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## A Look Back at Three Decades of Local LGBTQ+ Journalism

15 past and present BTL journalists reflect on their most meaningful writing

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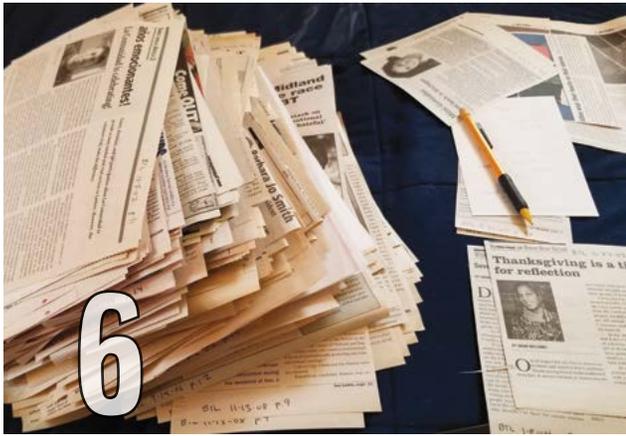
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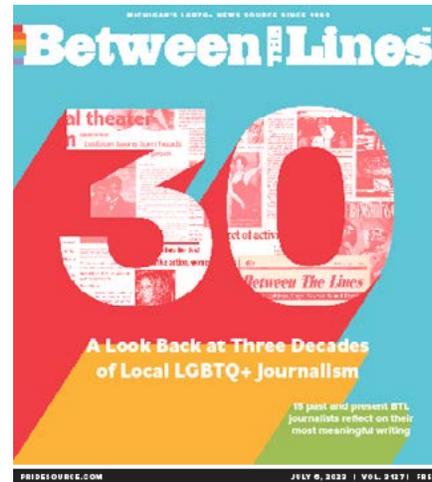
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# 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

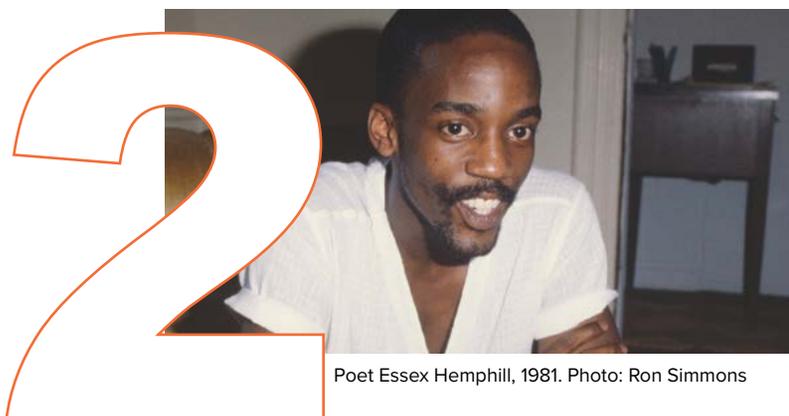
It all started in 1996, when LGBT Detroit launched the first annual Hotter Than July event. Today, Hotter Than July (HTJ) holds the title as the world's second oldest Black LGBTQ+ Pride. Thousands of participants are expected at the 2023 event, set for July 14-16 in various locations. Join the festivities, including a celebration at Palmer Park on July 15 from 9-2 p.m., where you can win tickets to the Hotter Than July Big Freedia concert that night. The Palmer Park event features Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, music, a twerking contest and more. Learn about the other HTJ events here and at [lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly](http://lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly).



## Light a Candle in Honor of Our LGBTQ+ Ancestors

HTJ's Candlelight Vigil, held on the first evening of the event, is an opportunity to reflect on those who have lost their lives to hate crimes, HIV/AIDS or other forms of discrimination and health disparities. Attendees are invited to submit a loved one's name to be shared at the memorial tribute, where, LGBT Detroit says, "ancestors will be called in remembrance and uplifted in prayer." Submissions can be made at [form-usa.keela.co/htj-memorial-tribute](http://form-usa.keela.co/htj-memorial-tribute).

July 14, 5:30 p.m., Palmer Park (910 Merrill Plaisance St., Detroit).



Poet Essex Hemphill, 1981. Photo: Ron Simmons

## HTJ Book Festival Featuring the Late Essex Hemphill

After the Candlelight Vigil, join a lively tribute to writer Essex Hemphill and a panel discussion focused on banned books at HTJ's Book Festival. The event, in partnership with Pen America, "sheds light on the ongoing challenges faced by authors whose works have been censored or banned due to their provocative content or controversial themes," according to information from HTJ. Hemphill was one such author. An openly gay poet and activist who died in 1995 from AIDS-related complications, he was known for openly discussing issues important to the Black gay community.

Attendees are encouraged to bring Black- and Brown-focused LGBTQ+ written works to start building the LGBT Detroit Library. Register at [form-usa.keela.co/htj23-book-festival](http://form-usa.keela.co/htj23-book-festival).

July 14, 8 p.m., LGBT Detroit Marvin Lee Building (20021 Greenfield Road, Detroit).



Big Freedia. Photo: bigfreedia.com

## Bounce with Big Freedia at the HTJ Concert

New Orleans' "Queen of Bounce" Big Freedia will headline the second annual HTJ concert on Saturday, July 15. It's difficult to categorize the lively performer, who has collaborated with artists like Lizzo, Drake and Beyoncé (who sampled Big Freedia on "Break My Soul"), and Big Freedia is definitely OK with that. Freedia told *The Root* in 2020, "How do I identify? I do not mind if you call me 'he' or 'she.' Both are right! Although some of my early influences were the drag queens of New Orleans (including my uncle), I don't wear dresses or high heels. I was born male and remain male — physically, hormonally and mentally. But I am a gay male. Some folks insist I have to be trans, but I don't agree. I'm gender nonconforming, fluid, nonbinary. If I had known the 'queen' in Queen Diva would cause so much confusion, I might have called myself the king!"

July 15, 8 p.m., Sound Board at Motor City Casino Hotel (2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit). Tickets at [bit.ly/3NRLMjN](http://bit.ly/3NRLMjN).



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### Sunday Worship Service

HTJ invites the community to “join hands with like-minded individuals who share a common vision of acceptance and love” at the annual worship service. “Come as you are,” HTJ press materials read, “and be inspired by a community that celebrates the beautiful tapestry of God’s creation.” The service kicks off at 10:30 a.m. at One Church Detroit and will feature opportunities for prayer in community, a Praise Dance, a solo by local entertainer Cierra Dior Malone and a sermon titled “What’s Love Got to Do With It” delivered by Pastor Jeffrey M. Seals. Stick around for a free luncheon service after the event.

July 16, 10:30 a.m., One Church Detroit (19185 Wyoming St., Detroit).

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(Left to right) HTJ Awards winners Julisa Abad, Shanay Watson-Whittaker and Chunnika Hodges. Courtesy photos

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### Honor the 2023 HTJ Awards Winners Over Brunch

The HTJ annual awards ceremony honors community members who have made significant contributions through acts of service. “The Hotter Than July Honors Brunch is a time when LGBT Detroit celebrates the contributions of those who have made a significant impact in the lives of Black and Brown LGBT+ people. This year, we lift up three extraordinary women who are not only friends to LGBT Detroit but partners in carrying out our mission,” LGBT Detroit Social Justice Engineer Jerron Totten told BTL. Read about this year’s award winners, Shanay Watson-Whittaker, Julisa Abad and Chunnika Hodges, at [pridesource.com](https://pridesource.com).

July 16, 1 p.m., The Charlevoix Gallery (14505 Charlevoix Ave., Detroit). Reserve tickets at [revenue-usa.keela.co/htj23-awards-brunch](https://revenue-usa.keela.co/htj23-awards-brunch).

Please check [lgbtdetroit.org](https://lgbtdetroit.org) for the most up-to-date scheduling information.



# BTL at 30: Three Decades of LGBTQ+ Journalism

BY TIM RETZLOFF  
GUEST EDITOR

One word comes to mind when thinking of the legacy of *Between The Lines*: heft.

We're talking 30 years of continuous publication, first monthly until late 1997, then biweekly for a year, then weekly for more than two decades, then back to biweekly in early 2020. That's more than 1,200 print issues to date.

I was directly involved in BTL at its founding and for its first four-and-a-half years, and I've continued to occasionally write for the paper ever since. The byline I have enjoyed here under each publisher gives me a unique vantage point.

My sense of the paper's history and of its heft, however, has been shaped by clippings.

From BTL's start, with digitization far in the future, I set aside three or four copies of each issue to clip and save. Time went by. I finally got around to actively clipping all the slowly yellowing stacks of papers, several file cabinets full, after finishing my B.A. and getting my Ph.D. in history, a couple summers of mindless toil just prior to Covid. I now have a dozen cardboard U-Haul boxes jammed with loose clippings.

The process of cutting out thousands of articles to archive has given me a new appreciation for BTL. These years have been momentous for our community, both nationally and locally. Let's consider (to borrow my go-to phrase for talking about Covid) the "before times."

*Between The Lines* launched in March 1993, before the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," before the implementation of "don't ask, don't tell." It began publishing prior to the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001. Prior to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021.

The paper started out only in newsprint. It predates the "Information Superhighway" and social media infiltrating our lives. It arrived before

retroviral cocktails. Before Ellen came out. Before the Lawrence v. Texas ruling jettisoned state sodomy laws. Before drag queen story hours.

We've gone from Clinton to Bush II to Obama to Trump to Biden, from Engler to Granholm to Snyder to Whitmer. We've gone from pariah



status to being an eagerly sought constituency and market niche.

Those of us around in 1993 have gained 30 years of life experience. Some alive in 1993 did not live to see 2023.

As a "trained historian," I am cognizant of a longer view, that 102 years ago Detroit Free Press writer Harold Auer wrote a fan letter to queer British author Edward Carpenter; that 85 years ago both Ruth Ellis and Prophet Jones moved to Detroit; that 65 years ago Detroiters attempted the first foray into homosexual organizing in Michigan, a chapter of the national Mattachine Society.

When I first began researching Michigan's LGBTQ+ past, the first issues of the *Gay Liberator* had been hawked outside Detroit's downtown Hudson's less than 20 years earlier. The *Liberator* lasted for 48 issues, until 1976.

In 1976, I was all of 12 years old. Now pushing age 60, I am less freaked out at the thought that *Between The Lines* is celebrating its 30th anniversary than I am unnerved to realize it's been 10 years (10 years!) since I wrote about the paper celebrating its 20th



Tim Retzloff (left) perusing past issues of BTL. (Right) The first issue of BTL, published in 1993, as Tim explores the paper's archives.

anniversary.

Next to sharing the thousands of clippings or taking a deep dive into back issues, perhaps the best way to convey how BTL has helped to document our history is through some Whitmanesque inventories.

A sampling of headlines drawn from the paper's archives suggests the scope of its coverage.

**"Printer Refuses Lines" from the debut issue.**

**"Domestic Partnership Languishes" from 1997.**

**"Detroit Pays Tribute to Ruth Ellis" from 1999.**

**"An Arabic Coming Out Story" from 2002.**

**"Tawas Schools Promise to Address**

**Antigay Harassment, Discrimination" from 2003.**

**"U of M Union Fights for Trans Rights" from 2005.**

**"Affirmations Overhauls Youth Program During Turbulent Year" from 2009.**

**"Adoption Rights Suit Amended to Include Same-Sex Marriage" from 2012.**

**"Royal Oak Human Rights Ordinance Upheld by Voters" from 2013.**

**"Sterling Heights Man Charged with Murder of Transgender Woman" from 2018.**

**"The Episcopal Diocese of Michigan Elects First Openly Gay Female Priest as 11th Bishop" from 2019.**

**"Michigan Plaintiff Instrumental in Pro-LGBTQ Supreme Court Ruling" from 2020.**

There have been milestones aplenty. We've felt the suicides of poet Terri L. Jewell, MCC Detroit pastor Mark Bidwell and trans teenager Ian Benson. We've witnessed the slayings of Kevin Bacon, Bob Gross, Kenny Heron, Shelley Hilliard, Nikki Nicholas, Amber MonRoe, Gary Rocus, Coko Williams and too many more. We've fought ordinance battles in Delta Township, Hamtramck, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Royal Oak, Ypsilanti and elsewhere. We have experienced wave after wave of backlash. Think State Rep. Deb Whyman, Troy Mayor Janice Daniels or the ever-devoted Gary Glenn of the American Family Association of Michigan.

At the same time, we've seen the rise of GSAs. We've voted for an astonishing

number of out candidates. We've elected allies and openly LGBTQ+ officials who got our rights enacted. We've attended same-sex wedding expos and Wilde Awards. And we've shopped in all those "Cool Cities." Some of us even saw RuPaul at Menjo's.

Along the way, there have been Hotter Than July, OutFest, Comedy Fest, PrideFest, Reel Pride, Michigan Pride, Motor City Pride, and a multiplicity of additional Prides: Berkley, Cadillac, Ferndale, Flint, Grand Rapids, Grosse Pointe, Hazel Park, Kalamazoo, Lowell, Macomb County, Muskegon, Port Huron, Royal Oak, St. Johns, the Straits, Traverse City and the Tri Cities. In 2023, the Between The Lines Pride Fest Calendar includes more than 40 community Pride events across the state, including three brand new festivals in the Upper Peninsula.

BTL has tracked the highs and lows of our organizations, sometimes holding them to account.

It has covered the bar scene, guerilla and fixed, maybe half-heartedly so since it was far less reliant on bar ads than Metra and Cruise magazines had to be in the 1980s.

BTL has also been a ready venue for local LGBTQ+ leaders to speak directly to the community, a roster that includes Kofi Adoma, Penny Gardner, Jay Kaplan, Terry Kuseske, A. Nzere Kwabena (previously known as Curtis Lipscomb), Rev. Renee McCoy, Jeffrey Montgomery, Leslie Norlin-Thompson, Rev. Roland Stringfellow and Stephanie White.

Perhaps most indicative of the diversity of our community, the paper has published profiles of everyday LGBTQ+ folks, activists and volunteers and entrepreneurs and pet owners. In 1993, it seemed brave to be out in print. Given how we're targeted by resurgent enemies, maybe it's still a bit brave.

Of course, BTL didn't cover everything. It couldn't cover everything. It may not have always covered everything well. Logistics and priorities and staffing and deadlines inevitably shaped editorial decisions.

It deserves scrutiny and criticism, too, especially with how it has often hewed to traditional politics. As with so many other community publications, it could always use more coverage about LGBTQ+ people of color. More about bisexual and genderfluid people. More about radical alternatives. More about kink.

Invisibility, marginalization and gatekeeping are, of course, concerns seen in the larger queer community as well. BTL is to be commended for making major strides in the past few years to push against privileged narratives and to reflect diversity writ large. One case in point is the recent Sex + Love Issue.

BTL has endured as a vital institution to ensure that the ignorant and hateful do not control the narratives that are told about us.

The stories in BTL helped put LGBTQ+ Michiganders on the map, showing that the queer Midwest matters. Article after article showed the importance, for instance, of having a PFLAG chapter and PFLAG parents Downriver. Article after article documented

the life-changing impact of the Ruth Ellis Center.

Showcased in this issue are reflections on previous writings by past and current contributors who offer a personal window on specific moments. In subsequent pages, please join them in revisiting some of their meaningful coverage in a sort of time capsule. Chris Azzopardi, Michelle E. Brown, Donald V. Calamia, Julie R. Enszer, Todd Heywood, Susan Horowitz, Ellen Shanna Knoppow, Sean Kosofsky, Jason A. Michael, Jan Stevenson, MaxZine Weinstein, C. Imani Williams, Dawn Wolfe and Cheryl Zupan are welcome voices indeed.

Other key writers deserving of mention have been Mary Banghart, John Burchett, Jessica Carreras, Tara Cavanaugh, Shea Howell, Eve Kucharski, Sarah Mieras, Kate Opalewski, Kelly Peters, Gary W. Roberts, David Rosenberg, Andy "Sunfrog" Smith and A.J. Trager, as well as such columnists as John Corvino, Craig Covey, Dawn Kettinger, Joe Kort, Patrice Maurer, Eric Rader, Larry Topping and Jody Valley. And, of course, D'Anne Witkowski, who still continues to write for the publication.

We posthumously remember the vital writing of Charles Alexander, Brent Dorian Carpenter, Sharon Gittleman, Anne Harris, J Katzman, Jen Kohout and Eric Otto.

Ric Brown, Keary Campbell, Elizabeth Carnegie, Danielle Eve and Jetta Fraser are among the photographers whose images left an imprint on BTL readers.

Their cumulative work made Between The Lines what it is and serves as a testament to advocacy journalism at its finest.

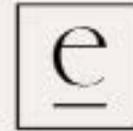
Whether revealing the Radical Faerie sensibilities of its founder or the mainstream Democratic perspective of subsequent publishers, BTL has survived in a shifting media landscape. It has established itself online as well as at hundreds of distribution sites across the state.

Throw in doses of feminism and pragmatism and whimsy, and it has become more than mere content and clickbait.

The journey of the paper has been intertwined with so many individual and collective journeys. Combing through my cardboard boxes of clippings for articles to scan for this anniversary issue, it's hard not to be awestruck by the history chronicled in the pages of more than 1,200 issues, political and cultural inroads, recurring joys and sorrows, change coupled with continuity.

Readers can explore the full heft of Between The Lines themselves by perusing copies held by the Labadie Collection and the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan or by Special Collections at Michigan State University, each of which hold full runs or near full runs. The Library of Michigan in Lansing has the first 10 years on microfilm and the next 10 years in bound volumes. Pride Source has some PDF versions on its website.

It's all a hefty achievement indeed.



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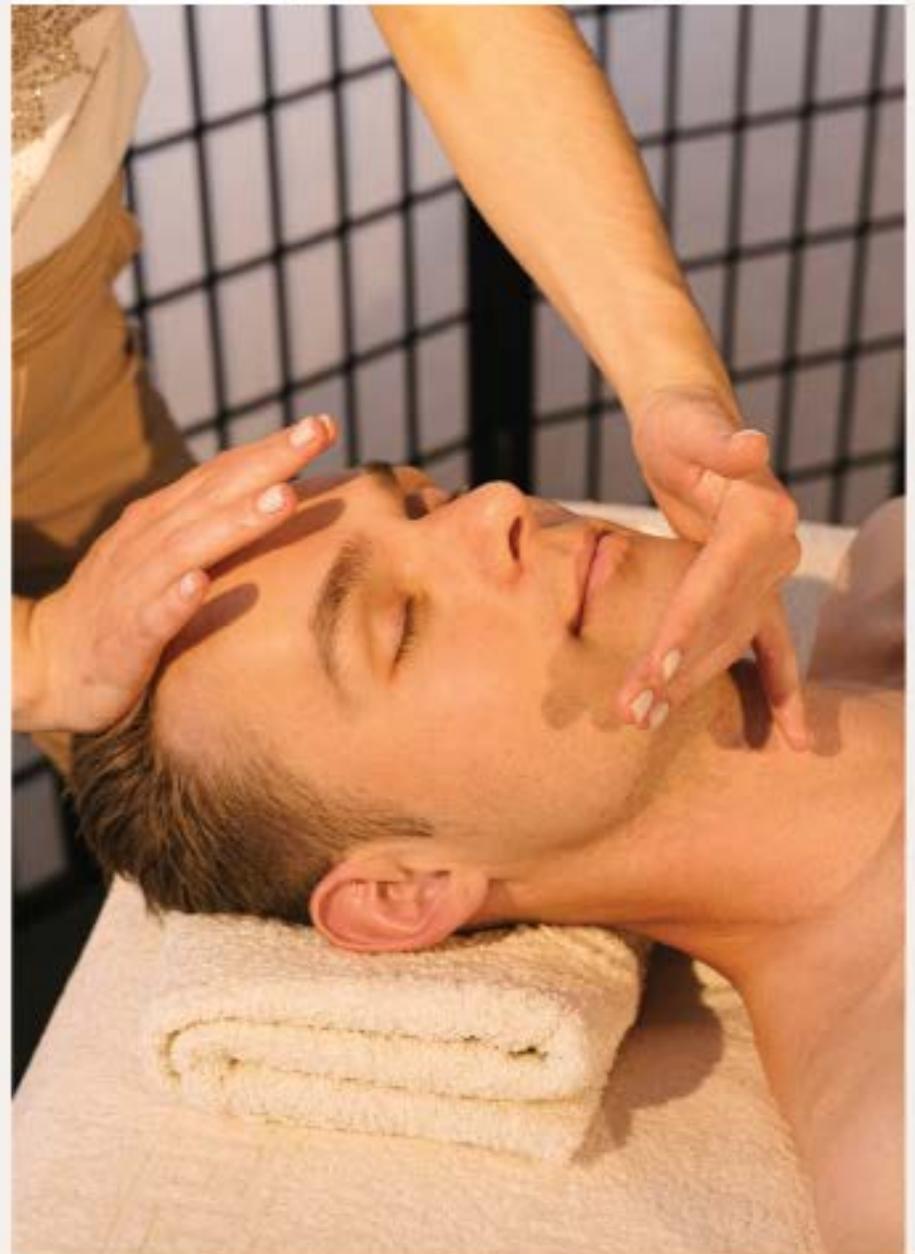
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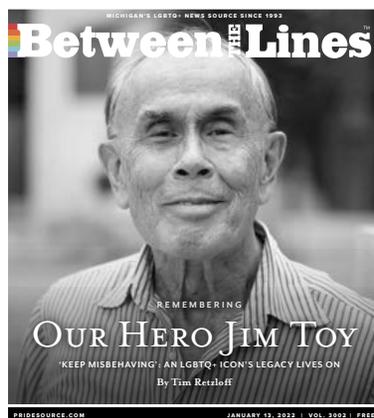
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# Honoring the Past, Defining the Future

## A Sit-Down with BTL's Editorial Director on Spotlighting Intersectionality

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Sometimes in life, we get a true full circle moment, and my role here at Between The Lines is one of those times. Somehow, it's been 18 years since I served as editor-in-chief of the Eastern Echo, Eastern Michigan University's student newspaper, where Pride Source Media Editorial Director Chris Azzopardi served as our entertainment editor.



Editorial Director Chris Azzopardi

These days, our roles are flipped, a circumstance many years in the making. Back then, I had some convincing to do — while it was clear to the whole staff that he was the best person for the job, Chris just wasn't sure he was ready for the challenge. I assured him that I believed in him, and he proved me right.

That year, I also discovered (surprise!) that I was pregnant with my first baby. It's not often that a student newspaper staff throws a baby shower for the editor-in-chief, but it's a fond memory. I decided to freelance while the baby and, later, the next baby were young (and then, until they were teenagers, somehow). Chris and I kept in touch thanks to the magic of social media, and one day, some six years after we'd worked at the Echo, I mentioned I'd be happy to edit for Between The Lines if there was a need.

There was, and I did. I loved getting to read Chris's stories before they went to print, and he'd occasionally find a story for me to write, too. Over the

next 10 years, as Chris's role grew, mine did too, and soon, he was the one believing in me and encouraging me to start building my career again.

Since his first days as a cub reporter at BTL in 2006, just days after graduating from EMU, Chris has served in several roles, including as a features writer who has interviewed high-profile celebrities like Dolly Parton, Beyoncé and Mariah Carey. Today, as chief decision maker for editorial content, he's building on a foundation established by Between The Lines staffers three decades ago.

While the core focus of the publication remains the same, the world has changed significantly since 1993. It can be a tricky balancing act to reach new audiences who have come of age in that period while honoring the enduring legacy of early queer pioneers. Chris sat down with me to discuss how he considers that balance, what he envisions for the future and why intersectionality has become one of BTL's primary areas of focus.

**Looking at the big picture in 2023, what can you tell me as editorial director about how this publication is approaching intersectionality among LGBTQ+ community members?**

When I started in this role, I had a mission coming in. I wanted to make sure that we were examining the intersection between queerness, race, cultures, religion, disabilities in a way that feels natural — sharing

stories that matter to the whole community but spotlighting voices that aren't always heard as much at the same time.

So, where there had been a focus primarily on white gay men and lesbian women, I saw opportunities to expand our coverage. I came into the role in 2021 feeling the impact of George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter movement, as well. I went to protests and I'd be there with my queer friends with our signs and we were collectively standing up for Black lives. I felt my privilege as a white gay man in a new way, and I realized that we're fighting for similar causes, and we're fighting constantly for certain rights because we are all marginalized and opposed in some ways that intersect. A queer, Black trans woman, as an example, is dealing with oppression in multiple ways. Those are the stories I really wanted to elevate.

**Can you give me an example of how you're working toward a goal of increased visibility?**

There are many, but one that may be fresh in readers' minds is our recent Ferndale Pride issue, where we profiled Baddie Brooks, a Black trans woman and musician who headlined the entertainment stage. We included her on the cover, as well, and it's a powerful image on several fronts. The same is true of our last issue in June, where we profiled Samantha Irby, a Black queer author who lives with serious chronic health challenges. If you go back over the last couple of years of issues, you'll find a very deliberate push toward expanding our coverage to areas we

may have shied away from more in the past. For example, the Black kink community, the queer disabled community and those in non-traditional romantic partnerships.

**How do you decide who will provide the voice for these diverse stories?**

We are, admittedly, a very small staff, so we unfortunately don't have full-time writers who represent a broad spectrum of diversity. However, we do maintain a freelance budget, which opens us up to a much larger pool of diverse writers. I'm often using social media to really perform intentional outreach to writers who have firsthand, lived experience on the topic at hand.

For example, I brought Aaron Foley into the fold. Aaron is a Black queer man who has been reporting on some stories that, frankly, I don't think anyone else but a Black person could report on. He has a really interesting perspective on the Black kink community, as one example. Another is Jupiter Contreras, a Black queer writer who has been traveling the country on their own in a van. They shared their perspective about just living in their body in places where they don't always know they're safe and about how getting away from society in that way has fundamentally changed them.

It's something we're always seeking to improve, but I think if you look at our covers, you can see an evolution there that really matches what's going on in the world today.

**How does your personal experience tie in to your vision for this publication now and going forward?**

So, I still remember the first time I picked up a copy of Between The Lines. I was a student at Eastern Michigan University, and I had recently come out as I entered my first year there. I didn't know any queer people at the time, but I started seeking out every issue of BTL because it allowed me to feel connected to the community without having a true connection yet. This was a way in for me.

That feeling of finding connection through storytelling is the motivation for me constantly now — it's why I have such a strong interest in celebrating the people who make up our community through sharing human interest stories. I want everyone to see a version of themselves in our pages and on our website because I understand, through my own personal experience, the value of seeing yourself represented. When I think about what that did for me as a young gay boy, it makes me want to continue to highlight people across every spectrum of race, sexual orientation and religion, which, I know firsthand, can be very complicated for a young people trying to reconcile their queerness with whatever religion they're a part of, or the family they are born into, or just social pressure. I hope readers feel the way I did when I first picked up BTL over 20 years ago — like they aren't alone, and that there is opportunity in community. That really is my primary focus and will continue to be.

# Stakes Rise in Michigan Holy War

By MaxZine Weinstein

“Holy crap!” That was my reaction upon rereading the article “Stakes Rise in Michigan Holy War” that I wrote in 1993. The holy war waged against the LGBTQ+ community back then is disturbingly similar to what we are facing 30 years later.

As a young queerdo in Michigan, I was stunned to enter their anti-queer sanctum in black mourning drag. I certainly hadn’t planned to enter the inner sanctum of their holy war, their “civil war of values,” as they called it. But it seemed important to flirt with the enemy to understand how they were planning on using the word of Christ to chip away at our rights and strip us of our dignity and self-determination.

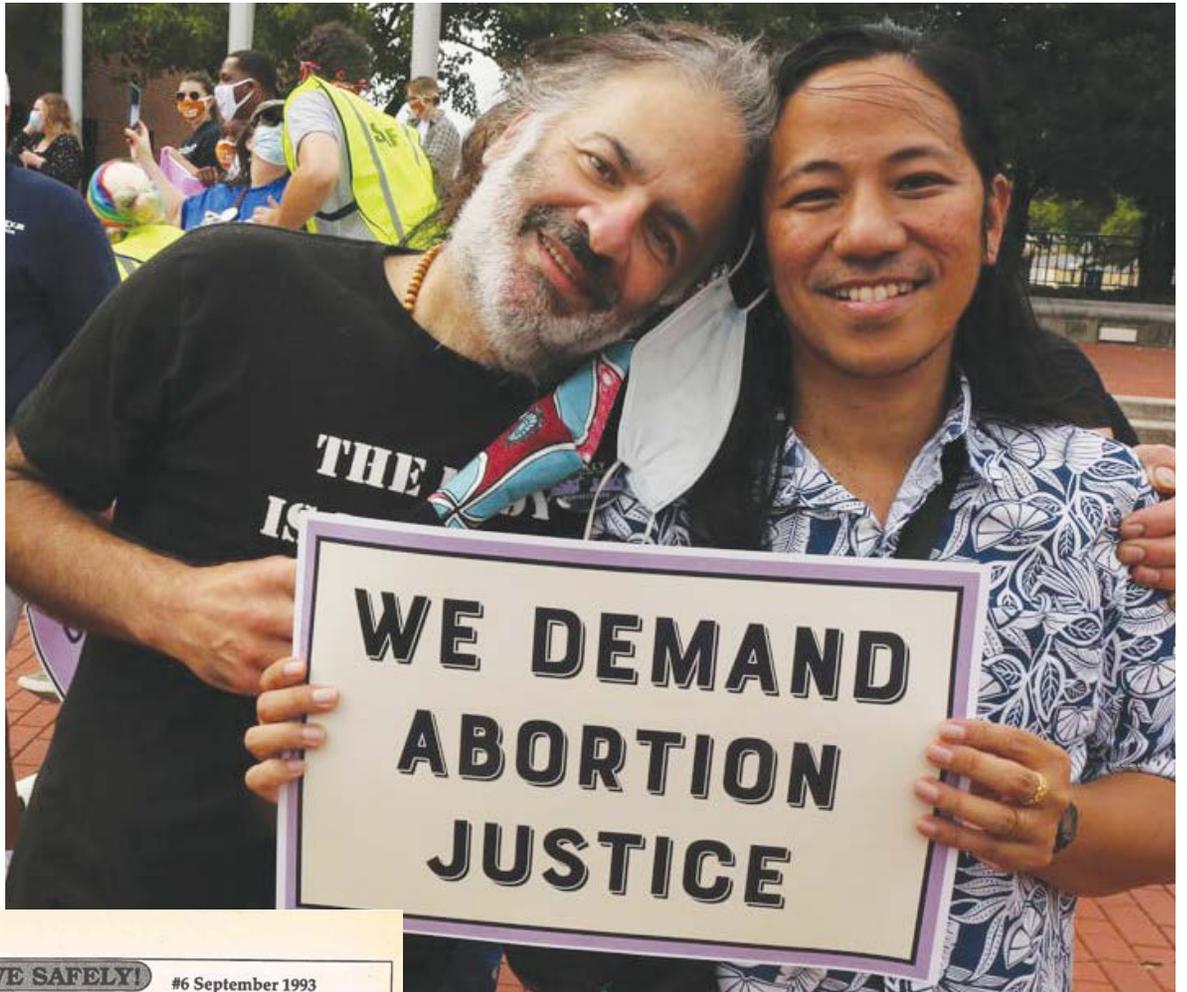
When I founded *Between The Lines* in 1993, I wanted our community’s newspaper to celebrate our freedom and creativity while sounding the alarm about people who were waging war against us. I haven’t looked at this article for decades and hadn’t remembered using the term “war” to write about the efforts of Focus on the Family and their ilk in 1993. It was (and still is) a war. They were laying the ideological foundation for building a massive army of true believers who would play the long game to deny queers their freedom. Their war was a series of campaigns, from taking over school boards to influencing the media to gaining enough political power to influence the direction of the Supreme Court.

Many of us were sounding the alarm 30 years ago. But did enough people respond to the alarm? Did enough people act? Could we have done more to prevent the wave of hate that is sweeping much of the nation?

The Christian Right has had

a scary amount of success in recent years. Last year, they managed to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in their attacks on the autonomy of women to control their bodies. This year alone, roughly 20 states have passed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. And state legislatures are especially dehumanizing trans people, even to the point of not allowing Montana State Representative Zooey Zephyr to speak on the floor of the legislature anymore. Then there is Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” legislation. It goes on and on.

Tennessee, where I have lived for 29 years, has passed more anti-LGBTQ+ bills than any other



(Left to right) MaxZine Weinstein with husband Rogue. Courtesy photo



“*When I founded *Between The Lines* in 1993, I wanted our community’s newspaper to celebrate our freedom and creativity while sounding the alarm about people who were waging war against us.*”

state, including the first legislation making drag performance illegal in many places and harmful laws taking away health care from trans folks. The law was struck down by a federal judge June 3, but that ruling could soon be appealed.

I live in a rural queer community an hour and a half from Nashville. We have formed the Coalition Against Moral Panic (CAMP) to respond to the slate of hate. On April 1, the day the anti-drag bill was set to go into effect, CAMP mobilized a choir of several dozen angels who circled the State Capitol and cast spells to transmute the hateful

and discriminatory legislation coming from right-wing lawmakers into calls for respect, nurturing, protection and well-being for all Tennesseans.

Just like then, I have been out marching and protesting with other queers — in festive drag, mourning drag, and by being our authentic selves. The stakes are higher — how can we not respond to the alarm bells? These Christian fanatics are trying to exterminate trans people. And they won’t stop there. They go after whomever they think is easiest to attack, and they have plans to broaden their war after they pass this year’s set of bills.

It is heartening to see that Michigan has not joined this wave of fanaticism. But please don’t think for a minute that you are safe from the attacks on our community — the Holy War knows no borders, and they will continue to use the federal courts and national elections to take it to the whole country. So, please, remember that the stakes are high. We need to celebrate our freedoms and defend ourselves against the religious right’s unrelenting onslaught.

# Summer Fashions

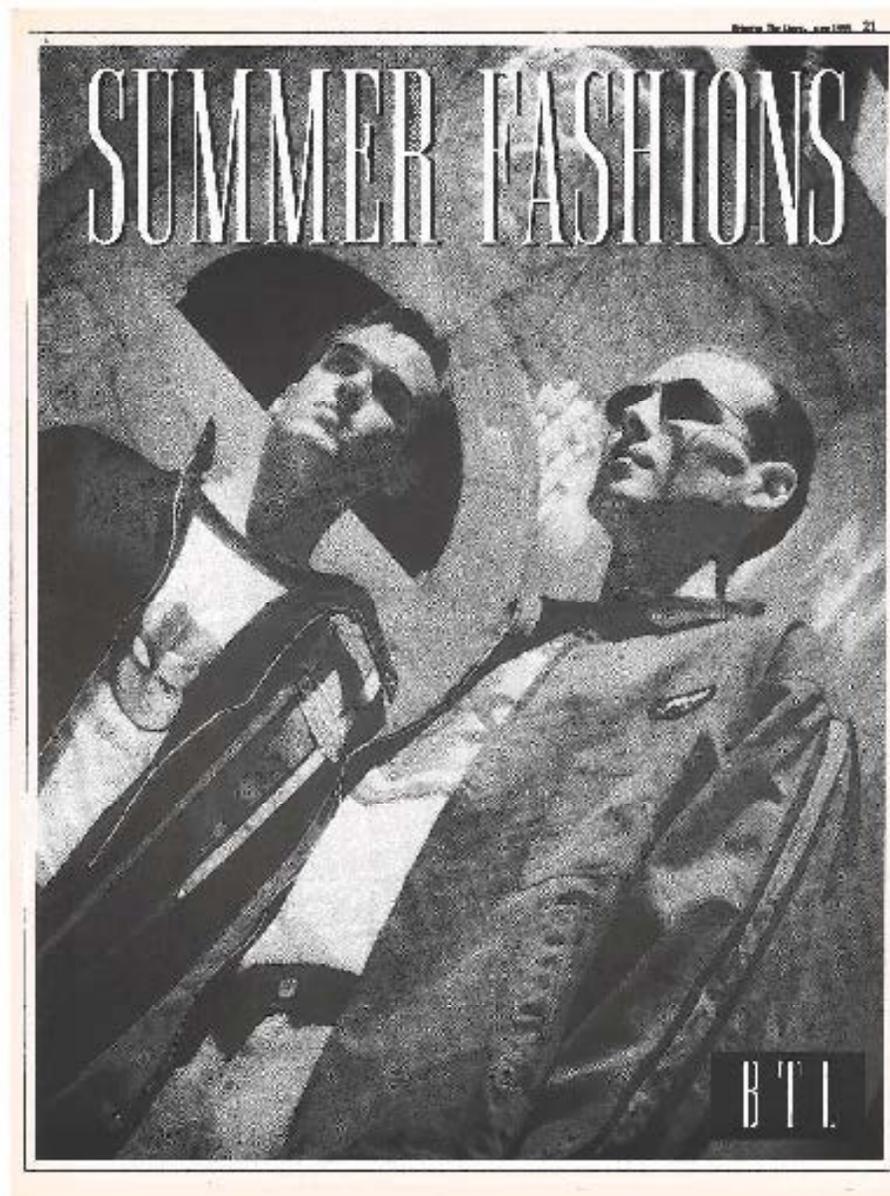


By Julie R. Enszer

Shannon Rhoades was one of the really cool students in the women's studies department at the University of Michigan. I wanted to be her friend. We knew each other a bit as undergraduates, enough that when she became the editor of *Between The Lines*, I called her and suggested that we hang out — or perhaps she called me with a question about Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center. I do not remember exactly how our conversation started, but it did. In my mind, it is a single, intense conversation, sustained for 18 months between the spring of 1994 and October of 1995, and one of the most consequential conversations in my life.

Early on, the idea emerged that she should move the paper to Detroit (because everything was happening in Detroit) and move into my new house on Church Street in Corktown. She did. We talked about building a volunteer editorial board for BTL. We did. Then, over the course of a brief number of months (brief now to my memory in my 50s; in my 20s, the days and months felt long, consequential), we did a flurry of work together: writing, thinking, reading, discussing queer political issues, analyzing movement strategy and tactics, all while Shannon adeptly edited and published BTL. We wanted a queer, feminist revolution. We understood that a newspaper would be a fulcrum for that radical vision.

And it was. Planning cover stories was one of my favorite parts of working on BTL with Shannon. Reviewing them recently, I was reminded how powerful each was: a cover with Urvashi Vaid, who died just over a year ago; highlighting *Creating Change* in Detroit; a cover of Scott Amedure after he was murdered; a cover about ballot initiatives. There was something heady about producing a monthly tabloid paper. Headly and stressful. To mitigate the stress, we gathered amazing people around the paper. Writers, activists, photographers, but mostly people



we thought were cool — really cool. I always was asking, “How can we bring more people into BTL?”

The June 1995 cover story from issue number 27 titled “Pride in Michigan” reflects this vision of BTL as a communal endeavor and feels like a pinnacle in the long conversation with Shannon. It is an eight-page feature with gorgeous photographs of local Michigan queers from a range of racial-ethnic backgrounds sporting amazing clothes at familiar Detroit locations: the Detroit Institute of Art, the Fox Theatre and *Tres Vite*, off Woodward Avenue. The photographs are sexy,

intimate, defiant, real. I remember it took months to put together the full feature with Crystal Muldrow as the photographer. We had stylists and assistants. And it was so much work.

A 1995 calendar published and distributed by the Lesbian Avengers with glossy black and white photographs of lesbians doing direct actions inspired us. In late 1994 and 1995, we queer people had a profound need to see ourselves in the culture at large because we were so rarely represented. In Detroit, we wanted to see ourselves as queer people

outside of heterosexual milieus and outside the U.S. coastal zones of San Francisco/Los Angeles and New York. Queer publications like *The Advocate*, *Curve* (then still called *Deneuve*) and *Out* magazine rarely offered glimpses of Midwestern queer life; we wanted to remedy that. We were Detroit queers: hip, urban, young, old, out.

In the pages of BTL are the foundations of my intellectual work. Book reviews of work by Minnie Bruce Pratt, Sandra Steingraber and Marilyn Hacker; movie reviews of “*The Incredible True Adventures of Two Girls in Love*” and “*Bar Girls*,” feature

*We wanted a queer, feminist revolution. We understood that a newspaper would be a fulcrum for that radical vision. And it was.*





# Advice to Be Well

From Dr. Mark Bornstein and Dr. Paul Benson



**Hi Doc,**  
**Whenever I look at my lab results on the portal, there always is a lot of “red” in my patient results and the provider never goes over them. Should I be concerned? Last time it said I have I+ protein in my urine. What does that mean?**  
- AJ

Hi AJ! This is a two-parter. Both are great questions and both have different answers. First, it is very important to understand that lab results are interpreted by your provider as a whole. When I see one lab that is “abnormal”, it matters what that lab is and what the other lab results during that blood draw were. Interpreting labs in isolation does not give the provider the entire picture. More importantly, on the patient side, it can lead to unnecessary anxiety. That being said, I never want to deter you from asking your provider questions. If you are curious about a lab result, please ask! I just want you to know that one lab result that is listed as abnormal does not always mean that there is a problem.

For your second part of the question, protein in the urine is something that the provider will be monitoring. There are many different labs that we use to monitor kidney function. Most of them are monitored in the blood but it is also important to monitor kidney function through your urine. Your provider will use the lab results from the blood and urine to develop a diagnosis and plan to address kidney results.

When someone has protein in the urine, it is

a sign of kidney dysfunction and it needs to be addressed. There are many reasons for protein in the urine, although high blood pressure or diabetes are two common disease states that are often times the culprit. If you have either high blood pressure or diabetes, you should be monitored for protein in the urine. The reason this is important is that if it goes unaddressed for years, it can lead to further kidney damage.

Now for the positive and uplifting news... there are medications to help with protein in the urine! We have both older medications and newer medications that help preserve kidney function and decrease the amount of protein in the urine. This is why it is important to test. If we can identify dysfunction early and start someone on meds, we can prevent new kidney disease and further worsening of existing disease. As we always say, prevention is the best medicine.

**I am living exceptionally well with HIV. I am on a one pill once a day medication for treating HIV. My viral load has always been undetected and my CD4 count stable at around 600. My doctor asked me if I was interested in entering a clinical trial with a new medication to treat HIV. I told him I would think about it. Is this a good idea? – MJ**

Dear MJ,

Your decision whether to participate in a clinical trial is 100% voluntary. It is your choice. Scientific trials are regulated by the

Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Principle Investigators (physicians or other qualified experts) are required to comply with Good Clinical Practice (GCP) laws and regulations to ensure integrity of data, on which approvals of new medications are based, and most importantly protect the rights, safety, and welfare of human subjects.

Research subjects must read, sign and understand the informed consent, which explains in detail what the clinical trial is about and the medication being studied. There are 3 levels of clinical trials a compound must go through prior to approval. Phase 1 has a relatively few healthy subjects and evaluates safety. Phase 2 also has relatively few subjects and tests for efficiency. The third phase has many participants and evaluates safety and efficacy. Phase 3 trials usually are blinded (the investigator and the subject do not know if the study drug is the one being studied, a specified comparative drug used for the same proposed indication, or a placebo). Phase 4 trials are sometimes used for post approval study of an approved drug.

As a clinical trial participant, you have the right to discontinue the clinical trial for any or no reason. As a clinical trial participant, you should be certain you can comply with scheduled study visits and procedures for the entirety of the study.

Clinical research is the engine that fuels new and better medications. Many patients want to be part of that process and eagerly participate in clinical trials. Others do not share that feeling.

Whether or not to participate in a clinical trial is your decision. If interested, you should have a thorough discussion with the investigator and ask all the questions that you have during the informed consent process. If it does not feel right, don't do it. If it is something you feel good about, then go ahead and participate.

At the Be Well Medical Center we have participated in over 120 HIV related clinical trials since 1981. We feel good knowing that we were part of the process in getting most of the medications we use to treat HIV today. We are also currently participating in a HIV prevention study (PrEP) with an injectable medication injected every 6 months, as well as future medications for treatment naive and heavily treated patients living with HIV. You can call our office and select option 7 to reach the clinical studies unit to hear about some of the studies we are currently participating in.

Thank you for the question!

*Since 1980 Dr. Paul Benson's Be Well Medical Center has been an inclusive medical center celebrating diversity. Do you have a health related question for Dr. Paul Benson and Dr. Mark Bornstein? Submit your questions to bewelladvice@pridesource.com. This article is a sponsored editorial produced in collaboration with Be Well Medical Center. Between The Line's journalism is made possible with the support and partnership of advertisers like Be Well. Learn more about Be Well from their ad below.*



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# Pilgrimage of Remembrance: Michigan Residents Join Thousands for D.C. Quilt Display



By Tim Retzloff

Among the many dozens of articles, history features and obituaries I've written for *Between The Lines* over the years, one that holds special meaning to me is my reportage, when I was assistant editor, of the October 1996 display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt on the grounds of the Washington Monument in D.C.

The 1996 event was the final time the whole of the quilt could be shown all at once.

This article is meaningful to me in terms of community. I am grateful to have documented the perspectives of different Michiganders who made the pilgrimage by chartered bus: A gay man from Battle Creek there to honor his lover. A student from Ferndale High School. A volunteer with the Lansing Area AIDS Network. Yoopers from Marquette.

soon, HIV would no longer be the near-certain death sentence it had been for 15 years.

On the ride back, I overcame my shyness to talk with yet another stranger, Leon Golson, then working with the Midwest AIDS Prevention Project. I recall thinking afterward that, like so many others, he would likely be gone in a couple years.

Jump ahead to 2023 and Leon is very much with us, still fighting the fight.

The article is also meaningful on a personal level. Walking quietly among the panels, I ran into my



well, but that his dementia had advanced to the point where he likely would not have known who I was. So, it was maybe better that I didn't see him.

Following his death in 1998, James would be commemorated with a panel of his own.

On a much lighter personal note, I relished catching a glimpse of Elizabeth Taylor being chauffeured in a golf cart on the west side of the U.S. Capitol.

Reflecting back on that trip to D.C. and how I wrote about it perhaps helps to capture some of the unresolved trauma and survivor's guilt that lingers, too often silently, as undercurrents in the lives of my generation of queer folk.

*I am grateful to have documented the perspectives of different Michiganders who made the pilgrimage by chartered bus: A gay man from Battle Creek there to honor his lover. A student from Ferndale High School. A volunteer with the Lansing Area AIDS Network. Yoopers from Marquette.*

The display carried emotional weight, the culmination of losses up to that time. Yet we were also on the verge of medical breakthroughs and,

friend David Sefarnik from Flint. It was the last time I saw him.

I learned later that my dear friend James Minterfering was there, as

# Lesbian Teens Turn Heads at Small-Town Prom



By Cheryl Zupan

When I covered the 1998 story "Lesbian Teens Turn Heads at Small-Town Prom," I remember feeling especially moved by the courage of a teenage lesbian couple from Colon, Michigan, population 500. Mandi Milliman, 17, and Dawn Johnson, 18, dared to attend

brave enough to attend their own senior proms. In 1998, hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people were prevalent, especially in small towns like Colon. Yet despite this, the young lesbian couple still made a decision to show up together at the prom, one in an evening gown, the other in a tuxedo. According to Johnson at the time, she was the first student to come out at her school, but added that three others came out after she did.



their high school prom as a same-sex couple, despite resistance from the principal and teachers.

The teens did not know it at the time, but they likely ended up helping other gay teens feel

Perhaps she really did light the way for others?

Today at many schools in Michigan and throughout the U.S., being an LGBTQ+ high

“

*One trend has continued for as long as I can remember: When it comes to mental health, LGBTQ+ students are still struggling more than their peers.*

school student is often welcomed and embraced. At other schools, even now, LGBTQ+ kids still feel they have to stay in the closet or endure a backlash from homophobic students, teachers and staff.

Prom can be tough for queer kids, both back then and today. Like Milliman and Johnson back in 1998, taking a same-sex date or dressing in a way that expresses one's identity is not always accepted. In 1998, gay couples were often told they could not attend their prom as same-sex couples. And while Milliman and Johnson certainly faced opposition (from the principal primarily), I am sure that they felt lucky they were allowed to attend at all.

Fast forward a few decades to Traverse City, when a 2019 Queer Prom was held. LGBTQ+ high school students and their allies were welcomed to the event. Held for the first time in 2014, the dance was staged to help students have a memorable prom experience, which they likely did not have during high school.

While life is better today for LGBTQ+ kids than it was for Milliman and Johnson, Queer Prom events continue to be held, including recently in Marquette. While I believe we have come a long way since 1998, it is still not far enough. From what I can see, schools

are not always doing everything necessary to provide a safe environment for students to be themselves.

One trend has continued for as long as I can remember: When it comes to mental health, LGBTQ+ students are still struggling more than their peers.

More than 80 percent of high school students who identify as LGBTQ+ cited depression, stress or anxiety as obstacles to learning last school year, compared to 40 percent of non-LGBTQ+ kids who reported such struggles. These stats are according to the YouthTruth survey, which was taken by more than 220,000 students during the 2021-22 school year. From elementary to high school, boys were more likely than girls and nonbinary students to report feeling happy.

I wish I could report that our prom couple, Milliman and Johnson, went on to conquer more bigotry and ultimately flourish during the 25 years since I interviewed them. It was a quarter of a century ago, however, and like most of the people in the stories I did for BTL, I did not stay in touch.

My biggest hope, as future generations of high schoolers come of age and become parents themselves, is that life will continue to get better for LGBTQ+ teens.

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# Crimes Are Very Similar: Murder Suspect Convicted of Killing Gay Man Exactly 20 Years Ago

## Secret of activist's sexuality brought to light in death

By Jason Michael

DETROIT — Harold McCormick, 65, was a quiet and community man, a pillar of his community. Slain on May 7, McCormick was a civil rights activist who marched alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson and worked with Mayors Coleman Young and Dennis Archer. He was a senior officer and longtime steward at Ebenezer AME Church. And he was gay.

No evidence of McCormick's sexual orientation could be found on his wall of fame. There were no photos of gay rights activists he may have marched with or mementos of Stonewall in his collection. He chose, instead, to keep that part of himself a secret.

"The whole family knew," said nephew Donnell Johnson, "it's just that he was not open about it."

But in death, if not in life, McCormick's life has been brought out of the closet.

Johnson, 26, found his uncle's body on the morning of May 11. McCormick was wearing only his undershorts and a phone cord and double-knotted necktie were still around his neck. Although robbery was initially considered to be motive in the killing, more details soon came to light.

Adult videos found in McCormick's living room led authorities to the Uptown Bookstore in a section of Highland Park known for prostitution.

There it was discovered that McCormick had been videotaped standing next to Willie Arthur Brown, a sturdy man identified as a prostitute, who was also a paroled murderer. Picked up by authorities in Palmer Park, Brown did not confess to the strangling, but quickly admitted that McCormick had paid him \$20 for his services. And suddenly the secret that McCormick had always kept to himself was out.

Praised by his nephew as an

inspiration to many and a "devout Christian," Johnson gave McCormick credit for his own move from Louisiana to Detroit. "I'm up here because I'm in the auto industry," Johnson said, "and, basically, he was the person who was instrumental in getting me in contact with the people I needed to be in contact with to get my foot into the auto industry."

Johnson also credited his uncle with encouraging him to pursue a master's degree, of which he now has two.

On the subject of McCormick's sexual orientation, however, Johnson said little, worried that the last actions of his uncle's life could tarnish the image McCormick spent a lifetime building.

"That's why you haven't seen me on any of these television programs because I didn't want to fuel the flames as it would be, because that's what sells papers and that's

what gets ratings. I feel more comfortable speaking about that he did in the community, or in the church specifically."

A graduate of Grambling State University in Louisiana, McCormick went on to receive his master's from Atlanta University. From there he went on to found the Martin Luther King, Jr. Youth Home in Cleveland, as well as several other organizations here in Detroit including Harold House and Quality Human Service.

Pres. Bill Clinton recognized McCormick for extensively researching his family's lineage all the way back to slavery. Since 1990 he served as the organizer of his family's reunions, where he often enlightened several hundred relatives from around the country about the family's ancestral roots.

"You have two kinds of people," says Johnson, "people who will run away from a fire and the other kind, the ones who will



Harold McCormick led a life devoted to civil-rights activism and was an inspiration to many people.

run toward a fire. He was the kind that would run toward a fire to see if anyone needed help."

McCormick will be memorialized by his family at the next McCormick/Carey family reunion scheduled for August in Atlanta.



By Jason A. Michael

I had been full time with Between The Lines for no more than a month when I was asked to look into the murder of civil rights activist Harold McCormick in July of 1999. A closeted gay man, McCormick had been strangled to death in his apartment with a phone cord and a double-knotted necktie by a male prostitute he picked up in Palmer Park. It was a sad story all the way around.

And as my research progressed, it would

I was the first to report this information and bring the details and exact date of the first murder to light. Speaking to McCormick's nephew, I learned how carefully the man who had marched with the likes of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson had concealed his homosexuality. Then, after a most undignified death, all his secrets came tumbling out.

In my nearly quarter century with BTL, the Harold McCormick murder stories stand out to me for a few reasons. First, still so new to the job, the digging I had to do on this story and the details I uncovered made me feel like

a real journalist. As gruesome as it sounds, it's been said in newsrooms around the world since the beginning of the free press that if it bleeds, it leads. McCormick's death, tragic as it certainly was, was enthralling.

It was also a cautionary tale. Don't assume your secrets will die with you. Sometimes, no matter how much effort you put into securing them, they will still manage to slip out. If not in life, then in death.

McCormick was a pillar of his community put down

by a homophobic killer. And in an instant, his carefully concealed cover came off. Then, suddenly, a life of good works is marred by one mistake: picking up the wrong piece of trade in the wrong adult bookstore at the wrong time. Just like that, the fickle hand of fate exposed McCormick and exposed all his business in the dangerous, and sometimes deadly, streets of Detroit.

*Speaking to McCormick's nephew, I learned how carefully the man who had marched with the likes of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson had concealed his homosexuality.*

grow even sadder. McCormick's then alleged murderer Willie Arthur Brown, only 43 at the time, had already spent 15 years in prison for an eerily similar murder he committed exactly 20 years to the day before McCormick's. I found this out after trekking down to the Herman Keefer building just north of downtown Detroit and digging up the death certificate of Brown's first victim, GM employee Calvin Edwards.

# Voter Guide 2000

By Jan Stevenson

When I was director of Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center in Ferndale and working with the paper, everything was just so frustrating in Michigan because we were just like a political wasteland. Everything was terrible. We were illegal. We couldn't marry. And any efforts on the part of the gay groups, like the Triangle Foundation, were just slaughtered every time. It was very frustrating.

We decided to do the Voter Guide starting in '96, really right out the chute. We took the paper over in late 1995, so it was right during the first election cycle that we kicked it off. And we followed the format that we stole from the Right

Wing, who brilliantly presented all the endorsements so you could see who was who very quickly.

This was all before the internet. You know, licking envelopes and mailing. Everything was old school in the beginning. We bought every gay mailing list we could find, contacting all the mail list vendors and asking them for whatever gay lists they had. It's expensive to do that.

But it was worth it because we could show someone, "Hey, you're in the Upper Peninsula, and you're in this district, and we just mailed out 40 surveys in your district." Or whatever the number. Escanaba was a gay hotspot.

Our first success really came in 2000. That was the year that Debbie Stabenow

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ran against Spencer Abraham for the U.S. Senate.

I think we printed 150,000 Voter Guides, and we mailed out 80,000, to try and encourage people to vote (and also to vote Democratic). It was a nonpartisan voter guide, but the reality is that the Republican Party's platform was so anti-gay we really couldn't endorse many Republicans.

After the '96 Voter Guide, we did some focus groups about voting, including why people didn't vote. Because what we found was that nationally, LGBTQ+ people weren't voting at the same rate as the general population. We wanted to know why.



Former BTL publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson. Courtesy photo

at *Hodges*...

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*We figured we could educate voters on what people really stood for and who liked them. Were they pro-choice? Were they for labor?*

And what we found was that most people had no idea who to vote for.

And they didn't really feel comfortable just voting for a party. They wanted to know actually who they were voting for, because not all the Democrats were good on our issues, either. So it wasn't something that you could just count on, the Democratic Party being amenable to LGBTQ+ rights.

We figured we could educate voters on what people really stood for and who liked them. Were they pro-choice? Were they for

labor?

Ahead of the 2000 election, we mailed out 80,000 Voter Guides and Debbie Stabenow won by 50,000 votes. And it was a thrill. I don't know if really that was what caused it, but whatever we did helped to push her over the finish line. And she's been re-elected ever since.

We used the Voter Guide as sort of a carrot to the candidates to say, "Pay attention to the LGBTQ+ community; it's a substantial voting bloc."

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# A 'Wilde' Celebration Planned for Local Theater Community

By Donald V. Calamia



Having spent 14 years as BTL's theater and arts editor and an occasional contributor for a few years thereafter, it's impossible to identify a single story I wrote as my favorite or most memorable. What I am most proud of, however, is the trust and faith publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson had in me and my wacky ideas.

In the spring of 2001, Susan and Jan placed a notice in BTL that they were searching for someone to expand and lead their theater coverage. Their goal was to bring together and forge a bond between the LGBTQ+ and theater communities. Why? Because, they reasoned, one wouldn't exist without the other. How many others responded I haven't a clue, but they chose me in time for the start of the 2001-02 theater season.

Little did they know what they were in for!

While a handful of theaters embraced our coverage from the beginning, others did not. A few wouldn't even return our calls. But that changed over the course of that first season, which ended with reviews of 37 professional productions staged or presented by 14 Metro Detroit companies. Those numbers would expand rather quickly over the next few years!

And that got me thinking. Hence, my first (and most successful) wacky idea: Why not take the next step and throw a big gay theater party each year to honor the best plays and performances of the season?

Susan and Jan loved the idea — and the Between The Curtains Awards was born. Thankfully, Susan came up with a better name, and The Wilde Awards made its debut on Aug. 26, 2002 at The Furniture Factory in Midtown Detroit.

True to its namesake Oscar Wilde, The Wilde Awards would be different from other media-sponsored theater award programs. My co-host

that first year was a young, up-and-coming female impersonator, Serena Escavelle, and rather than the critic deciding the winners, BTL published ballots for readers and theatergoers to submit their choices. (Thanks to ballot stuffing, that part of the process was revamped over the next few years.) And guests were encouraged to attend dressed in a manner befitting the late, great — and oh, so gay — Irish playwright.

**“**While a handful of theaters embraced our coverage from the beginning, others did not. A few wouldn't even return our calls.**”**



The result was one Wilde night, and for the next 14 years, the event would receive national recognition, change co-hosts, locations, owners, sponsors, presenters and entertainers. All told, the awards included nominations for 864 productions, 898 artists and 93 companies. Although The Wilde Awards still exists today, it's under the auspices of a different ownership.

I don't know about you, but I think Jan, Susan and I certainly accomplished what we set out to do!

A few of my other ideas, however, weren't so lucky. Remember Raves 'n' Rants? My No Reservations column? Few people do.

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# The Financial Burden of Trans Life

“My passion to advocate for the rights and dignity of transgender people was born on a newspaper delivery route.



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By Dawn Wolfe

My passion to advocate for the rights and dignity of transgender people was born on a newspaper delivery route. As a new BTL hire during the summer of 2004, I was asked one week to partner with our receptionist, Pam, to get the papers out.

Now, I was and am a science-fiction geek, and the geek social circles I was just starting to run in included trans folks. In the tried-and-true tradition of socially awkward people everywhere, though, the idea of actually asking any of them anything more personal than “Who’s your favorite author?” felt like an interpersonal landmine.

But in a delivery truck with a single person? Someone who was open, friendly, seemed to share my sense of humor, and also happened to be a trans woman? I asked Pam’s permission to ask about her life. She very generously agreed. The

things she told me about — the bigotry, danger and hate laws that trans people were enduring in the 21st century — made me angry enough to punch walls. As a journalist, I could do something a lot more effective than bruising my knuckles.

In the years that followed, it was my

honor to meet and report about heroes like Rachel Crandall Crocker, Denise Brogan-Kator, C.J. Tune-Copeland and so many more amazing, generous, beautiful and proud trans men and women who put their lived reality on the line, and in the pages of BTL, as activists and organizers, protectors and creators who at the time faced discrimination and isolation both from the wider culture and within spaces that were supposed to be L,G,B and T.

Looking back, my greatest error in those days was my failure to urge the former owners of BTL to hire trans writers to cover this community. Trans stories can and should be told by trans people whenever possible. At the same time, though, those of us in the rest of the rainbow share the responsibility of reporting about, fighting alongside and supporting our trans siblings against the forces that are working hard to oppress us all. I hope that my work — past, present and future — plays at least a small part in honoring that responsibility.

FEATURE STORY

**BTL's series on Trans life**

BY DAWN WOLFE

In an effort to broaden our entire community's understanding of the "T" in "LGBT," *Between The Lines* offers this first article in a continuing series on trans life. Because ignorance is not bliss — in its grossest, and because our LGBT community cannot afford to have a single letter — a single segment of our living, thriving, hurting — transgender community — feeling like it is less than part of the whole. BTL, with the help of a volunteer panel of experts listed here, hopes to help promote a greater understanding of our trans brothers and sisters.

Many LGBT people face many of the same kinds of challenges as members of the transsexual community. The most intimate part of our identity — our orientation — is political fodder for right and left wings alike. We can be feared without recourse, simply for being who we are — not, and are excluded from many legal/protections afforded the heterosexual community. Due to a simple lack of human compassion and understanding of who we are, we often meet with intense disapproval and exclusion from society.

For transsexual folks, the ostracizing goes a step further. Often in isolation, from both the queer and straight communities, transsexual people become sufficiently convinced they have been born into the wrong kind of body, and thus undergo the risks of hormones, surgery, and intense cultural disapproval in order to set things right.

The courage it must take to face parents, children, a spouse — an employer — with this most intimate of truths seems beyond comprehension at times. BTL hopes that readers will gain a greater understanding of our Michigan trans community in this occasional series article.



The series' technical advisor:  
Alfreda Rooks Jordan

Alfreda Rooks Jordan, Administrative Director of the U of M Health Services Comprehensive Gender Services Program, has been with the program for eight years, after having served as a crisis counselor for one year in Ypsilanti.

"I've been here ever since because I'm passionate about providing health care to everybody...and this [the trans community] is definitely an underserved community," she told BTL.

BTL is grateful to Rooks Jordan for her dedication to her work and for her generosity in sharing her technical and medical expertise for this series.

## The financial burden of trans life

### A potentially expensive proposition

BY DAWN WOLFE

For many trans folk, being true to themselves is not only a challenging proposition; it's an expensive one as well. An informal survey by BTL of medical experts and our Trans Panel of Experts found that expressing one's true gender can be as "simple" a financial matter as changing wardrobes — or it can potentially cost more than a four-year college degree.

First, there's the required therapy. According to Alfreda Rooks-Jordan, Administrative Director of the U of M Health Services Comprehensive Gender Services Program, U of M adheres to the Henry Benjamin standards in requiring "a minimum of three months working with a therapist before hormone treatment can begin."

Therapy sessions may be required anywhere from monthly to weekly, depending on the patient. U of M therapists charge from \$80-\$120 per hour.

Next, there's the hormones. According to a source at a local pharmacy, this cost "can vary widely." The source told BTL that a ballpark figure for hormones involved in transitioning from male to female is \$85 monthly. Persons transitioning from female to male may spend as much as \$233 per month on hormones alone.

And, since hormone treatments don't happen without a doctor's prescription, the cost of office visits must be factored in as well. However, Dr. Walter Bockwin, Ph.D., Coordinator of Transgender Services at the University of Minnesota, told BTL that the cost goes down after the first year of treatment.

"The first year is more expensive, because more visits [to the doctor] are required," he said.

Next — but not least — there's the surgery. While it's important to note that not all transsexual persons desire surgery, the cost can be prohibitive for those who do. The genital surgery that some trans folk undergo as part of their transition from male to female can cost from \$12,000-\$15,000 in the United States, according to Dr. Bockwin.

Rooks-Jordan told BTL that "facial feminization surgery can cost as much as \$40,000 and a tracheal shave, breast augmentation, and genital/reanal reassignment surgery can cost \$25,000 or more."



In Geneva above and C.J. Tune-Copeland, opposite page, are the PTM experts on our panel.

Medical treatment and surgery are not the only financial prices that transgender folk pay to be true to themselves. In Michigan, changing one's name legally to reflect his or her true gender costs approximately \$260. And electrolysis, which some if not many people who transition from male to female use to control facial hair, costs approximately \$9,000 per year, depending on the number of treatments.

The wide range of potential financial costs of life as a transgender person is reflected in a survey of the Panel of Experts — trans folk who have volunteered to act as expert consultants for BTL's series on trans life.

When asked, "how much have you spent, and how much do you continue to spend, to express your true gender?" responses varied from TransGender Michigan President Rachel Crandall ("probably only about \$3,000, and Jamie Fox's "not much," to Billie's "about \$600 per month" (Billie

requested that her last name not be used). The panel's male volunteers, C.J. Tune-Copeland and Tim Geneva, reported spending about \$425 per year and about \$150-\$200 per month respectively, in addition to incidental expenditures and the cost of changing their names.

In Michigan, only one health insurance company covers the expenses involved in transitioning, and that company covers only the costs involved in surgery. Some insurance policies will help with hormones, others with therapy, depending on the policy and the wording used by the health care provider when filing the claim.

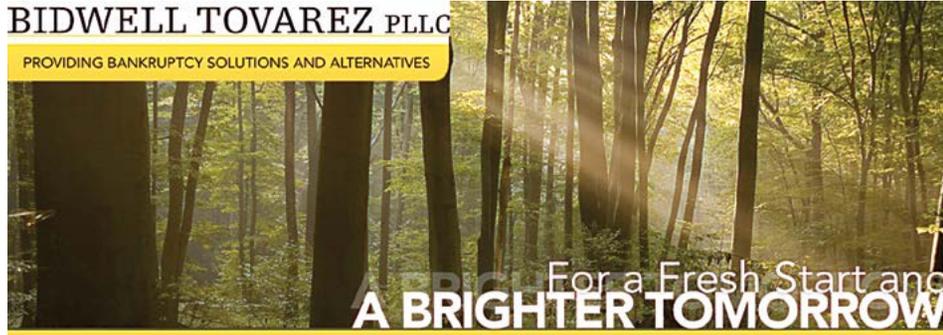
Geneva told BTL that he plans on paying his insurance costs out of pocket, at \$750 per month, since the plan offered by his employer will not help with the costs involved in his transition from female to male.

Rooks-Jordan offered this advice about insurance: "...the important piece of this is that when folks are buying insurance to get copies of the books and see if they [the companies] have a specifically written exclusion about transgender health care or surgery. If there's an exclusion, that's not an insurance that people want to purchase."

And, according to Dr. Bockwin, the health insurance picture is changing. "In Minnesota, we have a number of them [health insurance companies that cover the medical costs of transitioning]," Bockwin also said that insurance companies in California and other states are increasingly offering these types of coverage.

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# Affirmative Action, Women's Rights and Images

“

*The poem serves as an intentional call to action for women to recognize their potential, follow their dreams and embrace and garner enough self-love to pass down the good to our children and future generations.*



It Was a Treat to Know Him  
Puzzle on page 29

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By Imani Williams

As always, I thank BTL's editors and former publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson for inviting me to add my voice to BTL pages and the Pride Source family.

When asked to pen a short anniversary piece reflective of my most significant body of writing for BTL as a columnist, I didn't hesitate to accept.

The piece "Affirmative Action, Women's Rights and Images" was written for BTL in honor of Women's Herstory Month. Penned as a poem, this piece is most significant to me because it represents so much of what is wrong in the world while reminding all women what we can become with awareness, tenacity and self-love.

Since publishing this piece with BTL in 2003, I've reproduced it in a print anthology with Poets and Allies for Resistance. It is included in my self-published print book and Audible Audiobook, "Rootwork: Triumph Over Trauma." The piece is a part of my public readings and has been an obvious choice when performing at community events and open mics.

The poem serves as an intentional call to action for women to recognize their potential, follow their dreams and embrace and garner enough self-love to pass down the good to our children and future generations. A global call for women to unite, if you will, in spite of all the microaggressions that greet

women and girls out in the world.

Today, women around the globe are asking for calls to action on protecting women's reproductive health and basic

rights. While abortion remains safe at home in Michigan (for now), we know we have to stay awake and active in the movement.

There remain far too many queer women still pushing back on health maintenance that includes seeing a gynecologist and reporting for annual mammograms. That has to change, as a disproportionate number of lesbian and bisexual women don't schedule or keep appointments for physical

and emotional well-being. Equating disclosure about loving women with shame leaves women at risk. Preventative care matters, and we must be diligent about practicing self-care.

As a survivor, I want to see an end to sexism, racism and domestic/intimate partner violence. That absolutely

includes same-sex couples, along with pan and trans fam. Know that the work continues, and that I remain committed to addressing and ending trauma in our

## VOICES FROM AN URBAN BUSH SISTA!

### Affirmative action, women's rights and images



BY IMANI WILLIAMS

As I sit and wonder and ponder, I close my eyes, try and imagine what this world will be like for my daughters, 17 and 19, in 2007 and beyond.

It is time we wake up and pay attention as the government and conservatives try and dismantle women's rights one by one.

It's the 21st century and I wonder about the plight of not only the two born of my flesh and blood, but the plight of girl children worldwide.

My sisters, cousins, and nieces, of all shades and ethnicities and races. Hard to imagine the future without remembering the past, those strong proud womyn who have come before me: the mothers, aunts, and

grandmothers who struggled, taught and fought for equality and the right to survive against tremendous odds and all the freakin' isms known globally.

The sexism, the you're too old, too young, too black, too white, too skinny, too fat, too meek, too loud, too bashful, too out-spoken - too much damn wo/man.

The racism, the oppression that makes financial equality (same degrees intact) as evasive as the glass ceiling, is a reality that many will tell you does not even exist. *Do you want to keep your job or not? Play the game. He didn't mean it that way! You're just too emotional.*

The oppression, the abuse that can hit in so many ways (all negative): the physical, the verbal, the emotional, which slithers like a snake to snatch your spirit and silence your creativity. Your God-given right to thrive and be.

FGM: Femafe Genital Mutilation/ Castration; the painful cutting away, the removal of one's clitoris or whole womb depending on how savage the freakin' mutilator feels on a given day. The castration that takes away all that we are to the very core. Oh, no more, no more.

The socialization that automatically places girl children in pink dresses, with Barbie as playthings. Barbie, that model

communities.

I'll end with the close of "Affirmative Action, Women's Rights and Images":

"I'm not a man hater," I wrote. "This is just my prayer for the future of my girls and girl children worldwide."

Survival is key! The struggle continues. Peace.

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# MSU Student Club Likely Hate Group



By Todd Heywood

Before terms like “alt-right” and personalities like Richard Spencer rose to national prominence, Between The Lines had already uncovered the nascent rebranding of white nationalism into a well-heeled so-called intellectual movement.

In 2006, we reported that Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) at MSU would likely be declared a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). In spring of 2007, that happened, making the student organization the first university-recognized hate group in SPLC’s hate tracking program’s history.

Unraveling the obscured white supremacy agenda of the organization started with a simple question: What is a hate group? This arose after I covered YAF protesting the Lansing City Council. They were upset that the body would adopt a non-discrimination ordinance that would include LGBTQ+ people. It was a move that took over a decade, a ballot initiative and a new City Council to accomplish.

Standing in front of Lansing City Hall, one protester held a sign that read “Straight Power.”

Kyle Bristow was the head of the organization at the time. He claimed in 2007 the listing in the SPLC hate group findings was wrong. His organization was not like the KKK. He wasn’t wrong. His group used a pseudo-intellectual set of arguments and events to stoke white grievance and white supremacy. His

blog drove claims of Western superiority, now proudly touted by the Proud Boys as “Western Chauvinism.” After the listing, former Michigan Republican Party Chair Saul Anuzis called Bristow “exactly the sort of kid we want” in the GOP during a radio interview.

Bristow’s partner in the disruptive activities of white supremacy at Michigan State University was a Texas lawyer named Jason VanDyke.

Both would go on to hold

substantial roles in pushing the legal infrastructure of the white supremacy agenda in the U.S. Bristow, as an attorney, claims to have worked to allow the Charlottesville, Virginia “Unite the Right” rally in the summer of 2017. The rally devolved into violence with one woman killed by a white supremacy supporter driving his car into a crowd. Bristow also sued MSU to allow Richard Spencer to host a speaking engagement at the university. A settlement

allowed the white supremacy “thought leader” to speak during spring break in March 2018. The appearance resulted in violent clashes between anti-racist activists, white supremacy advocates and law enforcement.

That 2006 report by BTL was a warning of the rise of a new form of white supremacy. It was ignored for years, allowing it to fester. But the signs of danger were there, and BTL was instrumental in pinning the rising tide to the wall for all to see.

**Kyle Bristow**  
In his own words  
“I believe abortion is absolutely despicable. It hurts women... It raises the chance of breast cancer. It allows men to abuse women.”

**EAST LANSING** – Young Americans for Freedom, a student group that is eligible to receive money from Michigan State University, qualifies as a hate group based on a recent series of anti-minority and anti-gay actions the group has made, according to a national tracking organization.

YAF is under investigation as a hate group, said Heidi Beitzel, assistant director of the Intelligence Project for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama.

“They will probably be listed next year,” Beitzel said. Also included in the likely listing is 20-year-old international relations major Kyle Bristow, the group’s chairman.

IF YAF is listed, it will be the first university-recognized student hate group in the nation that Beitzel is aware of.

YAF has been involved in a series of minority hating events this fall, most notably its attempt to organize a campus-wide “Catch an Illegal Immigrant Day.”

And on Nov. 26, about a dozen members came to downtown Lansing to protest the Lansing City Council’s proposed civil rights ordinance, which would protect gays, lesbians and transgender persons from discrimination.

Outside of City Hall, protesters held up signs with slogans like “Straight Power” and “End Faggery.”

The group was joined by students who said they were members of the YAF branch at Olivet College. However, Jerry Rashid, assistant vice president for college relations at Olivet, said while the group has submitted paperwork to become an official student group, the college has not been approved in application. Rashid also expressed concern that the Olivet YAF group may be affiliated with the MSU organization.

YAF spokeswoman Joanna Vanavvas, 23, a professional writing major at MSU, laughed when told her group was being investigated by the SPLC.

“We’ll see,” she said. Vanavvas was featured prominently in Lansing area media holding a “Straight Power” sign at the Nov. 20 protest. And she readily admits the sign was her making.

YAF’s local branch has about 30 active members, with a mailing list between 100 and 150, Vanavvas said. She said the members meet regularly at the MSU Union, but declined to give a day or time when the group met. She declined to list the names of any executive board members, except for the group’s leader Kyle Bristow.

Vanavvas said the group is affiliated with the National Young Americans for Freedom organization. However, YAF’s national Web site does not list an active chapter at MSU, and Vanavvas was unable to produce any documentation to support her assertion. “I was told we were a registered student group with the national,” she said. “We are a nonpartisan group about freedom. We support our leader when he makes decisions for the group.”

**Leader with hate agenda**  
Kyle Bristow, a 20-year-old graduate of Chipewee Valley High School in Macomb County, leads YAF. While there, according to his online resume, he was involved in the marching band, International Club, National Honor Society, and he helped to form the Young Republicans club at his school.

In addition to listing his employment history – McDonald’s for more than three years – his online resume lists numerous volunteer positions with prominent Republicans including Dick DeVos, Mike Bonhead and Mike Rogers.

He also lists his former position on ASMSU, the student governing body of MSU, as well as serving as the former secretary of the College Republicans club at MSU. He also states that he is the Vice Chair of the Macomb

See Hate, page 18

By Todd Heywood

“That 2006 report by BTL was a warning of the rise of a new form of white supremacy.”

# Father Figure



By Sean Kosofsky

In 2007, I was the Director of Policy for Michigan's Triangle Foundation. This means I was the principal policy advocate for Michigan's LGBTQ+ community in our state's capital. I was also a regular columnist for Between The Lines. My column was "All Politics Is Loco." But more importantly, I was someone's son.

Despite all my moving around and career changes, one thing has been consistent — I am incredibly close to my parents and still a huge booster for Detroit. In 2007, I penned a piece about my father and how important he was in my life. I have had a lot of male and female role models in my life (Jeff Montgomery, Henry Messer, Joy Geng, Jim Toy, Shea Howell, John Kavanaugh and others), but my father will always be the most important. I remember an icebreaker once where someone asked, "If you could give a pair of comfortable shoes to one person, who would it be?" and without missing a beat, I said, "My dad." He has worked so hard his whole life to support a family, putting everyone's interests ahead of his own. He helped set us all up for success in our personal lives and careers.

I encourage you to read the original column, but I was invited to give an update on this article and why it means so much to me. First, my father is Jewish, and this has been on my mind a lot with the rising antisemitism in our culture. The GOP embrace of anti-gay and anti-trans advocacy we are feeling in our community now is directly related to their embrace of white supremacy and antisemitism. My dad is not very active with his faith. My mother is Catholic, and I was raised Catholic, but I always felt a kinship with Jewish people. They didn't proselytize and they didn't claim there was only "one way" to live. My father's Jewish upbringing gave him the open-mindedness and compassion to support me when I came out. This had a very important effect on the rest of my life. If my parents had not supported me, especially my father, it would have crushed me. I helped lead

the youth group at Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center in Ferndale for three years, and during that time, we saw countless youth cast out or assaulted by their families. Today, I want to appreciate my father for appreciating my differences and my sexuality.

Second, as the current wave anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and vitriol washes

over our politics, I am reminded that we need supportive moms, dads and other caregivers right now. With all the hate and violence and repression, one of the most important

safe spaces is in the arms of family. It's another reason I am so proud to partner with Stand with Trans, a national trans-support organization based in Metro



“

*With all the hate and violence and repression, one of the most important safe spaces is in the arms of family.*

Detroit. Stand with Trans is a lifeline for families dealing with a trans youth or loved one who comes out, while also providing help to trans people around the country. By working with them, in a small way, I get to stay in this fight.

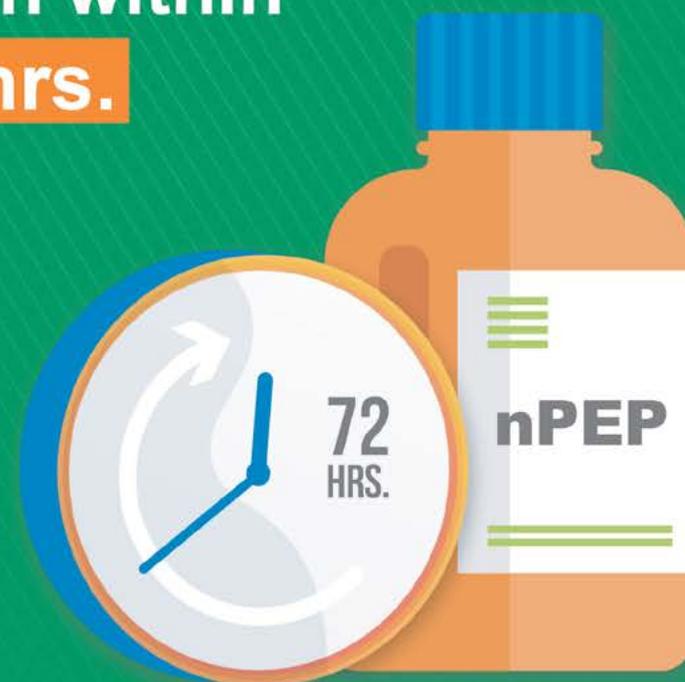
Most of my gay male role models have died. These men helped me navigate my male identity, my gay identity, my masculinity and femininity — my place as a man in our movement. But my dad is still with me, and while he is alive and well, I want to shower him with gratitude. He played an integral role in the man I have become. And, of course, I love my mom. She raised me, too, and helped save my life. My parents recently celebrated their 50th anniversary.

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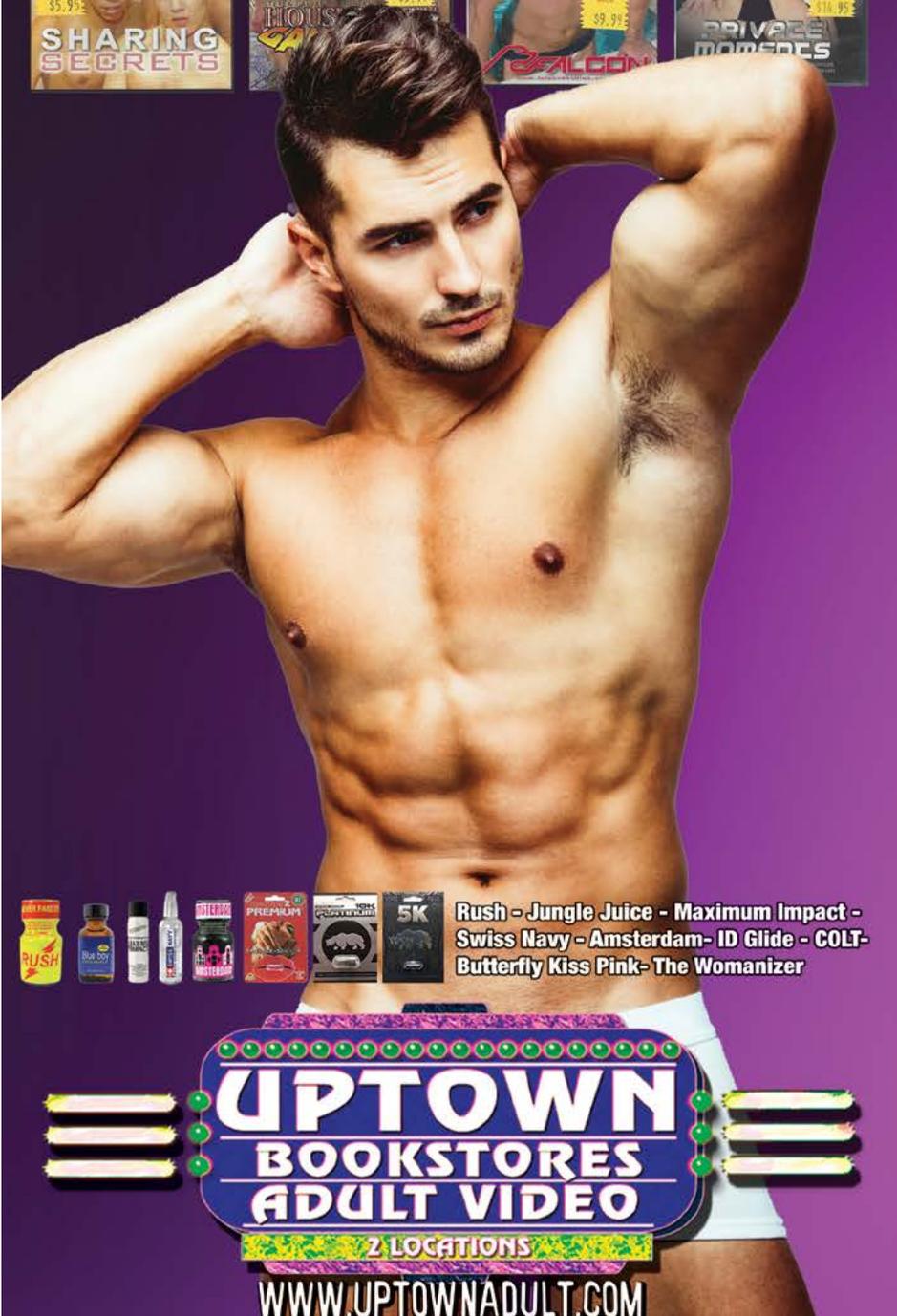
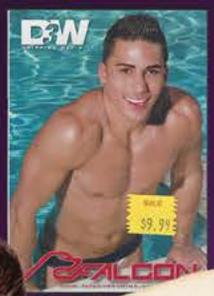
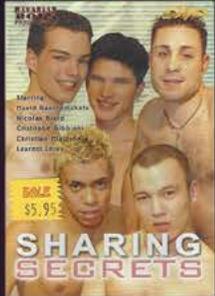
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MAY 29, 2008

# The Audacity of Pride



By Michelle E. Brown

In 2022, I had both the honor and privilege of walking those last earthly months with my friend Sandra, who was experiencing the final stages of pancreatic cancer. Those were days filled with reflection, conversation, laughter and love.

After speaking in Ann Arbor at the Women's March in October, I went over to Sandra's house to talk about her day, my day, the event and, of course, a little politics. At some point, Sandra went into the other room and came out with a scrapbook. In it were clippings of some of my op-eds from Between The Lines.

I was touched and surprised. When I asked her why she had kept this scrapbook, she replied, "You are who you are — always fighting the good fight and reminding us through your writing that we should all try to be better humans."

This year I was faced with my own health challenge. As I recovered, I flipped through that scrapbook and came across an op-ed from the May 29, 2008 issue of Between The Lines that still rings true: "The Audacity of Pride."

As a queer, Black woman, artist and activist, I see my many intersectional communities making progress but still under attack. It's not only one step forward, two steps back, but often just making that one step is bogged down as if walking through quicksand. It can be hard and laborious.

As the Hollies song goes, "The road is long with many

## The audacity of Pride

BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

June is here and Pride is busting out all over. Can you feel it? It's in the air, in our conversations, circled on every calendar — our celebration of our hopes, our dreams and our community.

Despite a couple of speed bumps here in Michigan including failure to pass the long-stalled anti-bullying measure "Matt's Safe School Law," Michigan Supreme Court's 5-2 decision upholding the appeals court ruling that Michigan's so-called "Marriage Amendment" prohibits public employers from offering domestic partnership benefits and the daunting reality that hate crimes in Michigan more than doubled in 2007 from the previous year's total, our march for full equality is definitely on the move.

Change is in the air rolling in on tidal waves from both coasts — New York and California — with monumental court decisions recognizing and affirming our right to marry. We have seen media diva, Oprah Winfrey, host several shows, on LGBT issues highlighting our love, our fami-

The audacity to say with conviction that, we shall overcome not some day, but this day. The audacity to respond to the long-suffering call, rooted in African American tradition, of "How Long" with an empowered, strengthened and firm resolve "Not Long, America. Not Long."

Pundits have already hinted that the California ruling might again put gay marriage on the front burner and be used as a wedge issue. The specter of the 2008 elections resurrecting the image of gay people getting married as a threat to the "institution" of marriage must be banished once and for all. We must have the audacity to proclaim "Never Again!" to being the political scapegoats "Never again!"

The other topic looming as the elephant in the room is race. Should Barack Obama receive the Democratic nomination, which seems pretty inevitable, will the flame of old biases be fanned into a divisive force? Will portrayals like one I was recently told of showing Barack Obama and Kwame Kilpatrick together dressed in Dashikis with the caption "You see what happened to Detroit — do you really want a black president" become mainstream? When voter's pull that curtain in November will they vote for their hopes, their children, the earth, the future or cast a vote based on the fears and biases of their fathers?

I have the audacity to hope that we, the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, will

... I am filled with more than the "Audacity of Hope" but am emboldened to have the audacity to believe change is finally going to come.

lies, our lives. Bigger-than-life GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has said the effort by anti-gay forces to amend the California Constitution to permanently ban same-sex marriage is "a total waste of time." While speaking at a Log Cabin Republican convention (LGBT folks identifying with republican values — yes they exist and are part of our community) he vowed that he would fight against any such amendment.

And our very own talk show goddess Ellen DeGeneres, whose show is watched by millions of Americans — LGBT and straight each day, brought the question of marriage equality to presidential hopefuls putting them on record, live and in living color before the American public. Her discourse with John McCain ending with her asking if he would walk her down the aisle brought our love, our rights (and lack of) home to viewers — all viewers, humanizing this injustice, changing hearts and minds, making people think from the heart not from fear.

A full and inclusive ENDA, the end of

be the ambassadors for change in our society. In celebrating our diversity, nurturing our families and defending the civil rights of all Americans we can and will chart the path for a better, fairer and more just society.

Just for starters, our community will host two public marches that cross the 8 Mile Bridge and raise awareness about the need to value cultural and racial differences. Not just a gay issue, "Building Bridges: Walking Together to Embrace Diversity" — is addressing a scourge on all of Michigan — the Eight Mile divide: white vs. black, lives vs. have none. Equality isn't a special right. It's the only right for all Americans.

In his book "The Audacity of Hope" Barack Obama calls for a new kind of politics. These new politics build on the shared understandings that pull us together as Americans. As we enter this season of LGBT Pride let us come together celebrating and embracing our diversity, our strength, our vision and our role as an integral piece of the fabric of America.

a winding turn that leads us to who knows where." Transphobia, homophobia, racism, gun violence, book censorship, anti-abortion legislation, attacks on voting rights, the environment — there is so much work yet to be done.

Fifteen years later, as I reread that op-ed, I realize I am still filled with more than

the audacity of hope but am emboldened to have the audacity to believe change is going to come. Inspired by the new voices and new leaders (especially from youth and within our LGBTQ+ community), we may not be there yet, but we are on our way.

“As a queer, Black woman, artist and activist, I see my many intersectional communities making progress but still under attack.”

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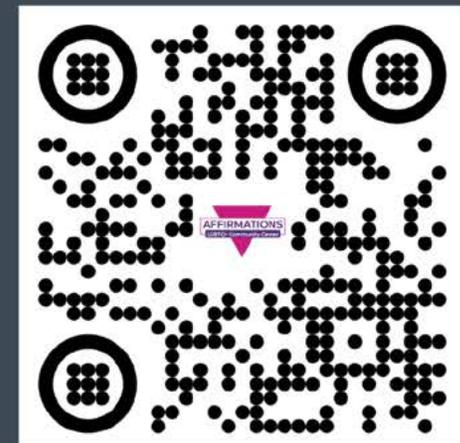
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# Heart in Motion



By Chris Azzopardi

In 2013, when I interviewed Amy Grant, Christian music icon and one of my childhood idols, there was something she went out of her way to tell me that made our interview one of the most meaningful I've done over the last 15-plus years. That interview, her first LGBTQ+ press interview ever, ended up being what so many queer Christians hoped to hear, not just me.

At one point, Amy expressed her overall impression of my questions, which covered LGBTQ+ marriage, and whether she was concerned about Christians who might judge her for speaking with me on queer topics. "This is interesting because I have never done an interview where it feels every question is saying, 'Tell me I'm OK,'" she said. She understood the assignment — it was me trying to understand how she reconciles her very public faith with the fact that so many LGBTQ+ people, including myself, admire her. It was then that she said, "Can I say one thing?"

Her closing quote was affirming for anyone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community but has felt betrayed by religious homophobia, particularly from those in the Christian community. And it was a powerful coda.

"I know that the religious community has not been very welcoming, but I just want to stress that the journey of faith brings us into community, but it's really about one relationship," she said at the

time. "The journey of faith is just being willing and open to have a relationship with God. And everybody is welcome. Everybody."

Though, at the time, two years before the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality, Grant may have been somewhat evasive in her answers, there was no denying she was speaking from an

through her soothing music, always felt like a welcoming place, so it was refreshing to know, years later when I interviewed her, that she was as much a safe place for queer people in real life as she has been through her music.

Shortly after our interview, I went to the same farm where her lesbian niece recently got



authentically honest place as an ally-in-training — I got the impression that she was learning how to be a visible one. That end-quote felt like she was reaching out her hand to our community, knowing full well that Christians would once again scorn her for her pro-love sentiment, which some did after our interview, of course.

Perhaps if she hadn't fully grasped the significance of her speaking on LGBTQ+ issues as the biggest Christian music artist, she'd still be hesitant to speak openly about, say, hosting her lesbian niece's wedding at her farm like she did recently, 10 years after our conversation.

On a more personal level, I grew up Catholic and felt the sting of anti-gay sentiments from within the Catholic church during the years leading up to me coming out at 18, when I was just coming to terms with my identity as a gay person. Trying to reconcile my sexuality with dangerous religious homophobia sent me into a scary suicidal spiral, but Grant,

married. Amy signed an issue of BTL with our interview featured on the cover, but even more special was meeting so many queer Grant fans (who knew?) who told me they appreciated our conversation. I realized that, at one point, they also needed to know from her, anyone, that they were indeed OK. One fan in particular, the wife of a preacher, shared with me that her husband actually recited parts of the interview to his congregation, with the reading having a strong emphasis on Amy's "everybody is welcome" quote.

Over the years, I've seen that quote circulate as a meme in religious Facebook groups. Ten years later, I'm still grateful that what Amy said keeps reaching people who need to hear what I needed to hear as a gay teen who didn't yet quite know, when it comes to practicing faith, it could be as simple as this: No one can tell you who to have a relationship with, even when that relationship is with God.

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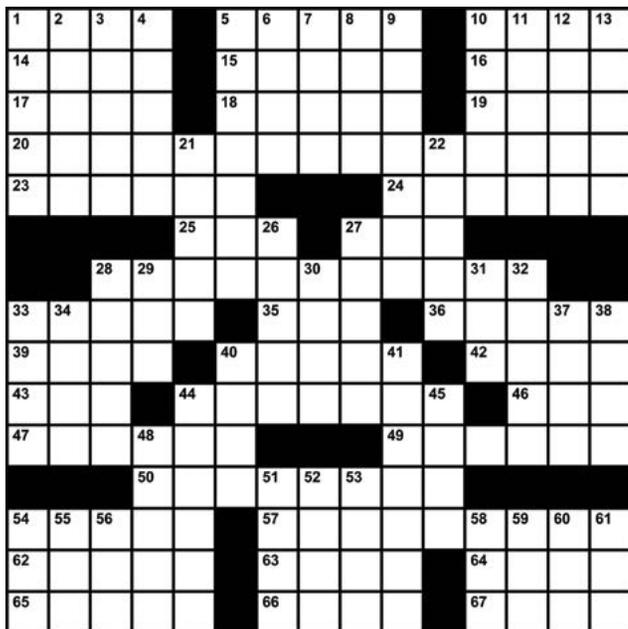
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 49 Poet Levertov  
 50 End of the definition  
 54 It tops the cake  
 57 Youth, to Shakespeare  
 62 Evans of "Dynasty"  
 63 Knoxville team, to fans  
 64 Boy with a bow who shot your beau  
 65 Orally pleased  
 66 "Hey, over here!"  
 67 Nabors' home state, for short

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 2 Allergy season sound  
 3 Affleck's "Chasing Amy" crush  
 4 Field of Ursula Le Guin  
 5 Stallion under a knight  
 6 Give a lot of mouth  
 7 Bone in a limp wrist  
 8 Michelangelo's David, once  
 9 Chew out  
 10 Sneaky Pie's cries  
 11 Grant of "Weeds"  
 12 Butler in "Gone with the Wind"  
 13 Love-making sounds

- 21 When actors should come  
 22 Big name in China  
 26 James Baldwin piece, e.g.  
 27 Divvy up  
 28 Question variety for "Advocate" poll  
 29 "Xtra"'s prov.  
 30 Dumbo's "wings"  
 31 Org. for sweaty men in shorts  
 32 "Slumdog Millionaire" setting  
 33 Ward of "Once and Again"  
 34 AI who drew Abner  
 37 Sci-fi planet population  
 38 Oliver Twist's request  
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 41 Like lovers who stay in the sack?  
 44 "Lesbians ignite!" e.g.  
 45 Mike Brady portrayer Robert  
 48 Paul of "Hollywood Squares"  
 51 Say whether or not you're coming  
 52 Its capital is Vientiane  
 53 Society's problems, like racism and homophobia  
 54 Island in gay Paree  
 55 Org. in many spy movies  
 56 Earnings at gfn.com  
 58 Young lady coming out  
 59 Constellation over Rio  
 60 \_\_\_ Kippur  
 61 FICA funds it

**It Was a Treat to Know Him**

**Across**

- 1 Big Peter in the library  
 5 Fruit pie part  
 10 Red planet  
 14 Bi  
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- 17 Bangkok tongue  
 18 Nitpicky about a bit of history?  
 19 Jackie's designer  
 20 Like a successful person, to Treat Williams (1951-2023)  
 23 Cheating, slangily  
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 25 "Cabaret" opening?  
 27 Old org. of tight ends  
 28 More of the definition

See p. 22 for answers

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# Michigan Makes History with First Marriages

“

*And when we were reading the ruling, we're going, 'Where's the stay? Where's the stay?' We finally realized there was no stay and that marriage was legal now on a Friday afternoon at 6 o'clock.*

## By Susan Horowitz

I realized very early on the significance of the DeBoer case. Most people felt like it was a fool's errand. I was really committed to following it step by step from the earliest stages all the way through to the end of it and went to all the court proceedings. I made sure we were up to date on what was going on.

We were really surprised when the ruling came down in 2014. We were very, very pleased with the ruling, but we expected there to be a stay. But there wasn't.

And when we were reading the ruling, we're going "Where's the stay? Where's the stay?" We finally realized there was no stay and that marriage was legal now on a Friday afternoon at 6 o'clock.

I said, "Let's call Lisa Brown and make sure that she opens tomorrow so that we can go in there and have these people get married." Lisa was the Oakland County Clerk. And Lisa said, "We'll open Monday. It'll be fine." Our hair's on fire. They're going to have a stay put in. They're going to go after it. And she said, "I don't know if I can get my staff to come in."

Then Barb Byrum, in Lansing, announced that she was going to open Saturday morning. So I think that, with a combination of Lisa calling around to her staff — everybody she talked to said, "Yeah, I'll be in. I want to come in" — they opened up the next day.

Jan and I were already married, but we knew we had to get as many people married as fast as possible, because the Republicans were running around to judges as fast as they could.

They opened up in the morning and started processing. They waived the waiting period. And in fact, there were so many people getting married, there weren't enough witnesses. There was a minister from the local Unitarian Church and Lisa Brown. She was fast. And



**Michigan Makes History With First Marriages**

State Is Number 18 In March To Equality

she was processing each couple and saying "You're married. Here, fill out the forms." We're witnessing and filling them out as fast as we can. We were able to keep going until the stay was put in place, I think, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We squeezed in as many as we could.

It was really a fantastic day. And Lisa still says that it was a highlight for her. She knew it was important, but she didn't realize how impactful it would be on her.

And, certainly, for the people who were married that day, it was just a beautiful thing. Just a beautiful day.

*Earlier this year, Susan was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The cancer was discovered in a very early stage and, because of this, Susan's doctors are very optimistic that her being cancer-free after completing chemotherapy. Jan and Susan publish regular updates on her battle with cancer at <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/susanhorowitz/journal>. Friends, family and longtime readers of BTL are invited to use CaringBridge to wish her well and show their support.*

# Mrs. America Is Intersex



**By Ellen Shanna Knoppow**

I learn something new every day. That's what I love about writing for BTL. From the legal intricacies of LGBTQ+ parenting to advice from a medical doctor on practicing safe kink, it's always an educational adventure. So when I discovered that Mrs. America, formerly Mrs. Michigan, was intersex, I eagerly pitched the story idea to our editorial director, Chris Azzopardi.

At the time, all I knew about "intersex" was that it's the "I" in LGBTQIA+ and that it had something to do with ambiguous sexual characteristics. I would come to learn that Jackie Blankenship developed normally but, instead of a uterus and ovaries, she had been born with internal testes that were producing estrogen. Doctors recommended and later performed surgery to remove them, something she believed to be unnecessary when she got older.

Jackie, a mom and radio host in Grand Rapids, was featured in an MLive piece on her big win as Mrs. America. It didn't say

other girls. Jackie was also open about her place in the LGBTQ+ community. She expressed what sounded a little like guilt over being able to "pass" so easily, but felt welcome among queer people just the same.

This may have been BTL's first profile of a beauty queen and certainly a first



for a cover. Just as I love to learn, I'm also on a mission to educate the public. There are more than 40 types of intersex conditions related to genitalia, hormones,

internal anatomy or chromosomes that don't fit into traditional binary categories. About 1.7% of the population is intersex (more than five million Americans). Being intersex is a condition, not a disorder. That's worth knowing.

For Jackie, a heterosexual woman,

being intersex just means she wears a hormonal patch and her daughter was born using Jackie's sister as a surrogate. But if this is the first you're learning about what it is to be intersex, you're in good company. Even a friend whom I consider worldly on all matters LGBTQ+ was perplexed. "Does she have a vagina?" he asked. I assured him that particular question hadn't come up.

much about her intersex condition, except that she advocates for intersex youth as part of her pageantry platform. "Far out," I thought. But would she want to talk to an LGBTQ+ publication? She did.

I was fascinated by Jackie's story about her entry into the world of pageantry. She said she enjoyed the glitz and glamor, theorizing that when she began, as an adolescent, it may have been because her condition made her feel less feminine than

“

*This may have been BTL's first profile of a beauty queen and certainly a first for a cover. Just as I love to learn, I'm also on a mission to educate the public.*

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