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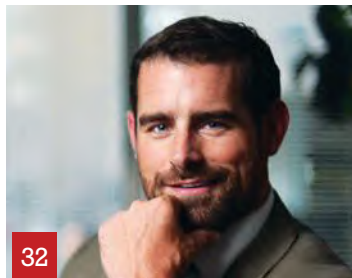
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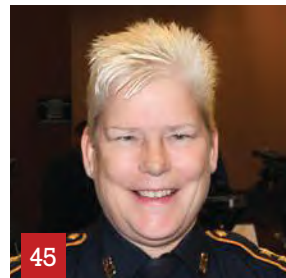
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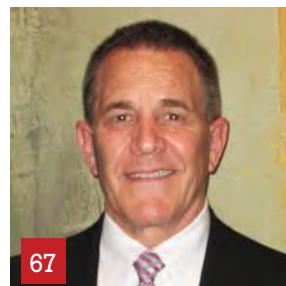
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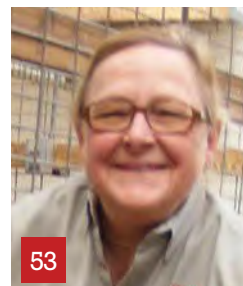
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Pennsylvania Rep. Brian Sims (SEE PAGE 32.)
 Photo: Kyle Cassidy
 kylecassidy.com
 Art Direction: Alex Rosa

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is looking down at a tablet computer on a wooden table. His right hand is touching the screen. A cup of coffee is partially visible on the left side of the table.

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WEB EXCLUSIVES



Jerry Hooker and Jacob Sudhoff take home-staging to the next level—and show you how to show off your home in style.

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- **Disabling Trump** A man born with cerebral palsy joins the Women's March on Washington and is forever changed.
- **HRC 20** The Human Rights Campaign celebrates two decades at their annual gala.

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Boy Scouts' New Policy Allows Trans Scouts

By Ryan M. Leach

The Boy Scouts of America announced on January 30, 2017, that they would begin recognizing Scouts by the gender indicated on their membership application. This is a historic new stance for an organization that has long been at odds with LGBTQ groups over the treatment of LGBTQ Scouts and scouting leaders. This new, inclusive policy will allow all children who identify as male to participate in the programming offered through the Boy Scouts of America.

For Phyllis Frye, the first transgender municipal judge in the country, the new policy means that she is now officially recognized for her accomplishment in achieving the coveted status of Eagle Scout—another historic milestone in the life of a woman who has made history on several fronts.

While this new policy was formally announced only recently, Frye was actually awarded her National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) lifetime membership in December 2015, after the Stonewall Law Association of Greater Houston purchased it for her. The



Officially an Eagle

Phyllis Frye accepting her National Eagle Scout Association lifetime membership in December 2015.

Phyllis]. I received a telephone call from an extremely courteous BSA staff member in the National Eagle Scout Service, whose only question was to make sure Phyllis' name was correctly spelled. There was no fuss or bother, just a sincere desire to get it right."

When transgender individuals begin the process of transitioning, their history does not disappear. Remembering and celebrating past achievements is as important to transgender people as it is to anyone. In the case of Frye, she achieved the highest level of scouting and deserved to be recognized accordingly. Frye was always an Eagle Scout, but had to wait until 2015 for that to be recognized formally. Everyone wants to be identified for achievements by the name that they identify with.

continued on page 15

Stonewall Association's Charles Spain, an Eagle Scout and longtime LGBTQ activist in his own right, said this about Frye's recognition: "When Stonewall Law Association [applied for] her National Eagle Scout Association life membership in December 2015, I attached a copy of the August 29, 2015, *New York Times* front-page article [that featured

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On February 18, the Montrose Center held its "Creating Roles of Wellness Needs" event. Pictured are **Deidra Sam, Terry "Kofi" Ray, Julian Rhyne, Tommie Ross, and Remmington Ross.**



OutReach United held its 2017 beneficiary meeting on February 12 at the home of Gary Wood and Bryant Johnson. Pictured are **Sallie Wyatt-Woodell, Justin Pitts, Kim Watson, Fran Watson, Kent Loftin, Desmond Bertand, and Dalton DeHart.**



On February 11, PFLAG Houston held an open house at the home of **Sara Fernandez**. Pictured are Fernandez, **Blake Weissner, Jane Gay, Jorge Robinson, and Carlos Fernandez.**



On February 11, the Krewe of Olympus held its Ball XLVII, entitled "The Seasons." Pictured are **David Gandy, Gary Nall, Andy Eversole, Fred White, and David Kostak.**



The T.R.U.T.H. Project held its "Just Tell the Truth" fundraiser on February 3 at Hotel ZaZa. Pictured are **Ray L. Shackelford, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Gathe, pastors Rudy and Juanita Rasmus, Kevin Anderson, Charlene Daniels, LaToya Jarrett, and a representative of congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee.**

What is DESCOVY?

DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years and older. DESCOVY is not for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. DESCOVY combines 2 medicines into 1 pill taken once a day. Because DESCOVY by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1, it must be used together with other HIV-1 medicines.

DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS.

To control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses, you must keep taking DESCOVY. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about DESCOVY?

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects:

- **Buildup of an acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Serious liver problems.** The liver may become large and fatty. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turning yellow (jaundice); dark "tea-colored" urine; light-colored bowel movements (stools); loss of appetite; nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY for a long time. In some cases, lactic acidosis and serious liver problems have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and 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 monitor your health.

What are the other possible side effects of DESCOVY?

Serious side effects of DESCOVY may also include:

- **Changes in body fat**, which can happen in people taking HIV-1 medicines.
- **Changes in your immune system.** Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any new symptoms after you start taking DESCOVY.
- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking DESCOVY if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems**, such as bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

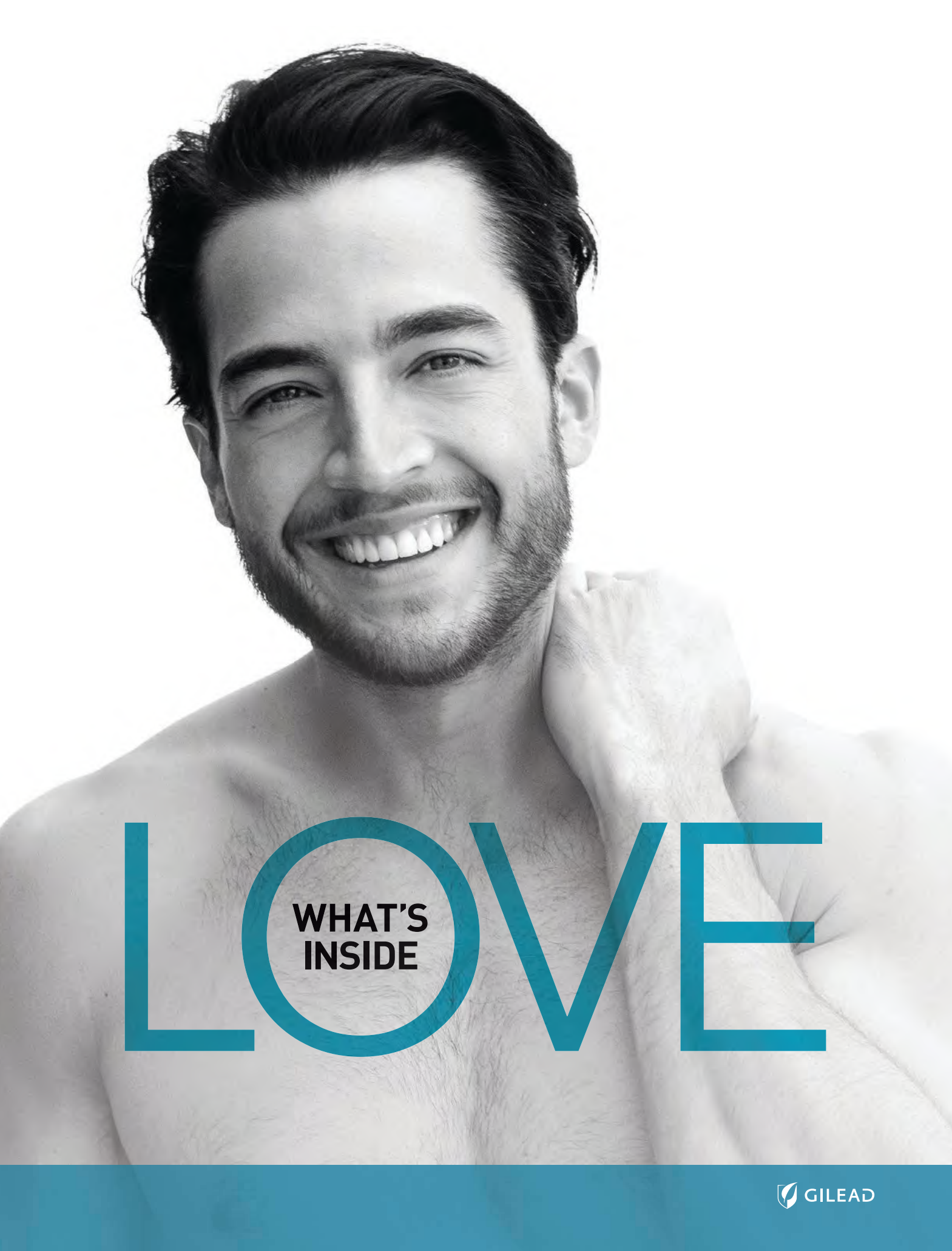
What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking DESCOVY?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **All the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how DESCOVY works. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist. Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe to take DESCOVY with all of your other medicines.
- **If you are pregnant** or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if DESCOVY can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking DESCOVY.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about DESCOVY, including important warnings, on the following page.

Ask your healthcare provider if an HIV-1 treatment that contains DESCOVY[®] is right for you.



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MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DESCOVY

DESCOVY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: feeling very weak or tired, unusual muscle pain, trouble breathing, stomach pain with nausea or vomiting, feeling cold (especially in your arms and legs), feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark “tea-colored” urine; loss of appetite; light-colored bowel movements (stools); nausea; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** DESCOVY is not approved to treat HBV. If you have both HIV-1 and HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking DESCOVY. Do not stop taking DESCOVY without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking DESCOVY or a similar medicine for a long time.

ABOUT DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a prescription medicine that is used together with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older. DESCOVY is **not** for use to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **DESCOVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** Ask your healthcare provider about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

HOW TO TAKE DESCOVY

- DESCOVY is a one pill, once a day HIV-1 medicine that is taken with other HIV-1 medicines.
- Take DESCOVY with or without food.

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about **DESCOVY**[®] and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF DESCOVY

DESCOVY can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “Most Important Information About DESCOVY” section.
- Changes in body fat.
- Changes in your immune system.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.

The most common side effect of DESCOVY is nausea.

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.

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

BEFORE TAKING DESCOVY

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

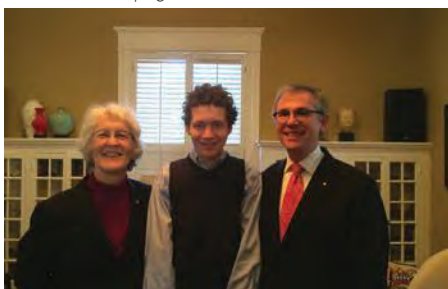
- Have or had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical condition.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

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.

GET MORE INFORMATION

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



Scouts for Equality

Phyllis Frye (l), with Eagle Scout and longtime LGBTQ advocate Charles Spain and his son, Jeff Spain.

Despite past tensions between the BSA and the LGBTQ community, Spain believes that the organization is making progress in the same way it has also evolved on some, if not all, issues relating to scouting regulations. “Cultural change is never easy, and we all know that BSA has at times lagged behind the public on issues. I believe that BSA was ahead of public opinion in 1978 when they opened all adult scouting positions to women, including Scoutmasters. I believe that BSA is ahead of public opinion today in recognizing that gender identity is a personal matter, deferring to Scouts and their families. BSA is leading the public, not following,” said Spain.

Boy Scout Law clearly states: “A Scout is friendly. A Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He offers his friendship to people of all races, religions, and nations, and respects them even if their beliefs and customs are different from his own.” Current policy on gender identity recognizes diversity, and the Scout Law is clear that friendship is to be offered to everyone. This law seems more relevant than ever in today’s toxic political climate. ■

In Memoriam

Celebrating the Life of Rev. Gracie Lee

By Shirley Knight

Rev. Gracie Lee was a pioneer in Houston’s lesbian community. Beginning in the early 1980s, she and her partner, Lynn Herrick, ran a bookstore and thrift shop, opened a shelter for women and children, ran a daily soup kitchen, and promoted women’s music. In addition, Lee served on the board of Houston’s oldest gay non-profit organization and edited their newsletter. She is remembered as a kind and generous person who lived by the Golden Rule.

Lee moved to Houston in 1983 and established Gracielynn Books at the corner of Fairview and Stanford. The store evolved into a community art center called A Place in the Sun, where Lee and her partner hosted art shows, concerts, and poetry readings. A flyer from 1983 promotes “GayLa events” featuring both male and female singers, pianists, and poets—all for just a \$1 admission. Iris Greer Sizemore, who has led a women’s group in Houston for over 40 years, says, “The bookstore was the place to go on Sunday afternoons.”

Lee and her supporters built an outdoor theater on the lawn outside the bookstore and held concerts there on Friday nights. During that time period, the annual Westheimer Colony Art Festival took place in Montrose and drew large crowds to the area. In 1983, an artist named Abraham Davidson was featured singing songs from his *Children of Creation* album. Admission was \$2.

According to an article Lee wrote in 1983, A Place in the Sun was “where artists and audiences discover themselves and one another in an intimate setting,” and where “seasoned

pros or newcomers with a ‘spark’ are helped to get professionally on their way.” Lee was a musician herself who wrote songs and performed with her partner as The Gracielynn Duo. In addition to performing and producing concerts, Lee hosted open-mic nights for the community.

When people who were down on their luck began showing up at the store, Lee opened the house that was also on the property as a shelter for women and children. In May 1984, Lee produced a first-anniversary gala, “commemorating a year of nonprofit service to the Montrose community.” At the time, Lee said, “A Place in the Sun has been feeding, clothing, sheltering, counseling, and generally helping homeless or troubled Houstonians for slightly more than a year.” Sizemore says, “They created a sanctuary and had a special corner in their hearts for music and women.”

By November 1984, the shelter had outgrown the space, so Lee and her partner leased a larger property. By this time, Lee’s work had come to the attention of then-mayor Kathy Whitmire, who declared November 18 “A Place in the Sun Day” in Houston. City Council Member Eleanor Tinsley read the proclamation at a concert celebrating the opening of the larger shelter.

Another way Lee helped the community was by serving as the secretary for Interact Houston, an umbrella organization for nonprofit groups. Interact billed itself as Houston’s oldest gay nonprofit organization. Founded in 1970, the group was “a nonprofit

continued on page 50

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On January 25, Halloween Magic distributed funds to its beneficiaries at Darwin’s Pub. Pictured are **Danielle Sampey, Gilbert Joseph Perez, Nicki Thompson, Jameson Gray, Debbie Skelly, Tim Martinez, and Paul Pettie.**



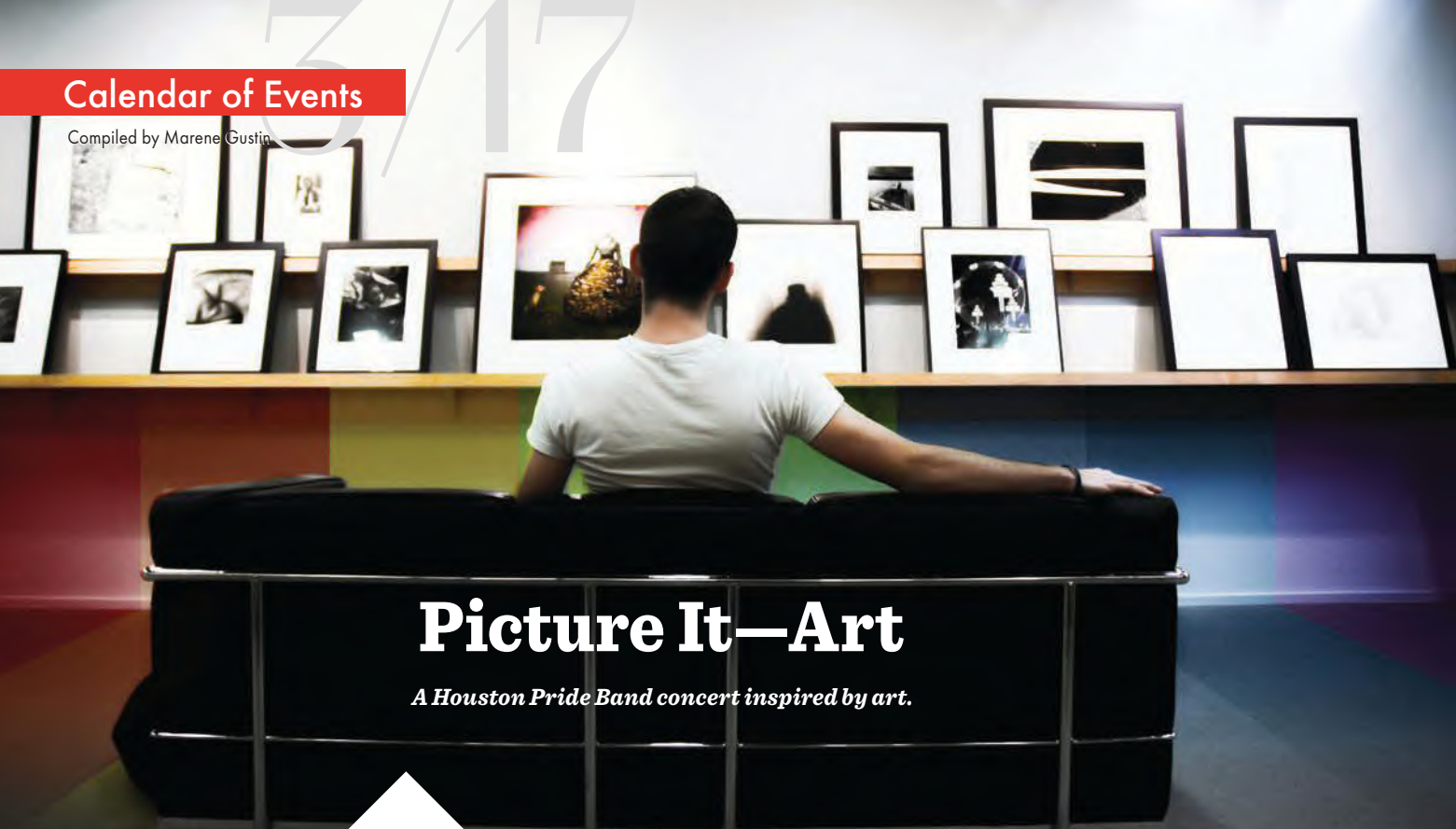
Ginger & Fork Restaurant held its 2017 Chinese New Year celebration on January 28 and 29. Pictured are **Jeffery Plummer, Donny Roy, Mary Li, Tammi Tse, and Mark Anthony.**



The Diana Foundation held its “Pick Your Seat” event on January 29 at Native Citizen. Pictured are **Andrew Zahorsky, Tanner Williams, Jeremy Kizer, Andy Davis, Ron LaCarna, Jerry Aucoin, Tola Ouk, Clay Kirby, Philip Alger, Jared Boudreaux, Alan Adolph, Kenneth Clayborne, David Eason, Joe Tate, Monnie Bond, Jose McDonald, and Josh Snellgrove.**

Calendar of Events

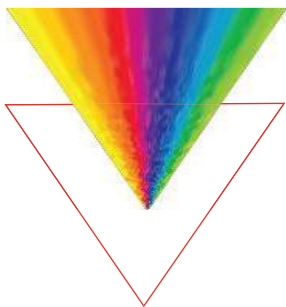
Compiled by Marene Gustin



Picture It—Art

A Houston Pride Band concert inspired by art.

JOE DOMBROWSKI



For almost four decades Houston's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community band has been marching in parades and performing at concerts and community events. They're a fun organization, and also damn good at what they do. But see for yourself this month.

Houston Pride Band's concert at the cool, still-newish Midtown

Arts Center Houston (MATCH) is a sequel to last year's *Picture It—Cinema*. This year, *Picture It—Art* will feature music inspired by art from early Mayan cave paintings, the Louvre, mural temples, old castles, Pablo Picasso, and more. The Pride band will be joined by the Oak Lawn Band of Dallas and The Pride of San Antonio Showband

for this beautiful one-night-only concert. Tickets are just \$10, but seating is limited, so get yours now at matchouston.org.

March 18
Picture It — Art
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2

Let the Right One In ★ *thru 19* The National Theatre of Scotland presents this vampire thriller. (See page 18.) alleytheatre.org

3

Brentano String Quartet's 'The Art of Fugue' ★ Da Camera presents this performance installation work. dacamera.com

4

Barefoot in the Park ★ A delightful rom/com as relevant today as it was in the '60s. thegrand.com
'Cry of the Third Eye' and 'Children of the Lost' ★ Filmed acts of an opera. aurorapictureshow.org

5

AIDS Walk Houston + This year's goal is \$500,000, so sign up now! And don't forget your umbrella. aidswalkhouston.org

6

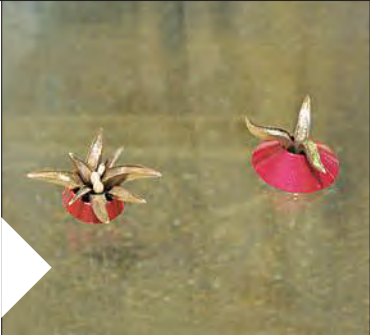
Writefest + *thru 12* A weeklong writers festival hosted by Writespace, Houston's grassroots nonprofit literary arts center. writespacehouston.org

7

Art League Houston 🖼️ *thru 11* Three new exhibits that you'll want to see. artleaguehouston.org
In the Eyes of Our Children: Houston, An American City 🖼️ *thru 31* Area schoolchildren's photos. rice.edu

8

BodyWorks RX 🖼️ *thru April 23* More than 75 human bodies, stripped of fluids and skin. Educational, if a little odd. thehealthmuseum.org

9 Memory Web ★ <i>thru 11</i> Moores School of Music and Psophonia Dance Company perform. psophonia.com Analia Saban and Blake Rayne 📅 <i>thru 18</i> Exhibits by two artists. blafferartmuseum.org	10 A Tribute to George Barris 📅 <i>thru Dec. 31</i> A tribute to the King of Kustomizing. See a replica of Barris' 1966 Batmobile, and other memorabilia. nmfh.org	11 Romeo and Juliet ★ <i>last day</i> Actors from the London Stage perform the classic. uhcl.edu/culturalarts Young Texas Artists Music Competition ★ Competition/awards ceremony. youngtexasartists.org	12 Music from the Movies ★ The Rob Landes Trio performs such classics as "Over the Rainbow" and "As Time Goes By" in Galveston. thegrand.com
13 Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942-1964 📅 <i>thru May 14</i> The exhibit showcases the Bracero Program, the largest guest-worker program in U.S. history. hnh.org	14 The King and I ★ <i>thru 19</i> Shall we dance? Ta, ta tum. So many great show tunes from this classic, you know you'll be humming along. broadwayatthehobbycenter.com	15 Jesse Lott Exhibit ★ <i>thru April 30</i> This exhibit opens the new Fifth Ward art space Mystic Lyon. fresharts.org	16 Ben Folds ★ The musician and vocalist performs with the Houston Symphony for one night only. houstonsymphony.org
17 Some Light Emerges ★ HGO celebrates its 63rd world premiere. hgo.org (See page 49.)	18 42nd Street ★ The toe-tapping, sing-along musical from the '30s comes to Galveston. thegrand.com	19 The Shacks and Chicano Batman ★ Two hot groups play this evening. warehouse-live.tickets-center.com	20 Glossy and Flat Black Squares 📅 <i>thru June 30</i> Rice Gallery's closing exhibit by Sol LeWitt. ricegallery.org
21 Abundant 📅 <i>thru 23</i> An exhibit by Women in the Visual and Literary Arts. wivla.org Glassell School of Art Studio Faculty Members 📅 <i>thru 23</i> New exhibit at UHCL. uhcl.edu/artgallery			24 Scrap-Arts-Music ★ A physical, theatrical music extravaganza. thegrand.com Bayou City Art Festival + 📅 <i>thru 26</i> Good art and eats in Memorial Park. artcolonyassociation.org
25 One Night Only + Theatre Under the Stars 2017 gala. tuts.com Aurora Education Highlights + Free screening. aurorapictureshow.org Art Is an Outdoor Market + Vendors, music, more. artcellarhouston.com	26 Two Centuries of American Still-Life Painting 📅 <i>thru April 19</i> An exhibit of some 67 works by American luminaries of the genre including Otis Kaye, Georgia O'Keeffe, and James Peale. mfah.org		28 All the Light There Was + Holocaust Museum Houston librarian Maria Harris facilitates a discussion of <i>All the Light There Was</i> by Nancy Kricorian. hnh.org
29 A Celebration of Survival 📅 <i>thru May 30</i> An immersive exhibition designed to honor the heroes, victims, and survivors of the Holocaust. hnh.org	30 Wildlife Photographer of the Year 📅 <i>thru June 4</i> An exhibit celebrating the very best nature photography. hmns.org	31 Luck of the Draw + 📅 DiverseWorks' famous fundraiser, where hundreds of original 7x9-inch works of art are up for grabs! diverseworks.org	Save the Date Sacred Space Yoga Retreat + April 8 A day of health and reflection . . . good for the current political climate. councilonrecovery.org

More CALENDAR →

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Calendar of Events

continued from previous page

Let the Right One In

Now thru March 19

Thru 19

The National Theatre of Scotland presents this vampire thriller at the Alley Theatre. This is an original stage version of the chilling Swedish novel and film of the same name, about a misfit boy who falls for the girl next door. Unfortunately, she isn't what she seems. alleytheatre.org

Adiós Utopia: Dreams and Deceptions in Cuban Art Since 1950

Now thru March 21

Thru 21

This landmark exhibit from Cuba looks at how artists depicted the hope of the revolution and the disillusionment in the years that followed. More than 100 works by 50 famous Cuban artists are included. This is the most significant show of contemporary work shown in the U.S. since 1944. mfah.org



Gay Women's Gathering: An Evening on Lesbian Pregnancy

March 22

22

The Montrose Center is hosting this event to discuss the ins and outs of lesbian pregnancy—everything from working with sperm donors and legal safeguards for LGBT families to things like insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

The event is part of a series by Path2Parenthood (formerly known as The American Fertility Association) and California Cryobank. Two stops in Texas—Houston and Dallas—were added to their schedule due to requests from women in the area. The series focuses on educating LGBTQ women about the issues they may face and the information they will need when considering pregnancy.

The event will touch on many concerns of soon-to-be parents, including working with a known or unknown sperm donor, the legalities and how-to's of second-parent adoption, concerns surrounding fertility issues, and more.

The evening will feature the medical expertise of Dr. Yanett Anaya of Houston Fertility Specialists, who will speak along with Debra E. Hunt (from Houston's Moore & Hunt law firm) and Scott Brown, a representative from the California Cryobank.

Anaya, who was raised in Houston, specializes in reproductive endocrinology and infertility. While she does not frequently participate in speaking engagements, she feels this event is very important because it will help increase awareness about fertility and access to care.

"I believe having children is a basic human right, and same-sex couples should have the same reproductive rights as heterosexual couples," Anaya says.

During the event, Anaya plans to touch on the medical issues of fertility, highlighting the various aspects of the decision-making process that can affect members of the LGBTQ community.

"I will discuss different options lesbian couples and →

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Location: Biscuit Paint Wall, Montrose. Photo Credit: Spencer Harrison

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My Gay
HOUSTON

HOLY WEEK & EASTER

Palm Sunday - April 9 • 9 & 11 am

Maundy Thursday - April 13 • 7 pm

Good Friday - April 14 • 7 pm

Holy Saturday Baptism - April 15 • 7 pm

Easter Sunday - April 16 • 9 & 11 am



Sunday Worship 9 & 11 am • Spanish & Deaf Interpretation 11 am
Children, Youth & Teen Program 11 am • Nursery Available • Handicap Accessible
2025 West 11th St, Houston 77008 • www.ResurrectionMCC.org • 713-861-9149

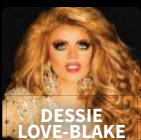
THURSDAYS • 9pm – 2am
RAGS TO RICH'S SEASON II VOCALS

18 & UP

HOSTED BY



KARA DION



DESSIE LOVE-BLAKE



LEO KING



DJ UKEMI

FRIDAYS • 10pm – 2am
FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE WITH AFTER-HOURS

18 & UP

FEATURING GAYEST & GREATEST



MALE
DJ JOE ROSS



DJ EDDIE E



DJ UKEMI

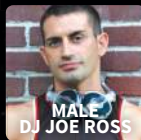


DJ JOHNNY VIBE

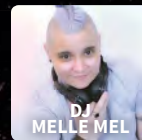
SATURDAYS • 10pm – 2am
RESURRECTION SATURDAYS
WITH AFTER-HOURS

21 & UP

FEATURING 2016
GAYEST & GREATEST



MALE
DJ JOE ROSS



DJ
MELLE MEL



DJ JOHNNY VIBE

SATURDAY
10PM – 2AM



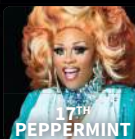
March 4
BIMBO JONES



March 11
DJ BLACK LOW

21 & UP

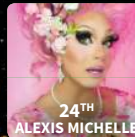
LIVE IN MARCH



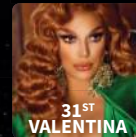
17TH
PEPPERMINT



19TH
MISS GAY USA



24TH
ALEXIS MICHELLE



31ST
VALENTINA



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Calendar of Events

continued from page 18

unpartnered women have to become parents," she says. "I will also discuss the age-related decline in fertility, which is a very important topic."

With the possibility of the legal landscape changing under the Trump administration, one of the issues that may come up during the event is access to healthcare and sperm donation, which is a real worry for many members of the LGBTQ community looking to become parents.

"Unfortunately, we are still unclear about what kind of policy changes the Trump administration will attempt to make, if any, within the realm of assisted reproduction for same-sex couples," says Anaya. "The American Society for Reproductive Medicine, which has been a great political advocate for equal reproductive rights, understands that there is a potential threat to this basic human right and has begun to mobilize and energize its members to stand up and advocate for their patients."

Houston Fertility Specialists serves a significant number of LGBTQ patients, according to Anaya. "Our physicians, nurses, and medical staff proudly serve the LGBTQ community and are sensitive to the reproductive issues that they may encounter," she says. "A significant number of LGBTQ patients have been able to realize their dream of forming a family with our help."

Anaya says that her practice offers and fosters a very welcoming and accepting environment for all of their patients.

"We believe in offering the most compassionate and individualized medical care to help our patients achieve parenthood," Anaya adds.

During the event, dinner and refreshments will be served. There will also be a raffle for attendees. The event is free, but registration is encouraged and preferred. —**Megan Wadding**
path2parenthood.org

SAVE THE DATE

HRC Houston 20th Annual Dinner

Apr. 1

April 1

Dinner, auction, and guest speakers make for a great evening for a great cause—the Human Rights Campaign. The organization's mission is a world where LGBTQ people are assured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest, and safe at home, at work, and in the community. Something needed more than ever nowadays. gala@hrchouston.org

SAVE THE DATE

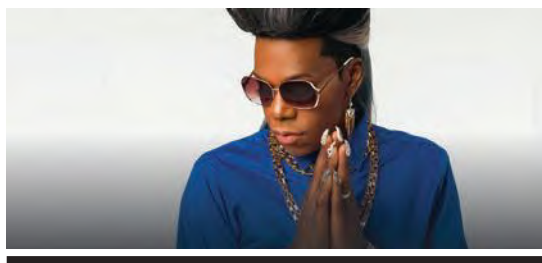
Houston Whatever Fest

Apr. 1 & 2

April 1 & 2

A two-day, multi-genre music, comedy, and art street festival in EaDO, this year's event features queer performers Jade Esteban and Big Freedia (pictured), among many others.

houstonwhateverfest.com



For ongoing events, visit OutSmartMagazine.com

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ARTSTALK

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This and That

Women in Wyoming and texting in Texas.

In the foreign state of Wyoming, where men are men and sheep are scared, the state legislature has busied itself making some decisions about the women-folk. On the surface, that seems like a real sweet thing to do, but it ain't.

They have an anti-abortion bill pending in the Wyoming state legislature. The bill is meant to shame women who are having an abortion, because apparently women who live in Wyoming aren't shameful enough. (I heard a rumor that they have to import shame from Canada, but I don't know if that's true or not.)

So in an attempt to alleviate their ghastly shame shortage, the state legislature has a plan to fix this crisis of un-shame. To improve Wyoming's standing in the world of humiliation, they are going to force every woman seeking an abortion to have a sonogram and listen to a fetal heartbeat, although there is no fetal heartbeat present during the early stages of a pregnancy. But these women have to pretend to listen anyway, or . . . yeah, shame on 'em.

I have to stop here to let you know that 13 percent of Wyoming's state legislators are hooter-toters. That's right: of the 90 members of the legislature, only 12 of them are female. In the whole United States of Damn America, the legislature with the highest Aqua-Velva and testosterone quotient is in Wyoming. Seriously, in the male-to-female lawmaker ratio, Wyoming is dead-ass last. That, right there, ought to be enough shame for women in Wyoming.

However, even with that ratio, the president of the Senate felt it was important to send this shaming abortion bill to the Senate Agriculture Committee, which is Wyoming's sole state committee with no women on it. The Senate Agriculture Committee will be making laws about women's health rights because . . . well, dammit, moo.

No, I am not making this up. You can look it up. Women are now cattle in Wyoming.

Okay, so now I have decided to respond to this crazy-ass event with the appropriate agricultural terminology, so the boys on the ag committee will understand it: *Bullshit*.



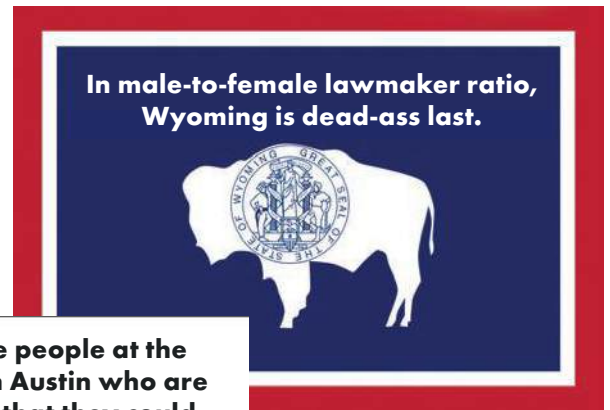
Yes, boys, your eyes are all brown because you're full-up to there with caca del toro..

**Stand.
Sit.
March.
Assemble.
Write.
Phone.
Blog.
Message.
Tweet.
Support.
Advise.
Demand.
Donate.
Vote.**

**Protest.
It's good for the soul.**

Get out your smartphone, because you've got some dates to remember, some folks to call, and some websites to visit before Thundering Trump, the Monarch of Mar-a-Lago, gets us all killed:

• **March 13 is Houston LGBT Political Caucus Lobby Day in Austin.** They have people at the capitol in Austin who are so dumb that they could throw themselves on the ground and miss. Honey, if you get on a bus to Austin, it'll raise the IQ level at the capitol 20 or 30 points. That should at least help them to collectively get their revolving doors to work. Check it out at thecaucus.info. Transportation will be provided.



• Got five minutes that you don't know what to do with? Honey, I can keep you so busy that people will think you're twins. Type **5calls.org** into the URL line on your browser. This joint not only gives you a dozen things to get you mad enough to fight a chainsaw barehanded, it also gives you a call script and the phone numbers of who to call to complain. It's free. You need it. It'll help you let off some steam.

• This is one of my personal favorites: **daily action.com**. You give them your cell-phone number and they send you one text every day about what you need to do to feed a cup of misery to a Republican who is coming after you with intent to barbeque. (Yeah, like you need another reason.) Dailyaction.com sends you a short text and quick instructions about what to do about it. Or, you can text the word "daily" to 228466 and watch the magic happen.

• **Thesixtyfive.org** reminds you that 65 million people voted against Trump for president. Every single one of them would rather pitch a tent in a tornado than have him as president. This website gives you ideas on how to make a real difference.

• And never, ever, ever, forever forget **hrc.org**, because they are a diamond in a sea of slop. God love 'em.

Susan Bankston lives in Richmond, Texas, where she writes about her hairdresser at [The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc.](http://TheWorld'sMostDangerousBeautySalon.com), at janitaJean.com.

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Money-Saving Tips

... for married LGBT couples.

With tax season now in full swing, you may be wondering how the Supreme Court's marriage-equality ruling affects you. This ruling was passed in 2015, but if you're newly married and wondering how things have changed, married same-sex couples can now take advantage of various deductions and retirement-planning strategies that were previously only available to opposite-sex married couples.

The ruling also makes all married couples subject to the same filing requirements. With that in mind, it is important to be sure that you and your spouse are getting the most benefit possible, both before and after retirement.

What Is the Best Way to File Your Tax Return?

Just like with investing, all situations are different, so there is no one-size-fits-all best strategy for filing your annual tax return. However, there are many more options that can be accessed now, primarily for married LGBT couples.

For instance, same-sex married couples are now required to file their federal tax returns (and state returns, if applicable) using the filing status of either "married filing jointly" or "married filing separately."

If you file jointly, you may collectively end up in a higher tax bracket, as well as reduce some potential tax deductions. But you may



also be able to take advantage of certain deductions that were not previously available to you. For example, as a married couple, the higher your combined tax bracket is, the more you may be able to deduct your Traditional IRA contribution—at least up to a certain point.

For instance, if you are married and filing jointly, and you are also covered by a retirement plan through your employer, there is an upper adjusted-gross-income limit of \$119,000 (in 2017), beyond which you cannot deduct your traditional IRA contribution. If you file as "married filing separately" or as a head of household, the maximum income amount can differ.

Investing in an IRA

Investing in an Individual Retirement Account, or IRA, may also provide you with certain tax incentives, due to the tax-advantaged manner in which your funds accrue, as well as with the money going in or the money coming out in retirement, depending on which type of IRA you have. (You don't have to choose just one or the other; many investors have both.)

• Traditional vs. Roth

The first step in taking advantage of tax-related IRA benefits is to understand how these accounts work. For example, with a Traditional IRA, most people are allowed to deduct their contributions going in. The gains inside of the account are allowed to grow tax-deferred, meaning that you won't owe tax on the growth of your Traditional IRA funds until the time of withdrawal. If your contributions go into a Traditional IRA pre-tax, 100 percent of

your withdrawals will be taxed at the time you make your withdrawals.

Alternatively, contributions go into a Roth IRA after-tax, so you may not deduct your contributions going in. But once they are in the account, they are not only allowed to grow free of taxation, but at the time of withdrawal, all Roth IRA funds come out tax-free. This can be a tremendous advantage in retirement, as it allows you to make use of all your funds for living expenses, etc.

In order to contribute to a Roth IRA, you will need to meet certain income guidelines, based on your annual adjusted gross income and your filing status. For 2016 and 2017, these parameters are:

	2017	2016
For Single Filers	Phase-out starts at \$118,000, Ineligible at \$133,000	Phase-out starts at \$117,000, Ineligible at \$132,000
For Married Filers	Phase-out starts at \$186,000, Ineligible at \$196,000	Phase-out starts at \$184,000, Ineligible at \$194,000

Source: www.fothira.com

For both Traditional and Roth IRAs, there is a maximum amount that you can contribute each year. For 2016 and 2017, that amount is \$5,500 if you are age 49 or younger, and \$6,500 if you are 50 or over. It is important to note that this maximum annual contribution is the total that can be deposited, regardless of which type of IRA you have. So, if you have both types, you could split the deposit amount between the two, based on your particular goals.

It is also important to be careful about withdrawing your IRA money before you reach age 59½. This is because in most cases, you will →

2017 IRA Deduction Limits

If your filing status is:	And your Modified Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) is:	Then you can take the following deduction:
Single or Head of Household	\$62,000 or less	A full deduction up to the amount of your contribution limit.
Single or Head of Household	More than \$62,000 but less than \$72,000	A partial deduction.
Single or Head of Household	\$72,000 or more	No deduction.
Married Filing Jointly or Qualifying Widow(er)	\$99,000 or less	A full deduction up to the amount of your contribution limit.
Married Filing Jointly or Qualifying Widow(er)	More than \$99,000 but less than \$119,000	A partial deduction.
Married Filing Jointly or Qualifying Widow(er)	\$119,000 or more	No deduction.
Married Filing Separately	Less than \$10,000	A partial deduction.
Married Filing Separately	\$10,000 or more	No deduction.

*Note: If you file separately and you did not live with your spouse at any time during the year, your IRA deduction is determined under the "Single" filing status. Source: IRS.gov

20th Annual HRC Houston Gala

Saturday, April 1, 2017 • 5:30 p.m.
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continued from page 24

be hit with an "early withdrawal" penalty from the IRS—in addition to the tax that you will owe on your Traditional IRA funds.

If you invest outside of an IRA account (for instance, in stocks or mutual funds in a personal investment account), you can also obtain certain tax advantages. As an example, by taking any losses and immediately reinvesting in another financial vehicle, you could deduct some or all of your loss for the current year, and possibly carry forward the rest of the loss in future years.

Contributions to a traditional IRA may be tax-deductible in the contribution year, with the tax due at withdrawal at whatever tax rate is then in effect. Withdrawals prior to age 59½ may result in a 10 percent IRS penalty tax, in addition to current income tax.

The Roth IRA offers tax deferral on any earnings in the account. Withdrawals from the account may be tax-free as long as they are considered qualified. Limitations and restrictions may apply. Withdrawals prior to age 59½, or prior to the account being opened for five years, whichever is later, may result in a 10 percent IRS penalty tax. Future tax laws can change at any time, and may impact the benefits of the Roth IRA tax treatment.

- **Spousal IRA Contributions for LGBT Couples**
Another benefit that is now afforded to LGBT couples is the allowable spousal IRA contribution. This means that a spouse who earns little or no income can make contributions to an IRA. Here, having a spousal IRA can increase the amount that is available in your IRA accounts, possibly enhancing your income-tax deductions, as well as the amount of income that you have for withdrawals in retirement.

- **Considerations for LGBT Business Owners**
If you and/or your spouse own a business, there are some additional tax-related strategies to be aware of. For example, if you haven't set up a retirement savings plan for your company, you may want to do so in the weeks ahead.

Here, a Simplified Employee Pension, or SEP-IRA, may provide you with some added benefits in terms of saving for the future and reducing your taxable income. A SEP-IRA can essentially provide you with benefits similar to a Traditional IRA, but the amount that you can contribute each year can be substantially higher. For instance, in 2016, you can contribute the lesser of 25 percent of your compensation or \$53,000. (For the 2017 tax year, you may be able to contribute the lesser of 25 percent of compensation or \$54,000.)

These plans allow you to deduct the contributions you make for your employees on your company's tax return. A SEP-IRA can also offer you a flexible way to vary the employer contributions every year, from 0 percent to a maximum of 25 percent of compensation.

Married couples can have some advantages over non-married partners when it comes

to SEP-IRA accounts. For instance, if a SEP-IRA owner passes away prior to age 70½, his or her spouse may be able to transfer the SEP assets into a new or existing IRA account of their own. They may also transfer the assets into an Inherited IRA account that is held in the decedent's name. It may also be possible to take a lump-sum distribution from the account. While there will be income tax due on the entire amount of this lump sum, a 10 percent IRS early-withdrawal penalty will not apply—even if the surviving spouse is under age 59½.

While a non-married partner can also take advantage of these options, if they open an Inherited IRA, distributions must begin no later than December 31 of the year that the account holder passed away. As an alternative, the surviving partner must completely exhaust the account within five years.

SEP-IRA plans can be established by a number of business types, including sole proprietors, partnerships, corporations, and S-corporations. And, unlike most other types of retirement plans, a SEP-IRA can be established as late as the due date of your company's tax filing, which is typically April 15, including extensions. This time frame also applies to making contributions into the plan for the previous year.

Planning Ahead for the Future

Because people are living longer now, ensuring that you have enough income to last for many years in retirement is essential. It can also be advantageous, and necessary, to provide for a surviving spouse—especially if he or she will be dependent on some or all of your retirement income for their future living expenses.

While you may not yet be close to your retirement years, it's never too early to become knowledgeable about the future Social Security benefits that you are eligible for, as it can help with your overall retirement-planning strategy. Also, depending on whether or not you plan to continue working while receiving your Social Security benefits, you could be required to pay tax on some of your Social Security benefits.

- **Social Security Benefits for Same-Sex Couples**
As it stands now, same-sex couples are eligible for both Social Security spousal and survivor benefits. This means that a non-working spouse is now entitled to at least half of the Social Security retirement-income benefit of a working spouse. It also means that if your spouse passes away, you would be able to start receiving either your or your spouse's Social Security retirement benefits, whichever one is higher.

In the case of Social Security, married same-sex spouses have another advantage that was previously only available to opposite-sex spouses—the "maximization" of your retirement-income benefits. This means that the higher-earning same-sex spouse may want to postpone the start of his or her Social Security retirement benefits in order to take advantage of a higher monthly amount down the road. For each year that you wait beyond your normal retirement →



“Houston Fertility Specialists was truly invested in helping us begin our family.”

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*ACTUAL PATIENTS | PHOTO: TARYN MELGOZA PHOTOGRAPHY

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MONEYSMART

continued from previous page

age to collect, you can get an 8 percent "delayed income credit," up to age 70. Doing so can provide you with more income in the future, as well as a higher income amount for a surviving spouse.

For example, if one spouse is at full retirement age and taking his or her full Social Security benefit, and the other spouse is at least age 62 (which is the youngest age that you can start taking Social Security retirement benefits), the 62-year-old spouse can take a Social Security spousal benefit, continue to receive this benefit through his or her own full retirement age, and then switch over to taking their own Social Security benefit at age 70, when this benefit's dollar amount has been increased by delayed retirement credits of 8 percent per year.

Also, if you and your spouse expect to be receiving pension income in retirement, there may also be pension-continuation benefits that are available to a surviving spouse now. In order to ensure that this income stream will continue, you will likely need to set up a reduced pension income with spousal continuation.

• **Estate Planning Advantages for LGBT Spouses**
If you're married, planning ahead for the future with a good, solid estate plan can make sense too—and doing so can also provide you and your spouse with benefits that have not been available in the past.

For instance, same-sex married couples can now take advantage of the unlimited amount of assets that may be transferred to a surviving spouse upon the death of the first, without having to incur the federal estate tax.

In addition, one spouse is now allowed to make a gift or transfer property to a spouse, without being hit with federal income or gift taxes. And, any estate-tax and/or gift-tax exemptions that are unused may also now pass on to a same-sex surviving spouse.

The Bottom Line

As with any couple, discussions about money matters can either be beneficial or a source of friction. Because there have been numerous changes—particularly in terms of retirement benefits and taxes—that affect the LGBT community, it could be that much more important that you work with an advisor who is experienced in financial planning, as well as in LGBT issues.

Personal finance-related questions may be emailed to grace.yung@lpl.com.

Grace S. Yung, CFP, is a certified financial planner practitioner with experience in helping domestic partners plan their finances since 1994. She is a principal at Midtown Financial LLC in Houston and was recognized as a "Five-Star Wealth Manager" in the 2014 September issue of Texas Monthly.



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FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Check out these fabulous events co-sponsored by OutSMART and our marketing partners.

March 5: AIDS Walk Houston 2016
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INFO: aidswalkhouston.org

March 17: Avenida Houston presents The Rink: Rolling at Discovery Green.
INFO: discoverygreen.com/rainbow

March 18: The Diana Foundation presents the 64th Annual Diana Awards, benefitting local charities.
INFO: thedianafoundation.org

March 18: Houston Pride Band presents their *Picture It* concert.
INFO: houstonprideband.org

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April 23: Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund Houston Champagne Brunch, benefitting future LGBT leaders INFO: victoryfund.org/Houston

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THE ALL-AMERICAN

Pennsylvania's Rep. Brian Sims heats up the UH LGBTQ Alumni Association's Red Dinner.

By **Brian Waddle**
Photo by *Kyle Cassidy*

At 38, Brian Sims has already made a national name for himself. The Democratic state representative has pushed the boundaries of the NCAA, the Pennsylvania Legislature, and advanced the rights of all LGBT Americans. From charming voters with a carpool lip-sync of a *Little Mermaid* tune to smacking down Republican smear-meisters, Sims is all unvarnished appeal and untarnished reputation.

He will bring his trademark inspirational message and fierce intelligence to Houston on April 8 as the keynote speaker for the University of Houston LGBTQ Alumni Association's Red Dinner. Sims spoke with *OUTSMART* about his strong support for the goals of this UH fundraiser.

Brian Waddle: What did the act of coming out as your authentic self while in college—and as a leader on the football team—mean to you personally, athletically, and academically?

Brian Sims: Coming out in college changed my perception of myself, and in ways I didn't expect. I had reached a point in my life where I said "f--k it," as far as my authenticity [being overshadowed by] everyone else's expectations of what they thought I was supposed to be. I thought my world was going to come apart when I [finally decided to] come out, but I was very fortunate, and that wasn't the case. By and large, my friends became better friends, my allies became stronger, and I reached a place where I could do this on my own. It was better than I expected.

But not everyone has that type of experience. And as you know, "the college

experience" has become so expensive and competitive, and the expectations on 18-year-olds and 20-somethings make college life like living in a pressure cooker. Many LGBT college kids stifle their own personal growth if they have disapproving parents who would cut off financial support. What would you say to college-age LGBT kids about this precarious step of balancing coming out while not alienating parents who disapprove of homosexuality?

Well, first, there are a lot of people who don't understand how the coming-out process can negatively impact a college student's financial situation if their parents are not supportive. It reminds me of people who don't understand the difference between "homeless" and "housing-insecure." Couch-surfing with friends is not an adequate sleeping situation, or conducive to being academically successful, and this impacts you in college. Yes, it is possible for people to make it through a university without one ounce of emotional or financial support, but those are almost insurmountable odds. What we're trying to do with this Red Dinner is to make this journey easier—with a successful ending—for University of Houston students.

Secondly, there is a misconception that you have to come out to everyone simultaneously. Come out to yourself first, and then you'll have the power to come out to others in your life. How and when we choose to share is something we all go through our entire lives. When, if, and where you choose to do that is your personal choice.

Do you think someone like Betsy DeVos, the new Education Secretary, has any

idea this goes on?

I heard that she just learned elementary schoolteachers have to pay for their own school supplies. If that rudimentary truth has escaped her to this point, [then this coming-out issue] is way, way, way over her head.

As you know, the Red Dinner was inspired by an email from an engineering student to the University of Houston LGBTQ Resource Center. He was reaching out and looking for assistance after his parents kicked him out of their home and subsequently refused to help him continue his education. A couple of weeks ago, I met the student who wrote that initial email. His story is remarkable—he's a dreamer, both literally and figuratively. He was brought to the United States when he was seven, and is laser-focused on proving everyone wrong—that he can graduate and have a career as an engineer. He was bullied in middle school, but laid low in high school to save himself mental anguish. Then as a sophomore at UH, he came out. Because of all the turmoil in his life, his grades suffered. He had no stable home, he was working to pay for his car to drive to school—the list of obstacles and hurdles goes on and on.

The good news is he is now back in school, a junior, and committed more than ever to making his dream a reality. What would you say to our UH student?

Two things. First, thank you for being so inspiring. People who have never been challenged or tested don't know how to overcome anything. I have no doubt he will be a leader in our LGBT community and an inspiration →



“COMING OUT IN
COLLEGE CHANGED
MY PERCEPTION OF
MYSELF, AND
IN WAYS I DIDN'T
EXPECT.”

to college students across the nation, gay and straight. He is literally the quintessential American story. Our goal is making sure other students don't have to overcome quite so much as he's had to.

And I want him and other students in his situation to know that while he and his family may be opponents right now, [he has the support of] so many more neighbors and community allies. That will far outweigh the negativity of his supposedly closed family relationship. The Red Dinner is proof of that. A common [trait] of our community is that we get to choose our gay family, and we just need to reach out to them more. Throughout human history, there is a rich cultural heritage around chosen families. You can create the community around you. We are re-defining the meaning of the American nuclear family, and we prove every single day that we know better, and we do better.

So, have you been to Houston before? I'm curious what Philadelphians think about Texas and Houston—do they assume we're all in 10-gallon hats and driving convertible Cadillacs with longhorns as hood ornaments?

No, you're not Dallas. I have been to Houston before, and I say this with the utmost respect—I think of it as the Chicago of the South, a world-class, cosmopolitan, beautiful city with not an accent or cowboy hat in sight.

You should visit during the Houston Rodeo when we dress up like all of the stereotypes! What is your message to Houston's LGBT community that doesn't have the luxury of living in a traditionally more progressive, liberal blue state—especially in light of the November election outcome?

I feel your solidarity—yes, Philadelphia is very gay-friendly, but Pennsylvania has the same protections as Texas: not a single LGBT civil-rights protection. The path to equality in Texas will look like the path in Pennsylvania.



The more liberal-leaning states and governors have already done this. Our challenge is to find a path that works for Republicans who are running for office.

Going back to our "firsts" conversation, there are thousands of Elizabeth Warren/

Red-Hot Rep

Pennsylvania Rep. Brian Sims brings his support for LGBTQ students to the UH Red Dinner on April 8.

BrianSims2020 hashtags all over social media. What do you see as your next "first step" in your career?

Are there really [Warren/Sims hashtags]? No, that can't be true. Seriously? That's interesting. Well, I'm still the only "out" elected official in our state assembly, and until there are some gains on the LGBT front in Pennsylvania, I'm right where I belong.

Brian Waddle is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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CELEBRATING HOUSTON'S LGBTQ

Women - of - Power

By Megan Smith
Photos by Alexandre Rosa

Powerful women are a force to be reckoned with—just ask the millions around the world who proudly marched after Donald Trump's inauguration, with signs and pink pussy-hats in tow. And when these women can come together, embrace their differences, and foster intersectionality, nothing can silence their voices.

The LGBTQ women of Houston exemplify this notion every single day. They're paving the way in philanthropy, healthcare, social justice, business, and more. To celebrate Women's History Month, OUTSMART reached out to the community for nominations of LGBTQ female leaders making an especially significant impact here in Houston. After an incredible response, we are proud to present our Leading Ladies of 2017.

“Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women—those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference; those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older—know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths.” —Audre Lorde



KIMBERLY TAYLOR

Kimberly Taylor tries to live every day by the words of her idol, Michelle Obama:

“When they go low, we go high.” “Michelle

Obama inspires me in a way that’s hard to put into words,” Taylor says. “Michelle used her role as First Lady to promote positivity and self-empowerment. I miss her already!” Taylor spreads her own positivity in her work as secretary for Bunnies on the Bayou. She’s served in this role for the charitable organization for the past two years. “Being a member of Bunnies on the Bayou is tremendously inspiring,” Taylor says. “Seeing the faces of our beneficiaries at our check presentations makes all the hard work worthwhile.” Taylor, who identifies as bisexual, is also an advocate for helping to eliminate bi-erasure and bi-phobia from society. “There are still so many people who don’t believe bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation, or that bisexuals are confused and lying to themselves,” she explains. “Not feeling accepted by the straight *or* gay community can lead to higher rates of anxiety and depression in bisexual individuals. I urge others in the community to ask questions and to not minimize anyone seeking support and inclusion.”



LYNETTE ROSS

While much of Lynette Ross’ involvement over the past several decades may have been “spent in the background,” its impact has surely been felt.

For the past 25 years, Ross has been involved with the LGBTQ recovery community at The Lambda Center, where she currently serves as corporate president. An ordained minister, Ross is also a founding member and treasurer of the Faith Leaders Coalition of Greater Houston (which is committed to religious diversity, cultural respect, and advocacy) and has been the senior minister at Cathedral of Hope since 2011. “We have created a safe, welcoming place for people to come and be in community together,” she says. “I’ve been around a long time, and my heart continues to break at the marginalization and discrimination

our community experiences, especially at the hands of organized religion,” Ross, who is an out lesbian, says. “I am inspired to help those who have been wounded by the Church to find a place to heal, as well as stand against those who inflict the harm. I encourage everyone to find a community where they feel safe and affirmed.” When asked about her role model, Ross points to another woman with decades of service to the community—Hillary Clinton. “I have admired her for years for her unrelenting work on behalf of women and children,” Ross says. “We live in a world that is still incredibly sexist, and over the decades, her perseverance to continue to serve her country, despite the never-ending misogyny, has been inspiring.”



KAYLEE SENN

Admittedly “immersed in geek culture,” proud pansexual transwoman Kaylee Senn’s role model is Anita Sarkeesian—the founder of Feminist Frequency, a website

that explores representations of gender, race, and sexuality in pop culture. “Taking cues from feminist author bell hooks’ insistence that popular culture is where the pedagogy is, Anita has been a model of how to encourage creators and consumers to critically examine the ways they contribute to social injustice and how to make our culture more inclusive,” Senn says. Following Sarkeesian’s example, Senn is taking her own steps to make society more inclusive and welcoming to LGBTQ people. For the past two years, she’s served as a transgender support-group facilitator—for both trans adults and youth—at the Montrose Center. Senn also acted as the remote-action coordinator for the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance campaign, and has since lent her time to Equality Texas, the ACLU of Texas, and to her own independent community-building and organizing. “Author and activist Alice Walker said it best: ‘Activism is my rent for living on the planet,’” Senn says. “I feel that I have been very fortunate, not only in my structural privileges, but in having had incredibly supportive family and friends. Others in our larger transgender family and in the LGBTQ community have not been so lucky. I want to be part of the fight against intersecting systems of oppression wherever I can, and to help build a more just and fair society.”



TAMMI WALLACE

Tammi Wallace is a powerhouse within Houston’s LGBTQ community. Not only does she serve on the board of the Montrose Manage-

ment District, the Mayor’s LGBTQ Advisory Board, the Hollyfield Foundation, and the Victory Fund, but she’s also the cofounder and cochair of the newly revived Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce. “I believe that we should constantly strive for fairness and justice,” Wallace says. “There is too much inequality in this world, and we are leaving so many people in our society behind. Someone paved the road for us; we now have to pave the road for others so they can pave the road ahead for the next generation.” The best way to do that, Wallace says, is to eliminate apathy and increase involvement. “Until we are *all* fully protected, we are *all* at risk, and we can and must be responsive and involved,” she says. “Getting involved can mean something different to each person—some volunteer time, and others give dollars. Now is the time to do one or both, at levels like we’ve never done before. Align your passion to make a difference, find an organization to support, and make it meaningful. Be bold!” Wallace’s role model is another bold woman—Marie Curie. “Here’s an incredible woman who won two Nobel Peace Prizes, and she dealt with obstacles every step of the way, including sexism, throughout her career. Even women questioned how she could have a family and career at the same time. But she persevered because she had vision and she took risks. She saw what could be, and did not let any obstacles stand in her way. Women like Marie Curie paved the way for other women to succeed and break barriers. I honor her legacy.”



RACHEL AFI QUINN

Rachel Afi Quinn has dedicated her life’s work to sharing her knowledge with others. As an assistant professor in Comparative Cultural

Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Houston (UH), Quinn teaches both undergraduate and →

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OUTSMART'S LEADING LADIES OF 2017

continued from previous page

graduate courses on gender, society, and feminist theory with a particular focus on globalization, sexuality, the Caribbean and race, and black identity. "Over the last few years, I've organized many speakers and community events at UH on topics that range from gender-based violence in the South Asian community to post-Ferguson conversations, digitizing the Chicana feminist archive, and black masculinities," Quinn explains. "The amazing students I get to work with every day at UH are a tremendous inspiration. Academia can be such a hostile place for working-class people and people of color, and the brilliance of these students who want to learn and share what they know inspires me to fight for a space for them to succeed." Quinn also recently joined the Houston GLBT Political Caucus to learn how to lobby elected officials and, in turn, teach others to do so as well. "I believe that I am responsible for advocating for the most vulnerable in my community," Quinn says. "Each of us can encourage our elected officials to make sure we protect the rights of all Houstonians." As for her role model, Quinn cites another queer woman of color—the playwright and intellectual Lorraine Hansberry. "She was creative and brilliant, and she produced work that has been so valuable to queer black girls like me," Quinn says. "We were queer not only because of who we desired, but for being bookish and intellectual. She is famously quoted as saying 'The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely.'"



KENDALL TOARMINA

Rice University MBA student Kendall

Toarmina knows the power of intersectionality—a major reason why she cites Alicia Garza,

one of the Black Lives Matter co-founders, as a source of inspiration and empowerment. "We are in a very tumultuous time," she says. "I think it is key that our struggles—those of the LGBTQ community, and those of other communities such as African-Americans, Latino-Americans, immigrants, and Muslims—are bound together. We must work together to make progress." Toarmina upholds these values as the president of Rice's LGBT alumni organization, Rice Alumni Pride. Additionally, she was one of two students who organized the university's first-ever Diversity and Inclusion Conference to help teach Houstonians the best practices to lift up historically marginalized groups. Plus, she regularly volunteers with the ACLU and registers new voters everywhere from college campuses to homeless centers and

the apartment complex where she lives. As the only openly queer woman in her class year at Rice's Jones School of Business, she also enjoys mentoring young people from all backgrounds who are interested in pursuing MBAs. "I think I draw on a deep, internal sense of empathy and justice. I've had some wonderful opportunities to develop that and give it direction," Toarmina says. Some influential professors and her fiancée, Melanie Pang, have helped guide her along the way. "Melanie is my biggest source of inspiration, every single day," she says, "She is an incredible force for good."



KAREN MORRY

Houstonian Karen Morry may have a wild streak to her—that is, if she takes after her role model, Calamity Jane. "While she had a

reputation of being a daredevil, she was also known to exhibit generosity and compassion to those around her in need," Morry explains. "She was an adventurer in a time when adventurers were mostly men. Not only did she survive, but she excelled in that environment." Over the years, Morry has followed her own passion for giving back to the community by serving on the boards of Pride Houston and AssistHers, an organization that provides nonmedical care to women with debilitating or life-threatening illnesses. Currently, Morry is the founding mother and board member of the Brighter Future Foundation, Inc. (BFF)—a nonprofit organization with the purpose of "preserving our past for our future." "BFF assists smaller nonprofits by providing the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their full potential, as well as fulfill their mission and vision," Morry explains. "We do this by providing an array of consulting services—board retreats, professional development workshops, volunteer outreach workshops, special events, and customized consulting services." As for her advice for those looking to get involved, Morry responds, "We need more volunteers and voices to be heard in all facets of our community. By helping others, we help ourselves. Get out in the community and get engaged. Be part of the solution!"



KIM WATSON

Kim Watson is a caretaker at heart. "I am passionate about LG-BTQ equality, women's empowerment, and caring for our elders,"

she explains. "Therefore, I align myself with organizations and activism in those areas." →

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OUTSMART'S LEADING LADIES OF 2017

continued from previous page

Watson currently serves on the board of the Montrose Center, as well as on the Center's Davidson Hatch Youth and Philanthropic committees. She also volunteers with AssistHers. "Working with AssistHers helps me just as much as it helps the women we serve, because I am able to be a caretaker and give back to the community," Watson says. "While there has been progress in the LGBTQ community, there is still a long way to go. Houston still does not have a nondiscrimination ordinance, and there is a threat that [legislators in Austin] will try to block not only Houston, but other cities from passing such legislation. This will negatively affect the LGBTQ community—especially the transgender community, an already targeted community. Therefore, whatever I can do to lead or support, I will help." Watson credits another lesbian trailblazer, Sally Ride, as her source of inspiration. "She is a fellow lesbian and scientist," Watson says. "It is important for women to have strong role models in science and math fields. Sally Ride was one of the youngest astronauts to go into space and was the first American woman [to do so]. She proved there was nothing a woman couldn't do!"



MEGAN MOONEY

Megan Mooney comes from a long line of strong women. "My mom and my grandmother are definitely my role models," she

says. "[They] taught me the importance of education, caring for others, and doing the right thing." These gifts are reflected in her work as a psychologist specializing in child trauma. "Often, LGBTQ youth are at much higher risk for experiences of victimization and trauma," Mooney explains. "I seek to help provide safe spaces for these youth to receive mental-health services." Periodically, Mooney also partners with Lambda Legal to provide consultation and referrals for LGBTQ youth who have experienced trauma. "I have also been working for the past few years with a collaborative group trying to improve care for LGBTQ kids who are in the custody of Child Protective Services," she adds. As one of the co-founders of Gender Infinity, she also works to create safe, affirming spaces for families, learners, advocates, and providers to advance relationships, knowledge, and resources that empower gender-diverse individuals. "I think it's critical that mental-health providers and school personnel become more aware of the risk factors for various forms of trauma and victimization that LGBTQ youth are at higher

risk to experience. I would encourage educators and clinicians to seek out training in working with LGBTQ youth, including how to create safe and affirming spaces and the use of appropriate language and terminology.”



DANIELLE SAMPEY

“My mom is my role model,” says Houstonian Danielle Sampey. “She works until the job is done, and does it with a good heart. She

helps the poor, takes care of those who are sick, and embraces those who are lost. She cares more about the well-being of others than about her own comfort. If I am half the woman she is, I’ll be thankful.” Her mother’s influence is more than apparent in Sampey’s work. For the past 15 years, she has worked as the executive director of Lazarus House, helping Houstonians to successfully combat and manage cachexia, or disease-related muscle loss. “We first started serving HIV-positive people in 2002 with the Wellness Program, a comprehensive program of disease-specific exercise, nutritional guidance, and support,” Sampey explains. “I was drawn completely in to their life stories and experiences. I have become grateful to be able to share the journey, and

my staff frequently says the same thing—the people are why we do it.” The biggest thing Sampey strives to instill in her clients and the broader Houston community is hope. “We have to keep hope alive,” she says. “You may feel like you have little to give, but if we all did one small act of charity daily, this world would be healed. If we could stop and acknowledge each other, especially with kindness, we would see how connected we really are.”

KATHARINE LIGON



Katharine Ligon thrives in controlled chaos. And by “controlled chaos,” she means the ongoing 85th Legislative Session in Austin. Since October 2016, Ligon has served as the legislative director for Texas state senator Sylvia R. Garcia

from Houston. She has eight years’ experience working in public policy and the legislature, and another five years working at DePelchin Children’s Center in Houston. “Over the course of my career, every job has been very community-focused, whether it’s working in direct-care services with foster families and children, or mental-health and substance-abuse advocacy at the local and state level,”

she says. Ligon explains that during college, she took two years off to travel to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to volunteer at Nuestras Pequeñas Rosas, a girls’ home for newborns to young adults who were abandoned and abused. (Sadly, Honduras has an extensive history of being locked into a cycle of poverty.) To continue her work helping families, Ligon earned a master of social-work degree from the University of Houston with a concentration in leadership, administration, and public-policy studies. “My path to social change stems from more than six years of working in direct practice with children and families affected by social injustices (e.g. oppression, poverty, and inaccessible mental and substance-abuse treatment),” Ligon says. “These unique experiences enlightened me to the social, financial, and health inequities and injustices many children and families face, especially in the United States. Since then, I have dedicated my educational and professional career to improving the lives of families by engaging with a spectrum of stakeholders to address social-justice policy issues, including access to healthcare and healthcare disparities.” As for her role models, Ligon points to a number of other social-justice warriors—Barbara Jordan, Michelle Obama, and Malala Yousafzai, as well as “the millions of women who are chipping away at the ceiling of patriarchy and misogyny every day, including stay-at-home mothers.” ■



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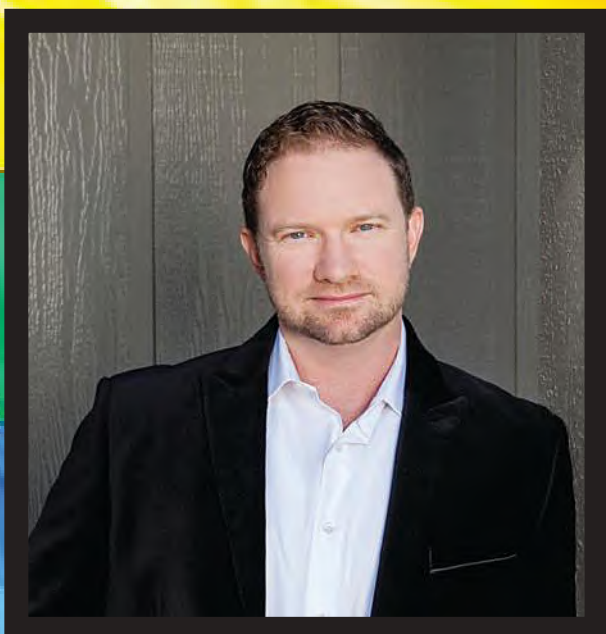
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Of Flamingos and Motel Pools

New Orleans visual artist brings her work to Bayou City Art Festival.

By Josh Inocêncio

For queer Southern artist Amanda Bennett, inspiration rises up from family memories and the routines of her environment. Her multimedia work, which she refers to as “digital art,” is rooted in her native Huntsville, Alabama, as well as her adopted homes of Birmingham, Nashville, and, currently, New Orleans. Her subject matter—ranging from mobile homes and corded telephones to local barbershops—will be familiar to many in the South. Later this month, her nostalgic work will appear in Houston at the Bayou City Art Festival—Memorial Park.

“I am currently doing digital art. Some people call it mixed media. I’m building images digitally through photos that I take—a digital collage, I suppose,” Bennett shares. “Once I create an image, I print it out, and what I’m doing right now is an emulsion lift, which holds the ink from my photos and creates a kind of film. Then I transfer to wood. I combine that with painting, words, sketches, and print materials.”

Bennett creates visual art from multiple genres and fuses the various forms in a way that is reminiscent of old postcards and Polaroid photos, creating an aesthetic that harkens back to the 1950s and ’60s in the Deep South.

“My subject matter is definitely vintage, nostalgic, geared toward mid-century,” says Bennett. “I’m really pop-art driven and inspired, but I also really love graffiti and old vintage signs. [It’s an] aesthetic that’s cre-



High Art, Low Places

Amanda Bennett elevates the pedestrian to proper art as seen in her artistic take on the Airstream trailer with the work *Home Sweet Home*. *BELOW*: The artist at work.

ated over time—layers of paint, scratched-out words, things like that.”

She cites her main influences as Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat, and both of those pioneers in the pop-art genre are reflected in her work. But viewers will likely see traces of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, too. She’s drawn to simple images, many weathered over time or discarded as the quicker pace of society changes the way we live and

interact. And while the 40-year-old Bennett wasn’t alive during the 1950s and ’60s, her work is influenced by the recollections of family members who shared stories of “a simpler time” with her.

“In the South, whether good or bad, we tend to try to cling to things from the past and not change things sometimes,” says Ben-

nett. “In my experience growing up, there was always talk of ‘a simpler time’ when ‘things were different.’ And quite honestly, that’s reflected in my work. In our current time, with so much overload of information and things constantly changing, I have a desire to hang onto things of the past.”

The methods she uses to create her pieces have shifted with each city she has lived in throughout the South. As a child in Huntsville, Alabama, she would watch her grandmother paint and her mother design T-shirts, among other crafts. While Bennett did not pursue the arts as her first career path, her family nurtured and encouraged her creative spirit. But after attending college at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa (where she studied secondary-education social studies), she began informally experimenting with painting in Birmingham. After jumping into a sales career that later took her to Nashville, she explored the collisions between the visual arts and music by painting people’s guitars and incorporating song lyrics as an inspiration for her pieces.

“I was also involved in the music world in →



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OF FLAMINGOS AND MOTEL POOLS

continued from previous page

Nashville," she recalls. "I was in a band for a while, and constantly surrounded by creative people. And so I did a lot of music-driven art for a long time. Then I started doing photography, which is how those two worlds collided."

The risk she took by jumping from a full-time sales career into art has allowed her to relocate to New Orleans with her partner, who is currently obtaining a master's degree at Loyola University.

"[New Orleans] is a place we really loved and visited often," she says. "It made perfect sense, because here in this city they embrace all of the arts and promote them."

As far as how her sexuality impacts her work, Bennett generally distances herself from controversy.

"To be frank, I grew up in a very conservative Christian family, and it is not accepted. So that is challenging," she says. "But I've always been a big joker, so I've tried to keep things light. On occasion, [I'll make] political statements with undertones that could be lost on someone."

While the downtown Bayou City Art Festival has featured Bennett's work multiple times (thanks to mentor artists who recommended that she participate), this year will be her premiere appearance at the festival in Memorial Park.

"There are a few things I'm working on for the Houston festival, but I wouldn't say I have them completely conceptualized yet," she muses. "I will have the poster piece with the Flamingo Trailer Park—and the rest is a surprise!"

To view Amanda Bennett's work, go to this year's Bayou City Art Festival—Memorial Park, March 24–26.




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Training the troops. Dark-water diving. Busting criminals. Deb Schmidt is a force for good.

By Shirley Knight

Photo by Dalton DeHart

WIN—What's Important Now? This is the motto Debra Schmidt uses to navigate life and work. Whether she's coordinating various divisions as assistant chief of the Harris County Sheriff's Office, rescue-diving in murky, dangerous waters, or dreaming up new ways to make a difference, Schmidt demonstrates her focus and resolve.

Thirty years ago, Schmidt moved to Houston from Wisconsin to join the sheriff's office as a deputy. Today she is the first female chief at the third-largest sheriff's agency in the nation, where she is responsible for thousands of employees.

In her career, Schmidt has served five different Harris County sheriffs. The last four have alternated between being Republicans and Democrats. After Democratic Sheriff Adrian Garcia promoted Schmidt from captain to major, he asked her to research, write, and help implement LGBTI policies. His Republican successor, Ron Hickman, demoted Schmidt and halted progress on LGBTI issues. Then in last November's election, Hickman was ousted by Democrat Ed Gonzalez. Sheriff Gonzalez subsequently selected Schmidt as one of his assistant chiefs.

"Who gets elected sheriff is important," Schmidt says, "because that person not only sets the direction of the department in terms of priorities, but also has a huge influence on the culture within the agency." The LGBTI initiatives were the result of complaints Sheriff Garcia had received about how transgender inmates were treated. "He came to me and said, 'We can do better,' and I agreed with him," Schmidt says. "All people deserve our respect. We're one human family here."

Beginning in 2012, Schmidt set about



Arresting Presence

Under the direction of the sheriff, Schmidt implements support for the LGBT community.

researching LGBTI policies in other sheriff's departments around the country, and found very few. She collected what she could find and adapted the information. "We brought internal stakeholders to the table and said, 'What is actually going to work, given our limitations in facilities and staffing?' Once we got the policy about 90 to 95 percent done, we brought in more people from the community." For example, she says she worked very closely with Lou Weaver, a consultant and LGBT community liaison.

She says there was some initial pushback from some staff members. "I think that came primarily from people not understanding why we were doing this, and maybe some of their own insecurities and questions." To mitigate discomfort and confusion, she set about educating the staff. "We had classes at the academy," she says, "and we also had a 12-hour online training class that was developed [with community input]." She notes that more than 3,200 out of 4,600 employees have gone through the training.

Another initiative Schmidt began to implement was the Safe Zone Project, which was to involve employees who would volunteer to

wear a rainbow-flag pin as "an outward sign to the LGBTI community that we were allies and safe people to talk to." After being halted under the previous Republican administration, the entire LGBTI policy is progressing again under Sheriff Gonzalez with input from the Citizen's Advisory Committee.

"In terms of our LGBTI policy, we are really setting the standard," Schmidt says. "For example, Maricopa County [Phoenix, Arizona] has taken our policy exactly the way it's written and instituted it. Multnomah County [Portland, Oregon] has also taken our policy and instituted it." While producing the standards, Schmidt was selected to participate in a panel discussion in Washington DC. She says, "I gave our take on what we were doing with LGBTI prisoners and their needs, and the policies became part of a national best-practices document."

Asked how she's managed to persevere, Schmidt says, "I think a lot of it was just hanging on to doing a good job. It's much more than the person who is in the number-one chair in the office. It's continuing to do good work for the community. It's bigger than any one of us individually."

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female on the command staff, she says, "I'm honored. It comes with a great deal of responsibility to the men and women of this department. It's an honor and it's a challenge, and it's my hope that it helps pave the way for other women so that they can rise up through the ranks and see that there's an opportunity for them to sit at the table and help guide the direction of the agency."

One hallmark of Schmidt's career is that she creates new work for herself. While serving as captain of the Training Academy, for example, she decided to establish a museum for the agency. "I think it's important to capture history," she says. "There are important things that happen that get lost otherwise. There's a lot of opportunity for us to learn from our past—important lessons that will help in our future."

Another initiative is a mentoring program, which she says "really helps set the culture within an agency. If the mentorship program is done right, it helps bring people up in a good, positive culture, and it helps give them direction and support in trying to achieve the mission of the agency." As for the career advice she gives, Schmidt remarks that "keeping the 'why' in mind is central. You have to have a strong reason why you choose this profession, and you have to be very flexible. Policies change, people change, technology changes, and you have to be able to make those changes and adjustments."

Schmidt also goes above and beyond the call of duty by using her interest in scuba diving to benefit the department. As a member of the Sheriff's Office Dive Team, she enters even the murkiest water to recover bodies, evidence, and stolen property. Once, while looking for stolen vehicles in the San Jacinto River, she says she found a pickup truck. "This was all black-water diving," she says, which means there was no visibility and the search was all done by touch. When she got to the bed of the truck, she says something very large bumped into her and knocked her back. "I think to myself, 'Whatever that was, it was big. I don't want to know what that

was.'" After finishing the search and prying the license plate off the vehicle, she surfaced and found her team anxiously waiting. They told her a large alligator "broke the surface like a Poseidon missile, smacked down on the top of the water, and swam east as fast as it could."

Schmidt also has interesting stories from her days with the Fugitive Warrant Division. In this role, she once flew to Guam to pick up a man wanted for murder. The man was suicidal and had to be watched at all times. After flying for 18 hours and spending 12 hours in Guam, Schmidt had to turn around and fly back to Houston without sleeping. During the trip, she kept all utensils away from the man except a spoon. Another memorable trip was flying to Miami to retrieve a 450-pound man who had to be moved with a forklift and transported through the airport on a food cart.

After 30 years in law enforcement, Schmidt maintains her sense of humor and adventure. When she's not on duty, Schmidt plays ice hockey, is a member of a band, hosts pirate parties, and leads dive trips to various reefs.

When she moved to Houston in 1985, she only knew two people. Now, she says, "I love Houston. It's my home. I have no intention of moving back north." She says she has seen the area grow exponentially over the years, and one of the things she enjoys is that Houston is a "very culturally rich city."

"What I love about America is the same thing that I love about this agency," Schmidt says, "it's the people who are in it. It's the richness of our culture. It's people caring about one another. I don't always see that in this job," she continues, "but even though I've been in this profession for as long as I have, I have not lost my faith in humanity."

As for the future, Schmidt says, "Every year, my New Year's resolution is a prayer that I can do what I can to help us achieve peace. What I'd like to see in the future is a more peaceful America, from the inside out."

Shirley Knight is the founder of AwakeNow.org.



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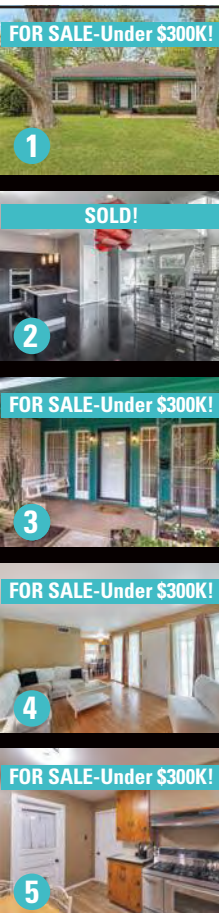
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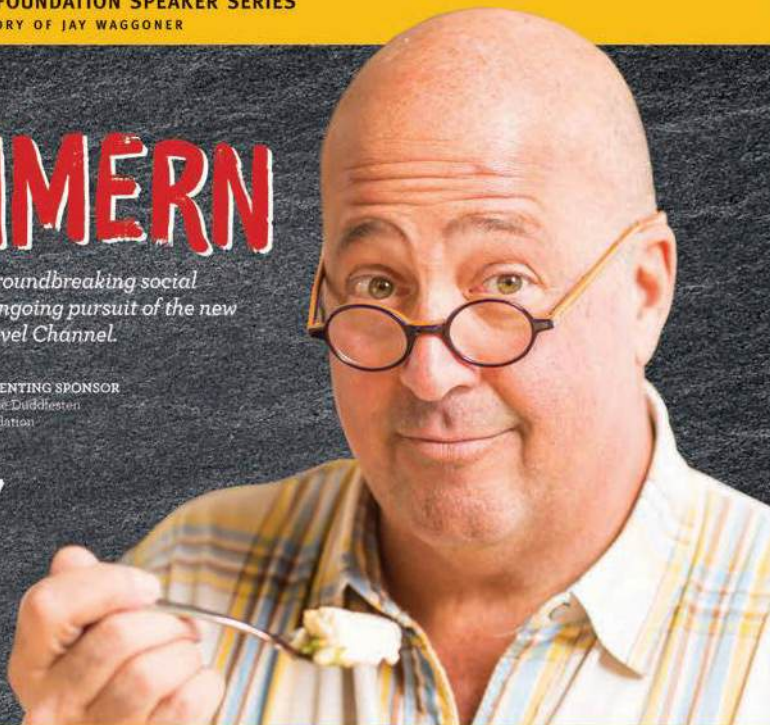
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Quiet Disruptions

Houston Grand Opera premieres 'Some Light Emerges.'

By Josh Inocêncio

This month, the internationally renowned Houston Grand Opera will premiere a new piece, *Some Light Emerges*, in The Ballroom at Bayou Place. The chamber opera explores the power and beauty of Houston's iconic Rothko Chapel, following five characters in Houston over several decades as they unexpectedly encounter the purple-and-black paintings that hang on the walls of the interfaith sanctuary. The creative team consists of composer Laura Kaminsky and co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, all of whom worked together on a previous opera entitled *As One*.

"Laura originated the idea to set the piece inside the Rothko, and Mark wanted to span the decades between the characters," Reed explains, describing the development process for *Some Light Emerges*. "But we all wanted to make it as much about a place as about the characters. And by making [the opera] about the Rothko Chapel, we're making it about art, the role of art, and why these different characters would be driven to this place.

"We're focusing on characters who may not be the kind of people you think of going to the Rothko chapel to look at Rothko paintings," Reed adds.

One of the characters is Alicia, who visits the chapel for a memorial service for her friend who had passed away from AIDS. During the late 1980s and early '90s, the chapel was one of the few places in Houston that would host memorial services for AIDS victims as many religious institutions turned away their families. "While Alicia is reflecting on losing her friend, and the anger she has because her friend had been rejected by other places, the paintings slowly take hold and she becomes intrigued by them," describes Reed.

Other characters in the opera have similar experiences that pull them toward the Rothko Chapel, including Tom, a construction worker



📌 **On Your Mark**
Transgender librettist Kimberly Reed co-created a stirring opera inspired by the otherworldly paintings of Mark Rothko in Houston's Rothko Chapel.

repairing a nearby street who goes inside to momentarily escape the Texas sun. But there is also Dominique de Menil, the founder of the eponymous museum in Houston as well as the Rothko Chapel, who looms over the characters in the background. "De Menil comes and goes, like a one-person Greek chorus," says Reed. "She hovers over the proceedings of the chapel, [and over the designers as they] implement the plans to make it happen."

As for the process of researching material for the opera, all three creative team members spent time in Houston at the chapel. But they also have personal connections that inform their work: Kaminsky's interest in the chapel stems from her love of artist Mark Rothko; Campbell's relationship with Houston developed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as evacuees fled the destruction in Louisiana. (One of the characters in the opera arrives in Houston shortly after Katrina hits New Orleans.) Reed's Houston connection goes back to her parents meeting here while her father was studying at Baylor College of Medicine.

But Reed also brings an outsider's perspective to this opera libretto, since she comes from the world of filmmaking. To her mind, the genres are very similar, and she sees how her work in film has only enhanced her work as an opera librettist. "You know, in many ways,

opera's [presentation of] visual spectacles is a forerunner to filmmaking," she says. Her experience in film has also influenced her commitment to "character-based" librettos that connects the audience more emotionally with the characters. But Reed also points out the main difference between film and opera: music serves the screenplay in film, whereas the libretto serves the musical composition in opera.

Reed, who happens to be transgender, has also used her experience in filmmaking and opera to create transgender stories that will hopefully humanize transpeople to the general public. In fact, the *New York Times* website has archived a short video essay that Reed produced with her iPhone, which is part of the newspaper's *Transgender Today* series.

"It's not unusual for me to be the first transgender person someone has known. I'm happy to be in that position, because the best way to dispel misunderstanding and increase empathy for "the other" is to simply get to know someone," Reed says in the *New York Times* piece. "That's how we've made progress in the LGB communities, and now it's time for the *T*. This is something I aimed to accomplish with my film *Prodigal Sons*."

As for her opera work, Reed aims to create stories with diverse characters that are more relevant to audiences today. While she is →

QUIET DISRUPTIONS

continued from previous page

reverential toward the classics, one of her goals is to expand interest in opera through riveting contemporary pieces. “I hope people realize contemporary American opera is more fun and acceptable and easier to relate to, so that it can connect with what people are going through today.”

What: *Some Light Emerges*

When: March 16–17, 7:30 p.m.

Where: The Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas Ave.

Tickets/Details: Visit houstongrandopera.org/community-programs for more information. Tickets are \$25 each.

Josh Inocêncio is a playwright and freelance writer. A Houston-area native, he earned a master's degree in theater studies at Florida State University and has produced his first play, Purple Eyes.



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NEWS

continued from page 15

educational, social, and community-service group” that used the tagline “Because We Care.” In addition to serving as secretary, Lee was also the editor-in-chief of *Bumpershoot*, the Interact Houston newsletter.

In 1983, Lee and others transformed Interact from “Houston’s oldest gay-rights organization” to Houston’s first agency “dedicated to providing social, educational, and support services to gays over the age of 40.” The group met at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church.

By 1985, Lee had formed a musical group called Sistersong, which she described as “a hard-hitting feminist group” performing “cathartic life music.” A May 1985 article in *TWT* magazine says, “Sistersong has entertained enthusiastic audiences at Kuumba House, Poet’s Workshop, KPFT, Munchies, and elsewhere throughout the city. Their material tackles spouse- and child-abuse, incest, street crime, and other topical subjects.”

In a subsequent article about the musical group, Texas NOW (National Organization for Women) vice president Phyllis Tucker was quoted as saying, “Listening to music by SisterSong is like climbing up in your grandma’s lap after one of the big kids has hurt your feelings. You have the strength, the energy, the

laughter, and the love to tackle the world.”

By 1986, *A Place in the Sun* was running a daily soup kitchen for men and families in addition to the shelter for battered and abused women. A photo from that year shows Gracie Lee and Phyllis Frye (who is now a municipal judge) with food collected by the Greater Montrose Business Guild in a “Share-ebation” food drive.

In 1987 Lee opened a thrift shop on Grant Street called B-Zzarrio and used its proceeds to fund the shelter. Sizemore remembers that in the 1980s, “the energy of the second wave of feminism was on fire here in Houston. We had a very vibrant NOW chapter, [and] it was a heyday of feminism and liberalism.” Remembering Lee, Sizemore says, “She had love in her heart for music. Her priority was writing and singing women’s music. Houston was a hot-spot for women’s music, and Gracie was in the middle of it.”

Rev. Gracie Lee passed away on November 6, 2016, at the age of 78. She is survived by two sisters, three children, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Donations to the Scleroderma Foundation are being accepted in Lee’s honor. Memories of Lee’s days in Montrose may be sent to her then-music and sheltering partner, Lynn Herrick, at 2700 Manor Rd. #102, Austin TX 78722.

Shirley Knight is the founder of AwakeNow.org.

Being Trans in Texas: Students, Moms Sound Off on Bathroom Rights

By Mallika Kallingal, CNN

President Donald Trump’s move to reverse Obama-era guidelines on transgender students’ right to use the bathroom of their choice in public schools has been met with anger and disbelief from civil-rights groups and families of transgender students.

Even before Trump took office, lawmakers in several states were proposing legislation barring transgender individuals from using bathrooms that correspond with their gender identities.

Senate Bill 6—The Privacy Protection Act—was filed in January in Texas. It would ban transgender individuals from using the bathroom corresponding with their gender identity in public schools and government-funded buildings.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who announced the bill, said, “We know this is going to be a tough fight. The forces of fear and misinformation will put out all the stops in Texas and nationally. We are on the right side of the bill and on the right side of history.”

But some Texas parents say the bill, if passed, would discriminate against their transgender children—and potentially jeopardize their safety.

Here are the stories of some transgender students from Texas. We left out their last names, school names, and city names at the request of their parents.

Marilyn, 8

Marilyn is only 8 years old, but already a fierce advocate for her rights. “I’m just like any other girl. I was assigned male at birth, but that’s not who I am. I’m not a boy.” And she is furious that the “bathroom bill” is an issue for her.

Marilyn’s school wouldn’t allow her to use the girls’ bathroom, a decision that she says left her humiliated. “I really didn’t like it. I thought it was horrible!”

Her friends supported her, she said. “Most students were pretty supportive. Some were not, but my friends were super-supportive.”

Marilyn is now homeschooled because she was bullied and because her school refused to accommodate her needs, her mother said. They plan to travel together to Washington for Gavin Grimm’s “bathroom bill” hearing at the Supreme Court on March 28.

“We are trying to let our kids know that they are loved and supported. We will fight for

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Falling into the (Gender) Gap

Dresses? Pants? Makeup?
Au naturel? An “androgynous
lesbian” tackles the
gender gap.

By **Natalie Mink**

Gender expression is something that is deeply personal to me. I don't think anyone should go around saying, “This is how someone should look if they want to be considered part of the LGBTQ+ community,” because there is no way to *really* tell if someone is part of this community unless they volunteer the information.

But before I came out, I had this idea in my mind of what a lesbian should look like and what clothes she would wear, as if the clothes somehow made me gayer than I was already. I did all the things that I thought would make it easier for me to fit into my lesbian family: I cut my hair, watched *The L Word* (religiously), and owned every album by k.d. lang and Melissa Etheridge. Hell, the reason I got into journalism was because of Rachel Maddow.

I thought the way you dressed and the way that you carried yourself mattered. I went through a phase where I told everyone I knew (and even some that I didn't) that I was, in fact, a lesbian. As someone who had been deeply closeted, it was freeing to not have to hide who I was, and I wanted everyone to know the real me.

Everyone has their own way of expressing themselves, and some women like to dress in skirts and wear makeup every day. That's fine, if that's what makes you comfortable. People should not equate someone's comfort with their sexuality. I had a friend in college who wore makeup and dresses, and the first time I saw her I assumed she was straight. Then I met her girlfriend at a gay-straight alliance meeting on campus a few days later.

Growing up, I felt like I was fighting two separate battles—one with my disabled identity, and one with my queer identity. When I was younger, I would ask myself questions like, “Will girls still find me attractive despite my disability?” or “What does this mean for my life going forward? Will people think that my gayness is part of my disability?” The answer



that I wish I could have given my younger self is simple: “Life is what we make of it, Nat. It's us against the world, sweet girl. Some people will find you fascinating and wonderful, and others won't. People are quick to make assumptions and slow to apologize. Chin up, babe—you got this.”

It all comes back to comfort. Labels create a safe space, plain and simple. My gender expression and label go hand in hand. I identify as an “androgynous lesbian,” because sometimes I don't feel comfortable wearing “gendered” clothing. I mean, “Why are you wearing *men's* clothes?” is such a useless question. If I'm wearing them, shouldn't they just be *Natalie's* clothes? Instead, people are trapped inside this construct of gender that has come to be accepted as “normal.” This phenomenon doesn't just affect the clothing industry, either. Toys, bedding, and even certain food products are being marketed to a specific gender. What gives companies or society the right to say something is a “boy” toy or a “girl” toy? Who says that a woman can't wear a suit and tie, or that men can't wear lipstick and a dress without being considered a drag queen? Biology shouldn't be a marketing tool, or an identifier.

Gender is a barrier for LGBTQ+ individuals primarily because of the discomfort level of the heterosexual population. As an androgynous lesbian, I've often heard people that I know ask me, “Why do you sometimes dress like a guy if you're going to date women who look like guys?” That is the beauty of androgyny and the power of feminine masculinity. Gender is simply something that suggests even more

segregation in this already segregated world—and even encourages the wage gap between genders. Understand that the phrases “throw like a girl” and “man up” can be harmful and reinforce to future generations that somehow your gender reflects on your character as a human being, and that girls and boys have certain standards that they need to follow to be considered female or male.

Society's obsession with a person's *biological* sex is also excluding a lot of individuals, particularly in the trans community. I am not transgender, so I can't explain it from that point of view. Speaking as a disabled person, however, I know what it feels like to be born in the “wrong” body. Being disabled has given me a perspective that nothing else will. Feelings of helplessness and questions of “why me?” come with the territory; at least they did when I was little. How does that fit in with gender expression? My question to you is, “How does it not?”

Being born in the wrong body, hoping for some sort of miracle, and wondering if maybe, *just maybe*, someone in the vast void had made a mistake. Yeah, I have those feelings, as I am sure others do—and they are valid. While my story is different from yours, every story is valid and every story counts. Express yourself in whatever way makes you happy and comfortable.

Gender is just another box on a form, and it doesn't define who you are or who you were born to be.

Natalie Mink is a native Houstonian, an active member of the LGBT community, and an advocate for individuals with disabilities.

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Houston's Grandmother of Green

Betty Heacker's iconic feed and hardware store isn't going away—it's growing.

By Kim Hogstrom

Twenty years ago, OUTSMART's publisher, Greg Jeu, stopped by Wabash Feed and Garden in the Heights to meet the store's owner, Betty Heacker. Jeu shook Heacker's hand and told her that he was grateful for her support of the gay community. (The term "LGBT" was not yet in our lexicon.)

"At the time, I remember thinking to myself, 'Does he mean there are businesses that *don't* support the gay community?'" Heacker recalls.

Heacker, herself an out woman, has never been one to see the elements that divide humans from one another: color, class, origin, religion, or love. Some rare, gentle souls are simply blind to the darkness in humankind. We are pleased to share this gentle soul's story.

In 1987, Betty Heacker bought an old plumbing-supply building on Washington Avenue in the Heights. What is now a heavily trafficked corridor of trendy bars, eateries, businesses, and townhouses was a dangerous part of town back then. "It was dicey, to say the least," Heacker remembers.

When the entrepreneur applied for a permit to build out her garden store to replace the plumbing supplier, she received the first building permit that the City had issued on Washington Avenue in 10 years.

The store soon gained a fan club. When the news of her authentic urban/country feed store spread, customers started coming from all corners of Houston.

Why? Where else could one find live egg-laying chickens, organic garden soil, antiques, veterinary supplies, top-of-the-line pet foods, yard art, fresh honey, bee-keeping materials, and cold, locally brewed beer?

Wabash became a destination. Customers would stroll its nooks, crannies, and garden spaces for hours. Some would spend an afternoon in the rocking chairs on the front porch sipping hand-crafted suds.

In addition to the wealth of sights, the store's aromas and sounds whisked visitors

away from the stress of city life. The smell of blooming citrus, native flowers, fresh soil, ground grain, and baled hay made each visit an experience. The honking ducks and crowing roosters were simply sensory icing on the cake. A Wabash billboard ad describes it this way: "It's like *GREEN ACRES* MEETS *MODERN FAMILY* AT A FEED STORE, AND HILARITY ENSUES." Like Wabash's mish-mash inventory, its name is an acronym for a crazy-quilt of cool stuff: "Washington Avenue Bric-Brac, Antiques, Sundries, and Hardware."

A native Houstonian, Heacker holds a degree in biology from Rice University. And while she will not admit it, she was the first to introduce organic gardening to Houston. She carried earth-friendly materials at Wabash years before the masses caught on to its value to our health and the planet's well-being.

"The organic movement was not an easy sell," Heacker explains. "There was a time when folks who used the old, toxic chemicals thought that organic gardening was *voodoo*—that it was

nonsense. It took a while for people to understand that the lawn on which their children played could be a danger to them," she explains.

When Heacker placed her first order for organic fertilizer in the 1980s, it was for four bags. Today, Wabash orders the same soil by the pallette, and it's hard to keep up with the demand.

Always a bit of a pioneer, Heacker has been an out woman for several decades, and she is glad that it's never presented problems. "My personal life has remained private. If anything, in the business arena, I think I have had more problems simply because I am a woman.

"I have had the classic challenges women face, such as difficulty securing bank backing, or being taken seriously. There are very few women in business who have not experienced [this to] some degree, but it is getting better," she concludes.

No matter the challenges, Wabash continues to grow and flourish in its new North Shepherd location. (For years, Heacker had to shoe-horn customers into her small Washington →



Heacker, with two of Wabash's current residents. **The Wabash Cannonball**  INSET: The Wabash Bandwagon.

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HOUSTON'S GRANDMOTHER OF GREEN

continued from previous page

Avenue parking lot, maintain a small inventory that moved fast, and pay property taxes that just kept rising. By 2014, it was either time to sell and hang up the hoe, or find a new location. She chose the latter.)

"A STORE BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD BE CALLED SOMETHING ELSE." —another Wabash billboard

Oddly enough, Heacker found another old plumbing-supply store at 4537 North Shepherd, just north of 42nd Street. While cutting her current property taxes nearly in half, the new building occupies 7,000 square feet, nearly double the size of the old store. Additionally, it has more than 30 parking spaces.

The new location will soon include a greenhouse and a separate building containing a community room and display kitchen for classes on beekeeping, organic cooking, and more.

The bigger store has the same fun and funk of the old one, but a more diverse inventory and conveniences such as a loading dock for soil and feed. It's still a work in progress, but it's already a home run.

Lou Congelio is the founder and creative director of CongelioVB, a full-service advertising agency and one of the most respected ad men in Houston. Congelio teamed up with Heacker to help get the word out about the new store, and says the Wabash campaign was the most fun he's had in his career.

"Betty is an old soul who values honesty, integrity, and doing the right thing," Congelio explains. "If it was up to her, she would garden all day, raise bees, and go fishing in between. But she's deeper than that, and that's why I love her."

"When she sold the Washington location, she could have easily called it quits and retired, but she didn't. She was concerned about her employees, so she decided to invest in a new store that would continue to provide jobs for her staff."

"That's Betty—always thinking of the welfare of others," Congelio concludes.

As much as Heacker's employees would have felt the loss of Wabash, so too would her customers. The store has earned a place in the very fabric of Houston, and Houstonians know it.

"There has always been something kind of magical about Wabash," Heacker states. "People seem to feel like they are a part of it, as if we are all connected somehow. I would have let many wonderful people down if I chose to close. I just couldn't do it," she says.

"WE'RE NOT JUST A THROWBACK TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WE'RE PRETTY MUCH A SLAM DUNK."

—a third Wabash billboard

Kim Hogstrom is a guest writer for OUTSMART magazine. She is also a documentary film producer and slave to a spoiled Chihuahua.

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The Power of Home

How to create a space that nurtures and inspires you.

By Joshua Smith

The first home I bought was a weekend place in Brenham, Texas. I remember pulling into the crushed-gravel driveway and being captivated by the property's rolling green pasture peppered with majestic oak trees. This land was beautiful, but the house—a neglected cottage—needed work.

I immersed myself in studying interior decoration and design before setting out to decorate my new home. More than just a shelter, this place became an extension of me: what I valued, what I loved, what I found beautiful and inspiring. I filled it with artwork that stirred me. Objects that told stories. And here's what happened: every time I walked in the door, the stresses of the day would melt away. I would come back to my center by relaxing in this comfortable space. I could be inspired there. I could connect. This was when I realized “the power of home.”

At that point, I knew that this was my true calling. So I pursued a career in interior design to teach others how to create homes that can replenish and nurture them.

Since the November election, it feels like we could all use some extra replenishment and nurturing. The frustration, anxiety, and fear running through the collective consciousness has left us exhausted, stressed, and even angry. Self-care is more important than ever as we navigate these uncertain times. An aspect of self-care that sometimes gets neglected is the art of creating homes that can nurture us. Our environments affect every aspect of our lives. They can become our stressors or our sanctuaries. When designed consciously, they nourish our spirits, inspire our minds, and enhance the connections to ourselves, our loved ones, and the divine. And when the outside world is stressful, we need those connections more than ever.

Here is a quick overview of six key techniques that can help you start living more beautifully and with more meaning at home:

- **Know Who You Are**

One of my spiritual teachers asked me this



Home Sweet! Home

OUTSMART shares the secrets to a bliss-filled abode, as seen in this tranquil living space in clean bright white accented with a soothing, powdery blue.

question: What does your bliss look like? At the time, I had no idea. She replied, “Well, then how are you going to live a blissful life if you don’t even know what your bliss looks like?” Start here: make a list of things you love and that bring you joy. How can you bring more of these things into your home? For example, I love to wake up, pour coffee in my favorite mug, settle into my comfy chair with the morning light streaming in, and contemplate my day or read something uplifting.

- **Add Your Personality**

Buy art that moves you. Collect things from your travels and incorporate them into your design. Choose items that tell stories of who you are, or that inspire you. For instance, one of my clients loves airplanes, so we hung a beautiful photograph of a propeller opposite his bed. Now, every morning he’s inspired to rise to new heights.

- **Clear Out Clutter**

Clutter = Chaos. Eliminating clutter not only feels good, but it also creates space for new energy to flow into your life. If you’re feeling stuck, chances are you need a good purge. One of the best ways to ensure you get it done is to enlist a friend to help. Have your friend over for

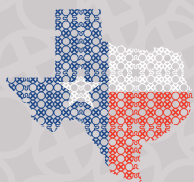
a drink, turn up the music, and go through your closets to get rid of stuff. Drawers and cabinets, too. When you have a pile of things that no longer bring you joy, donate them to an organization that supports a cause you love.

- **Get Better Sleep**

Sleep is critical to health and happiness. Nothing encourages good sleep more than a well-made bed. It’s a fact that people who make their beds each day are happier and more successful. Make your bedroom more restful by painting the walls a light color. Light blue promotes relaxation, and light green supports balance and harmony. Try to stay off your laptop or phone for 30 minutes before bedtime—especially if news headlines or your social-media feeds tend to agitate you. Keep the temperature cool so you can cuddle up with a comfy duvet. One of my favorite daily rituals is climbing into my bed each night and pausing to be grateful for my life and my loved ones.

- **Create Sacred Space**

For those who have a spiritual side, it’s important to create a sacred space to enhance the daily practices of prayer, meditation, and yoga. Carve out a special place in your home →



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(such as the corner of a room) for all of your rituals. Having this designated space deepens



Ohmm

Joshua Smith practicing Zen and the art of interior design.

your connection and enhances your spiritual growth. Create a personalized altar with a small table, stool, or bench—any piece that you love and find beautiful. Gather objects that hold spiritual significance for you. You can incorporate images or statues from a religious faith and elements from nature like crystals, shells, and feathers. Have fun with it, and include anything that helps you to connect. Fresh flowers add the perfect finishing touch. Candles and incense impart a sense of ceremony to your rituals.

• Engage the Senses

We don't just see a beautiful interior, we experience it. A well-designed space engages the senses and nourishes the soul. Start living more beautifully at home. One of my favorite ways to do that is to make the mundane more meaningful. If you order takeout, place the meal on actual plates and sit at a table instead of in front of the TV. Add more candlelight to your life. Try dinners or baths with candles, or light a few candles on your coffee table to change the energy of the room. Fresh flowers instantly lift the mood. Even fruit in a bowl can provide the same impact.

More than just shelter, your home is an extension of who you are and how you live. By taking the time to create a *conscious* home for yourself, you can create spaces that allow you to live better. When we live better, we feel better. And when we feel better, we do better in the world.

Go to joshuasmithinc.com to download a free guidebook on how to "Zen Your Home with Style" that covers all of this (and more) in much greater detail. And check out more articles like this at conscioushome.com.

Since 2012, Joshua Smith has created unforgettable interiors for clients in Los Angeles, New York, and across the U.S. Smith attended New York School of Interior Design and is principal of Joshua Smith Inc. He was named a Rising Star by House Beautiful magazine and is also a contributor to The Huffington Post. For more information, contact Joshua at joshua@joshuasmithinc.com.

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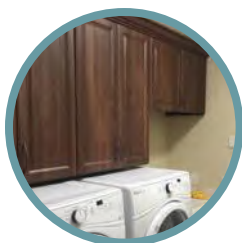


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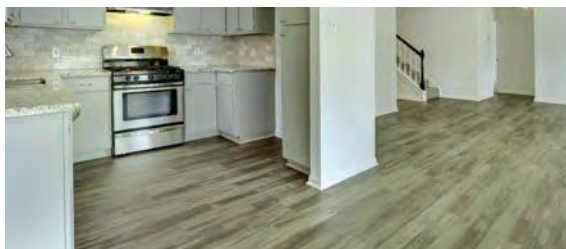


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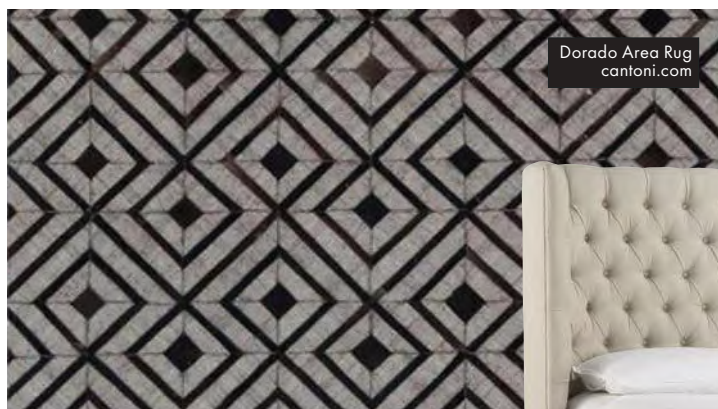
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Spring is the season to clean out, clean up, refocus yourself, and make some time for relaxation. Interior designers this season are focusing on “escapism” and creating environments that are devoid of the many technology distractions we must deal with every day.

Most of us spend so much time with our face in our phone that we tend to forget about the world that surrounds us. It can be a daily challenge just to remember appointments to keep and friendships to maintain, thanks to our constant over-programming and the information overload from social media. So putting the phone away and taking a break from reports of “fake news” just might help us create a new direction with a focus on maintaining sanity in our daily lives.

Creating an “escapist” decor at home may be challenging, but with these tips and tricks,

you will soon be creating a special retreat to reconnect with yourself, organize the space around you, and become more aware of what is important in your life.

The bedroom seems to be the logical place to create a quiet nook. This year’s Benjamin Moore color of the year is Shadow 2117-30, which is a rich, beautiful steel-blue. The enigmatic, evocative color creates a calm, quiet surrounding. Darker paint colors with more of a saturated hue tend to make a space feel more content and intimate. Designers will often choose to paint not just the walls, but also the

trim and moldings to give the space a more cohesive and unified expression.

Some of us live in smaller spaces where the bedroom seems to be our only sanctuary, so the bed is a prime choice to create a nest of relaxation and contemplation. Since the bed can be used for other things besides sleeping, consider making it a comfortable place to recharge and become centered. An upholstered bed is still popular in 2017, due to its look and feel of comfort and familiarity. The beautifully button-tufted velvet Harlowe bed from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams creates a →

peaceful place of respite where you can transcend distracting thoughts. Should you have a king-size bed, add six standard pillows and three European oversize pillows to finish your serenity nest.

It is important to balance the furniture in your bedroom, and one way to do this is to utilize a table on each side of the bed. Nightstands are sufficient, but a side table can add a unique stationary spot for non-technology items such as books, a framed photo of a loved one, and even a fragrant bouquet of fresh flowers. Using a pair of Gramercy side tables in dark stained mahogany and black steel from Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams will enhance and complement the room's other relaxing tones.

If your space has existing hardwood floors, or if you are in the market for installing hardwoods, one idea that will complete this sanctuary is the use of distressed-pine floors painted black. The patina of pine wood only improves over time, and will accentuate the dark vertical walls by creating a cohesiveness between the two planes. Floorcoverings International in the Heights is an installer of custom wood floors and other flooring products.

Rugs can feel great underfoot, and the textured Dorado geometric cowhide rug from Cantoni will provide a treasure of touch to

your retreat.

The space would not be complete without accessories, and you can find some of the most interesting and artful pieces to complete your project at Eclectic Home, also in the Heights. Their gallery boasts a large selection of lamps, wall art, and tabletop accessories. With table and floor lamps, you can control the artificial lighting in the space, but we also must control the natural light streaming through our windows. Using a contemporary blackout shade from Shade Stars, LLC, will create an intimate cocoon of rest and restoration to enhance your sleep.

Additional furniture should be included to offer more interest to your space. Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams' Roxanne rocking chair with Tibetan fur adds a bit of whimsy to break up any somber scheme. Tibetan fur is a luxurious fur that feels soft to the skin and can relax the senses from everyday stress, and the rocking motion of the chair will make you feel like you are napping in a hammock under a cool shade tree.

Another way to relieve stress, of course, is through music. Iconic Systems in Montrose can create an aural relaxation zone in your bedroom (or throughout your residence) to welcome you home after a long day at work by playing peaceful music for de-stressing and preparing for sleep—or other activities that would be enhanced with music.

Bedroom clutter can be a serious source of stress for many people. Piles of clothes, washed and waiting to be folded or hung, apparel waiting to be sent to the laundry or dry cleaners, and footwear scattered around the bedroom are all deterrents to a relaxing, stress-free space. Tame your confusion and chaos with a closet makeover from Cutting Edge. They are experts at storage solutions, and can move you one step closer to creating the ultimate distraction-free bedroom.

No matter which ideas you implement, become your own "escape artist" by making time for yourself. Create the environment you need in your bedroom, and make sure it's a sanctuary free from the stresses of work and social media—a space that rejuvenates your body, mind, and soul. Sweet dreams!



Kevin Hamby, RID, is a Registered Interior Designer in the state of Texas, professor of interior design at Houston Community College, and owner of Kevin Hamby Designs.

He is an award-winning interior designer who works with both residential and commercial projects. kevinhambydesigns.com



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Historical Record (Maker)

Celebrated professor and author Dr. George Chauncey doesn't just teach gay history, he makes it.

By Brandon Wolf

George Chauncey has solid gay-history credentials. He teaches LGBT history at Yale, and is the author of the best-selling 1994 book *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*.

Not only has Chauncey written about gay history—he has participated in it as an expert witness in more than 30 gay-rights court cases. Five of those cases went to the U.S. Supreme Court, including the recent marriage-equality cases.

Soon, Chauncey will publish his long-awaited sequel, *The Making of the Modern Gay World, 1935–1975*. From these vast resources, Chauncey has built the lecture series that he will present in Houston.

Gay New York Paints a New Vision of 20th Century Gay Male Life

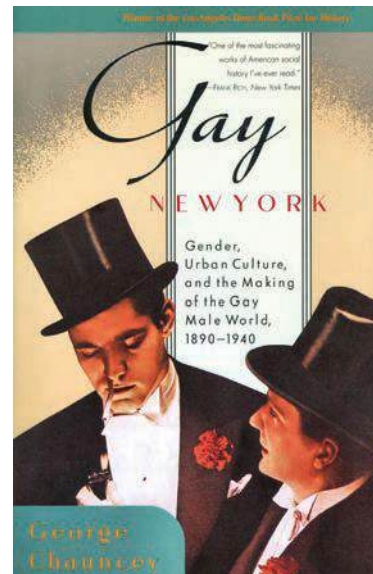
Chauncey spent 10 years researching gay male life in New York at the turn of the century and up through pre-World War II days. He searched through police records, newspapers, oral histories, diaries, medical records, the papers of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and other obscure sources. *Gay New York* readers enter a formerly unknown world of bars, speakeasies, parks, bathhouses, rooming houses, and cafeterias beginning in the 1890s through 1935.

Weaving a full fabric, Chauncey also interprets the cultural significance of his research. A true historian, he provides 90 pages of source notes to back up what he writes.

Chauncey's book shows that beginning in the 1890s, gay life was a visible element of Manhattan's working-class society, especially



HISTORY/DALE EDU



Historian

Dr. George Chauncey will give a series of three LGBT-history lectures at Rice University on April 3, 4, and 5. He is well-known for his 1994 book *Gay New York*.

in areas like the Bowery and Harlem. The word “gay” was not in use then—the popular nickname was “fairy.” Men were classified not by their sexuality, but by the gender roles they adopted.

Only effeminate men and those who played “the woman’s part” in sex were fairies. Masculine men, either gay or straight, were not considered “inverts” because they still followed the common gender binary and adopted the male role.

Fairies mixed with straight men in bars, some working as prostitutes. The effeminate men often wore rouged cheeks, sleek haircuts, and dressed flamboyantly in coded “gay” colors that included red ties and green suits.

Some “resorts”—large bars, often with rooms upstairs for sexual coupling—catered specifically to gay men. The most famous was Parris Hall. Visitors to New York who wanted to see the “debauchery” of big-city life toured these places regularly. The most infamous was The Slide, where tourists gasped at behavior they never realized existed.

When Prohibition began in 1919, the gay world became even more visible. Driven underground, gay men surfaced in the speakeasies of Harlem, where nonconformity was part of the allure of the clubs. New York police were

lenient with the clubs in Harlem, since that allowed clubs serving alcohol to migrate out of white neighborhoods.

Huge drag balls were regular events in Greenwich Village and Harlem, drawing both straight and gay audiences. Newspapers wrote accounts of the lavish outfits worn by the drag queens. During this time, “coming out” had a totally different meaning—it was used in the debutante sense to denote gay men coming out into the gay world.

Sailors were notoriously drawn to gay men for the oral sex they offered. When a fleet came into New York, the downstairs bathroom in the Times Square Building would be packed with sailors looking for sexual release. Gay men campily referred to sailors as “seafood.”

By 1930, when the “Pansy Craze” became popular, two of the three largest nightclubs in Times Square had gay male emcees dressed in tuxedos who lisped and swished, working the audiences by walking amongst the tables of patrons.

Ironically, the end of Prohibition in 1933 ushered in an era of repression and punishment for gay men. Morality crusaders blamed the hard times of the Great Depression on those who had enjoyed the liberation of the Roaring ’20s. Accusing fingers pointed to →

them until they have the same rights as any other human being.

"My daughter is so brave—all of our kids are, and it blows my mind that our government would do anything to jeopardize her safety. Yet that's exactly what they want to do by forcing her to use a boys' restroom," Marilyn's mother said.

EJ, 10

EJ is a typical fourth-grader. He plays basketball, golf, and baseball and has lots of friends with whom he likes to hang out. He loves going to school because his teachers and friends accept him. They have known him since before his transition, and they have supported him throughout the process.

But although EJ, now 10, plays on the boys' teams and is treated like a boy in school, he is not allowed to use the boys' bathroom. Instead, he can use only the nurse's or teachers' bathrooms.

"School is the one place he has to use a separate bathroom. We had hoped that would change, since he uses the boys' bathroom, without event or issues, everywhere else. No child should have to worry about going to the bathroom," said EJ's mother, Jennifer.

"Transgender students already face high levels of bullying and harassment from their peers. Legislation should not target trans students. All students, including those who are transgender, should be able to learn and succeed in school without fear of harassment or isolation. Transgender students, like my son, live their lives every day outside of school without event, and should be able to be themselves at school without fear of being isolated by using a different bathroom. I invite all lawmakers to meet transgender children and adults and speak with those who their laws affect," she said.

Kai, 6

Six-year-old Kai was out before she started school.

"I've always been a girl, but my mom didn't know it until I was four, even though I was tell-

ing her since I was three. I like DC Superhero girls and Minecraft. I wear pearls almost all the time. I have a transgender cat named Princess Petunia, and I am her mommy," she said.

Kai is now in kindergarten. Her troubles began once she started school. The school board and superintendent would not allow Kai to use the girls' restroom.

But Kai's mother, Kimberly, said she has a phenomenal teacher, and many of the staff have taken time to get to know her and are very supportive.

"Kai has never been given the right to use the proper restroom in this red county, red district, red state," she said. "Even as a Republican who did not vote for Obama, my family felt relief hearing Loretta Lynch address the nation that day. As a mom, I cried tears of joy hearing that President Obama heard us, saw us, and was on our side."

And she has a message to lawmakers today: "Please read up on your civil-rights history pertaining to schools, restrooms, and water fountains. You will look just as awful in the history books to the next generation as those other segregationists look to this one."

Trevor, 11

When Trevor came out at age nine, his mother, Melissa, contacted the school before the start of fourth grade to tell them Trevor was coming back as a boy.

She said the school cooperated and switched everything for him, from his locker sign to his desk sign, to reflect that Trevor was now a boy. But they wouldn't let him use the boys' bathroom—he had to use a teachers' or nurse's bathroom closest to him.

Now 11 and in the fifth grade, Trevor loves to draw and paint, so his parents decided to send him to a school that specializes in the arts. Trevor's new school allows him to use the bathroom of the gender he identifies with. Melissa says transgender children should be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice for their own well-being. "Trevor felt different and an outcast earlier. And no child should be made to feel that way," she said. ■

gay men as one of the causes of the hard times.

For Chauncey, a special moment during the writing of the book came when he sat down to start the first chapter. As he sorted out the information he had written on index cards, he suddenly discovered that all of the gay resorts and bars he had identified were located in the same small area—a final validation that had eluded him before.

Chauncey's book is packed with insights and information, and this summary is but a small portion of what awaits the reader. Chauncey intended to start writing a sequel to his popular book in the mid-1990s, but a marked increase in gay-rights court cases intervened.

Serving as an Expert Witness

Chauncey was surprised when he was asked to serve as an expert witness in the 1993 *Romer v. Evans* case, a Colorado statewide referendum that nullified local LGBT antidiscrimination ordinances. The case ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1996, and Justice Anthony Kennedy gave the LGBT community an identity as a "class" of people for the first time.

An "expert witness" is a person with professional knowledge of facts that may bear on a court's decision in a case. A judge must certify that the person is indeed an expert, usually based on their publications, academic appointments, and other scholarly credentials.

Chauncey says that his testimony was vital to establishing a history of discrimination against the LGBT community. When a court is presented with such a history, they have reason to suspect that an entire "class" of people is being singled out unfairly. It is then the responsibility of the state to show they have a compelling reason for treating that class differently than other citizens.

Gay New York had not been published when Chauncey was first approached by Lambda Legal. "At the time, there weren't many people to choose from," Chauncey says. He taught a gay and lesbian history class at the University of Chicago, and had published various academic papers about LGBT history. This was enough to bring him to Lambda's attention.

In 2003, Chauncey worked with the *Lawrence v. Texas* case that ultimately found sodomy laws unconstitutional. He organized nine other historians and served as the lead author for their historians' amicus brief.

In 2010, he was asked to help with the Proposition 8 case in California, where a referendum against marriage equality was overturned by a judge's decision. That decision was appealed. Chauncey was on the witness stand for up to seven hours at a time in the appeal cases that led to the Supreme Court's 2013 *Hollingsworth v. Perry* decision that declared Prop 8 to be unconstitutional.







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Chauncey drafted the “friend of the court” briefs submitted by the Organization of American Historians for *Hollingsworth*, as well as the *Windsor v. U.S.* case that partially voided the Defense of Marriage Act. He was called on once again to draft a brief for the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case in 2015 that finally brought marriage equality nationwide.

Chauncey took part in court cases that ranged from gay adoptions to the military ban. He says it felt very rewarding to read quotations from his testimony and briefs in judges’ decisions, knowing that he had helped the LGBT community advance to a new point of acceptance by Americans.

But the efforts required lots of evenings and weekends of work, year after year. The time spent on supporting those court cases impacted his effort to publish the sequel to *Gay New York*. Now, 23 years after the first book’s publication, Chauncey is finally on the verge of publishing the sequel. Asked about the length of the book, Chauncey laughs and says, “Big!”

A Preacher’s Kid Goes to Yale

At 63 years of age, Chauncey looks back and says his life has been very fulfilling. But getting to this point has been a long journey, and he is still amazed at the successes of the gay-rights movement.

Perhaps he was destined to make a difference. Born in Tennessee in 1954, Chauncey is the son of a Presbyterian minister who believed deeply in social justice. His father was actively involved in the civil-rights movement of the 1960s.

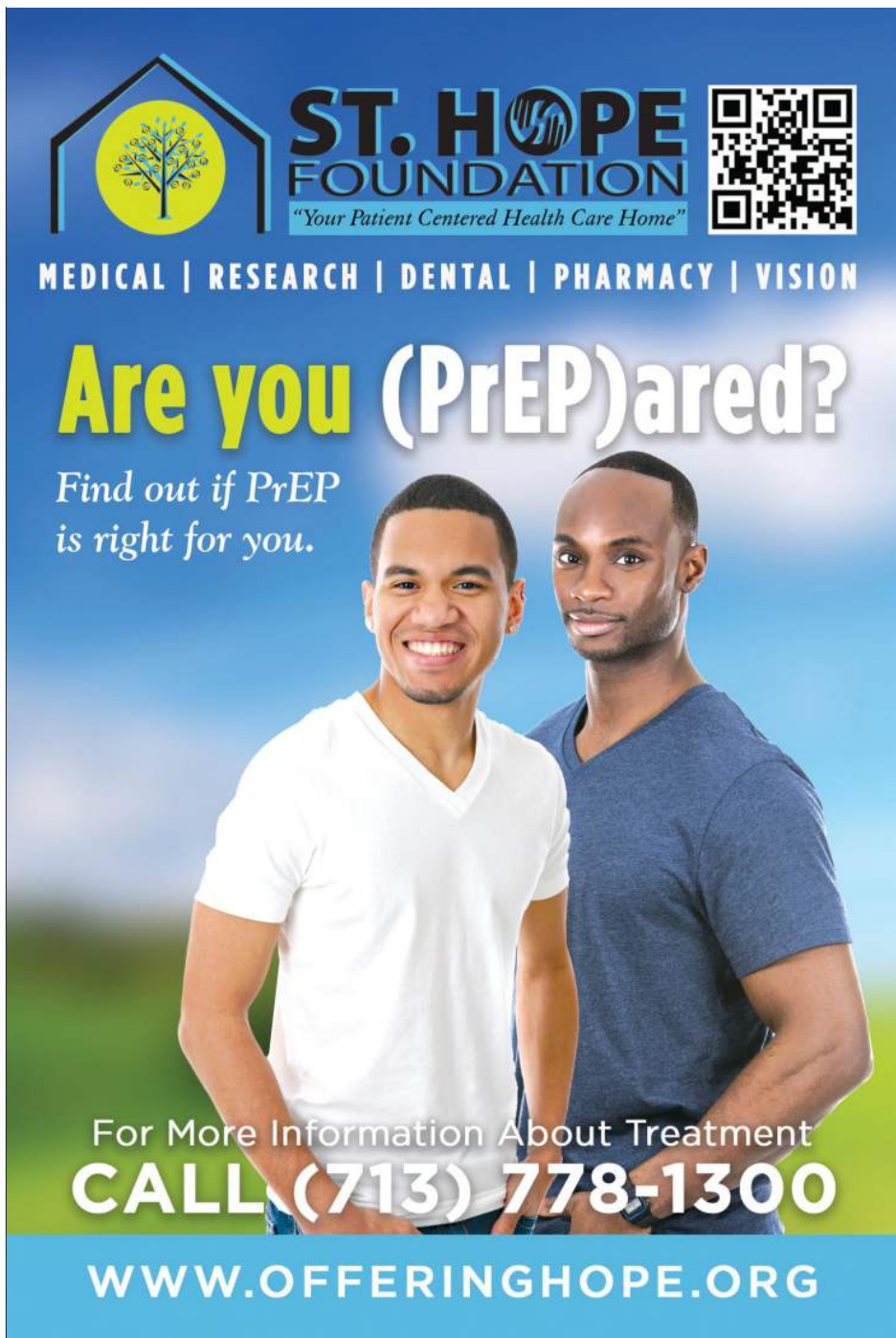
Chauncey’s early years were spent on the move as his father transferred from one church to another in the South. His mother was always active as a minister’s wife, in addition to raising Chauncey and his two younger sisters.

By the time he was in the sixth grade, the family had settled down in Richmond, Virginia, where he graduated from high school in 1971. His high-school years were times of turbulent racial unrest in Richmond. His father pastored the only integrated church in the city.

Chauncey was involved in church events, and at school he was the newspaper editor and performed with the theater group. At graduation, he was #2 in his class. “My gym grades brought down my average,” he laughs.

An excellent student, he won a scholarship to Yale University. “It was very different for me, growing up as a preacher’s son, to now be mixing with the sons and daughters of the elite and the wealthy,” he remembers.

Chauncey came out at Yale, and took part in the gay student group there. “A lot of colleges fought against gay student groups. The ones that didn’t still had an attitude of just putting up with us.” When the group sponsored events such as on-campus gay dances, they printed up enough posters so that they could replace them daily, as the signs were usually ripped down and trashed by students who didn’t approve. →



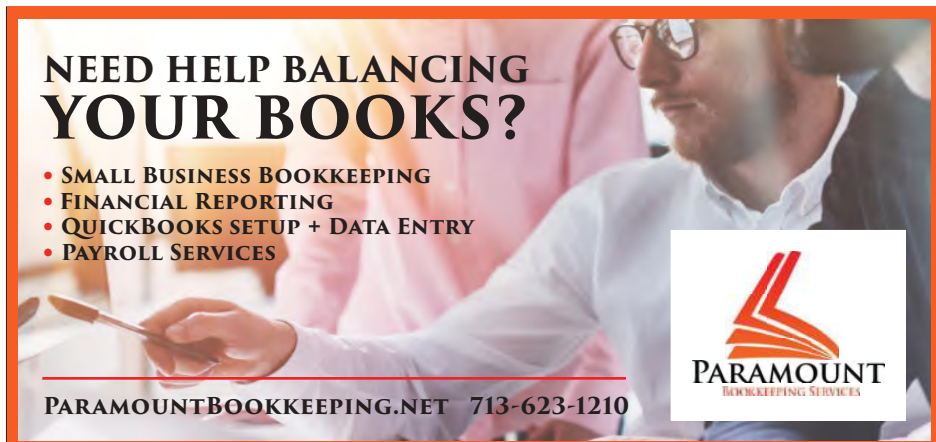
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HISTORICAL RECORD (MAKER)

continued from previous page

In high school, Chauncey had been more interested in philosophy than history. But now he saw history as a way to make a difference in contemporary issues. "Understanding historical background is important to realizing what the origins of issues are," he says.

The Evolution into a Gay Historian

After graduating from Yale in 1977, Chauncey spent a year in Africa on a fellowship that allowed him to study the effect of colonial rule on a small copper-mining town. He then moved to Boston and did odd jobs for two years before returning to Yale in 1980 to begin graduate work. In 1989, he received a doctoral degree at the age of 35.

Chauncey moved to New York, and held various teaching-assistant positions while doing research for the book he hoped to publish. In 1991, he was hired at the University of Chicago, where he taught in the history department and eventually became a full professor.

In 1994, *Gay New York* was published to much critical acclaim. His eye-opening revelations about gay life in New York during the early 20th century shattered popular myths that portrayed gay males as invisible, isolated, and filled with internalized guilt.

Chauncey began teaching a gay and lesbian

history course, although it was only offered once every three years. "In those days, all the students in the class were either gay or part of the women's studies program," he says. Straight students feared they would be identified as gay if they took the class.

In 1994, as Chauncey was visiting the University of Oregon to lecture on gay and lesbian history, he met Ron Gregg, who taught cinema at the university. The two eventually became partners, and Gregg moved to Chicago so they could live together.

In 2006, Chauncey was invited to join the faculty of Yale University to teach history—and also specifically gay and lesbian history. Gregg was also offered a position at Yale, teaching cinema and introducing a course in gay and lesbian cinema.

Chauncey says that his first gay and lesbian studies class had 25 students, nearly all of them gay. Today, his Yale class has 325 students, and the majority of them are straight. He's seen a sea change that he still marvels at.

In 2013, Douglas Carter Beane's celebrated play *The Nance* opened on Broadway. Nathan Lane's character, Chauncey Miles, was named as a nod to George Chauncey because the playwright relied so heavily on *Gay New York* to write his play. The PBS production of the play is available through the PBS website.

Both men have become beloved teachers at Yale, and are the epitome of a gay power-

couple. In 2014, they married. "Love Like in the Movies" read the headline of a *Yale Daily News* feature story about them in 2016.

The Rice Lectures

On Monday, April 3, Chauncey will speak on "The Politics of Antigay Discrimination in the McCarthy Era and Beyond." Many people don't realize, Chauncey says, just how harsh life was in America for gay men during this time. Bars were not allowed to serve alcohol to known homosexuals, movies couldn't portray them in a favorable light, and careers were ended if one's sexual orientation became known.

On Tuesday, April 4, the topic will be "From Drag Balls to Vogue Balls: Black Gay Culture and Politics Before and After Stonewall." Chauncey says he wants to show that the lives of gay African-Americans took a very different trajectory than their white counterparts.

On Wednesday, April 5, Chauncey will discuss "AIDS, the Lesbian Baby Boom, and the Campaign for Marriage Equality." Chauncey notes that most people have no idea where the push for marriage equality came from. In the 1970s, activists thought of marriage as a flawed straight institution. But the realities of AIDS and the parenting responsibilities of lesbians raising children made it clear that the legal protections of marriage were essential to the LGBT community.

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Dr. Chauncey's visit to Houston for this lecture series is a rare opportunity. Anyone interested in the history of our community should circle April 3-5 on their calendars for what promises to be three memorable evenings.

The Chauncey lectures will be presented in the new Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University on April 3, 4, and 5. The lectures will be illustrated with slide shows, and question-and-answer sessions follow each lecture. The lectures are free and open to the public.

A welcome reception will be held in the Moody Center following the April 3 lecture. There is no charge for the lectures, but tickets must be obtained for entrance. The free tickets are available online at <https://goo.gl/d2Q2AF>.

Guests are asked to arrive at 5:45 p.m., as the lectures will start at 6 p.m. promptly. Anyone not checking in by 5:55 p.m. will risk having their tickets given to those on a waiting list. The auditorium seats 150, so seating is limited, and tickets should be obtained as soon as possible.

The nearest parking is West Lot 1, which is accessed from entrances #8, #17, or #18. The parking fee is \$12. Economy parking is available in the Greenbriar Lot (entrances #13A or #13B) for \$2. A detailed map is available at OutSmartMagazine.com.

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to OutSmart magazine.



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The (H)Art of Kermit Eisenhut

A profile of the local artist and his undeniable animal magnetism.

By Kim Hogstrom

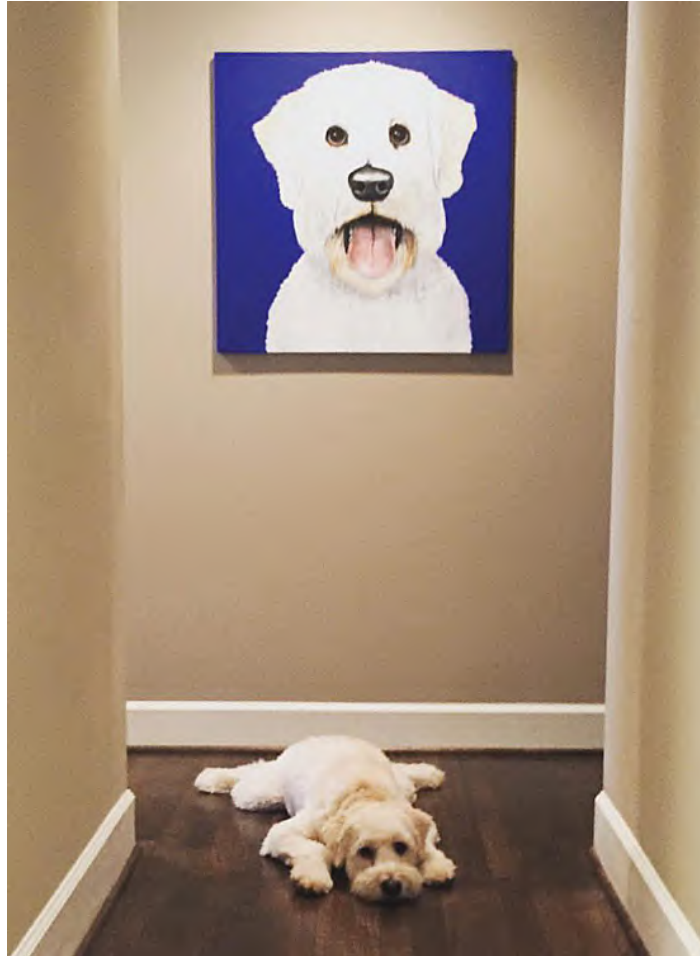
It is not often that one can identify an artist's work from across a room, but that's the case with the work of Kermit Patrick Eisenhut, one of Houston's most prolific and popular artists.

Eisenhut often works in a range of artistic styles ranging from abstract and impressionism to folk-art. But style aside, all his pieces seem to share some curious element. It is rare to find an artist who can work in so many expressive methods and media while still retaining an identity, but Eisenhut does it routinely.

What is that consistent element, we ask the artist? "I don't know," admits Eisenhut. "I guess I always create with the objective of making people happy. It's my job."

That's it! All of Eisenhut's work contains an element of joy, which makes each piece a delight to behold. Little wonder he has fans, followers, and clients across the U.S. and the world.

Eisenhut's work can be found in hospitals, schools, homes, restaurants, and in the offices of doctors, lawyers, and veterinarians throughout Houston. While the artist works with many subjects, he has established a radiant reputation for painting pets. He is absolutely the go-to artist for pet-lovers in search of unique gifts or memorials to their four-legged loved ones: bunnies, cats, dogs, horses, cows,



A Dog's (Still) Life
Kermit Eisenhut's pooch paintings can be seen throughout the city.

and even budgies. If it's an animal and it's treasured, Eisenhut can capture the love.

"Sometimes people want portraits of animals they've lost. Sometimes it's for their living furry friends. Either way, I try to identify the spark that makes the pet unique. I try to capture the life spirit that connects the pet

to the owner. That way, every time the owner looks at the painting, he or she will connect with the pet. It's just one aspect of the power of art," Eisenhut says quietly.

Many folks have commissioned Eisenhut to capture their pets on canvas. These paintings make wonderful, personal gifts and start at about \$200, making them an affordable option.

Denise Hurd is an administrative assistant and animal activist who has been a fan of Eisenhut's for years. She sees his work throughout Houston, and it always raises her spirits. "My favorite Kermit painting is hanging in the spay-neuter clinic in the Heights. Everything he produces is fun, colorful, and imaginative. It's remarkably affordable art from an artist with a true heart," Hurd concludes.

In addition to being prolific, Eisenhut is generous. As an out gay man, he has donated →



Mayor's Pet
Kermit Eisenhut with his close personal friend, former mayor Annise Parker.

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THE H(A)RT OF KERMIT EISENHUT

continued from previous page

his time and work to many LGBTQ projects and agencies. In addition, he has donated work or sat on the board of dozens of Houston's most prestigious and significant nonprofits, including Texas Children's Hospital, M.D. Anderson, and many animal shelters and rescue groups.



Corgi & Bess

One of Eisenhut's many puppy portraits.

Recently, Eisenhut started teaching painting to cancer survivors for both the Memorial Hermann Hospital System and the Harris Health System. Eisenhut may have found his calling with this teaching work; he's witnessed the restorative power of art through his students, and it has moved him to his core.

"Sometimes my cancer students come to class in tears," Eisenhut explains, "but the power of art is transformative. It helps us touch our dreams and exercise our imaginations, and it can redirect or drive moods.

"Art helps us communicate with the divine, helps us reach our souls, and helps us express both. These same students who come to class in tears can spend an hour painting and leave happy, wearing smiles. That is just how powerful art is," Eisenhut concludes.

The artist's life took a turn in 2005 when he was told his beloved mother had only weeks to live. "We brought Mom to my home in Houston, and we took turns taking care of her," Eisenhut remembers, referring to the help provided by his out-of-town sister. (In fact, we suspect most of the responsibility for the care of this sweet, aging woman fell to Kermit.) The two grew close during her last months, and they both blossomed through the experience.

"My dear mother was supposed to live only a few weeks, but she survived another 18 months with me. She was such a joy in my life. I miss her every day. Every day. But teaching some of my oldest students gives me a chance to sort of care for her again. Many of them could be my dear mom," Eisenhut says.

Kim Hogstrom is a guest writer to OutSmart magazine. She is also a documentary-film producer and a slave to a spoiled Chihuahua.

All You Can Eat

'Five Course Love' offers Mark Ivy five of the juiciest roles of a lifetime.

By Donalevan Maines

In the Sandra Bullock movie *Miss Congeniality*, a ditzzy beauty queen describes her "ideal date" as April 25—you know, "Because it's not too hot, not too cold. All you need is a light jacket."

But LGBT favorite Mark Ivy prefers April 8, because it's both his birthday and his mother's birthday. And this year, it comes during the run of his latest show, *Five Course Love*, which plays March 8–April 16 at Stages Repertory Theatre.

"My ideal first date?" the Montrose bachelor ponders. "Well, Houston has such great food, so I like meeting at a favorite restaurant and just goofing off, then going out for a cocktail or eight."

Ivy and two fellow Sam Houston State University (SHSU) graduates, Chelsea McCurdy and out actor Dylan Godwin, play a total of 15 characters in *Five Course Love*. They're

all hungry for romance, as they "nom nom" through five different restaurants, each with a distinct musical style on the menu.

In each vignette, Ivy plays a guy looking for love—including Matt, a nerdy architect on a computer-matchup date at Dean's Old-Fashioned All-American Down-Home Bar-B-Que Texas Eats, and Gino, a disgruntled "lieutenant" in an Italian-American mob family who dares to court the boss' wife in plain sight at Trattoria Pericolo. Next, he's Klaus, the latest plaything of a German dominatrix at Der Schlumpfwinkel Speiseplatz, followed by lusty bandido Guillermo ("Yes, it's super-sized") at Ernesto's Cantina. Finally, Ivy struts as Clutch, the cock of the walk at the Star-Lite Diner—or, as Coffin's script describes him, "the stereotypical rebel/car mechanic, low on brains." (But seriously, wouldn't you share a malt and fries with a teen idol named Clutch?)

"My ideal first date? Well, Houston has such great food, so I like meeting at a favorite restaurant and just goofing off, then going out for a cocktail or eight."

Ivy, who's now 28, grew up in the swanky Sweetwater subdivision in Sugar Land, where he sang for two years in the internationally famous Fort Bend Boys Choir.

At Hightower High School in Missouri City, "I was big into everything," he says. "I tried to do choir, show choir, theater, musicals, broadcast academy, PALS [Peer Assistance and Leadership, a mentoring group], and I was the school mascot. We were the Hurricanes, so naturally I was Poseidon. He's the great 'God of the Sea,' so my suit looked like that."

In his freshman, sophomore, and junior years of high school, Ivy also took classes at The Humphreys School of Musical Theatre,

taught by Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS) professionals.

At SHSU, Ivy benefited from the school's long-standing partnership with Stages, which jumpstarted his professional career and those of McCurdy,

Godwin, and *Five Course Love*'s out director, Mitchell Greco.

Ivy was just a junior at SHSU when he was cast in David Lindsay-Abaire's 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Rabbit Hole* at Stages. He played an angel-faced teenaged driver who accidentally runs over and kills a little boy who darts into the path of his car. "That pretty much got the ball rolling," says Ivy. "I was a new face to people in the community, and I started working consistently after that."

In 2010, Ivy played opposite McCurdy in out Canadian Brad Fraser's *True Love Lies* at Theater LaB Houston (TLH). "That was the last show I did with Chelsea [McCurdy], and from it I booked Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*. I hadn't even had a lead role in college," he admits, before starring in that year's TUTS summer musical at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

A year later, he played Ogg in Bayou City

Concert Musicals' production of *Finian's Rainbow*.

Some other career highlights at Stages include popular turns in *Xanadu*, *Next to Normal*, *Life Is a Dream*, and last summer's audience-participation mystery-comedy *Shear Madness*.

Broadway would have to wait.

"It was not necessarily my intention to stay in Houston, but from the time I started doing training at the Humphreys School, I saw what a great theater scene we have. I am an actor 90 percent of the year, which is more appealing than being up in New York working four different jobs waiting tables. I have not ruled out New York, but it might work better if I go in my late 30s, since I am more of a character actor."

Recently at TUTS Underground, Ivy played multiple roles with Godwin and other SHSU →



Singing for His Supper
Ivy and two other actors play 15 roles in Stages' tasty new musical comedy.

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ALL YOU CAN EAT

continued from previous page

buddies in the 2013 Broadway musical *First Date*. "That was a unique experience because most of my best friends in town were in it," he says. "It tested the boundaries for doing a job [while having fun at the same time]."

In partnership with Cordúa Restaurants and executive chef David Cordúa, Stages will offer "dinner and a show" packages that include a ticket to *Five Course Love* or *My Mañana Comes* (running through March 5) along with a choice of a three- or four-course meal at Americas River Oaks. Dinner packages are \$95 per person for four courses and VIP/premium seating, or \$76 per person for three courses and regular seating. Beverages, gratuity, and tax are not included.

Post-show Q&A discussions with the cast and creative team will take place Sunday, March 12, at 2:30 p.m., Thursday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, March 19, at 2:30 p.m.

What: *Five Course Love*

When: March 8–April 16

Where: Stages, 3201 Allen Parkway

Tickets: start at \$21

Details: 713.527.0123, stages theatre.com

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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The Victory Fund Brunch

... celebrates and supports LGBTQ leaders in Houston.

By **Ryan M. Leach**

Photo by Dalton DeHart

The seventh annual Houston Victory Fund Brunch will be held on April 23 at the historic Corinthian in downtown Houston. The champagne will be flowing, and the stakes for LGBTQ equality are higher than ever.

Houston, more than any other city in the country, has benefitted from the work of the Victory Fund. The organization, which focuses on electing LGBTQ people into office, gave early support to many of our trailblazing leaders, including former mayor Annise Parker. More recently, the Fund helped bolster the campaign of Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, who defeated her predecessor handily in November.

"The Victory Fund is coming off a fairly successful 2016 election cycle," says event chair Bryan Hlavinka. "Locally, we saw endorsed candidates Kim Ogg and Judge Steve Kirkland win their races. In state races, we saw the return of our only two openly-LGBT state legislators to Austin, Mary Gonzalez and Celia Israel. The Victory Fund continues to support Houston city council members Mike Laster and Robert Gallegos."

Houston has a long history of electing LGBTQ leaders to influential offices, supported in large part through the efforts of the Victory Fund. The organization, which is based in Washington DC, lends resources to candidates in order to help them win races at every level of government. Most notably, the Victory Fund supported Wisconsin's Tammy Baldwin, the first openly gay woman elected to the U.S. Senate. They were also instrumental in electing Kate Brown as governor of Oregon, another historic first in the country.

Part of the Victory Fund's success is its



The Thrill of Victory

... and the agony of a brunch hangover. Co-chair Bryan Hlavinka (second from left) and guests bravely suffer for a good cause.

support of both LGBTQ leaders and community allies. This year, the Victory in Houston Brunch will honor a few of these allies. The third annual Annise Parker Leadership Award will be given to pastors Rudy and Juanita Rasmus of St. John's Church in downtown Houston. "They were very vocal and visible in the fight for the [Houston Equal Rights Ordinance]. We wanted to recognize the work of our allies in the fight for LGBT equality locally," says Hlavinka.

Another ally who will be recognized at the brunch is honorary chair Amber Mostyn. "Amber Mostyn has been an incredible ally to the LGBT community," says Hlavinka. "The Mostyns are recognized as one of the top fundraisers in the state of Texas, and they have helped our community politically. We believe it is time Amber gets the recognition she deserves for the work she has done."

The brunch will be returning to the Corinthian, a venue that has played host to the event for most of the seven years it has been held in the city. It provides a beautiful backdrop

for this equality-oriented event, and sponsor tables (currently available online at victoryfund.org/Houston) should once again sell out. Individual tickets, if available, may be released closer to the date of the brunch.

The brunch has traditionally featured elected officials from around the country speaking about the important support they received from the Victory Fund, but at press time the names of guest speakers were not available. Past speakers have included U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, Pennsylvania State Representative Brian Sims, and Texas State Representative Mary Gonzalez.

What: The seventh annual Victory Fund Houston Champagne Brunch

When: April 23, noon

Where: The Corinthian, 202 Fannin St.

Details: victoryfund.org/Houston

Ryan M. Leach is a community activist, lawyer, professor, writer, and humorist. You can email him at ryanleach@outsmartmagazine.com.



Automotive **TRENDS** *for 2017*

WHAT DRIVES YOU

By James Hurst

The automotive industry is facing some exciting trends and challenges in this new year. The rapid pace of change in the technology world is having a direct impact on how cars are made and driven. From “heads-up” assistive-driving technologies, infotainment, and Wi-Fi connectivity to driverless cars, big changes are on the horizon that will soon be reaching local dealerships. Technologies such as driverless cars are getting closer to the

mass-production stage for most, if not all, automakers. From the Uber concept to rent-a-car companies like Zipcar, ride-sharing services have opened up many new choices for the consumer. Cities like Houston face legal issues never previously imagined as the automotive world changes before our eyes. For 2017, here are a few cars that are changing our concept of what automobiles can do today. →



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WHAT DRIVES YOU

continued from page 72

Audi A5 Cabriolet

While the 2016 Audi A5 Coupe and Cabriolet have carried over to the 2017 model year, the really exciting news is the entirely new family of A5 models that will debut for the 2018 model year. That being said, the 2017 Audi A5 lineup is one of Audi's sexiest, best-conceived and -designed luxury coupes. The elegant A5 Cabriolet is a striking automobile, both inside and out. Audi provides a high level of fit, luxury, and trim choices ranging from stainless steel and wood to carbon fiber. The A5 is powered by a turbocharged 2.0-liter inline 4-cylinder producing 220 horsepower and 258 pound-feet of torque. The Cabriolet is offered with an 8-speed automatic transmission and standard quattro all-wheel drive.

The well-designed Cabriolet convertible top can be lowered in seconds to experience the open road at its best. Audi offers a lengthy list of safety features, including active pop-up bars in case of a rollover. The A5 Cabriolet is a beautiful car that offers 21 mpg in the city and 29 mpg on the highway. You won't be disappointed.



KEY FEATURES

GERMAN TECHNOLOGY
STANDARD
ALL-WHEEL DRIVE
QUALITY WORKMANSHIP

Lincoln Continental

Lincoln introduces the all-new Continental for 2017. This large luxury sedan has been designed to compete with other large sedans such as Mercedes Benz, Audi, and Cadillac. It is offered in the base trim with front-wheel drive known as the Premier, followed by the Select, and finally the Reserve. The Continental offers a choice of three V-6 engines ranging from the 300 horsepower to the potent 400-horsepower 3.0-liter twin turbo mated to a 6-speed transmission and all-wheel drive. Lincoln Continental has done their homework and produced a car dominated by a large grille that leads your eyes back through flowing lines and sculpted proportions. The 117.9-inch wheelbase makes the Continental a large luxury sedan. →



KEY FEATURES

DRAMATIC STYLING
GRAND TOURING
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Range Rover Evoque Convertible

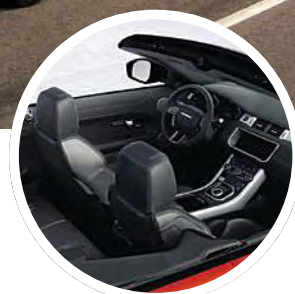
The 2017 Range Rover Evoque Convertible is a 4-passenger, 4-wheel drive, 2-door convertible. It belongs to a rather small niche of automobiles known as the convertible crossover. Its unique styling makes for a very attractive automobile. The Evoque is powered by a

240-horsepower 4-cylinder engine mated to a 9-speed transmission. Due to the added weight of the ragtop, the Evoque Convertible weighs over 4,500 pounds, which has an adverse effect on acceleration. Nevertheless, the convertible option offers an exciting perspective and fun in



KEY FEATURES

VISUAL DRAMA
SPORTING CHARACTER
LAVISH INTERIOR



this unique 4-wheel drive. Land Rover reports the Evoque will get 20 mpg in the city and 28 mpg on the highway.



Cadillac XT5 Crossover

For 2017, Cadillac has replaced the SRX with the new XT5. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, the XT5 is ranked 13 out of 20 in the luxury midsize SUV category. This newer Cadillac can be described as a quality crossover SUV with seating for five, good cargo capacity, and all-wheel drive. There are a variety of driv-

er-assistance options as well. The XT5 is offered in a base trim starting at \$39,395, followed by various trim packages known as Luxury, Premium Luxury, and ultimately the Platinum package for \$62,895. The XT5 is powered by a V-6 engine generating 310 horsepower and mated



KEY FEATURES

MODERN
UPDATED DESIGN
SPACIOUS INTERIOR
GREAT HANDLING

to an 8-speed transmission. Engine stop-start is a standard feature, along with cylinder deactivation when the V6's full power is not required. All together, this offers an estimated 19 mpg in the city and 27 mpg on the highway. →

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2017 LINCOLN
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Mini Clubman

The Clubman is the largest car currently sold by BMW's Mini brand. This mid-size automobile has seating for five, plenty of cargo space, elegant materials, and precision engineering. The Clubman is offered in three trim levels, beginning with the base model (from \$24,100), the S model (from \$27,650), and finally the John Cooper Works "performance" trim for \$35,100. It is now available in both front- and all-wheel drive configurations. Clubman models now offer two engine choices, beginning with a 1.5-liter turbocharged 3-cylinder rated at 134 horsepower and 162 pound-feet of

torque for the base Clubman model.

The Clubman S and Clubman ALL4 are offered with a 2.0 liter turbo-four with 189 horsepower and 207 pound-feet of torque. Both power trains come standard with a 6-speed transmission, while an 8-speed automatic is an option.

KEY FEATURES

BIGGER FOUR-DOOR MINI
UPSCALE INTERIOR
PRACTICAL CITY CAR



KEY FEATURES

FUN TO DRIVE
AMPLE RANGE PER CHARGE
ROOMY INTERIOR

Chevrolet Bolt

According to *Car and Driver* magazine, the 2017 Chevrolet Bolt EV is a 10Best Winner. It has also been named *Motor Trend's* 2017 Car of the Year. This battery-electric hatchback delivers more than 200 miles of driving range per charge. The Bolt EV has a floor-mounted battery which powers a 200-horsepower electric motor delivering 266 pound-feet of torque and 60 m.p.h. in 6.5 seconds. The Bolt

EV's basic model is the LT, and the upgrade is known as the Premier. The latter's trim level includes forward-collision alert, low-speed front automatic braking, lane-keep assist with lane departure warning, and IntelliBeam. This very attractive sculpted automobile has a base price of \$37,495 (before federal tax credits of up to \$7,500). →



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**KEY
FEATURES**

NEW GLOBAL PLATFORM
ALL-WHEEL DRIVE
SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Subaru Impreza

The Subaru Impreza has been redesigned from the ground up for 2017. It is offered as either a sedan or a versatile 5-door hatchback. The global platform is now safer and more rigid through the use of high-strength steel. The Impreza is offered in three trim levels beginning with the 2.0i Premium, the 2.0i Sport,

and the 2.0i Limited. All Imprezas come with Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive, offering more stability, fuel efficiency, and a quicker response to hazardous road conditions. The 2.0-liter Flat-4-Boxer engine delivers 153 horsepower and 145 pound-feet of torque mated to either a five-speed transmission or a

continuously variable transmission. Mileage figures are estimated at 28 mpg in the city and 38 mpg on the highway. Base price for the 2017 Subaru Impreza is \$18,395.



**KEY
FEATURES**

BEST SELLING IN CLASS
NEW GASOLINE-HYBRID ENGINE
UNIQUE STYLING CUES

Nissan Rogue

The updated 2017 Nissan Rogue is described as a five-seven passenger compact crossover SUV, depending on the model selected. For 2017, the Rogue features a revised front fascia, chrome accents, and edgy headlights. It is available in three trim levels known as S, SV, and SL. The Rogue is powered by a 2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine producing 170 horsepower and 175 pound-feet of torque. It is mated to

a continuously variable transmission that sends power to the front wheels. All-wheel drive is an available option, as is the Rogue's first-ever hybrid engine. The 2017 Rogue Hybrid combines a 2.0-liter inline-four with 141 horsepower and 144 pound-feet of torque and an electric motor rated at 40 horsepower and 118 pound-feet of torque. The Rogue continues to improve with a host of advanced



safety features, lots of cargo space, and various options. Mileage is estimated to be 26 mpg in the city and 33 mpg on the highway. The base price is at \$23,820.

Automotive TRENDS for 2017

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Taking Vows to New Heights

Lauryn Bohac and Chelsea Marvos' edgy wedding.



In God's Cathedral

Instead of the old church and steeple, Chelsea Marvos (l) and Lauryn Bohac decided to wed in a grander sanctuary.

Lauryn Bohac knew Chelsea Marvos was “the one” when she found Chelsea in bed with Brooke. “As a pup parent, I have always been concerned about being with someone who may feel differently about dogs than I do,” confesses Bohac. “What if she doesn’t like dogs? What if she isn’t comfortable around them? What if she says she likes them, but is one of those people who taps a dog on their head instead of petting and playing with them?”

“Nope, Chelsea was the complete opposite,” says Bohac with a sigh of relief in her voice. On one of Chelsea’s first trips to Houston, she had the opportunity to spend quality time with my Boston Terrier, Brooke. I left my place to run a quick errand before our date night, and when I arrived back, I found Chelsea and Brooke all curled up in bed together, both snoozing away. It completely melted my heart.

“Of course, I loved her before that,” Bohac says, “but that just confirmed that she was the one. I knew immediately that I wanted her to be Brooke’s mom.”

Chelsea Marvos, 33, and Lauryn Bohac,

26, currently reside with their daughter, Averi, and two Boston Terriers (Brooke and Bailey) in a small town outside of San Luis Obispo, California. Marvos is the assistant director of the Medical-Surgical and Medical Guarding departments at Twin Cities Community Hospital, and Bohac is a paralegal with the Adamski, Moroski, Madden, Cumberland & Green law firm.

Originally from Southern California, Marvos attended nursing school in Oahu before

“The moment I first saw Lauryn, she made me nervous in the best way possible.”

returning to California. Bohac, a native Houstonian, grew up in the tiny town of Sweeny and moved into the city following graduation from high school.

“I like to tell people that I met Lauryn in my dreams,” states Marvos. “Really, though, we met entirely by happenstance. In June 2014, I was in San Marcos, Texas, for a nursing conference, and Lauryn just happened to make a last-minute trip there to visit her very best friend. We met in passing through

mutual acquaintances, and throughout the night we talked and laughed. We immediately became friends. Before the evening ended, we exchanged numbers. Over the next several months we got to know each other better, and in January 2015 we both revealed that we had feelings for each other.

“The moment I first saw Lauryn, I told myself, ‘I have to get to know her,’” says Marvos excitedly. “She made me nervous in the best way possible!

“While we were just getting to know each other, there was this one time that we stayed up literally all night long talking on the phone,” confesses Marvos.

“The ease of conversation made it feel like I’d known her forever. Plus, she made me laugh until my stomach ached. That was the night that I knew she was the one.”

“For me,” adds Bohac, “the second confirmation that she was the one was when we were on a hike up Bishop’s Peak while I was visiting San Luis Obispo. Once we reached the top, I popped open a bottle of champagne and cheered, because I knew that she was the one. I knew I was going to spend my life with her. →

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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

She makes me laugh and keeps me happy. Still, I was that girl who swore I'd never leave Texas."

Marvos and Bohac married on July 16, 2016, at Yosemite National Park's Taft Point.

The officiant was Donny Alexander.

"I had the ring, and I knew exactly what I wanted to ask Lauryn," says Marvos. "I was just waiting for the perfect moment. For a couple of weeks we seemed to have many of those perfect moments—a romantic campfire on the beach, stargazing under a full moon, spontaneous road trips up the California coast—but none of them felt quite right.

"Then, on November 18, 2015, I was overcome with emotion," shares Marvos. "It was late at night. We were in bed with our hair up in messy buns and no makeup. Lauryn was having a challenging day due to her, as she would say, wicked PMS. I turned to her and told her that I'd been waiting for this perfect moment to propose to her. Because it was in that moment that I realized how easy it would be to commit myself to her in some exceedingly romantic setting. But in reality, life isn't always going to be perfect. I wanted her to know that I will be

there for it all—the great, the romantic, the perfect moments and the not-so-great moments, including the wicked PMS.

"While planning our wedding, it started to feel like it was less about our commitment to each other and more about those who would be attending," confesses Marvos. "We wanted to focus on just each other, so we decided to elope! Since we love the outdoors and had always talked about visiting Yosemite, we figured what better way to memorialize our very first trip to Yosemite than to get married at sunset, 7,500 feet above the valley. So we did!

"Now, hiking up the 1.5-mile trek to Taft Point in our wedding dresses and boots was pretty memorable," laughs Marvos. "We walked hand-in-hand through a gorgeous, glowing meadow and made our way across a small stream before we reached the peak. The ceremony was incredibly intimate. It was just us, our officiant, and our amazing LGBTQ-friendly photographer, Shawn Reeder. We wrote

our own vows and committed ourselves to each other, literally on the edge of a cliff!"

To celebrate their honeymoon, Mrs. Chelsea Bohac and Mrs. Lauryn Bohac are sticking with their love for outdoor adventures by going on an Alaskan cruise in the spring of 2017.

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist. He loves long walks in the mountains, especially in the spring.



Higher Love

Chelsea Marvos (l) and Lauryn Bohac say their vows in the sunset light of a peak in Yosemite National Forest.

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Love by Design

... for Adrian Duenas and Marcelo Sanéz.

By Henry V. Thiel

Adrian Duenas found his true love when he met Marcelo Sanéz in Quito, Ecuador, on December 10, 1999, while visiting friends and family. After returning to New York City, he sold all of his worldly belongings and moved back to Quito to be with Sanéz.

Both Duenas and Sanéz were born and raised in Quito. Duenas attended high school in California and studied at the University of California, Davis, before returning to Quito to finish his degree in Public Relations and Communications, while Sanéz received his master's degree in interior design in Salamanca, Spain. Today, they are partners in life and business, with Duenas as CEO and Sanéz as lead designer for their interior design studios located in Madrid, Ecuador, and Houston.

"I knew Marcelo was the love of my life when I met him," states Duenas. "I don't recall a specific moment when I knew I would marry Marcelo. The first days turn into months, and then into amazing years, and one random day you don't remember your life without the other—and that is what we all call family.

"But I have to admit that one day we had a knockdown of an argument, and when I left for work, I wasn't sure if our relationship would survive," says Duenas. "To my surprise and great delight, when I arrived back home that night, Marcelo had the apartment set, and he

had made a fabulous dinner for us with lots of champagne, and the wedding rings we wanted from Bulgari.

"Over the years, we had discussed getting married, and together we decided that we would get married when we had been together for 15 years," shares Duenas. "We needed time to plan a big celebration," he laughs, "and find a location that was convenient for all our friends and family who would be flying in from all over the world for that one special night."

It turned out to be a great plan, with more than 100 people from Europe, Africa, South America, and even Australia joining them in New York City for the weekend celebration. "It was a great weekend," they say in unison.

"That is why we chose New York," states Sanéz. "It was where we first visited the U.S. as a couple, and it is our favorite city in the world."

To start their new adventure in America, Duenas and Sanéz tied the knot in New York on November 1, 2014, at Riverpark, the Tom Colicchio restaurant. Being a destination wedding, the grooms hired Anissa Burnet, of Blankslate Events in New York, as their wedding planner.

"Anissa was recommended to us by a gay couple we knew who used her when they got married," says Sanéz. "The photographer was Matt Brown, who is a very well-known photographer in New York who also shoots for the

Do You Take This Man

... to New York for the wedding, the Cube for the reception, Mykenos for the honeymoon ...

design industry. But we decided to not label anything. We just wanted a wedding like any other. In fact, we never felt the need to turn to an LGBT vendor. We just went for the best quality and service, and we felt it should just be one more pretty and crazy wedding in New York. I guess that's what we are looking for, right? Be equal! And that's the philosophy at our BeDesign store.

"Since we were hosting a three-day celebration, Anissa created a web page to help organize all our guests," adds Sanéz. "The first evening, we rented the VIP area of the High-line Ballroom Club to celebrate Halloween. The next day was the ceremony."

"The one moment from the wedding that I will always remember was the candle-lighting ceremony," says Duenas, pushing back a tear. "My mother and Marcelo's best friend lighted one candle each. Then Marcelo and I took those two candles, and lit one candle together as a symbol of our union."

"Of course, something funny had to happen," adds Sanéz. "Our closest friend who was in charge of bringing the rings to the ceremony fell asleep after the Halloween party and →

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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

almost missed the ceremony. She arrived just in the nick of time.”

The dapper grooms wore John Varvatos tuxedo shirts and ties with their Prada suits. The reception was held at the Cube, a crystal box in Manhattan, which was purposefully decorated flowerless to achieve a modern and minimal look to showcase the Kartell Abbraccio centerpieces and lighting from Vibia. Upon arrival, guests signed a guest book designed by Enves Diseno.

The reception dinner featured a menu of Tom Colicchio favorites, including Texas brisket, Ecuadorian jumbo shrimp, and New Zealand lamb chops. There was no traditional wedding cake for these boldface-types, who instead served a flawless ginger pear ice cream with a whole homemade pecan pie for each table. Costume candy, fine chocolates, and traditional pastries were brought in from Ecuador—all accompanied by wines from France and Italy, as well as selected spirits from Europe and America. And the after-party was in the VIP room of the Avenue Club.

“Brunch the next day was at Bagatelle, hosted by our best men,” adds Saniez, “who had the waiters dressed as flying superheroes with champagne bottles.”

“After three amazing days with all our friends, we went to Mykonos, Greece, to recuperate. It was one of our best vacations ever,” states Duenas, “but we didn’t call it a honeymoon. When you have been with someone for 15 years, you just celebrate each day, which is what we did, and we loved it.”

Henry Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist, a boutique public relations firm which works exclusively with chef and restaurateurs. He loves Ecuador.



Photo Credit: Serendipity Photography



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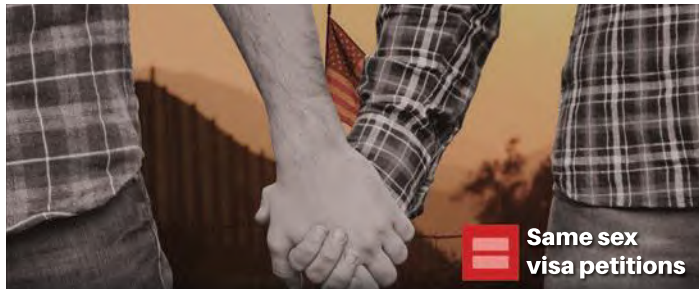
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▼ Jeremy Helligar (journalist, blogger, author)

(The Huffington Post, 2/13/17)

Anyone who knows anything about American history knows the role protest has played. Without it, gays still would be unable to marry, blacks still would be sitting at the back of the bus, women still would be unable to vote, and we would all still be British subjects. So please stop telling Trump's opponents to shut up and just blindly support him and his actions because it's the patriotic thing to do. "Freedom of speech" doesn't only apply when it works in your favor.



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JANET VAN HAM/HEBO

Bromance?

Bill Maher (l)
interviewed Milo
Yiannopoulos on Real
Time with Bill Maher.

Judy Gold ▶

(SiriusXM's *Tell Me Everything*, 2/21/17, John Fugelsang)
Re: Bill Maher's interview with controversial media personality Milo Yiannopoulos.

I'm surprised that they didn't blow each other at the end [of the interview]. He was flirting with Bill, and Bill was loving every second of it.

Kristen Stewart

(Saturday Night Live, 2/4/17)

The president is not a huge fan of me. But that is so okay. And, Donald, if you didn't like me then, you're really probably not gonna like me now, 'cause I'm like so gay, dude.

Ruby Rose ►

(NBC's Sunday Today, 2/5/17, Willie Geist)

Re: Rose's mother's reaction to her coming out to her at the age of 12.

I didn't know anyone else that was gay or a lesbian. So I didn't really know how to word it. So I was just like, "I think I should let you know that when I eventually get a boyfriend, they'll be a girl." And she was just like, "I know."





Pop Potpourri

Green Day, Good Charlotte, Cage the Elephant, and more.

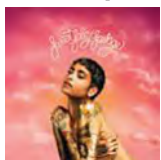
Karen Mason It's About Time



The acclaimed Broadway star and concert artist performs timeless standards ("I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Just in Time") and theater classics ("Everything's Coming Up Roses," "Somewhere/The Impossible Dream"). The album also features original songs by the album's producer Paul Rolnick, including the album's lead single, the title track "It's About Time," which honors our national marriage-equality victory. Zevely Records (karenmason.com).

—Troy Carrington

Kehlani SweetSexySavage



"SweetSexySavage came to me on a beach in Hawaii," the R&B singer/songwriter says. "I realized that's what women are. We can hurt. We can also be hurt. We can go as hard as we can soft. We can be as crazy as we can be sympathetic. We're all of the above." Kehlani's SweetSexySavage World Tour makes it to Houston on May 21 at Warehouse Live. More at kehlanimusic.com. —Suzie Lynde

If you were fortunate enough to experience punk rock the first time around—via bands such as Blondie, the Ramones, Talking Heads, The Clash, Television, Patti Smith, and the B-52's—you probably thought that the punk revival of the early '90s sounded calculated and vaguely commercial. By the time the major labels caught on to the profit potential of the first-wave punk acts, they had either morphed into something else or broken up altogether.

Perhaps the most successful band of the second-wave era, **Green Day** achieved a certain degree of cred based on the fact that its first two albums were released on important indie labels such as Epitaph and Lookout, respectively. Once the suits took notice and they were signed to Reprise (!), there was no looking back following the 1994 release of *Dookie*. Twenty-two years later, with multiple awards (including Grammys, Tonys, and induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) under their studded belts, Green Day is still going strong. **Revolution Radio** (Reprise) is no *American Idiot*, but its angry heart is in the right place on songs such as the first single "Bang Bang," as well as "Troubled Time," "Say Goodbye," and the title cut. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Green Day performs at Houston's Toyota Center on March 5.]

A ridiculous number of forgettable bands (remember Sum 41?) followed in Green Day's wake. One of the most calculatedly corporate examples, **Good Charlotte**, led by the overly tattooed Madden brothers, return to the scene of the crime with **Youth Authority** (MDDN). More versatile than most of their contemporaries (these guys can write power pop songs!), Good Charlotte certainly puts forth a good effort on songs such



as "Keep Swingin'" (featuring Kellin Quinn of Sleeping With Sirens), "Reason to Stay," "The Outfield," and the mostly acoustic "Cars Full of People."

Speaking of corporate rock, **American Authors** hit it big when its catchy song "Best Day of My Life" was featured in a variety of commercials around the globe. Some songs on American Authors' new album **What We Live For** (Island/Dirty Canvas), including the title track and "Pocket Full of Gold," sound like they were also written for that purpose. The band alternately channels Jeff Buckley and Maroon 5, and that's just in one song—"I'm Born to Run." They go for Mumford & Sons on the faux front-porch stomp of "Nothing Better" and "Mess with Your Heart." Only the soaring "Superman" feels like an effort that separates them from the pack.

There's more to Daveed Diggs than his Tony Award-winning performance in the acclaimed Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Diggs is also one-third of the avant-garde hip-hop act **clipping.**, along with William Hutson and Jonathan Snipes. Clipping's second album, **Splendor & Misery** (Sub Pop) takes the rapping, the noise, and the experimentation to the next level. Trained actor that he is, Diggs spits the rhymes so clearly that even your grandmother would have no trouble understanding what he's saying. "Wake Up," "True Believer," "A Better Place," "Baby Don't Sleep," and the sung "Story" are not to be missed.

Produced (as well as influenced) by Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys, **Tell Me I'm Pretty** (RCA) by **Cage the Elephant** sounds like it could have been released 50 years ago. Songs such as "Cold Cold Cold," "Cry Baby," "That's Right," "Punchin' Bag," and "Portuguese

Knife Fight" conjure psychedelic light shows, vertically striped pants, and iridescent lipstick. Groovy, baby.

Also swimming in a psychedelic sea, **Yeasayer** takes a more modern and even futuristic approach on **Amen & Goodbye** (Mute). There's the potential for dancing to the lightheaded beats on "Silly Me" as well as on "Dead Sea Scrolls," where Yeasayer borrows a page from the Lady Gaga playbook. A welcome weirdness prevails on the anti-toxin "I Am Chemistry," the anti-religious fanaticism of "Prophecy Gun," the hazy blast of "Gerson's Whistle" (with backing vocals by Suzzy Roche), and the unexpectedly accessible chill of "Cold Night."

Cullen Omori wasn't the only former member of the Smith Westerns to release an album in 2016. Julien Ehrlich and Max Kakacek teamed up to form **Whitney**, along with Josiah Marshall, Malcolm Brown, Tracy Chouteau, and Charles Glanders. The 10 songs on Whitney's debut **Light Upon the Lake** (Secretly Canadian) expand on the Smith Western's gradual move into sophisticated pop with grace and a little grandeur. Shimmering pop numbers, such as "No Woman," "The Falls," "Red Moon," "Polly," "On My Own," and the titular song, can help to illuminate even the darkest days.

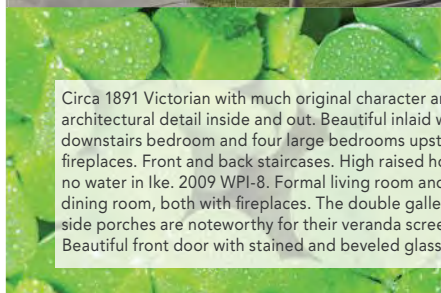
Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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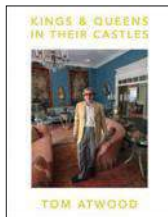
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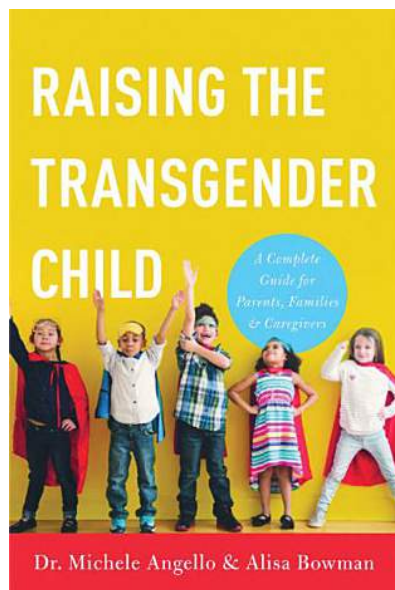
individuals from 30 states, Atwood offers a window into the lives and homes of some of America's most intriguing and eccentric personalities. Among the luminaries depicted are Allan Cumming, Meredith Baxter, John Waters, George Takei, Kate Clinton, Rufus Wainwright, Alison Bechdel, and many more. Available at tomatwood.com. —Suzie Lynde

The ABC's of LGBT+ Ashley Mardell



In her debut book, the author provides a voice to a grossly misrepresented community looking to move beyond the typical and trite stereotypes of LGBT+ people portrayed in the media. The book details the nuances regarding gender

and sexual identities and provides details regarding the full array of diversity within the community using anecdotes, infographics, photos, and more. Mango Media (mango.bz). —Troy Carrington



Raising the Transgender Child
by Dr. Michele Angello
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Dr. Michele Angello (l) and Alisa Bowman

Your preschooler has always had an active imagination. Flights of fancy and dress-up fill his days. Or she's rough-and-tumble, a scrapper in her mind. Make-believe has always been a big part of your child's life, but now you're hearing something you know in your heart is not "pretend." In the new book *Raising the Transgender Child* by Dr. Michele Angello & Alisa Bowman, you'll find guidance for making your way through just such a scenario.

In retrospect, you might've seen it coming: your son told you once that he was really a girl. Or your daughter cried when you wouldn't let her get a buzz-cut. You've suddenly realized, or your child has told you, that "zie" is gender-diverse. Either way, Angello and Bowman point out that few parents are immediately 100-percent prepared for raising a child like yours.

So you're not alone: others have raised transgender children before you, and have already "blazed the trails." Your feelings and worries are normal, and the

confusion about gender dysphoria will "burn off."

Dysphoria. Now, there's a word you might have seen while doing research in print or online. There are, in fact, many terms you'll want to understand when raising a gender-diverse child, starting with the difference between "sex" and "gender."

And by the way, as for shaky "studies" and Internet myths, set them aside. There are many theories about what leads to gender diversity, and a lot of unknowns. Again, put arguments away and ignore negativity; all kids are different, and so are their gender experiences. Is it worth obsessing over?

Probably not; you love your child regardless, so prepare yourself for a toe-dip into "social transition." Talk with teachers and neighbors, and take steps to make relatives aware of new pronouns and appearance. Educate yourself on public bathrooms, team

sports, and other legalities. Know when to ask for help—both financial and emotional. Remember that grief is common, and that your child is also dealing with many issues.

Finally, dare to dream again. Zie will grow up one day and, as the authors say, will eventually fall in love with "someone wonderful and amazing."

As a parent of a transgender child, you may think that this is all common-sense stuff you've heard before. That may be so, but there's a certain calmness to be found inside *Raising the Transgender Child* that can't be beat.

The other thing that sets this book apart is its comprehensiveness: authors Angello and Bowman seem to have thought of everything that Mom, Dad, and other caregivers could possibly need to know about present issues and what's to come. It's all easy to comprehend, too, and it covers children from small toddler to older teen. Particularly vexed parents will be happy to see that the authors even tackle the unpleasant situations and emotions that may need to be heeded along this journey.

Whether you need it now, or you sense that you might later, *Raising the Transgender Child* is a good book to have in your parenting bag of tricks. For questioning children and families, it's more helpful, perhaps, than you can imagine.

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was three years old, and she lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

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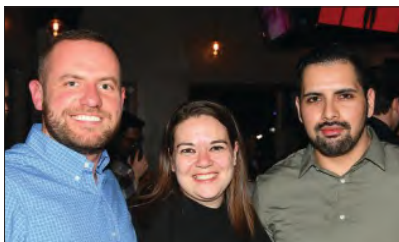




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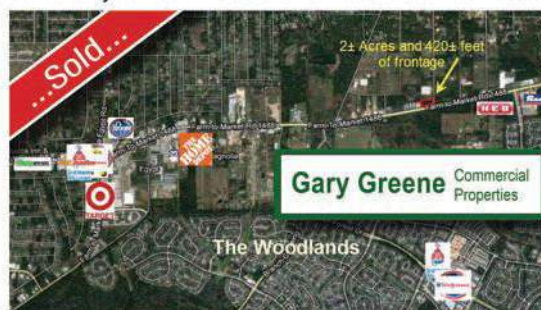
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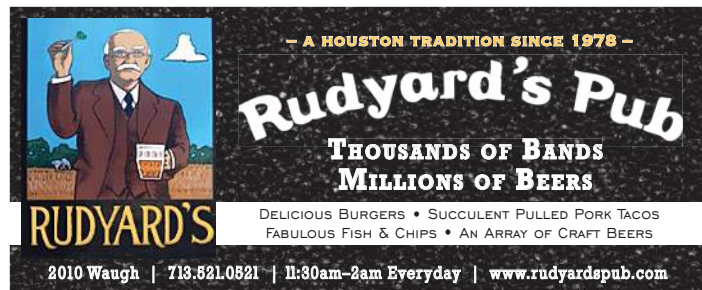
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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

Houston

13 ENTERTAINMENT

This comfortable club located in the Heights is a convenient alternate to inner-Montrose haunts. Patrons journey past the comfy seating and romantic lighting to find a spacious patio where they sometimes fire up the barbecue grill. 1537 N. Shepherd • 713.426.1313.

BAYOU CITY BAR & GRILL

This always-fun party bar opens daily (7am-2am Mon.-Sat., 11am-2am Sun.), serving fantastic food (11am-9pm) daily. Fifty-cent wing specials on Tuesday and Thursday pack the house. "Let Us Entertain You" with our Sunday drag performances. Party promotions nightly. 2409 Grant St. • 713.522.2867 • bayoucitybar.com.

BLUR

This multi-level dance club features a patio upstairs lounge and balconies that overlook Pacific St. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wed., 18-year-olds are welcome on Thurs., resident DJ Lorenzo spins Wed.-Sat. nights, DJ Pollo spins Karumba Latin night on Sun. Happy hour 8-10pm; free cover before 11pm. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.com.

CLUB 2020

Located downtown, this urban club features Clubbers Friday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713.227.9667 • club2020houston.com.

CLUB CRYSTAL

If you miss the now-closed Inergy, you'll find many of its former staff, management, and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Frwy, next to Colorado • 713.278.2582 • crystaltheclub.com.

CROCKER BAR

Resident DJ Johnny spins on Fri. and Sat. nights at this comfortably remodeled Montrose nightspot that also offers

karaoke on Tuesdays and Thursdays and extended happy-hour prices throughout the week. 2312 Crocker • 713.529.3355.

F BAR

Award-winning DJs spin nightly at this "boutique nightclub" that offers elegance without arrogance and features a stage, dance floor, VIP area, glass-encased quiet bar, and attractive patio. Tues. and Sun. drag shows feature frequent special guests. 202 Tuam St. • fbarhouston.com • 713.522.3227.

GEORGE

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar, just like most other neighborhood sports bars in town. Sports Saturdays and Sundays start at 3pm with dart and pool tournaments. 617 Fairview • 713.528.8102.

GUAVA LAMP

This trendy and friendly video and cruise bar gets busy during happy hour and stays busy 'til closing. Karaoke on Wed. and Sun., sometimes offering prizes, always packs the place. 570 Waugh Dr. • 713.524.3359 • guavalamphouston.com.

HAMBURGER MARY'S

The iconic franchise just opened in Montrose (11am-2am, Tuesday-Sunday) with lunch and dinner service complete with a full bar. Check the website for weekly show schedules and performers. Tuesday nights are Charity Drag Bingo. Bubblicious hosts Dining with the Divas on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Sunday brunch. 2409 Grant St. • 713.677.0674 • hamburgermarys.com/houston.

HOUSTON EAGLE

Part of the Eagle worldwide family, originating in 1970, this neighborhood watering spot is the place to cruise and dance and was recently voted Houston's Favorite Gay Bar. Featuring DJs on the weekends and the birthplace of the hit remix team Dirty Disco. Multiple patios. Featuring a 29-degree pour and 12 beers on tap. The inside leather shop is open the same hours as the bar. M-F 4 pm-2am, Sat. & Sun. noon-2am. 611 Hyde Park Blvd. • houstoneagle.com.

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Behind the Bar



WHO: Garrett Stone

WHERE:

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WHAT'S UP:

Craft Cocktails on Friday nights are new to the weekly lineup, which includes Tuesday Steak Night, trivia, and drag bingo! Wednesday karaoke with Kara and Ty is still going strong.

JR'S BAR & GRILL

With house emcee Kofi, OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest reigning drag champion, this Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables, male dancers, and award-winning cocktails. 808 Pacific St. • jrsbarandgrill.com • 713.521.2519.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

Jerry Atwood, Clay Howell, Neil Massey, Steve Wheaton, and Roger Woest take turns at the keys at this comfortable neighborhood piano bar. 1419 Richmond Ave. • 713.520.8446.

NEON BOOTS DANCEHALL & SALOON

Houston's only LGBT country dancehall is located in the historic Esquire Ballroom and opens Wednesday-Sunday. The new outside patio and stage are open. Wednesday features Steak Night and Bingo. Free dance classes on Thursdays and Karaoke. Saturday night the dance floor fills with the best C&W... check their website for all specials, events and times. 11410 Hempstead Hwy • neonbootsclub.com • 713.677.0828.

PEARL BAR

This LGBT-friendly lounge is open under "familiar" management in the Washington corridor. Daily highlights range from open mic night to steak night to appearances by DJ Kittie and DJ Ben Phoenix from KRBE. Drink specials and more. 4216 Washington • pearlhouston.com.

RICH'S HOUSTON

Houston's most iconic and largest LGBT dance club, with multiple levels featuring a video/show bar and a private VIP lounge. Originally built to be the Studio 54 of the South, Rich's boasts world-renowned DJs and entertainers. No cover before 10:30 p.m. 2401 San Jacinto • 281.846.6685 • richsnightclub.com.

THE RIPCORN

This well-kept, multi-roomed leather bar for men and their friends boasts a busy patio, especially on the weekends. The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club, providing BDSM essentials. 715 Fairview Ave. • 713.521.2792.

RUDYARD'S

The eclectic British pub is known for its craft beers as well as for the burgers. Most weekends you'll find up-and-coming local bands rocking the house. 2010 Waugh Dr. • rudyardspub.com • 713.521.0521.

SOUTH BEACH

This mega-dance club is a frequent winner of OutSmart's Gayest and Greatest awards, with DJ Eddie E spinning on Fri., and DJ Joe Ross playing pop & dance

music videos on Sat. No cover before 11pm. 810 Pacific St. • sobehouston.com • 713.529.SOBIE.

TC'S SHOWBAR

With the longest daily happy hours in Montrose (8am-10pm), it's no wonder this neighborhood watering hole is so popular. Owner Tim Pugh says TC's has built quite a reputation as the perfect spot to celebrate special occasions. Other big draws are the drag shows Wednesday-Sunday and karaoke Monday & Wednesday. 817 Fairview • 713.526.2625 • tcshowbar.com.

TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club located close to downtown has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town, both inside & outside at its patio bar. The raised stage where local charities perform also features an amateur dance contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. Opens daily at noon. 817 W. Dallas • 713.571.7870 • tonyscornerpocketbar.com.

VIVIANA'S

This club, in a new location, appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 4624 Dacoma • 713.681.4104.

Beaumont

ORLEANS STREET PUB AND PATIO

The place to hang for food, fun, and booze in a newly renovated pub, in good weather or bad. Open every night from 7pm-2am. 650 Orleans • 409.835.4243.

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only LGBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thurs.-Sat. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979.823.6174 • halobcs.com.

Galveston

23RD ST. STATION

A new face on the Island bar scene is here. The bar features a neighborhood-bar feel with octane. Drink specials daily and the weekend is filled with pulsing music, hot dancers, drag shows, and a Sunday Tea Dance. 1706 23rd St. • 409.621.1808.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the Island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Sat. and Sun. nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409.765.9092.

Spring

RANCH HILL SALOON

With its two pool tables, 52-inch plasma televisions, and large dance floor, this popular northside spot also offers DJs Thursday-Saturday. 247041 I-45N Suite 103 • 281.298.9035 • ranchhill.com.

THE ROOM BAR AND LOUNGE

One of only two LGBT hangouts in North Houston/Spring, this bar and video lounge has a laidback atmosphere where everyone is welcome and everyone is friendly to each other. The Room Bar and Lounge offers something for everyone, including daily drink specials, karaoke, free pool, drag shows, and live DJs several nights a week. 4915 FM 2920 • roombarspring.com • 281.907.6866. ■

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Retrogrades

... through May 9!

We start our month off with Venus retrograde. Venus symbolizes desire, commitment, love, and money—the very things we pay more attention to when she is retrograde. All partnerships will undergo some aspect of review, even if things are perfect. If your relationship is not doing very well, Venus retrograde will force a decision to either continue in your relationship or go your separate ways. Venus is retrograde until April 29—but by that time Mercury will be retrograde, so the period of review will continue through May 9. • The first half of March is a little more relaxed, while the last half of the month is a lot more active and decision-oriented.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). The energies this month continue to be mixed. You are very self-aware with Venus retrograde in your sign for the next couple of months. A part of you will want to break free of any limitations or restrictions that you experience. You may not feel that you have very much patience, so part of you wants to escape and avoid any drama or conflict if you can. The latter half of the month is a much more action-oriented time for you. Be careful that you don't overcommit this month.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Friends and community organizations can benefit from your efforts this month. You may feel a bit sluggish as the month begins, but Mars, planet of action, enters your sign on the 9th for a 40-day visit. Although you are more active during this time with Venus, your ruler, retrograde, the actions you take will be about things that you've been dealing with for a long time. This should help bring some resolution to any persistent negative problems. In the last half of the month you will need more time for rest and retreat, even though there may be a lot of demands on your time. With Mars in your sign, it will be easier for you to say no.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). The planets are bringing you recognition and responsibility. This is a good time to take on a different position at work. You are looking for a greater level of satisfaction, so it may be especially hard to do routine things this month. With Venus retrograde, you are reexamining your friendships and the people you really want to be in a relationship with. Don't be surprised if you find things aren't as you thought they were! At the beginning of March, choose your company carefully, as you will be more sensitive than usual. You are clearer by midmonth.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). This entire month continues to be a busy time for you. The ongoing Venus retrograde will be affecting the career and social-responsibility areas of your life. You may connect with clients or friends from your past. You are also more

direct and less patient with the people you work with. It's a creative time for you, and that can be good for writing, traveling, or publishing. Relationship energies can be quite edgy, especially in the latter half of the month. Choose your words and comments carefully. Overall, this is a good time to review the bonds and commitments that you have with your romantic or business partner.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Although you continue your overall theme of cleaning up and reorganizing your life, you are in a more creative and playful time. The first half of this month is good for you to take a break or focus on your creative projects via writing in your blog, teaching a class, or taking on a leadership position in a community organization. By the middle of the month, you are much more focused on your career, social responsibilities, and obligations. Be careful with commitments—especially those associated with your work—until after May 9. This is a good month for you to connect with clients or friends from your past.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). You are paying much more attention to your relationships this month. With Venus (planet of love and money) going retrograde, you will be very interested in reaffirming the bond that you have with your partner. For relationships that are doing well, this can be a very positive time. For those that are not doing well, you will want to find a resolution to the problems even if you decide to end the relationship. Continue the focus on getting your financial affairs in order so that you don't feel so trapped and overwhelmed by it all. By the end of the month, you will be ready for a break in your routine.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Your ruling planet, Venus, is retrograde until the end of April. Venus is the planet that rules relationships and commitments, so with her being retrograde, it's an important time of introspection. You will be more aware of how well your boundaries work—or don't work. You will be more outspoken and direct, expecting others to compromise while you hold your ground. This will bring about some sort of resolution with problematic relationships, and the end of ongoing problems. Your financial future and investments take on a stronger meaning in your life, particularly at the end of the month. Remember, you are in a time of review until the end of April. Hold off on the really important decisions until after that time.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). This month, you continue to focus on getting your work life and routines in order. You have been doing a lot of rearranging of your schedule, your office, and potentially your own health and exercise regimens. In addition to that, you are in a very creative time, and you'll want to share your efforts at creative play with others—especially as we get to the end of the year. Freedom of choice is a big thing for you, so keep your exit strategy handy. At the end of the month your focus shifts toward relationships, and it will be time to give some care and nurturing to that part of your life.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Your sense of home and security, family, and emotional

well-being is activated this month. Your home needs to be a sanctuary where you can escape. Relationships with family members are going through a change, and some of this is tied to last month's eclipse. This may also be a time when you want to redecorate, move, or potentially relocate to another area where you are less known. On the fun side of life, this is a good time for you to get away for some R & R! By the end of the month, you are back into your work routines and are pushing to get things completed.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This month you are working on your boundaries. You have been especially busy since the year began, and now you may be feeling that you are overcommitted at work, in your relationship, and especially with your family. In the first half of the month, you are really needing some time alone. You need to step away and take the time to make sure that you are happy about what you're doing. Nevertheless, this continues to be a good time for career opportunities, travel, education, and possibly even relocation. The latter half of the month will continue being active and busy. You will need some more time for fun and play at the end of the month. Don't forget to put that on your schedule, or you may not find any time for fun and play.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Your daily habits and routines are being emphasized this entire month. You have extra energy, and you're taking care of all of those small jobs and chores that you have been putting off. You are communicating more clearly to others, so it's an excellent time for writing, getting your daily correspondence in order, cleaning out your computer, or connecting with siblings that you haven't seen in a while. This is also a good month for you to focus on how to use your own talents and resources better. This is a good time to look for new outlets for your work and personal expression. It would be best to wait until May 9 before you make any decisions or commitments to these new directions. Family life becomes more important at the end of the month.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). Happy birthday to all the mermaids and mermen! This is your personal yearly cycle when you take a look at what you did last year and think about what you're going to do for the coming year. As part of your overall goal of getting your life organized and more focused, this month you focus on making better use of your current talents and resources. You are rethinking where you invest your time, love, money, and what you are getting back from your investments. This can be a very good time to reconnect with old friends, despite the fact that you are extra-psycho and sensitive at this time. Your boundaries are working better now, so you won't feel as drawn in to other people's problems and issues. By the end of the month you are ready to get out and be more mobile.

DAVID EDUARDO FLORES PEREZ



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OUT IN HOUSTON



The Miss LSV Charity Drag Bingo event was held on January 28 at Guava Lamp. Pictured are **Tiffany Le Dior, Demarcus Caples, Lady Shamu, Jacklin Dior, Lady Byrd, Shawn Kuehn, and Ken Marcel.**



On January 25, the Bering Support Network held "An Evening of Grace and Celebration" in honor of their 30-year anniversary. Pictured are **Rev. Larry Leutwyler, Ken McLeod, Rev. Stacy Anzick, Rev. Dr. Don Sinclair, Rev. Ernie Turney, and Rev. Troy Treash.**



HRC Houston held its Table Captains event on February 15 at the home of **Dean Putterman**. Pictured are Putterman, **Ed Finger, Lynn**.



On February 1, the Diana Foundation held its monthly happy hour at FBar. Pictured are **David Wallace, Rex Marzke, Tanner Williams, Justin Liendo, and Kaylynn Burns.**



The ActOUT performance of *Dry Powder* was held on February 2 at the Alley Theatre. Pictured are **Shelley Finley, Damon Price, and Whitney Spencer.**



Ty Herndon performed live on February 2 at Neon Boots. Pictured are **Rodney Myers, Ron McLeroy, Anita Cochran, Debbie Storrs, Herndon, Fernando Garcia, and Jim Daily.**



The Association for Family & Community Integrity (AFCI) held its meeting on February 2 at Canopy. Pictured are **Thomas Chappell, Liz Brooks, Larry Ponder, Sara Fernandez, and Paul Mandell.**



The Houston GLBT Political Caucus held a meet-and-greet with police chief **Art Acevedo** on February 13 at FBar. Pictured are council member **Robert Gallegos**, judge **Robert Johnson, Fran Watson**, council member **Mike Laster**, Acevedo, and council member **Amanda Edwards.**



Stretch Studio held its grand opening on February 11 at 2205 Montrose Blvd. Pictured are **Nune Fernandez, Krista Karbalai, Kobra Karbalai, and Jason Sechrest.**



MSIO held its gala on January 22 at The Power Center. Pictured are Osiris IV **Bob Alban** and Isis IV **Denise Martin.**



On February 18, **Deondre B. Moore** presented his "A Seat at The Table: An Experience for the Black Gay Community" event at the home of **Tommy O'Neill** and **Brent Whiteley**. Pictured are O'Neill, **Kathy Wingate**, sheriff **Zena Stephens**, Moore, **Julian Rhyne**, and Whiteley.



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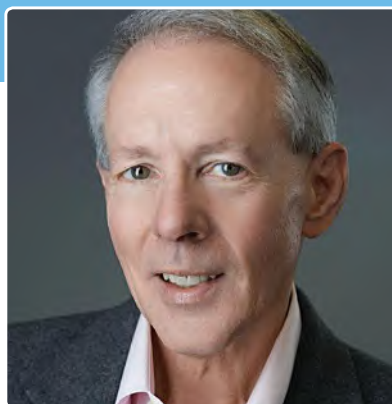
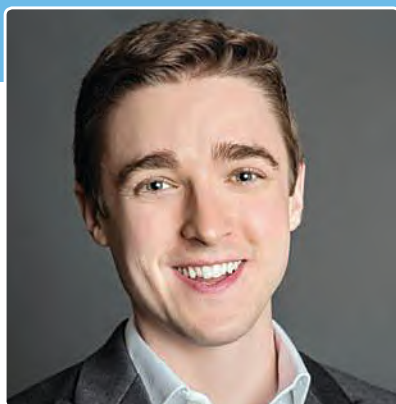


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