

# WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI, TRANS AND QUEER COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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 Photo courtesy of Cory Jobe



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 Photo courtesy of Richardson



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# ART-FELT

Photo by Sam Kirk

Sam Kirk's work makes its way across the city



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# WINDY CITY TIMES

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### WINDY CITY TIMES PRINT DATES:

Sept. 16, 2020	Oct. 28, 2020	Dec. 9, 2020
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Oct. 14, 2020	Nov. 25, 2020	

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[www.WindyCityTimes.com](http://www.WindyCityTimes.com)



## HORROR, UNMASKED

Matt Foreman writes of a horrific incident that happened to his husband after they told someone to wear a mask.

Photo of Francisco De Leon (left) and Matt Foreman courtesy of Roberta Sklar

## MORE THAN WORDS



Trans singer Kyler O' Neal discusses her new music video and poetry collection.

Photo by Alan Amaya

## EVENT HORIZON

Find out about events that have been cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

## THAT'S SHOW BIZ

Find out the latest about Sara Ramirez, Jeffree Star and the show The West Wing.

plus  
**DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

## Featured Properties



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COMPASS

# Members of Congress hold annual LGBTQ gathering online

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Members of Illinois' congressional delegation hosted a virtual edition of their annual LGBTQ breakfast the morning of Aug. 25.

Both political officials and community advocates participated in the event, which addressed, among other topics, the congressional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current census and the intricacies of voting in the upcoming election.

U.S. Reps. Robin Kelly (D-2), Mike Quigley (D-5), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-8) and Jan Schakowsky (D-9) all took part. U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) participated as well.

"We are in an unprecedented health and economic crisis, and trying to deal with systemic discrimination and racism that roils our society at the same time," said Krishnamoorthi, who then discussed the Heroes Act legislative package introduced in Congress.

The aid included in that bill, Krishnamoorthi added, is not a partisan issue: "I get questions every day from Democrats, Republicans and independents who happen to be leading their towns and villages, asking how they can get help to avoid layoffs and cuts in services. ... They are seeing their revenue drop in the pandemic."

Aisha Davis, director of policy for AIDS Foundation of Chicago, detailed the federal government's response to the pandemic, additionally noting that the state is facing a deficit of about \$6 billion. Davis said that AFC has been advocating a legislative agenda that would perpetuate broader systemic change in overlapping realms such as racial equity and healthcare access.

"We are hoping that the next package that comes from Congress includes some funding that enables states to bridge the gaps that these deficits are creating due to the pandemics," she added, noting that funding was especially important for programming assisting BIPOC communities as well as Ryan White Act-funded programs. "Right now, our conversations are not just going to focus on our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, but what the communities are going to look like after the pandemic has ended."

Schakowsky signaled her frustrations as Congress negotiated the various packages, noting that Republicans at one point scrubbed spending on nutrition programs but increased exemptions for corporate lunches.

"If there's anything that signals our differing values, that has got to be it," she said.

Illinois census director Oswaldo Alvarez spoke about the importance of the LGBTQ community participating in the census and detailed how the state for the first time created an office managing state residents' participation, which he said Gov. JB Pritzker instigated in response to hostility to the census in the federal government's executive branch.

"The census is one of the very few tools that we all have to twist government's arm to represent us and invest in us," Alvarez said. "Each one of us, each person, approximately represents about \$1,500 per person per year, so about \$15,000 over the course of a decade."

Census data also determines redistricting maps, he added. "If we don't have an accurate count, we don't have accurate representation."

"Illinois faces a very real threat of losing representation in Congress at a time when we really need it most," Quigley said.

Illinois has about an 82% response rate so far, and Chicago has the highest response rate from cities with more than 2 million people, Alvarez said. Nevertheless, reaching participants in marginalized neighborhoods remains difficult, so census officials have been working in tandem with local non-profit organizations.

"Those nonprofits are the ones who are knocking on doors and trying to deliver the message to people," Alvarez added. The federal government recently moved the final deadline for census participation up to Sept. 30.

Kelly echoed the importance of a vigorous census response in Illinois: "I've done 12 or 13 census events. I just did a census caravan on the South Side of Chicago, where, in the Seventh



U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi.  
Official photo

Ward, it's low. We're trying to bring that up."

Quinn Kareem Rallins—director of the state's Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative—described his program as the state's "first real effort to centralize criminal justice reform towards restorative justice, shifting [away from] punitive policies that the state has traditionally embraced." The initiative is primarily under the purview of Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton.

"We need to equip communities to solve their own problems, and shift from the traditional criminal justice system," Rallins added, further explaining that officials extensively engaged with incarcerated youth to identify gaps that both im-

## Annual event spotlights trans lives lost

BY VERN HESTER

On Aug. 30, Valerie Griffin celebrated the life of her daughter—Dejanay Stanton, a trans woman of color—with an annual summer get-together billed as "The Main Event Part 2."

The event, in its second year, was also aimed at shining a spotlight on trans lives that have been lost while promoting awareness and resources for victims of violence. Family members and friends celebrated Stanton's life and the event was presented with Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project.

The event took place in a community garden on the corner of 6951 S. Dorchester Ave., and included gift bags, a small buffet and a raffle.

Stanton, who was 24 at the time of her passing, was allegedly murdered by 17-year-old Tremon T. Hill at 4000 S. Calumet Ave. on Aug. 30, 2018.

Griffin said, "It's a real shame that these men are killing these girls. I've been struggling with this for two years, and each year on the thirtieth of August, I'm going to keep throwing this event." She also said, "What these (young trans) women need is to walk into their lives,



Dawn Valenti (left) and Valerie Griffin at the event.  
Photo by Vern Hester

they need more than their outside friends, they need their families with them." Griffin is partnering with the Anti-Violence Project and anti-violence activist Dawn Valenti to create an organization called Mothers of Murdered People.

Anti-Violence Project Director Caitlin Tupper said, "I am thankful that we have been able to be connected with Valerie Griffin for the anniversary of the beautiful and vivacious Dejanay Stanton. Valerie's deep and transcendent love for her daughter is why we are all here today."

"This year, we have seen unprecedented rates of violence and murder of the trans community. This is an epidemic and it must be stopped. We cannot become complacent or erase their stories."

Tupper then read the list of trans murder vic-

pede smooth re-entry and perpetuate recidivism. Among those gaps were detention facilities far from their communities and insufficient mental-health resources in their home communities.

Rallins added that the Pritzker administration will be addressing bail reform and sentencing strategies in the months ahead.

Schakowsky said that the House, for its part, will "move ahead with criminal justice reform. We are going to move ahead with the Justice in Policing Act as hard as we can. But we know that real changes are not going to come until after the next election."

Quigley spoke about the pervasive negativity permeating cultural discourses and anxieties affecting so many Americans. He said that, as the current presidential term progresses, the most common question he has been asked is what anyone can do to help during such chaotic times. His answer, he said, "is that you take care of each other. ... In the final analysis, we can't meet the hatred that we're living with with equal hatred."

Durbin said that he had watched the Republican National Convention and noted participants' ominous warnings about Marxism and various other right-wing dog-whistle issues. "I don't think Americans need to be afraid of those," Durbin said. "I think Americans are very concerned that we lack the leadership in the public health crisis we are currently facing."

Pride Action Tank Executive Director Kim Hunt, HRC Chicago's Justin Koziatek and Equality Illinois Policy Director Mike Ziri moderated the Aug. 25 event. AIDS Foundation of Chicago Government Relations Director Timothy Jackson also discussed the logistics of voting by mail as well as issues at stake in the upcoming election.

tims killed across the nation so far in 2020. The names included Dustin Parker, Selena Ramos, Alexa Ruiz, Monica Diamond, Lexi, Johanna Metzger, Layla Sanchez, Penelope Diaz Ramirez, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, Dominique Fells, Riah Milton, Jayne Thompson, Selena Reyes-Hernandez, Brian "Egypt" Powers, Brayla Stone, Merci Mack, Shaki Peters, Bree Black, Tatiana Hall, Summer Taylor and Draya McCarty.

Griffin said, "There is a story behind every name. ... These were people who had [lives] and dreams..."

More information regarding the Mothers of Murdered Trans People (MOMT) and The Anti-Violence Project can be found at, respectively, <https://www.facebook.com/momtrans/> and [CenterOnHalsted.org/AVP.html](https://www.facebook.com/momtrans/).

# Joseph Baar Topinka preserves legacy of mother: Pro-gay Republican Judy

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Riverside resident Joseph Baar Topinka is still impressed with the resolve and stamina with which his late mother, longtime GOP politician Judy Baar Topinka, was able to “slug it out” in the political arena.

“She got into the moment,” Joseph said, remembering, for example, how Judy could stand in front of crowds who, from time to time, booed her opinions.

“You can boo me, but you’re booing the truth,” she would answer.

Judy passed away in late 2014, just weeks after being re-elected to her post as the Illinois state comptroller, and Joseph has spent much time and energy since then fighting to preserve his mother’s legacy.

“I don’t want my mother relegated to a strange footnote—she was a lot better than that,” he explained. Joseph, who is an attorney, published a book about Judy’s life story in 2018, *Just Judy: A Citizen and Leader for Illinois*, and spearheaded an effort to have her included in the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, to which she was posthumously named a Friend of the Community in 2020 (and will be honored with other inductees, including *Windy City Times*, Tuesday, Oct. 13).

A former journalist and communications professional, Judy occupied many roles in Illinois politics, among them turns as a state representative and state treasurer. She made an unsuccessful bid for the governor’s office in 2006, losing to incumbent Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Judy ran on the Republican ticket, but Joseph said that was mainly because Riverside, where she lived, did not have Democratic party leadership to speak of. Joseph maintains that she was more of a populist than a partisan.

He said, “If my mother were alive today, and you asked her about our binary political system, she would say the same thing I will tell you: It’s dysfunctional. It’s totally dysfunctional.”

Judy often said to Joseph: “I could easily be a Democrat or I could easily be a Republican.”

She was fiscally conservative—Judy administered the state’s finances during some of its darkest fiscal hours—but was pro-LGBT rights and pro-choice at a time when her colleagues in the GOP were adopting more intolerant, far-right stances on those issues.

“Jeepers, gay people are people,” Judy told *Windy City Times* just prior to her 2014 re-election. “There’s rights under the constitution—everybody’s supposed to have them—and it bugs me when folks pick on gays or anybody else. I have a lot of gay people working in my office; they’re wonderful employees. We don’t single them out, or anything; they’re just part of the family.”

In November 2013, at the ceremony during which Gov. Pat Quinn signed marriage equality into law, Judy jokingly offered to be the flower girl at all the marriage ceremonies that were sure to come the following year, a comment that resulted in her drawing the ire of local right-wing media.

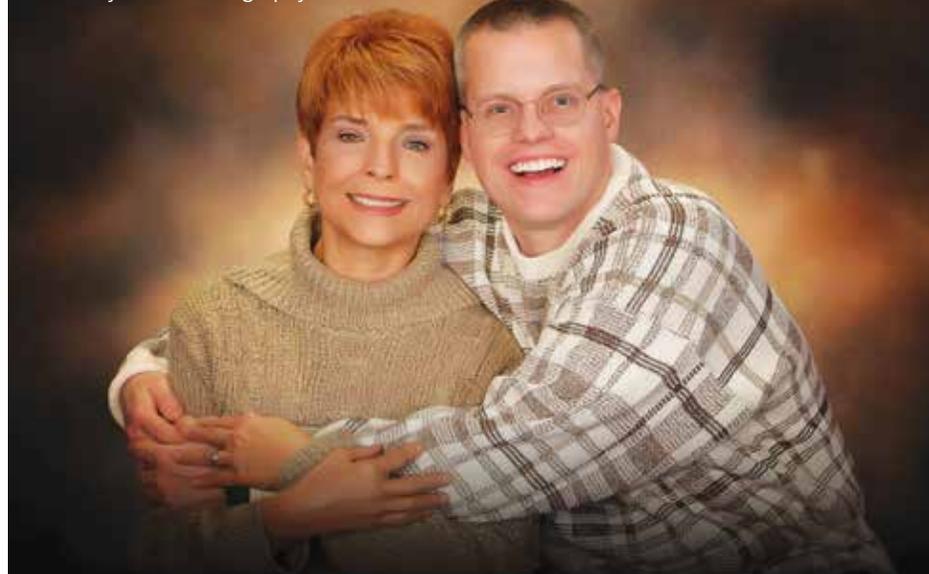
“She was dedicated to [the LGBTQ] community

of an open lesbian taking part in high-level discussions about the Democratic Party’s future. It read: “It’s great to see @LoriLightfoot—the nation’s first Black, openly lesbian mayor of a major city—take the virtual stage and address racial violence in our country through an intersectional lens.”

Prior to becoming mayor, Lightfoot was president of the Chicago Police Board, which enforces police accountability. Her engagement with CPD and management of that city’s response has been questioned further this past summer, as deeper questions of policing and racial equity were raised following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, when protests and incidents of unrest broke out in many cities, among them Chicago.

The mayor was especially critical of participants in unrest in August, ordering bridges raised and other means of access to downtown limited at various times this summer. At the same time, she has faced criticism from others who maintain that city authorities have been unresponsive and too lax on violence under her watch. Ald. Raymond Lopez (15th Ward), who is also openly gay, has been one such critic and has exchanged harsh words with Lightfoot during City meetings.

Judy and Joseph Baar Topinka.  
Photo by Triton Photography



when she didn’t have to be,” Joseph recalled. “She was dedicated to that community when it was not the ‘norm’ for a Republican. She was dedicated to that community until her death”

His biography of his mother’s life was intended not just as a remembrance of her but also as a tool for civics education.

“Illinois now requires civics training by law, and this fall, elementary schools are being required to have civics training [as well],” he explained. “I want that book in every school. The

experiences in that book can help young people.”

Now that Judy has been recognized by the LGBT Hall of Fame, Joseph would like to see her named to the Order of Lincoln, which recognizes the accomplishments of notable Illinoisans. He often laments the seeming lack of populists in politics these days.

“Do we even know what ‘populist’ means anymore, and do we even have leaders like that?” he asked. “If we don’t, maybe we should, and maybe my mother is a lesson for others.”

## Discover one of Chicago’s best kept secrets



Photography by VHT Studios, Inc.

## The Jackson Park Highlands

A secluded enclave of historic homes just south of Hyde Park and minutes from downtown. This 5-bedroom residence, which sits atop well-manicured grounds, has been lovingly maintained. Featured here, tall ceilings, wood-burning fireplace, high end kitchen, formal dining room and grand en-suite master.

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## HRC removes tweet praising Lightfoot

BY MATT SIMONETTE

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) recently removed a tweet praising lesbian mayor Lori Lightfoot after her participation in programming connected to the 2020 Democratic convention. HRC officials apologized for the initial post and acknowledged pushback they received from Lightfoot’s detractors.

“We believe in holding ourselves accountable and ensuring our actions are reflective of our intent,” said officials. “An earlier tweet was troubling to people who viewed it as prioritizing visibility of LGBTQ people over the policies that impact us—especially QTBIPOC. And so we have removed it.”

Lightfoot has enjoyed support from many in the LGBTQ community, but has also been closely tied in the eyes of her detractors—many of them also from the LGBTQ community—to the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

HRC’s initial post celebrated the implications

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### MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DESCOVY FOR PrEP

#### Before starting and while taking DESCOVY for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-negative.** You must get tested for HIV immediately before and at least every 3 months while taking DESCOVY. If you think you were exposed to HIV, tell your healthcare provider right away. They may want to do more tests to confirm that you are still HIV-negative.
- **Many HIV tests can miss HIV infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting or while taking DESCOVY.
- **DESCOVY does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).** Practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to reduce the risk of getting STIs.
- **DESCOVY by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1.** Do not take DESCOVY for PrEP unless you are confirmed to be HIV negative.

#### DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV. If you have HBV and stop taking DESCOVY, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check or give you HBV medicine.

### ABOUT DESCOVY FOR PrEP

DESCOVY for PrEP is a once-daily prescription medicine for adults and adolescents at risk of HIV who weigh at least 77 pounds. It helps lower the chances of getting HIV through sex.

#### DESCOVY for PrEP is not for everyone:

- It is not for use in people assigned female at birth who are at risk of getting HIV from vaginal sex, because its effectiveness has not been studied.
- You must be HIV-negative before and while taking DESCOVY for PrEP.

To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

#### Do NOT take DESCOVY for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV infection or if you do not know your HIV status.** If you have HIV-1, you need more medicine than DESCOVY alone to treat HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only DESCOVY, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat now and in the future.

### POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY FOR PrEP

#### DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About DESCOVY for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with DESCOVY. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking DESCOVY.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.



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#### POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY FOR PrEP (cont'd)

**Common side effects** in people taking DESCOVY for PrEP include diarrhea, nausea, headache, fatigue, and stomach pain.

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

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.FDA.gov/medwatch](http://www.FDA.gov/medwatch), or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

**Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with DESCOVY for PrEP.**

#### BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY FOR PrEP

##### Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- Have any other medical conditions.

##### Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with DESCOVY for PrEP.

#### HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY FOR PrEP

- Take **1 tablet once a day, every day**, not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months. You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking DESCOVY for PrEP.

#### HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners. If your partner is living with HIV, your risk of getting HIV is lower if your partner consistently takes HIV treatment every day.
- Get tested for other STIs. Some STIs make it easier for HIV to infect you.
- Practice safer sex by using latex or polyurethane condoms.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about all the ways to help reduce HIV risk.

#### GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about DESCOVY for PrEP. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
- Go to [DESCOVY.com/prep](http://DESCOVY.com/prep) or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit [DESCOVY.com/prep](http://DESCOVY.com/prep) for program information.

\*Advancing Access<sup>®</sup> co-pay support is available for commercially insured eligible patients only. Subject to change; for full terms and conditions, visit [GileadAdvancingAccess.com](http://GileadAdvancingAccess.com).



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# Nigerian LGBTQ+ refugee-turned-activist on importance of compassion

BY EMILY REILLY

Edafe Okporo came to the United States from Nigeria in 2016. Now, he's the founder of New York's first full-time LGBTQ+ refugee shelter. Along the way, he has gained insight to how one can make a difference in the world around them.

His new book, *Compassion Is Worth More: Using Your Civil Power To Create Change*, shows readers how to do just that—finding a voice to make a positive change in their communities.

"I wanted to give people a roadmap of how to create change in their communities," Okporo told *Windy City Times*. "*Compassion Is Worth More* is looking at what is making us change our viewpoints and how we can look more into our humanity to help people."

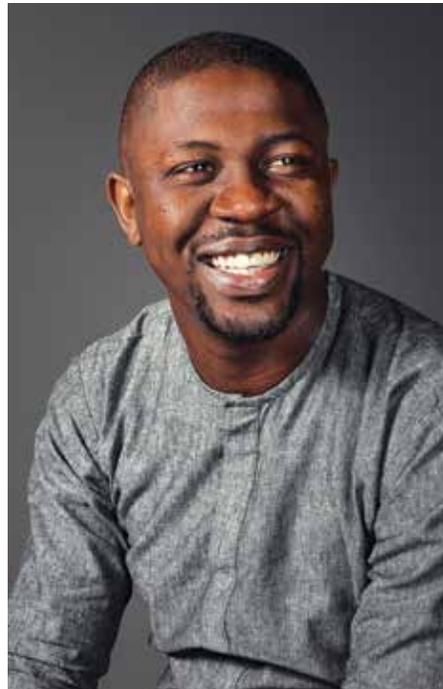
Okporo said his new book shows how a little bit of compassion can go a long way; even the small efforts have a greater, positive impact on the world. A point he focuses on is the damaging effects a polarized country can have. For example, many believe the United States is becoming a more and more divided country. Okporo can offer insight to the current situation, as he has lived in Nigeria where the political climate is polarized as well.

"I remember in Nigeria, the law that was passed that criminalized same-sex [relations] was based on religion," said Okporo. "In Nigeria, our polarity based on religion was hurting more people and I wanted to give people my experience so they understand that what we do as a country doesn't just only affect us as people who live in this country but affect people beyond our imagination."

Okporo explained that Nigeria is quite polarized through religion; the north is mainly Islamic and the south is mainly Christian. Through his lived experiences with this polarization, Okporo emphasized his belief that polarity causes much more harm than good to people. His own experiences with violence and discrimination were enough to make him feel unsafe and flee the country.

He described his experience arriving in New York City and how he didn't have a place to stay at first. He soon learned that he was not the only one facing this problem. Okporo's typical lens of advocacy was set aside as he discovered a new way to make a change, especially after discovering a problem with LGBTQ+ refugee housing.

"I used to fight for LGBTQ+ people to have access to HIV treatment in Nigeria—but HIV is not as big of an issue in America compared to Nigeria," said Okporo. "Another area of my life that was being affected by the policies I was currently living with was immigration. Most LGBTQ+ people, when they come to the [United States] to seek protection, before they're able to access housing, there is housing if you have HIV or AIDS. Some of them end up having sex with



**Edafe Okporo.**

Photo courtesy of Okporo

somebody else just to have a place to sleep in. Some people even told me that if I had HIV, my life would be made easier."

Thus began Okporo's advocacy journey in this country. He saw an occurrence among the homeless LGBTQ+ community and began speaking to HIV/AIDS activists in New York to help protect those who are HIV-positive and those who are not. Okporo was able to make a positive change in his community; the RDJ Refugee Shelter in New York was the result of his advocacy.

"Humans do not like inequality—we want an equitable world. But in order for us to create an equitable world, we ourselves have to understand what equity is," Okporo said. "So, for you to be a change-maker in your community, it starts with you understanding the role you have to play in the world as an individual."

Okporo emphasized the importance of putting aside differences in order to make change and have a positive effect in society and that helping one another should not be a political issue.

"I believe that coming together with our common, shared values is the only way we can sustainably create change as a people," he said. "Now is the time for us to come together on a common shared purpose and if we cannot do that then the democracy we try to protect as a country might not be sustainable."

**Compassion Is Worth More: Using Your Civil Power To Create Change is available for purchase on Amazon.**

# Filmmakers look back at pioneering movie 'Transsexuals'

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Chicago-based Media Burn Archive presented an online screening of the rarely-seen 1971 documentary *Transsexuals* Aug. 27, and hosted members of its original crew, who presented insights on both its production and recent restoration.

*Transsexuals* was created by a collective of New York City-based filmmakers, who were utilizing then innovative mobile video technology to document the lives of transgender women.

"Nobody had a concept of what 'video' was [as a medium] at the time," said one of the filmmakers, Susan Milano. A colleague of hers on the project, Andrew Gurian, also spoke, detailing his restoration efforts on the film. The technology used to produce *Transsexuals* was never widely implemented, so it has been exhibited only on rare occasions.

The film's title is now relatively anachronistic, as "transgender" is the generally preferred term currently, but the term "transsexual" was more widely deployed at the time of the production. The film's subjects also occasionally use the term "transvestite."

*Transsexuals* mainly centers two transgender women, Deborah Hartin and Esther Reilly, as they describe their transitions. Among those who also appear are LGBTQ-rights pioneer Sylvia Rivera. "It was a real surprise to find out who that was after all these years, after not seeing the film for so long," Milano noted.

*Transsexuals* is harrowing and explicit in many moments. Hartin, who had her gender-reassignment surgery performed in Morocco, at one point lifts her skirt so viewers can see what procedures she had done. One of the subjects describes an episode from years before wherein she tried to castrate herself.

Milano conducted the film's interviews, and



**Christina Milano, MD.**

Screenshot by Matt Simonette

said that she was relieved to watch the film recently without much embarrassment about how she pressed her subjects. "I think I have a pretty straightforward way of asking things, and am pretty sensitive to the people I'm speaking to," she added.

Christina Milano, MD, (no relation to Susan) who co-founded the Transgender Health Program at Oregon Health & Sciences University in Portland, said, "Watching this video will raise a lot of thoughts with folks. ... We are in an extraordinary time, when paradigms are shifting."

Some participants noted that Susan and her colleagues included cisgender subjects in the film who registered support for transgender people; they had little perspective on the challenges transgender people faced but expressed hope that they would find both self- and societal acceptance.

Christina surmised that "the comments are so timeless, [and are] about a wish for society to be more accepting."

## Virtual OPALGA+ scholarship gala slated for Oct. 24

OPALGA+/Oak Park Area Lesbian & Gay Association will hold a virtual scholarship gala Saturday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m.

The event will feature video clips from the organization's scholarship winners, the Founder's Award celebration and opportunities for attendees to donate funds to its scholarship program.

This year, the OPALGA+ board authorized the awarding of \$30,000 in scholarships to 11 scholars continuing our celebration of 30 years as an organization. The goal is to raise \$24,000.

See OPALGA.org.



@windycitytimes

# Black trans disabled Chicagoan on long quest for affordable housing

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

When Garnet Williams was set to enter their final year at Columbia College in 2014, they began to experience pain in their lower back. Because of this pain, Williams' life has changed dramatically these past six years—including the need for immediate affordable housing that has, according to them, proved difficult to obtain.

"I did not think anything of it," said Williams of their lower back pain. "I had been told my whole life that fat bodies are supposed to come with a lot of pain. I thought it was normal to constantly hurt. I noticed little things at first."

Williams told this publication that they depended on grocery carts to complete their shopping, and elevators at school, as well as leaning against walls to support their weight, so their lower back pain would subside. They added that eventually they began collapsing on the ground in public places because the pain was too much to bear. This led to Williams buying a rollator walker on Craigslist for \$20 so they could be mobile again.

"I had to take public transit to Morton Grove, Illinois, in order to get one wide enough for my body," said Williams. "I named it The Pussy Wagon. I also have invisible disabilities—ADHD, ASD [autism spectrum disorder] and PTSD—that make it hard for me to socialize and connect with others how I would like. Now I had a disability that meant a majority of places where other queers go to socialize are not accessible to me. I became very isolated, depressed and terribly lonely. I gained a lot more weight really quickly because of immobility which paved the way for so many to fat shame my disability. I really hit rock bottom after that."

Williams—who grew up in Canton, Ohio—came to Chicago to study the recording industry at Columbia College Chicago in hopes of being a singer/songwriter and performance artist. While in their senior year of college, they were living with their now ex-roommate in what they describe as an abusive relationship.

A friend came and moved Williams and their cat out of that apartment in the middle of the night. They slept on that friend's couch for a couple of months while they looked for work and a place to live which proved to be vexing for them. Finding an apartment was hard due to their lack of funds.

"Everything is wildly expensive in Chicago," said Williams.

That is when Williams' grandmother stepped in and helped pay for their safe and accessible studio apartment.

"I will always cherish her kindness," said Williams. "She passed away unexpectedly this past June. I can no longer afford to live in my current apartment without her help. As of right now, I have no idea where I am going to go once my lease is up on Oct. 1. The worst case scenario

is I will have to move back in with my mother in Canton. Her house does not have a bathroom or bedroom on the first floor which will be awful for me.

"This is why I need affordable, ADA-accessible housing here in Chicago. I want to continue to live here because I have recently started doing drag performing beginning with the drag competition show Mom Jeans at Berlin Nightclub on Sept. 3, 2019. Drag allows me to express myself without limitations. To be loved, appreciated and worshipped on stage when I previously thought that part of my life was over is an indescribable feeling. My career was beginning to take off prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and now that source of income, and my income from working at the front desk of the Old Town School of Folk Music, has dried up."

Williams said it is even more difficult to obtain affordable, ADA-accessible housing in Chicago during this moment. They provided this publication with a screenshot from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) replying to their public housing application that said there is a 25-year wait-list for the housing they require.

Additionally, Williams reached out to Access Living's Informational and Referral Housing Coordinator Natasha Flowers via email and she sent them the below response on Aug. 24.

"This email is in response to your request seeking affordable accessible emergency housing. Unfortunately, Access Living does not offer or have resources for emergency housing because emergency housing is only accessible through The City of Chicago and specific non for profits that work to address homelessness. I have attached information for SRO units with the YMCA as well as a link to the Single Room Housing Association,



Garnet Williams.  
Photo by  
Ethan Jollie  
Photography

they may be able to assist with housing options for you so my recommendation would be to reach out to them and see what assistance they can provide."

Upon researching the YMCA housing options, Williams learned they were only available to men. Williams is looking into the Single Room Housing Association options and said they also contacted Chicago House, Heartland Alliance, Mercy House and tried every apartment listing site and posted on social media about their situation to no avail.

"I have devoted hours every day this entire summer searching for an accessible apartment," said Williams. "I have exhausted every resource I have come across. There are far more disabled

people in this city than there is affordable, accessible housing available. I am confused why our city government has allocated money to build a cop academy that we do not need instead of using that money for subsidized housing for the most vulnerable Chicagoans.

"Chicago is saying, 'You are so poor and disabled that you do not deserve to live here.' Black trans disabled people like myself face so many barriers in our everyday lives including affordable housing availability and this is not okay. The thought of being forced out of this city because I have nowhere to live is devastating. It feels like I am being set up to once again grieve the kind of life I could have if only I were not disabled."

## Aurora garden damage seen as possible hate crime

In Aurora, a garden that included a shed painted rainbow colors to support the LGBTQ community was destroyed recently after someone smashed it with a pickup truck—and local authorities are viewing the attack as a possible hate crime, The Chicago Tribune reported.

Garden organizer Ellie Esparza said she was inspired to paint the shed to honor the LGBTQ community that Esparza said is often harshly judged in the neighborhood. The attack was actually the second that happened, after the fence was knocked down in what Esparza thought was a hit-and-run.

Talking with Windy City Times Aug. 28, Esparza indicated that the process to restoring the area has been frustrating: "I was watering

the garden and the local beautification and standards committee pulled up and took photos. Obviously, it's not as beautiful as it used to be—and they're threatening to fine me.

"Also, I asked the police if there were any updates—and there are no leads."

Then, Esparza told a story about a local trans woman who said she'd been the victim of discrimination and even sexual assault—and that she started crying out of gratitude when she saw Esparza's garden and shed. Support for the LGBTQ community is slow, Esparza emphasized, even mentioning that the city of Aurora refused to fund its pride parade last year, warranting a last-minute meeting and online fundraiser.

Esparza also indicated that even elected officials have not been supportive of the area. We're just trying to be supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. The alderman for that area [Juany Garza] has not reached out to us. The neighborhood is very conservative and I was told

she doesn't want to risk offending the people there."

In response, Garza told Windy City Times on Aug. 31 that Esparza has made at least two errors—both procedural. "First, [Esparza] never got in contact with me, and never got a permit for the community garden—but if the community enjoys it, that's fine," Garza said. "But the problem is that she decided to use Pride colors. You never know if there's someone there who's homophobic. She should've started a petition and get people from around the neighborhood to sign it—you never know. If there's a petition for the shed to be in Pride colors, I'm fine with it."

Esparza said she plans to rebuild the shed and is looking for community donations to create a more durable structure out of wood and metal. She can be reached at Ellie@ConcreteRoseStudios.com.

—Andrew Davis

# Looking at implementation of an LGBTQ+ curriculum in state public schools

BY EMILY REILLY

On Aug. 9, 2019, Gov. JB Pritzker signed Illinois House Bill 246 into law, amending the school code to include contributions of LGBTQ+ figures in public schools all over the state, effective as of July 1, 2020. Board members, teachers, students and parents are now learning to adapt to the curriculum changes during the first year with the new directive.

Equality Illinois Public Policy Director Mike Ziri spoke about the push for the mandate, how Illinois plans to introduce the material and feedback he's heard from districts.

"What we heard from some districts over the past year is, 'Hey we want to do this, but can you offer some guidance and resources?'" said Ziri.

Each individual district board is ultimately left to disseminate the curriculum. Equality Illinois and the Legacy Project are resources to help guide districts with the new material. Tools that are being used to guide this process include explanatory videos and a website that's currently in the works.

Although the mandate will look different across the state, the consensus for many districts is to weave LGBTQ+ figures and contributions into the existing curriculum, rather than sectioning it off.

"One way we envisioned it is to weave the stories of LGBTQ+ people in curriculum that's already being taught, so for instance, World War Two—

include the story of Alan Turing, the father of computer science, who at the end of his life is persecuted for being a gay man," said Ziri. "During the civil rights movement in the 1960s, talk about Bayard Rustin, who organized the March on Washington."

Data from the 2017 GLSEN Illinois State Snapshot, a national school climate survey, found that only 24% of LGBTQ+ students were taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history or events. Only 10% reported that they receive inclusive sex-education. The poor classroom environment and lack of representation for LGBTQ+ students was a large factor for pushing this mandate to make education more inclusive.

"There's data to show that schools that have inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ+ youth say that in those types of schools with those types of curriculum, they feel their peers are more accepting," said Ziri. "We hope that it will create more affirming places for LGBTQ+ youth in schools."

The Legacy Project, a non-profit that researches and promotes LGBTQ+ contributions, created an explanatory video in two parts called "Illinois LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum Overview" to help showcase what the new material will look like and why it's being mandated.

The first video showcases the impact of LGBTQ+ figures, listing out names of well-known LGBTQ+ figures in history including their contributions. Stories of the lives and contributions of LGBTQ+ figures like Leonardo Da Vinci, Eleanor Roosevelt,



Equality Illinois Public Policy Director Mike Ziri.

Photo courtesy of Equality Illinois

Billy Strayhorn, Jane Addams, Bayard Rustin, Frances Perkins, Dr. Alan Hart, George Washington Carver, Michelangelo, Kobo Daishi and Alan Turing were discussed. The suggested material focuses on their influence on the world, introducing a positive discourse for LGBTQ+ figures in the classroom.

The video also mentions figures like James Baldwin, Frida Kahlo, Josephine Baker, Sally Ride, Barbara Jordan and Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. Part two focuses on how the Illinois House Bill 246 was initially introduced, who the advo-

cates that pushed for its establishment are, and why the mandate is essential.

Part two answers some of the most important questions for teachers and district leads, noting that the new material will not require new textbooks but will instead rely on supplements, an option that was deemed less costly. Individual school districts will decide which supplements are chosen. The efficacy of the new mandate will be monitored by the Illinois Advisory Council on Curriculum Inclusion (IACCI), which is a collective effort of Equality Illinois, Public Health Institute of Illinois, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and the Legacy Project. The Illinois State Board of Education will monitor the compliance to the mandate.

Legacy Project Executive Director Victor Salvo explained that the organization is handling educational tools while its partners at Illinois State Schools Board of Education have created similar tools that are structured more specifically to assist teachers with the new material.

"I think the way it's going to happen, it will first go to district leads, then from the district leads, it goes to principals throughout the state, and then to the teachers in each school," said Salvo. "So in a fairly short period of time it will have filtered out to each individual teacher."

The official website to access the lesson material is in the works. The official stand-alone site will take longer to get fully running. There are currently about fifty lesson plans in the current site's database.

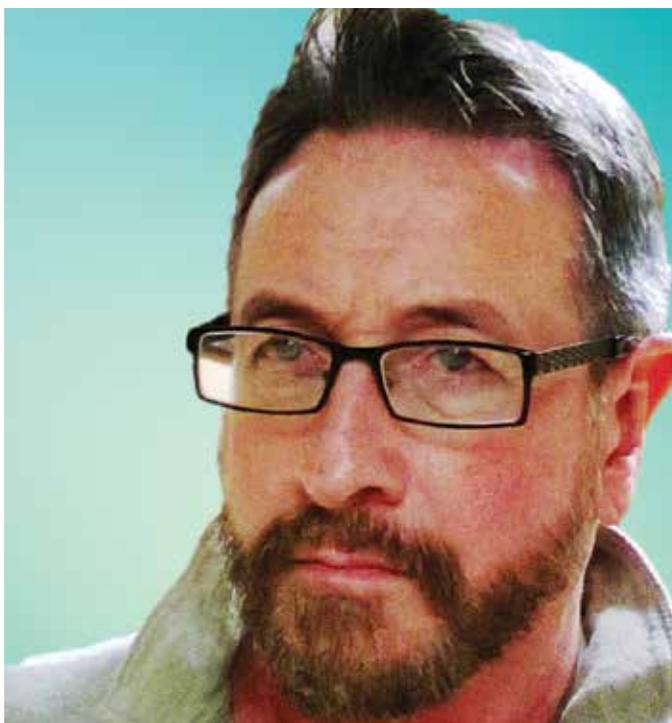
"It's data about the individual school, the subject in school, the grade in school, specific search terms and key words and all of that is different for every person and every lesson plan," said Salvo.

With the new mandate covering LGBTQ+ material, students aren't the only ones learning something new; many teachers know little about the new material and are relying on these webi-



Teacher Amy Wooten.

Photo courtesy of Wooten



Legacy Project Executive Director Victor Salvo.

Photo courtesy of Salvo

nars, videos and accessible teaching tools for the start of the school year. On the other hand, some teachers have already been trying to push for this inclusive education in the curriculum.

Amy Wooten, a fourth grade teacher at New Field Elementary in Rogers Park (and onetime writer for Windy City Times), said, “I, for one, already do this and I think part of it just because of being a queer person so I’m naturally very aware of being inclusive when it comes to tweaking our curriculum to include the voices of all of my students. And the same goes for kind of rethinking with my grade-level partner over the years about making sure the curriculum is multicultural as well.”

“It kind of helps at my school; we’re incredibly diverse. We have over 50 languages spoken at my school and we’ve had kids come out in the classroom. So it makes it easier for us to think in a different way and take the time and energy to take a second look at how we teach in the classroom to make them seem included and seen and heard.”

Like many teachers, Wooten said she has concerns over how the implementation will be regulated among the other mandates put in place over the years.

“As a teacher, I kind of know how education handles these types of mandates,” said Wooten. “So I’m excited as an educator but I’m also very interested to see how it plays out. Because if you went to the Illinois State Board of Education website, you would see there’s hundreds of mandates from over the years.”

The new material will be added into grades K-12, with different approaches to introduce the material for each age group. Level one, the contribution’s approach, focuses on grades three through six. Level two, the additive approach, focuses on grades five through eight. Level three, the transformational approach, targets grades seven through 10. Level four is the social action approach, targeting grades 9-12. Ultimately, the teacher must decide which track level is most appropriate for that instructor’s students.

Students and parents of those learning the new material this year are also responding to the new material in the curriculum—both positively and negatively.

Carbondale-based Rainbow Cafe LGBTQ+ Youth Center board member Carrie Vine and her son, Cal, a sophomore in high school, had positive reactions toward the mandate.

Carrie said she believes it’s a good thing that more students will be able to see themselves represented. Cal also supports the bill and did a history project on it last year. Being from southern Illinois, they have witnessed a different scope of reactions toward the bill. Cal spoke about the classroom environment, recalling a negative encounter he and his friend once had with a homophobic classmate.

Beyond the negative reactions to the material they’ve witnessed, Carrie and Cal support the new mandate and believe that it will benefit future generations of students.

“I feel that it is empowering to young people that are struggling with their sexuality and or gender identity,” said Carrie. “It gives them the opportunity to realize many people throughout history have had different sexualities and genders other than cisgender or heterosexual.”

## ARCHITECTURE

# Esposito dismissal causes uproar

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Members of Chicago’s architecture community registered their displeasure after the city chapter of the American Institute of Architects announced on Aug. 13 that longtime Executive Vice President Zurich Esposito would no longer be in the role. Chapter officials have not publicly disclosed the reason for Esposito’s departure.

Esposito, who is gay, did much to raise the profile of LGBTQ members in recent years. He



Zurich Esposito.

Photo by Joe Mazza/Brave Lux

spearheaded the launch of AIA Chicago’s LGBTQ architects’ group in early 2019, among several other notable achievements for the organization.

A Change.org petition, instigated by architect Mark Schmiedling, is calling for Esposito’s reinstatement and had 483 signatures as of Aug. 30. Architects Jim Goettsch, Carol Ross Barney and John Vinci were among the initial signatories.

“Since Zurich’s installment nearly fifteen years ago, he has worked diligently to transform the AIA Chicago chapter into one of the most reputable and active chapters in the country,” the petitioners wrote. “His unique ideas pushed the chapter forward by creating more programs, forming diverse and expansive interest groups, and producing top rated materials, like the highly regarded Chicago Architect magazine.”

“The chapter events have grown to become ‘must-attend’ by members as well as the design community at large. Design Night has doubled in size. Zurich is like our statesman, building

bridges with various government agencies and civic groups and dramatically raising the organization’s visibility and stature.”

In 2015, Esposito, who is not an architect but has long been an architecture buff, told Windy City Times that he was living his childhood dream in the role.

“Chicago is the epicenter of architecture, [so] my job is always changing and always fresh,” he said. “Before graduate school, I worked in a more conservative business and financial environment. After learning a lot and saving some money, I traded it all in for something I liked better.”

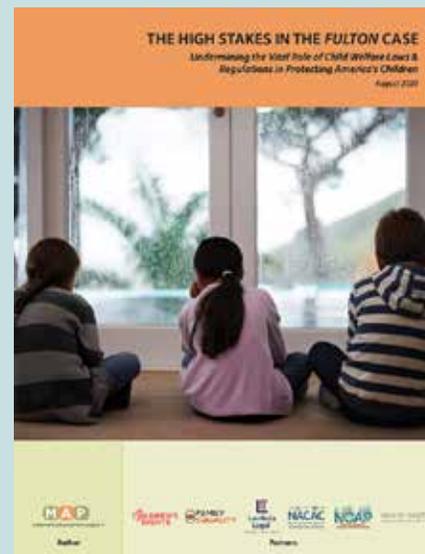
## MAP report: Religious exemptions in child welfare would harm millions

On Aug. 19, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) released “The High Stakes in the *Fulton* Case: Undermining the Vital Role of Child Welfare Laws & Regulations in Protecting America’s Children.”

This report highlights what is at stake in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, a case the U.S. Supreme Court will hear this fall related to taxpayer-funded child welfare agencies. The report is released in partnership with Children’s Rights, Family Equality, Lambda Legal, National Center on Adoption and Permanency, the North American Council on Adoptable Children and Voice for Adoption.

The case came about after the City of Philadelphia learned in March 2018 that Catholic Social Services—which the city had hired to provide foster care services to children in child welfare—refused to license same-sex couples despite signing a contract prohibiting agencies from engaging in anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

The report examines the potential outcomes of *Fulton*. For example,:



The High Stakes in the Fulton Case cover.

Image from Movement Advancement Project website

—Religious child welfare agencies could be given a right to demand taxpayer funding while rejecting qualified and loving parents simply because they are Jewish, Catholic, LGBTQ or single parents.

—Nearly every religiously affiliated social service agency that receives government funding—such as job training programs, emergency shelters and more—might claim a right to discriminate.

—If the government is unable to set and enforce the terms of its contracts, even when paying agencies with taxpayer money, it would make it nearly impossible for state and local governments to set standards for the provision of public services.

—Religious agencies might be able to claim a religious exemption to a wide array of regulations and laws, including those that protect public health and safety—like building codes, sanitation requirements and food-safety regulations.

“Child welfare agencies should always put the safety and wellbeing of children first,” MAP Executive Director Ineke Mushovic said in a statement. “But if taxpayer-funded child welfare agencies can pick and choose parents and families based on the agency’s religious beliefs—rather than whether or not children are placed in qualified, loving homes—it puts children at risk. And it’s not just child welfare agencies: how the Supreme Court rules could provide a license to discriminate in other areas including homeless shelters, food banks, early childhood education.”

The full report is at [LGBTMap.org/2020-fulton-report](https://LGBTMap.org/2020-fulton-report).

## Gerber/Hart fall benefit Sept. 12-13

The Gerber/Hart Library and Archives fall benefit—“Saving LGBTQ History: Archives in a Time of Activism”—will take place Sept. 12-13 at the venue, 6500 N. Clark St.

On those days, there will be a series of 90-minute salons (10-12 people each) that will highlight Gerber/Hart’s archives of activism. This will be an opportunity for intimate discussions on the current work and future of Gerber/Hart including the presentation of the new five-year strategic plan, a tour of the restricted stacks by the director, and a tour of the newly opened exhibit on queer activism in the 1990s by a curator.

Sparkling wine, sparkling water and wine, as well as light snacks, will be served during the salons.

Salon times will be 6 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 12; and 10 a.m., noon, and 2, 4 and 5 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 13.

Recommended guidelines for gatherings and food service amid the COVID-19 pandemic will be followed. Unless guidelines are relaxed, all attendees will be required to wear face masks.

Visit <https://gerberhart.org/3736> to purchase tickets.

## viewpoints

Emily  
REILLY

## The common thread of LGBTQ+ stigma and mental health

The relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and mental health has always varied from country to country. But when religion enters the conversation, a whole new aspect escalates the stigma.

Countries all over the world have high rates of mental health problems within their LGBTQ+ communities. This is often because of structural stigma escalated by religious beliefs against LGBTQ+ acceptance and religious leaders fanning those flames.

Religion is not the only social factor determining acceptance of a nation's LGBTQ+ community. Additional factors like political climate, education, healthcare and structural stigma are all very relevant as to why LGBTQ+ discourse is the way it is in a given country. Religion lies among many factors—but it has a mass following.

In 2016, Italian bishops cut back the release of an LGBTQ+ film; it wound up being restricted to 10 movie theaters under the belief that it was “indecent.” The homophobic rhetoric and influence of religious leaders, such as what occurred in Italy, only escalates a difficult situation for their LGBTQ+ community.

A 2017 Pachankis and Branstrom life satisfaction graph found that an LGBTQ+ individual's life sat-

isfaction would be much higher in a low structurally stigmatic country, like Finland, versus a high structurally stigmatic country like Poland. Poland and Finland are quite different countries, but among the notable differences between them is that Poland is more traditional and religious. Krakow's Catholic archbishop, Marek Jędraszewski publicly condemned the “LGBTQ+ ideal.” Many of its leaders have spoken ill of the LGBTQ+ community, insinuating that by being gay, you're committing a sin against God and are a threat to “traditional values.” This fear-mongering has led to “LGBT-free zones” throughout the country. When a religious leader with extraordinary influence and power escalates the tension for in the LGBTQ+ community, discrimination will ensue.

However, religion constantly changes in the lenses of culture, society, language, and history. When we look at a different country, such as Ghana, their views toward Christianity play out differently than somewhere in Eastern Europe might. The justification to discriminate looks different as well. For example, the Criminal Offenses Act of Ghana criminalizes consensual same-sex acts between adults under “unnatural carnal knowledge.” Offenses can lead to up to three years in prison. Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (GPCC) have contributed heavily to anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and the destructive social stigma, especially considering their association with political leaders and media organizations.

Of course, the United States is no exception. Although we applaud ourselves for being progressive compared to many other countries, there's still a lot of work to be done and a lot of work that took far too long to obtain. The performative, hyper-religious, conservative population is a ball and chain strapped to the structural progression of the LGBTQ+ community. It was only a few weeks ago that LGBTQ+ individuals were granted job security based on

sexual orientation because of the Supreme Court's ruling on the landmark Civil Rights Law—which was opposed by religious groups. Within that same week the GOP gave the green light to strip away health-care privileges from many LGBTQ+ residents, which was a win for President Trump's heavily religious base.

The consequences of this game of back-and-forth with basic rights is detrimental. Mark Hatzenbuehler conducted an experiment that measured the mental health of LGBTQ+ communities based on before and after certain states passed policies against marriage equality in 2004. The data found a 36.6% increase in mood disorders after a same-sex marriage ban. Additional data also found that PTSD, dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder, and comorbidity we're all much higher among LGBTQ+ individuals living in states with structural forms of stigma than states without it. Many factors in a given country contribute to LGBTQ+ structural stigma, but when discrimination is escalated by a religious base, the consequences worsen.

Those stuck at the bottom rungs of the equality ladder are at much more severe risk of mental health disorders than other “progressive” countries. But the truth is that even in ostensibly progressive, left-leaning countries, discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals still exists with devastating consequences and that's why the push for equality, justice, proper funding and fair research is so significant. It's important to prevent religious intolerance from slowing the progression toward justice for LGBTQ+ individuals because the difference is between life and death.

**Emily Reilly is studying journalism and film at DePaul University, and has written for The DePaulia and Windy City Times.**

## letters

### Masking the issue

Dear editor:

Wear a mask.

Illinois made great strides fighting COVID-19, but it will take sustained effort and discipline to keep the virus under control.

Illinois doctors are asking everyone to take two simple actions when in public: always wear a face covering and continue to maintain social distancing.

The recent uptick in coronavirus diagnoses should give us all pause. We all want to return to normal, but in the near term “normal” includes wearing a mask that completely covers your nose and mouth.

Wearing a mask is important even if you don't feel sick. Many individuals infected with COVID-19 do not display any symptoms. That's why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is urging everyone to wear a mask while in public.

The CDC cites growing research supporting the use of masks to prevent COVID-19 transmission. One study used contract tracing to track client interactions when it was discovered two Missouri hairstylists tested positive for the virus. Both stylists had consistently worn masks while seeing clients in the

days prior to their diagnosis, and none of their clients contracted the virus. Based on the results of the contact tracing, the CDC believes that active mask use by the stylists and their clients was a critical factor in blocking the transmission of the virus.

We can do this, but we must commit to doing it together.

Robert W. Panton, M.D.

President, Illinois State Medical Society

*A word, please...*

Dear editor:

We just finished reading your WCT's interview with Jay Manuel (in the Aug. 5 issue), and we have an important question.

Did you ask or even challenge him about the book's title, and the use of the highly offensive and demeaning word in the title—“Bitch?” (It's very offensive and demeaning to most women but, sadly, maybe not to men, especially gay men.)

In your article, Jay mentioned that he talked with psychologists, because “I really wanted to see how this story could come together from a psychological standpoint.”

I'm really confused, because I believe that most qualified psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, social workers (and most emotionally healthy people) would all agree that using the word “bitch” is highly misogynistic and demeaning. Sadly, it is used, usually by men, in a way to both consciously and unconsciously hurt, offend and put women “down and in their place,” and then say, “Oh, I was only joking.”

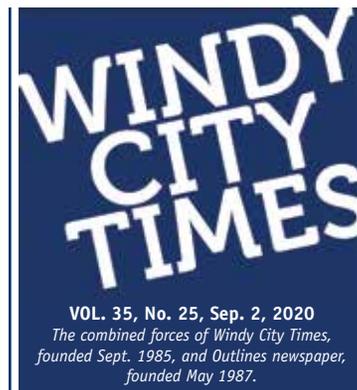
This feels so damn frustrating, and I wonder if Jay even “gets it.”

Isn't this in part what equality and the women's movement, for years, has been about—stopping the physical and emotional dismissive abuse of girls and women, often through misogynistic and demeaning language toward women?

I'm not trying to be “politically correct.” I'm just so damn tired of people using highly offensive and demeaning words like “bitch” being thrown around and then labeling it as a joke or “satire.”

We, (or our friends, especially in the LGBTQ+ family) have no interest in buying this book because, once again, it feels like it continues to promote toxic behavior and language.

Sincerely,  
Lori Fox



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WINDY  
CITY  
TIMES

## ARTS + THEATER



Artist Sam Kirk's installation at Chicago Cultural Center.  
Photo by Sam Kirk

## ART

## LGBTQ+ installation on display in Chicago Cultural Center

BY EMILY REILLY

The final pieces of Sam Kirk's latest art installation are on display in the Chicago Cultural Center until the end of September.

In honor of Pride, Kirk's installation began as a way to pay tribute to individuals of color in the LGBTQ+ community. Beginning in Times Square, the 12 pieces have made their way to Chicago since the start of June at Navy Pier and end at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Kirk said her art comes from a very personal place.

"A lot of my work explores the overlap of culture and identity, so I'm always looking how are LGBTQ+ individuals celebrated or existing within cultural spaces," she said. "And that comes from my background really. I'm biracial and I grew up in a predominantly Latino neighborhood and there's a lot of struggle that came with my life with the role that religion plays not only in the Latino community but also in the African American community. And then you look at a lot of the places where being queer is an issue, you can see how religion plays a role in that."

Because the pandemic changed plans for Pride celebrations, Kirk was determined to make LGBTQ+ community still feel appreciated.

"When COVID-19 happened and the parade was cancelled and basically all these events were cancelled, I was, like, 'What can I do as an artist to still celebrate Pride?'" said Kirk. "Because I do think about those individuals who do live in these communities and these homes where Pride month is their one chance to go out and be completely free and they might not have any other time during the year where it's embraced as much as it is."

After the Cultural Center agreed to showcase Kirk's installation in June, some were concerned if the installation should still be displayed through the Magnificent Mile during the Black Lives Matter protests that began that same week. Kirk made the case to follow through with the installation.

"I brought up specifically incidents that were occurring for Black trans women in particular during this

**Turn to page 14**



Artist Sam Kirk's installation at Navy Pier.  
Photo by Sam Kirk



Parker Haines (left).  
Photo by Emily Reilly

# Black Trans Lives Matter mural formally unveiled in Andersonville

BY EMILY REILLY

On Aug. 22, community members gathered on Catalpa Avenue between Clark Street and Ashland Avenue in Andersonville to check out the new mural that stretches across the street reading “Black Trans Lives Matter.” Speakers included many local Black trans residents from the community and members of the Chicago Therapy Collective (CTC).

Performance artist and CTC member KJ Whitehead hosted the event alongside Angel Nordstrum, the president of the LGBTQ Workers Center.

“I think it is definitely important that this fight does not stop for our rights and for others like us,” said Whitehead. “Black trans lives matter and Black lives matter, and we need to make that very clear. It’s also important to celebrate our little victories we have here today and this mural is definitely one of our little victories.”

“Black lives absolutely under no circumstances cannot matter until Black trans lives matter—ergo, all Black lives matter,” said Nordstrum.

Speakers condemned a nearby Walgreens for accusing two of the artists of stealing while working on the mural, which sparked conversation about holding businesses accountable for their racist actions.

The next speaker was Laura Austin, the associate director of the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce. She spoke about shifting the chamber’s agenda to be more anti-racist and why Black trans individuals are a necessity to the community. “If BIPOC trans and gender nonconforming individuals don’t live in our neighborhood, we lose,”

said Austin. “If these folks don’t feel safe here, we are not doing our job.”

Joycelyn Wynter, one of the 22 artists of the mural encouraged the crowd to look at the names bordering the mural, honoring the lives of Black trans individuals who died.

Iggy Ladden, local therapist and CTC Founder, had the crowd collectively take a deep breath and check-in with themselves. They spoke about the problem with how white people sometimes respond to racism by talking over Black voices

instead of listening to them.

“In our society, where so many are marginalized, it is Black trans folks and trans women in particular who are among the most marginalized,” said 40th Ward Ald. Andre Vasquez. “They’re harassed, brutalized, attacked, killed and their murders go unsolved by Chicago police.”

Local therapist Bonn Wade spoke about the six steps of an apology on both individual and structural levels.

CTC member and #HireTransNOW lead Elise Malarly made a point in saying, “Capitalism was never designed to benefit Black people and it especially wasn’t designed for Black trans people.”

Among the last few speakers were Parker Haines, a CTC member and local performance artist; Candace Gingrich, an LGBTQ+-rights activist; Illinois state Rep. Greg Harris; and Sean Connelly, from the Helix Cafe.

Haines left the crowd with a John Lewis quote: “When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to say something; you have to do something.”

Credit to the artists of the mural with their Instagram tags include:

- B – Bailey @baileys.funky;
- L – Molly Costello @mollyccostello;
- A – Joycelyn Wynter @beautyonthabatz\_;
- C – Grae Rosa @grae.rosa and Monica Trinidad @itsmonicatrinidad;
- K – Chi N. @itschinwosu & Yo Y.;
- T – Jes Scheinplug (they/them) @jshine1224;
- R – Mary Fedorowski @overbitestudio;
- A – Adam Polak @braverspaces;
- N – Tiffany Favers @epiphsfromtiff;
- S – Ivan Vazquez @thechicagolago;
- L – Laura Kaucher @laurakaucher;
- I – Daniel @heronhilldesigns;
- V – Chi N. @itschinwosu & Yo Y.;
- E – Owen Karcher @owenkarch;
- S – Melisa @peacecosour & Elisa @e\_roar;
- M – Alex Mendez @always\_make\_art;
- A – Touly Phiachantharath @uptowndesignstudio;
- T – Sam Kirk @iamsamkirk;
- T – Tattianna Howard @tattigram;
- E – soon to be art from Shala @followshala;
- R – Renisha James @reneweddesigns.



Part of the  
Black Trans  
Lives mural.  
Photo by Emily  
Reilly



Artist Sam Kirk.  
Photo courtesy of Kirk

## ART from page 13

time and how the Black queer community had started to talk about the issues they were facing in addition to Black Lives Matter and how this went into the conversation,” said Kirk.

More recently, Kirk also contributed to the Black Trans Lives Matter street mural in Andersonville, painting the first T in “matter.”

Kirk’s installation is a milestone for the Chicago Cultural Center as well, as it’s their first LGBTQ+ display across the city.

“It’s the first time they’ve done anything like that. They’ve never celebrated anything LGBTQ+ specific in an art installation in that way on the Magnificent Mile,” said Kirk. “It brought up some really good conversation about belonging and the importance of feeling welcomed in all parts of the city and not just these designated spaces and why that installation was important to happen downtown and not in Boystown and Andersonville.”

As for the art itself, Kirk created colorful images and portraits of individuals who represent the celebration of culture and identity and are inspired from people in real life.

“All of the work was inspired from interviews that I had with individuals from different cultural backgrounds,” said Kirk. “I interviewed a little over 20 different people and the pieces that ended up on the banner were actually from studies from more three-dimensional glassworks that I ended up producing for the residency. But I felt that what they conveyed individually was just as powerful as the finished pieces.”

One piece in the installation includes a woman wearing a rainbow hijab in the center. Another piece shows detailed imagery with the trans flag in the background.

“If you look at it in detail and you actually take the time to look at everything that’s happening in the piece, there’s so much narrative and there’s so many stories that really represent the people that I interviewed and what their life experience has been in not only the difficulties of being able to express themselves but also the families that they’ve made within the community as result of being rejected from their own and how they got through. I think it represents the many faces of our community that we don’t see represented enough.”

Kirk has upcoming work in the Latinx American exhibition in the DePaul Art Museum in 2021 and is currently working on illustrations for a children’s book called *The Meaning of Pride* set to release in 2022.

**STREAMING  
THEATER REVIEW**

## The Pursuit of Happiness: A BoHo Exploration of Freedom

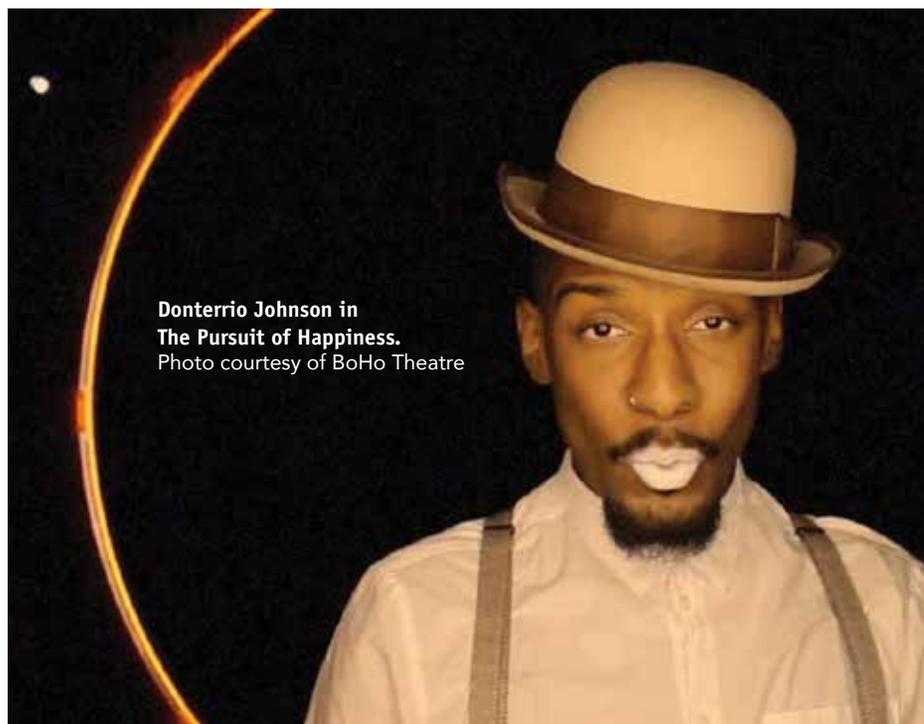
Playwright: Scripted by the artists and curated by Sana Selemon  
At: Streaming online at [BoHoTheatre.com](http://BoHoTheatre.com)  
Tickets: free with donation  
Runs through: Open run

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The projected shuttering of theater facilities for the remainder of the year ruled out cozy big-crowds-in-tiny-spaces musical pageants, but that didn't stop BoHo Theatre invoking their special talent for inviting every playgoer to share in an intimate conversation with its onstage personnel.

Since you can't get much more intimate than a heart-to-heart conducted in your own home, online stream seemed a fitting venue for BoHo's first production following their five Jeffs awarded in June.

The topic of this "exploration" is freedom—as explicated, extolled and celebrated by an ensemble representing segments of our society for whom that intangible commodity has not always been granted, well, freely. Without the accelerant



Donterrio Johnson in  
The Pursuit of Happiness.  
Photo courtesy of BoHo Theatre

of on-site spectators puffing adrenaline fumes at one another, however, it's not enough to merely string together a series of chest-thumping inspirational anthems from the Broadway/Cabaret repertoire.

What most distinguishes BoHo's symposial revue is the diversity reflected, not only in its

BIPOC cast, but in its selection of material. To be sure, the hour-long program includes fermata-laced torchers like "And I Am Telling You" and "The Man That Got Away" along with the obligatory "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother"—but the likewise inevitable "I Gotta Be Me" is rendered in gentle soft-shoe tempo and dedicated to pio-

neering Vaudeville hooper Bert Williams. We are offered a medley from the score of *The Color Purple*, but also a musical dialectic juxtaposing Bob Dylan's "The Times, They Are A-Changing" with Tracy Chapman's "Revolution" in addition to such period classics as Scott Joplin's "Easy Winners Rag" and Nina Simone's "I Wonder How It Feels to Be Free" ("Like a bird in the sky/I'd soar to the sun").

It's not all warbles and belts, though: Enhanced spoken-word accounts describe how unexpected identity and enlightenment may be discovered within the restricted environment of a Jesuit seminary, muse on the irony of a society where even Freedom itself comes at a price, and caution us to exercise diligence in guarding ours. Sometimes no words are needed, as in the poignant cinematic tale of a lonely young single who fashions herself a companion from old clothes and a paper-mache pig-mask for company and cuddling during the current isolation.

That same isolation mandates solitary entertainers overcoming spartan recording-booth acoustics, bare-bones instrumentals and the occasional missed note, but by the time esteemed artist/activist Marguerite Mariama exhorts us in a rousing triple-lyric finale to "Stand up! Stand up!" we are as cognizant as we are appreciative of the talent and industry—don't forget BoHo director/curator Sana Selemon, accompanist Nick Graffagna and video editors Tony Churchill and Charles Riffenburg—going into the assembly of this contemplation on a privilege too often taken for granted.

WINDY CITY TIMES

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## NUNN ON ONE: TELEVISION

# Nicco Annan makes it rain on 'P-Valley'

BY JERRY NUNN

Onetime activist and Olivier Award-winning playwright Katori Hall wrote a play called *Pussy Valley* that has now evolved into the new Starz series *P-Valley*.

The story is set at Pynk, a popular strip club in Mississippi, that is ruled by non-binary bearded boss Uncle Clifford—who is played by openly gay actor Nicco Annan. Clifford and the women at the club battle racism, homophobia and misogyny while trying to make a dollar to survive.

Raised in Detroit, Annan went to school in New York and trained under Israel Hicks at SUNY Purchase College Conservatory of Theatre Arts. Shortly after, he became a choreographer at the Yale School of Drama. Annan has previously appeared on *Shameless*, *This Is Us* and *Claws* before landing his latest role on *P-Valley*.

**Windy City Times: You are originally from Detroit?**

Nicco Annan: Yes, I'm a NorthTown boy.

**WCT: You studied musical theater growing up?**

NA: I studied all things. I was a triple threat. I studied improv and theater at first, then when I was 17 I told my mom I wanted to be Leroy on *Fame*. Gene Anthony Ray was this Black man dancing around in short shorts, braided hair and doing high kicks. That was my inspiration to study dance, so I joined a small troupe.

I was told that I could never aim too high with my size and could not be a concert dancer with Alvin Ailey because the company was too big. I was told I could never sing in music videos because I would have to look like Al B. Sure!

The transformative moment for me was seeing a deaf dance company perform at my high school. I couldn't believe that, even though they couldn't hear the music, they could still perform. I decided even if I was a paraplegic that I could still tell a story. I went to school and as soon as I graduated I turned to musical theater. I didn't want to be just the singular, Black, gay boy in the chorus so I started choreographing. When one door closes I open another one.

**WCT: And you have paid it back in sweat, just like in *Fame*! I wanted to be Coco from that show.**

NA: We could have done a number together!

**WCT: How did you land the role in *P-Valley*?**

NA: Katori Hall had a writers group that she called *Black Monday*, because every Monday that is when the theaters are dark. She wanted to collaborate with other artists and writers on Mondays when they were available. A writer friend of mine introduced us because Katori was looking for an actor that could embrace femininity. I came over on a *Black Monday*. The script was only four pages at that time and we started a workshop to create Uncle Clifford in New York.

We did a full production of *Pussy Valley* in 2015 at the Mixed Blood Theatre in Minneapolis. That

was the first and only live production of *Pussy Valley*. I had to audition for that and every step along the way was an audition. There were people behind the camera that had to green light the project.

There was always a misunderstanding of who Uncle Clifford was. Most people envisioned her more like RuPaul. People told me that they pictured Uncle Clifford to be light-skinned and very thin. Femininity equated to small for them. I always wanted to defy that.

I had to jump through many hoops, but I am grateful for that. It is the part that solidified who Uncle Clifford is for me. It allowed me to realize how small minded people are about the LGBT community. I was able to craft a way for the audience to come in and experience the persona of

something to her, but then she will say something back. Our community has been defending themselves since they were little, so if you come after someone be prepared for a battle!

**WCT: Are the costumes like armor? I loved those kinky boots you wore!**

NA: [Laughs] Oh, you have to wear the boots! Something happened to me on set and it speaks to what humanity is. My show runner's children came to the set one day. The oldest son asked me why I had nails on. I explained I was playing pretend and that was my character. He asked if I had super powers like Wolverine. I said yes and he thought it was cool.

When I play Uncle Clifford, I am not thinking about having to armor myself, but my defiance to societal norms is the real fight. That is the protest right there, the miracle and the blessing all in one.

**WCT: Does it take a long time to dress up for this role? I loved the red outfit in the third episode.**

NA: We called that look "The Wind Done Gone!" It doesn't take that long to get ready. We were adamant about not using traditional drag make-

If one of the golden ladies, or men, comes to me, then I will be more than happy to use that to amplify more stories about our community.

**WCT: *P-Valley* was just approved for a second season. What would you like to see happen in season two?**

NA: That is hard to say without you having seen the finale.

I would like to see how Uncle Clifford does with romance. I would like to see further development between Big L and Uncle Clifford. I think a relationship between a cis heterosexual Black man and a Black non-binary person with female pronouns is interesting.

I have more ideas, but let's talk after the finale.

**WCT: You have played gay characters in the past. Talk about that.**

NA: I just had a conversation with my mom about me playing straight characters in the past. I have played straight, but it's a new day where artists don't have to fit into the heterosexual normative in order to have their artistry recognized.

I have only played gay characters onscreen within the last year. I had played characters before that who were possibly gay, but I made



Nicco Annan in *P-Valley*.  
Photo by Tina Rowden/Starz Entertainment LLC

Uncle Clifford.

**WCT: Talking about small, this is a small town. Are you worried about Clifford being beaten up?**

NA: Let me ask you a question. Are you worried about that?

**WCT: I feel Clifford would kick someone's ass if they tried.**

NA: There you go! The homophobic and misogynistic energy is prevalent. When you are on the spectrum of the LGBT community, you learn how to deal with that misogyny or combat it in your own way. It is an individual fight and doesn't look the same for every person.

For Uncle Clifford, she—those are her pronouns: she/her—is audacious to walk out the front door while being her authentic self. I think that is what both attracts people and scares people. People don't typically cross her. They may say

up. The makeup just enhances Clifford's natural features. My beard is already there. The wigs are interchangeable. The costumes are just like another day in the office to me. I think it takes me about an hour to get ready overall.

The costumes are by Rita McGhee and I work closely with a hair and a makeup artist, all three are Black women. We just play together.

People like the pom-pom socks I wear on episode three, also. We don't have to spend a lot of money. Everyone wants to look great, even if they buy from the Dollar General!

**WCT: Do you think about a red-carpet look you will have if you eventually win an Emmy?**

NA: I believe the stories we are telling on *P-Valley* are noteworthy. The industry and audiences are realizing this is a whole world they didn't know about. It is kind of like how they react to *Game of Thrones* or *The Handmaid's Tale*.

choices as an actor and it was not in the script.

Being in the script as gay speaks to the expansion and visibility of the LGBT community, especially to the marginalized pockets of the community, whether that is trans or non-binary.

**WCT: Do you have plans for more choreography?**

NA: I am a choreographer on *This Is Us* and *All American*, so we shall see how that goes. I do have some ideas for a certain dance project as well as some biopics.

**WCT: Hopefully, you can come visit Chicago soon.**

NA: Listen: As soon as Miss Rona steps aside, we can all go out and shake a tail feather there, because I love Chi-town!

**Dive into the Delta on Starz at 7 p.m. every Sunday until the season finale Sunday, Sept. 6.**



## SPORTS

## Local LGBTQ players deliver message with social-justice T-shirts

BY ROSS FORMAN

David Rill and a few friends joined a new team this summer in the abbreviated Open Sunday Softball League, run by the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA), and they needed jerseys for the Howard Brown Weakened Warriors, coached by Michael Richardson.

"I saw some Major League Baseball players gearing up for the start of the [MLB] season wearing Black Lives Matters shirts, both in the wake of the protests and in support of their teammates," Rill said. "I thought [that] would be a great way to support those on our team and in the league and stand in solidarity with many others."

Rill and his mates "thought it would be great to support Tee Mart each week with a different message," he said. "Toward the end of the season [in late August], we wanted to make sure the message was more than just performative and put it into action, thus the idea of the supply drive was born."

Message-driven shirts were sold at the Sunday softball games. There were different shirts each week with a message for teammates and some other people in the league who wanted to participate or wear one. The shirts were intended to support a Black-owned business, Tee Mart Apparel in Rogers Park, and highlight them as an option for people who might need apparel or

jerseys this season or in the future while also starting a conversation or making a statement in support and advocacy for different groups who need support in and out of CMSA.

"Throughout the season, more and more people asked how they could get a shirt so with the help of Myles Lawter, we thought we could turn it into a supply drive: Donate \$10 to help offset the cost of the shirt with the promise of bringing an item to the fields to support Brave Space Alliance, [an] LGBTQIA+-run food pantry in the Midwest, located on Chicago's South Side.

"We've spent a little more than \$1,000 at Tee Mart Apparel [printing shirts], and we raised close to \$500 for Brave Space in addition to all of the supplies that folks [donated]."

CMSA representatives, including Rill, delivered the supplies and cash donation to Brave Space in late August.

"We never set a [financial] goal; this was more about sustainable support of Black-owned businesses that has to carry beyond 2020," Rill said. "Raising awareness for them as well for Brave Space were the primary goals.

"I've actually been humbled by the amount of support folks outside of Chicago have had for the cause," after learning about the drive on social media.

"The people [who Brave Space Alliance] serve directly aligns with the LGBTQIA+ community

that makes up the majority of CMSA, so it was an easy choice. I think CMSA has an opportunity to seek out and uplift Black-led groups while making our membership aware of local non-profits that are truly making a big difference in a lot of people's lives."

Rill said the campaign has been a league-wide drive—and beyond, thanks to social media. Case in point, heading into the last week of the regular-season, a friend of Rill's offered to cover the costs of shirts for the entire Howard Brown Warriors team—and the person doesn't even live in Chicago.

"I have been surprised in the best of ways by folks who just want to help out, but don't know where to start, so it's given them a chance to talk to myself, Myles, or one of our friends about groups to find and other resources available to them if they want to continue to educate themselves or use their position to give back."

The weekly shirts (ranging in price from \$12 to \$18) had simple messages with simple lettering, such as "Black Lives Matter," "Black Trans Lives Matter," "Justice for Breonna Taylor," "Protect Trans Youth" and "Support Chicago's Black Voices."

Six of the nine rec division had at least some players wearing the shirts.

Rill told Windy City Times, "I really only expected myself [and two new teammates to the

team] to wear them. ... It was great to see so many people reach out and ask about them. By the end of the season, we had folks from all over the league, folks who do not play in CMSA, and even folks who don't live in Chicago wearing the 'Support Chicago's Black Voices' shirt.

"It was rad to have genuine conversations with people about things they could do. There are different avenues of advocacy and action that everyone can take ... I think we did a great job of showing that and talking to folks about that when it would be [asked at the fields]."

Their social-media message even reached Major League Baseball.

Cincinnati Reds relief pitcher Amir Garrett replied, "Wow, this is awesome" about their first Black Lives Matter online post.

"I grew up in Columbus, Ohio so I'm a huge Reds fan," Rill said. "It was really cool to have him react positively on a post for some random people in Chicago."

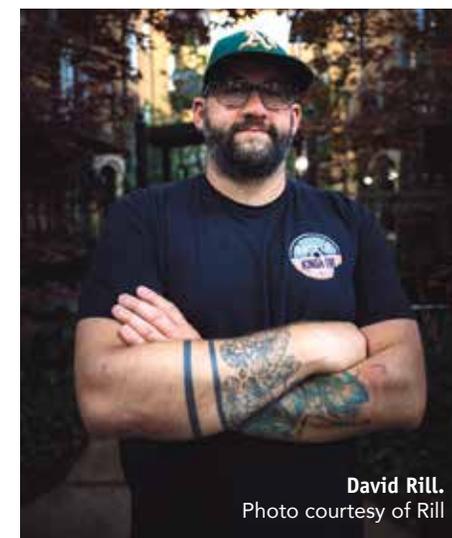
Rill, 35, who lives in Rogers Park, is the Eastern region director of field training at Noodles & Company. He has played CMSA sports for eight years, including softball, volleyball (indoor and beach), kickball and dodgeball. He also has played CMSA flag football.

"I think my favorite moment in CMSA was in football a few years back," Rill said. "My good friend Karl was our quarterback and with time was running out at the end of a game, he told me to take a snap as QB and just launch a Hail Mary [pass]. I had never played QB before, but the ball fell perfectly into his arms and he scored a touchdown. That ended up happening once more, leaving me with a pretty sparkling stat line for someone who typically plays on the offensive line."

One of his CMSA softball highlights was turning a triple play last season.

A softball injury also stands out, specifically, how it happened.

"One of [my former] teams were fighting back through a tournament bracket and the game went into extra innings. I was coaching first base when one of our outfielders had a walk-off hit to win the game. I jumped up in excitement and tore my calf muscle and couldn't play in the championship [game]. It's a pretty funny story to tell when you lead with, 'One time I got injured coaching first base ...'"



David Rill.  
Photo courtesy of Rill

Otis Richardson.



## Otis Richardson: Gay business owner expands Lavenderpop Greeting Cards

BY ROSS FORMAN

Otis Richardson is an artist and owner of Lavenderpop Greeting Cards—now the first independent and Black-owned greeting card company to be sold at Jewel stores in the supermarket chain's 121 years.

"Becoming a Jewel vendor was a step-by-step process," said Richardson, who lives in Chicago's Washington Park neighborhood. "When you partner with such a big retailer, there are so many things you have to have in place, [such as] business insurance, display racks, specific UPC codes and certifications. The executives at Jewel were very helpful in walking me through the maze.

"The response from the public has been tremendous. Hundreds of Facebook congratulations

[came in]; people saying they would start buying greeting cards again just to support me; people who live outside of Chicago would promote my cards to their family members who live here. [Plus], other buyers who couldn't get to a Jewel store, but decided to purchase online. I'm so appreciative."

Richardson's Lavenderpop cards are available in 10 area Jewel stores, mostly on the city's South Side, as well as Homewood and Oak Park.

"I had a disastrous interview with another grocery-store chain, so when I got a 'no' from them, it motivated me to approach Jewel. It [was], like, 'I'll show them,'" Richardson said. "Once I found the correct category manager, the process started to determine if it was even allowable for my cards to be sold there because of their prior relation-

ship with American Greetings Co. When I finally got the OK, I buckled down and made sure I accomplished every step I needed to do to make this dream happen.

Lavenderpop cards also are available at the Whole Foods in Englewood—and he's been an online card shark of sorts since 2004.

"I've survived pretty much by sticking around ... you know, the last person standing," he said, laughing. "Like many entrepreneurs, I have my day job to fund my creative endeavor. I've been able to maintain and keep improving my designs over time. Now that this retail opportunity presented itself, I was ready to take advantage of it.

"I believe the strength is eye-catching and relatable illustrations. Part of my motivation is to offer cards for people looking for another option for Black greeting cards. I also want to have fun cards that connect to Chicagoans. So several of the birthday cards have Chicago themes, such as Chicago-style hot dogs, Chicago mix popcorn, house music and even a card making fun of the bag tax at local stores."

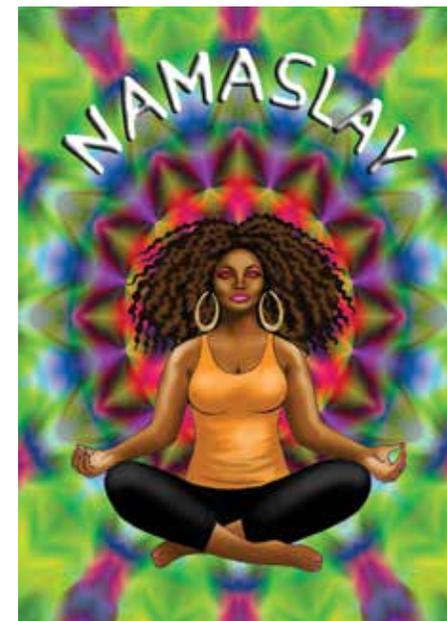
Richardson is the greeting card designer and the company's sole proprietor.

"Business is really great," he said. "Securing this 10-store deal with Jewel-Osco has really been a turning point for Lavenderpop. I've been in business for years, but it's only in the last few years that I've been able to get into retail stores. Before that I sold primarily online, [at] vendor fairs, and pop up shops."

Richardson said the most popular Lavenderpop card is a birthday card featuring a smiling woman with natural hair, adding, "I also have a series of [popular] blank cards, one with a sister meditating, and others featuring a man and woman with a fade hairstyle. These are extremely popular."

Lavenderpop cards are primarily purchased by women, particularly Black women, as many card designs feature Black women.

"My focus are Black images and Chicago themes," Richardson said. "I started with more LGBTQ designs years ago. That represented an atmosphere when we had more LGBTQ bookstores



One of Otis Richardson's Lavenderpop cards.

and gift shops. With the loss of a lot of these brick-and-mortar stores, it made sense to pivot and have designs that appeal to many identities, but really celebrated Black people because of the lack of diversity in the stationery industry."

Richardson, like countless business owners, has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. He has, for instance, set back due to his own concern in delivering to all the stores. Plus, he was worried about the safety of shoppers and if they felt comfortable spending time to look for a card when focused on getting essentials.

"Sales have been great, though. I've restocked several times and the cards have only been there for about a month," he said.

For more about Lavenderpop Greeting Cards (LavenderPop.com), the company can be found on Twitter @LavenderpopCards; Facebook, at Lavenderpop Greeting Cards; Instagram @lavenderpop; and Etsy, at LavenderpopCards.

### Hyde Park Art Center reopened Sept. 1

Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave., reopened its doors for limited exhibition hours Sept. 1.

The reopening will feature the Artists Run Chicago 2.0 exhibition, celebrating the work of 50 artist-run spaces and organizations that fuel Chicago's independent art scene.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the original Art Center exhibition, Artists Run Chicago (2009), Artists Run Chicago 2.0 examines the core motivations, trajectories and philosophies that have made the past decade generative for new models of artist-run initiatives to exist throughout the city and suburbs.

Free online public programming accompanies this exhibition, including monthly performances, workshops, and artist- and curator-led Art Center tours.

See HydeParkArt.org.

### 'Under the Stars with Handbag' drive-in fest through Sept. 19

Hell in a Handbag Productions is hosting "Under the Stars with Handbag: A Drive-In Festival," which is running Fridays and Saturdays through Sept. 19 at The Red Box Workshop, 4242 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., at 7:30 p.m.

Productions continue with Caged Dames (Sept. 4-5); Bewildered (Sept. 11-12); and the debut of Airport 1970SOMETHING (Sept. 18-19).

The lot opens at 7:30 p.m. and the feature begins promptly at 8:30 p.m.

Advance registration is required, and sales end three hours before presentation. Ticket prices are \$40, \$60 or \$80, depending on the number of patrons in a party and the size of the space needed. Tickets are currently available via Brown Paper Tickets at handbagdrivein.bpt.me.

## Dance for Life exceeds fundraising goal

Chicago Dancers United (CDU) announced that “Dance for Life 2020: United as One,” which took place Aug. 10–15, exceeded its financial goal, raising more than \$170,000 in contributions from nearly 700 donors.

Dance for Life 2020: United as One showcased Dance for Life performances from the past 29 years via video recordings on its website, ChicagoDancersUnited.org. Said recordings included works by the annual Partner Dance Companies—Giordano Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and The Joffrey Ballet—as well as past and present companies, including Hanna Britson and Dancers, Chicago Dance Crash, Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater, Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre, Luna Negra Dance Theater, Muntu Dance Theatre, River North Dance Chicago, Thodos Dance Chicago, Trinity Irish Dance Company and Visceral Dance Chicago.

Additional videos revisited previous Dance for Life finales by Randy Duncan and Harrison McEldowney/Jeremy Plummer.

The culminating virtual event on Aug. 15—the original date for the 29th anniversary of Dance for Life scheduled at the Auditorium Theatre—featured the world premiere of “Get It Together,” choreographed by Hanna Britson in response to COVID-19 and performed by 23 dancers from throughout the Chicago area. The hosts for the evening were Cortney Hall and Matthew Rodrigues, co-hosts of NBC Chicago’s program Chicago Today.

The final event also featured a Dance for Life highlights reel, remarks from board members and sponsors, details about resources available from The Dancers’ Fund, information about the 30th anniversary of Dance for Life in 2021 and more.



Hubbard Street Dance Chicago.  
Photo by Todd Rosenberg



**BILLY**  
Masters

“I don’t ever picture Dame Barbara Cartland doggie-style!”—Billy Masters explains that writers of fiction need not write solely from experience. This was part of a longer chat with **writer Christopher Rice** on Billy Masters LIVE!

Are we really living in a world where we accuse the president’s son of being high on cocaine during a convention speech? I thought the world hit a low when they went after Chelsea Clinton ... to say nothing of Amy Carter or the Bush girls. And does the son of a president have to actually say, “No, I was not high on cocaine” in a national television interview? I guess in this Trumpian age, the answer is yes. Whatever happened to class?

Then there’s **Jerry Falwell Jr.** I prepared a report on his unzipped escapade weeks ago, but thought “Who cares?” Apparently, people cared. On Instagram, he posted a photo from his yacht with a scantily clad woman—a woman who was not his wife. And let’s not even mention Jerry’s unzipped jeans peeking out below his protruding paunch. He deleted the pic, but not before others saved it and reposted it. Shortly thereafter, the executive committee of Liberty University’s board of trustees “requested that Jerry Falwell Jr. take an indefinite leave of absence from his roles as president and chancellor of Liberty University.” BTW, it was a paid leave of absence.

And yet, they didn’t have a problem with last year’s story about the pool boy—if anybody 29 years of age can be called a boy anywhere other than on a hookup app. A year ago, speculation ran rampant that Jerry Jr. had an affair with Giancarlo Granda. Now it’s being claimed that the tyke had an eight-year affair with Mrs. Falwell and that Mr. Falwell liked to “watch.” Jerry says,



**Christopher Rice** was a guest on **Billy Masters LIVE!**

Photo by Cathryn Farnsworth

“Becki had an inappropriate personal relationship with this person—something in which I was not involved.” Becki also asserts that her husband never watched. But, I noticed something odd. In his statement, Mr. Falwell says that he and his wife “forgave each other.”

What did Mrs. Falwell have to forgive Mr. Falwell for? Hmm. Becki’s list of sins continues to grow. It’s now being alleged that she performed oral sex on one of her son’s friends after band practice. Oh, did I mention they were both students at Liberty University? Falwell has resigned from the institute of higher learning because he doesn’t want his wife’s bad behavior to sully the school’s reputation. Fret not—he’ll leave with a \$10.5 million severance package. For that price, I’d do whatever he wants me to do with his package!

Last week on “Billy Masters LIVE.” I made a new friend and reconnected with three others. Our guest on Tuesday was writer **Christopher Rice**. While I might have previously met Anne Rice’s son, I certainly never spent any time talking to

him. I would have certainly remembered how smart and funny he is. Speaking of funny, we reunited the famed Funny Gay Males on Thursday’s show—their first time together since 2006! When they started out, they were **Jaffe Cohen**, **Danny McWilliams** and the late **Bob Smith**. Along the way, **Eddie Sarfaty** joined the group. All accomplished writers and performers, they formed at the perfect time in history to pave the way for people like Ellen. As with all of our shows, you can watch them on YouTube.com/BillyMastersTV.

This Tuesday (Sept. 1), we sat down with **Buck Angel**—famed porn star, producer and trans individual. And on Sept. 3, our drag divas series co-hosted by **Frank DeCaro** continues with **Peppermint** and **Miss Richfield**. How’s that for an all-star line-up? There’s something for everyone on BillyMasters.com/TV.

By the by, VH1 unsurprisingly renewed all of **RuPaul’s** shows. RuPaul’s Drag Race, RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars and Untucked have been picked up for another season.

Because most networks don’t have enough shows to air, some programs from the digital platform are moving up to primetime. For instance, CBS is bringing us the fourth season of **One Day at a Time**. If they find a way to air the earlier seasons, that would also be a smart move. **Star Trek: Discovery** joins the network line-up and will begin airing episodes from the first season on Sept. 24.

When **Zac Efron’s** little brother **Dylan** pulled to the side of a road to pee, someone took a photo. This is fortuitous since he lowered his shorts all the way. However, the locale appears to be pretty deserted, which makes me think it was an inside job—as in inside his own car. Posed or not, I’ll post it on BillyMasters.com.

Our *Ask Billy* question was about another photo. Kevin in Denver wrote, “Did you see the pics of **Tyler Posey** frying sausage in the nude? He is just so dreamy.”

He is dreamy, but also a big-ole tease. I mean, he didn’t really show anything—certainly not

any sausage! Once again, I got thinking—didn’t we have a story like this before? So I went and checked the definitive site for celebrity nudes—BillyMasters.com. And there was Tyler ... pleasuring himself during a video call. If I didn’t see it, I wouldn’t believe it. I’ll repost it for your viewing pleasure.

When I’m more interested in some actual sausage than anything else Tyler is frying up, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. Since there’s no rest for the wicked, I’ll keep cooking up content for BillyMasters.com—the site that will whet more than just your appetite. If you have a question, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before I recycle that “pocket full of Posey.” joke! Until next time, remember: One man’s filth is another man’s bible.

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# the DISH

Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### RAISED | An Urban Rooftop Bar

BY EMILY REILLY

**RAISED | An Urban Rooftop Bar** (1 W. Wacker Dr.; [RaisedBarChicago.com](http://RaisedBarChicago.com)) flaunts breathtaking views of the city with a spectacular food and drink menu.

The venue's traditional American cuisine offers choices for anyone—including breakfast, lunch and dinner—along with a selection of desserts and a diverse drink menu. For a socially distanced brunch or a casual night out for drinks, RAISED will go above and beyond your expectations for rooftop dining.

Breakfast options include skillet, omelette, parfaits, croissants, a breakfast burrito and more. You can also choose a “light and healthy” option as well as gluten-free and vegan items.

The lunch and dinner menu is hearty and savory, and it absolutely hits the spot. It's broken down into categories; the first is “snacks,” which are smaller, appetizer plates for tables to share. A standout from this section was the crispy polenta and ratatouille with goat cheese and smoked tomato sugo. This snack plate was the perfect starter along with the spot's frites (French fries), which are available in rosemary parmesan or regular flavors. They were thick and salty, and perfectly paired with the aioli and ketchup.

The next category on the menu—called



“btwn the bread”—offers sandwiches, burgers and everything that's (you guessed it) between bread. I chose the all-natural turkey BLT: stacked beeler's farm hickory smoked bacon, mighty vine tomato, lettuce and garlic aioli, served with house made chips. It was a classic lunchtime dish with a wonderful flavor combination.

The “substantial” category features appetizing, savory options of grilled bistro filet, chicken breast and the be-all and end-all of mac 'n cheese. The Carr Valley-aged cheddar mac 'n cheese was cheesy and flavorful with house-smoked beef brisket, roasted peppers, herb crumb throughout; a version without the beef is available as well—but, for my dining companion, the meat was an essential part of the dish.

Another feature of RAISED's menu was the “share” category, which serves platters that are typically ordered for a group to enjoy together,

**Above: The view at RAISED. Below: RAISED's raspberry crunch.**

Photos by Emily Reilly



including orders such as a charcuterie selection and lobster rolls. (Note: RAISED's items were originally all shareable; however, it recently revised its menu.)

As for drinks, the popular Watered Flowers cocktail was almost too pretty to drink. The foamy, delicate, pink cocktail was topped with decorative petals, and smelled of roses. It's made with CH vodka, aperol, strawberry, lemon, egg white and rose water.

Finally, the dessert was unlike anything I've tried before and had a lovely presentation. The raspberry crunch was an irresistibly sweet, creamy combination of raspberry mousse, lady fingers, white chocolate and orange zest—the perfect way to end.

RAISED's cautious approach to serving customers and spaced out dining areas were quite reassuring. Those that are dining must wear masks unless eating or drinking and are given sealed utensils. They can accompany up to six guests at once, but seating is limited to 90 minutes for parties of two and limited to two hours for parties of three or more. You can also scan a QR code and view a menu without contact. Our excellent server, Felipe, wore a mask and kept his distance—but still made sure our every need was met.

While you're munching on these menu favorites, you'll get a unique perk few restaurants offer—being able to see Chicago at its most charming state. I will never feel the same about dining again as I'm crammed in a booth at a chain restaurant, knowing that I could be dining out with the city's breathtaking skyscrapers wrapping around me, debating on if I should photograph my dish first or the view. Reserve a table at RAISED Rooftop Bar and you'll find yourself with the same magnificent dilemma.

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

**Artemis Singers.**  
Photo by Danyel Duncan



## Artemis Singers virtual panel Sept. 26

Artemis Singers will celebrate 40 years as Chicago's lesbian feminist chorus with a free virtual discussion and Q&A, 3:30-5 p.m., on Saturday, Sept. 26.

Gerber/Hart Library & Archives is hosting this online event.

Artemis Singers, a nonprofit organization, specializes in performing music written or arranged by women. Artemis Singers President Diana Clegg, who will also moderate the event, said in a statement, “We will share stories, photos and music from the early years through to the present and discuss future plans.”

The event is free, but registration is required by Friday, Sept. 25;

visit [GerberHart.org/events/artemis-singers-40th-anniversary-panel](https://GerberHart.org/events/artemis-singers-40th-anniversary-panel).

In lieu of a ticket price for this panel event, Artemis Singers encourages people to donate to the Black Lesbian Archives (BLA) (<https://blacklesbianarchives.wixsite.com/info>). Kru Maekdo created the BLA in 2017 to “bring awareness, build our community, educate and preserve our culture, while bridging intergenerational gaps.” Donations can be made through PayPal to [krumaekdo@gmail.com](mailto:krumaekdo@gmail.com).

For more on Artemis Singers, visit [ArtemisSingers.org](http://ArtemisSingers.org).

## CGHA scholarship fundraiser Sept. 12

The Chicago Gay Hockey Association (CGHA) will hold its Skate for Scholarships fundraiser Saturday, Sept. 12.

Proceeds will help the Inner-City Education Program, which is focused on helping children from underprivileged and underserved Chicago communities achieve their potential by giving them access to educational opportunities and the sport of hockey that would otherwise be unattainable for them.

During the event, CGHA players will join friends and loved ones for a socially distant skate, run, or walk around the Chicago—or wherever they call home. Attendees do not need to be in Chicago to participate in the Skate for Scholarships event. Participants just need to log the miles they skate, run, or walk on Sept. 12; through

the support of pledges, the miles will be turned into contributions to the Inner-City Education Program.

To sign up, visit <https://go.rallyup.com/cgga-participant/>; to make a pledge, visit <https://go.rallyup.com/cgga>.

## Women's pro soccer to resume Sept. 5

The National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) announced that its season will resume Saturday, Sept. 5, according to a press release.

Following the Challenge Cup that recently took place, there will be a televised NWSL Game of the Week on the CBS Television Network every Saturday in September, and on CBS Sports Network three Saturdays in October. CBS All Access will exclusively stream four games as well as the CBS broadcast coverage in September.

The NWSL fall series will include 18 matches over the course of seven weeks, featuring three, three-team pods that will all play one another and enable the league to minimize travel. The full format and schedule for the NWSL fall series will be released soon.

The three teams in each regional pod will each play four games. Those pods are:

- West: OL Reign, Portland Thorns FC and Utah Royals FC;
- Northeast: Chicago Red Stars, Sky Blue FC (located in New Jersey) and Washington Spirit; and
- South: North Carolina Courage, Orlando Pride and Houston Dash.

## EXPO CHICAGO pushed to 2021

EXPO CHICAGO, The International Exposition of Contemporary and Modern Art, will present its ninth edition from April 8-11, 2021, at Navy Pier.

The decision to move the fair from its traditional September 2020 time slot to this coming spring was the result of a collaborative decision-making process that EXPO CHICAGO conducted with galleries, collectors, institutional partners and city officials.

In response to the rapidly evolving social and business environments, EXPO CHICAGO put in place a plan that allows exhibitors to provide non-binding deposits and, subsequently, a flexible payment schedule for those participating in the exposition.

In addition, alongside expanding programming and initiatives, EXPO CHICAGO has pledged to make contributions to both the Art Dealers Association of America and the New Art Dealers Association from the proceeds of the exposition.

See EXPOCHICAGO.com.

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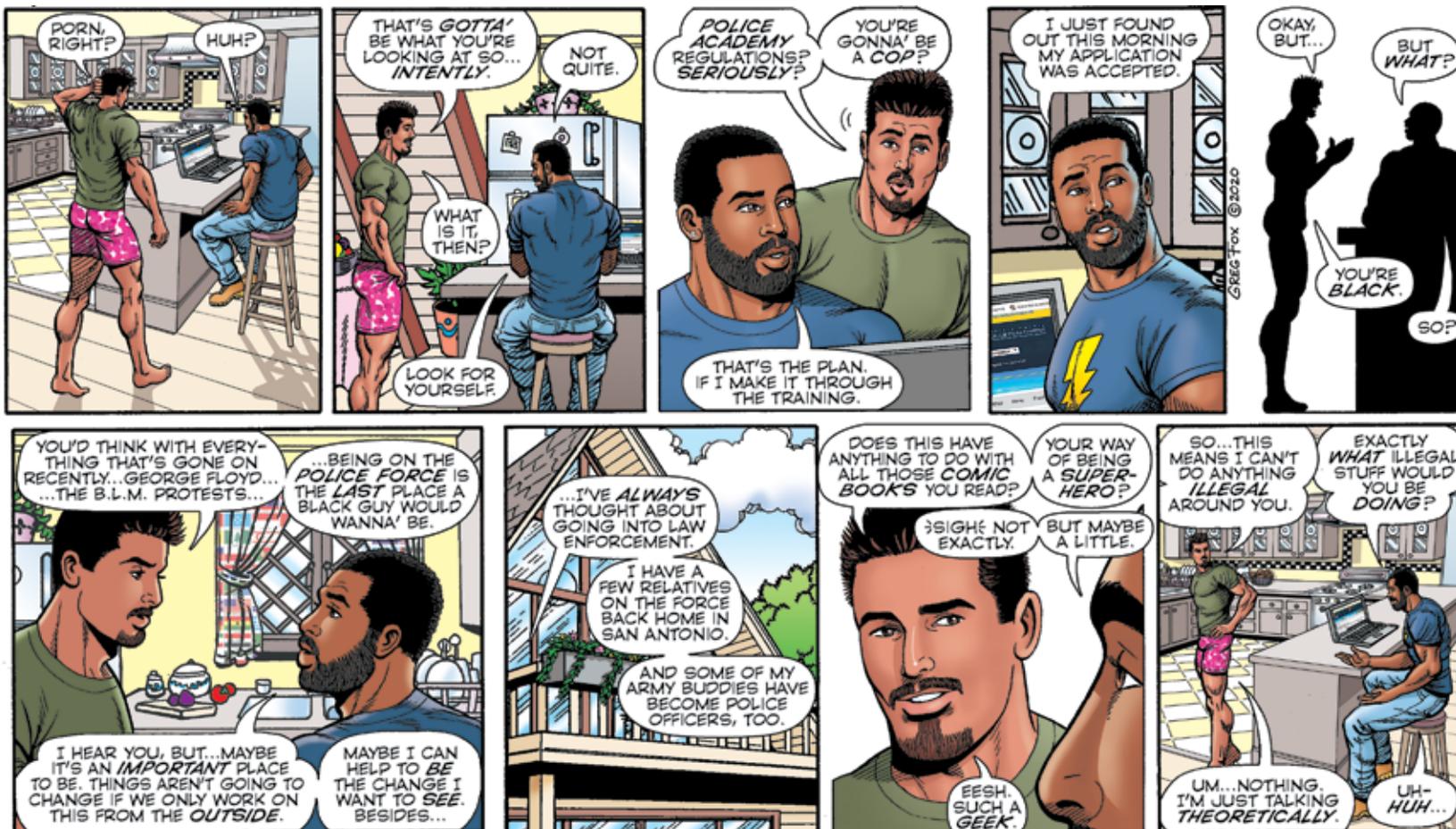
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## KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST

by Greg Fox



# WINDY CITY TIMES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

[NOTE: Events may not occur because of compliance with guidelines connected with the COVID-19 outbreak. Please contact the venue if interested in a particular event to see if said event is still scheduled.]

## Wed., Sept. 2

**Holocaust Museum's virtual soiree** Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center's Women's Leadership Committee will host stream live from a studio featuring a music by Katie Kadan, a finalist on The Voice (December 2019) and surprise guests. Social columnist Candace Jordan will emcee. Raffle. Free, Recommended donation \$200. 7:00pm Online 847-967-4821 <http://ILHolocaustMuseum.org/wlc>

**Virtual Author Conversation: Margot Livesey & Gish Jen** One September afternoon in 1999, teenagers discover a boy in a field, bloody and unconscious. Thanks to their intervention, the boy's life is saved. In the aftermath, all three siblings are irrevocably changed. 7:00pm Online <http://womenandchildrenfirst.com>



## PUTTIN' ON THE FRITZ

Wed., Sept. 2

**Museum Board President Fritzie Fritzshall will appear at the Illinois Holocaust Museum's virtual soiree.**

Photo courtesy of the museum

## Friday, Sept. 4

**American Blues Theater's Blue Bash benefit** Fundraiser celebrating 35 Years Strong with live, interactive, one-night-only celebration with performances by ensemble and artistic affiliates. Recommended attire is comfortable with a pop of blue.. \$100 suggested donation 7:00pm 773-654-3103 ext. 1 Tickets: <http://AmericanBluesTheater.com>

## Saturday, Sept. 5

**36th annual Printers Row Lit Fest CANCELLED** The festival, which is the largest outdoor literary showcase in the Midwest, will return in the summer of 2021.

**The National Women's Soccer League resumes** Televised NWSL Game of the Week on the CBS Television Network every Saturday in September, and on CBS Sports Network three Saturdays in October. CBS All Access will exclusively stream four games as well as the CBS broadcast coverage in September.

## Mon., Sept. 7

**Labor Day Picnic Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association** Social distancing, outdoor space. RSVP, food orders at link. 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Miller Meadow [www.facebook.com/events/873428943187729](http://www.facebook.com/events/873428943187729)

## Wed., Sept. 9

**Balkrishna Doshi: Architecture for the People** Exhibition illuminates Doshi's melding of modernism with traditional

Indian techniques and forms, yielding a body of deeply humanist work. Through Dec. 12, 2020 12:00pm Wrightwood Tickets: <http://ickets.wrightwood659.org/events>

## Thursday, Sept. 10

**Holocaust Museum, Resiliency2020 online event** Best-selling singers and songwriters, renowned entrepreneurs, respected mental health clinicians, blockbuster writers, honorable cabinet members, and inspirational celebrities to share their methods for bouncing back and staying resilient. Free. 4CEs provided. 12:00pm - 3:00pm Online Tickets: <http://www.resiliency2020.com>

## Friday, Sept. 11

**Q: Activism at the Margins of Identity exhibit at Gerber/Hart** Emerging as an outgrowth of the AIDS pandemic and the activism it brought forth, the 1990s saw a new wave of advocacy sweep through queer communities in Chicago and across the country. Political hostility, gay-for-pay media representation, and ongoing threats of physical violence pushed queer identities to the margins of society. Embracing otherness, they discovered strength in radical activism and artistic expression, transforming the concept of queerness. Gerber Hart Library and Archives 6500 N Clark St Chicago <http://gerberhart.org>

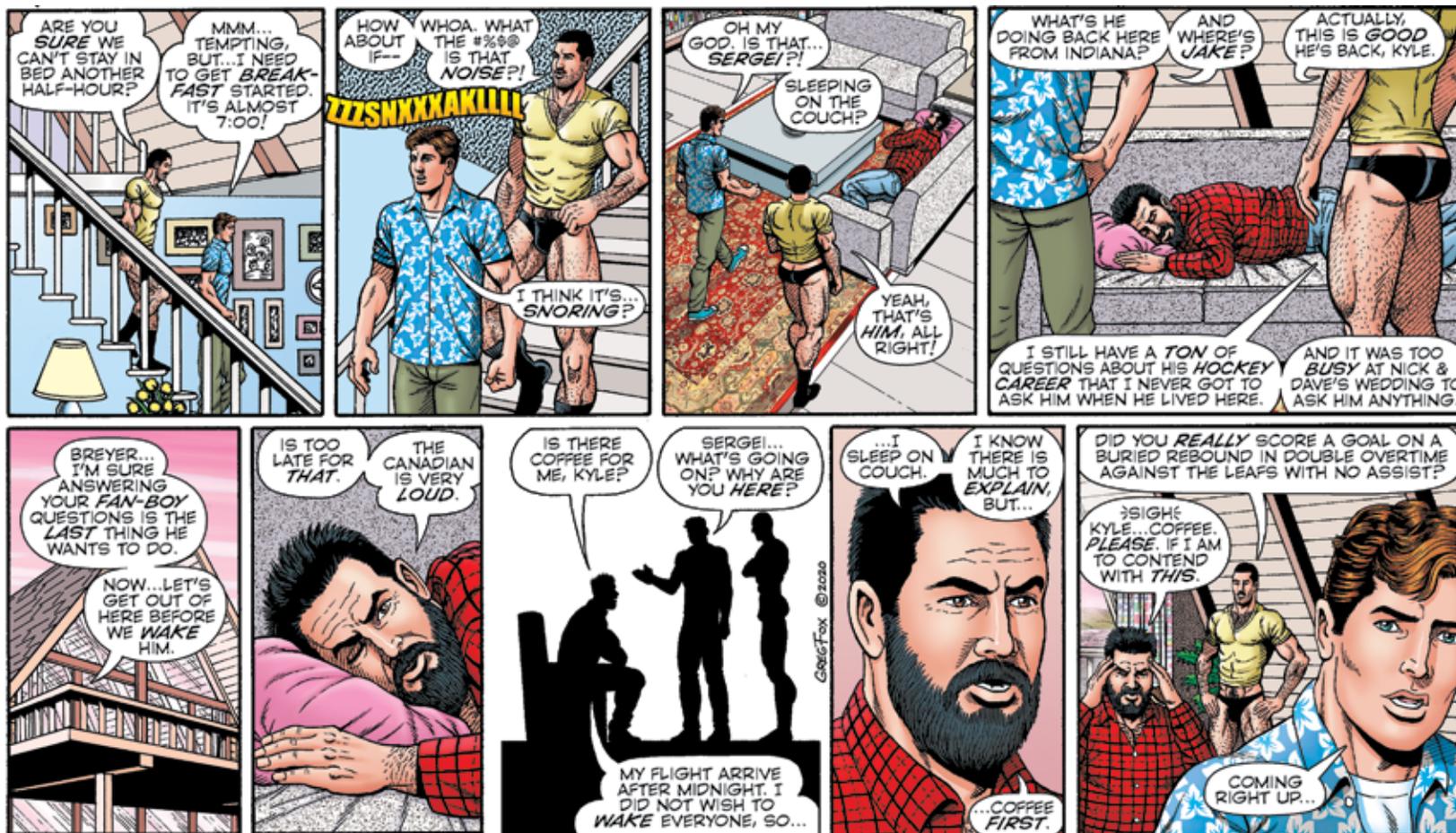
## Saturday, Sept. 12

**Lambda Legal's Phenomenal Women 2020 virtual event** Celebrate the community of women that make Lambda Legal's work a reality and to show solidarity for all the women in our LGBTQ+ community. Free 1:00pm Online <http://www.lambdalegal.org/womenleaders> Tickets: <http://support.lambdalegal.org/site/Calendar?id=109664&view=RSVP>

**Saving LGBTQ History Archives in a Time of Activism** Gerber/Hart Library and Archives Fall Benefit. A series of 90 minute sparkling salons (10-12 people each). Intimate discussions on work and future of Gerber/Hart, presentation of the new 5 year strategic plan, tour of the restricted stacks by the director, and a tour of the newly opened exhibit on queer activism in the 1990s by a curator. Salon times will be 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 12; and 10:00 a.m., 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 13. 6:00pm Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, 6500 N Clark St., Chicago

# KYLE'S BED & BREAKFAST

by Greg Fox





## Trans judicial candidate Jill Rose Quinn weds

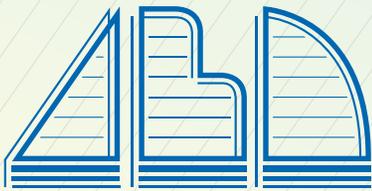
Democratic judicial candidate Jill Rose Quinn (right, in both photos)—who will likely be Illinois' first openly transgender judge after the Nov. 3 elections—added to her 2020 highlights by marrying partner Stephanie Marder this past weekend.

Quinn told Windy City Times that the couple had a small ceremony and dinner at the restaurant Pasta D'Arte. She added that Judge James Shapiro performed the marriage ceremony, and about 160 people who attended via Zoom. Brad Trowbridge served as "Best Man of Honor."

Photos by Marko Furundzic



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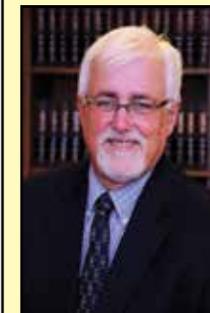
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# 35 THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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