

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE Lines™

MOTOR CITY PRIDE

A Chat with Headliner
Jordy, Plus the Event's
Queens Speak Out

TAYLOR SWIFT IN DETROIT

Exploring Queer Subtext
in 10 Taylor Songs

ANN ARBOR IS BURNING

Getting 'Radically Queer' at
Ann Arbor Summer Fest

Pride Marches On

Michigan Leads the Way as Pro-Queer Powerhouse
While Other States Push Us Away

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)

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 - ▶ **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.



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Illustration by Sarah Chung

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Suddenly, Michigan is awash in all things Pride. While we all know there's a distinct difference between performative LGBTQ+ support (looking at you, rainbow-themed antibacterial wipes on the Kroger end cap) and organizations that put in actual labor to support the community, the fact remains that June is ours. Like so many colors of the rainbow, there's something out there to suit every Pride personality, including Pride Night with the Tigers, Motor City Pride's Hart Plaza takeover, a concert by alt-pop darling Zolita and an educational event focused on improving the odds for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing housing insecurity.



Pride Fests on Tap for June 10

Motor City Pride, Michigan's largest Pride event, will kick off on Saturday, June 10, but the massive festival isn't the only option for Pride seekers across the state. At a time when the LGBTQ+ community is in the crosshairs of far too many conservative politicians and organizations, visible Pride events hold special significance. Consider also giving some love to these smaller events on the roster for June 10:

- Grand Haven — 12-9 p.m. at Waterfront Stadium (1 N. Harbor Drive, Grand Haven)
- Holly — 1-6 p.m., Holly Lakeside Park (Holly Bush Drive and Park Avenue, Holly)
- Howell — 12-4 p.m., Howell Historic Courthouse (200 E. Grand River, Howell)
- Marquette — 1-10:30 p.m., Ellwood Mattson Lower Harbor Park, (200 N. Lakeshore Blvd., Marquette)



Zolita. Photo: Facebook

Experience Queer Pop Sensation Zolita

Don't miss viral alt-pop sensation Zolita when she appears at The Shelter June 14 on a break from opening for Bebe Rexha on her North American "Best F'n Night of My Life Tour." The singer-songwriter and director/filmmaker boasts more than 300 million streams featuring her music, which frequently features LGBTQ+ storylines. Zolita's latest release, the EP "Falling Out/Falling In," for example, "unpacks the devastating, confusing and joyful process of falling out of love, getting over someone, and falling in love with someone else through its narrative story of movie-quality videos," according to a news release. Zolita's unique approach to authentic LGBTQ+ storytelling with a cinematic twist helped her 2022 video, "Somebody I F*cked Once," go viral.

June 14, 7 p.m., The Shelter (431 E. Congress St., Detroit). Tickets at bit.ly/43uqZle.



Attend a Motor City Pride Afterparty

Keep the party going long after Motor City Pride kicks you out of Hart Plaza. Geared for Life's annual MOTORBALL event is set to take place as the festival wraps up for the night on June 10. Kicking off at 10 p.m., the high-energy celebration, themed "Shades of Pride," will take over the Magic Stick and feature several performers. Adriel Fantastique will host an entertainment lineup that includes tribal house musician Ben Bakson, SanFranDisco, Stacey Hotwaxx Hale and Darryl G. If you're still awake, head over to Olympus in the Menjo's Complex for the after-party featuring music by Joe Gauthreaux, King Kii and Tylr_B2B Kass B2B Rekt.

XOXR is also hosting a Motor City Pride afterparty on June 10. Starting at 9 p.m. at The High Dive in Hamtramck, this event will deliver house, techno and drag. Featured performers include Joshua Orange, Sapphyre and Garrison XR.

MOTORBALL: June 10, 10 p.m.-4 a.m., Magic Stick (4120 Woodward Ave., Detroit) and Olympus (950 W. McNicholas Road, Detroit). Tickets: gearedforlife.us. XOXR afterparty: June 10, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., The High Dive (11474 Joseph Campau Ave., Hamtramck). Tickets: ra.co/events/1709971.



Still from Sofa Stories. Photo: Every Soul Arts

Learn About LGBTQ+ Homelessness

The LGBTQ+ community experiences homelessness and housing insecurity at a significantly higher rate versus other groups. A University of Chicago study estimates that LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBTQ+ youth. Often, people facing these situations turn to couch-surfing to survive. This survival tactic is at the heart of the Every Soul Arts' Sofa Stories project, a live theater experience featuring digital media, set to perform June 9 at Detroit Public Theatre. Sofa Stories focuses on LGBTQ+ youth in Detroit and is facilitated by Every Soul Arts, a collective of artists, care providers, housing activists and people who have experienced homelessness. Learn more about the project at sofastoriesdetroit.com.

June 9, 8 p.m., Detroit Public Theatre (3960 Third Ave., Detroit). Admission is free, but advance reservations are available through this ticket link: bit.ly/43ydffs.



Hit Detroit Tigers Pride Night

Head over to Comerica Park for Pride Night on June 13 to cheer on the Detroit Tigers as they take on the Atlanta Braves. The LGBTQ+ and allies event includes an exclusive Tigers Pride messenger bag with advance ticket purchases. While you're at the game, be sure to send a selfie to the L.A. Dodgers, who keep dreaming up new ways to offend everyone by banning and unbanning the long-running LGBTQ+-allied human rights org, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. The Tigers aren't about to back down from vocally supporting its Detroit LGBTQ+ fanbase.

June 13, 6:40 p.m., Comerica Park (2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit). Tickets at bit.ly/3X1NK4p.

Please check event pages for the most up-to-date scheduling information.

THE FIGHT FOR

ISN'T OVER.

PROGRESS MICHIGAN

WHEN THEY GO LOW, WE GO SIDeways

This Pride, Lean Into Whatever Weird Thing Makes You Happy

BY DANI LAMORTE

Pride Month means endless ear-bashing about history, community and being a “key voter” — so join me in front of the TV and we’ll zone out for a bit to recover.

Flick on the TV and you’ll see a battered housewife from Battle Creek, Michigan, talking about how she’s been spat out by Hollywood. Click. Next up, a blonde bombshell that never was, hawking God’s greatest hits for \$40. Click. Ukrainian dance party. Click. Dress Barn advertisement. Click. Baked potato.

This is the seriously unserious television landscape of gay video artist Tom Rubnitz. Born 1956 in Chicago, Rubnitz used the camera to make sparkling exaggerations of the mass media of his day — especially broadcast television. Every couple of years, one of his videos, “Pickle Surprise,” makes the viral video rounds, thanks in part to performances by two then unknowns: RuPaul and Lady Bunny.

“Pickle Surprise” spoofs the recipe instructional, with a humanoid sequined pickle leading the charge. Part of the lower Manhattan club scene of the ’80s and early ’90s, Rubnitz’s videos sample an era of unique and politically incisive art created out of the leftovers of late-20th century American television culture. In the video described above, “Made for TV” actress Ann Magnuson plays each character you’d find channel surfing in the 1980s. Every TV preacher is a potato saleswoman in disguise.

Until a few weeks ago, I assumed that articles about Rubnitz must be easy to come by. After all, his work is stunning and features the now-



“Even when our hands are tied, we reach for something through fantasy.”

famous RuPaul and Lady Bunny. I was wrong, in that particular way that you’re wrong when you mistake the necessity of something to you for its necessity in the world. I need Tom Rubnitz’s videos, but it seems most other people haven’t recognized that same need in themselves.

Recently, a transphobic pundit visited the University of Pittsburgh campus to lead a debate: “Should transgenderism be regulated by law?” More recently, Florida banned or unbanned something or another. I can’t keep track. Either way, bad news for people like us.

In the early ’00s, someone promised us “it gets better,” and I’d like to see that person brought up on legal charges for deceitfully

advertising the future. Let’s not mince words: Things are bad.

Things were bad when Rubnitz was making his videos, too. The dominant treatments for AIDS at the time might be described as a regimen of neglect, rejection and violence. Even his most seemingly joyous video, “Strawberry Shortcut,” ends with a heavy message: “Dedicated to the hope for a cure to AIDS.” Hollis Griffin, associate professor of communication and media at the University of Michigan, comments that, “HIV/AIDS was not the manageable illness it has become for so many people in the time since. That was not the case in Rubnitz’s era, when a diagnosis was considered deadly.” Rubnitz himself would die of AIDS in 1992.

AIDS wasn’t the limit of trouble in Rubnitz’s time. Gentrification in lower Manhattan, coupled with disastrous city policies and police brutality, led to the scenes like the 1988 Tompkins Square riots. Drag aficionados might recognize the park as the original home of the

Wigstock festival, documented by Rubnitz in 1987. Village Voice reporter C. Carr described the scene of the riots clearly: “Panic-stricken pedestrians ran down the sidewalks, as cops galloped, clubs at the ready. I tried to duck into a restaurant. ‘No!’ shrieked someone at the door, slamming it in my face. I kept running.”

In the midst of all this, Rubnitz sought laughter. “I wanted to make things beautiful, funny, and positive — escapes that you could just get into and laugh through,” he said in a 1992 Advocate interview. In other words: When they go low, we go sideways. He credited the un-reality of mid-century TV as inspiration. “It was that whole space-age thing of anything is possible, anything can happen.” Even when our hands are tied, we reach for something through fantasy.

Making these light videos was a heavy task for Rubnitz — figuratively and literally. Somehow, his videos capture the playfulness of the nightlife scene at its most potent, despite all the trouble

around. The equipment at his disposal was cumbersome and expensive. Suzie Silver, professor of art at Carnegie Mellon University, explains: “A 3/4 portable U-Matic video system could easily weigh 20 pounds or so. On top of that, the equipment was really expensive. A

basic system would cost at least a few thousand dollars.” Rubnitz wrangled enough strength to lift the camera, the club and the world, dress them in a sequin shift and spin them in front of a spotlight. It’s hard to know exactly how Rubnitz found this strength, though, because so little has been written about him. In fact, Suzie Silver, that very professor of art, is perhaps the whole reason I know about Tom Rubnitz.

I can’t confirm that transmission, but I know that sometime in my early 20s, I came across “Pickle Surprise.” If it wasn’t directly through one of her students at the time. That’s how we — Suzie, me, and maybe you, dear reader — work. We can’t trust that what we know or want or need or love will show up in books, and that those books won’t be banned or burned, so we share things amongst each other. There’s something very LGBTQ+ about not knowing quite how you know something, but knowing who else knows and why it matters to all of us.

Tom Rubnitz matters to me, and I think, if you make yourself a Pickle Surprise or take the Strawberry Shortcut, he’ll matter to you, too.

Dani Lamorte is a Pittsburgh-based artist. His first book of essays is forthcoming from the University Press of Kentucky. More at danilamorte.com.



Publisher Benjamin Jenkins (left) and Editorial Director Chris Azzopardi.
Portraits by Andrew Potter

Pride Marches On

As LGBTQ+ people across Michigan continue to celebrate our community out on the streets of big cities and small towns alike, another trans woman has been killed in Michigan. The loss of Ashia “Charm” Davis, just 34, is heartwrenching. Davis joins the seemingly endless list of Black trans women tragically murdered across the country. Police are asking for help in tracking down a suspect — see our reporting on page 23 for more details.

The news conjures up an ever-present dichotomy when it comes to reporting in the LGBTQ+ space. How can we function as journalists with the looming cloud of persecution hovering over us? When trans people are being attacked for simply being who they are? And how do we feel and report on queer joy when pain is ever-present in the fight for not just LGBTQ+ rights and equality in our country but in the fight for our actual physical existence?

Our Pride Source/Between The Lines staff is wrestling with these often competing realities as we bring to you our latest issue, aptly titled

Pride Marches On. Within these pages, we have deliberately chosen to spotlight people in our community reacting to the current socio-political climate: drag queens currently experiencing unwarranted Republican-charged hostility, a trans essayist who may seek refuge from anti-trans legislation in Ohio by moving to Michigan and a wellspring of “radical queer revolution” about to unfold at Ann Arbor Summer Fest. Turn to page 14 to find photos depicting queer joy as a defiant act from Pride 40 years ago — reminders that Pride is rooted in a revolution.

And so, yes, four decades later, we march on.

Back in April, as our editorial team began to plan our Pride Marches On issue, we reflected on its underlying theme. Our conversations were backlit by many backward steps being taken across the nation. Florida’s governor and soon-to-be presidential candidate signed a slew of hateful legislation, Tennessee has sought to erase the art of drag, Texas and other states have banned affirming healthcare for trans minors, and Ohio continues to suffer an identity

crisis, nearly topping HRC’s Municipal Equality Index while at the same time, its legislative body introduced over two hundred bills attacking the trans community this year.

Meanwhile, Michigan leads the nation as a state that is wrapping loving, protective arms around its LGBTQ+ community members, due in great part to decades-long work that culminated in March with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer proudly signing the amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, which has made, at long last, gender identity and sexual orientation protected classes in Michigan. And that’s not all — in May, bills were introduced in both the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate that would essentially outlaw conversion therapy for minors across the state.

We recognize the efforts of our thankfully Democratic-led legislature and Gov. Whitmer, who has shown what true LGBTQ+ allyship means in our state with, especially this year, real action. We also want to express loving gratitude to our team of journalists at Between

The Lines — their stories of our community’s triumphs and tragedies are the beating heart of our publication.

As for us, we both began working for BTL many years ago — Chris in 2006, and Benjamin in 2010 — and we both recognize the simple but profound power in sharing our stories in a world where it feels like those stories don’t matter. Especially now, we are acutely aware of how important it is to inform the community on the issues and tragedies that impact you, but we will also let some much-needed light wash across these pages, just as we have in the stories you’re about to read.

Joyful defiance. It’s a real thing. And as you march on this Pride season, when your feet hit the pavement and you’re proudly waving the flag in the name of all we have lost (and all we have gained), don’t forget it.

In solidarity and togetherness,
Benjamin and Chris



(Clockwise, top left to right) Robin Fierce, Sabin, Orion Story and Jasmine Kennedy. Courtesy photos

At Pride Especially, Drag Queens Won't Be Stopped

The Overall Sentiment Among 2023 Pride Queens? Stop Raining On Our Parade

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Last month, Montana became the first state to explicitly ban the act of people reading books to children dressed in drag at public schools and libraries. This oppressive law comes on the heels of other legislation and proposed bills in states like Florida, Tennessee

and nearly a dozen others all seeking to ban drag performance in various ways.

And yet, drag queens carry on, continuing to fill their calendars with performances during Pride Month and throughout the rest of this summer. In fact, at Motor City Pride this year, which is being held June 10 and 11 in Hart Plaza in Detroit, not only

are queens booked as entertainment, they are being rightfully honored as the grand marshals of the Pride parade, beginning that Sunday at noon.

"In recognition of the challenges they are facing," says Motor City Pride Chairperson Dave Wait, "we're asking individuals to represent the community and to be on floats

to really show that we're in support of the entire drag and trans community despite the backlash and rhetoric going on across the country. We want to show that Michigan is a welcoming state."

See **Drag at Pride**, page 22

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A Pride Survival Guide for Introverts

When You Love Being Queer But When Being Queer Is A LOT

BY MANDY SHUNNARAH

If you're like me, you're out and proud, but being loud isn't really your thing. And as excited as you are about Pride, it also kinda stresses you out.

You're the person sitting the furthest away from the speakers at drag shows, and you'd rather throw your dollars at the queens' feet as they're walking away. You're the one

hiding in the bathroom at the gay club wondering why you let your extrovert friends drag you out of the house at such an unholy (*cues Sam Smith) hour. You'd rather be at home reading TJ Klune or Casey McQuiston novels or catching up on "Our Flag Means Death" and "Golden Girls."

You're an introvert. I get it because I'm one too, henny!

So many of the activities around

Pride are geared toward extroverts, which has often made me feel like a bad queer since I never have quite as much fun as my whooping, dancing, high-kicking friends. In years past, I'd guilt myself into going, then hide in bed the following week. The tricky part is, I did have some fun — the

See **Introvert Guide**, page 30

5 Ways to Celebrate Pride Away from the Maddening Crowds

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Even introverts enjoy connecting with like-minded people from time to time. Happily, there are plenty of smaller events happening outside the major festivals. Consider these local, low-key opportunities to socialize (with limits) during Pride Month.

Royal Oak Public Library

The Royal Oak Public Library will be hosting a series of Pride Month films. Films include "Naz and Maalik" (3:15 p.m. June 13), "God's Own Country" (3 p.m. June 20), "Edge of Seventeen" (3:15 p.m. June 27) and "The Incredibly True Adventures of 2 Girls in Love" (June 30, 10 a.m.). The library is located at 222 E. 11 Mile Road in Royal Oak. bit.ly/43xjiS9

Detroit History Tours

Detroit History Tours will present Detroit Historic Pride – A Walking Tour on Saturday, June 17. The tour takes place from 2:30–3:30 p.m. and starts at the corner of Griswold and West Congress Streets. Advanced tickets required. bit.ly/3N76V9p

LGBTQ+ Pride Ride

Trek Bicycle Detroit Midtown will host an LGBTQ+ Pride Ride on Saturday, June 24. The ride, a casual 10-12 mile cruise, will kick off from the shop, located at 3613 Woodward Ave., at 6:30 p.m. and last approximately two hours. bit.ly/45EOyjn

Sidetrack Bookshop

The popular Sidetrack Bookshop in downtown Royal Oak will celebrate its first birthday on Saturday, June 24. The all-day party will feature various activities. Check the site for details as the event gets closer. Sidetrack is located at 325 S. Washington Ave. in Royal Oak. bit.ly/3oKaJUQ

Pride Brunch

The Detroit Shipping Company's monthly brunch series presents a Pride Brunch on Sunday, June 25, from noon to 3 p.m. The Shipping Company is a restaurant collective featuring six premium food-truck style eateries. There will be indoor and outdoor seating available, board games including Battleship and Jenga, cornhole in the garden and more. bit.ly/45JeFFK



Advice to Be Well

From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson



I'm a 74-year-old male. I have a healthy sex drive and have multiple partners. I have difficulty maintaining erections and cannot have sex unless I use Viagra. On multiple occasions I have passed out after ejaculation. It is only for a moment or two. It has freaked out my partners. I'm fine afterwards. I am on high blood pressure medications and have some other minor heart problems. My cardiologist says this is dangerous and that I should not use any erectile medications any longer. I don't want to stop having sex and I don't want to die. Do you have any suggestions for me? –JR

Dear JR,
Your cardiologist is right. PDE-5 Inhibitors, (Phosphodiesterase-5 Enzyme Inhibitors) of which Viagra is, can lower blood pressure as well as have other adverse effects. Depending on your cardiac status, this can lead to a significant cardiac event like chest pain, a heart attack, or passing out. Nitrates (commonly referred to as Poppers) are absolutely contraindicated with Viagra. So are certain medications commonly used to treat HIV. Concomitant medications can potentiate the vasodilation effects of Viagra or even increase the blood concentrations of Viagra which can increase risk. Visual and auditory impairments are relatively common with PDE-5 inhibitors as well. It's important the

prescribing physician is aware of your health and medications before prescribing PDE-5 Inhibitors. You should not take these medications if given to you by a friend without seeking medical advice. A new alternative for treatment of erectile dysfunction is available and a great option for many men. Shock wave therapy (SWT) works by delivering delicate sound waves to stimulate tissue regeneration. This includes the formation of new blood vessels improving circulation, as well as collagen and elastin production. When applied to the penis, this strengthens and restores the natural mechanisms that cause erections. You can learn more about SWT by going to our website at DoctorBeWell.com, selecting Sexual Health, and then click on the tab Defeat ED.

It's PRIDE MONTH!! I'm very excited and plan on celebrating all month. I did have a question that is important for me to know when I go out and meet people. Recently friends have been telling me they have syphilis and I am worried about contracting this STI. My friend was recently treated and I want to know if it is okay to have sex with him. –BA

Hi BA.
Ahh, syphilis in my opinion is the most confusing sexually transmitted infection (STI) so I am glad you asked this question. There are different types

of syphilis and depending on the type or stage of syphilis would determine if you are at risk of contracting the STI. The main way for men to contract syphilis is through sexual contact with the mucus membrane during the primary syphilis stage. Primary syphilis is determined when an individual has a chancre. A chancre is a single, sharply demarcated, PAINLESS ulceration. The reason why it is important to know that a chancre is painless, is that the lack of pain is precisely the reason why individuals do not realize they have a chancre and then transmit it. Sexual contact with the chancre or mucus membranes is the main way syphilis spreads. Alternatively, syphilis can also be spread from microscopically abraded skin. This is typically from the sloughing of skin from warts that are from syphilis. This way of transmission is likely much less common.

Let's go back to the chancre. A chancre can be present in multiple locations. Commonly people here about a chancre on the penis. This is the place that is easiest to see so people tend to come in for treatment when they see this. Be sure to check the back of the penis as well. The more tricky places that chancres can present is in the anus or even in the proximal urethra (peephole, for lack of a better term). These are the areas that many people do not realize they have a lesion in because it is painless and typically goes unnoticed. When someone

has sex when they have an unknown chancre, he/she can transmit the STI. During other stages of syphilis, it is typically not transmitted. When someone comes in the office and tests positive for syphilis with zero symptoms, we call this latent syphilis. During latent syphilis, someone does not have a chancre or warts so it is not transmitted during this stage. Another important piece of information to know, is that if someone comes into contact with syphilis, the incubation period (time it takes for the infection to show up), is anywhere from 9-90 days! That is a very long time. During the incubation period, syphilis also is not transmitted. This answer was jam packed with information! I hope you got what you needed out of this answer. As aforementioned, syphilis is one of the most complicated STIs. We can always talk more about this topic if you need further clarification.

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Nikki Haley: Cis Girls Would Rather Die Than Play Sports With Trans Kids



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

When it comes to running for president as a Republican, there is one big requirement: You have to be The Worst.

Donald Trump has already established himself as such in a myriad of disgraceful, impeachable and disgusting ways. So for every Republican lining up to run against him, the race to the bottom has, well, no bottom. There is no level too low, no hate to flagrant, no lie too big.

Take Nikki Haley, for example. Haley, former South Carolina governor and Trump's Ambassador to the United Nations, appeared at a town hall on CNN, America's favorite False Equivalence News Network, during which host Jake Tapper asked her to define "woke." This comes after Trump claimed, in a dig at a certain Florida man, that most people couldn't define what it means.

Spoiler alert: Haley couldn't define it, either. But did she stand there with her jaw open and no words coming out? Of course not. She said lots of words. Garbage words, to use a linguistic term.

She started with what she called "the women's issue of our time," which is, of course, "biological boys playing in girl sports."

"My daughter ran track in high school," Haley said. "I don't even know how I would have that conversation with her. How are we supposed to get our girls used to the fact that biological boys are in their locker room?"

If there's one thing I've learned as a parent, it's that I shouldn't have to have difficult conversations with my child. Instead, I should ban difficult topics, especially those that require any kind of critical thinking or nuance. It's simply not fair to kids and parents today to have to grapple with a changing society. Kids shouldn't have to think about issues like gender identity when they should be thinking about issues like how to survive when a "bad man" with an assault rifle bursts into their school and mows down their classmates. Like real Americans.

Also, the way that Haley phrases "get our girls used to the fact that biological

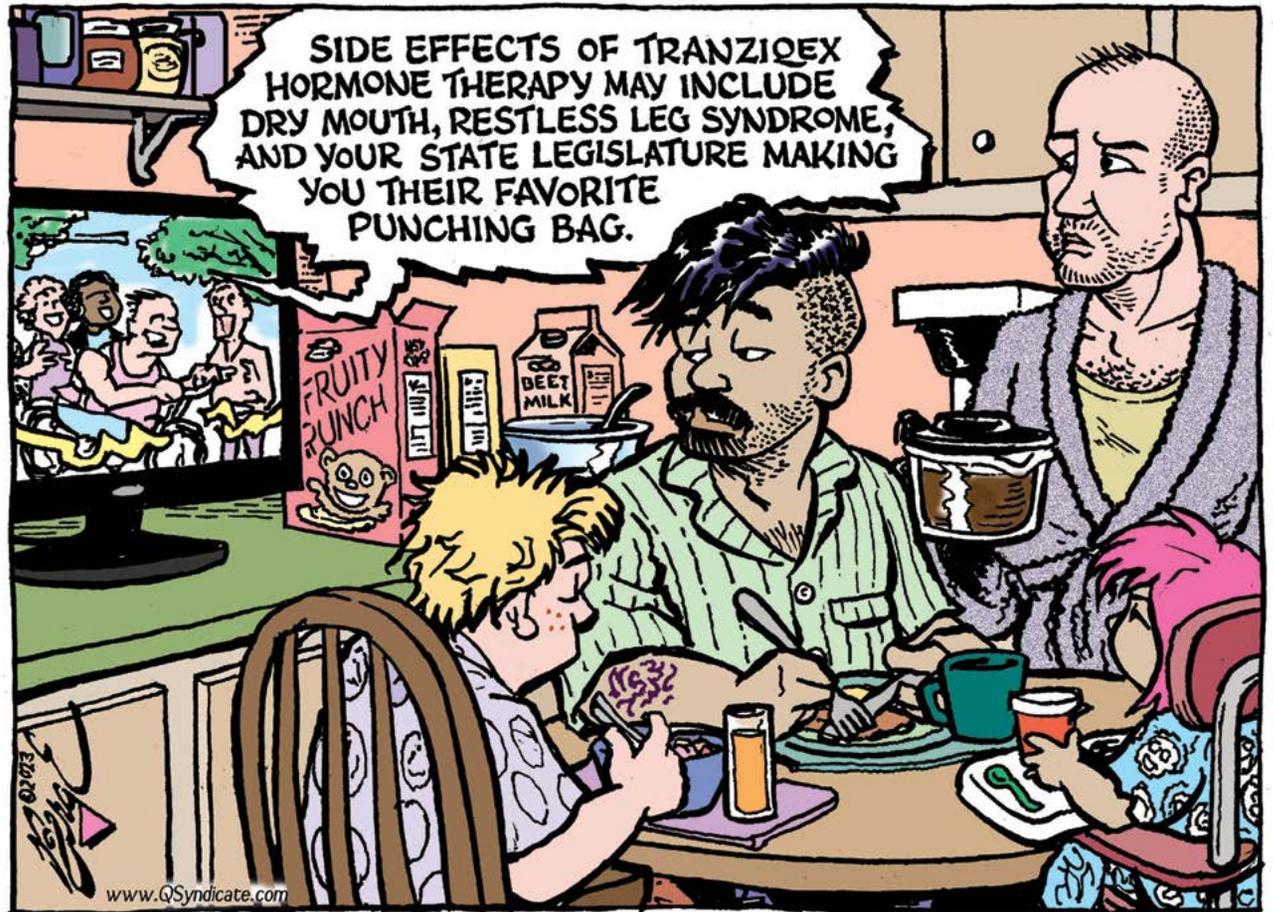
boys are in their locker room" implies that this is some kind of widespread thing. That in schools across the United States, trans girls are dominating girls' sports, destroying the sacred gender boundary that necessitated the passage of Title IX, for fuck's sake. There is no rampant trans war on girls' sports. There are, however, some trans kids who want to kick a goddamn soccer ball or swim some laps. And it's those kids who are besieged with hateful attacks from some of the most powerful people in the country.

Haley then says something unforgivably untrue and incendiary: "And then we wonder why a third of our teenage girls seriously contemplated suicide last year."

This makes me so angry I want to scream into the void until my body turns inside out and I become the void itself. It's so wrong on so many levels.

First of all, transgender kids aren't increasing the number of cis girls who think about suicide. It is an absolutely disgusting correlation to make and there is absolutely no evidence to support it. Haley is simply articulating that she, someone who hates transgender people, thinks that having to play on the same sports team as a trans kid would make a cis kid feel like her life just wasn't worth living.

Secondly, there is no doubt that teenagers need far more mental health treatment than they are getting. Teens today have spent their entire lives hiding from gunmen in



“

The New York Times compared 'her reasoned manner' to the 'displays of dominance' by Trump and DeSantis... But what she said wasn't reasonable. It was outrageous and a lie.

their schools from preschool on up, for one. They also had a big chunk of their childhood disrupted because of Covid. And then there's the fact that the country they live in went and elected a serial rapist and openly misogynistic garbage person as president — a man who bragged about grabbing women "by the pussy" and still won. A man who the country might even elect again! What is THAT saying to our girls?

"We should be growing strong girls, confident girls," Haley continued.

But how are we supposed to when people like Haley think that having to compete with a transgender athlete is the biggest threat girls face?

Predictably, the mainstream media that conservatives likened to radical left-wing propaganda responded as if Haley was a shining beacon of rational sensibility. The New York Times compared "her reasoned manner" to the "displays of dominance" by Trump and DeSantis.

But what she said wasn't reasonable. It was outrageous and a lie. The Republican party has swung so far to the right that it's nearly impossible to not seem hyperbolic when reporting on the dangerous shit they are saying and doing. And so, the media is apparently not even trying.

And that, folks, is how fascists come to power.

As Motor City Pride Turns 20, Remembering Pride Fest



BY JASON A. MICHAEL

OK, so the title is slightly misleading. Pride in Metro Detroit goes back farther than 20 years. It's

more like 34. But, if you'll kindly continue reading, I'll give you a brief history lesson and explain how it is that Motor City Pride is only 20.

The first official LGBTQ+ Pride festival in Metro Detroit took place in 1989. It was chaired by Frank Colasonti Jr. and funded by the Detroit Area Gay/Lesbian Council (DAGLC). The event's location was the gymnasium of the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus. The following year, the event became officially known as Pride Fest and moved to Oakland Community College-Royal Oak campus. Well, in the interest of journalistic accuracy, it was located in the Royal Oak Campus parking lot and garage. Not ideal, but still the gays felt safer in Royal Oak, which already had a reputation as being the most gay-friendly Detroit suburb.

But I digress. Michael Lary became event organizer for Pride Fest in 1991. He founded South East Michigan Pride (SEMP) and broke away from DAGLC. For the next 10 years, Lary worked diligently and with great dedication to elevate the stature of Pride Fest and draw out the crowds. Mind you, Affirmations, Ferndale's LGBTQ+ community center, was only founded two years prior, in 1989. The queer community in Michigan, at this point, was still in the early stages of organizing.

The crowds did come out, though. And Pride Fest grew bigger each year. So much so that Lary, under the auspices of SEMP, had begun organizing the Michigan Lesbian & Gay Film Festival and the Michigan Lesbian & Gay Comedy Fest. In 2001, SEMP applied for a special event permit with the City of Royal Oak to move the festival, which had outgrown its location, to

Washington Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets. The permit application was denied. And Lary decided, rightfully, to move the festival to nearby Ferndale, which by now was giving Royal Oak a run for its money to keep the title of "Gay-Friendliest Little Suburb of Detroit."

That same year, Lary decided to retire from the



(Above) At Pride Fest, a predecessor to Motor City Pride. (Left) Trixxie Deluxxe performs at Pride Fest. Photos: Jason A. Michael



Pride business. He turned control of the festival — as well as the Film Festival, Comedy Fest and other events he had begun producing — to Triangle Foundation. Triangle kept control of the event from 2003 to 2008, struggling to reconcile event production with its mission of anti-violence and political advocacy.

Also, in 2003 — and here, dear readers, is where the 20th anniversary comes in — the name of Pride Fest was changed to Motor City Pride. So I'm not lying when I say MCP turns 20 this year. It's actually the gospel truth.

MCP only grew after it was moved to Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit in 2012. From 2009 to 2017, MCP was headed up by a core group of Triangle Foundation volunteers who formed

the MCP Planning Committee. MCP became its own organization and received 501(c)3 status in 2017. And Dave Wait became the organization's executive director. The festival grew to two days and they added a parade, something the queer community in the region had not staged in years.

But back to Pride Fest. I first attended Pride Fest in 1997. I had just moved back to Michigan from Miami a couple of months earlier. Upon returning to town, I wasted no time in getting involved with Full Truth Unity Fellowship Church. It was a sunny June day when I and several fellow choir members from the church drove up to Royal Oak.

I was excited to see what a Michigan Pride festival looked like. I wasn't disappointed. It was, of course, much smaller than what I had experienced in Fort Lauderdale. On the other hand, it was much more than I could have ever expected when I fled Michigan for Florida after high school.

I returned the following year with my close friends Ken, Ghesoon and Liz. I'm happy to have memories of that day because we lost Ken just a

few years later. After Ken's death, G and Liz and I sort of drifted apart. Our group was never the same without Ken.

In June of 1999, I had just completed a brief tenure as managing editor of Kick magazine and accepted a full-time position with Between The Lines. The staff of the paper assembled at Pronto! for an early breakfast before the Sunday festival began. There, I met many of the staff for the first time, including columnist and my soon-to-be dear friend Charles Alexander, and we posed for a group photo.

I was young, optimistic and still eager to see what the future would bring. I was also thrilled to be working as a full-time journalist. Or, as the late Triangle Foundation Executive Director Jeff Montgomery christened me, I was now a full-time homo, which gave me the name of my first column.

Lary really did a great job with Pride Fest. The stage and dance area were out in the parking lot. Booths and vendors were located in the parking garage. Not very glamorous, but what it lacked in atmosphere it

made up for in shade. (Literal shade. Not gay shade.)

It was great when Pride Fest moved to Ferndale and out of the parking lot and into the actual street. The name change to Motor City Pride didn't mean much to me. But when the move to downtown Detroit and Hart Plaza was announced, I was skeptical. Shows you what I know — the festival has gotten so large some might say it has outgrown Hart Plaza. (Last year, crowds waited literal hours to get into the plaza.)

Like Lary, Wait deserves a lot of credit. He expanded the entertainment lineup and brought in big names to take the main stage. By all accounts, he's done a great job. But there's something about that little Pride Fest in Royal Oak that I long for.

In many respects, the queer community in Metro Detroit has come a long way since then. On the other hand, as attacks against our community at large (particularly against our trans folk) intensify, there was a certain innocence about those special Sundays in the parking lot that I miss.



Nicholas Blair's photos are featured in the new book "Castro to Christopher: Gay Streets of America 1979-1986." Photos: Nicholas Blair

The Photographer Bridging Pride History to the Present

Four Decades Ago, Pride Was Pivotal and Familiar

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Are we capturing history every day without even knowing it? Forty years ago, photographer Nicholas Blair wasn't intentionally immortalizing a specific era of what we now call the LGBTQ+ community — he just felt compelled to take photos wherever he could find

queer life. That included places where the queer experience was vibrant and loud, like San Francisco's Castro district, New York's West Village and the Christopher Street Pier, and Provincetown, Massachusetts. Many of Blair's photos were taken during Pride festivals, where drag queens freely expressed themselves, a mother held up a sign that read "We

love our lesbian daughter," and queer couples shared tender and passionate affection. Through photos alone, the book emphasizes the point that, yes, history really does repeat itself (and I'm not only talking about all the queer boys in this book who can't seem to find shorts that are short enough).

Shot during "the vanished world

of gay life before AIDS," many of those black-and-white images are featured in a new photography book called "Castro to Christopher: Gay Streets of America 1979–1986." Blair's photos capture a queer revolution, both the quiet, intimately loving moments and loud, indignant determination to be seen and treated equally

in a country that still, in many places currently, like Florida and Tennessee, does the very opposite.

Recently, Blair spoke about what it was like to capture this era of LGBTQ+ people and places — and what has (and hasn't) changed since then. Here is what he said, in his own words.

A 'backyard' cultural revolution

I dropped out of high school [in 1973] and hitchhiked through South America for about a year. When I came back to New York City, I had a lot of time to think about what I wanted to do. I thought I might try to go into film, but in New York a good friend gave me a Leica camera, a little camera to use. I went out to San Francisco, hitchhiked out there to be with my brother, and we ended up starting an arts commune called the Modern Lovers Commune, which was a loosely knit group of people, many of them who liked to travel as well, but who were all into art, and then eventually started Ancient Currents Gallery in that same space.

One of the trips that I took was in late 1977. I went away for a year to India on this super low-budget walkabout with my camera and my friend, just photographing through India, and actually Pakistan and Europe. When we came back to San Francisco, it was two weeks before the tragic assassinations of Harvey Milk and George Moscone. I was a hippie-type person; I'd been harassed at different times. But San Francisco seemed like a very safe space. I mean, we had gay people living in our group. It was very fluid and seemed very open and safe, and this was a big wake-up call.

Perhaps beforehand I was a little naïve, but this idea that all of a sudden people were getting murdered, it took me a little while to get myself together after coming back, and then I went to some



events, some political events in the gay community. I photographed pretty much all kinds of things going on in San Francisco, and I was really drawn to what was going on in a lot of ways. I had traveled before that and never had I seen anything like this.

It was a cultural revolution happening essentially in my backyard, and I was really just drawn to it organically. I mean, I would like to say, "Oh, I had this overarching political agenda to try to document the situation then." But it was just more like, "Wow, this is really interesting." There was a lot going on. You just didn't know what you might run into.

The beginnings of 'Castro to Christopher Street'

My brother had been living in Brazil and Peru for almost two years. He was very interested in Tobias Schneebaum, an anthropologist who was gay. My brother interviewed him, wrote a big article on him, and sold it to *The Advocate*. They published it, and my brother saw that I had some of these pictures from Castro Street. He said, "Well, maybe you should send some to *The Advocate*." We were basically what you would call starving artists, trying to make a living any which way — a lot of house painting at that time. But so I sent some to *The Advocate*. They said, "Great, we love it." They published a full-page spread, and that of course got me even more interested, so I went down to the Bay Area Reporter office. They call it BAR now, which was a local San Francisco paper.

So I had just a stack of maybe 30 five-by-sevens. I walked into the office. I can't even remember who I talked to, but there was an editor there. He just looked at me and

said, "Great. We'll run a weekly photograph. What do you want to call it?" I was just like, "Why don't we call it 'Castro to Christopher Street'?"

It just sort of evolved. I covered Pride San Francisco twice, and New York once, and I think I covered Halloween a few times in San Francisco. It was such a fun event, just so different then, both Pride and Halloween. I mean, Pride, you could just walk out in the street.

I liked to photograph the bystanders, not really so much just documenting the floats and what's going on in the parade. But with *The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence* [the same charitable drag group that dress up as nuns that the Dodgers recently honored, then dishonored, then re-honored after a Catholic uproar], for example, you feel like, "Oh, they're coming down the street. I'll just walk out in the middle of the street and hang



"It was a cultural revolution happening essentially in my backyard, and I was really just drawn to it organically."

out and photograph them."

Landing on a cover photo

Well, I did have some help from some friends looking through images, and tried different ones. I guess what I liked about that is the strong formal nature and the tension of the way the image is laid out and captured, the way the two guys are looking at each other in this. I wouldn't say adoring, but admiring. They're so close; they're almost pulling their heads back just a little so that they can see each other better.

And the love. I'm very attracted to just outward displays of affection, in the gay community or really with anybody. It's just something that's an eye-catcher. But then this older guy... I like this ambiguity in photographs. I like to say there

are truths in a lie. Because they're a truth, because optically it's showing you what's going on. But you really don't know. You could say those two guys are gay, but maybe they're just

friends. You really can't say for sure, and you don't know what's outside their frame, what's inside their frame. My thinking is that this might just be an older gay guy who's come out.

Looking back to make the book

In trying to complete the book, there was a question of how to do it. It took a long time to kind of organize the material. "Am I going to do it ontologically? Am I going to do it just all Pride, or how is it going to be arranged?" So of course I wanted the strongest images, but it also felt like I have to flush out certain topics specifically, which are kind of pivotal on the gay calendar or in the gay community. I didn't label the chapters, but some are

See *Gay Streets*, page 58

Pride in Michigan Kicks Off in Ferndale



Downtown Ferndale was bursting with music and celebration last weekend on June 3 during the city's annual Pride fest. Ferndale Pride attendees were treated to a jam-packed event featuring drag performers, an appearance by out lesbian Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, wide-ranging musical acts and a smorgasbord of queer events. Photos by Jason A. Michael.



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The Queer Fear of Living in America

Why This Writer Is Considering Moving From Ohio to Michigan

BY MIRA LAZINE

Transphobia in the United States is on the rise, both among the populace and policymakers. You can't browse the news without stumbling into debates over the legitimacy of trans lives — literally whether we should be granted the privilege of being allowed to exist. Trans rights are seen as a terror, something to fear and revile. Much uproar is given in the name of protecting the children, and yet little is given about trans kids forced into the wrong puberty.

Republican-sponsored bills in the Ohio State House specifically target trans folk. Rep. Gary Click is pushing for mandated conversion therapy and banning affirming healthcare

for trans minors, Rep. Jena Powell is trying to ban trans athletes from participating in youth sports and others are trying to prohibit trans folk from using the bathroom that they identify with. These bills are only increasing in number as time goes on.

It's only getting worse, and with political spearheads like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis jumping on Fox News to warn of "woke" evils supposedly plaguing the nation, it's easy to become fearful. What exactly is going to happen to us? It's a question without an easy answer, and as much as optimism is desired right now, in many parts of the country, there's no place for it. There's only survival — making sure that we as trans people are able to continue on

against every foreseeable odd stacked against us.

I'm scared. There's no doubt about it. I wake up with endless anxiety and dread over what's to come, constantly wondering what will happen next, what I should do, what trans people as a whole should do. And yet nobody has a solution. It's not hard to see why; changing the mindset of millions has been something sociologists have struggled to figure out for decades. It takes great political change to do that, but I worry we're running out of time.

This feeling follows me wherever I go. I've moved states several times in the past few years, and in every one I've felt the same over and over — will this be where I'll meet my end,

someone attacking me from the back of a beat-up Ford F-150 flying Trump flags? Or will it be because of some haphazardly designed policy at the hands of the next state's version of Marjorie Taylor Greene?

I'm plagued by it in social interactions as well. My day job cycles through a lot of new people and every time I see a different face, I can't help but wonder if they'll be the one to chase me out to my car at the end of my shift and harass me, or if they'll corner me for going into the "wrong" bathroom and threaten me.

I've had strangers jeer at me and call me slurs while circling me in public places. I've been stalked, cars honking at me because of how I present. And I've been threatened

by those I once called family. This trend seems to get worse with each passing year.

Even only just a few months ago, I found myself getting photographed and laughed at by random people with ill intent, and have had to leave public spaces for my own safety. There aren't many places I can go without feeling unsafe, without that continuous fear.

I'd love to think that this fear isn't justified, that it's somehow just a product of my imagination and that I need to just shake it off with some good old fashioned therapy. The world, however, has different ideas.

See **Queer Fear**, page 31

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Her partner, Karen
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◀ Drag at Pride

Continued from page 10

This year, headlining the Pride Stage at Motor City Pride during “Sabin’s Drag Revue” will be, naturally, Detroit’s own Sabin, along with two “RuPaul’s Drag Race” alumni: Robin Fierce and Jasmine Kennedie. Unsurprisingly, Kennedie feels the national anti-drag sentiment has only intensified since she began performing almost 10 years ago. She said it was especially palpable on tour at the end of 2022, during the tour for “A Drag Queen Christmas.”

“As a trans queen, my whole personal being is being attacked right now — especially in person,” Kennedie tells BTL. “Every tour stop from Amarillo, Texas, and on had protesters; we had bomb threats, and we had to have police with dogs sniff our facilities before performing.”

Sabin says that after performing in one of the Florida venues Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had attempted to sanction after the Christmas tour had passed through in December 2022, her love for Detroit and Michigan as a whole was reaffirmed.

“You could feel hesitancy from everyone and the looming of ‘what comes next?’ There was kind of an outside force working against us even before we got there,” Sabin says. “While I’ve never felt it before, because of the art that I do, this is probably the safest state for me to be in right now because of the elected officials that we have in place.”

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson have all voiced their support for the LGBTQ+ community and actively worked to codify protections for the community within Michigan. Still, Michigan hasn’t been free from its own slew of anti-drag protests and debates in recent months, including a small group of conservative protesters who were rattled by a Drag Queen Story Hour event being held at Sidetrack Bookshop in Royal Oak. They were ultimately outnumbered by hundreds of pro-queer community members and allies. Sabin shared that during brunch shows she has hosted, there have been times when people have been confrontational.

“I have had people that have walked in wearing Trump hats. And you’re welcome to that opinion, but I also slip little jokes in that make them uncomfortable,” Sabin says, “because you came in wearing your hat to prove a point, but I can also make you uncomfortable.”

Sabin added that during these kinds of situations, she leans into humor and makes a point of using the discomfort that exists to amplify her voice, denounce hate and make clear that wherever she is, “that is a safe space.”

Robin Fierce says that at many shows, she too will make a point of encouraging everyone in attendance to vote and be aware of legislation that is targeting queens across the nation. She points out that anti-drag legislation is a thinly veiled attempt at passing anti-transgender laws, since the drag and

despite politicians portraying them as sexually-oriented adult entertainers in blanket drag bans.

“For me, I like to show [my] body to give an essence of a woman, and for kids that’s not necessarily age-appropriate. I also agree that it’s up to the parents’ discretion to make that choice for the child. I am not going to be hired for a kid’s show and do that type of performance. I know my audience and my demographic,” Kennedie says. “I think what the Republicans are losing sight of here is that drag itself is an art form and it can be expressed in any way, just like acting, just like writing a script, just like writing books.”

Fierce added that despite the backlash drag queens are facing now, she would never consider changing any element of her performance to appeal to those who protest drag despite knowing nothing about it.

“I haven’t changed what I’m doing nor do I suggest anyone change what they’re doing, because we’re not doing anything wrong; we’re just trying to do our art,” she says. “Live your life, and stand up for the things you believe in, but don’t change just because people are all of a sudden trying to come for drag queens that

“As a trans queen, my whole personal being is being attacked right now — especially in-person. Every tour stop from Amarillo, Texas, and on had protesters; we had bomb threats, and we had to have police with dogs sniff our facilities before performing.”

— Jasmine Kennedie

trans communities are often incorrectly conflated.

“I feel like it’s harder to come for trans people as people as opposed to drag as an art that they see as the same thing — which it’s not,” Fierce tells BTL. “They’re acting like it’s a new thing, and it’s not. It’s been around in this country forever — not hurting people, genuinely not doing things to children or anything like that. Drag Queen Story Hours have been around for forever and even some of peoples’ favorite movies involve a drag queen — they were fine going out to watch ‘Mrs. Doubtfire’ but now want to actually take that away from drag queens across America.”

Kennedie agrees, adding that drag bans are simply a tool conservative Republican politicians can use to gain support for their party, distracting from more pressing issues like gun violence and sexual abuse by religious leaders. She said drag is an art form with many forms and applications, and that any sexual elements that might be present in some performances certainly do not reflect the only way of doing drag,

have been around before America.”

Ahead of Motor City Pride, Robin emphasized that this year it’s important to celebrate, but remember that Pride shouldn’t be just a party, but an opportunity to reflect on the “hard work that went into getting here” and “we have a lot of work to do.”

“RuPaul’s Drag Race” alumnus Orion Story, who is based in Grand Rapids, is set to perform at Lansing Pride on June 17. Orion anticipates the event will be one of the biggest Pride celebrations in recent memory because of ongoing anti-drag sentiment, emphasizing that the biggest voice the LGBTQ+ community has for change is on voting day.

“The biggest voice is action,” Orion says. “It’s scary that people are coming to Drag Queen Story Hours with guns and sitting outside and sending death threats and harassing, and a lot of the time the law is protecting those people. It’s one of those times where, even if you’re not political, you have to be. You have to be sure to be registered to vote.”

Trans Woman Ashia Davis Murdered in Michigan Motel

Investigators Working to Determine Who Killed Ashia 'Charm' Davis

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The body of 34-year-old Ashia Davis was found in the early hours of June 2 at the Woodward Inn in Highland Park, marking a tragic start to Pride Month in Metro Detroit.

While the medical examiner has yet to give an official cause of death, witnesses on the scene, including victim advocate for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office Julisa Abad, say Davis, a trans woman known to friends as Charm, appeared to have died of a gunshot wound. At the request of the Highland Park Police, the case has been taken over by the Michigan State Police's (MSP) Special Investigation Section. The MSP are investigating the death as a homicide and have released video of a suspect approaching and fleeing the scene.

"Another trans woman of color and member of our community was taken through violence," Abad told BTL. "Ashia Davis was loved by so many people in the community. Though every death has impacted me, this one has hit really close to home."

First Lt. Mike Shaw of the Michigan State Police told Fox 2 News it would take an autopsy to determine the official cause of death. He also said he was unsure of motive at this point and whether the murder had anything to do with Davis being transgender.

"Was there any type of sexual assault? Things like that is where we are at right now," he said.

Abad reflected on the way violence against trans women is often portrayed. "I've seen so many disparaging comments after trans women unfortunately die, and the big

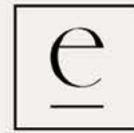


Ashia Davis. Courtesy photo

misconception is that trans women are out here tricking people," she added. "Whether people understand or not, or have their own biases, the reality is that straight cisgender men are killing transgender women because of their own self-hate and because of how the community treats us and continues to perpetuate the stigma."

Lilianna Angel Reyes, executive director of the Trans Sistas of Color Project (TSOCP), said her community is "mourning a beautiful woman and a loving sister. Ashia, Charm,

See [Ashia Davis](#), page 38



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10 of the Queerest Taylor Swift Songs

For Queer Michigan Fans, Why There's More to Love Under the Surface of Swift's Songs



BY LAYLA MCMURTRIE

I'm a bisexual woman, and I've been a Taylor Swift fan since I was a 7-year-old who lip-synced "Our Song"

in my family's Dearborn kitchen. Her lyrics have resonated with me since then, but I didn't realize how deep fandom could go before I met Ameera Salman, who is nonbinary and lives in Ann Arbor, and queer Swift fan Marie White, who is based in Wyandotte.

"Growing up as a closeted kid, I just related to her music so much and it felt like and still feels like a queer experience," White told me. "I even have a playlist called 'Queer Energy (Taylor's Version).'"

For years, Taylor Swift songs have been analyzed thoroughly — particularly by the artist's massive queer fanbase. Are the songs queer? Is she queer? The latter, of course, is (at least for now) just wishful thinking on the part of many Swifties, as they dig deep looking for another layer of relatability in their devotion to the pop superstar.

Enter Gaylor, a group of LGBTQ+ fans who look for queer easter eggs in Swift's music and, based on their interpretations of her songs, suspect that Taylor may be queer herself. Salman is a self-proclaimed Gaylor and says the possibility of Swift herself being a queer woman makes Salman feel "more connected to her."

Swift will coincidentally (or maybe intentionally?) bring her Eras Tour to Ford Field during Motor City Pride weekend on June 9 and 10, and surely some of the songs on the massively ambitious setlist will be from White's "Queer Energy" playlist. Some of those numbers might even be on this list.

Here are 10 of the queerest Taylor



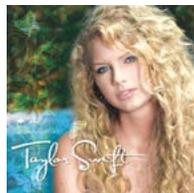
(Left) From the author's early Taylor Swift video tribute. (Above) Swift onstage. Photo: Photo: TAS Rights Management



Swift songs through each of her 10 eras.

"Mary's Song (Oh My My My)," Taylor Swift (2006)

Listening to this song growing up, I always enjoyed thinking about it as a close childhood friendship with another girl that evolved into a lifelong romance. While Swift could definitely be writing from the perspective of someone else, the use of the name "Mary" as the subject of this heartwarming story makes it easy to hear the lyrics in a queer



context. If you are a woman like me who wants to interpret it from your perspective, no one's stopping you.

Its meaning can be queer at heart, whether that's the case or not.

"The Way I Loved You," Fearless (2008)

This song about crazy, passionate love compares Swift's current male love interest to an old "you." The use of the non-gendered pronoun "you" is the root of many queer

interpretations of Swift songs. As a bisexual person hearing this, of course I'm going to interpret the "you" in this track as possibly being about two women intensely in love, whose feelings for each other are repressed. A Tumblr page titled "Taylor Swift is a Gay" tells me that I might not be too off base here.

"Ours," Speak Now (2010)

The lyrics in "Ours" are about a love that society looks down on. Sound familiar? "Seems like there's always someone who disapproves," Swift sings, "they'll judge it like they know about me and you." Maybe Swift didn't intend for this to be written about LGBTQ+ people, but there's no question that it resonates

deeply with those who have felt a similar kind of judgment.

"The Very First Night," Red (2012)

This song was only recently released on the re-recorded "Red (Taylor's Version)," but it's still meant to coincide with Swift's romances circa 2012. Gaylors, of course, have compiled many theories of what the words in the song could mean. "They don't know about the night in the hotel / They weren't riding in the car when we both fell / Didn't read the note on the Polaroid picture / They don't know how much I miss you." Notice

See [Taylor Swift](#), page 26

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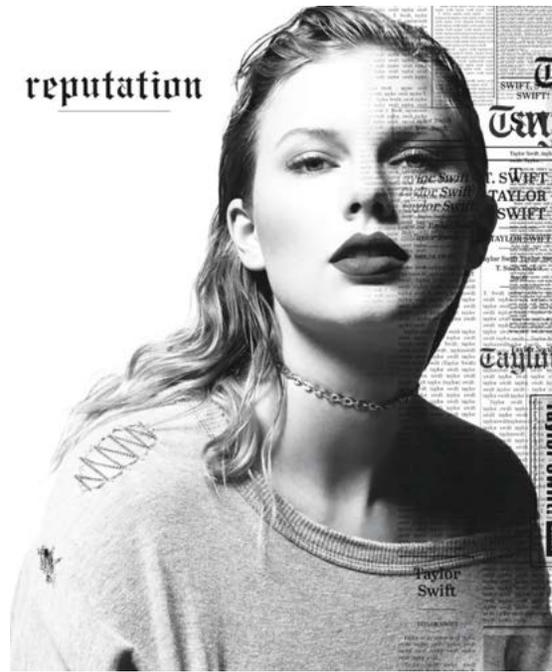


all, that kind of love isn't always easily pursued out in the open.

“Dress,” Reputation (2017)

“Reputation” saw Swift continue to evolve as a songwriter (see: more explicit language and sexier lyrics). Take, for instance, these notable lines in this sensual song: “Say my name and everything just stops / I don't want you like a best friend / Only bought this dress so you could take it off.” Some Gaylors think that the symbol of a dress alludes to a feminine partner. “What man cares that much about fashion?” Salman says.

Additionally, during her “Reputation” tour, Swift dedicated her choreography and performance of “Dress” to Loie Fuller, a queer modern dance pioneer.



“You Need to Calm Down,” Lover (2019)

In the music video for “You Need to Calm Down,” Swift features nearly a whole gay parade of queer people and LGBTQ+ rights activists. She even wears a wig with the same colors as the bisexual flag. Song-wise, this is Swift at her most explicitly queer. She isn't coming out, however — she's just showing what it means to be a good ally as she uses her massive platform to tell anti-queer conservatives that they need to get over it “'cause shade never made anybody less gay.”

During a conversation with “ME!” collaborator Brendon Urie in Swift's “Miss Americana”

See [Taylor Swift](#), page 58



Taylor Swift

Continued from page 24

how, in this line, the rhyme scheme is off. What pronoun would rhyme with “picture” better than you? Her.

“I Know Places,” 1989 (2014)

“I know places we can hide,” Swift sings on this song about a seemingly forbidden love that must be kept a secret. To me, the “anything wrong feels so right” theme feels like it could be about queer love — after

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Remembering Robert
 Puzzle on page 63

Motor City Pride Adds New Security Measures as Threats Increase Across the Nation



Sabin marches in the 2019 Motor City Pride Parade. Photo: Andrew Potter

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

With drag queens and trans youth under constant attack from all corners of the country, groups like Proud Boys have promised to demonstrate at Pride festivals around the nation. Pride Source has heard of no direct threat to Michigan. But as Motor City Pride (MCP), the state's largest Pride celebration, rolls around, organizers are aware of the threat and taking security concerns seriously.

"Security is always forefront on our minds with our planning," said MCP Chairman Dave Wait. "We work to ensure that the festival is a safe space for people to come and be who they are."

Wait said the Detroit Police Department has been an excellent ally in keeping festival attendees safe.

"We do work with law enforcement that monitors airwaves to see if there's chatter or discussions of any threat," he said. "When the Nazis came in 2019, they were aware of that well in advance and were monitoring it."

As of last week's planning meeting, no such threats have come across the wire. The planning committee will meet again before the event begins on June 10 and review any threats then.

"I'm not expecting that there's that type of chatter," Wait said. Still, they have made certain enhancements to their security strategy this year.

"That's one of the reasons that we have the one entrance and it's moved this year a little bit off of Jefferson Avenue to keep people safer," said Wait. "So that entrance was moved in our regard to be safe."

Wait added that, "We have new metal detectors for security operations, the kind they use at amusement parks and big venues that can get people screened quickly and moved into the festival faster. We're doing all kinds of things with that in mind."

Inside Hart Plaza, Wait said his security volunteers are well trained.

"We've got almost 50 people who are there assisting inside the festival," he said. "And the Detroit Police Department is our eyes and ears outside the festival."

Performer Sabin, who hosts a drag revue every year for MCP, said that Pride security is something she does think about.

"Of course I do," said Sabin. "But nothing more than my everyday surroundings. I stay alert and vigilant and speak up when necessary. The moment we stay home behind closed doors, they win. And I can't and won't let that happen."

Dancer Lex Hunter will also be performing on the Pride Stage as part of Sabin's revue.

"It's sad that we have to deal with prejudice on a day of celebration and inclusivity," said Hunter. "Hate groups have always been at Pride. We expect them to be there. But we lead by example and love."

Hunter said he is not afraid because he knows he's not alone. "I know I have my community standing with me and allies who are fighting just as hard to make our voices heard and make sure everyone feels safe."

Attendees should still be vigilant though, Hunter said.

"If you see something, say something. We want everyone to be able to celebrate with pride, not worry."

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Jordy. Courtesy photo

Motor City Pride Performer Jordy on His Stoned Michigan Recording Sessions and Making His Career Work For Him

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Emerging pop artist Jordy challenged himself on his recent tour and failed. The challenge? “I tried getting through the whole tour with one manicure,” he tells BTL over Zoom. “I got almost to the end of it, but I was like, ‘I need new nails,’ so we have new nails now.”

In addition to his manicure, Jordy also has a new album out. His bop-heavy second full-length, “Boy,” was released in April, just in time for his headlining performance on the Pride

Stage at 5:30 p.m. June 11 during Motor City Pride at Hart Plaza.

The album’s first single, “Story of a Boy,” is a queer take on the nostalgic classic “Absolutely (Story of a Girl),” which was a hit for the rock band Nine Days in the early 2000s. Twenty-three years later, Jordy’s version has inspired a TikTok viral moment, as the trans community has used bits from his reimagining to represent themselves and their own journeys in videos posted to the social platform.

Though Jordy now calls L.A. home, he’s originally from the suburbs of Chicago, so

he’s no stranger to Michigan. But he isn’t just fond of the state because he loves legal weed and sandwiches from Zingerman’s Deli in Ann Arbor — the artist even went on a summer writing retreat in Ann Arbor to work on parts of “Boy.”

In our recent interview, Jordy chatted about getting high while writing “I Get High” right here in Michigan, his recent life-changing appearance on “The Kelly Clarkson Show” and what to expect aside from “good vibes” when he takes the Pride Stage.

How does it feel to have this album out in the world?

I just got off of a tour, so I can be at home and that feels so good. But I mean, post album, it feels incredible. I’m just so happy these songs are out in the world, and I’m excited to keep promoting them and just spreading the good word. It feels like all of that hard work has come to fruition, and it’s really awesome.

What was the tour like? Is there a moment that really stands out to you as something that meant a lot to you?

I mean, the whole tour was amazing. It was great to start in my home city of Chicago. That’s always fun. I think the highlight on this tour was that I sampled “(Absolutely) Story of a Girl” for my album, which my version is called “Story of a Boy,” but in New York and L.A., I was able to bring out John Hampson, the original singer [from Nine Days]. He performed it with me, and it was so amazing, so I’m very grateful for those opportunities I had with John, just because it’s so cool to honor the original writer and the singer of the original song. He’s been so supportive and lovely over the past couple of months. It was really special to share that together.

What was your initial exchange with John before you put your own twist on “Absolutely (Story of a Girl)”?

We found the contact for his team a year ago and pitched the idea, and they were intrigued, for sure. They sent the demo to John and, supposedly, he really liked what I was doing with the song, and then he listened to my other music and he really enjoyed it, and so he was like, “Let’s do it.” So we ended up meeting for the first time when he flew to L.A. to be in the music video, because he has a little cameo in the music video as well. That was the first time we were able to sit down and really chat about each other and our journeys, and I was able to really express to him what this means to me and for my inner child and all of that good stuff.

Chicago’s not far from Michigan — what connections do you have to the state?

Well, a good friend of mine who’s also one of my main producers is from Ann Arbor and so last August, we went to his parents’ house over the summer and did a writing retreat, and it was amazing. It was so beautiful outside. We had this beautiful sunroom in the back of his house to set up a little studio and write. It was so amazing. We wrote three songs off of the album in that writing camp.

Which songs?

The first song we wrote at that retreat was my song “I Get High,” which for Michigan as well, it makes sense. We were high in Michigan because it’s legal there. So we got high and we wrote “I Get High” and then “Backseat Driver” and “Love U, Bye,” all that whole weekend. So very different songs from each other, which is also really fun. But that

was one of my favorite writing retreats we had done. I had just done Lollapalooza, so all of us, we were all in Chicago, so we just drove to Ann Arbor. It was so much fun. And then obviously, I've played Detroit a couple of times and this past tour, we played at The Shelter, which is famous for Eminem's rap battle. I felt like there was a lot of history in that venue.

Who musically influenced you as a kid?

Younger childhood years was Avril Lavigne, Spice Girls and Michelle Branch. When I was in high school, Sam Smith. They were always very inspirational to me because I've always been a singer, and that was always really inspiring to me. Then as I got older, more so in this space of my life, [queer pop artist] Fletcher's a big inspo to me. I adore her. I love her boldness and her lyricism and her performances and her voice. I've been listening to [openly queer pop musician] Jake Wesley Rogers, who I adore. I love Betty Who. There's too many to count, but so many inspirations along the way.

When did you know you wanted to be a musician?

When I've been a professional, the goal has always been to do music. So when I moved to L.A., I was DoorDashing and Postmating and barista-ing and side hustling and assisting and doing odd jobs that I found on Craigslist, just anything that was flexible and that would pay me money. But yeah, when I was younger, I was performing all the time. It was always something I wanted to do. There was never a point where I didn't want to be a performer or a musician. I was a theater kid, choir kid, a cappella kid. Did anything I could to be on stage. So by the time I graduated college, I was like, "This is what I want to do, and I will do whatever side hustles I need to do to achieve this." By then I was probably living in L.A. for three years, and then I was able to quit my side job and do this full-time.

What job did you quit to pursue music full-time?

My last job, I was a client services person at this post-production studio in L.A., which sounds fancy, but it was really me making coffee and bringing people food and doing whatever they told me to do.

Tell me about your theater roots.

I feel like I am where I am because of my school, which was a public high school that put a lot of money into the arts program, which is really important. I know that that's not the norm for most high school programs around the country, but we did "Rent," "Chicago" and "West Side Story."

Big, big productions.

Big, big productions. We did "Phantom of the Opera," kind of crazy. Such talented people came out of my class, which was so cool. This musical called "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," that was a moment for me because I got to sing some fun, big songs.

Then when I was in college, I did "Urinetown" and "Shrek." I did it for the first couple years in college and then I got to a point where I wouldn't necessarily say I would never do theater again — I think that would be fun to do in the future — but where I was like, "I'm kind of just sick of auditioning." I wanted to make my own stuff and do my own thing and not have somebody tell me I can't be something. I just got tired of it, so I shifted to music and here we are.

And then you recorded "Mind Games." How did you go from where you were to recording that album?

Before "Mind Games" came out, I put out my first song in 2018, and "Mind Games" came out in 2021. So there were many years of me putting out music. It was when the pandemic hit and TikTok really started happening for me that "Mind Games" started forming. My song, "Long Distance," went viral and that was a huge stepping stone for me. After I signed my record deal, after that song did its thing, that was when I had my team looking at me being like, "I think we're ready for you to do an album. Let's do an album."

In your eyes, how does "Boy" compare to "Mind Games"?

"Boy" felt more intentional. I think when I started writing the songs on "Mind Games," I didn't know I was making an album, and it became an album. I think "Boy" was more about me getting older and being a little bit more reflective and still talking about my specific experiences that I've lived over the past couple years. Every song is very specifically me and things that I have felt and gone through. I think it'll always be that way.

Did you write songs when you were younger?

I was way more of a singer when I was younger. I studied English in college, but it really was moving to L.A. and learning how to write songs. That was college too, for me. Being here and learning from the people I'd worked with really helped me figure out how to tell these stories in a melodic and fun, pop-y way. I obviously did dabble in writing as a kid. I went to summer camp and would write songs at camp and sing them around the campfire and that kind of thing, so it's always been a part of me.

What song on the album are you especially close to?

From a songwriting perspective, I love "Unburnable." That's one of my favorites off the album. I wrote it with Madi Diaz, who's an incredible writer and artist, and this producer-writer, Mikey Reaves, in Nashville. This was the only song I wrote in Nashville off of the record. It just feels like some really real, honest storytelling. I love the way we phrased it and explained this weird feeling

See **Jordy**, page 32

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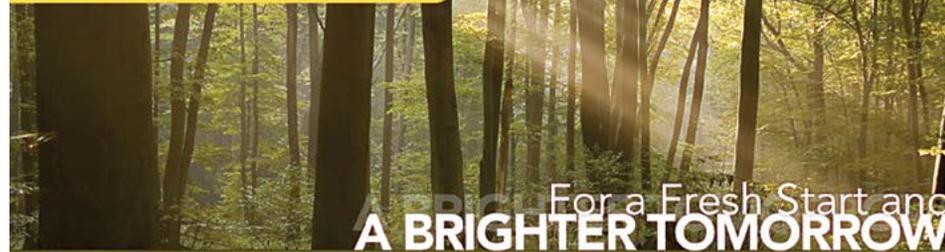
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◀ **Introvert Guide**

Continued from page 12

overwhelming feeling just hit me faster than a Trixie and Katya clapback.

And as much as I don't want to miss out on Pride celebrations, I've had to find some workarounds so I can actually have fun without getting too overstimulated. Try these tips to practice self-care and make your Pride season enjoyable, not just exhausting. No pretending to be extroverts this year, mokay?

Plan, plan, plan

It's harder to get overwhelmed when you know exactly where you're going, what you're doing and how long you'll be there. I'm talking about planning down to the hour, cuties! And rank the ones you want to do in order from most to least important — that way if something has to get nixed, you can cut it with confidence like that gorgeous woodland lesbian who chops wood with a broadsword (*cough cough* Nicole Coenen).

Look for smaller parties at clubs and bars so you don't end up at the hottest spot in town, wondering why there's a line out the door and you suddenly have heart palpitations. No matter how big or small the festivities are, there's no shame in pregaming with a nap. Jamie Lee Curtis goes to bed at 7 p.m. and she's thriving. #THRIVING.

Even better, see what the queer-owned coffee shops, bookstores, game cafes and indie theaters are doing to celebrate Pride. They've probably got some lowkey fun or at least some special discounts that will draw other LGBTQ+ introverts out, at least for a little while.

Circle your support introverts

We've all got that fabulous group of extrovert friends who are going to try to drag you out at all times of the year, so Pride weekend is the perfect time to enjoy the experience with your fellow introverts. You can agree in advance on which activities seem the most chill (and what your escape plan is if they're rowdier than you anticipate) and decide what time you expect you'll want to leave.

Other introverts are more likely to be understanding and not hit you with the old "just one more drink," followed by "just one more dance," right before the classic "but we're having so much fun!" Because you know "one more drink" means a whole platter of rainbow shots, "one more dance" means requesting Beyoncé's entire discography, and "but we're having so much fun" means "we ain't going home till they kick us out with a glittery boot."

Plot your escape

If you're in a mixed group of introverts and

extroverts or going with all extroverts, plan your escape. If anyone asks if you want to carpool, say, "Not today, Satan!" Carpooling makes you beholden to someone else's plans, which can delay your getaway.

Even better, let your friends know what time you're planning on leaving, that way you don't feel compelled to hunt them down in a crowd to say your farewells. Ever heard of an Irish goodbye? There's a reason those folks are so lucky, and it's got nothing to do with four-leaf clovers. Leaving when you feel like it without having to tell everyone bye or make an announcement is the dream.

Have a few excuses in your back pocket in case you need them. Fake sick if you have to. Pro tip: People will ask questions if you say something vague like you're just not feeling well, but only the truly brave souls will ask you questions if you tell them you have diarrhea. No judgment, and I won't tell if you won't. Besides, nervous tummies are real! You can always make a miraculous recovery just in time to do the activity you wanted to do.

Prep your survival pack

You've planned out your weekend, you've got your introvert entourage, and you've had your pregame nap, but now you're actually there at the Pride celebration. Surrounded by people. Where it's loud. And late at night. Why'd you agree to this again?

This year, bring earplugs. Whether they're the cheapies from the drugstore or those fancy reusable ones from the barrage of Instagram ads, they really do make a difference. They dull the music just enough so that it's tolerable, and they won't affect conversations with your friends. I mean, when it's super loud, people are going to have to yell in your ear for you to hear anything, anyway. Also, your ears will thank you when you're a queer elder trying to hear the tap noise on Grindr.

Consider blue light-blocking glasses if you're headed to the club. Will they actually protect you from the sensory overload of the strobe lights? Hell if I know. It's like prayer and vitamins: Can't hurt; might help. Even if they don't actually do anything, the placebo effect might still be useful.

If you get nervous in crowds, CBD gummies are your friend. They're powerful enough to chill you out yet they're missing the THC that, in overstimulating circumstances, could send your anxiety skyrocketing. Or if gummies aren't your bag, there's always good old-fashioned aromatherapy. Lavender and jasmine scents are said to have calming effects, so stash an essential oil roller in your pocket.

Mandy Shunnarah (they/them) is a queer Palestinian-American writer in Columbus, Ohio. Their first book, "Midwest Shreds: Skating Through America's Heartland," is forthcoming from Belt Publishing. Read more on their website, mandyshunnarah.com.

Prom ReDeux
Prom but make it queer

Affirmations invites you to the prom of your queer dreams! Bring yourself, your friends, and your partner(s) to an incredible party!

Music prom pics, dancing, food, spiked punch, and tarot readings are all part of the fun.

\$30 per ticket. All proceeds go towards funding our center and programming. This event is 21+.

Date: Saturday, June 24
Time: 8 pm - 12 am
At: Affirmations, 290 W 9 Mile Rd, Ferndale

Tickets are on sale now!

AFFIRMATIONS
LGBTQ+ Community Center

◀ Queer Fear

Continued from page 20

News articles showing the next dead trans woman pop up on my social media, repeating this same general sense of dread that I feel. A worry that one day my name will be the one mourned on the headlines. Or worse, that of someone I love.

I don't even know my own safety in this state, as trans murders are horrifically underreported in Ohio, and all I can know is that there are dozens a year on the federal level (that we know of).

My hands haven't been kept idle while this has been happening. I have been trying to do the work to combat transphobia around me — going to rallies, sorting out issues in my local area or just offering words of support to other trans people around me. But none of it feels like enough, because none of it is enough on its own. I can't make a movement show up overnight. All I can do is try and contribute my small part.

Beyond small contributions to movements and scenes, I've been focusing on finding solutions for making sure my loved ones and I don't get hurt in this assault on trans rights. Escape plans have been the central thing on my mind for staying protected, to places either inside the country or even outside of it. These plans aren't ones I want to make — I don't find any pride in them — but it's just the reality of everything right now.

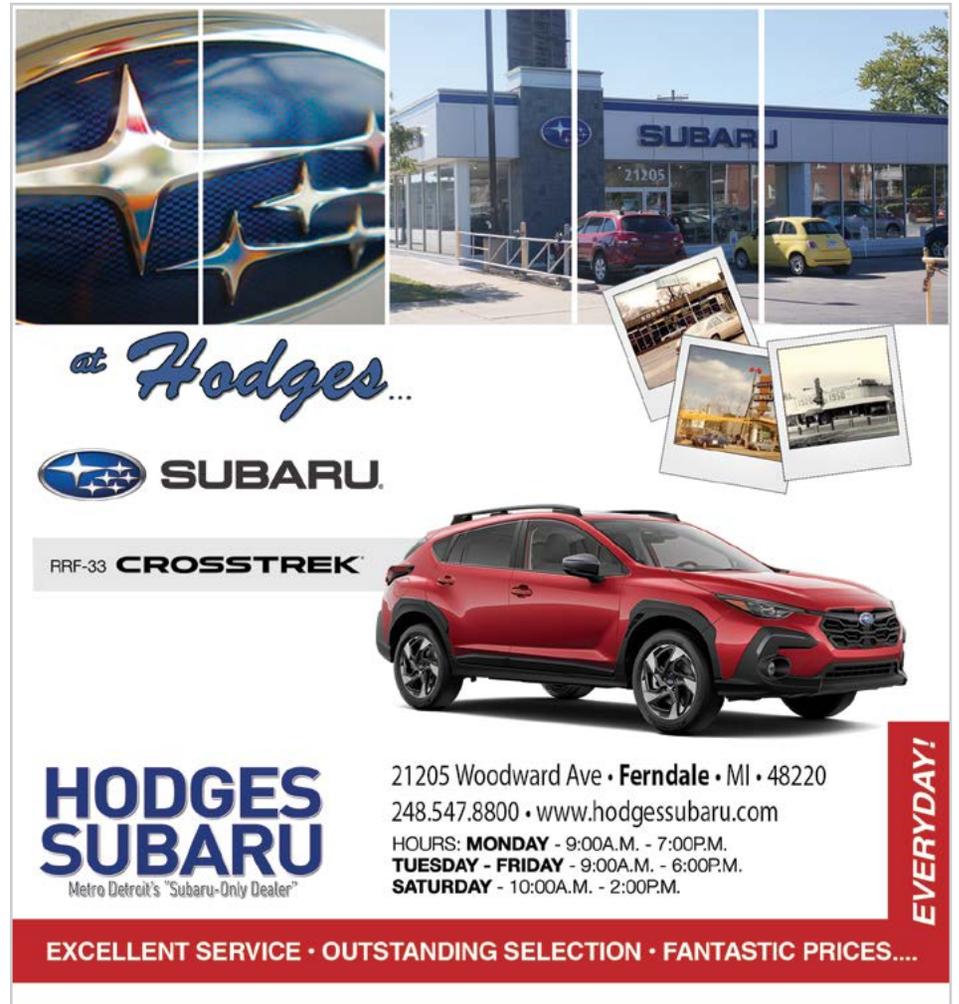
I have to make these plans. I've been made homeless for being transgender, and have only just worked my way out of it. The fear I felt, constantly worrying for my safety in stranger's houses and in hotels, is not something I ever want to relive.

There are a lot of places I've had in mind. Outside the country, I've made plans for places like the Netherlands or Australia, trying to bargain the feasibility with safety in law and culture. I've never lived outside the U.S. before, so this thought is especially terrifying to me. Inside the country is much more comfortable, albeit a bit more worrying. New York, Oregon, Washington, California and — most realistic for me right now — Michigan have all been different places I've considered trying to settle if things go even more south in Ohio.

Michigan in particular is the most feasible — it's a neighbor to Ohio with more progressive policies at the state level. I also wouldn't need to be too far from the connections I've made here in Ohio if I ever wanted to come by and visit those I care about.

I don't like the thought of leaving the state again. I've done that too much in my life. But if society's shift toward transphobia continues, I'll have to find somewhere to take refuge. I can only hope that some place will take me as I am.

Mira Lazine is a writer living in Cincinnati who specializes in science, politics, video games, and queer rights. You can find her over on Mastodon @miralazine.



at Hodges...

SUBARU

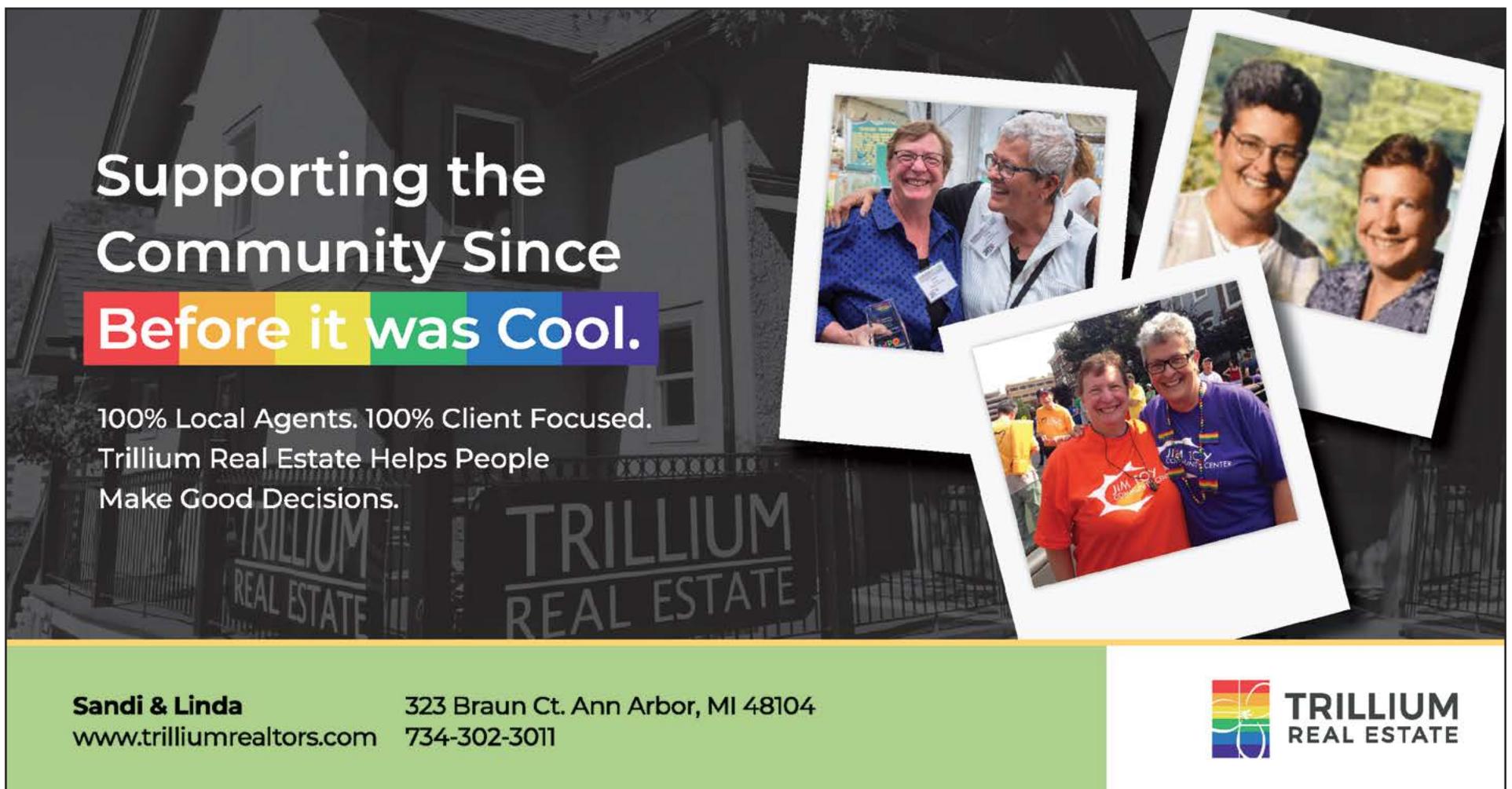
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Jordy. Courtesy photo

◀ Jordy

Continued from page 29

of not letting go of certain items from a past relationship. I love the way that we were able to craft and create that story. It just feels very special and very close to my heart.

What has it been like to experience the TikTok reaction to "Story of a Boy" from the trans community?

Very surreal, very inspiring. I did not expect that this would become a song for the trans community. That's not what I anticipated. When I first uploaded the sound, it was really just to compare the original version to my version and to show people what I was doing with the song. The second I saw the first video of a trans person using the sound to showcase their journey from, this is the story of a girl to this is the story of a boy, I was like, "Oh, this is cool and this makes sense, and how did I not even think of this before?"

Then it just caught on and more people started doing it. Then I started duetting it and showing my reactions to these transitions because I wanted people to one, feel loved and seen, and I wanted to showcase my love and also use my platform to lift these voices because the trans community is under attack right now.

It's really a scary time to be queer, and especially trans, in this country. So, for me, I just started using my platform to show these videos and duetting them and getting my mom involved, because she's amazing. I feel like people need to see supportive mothers

and my friends to get involved. I wanted people to feel seen and loved. Now just scrolling through, there's thousands of videos using the song, and it's really special.

I love that. And then there's your recent appearance on "The Kelly Clarkson Show." What was that like?

I have been a fan of Kelly ever since I watched her win "American Idol." I was very little, and me and my whole family saw the moment as it happened. So she's been an inspiration for me. The image of her holding my album, I'll just never get over. It is a constant "what the hell is happening?" kind of moment. It was very surreal. I get speechless when I talk about it because it doesn't feel like it happened, but it totally did.

How many times did you watch your episode afterwards?

Oh, I'll check in on that clip every day. I'll just be like, "I'm feeling low. Let's look at Kelly Clarkson saying my name," and I suddenly feel a lot better.

Lastly, what can Michigan Pridegoers expect from your performance?

Lots of good vibes. I like getting the crowd rowdy and going. I love dancing and just getting the crowd interactions. All of that is so special and important to me, so it's always going to be a good time. My thing is writing pretty vulnerable lyrics under really happy pop beats, so hopefully there will be some relatability, but also lots of room to dance and just let go, let loose and have fun.



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June 10 & 11, 2023

Hart Plaza, Detroit

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#MOTORCITYPRIDE

Pride Stage

Sponsored by MGM Grand Detroit

Saturday, June 10, 2023

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Act</u> |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1:15pm | Breakfast for Dinner |
| 2:00pm | Better Love |
| 3:00pm | Sabin's Drag Revue |
| 4:00pm | The Iron Roses |
| 5:00pm | Boys of Fall |
| 6:00pm | Sabin's Drag Revue |
| 7:00pm | Siena Liggins |
| 8:00pm | The Robyn Party |
| 9:00pm | Stage Closes |

Sunday, June 11, 2023

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Noon | DJ CIV |
| 1:00pm | PRISM Men's Chorus |
| 2:00pm | Drag Show: Robin Fierce from RuPaul's Drag Race, Jasmine Kennedie from RuPaul's Drag Race, Sabin |
| 3:00pm | Little Visits |
| 4:00pm | Mama Yaya |
| 5:00pm | Andrew Christian |
| 5:30pm | JORDY |
| 6:15pm | DJ CIV |
| 7:00pm | Stage Closes |

Festival Stage

Saturday, June 10, 2023

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Act</u> |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1:30pm | The Science Fair |
| 2:30pm | Desert Sharks |
| 3:30pm | Killing Pixies |
| 4:30pm | Hayley and the Crushers |
| 5:30pm | Rodeo Boys |
| 6:30pm | The Idiot Kids |
| 7:30pm | Synthia Looper |
| 8:15pm | Stage Closes |

Sunday, June 11, 2023

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1:15pm | OneLineDrawing |
| 2:30pm | The Dick Withers Band |
| 3:30pm | Larah Helayne |
| 4:30pm | CHECKER |
| 5:30pm | Act of Violets |
| 6:15pm | Stage Closes |

Schedules are subject to change. Check the website

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Pyramid Stage

Saturday, June 10, 2023

| Time | Act |
|--------|----------------|
| 2:00pm | DJ DigiMark |
| 3:00pm | Bronsyn Sacker |
| 4:00pm | THAY |
| 5:00pm | Nugisy |
| 6:00pm | Robert Bannon |
| 7:00pm | Anthony J Fink |
| 8:00pm | Stage Closes |

Sunday, June 11, 2023

| | |
|--------|------------------------------|
| 1:30pm | DJ Edward Alan |
| 2:30pm | Sharp Lives |
| 3:30pm | Crystal Harding's Drag Revue |
| 6:00pm | Stage Closes |

Riverfront Dance Stage

Saturday, June 10, 2023

| Time | Act |
|--------|---|
| 1:00pm | HOUSECATS: HOTWAXX HALE and Jenny LaFemme |
| 3:00pm | Jesse Cory B2B Ben Scott |
| 5:00pm | TYLR_ and KASS DETROIT |
| 7:30pm | Ladylike |
| 9:00pm | Stage Closes |

Sunday, June 11, 2023

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Noon | Ashton Swinton and Garrison XR |
| 2:00pm | Kindle |
| 3:30pm | Mister Joshooa and LOREN DETROIT |
| 5:30pm | John Collins |
| 7:00pm | Stage Closes |



SATURDAY
WELCOME GATES OPEN AT 1 P.M.

FESTIVAL EVENTS 1 - 9 p.m.

Four Stages of Entertainment Featuring over 50 Acts!

Over 140 Sponsors, Vendors, Non-Profits & Food Booths, plus thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality!

1 - 5 P.M. Family Area with youth activities and games
Sponsored by Kroger

8 P.M. Festival Entrance Closes
(No Admittance or Re-Entry after 8pm)

9 P.M. Festival Closes

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SUNDAY
WELCOME GATES OPEN AT 12:30 P.M.

FESTIVAL EVENTS 12:30 - 7 p.m.

Four Stages of Entertainment Featuring over 50 Acts!

Over 140 Sponsors, Vendors, Non-Profits & Food Booths, plus thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality!

NOON 2023 Motor City Pride Parade
Sponsored by Jeep

1-5 P.M. Family Area with youth activities and games
Sponsored by Kroger

6 P.M. Festival Entrance Closes
(No Admittance or Re-Entry after 6pm)

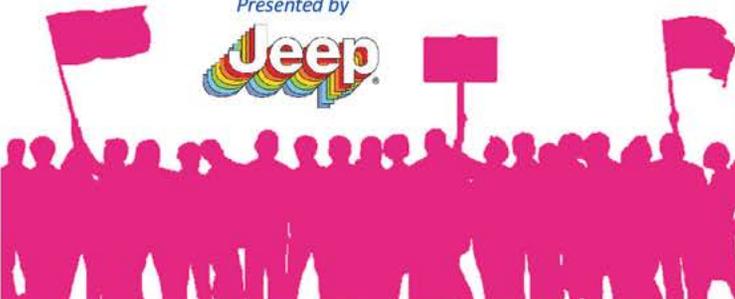
7 P.M. Festival Closes

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PARADE

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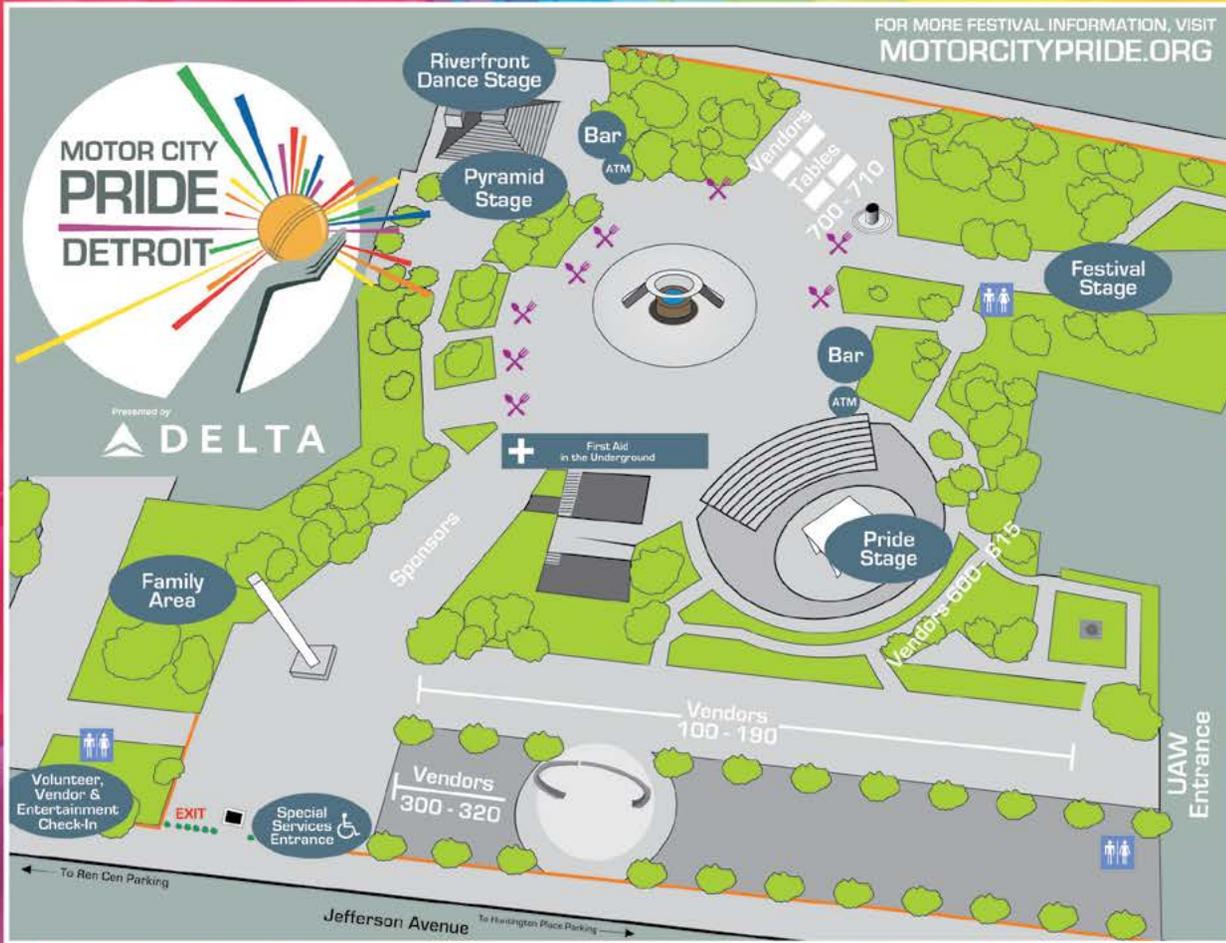
Sunday, June 11

Starts at Noon

Starts at the corner of Fort and Griswold

www.motorcitypride.org for any last minute updates.





Thank you to our vendors.

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- Affirmations
- All Well-Being Services
- Alzheimer's Association
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
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- Be The Light
- Brownie Butter, LLC.
- C&J Hammer Hard Accessories
- Central Michigan University
- Carlin Alumni House
- Christ Church Detroit
- Chunkysequins Shop!
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- Community Health Awareness Group
- Corktown Health
- Crystalline Dream
- Cuddles and Blunts
- Cummins Inc.
- Detox Day Spa Nutritional Coaching
- Detroit Community Health Connection/ EHE PREP
- Detroit Health Department
- Detroit Pistons
- Detroit Recovery Project Inc.
- Dreams and aspirations
- Edward Jones Financial Advisor Frank Zanger
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- Equality Michigan
- Face Flair
- Femin
- Forever Families
- Free Mom Hugs Inc
- Gay Tank Top
- Geeky And Kinky
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- KTCrafting
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- Legacy Adoption Services
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- Mama P's Wholesome Grinding Co.
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- Michigan Democratic Party
- Michigan HIV/AIDS Council
- Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health
- MoGo
- MSUCOM LGBTQ in Medicine
- NAYETAYE VISUALS
- NextGen Michigan
- Not Sorry Goods
- OllieOnyx
- Paige Abnormal Creations
- Peace Corps
- PFLAG Detroit
- Planned Parenthood
- Advocates of Michigan
- PRISM Gay Men and Allies Chorus
- Progressive Auto Insurance
- Queerest Gear
- Rainbow Love
- Ruth Ellis Center
- Samaritas
- Saving Throw Pillows
- SEMHAC Planning Council
- ShayMakes! Custom Treasures
- Sing Out Detroit
- Six Feet Over
- Stewie's Got Pride
- Stonewall Sports Detroit
- Sunday Assembly Detroit
- Sunset Toys
- Support the T
- Swagger Is A Gift
- The Cancer Screening Project
- The Cathedral
- Church of St. Paul
- The Henry Ford
- THE ORIGINAL
- HOUSE OF DOPE
- The Spliff Bag
- Tna Blessed Llc
- To Write Love on Her Arms
- Tri-County Foster Care Coalition
- Twisted Willow Soap Co.
- Twistful Thinking
- Unified HIV Health and Beyond
- IKEA
- UNITE HERE! Local 24
- USF/DS
- Vicious Fruit Apparel
- Visions of Citrine
- Wayne State University
- Prevention team (WSUP)
- Wayne State University-Wayne Health Adult Clinic
- Wayne Underwear
- Well Done Goods
- XclusiveShade

Family Activities

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Saturday
JUNE 10TH
1:00-5:00 P.M.

Sunday
JUNE 11TH
1:00-5:00 P.M.

Join other families as they participate in face painting, arts and crafts, plus much more!





Images from the BTL Pride festival archives featuring Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (top left), Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II with drag performer Sabin (right) and throngs of Pridegoers (bottom left). Photos: Andrew Potter

Your 2023 Michigan LGBTQ+ Pride Calendar

Pride Season is in full bloom for 2023, and you'll find all the important details right here. From small-town Prides in unexpected places to the big mainstay events happening in June and beyond, there's something for every Michigan Pridegoer.

JUNE

Saturday, June 10

Detroit (Motor City Pride)

Through June 11. Michigan's largest Pride festival draws more than 50,000 visitors each year to a two-day event featuring entertainment across three stages, plentiful food and drink options, and a wide variety of activities for all ages. This year, MCP welcomes pop singer-songwriter Jordy, whose new album "Boy" is out now; Detroit native and up-and-coming pop

artist Siena Liggins; The Robyn Party, a tribute to Swedish dance-pop artist Robyn, and local drag favorite Sabin. You'll also find "RuPaul's Drag Race" stars like Robin Fierce and Jasmine Kennedie on the Pride Stage. The Riverfront Dance Stage is usually where the DJs like John Collins spin. The Festival Stage, where you can catch a performance by "poolside glitter punk" band Hayley and the Crushers, is predominantly punk, rock 'n' roll and folk. Finally, the Pyramid Stage is for up-and-coming talent — don't miss Robert

Bannon on Saturday night. June 10, 1-9 p.m., June 11, 12:30-7 p.m., Hart Plaza (1 W. Jefferson St., Detroit). Pride parade June 11 at noon, downtown Detroit. motorcitypride.org

Grand Haven Pride

Grand Haven will hold its first Pride festival in 2023, featuring drag shows, a live DJ, drag bingo, food and drink, a kids zone and an adult friendship connection area. The all-ages event is set for 12-9 p.m. at Waterfront Stadium (1 North Harbor Dr., Grand Haven). ghpride.org

Holly Pride

1-6 p.m., Holly Lakeside Park (Holly Bush Dr. and Park Ave.,

Holly). [facebook.com/ACTHOLLY](https://www.facebook.com/ACTHOLLY)

Howell Pride

Tiny Howell in Michigan's Livingston County is a prime example of Pride persisting in an unlikely place. The Pride Alliance of Livingston will host the event, which includes swag, games, face painting, crafts, food trucks and a performance by a cappella group MaskEra on the lawn of the Howell Historic Courthouse from

12-4 p.m. qflivco.org/upcoming-events/howell-pride-parade

Marquette Pride

1-10:30 p.m., Ellwood Mattson Lower Harbor Park, (200 N. Lakeshore Blvd., Marquette). uprainbowpride.org/events

Saturday, June 17

Grand Rapids Pride

Grand Rapids will hold its 35th annual Pride celebration, themed "Unapologetically Me" in 2023. The bustling festival,

See **Pride Calendar**, page 40

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◀ Ashia Davis

Continued from page 23

her loss was tragic and ridiculous.”

Reyes went on to say that the community needs to uplift Davis’s friends and family during this time. “Also,” she said, “we need to advocate for Black and brown trans women and allow us to grow and thrive without violence.”

Though it’s early in the investigation, Abad said that “though I can’t talk about the case, I am confident that we will find justice for Ashia.” Currently, the MSP are asking people to look

at the video they released in hopes that some can help identify the suspect. In the video, the suspect is wearing a blue hooded sweatshirt or jacket, black Adidas jogging pants with a white stripe on the legs and an Adidas emblem on front with black Nike shoes.

“While the video is from a distance and the photo is blurry, we are hopeful that someone will recognize this person,” Shaw said in a tweet.

Police were first called to the Woodward Inn when someone noticed an open door to

one of the motel rooms. The fact that Davis’ body was discovered inside at the start of Pride Month makes the tragedy particularly painful, said Jey’nce Poindexter Mizrahi, vice president of the TSOCP. “I’m at a pause. It’s so unnerving. Gun violence continues to shake, rattle and roll us, yet no national gun control. They’re too busy trying to ban drag and fear mongering. It’s extremely telling in the worst way. We will fight on, though.”

At the beginning of the investigation, Davis’s beloved Yorkie, Clyde, was missing. But now Abad said she is “happy to report that Clyde has been located and is reunited with family.”

“While the video is from a distance and the photo is blurry, we are hopeful that someone will recognize this person.”

— Lt. Mike Shaw, Michigan State Police

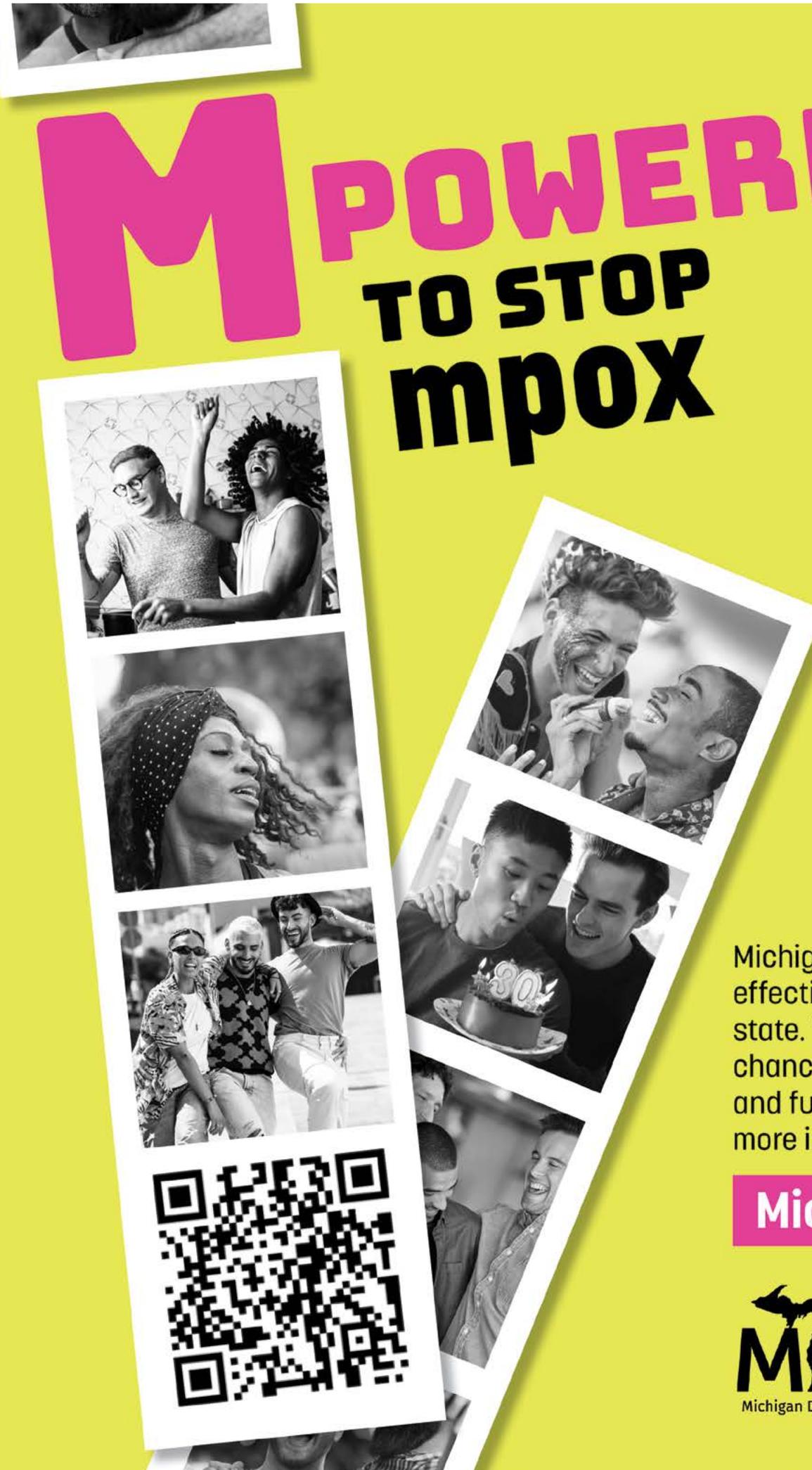
A memorial benefit show for Davis will take place Wednesday, June 7 at the White Star Night Club in Hamtramck, located at 9819 Conant St. Anyone with information about the case is encouraged to call the Michigan State Police at 1-855-MICH-TIP, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-SPEAK-UP or the Fair Michigan Justice Project. A fundraiser to help with Ashia’s funeral expenses has been set up at bit.ly/3OWkkm0.

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◀ Pride Calendar

Continued from page 37

one of the largest one-day events held in Grand Rapids each year, will offer 100+ vendors, a beer garden, entertainment on multiple stages, family and children's activities, food trucks, local artists, a sensory space and teen/youth activities. 12-10 p.m., Calder Plaza (320 Ottawa Ave. NW, Grand Rapids). grpride.org/festival

Grosse Pointe

WE GP will feature a short march,

music, activities for kids, a selfie station and activism opportunities. Attendees are encouraged to bring signs, joy and Pride. 1-3 p.m., downtown Grosse Pointe at the corner of Kercheval Avenue and St. Clair Street. wegp.org/event-5267072

Lansing Pride

Michigan's capital city boasts a long, influential history as the birthplace of several modern LGBTQ-influenced

movements and organizations, including the long-running Women in the Arts Festival (held in neighboring East Lansing each November). The annual Pride event will include more than 100 vendors, live entertainment all day long and a beer tent. 1-11 p.m., Lansing's Old Town neighborhood (centered on the 1200 block of Turner Street). lansingpride.org

Livonia Pride

Livonia's very first Pride event runs from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Livonia Civic Center Park (15218 Farmington Road). facebook.com/events/1223582008522184

Saturday, June 24

Bay City (Great Lakes Bay Pride)

11 a.m.-6 p.m., Wenonah Park (801 N. Water St., Bay City). greatlakesbaypride.org/regional-pride-celebrations/#pride-festival

Benton Harbor

12-6 p.m. Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Plaza (127 Pipestone St., Benton Harbor). outcenter.org

Flint Pride

2-8 p.m., Riverbank Park (100 Saginaw St., Flint). facebook.com/FLINTGAYPRIDE

Holland Pride

Out on the Lakeshore, the host organization for Holland's annual Pride fest, faced an unfriendly local county government this year when it came time to plan the popular event. Ottawa County, which has made national headlines driven by the actions of a vocal anti-diversity county commission, withdrew funding, but the organization pushed ahead to create a family-friendly festival complete with food, entertainment and a renewed commitment to support and affirm the region's LGBTQ+ community. 12-5 p.m., Centennial Park (250 Central Ave., Holland). facebook.com/HollandPride

Monroe County Pride

12-6 p.m., St. Mary's Park (111 W. Elm Ave., Monroe). bit.ly/43a65hV

Owosso Pride

2-6 p.m., Curwood Castle Park (224 Curwood Castle Dr., Owosso). facebook.com/events/1184185838868335/

Rochester Pride



Motor City Pride 2023 performers (left to right) Hayley "Crusher" Cain (of Hayley and the Crushers), Siena Liggins and Anthony J. Fink. Photos courtesy of Motor City Pride

See **Pride Calendar**, page 42

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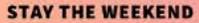
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**SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 25**
ROYAL OAK MUSIC THEATRE

TICKETS ON SALE AT
axs



Orion Story performs at Lansing Pride on June 17

◀ Pride Calendar

Continued from page 40

1-4 p.m., Rochester Municipal Park (400 6th St., Rochester). linktr.ee/foreverpride?mibextid=Zxz2cZ

Three Rivers Pride

12-9 p.m., downtown Three Rivers. facebook.com/threeriverspride

Sunday, June 25

Berkley Pride (Block Party)

The second annual Berkley Pride Block Party is set for 12-4 p.m. at 12 Mile and Robina Avenue. downtownberkley.com/berkley-pride

Port Huron (Blue Water Pride)

10 a.m.-3 p.m., 701 McMorran Blvd., Port Huron. facebook.com/BlueWaterPride?mibextid=LQQJ4d

Big Rapids Pride

The second annual Pride Big Rapids Festival, themed "Live with Pride," will feature a beer tent, live music, a drag show, food vendors and more.

12-8:30 p.m., Northend Riverside Park (North 4th Ave., Big Rapids). pridebigrapids.org

Saint Clair Shores Pride March

Organized by the Saint Clair Shores Residents for Equality group, the second annual St. Clair Shores Pride March will feature speakers starting at 11 a.m. behind the Chapoton Pump Station (23001 E. Nine Mile Road, Saint Clair Shores). The march route

follows Jefferson to Blossom Health Plaza to the end of the pier and then back to the start. facebook.com/events/108974112207197

JULY

Saturday, July 8

South Lyon (Pride in the Park)

12-5 p.m., McHattie Park (S Lafayette St., South Lyon). facebook.com/SouthLyonPride

Friday, July 14

Hotter Than July

Through July 16. Hotter Than July, the world's second oldest Black LGBTQ+ Pride, is celebrating its 27th year in 2023. Hosted by LGBT Detroit, this three-day event focuses on entertainment, education and Black LGBTQ+ culture. Throughout the week, LGBT Detroit will host a candlelight vigil in remembrance of community members who have died, a book festival, a testing zone, an awards brunch, a worship service and a concert on July 15 at Motor City Casino featuring "Queen of Bounce" Big Freedia and Detroit's Amber Chene and Nuandré. lgbtdetroit.org

See **Pride Calendar**, page 44



Holland Pride 2022. Photo: Facebook

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Big Freedia performs at Hotter Than July on July 15. Courtesy photo

◀ **Pride Calendar**

Continued from page 42

Thursday, July 20

Battle Creek Pride

Through July 23. Battle Creek Pride's four-day event features an LGBT Q&A on July 20 (6:30 p.m. at Miller Stone Building), a Pride parade on July 21 (7 p.m. along Michigan Avenue, from Washington Avenue to Commerce Point), a festival on July 22 from 1-7 p.m. at Leila Arboretum (928 W. Michigan Ave., Battle

Creek) and a candlelight vigil on July 23. battlecreekpride.org/pride-weekend

AUGUST

Friday, Aug. 4

Allegan Out Loud

Through Aug. 5. Allegan's second annual Pride festival, Allegan Out Loud, will feature an adults-only drag show on Aug. 4 at Griswold Auditorium (401 Hubbard St., Allegan) and a festival on Aug. 5 offering

See **Pride Calendar**, page 46

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I ♥ HTJ
HOTTER THAN JULY

SATURDAY
JULY 15

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*Big
Freedia*

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THANK YOU
FOR YOUR INPUT!

The ECHO partnership works to make Oakland County a place where healthy people are connected in a thriving and equitable community.

◀ Pride Calendar

Continued from page 44

food, vendors, music, a drag queen story time and an all-ages drag show at Riverfront Plaza in downtown Allendale. facebook.com/alliganspeakup

Royal Oak Pride

Through Aug. 5. Details TBA. royaloakpride.com

Saturday, Aug. 5

Ann Arbor Pride

12 p.m., downtown Ann Arbor. facebook.com/AnnArborPride

Sunday, Aug. 13

Hazel Park Pride

Green Acres Park (620 W. Woodward Heights Blvd., Hazel Park). Details TBA. facebook.com/MotownDragBingo

Sunday, Aug. 19

Jackson Pride

12-6 p.m., Horace Jackson Park (intersection of West Michigan Ave. and South Jackson St., Downtown Jackson). experiencejackson.com/event/jackson-pride-fest

Saturday, Aug. 26

Transgender Michigan Pride in the Park (Ferndale)

Transgender Michigan is celebrating the 24th anniversary of Transgender Michigan Pride in the Park in 2023. The event, which features a vendor area and a bring-your-own picnic is a chance to socialize, learn about local organizations and businesses serving the Michigan transgender community and more. 12-6 p.m., Martin Road Park (1900 Orchard Ave., Ferndale). transgendermichigan.org/transgender-pride

SEPTEMBER

Thursday, Sept. 14

Mackinac Island Pride

Through Sept 17. Community Hall (7358 Market St., Mackinac Island). Details TBA. straitspide.org

Wednesday, Sept. 27

Traverse City

(Up North Pride)

Through Oct. 1. Downtown Traverse City. Details TBA. upnorthpride.com

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Read These 15 New Queer Titles Before Homophobes Ban Them

Support Your Local Bookstore with Must-Read Fiction, Kids Books and More

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

In an era when books by or about LGBTQ+ people are being taken off library shelves and banned in grade schools, there's never been a more important time to support queer literature. Remember: Representation not only matters, it saves lives. LGBTQ+ people will not be erased, as the pages of these books prove.

Fiction

The Salt Grows Heavy

Cassandra Khaw

A mermaid, a prince and a plague doctor all walk into a bar. Actually, it's not a bar but a village of bloodthirsty children. Author Cassandra Khaw's wildly original novel is a dark fairy tale that defies easy explanation. Part nightmare, part romance, Khaw crafts this story with poetic prose and an eye for the macabre.

The Adult

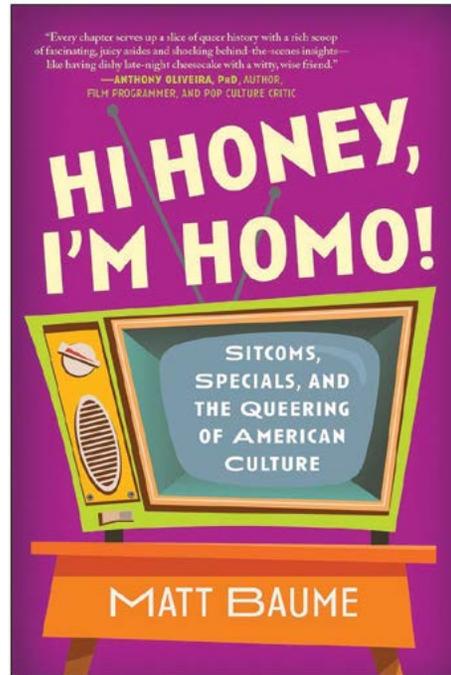
Bronwyn Fischer

A college freshman. An older woman. An affair. Bronwyn Fischer's "The Adult" is a beautifully written novel about what it means to find yourself as a young person and whether finding yourself is even really possible when you're consumed by a relationship with someone older and, presumably, wiser than you.

Confidence

Rafael Frumkin

A novel about a couple of gay scalawags who con the rich? Yes, please. After meeting at a juvenile delinquent boot camp, Orson and Ezra become partners in a life of crime. When they embark on the biggest scam of their career, targeting unfulfilled rich people, things don't exactly go as planned. Written in an engaging voice, "Confidence" is a book about how it pays to be morally bankrupt. Or does it?



Non-Fiction

Hi Honey, I'm Homo

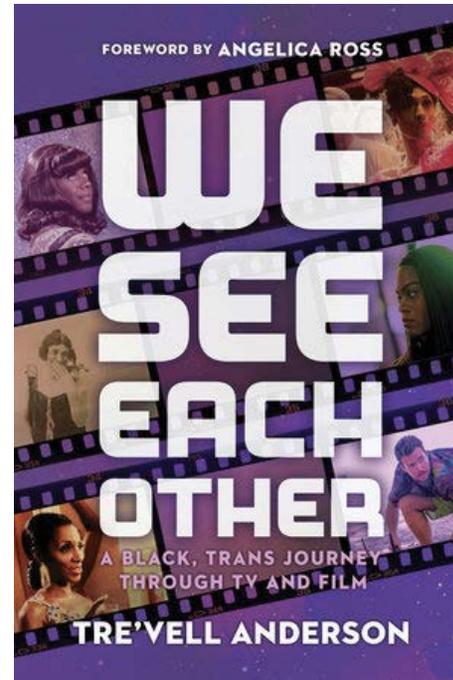
Matt Baume

You can learn a lot about cultural attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people by watching TV. Decades of it, in fact. And if you're thinking, "Well who has the time for that?" worry not. Matt Baume has you covered. "Hi Honey, I'm Homo" examines how the fight for LGBTQ+ equality has been reflected through TV history. From "All In the Family" to "Soap" to "The Golden Girls" to "Modern Family," Baume illustrates how sitcoms shaped and continue to shape the way people see LGBTQ+ people and how LGBTQ+ people see themselves.

We See Each Other: A Black, Trans Journey Through TV and Film

Tre'vell Anderson

If you start every morning with the "What A

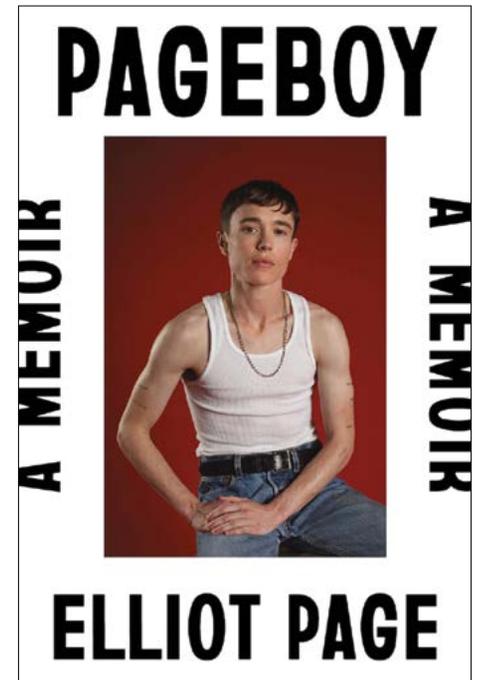


Day" podcast, then you already know that Black trans journalist Tre'vell Anderson is engaging, hilarious and smart as hell. In "We See Each Other," Anderson traces both a personal and on-screen history of transgender visibility through movies and TV shows like "Some Like It Hot," "Boys Don't Cry" and "RuPaul's Drag Race." This is an absolute must-read.

We Set the Night on Fire: Igniting the Gay Revolution

Martha Shelley

During this time of intense backlash against LGBTQ+ rights, it's wise to turn to the activists who were on the forefront of this movement to remember our history and how far we've come. "We Set the Night on Fire" recounts lesbian founder of the Gay Liberation Front Martha Shelley's story of fighting for equality. It's a personal history that cannot be separated from the history of the larger Civil Rights Movement. May this book inspire more LGBTQ+ people and allies to take to the streets and fight for our lives.



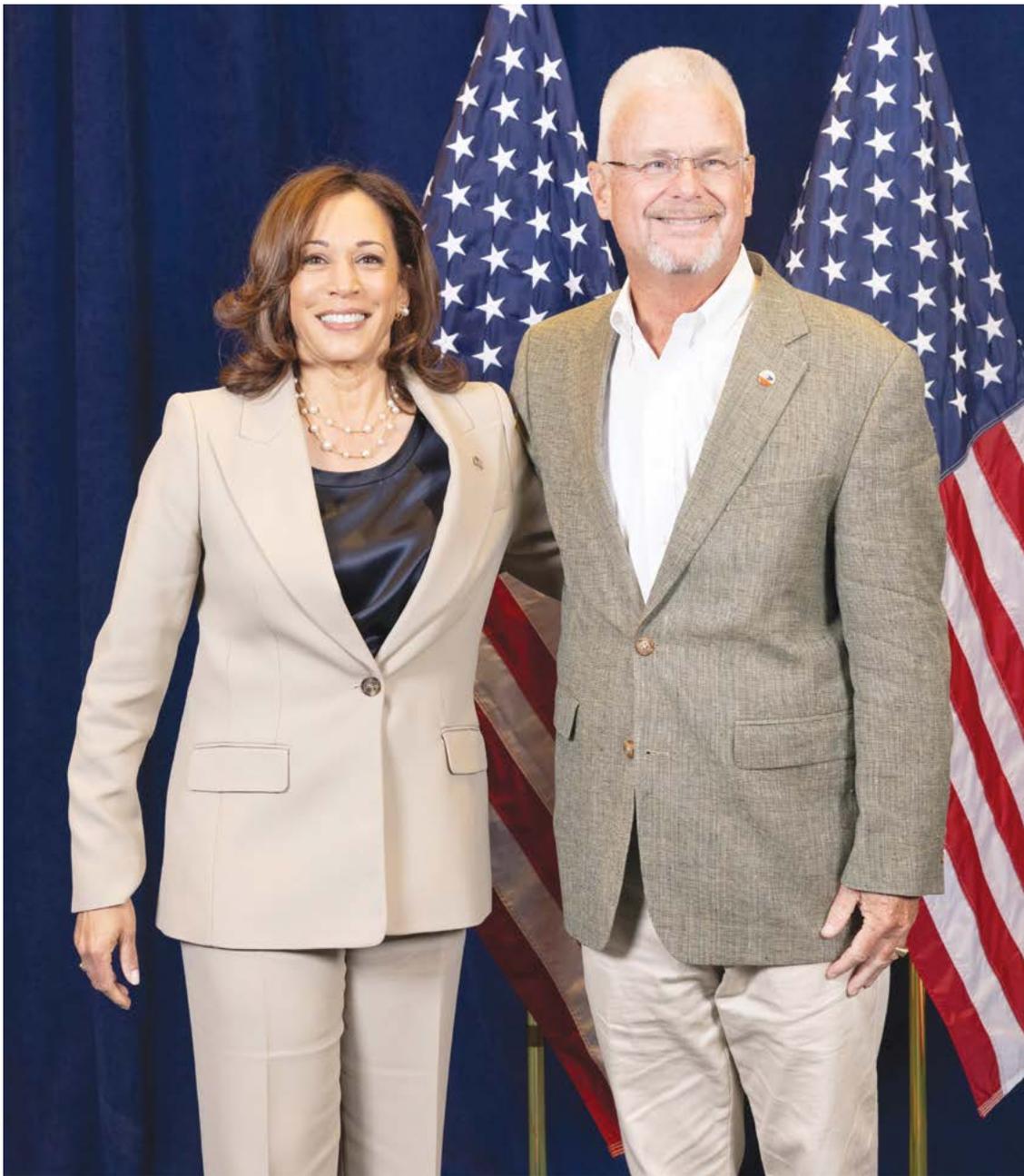
Memoir

Boy Wander

Jobert E. Abueva

In University of Michigan alum Jobert Abueva's memoir, he navigates multiple identities as he grows up. A star student at a Catholic boys' school in Tokyo and, after school, a call boy for rich foreign men. A child born in Manila and coming of age in Kathmandu and Bangkok before moving to the U.S. in the peak Reagan 1980s. A young man craving his family's love and acceptance but afraid to be fully honest. Abueva's road to self-acceptance was not an easy one, and this memoir is not always an easy one to read, but Abueva's honesty makes it ultimately rewarding.

See *Pride Reads*, page 62



Mark LaChey with Vice President Kamala Harris. Courtesy photo

Mark LaChey, 'Unsung Hero' of LGBTQ+ Politics in Michigan

After 30 Years, the Michigan Democratic Party Activist Is Calling It a Day

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Mark LaChey wanted to see tigers. With that objective in mind, the former first vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) recently spent two weeks in India, where his wish was abundantly granted. LaChey sat down with BTL on the occasion of his retirement from MDP leadership.

"Tigers were number one on my list," LaChey said, explaining that he intends to see many more animals in the wild. His chances of seeing tigers on this trip were marginal, but the safari guide for LaChey's vehicle got lucky. "I saw seven different tigers — 20-plus sightings. Phenomenal," he remarked. "They are amazing."

LGBTQ+ Democrats and allies

in Michigan who seek a seat at the political table have long known LaChey's name. Under his leadership from 2013 to 2018, the LGBT & Allies Caucus experienced significant growth and became an influential voice in the legislature. Until recently, LaChey served as the MDP's first openly LGBTQ+ vice chair, a role he took on in 2019. As first vice chair, LaChey proudly

represented the state's LGBTQ+ interests as a member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

LaChey met numerous candidates for president during a DNC meeting in San Francisco in August of 2019 when there were still 15 to 20 Democrats in play. "All but two of them, I think, came in front of us in person and gave us their pitch," LaChey said. He noted Kamala Harris and Cory Booker as especially memorable. LaChey would later endorse openly gay Pete Buttigieg for the primary. "That was really exciting to be in the room, sitting there vetting presidential candidates for all of us Democrats."

When LaChey was elected chair of the LGBT & Allies Caucus, there had been no openly LGBTQ+ state legislators after Chris Kolb termed out in 2006. At the time, LaChey told BTL, "Our goal is electing pro-LGBT candidates statewide. The ultimate goal is to elect pro-LGBT leaders. We are all about finding, funding and supporting pro-LGBT candidates."

With seven openly LGBTQ+ state legislators today — by far the most in state history — one could argue he's retiring with his mission accomplished. By the same token, LaChey says he'd still like to see more LGBTQ+ women, people of color and transgender individuals in office.

Rep. Jason Morgan of Ann Arbor is one of those seven LGBTQ+ lawmakers elected this year. He's also taken the baton from LaChey as first vice chair of the state party. Morgan said what he's always loved about LaChey is that he speaks his mind and says what he believes in. As vice chair, Morgan knows he has big shoes to fill.

"I am hoping to build on the great leadership Mark has provided for the Michigan Democratic Party," Morgan said. "He blazed the trail as the first LGBTQ+ vice chair of the MDP, and I am so honored to be following in his footsteps. I hope to continue to build a more inclusive party that works hard to ensure we are supporting and electing people to office who reflect the beautiful diversity of Michigan's people."

In January, LaChey reflected on his 50-year work history — which began with lawn mowing and snow shoveling — while vacationing in Puerto Vallarta. The 67-year-old retired from practicing law in 2020.

"I had filed paperwork and was planning on running and just decided that with seven now in the

LGBT Caucus in our state legislature and with Democratic majorities in our legislature, Supreme Court and in the governor's mansion — and it looked like Elliott-Larsen would be amended, as it has been — I thought, A, I've kind of accomplished a lot of what I set out to do, and B, when things become a chore instead of a pleasure, it is time to step away and move on. There's plenty of good people in the pipeline."

LaChey said the reason he is so passionate about electing LGBTQ+ candidates is that in the past, he would find he was one of the only ones doing the work.

"I cannot tell you the number of times I would go to a fundraiser and I would be the only [openly] gay person in the room," LaChey said. "And there could be 100 people at the fundraiser. And I would make sure that I would walk up to the candidate and say, 'I'm Mark LaChey. I'm openly gay and I'm here to support you.'" He would then ask their positions on amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and on marriage equality — before those things were the law of land and at a time when they were not universally popular among Democrats.

One of LaChey's most satisfying experiences in politics relates to his tenure on the LGBTQ+ Victory Fund campaign board.

"One of the goals of Victory is to get a seat at the table at every legislature," LaChey explained. He called getting former State Rep. Jon Hoadley and State Sen. Jeremy Moss elected "one of the high points, if not the high point, of my career as a behind-the-scenes LGBT political operative here in Michigan." He noted that there had been other LGBTQ+ legislators on both sides of the aisle; however, they were closeted.

"Jeremy [Moss], I spoke to when he first ran for city council in Southfield," LaChey said. "He was going back and forth about whether he should run as an openly gay person for city council. And as I counseled everybody, [I suggested] run as a city council person who's gay, not a gay city council person. And the rest is history with respect to Jeremy."

LaChey has lived in Saugatuck for the past 10 years with his partner, artist Bryan Hoffman, a former Ruth Ellis Center board chair.

See **Mark LaChey**, page 60

Michigan LGBTQ+ Non-Profit Leaders on What Pride Means to Them

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

It's the most wonderful time of year. No, wait, that's Christmas. Well, Pride is still pretty special — it's basically the high holy day of the queer calendar. More than just a gathering, it's a family reunion, a chance to connect with the rest of Metro Detroit's LGBTQ+ community and simply be out — fully out — in public.

In this charged political climate where the queer community is used as bait to get hateful people out to the polls and distract them from real issues, it's important to connect with one's tribe and feel the energy that courses through the community when it stands as one.

Our trans community has been taking some of the hardest hits. Our beloved drag queens, too.

While we may be relatively safe here with an LGBTQ-friendly state government, Pride offers a chance to stand in solidarity with our community throughout the country and, indeed, the world. It's a chance to stand up and be counted. A chance to be seen. A chance to simply be.

But don't take our word for it. Pride Source spoke to five executive directors of some of our community's largest and most respected non-profits. Here's what Pride means to them in their own words.



Angela Gabridge. Courtesy photo

Angela Gabridge, MiGen

- Recognition. Marching with our community elders in Pride parades the last couple of years is incredibly moving as younger spectators and participants come up to hug and high five our folks and thank them for all they did

to get us to where we are today.

- Vibrancy. Pride season is all about our LGBTQ+ older adults having a chance to live out loud in ways many of them did not get to experience in their youth.
- Authenticity. Nobody has to hide any part of who they are at Pride. It's an invaluable experience every time and recharges our batteries for another year pushing forward.
- Remembering. So many of our 45-plus community members suffered great losses through the HIV/AIDS epidemic, of loved ones who passed before marriage equality, of community members lost at disparately high rates to COVID-19 or to violence. Pride is a chance to come together in community and to remember.
- Resilience. Every year, we gather and the community refuses to recess to the shadows ever again. Despite attacks, political and otherwise, happening to our communities across the country, the LGBTQ+ community refuses to be cowed. They can keep up their hateful silly business, that's fine, we'll be right here with our rainbows and drag queens and a whole heap of love and belonging. Bring it.



Antonio Dave Garcia. Courtesy photo

Antonio Dave Garcia, Affirmations

- The coolest part of Pride, and especially when we are seeing so many anti-LGBTQ+ pieces of legislation being introduced and passed across the country, is simply being together in such large numbers. It is a show of force



Erin Knott. Courtesy photo

- and community to all the haters.
- I love seeing all the kids and families all around! One of my favorite moments of Ferndale Pride is the kickoff and all the confetti being shot off of Affirmation's roof. The looks on the little kids' faces as they dance around in the falling confetti is awesome!
- Pride is also important so that our elected representatives can partake and be seen side by side with the community. Last year Gov. Whitmer [attended], and I asked her how she's holding up. She told me how happy she was to be at Ferndale Pride and surrounded by so many people who love and support her.
- Truthfully, Pride season is exhausting! It is, by far, the busiest time of the year for me and my team here at Affirmations. It's great that so many businesses and orgs reach out to us to come be a part of a panel or presentation for Pride Month. It really is important.
- I've marched in many Prides from L.A. to Detroit. I've spoken at many, and I've had my fair share of cold beers and glitter. Still, at every single Pride I've ever been to there is always a moment where I find myself looking around at the thousands and thousands of people and thinking about Stonewall and how far we have come.

Erin Knott, Equality Michigan (EQMI)

- Togetherness in safe, positive spaces.
- Seeing people being their authentic selves



Mark Erwin. Courtesy photo

- without fear. Equipping people with the tools to be authentic and proud of who they are by distributing EQMI stickers, resources, etc. that help us spread the message.
- A reminder that supportive systems do exist — in a world where LGBTQ+ people are increasingly under attack and demonized, it's a time where you can see community members celebrated and supported, not just by organizations and corporations, but also the people around them.
- Connecting with new people who are passionate about our mission and giving them the opportunity to take action on issues that matter to them in a meaningful way.
- Witnessing teenagers and young adults walk into a Pride festival for the first time and just seeing the glow on their faces. Like they weren't sure it was possible to be in a space that was designed with them in mind. You can almost tell who is at their first Pride. And it's a good refresher that we are working to build an entire state where people feel that sense of inclusion and belonging. Not just at one specific location, on one specific weekend of the year, but ALL THE TIME!

Mark Erwin, Ruth Ellis Center

- The power and resiliency of our community, even in the face of adversity. With nearly 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced across the U.S. this year alone, Pride Month reminds us that our collective voices and diverse lived experiences are

our greatest assets. When we stand up for ourselves and each other, anything is possible.

- A time to celebrate the pioneers of our community, the elders that exist in our spaces, and the far too many young lives lost due to transphobia, homophobia, racism and suicide. Let their memories drive our purpose, our values and our vision for a world where all LGBTQ+ people are safe and supported no matter where they live, who they love or how they choose to live their truth.
- Pride season represents self-discovery and visibility. A time to be uninhibited, free to explore the intersections of what makes you, you. It is a time to explore potential, and the parts of you that you've been made to hide from yourself and the world around you. As Ruth Ellis once said, "Let everyone know. Speak up and express yourself."
- A time to celebrate. We don't often take the time to acknowledge our achievements before moving on to the next fight. Celebrate all that you have overcome. Celebrate your friends, family and colleagues. No matter how trivial it may seem, every milestone matters.
- Giving back. LGBTQ+ young people, especially LGBTQ+ youth of color, continue to be disproportionately affected by homelessness, overly represented in the child welfare system, and systematically denied access to the resources they deserve. Let's change that together.

- Liberation, freedoms, self acceptance, exploration and burgeoning gayness.
- Tacky rainbow colored gear and merchandise during marches and at festivals.
- Safe, brave spaces to organize and connect.
- Honoring our past, acknowledging our present, and preparing for a better future.



Roz Gould Keith. Courtesy photo

Roz Gould Keith, Stand with Trans

- Pride is joyful — as in filled with joy. Seeing Pride flags waving and young people expressing themselves in unique ways with ear-to-ear grins brings such immense happiness to me as a community leader and as a mom to a trans man.
- I love the excitement when a trans youth is selecting the appropriate pronoun button from the basket on our table at Pride. The glee and giddiness is palpable.
- One of the best experiences for me is when young people stop by our booth to say hi year after year. To witness their growth is a privilege.
- Pride season is one more way we can be there for the community. Families, allies and trans/non-binary youth need to be celebrated all year long, and Pride is like the icing on the cake.
- Being able to interact with individuals who are meeting another nonbinary person for the first time, parents who are trying to educate themselves on their child's experiences, people who see their neopronouns on one of our pins for the first time — these are priceless moments of joyful connection, and they're a core part of what Pride season is all about. (Logan Harding, Stand with Trans research librarian)

A. Nzere Kwabena, LGBT Detroit

- Celebratory gatherings held in late spring and early summer.



A. Nzere Kwabena. Courtesy photo

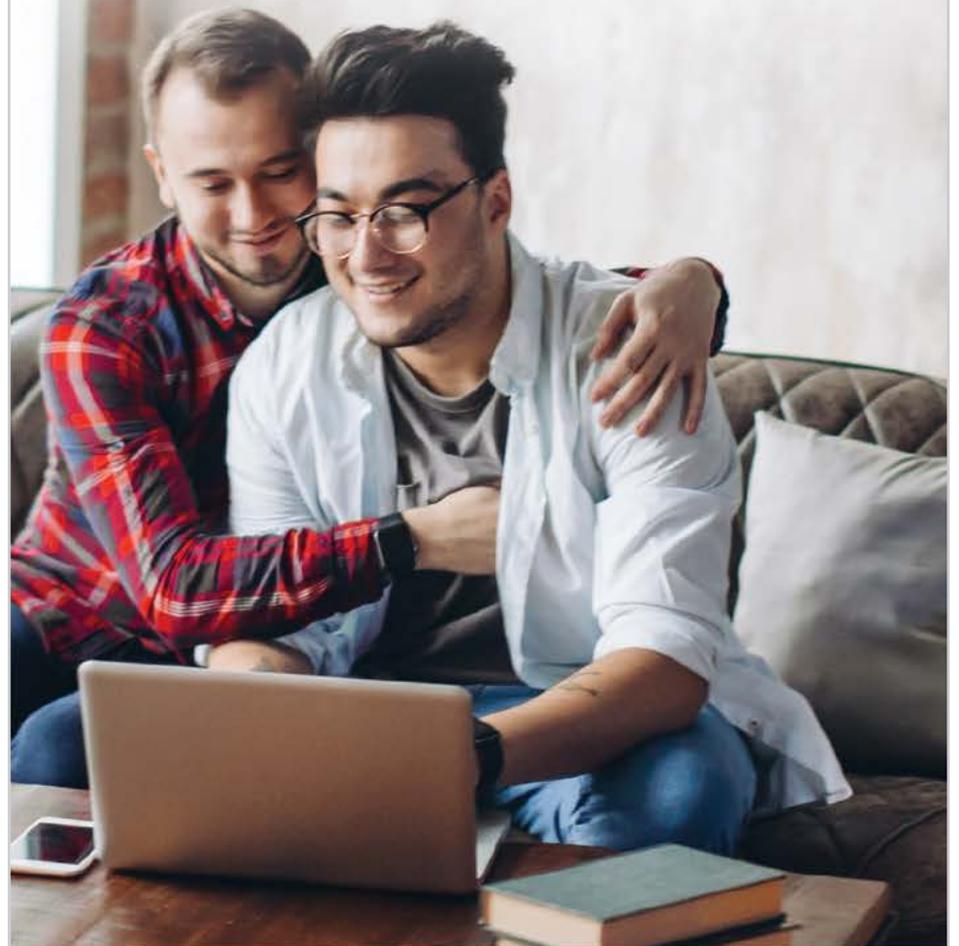


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Ann Arbor Is Burning, and You're Invited

'Radically Queer' Experience to Take Over Ann Arbor Summer Fest

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Casting a wary eye across the rainbow-riddled landscape that is corporate-sponsored Pride, it's no wonder some folks in the LGBTQ+ community have grown skeptical of the entire concept. By mid-June, you might be thinking, "If I see one more billion-dollar company insisting they value me on a sponsored Instagram post, I'm out."

And that's valid, but wait. There's more. So much more.

"Ann Arbor Is Burning: A Celebration of Radical Queer Imagination," a three-night immersive experience, part of Ann Arbor Summer Fest (A2SF), was created by Express Your Yes founder Petals Sandcastle; Flint's multihyphenate performer Tunde Olaniran; Na Bonsai, a Detroit-based musical artist, producer and mixed-media artist, and artist/vibration curator Elisandra Rosario.

The experience might just upend everything you thought you knew about Pride — and, maybe, everything you thought you knew about yourself.

James Carter, associate director of Ann Arbor Summer Fest, says that though the event has presented many LGBTQ+ artists over the years, it hasn't focused an entire evening on queer artists. "Earlier this year, we had a fun, creative conversation with Petals Sandcastle at Express Your Yes Foundation about NOW Studios activating our Annex space at Top of the Park, and when we asked the question: 'What would it look like if activities spread throughout the entirety of the event?', Petals, and their collaborators answered with 'Ann Arbor Is Burning: A Celebration of Radical Queer Imagination.'"

Carter says A2SF has several goals for "Ann Arbor Is Burning."



Ann Arbor Is Burning performer Aha Simone. Photo: A2SF



Scenes from NOW Studios/Express Your Yes. Photos: Petals Sandcastle

"Connection. Reflection. Joy. Surprise. Delight. Which, honestly, are our goals with any endeavor. We hope everyone will come and have a unique experience," he adds. "A2SF is known for our spectacle presentations, which typically fall in the large installation or circus

performances. Well, if you want a spectacle, come out on June 15. The evening is so jam-packed, you won't be able to take it all in."

Sandcastle describes "Ann Arbor Is Burning" as a "fever dream." "It's a fully immersive experience that will be spotlighting and

megaphoning Black and brown and queer performers, artists and activists, groups, figures and ideas." Sandcastle says the curatorial team wants to engage meaningfully with the entire Ann Arbor community (including those within the cis-heteronormative base, posing

questions like "What if the margin took over?" and "What if the top producers, the people who are creating the container, are Black or brown or queer, and they invite the heteronormative crowd to come to their party?")

With these goals in mind, Sandcastle and the "Ann Arbor Is Burning" team put together a series of events focused on a mission to "activate a radically ecstatic space to move, play and love on our own bodies; space to create and connect and embrace our inner child." Here's what's on tap.

Manifestos of Love — 5 p.m. Friday, June 9, The Annex Tent, Ingalls Mall

The opening night experience centers on a silent disco where participants are encouraged to "embark on a journey inward to explore the limitlessness of our identity through collective vibration." The lineup includes DJs, poets and MCs spinning live sets through provided headphones as well as opportunities to create art, experience a tarot reading, receive acupuncture and massage, play games, watch improv and more.

Dreamspace — 5 p.m. Thursday, June 15, The Annex Tent, Ingalls Mall

Dreamspace is all about the intersection of art and activism. The "artist" bazaar will offer a multimodal, multisensory collaborative installation featuring pairs of Michigan artists and organizations focused on intersection justice. You'll also find a free vegan buffet and opportunity to get involved by contributing to

See **Ann Arbor Is Burning**, page 54

A JUKEBOX FOR THE ALGONQUIN



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DIRECTED BY SUZI REGAN



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Ann Arbor Is Burning

Continued from page 52

an interactive community dreams visioning board. “This is a call to unify the tribes,” promotional materials for the event read. “Love is the uniform of our (creative nonviolent) revolution!”

Move/Play (Shua Group) — 5:30 p.m. Thursday, June 15, Power Center Lawn, Ingalls Mall

This “playful, curious” movement and sound experience, led by the Shua Group, will take participants through a series of exercises designed to encourage playfulness with the space and others. “The event begins with warming up and exploring unique animal bodies through group sounding, moving easily on the soft grass and activating expressive spines,” the event description reads. “Then, the group will expand outward the playful interactions with the space and others — gliding and flowing through the lawn and building group interactions. Along the way, participants can get to know themselves, one another and, perhaps, shift the way the Power Center lawn is known and experienced.” Participants are encouraged to wear a hat.

Ahya Simone: R&B, Soul, Experimental Classical — 6 p.m. Thursday, June 15, Ingalls Mall, O&W Grove Stage

Ahya Simone, a Detroit-based multidisciplinary artist, performer, filmmaker and harpist, will perform at the Top of the Park portion of Ann Arbor Summer Fest. Simone’s work features an exploration of Black identity, aesthetic and community building and bridges the classic stylings of harp playing to the current century. Often described as “ethereal,” Simone’s music incorporates elements of electronic music, jazz, R&B and soul. Simone is also the creator, co-writer and director of an upcoming fictional web series, “Femme Queen Chronicles,” which details the story of four Black trans women in Detroit.

SABETYE: House, Soul, R&B, Indie, Electronic — 7 p.m. Thursday, June 15, Ingalls Mall

SABETYE (Suh-Bet-Tea) is the stage persona of electronic music producer and DJ saylem mississippi celeste. The artist creates experiences utilizing art and sound for “collective liberation and healing” and invites audiences into intentional spaces for healing



SABETYE. Photo: A2SF

and freedom. SABETYE’s performance at Ann Arbor Summer Fest will center on “FORT PREMONITION,” described by organizers as an “experimental blend of sounds that are an homage to particular moments in h-time when celeste leaned on sonic healing for solace, inspiration and home space. [The performance] charts celeste’s journey toward becoming a disc jockey, quilter, anti-capitalist, womanist, friend, lover, family member and other roles in which they express facets of joy and love.” SABETYE will share the stage with other vocalists and incorporate dance, DJing, visual stimuli and more in an effort to “invoke a collective experience of expression and joy.”



Petals Sandcastle. Courtesy photo

Supercoolwicked: R&B, Neo Soul, Electronic — 8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 15, Ingalls Mall, Rackham Stage

Detroit-based Supercoolwicked is a contemporary R&B performance artist who blends live music with film concepts onstage. Her intention as an artist is to “honor her inner child, find collective freedom and preserve the traditions and historical narratives of African American peoples.” The musician has collaborated with wide-ranging artists, including Tunde Olaniran, Ian



Supercoolwicked. Photo: A2SF

Finklestein, Esperanza Spalding and ZBDT. Supercoolwicked will perform songs from her debut album, “Negro, Spiritual,” which focuses on the historical significance of Negro spiritual music while “experimenting with the many types of music developed since the forced migration of enslaved Africans to America,” according to the event description.

Terra Lockhart — June 15, Festival-Wide

Work created by Flint-based artist Terra Lockhart will be on display throughout the festival. Lockhart creates brightly colored sculptural work that combines objects found in nature with surreal concepts. The artist’s pieces “reflect the constant process of change, the connection between all living things and preserving and protecting nature.”

Community Council — 5 p.m. June 20, The Annex Tent, Ingalls Mall

On the final night of “Ann Arbor Is Burning,” the organizers invite you to become “grounded in playful practices to jostle the way we intellectually think and feel about reality.” This community conversation is intended as a pilot program to fund an initiative called 27 Culture Ambassadors (or “Civic Flitters”), which centers on the concept of guaranteed basic income. “Let’s drop below the surface together into the vast interconnected web where we are one entangled quantum soup, in contact with aliens and ancestors, ourselves and each other,” the event description reads. At the end of the evening, participants are welcomed into a community flow experience (not unlike the regular events offered in this space through Express Your Yes and NOW Studios), a collaborative improvisational space for music, dance, art, sacred play and creative bop jamming, no experience necessary.

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Patty Roache, Opera MODO. Courtesy photo

Queering ‘Don Pasquale’

Reimagined Opera MODO Production Celebrates BSDM, Kink and Queerness, Embraces Holistic Gender Expression

BY MIKHAL WEINER

When “Don Pasquale” first premiered in January of 1843, it joined a long tradition of opera buffa, or comedic operas, that had begun a century before. The opera’s composer, Gaetano Donizetti, was a force in the opera scene of the time — this was one of 65 popular operas he completed during his 51 years. His works ran the gamut, from funny to deathly serious tragedies (like “Lucia di Lammermoor,” which — spoiler — ends in heartbreak and the death of basically everyone).

The funny parts of the original “Don Pasquale” are the hilarious antics of Ernesto and his love, Norina, who go to great and mischievous lengths to trick his uncle — Don Pasquale — into letting them marry even though Norina is (gasp!) a widow. These deceptions include Norina pretending to be someone else and fake-marrying the elderly uncle, an elaborate moonlight pretend (but sort

of real) lover’s rendezvous, and other over-the-top, delicious tropes opera lovers have come to expect from these storylines. It ends with everyone getting along (it’s a comedy after all), and Don Pasquale agreeing he was just being foolish to stop true love from coming to fruition.

Donizetti may have been a creative powerhouse, but I can assure you he never envisioned the brilliant, creative new imagining this Pride season by Opera MODO, a queer-led opera company dedicated to creating opportunities for young and emerging artists. Opera MODO’s adaptation of the classic piece, renamed “D[x]n Pasquale,” grabs the inherent concepts with both hands and makes them wholly universal, spectacularly queer and deeply thoughtful — all the while retaining the silliness and fun of the original.

“This opera has a universal theme — the idea of a family member who doesn’t approve of who their dependent family member loves,”

says Patty Roache, who adapted the piece for Opera MODO. “This theme that worked in [19th century] Italy, now it can actually be understood as a really queer story that happens to so many LGBTQ people. We took that idea and worked with it to make [the opera] relevant and beautiful.”

Originally slated for premiere in the spring of 2020, “D[x]n Pasquale” was postponed indefinitely when the pandemic swept the world with shutdowns. “It actually gave us the opportunity to take our time, not to rush the process,” says Roache. “I took two years to really flesh out the libretto.” The resultant story ended up inviting in a veritable smorgasbord of queer community elements, with gender non-conforming characters, drag artists, folks who identify with kink and BDSM culture, and more. The miserly uncle is reborn as Dawn Pasquale, Ernesto gets a glow-up as Ernie (who is non-binary) and Norina expresses the complexities of her experience as a dominatrix.

“A lot of these ideas stemmed from my own queer interests and explorations over time,” says Roache. “It’s been so beautiful to have a platform to explore parts of my own queer identity.”

To that end, they did a lot of research on various philosophies and communities, learning about and speaking with people for whom polyamory, BDSM and kink identities are a way of life. This also included attending workshops led by the IDC (Intimacy Directors and Coordinators). “BDSM and kink can get stigmatized in stage representations, really generalized in a way that doesn’t [allow for] authentic exploration. When I was working on how to fit [these elements] into our story, I asked myself how to pinpoint the specific kink identities of the characters. Norina moonlights as a dominatrix, and she is a caring and loving Dom who really enjoys giving pleasure and making sure her submissives are taken care of, but also enjoys seeing how they react. I really wanted to make the characters authentic queer identities, instead of just general queer identities.”

Roache, who has worked extensively in musical theater, collaborated closely with Opera MODO’s artistic director, Dr. Steven McGhee, to ensure the synergy of the libretto and the original score. The two based the new text on an English translation of the original Italian, going aria by aria, recitativo by recitativo, to develop a lyrical world that would work with Donizetti’s signature bel canto style. Bel canto (literally “beautiful singing” in Italian) is a style of opera that is particularly extra — think lots of long, highly decorative, elaborate musical phrases. Donizetti was known for challenging singers with this style of writing, which was meant to highlight the prowess of the performers. Being a little (or a lot) extra also happens to work pretty well with the extravagance of drag and camp, which was perfect for Roache and McGhee’s artistic aims.

As Opera MODO takes “D[x]n Pasquale” on tour throughout Michigan, starting in Detroit on June 9, McGhee will accompany the vocalists by playing a piano reduction of the original orchestral score. Roache described this as “running a marathon every night.”

It couldn’t be a better time for the opera, as Pride Month is a time of celebration, but it’s also a time of revolution — of taking up space and being defiant. By joining other LGBTQ+ creatives who are staking a claim to classical art, Opera MODO proclaims that queer folks belong everywhere, even in the highly gendered world of traditional opera.

“When we had our premiere performance last year, people told me that it was the first time that they’d seen pieces of their identity put on stage and felt safe seeing them,” says Roache, tears in their eyes. “They said they felt celebrated. And that’s the point, you know? That’s the point.”

Opera MODO will bring “D[x]n Pasquale” to Detroit June 9 and 10, Saugatuck June 17, Grand Rapids June 18 and Traverse City June 21. Tickets at operamodo.com.

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Midnights



Side A
Track One
Track Two
Track Three
Track Four
Track Five
Track Six
Side B
Track Seven
Track Eight
Track Nine
Track Ten
Track Eleven
Track Twelve
Track Thirteen



Taylor Swift

Continued from page 26

documentary, the two artists discussed what makes them who they are. “When it’s me, it’s like — dancers, cats, gay pride, people in country western boots,” stated Swift, who told Rolling Stone the album is “very, very autobiographical,” with “moments of extreme personal confession.”

“Peace,” Folklore (2020)

There’s #Gaylor, and then there’s #Kaylor, an even more niche group of Swifties. Kaylor stand by the theory that Swift had a past relationship with model and former friend Karlie Kloss. In 2015, after two appeared in a series of photos for Vogue, Gaylors added this supposed evidence to their queer file on Taylor. In the song, Swift sings, “And you know that I’d swing with you for the fences, sit with you in the trenches, give you my wild, give you a child.”

Salman believes that there’s a strong possibility that Swift’s song “Peace” is about Karlie. “There’s a lot of evidence in Taylor’s songs that one of them wanted more,” Salman says. “She would have a child with her, but



she also could never give her peace of mind, peace of status and peace [in general] because she also doesn’t seem to want to come out.” White, however, is of the opinion that the Gaylors should just stop theorizing about Swift’s romantic relationships, period. “I think it becomes harmful when people speculate 24/7 about her life and who she is and isn’t dating because when it comes down to it, she is a person just like us,” White says.

“Cowboy Like Me,” Evermore (2020)

One superfan’s Reddit posits whether “Cowboy Like Me” might be a story about bearding in the entertainment industry. Jury’s out on this, of course, but the person who posted this has clearly really put some

thought into what this ballad could mean: “Taylor’s music has always been confessional, but ‘cowboy like me’ explores new horizons through the lens of someone who has been hiding who they are for so long, fooling the people around them and feeling cold and detached in the process, until they meet someone who’s doing the same thing as them: a gay star faking heterosexuality.”

“Hits Different,” Midnights (2022)

In this heartbreaking bop, just released on streaming services May 26, the love and pain Swift sings about screams queerness — to me, anyway. A man could never make me feel as passionate as these tender, warmhearted lyrics express. “A wrinkle in time like the crease by your eyes,” Swift sings. “Dreams of your hair and your stare and sense of belief.” In the bridge of the song, Swift sings, “Bet I could still melt your world. Argumentative, antithetical dream girl.” Make of that what you will.

Layla McMurtrie is a 2023 Eastern Michigan University graduate with a passion for writing about community, culture, music and art.

Gay Streets

Continued from page 17

what I would call sort of everyday life, and then there’s Pride San Francisco, Pride New York. There’s, of course, the AIDS crisis, Halloween and the Pier.

Capturing history without knowing it

I think in retrospect, this is what I noticed: At the time it seemed just like, “Oh, this is a normal course of events.” But now, 40 years later, it really seems like this is the inception of something that I believe is going to go on for hundreds of years. Of course it goes back to probably Stonewall, 10 years



Putting the book in public schools

I was thinking of just writing the biggest high schools in Texas a letter. Let’s just start with 50 of them. I mean, this is still a little bit of a pipe dream, but just saying, “I would be happy to donate a copy of my book to your high school.” See what’s the response. My friend was like, “Oh my god, what if you’re going to have to donate hundreds?” I was like, “Well, maybe that would be a great thing, you know?” And these are places where they’re actually getting rid of books and they don’t want to have these books. And so for somebody to be able to run a library, who tends to be queer and just say, “Hey, here’s a photo book.” I’m going to try it, just because it’s so easy. I picked Texas. It could be

CASTRO TO CHRISTOPHER Gay Streets of America 1979–1986



Photographs by NICHOLAS BLAIR
Introduction by JIM FARBER

before these images were taken.

I wish I had started earlier, but I could not see the importance from a historical perspective at that time. I mean, I wish I was that astute to be able to say, “Wow, this is the beginning of a cultural revolution. I’ve just got to get out there and photograph and cover this,” because there’s so many things I wish I would have covered that I didn’t cover. I think I was [making] \$15



Photographer Nicholas Blair

per photograph from BAR. So I guess it’s really become more of a document than I imagined at the time. But in retrospect, I think it is a very historic time.

any number of states.

What has changed in San Francisco since 1979–1986

I go out there occasionally. I’ll be out there this summer. When you’re down in that area, you can just feel that it’s sort of a gay area, but it’s not like it was. Even the Pier, it’s common to see a photo of somebody just lying around, sunning themselves on a towel, and even the garbage... the wood is rotting, and now that’s all gone. And I see people just walking around all over town now. It’s not that uncommon in New York City to see a same-sex couple holding hands. I still look at them and I say, “More power to you.” But you know, my mother is a Holocaust survivor and I’d still be afraid to go around with a Magen David hanging around my neck, I’ll be honest with you. I admire people that can do that and feel free.

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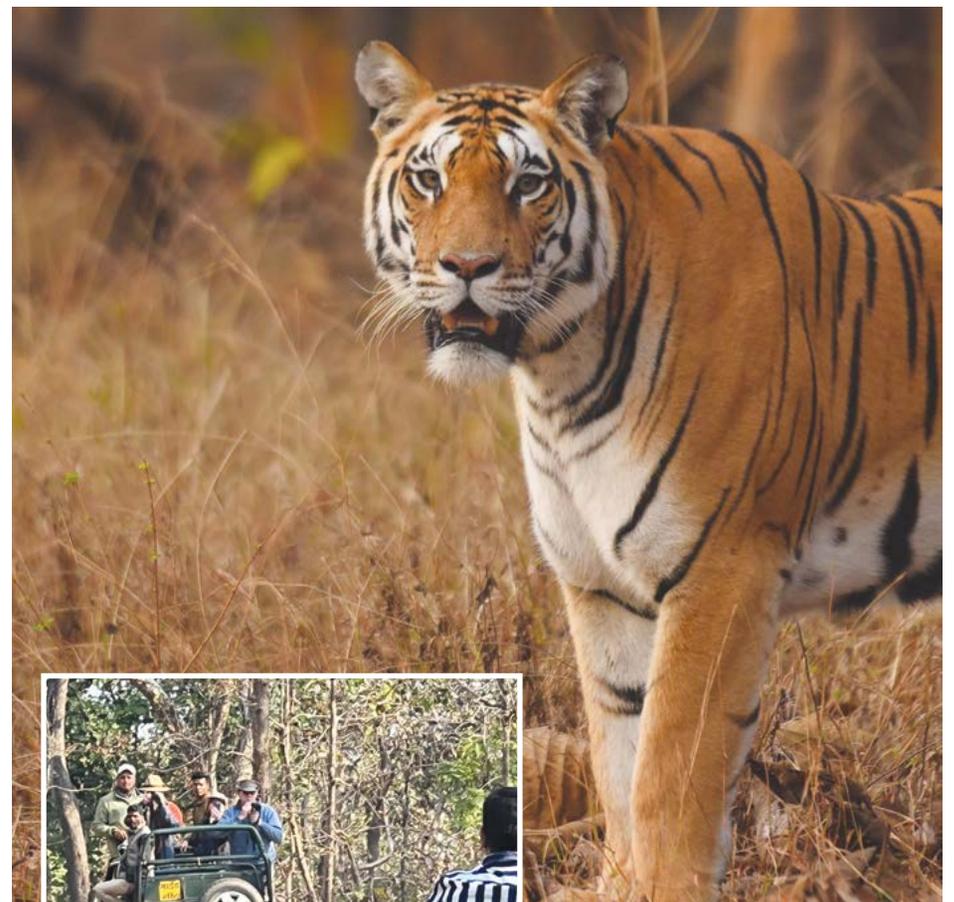
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Photos from Mark LaChey's trip to India. Photo: Mark LaChey

◀ **Mark LaChey**

Continued from page 49

Prior to that, LaChey lived in Pleasant Ridge, where he served on the Pleasant Ridge City Commission from 1991 to 2005.

"I was one of the first [openly LGBTQ+ candidates] elected," LaChey said. "I felt that it is so vitally important to have someone who is from our community who, as they say, if you're not at the table, you're on the menu."

It was in Pleasant Ridge that LaChey launched a group for LGBTQ+ residents, aptly named Rainbow Ridge. Around that time he met attorney and Ruth Ellis Center founding board co-chair John Allen.

"I met Mark in 1993 at the March on Washington, and we both found that we lived in Pleasant Ridge," Allen recalled. He mentioned an annual pool party and Valentine's Day dance that LaChey was instrumental in planning.

"Mark is a great guy with a great heart and cares a lot about the community and cares a lot about his friends," Allen said. "He is truly

one of the unsung heroes. I know Mark doesn't get the credit for half of the things he does politically. He gives so much of himself and so much, frankly, of his own money, but also of his time and his energy. I just think that that deserves to be recognized."

LaChey's significance to the LGBTQ+ community in Michigan precedes his leadership with the MDP. In the mid-2000s, LaChey was a volunteer and later policy/political director for the Triangle Action Fund. Subsequently, he

served as board chair when Triangle merged with Michigan Equality to become Equality Michigan. He is also a former precinct delegate for the Oakland County Democratic Party and member of the Stonewall Bar Association. As a student in the mid 1970s at Michigan State University's James Madison College, LaChey enjoyed interning for a state representative in constituent relations. He was also responsible for maintaining the floor's copy machine.

Today, his 6-month-old collie, Bonny, is taking up a lot of LaChey's time. Caring for his other pets — Louie the German Shepherd and Lucky the cat — and reading a memoir by Gore Vidal have been keeping him busy. The day before this interview, he was transplanting daffodil bulbs. And LaChey has plans for more travel.

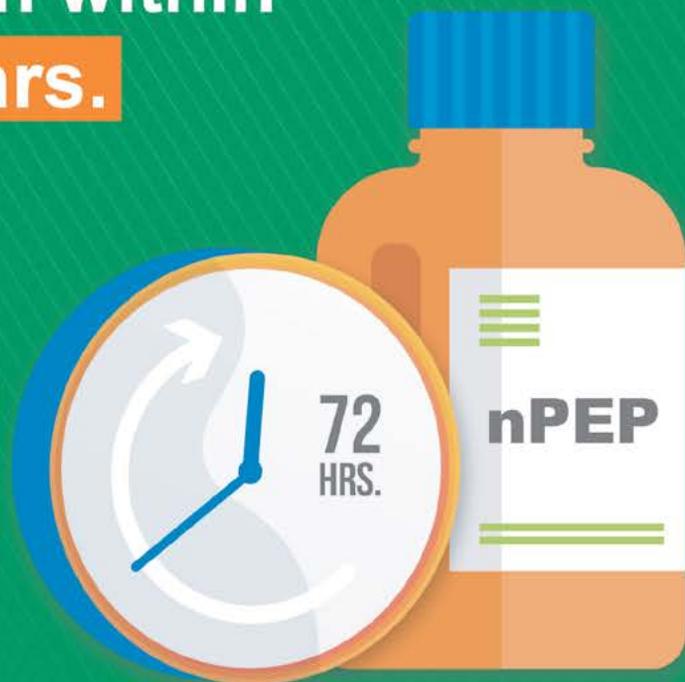
"Indonesia, Morocco, Madagascar," LaChey replied, when asked to name locales of future bucket list adventures. "A walking safari in Zambia," he added. "Plus, I've not yet seen Spain, Portugal, Austria... off the top of my head."



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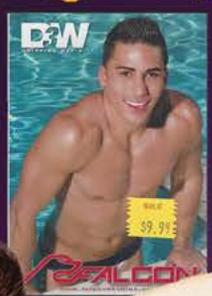
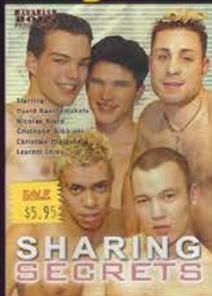
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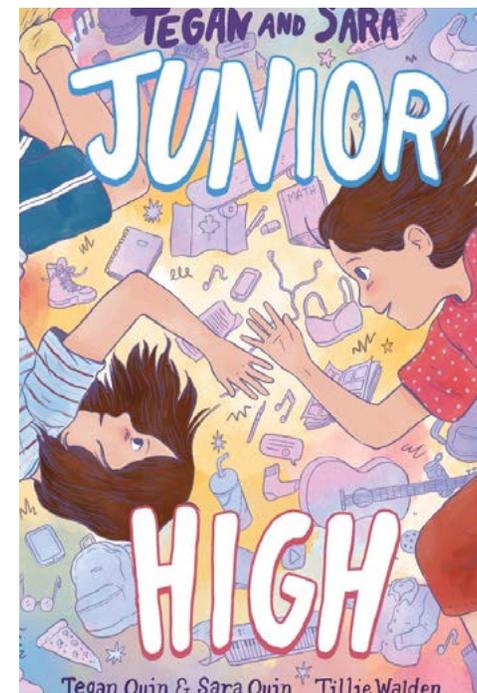
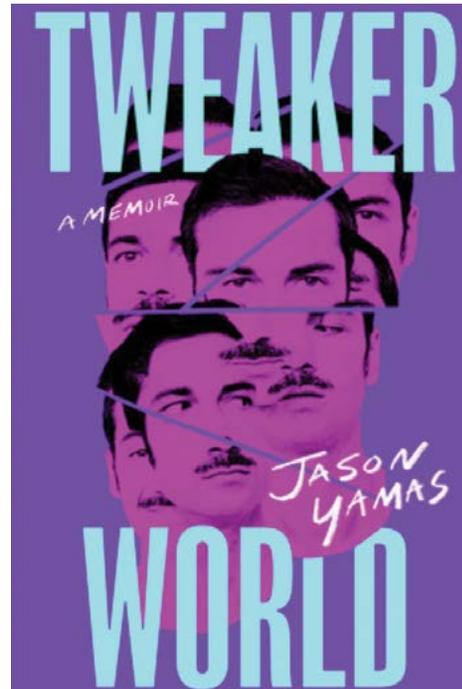
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♦ Pride Reads

Continued from page 48

Pageboy

Elliot Page

They say celebrities have no private lives, and to some extent, with paparazzi around every corner, that's true. But one's interior life is a whole different story, and for Elliot Page, that life was very different from the public life on display after "Juno" brought Page wide acclaim and stardom. "Pageboy" tells the story of Page refusing to be crushed by Hollywood's demands and society's expectations and deciding to live his truth.

Tweakerworld: A Memoir

Jason Yamas

How does one accidentally become one of San Francisco's biggest crystal meth dealers? You start with Beanie Babies. OK, not exactly. But like a lot of Yamas's life — past, present and future — it's complicated. "Tweakerworld" explores Yamas's history of addiction, from Adderall to meth, his career as a filmmaker, gay culture, his relationships with his family and boyfriends and his often drug-fueled sex life. "Tweakerworld" is brutally honest and beautifully told.

Young Adult

Not Everyone's Going to Like You

Rinny Perkins

In her collection of short essays and engaging

graphics, author Rinny Perkins dishes out the kind of advice that young adults need to hear, like: "Your existence is not validated by anyone's dusty ass opinion" and "You can mute the family group chat." Perkins explores issues of mental health, racism, family, dating and more in a voice that sounds like you're listening to your new best friend.

Nayra and the Djinn

lasmin Omar Ata

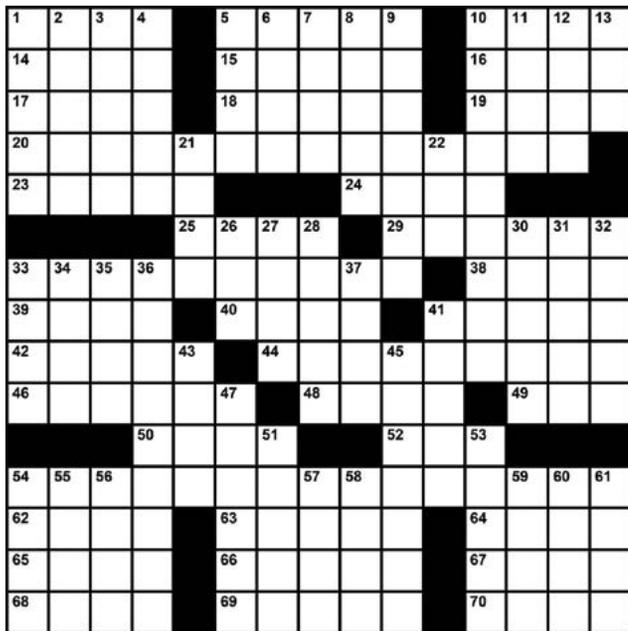
A graphic novel that follows Nayra, a Muslim girl, through Ramadan as she deals with classmates who bully her for being Muslim and a complicated relationship with her best friend. Just when she's at her breaking point, a djinn (a mythical being in Islamic folklore) named Marjan appears. Marjan has a complicated relationship of their own and the two characters help each other find resolution.

Tegan and Sara: Junior High

Tegan and Sara Quin, Tillie Walden

A prequel of sorts to Tegan and Sara's acclaimed memoir "High School," this graphic novel, illustrated by Eisner Award-winning artist Tillie Walden, follows everyone's favorite twin-rock star duo through the trials and tribulations of middle school with a blend of fiction and autobiography. If you're a fan of the Quin sisters, Walden or just charming and frank pre-teen stories, you'll want to pick this up.

See **Pride Reads**, page 64



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 38 Lady of Lisbon
 39 Shoot off a flare, e.g.
 40 Art Deco name
 41 Good at manual stimulation?
 42 Phantom's Opera instrument
 44 More of what Fierstein said
 46 Like many types of tasty meat
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 50 At least once
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 54 End of what Fierstein said
 62 Current currency of Sitges
 63 Former NFL player Tuaolo
 64 Razor choice
 65 Producer Meron
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 67 Christmas threesome
 68 Timothy Daly's sister
 69 Got to second base, perhaps
 70 "I ___ Andy Warhol"

12 Pub offering
 13 Place for a cruising sailor
 21 Hit the ground
 22 Shakespearean prince
 26 Miner concern
 27 Not remain straight
 28 Paid for a hand
 30 "___ now our gay apparel..."
 31 Come as far as
 32 Affirm orally
 33 Animal groups cruising with Noah
 34 Do damage to
 35 It comes before sum
 36 Ophidian opening?
 37 "Shall We Dance" star
 41 She played Glinda in "The Wiz"
 43 Campbell of "The Company"
 45 Ground hog?
 47 Tries to put a restraint on
 51 Bowling alley button
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 54 Boy Scouts sleep together here
 55 Disney duck nephew
 56 Sinead O'Connor's country
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 59 Place for Young men?
 60 Greek ship
 61 Renee Vivien's milk

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1 Waste maker
 2 Top, in a hierarchy
 3 High-tuition schools
 4 It can cut your pole
 5 "The Jungle Book" star
 6 Sergei of "The Opposite of Sex"
 7 Russian River deposit
 8 Hibernate with the bears
 9 Statistic in David Kopay's sport
 10 Douglas Fairbanks, by birth
 11 They're not homo sapiens

See p. 26 for answers

Remembering Robert

Across

1 Word with Mary
 5 "Oliver Button Is a ___"
 10 Features of Liberace's teeth
 14 Edison's middle name
 15 St. Teresa's town
 16 Photographer Catherine

Q Puzzle

17 Swallow alternative
 18 Cotton compressor
 19 Horne of "The Wiz"
 20 Groundbreaking play by Robert Patrick (1937-2023)
 23 Stand next to Cassatt
 24 Pair, to Magnus Hirschfeld
 25 Early caucus state
 29 Forest clearings
 33 Start of what Harvey Fierstein said

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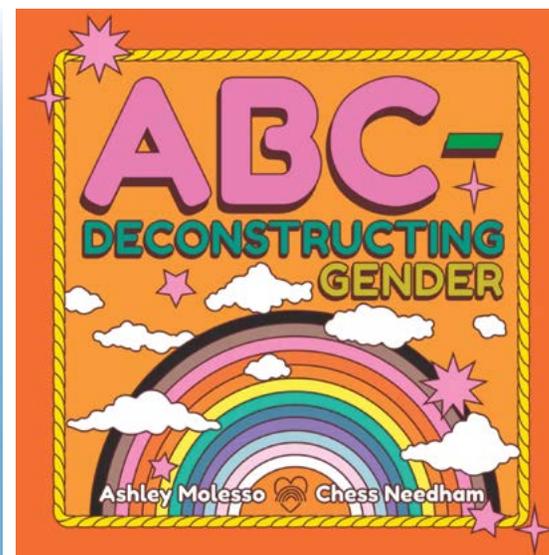
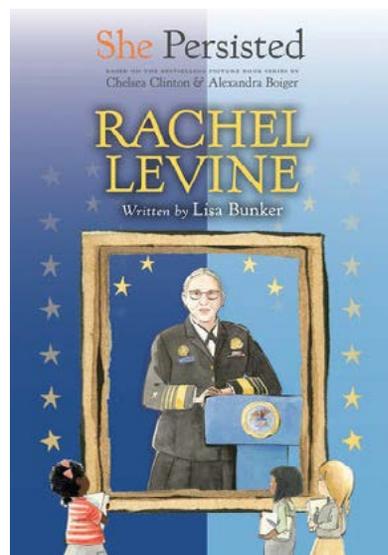
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◀ Pride Reads

Continued from page 62

Children's Books

My Paati's Saris

Jyoti Rajan Gopal; illustrated by art twink

The story of a day in the life of a young Tamil boy and his grandmother, who share a love of saris, as they prepare for a family party. A beautifully illustrated tale of acceptance, love, cultural tradition and intergenerational family bonds.

She Persisted: Rachel Levine

Lisa Bunker; illustrated by Alexandra Boiger and Gillian Flint

U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health Admiral

Rachel Levine is the latest subject of the "She Persisted" series. Levine is not only the first woman to hold this position, but also the first openly transgender person to serve in a role requiring Senate confirmation. Levine has been a favorite target of anti-trans hate and this book, which recounts her childhood and portrays her as someone who really loves to help people, is a great antidote to this hateful rhetoric.

ABC-Deconstructing Gender

Ashley Molesso and Chess Needham

There is no "A is for Apple and Z is for Zebra" in this ABC book. Each letter is used in a sentence that illustrates a drawing of people doing people things. Some of them challenge gender stereotypes ("Mohammad likes to do makeup and get beautiful with his sister"), but the themes throughout are showing empathy, helping others and being yourself. The illustrations are delightfully retro.

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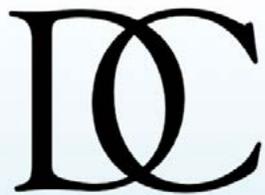
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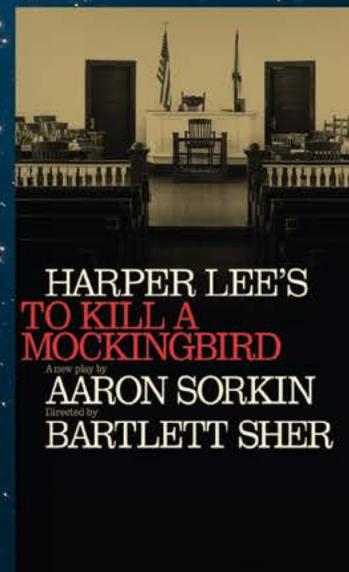
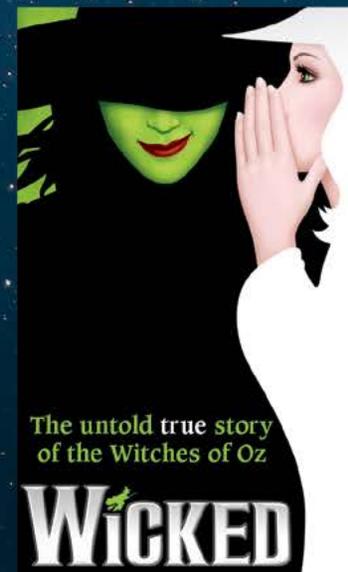
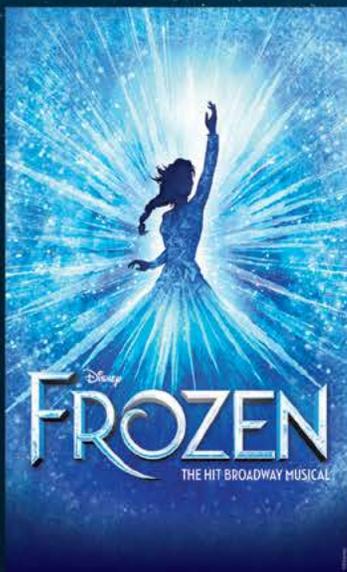
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