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SURVIVOR

Chicagoan looks back on concentration camps for Japanese-Americans

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

"Do not rely on following the degree of understanding that you have discovered, but simply think, 'This is not enough.'" —Yamamoto Tsunemoto, Hagakure Kikigaki: The Book of the Samurai.

Roy Wesley is on a quest.

On the day he was born in 1942, his parents and grandparents had been ordered to relinquish all their property and report immediately to a concentration camp. There was no due process. No one spoke up in their defense. There were no signs of protest from

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Roy Wesley, about 5 months old, at Minidoka Internment Camp, Idaho. Photo courtesy of Wesley



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Pro-trans rally takes place in Boystown.
Photo by Ed Negron

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Above: WCT breaks down the production Gender Breakdown.
Ensemble photo by Anna Sodziak

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BY GEORGE

Bent Nights looks at shows by George Clinton (left) and Hamilton Leithauser.
Photo by Vern Hester

LOGAN'S RUN



Hugh Jackman stars in the upcoming superhero movie Logan. WCT critiques the film.
Photo by Ben Rothstein

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WCT reviews the theatrical production A Wonder in My Soul.

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Find out the latest about Jodie Foster, Ricky Martin and Shania Twain.

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DAILY BREAKING NEWS



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Tiara Richmond: Trans woman of color murdered on Chicago's South Side

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

At 6 a.m. in the Chicago South Side neighborhood of Englewood, a 24-year-old transgender woman of color, Tiara Lashaytheboss Richmond (aka Keke Collier), was shot dead while engaging in a job that, for a majority of transgender women of color who are shunned by schools, churches, employers or, in some cases, their own family, is their only means of survival—sex work or, as it is known locally, “on the stroll.”

Richmond's murder makes her the second transgender woman in as many years in Chicago, following the 2015 murder of T.T. Saffore. She is the fourth transgender individual to have lost their lives to violence in 2017.

Her story did not make any national headlines. Early local reports from ABC misgendered her as male. That story has since been taken down.

On the evening of Feb. 22, shortly before President Trump and the Department of Justice officially revoked Obama's guidance on Title IX transgender protections, a group of 20 family members and friends gathered at 76th Street and Stewart Avenue in a vigil for their fallen daughter and friend.

Brave Space Alliance Executive Director and tireless community advocate LaSaia Wade was among the attendees at the vigil that was as much about mourning her loss as it was celebrating and remembering Richmond as a person.

“The family was grieving, but it wasn't just tears. There was laughter, there was love,” she told Windy City Times. “[Tiara] was the oldest sibling of three girls and she was really loved by her family. She was the life of the party.”

Wade added that, when Richmond went out to enjoy herself with her friends, she was the envy of the dance floor.

“Her sisters said that she was a person you could always talk to,” Wade said. “The one they confided in. They didn't understand, but they knew she was family so they really didn't care. No matter what, she had a place to go.”

During the vigil, one individual said that, despite the love of her family, it was hard for Richmond to make a living “as who she was.”

Wade also wondered why Richmond was misgendered by the CPD and the press when her gender identity was accepted by her family and friends.

There is a nationwide movement to legalize sex-work as a means of reducing the violence faced by those who engage in it either as their only means of survival, or in some cases, a career.

Many of the transgender women on the streets



Tiara Richmond.

Photo from Trans Women of Color Collective's FB page

of the South and West sides would use the adult section of Backpage.com in order to avoid having to be out in the open and such open targets.

On Jan. 17, 2017, Backpage.com closed its adult section.

Suburban Police Chiefs like Michael Kilbourne of Carpentersville hailed it in reports from the Chicago Tribune as the shutting off of “an avenue that lends itself to illegal and illicit activities.”

However, Wade sees the closure as putting trans women and others engaged in sex work in greater danger.

“The closure of Backpage was an attack by conservatives,” she said. “What kills me about that is that conservatives were on Backpage looking for sex workers. A lot of sex workers reached out to me and asked, ‘What am I supposed to do now?’ It cut off a vital avenue for their income. People have to go back on the street again.”

The street was where Richmond was robbed of her life. Saffore in 2015 and Paige Clay and Tiffany Gooden in 2012. Each of those crimes remains unsolved.

It was where Eisha Love was arrested in 2012 and jailed in Cook County's maximum security Division IX for four years without a trial until she accepted a plea deal in 2015 that saw her freedom.

It was where Richmond—a Black woman beloved of her family and friends but with few if any other options in terms of work was robbed of her life. Her family, friends and advocates like Wade mourn her alone.

Note: Read about a trans murder in New Orleans on page 11.

Open To Thinking

BY NICK PATRICCA



Understanding Steve Bannon: Dick Cheney. Darth Vader. Satan.

Although I am well-trained in the art and science of hermeneutics (divining the meaning of texts or the utterances of gods) and have successfully tackled many obscure but interesting clumps of words, I am stymied by Bannon-speak: “Darkness is good. Dick Cheney. Darth Vader. Satan. That's power. It only helps us when they get it wrong. When they're blind to who we are and what we're doing.” (Interview with Michael Wolff, The Hollywood Reporter, Nov. 18, 2016.)

Wolff interprets the ‘they’ in this Bannon utterance to mean ‘liberals.’ To me, this identification suggests that Bannon is saying that ‘liberals’ don't seem to understand the nature of power: how to get it, how to keep it, how to use it. And, that he—Bannon—does. With hindsight, it does seem to be an open question as to whether the Democrats squandered the first two years of the Obama presidency when they had power: popular mandate for change and control of both houses of congress. And, to give ‘the Dark One’ his due, as Trump's chief campaign strategist, Bannon did help get Trump elected president.

As chief strategist and senior counselor to President Trump, Steve Bannon is arguably the most influential member of the White House team. So: What is the Bannon Agenda?

“I'm a Leninist. ... Lenin wanted to destroy the state, and that's my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today's establishment.” (Interview with Ronald Radosh, Daily Beast, Aug. 22, 2016.) Are these the utterances of an ‘enfant terrible,’ an ‘idiot savant,’ an ‘agent provocateur,’ or of an adroit practitioner of rhetorical guerrilla political theater? Is it possible that Harvard-trained Steve Bannon does not know that Lenin's ‘Bolshevik dictatorship of the proletariat’ created the most efficient killer totalitarian state ever inflicted upon the human race?!

Before joining the Trump team, Stephen ‘Steve’ Bannon was an executive with Breitbart News which Bannon himself described as a platform for the ‘alt-right.’ I assume ‘alt-right’ means alternative right-wing politics at odds with the neo-cons, the establishment Republican Party, and such traditional conservatives as George Will and William Kristol of the National Review—all part of the po-

litical structures Bannon wants to destroy.

For me, Bannon's Skype address in summer of 2014 to a conference held in Vatican City by the conservative Catholic Institute for Human Dignity most clearly presents the Bannon agenda. (You can read Bannon's entire address at BuzzFeed courtesy of J. Lester Feder updated Nov. 16, 2016.)

In this address, Bannon articulates his nationalist, populist manifesto which:

- champions ‘true’ capitalism against the crony capitalism of the current power/money elite of the U.S., against the kleptocracy capitalism of Russia, against the totalitarian state capitalism of China, and against the DAVOS capitalism of the global elite;

- urges war against jihadist Islamic fascism;

- argues for a class-based, populist ‘insurrection’ of the ruined and about-to-be ruined middle classes of the U.S. and Europe against the globalist power elite;

- calls for a recommitment to the Judeo-Christian values that made the West great and are now being destroyed by corrupted capitalism, uncontrolled immigration and totalitarian, theocratic Islam.

Some of the economic and social concerns of this manifesto deserve appropriate discussion. Michael Novak, the conservative Catholic political thinker who recently died, has written in-depth on several of these key matters. Novak proposed practicable remedies in keeping with the core values of our civilization and Catholic tradition. Bannon seems preoccupied with the destruction of the status quo rather than with the creation of constructive alternatives.

It is also alarming that Bannon seems to be willing to tolerate racist and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and actions among those who rally to his flag, believing that these ‘aberrations’ will fade away as his agenda begins to operate in the political arena.

When I asked a colleague what she thought about Bannon she quipped: “Bannon never met an issue he could not solve with a nuclear holocaust.”

Bannon is smart; he's a thinker and a doer. We need to pay attention.

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Nick Patricca is professor emeritus at Loyola University Chicago, president of Chicago Network and playwright emeritus at Victory Gardens Theater.



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Broadway Youth Center launches Uptown location

BY MATT SIMONETTE

After several years in temporary quarters, Broadway Youth Center (BYC) has a permanent home. BYC held the grand opening of its new Uptown facility at 4009 N. Broadway on Feb. 22.

In his remarks, David Munar, president and CEO of Howard Brown Health, which operates BYC, said, "We've worked the last three years to get to this place. ... We're so excited that, in 2017, there's something to celebrate."

The drop-in center had been operating out of the basement of Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ. BYC had difficulties with the neighbors there, and had to go before the city's zoning board to get a variance to stay. But Howard Brown Board President Duke Alden emphatically thanked church officials for their support during those difficult circumstances.

"The work your church and congregation did to welcome us into your home kept [BYC's] mission alive," Alden said.

The new facility, which, including the \$400,000 build-out, will cost about \$1.2 million over the course of its five-year lease from Thorek Hospital. The space should allow for a significant expansion of BYC's clientele, according to Lead Youth HIV Test Counselor Edwin Ervin. The Wellington Avenue location allowed for about 1,300 visits per year, he said. The new location should allow for about 1,500-2,000 visits.

Fewer space limitations also means that various service providers won't have to take turns interacting with clients, Ervin added.

"We can run all the services at the same time," he said. "We're able to see more people. We can test more people. We can expand our services even more."

The nonprofit Designs for Dignity designed the space, donating about 50 hours to the project, said CEO Jennifer Sobecki. Designer John Michon said his team met with the youth who would be

utilizing the space.

"They'd never had the opportunity to be with designers and say what they've wanted," he added. "These rooms feel like a real place and not just a church basement."

Among those also speaking Feb. 22 were Howard Brown Health board's Executive Vice Chair Emily Byrne-Driver, BYC Executive Director Latonya Maley, Ald. James Cappleman (46th) and state Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago).

Nick, a young man who has utilized BYC's services for about two years, also spoke. He said when he encountered trying times, he was able to obtain clothes and get help completing his education through BYC.

"It has opened my mind in new ways, and opened me up to new ideas," Nick said.



Staff and supporters of BYC at the ribbon cutting.

Photo by Hal Baim

Trans Liberation protest March 3

A pro-transgender rally will take place Friday, March 3, 6-9 p.m., in Chicago's Loop at Wacker Street and Wabash Avenue.

According to the event's Facebook page, approximately 1,500 people planned on attending as of Feb. 28.

On that same people, it is stated "We will be protesting the overturned school protections for trans students across this nation and fighting for trans liberation. We will chant for Keke Collier who was killed just this week on Chicago soil, the 4th known killing of a trans person this year."

See "Trans Liberation Protest Chicago" on Facebook.

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Above: Organist Chelsie Coren (left) and Chicago singer Taylor Bennett (right).
All photos by Hal Baim

More than \$20K raised at sleep-in for youth homeless agencies

Chicago rapper Taylor Bennett made a surprise appearance Feb. 24 at the second Out in the Open Sleep In to benefit youth-serving homeless projects in Chicago. More than 100 people attended the concert portion of the event, and about two dozen stayed over night inside the Second Presbyterian Church, 1936 S. Michigan Ave., host of this year's Sleep In.

More than \$20,000 have been pledged so far for the benefit, with funds distributed among 13 agencies. The website will stay open for two weeks to accept more donations; visit SleepInChicago.org.

Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, Illinois state Rep. Juliana Stratton and Chicago Ald. Pat Dowell all spoke about their commitment to working on youth homeless issues.

Artist Erik R. Sosa donated 100 percent of proceeds of sales of his art exhibited at the show. Jasean, a youth activist, also showed his work.

Center on Halsted hosted a satellite event the same evening, with youth sleeping in at 3656 N. Halsted St.

More than a dozen youth who have experienced homelessness spoke passionately at the church Sleep In, telling their personal stories, and sharing their dreams for a better future. Many were speaking for the first time in public. The youth were from All Chicago's Youth Advisory Board, Broadway Youth Center, The 750 Club and El Rescate, among other agencies. A full video of the event will be available soon.

In addition to rapper Taylor Bennett—who came to the show right after his own record release—performers and poets at the event included Melo Makes Music, Lucy Smith, Jess Godwin, Sonny Apollo, Yohan, Alma Mendoza, Sami Grisafe, Jace, Jaymal Green from Majostee Allstars, Morocco Brown, and on the church's beautiful organ, University of Chicago student Chelsie Coren. Poet e. nina jay read from her work.

Fawzia Mirza and NBC Chicago's LeeAnn Trotter emceed the event.

This year's partner agencies were The 750 Club Apartment Adoption Project, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Broadway Youth Center of Howard Brown Health, Center on Halsted, Chicago Youth Storage Initiative, El Rescate, La Casa Norte, LYTE Collective, New Moms, The Night Ministry, Pride Action Tank, Teen Living Programs and Unity Parenting.

The event's hosts included Pride Action Tank, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Edelman, agencyEA, Windy City Times newspaper, Second Presbyterian Church, along with a wide range of other partners. Polo Cafe & Catering and Big Shoulders Coffee donated food and beverages.



Above: Emcees Fawzia Mirza (left) and NBC report Lee Ann Trotter. Below: Poet E. Nina Jay.



Tameka.



Sami Grisafe.



Jaymal Green of Magostee Allstars.



Jocelyn David.



Aladdin.

SURVIVOR from cover

those being loaded onto trains for transportation or their neighbors.

They were not living in Nazi-occupied Europe, but Portland, Oregon.

Wesley spent the first two years of his life in detention with almost 127,000 of his fellow Japanese-Americans.

From the moment Wesley rose to greet Windy City Times from the equally unassuming corner of an Uptown restaurant, the character in both phrasing and timbre of this openly gay musician and biologist was one of elegant tenderness.

"That's actually a good starting point," he suggested with a smile after he spelled out his name. "Being a Japanese American, how did I end up with an English name?"

The answer can be found within the footprints of a journey which began in 1890.

Wesley has set out to uncover them and, through the book he is writing, bequeath them to the future as lessons which, as xenophobic nationalism returns in force to America, can help extinguish it through historical and cultural literacy.

The seeds of Wesley's family are planted in a work ethic fashioned through the arduous, ceaseless labor at the rice paddies boxed across the prefectures of Southeast Japan and the fearless heart of the Uyesugi clan of Samurai warriors.

When his grandfather Kojiro arrived in Seattle at the close of the 19th century, he and eventually his Japanese wife needed both the work ethic and the heart to prevail.

"He worked very hard to make a living on the railroads in California and in the lumber mills of Oregon," Wesley said. "The mill was in Westport, along the Columbia River. There were 125 Japanese immigrants working there. They were very isolated as a community. There was a camp of cabins set up, surrounded by the forest and that's where my father was born."

It was October 1917. Wesley's father was named Newton (after Sir Isaac).

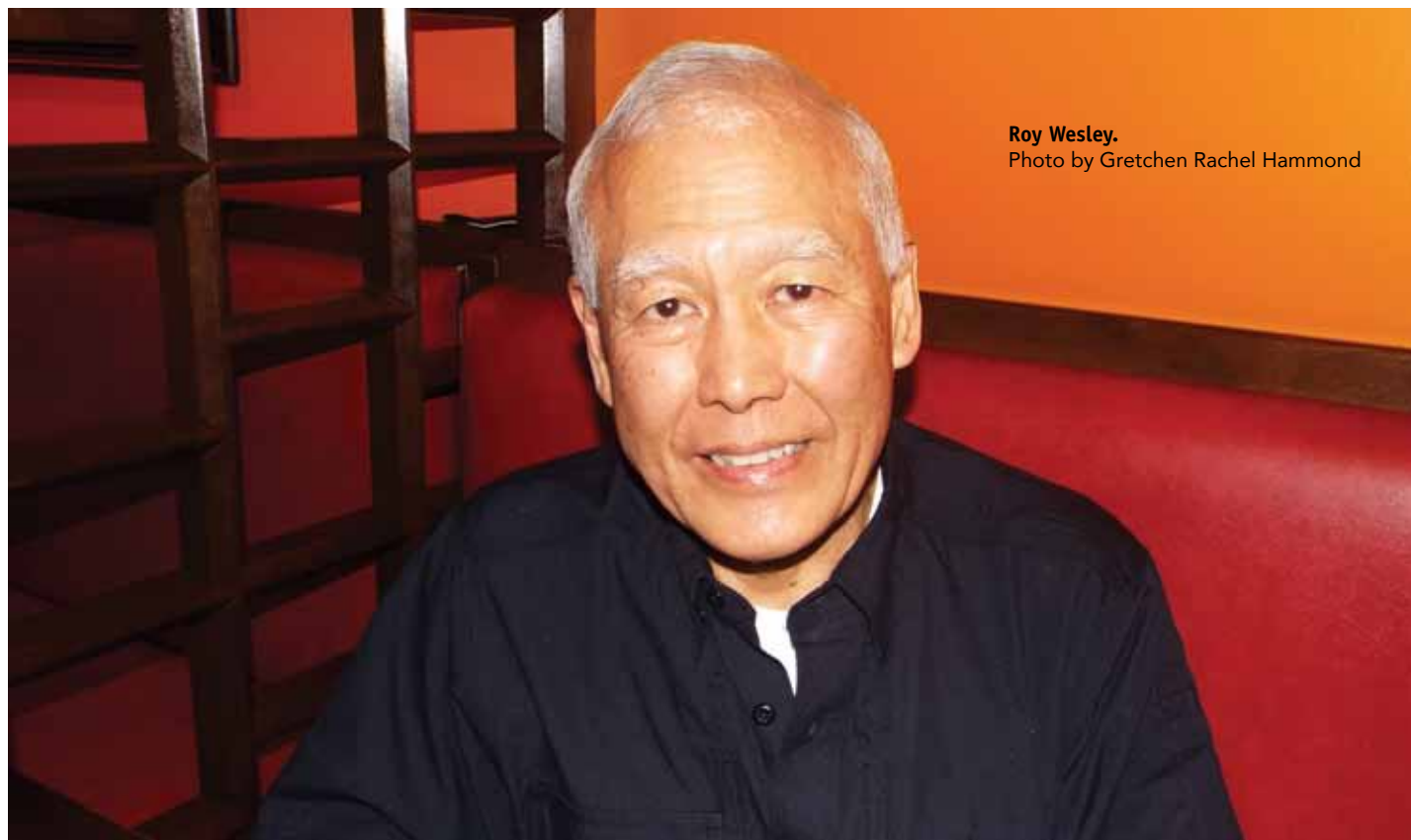
Although their playground was both breathtaking in its beauty and, according to Wesley, not so far removed from his grandfather's Japanese birthplace, Newton and his four younger siblings quickly learned survival skills such as swimming, hunting and fishing, while Kojiro worked two shifts at the mill until he was able to save enough money with which to buy a farm.

"When it came to farming, my grandfather ran into prejudice because Japanese farmers worked very hard and the crops they sold at market made them an economic threat," Wesley said. "But there was always an undercurrent of racial prejudice and discrimination that was fueled by the press and the government itself."

Asian Exclusion was built into the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act which was signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge.

It put a halt to Japanese immigration and denied citizenship to Japanese residents. The Act was born out of "Yellow Peril," which was a term historians believe was first used by German Kaiser Wilhelm II and was picked up by American newspapers.

In the late 1800s, it was the likes of New York



Roy Wesley.

Photo by Gretchen Rachel Hammond

Tribune founder and politician Horace Greeley who claimed that Asians were "uncivilized, unclean, and filthy beyond all conception without any of the higher domestic or social relations."

Like Trump's now-infamous charge against Latinos that "they're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime," the unsubstantiated rhetoric was swallowed hook, line and sinker by white, blue-collar communities who were whipped up into a hateful charge against immigrants through a perceived menace of lost jobs waved in front of them by political and social matadors in search of money and power.

Instead of Latinos and Muslims, "Yellow Peril" placed people from countries in what the Johnson-Reed Act called the "Asiatic Barred Zone" in the crosshairs of demonization and the resulting physical attack then by white communities in the Western United States. Japanese immigrants (called Issei) were denied even basic civil rights.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, Yellow Peril reached its zenith. Wesley's older brother was born two days afterward.

Lieutenant General John Lesesne DeWitt, then in charge of Western Defense Command, stated that, "The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted."

By then, Newton (termed a U.S.-born Nisei) had built a successful life as an optometrist and was an active community church member. It was at a church social event in 1927 that he met Cecilia Sasaki, the daughter of two accomplished musicians. He eventually married her after a three-year courtship.

Newton also changed his last name to Wesley

after the founder of the Methodist Church to which his parents had converted. Wesley noted that, despite his grandparent's objections, Newton made the decision as a businessman.

"Uyesegi was not only difficult to spell or pronounce, but my father was an optometrist and nobody would ever be able to find him," Wesley said. "My grandparents wondered why he would want to change something that had been a proud family name for thousands of years. They finally accepted it because of what happened in the war."

For almost his entire upbringing, the years between 1942 and 1945 were never discussed among Wesley's family—something he said was "not unusual for all Japanese families. There was a shame associated with it so nobody ever wanted to bring it up."

The family kept its silence for nearly four decades. In 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC). Public hearings were held in cities across the United States (including Chicago). Japanese families were finally given a voice as they recalled their experiences and sought redress.

"That was the big opening," Wesley said. "Then certainly George Takei's influence as a Hollywood star has helped that effort so that people are more aware of it now than ever before."

As Wesley described the years between 1942 and 1945 to Windy City Times, his amiable, matter-of-fact tone was tinged with sadness and resentment.

"Many Japanese now call them concentration camps," he said. "Because, in the technical sense of the word, that's what they were and that's even what Roosevelt called them."

Following Pearl Harbor, with the support of

particularly West Coast congressmen, DeWitt recommended "the establishment of board civil control, anti-sabotage and counter-espionage measures" against Japanese communities in the United States despite the 1941 Munson Report authored by the State Department which concluded that, "There is no Japanese 'problem' on the Coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Presidential Proclamation 2537 on Jan. 14, 1942, which forced Japanese aliens to register with the Department of Defense as "Aliens of Enemy Nationality." Their assets were frozen and movements restricted.

Less than a month later, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which began the evacuation and internment of over 120,000 Japanese people on the West Coast.

"My father had to lose his optometry practice, my grandfather had to sell several hotels and his grocery store in Portland, Oregon," Wesley said. "Everything that they worked for was sold for ten cents on the dollar. Farmers had to give up their properties to a land grab by greedy neighbors. The family had to decide what they were going to take to the camp. They could only bring whatever they could carry by hand."

With the concentration camps still under construction, Wesley's family were initially sent to a hastily organized detention center at the Portland International Exhibition Stockyards.

On the same day they were supposed to leave, Cecilia gave birth to Wesley. She was allowed three days in the hospital to recover before being transported to the stockyards along with her infant son.

"We were housed where the animals used to

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be,” Wesley said. “The stalls were already there so plywood floors were put down and [canvas] was draped over the top.”

The average size of the stalls given to families was 20 by 14 feet.

“There was still a lot of manure under the plywood floors,” Wesley said. “In the Spring, there were thousands of flies. So, the government issued strips of fly-paper which hardly helped. Sanitation was terrible and people were getting sick.”

As a community leader and president of the Portland, Oregon Japanese-American Citizen League, Newton was assigned to the camp’s Administrative Board.

“A lot of the Japanese in the camp thought that the Citizen League was in collusion with the government,” Wesley said. “It wasn’t true but there was a resentment and my father didn’t want to stay in that environment. A number of schools in the country were trying to help Japanese-Americans get away from the West Coast.”

One of them was Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana.

“My father applied to continue his education there,” Wesley said. “The Governor of Oregon and the Mayor of Portland wrote letters of support and so, after five months, he and my Uncle were



Roy Wesley (right) with husband, Mark Weber.

Photo courtesy of Wesley



released to go to Earlham to study. That left my grandparents, mom, brother and me in the camp.”

A month after Newton left, the family was transported by train to what was then a desert off the Snake River in Minidoka, Idaho. The camp there was opened on Aug. 10, 1942 and held 9,397 Japanese-Americans.

As described, by the Minidoka Internment National Historic Site, the camp “had 35 residential blocks, each of which consisted of 12 sleeping quarters. All of these blocks included a central H shaped building, where residents could shower and do their laundry. Although the 946-acre camp mirrored a fully functioning town, the five miles of barbed wire fencing, eight watchtowers, and the overall military presence separated the Minidoka Relocation Center from neighboring communities.”

“Life was extremely difficult,” Wesley said. “In the Winter, the temperature would go down to minus-20 degrees. We had one pot-belly stove in each 10’ by 10’ square room-per-family. When the snow and ice thawed, the whole camp area turned into mud. When you tried to get from one place to another, you were immersed in it. In the Summer the temperature was unbearably hot. The winds would send sand sweeping through the camp. I was a baby and I couldn’t crawl on the floor because it was just bare wood with a lot splinters.”

“Food was basically K-rations,” he added. “Spam mainly, sometimes hot dogs. Rice was available. Families couldn’t eat together. Men ate with men, women with women and they had

different eating hours. It was a way of demeaning people and keeping them in line.”

He showed Windy City Times pictures taken of Cecilia, himself and his brother in the camp. “I was amazed she got these because internees were not allowed cameras,” he said. “Everything had to be done by the internees. Because many of them were farmers, they ran irrigation channels from the river into the desert. It was the beginning of agriculture in that area and, today, it is a flourishing industry.”

Wesley described life for a mother trying to raise two children in Minidoka as one “with no dignity. The disruption of family life changed people. They became very depressed. Men became alcoholics afterwards because they lost the sense of pride in themselves. They were angry and frustrated.”

However, extraordinarily, that anger was not directed towards the government that had imprisoned them.

“The Japanese mentality is very internalized,” Wesley said. “It’s more, ‘What did I do wrong?’ They were ashamed thinking they were the ones who started the war and so had to bear the brunt of it. Millions of people were killed during the fire bombings of Japan and when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki but, again, feelings were internalized even though there was so much grief because of the family connections.”

Minidoka was closed Oct. 28, 1945.

Wesley’s grandparents remained there the entire time. Cecilia and the children were able to leave in February 1944 after their father, who was working at an optometry school in Chicago, negotiated their release.

Two students in Newton’s class began researching the idea of more comfortable contact lenses. Suffering from his own degenerative

Left: Roy Wesley’s mother, Cecilia Wesley (née Sasaki), with brother Lee, at Minidoka Internment Camp, Idaho.

Photo courtesy of Wesley

ocular disease which was relieved only by uncomfortable lenses that could only be worn for an hour-per-day, Newton engaged the students to work with him. After three years, they succeeded and developed the first contact lenses to be mass marketed and sold nationwide.

"By 1955, he had the largest contact lens business in the United States," Wesley said. "He was always so busy and gone a lot of the time, so I really didn't get to know him. It was very hard on my mom who just wanted the family to be together."

From the age of five, Wesley was coming to terms with his own sexuality. He never told his mother, who passed away in 1973.

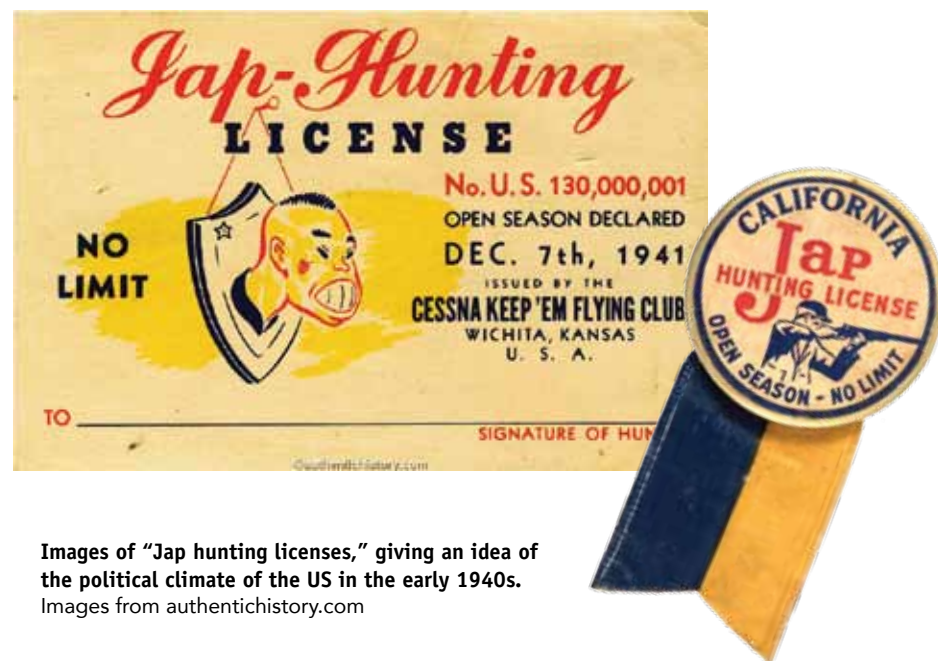
Inspired by composers such as Leonard Bernstein, Wesley displayed an extraordinary aptitude as a pianist. However, in college, he majored in comparative literature and science. He

I wanted," Wesley asserted. "He died five years ago, but I decided to write his biography on his 100th birthday as a way of coming to grips with who my dad was as a person. He was never going to be the loving, caring person I created in my mind. You have to confront that truth. Your life can be so much richer if you uncover the things in the past that inform who you are today."

That discovery and the understanding which followed changed Wesley's life.

"I have had a profound sense of sorrow for what everybody went through in detention," he added. "I went back to the Portland stockyards on this beautiful, quiet, sunny morning and I just listened. I could hear the anguish of the voices reaching from the past."

The nationalistic rhetoric of the 2016 election, the fears drawn upon and manipulated by Trump and the decisions that have been made since Jan.



Images of "Jap hunting licenses," giving an idea of the political climate of the US in the early 1940s. Images from authenticichistory.com

completed his education with a Ph.D. from CUNY in molecular biology.

It was there that he met and married his wife. "It's funny how you follow the course of your life because that's what society dictates," Wesley said. "But you are still left unsatisfied and still longing for the truth inside you. I told my ex-wife before we got married that I liked men but she thought I could change. But you can't hide forever."

The couple had two children in the 15 years they were together.

Wesley spent a decade working with his father at his foundation in Chicago.

It was at an Evanston gymnasium that Wesley met and fell in love with Mark Weber. "My wife took it very hard," he said his voice trembling with emotion. "She wanted to keep the family together but I had imprisoned myself by covering up my feelings."

Wesley has remained with Mark, now his husband, ever since.

The decision to write about Newton's life immersed Wesley in his family's immigrant story and their own imprisonment in 1942.

"I never got to know my father in the way that

20, 2017 have forced Wesley to wonder whether the United States has at all learned from the lessons history tried to teach it 75 years ago.

"It's painful to think about the disruption of lives and the impact of someone blithely signing an order which excludes and displaces people," he said. "You think about all these people who are living in a terrible state of limbo and could be destroyed when ICE finds them and they have to leave everything they have worked for behind. It's unconscionable and awful to watch."

However, for Wesley, there is one difference between current events and the Japanese experience in 1942 and it gives him hope.

"There's a huge population which is supporting resistance," he said. "They are making enough noise that maybe things can move forward differently. Back then, there were posters for hunting licenses which said that it was 'OK to kill a Jap.' But if we don't take the lessons of history seriously, everything will be diminished over time. The strength of our country has always been other ideas, cultures, new ways of looking at things. To all live in the same mold could be the end of the great experiment in democracy."

Grassroots meeting about electoral outreach, intersectionality

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

LGBTQ Impact held a grassroots community meeting Feb. 22 at Mary's Attic to discuss electoral outreach and the importance of intersectionality.

Featured panelists Jhonmar Castillo, Rowkeena Ellis, Rick Garcia, Gretchen Rachel Hammond (who also writes for this publication) and Richard Streetman addressed a packed house of about 75 people on a variety of progressive issues and ways the community can move the ball forward.

Event organizer John Zmuda introduced the panel ahead of their remarks.

Streetman encouraged attendees to publicize the event via social media and then spoke about the history of the LGBTQ movement over the past 50 years.

"We've gained a measure of equality over the years and we aren't going back to 1969, before we had those rights," said Streetman.

Garcia noted how thrilled he was at the large number of attendees that evening. He explained that LGBTQ Impact is a grassroots organization not tied to bigger local or national LGBTQ organizations or elected officials.

"We have to stand up, get together and organize ... we have to go where the rubber hits the road," said Garcia. "This means helping people register to vote and coming out to rallies. It also means helping with the fight for healthcare access, women's rights, immigration and #BlackLivesMatter, because it isn't just about LGBTQ issues, it's about all of us. Because LGBTQ people are Black, white, Latinx and Asian, and also either Muslim, Christian, Jewish or atheist, and each and every one of us is entitled to be treated



Richard Streetman, Rick Garcia, Rowkeena Ellis, Gretchen Rachel Hammond (back row) and Jhonmar Castillo (front). Photo by Carrie Maxwell

fairly and equitably under the law."

Garcia explained that in the past two months there have been two anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in the Illinois state legislature, so the community's work isn't done in Illinois. He said people in the Chicagoland area are extremely lucky to live in a liberal bubble that values LGBTQ equality. Garcia noted that the reason why LGBTQ equality is the law of the land in Illinois is because of the tenacity of a number of individuals who lobbied elected officials to make that happen.

"I know there is someone here that should run for office who could stand up for all of us," said Garcia.

Ellis began her remarks with an Audre Lorde quote—"There is no such thing as a single-issue

Turn to page 11

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Groups respond to Trump removal of Title IX transgender protections

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

The Trump administration drew first blood in what many believe is a systematic erosion of LG-BTQ civil rights during the evening hours of Feb. 22 when President Obama's guidelines extending Title IX protections to transgender students were rolled back, ironically, without the fanfare of publicity which has surrounded each of Trump's executive orders.

Nevertheless, reaction from advocacy groups nationwide and in Chicago was as swift as it was vocal.

"We all know that Donald Trump is a bully, but his attack on transgender children today is a new low.

Lambda Legal CEO Rachel B. Tiven said in a statement, "Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Secretary DeVos give us sickening echoes of the racially segregated schools era by claiming that enforcement of this federal civil rights law is a 'states' rights issue.'"

A joint statement from The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the National Center for Transgender Equality, GLSEN, the National Women's Law Center, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the American Civil Liberties Union, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and MALDEF read in part that the Trump administration "have sent a deeply troubling message to students that the administration will not stand up for students' civil rights."

"We condemn the administration's decision, vow to fight to enforce Title IX, which continues to protect transgender students, and call on individual schools and districts to treat students consistent with their gender identity and consistent with the rescinded guidance that accurately explained the law," they added.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) LGBT Project Director James Esseks echoed those sentiments while ACLU Senior Staff Attorney Joshua Block reaffirmed that the real battle over Title IX will be in the courts.

"Revoking the guidance shows that the president's promise to protect LGBT rights was just empty rhetoric," Esseks said. "School districts recognize [they] should continue doing the right thing; for the rest, we'll see them in court."

"While it's disappointing to see the Trump administration revoke the guidance, the administration cannot change what Title IX means," Block asserted.

"Fortunately, the White House does not have the power to singlehandedly change federal law, and school districts across the country are still legally obligated to comply with Title IX and protect transgender students," Transgender Law Center Executive Director Kris Hayashi added. "No matter what this administration says, the law remains on transgender students' side and students



Lambda Legal CEO Rachel B. Tiven.

Photo by Matt Simonette

can still take legal action when schools cross the line and discriminate against them because they are transgender."

However, this may be of little comfort to terrified transgender students and their parents nationwide. In a brief statement, PFLAG national verbalized those concerns.

"PFLAG hearts everywhere are with the worried parents who will be kept awake tonight, and the kids who will be scared to go to school in the morning," the organization said. "Tomorrow we will fight even harder for the protections that Title IX still affords all transgender youth across the country."

The son of one such mother Katharine Prescott took his own life after relentless discrimination that he suffered at his school. Her determination that no other parent should suffer the loss of a child as she did drove her to the Obama administration in order to play a vital role in crafting those guidelines.

"I would welcome the chance to share my story with Secretary DeVos and Attorney General Sessions to help them understand the real-life implications of reversing the Title IX guidance for protecting transgender students," Prescott said.

It is unknown whether either have the desire or the political will to take Prescott up on her offer.

"This guidance was developed and issued to support transgender students because the reality is that they are far more likely to face severe violence and discrimination at school than their peers, placing them at greatly increased risk of suicide and self-harm as a result," GLSEN Executive Director Dr. Eliza Byard added. "When stu-

dents are allowed to be themselves, they thrive. This guidance changes and saves lives and hurts no one. It should not be withdrawn."

The New York-based Family Equality Council called the action a "regressive and reprehensible step backward."

Locally, Equality Illinois CEO Brian C. Johnson stated that "rescinding the guidance sends a terrible message and invites personal bias to flourish in our schools."

Johnson called upon Illinois schools to support transgender students noting that it was a "legal and moral duty."

Lake County board chair comes out as gay

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Speaking at a College of Lake County event promoting tolerance Feb. 19, Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor, while discussing Illinois anti-discrimination laws protecting LGBT residents, intimated that he himself depended on those laws. In an interview shortly afterward, he confirmed that he is gay.

Later that week, Lawlor told Windy City Times that his being gay was one of "Lake County's worst-kept secrets," in that he's long been out to friends and family but had not discussed his sexuality in a public setting.

"In a lot of ways, I felt that what I did [Feb. 19] was not that big a deal," he explained. "After I read a lot of posts and emails that I got in response, I thought, 'Wow, this is really something.' It was just the first time I'd discussed it with a reporter in the room."

Lawlor, a Republican, has been county board chair since 2012. He represents District 18, which is composed of Vernon Hills and Indian Creek, as well as parts of Hawthorn Woods, Long Grove, Mundelein and other parts of unincorporated Lake County. His position as chairman is determined by fellow board members, not the electorate.

He said, "I never ran for county board to be 'the youngest' or 'the first gay' [officeholder]—I ran to help the people that I represent, and I want to be thought of that way ... I feel like I had to wait for a point in my career where I had some achievements under my belt and a reputation for a certain portfolio of work. That, and the discussions about diversity going on, meant [the time] was a good fit."

Lawlor was hard-pressed to find any negative reaction from his constituents, adding that he'd received an especially moving message from a local adolescents' physician that said his coming out had the potential to help save lives.

"If that's true, I hope it's the case that the way I went about it was the right thing," Lawlor said. "It wasn't about a rainbow ticker-tape parade. I wanted to be connected with people, and strike a cord and provide value and insight that they can reflect on their own lives."

He said that the LGBT community is not espe-

Even as they face exponentially growing fears from within their own community, The Association of Latino/as Motivating Action (ALMA) showed solidarity with transgender children when they called the decision "disappointing and wrong" and encouraged people to immediately echo those feelings to legislators.

"Now more than ever, they need to hear from you and they need to stand up for our transgender and gender-nonconforming students," the organization concluded.



Aaron Lawlor.

Photo courtesy of Lawlor

cially politically active in Lake County beyond some PFLAG chapters and gay-straight alliances in local schools, adding, "That's something I especially feel an opportunity to engage and speak to. I sometimes feel like I want to print up t-shirts that say, 'Yes, we're in the suburbs.'"

Lawlor affirmed his commitment to working on LGBT-rights issues, but said he'd be balancing it with his work on the county board, which, quite often, didn't overlap.

"The board hardly ever takes positions that say, 'It is the sense of the county board that this issue is good or bad,'" he said. "It's important to recognize I have deeply held beliefs about equality issues and I advocate for them regularly as an individual elected official. But the measure of success or failure in our office is the strength of our budget, or whether we are making our pension payments, or have a triple-A credit rating. You're not talking about gay or straight issues—they're good government issues."

Trans multimedia project announced

Regarding the annual observance of International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31), Chicago activist Meggan Sommerville has announced a multimedia project, "See Me!," in collaboration with singer/songwriter Sidney Chase.

The crowd-sourced project will culminate in a video series showing selfies sent by members of the U.S. and international transgender community set to original, exclusive music by Chase.

Visit Facebook.com/TransDayOfVisibility to download branded posters to optionally include in selfies. Email pics to TD0V2017@gmail.com by March 10.

Pro-trans rally takes place in Lake View



BY ED NEGRÒN

Chicago's LGBT community joined communities across the nation to protest the Trump administration's rescinded guidance from the Obama administration that protected transgender students in public schools.

Intersectionality was highlighted in nearly every speech at the Feb. 25 event, held at Halsted and Roscoe. The majority of the speakers were trans and non-binary individuals. The non-trans organizers took on a role of setting the stage, providing a platform, but then stayed in the background in a supportive role while a variety of trans voices were centered.

Politicians such as state Rep. Greg Harris and U.S. Rep Mike Quigley also spoke.

While there were several Latinx people who spoke about their fight for transgender rights as well as immigrant rights, Black trans speakers were noticeably absent. According to various social-media discussions, the reason for this absence was that many Black trans people (among others in the trans community) do not feel welcome or safe the Boystown, and therefore chose not to attend or support this rally.

Another protest, Trans Liberation Protest Chicago, is slated to take place downtown on Friday, March 3. For more information, visit the Trans Liberation Protest Chicago event page on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/events/1933015373598471/?active_tab=discussion.



Karari Olvera Orozco speaks at the rally.
Photos by Ed Negron



GRASSROOTS from page 9

struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

"I'm here to speak about intersectionality," said Ellis. "Intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading scholar in critical race theory. The term describes how different forms of discrimination can interact and overlap. I am a Black, gay, able-bodied woman. These things make up the fabric of me. We are all comprised of different fabrics that come together to create our human existence."

Ellis explained that "45" (her name for Donald Trump) has been in office for less than 100 days, and that, as a result, the progress that was made has instead regressed due to various executive orders and an inexperienced cabinet that is the least diverse since the Reagan era. She said that now is the time to come together to fight.

"An injustice for one is an injustice for all," said Ellis. "It's not us vs. them, it's all of us. I am my immigrant brother and sister. I am my Muslim brother and sister. I am my Black brother and sister. I am my transgender brother and sister. I am my non-able-bodied brother and sister. ... I will fight because I believe in humanity."

Hammond's focus was on transgender people and issues. She noted the recent murder of Keke

Collier (who also went by the name Tiara Richmond), the fourth transgender person of color murdered in Chicago since 2012, and asked for a moment of silence. Hammond explained that the rhetoric used to demonize transgender people is at an all-time high. She said there is a chasm between transgender people of color and white transgender people that needs to be addressed.

"An attack on transgender people is an attack on all of you, because you can remember those moments when you were bullied or attacked because of who you are," said Hammond. "We have to realize we have commonalities ... this is the greatest enemy [Trump and his administration] we've faced as a community and as a country. As an immigrant myself [she grew up in Manchester, United Kingdom], I find the current situation sobering, but we can win this fight if we organize and get out there with our message beyond the Chicago bubble."

Castillo spoke about a recent visit to one of the state legislators and the question they posed to him about why the LGBTQ community only goes to them when they need their specific issues addressed. He said that conversation was the catalyst for starting LGBTQ Impact to address a wider set of intersectional progressive issues, not just LGBTQ specific ordinances and legislation.

"Digital outreach is extremely important and

that's where my expertise comes into play," said Castillo. "We need to be on the ground and online because we can make a lot of noise ... but we also need to make sure we have a strategy that makes us effective wherever our message appears."

Panelists called on attendees to sign-up as a potential candidate for office, lobby legislators on intersectional progressive issues, attend rallies, register folks to vote and/or amplify LGBTQ

Impact's message via social media.

A Q&A and strategy session followed the panelists' remarks.

The group will meet Wed., March 8, at 7 p.m. at Mary's Attic to talk about the next steps as well as plan for the Pride March on Washington in June.

See <http://LGBTQImpact.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/lgbtqimpact/> for more information.

Fifth trans woman of color murdered in New Orleans

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

On Feb. 25, New Orleans ballroom star Chyna Gibson AKA Chyna Doll Dupree became the fifth transgender woman of color murdered in 2017 and the sixth transgender/gender non-conforming individual to be killed since January 1.

Her death was reported by award-winning journalist Monica Roberts on her Trans Griot blog.

According to Roberts, Gibson's body was found in the parking lot of a New Orleans East shopping center. She had been shot multiple times. Originally from New Orleans, Gibson had moved to California but returned to her birthplace in order to celebrate Mardi Gras.

Roberts added that a local television news station WWL-TV misgendered Gibson in their original report.

Other news outlets except WWL updated their stories to the correct gender following Robert's post.

A memorial for Gibson was held Feb. 26.

Trans Griot article: www.transgriot.blogspot.com/2017/02/rest-in-power-and-peace-chyna-gibson.html

viewpoints



Danger: Relapse ahead

After having completed substance abuse treatment and with six months of sobriety under my belt, I felt I was unsinkable.

I failed to see the signs that relapse would be just around the corner. My determination to never use again and to remain sober was no match against methamphetamine. My relapse was a devastating blow to my psyche and the hard work I had put into recovery. Since my relapse, I have learned that an addict is never truly cured and that treatment is life-long process.

Meth has an 88 percent relapse rate; which should be a testament to its destructive nature. After rehab, I had a strong aftercare program; I relapsed nonetheless. Each day of not using was like a fight. Battling cravings and the ever-present urge to numb my feelings eventually caught up with me. In the back of my mind I realized that it would be near impossible to win every day.

My being was fixated on doing everything right

in order to not jeopardize my recovery. By throwing myself into work and achieving new goals I was convinced that I was on the right path. In doing this I inadvertently set myself up for failure. Scared to slip up, I found myself taking a step back from social interactions. I shut out people in my life who truly cared and distanced myself from a key part of any addicts recovery, the support of loved ones and including them in my recovery.

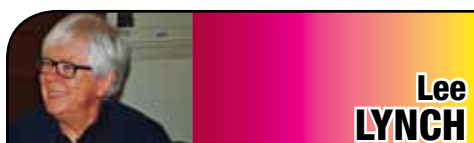
There are a few things I wish I had known prior to leaving treatment that could have prevented my relapse. To have been educated enough to understand the reality of relapse seems the most basic, but crucial aspect that I was not fully prepared for. Only 12 percent of meth addicts fight off relapse successfully. Knowing this statistic and being able to apply it to my own experience could have given me a different perspective. I had put so much pressure on myself to never use again that I burnt myself out. I found myself back at square one, back to feeling the urge to stave off my emotions. Meth creates a numbness that is appealing to those dealing with their feelings. It temporarily provides a false sense of happiness. I want anyone in the world struggling to understand this and in turn be able to fight their addiction harder and smarter.

Society views addicts as less than many times over, with disgust. This stigma affects addicts relationships and is a key reason most find difficulty letting their friends and family in. Rejection is a

powerful kind of hurt; leaving addicts vulnerable to battling addiction on their own. I wish I would have known how to better include others in my recovery. To have let my guard down and to have felt like I wasn't alone would have done wonders for me. Having the courage to simply call my best friend or a family member during my most difficult moments is something I wish I would have willed myself to do. I have incredible people in my life who would have listened and talked me down, but I was too proud to admit that I still struggled.

Stage IV cancer-survival statistics are better than the treatment statistics on meth addiction. This is an overwhelming fact that not only needs to change, but CAN change. Substance abuse treatment and aftercare are essential to any recovery program, however the reality once leaving treatment isn't always clear. It is easy to lose ones self while fighting tooth and nail for their recovery. Addicts need to fully comprehend what they are up against and they need to be shown by those they are closest to that what they are going through isn't trivial. They need to be made to feel safe enough to open up during their times of need.

C.L. Frederick is an internationally published columnist (having been published on websites such as The Huffington Post) who reports on social issues affecting the LGBT community.



THE AMAZON TRAIL Love song

The only one likely to get any treats this Valentine's Day is the cat. As my sweetheart said, now that we're getting old and fat, we need to think of new ways to celebrate loving occasions. So, we treated ourselves to an iRobot Roomba 650. More expensive than a red heart full of chocolates, but oh, so rewarding, so low calorie.

Could we afford this luxury robot? It was on sale and we had a gift card. Did we need it? No, my sweetheart actually likes vacuuming. Did she think it was just another gadgety toy that caught my eye? No, I barely saw the robot until she had it up and running. Don't believe everything you hear about lesbian family roles.

I admit, the Roomba was my idea. At the Left Coast Lesbian Literary Conference last year, I overheard a literary dyke enthusiastically praising the product and its sale price. I emailed myself a reminder to check it out. My sweetheart was not excited, but I foresaw a future which included making all sorts of messes—repotting plants, constructing signs for protests, eating crumbly non-fat crackers—without guilt or the anticipation of cleaning up with a loud, heavy, inadequate trump-like de-

vice.

She sings. Not my sweetheart, but the little helper she named Vic the Vac. You put Vic on the floor and she sings a happy fluty sound that makes us think she's thrilled to be doing her job. She's grateful to us for setting her free, free! And she sets about her duties assiduously. All we need to do, besides empty her nether parts, is keep out of her way. Vic does a better job of cleaning than the best of the big vacuums we've tried.

Of course, as with any new—would you call her a pet—there are moments of panic. The robot comes with an electronic thingy that creates a virtual barricade to keep her out of areas where you don't want her marauding. (An electronic wall anyone?)

But seriously, when Vic gets stuck under a bookcase, my sweetheart longs, and I quote, to be able to program Vic with messages like "owie" when she's stuck, or "uppie" when she's done and wants to be carried home from behind her barricade to her charging station. My sweetheart also wishes we could teach Vic to say, "I can't believe I ate the whole thing," to signal that her canister is full. As if that were an issue; we turn her on to do her happy dance whenever we see a spot. Our home hasn't been this consistently clean in ten years.

How is our robot a fit gift for Valentine's Day? For one thing, it frees up some together time. Time that, these days, is so tethered to the necessity of political activism. Instead of walking the beach hand in hand or sitting close by the (gas) fireplace, remembering falling in love and our wedding, we're calling senators from coast to coast to beg, thank, or encourage them to save the America we love.

It was kind of romantic, though, that first protest march we attended together. We live in a place that is about as populous as half a neighborhood in my hometown of NYC. The Women's March was anticipated to draw, at most, a couple hundred residents. As we waved our signs at passing motorists, people kept streaming toward us. Whole families, singles, packs of friends, all genders, all colors, packed the front of City Hall in the rain. Sixteen hundred of us. Several came from our 55+ neighborhood. A ninety-six-year-old woman in a wheelchair waved her sign, grinning her head off.

We held hands, my sweetheart and I, as we marched along the Coast Highway, the only coastal route from Mexico to Canada. Our little adopted town, where we have made our home, wasn't standing still for the coup of ignorance in our capitol.

The police and volunteers were, if not friendly, competent. They might have been scared of our unprecedented numbers. Some of the drivers who passed shouted obscenities and made emphatically offensive gestures. There was one man with a sign supporting the Bundy brothers' occupation of Malheur National Forest. We protesters were peaceful and did not engage.

The discouraging part, as my college roommate, who marched in NYC, said, was, "What now?"

Romantic activism, hardly a new form of courting and togetherness, is in our future. As are dieting, more walking in the rain hand in hand, and perhaps celebrating Valentine's Day in our living room with a waltz or a rumba to the happy love song of the Roomba.

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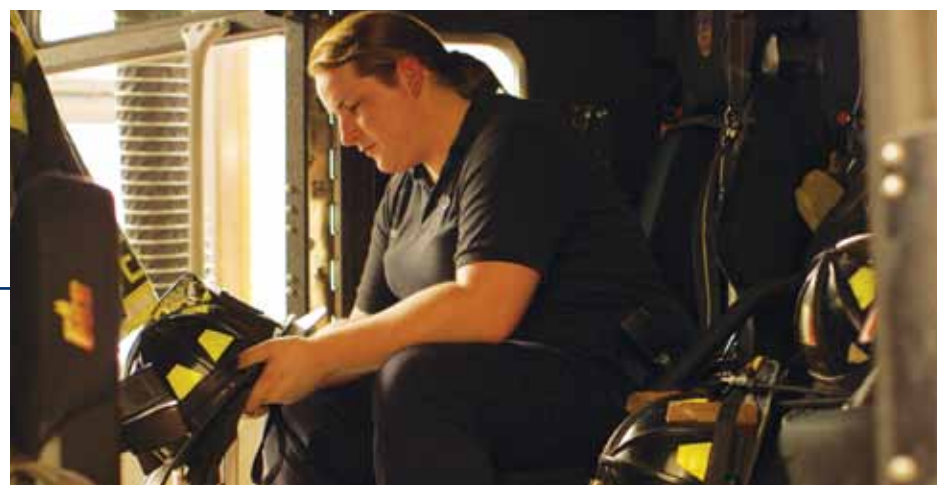
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Vermilion.



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Oscars at Center on Halsted.



Simply the fest

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Woman on Fire is part of the Chicago Feminist Film Festival.

Photo courtesy of the festival

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

L.A. drama

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

LOS ANGELES—One of the hottest theater tickets in Southern California right now is the acclaimed revival of *Zoot Suit*. The hit Chicano musical has been repeatedly extended at L.A.'s Mark Taper Forum, which is the same venue where *Zoot Suit* debuted in 1978 before transferring to Broadway the following year.

Zoot Suit was revived to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the influential regional powerhouse that is Center Theatre Group, but it has become so much more than just a nostalgia trip for Angelenos with long memories. *Zoot Suit* has actually become a vital and full-throttled piece of protest theater in light of so much anti-immigrant hatred currently spewing forth from the White House and the Republican-led U.S. Congress.

Zoot Suit dramatizes the grossly unjust trials

tied to Southern California's "Sleepy Lagoon Murder" of 1942, which led to the prosecution of 21 young Latino men including Henry Reyna (Matias Ponce) who was pegged as the ringleader. The racist "Zoot Suit Riots" from the following year are also dramatized, reexamining the ugly moment when U.S. sailors and marines felt justified in attacking well-dressed Black and Latino men for their "unpatriotic" fashion gear in a time of clothing rationing during World War II.

Zoot Suit was the main brainchild of playwright and director Luis Valdez, the founder of El Teatro Campesino (The Farm Workers' Theater). Valdez himself is back to oversee this splendid and energetic revival, as are original *Zoot Suit* stars Daniel Valdez and Rose Portillo (the two have aged on from the show's main young lovers to play Reyna's parents).

This revival of *Zoot Suit* has also been able to attract Academy Award-nominee Damian Bichir

(*A Better Life*) to play the iconic role of the narrator El Pachuco, a star-making role originated by Edward James Olmos. Bichir is much more gruffer El Pachuco than Olmos' smooth take (captured for posterity in the 1981 film version of *Zoot Suit*), but he ultimately gets the job done as a very Brechtian device who embodies and oozes Latino machismo while encouraging and cajoling Henry Reyna throughout his trying times in the court and prison systems.

If New York producers haven't already sewn up the rights to *Zoot Suit* for a major Broadway revival, every major regional theater across the U.S. should be clamoring to produce this musical. Not only is it a thrilling dramatized piece of Latino-American history, it also speaks to the fraught times we're living in when so many American minority groups are under attack.

***Zoot Suit*, presented in association with El Teatro Campesino at the Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum, continues in an extended run through Sunday, April 2, at the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Ave., Los Angeles. Tickets range from \$25-\$125; call 213-628-2772 or visit CenterTheatreGroup.org.**

More WWII drama

In addition to *Zoot Suit*, L.A.-area theatergoers have another music-filled World-War-II drama to choose from with *946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*. This truly is a "total theater" touring piece devised by the British Cornwall-based theater company Kneehigh, which is perhaps most famous on this side of the pond for its Tony Award-nominated stage adaptation of Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter* and its tour of *Tristan & Yseult* (which previously played at Chicago Shakespeare Theater).

946 is inspired by a children's novel by Michael Morpurgo, who is best-known for his novel of *War Horse* which was adapted into blockbuster stage and screen versions. Morpurgo himself teamed up with Emma Rice, former artistic director of Kneehigh and currently with Shakespeare's Globe in London, to adapt his novel for the stage. The result is a pure delight and like *War Horse* before

it, filled with animals depicted in amazing puppet form.

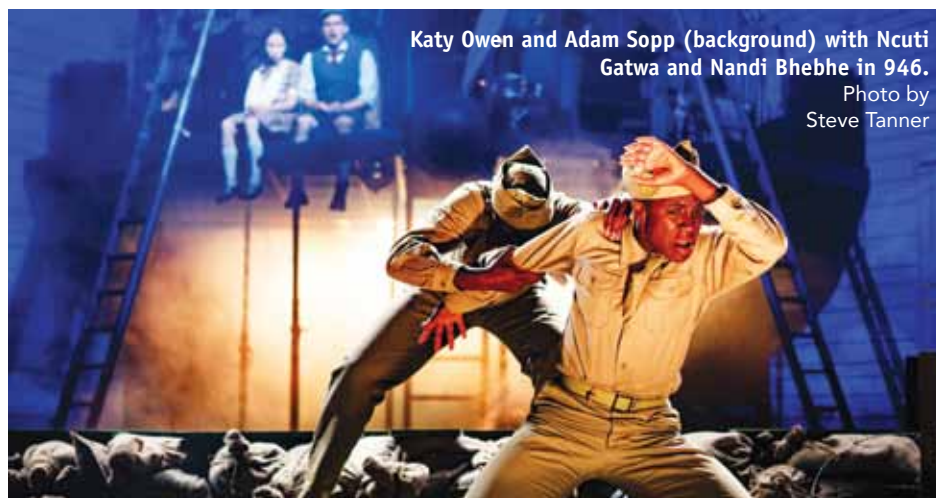
The initial plotline for *946* revolves around a head-strong little girl named Lily Tregenza (Katy Owen) who is obsessed with her mischievous cat named Adolphus Tips. Lily's wartime life is not only upended when evacuee children from London crowd into her rural neighborhood, but also when African-American G.I.s like Adi (Ncuti Gatwa) and Harry (Nandi Bhebhe) arrive to train for the planned D-Day landings.

Yet the title number also represents the 946 soldiers who were killed due to miscommunication and friendly fire in one of the Allied Forces' worst training disasters, so there is a very dark and serious side to this ostensibly children's theater piece. Otherwise *946* is great fun thanks to its amazing ensemble who are all multi-talented as actors, dancers, musicians, singers and puppeteers. And depending upon the moment, the ensemble also become drag artists since nearly every performer plays both male and female characters throughout the course of the show.

Although *946* could have delved deeper into U.S.-imposed racial segregation that occurred in the U.K. during WWII, this children's play does teach vital lessons in patience, tolerance and fighting for what's right. *946* may be targeted at families with children, but it's truly an entertaining and timely theater piece for all.

Kneehigh's tour of *946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips* continues through Sunday, March 5, in the Bram Goldsmith Theater of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 470 N. Canon Drive, Beverly Hills. Tickets are \$39-\$99; call 310-246-3800 or visit TheWallis.org.

The production then plays from Thursday, March 16, through Sunday, April 9, at St. Ann's Warehouse, 45 Water St., Brooklyn, New York. Tickets are \$35-\$71. Call 718-254-8779 or visit StAnnsWarehouse.org.



Katy Owen and Adam Sopp (background) with Ncuti Gatwa and Nandi Bhebhe in *946*.

Photo by
Steve Tanner

THEATER REVIEW

My Brother's Keeper: The Story of the Nicholas Brothers

Playwright: Young Jean Lee

At: Steppenwolf Theatre,

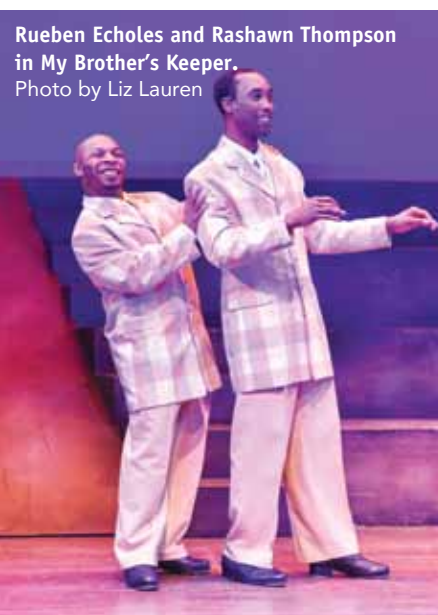
1650 N. Halsted St.

Tickets: \$20-\$89

Runs through: March 19

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Rueben D. Echoles wrote the script for this 41st-anniversary season revival of the show premiering in 2010. The Black Ensemble senior company member is also claims playbill credit for composing eight of the score's 21 songs, choreographing the breathtaking dance sequences, designing the dazzling costumes and wigs, and directing the athletic performers that make it all look so easy.



Rueben Echoles and Rashawn Thompson in *My Brother's Keeper*. Photo by Liz Lauren

He could probably play all the characters, too, but since this is live theater and not film, his onstage contribution is limited to a single role.

If asked to name North American Theater's most famous male dancers, the average person (depending on the age) might cite Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Gregory Hines, Savion Glover or Michael Jackson. The roots of these iconic hoofers' prowess, however, lie in the "flash dance" stylings (not to be confused with Flashdance, of the 1980s) of Fayard and Harold Nicholas, two African-American talents whose inspirational journey from the big-band ballrooms of Philadelphia to the jazz clubs of New York City's Harlem Renaissance. Over a career spanning nearly a century—sometimes faltering, but never forsaking, their muse, the siblings led exemplary lives, their agile feet never breaking stride until the Grim Reaper extinguished the spotlights forever.

The capacious stage (nearly twice the size than that of its debut at the Uptown Hull House) could have extended the evening's duration while slowing the narrative pace. This trap is deftly avoided

by Echoles' lyrics serving as expository transitions streamlining the dramatic progress, even as the brevity of the individual musical numbers likewise reduces the time devoted to undiluted spectacle.

The bigger performance space also accommodates such splendid turns as Vincent Jordan's ebullient Cab Calloway impression, a brass section spread out the width of the stage picture for maximum visibility, a grand drape curtain on runners whose very sound invoke nostalgia in playgoers of a certain age, and a wide staircase for the Nicholas duo's signature leapfrog-descending jump-splits.

Echoles and Rashawn Thompson reprise their roles as Harold and Fayard Nicholas with no evidence of fatigue, although rest periods are provided by Dwight Neal and Shari Addison as the Nicholas parents, Jessica Seals and Taylay Thomas the most prominent Nicholas wives and a chorus wearing smiles as bright as the taps on a new pair of shoes.

THEATER REVIEW

Gender Breakdown

Created by: Dani Bryant, with more than 200 contributors

At: The Vault at Collaboraction Studios in Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Tickets: 312-226-9633 or

Collaboraction.org; \$20-\$30

Runs through: March 19

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Gender Breakdown is an unashamedly proud piece of protest theater. Headed by writer Dani Bryant and director Erica Vannon, this devised world premiere for Collaboraction thoroughly highlights the many inequities and indignities faced

by female-identified artists working in Chicago's lauded theater scene.

The many bona fides to Gender Breakdown include its thorough research. In terms of quantifiable data, more than 200 Chicago theater artists were interviewed. Gender Breakdown also drew from a DePaul University Master Thesis study researched by Kay Kron and Mariah Schultz looking at hiring parity across Jeff Award-nominated Chicago-area theaters from the 2015-16 season.

Gender Breakdown also proudly features an all-female-identified crew and diverse cast of 10 performers, who each share qualitative personal stories. Overt and covert racism, sexism, ageism and body shaming are all topics that get prominent stage time.

Chicago's "Not in Our House" collective that assists women to speak out about behind-the-

scenes injustices is also mentioned. The cast not only referred to last year's scandal involving the former Profiles Theatre, but also obliquely (and speedily) worked in last week's collapse of Dead Writers Collective following allegations of harassment and emotional abuse from its leadership.

Oh, yes: There are hearty helpings of ironic humor to prevent Gender Breakdown from just being a non-stop harangue. In particular, a stepping-forward game of role requirements for auditions became an exercise of "can-you-believe-this?" eye-rolling.

Gender Breakdown is open about its own deficiencies when it comes to a lack of a transgender performer. Gender-non-conforming dramaturg and cast member Kate Hawbaker-Krohn brings this up by asking the wide-reaching question of what characteristics qualify as "female."

Yet Gender Breakdown really should have gone further by disclosing how and why Kron and Schultz's research into the 2015-16 season deliberately excluded musicals from the figures that get rattled off near the end of the show.

Structurally, Gender Breakdown also could have done more to differentiate when stories were actually from the performers' own perspective or if they belonged to someone else like an unseen interviewee.

Far from being a wallowing exercise in victimhood, Gender Breakdown allows local female-identified artists to share their grievances and joys about working in the Chicago theater scene. For many audiences, the show will be eye-opening to local gender biases, while for others it will just affirm what often goes unsaid.

THEATER REVIEW

Uncle Vanya

Playwright: Anton Chekhov:

Translation: Annie Baker

At: Goodman Theatre, Owen

Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.

Tickets: 312-443-3800 or

GoodmanTheatre.org; \$20-\$59

Runs through: March 19

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Playwright Annie Baker famously tested the patience of audiences with her drawn-out Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *The Flick*. So it would make sense that Baker would also be keen to write a new translation of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*—a Russian "comedy" where arguably not much happens plot-wise, though most of the characters are certifiably disillusioned with dashed dreams by the end.

Baker's easily conversational 2012 adaptation of *Uncle Vanya* makes a strong and secure Chica-

go debut courtesy of the Goodman Theatre. This production marks the 30th-anniversary season of Robert Falls' tenure as the Goodman's artistic director, and it's an appropriate choice—even if the characters regretfully reflect on much of the wasted time in their lives throughout the course of the play.

Rather than keeping *Vanya* set in the time of its creation in the late 19th century, Falls has pushed up the action several decades (as reflected by the occasional modern chair and antique radio in Todd Rosenthal's robustly decaying set design). This may slightly jar when characters refer to offstage "peasants," though perhaps Falls wanted to emphasize that even under Communist rule that the lives of poor rural folks didn't drastically change all that much.

To bring the contained and jarringly explosive dramatic bursts of *Uncle Vanya* to life, Falls has assembled an appealing ensemble. Prominently cast are two Steppenwolf Theatre ensemble members in the key roles of *Vanya* (a highly strung Tim Hopper) and his niece, *Sonya* (a practical and heartbreaking Caroline Neff).

Marton Csokas makes for a fascinatingly gruff Astrov, the alcoholic doctor who like so many in the play becomes obsessed with the beautifully unattainable Yelena (a truly fascinating Kristen Bush). She is unhappily married to the retired professor Alexander Serebryakov (an appropriately abrasive and oblivious David Darlow).

Mary Ann Thebus is a joy as the blunt-talking elderly nanny Marina, while Larry Neumann, Jr. makes for a sometimes unsettling presence as the neighboring impoverished landowner Telegin (aka Waffles thanks to his exaggerated puffy skin-condition makeup).

Although all the characters may long for drastic change, there is also a safety in their disappointing return to stasis and the way things have always been by the end. Falls' take on Baker's recent *Vanya* adaptation insightfully brings out the characters' hurt of missed chances and resignation that they won't be getting what they want. It's definitely not a happy end, but a realistic one that also feels rich after so many emotions churn and get tamped down just beneath the surface.

CRITICS' PICKS

Blizzard '67, 16th Street Theater, Berwyn, extended through March 11. It's an exceptionally well-done revival of Jon Steinhagen's play marks the 50th anniversary of the Big Blow which paralyzed Chicago. JA

By the Bog of Cats, The Artistic Home, through March 26. Ireland's ancient ecological graveyards provide the setting for a heartbreaking tale of Love Gone Wrong rendered with all the operatic grandeur of classical tragedy by one of Chicago's most under-recognized ensembles. MSB

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Paramount Theatre, Aurora, through March 19. Director Jim Corti delivers a gloriously grandiose staging of Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's macabre musical masterpiece. The staging would feel right at home in any opera house. SCM

The Wolf at the End of the Block, Teatro Vista at the Biograph, through March 5. Martyrs wholly without sin being in short supply nowadays, good causes often demand compromises in order to accomplish their goals, and nobody parses this irony better than Ike Holter. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

'Watermelon Woman' celebrates 20 years with re-release

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

It's been 20 years since filmmaker Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* debuted to audiences across the country and brought one of the first depictions of Black lesbian identity to movie screens.

The *Watermelon Woman* was Dunye's first feature film, and it was the first feature film that a Black lesbian made.

The film tells the story of Cheryl (Dunye), a twentysomething Black lesbian struggling to make a documentary about Fae Richards, a beautiful and elusive 1930s Black film actress popularly known as "The Watermelon Woman."

While uncovering the meaning of Richards' life, Cheryl experiences a total upheaval in her own life. Her love affair with Diana (Guinevere Turner, of *Go Fish* fame), a beautiful white woman, and her interactions with the gay and Black communities are subject to the criticism from her best friend, Tamara (Valerie Walker).

At its release in 1997, *The Watermelon Woman* brought excitement that the Black lesbian identity was finally being examined in filmmaking.

The film was part of a wave of movies being that LGBT filmmakers made in the early 1990s—dubbed New Queer Cinema—that looked at queer identities outside of a heteronormative lens.

"It was an exciting time, the building up to the making of *The Watermelon Woman*," Dunye told *Windy City Times*.

Dunye had made a series of short films prior to *The Watermelon Woman*, all of which were gaining buzz around New York.

"What it was doing was filling a void," she said. "It was putting a spotlight on an identity that wasn't seen before and definitely needed to be heard."



Cheryl Dunye.

Photo courtesy of First Run Features

While New Queer Cinema and *The Watermelon Woman* brought a lot of promise about what might come next, in many ways little has changed 20 years later, as Black lesbians still rarely see their stories told on movie screens or even small screens.

"In those in-between years, there was less and less funding for any American arts made by the people, for the people, about the people," Dunye said.

One reason might actually be because of the attention *The Watermelon Woman* received.

The film depicted a lesbian sex scene that one critic said was "the hottest dyke sex scene ever recorded on celluloid." It caught the attention of Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Michigan), who set about trying to disrupt funding from the National En-

dowment for the Arts, which had provided Dunye with a \$31,500 individual arts grant.

"I think it was the last [individual arts grant] because of the controversy around the arts funding and cultural production. The conversation got very loud in the moment," Dunye said.

She noted that, today, that same conversation is happening with reports that the soon-to-be-announced federal budget will propose cuts to the NEA as well as other arts and cultural funding arms.

"I definitely feel like that sound is back again," she said. "It's quite interesting to see that the culture has not grown, that it's going backwards."

She added, "It is so different when you go abroad. When I show my work at film festivals abroad, there is tons of support for the arts in comparable cultures. ... I mean, this year, seeing Spanish or Portuguese filmmakers who are queer from different cities and regions in those countries get tons of support. It's sad, but it's not a surprise at this point."

Dunye said that, without financial support, films like *The Watermelon Woman* don't get made.

She added that many of the filmmakers working during the early 1990s also headed to Hollywood by the end of the decade, when they were able to work, but not necessarily tell the stories in the same vein as that of New Queer Cinema. Many of them focused on cable TV, for instance.

"Once those streams closed down you don't see the work being made and you see people trying to tell their stories in different formats. That's more in my mind what happened," she said. "It just got shifted and, therefore, you don't get as varied of content or no content at all."

Dunye said the LGBT films that do seem to gain support and attract attention today don't take the same risks as the films of the early '90s.

"I mean *Pariah*, an independent film that got a lot of attention when it came out and found a way to do it, but there's not a lot of stuff that is taking that risk and telling those stories like *The Watermelon Woman*."

"There are others that are trying to, again, not just make entertainment happen for queer filmmaking, but to make culture in that way like *The Watermelon Woman* did and talk about something a little bit deeper."

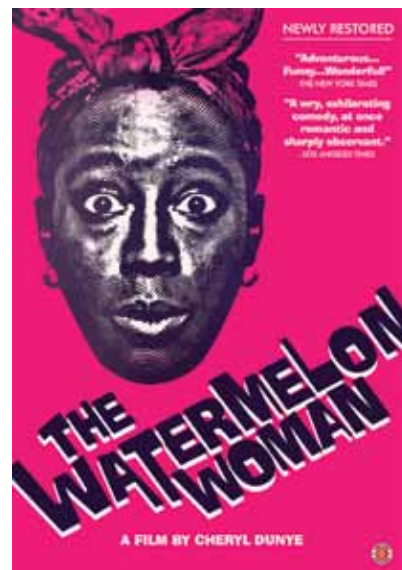
Dunye said despite the lack of momentum in the past two decades, she is hopeful about the

future.

"I feel like it's a great time to be making work right now," she said.

She said looking at the Oscar nominees and more mainstream filmmaking of the past year there are changes on the horizon, not just in terms of diversity but how films are being made and told, such as *Moonlight* and *I Am Not Your Negro*, which Dunye said is really the most exciting part for her.

"*Moonlight* is definitely telling a story in a different way, beyond its content and its direction and all those elements, how the team worked together to make it and who the team was, those



things are exciting when you look at the whole picture and I feel hopeful."

Dunye is currently working on turning her short *Black is Blue*, which is on *The Watermelon Woman* re-release, into a feature film.

"It's an afro-futuristic trans love story set in Oakland, between a Black trans man and a Black trans woman and an AI bot that lives with them and observes their love," she said.

She said the film should be completed in a couple of years.

The Watermelon Woman has been re-released on DVD and on iTunes.

Cleveland, Weeden at WC&F March 2

Vita E. Cleveland and Kayla Weeden will conduct a poetry reading at Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., on Thursday, March 2, at 7:30 p.m.

Chicago-based Cleveland(she/they)—a Black trans poet and percussionist from Cleveland, Ohio—writes and performs poetry with an emphasis on activism as "disruptive narrative." Weeden(she/her) is a queer poet in her junior year at DePaul University.

See WomenAndChildrenFirst.com.

'In-Betweens' in on VOD March 7

The award-winning documentary *Kings, Queens, & In-Betweens*—which focuses on the drag kings, drag queens and transgender performers in Columbus, Ohio—will receive a national VOD launch on March 7 (including iTunes, Amazon and Google Play), as well as a limited theatrical release on March 3.

Director Gabrielle Burton is a Wexner Center for the Arts artist residency fellow who won the Ohio Arts Council's Artist of Excellence award in filmmaking, and was selected to give a TEDx talk on the film.

The trailer is at <https://youtu.be/3nBULq8d-jQ>.

SPOTLIGHT

Jackie Taylor is well known as the dynamic founder and executive director of Chicago's 41-year-old Black Ensemble Theater. But Taylor also is an acclaimed performer in her own right, and her one-woman show **From Jackie with Love (What the World Needs Now)** features songs, monologues and more from her career in show business. This fundraiser show plays 7:30 p.m. Monday through Wed., March 6-8, at Black Ensemble Theater, 4450 N. Clark St. Regular tickets are \$65. Tickets for a VIP event on Wed., March 8 (includes fundraising reception) are \$150; call 773-769-4451 or visit



BlackEnsemble.org.

Caption: Black Ensemble Theater founder and executive director Jackie Taylor. Photo by Daniel Nicholas

Illinois star wrestler comes out as gay

Athlete and singer are dating at Stevenson, attended homecoming together

BY ROSS FORMAN

Dylan Geick was at home in north suburban Buffalo Grove, talking with his younger sister, Johnna, one day early last March. She had heard a fellow Stevenson High School singer who she thought was amazing.

Dylan heard him and also thought he was talented, so he sent a message with Instagram, with the witty line, "Wanna piano and chill?"

Dylan, 18, a senior and the school's star, elite-level wrestler, soon started hanging out with Grant Mower, 18, also a senior, who is in the school's choir and writes his own music.

"It was kind of this random circumstance," that they met at a school of more than 4,000 students, Dylan said.

After a couple weeks, both came out to each other and they started dating, though both were still in the closet to the school at the time.

"People started noticing that I was hanging out with him," said Dylan, who admitted that they were "sneaking around" to see each other.

Then one day late last March, Geick was eating lunch with five girlfriends, and the topic turned to another student who had then-recently come out.

As a joke, one of the girls turned to him and said, "So Dylan, when are you coming out?"

"In the moment, I just didn't feel like keeping the secret anymore. I replied, 'Actually, I am gay,'" Dylan said.

They were all shocked.

And Geick admitted he was dating a fellow Stevenson student.

Word spread, quickly—really quickly.

His phone instantly was blowing up with messages, mostly from students asking if it was true, that the stud athlete was, in fact, gay.

Students and athletes from eight other area schools also messaged Dylan.

All were supportive. All.

"It was a pretty awesome reaction, to be honest," Dylan said of the response. "I didn't really know what to expect. I knew that the environment at Stevenson was amazingly progressive and this is a pretty liberal area, so I knew there definitely would be support, but not as wide spread as it ended up being.

"I haven't endured any harassment in the school."

Dylan and Grant Mower are still together, close to their one-year anniversary of dating. They attended the Chicago Pride Parade together last summer and went to Homecoming together this past fall.

Dylan will attend Columbia University in the New York in the fall, where he will continue his wrestling career. Mower, who lives in nearby Long Grove, will attend New York University in the fall.

"I didn't realize how connected and supportive the LGBT community is," Dylan said. "From the moment I came out, there was outreach from so many people, [offering] guidance and advice. It surprised me how much people cared in a positive way, how much they really wanted to help me.

"To the kids in the closet who are worried [about coming-out], there is such a huge community that wants to help, and that was pretty surprising to me."

Dylan is convinced that sharing his coming-out story has had "pretty direct impact" on some Stevenson students and also students he has never met, especially in the sporting world.

"It's not like I adopted this issue. I'm just true to myself and just like to live unapologetically," said Dylan, who has, since coming-out, heard from two elite, high-level Illinois wrestlers, among others, offering their support for him, though each is still in the closet.

Dozens more, both current and former wrestlers, have reached out to Dylan, he said, most in the closet.

Dylan has been supported by his team—his teammates and coaches—100 percent, though he admits he was "super nervous" that might not be the case.

Stevenson's wrestling team is very ethnically-diverse, including several Russians, Dylan said. Some of his teammates had, by their own admission, homophobic views, "so I was worried how they would react" to my coming-out, Dylan said.

Take, for instance, wrestling teammate Nikita Nepomnyaschiy, who sent a text to Dylan less than an hour after he confirmed that he is gay during lunch.

Nikita wrote, "Hey, are you gay?"

Dylan started typing a long reply, but before he could even send it, Nikita wrote back, saying that it's no issue and he cracked a joke.

"That completely removed all of the tension," Dylan said. "He was accepting from the first second."

Everyone on his wrestling team has been supportive.

Robert Pavlovich, for instance, is one of Dylan's best friends and a fellow wrestler—he gave Dylan a big hug the first time he saw Dylan after coming-out.

"Those reactions were a huge weight off my shoulders," Dylan said. "I think I created closer, stronger bonds with all those guys through this whole [coming-out] process."

There was, though, one opponent who, via social media, hinted that he knew Dylan was gay—and the two were set to wrestle in the Illinois state tournament, in about 30 minutes.

"It wasn't like he said anything [on social media posts], but I got the message that he was trying to mess with me, trying to get in my head. It pissed me off," Dylan said. "I took care of it on the mat."

Dylan won that match, handily.

"I don't think he's a bad kid; I think he's com-



Above: Dylan Geick (right) and boyfriend Grant Mower. Below: Geick wrestling. Photos courtesy of Geick



petitive," Dylan said. They spoke briefly after the match, "and I don't harbor any resentment toward him."

Dylan was a marvel on the mat for Stevenson as both a junior and senior, compiling a combined 86-8 record. He was 43-3 this season—and he's finished fourth in the state tournament each of the past two seasons. He's a three-time conference finalist (champion once), three-time regional finalist (champion twice), and a sectional champ. He was a USAW All-American in 2015 and three-time Illinois Freestyle National Team member.

Mower attended many of Dylan's matches, and even drove Johnna, 15, a sophomore at Stevenson, to the state tournament.

Dylan has attended Mower's singing performances, as Mower is an aspiring musician who was admitted to Berklee School of Music in Boston as well as other highly-competitive music schools, though he opted for NYU.

Homecoming last fall "was awesome—it just felt normal," Dylan said.

HRW holding 'Kiki' screening March 10

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) Chicago 2017 Film Series, in partnership with Black Cinema House, will present a showing of Kiki at Stony Island Arts Bank, 6760 S. Stony Island Ave., on Friday, March 10, at 7 p.m.

Kiki offers insight into a safe space created and governed by LGBTQ youths of color, with the result being a coming-of-age story that celebrates agency, resilience—and voguing.

Also, Zach Stafford will moderate a panel about defining and connecting three themes in which the audience can engage with the film: international/U.S. LGBT-rights issues (HRW's Tico Almeida), the local housing and community issues (with academic/performer Julian K. Glover and community organizer Monica James) and the personal (Kiki co-writer Twiggy Pucci Garcon).

See FF.HRW.org/Chicago.

'Art, AIDS and Activism' March 3

The Out at CHM program "Art, AIDS, and Activism in Chicago" will take place Friday, March 3, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St.

The panel discussion begins at 6:30 p.m. and includes a reception at 5:30 p.m.

The panel will draw on two exhibitions on view in Chicago—"ArtAIDSAmerica," at the Alphawood Gallery and "One day this kid will get larger," at the DePaul Art Museum. Joseph Varisco, founder of "Queer, Ill, and Okay" and project coordinator at the Alphawood Foundation, will moderate.

Admission to each program is \$20 for the general public, and \$15 for students and the museum's members; visit <https://www.chicagohistory.org/outatchm>.

Beverly Wedding Expo to take place March 19

CHICAGO—On Sunday, March 19, South Side couples are invited to attend the first Beverly Wedding Expo at the Beverly Arts Center (BAC). The event will feature wedding vendors from Beverly and beyond, including caterers, bakers, florists, photographers, hair and make-up artists, musicians, invitation designers and more.

Attendees can meet local vendors, sample food and sweets, hear live music and check out the latest wedding trends.

"We're excited to offer this event for South Side couples," said Heather Ireland Robinson, executive director of the BAC. "We're looking forward to showcasing the BAC, which is a wedding venue, and tons of amazingly talented wedding businesses in our area that couples may not know are here."

The event features more than 50 local vendors and is being led by a planning team including the BAC staff and two local vendors, Diego Ivan Martirena of Maplewood Photography and Laura Hayes of Anticipation Events.

Stephen English, founder of The Blossom Boys florist, said they have been "thrilled to discover numerous South Side same sex couples we have helped with weddings..."

"So far, the response to this event has been overwhelmingly positive," said Diego Ivan Martirena. "The expo is a great way for engaged couples to find wedding vendors so close to home."

The Beverly Wedding Expo is Sunday, March 19, 2017, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$10 per person or \$15 per couple and available for purchase online at beverlyartcenter.org, on the phone by calling 773-445-3838, or in person at the Beverly Arts Center.

'Empire' stars visit BYC

MAC Cosmetics Viva Glam/MAC AIDS Fund spokespeople—and Empire co-stars—Taraji P. Henson and Jussie Smollett visited Howard Brown Health's Broadway Youth Center (BYC) on Feb. 13.

After several years in temporary quarters, BYC has a permanent home. BYC held the grand opening of its new Uptown facility at 4009 N. Broadway on Feb. 22.



From left: Empire's Jussie Smollett and Taraji P. Henson, MAC AIDS Fund's Nancy Mahon and Howard Brown CEO David Munar. Photo by Jeff Schear

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Queer Swedish queen featured in upcoming events

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

To cap its 30th-anniversary year, the Newberry Consort will be showcasing the life of Queen Christina of Sweden: The Girl King March 3 (Newberry Library's Ruggles Hall), March 4 (Northwestern University's Galvin Recital Hall in Evanston) and March 5 (University of Chicago's Logan Center for the Arts).

Artistic Director Ellen Hargis is the creator of "Christina of Sweden: The Girl King."

"Christina's birth gender was always ambiguous, and she displayed her masculine and feminine behaviors equally and openly," said Hargis. "She received a boy's education and adopted male dress whenever she could—often wearing trousers with a skirt over the top and preferring the flat boots favored by men. She wore makeup, but hardly bothered with her hairstyle. She rode horses astride and swore like a sailor, but was almost anti-feminist in her views about women's roles in society."

"While she was always a target of gossip, she seems to have made no effort to become more conventional—in fact, she almost seemed to de-

light in the fuss people made about her. She certainly didn't suffer societal setbacks because of her non-conformist attitudes, save the pressure she was frequently under to marry. She modeled herself on Queen Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen, and whether or not Christina was a virgin, she never married, although she had several celebrated affairs with both men and women."

Hargis decided to focus on Christina's life because the early 17th century is her favorite period of music.

"It was a time of huge change; of the invention of opera, the development of public theaters and the rise of virtuosity, divas and star instrumentalists," said Hargis. "Of course, the queen herself is a famous and fascinating character, but when we learned just how many of our favorite musicians she had personal contact with, it seemed obvious to trace her life and journey from Sweden to Rome, via the music she experienced along the way."

Hargis noted that the process of selecting the music for this production was easier than other productions since there is a lot of documentation about Queen Christina.

"We have records of the music holdings of the Tre Kronor Palace where she spent her childhood, manuscripts of the opera Cesti wrote for the occasion of her baptism where she is mentioned by name and court accounts of many other pieces she was known to enjoy and musicians who were in her employ," said Hargis.

Hargis explained that some of the music is unknown to modern audiences whereas some is still frequently performed today. In constructing the program, she used many of her favorite composers who traveled in Queen Christina's circle and chose the pieces from those composers that illustrated the narration included in the production.

"Sara Paretzky is the narrator of the program," said Hargis. "The readings are composed of his-



Queen Christina.

torical anecdotes, excerpts from Christina's letters and reports from courtiers about her various visits to foreign leaders that describe this exotic young woman. As we trace her life story, we'll perform music from each country and decade on period instruments she knew: harpsichord, lute, lirone, violins and voices. We'll be projecting images along with supertitles for the sung texts, so the audience will be viewing various portraits of the Queen at different ages, pictures of the places she lived and some of the music manu-

scripts we work from."

"Christina was in some ways and erratic and even irresponsible, but she had great strength of character and was masterly at navigating the political and social thickets of the 17th century," said Paretzky. "For a woman of that stature to pursue her own wishes and desires against a vast array of male power figures is quite extraordinary."

Countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen will be featured in the program. He is a participant in Newberry Consort's Young Artist Mentorship Program where young musicians are given the opportunity to perform alongside seasoned players and singers, gain insight into historical performance and forge professional networks in the field.

"I'm very excited to be able to work with such a world class group of early music interpreters," said Cohen. "The folks I'll have the chance to sing and play with in this concert program are among the finest devotees of this repertoire alive today and I can't wait to learn from them through the process of performing together."

Other show participants include Hargis (soprano), David Douglass and Brandi Berry (violins), Jeremy Ward (bass violin), Christopher Bagan and Charles Metz (organ and harpsichord), Lucas Harris (theorbo) and Erin Headley (lirone and viola da gamba).

"Our concerts aren't just sit-in-your-seat-and-listen affairs," said Hargis. "We perform music nobody else in Chicago puts on—repertoire we dig out of archives and reconstruct if necessary. We strive to provide multi-media context for the rare music we present, whether it's a staged presentation, narration, projected images and supertitles or something we haven't thought of yet."

"We always have an informal pre-concert chat 30 minutes before the show and invite questions from our audience. By embracing a wider context for the music, we discover how much we have in common with past societies and world views—and expand our imaginations along the way. It's not your grandparents' chamber music."

See <http://newberryconsort.org/> for more information about the Consort and to buy tickets (\$35 to \$55).



Newberry Consort's Ellen Hargis.
Photo by Jennifer Girard

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'Moonlight' mistake, omission part of 89th Oscars

A gasp-inducing snafu and an anger-provoking omission were among the developments that marked an Academy Award event that went smoothly—until the very last moments.

In what might be one of the most bizarre endings to any awards show, LGBT film *Moonlight* won the Best Picture Oscar. But it took a while, as presenters Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway actually pronounced *La La Land* (which took a total of six awards) as the winner.

La La Land's producers even gave three acceptance speeches before the mistake was announced. *Moonlight* ended up winning three awards, including Best Supporting Actor (for Mahershala Ali, who became the first Muslim actor to win an Oscar) and Adapted Screenplay (for Barry Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney).

The previously mentioned omission—which received considerably less coverage—came from previous Oscar winner Patricia Arquette, who was upset that sibling Alexis Arquette was among those not showcased in the show's "In Memoriam" segment. Patricia tweeted, "@TheAcademy #OscarsSoAntiTrans Only 70 Credits to your name! 4th generation actor @AlexisArquette I love you

! #Snub."

Going back to the *Moonlight* mistake, Windy City Times received a statement from accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers that read, "We sincerely apologize to *Moonlight*, *La La Land*, Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway and Oscar® viewers for the error that was made during the award announcement for Best Picture. The presenters had mistakenly been given the wrong category envelope and when discovered, was immediately corrected. We are currently investigating how this could have happened, and deeply regret that this occurred."

Speaking of *Moonlight*, McCraney (during the Adapted Screenplay win) said, "This goes out to all those Black and brown boys and girls and non-gender-conforming [individuals] who don't see themselves. We're trying to show you you and us. So thank you, thank you—this is for you."

In other show-related developments, Viola Davis became the first African-American actress to achieve such an Oscar, Tony and Emmy for strictly acting. (Whoopi Goldberg has an EGOT—Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony—but the last award is for producing.) Also, *La La Land*'s Damian Chazelle became the youngest person to win Best



Barry Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney at the Oscars. Screen shot

Director. In addition, Lin-Manuel Miranda (*Hamilton*) fell short of becoming the youngest EGOT winner when *La La Land*'s "City of Stars" topped his song "How Far I'll Go" (from *Moana*) for Best Original Song.

Jimmy Kimmel hosted the event, mixing politics, food that dropped from the ceiling, tourists and his faux feud with actor Matt Damon.

—Andrew Davis

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OSCAR NIGHT @ CENTER ON HALSTED

Glitz and glamour on the Red Carpet, Sunday, February 26.
Photos by Jerry Nunn

Sidetrack's OUTspoken! Series: March's featured storytellers



Rita Adair



Lindsay Eanet



Russ Goeltenbott



Abby McEnany



Clark Rogers

The March edition of OUTspoken! LGBTQ storyteller series takes place Tuesday, March 7, at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St. Doors open at 6 pm, stories begin at 7.

See www.outspokenchicago.com for more info.

—**Rita Adair** is a retired social worker and sensitive crimes specialist. Currently, she is an activist, author and mother of three grown children and six grandchildren (along with previously fostering 23 teenaged girls). Rita comes from a very eclectic, large family full of color, travel, fame and fantastic design.

—**Lindsay Eanet** can be seen around town at shows like Is This A Thing?, Essay Fiesta, You're Being Ridiculous and Story Jam, and next to you at your favorite bar, skipping over all your songs on the jukebox. She has a weakness for reality competition shows and cries an average of four times every episode of American Ninja Warrior. But enough about her, let's talk about you.

—**Garcia**. Actor. Poet. Writer. Young Fugitive. Co-founder of Queer House: a safe and inclusive space that welcomes Chicago youth of color to share their art.

—**Russ Goeltenbott** grew up in Skokie, Illinois, where he graduated from St. Peter's Catholic grade school, and Niles North High School. Russ has a B.A. in Business and Management from Northeastern Illinois University. He moved to Chicago and worked for over 30 years with various universities and agencies in student finance administration. He is currently consulting and assisting college students with paying for college and financial literacy.

Through the years, Russ has sung for various church choirs and events. Over the last two years, Russ has performed three sold-out cabaret shows at the Skokie Theater. He is currently preparing for his next show at the Skokie Theatre on April 1, entitled Russ Goeltenbott: No Foolin'.

—**Abby McEnany** is an actor, improviser, and writer who performs at various locations around Chicago, including iO and The Second City. You can see her weekly in Virgin Daiquiri, the acclaimed all-women team at iO, Wednesdays at 8.

—**Clark Rogers** is a sex professional from the southern United States. He is passionate about using his small but growing social media platform to educate men who have sex with men about everything from how to improve their sex lives to their shared history and social responsibilities. He has lived in Chicago for five years.

the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Vermilion

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Yes, River North spot **Vermilion** (10 W. Hubbard St.; TheVermilionRestaurant.com) has diners seeing red—literally.

True to its name, the restaurant has red sprinkled through, whether it's one seat out of a set, or a cascade of red light bulbs on a wall—giving



Vermilion's artichoke pakoras served on a bike.
PR photo

the place a seductive vibe that makes it the perfect spot for a date. (However, the atmosphere is more than seductive, making it a spot that friends or co-workers can patronize as well.)

I previously visited this Indian/Latin American fusion spot a few years ago, and I still remembered my main complaint about the cuisine: Although everything was delicious, some of the items didn't taste like the advertised ingredients. Maybe my palate was off that night—but there was a definite difference with my most recent visit.

The artichoke pakoras are distinctly unique—not for their taste, but for the way they were served: on a miniature tricycle. The fritters themselves were slightly bland, although the eggplant-coconut chutney certainly saved them. The duck vindaloo (with pomegranate molasses) left a more favorable impression, from a gustatory standpoint, as did the cilantro tamarind paneer.

(By the way, most of the meat-based appetizers

have vegetarian substitutes. For example, vegetarians can opt for portabella instead of toasted coconut shrimp.)

As for the main dishes, my friend went for the plantain-crusted whitefish and the butter chicken. The fish was probably my favorite dish of the night, with plantain and tomatillo sauce enhancing and not overwhelming the seafood. The butter chicken turned out to be a delicious choice as well, thanks to the creamy gravy.

The meal concluded with a dessert trio of shahi tukra (nut cake), flourless chocolate cake and mango flan. The first item—sponge cake with cardamom, topped with pistachios and almonds—was a runaway favorite for me.

So grab a friend (or a date) and hit Vermilion. It's a wonderfully exotic experience.

Note: Restaurant profiles are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.



BILLY Masters

"I've known Matt SO long. When I first met Matt, I was the fat one!"—Jimmy Kimmel reveals his history with **Matt Damon** during his Academy Awards monologue.

OH MY GOD! You write a column, you send it off to the proofers and then everything changes in a matter of seconds. I'd love to blame crazy **Faye Dunaway** and doddering **Warren Beatty**. But ap-



Faye Dunaway (left) and Warren Beatty at the Oscars, just before they stepped in it. Screen shot

parently they were given an envelope that said, "Best Actress—**Emma Stone** for *La La Land*." Warren didn't know what to do, he looked at Faye (not known for being fast on her feet) and she said, "*La La Land*." Everyone from that film is giving speeches, my column is done, and—oh, wait—Jimmy Kimmel comes out to say there was a mistake. Warren explains what happened and the Best Picture is really *Moonlight*. Meanwhile, where the fuck is Faye?

I have a few other Oscar observations. I found Jimmy Kimmel quite entertaining. I loved seeing **Shirley MacLaine** rock out to **Justin Timberlake**. Who knew **Caitlyn Jenner** had anything to do with the OJ documentary? I could watch **Meryl Streep** eat Junior Mints all day. You know **Jennifer Aniston** wants her sunglasses back. I'm SO glad **Zsa Zsa** made the "In Memoriam" cut—although I'm sure someone wanted to put quotes around the term "actress." Honorary Oscar winner **Lynn Stalmaster** was the first casting director to pass on me. That didn't stop me from making a pass on his son, Lincoln. Due to sealed court documents, I can't say anything more—except when they call it a "gag order," they ain't kidding!

Speaking of Caitlyn, she just came out against her boyfriend, **Donald Trump**. She took umbrage at the dropping of federal protection for transgender students to use the bathroom of their gender identification in public schools. The feds claim that those matters should be decided by the states. But Cait still has hope, saying, "And you can still fix it. You made a promise to protect the LGBTQ community. Call me." And then she gave Donald a little wink.

I'm not going to get political with you. But I do want to take a moment and explain what happens when you take a civil liberty and put it in the hands of states—slavery. If, somehow, states could decide whether to allow slavery or not, Oprah would be running a network from a plantation—wearing shackles. You might like to think that nobody in their right mind would vote to bring back slavery. But you'd be wrong. That's why civil liberties are determined on a national level—so that an old Black woman who wants to sit anywhere on a bus in one state doesn't have to sit in the back in another; so that people of different races or even sexes won't be considered married in one state and living in sin in another;

and so that someone who wants to pee in the bathroom of the gender they identify with in one state won't get arrested for indecent exposure in another. It's that simple.

Here's some good news for those of you who are still devotees of daytime dramas. (Yes, I'm talking to you, **Chris Smith**, one of the scene-stealing stars of *Bear City 3*—which I refuse to see until I watch parts one and two.) NBC's last remaining sudser, *Days of Our Lives*, has been renewed for its 52nd season.

Some people got mad at me when I predicted—sight unseen—that the new TV series *Doubt* would get a swift cancellation. Many felt I should give it a chance. But I trust my instincts. Sure enough, after two episodes, it's "see you next Tuesday, Heigl." It's unfortunate that **Laverne Cox** had to be a part of this, but you hitch your wagon to **Katherine Heigl**, these things are bound to happen.

Unless you've been living under a rock, you've already heard about *Feud*, **Ryan Murphy's** six-part series about Bette Davis and Joan Crawford making *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. The series is based in part on the book *The Divine Feud*, by Shaun Considine, and a script called *Best Actress*, written by Michael Zam and Jaffe Cohen, best known for his work as one of the *Funny Gay Males* comedy troupe. The original script was written about a decade ago and was optioned by a few people—including Ryan Murphy, who, at one time, hoped to make it into a film.

One actress heavily campaigned for a part. And that actress is—drum roll please—Faye Dunaway! Yes, 25 years after she played Crawford in

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Mommie Dearest, Dunaway wanted to reprise the role. The obvious question is why? After all, she regularly credits "Mommie" for ruining her film career. And that's why she wanted to tackle the role again—to prove that the problem wasn't her skills as an actress. No, it was the fault of the script, the director, the editors, the producers, and possibly the craft service people. The fact that nobody seriously considered her is all the more tragic, because I bet she would have been AMAZING.

When Faye Dunaway is in the news again, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Hmmm—maybe she planned this. After all, who is everyone talking about? Faye Dunaway. And this is now an Oscar clip which will be re-played for decades to come. It will certainly live in infamy *BillyMasters.com*—the site that has a long memory (among other things). If you have a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Faye and Warren take part in another Oscar ceremony—aside from the inevitable "In Memoriam" sequence! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wed. March 1

Identity Unknown: Rediscovering Seven American Women Artists A reading, Q&A, and signing for Donna Seaman's new book, *Identity Unknown*. 7:00pm The Swedish American Museum, Center 5211 N. Clark St.; <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/author-party-donna-seaman-identity-unknown-rediscovering-seven-american-women-artists>

ACLU Tele-Town Hall on immigration Sign up to join immigration tele-town hall with Rebecca Glenberg, Senior Civil Liberties Staff Counsel at the ACLU of Illinois, and Mary Meg McCarthy, executive director at the National Immigrant Justice Center. 7:00pm Event takes place by phone. <https://action.aclu.org/illinois-tele-town-hall-conversation-about-immigration>

Thursday, March 2

Bright Light, Darkroom benefit auction and party Photography community annual benefit, a festive evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and an auction. All proceeds will support MoCP. VIP reception 5:30 pm. 6:30pm - 9:30pm Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), 610 S.



ART TO ART Friday, March 3

Joe Varisco will moderate the panel at "Art, AIDS and Activism in Chicago."
Image from Varisco

Michigan Ave. <http://www.colum.edu>
AVER Monthly Meeting Chicago Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, the national organization of LGBT veterans formerly known as Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA). 7:00pm Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted Chicago <http://www.averchicago.org/>

New Town Writers' Workshop Participants are asked to bring copies of their work so other writers and readers may follow the text. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Charmers Cafe, 1600 W Jarvis Ave.

Friday, March 3

Art, AIDS and Activism in Chicago Drawing on two exhibitions on view at Art AIDS America at the Alphawood Gallery and One day This Kid Will Get Larger at the DePaul Art Museum-this presentation examines artists who participated as activists during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and '90s and contemporary artists responding to that time and ongoing HIV health issues. \$20 general admission, \$15 member admission. 5:30pm - 7:30pm Chicago History Museum 1601 N Clark St., Chicago <https://www.chicagohistory.org/event/out-at-chm-art-aids-and-activism-in-chicago/>

SCOTCH 2017 bowling tournament Annual official International Gay Bowling Organization bowling tournament in Chicago. SCOTCH evolved from the long-running Chicago Pride Invitational (CPI). 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm registration at Waveland. 9:00 pm - 11:00 pm opening night party a location to be announced. Through March 5. 7:00pm Waveland Bowl 3700 N Western Chicago <http://www.scotchbowling.com/tournament/schedule>

Saturday, March 4

Gender-bending, family-friendly "Jack

and the Beanstalk: A Panto Adventure Panto refers to a traditional family-friendly genre that includes songs, gags, slapstick comedy, gender-bending actors, and plenty of topical humor for adults. Through April 22. \$15. Lap kids, ages 1 and under, free. 1:00pm Gorilla Tango Theatre 1919 N Milwaukee Ave Chicago 773-598-4549 Tickets: <http://www.gorillatango.com>

American Veterans for Equal Rights LG-BTQA veterans' fundraiser for a planned LGBTQ veteran monument near the corner of Halsted and Addison. Drink specials, raffle and grand prize 3 day 2 night weekend stay @ Hilton Phoenix. All welcome. 2:00pm - 6:00pm Big Jim's, 3503 N. Halsted

3rd annual International Woman's Day Dance Dj Tess and DJ OCD. Fundraiser hosted by the LBTQ Giving Council for community grants. 21+ All identities welcome. 7:00pm - 12:00am National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, 3015 W. Division St., Chicago

Sunday, March 5

aChurch4Me Sunday Worship Service Find inclusiveness, peace, comfort and prayer 11:00am aChurch4Me, 7366 N. Clark St., Chicago 773-373-9916 <http://www.achurch4me.org>

Hedwig and the Angry Inch Brunch at Kit Kat Win Tickets to the Broadway in Chicago Show. Diva Madam X will perform live. Raffles throughout the day, with three lucky participants winning a

pair of tickets to see Hedwig and the Angry Inch at Chicago's Oriental Theatre. Reservations by phone. 11:00am - 4:00pm Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club 3700 N Halsted Chicago 773-525-1111 <http://kitkatchicago.com>

Author Sara Paretsky to narrate Queen Christina concert Musical journey of the life of Queen Christina of Sweden, who lived from 1626 to 1689 and was an eccentric, gender-bending iconoclast far ahead of her time. \$35.-\$45.concert. 2:30pm Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts 915 E. 60th St Chicago <http://newberryconsort.org/who-was-queen-christina-of-sweden/>

Tuesday, March 7

OUTspoken! LGBTQ Storytelling at Sidetrack March storytellers: Rita Adair, Lindsay Eanet, Russ Goeltenbott, Garcia, Abby McEnany, Clark Rogers. Doors to MainBar open at 6pm, stories begin at 7pm. No Cover. Sidetrack, 3359 N. Halsted St.

Wed., March 8

Activism Series: Personal PAC Terry Cosgrove of Personal PAC and Andi Friedman of AF Advocacy discussing the status of reproductive rights in Illinois and the way forward. 7:00pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/event/activism-series-personal-pac>

WCGC, Treble Quire's 'Requiem' March 18

Windy City Performing Arts' Windy City Gay Chorus and Windy City Treble Quire will perform "Faure Requiem," under Artistic Director Dr. Eric Esparza, on Saturday, March 18, at 5 and 8 p.m. at First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington St.

A chamber orchestra and soloists will present this work alongside contemporary inspirational songs.

Admission is \$20 (general)-\$35 (limited reserved seating); visit WCPAFaureRequiem.bpt.me.

OUT Chicago broadcast March 12

MB Financial Bank and its LGBTQ Business Resource Group is sponsoring the OUT Chicago (WCPT AM 820) live remote broadcast from the Art AIDS America exhibition at the Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., on Sunday, March 12, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

This event will provide a panoramic historical perspective of the AIDS epidemic and will explore the future of AIDS research.

Admission to the exhibition is free; however, obtaining time admission passes is recommended; visit ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org.

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BOARD MEMBERS WANTED

PROJECT FIERCE CHICAGO is seeking board members to join our volunteer collective organizing board. We especially invite people of color, trans and gender non-conforming people to be involved with PFC at the collective leadership level. Email pfcvolunteering@gmail.com for an application & details. (3/15/17-4)

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