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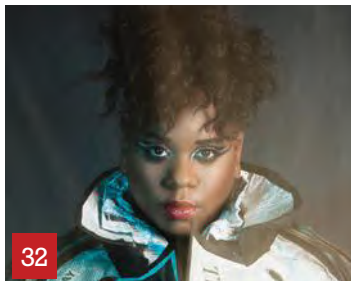
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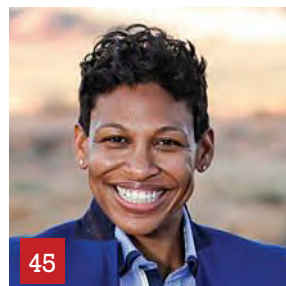
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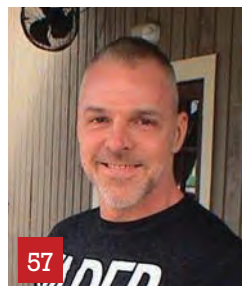
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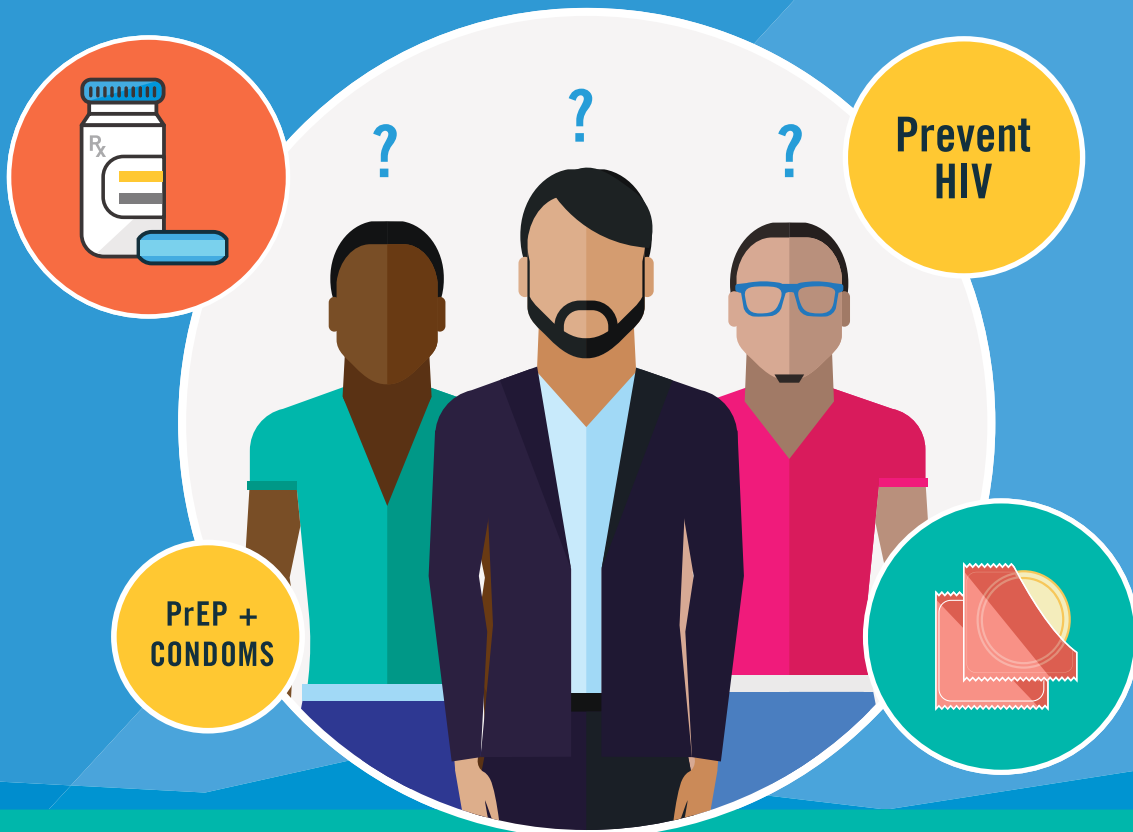
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WEB EXCLUSIVE



Interview with **Bill Bartlett**, music director for Bayou City Concert Musicals' cabaret series *Always Something There to Remind Me: The Songs of Burt Bacharach and Hal David*, which plays at Ensemble Theatre's Performance Centre February 18–20.

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Texas Supreme Court to Hear Lawsuit Challenging Same-Sex Benefits

By John Wright

LGBT advocates were weighing their legal options after the Texas Supreme Court agreed January 20 to take up a lawsuit challenging same-sex benefits for City of Houston employees.

Under pressure from GOP state leaders, the state's highest court reversed its previous decision to reject the case, *Pidgeon v. Parker*, which was first filed more than three years ago on behalf of Republican activists Jack Pidgeon and Larry Hicks.

A state district judge initially ruled in favor of Pidgeon and Hicks (who were represented by former Harris County GOP chair Jared Woodfill), but the state's 14th Court of Appeals overturned the decision in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* marriage-equality ruling.

The nine-member Texas Supreme Court declined to hear the case in September, with only one member dissenting, prompting a campaign from right-wing groups to convince justices to reconsider. The campaign included briefs signed by Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, Attorney General Ken Paxton, and dozens of GOP legislators.

Ken Upton, senior counsel for Lambda Legal in Dallas, said it was "troubling" that

the Texas Supreme Court would bow to such political tactics.

"The idea that the state can create a loophole to 'recognize' a same-sex couple's marriage, but deny it the same respect, dignity, and effect under state law that it gives a different-sex couple, is a pretty incredible reach to me," Upton told OUTSMART. "I guess we'll see if the Court has five votes to go down this path, which seems to spit in the face of the U.S. Supreme Court. One wonders if we are striving to become the next Alabama."

Upton said one option would be for Lambda Legal to reopen the federal case it filed to preserve the Houston workers' benefits in response to Woodfill's state lawsuit. The case was filed on behalf of city employees and their same-sex spouses in the wake of then-mayor Annise Parker's decision to grant them benefits in 2013.

Lambda Legal obtained an injunction that kept the benefits in place while same-sex marriage cases were winding through the courts. But once the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality, the parties agreed that the federal decision was 'controlling' and the state case was dismissed as moot, Upton said.

"As you can imagine, we have been

inundated with calls from concerned state and city employees," Upton said. "This not only puts LGBT workers at risk, but makes Texas much less desirable in competing for employees."

Noel Freeman, a city employee and former president of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus, was among the plaintiffs in Lambda Legal's lawsuit.

"I'm a little surprised the Texas Supreme Court decided to keep the issue going, but not at all surprised Jared Woodfill continues to push it," Freeman told OUTSMART. "He hates LGBT people and has spent decades of his life trying to inflict as much harm on us as he possibly can."

Woodfill didn't respond to a request for comment. After an unsuccessful campaign for state GOP chair last year, Woodfill now serves as president of Steve Hotze's Conservative Republicans of Texas, which is considered an anti-LGBT hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Freeman added that he believes the Texas Supreme Court's decision to hear the case is a sign of things to come under president Donald Trump's administration.

"I think opponents of LGBT equality feel empowered to attack us in every way they can

continued on page 15

COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



The "Flush SB 6" press conference was held on January 5 at City Hall. Pictured are **Lou Weaver**, Senator **Sylvia Garcia**, **Reagan White**, **Brad Pritchett**, **Fran Watson**, and **Kimberly Shappley**.



Bunnies on the Bayou held their annual Snow Bunnies fundraiser on January 15 at FBar. Pictured are **Barry Austin**, **Anna Sanchez-Morales**, **Kim Cook**, and **Eva Wang**.



On January 2, Harris County District Attorney **Kim Ogg**'s inauguration was held at the South Texas College of Law. Pictured is former State Senator **Jack C. Ogg** administering the oath to his daughter, District Attorney Ogg. Also pictured are **Olivia Jordan** (far left), **Jack Jordan** (center), and **Dean Donald Guter** (far right).



The elected officials' community inaugural ceremony was held on January 2 at NRG Stadium. Pictured are **James Lee** and **Shelby Hansen**.



OutReach United held its kick-off and announcement of beneficiaries on January 22. Pictured are **Bryant Johnson**, **Carol Wyatt-Woodell**, **Gary Wood**, **Fran Watson**, **Kim Watson**, **Jack Berger**, **Sallie Wyatt-Woodell**, and **Bob Briddick**.



The ACLU held a "Night Before the Inauguration" fundraiser on January 19 at Rich's Houston. Pictured are **Travis Nixon**, **Cheryl Newcomb**, **Cheryl Lovelady**, and **Mark Humphries**.

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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.

to roll back the progress we've made," he said.

The all-Republican Texas Supreme Court, whose members are elected, is set to hear oral arguments in *Pidgeon v. Parker* on March 1.

In addition to Woodfill, Pidgeon and Hicks are represented by Jonathan Saenz, president of the statewide anti-LGBT group Texas Values.

"Today's decision is an important step in defending our state's marriage laws and protecting taxpayers' right to not be forced by government to fund illegal same-sex benefits," Saenz wrote in an email responding to the decision. "Just like with abortion, taxpayers should not be forced to fund same-sex benefits."

In their motion for a rehearing, Saenz and Woodfill argued that *Obergefell* should be

interpreted narrowly because it violates states' rights under the 10th Amendment, has no basis in the Constitution, and threatens religious freedom.

"It is clear that the current Supreme Court will continue to use its power to advance the ideology of the sexual revolution until there is a change of membership," Saenz and Woodfill wrote. "It is well known that the homosexual-rights movement is not content with the judicial imposition of same-sex marriage in all 50 states; it is also seeking to coerce people of faith who oppose homosexual behavior into participating in same-sex marriage ceremonies."

Attorneys for the City of Houston responded by noting that state officials agreed to comply with *Obergefell* when they resolved Texas' same-sex marriage case, *De Leon v. Perry*, as

well as another lawsuit brought by Lambda Legal over benefits for state employees.

"The issue here is not whether employee benefits are a fundamental right. It is simply whether same-sex spouses must be allowed the same employee benefits as opposite-sex spouses," wrote City attorney Ronald Lewis and his chief of litigation, Judith Ramsey.

"As discussed, the State of Texas has already changed its own policies on employee benefits to comply with *Obergefell* and *De Leon*, and the attorney general has taken legal positions consistent with those decisions," they wrote. "The demand of the state senators and representatives that this Court intervene to prevent the state from spending 'taxpayer money on benefits contrary to state law' is empty rhetoric." ■

New Report Shows Power of LGBT-Owned Businesses

By Megan Wadding

The National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC), the business voice of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, has released its first-ever snapshot demonstrating the economic and social impact of America's LGBT business owners and entrepreneurs.

The report, called "America's LGBT Economy," explores the revenues, types, sizes, and geography of LGBT-owned businesses currently certified by NGLCC, as well as the number of jobs they create. The report's section of personal narratives from successful LGBT business owners reflects the very best about America's innovative entrepreneurial spirit.

The report found that in 2015 alone, NGLCC-certified LGBT Business Enterprises (LGBTBEs) contributed over \$1.15 billion to the United States economy, with an average revenue of \$2,475,642. The report also reveals that 900 certified LGBTBEs have, to date, created over 33,000 jobs in the U.S., and that the number of non-white LGBT business owners continues to increase annually, now at over 17 percent.

Another interesting finding in the report suggests that LGBT-owned businesses appear to have more staying power, with figures showing that the average LGBT-owned company has been in business for at least 12 years—far above the national average of less than five years.

Tammi Wallace, co-founder and co-chair of the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber, believes that the findings will bring awareness to LGBT-owned businesses in Houston.

"In terms of our impact as part of the

small-business engine that drives economic growth nationally and locally, these findings give us an effective framework to help educate policymakers, corporate and resource partners, and even the LGBT and allied business community about our significant economic contributions," said Wallace.

Wallace believes it is evident that LGBT-owned businesses are an integral part of both the local and national economies, so the report's findings were not entirely unexpected.

"[They] are an important part of the economic landscape in terms of our contributions, successes, and diversity that we bring to the table," Wallace said.

According to Wallace, the Houston LGBT Chamber leadership is extremely proud that the report noted that 68 businesses in Texas are certified LGBTBEs—meaning that the NGLCC has designated them part of its LGBT Supplier Diversity Initiative, signifying that the business is majority-owned by LGBT individuals. Of those 68 businesses in the report, 24 are in the greater Houston area.

"This stat emphasizes the opportunity the Houston Chamber has to continue to recruit more businesses in the region to secure the LGBTBE certification and build a strong network of LGBT-owned businesses," said Wallace.

Access to this type of economic analysis will continue to help the Chamber with legislative advocacy as well, according to Wallace.

"We [continue to] talk to elected officials and candidates about policy, such as inclusion of the LGBTBE certification in

government procurement, or talking to corporations about engaging LGBTBEs as part of their supplier-diversity programs," said Wallace.

The Greater Houston LGBT Chamber is celebrating its one-year anniversary in 2017 and, according to Wallace, has "hit the ground running" following a very successful first year.

"The Chamber has a strong commitment to educating the LGBT business community about the LGBTBE certification," Wallace said.

Wallace believes this report and others like it help to educate the general public, as well as policy-makers and even the LGBT community, about the impact of LGBT-owned businesses, and that its findings help garner support for the LGBT community at large.

"LGBT-owned businesses are an important part of the local, state, and national economies—and

our path to economic equality," said Wallace. "Numbers can speak volumes, and this study offers excellent findings to bolster support for LGBT-owned businesses and the important work of the Chamber."

Wallace wants to encourage Houston businesses to become members of the Chamber. Since the Houston LGBT Chamber is an affiliate of the NGLCC, local LGBT businesses that join the Houston LGBT Chamber will have their NGLCC Business Enterprise certification fee waived.

INFO: For more information, please visit houstonlgbtchamber.com.



Tammi Wallace, co-founder and co-chair of the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Color My World

The art of Valyntina Grenier.



Feeling down, depressed, and despondent about the current political climate? Then you need a little visual—and heart-warming—pickup, like a tour through Valyntina Grenier's latest work at Gspot Contemporary Art Space in The Heights this month.

"You could say that I want to challenge perceptions, beginning with the idea of a fixed self, gender, body, or ontology, including the perception that delight

and tenderness are not part of a discourse of political protest and protection," says Grenier of the new works of pure pigment, penciled lines, metallic, neon, and riotous color.

Grenier used the color of the landscape around her Tuscon, Arizona, home as an inspiration for her work, which she hopes is both a form of protest and an inspiration for tenderness, compassion, and empathy for other women and lesbians.

"I hope that experiencing familiar impulses in new surroundings will educate our emotions and influence a comprehensive reconsideration of how we treat the world, each other, and ourselves," she adds.

So go see these works and enjoy a breath of fresh color.

—Marene Gustin



Both And, 2016.
Oil on canvas.
Artist Valyntina Grenier (r).



Valyntina Grenier
February 4–28
Gspot Contemporary Art Space
310 East 9th Street
ggalleryhouston.com
713.869.4770

📻 Radio ★ Performing Arts 🖼️ Art & Photography 🔄 Ongoing + Other Things 📅 Save The Date

1

Bon-Buddhist Meditation +

A little serenity can go a long way.

rothkochapel.org

Amazing Acro-Cats ★ thru 4

An all-cat revue. Meow.
freneticcore.net

2

Alley All New Festival ★ thru 12

Theatrical readings and workshop performances. **BELOW:** Bekah Brunstetter, author of *The Cake*, about a gay couple wanting a cake for their wedding.
alleytheatre.org

3

The Great Oil Scam of Sulphur Flats

★ thru 18 Popcorn-throwing fun from the Old West Melodrama.
oldwestmelodrama.com

4

Sophia Loren + The grand legend in person. **thegrand.com**

Marcia Ball ★ Performs at Dosey Doe. **alligator.com**

Yo-Yo Ma ★ One night only.
houstonssymphony.org

5

Lunar New Year + The largest Asian celebration in the state, the Lunar New Year Festival in Houston is a Texas-sized Asian New Year extravaganza.
lunarnewyearhouston.com



7

Personal Scapes 🖼️ thru 26 A solo exhibit by Venezuelan artist Luisa Duarte.
galvestonartscenter.org

8

The Ghost Sonata 🖼️ thru 26 Mummies, vampires, and ghosts. Oh my!
classicaltheatre.org

9

Analia Saban and Blake Rayne: Cabin of the Accused 📺 thru March 18 blafferartmuseum.org
E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial ★ See the film as the Houston Symphony plays the soundtrack. houstonsymphony.org

10

Spring Awakening ★ thru 12 eadoplayhouse.com (See page 18.)
Viva el Amor ★ A Valentine concert from Mexico. meca-houston.org
Trevor ★ thru Mar 4 Directed by Tamarie Cooper. catastrophictheatre.com

11

Tango Time ★ Music, song, and dance by Casa Argentina de Houston. casaargentina.org
Houston Early Music Festival ★ thru 19 The fifth annual festival. houstonearlymusicfestival.org

12

Pump Boys and Dinettes ★ It's all about changing tires, baking pies, and singing! thegrand.com

13

Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942-1964 📺 thru May 14 The exhibit showcases the Bracero Program, the largest guest-worker program in U.S. history. hnh.org

14

Happy Valentine's Day!

15

Jesse Lott Exhibit 📺 thru April 30 New Fifth Ward art space, Mystic Lyon. fresharts.org
An Evening with Eva Schloss + Ann Frank's stepsister recounts her life. houstonfirsttheaters.com

16

Verdi's Requiem ★ thru 18 Houston Grand Opera's classic. hgo.org
Angel Otero 📺 thru March 19 Puerto Rican artist. camh.org
Christian Tetzlaff ★ The violinist with pianist Lars Vogt. dacamera.com

17

The Best Brothers ★ thru March 5 Bittersweet comedy from Theater LaB Houston. thelabhou.org
R&B Hitmakers ★ thru 19 This replaces A Salute to Stevie Wonder. houstonsymphony.org

18

Walking Tour of Montrose 🔄 Architecture Center Houston's new season starts. aiahouston.org
Mardi Gras! Galveston + thru 24 106th celebration with Sugar Ray and Bright Lights (below). galveston.com

19

The Radio Dept. ★ Hear this Swedish duo at White Oak Music Hall. whiteoakmusichall.com
ReelAbilities ★ + thru 23 Honoring people with disabilities. reelabilitieshouston.org (See page 18.)

20

Glossy and Flat Black Squares 📺 thru June 30 Rice Gallery's closing exhibit by Sol LeWitt. ricegallery.org

21

Pine 📺 thru March 3 The ambiguous and whimsical new works by Jessica Simorte. blueorangehouston.com



23

Inspire Film Festival ★ thru 26 Watch films that celebrate the human spirit. Each screening will be followed by a panel discussion with the filmmaker and/or subject of the film. inspirefilmfest.com

24

Mahalia ★ thru 26 A musical celebrating gospel icon Mahalia Jackson. ensemblehouston.com

25

Let the Right One In ★ thru March 19 The National Theatre of Scotland presents this vampire thriller. alleytheatre.org

26

Houston Kosher Chili Cook-off + houstonkosherchilicookoff.com
19th Annual Krewe of Barkus & Meous Parade + barkus.org
2017 Decadent Desserts & Dining + montrosecenter.org (See page 18.)



28

The Boniuk Library Book Club Discussion of 'Lilac Girls' by Martha Kelly 📺 A novel inspired by a real WWII heroine. hnh.org

Save the Date

The 28th Annual AIDS Walk Houston 📅 March 5 aidswalkhouston.org (See page 18.)



Save the Date

Green Day in Concert 📅 March 5 The Grammy Award-winning rock band hits Houston for one night only. houstontoyotacenter.com

Save the Date

Chicano Batman 📅 March 19 Their music blends Brazilian Tropicalia with early '70s psychedelic soul and romantic pop bands. dacamera.com

More CALENDAR →

SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 26 | 2-5PM

VIP RECEPTION 1PM

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www.montrosecenter.org/ddd

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Calendar of Events

continued from previous page

Spring Awakening

Now thru February 12

Thru 12

Kids, sex, and rock 'n' roll. All based on an 1891 play. If you haven't seen this award-winning Broadway musical, now's your chance. This is an innovative new production—although still using the incredible rock score by Duncan Sheik and the thought-provoking book and lyrics by Steven Sater. It also boasts an all-Houston cast and is premiering at EaDo Playhouse, one of the city's newest theaters.

eadoplayhouse.com

ReelAbilities Film Festival

February 19-23

19-23

A unique free film-and-events fest honoring people with disabilities, this year's speakers lineup includes Elise Roy, a deaf lawyer and artist. Roy became actively involved with gay and lesbian rights in law school and went on to several prestigious honors for her humanitarian work. One of the films on the festival



Elise Roy

this year is *Enter the Faun* (February 19), about an amazing partnership between a choreographer and a young man with cerebral palsy. This beautiful movie will astound you with humanity's possibilities.

reelabilitieshouston.org

2017 Decadent Desserts & Dining

February 26

26

Come for the boot-scooting and great barbeque to benefit AssistHers at Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon. Tickets are \$25 (\$30 at the door) or \$100 for VIP tickets that will get you in early for a special reception. Comedian Roxanna Ward entertains, and there's a chef competition as well as a raffle. Good fun for a great cause.

montrosecenter.org

COMING UP

AIDS Walk Houston

March 5

March 5

Funds raised at this annual walk help local HIV/AIDS service organizations provide programs and services to thousands of Houstonians impacted by this disease. This year's goal is \$500,000, so sign up now! And don't forget your umbrella.

aidswalkhouston.org ■



Emcee and DJ
Kevin England
KRBE Special K



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Katy Caldwell
Legacy Community Health

THE HONORABLE
BRIAN SIMS

Pennsylvania State Representative
Keynote Speaker

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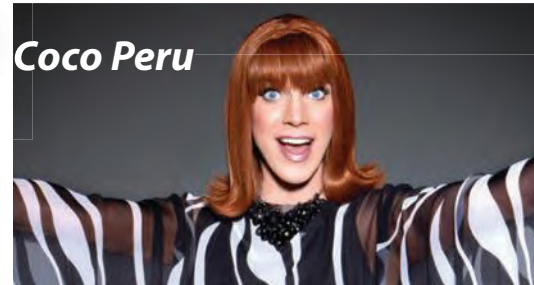
Leslie Jordan

Stateroom Type

Aquafest Rate

2-Bedroom Family Suite with Balcony (SC)	SOLD OUT
Mini-Suite with Balcony (MB)	\$1,349.00
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Now, in Other News

... the other shoe.

I have decided that our new president is like a bass drum—he makes lots of noise, but there ain't much inside. We're just gonna have to hold on for dear life for the next four years and sleep with one eye open and the other on alert. (By the way, quit reading his tweets—those suckers can take on a life of their own and put your eye out.)

While all you guys are watching Donald Trump set up a GoFundMe campaign to pay for his damn border wall, replace Obamacare with Trumpdoes'n't, and watch Alec Baldwin get arrested on the set of *Saturday Night Live* and taken to Guantanamo, let me remind you about some real problems we have right here in Texas. The problem is that even though we have a mess of problems, Republicans in Austin only have one solution: Bathroom Police. They want enforced potty-training.

I know it's been hard to take your cute, flirty eyes off Washington DeeCee. (Sweetie, on Inauguration Day, I sat there just waiting for Donald Trump to replace the oath of office with "Hey Bubba, hold my beer and watch this!") But now it's time to focus on the circus going on up in Austin: we are last in education, our bridges and roadways are falling apart, a quarter of our children live in poverty, 9,000 Texans die every year because they can't get health-care, we have a \$5 billion budget shortfall this year because tax breaks for the rich didn't work and we're fixing that by cutting off therapy for disabled children, and there are still people in America who put beans in their chili, dammit.

And Lt. Governor Dan Patrick's response to this mess is to take a sudden interest in our private parts. He doesn't think they should be so private. With a sudden burst of "damned if I know," Patrick introduced Senate Bill 6, which would prevent or repeal local laws and policies requiring bathroom accommodations for transgender Texans, and require public schools, universities, and government buildings to force people to use bathrooms that match their biological sex.

Holy damn frisky milking cow. How in the fool tarnation do you enforce something like that?

If this passes, I have worn my last damn dress. If Dan Patrick wants people to look at my hoochy every time I enter the ladies' room,

I ain't gonna make it easy for them. Either that or I'm gonna go bottomless and make some government official in the capitol sign a statement that verifies which bathroom I should use. Heaven forbid I should carry my woo-woo into a waa-waa zone.

I don't mean to be indelicate here, but you know how it is when you arrive home needing to pee and the urge keeps getting worse as you get out of your car and through the back door, leaving you tight-kneed and duck-promenading for the last 25 feet to the bathroom? Honey, I have seen people enter a restaurant and walk over tables looking like an ambulatory center-piece trying to get to the bathroom. When you gotta go...

So when I gotta pee, do not stop me at the bathroom door asking to see what I'm gonna pee with. First off, it ain't any of your business. Second off, IT AIN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.

One of the most despicable things that they want to put into this bill is that local governments won't be allowed to make their own rules. That means you're not safe in liberal Houston, because Dan Patrick wants all of Texas to live under Lufkin's rules. (For the two people reading this who don't know Texas very well, Lufkin is in east Texas and you can't live there unless (1) you're a holy-roller Baptist preacher, or (2) you're willing to sleep with one.)

Dan Patrick thinks we big-city folks are incapable of deciding our gender. I guess that's okay, because most big-city folks think Dan Patrick is incapable of deciding which finger to use when he picks his nose.

North Carolina lost \$395 million in commerce when they passed their bathroom bill. If you figure that six North Carolinas would fit into Texas, we could be toying with over \$2 billion down the sewer. But Dan Patrick sees it as his duty to keep the Belles of Heaven Republican Women's Club so outraged that you'd think the cutest stripper in Dallas is dancing on their front porch and preventing them from attending a six-buggy prayer meeting.

This bathroom stuff ain't the only really bad idea folded up in hundred-dollar bills and hidden in a Bible before being touted to the Texas legislature. But this is the one I am pissed off with right now.

I hope your Valentine's Day is filled with love, teddy bears, glitter, and Godiva chocolate. You can take that one day off this month, before you get back to fighting for your right to pee with what you got.

Susan Bankston lives in Richmond, Texas, where she writes about her hairdresser at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc., at juanitajeans.com.

2017

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What is TRUVADA for PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis)?

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine that can be used for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection when used together with safer sex practices. This use is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This includes HIV-negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex, and male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV-1. 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 TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- ◆ **You must be HIV-negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- ◆ **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- ◆ **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- ◆ **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- ◆ **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
 - Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
 - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
 - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
 - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
 - Have fewer sex partners.
 - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
 - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- ◆ **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- ◆ **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- ◆ **Serious liver problems.** Your liver may become large and tender, and you may develop fat in your liver. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.

◆ **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.

◆ **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider. If your healthcare provider tells you to stop taking TRUVADA, they will need to watch you closely for several months to monitor your health. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.

If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you also take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- ◆ **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- ◆ **Bone problems,** including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- ◆ **Changes in body fat,** which can happen in people taking TRUVADA or medicines like TRUVADA.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
Pregnancy Registry: A pregnancy registry collects information about your health and the health of your baby. There is a pregnancy registry for women who take medicines to prevent HIV-1 during pregnancy. For more information about the registry and how it works, talk to your healthcare provider.
- ◆ **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. The medicines in TRUVADA can pass to your baby in breast milk. If you become HIV-1 positive, HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- ◆ **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- ◆ **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA for PrEP, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include ledipasvir with sofosbuvir (HARVONI).

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 TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.



Have you heard about
TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The **once-daily prescription medicine** that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used **with safer sex practices**.

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for **adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex**.
- You **must be HIV-negative** before you start taking TRUVADA.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

visit **start.truvada.com**

 **Truvada**® 
200 mg emtricitabine • tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-1 negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **See the "How to Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.**

TRUVADA 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: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **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, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA 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 TRUVADA for a long time.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP (PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS)

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine used with safer sex practices for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection in adults at high risk:

- HIV-1 negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex.
- Male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

To help determine your risk, talk openly with your doctor about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.
- Changes in body fat.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

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

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

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you become HIV-1 positive 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 TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day,** not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- You **must** practice safer sex by using condoms and you **must** stay HIV-1 negative.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
- Have fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV-1 infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.



Retiring Abroad?

Here's what you need to know before you say 'bon voyage.'

Retiring abroad has become a popular option for those who are seeking the unique experiences that other areas of the world can offer. Doing so can also be a way to potentially lower your living expenses, especially if you can gain access to more affordable healthcare.

If you plan to move to another country, though, it is important to have a good understanding of the various issues you may face, such as the country's regulations for non-citizens, as well as U.S. tax and financial regulations. And if you are in a same-sex marriage, it is also imperative that you know whether your union will be recognized in your new home.

Ensuring that Your Income Remains Steady

In retirement, one of the key issues is ensuring that you'll have enough income to live on, as well as having funds available for emergencies and for fun. So if you're heading out of the United States, be sure that you will have access to the money that you'll need, when you need it.

This can include making sure that any interest or dividend income you have from accounts in the United States can be obtained on a regular basis without having to pay exorbitant foreign transaction fees. Depending on how long you plan to remain abroad, it could make sense to set up investment accounts in your new country of residence.

Social Security

While it may not be the source of all of your retirement income, Social Security is a major component of incoming cash flow for U.S. retirees. The good news is that this retirement income can follow you even if you leave the United States. But getting your payments isn't automatic—and there are certain countries where Social Security payments cannot be sent, due to U.S. Treasury regulations.



In general, though, provided that you don't move to a country where banking is restricted, you will be able to continue receiving your benefits for as long as you are eligible for payments. This includes continued payments even if you become a citizen of certain countries such as Germany, Ireland, Japan, Austria, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom.

If, however, you do not plan on remaining a U.S. citizen—and you don't qualify for an exception for continued Social Security income receipt—then your Social Security income will stop after you have been outside of the United States for six full calendar months. If this occurs, your Social Security income cannot be started back up again until you come back and stay in the U.S. for a full calendar month. According to the Social Security Administration, this means that you must be in the U.S. on the first minute of the first day of the month, and remain through the last minute of the last day of that month. You may also be required to provide proof that you were present in the U.S. during that entire time frame.

Organizing Your Banking and Investing Matters

Since having money available to you will be key (both for your day-to-day living expenses and the occasional emergencies), it can be helpful to open a bank account in your new location. When you find a bank, make sure that your new account will be able to accept transfers from your current bank account in the States.

Today, with most banks and financial institutions offering online access, it can be fairly easy to check your account balances, pay your bills, and manage your money while you're abroad. However, there may be restrictions and fees involved when transferring money to and from certain countries.

Also, having a major credit card like a VISA or MasterCard can be helpful for making purchases just about anywhere, as they are accepted in numerous locations around the globe. Before using your card in another country, though, be sure that you contact your credit-card company and make any adjustments that may be needed. Some credit card companies →

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will block foreign transactions in order to deter identity theft, so letting the issuer know that you are moving abroad can be crucial in avoiding surprises down the road. (In addition, some credit cards charge a foreign transaction fee.)

If you opt to move your investments and/or other assets to your new country of choice, be sure to work with an attorney and/or tax advisor in determining if and how these financial vehicles may be taxed.

Health and Long-Term Care Issues

Healthcare is another key component of any overall financial plan—and having access to the care you need is essential. Be aware that there are many U.S. insurance companies that will not provide you with coverage while you're living abroad—and this includes Medicare.

Depending on where you plan to reside, the healthcare may be so affordable that you won't need health insurance. However, some foreign healthcare may not be up to the same standards that you are accustomed to in the U.S. In any case, it is important to make sure that you, as a foreign resident, will have access to the same care—for the same fees—as the residents of that country have. You may find that it is to your benefit to return to the United States if you require certain surgeries or major medical procedures.

Also, as we age, we come to rely more on long-term care services—even if you just need assistance with basic living activities like bathing and getting dressed. Because Medicare and regular health insurance pay little to no long-term care expenses, long-term care insurance could be one way to help cover these costs. However, if you have this type of coverage, you might not be able to access the benefits when you're abroad—or the benefits you can access will be limited. (Look for details in the Exclusions and Limitations section of your policy. You might find that you can use your coverage only in certain countries, such as Canada and the U.K. If you already have long-term care insurance, you should inquire with your insurance carrier about what, if any, coverage can be used in specific countries.

In many areas of the world, long-term care costs are folded into their government-provided universal healthcare coverage, so the need for long-term care insurance will be nonexistent.

If you are considering the purchase of a long-term care insurance policy, be sure that you go with an insurer that provides benefits in the country you intend to reside in. Other considerations here include whether to purchase a policy offering reimbursement of your actual expenses—up to a certain daily or monthly limit—or a policy with an “indemnity” benefit that pays you a set dollar amount per day or month, regardless of how much your care actually costs. In many cases, getting a policy that →

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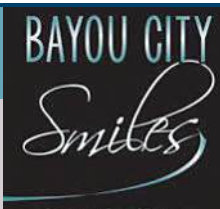
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continued from previous page

pays based on indemnity can be the better way to go, especially from a money-management standpoint.

What About Taxes?

Throughout our lives, the United States tax system plays a major role—and, unless you renounce your U.S. citizenship, it will continue to do so even if you move to a foreign country.

Anyone who remains a U.S. citizen will still be required to file an annual income tax return with the IRS—which includes declaring funds that you withdraw from your retirement accounts. The rules for filing income, estate, and gift-tax returns, as well as for paying estimated taxes, are generally the same regardless of whether you are living in the U.S. or abroad. Because you are still subject to taxation, it would be wise to stay in contact with your U.S. advisors, especially since tax rules can change over time.

Ensuring Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage Abroad

If you are in a same-sex marriage, it is also important to know whether or not the country where you plan to reside will recognize your union. Both tolerance and legal protections for same-sex marriages can vary substantially from one country to another. In fact, there are currently more than 75 countries that consider consensual same-sex relations to be a crime that may involve steep penalties. So prior to moving ahead, be sure that you get as much information as possible—directly from the foreign country's LGBT community, if possible—as this could have a major impact on your lifestyle and safety.

The Bottom Line

Regardless of where you plan to retire, ensuring that you are set financially is crucial to your wealth, your health, and your overall happiness. So prior to making a big move abroad, it is essential to do your homework so you are well prepared for the hurdles you will face.

For those in the LGBT community, it can be beneficial to work with an advisor who is experienced in financial and retirement planning issues that are specific to both single individuals and same-sex couples, and who can keep you informed of any tax, legal, and/or financial-related changes as they come up.

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.



February 18-20: Bayou City Concert Musicals presents *Always Something There To Remind Me...The Songs of Burt Bacharach* benefitting Bayou City Musicals. INFO: bayoucityconcertmusicals.org

February 23: Out@TUTS Night presents *An American in Paris, The Broadway Musical*. Join us the first Thursday performance of each show. After the performance, mingle with the cast and listen to fabulous cabaret music with your LGBT friends at Artista. INFO: TUTS.com/Out

February 26: AssistHers presents **Decadent Desserts & Dancing**, benefitting AssistHers at Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon. INFO: montrosecenter.org/ddd

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

March 17: Bringin' in the Green presented by The Montrose Center, benefitting the Center. INFO: montrosecenter.org

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

SAVE THE DATE

March 5: AIDS Walk Houston 2016 benefitting AIDS Foundation Houston as well as other local HIV/AIDS charities. INFO: aidswalkhouston.org

March 18: Houston Pride Band's Picture It concert. INFO: houstonprideband.org

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The Diana Foundation Finds *Unique* Guest Performer in

Alex Newell

The star graces Houston for
the 64th Annual Diana Awards.

By Barrett White

Photo by Brian Ziff

Before he won our hearts in *Glee*, Alex Newell was performing at his hometown musical theater in Beverly, Massachusetts, the gifted teenage son of a strong, single mother.

On March 18, he will perform at downtown's House of Blues Houston for the glamorous 64th Annual Diana Awards.

With no formal vocal training prior to *Glee*, Newell amazed viewers and producers alike during his run on the reality-TV series *The Glee Project*, which led to his role in Fox's prime-time musical series. "In fact, it was while working at [my hometown] theater that I found out I was cast in *Glee*, so it's always nice to see something like that come full circle," Newell muses.

Reflecting on his upbringing, Newell thanks his high school choir teacher, among others, and recalls his musical pedigree that includes his musically gifted uncle and aunts, and his father who played the piano and saxophone.

After high school, Newell found himself in Los Angeles and hit the ground running. Since *Glee*, he's been touring on the concert beat with fellow *Glee* alum Adam Lambert. He also appeared last month in New York City as Mary Magdalene (alongside Broadway royalty Shoshana Bean and Morgan James) in a

gender-flipped concert performance of *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

As Newell continues to perfect his craft, he continues to churn out hits such as the single "Need Somebody," a danceable power thrill that's available on Spotify (along with the rest of his growing discography).

After the Diana Awards, Newell plans to settle into his new home in New York before getting back to doing what he started off doing—thrilling audiences in the realm of musical theater.

Tanner Williams, president of The Diana Foundation (the oldest continuously active gay organization in the United States), recalls the extravagant Diana Awards shows from previous decades that took place at venues such as the former Tower Theatre on Westheimer and downtown's Wortham Theater Center. "They would film dress rehearsals and watch the playback to make tweaks," he says about the campy, sold-out award ceremonies that began in the '50s as a humorous spoof of the Oscars telecasts.

As the shows grew throughout the 1980s, The Diana Foundation became a nonprofit charity to raise money for AIDS Foundation Houston and Pet Patrol, among other local organizations that began in a time when the national government was turning a blind eye to the AIDS crisis.

"I'm just honored and proud to have been asked to perform [at the Diana Awards]," Newell says, thanking Williams and The Diana Foundation for the work they continue to do for the community.

"The Dianas are special. It's a special group of friends. It's part of Houston's gay identity. I think about the founding members, and why it was special to them. Keeping that alive is an honor," says Williams.

You can find more Alex Newell on the major music streaming platforms. For bookings and inquiries, contact Linda Lewis at linda@leftofcenterproductions.com

What: The 64th Annual Diana Awards

When: March 18, 6:30–11:30 p.m.
(show at 9 p.m.).

Where: House of Blues Houston,
1204 Caroline Street

Details: A VIP ticket includes dinner and access to the black-tie pre-reception meet-and-greet before the show. A balcony-level ticket gives you access to the cash bar and show. No dress code. For full event information, see thedianaafoundation.org.

Barrett White is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



I WANTED SO
BADLY TO LET
[MY SECRET] GO,
YET WAS FIGHTING SO
HARD TO HOLD IT IN.

OUTSMART's Top Black LGBTQ Leaders of 2017

Honoring the outstanding contributions of these community activists.

By Megan Smith

As Janet Mock, transwoman of color and powerful advocate, stood in front of the hundreds of thousands of women who gathered for the Women's March on Washington in late January, she proclaimed the following words: "Our movements require us to do more than just show up and say the right words. [They] require us to break out of our comfort zones and be confrontational. [They] require us to defend one another when it is difficult and dangerous.

[They] require us to truly see ourselves and one another." • Houston's black LGBTQ leaders are doing more than saying the right words. Every day, these inspirational individuals are out in the community fighting for better visibility, access to healthcare, against homelessness, and declaring that Black Lives Matter. As a way of honoring these champions, we reached out to the community for nominations of those making an exceptional impact in 2017. Below is just a sampling.

Malachi "Ki" Lee



Malachi "Ki" Lee knows he is just a small part of the greater universe that surrounds him. That's why his idea of a perfect Valentine's Day date is a hot-air balloon ride to see the vast Earth below, followed by walking barefoot on land "to feel what we are a part

of." Although he's a self-identified "newbie" to civil-rights activism, Lee is already a big part of his community here in Houston. He has already volunteered with the ACLU, participated in the Equality Matters Marriage Rally and Day of Love Marriage Protest, was featured in Equality Texas' Transvisible Project, and was recently cast in a documentary entitled *creating space* by the local queer people of color art collective htxpplproject (see p. 43 for more info on the project). When asked what inspires him to do this work, Lee responds with "freedom." "Freedom connects and revives every living being, removing blockages, repression,

and most of all, fear," he says. "People of color have been suffering and have been treated as 'lesser than' in this country. Things are reverting back to physical violence to instill fear in our community and prevent a unified country. I know people are tired of hearing about this topic—just as much as *we* are tired of the deaths of our transwomen of color, brutality toward African-American men and women, and injustice toward women in general. If you want to help and get involved, educate yourself on the current topics, participate in community rallies and nonprofit events to find out what is going on in the community, and volunteer. I believe ignorance is housed in a closed mouth, so speak up and ask!"

Joy Hawkins and Kendra Walker

Tired of seeing the lesbian-women-of-color community underrepresented and ignored, Joy Hawkins and Kendra Walker decided to take action. Four years ago, the two women founded Lesbians of Color, Inc., with the mission of creating a positive, safe place to bring diverse, progressive queer minority women together to have fun, inspire each other, and improve the community. Since then, the group has raised funds for numerous charities such as Be a Resource for CPS Kids (BEAR), The T.R.U.T.H. Project, Big-Up Youth Houston, Toiletries for Families, Epsilon Xi Gamma's LYFE Project serving homeless LGBT youth, and the Ronald McDonald House. "We strive to

give a voice and visibility to our community," they say. "In order to breed success among the younger queer generation, it is imperative that positive images and activities are curated." The duo also advocates for the issue they feel is presently most pertinent to their community—mental health. "Our community has a higher prevalence of depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, drug and alcohol dependence, as well as self-injury," they explain.



"We also experience higher rates of discrimination, violence, hate crimes, and domestic abuse, leading to higher stress levels. Simply discussing these issues among friends and within support groups gives people confidence to address these subjects. Always remember to take care of yourself and have fun." As for their idea of Valentine's Day fun, Hawkins loves the idea of a whimsical trip out of town. "You can never go wrong with a little fun in the sun with the person you adore!" she →

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BLACK LGBTQ LEADERSHIP IN HOUSTON

continued from page 34

exclaims. Walker agrees: "If I had to plan my dream date, it would be a gondola ride with my girlfriend, Thasia, on the waterways of Venice. What a perfect romantic escape!"

Daryl Shorter

Openly gay Houstonian Daryl Shorter also dreams of a romantic rendezvous this Valentine's Day—one that would "stretch over a week rather than one day, involve international travel, a beach, and lots of sun!" But as a psychiatrist, Shorter isn't just passionate about romantic getaways—he cares deeply about the mental health and wellness of his fellow LGBTQ community members. That's why Shorter currently serves on the board of directors for the Montrose Center in addition to volunteering as a yoga instructor for the Center's wellness program. "I believe that folks in the LGBTQ community—because of our collective experiences with religious abuse, homophobia/transphobia, discrimination across multiple spheres, and microaggressions and traumas—are especially in need of support, safe spaces to come together to create community, and



Shorter

in some instances, actual mental-health treatment," Shorter says. "The Montrose Center provides all of these things and more, which is why I volunteer with the organization." His activism also extends into his work in the medical field, where Shorter teaches medical students and residents about human sexuality, lecturing on topics specifically related to the LGBTQ community and how physicians can provide culturally competent care to people of diverse backgrounds.

Trilena Amos

For her dream Valentine's Day, proud lesbian Trilena Amos imagines a trip with her partner to an isolated island, free from the stress of modern technology. There, they would walk on the beach and treat themselves to a fine meal of champagne and lobster. But back in reality, Amos is an avid warrior for LGBT healthcare access. For the past four years, she's been a part of the team at Legacy Community Health, providing education, assistance, and health-insurance enrollment for ACA Marketplace consumers. She also serves on the board of the

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Amos

Lesbian Health Initiative, helping to eliminate barriers to healthcare for LGBT women and transmen. "As a conscientious listener, the most important issue in my community now is removing the barriers to accessing healthcare, which in-

cludes removing the stigma of mental illness, prejudice, and discrimination for those who identify as being LGBTQ," she says. "My advice for those who want to help or get involved is to be true to the core of who you are. Find out what you are passionate about, volunteer your time, donate money, look for local events that inspire you, and join."

Ashton P. Woods

"I hate injustice of *any* kind," says Ashton P. Woods, co-founder and lead organizer of Black Lives Matter Houston. "I honestly have no clue where I got that from. I love helping other people, and their relief is what inspires me. The idea of liberation inspires me even more." His help hasn't gone unnoticed. Over the past year, Woods has been appointed co-chair of the Black Humanist Alliance under the American Humanist Association, and as a member of Mayor Turner's LGBT Advisory Board, among other local, state, and national projects. He also runs a blog called "Strength in Numbers" and a project by the same name that focuses on issues pertinent to the black LGBT community. When asked about the issue that's most important to his community right now, Woods responds, "There are several, but the issue of anti-blackness is one that comes to mind. My

advice to anyone wanting to get involved is to find out where they best fit, and what dismantling anti-blackness looks like to them. Get in touch with the folks on the ground and ask for guidance."

Woods, who identifies as same-gender loving, also revealed his perfect Valentine's Day date: "It would be a night out at the movies, followed by a tour of food trucks and listening to live music at a nice park with good conversation, and end with drinks at a local bar." →



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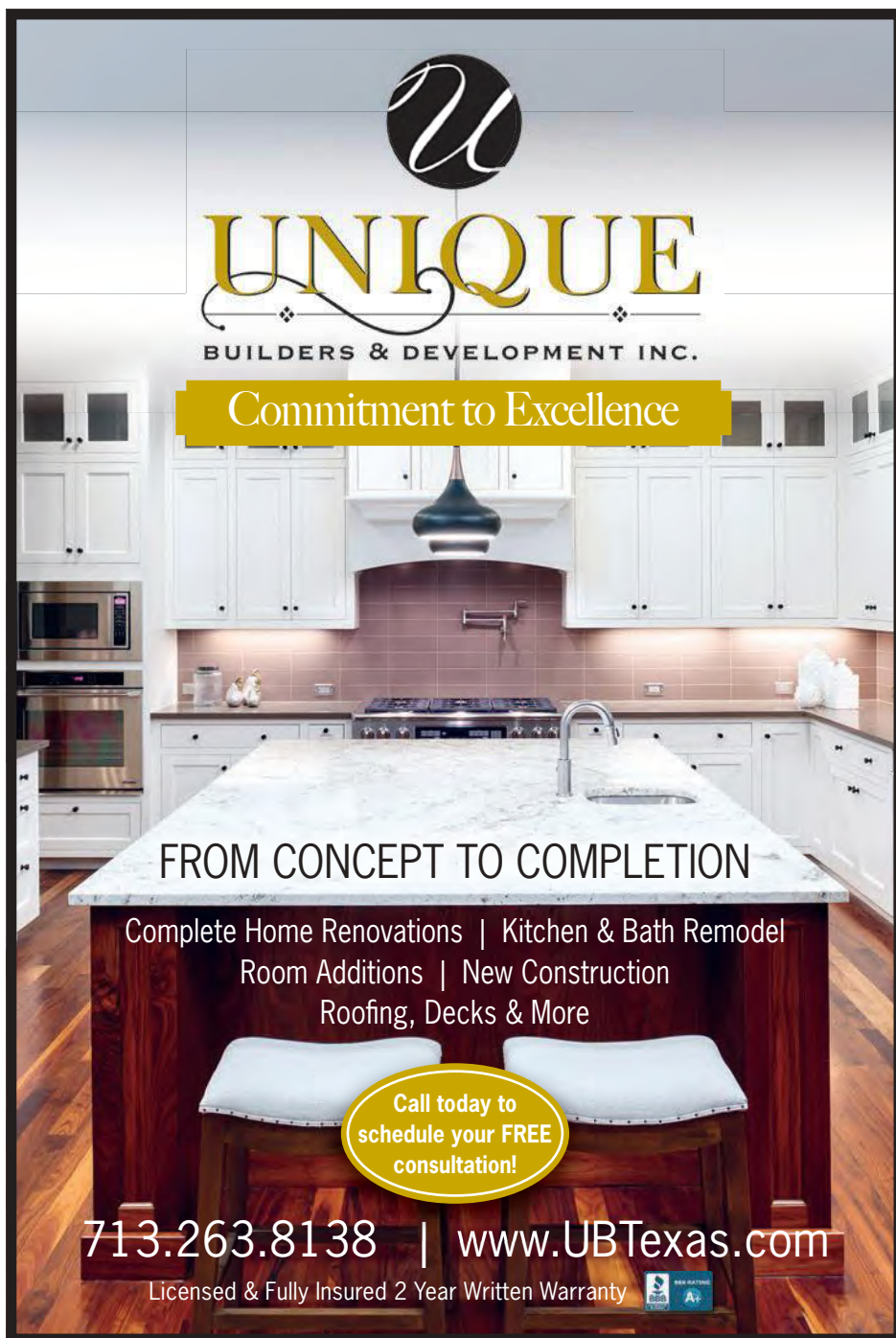


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BLACK LGBTQ LEADERSHIP IN HOUSTON

continued from previous page

Phoebe VanCleeve

“My passion stems from my own lived experience as a formerly homeless young black trans woman engaged in survival-sex work,” explains Phoebe VanCleeve. It was during this part of her life, she says, that she realized no one was out there



advocating for people like her. “[That] caused me to realize that only I could own and utilize my story,” she says. Since then, VanCleeve has been honored by the True Colors Fund for her work surrounding LGBT homelessness. She also serves as an executive committee member with the National Youth Forum on Homelessness, is a trans youth ambassador for Greater Than AIDS, and is an assistant organizer for Saving Our Sisters, an initiative for trans and cisgender women of color to engage in HIV prevention and awareness. Additionally, she advocates for the improvement of “intrusive, triggering, and non-affirming” services for transwomen. As for Valentine’s Day, she likes to keep things simple. “I’d like to catch a good movie,” VanCleeve says.

Robert Ross

An innate lover of nature, Robert Ross imagines a private dinner in a secluded garden or on the beach for his ideal Valentine’s Day date. “There is something about nature that feels very spiritual and calming to me,” he says. “I’d consider it the perfect setting for relaxed and intimate conversation.” By “divine order,” Ross also found his perfect career path as the new media representative for the Houston Health Department’s Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention. In this role, Ross works on Houston-specific campaigns to promote PrEP and HIV care re-engagement. Previously, Ross spent 10 years as the public-relations manager for The Ensemble Theatre, and helped establish OUT at The Ensemble, a special LGBTQ-focused mixer that celebrates the theater’s diverse audiences. And for the past five years, Ross has served as




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a board member for The T.R.U.T.H. Project, a nonprofit dedicated to educating and mobilizing LGBTQ communities of color and their allies through social arts that promote mental, emotional, and sexual health. "It's been a wonderful marriage between my interests in the arts and in health," he says. "My inspiration comes from my desire to connect with people," Ross continues. "I observe, listen, and try to use the skills or resources I have to help solve problems. My parents set an example for me growing up. They were always doing things to help others, be it a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. They weren't involved in any major organizations; they just did what they could right in their own community. My advice to anyone who wants to get involved in the community is to choose something you are passionate about and connect with an organization where you can invest your time, skills, and resources."

Tiffany Scales

When out lesbian Tiffany Scales says she lives a life of service, she's not exaggerating. Seven years ago, Scales founded Toiletries for Families, an organization dedicated to providing personal-hygiene items to impoverished families and individuals. She's also



CEO of The Arts Advocate, works in artist development and marketing for C5 productions and JPM, is a spoken-word artist for The T.R.U.T.H. Project and The Shout, and has volunteered for the past 13 years with St. John's United Methodist Church's homeless-outreach and youth programs. "My mother has news articles of me at three years of age volunteering," Scales says. "I am passionate about serving my community and enjoy enriching lives through poetry and the art showcases in which I am involved. [Art] is underestimated. I am grateful to provide platforms for artists, as well as safe spaces for aesthetes and those interested in what art is capable of doing." But sometimes, Scales would just like to get away. "I'd love to open a card with a plane ticket inside for a weekend [Valentine's Day getaway]," she says.

Graham Maio

Graham Maio may not have a dream Valentine's Day date lined up, but he does have →



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BLACK LGBTQ LEADERSHIP IN HOUSTON

continued from page 37

passion. Maio is a 2015 graduate of the Positive Organizing Project, an HIV/AIDS advocacy training program founded by his mentor, Venita Ray. He's also a brother of Delta Phi Upsilon, a community-service fraternity composed of gay, bisexual, and queer African-American men. "Through these two organizations, I focus on HIV/AIDS awareness, including unjust HIV criminalization laws," Maio explains. "I had a chance to present an art-advocacy event at TSU focusing on HIV/AIDS specifically in the gay black community. For this event, I wrote, directed, and acted in a play detailing the story of Michael Johnson, a young gay black college student from Missouri who was sentenced to 30 years in prison for being HIV-positive—which is a health status, and not a crime." Maio encourages others to find the advocacy path that best suits their interests and needs. "Not everyone needs to be in front of a camera," he says. "Don't be afraid!"



Maio

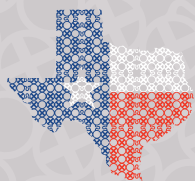
Dr. Keith Clarke and Dexter Williams

Houston gay couple Dr. Keith Clarke and Dexter Williams know about love. That's why their ideal Valentine's Day would be spent under a canopy with a breathtaking view. "Just me, my love, and a promise to love," they say. But for the LGBT community—especially for



Clark (r) and Williams

LGBT people of color—they know that there isn't enough love. That's why they started the Keith and Dexter Community Picnic five years ago so that people could come together to build community, have fun, and raise money for non-profit organizations. "Our goal is to provide a space for people in our community to let their hair down and hula-hoop, pick a team for our provocative relay races, or participate in our design-it-and-wear-it fashion show," Clarke and Williams say. "There is something for everyone. At our community picnic, everyone is made to feel special, whether you are black, white, Asian, Hispanic, or an ally. Because to us, you are special!"



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Before



After

Nishia Jackson

When Nishia Jackson came out as a lesbian in the late '90s, she had a difficult time finding resources within her community for LGBT women. "Because of this, I've always tried to do my part in either providing resources or pointing individuals in the right direction to gain knowledge as it relates to their needs," she explains. That's one of the main reasons Jackson helped found Krave, a series of Pride events for women held every Memorial Day weekend. But she didn't stop there. As an extension of Krave, Jackson (who is a degreed counselor) and her business partner, Queen, started Krave Cares to offer counseling services, home-buying advice, résumé-writing tips, interview training, and more to those in the urban community.



Jackson

"One of the most important needs in my community is the lack of leadership/mentor programs for youth who are just coming out and are in need of positive role models and guidance," Jackson says. "In order for our youth to eventually become leaders, they must first be properly led." Jackson's perfect Valentine's Day would take

place in a nice hotel, with she and her partner having a fine dinner prepared by a private chef, followed by deep-tissue massages for dessert.

Rhys Caraway

A little breakfast on the beach is what openly gay Houstonian Rhys Caraway wishes for this Valentine's Day. Every day, however, he wishes for growth and progress in his community. That's why he's both a brother of Delta Phi Upsilon—a fraternity composed of gay, bisexual, and queer African-American men—and a Black Lives Matter Houston advocate. "The need to strengthen those like me, and the numerous intersections that we [experience], encourages

me to do the work," Caraway says. "I don't believe that one issue should take precedence over another. As long as [it's an issue] affecting our community members in a negative way, it's important." ■



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‘We Speak. And We Make Them Listen’

Queer black couple cultivates strength through storytelling.

By Josh Watkins

By opening hearts, expanding minds, and creating space, HTX People Project founder Bria Davis is upping the ante for creative minority groups. Her project is a queer-people-of-color collective that aims to represent the “intersecting experience of real people, real lives, real history, and real conversation.”

Davis holds a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice from Texas Southern University. She started the project by purchasing a cheap tape recorder and taking to the streets of urban neighborhoods to approach strangers with a simple, straightforward statement: “Tell me about yourself.”

People would tell Davis more than she anticipated, and some of their greatest vulnerabilities, insecurities, hardships, and victories were captured on her tape recorder. Partnered with her girlfriend, Morganne Nikole, who holds a master’s degree in journalism from the University of North Texas, the duo saw in those pivotal encounters the power and potential of simple storytelling.

The initial idea for the project was stimulated by the realization that many people speak *on behalf of* marginalized individuals who rarely get the opportunity to have their own voices heard. Davis and Nikole wanted to change that. “We grounded ourselves in providing a voice to the voiceless,” they say.

As the HTX People Project’s collection of narratives grew, it quickly evolved into the medium of film. The project’s debut documentary, *NAKED*, gives eight women the opportunity to “truthfully tell their stories of struggle, adversity, insecurity, and perseverance.” Through the documentary, Davis and Nikole sought to challenge the standard assumptions that society tends to have about the experiences and attitudes of black women. “[Our mission is] to diminish the separation between rich and poor, or black and white, and place everyone in a position to matter,” they say. “We speak. And



Bria Davis (l) and her girlfriend, Morganne Nikole, founded the queer-people-of-color collective *htxplproject* to allow marginalized individuals the opportunity to share their stories in their own words.

we make them listen.”

The collective aims to use their documentaries to “bring disruptive conversations to the forefront of a larger society.” As black gay women, Davis and Nikole understand how they are perceived in negative ways by society. But instead of falling victim to society’s perceptions, they use their vulnerability and experiences to cultivate strength through storytelling.

A year after *NAKED*, HTX People Project released its second documentary, *creating space*, which captures the raw and uncensored voices of “six black LGBT-identified individuals who proactively aim to challenge societal standards and conformist ideals.” Those conversations confronted religion, race, sexuality, the gender binary, societal rejection, societal acceptance, and cultural oppression.

Both *NAKED* and *creating space* aim to build a safe space for often-silenced individuals—a space that allows those individuals to tell their own narrative and “evaluate their positioning within society from the perspective of active participants and observers.”

Presently, Davis and Nikole are pushing to drive *creating space* into as many spaces as possible. Considering the current state of the nation under a Trump administration, they feel “it is critical, now more than ever, for us to use our creative media to cultivate conversations that can educate and unravel unprogressive thinking and oppression.” Through films

that bridge the separation among various groups, *htxplproject* wants to create a togetherness that respects differences and embraces similarities—ultimately “transforming closed minds into open minds, *even if it falls outside of* [what people think of as ‘normal’].”

When asked how they navigate the masses of people in such a diverse city like Houston, Davis and Nikole proudly stated, “We disrupt the masses. We are unapologetic in our approach. We aren’t aggressive or confrontational, but we don’t censor our truths.” Knowing that not everyone can be as bold and courageous, the project strives to create a space for both the participant and the observer to feel liberated and encouraged to leave their comfort zones. “We hope our art offers hope, love, freedom, affirmation of importance, and motivation for people to wear their authentic selves,” they explain.

Looking back on what they’ve created so far, the HTX People Project team says that they are most proud of the way in which the project has increased their ability to share love with one another—first as partners, and then as a collective. They want to use that love to create more art and spread more love into the world.

For more information, visit thepplproject.com.

Josh Watkins is a frequent contributor to *OUTSmart* magazine.



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Passion and Purpose

Khaliah Guillory inspires with motivational speeches on diversity, love, and loss.

By Josh Inocêncio

When Khaliah Guillory sets goals for herself, she doesn't just write them on a notepad. She sends them out into the Universe. To her, this means speaking her goals aloud and sharing them with people around her, because she knows that verbalizing her dreams will empower her to turn them into reality. For years, this practice has continued to work for Guillory as she's risen to leadership positions in the banking industry, founded her own company, and launched a foundation to combat ALS after the disease took her mother's life nearly 15 years ago. As Guillory's website notes, she has combated adversity and loss both personally and professionally, but she now uses that history to uplift others.

"I'm a 'corporaneur.' I'm a vice president of merchant services with a well-known bank here in town, but my side-hustle is KOG & Company, which is a public speaking and consulting firm," she says. In her corporate career, Guillory is a district manager in Houston, which involves developing strategies to help under-performing teams produce more effectively.

"I flew out to our headquarters, and one of the major heads of the corporation leaned in after I sat down and said, 'I have no idea why we pay all these keynote speakers so much money when we have you on payroll!' And when I leaned back, I said, 'You're right!'"

Guillory has built on her experiences in corporate America to lay the groundwork for her KOG consulting venture that focuses on inspiring others in similar fields through speeches and one-on-one coaching.

"My whole goal is to inspire you to be Big. My belief is if I inspire you, you're going to go back and have a meeting with someone today, and that contagious energy [will] inspire them," Guillory muses. "And [eventually] we'll look up, and the entire population will be inspired. I'm not saying this will end all the



After losing her mother to ALS, out Houstonian Khaliah Guillory founded KOG & Company with the goal of inspiring others.

Becoming Big

senseless killings, but hopefully people will be able to have courageous conversations and connect more."

While discovering how to become "Big" is up to every individual, Guillory facilitates the growth process through three main speeches: "Who's Your #1?," "Diversity Deposits," and "Mogul in Training."

"Who's Your #1?" focuses on identifying a person or community in your life that pushes you to grow and holds you accountable.

For the aspiring entrepreneurs out there, "Mogul in Training" uses a networking platform similar to Angie's List to provide information about individuals with specific skill sets. Guillory is also developing webinars on how to create infrastructure for those seeking to start businesses. As Guillory says, "We're going to give you the tools to build a house, and show you how to do it."

Finally, Guillory's "Diversity Deposits" speech draws from her experiences coming out as a lesbian in the workplace. "It's been phenomenal at work [since I've come out.] When I was in the closet, I was a good leader. But now I'm a great leader because I'm comfortable in my own skin. And I think people appreciate that."

Initially, Guillory was hesitant to come out of the closet in the mid-2000s because she

did not want her sexuality to derail her recent promotion or future prospects. But when she had the opportunity to serve on a diversity council at work, her human-resources correspondent (who already knew she was a lesbian) encouraged her to be open with colleagues. She did—with no pushback from coworkers and no regrets.

Reflecting on how she shares this experience in her motivational speaking, Guillory notes that many people in her audience work with LGBT people who are still in the closet. "I try to encourage the folks who are contemplating coming out to do it. And I try to help [their straight colleagues] understand that their LGBT coworkers are trying to connect with them on a deeper level. That's a gift."

But coming out in corporate America isn't the biggest challenge that has shaped Guillory's entrepreneurial vision. As she writes on her website, Guillory's drive to succeed comes from "adversity, love, loss, and diversity"—especially the loss of her mother to ALS in 2002, just over a year after the diagnosis.

"After my mom died, I went to a very dark place. A year of hell is probably the best way to put it," recalls Guillory. "And one day I woke up and realized that she wouldn't want me to do this. My mother worked way too hard and →

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PASSION AND PURPOSE

continued from previous page

sacrificed way too much for me. At that moment I decided to change, because I'm the author of my life. If it's in the Universe, the Universe is going to take care of me."

Guillory has invested her dreams in the Universe ever since grappling with her mom's death. And in addition to her career, she raises research funds for ALS.

As for her next steps, Guillory is encouraging others to put their goals out into the Universe, too. Those who venture on to her website can watch her "2017 Universe List" video that begins every page. One of her goals for the new year is to collaborate more with others more—something that this project offers.

"If I verbalize something and tell people about it, it has a likelihood of happening," she says. "But you've got to work for it, and pursue it recklessly."

To learn more about Khaliah Guillory, check out her website kogpassion.com or follow her on Instagram at @kogspeaks.

Josh Inocencio 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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Treat Yourself

A guide to the perfect Valentine's Day for one.

By Dr. Laura McGuire

Happy Valentine's Day, all you quality queers and allies! It's Dr. Laura here to give you some advice and insight for the Big V... Valentine's Day.

Valentine's is a lovely time of year—lovely, that is, if you have cash to blow, a perfect relationship, and are a fan of the pink/red/white color scheme. For the rest of us, it's often an entire month of pressure, disappointment, and aching loneliness.

As a recently single queer myself, I thought I would give all of you fabulous single-folk some Valentine's Day ideas to help you not only survive, but thrive on February 14. Whoo! We can do this together.

First of all, a little background on the heart-heavy holiday. Saint Valentine was a third-century Catholic priest famous for helping lovelorn Christian couples marry during a time when it was against the law. (I mean, *imagine* that: people trying to block couples from marrying because of religious opinion. Why, who would dare try such a thing?) Valentine helped young couples in the name of love, and thus he was dubbed the patron saint of *amour*.

A hop and a skip later, the Romans were holding big, sexy celebrations every February to honor fertility. The new sheriffs in town, the Christians, were none too happy with this merriment, and replaced the partying with a time to honor their new saint. Since then, Valentine's Day has gone in and out of fashion. When mass-produced cards became available, so did the obligation to give one to your sweetie on this special day.

Now maybe you are still sitting there saying, "Well, where is the part about being single and not crying all day, like I always do?" Let me explain some ways to take the origins of this day, sprinkle in some gayness and modernity, and make it a day you can look forward to whether you are single, taken, or otherwise occupied.



🕒 **Love Yourself**
Self-love takes many forms: masturbation, solo-dates, and making self-care a priority.

L-O-V-E Isn't Just for Romantic Partners

Love is a huge concept. It is a feeling, a reaction, and a choice—all at once, and separately. We learn how to deal with love in the first few years of our lives by seeing how our primary caregivers show us affection. We love those who first show us that the world is a safe place where we will be listened to and protected. If we get the opposite message while growing up, we will fear love and react by either avoiding it or anxiously clinging to it.

As we grow, we may find love in all kinds of places. We might love our pets and feel the first sense of unconditional love from them. We love friends, coworkers, neighbors, and even the celebrities and characters in books we read and movies we watch. We feel attached to these figures, and hopefully feel some of their love in return.

Valentine's Day is a day for love. Period. End of story. There is no reason that that has to be limited to romantic or sexual love. If your dog, cat, or iguana is the being that you are closest to, and who is there every day to cheer you on, then celebrate that. Do you have a friend or group of friends who adore you, support you, and make you feel sane? Celebrate that! If your grandfather is your biggest fan, take him out to a fancy dinner on the 14th and tell him how much he means to you. Just because a love relationship is platonic does not mean it is any less worthy of your time, money, or attention.

Love Yourself!

As LGBTQ people, we automatically had to fight for our right to live the truth of who we were meant to fall in love with. That's amazing. Straight/cis people will never know that accomplishment. You have so many reasons to love and celebrate who you have become! Self-love takes many forms: masturbation, solo-dates, and making self-care a financial and scheduling priority. Want to see a movie that no one else wants to? Take yourself—and while you are at it, buy your favorite candy, popcorn, and drink without having to check in with another living soul.

Sexually, now is a great time to reconnect with your body. Touch yourself with your hands, use objects like a rolled-up pillow or a new kind of sex toy to explore what feels good to you now. Watch feminist porn to discover new ideas that turn you on. You might be surprised at how your desires or bodily reactions differ from when you were with former partners. You must be your first lover, friend, and companion. Many people will come and go from your life, but your relationship with yourself is truly forever.

Happy Valentine's Day, Houston!

Dr. Laura McGuire is certified as a sexuality educator through the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists. Learn more about her work at drlauramcguire.com.



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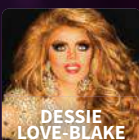
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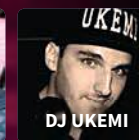
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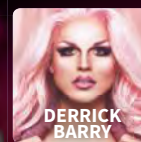
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‘Making Out Like a Virgin’

Never judge a book by its title . . . revelatory writings on finding love after darkness.

By Rich Arenschieldt

A slightly Scottish accent, eyes that see deeply, and an unparalleled approachability. These are the attributes you quickly notice when meeting author and sexologist Catriona (pronounced, aptly, like the hurricane) McHardy. This diminutive hipster/grandma seems an unlikely source for a book titled *Making Out Like a Virgin—Sex, Desire and Intimacy After Sexual Trauma*. However, her 32-year career at Planned Parenthood, talking and writing about human sexuality, gives McHardy the gentle gravitas necessary to tackle the topic.

“[Co-editor] Cathy Plourde contacted me to collaborate on this project, asking me to serve as a sexuality expert,” McHardy says. “She and a colleague had started a feminist publishing company and wanted to focus as much as they could on sexuality, starting with a book that addressed sexual trauma.” Initially, McHardy had reservations about the endeavor, as some aspects of it were fundamentally contrary to her long-held professional methodology. “My concern was this: throughout my entire career [in this field], I have always maintained a ‘sex-positive’ approach—one that counterbalances the vast amount of negative attention that this subject receives.”

Subsequent discussions led to a shift in focus. “We realized that we needed to look at this subject through a different lens, in a way that hadn’t been done before. There are numerous accounts that address victimization, disclosure, and survival beyond sexual violence. It is always much easier to talk about the fearful elements surrounding this subject, rather than the transformative aspects of it.”

When McHardy examined the available literature, she discovered that “there was not a lot of writing from individuals who had

journeyed beyond ‘survivor’ status to a place of actually reclaiming their sexuality.” In order to create a book that addressed this paucity, McHardy and Plourde issued a detailed “Call for Submissions” seeking potential contributors and informing them of the work’s purpose and unique approach. After an extensive vetting process, 17 were chosen—all of whom had very disparate stories. Narratives came from

women, men, trans individuals, gays, and straights—a panoply of people, each of whom endured under dissimilar circumstances. Some were skilled communicators, others not; however, each account was equally insightful and visceral.

“Some contributors requested anonymity,” McHardy says. “At the beginning of this process, a young Cairo woman proudly self-identified. As the project progressed, the political climate in Egypt shifted and the government began to retaliate against dissidents and writers. Because this young woman was actively challenging existing cultural norms, she became a target, braving significant risk by sharing her experience.

“Upon hearing these narratives, we immediately began to comprehend how these individuals had evolved,” McHardy continues. “Commonalities among the group were expressed in words, in simple statements or, sometimes, in fears that became apparent in various ways. Reading ‘between the lines’ enables readers to discern the subtleties of each person’s pilgrimage. The youngest contributor, a 24-year-old Asian, gives us a picture of raw physical sexuality. Another older contributor takes a much more spiritual and intellectual approach. Each transformation was distinctive and unique. Some underwent a lengthy process; others discovered that a single inti-

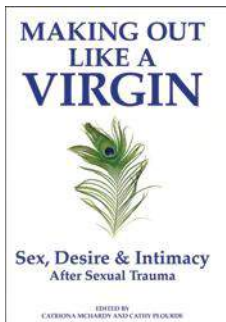
mate encounter was pivotal enough to facilitate healing.”

McHardy emphasizes that “survival” is a *stage* in the recovery process, not a *state* of being. “Current culture (and literature) espouse that surviving is the end result. *Like a Virgin* has another message. We say this: you can achieve something more. You can again have healthy sexual intimacy. You can feel desire, your libido can return, and you can be touched in a meaningfully intimate way.”

While *Like a Virgin* contains some difficult segments, it is filled with humor, wisdom, candor, and affirmations of all sorts; many phrases resonate weeks after a first reading. These autobiographical vignettes are brilliantly diverse, each offering revelatory snippets of life and love. “One of our writers speaks of ‘owning her sexy,’ eschewing conventional wisdom,” McHardy says. “She writes, ‘My sexuality is whatever the f--- I want it to be,’ echoing the sentiments of many contributors.”

McHardy’s three decades of pragmatic and authentic work in human behavior permeate the book. There are numerous “teachable moments.” Sexologists, and those they assist, often speak of “the process.” The book provides a simple yet effective triad for managing the thoughts and emotions that individuals experience: Go after the trauma. Process the feelings. Reframe the story.

“Go to the trauma, but don’t get stuck there,” McHardy explains. “One contributor →



Making Out Like a Virgin—Sex, Desire & Intimacy After Sexual Trauma • Edited by Catriona McHardy and Cathy Plourde
• Available in audio, eBook, and print from AnimalMineralPress.com



Sex Positive

Author Catriona McHardy (r) had a 32-year career at Planned Parenthood before penning *Making Out Like a Virgin*, which emphasizes that survivors of sexual trauma can return to having healthy sexual intimacy. She is pictured here with her partner, Dee Steffan.

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'MAKING OUT LIKE A VIRGIN'

continued from previous page

used a culinary analogy. His trauma was "folded into everything he baked." Eventually, a loving partner disabused him of that mindset, enabling him to jettison it. When confronting trauma, many people emotionally separate—from others, from themselves, and even from their own physical bodies. "This happens frequently," McHardy says. "Even in the context of everyday partnerships—for a multitude of reasons—things just don't work."

Those trying to reclaim their sexuality must, in some way, begin anew. Here the reader finds a surprising dose of humor. One writer nourishes her intimacy by saying, "I like to have food before I get nude." For another writer, reclamation leads to liberation, and (in this case) masturbation. "Every woman should have a very good vibrator. I highly recommend it," writes a contributor. Individuals need to redefine their own parameters for intimacy.

"Your brain, your heart, and your genitals must all be similarly aligned for successful intimacy," McHardy says. "People approach love in a variety of ways: intellectually, spiritually, and physically. Some of our contributors led with their heart, and some with their brains. Interestingly, the process of intellectual self-examination sometimes needs to stop so that lust and desire kick in. Sometimes, your genitals come last."

Like a Virgin is a chronicle of resilience in which people utilize a variety of tools and techniques to reclaim themselves. "It is crucial to know that people are doing this, that evolution is happening," McHardy says. "The world [today] is completely focused on the negative aspects of sexuality. *Like a Virgin* moves far beyond that."

Rich Arenschioldt is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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Love and Stress

Make your relationship a safe place to communicate your concerns.

By Denis “Woodja” Flanigan, PhD

The coming year might well be dominated by foreboding and uncertainty. The incoming president seems like a loose cannon, as likely to start a war with China or crash the economy as roll back LGBT protections. We have a Congress dominated by a party that has been historically unfriendly to the LGBT community, and appears to favor rolling back health protections for millions of Americans—particularly those living with HIV. Add to that the Texas legislature’s assault on our community with a “bathroom bill,” and the political landscape looks a little frightening. For some of us, the uncertainty in the oil and gas industry, a major force in Houston’s economy and a major employer, adds yet another layer of anxiety to the range of threats to our well-being.

These external stressors can impact the quality of our relationships. It is easy to carry the stress from our daily lives into our relationships. Worries about personal and global issues can put us on edge, make us irritable, and distract us. We can end up more focused on ourselves than on our partners. We may erupt more quickly into anger over slight frustrations and disappointments. Worry can even cause a decrease in our sex drive. Unless we are mindful about preventing or minimizing its influence, outside stress can exacerbate problems already present in the relationship.

Remaining mindful is the first line of defense against external stress. Communication and relationship-building are two strategies that can minimize the effects of stress. However, both of these approaches take deliberate action, and the stress itself can easily prevent

Outside stress can exacerbate problems already present in the relationship.



Communication and relationship-building are two strategies that can minimize the effects of stress.

that from happening.

Trying to be strong and carrying this stress on your own shoulders without sharing the burden with your partner(s) is one of the worst approaches you can take. For starters, a partner is left without an explanation for why you might be irritable or distant. We tend to make it about ourselves in those situations, which generally makes the stress worse. One of the most important benefits of having a relationship is being able to have a “confidant.” The health benefits of being in a relationship are largely due to the emotional support that relationships can provide.

If you want to have healthier, stronger relationships, start by sharing what’s on your mind. Let your partner(s) know what is bothering you. And listen. Just listen. Without judgment. As important as it is to share, it is equally important to listen. Many times, when your partner comes to you with distress, you want to “fix it,” or “make it better.” Well, a lot of the global stress we are likely to be experiencing in 2017 cannot be fixed and cannot be made better. Validation that your partner’s emotional response is appropriate can be very soothing. Simply feeling understood can be helpful. If you want to be encouraging, you can say something like, “I know this is rough/scary/etc., but we will find a way to get through this together—even if I don’t know how right now.” Attempts to “fix” the situation when the situation feels unfixable often increases the person’s stress instead of reducing it.

Consider doing regular check-ins in order to encourage this sharing. Ask how your partner is doing, or how they are feeling about things that you think might bother them. At the same time, share how *you* are feeling. Maybe try something like, “This event is really on my mind. How are you feeling about it?” Giving each other a chance to talk about what is going on outside of the relationship can help prevent the stress from escalating so much that you *need* to talk about it.

Also, doing things to enhance the relationship can fortify it against the impact of outside stress. Think of ways to foster greater romance, fun, and passion in the relationship. Make time to go on dates. Show your partner(s) that they are on your mind. Make time for recreation together—go to movies, concerts, plays, bike rides, walks, etc. Make time to have sex. Sex can neurochemically strengthen a connection. All of these things help to bond us.

Hopefully, none of our fears about the coming year will come true. But whether they do or not, we are all still affected by the stress of our jobs, our parents, traffic, taxes, etc. Making your relationship a safe place to communicate your concerns can ease your stress while strengthening your relationship. Every relationship can benefit from deliberate bonding. The stronger your relationship, the more resilient it is to stress coming from both global and personal issues.

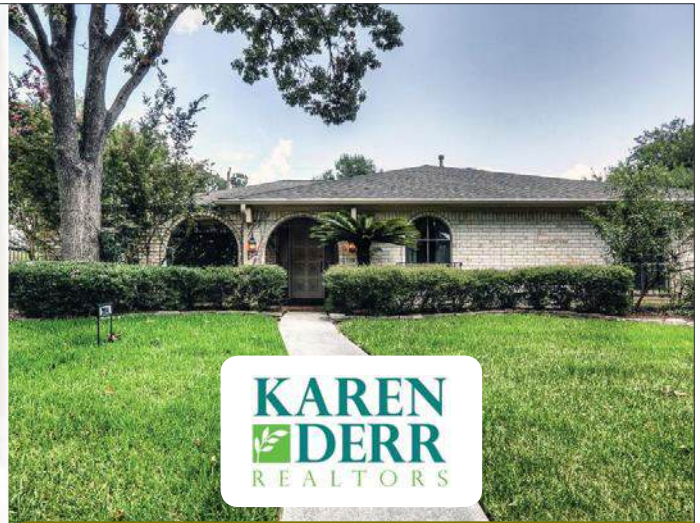
Denis “Woodja” Flanigan, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice, specializing in alternative relationships.

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Houstonian Becomes First Openly Gay Family-Court Judge in Texas

Attorney Jim Evans' appointment is an historic LGBT milestone.

Story and photo by Brandon Wolf

Jim Evans has been a typesetter, a Baptist minister, a grade-school teacher, an in-house counsel, and a family-law attorney. On January 1, 2017, he added Family Court associate judge to his résumé.

This career change, however, is different than his previous moves. As he took his place on the bench early last month, he became the first openly gay man to serve as a Texas Family Court judge. "There are openly LGBT judges in the criminal and civil courts," Evans says. "But this is a first for Texas—and probably for the South in general."

For the LGBT community, it's an important step forward. Family courts deal with deeply personal issues such as adoption, divorce, custody, community-property distribution, child support, and name changes.

The 507th Judicial District Family Court

In 2015, the Texas Legislature created several new judicial districts to handle ever-increasing caseloads throughout the state. One of those new districts was Houston's 507th Judicial District Family Court. The governor appointed attorney Alyssa Lemkuil to serve for one year beginning January 1, 2016.

But in the November elections, Lemkuil, a Republican, lost her bid for a subsequent full term to Democrat Julia Maldonado, who won 52 percent of the Harris County vote. Each incoming family-court judge must then appoint an associate judge to help with the district's caseload. Maldonado appointed Evans to serve as her associate judge.

Evans is familiar with elective politics. In 2014, he ran for the 308th Family District Court. Winning the Democratic primary, he ran against Republican incumbent James Lombardino. Evans took 47 percent of the vote. "It was the 2014 mid-terms," he says. "The



Texas Trailblazer

Jim Evans spent the holidays closing down his family law practice in preparation for taking the 507th District Family Court bench last month.

Republicans swept that election."

Despite the loss, the *Houston Chronicle's* endorsement of Evans was a tribute to his qualifications: "A graduate of the University of Houston Law Center, Evans, 47, has a pastor's compassion that comes from working as a Baptist minister, not to mention a master's degree in religious studies. A personal experience of perceived discrimination against Evans and his husband in the family courts led Evans to run for a position on the bench. He brings his decade of legal experience to bear on his passion for more equitable courts."

During the 2014 election, Evans answered a *Chronicle* questionnaire about why the election was important to him: "It will be significant to have an openly gay person on the bench. Currently, the family courts in Harris County negatively discriminate against gay and lesbian people. For example, none of the family judges, all of whom are Republican, will grant an adoption in a case where the prospective adoptive parent is an 'out' gay or lesbian."

Because of the difficulties that LGBT citi-

zens have with family-court cases, Houston attorneys often take those cases to Bexar or Dallas counties, where the judiciary has proven to be more equitable. Evans says that he thinks the situation has changed somewhat since the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) marriage-equality decision in June 2015.

But despite improving attitudes, Evans believes most attorneys with LGBT clients still prefer to take their cases elsewhere. "It's still too big a risk," he says.

Because cases are assigned randomly, it will only be by chance that cases with LGBT litigants end up in Evans' courtroom. Still, he hopes that with his visibility as an openly gay family-court judge, his colleagues on the bench will begin to disregard sexual orientation when making rulings.

Born and Raised in the Houston Area

Evans was born in 1967 in Pasadena, where his father was a lab technician for a petrochemical company "along the Channel." His mother was a homemaker, raising Evans and a younger →



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OPENLY GAY FAMILY-COURT JUDGE IN TEXAS

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sister. He spent his first three years of school in the La Porte ISD before transferring to private Baptist academies in the area.

Evans says his childhood memories are happy ones. While he was a good student with good grades, athletics were different. "I know what it's like to be chosen last," he says. Still, he enjoyed playing dodgeball with the neighborhood kids after school. And every summer, the family spent two weeks camping—something he eagerly looked forward to.

In high school, Evans played the marimba in the band. He especially gravitated toward such subjects as foreign language, history, and anthropology. Growing up amidst conservative Baptist beliefs, his social life was limited and there was no television in the home. Evans says that he still doesn't have a good grasp on the pop culture of his youth—including the television series, movies, and popular music of the 1970s and 1980s.

Evans enrolled in Houston Baptist University, where he had a full scholarship based on his outstanding high-school grades. He received a bachelor's degree in 1989, majoring in Spanish and history. But his real passion was education, and he dreamed of being a foreign missionary who developed Christian educational curricula.

Marriage and Ministry

After graduating from college, Evans moved on to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth to earn a master of education degree in 1992.

In 1990, Evans began a married relationship that lasted for 17 years and produced two sons. Looking back, he says marriage and children was the only option he was aware of for his life. The only gay celebrity he can remember from the times was Martina Navratilova. "Even Elton John was married to a woman in the 1980s."

After seminary, Evans got his first position as an associate minister in a Texas church. It was a part-time job, and he also worked for the *Texas Jewish Post* as a typesetter. "I knew every article in the paper, because I had to type each one by hand," he remembers.

As an associate minister, he was in charge of education, youth activities, and the music program. "I took a lot of trips to Six Flags," he says with a smile.

Evans moved on to similar church positions in Maryland and Louisiana before leaving the ministry in 1999. As a local schoolteacher in Monroe, Louisiana, he taught Spanish to 4th, 5th, and 6th graders at four different schools.

In 2000, after taking stock of his life and realizing that neither religion nor education offered much to support a family of four, Evans moved his family back to Houston and entered the University of Houston Law School. "Being

older, I could really appreciate the value of the program," he recalls. Evans was in the top 10 percent of his class, and selected to work on the school's *Law Review*. He received his law degree in 2003.

Coming Out as a Gay Man

Evans held a variety of legal positions from 2003 to 2007, working with bankruptcy law and as a corporate in-house counsel. While his new career made it easier to provide for his family, he was also finally coming to terms with his sexual orientation.

In 2007, Evans came out. "I knew I couldn't live the next 40 years the same way I'd lived the first 40," he says. Separated and alone, Evans began attending the Fathers First support group at Bering United Methodist Church. The group helped him sort things out, and he appreciated being able to share his feelings with other men who were in the same situation.

One of those men was William Flowers, with whom he fell in love. The men were married in 2010 in Connecticut, in a small ceremony that included just their children and a few close friends.



Jim Evans and husband, William Flowers.

Family Law

In 2008, Evans joined a family-law firm. Feeling confident that this was the field he truly loved, he started his own family-law practice in 2010.

With his appointment to the 507th Judicial District Family Court, Evans had to close his practice and refer clients to other attorneys. By late December, his office was filled with his outgoing boxes—and the incoming boxes of the new tenants.

Evans now offices at the Harris County Civil Courthouse at 201 Caroline. When he took the oath of office in that building's ceremonial courtroom last month, he became the 12th openly LGBT judge in the state.

As a family-court judge, Evans seems like a natural. A man with a warm and patient manner, he knows how to make complex issues understandable. As a father of two sons, he understands family life. He also understands the emotions that arise when a family is broken up and spouses struggle to adjust to new realities.

Evans is a good listener who answers questions thoroughly. The educator side of him can recognize when a person isn't comprehending, and he will search for another way to explain until things are clear. He has a quick sense of humor and a compassionate nature. Unaffected, Evans doesn't find it beneath him to slip a couple of LOLs into an email. →

OPENLY GAY FAMILY-COURT JUDGE IN TEXAS

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Currently, Evans teaches Sunday school at Deer Park United Methodist Church. He feels strongly about the rights and dignity of children. "Sometimes children aren't treated as people," he says. "Some adults feel it's okay to walk into a room where children are watching television and change the channel to what they want to watch. Oftentimes, the opinions of children aren't sought or valued."

Evans also feels strongly about the use of the word *adoptive*. "A child shouldn't be singled out as 'an adoptive son or daughter'—they should be spoken of simply as a son or daughter."

In the *Houston Chronicle* 2014 election questionnaire, Evans replied with answers that provide a deeper look at both his character and his qualifications to serve as a family court judge: "I am running for this bench because I am qualified to do the work required of a judge, and because I am passionate about doing that work with integrity and with an understanding of the enormous consequences of my decisions."

"The presiding judge in this court has the ability to appoint *ad litem* attorneys, *amicus* attorneys, and receivers in hundreds of cases each year." Noting that his opponent often appointed campaign benefactors, Evans added: "This sort of favoritism is inappropriate, and

not in the best interest of the children who are the subjects of the cases before the court."

"For the last five years, I have practiced family law almost exclusively. I know the family judges in Harris County, the family attorneys in Harris County, and the statutory and common-law basis for family law decision-making in Texas. I have a necessary understanding of the complicated property issues that sometimes arise in divorces. In 2009, I obtained certification as a family-law mediator, and I understand the value and the limitations of mediation as a tool that can be used to resolve family-law disputes."

Recalling his employment as a teacher and a minister, Evans pointed out: "These prior careers gave me an appreciation of the enormity of the pressures that people face with regard to their family lives and decision-making. This appreciation will inform my rulings on the bench as I strive for fairness and justice. I am a parent, divorced parent, step-parent, and adoptive parent."

LGBTs and Family Law

With the SCOTUS marriage-equality decision in 2015, the landscape of family law has changed for LGBT citizens. Although basic equality has been won, the details will continue to be worked out in courtrooms for years to come.

One unresolved question that affects cases involving community-property distribution

is the date when a Texas couple may consider themselves to be married. If a Texas couple went to another state to be married before the 2015 SCOTUS decision, is it the date of their out-of-state marriage or the 2015 date when marriage was legalized in Texas? And if the couple had previously held themselves out as "married," will Texas common-law marriage rules apply?

Although Texas judges must abide by the SCOTUS marriage-equality decision, those who oppose the ruling can make life more difficult for gay or lesbian couples involved in a divorce settlement. Likewise, judges often rule against an LGBT parent when the divorce involves a heterosexual partner.

Evans doesn't hold himself out as a savior, but he does feel that his presence on the court will help to make the local legal system more equitable for the LGBT community. Those changes will probably come slowly, but he has a strong belief that change is good—and he will do what he can to further it.

Evans also disagrees with the popular life-is-short meme that is heard so often. "Life is long," he says thoughtfully. "Why should we limit what our lives can be? We can change, and make our lives what we want them to be."

Jim Evans' evolving career is living proof of that belief.

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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Learning History While You Party

Eagle patrons are surrounded by decades of historic memories.

Story and photos by Brandon Wolf

Houston's LGBT community has a very rich history, but local historians admit that our community's awareness of it is limited. Efforts have been made to change that—archives established, exhibits displayed, articles written, speakers scheduled—all with minimal success.

The unique Banner Project, a portable exhibit of notable images from Houston's LGBT history archives, has reached further than any previous efforts. Now, the Houston Eagle bar has opened a second-floor party space called the Phoenix Room that features a fascinating array of historic images—an innovative concept that promises to reach an even wider audience.

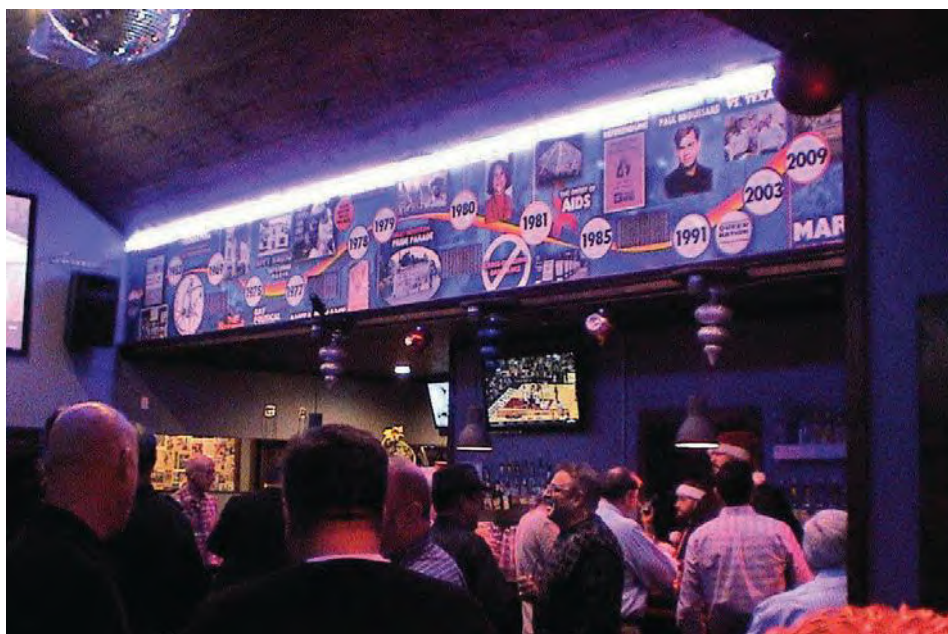
Figuring that it's easier to get people to a popular club than to a history exhibit, Eagle owner Mark De Lange decided to bring history right into Houston's LGBT club scene. His new Phoenix Room is a full-service bar space that surrounds customers with Houston's LGBT history dating back as far as 1937. De Lange hopes that partying and learning about LGBT history will no longer be mutually exclusive activities.

The room features a timeline of our community's history, a huge montage of LGBT publications since the 1960s, and an equally impressive montage of ads from gay bars in existence before 1985 and now closed. The focal point of the room is a full-sized recreation of the iconic 1997 Mary's bar mural that was destroyed in 2006.

De Lange says that nearly 3,000 customers now pass through the room every weekend. Multiple wall mirrors reflect images of the murals, giving them a sense of infinity that is unlike anything ever seen before in a Houston LGBT club.

It All Started with the Mural

De Lange says he remembers the original



Phoenix Rising

A timeline of Houston's LGBT history in the new Phoenix Room at the Houston Eagle.

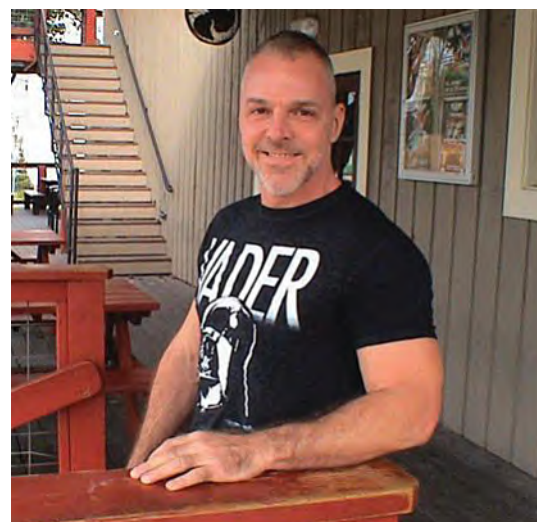
mural that covered the exterior east wall of Mary's bar, at Westheimer and Waugh, for nearly 10 years. The in-your-face mural featured a happy cast of colorful characters partying inside Mary's, including two shirtless leather men with hirsute chests and bulging crotches who are peering into each other's eyes with unbridled lust. Looking on, or playing pool, is the cast of other bar regulars. Sitting attentively on a stool in the center is Mr. Balls, a stray cat with extremely large testicles that became the bar's feline mascot.

The mural disappeared in 2006, painted over with blue sky and fluffy clouds while humorously leaving behind only Mr. Balls. The gentrification of Montrose is assumed to be responsible for the loss.

Mary's closed in 2009 after 39 years of operation. In 2011, the building was purchased and renovation was begun to convert it into Blacksmith, a gourmet coffee shop. The new owner allowed the Joanna Art Collective to reproduce the mural for Pride Month 2011, with the understanding that the image's existence would be temporary.

Cody Ledvina, who supervised the 2011 recreation with the help of two dozen art-stu-

dent volunteers, told the media: "This mural is a public-art masterpiece. The City of Houston doesn't have many notable public art spaces. Where there is public art, it's big and oppressive. This is the opposite—it's →



History Buff

Mark De Lange, owner of the Houston Eagle.



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HOUSTON'S LGBT HISTORY COMES ALIVE

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open, democratic, and fun.”

After the 2011 reproduction disappeared, De Lange began his effort to recreate it again in 2014 when he purchased the former 611 Club and converted it into the Houston Eagle. De Lange inquired around and connected with the original mural's artist, Scott Swoveland, who had since moved to Indianapolis.

De Lange wanted Swoveland to come to Houston and recreate his 1997 Mary's mural on the east wall of Eagle's outdoor patio. But Swoveland wasn't easily convinced. In the 20 years since he had painted the mural, his artistic style had matured. Swoveland wasn't sure he wanted to be remembered for a piece that he considered artistically inferior. If he recreated it, he wanted to update it to reflect his current artistic style.

The two men discussed different ideas—even expanding the mural on both sides to include more characters. But De Lange remained steadfast—he wanted the mural to look exactly like it did in 1997.

Meanwhile, De Lange began to consider renovating the Eagle's second floor into commercial space. The original owners had run a grocery store on the ground floor and lived upstairs. De Lange decided to have the mural recreated in the new second-floor bar space, where Swoveland's mural wall could become the central feature.

Construction had just begun when the Eagle suffered a fire caused by aging aluminum wiring on the second floor. The bar closed for the first six months of 2016 while the damage was repaired. Fortunately, the reconstruction process allowed De Lange to completely rethink his plans for the second-floor bar space.

By the summer of 2016, De Lange and Swoveland had reached an agreement: the Mary's mural would be recreated in its original form, and Swoveland would also be commissioned to paint six striking pictures of masculine men to line the remaining walls. The new images would give Swoveland the opportunity to showcase his maturing artistic style.

The Mural Goes High-Tech

As De Lange pondered the future of the historic Mary's mural, he realized that time and misfortune would eventually take a toll. To ensure the permanence of the artwork, De Lange asked Swoveland to paint the mural at a much smaller size, but using the same proportions as the original. That painting was then scanned at extremely high resolution, digitally enlarged to the size of the original mural, and printed on durable vinyl strips.

After the printed strips were glued to the wall, the seams were hidden using a “blowtorch” touch-up technique. The finished product is stunningly vivid and realistic, and the mural is now safe for perpetuity since it can

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The Mural Lives On

Cody Ledvina, who supervised the 2011 recreation with the help of two dozen art-student volunteers, told the media: "This mural is a public-art masterpiece. The City of Houston doesn't have many notable public art spaces. Where there is public art, it's big and oppressive. This is the opposite—it's open, democratic, and fun."

easily be reprinted using the scanned digital image.

As the resident artist at Mary's bar for 10 years, Swoveland was employed to repaint the bar's front window on a regular basis—usually to advertise an upcoming function or pay tribute to recent national events. One of his window scenes in 1997 was inspired by a gay greeting card showing a wide-eyed Dorothy and Toto from *The Wizard of Oz* in the middle of a leather bar—the prototype for his now-famous wall mural.

The image made its way to Mary's prominent exterior east wall after James "Fannie" Farmer, the owner of Mary's, asked Swoveland to replace a smaller mural that had been on that wall for years. Swoveland took his window design, removed Dorothy and Toto, and filled in the remaining space with people he knew and loved from Mary's. The mural was meant to show a typical afternoon at Mary's, as if the building's front wall had magically disappeared to reveal the bar's colorful interior.

Swoveland emphasizes that there was much more to his mural than just a brash public statement to an often-oppressive world that had little respect for the LGBT community. It also expressed three themes the artist felt deeply about: the importance of being true to who you are; the value of friendships; and living life to its fullest, even in the face of tribulations such as discrimination and AIDS.

Swoveland is still amazed at the popularity of his piece. "I thought it would be replaced in a year," he says, looking back. But he's pleased that it has endured, mostly because it pays tribute to the characters he loved—and who are mostly gone now.

The Concept Expands

De Lange was so pleased with the finished mural and its unique story that he began to take a similar interest in other community history that he felt was largely unknown. He launched an Internet search that landed him on the houstonlgbthistory.org website created and

maintained by Houston LGBT history titan J.D. Doyle. This online resource was launched in 2001 as an adjunct to Doyle's popular *Queer Music Heritage* radio show. In 2013, after being inspired by a comprehensive database of AIDS-related deaths in San Francisco, Doyle decided to expand the reach of his music archive by creating a Texas LGBT obituary database. He began by scanning and indexing the obituaries published in *This Week in Texas* (TWT), the statewide bar magazine that had served LGBT Texans for more than 25 years.

As Doyle made his way through the TWT obituaries, he became so fascinated by the iconic LGBT publication that he decided to build an online TWT library. He has now scanned and posted the contents of all but about 60 of TWT's 1,518 issues.

By 2014, Doyle had moved all non-music materials to his new website, houstonlgbthistory.org. Currently totaling more than 10,000 pages, it ranks as the largest and most comprehensive online source of Houston LGBT history in existence.

De Lange soon became mesmerized by Doyle's history website, and spent every free minute for weeks navigating through it. When De Lange came across a montage of past gay-bar ads created for the 2015 Heritage Society's LGBT history exhibit, he contacted Doyle and asked him to create a much larger bar montage for the Phoenix Room. The two decided to limit the montage to Houston-area gay bars opened before 1985 that had since closed. Doyle's original montage of 28 ads grew to include 86 bars. His friend and fellow historian Sara Fernandez digitally optimized the ads, and Doyle was careful to create visual contrast by alternating dark and light ad designs. He also separated bars that had occupied the same building under different names. His prize piece is a 1937 flyer found on eBay from The Wagon Wheel Nite Club, located at Airline and Little York, advertising a female-impersonator show. →

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HOUSTON'S LGBT HISTORY COMES ALIVE

continued from previous page

Re-thinking the Room

With the bar montage completed, De Lange further refined his interior design plans by hanging Swoveland's more recent works in the anteroom to the restrooms, leaving the remaining walls free. After becoming fascinated with the archive of Houston LGBT publications on Doyle's website, De Lange spent weeks building a montage of 84 publication covers, including one *TWT* cover from each year of its publication. The oldest cover is a 1968 *Albatross*, and the first *OUTSMART* cover from 1994 is also included. Numerous short-lived publications were launched in Houston over the years, including *The Courier*, *Eclipse*, *Gala*, *MaleMan*, *UpFront*, *Mr.*, *Houston Forum*, *Contact*, *LXIX*, *Out*, and *Montrose Area Pride*.

Timeline Traces the Community's Triumphs and Tragedies

Over the bar area hangs a historical timeline of Houston LGBT history interwoven with national LGBT history. The events depicted start in 1950 with the founding of the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles and run through the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court marriage-equality ruling.

De Lange consulted with numerous local LGBT historians including Doyle, Fernandez, Craig Farrell, the Botts Archive of LGBT History, and the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of LGBT History—all of whom helped refine the timeline until a consensus was reached that it was both comprehensive and inclusive. Eighteen events are featured, including the 1953 founding of the Dianas, the 1978 Town Meeting I, the 1980 repeal of the cross-dressing ordinance, the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision, and the 2009 election of Annise Parker as Houston's mayor.

As one's eyes sweep across the timeline, an awareness is created that change doesn't happen overnight—or in a straight line. There are victories and there are defeats, but it's all worth the effort.

On another wall, De Lange opted for a photo that Doyle took during the 1982 Pride Parade, of people filling the sidewalk in front of Mary's and sitting on the rooftop. The photo went viral when it first appeared on Facebook a few years back, and it perfectly captures the spirit of the times.

Like the Mary's mural, the process of digitization and hanging printed vinyl strips was used for the Phoenix Room's other montages. The result is so realistic that one must actually touch a montage to realize it has been printed on vinyl. De Lange framed all of the historical pieces with wood that matched the room's trim. Informational plaques were laser-cut into the wood and then hand-detailed with paint.

In addition to Swoveland's five new works on the second floor, there is "Bo," who resides on a wall next to the first-floor DJ booth. The ultimate leather-man's dream, Bo has become

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Educating the Next Generation

... through LGBT studies.

By Trevor Boffone

The University of Houston (UH) has seen an uptick in interest in its Introduction to LGBT Studies program in recent years. What began as a one-section course taught by Dr. Guillermo de los Reyes in 2010 has become a four-section offering that now attracts a mix of LGBTQ students and allies. This spring semester, 120 students enrolled in four sections taught by Dr. Andrew Joseph Pegoda and myself. UH offers one of the only LGBT-studies minors in the country, and has been recognized as a leading trans-friendly campus. I reflect here on my experiences teaching Introduction to LGBT Studies during last year's fall semester.

I was surprised to learn how little my students knew of the history, politics, and culture of the LGBT community. At the beginning of the semester, even queer students couldn't identify who Harvey Milk was, what Stone-wall was, or what Houston's HERO battle was about. Even the AIDS epidemic is a largely forgotten topic. That these foundational moments and figures in LGBT history were foreign to my students was an eye-opener. For my "free write" assignment during the first week, students explained their current knowledge of the LGBT community and their reasons for taking the class. Many who identified as queer wrote that they were taking the course to finally learn about their community.

One student wrote, "I've been more or less ignorant to current events in the LGBT community." Another wrote, "As a gay man, I would like to learn more about the history of the LGBT community, certain important figures in the LGBT community, and how to help keep myself safe—whether it's sexually, physically, or mentally—in today's society."

Straight allies in the class wrote that they were interested in learning how to become better allies. One ally wrote, "I believe that LGBT

rights shouldn't even be an issue today. But it is for many, and I honestly find that horrifying."

While some of their initial comments were shocking, knowing this about my students helped me tailor the course as I introduced students to an overview of LGBT studies. I decided to make the course more local by spending time teaching my students about the Paul Broussard murder in Montrose, for example. In addition to basic course content, I frequently reflected with my colleagues and students about the reasons why LGBT millennials had such gaping holes in their knowledge of queer history. Students often noted how these narratives are excluded from public education in Texas, both at the secondary and university levels. Many remarked how my course was the first course they took that talked about queer people of color beyond a superficial level. Nearly every week, I witnessed students becoming empowered by learning about their community and finding their voices as the next generation in the fight for equality.

Whereas learning about LGBTQ studies enabled queer students to better understand their struggles and see themselves represented in ways not typically seen in a college class-

room, the course was also an important space for allies to gain a voice and learn how to best use their skill sets to advocate for the LGBTQ community. One ally noted, "I feel that as an advocate, I am now able to inform and educate individuals who are uneducated [about phrases] that LGBTQ individuals might feel are offensive, like I was [previously]."

Yet the personal growth among my queer students was the most apparent. While many were shy and closeted at the beginning of the semester, week by week they came out of their shells and became more outspoken about their identities and experiences. Nearly every week, another student who identified as an ally during the first week came out as queer in class. Creating a safe and inclusive classroom space was my main objective, so it was gratifying to see students feeling comfortable about being out in class for the first time. For many, this LGBT-studies course was the only space on campus where they lived their identity to the fullest.

"Before this class, just the thought of questioning my identity and thinking about who I was made me want to black out; it was an uncomfortable subject for me. Actually, →



Students at Trevor Boffone's Fall 2016 Introduction to LGBT Studies at the University of Houston.

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EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

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I never realized just how uncomfortable I was about it until this class," said one student. "I feel like the topics we discussed in class, the material we looked at, and hearing other people's stories forced me to take a good look at myself and reevaluate my position and my own role in the world in relationship to others. I learned a lot more about my community, since I believe that our history and our experiences are what bind us together."

It is not shocking that comprehensive LGBTQ-inclusive education has the potential to change the way queer people experience this world. My students, both queer and straight, revealed how their entire understanding of the LGBTQ community can radically change in just one semester.

While not every student will take an LGBTQ studies course (for a variety of reasons), traditional university courses should become inclusive enough to teach the basics of LGBTQ history. Let's stop relegating queer history to specialized programs aimed only at queer students.

Trevor Boffone is a Houston-based scholar, educator, writer, and the founder of the 50 Playwrights Project. He is a lecturer of LGBT studies in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality program at the University of Houston.



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‘Purple Eyes’

Queer Latino playwright Josh Inocência brings his one-man show to UH.

By Donalevan Maines

Pancho Villa rides again when out Houston playwright Josh Inocência performs his clever, exhilarating one-man show *Purple Eyes* this month at the University of Houston.

The free performance promises to be an LGBT highlight of Cultural Connect Week, February 27–March 3, on the UH campus.

For non-Latinos, Pancho Villa, a famous Mexican revolutionary, is probably the most recognizable name among the cultural references in what Inocência calls his “ancestral auto/biographic” piece that connects his own story of growing up gay with the tale of three male ancestors whose century of machismo living helped inform who he is. That tale includes his father, whose motto is, “I’ll try anything once. Twice just to make sure I don’t like it.” (Whee! Now we’re having fun!)

“I wrote *Purple Eyes* shortly after coming out,” says Inocência, who is now 26 and more than two years into his liberation as an out author, performer, and teacher who grew up in far-northeast Houston surrounded by macho men.

“And, of course, I played with dolls!” he tells the audience. (As tempted as I am to continue quoting from the festive script, I don’t want to take anything away from the enjoyment of seeing Inocência perform it live.)

Suffice to say that this rising LGBT theater star (and OUTSMART contributing writer) mines plenty of humor and humanity in his colorful reportage. While some of his words and phrases will be unfamiliar—including some Mexican and Native American concepts that seem foreign—simply putting them out there underscores the importance and purpose of UH’s Cultural Connect Week.

In conjunction with this presentation of *Purple Eyes*, Inocência will hold at least four writing workshops, mainly in LGBT studies classes at UH. His workshops are designed to show others how they, too, can better understand themselves and their heritage by inves-



Generations of Influence

Purple Eyes gets its name from the notorious purple sunglasses Josh Inocência’s father wore when the playwright was a child.

tigating their ancestors, and then writing and performing a bit of what they learn.

Students will be encouraged to bring a family heirloom or cultural object from home, which Inocência can use to guide them through exercises that will help them craft a prologue, a central conflict, and a resolution for their performance piece. Each student will get an opportunity to perform his or her piece for the group and receive feedback from Inocência on how to expand it into a solo play.

Such “cultural work, storytelling, remembering, and bridge-making” seems to come naturally to Inocência, a 2008 graduate of Atascocita High School who earned a bachelor’s degree in theater with a focus on acting and directing at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Next, as a graduate student in theater studies at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Inocência got to write, perform, and direct plays while also studying the history and philosophy of theater.

His UH performance is another stop on his “Texas tour” of theaters and cultural centers that often includes audience talk-back discussions in addition to his writing workshops.

“The title *Purple Eyes* comes from my dad’s

notorious purple sunglasses he wore when I was a kid,” Inocência explains. “[It also refers to] the ability of the men in my family to ‘queer’ the world around them, despite their hyper-masculine tendencies.”

Inocência has completed a second play, *The Little Edelweiss; or, An Immigrant’s Fairytale*, which envisions—in the style of stories Inocência’s grandmother read to him as a child—his closeted great-uncle’s journey from Austria to the United States. That will be followed by *Chocolate Gravy and White Jesus*, which will complete Inocência’s set of scripts about various ancestral backgrounds that he calls *Splintered in Three: An American Trilogy*.

Last fall, Inocência got to see his work performed from a seat in the audience when the Landing Theatre Company’s *The Redemption Series* included his short play *dallas/love the bomb*—one of a dozen urgent works selected from the group’s national call for plays “in response to crisis in America,” and mostly focused on recent police killings and last June’s Pulse nightclub massacre.

“It was my first foray into writing something and handing it over for someone else to do,” says Inocência, who learned a lot from the experience. →



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'PURPLE EYES'

continued from previous page

Next month, another 10-minute script by Inocencio will be performed as a staged reading at the 38th Annual Mid-America Theatre Conference, to be held March 16-19 at the Hyatt Regency Houston/Galleria. *Ofélio*, says Inocencio, concerns an on-campus sexual assault.

What: Free performance of *Purple Eyes* (part of UH's Cultural Connect Week, February 27-March 3)

When: February 28, 6 p.m.

Where: University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun Road

Details: joshinocencio.com and uh.edu/cdi/events_programs/ccw/

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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‘We’re Just People’

New photography exhibit captures the trans experience.

By **B. Root**

Photo by Gary Watson

This month, TANK Space at Spring Street Studios is presenting *Dear Lieutenant Governor, “We’re Just People,”* a new photographic exhibition by Gary Watson. The exhibit consists of 19 black-and-white silver-gelatin prints of Houston transwoman Alexis Hollada. Watson took the portraits of Hollada over the course of several months, and each photograph has accompanying text pulled from an interview the artist did with the subject. The photos and captions tell Hollada’s story in her own words—from her youth to her growing self-awareness and her experiences as she made her transition, as well as her desire to support others during their transitions.

Watson came into contact with Hollada through a mutual friend after mentioning the idea of creating a project around the issues trans people face, particularly in Texas. “When I read about Lt. Governor Dan Patrick’s intention to make a so-called ‘bathroom bill’ a high priority in the current legislative session in Texas, I felt compelled as an artist to explore the subject,” Watson writes. “The bill seems very divisive and aimed squarely against the transgender community.” After Watson described his plans for a photo exhibit and took Hollada to visit his studio to see his other work, she agreed to participate in the project. “While I understood the transgender issue from an intellectual level, I wanted to understand it on a human level. I wanted to tell a story about a human being, rather than dealing with the transgender topic as an abstract concept. When I first spoke with Alexis, I told her that I was approaching this project as an opportunity to learn, and then in turn to share what I had learned from her.”

Watson believes the title of his exhibit, *“We’re Just People,”* describes his concept using three simple words that Hollada shared with him. “I added the ‘Dear Lieutenant Governor’ portion for this particular exhibition,



In Her Own Words

In his new exhibit, *Dear Lieutenant Governor, “We’re Just People,”* artist Gary Watson shares the story of Houston transwoman Alexis Hollada through photographs and text pulled from an interview he conducted with Hollada.

given the timing of the show with the convening of the Texas Legislature.”

“There are so many transgender people who don’t live it 24/7,” Hollada stated during the interview. “[They] are scared because of bigotry, hate, and prejudices against them, so they have to live closeted. As soon as they walk through that door into their homes, maybe that’s a safe spot for them. [But if their] family doesn’t accept them, they still have to hide it there, and they’re in a spot where they can only be themselves with a group of friends who know and understand. Or they may not even have that, and they’re just having to live with this all by themselves.”

Watson believes that people sometimes fear what they don’t understand, and that there are people with an agenda who will gladly feed that fear with misinformation. “I think if one is willing to learn about something, then one will gain understanding. And once one understands, there is the opportunity for respect. I

am grateful to Alexis for sharing her story with me. As a result, I have a greater understanding of the transgender community and its issues. I hope that those who see this exhibition will better understand that there are many ways to be human.”

As Hollada puts it, “We’re just people. We just wanna live life day to day, like everyone else does—[to] have freedom and respect from other people, just like we want to give to them. I don’t want anything super-special. Most of us just want that day-to-day, you know, where I can go to a job and not worry about being fired—or about not getting hired simply because you’re trans. [We just want] to be loved by our families and our friends, and love our families and our friends in return.”

Dear Lieutenant Governor, “We’re Just People” will be on display until February 18.

B. Root is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART.

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Project LEAP

The nation's premier HIV advocacy training program is now recruiting participants.

By Rich Arenschieldt

Twenty years ago, I was given the most meaningful professional responsibility of my life. I was asked to facilitate a one-of-a-kind advocacy training program, Project LEAP (Learning, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Participation), something I did for nearly a decade.

Since its inception, this 17-week program has trained numerous advocates, many of whom live with HIV and participate in Houston's Ryan White Planning Council, which oversees the allocation of \$28 million in federal funds that provide services for 13,000 HIV-positive Houstonians. This deliberative body, comprised of consumers and others, was legislatively mandated by the 1990 federal Ryan White CARE Act.

Tracy Gorden is a retired 65-year-old long-haul truck driver, a six-term Planning Council member, and a LEAP graduate. "In 2005, I suddenly lost my insurance and had

to quickly find an alternative. A friend of mine helped me solve that problem. Then after being retired for a few years, I decided it was time to help others as I had been helped. I enrolled in LEAP, graduated in 2011, and joined the Planning Council in 2012.

"When you begin something in life, you rarely have all of the facts about it," Gorden continues. "Usually you spend a significant amount of time trying to get and understand basic information. LEAP enables you to grasp a fairly complicated process in a relatively short period of time."

Dena Gray Hughes is a longtime HIV-positive community activist who enrolled in Project LEAP in 1997. "There was a time when I never thought I'd be able to look back 20 years about *anything*," Hughes says. "LEAP was the first major step I took to prepare myself for a lifetime of community activism."

"I had been recently diagnosed, and everyone told me, 'Enroll in Project LEAP,'" she remembers. "I needed to be with people who shared my experience—even if (as an African-American female) they didn't look at all like me. Joining LEAP was like getting on a freeway—once you got on, there was no stopping."

"You develop meaningful relationships with your classmates," Hughes says. "We learned, listened, and debated *everything*—the intensity was life-changing. Our instructor continually told us: 'If you are going to be effective leaders, you *must* know this information.'"

"There was no 'social media' at that time—if you wanted to know information about HIV, you went to LEAP," she continues. "Everyone had my [land-line] phone number, and I had theirs; *we were connected*. There is tremendous benefit to being in the same space with people who comprehend your situation and share your passion. This knowledge puts you on a path. Get on it. Expand the path. Hurry up. We are still here."

Hughes says, "25 years later, I am still telling people: 'You *need* to learn this. Don't waste your efforts complaining. Get to work. Once you graduate from LEAP, then you can roll with the movers and shakers in the field—not before.'"

If you would like to get involved in Houston's Ryan White Planning Council, you can apply online at surveymonkey.com/r/PLEAP2017 or, if you'd prefer a paper application, please contact the Ryan White Planning Council Office of Support at 713.572.3724. The brief written application and an in-person interview are required. Applications must be received by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 3, 2017. If you wish to apply after March 3, please call the Office of Support.

Rich Arenschieldt is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



Advancing Advocacy
Author Rich Arenschieldt (l) with Project LEAP graduate Irma Vilano Copeland in 2001.

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‘The Whale’

Joseph Moore plays a 600-pound gay man in Theatre Southwest’s new production.

By Donalevan Maines

Charlie, the dying 600-pound leading man of the acclaimed tragicomedy *The Whale*, briefly masturbates onstage to a gay porn video in a production that plays this month at Theatre Southwest (TSW) in the ‘burbs.

So, I guess it’s swell that Joseph Moore, the out actor who plays Charlie, felt comfortable “from the minute I stepped into the theater,” Moore tells OUTSMART. “It has such a homey feeling.”

A few weeks into rehearsal, Moore adds, “We’re still trying to figure out exactly how to do the scene, find just the right porn clip, and still get the point across that it’s gay. The audience skews significantly older, [so] we don’t want to run them out—but we don’t want to shy away, either.”

Anybody who might storm out *in flagrante delicto* would surely miss seeing a play of immense depth and humanity.

“I am so into the heart of this character—it’s incredibly moving for me to even talk about,” says Moore. “Charlie is such a sensitive character, and some scenes are so beautiful and remarkable, it’s hard to keep the waterworks from flowing. If I do cry, it shouldn’t be like the ugly crying.”

Moore is a former New York City professional opera singer who just celebrated the 20th anniversary of his relationship with psychotherapist Troy Gremillion, also a former professional opera singer in New York City. “We haven’t married yet; we always say, ‘We’re still not sure,’” jokes Moore, whose operatic background lends itself to the actor’s appreciation of the play’s supersized emotions.

Perhaps in contrast, the show’s director, Scott McWhirter, was drawn more to the dark comedy of out playwright Samuel D. Hunter. McWhirter, who calls TSW his theater home, has even penned a play, *A Broken Poet*, which he describes as a “minimalist, absurd tragicomedy.”

Moore is a 2001 graduate of Spring Woods High School who is single and living in Katy. He has been acting since he was in fourth grade—

including his appearance last fall as Gustin Novak, a radiologist in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who is traumatized by an astrological phenomenon in Noah Haidle’s *Saturn Returns*. In the same production, Moore made his TSW debut as an elder version of Gustin Novak.

Moore credits the late Scott Holmes, who was a TSW fixture, with leading him to the Sharpstown-area community theater. They met a few years ago while performing in a murder mystery at another community theater, about the time that Moore decided to “dip my toe” back into showbiz.

“He just made a big impact on me with his kindness and supportiveness,” says Moore. “He was a really great guy—so welcoming, even if you were reading for the same role. It was shocking when he died unexpectedly [last] July. I took it as a kick in the butt that life is short and I needed to get out there and do theater again. I did *Saturn Returns* for and because of Scott and his memory. When I saw they were doing *The Whale*, I read the script and knew, ‘I have to do this show!’”

Regarding the casting of Moore, McWhirter notes that “He has a soft-spoken nature, quiet and unassuming. I was intrigued by such a gentle vocal quality amidst all of this fat.”

Moore, who is over 6 feet tall and 230 pounds, began telling friends, “Bring on the milkshakes.”

Seriously, though, he says portraying the vulnerability of a morbidly obese gay man shouldn’t be much of a stretch. “That part I can identify with, to a certain extent,” he explains. “I struggled with being overweight as a teenager [outside of Philadelphia], so those kinds of feelings of shame and guilt and depression are not entirely unfamiliar to me. More challenging is the physicality. I spend almost the entire play sitting on a couch or in a wheelchair. Playing someone with congestive heart failure is very difficult. [With all of] the shallow breathing, you start to get dizzy and almost hyperventilate. To a certain extent, it is just the op-

posite of the breathing you do to sing opera.”

Then there’s the fat-suit he will wear, which was still being designed and created by Sam Martinez. “That comes next,” says Moore. “The way I work as an actor, there is an evolution. I have so many lines to memorize, so first, you’re trying the *lines* on for size. Things shift and adapt, in an organic way.”

As shocking as it will be for some audience members to see Moore, in a fat-suit, performing the blink-and-you’ll-miss-it masturbation scene, the “why” of how Charlie became so heavy should be more haunting than his appearance.

The play takes place in a small Idaho apartment on the outskirts of “Mormon Country,” where Charlie makes a last-ditch effort to reconnect with his bitter, razor-tongued teenage daughter, Ellie. Other characters include his ex-wife, Mary; a young missionary, Thomas; and Liz, the cynical sister of Charlie’s late, gay partner.

In 2013, *The Whale* won both the Drama Desk Award and the Lucille Lortel outstanding-play award for Hunter, who was born in 1981 in Moscow, Idaho. Now living in New York City, Hunter was awarded a \$625,000 “genius grant” in 2014 from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, along with Alison Bechdel, the out author of *Fun Home*.

Announcing the prize, the foundation wrote, “Born and raised in a small Idaho →



© Sensitive

Joseph Moore says that “some scenes are so beautiful and remarkable, it’s hard to keep the waterworks from flowing.”

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'THE WHALE'

continued from previous page

town, [Hunter] sets much of his work in his native region, within the nondescript confines of staff break rooms, cramped apartments, and retirement homes inhabited by ordinary people in search of more meaningful human connections. Despite the stark realism of his settings, Hunter leavens his plays with humor and compassion for the lives he depicts, while juxtaposing the banal circumstances of his characters with literary allusions and larger themes of faith and doubt."

Moore, who is also a financial advisor living in Spring Branch, says he hopes that Houston's LGBT community will support *The Whale* by attending performances. He credits Theatre Southwest with "pushing boundaries" by frequently presenting plays that are "a little edgy."

Co-starring with Moore are Matt Prideaux, Pamela Pancratz, Rachel Watkins, and Melissa Mayo. The stage manager is Wes Straw. Beverly Hutchison is the show's dramaturg.

What: *The Whale*

When: February 17–March 11

Where: Theatre Southwest, 8944-A Clarkcrest

Details: theatresouthwest.org or 713.661.9505

Donalevan Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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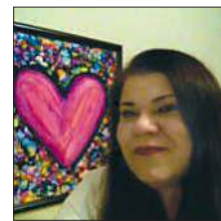
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It's a Match!

Kurth Dohmann and Greg Herzog's online romance turns into the wedding of their dreams.



Something Special

Kurth Dohmann (l) and Greg Herzog were a 100-percent match on Match.com. Six years later, the couple wed surrounded by friends and family.

Kurth Dohmann and Greg Herzog met the old-fashioned way—on Match.com.

“We were a ‘100% match,’ so there was reluctance on both parts about meeting for the first time,” laughs Dohmann. “Both of us had been married to our former wives for 17 years, have three children, are compliance professionals, Catholics, and are the same age (because one of us had lied on Match.com), and we even attended the same Houston church!”

“That’s just too weird—right?” Herzog adds.

“So after many weeks of emailing and talking on the phone, we met for our first date on Monday, May 18, 2009, at the Berryhill Mexican restaurant on Montrose. While neither of us would say it was love at first sight,” Dohmann admits while smiling at Herzog, “we both knew right away that this could be something special.

“Greg proposed to me on the Grande Riviere beach in Trinidad,” shares Dohmann. “It

was the Saturday after the Supreme Court marriage decision, and we were staying at the Mt. Plaisir Estate Hotel.”

“The name makes it sound so exotic,” giggles Herzog. “However, it was a simple beach hut with mosquito netting, just steps away from nesting leatherback turtles and the world’s most beautiful sunsets. It was very rustic and romantic.”

“Greg proposed to me on the Grande Riviere beach in Trinidad. It was the Saturday after the Supreme Court marriage decision.”

“So rustic, in fact, that after first seeing the place, I would have gladly gone back to Port of Spain. But the driver had already left,” adds Dohmann, rolling his eyes.

“The Tuesday after Greg proposed, we received a phone call from PopVows. We were one of the 10 couples they selected to be part of the PopVows Wedding on July 10, 2015, at

the Sambuca jazz lounge in Houston,” says Dohmann.

“This was less than two weeks’ notice, and we were still out of the country,” says Herzog, eyes wide in mock panic mode.

But together, they decided that there was no reason to wait. Upon their return to the States, they rushed to the courthouse for their marriage license. Then it all started to become real.

“We were going to be married in one week and still had not told anyone,” Dohmann recalls, remembering how breathless the moment was.

“In a mad rush, we called our children, parents, and a few close friends. Since we were already hosting a Fourth of July party at our house the weekend before, we announced it to our friends that day,” adds Herzog.

Since the wedding was being planned by PopVows, all the vendors were either LGBT or LGBT allies.

“While we were disappointed that we →



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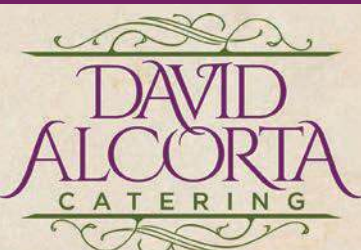
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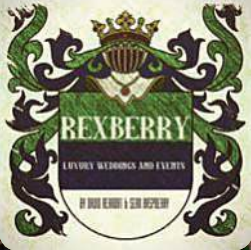
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WEDDING GUIDE

continued from previous page

didn't have the opportunity to incorporate any family traditions, we were both thrilled to have Kurth's granddaughter as our flower girl," says Herzog, with more than a touch of pride.

"We were also able to have Kurth's parents, all of our children, two of our grandchildren, and some close friends with us at the wedding," adds Herzog.

"It was a beautiful occasion that could not have been more perfect if we had had months to plan it," Dohmann beams.

"Since the wedding was so small," Herzog explains, "we had a reception the following September so our family and friends from out of town (and from out of the country) could join in the celebration. And David Alcorta Catering created a beautiful and delicious wedding cake for the reception."

"Way before the Supreme Court made history with its decision, we had planned an August Alaskan cruise to celebrate Greg's birthday. So we decided to kill two birds with one stone, and that trip became our honeymoon," whispers Dohmann.

"The cruise line offered an opportunity for married passengers to renew their vows during the cruise," says Herzog. "When they found out that we had just gotten married a little more than a month before, they insisted on renewing our vows in a private ceremony officiated by the captain of the ship. They provided the flowers, hors d'oeuvres, champagne, music, and a memory book. It couldn't have been a nicer way to start our life together as a married couple."

Henry V. Thiel is a principal with The Epicurean Publicist. He prefers sunrises to sunsets.





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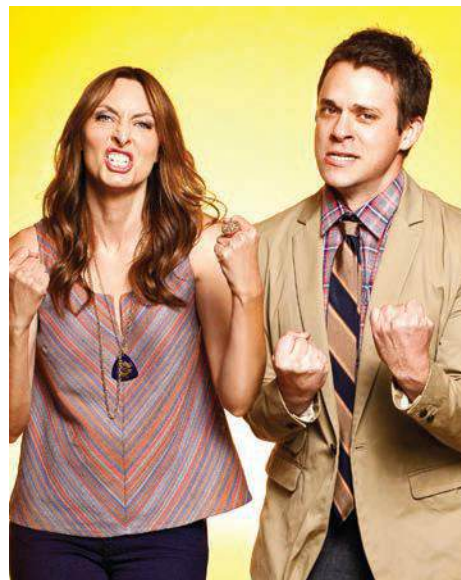
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Bryan Safi & Erin Gibson

(Entertainment Weekly, 1/27/17, Ariana Bacile)

Re: *Harry Potter*.

No one will have to fight these two for a spot at Hogwarts. "If I had a kid, I would give them the books," Safi says. "But I refuse to read them." Gibson's equally apathetic: "The only wigs and capes I want to see are on drag queens."



Warts and All

Bryan Safi (r), who is gay, and Erin Gibson are the *Throwing Shade* duo, who now host a talk show on TV Land on Tuesdays at 9:30 p.m.

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Dasha Perez-Haney

(Chopped, 1/10/17, Food Network)

Ted Allen: So, if you win, you get \$10,000. Any plans for that?

Chef Dasha (an executive chef from Denver, Colorado): Yes, absolutely. My wife and I are going on a culinary adventure. . . . But first and foremost, I'm here to prove to my mother that things haven't changed—she's had a very hard time with my lifestyle—but I'm still the same person.

What I can take away from this experience is power—that I was able to speak my mind and my feelings. And I think my mom will be very proud of me today, yes.

I'm still a culinary badass, and the world should watch out for me.
EDITOR'S NOTE: Perez-Haney made it to through the appetizer and entrée rounds, but was "chopped" on the dessert round.



Culinary Badass

Chef Dasha Perez-Haney was a competitor on Food Network's *Chopped*, hosted by Ted Allen, former "Food and Wine Connoisseur" on the TV series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.



Milla Jojovich

(*The Advocate*, February 2017, Brandon Voss)

Re: having a "gusband."

Gay husband! Chris and I met at a very pivotal point in my life. I'd just turned 15, I was making music, and he's an incredible musician. Instantly, we both just clicked, and we were inseparable. My father was incarcerated at the time, so I was left without a father figure. Chris was 26, quite a bit older, and he protected me. He was my buddy but also my voice of reason. And he had a car. He's always been a big brother to me, and now he's a fairy godfather to my daughters. I feel really bad for women who don't have a gusband. Every woman needs that camaraderie with a male without the pressure of physical attraction.



Does She Have a Gay Husband?

Milla Jojovich (seen here in 2016's *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*) wants you to know about her buddy, big brother, and godfather to her daughters.

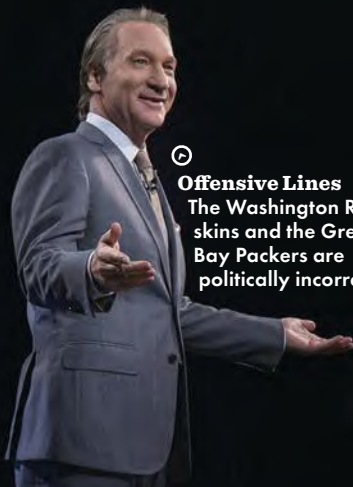
Bill Maher

(*Real Time with Bill Maher*, 1/20/17)

The pollsters who have found that nine in 10 Native Americans are not offended by the Redskins name must next poll gay men to see if they're offended by the Packers.



Offensive Lines
The Washington Redskins and the Green Bay Packers are politically incorrect?



Romy Madley Croft

(*Vanity Fair*, 2/17, Lisa Robinson)

Lisa Robinson: What's changed in your life since your 2012 album, *Coexist*?

Romy Madley Croft (singer-guitarist of the British band The xx): My personal happiness has gone up; I've dealt with some big things. I lost my mum when I was 11, and I never dealt with it. And when I was 20, my dad died while I was on tour, and I just drank and partied and numbed myself. But I've stopped all that now. I have a girlfriend who I've been with for five years—she's really helped me—and I'm very happy. I've always created a connection. I've always been a hopeless romantic.



Up, Up, and Away

Romy Madley Croft has had her ups and downs. "My personal happiness has gone up," says The xx singer-guitarist.



SATURDAY - TV LAND; JOJOVICH - SCREEN GEMS; CROFT - YOUNG TURKS; MAHER - HBO; PEREZ-HANEY - TAVERN HOSPITALITY GROUP



'Retake'

A realistic look at relationships past and present.

Feral: Season One



While trying to live together in harmony, pay the rent, and become part of an artistic queer community, best friends Billy and Daniel find

themselves dealing with difficult emotional issues—especially when it comes to finding and losing love. This new eight-episode Dekkoo-original series offers a passionate portrayal of young gay people struggling to find love and meaning in a confusing world. TLA Releasing (tla-releasing.com). —Troy Carrington

Judy Collins: A Love Letter to Stephen Sondheim



A Love Letter to Stephen Sondheim was filmed in May 2016 at The Boettcher Concert Hall in Denver, Colorado. Judy Collins takes the

audience through Sondheim's remarkable treasure-trove of music, interweaving stories of Broadway with her personal anecdotes. Available on DVD and home-video platforms on February 24. Cleopatra Music and Films (mvdshop.com).

—Suzie Lynde



Blossoming Affection

Tuc Watkins (r) as Jonathan, and Devon Graye as Adam/Brandon, star in *Retake*, directed and written by Nick Corporon.

Nick Corporon's new indie film *Retake* follows a lonely middle-aged man who hires a sex worker to help him relive a road trip—and a relationship—from his past.

Jonathan (Tuc Watkins) travels to San Francisco in search of a young male companion. The sex worker he picks up (Devon Graye) tells Jonathan that he's different from the older men he usually sees: "I feel like you require something more intricate." When Jonathan tells him that he's into role-play, the sex worker asks about the character that Jonathan wants him to play. Jonathan describes a lost and temperamental young guy named "Brandon." Back in Jonathan's hotel room, Jonathan asks him to put on a certain cologne, and "Brandon" assumes his role as they have sex.

The next morning, Jonathan brings Brandon some coffee and asks what his plans are for the next few days. Jonathan offers to double his nightly rate and pay

him a bonus at the end if he agrees to accompany him on a road trip to the Grand Canyon. Brandon cannot refuse that kind of offer and agrees to go with him.

As they begin their trip, Brandon quickly comes to realize that he is playing a major role in the recreation of Jonathan's lovelorn past. As Brandon attempts to dig for clues about Jonathan's relationship with the real-life Brandon, Jonathan insists that he must stick to the role he was hired to perform without asking questions.

As the sex worker slowly begins to piece together the identity of the person he is playing, he begins to feel a strange connection with Jonathan. Eager to leave his past behind, the sex worker sheds his own identity and truly becomes the character he's been playing. But as the two get closer to their destination, their affection for each other grows and a genuine relationship begins to blossom.

"*Retake* presents a new take on relationships, reliving the past,

and the fragility of love," says director and writer Nick Corporon. "I wrote the movie after having just turned 30—and the idea of getting older was weighing on me a bit. I had some great life experiences, but I didn't recognize any of them in the moment. I was always trying to get happy. All of this sadness, loneliness, and pining adds up to what I wanted to explore in the film: a realistic look at relationships past and present."

Set against the backdrop of the American Southwest and Route 66, which contribute to the overall sense of bleakness throughout the film, *Retake* shows how memory can seduce us into fixating on the past at the expense of the present, and how being able to move on from the past sometimes takes a lot of courage—and the help of others.

Retake is now available on DVD and VOD.

B. Root is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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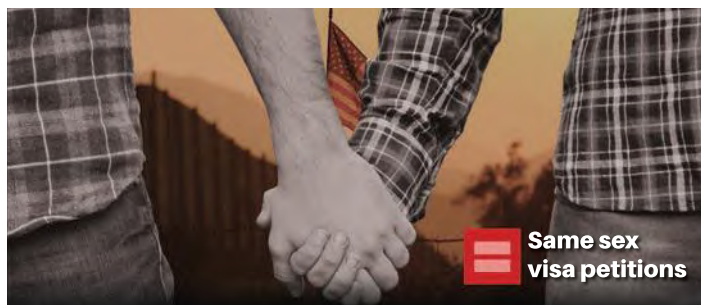
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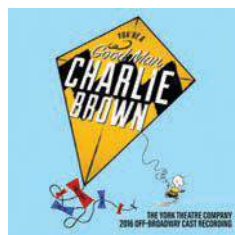
his lover, their about-to-be bar-mitzvahed son, their psychiatrist, and the lesbians next door. It's a hilarious and achingly poignant look at the infinite possibilities that make up a modern family . . . and a beautiful reminder that love can tell a million stories. The first-ever full cast album of the renowned musical includes a 60-page full-color booklet with complete lyrics and production photos. The cast features Andrew Rannells (nominated for a Tony for *The Book of Mormon*), Christian Borle (Tony winner for *Something Rotten!*), and Stephanie J. Block (Tony nomination for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*); directed by James Lapine (winner of 11 Tonys). Ghostlight Records (sh-k-boom.com/falsettos).

—Troy Carrington

In the pantheon of concert movies, from *Woodstock* to *Wattstax* and from Justin Bieber's *Never Say Never* to Michael Jackson's *This Is It*, few have reached the pinnacle of *The Last Waltz*—although *Stop Making Sense* comes closest. A 1976 farewell concert by The Band (and many of its friends), directed by Martin Scorsese, it is the concert movie that all other concert movies dream of being. Right off the bat, ***The Last Waltz: 40th Anniversary*** (WVB/Rhino/MGM) deserves kudos for finally getting the reissue right. Previous editions, including the four-disc box set were missing something—namely, the movie itself. Sure, the music is spectacular (especially the Joni Mitchell segment), but *The Last Waltz* is a concert movie, so seeing the movie is essential to the enjoyment of the music. This 40th-anniversary edition of *The Last Waltz* not only includes all four CDs, but it also features Scorsese's film on Blu-ray. Bravo!

Already racking up numerous awards and nominations, *La La Land*, Damien Chazelle's musical love-letter to Los Angeles, looks like it's the one to beat come Oscar time. With music by Justin Hurwitz, and lyrics by openly gay Benj Pasek and his straight collaborator Justin Paul, ***La La Land: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*** (Interscope) completes the picture. Movie-musical lovers are rejoicing over the fact that *La La Land*, one of the first contemporary non-animated movie musicals, contains original songs—the kind you leave the theater humming. Even if you haven't seen the movie yet, it will be impossible to resist numbers such as “Another Day of Sun,” “Someone in the Crowd,” “A Lovely Night,” and “City of Stars.” The one clunker is “Start a Fire,” the song performed by John Legend and co-written by Hurwitz, Legend, and a small committee.

For a musical that got its start as a 1988 John Waters movie with a message, *Hairspray*, like its main character Tracy, continues to defy the odds. A



2002 Broadway-musical adaptation by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman won a Tony and inspired a 2007 movie-musical version starring John Travolta as Tracy's mother, Edna—a character originated on film by the late Divine before Harvey Fierstein brought her to life on Broadway. Following *The Sound of Music*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Wiz*, *Hairspray* lives on as the latest addition to NBC's stable of musicals performed live on TV. ***Hairspray Live!: Original Soundtrack of the NBC Television Event*** (Masterworks Broadway/Epic) returns Fierstein to his Tony Award-winning role as Edna. Joined by Kristin Chenoweth, Jennifer Hudson, Martin Short, Ariana Grande, and newcomer Maddie Baillio, the cast does the songs proud—including “You Can't Stop the Beat,” “Good Morning Baltimore,” “I Know Where I've Been,” and “(The Legend of) Miss Baltimore Crabs.”

After Anthony Rapp's *Rent* stint, he appeared as Charlie Brown in a 1999 revival of the *Peanuts* musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* alongside a then-relatively unknown Kristin Chenoweth as Charlie's sister, Sally. ***You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown: 2016 Off-Broadway Cast Recording*** (Broadway) takes an interesting approach to the Clark Gesner musical (which first premiered on Broadway in 1971) by casting young Broadway performers between the ages of 9 and 14 as the young characters in the show.

Not the most thrilling musical on Broadway during the 2016 season (have you heard of a little show called *Hamilton*?), the revival of the 1963 Harnick/Bock musical *She Loves Me* nevertheless held its own, even earning a Tony Award. ***She Loves Me: 2016 Broadway Cast Recording*** (Ghostlight) stars Jane Krakowski, Zacahary Levi, and Laura Benanti (who received raves for her performance) in this stage-musical adaptation of the movie *The Shop Around the Corner*.

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.



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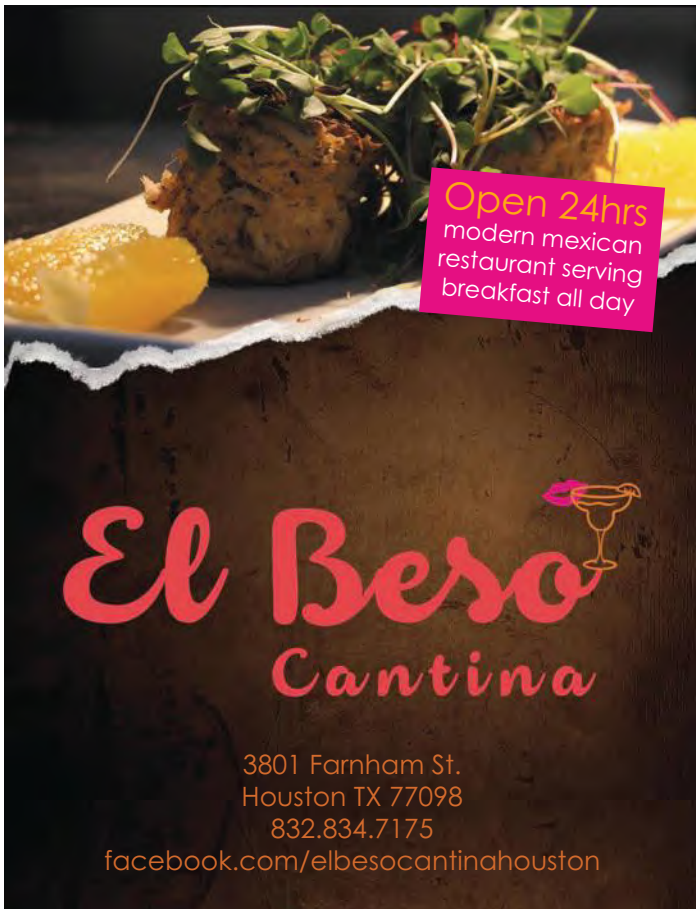
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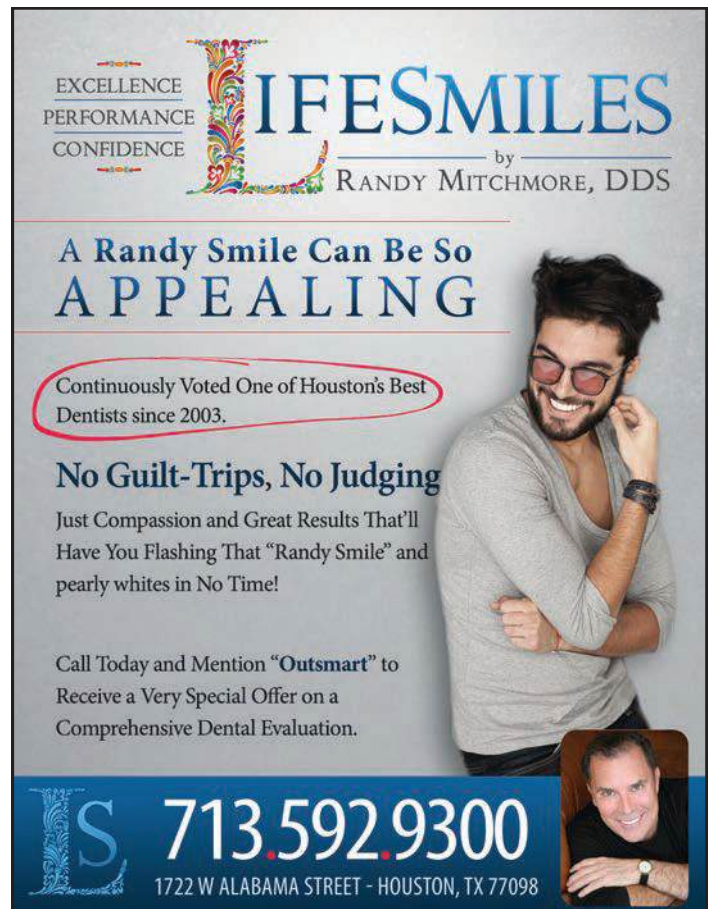
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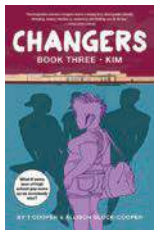
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‘On Christopher Street’

Transgender stories.

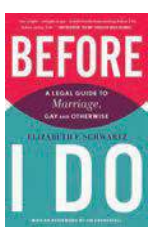
Changers Book Three: Kim T Cooper and Allison Glock-Cooper



When we last saw Oryon Small, he was kidnapped and locked in a basement with his best friend, Chase, dying in his arms. In *Book Three* of the *Changers* series, Oryon awakens in the body of Kim Cruz, an Asian-American

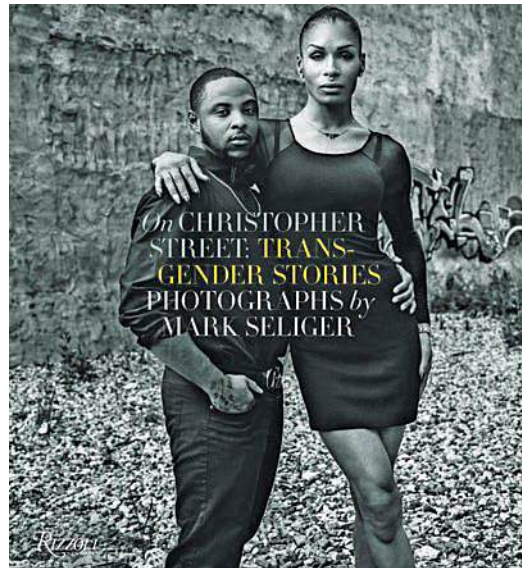
girl whose body looks nothing like she expected or desired. Kim—smart, funny, and finally fed up with the cards she’s been dealt—is finding out that friends change, love doesn’t always mean forever, and growing up means living your truth, even if it isn’t pretty. Akashic Books (akashicbooks.com). —Suzie Lynde

Before I Do Elizabeth F. Schwartz



In her first book, gay-rights attorney Elizabeth F. Schwartz spells out a range of practical considerations couples should address before tying the knot. She explains all of the implications of marriage, from name

changes and getting a license to taxes, insurance, Social Security, and much more. As Schwartz says, just because you can get married does not mean you should. The New Press (thenewpress.com). —Troy Carrington



On Christopher Street: Transgender Stories

Photographs by Mark Seliger, foreword by Janet Mock 2016 Rizzoli New York (rizzoliusa.com) 160 pages \$55

Everybody, as they say, has a story to tell. An ancestor was captured in an early war. Parents overcame adversity in a new country. A health scare, a welcome blessing, a lucky streak, a chance meeting—we all have our tales to share. And *On Christopher Street: Transgender Stories*, with photographs by Mark Seliger, reveals some stories you won’t soon forget.

Where would you go if you just wanted to be yourself? There was a time when a transgender person living in or near Manhattan would go to Christopher Street in the West Village to find support, advice, community, or family. More recently, you might have also run into photographer Seliger, who says in a brief statement that he noticed the “freedom of expression and gender identity” that was once abundant is “vanishing” from the area. High-end condos, cafés, and restaurants are moving in, and the trans community is being pushed aside. With this book, Seliger puts a marker on that community before it’s gone.

“I realize that everybody has a trans story, that being trans is something that affects all of us,” he says, using his camera as storyteller.

Being in prison as a trans woman, says one photo subject, is like being “caged.” You don’t belong with the men. They won’t put you in the women’s lockdown. Everybody knows what’s going on, and sometimes the guards have one more slap-down in store for you just before you’re released.

Many stories begin with “I was four”—or five or eight—when several of photographer Mark Seliger’s subjects realized that they were “in the wrong body.” Families were supportive—or not. Transitioning “is not easy,” and the decision for or against surgery is deeply personal. But ultimately it’s the “inner peace” that matters. Still, lying about being trans can backfire, and even if nobody knows, there’s a “constant state of paranoia and

fear” that may yet linger.

And then there’s the place itself: Christopher Street has “a dark side,” with drugs, prostitution, and harassment. This means that for the LGBTQ youth who comprise 40 percent of the nation’s street kids, it isn’t always safe.

And so there I was, quietly reading *On Christopher Street: Transgender Stories*, when it suddenly . . . ended! The surprise was not that I had finished, but that I was so wrapped up in the inside of this book that I didn’t notice the last pages looming.

Yes, it’s that kind of thing, filled with visual portraits that are worth the clichéd thousand words—and then some. Seliger’s subjects seem mostly well-at-ease in snapshots that feel random but natural; some people are identified, some are not, and not all of them weigh in verbally. But those who do tell tales that hit hard, in part because they leave readers with the sense that there’s more to say, but it’s too difficult to speak.

This large, elegantly presented coffee-table book is one you’ll return to again and again, because what’s inside is so compelling. If it is indeed true what they say about everyone having a story, *On Christopher Street* is filled with some of the best ones.

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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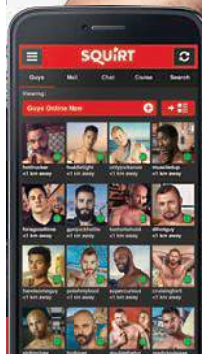
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HOUSTON'S LGBT HISTORY COMES ALIVE

continued from page 60

the bar's mascot. "Customers love to stand beside him for cell-phone photos," says De Lange. It's impossible to describe Bo—he just has to be experienced by visiting the club.

The Houston Eagle is the home bar of the Houston Bears, a charitable and social organization, so a large backlit sign honoring them also hangs in the Phoenix Room. The sign incurred minor damage during the fire, and the imperfections remain as an historical reminder. The Phoenix Room is dedicated to the memory of Gene Landry, a popular member of the leather community and mentor to many, who passed away in 2016, at the age of 47.

De Lange hopes to negotiate with Swoveland to offer limited-edition prints for sale in the Eagle's leather shop. De Lange is also planning to sell greeting cards featuring a photo of the recreated Mary's mural, with profits going toward maintaining Doyle's website.

A Commitment to History

When De Lange bought the 611 bar, he retained several built-in trophy cases on the first floor that display leather/denim-club trophies. The trophy cases cause De Lange to smile as he points out that they originally housed live chickens when the building was a grocery store.

Several 611 scrapbooks that were inherited from the previous owner will be donated to the University of Houston's new LGBT History Collections archive, along with De Lange's planning sketches, blueprints, and other materials documenting the creation of the Phoenix Room. During a leather weekend this coming fall, De Lange hopes to bring Swoveland to Houston to see his recreated mural and to greet fans of his artwork.

The Phoenix Room is open weekends starting at 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and at 4 p.m. on Sundays. The room is available for meetings, private parties, receptions, and fundraisers. Rental rates vary, based on the day of the week and how much staff is required to service the event.

The Diana Foundation was the first to book a function in the room, at which they honored De Lange. The next booked event is the LGBT Alumni Association of the University of Houston.

De Lange says customers often get teary-eyed as they see reminders of their younger days, or gaze at the recreated Mary's mural. Younger patrons show a profound interest in a past they know nothing about.

Buildings rise and fall. Bars open and close. People and organizations come and go. Leaders and traditions change with regularity. Triumphs are celebrated, and tragedies are mourned. To know where we are headed, we must consider where we have been. To understand who we are, we must reflect on who we were. And amidst this constant evolution, the only anchor is our history.

Brandon Wolf is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.






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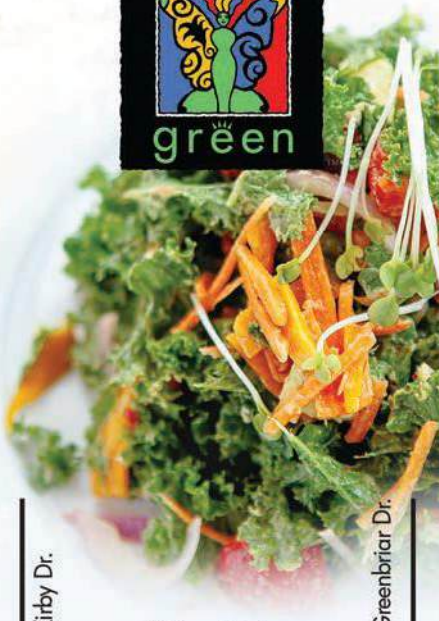


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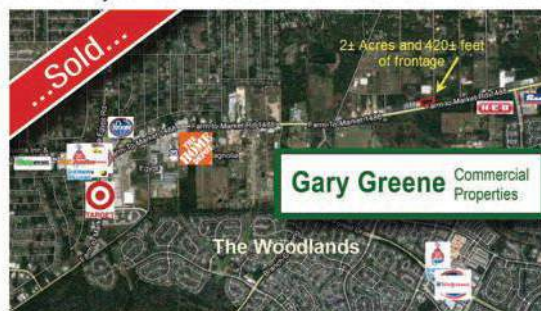
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Located downtown, this urban club features Clubbers Friday with male and female dancers. Its 6,400 square feet also offers theater-sized viewing screens and VIP rooms. 2020 Leeland • 713.227.9667 • club2020houston.com.

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.

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.

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. • jrbarandgrill.com • 713.521.2519.



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Behind the Bar

WHO: Jessica Curry

WHERE:

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WHAT'S UP:

South Beach has some exciting times coming up with all the *RuPaul's Drag Race* season-nine contestants coming on Saturdays. In addition to that we're proud to still have the largest & multi award-winning drag show on Thursdays with no cover. Open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Always 18+ to party. See you on the dance floor!



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 RIPCORD

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.SOB.

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.

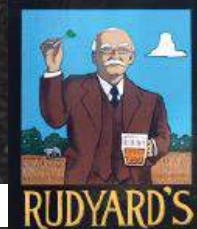
Spring

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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Get Projects Started

Strong period of retrogrades.

February should be the month you get all of your projects started. Essentially, this means we are in a strong period of retrogrades from February 22 through May 7. With Venus retrograde, we will reexamine our investments, our sense of self-worth, the viability of our relationships, and what makes us really happy. It's also not the best time to start a new relationship, but a great time to have an old lover return! After examining your financial foundation, you may reconsider your current investments, put yourself on a budget, or look for ways to take advantage of skills you have but don't use. With both the Venus and Mercury retrogrades dovetailing each other, February 22 through May 7 is going to be a big time for rethinking!

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This month is a mixed bag of energy for you. Normally during this time of the year, you are still busy with activities left over from the holidays. With Mars (your ruler) in Aries, you will have plenty of extra energy to get those tasks done. You may feel that everything and everyone is demanding that you respond immediately—and they are! February is always a good time for you to connect with community groups, or with your like-minded friends. By the end of the month you are ready for some rest and retreat, even though you are still in demand.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). During the first half of February you are busy focusing on career and security. Friends and business groups can be very supportive of your current plans. This could be a good month for you to take on a leadership role in a business or community group. Near the end of the month, you are in a period of rest and retreat. And with your ruling planet, Venus, going retrograde from February 22 through April 29, you are going to take a good look at yourself from the inside out! The latter part of the month can be a good time for a spiritual retreat, or just to get some time to yourself. Choose your company carefully.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). As the month begins, you are still focused on your career and long-term security. In the second week, you are connecting more to the public side of your life. Your views will impact others. During this time, it's very important to be very honest with yourself and with others—but especially with yourself. Deceptions will be found out easily, and that may hurt your reputation if you are not clear about your motives. Nevertheless, this is a time for you to step up and take a leadership role with a clear head and a pure heart. Choose your cohorts carefully, as you will be questioning your relationship with them.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Your career sector is especially active this month with Venus going retrograde at the end of February in your career sector. If you have plans, you need to put them into action right away. After Venus goes retrograde, it's the perfect time to reexamine your business practices and the people that you regularly do business with. Refocus on making better use of your personal skills, because people are open and receptive to your views. This is also an excellent month for you to do some traveling, teaching, or taking a class. Stay on track with your health and exercise plans!

LEO (July 23–August 22). Relationships and personal intimacy are very strong this month. For those born in Leo, relationships can involve lovers, friends, or confidants. Your relationship energies are more magnetic, drawing people to you for business and personal connections. Trust your initial psychic response to anyone you come in contact with. If they feel good, they are—you don't have to keep testing them. And if they feel bad, they are! In your romantic relationships, you will need some reassurance about your partner's goals and motives, just to make sure you are both on the same page.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). As the month opens, you are getting yourself back on track. The holidays can throw off your routines, and you are always happy to get back to them. Relationships are extremely important this month. And the solar eclipse occurring in your relationship sector on the 26th will indicate some sort of change, such as enjoying your existing relationship even more, finding the perfect partner, or having something special and unexpected happen to your partner. The viability of all your relationships, both business and personal, will be under scrutiny after the 22nd. This is a perfect month for you to get a handle on your finances.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). This continues to be a dynamic and fluid time for Librans. There are both relationship and career opportunities out there for you. And with your ruler, Venus, going retrograde on the 22nd through April 29, you are going to take a hard look at your relationships. If you are in a supportive relationship, this is a perfect time to renew those emotional, physical, and spiritual connections. If your relationship isn't doing well, this will force the issues to the surface so that you have to deal with them. Both business and personal relationships will be affected. The other main factor for this month is to make sure that you are taking good care of yourself via exercise, better eating, and choosing the right people to work around!

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). Your home and family are the focus as your month begins. You are generally in more of an internal phase. This is a creative and playful month for you. In the first half of the month, you are back and focused on getting things completed at work and connecting more to your normal routines for working out, meeting with friends, etc. In the latter half of the month, you are ready to step away from your agenda and have some fun. You will want to focus on projects that you really enjoy! With Venus retrograde on February 22, this can be a time

to examine your business relationships and financial connections through May 2017.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). You had been pushing yourself hard last year, so this is the year to really get your act together. You remain on that path, but you are taking it a bit easier this month. The first half of the month, you are looking for an approach to what you are doing that's more fun. You can have fun and be productive if you work on projects that inspire and fulfill you, rather than just completing a list of tasks. In the latter half of the month, home and family are more your focus. In fact, your home could be your retreat during the second half of the month, so keep your schedule very flexible during this time.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This month, you will have to find some balance between work/family demands and taking time for yourself. With your career, this is a very positive and optimistic time for you to get a promotion, look for a better position, or start your own business. Get that done before the 22nd, or you will need to wait until early May to put your project into action. There is a lot of family activity that you need to pay attention to. By midmonth, you are ready for a break from the circus of activity—if you can get away! You will need some down time at the end of the month, especially around the solar eclipse on the 26th. Put it on your calendar so you can enjoy it.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Happy Birthday to the free-minded and free-thinking Aquarians, who help us to envision the best version of society and the planet that humanity has to offer! This is your yearly cycle to review what you did last year and look at what you plan to



do this year. You'll be especially clear about this after the 7th. You are also focused on how to make better use of your resources and skills—especially the ones connected to your creative side. In the early part of the month, you are getting your house and business in order. Your energy remains strong throughout the month, even as others seem to lose some of their momentum. In the latter half of the month, you should be focused on improving your skills and financial viability.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). You have been working hard on getting your life in order during the past year. However, in the first half of this month, you are ready to take a break from that push! You are much more ready to indulge yourself in whatever you want to participate in. This period is very good for spending time traveling with your partner or having some adventures together. The latter half of the month, you are getting back to your agenda and routines. You are extra-psychic and sensitive near the end of the month. With the eclipse on the 26th, you may want to make sure you have the weekend to yourself for relaxing.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2017 yearly forecast at OutSmartMAGAZINE.COM. For more astro-insight, log on to lillyroddy.com.



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OUT IN HOUSTON



The RED Dinner Sparkle, a kick-off event for UH's RED Dinner, was held on January 5 at the home of **Kevin Hamby** and **Brian Waddle**. Pictured are **Shawn Kuehn, Lorraine Schroeder, Dr. Dan Maxwell, Joe Rera, Kevin England "Special K," Nick Brines, Hamby, Katy Caldwell, Waddle, Mike Pede,** and **Dr. Richard Walker**.



On December 31, Guava Lamp held its New Year's Eve celebration. Pictured are **Dan DiDonato, Mitch Rainey, Michelle Moser,** and **Heather Taylor Jones**.



On January 1, **Sara Fernandez** held her New Year's Day open-house event. Pictured are Fernandez and **Kiki Neumann**.



Kim Ogg was sworn in as Harris County District Attorney on January 2 at the South Texas College of Law. Pictured are **Judge Barbara Hartle** and Judge **Steven Kirkland**.



On January 2, Harris County District Attorney **Kim Ogg's** inauguration was held at the South Texas College of Law. Pictured are Ogg (far right) and her partner, **Olivia Jordan** (far left), with their son, **Jack Jordan**.



On December 17, The Diana Foundation held its holiday party at Houston House. Pictured are **Michael Broderick** (far left) and **Tanner Williams** (far right) with new Diana members.



The Honkey Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular was held on December 31 at Stages Repertory Theatre. Pictured are **Kelly Peters, Christina Edwards Wells, Ted Swindley, Chelsea Ryan,** and **Holland Vavra**.



On January 7, the Krewe of Olympus held its Twelfth Night party at Neon Boots. Pictured are **Tricia Lynn** and **Sharon Ponton**.



EPAH and LHI held a fundraiser on January 14 at the home of **Bruce Smith**. Pictured are **Laura Seifert, Joseph Moore, Aurora Harris, Smith, Cindy Cuellar, Kent Loftin,** and **Franki Navarro**.



On January 17, Live Consortium held an HIV legislative forum and free advocacy training at the Montrose Center. Pictured are **Glenn Urbach, Januari Leo, Venita Ray,** and **Michelle Muylle**.



AIDS Foundation Houston held its AIDS Walk kick-off event on January 18 at El Tiempo. Pictured are **Christopher Denman, Kelly Young, Jessica Rossman,** and **Al Farb**.

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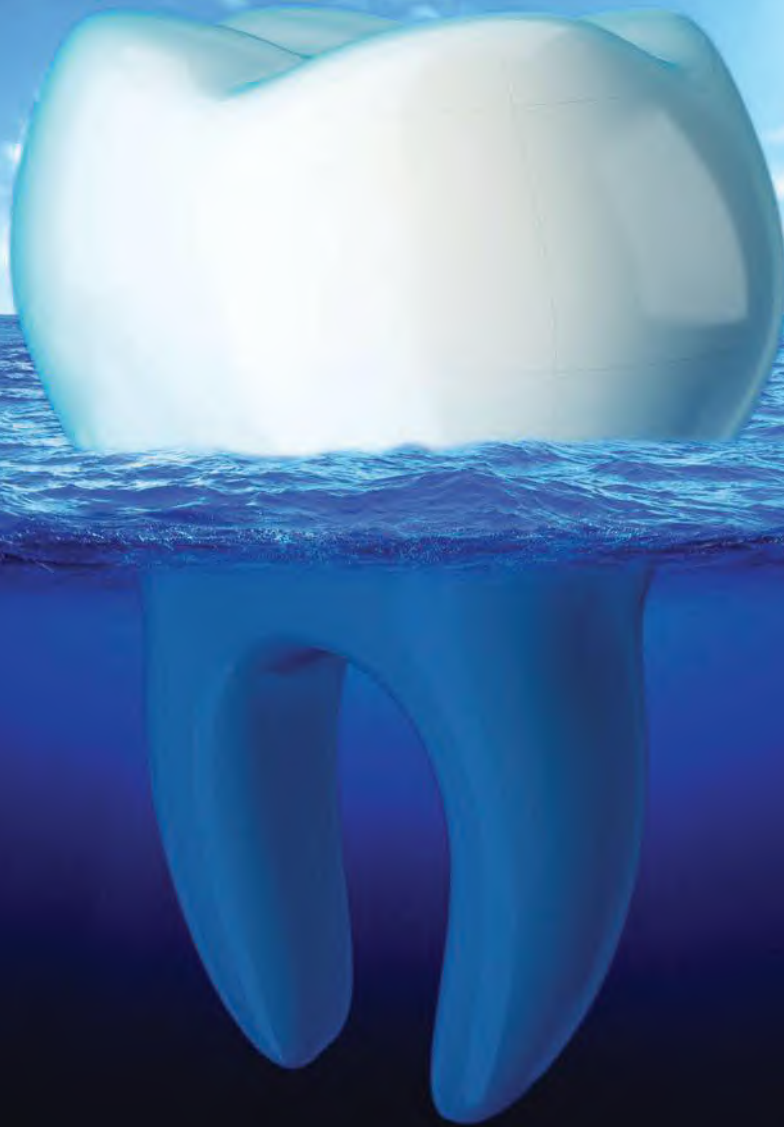
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