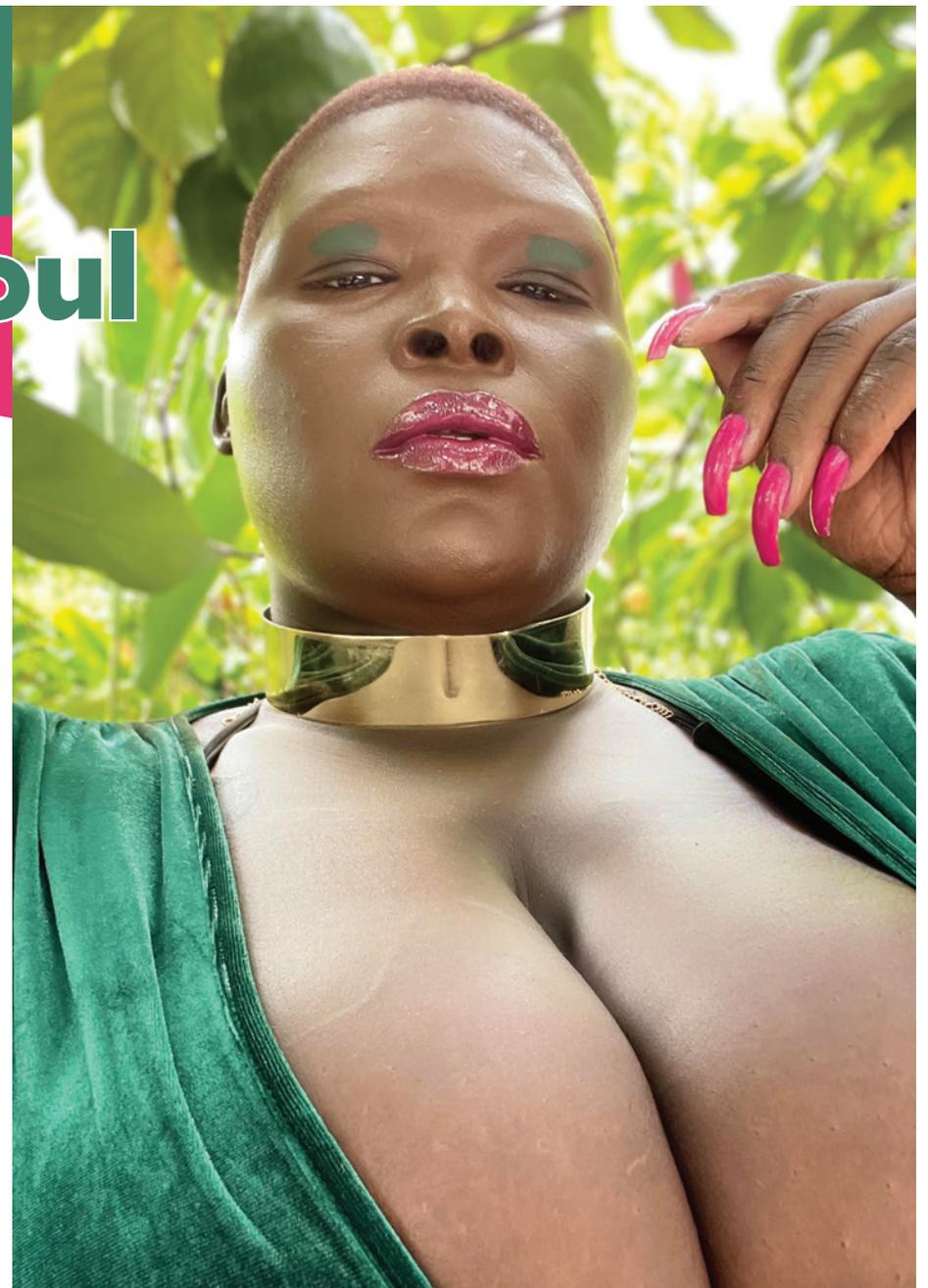
**WCT: Why did you name your YouTube channel Queer Soul? How would you describe your musical style?**

KOKUMO: For so long we have had trap and alternative R&B music but neither of those genres had a place for me as a non-cis woman. That is why I had to come up with a genre that spoke to who I am and that is why I named my channel Queer Soul.

“Queer soul” gives me the ability to be my proud, deep-voiced, oceanic, instrumented, unabashedly Black, dark skinned, plus-sized, queer, non-cis female self. My music is a testament to myself, and my instrument is my battle cry.

**WCT: Talk about the meaning of your album title, *Wildflowa': Da' Prelude Ta' Freedom Mixtape*.**

KOKUMO: This album is a part of a trilogy of albums that began in 2018 when I was living with my mother of origin at the time who would not talk about what happened to me as a child, so she kicked me out even though I was the one paying the bills, not her. That first album was



KOKUMO, The Queen of Queer Soul.  
Photo courtesy of the artist

titled *Wildflowa'*.

These albums are about my desire to be seen as a Black, dark skinned, non-cis woman. We do not all have to be skinny, but we do deserve to be heard. This is an album for every survivor, wherever you are and wherever you are.

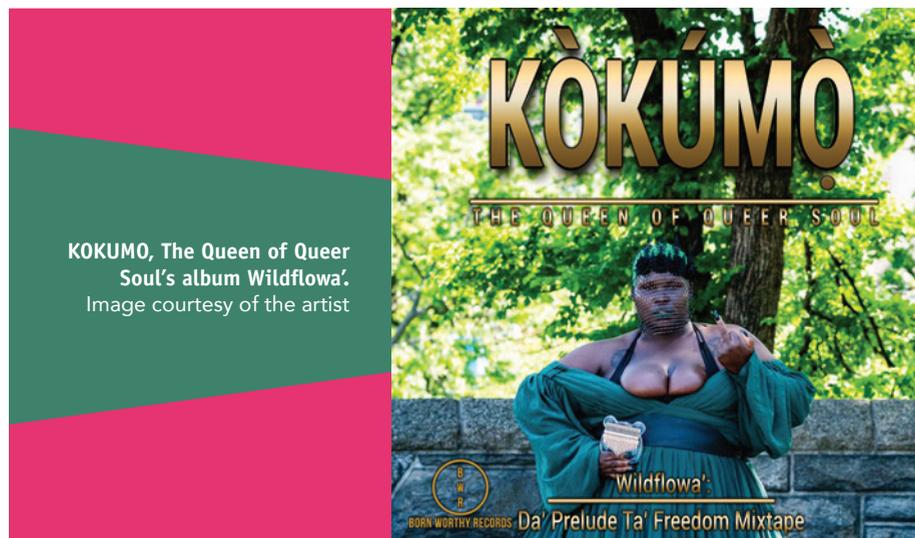
When I was doing my Underground Railroad tour, which was a tribute to Harriet Tubman, I went city to city singing to Black queer people about freedom and what it looks like. During that final stop in Baltimore, I had a psychotic break. This was after I was gang raped during the Trans 100 afterparty. I was in a shelter in Baltimore because I had to leave the place I was staying

at the time because it was not safe. I remember walking through West Baltimore barefoot after a verbal altercation with some cis women in the shelter and hearing someone say, “That woman is wild” and I thought to myself, that is the greatest compliment I have ever heard because if a woman is not wild, they will not make it. I have really had to learn to tap into my savagery, fierceness, the lioness within me and God. So, this trilogy is my exploration into what it means to be a wild woman.

I wrote a poem called “Wildflowa” that explains the meaning of my current album:

*i have cried  
arms stretched to a god i don't believe in  
but somebody said i shud  
tears  
falling like niagra  
creating oceans where i leave them  
all in search of home  
i long for the untilled soil  
from whence i sprang  
both unannounced and unwelcomed  
waving my arms and sangin' a song nobody  
wanted to hear  
but happy  
cuz i  
was where the wildflowers grow  
on land most dare not tread  
where the monster in me could lie dormant  
so the child in me could run free  
cart-wheeling, and rolling down heels until river-  
beds put me to sleep  
did i tell you that i have cried?  
because i belong where the wildflowers grow  
but have been plucked from nature where i was  
promised  
and thrown into cellophane and sold  
like a universe  
tricked into a pocket dimension  
like a pola' bear wakin' up in the Amazon  
my wings dun turnt ta cement  
n my smile a bagga bricks  
somebody take me where the wildflowers grow  
for that is my natural habitat  
where seed is promise  
dirt is the only religion  
and the wind is a high-five from God  
i ask you  
would you sell the sun  
or auction off the moon  
then why a flower  
especially  
one meant to be wild?  
wild  
meaning  
primitive  
unruly  
and uncontrollable  
flower  
the symbol of beauty  
grace  
and fragility  
wildflower  
a species of flower known to grow in the most  
unexpected and inhospitable of places  
i be's a wildflower  
primitive yet graceful  
unruly but fragile  
uncontrollable and all the more beautiful for it  
wildflowers  
bloom  
and dance a jig of divine contradiction  
for i promise  
you  
are the most beautiful oxymoron  
there eva was  
and will be!*

This album and the title is an ode to wild femmes and, quite frankly, an ode to scapegoats. Recently, I learned about the term "scapegoat



KOKUMÓ, The Queen of Queer Soul's album Wildflower'. Image courtesy of the artist

child," [which] exists in every dysfunctional family. That scapegoat child is, for whatever oppressive reasons, is deemed as the problem for the whole family. I was the scapegoat child. I was always going to be vilified for all of my intersecting identities. I was blamed for all the mistakes my other family members made. I wanted to create an album for every scapegoat child, so they know they deserve more from the life that was handed to them. My message is to be wild and be free.

The final album in the trilogy will be called Wildflower': A Black Girl in Bloom, which will focus on what it means to heal.

**WCT: What do you want to tease from your album, including using the words "traumatology" and "Afro-Elysium" for some of your song title choices?**

KOKUMÓ: I use "traumatology" because it is the story and study of abuse. Where it stems from and how it matriculates through the body. What we know about traumatology, which is a science, is that it creates physical disease and mental illness as well as results in people's deaths. After doing an emotional inventory of my lifelong trauma of having a mother who thought I was a demon, both parents being addicted to crack leading to me being trafficked so they could get a hit and my cis female cousins correctively raping me from my early childhood to my early twenties I was able to put that to music with these traumatology tracks. Whatever your story is you can listen to these songs and find out what your traumatology is and make peace with it so you can move forward. We make peace with our trauma, or our trauma will leave us in pieces.

"Afro-Elysium" is what propelled this album forward. I grew up in a demonic environment with a highly religious Christian Southern Baptist family where everything that is not cisgender and heterosexual is demonized. After all this suffering I experienced, they say that it builds character and brings reward so I asked myself when I leave this Earth will there be a heaven just for me and all the queer people so we do not have to explain or justify ourselves to anyone anymore. That is where the concept of Afro-Elysium comes from. [Elysium is the concept of the afterlife that some Ancient Greeks believed in].

The first of the three Afro-Elysium songs tell

the story of a dark skinned non-cis woman who died by suicide. The second song is where she goes to heaven and the first person she sees is Marsha P Johnson and all the beautiful non-cis women who have been murdered and they are voguing, singing, dancing and doing sex work in peace. The woman meets God who is also a non-cis woman. God tells her that she should not have killed herself and sends her back to Earth with a mission to keep doing the work to make things safer for the next generations. The third song is about her being back on Earth living her truth and kicking the world's fucking ass. That is what the whole album is about.

**WCT: Talk about your new record company, Born Worthy Records, including the name title choices.**

KOKUMÓ: I chose the name because I was born worthy and we all were born worthy. This is especially true for non-cis women of color, and especially dark skinned plus sized non-cis Black women realizing they were born worthy.

**WCT: Why did you upload all your songs to your Queer Soul YouTube and Spotify channels and essentially make them free to the public?**

KOKUMÓ: That is where the colorism and sizeism comes into play. I do not have the machine and financial backing yet. I must tell my truth and pray that my KOKUMITES, which is what I call my fans, will receive me as a musician. At the end of the day as long as people are listening to my music we can heal together from our collective trauma.

In the future, I hope to be able to monetize my music, but for right now I want to get my story out and inspire other people to tell their stories as well.

**WCT: Why did you leave Chicago and move to New York City?**

KOKUMÓ: I had to leave in 2020 because my mother wrongfully called the police on me and got me arrested, which led to me being repeatedly attacked physically. I wanted to leave behind all the trauma my relatives inflicted on me. I thank God and her angels that I got out of Chicago.

Also, after all the advocacy work I had done in Chicago, I felt like I deserved better. I built up so much LGBTQ infrastructure in Chicago and

then I see that there are other people who are being inducted into Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame before me, which felt like a dismissal of all the work I had done. I got tired of what I call the social-justice industry in Chicago. For so many of these people, it is all about the virtue-signaling and getting a platform, not actually being in community with and helping other people. I felt unsafe in these spaces. I gave the city all that I had, and I did not want to be there anymore.

I moved to New York City because, outside of Chicago, I was partially raised there and North Carolina. I always said that I am down south, Midwest, east coast type of girl. I had to go where I could be free. The healthcare is better here. It is bigger and a better city. There is not as much trauma here. I did not have to stay in places that constantly challenged me to prove my worth. In New York City, I can walk the streets and be seen as the woman I am without any problems. I do not have to worry about running into enemies who could still hurt me.

**WCT: What other projects are you working on?**

KOKUMÓ: I am working on the follow-up album to Wildflower', which is titled Tethys (Goddess Of The Forgotten). I named it Tethys after the forgotten Tethys Ocean that existed on Earth about 200 million years ago. What if Tethys corporealized into a water goddess who said, "Do you remember me? I gave you your first breath, yet you forgot me." This new album is a euphemism and allegory of what it means to be forgotten as a woman. If all those women came back in one form, the original water goddess Tethys.

**WCT: What overarching message do you want to share with the readers?**

KOKUMÓ: To my KOKUMITES a poem called Survivor's Guide from my book Reacquainted With Life:

*I am not what you did to me.  
I am not what you did to me.*

Also, no matter what the abuse, how frequent and/or how intimate the person is who did it to you we are not what is done to us. We are our ability to survive, overcome, persist and move on regardless of our circumstances. That is what Wildflower': Da' Prelude Ta' Freedom Mixtape is all about. I am telling my story and you should feel empowered to tell yours. I am not dying with anybody's secret or from anybody's secret.

See KOKUMÓ's Queer Soul YouTube channel, KOKUMÓ's Spotify channel, [instagram.com/bornworthyrecords/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/bornworthyrecords/?hl=en) and [windycity-times.com/lgbt/BOOKS-KOKUMO-becomes-Reacquainted-with-Life/57008.html](https://www.windycity-times.com/lgbt/BOOKS-KOKUMO-becomes-Reacquainted-with-Life/57008.html) to read more about her book.

If you are seeking resources to deal with sexual violence, contact [www.ourresilience.org](http://www.ourresilience.org), [www.rainn.org/resources](http://www.rainn.org/resources) or [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

*NOTE: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

## IMPORTANT FACTS FOR BIKTARVY®

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

(bik-TAR-vee)

### MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT BIKTARVY

**BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects, including:**

- ▶ **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking BIKTARVY. Do not stop taking BIKTARVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months, and may give you HBV medicine.

### ABOUT BIKTARVY

BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults and children who weigh at least 55 pounds. It can either be used in people who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements.

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

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

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

### BEFORE TAKING BIKTARVY

**Tell your healthcare provider if you:**

- ▶ Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- ▶ Have any other health problems.
- ▶ Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if BIKTARVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking BIKTARVY.
- ▶ Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

**Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:**

- ▶ Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, antacids, laxatives, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- ▶ BIKTARVY and other medicines may affect each other. Ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist about medicines that interact with BIKTARVY, and ask if it is safe to take BIKTARVY with all your other medicines.

### POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF BIKTARVY

**BIKTARVY may cause serious side effects, including:**

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

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

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

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

### HOW TO TAKE BIKTARVY

Take BIKTARVY 1 time each day with or without food.

### GET MORE INFORMATION

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



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Please see Important Facts about BIKTARVY, including important warnings, on the previous page and visit [BIKTARVY.com](https://www.biktarvy.com).



Scan to see Dimitri's story.



Annick Adelle.  
Photo by Virginia Schultheis

COMEDY

## A life in 'Between'

Talking with  
'World' traveler  
Annick Adelle

BY ANDREW PIRROTTA

Bay Area attorney Annick Adelle (they/them) has decided to face one of her biggest fears: stand-up comedy. After starting in 2016, she is releasing her own album and touring throughout the United States. In *Between Two Worlds*, Adelle (who lives between gender norms, but who also uses she/her pronouns) talks about living between worlds—between genders, between corporate America and a career in the arts, and between NYC and Germany.

### Windy City Times: What were you doing in San Francisco, originally?

Annick Adelle: I was a licensed attorney by trade, and because the tech company was headquartered in San Francisco, they invited me to work at headquarters. Then I had six weeks off because I was with them for five years, so I said, "Perfect. I'm going to do something that scares the hell out of me"—and that was stand-up comedy. Ever since then, I was hooked.

### WCT: As a kid, were you the funny one in your family?

AA: Yeah, I mean without knowing. But in hindsight that was all I was doing at parties, with girls; I was trying to be the funniest person.

### WCT: What does your family think about this new career change?

AA: I was on the trajectory to be general counsel of Airbnb or something. It's kind of like coming out. You have to choose happiness. You can't be what everyone else wants you to be. In the beginning they questioned what I was doing, but now they're supportive. They recognize you're a person, so they're now going around and rooting for me.

### WCT: Have they been to one of your shows yet?

AA: Oh, yeah, and my mom doesn't even speak English. She was just sitting there, laughing. I was even talking about her, telling people that she was my mom and she didn't understand a thing I was saying.

### WCT: Having done standup in both Europe and the United States, what is Europe like? What's the difference between the crowds?

AA: They're all good spirited. No one shows up to be an asshole. Everybody gives you kudos for doing this because it takes guts. They all recognize that. I will say that European crowds are very attentive and have maybe a longer attention span. You can tell a story and they won't get bored or anxious. I'm not judging this is just what I dealt with. Europeans will be a little bit less forgiving if the joke isn't clever. I think in America people are more open to silliness and risk taking. There are a lot of differences and it is very interesting. ... In America if people clap that's like whoa, a big deal. In Germany they clap because they appreciate it.

### WCT: What did you listen to growing up? Who did you watch?

AA: Well, that's the interesting part. I was raised in Germany. I wasn't born there. There wasn't a standup culture when I was growing up there. Open mics didn't exist. What existed was satire and political commentary, obviously funny, but stand-up comedy did not exist. So I didn't have anyone to look up to. So my comedic inspiration was just me. But then when I got to the states I realized this was a job, this was a career. I don't have anyone that I look up to. I'm trying

to be my own.

### WCT: Was doing standup a dare to yourself?

AA: Absolutely. It was a challenge to myself. It had been on my mind for years, but I never had the guts to do it. To do it was two things. Hey, maybe you'll actually keep doing it. And secondly, let's see if I've got the balls. I came off the stage like that's exactly what I want to do. I mean, it was terrible—everyone's first time is—but I knew what I wanted to do.

### WCT: What advice do you have to LGBTQ+ youth wanting to get started in stand-up comedy?

AA: I struggle with this topic because it is both who I am, an LGBTQ member, and I love the community and the cause. I'm always going to route for minorities. At the same time, I want to talk about it on stage, but I don't want to talk about it just on stage. ... I love it, but I want to keep a good balance. Do I have any advice? I guess, just be yourself and go for it.

### WCT: Where do you see your career going? Do you want big standup specials every year, or do you want to carve out a piece for yourself and tour where and when you want?

AA: I will say this: My priority will be that I get to stand-up comedy where I want with the location I want, with a following of people that love to see me in bigger and bigger venues. That would be my dream, just to be on stage and doing standup. That's what we do. We enjoy the moment, but we also want to open minds and eyes and have fun. If I can do that? Uh, perfect!

Be sure to check out Annick's new album, *Between Two Worlds*, out via *Blonde Medicine*.

# Kickin' it

Skaters  
from  
Chicago  
BIPOC  
queer  
collective  
froSkate  
release  
Nike SB  
shoe

BY KAYLEIGH PADAR



Nike and froSkate's "All Love No Hate" Dunk High shoes.

Photo courtesy of froSkate



froSkate  
member skateboarding  
with the new Nike SB shoe.  
Photo By froSkate

Members of froSkate—an organization dedicated to creating safe spaces for BIPOC queer skateboarders—recently became the first Black women to design a colorful sneaker with Nike SB, and the shoe was recently released.

Two of froSkate’s leaders, Karlie Thornton and L Brew, worked with Nike SB (which offers skateboarding shoes) for more than a year and a half to create a shoe that’s a “celebration of those who haven’t always felt seen.”

“We are changing the narrative of what it means to be a ‘real skater,’ amplifying those of all skill levels to broaden visibility beyond the pros we typically see,” said Brew, froSkate’s vice president. “And this Dunk is another example of how we’re changing the status quo.”

Thornton founded froSkate in 2019 in order to provide a much-needed space for skaters who don’t fit into the traditional skate-community.

Since then, froSkate has grown from a crowd of friends who enjoyed skating together into an organization that’s hosted more than 80 events and brought hundreds of people together.

Everyone is welcome at the froSkate meetups, but the group centers BIPOC, queer and gender-non-conforming femmes while encouraging skaters of all skill levels.

“It was just that the community really needed this kind of space,” Thornton said. “I started to skate in 2019 and really just wanted friends and people who looked like me to skate with, so that I didn’t feel alone or uncomfortable being the only girl.”

Thornton said she enjoyed working with Nike SB to make the shoe a reality and that it was exciting to see froSkate’s vision for the shoe mesh

with the expertise of the seasoned designers at Nike SB.

“The design team did a really great job helping us hone in on what the shoe would look like,” said Thornton, froSkate’s president. “We worked together to merge our mission with the look of the shoe. They really helped us figure out how to do this because it’s not like any of us designed a shoe before but they’ve designed hundreds.”

Nike SB released froSkate’s “All Love. No Hate” Dunk High shoe Aug. 13; it can be purchased in stores and online.

“It feels incredibly surreal,” Thornton said. “It’s just awesome to see folks rocking our shoes. They look so good on feet, and when you’re skating, they really pop and give an outfit so much personality.”

The advertisements for the shoe feature skaters of all different abilities and identities. When designing the shoe and its surrounding campaign, Thornton and Brew tried to “be as gender-inclusive as possible while still putting that call out to get more women involved in skateboarding,” Thornton said.

“We tried to speak to all of that through our shoe, through the colors, through the ‘all love, no hate’ motto,” Thornton said. “It’s just what skateboarding’s about, the love you have for it and the community you find through it. It’s not a place for hate.”

To learn more about froSkate, visit [www.froskate.com](http://www.froskate.com).

To locate a store where you can buy the “All Love. No Hate” Dunk High, visit [www.nikesb.com/shops](http://www.nikesb.com/shops) and [www.nikesb.com/the-vault/striped-box-era/froskate](http://www.nikesb.com/the-vault/striped-box-era/froskate).

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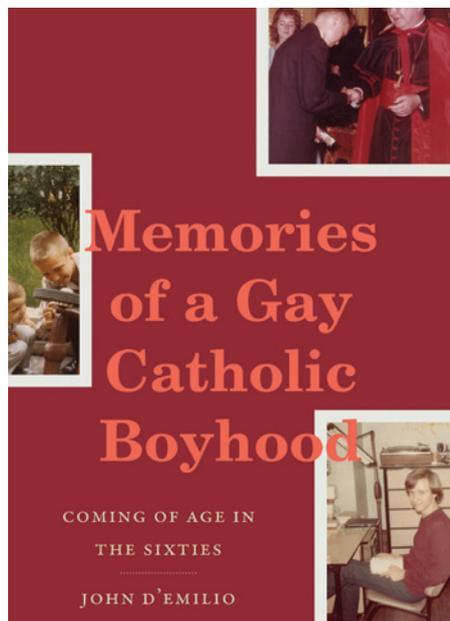


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ters: A History of Sexuality in America, was cited in Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy's 2003 majority opinion in *Lawrence v. Texas* that overturned every state's sodomy laws.

Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood chronicles D'Emilio's childhood in a working-class Bronx neighborhood to his time at the elite Jesuit Regis High School in Manhattan and finally his college years at Columbia University and first forays as a working adult. He writes about the political and social upheavals of the '60s that changed his whole outlook on life, including turning away from his family's conservative political ideology and becoming a lapsed Catholic.

When asked why he decided to write his memoir in this moment, D'Emilio said this was a long time coming. He added that it all started when he had heart surgery about 20 years ago; while recuperating, he would reminisce about his past and start writing it down.

D'Emilio told *Windy City Times* he was able to provide such a detailed accounting of his early life because he started writing these things down

era of protest and social change for multiple civil rights issues and the anti-war movement that emerged due to the Vietnam War. He added that this was the perfect era to write about "rather than the next 40 or 50 years" of his own life.

The overarching thing that became clear to D'Emilio while writing this book was his realization that he came of age at a time when it was "the worst time to be queer because it was a period in United States history when persecution of LGBTQ people was at its height and most intense due to the overwhelming oppression of the community that existed everywhere in America. The world I grew up in there was no mention or discussion of LGBTQ people. I had no idea initially how to describe or name what I was feeling as a young gay person. It was just something I was dealing with all by myself."

Writing about his time living in the Bronx apartment complex Parkchester, D'Emilio told this publication that it was designed to be a model housing project for working families in New York City and was built by a big corporation at the

"Coming from my conservative, working class Italian, no one ever reads a book environment I had no idea who James Baldwin was, but I read the book," said D'Emilio. "It opens up with a Black gay character sitting in a movie theater where he is cruised by other men. There are gay characters and bad things happen. It is not a utopian novel. I thought, my God, there is a name for what I am feeling. There are people who are like this. There are places where they meet. And all of this is happening in New York City. I was not going to mention this to anybody, but suddenly I feel that I have a little window that is open into a world that might speak to what I am feeling. I still thought that this was sinful, but I could not help myself. I started searching out places where, according to James Baldwin, men who had sex with men would meet. It was tremendously influential.

"Then four years later in college, I was talking to one of the men that I met when I was cruising. He had a sense of the struggles I was going through so he said I should read Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*. That book changed my life completely.

# The power of memory

## John D'Emilio talks new book, 'Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood'

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

In acclaimed author, LGBTQ+ historian and University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) Gender and Women's Studies Professor Emeritus John D'Emilio's new memoir, *Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood*, he writes about coming of age in the 1950s and '60s in New York City. This memoir—which will be released in October—is the most personal and candid of the dozen books D'Emilio has written.

D'Emilio previously taught at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro before his stint at UIC. He was also the National LGBTQ Task Force Policy Institute Director during 1995-97, a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow in 1997 and Guggenheim fellow in 1998, among other professional endeavors.

Among D'Emilio's numerous literary accolades are the 1984 American Library Association Stonewall Book Award in non-fiction for his book *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*; the 2004 Randy Shilts Award and Stonewall Book Award for *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*; the 2005 Yale University Brudner Prize and in 2013 the Publishing Triangle Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Additionally, D'Emilio and his best friend and co-author Estelle Freedman's book, *Intimate Mat-*

closer to when they occurred. Another reason was his family spent lots of time reminiscing about the past every weekend when they would gather at what they called "Big Grandma's house." D'Emilio would hear the adults telling these stories which he soaked up like a sponge.

As for his high school and college years, D'Emilio said the letters he saved from his friends, and the stories they told each other repeatedly helped him immensely. D'Emilio spoke about the research he did including reading the Columbia University campus newspaper from his time there to get a full picture of what happened while he was at college, not just his personal experiences as a student.

"At a certain point four or five years ago, I realized I had enough of these pages to put together and create a memoir of that time in my life," said D'Emilio. "What motivated me to take the next step and get it published was my experience as a teacher. My students love memoirs. That was their favorite kind of reading in the history courses I taught because it allowed them to identify with events in a way that reading a history textbook did not."

D'Emilio said his memoir focused on this period because his early life dovetailed with the

end of the Great Depression. He said his parents really wanted to live there and the only way to make that happen was for his mother to get a job there which allowed them to jump ahead on the waiting list.

"It was really like a model community," said D'Emilio. "It was private housing, but it was rent controlled which helped my family afford to live there. There were playgrounds and it was a very safe place. As a child, you thought you were in heaven growing up there."

D'Emilio wrote about going from the very insular world of Parkchester and the adjacent strict, and rigid in thought, Catholic elementary school to riding the subway to Regis High School where the Jesuit male teachers opened up his world to a more intellectual and liberal way of thinking.

"We were actually being taught to think for ourselves," said D'Emilio. "There were endless school activities. I was recruited into the Speech and Debate Society which allowed me to travel the country to places like Miami, Denver and Albuquerque for our tournaments."

While in high school, D'Emilio said his English teacher suggested that he read James Baldwin's new novel, *Another Country*, for a writing assignment.



Author John D'Emilio.  
Photo courtesy of D'Emilio

It made me realize that this is who I am and I had to admit it to myself and accept it which I did and never looked back."

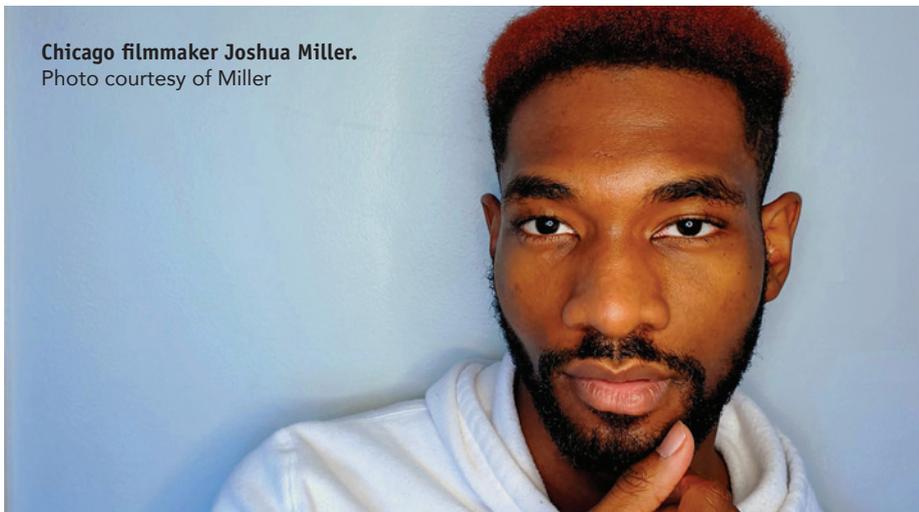
D'Emilio said the hardest things to write about were the "conflicts that developed with my family, specifically while I was in college [from 1966-70] over my changing political stances, relationship to the Vietnam War and religion."

"The easiest thing to write about was the family that I grew up in when I was a kid," he added. "Especially about Big Grandma and the family being together every Sunday and every day during the summer. It was amazing to recreate that world, because as a child, it seemed so wonderful to me. I felt like I was the luckiest kid in the world to have a family like this."

When asked what he would tell his younger self if he was able to go back in time, D'Emilio said "Trust yourself and your judgment. Do not be dependent on what other people are demanding of you."

In terms of the overall message he wants to convey with his memoir, D'Emilio said, "I hope it helps reveal to them what a transformative and important time the 1960s [were] for so many people of that generation—that so much was daring and innovative and just powerful."

Chicago filmmaker Joshua Miller.  
Photo courtesy of Miller



## Chicago filmmaker releases documentary about activist/writer Joseph Beam

BY KAYLEIGH PADAR

A Chicago filmmaker's desire to learn more about the quote "Black men loving Black men is a revolutionary act" led him to a community of writers and activists who helped tell the story of the man who wrote it: Joseph Beam.

Beam is best known for releasing the first anthology of stories from the perspectives of queer Black men in 1986—and it helped people to better understand their own experiences and connect with each other.

"The anthology revolutionized the way that stories were told and the things that we could

talk about," said Joshua Miller, the 27-year-old filmmaker who released a short documentary about Beam in June. "It revolutionized how Black gay men identified and resonated with each other."

Miller's short film explored Beam's life through interviews with his friends and excerpts of his writing. He's currently working on expanding it into a longer piece that will delve deeper into who Beam is and where he was from.

"Joe's friends continually challenged me to think of this project as the beginning of something," Miller said. "I think it's the beginning of the rest of my life creating these films, but also I hope it inspires a new movement for bringing these lost stories back."

Miller decided to try his hand at uncovering Beam's story when he realized there wasn't much information about him online.

"I feel like it's my duty as a member of the LGBTQ+ community to tell these stories," Miller said. "For so long, I told myself that I'm not the right person to tell this story, something a college professor told me that's resonated ever since was, 'if you don't tell it, who will?'"

Miller learned more about Beam by interviewing his close friends and colleagues, who were "so open, giving and passionate about sharing his story and continuing his legacy," he said. Miller said the documentary "wouldn't have happened without" Guy Weston and John Cunningham, friends of Beam who connected Miller with others who knew him.

"Anytime I doubted or felt like I was at a dead end, they were all there to support me and push

me forward," Miller said. "That's what Joe stood for. He stood for a community, and I want people who watch the documentary to understand community is what keeps his legacy alive."

As Miller got to know the people who made up Beam's community, he said they each "became like brothers" to him.

Learning about Beam gave Miller a better vocabulary for understanding his experiences as a Black queer man and "the tools to take control of the story and tell it," he said.

"Joe was all about telling stories, creating community, but he was also all about being an active part of the revolution and doing the work you want to see done," Miller said. "This project, and Joe himself, has taught me that I can do that too. I have the ability to create films about experiences people might be curious about. I have the ability to reach out to these people I don't know to ask for help and can create community as well."

Miller hopes his documentary inspires others to tell the stories of other forgotten historical figures so that people can draw strength from the fact "there have been revolutionaries in the past and there will continue to be revolutionaries," he said.

"I want people to begin to wonder about those whose stories have been lost with time, because I think if we're able to tell these stories, we're able to create visibility," Miller said. "When we're able to create visibility, that's the first step to changing people's hearts and minds."

To see Miller's documentary, visit: [jxreative.wixsite.com/formybrother/home](http://jxreative.wixsite.com/formybrother/home).

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Affinity Executive Director Latonya Maley.  
Photo courtesy of Affinity

## Latonya Maley named executive director of Affinity

The board of directors of Affinity Community Services—a Black- and queer-led organization on Chicago’s South Side dedicated to social justice in Black LGBTQ+ communities—has named Latonya Maley (she/they) as the organization’s newest executive director.

Maley follows in the footsteps of such individuals as Kim Hunt (now with AIDS Foundation Chicago’s Pride Action Tank) and Imani Rupert-Gordon (who now heads the National Center for Lesbian Rights).

Maley had been Affinity’s interim executive director for the past six months, and her duties were primarily administrative. However, she has also taken on an activist role, including participating in a June march through Lake View that aimed to call attention to social-justice issues affecting LGBTQ+ people while centering the Black trans community.

Previously, Maley was involved for several years with Howard Brown Health, including being the director of Howard Brown’s Broadway Youth Center.

## Wrightwood 659 to show ‘The First Homosexuals,’ ‘Michiko Itatani’

The Lincoln Park space Wrightwood 659, 659 W. Wrightwood Ave., will show two exhibits—“The First Homosexuals: Global Depictions of a New Identity, 1869-1930” and “Michiko Itatani: Celestial Stage”—on Fridays and Saturdays during Oct. 1-Dec. 17.

“The First Homosexuals” takes 1869 as its starting point; this was when the word “homosexual” was first coined in Europe, inaugurating the idea of same-sex desire as the basis for a new identity category.

On view will be more than 100 paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and film clips—drawn from public and private collections around the globe and including a number of national treasures which have never before been allowed to travel outside their countries. This groundbreaking exhibition offers the first multi-medium survey of the very first self-consciously queer art, exploring what the “first homosexuals” understood themselves to be, how dominant culture, in turn, understood them, and how the codes of representation they employed offer us previously unknown glimpses into the social and cultural meanings of same-sex desire.

“The First Homosexuals” is being organized in two parts, due to COVID-related delays, with part one opening Oct. 1 with approximately 100 works, and on view only at Wrightwood 659. Three years from now, in 2025, 250 masterworks will be gathered at Wrightwood 659 for part two of “The First Homosexuals” in an exhibition that will travel internationally and be accompanied by a comprehensive catalog.

The exhibition is being developed by a team of 23 international scholars led by art historian and University of Pennsylvania Professor of Practice in the History of Art and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies Jonathan D. Katz, with associate curator Johnny Willis.

“Michiko Itatani” celebrates the work of Chicago-based U.S. artist Michiko Itatani (b. 1948, in Osaka, Japan) who has grappled with the mysteries of the universe in her work throughout her prolific career.

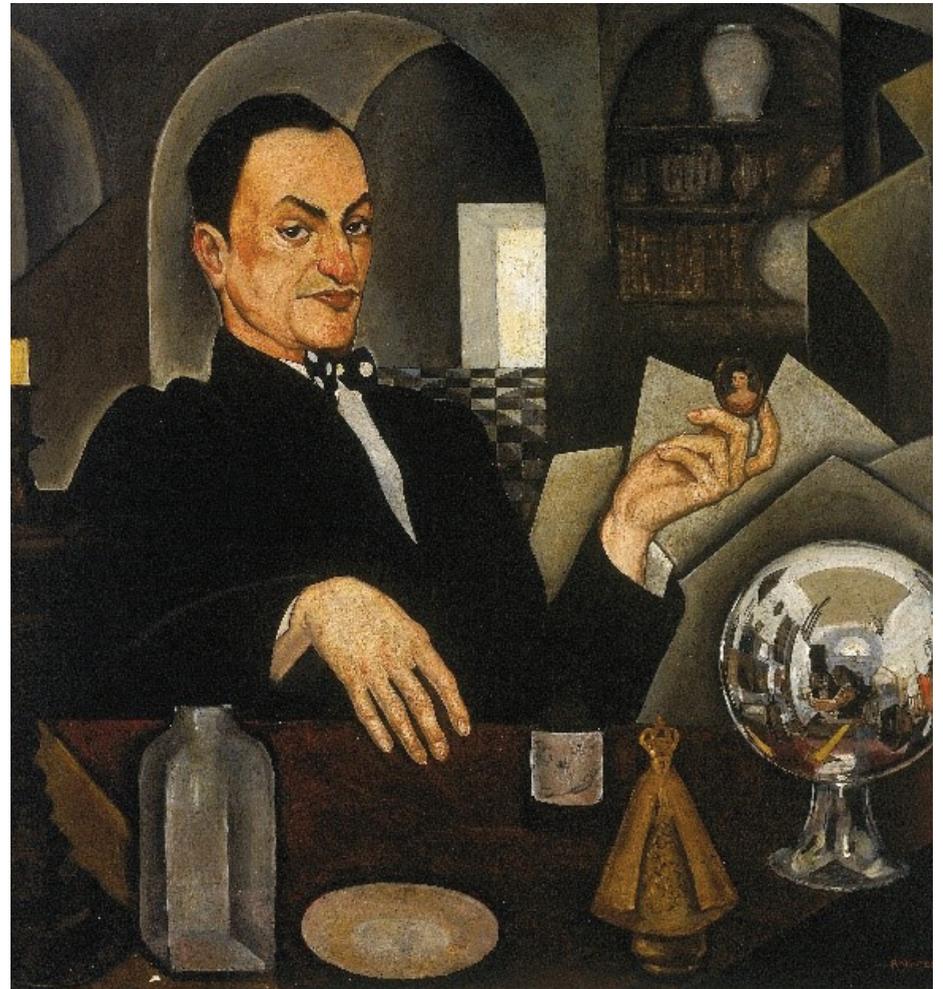
Professor emeritus at the School of the Art

Institute of Chicago, where she taught for 40 years, Itatani is represented in the permanent collections of public museums around the world, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA), Spain; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea; Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland; and the U.S. Embassy Brasilia, Brazil, among many others.

Wrightwood 659 is open Fridays at 12-7 p.m. and Saturdays at 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

**NOTE:** Visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination and booster prior to admission to Wrightwood 659. Masks will continue to be required throughout the gallery; see [wrightwood659.org/terms-and-conditions/health-safety/](http://wrightwood659.org/terms-and-conditions/health-safety/).

Tickets for the exhibition will be \$15 and available online only, beginning September 8, at [tickets.wrightwood659.org/events](http://tickets.wrightwood659.org/events). Please note that admission is by advance ticket only. Walk-ups are not permitted.



“The First Homosexuals” item “Retrato de un anticuario o Retrato de Chucho Reyes y autorretrato,” by Roberto Montenegro (1887-1968), Colección Pérez Simón, Mexico, © Arturo Píera.



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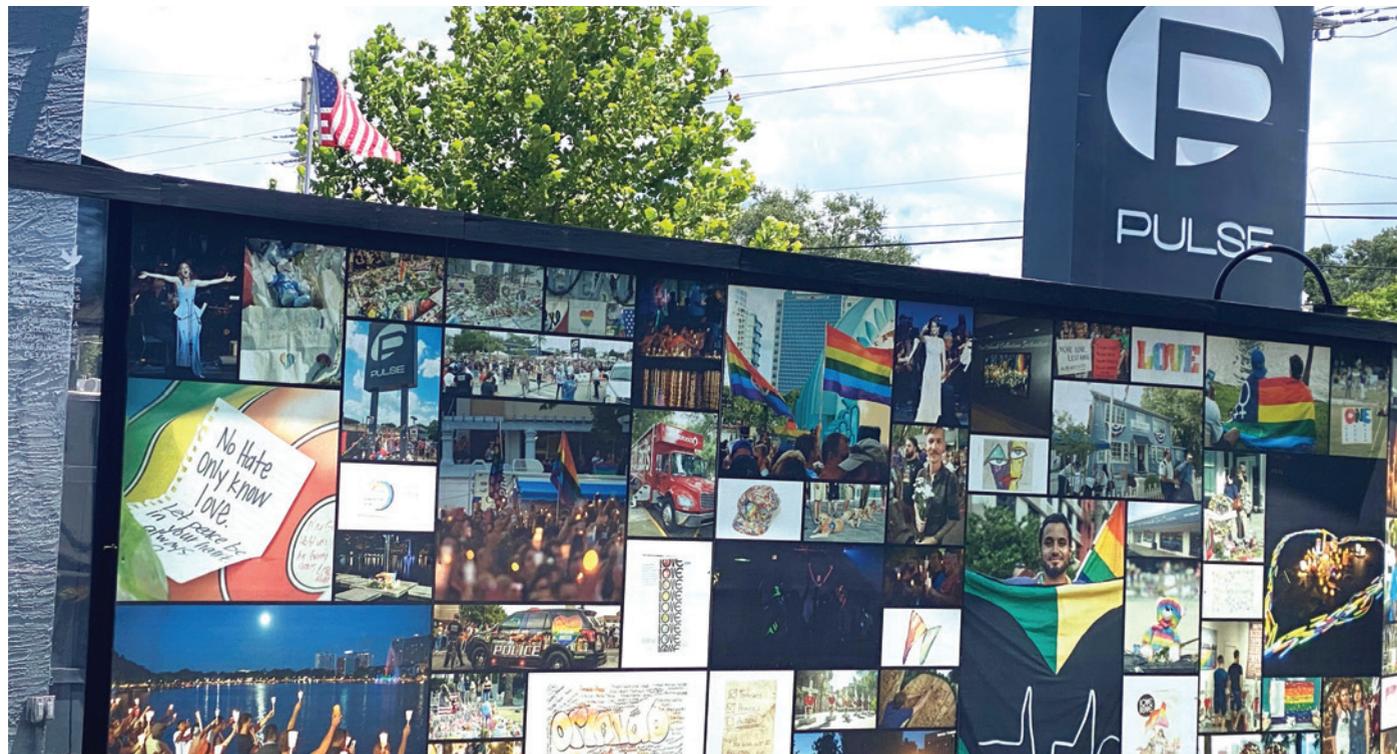


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# Pride Journey: Orlando



BY JOEY AMATO

Orlando has always been a place close to my heart. Back in 2002, I attended graduate school there as well as worked in the music industry for a company that launched the careers of Backstreet Boys, \*NSYNC, O-Town and other stars. I even managed a boy band of my own around that time. Needless to say, I really enjoyed living in Orlando. It was also the place where I finally admitted to myself that I was gay, although I didn't officially come out to my family until a few years later.

When I heard U.S. Travel's IPW convention was going to take place in Orlando this year, I knew I had to go.

I stayed at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress, which is perfectly situated within minutes of Walt Disney World parks and just a short drive from Universal Studios. The property is massive and contains a separate fitness building, resort-style pool with bar and live music as well as a convention area.

Epcot was always my favorite park to visit as a child, so I was excited to learn that one of the main events for the conference would take place there. We got to experience the park without the crowds, which was quite pleasant, especially

when it came to the newer rides Frozen Ever After and Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind. Seeing the iconic globe lit up at night is as magical now as it was when I was a younger.

Ironically, the conference coincided with **One Magical Weekend**, so I also had the opportunity to visit two LGBTQ+ parties while there, the first being the annual Red party at House of Blues and the second being OMW's Therapy pool party at Sheraton Lake Buena Vista Resort. People from around the country travel to Orlando for this event, so I ran into many friends during that weekend, some of which I hadn't seen in years.

My visit wasn't all fun and games though. I think we all remember where we were when we heard the news of the **Pulse** massacre back on June 12, 2016. A few years ago, the owner of the club opened an interim memorial with a goal of raising the funds to open a permanent space which would pay homage to the forty-nine beautiful souls lost that day. Located at the site of the original club, the current memorial contains an offering wall where visitors can leave flowers or mementos.

There are three viewing areas of the building. Visitors will be able to see the waterfall at the entrance of the club, a wall of the building where the forty-nine names are inscribed, as well as the

area where people were rescued by from the restrooms by first responders.

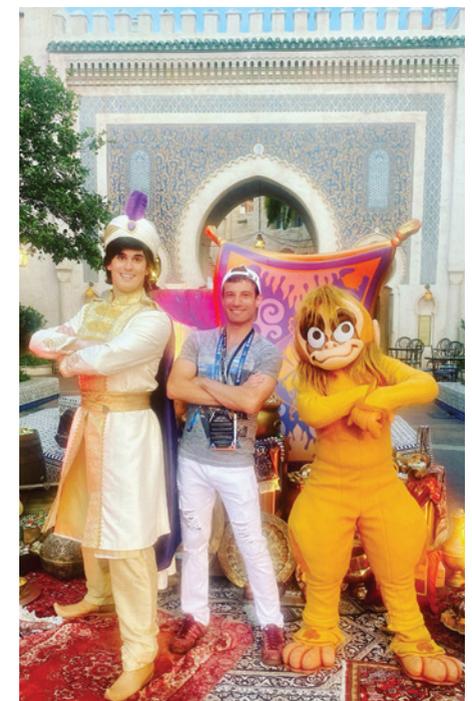
The memorial also has a Ribbon Wall of Photographs, filled with pictures of the community and the world's response of love and support and artifacts collected from the Orange County History Center. It's a very emotional experience but one you need to do if you're ever in the area.

A few miles away is the new Hall at the Yard development, an upscale food hall venue. One of the highlights is a restaurant called **The Chef & I**, which is owned by my friends Erica and Chris Rains from Nashville. Every time I visited their restaurant, I knew I was about to experience something special. The Chef & I is one of my favorite restaurants in Nashville and I'm sure it will be a hit with the Orlando community. The restaurant throws a delicious brunch, featuring menu items like Duck and Waffles, Brined and Smoked Salmon Benedict as well as their Hot Salt Chicken.

People often forget that Orlando isn't just theme parks. There are many beautiful towns in the metro area that are worth visiting. Antique collectors will really enjoy the charm of Mount Dora, while Dr. Phillips has emerged as a culinary epicenter boasting a variety of fine dining restaurants.

However, my favorite neighborhood to visit is Winter Park and more specifically, Park Avenue. The cobblestone street is lined with wonderful boutiques, outdoor cafes and is adjacent to Rollins College, my alma mater. Located in Winter Park, The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art is home to the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The Museum's Tiffany collection includes jewelry, pottery, paintings, art glass, leaded-glass windows and lamps, and the chapel interior the artist designed for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Orlando is known for having a wonderful LGBTQ+ scene. One of my preferred low-key places to enjoy a cocktail is Savoy, located just north of downtown. Every time I visit, I usually end up there with friends. Some other popular spots include Stonewall Bar Orlando and Southern Nights.



Joey (center) with some fancy friends at Epcot..

Photo courtesy of Joey Amato

Orlando Pride is also one of the largest pride events in the state. This October, **Coming Out With Pride** will take place on Saturday, October 15 at Lake Eola Park in downtown, and will be surrounded by a host of other events throughout the week leading up to the festival. While downtown, try to catch a show at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. The sparkly new building hosts a variety of touring Broadway shows as well as performances from major artists in addition to Orlando's many local performing arts organizations.

The next time you visit Orlando, I would encourage you to venture outside of the amusement park areas to get to experience the city. I met so many wonderful people when I lived there, so I would love for you to get to know the locals the way I did.

Enjoy the Journey!

# Pride Journey: Provincetown



Provincetown's Foxberry Inn.  
Photo by Joey Amato

BY JOEY AMATO

I think it's safe to say that I found my new happy place. I had visited Provincetown, Massachusetts once before during the winter season and even then, I enjoyed my time there. Of course, P-Town is much slower during the colder months than it was during my most recent visit, but I still enjoyed the small-town charm of this iconic coastal destination.

Provincetown is one of the most LGBTQ-friendly destinations in the country, if not the world. From the moment you arrive by ferry or by car, you are quickly transported into a rainbow oasis which makes it seem as if you are on an island where you are free to express yourself in any way you please.

As soon as I stepped foot off the **Bay State Cruise Company** ferry from Boston, I checked in to the Foxberry Inn, a beautiful property located less than a mile from the heart of P-Town. Most of the destination is walkable, but biking is also common if you prefer. The staff at **Foxberry Inn** was lovely and quite attractive, which is always an added bonus. My corner room came complete with a water view as well as a separate seating area and balcony to enjoy some morning coffee.

Each morning the staff prepared a delicious hot breakfast, which is included in the price of

the room. The breakfast burrito was definitely my favorite and possibly one of the best I've ever had in recent memory. Every afternoon, guests are welcome to enjoy freshly baked cookies and a hot beverage if they desire in the common area.

One of Provincetown's most famous attractions is not a physical attraction; it's a dance. More specifically, a tea-dance. The concept of a tea-dance began in New York in the 1960s. Gay men would meet at off-the-beaten path locations around New York City on a Sunday afternoon and enjoy tea, as it was illegal to serve alcohol to people known to be gay. How times have changed!

These tea-dances quickly spread around the country and today, the weekly tea-dances held at **Boatslip Resort** have become legendary. The waterfront property features a large outdoor deck plus an indoor section with multiple bars and plenty of room for dancing. The drinks are a bit more expensive than I am used to coming from the Midwest, but the pours were heavy, so it balanced out. My guest Michael and I sipped our cocktails while grooving to the sounds of Sylvester, Donna Summer, and Chic. The people watching alone was worth the visit.

After the dance, walk over to **Liz's Café**, just a few blocks away. The quaint restaurant gives off an island resort vibe and the food didn't dis-

appoint either. We both began our meal with the ceviche containing a variety of fresh fish served with homemade tortilla chips and followed that up with the pan seared cod prepared in a mouth-watering broth.

If you are in the mood for some after dinner drinks and entertainment, head to **Provincetown Brewery Co.** or the **Post Office Café & Cabaret** for the Anita Cocktail Variety Hour. Hosted of course by non-other than Anita Cocktail, the hour-long show also features performances by cast members Jona Williams, Abby Cummings, and Raquel Blake. My favorite part of the show was when Anita Cocktail sang live, something I rarely see drag performers do.

Keep the party going at Atlantic House, or A-House as the locals call it. This is the only dance club which operates for the entire year as some establishments shut down during the winter months. The complex consists of different rooms including Little Bar, The Macho Bar, Provincetown's original leather bar as well as the Big Room where people go to dance.

Wake up early the next morning and head to Boy Beach, which is located close to the Foxberry Inn or jump on **Art's Dune Tours** to explore the Cape Cod National Seashore. Access to this area is seasonal and only authorized vehicles are allowed to operate in the park. The company,

now in its 76th year in business, brings guests through the rolling dunes to various picturesque vantage points.

Spend the afternoon strolling around the town and exploring the dozens of boutiques and art galleries along Commercial Street. A bit further away is the **Provincetown Art Association & Museum**, a space housing a collection of works by artists from the Cape. The organization was originally established in 1914 so it's a great place to learn about the cultural history of this destination.

If you are in the mood for some exercise, journey to the top of The Pilgrim Monument, a 252-foot structure built to commemorate the Pilgrims' first landing. Since many of the properties in the town don't offer fitness centers on property, visitors can purchase a day pass and workout with the locals at Mussel Beach Health Club or Provincetown Gym.

P-Town is home to under 4,000 full-time residents, however this number swells to over 60,000 during the peak summer months. If you aren't a fan of huge crowds, I would recommend visiting during the shoulder season. This may also be a more budget-friendly time to travel as daily room prices tend to decrease.



Provincetown Bouillabaisse at Café Heaven.  
Photo by Joey Amato

For your final dinner in Provincetown, go to **Café Heaven** and begin your meal with their delicious Lobstertini made with lobster salad served atop an avocado and tomato salad tossed in a citrus vinaigrette. This was one of my favorite culinary treats of this vacation as the vinaigrette complimented the sweetness of the lobster perfectly. Michael and I decided to share the Provincetown Bouillabaisse for our main entrée. It tasted similar to a classic bouillabaisse, with the exception of linguica which is a nod to P-Town's Portuguese heritage.

Provincetown is an all-in-one destination, meaning there is something for everyone. Whether you choose to party or just relax on the beach, you will find your tribe in P-Town.

Enjoy the Journey!

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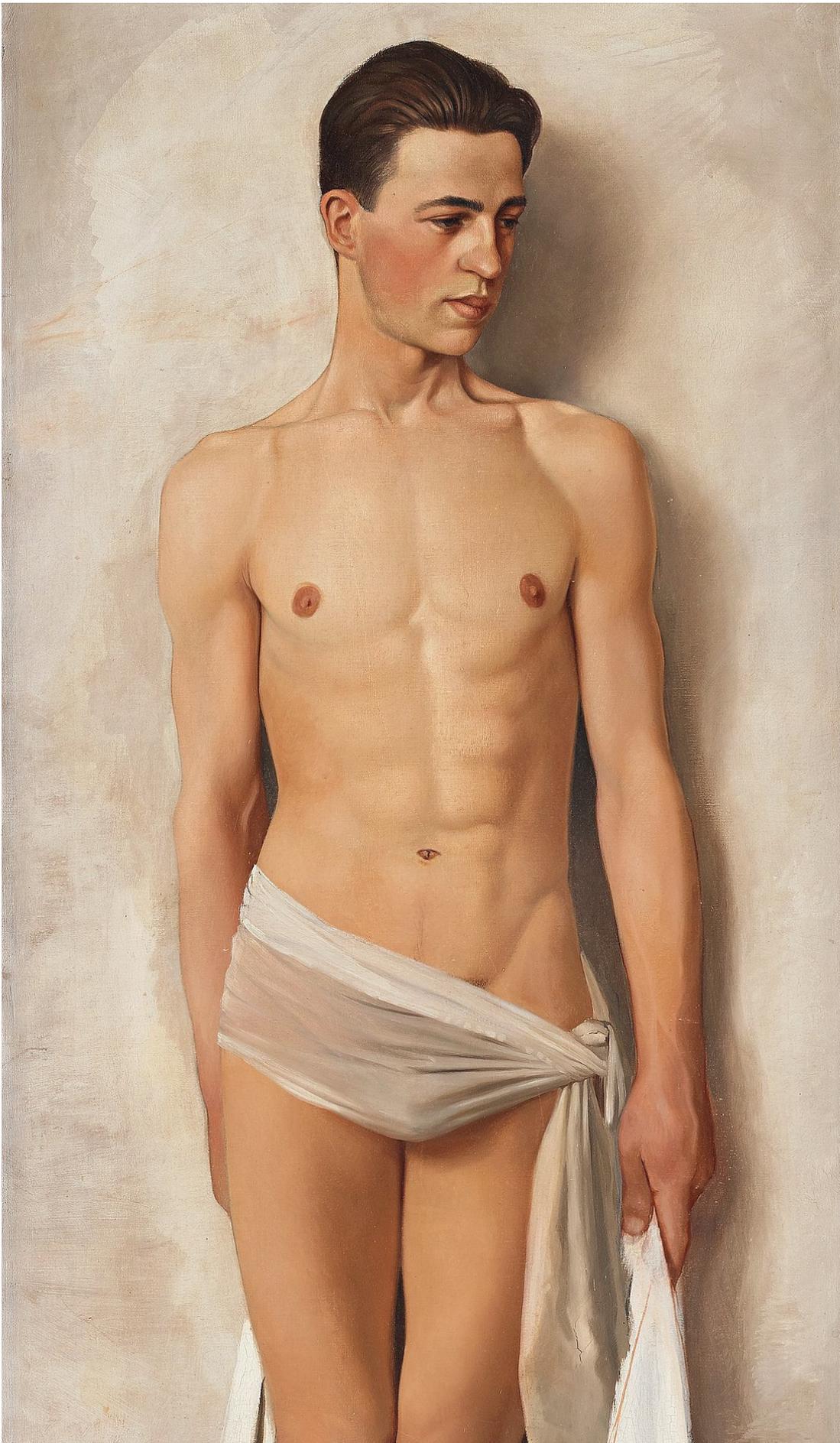
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**IMAGE CREDIT:** Owe Zerge (1894–1983, Sweden), *Model Act*, 1919,  
Oil on canvas, 135 x 50 cm. Private Collection. (Detail)