

WINDY CITY TIMES

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WCT talks with new national HRC President Alphonso David

AGENT OF CHANGE

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HRC President Alphonso David.
Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

Presidential candidate talks LGBTQ rights.
Photo by Matt Simonette



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PRESENT TENSE

Part two of our annual Holiday Gift Guide.
Print of A to Ziggy by Jason Brueck, courtesy of Jackson Junge Gallery

20-24

SCREEN GRAB

Winter movie roundup.
Antonio Banderas in the film Law of Desire. Image courtesy of the Gene Siskel Film Center

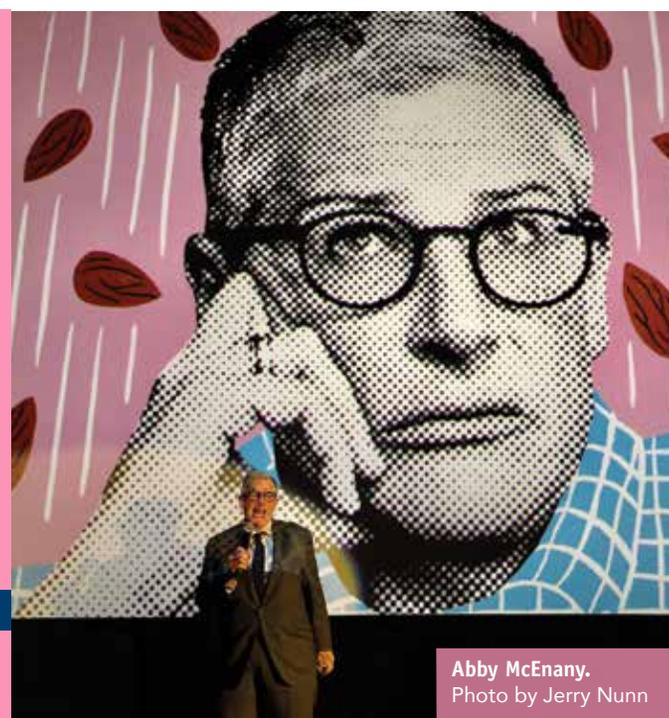


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WORK IN PROGRESS

Chicago series ups the queer ante

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Abby McEnany.
Photo by Jerry Nunn



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WINDY CITY TIMES PRINT DATES:

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Feb. 5, 2020	April 15, 2020	July 8, 2020
Feb. 19, 2020	April 29, 2020	July 22, 2020
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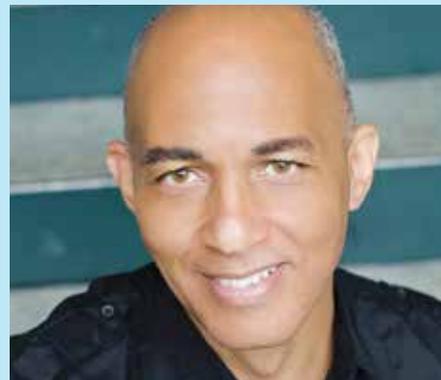


NAME THAT TUNE

The local LGBTQ musical group Lakeside Pride finds a new groove with Queer as Polka.

Photo (left) by Warren Perlstein

HOME OF THE CAVE



Local accessories designer Jack Cave discusses his background, style and more.

Photo courtesy of Cave

ISLE BE SEEING YOU

WCT went on an excursion to Ireland and Northern Ireland.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Jane Lynch, Liam Payne and Mariah Carey.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

This Week's Featured Properties



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Brad Lippitz has supported and contributed more to LGBTQ causes and candidates over the years than any other real estate broker in Chicago. And Brad's team happens to be in the top 10 in all Chicago with over \$80 million sold in 2018. If you need to choose a real estate broker, why wouldn't you choose a community leader who consistently gives back year after year? Brad looks forward to working with you!

Alphonso David: New national HRC president on work, policies and Trump

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Alphonso David is more than the new national president of the sprawling LGBTQ-rights organization the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

He literally is the face of change.

David is the first civil rights lawyer—and the first person of color—to be president of HRC in the organization's nearly 40-year history. Many have seen this as a step in the right direction for the organization, and David himself has said (on HRC's website), "There must be space and room for everyone in this movement, including at the Human Rights Campaign." David already immersed himself in HRC in his first 100 days, doing everything from touring critical election states to starting various pro-transgender initiatives.

Windy City Times talked with David when he was in town for the HRC Chicago gala.

Windy City Times: You been in office for at least 100 days. What's been the most surprising thing to you?

Alphonso David: There have been so many. I have been pleasantly surprised by the dedication, commitment, passion and talent of people in the organization; they've far exceeded my expectations. There are people who have been in the organization for 20 years—people who understand the movement—and there are people who have been there two to three months, but they all have the passion, love and dedication for the work.

What's also been surprising is the depth of commitment from supporters across the country. People are ready for change. They understand how important this election is and what this election means—not just for them, but for future generations. They're willing to invest their time and resources to make sure we effect change.

WCT: What attracted you to apply to HRC, in the first place?

AD: It is the largest LGBTQ-rights organization in the world. What attracted me was the opportunity to bring about change. It's the most dynamic organization; I thought it was the best place for me to go to if I wanted to effect change on a national level.

I've been working in government for 12 years, at the state level [New York], working with a governor who's very supportive of equality and equality-related issues. I was not looking at the time, but it was too difficult to say no. As I think about the next election, my family and friends, it was important to me to take a position in which I could effect change—and have the resources to do it.

WCT: Talk a little bit about growing up in Liberia.

AD: I was born in the United States and I grew up in Liberia for 14 years, moving there when I was a year old. It is a country founded by freed slaves from the U.S., although "founded" is a relative term because there were already people

there (similar to indigenous people in the United States). The constitution mirrors the U.S. Constitution, and the flag actually mirrors the U.S. flag, although the Liberian flag has one star. The capital, Monrovia, was named after President James Monroe.

Growing up there was an incredible experience for me. I didn't appreciate it then because it was all that I knew. My father and uncle were elected officials, and it was an incredible loving, rewarding, deeply enriching experience. I went to an all-boys Catholic school—which was an interesting experience. [Smiles] If you did anything wrong, the nuns would use rulers to bang your knuckles.

In 1980, there was a military coup, and my uncle was assassinated. My father was put in prison, and released about a year and a half later. He sought asylum; I was born here, so I didn't have to seek asylum.

WCT: When you were named HRC president, a lot of people saw this as a step in the right direction regarding diversity. However, there were naysayers claiming the move was tokenism, and that you're just a figurehead for the organization to say, "Hey, we're being diverse." How do you respond to that?

AD: It's unfortunate. A judge that I clerked for said something that's so true: "People arrive at conclusions with too little evidence." I don't criticize people for having opinions, [but] it saddens me when those opinions are uninformed.

There is no information they have to draw that conclusion. If anything, based on my record and accomplishments, it suggests the [opposite]. I drafted the marriage-equality act in New York. I drafted legislation to ban conversion therapy in New York. I was responsible for making sure transgender people were protected in New York.

My record supports the selection. I'm not being arrogant about this, but we need to look at the evidence. We live in a culture where facts no longer matter—and that's not just with Donald Trump.

WCT: You mentioned trans people and, as you know, HRC has been criticized for not being trans-inclusive. What pro-trans initiatives is the organization involved in?

AD: Okay. So we have the Transgender Justice Initiative, which we announced about a month and a half ago, and which will be officially launched next year (although we've started the pilot program now). That initiative is multitiered. It's focused on employment training; the unemployment rate for members of the trans community is very high, so we're looking to see how we can address that, with our coalition partners. We want to post job fairs and engage with community and corporate partners to identify job opportunities. We also want to create a training pipeline for positions across the board.

Next is capacity-building. There are many mem-



Alphonso David.
Photo by Andrew Davis

bers of the trans community who work in not-for-profit organizations who need the support and additional skills to be even more effective leaders. We're creating fellowships and identifying a cohort of transgender leaders who we will be working with over the year.

The third is working with local governments to identify the plight of violence against trans members of our community. So far, there have been at least 22 transgender people who have been killed this year; over the past seven years, it's been about 150 people. The violence is happening all over the country, but it seems to be [concentrated] in certain places, so what we're looking to do is identify those regions or cities and work with local governments. It may require training, geo mapping and other things to address violence in those regions.

Finally, there's a communications strategy—elevating the stories of trans members in our com-

munity. We don't want to just talk about violence. We want to elevate positive stories as well.

WCT: Let's talk international efforts. What is the organization doing, globally speaking?

AD: Internationally, we work with nonprofits to expand their reach, their resources; we've been doing that for years. We also work with corporate partners, using the Corporate Equality Index to make sure that more spaces are inclusive. Do you have health-insurance policies that are inclusive? Do you have nondiscrimination policies that are inclusive? Do you have facilities that are inclusive?

So we're working with corporate partners here—and, for those with global offices, we work to make sure those offices reflect the same policies.

WCT: Now how does that work if you want to effect change in countries with anti-LGBTQ policies?

AD: That is more complicated. So you may have a corporation operating in a country that is anti-LGBTQ. So the employees are protected in their buildings, but when the leave they're not protected.

Expansion of the global program involves looking at litigation. We want to work with our international partners, identify countries and regions that are ideal for litigation, and file cases. We have to be very careful where we go; we want to make sure we effect positive change. You could lose a case and expose people to significant risk.

WCT: Let's switch to politics. There are several parts of the left, such as progressives and centrists. How does HRC navigate these different areas of the left?

AD: They're all pro-equality and support pro-LGBTQ issues, so we support them. It's that simple.

There are going to be elected officials and candidates running for office over the next year. We're in the process of looking at a variety of candidates across the board; we're looking at their credentials and their plans. We're trying to get away from the labels and look deeper into the issues.

WCT: Lastly, if you could ask our current president one question and have him be totally honest, what would that question be?

AD: [Pauses.] That's a very good question. I have 6,000 questions.

If I only had one, I would ask him to tell me everything that has violated the law, as I define it. Alternatively, I'd want him to tell me everything he's done to hurt the LGBTQ community.

For more about the Human Rights Campaign, visit HRC.org.

HRC Foundation rates Illinois cities

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation released its eighth annual Municipal Equality Index (MEI), assessing LGBTQ equality in 506 cities across the nation—including nine in Illinois.

The MEI, the only nationwide assessment of LGBTQ inclusion in municipal law and policy, shows that cities across the country, including in Illinois, continue to take the lead in sup-

porting LGBTQ people and workers—even in the face of renewed attacks this year on the LGBTQ community by federal and state officials, the foundation stated in a press release.

The average score for cities in Illinois is 71 out of 100 points, which falls above the national average of 60. Assessed cities include Aurora (70 points), Carbondale (42), Champaign (79), Chicago, (100), Joliet (65), Naperville (65), Peoria (72), Rockford (79) and Springfield (68).

"Municipal Equality Index: A Nationwide Evaluation of Municipal Law 2019" is at HRC.org/mei.

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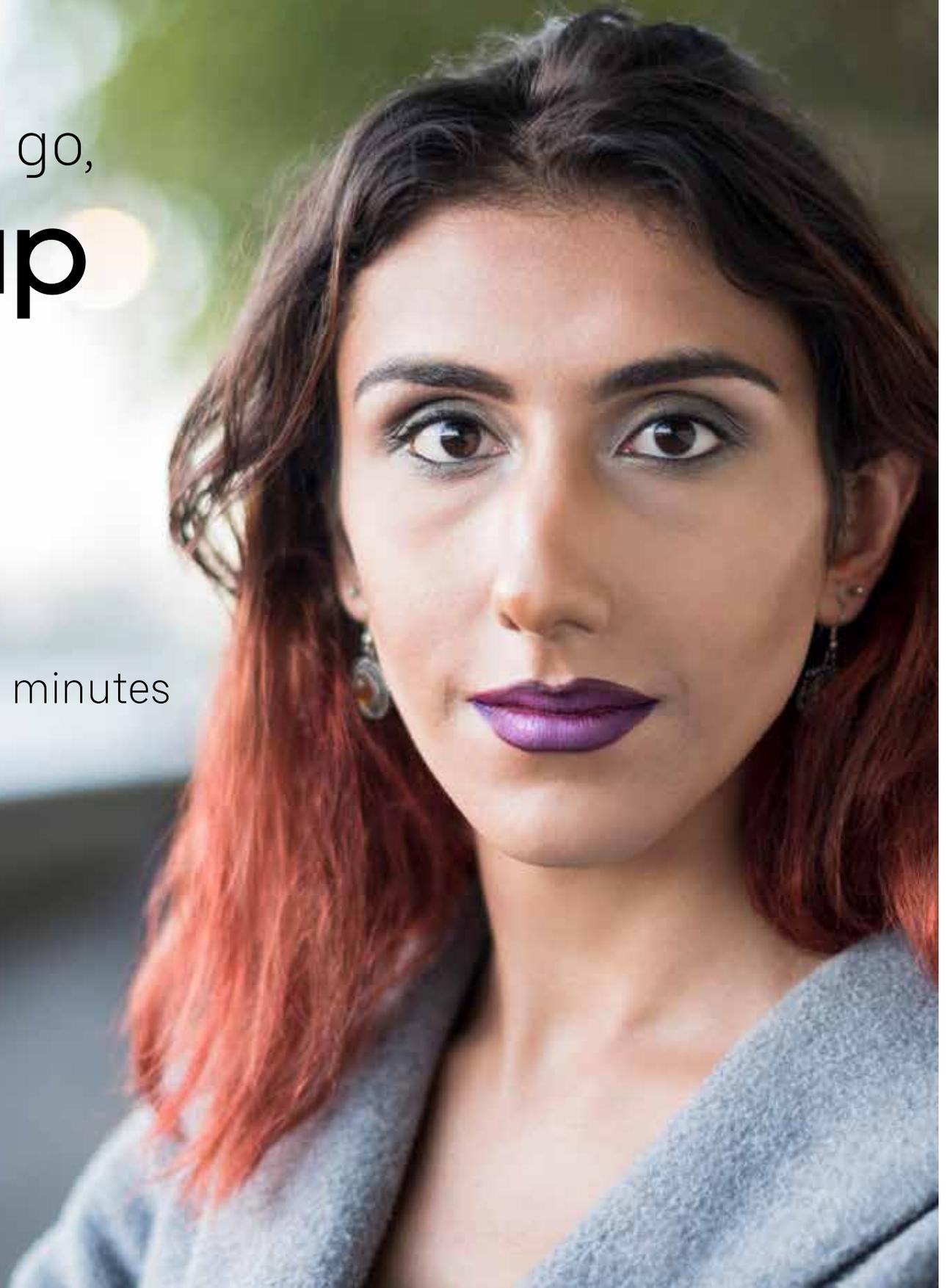
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ELECTIONS 2020

Marianne Williamson talks LGBT rights, presidential bid

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Marianne Williamson—an author and activist who's been running to secure the democratic nomination for president in 2020, said that she doesn't see herself as particularly competing against anyone to secure a bid for the highest office in the land.

"The Democrats on policy? None of us are that different," remarked Williamson during a recent visit to Chicago. "We know what we stand for, and that all our perspectives are very different from the president's. ... I think of myself as running with a lot of really good people. It's good because they're all virtuosos. I think every time someone speaks, the others think, 'Oh that's a good idea.' It's a good thing."

Williamson is the author of 13 books and has been engaged in a number of realms, among them community activism and spirituality. The 2020 race is an admittedly uphill battle for her, given the financial and logistical requirements to mount a political campaign, especially for someone not entrenched in their party. The crowded field of potential Democratic nominees looking to unseat President Donald Trump doesn't help either. Williamson's showing far down in the polls meant she has not been able to qualify for several of the debate forums.

But she was inspired to run by a significant evolution in life in the United States, she said.

"We're living in a time—and this is true not just for the country, but for the world—that the forces of exclusion are meeting the forces of inclusion, in a contest that's as great as anything we've ever had," Williamson explained. "That's really the existential crisis that this country is going through. We were founded on the notion that everyone is equal, and that there should be equal justice and opportunity for everyone. We have never fully manifested that. ... There are so many ways that the white European, WASP, straight male, Christian-dominated identity is being blown apart."

She said that she is among those to whom such a shift seems exciting, adding, "To many of us, we think of what's possible in terms of the flowering and the actualization of humanity, and we look at that and think of America, and American democracy as being a container for that, and are thrilled."

Williamson has an extensive LGBT platform on her website; her communications representative noted that Williamson, who is by trade an author, wrote the platforms herself.

Components of that platform include supporting the Equality Act; reversing laws that allow for discriminatory public accommodations practices; including LGBT persons in the census; appointing an attorney general who prioritizes addressing hate crimes; reversing the military's transgender ban; and backing Title IX protections for LGBT students, among others.

LGBT persons, the platform concludes, "should

be able to pursue a livelihood free from discrimination and have all of the rights afforded under the U.S. Constitution—not because of their sexual orientation—but because they are American citizens."

Williamson was especially active during the '80s and '90s AIDS crisis. She was a co-founder of the Center for Living in Los Angeles, which welcomed persons with HIV/AIDS, as well as Project Angel Food, which operated under its auspices. She faced criticism this past summer, however, when commentators suggested Williamson had said, among other things, that medical suffering was a self-imposed retribution for one's poor emotional state, and that individuals should rely on prayer, rather than medicine, for their well-being.

She insisted the comments derive from out-of-context quotes from her writings as well as second- or third-hand anecdotes, many perpetuated by commentators who were young or not even born in the '80s.

"I was shocked by it," Williamson said. "I didn't go into this expecting this to be a walk in the park, but that was so outrageous. Usually when people criticize you, at least there's a little bit of truth. There is not one iota of truth. I am not that person and I never said those things. You never hear anybody say, 'I was there [in the '80s] and I heard her say that.'"

Williamson said that she is committed to increasing funding for medical interventions such as PrEP and initiatives such as Undetectable=Untransmittable which could potentially decrease new HIV transmissions and increase access to care for people living with the infection.

She also emphasized that taking a stand for anyone's rights can no longer be "just a part-time



Marianne Williamson.

Photo courtesy of campaign team

job" in America.

She explained, "The forces that undermine our democracy—the worst aspects of our character—are now politicized in America. It's bigger than just ending the ban on trans [persons] in the military or just Title VII. It goes deep, and I think you have to have a president who has not only a commitment to policy changes, but a historical, attitudinal and philosophical view of all this."

Williamson's background means that her rhetoric—quite often referencing language associated with spirituality or principles that have taken root in the self-help industry—often stands in stark contrast to that of other politicians, she realizes. But she thinks that the electorate is ready for messaging not steeped in pessimism, invec-

legal service to the bench, focusing most of his career fighting to protect children and families.

Mejia-Beal and Smith are both Victory Fund runoff candidates. Incumbent candidates getting the group's backing include Arizona state Rep. Cesar Chavez, U.S. Rep. Angie Craig (D-Minnesota), U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids (D-Kansas), Maine state Rep. Ryan Fecteau and California state Assemblyman Evan Low, among others.

A Windy City Times interview with Mejia-Beal is at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Gay-man-talks-about-running-for-state-rep/66566.html>.

Kwame Raoul joins other AGs in pro-trans brief

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a coalition of 23 attorneys general to file an amicus brief in the Court of Appeals for the

tive or nationalistic hyperbole.

"There are far more lovers than haters in this country," Williamson said. "The problem is that the haters have become politicized. The problem is the haters are convicted, and convictions are a powerful force. We have to love with just as much conviction. Our problem is that we have a political establishment which has in its own way contributed to the problem, because it doesn't want to 'upset' anybody. It figures that if I upset you by telling you the real truth, by telling how dark and corrupt this is, you might not want to vote for me—it will sound 'negative.'"

Politicians exploiting fear, she added, further disempower Americans within the election process through "how people have been chronically disengaged from the political system. The political establishment has [also] taken advantage of that with the assumption that 'I will only care about something if it [affects] my people.'"

Americans need to feel like their government "has their back," said Williamson, adding that sentiment applied especially for the LGBT community, among others.

"The purpose of government is to be there for people, to protect the most vulnerable," she explained. "There are cases where, with gay and transgender people, the government proactively does not have your back, where government policies come down on the side of people who limit rights and freedoms, and open the door for harm."

But "tolerance" of various communities won't be enough, Williamson said: "Tolerance suggests judgement. We need to move to the point of celebration of people."

See Marianne2020.com.



ELECTIONS 2020

Illinoisans among latest Victory Fund endorsements

LGBTQ Victory Fund—the only national organization dedicated to electing LGBTQ leaders to public office—endorsed 39 more openly LGBTQ candidates for 2019 and 2020 races, including three incumbent members of Congress.

Included in the newest group of endorsed candidates are Ken Mejia-Beal, who is running for Illinois state rep in the 42nd District; and Levander "Van" Smith Jr., who is an at-large candidate running for Circuit Court judge of Cook County.

Mejia-Beal is running against Republican Amy L. Grant in the general election next November; currently, no other Democrats are running against him in the primary.

Smith, an Oak Park resident, brings 26 years

4th Circuit in support of transgender rights in an anti-discrimination lawsuit, *Gavin Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board*.

Grimm, a former student at Virginia's Gloucester High School, sued the Gloucester County School Board in 2015—when he was still a student—for discrimination that banned him from using the common male restrooms at his high school.

Raoul and the coalition argue that transgender individuals have the right "to live with dignity, be free from discrimination, and have equal access to education, employment, housing, public accommodations, and other necessities of life."

Joining Raoul in filing the brief are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and the District of Columbia.

Memoir profiles lesser-known sides of Edie Windsor

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Mention the name Edie Windsor, and many LGBT residents would correctly associate her with the landmark litigation that ultimately paved the way for the United States Supreme Court declaring marriage equality to be the law of the land in 2013.

But a new memoir, which Windsor had started before her 2017 death, sheds light on aspects of Windsor's life that many outside of her family, friends and New York City social milieu do not know about. That book, *A Wild and Precious Life*, was completed by Windsor's co-author, Joshua Lyon, and featured significant contributions by her second wife, Judith Kasen-Windsor. It was released by St. Martin's Publishing Group in October.

"Everybody really knew her because of the [legal] case," Lyon told *Windy City Times*. "She really wanted the book not to focus on the case, because there was so much more incredible stuff in her life beyond that, as a closeted woman growing up in America."

The book, which Lyon and Kasen-Windsor completed by utilizing Windsor's extensive trove of journals and documents, was intended as both "a portrait of this incredible woman and how, as she grew, the gay rights movement grew alongside her," he added.

"Edie had always wanted to write her book—her childhood story, her coming-out story, and her role at IBM," added Kasen-Windsor. "It was important for her to share it all."

Windsor was a very much a pioneer in the technology sector. *A Wild and Precious Life* details her many years working at IBM, where she achieved in the rank of senior system programmer at a time when few women did so. The book also recounts her commitment to the group Lesbians



Judith Kasen-Windsor and Edie Windsor. Photo from The Edith S. Windsor Trust & Judith M. Kasen-Windsor Trust

Who Tech, an organization dedicated to raising the visibility of lesbians and other queer women in the technology industry.

Lyon said, "After the case, when she became very celebrated within the community, she said, 'I started a whole new love affair with the gay community.' It fed a deep need for acceptance and love that everyone has, that she hadn't gotten as a young person. But when she [learned about] Lesbians Who Tech, that was a whole new level—that was a whole niche group that thought

and felt exactly like her. It just blew her mind."

"Nothing made her happier," said Kasen-Windsor. "She became a completely different person when you talked about technology. She just lit up, and she loved to talk about coding and all this geeky stuff. I went to a few meetings with her, and just stood there. I had no idea what they were talking about."

Lyon also said that Windsor thought it important to write about her second marriage.

"She wanted people to know about Judith," he explained. "She felt like people didn't know

a whole lot about their relationship. Her [relationship with late wife Thea Spyer] was mythologized, and rightly so, but she wanted people to know that she had a life beyond that."

Kasen-Windsor emphasized it was important that her late wife's story be publicly recounted.

"We've only had marriage equality for six-and-a-half years," she added. "Edie's case was in 2013, and I don't think people realize how fragile that is and how fragile it can be. I just think it's important for young people, and even people my age."



Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer swears in Judge Mary M. Rowland (right), with wife Julie Justicz and their daughter, Lilly Rowland, looking on. Photo by Jim Slonoff

Ceremony held for lesbian U.S. District Judge Mary Rowland

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

A ceremonial investiture took place for Judge Mary M. Rowland—the first out lesbian to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois—Nov. 25 at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in the Loop.

Rowland was officially sworn in for this lifetime appointment Aug. 22 to fill the seat vacated by current U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit Judge Amy J. St. Eve. Rowland was previously a U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois magistrate judge; Hughes, Socol, Piers, Resnick & Dym, Ltd. partner and Federal Defender Illinois staff attorney and chief appellate attorney.

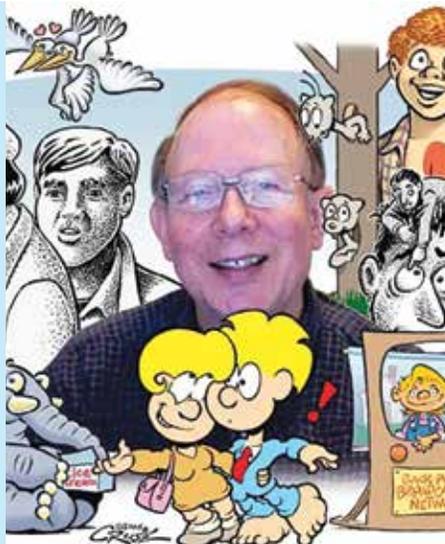
"To the LGBTQ community, I am so proud to be your sister," said Rowland in her remarks. "Our community has had incredible successes ... and a lot of that has been because many of us have come out and demanded to be treated with dignity and respect. I am keenly aware of my obligation to pay it forward and I will be mindful of that [going forward]."

Pioneering gay cartoonist Cruse dies at 75

(WILLIAMSTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS, Nov. 26)—Howard Cruse—a pioneer in the LGBTQ cartooning movement and the author of *Stuck Rubber Baby*, a 1995 award-winning graphic novel about the intersection of race and sexuality in the South—died Nov. 26. He was 75.

His husband of 40 years, Ed Sedarbaum, said that Cruse succumbed to complications from lymphoma at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Cruse, who lived in Williamstown, Massachusetts, had been diagnosed in August.

Cruse was born in 1944 in Alabama. In the 1980s, Cruse edited *Gay Comix*, a groundbreaking comic series that centered gay and lesbian cartoonists, and he created the topical *Wendell* series for *The Advocate*, according to *Lambda Literary*.



Howard Cruse. Image courtesy of Jay Blotcher and Ed Sedarbaum

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- ▶ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- ▶ **The most common side effects of BIKTARVY** in clinical studies were diarrhea (6%), nausea (6%), and headache (5%).

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

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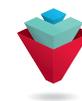
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- ▶ This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- ▶ Go to BIKTARVY.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5.
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Panel talks challenges for trans, HIV-positive service members

BY MATT SIMONETTE

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Illinois) was joined by legal experts at the Pritzker Military Museum the afternoon of Nov. 2 for a discussion of the ongoing challenges facing U.S. military personnel who are transgender and/or HIV positive.

Quigley was joined by three attorneys from the national advocacy organization Lambda Legal, as well as Nick Harrison, a litigant challenging the Trump administration's "deploy or get out," policy, which has been a tacit means to separate HIV-positive personnel from the military. Vanessa Sheridan, Center on Halsted's director of gender equity and inclusion, moderated the panel.

In his opening remarks, Quigley decried President Donald Trump's efforts to boot transgender service members from the military, adding, "We should be recognizing [their] contributions that allow us to enjoy the benefits of this country. ... These are heroes."

In a 2017 Twitter posting, Trump reversed orders from the Obama administration that had allowed transgender personnel to openly serve. Those service members have had their careers in jeopardy ever since, as the president's orders were conceptualized by defense department officials and then challenged in myriad court cases.

Trump effectively "pulled the rug out from under trans folks," said Kara Inglehart, a Chicago-based Lambda Legal staff attorney.

Among the Trump administration's rationales were unit cohesion and the cost of medical care for transgender persons. But neither the Department of Justice nor military leaders have come forth with evidence supporting those rationales, noted Sasha Buchert, a Washington, D.C.-based Lambda Legal attorney.

Buchert, who is transgender and had to leave the Marine Corps because of the pre-Obama ban, noted that eventually removing trans persons from the service will cost the government dearly in terms of lost "money, time and effort" that they've put towards that personnel's training. She further noted that about 40 percent of transgender military personnel have been deployed to the Middle East.

Quigley noted that many of the arguments around unit cohesion were similarly cited as justification for the military's segregation. Inglehart then suggested that the administration was likely implementing the rules as precursors to eventual legal challenges of anti-discrimination rules in all U.S. workplaces.

The Trump administration announced in February 2018 that military personnel who could not be deployed overseas for more than 12 months

would be similarly separated from their military service. That essentially bans HIV-positive personnel from service, since military rules—which in this area were formulated in the 1980s—prohibit HIV-positive members from being deployed at all.

A wave of firings of HIV-positive military personnel followed the deployment rule in late 2018. Harrison, a National Guard member and attorney, is among litigants suing so that those HIV-personnel can be deployed, arguing that medical advancements are such that HIV—which can now usually be suppressed with a simple oral medication regimen—should be addressed the same as many other chronic conditions. Persons already living with HIV cannot enlist in the military.

Scott Schoettes, who is Lambda Legal's Chicago-based HIV project director, noted that the rules in place are in part based on longtime—and long disproven—fears about soldiers coming into



From left: U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, Vanessa Sheridan, Kara Inglehart and Sasha Buchert. Photo by Matt Simonette

contact with blood in combat. "There was never been transmission from that kind of 'wound-to-wound' contact, in the military or out of it," he said.

Many panelists emphasized a significant disconnect between actual experiences of persons who've been in the military and what most politicians and others who have never served think they know about it.

"John Wayne never actually saw combat," Quigley said.

Harrison indeed said that he has only experienced support from colleagues who know about his legal case, adding that most military personnel are likely "already there" in their acceptance of change.

"We care about the person who has our back," he added.

CCH HIV chief talks prevention and treatment efforts

BY MATT SIMONETTE

According to Toyin Adeyemi, MD, an infectious disease specialist who is Cook County Health's (CCH's) senior director of HIV services, the state-wide Getting to Zero initiative, aimed at virtually eliminating new HIV transmissions in the state by the year 2030, has given way to a number of healthcare-delivery changes at CCH.

Those changes, Adeyemi explained, are intended to ease patient access for prevention and treatment services.

"For the first time, we have a Cook County integrated HIV program, where all of our programming is combined," she said. "We have six different sites where we provide HIV care, but we're harmonizing our best practices and making sure that our patients who are seen anywhere in our health system can get the same quality primary, HIV prevention and specialty care, either close to home or close to work."

Adeyemi's organization has a major role to play among service providers in Cook County. Its HIV integrated programs care for one in four persons living with HIV in the county, as well as one in six persons living with HIV in the state. The system's Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center cares for about 5,000 persons annually, which is one in five Chicagoans with HIV.

The overall goals of the Getting to Zero initiative are getting 20 percent more people with HIV in the state virally suppressed—at which point they'll have effectively zero percent chance of transmitting the virus—and 20 percent more percent more Illinoisans who are eligible to use the PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) intervention to do so. CCH has visioned about



Dr. Toyin Adeyemi. Photo courtesy of Cook County Health

22 long-term goals, and 78 long-term strategies, in addressing HIV prevention and treatment.

The more clients that can be linked to the county's continuum of health-care, Adeyemi said, the more they'll be engaged in their own care in the long term. "We find people through emergency rooms or outreach efforts, to connect them to a site that is convenient for them, which is a big part of [increasing] access," she added.

Another important part of the CCH initiative has been the availability of asymptomatic STI screening at CCH's 14 ambulatory clinic sites: "I do a lot of training with the providers ... to be able to provide to offer walk-in testing and also have PrEP 'champions and ambassadors' at those sites so we can, at every STI treatment or testing encounter, have the opportunity to offer PrEP, because we need to increase [its] uptake throughout the health system," Adeyemi said.

Yet another component, one that has only recently become a focus of HIV service providers, is addressing the needs of long-term survivors of HIV, who often face complications in conjunction with social isolation.

"We already have a program in place, the [CORE] Healthy Aging Initiative for seniors living with HIV, so we are going to be a part of leading that effort," Adeyemi said.

For more information, see cookcountyhealth.org/service/hiv-aids-program/ or call 312-572-4500.



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Center for Disability and Elder Law launches 'Proud to Thrive'

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

The Center of Disability and Elder Law (CDEL) announced its "Proud to Thrive" program at an "LGBT Elder Cultural Responsiveness and Advance Directive Training for Legal Professionals" event Nov. 20 at Clark Hill PLC's Chicago headquarters. LAGBAC's Mentorship Program and Pride Action Tank sponsored the event.

CDEL, according to its website, "was founded [in 1984] to provide pro bono legal services to low income residents of Cook County, Illinois who are either elderly or who have permanent disabilities."

Proud to Thrive will help low-income LGBT elders in Cook County with legal resources they otherwise would not be able to access.

Following CDEL Executive Director Caroline Manley opening remarks, CDEL Equal Justice Works Fellow Elisabeth Hieber—who will be implementing Proud to Thrive on CDEL's behalf—spoke about the need for this program due to the myriad barriers to proper care that LGBT elders face as they age.

Hieber's presentation focused on providing culturally responsive services for LGBT elders. They outlined that the Proud to Thrive program will include mobile legal clinics at LGBT-affirming locations, power of attorney workshops, educational programming and cultural responsiveness training. Hieber said this kick-off event was the first of many cultural responsiveness trainings they will be conducting.

To explain why the Proud to Thrive program is necessary, Hieber showed a clip from the 2010 Gen Silent documentary about the fears LGBT el-

ders (aged 50 and over) have with institutions that are focused on elder care. Hieber noted the studies that estimate that more than 2.4 million LGBT elders live in the United States and this number will increase to five million by 2030. They said a 2016 survey found that 56,000 LGBT elders live in Chicago.

Hieber outlined the three LGBT elder generations in these categories—Invisible Generation who were born in the 1920s, the Silenced Generation born in the 1930s-40s and the Pride Generation born in the 1950s-60s. They said that, due to when these LGBT elders were born, they have had a lifetime of discrimination and invalidation that has led to financial instability, stress and social isolation and hesitancy to access senior services.

In terms of LGBT elders' history of legal marginalization, Hieber said this includes many years of criminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity, the HIV/AIDS crisis, exclusion from the right to marry and no legal protections against employment, housing and healthcare discrimination. Hieber reiterated that because LGBT elders have not had full equality they experience higher rates of poverty and pointed to the studies that found 20 percent of LGBT elders are less likely to access various government services like housing and food assistance and senior centers due to fears of discrimination.

Hieber said this is where Proud to Thrive enters the equation to provide LGBT elders with access to legal resources and affirming and culturally responsive services that comprise legal aid and *pro bono* legal services, housing support, estate planning assistance and help completing advance



Elisabeth Hieber and Thomas Wendt.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

directives. They noted that legal practitioners can address these needs by being aware that LGBT people exists at the intersection of other diverse experiences, getting educated including using the correct terms to describe LGBT people's identities, committing to responsive action and finally providing culturally responsive support such as having updated intake questionnaires, forms, interviews and procedures that are LGBT-inclusive and partnering with LGBT organizations to do this work, among other things.

Attorney and CDEL Legal Director Thomas Wendt's presentation focused on CDEL's Senior Center Initiative which encompasses powers of attorney for property and healthcare directives and living wills. Wendt said that access and accessibility are the biggest barriers for elders to having these legal documents drawn up.

Wendt emphasized that advance directives are

especially important for LGBT elders, as they can be used to protect the ability of unmarried partners, friends and networks of chosen family to participate in health care and financial decisions. He explained the statutory short forms for each advance directive and taught attendees how to assist seniors in completing these documents at upcoming Proud to Thrive advance directive workshops.

A Q&A session followed.

The next workshop will take place Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 1 p.m. at Oak Park Library, 834 Lake St. in Oak Park. Interested parties should call 312-736-5900 to register. Individuals interested in Proud to Thrive's services can call 312-376-1880 or email proudtothrive@gmail.com.

See CDELaw.org.

Cook County clerk's office mark marriage equality milestones

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

To commemorate the upcoming 15,000th marriage license for same-sex couples in Cook County—and the sixth anniversary of then Gov. Pat Quinn signing marriage equality into law—Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough hosted an event Nov. 19 at her Cook County offices.

Yarbrough presented maps showing that every Cook County city or town, and every Chicago zip code, has had six or more same-sex couples who have applied for a marriage license as of Nov. 15. As of Nov. 15, the total number of licenses had reached 14,860. Yarbrough estimated that would increase to 15,000 marriage licenses by the end of December.

Community leader Pat Ewert, activist Vernita

Gray's widow, said it was an honor to be the first same-sex couple to be married in Illinois. Ewert recalled that, when she had to settle Gray's affairs, being able to say she was Gray's wife made a difference in the way everyone treated her throughout that process.

Former Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn spoke about the marriage equality vote in the Illinois House—which he called a "key moment for democracy, not just for Illinois but for the rest of the country"—and the celebrations subsequent to that vote. The former governor also spoke about Nov. 20, 2013, when he signed the marriage equality bill into law at the UIC Forum, with thousands of people in attendance.

LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS activist and U.S. Rep. Danny Davis' former staffer Ben Montgomery spoke about his work in getting Black people mobilized to lobby Black Illinois General Assembly members to vote yes on marriage equality.

The full article about the event is at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

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MOMBIAN

Holiday gift guide for LGBTQ children's books

It's time for my annual gift guide to some of the year's best LGBTQ-inclusive children's picture books! There were happily more books published this year than I can include here, so please visit Mombian.com for a longer compilation.

Family and relationships

A Plan for Pops, by Heather Smith and illustrator Brooke Kerrigan (Orca Books), is the touching story of Lou, an overall-clad, gender ambiguous child who loves visiting their grandfathers, a biracial couple. Lou must figure out how to help when one grandfather is confined to a wheelchair and won't leave his room. Evocative prose and a big dose of family love.

Caldecott Honor and Ezra Jack Keats Honor winner Bao Phi's **In My Footprints**, illustrated by Basia Tran (Capstone), tells of a Vietnamese American girl who gets teased by classmates about her two moms and told to "go back where I come from." She finds solace in imitating wild creatures and her moms draw on their own cultural identities (Vietnamese American and Hindu) to help her pretend. A lyrical tale about finding strength in imagination, family, and heritage.

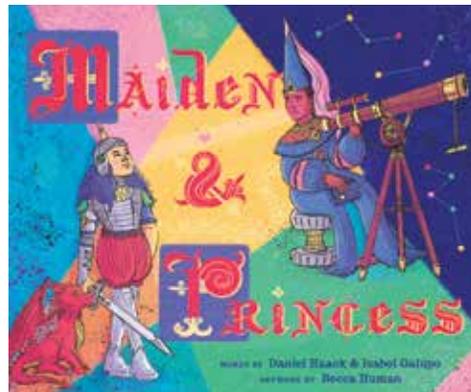
Ghost's Journey: A Refugee Story, by Robin Stevenson (Rebel Mountain Press), is based on the true story of a same-sex couple who fled from Indonesia to Canada from fear of persecution. Stevenson tells the tale from the perspective of their cat, Ghost, and her thoughtful prose captures the family's journey with just the right amount of detail for young readers.

I Am Perfectly Designed, by Queer Eye star Karamo Brown and his grown son Jason "Rachel" Brown, with illustrations by Anoosha Syed, gives us a gentle yet affirming conversation between a young Black boy and his father about their life together, as they walk through their vibrant, multicultural, queer-inclusive neighborhood.

Maiden & Princess, by Daniel Haack and Isabel Galupo, with illustrations by Becca Human (Little Bee), tells of a maiden who falls in love with a princess at a multiracial royal court. A welcome addition to the genre of LGBTQ-inclusive fairy tales and books about women in control of their lives and loves.

Love Makes a Family, by Sophie Beer (Dial Books), is a cheery board book in the vein of many others that showcase family diversity, but stands out for the fun, dynamic, and gently humorous illustrations. (Published in the last week of 2018, too late for my gift guide last year.)

My Two Moms and Me and My Two Dads and Me, by Michael Joosten and illustrator Izak Zenou (Dou-



Maiden & Princess.

Image courtesy of GLAAD

bleday), are board books that depict the everyday lives of children with same-sex parents. While they stick with a formula used in two previous LGBTQ-inclusive board book pairs (one by Lesléa Newman and the other by Stacey Bromberg and Joe Taravella), they are upbeat and stylish.

Family Is a Superpower (Capstone, 2019), by Michael Dahl and illustrator Omar Lozano, shows Wonder Woman, Superman, Batman and other DC Comics' heroes, along with a diverse group of everyday children and parents, demonstrating aspects of the one superpower that outshines all others—the power of family. A two-dad family is included.

You Began As a Wish, by Kim Bergman and illustrator Irit Pollak, offers a simple explanation of assisted reproduction, inclusive of same-sex, transgender, and nonbinary parents. For 30 years, Bergman, a licensed psychologist, has been helping LGBTQ clients and others have children through assisted reproduction. She has distilled her wealth of knowledge to create this melodic book appropriate for even the very youngest children.

Pride

Robin Stevenson's **Pride Colors** board book (Orca) turns the meanings of the colors in the Pride flag into a poem from parent to child, coupled with images of babies and toddlers and sometimes their two moms or dads. "Yellow sunshine, smiles so bright. I'll hug you, kiss you, hold you tight," says one spread. There's a mention of "Pride Day fun," but the sentiments extend far beyond a single day or month.

Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution, by Rob Sanders and illustrator Jamey Christoph (Random House), uses the perspective of the Stonewall Inn itself to create a simple yet compelling story of the fateful night in 1969.

Gender identity and expression

When Aiden Became a Brother, by Kyle Lukoff and illustrator Kaylani Juanita (Lee & Low), is a joyous tale about a biracial (Black and South Asian) transgender boy awaiting the birth of his new sibling. What sets this book apart from many others is that rather than Aiden's gender identity offering only challenges to be overcome, it is instead a source of strength and wisdom as he plans for being a good brother.

In **They, She, He easy as ABC**, by Pura Belpré Honor Award winner Maya Gonzalez and Matthew Smith-Gonzalez (Reflection Press), we meet an alphabet of friends, mostly children of color, who use a variety of pronouns and dance their way from A to Ze. The reader is then invited to "Join the dance. There's always room."

Ho'onani Hula Warrior, by Heather Gail and illustrator Mika Song, is based on the true story of a Native Hawaiian child who feels neither wahine (girl) or kane (boy) and who wants to join the school performance of a traditional kane hula chant. An empowering story of a child navigating and finding strength in both gender and cultural identities.

In **Sam!**, by Dani Gabriel and illustrator Robert Liu-Trujillo (Penny Candy Books), a nine-year-old transgender boy finds support from his older sister and parents when he tells them he's not a girl. Sam and his family read as Latino and they live in a racially diverse neighborhood. A warm story of sibling support and family love.

The protagonist of **What Riley Wore**, by Elana K. Arnold and illustrator Linda Davick (Simon & Schuster), loves to dress up in ball gowns, hard hats, and bunny costumes. When another child asks, "Are you a girl or a boy?" Riley simply answers, "Today I'm a firefighter. And a dancer," and several other fanciful things. Arnold conveys a message of acceptance without raising issues of teasing or bullying—important issues, but too often the only narrative about children expressing gender creativity. The completely positive approach here is refreshing.

In **Ogilvy**, by Deborah Underwood and illustrator T. L. McBeth (Henry Holt), the titular and gender ambiguous bunny moves to a new town, where the other children say that bunnies in sweaters must do certain things, while those in dresses do others. Ogilvy's medium-length garment confuses them. Ogilvy relabels the outfit at will and plays accordingly, until one day the other bunnies demand a fixed choice. Ogilvy convinces them that everyone benefits from wearing and doing what each chooses.

Jacob's Room to Choose, by Sarah and Ian Hoffman and illustrator Chris Case (Magination Press), is a follow up to their 2014 **Jacob's New Dress**. When Jacob, in a dress, and his friend Sophie, in a button-down and khakis, get chased out of the boys' and girls' bathrooms, respectively, their teacher leads a class discussion on gender expression. The children decide to create new signs indicating anyone can use any bathroom. The unfortunate reality is that not all schools will be as quick to make change—but this cheerful book offers a model to follow.

Across the rainbow

Flamingo Rampant micropress published its third cohort of queer-inclusive, multiracial and celebratory picture books, this time with the theme "Discovery." Buy them as a set at FlamingoRampant.com.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.



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SANTA SPEEDO RUN

RUNS THROUGH
BOYSTOWN
FOR CENTER ON
HALSTED

Joseph Stevens
Photography

PAGE 28

THEATER REVIEW

The White Plague

Playwright: Karel Capek, translated

by Peter Majer and Cathy Porter

At: Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland Ave.

Tickets: 773-384-0494;

TrapDoorTheatre.com; \$20-\$25

(two for one on Thursdays)

Runs through: Jan. 11

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Czech author Karel Capek (1890-1938) is one of those influential people most folks don't know.

Capek invented the word "robot" in his 1921 play, *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots), and first conceived of sentient artificial intelligence. Lt. Commander Data, R2D2, C3PO and Alexa are among Capek's descendants. But Capek wasn't writing science fiction like Jules Verne or H. G. Wells. The intersection of science and humanity was a lens through which Capek viewed social issues, such as the dehumanizing effects of industrialization.

The *White Plague* similarly incorporates science for political purposes. An ardent Czech nationalist, Capek used the play—written a year before he died—to warn against Nazi totalitarianism and war frenzy. (There's also a 1937 Czech film version.)

The story's set in a totalitarian state preparing for war, even as a deadly flesh-rotting global plague attacks people 40 and up. Young Dr. Galen

Marzena Bukowska in *The White Plague*.

Photo by Chris Popio

(same name as the 2nd-century Greek physician who influenced medicine until the Renaissance) develops a cure for the fatal disease, and freely heals poor patients. He refuses, however, to share the formula with ethically dubious Prof. Sigelius—the nation's leading medical authority—or otherwise reveal it until the world renounces war. The nation's dictator, the Marshal (an effectively strutting Marzena Bukowska), seizes this opportunity for a pre-emptive strike against neighboring states, but then is stricken with the plague and must reluctantly agree to peace. But the Marshal's youthful followers and soldiers are

unaffected by the disease. Groomed for war and wartime, how will they react?

Capek's plays hover between realism and expressionism. The *White Plague* is more realistic, but director Nicole Wiesner emphasizes expressionism. Rachel Sypniewski's semi-abstract all-black costumes (timeless, ritualistic and slightly military), Michael Griggs's pure-white abstract setting and the heavy use of silhouetted staging all are meta-theatrical devices familiar from Expressionistic films.

This new translation/adaptation may require such non-realistic presentation as it cuts volumes of earnest political and ethical dialogue, reducing the play to 75 minutes. What's left is minimum story and sketch-like scenes. For example, three debates over medical ethics between Galen (stoic Keith Surney) and Sigelius (comically crafty Dennis Bisto) are staged as a voguing competition, a bullfight and wizards casting stun spells. And Sigelius' assistants are played as robots (in homage to *R.U.R.*, one imagines). The story and style reminded me of Ionesco's *The Killing Game* (which ran last May at A Red Orchid)—another non-realistic play about plague and government.

Will you understand the message and story? Yes, definitely, except for the vague ending, which crucially needs to be clear. Will everyone enjoy the non-realistic style? No, probably not. A low concept interpretation might have been preferable to high concept, as few people know the play at all. Still, the well-executed production and disciplined ensemble grew on me, and I can't argue with the message.

THEATER REVIEW

Cold Town/Hotline: A Chicago Holiday Story

Playwright: Eli Newell

At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St.

Tickets: 773-338-2177, or

RavenTheatre.com; \$25-\$30.

Runs through: Dec. 22

BY SARAH KATHERINE BOWDEN

Cold Town/Hotline: A Chicago Holiday Story is a charming take on a Christmas miracle, where everyone with the holiday blues can find an answer at the Yule Connection hotline, including the volunteer call-takers themselves. It is not spoiling the ending that things come out merry and bright in director/playwright Eli Newell's tale of lonely people at Christmas, but what intrigues are the bits of reality that seep through the cheer and comedy at play.

Set in 1983 during an arctic Chicago winter, *Cold Town/Hotline* revolves around a group of volunteers spending the days leading up to the New Year taking calls and talking down those who have little to look forward to during the holidays. The hotline's organizer, Sheila (Robin Margolis), is going through her own troubles, as she divorces the husband who made the hotline famous on television. Betty (Jeanne T. Arrigo), her second-in-command, debates the value of racking up call numbers and only using scripts to talk to callers with longtime volunteer Larry (Dennis Garcia), while newcomers Annie (Caroline Chu) and Bruce (Sam Linda) adjust to Sheila's strict protocols. But when a surprise visitor arrives at the hotline asking for help, these volunteers must figure out the best way to help their visitor and themselves.

Newell builds intricate comedic and character-based business between his ensemble, which delights the audience as their eyes move from one end of the call room office to the other. Linda is particularly adept at capturing college student Bruce's weird nervous energy, and how Chi and Arrigo work to calm him down provides lots of chuckles. The surprise visitor—whom I don't want to discuss in detail, lest I give the game away—is given latitude to build a character in a few short minutes, and Newell's organic work with that actor shines through. If his script veers away from darkening the conflict between workers too much, maybe that's for the best. The play is about togetherness, so reveling in those moments, even when darkness leaks through, is definitely the whole point.

If you are in the mood for a holiday story that allows space for some of the dashed expectations and hard truths that Christmas can dredge up, check out *Cold Town/Hotline*. It is a fun journey with an ensemble that clearly enjoys one another's company during the long winter months.

THEATER REVIEW

A Xmas Cuento Remix

By: Maya Malan-Gonzalez

At: 16th Street Theater,

6420 16th St., Berwyn

Tickets: 708-795-6704 or

16thStreetTheater.org; \$22-\$32

Runs through: Dec. 29

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

You've got to admire the "show must go on" pluck of 16th Street Theater with its rolling world premiere of Maya Malan-Gonzalez's *A Xmas Cuento Remix*. After a weekend of previews, the Berwyn-based company lost its leading lady, Isabel Quintero, so she could travel out of state to care for her ailing father.

Music director Satya Chavez stepped in to replace Quintero for this contemporary American-set Latinx reimagining of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The first time that Chavez appeared before an audience in the Scrooge-like Tia role of Dolores, a miserly bar and apartment owner, was on opening night.

So it's not really fair to review director Miguel Nuñez's production. After all, most productions of *A Christmas Carol* need a properly rehearsed Scrooge at the core to properly bring home the universal message of generosity and good will toward all.

Satya Chavez, Isaly Vaiana, Claudia Quesada, Juan Munoz and Veronica Guterrez in *A Xmas Cuento Remix*.

Photo by Anthony Aicardi



So I'll instead focus on other aspects of 16th Street's *A Xmas Cuento Remix*. Malan-Gonzalez has written a carol-filled ensemble piece that proudly mixes Spanish snippets among the majority English script. The modernization of the well-trod, four-ghost Dickens framework is safe and cozy as it focuses on current/timeless issues like income inequality and the working-class poor.

The Greek chorus-like acting ensemble interjects on the action while also doubling as the show's chorus and musicians. Alas, the results are variable with the singing and acting under Nuñez's mixed direction.

There's great stage presence from some performers. Claudia Quesada brings a grounded reality to the dual roles of the irresponsible sister Elena and her hard-working/cash-strapped daughter Anita, while Isaly Vaiana has a ball being feisty as Sol, the Spirit of Xmas Present.

The low-key performances of Juan Muñoz and Ramon Smith are also fun. But other ensemble members give the impression that they're just going through the paces without that much differentiation between their multiple characters. One also wishes for more strong emotion and solid comic timing when the ensemble delivers their text.

The physical production is also mix of good and so-so elements. Joanna Iwanicka's set design is a jumbled hodgepodge, while lighting designer Claire Chrzan has much more fun with colorful and flashy LED lighting effects.

Audiences considering 16th Street Theater's *A Xmas Cuento Remix* should know that circumstances beyond the company's control prevent the production from gelling together as the confident take on *A Christmas Carol* that it wanted to be. But the show still can be a galvanizing experience as a Latinx refashioning of a holiday classic.

THEATER REVIEW

The Land of Forgotten Toys

Authors: Music by Dylan MarcAurele; book and lyrics by Jaclyn Enchin and Jennifer Enchin, based on a story by Larry Little

At: The Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.

Tickets: GreenhouseTheater.org or 773-404-7336; \$25-\$45

Runs through: Dec. 29

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

With *The Land of Forgotten Toys*, The Greenhouse Theater Center and CPA Theatricals have worked to ensure their world premiere production isn't a holiday snack—it's the whole dang meal.

With original songs by Dylan MarcAurele, book and lyrics by Jaclyn and Jennifer Enchin and Mike Ross, and original story by Larry Little, this production covers a wide area of holiday subjects, but may need some paring down before it hits home. Director Nicholas Reinhart and music director Stephen Coakley provide a minimalist staging, but there's still plenty of fluff to wade through.

Welcome to a brand new holiday universe, centered around Santa's workshop: *The Land of Forgotten Toys*. According to legend, the Queen of the Northern Sky (Katie Reid) collects forgotten and broken playthings and provides them to Santa (Randolph Johnson) to fix and re-distribute for Christmas. This is such common folklore, it's spawned a popular line of toys that have flown off the shelves at She-TOY-gan, a Wisconsin toystore. This shortage leaves two teen clerks, Grace (Bre Jacobs) and Nikki (Mary-Margaret Roberts), in a bind with store owner and Grace's aunt, Charlotte (Liz Norton). In her haste to escape the shop and



Brittney Brown, Lucas Crossman, Josh Bishop, Cathy Reyes McNamara, Jabari Thurman and Evelyn Crane in CPA Theatrical's *The Land of Forgotten Toys*. Photo by Zeke Dolezalek

explore the great unknown, Grace accidentally triggers the magical polaris star around her neck, which sends Grace and Nikki to the wilds of the North Pole.

Grace and Nikki have been summoned by the

Queen of the Northern Sky to investigate Santa's workshop, which is compromised by Santa's evil sister Charlotta (Liz Norton). The only help they have is from a fix-it elf, Schmedrick (Quinn Kelch), and a small army of forgotten

toys. There's a pitchy karaoke machine (Brittney Brown), an overheating Fun Oven Supreme (Cathy Reyes McNamara), a Barbara doll with a too-effective kung-fu strike (Evelyn Crane), a taxi-cab transformer (Lucas Crossman), an old trivia game (Josh Bishop) and a Game Dude with an electrical short (Jabari Thurman).

The Land of Forgotten Toys wants to incorporate something for everyone. It's a holiday morality tale, a rollicking musical, a romantic comedy, a state of the art multimedia visual experience, and it even encourages girls to pursue leadership in the STEM fields. It's a lot.

The show does itself one service by insisting that women and actors of color portray most characters in an expansive world. Jacobs and Norton both have amazingly rich vocals, and make compelling mismatched foes. Also, you're unlikely to find any duo as relentlessly perky as Roberts and Kelch. The unlikely standouts in this cast, however, are its youngest members: Joe Scott and Maya Keane as a pair of conniving elves with fantastic comedic timing. Those kids are going places.

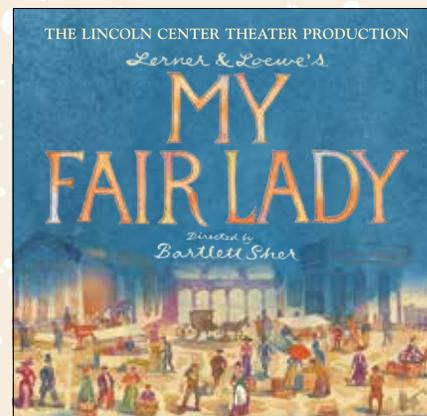
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CRITICS' PICKS

The Tall Boy, Stage 773, through Dec. 15—The celebrated talent behind this touring show (Tandy Cronyn, Kay Boyle, Simon Bent) create a tragedy you'll take away with you, of children twice orphaned by war, abroad and at home. *MSB*

The First Deep Breath, Victory Gardens, through Dec. 22—August Wilson and Chitlin Circuit comedy influence Edward Lee Colston's long, overwrought yet entirely engrossing family epic; a luminously acted world premiere marking Colston as one to watch. *JA*

The Winter Wolf, Otherworld Theater, through Dec. 29—Death lurks in winter's cold and darkness, but our brave young heroine drives the wolf from the door in Joseph Zettelmaier's 70-minute holiday fantasy, back for Year Two. *MSB*

Rutherford and Son, Timeline Theatre, through Jan 12—Githa Sowerby's 1912 hit remains riveting drama in 2019, portraying a wealthy English industrial family (perhaps her own) crushed by an oppressive, ethically bankrupt patriarch. *MSB*

—By Mary Shen Barnidgel
and Jonathan Abarbanel

Abby McEnany.
Photos by
Jerry Nunn



TELEVISION

'Work in Progress' spotlights Chicago, LGBTQ+ representation

BY JERRY NUNN

The new Showtime series *Work in Progress* really features queer representation—arguably, more than such landmark series as *Orange Is the New Black* and *Pose*. With many of the actors and producers from Andersonville, Chicago audiences can look for the hotspots on the North Side throughout each episode.

The concept is simple: A 45-year-old, overweight lesbian named Abby is going through a tough time in life. The series follows Abby through adventures and various relationships.

Friends and family were treated to an early

screening of the first two episodes of the new series on Dec. 6 at AMC River East 21. A red carpet was held before the screening, with much of the local cast and crew stopping by to chat about the series that evening.

The show was created and written by comedians Abby McEnany and Tim Mason and co-written by Lilly Wachowski, who many will know from past work with *The Matrix* and *Sense8*. Wachowski was excited to see the newspaper represented on site, exclaiming, "I came out in *Windy City Times*!"

One location used for *Work in Progress* was Highland Park's Ravinia Festival, during a Keshia concert. For that episode, the surroundings

were altered to resemble a Dolly Parton concert. Wachowski said, "My partner and I had been to the Dolly Parton concert there earlier. I wanted to make it as queer an environment as possible, while keeping it local."

When asked about how trans visibility is changing in Hollywood, Wachowski said, "I have mixed feelings. We have our toe in the door and we are almost in the room. As much pressure as we are putting on that door, I feel there is pressure coming back, especially in the way that people rely on tired caricatures with a punchline. We are still cast as serial killers and murderers. It is so tiresome. I was just watching the show *Mindhunter* and the big reveal was the character likes to whack off in women's clothes. Why do people keep telling these stories? Why are they relying on tropes that do nothing but harm trans people in the end? I think change is glacial. You feel it in the end. It's like scum rising to the top. It's hard to be optimistic, but there's no other way to be in this world."

All the characters in *Work in Progress* only go by first names, and McEnany stars as Abby. When McEnany was asked how different the character of Abby is from her in real life, she explained, "There's a lot of me in that character, but anywhere from 30 percent to 96 percent, depending on the day. Some aspects are not there to protect me and my mental health. It's very close to me. I had never met Julia Sweeney in real life before,

but being called Pat in a frat party did happen."

Theo Germaine—who flew in for the red-carpet event that day from filming Netflix's second season of *The Politician*—plays a trans man named Chris who starts dating Abby in the first episode. Germaine still resides in Hyde Park and was cast through an agent. Germaine said, "I'm excited for this show to finally be out. Abby is so talented and great. I wish I could write something like this about my life. It takes guts to really put yourself out there."

Mason has brought in many local Second City alumni, such as Nancy McCabe-Kelly and her husband, Bruce Jarchow, who said, "In a typical Chicago way, this story plays up the humanity of the characters. It is about what we all go through as people."

Celeste Pechous plays Campbell, Abby's best friend on the show. At the event, she said, "We are friends off camera so it was a very easy relationship to have on screen. We shot in my old stomping grounds of Rogers Park and Andersonville, so it was nice to come in from L.A. to visit."

The very funny Julia Sweeney plays herself in the series and has a moment with Abby during which her past *Saturday Night Live* character of Pat causes some trauma. Sweeney said, "This was such a crazy coming together of all the right elements to explore this topic. I get to defend Pat and at the same time, realize the damage that Pat has caused in the past."

Mason confessed on the red carpet that he's very self-conscious about being the straight member of the creative team. "I wasn't sure I was the right person to bring the story to life," he said. "Abby wanted us to do it together since we had from the beginning. I am a totally different person now and *Work in Progress* has changed my life. It has changed my attitude and hopefully, my compassion for the world."

Work in Progress tackles current hot topics like bathroom policies in one story arc. McEnany said, "Being in the airport and scared to use the bathroom is defeating. The way I survive is through comedy. My family is very funny and we communicate that way. Looking at things through a comedic lens is important. We wanted to tell the truth. I think many people don't know how hard it is for gender nonconforming folks to use bathrooms. The harassment is crazy."

Mason said the bathroom episode was the most important part for him, adding, "I don't think about going to the bathroom, but it's so stressful for Abby. That was a light-bulb moment for me. The world has been built by people like me for people like me. I hope things will change after people see this series."

McEnany stood in front of the crowd in the theater and said, "We created this pilot on 30 grand and a lot of favors in the city of Chicago. Many of those were favors from people in this very room. It has been a journey and a whirlwind experience!"

After the screening and applause, Wachowski yelled, "Now, let's go party!" Guests then went to Beacon Tavern afterward to celebrate the Chicago premiere.

Work in Progress debuted on Showtime Sunday, Dec. 8, with new episodes on Sundays at 10 p.m. after *The L Word: Generation Q* each week. Find more information at SHO.com.



Left to right - Julia Sweeney, Bruce Jarchow, Nancy McCabe-Kelly, Celeste Pechous, Lilly Wachowski, Abby McEnany, Tim Mason and Karin Anglin.

MOVIES

Winter movies bring an intriguing mix

BY JERRY NUNN

We finish out the year with some heavy hitters that we previously mentioned in the fall preview, such as **Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker**, **Cats** and **Little Women** in December. J.J. Abrams has now hinted publicly that there may be some LGBT representation in the Star Wars franchise and we'll see if there is any truth to rumors that two female Resistance fighters kiss.

Another film breaking out into movie theaters on Dec. 20 is **Bombshell**, which stars Margot Robbie and Kate McKinnon, who are in a relationship together for the Fox scandal piece. Brigitte Lundy-Paine is also in the film in a supporting role and came out as queer and non-binary last year.

As for local theaters, Gene Siskel Film Center presents out Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar's new **Pain and Glory** and **Law of Desire** (1987), both with Antonio Banderas. Look for the 30th Annual Festival of Films from Iran in February and the 23rd Annual Chicago European Union Film Festival in March at the Center as well. The film **Temblores**, from Guatemala, about a gay protagonist dealing with his conservative family, shows at Siskel Film Center Dec. 27-Jan. 2.

Music Box Theatre will screen a 35mm print of Mike Nichols's 1995 comedy **The Birdcage**, his remake of La Cage Aux Folles, on Jan. 13.

Below are some other cinematic highlights with

general release dates that are always subject to change:

January

—**Like a Boss**: (Jan. 10) The beauty company Mel & Mia's has sunk itself into debt and asks for help from the rich Claire Luna cosmetic mogul to save the day. Unfortunately, Salma Hayek as Luna may cause more harm than good, but that's all part of the zany fun. Tiffany Haddish and Rose Byrne star in the comedy that adds the over the top Billy Porter into the mix.

—**My Spy**: (Jan. 10) A nine-year-old named Sophie learns to be a spy in *My Spy*. Noah Danby and Devere Rogers play a gay couple in the action movie that tackles bullying with a buddy flick.

—**The Gentlemen**: (Jan. 24) Mickey Pearson played by Matthew McConaughey creates a marijuana empire in London just in time for it to be legal in real life in Chicago. Look for more bros with Colin Farrell and Hugh Grant in *The Gentlemen*, directed by Madonna's ex-husband, Guy Ritchie.

February

—**Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of the One Harley Quinn**: (Feb. 7) The longest title in the world is spun off from the successful 2016 film *Suicide Squad* with Margot Robbie playing the title role again. An all female superhero team sets out to protect a young girl



Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie in *Bombshell*.

Photo by Hilary Bronwyn

from the *Black Mask*, played by Ewan McGregor.

—**Fantasy Island**: (Feb. 14) Just in time for Valentine's Day, we have the first *Fantasy Island* movie based on the 1977 drama television series. Michael Pena takes on the iconic master of the island, Mr. Roarke, following up his other 1977 television show role as Ponch in the *CHiPs* movie.

—**Emma**: (Feb. 21) A new version of the Jane Austen novel is adapted for the big screen with Emma. Anya Taylor-Joy plays the title character who some may recognize from the horror film, *The Witch*.

March

—**A Quiet Place: Part II**: (March 20) The sequel to the horror film *A Quiet Place* sneaks its way into the cinema this March with Emily Blunt returning to a planet plagued by aliens. Please be quiet in the theater and don't buy any crunchy popcorn to snack on!

—**Mulan**: (March 27) Another live action Disney movie battles its way into the big screen with *Mulan*. Liu Yifei stars in the drama based on the 1998 animated film of the same name. Christina Aguilera better be singing the theme song.

Siskel showing LGBTQ+ films in December

The Gene Siskel Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 164 N. State St., is showing several LGBTQ+ films of interest in December. They include:

—**Fleabag** (Dec. 12, 15, 22): Starring Emmy winner Phoebe Waller-Bridge, this award-winning one-woman show that inspired the hit TV series looks at an oversexed, emotionally unfiltered, and self-obsessed woman living her sort of life.

—**Judy Garland classics**: They include *The Wizard of Oz* (Dec. 14, 17) and *The Pirate* (Dec. 14, 19).

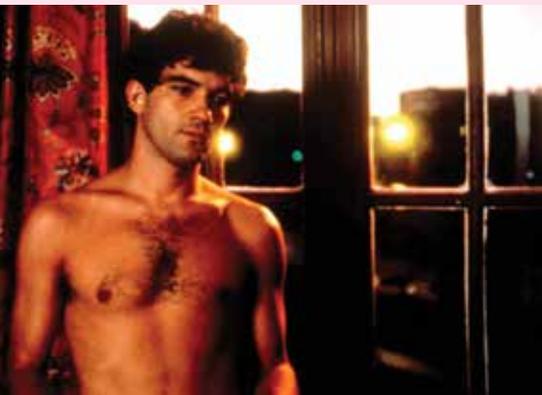
—**Present Laughter** (Dec. 21, 29): Starring out actor Andrew Scott (*Fleabag*; *Sherlock*), a popular actor's life spirals out of control as his many and various relationships compete for his attention in this reworking of Noel Coward's provocative comedy.

—**Temblores** (Dec. 27-Jan. 2): The Guatemalan drama centers on the revelation that the patriarch of a conservative family has a secret male lover.

—**Pedro Almodovar features** (Dec. 27-Jan. 2): In *Pain & Glory*, an aging director (Antonio Banderas) looks back on his life, career, and doomed romances on the eve of a retrospective of his films in Almodovar's semi-autobiographical opus. In the classic *Law of Desire* (which also co-stars Banderas), one of the bedmates of a successful director of gay porn will go to any length to possess him, including murder.

See SiskelFilmCenter.org.

Antonio Banderas in the film *Law of Desire*. Image courtesy of the Gene Siskel Film Center



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Cara Marie Gary & Graham Maverick, photo by Cheryl Mann.

Dominique Provost-Chalkley and Janelle Marie in *Season of Love*.

Image courtesy of Tello Films



MOVIES

Lesbian filmmakers debut holiday rom-com

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Thanks to classics such as *Love, Actually*—not to mention a seemingly continuous stream of confections from Hallmark and Lifetime Channels—romantic comedies have become for many a tradition during the holiday season. This year, a Los Angeles-based and lesbian-owned production house hopes the woman-centric rom-com *Season of Love* will become a new Christmas staple.

The film is directed by Christin Baker, who is founder and CEO of Tello Films, which operates both a streaming network and a production and

distribution company. In late 2018, Baker and a colleague at Tello decided that the company's next project needed to be a holiday movie and announced an open call for pitches.

"We basically just went out to the community and said, 'We know you've been wanting a holiday rom-com, so why don't you just send us your pitches for what you'd like to see?'" added Baker, who was a longtime Chicago resident. "We had a ton of just amazing pitches come to us from all over the place."

Baker as well as her colleagues whittled the entries down to a final three, eventually selecting

an ambitious pitch from writer Kathryn Trammell. "It hit all the notes with what we wanted to make," Baker recalled. "It had three storylines. It had the vibe of *Love, Actually*, which seems to be a thing that people watch every year. We wanted to use some of that [energy] so that we can make something that people will also watch every year. ... We just loved the variety of characters."

Season of Love interweaves three storylines about developing romantic attachments in the days leading up to Christmas: Lou (Jessica Clark), in the throes of preparing to open her new microbrewery, becomes attracted to her welder neighbor, Kenna (Sandra Mae Frank); Iris (Emily Goss), left standing at the altar, takes comfort from her ex-fiancee's sister, Mardou (Laur Allen); and Janey (Janelle Marie) prepares to make her once long-distance relationship with musician Sue (Dominique Provost-Chalkley) permanent.

Tello moved rapidly, by film industry standards, to get the film together. Its call for pitches was in November 2018, and *Season of Love* was in production by the following May. Baker and her colleagues in the cast and crew were faced with trying to recreate Christmas in the midst of a Southern California spring.

"Even though it was May and June, it was overcast and chilly in that time," Baker said. "We asked the actors to wear jackets and they were legitimately chilly. While we couldn't do Christmas like we wanted to with our exteriors, with our interiors, we said, 'Let's do Christmas and play it up all over.' It was funny to have to get Santa hats, Christmas sweaters and Christmas trees then."

A neighbor at one of the filming locations did provide some yuletide color though.

"We had some shots of some Christmas lights on a cactus, and Christmas lights in a tree—that was someone who hadn't taken down their Christmas

decorations at the house next door to us," Baker recalled. "We asked our location manager, 'Can you go next door and see if they'll turn these lights on for us?'"

Tello now has another holiday movie on their docket, as well as a project about the Storyville red-light district in New Orleans, she added. "Tello's been around as long as Netflix [streaming] and Hulu, and we've always been focused on the queer female community."

Season of Love is now available to be digitally rented or purchased at [TelloFilms.com/products/season-of-love](https://www.tellofilms.com/products/season-of-love).



Christin Baker.

Photo courtesy of Tello Films

10th anniversary of 'The Nutcracker' features gay dads

The House Theatre of Chicago will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the annual hit production *The Nutcracker*—an all-original, ballet-free and family-friendly production playing at The Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St., through Dec. 29.

The 10th-anniversary production paints a new family portrait featuring two gay fathers, a son, a daughter and their matriarchal Aunt, as they take this holiday journey of love and loss.

Company members Jake Minton, Phillip Klapperich, Kevin O'Donnell and Tommy Rapley created the adaptation based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, with original direction and choreography by Rapley.

Regular run tickets are \$30-\$50; student and industry same-day discounted tickets are available at \$20 for all dates, based on availability. Single tickets are now on sale; call 773-769-3832 or visit [TheHouseTheatre.com](https://www.thehousetheatre.com).

GLAAD releases annual TV report

LGBTQ+ media-advocacy organization GLAAD recently announced the findings of its annual "Where We Are on TV" report.

"Where We Are on TV" analyzes the overall diversity of prime-time scripted series regulars on broadcast networks and assesses



The House Theatre of Chicago's version of *The Nutcracker*.
PR photo

the number of LGBTQ characters on cable networks and original scripted streaming series on the services Amazon, Hulu and Netflix for the 2019-2020 TV season.

The report found that networks met and exceeded GLAAD's 2018 call for the industry to reach 10 percent LGBTQ+ inclusion in just one year, with a record-high percentage of LGBTQ series regulars on broadcast television at 10.2 percent of all series regulars. This is up from last year's 8.8 percent (another record-high), and the highest GLAAD has found since the organization expanded to count all broadcast series regulars 15 years ago.

Some of the other findings included:

—Netflix again counts the highest number of LGBTQ regular and recurring characters on their scripted originals among streaming

services tallied, while Showtime is the most LGBTQ-inclusive network on cable. The CW is again the most LGBTQ-inclusive broadcast network, with 15.4 percent of series regulars counted as LGBTQ.

—Bisexual+ characters make up 26 percent of all LGBTQ characters across all three platforms. This is a 1-percent decrease from last year, and far from the reality that bisexual+ people make up the majority of the community.

—This year, there is only one asexual character counted across all platforms, (Todd Chavez on Netflix's *BoJack Horseman*)—a drop from the two counted in 2018.

This marks the 24th year that GLAAD has tracked the presence of LGBTQ characters on television. The full report is at [GLAAD.org/whereweareontv19](https://www.glaad.org/whereweareontv19).

'Nat King Cole' holiday show Dec. 16-17

Writers Theatre, in partnership with Artists Lounge Live, will present a limited engagement of An Unforgettable Nat King Cole Christmas, starring Evan Tyrone Martin.

An Unforgettable Nat King Cole Christmas will be presented Monday-Tuesday, Dec. 16-17 at 7:30 p.m. in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre at 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe.

Martin will sing such Cole classics as "The Christmas Song," "L-O-V-E," "Mona Lisa" and "All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth."

Tickets are \$60-\$80 each (the latter price including a CD of Martin's performance); call 847-242-6000 or visit [WritersTheatre.org](https://www.writerstheatre.org).

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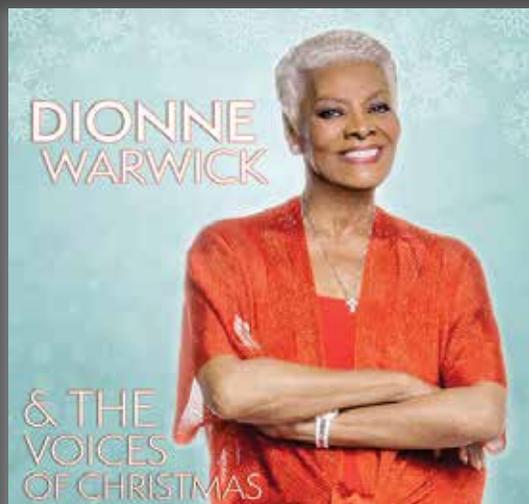
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WINDY CITY TIMES 2019 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE PART TWO OF TWO



I'll drink to that

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Yule love this

Five-time Grammy winner Dionne Warwick ("Walk on By," "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?") has released the CD **Dionne Warwick & The Voices of Christmas**, featuring vocal support from Andra Day, Michael McDonald, Chloe x Halle and others. The album provides some cool takes on holiday classics like "Silent Night" and "Jingle Bell Rock."

An epic gift

Gay-owned, Indiana-based **Epic Popcorn** (EpicPopcorn.com) was one of the few tested items that earned universal raves this year. Try the Holiday Box trio (\$39.95), which features the Epic Holiday Mix (a melange of white cheddar, and sweet and buttery caramel corn), Reindeer Chow (white chocolate corn and candy-coated chocolate, with pretzels) and the Epic Holiday Trail Mix (cheddar and caramel corn, with pretzels, crispy corn pillows, and candy-coated chocolate).



For the cause

amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR.org) is offering several luxury options on its online store for just \$40—including a Shantell Martin beach towel and a Jean Paul Gaultier tote bag. It's a stylish way to be charitable.

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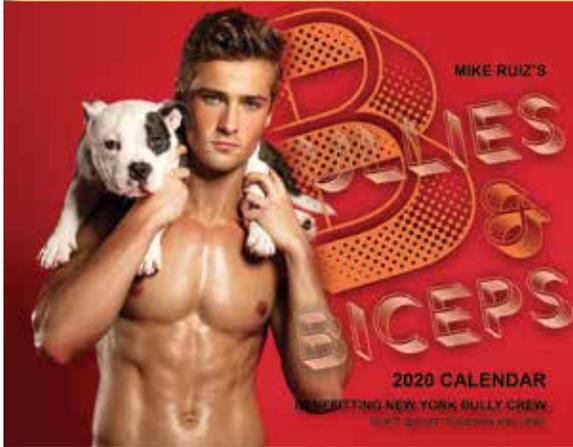
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Bullie pulpit

Pit bull terriers are controversial—but out photographer Mike Ruiz aims to argue that the breed is misunderstood. The 2020 edition of Ruiz's **Bullies & Biceps calendar** (\$26.99; <https://www.nybullycrew.org/product/bullies-biceps-2020-calendar/>), which benefits New York Bully Crew Animal Rescue, pairs male fitness models with pit bulls—providing multiple reasons to look up dates (or dream of one with a model).



Ray of light

Looking forward to warm(er), sunny days, **Coolibar** (various prices; coolibar.com) has great-looking items for the entire family that specialize in sun protection. Coolibar makes clothes with UPF 50+ sun protection; a typical white T-shirt has a UPF rating of eight—just a point to ponder.



Making the case

Make a statement even when putting your shades away. The **BLCO Travel Lente Case** (\$38) is a premium, hand-stitched unisex item that can be personalized. No one will be throwing shade at you when they see this.



A delicate matter

Manscaped (various prices; Manscaped.com) sells items to help individuals the land down under (and I don't mean Australia) manicured and fresh, with items ranging from Crop Mop to anti-chafing boxers. Also, in addition to the website-wide discount, Windy City Times readers can get more off by using the code "WINDYCITY2019."



Pure pleasure

More people are purchasing air purifiers to help with allergies, etc. The **Item Air Purifier** (iQair.com) is one of the best and options include the 5 in 1 personal air purifier (\$399), which is perfect for bedside, a desk or a hotel room; and the **AirVisual Pro** (\$269), which gives air quality readings and also actionable information about how to improve the atmosphere around you.



Swab evaluation

In this age of being environmentally friendly, it's not surprising that there are items such as reusable straws—and even swabs. I was initially skeptical about **LastSwab** (\$12; LastObject.com), but it's a viable alternative—with one item providing up to 1,000 uses—and it comes in makeup and standard versions.



MOTO roter

For those who like to keep their scalps clean, **Headblade MOTO** (\$12; headblade.com) is perfect. The unique design allows the razor blade to pivot up and down (following the contour of the scalp) while the body can lean side to side. However, if you want something a step up, there's also a gold-plated version called the S4 MOTO Goldfinger (\$75).

A SONG FOR YOU



My Life with Whitney Houston

ROBYN CRAWFORD

Book it

There are at least two LGBTQ celebrity books that are worth checking out this season. **Robyn Crawford's A Song for You: My Life with Whitney Houston** (\$28) and **Sir Elton John's Me** (\$30) are chock full of revelations—and emotion.



Nice to meat you

Cooks may not know what they're missing with **TBJ Gourmet Uncured Bacon Jam** (\$9; <https://tbjgourmet.com/products/classic-bacon-jam-9oz>). Featuring brown sugar, caramelized onions, apple cider vinegar, seasoning and, of course, bacon, this spread adds that extra oomph to a wide variety of dishes.



It's a wrap

Be warm and look cool with a scarf from **laetly** (\$75-\$85; laetly.com, and locally at retailer Komoda)—a line that has unisex items with bold colors and/or messages. So get Kraken (a theme of one of the scarves) and check out the items.

High frying

No doubt you've heard about the more healthful aspects of air frying. The **Instant Vortex Plus Air Fryer Oven** (\$119.99; <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Instant-Vortex-Plus-7-in-1-Air-Fryer-Oven-10-Quart/461120825>) will make you or your gift recipient the envy of everyone in the neighborhood, thanks to features such as seven built-in smart programs (such as reheat, broil, dehydrate and, of course, air fry). You'll get flavorful cooking that's better for you.



Gettin' the goods

For some, "Rosebud" may evoke Citizen Kane but, for others, the **Rosebud CBD All the Goods Gift Set** (\$124-\$284; RosebudCBD.com) may evoke a total sense of calm—or an awakening. The gift set includes a bath soak, salve and tincture, with items with ingredients such as Himalayan salts, essential oils and more.



Action Jackson

Local retailer/space **Jackson Junge Gallery** (1389 N. Milwaukee Ave.; J2Gallery.com) has some cool exhibitions on display—but there are some pretty amazing prints available for purchase. Pages of prints are on the website; your biggest problem may be deciding which one(s) to buy.

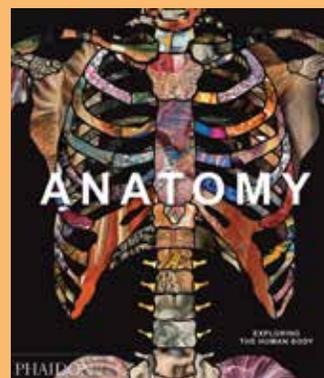
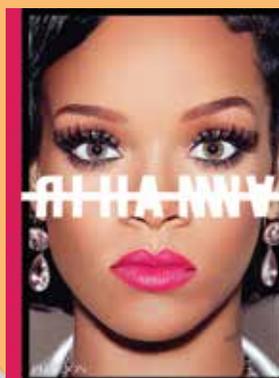


So hot

Addicted's (AddictedDallas.com) collection is justifiably called "Flammable Ice," as it's hot enough to melt the snow. The line does more than just look good, though; not only is the clothing pretty comfortable, but it's even water-resistant.

All the world's a page

Phaidon Books (Phaidon.com) has some great coffee-table books catering to many interests. Great Woman Artists, Rihanna and Anatomy: Exploring the Human Body offer some stunning images that are sure to be thought-provoking.



Nom com

Noms Bake Shop (various prices; GetNoms.com) is made for the present and future. There are delicious, individually wrapped cookies (in flavors such as Double Chocolate Chunk and Snickerdoodle) in cool boxes, including customizable wooden crates, that can be used for storage—of additional cookies or something else.



The bling's the thing

Sometimes, you just need protection. For those who like glam and glitter, **BlingSting** (BlingSting.com) provides that—but the products (some of which come in some eye-catching colors) also harbor sound alarms, pepper spray and other measures meant to keep someone safe. Safety never looked so good.

Fresh chair

Offering a twist on the traditional seat, **Rove Concepts** (RoveConcepts.com) includes items such as the Womb chair and ottoman—created after Florence Knoll requested Eero Saarinen design a chair that was “like a basket full of pillows.” And, yes, Rove specializes in “investment pieces”—but investments can definitely be worth it, in this case.



In fashion

Local retailer **Syd Jerome** (20 N. Clark St.; SydJerome.com) has been keeping men looking stylish for decades. Owner Scott Shapiro aims to make sure that everything from \$20 socks to a \$20,000 vicuna coat looks great on you—although you couldn't even look in my direction if I wore a \$20,000 item.



On the money

Cut down on “bulging wallet syndrome” with the **Dearborn Bifold Wallet** (\$36; <https://damenandhastings.com/products/dearborn-bifold-money-clip-wallet>)—a slim item that organizes your essentials into two sections, and even includes a removable money clip.



Sometimes you feel like a nut

For anyone who loves nuts or healthful snacking, **Skinny Dipped Almonds** (various prices; SkinnyDipped.com) would be welcome. And, thankfully, there are dark-chocolate varieties such as mint, raspberry and peanut butter.



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Holiday Events



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FUGLY SWEATER
 Party & Contest
SAT DEC 14 @ 9PM
 NO COVER

Holiday Cheer Ornament Party
 make Xmas ornaments
 with host Wil Velez
TUE DEC 17 @ 8PM

OTTER PRESENTS
LUMBERSEXUAL
Sloppy Xmas
 w/Moose the DJ
SAT DEC 21 @ 9PM

ROCK-SOUL KARAOKE
Holiday Spectacular
 w/Scott & DJ Creagh
SUN DEC 22 @ 9PM



5025 N CLARK ST

ENIGMA PRESENTS:
SPIRAL 365
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
SUN DEC 15 @ 9PM
 NO COVER

BIG GIRL HOLIDAY CRIME SHOW
 with Sofonda Booz
TUE DEC 17 @ 8PM

That Karaoke Holiday Thing!
 with Bradley K8
THU DEC 19 @ 9PM

SUNDAY SOCIAL NAUGHTY & NICE
 hosted by Chamilla Foxx
SUN DEC 22 @ 2PM



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FUKR
 DJ Jesus Pelayo
 DJ Milty Evans
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SAT DEC 14 @ 10PM

LIP SERVICE
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Holiday Show
 with Travis Austin Wright
TUE DEC 17 @ 10PM

BABES IN BOYLAND
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 Naughty Little Xmas
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THU DEC 19 @ 11PM

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SAT DEC 21 @ 10PM

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SUNDAY, DEC 15TH



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5-8 PM



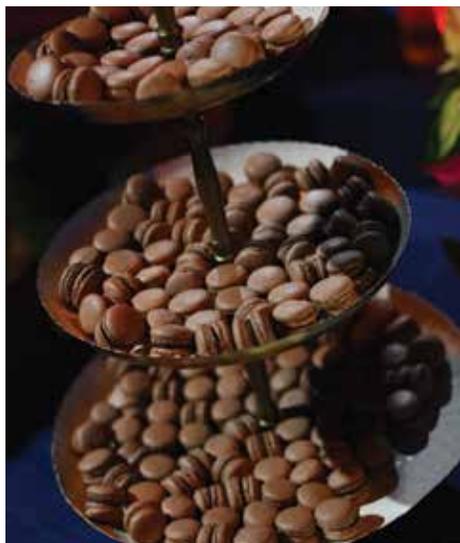
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Community turns out for World of Chocolate

BY MATT SIMONETTE



About 1,000 Chicagoans and other visitors showed up at Revel Fulton Market in the West Loop for AIDS Foundation of Chicago's annual World of Chocolate fundraiser, which shows off the finest confections from local-area vendors to raise financial support for AFC, on Dec. 5.

Eighteen businesses took part in the event, serving up both traditional candies and unorthodox, chocolate-tinged takes on other foods. Prasino in LaGrange offered a mixture of the sweet and the savory with dark chocolate chicken liver pate, for example, and suggested that it be followed by the raspberry dark rum sangria it had on hand. LondonHouse Chicago, in contrast, served malted milk chocolate nitrogen in chocolate coated waffle cones. Walgreens went retro and offered samples of its classic chocolate malted.

Sofitel Chicago's Harrison Hayes said, "To be able to showcase our [company's] contemporary representation of our storied French heritage to the Chicago community—and especially at such a renowned event like World of Chocolate—is an opportunity we are constantly striving to participate in."

Among Sofitel's offerings were orange pine nut tarts with white chocolate cream; milk chocolate bark infused with Vadouvan curry; and French pepper-infused dark chocolate tarts.

The event grossed about \$200,000 before expenses were factored, according to Brian Solem, AFC's director of communications. The organization was presented that evening with a check for \$30,000 from Mariano's and the Illinois Lottery.



Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)



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BILLY Masters

"I didn't bother going to school. I just found my inner pussy."—Sir Ian McKellen explains how he prepared for his role as Gus the Theatre Cat in the film version of the musical Cats.

I have never been a paid spokesperson. Nobody has ever bought my endorsement—but I'm open to offers. Without exception, I tell you what I think and stand by my opinions. As you know, I'm constantly on the road. So when I saw a post-Thanksgiving flight from Boston to Miami for \$14.37, I jumped first and asked questions later. I had never heard of Frontier Airlines, but for that price, what did I have to lose—other than my life? Of course, there was a blizzard in Boston on the day of departure. Perhaps an airline with a reputation wouldn't have risked it. But, God love those people at Frontier. We may have been delayed, but the employees were pleasant, the plane was decent and I got to Florida in one piece. When I checked in, I saw the breakdown of my fare. Most of my \$14.37 was spent on fees and taxes. What Frontier Airlines actually made on my ticket was \$0.02—you can't even buy a gumball for that price anymore! The day after the flight, I got an email from Frontier asking me to fill out a survey about my experience. Actually, what they said was, "We'd like your two cents." Definitely recommended.

After my brief stay in Florida, I had to dash to Los Angeles to co-host Sidebar with John Duran, on Channel Q Radio, which is syndicated around the country. (You can hear the show on BillyMasters.com.) The good thing about when I host something is I bring my own guests. I booked **Jenifer Lewis**, since she was appearing in **Debbie Allen's** "Hot Chocolate Nutcracker" gala the following night. And what a night it was. **Shonda Rhimes** donated a building to the Debbie Allen Dance Academy! And I learned **Berry Gordy** gave Debbie the first \$50K to get started. As to the show, there was never such a "Nutcracker." Over 200 gorgeous kids danced, sang and acted their tails off. And speaking of tails, Jenifer Lewis played a rat! We were joined backstage by the young and restless **Shemar Moore**, who has a pretty hot tail himself. You must check out the photos at BillyMasters.com.

An old photo has surfaced of **Pete Buttigieg** raising money for the Salvation Army—he's even wearing the apron and ringing the bell! Turns out, the mayor has a long history of working with the group and actually held a mayoral event at the Salvation Army center in 2018. The organization has a long history of anti-gay stances. However, the Salvation Army has said it has "evolved" on some of its views. Instead of people finding fault with Mayor Pete over groups he has volunteered for, why not focus on the fact that he actually volunteers?! I dunno about you, but I sure ain't standing outside in the cold ringing a bell for NOBODY!

And now, time for more of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions." Who doesn't love an ornament? And who doesn't love Broadway? You put



Jason Derulo's (above) Instagram photo was cause for a hot debate.

Image from Warner Records

those two things together and you get one of my favorite annual gifts—the **Broadway Legends collectible ornament**. Since 2008, **Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS** has raised money by featuring an iconic Broadway performer immortalized as a handmade glass ornament. For 2019, the honor goes to **Angela Lansbury** in the title role of *Mame*. You can grab this one at BroadwayCares.org.

A couple of months ago, I went to an event which featured celebrities playing the game *You Don't Know My Life*, which is described as "The TMI Party game with no wrong answers ... just #inappropriate ones." The game was created by my pal Dennis Hensley, with Jeb Havens, and is based on Hensley's experience of interviewing celebrities and asking odd questions to get them to tell offbeat stories. If you play this with the right people (the night I was there, both **Frank DeCaro** and **Melissa Peterman** were playing), it can be both hysterical and shocking. On that fateful night, I shared a long-forgotten story about me and **Ben Stiller** on an airplane—but I'll save that for another time. This is great to play with friends, both old and new. Grab it at YouDontKnowMyLifeGame.com.

Here's a first—this week's "Ask Billy" question comes from within my own organization! My proofreader Aaron wrote, "I just read about **Jason Derulo's dick** being censored online. So now I wanna see it."

Obviously I have the photo in question, but I didn't plan on running it. Why? They discussed this on *The Talk*. If I live by one rule of thumb, it's that there's no reason to share a story that has been discussed by Marie Osmond. But rules are made to be broken. Jason posted a photo where he was clad only in some tight-fitting black boxer briefs—briefs which showed a siz-

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CHAMPAGNE TOAST AT MIDNIGHT

able tubular structure across the front. When a fan asked what was in there, Derulo said an "anaconda." Apparently harboring an animal in your undies is an Instagram no-no. The social media platform said the photo was "taken down for nudity or sexual activity." Jason shot back, "I can't help my size." When they discussed this on *The Talk*, someone wondered if it was discrimination. Why can you show a large-breasted woman in a tight T-shirt but not a large-penis man in tight undies? Food for thought. That food was a bit much for Instagram, but it's an all-you-can-eat buffet at BillyMasters.com.

When being big is bad, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Sigh—if I had a nickel for every time I was called too big ... well, I'd be flying Frontier Airlines forever! And I'd be updating BillyMasters.com, the site where size is never an issue. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I tell you which celebrity mentioned in this week's column actually kissed my hand. Here's a hint—we have a nude photo of him on the website, too! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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the DISH

Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR River Roast

BY ANDREW DAVIS

At **River Roast** (315 N. LaSalle St.; RiverRoastChicago.com), the centerpiece menu item is its Beef Tomahawk—an almost three-pound, wet-aged steak attached to a bone that's reminiscent of the Brontosaurus ribs seen on the opening credits of old Flintstones cartoon. It comes with shoestring fries and herb butter. (It also costs \$105, so it's definitely more of a "special occasion" item.)

That's the type of item guests can expect at this River North restaurant that's situated on the Chicago River (hence its name). In the summer, people can sit outside and enjoy incredible views while eating.

But going from the view back to the menu



River Roast's Beef Tomahawk.
PR photo

items, let's continue with beverages. While I went with hot tea, my friend/dining companion had Old Fashioneds (yes, plural)—meaning he definitely enjoyed this spot's version of the cocktail. However, River Roast also has cocktails such as Whiskey Smash and mulled wine in addition to a variety of cocktails and mocktails (the latter listed under "Temperance").

Appetizers and sides provided a delightful culinary start (although the sourdough bread, accompanied by spreadable Gruyere, was tasty

as well). The Golden Gobbits (seasoned fried chicken nuggets, with honey) were practically addictive, the macaroni and cheese were solidly done and the Carrots & Dirt (carrots with pumpernickel crumbs, goat cheese and balsamic) were great. (Despite the spot's name, River Roast has a variety of wonderful vegetarian/vegan dishes, including quinoa salad and roasted acorn squash.) Other apps sound scrumptious, including shrimp-and-crab toast, blistered shishito peppers and burrata.

So, let's go back to the Tomahawk. It's presented tableside, with the server carefully removing the bone from the meat, and then slicing the steak. It's certainly one of the best steaks I've had recently (although Tao Chicago's Wagyu is up there as well)—and, if only two people are eating, you're almost certain to have delicious leftovers. However, if steak isn't your thing, River Roast offers its famous roast chicken (half of whole), pork shank and whole fish as well.

And don't go without sampling dessert. The slices of chocolate (silky) and carrot cake (hearty and not too sweet) we ordered are seemingly each almost as big as your head—and they taste as great as you'd expect.

Note: Profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.



BEHIND THE NAME

"The name Royale comes from my fascination with royalty and the rise and fall of fame. I was a young art student when I saw Prince Poppycock perform on America's Got Talent, and when I started drag, I knew I wanted my name to reflect royalty and the lush life, which my drag is not. The name Ryan just came afterwards because it just rolls off the tongue."

MY MUSE

"My main muse is most definitely Lady Gaga—she has this pop-rocker edge that I just love. It's a beautiful mix between hard and soft, edge, rock and glamour. I am also inspired by Alexander McQueen, Gareth Pugh, Jeremy Scott, Marco Marco, Versace and Mugler, to name a few."

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT I ...

"... have a Bachelor's degree in fashion design and that I am currently working towards a Master's in social work. I also don't think most people know that besides drag, I also have my own fashion business: Ryan Royale Designs."

WHEN I NEED A PICK-ME-UP, I ...

"... either go fabric shopping or lock myself away to create. It's a great way to just get inspired and create something beautiful and unique. Getting lost in the whole process of creating a garment is relaxing to me, and helps me reset."

GO-TO NUMBER TO SLAY A CROWD

"I have been performing my Lady Gaga at the Super Bowl mix, because it's her greatest hits and everyone will know at least one song in that mix. Plus, it's hilarious to hear an entire audience scream RA-RA-RA-AH-AH during Bad Romance."

WHERE CAN WE CATCH YOU

"You can catch me every Friday night at Lips Chicago for our Glitz and Glam show. You can also catch me death-dropping at different bars in Boystown, Andersonville and Rogers Park."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: facebook.com/ryanroyale

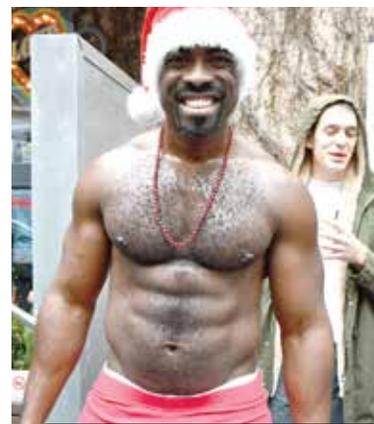
IG: @theryanroyale

Twitter: @theryanroyale



THE SOFO TAP

Happy Holidays from St. Nick and Doggy Days!
Photos by Kirk Williamson



SIDETRACK

Ninth annual Santa Speedo Run raises some fun funds for Center on Halsted.
Joseph Stevens Photography

Photo by Guys and Queens

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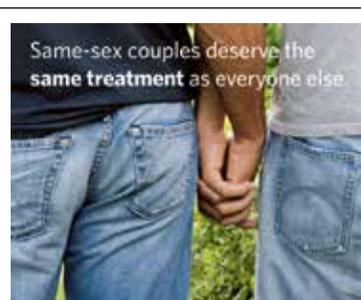
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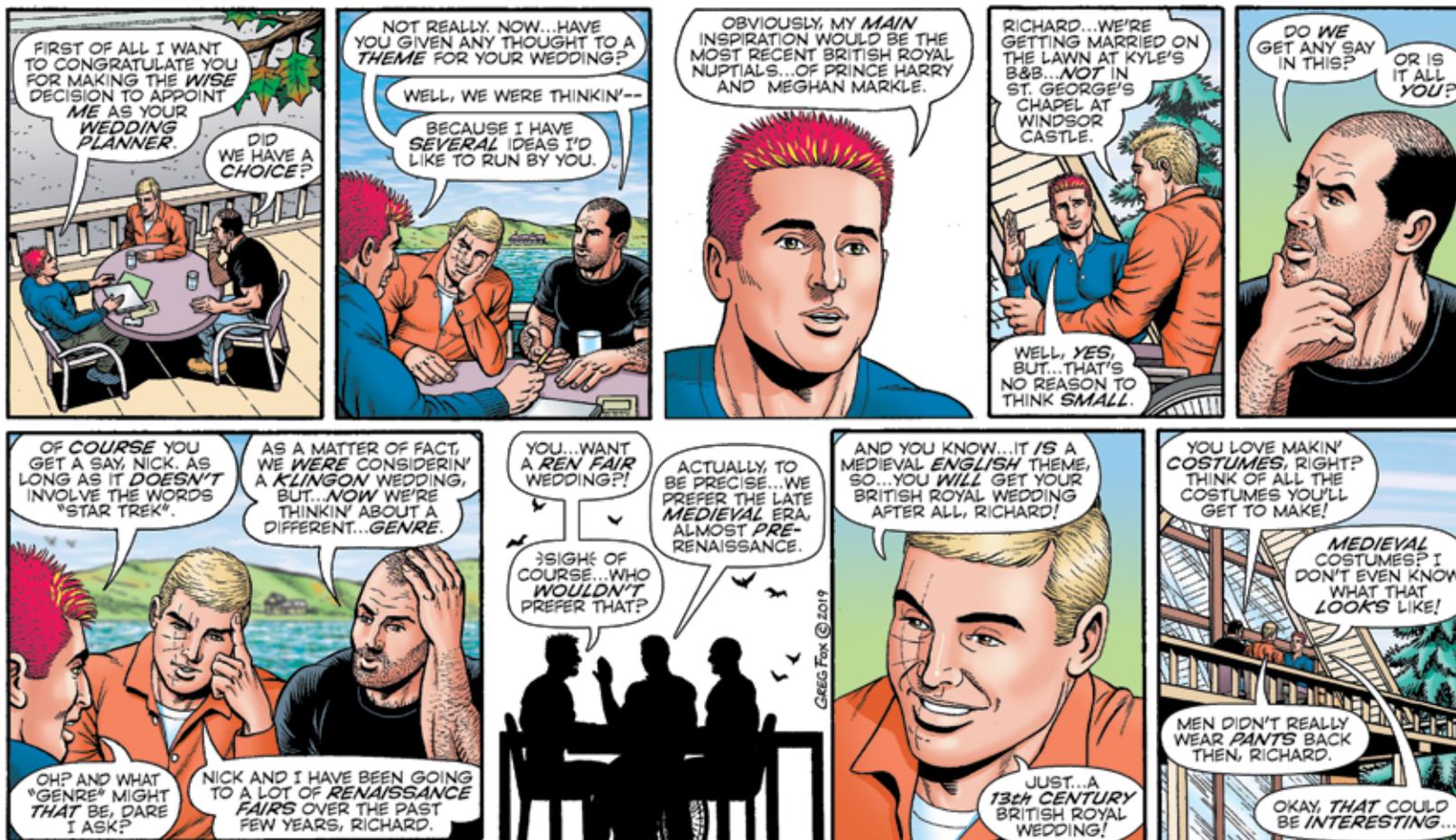
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KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST

by Greg Fox



WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed., Dec. 11

Chicago NOW 2019 December Board Meeting Members-only open board meeting with dinner, drinks and lively feminist discussion. Seats limited. Reserve online. Current members free. Prospective members \$40 6:30pm Split Rail 2500 W Chicago Ave.; ChicagoNOW.org

Thursday, Dec. 12

The Boys Who Said No Special preview of the nearly finished documentary film on the men who resisted the draft and those who supported them. Food and drinks will be served. Free. RSVP online 6:00pm - 9:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.crossroadsfund.org/bwsn>

Let's Talk: African American Men's Emotional, Physical and Mental Health Candid conversation with professionals. Dinner will be served. Questions to Natalie Watson, 773-834-4244. RSVP online 6:00pm - 8:00pm St. Bernard Ambulatory Care Center, 6307 S. Stewart Ave. Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mens-health-physical-mental-emotional-tickets-83228894865>

America's Best Outcast Toy Pride Arts presents an oddball holiday reality musical. Through Jan. 12 7:30pm The Broadway, Pride Arts Center, Broadway Theatre at 4139 N. Broadway <http://PrideFilmsAndPlays.com>



JUST BE-KOZ Friday, Dec. 13

Out musician Dave Koz will hold his annual holiday concert at The Chicago Theatre. Photo by Antonio Dixon

Friday, Dec. 13

More For Gay Men Peer-led personal empowerment group. This group meets quarterly. Free. Info: Anthony Didato, SEEKER_DIDATO@JUNO.COM 6:30pm - 9:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=16269>

Joffrey performing Chicago-set 'Nutcracker' Reimagined classic by Tony-winning choreographer Christopher Wheeldon through Dec. 29. \$35. 7:00pm Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells Dr. 312-386-8905 Tickets: <http://Joffrey.org>

Dave Koz and Friends Christmas Tour 2019 with Special Guests Jonathan Butler, Melissa Manchester, Michael Lington, and Chris Walker 8:00pm The Chicago Theatre (Chicago) 175 N. State St., Chicago Tickets: <http://www.1.ticketmaster.com>

Saturday, Dec. 14

Sketchy Saturday at the Lucky Horseshoe Monthly Gay Drink and Draw. Grab a seat, order a drink and draw one of the beautiful models/dancers. 5:00pm - 7:45pm Lucky Horseshoe 3169 N Halsted St Chicago <http://uckyhorseshoe-lounge.com>

Sunday, Dec. 15

Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago Board Elections Public board meeting, elections first followed by regular board meeting. Come learn what we do. 11:30am - 1:30am Next Door Chicago, 659 W Diversey Pkwy, Chicago <http://www.meetup.com/chicago-bisexual-queer-meetup/events/>

LBGTQ Country Dance Meet members of the Second City Outlaws and The Illinois Gay Rodeo Association. Every third Sunday of the month. Free 4:00pm - 8:00pm The Call (Chicago) 1547 W Bryn Mawr Chicago <https://www.meetup.com/Chicago-LGBTQ-Country-Dancing/events/>

Tuesday, Dec. 17

Transfeminine Alliance Chicago (T-FEM) Peer-led discussion group for anyone

who was assigned male at birth and identifies as female, feminine of center, or questioning their gender. Meets every Tuesday in Room #200. Free. Gearah Goldstein, tfemchicago@gmail.com 7:00pm - 8:30pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.tfem-chicago.com>

Wed., Dec. 18

Scrooge & Marley screening Modern day variation on Charles Dickens' classic story of the holidays, "A Christmas Carol." Filmed in Chicago. Recounted from a gay sensibility, with heart, comedy and music, the magic of Dickens' timeless tale of a man's redemption at the holidays—thanks to the help of three ghostly spirits—comes alive from a fresh perspective. Free 6:00pm - 9:00pm Chicago Cultural Center 78 E. Washington St. Chicago http://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/scrooge_marley.html

CNN analyst Renato Mariotti keynoting Tenth Dems Annual Awards Dinner POLITICO Magazine legal affairs columnist, former federal prosecutor and host of "On Topic" podcast Mariotti will speak. Tenth Dems is a grassroots organization working to elect Democrats at all levels within Illinois' 10th Congressional District. RSVP by email events@tenthdems.org, phone or online. Buffet dinner, \$50 6:30pm - 8:30pm Hyatt Regency Deerfield, 1750 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield (847) 266-VOTE (8683) Tickets: <http://tenthdems.org/2019dinner>

Podcast for Brave Conversation and Bold Voices Living Room Chats at Affinity. Audience members arrive between 6:00-6:45. Door closes 6:45 p.m. 7:00pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S Wabash Ave Ste 108 Chicago <http://affinity95.org>

Thursday, Dec. 19

Sidetrack Holiday Customer Appreciation Party Enjoy delicious bites from Yoshi's and Amazing Edibles. Holiday drink specials. Drawings for cool prizes with Dixie Lynn Cartwright at 8:30 and 11. Continue the Sidetrack Holiday tradition of bringing a donation for Heartland Alliance. 6 pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St., <https://www.facebook.com/events/954498378258870/>

SocialWorks, A Night at the Museum with Chance the Rapper SocialWorks and Grammy-award-winning musician and humanitarian Chance the Rapper present a kid-friendly evening will feature 50 plus event-only activations, activities, performances, interactive spaces, giveaways. \$10 6:00pm - 10:00pm IMAG Theatre <http://www.socialworks-chi.org> Tickets: <http://natm.tix4cause.com/e/3/a-night-at-the-museum>

Sunday, Dec. 22

Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association Meeting OPALGA meets the fourth Sunday of each month 3:00pm - 5:00pm First United Church of Oak Park 848 Lake St. Oak Park, IL 60301 <https://opalga.org>

Saturday, Dec. 28

"Black and Gay" comedy show With Dewayne Perkins. \$15 10:00pm North Bar, 1637 W. North Ave. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGXS5rjuy-c> Tickets: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/dewayne-perkins-late-show-tickets-85197793895?aff=ebdsbdestsearch>

W&CF hosts 'Honeypot' book launch party, author discussion

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

One month after the release of *Honeypot: Black Southern Women Who Love Women*, Andersonville bookstore Women & Children First hosted a launch party and conversation with author E. Patrick Johnson Dec. 5.

Johnson is also Northwestern University's Performance Studies and African American Studies Carlos Montezuma Professor. He previously wrote *Black. Queer. Southern. Women.: An Oral History*, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* and *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South—An Oral History*.

Honeypot combines oral history with magical realism and poetry to tell the story of the trickster Miss B., who takes Dr. EPJ to the women-only world of Hymen; there, she instructs him to gather and share the real-life stories of queer Black women in the U.S. South. Throughout the process, Dr. EPJ interrogates his privilege as a man and academic due to what the women tell

him about patriarchy, class, sex and gender.

Affinity Community Services Executive Director Imani Rupert-Gordon moderated the event.

Women & Children First Co-owner Sarah Hollenbeck kicked off the event with a couple little-known facts: that the bookstore is on by indigenous land and that Women & Children First is one of only 10 feminist bookstores left in North America.

Rupert-Gordon asked Johnson how the book came to fruition and specifically who Miss B. is to him and what she represents.

Johnson explained that the word "honeypot" also means a woman's vagina; when he found that out, it led him to do research on honey, what it is used for and why it is so important and how honeybees interact with each other. His goal with this book was to allegorize his academic journey of collecting the stories of queer Black women in the South. Johnson said *Honeypot* is an offshoot of *Black. Queer. Southern. Women.*

"Miss B. is a metaphor for what it means for



E. Patrick Johnson and Imani Rupert-Gordon.

Photo by Carrie Maxwell

to be a man doing this work," said Johnson. "This allowed me to play with some of the tensions I experienced ... and to deal with my own internalized misogyny. ... Dr. EPJ is me and is not me. I had to make him unlikeable in the book because I am not like that."

In addition, Johnson spoke about how forming personal relationships with the women made him constantly learn new things about himself and the world around him. He said that he always wanted to be an academic and that meant not putting his own story into his work but conducting oral histories changed that for him.

When Rupert-Gordon brought up the subject of rape and sexual assault that permeates many of the women's stories, she wanted to know how

Johnson got there and why he wanted to include it in the book.

Johnson responded that out of the 79 women he interviewed, 66 of them shared incidents of sexual trauma at the hands of a male relative—so he could not ignore it or omit these stories from the women's narrative.

Other topics included Johnson's writing process, how art is activism and the way intersectionality showed up in the book.

A Q&A session followed.

Johnson invited guests to nosh on celebratory cake and in homage of the book, organic dandelion tea and, naturally, honey to close the festivities.

CONNEXIONS

Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC



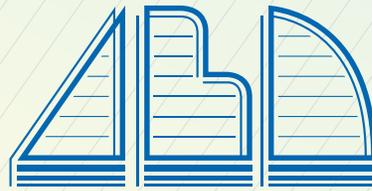
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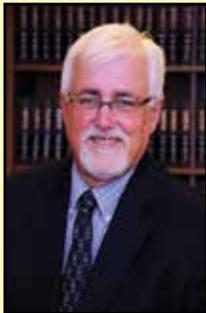


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Bring a Date!

FINAL WEEK – GET YOUR TICKETS NOW

Take a break from the shopping crowds and see show the New York Times calls a “must see” this fall, and Hyperallergic says is “...one of the most engrossing presentations of contemporary painting to have been shown in the United States in many years.”

The first U.S. retrospective of the paintings of Japanese cult-artist Tetsuya Ishida is on view through December 14 at Wrightwood 659 in Lincoln Park.

TETSUYA ISHIDA: Self-Portrait of Other

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