

Award-winning actress
Angelica Ross

on politics, Hollywood, Buddhism and more

Speaking HER MIND

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Angelica Ross had already made her imprint on society in various ways. She is the founder of TransTech Social Enterprises, which helps transgender and gender-nonconforming people become part of the tech industry; an activist who hosted the 2020 Presidential Candidate Forum on LGBTQ Issues; a singer who has already released several singles; and an award-winning actress who has been on shows such as *Pose* and *American Horror Story* as well as on Broadway (the production *Chicago*, in 2022).

However, in September, Ross became even more widely known thanks to social-media posts in which she called out super-producer Ryan Murphy and actress Emma Roberts, among others. Windy City Times spoke with Ross in early November about her current relationship with Hollywood, her political aspirations and her deep friendship with a prominent local trans politician.

Note: This conversation was edited for clarity and length.

Windy City Times: You're going to return to Chicago on Nov. 15 for an LGBTQ+ Victory Fund event. Why is that important to you?

Angelica Ross: It's the work they're doing in making sure that LGBTQ+ folks see ourselves as viable players in politics, and that gets us to see how important our participation is. But, to be honest, the person with the plug to get me there was [MWRD Commissioner] Precious Brady-Davis.

Continued on page 6



OWEN KEEHNEN

New book explores 'Man's Country'

5



DULCE QUINTERO

Reflections from IDHS head

9



COL. JENNIFER PRITZKER

On philanthropy, republican ties

12

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



BIKTARVY, the BIKTARVY Logo, GILEAD, the GILEAD Logo, and KEEP BEING YOU are trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc., or its related companies. © 2023 Gilead Sciences, Inc. All rights reserved. US-BVYC-0292 04/23



BIKTARVY®
bictegravir 50mg/emtricitabine 200mg/
tenofovir alafenamide 25mg tablets

**#1 PRESCRIBED
HIV TREATMENT***

*Source: IQVIA NPA Weekly, 04/19/2019 through 01/20/2023.

ELIAS

SWITCHED TO BIKTARVY



Listen to **REAL STORIES**
being told by **REAL VOICES**.

No matter where life takes you,

KEEP BEING YOU.

Because HIV doesn't change who you are.

BIKTARVY® is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in certain adults. **BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.**

Ask your healthcare provider if BIKTARVY is right for you.

Person featured takes BIKTARVY and is compensated by Gilead.

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

WINDY CITY TIMES

COVER CREDITS:

MAIN STORY: Photo of Angelica Ross by James Anthony

Cover of Man's Country: More Than a Bathhouse; photo of IDHS head Dulce Quintero courtesy of IDHS; photo of Col. Jennifer Pritzker courtesy of TAWANI Enterprises, Inc

PUBLISHER Terri Klinsky
EXECUTIVE EDITOR Matt Simonette

DIGITAL DIRECTOR Jean Albright **ART DIRECTOR** Kirk Williamson **BUSINESS MANAGER** Ripley Caine
SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Terri Klinsky **CONTRIBUTORS** Andrew Davis, Carrie Maxwell, Matt Simonette
WEB HOSTING LoveYourWebsite.com (lead programmer: Martie Marro)
(773) 871-7610 FAX (773) 871-7609

Editorial: matt@windycitymediagroup.com **Sales:** terri@windycitymediagroup.com

Copyright 2023 Lambda Publications Inc./Windy City Media Group: All rights reserved. Reprint by permission only. Back issues (if available) for \$5 per issue (postage included). Return postage must accompany all manuscripts, drawings, and photographs submitted if they are to be returned, and no responsibility may be assumed for unsolicited materials. All rights to letters, art and photographs sent to Windy City Times will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication purposes and as such, subject to editing and comment. The opinions expressed by the columnists, cartoonists, letter writers, and commentators are their own and do not necessarily reflect the position of Windy City Times. Publication of the name, photograph, or likeness of a person or organization in articles or advertising in Windy City Times is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization. While we encourage readers to support the advertisers who make this newspaper possible, Windy City Times cannot accept responsibility for advertising claims.

WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP
5315 N. Clark St. #192, Chicago, IL, 60640 U.S.A.
(MAILING ADDRESS ONLY)



Danny Sotomayor.
Photo by Rex Wockner

Documentary examines the activism of Danny Sotomayor

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Practically everything the late Chicago AIDS activist Danny Sotomayor did was “a fight.”

So says fellow activist Victor Salvo in the WTTW documentary *The Outrage of Danny Sotomayor*, which is part of the station's Chicago Stories series.

Salvo is one of numerous Chicagoans interviewed for the program—among them historian/author Owen Keehnen, activist Lori Cannon and former Alds. Tom Tunney and Helen Shiller—which traces Sotomayor's life from his childhood through his activist work in Chicago at the height of the AIDS crisis, and documents his relationship with his partner, the late playwright Scott McPherson.

Writer/Producer Dan Andries said that he was “riveted” by Sotomayor's story when he came across it during his work on the 2008 documentary *Out and Proud* in Chicago.

“I really felt, after that experience, that his life, times and death could be a film,” Andries added. “Whether it was a narrative film or a documentary, I just felt that [his story] had the proper shape, feel, trajectory and truth that would make it a great movie. I spent a lot of time talking to people about that, including colleagues here [at WTTW] and people close to him who were part of it all. I entertained the idea of writing a screenplay, and talked to lawyers about it.”

Ultimately, however, Andries settled upon the documentary format, and he said that he was fortunate that a great deal of archival footage of Sotomayor still existed.

“There was a vast video archive wherein you could see Danny Sotomayor in action,” he explained. “It was not like if you had Henry Gerber, for example. There's not a lot of film of Henry Gerber.”

Andries's bosses at WTTW ultimately ac-

cepted a pitch to include Sotomayor's story as part of the Chicago Stories series: “You have my passion and their faith in it. That gave me the chance to make it.”

He sees Sotomayor's endless pursuit of attention, education and funding for people with HIV/AIDS as occupying a pivotal moment within the city's history. Andries said, “He made life better for so many people—people who were suffering from stigma, suffering from underfunding, suffering from neglect.”

He added, “The growth of Richard M. Daley into a mayor who was supportive of the gay community was very much impacted by Danny. Some people would say that he singlehanded moved the man into the right camp.”

Indeed, Sotomayor was a persistent thorn in the administration's side during the height of his activism. *The Outrage of Danny Sotomayor* chronicles numerous run-ins between Sotomayor and Daley, who attended the activist's funeral. When Daley was at Sotomayor's casket, someone joked that's how they knew Sotomayor was really gone—Sotomayor would have sat up in his coffin and confronted Daley otherwise.

Andries felt it was important to underline Sotomayor's influence as an organizer in the program.

“Danny was aligned with ACT UP Chicago,” Andries said. “Danny was not just Danny, and ACT UP Chicago was a powerful group of people who worked together. For better or worse, he was the torch-bearer. I think groups like that need that kind of person. He says in the documentary, ‘I need the movement and the movement needs me.’ I think he was dead-on.”

Chicago Stories: The Outrage of Danny Sotomayor can be streamed at <http://www.wttw.com/chicagostories>.

ADD SOME
MAGIC TO YOUR
HOLIDAY SEASON!

FOR TICKETS & INFORMATION
VISIT OUR WEBSITE.

CHICAGOMAGICLOUNGE.COM

5050 N CLARK STREET | 312•366•4500

CHICAGO
MAGIC
LOUNGE

Author Owen Keehnen.
Photo by Israel Wright

Owen Keehnen

takes readers to an 'oasis of pleasure' in 'Man's Country'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In the book *Man's Country: More Than a Bathhouse*, Chicago historian Owen Keehnen takes a literary microscope to the venue that the late local icon Chuck Renslow opened in 1973.

Over decades, until it was demolished in 2018, the Andersonville spot hosted tens of thousands of locals and celebrities (from ballet dancer Rudolph Nureyev to Boy George to the Village People) who went there (or the adjoining dance club *Bistro Too* or the leather club *Chicago Eagle*) to entertain and/or be entertained in various ways.

In a talk with *Windy City Times*, Keehnen talked about Renslow, history and, of course, *Man's Country*.

Note: This conversation was edited for clarity and length.

Windy City Times: There are so many aspects of Chicago, including LGBTQ+ Chicago. You've written another book about Chuck Renslow, with [*Windy City Times* Owner and Co-founder] Tracy Baim. So why devote

a separate book to *Man's Country*?

Owen Keehnen: I didn't plan it that way. I think what happened was that bathhouse culture had always interested me, and I felt that the narrative had been hijacked by AIDS. [The view was] that it was just a sex den, when [bathhouses] were much more complex than that.

When Chuck passed away in 2017, the building was torn down in 2018, and the intersection of Clark and Carmen had the Chuck Renslow Way street sign there; it seemed like it was time to tell the story. I had worked on *Leatherman* with Tracy, I had interviewed Chuck several times for the newspaper, and I knew him socially.

I wasn't sure I had enough material, but I went to an exhibit at the Leather Archives [in Chicago] and saw in the *Man's Country* exhibit that the front desk kept a journal—but it turned out that the journal had nothing I wanted to use. But by then I had started interviewing people—and it became so clear that *Man's Country*, and bathhouses in general, was a lot

more complex than a lot of people had seen them. Bathhouses had been demonized, but the culture was [complicated]. When *Man's Country* opened in 1973, you could go there for entertainment; it was like a men's club where you could go for the weekend.

The role that bathhouses played actually changed over the 45 years *Man's Country* was open. After HIV/AIDS hit Chicago, part of *Man's Country* became the queer techno club *Bistro Too*; when that closed, another portion became the *Chicago Eagle*. So I wanted to write how this compound restructured itself to fit what the community needed. For a while, there was even a clinic there, as well as a store.

WCT: I think something that might surprise some readers is that there was a *Man's Country* in New York City as well.

Keehnen: Yes. Chuck wasn't looking to buy *Man's Country* but he was interested in the bathhouse business, and he had purchased half of the property of the *Club Baths*, in Chicago. When he opened *Man's Country*, he went to his original investors and they were going to open

one here and one in New York.

Chuck wanted to model his Chicago *Man's Country* much more along the lines of *The Continental*, in New York—like a private club. But the *Man's Country* in New York was described as 10 floors of sex and the partners decided to part ways. As I understand it, Chuck took Chicago and the partners took New York.

WCT: You also write about celebrities being at *Man's Country*, which I found fascinating.

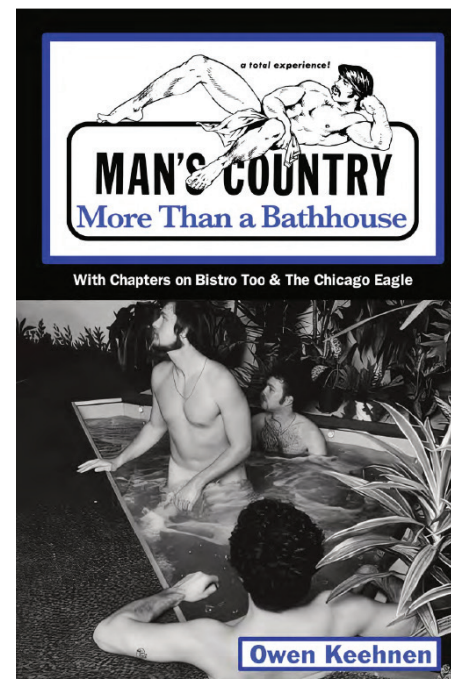
Keehnen: Yes. It shows how the place evolved over time. People took this main stage when the music hall was part of *Man's Country*—people like [singer/comedian] Rusty Warren, [puppeteer/puppet duo] Wayland Flowers and Madame, and Charles Pierce. It was an opportunity to showcase talent. The fact that it was a gay bathhouse wasn't that much different than if it were a gay nightclub.

Then, as *Man's Country* evolved, that same stage that had different people in the original bathhouse circuit later had celebrity acts like Divine, Village People and Boy George. The stage at *Man's Country* had a long history—and so did the hallways. There were a lot of celebrities who walked along those—sometimes after they performed. [Laughs]

WCT: And I think a question should be devoted to Sally Rand alone.

Keehnen: [Laughs] Sally Rand was a dancer who had been in silent films with Cecil B. DeMille. She was arrested three times in one day at the [1933] Chicago World's Fair for public nudity, even though she was never actually nude. Her thing was "the Rand was quicker than the eye." Her fans and balloons covered her, so she was never exposed.

This was all big news in the 1920s and into the early '30s. So, 40 years later, when Sally was



going to be the headliner at *Man's Country*, she was in her 70s. If there was any apprehension about having a gay bathhouse in the neighborhood, Chuck told me that the older people would say, "You can't be all bad if Sally Rand's playing there." And Chuck loved Sally; she also came back to perform for "Cruising the Nile" and she was a huge ally.

My favorite quote from Sally was when someone asked her what it was like to perform at a club of gay men. I'm paraphrasing but she said, "I haven't seen you guys in action. All I know is that there's a room of half-clothed men and they're paying attention to me." I think, for stories like that, I want the audience to feel the good nature and "almost-innocence" of bathhouses. It was as much good, clean fun as you could have in a bathhouse.

WCT: I actually never visited *Man's Country* so almost all of the information here was new to me.

Keehnen: Well, part of the reason I wrote this was so I could almost make it like time travel. I collected these anecdotes, personal stories, news clippings and other things so that people would almost feel like they were there—not just people who had been there but people who never had the opportunity to visit. Again, the scene was more complex than people thought.

WCT: If *Man's Country* were around today, especially in the wake of the COVID pandemic, how do you think it would be?

Keehnen: Truthfully, I can't imagine it surviving any longer than it did without being revamped. After Chuck passed away, it's so hard for me to imagine that story continuing. That's where Chuck's office was; *Man's Country* was his home base.

Turn to page 6

WCT: I read that, when he was 87, he was still going in three times a week.

Keehnen: Oh, yeah. Man's Country was such a big part of what Chuck wanted to give the community—which was just this gathering place that wasn't about sex, although it could be about sex. It could be anything you wanted it to be. He originally called it "an oasis of pleasure." Chuck wanted people to experience pleasure in whatever form that meant to them. That's what Man's Country was about—a place to deepen your sense of community in whatever way you wanted.

WCT: What does this book say about you?

Keehnen: I think this book says that I want to expand the way we think of gay history to include the way I remember gay history.

When I talk about wanting to make this time travel, it's selfish, too. I want to time-travel, too. I think if I see places disappearing, my focus has been more on re-creating the places. Like with Dugan's Bistro, with the downtown disco scene; the Belmont Rocks; and Man's Country, I want to show the importance of the community physically coming together.

I don't feel that the fabric of community is quite as tight [these days] because of social media. I also think that, with all the threats out there, it's going to be put to the test in the future. There are so many malignant forces out there. I worry that the bonds we have right now are not strong enough.

I also like to write about people having fun, having sex and hanging out together. I want to write about things that younger people may have an easier time connecting to.

WCT: Yes and, speaking of social media, I think a lot of bar owners started to worry when it became popular. It can take away that physical connection.

Keehnen: Our whole movement—our rights and community—happened because we came together and told our stories. We did things together—physically together. Maybe I'll be surprised.

WCT: But social media can bring people together—like with rallies—so there is hope.

Keehnen: Oh, yes. It can certainly be used to bring people together—not as a substitute for being together. That's when the problem happens. And if we don't tell the stories, the stories are going to be told for us. If somebody tells your story ... well, we know how that narrative works out. It's never a good scenario.

WCT: So what do you think you'll cover next?

Keehnen: I have a couple ideas. I want to do something on the importance of different sex spaces other than bathhouses, like the Lincoln Park bushes or Montrose Harbor or the Back 40 at [the shuttered gay club] Manhandler. I want to write from the perspective of the change of surveillance culture.

Man's Country: More Than a Bathhouse is available on online retailers such as Amazon as well as brick-and-mortar spots like Unabridged Bookstore, 3251 N. Broadway.



Cover art for Angelica Ross's single, Grand Theft Lover.

Courtesy of Ross

ROSS from cover

She is a longtime friend of mine who I knew when I was doing drag shows at the Kit Kat Lounge and she first came off the bus from Nebraska looking to do drag and various things. I said, "Girl, this drag stuff will be here when you get ready. Go to school and get your degree." And she went to school and did drag. So to have this full-circle moment [is incredible]. I've been a maid of honor at her wedding. She's just breaking so many personal and professional barriers, and I feel so blessed to be a part of her journey. Lending my star power to this moment is why I'm showing up for her. It's all about Precious, for me.

WCT: I don't know you very well, but you're an outspoken activist and strike me as someone who's had very few regrets in her life.

AR: [Laughs] That is absolutely correct.

I am very, very blessed to have been introduced to Nichiren Buddhism. It has given me the perspective to understand what things mean.

When you look at something like a lotus flower, it's one of the central symbols of Buddhism; it's because the flower has to take this journey through murky, muddy territory in the water to break through to the surface and blossom—unsubdued by its environment. So I thought, "How could I regret the soil that helped me blossom?" It's not an easy place to get to, but my spiritual practice has definitely gotten me to understand the value in every single moment of my life.

WCT: And one of the reasons I feel you've had few regrets, if any, is what happened regarding your posts [about Hollywood] and your interview with The Hollywood Reporter. I've talked with people who've said, "Oh, she's burned her bridges now"—and I said, "If she has burned them, she didn't regret it."

AR: Trust me: If I burned a bridge, I meant to.

I don't ever want to go back there. It's not about burning bridges because I tell you this: So much goes on in Hollywood that's not spoken about and Angelica is not about that life. I've always spoken truth to power. The whole Hollywood game is about privilege; once they get

in, most people try to hang on to the privilege they gain and they know that they have to play a certain game to do so. I'm not about those games. I'm not looking to trade my power for privilege.

Something else that people don't know is that everybody is calculating everybody else's purses and wallets. It's all a business. I've always been someone who's been able to maintain several income streams.

WCT: Something else I've told people is that if they truly knew what people did [behind the scenes] in Hollywood, they probably wouldn't watch any films or TV series.

AR: Right. That's the real deal. I'm a theater kid, and so I've always been about creativity, music, musical theater, choirs—all of this kind of stuff. Now, I understand the heartbreak that some artists feel when art meets commerce. But you can always create—you just don't have to be part of that machine.

So that's what I chose to divest myself from—the Hollywood machine. I'm still executive-producing an animated series that has star power like Keith David, with me playing one of the main characters as well. I have a feature film that I'm working on that I'm executive-producing as well that's outside of Hollywood's permission. I don't need their permission.

WCT: And something else you're working on is music. You've released a single called "Grand Theft Lover."

AR: Yes! I'm just feeling so great about my music these days. I've been going through a whole artist development and what's been so great about that—especially as a trans person—is that I've been able to create space for myself. Many times, we're not given space to be ourselves and to build on our dreams. So people have been watching my art develop from people who didn't know how to use their voice, as a trans person, to someone who has extensive range. I've been writing my own lyrics and I've been producing my own music.

I wanted to [develop] my songwriting skills so I took an online course from H.E.R. As one of my assignments, I wrote the song "Grand Theft Lover." I created these lyrics based on love be-

ing a game—and I thought about PlayStation. And then there were those "cheat codes" from those games in the '80s. So I wanted to give a nod to the nostalgia and the versatility in my songwriting pattern.

WCT: Going back to your activism for a minute and our talking politics, do you plan on running for political office down the road?

AR: I am literally getting ready to run for office right now. That's why I moved back to Georgia. I had plans to build my production company—Miss Ross, Inc.—here back in 2020, but I ended up being booked and busy. I've done sizzle reels for shows I've produced, I've been talking to networks, I've been trying to sell shows. So the rat race of Hollywood had kept me from being in the driver's seat.

What I love about being here in Georgia and just being who I am is that I want to let people know that they don't have to be just one thing. You may not end up on TV or on a Vegas stage, but I believe that I can be a part of the local theater or music scene in Georgia and create a legacy while I also work on policy issues. The policy issues include the abortion bans that are trying to creep into Georgia policy as well as the ban on trans rights. I'll always do the work and I'm going to ask the people to vote me into a title so I have that authority behind me.

WCT: And as if all that isn't enough, there's TranTech.

AR: Yes. TransTech is my baby and we are going on 10 years next year. What's so amazing is that our first board president was Precious Brady-Davis. When I launched TransTech in 2014, the first person I turned to in order to get us off the ground was our board president. She was only there a short time because I saw that she had other things going on. I literally sacrificed my entire life, bank-account balance, credit score to start TransTech, but Precious was there for me in the early days.

WCT: For you, what is it like to be part of the LGBTQ+ community in today's America?

AR: I think that, in today's America, there's so much purpose and potential for us to not only change the world. We're in an environment that's ruled by a lack of compassion. Being LGBTQ now [means] that when you're in an environment and you witness that something is missing, it's a time to create, be calm and be that thing that is needed.

So I think there's a leadership that is needed from folks who are not lying to themselves—[because] folks who are lying to themselves will lie to you, too. We have so many politicians who lie to themselves. We don't need to lie to ourselves about who we are.

Also, we need to find value in our intersections and our identities. It's one of the most powerful calls to action that's not just unique to LGBTQ people—but, because of this imminent call to action, we're in a position where we have to act quicker or with more urgency than our cis het counterparts who still are almost complacent by their comfort and privileges that fitting in might get them.

I do believe that LGBTQ people will free the rest of the world.

THANK YOU!

Our corporate supporters help us work toward a day when people living with HIV or chronic conditions will thrive, and there will be no new HIV cases.



Many thanks to the following companies that made Corporate Partnership-level contributions to AIDS Foundation Chicago in the past year:

abbvie



BMO



Walgreens



To learn more about AFC's Corporate Partnership Program, contact **Erwin Saenz**, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, at ESaenz@aidschicago.org.



Longtime Chicago couple reflects on their 50-year love story

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

When Chicagoans Bob Wolf and Peter Tortorello met each other for the second time in 1973, during the Friday night cocktail hours at the now-defunct gay-owned restaurant-bar The Trip in Streeterville, they knew right away that they were meant for each other.

Both Wolf and Tortorello were young professionals, and The Trip was the place to be seen for those who were just starting out in their careers and wanted to meet other gay men.

"We all had college degrees and great jobs, so we thought we were hot shit at that time," said Tortorello. "On Friday, October 19, 1973, I was with friends doing cocktails. A handsome blonde man walked up the stairs and caught my eye. As we were leaving for dinner, we saw him at the corner of Ohio and State, and asked him where they were going, [which was] the Fireside on Wells Street in Old Town. We followed them to the restaurant.

"Taunted by my friends to approach the blonde at a nearby table, I did—only to be ignored. His date did respond with a lovely hello. A week later the group was back at The Trip, cocktail and looking. The blonde's date arrived, said hello again and that is when Bob and I introduced ourselves and started talking. I went to Bob's apartment that night on Bissell, [which backed] up to the train tracks. The passing rumble of the El was not a distraction."

Two days after that, Tortorello moved out of his parents' home into an apartment on Barry Street with the help of long-time friends, his mother and Wolf. Although the two men lived in different apartments, Wolf spent the first night at the Barry apartment and fundamentally never left. They moved in together within

that year. They have been together, apart from two very temporary and painful breakups for a few months, ever since.

This year Tortorello and Wolf are celebrating their golden anniversary. This past October, the two Chicago natives hosted a bevy of friends and family at the InterContinental Hotel to mark their years together.

Knowing early on

Both men grew up Catholic and knew they were gay at an early age. Tortorello had same-sex encounters while in his teens, as well as one at a fraternity function he attributed to the "golly, was I drunk last night excuse." Many of his friends—sons of his parents' friends—came out as gay years later. Tortorello joked that he blames it on the water on the Northwest Side of Chicago and finishing school at St. Patrick.

Wolf grew up in the Back of the Yards and attended DePaul Catholic Minor Seminary. He recalled, "Late in my senior year, I admitted to the spiritual director that I thought I was a homosexual. He told me that I could not continue to study for the priesthood unless I got professional help to change my inclinations. I began seeing a psychologist for the next several months.

"Rather than change my sexuality, I finally decided to live my life as a gay man. My parents paid for the treatment, but I never told them why I needed it. They finally stopped asking. It was not until I was diagnosed with HIV and decided to leave work on disability that I told them I was gay and HIV-positive. Just before my mother died, she made the comment that '...your Dad always knew.'"

Tortorello's coming out process progressed

slowly. He dated several women in college and in graduate school. It was at Northern Illinois University that a classmate unexpectedly kissed him. He played "grab ass" with his roommate, Jon. Eventually he went to his first gay bar, The Locker, in Rockford.

After graduation he was on a double date with his fraternity pledge father, Rich, and their "girlfriends." He dropped off his date and went to The Trip for the first time. There was Rich. With that, they both ended their hetero relationships, starting their lives as out gay men. Friday's tradition was to go to the gym, meet up at The Trip for cocktail hour, have dinner, change into disco threads and go to The Bistro, Chicago's version of Studio 54. At that time, customers would see both gays and straights dancing to Barry White's "Love Theme."

Health and work concerns

After receiving his MBA from Northern Illinois University, Tortorello worked for UARCO and Xerox in Chicago and Houston, Texas, where he and Wolf lived for 10 years. Houston was a happening place in the early '80s, and this was not the best time in their relationship.

They separated for several months, but got back together when their family came to town to celebrate Thanksgiving. It was shortly after that when Wolf started running temperatures, an early indication that something was amiss with his health.

That same year, they lost 40 acquaintances to the AIDS epidemic. Frightened, they decided to move back to Chicago. Two years later, Wolf was diagnosed with HIV. With the support of Drs. Tom Klein and Keith MacDonnell, as well as others, and the loving relationship that he has

shared with Tortorello, Wolf is now a long-term survivor and is undetectable.

Tortorello worked at a few software firms as well as at Oliver Wight, a premiere manufacturing consulting firm, and Oracle. Until recently, Tortorello was a real estate agent for two decades with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services.

Wolf became Director of Human Resources at Arthur Young, and Ernst and Young, following a merger. Six months after starting his Arthur Young position, Wolf's boss took him to lunch and told him he "knew I was gay for about three months, and I had better keep it a secret from top management in the office and region. This led to me going on long term disability. I hired an attorney to inform the managing partner of my situation so that I would not be fired before my claim was approved. Today, this organization is one of the most highly-rated employers by HRC and Lambda Legal Defense, and I believe I played a part in them making the changes they did to get those ratings."

Road to recovery

Twelve-step programs started Wolf and Tortorello toward recovery and better mental health. Wolf found Alcoholics Anonymous, while Tortorello joined Al-Anon; these organizations were "a lifesaver" for them, and there they met new, supportive friends. The couple also went to therapy together and Tortorello continued with individual therapy to address his own traumas.

During the '90s, Tortorello lost childhood friends to AIDS, and when he told his parents that Wolf was HIV-positive, they were terrified for him.

"Peter and I beat the odds because he never

Left: Bob Wolf and Peter Tortorello's first picture as a couple in 1973. Right: Peter Tortorello and Robert Wolf at their 50th anniversary party.

Courtesy of the couple

wavered in his support," said Wolf. "He never treated me like a leper and was there through it all. I used to take one of the early AIDS medications in the morning as I was getting ready to go to work. Peter would drive me from Sheridan Road to Downtown Chicago, and he would have to pull off the road so I could vomit because the medication was so toxic."

Celebrations

To celebrate their 20th anniversary on October 26, 1993, the couple held a "Celebration of 20 years of Commitment" at the InterContinental Chicago (where their recent 50th anniversary celebration took place). That is what they consider to be their official coming out party.

In 2001, they—along with their best friends, Chris and Chuck—exchanged civil union vows in Vermont. Unfortunately, both of them woke up that morning with high temperatures and slept for two days. They went on to Ogunquit, Maine, for their honeymoon after stopping by Ben and Jerry's.

Twelve years later, on Oct. 26, 2013, they returned to Manchester Center, Vermont (the place where the Green Mountain Boys planned the American Revolution) and were married at the Vermont Art Center, followed by a dinner with 20 family members. On June 1, 2014, their civil union certificate was converted into a 2001 marriage license in Hinsdale in DuPage County. County staff applauded this as the first same-sex marriage in DuPage County.

Keeping active

The couple has always been politically active, having worked for the Clinton, Kerry, Obama and Biden campaigns. In 2008 they were in Grant Park, just 20 feet from the stage. Oprah stood behind them. Wolf was the Obama campaign data manager at the Hyde Park office in 2012, and met with the president on Election Day. Tortorello and Wolf were present in Washington for the second Obama inauguration and danced at the HRC Inauguration Ball.

As for their hobbies, Wolf is an avid reader, a Wordle fanatic and fine home chef. They host dinners throughout the year and especially in the holidays and for the past 30 years, they have hosted family and friends for Christmas dinner in their home. They have a second house in Sawyer, Michigan, where Tortorello enjoys gardening, bicycling and hiking. They have traveled to all seven continents, and cruised the entire length of the Amazon, as well as around South America, Antarctica, Alaska, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and the Galapagos Islands. They are patrons of the Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera and Broadway and local theaters as well.

IDHS head Dulce Quintero

reflects on making history, being an advocate

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Dulce Quintero has always believed in helping people—and decades of doing so has resulted in an especially noteworthy achievement.

Recently, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker appointed Quintero, a member of the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, as secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), making them the first nonbinary individual to helm a state agency. On Nov. 30, the Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action (ALMA) will present Quintero with the inaugural ALMA del Líder (Soul of A Leader) award to celebrate this development.

Windy City Times recently talked with Quintero about their gender-identity journey and their commitment to helping others, among other things.

Note: This conversation was edited for clarity and length.

Windy City Times: First of all, I'm not sure if a lot of people know what IDHS is or does. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Dulce Quintero: Absolutely. At the Illinois Department of Human Services, we have about 14,000 employees. People may know about our local offices where people apply for medical cards, SNAP benefits and things like that. We have more than 100 offices across the state.

We focus on marginalized communities and people who deal with poverty. We also have hospitals; there are seven medical hospitals under our care. We also have seven centers of developmental disabilities in the state as well as a few schools. We provide funding for prevention of and recovery from substance use.

And we're also fighting homelessness and we're working with [Chief Homelessness Officer] Christine Haley—and a lot of my background has involved unhoused populations. I've worked with young people and with people who are chronically unhoused, such as veterans and people who are diagnosed with mental-health and substance-use issues. So all of that work is very dear to me. ... I love what I do because I started in community work; it wasn't government work. I'm now able to apply my experience in community work into my current seat as a public servant.

WCT: Regarding your achievement of becoming the first nonbinary individual to head a state agency, you're receiving an award from ALMA [Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action]. What does

that mean to you?

DQ: Oh... I [recently] delivered the keynote speech for the Hispanic Federation. I focused on what leadership means to me, and I think there's a traditional view on what leadership looks like. I really lead from a place of breaking that mold. I think it's really important that we think about people who have many years of lived experience, because sometimes people only look at credentials.

I have a multifaceted background and identity, as someone who came from Mexico at age 9, and had to learn how to live in this country and speak the language. My parents were farm workers and had to move around a lot; I grew up from a very humble beginning, and I know about poverty. I've had that trajectory in my life and I've experienced homelessness; with that in my background, there will be a whole level of advocacy at the table that will make me relentless; I'll never be too tired to advocate.

I also grew up Mormon, so I was super-religious. I was going to go on a mission for the Latter-Day Saints. I actually went to three high schools—one in Chicago, one in Mexico City and one in Sacramento, California. The one in Mexico City was a Mormon high school, and I wanted to go to Brigham Young University and then on my mission. But then I went to UC-Davis for college—and I came out.

When I came out and talked to my bishop, I was told I couldn't be Mormon and gay, so I decided to be out and proud. People say, "Dulce, you're so out and proud"—and that's because I have to be. And with my gender identity and expression, I never felt like I should be in a box; there needs to be freedom because there's a spectrum. And right now, I identify as they/them but it might look different later.

So [I love] being able to be from a place of humility and being able to bring all of my experiences into this role to help bring about systemic change. Also, there's the fact that we get to work for Gov. Pritzker—someone who has hired and promoted someone like me. That means a lot, but I also have a lot of responsibility. So I go out into the community and listen to the experts who do the work every day.

WCT: I think it's interesting that you said you have no attachment regarding gender identity because looking at your [Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame] bio, the pronouns used are "she/her." [Note: After



Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary Dulce Quintero.

Courtesy of IDHS

induction, the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame does not update bios, per policy.] So your journey taking you beyond the binary happened after your induction.

DQ: Yes. And you know what, Andrew? I've been thinking a lot about [the journey]. Even [at IDHS], with the [email] signature, I didn't put pronouns there for a long time. And my friend will sometimes say, "girl" and "ella," and I'll ask, "Could you try to use more 'they' and 'them' when you speak?" I also have friends and loved ones who say, "Dulce, I'm really trying"—and I can see that they're trying. I also think that it's important that we're teaching people; sometimes, they just don't know. People need to ask because some people only prefer their names.

WCT: You've talked a little bit about this, but what is it like for you to be part of the queer community in today's America?

DQ: You know, you think you've brought change—and then you think, "Not so much." We have a lot more work to do. I think about our transgender brothers and sisters—especially Black and Brown ones—who are murdered. Hundreds are murdered, and that's an epidemic. We just need to do more.

I'm very mindful of that, with my passion in advocacy about transgender and nonbinary people. When I moved from California to Chicago and I started organizing the Dyke March and moving it from Andersonville, I wanted to make sure that transgender people were part of that movement. I will always speak up for the trans community. We need to do more because we are losing people every day.

Col. Jennifer Pritzker

on philanthropy, Republican ties

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Col. Jennifer Pritzker is someone who firmly believes in giving.

There's the transgender activist who has been supportive of many LGBTQ+-related causes. And, of course, there's the Jennifer Pritzker who spent almost three decades in the U.S. Army, Army Reserve and Illinois Army National Guard, and who is extremely supportive of the military to this day. In 2017, she created the Pritzker Military Foundation, which serves as the Pritzker Military Museum & Library's grant-making arm.

Pritzker—a cousin of Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker—also created the TAWANI Foundation (named after her children) in 1995. TAWANI is about philanthropy in the areas of education, gender and human sexuality, cultural institutions, environmental initiatives, and health and human services.

And she also believes in giving her opinions. In a recent interview, Pritzker offered her thoughts on everything from philanthropy to her Republican background—and why she severed ties with former Donald Trump's administration after voting for him in 2016.

Note: This conversation was edited for clarity and length.

Windy City Times: I wanted to start with something recent: The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame. What did the induction ceremony feel like for you, and what would you have said if you could give a speech?

Col. Jennifer Pritzker: I actually have a lot of different views about that.

On one hand, it's always nice to be appreciated. I certainly couldn't have wanted a better venue; the Chicago History Museum is one of my favorite places in Chicago. My father started taking me there back as long as I can remember. I've seen a lot of changes; back then, it was the Chicago Historical Society.

Right now, in this country, anything having to do with LGBTQ+—I'm using four out of the 26 letters in the alphabet, no disrespect—is very controversial. It's a double-edged sword—to some people, if you're in the LGBT Hall of Fame, you're a hero; to others, you're an agent of Satan. So I'm already somewhat on the [borderline] because I come from a well-known family, I've got a few bucks and I have cousins who are prominent in politics—one who's been in Obama's Cabinet, Penny Pritzker; and, of course, the governor, JB. Some people think I'm his sister; some people think I'm his wife. That's why I have the Pritzker family exhibit in the historical museum; it lays out who's who.

If I may get a little risqué, in addition to being a public figure, I'm also something of a PUBIC

figure. It's like I'm a novelty figure, a sideshow exhibit: "Is it a he?" "Is it a she?" "Does it stand to sit and pee?" Why should being LGBT be a bigger factor than having blue or green eyes, or if you're 28 or 58? Certain things are what they are, and you can do good or not-so-good things with them—but that's not all of what you are.

No matter what I do or say, some people's notions of me will not change—and they're as unchangeable as the Rocky Mountains. But, you see, mountains change. They have volcanic eruptions, and they're influenced by wind and water. So the Earth doesn't remain stable; it's always in a state of change.

I am what I am. I'm a 73-year-old transgender woman who's been endowed with prosperity. I'm of European Caucasian descent. I'm Jewish. I'm a veteran. I am a father and a grandfather even though I live as a woman. I spent 27 years in the Army—eight-and-a-half years on duty and the rest in the National Guard reserves. I've had some kind of business of my own since 1987. Some days are good, some are not so good and some days I've avoided disaster by the skin of my teeth. So you have ups and downs; that has nothing to do with what gender I'm living in or what my physical state is.

I've been engaged in many different kinds of philanthropy. Now there are people, like [journalist] Jennifer Bilek, who think that my cousin and I, and other people like me, are on a conspiracy to screw up the world, to rob everyone of their identity—but it's quite the contrary. Most of the philanthropy I've done has been for scientific research and medical treatment. I've only become involved in advocacy because I've had to.

And while I'm not that wild about voting for Democrats, there's no way that me or someone like me—or, for that matter, any rational person—can vote for Donald Trump. I made the grave mistake of voting for him in 2016. I should've followed the advice of my youngest son, William, who said, "If you don't like Hillary Clinton, then vote libertarian," which I did in 2004. I voted against Bush the younger for two reasons: I thought it was a mistake to invade Iraq and he wanted a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. But we have freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion.

WCT: So would you vote for someone like Liz Cheney, who was not ruled out running in 2024?

JP: Probably—but I don't know if she can do it as a Republican because the Republican Party has gotten so [mixed] up. To be a little vulgar, the Republican Party is like constipation; they can't even pass gas. I hate saying that because I

Col. Jennifer Pritzker.

Courtesy of TAWANI Enterprises, Inc



voted Republican for a long time. I started voting in 1972 and I didn't vote Republican twice—in 2004, when I voted Libertarian; and in 2020, when I voted Democrat because I wanted to make sure Trump didn't get back to the White House.

[Biden] wasn't my favorite choice but he was a plausible one; he's a lot more rational than Mr. Trump and he looks like he has his weight under control—and that's no small feat. What really turned me against Trump was when he said there was no place for transgender people in the military. Naturally, I had a very negative reaction to that. Also, he's said some extremely disparaging remarks about people like John McCain. The Department of Defense went through a hell of a lot of trouble to change that policy [regarding transgender inclusion in the military]; they didn't do it on a Twitter whim.

Right now, the Republican Party is reactionary, spiteful and totally unproductive. You have state legislatures competing with each other to see who can pass the most repressive laws the quickest.

I've contributed a lot to LGBTQ+ causes but I've also contributed a lot more to things like military history and military affairs. If we're going to have a democracy in which the military is controlled by the civilian population, how can they do it if they don't know anything about the military? With a voluntary and non-governmental organization, I can do things that I could never do in uniform.

[At this point, TAWANI Marketing and Communications Director Theadora Gerber said, "I think one point you make really well is that [neither] side is contributing to finding solutions. If there's a hysteria going on, they should look for solutions.]

I would agree that both [main political parties] have taken extreme views. We've seemed

to have lost the ability to have true bipartisan, nonpartisan approaches to common problems.

Now no matter what your views, there is climate change. Now how much is attributable to humans, I don't know but we have to deal with it. And what about the war in Ukraine? We can't just sit by and do nothing—but what do we do? The current war in Israel—what do we do about that? We've got some serious economic problems in this country. We have a serious problem about paying for healthcare.

WCT: With October [when this interview was conducted] being National Coming Out Month, who was the first person you came out to?

JP: I don't know. It's hard to say because, for years, I thought of myself mainly as a transvestite. That's a term you don't hear much anymore; that shows how old I am.

I didn't really have the opportunity to explore who I was. In those days, a male could get arrested for appearing in public in women's clothing. But after the age of 10 or 12, my parents sent me to a psychiatrist; I'd say things like, "I could see myself in dual current." It was hard to find a way to "resolve" the issue for a long, long time. Going into the Army was not a great place to do it—although a lot of transgender people join the military to find resolution. You can function with the suppression but, after a while, you just can't do it anymore.

It's hard to say who the very first person was. It took me a long time to realize that the clothing was just a tool. It's so subjective about what's considered men's and women's clothing. I'm at the point where I've taken an interest in a lot of women's issues; I identify as a woman so these issues are a lot more relevant to me.

Maybe another way of coming out is trying to find out who you are so you can be at peace with yourself—so that you can function.