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Ryan Redoute. Courtesy photo

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

It's the time of year when our social calendars start begging for relief from all the graduations, weddings and late spring gatherings, but don't let that stop you from adding some worthwhile events just for you. Break free from your mounting obligations and take in a special queer art exhibit in Lansing, attend "The Prom!" in Birmingham (and go to an actual prom at Affirmations in Ferndale), celebrate the legacy of Detroit's Club Heaven or venture out for a night of fine dining and opera among new friends with a private social club.



"Don't Wake Me" by Jenelle Austin. Photo: Lansing Art Gallery

See a Queer Art Exhibit in Lansing

Venture over to Lansing for the LGBTQ+ Artist in Michigan exhibit at the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center, on display now until June 29. The free exhibit, which is co-sponsored by Suits and the City, a nonprofit LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, features the work of local LGBTQ+ artists including Jenelle Austen, Jacob Converse and Cat Bathing. Artwork includes paintings, sculptures, photographs, fiber and mixed-media pieces focused on LGBTQ+ identity and representation.

Through June 29, Lansing Art Gallery (300 S. Washington Square, Lansing). Learn more at lansingartgallery.org/exhibits/the-lgbtq-artist-in-michigan.



Go to 'The Prom!'

"The Prom!," on stage with Birmingham Village Players through May 19, is your chance to experience the teenage drama of high school prom all over again, through the story of high schooler Emma, who dreams of taking her girlfriend to the senior prom. When her plans are thwarted by an intolerant PTA, the community learns a lesson in tolerance and selflessness. Producer Laura Quinn said in press materials that the show is an "amazing musical" that shares an "inspiring message of love and inclusivity."

There's still time to grab tickets to a real queer prom — Affirmation's Prom ReDeux is set for May 18, offering a chance for a prom night do-over in a queer-affirming space. Buy tickets at goaffirmations.org/promredeux.

May 3-19, Birmingham Village Players (34550 Woodward Ave., Birmingham). Reserve tickets at birminghamvillageplayers.com/the-prom-2024.



Get into the Groove at a Silent Disco

A few years ago, silent discos were all the (quiet) rage, and lately, they seem to be making a comeback. It's a unique experience, grooving up next to people who are all in their own little worlds, immersed in a closeup experience with the music pumping through each pair of headphones. Head over to Fun Girl Dance Co. in Ypsilanti on May 4 to join the experience at the Cheers to Queer silent disco night. It's a multifunctional space — hit the bar upstairs or the social lounge downstairs when you need a break from the disco.

May 4, 7 p.m., Fun Girl Dance Co. (117 Pearl St., Ypsilanti). Learn more at bit.ly/3wuckZJ7.



A previous Detroit Sound Conservancy event. Photo: Detroit Sound Conservancy

Celebrate the Legacy of Club Heaven

Detroit Sound Conservancy, an organization that manages a music archive focused on the preservation and celebration of Detroit music, will present a free panel discussion and storytelling event featuring Club Heaven, the now-defunct legendary gay club, on May 17 in Farmington Hills. "Celebrating Club Heaven" will showcase stories shared by former clubgoers, a panel discussion with local musicians and artists, a look at the one-of-a-kind sound system created by DJ Ken Collier that drew a young Black queer crowd to the Detroit club in the early '90s and a musical tribute.

May 17, 7 p.m., Hawk Community Center (29995 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills). Reserve free tickets at bit.ly/3y5J0Sz.



A previous Apotheculture Club event in Detroit. Photo: Apotheculture Club

Have a Memorable Night at the Opera

Culture and cannabis collide in Apotheculture Club's The Vixen in Detroit event, which will feature a special dining experience and a trip to Detroit Opera's "Cunning Little Vixen" production. Creative Producer James Blaszkowski, a freelance director who was commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts to create a new classical music concert this June with classically trained queens Sapphira Cristál and Monét X Change from "RuPaul's Drag Race," tells BTL, "What started as a simple idea to pair cannabis with classical music has evolved into a vibrant community of artists and professionals across the country who are eager to connect and share cultural experiences while elevated. Our private events include amazing food, multi-genre music and curated conversation, followed by an epic outing in transportation we provide. We can't wait to return to the Detroit Opera House for a show that not only has gorgeous music, but large scale animations!"

May 17, 5 p.m. Tickets include transportation between the club's private residence and the Detroit Opera House, dinner and tickets to the opera. Learn more about Apotheculture on Instagram @apothecultureclub. Purchase tickets at bit.ly/3Wjmh3.

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JUNE 16TH

**BAY CITY
PRIDE MONTH TEA DANCE**
@ DRYDOCK BEER GARDEN

JUNE 22ND

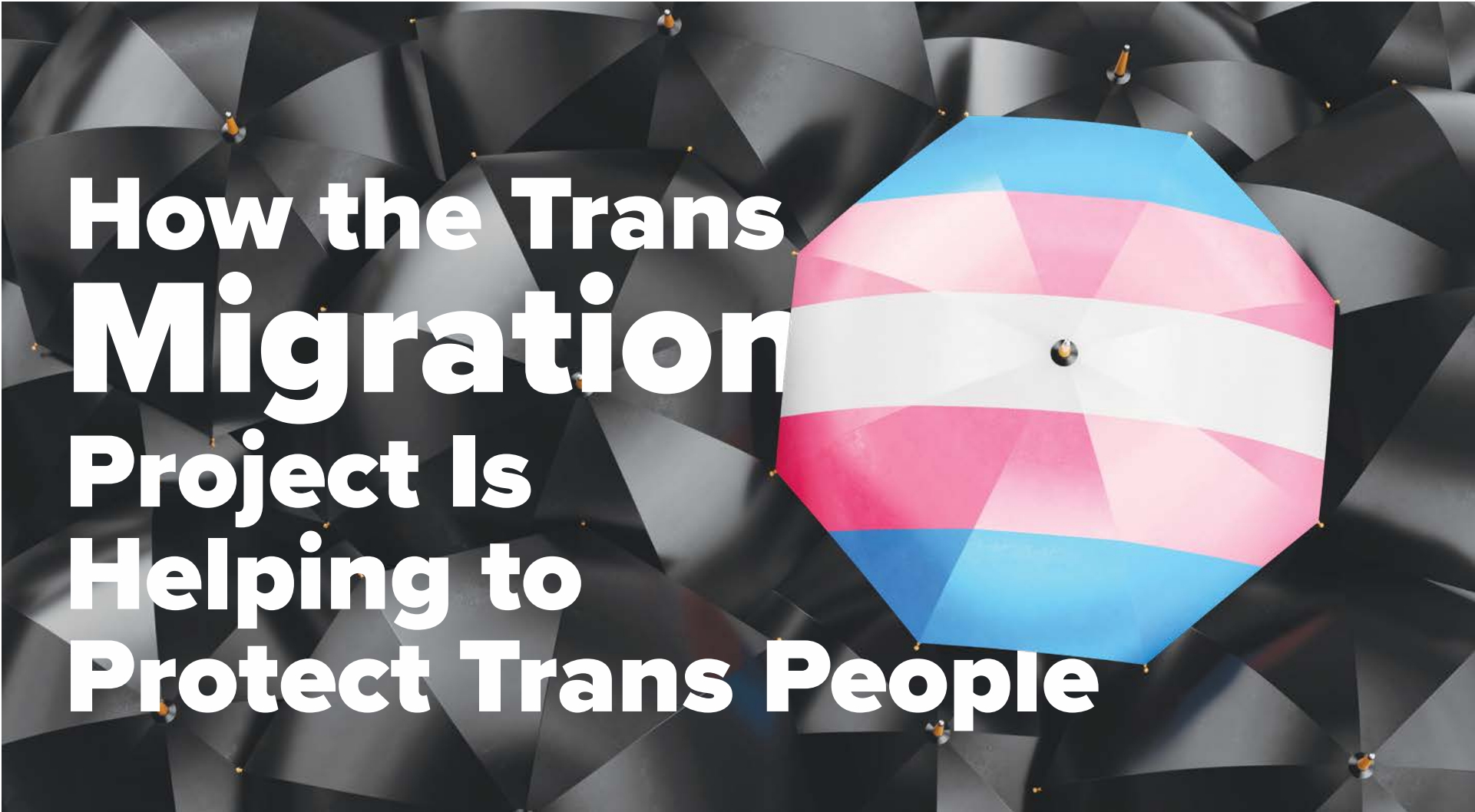
**BAY CITY
GREAT LAKES BAY PRIDE FESTIVAL**
@ WENONAH PARK

JUNE 29TH

**SAGINAW
AFTER PARTY DRAG SHOW**
@ DOW EVENT CENTER RED ROOM



Learn More



How the Trans Migration Project Is Helping to Protect Trans People

BY LIAM CLYMER

A faith-based collective of partners across Michigan is shepherding out-of-state trans people to Michigan for the gender-affirming care and affirmation they can't access in their home states through a movement called the Trans Migration Project.

Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, senior pastor of MCC-Detroit, is the board president of Inclusive Justice of Michigan, a faith-based coalition that advocates for the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in the religious space and is spearheading the local Trans Migration Project. Stringfellow said that religious spaces are well-positioned to provide the resources needed in this movement.

The project isn't built around a formal process. Instead, to avoid drawing attention from harmful political groups, the movement provides information and resources to organizations across the U.S. in private. "We could help them with housing, financial

support or simply just being a friend to them," Stringfellow told BTL. "Congregations are more suited to do that quicker than trying to find families or individuals who can respond."

It's vital that religious figures show that religion doesn't have to be used as a weapon, but instead, can be used as a resource, Stringfellow said. "I utilize the same skills I use as when I'm speaking with anyone — I speak to them from a positive religious angle," he added.

The concept of migrating for affirming care falls in line with much of the rhetoric surrounding the concept of migration as a whole, said Stringfellow. "Migration, particularly for our trans siblings, is still very much in line with the whole issue in this nation surrounding migration," he added. "You know, 'This is ours,' 'Get out,' 'Build a wall,' kind of rhetoric." He said he encourages his country to examine what it prioritizes.

The goal of the Trans Migration Project is to provide "humanity, dignity and safety," Stringfellow

said. "When someone is in a place where they are unsafe, their lives are threatened, their livelihood is in jeopardy... Shouldn't we be a country where we welcome all and protect?" Stringfellow said. "If there's a place in the country, in this case a state, that is hostile to them, then those of us who can should welcome and facilitate safe passage. Give them a warm welcome in the time that they need it."

It's not surprising that Michigan has become a much-desired travel destination for people seeking gender-affirming care from out of state. Jay Kaplan, the ACLU of Michigan's LGBTQ+ project staff attorney, said the interest stems from the legal protections in place and access to care found in Michigan.

Whether seeking help through the Trans Migration Project or individual organizations and medical systems providing care in Michigan, patients must do thorough research before deciding to travel out of state for care — differences in state regulations can impact what responsibilities

fall to the individual.

"For instance, Indiana has a prohibition on aiding or abetting in accessing gender-affirming care, and it applies to licensed medical professionals and counselors in the state of Indiana," Kaplan said. "Let's say a family was interested in going to Michigan — it couldn't be that doctor in Indiana that's making a referral or sending medical records to a provider in Michigan, and more likely, it would have to be that the family gets the medical records and brings those."

Separate from the faith-based Trans Migration Project, Kaplan, on behalf of ACLU of Michigan, is part of a workgroup made up of stakeholders from various organizations and legal entities in Michigan focused on easing access to gender-affirming care in Michigan.

He said almost half of the states within the U.S. have some kind of ban on care — Michigan doesn't. "We have civil rights protections, explicit protections, under our laws for gender identity and expression," Kaplan explained.

"We don't have any limitations or bans on gender-affirming care... our Medicaid program doesn't have any limitations on covering gender. So, we're in a safe space where one can access this care."

"This is a highly politicized thing," Kaplan said. "In my opinion, it's certainly not about what they say: protecting children. It's a cynical political play where these politicians profess to know more than doctors and medical experts and current medical science as a way to gain political advantage."

Those who care for their trans siblings must show it through action, Kaplan said. "I think all of us who care, we can't just stand by and not do anything," Kaplan said. "This is wrong. These laws that have passed, they're harmful. They do harm kids, and they will continue to harm kids. We all have a role to play."

Connect to the Trans Migration Project by contacting Inclusive Justice of Michigan at mccdetroit@gmail.com.

‘She Represents Hate’

Trans alumni question Adrian College’s decision to bring anti-trans crusader to campus

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Riley Gaines, a former competitive swimmer and internet influencer who has garnered fame from an unapologetic anti-trans platform that likens transgenderism to “spiritual warfare,” will take the stage May 5 as the 2024 Adrian College commencement speaker despite backlash from current students, alumni and parents.

Gaines was motivated to become an anti-trans crusader after she tied for fifth place with University of Pennsylvania swimmer Lia Thomas, who is a transgender woman, in the 200-meter freestyle competition at the 2022 NCAA National Championships.

Gaines’ visit to Adrian will be one of many college stops on the anti-trans crusader’s speaking tour. She made headlines in October after speaking to Harvard’s Network of Enlightened Women, a conservative women’s club. Nearby, a large group of students demonstrated against the event by holding what they called the “Big Trans Party.” That same month, while speaking at a fundraiser for Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Gaines likened transgender identities to “spiritual warfare.” “As a Christian myself, I entirely see this as spiritual warfare,” she said at the event. “It’s no longer about right versus wrong or good versus bad. This really is about moral versus evil.”

Spoiler alert, commencement attendees — Gaines seems to use this framing frequently. Just this month at a University of Buffalo event she said, “We’re denying objective truth when we deny what a woman is. This is spiritual warfare. The whole movement is moral versus evil, light versus dark.”

In March, Adrian College and President Jeffrey Docking released a statement amid the overwhelmingly negative public response to the school’s decision to invite Gaines. “Adrian College has never shied away

from presenting and debating substantive disagreements on campus. In fact, this is precisely the purpose of universities — to engage in civil discourse of controversial issues,” Docking was quoted in the release.

Alumnus Cole Bouck is skeptical about the claim that Gaines’

inclusion will foster discussion — after all, a commencement address does not offer opportunities for exchanging ideas. Gaines will have the microphone, and the audience will be expected to quietly listen with no opportunity for rebuttal. The college does not appear to be holding any other events featuring Gaines where the

community could engage with her.

Leeann McKee, an Adrian College alumna who has competed as a trans athlete, is similarly skeptical. “[Gaines] is only notable in that she actively works to suppress trans people and turn sentiment against them,” she tells BTL. “I’m not sure how that message of hate is

appropriate for a commencement speaker. If [Docking] wishes to have a robust debate of trans people and even trans athletes, he should arrange such with Riley Gaines and a trans advocate. Giving one side a prominent platform like a commencement speech is nothing less than promoting such a viewpoint.”

Bouck attended the small Methodist university located about an hour southwest of Ann Arbor in the early ’80s at a pivotal time in his life — a time that influenced his decision to launch The R Cole Bouck LGBT and Ally Pride Scholarship at the school in 2017. “I came out as a sophomore there,” he explains. “We had a little support group.” While he would transfer to Michigan State the next year and eventually graduate from there, Bouck considers Adrian as the place that holds his college heart. “All my fun college memories, the meaningful relationships that I had, really came from Adrian.”

By his estimation, Adrian College has nurtured and supported LGBTQ+ students for decades. He’s left puzzled by Docking’s decision to invite Gaines, who he says “represents hate,” to speak to a graduating class that will include queer and trans students.

Bouck described a pleasant, supportive process from Adrian’s Office of Development as he worked to set up and fund the scholarship. He even encouraged the school to check with the United Methodist Church to ensure the organization wouldn’t throw up roadblocks to establishing a fund specifically supporting LGBTQ+ students. “And there was no pushback,” he recalls. “It was quite a contrast to what we’re seeing now.”

Bouck says that for more than 25 years after he graduated from MSU with a degree in psychology, he returned to Adrian as a guest speaker for a human sexuality class, discussing his experiences



Riley Gaines. Photo: Gage Skidmore, under Creative Commons Attribution License

See **Adrian**, page 13

At Last, a New Queer Bar Is Coming to Ann Arbor

Uplift co-founder Saharsh Hajela on the dedicated LGBTQ+ space, set to open in late summer

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

The rumors are true — there's a new queer bar coming to Ann Arbor later this year, and BTL sat down with co-founder Saharsh Hajela to get the why, where, what, how and, most importantly, to find out when we can visit Uplift.

Since the legendary Aut Bar closed in 2020, Ann Arbor has lacked a dedicated queer bar, though spaces like North Star Lounge, queer-owned Necto and Live Nightclub have been intentional about dedicating calendar space to queer events. Queer clubgoers have long flocked to Necto's weekly Pride nights on Fridays and North Star offers a weekly LGBTQ+ Night on Thursdays with open mics, drag performances, musical acts and more. Hajela has worked with Live Nightclub for the past few years producing drag shows and brunches and other queer-affirming events. "They are — and have been for a long time — a phenomenal ally space for queer folks," he said. He noted that his work with Live and other bars and clubs has helped to inform the vision he and his business partner, who wishes to remain anonymous until closer to the official opening, have for Uplift.

Still, as appreciative as many in the local queer community have been to have a place to go that feels welcoming, Hajela says there's a difference between being a guest and having a home. Uplift will fill a unique gap in Ann Arbor and the surrounding areas.

What can we expect from Uplift?

The new space will be multi-functional as a bar, dining and event space, all tailored toward the LGBTQ+ community. Hajela said Uplift will partner with Circ Bar to provide hot food options.

Hajela hinted at a wide range of unique queer events we can expect — he can't make promises yet as



Uplift will be located at 210 First Street in Ann Arbor. Photo: Chris Azzopardi

the team is still hashing out what will work best, but it sounds like the veteran queer event planner is paying special attention to the event aspect. "Uplift is going to be a canvas for all kinds of events we're going to hold," he told BTL. "We want to allow all different types of people to have all different types of times here."

Outside special events, Hajela said the intended vibe is a traditional neighborhood bar where patrons can grab a beer or a mocktail with a friend as well as a festive late night atmosphere. "After work, you can head over and have a great conversation in a warm, inviting place, but on weekends, when you're looking for a place to go out late at night without having to drive outside the city, we can provide that, too," he said. "The space will be really adaptable."

Uplift will be intentionally inclusive for people who don't drink alcohol. "We're not going to ignore

the growing need for mocktails," he said. "Folks who are looking for a tasty drink beyond Sprite in a can will absolutely have options."

Why did the owners decide to launch a new queer bar in Ann Arbor?

"I think it's pretty common and a shared experience to walk into a space and see someone glance over at you or present a reaction in a certain way and think, 'OK. I've seen that look before; I know how this is going to go. It's time to put my guard up. It's time to start to mask... It's time to start considering leaving,'" Hajela said. "And Ann Arbor is certainly a queer-friendly place — there are people doing great work to create queer-inclusive spaces. But we feel there's a tangible difference between feeling like a guest in a space and feeling like you're home. It's a place where queer people can

feel celebrated and connected and have a great time, but not just once a month or every few weeks — every single day. That's really the driving force behind Uplift."

Hajela notes that for many people in surrounding areas, Ann Arbor can provide a haven from less accepting areas, pointing out that less than an hour from Ann Arbor, flying a Pride flag outside city hall has been banned. "Our existence is political, and we feel strongly that there are thousands of people in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area who are seeking community — seeking space where they don't have to explain themselves or justify their existence, a place that prioritizes them. That's what Uplift aims to be."

How is the space coming along?

Hajela and his silent partner have begun working on the space, and

Uplift launched its social media presence recently (follow Uplift on Facebook and Instagram @uplifta2). You can also join Uplift's mailing list and watch for updates at upliftannarbor.com. Hajela invites the community to participate in upcoming polls on social media to help shape what kinds of events Uplift will offer and to check out photos as they reach various milestones heading toward the grand opening.

Where will Uplift be?

Uplift will be located at 210 S. First Street in downtown Ann Arbor on the main floor, below Circ Bar and above Rabbit Hole.

When will the doors open?

We still have a few months to go. Hajela expects to welcome Uplift's first patrons toward the end of the summer if all goes well.

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Idaho Legislators Continue to Flex Their Muscles, Use Those Muscles Against Trans Youth



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

The national political and legal landscape for transgender youth in Idaho is... not great!

While it should be absolutely appalling that elected leaders in Idaho (where they have a Republican majority) are focused on hurting a very small and very vulnerable population of kids, it unfortunately doesn't seem to bother enough people to stop it.

After an emergency appeal by the state's attorney general, the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that it was A-OK for Idaho to ban transgender care for minors and make it a felony to provide such care.

According to The New York Times, "Although orders on the emergency docket often include no reasoning, the decision included concurrences by Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, who was joined by Justices Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Clarence Thomas, and Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, who was joined by Justice Amy Coney Barrett."

On April 5, people protesting the proposed bills tossed tens of thousands of colorful paper hearts over the fourth-floor railing in the Idaho capitol.

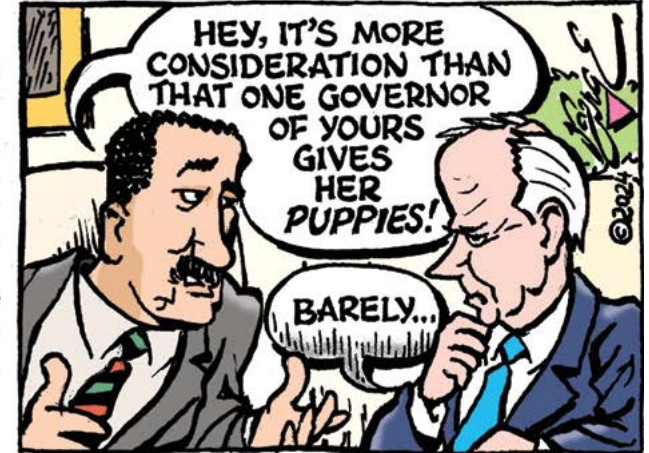
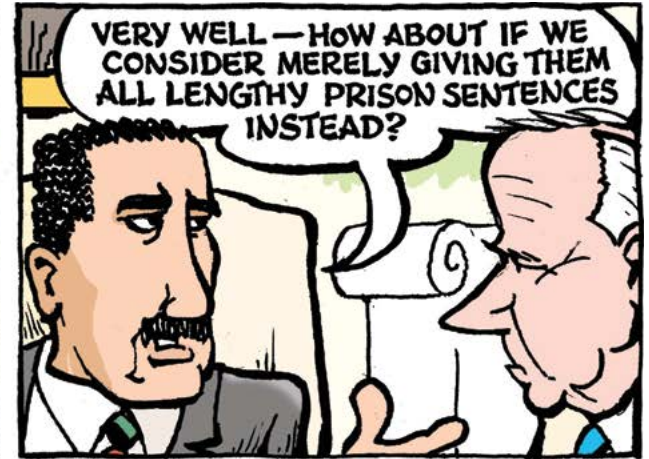
In other words, the court's most conservative members were all, "You go, Idaho! Ban them trans kids! Jail those doctors!"

In a statement, the American Civil Liberties Union called the ruling "an awful result for transgender youth and their families."

"Today's ruling allows the state to shut down the care that thousands of families rely on while sowing further confusion and disruption," the statement continues. "Nonetheless, today's result only leaves us all the more determined to defeat this law in the courts entirely, making Idaho a safer state to raise every family."

Sadly that's not the end of bad news out of Idaho.

According to The Advocate, "The Idaho State Legislature



adjourned its 2024 session...having passed three new laws that target gender-affirming care, permit the practice of misgendering and deadnaming in public schools, and define gender as a binary sexual concept. Republican Gov. Brad Little signed all three bills."

As The Advocate reports, one of the bills "defines gender as a synonym for biological sex and 'shall not be considered a synonym for gender identity, an internal sense of gender, experienced gender, gender expression, or gender role.'"

Another bill "bans public funds including Medicaid from covering gender-affirming care."

The third bill "allows educators and students to misgender or deadname others without any resulting disciplinary action."

In March, LGBTQ+ supporters held a rally led by the progressive activist group March Fourth in protest of the proposed bills.

"We are here to tell lawmakers in Idaho to keep the LGBTQ+ community out of their hateful legislation," Joseph Crupper, a March Fourth organizer, told KTVB7.

KTVB7 quoted a speaker at the rally saying, "Being transgender, being nonbinary, does not strip any of us of our right to the pursuit of happiness."

The rally, according to KTVB7, was organized by community leaders and "a host of local nonprofits: ACLU of Idaho, Add the Words, Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates, Southern Idaho PRIDE, PRIDE Foundation, Southeast Idaho PRIDE, Boise Trans Collective, Black Liberation Collective, Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and Boise Pride Fest."

On April 5, people protesting the proposed bills tossed tens of thousands of colorful paper hearts over the fourth-

floor railing in the Idaho capitol.

According to The Advocate, the ACLU of Idaho "took to social media to ask local residents to mail in homemade paper hearts. Across just ten days, the organization collected over 48,000, representing the 48,000 Idaho residents who identified as LGBTQ+ in the 2020 Census."

The Idaho legislature passed the bills anyway.

Sen. Mary Shea, a Democrat, brought up concerns about how much these hateful bills will cost the state.

"Idaho has already lost twice civil rights litigation concerning gender identification on birth certificates," she said, according to The Advocate. "By our calculation, we have paid approximately \$14 million over the last decade trying to defend statutes like this one. I'm really concerned about what this is going to mean for Idaho taxpayers."

Something to remember the next time that Republicans scream about fiscal responsibility.

Sen. Melissa Wintrow, a Democrat, posted about the protest on Instagram. "Advocates denounce anti-LGBTQ+ laws with thousands of paper hearts," Wintrow posted. "It was a beautiful representation of all the lives being negatively impacted by legislation. LGBTQ+ community, I want you to know that I see you, I believe in you, and I stand with you. You are loved, you are valued, and you belong."

The Advocate also reports that the protesters had a designated clean-up crew who collected the hearts after the protest. So they didn't just trash the Capitol and leave, unlike, oh I don't know, a certain Trump-supporting mob on a certain January 6.

As bad as all of this news out of Idaho is, don't overlook the fact that there are a lot of people fighting for trans and queer people in Idaho and that is not nothing. Keep fighting.

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Detroit's Baddie Brooks to Lead NYC Pride Parade

One of Detroit's own will serve as the NYC Pride Grand Marshal in the city's 2024 Pride Parade on June 30. Trans vocalist and trumpeter Baddie Brooks, who was named Youth Activist by NYC Pride, will head up the historical march through the streets of Manhattan.

"When I was selected to be the NYC Pride Grand Marshal, I was flooded with a catharsis of emotions," Brooks tells BTL. "I was very excited to be

selected for such an important role, and I couldn't help but reflect on how far I've come in my journey of coming out as a transgender woman. I think that representation is imperative. I wish I could've known that there were people like me growing up. I hope that I am able to serve as a positive example for those who may be unable to come out right now. Black transgender women are often targeted at an alarming rate, and need to be protected."

Brooks notes that her trip to NYC will be the first time she's represented Detroit at a Pride fest outside Michigan. "I am also excited to premiere a new song at local Pride festivals this summer," she adds.



Baddie Brooks. Photo: Lauren Jewell, Roaming Roach Photography



Jeff Newsom. Courtesy photo

'Frock' Show to Benefit Ruth Ellis Center

An art installation created by Detroit creative entrepreneur Jeff Newsom will benefit Ruth Ellis Center as it kicks off its 25th anniversary year. Newsom curated 25 fashion masterpieces for "Frock," which will have an opening night event on May 9 from 6-9 p.m. at Next Step Studio & Gallery in Ferndale.

Ruth Ellis Center will receive all proceeds from the event. "It's a fantastic opportunity to enjoy creativity while contributing to a cause that makes a real difference in our community," Newsome tells Pride Source.

The exhibit, which features pieces by Halston, Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga and Dior, will run May 9-12 and May 16-19 and then become part of The Henry Ford Museum's permanent fashion collection.

Learn more at ruthelliscenter.org.

Ann Arbor Library's Short Film Honors Aut Bar



A scene featuring Keith Orr (left) and Martin Contreras in "Elegy for the Aut Bar."

"Once upon a time, there was a place to go for people who were different, who were looking for the company of others like themselves, who believed they deserved to live out in the open..."

Thus opens the short film, "Elegy for the Aut

Bar," now available on the Ann Arbor District Library website at aadl.org/elegyfortheautbar. The film focuses on the iconic Ann Arbor queer bar and its founders, Martin Contreras and Keith Orr, alongside the lesbian couple who formed Ann Arbor's Trillium Real Estate, Linda Lombardini and Sandi Smith, as well as the history of Braun

Court.

The bar, which closed in 2020, was a mecca for the local LGBTQ+ community for 25 years. Director Peter Sparling writes in the film's description, "[Contreras and Orr] created a cultural and political hub that bridged the AIDS era with assimilation of the queer community and urban gentrification. This film is both tribute and elegy to a moment of significant hope when Ann Arbor lived up to its reputation for harboring a tolerant and liberal-minded population. It is dedicated to the two men who were at its heart and whose proud determination to make it happen was both fierce and tender."

'Challengers' Brings the Heat

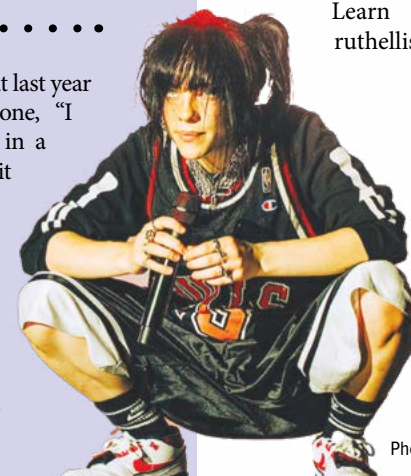
Is "Challengers" the sexiest cinematic romp to grace the big screen in decades, as that viral churro scene would have us believe? You'll have to see for yourself, but it's undoubtedly one of the most bisexual-forward films yet, with Zendaya in the lead role, as a tennis star who, at one point, orchestrates a threesome with two male fans, who might just have more heat together than with her. A complicated, decades-long love triangle ensues.

Kathy Griffin's 'D-List' Finally Streams

Fans can finally stream "My Life on the D-List," Kathy Griffin's hilarious reality TV show that chronicled her life between 2005-2010. All six seasons of the Emmy-awarded series are available on the Peacock streamer. "Whaaaaaa? News to me! I really love when people discover Kathy Griffin My Life on the D-List. I am very proud of the show. I hope it gives you lots of laughs," Griffin posted to Instagram.

Billie Eilish Headed to Detroit

Billie Eilish, who came out last year and recently told Rolling Stone, "I realized I wanted my face in a vagina," will bring her "Hit Me Hard and Soft" tour to Detroit when she plays Little Caesars Arena on Oct. 7. Eilish co-wrote her upcoming "Hit Me Hard" album with her brother Finneas, who also served as producer. Tickets are available May 3.



Billie Eilish. Photo: Instagram / @billieeilish

Tim Walberg: Michigan's Worst Congressman?

Walberg's support of Uganda's 'Kill the Gays' bill is just the tip of the iceberg

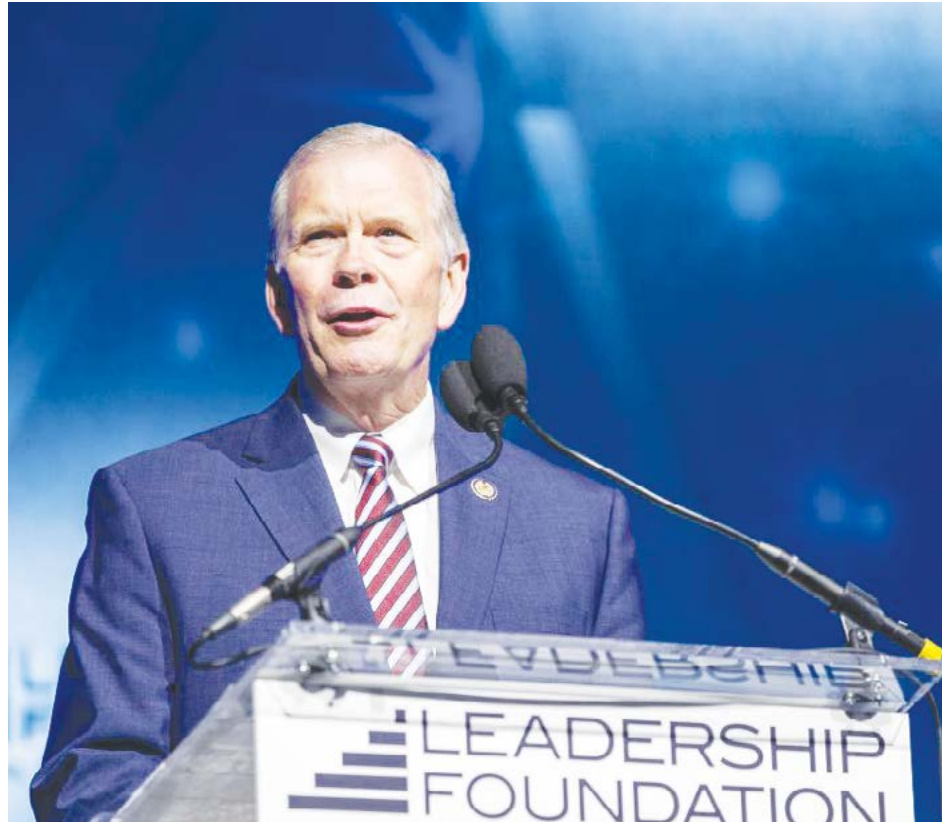
BY HANK KENNEDY

Congressman Tim Walberg, a man with the name and look of a substitute teacher, is an unlikely candidate to grab headlines. Yet after his latest blowup over nuclear weapons, grab headlines is exactly what he did, in national media such as USA Today and even international publications like The Guardian. Behind Walberg's bland exterior lurks a hard-right ideologue, one whose latest statements would be easily predictable from his past behavior.

Tim Walberg first won his seat in 2006 against Joe Schwarz, a somewhat moderate Republican. Schwarz opposed the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would have banned same-sex marriage nationwide. He also supported abortion rights and embryonic stem cell research. These positions were too much for Walberg, who helped bury Schwarz in a Republican primary with a ton of campaign money from conservative interest groups and donations from anti-immigrant vigilantes the Minutemen. In a sign of the tenor of the campaign, Walberg had to disavow an instance of anti-gay vandalism against one of Schwarz's campaign offices.

Since that election, Walberg, with a brief interlude from 2009-2011, has been one of Michigan's select few to represent the state in Washington. He has amassed a rather interesting record in that time. For example, he repeatedly suggested that President Barack Obama was not born in this country. He reasoned that if President Obama wasn't born in the U.S. then he ought to be impeached. Curiously, the rest of Congress didn't see it that way and Obama was never impeached for being born in Kenya or wherever else Walberg thought he might have been born.

As expected from his campaign to defeat Schwarz, Walberg was a crusader against same-sex marriage and queer people. In 2015 he cosponsored an amendment to the Constitution banning same-sex marriage. When the Respect for Marriage Act came up for a vote in 2022, Walberg voted against the Act, which codifies the Supreme Court decisions legalizing interracial and same-sex marriage into law.



Rep. Tim Walberg. Photo: Facebook

The most disturbing incident in Walberg's campaign — so far — came last October. Walberg traveled to Uganda, sponsored by the creepy and secretive Christian group the Fellowship, also known as the Family. While in Uganda, Walberg attended the country's National Prayer Breakfast, a sister event to the one that happens in the U.S., also sponsored by the Fellowship. Speakers at the event called LGBTQ+ rights advocates "a force from the pit of Hell" and advocated for a "Christocracy" to replace Democracy.

In Walberg's remarks, he offered encouragement for the country's leaders who had recently passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act, pejoratively known as the "Kill the Gays" bill. The law criminalizes same-sex conduct, and allows for the death penalty in cases of "aggravated homosexuality." Walberg told the President of Uganda to "stand firm" against international pressures to repeal the law. Walberg asked rhetorically, "Whose side

do we want to be on?" Answering his own question he said "God's side. Not the World Bank, not the United States of America, necessarily, not the U.N. God's side."

But it was not Walberg's trip to Uganda or his denunciations of homosexuality that garnered him this most recent round of media attention. On Friday, March 29, a video of Walberg at a town hall in Dundee spread on social media. A constituent asked a question about humanitarian aid being let into Gaza. Walberg sneered, "We shouldn't be spending a dime on humanitarian aid." He continued, "It should be like Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Get it over quick." Walberg's careless talk about nuclear weapons was reminiscent of when Arizona Senator (and failed presidential candidate) Barry Goldwater said, "Let's lob one [a nuclear weapon] into the men's room of the Kremlin."

Fellow Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, Congress' only Palestinian-American, quickly responded. "It's disgusting and

disgraceful that anyone, let alone a U.S. congressperson, would call for the genocide of Palestinians with nuclear weapons," she told the Detroit Free Press. That Walberg was so cavalier about the use of nuclear weapons suggests he was one of the only Americans who didn't watch "Oppenheimer."

Given Walberg's Christian background (he was a minister, after all), it's instructive to look at what his coreligionists were saying after the atomic bombings of Japan, which killed or injured 200,000 people. An editorial in the Catholic magazine Commonweal argued, "...we will not have to worry any more about keeping our victory clean. It is defiled...The name Hiroshima, the name Nagasaki, are names for American guilt and shame... For our war, for our purposes, to save American lives we have reached the point where we say that anything goes. That is what the Germans said at the beginning of the war."

Since Walberg is a Protestant, perhaps the Catholic Commonweal is the wrong outlet to convince him to change his mind. Here's what Christian Century, a Protestant magazine, had to say: "...Instead of congratulating ourselves on winning a race and achieving the impossible, we should now be standing in penitence before the Creator of the power which the atom has hitherto kept inviolate, using what may be our last opportunity to learn the lost secret of peace on earth." Another article in Christian Century said that "What the use of poison gas did to the reputation of Germany in World War I, the use of the atomic bomb has done for the reputation of the United States in World War II. Our future security is menaced by our own act."

It seems that Walberg is at odds, then, with what Christians in 1945 thought about the atomic bombings. The Christians of that time seemed to think they were moral crimes, not models to be emulated. Walberg, on the other hand, thinks it's perfectly fine to talk about incinerating thousands of people as a "metaphor." On issues from LGBTQ+ rights to threats of nuclear annihilation, Tim Walberg is sorely lacking in Christian love.

◀ Adrian

Continued from page 7

living as an out gay man. “That would be the first time many of them would meet someone who was openly gay, and I also talked about my experience coming out at Adrian College,” he remembers. “Everything was on the table.”

Bouck isn't sure the college would welcome that kind of engagement now, though students do have access to an LGBTQ+ support group called Safe Place (the group's student advisor did not respond to a request for comment).

Safe Place created an online petition that reads:

“I feel abandoned and discarded by my alma mater. In my opinion, human rights are not ever debatable, and acting like they are trivializes and threatens human rights across all groups.”

— alumnus Brodie Lobb

We, as a club dedicated to LGBTQIA+ rights and the prevention of injustices on campus, are deeply concerned about the decision of Adrian College in Michigan to invite Riley Gaines as a speaker for this year's commencement ceremony. This decision is not only inappropriate but also discredits the graduates who may be in alliance with or a part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Riley Gaines has been known for her controversial stands that are far from inclusive. Her presence at such an important event could potentially harm those who support or belong to our community. We must create an environment where everyone feels respected and valued, especially during such significant moments as graduation.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, 4 out of 10 LGBT students report being bullied at school (Human Rights Campaign). By inviting someone with controversial views on inclusivity,

we risk further alienating these students and creating an environment that doesn't respect their identities.

We urge Adrian College administration to reconsider their choice of speaker for this year's commencement ceremony. Let us ensure our graduation is a celebration that respects all students' identities and values inclusivity above all else.

The petition has received more than 1,600 signatures, a number close to the college's entire student enrollment of around 1,800.

Brodie Lobb, a trans alumnus who came out and transitioned while a student at Adrian College a few years ago, told BTL he is “outrageously disappointed” by the decision.

“I feel abandoned and discarded by my alma mater,” he says. “In my opinion, human rights are not ever debatable, and acting like they are trivializes and threatens human rights across all groups.”

Lobb says he is unaware of Adrian College inviting an equally controversial speaker with a more progressive-leaning profile. “I imagine it has something to do with donors and trustees and their political leanings,” he says. “All this decision does is reinforce inaccurate and harmful misinformation

about hormone therapy for transgender people and reinforce arguments about where transgender people can exist in public spaces and lead typical, fulfilling lives under the guise of ‘protecting women's rights and Title IX.’”

After hearing about Gaines' invitation from Adrian College and reading the administration's justification, Bouck considered pulling his scholarship. Ultimately, he decided to continue on with plans to fund the scholarship until it becomes self-sustaining through fundraising. “No, I've decided not to pull it,” he says. “I'll see how it goes next year. If it continues to be supported as it has been, then I feel obligated to try to keep that presence and have a part in the dialogue.”

BTL contacted several departments at Adrian College, including the president's office, but received no response — a surprising outcome given the school's stated desire to engage in civil discourse with the community.

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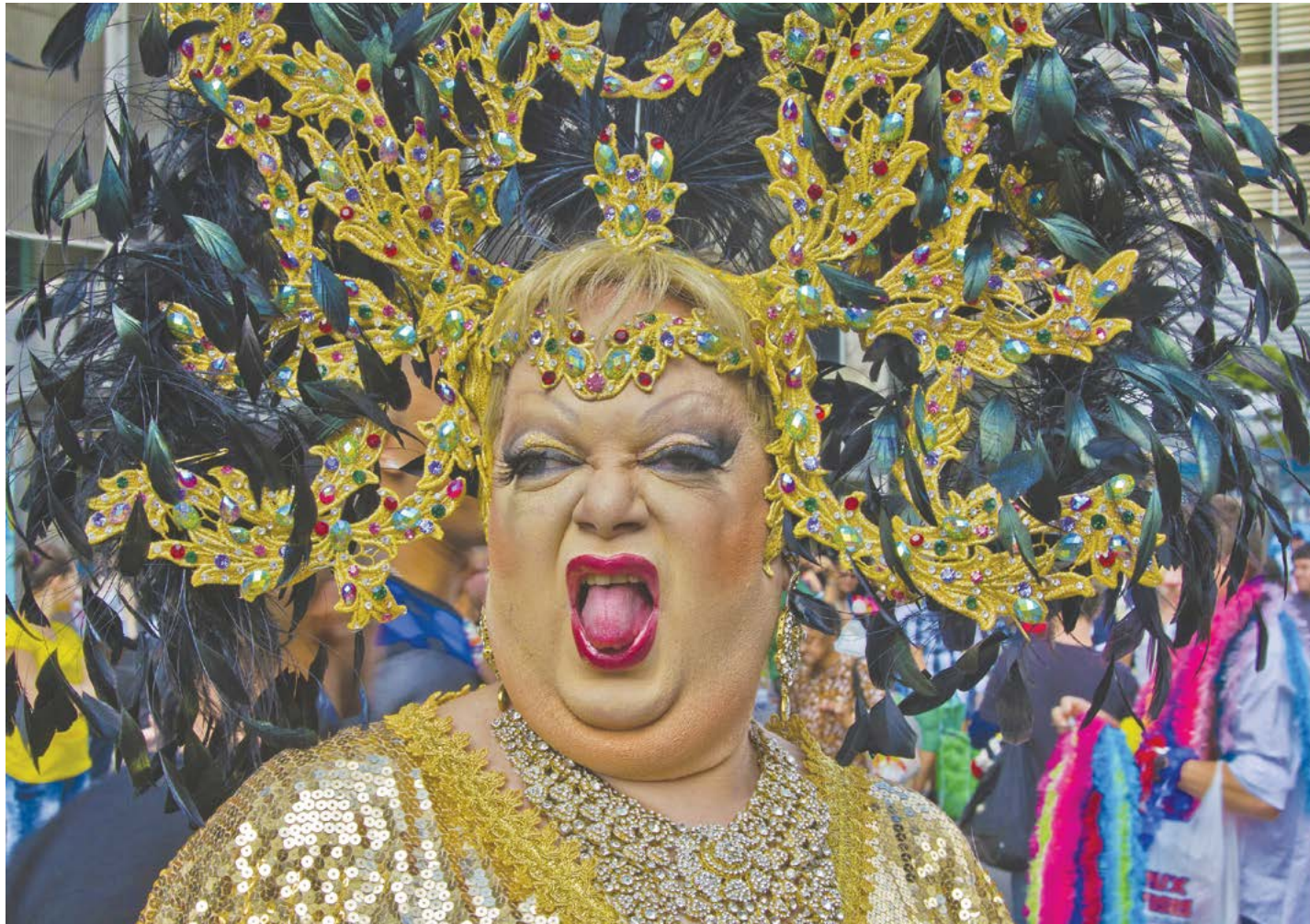
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2024 Pride Festivals Worth a Road (or Plane) Trip

Start planning your best summer ever with a far-flung Pride adventure



Sao Paulo Pride. Courtesy photo

BY MADELEINE AITKEN

With June comes Pride, and with Pride comes countless opportunities to celebrate around the globe.

Most major cities host festivities in June that feature activities like parades, live music, parties, street fairs and more. There are lots of ways to celebrate close to home, but if you're in the mood for a trip this summer, you might consider traveling for Pride — or even visiting a few different ones, since the celebrations are held across various weekends in June. Maybe you want to check out the biggest Pride parade in the world, or maybe you want to experience a weekend jam-packed with queer partying. Maybe you want to be part of a 50th anniversary Pride celebration, or maybe you want to see what Pride is like in another country. Start packing

that rainbow thong, because no matter what you're looking for, there's something for everyone.

LA Pride in the Park

Los Angeles, June 8 – 9, 14 – 15

Los Angeles held the first officially permitted gay parade in the world back in 1970. Fifty-four years later, LA Pride in the Park, set for June 8 and 9, will include a music festival with exhibitors and vendors, daytime activities and an assortment of food trucks and bars. Last year, Megan Thee Stallion and Mariah Carey got top billing, and this year headliner Ricky Martin will shake his bon-bon on stage.

The weekend continues with the LA Pride Parade on Sunday, which typically draws more than 150,000 spectators and

participants to Hollywood Boulevard. The 2024 theme is “Power in Pride.” When the parade ends, there's an adjacent Parade Block Party that serves as an after-party to the festivities and a goodbye to the weekend.

“From the colorful LA Pride Parade to the powerful performances at LA Pride in the Park, LA Pride is a living tapestry of acceptance and resilience, and every dollar spent and donated supports [Christopher Street West's] impactful community work year-round,” Gerald Garth, president of Christopher Street West, the nonprofit behind LA Pride, told BTL.

For those looking to make a longer trip out of it, LA Pride hosts an LGBTQ+ Pride Night at Dodger Stadium and, the following weekend, Pride Is Universal, an after-hours Universal Studios takeover. Both are great excuses to extend the Pride celebrations.

Chicago Pride Fest + Chicago Pride Parade

Chicago, June 22 – 23, June 30

Chicago also hosts its celebrations across two weekends, with its Pride Fest on June 22 and 23 and its Pride Parade the following weekend on June 30. Pride Fest, in its 23rd year, will feature live music across three stages, including performances by JoJo Siwa, Natasha Bedingfield and Bob the Drag Queen. There will be a Proud Pet Parade (with prizes!), a Youth Pride Space for teens, guest speakers, dance exhibitions, and food and merchandise vendors. It's held in Chicago's historic gay neighborhood, known as Northalsted, aka “Boystown.”

That same weekend, you can also attend Pride in the Park Chicago, a two-day music festival. Headliners are still to be announced, but last year it was led by Zedd and Saweetie and featured a number of other artists like Zara Larsson and Years & Years. If you're hoping to see the Parade, you'll have to stick around until the following weekend: the Chicago Pride Parade, one of the oldest and largest parades in the country, is on the following Sunday.

NYC Pride

New York City, June 29 – 30

We would be remiss to not include the ubiquitous NYC Pride on this list. Its inaugural march took place in 1970, on the one-year anniversary of the day police raided the Stonewall Inn, an LGBTQ+ club, and launched what would become known as the Stonewall Uprising: six days of protests and violence that helped catalyze the gay rights movement in New York, the U.S. and around the world.

The weekend celebrations, on June 29 and 30, starts with a nod to young queer people with Youth Pride on Saturday, a celebration of and for LGBTQ+ and ally teens, which will include music performances, carnival attractions, free food and (non-alcoholic) beverages, on Saturday. Specifically youth-focused Pride events are not hugely common, which makes NYC a great place to celebrate for younger people. The weekend continues with the Pride March on Sunday, which in 2019 earned the Guinness World Record

for the largest LGBTQ+ march with five million people in attendance, snagging the title from São Paulo Gay Pride (see page 26!). After the Parade, attendees can head to PrideFest, a street fair with exhibitors, food and activities in the historic Greenwich Village.

Denver Pride

Denver, June 22 – 23

If the mountains are calling, Denver Pride, on June 22 and 30, might be a good option, especially since this year is Denver Pride's 50th anniversary. It's the biggest Pride in Colorado, drawing crowds from across Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region and beyond, with 550,000 attendees in 2023. There's a Pride 5K on Saturday, for those looking to actively show their pride — literally. On Sunday, there's a PrideFest Parade, plus a festival with more than 250 exhibitors, 30 food vendors and live performances. This year, Denver Pride is partnering with The Rainbow Market

and three stages across six blocks. The next day, PrideFest continues in Seattle Center, functioning as a kind of afterparty to the parade that ends there, with hundreds of vendors and food and drink options. There will be entertainment on four stages, and for the first time this year, there will also be a designated family area for those celebrating with kids.

The Seattle Pride Parade is celebrating its 50th anniversary, and has grown to be Washington's largest parade. Back in 1974, 200 LGBTQ+ people came together as an act of collective resistance, and the rest was history. This year's theme is an embodiment of the 1974 gathering's echoing cry: NOW! If you follow the parade down its route, you'll end at the aptly placed PrideFest in Seattle Center under the Space Needle.

San Francisco Pride

San Francisco, June 29 – 30

In San Francisco, there are two main events on June 29 and 30, plus an official



Denver to host the first Gayborhood Market.

“It will be a space dedicated to supporting local LGBTQ+ community organizations, small businesses, entrepreneurs, craft-makers and artisans by lowering the cost barrier to access PrideFest participation,” Rex Fuller, CEO of The Center on Colfax, the nonprofit that runs and benefits from Denver Pride, told BTL. “The Center on Colfax wants Denver Pride to be accessible to our diverse community.”

Seattle PrideFest

Seattle, June 29 – 30

In Seattle, there's a two-day, two-location festival on June 29 and 30. PrideFest begins on Saturday in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, with local businesses, beer gardens, family and youth programming,

afterparty and a party inside City Hall. The Civic Center Celebration will be held both Saturday and Sunday, with main stage performances organized by OASIS and San Francisco's first Drag Laureate D'Arcy Drollinger. On Sunday, they will host Grammy, Emmy and two-time Tony winner Billy Porter on the main stage, in addition to other performers and community stages throughout the weekend.

On Saturday night, Pridegoers can check out the official San Francisco Pride After Party, which will have DJs, dancers and performers from the main stage, before the SF Pride Parade will take its route down the famous Market Street the next day. Also on Sunday, there's a San Francisco Pride Party at City Hall, for those looking for a unique

See **Pride**, page 26



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CHICAGO SUN-TIMES



Plan The Perfect Summer With Tips From ‘That Michigan Guy’

From cute beach towns to remote adventures, Ryan Redoute will have you exploring the Mitten from wrist to ring finger



Ryan Redoute. Courtesy photo

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Ryan Redoute’s Michigan travel content could be considered the real-deal counterpart to the Pure Michigan campaign. Instead of billboard-sized images of iconic

Great Lakes States imagery advertised along the freeway, it’s Redoute on his podcast or social media, dishing on hidden gems in quaint Lake Michigan and Huron beach towns or delivering a charming dissertation on the uniqueness of

Michigan lingo. If Pure Michigan is the corporate owner who flies in once a month to discuss the quarterly reports, Redoute is that guy in the break room telling you about his latest weekend escapades — and you’re taking notes.

Actually, he’s “That Michigan Guy” on social media, though he was “that guy in Chicago” for a hot minute several years ago, when he relocated to pursue a career in marketing before the siren call of Vernors and boys who say “Geezo-Pete” lured him back to his home state — hopefully for good. If Michigan could bottle what Redoute is selling, we’d have to close the border.

Redoute effortlessly channels the Michigan vibe just by existing as his unapologetically queer, authentic self on Instagram, TikTok and especially on his popular “In Michigan!” podcast, where he shares stories and quizzes guests about why this state is the way that it is. Like Michigan itself, he doesn’t take himself too seriously, and he really wants you to romp all over her lovely beaches and dramatic landscapes. “Why do I love Michigan?” he responds incredulously to an uninspired question. “Girl. What’s not to love!?”

Redoute was more than happy — he was downright exuberant, in fact — to share his tips for creating an unforgettable Michigan summer travel itinerary. “I think if you get to these places this year, you will look back on your summer and think, ‘I had a great time,’” he tells BTL.

Memorial Day Weekend Getaway: Northwest Michigan

Redoute views Memorial Day weekend as the perfect opportunity for a big family or friends get-together. “Just get a lake house from Airbnb or Vrbo, so you can enjoy the great indoors. It’s Michigan so it could maybe be warm... but it could also not be warm,” he advises. Think wineries in Traverse City, fishing in Bellaire, hiking in Glen Arbor or biking through Harbor Springs:

active, but relaxed. As he does for every Michigan travel spot he recommends, Redoute encourages visitors to seek out quirky natives who are deeply in love with the Mitten, lake-sized potholes and all.

Midsummer Retreat: Frankfort

“People always think I’m going to Germany when I say I’m headed to Frankfort for the weekend,” Redoute says, laughing. “But no — you have to go to Frankenmuth for that Bavarian theme.” Frankfort, Michigan is a quintessential mid-coast Lake Michigan beach town that isn’t yet overrun with tourists. Expect ice cream and tourist shops and a “huge” beach. “If you want a beach where you’ll never have trouble finding a spot, head to Frankfort,” Redoute recommends. He finds Frankfort is a good midsummer destination — it’s a time of year when the temperature can be quite hot, but when Lake Michigan is still very cool. “It’s good to have a lake to cool off in,” he notes.

Frankfort is also situated in a good spot for visiting nearby Sleeping Bear Dunes. “But pay attention to the warning signs,” Redoute cautions — no one wants to pay that \$10,000 fee for a rescue because they can’t hack the climb back up.

Charming Escape: Saugatuck and South Haven Combo

“Saugatuck, everywhere you look, is this Instagrammable, cute Michigan town,” Redoute says. “And I love that it’s a bit of queer energy mixed with family energy. It’s queer. It’s family-friendly — a perfect little town with cute stores.” Redoute

See **Ryan Redoute**, page 23



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A Map of Songs

Why PRISM Chorus chose Dolly, Sufjan and 'Hairspray' for its 'Hits the Road' show in May

BY MADELEINE AITKEN

PRISM Chorus is hitting the road, and they've got their playlist all mapped out.

The choir will perform "PRISM Hits the Road: A Musical Road Trip Across the Nation!" at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts on May 31 (tickets are available at prism-chorus.org and at the MCPA Box Office).

The show is inspired by PRISM's own upcoming travel, as they trek to Minneapolis this summer to attend and perform at the GALA Chorus Festival, a quadrennial festival that brings together LGBTQ+ choruses for five days in July — the largest LGBTQ+ choral event in the world. Or, as board member at large Bill LeAnnais calls it, "the Olympics of queer choirs."

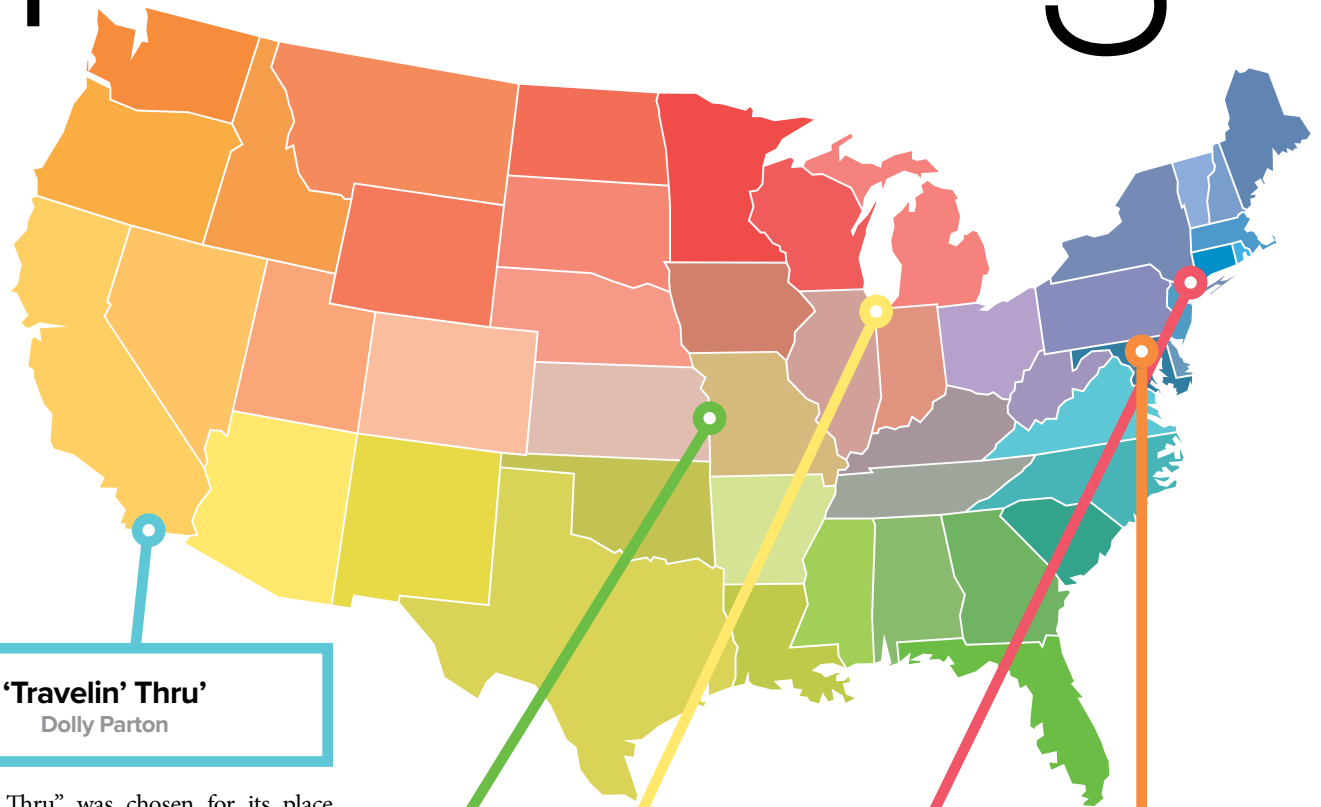
PRISM first assembled in 2016, when a small group of friends decided to form an a cappella group in Detroit, and eight years later, it's become a full-blown chorus. PRISM Chorus is now a volunteer, non-profit performing arts organization that aims to carve out a space in the performing arts for LGBTQ+ men and allies.

"One really cool thing about PRISM, and something that makes it unique, is that we give our members a voice in what we perform," LeAnnais said. "Each season, we survey the group and ask them what themes and music they would like to see highlighted in future concerts. Then, as a programming team, we think about what's going on in our world and how we want PRISM to represent [that]."

"PRISM Hits the Road" will be all about road-tripping across the U.S., from east to west, and the diversity of music our country offers: from Broadway, jazz, soul to country, indie and pop," LeAnnais told BTL. Songs, he said, will represent "specific places as well as the sentiments of exploring, making memories and enjoying the journey."

The broad theme, LeAnnais noted, allows PRISM to highlight different artists and continue to pursue its goals of spotlighting queer artists and themes. "While the country may be more divided than ever, we as an organization have always seen music as one of the best ways to bring people together," LeAnnais said.

The lineup includes a mix of classic show tunes, pop hits and, in true PRISM style, a few surprises:



'Travelin' Thru'

Dolly Parton

"Travelin' Thru" was chosen for its place in the 2005 movie "Transamerica," about a transgender woman who has to rethink her past when she finds out she has a 17-year-old son. Written by Dolly Parton for the movie, it earned her an Oscar nomination for Best Original Song in 2006, an award she was nominated for back in 1981 for her enduring classic "9 to 5." The rest of the set includes what Artistic Director Darin DeWeese called "general traveling music": songs like "Go West" by Village People and popularized by a Pet Shop Boys version, "Life Is a Highway" by Rascal Flatts and "Roam" by

'Kansas City'

Oscar Hammerstein and Richard Rodgers, from "Oklahoma!"

From the classic "Oklahoma!" comes "Kansas City," which PRISM's small auditioned ensemble, Men of Note, will perform in "an over-the-top jazzy version," DeWeese said. A poppy track from the middle of the musical, "Kansas City," will pick up the pace after "Chicago," one of the gentler and more wistful of the songs on PRISM's setlist.

'Chicago'

Sufjan Stevens

"Chicago" by Sufjan Stevens, a Detroit native. "It is always important to have queer artists represented in our concerts," DeWeese said of Stevens. "Chicago" is a perfect road song: Stevens sings about getting in a van and driving to Chicago and to New York, sleeping in parking lots and admitting his mistakes, inspired by his experiences driving to Chicago when he was in school at Hope College in Holland to get away to the city and see shows. His album "Illinois," which "Chicago" is from, has also inspired other forms of art: it's the basis for a new Broadway musical called "Illinoise" by director and choreographer Justin Peck and playwright Jackie Sibbles Drury.

'NYC Medley'

Barry Manilow

From Baltimore, "Hits the Road" heads next to New York City with Barry Manilow's "NYC Medley." Manilow, who came out publicly in 2017 at the age of 73 — noting that he waited to come out of fear for his career, even though he had been romantically involved with his manager and husband Garry Kief for many years prior — released his album "This is My Town: Songs of New York" the same year, featuring "NYC Medley." With pieces of "New York State of Mind" by Billy Joel and Tony Bennett, "Manhattan" by Ella Fitzgerald and

"New York, New York" by Leonard Bernstein from the 1944 musical "On the Town," the song will be performed by four "immensely talented soloists...before the curtain opens to the full chorus singing 'New York, New York,'" DeWeese said.

'Good Morning Baltimore'

Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, from "Hairspray"

"Hairspray" opens with the irresistibly bubbly "Good Morning Baltimore," and it'll also kick off the "Hits the Road" show. In the beloved musical, the song takes the audience through Tracy Turnblad's journey to school, as she hitches a ride on a garbage truck when she misses her school bus. DeWeese called it an "amazing opener to the show," as its upbeat, optimistic energy will make for a rollicking entrance. In the musical, "Good Morning Baltimore" uses the song to establish Tracy's ability to understand and empathize with all kinds of people, a message that falls directly in line with PRISM Chorus' aim to provide an inclusive and affirming space for LGBTQ+ folks and allies. In "Hits the Road," it will be performed with "our soloist in full drag and her backup dancers to set the scene," DeWeese said.



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Greatness in the WNBA
Puzzle can be found on page 25





David Archuleta. Photo: Shaun Vadella

The ‘Idol’ We Need Now

How David Archuleta left behind the Mormon Church to flourish as an openly queer person

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

When David Archuleta returned to the “American Idol” stage last month, he knew that singing his latest single, “Hell Together,” which he wrote about his mother’s show of unconditional allyship after he came out in 2021 and left the Mormon church (so did she, in solidarity), wouldn’t be embraced by everyone. But he sang it anyway, his pro-queer message heard loud and clear by those who are closeted and afraid, like

he once was, and who still need it most — LGBTQ+ youth.

Archuleta wasn’t even close to being out in 2008, during the seventh season of “American Idol,” when his kind smile and puppy-dog eyes told a very different story than the open and honest one he’s been sharing through his candid thoughts and personal music. He told *People* magazine in 2022 that he would pray to God to “please take this away from me because I don’t know what else to do.” He only got frustrated when he spoke to church leaders

about Mormonism’s views on the LGBTQ+ community. And then, at 30, after spending most of his life as a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which he has since abandoned, he came out publicly.

With years of severe anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts behind him, Archuleta is doing what so many of us feel compelled to do when we’ve been condemned and felt betrayed by our faith communities: sharing his story with authenticity and vulnerability and standing as a beacon of hope

and empowerment for those who are still finding their way to their truest selves. He’s giving his voice in more ways than one, too. As a singer, he’s hopeful that “Hell Together” — inspired by an exchange he had with his mother who texted him and said, “If you’re going to hell, we are all going to hell with you,” he explained in an Instagram post — will inspire other parents to be wholehearted allies to their queer children.

Recently, I spoke with Archuleta, 33, about performing the emotional song on the “Idol”

stage, his advice for queer youth torn between authenticity and religion, and why he identifies with his younger self now more than ever.

How did it feel to be on the “Idol” stage again all these years later, but this time as almost a completely different person in some ways? You got to step back on that stage as an openly queer person and express being openly queer.

It was invigorating. It's just nice to be able to feel like you can just lay all yourself out there when so many people feel, and still feel, like you should hide. So just to be back on the "Idol" stage and be able to be there now that I've come out, like you said, even wearing mesh, it's nice to be able to feel like you can lay all yourself out there in the open, in front of people without having to feel the need to hide. And people still feel like you should hide. They'll say, "Well, don't talk about it. Don't show yourself. Can't you just keep it to yourself?" So you have to be open about it. You have to talk about it because you have to show people "I'm here. What are you going to do about it? You can't hide me." And they try to, because it makes them uncomfortable.

When I hear you sing "Hell Together," those feelings are still so raw for you it seems, and it's such an important song that you're releasing. As a kid who struggled with my sexuality while growing up Catholic, it would've changed my life had I heard that song in my teen years. And as an adult, I realize there are so many young people who need to still hear the message of this song. Was that on your mind while working on it?

Yeah, because when I came out, I had thousands of people, even to this day, still in the closet — all ages, people who are still married, people who are young, teenagers, people about to go on missions for their church — all saying, "I'm like you and I don't know what to do." That was the biggest motivating factor for me to write a book, because I'm writing a book now. I am trying to live my life authentically, but also I want to do it in a way that keeps the conversation going. I don't want it to just be a middle finger to conservative people. There's too many people like me still in that community who don't know how to find their way. They don't know how to get out of that. And they don't have a safe way to get out of that.

I think a lot of people who are out and now part of the queer community, they know how that struggle is. And a lot of people

who find their way into the queer community, they have to be tough. They have to be thick-skinned, they have to be fighters, but not everyone knows how to do that. Songs like "Hell Together" and other artists who've written songs that are similar to that, I think it's like, I want to start that conversation. "American Idol" was not the place I saw myself singing a song about going to hell together and about coming out, because that's not the audience that is OK with that. It shows in a lot of the comments. "American Idol" is still a very family, middle America Christian-conservative audience for the most part, and they're not OK with that kind of stuff.

So you have to start in a very

and not everyone's ready. But do what is going to help you feel like you can thrive and prosper and be happy.

You knew that performing this song would be somewhat controversial given the show you were performing it on. What went through your mind as you were singing?

I was scared. It's uncomfortable. And I was nervous, not just because of the song, but also the fact that it's a hard song to sing vocally, and I'm on a singing competition show that I once was a singing person on, singing a song that I knew was going to have

now can have in mind when they have a kid going through a similar thing.

Controversy aside, there's been an outpouring of support for this performance as well, and some commenters are even admiring your chest in the mesh.

Oh my gosh. That's so funny. Here I'm going all deep and stuff, and gay Twitter's not even thinking about that, oh my gosh. That's hilarious. I mean, I didn't look at that as the focus. It was just like, I feel good in this, so I'm going to wear it. And that's what I think. My mind was totally taken by

go to the gym for nothing, no. I like to show off what I've worked hard for.

What did it mean to you to be named Outstanding Breakthrough Artist by GLAAD this year?

Oh, that took me so off guard. I wasn't expecting it at all. Because Ice Spice was literally in the category, so I was like, if Ice Spice doesn't get it, it's going to be someone else other than me. But I was like, there's no way in hell I'm going to get this. So I was just minding my own business. I'm like, it's cool that I was nominated and my jaw dropped when [they called my name]. I'm like, "What? What?" I was so confused, but I was so happy as well. And by winning the award, I was able to go backstage and I got to say hi to Reneé Rapp, and I was like, "I love you. You're an amazing singer." She's like, "Wait, I'm obsessed with you."

With Pride on the horizon, how do you reflect on your journey and what this time of year means to you and the rest of the queer community?

It's so exhilarating and invigorating. Pride is a thing that I've now embraced; I was afraid of it before. Because I'm like, oh, Pride is so loud and colorful, and in your face. Now I'm just like, "Oh, I get it now. I see why." I look forward to it. I'm performing at a lot more Pride things this year, whereas I only performed at one last year and it was my first one, so I can't wait to keep going. It's so fun.

You'll have to expand the mesh collection.

Yeah, I guess I'll have to maintain at the gym.

Your self-expression is not just through music, but it's radiating through your style too. I've watched your journey from somebody who was more of a button-up GAP kid to really pushing fashion boundaries more. How is what you wear an

I just think that if there is a God like the way I've been taught, then I thank God I'm alive in this moment because this is just something that makes me thankful to be here, and thankful to be alive and breathing.

uncomfortable conversation with people who don't want that conversation. But you know what? If there's a little queer person who is on the couch with their family watching this, and if they hear their parents saying, "Ugh, that's so gross that he would sing that song," I hope that they see that there is a mother out there like my mom, who wasn't OK with me coming out at first. I had to have hard conversations with her. Sometimes you have to find a way; you have to help them understand and say, "This is what I've had to go through." I know it's hard, but try to have a hard conversation and say, "Mom, Dad, I want you to listen to what I've had to deal with and why, and the pain I've had to go through and the torture of not being able to change who I am because this is what I am, and who I am. And I need you to understand why I'm coming out." That's a hard conversation to have

very mixed reviews by the people who are watching it. But at the same time, it was so refreshing. Because again, I don't have to hide this about me. I don't have to just present myself in a way that is acceptable to people who would judge me normally. If you just judge me, then go ahead and do it in my face. Because I'm not going to do this anymore behind closed doors. This is just who I am, and that's fine. So it was nice. Singing a song like "Hell Together" on a family show, "American Idol," it's like, in the end, it is a song about family. And sometimes I think people overlook that. But it literally is a song about a mom showing her support and learning how to support her son. I love my mom. I'm grateful because not everyone's parents are like that. Hopefully by sharing her story and what she said can be something that other parents in the future or

the controversy. I'm still getting comments. I'm still getting people trying to rebuke me and save me, and shake their finger and say, "How dare you," defending their beliefs. So that stuff takes more of my attention. I guess the gay guys have been commenting on my body, so maybe that's also why I haven't noticed. It's nothing new, whereas singing a song about going to hell together in front of a conservative audience of millions of people was more...

Pressure?

It was just more like that's what took my attention, I guess, and pressure. But hey, I'm glad. If it's positive that they're commenting about that, then great.

You don't go to the gym for nothing.

I've been working out, and I don't

See David Archuleta, page 27

Go Girl! Saugatuck Celebrates Women's Weekend at Nation's Largest Gay Resort

Event features workshops, beach vibes and a focus on community-building

BY BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

Women hearing the siren call of Lake Michigan may want to mark May 31-June 2 on their calendars. Those are the days that the largest gay resort in the country will host its annual women's weekend event, a sapphic party called Go Girl! Saugatuck, now in its seventh year.

Taking place at The Dunes resort, Go Girl! was born when Mimi Gonzalez approached the owners about booking a comedy show. Mike Jones, one of three owners, offered her the Cabaret but said what they really needed was someone to book a women's weekend.

Gonzalez said she'd look for someone. Turns out, the person she found was herself.

"Sometimes life does that to you," Gonzalez told BTL. "It says, here's your opportunity and you're the one who's supposed to do this. That's why it's coming right to your feet."

Metro Detroiters making the 192-mile trek to the resort situated two miles from Lake Michigan will be treated to an event that throws the doors open to everyone on the LGBTQ+ or feminine spectrum.

"I'm really bent on radical inclusion," Gonzalez said. "I've spent a lot of my life as a Latina, lesbian-identifying bisexual woman of color. I have found myself excluded far more often than I've been included... Everybody on the gender and sexuality spectrum is welcome at this women's weekend. Ninety percent of the people I pay are women of color."

"Inclusion is one of the best ingredients in our secret sauce," Gonzalez said.

All events take place at The Dunes, but there are nearby hotels to accommodate those who aren't able to stay at the resort. The annual event coincides this year with Saugatuck/Douglas Pride.

Featured performers include:

- Yoli Mayor, the "Cuban Adele"



Partygoers let loose during a past Go Girl! event. Courtesy photo

- Tamale Rocks and Safety Third
- Reigning GoGirl! Showgirl Oshun Hathor
- Author and motivational speaker Graci Harkema
- Poet C.C. Carter
- Chicago DJ Gloria

"I stuffed the days full of activities, workshops, pool parties, DJs, ending with an open mic Gospel of You brunch," Gonzalez said. "This year we're adding the intergenerational panel that Crowded Table Productions created and produced in November in Lansing."

Tamale Sepp, the founder of

Tamale Rocks and a self-described "skydiving moto babe, mother of spaniels," has performed several times at Go Girl! Saugatuck.

"Mimi creates a really inclusive and exciting environment for people to participate in," Sepp said. "She's always looking for what is going to wow her guests. She brings in really great talent from different places and musical guests that are of the community and would be something that the community would want to see."

This will be motivational speaker Graci Harkema's fifth year of attending Go Girl! Saugatuck. A group of her friends from Grand Rapids were going and she thought it would be an opportunity to meet other women in the LGBTQ+

community and have some fun beyond just drinking at a bar.

"I was really drawn to go for a weekend with all the activities and the opportunity for connection with others and the opportunity to make new friends," Harkema said. "Some of the folks that I met during that first year, I'm still friends with to this day."

Gonzalez said it is important to her that she puts together a weekend that makes the most of people's vacation dollars. She wants them to have a wide variety of choices.

"There are workshops that teach writing and masc of center," said Gonzalez, who also listed real estate and retirement, women veterans and their benefits, hula hoop, yoga,

drumming — "a lot of the trifectas of lesbian entertainment."

"I want to cater to many tastes," she added. "Women are spending good money to have a good time."

She seeks out variety in the entertainers, looking for unusual talents including acrobatics and fire-eating.

Sepp, whose show encompasses not just her talents but those of the friends with whom she performs, choreographs a multidisciplinary act designed to create a stunning finale. She'll road trip from New York to Saugatuck, picking up her drag king friends along the way.

"We're going to caravan to Go Girl! and have ourselves a good

See **Go Girl!**, page 24

◀ **Ryan Redoute**
Continued from page 16

suggests going in late July to early August to get the most from the beach scene (don't



(Left) Ryan Redoute and husband Paul Joyner in Frankfort, Mich. (Right) Chapel Rock. Photos: Ryan Redoute

“Tahquamenon Falls blew me away. You can just lay in the flowing water and it feels very Michigan magical.”

Chapel Falls Beach is part of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and includes “one of the most beautiful beaches I’ve ever

miss Oval Beach) and staying in downtown Saugatuck as a family or making it a couple’s trip. He loves to visit with his husband for romantic getaways.

Compared with Saugatuck, nearby South Haven is a bit more hectic (in a good way), so Redoute suggests establishing a home base in Saugatuck and taking the 20-minute drive down to South Haven for a day. “Visit the famous red pier, take a morning jog on the beach, get some good food — it’s a very fun combo trip to tie these two towns together.”

Nature’s Retreat: Michigan’s Upper Peninsula

You don’t need to strip down for a classic sexy waterfall shot like Redoute did for the photo gracing the cover of this issue, but you can totally get away with that kind of thing in Michigan’s most remote region, the pristine Upper Peninsula. Redoute recommends picking a spot within driving distance of the Mackinac Bridge, the Chapel Beach Trail and Tahquamenon Falls, which he says remind him of thermal spring spas he’s visited in Costa Rica. “Check out the Upper Falls, but then you can also play for the whole afternoon in the Lower Falls in the water or have a picnic,” he says.

seen, period, including in other parts of the world,” Redoute says. “You’re just walking through these beautiful trees that are just incredible. It’s just that feeling of being very in the nature of it all. Really, I’m a city girl, but I also love being connected to nature — that’s where Michigan really thrives.”

Virtual Travel: When You Just Can’t Get Away

If you lack one of the fundamental ingredients for summer travel (time or money), fear not. Redoute has a series of virtual travel tours for unexpected Michigan adventures you can enjoy from home — with a little imagination. Think Michigan’s little-known Serengeti Desert, the Bavarian Inn thermal springs or the oft-overlooked volcano in Holland, nestled right up against the Lake Michigan shoreline. OK, these destinations might be more fantasy than reality (Redoute recently posted a video apologizing for misleading excited Michigan travelers), but isn’t that what vacation magic is all about?

Follow “That Michigan Guy” Ryan Redoute on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube @ryanredoute. Listen to the “In Michigan!” podcast at apple.co/4dd5tNL.

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Go Girl!

Continued from page 22

time,” Sepp said. “We practice remotely and then we show up and have a blast. We’re going to bring some excitement to the

just coming together,” Harkema said. “It’s very diverse and very inclusive. You’re going to see folks of all ages over the age of 21 and from different geographical backgrounds, different races, ethnicities, different orientations and sexual identities. It’s just the time to come together.”



Mimi Gonzalez. Courtesy photo

table and [the weekend] has a bunch of other great performers as well.”

Sepp lives in her van with her dogs and her motorcycle, a lifestyle that she said allows her to claim all towns as her hometown. It’s also one that she said has opened doors to a variety of pastimes, from sky diving to drag and burlesque. Her background is in gender performance, but she’s also done circus work.

Harkema will read from the book that made her a bestselling author, a memoir called “Rising: From the Mud Hut to the Boardroom and Back Again.”

“I’m a 37-year-old, Black, queer female and when my book came out, I realized how important it is that we have representation,” Harkema said. “Of all the published authors in the U.S., less than six percent of them are Black and only 15 percent of them identify as LGBTQ. So being able to bring that intersectionality of an author and being able to share my narrative and my journey with others might help inspire others.”

Harkema says that the event attracts a strong contingency of people from Detroit.

“What’s beautiful about this weekend is

According to Harkema, it’s the perfect mini-vacation for Midwesterners.

“We don’t have to go to Florida or New York for some weekend fun,” Harkema said. “For just a few hours in the car — or less than a few hours — we can be in this place that feels like it is much further away, but is more accessible.”

Gonzalez points out there are plenty of beautiful parks nearby and said they often end up walking the beaches collecting rocks on the final Sunday. Importantly, the entire community is queer-friendly.

“It’s gorgeous and there are so many activities,” Gonzalez said. “There are hikes, boating, kayaks, paddle boats, bike trails and free

“Sometimes life does that to you. It says, here’s your opportunity and you’re the one who’s supposed to do this. That’s why it’s coming right to your feet.”

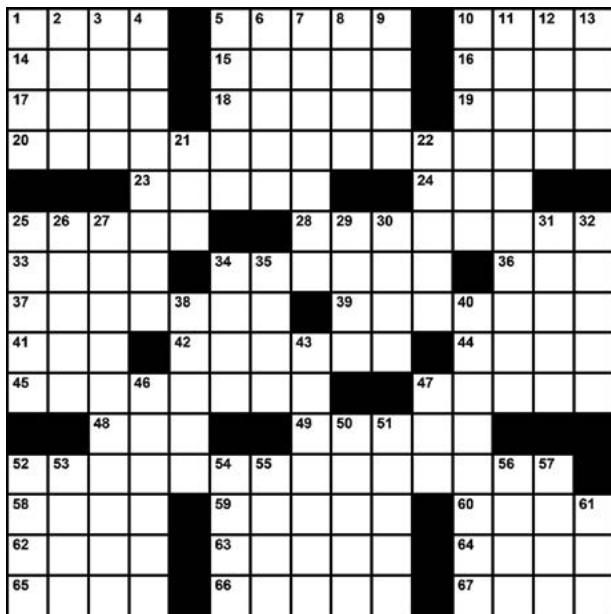
— Mimi Gonzalez

beaches. There’s so much to see naturally and, because it’s such an art community, there is so much culture there. Most of it is queer-supported and queer-created culture.”

Wrist bands are available for the entire weekend or for one-day passes, starting at \$20 for just the Sunday brunch, \$100 for Friday or Saturday and \$145 for the whole weekend. Room reservations are separate.

“Go Girl! Saugatuck is an intersectional, intergenerational good time,” Sepp said. “I would invite people to come for a day or the whole weekend, but come and enjoy the performances, the DJs, the workshops, the pool parties. Come with an open mind and be prepared to have some fun.”

Reserve tickets at gogirlsaugatuck.com.



- 34 "Diana and Callisto" painter
 36 Shakespearean interjection
 37 More of the quote
 39 Retired Seattle Storm hoopster, and source of the quote
 41 Direction away from NNE
 42 Used rubbers
 44 One of the Cone sisters
 45 Certain Biblical scholar
 47 "Happy Days" actor Williams
 48 "___ out!" (cry by Pallone)
 49 Scrabble companion of Q
 52 End of the quote
 58 Julia Morgan wings
 59 Train making all stops
 60 Muscle Marys pump it
 62 Personal lubricant ingredient
 63 It may slip over one's head
 64 General on Chinese menus
 65 Tools for those who cut
 66 Recesses for Rev. Michael Piazza
 67 Film director Gus Van ___
- 12 Pearl Buck character
 13 Pound unrelentingly
 21 Ticket abbr. on a Cherry Grove ferry
 22 Taking it lying down
 25 Group that won't pose for nude photos
 26 Home for Troy Perry
 27 How to watch a video about felatio?
 29 River to the Seine
 30 "Tearoom Trade" author Humphries
 31 ___-surface missile
 32 Roomy vehicle
 34 Polo of "The Fosters"
 35 Broadway lyricist Gershwin and others
 38 Love objects
 40 Friends with ___
 43 Wall materials
 46 Witherspoon and others
 47 "South Park's" Big Gay, et al.
 50 Give a hard time to
 51 Lesbos and more
 52 Some like them hot
 53 Spicy stew
 54 Bone in a limp wrist
 55 Chicken pen
 56 Bear of the night
 57 Let out
 61 "It's ___ for Me to Say" (Mathis)

Across

Greatness in the WNBA

- 1 Leave marks on the back
 5 Overhand stroke, for Mauresmo
 10 Take advantage of International Male
 14 Prefix with sphere

- 15 Family gathering spot
 16 In the pink
 17 Carbon compound
 18 Lake Nasser dam
 19 Shape of George Frenn's track
 20 Start of what every great team has to do
 23 Garson of Hollywood
 24 ___ Tin Tin (old TV dog)
 25 Color for Katharine Lee Bates
 28 Provided that
 33 Part of GWM

Down

- 1 Nick Malgieri, for one
 2 Musical Horne
 3 Mine, to Rimbaud
 4 Grandpa Walton portrayal
 5 Sudden burst
 6 Stroke with an upright stick
 7 If everything goes wrong
 8 "The King and I" setting
 9 Gym bunnies do it to their pecs
 10 Certain winner
 11 Trying on clothes?

See p. 19 for answers

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◀ Pride

Continued from page 15

way to celebrate Pride. On the Thursday before the weekend begins, San Francisco Pride will host its second annual Human Rights Summit.

New Orleans Pride

New Orleans, June 8

The Big Easy is an easy choice for celebrating Pride, with a full day of

Community Fest, and end on Bourbon Street. From 7 to 10 p.m., it's the only parade on our list that happens at night.

Philadelphia Pride

Philadelphia, June 2

Philadelphia Pride, held on June 2, begins the day with a Pride March through Center City, featuring a morning ceremony, a 400-foot Pride flag, music and speeches. The march ends at Philly's Midtown Village neighborhood — also known as the Gayborhood — for the Pride Festival that

year, with events, parties and programming from May 31 to June 2.

But Provincetown celebrates Pride in different ways all summer; if you want to extend your Pride celebrations beyond June, Ptown makes it easy to do so. There's the MEMDAY Weekend Women's Festival for LGBTQ+ women and non-binary and trans people (May 23 – 27); FROLIC Weekend for queer men of color (June 13 – 17); Bear Week, which is the largest gathering of bears in the world (July 13 – 20); Girl Splash, an annual summer week for women (July 24 – 27); and Family Week, which is the largest gathering

there aren't adequate ways to celebrate: like its bigger peers, Key West Pride includes a Saturday street fair and a Sunday early evening parade. There are lots of smaller events too, including parties, discos and drag brunches. If you need a queer excuse to return, Key West also hosts Tropical Heat, a 5-day party for LGBTQ+ men (Aug. 7 – 11) and Womenfest, for LGBTQ+ women (Sept. 4 – 8).

São Paulo Gay Pride

São Paulo, Brazil, June 1 – 2

If you're looking to take your celebrations international this Pride, São Paulo earned the Guinness World Record for largest Pride parade in the world in 2006, and held that title until NYC Pride surpassed it in 2019. Brazil is progressive when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues: it legalized same-sex marriage and adoption in 2013, two years before the U.S. legalized gay marriage and four years before it allowed gay couples to adopt.

São Paulo Pride, on June 1 and 2, offers Pridegoers the chance to indulge in a weekend full of parties around Sunday's parade — you can hit a 12-hour marathon party that runs from 10 p.m. on Saturday to 10 a.m. on Sunday, ending just before the parade begins, or if partying after the parade is more your speed, you might check out the city's most famous pool party, which runs from 4 p.m. on Sunday to 7 a.m. on Monday. If you're going for a party vibe this Pride, São Paulo might be your destination of choice — plus, you can check off “going to one of the largest Pride parades in the world” from your bucket list.

Pride Amsterdam

Amsterdam, July 27 – Aug. 4

For those looking to take it international but not with quite so much emphasis on the partying, Pride Amsterdam, across two weekends, is a great choice. The Netherlands was the first country to legalize gay marriage, and Amsterdam celebrates Pride with a two weekend celebration. The first weekend, July 27 and 28, includes Pride March and Pride Park, a festival in the famous Vondelpark, on Saturday. Pride Park will turn Vondelpark into a Pride haven, with a Rainbow Market, sports and activities sponsored by Sport Pride, and youth activities sponsored by Youth Pride, plus a stage with performances throughout the day.

The celebrations continue the following weekend, from Aug. 2 to 4, with street parties on Friday and Saturday all across the city — there are nine different locations on Saturday and 10 on Sunday, so you can explore the city and stop to party along the way. Amsterdam also hosts a Canal Parade (which, yes, is exactly what it sounds like: a parade of boats through the canals) on Saturday, and the festivities end Sunday with a Closing Party in the central Dam Square.



Denver Pride. Photo: The Center on Colfax

celebrations that stretches into its parade into the evening. Like San Francisco Pride, New Orleans Pride, on June 8, features a summit on the Friday before its PrideFest and Pride Parade on Saturday. The Black Queer Legacy Summit will include workshops, panels, networking opportunities and exhibits celebrating the legacy of the Black queer community. Pridefest, Louisiana's largest LGBTQ+ celebration, kicks off the festivities with a day of entertainment, headlined by the New Orleans-based Big Freedia, who also headlined in 2019.

Also on Saturday, there's a Black Queer Community Festival run by Black Pride NOLA, who are organizing the summit as well as parties and brunches throughout the weekend. The NOLA Pride Parade is Saturday night, following Pridefest: it will loop through the French Quarter, passing

begins immediately after the March. It's another street festival with food trucks, artists, vendors and live performances.

Like New Orleans, Philadelphia Pride offers a compact way to celebrate, with everything happening on one day. Although Pride certainly warrants more than a day of celebrating, if you're working with a tight schedule but want to make it to an out-of-town celebration, Philadelphia is another great option.

Provincetown Pride

Provincetown, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, May 31 – June 2 (and beyond)

Provincetown has long been known as a kind of LGBTQ+ epicenter and a favorite destination for a Cape Cod summer getaway. The main Pride celebration is in its seventh

of LGBTQ+ families in the world (July 27 – Aug. 3). It all ends with Provincetown Carnival, which, dating back to 1978, is Provincetown's original summer celebration of community, expression and creativity, with parties, events, costume contests and the annual Carnival parade (Aug. 17 – 24).

Key West Pride

Key West, Florida, June 5 – 9

Maybe the hustle and the bustle (not to mention the Pride crowds) of a big city like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago isn't for you. That's why this list includes the more laidback Provincetown celebration, and another option for a more low-key Pride is Key West Pride, from June 5 to 9.

Just because it's smaller doesn't mean

◀ David Archuleta

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extension of who you are?

Well, I used to be styled, first by “American Idol,” which was on Fox. It was a conservative family show. And then after that, I was styled by my friend who was a Mormon mom. And I was a Mormon. Now that I’ve come out of that and I don’t have to worry about, “Was this modest enough?” I don’t worry about that anymore. I’m just like, “Do I feel good in this?” And it’s so freeing. It’s so nice to just be able to wear what feels good and what I feel confident in, and what I feel makes a statement. And I’ve invested more money into a stylist. Shout out to Andrew Philip Nguyen. He’s been so fun to work with, and I’ve worked with the other stylists too, and I look forward to collaborating with more photographers and stylists and brands hopefully. Hey, I’ve never had brand deals. I would love to because it’s just another form of expression and creativity, and I love it. It’s a new world to me, and I think it’s really fun.

When you look back at the last few years after coming out, is there a specific moment or experience that made you feel like you made the right decision?

I feel like every day makes me feel that way because a lot of religious people will be like, “Well, we don’t tell gay people to die and stuff,” but the structure and the conversations and the culture builds to a lot of queer people having to choose one or the other. A lot of people feel like to choose religion, they

will even have to lay down their own life, [or] even take their own life. And there was a point where I was willing to do that. So for me,

is just something that makes me thankful to be here, and thankful to be alive and breathing.

realized. I was talking to my friend, Mikey Angelo, he’s on TikTok, and he does these really funny recap videos. He’s like, “I was a Mormon

lost the meaning of life.” It’s like, “No, I just have to find community elsewhere,” and I have meaning for life again. So I think that’s something else, to be encouraging to people who haven’t left religion and haven’t come out, because they’re afraid of losing their community, and feeling like they’ll lose their purpose to live. It’s like, you know what? There is a community elsewhere and it’s beautiful, and it’ll give you a whole new sense of meaning to live, and it’s wonderful.



David Archuleta. Photo: Shaun Vadella

How did the concept for the “Hell Together” video come about, and also what was it like seeing young David in those family videos? How do you identify with him now?

I totally identify with him because for me, when I was little, there was no judgment toward myself. And so it’s nice to be able to see myself no longer with that judgment because when I started hitting age 11, 12, 13, 14, I hated myself and hated how I looked. Now, being able to see myself and be like, “Oh, I have compassion for myself,” is very healing. And so when I see videos of when I was 6 and 7 years old and then not having any fear of who I am and who I would become is really an empowering moment for me. There are a couple of moments when I was 9 years old that I saw and I knew about being different and I was scared of it, but now being able to just hold myself and be able to show love is really beautiful. And also to just pay tribute to my mom and reminisce. We’re human beings trying to figure out life and be there for each other, just like everyone else in this world is trying to.

Seems like you’re breathing much easier these days.

Thank you. I wasn’t breathing too easily on the “American Idol” stage last [month], but otherwise, yes, I would agree.

What has it been like to find queer and ally ex-Mormons in the music community, with Tyler Glenn and Dan Reynolds among them?

It’s been great to do LoveLoud with them. I’ve found a lot more people grew up as Latter-day Saints than I

too.” I was like, “What? You were a Mormon too?” And now we’re both out and we were both jamming at Coachella. I’m like, look at us two ex-Mormons, now out and queer and proud and having a fun time at Coachella.


Would you say you left one community for another community?

Yeah. I feel like, as human beings, we need community. And that’s what was so beautiful about religion: it’s community and you’re there for each other. And so when you leave religion, people think, “Oh, you’ve

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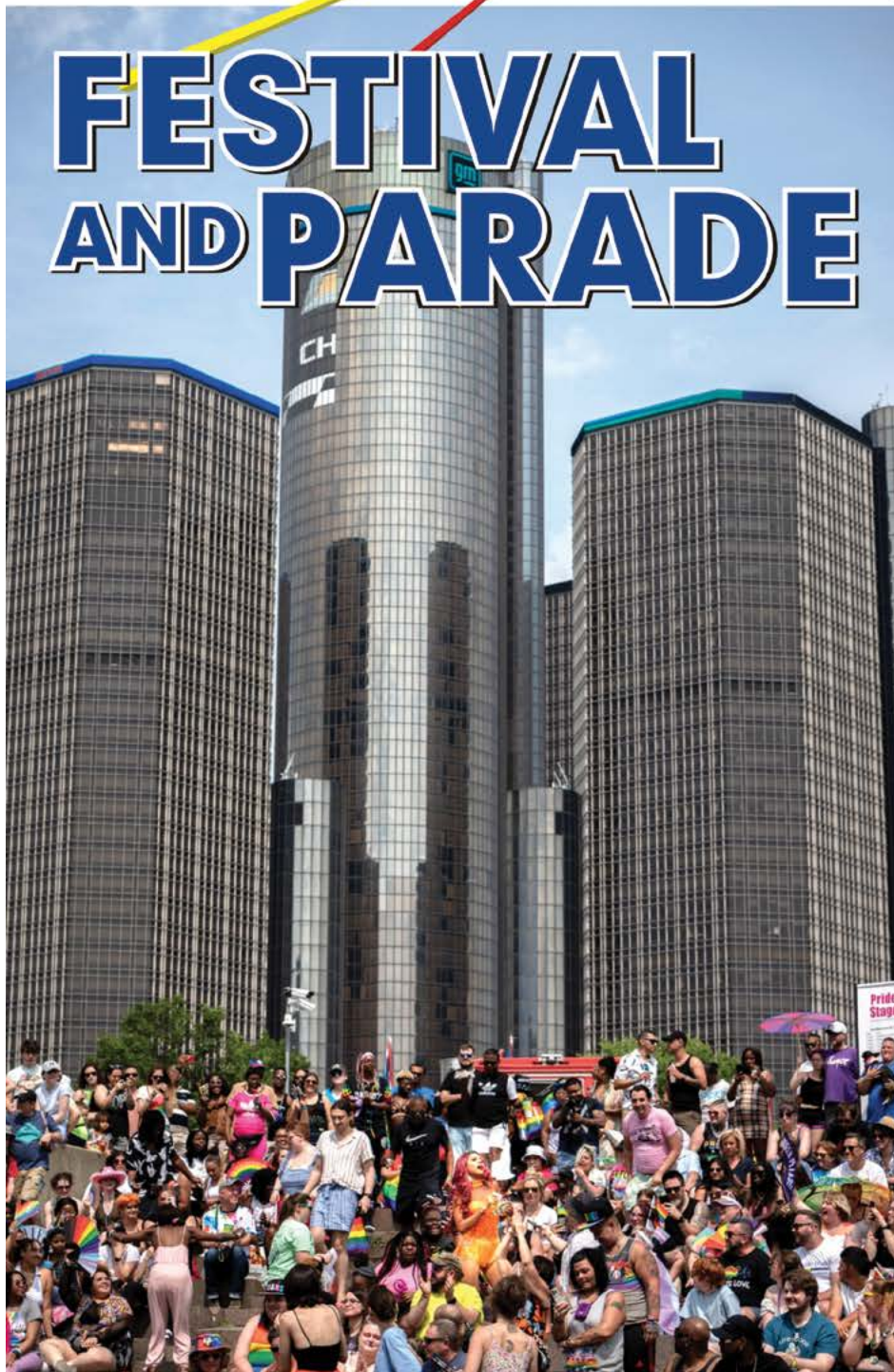
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